

## 05/11/1996 – Saturday

“What a long, strange trip it’s been”... These words from the Grateful Dead song keep running through my mind as I think back on the past 24 hours...

We were to have left at noon on Friday. But bad weather in Chicago resulted in our flight being cancelled. United re-booked us to Dulles via Denver, departing at 8:00 am.

That flight (a Boeing 727, in which we sat in the very last row) was about an hour late departing.

The flight from Denver (a 777) was also late departing, and then was forced to return to Denver when the nose gear doors wouldn’t close. That was a minor problem (somebody left a safety pin in), but we had to re-fuel and inspect the plane (due to a heavy landing), so we lost a good 2 hours.

We arrived at Dulles about 30 minutes after our plane to Frankfurt had departed, and after standing in line at the customer service Rep’s desk forever we were re-booked to Paris, then to Frankfurt via Lufthansa (on an Airbus A-321).

We did not get to sit together, although we did get aisle seats. There was also a problem with our bags, which were checked in Dallas only as far as Dulles. The agent in Dallas (Annette Postin) was extremely helpful but despite her best efforts our bags remained in Dulles.

At least they said they have them. We straightened that out with Lufthansa who, although they only carried us the last leg, get stuck with the responsibility of getting the bags to us. They will also reimburse us for incidental expenses.

But right now, all is right with the world. We are on a train headed towards Bonn, and Kathleen is sleeping. I am feeling a little better, having gotten some sleep on the plane.

Frankfurt Am Main is incredible – a huge airport and a huge train station. It is like a small city. Customs was a breeze: not only did we have no luggage we didn’t even have to show our passports.

I feel much more self-confidence this trip – things look “foreign” but not intimidating.

Got the 14:04 train to Bonn (a 90-minute ride). Intended to buy a sweatshirt but found that all the stores had closed at 2:00 pm! The pedestrian area outside the train station was interesting but dead. It wasn’t quite as devoid of people as Belfast on a Sunday, but it was close.

We walked around a bit before catching the underground (U#16) to Bad Gotesberg (3.25 each) and again on the three blocks walk to our hotel (the Zum Adler, 60 Koblenzstrasse, 150 Dm). It turned out to be rather nice and mostly empty, so we got a room with a bathroom (#315).

There were several restaurants near-by. We did walk up to the hill-top hotel (where I had tried to get us a room in). In a way I’m glad we ended up where we did. It was a bit more convenient.

We ended up having dinner at an Italian restaurant before returning to our hotel and crashing about 7:00 pm.

### Valuable Lessons

1. Always carry your coat

2. Bring toiletries, at least one day's change of essentials
3. Plan the trip to accommodate the delay of your baggage

## **05/12/1996 – Sunday (Day 2)**

### **On the Rhine**

We both slept like we deserved to and didn't get up until 6:30. Had a delightful breakfast, much as we remembered from Berlin: hard boiled eggs, toast, meats, cheeses, cereal, yogurt and coffee to die for. It was about a 20-minute walk to the Rhine, where we boarded our river boat for the long day cruise down the Rhine.

The day is overcast and what the weather report called "unseasonable cold" – about 50 degrees. Despite our lack of coats or sweatshirts we were OK on the walk to the river, and the boat has inside seating.

Coffee on the boat is tourist expensive – 3.20 Dm each. Food is moderately expensive to – Breaded fried pork cutlet in mushroom gravy with fries and beer for both of us cost 39 Dm. We appear to have traveled at a good time, as nothing seems crowded, although everything seems to be running on the summer schedule.

The Rhine valley is beautiful – picturesque little towns on the waters edge nestled amongst green hills. There are a large number of vineyards on the steep hills, which are occasionally topped by an old castle.

We called while at Koblenz and got great news: The bags await us at our hotel in Bacharach. Life is good.

Something or somebody is always in motion on, in or around the Rhine. There is a constant stream of barges and tour boats going in both directions. We have also seen many kayaks, rowboats and pleasure craft. On shore, trains and cars pass on both banks, and there is a steady stream of bikers and hikers.

This has been an enjoyable and relaxing way to spend the day – a good way to let us "catch our breath" after the strain of the flight.

Well, I spoke too soon. We stopped at Bad Salzig and picked up a tour group of about a hundred Spanish speaking tourists (clutching many "El Rhino" maps). We joked to ourselves that they had all read the same book as we had and were staying in Bacharach too, then watched in horror as they all queued up to get off with us! Fortunately, they all got onto their busses and headed out of town, leaving us in peace and quiet.

Bacharach turned out to be a real gem. It reminded me of Pitlochry Scotland, in that I did not want to leave. It is a beautiful little Bavarian Rhine river town, with narrow streets crowded with buildings. It will be what I always think of whenever I visualize a medieval town.

The hotel Kranetrum (sp?) was also a delight. We checked in, claimed our bags (hooray!), walked around while it was still light and ended up eating at our hotel. The food was quite good and met what seemed to be the Rick Steeves fan club there. There were four American couples there, and we spent awhile wind evening trading advice, stories and in general reveling in the comradery of European travelers.

We got real friendly with one couple in particular” Jay and Keri Sigman, two accountants from Kansas City. This is the beginning of their first trip, and we sat up talking to them until 2:00 am (4 bottles of excellent German wine and two rounds of beer). Great fun.

