



OUR BUMBLE EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME.

BY JOANNE & CRAIG.





THIS WEEK

Hello everyone, this week has been busy and a pain quite literally. The Bumble took a back seat for a few days and we ended up behind, very behind as you'll find out. One of us is not with the other at the moment so read on to see what been going on.

Sorry once again for the delay but life on the road presents certain ups n downs and times.

Krugzell To Bad Waldsee

SUNDAY 8 NOVEMBER

Nothing sexy folks as today is administration day! Today, we head to Bad Waldsee for Vin's repair, so I need to transfer some pennies in readiness plus once a month I do all the admin chores like topping up our Euro account and paying any bills. First, we moved to the village of Bad Wurzach, so I could access the internet. I did the admin and Craig went for a wee walk.

With chores done we had a bit to eat and I then went and fed the ducks. Hungry little buggers too but I just love watching ducks they are so cute! Then we went for a walk around the village. Nothing of great attraction but it is a really pleasant village. The sort of place you could settle down and live. A small high street with a few convenience shops, a large village green and a peat rich aka muddy but very attractive river. We strolled through across the green towards the park whilst Craig chatted on about the options of collecting energy via prop shaft and a beefed up version of a dynamo. He comes up with some great ideas and a times I do wonder how his mind works. I would never think of such fantastic things. Craig's ticking mind aside, it was a lovely walk and so nice too see everyone out in the gardens, playing with the children or taking grannie for a walk. At the end of the village, a very busy restaurant serving a wide variety of German sausages.

The drive to Bad Waldsee didn't take long and once we arrived we headed straight to the



Hymer service centre. We are not having the repairs done at Hymer but we do know we can park at the centre and get free electric and water. Once settled in, we pulled a few things together as we are not sure if we can stay in Vin during the repair or if we need to find a B&B. Last year, HK let us return to the motorhome each evening to sleep, so we are hoping for the same this year. Having said that, I am sort of hoping they say we cant sleep in Vin then we can enjoy the comforts of a B&B and a soak in a bath. This may sound daft but we have been living in the motorhome for nearly a year and a couple of nights in B&B would just feel like heaven. Plus it means we will have to eat out for breakfast, lunch and dinner, a true treat. Craig is hoping for the opposite and I think he is mortified by my thoughts. After getting Vin ready, we put our feet up and watched a film.

Our Bumble verdict: Bad Wurzach is a pleasant little place to visit for the day.



Bad Waldsee To Wolfegg

Above: Our repair centre.

Below: Pharmacy sign on a wall.



MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER

Up bright and early. Craig was buzzing around and at 6.30am he was ready to drive over to HK. I told him to chill and relax, it is a 10 minute drive and we had agreed a time of 9 am but oh no, we had to be early.

We arrived and at HK, a small motorhome repair unit run by two chaps who are based just down the road from Hymer. Both were trained at Hymer and set up on their own several years ago. When Hymer get too busy they refer people to HK. Last year, they repaired a shower/water ingress problem and they did an excellent job. The younger of the two chaps was already in the workshop, so we said hello, discussed the repair and then left him to it. Well, nearly! As we were stepping out of Vin the habitation door spring broke. We couldn't believe it!

By 8.30am we were sat in a cafe in the centre of Bad Waldsee having breakfast. The same cafe we visited last year, a small bakers offering coffee and fresh pastries, which are just so delicious. With full tum's we had a stroll around the centre, which

is really very pleasant before walking up to the thermal spa and lake. To our surprise the thermal spa had an overnight camperplatz with full service facilities, we could not remember seeing this last year. I fancied a spa and pamper but not for Craig. On the way back to the village we spotted a vets, so we nipped inside and asked about dachshund breeders in the area. The vet was very helpful and explained hardly any breeders in the area. He knew of just one breeder some 20km away but he was unsure if they had any puppies. He scribbled down the address and we thanked him for his time.

We were just looking at options for lunch when the phone rang asking us to head back to Vin for 1pm. Blinking ek that is quick.

Back at HK and Vin was already to go to the paint shop. The older of the two partners joined us in Vin and we drove 15km to a small village of Wolfegg. Once at the paint shop we reversed Vin in to a paint bay and we set off for a cycle around the village.

Wolfegg is only very small but it is very pretty. One bakers, a restaurant, tourist information, hotel, Schloss, church and a dozen houses and surprisingly a camperplatz. We cycled around looking for something to eat but not today, the whole village was eerily quiet. It was steeped in that kind of silence that makes you begin to wonder, is this normal or did something happen here. Is everyone OK or did everyone get poisoned in the middle of the night? Not a soul around despite our best efforts to find life. We pressed our faces on the bakers window in the hope someone would feel sorry for us and feed us even if it was bread crumbs but nope. So, we tootled on up to the Schloss, a fine Renaissance

castle. We wandered in to the cobbled courtyard but unfortunately everything was shut. However the winged castle with towers at each corner was beautifully maintained and you could see some fine classic cars tucked neatly in to one of the arched garages. The castle dates back to 1500's and often holds concerts for the public. To the side of the castle, a nice stone church with a beautiful interior.

We still had an hour or so to kill before heading back to Vin, so we had a wander over to an orangery. It was empty but it had nice views down the valley towards the river. A good place to park our bums for a while and gaze at the forest. After a while we noticed a few white dots in the distance then a few more. We stood up and studied closely. They were deer but not any deer they were beautiful white deers with massive antlers. We have no idea how many but at least a dozen or so and they were just roaming around in the forest. We watched them for a while, so majestic. Then we crossed the road and watched some fat chicken peck at the floor. You see a lot of free roaming chickens in Germany and they all look to healthy and happy and...fat! In fact, all the farms look so well kept in comparison to the rest of Europe. Not only are the animals healthier but the farms are so clean.

We arrived back at the paint shop to find Vin primed and ready for painting, tomorrow. The owner had a brief chat before he closed the shutters and locked up. It was 5pm and pitch black, so we shut shop, grabbed some food and flopped in bed. A long day, we were shattered.



Wolfegg To Bad Waldsee

Above: In the paint shop.

Below: Craig orders some cakes. Yum Yum.



TUESDAY 10 NOVEMBER

We woke early, so we could be ready and out by 8am. The paint shop wanted to start the final coat for Vin first thing and we didn't want to delay them. Sure enough 8am and Vin was back in the booth ready to have his rear sprayed.

We cycled back to the village of Wolfegg and to our surprise we found some people. It sort of took us by surprise as after the dead day yesterday. First, we headed over to the tourist information office and sat on the benches. It was a cold, crisp morning but the sun was shining and if you perched yourself in the rays it was lovely. Nice and warm. With a comfy warm seat we checked out the internet and whey hey, it worked. We logged on and spent an hour or so checking our routes, emails, weather and travel plans.

Tapped out on internet we shot over to the bakers and we both enjoyed a hot coffee and a cake. The racks of fresh bread not only smelt fab but looked so fluffy, so we also got a loaf for later. At €8 (for everything) I didn't think it was too bad but Craig

thought it was expensive. We agreed to disagree.

We headed back to Vin for lunch time and after an inspection and a chat with the owner we were on our way. They had done a superb job and Vin looked amazing. Back to HK in Bad Waldsee where they put the finishing touches on to Vin like the stickers and the rear light. Unfortunately, they had forgot to order the bottom skirt and so Craig was not impressed. By late afternoon, Vin was like new and he looked great. It felt good to have him back in tip top condition. We paid the bill (say it quickly) €2700, which we can claim back from the insurers (all approved) and headed on our way. The HK guys have done a great job but something didn't feel right between their partnership. We didn't get involved but clearly their relationship has broken down and you can feel the atmosphere. A bit like us two when it comes to costs (ha). Whilst they did a fantastic job we are not sure we would go back because of the tension, it felt uncomfortable.

We proudly drove Vin up the hill and parked him on Hymer. Craig went in to the service reception and asked if someone could look at a few things for us. The receptionist booked us in for 7.30am in the morning.

By the time we had settled down and plugged in it was time for something to eat and then bed. Another long day but well worth it, Vin is starting to look like new.

Our Bumble verdict: Both Bad Waldsee and Wolfegg are nice towns to visit.



They forgot the new bottom skirt.



The old one went back on.



All good as new, well nearly.



Bad Waldsee

Above: Hymer in town.

Below: Receptions at Hymer.



WEDNESDAY 11 NOVEMBER

Up at the crack of dawn, again. It feels really strange having to get up for a given time. We have been travelling for nearly a year and with no schedule we just get up when we want. To be honest, our body clocks are now sync'd to the sun, so as soon as we see a glimmer of light we are up. Well Craig is, I usually roll over and nick his warm bit, have a good stretch and then slowly climb out and stumble everywhere. We usually doss for about an hour with coffee and breakfast before hitting the shower. But today, it is up, swill and dress. Blink and the Hymer guy is at the door ready to inspect.

