

B47 TO BERNKASTLE AND BACK ON THE MOSEL

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Marlies and Benny Brown were the first to hear of our Nurburgring exploits but felt we were a bit too stoked up for our own good. Maybe it was the third glass of Mosel dew that caught their attention. "What you both need is some time on water," they said and they didn't mean drinking it. "A trip to Bernkastel and back will help bring you out of the clouds."



"Why don't you leave the MG in front of the winery while you're gone," Benny said. "Heinz says it's OK and you might even snag a buyer or two if it's on display out front," was his further inducement.



At 10:45 precisely (We're in Germany you know) the Traben to Trarbach ferry tied up at the dock just below our hotel. It makes this trip four times a week and we had our Euros and ready to board.



It's a first-come first-served arrangement and on nice, sunny days like today, there is a gentle push and shove to get a seat near the prow or the fantail. The experienced prow riders bring a jacket because, even on the warmest days, it gets a little chilly up front.

The fantail seats are much better for relaxation and the passengers here would rather leave the prow to the folks in a hurry. Food and drink are available with not much else to do but consume both and enjoy the vine-covered hills and river traffic as it glides by.



The Mosel is a controlled river with several dams along the way and locks to raise and lower the steady barge traffic that plies the water. Louise asked why the dams and locks were necessary. "If we didn't have those the water would drain into the Rhine and all we'd have left is a muddy river bottom," said the Captain with a wink.



The river barges are interesting for me to watch but almost fascinating to Louise. They all seem to be configured the same way. The Mate lives in the cabin on the front; the cargo bins carry the payload in the middle; the Captain guides the ship from the wheelhouse and his wife runs the cabin on the rear. It is common knowledge that she could run the wheelhouse as well. Sometimes there is a car on the rear deck for trips into distant towns.



The Browns were right. By the time we arrived in Bernkastle we were pretty well calmed down and ready for a storybook walk.



The houses reflect the prosperity that a combination of wine grapes and a navigable river brings to a small town,



but we were unprepared for the "frozen in time" appearance of the village. This place is *gemuteikheit* on steroids and, from the crowds we encountered, it appears the principal economic driver here is tourism.



Not that Mosel wine is small potatoes. Many shops sell nothing else but and the proprietors enjoy the task educating tourists on the quality and value of their local wines.

They enjoy it even more when you pick up a bottle or two of their pride and joy...as we did for our evening meal with Marlies and Benny at their home. Of course, you shouldn't spend any time in Bernkastle without sampling the local product so we chose a wine bar on the main plaza.



Louise immediately struck up a conversation with a couple from Norway who were trailer camping. In our travels we've noticed the Dutch and Scandinavians seem to be the most comfortable speaking English...usually with little accent. The man was different because his accent was almost American. "Of course it is," he said. "I spent 20 years driving trucks for the studios in Hollywood. What would you expect?"



The return ferry to Piesport left at 3:00 PM sharp but the seating choice became problematic due to on again, off again light rain. I needed a solid surface to work on the blog and all that was left was on the rear deck. Field expediency once again came to the fore and Louise's umbrella and my travel bag provided a shelter so you could read these words.



While we were off calming down, Marlies was busy in her kitchen creatively preparing the meal that would celebrate our recent achievements. We enjoyed turkey breast smothered in pepper sauce, herbal spiced potatoes, cauliflower casserole, mushrooms in a cream sauce and a three part dessert of lemon, caramel and raspberry puddings. All of it washed down by the wine purchased in Bernkastle. A storybook day with a storybookending, all along the Mosel.



To round out the evening we had a nightcap or two in order to thank Heinz and Sylvia for allowing the MG to stay out front. "Our pleasure," said Heinz. "In fact, it drew a lot of photo takers who stopped in afterward for a glass of wine. We're thinking of making you an offer."



Tomorrow we've been promised a tour of Radio/Television Luxembourg.