

**May June 2008**

**Germany and Austria**

**Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> May**

The alarm was set for 4.40 for the journey all the way to Lindau in one day. After the usual final checks I am able to leave the house at 5am in the rain so wet weather gear is already useful and one less thing to carry on the walk to the station to catch the 5.42 to Marylebone. The network card reduction on the pre-bought tickets is available as it is a bank holiday. This is the last time; the next will be with a senior railcard. The train has lots of coaches as the west coast main line is closed. The Bakerloo and Metropolitan take me to St Pancras where papers keep me occupied in the lounge waiting for the 7.55 to Brussels calling at Ebbsfleet.

The train reaches Brussels on time which gives me an hour to wait for the ICE train to Köln although my plan to get cash is unrealised as the machine is not working. However, the train's ten minute delay before Köln still leaves half an hour and time to get it there. I have brought plenty of fruit, biscuits and cake that needed eating up so no restaurants are needed. After Köln, it is the IC train to Mannheim, ICE to Ulm and IRE to Lindau and all the connections work well; in fact rather hurried and a stumble as I rush to catch a train causes a bruised leg which is not a good way to start a hiking trip. I'm on a Belgien saver at half price booked online but with no reservations but this causes no problem as there are always plenty of seats.

Arrival at Lindau is at nine for the short walk to the Gästehaus Lädine which I had booked by phone and fax at 35€. After arrival at 9.20 (previously advised) I get to my room number nine on the second floor, next to the WC with the shower downstairs. The room is small but comfortable and I'm in bed by 9.45 for a good night, waking early.

**Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> May**

I'm up at 6.15 to a beautiful sunny day. After sorting my luggage and showering I have time for a walk around the island old town with views across to Switzerland and Austria from the harbour. Breakfast is at eight back at the gästehaus and is decent, sitting at communal decorated tables. The clientele is mostly German with one French couple. I sit with a doctor and physiotherapist who have 'only one week' and suggest an 'apple a day' and indeed there is an apple to take away.

I leave at 8.40 for the walk along the lakeside to Bregenz but soon take a tumble with tangled shoelaces. Grazes and some blood, scratched glasses but no major damage. The weather is warm with hazy sun. The crossing into Austria at Locknau of course has no formalities. There are lots of cyclists and a few power walkers but no trans Europe hikers.

Bregenz is soon passed and as one of the paths that I want is closed I decide to walk up the road to avoid some height gain. This is probably a bad move as the road is busy and has not much of a pavement. Also the footbridge over the Bregenzer Ach is no longer in place and this would cause a long detour and so I decide on the 3€ bus ride to Lingenau which is interesting and through

pleasant countryside but is cheating.

At Lingenau no one answers the door at a pension so it is the three star Hotel Löwen at 3pm for 49€. The room is very pleasant and large with an excellent bathroom, a balcony and a lot of light wood. After a bath with soothes my bruises but causes some difficulty in entering and exiting I have a restful spell on the balcony.

I have a leisurely set meal for supper at six – soup, pork escalope, vegetables, rhubarb compote with strawberries, cream and ice cream and a Weizenbier. After a stroll around the village I am in bed at 9.30 but soreness after my fall ensures a poor night, with no position comfortable.

### **Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> May**

The weather is hazy with an overcast sky with the sun coming out later for a warm humid day.

I am up at 6.30 in good time for an excellent breakfast at 7.30. Through the window I see several school buses unloading which is enjoyable to watch. After packing I am able to leave at 8.15.

Initially I make my way uphill from the village along the road in the morning air. Soon the path goes into the forest and almost reaches the summit of the Roter Berg at 995m with intermittent views of the valley. Hittisau is approached through the fields and has a shop for buying provisions. From there there is a descent to the bridge at 750m and then a long gradual ascent along a mostly quiet road with houses becoming spread out. At Zipfel the road becomes private with a list of charges but no means of collection. The way is very pleasant with alternating forests and meadows with a few walkers and cyclists to the Lecknersee and soon after there is a restaurant where a rather slow pasta and cheese sauce agreeably fills a corner. Rather than take a path in the valley bottom I elect to stay on the track which I think will be easier. It zig zags up the hill to gain height and passes two alp buildings. The track then undulates for four or five kilometres to another alp at Pass Scheidwang at 1317m. The central part is rather rough with some fords but eh extremes are narrow roads with a ribbon of tarmac reminiscent of the old single track roads winding through the Scottish Highlands. The alp is boarded up and surrounded by a rapidly melting snowdrift.

After the alp the way is downhill, steeply at first. Higher up there are a lot of primrose and gentians; lower down dandelions. It becomes something of a slog to Gansensriede Säge with just two cars and a few cyclists for company and arrival is at five. The first hotel, the Hirsch has a nice big room for 30€ with supper from six and breakfast from eight. After washing and a rest I make supper at 6.15; Badische white wine (fine), rösti (poor, bought in), salad (OK) and hot chocolate for 13.70€. After a short walk around the village to the room for the usual occupations and bed at nine with the shutters closed and a good night to almost six.

