

Tyrolean Turmoil — 1984

My husband, Martin, had arranged to visit an exhibition in Leeds on the day before our flight was due to leave from Coventry. We decided to drive to Coventry via Leeds and to stay with my sister over night. While Martin was looking round the exhibition I took the boys into the park after first buying some canned drinks. We found a playground area and I was happy for the children to let off steam as they had a lot of travelling ahead of them. Since I had no carrier bag I had put the open cans in the buggy, which I dragged behind me as I followed Leon and Kim around. Unfortunately Kim managed to get hold of the buggy and tip it up! Fruit juice spilt all over the buggy seat. The public toilets proved to have no water supply so I couldn't wash the seat. However the sun was hot and I was sure the seat would dry, shortly, if stickily. Kim was furious at having to walk all the way back to the car.

On the way to Austria we lost our buggy in Leeds!

While we ate our picnic lunch I left the buggy in the sun; shouting at Martin when he tried to put it in the boot, not knowing it was wet. Half way to Coventry an hour later I casually asked if he had put the buggy away before we drove off. "No", he frowned. When we reached my sister's house, Martin 'phoned the Leeds police. They sent a man to search but called back later to say that there was no sign of a buggy. Oh well, it had been a rickety old thing anyway and we hadn't intended to take it on holiday with us, so its loss posed no immediate problem.

FRIDAY JULY 6th— Journey by Plane

Had to get up at 5am to be at the airport for 6. My sister, Margaret, was up before us making tea and offers of eggs to eat. Martin accepted but I made do with cereal and toast. As breakfasts were ready for the babies we went upstairs and woke them. Still more asleep than awake they made brave attempts to eat cereal, then were loaded into the car clutching pieces of toast to their pyjamas. The airport was just waking up. There was no one to see to the parking of the car so we left it by some "No Parking" bollards and carried cases and pyjamaed boys into the old Nissan huts which serve as airport buildings.

I dressed the boys while Martin "checked in" the luggage. Then Leon and Kim went off to explore. Hoping that no one would mind too much, I let them roam about, freely, since they would have to sit still on a coach for 12 hours, later that day. We all watched the two aeroplanes "parked" on the tarmac being made ready for flight. First was a smart silver one with a blue stripe. At about 7am the tannoy asked all passengers for the flight to Paris De Gaulle to assemble at Gate One. I didn't see anyone move, but later we could see all three of them being led across the tarmac!

Our plane was next, painted in the red and yellow livery of Janus Airways. We found out later that it was a "Dart Herald". Three year old Leon was thrilled by everything. "Can we go on our aernplay now?"; "Is that our aernplay?" and such questions. He could hardly contain himself! Kim was more interested in making friends with a girl sitting behind him. He seemed to be doing rather well, (in fact he won a lot of friends on this holiday). At last we were called to Gate One (the only gate!); went through passport control, handed in our boarding cards and hurried out across the tarmac. Somehow we managed to be the last to board the 'plane, but succeeded in occupying three seats, together, backing onto the cockpit. I am the only one who had ever flown before, yet I think I was the most frightened, hoping I wouldn't develop claustrophobia at 10,000 feet. Leon's joy was quite infectious enough to make me forget my worries for a while.

Once the engines started up the 'plane was incredibly noisy. We had to shout directly into the ear hole of the person we wished to address! I actually managed to enjoy the lift-off, although the "hanging about in the middle" part was a bit nerve wracking. However, I made a conscious effort to relax and was all right. Leon sang out loud. I couldn't hear him but I could

see his mouth moving. I bought him some lemonade. The two women opposite us had been told at the checking-in desk that breakfast would be served on the 'plane. When they found out it wasn't they ordered brandy, instead, (at 7.30am!) We touched down at a dull and gloomy "Oostende".

"Never mind", said the stewardess. "Perhaps it will clear up, later".

"Wednesday" said I, pessimistically.

While we waited for our luggage a courier explained that there were two coaches waiting outside: one bound for Austria; the other for Amalfi. She would call each group to the door, separately, to avoid confusion. Our cases were easy to identify thanks to the fluorescent yellow stripe we had applied to the sides of each one. Leon wanted to watch our aeroplane take off again so a nice customs official took him to the doorway to get a good view. Later, however, the same official was upset by someone who climbed the barrier and he came over to ask for a few of the suitcases to be opened. He actually apologised to Martin when he realised that one was ours. (I bet he was disappointed to find it full of nappies!). The courier couldn't believe it, saying that previously no official had ever asked to see inside cases.

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— Journey by Coach

The Amalfi passengers were called first. When we were called, Martin took the cases to the luggage hold while I took the flight bag and Kim onto the bus to find three adjacent seats. At the last minute we realised that Leon was missing and Martin went back to find him while I continued my dash for good seats. We were lucky, for there were only three vacant seats on the coach and one was (of course) next to us. No one wanted, it seemed, to commit themselves to 12 hours of baby, so we had 4 seats on which to spread ourselves.

The driver began his talk as we set off through Oostende and we were glad we had accepted Margaret's offer of sandwiches, crackers and cheese: our first and only stop was to be half way on the 710 mile journey. I worked out that could be 4.30-ish. There was a toilet on the coach and drinks were served, at intervals, by one of the drivers. There is little to tell of the journey although it lasted so long. By introducing toys as the boys showed signs of boredom we managed to keep them under control. On one occasion I asked Leon which toy he would like to play with next, hoping he would chose something I had in my bag. "A football" was the prompt reply! I had to laugh as I imagined Leon with a football in the bus. Of course the boys slept a lot, too, which was nice for all of us. Kim kept pointing out the cars, which we passed, as if each one was the first he had ever seen.