### **05/13/1996 – Monday (Day 3)**

#### **The Romantic Road (Not!)**

After our late-night fun, reality can back with a headache at 4:30 am, which is when we had to get up to catch the 5:51 train to Frankfurt so we could catch the 8:00 bus. We had a bit of a panic trying to get out of the hotel: the door was locked, and it took me awhile to realize that I had another key on the ring. We made the train with five minutes to spare.

Got to Frankfurt and had breakfast at the station, then found the bus just outside the station. For 10 Dm each we were on the bus and on our way down the Romantic Road...

What a disappointment. It was everything we always thought a bus tour would be, or not be. They would play a tape (in English, then Japanese) as we approached giving a superficial highlight of the town, we’d drive through the center of the town, then drive on. We had several 15- or 30-minute stops, and one two hour stop at Rothenberg for lunch, but most of the time was on the bus.

It was a good opportunity to catch up on lost sleep (that must have been a problem for all of us, because they skipped the last stop and headed straight for Munich. Thank god!

We hopped right on the S-Bahn (Eurail pass accepted), zipped right to the Marienplatz and found the Hotel Am Markt like we had been there before. We are getting good at this.

I didn’t mention that it rained since lunch. That may be why the bus tour really lost its appeal.

Anyway, we walked around a bit, had Italian for diner, and went to bed at 10:30. This is a marvelously beautiful city.

### **05/14/1996 – Tuesday (Day 4)**

#### **Munich**

Slept well and beat everyone to the toilets and showers. Breakfast was a bit of a disappointment (rolls, butter, jelly) although the coffee was excellent. Guess that’s how they keep the room rate low. The dining room is not quite spectacular, but it is very interesting. The clientele seems to be (based on the way they are dressed) businessmen. The location is superb.

We decided over breakfast to stay in Munich an additional night.

The trip to Dachau was simple – U-Bahn to Dachau, then a bus to the camp, which is now right in the town itself with houses all around it. That, and the hundreds of noisy school children (teenagers acting their usual way) made it difficult to absorb the atmosphere. It was kind of like being at the Museum of Science and Industry.

Had a late lunch in Munich [Schweinkotelett vom rost, rostkarto-fflen and toasted port with roasted potatoes and Spaten Munchen beer] and decided to skip the Art Museum in favor of just walking around Munich. This is a glorious city with a plaza, square or park seemingly around every corner. Even the rain,

which has been ever present since our arrival in Europe, cannot diminish the greatness and beauty of this city.

Stood in the rain with many others and watched the glockenspiel clock do its thing, ended up at the Hofbrau House for our appointment with Jay and Keri but they did not show up. Had fun (and 2.5-liter beers) anyway. The tempo of the band picked up all night, the food was surprisingly good, and we had fun talking to the people at our table. It may be touristy but it is enjoyable.

We wandered home and decided to take a day trip to Garmish - Partenkirchen on Wednesday.

### **05/15/1996 – Wednesday (Day 5)**

#### **Day Trip out of Munich**

Set the alarm for 7:00 and reluctantly climbed out of bed close to 7:30. Our first two hotel rooms had a toilet and a shower, so this is our first experience sharing those facilities. So far we have not had to wait.

Bought a Thomas Cooke timetable (37 Dm) yesterday (it is great – I'll never travel without one) and was able to confirm our departure time. We also stopped at the Eurail Aid office and got great help regarding the night train to Prague.

It took us 15 minutes from the time we left our hotel to reach the seats on our train. What a location!

Took the 9:00 train to Garmish – Partenkirchen and, just like the Flam detour in Norway, followed the crowd to the Cog train ticket office where we bought our tickets (57 Dm each) and hopped on the train, which departed about 10 minutes later.

The trip up to Eibsee is interesting, but the fun really begins when you get on the cable car (along with about 50 of your most recently acquired closest friends) for the 10-minute ascent to the mountain peak. It was overcast at Eibsee, but we went through the cloud on the way up and emerged into brilliant sunshine so beautiful that we all gasped in surprise.

The view is indescribable: it felt like being on top of the world. The only disappointment was that the other cable car was not running so we had to retrace our route back down.

We both felt a little funny at the peak, but much better when we got back down. Must have been the altitude.

Decided to head on to Innsbruck, so caught the train at 2:41 – got into town at 4:00. The old town was alive with tourists who swarmed to the many outdoor cafes lining the sidewalks in the pedestrian-only area.

Don't know if it has been as cloudy there as it has been wherever we have been, but everybody seemed happy to have the sun out.

We really didn't do much more than walk around, then stopped off for a drink, before grabbing some bread and cheese before heading back to the train station to catch the 18:41 back to Munich.

We stopped off for one more beer and then headed to the hotel to get a good night's sleep.

We realized why we are going through so much money: we are buying 2 big meals each day. We will try to get back to the deli approach for lunch like we have done on previous trips.

We have walked around or used the U-Bahn (free to Eurail pass holders) the whole time in Munich!

Tomorrow we head to Salzburg.

