



**On Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012** we set off for our long awaited holiday to Boppard, an historic town on the river Rhine in Germany looking forward to a week of walking and sightseeing along this great river. Fortunately we arrived in plenty of time at Birmingham airport as one member of the group injured her foot on her suitcase and had to find the first aid post to have it dressed. A good start to a walking holiday! Fortunately though this did not stop her from taking part in all the walks. On arrival in Frankfurt it took some time to locate a) the Ramblers leader and b) the coach! However we finally arrived safely in Boppard after a long journey and we were soon settled in to our hotel, The Hotel Rheinlust, overlooking the river. After a late dinner we were given a briefing on the following day's walks. Unfortunately we were too late for the walking tour of the town but were shown round the following morning by our walk leaders, a husband and wife team, before boarding the train to Rhens from where we would begin our first day's walks. Having 2 leaders, there was a choice each day of a short or longer walk, although for some there was not much difference. On this day the longer walk took in an extra 2 mile loop. The longer walk took us mainly through forest, where we came across a Roman subterranean aqueduct, and we were glad of the shade afforded by the trees. Further on we encountered a "Bike park" which was like a skateboard park with higher "jumps" where young boys were performing amazing acrobatics on bicycles.

We came out on to the Vierseen Blick, a viewpoint overlooking the Rhine where it gives the appearance of a chain of four lakes, and a little further on was the café Gedeonseck where the shorter group were already enjoying cool drinks and sampling the apple strudel. From here, some took the chairlift back down to Boppard whilst others took the steep and rocky path beneath it. Our meal that night was taken at a local restaurant and a lively affair that was!



**The second day's** walks involved a ferry across the river and a short train journey. The Longer walkers disembarking at the village of Kestert to walk the 10 miles to St.Goarshausen via the Rheinsteig which is a long distance path running for 320 km between Bonn and Weisbaden. The shorter group travelled on to Wellmich and climbed up passing the chateau fort of Katz. This was built in 1731 on an outcrop of rock but was destroyed by an explosion in 1806 and rebuilt in 1896-98. The longer party would also pass this in the afternoon before descending into St. Goarshausen to meet up with the others for the journey back to Boppard.

**Day 3** took us all to Buchholz by local bus to walk through the Erbach Gorge on the Moselle river. Some of us became quite excited by the thought of this rocky path with wire ropes – how adventurous – but these turned out to be no more than wire handrails. It was not too difficult and was very beautiful with the sun trickling through the trees, and the water babbling through the gorge. We were ready for our lunch stop at the café at the end of the gorge and Doreen proved to be a tasty snack for one hungry fly! After lunch we walked through meadows where we saw horses blindfolded, and through villages to catch the train back to Boppard.



**Day 4** was a "free" day, which left us free to explore or relax as we wished. Rosemarie arranged for some of the group to go to Koblenz where a flower festival was being held and then returning to Boppard by boat, whilst others took a 4 hour boat trip to Rhudesheim, a very pretty but touristy town famous for its Asbach brandy and the Drosselgasse with its glockenspiel clock, restaurants and bars. Were we late for the boat back or did it leave early or was it the temptation of the ice cream? Whatever, we were forced to make alternative arrangements for our return, which we did by train after working out the intricacies of the ticket machine!

**Day 5** and we were walking again, this time on the Loreley plateau high above the Rhine through meadows, fields of ripened corn and forests and with superb views of the river and villages along its banks. We saw the 2 castles overlooking each other, the Sterenburgh and the Liebenstein, built by two brothers who fell out, and all the while being serenaded by rock music which grew louder and louder as we approached the visitor centre. We learned later that it was a group



called "Riverside" practising for a music festival to be held the following week. We met up with the short walkers at a restaurant where we ate lunch on a sunny terrace and afterwards we all descended together before returning to Boppard.

**Day 6** and for our last day both groups walked together on a modified route from Lorch to Assmanshausen following the Rheingauer Reisling route. Assmanshausen is a red wine town, German wines being mostly white. This was another lovely walk through vineyards and forests and again with superb views of the Rhine.

The old town is very pretty with half timbered houses and cobbled streets adorned with vines and flowers. It was here that we "lost" 3 of the group, although we had a good idea of their whereabouts! After waiting for a while for them to drink, sorry, catch up, one of the leaders went to look for them whilst the rest of us hurried to catch our train, which we missed by minutes. We returned to the ferry only to see it disappearing with the 3 "lost boys" on board +1 leader. We were not amused, as we had to wait for it to cross and return. We were anxious to get back to the hotel as some of were going to a wine tasting before our evening meal at a local restaurant.



However we managed both and spent an enjoyable evening in the restaurant celebrating Josie's birthday. The restaurant produced a cake with a candle (very discrete) and a sparkler, the group presented her with a card signed by us all and a gift, and she very kindly treated us all to a drink. A truly memorable evening.



**Day 7**, our very last day. As we would not be leaving until the afternoon, we were able to spend a leisurely morning, wandering round the town or by the river and listening to the band in the park followed by lunch in the square where more from our group gathered before returning to the hotel to collect luggage and board the bus to Frankfurt and the plane home.

This was a truly enjoyable holiday in spite of there being over 100 schoolchildren in the hotel, with blue skies, plenty of laughter, good walking and good company.

Thank you Stuart, for making it all possible. We look forward to the next one!

Janet Bell