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"Dar", he would say; "Daddy, dar; Mummy, dar, dere". I tried to point out to him things of more local interest, but the cars seemed to win. Leon couldn't stop talking about the aeroplane. He was very disappointed to learn that we wouldn't be going on another as soon as we left the coach. All week he kept asking to go home and I'm sure it was just to go on another aeroplane!

We made our stop near Frankfurt where we bought ice creams and a super map. Supposedly of Germany, this map included, on the main section, the area between Copenhagen and Northern Italy, and on the rear of the main maps, smaller-scale maps of all the adjoining countries. Travelling through Bavaria brought back all sorts of memories to me, although it is 17 years since I went there as a child. For a few miles I recognised every name on the Autobahn turnoff signs as places I had visited!

Darkness fell as we reached the Austrian border and, an hour later, we arrived in Kitzbühel. We picked up our courier at Schwarzsee Station, though none of us had any idea where we were at the time. The next half hour was spent in making a tour of the town to drop people off at their allocated hotels and villas. A confusing journey: we were among the last to be

dropped, at exactly the time stated on the travel details - 11.30pm. We were met by an incredibly young-looking manageress leading a huge dog. Martin filled in a form and we were handed the key to room 214 and wished a good night. 214 was on the second floor and there was no lift but it was a pleasant room. My first priority was to see if we had a view of the lake. As I closed the curtains I could see a faint reflection of shadows on water. Leon and Kim made no protest at being changed into pyjamas and put to bed, although they had both just been roused from sleep. Both seemed quite pleased with their own little beds — until we turned the light out, when Kim screamed and stood up in his cot. Unlike at home there was no glow through the window from street lights, so the darkness was intense. Martin and I got up in the dark to comfort him. He lay down straight away and was soon fast asleep.

SATURDAY JULY 7th — First Day

Kim awoke too early for our liking but settled again for a while. Breakfast wasn't until 8am so I didn't want to get up before 7. Nonetheless, it was a bit frantic to unpack and dress myself and babies before we went downstairs. One joyful event - Leon's nappy was dry! That had never happened before. I made a big fuss of him for that. Downstairs we searched for the dining room, stepping over wet floors where the maids were already hard at work. A waitress labelled "Sonja" greeted us and asked if we wanted tea, coffee or juice. We ordered one tea and 3 juices. She brought them on a tray with boiled eggs and a basket of bread, butter and jam. There were slices of brown bread and those lovely crispy buns which I remembered from my visit to Bavaria. Austrian butter is quite unlike ours. I think it must be unsalted. It spreads like fresh cream onto the bread and I usually ate it without jam. Breakfast was the same every morning, except when Martin changed to drinking tea, and sometimes the types of bread varied. Leon didn't eat his egg, which was just as well because after the first morning he and Kim were sharing a breakfast: Kim ate the egg, while Leon ate bread and jam.

After breakfast we went for a short walk, following signs for "Schwarzsee Rundgang". At 10am we had to be back at the hotel for a meeting with the courier, Chris. Kim refused to walk (a familiar pattern during that week) so Martin carried him into the distance as Leon and I walked at Leon's pace, stopping to look at things, such as toadstools; huge pine cones (which looked like doggy-doo) and the dew on spiders' webs in the grass. Leon wanted to take the spiders' webs home. I explained we couldn't but said we would photograph them later. I'm ashamed to say that on the only occasion we remembered the camera it had the wrong lens on it, so Leon didn't get his photograph. Sorry, Leon.

At 10 o'clock we assembled on the terrace for our pep talk. Chris was a comedian. He began with:

"I hope you enjoyed your flight with Mickey Mouse Air.. sorry Janus Airways."

According to Chris the natural warm springs which heat the lake are in fact connected to the hotel electricity supply and ought to be plugged in an hour before you want to swim!

and continued in much the same vein. He listed the trips and entertainments available, and their costs. Even the hotel party had to be paid for, but we could not consider the evening outings because of our children. Then came the "dos and don'ts" including where to cash cheques; phone home; have a cheap pint; places to avoid and explaining about the heating of the lake: According to Chris the natural warm springs which heat the lake are in fact connected to the hotel electricity supply and ought to be plugged in an hour before you want to swim! I wonder if anyone ever falls for it?

Schwarzsee Rundgang. A signposted footpath around The Black Lake. Forste-Meile A series of gymnastic exercises sited at intervals along a route through the forest. At each stage there was a description (in German) of the exercise to be carried out on the equipment provided, with the number of repetitions recommended for varying levels of fitness. The equipment consisted of wooden beams and, sometimes, metal bars.

We booked three trips: one that very afternoon. I was in a bit of a panic, when I paid for them, to realise that £60 of our holiday money had gone already! Back in the hotel room I hastily rearranged contents of the flight bag to include those items more suitable for a half day out. As they included a picnic lunch the bag didn't seem much lighter than it had on yesterday's journey. At noon we climbed onto the coach and headed for Krimml Waterfalls.

There was a courier on board, (Janet) who made our first view of Austria even more interesting by telling us all about the things we passed. A lot of the houses have ornate bells, on the roof, which were rung in times past to call the farmer in from the field, or summon neighbours to assist in a crisis. One newly built house had a fir tree tied to the roof. This is a sign that the owner is pleased with the work and all builders are invited to a party. If the work is unsatisfactory a broom is tied to the roof, and no party is held. This happens only rarely. All the new houses are built in the same style as the old, and all are beautiful. Flowers are grown on the balconies of all the houses, mostly by the men! Our driver, Hans was very informative, too, telling Janet things even she hadn't known. The Austrians, it seems, use the phrase "a well flowered balcony" to describe a well-endowed lady. As we drove through the Pinzgautal Janet pointed out the valley's own breed of horses and cows, for which it is famous. The horses are strong work

in the Ziller Valley, it is the law for every house to have at least one room available for guests.

horses, and the cows small, brown and white with a white back. The Pinzgautal is unique in the Tyrol in that the barns are separate from the houses. In all other parts of the Tyrol, and indeed further, the barns are attached to the backs of the houses as an aid to winter warmth, and to save the farmer a cold walk to attend his cattle. On the soft ground of the valley floor are scattered small barns. Here, the hay from each individual field is stored until the ground is dry enough to get horse and cart in to carry the hay to the large barn. They are not in use now, but the farmers are obliged to keep the little barns in good repair.

