

SPAM MAN

Craig | Joanne | Peanut



Overview

The cherubs followed us in to Austria and no matter where we go they appear. They are haunting us, these little not so friendly looking chaps. Here's some pink little fella's for you. We arrived in Innsbruck and it truly is a beautiful place both in terms of its setting, its architecture

and its layout. The Austrians are so different to the Italians in every way. It is so quiet here in terms of noise even though it is busier in terms of people. The shops operate as normal, which feels good. The biggest change is how clean and tidy Austria is. Not a drop of litter or a splash of dirt anywhere, which is what makes Austria so unique and special.



Wednesday 23rd July: Brenner to Innsbruck

Up bright and early to head along the Brenner Pass and so excited. Slept like a log last night but it did drop to a nice 12 degrees, perfect temperature and remedy for itchy skin. We've read the pass is very pretty and if its anything like the Gothard Pass then it should be a good day. The rain had finally stopped and as soon as the sun said good morning. we popped



Does this mean the bus
went passed?

Homer in to 1st gear and tootled off. Waving good bye to Italy (thank you for a lovely time) and saying hello to Austria. You know, I can't wait to yodel and no idea why? I am sure over the next couple of weeks we'll find a great spot to yodel our little hearts out whilst Peanut joins in with a yo-howl.

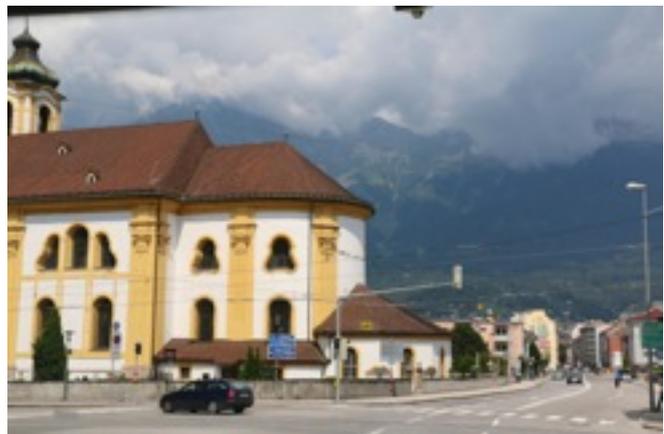
There are two routes the old brenner pass and the brenner autobahn pass. Both roads run in parallel (near enough) but one you pay for and one you don't. We opted for the old road, the freebie and not because it is free but because it allows you to stop when ever you want and the pace of travel will be slower, so we can admire the view. We meandered through looking at the lush hills, alpine house and loads and loads of flowers. It was pretty but not half as pretty as we expected. It was more like a pretty scenic drive



rather than awesome 'no to be missed' pass. Don't get us wrong, it beats the M6 corridor any day but it doesn't blow your socks off. We stopped at one of the lay-bys to look at the huge bridge. No idea of the name but certainly one engineering challenge that couldn't have been easy. As we sat there sipping our morning coffee, the Italian way of course, it dawned on me. They should offer bungee jumping off this bridge, it would be well cool. You might get a nose bleed or two on the way down but it would be one hell of an awesome ride.



The Brenner pass isn't long at all and considering its location, the roads are pretty flat. So it didn't take that long to get through. Not sure how long exactly but by lunch we were cycling around Innsbruck. We parked behind a lovely church and just as we were about to set off, a coach load of people pulled up. Guess where from? Lancashire! The saga group were lovely and you could tell they were English...sandals and socks are a give away and not just on the fella's may I add. The group of elderly ladies and gents were linking arms and prop each other up as they walked two feet from the coach to the church. I said hello and a little old lady said "are you English?" I replied and that was it,





the coach load came to a halt. Everyone was intrigued to know about our journey and the poor tour guide was tossed to one side. No matter



Rather gruesome for a church

how much she tried to encourage them in to the church they were having none of it. Eventually, we got away and the tour guide got her tour back on track. Lovely bunch of elders, really hope they have a good trip.



Innsbruck is much larger than I expected but just as pretty. Its like a town that sits at the bottom of a big bowl of mountains. You basically have one long and very wide street with shops on either side. At the far end they have an arch de triumph and as you approach the river the street turns in to little alleys full of tiny shops and cafes. The architecture is just as you imagine, alpine clad and colourful. It is mid summer and very pretty, so guessing it would be very stunning in mid winter when everything is covered in snow. About half way

round it started to rain. We pulled over to get shelter and covered peanut with our £1 pound land poncho. I think he looks rather dapper in yellow!