### **05/16/1996 – Thursday (Day 6)**

#### **On to Salzburg**

After a bit of a struggle we are on the train to Salzburg. We had awakened early, packed, had a leisurely breakfast, paid our hotel bill (318 Dm) and rode to the Hauptbahnhof with plenty of time to spare. The train was not in yet, and Kathleen had just started off to buy newspaper when it pulled in. Lucky for us, she turned around and came back, because we encountered the biggest hassle we have yet encountered getting onto a train. It was very crowded, and we had happily settled into an empty compartment when we got bumped by the train crew. It seems they get one compartment to themselves and in spite of the fact that there were not any reserved signs we had to move on. We got trapped in the compartment while a rather heated discussion went on between the crew and several Germans who had come in behind us, but in the end we all left.

We got off and walked along all the second-class coaches but they were full and decided to wait for the next train. Walking by what we thought was the 1<sup>st</sup> Class smoking car we saw many empty seats and decided to endure a little smoke. Turned out to be non-smoking but completely reserved. We decided that it was close enough to departure that there were certain to be some no-shows and grabbed some seats that were reserved (this was the newer coach with aircraft-style seats in a 2-1 configuration). This turned out to be a good move.

In Salzburg we went directly to Tourist Information and got a room (440 OS) at the Pension Sandwirt Aver, which is a walk of a few blocks from the station. Even though it was 10:30 am or so, we were able to walk right over and drop our bags in the room, which we did.

We then went back to the train station and got cash from the ATM, then went to the ticket office to book our night trains. The man we dealt with was great (excellent English) and there was no crowd – nothing like our memories of Berlin! We booked 3 nights for around \$400 – a bit steep, but it will guarantee that we arrive rested and ready to go.

Took the bus towards the old town (19 OS each) and discovered a beautiful, bustling area full of narrow, winding streets, all overshadowed by the looming [Hohensalzburg Fortress](#) (naturally, we took the funicular). The tour was interesting, conducted in German and English with a Japanese translation going on at the back of the group.

Ate dinner at Sternhau (pork cutlet in gravy with spinach pasta and roast potatoes for me, grilled pikeperch with boiled potatoes for Kathleen. With beers (one each) it came to 480 OS, and it was delicious.

Walked around after dinner, came across some kind of rally, complete with flags and music. Couldn't quite figure out the occasion, appeared to be some kind of Europe thing.

Managed to hit town on a holiday (we think Ascension Thursday) so naturally almost all of the stores are closed. We lunched on the remains of the bread and cheese from yesterday.

We lounged in the beer garden up at the fortress after the tour. It was (finally!) a warm, sunny day that we did not want to end. The old town is beautiful, much like Warsaw: narrow, twisted streets, lots of charm.

### **05/17/1996 – Friday (Day 7)**

#### **Salzburg**

Decided to sleep in just a bit so we could have breakfast (rolls again!) before catching the bus to [Berchtesgaden](#). We slept well and had small waits for the single shower available. Left our bags at the train station baggage check (300 OS each) and caught bus #11 (bought a one-day bus pass for 100 OS each). Got there and caught bus #9541 to Königssee almost immediately.

Königssee must be to the Germans what the Grand Canyon is to the US. There were dozens of tour busses and thousands of people there. Hundreds of stores, restaurants and hotels line the walk from where the bus dropped us off to where we lined up to buy tickets (17.5 DM each) and lined up to cram into the crowded boat for the lake ride. It was beautiful, although the tour guide spoke only German.

Finally tried bratwurst and sauerkraut at St. Bartholomew (beer: München - HB) and enjoyed strolling around. The view was simply beautiful.

Bought some lunch food and stopped off for a beer before catching the bus back to Salzburg. Kathleen has come down with a sore throat, so we got some throat lozenges – hope it goes away!

Had dinner at the train station and are now on the train to Prague, and it was good! I had goulash with dumplings... sort of like our beef stew, hot but good.

We have both noticed how poorly Europeans seem to deal with standing in line (at least by American standards). I first observed it while boarding the plane to Paris in Dulles – it was one big traffic jam. Over here we have found that anything goes – crowding from behind, cutting in from the side, anything to get in front of you. I'm trying to learn the etiquette – I think there is some kind of Elderly and Women first rule at work here, but I'm not real sure yet.

Odd thoughts: We had to show passports on the bus going into Germany. And again before we could go onto the platform for the Munich train. Nobody looked closely (we just flashed them from halfway across the bus), but we did have to show them.

There are many group activities. We have often seen groups of people traveling together: an elderly group of hikers got on the bus, and there were several groups eating in the restaurant. Odd mixture too – no real age limitations.

Bikes are apparently a way of life. They are accommodations everywhere: covered bike racks, busses have bike racks, you can even take them on the subway.

Germans love their dogs. They are everywhere: on public transportation, in restaurants, out running around (but always well behaved). Our hotel manager in Munich had two elderly poodles that slept behind the counter all day.

## **05/18/1996 – Saturday (Day 8)**

### **In Prague**

#### **“Passports please”**

Well, the night train was a marginal success. The car was very hot, and nothing we did to the temperature control seemed to help. We opened the window, which helped, but it was noisy and kept blowing the curtain open.

As was the case in Sweden, the car attendant did not speak much English. He took our Eurail passes and would not give them back. All he said was “Prague”.

Then there were the passport checks. I don’t know where the train was, but we had our passports checked twice: once around 3:20 and again at 5:00 am.

