



Santa Cruz Rowing Club European Rowing Tour 2019

There they were: "Three Man in a Boat" right out of Jerome K. Jerome's novel, only the dog was missing. The "Three Man" were on a boating trip in a fixed seat, wooden skiff with one man rowing and the other two resting and enjoying their journey on the Thames. And so did we, a group of ten rowers from the Santa Cruz Rowing Club rowing in two coxswained quads. After a short greeting, each boat continued its journey. The scullers continued their row up the river toward Oxford and we entered the Pangbourne Lock before continuing our row down the Thames toward Reading. This is a report of our journey through the Thames Valley in England and the Mosel Valley in Germany in July of 2019.

The Journey

Flight and Oxford

After an overnight flight from SFO to Heathrow a hired bus drove us to our countryside hotel at the banks of the River Thames between Oxford and Henley. The time before check-in was used for a "tea-time" and a walk along the river.

The first full day was spent on an Oxford city and University walking tour. With the help of our tour guide Ann we walked through the center of the University area, passing many monuments, colleges, the Turf Tavern and Christchurch College before strolling back to our meeting point.



Henley

The following day we visited one of the most celebrated rowing events in the world, the finals of the Henley Royal Regatta (HRR). We dressed up for this event in accordance with long established tradition (and dress code) and enjoyed a wonderful day at the regatta. Our hosts Caroline and John Turnbull from the Wayfarers Rowing Club who are stewards of the HRR graciously helped us to purchase tickets for the Stewards Enclosure, the grandstand near the finish. One of the highlights was the race for the Kings Cup, commemorating the 100 year anniversary of the Henley Peace Regatta after World War 1. The competing crews represented the Armed Forces from the original six allied nations, as well as Germany and the Netherlands. For the finals, the US Naval Academy eight and the German eight traded the lead from the start with the US clearly leading the last few hundred meters and winning by half a boats length. We ended the day with a traditional afternoon tea at one of the world's oldest rowing clubs, the nearby Leander Club.



Newbridge to Oxford

Our hosts trailered for us two quads to the small hamlet of Newbridge, ten miles west of Oxford. After rigging the boats and a farewell to John and Caroline, we started our decent down the river Thames. Navigating this upper section of the river was challenging for us coastal rowers since we had to row down a narrow and winding river with bushes and trees reaching over the water. For lunch we tied up the boats along the river bank and enjoyed our sandwiches sitting in a peaceful river meadow. The afternoon row led us through Oxford where we saw the riverside of the city with its waterways, four locks, and residences along the river. Our destination, the Falcon Rowing Club came in sight after passing an impressive row of boathouses belonging to the various Oxford colleges. We were welcomed by Jeff, a former resident of Felton in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Jeff helped us to store our boats in the enclosed boat storage area.



Oxford to Abingdon

Only nine miles of rowing with four locks to pass were required to bring us from Oxford to Abingdon. This stretch of the river was easier to navigate than the day before since the Thames widens after Oxford and is less curvy. We reached Abingdon Rowing Club in the early afternoon with enough time for a stroll through the historic part of town. For lunch we stopped at a beautifully located riverside restaurant called the Nag's Head, situated half way across Abingdon Bridge. The food was delicious and the service was friendly. After strolling back to the rowing club we took an early bus ride back to the hotel. An evening stroll along the river bank brought us to the waterfront cafe in nearby Benson for dinner.



Abingdon to Goring

The neighboring Army Rowing Club was giving sculling lessons when we launched our quads from Abingdon Rowing Club for a sixteen miles row to Goring. We passed our hotel and paraded the boats under Shillingford Bridge for pictures taken by Rachel and Colleen. Since there was no landing facility at the hotel, we stopped for lunch at the riverbank nearby. After Benson lock it was a straight row down the river to the Goring Thames Sailing Club where we received a friendly welcome from the club commander Simon. He helped us to recover from the afternoon row with refreshments from the club bar.

Goring to Reading

We waved goodbye to Simon and went on our way for the final fifteen mile row on the Thames. We passed three locks before stopping for lunch at the riverside meadow in Pangbourn. Geese were all around us and youngsters were jumping off the nearby street bridge for a swim.



The afternoon row led us through two more locks. While approaching Reading, the riversides of the Thames changed from a green valley into more urbanized areas. Caroline and John had parked the boat trailer at the Reading Riverside Park. We de-rigged the boats and with the help of all participants loaded them onto the trailer. Then it was time to say goodbye to our hosts and to get on the bus for a last ride from the Thames to the hotel.

Transfer from the Thames in England to the Mosel in Germany

We enjoyed the last breakfast at our hotel and took a final view over the Thames and then we were off to Heathrow Airport for a 1 hour 15 minutes flight over the English Channel and then onto Frankfurt, Germany where we were welcomed by a pouring rain. By the time we arrived at our Bed and Breakfast in the small town of Pommern at the Mosel River, the rain had stopped and we were welcomed by our host Mrs. Henerichs. The Mosel is one of Germany's prime wine-growing regions, producing mainly Rieslings. The B&B consists of the winery on the ground floor, the restaurant on the first floor and the guestrooms on the second and third floors. Three more rowers joined us this evening: Mary Ann and Sam and Joe's brother Jürgen from Cologne, Germany. After checking into our rooms we gathered for our first dinner on the veranda with a view of the river and a glass of wine in our hands. Very soon the house wine "Number Nine" became the favorite. Before retiring for the day, we explored the narrow streets and beautiful architecture of this charming village.