Innsbruck the capital of Tyrol! If we look up we see Germany and if we look down we see Italy or nearly but for some big rocks in the way. Innsbruck means Bridge Over the Inn - meeting

place of the valley of the inn and the sill river. We're parked at the church which has a great view over the ski jump, which hosted the 1976 winter olympics. The tram service is great here, runs all over town and the alpine train service even runs in to the mountain towns all around Innsbruck. In fact, if you like travelling by train this would be a perfect destination (mum). The town buildings are quite gothic in style and are protected by the town



planners, who stop anyone building out of character hence why it keeps so nice.

One the rain eased we cycled around calling in at glockenspiel museum, a church with cherubs, pipe shop....

Craig spotted a great little shop, one our late friend, Vinny would turn in his grave...a strudel bar.



After half an hour debating what to have from the huge strudel and cake menu, we opted for a cherry strudel and Sacher



cake. We shared half and half and sat in the open air watching all the tourists walk by. Peanut watched eagerly to see which one of us he could play the puppy eyes to. Sorry dude, not today, we're enjoying our pudding and you can wait until we get

home and have your cheap Lidl dog biscuits. Only at the last crumb did he turn away and pee up the table leg. Jeez Peanut, you have no table manners at all. Craig, I suggest we depart quickly before anyone notices he's pickled everywhere.



One thing that struck us half way round...the shops are open and there are people around between 2 and 4. It felt weird, it felt so busy. It the one thing I could never get used to in Italy, everything and everyone just shuts down between 2 and 4 and no one debates from this. Many times it drove us mad.



After our cycle around we went to Lidl. Not sure how long we were in there but it was dark when we came out. There were so many different things to chose from and the



language change from Italian to Austrian took some getting used to. In Italy everything ended in an O and here everything sounds so abrupt...brockwurst, sourcroust... Eventually we sussed out a few things and departed with €50 worth of goodies.



We tried to find somewhere to wild camp but struggled, so we went back to the church we stayed at this afternoon. It was only a little carpark and just outside Innsbruck, so perfect place for us to stop. Craig made dinner whilst I filled up the van with water. Then as we had dinner, we watched the



sunset and cast a lovely orange hue on the mountains surrounding us. It felt very clean, quiet and still in comparison to Italy.

After dinner, Craig tried his Lidl lager variety pack...selection of 8 of the

cheapest Austrian lagers, a refreshing change from Italian wine.

How cool, this bicycle pump and repair kit can be found in Innsbruck and free to use.



When ever I see love hearts I think of my sister,



*Thursday 24th July:
Innsbruck to Mutters*

Blue skies in Innsbruck this morning and against the limestone mountains, it looks stunningly pretty. Today we're going cycle around Innsbruck





again but also take a look on the other side of the river. It is such a lovely place, it warrants a double dip! By the way, if anyone fancied coming here for a weekend break...highly recommend it!. I also want to find a card shop for our Lucy and Phil's birthday. I know its a couple of weeks away but want to make sure it arrives in plenty time for their birthday.

As we cycled around Craig went to take a few photo's whilst I spotted a bread/cake shop. I looked inside and smelt wonderful. The smell of fresh bread is just divine and I could just scoff the whole shop. Ummm what should I

get Craig? I umm'd and arrr'd for while then I spotted an apple strudel but not as we know it. It was like a massive bun / bread with apple tucked inside and a little sprinkle of sugar crumbs. Yip, that's the one for my Craig, he will enjoy that. Nice an tart and lots of it to make it feel like a hearty pud. I quickly paid my €0.89 and hid the surprise in my rucksack.



Back in Homer and we packed up and headed off to find somewhere for lunch. Oh that reminds me, Craigs surprise, apple strudel I must remember to take it out my bag. We headed back towards the Brenner Pass with intention of stopping on one of the lay-bys over looking Innsbruck. As we drove passed the ski jump centre, we turned off for a little place called



Natters. Love the name, how cool it that, Natters. Mum, you'd be right at home here hahahaha. Within a blink of eye we'd passed through Natters and drove in to Mutters. God these village names are well cool. Now mutters, who does that remind me of? Phil, my quietly spoken and dainty little nephew hahaha. *Hey up Craig, pull up over there. That will do us fine for lunch.* We pulled up on a little car park at



Peanut tucked in even his feet are tucked under

the side of a closed hotel. We parked up at the side of an old apple tree with great views over



Innsbruck. What a fab spot. *Hey luv, look over errr, we even av a tap.* We spent the rest of the day nattering about all sorts and preparing this evenings dinner....goooooolash. Craig was making a traditional beef goulash and chips for dinner and I couldn't wait. We even got free internet access from a nearby hotel, it was a bit intermittent but it was it was free. Craig set off downloading a load of stuff including my requests which included a few new albums and Made in Chelsea series 7. I just love that series and I can here some boo's and some cheers but I just think its brill.