We explained that we didn't know if still under warranty, so if not, could we have an estimate. We asked him about the habitation door, the table runners, the microswitch on the tap, the chopping board, the fridge/freezer. He noted everything down and went back to the service area only to return minutes later saying they would repair everything, this morning. Wow, we didn't expect that. We grabbed the computers and went over to the reception area whilst Vin went back under the knife. As he rolled away, I am sure he gave us a cheeky wink!

We waited in the reception area and took advantage of the free wifi. We finished Our Bumble and sent it on its way!

After an hour or so, Michael returned to inform us he was not happy with the door. The inside was wet due to a leaking window, so the inside mechanism would slowly start to fail. He informed us that he was going to change the whole door but it would take a while longer. We didn't care about the time we were so pleased that they had found the issue and were sorting it.

I was getting hungry and with Vin in repair Craig agreed to walk in to Bad Waldsee. By now it was 2pm and the bakers and cafes were low on stock. We opted to head in to the local pub and sample German pub grub. It was a very traditional pub with wooden chairs and tables, open fire and low beams. In the corner, three elderly gentlemen having a chat. The young girl behind the bar kindly explained the pub menu, which consisted of sausage blonde, sausage smoked, sausage local and chilli con carne. Craig ordered the local sausage and a beer, I ordered a chilli and a coke. We sat on the table by the door! Minutes later we were the centre of attention. It always happens to us. We had sat in someone's seat and when he entered the pub he was not too impressed. It sounded like the young barmaid explained to him that we were tourists but he didn't care. He sat down at our table and glared at us with his favourite tankard full of mulled wine. The 3 chaps in the corner were absolutely pissing their sides laughing at the old chap. We smiled and tried to make conversation but the fact we could not speak German and he could not speak English made it a tad difficult. Eventually, the young barmaid came over and helped translate. During the next half hour more people trickled in to the pub and each time they joined in the conversation. In the end we had a good chat and a brilliant laugh with the whole pub. We noticed a few people wearing traditional

black hats with badges and pins. We didn't know what they were but as one man kindly explained, it is a tradition to wear the hats and pins on remembrance day. The only day we turn out without the camera! Craig picked at his sausage wrapped in thick pigs stomach and I picked at my chilli. The food was very average but the characters and the entertainment certainly made up for it. A great afternoon.

Back at Hymer and Vin's second make over was nearly complete. The fridge/freezer seal was not right, so the Dometic (manufacturer) engineer was coming out tomorrow morning to fix. Well we certainly can't complain with the service. Its been absolutely belting. Not only are they quick, efficient but they are extremely friendly. Oh and to top it all Vin has even acquired an exclusive, limited edition Hymer pen, which now takes pride of place in Vin's one and only pen slot.

Once again, a quick evening meal before shutting up shop and hitting our bed. That reminds me, Vin feels a lot warmer now his garage door is fixed. No draughts and a snug seal. Think we got the repair done just in time before the rain starts and the freezing cold nights arrive.

Then just before bed....oops something isn't right. Vin is not beeping? Looks like they have changed the door and forgot to replace the alarm sensor. Hopefully, a quick job for them tomorrow.

Bad Waldsee To Weingarten

THURSDAY 12 NOVEMBER

Up early to see Michael about the alarm. We wanted Vin in the workshop before they got too busy and the freezer guy arrived. Sure thing, Michael whipped Vin in and out the garage before we could blink and sorted the alarm.

The Dometic guy arrived around 10 and by 10.30 we were all sorted. He had repaired the seal, the latch and the patch over the door. If anyone has a Dometic freezer you might want to take a look behind the black plastic panel. There is a moulded gap in the door that should be filled and sealed before they issue for sale but they often forget. The service engineer knew the problem straight away which suggests it happens all too often. This gap allows warm air in the freezer causing constant water leaks. The leak had caused one of the hinges to rust and the engineer did not have the hinge with him but not to worry, customer services are sending one to our home, so we can exchange when we get home.

We stopped at Lidl for some bits and by lunch time we were on our way but not before we checked out the dachshund breeder. A few kilometres out of Bad Waldsee in the middle of nowhere. We found the mansion house, where the grandparents lived on the bottom floor, their children lived upstairs with their children. A true family home. Unfortunately, they didn't speak any English but their grandson came to the rescue

and we were informed they did have some pups but they died. However, they were quite happy to show us the mother...not quite what we had planned.

Today, is a grey and miserable day and the drive to Weingarten was drab. The rolling fields didn't look at green and inviting with imminent rain clouds. Fortunately, it wasn't long and we were seeking out our parking spot for the night. We followed the motorhome parking and found a camperplatz with free parking during the day and €5 for overnight. It is about 1 kilometre from the centre, so not far to walk. We parked up and plugged in to the electric. Craig put €1 in to the machine but it didn't do anything. I told him to change to a different socket but he refused to try in case the machine gobbled up another €1. Instead he drained all the dregs of electric from the bits of left on the other meters. This felt out of character for Craig but guess a year on the road changes you.

I felt cold, my head felt heavy, my ears were itching and teeth felt aggravated. It was almost like I had a cold coming. Grrrr. Craig cooked a fantastic chicken dinner, which I devoured before heading to bed to nurse my cold.



Weingarten

Above:

Below:

FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER

A morning of cleaning Vin and clothes washing before heading in to Weingarten.

We were parked a couple of kilometres out of the town and the walk to the centre was slightly disappointing. Nothing pretty about this place unless of course you find concrete apartments, tipsy tramps and kebab shops appealing. We carried on and eventually we arrived at St Martin's Basilica, the largest Baroque church in Germany. Outside it looked rather grand with its domes and spires. Often compared to St Peter's in Rome but believe us, it can't be compared in any form. Inside a lovely cupola and a massive organ with over 6,600 pipes but that was it. As with all German churches, it was immaculate and very well maintained. One thing I love about German churches are the stamps. Most churches have them and I think it is a really good idea, so children can collect stamps of all the different churches they've visited.





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ The basilica.
- ❖ The ceiling.
- ❖ Lovely wood seating ends.



We had a walk around the back of the basilica towards the university complex but we were stopped. They had turned some of the buildings in to refugee centres and security was tight. Fortunately, we spotted a student taking a short cut towards the town centre, so we followed her tracks. Up, down and around a few corners and we arrived in the small and compact centre. Again, nothing much to rave about just a brief toot before walking back to Vin.

We debated if we should move or stay but with fading light and drying clothes we decided to stop for the night. We had a bite to eat and then had another look at the plan. Weingarten was not at all like we expected and as Ravenburg sounds similar we thought we would now give it a miss. A change of plan, we are now going straight to Meersburg.

By Friday, we plan to be in Haslach in the Black Forest. Our German friends, Peter and Carola live there and we plan to visit them for a couple of days. We are so looking forward to seeing them again.

Our Bumble verdict: Nice church but nothing else really.



Weingarten To Meersburg

Above: Meersgarten centre.

Below: Stone statue.



SATURDAY 14 NOVEMBER

We are parked on a small dedicated camper spot, which is actually just a small section of a rather large car park. The car park is more like the community centre that a parking lot. Yesterday, ADAC (German RAC) diagnostic arctic was parked up offering winter diagnostics for cars. The queues were not stop all day. Today, it is recycle day and people are queuing up to off load their rubbish. The recycling here is amazing and so organised. An massive truck arrived, dropped down the side of the truck to reveal a neat recycling unit. People patiently queued until it was their turn to hand over their rubbish. Its not just the organisation but the whole attitude to recycling, it is much more advanced that at home.

After filling Vin with water from the service point we headed out of Weingarten. We drove along the empty roads passing through small and compact villages. The weather was still cold and the skies were flat and low but at least we were out of Weingarten. We travelled the gentle, mini roller coaster road all the way to Meersburg. We passed endless vineyards and orchards all void



Above: An old town entrance gate.

Right: The town has a small Zeppelin museum.



of any colour. None of the brilliant golds and reds of autumn just bare wood and dull skies. This is the start of winter, lets hope it is not long before the snow falls and brightens everything up.

We arrived in Meersburg and headed straight to the car park on the lake. No motorhomes, sigh. A sign all too familiar in Germany and rather annoying when all we want to do is park for a few hours. We headed a little further, parked on a small lane and had lunch. A wonderful sushi and salad with ginger and soya, so yum. We debated

going back to Meersburg or carrying on. Shame to not visit such a pretty village, so we headed back and found a camper parking place just over 1 km out of the village.

