

Stuttgart and Strasbourg



From Toronto we flew to Frankfurt via Chicago then train to Stuttgart for a few days then train to Strasbourg.

Onto Stuttgart and Strasbourg

Saturday, 15 September 2007

September 15 – Saturday

Off today – we left Mum's place at noon headed for Frankfurt via Chicago. At time of writing – we were sitting in the United international first class lounge in Chicago waiting for our flight. This lounge was very tired looking – maybe we should have gone via NY and flown Singapore across the “pond”.

September 16 – Sunday

We arrived in Frankfurt on time around 9:30am however we waited 45 minutes for our luggage – another brickbat for United. We caught the ICE train to Stuttgart and arrived at our hotel, Le Meridien, around mid-day. The hotel was very nice – large room, great shower – what more can one ask for.

It was a beautiful day – 26°C so after a shower and kip we took a walk through the park stopping at a lake-side cafe for an early dinner. We crashed out early but awoke at 2AM and took a sleeping pill.

September 17 – 20 Monday – Thursday in Stuttgart

On Monday we met up with Rolf and Lori's for lunch at a gasthouse in a vineyard then went back to their place. We showed them our photos, had a light early dinner – then got back to our hotel by 9:30pm – we finished off the evening with a drink in the hotel lobby bar.

On Tuesday walked around Stuttgart then met Dieter's old friend Mecthilde at 2pm for a bit a walking / driving tour of Stuttgart. We then met her husband Helmut around 5pm at his office and went to small wine bistro in a nearby town where we had a leisurely meal washed down with copious fiertel's of wine (on some people's part). It was very late when we finally got to bed.

We had a bit of a later start than planned on Wednesday – we did get to the Mercedes Meuseum as planned then headed back to Rolf and Lori's for afternoon tea (was supposed to have been lunch). We had a very enjoyable dinner in the hotel dining room.

We had a very early start on Thursday in order to catch the 7am TGV to Strasbourg.

I must make an aside here to tell the saga of our train tickets.

September 20 – 24 Thursday – Monday in Strasbourg

The TGV to Strasbourg arrived at 8:15 and we were all checked-in to our hotel, the Sofitel by 9am. The Sofitel is not quite as spiffy as the Le Meridien mainly because the room is much smaller but still has a great bed and very friendly staff. We were both stuffed so after a quick brekkie at a local cafe we had a cat nap. We headed out to the old town before lunch and oriented ourselves to the city. We had lunch at bistro sitting outdoors in the glorious sunshine – the service was amazingly slow (the waiter seemed on the verge of a nervous breakdown) however we still enjoyed the whole European outdoor café experience.

The hotel's WiFi provider is Orange and I got a good deal on 3 hours over 30 days for 5€ – I could have had an additional hour for 1€ but this offer was not well documented.

The old city of Strasbourg is wonderful – surrounded by a river and canals – with superb centuries old buildings and cathedrals.

On Friday we started with breakfast which was fine just not a totally deluxe spread. We took a boat trip (1 hour) which went around the river and canals giving us a good overview of the town. Again it was a wonderful sunny day. We had lunch at a restaurant called Au Pont St-Martin on a small terrace situated right on the canal. We shared goat's cheese salad (wonderful) followed by a local favorite, flamenkuken, which is sort of a super thin pizza base topped with crème fresh mixture, bacon bits and a sprinkling of cheese – it was very mouth watering but far too much. Later in the arvo we climbed the cathedral – up 350+ steps and of course walking, walking everywhere with the odd stop at the quintessential sidewalk / plaza cafes. For dinner we had our 'free' dinner at our next hotel, Regent Le Petit France, even though we were only checking in the following day. (The hotel's restaurant was closed on the Saturday for a wedding). The dinner was excellent.

On Saturday we moved from the Sofitel to the Regent (Le Petit France) – unfortunately our room was not ready so we dropped our luggage and went out for more walking and sightseeing around town. Following lunch at a cafe overlooking Le Pont Tournant we were able to check in – wow! We'd been upgraded from a junior suite to a full suite – pure luxury. My only complaint about the hotel was that they did not use Orange as their WiFi provider but Suissecom which was outrageously priced – 10€ ph so we were offline for a couple of days – perhaps I'll find an Orange hotspot on the way tomorrow on our epic train journey to Marseilles.

In the afternoon we visited Museum of Contemporary Art and Palais Rohan. For dinner we went to small bistro, L'evenil Des Sens, recommended by the hotel. It turned out to be a bit more up-market than we were actually looking for (eg a mandatory 2 courses for 28€ (or 34€ for 3 courses and you had to commit to the number of courses up-front) – the meal was not really fantastic – more interesting I would say..

Sunday – another glorious sunny day – must have been in the high 20's. We took the tram to the EU parliament then walked around for a couple of hours. We stopped at Cafe de Canon (just over the canal from the Cathedral square – it was an all time low-light scoring a 0 (yes, zero) as we never received the food we ordered – we finally left in a storm of protest paying only for our beer & wine. Since it was now so late we stopped at another cafe and shared a ham and cheese baguette – it tasted wonderful. Afterwards we went to the Alsace Museum – entry was free in celebration of the xx anniversary.

We finished off the day with our belated (free) welcome drink at the Champagne Bar in the hotel – a nice glass of FC. We then had dinner at the Cafe La Corde a Ligne on the opposite side of the canal. We both had spaetzle – the only menu item aside from salads.