

CHAPTER 13

Cruising on the Danube with the Romans

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We have known Bill and Jackie Urban for more than thirty years. Jim worked closely with Bill at Monmouth College, helping edit the *Journal of Baltic Studies* and team-teaching American colonial history as Coordinator of Pan-American Studies. Vicki and Jackie both served as Latin teachers at Monmouth High School. During all these years of working together, we never traveled abroad together, although we frequently shared pictures and stories of our experiences in Europe.

This finally changed after our retirements. In 2019, Bill and Jackie planned to take a Danube River cruise offered by Viking Cruises.¹ We had never been on a vacation cruise, and the itinerary covered countries and areas we had not visited on our European travels. We decided to join them, and this gave us an opportunity to plan a trip that would be interesting to all of us.

Vicki's being a professor of classics meant that most of our travels outside the United States had been built around visits to Roman and Greek sites. Some of these were organized tours we signed up for, but at other times we would design our own itinerary, making our plane, hotel, and car reservations and plotting routes that allowed us to explore as many classical sites as possible. This trip would be different since Viking would determine the stops along the cruise. Viking did offer onshore excursions at each port, but none of them focused on Roman history. Therefore, we had to plan some of our own onshore activities.

A trip on the Danube offered many opportunities for observing classical sites and museums. Because the river was the northernmost defense border of the Romans against the barbarian tribes to the north, the Romans established the *limes Romanus*, a series of forts and watchtowers along the southern bank of the river, with additional protection provided by Roman ships patrolling the river and transporting troops and supplies along what would become the southwestern and central European main trade route. The section of the Danube we would be cruising is all part of a UNESCO Heritage Site,² and four of the most important Roman sites were at or near ports the Viking cruise would be visiting. Vicki was interested in understanding further, from research after the trip, how Romanization occurred on the border, how living on the border through the four centuries developed sequentially, and how the river had an important role.

Another factor we considered was our mutual interest in beer and wine tasting. The Danube cruise visits towns in southern Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, all of which have significant brewing and vinting histories. As we write below, Viking does try to provide representative beverages with its onboard meals, but we wanted to explore some of the more local craft-oriented options as well.

So, our planning began. Bill negotiated the travel arrangements, managing to get flights from and to Peoria instead of Chicago for no additional charge. Jim did the research on classical sites along the route and found some venues for tastings. The cruise was to begin on October 30,

¹ For a sample itinerary, see Viking Cruise Line n.d.

² For a description, see UNESCO World Heritage Convention, n.d.a.

but Bill and Jackie flew to Munich earlier to visit with friends in Ulm. We left Peoria in the afternoon of October 29 and flew overnight from Chicago to Munich, where Viking provided buses from the airport to the dock in Passau, a German town on the Austrian border. Once we checked in and boarded the Viking *Vilhjalm*, one of several river vessels Viking labels “longships,” with three decks of cabins and a capacity of almost two hundred passengers, we had a light lunch and walked to the Passau train station to meet Bill and Jackie and help carry their luggage to the boat. We had rooms across the hall from each other on the lower deck toward the front of the vessel. The rooms were small but efficiently organized and comfortably furnished. On the lower deck, our view was limited to a porthole, so we spent most of our free time on the upper deck or in the lounges with full-length windows. The weather was, overall, quite cooperative for this as well.

That evening we had our first of many delicious meals aboard the vessel. The Viking kitchen staff tried to offer main courses that represented typical cuisine of the area the boat was visiting. This also extended to drink offerings with meals; for example, in Austria we were offered a choice of a white Grüner Veltliner or a red Zweigelt wine, both characteristically Austrian. Another of the amenities Viking offers is coffee available 24 hours a day from large dispensers on the upper deck, usually accompanied by a selection of cookies. It was fortunate for us that our plans included a good deal of walking.

The next morning was set for touring Passau. The town is situated at the confluence of the Danube and two tributaries, which has made it an ideal site for trade. In Roman times, it was known as Batavis, a fort and colony on the border between the provinces of Raetia and Noricum, responsible for control of trade between Gallia and Illyria. After the original fort was destroyed by barbarian attacks in the third century, a new fort, Boiodrum, was built slightly upriver. The Romans left this site in the late fifth century, and the fort was demolished. In the late medieval period part of the foundation of the fort was used for the construction of a house, but the rest of



Figure 13.1: From l. to r., Jackie Urban, Jim Betts and Vicki Wine outside the Passau Roman Museum. Photo by Bill Urban.

the fort’s foundation was lost until uncovered by an urban construction project in 1974. The site was named Kastell Boiotro, and Jim learned that a Roman museum had been installed there. We walked to it after breakfast instead of taking the Viking town tour.

