

# *Jarek Trip from June 3<sup>th</sup> till June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010*

*organized by OA Jarek (Orts-Ausschuss: committee)*

*Tour-guides: Inge Morgenthaler and Michael Rettinger*



*Picture 1 - The Jareker group in front of the “Parkhotel” in Novi Sad. Second from the left side: Michael Rettinger, to the right: Michael Schmidt, 2 to the right and 1 upstairs: Inge Morgenthaler, ahead in the crouch: “Benni” our tour guide and rightmost: Dragan our bus driver, both from Novi Sad (Serbia).*

It was a diverse group of 42 persons who turned up at the airport in Stuttgart on June 3, 2010 to fly from there to Belgrade and to visit Jarek from there. A third [of them] belonged to the age groups 1927 to approximately 1935. They had still lived in Jarek as young people and they wanted to renew their memories and see their home again. A further third between the age group 1937 and 1944 was, of course, born in Jarek, but had yet only faint memories of the village or even none at all anymore. Most of this group came with their spouses, who weren't from Jarek. The last group finally was the post-war generation, who only knew Jarek from the stories told by their parents and grandparents, and who wanted to see where they had lived. How would all of these diverse people fit together? Would this work out?

We were received in Belgrade by a young tour guide from the firm of Elnostours, Novi Sad, who had graduated from high school in Berlin and therefore spoke German perfectly. The concern Elnos Tours had organized this trip according to my plans. Michael Rettinger had taken care of the financial part of the trip.

We arrived at the Park Hotel in Novi Sad after a pleasant journey, where we obtained our rooms. It belongs to the five best hotels in Serbia. After we had freshened up somewhat, we rode in our bus to the city center. At the National Theater the city tour began through a pedestrian zone. All were impressed by the large square in front of the magnificent city hall, the recently renovated Catholic church and the beautiful old art nouveau houses roundabout.

During a stroll through the pedestrian zone in the direction of the bishop's palace, we were able to admire further art nouveau houses. Today Novi Sad is a very lively city. In nearly every house on this street there is café or a restaurant with tables and chairs in front. The lower pedestrian zone in the direction of the Donaupark (Danube Park) has been especially nicely renovated. There are small passages with modern stores, which were all open notwithstanding the holiday.

Following the city tour, we ate our supper in a very beautiful old traditional restaurant at a side street. We received an excellent menu and a good Banat wine. The bus took us back to the hotel again later, and we spent our first night there.

On Friday, June 4th after a good breakfast buffet with much Serbian sausage and cheese specialties, the great event was to take place in Jarek, for which we had waited for nine years: The unveiling of a memorial plaque in the village hall. (See the report: Commemorations in Jarek.) Our bus finally took over the canal to the road to Jarek. Here we rode through the lowlands of the Batschka to our home village, the most important destination of our trip. All those who had known it previously, it seemed strange.

The old houses in the lower Hauptgasse on the left side have nearly all been torn down and replaced with new ones. On the right side some are yet standing, but partially with hideous additions. In the former "Großen Wirtshaus" ("Large Inn") there is a pharmacy, next to it, a flower shop. Behind it is a new Orthodox church.

Before dinner we had the opportunity to gain a first impression of the village. We strolled in small groups through the town — [having been] provided with copies of the old and new town map, in which also the small streets between the gardens are sketched in — which are all built-up with new houses. Backi Jarek has about 8,000 inhabitants today.

Since our visit in the year 2006, several very beautiful new businesses have emerged. Also in the upper Hauptgasse the stucco of several facades have been renewed and the houses have been painted with colorful paints. It struck me that the houses newly renovated in the year 2006 have lost their color again in the meantime. It was explained to me that the paint gets ruined by the "Saliter" ("saltpeter") which is absorbed by the façade from below. It was not for nothing formerly that the women of Jarek whitewashed the houses every year before "Kerweih."

In the afternoon we strolled again through the village. We were able to go into every yard and we had the impression that the people were waiting for us. They greeted us kindly and would have liked to talk with us more, which regrettable failed due to the language. Most of the old transverse houses in the Haupt- Spital- und Wassergasse are belong to two owners. Often one half of the façade is renovated and the other half is run down. We also saw several fences which cut through exactly the center of the old yards and gardens. The old front-buildings are mostly rented out and the owners have added new houses in the yard where formerly were the arbors and stables.

In the evening we drove to Cenej to eat at a Gäste-Salash. Unfortunately we could not sit under the beautiful old nut trees since it rained in torrents. But the inside was still decorated in the old style, and we spent a cozy evening.

Also on Saturday a visit to Jarek was scheduled. This time I went into the houses of my grandparents and was received very kindly. They welcomed me cordially and asked me to absolutely come again for a longer stay.