Meersburg is on the edge of Bodensee, the largest lake in Germany. This quaint little village is often overlooked as people usually park up and jump on the ferry to Konstanz or Mainau island. However, Meersburg located on a hillside covered in vines is very pretty with a lakeside cafes and medieval village perched on top of the



Images Clockwise:

- ❖ The Schloss.
- ❖ Buildings in town.
- ❖ The old castle overlooking the lake.
- ❖ Waterwheel.
- ❖ Joanne on a plate.





Above: Setting sun on a small vineyard.

Right: Statue by the Schloss steps.



steep hill. We walked around the upper part of the village admiring the old half timber framed buildings, a huge waterwheel, the Schloss and the oldest inhabited castle in Germany dating back to 7th century. The castle was rather grey in colour but it did have a prime location on top of the hill with aspects winding all the way down to the waters edge. The Schloss immaculately painted with lovely gardens had the best panoramic view of the lake with hillside stacked in golden leaf vines. We walked around the cobble streets tooting in shop windows full of

train toys, musical bears and soft home furnishings. The cold wind combined with fading light made it rather cold for wandering around shops, so we headed back. As we passed the church we noticed the local mariner choir were performing a one night special. The walk up the hill to Vin was brisk to keep the cold at bay and once inside, we locked up, closed the blinds and turned on the heater. Its cold, looks and feels like winter has arrived.

Our Bumble verdict: Lovely area to visit.

Meersburg To Tengen

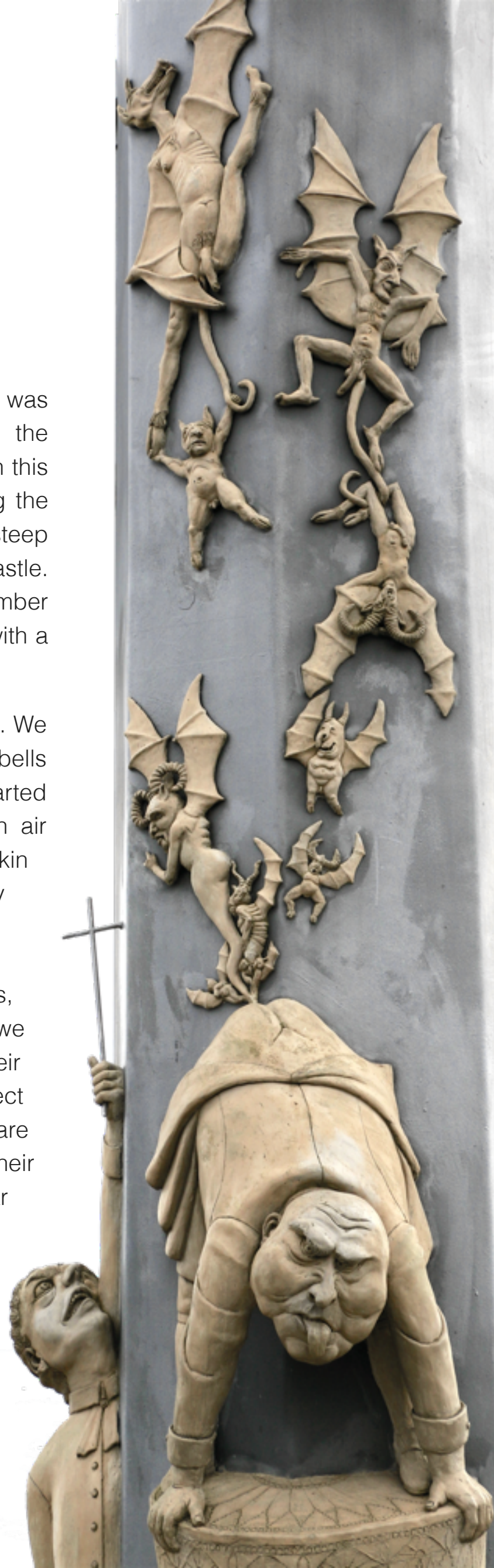
Right: The odd post on the pier.

SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER

Another stroll in to village but this time to the waters edge. It was only early, so the streets were still fast asleep and the abandoned beer bottles were the only sign that life exists in this little village. We walked to the small marina and out along the jetty. From here we got the best views of the village with steep hillside covered in golden brown vines leading up to the castle. At the end of a the peer, a strange statue. It contained a number of odd cartoon like characters...one farting and a woman with a fish up her skirt?

Today, the wind has a nasty bite and its chilling to the bone. We walked back in to town via the promenade. The church bells rang out all over the village and slowly but surely people started to stir. A handful of cafes offering both inside and open air seating. What I do like is the open air seating has sheep skin rugs, cushions and blankets to keep you warm. Not only looks cosy but it is colourful and inviting. The cafe owners were just starting to open up and as we walked by they all were extremely pleasant. We began to chat about Germans, the culture, the country and the economy. It is nothing like we expected, it is much better and they are so in control of their country, it is brilliant to see. They work the land, they respect each, they give great service etc and as individuals they are ambitious, hard working, health conscious and sure of their place in the world. Of all the places we have visited this year Germany certainly is the one with the booming economy and from what we have seen so far, well deserved.

We wandered back through the village before heading our way to Vin, packing up and setting off. We followed the lakeside for several kilometres when we spotted a beautiful church on the edge of the lake. We



pulled over and had a walk inside. Basilica Bernau was certainly an eye catcher but inside, a very different story. It wasn't bad but not great and certainly not worth the detour.

Back on the road and we spotted a McDonalds, so we pulled over and sent our latest Bumble before hitting the motorway. Eventually, we pulled over in to one of the service stations for our lunch. German service stations are the ugliest in Europe. They are just lorry yards with unsavoury characters and dodgy toilet blocks. We ate our lunch whilst watching a Romanian lorry driver open the side of his lorry and hang out his washing. Closely followed by a Polish driver who ran back and forth salvaging goods from the rubbish bin.

Back on the road and the wind had started to pick up. You could feel Vin rocking overtime a gust of wind hit us from the side. Not long and we were off the motorway and back on to country lanes. We passed endless vineyards and orchards. We spotted a sign from a historical cathedral and through it would be a good idea to follow. But it turned out to be a dud...it was closed for renovations, so we Bumbled on. Just as we thought we might not find anywhere up pops a large car park and an historical waterfall sign. We pulled in to the huge abandoned lorry park. We wrapped up warm and headed off in to the village of Tengen. We followed the signs for the waterfall but after a couple of miles we gave up. The waterfall was no where to be found. We reckon it was that historical it was dried up. The tiny village was extremely quiet with not a lot to offer but it did offer us a parking spot for the night, so can't complain too much.

Our Bumble verdict: Tengen, well give it a miss.

Is that a kipper in your nicks madam?



The lovely church: No photos allow inside though.





Tengen To Feldberg Via Schluchsee

Above: Captain Joanne sails
the lake - ish.

MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER

Up bright and early and after a breakfast we were off. We hit the road to be greeted by truck after truck. Like huge arctic soldier ants they formed a line with loads full of logs. This is the time of year when they start to clear the roads from any potential trees that could fall or damage the road. We passed numerous teams of lumberjacks working hard felling trees.

The drive through the countryside was pleasant but slow and we arrived our first stop Schluchsee . This was originally a glacial lake but was dammed in the 1930s to become the largest single body of water in the Black Forest. Schluchsee is one of the prettiest of the Black Forest lakes. First we parked right by the waters edge but after seeing a no camper sign we moved a little further towards the village. Craig cooked a pork joint for lunch and whilst it cooled we took a walk around the lake. Everything was closed and the lakeside activities were boarded up. We crossed back in to the village at the railway station and wound our way up to the tourist office.



We managed to find free wifi but our connection brought horrid news. Our friends son died at weekend. He was only



16 and knocked down by a car. We can't even begin to imagine how they are coping with the loss and only hope and pray they find the strength to get through this horrid time. It is hard to even think of the right words, we feel rather numb.



A quiet lunch whilst we both took time to think about our friends and send them our love.



It is times like this that make you stop and think about the people you love. The rest of the day was quiet as our thoughts constantly drifted to our friends back home.

With not much going on a Schluchsee we decided to head over to lake Titisee a few kilometres away. A nice pleasant drive and a nice pleasant lakeside village but what a blinking

stupid road system. We drove in to the village followed the signs for the car park, which turned out to be next to the train station. We didn't fancy a nosy night with the chu-chu's, so we went to head back in to the village. Oh no, it is a one way system. After about 20 minutes travelling in the wrong direction we gave up on Titisee and carried on around the lake to Feldberg. We got lovely views of Titisee from the other side and yes, it looks rather nice but if you venture there be on your guard for the one way system.