Artifacts in the museum date from the Mesolithic era to the fifth century. They are organized in chronological order³ and include funerary monuments, figurines, *terra sigillata* (clay being one of the items traded in the area), and transcripts of documents. Maps, signs, and audio-visual aids offer information on Roman colonization,

³ The exhibit on the topic “economy and trade from the Stone Age to the Roman era in Passau” shows that “As early as the 5th millennium BC, flint was being exported from Lower Bavaria to Lower Austria. The Celts traded from the 5th century BC to the 1st century AD with salt and graphite, clay, ceramics among other things.” (translated from Museen in Passau n.d. This German language website gives a detailed description of the museum holdings.)

viticulture, the operation of the customs system,⁴ and the activities of the monk, diplomat, political leader, and canonized saint Severin.⁵

After touring the museum, we caught up with the town tour in time to join them for the noon organ concert in St. Stephen's Cathedral. The organ (actually five separate organs which can all be played from the main console), with more than two hundred registers and almost eighteen thousand pipes, was considered the largest church organ in the world until surpassed by a Los Angeles church in 1994.⁶ The half-hour recital showcased all its resources in works ranging from the Renaissance through Bach to twentieth-century composers. As a musician, Jim enjoyed the program, and Vicki and Jackie were both impressed as keyboard players themselves. Bill was not too excited by the twentieth-century pieces, though. After the concert, we boarded the boat and finally set sail down the Danube and into Austria.

The cruise was scheduled to do most of the sailing overnight, except in places where the scenery is especially notable, such as the Wachau Valley in Austria and the wetlands on the Slovakian-Hungarian border past Bratislava. This meant that we were asleep on most occasions when the *Vilhjalm* went through locks on the river, but we did get to watch the procedure a few times during the day. For those of us who live near the Mississippi River, the sight of locks and dams is not unusual, but the view from onboard as the boat went through was impressive. In fact, the photo we took of the lock gate at Melk, opening to reveal Melk Abbey downstream, became Vicki and Jim's 2019 holiday card (Fig. 13.2).

We first docked in Linz, Austria. Even though it was the site of the Roman fort of Lentia, there is not a great deal remaining of that history to be seen either in surviving construction or in museum holdings. According to the website on the city's history, the fort was located where the Provincial Theatre stands today, and remains of a Mithraeum were discovered in Tummelplatz.⁷ The timeline presented in the website notes "Evidence of permanent human settlement since the late Stone Age" and further states that



Figure 13.2: Melk Abbey from the lock gate on the Danube. Photo by James Betts.

⁴ An exhibit plaque explains how the custom system worked. "Customs duty was an important source of revenue for Rome and the leaseholders of customs stations. Both inhabitants of the Empire and foreigners had to pay 2.5% of the value of trade goods in customs fee" (Museen in Passau n.d.).

⁵ "The written tradition with the memoir on the life of the diplomat Severin" offers "a comprehensive insight into the time of the collapsing Roman Empire, again using Passau as an example" (Museen in Passau n.d.) His monastery near Mautern also provided an important connection for the Romans during this turbulent time. The museum there has more information on his life and association.

⁶ More information about the instrument may be found at Passau Tourism n.d.

⁷ The fort, named Lentia by the Romans from the Celtic word for "bending, curving," from its location at the bend of the river, was "the first in the Noricum-Danube region." The area had been inhabited by a settlement of Celts in the Linz Basin from c. 400 B.C. The Romans, after first constructing fortification of wood and earth in the first century A.D., replaced them with a larger stone fort in the second century. A civilian settlement followed soon after. "The settlement was destroyed on several occasions by attacks by the Goths in the second century; a residual settlement from the late antiquity on the Martinsfeld withstood the storms of the barbarian invasions" (Linz City Administration n.d.b.).

“The significance of the settlement has been marked since time immemorial by the East-West path of the Danube, divided by the North-South line which marks the shortest route from the Adriatic to the Baltic Seas.”⁸



Figure 13.3: Bill Urban (l.) and Jim Betts (r.) sampling Czech beer in the Restaurant Pivovar. Photo by Jackie Urban.

