



Bike tour from Vienna to Budapest

via Lake Neusiedl-Lake Balaton (September 7-21, 2021)



As vaccinated and equipped with Covid certificate, we (Helen and Patrick) dared the bike tour with our e-bikes from Vienna to Budapest via Lake Neusiedl - Lake Balaton, approx. 750km. We were able to take the bikes with us on the direct trains Zurich-Vienna and Budapest-Zurich without any problem – but with reservation.

For a few days we were accompanied by Ilus (Servas member) from Tatzmannsdorf/Austria. As a Hungarian, she provided accommodation in Hungary and telephone call. So we were also on the safe side that our bikes could be parked well at night and placed in a locked room.



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In Vienna we met with Hedwig and Lorenz in their wonderful organic garden in the middle of the city for breakfast and exchanged news; we have



known each other for years and see each other again and again at international Servas meetings. Hedwig was currently busy as with the theatre project in the Odeon «Chernobyl, a chronicle of the future».



With our e-bikes we were able to move on very well on signposted bike paths and discovered a lot in Vienna such as the city center with Ring-Rad-Rundweg, the Ottakringarea, the vineyards of Nussdorf (unfortunately the "Heurige" was only open for a closed group; what a pity) as well as the Danube Island (about 20km long). The



“Burgtheater” was also a highlight. The play (written by Tabori) I booked had to be replaced with "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" due to the illness of an actor.

Through Praterpark we continued towards Podersdorf at Lake Neusiedl, which is located in a wonderful nature reserve and is a World Heritage



Site. Ilus joined us in Sárvár, Hungary. In Heviz with a well-known thermal lake, I had to try the healing



of the thermal water, which was wonderful for my knees. We stayed at Lake Balaton for a few days. Vineyards with fine wine, Tapolca with the underground waters



as well as the remaining of three monk dwellings (monk cells from the year 1050 ca.) near Tihany was another highlight.



Szantod to Balatonkenese is very well developed for cyclists and signposted

accordingly. Otherwise, it was often a risk to ride sandy side roads with holes according to the “bikeline” bike tour book. Luckily, we were also able to navigate with MapsMe. It was fun and an exciting adventure because there was so much more of the wonderful, pot-flat Hungary to see and experience.



Budapest has some well-developed cycle paths. Our Servas Day Hosts, Judit and Sandor, guided us through the history of



Hungary and showed us many exciting locations in Budapest as well as in the countryside:

artists' city

Szentendre and

Esztergom. In Szentendre I really wanted to

visit the Kovács Margit Múzeum.

Margit Kovács (1902-1977) is an

outstanding ceramic artist, known for her colorful and lively depictions. Esztergom is located on the Danube, which forms the border with Slovakia. From the 10th to the middle of the 13th century, Esztergom was the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary. The basilica is the second largest in the world.



Judit and Sandor really wanted to take us to a classical



concert with dedicated young

musicians. They played pieces from

Brahms, Schumann, Boellmann, Haydn to M.

De Falla and Hermosa. Masks were hardly worn

as everywhere in Hungary. Unbelievable that

this is so easily ignored. On the train and across

the border to Austria masks were mandatory

everywhere. For the return trip to Switzerland, we had to store our contact details online.

I would like to add some comments from our Servas friends which we have visited:

Hedwig from Vienna (written on the train from Arnhem to Brussels):

Kurz (in German: make a long story short and also the name of the Austrian Chancellor "Mr. Kurz") about Servas in times of pandemic: the Chancellor of this name has been served up, so I can write like that again!

Already last year we believed that it would probably be over with Servas encounters, no chance to survive this safely, too many fears all around, the pandemic would have us and Servas under controlrien ne va plus; so it was in the two lockdowns March to May 2020 and December to May 2021..... but hardly over with closed schools, shops and restaurants.... and already the first request from Brussels was there. A young couple wanted to visit us in Vienna. We happily agreed, still unvaccinated, because there was no vaccine yet. We were able to drive to the countryside to our second home, leave the city apartment to the guests, but a visit to a wine tavern (called "Heurigen" in Austria) and an invitation to eat apricot dumplings with a Servas friend already worked. Because it was such a rare thing, we especially enjoyed the encounters. Only when a thunderstorm suddenly surprised us with heavy rain in the wine tavern around the corner and we had to crowd together in a confined space in the "Heurigen" restaurant, uncertainty and fears appeared. However, these were soon gone, as there were no nasty viruses buzzing around in the middle of summer. As a precaution and in accordance with the regulations Balkanto meeting in November, General Assembly and Christmas Meeting 2020 had to be cancelled. The second lockdown survived well except from the media heard of bad illnesses, spring and summer 2021 spent with vaccinations, raved about Servas' encounters in old times on cold winter and balmy spring evenings, until finally in the middle of summer 2021 again inquiries from almost all over the world came in. We met for a music event of a Servas friend making music on the Danube, at the "Heurigen" and in Trieste with the local coordinator E and her mother A to eat spaghetti while the heat was 37°! in Servola at border to Slovenia.

In September the first guest was there, in October the next one and inquiries from France and Israel, which I unfortunately had to answer negatively, because we wanted to finally realize our trip to Holland and Belgium, planned two years ago.

The nice thing: all the young people are now on the road and even nicer

was the first request for a contact conversation, again from young people, who heard about neighbors of Servas, the idea of traveling to friends and accommodating such as guests, so attractive that they wanted to join immediately. Said and done: all formalities were completed within a week and now Servas Austria has two new members.

Slowly something is happening again such as cross-border meetings and - but with caution and consideration - we already have planned a November and a Christmas meeting including a workshop.

Let's have Servas as long as we want it and younger people hopefully will follow!

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November 6, 2021 Helen Heim Hueber