We had a quick cycle in to Mutters (cause it started raining) and surprised at the number of 'grand design' houses. You know the ones I mean, square and simple but well elegant inside. I did expect this here but it looks like they are common place and probably standard build after



the alpine type house.

With pitter patter rain drops we dozed off to sleep. Hey up chuck, move over. I need to get the quilt I am bloody fleeing. Craig you cant be cold. Its cooler but not cold. I am freezing my knackers off here just let me get the quilt. There we were 3am and Craig snuggle under the quilt and we sprawled like a starfish with just a thin sheet. Talk about opposites! My arms up and out, his arms down and



under. The only thing we agree on are the feet. Always like to keep the feet popping out at the bottom, so even when we cant hug our toes can cuddle . You know we've not used that many AA batteries.

poop station with bags and bin!

Wot the hell are you on about batteries for in the middle of the night? Just thought I'd share the fact. Well thanks Craig, I am sure I will now sleep as whole lot better. Just as we were dozing back to sleep - thud, splat, thud, splat. There goes another apple. Homer will stink of apple juice in the morning. Home from home Craig, he will smell of apple cider





Friday 25th July: Mutters to Watters

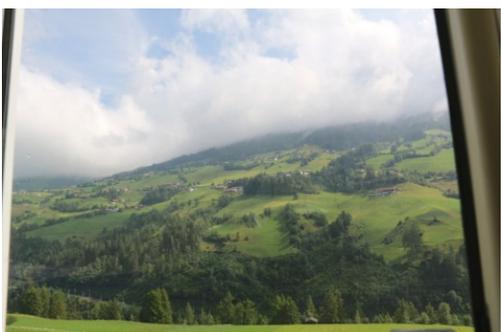
Mutters in on a plateau overlooking Innsbruck, it is quaint and beautiful. We had a cycle around Mutters and it was absolutely stunning. Only small but perfect little alpine village. In fact, I can imagine this place being the perfect christmas romantic getaway. Little pub with log fire, church, alpine retreats, spa hotel, stables etc and no matter where you looked you could see one of the many mouton peaks.



We managed to get a mobile signal, so I did a few admin chores included telephoning our insurers to renew our motorhome insurance. Must admit the price is pretty good for fully comprehensive, both of us, full-time travel within Europe and breakdown recovery £439.



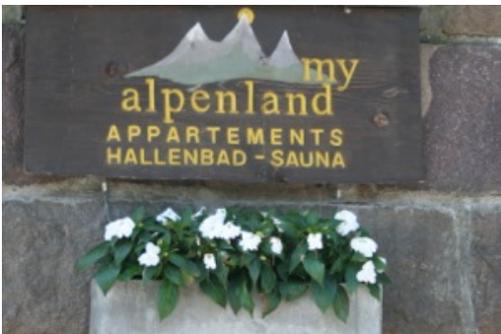
We were happily sat on the village bench when all of a sudden 101 German walkers descended on the village. All looking rather focused and ready to march up a mouton path. Craig stood up to move Peanut and this woman sat straight in seat. Cheeky mare but she didn't care and she was having the seat. Rather than create a fuss we cycled a few yards up the village, at least we can get away from the noisy buggers. We watched the horses and then cycled down a little lane. We found one hell of an amazing house with fabulous view but even more impressive...infinity garden. Forget the infinity pool this house had the garden with mouton backdrop, how blinking cool is that. And to top it off, they have one of those robot mowers. I leaned on their fence and watch the mower bump and grind its way around the lawn. This is what I call a perfect home.





Back in Homer and no idea why but it was like a bloody fly fest. Everywhere you turned you got a buzz. God they are so ugly and annoying, Got us thinking about the fly. What is their purpose in life? Have they got one? Apart from annoy the shit about of us. Every time one landed it

ticked me and made me itch. Aaaargghhh damn flies. Half an hour later and we were off, which was a good thing because the hotel builder turned up and he didn't look too impressed with Homer on his car park.





