



PASSAGE TO BERLIN and on to the Mecklenburg Lakes

**'SOMMER WANDERER'
HAINES 380**



Having spent an idyllic summer of 2007 in Holland, we overwintered at Heerenveen in Friesland and in June 2008 joined our friends with their Broom 32 and both boats embarked on what was for us, a pioneering journey into the bowels of East Germany. Travelling a distance of 1617 km over three months.

We left Holland in a sea of orange with World Cup fever, which continued with Germany's excitement, but sadly neither managed to win the Cup.

From Heerveneen, we travelled via Groningen and via the picturesque route of the Mussel Kanaal, in a convoy patrol through about 50 hand operated bridges, and 7 sluices. Continued on our way to Ter Apel and to Haren, Germany via the Haren-Rutenbrock Kanal and the Dortmund-Ems Kanal.

We had previously agreed not to take the direct route, but a more scenic trip along the Weser. We mixed it with the big boys (ocean going containers) and barges along this very wide, fast flowing and extremely busy section of the river passed Bremen. Enjoyed the towns of Oldenburg and Nienburg on the way, eventually joining the Mittelland kanal at Minden. Watched families of red & black kites gliding effortlessly on the many nature reserves and broke our journey for a couple of days at Hannover. Got moved on by the police a couple of times for not mooring in designated spots. The 2nd time with two Dutch boats - one had moored in the lay-by many times before, but the police had changed the rules this year and we were all fined €10 each at 8am in the morning and told to move on (Police beer fund?) *Maybe it was imagination running wild, but it did seem that from then on the Polizei were keeping an eye on us for our entire journey!*

Crossed the impressive new bridge over the shallow Elbe, twisting its way through unattractive scenery below and continued along the Elbe-Havel kanal, stopping at Brandenburg/Kitzen/Glindow and the picture postcard village of Werder. The lakes were now opening up into large expanses of glorious open water, then into Potsdam (we returned to Potsdam later when our family visited us to see Sanssouci park and palace) Continuing on to Nikolassee and Wannsee (a large and popular sailing area). and moored at some friendly yacht clubs. Went through the heart of Berlin and had no problem with congestion or the 24 hour mooring spaces and we were able to moor close by the Bundestag/Reichstag. Did all the 'touristy things' by which time we were quite exhausted!

We had a week's quiet relaxation on the River Dahme and down to the bottom of the Teupitzer See, where the lakes on the south side of Berlin were quite fantastic with the forests coming right down to the waters edge and lots of caravan and camping sites. We liked Woltersdorf where we were able to swim in the placid warm lake and Teupitz, a friendly town mooring.

We went back through Berlin with our family, stopping on the way at Treptow and visiting the truly amazing Russian war cemetery and memorial in the park there. Dropped the family off at Spandau to fly home via the S-bahn and Schönefeld to England and then we headed further East.

The Sluice at Spandau is well known for being slow, we had to wait 2½ hours until the various barges had passed through. Eventually got underway travelling along the Havel - tree lined waterways with sections of industrial reclamation sites, but in the main, very pleasant with narrower waterways and reeds, reminiscent of home, and stopping at picturesque marinas and villages along the way. Continuing on along the river Havel stopping at Zehdenick a pretty village with the usual traditional cobbled streets. In the supermarket an Englishman heard us talking, and was amazed to have English visitors in his holiday village (he worked in Berlin)!

Called in at Cardinal Boats at Fürstenberg to sort out an electrical problem with the Engine (it wouldn't turn off). Cardinal is a British Company and has some of Haines 380's. and we got the problem resolved here. They have a new marina on the Röblinsee which is excellent, they made us very welcome and we stayed there 5 days. We were able to explore the countryside on our bicycles. A lot of the area around here is now a nature reserve - we understand that previously the Russian Military had used it as a munitions dump and there were eerie remains of army buildings still visible through the fauna which was slowing encompassing them. A few miles away was the site of the women's concentration camp at Ravensbruck, a harrowing place which we did not visit.

We encountered many parties of canoeists enjoying the calm waters and we continued on our way through numerous lakes and sluices as far as Rheinsberg, a historic town with lakeside castle - just 90 km from Berlin, but it took us 10 days by water to get there!

We found the local people friendly and helpful willing to practice their English, which was for the most part much better than our German! Eating out was cheaper than home, but diesel wasn't! Mooring costs averaged €1 per Metre; free at anchor in the lakes, but illegal to tie on to the trees due to the sandy soil. The weather was very good although a lot of rain initially, but this was soon forgotten when the sun came out, some days the temperature reached 36 deg.

Used our bikes into the hinterland, but didn't go much on riding over the cobbles! Saw 3 private English boats south & west of Berlin and exchanged a few stories. The further East we went, none at all.

The scenery ranged from reed beds like our own Broads to vast forests coming right down to the waters edge and arable fields; maize was being harvested before we came home. We saw deer and foxes and many large birds of prey (eagles and kites) although not able to identify them accurately. There were also a great number of wind farm which blended into the landscape unobtrusively and the lakes are vast, which made our own broads look like puddles! Following over 40 years of neglect by the Russians and the DDR the old buildings are gradually being rebuilt and cottage gardens reminded us of our childhood, full of vegetables, flowers and fruit trees.

We took a couple of train rides to the Baltic coast - first to the Hanseatic city of Stralsund dating back to the middle ages - fine preserved buildings to view and a thriving port. Then to the very pleasant university city and port of Rostock, from here we continued to the picturesque seaside village of Warnow - not unlike our own holiday resorts - could have been Yarmouth with its promenade and fine sand. Got used to seeing naked Germans bathing in the lakes (freikörperkulture)!

Sommer Wanderer is spending the winter 116 km north of Berlin at Neustrelitz and we are looking forward to returning next spring to continue our travels through the Mecklenburg lakes.