

<p>2013 Germany - Poland - Baltic States <i>5 Weeks with VW Caddy Hotel</i></p>				
<p>22nd July - 25th August</p>				
	<p>Stork Country</p>	<p>Polish Sahara (almost 40km walk)</p>		<p>Watching Sunset in Estonia</p>

Overview

Background

We had been talking many years about visiting Poland and the Baltic States after the Iron Curtain fell. Although I felt a bit saturated after the 3 months China/Hongkong/Australia trip this spring, Peggy insisted that it would be better to do this trip **now** than **not** perhaps another time! So 1 week after returning from our 6 weeks stay in Ste Marie we left already... and I was not prepared...with the planning!

Planning

.....I really was not... I just went to the library and got a few books, then looked at the Internet for somewhere to stay in Berlin and that was it. Anyway, somehow I figured out a master plan for 5 weeks up via Berlin and North Poland, then a Baltic Loop up to Tallinn, then back through East - and South Poland... but apart from that: 'suck it and see....'. Of course **'free-style' with our Caddy Hotel.....**

Our Impressions

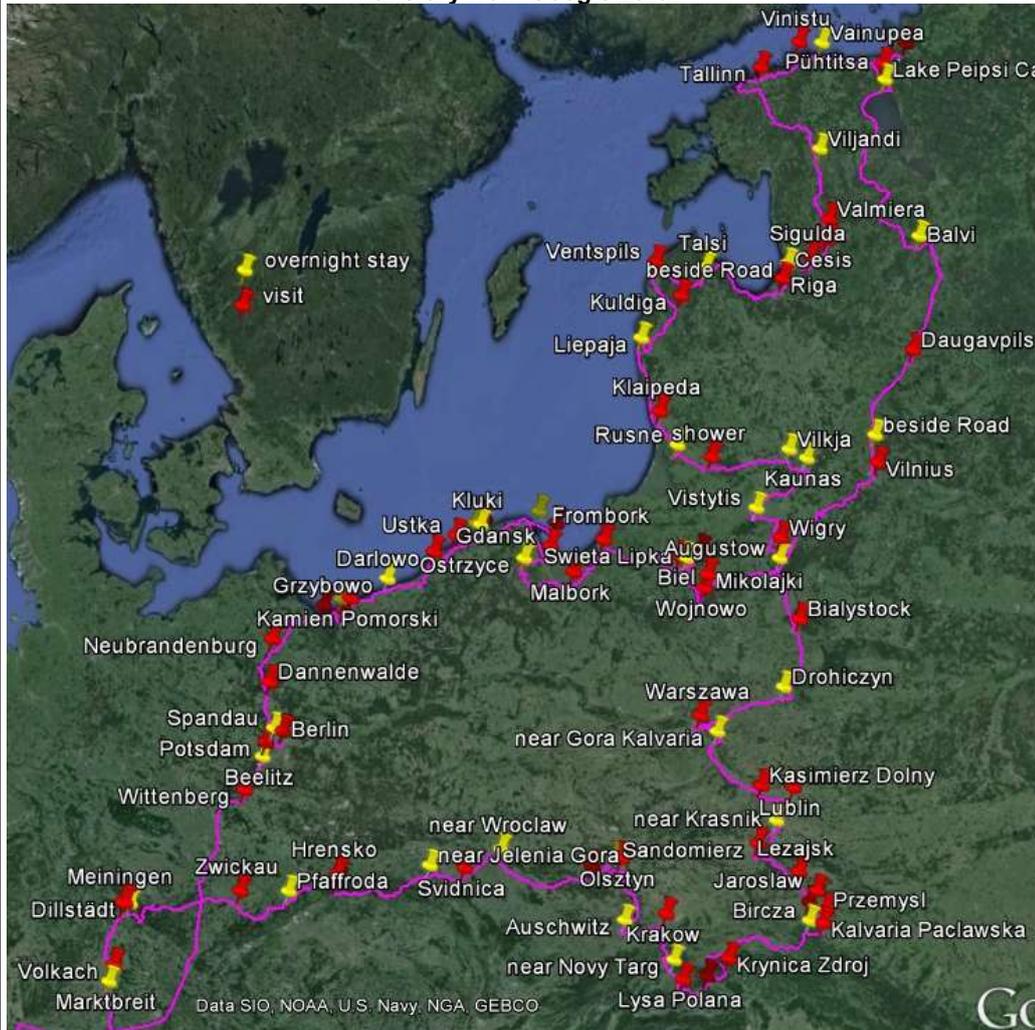
It was perhaps not the greatest and not the easiest of our trips. Peggy quite soon got a bit tired of seeing dozens of towns and even more churches.... but then there were these impressions and those simple meals - mostly **yammie Hausmannskost**, these few encounters with locals and those scenarios, historical sites, storks, farms, endless forests..... For me an important experience was to be exposed to the sites of historical turmoils over centuries.... it's ok to read in books but when you eat eal near Danzig and you think of 'The Blechtrommel' and the Pole at your table acknowledges..... when you see Wolfsschanze, Auschwitz and Czestochowa and even the Malbork Fort of the Deutschordensritter.....and you experience a Maria Himmelfahrt at holy places.... you meet an elderly German nostalgic of glorious German times in Lituania visiting the graveyards of his ancesters...in Estonia people usually not looking in your eyes - confirmed in a dramatic novel 'Fegefeuer' by Sofioksanen which I read right after returning home (thanks Marco!) .. experiencing a Poland, which the first time in centuries looks like really belonging to the Poles after all their sufferings.... **Yes it was a very important trip for me!**

Facts

- 35 days, 35 nights in 34 different places. 2 times in campings (+1 night with Evi & Rafa in Aarau - thanks!)
- 8870km. 1000km on motorways - nearly 8000km on normal roads (60km/h average)
- Roads were generally good to ok and signposting rarely gave problems, except for deviations often with confusing guidance - I got lost half dozen times!
- Total cost: CHF 1300.- of which 700.- for fuel , 350.- for restaurants, 250.- for food & drink shopping!
- The weather was mostly nice and hot (up to 34°) or comfortable. Just a few days where uncomfortably cool and wet.
- We had no health troubles at all - usually we managed to use toilets at shopping centers in the mornings.
- We only had showers once a week and did daily body wash in whichever way (eg. using our bucket)
- No world news for over a month - no problems solved in the meantime (Syria, Egypt, etc) but no lack of cool draft beer all the way!!!
- We never had problems with anybody - there was one man at Vainupea, Estonia who kept going on for 10 mins yelling at me 'EU No Good!! I could not talk with him - he did not speak any English.....otherwise people were friendly or a bit reserved the more you got North.

My thanks to Peggy who again did look after food, clothes and cleaning and prepared breakfast every morning and dinner when restaurants were out of reach! I am also thankful that Peggy endured those times which may have been a bit boring for her as she has no cultural roots in Eastern Europe.

Itinerary from Google Earth



Peggy's Diary

21. 日 柏林前一天 Beelitz
- 22-23. 一二柏林二天 Spandau
24. 三. 波罗尼亚小湖边一天 Wislocka
25. 四. 波罗尼亚一天 Jurgelovo
26. 五. 波罗尼亚地白村 Kluki
27. 六. 波罗尼亚 Camping 行 3天 Smokaczin
28. 日. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Itala
29. 一. 波罗尼亚湖 Brodnica dolna
30. 二. 波罗尼亚 Swata kupa
31. 三. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Augaotow
32. 四. 波罗尼亚 停车场 的一休 休息停
33. 五. 波罗尼亚 巴士 停车场 Vilnius
34. 六. EST 波罗尼亚 地 Peipai
35. 七. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Vainupea
36. 八. 波罗尼亚 停车场 viljandi
37. 九. 波罗尼亚 停车场 2skant Riga
38. 十. 波罗尼亚 停车场 (L.V) Talo
39. 十一. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Liepaja
40. 十二. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Ruzoe
41. 十三. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Vilnia
42. 十四. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Vistytis
43. 十五. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Dzhelichayn
44. 十六. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Gora Kalvaria
45. 十七. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Krasnik
46. 十八. 波罗尼亚 停车场 (U.A.) Bircza
47. 十九. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Nowy Targ
48. 二十. 波罗尼亚 停车场 (U.S.W.) Oswiecim
49. 二十一. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Czeszochow
50. 二十二. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Wroclaw
51. 二十三. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Jelenia Gora
52. 二十四. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Jaroslaw
53. 二十五. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Przemysl
54. 二十六. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Kalvaria Paclawska
55. 二十七. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Krynica Zdroj
56. 二十八. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Meiningen
57. 二十九. 波罗尼亚 停车场 Lysa Polana
58. 三十. 波罗尼亚 停车场

To the Readers of the Diary..... I write the diaries mainly for myself and Peggy. I appologise to other readers for my writing much about everyday routine which tends to be boring. For us it is often just such details which bring back the memories of the experienced feelings when we read the diaries much later when most things seem forgotten....

An die Leser des Tagebuchs..... Ich schreibe die Tagebücher für mich selber und Peggy. Ich bitte sonstige Leser mich für die Beschreibung der langweiligen Tagesroutinen zu entschuldigen. Es sind aber eben oft diese Dinge, die uns später wieder zu den Erinnerungen und Erfahrungen zurückführen, wenn vieles schon vergessen schien.....

