







# How to Travel Europe Cheap

Travel Europe like we did - for \$5 dollars a day or less!



by Kris Kemp

Discover the travel secrets that most people don't know about!









above: Chateau Isle Marie (Picauville, France)  
top right: Getting a ride in France  
right: Delicious meal (Traben-Trarbach, Germany)  
below: Good times (Sternhagen, Germany)





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Traben-Trarbach, Germany  
Beautiful town on the Moselle River.  
We stayed here for a week. It was awesome.

## **How to Travel Europe Cheap**

Travel Europe like we did - for \$5 dollars a day or less!

by Kris Kemp

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## Table of Contents

About this Ebook .....	9
About the Author .....	12
How to Travel Anywhere for \$5 dollars a day or less ...	13
How to Travel Europe Cheap: Overview .....	14
The Best Way to get to Europe .....	15
Travel France for \$5 dollars a day or less .....	17
Travel Europe for Cheap .....	20
8 Steps to Traveling Europe for 2 Euros a Day .....	23
Our Trip to France and Germany: Photo Story .....	33
17 Things: Essential Gear for your Trip to Europe .....	280
Travel Anywhere for \$5 Dollars a Day .....	288
Traveling to France and Germany: Notes from my Journal ...	289
What I Learned from Traveling to France and Germany ...	397
About the Author .....	402

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## About this Ebook

This budget travel guide, complete with photos, personal stories, and reference websites, will change the way you look at travel, forever. For less than \$100 dollars, you will uncover a world of opportunities that will save you, literally, thousands of dollars.

Specifically, I will provide reference websites that will enable you to travel, anywhere in the United States or abroad, in any country in the world, for \$5 dollars a day or less.

Also, I will tell you what you need to take on your journey and where you can purchase these items at reasonable prices.

You're about to learn how to travel cheap, cheaper than you ever thought possible, to any country in the world.

You'll discover that you can travel for cheaper than living and paying rent at your current location. If you put what you're about to learn into action, you can change your entire life.

Feel free to skip around to the chapters that interest you most.

At some point, read the entire ebook in order to get an overview of how you can travel anywhere in the world for \$5 dollars a day or less.

Traveling abroad for weeks, months, and even years is possible and can be done on the cheap. You can do it.

When others ask you, "How can you afford to travel?" Smile, then tell them to visit: [HowToTravelEuropeCheap.com](http://HowToTravelEuropeCheap.com) and [TravelCheapBlueprint.com](http://TravelCheapBlueprint.com)

## **Why I'm writing this ebook**

Earlier tonight, I was at a friend's 40th birthday party. He's a writer and I met him through other writers and a publisher named Gail, who published Red Herring, a magazine that featured news, music, and culture of West Palm Beach, Florida. Currently, Gail is seeking a publisher for her novel and working on a second one.

At the party, Gail mentioned that she heard I was in Europe. I told her I was, that I had been traveling France and Germany with my girlfriend, Raegan, for the last 4 months.

"How did you do it?" Gail asked.

"It's cheap," I said. "Anyone can do it."

I told her how we traveled Europe for a few dollars a day or less.

"You should write a book that explains how to do it," Gail suggested. "A lot of people would be willing to pay for that information."

I thought about what Gail said, and then started writing this ebook.

Once I finished the ebook, I wasn't sure how to price it. I thought about giving it away for free. I talked with my friend Carrie about it. She said: "If it's free, people won't value it."

In other words, people value something that they pay for.

So, that's how this ebook came about, as a result of those conversations and the subsequent weeks it took to write the book and lay out the photos using Pages on my Macbook Pro laptop.

This ebook will show you how to travel anywhere in Europe for \$5 dollars a day or less. You can use this ebook to save hundreds or even thousands of dollars on your next travel adventure abroad.

You're about to discover how to travel in a way that's inexpensive and fun. At the same time, you're likely to have more of a rich experience when you travel this way.

Stay curious. Stay safe. Keep traveling.

Kris Kemp

writer, musician, traveler, creative entrepreneur

[HowToTravelEuropeCheap.com](http://HowToTravelEuropeCheap.com)

[TravelCheapBluePrint.com](http://TravelCheapBluePrint.com)



Horses. Sternhagen, Germany



## About the Author



Kris Kemp is a writer, copywriter, musician, photographer, traveler, and creative entrepreneur. His writings include 19 ebooks, 5 screenplays, 2 musicals, a novel, and hundreds of blog posts and email sequences. He specializes in writing copy for landing pages, squeeze pages, and email sequences. Although he has a variety of interests, they share the common theme of freedom—travel/

location freedom, time freedom, financial freedom, health freedom, creative freedom. / [bicycledays@yahoo.com](mailto:bicycledays@yahoo.com)

[KrisKemp.com](http://KrisKemp.com)

Self-Development Made Simple

[KrisKempCreative.com](http://KrisKempCreative.com)

Build your Audience & Grow your Profits

[BicycleDays.com](http://BicycleDays.com)

Find yourself. Free yourself. Bring your ideas to life

[MakeBigProfits.net](http://MakeBigProfits.net)

Get Effective Strategies to Escape the 9-to-5

[YourOwnPrivateATM.com](http://YourOwnPrivateATM.com)

Discover how to make money online, quickly

## How to Travel Anywhere for \$5 dollars a day or less

Anyone, including you, can travel Europe or even the U.S.A for \$5 a day or less.

How?

By using WWOOF and CouchSurfing.

### **WWOOF**

WorldWide Opportunities On Organic Farms  
[www.woof.net](http://www.woof.net)

### **CouchSurfing**

Homestay and social networking service - stay with locals and meet travelers - share authentic travel experiences  
[couchsurfing.com](http://couchsurfing.com)

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WWOOF - the main website - organic farms worldwide  
[www.woof.net](http://www.woof.net)

WWOOF USA - organic farms across the USA  
[www.woofusa.org](http://www.woofusa.org)

WWOOF France  
[www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr)

WWOOF Germany  
[www.woof.de/en](http://www.woof.de/en)

WWOOF Deutschland  
[www.woof.de/de](http://www.woof.de/de)

## How to Travel Europe Cheap: Overview

If you're wondering how to get to Europe, and travel France for \$5 dollars a day or less, keep reading. I'm going to tell you how to get to Europe, particularly France, for cheap, and how to travel France and do what I'm doing, for less than \$5 dollars a day.

Why should you trust me?

Why should you trust me when it comes to giving you information on how to get to Europe (France) for cheap, and how to travel Europe for a few euros a day? Because I'm doing it right now.

As I write this, I'm in Picaudville, France, staying at a chateau. Basically, it's a castle, and my expenses are about 2 euros a day, probably less, more like 1 euro a day.

At the time of this writing, one euro = \$1.11 in American money.

Picaudville, France - The Chateau d' L' Isle Marie

Currently, I'm writing this from Picaudville, France, in a basement kitchen at Isle Marie, a chateau that's been converted to a bed and breakfast, about a half hour from the beaches of Normandy. I'm writing this and drinking Russian Earl Gray, loose leaf tea.

Raegan and I are WWOOFing (WWOOF - World Wide Opportunities On Organic Farms) here.

Sign up for WWOOF France at: [wwoof.fr](http://wwoof.fr)

Sign up for their main website at: [wwoof.net](http://wwoof.net)



## **The Best Way to Get to Europe**

If you want to get to Europe for cheap, take a cruise.

That's right, take a cruise ship to Europe. It's way cheaper than flying. You'll save around \$2,000 dollars.

When I looked into traveling to Europe, I checked into flight deals and found round trip tickets to be around \$3,500.

A Royal Caribbean cruise ship, for two, to Europe, is around \$1,200 dollars, and if you get the tickets early enough, the cost is reduced to about \$950. This is a great deal.

We took a Royal Caribbean Cruise to France.

The cost for both us, sharing an interior (no windows) state room, was about \$1,200.

\$600 dollars each for a 12-day cruise that includes food, drinks (not including alcohol), and entertainment ... sweet deal.

That is only \$50 dollars a day for delicious food, as much as you want to eat, entertainment, and beautiful views. The ship even had a movie theater.

To find the best cruise ship deals, look for "cruise ship apps" on your phone. If you're using an Apple phone, search on iTunes. If you're using an Android phone, search on Google Play Store.

Also, search on [google.com](http://google.com) and [duckduckgo.com](http://duckduckgo.com) for "cruise ship deals" and "cruise ship discounts" and "cruise ship travel packages".

[DuckDuckGo.com](http://DuckDuckGo.com) is a great search engine for finding websites that Google ignores. You can find some gems.

**Before you think that \$1,200 is too much, consider this:**

1. It was a 12-day cruise, leaving the Port of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, stopping in the Azores Delgado (Portugal island) after 7 days, for a one day stop, then continuing, arriving in Brest, France on the 10th day, Cherbourg, France, on the 11th day, and Harwich, England on the 12th day.
2. All food, except for alcoholic beverages, was included. Most of the restaurants featured all you can eat buffets and they were open most of the time.
3. The ship included a rock climbing wall, dance lessons, a movie theatre, a performance stage with live theatre and guest speakers, various speakers on different topics who gave lectures in the Safari Room (a section of the ship), singers and musicians, delicious food, friendly staff, and daily cleaning and room services.
4. There was a lot of activities on the ship, including lectures, movies, dance lessons, rock climbing wall, an indoor swimming pool, an outdoor swimming pool, a jacuzzi, a jogging and walking track, a gym, a theatre that featured musical theatre, dancing, a magician, a professional pickpocket who lectures about how to protect yourself from being a victim of pickpockets when traveling abroad.

So, if you want to know how to get to Europe for cheap, take a cruise. Go with Royal Caribbean Cruise or some other cruise ship that has good ratings and an affordable price. Use [DuckDuckGo.com](http://DuckDuckGo.com) and [google.com](http://google.com) to find cruise ship deals. Also, search on iTunes or Google Play store to find cruise ship apps.

## **Travel France for \$5 dollars a day or less**

Once you're in Europe, how do you travel in Europe for a few euros a day?

Currently, I'm traveling in France, with Raegan, for a few euros a day.

How?

By using WWOOF and CouchSurfing.

### **WWOOF**

WorldWide Opportunities On Organic Farms

[www.woof.net](http://www.woof.net)

### **CouchSurfing**

Homestay and Social Networking Service - Stay with Locals and Meet Travelers - Share Authentic Travel Experiences

[couchsurfing.com](http://couchsurfing.com)

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### **More WWOOF websites**

WWOOF - the main website - organic farms worldwide

[www.woof.net](http://www.woof.net)

WWOOF USA - organic farms across the USA

[www.woofusa.org](http://www.woofusa.org)

WWOOF International

[www.woofinternational.org](http://www.woofinternational.org)

WWOOF France

[www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr)



WWOOF Germany  
[wwoof.de/en](http://wwoof.de/en)

WWOOF Germany  
[germany.wwoof.net/en](http://germany.wwoof.net/en)

WWOOF Deutschland  
[wwoof.de/de](http://wwoof.de/de)

### **An Itinerary**

Before I left, I set up an itinerary, a schedule, with places to stay at [couchsurfing.com](http://couchsurfing.com) places to do some work, in exchange for room and board (food), at [wwoof.fr](http://wwoof.fr) The main WWOOF (WorldWide Opportunities On Organic Farms) website is [wwoof.net](http://wwoof.net)

By doing this, we've managed to stay at different towns throughout France for the last month and a half. So far, we've visited 3 towns in France and have plans to head to Paris at the end of the month.

### **Brest, France**

On May 16th, we arrived in Brest, France, and stayed with Ludmilla, a friendly 19-year old college student, for about a week. Ludmilla actually gave up her room so we would have a place to sleep. Our cost? Nothing, except for food. We met her through [couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org)

### **What is CouchSurfing?**

Couchsurfing, basically, is a website that links people with available places (rooms or couches to stay) with those looking for a place to stay. It also allows couchsurfers and hosts (those who have couches) to leave a rating for each other and post pictures,

so you can get an idea of what the other person is like. Using [couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org), you do not need to pay for hotels, only for some food and, perhaps, gas money.

So, we stayed in Brest, France, at Ludmilla's, which saved us hundreds in hotel or hostel fees.

### **WWOOF'ing**

Since then, we've been WWOOFing, [wwwoof.org](http://wwwoof.org) which means we've been working 3 - 5 hours a day, in exchange for room (place to sleep) and board (food) at organic farms in 3 different towns in France. Typically, we work 3 - 4 hours a day at the most.



Traben-Trarbach, Germany  
Beautiful town on the Moselle River.  
We stayed here for a week. It was awesome.

## Travel Europe for Cheap

To do what we're doing--to get to Europe and travel France for a few euros (a few dollars) a day, follow these steps below:

1. Book a one way cruise to France. Do this using Royal Caribbean Cruise or some other major cruise ship that goes from your destination to France.
2. Go to: [wwwoof.org](http://wwwoof.org) and then [wwwoof.fr](http://wwwoof.fr) and sign up for a membership. I think it's about \$25 per person using the American site, and about \$15 euros each using the France. You'll save thousands, so the fee is minimal.
3. Once you've signed up the site, send out e-mails to various WWOOF (World Wide Organization of Organic Farm) (Willing Workers On Organic Farms) hosts that look interesting to you.
4. Schedule your itinerary so you go from one farm to another, with the distance from each being a few hours, so you can hitchhike from one place to another, like we're doing.
5. Go to: [couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org) Sign up for a membership and pay the \$25 donation fee. Fill out a profile description and post a current picture of yourself. Schedule places to couchsurf between the WWOOF places. This will keep things interesting for you.

## Summary

If you want to know how to get to Europe, and travel anywhere in Europe for less than 2 euros a day, follow the suggestions that I mention above. The experience will broaden your perspective. I know it has for me.

When we traveled, our expenses were often less than a few euros a day, since we were receiving free room and board (place to stay



and food) in exchange for a few hours of work a day. Also, living with the locals gave us a glimpse into what it's like to really live in another country, which is something one might miss if they stay in an hotel or even a hostel.



Exploring  
Loqueffret,  
France with  
Raegan.





Homemade tomato and mozzarella, with fresh basil. The tomatoes and basil came from backyard garden. With homemade pizza and homemade peach sangria and organic red wine (grapes from the vineyard). A delicious meal prepared by our hosts in Traben-Trarbach, Germany.

## **8 Steps to Traveling Europe for Two Euros (or Less) a Day**

Consider this your action plan for traveling Europe for cheap, for an extended period of time. Follow these suggestions and you'll find yourself in France, Germany, or anywhere else in Europe, enjoying the sunlight, the wonderful people, and the beautiful surroundings.

### **1. Eliminate your anchors**

An anchor is something that keeps you attached to one place. This could be a job, a career, an apartment, a relationship, or any other obligation.

In order to stay in Europe for an extended period of time, you must first eliminate, get rid of, and remove any "things" that demand that you return.

If you have a dog, a cat, or another animal, give it away to someone.

If you are in a relationship with someone, tell them they need to go with you, in order to keep the relationship going. You'll find that traveling together is an incredible bonding experience. Traveling is a way to build memories, especially since it can provide challenges.

Traveling presents so many beautiful moments because when you travel, you put yourself out there and when you do that, almost anything can happen. Before you travel and even while you are traveling, be sure to maintain a positive happy attitude, no matter what.

Find someone to travel with. Having someone to share the experience with, especially talking to them at the end of the day, is truly comforting.

If you have a mortgage and monthly payments on a house, rent it out, or better yet, sell it.

If you have an apartment, talk to your landlord about your plan to travel overseas and ask for your first, last and security deposit back. If he declines your request, quit paying rent in order to get it back.

In short, you have got to eliminate any anchors, including jobs, that are keeping you in your current place--your house, your apartment, your town, your city. Once you get rid of stuff in your life that is holding you down, the freedom and lightness you feel will enable you to travel with less baggage, both mental and physical baggage. Traveling light opens doors of opportunity to new people, places, situations.

## **2. Be open to the adventure**

Once you set the date for travel to Europe, your friends, neighbors, acquaintances will, eventually, find out what you're doing. Although most people will be excited for you, there may be some who are negative, dismissing your antics as those of someone trying to run away from responsibility.

"You can't just run away to France. What are you going to do? Be a poet in Paris?"

"Do you even speak German? They don't like Americans."

"It sounds romantic working on a farm in France. Yeah, just wait until you get there."



In order to over ride the forecasts of negativity mentioned by well-meaning friends, you must be open to the adventure that, even if your trip does have moments of struggle, at least you are having those moments of struggle in Europe--a place where you're surrounded by beautiful architecture, a rich history, interesting and friendly people, and situations that will, quite literally, change the way you look at the world.

The naysayers and others who comment negatively about your trip? Just ignore them or laugh at their comments. Do not let their negativity affect you in any way. Behind their sarcasm, they are jealous and they wish they had the courage to travel like you are going to do.

### **3. Set a date for departure**

Set a date when you will leave, two months in advance. This will give you time

to prepare an itinerary (schedule), routes (map), and places to stay.

### **4. Schedule your trip one way**

Whether you are flying or taking a cruise, take the trip one way. By doing this, you are not obligated to return on a certain date. This allows room for possibilities for extended travel as well as eliminating the obligatory return date.

### **5. Plan your gear**

Plan what you are going to take. Basically, you are going to need high quality clothing and gear. Most of these items can be found at speciality shops or online.

## **Buy quality clothing**

It's better that you take one comfortable T-shirt, made of quality materials, than three-in-a-pack, bleached 100% cotton T-shirts that are cheap and itchy.

If you want a warm jacket, find a good one with an outer shell that is waterproof and an inner lining that is lightweight and warm, with a material like capilene or fleece. You can find high quality clothing online at the following websites.

## **Avoid 100% cotton clothing**

When buying clothing, particularly underwear, socks, and T-shirts, do not buy 100% cotton, as it retains moisture. When you're in cold weather and you're wearing a cotton T-shirt beneath layers of clothes and you sweat, the moisture freezes on the cotton and you end up shivering, even though you are wearing layers. Instead of cotton, purchase materials that are synthetic, like a 50% polyester, 50% cotton, a blend of polyester and nylon, or better yet, a material that is 100% nylon. Even though you are likely to pay more, the material is more comfortable, dries faster, and will keep you warmer.

## **Minimize your gear, get high quality gear**

When you travel, it's critical to be minimalist, to live with less. In order to do this, take a small amount of high quality gear.

Essentially, you will need these items:

1. comfortable sneakers (I recommend New Balance as they are lightweight and durable)
2. t-shirt (poly-cotton blend - H&M)
3. good socks (micro wool, smart wools)
4. 3 pairs of underwear (poly-cotton blend)
5. toilet paper (flatten tube, place in bag)
6. laptop (get a MacBook Pro - durable)
7. Lightweight, warm jacket (capilene or micro wool or synthetic shell with fleece inside - lightweight; get a high quality, durable, warm jacket, avoid cotton, as it holds moisture; buy synthetic--nylon, polyester, micro-wool; better to pay \$75 - \$150 on a good jacket that's lightweight than to have to tote around a bulky jacket that does not serve its purpose of keeping you warm)
8. pen, Sharpie, notepad
9. currency to convert to Euros

10. passport (get a passport card - it's the size of a driver's license or state ID), driver's license - take a picture of your passport and store it on your phone and on your computer, and on a password-protected flash drive  
copy of passport in ziploc bag

11. pepper spray, taser, knife - self-defense

12. flashlight - small, high-quality, LED  
Raegan brought a headlamp, which turned out to be an excellent idea. One night in a dark area, it was so useful as I switched it on, put it on my head, and looked for something that we needed.

13. European outlet adapter

## **6. Get an international-calling/texting phone app**

A few of these are ...

### **WhatsApp**

Free voice, video calls, and SMS messages

### **Viber**

Free, international calls

### **Facebook messaging**

Use Facebook messaging for texting and video calls.

### **Skype**

Skype to Skype international calls are free. If you need to send

text messages or call a cell phone, you will have to pay a monthly fee.

### **Face Time**

If you're connected to another Apple user, you can use the built-in Face Time app. Audio and video calls are free.

### **Line**

Free, international calls up to 5 minutes

## **7. Plan your trip itinerary using the following websites:**

[www.woof.org](http://www.woof.org)

[www.woof.net](http://www.woof.net)

This website enables travelers to get free room (place to sleep) and board (food) in exchange for working at farms 3 - 4 hours a day. At this site, you'll see links to other WWOOF sites, like <http://www.woof.fr> (France) and <http://www.woof.de> (Germany).

Each site charges an annual fee of \$25 - \$30 U.S. dollars or, if you're traveling overseas, \$20 - \$25 euros. This is a bargain. You will save thousands of dollars in hotel fees. I did. You can, too.

[couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org)

[couchsurfing.com](http://couchsurfing.com)

This website allows travelers to connect with people who will allow you to stay on their couch or in their room, in their house or apartment. Typically, couchsurfers stay for 2 - 3 days. Although the website is free to join, a \$25 donation helps to offset costs and enables you to get a certified status, as a mailer is sent to your address so you're seen as a real person. You can use this



website to host travelers and to find couches and beds to sleep on while you are traveling.

[maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com)

Use this website to plan your travel schedule and determine how you will get from place to place. It's great for hitchhiking, buses, and trains.

<http://www.carpooling.co.uk>

Petrol (gas) can be expensive in Europe, so carpooling, also known as ridesharing, is a nice alternative. Once you set up an account at this website, you can e-mail people who are offering rides or even post a rideshare of your own. Either way, you save money on gas.

<http://www.bahn.com>

Europe's travel website for rail journeys (trains). Get familiar with this site.

<http://www.digihitch.wiki>

Original stories, travel tips and road culture for hitchhikers, backpackers and modern nomads. Features highway routes, road maps, safety advice, legal advice, photos.

<http://www.hitchwiki.org>

The hitchhiker's guide to hitchhiking.

## **8. Sell 90% of what you own**

See #1 "Eliminate your anchors". This is what you need to do. Pretend your house or condo is going to be hit with a flood or some disaster and you have to leave in 3 minutes and you can only take what will fit into your backpack.

You'll probably want your laptop, laptop cord, clothes, passport, flashlight, knife.

That's about all you'll need when traveling Europe or anywhere else. Trust me. I traveled in France for 3 months and in Germany for 1 month, with my girlfriend, and that was basically all she had in her backpack. After the first few days, I started reducing my gear by selling it and leaving it behind and it was not missed.

### **Summary**

Traveling to another country is something anyone can do if they are willing to minimize their belongings and plan a schedule. Staying in that country for a longer period of time means eliminating anchors before leaving.

If you do travel for an extended period of time, you'll find that a lot of people say the same thing: I'm so jealous. I want to go.

The sad fact is that they're not willing to eliminate their anchors in order to go, so they stay where they are.

When you look at what people own, most people are paying rent for a storage shed or a place to store their furniture, decorations, and clothes.

If they could reduce what they own to a hiking backpack, which most people can do but are afraid to do for some reason (maybe

they are afraid of freedom?), they would be able to experience a freedom that would enable them to travel to another country for months.

Traveling is simple. Follow the 8 steps listed above. You can do it.

### **Shortcut to cheap travel to Europe**

All you have to do, if you want to travel cheap in Europe, is plan your trip with:

[couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org)

[wwwoof.org](http://wwwoof.org)

That's it. You'll save thousands of dollars.

Normally, WWOOF hosts (farmers who host WWOOF'ers) want WWOOF'ers (Willing Workers On Organic Farms) to work for at least 2 weeks, since the first few days to the first week consists of training the woofers on what needs to be done. Usually, you'll stay at WWOOF locations for two to three weeks.

To keep things more interesting than they already will be, you can schedule places to CouchSurf in between your WWOOF'ing adventures.

Usually people who host couchsurfers offer their couches and spare rooms for 2 days, some offer them for 3 to 4 days. I was expecting to buy groceries when we couchsurfed in France and Germany. Interestingly, however, it was usually the couchsurfing host who provided food and once he or she found out we were vegetarians, still provided the food and then mentioned nearby places where we could buy food if we wanted. Plan to buy your own food when you couchsurf and offer to cook food for the host.

## Our trip to France and Germany: Photo Story

Here's a brief pictorial overview of our four month trip through France and Germany. In the companion ebook set, Pictures from our Trip to Europe, you'll see 376 photos from our trip.

### Royal Caribbean Cruise Ship

Fort Lauderdale, France to Harwich, England

**cost:** \$1200 (about) for 2 people in interior cabin (no windows)

**duration:** 12 days

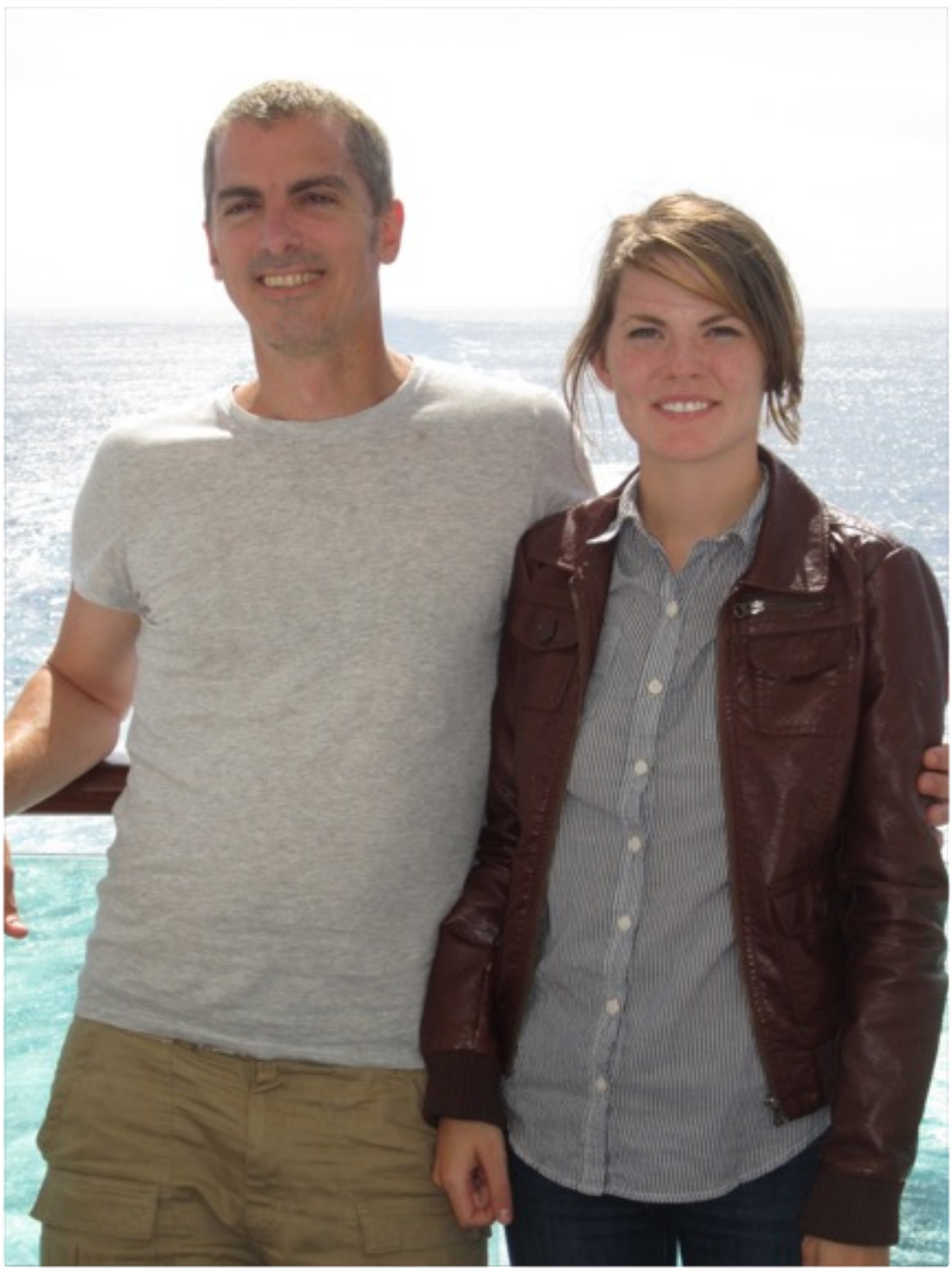
**includes:** all food and drink (except alcohol) and entertainment  
**note:** On day 10, the cruise ship arrived at Brest, France, where we disembarked as that was our first CouchSurfing location.





Leaving Fort Lauderdale, Florida.





Me and Raegan. on the cruise ship.



(Left) Raegan, on the rock climbing wall.

(Below) Me, on the rock climbing wall.

(Below left) Raegan and me.







The ship had several swimming pools. :)





Above: People on deck. Below: Raegan and me.







Above: Me. Below: Raegan.





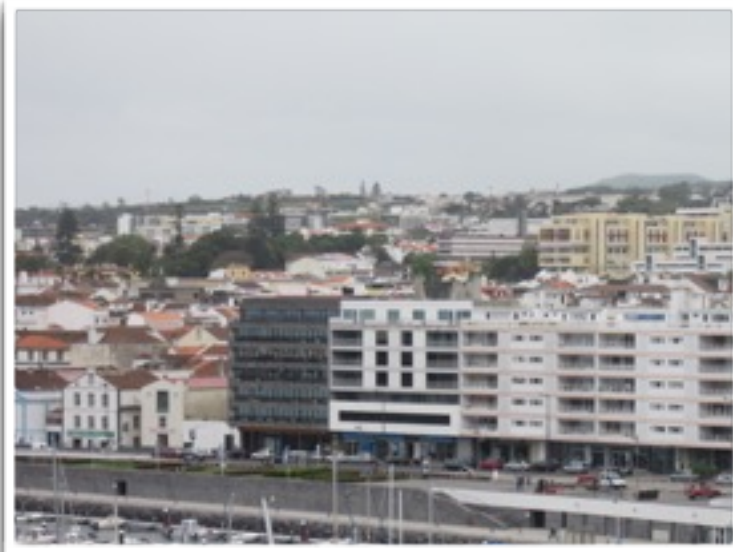
**Ponta Delgada (Azores archipelago)**

A chain of islands that is a region of Portugal

**location:** 2,076 kilometers from France

**duration:** 8 hours

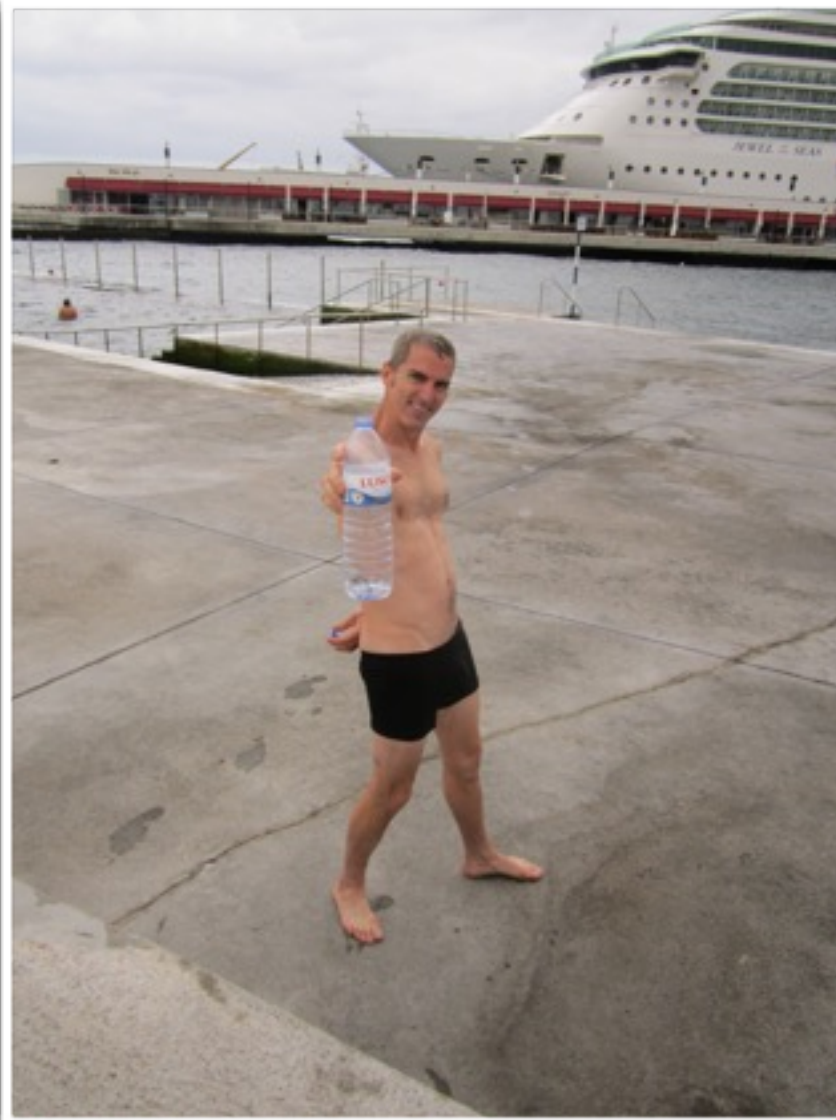
**details:** We walked around town. Got an espresso. Visited a fort. Shared a bottle of red wine. I took a dip in the frigid water.











