

The Country of Hungary

# Jim and Emmy's Travel Journal

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1980

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We arrived in Germany on May 9, spent time in Mettlach. After a week in France, we crossed the Pyrénées Mountains, into the little Country of Andorra. We drove south into Spain, turned left for a few miles, then left again and returned to France.

After a delightful couple of weeks in France, we crossed the border into Italy and spent time visiting Pisa and Florence, then crossed to the Island of Corsica (part of France) by boat. Later we boarded another ferry to Sardinia (a part of Italy). Several days later, an overnight ride on a ferry brought us to Sicily, then by ferry to mainland Italy.

During our trip through Italy, we visited Naples, Rome, Florence, Venice and dozens of other beautiful little Italian towns, and the little country of San Marino. We spent a night in Yugoslavia, several days in Austria, then crossed the border to Hungary.

We crossed the border to Hungary at 4:00 PM (Speedometer 26,390). It did not take the border people long to take care of us. We showed him Emmy's diary with the notes of the things we bought in Italy and other places and asked if there would be a problem when we left. The Hungarian Customs man asked if we had gold, silver, guns, liquor or tobacco. He looked at the covers of the books we were reading, and that was all. We cashed a \$100 Travelers Check (received Hungarian money) and were on our way.

We see a lot of farmland with wheat, barley, corn and lots of weeds, compared with most other countries. Many people riding bicycles. Apartment buildings are not fancy, and the houses looked old and in need of paint. The corn fields have some tall corn and some not so tall, very spotty. Have seen some irrigation. Country looks poorer than most others.

The red poppies are cheerful. We stopped in a market in one little Hungarian town, but the store didn't have much of anything to sell. Bought some rye bread, they cut off a piece and weighted it for us. We also stopped at a roadside fruit market.

We went into a supermarket in Gyor. Emmy wanted to buy some eggs and was having a problem presenting her request. Jim heard a familiar voice crowing like a rooster, then found Emmy had forgotten basic biology. She should have "cackled like a hen," but she did get her eggs, and some laughter.

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At this point the Autobahn is a two lane road with the right-away and bridges ready so they can put in the other lanes just as soon as needed. They have rest stops every few miles. By this time the crops in the field look better. Near the little towns there are big gardens with garden houses, and there are TV antennas on most houses.

About seven miles outside Budapest, the Autobahn becomes six lanes, a very good road, but the Danube River is not blue here either. We arrived in Budapest about 7:30 in the evening. It took longer than expected since the freeway stopped before it got downtown. That is true all over Europe. So many of the European cities are old, with beautiful old buildings, so they won't tear them down just to put in a freeway, and we like that idea. It was twilight and the sun sets very late here. Budapest is very attractive and there were many people walking around on the downtown streets.

We had some problems finding the campsite where it appeared on the map, but finally found a sign and the crowded camp. It's located on the east side of the Danube River, a little north of downtown. A nice man who spoke German came out to greet us and helped us get settled in the Budapest campsite, and Emmy was impressed when he kissed her hand.

### **H, Budapest, Jul 10, Thu - 49 - 190 - 6,230**

Jim woke Emmy at 7:00 just in case the time had changed and it was really 8:00 AM in Budapest, and it really was. Left soon and toured Budapest. Buda is the hilly part on the west side of the river, and Pest is the flat industrial area east of the river. Near downtown there is a race track and a sports arena. Also some nice office buildings and a large RR Station. Several of the bridges that cross the Danube River are also attractive.

Drove across the Danube River (well, actually we drove across on a bridge), and went to the top of a hill overlooking Budapest. There we found a large Russian Monument commemorating the "liberation" of Budapest in 1944-45. A large group of Soviet tourists were there with a Soviet Army Officer. He did not seem to be a tourist, wonder why he was with them. They gathered as a group for pictures and Jim introduced himself as an American. Jim asked if they were Russians, and they smiled and said Soviet. Jim did not ask the Soviet Officer about Afghanistan and the Olympics.

