

Trip Report Garmisch

Space City blew into Berlin in January for the pre-trip tour, along with the City's first snowfall of the season. Eighteen club members, along with several other Texas Ski Council clubs enjoyed sightseeing in a winter wonderland on a city tour which included photos at Checkpoint Charlie, viewing the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag. A tired crew headed to bed but a few like **Bob and Marilyn Davis** headed out to explore the surrounding area of the hotel. The fabulous fireplace surrounded by comfortable chairs in the hotel lobby was a popular meeting place the entire 4 days, as trip members came by with reports on their activities. KadeWe Department Store with its huge food halls was a magnet for the entire group. **Barbara Carlson, David Weathersby and Roger Holzman** dined in the beer garden there while others picked other German delicacies to enjoy. An Irish Pub in Berlin (who knew?), complete with music and dancing, was a popular spot for some in the group. **Frank and Susan Stanley** enjoyed the opportunity to connect with Berlin friends. **Frank Yu and his wife Sue Ann Chu** dined one night on duck and Frank proclaimed it "the best ever"! Rumor has it that Frank ate duck every chance he got on the trip.

Meanwhile, **Roger Holzman** was seen struggling with the hotel computers that for some reason only spoke German - an experience we all shared when we ventured online. Thursday, **Christie Burke, Margaret Walker and Betty Gosse** headed out early to the Museum District and almost the entire group followed, including **Sandy Schneider**

and **Peggy Strong**. Berlin pre-trip participants loved the Pergamon Museum, the primary visitor attraction on Berlin's museum island and home to more than 6,000 years of cultural history. After puffing up and then back down the foot-high stone steps of the ancient altar, the group all headed to the nearby Berlin Cathedral, the City's largest Protestant church, and gave thanks they survived.



Was that **John Salinas** we saw heading for the fitness facility? Perhaps John was taking too much advantage of the 3 course breakfasts Germans are famous for!

Barbara and John Brescian, along with **Marilyn and Bob Davis** enjoyed lunch atop the revolving restaurant at the TV Tower, a Berlin landmark, and Bob stopped at a nearby store to buy gloves - handy in the low 20's temperature of Berlin. Almost the entire group toured the dome high atop the Reichstag Parliament building, only to find it was like walking in an igloo in Alaska - the open top trapped the cold air in the space. John Brescian could be seen speed reading the placards.

After a 9-hour motorcoach ride to Garmisch, the group arrived at the Hotel Konigshof and joined the 31 new Space City arrivals from the U.S. and Moscow. Moscow? Club members **Bob and Carol Viktorin** currently are based there. The Texas Ski Council Winter Expedition now could officially begin.



Most nights, you could find workaholics **Brent McGibbon and Steve Nickels** in the lobby, trying to communicate via iPhone or iPad with the US. Trip Coordinator **Barbara Brescian** was spotted at St. Martin's Church, praying, no doubt for more snow.

Andy and Leslie Cashio were enjoying their day on the Garmisch slopes when Andy was sideswiped by a boarder – a fellow American, no less! A beginner snowboarder made an abrupt right turn and sat down coming into the lift line. This created a perfect yet unintended ski jump for Andy Cashio. He got high marks for distance but was unable to stick the landing. **Ali and Fred Pethick** had a blast on their first European ski venture.

No, that wasn't an Italian tenor staying at our Garmisch hotel, but **Evan Howell**, practicing in the hallways for his Happy Birthday serenade to **Christie Burke**, who celebrated her special day on the trip. **Sue Ann Chu** picked up a paper crown for her at

a nearby Burger King and picked up a spare for **David Weathersby**, who celebrated his birthday a few days later. **Laura Nowicki** got surprised with a cake at dinner for her birthday, and everyone in the Hotel Konigshof restaurant sang.

Mega shopper **Ann Rogers**, egged on by super mega shopper **Gloria Lopez**, hit the jackpot with the purchase of a mink coat for \$300 at a second-hand shop in Garmisch. She couldn't wait to walk in the door back in Houston and see the look on her husband's face.

All enjoyed the Garmisch-Partenkirchen's welcome event for the Texas Ski Council with hot spiced wine including **Senjit Sarkar, Tor Lileng, Cindy Moore, Debbie Cini and Jose Araujo**. At the event, **John Salinas**, thinking the mugs contained hot chocolate, added whipping cream to his cup, the hot gluwein coagulated before his eyes.