### **Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> May**

The usual chores lead to a satisfactory breakfast at eight and departure at 8.40 to another warm hazy morning. The three and a half kilometre road to Gunzersried is quiet and peaceful with a

slight rise out of the village and good views up the valley. Then there are several villages and a steep path down into the valley. The signage up to now is good but fails through Sonthofen. I take a rather round about route along the river dyke and through the extensive town centre to start the long climb. A lot of it is along a road; initially suburban and then an alp road zig zagging up the hillside. It finishes at 1329m where a poor mountain path starts with lots of roots and rocks. A steep climb, 200m in a kilometre, takes me to the end of the ridge and then a wooded ridge with snow patches, boggy bits and a lot of flowers. After about a kilometre there is rustic seat with excellent views of the area to come. A hundred metres down a steep path takes me to another path round to the path up to a contour around the Spieser; the summit would have to wait for another time. The path goes to Alp Hirsch for a beer but they have no rooms. By now the afternoon is well advanced and I'm getting tired. The route takes me sharply up to a pass and then down to Unterjoch. The descent is rather tedious initially with plenty of snow patches and rocks and roots and eventually down a steep grassy slope between two ski tows.

After a short walk along the Deutsche Alpenstrasse, the village starts. The first place has private rooms but at 40€ and with a fussy man but the Haus Louise has an excellent room with balcony, facilities along the corridor for 20€. By now I am very hungry so after a shower I head for a nearby hotel for a tasty supper of Butterfischfillet, fried potatoes, salad, Apfelschorle and Hot Chocolate for 16.60€. Then it is back for an early but restless night.

### **Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> May**

The eight o'clock breakfast is excellent and I make a leisurely start at 9.15, visiting the shop for lunch provisions. The weather is overcast and warm but with sunny intervals. There is a gently rising road out of the village to the Austrian border of which there is again no sign on the ground. Then a field footpath takes me to a guesthouse called Alpenrose on the map but Rehbach on the ground and then stepplly down to the River Vils which is flowing north in the direction I want. The route is along various good forest tracks crossing and recrossing the river. For quite a way there is a quiet track above the river to Himmelreich ending with a grassy slope back down to the main valley and a bridge to the track which has become a road.

Lunch is at Vilstalsäge: turkey escalope with cheese, spätzle, vegetables and an Apfelschorle which is OK. A couple join me at the table even though there are other places free. I leave as soon as possible. The rain starts and I shelter for ten minutes when the warm sun comes out. However there are rumbles of thunder and a darkening sky and growing wind. At the edge of Pfronten I try two houses for a room. No answer at the first and the second one wants 40€. Then the rain comes in earnest, a real cloud burst from which I shelter for 30 minutes, after which again there is hot sun. Accommodation proves difficult to find but eventually for 20€ I get what is in effect a Ferienwohnung but with breakfast at eight. Chores and then enjoy the bedroom, bathroom, sitting room, kitchen and balcony. Bed is at nine and sleep until 4.30, not so sore and then doze to podcasts.

## **Saturday, 31<sup>st</sup> May**

Up at 6.30 for the usual chores and a good breakfast arrives on a tray at 7.50. The man again asks when I'll leave; I'll bet that breakfast at 7.30 would have been OK. There are rolls and cak left over for lunch.

I leave at 8.40. The weather is dry but feeling fresher with clouds and sunny periods. After leaving the village I go steeply up through the woods to Falkenstein and the Burgruine. The timings on the signs are definitely bizarre. At the top there are excellent views all round including the plains to the north. After the summit a road goes down in zigzags to another path rising up through the woods to a wooded edge, with several opportunities for views to the left and right, Austria and Germany respectively. From here the route goes down to the beautiful and beautifully situated Saloberalp where a tasty lunch consisted of Erbsensuppe, Kaiserschmarren with apple and Weizenbier. Plenty of K left to take away for supper. The path is steeply down, partly on a dirt road to the delightful Alatsee and then the way is along roads and paths past Ober- and Mittelsee to Bad Faulenbach on the outskirts of Füssen. I go into the town centre for the bank (OK) and information about the route to Schloß Linderhof (closed). After a brief wander through the town and across the river Lech it is three kilometres along a road to Hohenschwangau with a good cycle/footpath.

The information office is open and is encouraging about the way to Linderhof although they don't check the paths every day. He suggests a shorter path to the one I was considering. There is a hotel nearby at 31€ although that turns out to be 41€ from May. But they have a room and breakfast from 7.30 which is useful for an early start for a long day.

After resting and snacking I have an early night and a fair night.