**Brest, France**

A port city in Brittany, in northwestern France, bisected by the Penfeld River. It's known for its rich maritime history and naval base.

**duration:** 5 days

**details:** We couchsurfed with Ludmilla, a sweet 19-year old university student. Sign up at: [couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org) Ludmilla was a happy hippie who played guitar, sang, introduced us to her friends, gave use walking tours of parks. Cool girl.



Ludmilla, Raegan, Kris



































## Loqueffret, France

WWOOF'ed with Yannik Frezel, who runs a 200 acre cattle farm. As he had been a WWOOF'er in New Zealand, he said "I know what it's like and I'll treat you well." He did.

He taught us how to mend fences and herd cows. He showed around nearby villages and towns. His wife, a culinary school graduate specializing in pastries and deserts, prepared delicious meals and fantastic deserts.

**duration:** 2 weeks

**website:** [www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr)



View from attic room. Loqueffret, France.



Our room was the attic room. You can see the window coming out from the rooftop that went to that room. It was cozy and quiet. They owned the building beside them (to the left) that they were converting into a meat / butcher shop for the cattle they raised.

Travel France like we did, using [www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr) and [couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org)  
We found this place on [www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr)



View from outside the attic window. Across the street was an historic church (seen on the left) and a tabac (tobacco) shop (seen on the right) that also sold small amounts of grocery foods (meat, cheese, eggs, snacks) and had a small bar where you could get beer, wine, soda, and snacks. Yannick invited me there one day for a beer and introduced me to some local men, who appeared to be farmers or retired folk. It was cool.





View from outside the attic window. Across the street was an historic church (seen on the left) and a tabac (tobacco) shop (seen on the right - yellow sign) that also sold small amounts of grocery foods (meat, cheese, eggs, snacks) and had a small bar where you could get beer, wine, soda, and snacks. Yannick invited me there one day for a beer and introduced me to some local men, who appeared to be farmers or retired folk.



Exploring the town of Loqueffret, France, a small rural village, a commune, in north-western France, covering 2770 hectares. In 2017, it had 359 inhabitants. Inhabitants of Loqueffret are called in French Loqueffrettois.







































Above: Tabac Shop across the street  
Below: View from the attic room window.

















## Yvignac-La-Tour, France

A commune in the Cotes-d'Armor department of the region in Brittany in northwestern France.

**duration:** 7 days

**details:** WWOOFed with Aman and Natalie and their 2 children. They have animals (goats, rabbits), a garden, and live a lifestyle that follows the principles of "Transition", a move away from fossil fuels and a move toward sustainable living practices. They use compost toilets, avoid wi-fi, opting for plug in internet, eat organic, and mix their own mud to strengthen sections of their house.

**etc:** In 2016, there were 1,184 residents. The inhabitants of Yvignac-la-Tour are known in French as yvignacais.

**how we got the place:** [www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr)



















Our room. 4 beds. Cozy.







The view from the bed. 2nd floor room.





Above: Raegan's birthday.  
I picked her a bunch of flowers.  
Below: 2nd floor.





In the backseat of their car, on the way somewhere for an errand. One of our jobs consisted of babysitting their children. One thing I did that they liked was pushing them around in the wheelbarrow. To my right is a red headed Irish girl who was also WWOOF'ing, who arrived on the 2nd or 3rd day and shared the room with us.









Aman introduced us to Gwenole (white tank top), the next person who hosted us. We helped bring this contraption to Gwenole's place.









Aman and Natalie's beautiful kitchen and dining room that was cozy and comfortable, like a Christmas cave, a place of enchantment, interesting dinner conversations, and delicious food.





Me, Kris, picking the leaves to be boiled for tea. We picked fresh herbs from the garden that day.



Above: Raegan and Aman in the garden.  
Below: Fresh potatoes from the garden.







The loom that Natalie uses to make clothes.

















Delicious food, organic and fresh.  
The food here was so delicious. : )















## Savignac, France

A commune in the Aveyron department in southern France.

**duration:** 7 days

**details:** WWOOFed with Gwenole and Costina. Gwenole is building out a ceiling for what will be a bakery. Costina illustrates fliers, sews clothing. Yard has orchard with cherry trees, pear trees, and garden of lettuce and beans.

**etc:** In 2017, there were 721 residents.

**how we got the place:** [www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr)











Raegan mowing the yard. Our room was the door on the right.  
Had its own fireplace. Got cold at night.









Our room. Cozy. Fireplace.













Gwenole, walking with his daughter. Behind him is the building that he's converting into a bakery. Raegan and I helped him with carpentry and insulation.









Above: The garden. Shed in the background. Raegan mowing.  
Below: The outhouse. Compost toilet.

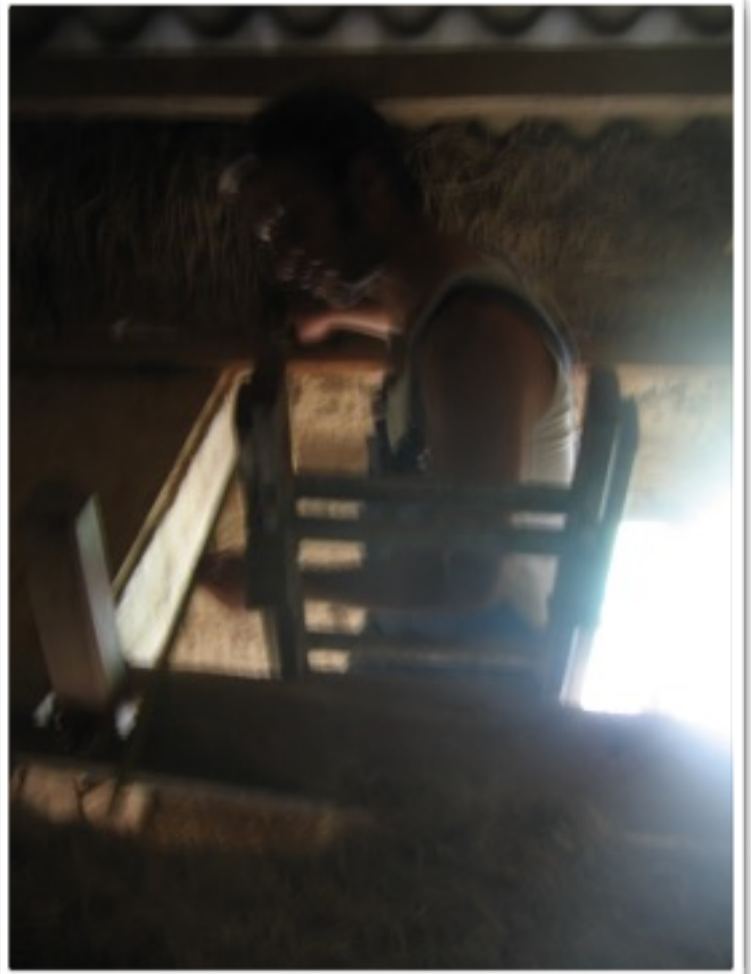


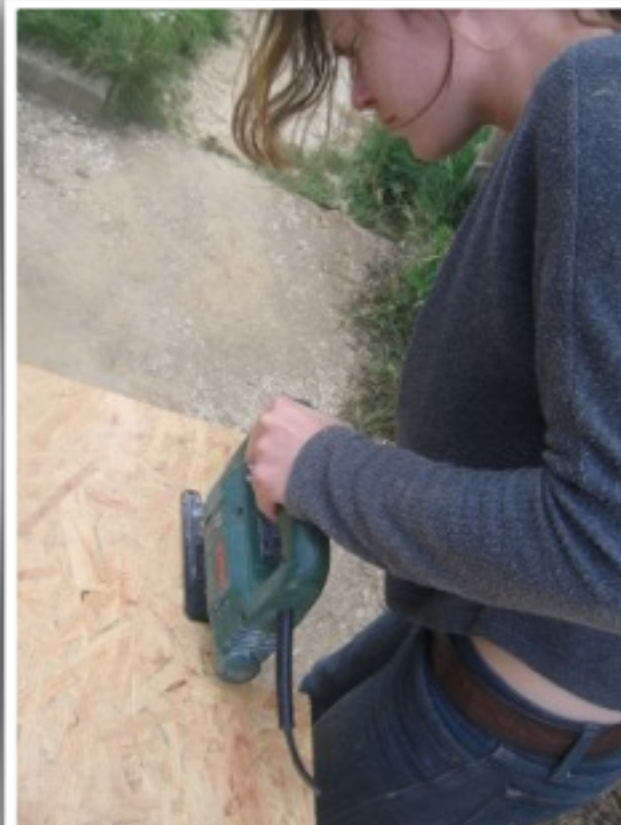


Our room. View from the bed looking at the door and window.



Gwenole on the ladder. In the attic of the soon-to-be bakery. We laid plywood across the rafters and insulated it with hay.









Bicycling to the dairy to get bottles of milk. Put them in my backpack for the return trip. Beautiful day.



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One day, we bicycled to town. After pedaling for miles through the countryside and wide open fields and farmland, we ascended a hill and were greeted by the village. It was comprised of quaint shops—a bakery, a grocery store, a tabac shop, and more.

In the center of town was a cathedral church.









Above: The main house. The door to the far right led to the guest room, where we stayed.

Below: The main house on the left. The soon-to-be bakery on the right.



## **Train and Hitchhiking to Picuaville, France**

Please see pages 175 - 183, for the train ride, then hitchhiking to Picuaville, France. Then, return here to continue the journey.

Thank you for understanding.

- Kris

## Picauville, France

A commune in Normandy in northwestern France.

**duration:** 33 days

**details:** WWOOFed at the Chateau L' Marie (a castle turned bed & breakfast). Stayed at a 2-story, 500-year old, 15-room manor house, 50 yards from the main chateau. 25 yards away was a building that housed self-catering apartments (longer stay housing) complete with full kitchens and washer/dryers. This was an amazing experience. We were even given keys to a Sirocco in the garage for runs to the village to buy food and necessary items, and given small stipends (money).

**etc:** In 2015, there were 3,334 residents.

**how we got the place:** [www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr)







The Chateau Isle Marie  
Picaudville, France  
We did some work here in exchange for free room and board at the nearby Manor House, a 15-room, 500-year old, two-story stone building, that we had all to ourselves. It was amazing. The work consisted of some weeding, some room cleaning, some table setting. Only a few hours a day.





Raegan weeding. This is one of my favorite pictures of her.







The doorway on the left side, in the left picture, leads to the kitchen. Inside, on the left, is a spiral staircase that leads to the 2nd floor bedroom that we had. The pictures above show the building, the Manor House, that we had to ourselves, for 33 days. Imagine the pictures being connected to get an idea of what the Manor House looks like. The window above the doorway leads to the 2nd floor bathroom adjacent to our bedroom.



Left: The round stone building is the dovecot. There was no roof on it and vines had grown up along it.





Inside the dovecot.



Raegan standing with Chateau Isle Marie in background.





Above: Front of Chateau.  
Below: Back of Chateau.









Toy cars in the attic of the Manor House.



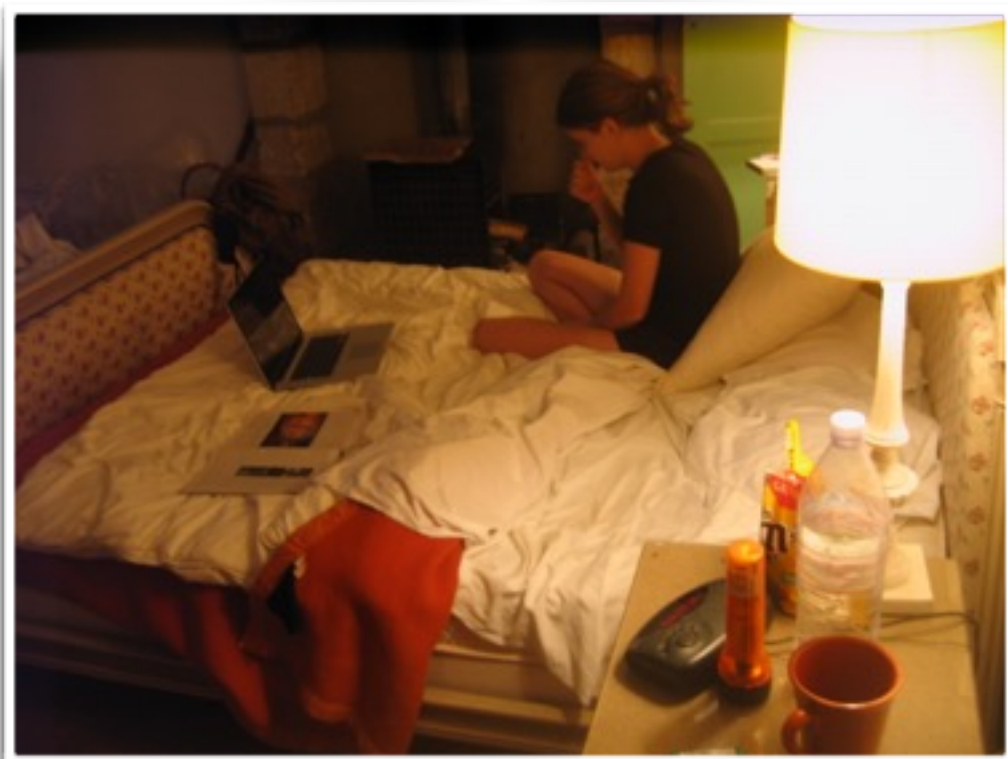




Above: Window from 2nd floor room to backyard.  
Below: Our room.









The manor house, a 500-year old, 15-room, stone building with walkable attic. The door on the far left leads to a first-floor kitchen. To the left of the kitchen is a spiral staircase that leads to the 2nd-floor bedroom. The window on the right side of the door to the kitchen, on the first floor, is the window for the alcove where Raegan and I sometimes ate lunch (seen in picture on the left). You can see the alcove in the picture below. The 2nd-floor window above the door to the kitchen opens to the bathroom.

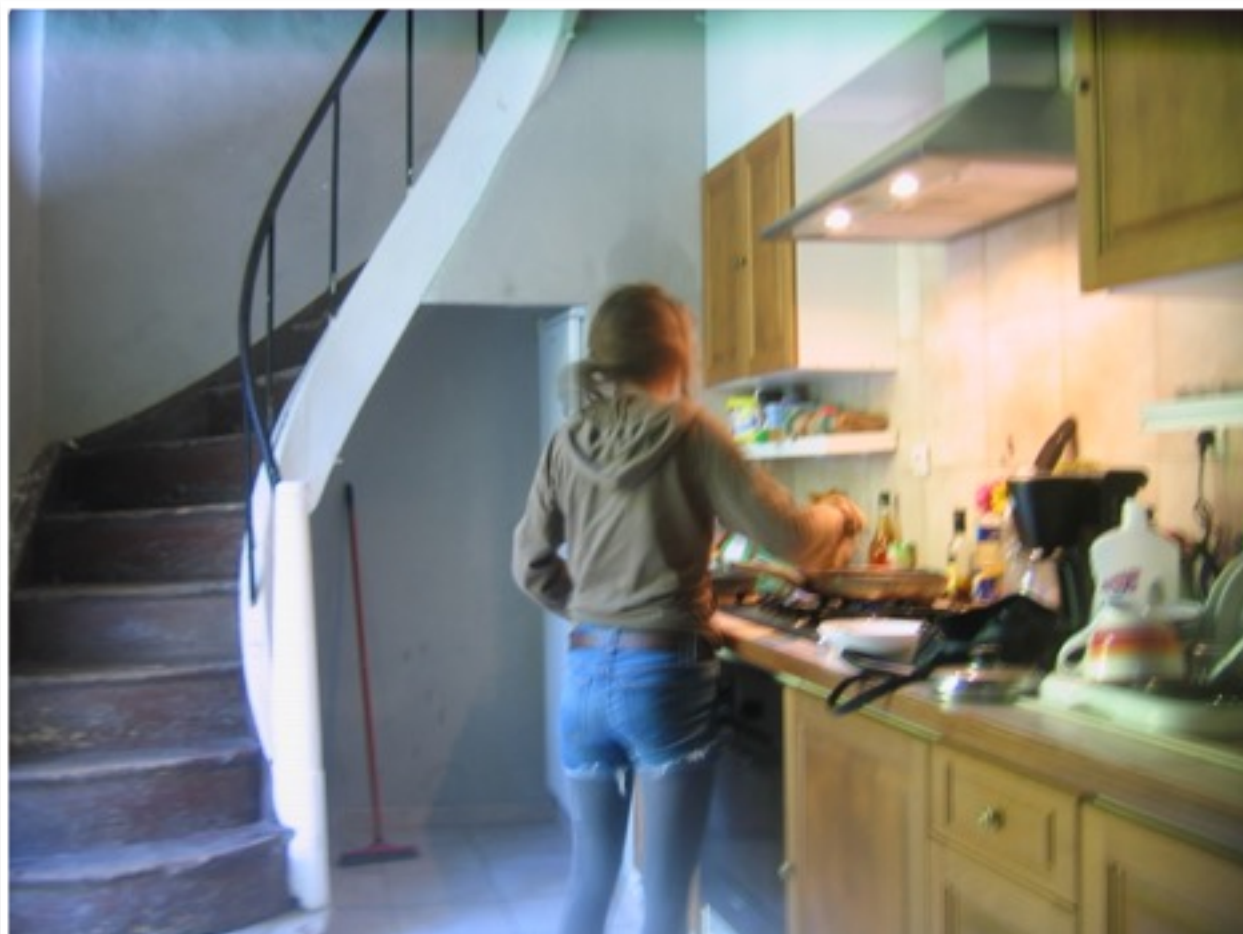




In the ground floor kitchen of the Chateau Isle Marie. Laptops open. This is where we spend a few hours a day helping out with the website and article research to promote the Chateau Isle Marie. Dorothea, the caretaker, was very kind to us, preparing delicious lunches and snacks.

















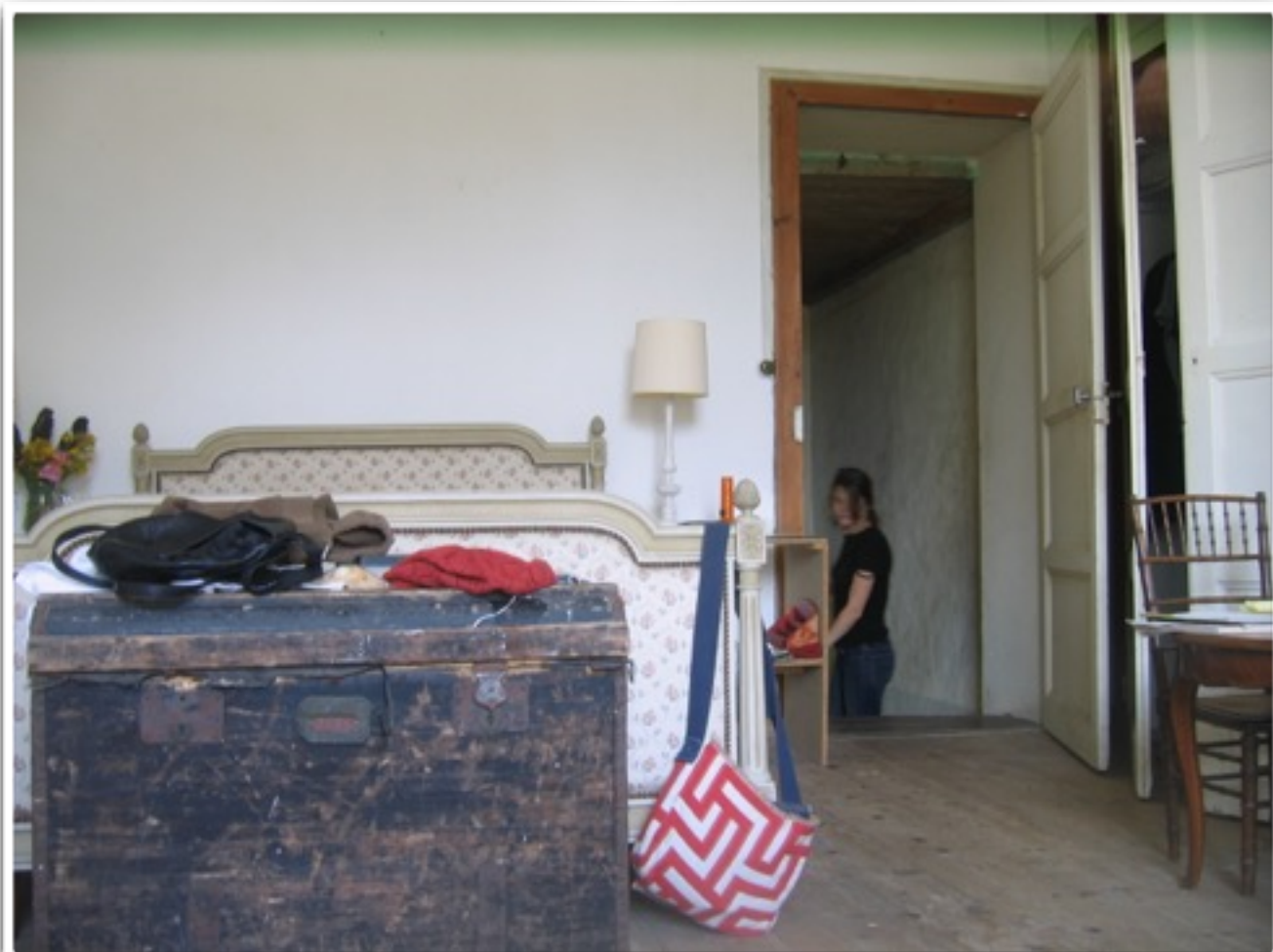
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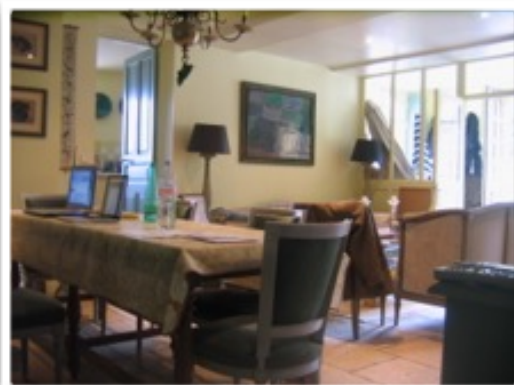












Laptops open on the table, ground floor level kitchen of the Chateau Isle Marie (left).

(Above) The Chateau Isle Marie (with entrance to ground floor level kitchen on far right side. (Below) The beautiful kitchen.

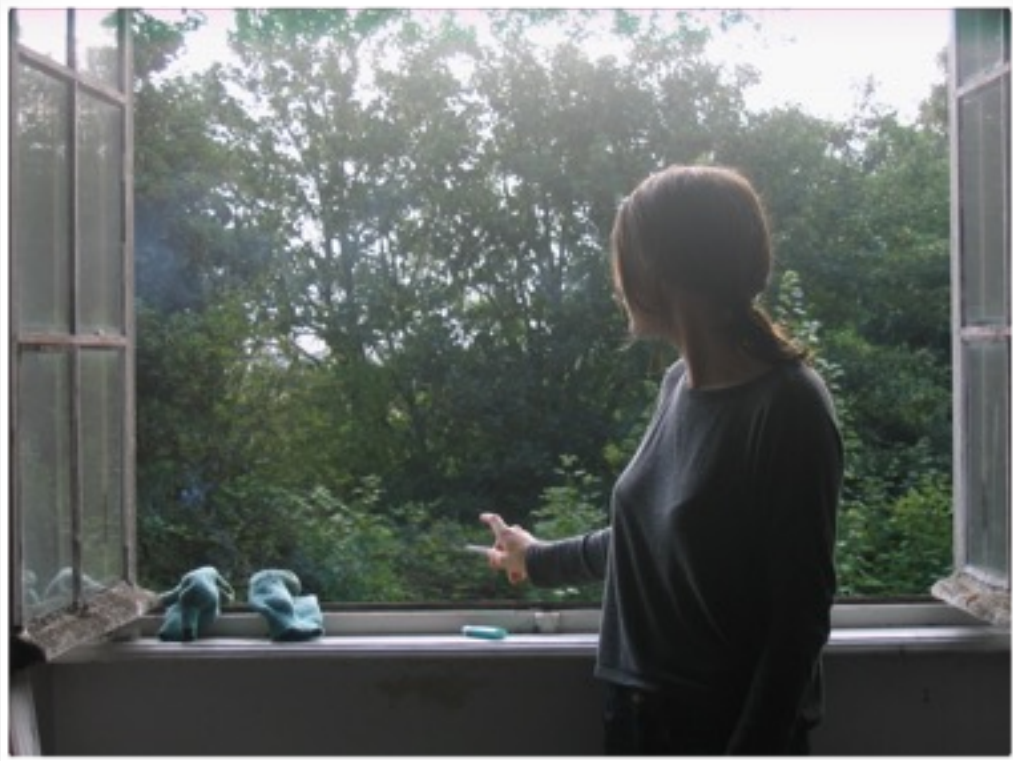




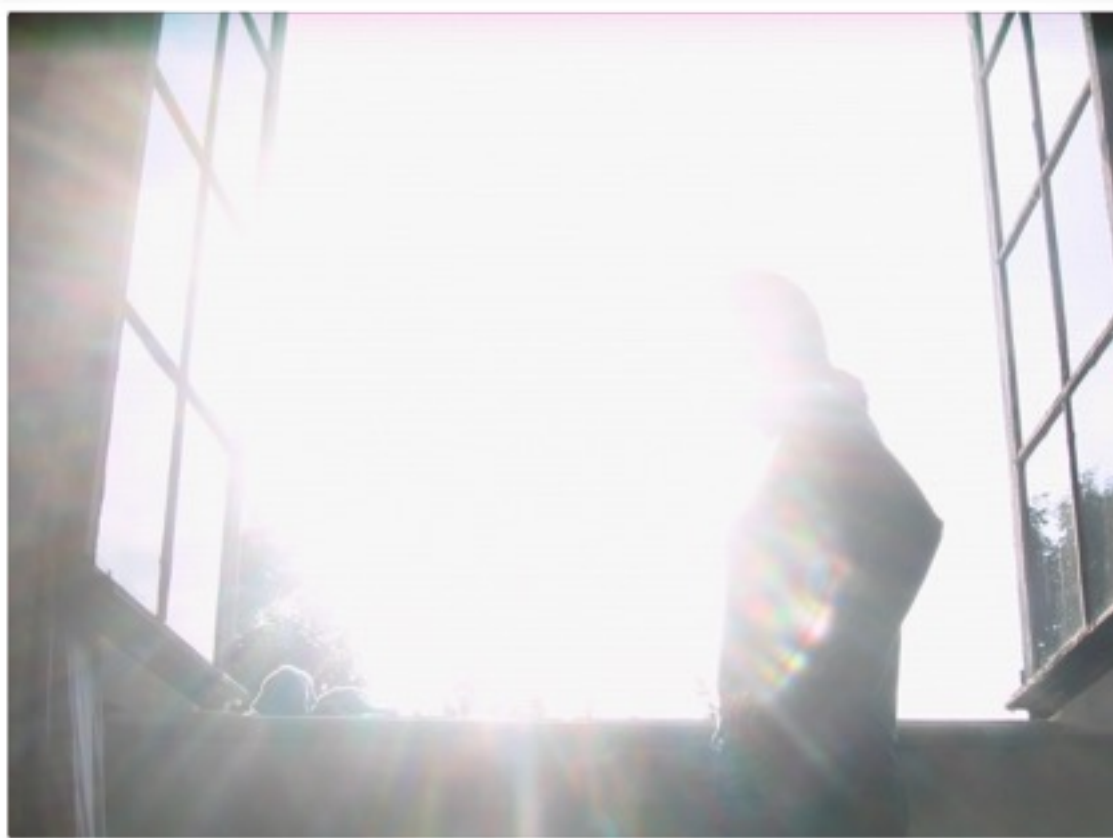
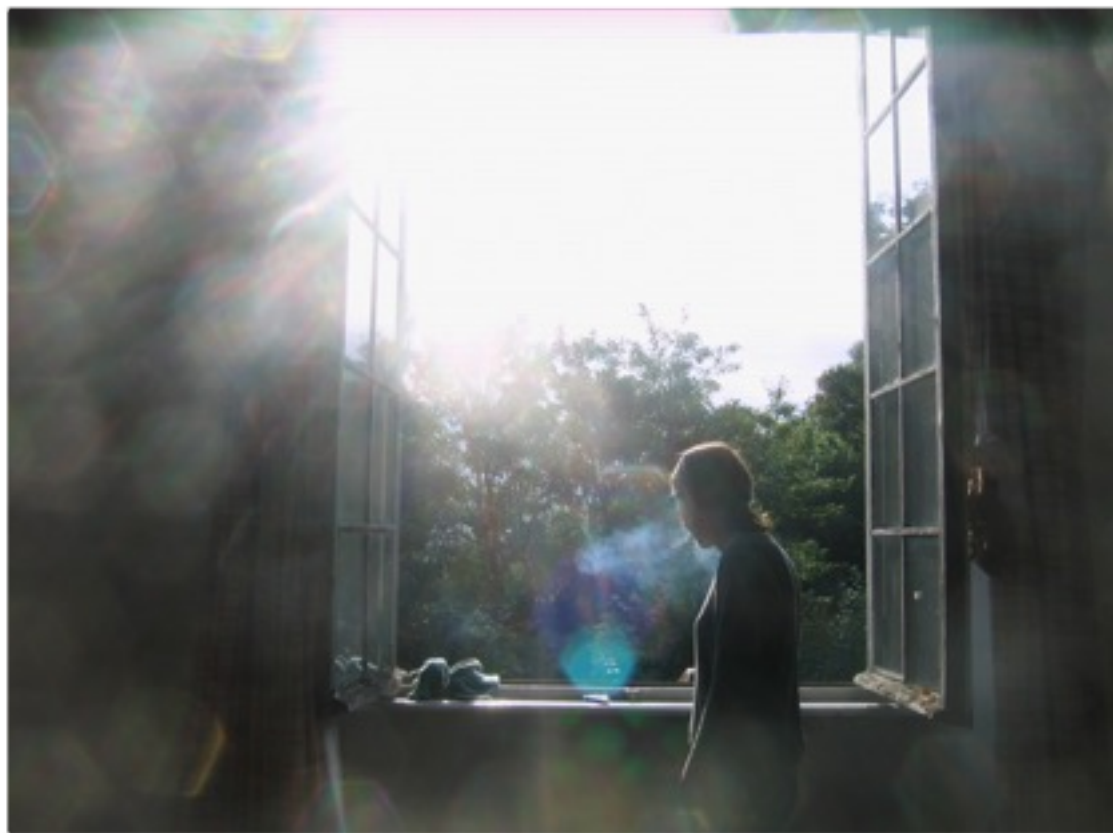


















Top, left: The manor house, a 500-year old, 15-room, stone building with walkable attic, where we had a room all to ourselves. At nights, bats would fly in and out of the attic. One night, a bat flew into our room. We woke up. I managed to throw a shirt over it and capture it. I put it on the window ledge and it sat there for a few seconds, then flew outside.

