

Via Alpina 2008 stage 1 – 40 by Arjen & Ingo Ronner

Day 1 – 4/6/2008 - Utrecht

The tension before the departure dropped at the beginning of our trip. The train compartment is nice with small beds. From Milan to Trieste 40 minutes delay. At arrival in Trieste by bus (line 20) to Muggia. Looked for the Via Alpina, no clear starting point, grocery shopping done, and started from the Marconi Square. Coincidentally walked into red-white markings, followed them until they mixed with blue and white markings. Lost our way, did too much mileage and meters in altitude. Finally found a spot under the olive trees for a first primitive night of wild camping. Little light as possible so that we will not be noticed.

Day 2 – 5/6/2008 – Muggia

In the morning we quickly packed and went off. Again we lost the road due to unclear maps and markings. In the direction of the Premuda hut we probably climbed too much, and we also had to descend it. During a heavy rainstorm we had a nutritious lunch of bean-pasta soup, named jota, and a fresh salad. Arjen feels still not very good, not yet adapted to the circumstances. From Welmoed still heard nothing, makes me a little worried. From Premuda into the real mountains. Continuously searching and paying attention to the direction of the route. For example just before Draga you should continue from 1 to 17. Later in Presek you should cross the border and go left, but for a long time marks are missing. Just before Planicka, we thought then, we already passed it, we set the tent up in a meadow, fortunately it stated dry. I have to admit that it's pretty heavy when you want to go completely independent, with tent, sleeping bag and cooking stuff. From location to location with a minimum of equipment will be reasonable to do, but what we do is heavy. And meanwhile I got blisters too, caused by moisture in my shoes, they do not dry very well anymore in the humid air and the wet grass. Finally an sms from Welmoed, again with good news, she will be driving the blue-ridge parkway on her own, what gave me some piece of mind.

Day 3 – 6/6/2008 – Planicka

It has rained all night and it still continued in the morning. Everything is damp and wet, and that does not pack very well, a real setback those first days of our trip. We left each on a bowl vanilla custard. Totally lost, no more markers, we stray through a sodden forest, and eventually followed a little stonewall. To arrive at a path to Lipicka, which is famous for its white horses. Then we walked to the exit, where we once again found a sign of the Via Alpina. Through wet scrub we walked to a village where the place was packed with massage parlors, guess what will happen in there ;-). From there we followed the red and white markings uphill south of the village, mistake, we drift miles away from the right direction, no card, no navigation, but how ironically in the silence that we are after, we are happy to use the noise of the highway to navigate us in the right direction. Finally back on the "right" path, we end up in a comfortable hotel room in Matavun. Time to display everything so that it can dry. Welmoed called, all from the U.S., I was very happy to hear her voice once again. And now pray for good weather.

Day 4 – 7/6/2008 – Matavun

In the morning we get a delicious breakfast at a small table outside in the morning sun. The holiday mood is fully recovered. Cheerful, with good weather we set off, the marking seems to improve.

According to the description a flat stage, actually it seems to be incorrect, it is going up and down. Finally we are faced with the Nanos, the first real mountain, 1250 m, 600 m rise. It is hard work, a steep rocky path, and the clouds are getting darker and darker. Just before the summit, a storm breaks loose and the rain comes pouring down. Just below the actual summit we settle in a voca, which we believe corresponds to a mountain hut in the Alps. Or did we already arrive in the Alps? For me jota to eat here, a Slovenian potato soup, and for Arjen a fat piece of meat. We decided to descend to Strane, a small village and look for a camping place there. The forest is located on a north slope which made it quickly dim and very wet, which unfortunately didn't make walking easier. Ultimately we came out of the forest, and were pleased to see some light once again. While we were looking again for the markers, a farmer on a tractor stopped by asking where we wanted to go. He said: jump in the trailer, then I look it up home. There he offers us shelter for the night in his farm, argues about it with the rest of his family. He wants us to drink a glass of pear obstler with him, now it becomes clear to us he is completely pissed. With great difficulty we get rid of him, and we stretch our weary legs on our sleeping mats, rolled out in a mess room. Suddenly he, the farmer, storms into the room farmers, screams loudly that if we are Arabs or terrorists he will murder us immediately! We beseech him that we ordinary walkers and he seems convinced, and leaves again. In the middle of the night, shouting, flashlights shine in our faces, police, probably because he called them, ask with a grim tone to show our papers and what we are doing there. Having listened to our story, seen how drunk the farmer was, they conclude that our story is most plausible and offer us a ride to a hotel in a larger village, namely Postojna. We traveled in the prisoners compartment of the police van , without windows, not pleasant. On our way to Postojna we had to change vans one time and we arrived in the sport hotel Postojna at about 12:30 in the night. It had been a long day.