Bill suggested that we should take advantage of one of the excursions offered by Viking at this stop, a trip into the Czech Republic for a walking tour of the UNESCO Heritage Site of Český Krumlov,⁹ and we boarded the buses for the one-and-a-quarter-hour ride. Český Krumlov was a feudal capital on the Vltava River from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, and the architecture of the town reflects this. The castle is medieval in its basic design, with Renaissance additions and a Baroque theater (one of only two to have survived to the present). It also features a three-story bridge across a moat which instead of water holds brown bears! The town houses and shops are of similar age and make for an attractive town square.

Fortunately, the town and castle were spared in World War II. Bill was the one of us familiar with the history of the area and could point out things the tour guide could not take time to mention.

After a tour of the castle, a walk to the riverbank to view the town from that level, and a walk back into the square, we were left on our own for lunch. Most of the tourists headed for restaurants in the old town, but we had other plans. Jim had learned that Český Krumlov had a tradition of beer brewing dating from the foundation of the town. A craft brewery had set up shop on the grounds of one of the old breweries, and we went there for a hearty lunch and excellent draft beer. Some American tourists who had visited previously had posted negative online comments about the service; fortunately, three of us speak German, and we had no problem with the waitstaff. Bill was so impressed by the place that he recommended to Viking that it be put on the list of lunch options. The walking, beer, and food made for a rather sleepy bus ride back to Linz.

We were scheduled to dock in Krems next. Krems is one of several small towns on the Danube in the Wachau Valley, one of Austria’s prime viticultural areas. The views of the vineyards rising up the riverbanks as the Danube flows through the valley were very picturesque and peaceful. Jim had learned that a town near Krems, Mautern, had been the site of the fort and surrounding town of Favianis¹⁰ and had a museum with many Roman items. The museum was

⁸ Linz City Administration n.d.a.

⁹ For more information on the town, see UNESCO World Heritage Convention n.d.b,

¹⁰ According to Lower Austrian Magazine n.d. Roman building activity in the area began in the first century for a fort to house auxiliary troops, on top of traces of earlier settlements during the transition from “the Early to Middle Bronze Age (1700 to 1500 BC). . .” Stone walls in the second century replaced the initial camp, followed by “destruction of the fortifications and settlement during the Marcomannic Wars” in 180. In 300 the 1st Noricum Legion was stationed in Favianis. Then “significant expansion” occurred “in the fourth century, when fan-shaped and horseshoe-shaped towers were built – some of which can still be seen today.” The fort had barracks and stables. The civilian settlement which grew up outside the camp, as with other military forts, had both residential buildings and workshops, with “evidence of blacksmiths, metalsmiths, tanners and weavers as well as shops such as butchers and bakers” (*Lower Austrian Magazine* n.d.).

officially closed for the winter, but Jim contacted the museum by email and found that staff would be there for post-season maintenance. He made arrangements for us to visit on a Saturday morning, but the *Vilhjalm* did not dock until late morning. With the aid of cell phones, we managed to talk the museum staff into waiting for us until we walked the mile from Krems to Mautern. The museum, located in a Baroque building originally serving as a granary, was small but had interesting finds from Favianis, such as jewelry, glass and ceramic ware, clay masks, game pieces, a small plaque with an incantation begging the gods of the underworld for help with a love affair, and a bronze tablet inscribed with a military discharge document. There were also artifacts from the nearby monastery which St. Severin established and in which he died in 482. When we visited, a special exhibition on Severin gave a good deal of information on the effect on the residents as the Roman Empire declined, including Severin's diplomacy between the Roman residents and the Germanic tribes on the north side of the Danube.¹¹ Outside the museum, sections of the Roman fort walls and remains of two towers still stand.¹²

By the time we finished touring the museum, lunch hours on the boat had ended. Jackie, however, talked to some of the crew and persuaded them to set up a small meal for us in the lounge. After lunch, Jackie took a nap while the other three of us went back into Krems. One of the Viking excursions for the day was a visit to a large Wachau Valley winery. Jim, however, had found a tasting room for a small winery, Lesehof Stågard, right in town. The winery offers typical Austrian wines like Grüner Veltliner and Zweigelt but specializes in Riesling wines from single-sourced vineyards in the area. We sampled several of their wines and were surprised by the differences between Rieslings from different vineyards, even though they were produced by the same winemaker. (Jim particularly liked the Steiner Pfaffenberg.)



Figure 13.4: Bill Urban at the Mautern Roman Museum. Photo by James Betts.

