

Post



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Everything's better mit schlag - August 27, 2023

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SUMMARY

We have a nice semi-lazy morning (far niente) but do accomplish our stretching in the onboard gym. Our afternoon excursion visited the 13th-century Cistercian monastery at Bad Doberan followed by a ride on the Molli steam train. Back on the bus to the seaside resort of Kühlungsborn for apple cake with streusel topping (delish!) and free time to walk around or shop. - Karen

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DETAIL

Today we wake up in Germany. Warnemunde, to be exact. It's early, 7:20 a.m. Our captain is making his daily announcement to the whole ship. Normally this happens around 9 or 10 am so those who wish to can sleep in. But today much of the ship will be making the long bus ride to visit Berlin. Their day-long excursion will be about 12 hours. Thank you no.

Part of the captain's announcement is the weather report. The grey skies we see now are expected to continue, turning into rain around five or six. Oh, well.

Our excursion will start at the much more civilized time of 1:45 p.m. We use the intervening time to exercise, stretch and relax in the 'hot' tub. We spend the rest of the time watching the busy channel off our balcony. There are a dozen or so swans and an interminable procession of boats and ships going by.

Many of them are small personal sailing vessels and others are huge ferries. Off our bow is a pair of smaller ferries that travel just ? three hundred yards or so, across the channel, getting cars and small trucks from one side to the other. It hardly seems worth it but they do it incessantly all day long.

The other ferries include the Tinker Bell, which has a gigantic tinker bell painted on the side. Another is a hybrid ferry, part of the biggest fleet of hybrid ferries in the world. Planted smack dab on top, like a huge birthday candle, is a tall, broad metal cylinder. They store energy there for use later. If the diesel engines are producing more energy than is currently needed they spin up the big, heavy column to a fast rotation. It's quite the sight.

Eventually it's time for our excursion. On the bus we meet our local guide, Cornelia. She points out interesting things we are driving past, like a factory where they produced most the country's ejector seats for planes. She lets us know we're in the German state (province?) of Mecklenburg and reminds us of the cities and counties, of the same name, in various US states.

She tells us about other connections between this area and the US and UK. About how Princess Charlotte used to be here and married so and so in the UK and how the US honored her by naming a major US city "Charlotte" (North Carolina).

As we drive by so many sad, drab, grey apartment buildings, she reminds us that we're now in the part of the country that was East Germany for too many years. She explains how people liked the shorter apartment buildings since the government didn't feel that elevators were required unless the building had more than six floors.

We drive by a beautiful field housing a 'pick your own flowers' business. It had flowers of all types in bloom there, in bright colors, with people walking along making big bouquets. We learn that today (Sunday) is the last day of summer vacation for school kids. Tomorrow is the first day of school for first graders and here it's a big deal (maybe to lessen the anxiety the kids feel). They have big parties, people dress up, they give these kids big paper cones filled with candy, pencils, blunt-nosed scissors, and other things they'll need in the year(s) ahead.

We visit an enormous monastery from the 13th century in Bad Doberan and tour the cavernous interior. It's hard to imagine what it took to construct such a big, tall, sprawling building way back then.

Continuing on towards our next stop we hear about an annual festival here to honor the American musician Frank Zappa. Hm. At the train station we're dropped off and climb aboard 'The Molli'. It's a steam train that has been making it easy for dignitaries and commoners alike to get to the Baltic Sea shore for holiday since 1988. It runs on burning coal and depending on the prevailing winds you get to be enveloped in the smells thereof. The Molli goes right through the center of town and people watch in amazement as it passes, bell clanging. It does this everyday (during the summer) multiple times a day. You'd think it'd lose its charm.

As has been the case since the train started there's only one track most of the way. The exception is at the halfway point. There we stop, get out (if we want photos) and wait for the train going the other direction. Once it's passed we can continue on.

At our destination, we transfer from the Molli back onto our bus for a quick ride into the nearby Baltic seaside town of Kühlungsborn for apple cake 'mit schlag' (with whipped cream). We sit with Katrina and Neal, from Australia, and get deep into the subject of their Superannuation program (read 'compulsory IRA') to fund retirement.

On the bus ride back we hear about the politician who exclaimed that "if the world were going to end they'd go to this region (Mecklenburg)" since everything gets here fifty years later than the rest of the world. We believe it.

It's now raining as we pass a cruise ship simulator (for training cruise ship pilots), and a hotel made of recycled shipping containers. Before long we're back aboard the Azamara Pursuit. For dinner the theme, appropriately enough, is German food. It's quite good, as (sadly) are the desserts: Sacher torte, Black Forest Cake, bee sting cake, and apple crumble, to name just a few.

Another good day, but we hope for better weather tomorrow.

Photos



Grey skies but interesting boat watching from our balcony



Just in front of our moored ship a pair of local ferries incessantly zip back connecting the roads on either side.



The big monastery. To make the bricks look more uniform they've painted them all red and then painted the mortar white where it should have been from the beginning.



A local dignitary (king?) who died in the saddle at a local horse show. As such, his statue is designed with two hoofs in the air (of course).



Other local dignitaries. Their bodies are made of wood. All that is, except their heads, which are sandstone. They didn't want to be called 'blockheads'. Is that real? You can't make this stuff up.



The Molli



All aboard!



The interior. Quaint but comfortable.



The coal that makes the Molli go (and makes the Molli belch ugly, smelly black smoke)



Kühlungsborn, historic Baltic seaside vacation town



Local woman has a bad back. Asks a local weaver to make her a wicker bench to sit on. Oh, and give it a cover to shade the sun, but only sometimes, oh, and add a pullout so I can rest my feet. The rest is history.



Now the beach has a zillion of them

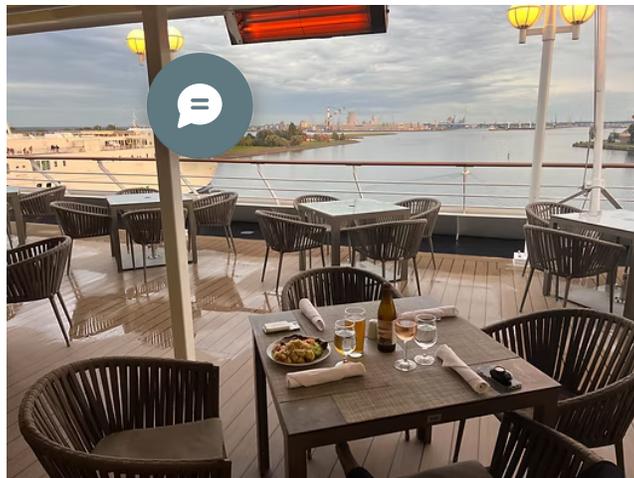
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Apple cake mit schlag



Thatched roof. Cooler in the summer. Warmer in the winter. Last longer than tiles. Insurability? Not so good. Very prone to catching fire. You can't win them all.



Dinner on the back patio with a nice view (out of the rain, under the radiant heat)



Hybrid ferry with it's tall, spinning energy bank. So cool!

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