

## **Innsbruck 1994** (*part of my biggest European tour*)

It was December of 1994. After spending a few glorious days in Venice, Italy, it was time to head north.

Wandering into the center of the Austrian town of Innsbruck from the train station, I happened to have totally unexpectedly arrived during the local traditional *Krampus* night of festivities! Running around the area were costumed troll-like characters, in enormous masks, with large brass bells hanging from their belts, while carrying brooms. They would whack you on the ankle with the broom [harmlessly] as a traditional message to 'be good' during the holidays.

The entire town seemed to be out there, mostly congregating around the impressively large and well lit Tannenbaum near *The Golden Roof*, a prominent feature in the town center. I joined the party, set my large backpack down and got some *glühwein* [a mulled wine like a lighter style of glögg] with *lebkuchen*, enjoying the rich holiday ambience. Before it got too late, I had to find the nearest hostel to get some sleep.

The following day I explored Innsbruck, did some drawings, enjoyed the vintage alpine architecture, quality bakeries, *Weinachten* decorations, and the views of the surrounding snow covered alps ! [it was not snowy around town]

With time on my side, I decided to take a hike up a nearby trail. With not enough time to get to the top, but high enough to see the town from above, and fit in some satisfactory nature time. Being alone in such raw wilderness gave an emotionally charged perspective — I had just experienced several centuries of art and culture, densely packed into the past (nearly) three months. Dreams came true; finally experiencing Paris, Hamburg, more Bremen, Borås, Gränna, more Stockholm, Uppsala, sketched runestones, Oslo, more Berlin, Dresden, Prague, Florence, Athens, Venice, now Innsbruck, and drawing as much as possible. I think the enormity of my pursuit and success and all of the art came out in a rush of rare weeping. An unforgettable wave of some kind of psychological cleansing. That was a great day.

- DG, 2021-24