



THE BLACK SEA TO THE NORTH SEA - 2018

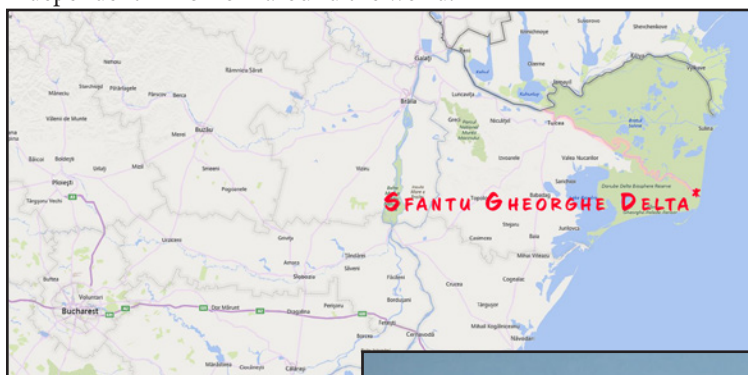
Our overall route is shown to the right, beginning with a few days in Bucharest (Flying Pig Adventure #39 already published), and ending in Amsterdam / the North Sea, where we also spent a few days (and will be covered in an upcoming Flying Pig Adventures travelogue).

All this was supposed to be on a single ship, but river water levels along the way required some changes.

In the area of Budapest, the river levels were so low we had to abandon the ship and resort to buses which over a few days took us to a place further upstream on the Danube where we could continue our journey on different ship. The ship we transferred to was built a couple of years before the one we had been on before the Budapest abandonment. That ship had been on it's way to the Black Sea going the opposite way so all the passengers just switched ships.

After meeting up with the rest of our travel companions at the Bucharesti hotel we were all bused a couple of hours away to our ship on the Danube. From there we headed down river towards the Black Sea and into the Danube Delta. The Danube splits up into several waterways. We took a southern branch, the Delta's oldest, most winding arm, Brațul Sfântu Gheorghe. It is the least used by freighters and fishing boats, wider but shallower than the Sulina arm.

Sfântu Gheorghe is a small village of brightly painted Lipovani and Ukrainian cottages that has subsisted on fishing since the fourteenth century. Most prized is the sturgeon, whose eggs, icre negre or black caviar, once drew thousands of Romanian tourists here on shopping trips. The catch is not what it used to be, though you still might find some caviar if you come in late August or early September. The reed and mud houses, most of which support colonies of swallows, are the main attraction of the village. Most tourists come for the relatively untouched beach (stretching 38km north to Sulina) or to make trips into the surrounding marshes. A large tractor, one of the two or three motorized land vehicles in the village, carries tourists the 2km to and from the beach in a trailer, departing every hour or so from the centre – the schedule should be posted on one of the information boards near the main square. These days, the village is best known for hosting the fabulous Anonimul Film Festival in mid-August, a week-long celebration of independent films from around the world.





Below and right is the green-brown Danube meeting the blue-green and somewhat choppy Black Sea, just downstream from St. Ghieorghe, Romania. This is as far as we could safely venture as the flat bottom design of the ship would not do well in the choppy waters of the Black Sea. The Danube Delta is the second largest river delta in Europe, after the Volga Delta, and is generally considered the best preserved delta on the continent. The greater part of the Danube Delta lies in Romania. Its approximate surface area is 1,603 square miles, of which 1,331 square miles is in Romania.



Some water scenes from around Sfântu Gheorghe.





We got to walk around a bit in Sfântu Gheorghe.



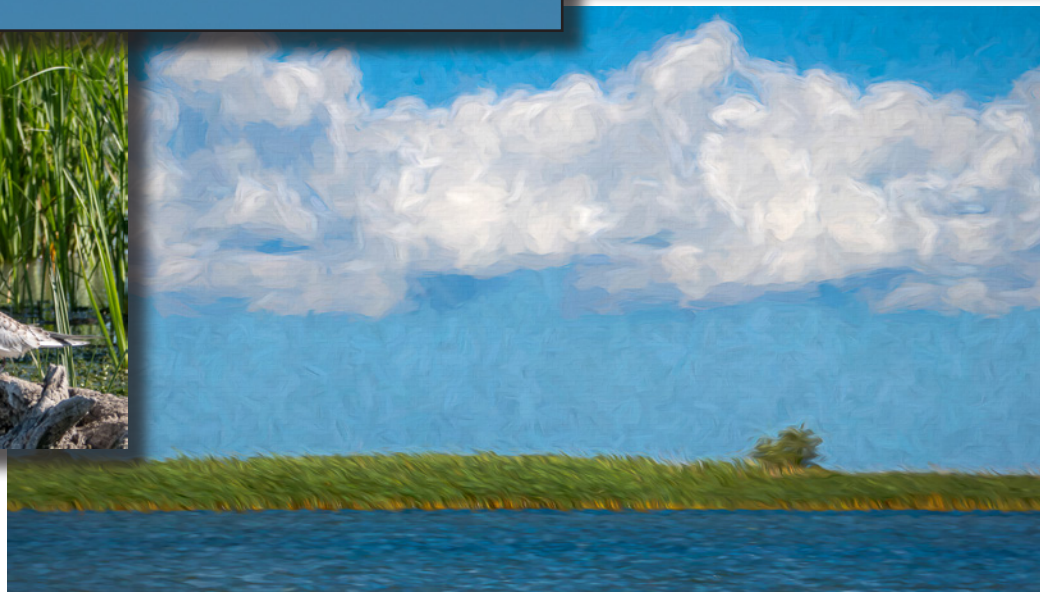
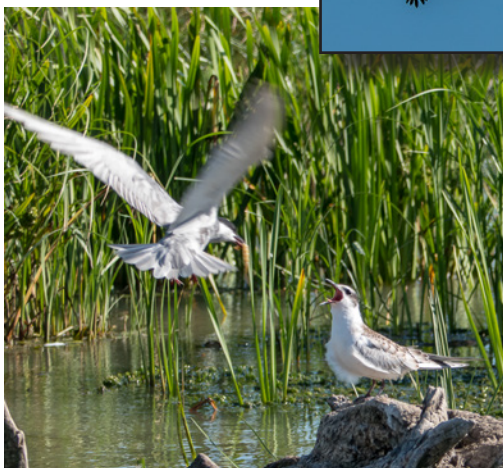
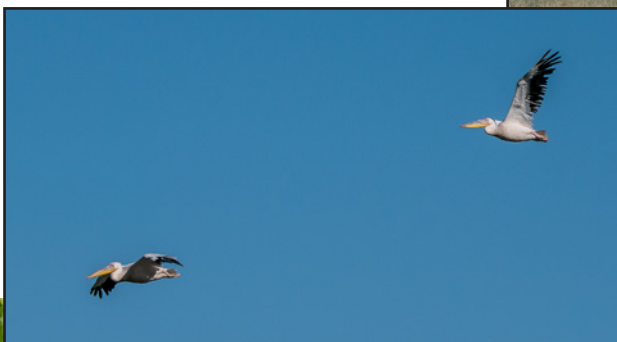
The Sfântu Gheorghe post, telephone and several other government offices.



The local police vehicle above hasn't seem to have gotten much use and it's abilities to actually function were suspect, the one below seemed more functional and the officer more relaxed.



We got a short locally guided tour out into the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve to see some bird life and typography.





From Sfântu Gheorghe we headed back upstream on the Danube.

Riverside camping was a common sight in the rural areas we passed through.



It was pretty warm on the Danube and we saw plenty of people and animals using the Danube to cool off a bit.



This ship is typical of the cruise ships (as well as our own) that we passed frequently along the way.



There were lots of barge ferries going back and forth across the rivers too.

