

SALZBURG, GERMANY AND BAVARIA

June 2002

Bill and I are just home from our vacation in Germany and Salzburg, Austria. We were there for two weeks and have so much to share about everything we did and saw. Salzburg was dominated by the Romans and Bavarians from the beginning of the first century. We climbed high up a hill to one of the oldest fortresses in Europe. It is a highlight of the city, built in 1077 and is wonderfully persevered having never been penetrated by outside forces. Although much of Europe is steeped in history, Salzburg is now all about music. This was where Mozart was born. There is a Mozarteum that still serves a growing need for music and a great collection of Mozart's works. We heard an opera in a lovely old castle with velvet seats and crystal chandeliers. It's a lovely city located on a river ready for pleasure with wide bicycle paths and music festivals.

Germany was a learning experience from start to finish. Phew...where to start? I think I'll call it the BIG SIX C's. Christianity, Charlemagne, Constantine, the Crusades, Concentrations camps, and Castles. Northern Germany was awful. In Frankfurt the people were totally rude from the beginning at the airport to the streets in the city. The weather was miserably hot and humid. Some buildings still showed the effects of WW11 and others still have anti-Semitic graffiti...all too common. The whole culture smokes and even the outside air was un-breathable. From here we went to Dachau where some of the literature says that Germany tried to blame the Americans for making the ovens and gas chambers! Now there's a twist on the history as we have learned it. They still don't seem to like us much over there and it is very obvious. Their arrogant attitudes, the exclamation points on every sign, and their fierce need to be superior are all still alive and well in a culture much unchanged from its past. It adds up to the same reasons why they were major players in one of history's worse atrocities.

Since the beginning of time anyone with POWER used it. It was brutal force and most of it had to do with religion.....namely Christianity. Add to that the rats, the famine, the diseases and the ignorance of the day, it is easy to see why one of our historians said...."There really were no good ole days".

But wait. Are you still with me? We found a totally different Germany in the south. Bavaria....they don't like being called Germans.....wonder why? This was quite another country indeed. Nature has blessed the whole area with awesome resources. They are surrounded by mountains and hilltops, lush green valleys and gorgeous rivers and lakes. The cities are charming and the people are friendly. Most of the medieval towns have survived the traffic and pollution of the centuries. There is living history on every road and in every town. It was overwhelming to walk around towns thriving in the same buildings built over 1000 years ago. There were also golden fountains and fairytale castles next to quaint little towns and cobblestone streets.

The pulse of so long ago is still closely connected to the ways these people live today. Life in Bavaria is certainly good. Bill hang glided over the Alps. Just jumped off a cliff at 8000 feet up. Okay, so he was strapped to an instructor...but his name was Tiger!! We rode a luge!! We rode bicycles. We climbed thousands of steps and saw architecture change from Germanesque to Rococo. The brilliance and grandeur of mankind's best was mixed with the history and destruction of its worse. In total, a fascinating vacation.