

Preparing for a European Research Trip

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Question:

**How do you know
when you have been
spending too much time
in Europe doing genealogy?**

Answer:

**Don't worry . . .
Your spouse will let
you know!**

Agenda

- Europe
- Prior planning
- Research
- Bring it on home

Why Do Genealogy in Europe?

- **Critical Contacts**
- **Learn insider information**
- **Records & resources**
 - More available locally
 - Indexes & finding aids
- **Get feel for people & customs**
- **Understand the geography**
- **Connect with ancestors**

Location Location Location

- **You must identify a locality**
 - Family sources & traditions
 - Immigration & naturalization records
 - Ethnic associations
 - Church records
 - Census enumerations
 - Death records & obituaries
 - Published & manuscript histories
- **Internet resources**
 - Maps
 - Bulletin boards
 - Other contacts

Contacts

- **Its all about local contacts!**
 - **Institutional contacts**
 - Staff, volunteers, priests, historians, etc.
 - **Individual contacts**
 - Friends, relatives, fellow researchers, etc.
- **Share what you are looking for**
 - Talk with people openly . . .
 - Where you research & what names
 - Ask questions often, don't be bashful
 - Always listen for what people know
- **The broader the net is cast . . .
the greater the catch!**

Prior Planning

- **Electronics**
- **Documentation**
- **Attitude**
- **Gifts**
- **Culture**
- **Language**
- **Travel**
- **Accommodations**
- **Schedule**

Electronics

- **Consider all your potential gear**
 - Laptop computer
 - Digital camera
 - Battery recharger
 - External hard drive
 - Lights
 - Portable printer
 - PDA
 - Cell phone
 - Digital card reader
 - Personal care items

European Standards

- **Europe uses several different . . .**
 - **Electrical currencies**
 - 220 volt vs. 110 volt
 - **Sockets & plugs**
 - Plug adapters
- **Countries need unique assessment**
- **Hardware evaluated individually**
 - **Input requirements (voltage)**
 - **100-240 V**

Transformers & Converters

- Light duty voltage converters
- Voltage transformers
- Step down vs. step up
 - 220/240v \leftrightarrow 110/120v
- Watts vary based on load
 - Multiple outgoing sockets
 - Estimate max load +
- \$30 very respectable model
- Purchase wired for your country
- Don't forget socket adapters!

Documentation

- **Passport**
- **International drivers license**
- **Regular drivers license**
- **Medical information**
- **Photocopy everything (front & back)**
 - **Credit cards & financial instruments**
 - **Passport & IDs**
 - **Airline tickets**

Finances

- **EU countries all use Euro**
- **Currency exchange**
 - **ATMs & credit cards give best rates**
 - **Airports & banks worst rates**
- **Don't bring currency**
 - **Confirm use of ATM card**
 - **Call credit card company**
 - **Bring a few emergency \$**
- **Credit card benefits**
- **Import/export duties**

Attitude & Gifts

- **Be humble & gracious**
 - It ain't America - get over it!
 - You have much to learn
 - Don't be an ugly American
- **Bring gifts**
 - Research facility staff
 - Those who help you
 - Cash contributions to institutions
- **What do they like?**
 - Fine American chocolates
 - Tee shirts & American stuff

Culture

- **Learn local culture & customs**
- **Enjoy their foods & beverages**
- **Bring your own drugs (legal ones)**
- **Follow their laws**
 - **Speed limits & parking regulations**
 - **Travel permits/stickers**
- **Don't find fault or be critical**
- **Many travel guides available**
- **Calories don't count in Europe!**

Language

- **Learn as much as possible before**
 - CD & cassette tape instruction
 - College & BOCES classes
 - Language & travel books
- **Familiar genealogical vocabulary**
- **People will help you**
 - Many folks speak some English
 - Varies from country to country
 - English spoken more in cities
 - Bring good dictionary
- **Make it a point to learn language**

Getting to Europe

- **Seasonal airlines prices**
 - January thru April best discounts
 - Summer is most expensive
 - Spring & Fall are reasonable
- **Shop all the carriers for sales**
- **Some European airports cheaper**
 - Munich vs. Vienna
 - A little driving in Europe may save \$
- **Last minute ticket deals**
- **Ticket hawkers**

Travel within Europe

- **Good public transportation**
 - Will it get you into the Hinterwald?
 - Will it give you needed mobility?
 - Consider a mix
- **Rental cars**
 - Not cheap . . .
 - Shop for sales & discounts
 - Compare final prices (watch for add ons)
 - Simple to drive throughout EU
 - Rent with credit card for benefits
- **Travel permits & stickers**

Accommodations

- **Go local!**
 - Stay away from touristy lodging
 - Long-term accommodations cheaper
 - Live with friends or contacts
- **Many hotels on Internet**
 - Ask questions
 - Get pricing
 - Learn about availability
 - Make reservations online
- **Be flexible, but make reservations**