Tourism is one of the top three industries in Austria. Dairy farming and forestry are the other two. Everywhere one sees the sign "Zimmer Frei": their equivalent of our "Bed and Breakfast". In fact, in the Ziller Valley, it is the law for every house to have at least one room available for guests. We stopped to take photographs of our first view of an Austrian mountain range. Hans had been a mountaineer in his youth and pointed out the chief peaks.

Grossglockner is the highest. No trip was organised to visit it as it cannot be scaled except with rope and tackle. Many visitors apparently do not believe this and ask Chris to take them there, saying that firms in town do excursions to it. No matter how many times Chris tells them the tours only go to the bottom some people will still argue. Janet pointed out the Grossvenedige, the second highest peak, and Hans added that it is so called because on a clear day one can see Venice from the top.

After a very interesting journey we arrived at Krimml with a couple of hours to spend there. There was a choice of two paths: one to the top of the waterfall and one to the bottom. We decided on the lower, easier path. Kim, contrary to our expectations, refused to walk and had to be carried. Our pace was very slow and we soon lost sight of Janet leading the rest of the party. We ate our lunch on a bench where we could see the falls before we went down to them. Then we went into the café for a drink as we had none with us. From our seat on the terrace the view of the falls was terrific so, before we left, I asked Martin and the boys to pose for a photo with the falls behind them.

On the way down the path from the cafe I had a fright. I couldn't find the purse containing all our Austrian cash! I ran back to our table: nothing! We searched through our pockets and those of the flight bag. At last, I found it in the bag but, after that scare, each of us carried half the money. At the bottom of the path the noise of the water was deafening but what impressed me most was the distance the spray could travel. The rock, for yards beyond the edges of the pool, was soaking wet and even further away we were still being showered with a fine

spray. Martin took a couple of photos, just to prove we were all there. Then he went to the edge of the pool for a soaking and got moaned at for not taking a picture. His excuse was that nothing would have shown up; it would have been like taking a picture in a downpour, as if that would have mattered! I sat down and changed Kim's nappy with a speed which stunned Martin. He doesn't realise how much practice I've had over the years. It was cool and damp, close to the falls, in marked contrast to the pathway. However, it was so very chilly in the shade that we soon climbed up onto the main path. Here were lots of souvenir shops built to look like log cabins. Very picturesque but they had all the usual tourist attractions: hats, sticks, wood carvings, horn carvings, cassettes of Tyrolean music and liquor in fancy containers. I bought a Stocknagel, a book of postcards and some stamps. I wanted to get some of the cards off straight away to people we would see soon; not least of all Margaret, to apologise for bringing her back door key to Austria!

Stocknagel A small metal badge to nail onto a walking stick. Each badge usually shows a picture of the place it comes from, but can be in the shape of a stag's head with the name of the resort underneath. They are very common in Alpine countries but I've also seen them on sale in some resorts in this country.

We followed the path, (very slowly due to Kim's weight and Leon's short legs) back to the village. It was well signposted but it was a much longer route than the bus had taken to drop us off. At last we reached the village and looked for "the funny little house" which Janet had pointed out as being the place where the bus would park. We sat down on the edge of a hay field to write postcards. As well as to Margaret, we wrote to Martin's dad, workmates and Leon's nursery. Of all the people passing by it was impossible to recognise any from our party although they all seemed to know us. (I wonder why?) Hearing some English voices, I asked some people if they had seen a post box. They hadn't, but told us that they looked like "yellow boxes on the wall. They're often near hotels." Sure enough, the first hotel along the road had a post box outside. After all that I was disappointed to see that the next collection wouldn't be until Monday.

We rejoined the coach and I actually fell asleep on the return journey. There was plenty of time to get ready for dinner. I put a dress on, but refused to change the boys' clothes, just for them to dribble dinner down. Martin was disgusted because I made him wear a tie, but got back at me when he noticed he was the only tie-wearer in the dining room. Dinner was a very tasty soup with noodles; roast pork with vegetables, and cherries for pudding. The meal was spoiled for me by a waiter who approached us in the middle of it and told us that, as we had only paid for three people, the baby should not be getting a helping. From the travel agent I had understood that Kim would be catered for and we would settle up for the cot and his food at the end of the holiday. As it happened, sharing a meal between the boys was a better idea as neither could do justice to an adult portion. However, it was the way in which we were told that upset me although, in fairness, the waiter's English may not have been good enough for him to have been tactful. The waitress was ever so good to us. She often gave us an extra portion. If one of the boys had been too tired to come to dinner she always gave us something to take up to the bedroom for him! That first night, either by accident or design, we were given a dish of cherries each. There were far too many, and when I looked round I noticed that most of the other tables had only one plateful per table!

Back in our room, we washed two very sleepy babies and put them to bed. We stepped onto the balcony to admire the view and to let the boys settle. No such luck: after we had each made several attempts to keep them quiet we decided to leave them to their fate and go down to the bar. With some misgivings we locked the door and prepared to rush back into the room at the first scream. It never came. It was as if they had said to each other "Good, they've gone. Now we can spit!" They were obviously enjoying themselves, immensely. Martin waited outside the door for a few minutes then went back into the room and told them to be quiet. After that evening they behaved perfectly whenever we left them alone. (We never went out of earshot for

more than a few minutes).

