



GET THE OUTDOOR HABIT

WALKING IN A WINTER WONDERLAND
NOG's New Year in Stolberg – Germany

By Dave Green

12 NOG's and 2 Noglet's decided to meet up with Dorit and 4 of her friends in Germany for a New Year holiday. After the short flight from Heathrow to Hanover we were met at the airport by Dorit. Once the endless paperwork was sorted we collected our hire cars and set off in convoy towards the historic town of Stolberg in the Harz mountains.

On the first day we met up with Ken and Deanna who has arrived on an earlier flight, and then Sally and Martin who had driven over with their children. After a late breakfast we

wandered around the town admiring the wonderful half-timbered buildings and narrow cobbled streets while looking up at the old castle on the hillside. Once the town had been explored, being an "Outdoor" group we set off into the forest for an afternoon walk. After a couple of hours walk we arrived at the look out

tower, which is best described as a small version of the Eiffel tower, after climbing the many steps and admiring the view, we had our first taste of Gluvine (mulled wine).

The second day we made the short journey to the town of Quedlinberg, a fine town that was considered the jewel in the crown of the former GDR (East Germany). Everybody seemed to have a good day touring the historic centre, visiting the castle, drinking more Gluvine and dare I say it shopping. In the evening while eating dinner, a little snow began to fall.

On the third day (New Years Eve) we woke up to find around 8 inches of snow, which had transformed the picturesque scenery into an amazing winter wonderland. So after another delicious German breakfast it was time to put our boots on and enjoy a fine days walking in the deep snow with clear blue skies. After the walk and more Gluvine, we changed for our New Years Eve dinner, then with all the food and drink consumed, we walked to the town square to welcome in 2003. In Germany, New Year is also firework night, this means that all the fireworks are ignited in the 10 minutes after midnight, this was spectacular, but seemed to give little regard to safety, with bangers being thrown (not just by



the youngsters) and Roman Candles being lit in the

hand then put on the ground. After that Dorit's friends made us a special punch using a cone of sugar soaked in rum before being ignited on a sort of camping stove.

A late breakfast was in order for New Years day, after which a day's sledging was in order. This was great fun but it left many of us nursing large bruises and bumps that took several weeks to heal. It also gave us chance to visit the swimming and sauna complex, this had an indoor pool with an area where you could swim through to an outdoor part of the pool; yes swimming outdoors in January!

As the snow was starting to clear from the roads, on the Thursday it was safe to consider using the cars again. This gave us the opportunity to ascend the highest mountain in the Harz, which is the 1142m Brocken. Some of us planned to use the

narrow gauge steam train, while the purists wanted to climb it on foot. In the end with rain and mist



coupled with limited daylight, we all used the train. While we didn't get a view from the top, it was a wonderful scenic railway journey.

Friday was our last full day in Stolberg before the journey home. Stella, James, Ken and Deanna went to visit Colditz, which was about three hours drive. The rest of the group had a quiet day in Stolberg, in the morning we had a guided tour of the town including the old church where Martin Luther had preached. Then after yet more Gluvine we returned to the swimming and sauna complex.

That leaves just one question to be answered, of the NOG's on the trip; Dave, Sarah, Stella, James, Nigel, Dawn, Ken, Deanna, Sally, Martin, Ian Reese and Aly who went in the mixed nude sauna? Was this the first NOG's orgy?

find a pub and decided to stay with us for the rest of the day.

The glorious climb led us to eat lunch on top, about 3 hours later with absolutely fantastic clear views all around. The descent was no less enjoyable with a walk along the summit ridge via Mynedd Moel and an exciting descent off the ridge



RECOMMENDED WEBSITE

<http://www.multimap.com>

This site has a map of the UK on the home page, then if you click on an area you will get a larger scale map, then if you keep doing this, you can a 1:50,000, 1:25,000 map (what we use for walking) or an even larger scale 1:10,000 map. For any map you have on the screen you can get an aerial photograph. Well worth having a look and putting it into your favourites.

THE MARCH OF KINGS – 2003

By Jackie Roberts

Our journey from Cardiff to Brecon was quite uneventful with Dave and Petra in the car until we hit an inn east of Dolgellau called the Cross Foxes. A few glasses to get into the banter with Daves recollection of allsorts and we were set for the weekend!

Our breakfast that first morning was enjoyed amidst an imposing setting of trees banking the stream and mountains in the distance. Our task was to climb Cadair Idris and nothing was going to get in our way. The Pony track route was taken and proved irresistible even for an old warrior like Ray, who sacrificed his desire to

at Gaw Graig.

En route back to base we had a drink at the Gwernan Lake Hotel at the foot of the Foxes Path which is where we ate our meal later that evening. Very enjoyable, particularly with the wine purchased by our newest member of the group, Taha. We had done 12 and a half miles of mountain walking and so appreciated our relaxation that evening.

The next day the sun shone again and we decided to do a shorter walk from one of Daves guide books in the Coed-y-Brenin forest via the waterfall Rhaedr Ddu. The route led us via an old disused gold processing site close to mine. George and Taha discovered the original tracks and there was much discussion.

Lunch was next to the Afon Mawddach from where George and Ray departed to find a pub. The rest of us ie Sian from Cardiff, Nigel, Dawn, Martin, Ali, Petra, Dave, Taha, Norman and myself drove to Barmouth to see the sea and finish off the weekend with some light or more substantial refreshment.

All in all an excellent weekend with excellent company, one of the best. Norman rates it as one of his top 5 in 30 years of hostelling. A mention to Sophie and Adrian who joined us for one night and Rachel and Roger from Cardiff who went their own way on the Sunday.