From Krems the voyage went to Vienna. In Roman times, the site was known as Vindobona. The camp was situated in the location of the modern city center, with the accompanying civilian settlement, from the third century, stretching to the third district, to the southeast; there are some Roman ruins to be seen in the city, such as those in the

¹¹ The timeline given in Mautern an der Donau n.d.a shows that in 450, Severin von Noricum, "Saint Severin," founded a monastery in the area. Eugippius published "Vita Sancti Severini," in 511, as a biography of Severin "that very vividly depicts his life and work in Noricum" and records his interactions with the Romans along the Danube. He tried to be helpful to both the barbarians and the Romans. One example of how he worked with the Romans at Batavis is given in Chapter 27.

¹² The fort lies beneath the oldest parts of modern Mautern. The brochure "The Danube Limes in Austria: MAUTERN –FAVIANIS," citing OAI research literature, further indicates Mautern was significant for its location controlling the river crossing "on a traffic route that was already in use in prehistoric times and runs parallel to the Amber Road leading east." Additional information is available at Mautern an der Donau (n.d.b.).

Michaelerplatz,¹³ and a Roman museum¹⁴ in the Hoher Markt. Due to time constraints, however, we did not visit these¹⁵ and instead chose to explore another Roman site in the area.

We took a train thirty miles to the town of Petronell, today a small town about two-thirds of the way from Vienna to Bratislava. This was the location of the Roman city of Carnuntum, which started in A.D. 6 as a temporary camp, grew to be larger than Vindobona, and became the capital of the province of Pannonia Superior¹⁶ until its cession to the Goths in 433. Marcus Aurelius lived in Carnuntum from A.D. 172 to A.D. 175 and wrote part of his *Meditations* there, and in A.D. 193 Septimius Severus was proclaimed emperor at Carnuntum. One of the reasons for its success was its location on what is known as the Amber Road,¹⁷ a trade route that served to transport amber from the Baltic Sea to what is now Venice. Among the holdings of the Museum of Carnuntum are several pieces of amber.¹⁸

The site extends over a two-mile stretch of the southern bank of the Danube and includes an archeological park incorporating a quarter of the civilian city, two amphitheatres (one civilian, one military), a gladiator training school, a museum, and a triumphal arch known today as the Heidentor (“Heathens’ Gate”). We concentrated on the archeological park, an interesting combination of excavations and reconstructions of several of the Roman buildings, including houses and baths (similar to the Villa Borg in Germany and Arbeia in England). We took our time touring the ruins and reconstructed buildings, and enjoyed lunch in the restaurant onsite, which includes a few recipes from the cookbook of Apicius along with Austrian and Italian dishes.

¹³ Described in Atlas Obscura n.d. In Visiting Vienna n.d.b it is observed that “Building works often reveal evidence of Roman times.” One example is “Michaelerplatz square at one entrance to the Hofburg palace complex,” which is the site of crossroads of earlier east-west and north-south trade routes. Extensive excavations during the redesign of the square in the early 1990s exposed remains of Roman dwellings. The reconstruction provided a “special display” across from the center for public view of some of the excavations.

¹⁴ For details see Visiting Vienna n.d.a. The Romermuseum, within the Wien Museum Karlsplatz, provides an introduction to the Roman fortress and settlements, and has excavations from two officer houses in the basement. “The late fourth and fifth centuries began to see the dramatic decline not only of the Roman Empire in general but also of Vindobona in particular” (City of Vienna n.d.).

¹⁵ Both *Visiting Vienna* n.d.b and *Wikipedia* n.d.a and n.d.b provide helpful information on further remains of Roman sites within the city. Besides remains of the Roman military camp found at many sites in the center of Vienna, street names in the city also reflect the Roman presence, as well as perhaps the street plan, because parts of the walls may have been standing when streets were laid out in the Middle Ages. Visiting Vienna n.d.b points out that “The Graben street that forms the pedestrianised heart of the city may have marked one side of the fortifications, for example. (*Graben* actually means ditch or trench.) The layout of the city centre probably reflects in part the structure of the original Roman camp.” Of additional interest, “The word Vindobona also survives in business, product, ship, street, and train names. For example, this pharmacy on Porzellangasse: Vindobona Apotheke” (*Visiting Vienna* n.d.b).

¹⁶ This information (and more) is available at Roman City of Carnuntum n.d. After Tiberius had established a winter camp, the permanent military camp was built in A.D. 41 to 54. In 70, settlement of the civilian city began. From A.D. 81 to 96, “the auxiliary fort and the amphitheatre in the canabae are established” during the reign of Domitian.