Diary

Sun 21. July	Start: Ipsach (home)	End: Beelitz (near Berlin)	Today 936 km			
<p>I had figured out that we would stay tonight near Lutherstadt Wittenberg on the shore of the Elbe.</p> <p>Got up at 5.30 and left home at 8am. Easy drive on Motorway in nice weather via Karlsruhe - Nürnberg - Leipzig where sunday traffic-jams slowed us down such that we reached the Elbe at Coswig at 5pm only. In fact we found a good spot for the night at the ferry stop - but there was no reasonable place to eat closeby - and so we continued to nearby Lutherstadt Wittenberg. Nice town - brushed up a bit and very touristic - so we enjoyed to stroll for an hour and then left - as we had not seen a good place to stay the night.</p>		 <p style="text-align: center;">Lutherstadt...</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">.....Wittenberg</p>			
<p>Note: it is always difficult to find at that convenient time the one place to sleep and the right restaurant to have dinner at</p> <p>So we decided to just continue on the main road (nr 2) towards Potsdam, hoping to come across a Landgasthof..... there was none of course... then after 8pm when we drove past Beelitz we saw a loney parking and changed to plan B - park - picnic - a short turn in town and then sleep.</p> <p>As every evening from now on (to Peggy's distress) I would have to plan the next day's program before going to sleep! Sunset was at 9pm.</p>		 <p style="text-align: center;">Night Parking outside Beelitz</p>				
Mon 22. July	Start: Beelitz	End: Spandau (near Berlin)	Today 72 km (1008km)			
<p>After a good night got up at 6am ... then coffee and go! Parked in Potsdam Center at 7.20 already! Very interesting to visit the ex-capital of the DDR - it looked very provincial! Walked passed the Alter Markt, the 'Neuer Markt' then along the pedestrian Brandenburgerstrasse to the Brandenburgerter and back to the Nauenerter. Then continued through the Dutch Quarter with the red bricks buildings and back to the car via the Wochenmarkt at 9am. Then drove to Sans-Soucis Palace (was still closed) and visited the huge park and its attractions: Neues Palais, Chinesisches Haus etc for almost 2h. At 11am we continued to Spandau along the Havel past the Sacrow castle then Kladow and Gatow.</p>		 <p style="text-align: center;">Nikolaikirche, Potsdam</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Sanssoucis Park</p>			
<p>At home in the internet I had found a 'Camper-Hof' in Spandau... that's where I had planned to stay for visiting Berlin the next day! When we arrived at 1pm, the reception was closed and the site and services looked shabby. So we left again - a few 100m towards the lake we reached a new residential area..... when the idea came that we could just park here, 100m from a meadow on the 'Altes Strandbad' and stay...leaving the car here the next day! Then walked 2km along the nice lake to Alt-Spandau. After a stroll in town we had a tidy beer and decided to have a nice picnic at our 'Altes Strandbad'....starting at 5pm in a beautiful summer evening.....then went for another walk along the lake until it was late enough to slip into the car for the night. Went to sleep at 10pm.....</p>		 <p style="text-align: center;">Picnic at 'Altes Strandbad'</p>				
Tue 23. July	Start: Spandau	Visit Berlin	End: Spandau	Walking all over Berlin		
<p>Good night in spite of heat and noisy planes landing at Tegel until after midnight. Got up at 6.30 - coffee and go!</p> <p>Walk to Spandau - U-Bahn to Charlottenburg (a quick walk to view the castle) - Bus to Kurfürstendamm - quick turn to see the Gedächtniskirche (disappointment because it was covered for restoration). Then U-Bahn to East Berlin (nostalgic wooden carriages) over the Oberbaumbrücke to Warschauerstrasse.</p>		 <p style="text-align: center;">Charlottenburg</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Ku'Damm</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">U-Bahn Ost-Berlin</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Oberbaumbrücke</p>	
<p>Crossed the bridge again on foot and then continued to the Jannowitzbrücke over the Spree again, then zickzack to the Rote Rathaus and Alexanderplatz. Then passed the new Synagogue to the Bernauerstrasse to see some remains of 'the Wall'. On the way back over the Spree and following the S-Bahn we had a tidy beer (very hot day!)....then felt fit to continue to the 'Unter den Linden' area.</p>		 <p style="text-align: center;">Rotes Rathaus</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Monuments</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Old Walls</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Old Pumps</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">F. and D. Domes</p>
<p>Quite tired we reached the Brandenburger Tor. Made a turn to the Reichstag and then took a bus to the Zoologischer Garten passing the Grosser Stern. Then we hopped on a bus to Spandau....preferring slow surface to underground travel.</p> <p>Back in Spandau we had dinner in the Biergarten of the local brewery: Haxe und Havel-Bier.</p> <p>Lovely walk back along the lake reaching the car at 21.30 - no problem to sneak in! It had been hot the last few days and we did not have a chance for a proper wash since we left home.....</p>		 <p style="text-align: center;">Brandenburgerter</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Reichstag</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Ying and Yang balanced</p>		

Wed 24. July	Start: Spandau	End: Wiselka (Poland)	Today 292 km (1300km)
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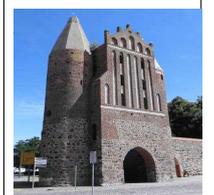
Good night and left right away before 7am. Drove North over country roads when after 1h we saw this side road to Seilerhof (Camping) beside Kleiner Wentowsee! Bingo! There was a public meadow with toilet and water just beside the lake.....here we had one of a few relaxing 2h of the trip enjoying b'fast and a good wash!!!! Then continued nice country roads up to Neu-Brandenburg (where I got trapped in a strictly 'no cars' place under a Tower - forget to take picture - this from GE streetview). Eventuall reached the Usedom island - No way to reach the sea by car or even park for the night!



B'fast & Wash beside kl. Wentowsee



Dead-end at Neu-Brandenburg (GE - pic)



Typical Towers (Friedland)

No problem - it was just 2pm - so we crossed the border to Swinoujscie (Svinemünde), drove into the town center beside the port and easily got Zloty with my Postcard. As we felt that this place was a tourist trap we continued with the intention to join the East Sea Coast after crossing a lagoon by ferry (gratis) and entering the Wollin N'tl Park. At the next place, at Miedzysdroje, we could not get to the sea either and there was just no quiet place to stay or even stop for a while. We tried this a and that while we continued to Wiselka which was smaller but no better even located 2km inland.

Note: Now we had to understand that along 500km of polish coast there is hardly car access to the sea shore and if there were a few car parks, there would be 10 million Polish Holidayers going for them:-))).



Ferry at Swinoujscie

In the mean-time it was after 5pm and we started to wonder.....when 2 km later in a small forest we saw a P-sign.... well if not the sea.. perhaps the forest? True enough - there was a quiet lonely space about 100m off the road beside an idyllic pond. Well after pondering for a long time (even driving another 5km east and back) we settled and after a relaxing apero had a self-prepared dinner - pork fillet - all perfect, what more do you want?

Peggy did not feel that way - she suddenly got upset for no apparent reason and the nice evening atmosphere was spoiled!



Way to 1st night stop in PL(GE Street View)



Pork Fillet....etc



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Thu 25. July	Start: Wiselka	End: Grzybowo	Today 118 km (1418km)
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Got up at 7am. Overcast but comfortable b'fast. We decided to go for a walk to see the (famous) shore. It was early morning and so we managed to park at Wiselka to start walking into a very nice forest. Big fur trees and the ground covered either by grass or blueberries. After a while we reached the Kikut Light Tower on a hill - no view - but we met a polish German (or vice versa) who told us a lot - even his life - while we walked with him and his lovely dog to the beach. We then followed the nice lonely beach beneath steep slopes for a few km's and then returned through the forest to Wiselka.



Kikut Tower



East Sea at Wiselka

Next target - Wollin - which we reached over small roads. There was not much to see except for a tourist trap of a Viking Village (the Vikings had destroyed wealthy Wollin 1000 years ago). By then I had decided to skip the 100km detour to Szczecin - where I had been with Max Grob in 1968 - instead we continued to Kamien Pomorski to visit our Poland's 1st of uncounted city towers, rathouses and cathedrals. Then beside the port we also enjoyed the fish and chips and a beer with the view over the Haff:-))). In good mood we drove back North, then East along the coast.



City Tower....&



.. at Kamien Pomorski

First to Trzesacz - a nice small fishing town with many restaurants and bars, now of course overcrowded with tourists. The main attraction here is a crumbling church at the rim of the dune illustrating of how the sea eats the land.

The next town, Trzebiatow - a bit inland - features a well preserved town square and a big cathedral....we just made a quick turn and as it was already 5pm we seriously started to think about where to stay..... and while continuing looked here, tried this, tried that nüüt!



Crumbling Church at...



.. Trzesacz



Trebiatow

Just as we neared the last village before Kolobrzeg - Grzybowo, we spotted a huge almost empty carpark - bingo! Here we stayed! 10 min walk to the beaches area (with WC), 10 min walk to the fun and food places but we were too late for the beach and had still our pork fillet to finish. So we had our good picnic in the car. Sunset was at 9pm and I still had to do my reading to plan tomorrow.....

(The picture is from GE Street View)



Night at Grzybowo

Fri 26. July	Start: Grzybowo	End: Kluki	Today 219km (1637km)
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Very early start at 6.30 - no coffee as I expected to reach a nice spot at a lighthouse within 1h! Dänkste..... just passing Kolobrzeg with a short turn through town (it was too early to visit) and then took a small road to the coast (Gaski?) but instead of the light house or even seing the beach we ended up in a dead end after a very bad stretch of road.....somehow we got back to main road but then continued to Koszalin (just a brief turn by car) and then Darlowosko at the seaside (again no way to get near the beach by car). So had breakfast parked in a sidestreet. Then we visited nearby Darlowo with an impressive medieval castle and a nice well-preserved old town. My Guide had promised an exciting drive through the 'Kariertes Land' so we did the detour to Slawno but we did not see much more than lovely country side and a few nice traditional farmhouses.