Top, right: The dovecot. Roofless. Covered in vines.

We stayed at this amazing place, the Chateau Isle Marie, for 33 days, then got a ride with Dorothea to the train and headed into Paris, France. Special thanks to Dorothea for her kindness and generosity.

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**Train to Paris**

**duration:** a few hours

**details:** Dorothea drove us to the train station. From there, we took the train into Paris.





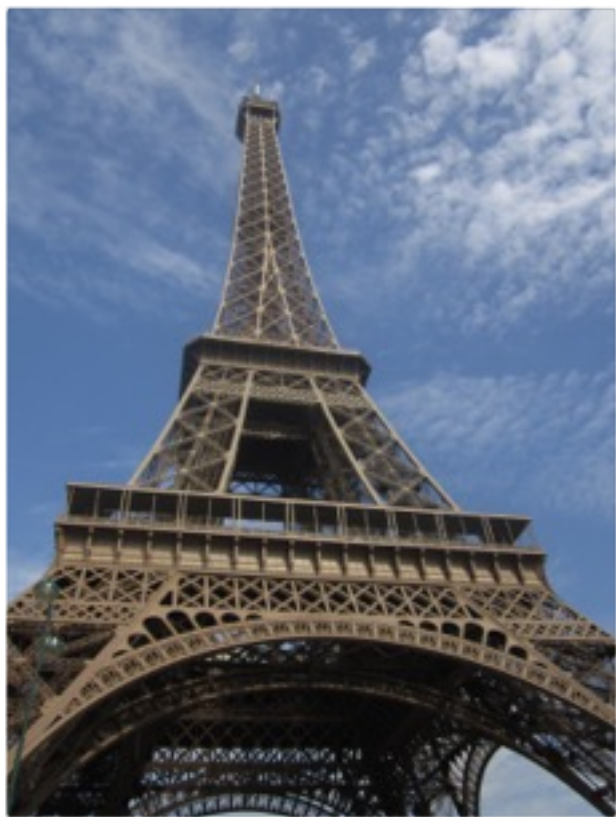


**Paris, France****duration:** 5 days**details:** Couchsurfed at Yseult's condominium, in the Bastille area of Paris. She was a friend of an acquaintance of Raegan's who allowed us to stay in her condo as she was visiting a friend in Switzerland. Her condo was on the 9th floor, with beautiful views of the city.**how we got the place:** [couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org)

Yseult, Raegan, me. At a restaurant in Paris, France.













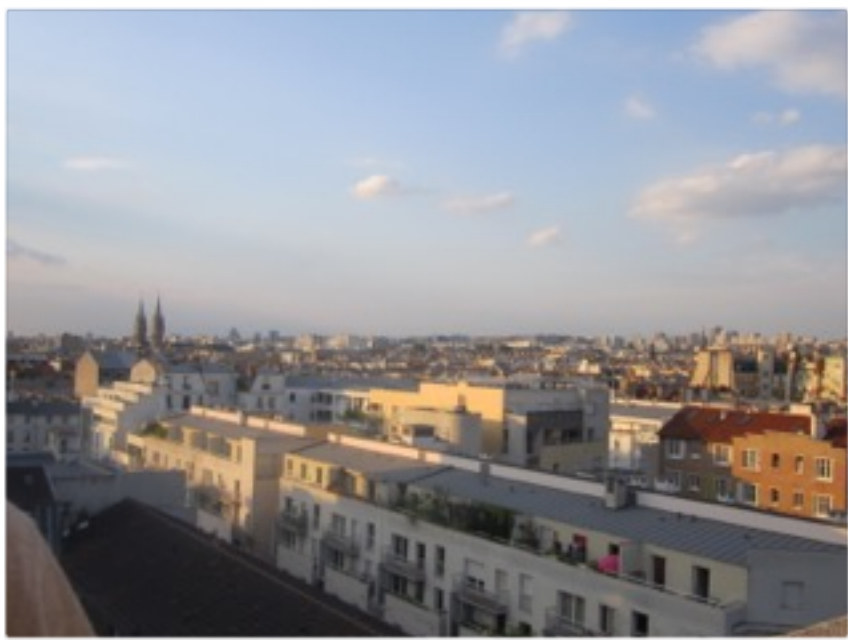




Sunset. Paris, France. Photo taken from the 9th floor condo balcony. Located in the Bastille area of Paris, France.













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## Hitchhiking toward Germany

We hitchhiked and got a few rides heading toward Germany.

**duration:** 1 day







Got a ride from a super cool couple who had just gotten off of work from Disneyland Paris. They took as far as they could go and then gave us two coupons worth eight euros each to purchase food. Nice couple.



**2nd ride:** Got a ride from a cool guy who took us far as he could.





**3rd ride:** Got a ride from friendly guy and his son. They stopped at a convenience store and bought us coffee and hot chocolate. They drove us as far as they could. Nice people.







Tired from hitchhiking, we decided to get a hostel, then take a train into Germany the next morning.

## Reims, France

A city in northeastern France's Grand Est region. It's the unofficial capital of the Champagne wine-growing region.

**duration:** 1 night

**details:** Stayed in a hostel overnight. We had tried hitchhiking for a few hours but did not get a ride.



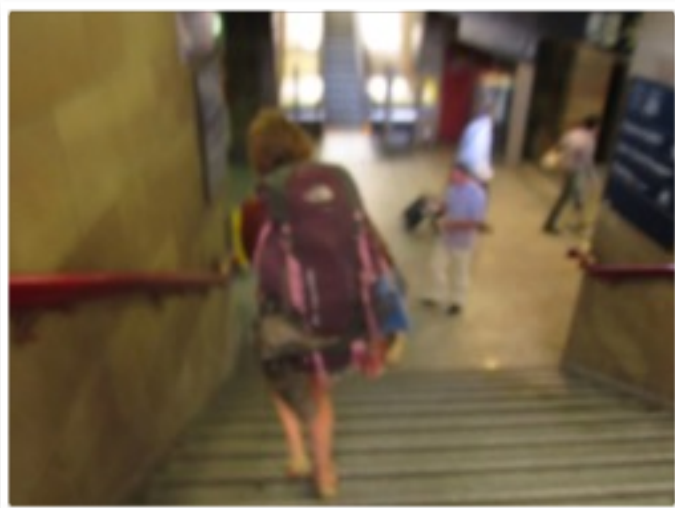
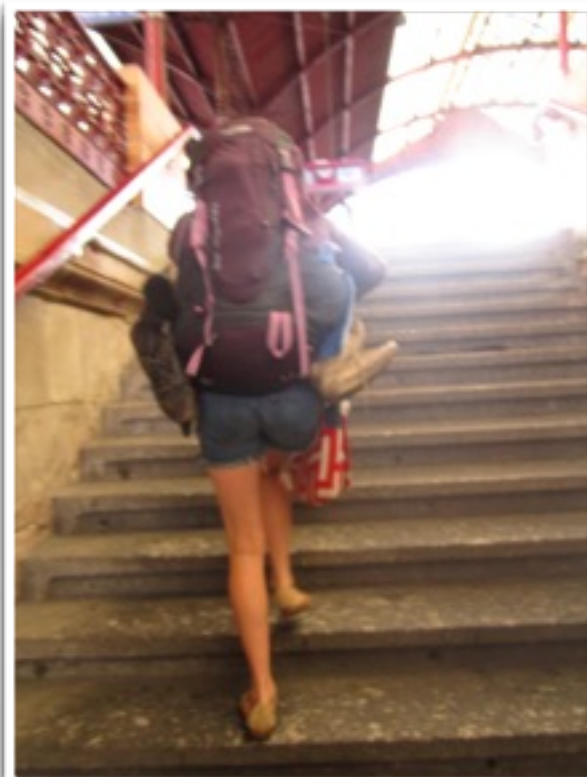


### Train into Germany

The next day, we took a train into Wiesbaden, Germany.

**details:** We took a train to Wiesbaden, Germany, and met my friend Ryan and stayed with him on the Army base where he was stationed.







**Wisebaden, Germany**

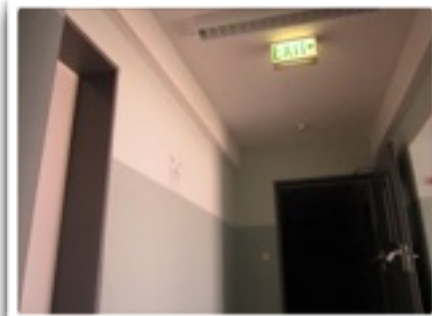
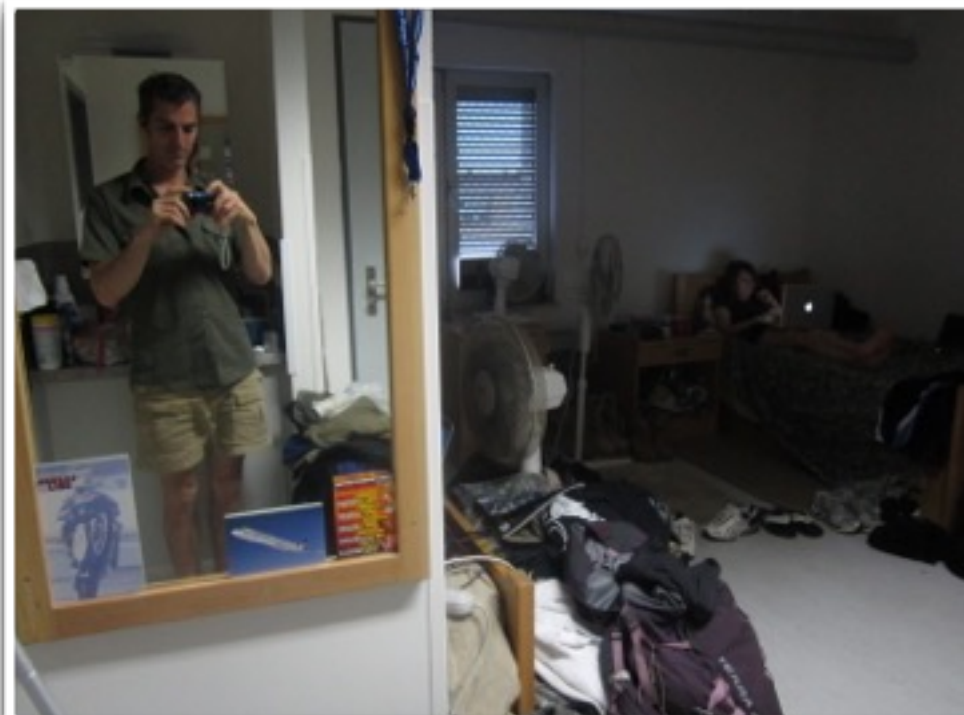
We stayed on the Army base in Wisebaden, Germany, with my friend Ryan who was stationed there.















Please skip to page 185 to continue the photo story in chronological order.

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**Train Ride and Hitchhiking (from page 115)**

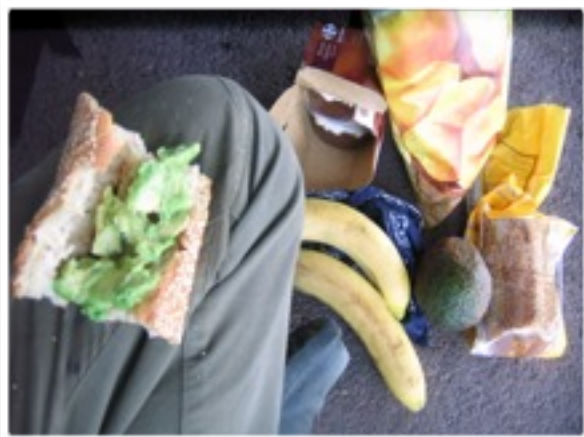
A train ride, then hitchhiking to Picuaville, France.

**duration:** all day

**details:** Took a train, then hitchhiked the rest of the way to Picuaville, France, to the Chateau Isle Marie.

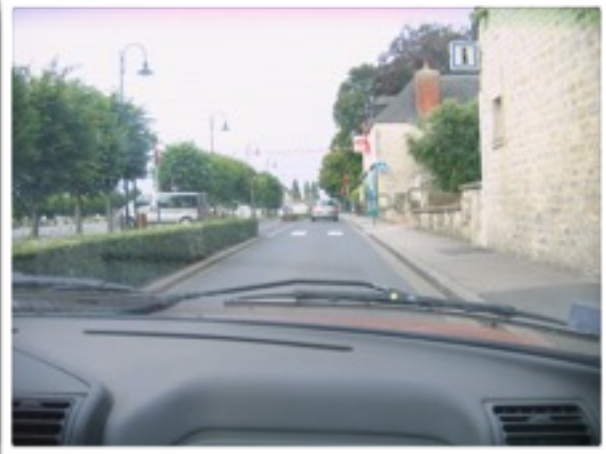
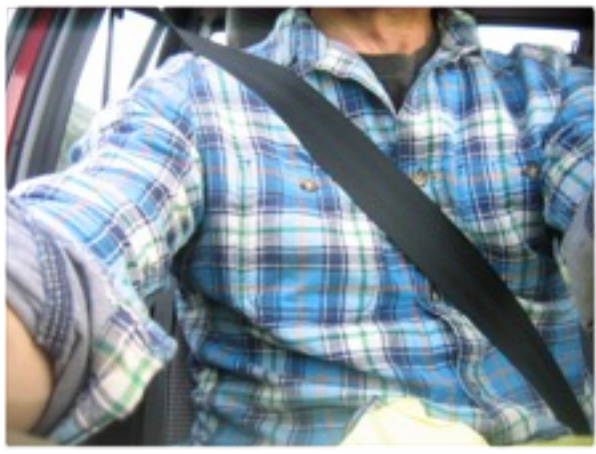












We get a ride from a gentleman who drives us to a church, parks, and points at the rooftop, where a parachute attached to a soldier dangles. Apparently, during World War II, American soldiers who were parachuting into France were getting caught on church steeples and rooftops, and this was set up to commemorate that bit of history. Interesting. After the church stop, the kind gentleman drove us directly to the Chateau Isle Marie. I was thanking him and saying "Chateau Isle Marie" and since it appears to be a small town, he knew the location.





The kind Frenchman who picked us up continues driving. The small town or village is behind us and we're driving through the countryside. To the left of us is a big patch of forest and halfway past it, he turns into a two lane dirt road. Now, we're under a canopy of trees, in his tiny car as it navigates the winding road, and, as we approach a clearing up ahead, this comes into view ...





We thank him and he drives away. We knock on the door. No one answers. I try the door. It opens. “Hello?” I ask, as I enter the castle. No one answers. We enter the Chateau Isle Marie and leave our backpacks, neatly in the corner, then proceed to explore the grounds. We walk down one trail that leads to an old stone church (below).



We continue to explore and see the Manor House, a two-story, 500-year old, stone building and the nearby dovecot, a round, stone building that used to house doves and carrier pigeons for transporting messages, whose bird droppings were used for fertilizer, and whose meat was used for food.



Above: The Manor House



## The dovecot



After exploring, we returned to the Chateau and sat outside on the front steps. Later, Dorothea, the caretaker arrived. We had arrived a day early. She was understanding, and set us up with a room on the 2nd-floor of the Manor House. We ended up staying here for 33 days and Dorothea wanted us to stay longer. I wanted to stay. Raegan wanted to leave. This place and the experience of living here was amazing. Below: Chateau Isle Marie



Please return to page 116 to continue the photo story in chronological order.

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## Train into Germany

We took a train into Berlin, Germany.

**details:** On the train ride, we met a nice punk couple who invited us to stay with them at their place in Berlin, Germany. They said their drummer was out of town and we could stay in his room. We politely accepted. They made delicious vegetarian chili and even took us to the store to get supplies. Later, they invited us to the park to hang out with their friends, then a local punk bar.



Ben and Janine, the nice couple who invited us to stay at their punk house in Berlin, Germany.









### **Berlin, Germany - the punk house**

We were in Berlin, Germany for a few weeks, staying at several different locations. Two of these locations were found via [couchsurfing.com](http://couchsurfing.com) and the first one happened when Ben, a complete stranger, overheard us talking and invited us to stay at his place, a punk house, in Berlin, Germany

**details:** On the train ride, we met a nice punk couple who invited us to stay with them at their place in Berlin, Germany. They said their drummer was out of town and we could stay in his room. We politely accepted. They made delicious vegetarian chili and even took us to the store to get supplies. Later, they invited us to the park to hang out with their friends, then a local punk bar.

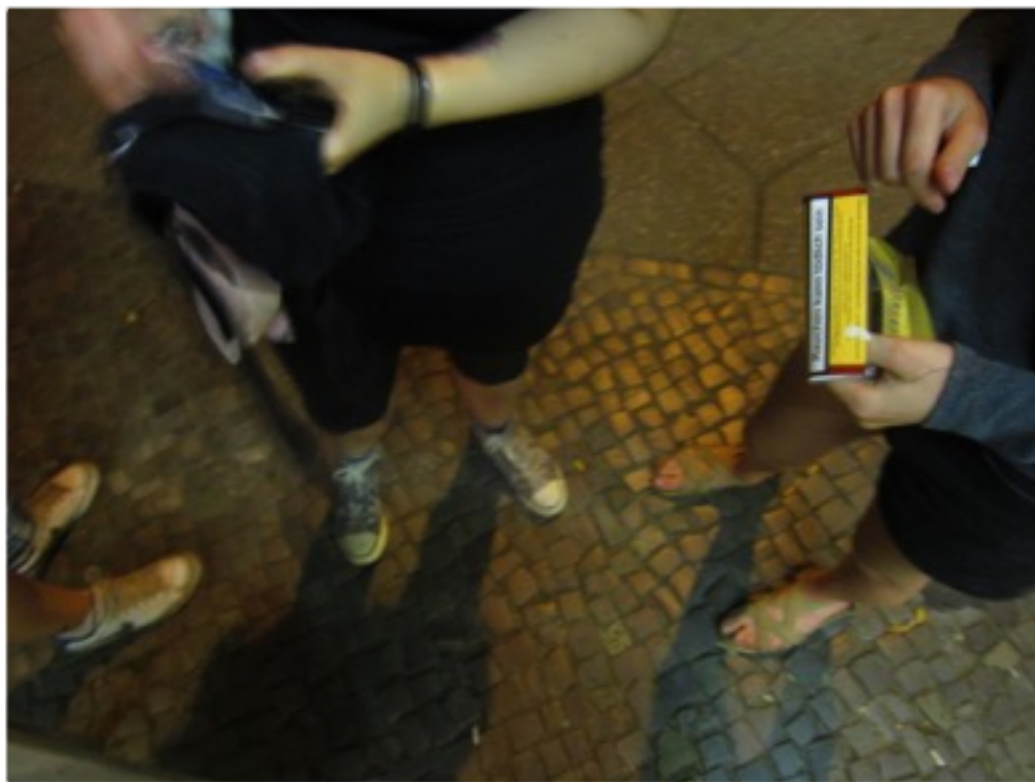


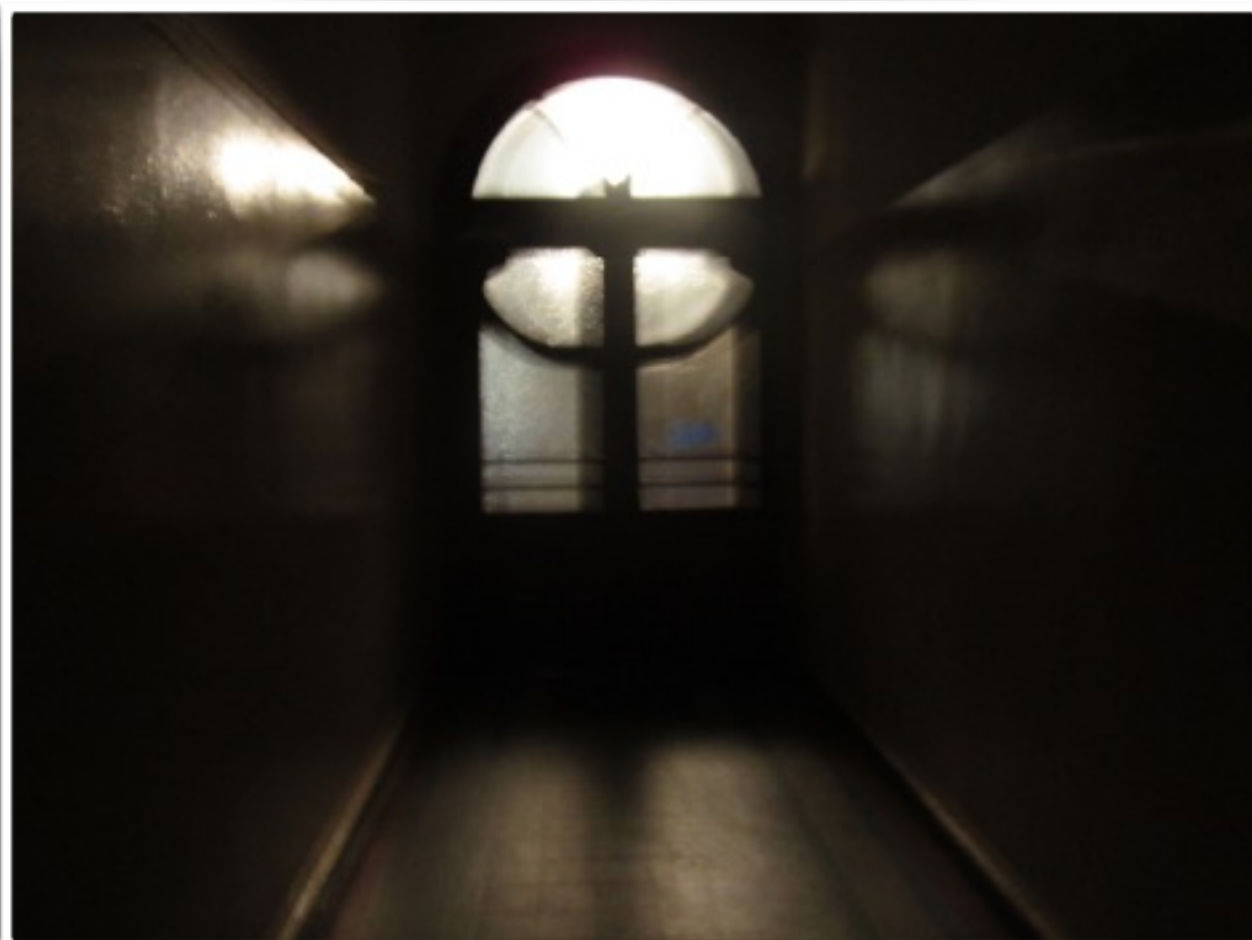




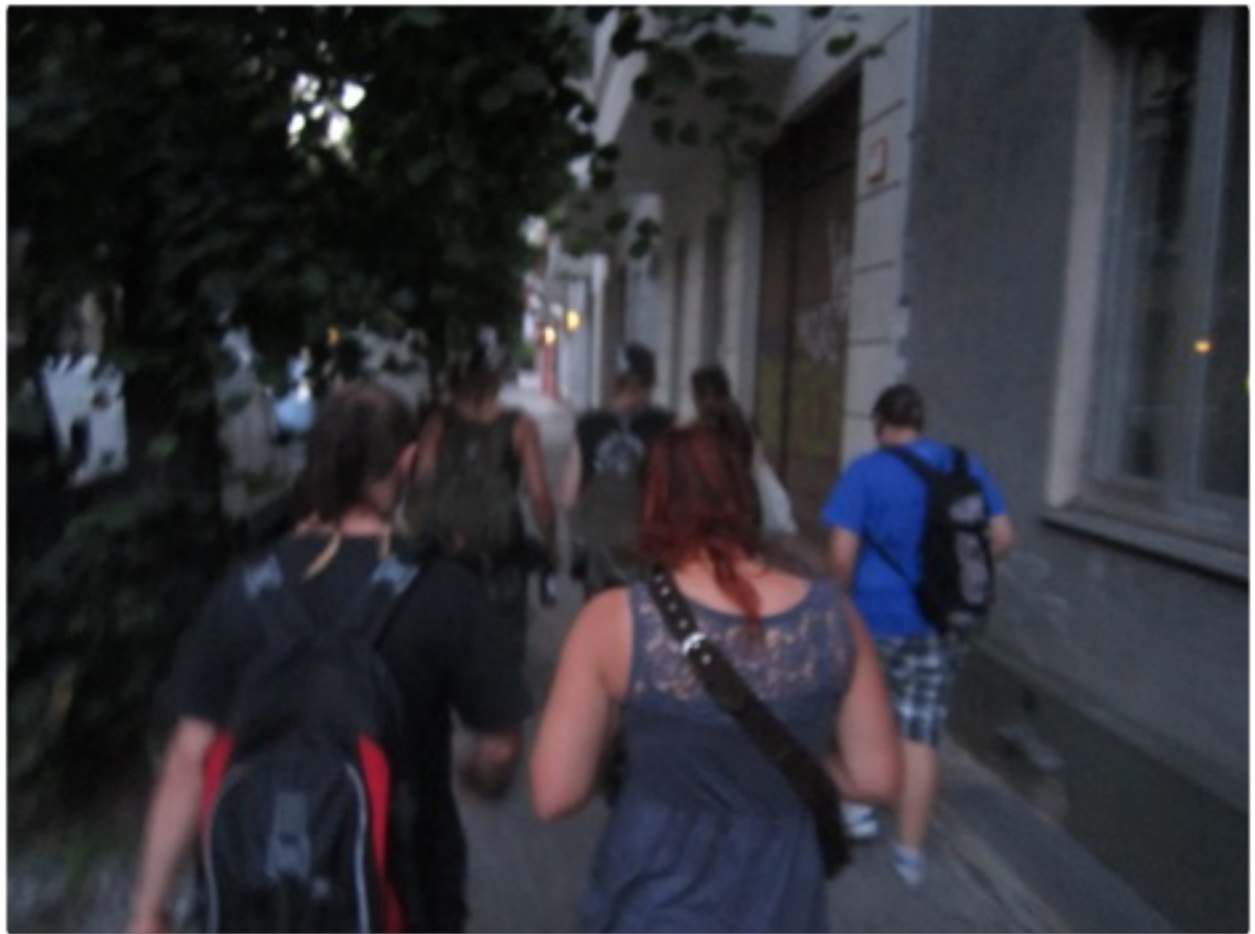


















## **Berlin, Germany - couchsurfing with Yashkin**

For our 2nd stay in Berlin, we couchsurfed at Yashkin's apartment. Super nice guy. He gave us a bicycle tour and even cooked us delicious breakfast with fresh salmon.