SUNDAY JULY 8TH

We decided to walk into Kitzbühel this morning to have a look around before trying to do our shopping and laundry there, next day. The brochure described the walk to town as taking 10 to 15 minutes: I timed it at 45! Kim refused to walk, as was usual by now. I think being on foot in a strange place frightens him. He is the same if we go for a walk at home. Nor did Leon walk very fast. We became annoyed and kept telling him to hurry up. Then we noticed his little legs were moving as fast as ours but, with such short legs, he wasn't getting anywhere! It was a pleasant walk, made perfect for Leon by the trains. There was a busy line running from Kitzbühel along the side of the lake furthest from the hotel, and we had to follow it for some way to reach town. Every 5 minutes or so a train (usually painted orange) would pass. There were local- and express-trains (unbelievably long!) as well as the goods-trains (which are all we get, back home in Bedale). Leon was thrilled with each one and the excitement lasted all week.

Leon and I stopped to listen to the crickets chirping and tried to see them but couldn't. Martin couldn't even hear them. As Chris had told us, all signs pointed to "Zentrum", so we left the main road at the first sign we saw, knowing that we couldn't become lost. It was more pleasant to walk between houses than on the main road and, anyway, we found The Park. I spotted the climbing frame and Martin agreed to stop for a while. It was barely 9 o'clock and we had all day before us. Martin taught Leon to somersault over the bar. There were a number of local children there already and we were joined, presently, by a Scottish couple and their two boys.

The playground was different from those at home, being on sand, and the equipment made of wood. The climbing frame had ropes and rope netting like on an assault course. There was also a larger piece of equipment, with a chalet play house at one end, joined to a slide by a fort-like battlement. Both boys enjoyed using the slide. They had to be caught, at the bottom, because it ended two feet above the ground. Leon did eventually acquire the knack of slowing himself down so he could stop and stand up at the end. The first time I was on duty at the bottom I thought he'd stop himself but he didn't and flew off the end, into the air, to land on his bottom in the sand. After that he insisted that Daddy should catch him!

There was also a sand pit and two huge benches which, despite their size and weight, the children managed to move around. My favourite was the drinking fountain. Basically, it comprised a hewn out log with a spout, above, from which fell a constant dribble of cold water. We took it in turns to drink from Kim's cup. There was a noticeable lack of drought in Austria despite the soaring temperatures. Water is always readily available from the melting snow on the mountains. By 10 o'clock the slide was too hot to touch and we left the park shortly afterwards.

What struck me most about Kitzbühel on a Sunday was that everything was closed. Although it seemed unusual for a town whose main reason of existence is tourism, I imagine it is because Austria is predominantly Catholic. As we wandered around, a few cafes began to open for lunch. We made mental notes of the positions of the supermarkets and launderettes. Of course we found the toilets, too, (marked "WC"). Outside I overheard a group of American tourists talking. "Now this is what I call window shopping" said one. It seemed they were here on a day trip, which I thought rather mean of the tour company. Surely there are better places to visit than a town on a day all the shops are closed?

Leaving the toilets and struggling back up the bank with Kim in my arms I caught sight of a buggy in a shop window. The English price would be £60. Unfortunately that shop didn't take Barclaycard but, from that moment, it became my priority to find a buggy-selling shop which did. I was very lucky, because the shop I found had a buggy whose price was reduced from 1790AS to 1200AS (£40). We decided this was to be our first stop next morning.

In the main square a Tyrolean band was playing. We stopped to listen for a while and I took some pictures. I think the band was called "The Oberland Quintet" but my photo which

shows the poster isn't very clear. There was another fountain in the square, this time a more ornate one, but still with drinkable water. We found another two in the town and, after a while, began to expect them wherever we went. They are a wonderful idea especially with the weather as hot as it was that week. We had lunch outside one of the hotels in the square, on the shady side. We tried to order just one meal between the boys but the poor waitress got hopelessly muddled and brought us each what we had wanted just for Leon and Kim. Our Sunday lunch that week was a plateful of chips!

We went back to our hotel for a short rest, but the babies wouldn't lie still and go to sleep. Another Tyrolean group was playing on the hotel terrace; this time a duo. I thought a tape of Tyrolean music would be a nice souvenir but Martin didn't want to hear any more. Giving up the idea of a rest we set off round the lake, this time in a clockwise direction. By the time we reached "Restaurant Schwarzsee", a third of the way round, the duo had begun their routine there! The music drifted across the lake to us, later, as we walked all the way back to the hotel. I must admit I enjoyed it. At is very jolly, holiday-spirited music. At the boathouse near the restaurant I bought another Stocknagel and more postcards. For a while we sat and watched the boats and a windsurfer who had more persistence than luck. Kim dropped his hat an the water, but I retrieved it. Behind the boathouse is the Moorbad We continued round the lake, stopping at nearly every bench. These are painted bright red so you can see them miles away and gear yourself up to reach them. They are also very cleverly sited so that they are in shade at the hottest part of the day. Beside each one is a litter bin mounted on a tree; very tidy, the Austrians. In cafes, everyone returns empty bottles to the counter to be sent for recycling.

Comment from Chris about the "Moorbad": "You can pay 60 Schillings for a mud bath there, or go to the other side of Schwarzsee and have one free!"