¹⁷ According to Anders Hammarlund, researcher at the universities of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Uppsala, the term “Amber Road” “was coined in the 1920s by the Cambridge archaeologist José Maria de Navarro to denote a set of trails or paths connecting the Baltic and the Adriatic during antiquity. Here, people have been trading since Neolithic times. Salt from the salt mines of Central Europe—sought after by the peoples of northern Europe—was exchanged with amber from the Baltic shores, which was then sold to Mediterranean peoples. This trade intensified when the Roman Empire expanded north of the Alps, and in some Roman cities the fabrication of amber art wares reached almost industrial proportions.” See Billock 2019.

¹⁸ In Billock 2019 Hammarlund describes Carnuntum as the main trading point on the Amber Road, which intersected with another ancient trading route, the Limes Road.

Although we had originally planned on our return to Vienna to have dinner in the city, we had been active enough during the day that we opted to dine on the boat.

The Viking *Vilhjalm* went on to Slovakia and stopped in Bratislava. The modern city lies mostly on the northern bank of the Danube, but there was a Roman site about ten miles south of the boat dock, in Gerulata (modern Rusovce). Gerulata started as an earth-and-timber fort in the first century and went through four construction phases.¹⁹ The archaeological site contains ruins from throughout this period.²⁰ The second fort, built in the fourth century “into the northern corner of the original *castellum*” is in the open-air part of the museum.²¹

Unfortunately, the museum is not open in November, so Jim and Vicki settled for the Viking city excursion instead. After we returned from our trip, we learned that there were ruins of a *villa rustica* located north of our dock in Bratislava in the suburb of Dúbravka;²² even if we had known about it, though, getting there would have taken almost an hour. The villa, similar in design to those in other provinces, is on the “barbarian” side of the river, indicating that in this area the Romans were able to establish settlement on this side, or at least Romanization with leaders of Germanic tribes.

Remains of Roman buildings have also survived in Stupava, Devín Castle, and Bratislava Castle Hill. Devín Castle Natural Heritage Site indicates that Roman stone structures dating from the third and fourth centuries have been found within the later Castle construction.²³ The Romans had displaced the Celts and Germanic tribes who had previously occupied the Devín Castle Hill “at the confluence of the Danube and Morava Rivers.”²⁴

The Devín *oppidum*, a “strategic trade centre” and “fortified acropolis” at the top of the castle hill, founded by Celts at the end of the 2nd century BC, “took place due to favourable location at cross-roads of long-distance roads.” Other Roman activity is in evidence, because “buildings from Stupava, Bratislava-Dúbravka, Cífer-Pác, Veľký Kýr (before Milanovce) and from Bratislava-Devín belong already to the 2nd, 3rd and the late 4th century.”²⁵ The museum website notes that “The Kelemantia Fort (Iža – Leányvár near Komárno) was part of the Limes as a Roman bridgehead on the Danube’s left bank.” As with the other sites established along the Danube, this strategic area has settlement evidenced as early as Upper Paleolithic, through Bronze, to the end of the Iron Age, when the Celts came. “Celtic settlement was destroyed in the 20s–30s AD by

¹⁹ The border fortress and civil town (*vicus*) of Gerulata—a name of Celtic origin because the Celts founded an *oppidum* (“fortified settlement”) “at the crossroads of long-distance roads”—were established during the Flavian dynasty (reign of Emperor Domitian, A. D. 69–96). The museum webpage describes the following development: “During Trajan’s rule (A.D. 98–117), the defensive system of the Limes was perfected,” and the camp housed a cavalry unit for the protection of Carnuntum. The Bratislava Museum in the village-district of Rosovce, on the site of the remains of the military camp, exhibits finds from excavations, showing military occupation: “Many finds are related to the presence of troops. Decorations include engraved gems, buckles, bracelets, pendants and amulets.” See Bratislava City Museum n.d.b.

²⁰ A detailed description can be found at Schmidtová n.d.

²¹ See Bratislava City Museum n.d.a.

²² Elschek n.d. gives details.

²³ Bratislava City Museum n.d.c.

²⁴ Bratislava Tourist Board n.d.

²⁵ Schmidtová n.d.

