



Ambling through Alsace.....

On 18 August, just doing a routine oil check after a quiet day's cruising through the Jura, we were alarmed to find the oil tank full of water...after consulting our home base, we had no option but to turn around and crawl slowly back over two days to St. Jean de Losne. Naturellement, the head mechanic was just leaving on holiday for 2 nail-biting weeks...would we need a new top gasket...a new engine? Luckily, almost 3 weeks later it turned out to be a replacement of the cooling outlet to the engine....but these things take time...mais oui.



As we wait, the European heat wave hits St. Jean de Losne...day after day with temperatures ranging from 35 – 46C on board ...stifling. We are sitting in a tin can. We begin dousing Louie in buckets of cold water...thank goodness we have the car. When we can stand it no more...we take off for three days in Alsace.



Look away now....our vegetarian friends...for this is the land of ham hocks and sauerkraut in numerous variations....or the traditional flammenkuchen (thin crust pizza...heavy on the cheese, cream, bacon and onions). Sitting in the middle of the vine-covered rolling hills is the capital, Colmar...a picture-perfect, fairytale town – a blend of German and French - its centre crisscrossed by canals- Le Petit Venise, la Rue des Marchands and Fishmonger’s District. It’s labrynth of pretty streets and brightly-coloured restored houses are bordering on “Disney”. It’s almost hard to take it all in. We head for the hills and the immense 12C Chateau de Haute Konigsbourg with its amazing views. A silhouette that has dominated the surrounding countryside for 9 centuries - immaculately restored courtyards, turrets, endless spiral staircases, an inn, a forge, a mill...757 m above the plain.



No less lovely and perhaps cozier were the tiny string of medieval villages that run through the surrounding vineyards – each just a little different than the next. At Riquewihr, past a beautiful arched gateway in the ancient walls, we find a shady, courtyard restaurant and enjoy a lunch of goat’s cheese tart, stocking up on the fruity and fresh Rieslings and Cremant. At Kaysersberg, we enjoy the lovely little canal that meanders through the town, which is filled with charm and flowers. Each town is a living museum. At the last place, Eguisheim, 2 circles of streets enclose the town. Every town is dominated by local wine producers....Sylvaner, Pinot Blanc, Riesling, Muscat, Gewurtztraminer....all are included in “les plus beaux villages de France”. Suddenly, the roads are filled with tractors....the harvest has begun...only permitted to start when the wine association gives their permission. The individual owners may not decide themselves.