## **Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> June**

At 6.30 the sky is beautifully clear. There has been some rain overnight. After chores I find the breakfast room already full of families at 7.30. The breakfast is good with muesli and eggs with lots of coffee. On leaving at eight the tourists are already massing including Americans and Koreans. The steep path up to the Marienbrücke is quiet but the top is not with a lot of people taking pictures of the first rat view of the castle. The path heading along the valley to the mountains is much quieter and well made. The Lehrpfad is well made with plenty of interpretation tablets, zigzags, good views and one patch of snow before the ridge at 1600m which is muddy with the snow just melted.

The path down from the ridge is not so good; unstable with mud. The path gets better but there are several steep snow patches which I work around at some effort. The descent is slow until I reach the forest roads in the valley. It is about two hours along forest roads and then along a path past a lake, field and waterfall and a steep hill to the Kenzenhütte which is mostly occupied by cyclists.

After a short snack I take the steeply rising track through the grassland with lots of flowers for 260m to the Bäckenalmsattel. The descent is long through alpland and forests and along streams and rivers to the head of the forest road. Schloß Linderhof is about another hour including a ford to wade. Luckily the hotel has a room, but for only one night so there will not be a rest day. There turns out to be party arriving but I seem to be alone tonight. 55€ + KT, 15€ for HP.

The feet are the worse for wear and the lift is welcome. The room is good and overlooks the mountains. I have supper at 6.30. It's OK, but not much taste. I have a very disjointed sleep from nine.

### **Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> June**

I have a long lie until 7.30 and am the only one for breakfast at 8.10. It is much better than dinner with muesli, fruit, egg and yoghurt and leisurely so that I don't start until 9.45 with a walk through the Schloßpark in the hot bright sun. There is plenty to see without going into the house but finding the start of the path up the mountain is not easy with several false starts. It turns out to be narrow, steep and 'rooty'; only later I see that a part is marked 'gefährliche Stelle' on the map. The going is slow with plenty of fallen trees causing detours and hot sun in the clearings. Eventually Pürschling Haus on the ridge is reached and they serve me lunch outside in the shade, although the cloudes quickly gather. Rostbratten, red cabbage and dumpling and Apfelschorle for 12€. The way down is along a steep concrete track with lots of cyclists again. There are some large drops of rain and lower down thunder which heralds more organised rain which is eventually torrential with hail. There is a suitable seat underneath an overhang and it is fascinating to watch the torrent for about thirty minutes. When it is more or less over I go down the steep rocky path which leads to a road into a damp and overcast Unterammergau where I soon find a room in a private house for 22€ and breakfast is available at 7.30. The room has a pleasant terrace which is shared with another room but there is no one else staying. It has a table and chairs and a view of the mountains and is very suitable for the usual activities of writing up my diary, reading and puzzling.

I make a brief foray into the village to look for a post office or even a stamp machine but there is neither. Back at the house the room is small with a wash basin to which a very small shower and WC cubicle has been added. The room has several items of painted and 'holy' furniture.

### **Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June**

After getting up at 6.30 and breakfast at 7.30 I get away at 8.15. The breakfast is OK with lots of weak coffee. At the shop I get provisions for lunch, post cards and stamps. The woman is not sure of the amount and neither am I. I buy the 45c ones and post cards. Later I find this is not enough but the cards get through.

The weather is good for walking; overcast and cool with some wind and a hint of brightness. The signed route round the side of the hill is longer than that on the map but is comfortable. The Hörnle hut on the ridge is closed and therefore no refreshment. There are a lot of walkers along

the next few miles but no mountain bikers. There is good path to the main summit but again the paths are not as marked on the map and the times on the signs bizarre and contradictory. But it is easy to find a way down through the forest to Grafenschau along muddy paths and forest roads. The village is obviously a wealthy one with a large OAP's home, school and one restaurant which is closed and therefore no cooked lunch here, just a few crumbs from the rucksack sitting on a bench. It seems to be a largely commuter village.

The way to Eschenloe is a flat road around the farmland and Moos and takes about two hours for the eight kilometres and arrival in the village is at 4.15. There are several hotels and private rooms but as I decide on a rest day I select the Alpenhotel Wengere Hof with a 'sehr ruhige Lage' and is about a kilometre out of the village. They have a room for two nights at 45€ per night. It turns out to be a very nice double with a large balcony facing the forest and certainly quiet. Laundry, shower, Apfelshorle from the help yourself bar and then to the village for dinner at the Alte Post. Pork medallions, Spätzle, mushrooms and Weißbier for 12.10€. Afterwards I go back for an early night with the shutters closed and a peaceful night.

### **Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> June**

I treat myself to a long lie, getting up at 8.15 for a good breakfast at 8.45 before returning to the balcony to read. The weather is rainy, so it was a good choice for a rest day, and the balcony is large enough to escape the rain. I make two excursions – on shopping for provisions and stamps and one for a walk in the evening and to phone Margaret.

### **Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> June**

Again the weather dawns grey but reasonably fine. I have another good breakfast at eight, pay and leave at 8.45. I need to retrieve the camera battery from my rucksack so that the actual departure is at nine. It proves to be an uneventful and fairly level day as the clouds are low and the official route over the mountains seems a bad idea.

