

As with the earlier Swiss Trip writeup, please view the 16 Euros Slideshow, a downloadable file which will run directly on a Windows computer, and follow the text below as it coincides with the numbers as shown on the pictures.

8/21/06 The Porsche Club group broke up at Zurich Flughafen (airport), most heading for the AA flight back to the USA, while Joe & Lynne went, immediately after saying good bye, to the rental car area. As negotiated in the USA the rental should have cost only \$320 US. And our last nights before our own return to the states a week later had also been arranged from the states. Somehow, each wound up costing us an added \$100 US for silly fees, something the Swiss seem great at. For example, a 2 CHF OR Euro fee to use a toilet at the Zurich main Bahnhof (train station) or at many rest stops along the highways. Annoying, but meaningless in the grand scheme, which made them even more frustrating. But Joe found devious ways to beat the silliness. For example, riding a local train to use their toilets, then returning from the next station. With a single-fee all-day ticket price of 15 CHF to use any transport in Zurich, including the boats on the lake, it is unbeatable. Especially given the lack, and cost, of parking. These would prove to be a factor when we returned to Zurich the next weekend, but for now we were on a critical mission. We had a six hour drive ahead of us, over roads we had never seen with signs we could not read, and crossing two borders. At the end of this we had exactly one opportunity, a two hour window, within which to drive a road Joe has waited for since he first learned of its existence. He would have loved to do this with a Porsche, but financial reality intervened. Not this time. Instead, Joe had made arrangements to rent a competent car, a VW (pronounced fow-vey in deutsche) Passat. When we arrived, it turned out to be a wagon, with a 2.0 liter gas four-banger and six-speed manual, well equipped with AC, power everything, but a CD radio which had filters which made the use of an iPod through it a waste of effort. It also had a new technology which Joe first observed on the new Corvette, and hopes NEVER to see on a Porsche; electric-only security and operating mechanisms. Scary when you realize that the loss of the battery, pretty typical about every four years, especially in the snow belt, means no alternative to a tow truck to the dealership. Stupid. If the remote OR the car loses its battery, there is NO alternative nor ability to even get in out of the cold. There are NO manual locks or latches. This is an improvement?! Anyway, end of diatribe. The car was otherwise a surprisingly competent vehicle, and my thoughts went back to my experience in Italy with “trailing bag oversteer”, wherein Joe used his loose bags slamming against the wagon walls to help steer around curves. But this time would be different. Joe started driving to get out of Zurich, then handed off to Lynne to drive to France. at Basel, our first border crossing. Nervous about time, we made no effort to get our passports stamped in France, a country we were in almost three hours, passing by Mulhouse, Strasbourg and Forbach, but took only a single picture 3457 from the highway before crossing back into Germany again at Saarbrücken. As noted in the Swiss Trip writeup, street signs in Europe do not show direction, so on cloudy days like this, dead reckoning is mostly dead, we reckon. And our map shows few of the little towns noted on the signs. We drive and pray, because we have few other alternatives. And being tired, we took no further pictures along the route. Our objective is a small town near Adenauer, about thirty miles east of the Belgian border in the Eifel mountains, similar to the Adirondacs in both appearance and weather. And the mixed conditions enroute were not instilling much confidence. We are headed for a small town called Nurburg, where we have reservations at Tiergarten Hotel, a unique place you will read more about soon. By now we have figured out that the maps are not consistent, but signage can be decyphered to show road designations – in Germany, autobahns have a semi-ovoid blue symbol with chopped off left and right sides, and a number inside which coincides with the Axx shown on the maps. More confusing is the E code roads, which are generally shown in green rectangles, and really represent the EU designation for a route, also marked on the map. Other numbers, sometimes shown in boxes, but often not, represent more local roads. The closest parallel in the US would be State routes, like SR-11 as passes through Syracuse north-south. Thankfully, we took very few wrong turns, and recovered quickly when we did. Our target is a toll road – a two lane wide 20 km one-way rural road. For 16 Euros, we will be allowed to drive this road during the period 5:30 – 7:30, rain or shine. From a parking lot, through a tollgate, to... the same parking lot. During the drive, whatever vehicle (within some limits) and however dressed (except for bikers, who must wear helmets and full leathers, because an average of one per week dies here), we will be free to our own recognizance, so long as any passing occurs only on the left. Ideally with a signal. We are at die Nordschleife at Nurburg, known to the driving faithful as Mecca; the Nurburgring. Thankfully, we arrived with about an hour to check into our room and remove our luggage from the car. We took the opportunity to grab a quick nap. At the designated “open time”, the professionals who use the ‘Ring as their benchmark for automotive development, with very good reason, give way to the general populace. And we are about to satisfy a twenty-year long itch. 3458 Joe examines a magnetic ticket for which he has paid 56 Euros for four laps, a savings of two Euros per lap. There are a LOT of people here who have spent far more to enable them to drive far more often. Lynne decides that this is Joe’s “happening”, so he should drive first. For those still unaware, the ‘Ring is like heroin – addictive and it can kill. But for track junkies, it is simply something one MUST do before one dies. A former circuit on the F1 calendar, it was replaced with the safer short loop made from the south piece of the original after Niki Lauda was horribly burned in his Ferrari. Still its siren song beckons... As you will see, weather is as much a factor as anything. And today is one of the worst, with some breaks of sun which will dry the exposed areas even while there are cloudbursts in other sections, many of which are arrived at via blind curves or rises. What Joe knows of the course is minimal; he has read much, brought a track map, and watched videos. But they really are worthless. This is to experience, and as said by the Wright Brothers, cannot be learned by watching. Lynne has had no preparation whatsoever, save for her track experience mostly at Watkins Glen, a lively and similar venue. About one fourth the size! Joe is well aware that testosterone, fatigue and unfamiliar car are a lethal combination, even on a known track. Add that a single circuit can take as long as a typical run group at a PCA Driver Ed, and you get the picture...

