

Kenny and Paul's Excellent Adventure 2004

We left SF in the evening and arrived in Zurich the next night. The long layover in Heathrow meant that there was plenty of time for shopping, but the opportunities were not so great and the exchange rate is a disaster. However, intrepid Kenny did find a few things for Paul's well-to-do cousin. Despite the long flights, Kenny's body was not as off-kilter as it usually is when flying across the pond.



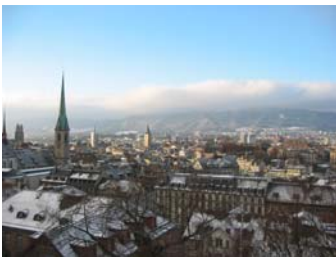
Paul had booked us a charming hotel just above the Old Town. On our first morning, after an excellent and ample breakfast in the hushed, powder blue dining room, we wandered along splendid cobble-stoned streets full of modern design shops. Kenny spied a watch designed by the Danish architect Arne Jacobsen (who designed those orange chairs). It took me a few days to decide to buy, along with an equally beautiful pair of reversible metal cufflinks. Near the river we found the church with windows by Chagall and Giacometti. The seven Chagall windows are justifiably famous, colorful and narrative, and overpower the single Giacometti window, which you might miss unless someone points it out to you. (It was also darkened by scaffolding outside.)

The main shopping street in town had the usual selection of high-end designers and one particularly memorable candy shop... Pedestrians and streetcars vie perilously with each other for space along these broader avenues; thankfully, like many European city centers, other vehicular traffic is excluded to prevent complete chaos. We walked to a neighborhood that was less pristine, you might compare it to SOHO or South of Market, with old factories converted to cultural uses. The featured artist in one of the spaces used canvas and rhoplex to create ghosts of old rooms, which were spectacular, but much of the rest of it was incomprehensible. Our destination was an old ship-building plant that now houses two theaters and a chic restaurant for the pre-theater crowd. We liked how they had inserted concrete boxes into the old timber structure and left a substantial amount of the original intact. Back out in the cold we found a beer hall with great simple (and for Zurich affordable) food and a ton of Gemütlichkeit (cozy-comfiness), which led to the inevitable afternoon nap (such comfortable duvets). Paul insisted that there would be plenty to do and see because it was the end of Advent, and so we walked around town looking for any of the supposedly numerous winter markets. The one that we did eventually find was very small and dilapidated, and was closing up at 7:00 pm! We never found much night life at all and decided to skip dinner and go for a walk. Behind the main street we wandered along a dark canal and found the Bauer au Lac hotel where we had first booked (but at \$600 a night decided to relocate) and looked at the dark lake.

In the morning when we woke up snow had fallen and the trees outside our window were perfect. We could hear music from the Conservatory next door and took our time getting out to the Kunsthalle (only a half block away) to see a huge Monet show. Of course the climax is Monet's time in Giverny and there was a lot of ephemera related to his garden designs. What is so interesting about Monet is how close he came to abstraction.



In the rain we found our way to the park where Le Corbusier's Heidi Weber Pavilion stands. Really it is two structures; a canopy divided into quadrants and then several stacked cubes under it. Each face is either glazed or filled in with colored metal enamel. Like other of Corbu's residential designs there are multiple circulation systems. The snow was the perfect background for the brightly colored walls, dramatic forms, and poured-in-place concrete. Unfortunately it was closed for the winter but we could walk right up to the windows and peer in. On one wall we saw a copy of the silkscreen that hangs in our living room. For a moment we thought about walking back to the city center along the lake, but with our toes beginning to freeze we thought better of it. Since the aerial tram up to the University was closed when we got there and our stomachs were beginning to growl, we inadvertently went for the most expensive lunch in memory. Screw-top Swiss wine and boozy fondue with bacon. Yum! We climbed back up and down the hill to the hotel, taking an accidental detour, and arrived exhausted back in our room, ready to stay in and read. Kenny worked his way through *The Sigma Protocol*, a perfectly awful Ludlum book that takes place in Zurich.



In the morning the rain had stopped, and so we went for an invigorating (i.e. cold) walk further up the hill to look out over Zurich. We both felt it was a beautiful city, but it seemed to me so pristine as to be unreal. Paul says that for Switzerland it is pretty 'gritty,' because graffiti is left untouched for more than a few hours, and there is the occasional evidence of litter (!) on the streets. But the people are reliably Swiss, keeping to themselves and being home by 8pm.

Our train left in the middle of the day for Munich. We zoomed across white fields and watched children slide down hillsides from the warmth of our compartment. Kenny wanted to stop the train and join them. Paul was happy to read. It was the perfect time of day to travel, the sun was bright and the snow untouched. After four hours the sun began to sink and we arrived at our destination in darkness. Thankfully, our hotel was right across the street from the train station, and we were in our room in no time.



Although it was a large corporate hotel (Le Meridien) it had all the creature comforts including a Jacuzzi and enormous lap pool, and despite being across the street from the main city train station, it was quiet and friendly. After we got ourselves situated we walked into the center of town and saw ice skaters and great crowds enjoying the winter market. Munich was huge, compared to village-like Zurich. A couple of streets away from the main action we found a beer hall with different themed rooms and ate another delicious simple meal accompanied by lots of beer. Despite the size of our glasses we never got really drunk. Did the winter weather sober us up?

Since breakfast wasn't included Kenny ventured into the cavernous train station and figured out how to buy pastries and juice. (The hotel did offer free but awful coffee.)