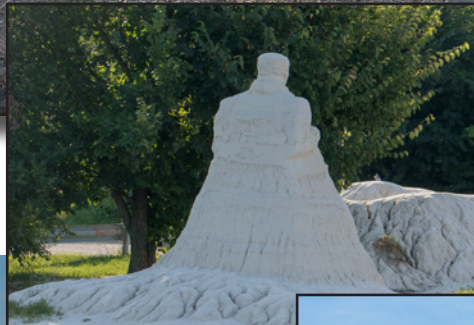




Rousse (Ruse) is the fifth largest city in Bulgaria. Rousse is in the northeastern part of Bulgaria, on the right bank of the Danube, opposite the Romanian city of Giurgiu, approximately 47 miles south of Bucharest, where we had been just a couple-three days before. It is the most significant Bulgarian river port, serving an important part of the international trade of the country.

Rousse is known for its 19th and 20th-century Neo-Baroque and Neo-Rococo architecture, which attracts many tourists. It is often called the Little Vienna. The Rousse-Giurgiu Friendship Bridge, until 14 June 2013 the only one in the shared Bulgarian -Romanian section of the Danube, crosses the river here. Not able to read this language at all, I choose this manhole cover souvenir selfie photograph for the design not any geographically documenting text, (Wendy was off doing something else as it was too hot for her to be street walking).

When docked in Rousse (Ruse), Bulgaria there were some strange 'white lumps of something' along side us on the river bank. Upon investigation, there were some sort of temporary sculptures, but the sculpted portion of the 'lumps' were only seen from shore. The sculpture to the far left, as seen from the ship, did indicate to me that there was more to be seen... and there was. This one was a sculpture of Nikola Tesla, the Serbian-American inventor, electrical engineer, mechanical engineer, physicist, and futurist who is best known for his contributions to the design of the modern alternating current electricity supply system. Nikola Tesla was born in Smiljan, Austrian Empire (modern-day Croatia) and is celebrated all over the current political boundaries of the old Austrian Empire in this area.





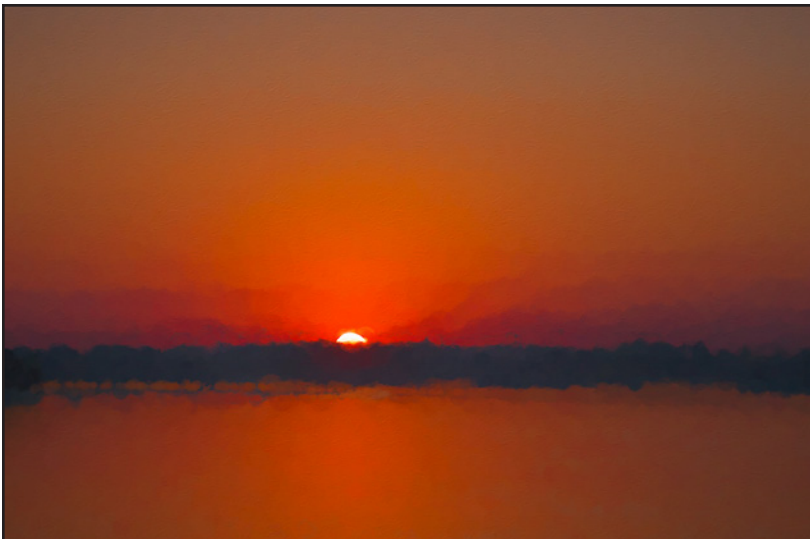
I relied on techniques other than text signs to wander around Rousse.

The art and architecture was what I feel is very austere, linear and reflective of the days of communism in the Eastern Bloc and countries that were under Soviet domination.

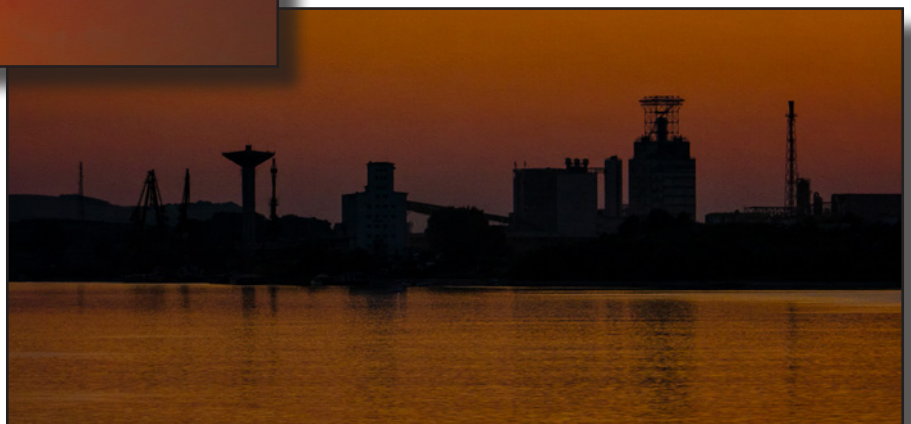




Rousse had some nice parks and a definite outside cafe culture. On our way out of Rousse and on up the Danube, we picked up some entertainment and after their performance dumped them off at Port Svishtov and continued our way into the sunset and upstream to our next stop.



As one would expect, there is plenty of industry and major industrial complexes along the Danube too. For beauty, better viewed in silhouette and late sunset.





The next morning we awoke to new sights as we continued on upstream.



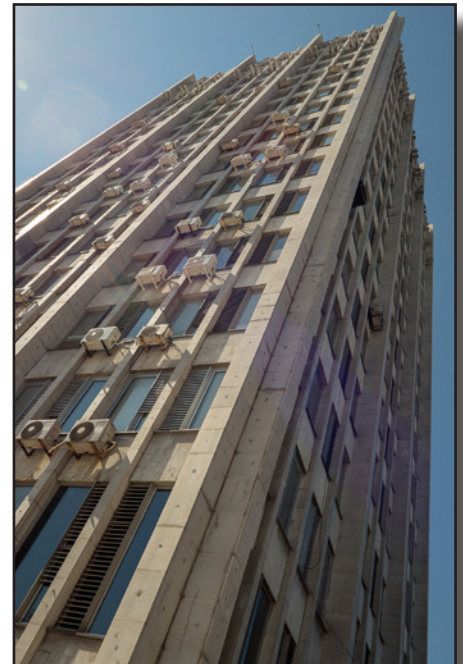
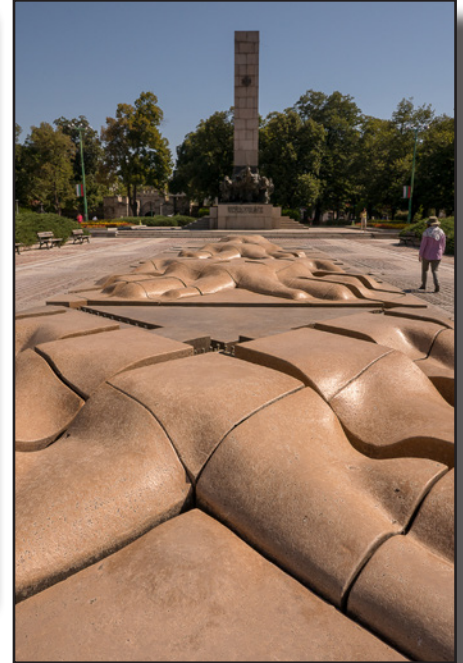
We stopped at Vidin, a port town on the southern bank of the Danube in north-western Bulgaria. It is close to the borders with Romania and Serbia, and is also the administrative centre of Vidin Province, as well as of the Metropolitan of Vidin. There was time to take a short walk-about in the town, then we were to take a bus to Belogradchik Rocks, a group of strangely shaped sandstone and conglomerate rock formations located on the western slopes of the Balkan Mountains near the town of Belogradchik.