Big enough for a bath, go on
Craig dip ya toe.

We tried to park on the cable car car park but no overnight camping, so we travelled east. Not pulled in a few places but everywhere no motorhomes or no overnight parking. We were getting a little worried that Austria may not be a good place for motorhomes. After all the place is impeccably clean and not a weed out of place, so I cant imagine wild camping being something they welcome with open arms. We spotted a lovely pink and white building and decided to pull over for a toot. As we did we noticed a hidden park. That will do us fine, we parked up, had dinner (fresh salmon & new potatoes, yum!) and closed shop for the night.



Craig someone has just walked passed the van. Craig I can hear voices. Are you sure? Well I am not sure it was a person but certainly something went passed. I don't like it here, it feels spooky all of a sudden. I bet this park has bogie men. No worries chuck we'll move. We moved to a lay-by on the main road and fell fast asleep.

Saturday 26th July: Watters to Schlitters

With the back and forth of last night, it was 9.30 before we woke. When we did there were quite a few cars around. Mainly locals taking their dog for a morning walk. The Austrians seem to have an air of aloofness about them and unlike the Italians who are curious about you, these guys just don't want to know. Don't get me wrong they are friendly but their confidence in what and who they are means they don't need to interact. However, we've only been here a few days and our views may well change

Just watching them is great and a bit general we know but it seems you have two types of fellas

- The well dressed, very masculine and strong features (Arnie)
- The hippy come soft rocker. Still strong features but straggly hair (hairy bikers)

Then the women...

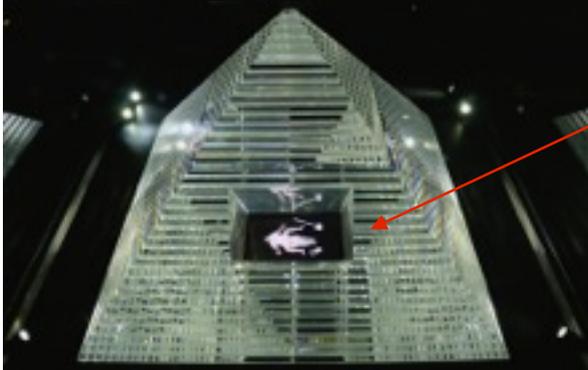
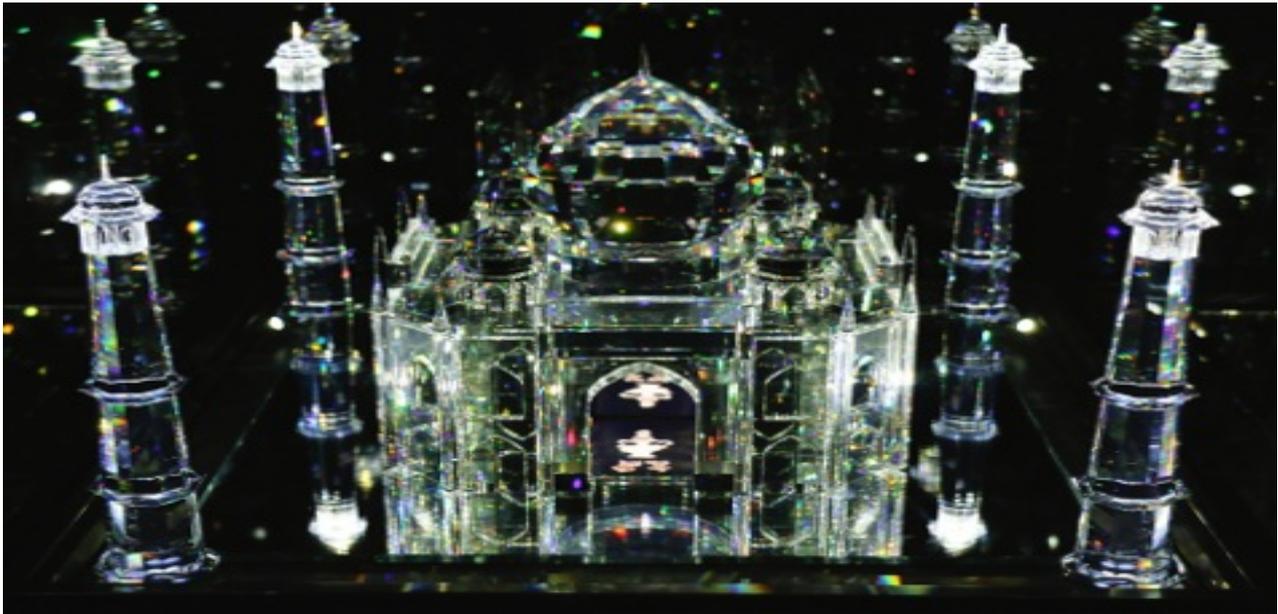
- Slender and very athletic with pert little bum no matter what age. (I think I look like this until I look in the mirror hahaha)
- The stocky ladies who eat shot put for breakfast.