Day 5 – 9/6/2008 - Postojna

With a taxi back to the drunken farmer, to reclaim our walking poles which we were forgotten in the consternation of last night. He was there, and still drunk, didn't offer us an apology, the taxi driver had us driven for a nice price . From Strane again we set off to Predjama , where a castle is more or less built into a cave is. After Predjama we climbed a fairly high mountain, Javornik, in front of the koca at the top there were a lot of drunk Slovenians. We have a sort of ambivalent feeling about Slovenians, we shouldn't generalize, but there are a lot of primitive-looking screamers amongst them, much booze and loud, well it is Sunday and what you want huh? From Javornik descended to Crni Crk and honored the family hotel with a visit. Cooked pasta in the room. Next morning an extensive breakfast and internet, last night we asked for internet, they didn't have it, but in the morning they arranged a laptop with internet connection, top!

Day 6 – 9/6/2008 – Crni Vrč

Half past nine on the road to Idrija with Ledine as final destination, so that we already are some kilometers on our way in the next stage. Near Predgrize, taking some landscape pictures, loud screaming of farm laborers, a young man comes to us, asserting that a license is required for taking pictures. After some insistence from his side I erased the pictures, no sense in arguing in the middle of nowhere, strange boys these Slovenians. The trip continued to Ledine, which according to the Via Alpina organization had a B & B, not! Two miles walking back to the Fortuna pension, nice reception, with cake and again internet. Send several mails to Welmoed, had the opportunity now, I wonder how she's doing. Furthermore, fit and measuring the times for trying to get into Austria coming Sunday, which is closer to us in language and culture, I think.

Day 7 – 10/6/2008 – Ledine

After a somewhat disappointing breakfast of tack, jam, ham pâté, and a pot of coffee back on the road to Ledine through a hilly landscape. However, good weather, but no drinking or eating opportunity on our way. In Dolenij we wanted to do some grocery shopping, nothing, only a bar with twixes and some chocolate. Then to Porezen, exhausted, the hut still closed, set up the tent, it blew hard hard up there, quickly cooked a pasta meal, then crawled into the tent.

Day 8 – 11/6/2008 – Porezen

After a restless night, a cloudy and windy morning, we set off on a sandwich per person, not very much, unfortunately the lodge in Petrovo was no help, it was closed. On a carrot and a Twix to the hut of Crna Prst, 100 meters higher. A minute or ten before the hut it begins to splash, just in time, when we're in the hut it starts to pour. The hut is a chaos, still working on the interior, probably for this summer. Plans for tomorrow are uncertain because of the weather. We hope well dressed to be able to go, rain would not be a problem, but wind could be. Tonight we had a delicious meal for dinner at the hut, eggs and cheese for me, minestrone with sausage for Arjen and a cucumber-tomato salad. We met two Frenchmen who also walk the Via Alpina, young guys, who printed all PDFs into a thick book, have less financial slack than we have, but now spend their money on beer having a nice evening. Nice mountain hut, very nice and friendly worth, for the first time the real mountain feeling.