In spite of that, we arrived in Prague mostly rested. We were approached by several people offering us rooms. The train station appeared to be very run down. The showers promised in Frommers were closed. There are about 6 currency-exchanges in the station. Very eastern European.

We cashed some travelers’ checks, figured out where our hotel was, deciphered the underground and headed to our hotel in the hopes that they would store our bags for us, as the bag store at the station was crowded and dingy. They did and we went to the nearby McDonalds for some blissfully inexpensive (by German standards) coffee and mapped out our day.

Spent most of the day at the [Prague Castle](#) and surrounding area. All very beautiful, and all starting to look the same (I cannot believe I am saying this!). It was hot and I needed a shower, so we headed back to the hotel to check in and cleanup before tackling the [Old Town](#).

Just as we got to the hotel it started pouring rain. So we cleaned up and waited out the storm before heading out to dinner.

Turns out that it is hard to get a table (something Frommers failed to mention). We got turned away from several places and, in the face of another storm, settled for a pizza joint. We ate, watched it pour again, and left shortly after the power went out (had pizza. Spaghetti and four beers for \$20/519 K). Took the metro back to the hotel and got back just in time for the third wave of rain. All day we only got a few drops actually on us!

Prague notes: the hotel kept our passports! Also, while we were in a small grocery store looking for Kleenex and throat lozenges, I was approached by an irate security guard who finally managed to make me understand that I was in violation of some very important rule stipulating that all shoppers must have a cart. I got stopped entering the underground by the ticket inspector: I must look guilty.

The roof in our room is leaking and the lights keep flashing. I can hardly wait to see Budapest.

## **05/19/1996 – Sunday (Day 9)**

### **In Praha**

Breakfast in the Opera Hotel was good – eggs, meats, cheeses and all the coffee we cared to drink. As a result, we could not get out of there real fast. By the time we got to the train station and checked our bags, bought throat lozenges and got back to the bus station we had missed the 10:00 bus to Theresien.

We had trouble even finding the bus station. Then, the Frommers book was wrong about the busses - #17 is the only one that goes to the old ghetto.

We tried to get into the old Jewish cemetery while killing time, but there was already a huge crowd there so we gave it up.

Caught the bus at 12:00 but had to worry about where to get off as there were two Theresien stops. Picked the first one, as it had what looked like a prison and the star of David outside, but we were wrong. It was simply a Gestapo prison – quite fascinating but not what we were expecting.

We managed to figure out that the city was a relatively short walk, so we headed that way and found what we were looking for [[Theresienstadt](#)]. It was, and is, exactly what we had read about – a city. The Germans evacuated everyone and turned it into a “model” Jewish city. It is now just another Czech city with an unbelievable past.

There was a fascinating museum, opened in 1991. For reasons we couldn't understand, admission was free, but it would have been worth paying for. Time did not permit us to fully enjoy it, or the town, because we had to catch the 4:20 bus back to town.

Forgot to mention the tourist info at the bus station – quite helpful and had a printed itinerary of all bus connections.

Had dinner right by the old City Hall in a wonderful sidewalk café with great beer. It rained again but not too heavily. We had finished eating and they were closing umbrellas and not serving more beer, so we left to walk around. Took a circular route: by the time we returned the rain has stopped and they were back in business. We stopped again and had more drinks until it was time to leave. We did not leave much margin of error: Were only on the train for 20 minutes when it left.

Prague has grown on us both. The foreignness of it is hard to get around. Since the Russian occupation, Russian was the second language. As a result, few people speak English and it is hard to communicate. The train station looks run down and the bus station is even worse. It is hard to get around unless you know exactly where you are going. And yet, it has a beauty and charm that manages to overcome all of that. We'd love to come back on a photographic trip and spend several days here.

## **05/20/1996 – Monday (Day 10)**

### **Budapest**

Well, these night trains are not all that I had hoped they would be. We are not getting the sleep that we need. Last night was yet another parade of passport checks: we figure that we were checked by the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary (yes – three passport inspections!). That coupled with a relatively late night, early morning and other train noises and we were not well rested.

Pulled in on-time, which is to say before the IBUSZ opened. Went into a Tourist Information office, got some information and a room (or so we thought) at a hotel a few blocks from the train station. After

navigating our way there (no easy task) we were told that they had no rooms, so we had to hike all the way back.

Coming back into the station we were accosted again, as we were when we came off the train, by people offering us rooms, rides and currency exchange. We persisted and made it to the UBUSZ office and got lots of help: an incredibly cheap room (about \$25 for two nights), cashed a travelers check, bought a bus pass and got directions to our room (or so we thought).

Headed back out, made our way across the street (down and up steps via an underground walkway) to the bus stop across from the station. Caught the #73, got settled in and had it turn around and head in the wrong direction.

We were seated across the aisle from each other, separated by standing passengers and finally agreed that we needed to get off. We did, caught another very crowded bus back to our starting point, and caught the #73 trolley that at least went the way we expected. Got some help from an English-speaking native and got off at the last stop and finally got to our room.

It turned out to be in a four or five story building set back from the street, built around a central courtyard. We are in a room off of the entrance hallway, which also contains a room with a toilet and sink, another with a shower, a small refrigerator with a tea pot, and another door, apparently leading to the rest of the apartment. Our hostess speaks nary a word of English, but we managed to get through the key instructions OK.