After breakfast and completion of the people watch survey we headed off down the road to the Austrian Wonderland...Swarovski Crystal. We paid our €11 each to get in and had a bit of a laugh with the Australian ticket lady. Her accent seemed as out of place as ours! I was so



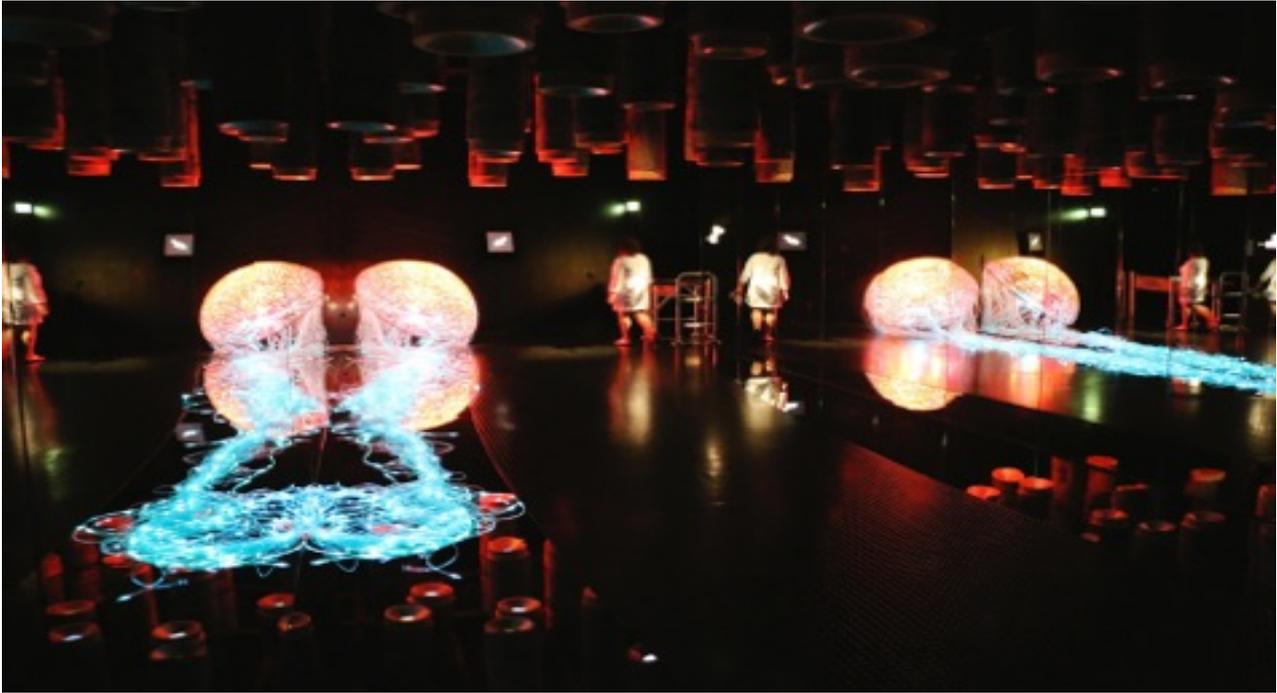
looking forward to seeing the crystal world and on the entrance wall there was a quote from some guys "Simply amazing and even better than one of the seven wonders of the world" This mad me even giddier and could help but give a little hop, skip and chuckle. Craig did his typical man thing, slowly strutting his stuff like he wasn't bothered but seeing me giddily made him chuckle too. Wow, look at the entrance. A massive waterfall in the shape of a face, it looks great. Where's the entrance, oh its there, underground. Ahhh that's why we couldn't see it from the main road. As we entered it went pitch black and then as our eyes opened we could see a huge crystal wall. Wow and the world largest crystal and massive horse with crystal every where, it was captivating. It was brilliant and couldn't wait to see the rest. But that's it folks, the rest was errrr nothing like we expected. Don't get me wrong, it was OK if you are in to modern art but I was expecting to see crystal and not