So, with a substantial degree of circumspection and respect for what he is about to undertake, Joe inserts his ticket, mag stripe down, and after a few seconds it is returned with the display notice “3 Laps Left”, and the barrier bar lifts, as if to say “have at it kid, your destiny awaits”. It ought to be noted here, though, that Joe is far from wet behind the ears on a track, no matter the car nor his unfamiliarity with the roadway. As an instructor with Porsche Club of America, and especially one who mentors other instructors, he ought to be able to quickly determine a reasonably competent pace which is at once safe and fun. Lots of visual clues exist to support that; there are simply no trees growing through the track surface, so the path between them is a decent predictor of the track path as well. Excepting absolutely blind rises and curves, for which a prudent person simply adjusts to the conditions at hand, there are nonetheless long stretches whose conditions and characteristics are self-evident, and which allow a capable driver to know the prudent limits of the car safely. That is until Adenauer Forst, aka “Failure to Turn”, and either of the carousels. 3462 So Joe drove onto the track, and quickly acclimated to the conditions, including the light rain as seen. Lynne, meanwhile, is taking pictures and hanging on for dear life, as the attitude of some of these shots will show. The silver dot ahead is a 911 coupe which entered the track almost 30 seconds before Joe, and this is still the initial straight. 3473 Joe has arrived at the tail of the 911 surprisingly quick. Either this guy has never been on a track, or this is his first Porsche. The red 944 blows by us both on the left. 3474 Patient, and mostly because Joe hasn’t a CLUE where the road goes next, he decides to hold back. 3476 But through these twisties, it was getting ridiculous. Joe was having to brake to avoid hitting him. 3477 Joe could finally see that the 911 would finish to the right side, and then would have to apex to the right through the next turn. So, despite the body roll, Joe setup and then passed the 911. Equally skilled, even with equal ignorance of the track, no VW wagon should ever have been able to catch that 911. No points, say the judges (not really, and that attitude kills WAY too many people here). Calm down Joe. 3484 The 911 has faded from memory, and this is an obvious uphill, so flat out is the obvious pedal position. We’ll deal with the blind rise at the top when we get there, though the road clearly sweeps down to the left. See what can be learned just by observing? 3492 This panel van is one of many odd vehicles. People drive what they have. Joe quickly passes it as well. Still no points. If Joe couldn’t, pass this, something would have been dangerously wrong. 3493 Through a downhill sweeping left – right, flat out. Pretty peppy and decent brakes for a shopping cart. 3496 There is no photo of Adenauer Forst. Let us just say that Joe was WAY too early, and although he did not collect grass, he did collect curbing. And Lynne was basically hanging on for dear life, never mind the camera. Valuable lesson about what one does, and does NOT, learn from the approaching topography. That particular turn, approached from an uphill straight toward an area devoid of trees, looks to simply continue on. NOT. Instead, it is an acute, off camber and usually wet, left, followed quickly by a right onto another straight. Joe never did get the correct line, but he at least learned a better one than THAT. This photo shows construction cones and Joe’s favorite sign, right at the ideal apex. Oh well. Now we know it is there. 3499 Another challenge – downhill to a tight left hander. At least it can be seen. 3501 More fun twisties. And people taking pictures. We could not imagine why until much later when we found out that Range Rover had brought a pair of the new replacement for their Freelander, their pathetic unibody answer to the Rav-4, for advertising shots. An SUV. At the ‘Ring. Do you think the Cayenne has had an impact? 3503 This wet, off-camber, KEPT coming! 3505 Finally a straight. What the hell? We don’t read deutsche, but an exclamation point in a red triangle is as subtle as a train wreck. Prudence is the word. 3509 Only seven more km to go. How long IS this?! 3512 Hard on it again, this is one long track. No way we are learning it today. 3514 The first carousel, which consists of a 30 deg. banked concrete, with the sand rubbed away to expose the aggregate rocks, which are slick as snot in the wet, coupled with a flat asphalt apron. Get a wheel onto the apron under power and you will scare the hell out of yourself. Joe did, on his second run, and was quite circumspect thereafter. 3517 Joe has just been passed by a blazing fast M3. This guy obviously knows what he is doing. Unfortunately, there is no way to follow his line for long. 3525 Another blind wet curve. The place is full of them. 3527 Finally, a piece of road Joe can see what to do. Hammer down. 3528 Until you get to that right hander... 3532 Then power up the hill thru that left hand sweeper... 3534 To the second carousel. 3536 Thru the long hard right hander where Lynne could not keep her balance at all... 3537 Onto the final straight back to the pits, where another Bimmer blows by. 3538 It is now Lynne’s turn. This will be funny. 3532 Through the gate. Ticker now says Two Left. Onto the track and accelerate. Where Joe was attacking the course, Lynne is just moseying. 3541 The first car passes her. 3542 Then another... 3543 That’s another, way ahead through the twisties... 3547 – 3562 And another one, and another, and another two, and another two... What is it, Rush Hour? 3563 You’ve GOTTA be kidding! A camper bus with roof storage? And a CD of, what, .80 ?! 3564 It’s uphill and he’s pulling away! 3566 And another. At least he also blows by the van. 3569 Well, at least she has maintained contact with the van, even if another guy has passed her. 3571 At least this one is supposed to – it’s a GT3. 3573 The first carousel. Even with rain, we still got bug splat. 3576 Mercifully, it was over soon enough. As we pulled into the pits, another VW wagon, a Golf, was about to start. Lynne felt that this was Joe’s sandbox, so he would use the last two runs. His second run was unremarkable, until 3628 the first carousel. Note the orientation relative to the turn. Not a good position to be, and caused by getting a rear wheel high on the apron. We were flung out toward the barrier, 3629 but thankfully never left the pavement. Joe had learned a few things; how to handle a sliding car (long before he got here), and NEVER to do THAT again! 3640 By the time we reached the second carousel, it was raining hard. Prudence was in order. So we returned to the pits briskly but with no anxiety, and took a breather while that rain shower finished. One last lap, so make it a good one. The next chance will be a LONG time coming.