Schedule

- **Not your last trip to Europe**
 - You won't finish it in one visit
 - Think long term & plan accordingly
- **Schedule is based on budget**
 - Longer you stay the more it costs
- **Use time wisely . . .**
 - Maximize research time
 - Minimize down time
- **Schedule important appointments**
- **Be flexible with contingency plans**

Scheduling Research Visits

- **Contact each repository**
 - Introduce yourself to staff
 - Make them aware of your plans
 - Share your research objectives
 - Learn their rules & restrictions
 - Determine services they provide
 - Ascertain their schedule
 - Research hours
 - Special closings
 - Ask questions
 - Make reservations where needed

Travel Binder

- **Blue brain organizes trip**
 - Chronological order as needed
 - Airlines ticket
 - Car rental
 - Map from airport
 - Hotel reservation
 - Contact information
 - Schedule
 - Copies of legal & fiscal docs
 - Records repository info
 - Research guide
 - Objectives
 - Finding aids
 - All things . . .

Research

- **History**
- **Preparatory research**
- **Maps**
- **Records**
- **Consultants**
- **Research methods**
- **Research aids**
- **Repositories**

History

- **Understanding history is key**
 - European, national, regional & local
- **All aspects of history**
 - Governmental, religious, socio-economic, military, etc.
- **History supplies context**
- **Provides helpful clues**
 - History of parish may lead to older records in earlier neighboring parish

Preliminary Research

- **Learn all you can prior to trip**
 - Study detailed maps of area
 - Become familiar with locality names
 - Understand governmental structure
 - Search available microfilmed records
- **Use Internet to immerse yourself**
- **Develop research objectives**
- **Organize every needful thing . . .**
 - Existing genealogical data
 - Document everything you learn
 - Write down every hunch & question
 - Match research objectives with scheduled visits

Maps

- **Modern research maps**
 - Loose detailed maps
 - 1:50,000 or 1:35,000
 - Bound book maps with gazetteer
 - 1:100,000
- **Online interactive maps**
 - MapQuest Europe
 - Specialty interactive maps
- **Historical research maps**

Records

- **Identify every available record**
 - Where are they stored?
 - What information do they contain?
 - Are there restrictions on their use?
 - How may I reproduce them?
 - May I digitally film them?
 - Other reprographic services available?
- **Where do I learn this?**
 - Published guides
 - Repository staff
 - Email
 - Internet sites
- **Talk to everyone**
- **Ask in different ways over & over**

Deciphering the Records

- **Original foreign records challenging**
 - Different language
 - Unique vocabulary
 - Local adaptations & usage
 - Foreign handwriting scripts
 - Each changed in different periods
- **Find a mentor**
- **Study aids**
- **Experience is best teacher**

Hiring a Consultant

- **Advantages**
 - Skilled with local records & repositories
 - Know all resources available
 - Provide additional contacts
 - Can teach & mentor you
 - Experience may save \$ in long run
- **Disadvantages**
 - Can be very costly, for example . . .
 - \$50/hr. is not uncommon in Europe
 - Plus travel time & expenses
 - May not help find anything

Research Methods

- **Where will you focus your time?**
 - Extract focused data
 - Duplicate records & materials
- **Research cycle is critical**
 - What specific information do I need?
 - In what record will I find it?
 - Extract or duplicate record
 - Do supplementary records exist?
 - Repeat research cycle
- **Focus on best record sources 1st**

Research Aids

- **Many aids available to help**
 - **Collection guides**
 - **Publications**
 - **Detailed finding aids**
 - **Indexes**
 - **Online catalogs**
- **Spend time to see what's what**
- **Duplicate finding aids & guides**
 - **Help you plan for tomorrow . . .**
and for next year's visit

Repositories

- **Where is every record stored?**
- **Learn about their collections**
 - Finding aids & catalogs
 - Online listings
 - Ask questions
- **Figure out their game**
 - What are their research hours?
 - How many records may I use?
 - May I use a laptop, camera, etc.
 - Pencils vs. pens
- **Plumb depths of every collection**

Walk Ancestor's Land

- Find ancestral home sites
- Locate distant relatives
- Slow down to appreciate
- Can be spiritual adventure
- See some sights
- Take pictures to . . .
 - Document localities
 - Share with family
 - Post on website

Bring Home Treats

- **Share your experience with family**
- **Bring home . . .**
 - **Chocolates & candy**
 - **Foreign foods**
 - **Clothing**
 - **Toys & games**
 - **Fun stuff from your trip . . .**
- **Remember to thank those who assisted you in Europe**

When You Return Home

- **The real work begins . . .**
 - **Sorting through tons of paper**
 - **Organizing digital images**
 - **Extracting genealogical data**
 - **Studying your finds**
- **Continue to learn**
- **Stay in contact with associates**
- **Soon you will feel urge to return
and plan your next trip!**

Questions?



The End

Thank You!