

Dear Frau Schwellenbach,

Martina Krautwig has given me your e-mail address.

We are the English family from Banbury with whom Tobias and Thomas stayed last Easter. We all had a fantastic time, great fun and so interesting. Our son James called it "The most amazing two weeks of my life" and wrote about it in an article in the Banbury Guardian. We gave Martina a copy to give to you.

Not only did our sons make to new good friends but we did too, in fact 4 new friends! Both families get on so well. As a result of this we changed our summer holiday plans. We were supposed to go to the Massif Central in France, but we decided to camp in northern France and then visit the Krautwig family for 2 nights. We thought 2 days would be the right time as we didn't know how well we would all live together and we also didn't want to outstay our welcome.

Well, we all got on so well! Our first full day was taken up with Tobias' 14th birthday and visiting the Museum in Bonn. The next day was Martina's birthday. We had originally decided to leave that day but as we were all having a good time together that we accepted Martina's invitation to stay another night. We celebrated her birthday by a visit to the Rhine, Petersburg and Drachenfels followed by a lovely meal at Königswinter. Again Martina mentioned about us staying longer and again we decided to stay another night, all last minute plans! The next day Tobias and Thomas took us to Köln by train where we enjoyed climbing the cathedral tower, walking along the Rhine, sampling ice cream and visiting the Lego shop and some sports shops. Martina asked us to stay another night but sadly this time we had to say no because we had to be back in France to catch our ferry making sure we had enough time without rushing. We were going to leave in the morning but we had a small problem with the car that needed to be mended and we just really didn't want to leave. We eventually left at about 4.00pm after giving the boys more play time and Martina and me more chatting time! We were very sad to leave but we are looking forward to the next time we meet.

We had a brilliant time, the highlight of our holiday! I think the unplanned nature of it all, the serendipity, added to the fun and pleasure but it meant that everything was planned at the last moment. We therefore concentrated on getting to know each other and discussing, comparing and contrasting so many aspects of our lives in 2 different European countries finding so many similarities. I can't wait for our next meeting to continue these fascinating discussions!

I hope this gives you an insight to the "twinning" of our families and how much we are all enjoying it.

With best wishes,

Frances King

PS: As a result of all this our youngest son (age 10) is trying to teach himself German using a CD!

PPS

Since starting to draft this, Tobias and Thomas have returned to Banbury to spend their October school holiday with us, attending Banbury School for most of their visit! It's been lovely to meet again and continue our discussions and the fun we have together! Martina and I have frequent long telephone conversations during which we discuss a wide range of topics. I'm so very glad we have found each other and I am sure we will have many more fantastic times together!