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Our 3 Generation European Vacation - Slovakia - Country 3 of 6

Monday, July 20, 2015

Slovakia, the eastern part of the former Czechoslovakia, was created on Jan 1, 1993 as part of the "Velvet Divorce."

I first visited in 2008 when I reunited with family with whom there had been no contact for 70 years. DH & I have returned many times since. It's a remarkable place with much beauty and history and EXTREMELY inexpensive.

A goal this trip was to introduce/connect the younger generations of the family just as we had done last year with DD#1 & family.

We had dinner together in Bratislava, the capital. That's me beaming on the right listening to the young people (and DH) communicating in English. I worked on my Slovak with a member of my generation – 90 year old Vasil who speaks 5 languages, but not English.



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Bratislava is an ancient city with a rich history. It's located on the Danube about 60 miles from Vienna. The bridge in the distance is commonly known as bridge UFO because of the restaurant on top. It's formal name is bridge SNP, a reference to the Slovak National Uprising against the Nazis in 1944, a valiant attempt but sadly unsuccessful.



The castle dominates the river. When Budapest fell to the Ottoman Empire and the Vienna was besieged, the emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Empire ruled from here.



From this vantage point you can see 3 countries – Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic.



Slovakia is a nation of castles. On previous visits we explored 12 of them which in my opinion rival any I've seen elsewhere in Europe.

You can see these on my website

www.brigs.us/Euro

[pe-Aug-2013/Castles-of-Slo](http://www.brigs.us/Europe-Aug-2013/Castles-of-Slo)

[vakia.htm](http://www.brigs.us/Europe-Aug-2013/Castles-of-Slovakia.htm)

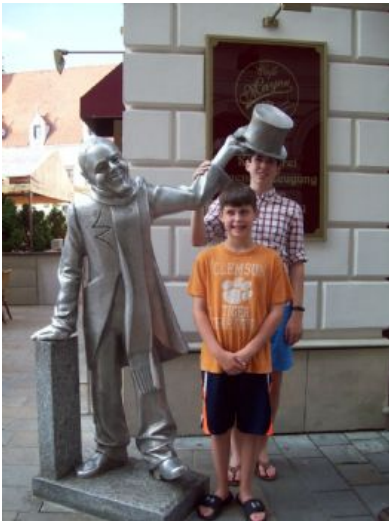
Back in Old Town we walked the medieval streets through St Michael's Gate, an entry point of the old city wall.



St Martin's Cathedral where emperors were once crowned.



Whimsical sculptures are displayed throughout the city. These are quite famous in Old Town



The main square is the site of frequent entertainment, both modern and traditional.



All that remains of the city's once vibrant Jewish Quarter is a monument describing its destruction, not by the Nazi's but by the Communists who chose that area for the highway to the UFO bridge. One of the sculptures has a plaque with "REMEMBER" written in Slovak and in Hebrew.

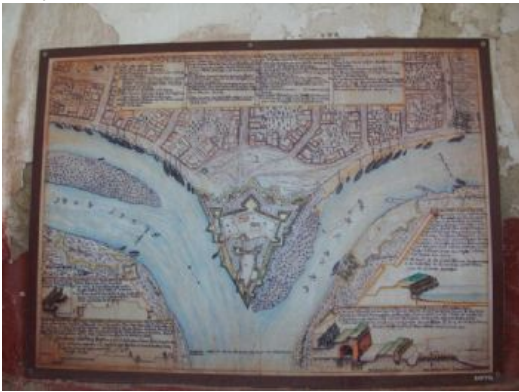


We like to get off the beaten path, so we decided to drive to Budapest and stop at a little known site along the way – The Komarno Fortress on the Slovakia-Hungarian border.

We had done our research ahead of time, so we were prepared for an enormous ruin in the very early stages of restoration.



This fortress guarded the confluence of the Danube and Vah rivers since the 12th century. It was never conquered.



Today it is being rescued/restored from centuries of neglect and outright vandalism. It was used in the 50s by the Communists who painted the entire complex red when it functioned as an army barracks.



