



FOUR CAPITAL CITIES IN ONE DAY
– A WIKO-ENABLED EXPERIENCE
MARK E. HAUBER

Mark E. Hauber is the Harley Jones Van Cleave Professor of Host-Parasite Interactions at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He is a native of Hungary and a graduate of Yale (BS) and Cornell (PhD) Universities, and he trained at UC Berkeley as a Miller Post-doctoral Fellow. He was a faculty member at the University of Auckland and Hunter College of the City University of New York, where he also served as Associate Vice Chancellor for Research. He has been an editor of *Behavioral Ecology* and of *Ethology* and editor-in-chief of *The Auk: Ornithological Advances*, and currently he is co-editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Field Ornithology*. Together with his students and other collaborators, he has published more than 350 peer-reviewed articles, including in *Nature*, *Science*, *PNAS*, and *Current Biology*. Mark's true passion (and paid job) is to study avian behavior in the context of brood parasitism by cuckoos and cowbirds. You can find more at www.cowbirdlab.org and Twitter @cowbirdlab. – Address: Department of Evolution, Ecology, and Behavior, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 515 Morrill Hall, 505 S. Goodwin Ave., Urbana, IL 61801, USA. E-mail: mhauber@illinois.edu.

I love travelling. It comes from having spent my childhood behind the Iron Curtain and the Hungarian state having given me a regular passport that said: “*Not valid to all the countries in the world.*” Even though my family also loved travelling, and so we explored the allowances that the state made for us – Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the GDR, and we even lived in Soviet Russia for a while when my military-employed father attended “graduate school” (a.k.a. tank-driving lessons); until I turned 16, all I had seen of the West was the barbed wire fence separating us from it.

Then came my first trip to Vienna – oh, the excitement!!! What a bundle of nerves I was, while I held onto a valid train ticket and a Western-validated passport and crossed the Hungarian-Austrian border with my mother. They let us through!! It was a great sigh of relief, only to find out, of course, that Vienna looked just like Budapest, but was cleaner and had far better neon advertisements on top of the 19th-century rental palaces lining the grand boulevards of that city.

My next trip to the West was at age 17, to West Berlin, in spring 1989!! So much to come later that year. But first, we were on a trip heading to Sweden to visit my cousins, whose father was doing a postdoc in Stockholm, again with my mother and some half-Swedish and half-Hungarian friends. We flew cheaply to East Berlin, “The capital city of the GDR,” on Malev-Hungarian Airlines (now defunct, replaced by Whizzair), and then took a train on a ferry to Sweden. But because we were heading to the West, our passports once again included access to Western countries and locales, including West Berlin!! We decided to spend the day walking around Berlin – both sides! First, we headed for the Brandenburg Gate and looked at it from the (far) distance allowed by the East German border guards, with the Berlin Wall also blocking the view past the Gate into the Tiergarten’s nightingale-home woodlots. Then we headed to Checkpoint Charlie and crossed into West Berlin. And there we were! On the other side of the Wall!!! Instead of another wall (and lots of rabbits living in between), the wall on the Western side was heavily graffitied and ridiculed. There were observation platforms to look into East Berlin (and, again, at the rabbit-filled fields between the actual Wall and the additional barbed wire fences). We were free to move around, buy expensive chocolate, and visit the Europa-Center in downtown West Berlin, at the end of Kurfürstendamm.

Who knew that 32 years later, I would call the central boulevard, Ku’damm, “almost home,” the M19 bus would be my going-home ride, and I would become a resident of Grunewald at the end of the avenue??! I certainly did not imagine such a thing as a high school kid studying for a national Hungarian competition in Biology (which I won twice)...!

Once we had spent all our West German currency (we were allowed to carry the equivalent of US \$50 each), we headed back to East Berlin to catch our Sweden-bound train. But it was not easy. The border guards told us to head back to Checkpoint Charlie instead of the other border crossing that we tried, and I was duly strip-searched for who knows what. As my fellow Fellows know, I have never drunk or done drugs in my life, and certainly was not going to hide chocolate in my body cavities to transport to East Berlin...

Fast forward 32 years to my much-anticipated Wiko arrival. I suddenly connected back to my childhood! I knew myself where in town I lived in Villa Walther, just off Ku'damm. I could take the M19 to Prada to buy shoes, to Breitscheidplatz to see the bombed-out cathedral tower, and to Nollendorfplatz to eat Ethiopian food and socialize with my fellow homosexuals. The last ten months in 2021/2022 have truly been heavenly, living and working at Wiko. I even wrote a new bird book manuscript, as I had promised to myself and to Wiko's Rector, which is now working its way through peer review at the University of Chicago Press.

One of my most special travel experiences was also made possible by Wiko – it was a conference trip to the 2022 LIBER Journées, organized by the Association of European Research Libraries in Budapest. Wiko Fellows and staff facilitated my invitation, and I ended up giving a talk on my experience with the Open Science framework as an editor-in-chief of two ornithological journals in front of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' founder (his painting) in a hall overlooking the Danube and the Buda castle. Though my uncle (the same one who worked in Sweden) was a two-term president of the Academy in Hungary, I had never been to the building, and it was an honor to make it there on my own achievements, without any nepotism! So, once the conference was over, I invited my Berlin boyfriend to come and join me for a couple of extra days to enjoy the city, visit my mother, and make our way back to Berlin. I rented a car, and when the day came, we made our way out of Budapest, after a night of dancing and drag shows in the still viable Hungarian gay scene. We first drove to Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, and walked along the Danube in search of ice cream (for me) and cigarettes (for him). We were both successful. We then got back on the highway and drove to Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna, the capital of Austria, for a tour of the buildings and the grounds. What a stunningly sunny day it was! We also headed back to downtown Vienna to visit St. Stephan's Church. We narrowly escaped total disaster, as our underground parking garage near the Opera House slowly filled with dense smoke from a burning car (we backed out just in time and drove safely to the airport). Finally, we landed back in Berlin, the capital of all of Germany, still before midnight (otherwise the Berlin airport would have rejected us), completing our whirlwind 4-capital city tour in one day. *Thank you Wiko for adding this magical day to my life!*