

TRIP TO GERSCHEDE



The day of the trip to Gerschede in Germany had finally arrived, Julie was driving Sam and I to Terminal 5 at Heathrow Airport. We arrived shortly before 2pm and everything looked very impressive. We soon found where to check in, after showing our passports and tickets our luggage was sent off on the conveyor belt and we were directed to the departure gates. (Thanks Neil for the information on which gate to use, we went through really quick).

In the departure lounge Sam and I made our way to one of the many eating outlets for lunch, our holiday had begun. We soon met up with Jill, Lauren and Danielle, Jean and Kirstein and many others; it was a real party mood. Jill and I always keen to enter the party spirit quickly armed ourselves with a drink.

It wasn't long before we were called to our boarding gate, it was quite a long walk but everyone was chatting happily on the way. Passengers were being boarded according to their seat on the plane; Sam and I were in Row 11 so we were the last section to board. We approached the gate, handed our boarding cards and passports to the stewardess, she opened them, looked at Sam and I, and then asked "why have you got two female passports"? I looked at the passport and all I could see was Julie's face staring at me. I checked my bag to see if I had Sam's passport, but no it was not there.

I rang Julie at home to check if Sam's passport was there and sure enough, it was. I was told I would not be allowed to travel and my luggage would now need to be taken from the aeroplane. I called Jill to tell her Sam and I would not be getting on the flight, I think she thought I was joking; I was too upset to explain details. I watched our suitcase being off loaded while the stewardess checked for availability on the next flight.

The next flight was at 7pm and was full, therefore we were put on standby: the desk closes forty five minutes before departure, if passengers have not checked in by then their seats are offered on a first come basis. There were three people already on standby for the 7pm flight.

I was told we would be escorted from the departure gate back through immigration to landside where we could check in as a standby for the 7pm flight. It was a nightmare and the thought had crossed my mind just to go home, but Sam was keen to wait. Julie arrived back at the airport with Sam's passport so checked in again and joined the standby queue. There were lots of people on standby for all different flights and some had even worse stories to tell, it made my problem seem very small.

At 6.20pm we were called for the 7pm flight, we were given boarding cards and were on our way again, this time it was a mad dash for the gate. Apart from another small administration hiccup at the boarding gate we boarded the plane. Sam's face when he realised we were in first class, it was a picture and I must admit I was starting to relax and accepted the offer of a glass of wine. We were treated to a really nice meal and first class attention.

On arriving at Düsseldorf we could not see anyone we knew, we walked past all the arrival exits and were debating a bus/taxi to Gerschede. We noticed a couple holding a card displaying our names. (Always wanted my name displayed on a card when arriving at an airport). The couple were Jessica and Martin, they chatted all the way to Gerschede explaining many of the sights we passed, we thought we would be staying with them but when we arrived at the church we were introduced to Raimund. Most of our group had met and left with their families. We were asked if we would like to eat and drink before going home with our host. It was dark by now so we couldn't see much of where we staying or the surroundings.



On Saturday we had breakfast with our host Raimund and then joined our party at the church, everyone was pleased to see us, and it felt really good to be there. A trip to Essen Werden had been organised for the adults and an alternative recreation for the young folk. Arriving in the town we were met by a local guide, he escorted us around the town filling us in on the local history and showing us places of interest. We were allowed to look inside the local church which was quite spectacular, it was being prepared for a wedding later that day.

We then went for lunch, we all sat outside as the weather was warm and sunny, how lucky were we. Following lunch we would be boarding a boat for a trip around the lake. When we finished our boat trip it was a quick trip on a train back to Gerschede.

We just had time to wash and change for the barbeque which had been arranged for that evening. It was outside the church, music was playing, food was cooking and plenty of drink was flowing. It was a great night.

Sunday morning it was off to church, the service had some parts in English and others in German, the bits you couldn't understand (German for us), translation sheets were supplied. The service was lovely and we listened to a very junior choir singing a couple of delightful songs. Lunch was arranged at the church and after we had a stroll around the town with our host Raimund.



In the afternoon we were to rehearse our part of the concert, we were all taking part, singing and dancing songs of London. I must admit I was really wary of joining in at first but I am glad I did as it was such good fun. Ray and I were partners in the Lambeth Walk, I think we could now enter Strictly Come Dancing. The people from the church in Gerschede performed for us as well, everyone was joining in. They also had a performance from part of the orchestra from the local

catholic church. (our host belonged to the Catholic Church). The whole concert was brilliant and enjoyed by all.

Following the concert we were invited for a meal in a brewery, it was quite an old building and still used as a brewery. Part of the brewery has been made into a restaurant, quite big inside. We were all together in what felt like a banquet room. There was a buffet laid out on long tables, you could eat as many times as you wanted. There were all different types of food and our German friends were keen for us to try them.

At about 10pm people started to leave but our host had joined some of his friends, he asked Sam and I to join them. Before long there were a few more German people and a few more from our group. A sing song began with yellow submarine and then followed by other English and German songs. To say we sung into the early hours is putting it mildly.



Monday morning arrived, we had breakfast with our host Raimund then off to the church. Many of our group were already there having breakfast. We then had to say our goodbyes to all the friends we had made, but promising to keep in touch, and hoping to see them in Greenford.

We are now at Düsseldorf awaiting our flight, which had been delayed due to the bad weather in England. It was only an hour delay though and we were soon up in the air,

When on the plane I was reflecting on the marvellous weekend, we were only arriving at Düsseldorf approximately sixty five hours earlier, we had slept three nights but fitted so much in. Sam and I really enjoyed the trip; we made lots of new friends, some from Germany and also some from our own parish. I would recommend the trip to anyone, it was so well organised, so friendly, you couldn't fail to enjoy yourself. We hope to keep in touch with all our new friends.

Clare Johnson

