



The smart-club-niedersachsen posted an invitation on the funkysmart message board, asking if anyone would like to join them on a tour of the Brabus factory in Germany. We thought what a great idea - so we replied, "Yes Please".

Tuesday 19th Oct. The trip began. Mark and Tracey, club members from Devon, joined us for the trip over to Germany. We left our home near Winchester at 3.30 pm, and travelled to Dover. We stayed over night at a Travel Inn, ready for our morning ferry crossing to Calais, France.

Wednesday 20th Oct. Our ferry left on time (9.30 am) - the crossing was not too bad, Georgie being the only one who was unwell. 1hr 30 minutes later we arrived at Calais.

Out of Calais onto the A16 and then the A18 [same road different country], then onto the A10 to Gent and the A14 to Antwerp. We had already been warned about the major road works on the R1 around Antwerp, but that did not stop us taking the wrong road, only because they had covered up the road names at the junction where we needed to bear left. So, after a little detour we eventually managed to get back on track. But we did see our first smart tower. Onwards up the A13 towards Eindhoven, then the A21 to Duisburg. From there, on to Schermbeck where we spent our first night.

Thursday 21st Oct. After jet washing the cars in the garage next door to the hotel, we visited a local factory that makes smart BLING accessories in a small town called Hillbeck.

Later that day, at the Herne Hotel BB, we met more English members in the group and some of our German hosts. The English group consisted of Daggi and her daughter Melissa, Dave and Mike, James and Andy all from the Essex Smart group. Our German hosts were Peter Mundt, his wife Ute and daughters Steffi and Hendrike.

Peter decided we should have a meal together at a local restaurant called the 'Café De Sol'. After walking for about 15 minutes we arrived only to be told there was no service. So it was back to McDonalds (which was right next door to Hotel BB) but not before we waited for Claudia to join us and give me a lift back to McDs. And so again to bed. Peter and his family also stayed at the Hotel, so we could all travel together the next day to BRABUS!

Friday 22nd Oct. Up early to have breakfast before we started our journey to Bottrop. Peter kindly gave us all shirts with the German club web-site address on (www.smart-club-niedersachsen.de).

On to BRABUS, where we were joined by a lot of German club members. Two in particular, Lars and Nadine who had gone to the trouble of organising a wheelchair for me, knowing that I'm disabled and could not walk around the two factories. We were met by our guide, Christian, who, it has got to be said, was absolutely fantastic, having to do the tour speaking two languages (German & English). The first part of the tour took us through the design and fault-finding departments; computer aided design of both interior and exterior of the cars; wind tunnels and rolling roads, where components and performance could be tested. All the data was displayed on screens outside of the room where the tests were taking place which were to make sure that the engines were developing the right BHP.

The second part of the tour, was around the engineering workshops, where they were building engines, but not just for smart. We saw the showroom with various makes and model of engine that Brabus tune for, including the small smart engine, to an enormous V8 for luxury cars.

Next, a quick drive to a restaurant in town for lunch, and boy do I mean a lunch, the food and service were excellent with the added bonus of the great company. Back to the factory after a little detour, (we got caught at red traffic lights) for a photo shoot, sign the yellow smart door panel, and view the V6 bi-turbo (in red). That got a lot of attention. So we said goodbye to Brabus and then on to the next resting-place, a youth hostel at a place called Bad Iburg. We arrived at 6.00 pm, to be informed that we should dump our

cases and be back in the foyer at 6.30 pm, ready for our night-tour of Osnabruck. Peter had asked for a bilingual guide, but unfortunately did not get one, so we English did not quite know what was going on, apart from the fact it was a tour of the old town and its history.

Saturday 23rd Oct. Back to Osnabruck to the smart centre to view what goodies they had to offer, and for Claus to look at a new exhaust and try to talk his wife into buying it.

The main reason of this visit for Mark was to have new side BRABUS skirts fitted, "they do look the biz".

Next we visited a motor museum in Melle. Very interesting - the guide owns quite a few of the exhibits and every car is road-worthy. Other owners lend him cars for approx. 6 months, then they are returned, so he has a different selection most of the time.

It was then time to make our way to our final resting place for the trip, the Hotel Amadeus near Hanover, which was almost in Peter's back yard. We unloaded our things into our rooms, then went to Peter's house for coffee and a chat. Later we returned to the hotel where Peter had a test drive of my car and my spotty jacket.

Sunday 24th Oct. Off to the flea market at the smart centre in Garbsen. In Germany they are not allowed to sell goods from the showroom on a Sunday. They had some superb special edition smarts that had been ordered by a German company, with Turquoise Tridion and Jack Black panels (well Georgie thought they were great anyway).

Everyone thought it would be fun to put Andy's roadster in the smart tower, although he did get a little jumpy when they said there was a possibility that they would not be able to get it back out (they were kidding!).

Loads more photos taken, then for some of us back to Peter's for apple cake, earth teddies (strawberry's to you and me) and cream.

Some of the Essex group went with Peter's wife Ute, to the gardens in Hanover, as they were not returning to England until the Monday.

The journey home. We left Peter's house at 3.30 pm knowing that we had approx. 700 Miles to drive back to Calais. We had also decided on a different route back to avoid the road works round Antwerp, Peter had kindly printed some maps for

the route to Aachen then round Brussels, Gent, Brugge then to Calais, it took us 10 hours arriving in Calais at 1.30 am.

We were originally booked on the 11:15 am ferry but managed to get a sailing at 3:30 am. The ferry crossing, well what can I say, it was turbulent to say the least; gale force eight, I believe they said. The crossing which should have taken just over an hour took three hours. Mark was the only one of the four of us that was not unwell during the crossing.

We arrived in Dover at 6.30 am, but it still was not over. I had another 3 hours drive to get home to Winchester, and poor Mark about 6 hours back to North Devon. But it was well worth it, loads of pics for the album and lots of very fond memories of the new friends that we made from the smart-club-niedersachsen.

If anyone is interested, there is a trip in October 2005 to Cuxhaven - the niedersachsen club would be very pleased to see you.

By Den & Georgie Grace



left to right - Klaus, Tracey, Mark & Yogi