Day 9 – 12/6/2008 – Crna Prst

This morning not such a great breakfast. The worth is saying that it will not go to storm and that we can safely set off to the Dom na Komni. Little rain, maybe. Once on the road it starts to rain and blow heavily, everything is closed, no pretty views as promised. By noon, everything is soaked, our shoes are completely wet inside. Several times we run into steep snow fields, scary, but not really a problem. We are overtaken by our French friends, whom we at certain time see return out of the rain, too dangerous is their assessment. Without a map for orientation going downward seems not a good idea to us, so we decide to return to the first part of the route where one would find ski hotel. Nine and half hours of walking to finish up where we passed by already after three hours. Everything soaked. Ski hotel is not open, but koca Merjasec is open, very nice friendly folks, speaking German and English, delicious vegetable soup and French fries. How after a week all your insights on this trip and life in general can be changed. Was that perhaps the purpose of this whole exercise? Appreciation for the luxury and convenience at home, more appreciation for the company of Welmoed, that are things which I really miss now. Now I'm going sleep, so tired!

Day 10 – 13/6/2008 – Vogel

After a good breakfast, eggs, bread, two cups of tea, we set off. Under a cloudy sky, walking on ski-piste, a stone desert, ugly, ugly, ugly, it soon starts to rain again, first a few drops, rapidly it's pouring down. And it seems not to stop anymore, we stop twice at an opportunity to have a cup of tea, warm, and the rain continues. A thousand meter ascend to the hut through the pouring rain. Completely soaked we arrive at the hut, though our equipment is supposed to be waterproof and of high quality. The shoes must be put in a drying room where heating is available, so that's going to be nothing. Just ordered food, difficult, difficult, difficult, we wanted spaghetti with cheese and ketchup, they don't have ketchup, "it's a mountain house huh?!" is the argument. But one with a fully equipped kitchen, so what a crap! Not really happy this situation. Moreover, we are the only guests, tomorrow, a group of forty six children will arrive for three days, and as huts worth you better be prepared for them, we are just passers. After the "romantic" tent-sleeping bag idea, I start now to let go the idea of walking the Via

Alpina in one piece, it might be too long for me without Welmoed, my parents and the Netherlands. Now I'm thinking to return of this journey together with Arjen from Innsbruck or Oberstdorf return. Then walk together later this summer another piece and finally with Welmoed in the after summer another piece in France. Just some thoughts, I'm a bit somber.

Day 11 – 14/6/2008 – Dom na Komni

Breakfast at Dom na Komni, two fried eggs, a bowl of jam and a full cup of coffee per person. Quickly we set off, it's cloudy but dry. The shoes are still wet inside as already expected. Two and a half hours of walking brings us to the koca Triglavski. Where we meet our French friends again. Shivering, all their belongings were soaked, and they go looking for wood in the forest to make a fire in the hut which officially still is closed. We go further, it starts to snow, need to cross many snow fields, before starting the long descent from the koca Sazorska to Trenta. Descending, descending, descending, in Trenta, disappointing village, only a handful of houses, we find a simple but comfortable accommodation. Dinner in a nice simple restaurant further along the road. Salad, cheese slice for me, for Arjen skewers, potatoes, and that all for only 25 euros including two expresso. Also heard that the Netherlands during the European Football Championship won with 4-1 of France. Just measured a bit, and Innsbruck will be the preliminary endpoint for this time, probably to continue later in Oberstdorf.

Day 12 – 15/6/2008 – Trenta

Good breakfast from a very nice older lady, even a second cup of tea. We're looking at lovely day, the sky is blue and the sun is shining. Cheerful we set off. Once again the path in Trenta is not easy to find what costs us a half hour. At a koca steep uphill, to the highest pass of Slovenia. If we want to lunch at about twelve thirty the bread shows to be moldy. Fortunately they serve pancakes at the hut on the pass, enough energy. Prompt we follow the wrong markers for two hundred altimeters, which we also have to descend, before, after asking a bit around, get back on the right track. Arjen is disappointed, he had hoped today to walk into Austria. After a steep descent on a path, which didn't get much traffic, with in the end a snow gutter, we arrive at the Dom Tamarju, where we are once again the only guests. Meanwhile, the sky getst covered and my watch indicates rain. It remains rumbling, for how long? On to Austria tomorrow.