Look Inside. some wannabe's wacky art collection of white shirts flying around a dark room. As we walked from room to room we got more and more puzzled as to why we weren't seeing crystal. It was only right at the end (almost in a corridor as some after thought) they showed a few cards detailing the





Jelly Fish for our friend, Keith?



history and a few of the Swarovski pieces. We left rather disappointed and confused but tried to be balanced...maybe its nicer when it snows?

As we travelled down the road, Craig spotted a policeman on a bike. We pulled over and I took some photo's whilst he asked about the toll system and this go box. The policeman was very polite and basically said if you keep on the small roads you don't need any pass or box. You only need the box for the motorway or toll roads and it is an automatic prepaid box, which is mandatory for our weight of vehicle. If we don't use there is no problem because we can cash it in at the German border. As we set off again, we seemed to pass loads of motor homers and in usual fashion we waved hello to fellow drivers. The road seemed smooth and followed the chalky, limestone river all the way to our stopping point.

We looked at route options over a cup of coffee and by the time we'd finished it was raining. Nothing for it, lets go singing in the rain. Peanut joined me for a wee paw tap but Craig just shivered at me from Homer's window. Yeah, I am bonkers but I don't care, the rain is soothing my skin, so I am gonna sing a little Tommy Steele just like I used to when I was a little girl. Me and mum sat in front of the TV, crossed legged and singing our hearts out.



Every day it seems to stink of cow shit but for the love of us we cannot see any cows. Now I know there will be cows in the hills but by christ if that smell is from them then they have a serious problem. The farmer needs to rethink their diet cause it damn hums.

We didn't go too far, it didn't seem any point with all the cloud and rain. It was good cloud like little balls of cotton wool within the valley. We found a perfect spot right in the middle of the mountain peaks. Massive tarmac plot in middle of grassland. When we stepped out and Craig shouted hello and it echo'd around the valley. We played around with the echo's for 5 minutes before settling down to admire the views with a bottle of merlot.

Sunday 27th July: Schlitters to Garberbach

We both woke with a bit of an icky belly. We've been fortunate so far but then again we are quite strict on bottled water and food hygiene. Not sure if its the spicy kebabs Craig made or the glass of merlot.

Time for a new bar of soap, so I opened up the new 'organic' au natural soap we bought in Ferrara. Made from only natural products, so as not to aggravate my skin. Half way through the shower I slung the soap straight in to the bin. It was like showering with a block of lard, it was greasy and I stunk like a chip pan, why am I such a sucker for produce (I hear Craig mutter to himself).



Craig well impressed with portable air pump.

We set off, east to the Ziller Valley. Travelling through dense evergreen forests and fast flowing rivers that cut through to make lush valleys that sit of the an abrupt and demanding snow capped mountains. As we travelled along the quiet road we passed numerous villages all offering some type of extreme sport from rafting and climbing to skiing and tobogganing. As you would expect quite a few elder people were walking whilst the younger crew were off doing a bit of mouton biking. We did see the train quite a bit and seems like it would be a good way to see the Tyrol. I bet you get some amazing views from a train journey (mum). The lush green pastures seem like they'd been spray painted,so intense in their colour and so pristine. The area

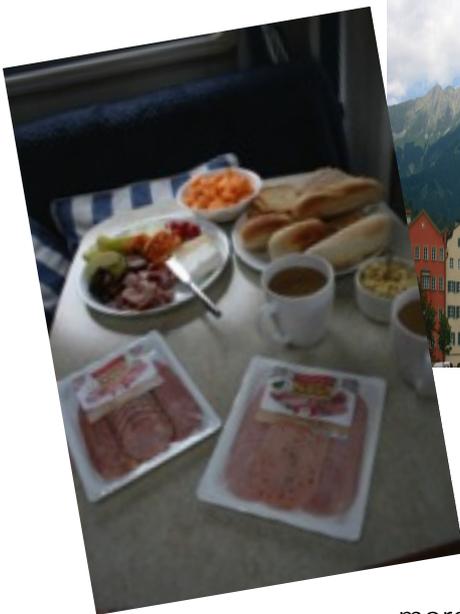


Look closely at the cable cars going from 1 hill to the next and disappearing in to the cloud. Then hand glider! appeared



landscape is so vast but you'd swear someone had just mowed the

lawn. We pulled in at some village for lunch and had a full blown Austrian Spam Fest. We had every spam going and whilst it was a good cultural lunch not sure we'll be dashing for another anytime soon.