Vidin is one of the poorest cities in the EU (some say the poorest of all), but it is a town with many historic and cultural landmarks. Tourism has experienced a decline except for groups like us that stop by while on Danube cruises.



Vidin boasts two well-preserved medieval fortresses. We visited the dungeon of the main one, Baba Vida, built in the period from the 10th to the 14th century. It is said to be the only entirely preserved medieval castle in the country





Death notices posted along the street. We have seen this in other countries in this part of the world too, (as in Montenegro several years ago).



From Vidin we took a bus to the Belogradchik Rocks. On the way we passed a pair of nesting White storks.



We stopped in Belogradchik for refreshments and a rest stop where there were more examples of that austere and chiseled style of sculpture so common in these old Eastern Bloc countries.

Belogradchik overview from the Belogradchik Rocks above the town.





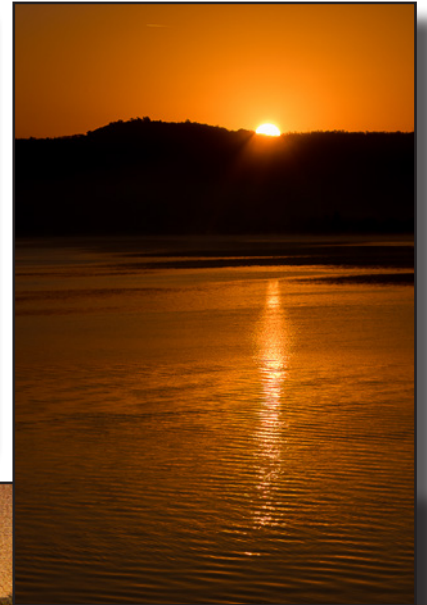
Back on the ship there was yet another inspiring sunset as we continued upstream on the Danube and into Serbia / Romania.



Sunset through
the pilot's house...

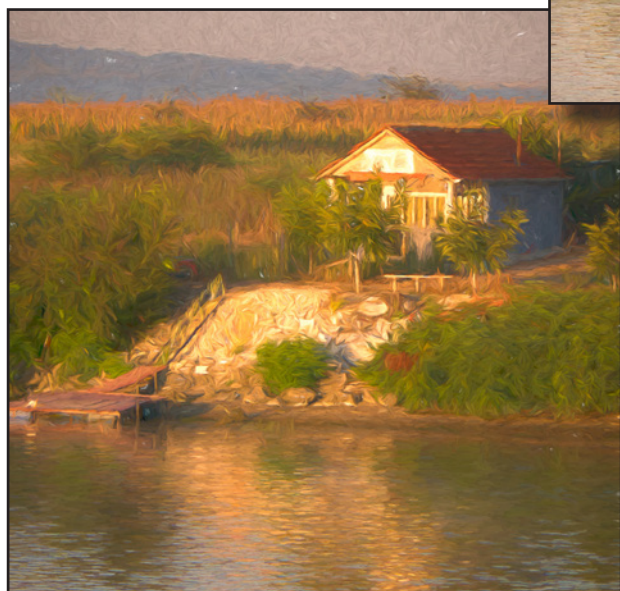
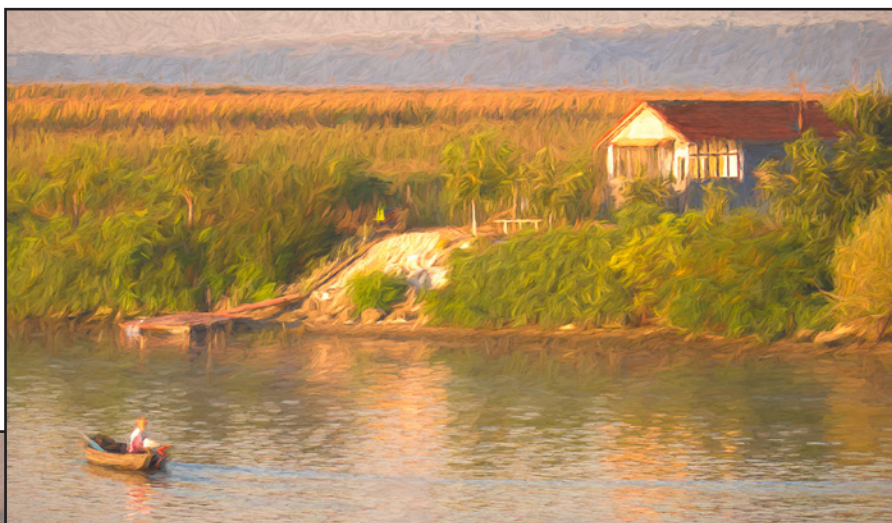


Sunrise the next
morning... even
more inspiration...





There was a bit more morning inspiration before we came to the Iron Gate I Hydroelectric Power Station.

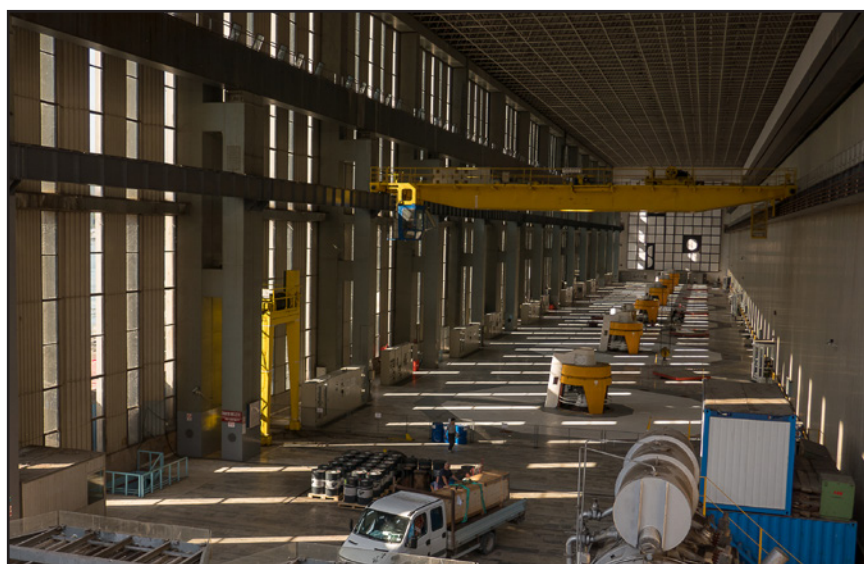


The Iron Gate I Hydroelectric Power Station, was an accomplishment Tito was particularly proud of. Josip Broz, commonly known as Tito, was a Yugoslav communist revolutionary and political leader, serving in various roles from 1943 until his death in 1980. During World War II, he was the leader of the Partisans, often regarded as the most effective resistance movement in occupied Europe.

The Iron Gate I Hydroelectric Power Station is the largest dam on the Danube river and one of the largest hydro power plants in Europe.

The Romanian side of the power station produces approximately 5.24 TWh annually, while the Serbian side of the power station produces 5.65 TWh. The discrepancy in power output between the two halves is due to the generating equipment. While Romania's equipment is newer and thus more efficient (thereby generating more power), it is proving more unreliable; resulting in increased downtime for maintenance/repairs, and consequently lower annual power output overall.

When we went through in the lock, one of the huge doors was open and we got interesting views into the top of the turbine / generator area.





Entering the Iron Gate Lock 1 (the most down river lock and entrance to the Iron gate gorge).