The walk from the hotel is initially along a path as last night to cross the river and then up to the main track which is a road changing to a forest track all the way to Walchausee at Einsiedl, about nine kilometres. The scenery is pleasant including a view into Klamme and a small tarn.

At Einsiedl the way joins a toll road along the south shore of the lake. There are some light showers and all the mountains are covered with low clouds; very unlike the previous visit in December 2006 with blue skies and frost. The road has little traffic and the walk is fine. At the far end there is a path through the fields another forest section to reach, at three o'clock, Jachenau, a small village. The Gathof zur Post has a room at 30€, and a three course meal with wine and HC is 21.20€.

The village is very peaceful and the night is good with sleep until 5.30.

### **Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> June**

Up at 7.45 and straight to breakfast where six places are set and the meal is good, with fruit and muesli in addition to the usual, with a cheese roll to take away for later. I pay and then back to the room and leave by 9.10.

It was raining overnight and at first light but now it's merely damp with more low clouds. This together with tiredness leads to the decision for another valley route. The first two hours is along field footpaths and needs careful navigation. The weather is drizzly with heavier bursts and waterproofs and rucksack cover are certainly needed. After the fields the track leads through the woods and there is less route finding with 814m the highest point. There is some brightness but always clouds and a shuttered chalet gives me a dry seat for a snack and then it is steeply downhill and along to the Gästehaus Lege for a lunch of Spätzle and Weißbier at 9.60€. It sits rather heavily on the stomach and the seven kilometres into Lenggries is rather an effort, starting along a path but ending on the road. A man with six boys on some sort of puzzle walk encourages me to the village centre for accommodation.

One house seems only to have rooms by the week and there is no other so the zur Post yields a room, at 3.30, for 31€. The boss is across the road in his café and I seem to be the only resident in the hotel which has obviously seen grander times with lots of momentos and photos on the walls of the hallways. The room is comfortable enough and I get a decent night with only one break.

### **Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> June**

Up at seven for breakfast across the road at eight which consists of two mugs of strong coffee, rolls and jam.

Departure is at 8.45 in the rain which seems to have been falling during the night. The route starts through the streets of yesterday, past the Kalvarienberg and Hohenburg on to the forest road alongside the Hirschbach which is not surprisingly in full spate. This is the lower of two versions of the E4 marked on the map; there seems no point in going over the Fockenstein (1582m) in the rain and clouds. The track is good at a continuous but reasonable angle to reach the pass, Hirschtalsattel, 1224m, in two hours. After the pass there is a kilometre of a muddy path down into the Stinkergraben which lives up to its name smelling of H<sub>2</sub>S. The path becomes a decent track and when meeting the main valley, the Söllbacktal, becomes a forest road along which it is possible to 'motor' along. The track is good all the way to lunch at Söllbackklause, alongside the river all the way. Lunch is good if rather pricy at 20€ for Schollenfilet, asparagus, salad, Radler, coffee and Apsfelstrudel.

The last bit of the valley is along tarmac to the main road around the lake, the Tegernsee, for two kilometres until there is a path, the Uferweg. This goes through several expensive village resorts to the head of the lake and then along the road to the town of Tegernsee. Since lunch there has been some rather warm sun.

Accommodation proves difficult with no joy at a private house and a guest house so I head for the information centre. They find two hotel rooms one at 150€ and one at 55€ at the Fischerlstüberl

am See which I head for. I had already passed the hotel on entering the town. The room is fine, overlooking the lake, but also the busy main road which passes the door, with a balcony. The two thicknesses of double glazing, shutters and thick curtains help to keep the noise out but also the air.

I explore the town and the Schloß with a walk to check the start of tomorrow's route by the station. Back in the hotel the room is stuffy with all the noise protection but I sleep until 12.30 and again from 1.30 to 6.30.

### **Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> June**

The morning is dry with some sun but also low clouds. Breakfast at eight is fine and allows me to pay and be away by nine.

The route is immediately steeply uphill into the clouds and forest but with some views of the lake. After 530m in less than an hour and a half the ridge and the Neureuthaus is reached in the clouds, but again there are limited views of the town and lake. For about two and a half kilometres the path is level through the forest with some views and then down along a good, long path to Au and the road to Schliersee and paths around to the lake to the village which is a resort but not so exclusive as Tegernsee. The weather is sunny but threatening; the forecast was for a storm. Sitting by the lake eating a snack for lunch is very pleasant.

Out of the village there is a long, fairly gentle ascent alongside the Leitnergraben and then the way steepens to the summit in the trees at about 1200m with fleeting views of the Wendelstein. The descent is varied with a forest road, a rocky, muddy path followed by a field track to Trach, a hamlet about a kilometre short of Fischbachau. There is a large room available for 16€ in a beautiful old farmhouse. The furniture is painted and dates from the eighteenth century and the bed is high with a large duvet and there is a handbasin, with WC and shower along the corridor. I fix breakfast for 7.30 with coffee, take a shower and sit on the terrace reading for a while.