Day 13 – 16/6/2008 – Dom Tamarju

With the breakfast in the Dom Tamarju a full pot of tea instead of just a mug. This is a pleasant surprise and the total for the night is only 42 euro including dinner and breakfast. If we leave it's gray, raining light and it seems rather a drizzling autumn day than a sunny summer day. At noon we cross the border into Austria, we still had to show our passports to a policeman, but he smiles friendly when he sees that we are brothers. Steeply up from the Wurzenpass to the three countries point. From there we take the cable car down to Arnoldstein to the post office, so we send our camping stuff back to the Netherlands. That makes a difference of thirteen kilograms! Then we took the bus to Unter-Thorl, found a simple accommodation and for diner a good bar-stube along the road with friendly service. The Via Alpina is around the corner, two hundred meters, so starting tomorrow will be smoothly. Had another call from Welmoed, she was in Paris with her employer the book publisher de Geus. Unfortunately disconnected, still tried a few times, but nothing, then sent an sms.

Day 14 – 17/6/2008 – Unter-Thorl

Good breakfast, only thirty-four euro for B & B two persons and this is Austria! If we leave it drizzles,

the markings are no problem this time and the first ascent is going well, we are optimistic. It starts to rain harder and soon everything is soaked, we needed two days to dry everything, in two hours everything was nullified. No beautiful vistas, and it goes up and down, we're screaming and cursing of frustration! At a certain moment, let's say halfway the marking fail again, we linger around for half an hour in the torrential rain until we find the sign that brings us back on the right track. After a short two hours we arrive at a hut, the stove is burning, we decide to stay there. We meet an older couple from Switzerland who also walk a piece of the Via Alpina, exchange experiences, funny, probably we will come across them more often. Circumstances are hard! Disappointed in the weather, the circumstances, we have to see how things will be going.

Day 15 – 18/6/2008 – Freistritzer Alm

Bad night in the shelter on the Freistritzer Alm, the Swiss guy snored very loud, moreover the air was quite bad in the room where we had to sleep with five. A quarter past eight we hit the road again, we will try to do two stretches at once and leave the Swiss couple behind us, not bad people, but the snoring, hopefully not again! The weather is with us, sunny, partly cloudy later, it goes quite well. Only to Nassfeld we make a small mistake and we walk a bit through Italy instead of Austria. Finally we arrive in the hamlet Nassfeld and speak with someone we ask for a private room or a pension. He knows a hotel on the other side of the valley where hikers can go, and he brings us there with the car, top! This alpine gasthof Plattner has so-called alpine association accommodation. Fine talk with Welmoed. Then a delicious meal and meanwhile it started raining again. Hopefully only this evening and tonight, you should remain optimistic at such an undertaking.

Day 16 – 19/6/2008 – Nassfeld

Slept pretty good in the so-called lager of the gasthof, breakfast with fruit juice, that was a long time ago. Very nice people. Nice weather, little cloudy, first over the ski slopes of Nassfeld to the top, then along premises from the First World War. At noon we eat a sandwich in the sun on the Rattensattel, it was meant to be like this all the time actually. Last piece of the leg is again slightly longer than we had expected, two and half hours instead of the one hour we had counted on. The huts worth and his girlfriend seem to be very nice, got a good meal of baked eggs, cheese and tomatoes. Furthermore he tells us that good weather continues at least until Sunday with in the afternoon thunderstorms possible, what sounds very good to us. Fitting and measuring with the stages, times are variable, but we will try to arrive Monday or Tuesday in Sexten. No mobile phone coverage here at the hut. Everything is well.

