

Mit Fahrrad: With Bike

When recalling the activities that brought me the most joy and sense of freedom in my youth, bike riding certainly makes it to the top of the list. It sits right up there with swimming and perching myself high in the fig tree with a book on a warm summer day. During the time of my 20's and 30's, I have very few memories of bicycling, so it came as a delightful rediscovery at 40. Moving just across the bridge from Heidelberg Altstadt, my bicycle became my primary means of transportation out of practicality. I fully embraced the freedom it offered. Never needing to wait in traffic or search for a parking place, my bike transported me to work at Heidelberg High School, to appointments, or downtown for shopping. My car was there for journeys outside of the city and for my girls when they began driving. It was with great reluctance that I gave up this freedom upon moving to Austin, out of fear for my safety. Just because Texas drivers may "drive friendly", that does not always mean they share the road well with people on bicycles.

While the first walk in the Freidrichsruhe Wald may signal my arrival in Germany, hopping on a bike and pedaling into Oehringen to pick up some groceries is the next. Last summer I did not drive a car during our entire stay in Germany and so far I haven't driven these first four weeks. However, a day hasn't passed that I haven't taken a bike ride. Some days it may be a short trip to the local organic grocers, others an evening loop with Sebastian that takes us down along the Ohre river and through the pristine Hofgarten.



In years past, we would set aside a few days to travel by bike through France with Sebastian. However, this summer we settled on day trips right here in beautiful Baden Wurtemberg. Sometimes it's just the three of us, but when we are lucky we get to participate in a *Hetzer- Hubele Radtour*. And let me tell you, these tours are pretty amazing for a host of reasons! Just a few of those being:

1. It's put together by Uncle Reinhold (brother of Marianne) who happens to be a planner extraordinaire.
2. I don't have to plan it.
3. I get to spend an entire day with some of the nicest people I know.
4. The scenery is spectacular.

But there are a few drawbacks as well. Starting with:

1. I get my butt kicked every time by Marianne, my 82 year old mother-in-law who passes me on every hill!

Now that you know the basics, let me share with you the beautiful tour we had last Friday. From Marianne's house we headed to the Oehringen station and loaded our bikes aboard the train bound for Schwaebisch Hall.



If you don't know about this picturesque city, you need to read this. Only 20 minutes from Oehringen, it sits down in the Kocher Valley offering visitors a brilliant contrast of sleek modern and well preserved historical architecture. I had not been for several years and was struck by the superb integration of a new shopping district into the old town. I certainly hope to return once more before our summer adventure ends.



From Schwaebisch Hall we headed north following the *radweg* along the Kocher River. The views from the rolling hills, through the forests and along the rushing stretches of the river were almost too much to take in. I found myself continually distracted by the beauty of a grove of trees, a patch of wildflowers, or grazing cows causing me to fall to the tail end of our group, there was just so much to see!

It is quite a task to manage 50 miles in few short hours so

there we kept up a good pace... rather, at least some of the group did! A few drink pauses along the way and we hit our lunch stop midday in Kuenzelsau. Finding a series of benches along the river front, we enjoyed our packed meals and conversation.



The next half of the trip took us again through beautiful countryside and charming villages. Before long we were back on a trail I know well that connects the small village of Ohrnberg with Oehringen. This stretch of the radweg was purpose-built two years ago in preparation of Oehringen's hosting of the 2016 Landesgartenschau. It is a scenic stretch again along the Ohre and is popular with local families on the weekends.

What a day we had! 50 miles of pure nature, pleasant conversations, delightful company, and with another plan proposed for one more ride together in the weeks to come.



Not written in English, but here is a map of our journey if you're interested. This site in English offers some further information of the entire 332k Kocher- Jagst cycle route.