Darlowo

We reached Ustka at lunch-time and after a detour via the wrong side of the port we found a car park just at the beginning of the main street! Ustka had this little touch! We enjoyed to stroll along the crowded main street to the front of the port. Here we had a buffet-lunch (pierogi, cabbage rolls etc) with a beer and then went to see the beach.....I think I have never seen such a crowded beach in my life (must be like that in Tsingtao China!). Our next challenge now was to find the best way to visit the Slowinsky Dunes (Polish Sahara). As it would be difficult to find a place to stay for the night at the usual eastern starting point - crowded Leba, we decided to look for a place to stay on the western side, knowing that it would be a very long walk to the dunes!



Ustka - hmmm



Ustka - hmmm

So we drove over small roads to Smoldzino passing lovely villages and seeing more and more storks. There were a few camp sites around but we wanted that only for the next day after the walk and there was no wild place here. The last try took us to Kluki at the western side of lake Leba - bingo! Kluki is a small village with traditional wooden houses and there was a rest area for visiting the lake (view tower with view over the lake to the distant dunes) and the Nat'l Park. Here we stayed and had a lovely evening with picnic and a quiet night after great sunset.



Storks love PL



View over Lake Leba - Kluki Dunes in the Background



Picnic beside the Caddy Hotel

Sat 27. July	Start: Kluki	38 km walk to Dunes (PL Sahara)	End: Smoldzinski Las	Today: 9km (1646m)
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Good night and after b'fast (while watching 4 deers) we moved to a very small 'home-camping' at Smoldzinski Las (glad we had seen this yesterday). This was the first time that we stopped at a camp site (27 Zloty) and we were well-received although another guest had to transitate! Here we left the car and started our walk to the dunes before 8am. First through a nice forest 3km to the beach (passing by the Czolpino light house) and then 14km barefoot on the lonely beach in a great morning atmosphere... good that the sand was firm....until we reached a crowded spot where we turned inland and walked over the low front dune.....



Czolpino Light House



Access to the Beach



Lonely Walk to the Sahara

WOW!!!
Suddenly you are in the Sahara!
 and it was very hot that day!



The crowds had come by 'eco-bus' from Leba. In fact one is not allowed to trespass over the fences but everybody did and so we too went on a roundwalk over the top with beautiful view also to the lake and the sea! Then out of nothing a ranger appeared on a quad and was quite rude - quite right so!

After a good hour we left again and walked the same way back, but now in the very hot afternoon sun and after a while I could not resist to go for a swim - naked - as I had not taken my swimming trunks - I had not expected these Mediterranean conditions! We were getting quite tired in the end but we still made the detour via the crowded Czolpino Beach - with the reward of passing a beer shack - we had done 32 km barefoot - now another 3km on the road. We reached the camping after 5pm - on the way for 9.5h with 3*20 min rest. We were in very good spirits and enjoyed a great shower - the first in 1 week!!! We also felt good to be relaxed by being 'legal' to do things openly and as we wished. It was still warm. Even sitting in the shade I did not wear a T-shirt before 7.30!



Where I had a swim

Sun 28. July	Start: Smoldzinky Las	End: Chalupy (Hel)	Today 176km (1822m)
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Got up at 7am then took it easy - with breakfast outside on our camping table! Nice drive through sunday morning atmosphere with storks here and there and people walking to or from church everywhere. At one big church in a small village we stopped and watched how people squeezed in while many stayed outside in the yard and listened to the sermon relayed by loudspeakers! Later we realised that this is normal in PL. As we wanted to visit the Hel Peninsula we drove back to the coast at Karwia! The holiday traffic mess here was topped by sunday traffic! The worst blockage was before the roundabout leading to the access of the Hel peninsula: 1.5h for 4km! So we reached Hel at 3pm instead of 1 as planned!



Sunday at Zarnowiec

We still managed to spend a good 1.5h to stroll in the very touristic town but also around the cape with a very particular atmosphere. It was too misty to see Danzig over the bay and as we feared that it may rain we decided to drive back inland to look for somewhere to eat and stay. Just when we crossed the last village on the peninsula - Chalupy - we noticed a Festplatz - U-turn and squeeze into a small parking lot - bingo! Plenty of places to eat! Entertaining atmosphere along the bay-promenade and no one would even notice that our Caddy was a hotel. Note: At night we had the first few drops of rain - will the brilliant weather be gone for good?



Hel - Peninsula



Chalupy - Festplatz

Mon 29. July	Start: Chalupy	visit Danzig	End: Ostrzyce (Kaschubische Schweiz)	Today 125km (1947km)
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Got up early and drove right away to Lidl, opening at 7am - so had b'fast on parking. Then slowly in gray weather towards Danzig and stopped in a huge shopping center at Rumia enjoying a good 'morning service' at Auchan!
Then paid a visit to the port of Gdynia with a historical 3-master and a WWII-destroyer. Before entering Danzig we made a turn in Sopot, a posh holiday resort with huge luxury hotels and a 500m jetty!



Gdynia - Port



Sopot - Jetty



Sopot - Posh Hotels

We were lucky (good nose) to find a free parking just before entering the center of Danzig near the Solidarnosc Memorial - and also the sky cleared up! After a short walk we reached the historical railway station. Then shared a popular Zapiekanka, kind of a pizza-baguette. Later we felt a bit sorry in view of the countless speciality and snack stalls in the market streets.

We walked for 5h and the list of churches, towers, monuments, traditional buildings we saw would fill the whole page here. What impressed us most was how this city, in rubble 70 years ago, was rebuilt to make you feel like being in a rich traditional old town!



Zapiekanka & Railway Station



Nikolaikirche



Marienkirche



Rathaus



Krantor

In the end we could not resist to have a few tidbits and a beer before returning to the car and driving on towards the Kaschubische Schweiz! On the way we had a very strong thunderstorm before, at 6pm, we spotted this carpark at the lake in Ostrzyce and then had a great picnic evening and even sung 'frère jacques' (Peggy in Chinese) with a groupe of French Poles (and versa)!



After 'frère jacques'

Tue 30. July Start: **Ostrzyce** End: **Sweta Lipka** Today 335km (2282km)

Very strong thunderstorm at 3am but soon managed to sleep again. Got up at 6.30 and drove off right away as we felt exposed here! After a lovely drive in rather unpleasant weather we reached Malbork, the site of the huge castle of the 'Deutschordensritter' which for a couple of centuries around 1400 played a major role in PL. We did not feel staying long as the weather was very rough! So we continued to Elblag and made a short visit around the huge church and the pseudo tradition-style buildings around. On the way out of town I got lost in traffic deviations as I could not understand polish!

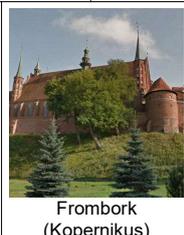


Huge Malbork Castle



Elblag

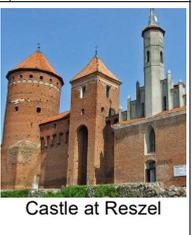
In the end we reached Frombork with a Gothic Dome where Kopernikus did much of his work on his new world model! The weather was so unpleasant now that Peggy did not want to step out of the car. I was then frustrated because I had at least expected to have a tripe soup or le like!
So we continued passing-by Braniewo and first along the russian border we then headed for Reszel. Just before we crossed a sign showing Biel at 0.2km. As the rain had stopped we made a quick turn in Reszel to visit the nice church, rathaus and the fort.



Frombork (Kopernikus)



0.2km to Biel



Castle at Reszel

Then continued to the holy place Sweta Lipka which we reached by 5.30pm. Just early enough for a short visit to admire the overwhelming richness of the basilica and enjoying 10 mins of organ play during the 6pm service! Now the sun broke through and as we had spotted a big lonely carpark just above the basilica we just stayed there and enjoyed the evening with Peggy cooking fresh chanterelles (from market in Danzig) followed by chickenschnitzel with onion- and tomato-sauce!



Sweta Lipka..



.....Organ



&.....Chanterelles

Wed 31st July Start: **Sweta Lipka** visit **Wolfsschanze** End: **Augustow** Today 269km (2551km)

Got up at 6.30 - sun again! After b'fast drove to the Wolfsschanze in a deep forest near Kestryn. It was a awesome place with all these huge destroyed bunkers overgrown by forest while imagining how it was when Hittler lived here for 3 years from 1941-44! This was considered the center of Germany - madness!! One has to be here to realise!
Now we continued south to Magrowo entering the famous lake district of the Masuren and then on to Wojnowo with an old monastery of a russian orthodox sect of the 'Altgläubigen'. Nice drive but also here we realised that the roads rarely follow the lakes or the rivers... so one has to go for a walk!



Wolfsschanze



Wojnowo

I had planned to make a walk to a much praised Moonlake near the touristic town Mikolajki! We parked and then walked off and soon realized that it would be a 6km walk on a road with no view under under hot sun! Frustrated we turned back and then had great fun in the small pleasure port sitting in a shady garden having a beer. A few polish people from Krakow joined us and shared their excellent smoked eel with us! Then went to Moonlake by car! The only way to see the lake was to climb a tower several 100m from the shore! That would have been a real flop walking there instead of enjoying beer and eel!



Mikolajki....



....beer, smoked eel and company

15.30 - Question: Should we stay one more day in the Masuren? Aware of the long way in front of us I pushed for continuing and to stop at the first good opportunity! Nice drive past Drzysz and Elk and as we were nearing Augustow it was 6pm!

