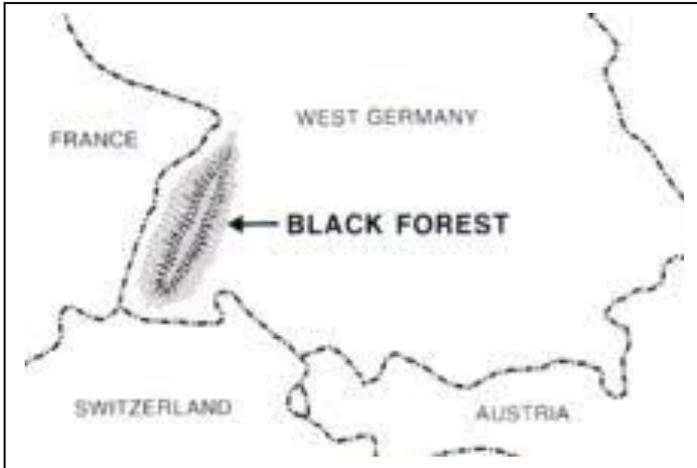


**Location: Alpersbach Black Forest**

Our walk in the Black Forest is from Falkau to Freiburg, around 48 km's with stopovers in Alpersbach and Kirchzarten, including some circuit walks around these towns. To save looking up where the black forest is the following map shows it tucked at the bottom of Germany



bordering France and Switzerland.

We arrived at Alpersbach for a three night stay after a scenic train ride and a taxi to the hotel. Our first impressions of the region were very favourable as we drove through rolling hills bordered by forest; very manageable looking terrain for the more mature walker! Our host, Joseph, was a real character. As head chef, he took great interest in growing his own vegetables and herbs for his adventurous recipes, e.g. stinging nettle soup. A significant amount

of the produce used in his restaurant was sourced from the local farms. The eggs were especially delicious.

There are lots of interesting things in this area but one of the most interesting is that it is home to its very own native cow the Hinterwald. Farmers have used this native stock and bred it into an animal which is used for both milk and meat. And here is the cow. Those with some awareness of the farming industry will see the strong resemblance to the Hereford. One significant difference is that it is quite small for a domesticated cow.

Another cow fact, the very popular Angus bred in Australia was bred in Germany. Our first walk was from Falkau to Alpersbach, a stroll of 17kms over the



range between the two villages. We passed through many small settlements on our way which were all charming and incredibly neat (and no graffiti). We then walked into a forested area and came across this lake. This is a swimming hole for the locals and there were a few people swimming when we arrived. It was a great place to stop for lunch, particularly as there were plenty of bench seats around the lake. During the course of our lunch the swimmers exited from the lake and dried themselves off. There must be a

different attitude to nudity in the Black Forest as we were given the full display. Photos are on the deep web, not on my child friendly blog.

We managed to finish our lunch without raising our heads again. I personally think that nudity is disgusting, shameful and damaging to all things human. But if I were 22 with a great body, it would be artistic, tasteful, and a progressive religious experience.



We left the lake and headed on down to a village on our way back to the hotel. Displayed outside a dress shop were these examples of what the locals are wearing, a much more appropriate style of dress for my blog.

The great thing about walking in Europe is that there are plenty of opportunities to purchase refreshments on the walks. It is a rare walk that you don't come across a café or shop where you can replenish your supplies. It's hard to give up our Australian maxim of carrying the days supply of water on a walk but with a little research on what is available on the track you can get away with only carrying half a litre of water and you will never go thirsty or get hungry.

Imagine taking this sort of risk when walking a trail like the Larapinta in Central Australia.

As we were staying in Alpersbach for three nights we could do a circuit walk from our hotel. We were spoilt for choices such as, high Alpine Walks with snow meadows, quite ambles through country lanes and a walk to see the local cuckoo clocks. We chose the clocks walk as we hadn't come across any, in an area supposedly famous for its clocks. Germans are great walkers and their walking associations apparently evolved out of the cuckoo clock makers who transported their clocks around on their backs selling them as they travelled about. This is Carol and I in front of a rather large example of the clocks.

This was part of a display that was situated on one of the local rivers where a whole manner of industries developed from the use of water power. One such industry was the manufacture of spoons (which incidentally are rather big in this region), another was timber milling.

The walk back to the hotel required us to walk back up the ravine which was the source of water for the industries. Across

the start of the ravine was this viaduct which facilitates train travel from one side of the gorge to the other. This was a major trade route between Austria and Germany and was a prime target during the WW II bombing raids, albeit unsuccessful. On retreat of the German troops, the viaduct was blown up but was rebuilt with funds from the Marshall plan.





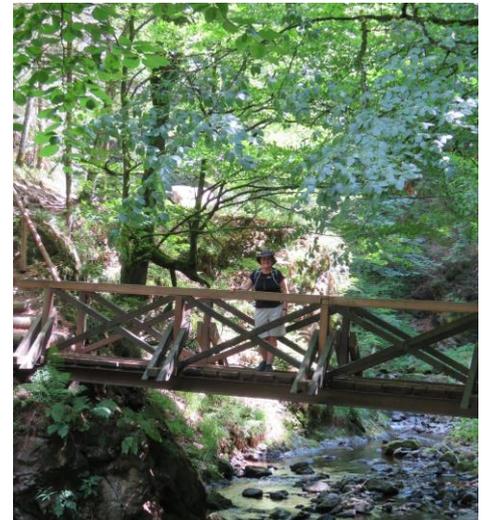
The walk up the ravine, while steep was well worth the effort as the plants were all in extremely good health and the mosses were very wet and green. Fortunately, there were steps and ladders for the more difficult parts, but we still needed a few rests on the way up. This is a very popular walk as we met many people on our way up, we obviously chose the wrong way to look at the ravine.



The Ravine itself was beautiful.

Carol was a little tired, after our arduous climb so she decided to catch a taxi back to the hotel while I continued to explore the local forest. On my way I met a farmer who was bringing in his hay. All belted up in the tractor cabin was a fine three-year-old example of the Germanic looks including the blond hair, who was helping grandfather bring in the hay. We had a bit of a chat about his farm. The people we have met in this area have all been very friendly and accommodating with our lack of language skills. It is not going too far to say that they have been charming and helpful. Difficult to reconcile this culture we are experiencing with what has gone on in Germany in past times.

On leaving the lower lands I moved on up into a very steep area which was heavily forested and very dark. Visions of witches and Hansel and Gretel came to mind as I walked past strange toadstools (I think they were in my dinner later that night), gnome hideouts and little caves. A little research later on corrected my misunderstanding where the fairy tale was set, it is suggested it was actually in Romania a long long way away. I came across this rock formation which was unusually very black, so I was wondering if this type of rock contributed to the areas name as well as the very dense forest we have come across.



Tomorrow we leave our hotel, heading to Kirchgarten, a 16km walk.

Joseph excelled himself with his meal on our last night; we had to go for a bit of a stroll after dinner to let the effects wear off before heading up for the night.