We ate dinner in the large inn in the Kreuzgasse both days. Our travel agency had organized a "Banda" (a folklore music band) on Friday and on Saturday a young folk dance group, which performed Serbian dances and songs. The beautifully dressed young men and maidens took great pains and were delighted by the nice tip.

After that we drove to Temerin to the "Bean-Soup World Championship," to which Mr. Mandic as well as the mayor of Temerin, Mr. Gustonj, had invited us. It was a noisy and entertaining folk festival.

Therefore we arrived somewhat later at the Peterwardein Fortress. The façade of the restaurant there has been recently renovated; the photos of the bombed Danube bridges have been taken down, and the people of Novi Sad enjoy life. All tables on the large observation terrace were occupied. We also enjoyed our supper with a view of the passing ships on the Danube and of the setting sun, of course, again with a good Banat wine.

We also wanted to see something of the Vojvodina in deed and I therefore had planned a ride into the Fruska Gora for Sunday. We crossed the Danube over the new bridge, which was built with EU money and opened in 2006; we rode through the Kamendin with the villas of the wealthy Serbs, after that through the woods of the national park until the monastery New Hopovo. Of the former 35 Serbian-Orthodox monasteries only 17 are still extant. These monasteries with their ancient frescos and iconostases rank among the most beautiful in Europe. Also the next monastery, Krusedol, was freshly renovated and made a very inviting and pleasant impression. Our trip continued then through vineyards and fruit groves down to the Danube, which lay before us as a mighty wide stream until Srenski Karlovci.

In the new restaurant "Dunav" directly at the bank of the Danube seating for us had been reserved. We were able to experience the passing tow and push boats really up close. Due to the many heavy rains there was flooding, and the wide Danube Stream impressed us very much.

For wine and honey sampling we strolled in a cozy garden into the honey museum at the other end of the town. We were already the zillionth group on that day and bread had run out. The renowned Riesling, which the Romans had already cultivated in the Fruska Gora, would have tasted better with some bread. In any case, we could not take any along, but for that we bought the magnificent acacia honey of the gigantic trees behind the house.

On the return trip to Novi Sad we drove by the church "Maria Schnee" and made a short stop. It is the famous pilgrimage church of the Catholic Danube Swabians, which was built at the spot where Prince Eugen had defeated a Turkish army on August 5th, 1716, which was many-times of superior strength. Snow was to have fallen which crippled the Turks because they believed it to be a miracle.

Our tour guide after that took us to a brand spanking new super-modern fish bar on the Fischerinsel in Novi Sad in the shape of a ship. Here we received an outstanding fish soup and battered Danube fish. Also from here we could see the passing boats very near, because the water reached nearly to the house or rather to the ship. After this diversified day we arrived red at our hotel, ready for our last night in Novi Sad.

The next morning signified the leave-taking from Novi Sad, but before that we visited the Piaž (market) to do the last shopping and to buy hand-made delicious noodles, which can be bought only there. After that our bus drove on the Autobahn through the far lowlands of the Batschka, over the wide Danube Bridge near Baja till Belgrade. The new local city guide took us first to the fortress Kalemegdan, where we had a magnificent view of the confluence of the Save and Danube. From there we strolled through the splendid boulevards of the pedestrian zone, passed the national theater and museums to the restaurant. These houses, too, were beautifully renovated, but the views into the side streets revealed a different picture. There is yet endlessly much to be done in this city. "When we enter into the EU everything will be different," is what many people say.

After dinner, which we could hardly master, we made a city tour, passing by the bombed buildings of the last war, which had been left standing. Our tour ended with the viwieng of the church of Saint Sava, the national saint of the Serbs. Here ended also the ability to walk of our dear Michael Schmidt. He broke several toes at the last quarter hour, which however, did not prevent him from an evening of entertainment the last night at the hotel. He let rain down upon us a "firework" of poems, songs in three languages and anecdotes that was just a pure delight.

The following morning the bus took us to the airport, where we said good-bye to our tour guide, Benny, who took care of us every day until late at night; who interpreted for us, and who saw to it that all instructions of his boss, Alexander Vranic, were carried out just as I had discussed with him. Everything has gone splendidly without a hitch, and the travel bureau Elnos Tours has labored to our fullest satisfaction.

It became apparent very quickly that despite the great age differences all participants got along markedly with each other and constituted a harmonious group. As I was told, all were very pleased with the trip. For most of them this will probably have been the last journey to the old home; but some said that they will travel there again when the memorial plaque at the mass graves will be dedicated.

*Inge Morgenthaler*

translated by Sieghart Rein

*OA Jarek, in June 2010*