

MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | WEDNESDAY, 3 APRIL 2013



Siegfried Land

I am writing this newsletter from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. We are camped next to a rushing river in a town that boasts the most visitors in the whole of this country. Vianden is nestled in a gorgeous valley overlooked by a most impressive chateau. It's even colder than where we have been with snow drifts still persisting in sheltered spots. It is in the Ardennes highlands.

Some 1000 years ago Count Siegfried of Ardennes (now fancy that - Count Siggyl!) built a castle high on a promontory thus laying the foundations of today's Luxembourg. Every European super power has tried at some stage to conquer Luxembourg - without success. Its not called "the Gibraltar of the north" for nothing.

Our drive today from Gulpen passed briefly through Belgium and then up on to highlands with lots of winding roads. We were particularly impressed with the town of Clervaux. We snapped photos from a number of vantage points around the town but it was too cold to stop and take a ride on our bikes. Instead we saved our ride for Vianden.

The ride around the town was freezing. We had to do it however - it was just so beautiful.



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Touring in a Van

We cannot imagine touring around Europe any other way - give us a motorhome any day. The flexibility to go where you want and when you want; the joy of stopping each day in a new and interesting location; or staying somewhere for as long as you like; and being able to pull up for a cuppa at any time and enjoy a room with a view, are just a few of the plus points.

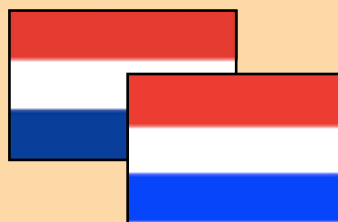
Of course, Heather will admit to worrying about whether our van

will miss the trees lining the roads and having to cope with me worrying about using too much gas (in case it runs out and we have trouble buying some more in faraway places like Turkey or Greece) plus whether we will be able to get over road humps unscathed because our van's exhaust and back-end is so ridiculously low.

Anyway, we shall see how it goes.



CHEAPER EGGS? We were surprised to find that eggs are sold 10 to a carton in Europe. In Australia we still hang on to our "imperial legacy" of 12 (a dozen) to a carton.



COPYCATS? We did a double take today when we saw both the Dutch and the Luxembourg flags - they are essentially the same except that Luxembourg's blue is lighter.



LANGUAGE Within a very small area we had to cope with 4 languages today - Dutch, Flemish, French and German. Shopping was at times a giggle, and road signs and advertising hoardings were quite perplexing. The official language of Luxembourg is Letzeburgesch.

The heater is on and the van is warm ... what more could one want?

The streets were narrow and cobbled and the houses multi-coloured. The hills around us were heavily wooded with bare limbs waiting for the sun. The signs were in French. The languages spoken were French and German.

The whole of Luxembourg is only 82 km long and 57 km wide.

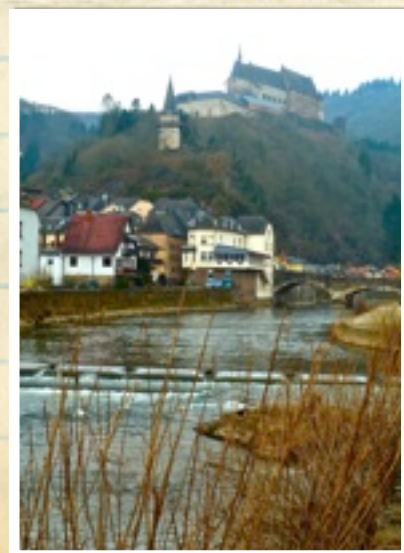
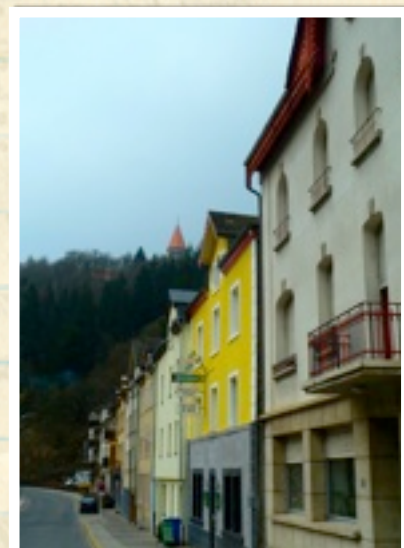
The secondary roads are very passable in our rather large van. In some towns we had to squeeze through narrow spaces between houses that jutted out but we noticed many larger trucks than our van so they must be able to get through.

We came across a number of roadworks with lights to allow only one way traffic. At one point, whilst waiting at one of these lights, an impatient driver wanted to pass us only to realise his mistake. We glared at him as he backed up behind us. Drivers are the same all around the world I guess.

We have just had a lovely shower and are now writing and surfing with our computers.

The heater is on so the van is warm.

What more could one want?





PHOTOS



EVERYTHING WE DO IS A NEW EXPERIENCE. HAVING TO WORK OUT WHAT A SIGN MEANS, LOOKING AT HOW PEOPLE DRESS FOR THE ICY WEATHER, WATCHING CHILDREN PLAYING HAPPILY IN FREEZING CONDITIONS, LISTENING TO MANY STRANGE LANGUAGES AND TRYING TO WORK OUT WHAT IT ALL MEANS. SOME PEOPLE WOULD FIND IT VERY STRESSFUL BUT WE ARE INTRIGUED BY IT ALL. WE CAN IMAGINE HOW IMMIGRANTS MUST FEEL WHEN THEY FIRST COME TO AUSTRALIA AND HAVE TO IMMERSE THEMSELVES IN OUR CULTURE.