With Titisee off the list we carried on to our next stop, Feldberg. We drove up and up and up to the highest mountain in the black forest. At the top lots of construction work building a new hotel and road system. We managed to park on the natural museum car park right in front of the sky run.



The view from the top of the peak towards the forests.

We set off and walked up the Schwarzwald peak where, tradition has it, witches and demons once gathered to dance on the witches' Sabbath. Fortunately, it was too cold and windy for brooms tonight but at 4,900 ft we did get a great panoramic view of mountains, hill-side pastures and small villages. A tad hazy but we still managed to see the Alps, including famous peaks such as Jungfrau, Pilatus, and Titlis, as well as the Vosges Mountains, Schwäbische Alb and Monte Blanc. The views were spectacular and we didn't want to go down but the wind hurt. We hid behind the peak monument to seek shelter from the icy wind but it was evil. The wind was not backing down today and with sunset imminent we made our way down the mountain. Along the way a couple of lads opted to do roll all the way down...brave souls. We opted for the

walk and trot route. With only a handful of people and the odd maintenance man the mountain felt eerily quiet. But with this freezing wind no wonder.

Joanne looks into the distant mountains, but at a cost.

Back in Vin and we slowly defrosted. The icicle dew drops slowly melted and our cheeks started to glow bright red. My ears were ringing and after a while they started to burn. Then slowly but surely I got a dull ear ache. After evening meal, I didn't feel too good at all. A mixture of ear ache, jaw ache and a cold, so I hugged my pillow and went to bed.

Several painkillers later and I could still feel the heart beat in my jaw, ear and now tooth. Needless to say it was a very long and painful night.

Feldberg To Sindelingen

TUESDAY 17 NOVEMBER

Morning arrived and I was not a happy bunny. I was shattered and in pain.

We made our way down the mountain and headed to a small village we think it was Hinterzarten but not sure. We arrived and within 5 minutes I was in tears with the pain. Craig went in to the village to seek a dentist and thankfully he found one just up the road from where we were parked. He arranged for them to see me straight away, what would I do without him. I got ready and at the same time, I started to panic. I hate dentists to start with but now I have to visit a dentist that doesn't even speak my language. I was absolutely petrified.

After filling out the paperwork I was led to the..drill room. The receptionist spoke good English and the Dentist spoke a little. In fairness, he was a lovely chap, very gentle and calm. Half an hour later I returned to the waiting room. I had a bad infection in my jaw and in order to drain it the dentist had drilled 4 channels in my tooth. This would allow the infection to drain. I would need to return every few days to the dentist and once it was clear they commence root canal treatment.

Back in Vin we talked over the options:

1. Stay here for a month and let the dentist complete the treatment but that could cause problems because we need to be back in UK for 15 December.
2. Carry on travelling and find a dentist every few days. Feasible but can't guarantee we will find a dentist and one who is will to treat plus it just feels too risky.
3. Fly home, have the treatment and Craig slowly makes his way to the UK.

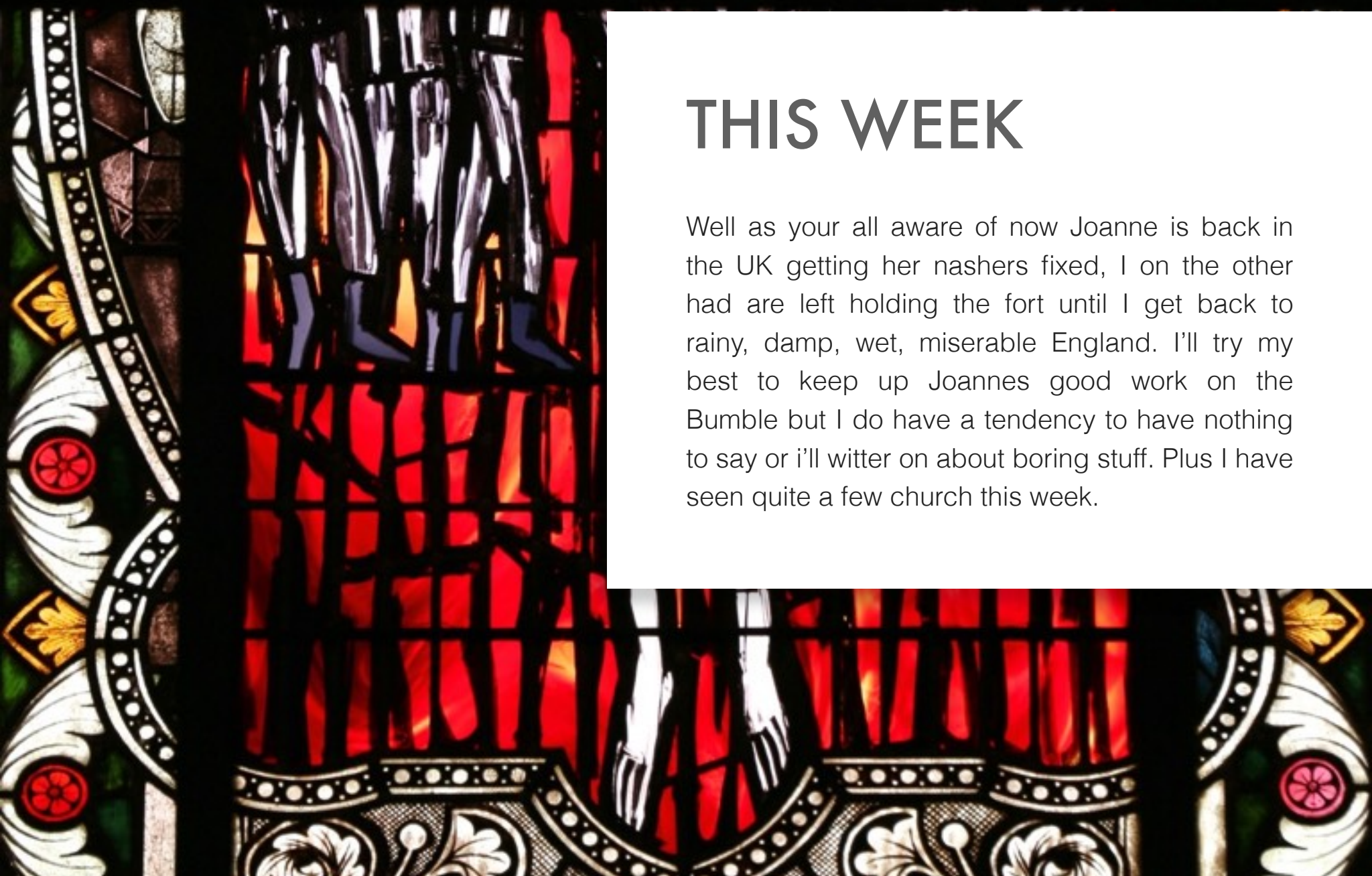
With that we checked out the flight options and after a chat with my dentist, I decided to fly home from Stuttgart. We booked the flight and made our way to Stuttgart. Whilst I knew it was the right decision, I felt extremely low. I didn't want to fly home, I wanted to arrive back in the UK with Craig. We had set off on this journey together and I wanted to arrive home together. Deep inside it really upset me. I know we have our ups and downs like most folks but we are still a couple and love each other to bits. This also meant we could not visit our friends, not the best day.

By nightfall, we were in Sindelingen just outside Stuttgart. we had parked up at a Hymer centre for the night. Not a lovely spot but it'll do



THIS WEEK

Well as your all aware of now Joanne is back in the UK getting her nashers fixed, I on the other had are left holding the fort until I get back to rainy, damp, wet, miserable England. I'll try my best to keep up Joannes good work on the Bumble but I do have a tendency to have nothing to say or i'll witter on about boring stuff. Plus I have seen quite a few church this week.



Stuttgart To England For One, The Other Heads Onwards Towards The Rhine.

THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER

Well we woke this morning both knowing we would soon be part for a few weeks, Joanne packed some items to take back to the UK with her and before you know it it was time to drop her off at Stuttgart's departure point. I returned back to the parking area we stayed at the night before, emptied the loo and ditched our waste water then sat and waited until Joanne called me to let me know that everything was on time and she was on her way back to Blighty.