I had a place in mind at a lake after Augustow (but it was good that Peggy had noticed a restaurant with a car park as we drove through town). The only spot where we could access the lake was at a recreation resort and it would be very nice for picnic but no parking for the night. After several more attempts we drove back to town and there it was....another restaurant with a swimming terrace and a car park - bingo!!! Had a delicious meal with flaki (tripe soup), hecht and roast pork and beer! The weather had been brilliant with 25° and the evening was warm and bed was just 10m beside us - when we had asked if we may sleep there - 'no problem'!



A delicious Meal &...



...Hotel Caddy just beside!

Thu 1. August Start: **Augustow** End: **A14 - Lonely Rest Area** near Moletai (**Lituanian**) Today 271km (2822km)

Got up at 6.30 and left right away. Nice and lonely drive to Lituianian border which we passed easily (as do the storks). We soon noticed hordes of traffic police looking for traffic offenders in every possible way. So watch out! The country-side towards Vilnius did not change much but the many small wooden houses gave it a different touch. Also we noticed many 'decorative' cemeteries and churches. We made a short turn in Alytus to get cash and of course I got lost on the way out - we counted it as 'surprise sight seeing'.



Cemetery with...



Chappel (Pivasiuny)



Small Shop

After 11 we reached Trakai with a famous castle on a small island. First we visited town and 2 churches and then crossed the lake's arm over a floating bridge made of a chain of rafts. In the end we crossed over to the Trakai Castle originating from 14th century but looking like made of Lego and just finished yesterday - we just had a brief look and did not enter. Dilemma: 1pm - too early to stop and a bit late to visit Vilnius.....we drove into Vilnius and I got lost 3 times until we found a free car park across the river at 2pm - not so bad!



Trakai: Raft-Bridge...



Trakai Castle

We enjoyed a good 3 hours turn seeing 10 churches of all styles and beliefs, stately buildings (eg. presidential palace) and in the end crossed over a long footbridge with view to the modern business city! It was hot and we did not even have a beer as the terraces and prices looked very touristic.....



Cathedral



St Andrew Church



President'l Palace



Footbridge over Neris

We left at 5pm to take the A14. I had chosen to drive the short way northwards by the eastern way to take it easier on the return way now I had to take petrol! I had some difficulty understanding the screen until someone helped me to get the English menu.... now it was easy.... but then the question was.... 'how many Lt'? I wanted about 50 liters - so I typed 50..... now Lt stands for Litas - so I got 15 liters.....over! So had to find out again how to get to the English menu ... what a stress.... After a while on the A14, I became impatient to stop.....could not go to restaurant because a fish tin had leaked and we had to end the smell.....so we stopped at a lonely rest area and had a 'just in case' picnic.... then nice sunset....read....sleep!

Fri 2. August Start: **A14** near Moletai Visit **Dougavpils** End: **Balvi (Lettonia)** Today 381km (3236km)

Got up 6.30 - lonely b'fast right away! Nice country drive past Utena (small shopping - beside a beer tasting shop for take away beer), then easily over the border into Lettonia (just a pannel) and, passing a lakes country, on to Daugavpils. We stopped here to get cash and also to visit this very russian-type town - dead industry, rectangular design, stately buildings (if after restauration) and an international railway station (where I realised that our watches were 1h late - aha!). Then saw an interesting russian restaurant - pity it's lunch-time.....and so we left!



A14 - Rest Area



Airy Promenade at (lake) Zarasai



Railway Station at Daugavpils

Passing beside lakes again, rarely seeing them - so we took a side-road to Aglona to see one ... incidentally Aglona turned out to be another holy place with a nice church - even the Pope had been here! On the way towards Russian border we made a short turn in Rezekne with 'Mara' the Letton liberty statue. At Karsava we turned into a small country-road to follow the Russian border at some places at less than 1km. Very nice evening atmosphere and lonely farms and small villages now and then. It started to get late and we wanted to eat out tonight..... nūūt!



Aglona Worshipping



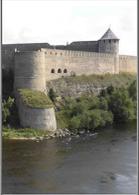
Mara - Lib.-Statue



Village near Russian Border

On the way to Vilaka I asked someone if there is a restaurant in Vilaka - 'no!' Is there a restaurant elsewhere? 'Yes, in Balvi!' So I started rushing, also past Vilaka. Got to Balvi (30km) before 7pm. There was one restaurant. I asked if we can eat here. 'Yes.....' so I walked out to park properly (3 min).... just saw 2 women leaving! Going back the door was locked! Although there was someone inside even looking at me when I banged the door.... the door remained locked! Plan B: Parking behind a Bus Terminal and Peggy cooking something from reserve! Now we regretted the missed opportunity at lunch time! Then we went for a short walk to the nice lake until dusk. PS: Here people seem to have a habit to pee everywhere in public -mhh....

Sat 3. August	Start: Balvi	End: North Shore Lake Peipsi (near Alajoe)	Today 344 km (3547km)
<p>We left at 6am as bus traffic was starting..... and drove to Aluksne to have b'fast beside a ducks pond and a street market (it was only 7am and I enjoyed my coffee!). Nice drive on small roads to Ape where the road to the Estonian border became a bumpy track.....after about 3km we crossed the border pannel and the small road became perfectly smooth.... On the way to Tartu we crossed the highest point of Estonia (271m) and passed the ski resort Otepää. We skipped Tartu because of road works and soon reached lake Peipsi at Kallaste - picnic at lake!</p>			
			
Balvi - New Ortho. Church		Otepää Ski Jumping	Orthodox Church and Statue
<p>Now Lake Peipsi - 3500 sqkm - 5th lake of Europe - 6 times Lake Geneva! Before opening the map yesterday I did not even know it exists!.... It looks like a sea and of course we had nice weather again! We decided to stop for the day at the first good opportunity..... we tried very hard for 3 hours (I was already frustrated and desperate) when, already nearing the russian border after Alajoe, Peggy saw some kind of a 'camp' through the bush and right on the beach!!</p>			
<p>She went in and asked if we can stayBingo... the manager looked very happy to have us (for 3.5 Euro) and so we settled at 3pm! While Peggy went for a shower (1st in a week) and did the 'menage' I went for a swim (22°) at the big beach with fine red sand. Then we had two large beers for 1 Euro each! The rest was enjoying relaxed camping life in beautifully hot weather! There was some club-event with outdoor disco and dance! Music the whole day and evening until 4am!</p>			
Lake Peipsi at Campsite		Relaxed Camping	Late Evening Walk on the Beach

Sun 4. August	Start: Lake Pepsi (near Alajoe)	End: Vainupea	Today 270km (3817km)
<p>Relaxed morning getting up at 7am. B'fast and hanging around a bit until 9am. Then drove to Russian border at Vasknarva where we tried to get close to the river....in the end we found a footpath.... behind the orthodox church. Then continued north and suddenly saw that crowded car park (sunday) and found this very holy orthodox church with an awesome bell play and below the hill was a source where all the believers went to fill car boots full of holy water!</p>			
			
Vasknarva		Pühtitsa Monastery &...	... Holy Water
<p>Should we make the detour to Narva? Well we did! The drive there was nothing special but it was quite exciting to get to the border gate to Russia at only 120km from St Petersburg we had visited in 1996. In addition it was also interesting to see the 2 castles on both sides on the dividing river. Then we walked through a 'communist settlement' (ohoh) to an orthodox church where we were allowed to witness a marriage ceremony. Before leaving Narva we went to a shopping center and had a portion of real Russian solianka soup and potato pelmeni.</p>			
			
Nostalgic Narva		Narva-side...	Wedding Ceremony
<p>Btw: Sunday, Narva was dead and so we skipped seeing the northern part and left. In the end it was good as it was not easy to find a good place to stay the night. We would have been happy to stop any time at a nice place in this beautiful weather. Tried this and that... after seeing the mansion Malla we made even a 12km detour to the Letipea light house (a flop and also we missed the biggest Findling of Estonia (930qm). Then made a turn to the port in Kunda. Nothing. At Vainupea we tried another side-road - bingo - 6pm! Beautiful spot beside the sea and a beach with bathers enjoying a summer evening! Had dinner and then enjoyed sunset at 9.30pm (still wearing T-shirts only)</p>			
			
Malla Mansion		9.30pm - Sunset at Vainupea	

Mon 5. August	Start: Vainupea	visit Tallinn	End: Viljandi	Today 390km (4207km)
<p>We were left alone in the morning and while we had b'fast a ranger parked right beside us (hmm!). He didn't care about us! Then we continued slowly in morning atmpsphere along the coast and via Vinistu up to the northernmost cape at Pärispää (here we met a couple from Thun in a camper. Before Tallinn we passed another Manor, Kolga (sad family story) and the Jägala Waterfall.</p>				
				
Near Vinistu with its..		... Museum	Manor at Kolga	Jägala Fall
<p>Found a place to park in a side street 10 mins from the Toompea Citadel - the approach to the wall and even climbing a bit was impressive. Here we got to the big square between palace and the huge Alexander Nevski Cathedral. Made a turn in the upper and lower parts of the city - many beautifully restaurated buildings but it felt a bit like an open air museum with hordes of tourists and swiss prices! In the end we just stayed a bit over 2 hours and got back to the car at 3pm.</p>				
				
Tallinn - Alex. Nevsky		View from Citadel	Rathaus	

Now what? We decided to continue west along the coast to find a nice place to eat and stay the night. The hot summer weather was still on! But again - for 40km I tried everything - no reasonable restaurant, no reasonable place near the shore! Somehow we felt Estonia to be a bit 'sterile'. We suddenly missed 'enjoyable polish atmosphere'. At Lohusalu I gave up and turned inland to the main road to Keila and beyond to turn into a smaller road heading South towards Rapla (nothing), Turi (nothing), Viljandi (7.30pm by now - nothing) - look, there seems to be a restaurant with a terrace - bingo and even a hidden carpark! We had a very enjoyable meal: Pelmeni, Buckwheat with meat (like cantonese fried rice), roast pork and 5 beers!