As he left the pits, Joe had a silver Miata behind him. 3645 Lynne had decided to brace herself with her foot against the dash, to get better pictures, especially since she knows Joe will be pushing it. That's her shoe you'll see, and we returned the rental car with footprints on the dash. They seemed nonplussed. 3659 Into the twisties. No mistakes, and nobody trying to pass. In fact Joe is pulling away slightly from the Miata. 3661 More of the same, where Joe had passed the 911 on his first run. This part he knew. 3670 The long straight to the left sweeper, flat out, and the Mazda is not in sight. Joe is having fun. 3680 Flying through the woods heading for Adenauer Forst, and it is starting to sprinkle. No mistakes, now Joe. Discretion is the better part of valor. He still bungles it, but at least is safely thru. 3706 Joe has finally figured out how to take this turn with his favorite sign right at the worst possible place. Lynne struggles to maintain control, and the car's body roll is as you might expect for a wagon. Still no sign of the Miata. 3771 The rain is a fine mist now, but the day is catching up on Joe as well. Little things he misses cost tenths, but he also realizes there is no percentage in being stupid. 3773 We have just come off the last turn which Joe has bobbled horribly, so his speed into the final straight is well off. He is bone tired, and happy that the shiny side is up, and the dark side down. The tires have probably been worn a little more than they might otherwise have, but the wet conditions prevented even that to a great degree. About a hundred yards after this shot, as Joe has backed out of it, the Miata flashes past on the left. Between the taillights is a 'Ringers decal. Joe has nothing to be ashamed about. For three laps he has better than held his own, the last driving a station wagon against a more potent car, with an experienced driver and holding him at bay to the end. Not bad. And a lovely way to end the day. He is only sad that the toll gate took his magnetic ticket when it lifted the gate for the fourth run. But he does have the pictures and the memories, as well as the feeling of utter exhaustion, both physical and emotional. Although we had seen a number of bikes and riders in the paddock, we saw none on the track. Maybe Darwin was right, because the conditions were not remotely fun for a two-wheeler. 3776 Just some of the heavy-duty machinery and people in the paddock. Joe even met a Brit who explained about the Golf he was driving which proclaimed "Rent-A-Racer". Nicely set up, but not for the financially faint of heart. And no insurance except the liability required by law. Pretty risky. We returned to the Hotel Tiergarten for dinner, and spoke the following morning to the co-owner whose sister, Sabine Schmitz, drives a Porsche 997 in Supercup and holds the fastest time for a woman at the 'Ring. She told us this and gave us autographed cards because she had at first denied we had a room reservation, until she realized that she had presumed the name Holzer was with her deutsche gruppe, rather than with her Limey english speakers. We had a great laugh. The restaurant was cramped, but had a ton of racing memorabilia, and it was neat as we were having dinner to hear the Italian pit crew who were obviously there for a professional session shakedown of something shrouded in a locked garage. A day Joe will cherish.

