

Appreciating Home

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Water. Droplets dance happily atop my head, then roll down along the nape of my neck onto my shoulders. From there they descend soothingly until they pool languidly at my feet. And they're warm! I daresay, even *hot!* All I have to do is rotate the knob a tad and I can relax amidst the rising steam. Refreshed and thoroughly warmed, I can slowly towel dry, absorbing each water bead on my skin. Such is my morning routine—as it surely is yours as well. We've all come to take this aquatic luxury for granted as our showers splash down on us (from above).

But this extravagance was not granted to me in Europe. In my Parisian hotel, I had to squeeze uncomfortably into a tiny triangular cubicle and could barely reach for the removable shower head. In Zurich, the shower head took on a life of its own as it spewed wildly—a thrashing Loch Ness monster wriggling out of control until I turned off the faucet. And in Austria, while docile, the shower head merely splattered luke-warm water. Attached to a heater with a 5-gallon tank, the gas flame could barely warm the water that flowed through the pipes in this alpine climate.

Indeed! Each venture out of the house required layers of clothing: Nylons followed by long-johns, 2 pairs of socks and jeans just to keep my legs warm; a camisole and silk under-shirt beneath a long-sleeved T-shirt, a wool sweater, and finally my down over-coat. Each layer had to be tucked one into the other in precise sequence to avoid exposure if ever I should bend or stretch. It wasn't really *that* cold. I'm just super-sensitive. But within moments after taking up a brisk walking pace, I was of course warm. No—hot (and sweaty). Now the layers had to be peeled back. Inevitably a breeze wafted up and soon became an arctic wind. I was cold again. Sweaty and cold! Layers back on and rush home to thaw out under the shower...

(Oh yeah, the shower only dribbles placid water from a hose that I must hold above my head.)

Travel—while offering eye-opening and exciting opportunities—also makes this weary vagabond appreciate home.