Tue 6. August Start: **Viljandi** Visit **Valmiera, Cesis, Sigulda** End: **Pond near Siguli (Latvia)** Today 250km (4457km)

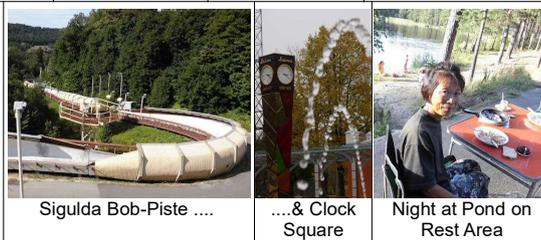
Got up and left parking at 7.30. Then visited the ancient Ordensburg with nice view over river and the old town with old wooden houses. Then continued to Karski Nuia where we had b'fast beside a nice small lake. Soon came the border-crossing near Lilli (just a pannel) and the nice country-side continued until Valmiera where we made a short turn to the old castle walls. Nearby we had a go at a xx-Maxima supermarket where Peggy bought 2 pairs of shoes and a hat for me for 5 Lats and 3 filet steaks and 2 x 5dl wodka for 7 Lats..... (1 Lat - 1.77 CHF)



Next stop Cesis - small town with a big castle with a nice park, an old brewery building, an orthodox church and many stately wooden houses. By now it was 2pm - too late for Riga - so we stopped at a road-side food shack for a good soup and a chicken dish and continued to Sigulda. It was 4pm and we got already concerned about reaching the coast and find a good place. Also we were a bit saturated of sightseeing today.



So just went to see the incredible bob-piste of Sigulda - then left for the nearby Turaida Castle. We saw it from far, perched on a hill! When we reached its car park, we realised that this site is now a tourist trap. So we rushed to the coast taking a detour to overcrowded Saulkastrī - even got a glimpse of the shore - no chance to stay - then no more chance to see the sea. Suddenly we spotted a rest area in a forest beside a pond. Bingo - stop, table out, cooking, eating (yammie filet steak), enjoying (watching people swimming), Peggy taking a swim in the dark (naked:-)! **10pm - 22°!**



Wed 7. August Start: **Pond near Siguli** Visit **Riga** End: **Talsi** Today 201 km (4658km)

Nice b'fast at 6.30 beside mirroring pond in morning sun! We left as the first people turned up for a swim. Easy drive to Riga with a short morning service stop at a shopping center. Then we parked 2.5km before the city center and the enjoyed walking along the very busy main street with many interesting buildings (around 1900), shops and churches to the first attraction - the orthodox Nativity Cathedral - then made a detour to the 'Jugendstil'-Albertastreet before crossing a canal to enter the city. Riga is a very attractive place to see and it would go to far to describe in detail.



We walked twice through the old center with many tourists but also normal pulsating life. Passing 'Double Coffee' offering 2 large beers for 1.69 Lats we succumbed to the temptation before making a turn to the huge very attractive market - had a solianka for 0.30 and a pie for 0.20! After seeing the communist tower and the ghetto we returned to the car after crossing and enjoying the center once more. Beautiful and good day so far - 6 h site-seeing with over 32°!

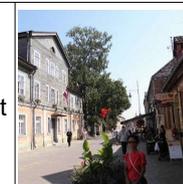


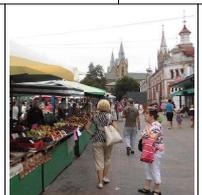
It was now 4pm and time to leave - took a while and a good nose to get to the road to Jūrmala. I had read that this is a very attractive beach resort. Just after the turn-off I saw (too late) a pannel asking to buy a vignette to enter Jūrmala. U-turn, by-pass, forget and then we joined the coast right at the end of Jūrmala! But then again we drove and drove over 60km to find somewhere to stay along the coast - no way! At Mersrags I gave up and turned inland at the first opportunity towards Talsi which is a small town right beside a lake. There were 2 parkings right beside - but Peggy found them to exposed and the only restaurant had no parking and 'international' food. As after turning around x-times we saw another more hidden carpark we stopped there and had our own food - the bacon we bought at the market - yammie! By now it was 10pm and still 26°!!!!!!

Thu 8. August Start: **Talsi** Visit **Ventspils, Kuldiga** End: **Liepaja** Today 274 km (4932km)

Got up at 6.30 - b'fast right away. Nice drive to Ventspils. After the 'morning stop' at a shopping center we went directly to the big jetty at the end of the harbour and enjoyed the lovely morning with the seagulls. Then drove back into town beside the harbour had fun about the cow-sculptures (Cows Parade 2012), visited an orthodox church and the nice market (Peggy bought chanterelles). Otherwise this 2nd-biggest town of Lv appeared not much of a city.



<p>At 10.30 we drove inland to Kuldiga, a small town with a pedestrian street with nicely styled houses giving it an attractive cachet. To stretch the enjoyment we had beer with fried pelmeni..... This was also the only place in the Baltics we saw a public well with a nice pump - just the right moment to refill our water bottles! We left at 2pm towards Liepaja. I hoped to find a place to stay at the cost. So approaching Liepaja at Grobina, I turned North to reach the coast at Saraiki - well, when I turned off seawards at Medzes we had to follow a very bumpy and dusty track - and then (as usually) there was no way to access the shore. We were already entering an unattractive suburb of Liepaja, when we saw people walking to and from the sea. So we turned and 500m ...</p>	 <p>Kuldiga - nice...</p>	 <p>Street & Beer</p>	
<p>...further was a big parking at the start of a jetty. Perfect! First went to visit the orthodox church beside a shabby ex-communist settlement nearby. Then walked 200m on the jetty and turned back when we noticed how long it was and now at 5pm was time for apero. Peggy cooked the chanterelles and we had a good scenic meal. After dinner we took the challenge of walking to the end of the jetty - endless 1.7km walk (one way) over very badly damaged dam in setting sun - with slippers only. But we enjoyed the great atmosphere. While walking back it got quite dark as we reached the car at 9.30pm. Afternoon was hot at 31° - now windy and cool!</p>	 <p>Liepaja Ortho Church</p>	 <p>.... shabby Settlement</p>	 <p>... decayed Jetty in Sunset Atmosphere!</p>

Fri 9. August	Start: Liepaja	Visit Klaipeda	End: Rusne (Lithuania)	Today 184 km (5116km)			
<p>Got up early and scenic b'fast - still 20°! Used up local cash for petrol (& WC) then went to very nice market where Peggy bought some beef fillet, bacon, sausage, vegies and with last few coins: water, beer and buns. Then had a look at the nice next-door church and then easy drive to and across border and on to the holiday resort, Palanga. Made a short turn but did not even see the sea and continued to Klaipeda. 1h stroll in town and to the old port. As the wind had become very strong we skipped the famous Neringa Peninsula (also we had already seen big dunes in PL). Then drove directly to Silute to visit Rusne at the estuary of the Niemen River.</p>					 <p>Liepaja Market</p>	 <p>Klaipeda -Port</p>	
<p>We were very lucky that Peggy spotted that track to a hidden parking at a small pier beside the Niemen. Perfect to stay here although it was only 3pm. Went for a short drive on the island (many storks) and then rested before Peggy prepared dinner - beef filet and salad. After a delicious meal we walked along the beautiful river with the Russian Kaliningrad-Enclave just across. On the way we met a few locals fishing who offered Peggy a beer (I was allowed to share). After a short chat we returned to the car. When I shared the nice moment with Evi via SMS.... Peggy felt left out of the phone and the evening was spoiled.....</p>					 <p>Rusne Niemen River</p>	 <p>.... Storks & old Houses</p>	 <p>... Beer offered by Locals</p>

Sat 10. August	Start: Rusne	along Niemen River	End: Vilkija	Today 191 km (5307km)			
<p>Enjoyed our choice place again at b'fast. Then drove slowly in direction to Kaunas taking every opportunity to look at the Niemen River - often mentioned in relation with Napoleonic times! It was Saturday - and we were desperately longing for a shower. At some stage crossing a forest we saw an indicator to a hostel and over a short track we reached a group of houses with a terrace in between, parked and asked if it is possible to take a shower. Immediately we were kindly invited to do so - for free!!!!!! While Peggy took her shower I sat with a German (70ies) from Hamburg and had a long talk about his nostalgia regarding lost German territories due to Hitler's madness.....also: he was of the opinion that even without Hitler there would have been a terrible war with Russia! He comes here for 20 years to attend the graves of his ancestors!</p>					 <p>Discussion with a German...</p>	 <p>.... while Peggy took a shower!</p>	
<p>Then had lunch at Jurbarkas and a little walk to the Niemen before continuing castle hopping to Panemune, Raudones, Veliuona, also climbing a small hill at Seredzius. Now it started to rain and it was 4pm and nearing Kaunas....same problem every day.... then at Vilkija, I saw a sign to a ferry pier! The car park was full because a wedding apero in the park beside. It rained heavily now - we just waited. Soon most people came back and disappeared. Now we could choose the best spot with view to the Niemen. Later turned up another wedding party - they did not stay long either as they were soaked quickly. 7.30pm - time for dinner in peace in the 3rd thunderstorm!</p>					 <p>Panemune Castle</p>	 <p>Raudones Castle</p>	 <p>Vilkija Pier</p>

Sun 11. August	Start: Vilkija	Visit Kaunas	End: Vistysis	Today 171 km (5478km)				
<p>Crisp morning (15°) - lovely b'fast till 8.30! Drove slowly to Kaunas and had our morning routine at a Maxima xx supermarket. By now sun had reappeared and so at 9.30 we parked before a bridge to take a nice walk to the old town.</p>								
<p>First we reached the city wall and then made a turn around and into all the churches where Sunday services and communions were held. Then strolled along the nice pedestrian street of the old town. It was still early for anything more and so we returned to car after 2h. Then drove to the other end of the city to the famous Pasaislis Monastery (now partly a 5*hotel). Very nice St Peters-Dome-type church - great space and decoration inside!</p>					 <p>Kaunas</p>	 <p>....old town</p>	 <p>Pasaislis</p>	 <p>... Monastery</p>

By now it was time for lunch and after much driving around we found a little place beside a Maxima at Garliava. We ordered a dish of 'anything' - even Peggy through her glasses and after tasting could not make shure....some glutinous balls with meat inside - yammie! (through Google: Zeppelinas usually based on potato).