8/22/06 On our way to Tiergarten we had taken a wrong turn, and discovered a castle atop a hill overlooking Nurburg. So, although we had five hours drive (as it turned out, almost seven, but more on that later) to get to Lynne's relatives in Geusa, near Merseberg outside Leipzig, our late morning start made for a compressed schedule. But we agreed to a half hour. So Lynne went walkabout at the castle and took pictures 3781 – 3834 while Joe sat in the car trying to make the iPod work with the radio using his FM converter, which never really cut it because of signal filtration by the radio. (Suggestion for car radio manufacturers; if you won't put a cassette adapter in the thing, how about at least a mini-stereo input jack so we can plug in our own portable sound source. Carrying that FM converter and trying to tune it was a pain, and completely unnecessary. All my prior cars had the ability until you decided that only CD's were an acceptable medium. Get a grip – they are passe too, you just do not yet realize it. Like your expensive CD based NAV systems which are obsolete before we get them, but require we change disk twice daily because the location break you selected does not coincide with the territory of my daily travels, instead of a \$100 notebook hard drive system which could contain the entire world, and still have room for iTunes). Then we headed for Geusa. In case you wonder, Joe saw lots of his favorite signs along the way, a grey circle with grey diagonal lines meaning No Speed Limit. And he had fun where he could do so safely, which was far less than he expected, due mostly to construction. Where possible, though, it was refreshing to drive 210 km/h legally (that's just over 130 mph for the metrically challenged), and their fatality rates are STILL lower than on the US interstates. So much for "speed kills". Nobody was ever killed because they drove too fast. They die because they STOP too fast. Sounds stupid, but it is fact. Anyway, we did eventually hit the road, but about three hours after expected. Then, because of construction and sign confusion, wound up heading north instead of east as planned. In an attempt to avoid the delays of construction we could already see on the other side backed up for miles, we decided to take back roads to diagonally get back to the correct path. It did not quite work as planned, both because we had no idea what the towns shown on the signs were – they were not on our maps! – and it was overcast. But we eventually got back to the autobahn, after losing another two hours to that fiasco. Lastly, once we got to Geusa, the directions we had were off by about a mile, critical when you do not speak the language, and you are in the former east german rural area where they don't speak any english either. Eventually we found a farmer who motioned for us to follow him, and he led us practically to their doorstep. Our objective was Renate Grossmann, our age and the widow of the son of Hardy and Annalies, cousins of Lynne's mother. Wolfram, Renate and their two boys, Thomas and Andreas, had visited us fourteen years ago in Liverpool, immediately after the breakup of the Soviet Union, while Hardy & Annalies visited Lynne's sister Bonnie and husband Jim, and her mother, Martha. We all believe the social contract expectations Wolfram had grown up with, which departed him when East Germany disappeared, ultimately led to his demise some years later. Hardy and Annalies were similarly affected, but at least were able to adjust to the new realities. Renate was thankfully able to adapt well, and found a nice position demonstrating technology in the physics department of the university in Halle nearby. She and Thomas, who operates locks on the local canal system, live together in one side, while Andreas lives with Hardy and Annalies on the other, as much to help them as anything else, and works in automotive repair in Halle. Needless to say, since we arrived later than planned, Annalies already had a meal for us, so we ate first and then relaxed. Like your family is any different? But we took no more pictures that day.

8/23/06 Today would really be our first to truly relax. We had little planned, and no real agenda even at that. Tomorrow would be the visit to the Porsche Cayenne factory in Leipzig, about 30 miles away. It turned out that Andreas would also be free then, so we coordinated his inclusion with Joe, Lynne & Renate with the Porsche AG contact. But that will be tomorrow. Today we woke up late, and had a chance to meet with the family when we had dinner at mittag or mid-day. 3849 Pictured here left to right are Joe, Andreas, Renate and Annalies. 3850 And Hardy. Lynne is taking the pictures, and Thomas is with his girlfriend Vicki renovating her apartment. Renate took Joe & Lynne to see her workplace at the university in Halle, a building dating back to the mid 1800's, but with updated technologies as would be appropriate for a physics department. An interesting juxtaposition. Later, Lynne, Renate and Annalies took a walking tour of Geusa, while Hardy showed Joe his extensive shooting equipment and awards. Hardy was fun to visit; he showed Joe how he used to shoot deer from his upstairs window to the field under the powerlines, yet he was exceptionally careful to keep the weapons and ammo in separate locked cabinets and different rooms. He explained about the different weapons – a scoped bolt action .223 rifle with a five shot magazine, an over-under 12 ga. shotgun with changeable chokes, and a Luger pistol which converts between 9mm and .22 cal. The .22 keeps the costs down, but the 9mm is good for finishing a deer he has claimed. The rifle is used both for hunting and competition, as the round is conventional military spec. He showed Joe a variety of ammunition for it, from precision weighted competition rounds to what he described as “Soviet ammo”, which looked for all the world like varnished soft steel cartridges with a course lead slug – Hardy called them “junk”, but cheap, and usable for pests. He also had a stand scope to view targets downrange for zeroing sights. Clearly he is capable with a gun. He also showed Joe his car, a Nissan with a 1400 cc engine. Joe was surprised it had remote keyless entry and power windows. 3856 Renate and Annalies walking on their street in a pleasant rural community which could be mistaken for a suburb, and 3861 the front of the house they share. Renate informed Joe & Lynne that she hopes to run in the NYC Marathon in 2007 or 2008. She is an avid runner with a close friend.