Our first adventure was to find a neighborhood church, Herz Jesu, designed by the architects Allman, Sattler, & Wappner (unknown to Kenny, but he had read about it) that both of us were interested in finding. A perfect winter morning, cold with fresh snow, we walked carefully to be sure we didn't slip. With our map in hand we turned a corner, and there in a neighborhood of four-story flats was a perfect glass cube set back from the street. But it's not a cube, more a rectangle of glass. Tiny representations of blue nails fill the front windows. Walking around the side you can see a wood box within, the sanctuary. As you walk further down the side of the building the glass changes from transparent to translucent and nearly opaque. Exquisitely detailed it seems, at first, another twist of the modernist box. However, the entire front of the building can swing open onto the plaza, the motion of the two huge 'doors' representing the invitation of the church into its fellowship. Of course it was too cold and the plaza too covered in snow for us to see this in operation, and we entered through the usual blue doors at the bottom. Immediately behind the blue glass you see the exterior beauty of the wood sanctuary, the box within the box, and exploring further inside you eventually see within that the interior of the wooden box, and the concrete pavilion that holds the organ. Despite its simplicity and bareness, it feels very inviting;



on the altar are the simplest of furnishings, and as the stunning backdrop a golden bamboo screen (we think) was suspended, which, like an Ad Reinhardt painting, slowly reveals an image of a cross. This was true throughout the building. Crosses were subtly placed everywhere. Kenny said to Paul, "It is intimate and inspiring in the same moment." The feeling was one of awe, but not insignificance. The workmanship was breathtaking, the attention to detail beyond what you find in the States (no surprise there). The stations of the cross were illustrated by contemporary photographs in stainless steel frames around the perimeter. This is one of those rare buildings that reminds us about the creative enormity of abstraction and modernism.



We found our way back to the subway and went to the Residenz, the palace museum that was rebuilt after World War II. The grotto with walls and fountains of seashells was delightfully grotesque but the restored rooms bored us after the first dozen or so. We concluded it must have been dull to be royalty in Germany. Kenny liked one tiny room that was Chinese red and covered in little framed pictures.



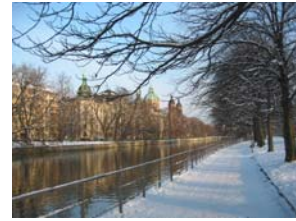
Around the corner we wandered into the famous Theatinerkirche (St Cajetan's Church); the interior of which was all white, a relief after all the gilt of the palace. Another beer hall for lunch, where we ended up next to a gay American couple (of course!). We wandered into the Italian Garden which sits in front of the Bavarian State Chancellery. Great planes of snow were sliding off the new glass roofs and crashing to the ground. We didn't see a barrier or warning sign anywhere. We walked over to Maximillian Strasse to peer in the windows of the same boutiques that we saw along Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich. Paul found a chocolate store (he has a nose for this) and we relished our dessert while waiting for a tram. We decided to explore the neighborhoods from a warm transit vehicle and passed the Maximilianeum, which looks like something out of a 19th century dream (it now houses the Bavarian parliament). We weren't quite sure where we ended up but when our chocolates ran out we boarded an S-Bahn back to our hotel for our requisite afternoon nap.

When we woke up in the early evening we bundled up again and found our way back to Marienplatz and the winter market. We indulged in sausages and then the best potato pancakes ever. We watched them being made and ate them hot with garlic mayonnaise. In between courses we drank a few mugs of gluhwein, or mulled wine. Thousands of people were in the streets seeing old friends, drinking wine, and laughing under the stars. Around



eight (or was it nine?) the church bell rang and all the vendors closed their huts down for the night and everybody went home.

In the morning Kenny was determined to see more neighborhoods by trolley (Paul would have been happy staying warm under the duvet) so we boarded one in front of our hotel and guessed when it was time to disembark. For such a busy city it was very quiet and we took a romantic walk along the river. Just about the time we were getting cold we ducked into the Bavarian National Museum because Kenny wanted to see the replicas of rooms from Bavarian homes. There were hordes of children since the museum was also showing hundreds of crèche scenes, which we actually enjoyed. Soon enough we found the English Garden, endless fields of snow, with kids playing on a snowbank. A friend of ours told us that he found an entire nudist colony in this park when he visited. Well nobody was running around naked when we were there! Eventually we walked over to the University District, which was not as interesting as we had hoped. On a side street we did find a modern furnishing store that carried the most beautiful web baskets – bought one for cousin-in-law Chloe. The beer hall in this neighborhood was not as much fun as the ones in the center of town.



We sorted out the trams and took it down to the Galerie im Lenbachhaus, which houses an excellent collection of Blue Rider paintings. The museum is a restored mansion and we got lost (wayfinding in European museums is not terribly advanced) and stumbled into an exhibition of a light artist who reminded us of James Turrell. We entered a dark room and after our eyes adjusted we realized that the illumination was a small glow at the top of the room. Like a good dessert we consumed it all too quickly. Upstairs we finally found the Blue Riders and a stunning collection of Kandinskys. You could see abstraction unfolding before you. Visually filled we returned to the hotel for a swim and a nap. For dinner we wandered back to Marienplatz and a famous beer hall for another delicious dinner.

Our rental car agency was in the train station and our car was in a garage directly across the street from our hotel. But with more wayfinding problems it took us quite a while to



locate the vehicle and then sort out how to get out of Munich. Kenny wanted to visit Dachau but we never saw the turnoff and it was probably not the best site to see the day before Christmas Eve. We drove without incident for about two hours to Crailsheim. When we turned onto the little street where cousin Patrick and his wife Ina live we knew we were in the right spot because it looked just like the pictures. On the bank of a small river their home overlooks a little dam (their home used to be next to the mill) and a field beyond. Patrick had just completed a

greenhouse/dining-room off the main house and we spent most of the next few days around the table eating and laughing. It was all like a dream.

The snow turned to rain and we never got a chance to slide down a hill. We will have to return.