At 4.15 I find an excellent meal (best yet) in courtyard of the Klostersaal: carrot and tomato soup with ginger and chillies, three dumplings (speck, cheese and spinach) floating in butter with parmesan and Elderflower Schorle for 14.80€. After a visit to the Klosterkirche with its very elaborate rococo interior I stroll back to the farmhouse for more reading. The rain comes at 6.30 but not stormy and not for long. A good long sleep follows with only one interruption.

### **Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> June**

The windows reveal a clear blue sky with sunshine at 6.45 and an OK breakfast follows at 7.30 with lots of coffee and a cheese roll to go. Departure is at 8.30 followed by a visit to the bakers for lunch and postcards and then up the street to Birkenstein. From there it is a left turn at the Überwirt onto the forest track which is steep but with a good surface and plenty of zigzags.

None of the alms are open for business so the provisions bought in the village are welcome. The path is a little downhill to avoid a cliff and then it is muddy and stony through the grassland and a



few trees. At the foot of the Wendelsteinwand there is a path which diverges left and is initially overgrown but then good; a beveledere to the Riederalm where the main path from the Wendelstein joins. There is bench at the junction with an excellent view down the valley and very suitable for lunch; again there is no activity at the farm. The well surfaced track descends into the valley in wide sweeps from 1500m to 450m at the Inn. It is Ruhetag at the Mitteralm and the path crosses the rack railway several times. The scenery changes from forest to farming land and the cool wind to warm sunshine. There is a lot of tarmac, first through the small town of Brannenburg and then over the main line railway, the Autobahn 93 and the Inn; this is lowest point since Bregenz.

The approach to Nußdorf is through the forest and extensive housing but no 'Zimmer Frie'. The information board in the village has several addresses which yield nothing but another has a room for 21€ with breakfast at 7.30. The room is large with a separate bathroom and a large balcony. It is Ruhetag at the local inn but there is a Pizzeria where I can eat outside as they set up the large screen for the big match (EM stands for Euromeister, the European football). However there is smoking so just time for a four seasons and beer and then back for an early night and a good long sleep.

## **Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> June**

At 6.30 there is a clear blue sky and at 7.30 the breakfast is the usual for a private room with a large flask of coffee and yields a Wurst and cheese roll for lunch; the cheese is better than usual. After packing I get away at 8.15 and straight onto the path.

Since there is a gap between the maps I study the signposts carefully but there is little help. The first three kilometres are along a quiet road alongside the river in the trees. After a mill the valley opens up and the road takes wide sweeps upwards. A detour to the walkers' car park yields a map and the wrong path and so back to the road for a bit further until there is a sign to the Hochries. This is not the E4 but it turns out to be a good choice; quite long but good gradients and variety of forest and alms and close to the Austrian border. As it zigzags up to the ridge the former hot sun disappears and the cloud and wind are quite a relief. A track bypasses the first summit and then a climb of 150m reaches the Hochries summit at 1568m where a drink is 50c cheaper for Alpine Society members!

After thirty minutes at the summit there is 200m of a rocky path through alpine vegetation and then along a track past another hut. It is tempting to stop for a meal but the weather does not inspire confidence. The way zigzags down through the forest where there is some felling and an alm has refreshments but no meals. By accident I choose a longer way down but it is an interesting path. There are no rooms in the suburbs which seem to be a wealthy area. One Pension has no rooms and so the Information Office gets a visit. They ring round and find a private room for me. It is steeply uphill and not in the direction that the staff send me. The house is quiet and the room is good with a balcony, en suite and yes I can stay for two nights. I order breakfast for eight with coffee, shower and go out for an evening meal. I am ravenous but

have to sit inside to avoid the smoking. Later the night is a broken one.

### **Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> June**

Rest day.

Breakfast at eight with plenty of coffee. Leisurely stroll to post office, shop and lunch at eleven. Back to room and a better night.

### **Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> June**

Up and into breakfast a little before eight allows me to leave by 8.40. Immediately the way is steeply up but the paths are well graded and the 900m or so is not too arduous. The weather helps; it is grey with some clouds floating around but cool and the kilometres are relatively easy. The height is achieved in two and half hours and there are views from time to time.

At the Steinling Alm (1550m on the map, 1450 on the building) a hot chocolate is waiting and they give me directions for the track which is only signposted to the Hochplatte after the start. The path is rocky and winds through a rock garden. There is one snow patch to avoid and then the path is steep up to the saddle to the east of the Kampenwand summit. The descent is initially tricky with fixed ropes and up to another saddle. From there there is a long contour walk high above the valley looking down on Schlecking and past several alms to a comfortable rock with a view for lunch – smoked salmon sandwiches, tomato and banana.

The descending path to the top of the cable car is delightful and from there there is forest road to the lower station in the suburbs of Maquartstein. One or two enquiries yield nothing and the information office is closed until 1600. But across the river is the Burg café with a room, 49€ but it is huge with a balcony and a good bathroom. After a shower I take an early meal of Schnitzel and potato salad with Frankenwein.

