

Part 2 "Holiday but NOT a Holiday"

"Wheels of the Bus Go Round and Round"

By Natalie Cox

Decided to spend our first day wandering around, got the train, and went to Marienplatz Square which is the centre of Munich. There were dozens of cafes serving up gallons of beers in mountain-high steins. I don't like beer (gross understatement) so couldn't see the sense in it all. There were old buildings there, and there and, oh look, there too.

Came across a group of singing nuns which was cool. Next day we had a bike tour booked. Oh my goodness, I haven't ridden a bike since I was 10yrs old which was.....

well, lets say, it was a long time ago. Poor man tried every type of bike he had, with Steve offering unhelpful suggestions with every one. Either my arms wouldn't reach, my bum was too fat, my legs were too short, my patience was non-existent. I did walk to meet them at their lunch spot and came across all these river surfers.



Singing Nuns



Eisbach Wave

It's called the Eisbach Wave, you have to YouTube it, it's amazing. Following day we went to the countryside and the dumb ones went off biking again while I wandered around the village, then after lunch we toddled back in to the bus and drove up to a castle. And oh what a castle, sitting regally on top of a hill.

The Neuschwanstein Castle was so over the top with gold, paintings and furniture that it verged on the garrish. All this for one "Mad King Ludwig" who was deposed and died, aged 40, under mysterious circumstances before the castle was finished. Walt Disney saw it on his travels and was so impressed by it that he used it as a model for Cinderella's Castle. Woke up next day with the day all to ourselves before we joined the dreaded bus tour, so thought we'd go to Dachau Concentration Camp.



Mad Kings Castle

Nothing like going through gas chambers to dampen the mood. It was horrifying, shocking, heartbreaking, upsetting and unbelievable. Cannot fathom humans doing these things to other human beings. Later in the day I took Steve to a BMW Museum. Travelling with 3 women I think he felt totally drained of all his testosterone, so I gave him a top-up. Unfortunately it was Germany so BMW's were the best I could do. Sorry! When we went to get the train back, there were heaps of people outside drinking copious amounts of beer and yahooping like it was party time. Turns out we were by the stadium where ACDC were playing that night so they were just warming up before the gates opened.

That explained why all these 50 and 60+ year olds were dressed in their black denim or leather with ACDC black t-shirts on. Not sure we'd get away with that here but they sure were having a good time. In the evening we met up with the tour company and other travelers. They included 2 American couples, 1 who thought Trump was the best thing since sliced bread, the other who despised him so much that I can see them weeping when the bullet didn't hit the right spot. Spent a night in Innsbruck, Austria, and watched a Tyrolean Folklore Evening. Got ~~tortured~~ treated to yodelling, long horn blowing and this ~~weird~~ unique dance where they kept slapping themselves. You've got to sample a country's culture eh?

Went to an Augustine monk's Abbey, over the highest Pass in Austria, and over to Italy through the towering, beautiful Dolomites. (more impressive than the Alps, just saying) Stayed in Cortina, saw an old ski jump from 1956 Olympics. Stayed in Bolzano, Italy's capital of Christmas. Visited Glorenzo, a lovely walled city that had beautiful arched walkways. Travelled over the Tubre Pass in to Engadine National Park before arriving in St. Moritz. Where's the glitz and glamour? Don't all the rich and famous come here? Not today. Only Natalie Cox, retired, from Tauranga, who has to pay the same prices as the Princesses and movie stars. Dior, Chanel, Cartier, Versace, Gucci, Rolex.... not a Briscoes or K-Mart in sight.

Did have Lindt chocolate though, so much Lindt Chocolate. Went on a Funicular train, then changed to a cable car and went up to Piz Nair which was cool, literally. Went on every cable car and funicular throughout the whole trip. Just got so excited when I found one. (my inner child). Moved on, on board the Bernina Express train which took us over the Alps to Tirano Italy) where we boarded the bus back to Lake Como. Having totally wiped Mr Clooney from my "people I would cheat on Steve with" list, I found a cable car to compensate. Up 700m to look over the town and lake. Came down and had dinner at an outdoor restaurant and afterwards the maitre d' was so captivated by my beauty (you weren't there so can't prove otherwise) that he hugged and kissed me.