Our Captain on the lower portion of the trip. Most mornings at sunrise I was already at my Situation Room (a table on the observation deck) when the Captain would make his way to the bridge to take over from the night watch. We would exchange pleasantries, discuss a few rumors and a bit of politics and then he would continue onto the bridge. He was Austrian and had a place in Odessa, Ukraine on the Black Sea to which he was headed to after his stint on this cruise. The Captain was an easy fellow for me to like... a bit of a rebel, a nonconformist, respectful and courteous to all (except when one ignored his request not to block his view when manoeuvring the ship... which I never did but did witness others that did AND ignored him). He never seemed flustered by events and it appeared was well liked and respected by the crew. I missed him on the second half of the cruise for sure.



The ships throttle and thruster controls were levers on a gimbal affair. It was very interesting to watch him manoeuvre the ships via them.

A note on these ships and their crews... at least for this cruise line and our experience this time. We were told by crew, that crew members can request a certain ship and the request is considered based upon their performance, so the better ships tend to have better crews. We were also told that this, our first ship was the most desired ship in the fleet to serve on.

I think we were spoiled on this ship because when we were transferred to the sister ship (only two years older and almost exactly the same layout) and serviced by that ship's crew, we noticed a slight difference in the level of service and such. And it was not to the better side. It was still good service on the second, sister ship, but not as great of service we had on this, the first ship.





After the Iron Gate I Hydroelectric Power Station, we entered the section of the Danube referred to as the Iron Gates. The Iron Gates forms part of the boundary between Serbia (to the south) and Romania (north). In the broad sense it encompasses a route of 134 km (83 mi); in the narrow sense it only encompasses the last barrier on this route, just beyond the Romanian city of Orșova, that contains the two hydroelectric dams, Iron Gate I Hydroelectric Power Station and Iron Gate II Hydroelectric Power Station.

At this point in the Danube, the river separates the southern Carpathian Mountains from the northwestern foothills of the Balkan Mountains. The Romanian side of the gorge constitutes the Iron Gates natural park, whereas the Serbian part constitutes the Đerdap national park.

The riverbed rocks and the associated rapids made the gorge valley an infamous passage for shipping, even for the most seasoned boatmen. During the period of the Ottoman rule, the ships were guided through by the local navigators, familiar with the routes, called *kalauz* (from Turkish *kalavuz*, meaning guide, travel leader). During the rule of prince Miloš Obrenović, local Serbs gradually took over from the Ottomans, being officially appointed by the prince. In order not to aggravate the Ottomans further, the prince named Serbian navigators by a Turkish name, *dumendžibaša*, from *dümen* (rudder) and *baş* (head, chief, master). The navigation fee was divided among *dumendžibaša*, *loc* (river pilots) and regional municipalities.

The construction of the joint Romanian-Yugoslavian mega project commenced in 1964. In 1972 the Iron Gate I Dam was opened, followed by Iron Gate II Dam, in 1984, along with two hydroelectric power stations, two sluices and navigation locks for shipping.

The construction of these dams gave the valley of the Danube below Belgrade the nature of a reservoir, and additionally caused a 115 foot rise in the water level of the river near the dam. The old Orșova, the Danube island of Ada Kaleh and at least five other villages, totaling a population of 17,000, had to make way. People were relocated and the settlements have been lost forever to the Danube.

The dam's construction had a major impact on the local fauna and flora as well—for example, the spawning routes of several species of sturgeon were permanently interrupted. Beluga sturgeon was the largest, and the largest specimen was recorded in 1793 at 1,000 pounds.

The flora and fauna, as well as the geomorphological, archaeological and cultural historical artifacts of the Iron Gates have been under protection of both nations since the construction of the dam. In Serbia this was done with the Đerdap National Park (since 1974) and in Romania by the Porțile de Fier National Park (since 2001).

Decebalus Rex cliff carving in the Iron Gates gorge was commissioned by Romanian businessman Iosif Constantin Drăgan and it took 10 years, from 1994 to 2004, for twelve sculptors to finish it. According to Drăgan's website, the businessman purchased the rock in 1993, after which the Italian sculptor Mario Galeotti assessed the location and made an initial model. The first six years involved dynamiting the rock into the basic shape, and the remaining four years were devoted to completing the detail.

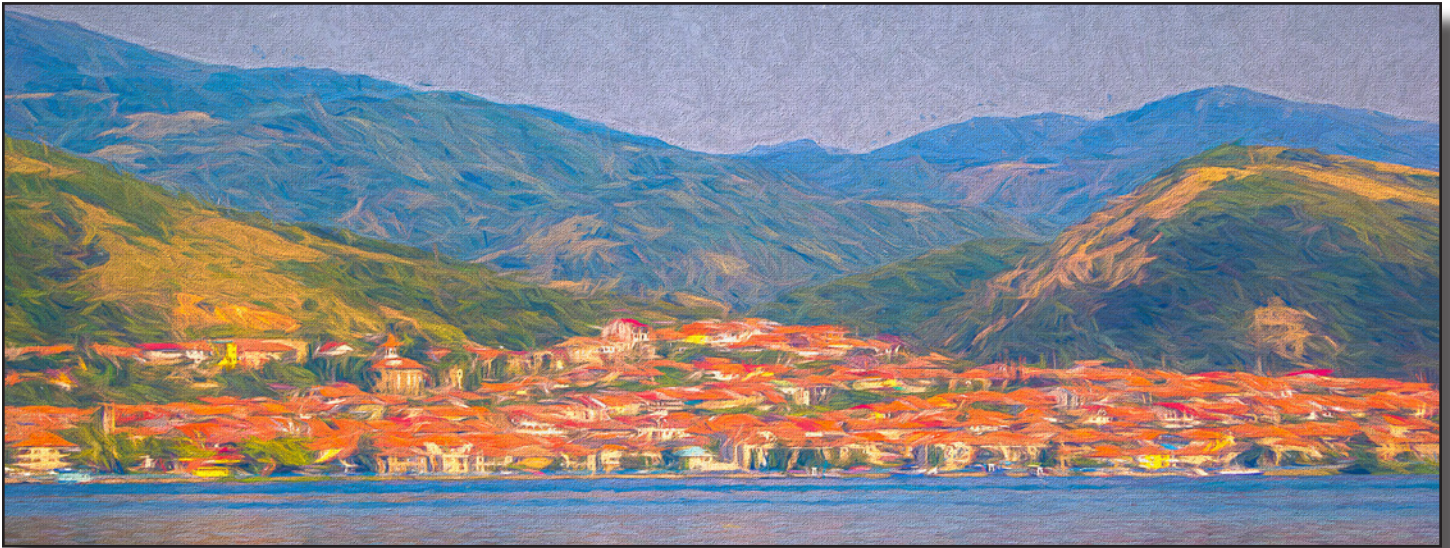
Under the face of Decebalus there is a Latin inscription which reads "DECEBALUS REX—DRAGAN FECIT" ("King Decebalus—Made by Drăgan"). The carving was placed opposite an ancient memorial plaque, carved in the rock on the Serbian side of the river facing Romania. That plaque, known as the Tabula Traiana, records the completion of Trajan's military road along the Danube and thus commemorates the final defeat of Decebalus by Trajan in 105, and the absorption of the Dacian kingdom into the Roman Empire. Drăgan wanted the Serbs to carve a giant head of a Roman Emperor, as if confronting Decebalus on the opposite side of the river, but the Serbs refused.

The Mraconia Monastery, also in the Iron Gates.





Yet another inspiring village scene along the Danube in the Iron Gates section.



We stopped at Donji Milanovac in eastern Serbia next. A small town with a population of just over 2,000, it was the jumping off spot to go to an archeological dig for some of the passengers. It was very hot, so Wendy & I opted not to go and wandered around the village for an hour or so.

On the dock was a large market of lace table clothes and such.

On our walk we saw a large elephant sculpture in front of our ship, a worn out soccer ball (football in these parts), a stroll through a local grocery store, a cool drink, and a park bench in a shady spot... but that was about it.

Then it was time to head upstream and into the sunset.