I was now on my own again but this time Joanne wasn't flying back, I would have to continue on on my own, no wife, no dog, Billy no mates again. I fired up our old TomTom and punched Ludwigsburg into it 40km to go today but hopefully it will be nicer than the building site that is Stuttgart. We set off abroad on December

8th 2014 and I haven't put a foot on English soil since. So far I have sat in the driving seat for over 420 hours, drove over 14,000 km with an average speed of just 33km/h and I've still quite along way to go. My plan, if there is such a thing is to head home but stay in Germany as much as possible, I really like the place, great landscape, interesting architecture, pleasant people, quite cheap, no toll roads but maybe just a little too many sausages. I'll probably then nip through the Netherlands, into Belgium and lastly Calais in France, catch the ferry to dover and then north towards home. 3pm came around and Joanne rang me with the all OK and said she'd call again on getting home, hopefully I won't be to "Scholssed" by that time.

I suppose I'll have plenty of time to reflect on our experiences for the past year, no doubt over a brick or two of cheap plonk from Lidl, I'm not





best know for my extravagance (if it has alcohol in it then it is fine by me.) Life in a tin box can be very testing at times, very rewarding at others, If I have a thought i'll let you know.

The drive from Stuttgart airport was uneventful, 40km of mainly motorway and traffic jams as it goes around Stuttgart's industrial outskirts until I landed in Ludwigsburg. I pulled into the car park mentioned on the TomTom, it looks like it's €10 for 24 hours but at least it has a dedicated motorhome area with waste disposal and electricity at the mighty cost of 50 cents for 1/2kw. I hate paying for car parks but I was in and today I don't really care. Luckily the electric post indicated socket one had over half a kilowatt left, socket three still had over a kilowatt left, so I plugged in that one first then i'll swap over to three later (why let it go to waste is my motto). I washed Joanne's left over laundry then settled in to a night of vino solitude. The car park has a few other motorhomes on it all of which are

German, If i'm lucky I might meet one that speaks English and they can fill me in on the local area. Tomorrow will be my first day exploring on my own again, seeing a town is much faster on my own, I don't get distracted with shops and stuff but still, the old adage is true, an experience shared is always much better than not shared. I miss Joanne already. Time to watch the box and sip (or gulp in my case) that red vino I mentioned.

Knock, knock at the door, it was a little German fellow apparently asking for my €10, I pointed to the ticket machine as he didn't speak English, he said something but I didn't have a clue what. Off he went back across the car park, I'll see if he's legit tomorrow. No badge, no money will be the answer when there's a machine. Now where's that glass of mine?

Above: My very wet spot for the night in Ludwigsburg



Ludwigsburg

Above: The southern end of the Schloss.

Below: Door knocker.



FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER

I woke up to the sound of rain, and lots of it, it was absolutely throwing it down, nevertheless I decided to walk over to the Schloss as it was only a couple of hundred meters away, It looks really nice, set in gardens and what not, the entrance fee was about €8 but I wasn't going any further, I was getting wet through, I haven't even taken my camera of of its bag in fear of it washing away. I headed back to the van and decided to plan my route out a little, hopefully it'll stop raining later and i'll head back.

Well I got a break in the weather after a couple of hours the rain backed off a little so I decided to walk over to the Schloss again.

It was closed!, but you were still allowed to walk through the gardens and central area of the palace. I would imagine that the place is stunning in summertime, all the the Schloss is set in impeccable gardens and has a huge water feature on the south side but as usual for me it wasn't switched on.

The central area appears to house quite a few museums when its actually open but I could at least peer through the odd bit of



Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Statue inside a museum.
- ❖ The Schloss interior.
- ❖ Doorways details.



glass here and there, it looks quite good actually with sculptures and posh old horse carriages. The heavens opened again so I legged it back to Vin to dry off. Now bored I decided to head to the parking machine and put in my ticket, €3 it wanted, much better than paying €10 to the little German.

Our Bumble verdict: Ludwigsburg' Schloss is super, but the town itself is overhyped but still definitely worth your time.

The road from Ludwigsburg to Heidelberg panned out into more vineyards than i've ever seen. All the vines are bald now but still mighty impressive. I passed more towns that produce wine than you can shake a stick at. Don't tell Joanne though, she like rolling hills of grape vine. Well just 11km from Heidelberg I pulled in, this place will do nicely for the day.



Neckargemund

Above: My spot for the day, right on the river.

Below: The towns high street, it was very quiet.



SATURDAY 21 NOVEMBER

Well I got up early and set off towards Heidelberg, the vineyards vanished and were replaced with tree covered hills. I pulled in at a lovely little town right on a bend in the river Neckar, It was called Neckargemund. A quiet little town with great views over the river, I had a walk into town and the streets were lined with traditional looking shops and very narrow avenues branched off one another. There are pathways all along the river too so it would make an excellent place for visit the surround areas on foot or bike, but it's a tad cold at the moment.

The rain started again so I headed back to the van for some lunch, Pizza for one, extra garlic. I spoke to Joanne and then decided to just stay for the day and type up the events so far.

A couple of glasses of vino and it was time for bed, not a particularly exciting day but crap weather always takes the shine of everything.

Our Bumble verdict: Nice enough place to visit or stop for the day.



Heidelberg

Above: Face over a window on the building below.

Below: This old building is covered in faces.



SUNDAY 22 NOVEMBER

I got up at the crack of dawn, peered out the window and oh dear, Joanne won't be happy, My view had changed from rain, rain and more rain to snow capped trees all around, Joanne loves snow and she'd have loved this view. I had just 11km to drive to Heidelberg so set I set off hoping to find a decent spot to park in whilst it was a Sunday. Oh dear, Joanne won't like it again, I found a spot right on the riverside with views across the Neckar river and towards the castle.

Heidelberg was for centuries a centre of political power and Germany's first university was established here, the town has been rebuilt a few times through the wars the last time being in the 18th century. It has a huge castle that dominates the town and it is on a hillside surrounded by tall trees tipped in snow.

A quick brew and I set off to explore the area. I followed the river into town, The north bank is mostly a long park lined with trees backed by some rather expensive looking old properties.



Above: Heidelberg's Alte Brücke (bridge)

Below: Statues on each side.



The south side is Heidelberg itself, the old town is below the castle and gets progressively newer the further you are from the castle. The temperature was pretty low however at just 2°C and there was a low grey cloud covering the hilltops and sky.

I crossed over the Alte Brücke (Old bridge) which was built in 1786 which has elegant statues at each end and a nice gateway to the entrance of the old town.





Above: The Alte Brücke entrance gate.

Right: Haus zum Ritter, now a hotel.



My first port of call would have to be the castle, it's regarded as one of the finest Gothic Renaissance castles in Germany. As I entered the town I passed a rather impressive looking hotel called Haus Zum Ritter which was built in 1592 for a rich cloth merchant and then continued up a very steep pathway leading up to the castle itself.

Halfway up and the path splits into two, go right to the entrance or left to the gardens, I went right and walked up to the kiosk, €6 admission fee, I

check the opening times and might come back later if the weather improves. (Rubbish light for photos) I headed back and down, then took the left pathway towards the gardens. Large sections of the castle are in ruins and in some places huge chunks have fallen off exposing the insides a little. I walked through the large terraced gardens and continued on around the castles perimeter. Joanne would have liked this place.



Images Clockwise:

- ❖ One side of the castle.
- ❖ The north entrance.
- ❖ Remains of the gardens walls.
- ❖ Large sections have fallen away.
- ❖ Water feature in the gardens.





A statue on Alte Brücke looks up towards the castle.

Views from the castle towards the Heiliggeistkirche church.





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Statue at the castle..
- ❖ View from the castle over Heidelberg.
- ❖ Another statue at the castle.



After a good toot around I headed back towards vin to get some lunch.

I walked back down the way i'd came then along through the towns main high street and came across an excellent building, no idea what it was but there where stone heads of all different expressions over each door and window. A few snaps then on again, I walked over to the two main churches in town, both very large, I popped my head around the first one, Heiliggeistkirche but nothing interesting to report on the inside, the other one was holding some kind of service, I don't go in churches if there is a service on, It would feel as though I was being rude or something to the people at prayer, so best to avoid.

The town is getting all festive and many of the shops and stalls are putting the Christmas stuff out. The town and riverside got busier as I made my way back, lots of people walking or jogging along the riverbank. Not something the English really do, shame as every other country seems to.

A spot of lunch beckoned and I typed up my day once again. The sun came out but the temperature never rose above a chilly



Images Clockwise:

- ❖ More stone heads.
- ❖ Heidelberg's high street.
- ❖ Madonna (the singer) must have got her Erotica bra ideas from this one.



8°C, I wrapped up and headed back towards town, 5 minutes later though I was cold and missing Joanne so back to the van again for a hot chocolate with squirry cream on top. I'll watch the world go as the sun sets in my tin box on wheels.

