

B58 LAST STOP FOR OUR MIGHTY GIRL
 PROJECT: EUROPE 2011
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To celebrate our last night with the MG we treated ourselves to a four star hotel in Heidelberg and chose an American chain in which to do it. We've known the Marriott chain for decades and have one almost in our front yard in Woodland Hills.



The hotel was as nice as we expected and, being last minute and a weekend, we got a decent rate for the night. WiFi was available in the room but what followed next took me aback. "It'll be 23 cents a minute for the use of WiFi or we can arrange a 12 hour package rate," said the

desk clerk. During our 2 ½ month tour of Europe we've stayed in over 40 hotels and B&B's and never once were charged for the use of WiFi. "Let me think it over," I said and then asked, "How much does it cost to use the elevator and is the TV coin operated?" She didn't appreciate my humor but said she'd pass my remarks along to management. Since it is well known that Mr. Marriott reviews all comments from his hotels daily, I hope this one got back to the U.S. intact.

Before we headed for the autobahn we looked for a site that we visited during our first honeymoon trip to Heidelberg. It's called the Alte Brücke or Old Bridge and is a must-see for any visitor with a camera in hand.





An American living in Heidelberg passed by and said, “Oh, you’ve found the ADAC calendar shot.” ADAC is the German version of our AAA and this spot is used in its calendars and brochures...the equivalent of a Disneyland Kodak moment. I’ll bet pictures taken from this point are stored under the beds of thousands of American travelers, ours included.

We breezed past the Frankfurt exit but marveled at the skyline that has popped up in the past 50 years. It used to be a low profile town, barely rebuilt from WWII damage. Now it has high-rises and a profile that resembles the city of Futurama plus a busy airport that befits the financial center of postwar Germany. We left the autobahn at Friedburg and headed over country roads toward our ultimate goal.



At one roundabout we stumbled onto an unlikely reminder of times past. It was a monument to Elvis Presley, stationed here during his military service. It’s hard to believe this town was captured by a guitar playing GI wearing blue suede shoes.



The MG had just turned 5,000 miles as we came to a stop in the main square of Nidda at 2:45PM. We called Michael Stadler for the final directions. He and Evi were waiting in the street and pointed to a choice parking spot for the MG. We enjoyed champagne and a special German dessert to celebrate our safe arrival and the upcoming handing over of keys ceremony. We also got to know more about the people who would be taking over the care of our MG. They were both raised here in Nidda, a city of about 18,000 people. Michael expanded his Engineering degree into investment management and has successfully developed moribund companies into revenue producers owned by individual investors. This has taken him, Evi and their two daughters into underdeveloped countries and given them a world-view not available to all. Now they're beginning to enjoy the fruits of their labor.



There was one small surprise. Each Sunday evening, Michael gets together with his car buddies so they can talk about...what else...cars. It's also an old-fashioned pitch-in dinner with their wives each preparing an item for the meal. At this point the gathering becomes stag. No women allowed. Evi, Louise and the other wives left for an

evening of classical music while we men were left to our own devices. Those included plenty of beer, wine, schnapps and food. Predictably, the MG was the main attention getter and topic of conversation.



I'm fortunate the guys spoke English because my limited German would have made for a quiet evening. It turns out much of their English was learned by listening to AFN during their youth. It was the music that got them. The English came by osmosis. Once the eating was over we got down to the toasts.



Each toast was followed by a small glass of schnapps, taken bottoms-up style. I'm still not sure what it tastes like but it sure is smooth going down.



Then the gloves came off. They all wanted to check out the MG top to bottom. I drove it onto the classiest lift I'd even seen and they swarmed underneath looking for any fatal flaws. I knew there weren't any because I'd already spent a lot of time under there myself...without the classy lift unfortunately.

Michael was the one who had to be pleased and he spent a lot of time going over the underside. He's already restored cars himself so he knew what he was looking for.



Then it was time to learn more about the MG's new environment. Michael raised an inner door and revealed the cars already in his growing collection. The first was a new Aston Martin DBS convertible next to a pristine Jaguar XK8 convertible. Following that was a Porsche Cayenne,

a Mercedes Benz SLR McLaren coupe built in England by McLaren Automotive. Only 3,500 were built and were never legal in the U.S. Production ceased in 2007.





The AMG Mercedes Benz SLS coupe was designed to replace the SLR McLaren. It is highly styled after the 1954 Mercedes 300 SL gull wing coupe that captured the imagination of the post war world. I am using photos from the Internet because my camera turned green with envy and the pix are not usable.

The final item was a 1929 BMW Dixie, a little known 2 door that Michael restored on his own. The pictures were green also so don't have a good shot of it.



Louise and I couldn't believe our luck. We came half way around the world looking to place our car with someone who'll appreciate and care for it. Through an accident of fate (read that as God in the works) we found a family in the parking lot of Aston Martin who are real car people and recognize quality when they see it. Sure, most of these cars outdo it in price and performance but not one will ever have the classy looks and world-wide experience of our 1954 MG TF. She'll be able to tell them all a thing or two when the door closes at night.

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Tomorrow we'll seal the deal and return to Paris.