The high tech Garmisch area issued lift cards that skiers slipped into their pockets for reading when passing through the gates at the lifts and trams. Very cool.

After gondola-ing up the Garmisch Classic ski area, it didn't take **John Brescian** and

Bob Davis long to find the bar on the slopes and – you guessed it – the Pilsner Urquell. **Carol and Bobby Viktorin** skied hard and **Roger Holzman** reports he was exhausted trying to keep up with them.

By day, ski experts **Bob Whitten and Laura Nowicki** got the full alpine experience, while spouses **Jim Nowicki and Myra Whitten** found lots of sightseeing and Garmisch activities to keep them occupied. At night, the **Nowickis** and the **Whittens** headed to the Casino. **Marilyn, Bob Davis, Melissa and Bob Frazier** tried their hand there, too.

The **Whittens** and the **Nowickis** were also spotted at the lobby bar playing a lively hand of bridge. They had a couple of extra decks and loaned them out to **Sarah Granbery and Elizabeth Albright** who found a couple of easy marks in **Ralph Eureste and Charles Albright** for a mean game of spades. Everyone wanted in on the game so it became a rotation of players and partners. Just a few libations were enjoyed while dealing and bidding!



A brave group of folks traveled 1 hour and 15 minutes on a cog train moving up the mountain, partially through a dark tunnel. They then raced to a tram that rose vertically

to the 10,000 foot top of Zugspitze – quite literally, the “Top of Germany.” It was cold, it was windy, but they all faced the web cam and got the shot. No doubt the aromatic goulash in the restaurant was topped off with a glass of gold liquid following that adventure!



Garmisch skiing wasn't enough for ski diehards **Pete Mathieu, Ric Levi, Ralph Eureste, Dayle Hein and Joe Salley**, who rented a car and headed for St. Anton in Austria (incredibly, only a short drive away).

TSC Expedition Coordinator **Ross Baker** took a day off to train to Munich and sightsee – BMW museum anyone? Meanwhile, **John Brescian and Brent McGibbon** trained to Munich and then Stuttgart to spend the day at the Porsche factory and museum. Alas, all came home empty-handed. **Margaret Walker** headed via train for a day trip to Munich to visit friends.

The day excursions to Innsbruck, Austria and Neuschwanstein Castle were very popular with the entire TSC group. The bus was full both days with adventurers. **Bobby**

Viktorin managed to get a year's worth of shopping in during his free time in Innsbruck. He took his wife, **Carol**, to the Frey Willa store and took care of her February birthday, Valentine's Day, and anniversary. You know how to vacation, Carol! The following day the group traveled to the village of Fussen to tour just one of King Ludwig II's castles. Some folks walked up the hill to the castle while others enjoyed a horse drawn wagon ride. When we arrived at the top, we experienced rainbows and a glittery atmosphere on a frosty morning.



Meanwhile the adventure continued with the Prague post trip for 23 energetic Space City members. They partied the entire way on the 5-hour train ride to Prague – or so said the beverage cart guy who made numerous stops at the compartments occupied by **Debbie Cini, Cindy Moore, Ann Rogers and Gloria Lopez**.

Every day, most everyone scattered in all directions to visit the Royal Castle (the world's biggest), the Old Jewish Quarter, dating back to the 13th century, and Old Town Square with its incredible Astronomical Clock. If you want evidence, **Andy Cashio** was busy with his camera catching all the action. Most of the group opted to travel one day to Pilsen, home of

the Pilsen Urquell brewery. A glass poured straight from the vat? No problem!

Ross Baker even tried touring Prague by Segway- a bumpy proposition with all the cobblestones. **The Brescian's, the Frazier's, and the Davis's** enjoyed a scenic but chilly boat ride on the River Vltava.

The group broke off into various farewell dinners, the most unique in a church bell tower. **Jose Araujo** escorted **Betty Gosse, Sandy Schneider, Margaret Walker, and Peggy Strong** for dining with a panoramic view of the Prague lights.

The big question at trip's end was "Where are we going next year?" Count me in!

Barbara Brescian
TC - Garmisch