

EUROPE 2023



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

Walking Football

It required quite a bit of research, but eventually, I reached my goal yesterday. Over the past week I took to social media to express my frustration about the abundance of posts discussing the advantages of walking football for the elderly but, annoyingly, neglecting to mention session days and times. To my surprise, I received several responses from all over Europe, one of which was from the head of Walking Football Germany. He contacted me and personally took the initiative to inquire about nearby sessions around Würzburg and then sent me the information he had gathered, allowing me to get some valuable practice in.

A 90 min drive to Frankfurt proved to be too far for me to travel, but just 25kms away in a quaint town called Unterspiesheim (with a population of 1,200), they held a two-hour walking football session every Wednesday.

We arrived early but I had to search around a bit before locating the field. 14 players were already warming up once I found the right location - a surprise because warming up isn't a normal routine for me. I nevertheless joined in. What surprised me was the presence of a coach and a manager overseeing the session, along with a fitness coach!! They gave a warm welcome to both myself and Heather, although they were disappointed that Heather chose not to participate.

We were divided into two teams and I decided to put in some extra effort, as I really needed the practice. Throughout the two-hour session, I constantly found myself being marked by at least two players wherever I went on the field or anywhere near the ball. The standard of play was quite high. Most of the players were in their 50s with a 72yo arriving late.

I must confess that I thoroughly enjoyed my time playing the game I love, even though there were instances when a couple of players consistently sprinted without being called for it. The great thing was that everyone played in the true spirit of the sport and had a fantastic time. I fielded numerous questions about walking football in my home country. After the session we hopped back into the car, me still hot and sweaty, and took the 45 -minute drive back to Würzburg in the dark.



River Amble

The aim for today was to enjoy the country north of Würzburg and be at the required location for Sig's football at 5.30pm. We left after lunch and headed to our first location Dettelbach. This led to a journey across country to another large bend in the Main River. The journey was beautiful being across open fields many of which have been recently ploughed. The beauty of Dettelbach is outstanding. It is not one of the gems listed on the Romantic Road, but none the less it was as outstanding architecturally as any we have seen. We particularly loved the old stone walls and round towers. Some were covered in ivy that had changed to a beautiful reddish colour. A lot of the old external walls are still intact here.

Our journey then took us north, hugging the river as closely as we could. Villages emerged about every three kilometres and we alighted and strolled around each one. Once again bike riders were our most common companions. It is no wonder they are here. The proliferation of e-bikes is obvious. The country is idyllic.

Where there were steep river banks (on the southern side), grape vines abounded. At one spot, I think it was Volkach, we spotted a church high on a hill in the midst of the lines and lines of grapes (see picture above). It was truly rather awe inspiring.

We eventually headed towards an area covered in small lakes that was labelled as a "bird watching habitat". Unfortunately we could not find any paths into the area and, on closer inspection, realised that a lot of the water areas were in fact cooling ponds for what looked like a nearby nuclear power station (or two). This was thus bypassed and we made our way instead to the location for the football. Our early arrival gave us the opportunity for a one hour snooze in the car. The football fraternity in this small town were extremely welcoming to both of us so we enjoyed our time with the locals.