[couchsurfing.com](http://couchsurfing.com)





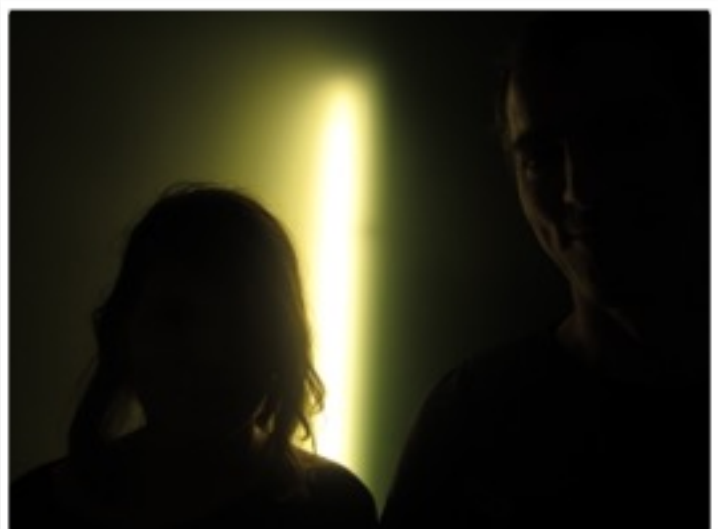
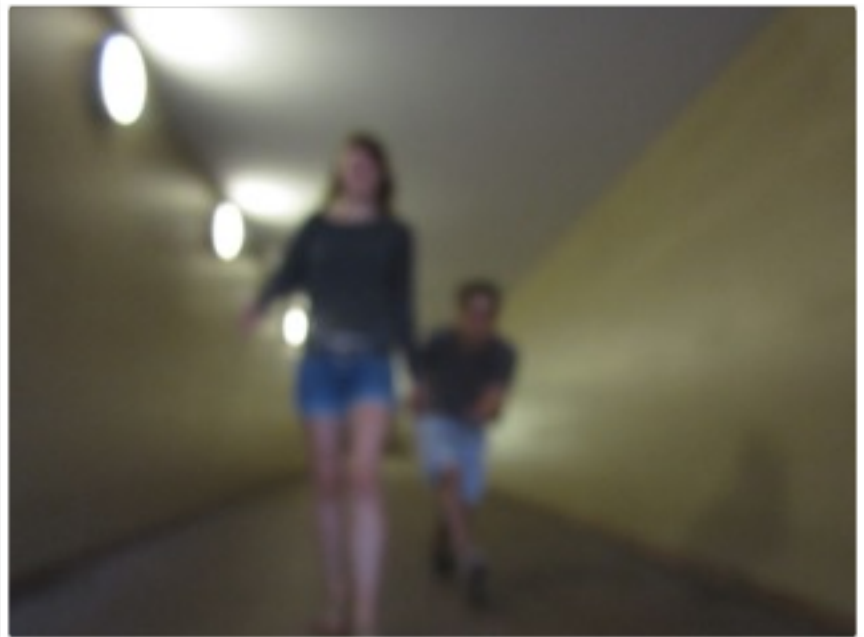
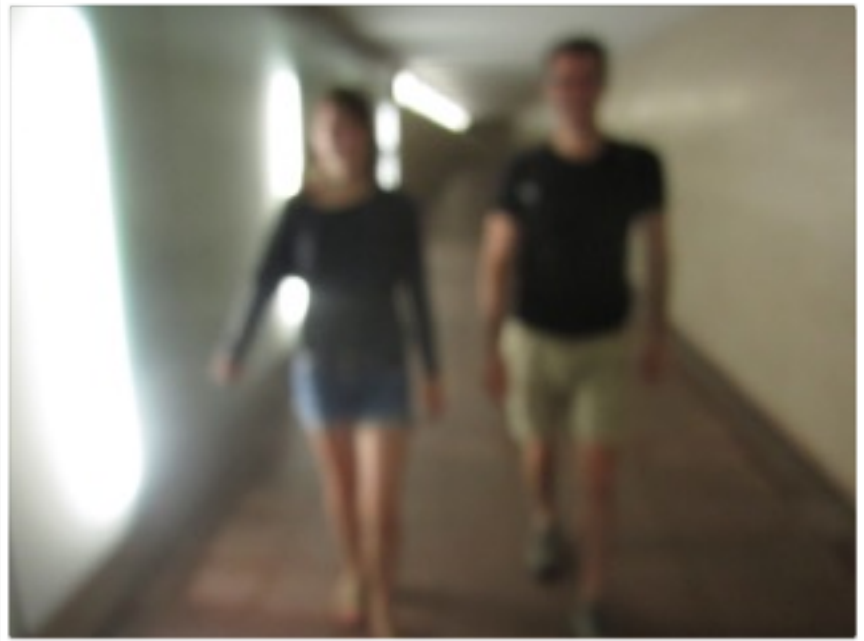
































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**Berlin, Germany - couchsurfing with Johnny**

Our third stay in Berlin, we couchsurfed with Johnny, a quiet couchsurfer who graciously allowed us to stay for a few days and nights, allowing us to sleep on his pullout couch in the living room. He had a projector and we watched a movie on the wall. He was a nice guy, quiet, and somewhat shy.

Looking out the window to the courtyard restaurant below.







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## Traben-Trarbach, Germany

WWOOFed with Juergin and his wife Ushti. They are both schoolteachers who also have a vineyard and gardens in their backyard. Juergin was part-owner of a vineyard on a steep hill, overlooking the Moselle River. Our WWOOF (WorldWide Organization Of Organic Farms) tasks included helping him weed the vineyard, some gardening, and retrieving stones from a river for the garden. Juergin prepared delicious meals using ingredients fresh from the garden, and even offered us homemade peach sangria and organic red wine from his vineyard. The town of Traben-Trarbach, Germany is beautiful, like something out of a fairy tale or classic Disney film.

**duration:** 1 week

**how we found it:** [www.woof.de](http://www.woof.de) [woof.de/en](http://woof.de/en)





































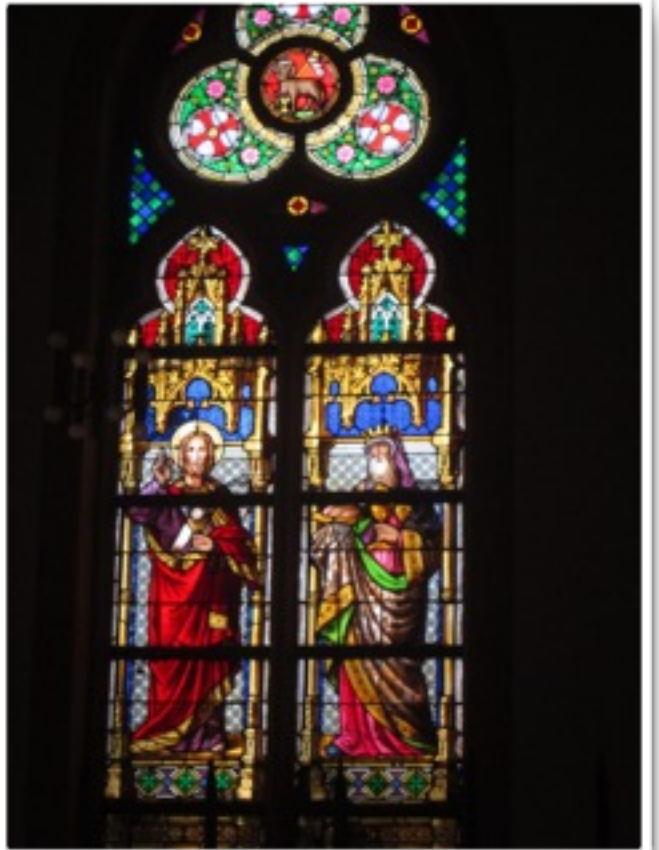














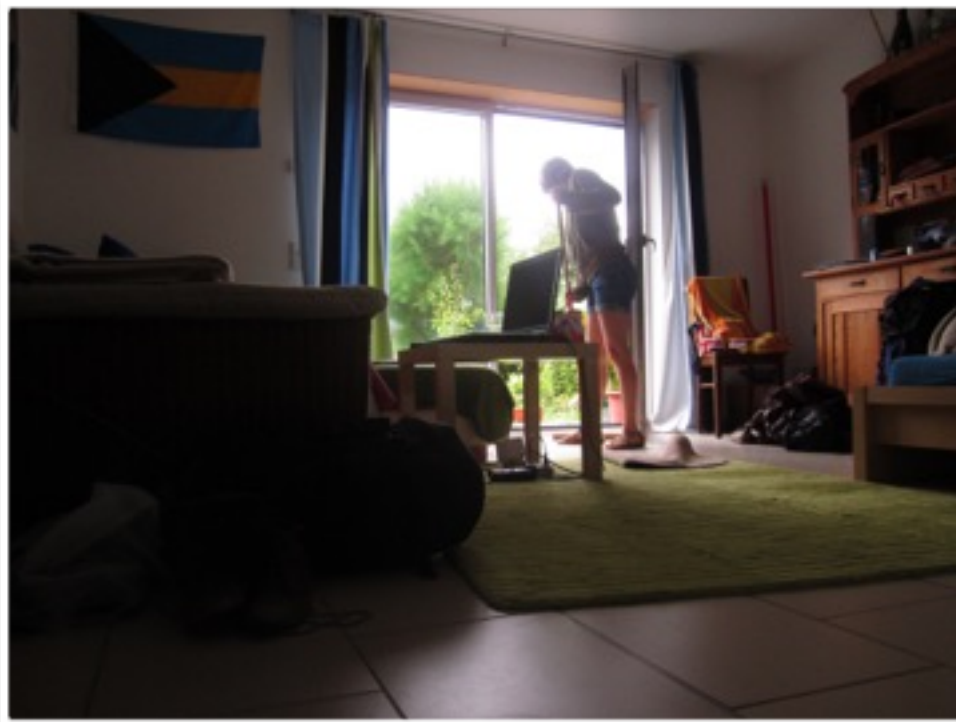




The house where we stayed. [www.woof.de](http://www.woof.de)







Our room.  
The sliding  
glass doors  
opened to a  
lovely  
backyard  
garden and  
beautiful  
views of the  
surrounding  
mountains.



The dining area, with beautiful views of the surrounding mountains.























































location: Sternhagen, Germany

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[HowToTravelEuropeCheap.com](http://HowToTravelEuropeCheap.com)





**Sternhagen, Germany**

WWOOFed at Julianne Daminger's place. She's a dairy farmer who also has a donkey, 2 llamas, horses, and cows. We helped her load hay, split wood, milk a cow, clean out a stable, gather apples and pears.

duration: 1 week

how we found the location: [www.woof.de](http://www.woof.de)





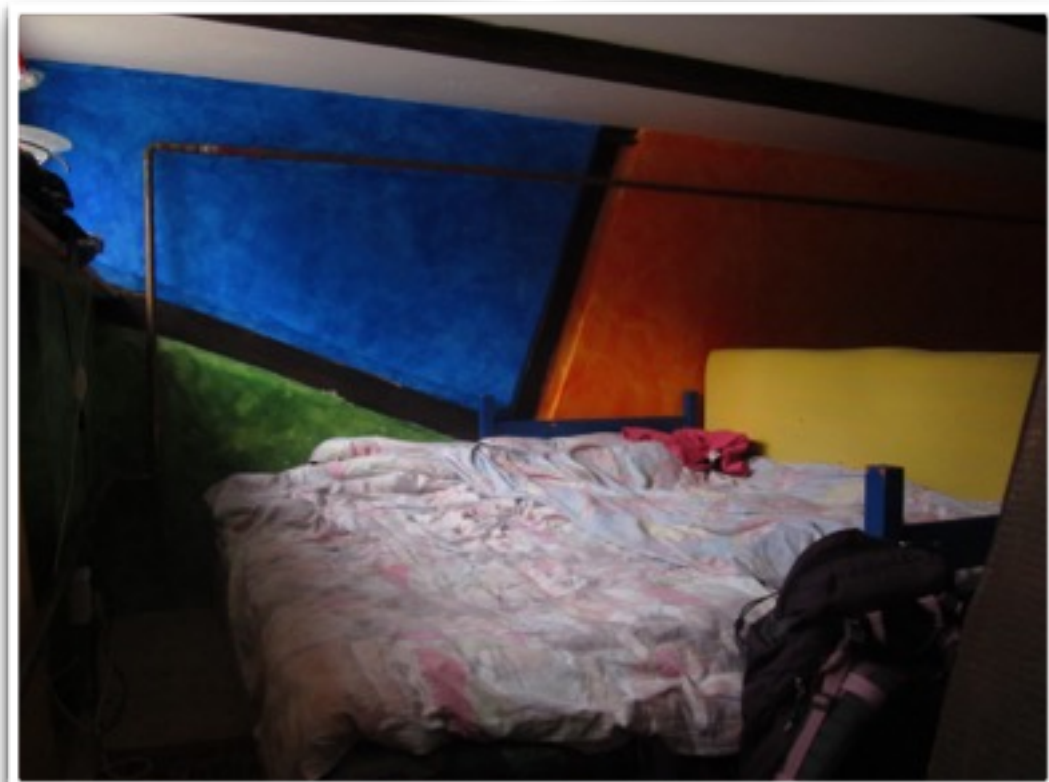








Our upstairs room





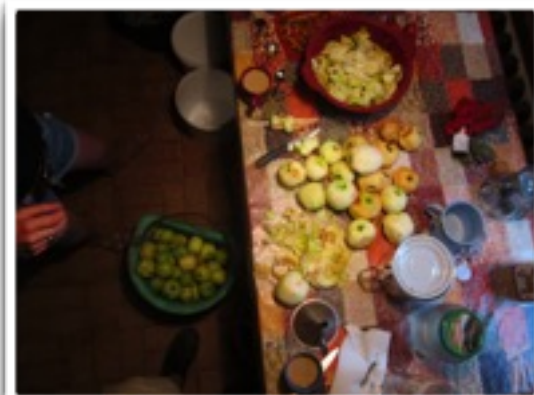










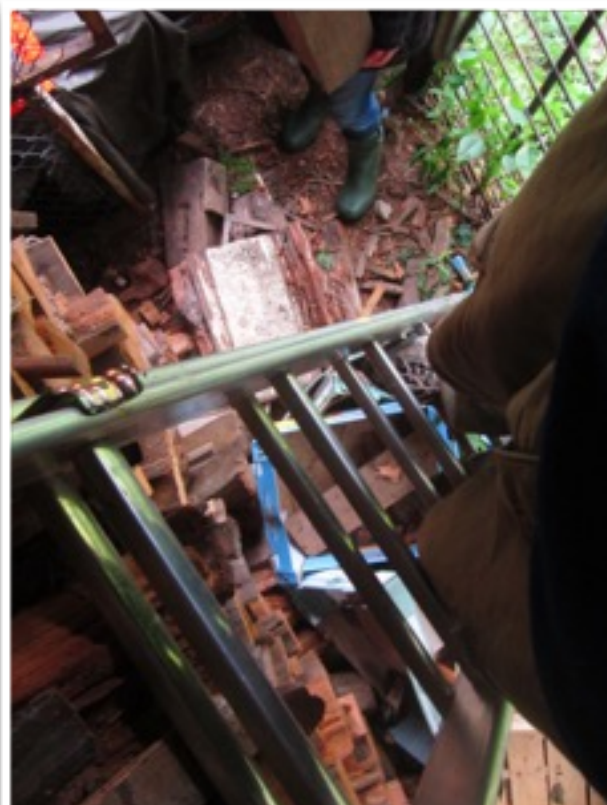




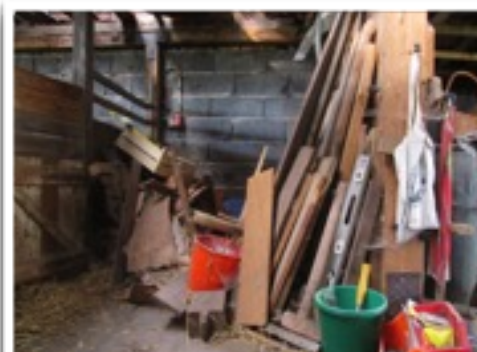
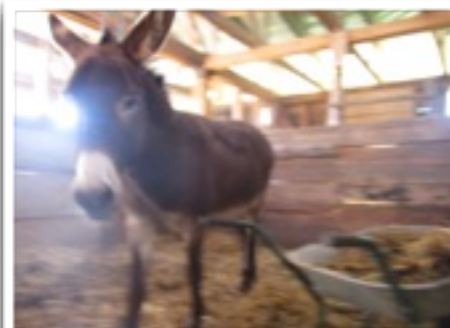


























Milking the cows





















One afternoon, we explored an old church and walked up what felt like 6 flights of stairs. In the attic, there was a bell, and this is the view of the town below.







## Train to Prenzlau, Germany

Saying goodbye to our WWOOF host Julianne at the train station.









## **Air Berlin Flight**

Hamburg, Germany to Miami, Florida

duration: 9 hours, 51 minutes

note: Excellent flight, smooth. Free meals and drinks, including delicious pasta, choice of white wine or red wine, juice, soda, water.











**Back in Florida**

We landed at the Miami airport and Raegan's parents picked us up and drove us to their condo.

**A few days later**

Driving into a storm













Travel Europe like we did, for  
\$5 dollars a day or less.

[TravelCheapBlueprint.com](http://TravelCheapBlueprint.com)

[HowtoTravelEuropeCheap.com](http://HowtoTravelEuropeCheap.com)

## **17 Things: Essential Gear for your Trip to Europe**

On our trip to Europe, my girlfriend and I brought Northface hiking backpacks, the kind that have shoulder straps, waist straps for the breast and chest area, and multiple, zippered pockets. Northface is one of the best name brands available for durable, high quality camping gear.

When you're planning your trip to Europe, it's paramount that you purchase high quality gear. Do not underestimate the importance of this. If you're used to buying cheap gear and clothes made from cheap material, it's time for you to change your mindset.

### **Europeans dress well**

Europeans tend to dress very well. For the most part, they wear clothes that are fitted, made of high quality material, and are name brand. Even when you see them in jeans in sneakers, the jeans and sneakers are new looking and clean.

When I was in Paris, France, it was easy to spot the American tourists as they were the ones who were usually fat, wearing oversized T-shirts, shorts that went down to their knees, and some with fanny packs.

The French and other Europeans, however, were the ones with form fitting clothes that looked high quality and comfortable. Also, they were well groomed.

On the subway ride into Paris, four guys sit across from me, wearing suits, black and white, with beautiful looking shoes. All of them were well groomed and handsome. Maybe they were business people, but the way they dressed really made them look handsome, classy, and serious in their profession.



## What to take on your trip: 17 recommended items

Here is a list of essential travel items, along with websites where you can buy them.

### 1. comfortable shoes

If you have a decent thrift store nearby, one that sells high quality shoes in new condition, go there and buy a pair. If not, find a shoe store nearby or go to Target or another outlet clothing store.

#### Get the shoes online:

[zappos.com](http://zappos.com) - excellent customer service, free shipping

[ebay.com](http://ebay.com) - find good, used shoes

[amazon.com](http://amazon.com) - free shipping with Amazon prime

[walmart.com](http://walmart.com) - cheap shoes, cheap quality

### 2 pairs of shoes - sneakers, loafers

When I traveled Europe, I brought 2 pairs of shoes ... New Balance sneakers, for working, and Rockport (leather uppers) for non-work activities like exploring, walking around, etc.

I like the support of dress shoes with arches. I like the Rockport loafers and Mephisto dress shoes. I usually wear these shoes without socks unless it's cold outside.

I discovered the Mephisto brand shoes at a nearby thrift store and, after trying them on, purchased them for around \$10 dollars. Later, when I searched on Ebay, I saw that they were selling, used, for \$60 to \$70 dollars. New, Mephisto shoes sell for \$400 to \$500 dollars. They are the most comfortable shoes I have ever worn.

If your feet hurt after walking around in sneakers or tennis shoes all day, I suggest you to try shoes with an arch and a leather

upper, shoes like Rockport, Mephisto, Doc Marten, or other high-quality name brands.

## **2. T-shirt (poly-cotton blend - H&M)**

When you're traveling, it's better to have one good T-shirt than 3 lousy T-shirts. By lousy, I mean cotton, those junky Fruit of the Loom cotton T-shirts that come in 3-packs or 6-packs. Do not bring those.

[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

[walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com)

Cotton t-shirts retain moisture, so if you sweat, the moisture sticks on the shirt. This causes problems if you wear layers, then sweat in the t-shirt and then keep the t-shirt on later that day and it gets colder. Why? Because the sweat will freeze on the shirt and this will cause you to be cold.

When traveling, bring clothes that are synthetic. I did, and I was glad I did. I went to H&M, in the Palm Beach Garden's Mall, and bought some T-shirts (gray, black, white) that were made of a blend of cotton, polyester and, I think, elastin. I wore them a lot in France and Germany, as they were comfortable and were not sweaty or itchy like the cheap cotton t-shirts that are 100% cotton.

## **3. good socks (micro wool, nylon, synthetic)**

Buy good socks. Buy micro wool or synthetic. Do not buy cotton, as they retain moisture and dampness. You can buy micro wool and synthetic socks at these websites. When you use these websites, I receive a commission on your purchase and you pay no additional fees. It's easier to buy online, as you're paying a reduced fee due to lower costs.



## **Find smart wool socks at ...**

[SierraTradingPost.com](http://SierraTradingPost.com)  
[amazon.com](http://amazon.com)  
[ebay.com](http://ebay.com)

### **4. 3 pairs of underwear**

Buy synthetic underwear, a combination blend of polyester, cotton, nylon, silk, elastin. Try it on at the store to make sure it is comfortable

### **5. toilet paper (smushed, in a bag)**

Buy one roll of toilet paper. Set it on a table. Squish it down so the tube inside is flat, and the toilet paper is like a speed bump shape. Then, slip the toilet paper into a bag. This is useful in case you cannot find a bathroom, or don't want to pay for a bathroom as some bathrooms in city areas have pay toilets. Find a quiet spot in the bushes somewhere and go to the bathroom.

### **6. laptop**

When you travel, bring a laptop. It's essential gear. You can use it for Skype, to make phone calls, for the internet, for e-mail, and for watching movies (<http://www.hulu.com>) and other sites, as well as keeping a journal, updating your blog or website, and uploading photos. I recommend you get MacBook Pro laptop. Even if you pay twice as much, the durability and reliability are worth the price.

### **7. european strip plug adapter**

A [six-outlet](#) European strip plug adapter valuable when traveling Europe, since the outlets are different. This will allow you to use your laptop, and recharge your digital camera battery. I ordered this from Amazon. You can, too, using the link below.

[amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

## **8. european outlet adapters**

Bring three single European-to-American outlet adapters. These are individual adapters that are useful if you do not need the 6 outlet adapter. Click the link below to one or two of these.

[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

## **9. warm jacket**

When I was in Europe, I brought a capilene jacket, that was left behind by my friend's roommate. It proved to be useful, as it was lightweight and warm. A warm jacket is essential, as it can get cold in Europe. Buy a lightweight jacket that has a synthetic shell and an inside lining made of fleece, down, or other warm material. Use the websites below to find one.

## **10. notebook/pens/sharpies**

Great for writing down activity plans, lists of things you need to do, phone numbers, websites, e-mails, bus schedules, train schedules, and even for playing games while on the train or bus.

Sharpie markers are useful for writing signs for hitchhiking or for being picked up at a bus station or train station by your Couchsurfing host or WWOOF host. For hitchhiking, write the destination with a smiley face. When you arrive at bus station or a train station and are waiting for your Couchsurfing host, you can write "Couchsurfing" or your names. If you're waiting for your WWOOF hosts, you can write "WWOOF" or your names. Either way, a sharpie marker comes in handy. For cardboard, you can find some in a dumpster or in a trash can somewhere.

Raegan and I played a game where she wrote out a bunch of interesting questions. I answered them. Then, she said it was my turn to write out questions, which I did, and she answered. We both learned a lot about each other that way.



### **11. musical instrument (optional)**

I brought a melodica. Because I was just learning the instrument, and it was loud, I did not play it that often. On the few occasions where I did play it, I would go to a quiet place, like the garage, in order to keep the noise levels down. A small musical instrument, like an harmonica, banjo, or melodica, is worth taking on your trip. Most of the places we stayed at the hosts played musical instruments, sang, and enjoyed hearing music. For fun, consider taking a small instrument like a melodica or harmonica.

### **12. money to convert to euros**

Bring 2 thousand dollars American money to convert to Euros. When I arrived in France, \$1,000 U.S. dollars converted to, about, 600 euros. Although this might seem disappointing, 600 euros has considerable purchasing power.

### **13. passport**

Bring your passport. Also, make a copy of your passport and put that in a bag, to keep it moisture free. Another idea is to scan a copy of your passport, birth certificate and driver's license and store that somewhere online, at one of those online storage sites that are free to use and that have private access. and to e-mail it to yourself as an image file, and to store it on your laptop computer, on the desktop, as a backup.

### **14. flash drive (USB drive)**

Bring a flash drive (USB drive) that has your personal information on it--a scanned copy of your passport, driver's license, and birth certificate.

[amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

### **15. taser, pepper spray, pocket knife**

I think it's a good idea to bring weapons, just in case you are attacked. Self-defense weapons worth owning, and worth traveling with, include a taser, pepper spray, knife. I suggest you get all three, as this will be handy in the rare instance that someone threatens you or you are in a situation where you are lost and feel threatened in any way.

<https://www.supremedefense.com>

<http://www.stun-gun.net>

<https://www.knivesdeal.com/knives-for-sale>

<https://www.asecurelife.com/self-defense-without-a-gun/>  
[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

[walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com)

### **16. flashlight or headlamp**

A flashlight and a headlamp are useful things to own, especially when traveling. For the flashlight, I would suggest something very small with LED light. For the headlamp, something high-quality with LED.

<https://tacticalgear.com/tactical-flashlights>

<https://www.cabelas.com/category/Tactical-Lights-Accessories/105589080.uts>

[outdoorgearlab.com](https://www.outdoorgearlab.com)

[walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com)

[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

When we stayed in Europe had a bathroom that was down the hall. When I needed to use the bathroom at night, I would simply



grab the flashlight, put my hand over the lens to diffuse the light, so as not to wake up anyone else, then gently walk to the bathroom.

A headlamp is actually more useful because you can put it on your head, and have your hands free to do whatever it is you need to do, like feel for furniture as you're walking to the bathroom, working late, riding a bicycle late at night or other low light situations. My girlfriend brought a headlamp, which was very useful, as you could just turn it on and put it on your head, or hold it in your hand, then use it to find the bathroom.

At one of the places we stayed, there was an outhouse with a compost toilet. And it got cold, too. Without the flashlight, we would have been bumping into the wheelbarrow or the their kid's tricycle. Bring a flashlight. Bring a headlamp.

## **17. hiking backpack**

For our trip, each of us had NorthFace hiking backpacks. Reliable. Sturdy. Useful since it carried our gear and kept our hands free. Find a good backpack at these websites:

[ebay.com](http://ebay.com) - new backpacks at wholesale prices, high-quality used backpacks

[SierraTradingPost.com](http://SierraTradingPost.com) - high-quality gear

[amazon.com](http://amazon.com) - read the reviews, get free shipping with Amazon prime, customer-friendly return policy

[OutdoorGearLab.com](http://OutdoorGearLab.com) - indepth reviews of outdoor gear, links and price list to where you can buy them

## **Travel Anywhere for \$5 dollars a day**

Anyone, including you, can travel Europe or even the U.S.A for \$5 a day or less.

How?

By using WWOOF and CouchSurfing.

### **WWOOF**

WorldWide Opportunities On Organic Farms  
[www.woof.net](http://www.woof.net)

### **CouchSurfing**

Homestay and Social Networking Service - Stay with Locals and Meet Travelers - Share Authentic Travel Experiences  
[couchsurfing.com](http://couchsurfing.com)

+++++

WWOOF - the main website - organic farms worldwide  
[www.woof.net](http://www.woof.net)

WWOOF USA - organic farms across the USA  
[www.woofusa.org](http://www.woofusa.org)

WWOOF France  
[www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr)

WWOOF Germany  
[www.woof.de/en](http://www.woof.de/en)

WWOOF Deutschland  
[www.woof.de/de](http://www.woof.de/de)



## **Traveling to France and Germany: Notes from my Journal**

While traveling to Europe, and visiting France and Germany, I kept a journal to document my experiences. Here, you read portions of the journal and look at some of the photographs that Raegan and I took during our trip.

### **Why I wanted out of the U.S.**

According to my friend Terry, a therapist, there are two reasons why people do things. A negative push and a positive pull. The negative push is what you want to move away from, and the positive pull is what you want to move towards. The combination of both of these--a negative push and a positive pull--becomes, almost, an unstoppable force.

### **Negative push to leave America**

I was back in West Palm Beach, Florida, and wanted to leave the United States of America for a few reasons. To begin with, I believe that 9-11 was an inside job, that Dick Cheney and others, especially those involved with Policy for New American Century (PNAC) engineered 9-11 in order to start a war with Iraq and Afghanistan, so they could set up military bases in the middle east.

Also, I believe that America has blood on its hands for other reasons. Read "Confessions of an Economic Hitman" by John Perkins. In any case, I was embarrassed of living in America and participating in the merry-go-round of consumerism that's built on the backs of factory workers in China. This was my negative push to leave the U.S. I wanted out.

## **Positive pull to visit Europe**

For years, I had read stories about people living overseas. They write about the freedom they feel, the kindness of the people, the higher quality of life that they experience even on a limited budget. I wanted to see if it was true, to see if Europe was a place where I could be inspired, where I would feel free, where I would meet people friendlier than those I had met in America.

My intention was to stay overseas, get a job, learn another language, and, in general, live below the radar. I had done this successfully here for years, why not overseas.

## **The original plan to move to Mexico**

Originally, I planned to move to Oaxaca, Mexico, and rent a cheap room and live. Looking on Craig's List, I found rooms, that included kitchenettes and bathrooms, for as little as \$250 a month, and this included electricity. Oaxaca is a small town in the hills, one of the safest areas to live in Mexico. My friends, Drake and Megan, a married couple, are missionaries in Oaxaca. So, I figured I would know them, meet the locals, and continue to work online, stay inside a lot, and have my income go further than it does in the U.S.

One night at my friend Terry's apartment, Michelle, someone who I had met about a year earlier, arrived. She mentioned that she and her husband and 4 children were planning to take a one way cruise to France. I mentioned that I was going to go to Mexico, but that Europe sounded more appealing. She invited me to come along.

My plan was to go with friends, a married couple, Michelle and Adam, and act as a babysitter for their kids, in exchange for food



and sleeping on the floor of their hotel rooms. Adam works online, so he was planning to work while traveling.

About a month before the trip, I meet Raegan, this cute, smart girl. We start dating. I invite her to come to Europe with me. Thankfully, her parents let her go. For both of us, this was our first time in Europe.

### **Taking a ship to Brest, France**

A few weeks later, we were on a ship, a Royal Caribbean Cruise Ship, on a 10-day journey to Brest, France. The ship was a 12-day cruise to Harwich, England, but our destination was Brest, since the family was departing there and since that would be a better departure point for traveling across Europe.

### **Before leaving, Raegan and I planned our trip by joining these sites:**

WOOF  
[www.woof.org](http://www.woof.org)

WOOF France  
[www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr)

WWOOF Germany  
[www.woof.de](http://www.woof.de)

Couchsurfing  
[couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org)

WWOOF's main website is [www.woof.org](http://www.woof.org). Basically, it's a website wherein organic farmers solicit for visitors to help them with their farms, for 4 - 6 hours a day, 5 or 6 days a week, in exchange for

room (a place to sleep) and board (food, 3 meals a day, and snacks, too).

Couchsurfing - [couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org) - a website that allows people to post ads, offering their couches, and extra beds to be used by travelers. What do they get out of it? They get to meet people from all over the world, and to show them around.

Also, before leaving, we planned what we would bring.

### **Taking a cruise ship to Brest, France**

Taking a one way cruise ship from America to France, for 2 people, is inexpensive. Our cost was about \$1,200, and this is for 2 people, a 12-day cruise, in an interior stateroom with 2 beds (that you can slide together), and all the food you can eat, and drinks, too (excluding alcohol).

The ship provided live entertainment, educational programs, had a movie theatre, a theatre for live performances, dancing lessons, 2 swimming pools, a rock climbing wall, a mini golf course, basketball courts, a casino, ping pong tables, pool tables, a buffet, other restaurants, a workout room, and more. It was a great deal.

### **Brest, France**

We spent 5 days at Ludmilla's apartment that she shares with her brother in Brest, France. We e-mailed her at [couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org). She responded. At that site, Raegan and I posted pictures of ourselves and mentioned that we were traveling in Europe and looking for places to stay. We also said that we both enjoyed photography, writing for blogs, cooking, gardening.

Ludmilla, a 19-year old university student, was a wonderful host. She also has a nice singing voice, plays guitar, and takes



pictures. Almost every day, she would invite us to take a walk to a park. One day, she took us to cliffs overlooking an inlet. It was really beautiful.

The first day we were there, Ludmilla invited us to have lunch, with her friends, at an Indian restaurant. The food was good and her friends were really nice.

Usually, Ludmilla would take us on walking tours of parks. One day, she took us on a walk to Plouziana, a park near the sea shore, where Raegan and I took photos. While there, I felt as if I was on a free walking tour. It was interesting, fun, and healthy.

