

Danke Schön

Coming Soon?????:
tomandlauracraig.com

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Top 10 Reasons to Visit:

1. Location in Europe
2. Beer (so I hear)
3. Open Guest Bedroom
4. Autobahn
5. Entertain Laura
6. Schnitzel (everything is better fried)
7. Drendels & Leiterhosen
8. Biergartens
9. Walking around the real „fantasy land“
10. To become an article in Danke Schön

General Update

How in the world does time go so fast? There is no way I have been living in Germany for over six months! I guess that alone speaks to how life in Germany is going. We are really enjoying our time here and are settling into this new lifestyle. I can say that after we all came back to Germany from our summer vacation in the States, I truly felt like I was coming home. Since the first six months consisted of numerous separations from Laura and the kids, it in a way always felt somewhat like vacation. Now things feel more permanent and settled (which is a good thing). If only I could just hurry up and learn this language!

Our First Visitors

In early May, Glen and Kathy (Laura's parents) came to visit us. Glen stayed with us for two weeks, and Kathy stayed with us until she traveled back to the US with Laura and the kids for summer break in early July. We had a wonderful visit, and look forward to their upcoming return in mid-September.

We have always said that we want to experience this journey together with our family and friends. I believe Glen and Kathy were able to truly experience a little of life in Germany and I think (I hope) it was even more enjoyable than they could have hoped for.

For those of you starting to feel sorry for me living with my mother-in-law for two months, don't. I am incredibly blessed to have a wonderful relationship with my in-laws! Not to mention I don't have any



Bergkirchweih (local fair) in Erlangen

problem with many of my chores being taken over (laundry, dishes, etc.). That doesn't mean I wouldn't kick them out to open the doors to any others that might come for a visit.

Travels

Our travels in Europe got off to a fast start and have slowed down a little of late (only because Laura was in the US for 2 months). I still think we have done pretty good at getting out and exploring.

Amsterdam

Shortly after Glen and Kathy arrived, we all took a road trip to Amsterdam. Laura had found a great apartment we could rent, and mapped out a wonderful long weekend. As the drive was approximately 10 hours, she found a primate park located outside of Amsterdam that gave us a target to break up our time. This was a really neat park with primates literally walking amongst the visitors. The highlight of the park was a group of approximately 80 monkeys including one born the night



Ashlyn with a monkey not named Adam!



before that was clinging to its mothers back.

Amsterdam was amazingly beautiful and we were greeted with fantastic weather. We were able to take a canal and bus tour, visit the Anne Frank house, tour the Van Gogh museum, and much more.

Köln

Our first "major" German city to visit was Köln (Cologne). Good friends Warren, Celia, Abby, and Audra moved to Köln about a year and a half ago from Temecula to be full time missionaries. Ashlyn was very excited to reconnect with a friend from back home! We were able to bring a special "care package" of brownies, peanut butter, maple syrup, etc. that friends from Linfield and family had sent to them in our container. They have found that American brownies are one of their most powerful missionary tools, and the 30+ packages we delivered should help the cause.

It gets redundant saying that this was another beautiful European city, but it is so true. The highlight of the tourism portion of the trip was visiting the Dom (cathedral) which is where the three kings are entombed. After naively asking Laura which three kings (there are a lot in European history) I was informed "the three kings," and she promptly sang to me...

"We three kings of Orient are; Bearing gifts we traverse afar"

Of Course!!!!

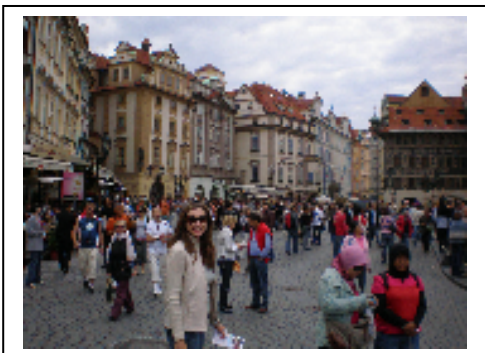


The Dom in Köln

Prague

Mid June, Laura and I escaped for our first weekend alone since moving to Germany. Kathy stayed with the kids, and Laura and I headed to Prague. After a scenic 3 hour drive (not including the half hour lost knowing we were one block away from our hotel) we pulled into the heart of Prague.

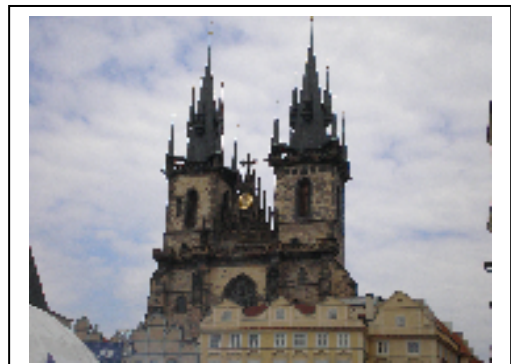
Prague is a fascinating city with over six hundred years of architecture that has barely been touched by natural disaster or war. Stunning! We loved walking the city and seeing all of the Russian nesting dolls (I am sure just for us tourists) and the influence of Good King Wenceslas (the countries patron saint). Bet you can guess what Laura and I were signing the entire time walking around the city!



Just a few tourists!



So childish...But cute!



Just another amazing church!

London

School ended on a Friday, so what does Laura do? She boards a plane with Kathy and the kids on Monday of course. One of Laura's good friends and coworker, Carol Prime, spent the summer in a rented house in London, and invited us over for a visit. I was heading to the US for a business trip, so unfortunately had to miss this one. (I did make it to London without Laura a year ago when looking into a potential position with TaylorMade). Once again, Laura fell in love with a European city, and "could see herself buying a place there." Anyone have a couple million pounds laying around? Can't speak from personal experience on this one, but it sounded like all had a wonderful week and were able to see all the sights one should see while in London (without mortgaging your house).