Leon and I went into the hotel's swimming area "Strandbad" for the first time that afternoon. In theory, as guests of the hotel we were able to get in free on production of our guest card. Unfortunately we had been told that these would not be ready until Monday afternoon. Fat lot of good to us, then, as the succeeding days had been booked for trips out and the advantages the guest card brought were valid only in Kitzbühel! Anyway, we weren't challenged so we joined the throng of locals at the lakeside. Part of the lake had been fenced off for non-swimmers, and into this we headed bravely. Despite the warm springs and the soaring temperatures on land, the water was freezing cold. Leon was less bothered by this than by the feel of the lake bottom under his bare feet. He has been used to smooth swimming pools. Just to say I had done it I decided to brave the real lake and have a swim. Undeterred was I by Big, hunky American males emerging from the water with chattering teeth and saying to each other, "It's warmer the second time isn't it?" I daren't go far from the steps because the next set seemed so far away, and the water was so cold I expected to get cramp before I reached them. When I climbed out of the lake, my head was so much warmer than the rest of my body that I felt really dizzy and thought I might faint! I had to lie in the sun before I felt better, while poor Leon urged me to move and help him jump into the pool!

MONDAY 9TH JULY — Shopping, Washing and Sun

After breakfast we made our 45 minute/10 minute walk into town with a bin-bag full of washing and a shopping list. We passed a couple, who seemed to know us, who recommended a nice place to have lunch and spend the afternoon. It was a little lake behind the hotel, about the same distance away as Kitzbühel, but in the opposite direction. Apparently, the cafe was cheap and it was peaceful. We decided to go there after we'd done our chores. (Wishful thinking: they took ages and we never got there!) First stop, buggy. This was bought without any problems. Worried about import duty, I'd asked Chris the previous evening if there were any restrictions on buying a buggy abroad. To my surprise he said that anything over 1000AS qualified for a tax

The story of the tax rebate.

The form was duly stamped at the German border. The customs officer wasn't interested in seeing the buggy, so the bus didn't have to be unpacked. Back in England I sent the form back to the shop. The rebate was worked out to be 232.5AS (£8.84), less charges. The cheque we got from Bank für Tirol und Vorarlberg was valued at 187AS (£7.11). Our local bank couldn't process the cheque but gave me the required form for Martin to sign and post to his bank in Liverpool. A week later we got a receipt from them. £7 less £2 commission, less Other Charges of £2.21 leaving a total credited of £2.79!

rebate of 20%. The people in the shop knew this and there were no problems with the forms. Martin and the shop manager discussed it in German and, as we left, the manager said in perfect English, "I hope you enjoy the rest of your holiday." Martin laughed and complained for his making him speak German, but the Austrian claimed Martin's German was better than his own English.

The buggy itself is a vast improvement on the old one. It has Lie-back facility, which needs care when sitting it up again. The screw needs to be very tight or it slips, as Kim found out, painfully, in Rattenberg next day. (Two months later his nail was still discoloured.)

The buggy's front wheels swivel, making manoeuvring a cinch. Driving in a straight line is less easy. The seat may also be reversible to face the pusher, but I haven't had it to pieces yet to try. Such a buggy in England would cost around £60 so even without the tax rebate it was a bargain.)

After buying the buggy our next aim was to find a laundrette. We had noticed a couple on the previous day; all we had to do was to remember where they were! We found one which turned out to be a dry-cleaners only. Martin was sent in

to enquire where he could find a "Selbstwasche". He was directed to the other laundrette we had seen. I took the bag of washing inside, only to be told that it was NOT a self-service place, but the lady would do it for me for 90AS (£4!) and I could collect it in 2 hours. To kill the time we did the shopping at one of the supermarkets then had lunch at a cafe.

I also bought a couple of German children's books for the boys. At 300AS (£11) they were expensive but we couldn't get anything like them here.

After collecting the neatly-folded washing at 1.00pm we stopped at the park. There seemed little point in going back to the hotel or to the other little lake for the afternoon. It was much later than we'd expected to be finished in town and far too hot to hurry anywhere (or even to go anywhere slowly!) Kim headed straight for the sandpit and stayed in it all afternoon. (Dare I say it? As "happy as a sandman".) Leon had to be dissuaded from going on the slide as it was far too hot to use. I headed for a bench in the shade and settled down to read my new books. I had to keep moving to stay in the shadow and was soon uncomfortably hot. I burnt despite these precautions, suntan cream and wearing a cotton jacket! The burn caused terrible itching, which kept me awake every night for the rest of the holiday, and didn't completely clear up for weeks!

Martin made friends with an Austrian girl - who was a nanny - there with her charge, Alexander, a Canadian boy. She was from a little village but staying in Kitzbühel while the Canadian family was stationed there. She was able to give some interesting comparisons between tourist- and real-Austria. Apparently life is much cheaper in the out-of-the-way places. I would have liked to have joined in the conversation but, as it took place on the edge of the sand-pit in full sunlight, I couldn't.

We arrived back at the hotel early, so we decided to go to the Strandbad for a while. Our guest cards still hadn't arrived and this time we were challenged at the entrance, but not stopped. Leon and I went prepared to swim, and did indeed splash about in the water a bit. I went for another very brief swim in the lake proper, but I'd forgotten how intensely cold the water was and again came out dizzy and shivering. Even in that hot sunlight it took ages to get warm again. Martin amused himself by watching the numerous, scantily-clad girls. It seemed that half the population of Germany was there and the shop did a roaring trade in cold drinks, ice-cream and cakes.

At dinner that evening Leon was so tired that I took him up to bed before the meal began. He had become accustomed to taking a nap on the coach so when he missed the nap he couldn't stay awake to eat. Our lovely waitress gave us 4 helpings of Veal cutlets that night so Leon would have something to eat when he awoke! On another night it was Kim who was too tired to attend dinner and the waitress gave us extra for him, too. On that occasion, however, Leon ate it for him whilst, supposedly, being asleep in bed. (We knew it was Leon because he left the cherries from the cherry cake. Kim would have eaten them.)