Our Bumble verdict: Great place to visit with and interesting castle. Good shopping options too.



Speyer.

Above: Stonework above the entrance to the Cathedral.

Next Page: The Cathedral and interior.

SUNDAY 22 NOVEMBER.

Well after a craps nights sleep, no idea why, I decided to move on with a quick pit stop for some LPG and a visit to Lidl for some bits'n'bobs. I was heading south west of Heidelberg for about ???km to the town of Speyer. I was just pulling onto the main carpark when I saw a sign for campers, it turned out to be a paid Aire at the rear of a hotel, the pricey sum of €22 a night they charged but as no one was about I emptied the loo and filled up with all the water I could carry before heading back to the towns main carpark again. €2 for 2 hours or €3 for the day, no camping or sleeping in vehicles allowed though. I put my €3 in and was of like a shot to visit the town, I didn't want to hang around to long as I planned on moving again later and the fact a load of gypsy's were also parked up across the road.

The reason for visiting Speyer was the fact that it has huge Kaiserdom or Cathedral. It's a World Heritage Site too. The literature inside says it's the "Greatest Roman Church in the World" Quite a statement, well just to start the playing field even, "No It's Not". It is very big though, so big in fact its the second





Above: Side room with odd displays.

Right: One one of the display items display.



largest in the world after an abbey in Burgundy, construction started in 1030ish and finished in 1124ish and according to the info it's, get ready for this mouthful. "A triple- nave, cross-vaulted basilica with transept, vestibule, choir, apse and several towers. Its magnificent triple-nave crypt, the burial place of Salian emperors, has stunning stone carvings, some worked by Lombard stonemasons. St Afra's, dating from around 1100." The interior is quite simple with some nice stonework dotted about the place but dam those pillars inside look like they might reach god.

There is a crypt and a room to one side which is nicely lit with some odd but very pretty (too me that is anyway) items on display, maybe Indiana Jones should pay a visit. The Cathedral's doors too are incredibly big with some nice metalwork on them. The entrance too is all expertly built in different coloured stones and a brilliant tiled ceiling. Once outside I zipped through most of the town in no time. It's a very nice place in fact with loads of shops and christmas stalls, Quite a few other churches all of which seemed very nice. You could easily spend a full day here, and



Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Another odd piece.
- ❖ Pretty candles.
- ❖ Stonework on the entrance.



another at the towns SeaLife centre oh and another at it's Teknic museum.

I must admit the technical museum was the first thing I saw on entering the town, I looked like a Boeing 747 was landing in front of me. I didn't go in but the place if full of technology stuff, huge planes and an IMAX cinema. I was very, very tempted though to let the little boy inside me out to play but you would have just had to look at tons of techie photo but it looks a great place for a family day out.

Back to the van and I put a wash on, quick shower and a spot of lunch before heading on to my next port of call. I'm now basically driving along with the Rhine river for a while.

Our Bumble verdict: Nice town and worth a stop, especially if you've got kids.



Worms

Above: Not sure what it is but each of the little pillars had German town crest on them.

Below: Section of stained glass in Worms Cathedral.



MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER

I pulled up next to the mighty Rhine in the town of Worms, odd name to us English but there you go. It is apparently one of the oldest record towns in Germany and is home to the Cathedral of St Peter which is one of the largest late Romanesque cathedrals in Germany.

My parking spot for the night is yet another freebie, yah. but there is a proper Aire next to me with electricity etc but was €5 a day. After a good nights sleep I was ready for Worms. The town centre was just a short walk away but the views of the Cathedral are spoiled by tall flats and make the area look a little unsightly. Once passed them though the town is nice enough with quite a few churches, Europe's oldest Jewish cemetery is here and the streets have the odd smattering of old buildings and statues. As I walked through the streets I passed an interesting set of bronze statues, I don't have a clue what it is but as you can see above it is very nice.



All Images of inside the Cathedral:

- ❖ The alter area is in a flat gold.
- ❖ Stone relief.
- ❖ Another stone relief.
- ❖ The back.
- ❖ Tombs in the crypt.





I approached the Cathedral but every door turned out to be locked as I walked round it's huge base, Oh dear I had walked to the back first and eventually got to the front, which was unlocked. I entered but could see a thing for ten minutes as it is very dark inside. My eyes eventually adjusted, the entire thing is made of a red stone, with a mix of old and new styling, some of the windows were clearly very old, others were more like modern art. There are some old reliefs on one of the walls and in the crypt are 9 tombs. The organ was being played and gave an excellent if religious sound as it reverberated around the Cathedral.

The alter bit at the front is very nice, it has some excellent wooden seats with gold trim to match the marble alter itself. Normally gold stuff looks a little cheesy but it was more of a flat gold which goes very nicely with the red stone.

Time to move on again so after another little walk around the town I headed back to vin. A spot of lunch and time to move on again following the river northwards.

The river Rhine is massive and is Germany's major artery of water and lots of industries use it. The Rhine carries more freight than any other river in Europe and by the 1950's the river had become poisonous and by the 1970 and 80's the famous Rhine was also called "The sewer of Europe." and that was the price of all that industry. Thankfully though they had got there act together, spent millions on treatment plants and the river is now no longer poisonous. I don't plan on drinking it anyway.

Our Bumble verdict: Nice enough place to stop at but don't go out your way to get here.

WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER.

The road from Worms was full of industrial plants at first but they instantly stopped and were replaced with mile after mile of vineyards again. Every few hundred metres, perched on the end of each vine was a large bird of prey, there were literally tons on them all sat there watching the world go by, they may also have been trying to spot a rabbit to though. I eventually arrived at Oppenheim and parked up on the towns camper spot, I think it's free and the electric too. So I picked a nice little grassed area and out came the little oil heater we have. The rest of the day was spent typing up again.

I woke up to find that the fee for the site was actually €7 for the night and €3 for the electric. Dam, dam, dam. I set off first thing and made the mistake of driving to the town centre, It might have well have been an Italian village with its very narrow winding streets, most of which had road works on the so it was a pain in the arse to get round, it was still quite dark, snow was falling and reduced visibility and the stupid TomTom sent me around in circles, three times I drove round the centre trying a different way out each time. The van was too big for most of the turns and the road was literally an inch wider than me. I eventually got out of the town but was so pissed off I continued onwards.

I drove along the roads towards Mainz but didn't stop, my temper was still on max, made worse by the fact my back and side was incredibly sore for some reason and driving was painful. After over 120km I finally calmed down and hit the small town of Bacharach. It is situated on the Rhine but like most towns in this area they are very pretty, Medieval in character and and also very narrow.

I spotted an aire on the riverbank and the cost was just €5 for the night. I played safe and decided to spend the day, did a little washing, tidied up and washed the van down. I had a very quick cycle into town and it indeed it is a nice place to spend the day. I'd met a German lady on the site who was on her way to Spain for the winter and she spoke very good English, the snow had stopped but rain had now started so we had coffee and chatted for a few hours about Spain etc.

Our Bumble verdict: An old town with narrow streets, drive in a larger van at your peril.



Bacharach

Above: The towns castle.

Below: Wall sign shows the towns grape production.



THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER.

I woke up early and the forecast was for rain, I decided to walk around the town whilst I had the chance. The sky was very grey and sadly made everything look a little grey too. The town is entered through one a a few very narrow but tall entrance gates. The actual opening though is very low. I walked along the main street and past the Rathaus or town hall to you and me, A sign indicated it was originally from the 11th century rebuilt several times since. If fact the majority of the building are very old, some a far back as the 15th century.

The town was deserted, it was early though but I can image it being packed with people in summer but always quiet at any other time.

All the hillside around the town have vines growing in German precision straight lines and many of the properties also have vines growing on them, they must look very nice when they have colourful leaves and juicy grapes dangling from them.

Up some steps and you arrive at an red stoned church ruin, It looks like a mini cathedral in a way and once must have had



Images Clockwise:

- ❖ One of the towns entrance ways.
- ❖ View across the Rhine from Vin.
- ❖ Old town main street.
- ❖ Bacharach sign.
- ❖ The old church and even older church ruin.





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Old door.
- ❖ Church ruin window.
- ❖ Another old building and ruin.
- ❖ Last of the Autumn colours on an old house.
- ❖ decorative ladder on a restaurant wall.





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Tending the vines for next years crop on steep slopes.
- ❖ New baby in town maybe.
- ❖ A note on a timber beam.
- ❖ The old fortified wall.



some fine leaded windows. The current church looked pretty old too but was closed.

Back down the steps and up some more on the other side of town, I was at the base of the vineyards and someone was tending his precious vines for the next years crop. The town below and the Rhine behind, shame the weather was crap you could get a good photo from here.