The next morning as the sun rose we turned off the Danube and into the Sava River for a short distance where we docked in Belgrade, Serbia. Belgrade is the capital and largest city of Serbia. It is located at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers, where the Pannonian Plain meets the Balkans. The urban area of the City of Belgrade has a population of 1.23 million, while nearly 1.7 million people live within its administrative limits.

It was from the confluence of these two rivers (from about the spot in the river that the cruise ship in the image below is) that it is said the first shots of World War I were fired. When Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia July 28th, 1914, that night three ships stationed at Zenum, near Belgrade, bombarded the Serbian capital. Using their large guns, they rained shells on Serb fortifications and a railway bridge crossing the river Sava.



Modern day Belgrade to the right, and view of the confluence of the two rivers from the Belgrade Fortress.

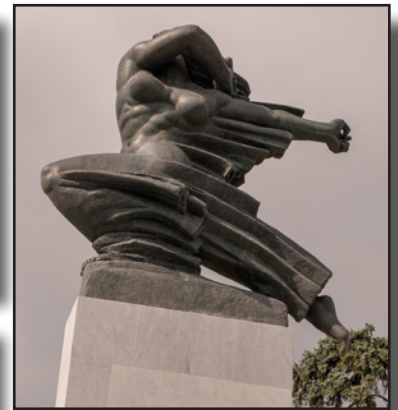


There are lots of leftovers from various conflicts stored in the Belgrade Fortress. The tank had some sort of historical merit... 1st of something or another...

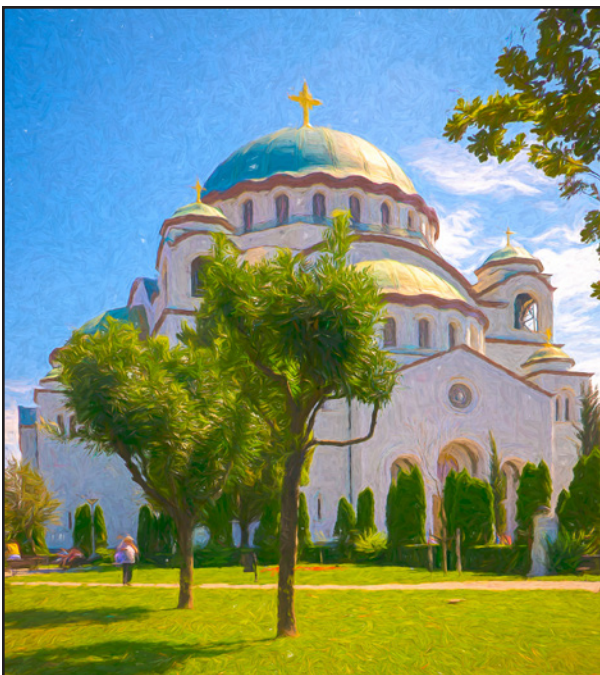




Not our tour bus, but we did take a similar one for a tour of Belgrade and there is a lot to see in Belgrade.



To the left, Mr. Tesla celebrated again...





Maybe this one says "Belgrade"...

As we left Belgrade, headed back up the Danube, we passed under NATO's unfinished but promised Žeželj Bridge. The temporary green military bridge has served as 'the' bridge for 18 years.

The original Žeželj Bridge was built from 1957 to 1961, but during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, the bridge was bombed 12 times. In April, 1999, it was finally demolished, cutting railway transport between Serbia (then Yugoslavia) and Hungary.

In 2000, the green temporary Road–Railway Bridge was constructed near the Žeželj Bridge to serve as replacement until the new one was constructed. Over the years, the construction of the new Žeželj Bridge was postponed several times. October 2017, the arches of Žeželj Bridge were connected after five years of construction and eighteen years since the previous bridge was destroyed. Last I read (but not verified) vehicle transit was established on September 1st, 2018... a few days after we passed under it.



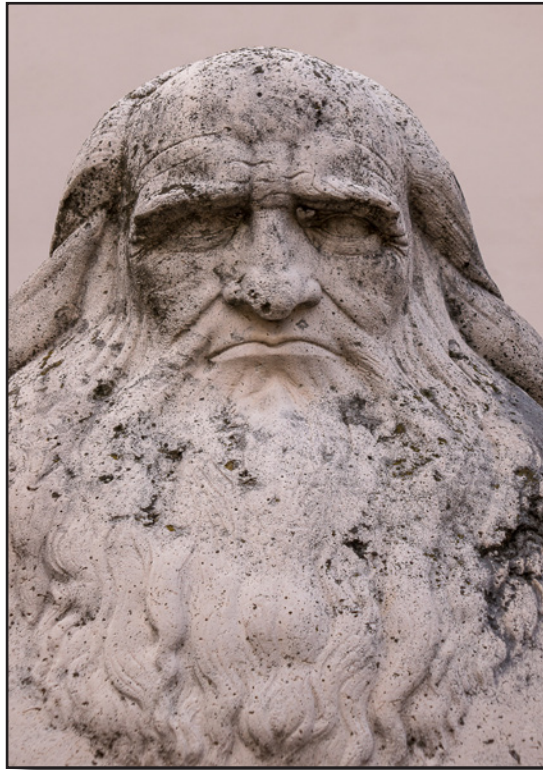
Generally boats pass each other to the right (port to port), but passing to the left (starboard to starboard) is common practice too, for various reasons. When boats do pass each other to the left they display a visual signal to each other. Each displays a blue panel that is located on the starboard (right) side and has a light in the center of it. Normally it is stowed and/or rotated to a position where it is not visible to the other boat.





Back over to the Hungarian side, we took a trip to Pécs to see their cool love locks collections... and we had heard the Pécs man hole covers were pretty cool too.





Pécs is said to be the cultural center of Hungary too... more information here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pécs>



Our next stop on the river, just outside of Kalosca, south of Budapest, was the end of the road (or river in this case) for us going north due to low river levels. We would not be going into Budapest and docking as planned.

Instead, we would be transferring to another ship much further upstream and continuing our trip to the North Sea there.

The ship we were going to transfer to was the sister ship to the one we were on, but a couple years older. It had begun the same journey as we were on, only from the North Sea (Amsterdam) to the Black Sea (Bucuresti). Those passengers would be transferring to this ship and continue on to the Black Sea from here.

This process would take a couple of days to arrange as both ships had to be cleaned and readied for new passengers and such.

We were given the option to continue on via horseback, riding lessons at a horsey place in the eastern suburbs of Budapest included, but the uniform did not fit me very well so I declined.





One day while docked here and readying for our transition to the next ship, I borrowed one of the ship's bicycles and rode into Kalosca for a bit of self-guided tourism based on aimless wandering and serendipitous moments, while much of the rest of the passengers opted for a bus based tour of a pre-planned nature. The day was another very warm one, but with plenty of water and many shady bits I could stop in, it was very pleasant. This shady bit was a small road-side cemetery.



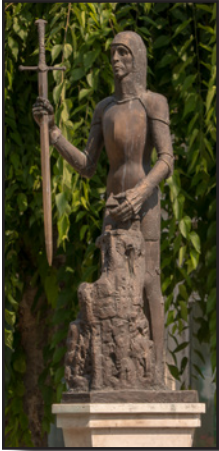
Another Hungarian sculpture of an austere and linear nature at a roundabout. A high and harsh angle to the sun for this silhouetted image of it seemed appropriate.

I stopped at a porcelain factory to check out their showroom, air conditioning and rest rooms for a bit.





Another shady bit... a pedestrian only street where I ditched the bicycle for a while, did a little shopping, enjoyed the public art sculptures and had a late lunch by myself sitting in an outside cafe.





After lunch it was time to wander back to the ship. Not wanting to retrace my exact route into and through town, I used one of my iPhone GPS APPs to find some different distractions on the way.