Bernina Express

He's on the list now! As with all bus tours, and 1 of many reasons I don't like them (actually despise them), we moved on the next morning, through Aosta Valley (Italy), Martigny, renowned for it's gastronomy which we didn't stop to try, (brilliant thinking) and Sion (Switzerland) to rainy Tasch, where we had (more good thinking) a dried up version of chicken dinner. Next day free so tried to organise a trip to an ice castle but it was cancelled because of weather. Was rainy and windy, but we were set on going up a mountain, stupid us.

The only one still open was the Gornergrat cog railway (Peter will know of this) so we travelled up to 3,089m and stepped out

in to wind that nearly knocked us over. The Matterhorn was hidden behind cloud, so rather than waste the trip, we walked up even further to a Chapel (should've gone in and prayed for better weather), Hotel Gornergrat (at \$1,192 per night we gave it a miss), shops (if I can't afford the hotel, I can't afford the shops), and an observatory where Steve went on a virtual paraglide flight around the Matterhorn. He sat in a floating chair with handles for steering. More stuff for the testosterone. Walked a bit further up to see the Marmots, ugly oversized

guinea pigs, then headed down to shelter. While waiting for the train we watched all these soccer balls rushing down the swollen river. Found out later that we were the last train to get out of Zermatt which got closed down due to flooding. The soccer balls were from a school that got washed out. Boarded the Glacier Express next day to Andermatt then bused (yay) to Lucerne. We just had time for another gondola ride up Mt. Stanserhorn (top story open air, but only lasted 10mins before I lost feeling in my extremities) and counted 10 lakes before descending and going on a boat ride around Lake Lucerne. Lucerne looked beautiful but hey, we're on a bus tour, have to go, there's a schedule keep to. There's a stop-off at Berne for a walking tour to a clock which, because of the rain, didn't do what it was meant to. Got caught up in a protest, black immigrants wanting fair treatment. Good luck to them with that! Ended up spending our last night with the bus people in Zurich.

Top of Gornergrat railway to NOT see the Matterhorn



As Queen said "I Want to Break Free..."

No more bus, back on our own timetable. Got the train, a double decker no less, out to the Rhine Falls, largest in Europe, for a breathtaking view so close up that I could imagine being swept up in it's surging water, being carried over the edge. In reality, I'd fall in, drown (remember, forgotten how to swim) and my broken, lifeless body would be discovered downstream a few days later. Rhine Falls, YouTube it, it just totally mesmerized me. Snapped out of it when Steve stated he needed food. A statement I got to hear quite often during the time away. Finally it was our last day in Switzerland. We got the train (again) to a Cablecar (again) that took us up 2,625ft to see a panoramic view of Zurich, the lake and mountains behind it.

There was a path that led to a restaurant where we had strudel and drinks before heading back to town. wandered to Lake Zurich where we jumped on a boat for a beautiful cruise around the lake. Saw rowers, absailers, yachties, jet skis, everything. And had my last (of many) Limoncello Spritzers of the trip..... and then it was over.

"The End is Nigh"

Another of those 12hr flight to Singapore. Agony having to walk through the "chosen ones" section, with their pod beds, gourmet meals, little fluffy slippers. and smug looks on their faces. Hotel was fantastic, let us leave bags while we headed off. Steve was excited because we found a cafe that served bacon and eggs for brekky, no noodles, rice, pasta or pizza in sight. Boring! Wanted to go back next day but Steve's internal GPS system had a short-circuit. The cafe that was 10 mins away took us over an hour to find. I was very good though, behaved very well, on the outside anyway. My inside voice was screaming profanities. He bought me some lovely clothes though, so what can you do? We were right next to the Arab/Indian area so wandered around looking at all the quirky shops and buildings, taking in the smells from all the restaurants. Before you know it, we were on another plane heading to Auckland. Our plane was late so we missed our Tauranga connection. Had to sit around the domestic terminal for 6hrs. Do you know what it's like to do that... at a domestic terminal? So, after leaving our Singapore hotel 22hrs ago, we walked in our door. That's it, finished, over and done with. Just the unpacking, washing, grocery shopping, lawn mowing etc, etc to do.

Oh, and by the way, we saw a Jaguar on our time away, yep, just one. Figure that qualifies this to go in the Jaguar magazine, don't you think?

Natalie