Day 17 – 20/6/2008 – Zollner See

Day started with a super breakfast of all local products. The huts worth says will be a beautiful day, we are happy! During the descent, our shoes again get quite wet because of the long wet green grass, we're fed up with. When we arrived in a col we saw all kind of old premises from the first world war, impressive, bizarre place to fight a war. The sky gets quickly covered during the descent, soon it begins to rain, not as predicted, time once again to get quite offensive. At the Plocken pass we dropped into gasthof Plockenhaus, during a huge downpour, had a bite to eat, was delicious. Then steeply upwards to the Wolayersee hut. In the hut we spoke to a Swiss couple who also are walking pieces of the Via Alpina, most likely we see them more often the coming days. Just calculated that we can arrive in Sexten on Tuesday, that would be nice. Until that time no mobile coverage.

Day 18 – 21/6/2008 – Wolayersee

Last night we found out that we have to be economical with our money if we still want to do all three huts to Sexten still. Therefore we take a simple breakfast (no cheese / meat), this seems to be quite a commercial hut that Wolayersee hut. Set off on a light breakfast, not too heavy leg, beautiful weather, no problems really. Arrived early in the next hut, the Weisssteinhaus. We explained to the huts worth, a very friendly lady, that we must be careful with our spendings. She offers spontaneously that we can order on account and then pay later through the bank. Absolutely amazing! Good soup full of vegetables, delicious spaghetti with garlic sauce, not much people in the hut. Tomorrow a long stage to go to the Neue Porze hut. No mobile coverage, no SMS. Countdown to Innsbruck has begun, we split it into pieces, first Sexten, then Pfitscherjoch and Schwaz, hopefully on the fourth of July. Thinking about this type of adventure has already begun, I should say the grinding, what in the future?

Day 19 – 22/6/2008 - Weisssteinhaus

We got an invoice of the very friendly worth of the Weisssteinhaus. Simple breakfast and early on the road for a long leg. Good weather, a few simple snow fields, long ridge walk, up and down, with beautiful views on both sides. Went faster than expected. Four in the afternoon already arrived at the Neue Porze hut. A real commercial hut, which probably has more business from restaurant customers than mountain hikers. Had a long talk long with Arjen about my Via Alpina project and qualified it as a total failure. None of the ideas that I had was correct, tent does not work, no good spots, too heavy, unpacking, setting up, dismantling, too much work. The weather can be tough, not always sun, then the story of just bathing in the stream doesn't work. Furthermore you will be seldom in villages, so it can be difficult to get provisions. The huts vary much in quality, some are super-commercial, some are very nice and relaxed. But getting a good sleep is different, lagers are actually nothing, snorers, stinkers, you come across them everywhere, and they aren't even super cheap. Many of the huts prefer to sell only as much food and drinks as possible. A far too naive and romantic image I had in mind. And that image is now in shambles. But back to work then, my profession Oracle DBA, and then shorter, more comfortable holidays. Though we still planned to continue this journey up to stage forty.

Day 20 – 23/6/2008 – Neue Porze hut

At a moderate breakfast with nice weather we leave the Neue Porze hut, happy to go, what a fucking commercial hut. A moderate stage ahead. Around lunch time at the Filmoor hut, nice hut with an extensive lunch menu, potatoes with rosemary and sheep cheese with bread, totally different from the usual strudel. Very nice and especially delicious, relaxed. Then we went on to the Obstansersee hut, crossed a few snow fields. Around five in the afternoon heave rainshower, but fortunately we are inside the hut. The huts worth will keep some tomato sauce separate for me without bacon, for the pasta, and he does not forget, though he must cook for a whole class of school children, very nice. Together with the Swiss we drink a glass of wine, nice people. Sleeping goes well, the children are very quiet. Sometimes things can go well!

