

## Rhine/Main/Neckar Gathering June 2017

On 18th June, our international group comprising twenty six women from eight different countries, met at the Savigny Hotel in Frankfurt for the start of an action packed week exploring Frankfurt city and its surrounds. As it was Sunday, there was very little open in Frankfurt for our first dinner together, so we headed to a nearby tavern where we caught up with dear friends from previous gatherings and made new friends for the future. With an early start and a strong reminder to "be on time" from Baerbel, we retired that first night with great anticipation for what was to come. We were not disappointed!

The next morning our friendly bus driver, 'Herman the German' as he became affectionately known, was waiting to drive us to Ruedesheim on the Rhine for a walk through the popular UNESCO town where we caught a cable car to the Niederwald Monument for a spectacular view across the vineyards to the Romantic Rhine below. The river cruise which followed afforded us views of majestic castles and a glimpse of the Loreley, the siren who according to local folklore, lured sailors to their deaths. Our next two nights were spent at Oberlahnstein near Koblenz.



Captivating Koblenz, with its quaint history is the meeting point of the Rhine and Mosel Rivers. A cable car took us up to the Ehrenbreitstein Fortress standing sentinel over the town where we enjoyed a lively tour inside the fortress walls. Our Medieval Knights' dinner at Marksburg Castle on the Rhine, provided lively entertainment and much merriment with wine and food in abundance. One of our members, being crowned and gowned, became known as Lady Sandy for the remainder of the Gathering.

Heidelberg, Germany's oldest university town both informed and delighted us. The ruins of Heidelberg Castle stand regally over the Neckar River with a wonderful view of the river and the quaint cobbled streets and rooftops of the old city below. Frankfurt became our home for the next six days and the Gathering organisers kept us busy with well organised activities. Along with local 5W members we were introduced to Ebbelwei and Brezel (applewine and pretzels to the uninitiated) on the colourful Ebbelwei Express, a tram from yesteryear which took us on an exclusive tour of the city. Baerbel provided the commentary against a

backdrop of some very noisy 5Ws! That evening we ventured to Sachsenhausen to assist the Frankfurters in their attempt to break the Guinness Book of Records for the most servings of their famous green sauce in one day.

Other 5Ws joined us in Limburg with its magnificent seven-towered cathedral and medieval 13th century buildings. Multi-storied, timber-framed, colourful buildings that 'kissed' in narrow streets, provided us with an eclectic range of merchants' shops and historical adventure.

A free day enabled a few of us to opt for a walking tour of taunting Taunus, Frankfurt's recreation area and its not so circular walk! Setting off we read 7.5 kms. That's ok we thought! Circular though, it was not!!! Some 12 kms later we found ourselves back at our starting point, well exercised, having been well fed midway and happy to have immersed ourselves in nature. An "urban free" day was just what the doctor ordered! Others visited Mathildenhoehe, Darmstadt, famous for its artists' colony and art deco buildings. The Russian Chapel delighted us and the Wedding Tower in the Exhibition Centre provided us with spectacular views in all directions.

The finale was our visit to historic Hessenpark Open Air Museum; a collection of over 100 endangered buildings from all over Germany. Re-erected to form a village from 400 years ago, the village was complete with church, synagogue, hotel, cafes, bakers and an amazing wood turner's business.

After such an action-packed week, our Italian farewell dinner was just as rowdy and fun filled - we had become accustomed to expecting nothing less. **IT WAS ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS!!!!**  
**When is the next one?**

