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St Jakobsweg – the 2nd week

by Rae & Vitus Achermann

DAY 7: Buochs – Zollhaus, Giswil: We have been walking for 6 days now and we would always set off in keen anticipation of what each day has in store for us. Each new day has brought a stunning variety of scenery - squeaky clean villages, houses overflowing with flowering window boxes and mostly hot sunny weather. We have now arrived in Canton Nidwalden, home of the Achermann brothers. After leaving Buochs, we headed for Stans with good views of Pilatus and the Engelberg mountains covered with new recent snow. The path passed many chapels. The recently restored church at Stans is most impressive. It was then a pleasant walk through fields and forest, to Ranft and we visited Bruder Klaus' chapel where he lived as a hermit for the last years of his life. His family home and birthplace have been restored in Flüeli. The area has particular interest to the Achermann family as they can trace their roots back to Bruder Klaus on their maternal side.



Richard W. striding towards Stans

As we left Flüeli, it is unfortunate that Heidi became separated from the group and after walking for some time in the wrong direction and just as she was beginning to panic, she was relieved to see Richard coming to find her and we all joined up again at Sachseln. From there it was a long, hot walk following Lake Sarnen before thankfully reaching our accommodation at the Zollhaus, Giswil where we thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality and fine dining with our hosts, the Durrer family. This is also the area where Heidi's family came from before emigrating to New Zealand.

Day 8: Zollhaus, Giswil – Brunig Pass – Brienzwiler: This day provided us with impressive lake and mountain scenery as we walked the length

of the tranquil Lake Lungern on the way to crossing over the Brunig Pass at 1007m. We climbed up through forest where it was blessedly cool with an



Three of the group pauses at Lake Lungern

undulating gradient. By now we seem to have established a 'pecking' order when walking. Richard W. would stride effortlessly ahead up the hills, the rest coming up behind. Maele just floated along under her floppy hat in her usual loosely paced Samoan stride. Rae plodded along at her pace and was usually at the back with Vitus making sure she reached our destination. We reached the top of the pass where Beni joined us for lunch, having driven first to Brienzwiler, then walked all the way back up to meet us. There followed a 1½ hours knee-crunching steep descent mainly through forests, to the pretty village of Brienzwiler where our accommodation was at an Equestrian Centre in a separate building away from the stables with no restless horses to disturb us.

DAY 9: Brienzwiler – Boenigen: After reaching the Brienzensee the next morning, the pilgrim way continued up through forest, across a suspension bridge at Oberrieden, with many more very steep climbs and descents above the lake. It seemed we had been walking for hours before we reached the youth hostel at Boenigen later in the afternoon after a very tiring day.

Day 10: Boenigen – Thun: We continued on, through the tourist town of Interlaken with cloudy views of the mountain tops, following the River Aare and through a nature reserve to Lake Thun. There followed a very steep climb up to the entrance of the St Beatus Caves with its impressive waterfall; time did not allow us to visit the caves. The views





overlooking the lake towards the Bernese Alps were magnificent and one could almost forget the aching legs and blistered feet. On reaching Thun, the long, exhausting walk through the town on hot asphalt to our B & B accommodation was a killer! Our Kiwi friend John appeared to be allergic to Swiss insects and had to visit a chemist for medication. By this time, Rae's blistered heels and toes were very troublesome, so she then did most of the walk in Teva walk sandals. Richard & Heidi W. were the only ones not to suffer blisters.

Day 11: Thun - Blumenstein: Today was a mercifully short one with easy and enjoyable walking most of the way. We followed Lake Thun and then the way led through beautiful rolling farmland. The many wayside cherry trees were laden and our pil-



Maele & statue overlooking Blumenstein

grim group couldn't resist the temptation. Our next destination was Blumenstein, a small town nestling in a green valley surrounded by rocky mountains. Our massenlager accommodation for the night was upstairs in a disused chapel which dated from 1734. In the afternoon Vitus still had energy to walk some distance to the church high on a hill overlooking the town; some of us were just grateful for an extended rest!

DAY 12: Blumenstein - Schwarzenburg: As usual, we were up early with some of us attending to blisters before packing up and then visiting the nearby bakery & coffee shop for breakfast. The next place of interest was the Ruggisberg monastery ruins where there were panoramic views of the hazy Bernese Alps. The monastery church of St. Martin dates back to the early Romanesque period of the 10th-11th century. The path to Schwarzenburg was varied - a lot of level walking on good tracks, some of it was very steep up through forest with areas of beautiful agricultural country, including crops of peas, barley, wheat & strawberry fields. For this night's accommodation, the group stayed at two separate B & Bs and again the hospitality of our

hosts, a former policeman and his wife, was exceptional.

DAY 13: Schwarzenburg - Fribourg: Leaving Schwarzenburg, we walked on ancient cobblestones through the forest and followed the River Sense to reach the beautifully painted Tifers chapel, one of many on this pilgrim way. Now that we were in the French-speaking part of the country, we had to remember to say "Bon jour" and not "grüezi" as we met people along the way.

Our hosts had recommended that we change our route slightly and walk through the picturesque Gotteron Gorge on our way to Fribourg. It was a very pleasant walk along the river where many families were out walking or picnicking on this hot afternoon. Leaving the cool of the gorge, we rounded a corner, and suddenly the medieval town of Fribourg came into view. We entered the city gate and climbed up the steep cobbled steps to the Cathedral dominating the old town. We enjoyed a celebratory drink, and didn't that cold beer taste great! As the youth hostel didn't open until 5pm, we had time to explore, so took the funicular train up to the old town. It is interesting to note that the train is run purely on - the town's sewerage! How is that for alternative energy!

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