

June 2004

Miles flown: 15,993
Miles driven: 700
Countries visited: Curacao, Switzerland, Austria, Germany
States visited: None !

Start by flying back from Curacao and back into work the following day. I last a whole 2 days at work when I am on a plane again on my way to Zurich to Rebecca and Norbert's wedding. They think I am insane as I am flying into Europe only for the wedding – staying about 48 hours and flying home again. Well – I probably am insane but whatever. Now Rebecca had told me that the weather was great and expected to be around 20 degrees – so bearing in mind that I was working with hand baggage only, AND that I had to bring a hat I decided to pack a couple of short- and sleeveless dresses and travel in jeans and a denim jacket.....

So, land in Zurich, grab car and drive out through Switzerland to Austria – naturally I had no real map and had to make do with the Swiss rental car map and an old Germany map that I had and their directions ... surprisingly enough I made it there without one wrong turn which I thought was a miracle to be honest ! So, I rolled up and got to the room – it was an odd room to be sharing with a complete stranger since it had one round bed with a canopy in it and a sofa bed with no sheets.... Interesting ! Anyway, I made up the sofa bed and had an hour's kip before my roomie arrived – she's called Sylvia and very tall with streaks of bright (pillarbox bright) red in her long-ish hair) – oh yes and speaks no English So we get changed and go down to the registry office for the wedding – apparently in Germany they have to have a civil wedding for it to be legal – the church thing is purely for choice and is not legally binding. For seem reason they chose to wear red which was very nice.



Check out those shoes

The ceremony was very sweet and everybody in the wedding party cried. After some odd sheet/heart cutting out thing outside (I am told it is very traditional) we got down to the toasting and snacking in the small area next to the Town Hall (Rathaus in German– says a lot about what they think of their civil servants). It isn't exactly warm at this point so I have my denim jacket over my little silk dress. Back to the hotel and the real celebrating begins with a great meal in the hotel restaurant (we are taking up most of the hotel with the wedding party – there are about 40 of us including lots of kids) and lots of wine and then we decamp (after I change back into jeans and a long-sleeved shirt) into the basement to a very odd local band of two guys playing traditional Austria music – it was quite hilarious and raucous and I didn't get anywhere near to bed until around 3am.



Mad band

Of course most people didn't speak English so I was forced to speak German which was good for me.

Although I did take some comfort in Norbert's auntie from Australia when it all got too much for me.



The following day I work up late to this view: and this was the clearest it was all day ...

It was beautiful in the mountains and the air even tasted clean but it was cold. We all got dressed up – all I had was a sleeveless dress to go with my hat so I wore my denim jacket and a huge silk scarf to try to keep warm.

We walked over to the ski lift to take us up to the 13th Century chapel for the wedding service – 3 minutes into the ride and we were totally surrounded in clouds. I was just grateful that I had remembered to bring an umbrella as it pretty much poured the rest of the day.



The chapel was beautiful but as it was 13th Century had no heating in it at all so I sat and shivered all the way through the lovely flute and oboe music and the ceremony – although when the priest got out his guitar and started singing the shivering was taken over by fits of giggling. Somehow it all seemed very incongruous in a 13th Century chapel.

Afterwards we decamped thought the rain to a local bar and had lots of coffee and cake and warmed up before going to an interesting talk (back in the freezing chapel) by a local guy about the history of the place which involved all sorts of odd demonstrations including him playing a recorder with his nose – euuch.

Back down by cable car and a rest (and I went to bed to warm up) before the dinner which was great – more great food and wine and a wedding book we filled in as well as another band (still pretty German and traditional but not as nutty as the previous night) and fun and frolics and speeches and party games. Now I was hoping that German weddings didn't follow the traditions of US and UK weddings but there we were – the bride throwing the bouquet – I hid in the furthest corner of the room but Norbert searched me out and somehow placed me at the front ... and Rebecca threw. Now I had guessed that she might be a lousy shot so I ducked right down to the floor and still only narrowly missed catching it. Thankfully they didn't notice at the time but when I visited them next time they gave me a ticking off as somebody had captured it on film! I finally bailed at around midnight since I had to be up by 6am to drive back to Zurich to catch my flight home. It was a wonderful weekend though and everybody was so so nice to me.