8/24/06 3885 Renate prepares our lunch! Actually, she is feeding the pet rabbit of Thomas' girlfriend Vicki, whom Joe & Lynne did not meet. Both Thomas and Andreas ride crotch rockets – fast motorbikes, and dress the part, though we suspect that may be a legal requirement because we never saw anyone merely dressed in shorts on one. And helmets ARE required in both Deutschland and Schweiz (Germany and Switzerland in the native tongue). 3886 Another stone church, this on the way to Leipzig. Approaching the Porsche factory there, one is struck by a few observations. Despite over fifteen years since the reunification of Germany, the eastern sector remains the depressed economic area the Soviets kept it as a buffer, remembering the past century, when they took over at the end of WWII. In fact, that was part of why it was so remarkable how fast Porsche went from conception to plant there, while it took an act of congress (literally) to change anything in Stuttgart. As before, road signage was not remotely intuitive. And all we had, as with Geusa, was directions we had obtained from the internet. But those who have seen the Porsche Customer Center at Leipzig could find it from five miles away. Perched in open farmland, it looks as you might expect a flying saucer in Iowa! The inverted cone form is so distinctive as to be nothing else, and so Joe was able to get to it unerringly. We had a noon appointment for the luncheon which would precede the plant tour, which at \$50 US per person was the only way we could get in without paying for actual test drives. THAT was financially impossible. But for a one-time, \$200 seemed quite acceptable. 3887 At about eight feet high and made of glass, these etched doors greet visitors. Joe thinks they were made special for Hans Joachim Stuck, a tall factory race driver. They definitely leave an impression, as does most of the gleaming stainless and black marble structure. Unfortunately, we were informed that we would have to lock all recording equipment away before entering the factory where they perform final assembly on the Porsche Cayenne, now available in four models; from the base Cayenne with a V-6 motor from VW (but labeled as a Porsche), thru the S, Turbo, and Turbo S models. While Porsche has a storied past in off-road competition, which included a dominant performance by the 959 prototype in the hands of Jackie Ickx and under the development of Helmuth Bott in 1986, taking first, second and fifth in the hardest race in the world, the Paris – Dakar, they have chosen not to run the Cayenne in such races. But that is far from the most bizarre realities of the Cayenne. Porsche junkies like Joe were appalled when Porsche pulled out of LeMans and endurance racing at the factory level, explaining that they needed their engineers to concentrate on the development of the Cayenne. We were even making jokes about the proof of “string theory”, claiming we had shifted to a parallel universe, when Porsche builds a truck while Cadillac wins endurance races. However, it must be acknowledged even by the grudging groupies like Joe that a) The Cayenne has provided Porsche with the capital to be so solid financially that THEY bought 20% of VW, when the rest of the world has believed for years that VW owned Porsche, and b) That when Porsche introduced the Cayenne, the entire concept of SUV was redefined, and any manufacturer whose vehicle was subject to rollover accidents in emergency maneuvers was a poseur at best, and c) That it actually was possible to make a vehicle which could seat four of Joe comfortably, and be equally competent on the African plains, rock strewn ravines or the Nurburgring with only a change of tires. The doubling of gas prices over the past two years has not helped sales, but it has not hurt them that much either, seemingly because those who can afford one are less likely to be put off by fuel expense. As Joe recognizes; he gets only about 6 mpg at Watkins Glen in his 993. Who cares? It's entertainment, babe! And we were about to enter its womb, so to speak. The place where they are born. Well, not quite. It seems this is really just a final assembly point for subassemblies sourced all over Europe, including engines assembled in Stuttgart. The bodies, fully assembled except for the steering wheel, arrive here in automatically unloaded railcars from Slovakia. Here they wait underground for 24 hours to reach thermal balance, and then are (still automatically) mounted on an overhead conveyor which brings them to the assembly plant. Each has all their appropriate interior appointments, paint, cosmetics, protective sheeting, and an individual vehicle identifier transponder included therein, so a computer can track them fully through the process to assure they are mated to the correct parts throughout. But more on that once we get into the factory. All the above Joe knows because... well, that's Joe. For him the term “Porsche Fanatic” is totally inadequate. So we have arrived at the Leipzig plant, passed thru security and the front door, and been greeted by a smiling young woman who asks our names.

After some official paperwork, we are presented with two different metal clip-on disks – one for the meal and one for the plant tour. We are then instructed to tour the Customer Center as we wish, and eat in the dining hall upstairs, but be back in the lobby by 1:45 for the plant tour. We ascend to the “cafeteria”, as if that description is the slightest bit accurate in describing the scene – uniformed wait staff and atmosphere like you would expect at a five star restaurant, with a view akin to the Toronto Needle. Except 3889 this is what we see instead of a lake. The Porsche Leipzig test and demonstration area, where a number of actual purchasers of vehicles, and those who have paid a hefty sum above our small lunch tab, will be tooling around learning their respective vehicles from Porsche employees, and even taking the wheels themselves a bit. 3890 We are invited to sit with a panoramic view of the facility, and the lunch service begins immediately. At first they are confused, because they had understood we were a party of only three. But no matter, and they were fully capable of such a small deviation. 