Martin and I got into the habit of having coffee on the terrace after putting the boys to bed. Then we'd go for a short walk, or do a bit of the "Forste-Meile" before bed. Our room had three single beds, two of which stood together to form the continental-style double bed. We each had our own single quilt. This was great since, at home, Martin and I had nocturnal battles over quilt ownership. Leon was delighted with his bed, especially the "rabbits-ears pillow" where the maid chopped the fluffed up pillow in the middle. Unfortunately this won't work on our foam pillows at home.

That evening mid-way through our meal (from which Leon was absent) a crowd of new arrivals appeared. They had had a disastrous journey, with delays at both airports. They should have been travelling all night to reach Kitzbühel at 9am. Instead they didn't leave Oostende until almost that time! On arrival at their villa they were told a bus would collect them for dinner, but it didn't and they had to walk. Two of them shared our table and they seemed pretty fed up with their holiday, already, having wasted a day. Next time we spoke to them was on Wednesday, on the mountain, and they were enjoying themselves by then.

TUESDAY JULY 10TH — A Coach Trip

Next afternoon was to be an organised outing, which left us with only the morning to fill. This was uncomfortable for me because of my sunburn and, early in the morning, it was already too hot to be in the sunlight. There were local people sunbathing by the lake before 9 in the morning. We found a cool clearing in the forest and took some photos. I was wearing my Indian cotton dress, taken for evening wear, but chosen today because it is thin but covers my arms and neck. Really the most comfortable place to be, I discovered during the next couple of days, was inside the lovely air-conditioned coach.

Today's coach took us first to Rattenburg, to their famous glass factory. The shop was an Aladdin's cave of goodies yet I didn't buy anything because I felt it would have been buying just for the sake of it. Glass ornaments are difficult to pack safely and we do not have many ornaments at home because of the lack of space (shelves full of books) and problem of little hands! We did buy Ice creams, outside, from a stand offering a choice of several cone shapes and sizes and at least 12 ice-cream flavours. Unfortunately, Kim had just trapped his finger in his buggy and even ice cream couldn't stop his screaming. This was so bad that an old woman opened her attic window and screamed abuse at us! Martin shouted back in explanation:

"Er hat den Finger ertappt" but, as this brought forth more verbal assaults, he left the small square and found a shady spot to park the wailing infant near the riverside path, where the same explanation to other passers-by produced a most sympathetic response.

Keith, today's guide, had recommended a visit to the local church after a look round the shop. I would have liked to have seen it. From a holiday in Switzerland with my school friend, Penny, I remember the beautiful decorations which the churches have. However, there wasn't time to get to the other end of the twisty high-street and back before our meeting time, let alone a leisurely look round the newly decorated church. Reluctantly, we had to miss it out. As Martin whisked Kim and buggy out of earshot of residents, I searched in vain for a toilet. I also wanted some postcards of the town as I'd been able to buy only one photo of the main street, but Martin had all the remaining money. By the time we got back on the bus I was in a foul mood.

However, our next stop cheered me up. I think I enjoyed this place more than any other.

It was Achensee, the highest and longest lake in the Tirol. First stop here was the cafe for the celebrated cream cakes. I hadn't bought any cream cakes before, as I had wanted to save my money for the best. I insisted on a photo of the table, once laden, but it doesn't do it justice. We bought apple juice and yogurt for the boys. The yogurt came in *pint* glasses. It is (I'm told) sweeter than English yogurt. Martin had lager and a banana split and I had chocolate cake and iced coffee. The coffee would have been perfect if it hadn't contained ice cream, which made it too sweet for me.

Again we didn't have time to do all Keith had suggested (to go on the boats and to have a swim.) We *had* to find time to paddle because Leon wanted to go in the water. Achensee was spoilt by the very high prices in the gift shops. I refused to buy a Stocknagel and observed, smugly, a bottle of "Obstler" at twice the price yet a quarter of the size of the one I had bought at the supermarket for Margaret.

On the way home, Martin used up lots of film in taking pictures from the bus window. We had only one day left in Austria and another film to use as well as this one so we felt we could be extravagant. The photos show, rather well, the beautiful houses dotted all over the hill-sides. Even the new ones are built to the old design, and their new housing estates put the best of ours to shame.

WEDNESDAY JULY 11th — Up the Mountain!

This was the most exciting excursion of our holiday: a trip to the top of the Kitzsteinhorn at Kaprun. Leon experienced his first train ride and a trip on a "Seilbahn" (cable car) all in one go! To date this remains the only train on which he has travelled. As we boarded the bus outside the hotel, at 10am, the radio was broadcasting a weather report: the hottest day for twenty years, already 35 degrees C (95 F !!). The bus was the best place to be with its blissful air-conditioning. We had been warned that it would be cold up the mountain, so were all wearing long trousers, yuk! Once on the bus the courier admitted that on such a day as this his warning had been unnecessary. Too late!

Getting off the bus was like nothing I have ever experienced before; the heat was indescribable. The only shelter was under umbrellas at a tiny cafe, but they couldn't cope with three bus loads of us. The couriers told us to keep together while they bought tickets and tried to get us on the same train. All passengers are counted electronically, and the number of places remaining shows on a screen above the gate; useful for demented couriers. A more depressing "aid"

When everyone from the train was inside, the doors behind us were closed while we were decompressed.

was the presence, along the barriers, of signs stating approximate waiting times for that position in the queue: typically 15, 30, 45 minutes! I didn't fancy that in such heat. Luckily, because of the popularity of the resort on that day, the trains were running non-stop instead of every 15 minutes. Somehow we all squeezed onto the same train in a very short space of time. We had to climb steps all the way up the train as it was built on the gradient of the track. There was standing room, only, but one kind lady offered Leon her lap and her husband moved up to let me sit down with Kim. Leon didn't like that arrangement so the lady and I swapped burdens. Kim didn't mind being with a stranger as long as he could see me. Martin had to stand. The friendly family were Dutch and their son was also called Leon!

