As Subject Adviser for German, I again led a group of U3A members, from groups studying the German language, to Munich, with a programme starting on 13th May and running to the 17th. The group was a bit smaller this time, only 12 of us, but I believe this was again successful – here’s what we did!

On our first day, in the afternoon, we visited the Alter Hof, which was the first residence of the rulers of Munich, built around the twelfth century and now restored as the Tourist Office amongst other things. We viewed the audio-visuals set up there, one in English, one in German, which explain the origins of the city, the Alter Hof, and quite a lot about the ruler known as Ludwig the Bavarian. Here’s a picture of us all outside, on the steps.

In the afternoon, we visited the Residenz, where the ruling family, the Wittelsbachers, moved after the Alter Hof became too small. We had an excellent guide, whose German was very clear, but who, oddly, did not use the dative case at all! One stunning room was the Antiquarium, where the ceiling has paintings of all the Virtues, both spiritual and lay, to remind those using the room of the principles of good rule!

We finished off this tour with a short visit to the Treasury, where we saw not only the emblems of royalty, but several very valuable pieces, some, like the one on the right, which was made in the UK.

Our second day should have begun with a tour of Munich’s underworld, organised by a local adult education institution, the VHS, but recent rain meant that all the underground canals were full of water, and this was cancelled on safety grounds. A hasty rearrangement saw us join a short walk, also organised by the VHS, in a suburb called Grünwald, learning about edible herbs and plants to be found in meadows and forests. The VHS supplied audio headsets for everyone which made hearing the guide much easier! This finished with a little tasting session with cheeses flavoured by various herbs.

In the afternoon, we attended the weekly lecture for registered senior citizens at the Ludwig Maximilian University. This week’s subject was: Public budgets and investment in Germany and Europe; costs and effects on growth. I think we all found this quite challenging, especially as the slides were very complex!
The evening was taken up by getting together with staff and senior students from the LMU at a local hostelry. This would have been in the beer garden, but the weather was too cold. Nevertheless, everyone enjoyed the evening, with animated and stimulating conversations!

Our third day started with a guided tour, in German, of Munich’s main outdoor food market, the Viktualienmarkt. We learnt some history and sampled many of the local foods, with explanations in German from stall holders.

In the early afternoon, with no need for any lunch after the morning’s tour (!), we took part in a specially arranged common seminar at the LMU with the senior citizen students, where we talked about the past and future of Europe together. We finished this with a picture of everyone, including the German students and staff, taken in the big auditorium, part of the university main building.
We finished off the third day with a tour of the old centre of Munich, arranged by the VHS for us with an expert guide and audio headsets from the VHS again. Sadly, this was the coldest evening of the week, although it didn’t, thankfully, also rain! The guide was more than generous with her time, and we all learnt a lot about the city.

Thursday began with a choice of either the art galleries (the Pinakotheken) or the BMW Museum, where a couple of us had a guided tour, and others simply went round on their own. One lady, who remembered owning an Isetta as a student, was very tickled to find one displayed in the BMW World building.

In the late afternoon, we had a tour in German of the Bier-und-Oktoberfest Museum, which is in a restored middle ages building and contains much that is relevant to the time, including the “stairway to heaven” – picture. In the museum, we learnt about traditions surrounding beer and the famous festival, with samples of three different beers. This day finished with dinner in the underground rooms of the museum, with typical Munich food.

For our final day, our group now somewhat reduced in size due to early departures, we had a guided tour, in German, of an exhibition called Typically Munich, which was in the old City Museum, where there was much else to see. Again, an excellent guide speaking very clear German.

A final coffee and cake in Munich’s best café, Rischart’s, overlooking the Viktualienmarkt, and we all departed for the airport.