It was funny, I chucked a piece of ham for Peanut and it landed on his head. It stuck well and truly and no matter what, it wouldn't come off. We called him Ham-ed. Then we chucked more and called him mo-hamed. Peanut shook like mad to get them off. Eventually poor Peanut was like a

walking spam dog, it was a shame but funny. We had a laugh and he got a spam dinner.



As we travelled further in to the valley the views got more and more impressive - to the west Tux Alps and to the East Kitzbuhel Alps. We kept on going and the quite road became narrow and narrower and we started to climb. Hey up we're off taking Homer for an adventure. The villages



around here are renewed for the their singing and apparently this is where Silent Night comes from. As we climbed higher the road split. We went left and slowly climbed right up to the



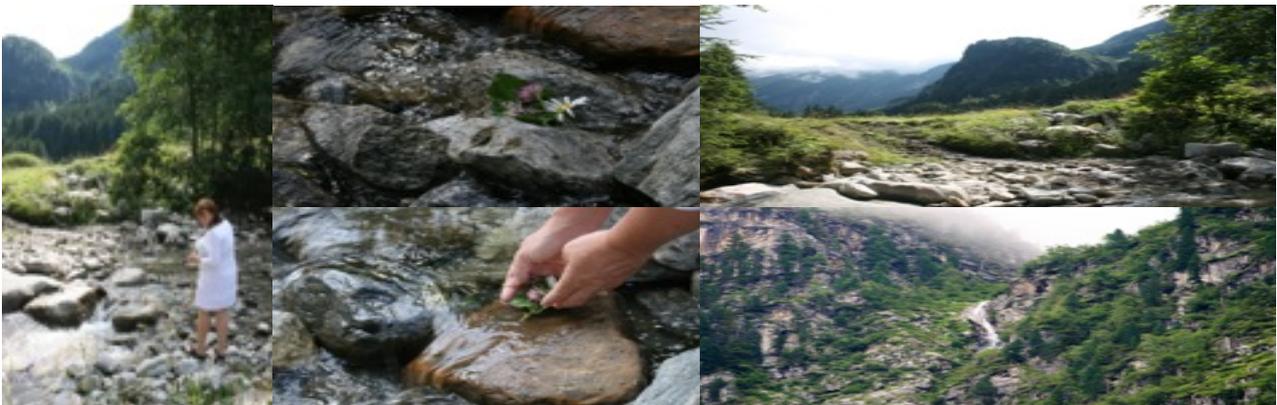
top, Passed Mayrhofen, which was hosted the World Cup ski run and later deemed to dangerous. We ended up right in the heart of the Kitzbuhel range and it felt like we were driving through a narrow crack and any moment now the crack could open a little more and we'd drop through. At the end of the road, a majestic but fierce glacier Olperer. Now



this is what we call a pass! We pulled in to a little lay bye at the side of the road and watched a couple take a dip in the river. Jeez not sure we want to take a dip in that cold water. It might be spa like



but you'll catch your death plunging in there, After a bit of a walk we collected a few things and went to the top of the path and found the start of the river. We cupped a little lily pad and placed a few alpine flowers around it before sprinkling a few of Russell's ashes in the middle.



We found a good spot and then gave him a little nudge and off he floated from one of the highest and most beautiful places in Europe. The little stream soon branched off in many directions from green alpine lakes to magnificent waterfalls.

On the way back we spotted a piece of rock for Michele xxx. For some strange reason we can't find any of the candy sort, so a bit of Alp is the best we can find.

Craig came up with a good idea...BBQ and so we got our act together and fished out the barbie. We had sausage, chicken,



jacket potatoes, corn on the cob and Peanut had his own little calamari. All this whilst we listened to some classical music. Craig used to hate it but now he's getting used to the odd piece or two. With full bellies we put our feet up, turned up the tunes and hummed away to a Mozart or two. Then we both melted away listening to one of my favourite pieces Adagio, so beautiful but so moving, a great end to a wonderful day. But can't wait for tomorrow and Monday, so excited with our plans, feel like a little kid.