### **Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> June**

It was a pretty good night but at two I was awoken at two by the wind and rain which forced me get my boots in from the balcony and close the windows. I got up finally at 6.45 for breakfast at 7.30; a good buffet and a lunch packet offered and accepted. It is still raining at breakfast but it has just about stopped on leaving at 8.40 although grey and overcast. In fact there is no significant rain during the day. The radio said unfreundlich.

The way is fairly steep up the usual forest tracks to about 1200m where I decide to take the route around the base of the Hochgern. Initially, to the Giern Alm, the way is fine but then the path is indistinct, muddy and stony alongside the scree and then very slippery and muddy down to join the main path which is also very slow going, very uneven and slippery. Eventually to the Hinter Alm at one and decide that I haven't another 500m of ascent in me and so the valley way; south and east to Urschlau along a forest road with logging trucks and cows heading up to the Haar Alm for the summer; five cows with four attendants.

The rest of the way is along the delightful valley to Ruhpolding. There is some sun and whereas it was cold on top with numb fingers it is now much warmer. After several enquiries for rooms it seems that one night is snubbed until the Restaurant-Pension Alte Mühle has a decent room for 30€. I arrive at 4.45 and by 5.30 I am in the restaurant eating Schollenfilet, Kaiserschmarren, Grüner Veltliner and HC for 18.20€.

The night is poor – plenty of traffic.

### **Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> June**

The sun is shining when I get up at seven for a brief sortie from the hotel before breakfast which is fine. I leave at 8.55 in the sun but cool with fine weather until midday and then overcast with only a few spots of rain. The morning is very pleasant with, unusually, no big ascent. After the suburbs of Ruhpolding the Mozart Radweg is joined which rises gently through woodland by a stream. After this there is farmland and a long transit through the various villages of Inzell to the far side at Kapel at twelve.

The ascent starts, 750m in two hours on steep but mostly good paths to the Kohler Alm on the ridge with excellent views but it is a chilly place for a brief lunch. Then it is on to the path to Zwiesel Alm which is marked with blue and white which is worrying if it has the Swiss meaning. The way is slow with lots of roots and stones and one section of steps and a fixed rope and the alm is reached after an hour and twenty minutes. After a brief halt the long descent to Bad Reichenhall starts, 1000m from the Kohler Alm. The path starts steep and stony but gets better. At the bottom of the path various requests for a room yield nothing. Apparently there is a cycle marathon in the town. The first hotel in town is full but the helpful man in charge directs me to an area near to the station where there are plenty of hotels. I'm getting rather worried but at 7.10 I find a room at the Four Seasons Hotel for 45€ which is very pleasant and quiet and offers breakfast from 7.30.

Round the corner from the hotel I get a light meal at a café which is just about to close –Goulaschsuppe, Kartoffelpuffer and Weißbier for 12.10€. After the usual reading and podcasts a good night's sleep although wakened at 4.20 by the dawn chorus – closed windows and earplugs!

### **Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> June**

I make a leisurely start for a short day. Breakfast at 8.15 is good with plenty of choice and I'm away by 9.15. The weather is sunny but cool and the clouds gather as the day progresses.

After leaving the suburbs the way is along a pleasant country lane looking across the fields to the mountains. Soon the border between Germany (Bayerisch Gmain) and Austria (Großgmain) is reached with no formalities but the police are in evidence. I leave the road and go up into the woods at Wolfschwang and then along pleasant paths to Latschenwirt which is no longer a restaurant. After this the road is rather busy but a detour along a path is a long deviation and I return to the road for a steep descent into Fürstenbrunn at the edge of the plain leading to

Salzburg, with some noise from the airport. It is quite warm and humid.

Gasthof Esterer, just past the village, provides lunch (a hefty slab of Polenta, potatoes, cheesy sauce and red wine) and also a bed with breakfast at 7.30 at 45€, ready for a longish walk across Salzburg. I spend the afternoon in the room and have a good night.

### **Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> June**

I'm up at 6.45 ready for breakfast at 7.20 but it's poor, no rolls, grey bread and toast, one jam, liver sausage, coffee but with some good cake and cheese. I make a quick departure at 8.15 in the dry morning and the sun soon comes out to make it warm. The visibility is excellent and the walking is easy across the plain. At the airport there is a deviation and then the route is through the streets of suburban Salzburg, passing Schloß Leopoldshorn and lake. There is a city meadow and then the foot of the Festung leads to the old town.

The second shop yields the map I need (WK081) and postcards and stamps (65c as in Germany) and then a cash machine coughs up the dough. An internet café wants 20c/min, minimum 2€ which seems too dear. Many of the buildings (including the roof of the cathedral) have large banners about the football on them.

