

EUROPE 2023

4 months | 6 countries | 8 house swaps | 10 journey legs | 2 grand-boys



Goat or Sheep?

Blayze was keen to see sheep with black heads - so English! On our drive this afternoon we stopped to admire a flock in the paddock. A couple of inquisitive ones came over to check us out. They all had long curly horns. Blayze swore they were goats. I told him they were "horny sheep". A giggle was heard.



Weedy Plant?

Blayze enquired about the light purple coloured plant that covered the hills slopes. When we stopped to show him what heather looks like he read out his Google search: "a stubborn plant with a woody stem that continues to thrive despite difficult conditions. Some consider it a weed but its major benefit is that it stops degradation." Heather to a tee.



Venturing Out

Day one of exploring this lovely area. All of us (except Deakin who was still sleeping) headed off on a walk to explore the village. The old stone buildings hug the road and exude permanence. Many are decorated with hanging baskets of vividly coloured flowers. The air was pungent, probably as the consequence of the spread of manure over the surrounding farms. Maddi and I loved it — nothing nicer than a good whiff of cow or horse manure. Blayze on the other hand was disgusted and felt the need for a clothes peg! We have a beautiful old church — St Bartholomew's — a couple of doors down from the house. Apparently a church has been present in the village since at least 1230, and it is possible that a church was here during the [Saxon era](#). The current tower was added in about 1450, and the rest of the church was rebuilt in 1506. Just saying — this place is old. We wandered through the grounds of another church and down to a stream. Maddi was delighted with the scenery and Blayze was still wanting the peg!



Homeland Dreaming

Since landing in the motherland I have felt this overwhelming sense of belonging! This place is what I have dreamed of all my life. A small, tight knit village with beautiful old homes and pubs, the amazing old cemeteries and churches and I certainly can't forget the picturesque landscape. The grass is so green and beautiful - I just want to lay in it! There is so much nature that it (ivy) even grows on stone buildings (which Siggy told me some get so strong they can wreck foundations!).

There is so much life and soul in this village. I feel so blessed to be here. I've always dreamt of living in a small cottage in the English country side in a small village with my beloved animals and this trip is definitely seeing those dreams come to life. It's amazing to see where my mothers family has come from and I feel proud of my heritage. It's very sentimental as my mother's mother passed away very young and Nana Flo and Nana Glad who I never met as they have also passed away, yet I've always felt a strong connection to that side of the family. I hope one day I can bring my mum and Auntie Lauren here. It feels really healing and I can definitely feel the presence of those 3 amazing women as I explore the town and countryside.

Tomorrow another dream will come true - riding a true cob type horse on a trek in beautiful English forest and bridle paths. I can't wait to see what is next to come! **Maddi**

Deakin awoke late and served himself up some marmite. However the after taste was too much to bare and he had to wash it down with lemon curb.

We had hoped to start using our National Trust passes today but the local venue where we have to pick them up is closed on a Thursday, so this afternoon was reserved for a drive through the local countryside. Maddi was sleeping when we were ready to go so she and Deakin stayed at home and the rest of us ventured out onto the narrow, hedge lined roads. Our eyes feasted on the violet/purple clad uplands, the decorative black and white cattle and many herds of sheep — some wandering the road ways. We were looking for the black faced variety that are such a novelty for us.

Maddi and Deakin went for another walk through the village. Maddi simply loves this place and feels very much at home. She is determined to come back to England in the future and bring her mother with her.

Our food supplies are still a bit limited so we decided on our first pub experience. We choose the Sun Inn some 30 metres walk from our front door. The meals were enormous and great concern was expressed by the master of the household about carrying too much weight for the upcoming soccer tournament. We wondered home as the sunlight started to dwindle. We've forgotten how long the days are here.