### **Meeting Ludmilla's friends**

One evening, she introduced us to friends who lived in a community house which they shared. They were an interesting, eclectic bunch, including Yurri, a young physician from Brazil, Cani, a Japanese girl who married a Frenchman, Emilie, a former Boston resident who now teaches English, and a few others. They invited us to stay for dinner and Emile cooked a delicious meal.

### **Surfing in France**

The next day, they invited Raegan and I to go to the beach to go surfing. Reagan declined, since she was not feeling well. Ludmilla and I went, though, and it was fun. On the way there, they stopped at a grocery store, purchased knives, bread, soft cheese, sausage, two bottles of wine, cantaloupe. At the first beach, which had very small waves, we sat on rocks and ate the food. After eating, they drove to another beach where there were waves and surfers.

## Beaches in France

The great thing about the beaches in France (we were in Northwest France) was this that there were no condos blocking the views of the beach, and the parking was free. You just drove through a small beautiful village near the beach, then through narrow roads until you reached a hill, then parked. Everyone we talked to was really nice and friendly. No parking fees or meters. No cops. No lifeguard. Just a beautiful beach and cool people. Awesome.

## Plouziana, France

One day, Ludmilla took Raegan and I on a walking tour of Plouziana, France, which has cliffs overlooking the inlet.

## Travel Europe

If you go to Europe, plan your travels with [couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org). The hosts, at least most of the ones that we encountered, were friendly, kind, considerate, and generous.

The other site to look at is [wwooof.org](http://wwooof.org). This is the American WWOOF site, from which you can find WWOOF sites in other countries like France - [wwooof.fr](http://wwooof.fr) and Germany - [wwooof.de](http://wwooof.de).

At Ludmilla's, I left behind a rolling suitcase (suitcase with wheels), clothes, and an iMac G5 (Apple) computer. Ludmilla agreed to sell the computer and send me the money. The reason I left that stuff behind was to lighten my load. I took it with me as my intention was to stay in Europe. Carrying that additional weight around, though, proved to be cumbersome. I already had a hiking



backpack, smaller backpack, and a sleeping bag to carry, so I left the rolling suitcase and the iMac G5 computer with Ludmilla.

## **Preparing to leave Brest, France**

On Thursday night, Raegan and I discussed with Ludmilla how we could get to Oceanapolis, a seaquarium theme park, in order to meet Yannik Frezel, who agreed to meet us there and take us to his farm. Yannik was the person who we were going to do some work for, in exchange for room and board. He lives in Loqueffret, France, and we arranged to stay with him via [www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr)

This is the exciting thing. We're in a different country, where we don't know the language, and we're planning to meet someone who we don't know. To me, that's exciting. What will he look like, act like? What will his farm be like? Will the accommodations be comfortable? What will we be fed while we're there? Because everything is so new at this point, I have nothing to draw any conclusions from, which makes this kind of travel so interesting and refreshing.

The next morning, Ludmilla walks Raegan and I to the bus, talks with the bus driver, then tells us, in English, that he will let us know what stop to get off at. We thank her. The bus pulls out, and we're off to our next adventure.

A half hour later, the bus is near Oceanapolis, so we pull the cord indicating we need to get off. We exit, then walk toward the ocean theme park. It's hot. We're walking on the grass, heavy gear on, anxious to find shade.

## **Waiting for Yannick**

It's a big parking lot so we sit down in the middle of it, near the entrance, waiting for Yannick to arrive. We wait for an hour. It's hot, and I'm wondering what he'll look like, what he'll be like, what kind of car he's going to drive.

Eventually, I approach someone at the ticket desk and ask to use a phone. Just as I am asking, Raegan yells "He's here" and I turn, then walk back toward her, seeing her load the gear into the hatchback of a small car.

## **Driving to Loqueffret, France**

Before he arrived, we were wondering what he would look like, what kind of car he would drive. I was expecting someone tanned, with a salt-and-pepper colored beard, driving a wreck-of-a-car, something rusted, that you might expect a farmer to drive.

This guy was quite different. He was tall, slim, with thick glasses. He looked more like a college professor or science teacher. His fiancée was friendly and quiet.

He helps us load our gear, then introduces us to Marie, his fiancée, and his children, Natan, who is two years old, and his youngest child, whose name I forgot.

On the way there, Yannik tells us that this is his first time hosting WWOOFers (Willing Workers On Organic Farms). He says that he has WWOOFed before, in New Zealand and in Australia, and he knows how it's like to WWOOF, so he'll treat us well.

He takes us to Ikea. Him and his wife browse the store while Raegan and I follow along. Then, he goes upstairs and we get food at the cafeteria. He pays for it.

For lunch, I select a multigrain crepe and french fries with a beverage and Raegan got a small vegetarian sandwich and something else with coffee. The food is delicious.

On the way to his house, he stops at the town center, dominated by a big, old Catholic church, a 500 year old edifice that seems to watch over the entire village. We thank him, and get out of the car to take pictures.

Then, he drives to his house which sits on the main road through Loqueffret, a tiny town with narrow, hilly streets, 2-3 story stone houses, and rolling pasture land, meadows, and forests.

Arriving at Yannick Frezel's house. His front door is on right. Raegans, in front, smiles, while Marie, his fiancée, adjusts her purse. Loqueffret, France.

Once we arrive at his house, Yannick leads us upstairs to our room. Cool. It's an attic room with windows out to the roof that allow in nice natural lighting. It's spacious, too.

### **The first day at Yannick's**

Raegan goes grocery shopping with Marie, while I ride the tractor with Yannik. He shows me the gears and lets me drive it for a while, as we mow a small patch of pasture.

### **The cattle farm**

Yannik runs a 200 acre cattle farm. It is divided into a lot of smaller patches. Some are many acres, others are only an acre or smaller. He raises cows for butchering. He's in the 2-year process of converting his farm to organic. Along with selling the beef from farming, he also earns money from the parks and



recreation department for keeping up his property, which borders their property.

The daily work tasks consisted of mending fence, by putting up new fencing, removing old fencing, weed wacking (using a weed wacker with an engine that gets strapped on like a backpack), and helping Yannick to herd cows.

### **Working on the farm**

For the first few days, he showed us what to do. Then, he would tell us what to do, and leave us to do it while he did something else. We were usually working for 6 hours a day, 5 days a week. Sometimes, Raegan and I would work together, pulling up pigtales (fence posts) and wiring. At other times, we would work on our own. Around noon, Yannick would pick us up for lunch, then drive us back to his house for a delicious meal prepared by Marie, his fiancée.

The day would usually start around 8am or 8:30am with breakfast, then a short break, after which Yannick would drive his jeep a few miles away to the barn, where he had his tractor and surrounding pastures. Around 1pm, Yannick would collect us in his Jeep for lunch, which would last 2 hours (1 hour for eating, 1 hour for a nap or to relax). Then, it was off to work again until evening, when we would return, get cleaned up, then be called for dinner, usually around 8pm.

At dinner, there was usually wine or Ricard, an alcoholic drink that tastes like black licorice, that requires the addition of water as it is strong. After dinner, even after lunch sometimes, we would be served dessert. Since Marie was a culinary school graduate, from the world famous Cordon Bleu in Paris, France, specializing in

pastries and desserts, the food, especially the desserts, were delicious.

On the second day at Yannick's farm, he drove us in his Jeep to the farm, and told us to roam the grounds, that he had an errand to do. Raegan and I get out, walk around the pasture, and play with his dog, an excitable border collie, a cattle herding dog he'd gotten from a local farmer. The dog has one brown eye and one aqua blue eye and, when nearing a group of cows, will crouch, and slow his gait to a deliberate stealth approach.

While Yannick is gone, Raegan and I walk the 1-2 acre patch of land, avoiding the flattened piles of cow excrement. We visit the trailer on the other side, which contains 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, living room, kitchen. I turn on the water but none comes out. We stroll the nearby garden with its lettuce, radishes, carrots, then walk to the other side of the pasture, ducking beneath the electric wire and crossing the meadow until we reach the forest, where the land slopes to a swampy area at the bottom. After about 90 minutes, Yannik returns. We get in the Jeep. He drives us home.

## **Delicious food**

We go to our upstairs room and get on the internet, our laptops open, until we're called for lunch, sauteed tuna with marinara sauce and onions over farafel pasta and a loaf of baguette with a brick of farm fresh butter.

The dessert was soft cheese, which tastes like yogurt but 1000 times better since it contains the butterfat of the milk, with fresh pureed strawberries on top. It was served in a little glass jar that

looked like a jam jar. The meal was phenomenal. Marie is a good cook.

One day on the farm, we got to herd cows, which was a really neat experience. Yannick led us up the side of a hill, which had high grass with uneven terrain. He got in one place and instructed Raegan to stand about 20 yards away from him, and instructed me to stand 20 yards on the opposite side of him.

We held sticks in each hand. The sticks were thick branches. He said that holding the branches out makes it seem that we're wider than we are, to the cows. He said that yelling while holding the branches out, or even arms out, will steer the cows in the direction you want them to go.

### **Herding cows in France**

I'm standing there, holding out the sticks, looking at Raegan, the cows, Yannick, and thinking: This is awesome. I'm in France, in Loqueffret, France, standing on the side of a hill, herding cows. It was windy and slightly cold. Still, it was awesome, especially when the cows started running and we're chasing after them, falling into the uneven terrain that goes up and down 6 to 12 inches with every step you take. Chasing cows, in France = exhilarating.

On weekends, we wouldn't have to work, unless an unforeseen circumstance came up, like cows escaping the pasture. So, on Saturdays and Sundays, if Yannick and Marie were not showing us another village, we would walk around Loqueffret, France, to explore and take pictures.



## **Leaving Loqueffret, France**

After spending two weeks in Loqueffret, France, helping Yannick with winding up old fencing, putting up new fencing, removing the insulators from old fencing, weed-whacking, cow herding, and even more domestic duties like baby sitting, it was time to leave.

## Yvignac-La-Tour, France

**description:** Stay with family at their house. Sleep in attic room.  
length of stay: 5 days

**job duties:** weeding, making mud, plastering walls, playing with the children

Our next destination was Yvignac-La-Tour, France. There, we were scheduled to stay with WWOOF hosts Aman and Natalie, and their two children He was a comdienne (actor) and she was a schoolteacher. We had arranged this at [www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr)

### Sunday late night

Raegan and I stayed with Aman and Natalie, a friendly and quiet couple, and their two children, Lucie and Anon, in their three-story (two stories + attic room) house on a few acres on the outskirts of town, for a week.

Aman and Natalie's house. Raegan and I stayed in the loft bedroom, the third floor attic, with the windows facing the roof of the second floor porch. Svignac-La-Tour, France.

### Daily work

The work consisted of weeding, making mud, and transferring mud up a ladder to a second floor porch. Since Natalie works as a teacher, Aman was home most of the time, directing the work, which was minimal, consisting of a few hours a day. The food was delicious and organic, store bought or garden fresh.

Although there was work to do, Aman let us join him in the work, choose a task of our own, or do whatever we wanted. One of Aman's common expressions was, "Do as you wish."

Aman and Natalie and their family are part of transition, a lifestyle movement that started in England that promotes moving away from oil reliance and more toward self-sustainable practices.

My experience with this movement, since Gwenole, our last WWOOF host, was a transition follower as well, was interesting and funny. As transition does not promote oil reliance, lots of the tools were simple wooden sticks and, although they served their purpose, it might have been more practical at time to use an actual store bought tool for weeding or digging out vegetables. Raegan and I laughed about this. Nonetheless, it was an interesting experience.

### **Journal excerpt**

Waiting to meet Aman (Yvignac-La-Tour, France)

We're sitting on the steps of the old stone church, gray skies overhead setting the perfect canopy for the postcard scene. France, with it's beautiful little towns scattered about the rolling meadows, along with it's crumbling buildings whose history speaks in whispers, unveils a texture of possibilities.

A red, two door hatchback slows to a stop in front of us. A petite young man exits the driver's side. He's wearing black--T-shirt, loose pants, shoes--and his hair is standing up like a q-tip top, a black fluff reaching for the sky. He walks up to us, smiling, his hand extended. His name is Aman.

Aman, who I'm guessing to be in his 30's, is our WWOOF host. He's an actor. He helps us load the gear into his compact vehicle. We climb inside, and enjoy the raw beauty of it all--getting into the car of, mostly, a complete stranger, but someone who has been hosting WWOOF'ers for some 2 years, the ride along the winding streets between meadows and pastures, and the curious



excitement of not knowing exactly what this house will look like, what the sleeping accommodations will be like, what the food will be like, what our WWOOF hosts will be expecting from us.

I was a little concerned because we were about a half hour from Mont-Bon,

France, a small village peppered with old stone buildings and the old stone church at the town center, common to villages here in France, and, now, were far into the countryside and I thought, "What if it's just a boring house and not much to do?"

From reading their ad post on [www.woof.fr](http://www.woof.fr) I knew it was a married couple with their 2 young children, that he was a comedian (French for actor) and she was a teacher, that they had a hectare of land and mentioned "no farming or building, just hanging out with our kids, playing music, enjoying the garden, taking walks, visiting the sea only 1/2 hour away or doing nothing at all".

I feel my suspicions are confirmed concerning the boredom aspect when he turns the car into a driveway of an old two-story house and parks the car. From the outside, it's a 2-story house with an overgrown yard, rabbits in pens, a goat, curiously staring at us, munching grass, its whiskers dangling from its chin.

Once he took us inside though, my concerns evaporated among the eclectic furnishings and cavelike features of the abode. Outdoor holiday lights hung from the ceiling, their wires strewn from one side to another. Within the walls were molded shelves, dug in, for books and other items. The entire place was a mishmash of homemade glory. The whole place radiated a warmth and peacefulness to it, a kind of vintage hodge podge of mismatched beauty, curbside finds and Christmasy embrace.

Aman introduced us to Natalie, his wife and their children, Lucie and Atonopolis. Aman shows us the house. The front door enters into a dining room and open kitchen, a couch and shelves and a table in the corner, a dining table in the middle, and a small kitchen area on the other side. A winding staircase, with various shaped oak patterned wood for steps, curves up to the second floor which opens to a wide hallway, a bathroom on the right.

After showing us the upstairs bathroom and instructing us to turn off the lights when not in use, he leads us to an entry on the left side. At the end of the hall, a doorway leads into a large room with games laid about, a small version of fuseball, and a loom in one corner. There's a ladder perched near one end of the room that leads up to an enclosed attic room.

He carries the Northface backpack up the ladder and I follow him and Raegan follows me as Aman shows us where we'll be staying, a cozy attic room with a angled ceiling that meets in the middle.

Raegan and I, after a lovely dinner of boiled potatoes, fresh from the garden, with fennel greek vegetable and a plate of cheese, slept in the double sleeper.

This morning, I placed the bag of flowers and the note in front of her. She turned from looking at me to see it and opened the note and read it, which said:

23

Happy Birthday Raegan

I love you, Raegan Test, and I'm glad that you are with me. Love, Kris :)

you + me = us (with drawing of her and I arm in arm)

She opened the flowers, carefully pulling them out and they come out in a nice clump, from having been pressed in the backpack, the small yellow backpack, for two days, since Friday, and she said: "I love you" about 4 times. :) I used one grocery bag to hold the flowers, and another to tie it around the post that supports the upper, single bunkbed. Now, she's asleep. Happy Birthday, Raegan Test.

## **Monday**

After the village visit, we returned home and, soon after being inside, Chaneux arrived, a WWOOFer and teacher from New Orleans, a red haired, blue eyed girl, who will be here for a week sharing activities and work.

Aman gives Raegan, Chaneux and me a tour of the yard, showing us his rabbits, two goats, one sheep, garden, and pile of firewood, which we end up, for about 2 or 3 hours, forming a chain to transfer to stacking up against the exterior wall of the house. This was followed by weeding, pulling nettles and thistles from the ground. We started in the backyard, then moved to the side yard. The nettles were difficult to remove and very thorny. The work wasn't the easiest, but was worth the barter for a loft to sleep in and delicious food to eat.

For dinner, we had carrots sauteed in butter, with onion, sun dried tomato, bay leaf, and boiled, sauteed potatoes, cous cous, steamed or boiled artichokes with an olive oil balsalmic sauce that we spooned from a jar, red wine (I did not have any as I did not want the sugar rush or feeling alcohol sometimes brings). Later, they brought out a birthday cake, homemade, that was absolutely



delicious, and we all sang happy birthday to Raegan, her 23rd birthday.

## **Friday**

Tomorrow, early afternoon, we, Raegan and I, will be taken via car with Aman driving us to Gwenole and Costina's, who live with their child, Mona, and their Mom. They have a small garden, an orchard of cherry trees and, perhaps, other trees, along with some chickens, a goat, and sheep. We'll be assisting with gardening and building their bread oven building. I think it will be fun and Raegan and I will have a room to ourselves. Nice.

## **Svignac, France**

**description:** Sleep in cottage room attached to house with separate entrance. length of stay: 14 days

**job duties:** weeding, gardening, carpentry, general assistance, bicycling to fill milk bottles

Since Aman, who we were staying with for a week in Yvignac-La-Tour, France, knew Gwenole, the next person who we were going to stay with, he gave us a ride to Gwenole's house and farm, that contained an orchard.

### **Journal excerpts - Svignac, France** **Saturday afternoon**

Raegan and I are at 22250 Sevignac, France, wwoofing at Gwenole and Costina's house and small plot of land, which includes a small orchard of fruit trees--cherry trees, apple trees, pear trees--and a greenhouse, a garden, sheep, a goat, a cat with kittens. Gwenole and Costina have a little girl named Mona, a curious child who is inside our room, a guest room that is attached to the house, but has a separate entrance.

Today, I made a blunder. During a break for cider in the afternoon, I uncorked a green glass bottle and it overflows all over the table, feeding half of it to the table, the earth, and the creatures underneath who are having a cider party, drunk insects on holiday.

### **Wednesday**

Around noon, at Gwenole's and Costina's, we weeded, then picked cherries. In the afternoon, Fabian, a farmer from nearby, picked us up, drove us to his farm, where we planted leeks,

harvested potatoes, milked a cow, rode horses, then poured glasses of walnut liquor and another type of liquor, then cherry liquor, which is 50% alcohol. Then, he fed us dinner--salad, bread with butter, cheese that he made, salami, with a dessert of ice cream, coffee, and hot chocolate with bio (organic) cacao powder and fresh milk from his cow. He drives us back to Gwenole's farm house.

Raegan asks me to help find the laundry, as it was not on the line. I asked Gwenole and he said Verica took it inside. I went upstairs and she pointed to a basket of folded clothes. She put her finger to her mouth to "shhh" me as the baby was sleeping. I was kind of drunk and probably loud, after having drank the liquor at Fabian's.

## **Monday**

I think it's Monday, 9:26pm, June 19. Raegan and I arrived in Brest, France on May 16, about 33 days ago. So far, we've been in these towns - Brest, Loqueffret, Yvignac-La-Tour, Svignac, where we currently are staying. In a few days, we hitchhike to Normandy, to Isle Marie, where we'll work at a bed & breakfast for a month.

Being in France is just ... wow. Especially WWOOFing. The people we're staying with are a progressive young couple with a child and another on the way. He's assembling a bakery and she's learning how to make clothes using a loom. They're participating in the lifestyle of transition, which involves moving from oil dependence to a more rural, agrarian, self sustainable lifestyle that involves old tools, hard work, farming, and bartering. It's interesting and encouraging to witness their daily activities and how they are so different than the activities of most working class Americans. At the end of the day, most people seem to want the



same things--someone to love, something to do, shelter, a way to earn money or something of value, freedom, however they define it in their own terms. It's really interesting to see how they define those same things so differently. To some people, freedom is using old tools and pulling up lunch or dinner from the garden. To other people, freedom is standing in line to buy food at the grocery store. The variety of how people define their life is what makes life such an interesting spectacle.

## **Tuesday**

Today started early, around 8am, when Mona, the two year old daughter of Gwenole and Costina, wandered into our room, carrying something that she left at the foot of the bed, and speaking French. Raegan and I were cuddled in bed, her body curled into a tiny little ball, her knees up near her head, body arched at the hips and that soft face and hair.

Around 8:30, we abandoned the comfort of the bed, the sunlight from the windows gave indication of a warm day, something somewhat rare as the days here have been usually gray and cloudy, cold, teasing rain. We readied ourselves for our day as WWOOFers (World Wide Organization of Organic Farms) by dressing in warm clothes, even though we carried minimal gear, everything in our backpacks, before leaving our room, walking the ten steps to the kitchen dining room next door, seeing residuals of breakfast eaten earlier, a half loaf of bakery bread, some carved butter, a half pot of coffee, lukewarm, jars or jelly or jam, a big sharp knife for the bread.

After breakfast, I returned to the room, then Raegan called me. I stepped

outside and we loaded the bail of hay onto his trailer. Gwenole drove to a nearby barn where we cut the twine, then dismantled the hay, by pulling it out in big chunks, in order to reduce the size of the hay bail to roll it into the barn. Eventually, the hay became smaller and we rolled the core inside.

Then, Gwenole drove us to another farmer's house, parked, and we got out. That farmer offered us coffee. We accepted and he brought out glasses and a steel pot with black coffee inside, along with a carton of lait (milk) and a saucer filled with sugarcubes. We served ourselves. He was staring at Raegan, asking her questions, ignoring me. After the coffee, Raegan and I followed him and Gwenole around his barn. He grows hemp on his farm.

After the tour, in the car, Gwenole said: "He likes girl wwoofers. If I have 2 wwoofers who are guys, he'll say no, but if girls, yes."

Later, when I asked Raegan about that, she said it made her uncomfortable. It made me feel uneasy, too. The thing with wwoofing is that incidents like this happen so fast, that sometimes it's only after they happen when you realize how uncomfortable it actually is.

Our next errand was a hardware store where Gwenole purchased flats of tongue-in-groove wood that Raegan and I loaded into the trailer. We return to his property and carry them to the stone building that we're helping him to to build out for a bakery. The wood would be used to shore up a ceiling and attic space that will, eventually, help insulate the bakery.

We had an early lunch, then continued working. After dinner, Raegan and I and Gwenole and Costina and Mona and Verika (Costina's Mom) went to a music festival in town about 20 minutes away.

When you're WWOOFing, you're not really sure what to expect, especially when you get invited to a music festival, in a small town, in France, in Europe. That makes it exciting but it also can lead to disappointment, depending on what you imagine to expect. The way I've been keeping things in check is to expect nothing, in order to be happy with crumbs.

We arrive at the festival and Raegan and I wander off by ourselves. The festival is boring. To buy food, you have to line up to buy tickets. The line for tickets is long. The lines for food are even longer and disorganized, a mass of people standing in front of a booth.

Despite the boringness of the festival, Raegan made it wonderful by being affectionate with me, accepting a piggyback when we arrived, holding my hand, resting her soft neck and beautiful head on my shoulder in a church service we visited, that was crowded with people from the festival, where the choir sang "My Bonnie lies over the ocean".

Later, when we met up with Gwenole, he gave me a pack of Camel cigarettes that he found. I asked someone to light a cigarette, then Raegan runs up, takes the cig, accepts the light, inhales until it glows orange, says "merci", then floats away like the butterfly, stray and restless and magnificent she is ... it was a good night.

Some funny things that've happened ...

At a traditional Bretagne (France) music show, wherein a crowd of French people crowded in an open barn, I stepped into a dance thinking the guy to my right was a girl, then discovering she was a guy, a fluffy haired little boy. In these dances, it's considered bad



taste for guys to dance with other guys. So, after the song ended, I embarrassingly walked away.

At the same dance, or maybe a similar one, I stepped in the line to dance, taking a lady's hand. She appeared to be in her 60's and I thought she would be glad to dance with me. I glanced at her and she looks at me and scowls.

At Gwenole's place, standing beside Raegan, I opened a bottle of apple cider without letting the gas out first. As soon as the cork is partway off, it shoots out of the bottle, and the cider explodes out the top, about 10 feet in the air. Thankfully, no one was standing in front of the cork. The cider that was left in the bottle filled 2 small cups. The earthworms would be merry before evening.

Asking, on the first lunch with Yannick and Marie, if Marie was finished with her french fries, expecting her to say "Yes, do you want them?" I ask her, "Are you finished with those?" pointing to the fries. "Yes." She said. I eyed them for the next minute or two or three, until she threw them away. Raegan caught the comment, and we were both laughing about it.

## **Thursday**

We've just eaten breakfast--baguettes with butter, prune jam, homemade cherry jam, bio (organic) granola cereal, fresh mint tea, coffee, and are going to bicycle to a nearby farm to collect 2 bottles of milk. This life is wonderful.

We awoke around 10am, when Mona, the bright, already talking 2 year old daughter of Gwenole and Costina, the young couple who run the farm where we are staying, wandered into our room, then crawled into our bed. After a breakfast of baguette, with crunchy crust and moist air bubbled inside deliciousness, smeared with

butter and prune jam and I had some homemade cherry jam tasty and without too much sugar, we, Raegan, my girlfriend, my best friend, 23 year old traveling companion, we cleaned up, fixing ourselves in the mirror, brushing our teeth.

After breakfast, I washed out the milk bottles and placed them in my backpack. I went to the barn and rolled out the blue Peugeot bicycle, put down the kickstand and tried some channel locks to loosen the nut below the seat, to lower it for Raegan, as it was too high for her the last time she bicycled on it, riding with me, me on the purple "Viking" bicycle, skinny, hybrid tires, the last time we bicycled to Claude's, an organic dairy farmer about 3 miles away, to fill the glass bottles of milk. This would be our second bicycle trip there. We bicycle there, Raegan filled the bottles with milk, putting them at the mouth of the tap and pulling the lever just so, so the milk would slowly pour out.

Claude walked up to us, dressed in work gear, a zip up outfit, coveralls, similar to the gear I had worn when weed whacking at Yannick's in Loqueffret, and Raegan and I said hello or bon jour. Claude said something. I was taking pictures of Raegan as she held the bottle to the mouth of the big steel tank, the creamy milk pouring out slowly, filling it. I've been taking

lots of pictures, documenting this experience, the cruise over here, the couchsurfing at Ludmilla's, and the subsequent wwoof hosts between then and now--Yannick and Marie's, a cattle farmer in Loqueffret who's converting his 200-acre farm to organic, Aman and Natalie, a young family of hippies who are living out the "Transition" lifestyle which involves gardening, old tools that do not require petrol or electricity, building with sustainable materials like mud, straw, and recycled bottles, and the current location with Gwenole and Costina, another young married couple with their

bright two year old daughter, Mona, and their Romanian speaking mother-in-law, Costina's Mom, Vericka, who also speaks some English and probably some French, too.

After the milk pickup, we bicycled to Gwenole and Costina's, ate lunch, then bicycled to Maurice's, a hemp farmer who's an acquaintance of Gwenole. The day before, Gwenole said that "tomorrow you will work with Maurice at 1:30 for a few hours and he will give me hemp. If that is okay with you. You don't have to," he added. "It's okay. That's cool." I said. So, we bicycled to Maurice's, parked the bicycles and he offered us coffee. We accepted. He brings out a pot of steaming black coffee, and puts a carton of lait on the table, a glass bowl of sugarcubes and then proceeds to engage us in a conversation, staring at Raegan with a look of affection in his eyes. Earlier, the day before, Gwenole had cautioned me, saying, that Maurice likes money and women. "If I have two girl wwoofers, Maurice will want to have them work and then take them out and show them around, give them wine," Gwenole said. "Wow. Should I be worried?" I asked. "No." Gwenole said. "He says he is like that. People know."

We ended up working a few hours for Maurice. I was using a pitchfork to toss hemp, or sometimes tossing it in by hand, into a harvester, this big yellow machine. Raegan was on the other end, where the machine was spitting out the hemp, sifting out the fluffy hemp from the heavier material. The heavier material would be used for building material, and the fluffier material for insulation. Then we loaded bags of hemp while Maurice went on an errand. He returned with a chocolate bar and a bottle of Evian. We devoured the chocolate bar and gulped the water. He also returned with heavy paper bags, which we filled with hemp.



Tomorrow, Costina is taking us to Denan and from there, we hitchhike to Picaudville, France, where we'll be wwoofing at Chateau-de-Marie, a bed and breakfast. They have private rooms with their own private bathroom. I'm hoping it will be nice.

## Hitchhiking to Picaudville, France

Hitchhiking from Denan all the way to Picaudville, France was fun and easy. We got rides from 3 - 4 different cars. Everyone was really nice.

Here's how we did it. A day or two before leaving, I would plan the route using a map, and Google Maps, in order to compare both routes. Basically, I would route the beginning destination to the final destination, then write down the names of the towns in between, with the goal being to get a ride from one town to the next, spacing the towns approximately one hour apart. I would go over the routes with Raegan. The day of hitchhiking, we'd pull out cardboard from a dumpster and make a sign, using a Sharpie marker.

Raegan, cleverly, added a smiley face to the bottom along with the letters "SVP" standing for s'il vous plait (French for "if you please").

After eating lunch in front of the grocery store, then putting our thumbs out to hitchhike, we got a ride about 10 minutes later, from a guy who did not speak English.

He took us to this church in the village square that had a parachute on the roof, attached to the figure (sculpture) of a military parachutist.

Apparently, this actually occurred during World War 2, then later, a sculpture was made to commemorate this event.

Because neither of us understood what he was saying, when he parked, I got out and took pictures and Raegan stayed in the backseat. After I got back in the car, he drove us to Chateau d' L' Isle Marie, the luxury bed and breakfast, where we were planning to WWOOF for the next few weeks.

When we arrived, we thanked the driver and looked for the owners. Because they were eating dinner at restaurant, they weren't there. We actually mistook some of the guests for the owners, then sat our backpacks outside on the front porch and waited for them to arrive. Even though we were supposed to be at the Chateau a day later, and had hitchhiked early, in case of the chance that we might not have gotten rides and had to spend the night outside or somewhere (we had sleeping bags), we arrived there a day early.

Thankfully, once Dorothea and Simon, the Chateau caretakers/ owners arrived, they showed us the room and building where we would stay and said that it was quite alright that we had arrived a day earlier.



## Picauville, France

**address:** Chateau d' L' Isle Marie

**description:** Luxury bed & breakfast

**length of stay:** 33 days

**job duties:** weeding, changing bed sheets, vacuuming rooms

### Friday

We just arrived at Isle Marie, a bed and breakfast in Picauville, France, after hitchhiking from Denan to Saint Malo, then took the train from Saint Malo to Saint Lo, where we purchased some food at a big grocery store.

Raegan bought an avocado, a sesame seed baguette, some chocolate mouse cup and only paid a few euros. Hungry, we ripped off the bread into sections, then split the bread longways. Using our fingers, we punctured the skin of the avacados, then squeezed out the green flesh onto the inside of the bread. It was a delicious meal and the chocolate mouse proved to be a tasty snack and satisfactory dessert. Sitting there, our hair a dirty tangle, our backpacks strewn about, eating with our hands, we probably looked like filthy travelers in need of a bath. The passersby, however, those leaving the store and entering the store did not look at us with suspicion or disgust. Instead, after the occasional glance, they were on their way to their business, having their own lives to consider.

