

THE MARTIN FAMILY

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SWITZERLAND

May 1, 2011

Dear Reader,

I hope that this week finds you happy and healthy. We continue to enjoy an absolutely marvelous and beautiful spring in Zürich - a situation that made it difficult to understand Nazy's request:

"Eastern Europe?" I asked. "It's beautiful here. Why would we want to go there?"

"Tradition. We always spend Easter in Easter(n) Europe."

"Always?"

"Last Easter we were in Krakow."

"Hmm.." I replied. "*One year is not a tradition..*" I thought.

After finding a list of "underrated cities" on the web, I narrowed our choices to Bratislava, Slovakia and Kotor, Montenegro. Aware that Darius had been to Bratislava, I gave him a call.

"It's a sleepy little town, Dad." He explained.

"Sleepy?"

"But cheap - very cheap."

Darius' advice, together with Google™-supplied information that it would take 19 hours to drive to Kotor, closed the deal (for me). I just had to convince Nazy.

"Did Darius say Bratislava was exciting?" Nazy asked.

"*Sleepy ≠ Exciting. But cheap =*" I thought. "Bargains, Nazy. Darius said that there would be lots of **shopping bargains**," I said. "*I wonder if the shops are open during the Easter holiday.*"

Most of the drive was through Germany and Austria. Accordingly, we spent our time in one of two speeds: a congestion-induced too slow (5 kph) or a culturally-mandated too fast (160 kph). When we were traveling at 5 kph, Nazy was helpful:

"Why don't you find an alternative route, Dan?"

When we were traveling at 160 kph, she was equally helpful:

"Are you trying to kill us?"



Famous Bratislava Artwork

Bratislava Castle

We traded places. Nazy began to drive, noting immediately that it is dangerous and impossible to drive at the speed limit (120kph) on the Autobahn. Average speed in the slow lane was 140. She adjusted and I became helpful:

“Why are you going so fast, Nazy? Are you trying to kill us?” I said.

Bratislava is on the Austrian border, about 70 kilometers from Vienna. We were booked at the Morrel Boutique Hotel near the old town and the [Danube](#).



At check-in, Nazy asked the concierge about things to do:

“... and the shops?”

“Most of them will be closed for the holiday.”

Nazy, gasping, soldiered on: “What should we see?”

“You could take the hydrofoil to Vienna.”

“Is there anything to see in Bratislava?” Nazy persisted.

“Well, eh, there’s Bratislava Castle.” [The Slovak word for ‘castle’ is ‘hrad’.]

“Is the castle exciting?”

“No. You could see St. Martin’s Cathedral..”

“.. that sounds great. We’re ‘The (St.) Martin’s’, so I’m sure...”

“- but it’s being repaired,” the concierge concluded. “There’s nothing there.”

“*So why are we here?*” Nazy thought.

“But, your booking is inclusive of breakfast, Internet, TV (500 channels), the minibar...”

“*Now I know why we’re here.*,” Nazy thought. “You got a real bargain, Dan.” She said - glaring.

The hotel was very nice: perfect location and delightful room, (The entire package - including a few dinners cost less than one night at our hotel in Rome.)

On Saturday we walked through the old town. Although most of the shops were closed, we saw a plethora of restaurants and pubs. The Cathedral (named after me) was built in the 11th century. The steeple, hit by lightning in the 15th century, was being repaired. (Obviously a ‘rush’ job.) A local bank was funding the repair and as a result they ewre permitted to hoist a giant billboard onto the shrouded steeple. This private/public cooperation is a trend. Tod’s shoes is spending €70M to repair - to stop decay of - the Colosseum in Rome. During the work (which will take about 10 years) there will be a huge Tod’s advertisement hanging from the Colosseum.

As we walked through the city, it quickly became clear that Slovaks really like metal sculpture. A few examples:



Human photographer taking photo of bronze photographer photographing Nazi



Aluminum sculpture and Dan

Although the city was somewhat sleepy, we enjoyed our stroll. We had a very nice lunch on the banks of the [Danube](#) (maybe the color is different in [Vienna](#)).

The following day (and following advice) we took a boat up the [Danube](#) to Devín castle.

Reader interrupt: "The dot on your 'i' is ill-shaped."

Answer: "That's the way they write; it's their language, so we conform."

Archeologists believe that human beings have been living in the area of Devín for at least 8,000 years. The castle is, of course, not quite that old. Essentially, it is a well-preserved ruin that was blown up by Napoleon in 1811. It features a great view of two rivers: the [Danube](#) and the Morava. The pre-Euro Slovakian money had an image of Devín Castle.

The end of page three has arrived, but I'm not done. Will we find (or enjoy) Slovakian Wine? What happens to an aquarium when the filter stops working - for five days? How did Nazi and Dan celebrate the 'wedding of the century'? Is a midweek edition of TWL forthcoming? Stay tuned...

Take care and Cheers,

Dan

Easter(n) Europe
Wedding - didn't invite me
Windmills
Enjoy Bratslavia
Driving speed Nazy/Germany/austria
St. Martin's Cathedral
Michael's gate
Sculpture (metal)
Shopping (Castles, Churches, Ruins)
Aquarium .. amber, smelly,