We were both frazzled from our harrowing trip (it took us 2+ hours from when we got off of the train until we were in our room) and tired from a lack of sleep, so we napped for a few hours before setting out into what had changed from a warm humid day to mostly rain and cool weather.

Had a quick lunch in a nearby diner and then walked down to the river. Hopped onto a delightful river cruise on the Danube (I even won a drink or a pancake at a restaurant in a drawing!) that included two drinks for the price of the tour. Prague could learn a lot about catering to English speaking tourists from this outfit – helpful, cheerful and fun.

Walked around the shopping area and started to run out of gas again, so stopped in at a bar which served Guinness on tap. A few beers cheered us up considerably, so we found a restaurant recommended by Frommers (Apostolok) and had a delightful meal: some kind of Hungarian mixed drink (Puzsta – Apricot brandy, cognac (local), sweet Tokay wine), meat crepes in a sauce to die for, goulash with a uniquely Hungarian noodle, cucumber salad, wine and desert, all for 5500 K (about \$33).

And the restaurant itself! Beautiful tiled floor, tables separated by elaborate wooden dividers that created, in effect, private booths, each decorated with a tile saint. The service was nearly as good as the food. Just another typical restaurant that seems to go back from the narrow street entrance forever.

Walked back to our room in the rain and settled in.

Budapest is a unique city – partly European but partly Eastern. It is more cultured and business-oriented than Prague, seemingly more refined. We were, and continue to be, befuddled with finding our way through the twisting streets. After our troubles finding our way to the room we were a bit turned off, but the wonderful dining experience helped.

Say a spot check for tickets on our subway ride but at least these people looked civilized: they had arm bands and they set themselves up in a roadblock as people came off the escalator. In Prague they looked like thugs and acted like pan handlers and seemed to only stop tourists.

### **05/21/1996 – Tuesday (Day 11)**

#### **Budapest**

What a difference good nights sleep (and a sunny day) can make to one's attitude. We went to bed early (10:00) and did not set the alarm and as a result woke up much refreshed at 8:00. The night was quiet and peaceful.

We tot no breakfast (at this price, who can complain?) so cleaned up and set out to a cool but sunny day. Bought ourselves a Russian doll for 3200F near the river.

Took the funicular up the hill to the Castle and admired its beauty. Bought wine, cheese, bread and ham and had a picnic lunch at a shady picnic table outside of a playground.

Toured the [Buda Castle](#) and the Art Museum, then headed back to Pest to pick up some souvenirs (prices are best we'll ever see!). Had a few beers in the afternoon sun and wrote post cards.

Went back along the booths and bought Kathleen a silk shawl (5200F) that she had been admiring and got me a T-shirt (800F). Then headed back to the room, changed, and headed out for dinner.

Ate at the Nemzeti Hotel: it was everything the book said it was and more. There was a four-piece band playing Hungarian music, the room itself was amazingly beautiful, and the food was divine. Had another "pancake" (very grossly like a meat burrito with a divine sauce), Kathleen had salmon, I had a turkey cordon blue, all washed down with an excellent native white wine. I'm going to miss this city...

Went back to our room and wen to bed in anticipation of an early wake-up call and departure.

### **05/22/1996 – Wednesday (Day 12)**

#### **To Vienna**

Got up at 7:00 and got things packed by 8:25 or so, so we decided to head right to the train station to try to catch what I thought was the 8:57 (we had originally decided to catch the 9:55). Got there by 8:40 (what a contrast with our trip to the room the day before!) and caught the 8:47.

Plotted our stay in Vienna and looked for a place to stay. Had several cups of coffee and talked to a man who worked for BASF from Michigan who was working for two years in Heidelberg.

Hit town at 12:05 pm and got our courage up a bit and called some places on our rather than going through the TI. The first place was full, but we got our second choice. Had better directions than Budapest, but it was still a it of a struggle, as our map for this part of town was non-existent and we were again plagued by a poor pubic transit map. Kathleen asked a woman for directions to our street in German, and she was very helpful, to the point of giving us her map. Turns out we were on the corner but didn't know it because the street sigh was wrong or misleading (one of those cases where the street name changed).

The room is another walk-up interior courtyard affair. Less privacy than Budapest – we walk through the apartment to get to our room – and we appear to be sharing a shower with the people in another room across the hall. None the less, the woman we have dealt with is a delight. She speaks some English, and is very hospitable, offering us coffee, use of the shower and whenever we needed to be comfortable.

Unfortunately, what we needed the most was a laundry. As luck would have it we ended up just a few blocks down the street from the laundry recommended by Frommers, so we set out to take care of that unpleasant but necessary task. Dropped everything off and had lunch (pizza) and mapped out Switzerland for the two hours they took to wash and dry our clothes for us.

Tried to call Switzerland to reserve our hotel but couldn't figure out the dialing code so picked up and folded our clothes (230 AS) and dropped them back in our room before setting out to see the city.

Vienna is simply stunning. There is a huge building, royal building, University, museum, Symphony hall or church everywhere. We could easily spend a full week here and not begin to make a dent in the cultural possibilities.

