

# Journeyman

## An Interview with

**Peter Müller**

from carpentry "Gebrüder Müller oHG" in Mendig, Germany

The journey (in Germany it is called "Walz" or "Wanderjahre") is the travelling of craftsmen after their successfully completed apprenticeship. Its duration is mostly at least three years and one day. Journeymen (in German: "Wandergesellen") have to leave their home town out of a radius of 50 kilometres.

Concerning this topic, we, Julien and Thorsten, students from August-Horch-Schule Andernach, Germany, interviewed Mr. Peter Müller from carpentry "Gebrüder Müller oHG" in Mendig, Germany, on Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Mr. Müller is an ex-journeyman and was so kind to answer our following questions.

### 1 - General:

*Julien:* **Is the journey a duty or optional?**

*Mr. Müller:* No, it is no duty. All journeymen are volunteers.

*Thorsten:* **What are the rules during the journey?**

*Mr. Müller:* Firstly, it requires a successfully completed apprenticeship. Furthermore you have to be younger than 30 years, unmarried, without children and without any debts. During the journey itself, there is a secret code of behaviour, and you are not allowed to come into a radius of 50 kilometres around your home town.

*Julien:* **How do you start the journey? Do you have to apply for it or to work a certain period of time?**

*Mr. Müller:* No, you have neither to apply for the journey nor to work some time. So, when you have finished your apprenticeship, you can just leave.

*Thorsten:* **How do you travel?**

*Mr. Müller:* The journey itself has to be for free, so you tramp most time. You are allowed to use public transport, but this should not be daily business.

*Julien:* **Where do you sleep?**

*Mr. Müller:* There are some hostels, where you can live, or maybe you can sleep at your place of work.

**Thorsten:** Do you have contracts and insurances?

**Mr. Müller:** You do not have written contracts, they are rather unformal deals, but you have insurances and you are paid per tariff.

**Julien:** What about things like termination, holidays and wages?

**Mr. Müller:** You can leave your workplace and travel on whenever you want, because there is no written contract. The company can terminate your work at any time, as well. You can plan your holidays on your own, but you should always have enough money to live. The wages are paid at that point of time, which you have estimated with the company, so that is individual.

**Thorsten:** How long do you stay at one workplace?

**Mr. Müller:** You stay there three months at maximum, because it is called a journey.

**Julien:** Do you get a certificate of employment from every company?

**Mr. Müller:** Yes, every company gives you a certificate and an entry into your official logbook of your journey. You have two logbooks, one is official and one is private.

**Thorsten:** Do you get benefits in job and career, for example at future applications?

**Mr. Müller:** On the one hand, the journey is a huge experience, especially in daily life and in interaction with people, and it is also an improvement of your job skills. On the other hand, only around 50 percent of the companies and workshops appreciate these experiences; the other half does not prefer a journeyman to a "normal" worker. So your chances in applications are not really improved; they almost stay the same.

**Julien:** Is there a kind of network for ex-journeymen?

**Mr. Müller:** Yes, every year, there is a congress or meeting for all journeymen of one country, even for the earlier ones.

## 2 - Personal:

**Thorsten:** When and how long have you been on your journey?

**Mr. Müller:** I started my journey in 1989 and travelled a bit longer than two years.

**Julien:** At which places did you work?

**Mr. Müller:** I was in Switzerland, Sweden, Hawaii (USA), New Zealand and Australia.

**Thorsten:** Which personal experiences did you make?

**Mr. Müller:** The whole journey is a special experience. You get a completely different view of the world and the people. We live in a fast-moving world today. On the journey, things are different. You get your time to stop and to accept the world as it is. And it changes you. I still try to live life more slower in these fast times.

**Julien:** Did you have or do you still own traditional clothing from your journey?

**Mr. Müller:** Yes, I still have my uniform.

### 3 - Actual situation:

*Thorsten:* **Are some of your employees on their journey at the moment? If yes, where do they travel?**

*Mr. Müller:* No, none of them is on the journey now. But my nephew is on a worldwide tour at the moment. He has been in the Caribbean, and now he is in Jakarta (Indonesia). But in his first year of his journey, he worked in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

*Julien:* **Do you work with journeymen in your company today? If yes, where do they come from?**

*Mr. Müller:* No, not in the last months, but I had four journeymen working here last year. One was from Inzell (Bavaria, Germany) and one was from Pforzheim (Baden-Württemberg, Germany). I can not remember the home towns of the other two.

*Thorsten:* **What has changed in the last years concerning the number of journeymen and personal attitudes?**

*Mr. Müller:* The number of journeymen has increased over the last few years from 400 to 600 in Germany.

The attitudes of journeymen stay the same, because all of them are volunteers and motivated to travel the world. Yes, the first time in foreign areas is always difficult and combined with homesickness, but every participant says, the journey was a great, unique and unforgettable experience.

My personal attitude towards the journey has not changed much in the last years. I still think it is a great tradition. During my own journey, I thought it was outdated and needed to adapt. But today, I understand why it has never adapted and never will, and I agree, that it should stay unchanged. The journey only works this way.

Thanks to Mr. Müller for his detailed, comprehensive and very interesting explanations to our topic, the journeymen.