Bernkastel to Traben-Trarbach

Eric (Volker Fritz's son) from "Rowing Europe" in Bern, Switzerland had arrived early in Bernkastel with the boat trailer, transporting two quads and one double with coxswain. Gordon, the coach from the Bernkastel Rowing Club gave us a friendly welcome and provided ample space to unload and rig the boats. Soon we launched onto the Mosel and were amazed by the beauty of the steep vineyards overlooking the river. Within three miles we reached the first lock.



Locking was quite different here from the Thames since these giant locks are designed for commercial river freight ships. Entering the giant lock chambers was a bit intimidating at first but actually convenient since we had enough space to stay in the center without having to “hook” ourselves to the chamber walls. For lunch we landed at the town of Kinheim where we ate our leftover breakfast rolls sitting on the river bank. When we reached the town of Traben-Trarbach, it took us a while to find the local rowing club since it is located more than a mile downstream from the city. There we landed and carefully stored our boats in a narrow space behind the boathouse. For dinner at the B&B we were joined by our friends Ole from Copenhagen (Willamette 2011 and Weser 2015) and Ingrid and Richard (Weser 2015) from nearby Koblenz.



Traben-Trarbach to Zell

The next morning, after carefully backing the boats out of the tight storage area at the Traben-Trarbach Rowing Club we were off to our next destination, the city of Zell. Three miles down the river we performed our daily locking routine and then rowed to the small town of Reil. Here we landed for lunch at a beautiful terrace restaurant and ordered typical German pub food: Currywurst with Pommes (French fries) and yes, it was served with “Mayo” for the French fries. Then it was a short row to the Zell Rowing Club where a friendly lady rower opened the boathouse for us to see their boat inventory before she took a skiff for a short evening spin on the Mosel.

Zell to Senheim

How small the world is! An English Gentleman, who we found out is also a friend of our hosts Caroline and John in England, opened the Zell RC boathouse facilities for us before we launched our boats. He gave us some advice on how to approach the next lock 6 miles down the river and then went on his way for a morning row. After navigating the daily lock, we stopped for lunch at the riverbank and then rowed the remaining six miles to a small river harbor in Senheim. Our landing spot was located next to a giant campground equipped with a convenient store and a beer garden which we



enjoyed a lot. The evening ended with a dinner at Mrs. Henerich's patio where we welcomed Rick's daughter and her boyfriend who joined us as guests for the remainder of the tour.



Senheim to Pommern

We launched from the boat ramp at Senheim harbor for the longest daily row of 16 miles. A few miles down the river we passed the picturesque town of Beilstein with the Metternich castle overlooking the town. We locked together with a large sightseeing boat through Fankel lock and stopped for lunch at Cochem Rowing Club. Here we enjoyed our sandwiches while taking in the breathtaking view of Cochem Castle overlooking the city of Cochem and the Mosel below. After lunch we passed by the city of Cochem where an armada of river cruise ships anchored on both sides of the river. The afternoon row ended at the campground of our base town of Pommern. After landing on a very basic boat ramp we carefully transported the boats between RV campers and rested them near the swimming pool where a group of children watched "the strangers" placing their unusual boats near their playground. We thanked the campground management for allowing us to use their space and facilities by consuming some refreshments at the campground pub. A short walk through town brought us back to our B&B for another evening dinner on the veranda.

Pommern to Moselkern and Elz Castle

After breakfast we walked one more time through the small town of Pommern to the campground to launch the boats. It was a short three miles row to the last lock of the tour. And it was the most difficult lock to maneuver since the lock master ordered us to use the "sports boat lock" instead of the locking via the main chamber with a motorboat. It was difficult to maneuver since the narrow lock chamber did not allow us to use our oars and only two boats could lock at a time. From the Müden lock it was a leisurely two mile row to the final destination of Moselkern. Here we landed on a rocky riverbank and with good teamwork and the support of friends we carried the boats to a large soccer field where Eric from "Row in Europe" had parked

the boat trailer. There we de-rigged the boats and loaded them onto the trailer for a return transport to Basel.

After all the hard work we lunched at a nearby open kiosk to strengthen ourselves for a one-hour walk to Elz castle. Through the town and the forest along the Elz creek we walked to the castle. The first view of the castle, after reaching an opening in the forest tree cover, was breathtaking. A long climb on a stairway from the valley floor brought us up to the castle gate where we joined the last guided castle tour of the day, narrated in English. The tour of Eltz Castle was an exciting and informative journey through 850 years of architecture and culture.

We ended the castle visit with a walk to the nearby parking lot where our bus was ready to bring us back for the last time to Mrs. Henerich's B&B. During dinner, Steve (Rick's brother) presented our host a small "Thank you" package to our host before we retired for the last night in our B&B in Pommern.



Transfer Pommern to Frankfurt Airport

All good things have to come to an end and so we entered the bus for an early ride to Frankfurt Airport where we said goodbye to each other and everyone flew home or visited friends and families in Germany.

Participants

Rowers

*Elizabeth Gummere
Joel Herzel
Jay Hicks
Marilyn Schultz
Nancy Miner
Allan Miner
Rick Rosenthal
Steve Rosenthal
Irene Hoffmann
Joe Hoffmann
Mary Ann Johnson
Sam Johnson
Jürgen Hoffmann*

Non-Rowers

*Colleen Devlin
Rachel Rosenthal*