

Black Forest, Germany
15th - 19th May 2014
FIRST EDRG'S EUROPE WALKING HOLIDAY

DAY 1

Upon our arrival at Baden-Karlsruhe Airport, we were greeted by 2 German couples, Volker and Helga, Peter and Gitta with a huge banner to welcome us to the Black Forest. Martin gave a brief introduction and then we were whisking away in a hired mini-bus following by two fleet of cars. We stopped somewhere along the route for a break at Mummelsee and they surprised us with picnic by the roadside, offered fresh pretzel, some nibbles and bottles of Prosecco plus orange juices for those who don't drink! Such a nice welcome and around that time another German couple Hubi and Sabine joining us. Brief walking to the lake to stretch our legs before moving on to Triberg which is famous for the world's largest cuckoo-clock and Germany's highest waterfalls. 1st visit to the house of cuckoo-clock with a view inside to see how the clockwork moves! The wheels and cuckoo are made of traditional wood and the guide was explaining how it works and also explaining that her father-in-law was building it. Very interesting! 2nd visit to Triberg for browsing around shops that sell cuckoo clocks, woodcarvings and all kind of Black Forest souvenirs, before starting our walk along lovely trails via asphalted paths, steps and footbridges to the top peak admiring highest waterfalls with an overall drop of 163 metres. Further along the trail we met a beautiful squirrel with reddish coat hopping around without shyness nor fear of us - people! Arrived hotel in Barental which is next to the roadside but in a quiet spot for our evening meal and 4 nights stay.

DAY 2

We took a train out to Freiburg for the day and to meet Michael Kutenbaum who was kindly guiding us around the old city and explaining some bit of history with his excellent signing skills and a lovely smile, although Martin did help with translating from DSG (German Sign Language) to BSL. First stop was a Cathedral which is one of the oldest in all of Europe and is held on the square with a Farmers Market surrounding selling local fruits, vegetables and flowers. At the entrance of the Cathedral, above the arched portal are the ornamented columns and sculptures protected by a wire netted to stop the birds flying in. It has survived the bombing raids of the war and lucky the beautiful stained glass windows had been taken out at the time of the war, so these windows suffered no damage. There are little streams called Bachle which has been built nearly 600 years ago as a water supply for industrial uses and nowadays it runs through the streets of the inner city. The locals say that if you accidentally fall or step into one, you will need to find someone to marry! In addition of the historical city, there are remaining old city walls and two surviving medieval gate towers still standing today. Lastly another piece of history was to visit a deep cellar underneath the oldest inn with its clay floors, pillars, and stone vaults. It now stocks up row and row of bottles. Michael said his goodbye and went off his own way, and then we stopped in the city for lunch. After lunch and a full belly, we were hiking up to the top of Schlossberg along the forest trails from the historic city centre. There is a Tower located on the hill for an amazing view of Freiburg and as far as the Swiss and French Alps. Unfortunately when we got there the tower was closed for health and safety reason but we could see the views around us. Long walk back to the city, passing river and to the station for the train back to Barental.

DAY 3

A day at Wutachschlucht with approximately 5 hours hike along steep and sometimes slippery trails through the narrow gorge down into thickly forests with overgrown roots, craggy cliffs, waterfalls and wild rivers, seeing different kind of ferns and rocks along the way. The most interesting section of the gorge is to see the Canyon which looks like Grand Canyon in Arizona, US and can be sometimes called by the locals 'Grand Canyon of the Black Forest'. At the end of hiking, we took a local bus back to the car park where our mini-bus and cars were waiting for us. 15.5km/9.6 miles.

DAY 4

Morning in Feldberg - hiking up the meadow to the foot of the summit, the highest mountain in the Black Forest even higher than Ben Nevis. There is a stunning panoramic view to the Austrian alps southeast and the French Mont Blanc in the southwest with the Swiss alps somewhere in between. Apparently Feldberg is a ski resort hence there are a few snow left. 10 km/6.2 miles. Afternoon in Titisee - a pretty town with the lake where we were allowing to split up and explore in our free time for shopping, strolling and refreshments.

DAY 5

1st stop at Belchan for a cable car ride up to the mountain station, which is a starting point for numerous hiking paths. From there we walked along narrow paths to the summit - the 2nd highest mountain in the Black Forest to enjoy the view over the valleys to alps. There we made many collection of rocks to form these words '2014 Essex Ramble'. Circular route back to the mountain station for snack and back to car park at the bottom. 7 km/4.3 miles. 2nd stop to Bad Sackingen for a walk along Holzbrucke bridge, the longest wooden bridge with the wooden roof across the Rhine to another country Switzerland. It's a half-way the border between Germany and Switzerland. 3rd stop to a village of Inzlingen for a short walk around a medieval castle surrounded by a moat. Final stop for a meal Lorrach 'the mountain restaurant' before our flight home from Basel Airport, Switzerland.

Finally we have been fortunate with good weather - warm sunny/cloudy days. No sight of rains! Many thanks to Martin Bogard and Volker Diesslin for their bookings, their hard work to make the walking holiday enjoyable and worthwhile. Please see essexdeafamblegroup.weebly.com for more photographs of the trip..

b.s.coryn - 25th May 2014



left to right: Marlene, Helga, Barbara, Sabine, Heidi, Wendy, Gitta, Chrissie

left to right: Volker, Peter, Terry, Martin, Ken, Hubi

