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The three hour train ride to Frankfurt required that I change trains three times with an average of a four minute layover between trains. When I purchased my ticket, I was given a schedule of the departure time and track for each of my trains, so I at least had a good chance of making my connections. Usually, I would arrive at the station, get off the train and scurry down the stairs to the connecting passageway beneath the train platforms. I would climb up the stairway to the next platform just as my connecting train was pulling into the station. I would get on board and the train would depart soon after I sat down. I was lucky that I could move that quickly. If I had been carrying my bike or if I had been slower on my feet, the trip would have taken much longer since I would have to wait over an hour for the next train at each station.

The first train of the trip took me to the Luxembourg/German border and then to the city of Trier where Karl Marx went to university. The train was one of the cute, two car trains that are used through Luxembourg. From Trier, I took a longer train which followed the valley of the Mosel River. The scenery through this part of the trip was gorgeous. For the next hour I passed vineyard after vineyard of grapes growing on terraces along the steep sides of the hills of the valley. Beautiful towns lay along the banks of the river with tall church steeples marking each hamlet. The large stone churches were more like small cathedrals due to their size. Most of the houses and buildings in the villages were white in color with steep, dark roofs. I saw all of this as the train raced past, plunging through tunnels and past the ruins of castles. I was surprised by the number of castles and chateaus that were perched high up on the rocky outcroppings of the hills. I couldn't imagine so many of them in one place. I highly recommend the train ride if you ever get the chance.

The third train took me from Koblenz to Frankfurt. The train car in which I had my seat reservations was divided into smoking and nonsmoking without a barrier between the two sections. However, even sitting on the edge of the division, I did not notice the smell of smoke. Maybe they kept the non-smoking side at a positive pressure so that the air flow was towards the smokers. The tracks followed along the Rhine River which was busy with barge traffic. Some of the barges were carrying containers in stacks adding up to 128 containers per barge. The train continued past the beautiful scenery, but after about half an hour, the valley widened as the train turned up the Main River and the vineyards gave way to an industrial area. I could still see hills and vineyards off in the distance, but the development announced that we were nearing the city of Frankfurt.

I stayed in Frankfurt from Thursday till Sunday. Since this was my third visit with Michele in the past year, there is not a lot about Frankfurt left to write about. But, I will touch on some of the highlights.

The arrival of Autumn each year signifies the arrival of the regional beverage of Apfelwein (apple wine) which is served in heavy, ceramic containers that are painted in light gray and blue designs. We went to a restaurant on Friday night with Michele's friend Gabi to feast on sausages, sauerkraut, potatoes and a jug of the apple wine. The wine was purchased for my benefit and Gabi and Michele watched to see my reaction. I had expected the taste to be like apple juice. Instead it had the hint of apples, but the apple taste was very weak and thin. Gabi and Michele mixed their

wine with seltzer water because they really didn't like the taste. The wine wasn't bad and got better after a few glasses, but I don't think that I would ever find myself reaching for it by choice.

Plans for biking the Rhine were dampened by rain showers on Saturday. Instead we opted to go cosmic bowling and I tried my hand at repairing a hole in Michele's wall which mysteriously appeared and won't be mentioned again. I also satisfied my craving for Lebkuchen which I purchased in bulk at the local grocery store. On Sunday, Michele and I went to mass in Frankfurt and then drove to the little town of Rothenburg which lies about three hours south of Frankfurt.

Rothenburg is a walled city dating back to the middle ages. A friend of Michele's described the city as "planet cute sprinkled with happy dust" because it is really cute. Stores selling nutcrackers and other crafts abound along the cobblestone streets and it is a pleasant place to spend an afternoon. There are walking tours that are offered to teach some of the history of the city. One of the legends concerns the Thirty Year War which raged between the Catholics and the Protestants. During the war, Rothenburg, which was a Protestant town was about to be invaded by a Catholic army. Because he was a fair, Christian man, the Catholic general offered a deal to the town before the destruction began. If anyone could drink a three liter container of wine in one gulp, the town would be spared. The town's mayor rushed forward to take the challenge. He successfully gulped down the wine and subsequently passed out for three days while the people of the town rejoiced over his dedication to his civic duty. The moment is forever immortalized in the clock of the Councilors Tavern in the town square. At certain hours of the day, figures in the clock reenact the mayor's selfless act while the Catholic general eggs him on.

I unfortunately missed witnessing the clock striking the correct hour since we only had a few hours to spend in the town. We returned back to Frankfurt where Michele made a dinner of Weisse Kloesse which are made from potatoes and flour before I caught my flight back to Copenhagen. A fitting end to my potato harvest holiday.

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