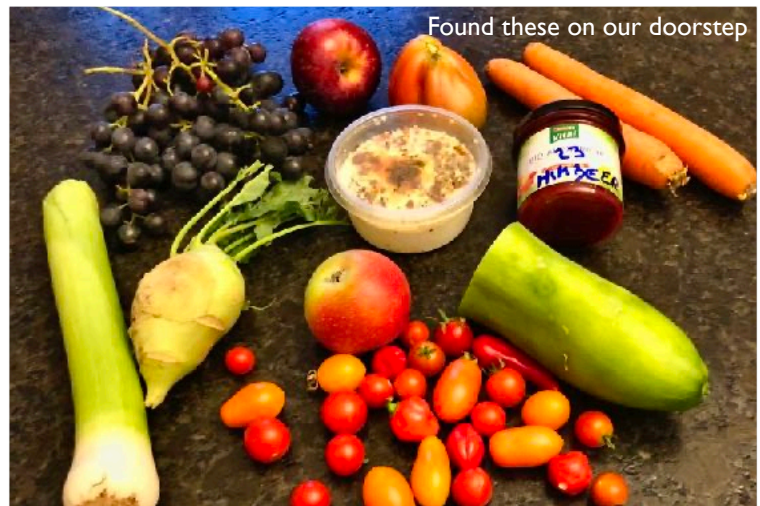


EUROPE 2023

4 months | 6 countries | 8 house swaps | 10 journey legs



Steyr

In the wee hours of the morning, we started our day with an early breakfast, followed by a prompt taxi ride to Vienna Bahnhof and an early train bound for Steyr - about two hours distant from Vienna. Deciphering which platform number was only one of the issues. However, we eventually made it to our destination, thanks in large part to kind-hearted fellow passengers who understood the disorientation of navigating an unfamiliar train station. We even received more than a few offers to help lift our bags.

On the first leg we met a young man and had a discussion the whole way to Linz where we changed trains for Steyr. His parents are Ukrainian who escaped the Crimea after the Russian invasion and now live in Estonia. Such an interesting and informative chat.

Upon our arrival at the station, Christian and Innes, the couple we are swapping houses with, greeted us. They kindly drove us to their home, showed us around, and handed over the keys to both the house and their car. Bliss.

Their recently renovated home boasts spacious rooms and a delightful view of their expansive garden. Their residence is conveniently close to the old city centre.



Our hosts occupy the upper floor of the house and stayed in our home for three weeks in August. It was great to catch up with them and discover how they enjoyed our place and what they did with their time in Cleveland. They, including their 14 year old son, had been at our home as part of 12 months off from their jobs traveling the world.

Now we have three weeks to unwind and relax after the fast-paced early phase of our travels. Our plan is to immerse ourselves in the community and also explore further local parts of Upper Austria. Although we had visited Steyr briefly in 2018, it was only for a few hours. We still hold vivid memories of the city's beauty. It will be interesting to see how three weeks in one spot goes down as we are used to touring rather than staying.

Steyr is an ancient town, having celebrated its 1,000th anniversary in 1980 and is apparently one of the best preserved old towns in the country. The famous historic old town centre is built around the Stadtplatz and was largely restored following World War II.

This house swapping gig is quite wonderful as proved today by the thoughtfulness of our hosts who not only collected us from the train station but also supplied a large range of food items including a box of fresh vegetables from Christian's mother's garden. Another example of how good the scheme is, is that the very first couple we ever swapped with (some 13 years ago) are coming to Australia again this year and are staying with us for Christmas - as friends this time instead of house swappers! How wonderful is that!

It is now early evening and we have already been to the local supermarket to augment our supplies, washed our clothes, showered (in a lovely big amenity) and Heather is in bed now typing today's newsletter. What a life! We miss our family and friends. Siggy certainly misses playing football four times a week. Some of the travel has been trying, but really, life is brilliant compared to those in Israel (and Palestine) and Ukraine who daily fear for their lives.