Raegan sat on the L.L Bean sleeping bag, that was rolled up into the carrying sack, the one I had gotten for my birthday or for a Christmas gift some years before, and I perched my butt on the ledge below the window. Beside us sat our backpacks and Raegan's shoulder bag.

After eating at the grocery store, and making a sign for Picauville, the town where Isle Marie was located, our next destination, we crossed the street. Raegan held the sign in her left hand and put out her right hand, thumb extended. I stood behind her, held my right arm out, lifted my thumb, and smiled.

After about ten minutes, a red, two door, hatchback Peugeot, rolls to a stop in front of us. I notice and alert Raegan, who meets me at the pile of backpacks and begins picking them up. "Go over to him and smile before he leaves," I instruct her. She grabs a few smaller bags and does that--jogging over to greet him before he changes his mind. Thankfully, he didn't leave. I grab the rest of the gear, bring it to the back of the car, stuff it inside. Raegan's already in the backseat, and I hand the overflow--the gear that doesn't fit, to her. Then, I jump in the front seat to greet our kind driver.

"Merci," I say with a smile. "Ju mappel, Kris." I extend my hand, then point to Raegan. "Raegan," I say.

He says his name, a collection of syllables with a French accent, which I forget, and say, "Nice to meet you. Parlay vo Anglais?" I ask him. "No," he says, then says something in French that I do not understand.

So, this guy gave us a ride to Isle Marie, in Picauville, France.

This place is amazing. The house we're staying in is a three story, old stone building from 1508. We explored the rooms and the entire place is sprawling, one room leads to another, and most of the rooms seem to be unfurnished. We're staying on the second floor, sharing a queen sized or king sized bed, I think, in a room that has high ceilings, maybe 15 feet, not sure, but something close to that.

We met Dorothy, one of the caretakers of Isle Marie, this historic, three story mansion where we'll be working in exchange for room and board at the old building, the one that was built in 1508, about two hundred yards away, and out of view of the Isle Marie mansion. Our work will likely consist of gardening, cooking, and helping out around the mansion, as they receive and board guests this month, and charge a few hundred dollars a night per room or something like that.

The ground floor kitchen of the Chateau Isle Marie, where Raegan and I spent a lot of time doing computer work for Simon, one of the Chateau's caretakers. Our work consisted of article marketing—writing articles with backlinks to <http://www.islemarie.com> in order to increase traffic to their website.

Raegan also did a lot of photo image editing. I think Raegan took this picture. Photo: Raegan Test

The ground floor kitchen of the Chateau d' L' Isle Marie, where Raegan and I set up our laptops to do computer work, SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and photo editing for the <http://www.islemarie.com> website.

## **Saturday, June 25, 2011**

At 9am, we met Dorothy in the basement kitchen, where she offered us Muesli cereal and yogurt. We mixed it in a bowl and ate. At some point, Simon, her cousin, came downstairs and we introduced ourselves. Soon afterward, he left. She left us with instructions to turn off the burner for the potatoes, once they had reached a soft point, then pouring them into a colander, and returning the potatoes to the pot, with the burner still off. While



eating cereal and yogurt, she discussed the politics of farming and such movies as "Food Incorporated".

Dorothy is a classy lady, a blonde, who was wearing a khaki dress with a scarf, and has pretty features. She is Dutch and knows how to speak Dutch, German, French, English, and some Italian. She said that she grew up in Holland where the American TV programs are not dubbed, but are subtitled, which makes it easy to learn English.

Before leaving, as she has a busy day, she told Raegan where the key was to the barn so we could get the bicycles to ride later, and also pointed to the bicycle pump sitting on the floor, just outside of the mud room.

Raegan and I just took a bunch of photos of the rooms of this house and uploaded them to the computer. She just left, with her Macbook Pro in hand, to go to the kitchen, where she'll probably go online to upload them to her Flickr account. She's a good photographer and skilled at fine-tuning the photos in Photoshop.

Earlier today, we wandered the grounds of Isle Marie, this beautiful bed and breakfast, located on several wooded acres and connected by walking paths that are surrounded by towering trees on both side, providing shade and an amazing kind of natural sanctuary.

There is the main Chateau and then a few hundred yards away, two other chateaus. Raegan and I are in one of them, the one that would require further renovation to rent, that is strewn with old furniture, suitcases, boxes of delightful repositories from the past including 8mm film reels, and three antique pedal cars for children, as well as other items like chests, old hats, and more. It

was around noon and we took photographs of the inside of this beautifully treasured storehouse and its things.

In the afternoon, since Simon had said we could borrow the car to run errands, we returned to the Chateau where we, Raegan and I, saw Dorothy attending to food preparation in the basement level kitchen. She's a classy, blond haired lady who dresses well, speaks articulately, whose entire life seems pronounced and to the point, as if she's unglued herself from unnecessary detritus and engages only in pragmatic missions.

Raegan and I greet Dorothy and I mention that Simon mentioned the car and would it be okay if I borrowed it. She said it would, then walked us to where the car was, parked near the old building that houses the maintenance tools and collection of riding bicycles.

I drove to the gas station first, where we put \$10 into the car, the four door Citron, then to the market, where we purchased additional food--bread, avocados, butter, potato chips, canned mackerel with mustard, a marinara type sauce, Muesli cereal, red potatoes, yellow onions, and maybe some other stuff, too.

Back at the house, Raegan put together a delicious sandwich--wholegrain bread, avocado, tomato, herring with yellow mustard. Great idea to add the fish. We ate at the table in the small room off of the first floor dining room, the sunlight pouring in, us eating happily in this chateau that was built in 1508, being part of history. A beautiful experience.

## Sunday

This morning, I asked Raegan if she wanted potatoes and eggs. She said yes, and also agreed to help in the preparation. We walked down the stairs to the kitchen and began chopping the potatoes, onions. I fried the potatoes in a big saute pan, covered with another one upside down on top of it to keep in the heat, then fork whipped four eggs in a bowl, moved the potatoes to one side of the pan, and poured in the eggs on the other side. Raegan added spinach to the eggs and cheese. It was a delicious breakfast--eggs, cheese, spinach, potatoes.

After breakfast, we walked the pathway, with tremendous trees towering overhead providing shade and cool, to the main chateau, featured in the Isle Marie website and many notable publications. It's historic and has good reviews as a classy place to stay. This morning, we would be finding out our jobs, our roles as WWOOFers (World Wide Organization of Organic Farms).

Although, technically, the Isle Marie is not an organic farm, it's ground are maintained with organic methods, so it's participation in the WWOOF program shows that their definition of organic farm is quite elastic, which is fine with me, and probably the other WWOOFers who've come before.

Raegan and I arrived in the basement level kitchen and greeted Dorothy, who offered us coffee, tea, a wholegrain baguette, and proceeded to tell us that we could weed at the two story chateau close the chateau where we were staying, and that, also, we could sweep the tennis courts if we had time today.

I drank a cup of coffee, poured another, and finished half of it, and sliced some of the baguettes which I buttered and shared, along with the coffee, with Raegan.



As usual, Raegan looking gorgeous, with her penetrating blue green eyes, red lips, cute nose and happy face, and stylish, too, wearing a fitting black T-shirt I purchased for her from H&M, blue jean shorts with a brown leather belt, gray stockings and her cute brown boots.

Sometimes I just watch her, almost hypnotized by her good looks. And she has these gestures too, that are birdlike and fluid, almost like a ballet dancer. If she rubs up against you, you'll probably find fairy dust on you.

Raegan and I finish the coffee and bread and then walk to the second chateau, sit down, and begin pulling weeds, plants, and stray flowers from amidst the driveway, which is covered with small white rocks. Thankfully, the roots to the weeds are shallow. They come up easily. Raegan continues pulling weeds diligently, while I make small excursions to go to the bathroom, take photos, or refill the water bottle.

We continued weeding, then took a lunch break. Raegan made this terrific sandwich--wholegrain bread with avacado, tomato, and mackeral swimming in dijon mustard sauce. After lunch, we continued weeding some, then walked to the tennis courts and began sweeping the leaves into piles. It was hot. I removed my shirt. I continued working. I looked at Raegan and she was looking at me. She smiled. I smiled.

I put my thumb to my mouth, and began blowing, as if I was blowing myself up into a big balloon. We both laughed.

After sweeping the leaves, carting them away, dumping them into the forest just outside the courts, we sat on the courts, our backs leaning against the old stone walls that, perhaps, had witnessed tennis games for the last hundred years or so, and talked. I

mentioned that I remembered a teacher in high school saying how when he was younger, he thought that, at some age like 22 or 24, he would just become an adult, and have a job and a wife and a kid and, that, it--adulthood--would just happen. He said that as he grew older he realized adulthood is something you have to prepare for, otherwise you'll end up being a kid in an adult world, something like that.

"Like you?" Raegan said, smiling.

"Yeah, sometimes I feel that way." I said, smiling. "I remember thinking about what he said years ago."

"That's interesting," Raegan said.

We returned the tools, the brooms, the rake, the cart, to their respective places, and greeted Dorothy, who was putting together a wall rack, screwing it together. We talked with her, telling her about the tennis court clean up, and Simon mentioned that the net needed to be loosened. Dorothy said it did, too. So, Raegan and I returned to the court, loosened the net, then walked back to our private chateau.

I asked her if she wanted to help me make dinner. She said yes, and we walked downstairs to the kitchen. She boiled half of the bag of penne pasta, while I sauteed butter, milk, a can of mushrooms, and cheese. Raegan, wisely, added more cheese.

Because it was milk, and not cream, the sauce failed to congeal, but it was still tasty. I also added some salt. After tasting it, Raegan added some marinara sauce that had eggplant in it, and it tasted almost like an a la vodka sauce, but without the vodka, a sauce that combines red sauce (marinara sauce) with a white sauce (alfredo sauce) to make a delicious orange colored sauce.

Raegan, preparing breakfast in the first floor kitchen of the manor house, the building where we stayed at the Chateau Isle Marie. Picaudville, France.

We also cut some baguettes into smaller pieces, opened them, and spread butter on some of them and pesto on others, then put them into the oven. The meal was delicious. After eating, we watched an episode of "Freaks and Geeks" on Raegans laptop.

## **Monday**

It's 2:30 in the afternoon. We weeded today, starting at the nearby chateau, finishing the front left side, the left side, and the back, then taking a lunch break. For lunch, we sauteed potatoes and onions in oil, then added tofu, continuing to fry it by leaving another pan, upside down, on top of it.

Once that medley was cooked, Raegan added pesto and I added butter, flavoring it to a delicious finale. Raegan sliced apples in a bowl and drizzled them with honey, beside sliced cucumber and sliced tomato. We sat at the table in the small room adjacent to the the main dining area living room.

It was a delicious meal. After lunch, we started weeding the front of the main chateau, along the stone walls that rise up to support a bed of hedges, in front of the raised driveway that rises up to the front door. Raegan brought out two cups of steaming tea--spearmint, lemon, green tea mix. We continued weeding and drank the tea when it had cooled to an allowable sipping temperature.



After drinking the tea, we went into the basement kitchen and chatted with Dorothy, who runs the chateau, and she said she would meet us around 3:30. I told her that we would either be in the chateau where we are staying or in the kitchen, on the internet.

This place, the Isle Marie, with all of its grand majestic beauty, towering trees, old stone buildings, rich in character and history, is a storehouse of wonder, an open suitcase of epiphanies. The place is romantic and being here with Raegan makes it even more romantic. I like it here.

## **Tuesday**

Yesterday, we finished weeding the rock laden perimeter around the second chateau which appears to be two stories but it could possibly be three stories if you count the attic, if there is one. These old stone houses, these chateaus, are giant affairs, sprawling in their expanse and connecting rooms to rooms.

Once you're inside, you are surprised at the number of rooms for, on the outside, even though these houses are huge, they do not appear to hold so many rooms.

Being here, in Picauville, France, at the Isle Marie, sleeping in the second floor room of a building that probably contains 18 rooms, doing a few hours of menial work--gardening--in exchange for room and board, including food, is a rich experience that, likely, less than 1% of the population has ever experienced. I'm grateful for this experience and I hope to inspire others, through writing about it, and taking photographs, to participate in this kind of experience as well.

After finishing the weeding around the second chateau, we weeded around the front of the main chateau, the Isle Marie chateau.

At some point in the early afternoon, we took lunch. Raegan assembled a delicious bowl of vegetables and fruits with sliced tomato and cucumbers and apples with honey drizzled over the apples. We pan fried potatoes and onions in oil, sprinkled salt into it, then added tofu, pesto and butter. Eating delicious food in a castle with someone you love is a wonderful experience.

At 8pm, yesterday, we met with Dorothea and Simon, her cousin, to eat dinner. Dorothea plated sliced cantaloupe. She offered us prosciutto wrapped cantaloupe and we declined politely. We sat at the outside table, eating cantaloupe and drinking Evian. There was also Perrier sparkling water, too. A basket of sliced, whole grain baguette bread sat on the table.

The main course was a glass tray, hot, with steaming mashed potatoes mixed with fish, with a crispy coating on top. Dorothea used a spatula to carefully slice it into four sections, one for each of us, then lift it from the glass tray to our plate. It was delicious and Raegan and I told her so.

Dorothea and Simon held court in the conversation, telling us stories that did little to disguise their efforts to remain royalty in this world and show their knowledge of things considered worth knowing for people in the upper echelon of society. It was interesting, somewhat, but as the conversation continued, it grew somewhat boring.

I'm not really interested in name dropping or famous people or talking about things. I prefer participating in conversations that revolve around concepts, like philosophy, and discoveries about

human nature, science. Being told stories is fun, too. But when the stories are strained through someone's ego that's hoping for compliments on the other side, it becomes more of a chore than anything else.

Dessert was brought out, an apple tart pie, cold, which was an apple pie with cheesecake filling in the bottom part, just above the crust. It had a hint of sweetness which made it all the more delicious.

Soon after finishing her pie, Dorothea excused herself and we were left to talk with Simon, who talked a lot about the internet. He seemed to be negative about the internet. I felt he was being dismissive of it, so I brought up some points about the benefits.

Later, back at the room, Raegan said: "I liked what you were saying at the table." I asked her what she meant by that.

She said: "You didn't sound awkward. Probably because that's your thing, the internet and websites."

"Do I usually sound awkward?" I asked her.

"Sometimes," she said. "But the internet is your thing," she added.

"Cool, thanks," I said.

### **Friday, July 29, 2011**

Last night, Raegan and I watched the 3rd episode of "Band of Brothers", the compelling story about Easy Company, a division of U.S. Army soldiers, and the D-Day Invasion.

Earlier, Raegan helped with the tablado, the dinner at the farm house that Jan and Mike put together once or twice a week.



## **Interesting History of the Chateau Isle Marie**

At around 7pm, before dinner, the guests of the chateau gathered in the drawing room of the main chateau, sat on chairs and couches, and listened to Simon, one of the chateau caretakers, tell the history of the Chateau Isle Marie. It was actually interesting. A lot of history in an hour.

Some of the highlights included the following:

During World War 2, the German army opened the floodgates nearby, which caused the Isle Marie to flood. The flooding of the Isle Marie, many years ago, would leave water around the main chateau, thus giving it the name, the Isle Marie, or Island Marie.

During the D-Day Invasion and days that followed, American paratroopers were parachuting into the area, and landing in the water, which was cold because of the time of the year, and even though it was not that deep, maybe a few feet high, some were drowning, as they were parachuting in with 100 pounds of gear, a parachute, probably landing a state of nervousness and confusion, thus obfuscating the situation.

A servant of the one of the original Isle Marie owners was left behind in order to protect the family treasure, after the family had left during a siege. The servant, captured, was asked where the treasure was. The servant refuses to tell and is killed. Hundreds of years later, around 1900, Simon's great grandfather hears that the gold is buried in the chapel, the building that is attached to the guest chateau. So, he begins digging in the chapel floors and finds a chest. His excitement turns to disappointment when he opens it only to find a small boned skeleton. Simon mentioned that it was likely a French soldier since the French have,

generally, smaller bones compared to the English who are bigger boned.

For most of yesterday, Raegan and I were in the kitchen. She diligently sat at her laptop sorting through photos that Simon had chosen and improving them using Photoshop. I admire Raegan's patience and tenacity. She is capable and when she is working, she is focused. She's not playing around, talking, or eating, she's just doing the task in front of her. I hope that rubs off on me.

While she was doing that, I was online, grabbing paragraphs from various websites about different places to visit in Normandy, France. I pieced together an article, called it "12 Places to Visit in Normandy, France in Europe" and started the article with Simon's article, of original construction, about Mont Saint-Michel, the commune (town or village) that sits on a tidal rock point that's comprised of a Benedictine Abbey and collection of houses and shops, inhabited by some 41 people. Beneath Simon's article, I recommended another destination, then 10 other places worth visiting.

## **Sunday**

Tomorrow we go to Paris. Dorothea is driving us there. She has a dentist appointment. It is kind of her to give us a ride, considering how busy she is with the Chateau Isle Marie.

The chateau, rich with history, grandeur, and acting as a luxury bed and breakfast and a place where memories are made, nonetheless, can be a relentless taskmaster since the maintenance of the building and the grounds consume a lot of hours. Add to that the number of guests that come in and out of the front doors of the main chateau and the guest chateau, which means managing a small staff, scheduling visits, buying groceries

for the breakfasts, and other day to day operations, and the beautiful old chateau becomes a relationship with a hungry monster, one that's continually needing to be fed in order to function.

Yesterday, Dorothea left early with her friend, Peter, this guy who runs a film production company that has offices in Los Angeles and in New York City. They went to Jersey, a beach that, I think, has historical significance as it was a Landing Beach during D-Day, or maybe not, I'm just guessing about that. Nonetheless, it's supposed to be a beautiful beach and as it's in France, the beach will have a beautiful village nearby with old buildings, charm, and rolling countryside on the outskirts.

Dorothea was gone for the entire day and Simon had left the day earlier, so Raegan and I were on our own. Dorothea left instructions to hang the laundry to dry. Besides that, there was not that much to do.

Raegan and I got online, talked, ate, parked ourselves in the ground floor kitchen. In the late afternoon or evening, some guests arrived. Raegan got their last name, found their room, and I helped with their luggage, which was only one bag, since they were here for only one night. Later in the evening, I gave that family a tour of the place. They were a husband and wife and their children. They were from Dublin, Ireland.

The day before yesterday, I gave an English couple a tour and afterward, the Dad mentioned, when I told him we were going to Paris, that "You'll love Paris. Paris is food for the soul."



We had a fun game of tennis, laughing and smiling, enjoying the beautiful old court and the the tall trees that stood guard all around us. It's beautiful being in France with someone you love and who loves you. It's beautiful being immersed in the joy of the moment and the possibilities of the moments to come.

Raegan is so pretty. She looks like a movie star from the 50's, with a natural glamour and gestures that are all her own. Every tender bend of her neck is a possibility, and every sideways glance, sometimes nervous, her insecurity shining through, those big blue green eyes can slay the greatest dragons of fear that guard the dark places of the heart. Even in jeans and a t-shirt, her natural prettiness shines through. Sitting beside her, it can be difficult to concentrate, as she's so easy to look at, getting caught up in the orbit of her beauty.

I'm drinking tea. I'm in France. I'm in the ground floor kitchen of the Chateau Isle Marie. Standing in front of me is Peter, the film producer, looking debonaire, wearing his scart and clean black t-shirt, another gentlemen wearing leather slippers, a collar shirt, nursing a beer in a glass even though it's around noon, and Dorothea, who's at the stove pan frying

sausages. Raegan, a few minutes ago, wandered off, I'm guessing to go to the farm house, probably to smoke a cigarette. She'll probably be back in a few minutes. Me, I'm sitting here at the kitchen table, laptop open, absorbing the beauty of the moment, keeping track of what I see before me, pushing out my observations into the keys of this keyboard.

## **Monday**

I just returned from the farm house. Now, I'm back at the basement kitchen of the Chateau De L'Isle-Marie, on our last day here, since Dorothea is driving Raegan and I and her friend, Peter, into Paris around 11am, where we'll couchsurf for a few days before hitchhiking or taking a train into Wiesbaden, Germany.

Once there, we'll stay with Ryan for a week. Earlier, we watched the final episode of "Band of Brothers", a moving HBO miniseries. Interestingly enough, Peter, the film producer, was sitting in the kitchen, while the opening scene menu was up on the big, flat screen TV at the end of the kitchen table, and he mentioned that his partner, of the film company where he works, was involved in producing this with Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg. Peter is a Dutch guy who runs a production company with offices in Los Angeles and New York. He dresses dapper (scarves, high end sunglasses), his luggage is Louie Vutton. He's a friend of Dorothea's.

## **Paris, France**

We arranged to couchsurf at a place in the suburbs of Paris, France. However, a friend of a friend of Raegan's, after hearing we were visiting Paris, mentioned he knew someone who lived there. That person, Yseult, is going to let us stay in her 9th floor condo, in the Bastille area of Paris, for a week, since she will be visiting someone in Switzerland. Nice.

## The Suburbs of Paris

It's morning and we're in the suburbs of Paris, staying with Viet, a guy who we haven't even met in person, yet, although we have met his roommate,

Hugo, a college or university student who has the small room next to the living room, and is staying here for 2 months while he does an internship for a finance company in Paris. We're staying in the living room, which has a mattress on the floor, couches against the wall, and a coffee table, wooden, painted red, on which we've put our laptops.

Yesterday, following the chaos that ensued once we arrived in Paris, Raegan wrote a brilliant blog on Tumblr. She has a writing style that captures the story concisely and with humor. Sometimes my writing tends to spiral off into introspection until it gets lost in the constructed memory (one in which my own imagination fills in the blanks).

In short, this is what happened yesterday. We packed our gear--backpacks, sleeping bag, in the trunk of Dorothea's Peugeot hatchback, then Phillip, the Dutch born film producer that, we suspect is dating Dorothea, drove us into Paris.

On the way there, Raegan napped, laying her head on my legs, while I read The New Yorker. Writing about this now almost makes me feel debonair and slightly crazy, as if I'm participating in the myth of the dapper American traveling to Paris, "reading The New Yorker" with a beautiful young girl draped over my legs ... how did I get here? Lucky? Blessed? Serendipity? In any case, I am thankful for this wonderful trip, this wonderful girl, this wonderful life.



## Arc d' Triumph

Phillip drives into Paris, parks near the Arc d' Triumph, and we unload the gear. We say goodbye to Dorothea and Phillip. They drive away, and we move our packs up against a wall. Nearby, a bunch of people are standing in flocks, looking at and photographing the Arc d' Triumph.

We shuffle into our backpacks and walk down the nearby staircase into the subway, but it's not the subway we find out when we arrive at the other side. It's just an underground passageway to cross the street. I notice the subway signs on the other side of the street. We cross, get on the subway, and head toward the Arcueil Cachan, the subway stop near where Viet lives. The train passes his exit, which Raegan points out, so we get off at the next stop. We ask to borrow a phone, wander some and finally someone lets us use his phone. I call Viet and leave a message. We go back to the train and take a train back to his stop, then find his house.

Although he gave us the passcode to get inside the first floor condo where he lives, we do not have a way to get inside the house. Raegan has to go to the bathroom. She stays in the condo to watch the gear. I go scout for an area with bushes, trees, privacy, then pee, and return to tell her where it is. She goes to pee while I watch the bags, sitting on the inside steps of the condo.

Eventually, maybe an hour later, Hugo, Viet's roommate arrives. We introduce ourselves, explain the situation, and he kindly lets us in, tells us where we can sleep, and shows us how to get on the internet. We bring in our gear and get online. Raegan checks couchsurfing.org and there's a message from Viet saying that the

key to the door is under the doormat. So, we leave to take a subway to Paris to explore.

## **Thursday**

We're in Paris. Raegan mentioned on Facebook that she'll be in Paris and is looking for people to hang out with. Mikey, an acquaintance in San Francisco tells Raegan about Isu, this girl who lives in Paris. They contact each other and we meet in Paris, in the downtown area, near Bastille.

We wander the streets, buy a falafel, and keep wandering. Isu, after hearing we're looking for a place to stay for the next two days and will probably get a hotel, but have found hotels that are budget priced that have poor ratings, offers to let us stay at her place, a condo, as she's leaving to the Swiss Alps to visit someone.

The day we arrived to meet her, after bringing our backpacks to the condo, we wandered downtown and found a bar, where we ordered a pitcher of Sangria, and tapas--panini fromage (bread with cheese) and frites (french fries). We drank and ate and I paid for it, since I was very glad we had found a place to stay, in Paris, for free.

So, we're here in the condo, 9th floor, great views of Paris. Raegan's taking a nap, probably from eating the plate of pasta that we cooked, with pan fried onions in sunflower oil and Barilla olive marinara sauce, with grated cheese. Delicious. Raegan bought a white sun dress that she's wearing now, as she sleeps, and she looks so pretty in it.

Earlier today, we wandered around Paris, got coffee, roamed through the outdoor market, I bought green grapes and a UFO peach, Raegan bought the white dress, then we found the falafel place that Isu introduced us to on

Tuesday, when we met her, and bought 2 falafels, one for each of us, we walked, while eating the falafels, then found a park, sat on a bench and continued eating. While eating the falafel and walking, a falafel ball dropped on the ground. I was upset about that, took another bite, and another falafel ball, that I had not even seen because it was hidden beneath the cabbage, drops onto the ground. Raegan was laughing. I started laughing, too.

We walked around downtown Paris, in the Bastille area, then along the Seine River, along the temporary beaches installed by the city, which consists of sand filled areas which are about 30 feet out from a wall before stopping at the sidewalk. On the other side of the sidewalk is the Seine River.

We continued walking until we reached the Louvre. Raegan asked if we could tour it and I agreed and she was happy about that. We went inside.

We walked around for a few hours. Some of the paintings were enormous. Lots of beautiful work. We even saw the Mona Lisa, with a big crowd of people around it. It was encased in glass or plexiglass or plastic and there were a few security staff in front. I walked through the crowd and Raegan followed me to the front.



The security offered to pull up the rope so we could get out, almost like the bouncers at the front of the stage of a concert that pull up crowd members who might otherwise get crushed by the pressure of the fans. I accepted and the security person lifted the seat belt looking barrier and we moved out from the crowd and to the right, then walked back through the room and into other rooms, looking at art and talking. It was cool.

## **Friday**

I'm going to get some groceries--bread, maybe some fruit, some chocolate biscuits, and am coming back so we can watch "Super 8" which she downloaded from a torrents site last night.

It's later in the evening, around 7:20pm. Earlier today, I grocery shopped at a nearby store, returned, and then shortly after that we got dressed and walked around. Raegan was looking beautiful and very pretty in her white dress that she bought yesterday. She wore a black t-shirt over the top then, after some walking around, took it off. That white dress and her pretty face and her beautiful figure is such a lovely combination. I told her she looked pretty. She thanked me and told me I looked handsome.

Then, later, she told me I looked handsome again. It was nice to hear, and it makes it more special because she is beautiful. We ate lunch at a place that had a special for \$11 euros each. Raegan ordered salmon and I ordered vegetarian tacos.

The meal came with espressos and I ordered tap water that was served in a bottle. The food was okay.

Afterward, we roamed to the Opera house and once we found it walked inside and there was only entrance for the gift shop, the actual opera house was blocked off. We decided to see a movie and saw "Midnight in Paris", the Woody Allen movie with Owen Wilson. It was good, the theme of it was about enjoying the present.

After returning home, I heated up pasta and sauce. We ate and discussed options for traveling. I went online and came across [http://hitchwiki.org/en/ Paris](http://hitchwiki.org/en/Paris) and there seems to be good options for hitchhiking from Paris, France to Germany.

I asked Raegan if she would be okay with that and I told her that I wanted her to feel comfortable. She said she would think about it. We continued eating. I read some information from the website and she said it would be okay with hitchhiking. We're planning to hitchhike to Wiesbaden, Germany, where Ryan is, then stay with him for a week. After that, we plan to hitchhike to the next WWOOF place.

## **Saturday**

Used some information on the website <http://hitchwiki.org/en/Paris> to plan our route. Then, scribbled the information onto two pieces of paper.

This morning, we prepared for departure which, essentially means we cleaned, packed, cleaned some more, threw out garbage, and Raegan was sweet to leave a postcard on the bed with a thank you note to Yseuti, the girl who let us stay in her condo in the Bastille area of Paris. I even left the cookies-- biscuits with chocolate on them for her. She was very kind to let us stay there.

We took the train for 40 minutes to the outskirts of Paris, basically the suburbs, to the Mame-Le-Vallee stop, also the stop for Euro Disney. This is where things got painful. We leave the subway, our backpacks strapped on walking briskly through the crowd of people. I was following Raegan to the bus #59 stop, which runs every hour, usually 5 minutes after the arrival of the RER (the train, subway, metro), so that's why we were hustling.

We get there, unload our gear and sit on a bench and these two teenaged thugs, one latino and another white, approach us.

They were geared out in the usual athletic clothing--baggy pants, sneakers, zipped up hoodie, both of them smoking cigarettes and one blaring music from an mp3 player.

The latino sits beside me and I move the gear away from him.

The white kid says something in french to me, then puts his hand on my ankle to move my foot off of the bench.

I'm so surprised by him touching me, I wasn't sure what to do.

I kind of wanted to punch him, but there were two of them.

Then, the white kid puts his hand on Raegan's ankle to move her foot off the bench.

She moves her foot off the bench and I'm like "hey, what are you doing?" to the guy. He looks at her and me, then says something in French. Then, the white kid is standing there.

I stand up and slip out my taser from my left pocket, slip off the cover, then put the cover and taser back into my pocket. I'm prepared to taser both of these assholes in the neck and kick



them repeatedly in the head and neck if they happen to threaten me or Raegan in any way or touch either of us again.

After a few minutes, they wander off.

"What was that all about?" I asked Raegan. "They were assholes. Touching you."

"They were just trying to have some form of control," she surmised.

About 45 minutes later, bus #59 finally arrives and it was relief to get on and get going, especially since those assholes were gone. I instructed the bus driver to let me know of the stop, reading it off to him from the notes. He drives us to a plexiglass or glass enclosed bus stop that's on A4, this main road heading to Germany, and indicates that this is where we get off.

We thank him, leave the bus, and put our thumbs out and hold a sign that reads:

direction

REIMS s.v.p.

The s.v.p. was for s'il vous plait which means thank you in French. Raegan also drew smiley faces around it.

After 2 hours of hitchhiking and some bathroom breaks where Raegan crosses the street and goes into the woods and I walk a few feet, turn, and pee in the adjacent cornfield, a black hatchback slows to a stop at the intersection behind us. It's a two-door, compact car.

A short, stocky guy gets out of the driver's side and approaches us. I greet him with a smile and handshake. He says something in French. He's smiling. Then, a girl on the passenger side exits, stands there, smiles, greets us. We thank him and get in the car. Raegan dislodges her backpack, gets in, I hand her her backpack, shoulder bag, the sleeping bag, the bag of food, then I get in and reach out to the street, where I had sit my backpack, and pull it in the car, sitting it beside me on the backseat.

The driver guy did not speak English, but his girlfriend spoke some, and translated for him and for us. He worked at Euro Disney, near the train stop, bus stop we had just left. She was on holiday.