3891 We also look below at a variety of Porsches parked with plates, and are told they are employee cars. Seems an abnormally high percentage of Porsches. After a fabulous lunch we return to the lobby to meet Lars, who will be our tour guide. Our time slot has been set specifically for North Americans, and we meet a pair of guys from Chicago, a family of three from Alberta Canada, and an Asian family who seem reserved so we do not press them. Lars speaks english well, with the typical german accent. 3893 Our first stop is up one floor at the “current model” display. It is correct except for two items; the yellow Carrera GT is no longer being made, production actually occurring at the Leipzig plant, but having been ended in May. Still, at \$450,000 US it is quite a car, and the ONLY one we were not allowed to sit in. The other error is that the 911 Turbo is the one based on the 996, with the smooth sides and “hound-dog” headlights, vs. the recently released 997 based car, with sexier flares and more pleasing ovoid headlights. We are told the new Turbo is in such high demand they cannot afford to have one sit here. 3894 It takes little coercion to get Renate to sit in the 997 Cabrio, since she doubts she’ll be sitting in another anytime soon. For some reason, though, Andreas declines, and we decide he may feel a little overwhelmed, so we do not push it. The tour then moves to the historic display. As you can guess, there are no Cayenne’s there, since none has yet been entered in competition officially. Maybe someday. But probably not soon, both because there is no commercial need, and because some of those development engineers will be tied up bringing to life the next new Porsche, the Panamera, expected to be a four passenger sedan sharing the Cayenne running gear, but aimed at the Benz S Class, Audi A8 and BMW 7 Series cars, expected to hit the streets about 2009. Meanwhile, we will have to remember Porsche’s glory via its earlier products. 3898 Like the Jules 936, a “parts-bin” car developed in only four months when then CEO, American Peter Schutz, found out no top tier Porsche would be at LeMans, for the first time since the fabled 917 first destroyed Porsche’s previous record of winning it’s class, but never overall, at the most famous endurance race in the world. Since then, more have belonged to Porsche than all other brands. Combined. The 936 was no exception. 3902 The Rothman’s sponsored 959 prototype which ran Paris – Dakar, a race so grueling it had rarely seen a car finish, and never had seen one win overall. So much for that one, also. Porsche’s history has been to show up so well prepared that the competition actually winds up resenting them eventually. But a blast to watch. Sadly, we then had to lock our cameras away, and so have no pictures of the assembly plant. But Joe will attempt to paint you a picture with words. We walked from the Customer Center across the employee lot (where all the Porsches with plates were parked) into the admin/office area. It is actually quite nice – open and airy, it lends a collegial atmosphere. We then proceeded to the plant floor, arriving actually at the middle of the works. An overhead conveyor brings fully assembled bodies with interiors from the rail station queuing area underground and presents them here. Each vehicle has its build info associated with the ID tag it wears, which is read by computers along the route. They match it with subassemblies; engines, suspension, transmission, and exhaust components along with their support pieces, placed onto robotic chassis frame carriages which self-drive around the plant, automatically recharging at various points along the path. These also communicate with the computer, as they contain sensors which assure each part is correct, and verifies tools are used in the correct sequence and with the proper torque values, etc., all tracked automatically by the computer. These robotic sleds are pretty neat. One of our group inadvertently stood in the path of one (you can see the path by the rubber tire wear in the otherwise perfect paint on the floor – in fact you could eat off the floors). The robot simply stopped and patiently waited for the person to move. We were told that if it would have been delayed excessively, it would have tooted a horn and flashed a light, but it was startling enough without any of that. Assembly of the chassis including brakes, struts, shocks, differentials, driveshafts, etc. is performed by a crew which is about 20% women. Porsche had targeted 35%, but there were simply not enough qualified applicants. To become one, a person must first apprentice with a more senior person for up to three years. So they will be awhile before the mix is reached. As an engineer involved in manufacturing and systems, Joe was fascinated with the quality checks. As an example; a strut sub-assembly will consist of all the parts – spring, shock, brake assembly, hub, and hosing as appropriate for a specific model. Obviously, a standard strut is different from an air-sprung setup. Each sub-assembly, and every part attached thereto in the plant, has a unique barcode stamp, which the computer checks against inventory records to assure the proper part is used. Once identified, the carriage spreads its clamp to the proper opening to put that specific sub-assembly in place, then the carriage clamps to lock the upright in the specific location to match to the body when they meet. All the parts must be registered on the carriage before it can leave for the next location. In the event that a part is missing, they have a small supply of consumables – things like bolts and washers, etc., which are not actually inventoried, but maintained by their respective vendor on a kanban basis. These can be used to “recover” a missing part. But if the part is a more complex assembly, or not in this part batch, the carriage can take itself out of line so as to not interfere with the builds, nor allow next assembly while missing parts. We had the chance to observe the carriage lift a chassis assembly into position, and then the bolt insertion and torquing. The bolts are pre-placed on the carriage so they lift right to the correct place, then the torque is transmitted through the fixture to the tool, where the torque setting and rotation is verified. The pace was not hectic, but people worked full days. Staffing runs about 10% more than absolutely required, to cover for training, which they get a lot of, and breaks or sickness etc. Lead persons must be capable of at least two jobs. Fluids are also computer controlled, and there is a station which has nozzles and hoses to place into each appropriate fill point after leakdown tests.

