

COME FLY WITH ME!!! HAVE A GREAT TRIP TO YOUR ANCESTRAL HOME TOWN

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Some Possible Goals in Having a Visit to Your Ancestral Town

1. Find some useful old genealogy records. On-site finds may occur.
2. Meet with some local genealogists who may be able to help with your research.
3. Meet some “new” relatives whom you have never met before.
4. See some meaningful sites, such as your ancestor’s church, cemetery, house, and property.
5. Nearby sites of interest.

Where Are Your Towns? (or my towns?)

Europe:

- Scotland
- England
- Germany
- Switzerland

US:

- New England
- Southern
- Midwest

Visiting a Quaint Old German Town: Heuchelheim

- Try to talk to the locals (Note: go to the town, and in the native language, you say: “My great-grandfather was born in this town.” These are magic words and will get you some help.)
- Don’t let your lack of language skills get in the way of your goals. Learn at least a few words to get you started. Do not assume that English is spoken.
- Have some specific goals. Perhaps you want to find genealogy records, or locate people with your same surname, or find a local genealogist, or find your ancestor’s old home.
- Be flexible with your time. You may get an offer of assistance that will take a day or more.
- Hope for some good serendipity. Just as the local Burgermeister (mayor) was helpful to me, you may find people who are helpful to you.
- Inquire about any useful genealogy sources for the town: books, private records, old church/civic records.
- In small towns, people are likely to be friendly and helpful, but you may need to talk to 2-3 people to find the more friendly ones.

Avoiding Problems on Your Trip: Gimmeldingen

Some lessons learned:

- Do some advance planning. If possible, contact people in the town in advance of your trip so that at least some people may be expecting you. Just because one of your relatives had a good visit in a certain town does not guarantee the same for you.
- Carry your basic database with you. This means that you'll want to have your ancestral database with you in some form, such as a flash drive, laptop, or special phone. Also, have data on contacting local people. Have battery backups.
- Take some notes along the way. In a few days, you may forget names or places.

Better Preparation Makes for a Better Visit: Goddlesheim

Some lessons learned:

- With some advance planning, and emailing some local people, I was able to have excellent in-home visits with some local people and possible relatives.
- Look for local family history records, or Sippenbuchs, that may be useful.
- Local church people can be very helpful. The best records are often in the church.
- Inquire as to whether there are any family organizations that have family reunions, newsletters, and such. These organizations may have useful data bases.
- Bring along any useful photos you may have of local places, such as an ancestral home. In European small towns, many homes exist for hundreds of years so you may be able to find your ancestor's home. Photos of people may bring recognition by the locals.
- Check ahead of time for genealogy archives: hours, rules, reservations.

Meeting with Your Possible Relatives: Viermunden

Some lessons learned:

- Try to make contact with local genealogists or people who may be possible relatives by using the town website. Post a message on the town website noting your connection with the town, your family name, and a little data about when your ancestor lived in the town. You may get an answer and you may find possible relatives.
- If you can find a willing distant relative, try for a nice walking tour of the town, along with meeting the local people.
- Churches were a big part of our ancestors' lives. If possible, attend your ancestor's church, or at least visit it. This message applies in any of our old ancestral places.
- Also, meet with any local genealogist whom you may hire to collect certain key data.

CONCLUSION: PLAN AHEAD, AND ENJOY YOUR TRAVELS!!!