We were on the Buda side of the river taking pictures of the Parliament Building (one of the most beautiful government buildings in Europe), when a man saw Emmy drinking from a glass. He asked for some, and when he found it was water he spit it out on the street and signalled with his forefinger, indicating she should wait and he would bring her something good to drink. In the meantime Jim came back and rather than try to explain we didn't want to try his drink, we just went on. Jim finds it easy to understand how Emmy attracts all the men!

Since the stores were to open at 10:00 AM, we went back to Pest and toured the main shopping street. Saw very little we would like to buy. Budapest has the poorest shopping area we have seen in any major city in Europe up to now. One candy dish, orange with yellow spots, looked interesting, but there were so many people in the store we didn't wait.

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There are fewer private autos on the streets than in most other cities. Several times men came up to us on the street in Budapest and asked if we wanted to exchange money. We don't need more of this kind of money. We could have exchanged money in Vienna for a better rate, but why bother. We are not interested in finding out if the government is serious about the illegality of money exchange, and we don't intend to buy much anyway.

Emmy bought a bar-b-que chicken, and we stopped and ate when we got to a rest stop outside of town. (Really Emmy eats a lot of things other than Chicken. We mention the bar-b-que, but not other things she buys.)

We are returning to Austria by a different route than the one we used to get here yesterday. The land is more hilly and we have seen several fields of sunflowers. A lot of the farming has been on a very large scale, government farms no doubt, but some little farms in between.

We have had beautiful weather. A little rain at night, but the days are nice. Lake Balaton is the largest lake in Europe. The southern shore is supposed to be more of a resort area than where we are on the north. If we could have found a campsite, we would have spent the night.

In the little town of Nagycenk we saw a family of storks on the roof of a large building. We could see babies and mama in the nest and papa at the other side of the building. We drove down the street to try for a good photograph. While we were just going a couple of miles per hour with the camera in his hand, Jim saw three eight to ten year old school girls walking along the street in Nagycenk. He should have taken the picture, but was frozen in his seat as these girls sprang in the air with arms, legs, lunch boxes, school books, and pigtails flying in all directions. They were thrilled they had had their picture taken, and Jim was so disappointed he hadn't taken that picture!

We stopped in the border town of Sopron and looked and looked for something to buy with the last of our Hungarian money. It's worthless after we leave the country, and almost worthless here. Finally bought a small candy dish at an atrocious price. The whole trip cost us about \$130 instead of the \$212 it would have cost for a one day bus trip, and we are sure we have seen much more than we would have seen on the tour.

About a mile from the border we were stopped by a guard who wanted to see our passports. Then we waited an hour for our turn to move into the Hungarian customs area. There was no reason for the delay, just policy. When it was our turn at the border, they only took a moment, looked in a couple of drawers, and looked around inside the camper. We felt the Hungarian Border guard was more interested in the Dodge camper than in what we might have with us.

As much as we have been unhappy with some of the people and policies in Austria, we were very happy to get out of Hungary. During the two days we drove 325 miles in Hungary. Near Vienna we found a campsite we had not stayed in before, and were in place before dark.

We returned to Austria, then spent a night in the tiny country of Liechtenstein. We crossed between Italy and Switzerland a couple of times on the way from St.

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Moritz to the Matterhorn. We then crossed the country of Switzerland, and into France at Basel, Switzerland, and soon returned to Germany. After a few days at Toni's, drove across Luxembourg, into France, on our way to Paris.

Crossed border from France into Belgium, later boarded a ferry for a visit to England, drove into Wales, a ferry to and from Ireland, to Scotland, more time in England, then by ferry to The Netherlands. Crossed West/East Germany to West/East Berlin, then to Mettlach, Germany. After a couple of days showing Hannah and Toni a bit of the Alsace, France, we returned to Mettlach, and on October 26, we returned to the US .