

Munich, a city for naturism

Open air naturism is everywhere in Munich. As part of our *The London Question* project the Naturist Action Group decided to run a fact-finding mission to explore Munich's famous *Englischer Garten*. Naturism in Munich is openly accepted and practised, in contrast to the UK. A large number of facilities, both open air and indoor, local authority and other, are available. It was hot and sunny during the 6-day visit by Pete Knight and John Paine in September 2011.

Munich/Munich is the third largest city in Germany, just north of the Bavarian Alps, with 1.35m. inhabitants. Munich is a well-ordered city with a calm friendly ambience, no visible tensions (even though there is a significant Muslim community of Turkish origin) quite different to the atmosphere in several large English cities. Most Germans spoke very good English – which was of great benefit to us! The cost of food and beer was reasonably priced, another benefit.

NAG had widely broadcast our intention to go to Munich and corresponded with local naturists, Richard, Alex, and Jürgen. They sent NAG a lot of very valuable information. We also had details about Munich from the *German National Tourist Office* and *British Naturism*. Jürgen had wisely told us “Never ever translate the English '*naturist club*' into German '*FKK-Club*', because that means '*a brothel*'.”

Pete had 2 days exploring before I arrived on Saturday and we visited *Englischer Garten*. The English Garden is a municipal park, smaller than London's Hyde Park, on the eastern edge of the city centre. The naturist area is a flat meadow at the southern end of the park, with a fast-flowing branch of the River Isar (pronounced *Eezaah*) flowing through it. Thousands of residents sunbathed in the park and enjoyed a dip in the river at 3.00pm, families amongst them, women mainly in scanty bikinis, and some topless.

On the naturist side of the 4m wide river were naturists of all ages, in families, couples, or single (both males and females). Many arrived by bicycle and some were only just arriving at 6.45pm. Textiles intermingled with the naturists, and many people, including families, wandered on paths through the Park. Naturists were clearly visible, and a children's play area was adjacent to the meadow used by naturists. I spoke to a few naturists who said that often there are more naturists. More women had been naked previously, but in recent years some photos had been posted on *YouTube* by sightseers. Now many naturist women at this park preferred to keep their knickers or bikini bottoms on.

We were told that naturism was accepted in Munich and there was no problem with the police. Naturists here were regular users of *Englischer Garten*, other Munich naturists used a variety of open-air locations within the city. We had the locations and planned to visit a number.

City sights

On Sunday morning we did the city tour, including the Rathaus (town hall) with its animated Glockenspiel clock. Then we went to **Ludwigsbrücke** (bridge) on the River Isar and the open air naturist shingle beach. We joined a few naturists intermingled with the textile couples, families and young citizens enjoying the sun and water opposite a church. Erwen said there was an acceptance of naturism here and no problems of unwelcome behaviour, or moral prudery leading to unwelcome reports to the authorities.

Then we went back to *Englischer Garten*. As we walked past the surfing area on the River Isar, and through the naturist area, there were more naturists than on Saturday. At 4.00pm

we met Richard, he lives outside Munich, has travelled extensively to naturist activities and published a book *Active Nudists*. Alex a very active 'free range naturist' who runs *Isar Naked Tours* joined us. We then drove to another Munich naturist beach on the River Isar, at nearby **Flauchersteg**.

At 5.10pm there were well over 100 naturists, singles, couples, families, and picnics or barbecues were common. A well-used open bridge crosses the river, pedestrians and cyclists did not bother to look down 8ft to the naturists laid out in the sun. Karl and Angela, in their 50's, told me they had no trouble with 'meerkats'. Once Alex had 30 naked cyclists (of both sexes) on this bridge, the police came through looking for a petty thief and did not turn a hair.

I openly took several photos of Pete, also Alex, sunbathing on the Flauchersteg beach near the bridge. No naturists objected to this, as clearly we were taking personal photos. Stan and Eva, in their 30's, had their pug dog with them. Eva posed in the water for a photo with her dog, near to Richard playing with his dog Molly.

Festivals

We visited the large *Oktoberfest* Showground on Monday morning. First held in October 1810 *Oktoberfest* is now held in September and started later that week. It is a very large showground with huge beer halls and many fairground attractions. Munich has a variety of other large festivals during the year. After lunch in the *Gasthaus* bar, served by Babette in her dirndl costume, we made our way to the **Dantebad Leisure Centre**, north-west of the city centre. At 3.00pm we met Alex at the open-air naturist pool and grass sunbathing area part of this large local authority complex. Admission was €3.50 and the fenced naturist area had an open entrance, a sign indicated that costumes are not allowed on men, women, or children.

A large pool (25m x 10m) had recently been installed by the city council, to replace a smaller one in the naturist area, and other works done. I estimate that they had spent at least €200k on the naturist area upgrade. The enclosed naturist area was larger than many Club grounds in the UK, nice grass, a few trees for shade, and free sun loungers. Over 80 naturists, of various ages, were enjoying the sun, and I spoke to a few. The sexes were evenly balanced, with many lone females and some children with their mothers.

Alex gave us photos from the free-range naturist activities that he organises as *Isar Naked Tours*. Most were outdoor in the countryside but included a naked indoor bowling session, whilst a naked theatre event was planned. The majority of naturists involved had no problem with being photographed, even if they were to appear on Alex's website or in books like Richard's. Alex had a novel way of disguising the shy people who did not want to be recognised – the wearing of 'Father Christmas' type beards including the women!

At 6.00pm Pete and I left to go by underground to *Englischer Garten*. Jocken (aged about 45) had noticed us in the Dantebad naturist area and helped with the underground train directions. Jocken told us that when he gets into his flat he strips off to live in a naturist environment as much as possible. As we arrived the sun was going down, so the few remaining naturists were just leaving the park.

Leaving *Englischer Garten* at 7.10pm Pete and I moved on to **Müller'sches Volksbad** a city council leisure centre by the Ludwigsbrücke bridge. Built by a local philanthropist called Müller in the 1920's the original art-deco building had recently been refurbished. It has a Sauna Suite, a separate Swimming Hall, and areas for Massage. The entrance fee for the Sauna Suite, which contains a variety of rooms, was €9.50.

It was just before 9.00pm when we entered the complex and there were about ten other totally naked people in the Sauna Suite, young couples, male and female singles, of various ages. No-one was at all self-conscious, as nudity is the norm in such facilities. It was very quiet, people were friendly and helpful. It is likely that at an earlier time on a different day of the week the facility would be quite crowded. Munich council has ten leisure centres with saunas.

Last visits

On Tuesday morning we made a very informative visit to ***Dachau Concentration Camp***. This Camp only exists because the last inmates insisted, when hundreds of concentration camps were being dismantled, that Dachau be kept to show the world the reality of how awful the Nazi policy was.

Back in the city at 4.15pm we again visited *Englischer Garten* where about twenty naturists (both sexes) enjoyed the sun. An office worker (in his 40's) was taking a break from his office nearby. Train driver Wolfgang (40's) works nights and visits *Englischer Garten* on Monday and Tuesday. Ricardo and Carmen (50's) Spanish naturists from Las Palmas (Canary Islands) had been unaware of *Englischer Garten* until they arrived at Munich. Like us, they were amazed at how Munich accepts naturism.

From this mission NAG has compiled three documents: the first a much expanded version of this article *The 2011 Munich fact-finding mission*, secondly, local facilities *Naturism in and around Munich*, and thirdly, *The legal framework for naturism in Bavaria, Germany*. You may find these, and more on naturism and the work of the ***Naturist Action Group***, at our website naturistactiongroup.org

John Paine 19 November 2011

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