

VISIT TO ERFTSTADT Fri 19th to Mon 22nd Sept 2014

In the 36th year of Twinning with Erfstadt we visited Andernach on the Rhine to renew friendships made in past years and see the geyser.... www.geysir-andernach.de/english/

On Friday we found the brand new coach was rather well appointed as we left Wokingham Carnival Pool at the unwelcome hour of 6am. A little too early for some who fell asleep on the way to Dover.

Ferry check-in times are longer than before but the short cruise to Calais gave time to enjoy the ships busily moving their cargo around Europe and for us be tempted by the breakfast offering. We avoided the autoroute through Brussels which gets very congested on Friday and went south near Charleroi and Namur. Unfortunately a motorway stop for lunch for lunch had to suffice because there were so many road works but we reached Erfstadt by 6.30pm. A welcome in Liblar followed the introductions to our hosts, some new and some well known before we left for dinner.



Andernach Geyser

On **Saturday** we had a guided tour round some of the old streets and looked at the buildings. Lunch followed in a local restaurant and then we had some free time in Andernach. After lunch we visited the museum where the action of the geyser was well explained. However, as we prepared for the short Rhine trip to witness the water spout, the weather became a little showery if not drenching! By the time we reached the site it had fortunately dried up.

The discharge of water began quite slowly and we were rather disappointed; however the dribble became a stronger hosepipe-like spurt and then improved until it lived up to the pictures in the museum with a mixture of water and steam spouting high above us.

This striking phenomenon is a natural attraction forcing a jet of water **130 to 200 feet high**. It erupts about every two hours and spouts for six to eight minutes, the geyser's peak lasts just a few minutes. What makes cold-water geysers erupt can be compared to the force generated by shaking a bottle of carbonated water. The visit starts with a 60-minute session in the Geyser Adventure Centre in Andernach, where visitors "accompany" a carbon dioxide molecule on its journey from the magma up into the Earth's atmosphere. There are numerous exhibits, both visual and interactive, that make learning about the geyser fun for all ages. From there, visitors take a 20-minute boat ride. The ride itself is impressive, with views of rolling hills and unusual architecture along the Rhine then a five-minute walk from the landing stage to the geyser itself.

Sunday was a more relaxing day which was spent with our hosts and in the evening we all met up for the group meal with our hosts and other Erfstadt members.

Places visited by our members on Sunday included a visit to a local art exhibition; a new park in Liblar and the enormous brown coal open cast mine near Erfstadt.

We bade farewell to our hosts at 8am on Monday morning. The coach went near Maastricht of EU treaty fame as we made towards Ypres for lunch and the 1st WW memorial museum. Upstairs in the Cloth Hall the exhibits were numerous and moving but the continuous dirge-like noise (hardly music) became more and more depressing. Many of us found it overwhelming and exited without completing the whole exhibition. The coach was quiet as we drove the last few miles to Calais. Here the migrant clusters were clearly visible around the port and the coaches seemed to huddle together in a protective queue at the UK Immigration Control building. Nothing untoward happened and we arrived in Wokingham Broad Street about 20:00 on Monday evening.