Made the circuit around and went through the old cite (rode the tram around when we got tired of walking), then had a drink, then dinner at another Rick Steves recommendation (Zum Scherer). Excellent, for 700 AS,

### **05/23/1996 – Wednesday (Day 13)**

#### **Vienna**

Weather continues to fluctuate wildly. We slept late, had breakfast (rolls very thick coffee) paid up (650 OS) and headed to the train station to check our bags (40 AS in a locker). On the walk over I was worried that I needed shorts: A long sleeve shirt was definitely overkill. However, the day progressively got cooler and more overcast and by late afternoon beer time (6 p.m. or so) it became cold with rain. Last night, and again this evening, I thought fondly of the wool sweater sitting unused in my suitcase.

After dumping our bags, changing the last of our Hungarian money and getting some more cash from the ATM with headed to a local coffee house to see what that is all about. Went to the Cafe Hamilton (Dorotheergasse 6) and had coffee cakes and read the Wall Street Journal which turned out to be appropriate in view of the \$20 bill we were presented with.

Jumped onto the metro and went to the [Habsburg Summer Palace](#) - it was huge. The palace itself was magnificent (we took only self-conducted walking tour) but the gardens surrounding it were huge: they seemed to go forever in all directions and included a beautiful big greenhouse as well as the world's oldest zoo. It was all very impressive

Came back into the Pedestrian area by means of a trolley to the West train station, then a walk through the rambling outdoor market that Kathleen had read about. The food looks delicious.

Ended up in a sidewalk Cafe for a few beers just about as the rain started. But, by the time we finished our drinks and selected a restaurant that had stopped.

Picked another restaurant out of the Frommers (Stabeisl) - another good choice small. Menu in English, a waiter who spoke English, ambience, and good food too. I had pork slices in mushroom gravy with fried potatoes, Kathleen had fish and chips.

Headed back to the train station, bought some wine and other goodies and climbed aboard our new city night liner (EU) train.

The sleeping compartment is SMALL. We had to fold up the top bunk just to have a place to sit, and luggage storage is at a real premium. Obviously, this service is aimed at the European businessperson with very little carry-on luggage. On the other hand, it is quiet (it was sometimes hard to tell where you even moving), the hostess spoke English (a 1st on a night train for us), and they took our passports and customs declaration so we did not have to get up for passport inspections and they serve breakfast in the morning.

We have perfected the art of taking a sponge bath in a train car even in the cramped confines of the compartment we are in today. It is amazing how scruffy I feel without cleaning up somehow (as I discovered in Prague) and how much better I feel after washing my hair and the rest of the me at in the sink.

Although we slept better last night than we ever have in a train I don't think I'll try this again. We just don't sleep enough, and because we really miss the relaxation of long day train trips.

#### **05/24/1996 – Thursday (Day 14)**

##### **Switzerland**

Hit Zurich about 8:25, got off of the car last, went to the big board and saw the 8:33 to Bearn, so hopped right on that. It was an Express, so we were there by 10:00. Did some last-minute planning in route and book the seats to Paris when we got there, and good thing too. Our first choice - the 10:25 from Lausanne - had no more non-smoking seats so we had to look at the 12:30. Cost: 10 Swiss Francs. Also got some money and a local train schedule before heading to Murten.

The trip takes about 30 minutes with one train change. What a town! Very much like Bacharach. Our hotel is marvelous! We are on the very top floor, with a spacious room with a balcony. The people that run the place are everything the book says and more. We told them we would be leaving before breakfast tomorrow and they offered to make sandwiches, then brought them up to a room, along with wine and glasses (which we ordered).

The town itself is everything we hoped it would be: rural, medieval and on a lake. We did a quick oat tour (rail passes honored!) and walked all over before settling down to a delicious (but expensive) dinner.

Had our wine on the balcony while watching the clouds and rain move in before retiring for the night.

#### **05/25/1996 – Friday (Day 15)**

##### **In and around Murten, Switzerland**

Got up and caught the 8:05 to Berne so we could begin our [Panoramic Express](#) journey. Decided it was a holiday weekend (they were running extra trains) so we stayed in our car at Spiez while it was attached to the Zweisimmen train. We literally did "follow the crowd" to the Panoramic Express train, paid a 6 SF (each) reservation fee and climbed aboard.

We sat in the very last car (the dining car) of the very modern train. It had 8 seats separated from the rest of the car, and we were the only ones back there. Our conductor told us that they were the best seats on the train, and I agree.

The scenery was magnificent. We could have sat there all day watching it flow by. Kathleen seemed especially enchanted – she took a lot of pictures.

All too soon we reached Montreux, which is another beautiful city: Nestled in the hill overlooking Lake Geneva with spectacular mountains looming across the water. The walkway along the lake was lined with flowers and shrubs – quite a sight.

Unfortunately, the day was overcast, and it rained a bit while we were walking around for the 2+ hours we had before the boat for Lausanne. We pulled into a sidewalk café and had a glass of Bier Cardinal beer that was pretty tasty after all that walking.

We then hopped on board the boat, cruised to Lausanne, took the metro to the train station, and caught the 5:35 IC to Fribourg, where we caught the 6:45 back to Murten for dinner.

What we thought was a little Italian restaurant in Murten turned out to be some kind of club: we started to walk down the steps and were greeted by the curious looks of about 20 men, all seemingly smoking and playing cards.