The route leaves Salzburg over the bridge, along an old street, Steing, and then up a lot of steps to the Kapuzinerberg via a couple of churches. After this there are various paths through the woods to the summit at 638m. The restaurant in the castle is closed. Unfortunately all the height is lost down steps back into the city, across the railway and more suburban streets lead to a path up through the woods, although it is not the one shown on the map as the E4. The path is relentlessly steep to the Unter and Ober Judenberg and then to the Zistelalm at 1000m but again the restaurant is closed.

I decide against another 288m to the Gaisberg summit but go a little way down the road to an almost hidden narrow path through a wood and a field to join the official E4 for the alst four kilometres to Ebenau.

There is a Pension over the baker's, but the chef is away for an hour and I can't understand the assistant's thick dialect. I go to eat at the Schnitzel Paradies with spicy Schnitzel and Wießbier for 12.90€. When I get back to the Pension I get a decent room overlooking the river for 30€. Th room is comfortable with a large balcony looking towards the hills. Wireless is available so I check the weather forecast and answer a few email. Apart from wakening for an hour at two it is a decent night.

### **Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June**

I'm up eventually at 7.30 for Breakfast which turns out to be excellent; juice, muesli with yoghurt, egg and all the usual with good bread from the inhouse bakery and I'm away at nine after paying the 30€ bill.

The clouds are low, but it is fine. The grass in the meadow is soaked from the overnight rain. Initially the path is fussy to avoid the main road but soon it joins a side road, the Klammsstraße. From there the route joins a forest road and over the stream issuing from and giving the first view of the Strubklamm. The path goes steeply up through the damp meadows and roads with a silly diversion to avoid a farm. There is more uphill through the woods with just one narrow section overlooking the Klamm. The road is on the other side; I think it has better views and is easier. The climb is the Metzgersteig, named after a seventeenth century butcher who died here. After a confusing way through a farm the path crosses the stream over the electricity dam onto the road which winds up to Faistenau which is on a little hill. The village shop yields apples and chocolate.

After this, for the next few kilometres the signs are poor and disagree with the map for the 804 path. Eventually after passing a building site the path goes steeply uphill to the Sattelalm, with no cows yet, and to the Sattel at 1140m. I begin to realise that I need another rest day! After poor paths going up there are good ones going down via the Fiblingsee to the lakeside at Fuschl and the walk into the village as a few spots of rain start to fall.

The first Pension wants 41€ so I visit the Information Office and they find a single at Haus Brigitte in the village centre. It costs 26€ for a fairly small single room with a nice balcony with a view of the hills. There is no hot water initially but BBC world is available for once. An abortive sortie shows that the restaurants tend to open later. At six I am successful for a good Italian meal but the place is pricey and smoky. Back to the room for an early bed and a good night.

### **Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> June**

Is spent mostly on the balcony and resting.

Out for some sightseeing, shopping and a nearby restaurant for the Mittagsmenü which is very reasonable but with slow service. There is a loud but interesting American conversation at a neighbouring table. The weather is mostly grey with some heavy rain at teatime and brighter later.

The night is poor and the weather gets warmer.

### **Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> June**

It is an excellent morning with a clear blue sky and bright sunshine after yesterday's rain. I am up at 6.30, have a breakfast which is as good as yesterday at 7.50 with a British family and away by 8.50. The day's route is fairly long but largely level after the initial climb of the first hour and a half. Initially the slope is very gentle up the attractive Ellmau valley through small villages and past farmhouses. The Hochlackenhof Wirthaus is getting ready for the day's business and then the path goes sharply up to the Mozartblick for a wonderful view over St Gilgen and the Wolfgangsee. I bet Mozart never came here. There are lots of seats here all together; it is obviously a popular spot.

Then the path is steeply down but well made, the Mozartsteig, to the outskirts of St Gilgen and

then through the streets to the Uferweg, which is the old railway solum of the Lokalbahn. At first this is shared with the cycle track and close to the road as there is little room until the flat delta opposite St Wolfgang where there is plenty of space, villages and lots of campsites. After about three kilometres the path rejoins the railway line right on the lake side through marshy vegetation and excellent views across the lake. The suburban streets of Strobl take a fair time and the restaurants have closed so there is no lunch but eventually I get to the outflow from the lake and then take the path along the river which is delightful, partly on the south and partly on the north bank with a lot of prosperous housing.

Eventually there is no sight of the Uferweg and so a track takes me to Lindau where the Pension is full but the Wirt directs me to a farmhouse nearby. This has a small room with an excellent balcony and view across the valley for 20€. The room needs cleaning so I go back to the Pension Grabner for a meal while that happens. The meal is modest for 11€ and then it is back to the room for clothes washing and a very pleasant time on the balcony looking towards the Schaffberg but there is a lot of noise from various building works around. A decent night follows.