Now we continued to Kybertai at the border to Kaliningrad. A young German cyclist we met at Kleiner Wentowsee (24th July) had told us that we must visit this place! Nice drive ok - but there was nothing to see than a boring village, a railway track and a border station. Loss of time? No, as you will just see, because we decided to continue for 20km to a lake to look for a place to stay

We soon reached the lake at Vistiysis and drove almost into a high fence crossing the road closing the border du Russia. A dramatic consequence of Lituania's independence! Although it was nice here we could not just stay in front of people houses, but 1km fruther we saw a lonely car park right at the beautiful lake! Had lovely apero and picnic and then went to the village for a beer (Utenas!). It was ok except for some drunk men who insisted too much to get Peggy to share their vodka. At 9pm we decided to walk back to the car. As it was so nice I stayed for a while in the front and fell asleep. Next thing: I was driving in the dark while sleeping!



Mon 12. August	Start: Vistysis	Visit Bialystock	End: Drohiczyn (Poland)	Today 366 km (5844km)
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I was still shocked by the night's events.....very glad to have my dear coffee first thing! Beautiful lake in morning sun and watching storks jumping and flying.....you will never get that in a camping site much less a hotel! Then drove to Kalvariija to spend the last cash on petrol, vodka and small things (at Maxima) and still had 110 Lt to change at the border! Crazy - we did not manage to spend Fr. 100.- in 4 days!



Easy drive accross the border to Suwalki and on to Wigri, a monastery beside a nice lake with an attached hotel lodging guests in former cells!. After 45' we left and took small roads to Biby to join the main road to Augustow - where we had stayed on the way North.

Took main road to Bialystock which turned out to be a lovely city with a huge palace and park (now univesity), nice dome (originally built as extention of the small church) and a big lively square around the Rathaus. We left at 2.30pm. Soon I was confused by a deviation and ended up in a never-ending 1-track road which I could not make out on my map - 20km later, asking people at an intersection we managed to get back on our road to Bielsk Podlaski and then onward to Simiatycze.



Question: Lublin or Warszawa first? I turned towards Warszawa and now it was time to look for a restaurant and place to stay!

Just as we started to lose hope I turned into Drohiczyn, a small town at the Bug River, with 4 churches / monasteries. After 200m we saw a guesthouse (Zamkowa) with a restaurant terrace and a big car park! We asked - "no problem!". There was even another guest, a young lady speaking english, who helped us to order a fine meal! I had my Flaki (tripe soup) - then we shared a trout, a Golonka (gepökelted Eisbein) and some kind of yammie potato-cakes. Plenty of nice and cool beer! Good and quiet night! They even left the door open! Btw: Pope John-Paul II had been in Drohiczyn in 1999.



Tue 13. August	Start: Drohiczyn	Visit Warszawa	End: near Gora Kalvaria	Today 191 km (6035km)
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After b'fast we went to visit 2 of the 4 churches. At 8.30 we continued towards Warszawa via Wegrow with a big church and a huge empty market square. We approached Warszawa over the Vistula (Lazienkwoski) as I hoped to find a free car park close to the adjacent park. After a loop along the Vistula we reached the park ... no free parking! So we decided to park closer to the city and took the expressway along the Vistula again..... Ah - a few cars parked beside a pier! Perfect free parking with walk to the city along the river, first under the railway bridge then past the Copernicus Museum right to the bridge in front of the castle! Btw - beautiful weather!



We really enjoyed turning around in the old town and in the market square - I even recognised the traditional Pub where I had a meal with my old friend Max Grob in April 1968! Of course we considered to have a beer and a huge Golonka with Sauerkraut, but after last night's fiest we were not ready - later we felt sorry about missing out again! There is so much to see you will just forget most again.... amazing what has been achieved after it was all rubble after WW-II....



Then walked through the new town with many churches, the guarded Presidential Palace and the adjacent Hotel Bristol and of course the great landmark, the Culture Palace - hated and admired! Saturated, we just made a short detour to the Ghetto before retreating back to the river, on the way crossing nameless old building of better times waiting to be restaurated. The car was still there (!!) and we left Warszawa after 5pm right into rush-hour traffic!



We crossed the Vistula again to drive south towards Lublin and after some hesitations in heavy but fluid traffic finally managed to get to road Nr 17. Great, as it was getting time to find a place. We saw a few road-side restaurants but 'not good enough', we thought....before we got stuck in a very bad congestion near Kobiel. After 30 mins we reached an intersection and so I turned off towards Gora Kalvaria. Still heavy traffic, mainly lorries! But this meant that after 12km we found a road-side station for eating, parking, sleeping etc.. Peggy did not look happy with the offers and so I just ordered Placek (popular Röschti-cake) with shredded pork and sauce! This one was a bit soggy! Peggy finished some picnic later at the car.



Road Side - Placek

Wed 14. August	Start: near Gora Kalvaria	Visit Lublin	End: near Krasnik	Today 238 km (6273km)		
<p>Got up very early and left the busy parking right away. We crossed the Vistula and turned to Czersk hoping to park at the river to enjoy....no way, so we had b'fast beside the castle on the village square. Then nice drive along the Vistula Valley through huge apple plantations to Pulawy and then on to Kasimierz Dolny, a very touristic small old town with famous city houses, a castle, churches and what we liked most - a long promenade on the Vistula Dam - so we parked at 1km of the center and enjoyed the walk!</p>			<p>Czersk</p>	<p>Vistula at touristic...</p>	<p>.....Kasimierz Dolny</p>	
<p>Before 12 we left towards Lublin... after the empty North... one village after another! First I did not find the city center right away but then I found a carpark at 1pm, about 20 mins walk of the old town... we always find it interesting to walk through everyday-life streets too. The old town was very nice with old city gates, the churches, the main square and the huge fort and it was not too touristic. Got back to the car at 3.30pm after enjoying walking through busy streets again.</p>			<p>Lublin.... Front of old Town</p>	<p>..Trinity Dome...</p>	<p>Model of Sw Michala</p>	<p>.....huge Fort</p>
<p>Back in country-side at 4pm ... time to start caring for the night. After the noisy last night Peggy was a bit choosy and turned down several possibilities.... in the end we saw this small road-side restaurant near Krasnik with a car park and some private space even hidden behind - perfect - 'no problem' they said. Peggy had a pork schnitzel (15zł) and I had placek (15zł), better than yesterday and salad (4zł) and beer of course. At 7pm we went back to the car to have desert and wine, writing diary in last shimmer of setting sun and then closing the day!</p>				<p>Sleeping behind (GE-pic)</p>		

Thu 15. August	Start: near Krasnik	Maria Assumption	End: Bircza	Today 315 km (6588km)		
<p>Got up at 6am - 7° - spotless sky! It will be a long day! We only realised later in the day that this was a national holiday - Assumption Day in catholic Poland! We left right away and took small roads through lovely country-side towards Sandomierz. Just as we were going to cross the San River - there was a ferry instead of a bridge - and it was out of operation! So we just had breakfast beside the water! Then we backtracked northwards and got to a ferry (9zł) crossing the Vistula to Zawichost. The ferry captain tried to sell old coins, banknotes and stamps.</p>			<p>B'fast at 1st Ferry at San</p>	<p>Ferry to Zawichost</p>		
<p>After nice ride we reached Sandomierz easily and parked outside town. Sandomierz is a very nice town with an old city gate, a beautiful church, a picturesque market square around an impressive Rathaus. Here we already wondered why all shops were closed and the church full! When we continued through the country-side we saw all these nicely dressed people walking to or from church and at all churches people were queuing outside.</p>			<p>Sandomierz....</p>	<p>Market Sq & Rathaus</p>	<p>Cathedral</p>	<p>..Service</p>
<p>Eventually we reached Lezajsk, famous for its basilica and its 3 organs with over 1000 pipes! The place was in a mess and we had to park far away. There was a service held outside the basilica with a huge crowd and the sermon was transmitted into the overcrowded basilica. The big organ was really impressive. We then continued to Jaroslaw, one of the oldest towns of PL. Surprise! The main square with its impressive Rathaus was crowded by - army! Tanks and other martial vehicles. Spectators were obviously waiting for a parade. Only one restaurant open - not our taste! Btw: The Orthodox church was closed on Maria Assumption.</p>			<p>Lezajsk.... Service outside</p>	<p>..huge Organ</p>	<p>Jaroslaw.... Army Parade</p>	<p>...quiet Ortho. Ch.</p>
<p>So we had a beer on the way out of town:-) Lovely contryside getting more and more hilly. On the way to Przemysl we made a small detour to Pruchnik to see some traditional wooden houses. I had expected Przemysl to be a dull dusty border town. As we drove past the center I quickly changed my mind and looked for a parking. It was a public holiday - people having their day off and enjoying strolling and having ice cream in the warm weather. Anyway it is a nice lively traditional center with 3 big churches within 200m.</p>			<p>Pruchnik ... wooden Houses</p>	<p>Przemysl... nice old Town</p>	<p>... with nice Churches</p>	

When we left it was past 5pm already. As it was a holy day I wanted to reach the famous sanctuary Kalvaria Paclavska today! The place is on a mountain-top beside the Ukranian border and it is a nice drive on narrow roads. We reached the sanctuary at 6pm, after a short stop at a chapel with a source of holy water in its basement. When we arrived we saw that the big party was nearly over. There had been a big market for the day with food and souvenir stalls - we just got on time for the last service, to admire the extremely richly decorated interior. Unfortunately it was too late to stay for a while and we drove off at 6.30 to find a place for the night. Then drove along a small road endlessly winding in setting sun - no place to stop!