Sophie, Adam, Ashlyn, Laura, and Carol

Summer Vacation

Nights in London = 6; Nights in US = 47; Nights in Germany = 6

That is how Laura and the kids spent their summer vacation. Left the Monday after school ended, and returned the Friday before it started! We struggled initially with whether or not we felt it was a good idea for the kids to be away from Germany and back in the States for such a long time. I was concerned that this could make the transition that much harder. Ultimately the pros of spending the time with family and friends far outweighed the cons. After the decision was made we began to realize that much of the international community (our primary circle of friends) takes off for the summer to head home, or heads off in Europe for extended vacations. This would have made for a long summer for the kids staring at the walls and driving their mother crazy.

I was able to join them for two weeks in August for just enough time to visit every doctor in southern California. I now wear glasses, had been told I have skin cancer on my nose and arm, have clean teeth, and was told I could eat whatever I want but don't breathe due to allergies. I did everything but turn my head and cough. Ahh, Relaxation!

Fortunately there was a few enjoyable moments for me mixed in, and Laura and the kids had a wonderful full schedule reconnecting. A few new perspectives of Southern California: The vehicles are big; as Adam perfectly noted, the landscape is brown; there is a store on every street corner and their open on Sunday; the economy is really hurting the small shops; WalMart is a beautiful thing!



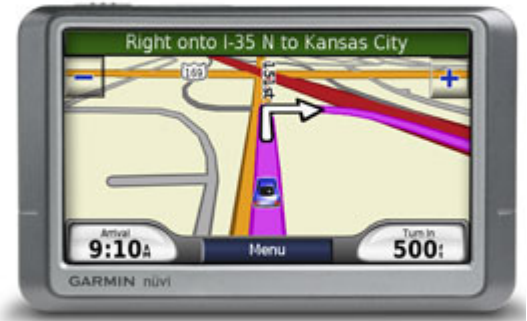
OUCH!...but nice leg!

Achtung (Caution)

Just a word of warning for any that may be planning a trip to Germany.....the bug bites hurt! Not sure what it was that took a liking to us, but something found us in the late spring/early summer quite tasty. Maybe it was all that Mexican food that we were still carrying in our systems at the time. Have not had any recent attacks, but I am not letting my guard down.

Dora

Upon graduating from college, my first job was in sales. I was selling loans to individuals with poor credit, and I was terrible. I realized then I was not meant to be in sales. However, after spending some time at TaylorMade, I came to realize I could sell something if I truly believed in the product. If I ever do decide to make the leap to sales (not likely) and I can't get a crack with TaylorMade, I have found another alternative. Satellite Navigation Devices. After spending six months in Europe driving all over with our Garmin device, I am convinced I could sell this to anyone (especially someone in a foreign country that does not speak the local language). It is absolutely amazing that you can type in any address and have step by step directions on how to get there (picture and all). We have had this delightful ladies voice with a British accent, which the kids have named Dora, journey with us to Amsterdam, Prague, Köln, and anywhere else we want to go. "In 300 meters turn right and proceed to the motorway." Thanks Dora!



Callie enjoys her first smore!

Farewell to the Johnsons

This week we said goodbye to some good friends that have now left Germany to head back to the States. Eric and Liz moved here over four years ago with their daughters Curiosa and Brisbane. Their third daughter, Callie, was born here in Germany. Eric worked for adidas and they became really good friends in a really short period of time. We have come to realize this is one of the bitter sweet aspects of an international assignment. We are on one hand very excited for our friends who have been given an opportunity to head back home, but on the other hand are very sad we will not be able to continue this adventure with them. They were an absolute blessing to us and helped make our transition to Germany so smooth. We look forward to visiting them in Portland, even if Eric has gone to work for the "Evil Empire" (Nike).

The New FIS

This school year began an exciting new era for the Franconian International School (FIS). The first day of school was the first day in their brand new building. The school has moved from old converted houses in Herzogenaurach (town where adidas is located) to a beautiful new building in Erlangen (town close to where we live). The school houses K-3 through 12th grade in four separate "sections" of one larger facility. Walking in on the first day also illustrated another major difference between the US and Germany. The school looked like a construction zone on the outside with tractors, scaffolding, workers, paint, etc. all over the place. In America the fear of a lawsuit alone would have had every child wearing a hardhat and signing a release of liability! In Germany the kids dodge bulldozers and hold their breath while rubbing shoulders with chain smoking construction workers.

Things That Make Us Laugh.....

There have been a few things here in Germany that for some reason we find very entertaining. Here are just a few of them:

1. Bridge Watchers

Early on after we moved here, we noticed an interesting phenomenon that many locals seem to enjoy. People standing on a bridge overlooking the autobahn watching the traffic. Bridge Watchers! Nothing helps break a smoking habit like standing on a bridge inhaling exhaust.



2. German Pickups

One thing you see very little of in Germany are pickup trucks. I can probably count the total number of pickups I have seen on one hand. To compensate they have gotten very creative.



3. Men in Speedos

After time you actually get a little numb to men wearing speedos (when not competing in the Olympics jumping into a pool). However, one Sunday when driving back from a weekend getaway we passed a line of trucks parked along the side of the autobahn (truckers are not allowed to drive on Sundays). One trucker decided it was a good idea to sunbathe on top of his rig in a speedo. I for one did not think this was a good idea!

**Picture
Withheld to
Protect the
Children**

German Lesson:

English: Caution, please use toilet in seated position only.

German: Achtung, WC nur im Sitzen benutzen.



As opposed to???

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¹³*I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

Philippians 4:13