### **Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> June**

Up at 6.15 for breakfast at 7.30 and away at 8.20 into another warm sunny day with some clouds passing over. The route is initially along the road, which is being newly metalled in connection with the building work, from Lindau down to the river. Then there is an excellent path along the river bank. North of Bad Ischl there is a tangle with the main road which crosses the river into a tunnel. After crossing the river I can take a minor road through the village of Jainzen and into the woods. The map again has not got the line of the path correct and a little imaginative route finding is needed around the Hausberg and onto the main road alongside the River Traun. Initially there is a cycle path along the busy road which is very noisy, but after a couple of kilometres there is a bridge over the river and a country road past the Mitterweißbach station. This is much pleasanter even though the main road is still audible across the river. The lane continues for about four kilometres through fields, forest and hamlets to Langweis station where the lure of lunch takes me back across the river. However one inn is no longer and the other boasts 'Ruhetag'.

The Soleleitung provides a comfortable and level pathway to Planhau where there is a bridge leading to a path through the suburbs of Ebensee to the station where there are several guesthouse. But the information office across the river is closed; I had hoped to ask about accommodation for tomorrow night at Almsee. There are several leaflets available which get me to the Pension Kohlbach which has a room with half board for 35€ and breakfast at seven which is a bonus.

After a shower and laundry with a convenient washing line on the terrace there is time for shopping for provisions and a visit to the lakeside, the Traunsee. At five o'clock I can have my evening meal – pancake soup, gammon, potatoes, sauerkraut, dumpling, cream slice and a

Weißbier.

Afterwards the communal terrace is a pleasant home for reading and reading. I disable the ticking clock but not the church clock and hence a mixed night.

### **Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> June**

As promised breakfast with the newspaper is at seven on a glorious sunny morning with high twenties forecast for the day. Initially the way is three kilometres across the delta along quiet roads through Ebensee and the village of Rindbach. Then the path starts along the Rindbach proper. A lot of it is along forest roads but there is a steep rocky section with steps and a fence which goes near the stream and waterfall.

The forest road is steep and relentless but there is plenty of shade from the sun. There are plenty of cyclists but no walkers. At about 800m (climbing from 425) the track levels out for a kilometre or so and then there is a reasonable path through the woods down to join another forest road to the Offensee. The first Gaststätte is a 'posh' restaurant but an excellent path around the lake leads to a Jausenstation for a Radler.

The work then starts again along a steep path mostly alongside scree with a lot of fallen trees. A bench with a roof provides a lunch spot and after about an hour and a half the summit at 1029m is reached and then it is back to the forest roads with good comfortable walking. There is a steep down and up with a brief sortie for foot bathing in the Nesseltalbach before rejoining forest roads and one more path to the Almsee at 3.45. This gives plenty of time for the last bus at 4.25 (checked in Ebensee) if no accommodation is available. However, as predicted in Ebensee, the first inquiry yields a simple room with balcony and stunning view across the lake and mountains for 25€. Breakfast is not until 8.30 but a 'Vacuum Frühstück' can be provided.

After a shower I eat my supper outside on the terrace, only spoiled by more smoking, with Grießsuppe, Forelle, salad and Weizenbier. After this I got to my room for reading on the terrace with the wonderful view. Unfortunately there are diners below and so there is noise and I have an interrupted night.

### **Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June**

At five the view is magical over the lake with mist lying low and already there is sun on the peaks and a moon in a clear blue sky.

Since breakfast is already set out I decide to leave early. After a shower I get the awful coffee drunk, eat yogurt and muesli and pack everything else for later. I leave at 5.50 with the air still cool and there is a wonderful walk around the lake through the woods to Habenau and then along a winding road along the river to the Almtaler Haus with not too many cars in the early sun.

A diversion takes me to the Gr and Kl Ödsee and it is well worth it for the jade green lakes with snowy peaks reflected in the surfaces. I have the first to myself but others are beginning to arrive

at the second. Then there is a 200m climb to the Ringsattel with warnings of difficulties because of storm damage. At the Sattel it takes about 45 minutes through the tangle of fallen trees. Afterwards the path is good as it goes back down to the valley. At the bottom there is a sign saying that the path is closed; however there are people going back up and asking about the path.

Along the forest roads it is a long hot walk to Steyerling which is the first source of refreshments. As my water is long finished the Radler is very welcome. Another two kilometres takes me to the station, arriving at 3.20 but there are no trains between three and 5.26 and no restaurant. I decide to walk to Klaus doing a bit more of the E4. The wait there is 45 mins which is not long enough for a meal. The train arrives on time and it is a comfortable and scenic ride to Selzthal.

There seems little at the small town except for the railway junction. I find a room for 23€ and supper at a nearby restaurant. A helpful railway man prints out times of trains to Bregenz; 8.18 or 10.18. I decide to take the former and rearrange breakfast for seven.

### **Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> June**

Up at 6.15, breakfast at seven, Pay and away by 7.50.

Ticket from the Automat with a credit card, 51.10€ to Lindau.

Lots of changes but all connections made until a hold up outside Feldkirch and eventual arrival in Lindau at 5pm to a welcoming hug from the Pension lady!