They replaced the cross on the chapel with a red star. That is also gone now.



Only a small part of the complex is open to the public and cannot be explored without a guide for a very good reason.



Much of the access is through tunnels like this. This reminded me of the "mine" under Rheinfels Castle in Germany.



Occasionally we would come upon a relic of the past.



Our young guide provided a narrative in Slovak, Hungarian and English (for us). Not many westerners come through here. They are doing what restoration they can with the limited funds available. What this place needs is a billionaire with a sense of history to adopt it. Obviously such a tour is not for the ordinary tourist. However, we were surprised a few days later when while exploring a military museum in Budapest we came upon a display describing the historic battles at the Kormarno Fortress.



The attendant at the museum was quite surprised when I told him in my ungrammatical Slovak that we had already visited there.

Next blog – Budapest, Hungary

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WILSONWR

Those were some great pictures! What a story they tell. I can't wait to catch up on the rest of your blogs!

2149 days ago



HELEN_BRU

Wow, you don't miss much on your visits! So happy to join you. I was back there in 1971.

2149 days ago





JACKIEWALKS4FUN



Love it, and your pictures of your family. I can see you are having a great time.



2150 days ago



HOLLYM48

Again, a wonderful blog and I love that your grandson's love to get their pics taken. Awesome trip!

2150 days ago



WALLAHALLA

Most excellent. I so want to go there.

2151 days ago



ONEKIDSMOM

Love them all, but have to admit to a particular liking for the "whimsical sculptures". We have a



few around here, which totally capture my imagination.

2151 days ago



MISCHAKEO

Lovely pictures. I want to go there! Thanks for sharing your wonderful trip.

2151 days ago



STRIVERONE

The photo albums on your website were really interesting. I learned more about Slovakia in the last 20 minutes than I did during the rest of my life.

2152 days ago



DOVESEYES

Wonderful thanks so much really enjoyed this blog.

2152 days ago



PHEBESS

Looks like a wonderful trip - I love that crazy sculpture, especially the guy climbing out of the manhole!!!

2152 days ago



PRNCSCUP1-2FULL

Oooooh..... Now I have Slovakia Envy! I am from 3/4 Czech and the only words I know in Slovak are curse words! Both my maternal and paternal Grandmothers had a grand time teaching my sister and I cuss words! My Grandpap was upset! We were adults at the time though! so, don't think the guides would like what I would have to say! HeeHee! Thanks for sharing!

2152 days ago



CD4114015



This is SO and can't think of anyone I'd rather see enjoy it....except maybe me!



2152 days ago



GINIEMIE

Cool! I love the playfulness of your grandsons with the statues around town. It is so fun. To me, if it says Hungary, Austria or now Czechoslovakia I'm curious. My DD found family connections-to her dad's family there in her Family tree explorations. She is doing a fantastic job for the family and is disappointed that her brothers are not more interested. Her grandmother is, but she's 84 and is not computer savvy enough to look at what DD had dug up. She's done some of my family too, and thanks to her Latin studies has made some significant strides in Belgium. Now she would like to go.

I love castles and went through several in France, but only two in Belgium or should I say one and one ruin. I find it amusing and sad that the museum guide was surprised. Some of us Americans do care about our roots...I'm claustrophobic, so I don't think I'd like the tunnels too much.

I guess my DD and I should go exploring-but my nerves are shot after the trip with Erik. I don't



have your energy my friend. Thanks again for the tour.



2152 days ago



LIVEDAILY

There are very few places on this Earth that haven't been conquered by an opposing force in one way or another. So glad you got to visit that very special place!

2152 days ago





KRISSY82

Sounds amazing! Great pictures!
2152 days ago




WUMPASTAR

Okay, now I wanna go there. I don't think it's a country people really think "I wanna go there" but you convinced me!!! It looks and sounds AMAZING! I wouldn't go through these tunnels though. Just seeing your picture gave me a mini panic attack hahaha I'm claustrophobic!
2152 days ago



PHOENIX1949


2152 days ago



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