German tribes. Strategic location of the Devín hillfort enabled and contributed to the development of cultural contacts and trade.”²⁶

Anton Spiesz writes that in the mid-fourth century “Roman influence began gradually to decline. Nevertheless, under the Emperor Valentinian [*sic*] I, new fortifications were built on the Roman ‘*limes*’ and old army posts reconstructed.” Eventually, though, in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, the weakening Roman Empire “ultimately collapsed” and other peoples, including Huns, Goths, and Lombards, inherited the remnants of the Roman Empire.²⁷

The last port on the Viking cruise was Budapest. Bill and Jackie decided to look around the city, while Jim and Vicki took city transit for a thirty-minute ride to the Roman site of Aquincum.²⁸ One of the four major fortresses on the Roman Danube *limes*, Aquincum was originally a Celtic settlement. The Romans used the strategic site, again, typically, for both defense of their side of the border and for protection of an important crossing with trade routes. Modern Buda developed from the legionary camp of Aquincum, one of the four largest military *castra* of the *limes*, and Pest from the fort of Contra-Aquincum (built on east side of Danube to defend the crossing) in the early Middle Ages. The approach to the Elizabeth bridge on the Pest side, which we walked over on our way to the train station, passes over a park with the preserved remains of Aquincum’s wall and two of its towers.

Like Carnuntum, the location includes a museum and an archeological site,²⁹ but much closer to one another than in the former case. There is also an amphitheater near the transit stop. The archeological remains include sanctuaries, baths, Mithraea and shops, “the most characteristic public buildings and several private houses” from the civil town’s second and third centuries.³⁰ The museum website also describes other sites in the area, such as the mineral springs that supplied the aqueduct, evidenced by remains of its pillars.³¹

The finds in the museum include mosaics, statuary, coins, and building materials. Unique in the museum’s holdings are the fragmentary remains of an organ built in the third century alongside a modern reproduction of the instrument.³² It was interesting to compare this small, portable instrument of fifty-two pipes with the Passau organ we had heard on our first day of the cruise.

²⁶ Bratislava City Museum n.d.c.

²⁷ Spiesz 2006: 309. Spiesz meant the Roman emperor Valentinian I (321–364), known as “The Great.”

²⁸ Many images of the museum holdings and also a virtual tour can be found at Aquincum Museum n.d.a.

²⁹ Budapest City n.d. introduces the Aquincum Museum with a description of its origin, going “back to a discovery in 1778 when a local vineyard owner stumbled upon the remnants of a Roman floor heating system, or ‘hypocaustum’ in his garden. Schönvisner István, a university librarian, recognized the importance of this discovery and identified the location as the ancient city of Aquincum. Today, the Aquincum Museum operates as a branch of the Budapest History Museum.”

³⁰ Aquincum Museum n.d.b.

³¹ “Mineral springs still flowing in modern-day Római Strandfürdő (Roman Lido) supplied one of the greatest architectural feats of Roman Budapest, the aqueduct.” Aquincum Museum n.d.c describes the mechanics of how the aqueduct worked, until the Romans were no longer able to maintain it in the 4th century. “The aqueduct is mentioned in medieval sources and documents and portrayed in engravings. Remains of the pillars can be found in the park north of the Aquincum Museum, while the reconstructed section of the aqueduct can be seen between the lanes of the Szentendrei Road between Aquincum and Kaszásdűlő stations.”

³² A full description with an audio sample of the reconstructed instrument can be found at Aquincum Museum n.d.d.

We all dined together on the boat that evening and went to bed early in order to be ready for our 3 a.m. debarkation and trip to the Budapest airport for the return flights that would take us back to Peoria.

In addition to all these activities there was also much opportunity to enjoy the beautiful scenery along the Danube (both natural features and historical buildings along the shore), socialize with other travelers on the boat, and appreciate the good food, lectures on the culture and history of the towns visited, and local entertainment that Viking provided onboard, including a folk music performance at one stop and at another a program of arias and *Lieder* presented by members of the city opera company.

Having the opportunity to see the Roman remains and learn about the fortifications helped us to understand the structure of the defense system, the organization of the forts (similar to the border constructions we had seen in England), the continuity of the time period beginning in the first century A.D. through expansion and eventual decline as the barbarian tribes overcame the defenses and the Roman legions left. It was also instructive to see the Roman influence in the towns which grew around and supported the military camps, with Romanization evident in the lifestyle, housing, religious development, and (last, but not least) viticulture.

This was the most time we had spent together with Bill and Jackie, and it was very rewarding for us. Bill's historical background provided us with insights to the places we were seeing, and Jackie's experience shepherding her family through foreign countries came in handy for us on several occasions. It was fortunate that we went when we did, for by the spring of 2020 all river cruises had been suspended due to global health conditions.

Of course, as soon as travel restrictions were lifted, Bill and Jackie were again on the road, taking a Rhine River cruise in 2022.

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