I found that my understanding of the written Hungarian language was improving too!

Many of the passengers on this cruise were disembarking in Budapest, as the trip was actually two parts. The first part was from the Black Sea (Bucharest) to Budapest, the second part was Budapest to the North Sea (Amsterdam). For those passengers only doing the first part, there were transfers into Budapest and hotels provided for them for the day or two they would not be on this ship.

Then there were the adjustments to be made for those passengers that were to get on in Budapest and continue on up to the North Sea (Amsterdam)... those just doing the second part. Those passengers were bused from Budapest to where we were docked near Kalosca to connect up with this north bound group, (albeit only spending one night or so on this ship). They were the most unhappy and concerned of all the passengers as their trips took a sudden turn for the worse right from the start. For those people getting on in Budapest, we were told that they were given options to cancel the trip and receive a full refund.

From our ship docked near Kalosca, Hungary we boarded buses and traveled north for a few days. First to Bratislava, Slovakia for a few hours, then onto Vienna, Austria where we stayed a couple nights. Then onto Salzburg, Austria for one night before traveling from Salzburg to where our next ship would be waiting for us... on the upper Danube near Regensburg, Germany. We were to have stopped in both Bratislava and Vienna via the Danube in any case, but would not have stopped in Salzburg.



Posing with street sculpture is a thing in Bratislava!





Bratislava Holocaust memorial sculpture is to the right, and in front of the synagogue fresco below. Before WWII Bratislava had been the biggest Jewish community in Slovakia. The Slovakian government paid the Germans the sum of 1000 Reichs per Jew to exterminate them. The Catholic priest who lead this and drank tea with Hitler was hanged at the end of the War.



Fresco of the Old Synagogue in Bratislava - which was razed and replaced by this Flyover.



In this house in 1847 Sigmund Steiner established
antiquarian bookstore STEINER.

The Steiner family lived here from
the 19th century (except during the holocaust)
through the first half of the 20th century.

This memorial plaque is also in memory
of sixteen members of the family
who died in concentration camps in 1942 - 1944.
May their souls be bound up in the bond
of everlasting life.

Remember and never forget!

June 2012



After a bit more street walking in Bratislava, lunch and a few more photographs, it was time to reload ourselves onto the bus and head into Vienna. Bratislava is a place we would like to come back to. We could easily spend a week or so hanging out.

We had been to Vienna for a few days just about a year ago with our friends and travel companions Bev and Tom Layton, and while we had wanted to get to Bratislava, it just did not happen. Having only a few hours here was bittersweet since we liked it so well.



There were a couple places in Vienna we missed last year and wanted to see so we were looking forward to the day or so there as well. The hotel we stayed in was close enough to central Vienna that we could walk to it.

Wendy is there in the background overseeing my car shopping experience.





A revolutionary (Trotsky), a psychoanalyst (Freud), several writers and poets (including Polgar, Zweig and Altenberg) and an architect (Loos) walked into a café. What sounds like the start of a joke was an everyday occurrence at Café Central (est. 1876). Over coffee, cake and the odd cigar, some of the greatest poets, philosophers and – it has to be said – storytellers the world has ever seen, got together in Vienna's most attractive coffeehouse.

Last year while in Vienna with Tom and Bev, we had walked past and stepped into Café Central only momentarily to see the inside. This time we stopped for coffee and something to eat, sitting inside, people watching, and admiring the architecture.

Peter Altenberg had his mail sent to Café Central... as well as his laundry! I am thinking the new owners of Cups Espresso, my *Poulsbo Situation Room*, are going to have to up their game!

Peter Altenberg can still be found in Café Central to this day – although only as a papier mâché figure. He sits next to the entrance, casting a rather grim, yet curious eye over guests as they arrive.

We purchased a couple of books about the Central Cafe (history and recipes) and asked our waiter to sign them. One for my son Scot and his fiancée and one for ourselves. Our waiter took the books and stamped them with the 'official' Central Cafe stamp, signed them, and then proudly pointed out that he was the waiter featured in a two page photo spread within the book. Another wonderfully serendipitous moment on our travels.



More about Café Central here:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Café_Central
 and here:
<https://www.cafecentral.wien/en/>





Thinking Vienna could be a place we could be happy moving to, we went to the open house the Habsburg's were having at their Schönbrunn summer home.

With 1,441 rooms we were thinking we would have room to invite friends (and maybe their friends) to stay with us from time to time.

While it did come mostly furnished and had a lot of garden art (also included) the amount of yard work put me off so we rescinded our offer.

If you may be interested, more information here: <https://www.schoenbrunn.at/en/> and here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schönbrunn_Palace





The next day we went to Durnstein. The town was nice but a bit of an overcrowded with tourists as it is a major tourist attraction and embarkation point for river day trips. We took the river trip up the Wachau Valley on the Danube and to the Melk Abbey. The Melk Abbey left us wanting after the Habsburg's Schönbrunn open house. We did not even bother to make an offer.

The town was nice but a bit of an overcrowded with tourists as it is a major tourist attraction and embarkation point for river day trips.





The next day we left for Salzburg, arriving late evening and then left in the early morning. Only enough time to find an appropriate manhole cover for a selfie souvenir.

When we got to Regensburg, Germany we unloaded our bus belongings onto the next ship. Although it was a few years older, the layout was the same and we got the same cabin number, (albeit, as I have spoken of before, the crew was different too and we felt not as good as the prior ship's crew).

We like being ship based much much much better than being bus based, especially in a fully loaded huge bus. While we have taken a few tours that were bus based, it was always with a small number of people on a smaller bus where each passenger got at least two seats. This experience reaffirmed our prior choices and is definitely not a way we would choose to travel and tour.

As it turn out, for these European river tours, running into unnavigable waters is pretty common. Both for too little water and for too much water. Sooo... if you are planning a river cruise be aware of this and consider it in your overall plans. The tour companies don't really devote a lot of space in their marketing materials telling potential clients about this, so be aware by considering the season and other special conditions (droughts, etc.) when planning your trip.

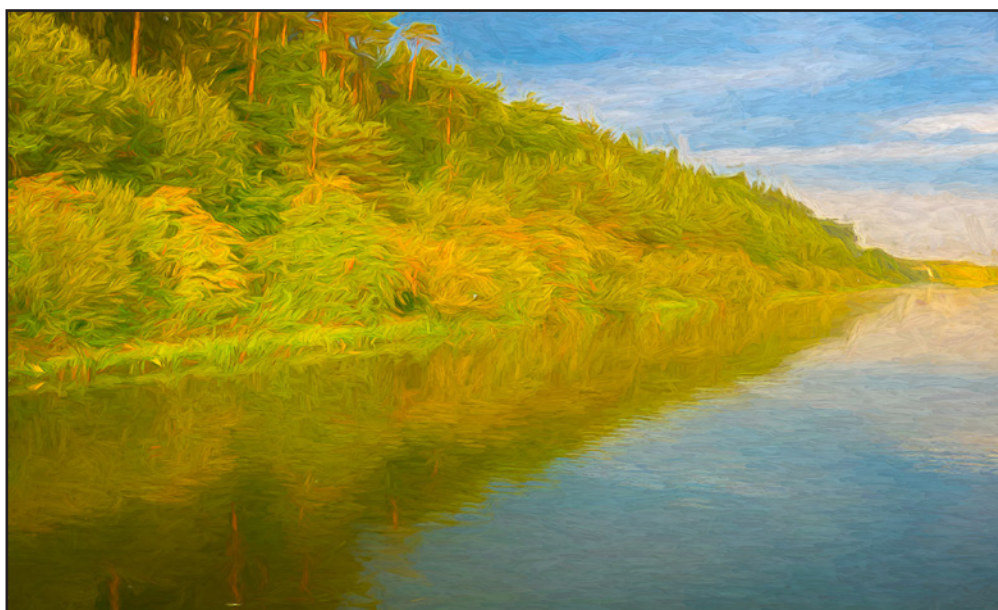


Part of the Regensburg public and free bike use program.