We headed on down the road and ate at what appeared to be the most popular restaurant in town, another Italian restaurant a few blocks away. Had Lasagna, Kathleen had cannelloni, we split a salad and a ½ liter of Chianti, all for 62 SF. The waiter, who must have been the owner or manager, seemed very surprised when we tipped him.

Headed back and hit the sack early: this traveling wears us out!

## **05/26/1996 – Saturday (Day 16)**

### **In and around Murten, Switzerland**

Got up at 7, went down for breakfast at 8 only to find the restaurant closed and dark. Went back upstairs and packed our bags for the day then tried the restaurant again at 8:30 with better results.

Had bread and rolls plus OJ, Cereal and delicious coffee. Hated to rush off to catch the 9:05 to Interlaken.

The hotel has seemed deserted. We appear to be all alone in our room up in “the attic”, but we finally ran into some other guests: a group of 4 gregarious Swiss at the table next to ours. They, and the other people we have been around, all seem so outgoing, always talking and laughing. They remind us of the Danes on the ferry from Germany.

Caught the train to Berne, then a train to Interlaken (20 SF – no Eurail), then a bus to Stechelberg (7.20 SF), then a breath-taking cable car journey to the Schilthorn (via Gimmelwald and Mürren, 112 SF).

The view from the Schilthorn (where a 007 movie was filmed) was wonderful. There were clouds, but there was enough sun and enough breaks to make the view worth the cost of getting there. Kathleen had only the small camera and went through a 24 shot roll of film: I went through 36 exposures on my camera.

Had lunch in the revolving restaurant (Lasagna, 9.50 SF - the best deal on food we have yet encountered in this country) before heading down.

Spent some time in Interlocken and Berne between trains before heading back to good old Murten. Our hotel's restaurant (and seemingly the hotel too) was closed, so we went down to "the strip" and had a very pleasant meal (port, veggies and salad with a bottle of incredibly pleasant Vully for 57 SF before heading back to our room. Once there, we sat on the balcony and drank the bottle of Cotes du Rhone that we had bought last night. Altogether a lovely day.

Oh yes – met a woman from a Chicago based consulting firm on our way to Interlocken. She was just hitting the ground for a conference. Discussed things to see and do (it was her birthday). Also met a woman from Milwaukee who rented apartments here. We all had a nice discussion on the train.

### **05/27/1996 – Sunday (Day 17)**

#### **Berne and Lausanne, Switzerland**

Slept till 8, had breakfast, packed, paid, and left on the 10:05 for Berne. Checked our bags in a locker (8 SF) and set out on a walking tour of Berne.

It's a beautiful city (although we are glad we stayed in Murten), with a lovely set of fountains built in the mid 1500's. We photographed them all.

Saw an example of the "drug problem" that the Eurail book mentioned – a group of 3 youths shooting up right outside the parliament building!

Finally succumbed to the McDonalds urge – had ¼ pounder meals for 10 S each! Then caught the 15:16 to Lausanne.

It has been mostly overcast all day: Had occasional rain in Berne. It is the same in Lausanne, only colder and windy too. Found out hotel easily and got a third-floor room facing the lane across from the bathrooms. There appears to be few guests here today.

Decided to skip the old town this afternoon in favor of the lakefront area. Found a carnival down the road and walked around looking at all the rides but stayed on the ground.

Found a restaurant by watching the groups of tourists – they all seemed to be headed to a particular Pizza/Italian restaurant, so we followed. Got good food for a cheap (by Swiss standards) price – 55 SF for mozzarella and tomato salad, spaghetti, lasagna and ½ Liter of good Chianti Classico wine.

Came back to the room, wrote post cards, and boned up on Paris for tomorrow.

### **05/28/1996 – Monday (Day 18)**

#### **Lausanne, Switzerland**

Set the alarm for 7:00. Did the usual travel morning thing (another breakfast of rolls, butter, and jam), paid the bill (120 SF) and headed for the train station. Put our bags into a locker and walked through the old town (up-hill) towards the museum containing art created by mental patients. [Collection de l'Art Brut, <https://www.artbrut.ch/>]

The morning was cool and started out with rain, but that had stopped by the time we left the hotel. As we walked (did I mention it was uphill?) it began to clear off it became sunny.

We reached the museum as desired at 10:00 only to discover that it did not open until 11:00. So, we headed downhill through the old town Stopped off at the plainest Cathedral we have ever seen. It was apparently designed with the idea of showing off the magnificence of the architecture and the windows.

Bought some sandwiches for the train, and caught the last train of the trip, the a2:46.

Also changed in all our Swiss money (coins too) for French Francs at the train station.

The TGV was crowded, but what a train. The serve meals and drinks (you must pay for them) while the countryside goes flying past at an unbelievable speed. We munched our sack lunch and enjoyed the ride.

The train really got flying once we hit the open country. I'm guessing around 100 MPH.

Once in Paris we decided to skip the 3 metro lines in favor of walking to our hotel. The map we used was mis-leading in that it didn't show minor streets, so it was much further than it appeared, but we made it. The walk up the four flights of steps at the hotel almost killed us (the elevator barely fits the two of us without our packs!) but we made it.

Rested up a bit and enjoyed having a TV again before setting out for dinner. We are staying in the Latin section, and it really comes to life at night. We found block after block of small restaurants and café's, and hundreds of people milling through the narrow streets.