Day 21 – 24/6/2008 – Obstansersee

Simple breakfast, but at least be involved and kind staff at the hut. We say goodbye to the Swiss, we meet them one more time on our way to the Sillianer hut, where we eat strudel for lunch. Once arrived at upper station of the cable car to Sexten, as advised by the Via Alpina, they appear to have lunch from half one to two, so we decided then to walk down to Sexten. In the village we do shopping, topographic cards, fresh fruit, yogurt and find a private room. In the evening we have pizza, which we have been looking forward to, delicious! On the terrace we meet an older Dutch couple, who are still camping out, and we hear from the waiter that he worked for two months in Amsterdam. Greased our shoes, charged

batteries and phones, packed backpacks as far as possible, we are ready for the continuation.

Day 22 – 25/6/2008 – Sexten

Good breakfast in our guesthouse, coffee, soft boiled egg, fresh bread. A long and steady climb to the Drei-Zinnen, the hut is still closed, but the place was swarmed with people. A long descent, then again a long steep climb to the Durrenstein hut. This time I am getting crazy of the heat, it seems difficult for the weather to sit somewhere in between, I mean something like twenty two degrees Celsius or so, first just rain and cold, but since Sunday thirty two degrees Celsius and threat of thunderstorms. Nice reception at Durrenstein hut and a nice big plate of pasta to eat. It was heavy today, up to tomorrow, which looks a little bit lighter.

Day 23 – 26/6/2008 – Durrenstein

After the usual poor breakfast we're on our way. Long time an easy path. Via Alpina wrote that it is three and half hours to the Seekofel hut, the local sign indicates about five hours, which is a big disappointment, we did count on a short light leg. Strange but true, locally people speak German in South Tyrol, except in the cabins of the CAI, there is Italian the language. A little bit frustrating because we do not speak Italian. In the Seekofel hut we take a plate of spaghetti and then go down to the Pragser Wildsee. There is a choir singing at the shore of the lake, they are there because of the choir weekend in Hochpustertal, this would really have been something for Welmoed. The heat, temperature of zero, because of snow, to more than thirty currently, start to cause problems with the feet, very painful. From the Pragser Wildsee by bus to St. Martin in Gsies. We would like to buy yogurt and fruit, and eat in the room, but the Spar is accidentally closed on Thursday, which is also the case for the local restaurants. Just outside the village we found a hotel restaurant where we can have diner, for the third time in 24 hours spaghetti. Just now a thunderstorm brakes loose, wonder what tomorrow will bring us, the predictions look very good.

Day 24 – 27/6/2008 – St. martin in Gsies

The morning began adventurous, at seven o'clock, sirens, men, whether or not half dressed, hurried to the fire station and five minutes later two fire engines left the garage. After an extensive breakfast, sandwiches, yogurt, cake, we hit the road again. Slowly ascending to two thousand meters, then a bit steeper, but not very steep. Yet a big thunderstorm on the way, we take shelter under a tree until the worst was over. The way to Anholtz-Mittertal was not too difficult and long. We sit down in the only inn that is open in the village, inform for a bed and decided to stay. Did a small wash, ate a pizza, and prepared for the long stage tomorrow, along the Riesenferner hut, fifteen hundred meters up and down again on the other side.

Day 25 – 28/6/2008 – Anholtz-Mittertal

Good breakfast, very nice owner of gasthof Bruggenwirt. Ascend to Riesenferner hut is in very good pace, before noon we're at the hut, the descent is a lot slower, painful knees and feet. Down in the valley a flat and rather boring piece along the road to Rein in Taufers. Hence steigt weather significantly, from fifteen hundred to two thousand meters meters, Via Alpina doesn't mention it, we're quite destroyed. Seven in the evening we arrive in Ahornach, where we check in at Moos Maier, a chic looking nature hotel, but fortunately it's not that chic. For fifty-five euro per person, you have half-board, only accommodation and breakfast is just ten euro cheaper, of course we take the first option. And now my eyes get almost closed, I'm that tired, tomorrow a brand new day with new challenges.