Wheels, with tires already aboard, are installed next. This is where Joe can see where things save Porsche costs – the wheel bolts are placed on a fixture and the wheel hung on them, then the set of five per wheel is driven home in one pass. But if YOU have to hang that same wheel on a road with a jack, getting it to stay on the hub is a pain! Porsche used to have studs on their hubs, a much more user-friendly approach. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to go to the dyno area where each vehicle gets its engine fired up, because of the potential hazard. From there every Cayenne vehicles get a brief tour of their test track (we were almost hit by one on our way out when Joe backed into its path by mistake). This tests all systems and assures the vehicle is correct to ship. As well, a random selection are given a much longer duration test for Quality Validation purposes. However, by German law, these have their odometers set back afterward. Just as with the change from Porsche's earlier practice of having an individual assemble and sign a whole engine, it was determined that customers were demanding that a specific person build theirs, and you can readily see the customer's advantage in getting a car which has seen the validation run. So, to protect everyone (and especially Porsche) all record of special testing and build personnel and date is strictly off-limits to customers. We noted that no painting occurs at this facility. The vehicle bodies all arrive in their final form, with protective films which will remain in place throughout their tests and transport to their final customer destination. For a few lucky souls, the film is removed right here, and they take the cars out onto the track and the "offroad" section. In fact, Lars noted that they leave with many different colors, but all come back the same – a mustard brown – from the course. But before they leave, they are washed and polished. After all; this is Porsche. It was a great visit. On the way back to Geusa, we stopped to see the canal lock where Thomas works. 3909 Some of the safety equipment he has to be able to operate; a rescue ring and fire extinguisher. 3910 Thomas (foreground) talks to Andreas with Renate in the background as a tour boat is departing the lock. When we returned, Annalies had a barbeque planned of brats and beer, along with dumplings which were delicious. 3912 Here are Annalies on the right, Hardy in the middle, and Margot, a sister of Annalies, on the left. We sat out in the garden and reviewed pictures from our trip until it started to thundershower, our first for the entire time we had been in Europe. So Hardy grilled under a canopy, but we ate indoors. We had a nice evening looking at pictures Annalies has showing their visit with Lynne's sister Bonnie and her husband Jim. Lynne & Jess (was she really that young?) had visited for one day, but Joe had been unavailable at that time. So much has changed since then.

8/25/06 3914 – 3916 From the left, Andreas, Renate, Joe, Annalies and Hardy as we prepare to leave for Straubing. Hardy insisted on showing us the way to the main road, and took us through the back roads of Geusa on the way to the autobahn. When he pointed to the highway entrance, it indicated Leipzig, which was north of our location, while Regensburg, where we would turn east, was to the south. But we figured he knew the roads better than we, so we decided to go that route, figuring our worst case would be to turn around. He was right. We never did quite get the hang of the road signs in Europe, but we made fewer mistakes once we decided to stick to the main roads. We did, however, make one foray. Because A93 would get within five miles of As in the Czech Republic, we decided to feel our way there and back while enroute to Straubing, the home of our friend Yvette, a Czech herself who lives in Germany. We had met her on a beach in Jamaica of all places. But because she drives a BMW M3, she and Joe hit it off, and we have maintained contact ever since. She visited us 18 months ago, and hopes to do so again the end of 2006. She also hopes to meet a black American for romance. Joe has helped her with Internet contacts. Anyway, we got a little lost, again because the signs were for little villages we did not have on a map. But we eventually got on track and found the border crossing, where we were met by stern-faced guards with sub-machine guns. The look they gave us was odd when they asked why we were there, and we said we simply wanted to get our passports stamped so we could prove we had been there. But they did so and allowed us to get gas at the station we could see. It was not that we needed gas – we had about a third of a tank. And we had NO idea what the exchange was, nor even what the Czech currency was, which is not Euros. But we figured it was a small price to pay for the experience. So Joe drove to the station, labeled "F1". The motif was Formula One, alright, right down to the grease covered mechanic and the two best-looking girls we saw in the whole town. After pumping the gas, there was a sign which could only have said "Don't Drink & Drive", but the girl handed Joe a can of Czech beer "as a gift" when he went to pay! Lynne decided we should tour the town, despite having indicated otherwise to the border guards! When we went toward As, we were struck to see 3926 an outdoor "flea market" like place. What was strange, though, was that the only people there were asians, who beckoned us to come look at their goods; western attire with english graphics we doubt any of them could read. 3927 As we left, Joe could not resist getting a picture of the sign above the basket shop. The shop had dirt floors and an asian proprietor who seemed no more certain what to do about us than we about him. The building behind the shop is where the sign points, one of three like signs we saw within 100 feet of the border crossing. One suspects they are indicative of a substantial cross-border economy in the area, especially being so close to the A93. And in fact, we passed construction which was obviously intended to make the route to the crossing even more direct. But note the spelling on the sign. One had the strong impression that one could probably purchase pretty much anything you wanted here, but were well advised to wear latex head to foot. We continued on, eventually finding our way back to A93, to Regensburg for the A3 which would take us to Straubing. There we spent almost an hour trying to find a street sign which coincided with the directions we had obtained online, before finally stopping at a Burger King, a place we suspected at least some person might speak english, and we were right. The manager helped us out and we finally found Yvette's place. The name on the apartment mailbox said so as well. But nobody was home. Except an older woman who insisted nobody by that name lived here, and had a hissy fit until we moved from a place where we were blocking nobody, into a parking spot obviously belonging to somebody. Strange how the German mind works sometimes. So it was time to finally use the cellphone Yvette had so graciously loaned us for emergency contact in Europe – to call HER. She was in the middle of a government snafu of some kind, but got there ten minutes later. After climbing to her apartment, to the dirty looks from the old woman, Yvette

announced that she was taking her kitty and some clothes to “Jonnie’s Place”, meaning her ex-husband’s apartment. But she said she would be back later to take us to dinner.