Kalvaria Paclavska



...rich Interior

It was almost dark when we reached the main road at Bircza. A few 100m later we saw a restaurant with a car park. Voilà! Had a beer with excellent fried liver with onions and pierogi! Bed at 9.30 - too dark to write diary!

Fri 16. August Start: **Bircza** via **Slovakia** End: near **Novi Targ** Today 371 km (6959km)

Left right away as it was only 7°. Stopped at a Tesco/Obi supermarket before Krosno for morning routine. I had planned to turn at Grybow to take small roads to Krynica Zdroy, a thermal sources resort and to stop for a bath! The road was closed and so we turned via Novy Sacz (area with modern churches). Now - I had not realised that this was a long weekend on top of holiday season and a brilliant weather forecast! Nice drive through 'growing mountains' as we neared the Hohe Tatra Chain but when we reached Krynica Zdroy, traffic was in a mess and we did not even set foot on the floor!



Many Modern..



..Churches

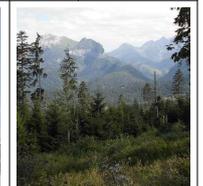
So we took the scenic drive from Muszyna through a narrow valley along the Slovak border to Pivniczna Zdroj (stop at a supermarket parking for the first bite today - silly!). Nice and easy drive over a mountain range into Slovakia and soon we passed an old wooden church at Hranicne after which we descended to L'Ubovna in the Poprad Valley which we then followed to Podolinec with a big market square and Spisska Bela (beer stop) at the foot of the Hohe Tatra. We then drove North into a narrow valley passing Zdiar, a ski resort before crossing the border and the Hohe Tatra near Lysa Polana.



Hranicne Wood Church



Podolinec



Hohe Tatra at Lysa Polana

Here we had joined one of the most popular (most beautiful) places in the Hohe Tatra and we noticed that because cars after cars were parked wildly for 10km beside the road in the forest. No way for us to stop here for the rest of day or even to think of driving over to Zakopane. Now for the next 20km we crossed several overcrowded touristic villages and so we kept continuing until after Novy Targ where we spotted a big road-side stop with a restaurant and beautiful view over the plain to the distant Hohe Tatra in evening sun. We enjoyed the dinner - Smalec (pork fat), shashlik, black pudding with Sauerkraut and beer.....and in the end sunset! Btw: All necessary facilities were open all night!



Night near Novy Targ

Sat 17. August Start: near **Novy Targ** Visit **Krakow** End: **Oswiecim** (Auschwitz) Today 160 km (7119km)

Great b'fast at 7am in morning sun with 180° panorama! Then nice hilly drive to Krakow, where after an erring loop, we found a shady car park 200m South of the Vistula at 9.30am. After crossing the Vistula we visited the Jewish quarter and then walked to the old center along Starowislna and via the opera and also made a turn at the railway station where I had taken the train to CSSR with Max Grob in 1968. Now we just kept strolling and and marvelling, starting at the Grunwald Statue and then entering the old town via the Barbacan and the Florian Gate.



Grunwald M'ent



Barbacan



Florian Gt

The huge Market Square was very impressive with the Maria Basilika, Town Hall, Market Hall etc.....then visited the Trintity Church with a very high vault and we could just witness the ordination of a group of priests. Then continued to the St Peter & Paul Church and beside the St Andrew Church.....etc. In the end we were saturated of churches! One should really spend 2 whole days here.....



Market Square.... Maria Basilika



....Town Hall Tower



Dominican Trinity Church



St Peter & Paul with 12 Apostles



St Andrew Church

Tired already we still had the Wavell to visit. We made the turn of this impressive palace compound. It was very hot but of course we were impressed and also enjoyed the view from the wall over the Vistula and the Southern part of Krakow. It was 1pm and we were very hungry - so on the way down to the Vistula we had a bread ring (-.16 zl) from a market woman and a nice beer under a shady arcade. We then crossed the footbridge over the Vistula and walked to the Schindler's Factory before returning to the car at 3pm. We had visited Krakow in 6h.



Wavel castle with...



....Cathedral



....well deserved!

Drove out of town crossing the Vistula and passing Wavel once more. We took the smaller road to Liszki hoping to find a good place to stop for the evening. After a few km we passed a camping-site and we asked if we could just take a shower (saturday:-) - 'no!'. So we continued via Babice and Zator and there was really no good place until we reached the Auschwitz Camp and even the car parks there were not suitable for our purpose (awkward place to sleep anyway). So we drove back to Oswiecim and stayed at the car park of a Lidl supermarket. After in-car-picnic we went for a stroll across the bridge over the Sola River to the town center. 3rd day over 30° and great weather!



Night at Lidl (GE-pic)

Sun 18. August	Start: Oswiecim	Visit Auschwitz	End: Czestochowa	Today 159 km (7278km)	
<p>Got up at 5.30 and moved to a small car park beside Soal River to have b'fast. Then walked on the dam 1km to Auschwitz 1. It was only 7am and we had to wait 1 h to opening. As expected it was a hard experience to see all this proof of human atrocities. What struck me most was all that official bureaucracy making the whole thing controlled and 'legal' down to the smallest detail of daily decisions! At 11am we took the shuttle to Birkenau.... were one saw the magnitude of the horror and the rail-tracks (we all have seen in films) illustrated the dynamics!</p>			 <p>Auschwitz</p>	 <p>Burokracy</p>	 <p>Birkenau</p>
<p>At 12.30 we left towards Czestochowa making a distant bypass of Katowice on secondary roads via Trzebinia, Olkusz, Zawiercie and Myskow to the Polish Jura! Very nice country-side with hills becoming higher and more rocky until we reached Olsztyn with a big fort on top of rocks. After a short walk we continued but now reaching Czestochowa at 5.30pm and no restaurants in sight we settled for the evening at the carpark of a big petrol-station. Had in-car picnic and somehow passed the evening. 4th day over 30° - still no shower - at 9pm still 28° - too dark to finish writing!</p>				 <p>Polish Jura at Olsztyn</p>	

Mon 19. August	Start: Czestochowa	Visit Czestochowa	End: near Wroclaw	Today 198 km (7476km)	
<p>Noisy night but got enough sleep and got up at 7am. Drove to Auchan Shopping center to have quiet b'fast on carpark and morning routine:-). Then went to Jasna Gora to see what everybody wants to see - the Black Madonna. Early morning was easy to find a car park near the park. The whole site is very impressive, as expected. Unfortunately there was a service in the chapel with the black madonna - so we could not get close enough to see to the madonna picture in detail.</p>		 <p>Jasna Gora Monastery</p>	 <p>Basilika</p>	 <p>Chappel of...</p>	 <p>Black Madonna (google-pic)</p>
<p>We left about 10.30am and took the road to Opole. After about 30km, passing Kochanowice, Peggy saw a small road-side guesthouse. Can we just get a shower? 'No problem - 15zl each' - we really enjoyed the room for over 1h! Then 10 mins later, just after Lubliniec, we felt like having a bite in a roadside restaurant. Had a beetroot soup (good but watery) and what did we see at the wc - a free shower -hmmmm!</p> <p>I had planned to visit Wroclaw today slowly getting late ... so I skipped Opole and Brzeg....then at Olawa Peggy wanted to do shopping at a Lidl and spent so long time that Wroclaw was now for next day (in fact I was glad!).</p>					
<p>But now we had to look for a place to stay within the next 20km! After 10km, in the middle of nowhere, we saw a small road-side eating place with just a few car slots - no beer! Can we use our own? 'No problem' said the kind lady! So we had a good evening with excellent Flaki (tripe soup) and fried liver with onion and for desert strawberry-pierogi! We retired to the car at 7pm and it started raining and continued the whole night. The restaurant closed at 8pm and we were alone.</p>		 <p>Shower (GE-pic)</p>	 <p>Night (GE-pic)..</p>	 <p>...yammie Dinner</p>	