Day 26 – 29/6/2008 – Ahornach

This morning extended breakfast in hotel, delicious, fresh fruit, yogurt, croissant, juice. A quite late start, an hour's walk to the funicular of Speikboden. First lift with cabins and then proceed with the chairlift. Walked the Keller-Bauer route to the Chemnitzer hut, beautiful views into the valley and the Drei-horn Spitzen in Ahrntal. At the Chemnitzer hut we decided to walk to the Edelraut hut, right along the reservoir, first down, then up, and not along the Neveser Höhenweg as described by the Via Alpina, too much snow and still very wet. From the Edelraut hut we divert again from the Via Alpina, on the advice of the huts worth, along the Hochfeiler hut to the Pfitscherjoch. If everything goes as we think it should go, then this way we pick up at least one piece of the following, in kilometers super long, stage. The schedule shows us that we can arrive Friday July the fourth in Schwatz. We then still have to arrange the train to the Netherlands. Very nice, friendly and involved people at the Edelraut hut, a real mountain hut!

Day 27 – 30/6/2008 -

On a simple breakfast we hit the road, four hundred meters ascent to the highest point of this holiday, 2930 meters. On the other side down through the snow and a small piece across the harmless flat glacier. After a short stop at the Hochfeiler hut thousand meters down and five hundred meters up. At the Pfitscherjoch self-service restaurant and a lot people, popular place, not so very beautiful. The descent in the Zillertal is again very attractive, Alpine roses, larch trees, running water and many cows. After ten miles and a descent of another thousand meters, we quit and take the bus to Finkenberg. That means two more stages and a descent to Schwaz, Thursday on the train and Friday in Den Bosch.

Day 28 – 1/7/2008 – Finkenberg

During a hot start of the day it's going uphill, the sun shining and there is no puff of wind. The first highlight of the day is the Schosswandhaus, then it's going fast downhill. Crossed a stream in bare feet, because the bridge is already two years broken. Made our sandwiches on the edge of a wild stream. Then uphill, after many hairpin turns arrived on the Rastkogel hut, we already could see from six hundred meters lower, that was though. In the beginning of the evening trying to call Welmoed, obstructed by a thunderstorm, allowing only emergency calls, pity, pity, pity. Tomorrow the last night in a hut before we descend to Schwatz.

Day 29 – 2/7/2008 – Rastkogel

A scanty breakfast, with an additional bonus on the bill for the meat / cheese. Quickly towards Loassattel where we had cool drink. Then fast on to the Kellerjochhutte where we arrive early in the afternoon. We decide, after a delicious lunch of pasta and salad, to descend to Schwaz. That goes swift and from Zint Mountain we take the bus to Schwaz, a good choice, because just when we board a thunderstorm starts. From Schwaz, we take the train to Munich and then we catch the City night liner towards the Netherlands, where we arrive the following morning.

This is the end of our trip in 2008. Do not be frightened by this story, in addition to the difficult moments, there are enough fine moments to enjoy. It is a beautiful, varied, adventurous trip, you will remember your whole life. Here are some tips for candidate Via Alpina walkers from our experience:

1. Do not start too early in the season, last week of June, otherwise there may still be snow in many places. Furthermore, at this time much huts are still closed.
2. Leave the tent at home, hardly possible to camp, private property, or inclined, or vegetated. Saves a lot of kilos. Furthermore, the possibilities for grocery shopping is limited.
3. Always look careful at markings where opposite direction comes from, it can help you find the right direction.
4. Use gamaschen in wet grass.
5. Put sneakers into the backpack, always handy if you from your accommodation have to go somewhere, for example a restaurant. Also useful in the hut.
6. Buy fruit and yoghurt in the valley, for the much needed vitamins, and for a change of the hut food.
7. Take your shoes during breaks off, let feet and socks air and dry.

Photos are available at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/25143217@N05/>