We were uncomfortable that we had somehow made her think we would need more space than a simple bed and shared bathroom. But she was adamant, so we think there may have been something else going on. Anyway, we laid down to take a brief nap, but were awake when we heard her open the main door. When, after a half hour, we realized we might be preventing her from getting dressed, we apologized, and all had a good laugh. But it was time to hurry, as Jonnie would be picking us up soon in his cab to take us to dinner. Despite her protests, we insisted that if we were to drive her from her own home, the least we could do was buy dinner. A steakhouse was selected, only to discover when we arrived that they were closed for vacation. So Jonnie took us instead to a “hot rock” restaurant. We had no idea what to expect, but again “when in Rome...” The next two shots were taken with a different camera, and for some reason the editing software refuses to label them. The first shows Yvette on the left and Lynne on the right sharing a flambe salad. Kind of like eating salad which you cook. The second shows Joe with a four-meat platter on which he fried his own dinner using the heated stone they brought him, just from the residual heat. Joe decided to try this when the proprietor indicated that they had no foods actually cooked by them. It actually turned out to be both quite tasty and a unique experience. We doubt it would catch on in America – we like to be pampered when we pay to eat out. But it was a novel occurrence, and seemingly not rare in the area. Anyway, and despite our protests again, Yvette insisted we have her apartment to ourselves for the night, and that she would bring in breakfast in the morning when she arrived.

8/26/06 Our last day in Germany. To help us find our way to the A3, because we were totally lost by this point, Yvette led us to the turnoff to follow toward the highway entrance after our good-byes, and we were on our way. 3936 Stuttgart was our destination, but we took the more northern route via Nurnberg and Heilbronn instead of the route which would have brought us in from the south, via Munich. Joe had driven the alternate route when he had been in Germany while working with GE six years ago, and hoped the northerly route would have more open highways with more opportunity to see his favorite sign – and act on it. 3936 A typical autobahn sign and appearance, in an atypical area; little traffic and no construction. Joe finally got his opportunity, and spent a good portion of the time at well over 200 km/h. Legally. No blue and yellow hidden in the bushes to make certain we teach the masses to park in the left lane and set the cruise, then do pretty much anything EXCEPT the prime task at hand. Which explains why our fatality rates are HIGHER than those on the autobahn. So much for the latest in “Driver Responsibility” ticketing and fines. The responsible drivers are merely trying to do that – DRIVE. He was in heaven. Until they actually reached Stuttgart. It seems that the city itself, at least everywhere near the Porsche Works, was being repaved or something, because EVERY road had barriers on it. Joe had been there with Yvette when he had last been to Europe, but Lynne got little more than a cursory glance. Oh well, at least we had seen the Leipzig plant, so it was not a total loss. But we were disappointed. We had not expected to be able to tour the plant – this was a Saturday afternoon when we arrived, so it would have been impossible anyway. But closing the city? So we headed south for Switzerland and Zurich, where we would have one last day to actually relax and tour the city before we would depart Monday morning to fly home. But we determined to get in one last task in Germany. We had not thought to get passport stamps when we first arrived in Switzerland. We had not taken the time to get them stamped when we had first moved from Switzerland to France, and then to Germany, because we had feared the delay in our Nurburgring opportunity, our sole and exclusive chance to do the laps. We could not recover the French stamps, but since we were returning between Germany and Switzerland, we stopped to inquire. The Swiss were very cooperative. The Germans were as well, but they obviously had a pressing matter at hand. We were directed into a room with five other people, only to discover that there was no restroom, no exit without the guards releasing the locks, and no guards in sight! Joe’s bladder especially started to get concerned, but soon a guard came, asked what we wanted, and in fairly short order we were on our way – Joe directed to the nearest “toiletten”. We arrived in Zurich and followed the signs, but somehow missed our turn, which was supposed to be right after the lufthafen exit. So, doubling back, Joe found the place we had to be, mired in – Construction! We felt our way along, though, and the room was pleasant enough. But next time we will return to the place Joe stayed when he worked with GE, and had to inspect and test switchgear at the ABB factory – the Swissotel at Oerlikon. The Park Inn cost us \$100 extra for the two nights for parking and breakfasts, which would have been included at the Swissotel but were built into the original price. So much for a bargain. But where it really mattered showed up later when we went to dinner in the city. A Saturday night, we discovered that all the places we had expected to find a meal were closed already, and there was NO place to park near the only place we found that was still open. So we “created” one. Had we stayed at the Oerlikon hotel, we could have taken the same ticket we would buy the next day and taken any mass transit anywhere we had wanted without having to worry about the car, and then ridden that same mass transit back to within 100 ft of the hotel at any time of the day or night. Oh well, live and learn. 3940 One of the places we saw that night. When we went to the Italian restaurant which was shown in the guide as “Late Food”, the line stretched for more than a block. Thankfully, it turned out to be for the dance club right above, which certainly reminded us of its existence throughout dinner.

8/27/06 Lynne & Joe had some “disagreements” about the parking and touring plans, especially since the weather was again miserable. So we decided to separate, splitting the CHF we had. 3942 – 3949 Lynne does a final walkabout and gets a few decent shots of Zurich. Note the ornate detail, typical of the place. The weather prevented some of the outstanding girl-watching otherwise normally found here, but Joe used the excellent tram, train and bus maps to go visit the 3951 industrial center and ABB plant, and used the trains to avoid paying 2 CHF per potty stop. It was fun. Next day we would return home. To be safe, we checked all but our computer bags. Thankfully, we were headed home, so when the secondary flight was delayed and we were able to take an earlier flight also delayed, we got home in time to rest almost a day before we finally got our luggage. After taking care of bills, pets and what-not, Lynne got back to patient care, and Joe started building these trip reports. We hope you liked them.