Tue 20. August	Start: near Wroclaw	Visit Wroclaw (Breslau)	End: near Jelenia Gora	Today 127 km (7603km)	
<p>Slept quite well.... even some traffic. When we got up it was still raining and we left right away without breakfast. Then I felt not having proper control of driving without my coffee - so had to stop somewhere for b'fast. Slowly I got to my senses again and we found a good place to park the car in a side street between derelict ranges of buildings.....It was 8am and it still rained and it was windy and cool. After all the warm days we did not wear enough and felt cold during the whole visit. After 20 mins walk to the center through 'normal life' streets, we first paid a 'comfortable visit' to a big very modern shopping center.</p>		 <p>Krakow - 20's</p>	 <p>Shopping Center</p>		
<p>Then we continued over the Oder passing the market hall (thought of coming back for lunch), the Sand Island and Sand Church. Over the iron bridge to the Dome and the St Pauls Cathedral. Then we returned and walked along the Oder to the university (miserable rain). Eventually we reached the Elisabeth Church (where one can obtain 'Plenary Indulgencies'), the main Market Square with rows of nice historical buildings and the impressive Rathaus (it was too early to visit the Ratskeller to enjoy the famous Svidnica Beer).</p>		 <p>Iron Bridge to Dome Island</p>	 <p>Dome & Nepomuk Statue</p>	 <p>St John's Cathedral</p>	 <p>The Oder</p>
<p>As we still felt cold we did not return to the market hall to have lunch and rather walked back to the car. Wroclaw in 3.5h but it was interesting to see - a lot looked still like in the 1930's - a bit decayed and we even saw bullet holes here and there.</p> <p>We left at 11.30 and when we passed beside an IKEA shopping center we went to warm ourselves and waiting for the rain to stop! We made a big turn to look for a pillow for my seat! Meanwhile we had our usual IKEA treat - hot dogs - for lunch and ice cream from a robot!</p>		 <p>Market Square with...</p>	 <p>... Rathaus</p>	 <p>Waiting for Rain to stop at IKEA</p>	
<p>Next we stopped at Svidnica, a small town with a historical center with a</p>					

big cathedral (quite special inside decorations), a nice market square (one more) and the biggest wooden church of Europe. Latter was definitely impressive but it had become more of a tourist trap than a sanctuary! We left Svidnica at 3pm. Saturated from site-seeing today we decided to visit Jelenia Gora tomorrow. Again - as most days now - I felt stressed about finding a good place to stop before getting into town.	Cathedral	Market Square	Wooden....Church
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In-extremis (7km before town) we saw a small road-side restaurant with a rest area! There was beer and the owner spoke some german! We had a 500g Golonka (Eisbein) and blood sausages.....wow! At 7pm we moved to the car and had a warming coffee. That was the last night in PL and I missed out the last chance to have Bigos (hunter's stew), a popular polish dish - reason to visit Poland again! PS We had seen so many towns and cities that I did not feel ready to visit more big cities like Leipzig and Dresden - So I decided to by-pass these cities and continue through the Riesen- and Erzgebirge!



Wed 21. August	Start: near Jelenia Gora	Via Czech Republic	End: Pfaffroda (Germany)	Today 302 km (7905km)
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We left at 6.30 and moved to a Tesco shopping-center outside Jelenia Gora for b'fast and morning routine. Then visited town - a cathedral, a market square with nice historical houses and a town hall. I even saw Bigos on a menu (9zl) - early morning - hmm). It was still cold and we were really saturated and did not stay long. So we drove slowly to the CZ border and while crossing the Riesengebirge, the sun came back and changed our world for better. Nice drive (by-passing Liberec) to Decin to the Elbe to follow it North into Germany.



Beautiful drive along the Elbe squeezing through a narrow valey. The most spectacular site was Hrensko with amazing rock-formations. Then we continued to Bad Schandau and Königstein (Sächsische Schweiz) where we saw a nice camp-site (2pm). By the time we had thought of stopping and enjoying the afternoon we were already 3km further and could not bother to turn back...At Pirna we turned West and zigzagged for the next 3 hours on sinuous roads over hills, through valleys and the little towns and villages of the Erzgebirge.

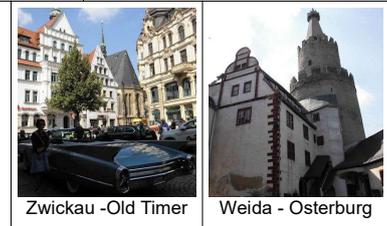


We had passed Glashütte, Schmiedeberg, a lake 'Lehnmühle', Frauenstein (castle), Sayda and still no place to stop for the night. Then unexpectedly we spotted a remote small car park beside a lovely pond - voilà enfin! First we went for a little walk up to the Pfaffroda Castle (now a home for aged) and through the little village back to the lonely car. Peggy then prepared dinner while I wrote in the diary. We ate with view over the pond and then had a good wash! Today the weather was nice and it will continue so until we get to CH border!



Thu 22. August	Start: Pfaffroda	Visit Zwickau	End: Dillstädt near Meiningen	Today 325 km (8230km)
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Got up at 6.30 - 7° - nice hot coffee! Today I just wanted to drive towards Meiningen (to find out about some ancestor) and stop at a nice place in the Thüringer Wald before 4pm - hahaha! Very nice morning drive with stops at Marienberg at 8am to see a nice church and at a shopping center at Annaberg for morning routine. Then left the Erzgebirge and visited Zwickau with a nice cathedral - but the old town was eclipsed by an old-timer show and competition! We left at 12.30 and continued to Weida where we visited the impressive Osterburg on top of a hill. At 2pm we continued to Saalfeld to enter the Thüringer Wald. Now Peggy seemed to just endure and so I did not make any more stops.....

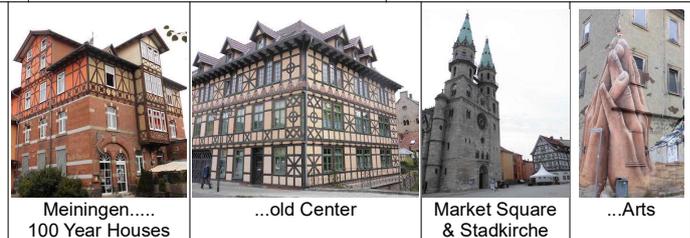


From Bad Blankenburg we started to look for a place to stay. Just drove through Rottenbach, Königsee, Gehren and then I missed the way and ended up on a Expressway to the North.....a bit of swearing and back on track past Ilmenau right through the heart of the beautiful Thüringer Wald to Schleusingen. All the way we did not see any spot to stay! So I turned back North to Suhl and then along the Hasel Valley to the West in direction of Meiningen. Again I was getting impatient having tried x side-ways to dead ends. Then at 7pm passing Dillstädt we saw a car park beside a church. Apero and in-car picnic - then went for a stroll through the village and admired the many slate-faced houses and cheered with 2 wedding parties - the did not serve us any Sekt though!

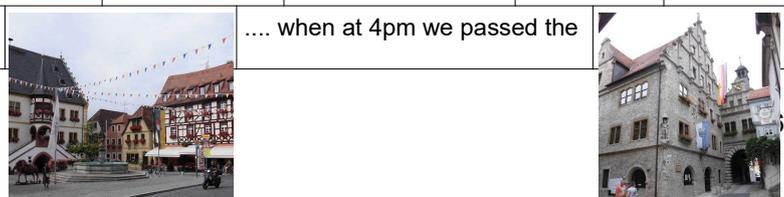


Fri 23. August	Start: Dillstädt	Visit Meiningen	End: Marktbreit am Main	Today 140 km (8370km)
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Got up at 6.30 and moved to next car park for b'fast. Short drive to Meiningen and parked at a shopping center.... then walked 15 mins to the center and already marvelled at many stately buildings and mansions over 100 years old. There was even a park with medieval ruins. The picturesque center was really worthwhile visiting and there was also a big palace which now hosts government offices including the Stadtarchiv where I went to seek info about my ancestors.



Stayed in town for 2h and then went food shopping to



<p>take home - eg a 'gepökeltes Eisbein'! We then also realised that Meiningen has a lot to offer in the hilly neighbourhood, but it was now time to go home! Took main roads South crossing Schweinfurt and then stopping at Volkach to make a quick turn in the old town and along the shore of the Main (no good place to stop already). So we continued along the Main.....</p>	<p>Volkach am Main</p>	<p>small town of Marktbreit, with a big carpark right between the river and the old town. And there was even a pannel inviting guests to park here for free to visit town! Bingo!!!!</p>	<p>Marktbreit am Main</p>	
<p>First went for a turn in the old town and then for a Beer and Jägerbraten mit Klösse! Then we had our 2nd-course picnic right at the river! Also went to see an old river crane which inside is motioned with a wooden walk-wheel!</p>	 <p>Jägerbraten first...</p>	 <p>..then 2nd Course at the Main</p>	 <p>River Crane</p>	<p>Then the party continued with a german couple with a camper parked beside us!</p>  <p>Last Night Party - with Gesine and Husband</p>

<p>Sat 24. August</p>	<p>Start: Marktbreit</p>	<p>End: Aarau (at Evi & Rafa)</p>	<p>Today 412 km (8782km)</p>
<p>Sun was up before us at 7am! First thing - I did not find my driving/sun glasses - that spoilt much of our last day driving! I went 3 times all around to look for them! Even Gesine tried to help! After b'fast we left only at 9 am - putting me in a rush from the start! This time we joined the Motorway and then drove to Ulm - I skipped the visit of the Münster! Then we continued on main-road first along the Donau-Valley and then past Stockach - 1h Lidl somewhere for last shopping - to the Swiss Border at Thayningen. It started raining and saturday traffic through Schaffhausen - borders between - Eglisau and then Koblenz, Brugg to Aarau was very slow! But after a hug with Evelyne and Rafa and a good shower we felt good again and ready to have Evi's nice dinner! Many thanks! Again it was good not to end up in the evening at our sad empty apartment.</p>			

<p>Sun 25. August</p>	<p>Start: Aarau</p>	<p>End: Ipsach (home)</p>	<p>Today 78 km (8860km)</p>
<p>After a sumptuous breakfast at Evi and a Skype Session with Pady and family in Perth we reached home at noon! PS A few days later Evelyne and Rafa came to Ipsach to help us eating the smoked pork we had brought back from the trip! Also my glasses had been found and delivered to the 'Fundbüro' in Marktbreit who kindly sent them back to me - many thanks (also thanks to the Internet)!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The End</p>			 <p>Fiest on comfortable Balcony</p>