From Regensburg, we traveled back down stream on the Danube to enter the Rhine–Main–Danube Canal. It connects the Main and the Danube rivers across the European Watershed. The canal connects the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea, providing a navigable artery between the Rhine delta and the Danube Delta. The present canal was completed in 1992 and is 106 miles long. Along the course of the canal there are 16 locks with lifting heights of up to 82 feet.

Most locks are designed to conserve water, which they do by piping first the top third, and then the middle third of the lock water into side tanks during the down cycle. On the up cycle, these tanks replenish first the bottom third and then the middle third of the lock volume. The remaining top third is supplied by water from the upper level of the canal.





The concrete wall marks the summit of the Europäische Hauptwasserscheide (European Main Water Divide) and is 1,332 feet above sea level. This is the highest point on Earth that is currently reached by commercial watercraft from the sea.



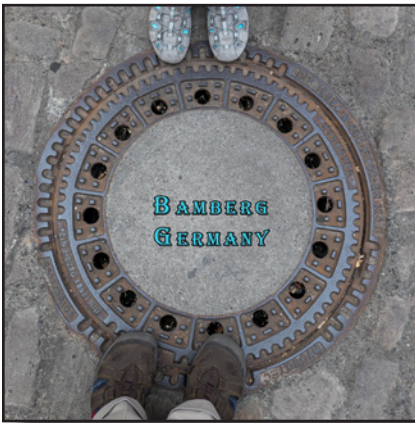
Deer stands were common in the farming areas. In this case, I do not think it was hunting season...

We saw several well equipped fishing groups.



Car camping in the rain... Very NW...





At Bamberg, we exited the Main-Danube canal and entered the Main River itself.



I am pretty sure that this fellow is one of those Spy vs. Spy guys....



I thought this was a pretty cool way to display these busts and visually isolate them from the busy background of the park.

Badly bent but not broken....



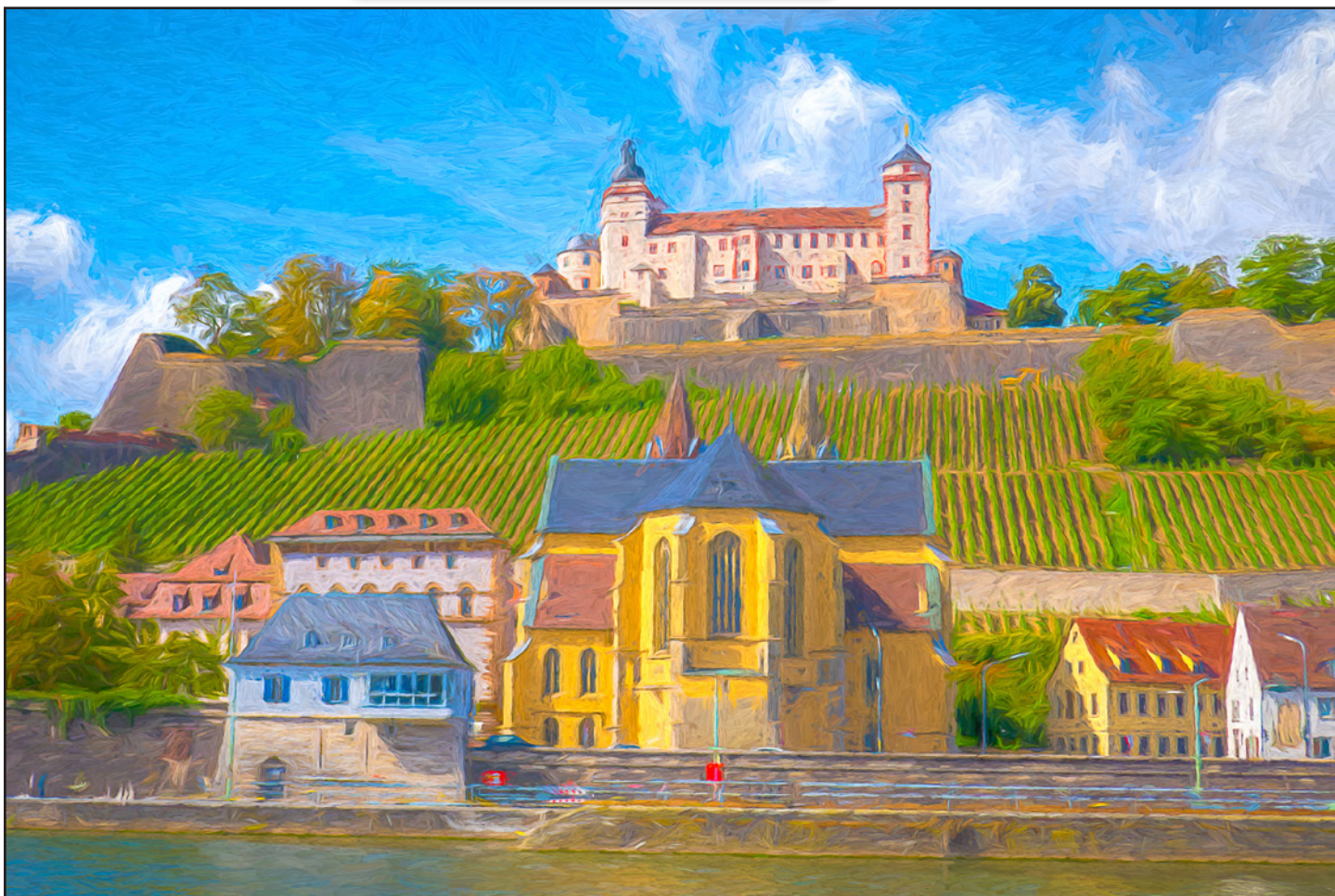


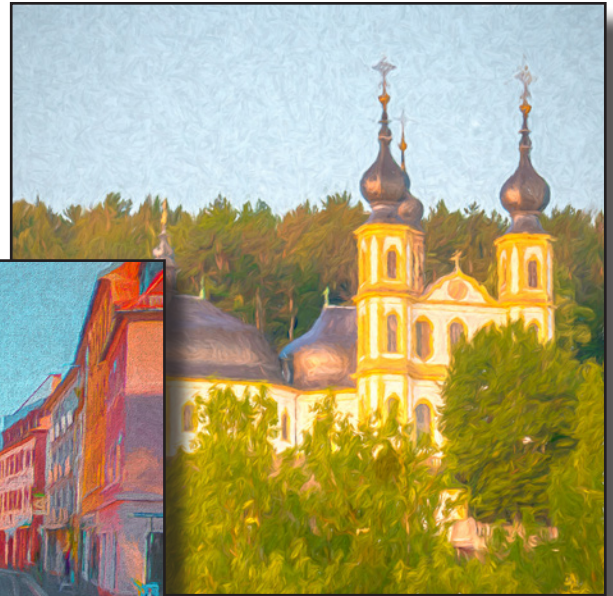
For most of the Main-Danube Canal, my Situation Room on the upper deck was closed due to all the low bridges. The pilot house, canopies, railings and other bits that stick up from the deck are lowered, folded down, stowed, or otherwise made to fit a very low profile. This photograph shows the pilot house lowered and passing under a bridge with not much clearance to spare. High water can shut down these canals when the water level is too high for the boat and ship bits to be lowered enough to pass under these bridges.



Würzburg was a sample of what was to come along the castle strewn Rhine River. I had a solo walk-about in the morning as Wendy opted for the city group tour (and why there is no second set of feet in the souvenir manhole cover selfie.

