

Greetings from a rather damp Pontresina in the Swiss Alps.

I am pleased to say that all the transport arrangements worked well. There were some tight connections that I was concerned about but even Eurostar was spot on time. I saw no evidence of immigrants and we sped through Calais with no perturbation.

My billet in London on Tuesday evening was rather down market on the hotel at St Pancras but was still clean and had air-conditioning and so I could shut out the noise of London. It was a good thing that it was just across the road as my train to Paris was scheduled to leave at 7 AM. In Paris I had the short walk from the Gare du Nord to the Gare de l'Est and found that the latter had been evacuated. I don't know why but we were soon let in and my train to Stuttgart left on time and it was only 10 minutes late arriving.

The hotel in Tübingen was simple but comfortable in a quiet suburb. I had four nights there and spend the warm sunny days walking in the woodlands and hills round about the town. I visited Reutlingen which is a pleasant town nearby and has as its main claim to fame, apparently, the narrowest street in the world, measuring just 31 cm or a foot across.

My journey from Tübingen to Pontresina depended on a five minute connection between the local train and the intercity train which concerned me somewhat; but several people were making the same connection and it worked with German precision. Here in Pontresina the hotel taxi met me and I was soon established in the same room as last year with its view from the balcony of the mountains, although through quite a lot of low cloud and rain.

This morning I spent in my room reading and watching the rain but this afternoon I got the train up the valley for a local walk and apart from one heavy shower with wind and hail there was some brightness and even a bit of sun! (For those who know the area, train to Ospizio, walk to Alp Grüm, train to St Moritz and walk back through the Stazerwald.)

First the weather, which seems a very British sort of start. There seems to have been something of everything. One day I was walking in the forest above Soglio in the pouring rain with mountain streams torrentially around me. The day after I awoke to find the hills covered in fresh snow. Another day I started in the sunshine walking through the woods but later the wind got up and it started hailing followed by heavy rain, lightning and thunder. But yesterday it was wall to wall sunshine with a completely blue sky even though the area was rather chilly, starting with frost.

The days pass very pleasantly with a typical one starting with breakfast at 7:30 with all the usual muesli, cheeses, jams and cooked meats. I am getting plenty of exercise with each day having between a half and a full day's walk. Yesterday I started with a ride on the chairlift to get some altitude from the valley. Then it was a long walk to nearly 3000 m and a landscape of gravel and rocks where glaciers recently were. Then a couple of passes and a long hike down a series of valleys to get the bus back to the hotel.

Tomorrow snow is forecast and so I am going for a bus ride into Italy, to Chiavenna. Even there the forecast is for rain.

Tonight's dinner included Heusuppe, or Hay Soup. I was assured that it really is made from Hay. I think I was persuaded that the taste was reminiscent of the scent you get in summer when the grass is being cut and you can smell the herbs.

Greetings from Germany where I am staying in Worms on the way back to England.

First the weather, which continues to be various. Monday: bright blue sky, Tuesday: overcast, dense fog and cold wind, Wednesday: heavy rain turning to snow and about 10 cm settling in the valley, Thursday: mostly sunny with a cold wind, Friday: thick fog, melting away to give bright sun, Saturday: almost continuous sun!

The hotel has been very comfortable and friendly and it is a worthy choice for a return visit. The breakfast is the usual buffet (with some excellent bread), and I have opted for the five course set meal in the evening and have enjoyed some good meals: a starter, soup, salad, choice of two main courses and a sweet. The portions are quite small, but I never felt underfed.

As I said before I have had plenty of exercise and feel better for it. But don't get me started on the subject of cyclists; they get everywhere in their ridiculous Lycra outfits, riding along narrow mountain paths and wearing away fragile surfaces.

Today I enjoyed the train ride (first class of course) down through and out of the mountains, and across southern Germany to Worms where I am staying for a couple of nights in a modest hotel in the market square. Tomorrow I shall be exploring the town and its surroundings on the Rhine.