I made my way down once more and then around rest of the town, there was a lamppost with baby clothes and a sign on it, maybe a way of announcing a birth to the townsfolk. The odd tree still had the last of the autumn's leaves and the odd person had started to appear. I I was getting cold so walked back to Vin passing the remains of the towns fortified walls. This place certainly has some history behind it.

A quick brew to warm up and I fired Vin up and drove off to a petrol station with diesel at €1.07 a litre, Vin now topped up I continued on to the next town.

Our Bumble verdict: Great little town to visit with lots of wine, history and more wine.





Spay To Koblenz

Above: Pfalzgrafenstein.

Below: Spay church.



THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER.

The drive to spray was all to familiar now, castles, historic towns such as Burg Rheinfels, Gründelbach, Boppard. and castles like the one above which is in the middle of the river itself. (Pfalzgrafenstein) The Rhine bended and twisted through the landscape until I reached a town named Spay. The sun came out for five minutes so I pointed the van into the warming sunshine and had a little walk.

This place is like a German version of a Cornish coastal town, if such a thing exists. Quiet little streets, with homes that looked more like cottages but instead of the seaside you get the Rhine. On the opposite bank in yet another castle. The Marksburg to be precise. It overlooks all below as it sits high on a rocky outcrop.

Across the road is the towns church, Again more English looking than the typical onion domes German style. Inside it is quite plain but with some superb stained glass windows. Maybe once those of the ruined church of Bacharach were like these. Most looked original but odd new one done in a different style. I must admit



Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Old stained glass.
- ❖ Marksburg castle.
- ❖ Newer stained glass.



i'm not religious but the new style windows don't hold a candle to the older ones.

Back at Vin the windscreen central heated had lifted the inside temperature to a toasty 24°C so with that I decided to chill out and have a spot of lunch. The sun soon hid in the clouds and I started to get bored, The computer came out and I look at the map, where next, I looked at the best route back home and what was along the way, Koblenz was the first place that came up, the light was starting to fade but I set off anyway, after all it was only about 18km away.

As I approached the town it didn't look too good, but as I got towards the centre it looks like it might be a good stop. I followed the camper parking signs and they have put me on the other side of town. Looks like the Brompton will get his wheels in action again. Within 10 minutes it was dark so with that it was TV on, sit down and watch a film for the night.

Our Bumble verdict: Spay is a nice little pit stop especially if the sun comes out but the road that is the either side of the Rhine valley is a must visit.

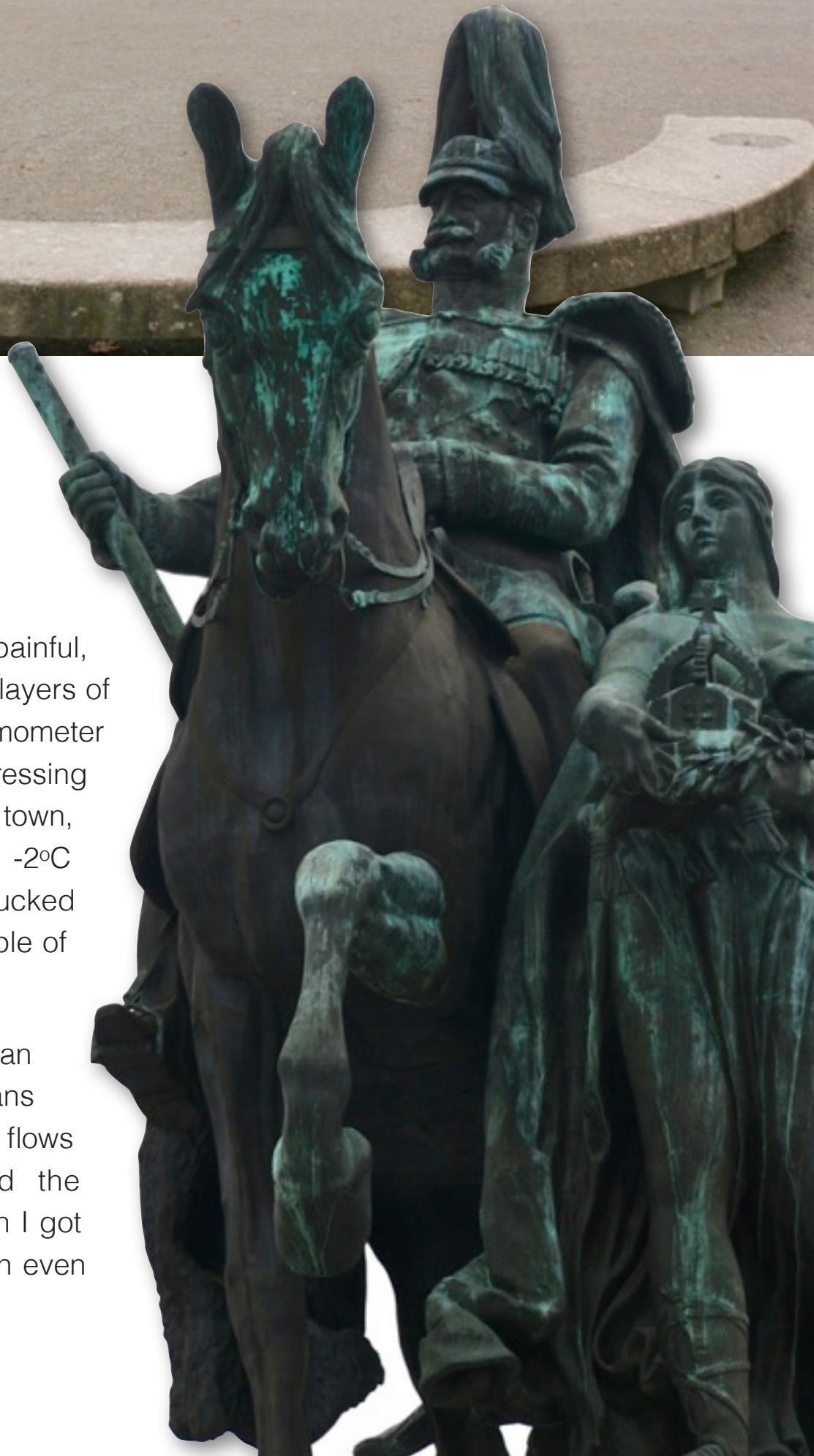


Koblenz

FRIDAY 27TH NOVEMBER

I woke up and my back and side were still painful, not to be deterred I got ready and put lots of layers of clothing on, it looked cold out and the thermometer confirmed it at just 3°C. The sky was a depressing grey and I got the bike out and headed into town, There was a slight breeze so it felt more like -2°C and I cycled along with one hand, the other tucked in a coat pocket and switched out every couple of minutes.

The town's name comes from the old 9BC Roman name "castrum ad confluentas" which means "confluence" as this is where the Mosel river flows into the Rhine river, this point is called the "Deutsches Eck" or German corner and when I got there I was greeted by a huge statue sat on an even





❖ All images of the Basilika St Castor.



bigger arced base. The statue is of “Emperor Wilhelm I” sat upon his horse and is actually a copy, the original was destroyed in WW2 but it is still very impressive, people were climbing the steps at the base and you could get up pretty high within.

Next up was the Basilika St Castor, A large church behind the statue. It was built originally built over 1200 years ago on the site of an even older church. Four tall towers point to the sky and the interior is quite simple with thinly coloured arches on the ceiling.

A cable car runs from behind and takes people to the other side of the Rhine and up to the “Festung Ehrenbreitstein” and old fortress built on a large rock and would offer great views over the city and rivers that flow through it, sadly the cable car is closed in winter so it was a no go for me. I then cycled past a building I liked the most, it wasn’t mentioned in the guide books but dates on the side indicated it may have been built in 1902. Signs at each doorway said it was a military building. It was built out of stone with fine windows and arches above, at the front entrance three bronze looking figures peer down at the entrance below. Two chaps came out and must have been on a cig break, I





Above: Images of the Federal Offices, once the Prussian Presidents Offices.

Below: Xmas markets.



walked over and said hello, They turned and faced be all tooled up with Glock pistols and I was expecting to be told to go away quickly, It seams that all military personnel the world over either don't like photo's being taken or tell you to move along as they point with their weapons. Well not this time, they both spoke a little English so I asked what the building was. They didn't seem sure what I said so I pointed at their weapons and said "Police, Courts, Army." They smiled and said it was difficult to explain in English at which point one zoomed off and came back with some literature about the building.