At the top we all crammed into a corridor with glass doors at both ends and were told to "bunch up." When everyone from the train was inside, the doors behind us were closed while we were decompressed - very claustrophobic! At last the front doors opened and there was a mad surge forward. In the tranquillity of the coach we had laughed when Chris described techniques for dealing with barging skiers, but they were really necessary. How our couriers managed to keep us together I'll never know. The cable car, on the next stage of the ascent, held only 60 and departed the instant it was full. Most of Chris's coach party caught the first cable car. There was

no opportunity for vertigo as the car was so crowded that I could hardly see the windows, never mind see through them. Martin held the camera over his head and took a few shots, so we would know what we'd missed. At the top, Janet gave warnings about thin air in the ice tunnel which was cut through to the far side of the mountain peak at a fairly steep downward gradient. The thought of it made me dizzy, so I sent Martin and camera along the tunnel, electing to stay in the cafe with the children. I bought postcards and chocolate, with which I bribed the boys to keep still. Every time I stood up I felt dizzy, from a combination of lack of sleep and the altitude. The panoramic view didn't help either, yet I wanted to see it and remember everything as I'll probably never again experience anything like it. Skiers left the cafe, donned their skis and disappeared down a precarious looking slope off the end of the world (or so it seemed). The young girl, whom we had first met at dinner, swung on one of the warning signs while her husband took a photograph. To my relief Martin was the first person back through the tunnel. The relief died, however when he told me he'd come for a new film. He'd got to the end of the tunnel only to find he was on the last frame of the film!

I couldn't face lunch in the mountain-top restaurant so we took the cable car down to the half-way station. This time the car was less crowded so we could see the view. It wasn't as scary as I'd expected. Perhaps I was too relieved to be going down to care. At this level we could see hundreds of skiers: They come here for summer practice, looking incongruous in shorts and sleeveless tops, a long way from the Winter Olympics. Martin found a table and sat there with the boys, while I tried to find my land legs and choose a meal in the self-service restaurant. I couldn't cope with anything hot, so chose cold meats and salads. It was really awful (the only Austrian meal we disliked) and no one ate much. We were reluctant to descend into the inferno, but didn't want to find the last train too full, so we started queuing for the earlier train. Again the place was packed with skiers who seemed to have no idea of waiting their turn. Well, they say queuing is an English habit - not such a bad one, I feel. As soon as the decompression chamber opened it was a case of every man for himself. I must admit that, once in, I was accorded better treatment than anyone, when it was seen that I was carrying Kim. We seemed to be in the chamber a lot longer this time. It was awful yet, totally unconcerned, Kim fell asleep and didn't wake up until we were back on the coach. As the glass doors opened, the mad rush began again, this time for good places on the train. Once again someone offered me a seat. Martin stood, with Leon clinging to his legs. Won't Leon get a shock when he experiences British Rail trains? Mountain railways are made to accommodate more standing passengers than seated ones. Obviously, if you are carrying skis, sitting can be awkward.

Oh! The reluctance to get out at the bottom. Up the mountain it had seemed refreshingly cool. Here there was no breeze. The whole area was tarmac so the heat hit from above and below. Along the fence near the railway were a couple of trees. We climbed through the fence and stayed in the shade. I lay Kim on the ground where he was much cooed over by other passengers. In the middle of the Tarmac was a fountain, so I braved the sun to go for a drink. Strangely, it was fenced off and had signs up proclaiming "Nicht Trinkwasser". Drat!

Back, at last, in the air-conditioned bus, we all stripped off for the short journey to our next stop: Zell am See. The delights on offer were swimming, boating, eating and drinking, but I had to do some shopping and, again, there wasn't a lot of time. The shops were air-conditioned,

Note from Martin: Although I may not have appeared so, I felt terribly out of breath. The tunnel gradient was steep enough to make you want to run down it, rather than walk, and I had also returned uphill at a trot, so my heart was racing. One poor, overweight lady seemed on the point of collapse as she retraced her steps in the thin atmosphere. The view was magnificent, however, and the ice underfoot with the sun glaring from a clear blue sky gave an unusual combination of sensations as I squinted, through polarised lenses, across the range of snow-capped peaks.

too, so the expedition was quite pleasant. Martin found a working, drinking fountain and a young Canadian man, so he settled down for a chat, while I spent the rest of our Schillings on souvenirs. (Oh, and took Leon to the toilet. I couldn't find a public one and Leon was becoming desperate so we boldly walked into an hotel, hoping we would be taken for customers from the terrace. From the Canadian Martin learnt that the Austrians call the toilet "der Klo").

The evening was taken up with packing, then Martin and I went for a last walk. Martin said he needed the exercise to help him sleep, but I believe it woke me up as I spent another night listening to the music from downstairs and praying for 4.30 when the alarm would go off. As usually happens with my insomnia, by 3.50 I hadn't slept at all, yet the alarm woke me 40 minutes later.

It was a relief to have something to do although the dressing and final packing was hectic. We were served breakfast downstairs before the bus was due, then joined a crowd of sleepy people, outside, in the cool of 5 o'clock in the morning. Typically, the most lively members of the party were our boys. Kim, for the first time during the holiday, set off at a run down the drive. It was the furthest he'd been from us all week! I let them run off some of their energy whilst wishing they'd be a bit quieter about it when most of the other hotel guests were trying to sleep. The one consolation was that we wouldn't be around to hear any complaints!