She offered cigarettes all around. Raegan accepted. Politely declining the cigarette, I almost felt left out when they all seemed to enjoy the smoke, while he drove through the winding streets of hamlets (small villages in the countryside) and small farms on the outskirts of small towns.

"Do you like music?" He asked. Okay, maybe he did speak English. And better than us at that. Yes, we said. Wi.

He turns on his stereo and the music sounds like that band that plays that song "Wake me up inside" who is that Evanescence? Sounds like a cologne more than a band. And a cheap cologne at that ... Evansesence, for the goth in you. You could meet the girl or guy of your dreams, or maybe go home with a vampire bat following you.

The girl, Tiffany, asks: "Will it be good for you if we take you to (town name, forgot) that is halfway to Reims?"

We say yes, great, and thank her. They take us to this small town, park near a roundabout, we get out, and then they give us 2 slips of paper, coupons, worth \$8 euros each, that you can use to buy food at restaurants or maybe even grocery stores. They were so nice. We thank them. They give us their contact information. Then, they drive off.

We walk to the roundabout, hold the sign for Reims, and start hitchhiking. It starts lightly raining. After about 15 minutes, a car slows to a stop. It's a compact car, two-door hatchback, with a young blonde girl driving and an older gentleman (dad maybe) in the passenger side.

Neither speak French but they're asking us something and I'm like "wi, merci" (yes, thank you) to pretty much everything they are saying. They might have been saying, "Is it okay if I take you home and eat you?" and I would have been answering "yes, thank you".

We load into their car, they drive us to a toll booth, and we hitchhike there.

By now, it's raining, so we stand underneath the toll booth covering. Thankfully, it's automated, so no toll people to tell us to get moving. After about 30 minutes, a four-door hatchback slows to a stop and they wave for us to get in. We do. It's a guy and his son.

They drive us to a convenient store for a coffee break, then hand us \$2 euro coins so we can purchase a drink.

Raegan gets a coffee or an espresso. I buy hot chocolate.

We thank him and give him his change.



We stand around a small red table, the 15-year old son, the father, Raegan and I, drinking the hot beverages and doing our best to maintain the conversation.

The son speaks some English and acts as the translator for the dad.

At one point, the dad says: "He's my baby" while looking at the son.

And the son replies: "I'm not your baby. I'm your son."

LOL!

They take us to Reims, France, since they're headed there, according to the son, "to look for my Mom".

Okay.

I think the dad mentions ex-wife and then talks more in French.

At this point, Raegan and I are nodding. I'm watching for their cues, their facial expressions so I can match them in order to appear like I know what they are saying, even trying to see what their facial expression might be before it happens. I

f body language and the way something is said is important, I'm doing my best to maintain that kind of communication.

When they get near Reims, the son asks us if we want to be dropped off at the highway, to continue hitchhiking to Germany, or to Reims.

Raegan and I discuss our options. She wants to be taken to the train and I want to continue hitchhiking. Her reasons are good, as she explains that Meitz, Germany is far and the train will get us to

Frankfurt, which is near Weisbaden. I want to continue hitchhiking, reasoning that, so far, it has been good and we should continue. Besides, I say, we don't know when the train is leaving and we don't know how much it is. I tell her that I want her to be comfortable, and if that means taking the train, let's do it.

Raegan tells the son that we would like to be dropped off at the train station. He mentions this to his dad. They talk.

Then, he says that there are two trains, a fast one that is expensive, and a slow one, that is cheaper.

We opt for the slow one. They drive us into town and drop us off at the train station. We wander the halls and find a clerk to find out the schedules. Turns out that it's about \$224 euros for two tickets to Frankfurt.

When Raegan asks about a cheaper train, the clerk, this fat guy, explains that there's a train that leaves Paris. Obviously, we don't want to take a train from Paris since that's two hours away.

Perhaps there was a communications barrier, but the clerk kept referring to a train in Paris.

Due to the price, we decide to hitchhike. We wander to an intersection, put our thumbs out, sign out, and stand there in the cold for about two hours. People wave and are friendly for the most part, a lot of them are curious like they have not seen hitchhikers. We are in Reims, France, a quaint little town that seems to be an expensive little cultural hub, with first floor retail shops and apartments above them, that spreads out into narrow streets.

It starts to rain lightly, and we go to a hotel to get directions to a hostel.

We decide to buy the tickets to Frankfurt, Germany. The train leaves tomorrow. The tickets are \$224 euros for two tickets, but we decide it's our only option, as hitchhiking wasn't working in Reims.

We go to Subway, use the coupon the first hitchhiking couple or friends gave us, buy two meals, eat, talk, say we love each other, then walk to the hostel a mile or two away.

We're at the hostel now. I'm about to wake Raegan so we can eat breakfast then start walking to the train to take it to Frankfurt, Germany, where we'll be staying with Ryan, a friend of mine who lives on the army base there. I checked the e-mail and Ryan sent his phone number and said to call when we arrive. He'll pick us up and take us to Wiesbaden, where he stays, and where we'll be staying with him for a week.

## **Sunday**

It took a while for me to fall asleep, since the people in the room next to ours were loud, I woke up early. I suppose this was good, however, since we had to get an early start for breakfast and the long walk (about a mile and half, to the train station).

I awoke and quietly assembled my clothes and then cuddled some with Raegan, who was curled up in a beautiful ball, her long legs bent at the knees and her back curved in an arch, her hair a tangled surprise, her pale pretty face, those delightful eyes, button nose and her soft skin, she's just cute and pretty and smart and I love her.



Once she woke and dressed, we walked downstairs, past the front desk clerk, through the glass walled hallway which had folded, temporary walls that were comprised of crisscrossed wire and which held drawings and illustrations of actors and musicians, including Jack Nicholson, Jimi Hendrix, Iggy Pop and walking past them I pointed to Jack Nicholson's face and said: "I always like my bacon crispy and my eggs runny," with a Jack Nicholson voice, and Raegan laughed lightly.

The hallway with the art took us to another building with spiral stairs that we walked that led to a small room with couches and a flat screen TV and a fuseball table and we walked through there into the dining room, a large room with lots of windows and food sitting in pans, buffet style for self service, and assorted groups, mostly guys in their twenties or thirties, some by themselves, some in groups of two, sitting at tables.

The single people sat silently, munching their cereal.

The groups were in conversations, talking quietly, between sleepy bites of the baguette or spoonfuls of cereal or sips of their orange juice. At some point, two families entered, the parents dressed in shorts and light traveling clothing and the their kids appearing to be 15, 12, 10, 8.

Seeing them, I thought what a cool experience to be traveling with parents as a kid and staying in hostels along the way. Money saving with also the ability to meet other travelers in the common areas and exchange stories and traveling tips.

Raegan and I looked over the buffet, which was in 3 sections, one for cereal, one for food, one for beverages. On the left, there was cereal in these plastic bins, where you turn a handle and it falls out into your bowl or in your hand or, if you want to take a bag

with you, in a bag if you have one. Nearby, cartons of lait (milk) stood in a small flock. In the middle, there were pans of food--baguette bread, slices of angelfood cake, apple sauce, containers of yogurt. On the right side section were the beverages, aluminum machines that dispensed coffee, orange juice and, probably, water, too.

Raegan and I got chocolate cereal with milk, apple sauce and yogurt. I also got a baguette, broke it in half along the middle, and opened up the gold colored wrapped wafers of butter and smeared the butter in the middle. Later, Raegan squished avocado in the middle of this and we ate it on the train. It was delicious.

After breakfast, we returned to the room, packed our gear, and left the hostel.

Outside, the weather was cool and the streets were quiet as it was early Sunday.

I felt healthy and good and the world was full of promise, for I was with someone who loves me and someone who I loved, and we had train tickets to Frankfurt, Germany. It is August and we're traveling Germany and it's great. I'm enjoying this trip.

We walk through the streets of Reims, France, the beautifully quaint town with its old streets and old architecture, mostly first floor retail with apartments above, the morning sunlight dancing through the alleys and over the rooftops.

After 30 minutes, we arrive at the train station. There, we sat and I checked with the clerk a few times about our train, which was scheduled to leave at 10:52am.

Since we had one food coupon worth \$8 euros that was remaining from the two coupons given to us by Tiffany, the first girl who picked us up with her boyfriend for a ride at the Truffaut garden stop in France the day earlier, we decided to use the coupon to buy some food. Nearby where we sat in the lobby of the train station was a pastry, sandwich, coffee shop. We purchased a thon (tuna) baguette which had boiled eggs (quartered) and tomatoes in it, an apple pastry and a water for \$7 euros and change, almost 8 euros. It was a meal and later when we ate it on the train, it proved to be worth buying as it was delicious.



## **Train to Frankfurt, Germany**

Around 10:30, an announcement came over the speaker, saying the platform number of where to be for the train. We walked to the platform, waited, then got on the train.

The first train was a small number of cars, new and modern, like a monorail at Disney World. We took that train for about 10 minutes, got off at the next stop, then walked to the next platform, got on the next train and rode that for about an hour. There was another stop where got off, then got on a train, the final train to Frankfurt, that was so crowded we found a seat for Raegan, while I stood in the middle section until the next stop, when a seat became available. We rode the train to Frankfurt.

## **Frankfurt, Germany**

Once we got to Frankfurt, we called Ryan and he told us he would meet us at O'Rilley's an Irish pub across the street from the train station.

We went there, Raegan ordered a beer, and we watched the conversation between a young man and an older man in the table in front of us.

The young guy was tanned, blond haired, blue eyes, white teeth, good looking, almost like Brad Pitt with an easy eager grin and happy eyes. The guy to the right was short, tanned and wrinkled, with beady eyes and a small upturned nose, skinny, petite, with expressive eyes, looking like a marionette puppet.

I left to go to the bathroom and when I returned, the young guy tells us he is going to the bathroom and asks us to watch his cell phone, as he doesn't know the guy that he's talking with that well

and it's probably okay, but just in case. We agree to do this. He leaves.

Then, Raegan told me that their conversation was funny. She said the older guy was saying something in another language and the younger guy was answering with "I don't know what you're saying".

She said that, at one point, the older guy says something and the younger guy replies "escort service? No, I think you're getting the wrong idea."

We both laughed at this. We watched their exchange.

The young guy returns.

The older guy asks the young guy for cigarettes and he was offering them to him, while trying to talk to him. He offers him cigarettes. Then, the older guy pulls a beer bottle from a bag, opens it, and is about to pour it into a glass when a dark haired waiter notices and tells him he can't do this.

The older guy protests, then shakes the hands of the younger guy, the waiter, and leaves, but asks for more cigarettes first. He asks for cigarettes from Raegan, who offers him one, then he walks off. The waiter explains that he's "the local crazy".

I introduce myself to the younger guy and we get into a conversation with him. His name is Olly, Oliver, and he's been traveling in Asia for 8 months and is now on his way back to Finland, where he lives. He's nice and friendly and tells us stories about traveling, meeting people, this Canadian girl, and how he likes traveling to have fun, even if it means sticking with other travelers instead of trying to be only with the locals. He invites us

to stay with him in Finland and we get his e-mail. Ryan parks his red Ford F-150 pickup truck and we load our gear in and leave.

Ryan was quiet at first so I didn't know what to expect. It turns out Raegan was apprehensive about this too as she mentioned it later when I brought it up.

### **Wiesbaden, Germany**

However, after Ryan drove us to the base where we brought our backpacks to his room. Then, he gave us a tour of some interesting places in Wiesbaden. He drove us to the forest at the mountain top where there was an Ewok village type setup where people could wander from trees to trees, about 30 or 40 feet up, with repelling wires strapped to them, in a kind of up in the air athletic course.

After the forest visit, he suggested dinner at an Italian restaurant on base that was a unique experience. The outside of the restaurant didn't appear to be a restaurant at all. It was a big cement building that looked like a storage building. Inside, it was empty of people, carpeted, and a bored waiter that stood hunched on the countertop at the far end of the room. I felt like we were in a big living room, on a reality show. The food, however, was surprisingly delicious, with free shots that followed, courtesy of the bartender, Erko, from Romania.

Before dinner, Ryan was quiet, so so quiet that it was a bit awkward. Sometimes, I associate quietness with disapproval. The mind fills in the silence with negative thoughts. I think Raegan felt awkward, too. I wondered if he actually wanted us to stay with him or was just being polite



After dinner and after drinking the shots, Ryan became more talkative. He told us interesting stories. I think that he spends a lot of time alone on the barracks. He appears to have become more studious—reading and studying for his classes.

Once dinner was finished, Ryan drives to town and gives us a walking tour of Wiesbaden. It's quaint, overflowing with charm and historic architecture.

We knew that Ryan was a great host. It just took some warming up.

## **Tuesday**

Raegan is clothed, lying under the covers, in bed. I'm beside here, crouched down with the laptop open, typing this.

Ryan is in bed, taking an online test.

The flat screen TV in front of him is broadcasting a wrestling match.

We're in the fourth floor, in Ryan's room, in base in Wiesbaden, Germany.

It stopped raining and I mentioned this to Raegan.

Ryan said he'll be finished in a little while.

Yesterday, he said we could go to Mainz, a town in Germany.

I'm supposing we'll explore this town and other places that Ryan wants to show us and get some food to snack on and probably eat lunch, too.

Now, we're at Ryan's room, fourth floor walkup, where we'll be until Friday, when we hitchhike to our next WWOOF farm.

## **Wednesday**

Ryan drove us to a grocery store and Raegan and I purchased green grapes, bananas, Ruffles potato chips, tortilla chips, salsa, pecan Sandies, and three of those Michellina microwave pasta meals.

We returned to Ryan's room, ate lunch, then ventured out again.

Ryan drove us to Mainz, a town in Germany, where he parked and we walked around. He showed us the town and pointed out bars and restaurants that he had either been to or heard about. It was like being given a private tour.

Toward the end of the day, we went to a restaurant/bar in downtown Wiesbaden, got a table. Ryan and Raegan ordered beers. I ordered water.

Christopher arrived, this friend of Ryan's who Ryan met at church. He was an intense 26 year old, with eyes that would squint intently when listening to you. He explained that he was a mason. He was into politics, online stock trading, and works as a lawyer. He's applying to be a lawyer at the American consulate. He wants help with a website, making money with affiliate programs. I offered to help him. He offered to show me how to make money with currency trading and I said I'm interested. He also explained that he could set up an offshore banking account for me, one that required no minimum balance for checking or saving, one that the government would be unable to keep tabs on.

It sounded good. I told him that I would definitely contact him.

After hanging out, listening, talking at the table with Ryan, Raegan, and Christopher, we left.

Now, Raegan is laying on Ryan's bed, watching a video on her computer, while I sit here, typing this.

Ryan is working the next few days.

We're planning to leave Friday or Saturday to the next WWOOF stop, probably Saturday, since Ryan could give us a ride to the train station or to an area near the on ramp for hitchhiking.

## **Friday**

I woke early and typed up a lengthy blog post titled "How to be Free".

The blog was inspired by what I read at the website [BuildFreedom.com](http://BuildFreedom.com) about how to install new belief systems that are effective for finding freedom in life.

Then, I did a hundred pushups, drank water, and continued writing some other ideas for a future blog post.

Ryan had left earlier to go to work. Raegan slept in.

A few hours later, Raegan gets up, and we talked. She laid in the bed with her laptop open.

I decided to get some food. Outside, on army base, a lunch cart is parked. I bought a double order of french fries from the German who runs the lunch cart in front of the video store, along with a coca cola in a can. The fries were delicious and eating



them, since I had finished typing the long blog and posted it at [kriskemp.com](http://kriskemp.com) was rewarding.

## **Weisbaden, Germany to Traben-Trarbach, Germany**

At around 2pm, there's a few light taps on the door, then Ryan enters. He comes in. We talk. He said he was leaving to get his bike, his motorcycle. Raegan and I discuss coming with him, as he'll be near the Frankfurt airport. We pack our gear, go with him.

At the airport, we realize we don't have the phone number or address of the people we're staying with. We find a table, put our backpacks in a pile. Raegan pulls her laptop out of her backpack and opens it on the table, but the online is not working. I ask information and they say you have to pay for it. She pays \$5 for an hour and gets the phone number of the place where staying, writes it down, then Skype calls them. While she's doing this, I'm looking for the bus that goes to Hahn, Germany.

By the time I find it, I ask a lady waiting at the stop when it leaves and she says ten minutes. So, I walk, very quickly, back to Raegan to let her know and she's on the phone with the German people where we're going to WWOOF. They have a vineyard.

The woman is telling her that once we get to the Hahn airport, we need to take a bus. I tell Raegan the bus is leaving in ten minutes, so she gets off the phone quickly. Before she does, I tell the woman that we'll be in Hahn in an hour and a half. She gets off Skype, folds the laptop, puts it in the zip-up case, then in her backpack. I hold her backpack up, she turns around, slips it on her back. I put mine on, then lead her in the direction of the bus.

We're walking rapidly through the terminal toward the exit where the bus is, then before I'm about to walk out, Raegan asks "Where do we pay?" and I'm not sure, so I walk up to a desk and ask this guy where we pay for the bus, he says "on the bus" and then we rush outside, check traffic, cross the street, check traffic, cross the street, go up to the bus.

I ask the driver "Are you going to Hahn" he says yes and I step on the bus and he says "no", then leads us both to the side where he opens a compartment. I hold Raegan's backpack while she undoes the straps and slips it off, then I put it inside the compartment. Then, I take off my backpack and slip it off and put it in the compartment.

We go inside the bus, it's \$13 euros each for the trip to Hahn. Raegan hands me \$20 euros and I pull \$20 euros out of my pocket, we give him \$40 euros, he gives us \$14 euros back, we walk near the back of the bus and sit down. On the way to Hahn, there's a traffic slowdown but it feels good to be on the bus.

We are quiet for the first half hour, then we talk and laugh as we make up captions for New Yorker cartoons, the ones on the back page that have no captions for them.

We arrive at the Hahn airport, use a pay phone to call the German couple. The guy say his wife is at the bus station about 500 meters away.

I ask him to describe her. He says she's about fifty, has blond hair.

I ask him what she's wearing. He says he doesn't know. (LOL!)



I ask him to call her and tell her to meet us at the airport. He says he doesn't know if she has her phone. I thank him and tell him we'll look for her.

I tell Raegan what he told me. Raegan, smartly, flips open her notebook, writes the woman's name in big letters, then our names under them in smaller letters.

We wander the airport terminal. Raegan holds the notebook as we approach women walking through the terminal.

I walk outside to find the bus station and am not sure what direction it is in. I ask someone in a airport gift shop. He says it's outside at the end, pointing to one side.

We walk in that direction.

We're near the door at the end and we are approached by an attractive brunette. (A brunette. Not a blonde. LOL!)

Ushti greets her with a smile and a hug, and we say hello, then follow her to her car.

## **Traben-Trarbach, Germany**

She drives us to this lovely little mountain top cafe/bar and orders three Coca-Colas. The cafe has a beautiful view of the two towns, separated by a winding river, in the valley below. Ushti and her husband live in the second one. They are both teachers and the husband runs the vineyard for fun. It's a passion of his.

After we finish the sodas, we get in the car and she drives us to her house, a modern house with lots of windows and a beautiful view of the town and hills. Her husband cooked a delicious dinner of bean salad, potatoes with rosemary, and meat patties. He also served us white wine from his vineyard, delicious. For dessert, he served us a pitcher of alcohol and water with 3 different types of peaches, diced up, floating in them that imbued it with a fruit flavor. It was like sangria but with peaches. We talked, then went to bed in the downstairs room, the room of the son. He's sleeping in his sister's room and leaving on Tuesday for Portugal with friends.

## **Saturday August 13**

Raegan and I awoke around 8am.

We are staying in David's room. He is the 22 year old son of the couple whose house we are staying. How did we find this gem of a place? [www.woof.de](http://www.woof.de)

WWOOF'ing - doing a work exchange for room and board, doing gardening in their garden and helping in their vineyard and other tasks.

Raegan said I was sweaty and I was snoring throughout the night. Then, I remembered, that she kept waking me up and asking me

to sleep on my side, because I was snoring. A little after 9am, we walked upstairs, greeted the Jurgen, the husband, and Uschti, his wife, then ate breakfast with them and their daughter, whose name I forget.

After breakfast, Jurgen drove us to this pasture outside of a nearby town where we helped disassemble a large tent, used for the musicians to relax in before and after playing at the music festival that he and his wife started in 1977 and have been running ever since. It now draws 7,000 people a year and they break even on it, putting any profits of it back into it to keep it running. They are both teachers. He teaches Biology and Chemistry, and she teaches something, I forget.

We also did some raking and moved some piles of firewood about 25 feet to another pile. When we were lifting sections of the stage these field mice were running around slowly and confused, so slow that I went to pet one, using the back of my hand near its tail and when I touched it, the mouse let out a "eeeeee" and continued scampering, slowly. It was funny.

A German lady (of course she's German what else would she be we're in Germany ha ha ha) said: "Don't touch it, you can get a disease, and get sick!" and it was kind of funny because she was so intense about it, saying it in a terrified tone of concern.

We're at the house now, in the basement room. Raegan just asked me to read two paragraphs of her blog post. She posts blogs at Tumblr. I just read it and it was so well written.

She asked me what I thought of it and I said: "You have a gift. You should be writing every day and be getting paid well for it. How do you write so well. Usually, it takes years for people to write like that."



Her writing is concise and interesting, honing in on the important parts but leaving enough detail in it so you want to keep reading. She is a really good writer. "You should just be getting paid to write blogs. You're really good."

She thanked me and smiled and I could tell she was encouraged. She got up, went upstairs and returned with a glass of peach infused alcohol and water that Jurgen had put together the night before.

**Tuesday, August 16**  
**11:40am**

As I write this, Raegan is laying in bed, her laptop open, watching "Twin Peaks".

Last night, after dinner, Jurgen invited us to stay at the table for a dessert wine. I politely declined and thanked him, then sat there and drank water, participating in the conversation while Raegan and Jurgen, the dad half of the couple who is allowing us to WWOOF here for a week, drank wine. It was Jurgen's own wine from his vineyard.

Sitting there, playing conversational softball, I realized that this kind of event--sitting, listening, participating in the social interactions offered, constitutes a big part of WWOOFi'ng (World Wide Organization of Organic Farms), in that the WWOOF'ers, in this case Raegan and myself, are obliged to be part of social gatherings. If we say no, we appear to be dismissive, disinterested, or outright rude. So, we say yes.

Sometimes when I get caught in a situation that bores me or does not interest me in any way, I separate myself--one part of me floats off into a world of imagination while another part of me

nods, says "yes" or asks pertinent questions. Since most of the world is sleepwalking anyway, they don't seem to notice, but if they looked deep into my eyes, they would see that I'm already in another dimension.

About ten minutes into the conversation and drink with Raegan, myself, and Jurgen, his son, David walks in the house, then into the kitchen, and parks himself at the table.

His friend, Patrick, arrives. Patrick is a rabbit looking fellow, with piercing eyes that are set far apart almost on the sides of his face, like a Gekko lizard, and jaw line that extends far out from below his nose, almost as if he's making a chimp face. He's an interesting looking young man. For some reason, I get the impression he's smart.

David, the son, is a slim, olive skinned youth with small eyes, small nose, and a warm smile. Soon after they arrive, Thomas, another friend of theirs, arrives.

Thomas is a big guy with big arms, enormous hands, a big head. He reminds me of Tony Robbins, the world renowned self help coach who is about 6'3 and has a big head and huge hands. He actually kind of looks like Tony Robbins, too.

The trio--David, Patrick, Thomas, and their other friend, are leaving for Portugal tomorrow. They're here because they're leaving tomorrow morning, taking an early morning flight from the Frankfurt-Hahn Airport, about twenty or thirty minutes away.

The flight is only two hours long.

As I write this now, barring any unforeseen delays, they are already in Portugal.

David invites us to go drinking with them. As Jurgen invited to drive us up to the top of the mountain, en route to his job as a school teacher, so we could walk back and even hike, enjoying marvelous views of Trarbach and Traben, the two small towns that are nestled on either side of the Moselle River, that winds it's way along the base of the hills.

Considering what I've experienced with Raegan, that when she drinks she drinks a lot and can get quite flirty, I decline on David's offer.

Raegan, though, hears him and says "C'mon, let's go".

"We have to be up early tomorrow," I say to her. "We'll get up in time," she says. "Let's go."

(Three handsome young men inviting Raegan and me to go out for a night of drinking before they leave for Portugal. Me declining out of insecurity. I should put any insecurity aside and agree to go.)

"Maybe you should just go. Would you mind if I didn't go?" I ask, hoping that she'll urge me to go and realizing that I've just jumped off of a diving board that is, hopefully, above a pool of deep water.

I write "hoping" because if she says "no, you can stay, I'll just go", then that will just make things worse, as I won't feel needed. Needless to say, I'm hoping she'll say, "come".

"C'mon, let's go," she says. "It'll be fun. I want to go."

Since she says "let's go", I'm reassured that she wants me to come with her and I feel happy that she wants me to go with her.

"Okay," I say. "We can go. Let's go."



We herd ourselves out into the narrow street, that runs up to the top of the hill, and follow Thomas, the giant, toward a small, two-door hatchback.

Somehow, we cram ourselves into the car, three of us in the backseat while Thomas drives and Raegan sits in the passenger seat in the front.

As Thomas steers the small car around sharp curves, the eloquent streets—a patchwork of cobblestone and fresh asphalt—eaten up below the snout of the compact car, David, Patrick, and Thomas are talking in German. I'm imitating them, and Raegan's talking, and we're all laughing.

It's a great big hullabaloo of smiles and nothingness that fills the car and the outside air while the beautiful old buildings of Trarbach whiz by in a soft blur, standing tall against the dark sky and hazy lamp light.

Outside, the air is cool, fresh, clean, and beautiful, windswept and filtered from the Moselle River and the surrounding mountains and forests, some covered with wine vineyards and perhaps the oxygenated air has a flavor of organic grapes. It's delicious and as the air flows through the open windows, I'm feeling more relaxed by the minute.

Writing about this and thinking about this now, I realize that sometimes the best moments in life come as a result of “letting go” and “letting happen” what happens. Trying to control things only prevents the inevitable. Expectations are premeditated resentments and, at the end of the day, I don't want to have any regrets.

The streets are empty and soon enough we're on the bridge, crossing the Moselle River, into Traben, the beautifully quaint town with historic architecture, like Trarbach it is comprised of four-to-six story buildings that have first floor retail with the remaining floors being apartments or offices. The streets are narrow and winding and rise at a slight but noticeable incline as the village rises up the hill.

Thomas turns the car this way and that way and we're sloshing from side to side, a tangle of shoulder and arms and German conversation.

Each town is small, so the ride is only about 5 minutes long.

We arrive at the bar.

Thomas parks, we crawl out of the car and walk toward the bar.

At this point, I was expecting the bar to be a rowdy enclave of Germans, a posse of all ages, singing songs and holding those giant mugs of beer that you see advertised at Oktober Fest.

As I entered the bar and looked around, however, I noticed that Oktober Fest, if it is supposed to be like a German bar experience, obviously forgot to look at this bar for clues.

And maybe that's a good thing.

The bar is a small room with a curving bar near the front.

In the middle of the island stands a bartender, a gray haired man with a big fat chest, wearing a loose red, button up collar shirt and an expensive looking watch, ring, and a necklace.

He has the demeanor of someone whose made money from illicit activities, and is proud to advertise this with his jewelry. He barely moves. He stores his energy for mental expenditures. Also, he doesn't appear to care about much since he has loaded gun within reaching distance.

In situations like these, where I don't know what's going to happen next, I tend to cover up everything with a lasagna layer of lackadaisicalness. Inside, however, the wheels are turning, the sparks are flying, the pistons are rising and falling, the belts are spinning, the engine is rumbling while it waits for its driver to slip it into first gear. Outside, the car is purring gently and I laugh and am making small talk. This is where my greatest acting skills come into play and most don't notice, which is fine by me. If they did, I might come across as being incongruent or fake when the reality is I want to get along, have a good time, and, in doing so, put the flashlight on someone else. Most people are self-concerned and this allows me to analyze and make adjustments in order to keep the party going.

As long as I can remember, my mind has been prone to hyperboles. The the constructed memory, for me, proves a lot for interesting than reality, even if I have not eaten Ritter's chocolate.

David and Thomas take chairs near the corner, I take a chair with an empty one between us, so Raegan can sit there, which she does. Patrick sits on my right.

For the next four hours, we played drinking games, a silly dice game that involved shaking dice, putting them on a table, and coming up with numbers. A certain number combination meant that you received these metal washers, that sat on a short pole.



Whoever ends up with the most metal washers loses, and has to buy a round of beers for the next game.

Four hours. LOL.

I lost the first game. I played the second game and did not lose.

After that, I declined on playing any further games because the game was boring and I did not want to buy beers for everyone.

I had a \$20 euro bill in my pocket and some euro change. Still, I didn't want to use it for beer.

Raegan got drunk. She had, I think, about five glasses of beer, two brandy & cokes, vodka in a glass with an ice cube, and a big tall beer, a Pilsner, that was wheat colored with a foamy head.

How does she drink so much? She's so petite. Maybe she's shy and the alcohol helps her to feel less shy and more comfortable. Maybe she likes the taste of beer. I'm not judging, just observing.

She went to the jukebox to select a song and ended up getting hit on by some short guy from Spain. Watching her from my seat, to make sure everything was okay, I saw him saying something to her.

Then, I heard him saying "Raegan". She walks to me and I ask her if everything is okay and she says yes.

Some time later, the guy behind the bar, who introduced himself earlier as Michael, invited her to play darts. She kept looking at me while playing darts with him, then waved for me to come over.

That single action, her waving for me to come over to play darts, meant so much to me. It is significant to me when Raegan does

that, when she shows that she cares about me enough to show that she is my girlfriend in front of other people.

Sometimes, I get insecure because I'm 42 years old and she is 23. Her waving me over while playing darts with the guy, was considerate of her. I walk over and hug her and in between her dart-throwing she's dancing and I'm dancing with her, hugging her, kissing her.

"We're gonna go," I tell her.

She tosses 3 more darts. Despite her condition of severe intoxication, her aim is good and all 3 darts hit the dartboard. It's one of those electronic dartboards with the little holes in it, that keep score electronically. After the dart toss, I walk her back to the group, and we sit with them for a few more minutes until we leave.

While driving back, David says, "We're going to go back to the house and drink more."

Hearing that, I get frustrated because, at this point, I'm feeling tired and I want to cradle Raegan in my arms and hold her and kiss her and love her, then fall asleep with her in my arms.

Thomas, the driving giant, parks the compact car.

We spill out onto the streets, tired, drunk, and I'm holding Raegan's hand because she's stumbling to and fro, the world swaying beneath her feet like a ship that's listing.

We enter the house from the basement door and walk into David's room, where Raegan and I have been sleeping.

At this point, Raegan and David go outside to share a cigarette and talk, and I get into a conversation with David, where I'm telling him about my websites. He's a good listener.

Eventually, about 15 minutes later, everyone goes back to David's room to catch a few hours sleep before they leave to go to the airport for their departing flight to Portugal.