The rest of the week was unspectacular, movies and laundry really. I had missed a friend's surprise 40th whilst away so we caught up for pizza on his actual birthday and Saturday night three of us went on a somewhat abortive mission to see live music – we didn't book online in advance and the only tickets left were standing room only and I still can't stand around for lengths of time without my knee hurting like crazy. Sunday I did a 46 mile bike ride with Marla on the Silver Comet trail – it stormed and rained like fury on our way over there but was pretty good once we actually started – only about 15 minutes of rain – no big deal. Everybody at work is convinced that I will not be able to do the Russia trip as I am not training every day but I was fine and am sure I'll be OK. Rest of the week was more work and a couple of jaunts out – my friend from Reno was training again and we had dinner together and he and the other trainer joined Deb

and I at Cyrano De Bergerac which was pretty well done. Friday Kate and her family arrived to stay over before flying to England for their holidays and once they had settled I went out to Blind Wille's to see Delta Moon who I have been dying to see again for ages – John and Maxine joined me – and even Jay showed up – it was fun. Saturday morning I drove Kate and co to the airport and then I went up to Chattanooga to meet Stacey and Marilyn – I thought I was late but still ended up about an hour ahead of them. We mapped out a great rally route complete with odd questions and even a tour of the local civil war battlefields which is actually surprisingly moving for a bunch of fields and trees. We had dinner at the place we were planning to take the Morgan club to but the lady with whom Stacey had made arrangements to meet wasn't there and hadn't even had the courtesy to call to say she was out of town – so we blew that place out for the group dinner. Choo-choo for the night again and then dashed home – packed, had sushi for lunch with Deb and then off to the airport – no, not another plane again?

Germany was wild – I stayed in a hotel for the first week as my social schedule was chaotic – during the day I was mostly in Weissach on the pre-production launch team for the new Carrera but still had to go to a number of meetings in Zuffenhausen, which was fine except they kept changing cars on me and mostly I ended up in a car without Navi and I had NO maps. Monday night (the evening I landed) I went to a music festival in Tamm with one of my counterparts – all brass band, rows of tables and beer-drinking and oompah music. It was hilarious – especially when he had to play. The finished with fireworks – very cute. Tuesday I went out for dinner with a group who were over from PCNA – interesting evening as the host was nearly an hour late and I was starving. Wednesday I went out with Martin – the manager of Frontdesk over in Germany – he picked me up on his scooter and we went into town on it – I couldn't stop laughing all the way in. We went to a couple of beer-gardens had pizza and watched Germany lose in the European cup qualifiers before wobbling our way back to Weilemdorf where I was staying – it was a fun night. Thursday I decided to stay in and have takeaway Chinese as I had a heavy weekend coming up. Friday I met Norbert and Rebecca and Rudi for dinner and beers. They took us up to the top of one of the hills in Stuttgart to a beer garden to look out over the world and catch up – great view.



Great view



which shall I have ???

Saturday morning Robin arrived and we drove (via all around Stuttgart at least 3 times – no map – no Navi) to Ludwigsburg for lunch and a stroll around the castle and town – the weather was great and there was some kind of festival on so there was a lot of value in people-watching for me.



Robin's new house ...

In the evening we called Robin's friend from the US and we all went to a beer garden for, well – beer and wurst. I was dropped off home around midnight and fell asleep exhausted.

Sunday I was originally due to meet Nadine but she had sent me a curt text message saying she couldn't make it with no explanation. Niiice. I had plans to go to a baseball game in the afternoon so I finally made it to the Porsche museum in the morning, which I have been promising myself I would go to since I started but have never found time to go to during my week visits to Zuffenhausen – it's tiny but ok as car museums go. Then I went to one of the funniest German experiences yet – a baseball game! One of my counterparts invited me and I actually found the place just in time. It was a mix of US guys and Germans playing and I couldn't stop laughing as the supporters (all 4 of them) were shouting things like "aufgehts Marco !" and "go baby go!". I must tell them it all sounds very different in another context. Anyway Joerg's team lost – but not too badly and he made a couple of Home runs so it wasn't disastrous.

Sunday night I arrived at Norbert and Rebecca's for a BBQ. Monday I also stayed and we went to a beer garden to meet up with a bunch of their friends for their first time since the wedding. Tuesday Elmar (from May) had a BBQ and Ralf (the cute germ) picked me up. There were 8 of us in all and it was a lot of fun. The food was excellent and I even kept up with a lot of the conversation ! Ralf dropped me back at the hotel at around 11pm – another late night. Wednesday I had a supplier visit with Becker – all around the factory and then with the development team to talk more about root cause analysis of sound system issues – I've just bought some new equipment which will help resolve some problems we are having. Then I went over to Emil's house for dinner (German who was over late May) with his family, which was a lot of fun – his precocious 7-year old daughter is a lot of fun – and so back to the hotel at around 11pm again.



Elmar cooks

It was extremely strange really since it was one endless social whirl from beginning to end –I had never expected it to be like that since the Germans are generally very reticent and take time to become friends but they were all really nice and super-friendly – I hardly had a moment to myself! And my life seemed to be filled with beer gardens and BBQs. Thursday I flew home. Which was technically July so I haven't counted the mileage this month.

And THAT, my friends was June !