It turns out it was once a home for priests, a jailhouse, courts for the wars then the Prussian presidents office before it burned down in 1901, Subsequently rebuilt in 1902 and is now the "Federal Office of Bundeswehr Equipment" which means the IT and electronics support for the military.

I thanked them and then took a few quick snaps before heading to the old towns centre.

Everywhere is full of Christmas Markets, Timber stalls and chalets selling sweats, mulled wine, food and of course German



Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Giant fingerprint.
- ❖ Giant thumb is beside the Ludwig museum and faces the Basilica



sausages. They even put wood chipping's on the floor to add to the atmosphere and setting.

The old town is filled with typical shops and lots of bespoke shops too, I passed one shop selling just pipes, some in i suppose a new style whilst other were very traditional looking, but dam they were expensive, average price, just €300. There were hardly any “touristy” shops selling crap which is always good. The town was filled with Americans too as they appeared to be on the

very popular cruises that travel up and down the Rhine river.

I made my way back to the Basilica and spotted a giant thumb. Yes the 7ft tall thumb sits beside the Ludwig art museum is well. a big thumb. I’m not really into art so i never went inside but anything the the name Ludwig in it is usually very good.

As I drove into the town yesterday I spotted a large building so I figured I best go and find it. I



cycled off and ended up at the large white and blue building. It was the “Kurfürstliches Schloss” which is the Electoral Palace. As usual with my luck it was closed but looks like it contains some museums in its outer buildings. Large stone lions on either side appear to guard the building, probably they send off any leaves that land on the luscious lawn in front.

The Germans do like to keep any fallen leaves at bay. In every town there is an army of gardeners clearing up the autumn leaves and mowing the grassed areas. They keep the streets clean like now where else. It is odd though that a country that appears to have the

strictest recycling system I've come across, they cycle to school or work also used huge amounts of screaming 2 stroke petrol engine leaf blowers and not an eco friendly rake.

I was now frozen to the bone, the cold air had taken its toll so I briskly headed back to Vin and put the kettle on. As I thawed out I opened the computer to see where was next and how far it was. I looked out the window and it was now blue sky all above, I checked the thermometer and it had risen to 8°C. Well tuff, the drab grey photos will have to do and with that I tidied up a bit and set off. I crossed and headed away from the Rhine to a place called Maria Laach.



Maria Laach Abbey



First along the motorway and then into the wooded hills until I reached my destination. Maria Laach Abbey which is situated on the edge of a large lake called “Laacher See.” I pulled in to the car park facing the place and looked through the trees. It was lit by the fingers of god. Those rays of light that break through the clouds and seaming highlight just certain things.

Ignition off, boots back on, I grabbed the camera and walked over before the sun went back in. I walked past the information booth, the posh trinket shop, ignored everything else on route and there it was. Gods fingers had stopped pointing but at least it wasn't grey sky all around.

I walked to the entrance to take a piccy of the cloister gardens, I was soon surrounded by a coach party of Germans, sure enough they went in so I decided to tag along and passed through the bronze doors covered in reliefs of the zodiac. Once inside I headed straight for the crypt.

Down the steps to be greeted by not tombs but what I would describe as a mini sanctuary all with little stone archways and low ceiling.

Back in the main church at the Alter end are massive paintings, but not with paint, tiny tiles make up some very impressive mosaics that are similar to those in Granada, Spain. A couple of priests had closed one section whilst they got the hoover out and cleaned away. The German party started to sing away at the back of the church next to a tomb, they were very good even though I couldn't understand a word. With a feeling the visit was coming to an end I quickly snapped away. I must admit it is a very nice place, the Maria Laach is not just a church it also has a Forum, Book and art shops, Garden centre, Fishing, Boating, A Foundry and Farm shop, plus a posh looking hotel too.

Our Bumble verdict: Lovely place to visit for all the family, super place in a super setting.



Images Clockwise of the Abbey:

- ❖ The Abbey entrance.
- ❖ The cloister.
- ❖ Lion water feature.
- ❖ Pillar relief.
- ❖ Tomb.





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ The crypt entrance.
- ❖ Inside the crypt.
- ❖ The Germans sing.
- ❖ Old painting on a pillar.
- ❖ The priests take cleaning seriously.
- ❖ Next page: The superb mosaic alter.







Cologne / Köln

SUNDAY 29TH NOVEMBER

Above: Vin parked beside the Rhine again.

Below: Now facing the other way as the sun was going down.

I woke up this morning and peered out the window, dam, it's grey and wet again so I just worked on the Bumble for a bit then got ready to move on again. I continued up the Rhine for a while before the roads whisked me away for a while until I reached my destination, "Köln" Cologne.

I drove into the city and immediately thought "Nightmare" it looked like one of those places that you'd never find somewhere to park. I crossed the bridge north of the old town and spotted a camper in the corner of my eye. I followed the camper parking





signs but they took me through a car park and into a private camping area that was crammed to the seams with vans. The car park itself allowed campers and even had a service machine (empty the loo, fresh water etc.) but it was a little long and I would have either have to take 4 spaces up or block access to the pavement. I drove along the Rhine towards town again and then spotted the access road to where I had seen that camper, it was just after the coach parking area beneath the bridge. A quick U'turn and I was down by the waters edge. It was 2km to the centre and was free.

The sun came out again so I figured I might as well have a quick dash to the Cathedral just in case the heavens opened again tomorrow and with that I was off like a shot. I'm glad I turned around when I did though as the city centre traffic was a nightmare, that bad, the traffic was being directed on a one to one basis with those

glow in the dark paddles they use at airports. I walked under a bridge that was lit with cyan coloured lights underneath and then up the steps beside the Cathedral. Jesus it was busy, the train station is right next to it so the place was crawling with people. I made my way around the front to the entrance and made my way in.

Above: The congested tunnel.

The Cathedral is called the "Kölner Dom" and is the largest Gothic cathedral in Germany, it was built from 1248 onwards, I say onwards because it wasn't really finished until 1880, It wasn't really damaged in the WW2 bombings even though it was apparently the bullseye to aim for. It really is huge, everything points upwards and the front spires look like they touch the sky.



I was surprised to find out that the stained glass windows are not stained at all, they are actually covered in pigments that are then burned onto the glass. The windows themselves are about 15-20m tall and they are all along the length of the cathedral. They are simply superb and are some of the best I've ever seen. The cathedral has 9 chapels, all containing important religious artwork. The allied forces bombers' lousy aim was their loss and everyone else's gain, Cologne is worth visiting just to see this superb building.

The sun started to go down once again so it was time to go back to the van and settle in for the night. I spoke to Joanne and she's been treating herself to goodies from Sainsbury's (UK supermarket), she's seen her mum and other family members and doing exciting things like jet washing the drive and visiting the dentist.

Above: View from Vin now as the sun had gone down.

Below: A closer view of the cathedral.





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Tall spires touch the sky.
- ❖ View of the side.
- ❖ A gargoyle protects.
- ❖ The towering insides.
- ❖ The famous "Shrine of the Three Magi," Well I think it is.





Images of the stunning glass windows inside the "Kölner Dom."

All are pigment paintings which is then burned on to the glass, not the usual stained glass as in most churches.





I must say though that this morning I nearly got the bike out with its basket on the front, For a split second I thought I'd take Peanut, then I remembered I cannot. As I walked into the centre I thought about the little old dude, I loved how his ears flapped in the wind when he was in his bike basket, how his legs were so short his willy was always on the floor, The fact he never didn't have a cuddly toy in his mouth squeaking it to drive me mad. I do miss our dog. I've put this piccy in before but I love it, it's the last piccy of me and him and I also hate it for the very same reason. Joanne still gets upset whenever she see a little dog and occasionally busts into tears when she thinks of him.

This morning the sun didn't come up just the rain clouds again, stop, start, stop, start all morning. I decided to wrap up and head into Cologne centre again and see what it has to offer.

Well I must say what a disappointment. I hoped the centre would offer lots of goodies to see but apparently not, Yes it does have a few more churches, yes it does have a couple of museums but sadly everything is wrapped in concrete. I never even got the camera out. The shopping area does offer a lot though and the Xmas markets smelled of smoky timbers and tasty foods and they looked very nice but sadly nothing else. It's not that I didn't look either, I must have walked for over 3 hours but it doesn't float my boat. Joanne would say the same too, There is no feeling of anything other than office blocks and concrete blocks.

Our Bumble verdict: It certainly not the best city, but it certainly not the worst, but yes it is worth it just for the Dom.

Well that's it this week folks. It's been awkward with no Joanne for both this "Our Bumble" and the last. Tune in next time and see where I head for next, or will I just get sick of the rain and head straight home after all Calais isn't far away.