## **Thursday**

On Tuesday, even though we had planned to meet Juergin early in the morning in the kitchen, then go with him on his way to school in order to be dropped off at the top of the hill, in order to hike back and enjoy the views, because we went to bed so late, at around 4am, Tuesday morning, we slept in. I woke around 10 or 11am, and Raegan stayed in bed until around noon.

Ushti, Juergin's wife, at hearing this, said: "I knew if you went to the bar this would happen." She was smiling as she said it. "So I told Juergin that they will not be able to make it."

Hearing this, we all laughed. They were not angry or upset. Instead, they acted merry, mentioning that in Germany, "you have to drink the beer, it's delicious", said Juergin.

"Yeah it is," Raegan agreed.

Yesterday, Wednesday, Raegan picked green beans, while I weeded. After she picked a bunch of them, she joined me in weeding a small patch of the garden, a plot where lettuce had been planted, but was taking some time to grow, as the lettuce leaves were tiny compared to the weeds that surrounded them. Then, we moved to another patch of garden and pulled out potatoes and onions. I called this other garden "the rebel garden"



as it has tangles of high growing weeds and flowers among it. Earlier, I varnished one side of the four wooden fence walls, that serve to block the view of the neighbor's back yard, which has junk--TVs and other stuff--in the yard. Later, Raegan varnished the back of the fence walls.

Last night, we had dinner with Ushti, and Juergin was not there, as he was swimming at an indoor pool, with friends, and would go for pizza afterwards. The dinner, comprised of fresh beans that we had picked from the garden earlier, doused in a delicious parmesan cream sauce, and a cheesy potato casserole, that included potatoes from the garden as well, was absolutely delicious. I told Ushti that it was delicious, and Raegan agreed. She said that Juergin helped her make it. That guy can cook. The food he prepares is seriously delicious. Ushti said her thing was cleaning, taking care of the bills, and planning, specifically mentioning vacation plans.

After dinner, Raegan brought her laptop upstairs to the kitchen table, got online, and Ushti helped us plan our route to Berlin. After Ushti helped us, then left to go upstairs to work on schoolwork, as she is a teacher, Raegan turned her head up to me, smiled, and said: "I love you." It was nice to hear. "I love you, too," I said.

We ended up having to cancel the stay in Steinsdorf. I sent the couchsurfing hosts a polite e-mail, explaining and apologizing. Then, Raegan and I cleaned the kitchen, washing the dishes, drying them, and putting them away.

We returned to the room. Raegan asked if I wanted to watch a documentary called "The Global Warming Controversy" or "The Global Warming Hoax". We snuggled in bed while watching it. It

was a 90 minute or 2 hour long BBC documentary, very well done, in which scientists explained that global warming was a misinterpretation of the facts, and that the sun has more to do with global warming than carbon dioxide, which is a byproduct of global warming, not the culprit. The scientists concurred that since so much funding was available for global warming studies, it was difficult for the truth to get out regarding the subject, and those who do say that global warming is a hoax, are branded as a heretic and being in bed with the oil companies.

Although the documentary was interesting, I was tired. After it was over, Raegan noticed this and said: "Awww, your so tired. Your eyes are half closed."

"Are you tired?" I asked her.

"No. I think I had that coffee too late in the afternoon," she said.  
"That was around 4, I think," I said.

## **August**

We just had coffee in the upstairs kitchen. Raegan made it, using the french press, and the whole coffee beans, fresh ground, with milk and raw brown sugar. It was delicious, smooth, sweet.

Last night, in bed, Raegan said: "I love you so much."  
"That's so nice to hear." I told her. "Because I love you so much, too." We cuddled, kissed, then fell asleep.

Last night for dinner, Jeurgin boiled tortellini and made two delicious sauces, pesto sauce, using fresh basil from the garden, and a delicious tomato sauce, using fresh tomatoes from the garden. The tomato sauce was prepared with chopped onions pan fried in olive oil, in a sauce pot. Then, he added tomatoes.

Earlier, Ushti, his wife, soaked the tomatoes in hot water, then showed Raegan and I how to remove them from the hot water, and peel them.

The hot water bath makes the skin easier to peel. Jeurgin chopped the tomatoes and added them to the olive oil-onion mixture, and added diced, fresh rosemary that I picked from the rosemary bush, that sat outside.

The end result was a delicious, tangy, light tomato sauce with a sweet aroma from the onions and oil, and a zesty flavor from the rosemary.

The meal was fantastic.

Jeurgin brought out his wine, that he makes himself, from the vineyard. He has a vineyard in the backyard and one on the side of a nearby hill, that we weeded a few days ago. On the table was a big bowl of tortellini, a bowl of the tomato sauce, a bowl of pesto sauce that was homemade, too. The only thing not homemade was the tortellini and it was delicious. The sauces, however, were spectacular.

After dinner, Ushti invited Raegan and I to the outside patio, where we sat in the dark, stars above us and lights from the nearby towns of Trabin and Trabrach like still fireflies against the dark backdrop of the hills that lie just beyond them. Even the castle, where Ushti took Raegan and I for a coca-cola after she picked us up from the airport, where the bus had dropped us off last Friday, could be seen, illuminating the crumbled top portion of the stone walls.



We sat outside, talking, drinking, laughing. Uschti, Jeurgin, and Raegan drank wine. I drank sparkling water. It was romantic, being in this environment, overlooking a small town in Germany with them, especially with Raegan beside me, as she held my hand and leaned into me affectionately.

## **August**

Last night, while eating a delicious dinner of soup made from garden picked beans and potatoes and other ingredients, along with potato pancakes, a phenomenal result of Jeurgin's skills in the kitchen, eating outside on the balcony overlooking the town of Trabin-Trarbach, the Moog River, and the hills in the distance, Jeurgin invited us to a music festival in a nearby town. We accepted his invitation. Then, he said we have to go, or we'll miss the music.

Hurriedly, we moved the bowls and wine glasses to the kitchen. Uschti, his wife, said she would clean them. Juergin said to leave them so we could get ready to go. We did.

Uschti drove us to a town, then a small wooded area with a lake nearby where the festival was happening--one stage, a fire, small makeshift, buildings with roofs that served as a beer/coca cola station, food station, soundboard tech station.

The first band was talented and played technical rock with atmospheric guitar, kind of like Rush meets Dream Theatre. The second band was rockabilly meets the Dropkick Murphys or a bad imitation of the Dropkick Murphys, with a standup bassist who sang, a guitar, and drums.

The crowd seemed to like both of the bands, judging from the dancing near the front. About 300 people were there, not a lot, but

the clearing in the wooded area where the festival was held did not seem to be able to hold many more people than that.

Jeurgin said that last year, 500 people were here.

Raegan got beer and then said she wanted cigarettes, I told her I'd get one for her, we walked around looking for smokers. Finding one, I approached her, said "Hallo" and then, like a mime, acted as if I was smoking a cigarette, "do you have", pause, "a cigarette".

At this point, Raegan steps in closer and mimes holding a cigarette. The woman fishes in her purse and pulls out a bag of tobacco and rolling paper.

"Oh, great," Raegan says, smiling. "This is better. Danke."

I pretend to be interested in the lady and trying to speak German, until Raegan has rolled and lights the cigarette and then we say "danke" and I say "thank you" and we smile, and walk off.

It got cold, so Raegan suggested we sit by the fire, which is roaring.

There's a few old couches surrounding the fire. She sits at the edge of one. A young kid is sitting on the other edge, appearing to be sleeping or pretending to be sleeping. I sit in the middle. Raegan curls up in a ball and we cuddle. Every now and then, I look over at where Juergin is and see him talking with people, a beer in his hand, watching the band, looking around. As the last band is appearing to finish up, but keeps playing encores, I suggest we approach Juergin, so we leave the couch and the warmth of the fire, approach Juergin, and ask if he wants to go.

"This band has one more song, then we'll go," he says.

They finish the set, we walk down the hill. He calls a taxi. We get in, another guy is on my left, heading to the same town. We go home, dropping him off first.

This morning, we took a train to Berlin for only \$8 euros.

Awesome.



## **Berlin, Germany**

### **Monday**

Currently, in Berlin, Germany, staying at a punk house, first floor, with high ceilings. Ben, the kid who's the boyfriend of Janine, who we got the train

ride with to Berlin, said we can stay here as long as we like. He's letting us stay in his roommate's room, who is out of town for two weeks. He called him and asked, then told us we could stay here. Either Janine or him, Ben, asked where we were staying and I said we're looking for a place to stay Monday and Tuesday. That was nice of him to call his roommate, ask him, let us stay here, and then offer us an extended invitation to stay as long as we like. Awesome. Thank God.

Tatiana and her girlfriend, and Janine, the friend of Ben, invited Raegan and I to an electro concert tonight at a bar, so we're going there later. They said it's a small bar. Sounds interesting.

Later, some of Ben's punk friends arrived to his apartment. We hung out in Ben's room and talked. It was Ben, his friend, whose name I forget, Raegan, and me. They were drinking beers. I had some of Raegan's beer and was drinking water. Ben's friend had a little dog with him, that sat on his lap.

The conversation was centered around politics and living independent from the state. The dog owner went so far as to say he didn't like Germany, the state.

After more of Ben's friends arrived, we walked to a nearby park, drank more beer, and talked and listened to music. Later, we went to a punk bar, drank shots of Mexikana, talked, laughed, stacked the paper coasters for beer into buildings and pretended they were cards.

She's watching "Twin Peaks". I'm typing. Outside, the rain has subsided. Later this evening, around 7pm, we're going to our next couchsurfing location, in Berlin, Germany.

I love Raegan.

Around 6pm, we start to pack our gear, then walk out with Ben and Janine, the two friends who we stayed with at the punk house. It's Ben's living space and Janine is a friend. They are both very nice.

## **Berlin - CouchSurfing at Johnny's**

We walked to the subway. Janine purchased a ticket for us, since I gave her money for a ticket yesterday that we did not use, then waved goodbye to them as we sat on the subway train, before the train's outside view turned into a blur as it sped away.

Raegan is skilled with directions. We get off at the right exit, then follow his directions, which I had written onto a sheet of paper, until we find his house. We ring the bell. He buzzes us in.

This would be our second couchsurfing location in Berlin. The first, at Ben's, was incidental and a blessing, as we had not planned it. Ben was so kind as to arrange for us to stay in one of their rooms that was vacant for a few days.

We open the door, walk through a hallway, open another door that leads to a courtyard. There's a building on the right.

"He said it's on the right," Raegan says.

We enter the building and walk up the stairs.

At the third floor, we knock on the door, it opens and we're greeted by Jonny Weckerle, who will be our couchsurfing host for the next two days, through Thursday evening.

He's a short, petite, balding man, probably late 20's or early 30's, and he greets us shyly, with a smile and keen eyes that seem curious and insecure, as if they're dropping question marks all over the floor to statements he refuses to ask. From jump, the entire vibe is weird.

Johnny is extremely nice and kind. He appears to be very shy.



Raegan and I lumber inside the small apartment, through the front door, that leads to a tiny kitchen, and into a living room, with a futon. Beyond the living room is his room.

We unstrap our backpacks and gently drop them to the floor, beside the chair that is opposite the futon.

Then, we sit on the futon and make small talk with Jonny, this quiet and nervous fellow, who's insecurities seem so great that they balloon around us, leaving little room to breath.

I can already tell and I'm sure Raegan can, too, that this couchsurfing experience is going to be somewhat uncomfortable, because the host seems so uncomfortable with himself.

When I ask Jonny a questions, he answers with a giant sigh, as if I'm deflating his favorite beach toy, a stuffed whale that he's been keeping since he was a kid.

The sigh is a preface to his quiet answers that begin with "Well, I think ..." or "Maybe ..." as if he cannot answer a question because he sees ten sides to everything, so his opinion has been turned into buckshot, leaving the recipient injured, confused.

He asked us what we were going to do for dinner. We walked to a nearby produce stand. He buys the produce. Then, we go into a grocery store. I purchase ingredients to make an alfredo sauce. We return to his apartment, Raegan and I make dinner--whole grain pasta with Alfredo sauce and salad. We eat. Jonny offers us wine, which we accept.

After dinner, we sit on the couch, Raegan on my left, myself in the middle, Jonny on the right, and watch "True Grit", on the living room wall, as Jonny has a projector attached to his laptop. That was cool.

Then, we go to bed.

### **Wednesday, August 24**

Today, we took a subway to a concentration camp site, with a holocaust memorial. We rode the subway for free there and back. No one asked for our tickets. We did not buy any tickets.

As we were leaving, Raegan said, "I love you." I told her that "that's nice to hear because I love you, too".

On our way back to the train, we stopped at a Vietnamese restaurant, ordered a delicious meal, then walked back to the train.

Now, we're at Jonny's. He's at a meeting. When he returns, we plan to watch a movie and maybe cook some food.

## **Berlin - couchsurfing with Yashkin**

### **Thursday, August 25**

We're couchsurfing with Yashkin, a 27 year old Berlin resident who was born in Guatemala. He took us on a bicycle tour that was 8 hours long, included a big part of the city, including the Berlin Wall. He took us to an indian restaurant and paid for it. He lives in a 3rd floor walk up, wood floors, one big room, and a kitchen that connects to a bathroom. No kitchen sink, so dishes are washed in the bathroom sink.

### **Friday, August 26, 2011**

Raegan's sleeping in, she said she felt sick, her stomach hurt. Once she gets up, we're going to a nearby coffeehouse with internet, to get online to plan the trip to the next WWOOF location, about an hour-and-a-half away. We're planning to leave sometime tomorrow. We'll probably take a train as far north as we can, then hitchhike from there.



## **Train to Sternhagen, Germany**

### **Saturday**

We woke to say goodbye to Yashkin, our kind and terrific host, who was preparing to leave for work at the coffeehouse. We thanked him, said goodbye. After he left, we returned to bed. We both slept. Normally, I am not tired once I awake, but I slept well.

We pack our gear, clean the room, fold the sheets, clean the kitchen, leave a thank you note for Yashkin, and leave the key under the doormat. Raegan writes that the key is under the mat on the thank you note.

We walk to the subway train, and "black ride" (ride for free, no tickets) all the way to Bernau, the last stop on the S2. Black riding is a bit risky, since our trip involves switching trains and staying on the last one for about 40 minutes, while it makes a high number of stops, five or six, near the end, making stops every one minute. I watch for train cops.

At Bernau, we get out, and Raegan asks the bus clerk about the bus schedule.

I ask where to buy tickets from another clerk at a store across from the bus clerk.

We buy a train ticket for \$20 euros, then ask where we need to stand. A nice girl tells us where to go. We go there, wait for the train.

While waiting, Raegan has to pee. I look at this small abandoned building about 50 yards from where we're standing, wave her over, and suggest she pees there. She does. The train arrives.

We cannot find a seat, so walk forward on the train, and upstairs, and see a lot of empty seats. We sit there for about 40 minutes until the train station lady asks for our tickets, then says something to the effect of this is first class.

She asks for my name and I tell her we'll move. We move to second class, downstairs, with fold out seats, stash our gear under the seats, and face each other, hug, kiss, talk.

Across from us sit two guys speaking in German, one has a bottle of red wine. Their wives and children walk in. Their bicycles and backpacks are nearby. Apparently, they are going on a bicycling tour and camping. They leave at a station before ours.

We arrive at Prenzlau, get out. I ask two people if I can use their phone to call and they say no. I tried using the T-mobile phone booth but the directions were in German, so I was unsuccessful.

I go across the street to a grocery store, ask a clerk if I can make a call. She says wait, then makes a call. Another store worker, a woman who is stocking the shelves, walks toward us. I explain the dilemma that I need to call someone and don't know how to work the phone, then ask her if she can make a call for me. She does. I talk to Julianne, tell her we're at the train station. She says she'll come. I thank the store clerk, return to the train station, tell Raegan, she says "great" and we wait for Julianne.

20 minutes later, Julianne arrives in an old red Volvo station wagon. We get in, then go to her place.

## **Sterhnagen, Germany**

### **Tuesday**

Julianne Dammingier, the woman who runs the farm where we're currently WWOOFing, is a hard working lady who keeps cows, horses, a donkey, and 2 llamas. Because she has a farm, she receives a discount on taxes that go toward health insurance. She said her boyfriend, Frank, a website developer, pays about \$300 a month. She pays about \$60 or \$70 a month.

So far, the work that we've done includes: milking cows, chopping wood, chopping plants in the horse pasture that are bad for the horses, then carrying the plants and dropping them in a pile by the river.

For money, Julianne gives piano lessons. Also, she barter her milk for other food she needs, like apple ginger juice, and also for this kind of currency that is used among farmers to buy and sell products and merchandise between themselves. It's a small farming community in Germany.

The food here is mainly milk based--yogurt, milk, butter, cheese--or apple based--apple compote, apple juice, apples--with other foods like bread, and also yogurt with fruit and granola, coffee, tea, carrot and onion soup with pasta in a tomato-milk sauce that tastes like penne ala vodka. The food is delicious.

### **Saturday**

Earlier today, after a breakfast that consisted of our choice of boiled eggs, whole grain bread, fresh jams--plum, banana-orange-rhubarb, fresh butter, fresh milk, fresh cream, a pot of coffee, a pot of tea, sugar, a bowl of chopped lettuce--with Julianne Dammingier, the lady who we're WWOOFing with, and her boyfriend, Frank, Julianne left to run an errand and Frank left



to go to work. Raegan and I scooped up the poop from the donkey, the horse, and the llamas that was mixed in with wet hay that laid in the stable. We wheelbarrowed it to the back, dumped it in a pile, and replaced it with dry hay.

Now, Raegan and I are in the loft. We're about to go outside to see what Julianne wants next. We're probably going to put the tarp over the hay to keep it dry. The yoga instructor, that we met two days ago, who lives down the road, invited us to make apple cider today, so we're probably going to do that afterward.

This evening, around 5pm, we're going to go to Prenzlau, to the train station, take a train to Hamburg, then another one to the airport, spend the night in the airport, then take a flight to Dusseldorf, Germany, then another flight from Dusseldorf to Miami, Florida, where Raegan's Mom will pick us up.

## **Trains and Bus to Hamburg, Germany**

This night was a tiresome, arduous journey of riding the train, six hours, with about five different connections in between, from Prenzlau to the Hamburg train station.

Some of the rides were about an hour long. Others were only a half hour or less. So, once we got to a station, we'd throw our backpacks on, grab the remaining gear--sleeping bag and smaller pack--and walk as fast as possible, looking for the next train to the next destination.

At midnight, we ended up at the Hamburg train station, a massive train station, densely crowded with weekend partygoers. Most of them appeared to be twenty somethings, the guys dressed in jeans and t-shirts and the girls wearing short dresses or shorts and dolled up with makeup.

The Hamburg train station is cavernous, littered with restaurants and cafes and the noise from all the partygoers. It was loud, crowded, and insane. It was kind of stressful, too, since Raegan and I, following the signs that pointed to information, found the information station closed.

We ended up on a train that was so crowded, we kept our backpacks on.

Then, Raegan said: "I don't think this is the right train."

She was looking at the train route map near the ceiling and hearing her say that left me with a sinking feeling.

It was hot with all the people standing shoulder to shoulder within the train car. My pack bumped into someone sitting down. I looked at the guy and said "sorry" and he looked at me sternly

and then I looked at him and raised my shoulders like “really? it’s not like i can move” until he looked away.

He has no right to expect not to be bumped in a train this crowded.

The train was sardine packed with humans looking for fun, love, and other ways to get lost in the wee hours of a Saturday night as it crosses into Sunday morning.

## **Sunday**

As people got off at the next stop, Raegan found a seat, then said “sit here” as she pulled one down next to her, so I did, leaving the backpack on.

A blonde haired girl with an Irish accent overheard Raegan and I talking about how to get to the bus station. She told us where to go. It’s nice to get help from someone who is a complete stranger. She got off at the next stop. We thanked her and she walked away, waving, with a kind smile.

A twenty something kid nearby, behind the couple across from us--who looked to be in their forties, both wearing jeans and white collar shirts, as if they were retired models from a Gap ad in the eighties--asked us if we knew where we were going.

“We’re looking for the train station.” I told him.

He told us where to go, then offered to walk us there. We thanked him.



At the bus stop, he and his girlfriend, a short blonde wearing tight jeans and Ked's, who was laconic, directed us where to go, walking us to the bus stop. We thanked them and they walked away.

Across the street, I saw some bushes, told Raegan "I have to go the bathroom, I'll be back" and then walked across the street, found a space in the bushes, peed.

When I returned, I saw Raegan talking to a guy and a girl.

Raegan was rolling a cigarette.

They introduced themselves.

We talked.

He said he was from the Czech Republic and living in Hamburg, but hoped to go the United States to do computer work.

With his attire—a white T-shirt with wings or skulls on it in black ink, silver necklace, denim—he looked like a 90's metal fan, but this outfit seems common to guys in Germany.

We talk with them for a little while. Then, they leave.

The bus rolls up and stops nearby.

The driver and someone else inside are taking a break, eating something.

A few minutes later, the bus pulls up. We get on. I pay \$2.60. We walk to the back of the bus, set our gear down, and watch the outside world of Hamburg pass by for the next few minutes until we arrive at the Hamburg airport.

## **Hamburg Airport - Germany**

The Hamburg airport lobby greets us with these enormously high ceilings, like a warehouse space, probably 40 feet in the air, that opens to the second floor balcony.

We join the ranks of other weary travelers who have parked their tired bodies on the seats, while waiting for their departing flights. The stairways to the second floor are blocked by these poles, I'm guessing, for the next few hours, maybe for the cleaning crew or for security purposes or whatever.

We get online. Raegan pays for 3 hours of internet time. Then, she sees a nearby cafe, goes there, orders a beer, a Hefenvizen, while being online for a bit. We talk. She orders another Hefenvizen. We talk some more, while I keep looking over at our gear sitting on the nearby chairs in the waiting area. We both use the bathroom multiple times.

A few hours later, maybe around 2pm, we return to the seats. Raegan curls up, her beautiful head on my lap, sleeping under the pink fleece blanket, while I sit there for two hours, staying still, so she can sleep.

## **Flight to Dusseldorf, Germany**

Later, around 8am, we check our bags, then board the first flight headed to Dusseldorf. As the flight takes off, a girl across from us, starts crying loudly, and this freaks me out, as I sometimes get afraid to fly, and I start getting nervous.

She's curled up in her boyfriend's arms. The flight's only 45 minutes long. Once we disembark the plane, we search for the next flight, then find it, board it.

## **Flight from Dusseldorf, Germany to Miami, Florida**

This flight is on a big plane with 3 aisles. Raegan has the window seat and I'm sitting beside her.

### **10am**

The plane flight is smooth, with very little bumpy spots, but I'm still uncomfortable for most of the whole flight, since we're 38,000 feet in the air and I have these visions that keep coming to my mind, visions of another plane running into us, then us plummeting to the ground, then me standing before the Judgment Seat of God, while the weight of eternity hangs in the balance, of a final destination in either Heaven or Hell, and I'm afraid that my "persistence in doing good to seek glory, honor, immortality" has not resulted in my going to Heaven.

If you want to know more about this, visit [EvangelicalOutreach.org](http://EvangelicalOutreach.org) and [SpiritLessons.com](http://SpiritLessons.com)

The bottom line is this: I'm afraid of flying because I'm afraid that, if, something happens, everyone on board is doomed and we're all going to die and I'm not sure, since I now believe that Salvation requires maintenance and that there must be a persistence in doing good, if I'll make it to Heaven.

So, in short, I'm afraid of dying in a plane crash, that's why I'm, sometimes, afraid of flying. With trains or cars or even hitchhiking, I feel that there are multiple ways of escape. With a plane, however, because it's so high in the air, if something goes wrong, it could be all over. Also, it feels unnatural to me, even in a plane, having 38,000 feet of air under my feet.



## **Arriving in Miami, Florida**

Thankfully, we arrive safely, landing in Miami, Florida, and there's applause, by others first, then we join in, as we land. The plane ride was really good, actually, as it was smooth for most of the entire way. Also, we were served two meals, along with a snack of cookies, and servings of our choice of coffee, tea, water, apple juice, orange juice, tomato juice, white wine, red wine.

On the plane, I took a few sleeping pills and they didn't appear to work, although, at one point, I was slurring my speech, was moving my arms really slowly which is uncharacteristic for me, and Raegan pointed out that my eyes were red and puffy, as if I was drugged. I was drugged, self medicated on sleeping pills that my body or my mind or both chose to override, or ignore.

So, even though we leave Germany at 10am, and it's a 10 hour flight, we arrive in Miami, Florida at 2pm on the same day, due to the time difference, being six hours behind, between Florida and Germany.

After going through multiple lines for customs, we find Margaret, Raegan's Mom, walking toward us, flailing her arms up and down, a big bright smile on her face, her blonde mane sticking up like the Lion King has just awakened, walking toward us. Nearby is Rocky, Raegan's Dad, and it's great to see them, as they grab our bags and we find their truck.

They drive back to their 9th floor condo. On the way there, I call Mom and tell her I'll be with them tonight. We arrive at the condo. Rocky serves us delicious French onion soup he's been making all day, left simmering while he and Margaret went to pick us up in Miami, along with delicious veggie burgers for Raegan and me.

After dinner, we watch "The Forgotten", some of it, then go to sleep.

### **Air Berlin flight**

To return to America, we booked a flight with Air Berlin, out of Hamburg, Germany to Miami, Florida. The nine-hour-and-51 minute flight was smooth. The stewards and stewardesses were polite. They served a delicious hot meal, a snack, and drinks, your choice of water, white wine, red wine, soda, juice. There was even an in flight movie, "Midnight in Paris" that you could watch free. Listening to the movie required headphones, a few euros each.

### **Our Visit to France and Germany**

Visiting France and Germany was an amazing experience. Both countries offer an architecture rich in history and a culture that is interesting and friendly.

If you want to travel like we did, simply do what we did, by using the websites that we did, in order to work on farms in exchange for room and board, and couchsurf the rest of the time.

[wwroof.net](http://wwroof.net)

[wwroof.fr](http://wwroof.fr)

[wwroof.de](http://wwroof.de)

[couchsurfing.com](http://couchsurfing.com)

Our experience hitchhiking was good, except for the two times where we did not get a ride and decided to take a train.

The nice thing about visiting Europe is that when you return home, you still take it with you. It broadens your perspective and shows you that the opportunities are almost endless, of what can be accomplished when you make a plan and take action.



## **What I Learned from traveling in France and Germany**

You might assume that people are the same everywhere and, partly, this is true. People do have the same needs--the need to be loved, the need to have something to do, the need for shelter, the need for significance. The interesting thing, however, is to see how people satisfy these needs in different ways.

Traveling gives you an up close look at how people satisfy the same basic wants and needs in different ways.

While traveling, I felt like a cultural anthropologist, especially when I put pen to paper, almost every evening, to chronicle the day's events.

### **French**

The French live differently than Americans. They take two hour lunch breaks—an hour for lunch, an hour afterward for a nap, or just to relax to let the food settle. The food they eat has high quality ingredients, which makes it taste better. They use organic ingredients.

The French value relationships and good food. Some of the kitchens we cooked in and the dining rooms that we ate in were kind of messy. Often, the dishes were mismatched. That was not an issue however, because the conversation was interesting, the meals were delicious, and the experience, therefore, was memorable.

Instead of valuing superficial things like matching dishes and glassware, they value high-quality food and high-quality conversations. In this way, the French are philosophers and

poets, highly intelligent with excellent conversational skills and excellent cooking skills.

At the first farm we stayed, the TV would be on during lunch, so the farmer could get updates about the weather. Besides that, however, the TV was rarely on. One day, Raegan and I were babysitting Yannik and Marie's children, so we watched "Diehard 3", with Bruce Willis, in French.

This was one way to entertain ourselves and to learn French. The movie was so boring, and the dialogue was mainly one word commands, like "Go!" and "Get out, now!" Perhaps the dialogue was changed for the French-speaking version.

We didn't learn much French watching this movie.

## **Germans**

The Germans, although they do not take two hour lunch breaks, seem to value relationships, too. They are industrious and hard working. Most of the Germans we met spoke multiple languages-- German, English, and some French. The Germans that we stayed with do not watch TV. I don't think they had the TV on once while we were there.

The Germans we met were highly intelligent. The conversations with them were straightforward. For the most part, they seemed serious, but also up for a good time. Juergen and Ushti, the married couple who we stayed with in Traben-Trarbach were kind and considerate with us, offering us delicious homemade food and a rich experience working with them in their garden on on the vineyard.

## **Are Europeans really different?**

Granted, perhaps the reason why we encountered such behavior among French and Germans may be due to the fact that they were either WWOOF hosts or Couchsurfing hosts.

[www.woof.net](http://www.woof.net)

[couchsurfing.com](http://couchsurfing.com)

Being in either category might mean that they share the same ideas about life.

Compared to Americans who I've met, however, I find both the French and Germans nicer, more considerate, and more generous. Americans tend to be guarded, cautious, and suspicious.

If you have yet to travel to France or Germany, I encourage you to go. You're likely to return with a different way of seeing the world or, perhaps, raised standards for yourself and for others.

## **Traveling changes you**

Traveling, especially to another country, will change you because once you travel to another country, you'll look at things with a broader perspective.

Traveling is an education that can bring about opportunities that are both unforeseen, unexpected, and wonderful.

It's possible to travel for months and probably even years if you travel the way that we did.

The world is waiting for you to explore it.



## **Set a date and go**

Instead of saying someday you will travel, set an actual date that you will leave.

Then, between today and that day, plan your itinerary (schedule of where you will stay and how you will get from one place to the next).

If you are scared, then plan your trip so well that you have back up plans, and backup plans for back up plans.

Then, when the day comes, go.

You'll be glad you did.

Kris Kemp

writer, musician, photographer, traveler, creative entrepreneur  
[bicycledays@yahoo.com](mailto:bicycledays@yahoo.com)

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[TravelCheapBlueprint.com](http://TravelCheapBlueprint.com)

Your guide to traveling anywhere for \$5 dollars a day or less  
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Self-Development Made Simple  
[KrisKemp.com](http://KrisKemp.com)

Digital Marketing Made Simple  
[KrisKempCreative.com](http://KrisKempCreative.com)



Paris, France  
Above, right: Streets  
Below: Sunset from the 9th floor  
apartment balcony, Bastille  
section of Paris, France.



## About the Author



Kris Kemp is a writer, musician, photographer, traveler, real estate investor, and creative entrepreneur. His writings include 19 ebooks, 5 screenplays, 2 musicals, a novel, and hundreds of blog posts and email sequences. Although he has a variety of interests, they share the common theme of freedom—travel/location freedom, time freedom, financial freedom, health freedom, creative freedom.

Kris Kemp  
[bicycledays@yahoo.com](mailto:bicycledays@yahoo.com)

[KrisKemp.com](http://KrisKemp.com)  
Self-Development Made Simple

[KrisKempCreative.com](http://KrisKempCreative.com)  
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Milan, Italy

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Thank you for reading this ebook!

Kris Kemp

[bicycledays@yahoo.com](mailto:bicycledays@yahoo.com)