Later on in the late morning Wendy and I hooked up and wandered around a bit more together before returning to the ship and heading further along the Main towards the Rhine River.







I saw this cool blue Citroën step van and likened it to my first MoHo (the International Harvester Metro Mite shown below). It would be very cool to have brought the Citroën back to the USA and turn it into a MoHo but I think those days are best behind me...





We came across a church courtyard with a lot of sculpture. Most of the sculptures still had that austere and linear style I have already referred to.





We saw and were seen as we travelled along the Main.







Our room on the boat. Sliding windows floor to ceiling. The views were great, except the concrete walls of the locks.



From the Main and into the Rhine where there be castles, grapes and wine (and more sunsets)



We saw that the old style Zimmer Frei signs (Free Room, as in we have a vacancy) are being replaced by the Costco variety of sign.





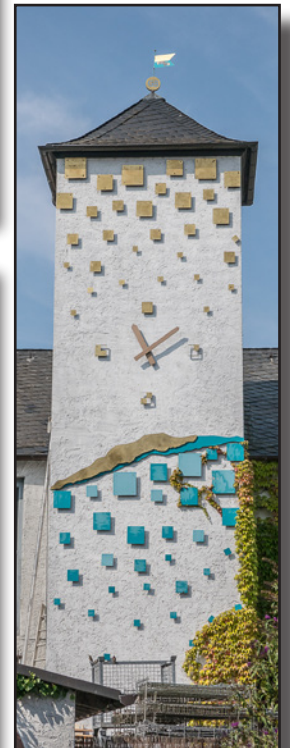
Rüdesheim am Rhein...

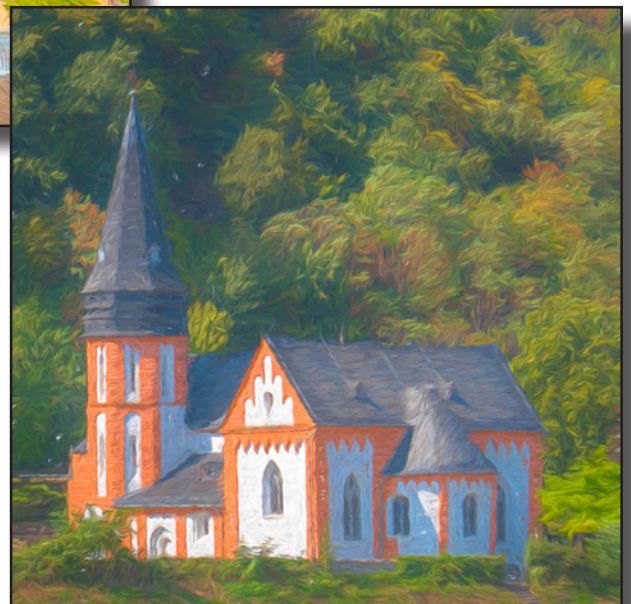


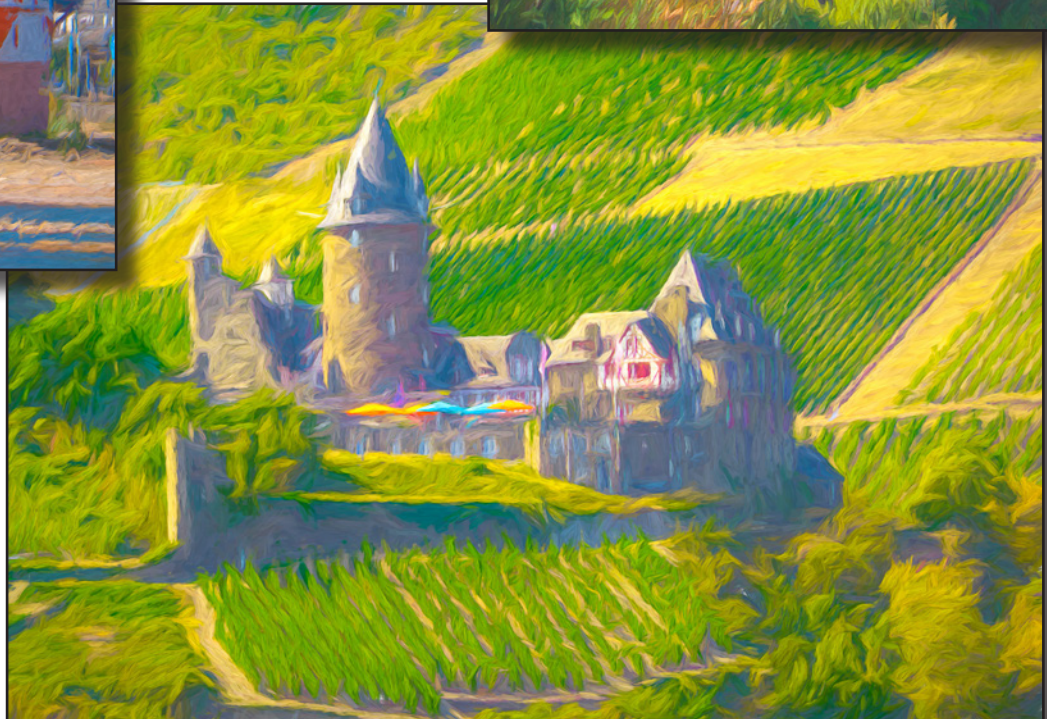
The street signs with the old style of ß are a collectors item now and disappearing from streets by less than honorable means.

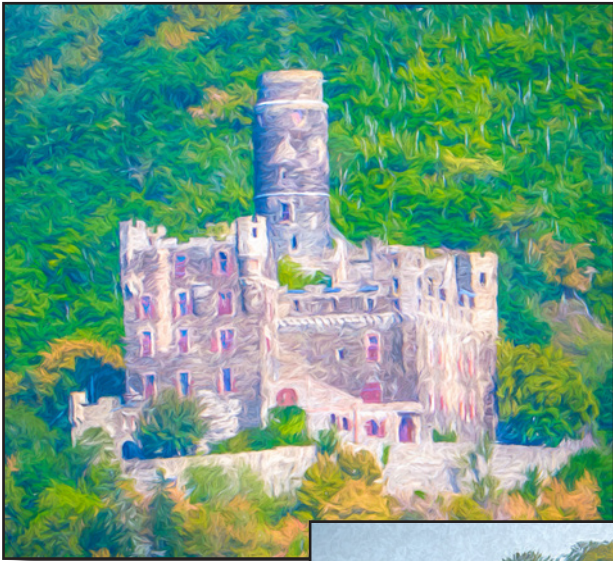


We stopped in a winery's tasting room and were pleasantly surprised that they had used a local NW artist's work for a series of their wine labels and promotional materials. Each year they choose a different artist's work, selecting from artists all over the world.









These bottom two images are not truly castles, but entrances to train tunnels. Their purpose was to fool American bombers during the war. Bombers had instructions not to bomb castles due to their historical value.





Kilometer 537. These navigation aids were all along our route and I could use them to locate ourselves on maps and guides.



A small section of the ancient Roman road from Trier to Koln.





A container ship with the bridge extended up for better viewing (while between bridges).



At this point along our route it became very industrial. We are nearing the Amsterdam canal and at first light tomorrow should almost be to Amsterdam.



From time to time we did get a bit of visual relief from all the industry, like these sculptures along the bank.



The next morning at dawn, as I sat in at my water based Situation Room on the ships observation deck with my cabin made french press coffee with the beans I brought from Seattle, we exited the Amsterdam Canal, passed Kilometer 1 and officially entered the North Sea.

We spent a few days in Amsterdam, the subject of a future *Flying Pig Adventures* travelogue, so until then...

.END