We are at a marvelous little hole in the wall place (La Petite Hostellerie, 35 Rue De La Harde). Whoever says that Paris is expensive obviously had not just been Switzerland, as the prices seem very reasonable to us.

Walked home along the river – Found Notre Dame. Hard to believe we are really here! Paris has a wonderful ambience to it.

## **05/29/1996 – Tuesday (Day 19)**

### **Paris, France**

Woke up to a cool but cloudless day. Had pastry and coffee (500 F) across from the hotel, then set off to discover the city.

We went back to Notre Dame: it is somewhat plain inside compared to some of the churches we have seen elsewhere, but the stained-glass windows are numerous and beautiful. It is big and beautiful.

A block or so behind it is a memorial to all the Jews who died in WWII. It overlooks the river – lots of stone – and is moving in the menace and sorrow that it conveys.

We then walked to the Louvre. By the time we got there it was lunch time, so we bought some really good sandwiches (on French bread, of course) and sat and ate outside the museum before we went in.

The museum is huge. It took us forever to just walk its length outside, trying to reach the park at the other end for lunch (we finally gave up and ate near the main entrance). Getting in is weird: The search and X-Ray all bags like at an airport, yet you can carry bags back out without a second glance.

It is big, and many parts were closed for renovations. Coupled with a map that wasn't the best we spent a lot of time trying to find the exhibits we wanted to see. We found the Mona Lisa but never could find the Venus de Milo.

Walked all the way to the Arc de Triomphe when we had finished seeing the museum. It is a long way, and the day had grown warm, especially when we were in the sun. We were a little tired by the time we got there, but not so tired that I couldn't walk to the top (Kathleen stayed on the ground to rest) to enjoy the really wonderful view of the city.

There was some kind of Red Crescent march/memorial going on the whole time we were there (near the tomb of the unknown soldier). There were many current military members in uniform and past members wearing suit coats with medals. It was apparent that there was going to be some kind of ceremony, but the people "running" things under the arch kept moving us and the rest of the crowd around so much that we got disgusted and left before it started.

Stopped off at a McDonalds with a sidewalk café-like area and had large cokes to get re-hydrated before taking the underground back to our room where we dropped off the tourist stuff and headed out to dinner.

Went to another place out of the Frommers book (Au Vieux Cosque, 19 rue Bonaparte) that was excellent: small, quiet, and great food (pork with spinach for me, lemon chicken with rice for Kathleen, Avocado salad (Kathleen), tomato/mozzarella salad for me, and a strawberry tart for dessert. Decent wine, reasonable price, quite a place!

Headed back to the hotel: Ended up walking (with really wasn't too far) because the underground was not working for some reason.

## **05/30/1996 – Tuesday (Day 20)**

### **Paris, France**

Last day! Slept in a it, then stopped in on a street market near our subway stop. Bought ham and cheese sandwiches in a store bordering the market, which we took to McDonalds and enjoyed with a good cup of American coffee.

Checked out our ride to the airport and purchased the tickets, then headed off to the Bastille monument. Went from there to the Lafayette Galleries department store and bought a few small items to remember Paris by.

Next went to the Eifel Tower: Went all the way up and enjoyed the spectacular view of Paris. Even wrote and mailed some post cards from there.

Walked over to Bonaparte's Tomb, but it had just closed, so we headed back to the hotel. Had a beer at a sidewalk café near the hotel on the way.

Went back to the La Petite Hostellerie for our last dinner. Managed to get ourselves quite lost on the way, but in the end found it and enjoyed another excellent dinner (duck l' orange for me, beef stew for Kathleen).

The night was quite warm, and the sky was still blue at 10 pm, with a few pink-tinted clouds reflecting the last rays of the sun. Quite a view for our last evening. Reluctantly walked back to the hotel and went to bed.

### **05/31/1996 – Wednesday (Day 21)**

#### **On the Way Home**

Got up, packed, paid our bill, and headed towards the train. Stopped off at the McDonalds to purchase the breakfast special we had seen advertised the other day. What a fiasco. It took 15 minutes for Kathleen to convince the server to give her the special and to get the food and get it rung up. Then, with all of our luggage it turned out to be very hard to carry. I managed to gulp my OJ, drink my coffee and ate part of my coffee-soaked croissant on the way to the train.

The train was also very confusing. It stopped at a large, empty terminal. We followed rather vague signs directing us to take a shuttle to terminal 1. We waited 5 – 10 minutes for the bus, which was very crowded. The driver must have thought he was in a sports car, because standing up was very difficult whenever he started, stopped or turned.

The airport experience turned out to be a seemingly endless queue of lines and jostling people. We had to answer the usual 20 questions and show papers and passports and tickets before even being allowed into the ticket counter area to check our bags and get boarding passes, then had to wait in line and show papers to get through security to the gate area, then again to get to the person taking tickets before boarding the plane. Whew!

We did stop off at Duty Free and picked up some liquor for Kathleen (Benedictine – 129 F and Paddy – 80 F) before going to the plane.

The flight home seemed to go quickly (another 777). Had about an hour and a half before our flight to DFW (a 737). Customs was practically non-event: they just looked at the passports, stamped them and we were through!