The coach arrived on time and cases and buggy were loaded on to it. Our hotel was the first picking-up point so once again we were able to get seats, all together. The last people to board the coach were understandably (?) upset to find that they had to travel in the bar. The coach drivers were Belgian but one spoke some English. Martin consistently failed to communicate satisfactorily with them in French, German or English! but was impressed by the high standard of driving shown by the coach drivers. I still don't remember much of the Austrian countryside, which we crossed, although this time it was daylight. I had made up my mind to try to sleep every time Kim did, so I think we must have dozed off straight away. I remember the German border because Martin had to get off and have the form for the buggy stamped. There was no problem over this. I could see the customs official from my seat and he went straight back to reading his girlie magazine when he'd done it. The buggy didn't even have to be shown.

The day was dull and colder than any we had had all week. We had dressed for the heat, but for myself I was glad to be on the cold side as a relief from being too hot. Martin and Kim seemed to revel in the heat. Leon has the kind of skin which goes red but even he didn't seem upset by the temperatures we'd experienced while away. Forewarned, everyone had taken lots to eat on the journey, and I wasn't surprised to hear that our only stop would not be until Frankfurt. I reckoned that would be around 2.0pm. What did surprise me was that the drivers showed a video film which was actually showing the end credits as we pulled off the Autobahn! Those drivers must have excellent timing! The film was "Goldfinger" in English with Belgian sub-titles. During the course of the journey they showed two more films: "Diamonds are Forever" and "The Enforcer" - a violent 'Dirty Harry' film which was shown on television a few months after our holiday.

The journey was otherwise uneventful. Because of people watching the videos we tried harder to keep the boys still and quiet. Talking to fellow travellers in Oostende airport we heard nothing but praise for their behaviour! I was very proud of them. However, I wouldn't want to undertake such a journey with them, again, until they are old enough to know they must sit still. Next year Leon will be too old to get away with bumping on the seats.

At the airport we heard that we had 2 hours to wait for our flight. This was the worst part of our journey for me. I was tired with nothing to do but sit and worry about the flight to come. One man spent a long time arguing, with the officials, about his flight which left after ours. He said he had a long drive home and had to be up at 5 in the morning. There was an earlier plane he could have got (there must have been two flights to Lydd) and wanted to be put on the earlier flight. The officials were adamant and he had to wait. Luckily we weren't sitting near him. We

talked to a family from Middlesex. They had noticed us more on holiday than we had them but were very nice people. They had been staying in another hotel but we had shared a few trips.

We bought coffee in the departure lounge while everyone else scrabbled for the Duty-Free. The only thing I would have liked was a postcard of the airport or our 'plane for Leon, but that part of the shop was closed by 7pm which was when we arrived.

At last our plane came in and it was time to screw up my courage and get on board. It was the same plane on which we had arrived. I recognised the misty windows. Martin's seat belt didn't work properly. It *would* have to happen to him, the seat-belt fanatic! He pointed it out to the steward, at the end of the flight, when it was possible to make himself heard. The steward grinned, knowingly, and tightened the belt for him. Martin promptly stood up without touching the belt buckle! The steward was appropriately embarrassed and promised to report the defect, right away.

I enjoyed this flight much more than the out-going one. Perhaps I was just eager to get home. I can't describe how much I was looking forward to the familiarity and comfort of Margaret's house! Leon was just as thrilled by his second flight as by his first. We chose seats which would give him a good view through the window. I had Kim on my knee. He was so impressed that he fell asleep as we took off and didn't wake until I moved to get off the plane. I had to keep my seat belt on for the whole journey. Martin sat opposite with Leon, pointing out things of interest to see on the ground.

The parts of the flight I enjoyed most were take-off and landing. Once we got over land I thoroughly enjoyed picking out features of the landscape. In fact now I wouldn't mind a trip in a light aircraft to see other areas from the air. I am convinced that is the best way to study cartography. As we approached Coventry the reflection of car headlights from the road told us it was raining! Hooray for England!

It was quite cold to walk across the tarmac in the rain. Our luggage was brought fairly quickly and we waited to go through customs. About 4 couples were allowed into the customs area at a time and they were very slow. We were among the last and got through very quickly. Perhaps the customs officials were also looking forward to going home! One couple in our group, who had a suspiciously clinking carrier bag, were made to open their cases.

We waited in a tiny porch, with our luggage, while Martin, sheltering under half of someone's umbrella, dashed off to the car-park. The porch was quite crowded before any of the cars appeared. I was pleased to see that the car-park hadn't been locked up for the night as everywhere else seemed to be deserted. It was 9.0pm. The precise time the brochure had given for our return.

At last we were back at Margaret's house where the temptation was to forget our tiredness and stay up all night talking. However, we did get to bed at a fairly reasonable time. I had the best night's sleep for ages. Kim woke up at his usual 6am but, after a clean nappy was put on, he went to sleep again until 9 o'clock, as did we all. Having been on his best behaviour all week, Martin was sick of holidays and cancelled our planned visit to his friend in Birmingham, so we could go home that afternoon instead of the next day. I was very disappointed. I would have liked to have spent longer with my sister, but gave in only after making him agree to stay until evening.

Kim could not talk, at the time we went to Austria and, sadly, has no apparent recollection of the holiday. Leon, however, remembers some parts quite vividly and we reinforce these memories periodically by discussion and by showing him the film slides. He still (aged 3 1/2) has no real concept of the distances travelled, although he fully appreciates that we "flew over the clouds" in an aeroplane.

Gill Pickering

APPENDIX

Nicht Trinkwasser Not drinking water.

Moorbad Mud bath.

Pinzgautal Pinzgau Valley.

“Er hat den Finger ertappt” “He’s trapped his finger”

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