



We left the camping ground on Monday morning. Most check out times in Europe are 11am but this one was 10am so it was a bit of a shock. After trading our wristbands and car sticker for our passports at the gate, we were on our way. It was just as well we left earlier as the traffic was very slow for the first 45 minutes.

Once we hit the autostrada the kilometres decreased much more rapidly. The first part of the trip was dead flat, but then the alps loomed ahead and the tunnels began. It was our second biggest tunnel day with a count of 22, but two of them were around 6km long.

The most direct route took us very close to the Slovenian border. We decided it would be to fun to detour into Slovenia, find at least one cache and bring our total country count to ten. As we approached Slovenia, it was strange to see a border post as none of the other EU countries have them. We had our passports ready but then realised the border was unmanned. We found three caches very quickly.



Two of the caches were at Lake Zelenci, a tiny lake hidden away in a nature reserve behind a roadside cafe. We would never have found it if we hadn't been on a geocaching mission. The lake had an unusual natural phenomenon in it - small round "windows" in the lake bed with spring water bubbling up. They looked like mini volcanoes under the water. The tiny green lake with the Julian Alps in the background was a beautiful sight.



We bought a couple of things from the cafe on our return. Even just over the border, Slovenia had a very different feel from Italy and Austria. It was noticeably poorer and more traditional. A couple of workers arrived at the cafe on their tractor and they were wearing traditional felt hats. The Slovenian language is very different too, we couldn't understand a word! The other cache we found was at a memorial to the ten-day war that took place after Slovenia gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991.



Our plan was to continue from Slovenia directly into Austria, but the road was closed for maintenance. Fortunately Andy noticed the signs at the beginning of the road before we went on to it. So we had to go back into Italy and to Austria from there. As the Austrian autobahn took us through beautiful mountain scenery, the temperature plummeted by about 18 degrees and the rain started. By the time we had reached our village the rain had stopped and it was a bit warmer again.

We are staying in a tiny village called Obertraun on the edge of Lake Hallstatt. We have a two bedroom apartment in a traditional Austrian chalet (complete with window boxes of course!) with million dollar views of the lake and mountains. All for just over NZD100 per night!



We had no food for dinner and the only supermarket had closed by the time we arrived, so we needed to find somewhere to eat. The apartment owner recommended a traditional Austrian restaurant in the village. The kids enjoyed Wiener Schnitzel, Andy had pork and I had a whole local trout freshly caught from the lake. When the waitress collected our plates, she couldn't believe I hadn't eaten the skin of my trout. I kept the plate for a bit longer and

gave it a go. It was very tasty, but I'm not sure I agreed with her that it was the best part! All the food was very yummy and we washed it down with apple strudel.

It is lovely to be in the mountains again. The air here is so fresh and the scenery is beautiful. Obertraun is surrounded by forested mountains on all sides. It is very quiet here, a complete contrast to the camping ground we have left behind!