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Mary Del Rosario  
Lead-Writer Editor  
Stars and Stripes Europe

# EDITOR'S LETTER

**“THE WORLD IS A BOOK AND  
THOSE WHO DO NOT TRAVEL  
READ ONLY ONE PAGE.”**

This quote from Saint Augustine is one I'm most certainly going to live by this year. After what feels like an eternity, Europe has welcomed us back with open (yet safe) arms. You may be asking questions such as, “Now that countries are open, where should I go?” or “What's the best hidden gem in Europe?” Let the fall/winter edition of our Stripes Europe magazine answer those burning questions.

In this edition, we'll explore which destinations boast the prettiest fall colors and where you can enjoy a wonderful English hike. If you like to explore underrated cities, head to page 16 to see the beauty that awaits you. Also, be sure to read up on a gorgeous canal city that can rival Venice. For the aspiring oenophiles, you'll want to inform yourself on the best wine region in France.

If you're like me and don't care too much for the dreary winter days, step outside of Europe and whisk yourself away to Egypt—a country you probably never thought to explore while here. Or chase the sun in these warmer (and closer) European destinations.

However, if you love snow-capped mountains and the feel of fresh snow, head to this winter wonderland on page 40. In this magazine, we feature a popular snowy playground for all to enjoy. Also, be sure to feel the hygge—coziness in Danish culture—at these cozy, wintry stays. Since our camera rolls are screaming for pictures other than that of our living rooms, come see where to take the best photogenic shots in the winter.

In case the wine region we've featured wasn't enough to entice you to traverse this area, we have a Beaujolais poached pear recipe that tastes like heaven on earth. Also, if you find yourself in the southern part of Holland, be sure to snag this well-known souvenir that will last a lifetime.

We know this year has been hard in so many ways, but with the help of our fall/winter Stripes Europe magazine, we hope to take out some of the guesswork on where to explore. Now, how many pages will you fill in your book?

LOOK OUT  
FOR **THIS STAMP**  
THROUGHOUT THIS  
EDITION TO SEE  
**MARY'S FAVORITES!**

EDITOR'S  
PICK

IN THIS EDITION

# WHERE TO GO

## FALL travel

- 06 Best Places to See Fall Colors in Europe
- 10 Beaujolais Wine & Wandering
- 14 Hadrian's Wall: Where History and Hiking Meet
- 16 The Alluring Spanish Oasis of Albarracín
- 18 Get a Degree While Overseas
- 20 Discover the Magic of Switzerland's Lauterbrunnen Valley
- 24 **Egypt: The Vacation You Never Knew You Needed** ▶
- 30 On Your Radar: Annecy, France

## WINTER travel

- 34 Cozy Cottages & Holiday Homes
- 36 Finland: A Nordic Adventure
- 40 Austria: A Winter Wonderland
- 42 Chasing the Northern Lights
- 46 Your European Christmas Bucket List
- ◀ 48 **Germany's Snow Playground: Garmisch-Partenkirchen**
- 54 Encounter Nature and Winter Sun on These Southern European Islands
- 58 Photogenic Winter Destinations

## FOOD & SHOPPING

- 62 **Are You Fond of Fondue?** ▶
- 64 Poached Pears in Beaujolais Wine and Black Currant Sauce
- 66 Delftware: The Perfect Touch of Dutch
- 68 Souvenirs to Snag from European Countries

24

48

62

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# *Best Places to See* **FALL COLORS IN EUROPE**

By Stacy Roman

During the summer months, Europe is a bustling playground of beachgoers, hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts. With crystal-clear waters of the Alps and golden sandy beaches stretched across the Mediterranean, it's no wonder. However, as the warm breezes begin to chill and the days get shorter, many regions of Europe transform into a colorful autumn wonderland. Here are eight places to visit to get your fall fix.

*continued on page 8*



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Terry Dickerson is an IRS registered tax preparer, with more than 13 years of experience in the Kaiserslautern Military Community.

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## Lake Bled, Slovenia

Lake Bled is a wonderfully quiet place to visit after summer tourist season—especially during the weekdays. Nestled in the northwest corner of Slovenia, take a short bus ride from the capital of Ljubljana to this relaxing hamlet. Although fog and dreary weather may roll in, the stunning crimson leaves bring a pop of life to the gray background. View the rugged peaks surrounding the glassy waters from the castle perched atop the hill.

*Peak foliage viewing dates: mid-September through the end of October*



## Loire Valley, France

The rich valley surrounding the Loire River in the middle of France is perfect for not only winemaking, but also fabulous autumn colors. Visitors can help harvest grapes and partake in many wine festivals throughout the region. Take a sip of award-winning wine while walking through the palatial Chateau de Chambord. Or drive through the valley and admire the rust-colored leaves lining the riverbank.

*Peak foliage viewing dates: end of September through mid-October*

## Deutsche Weinstraße, Germany

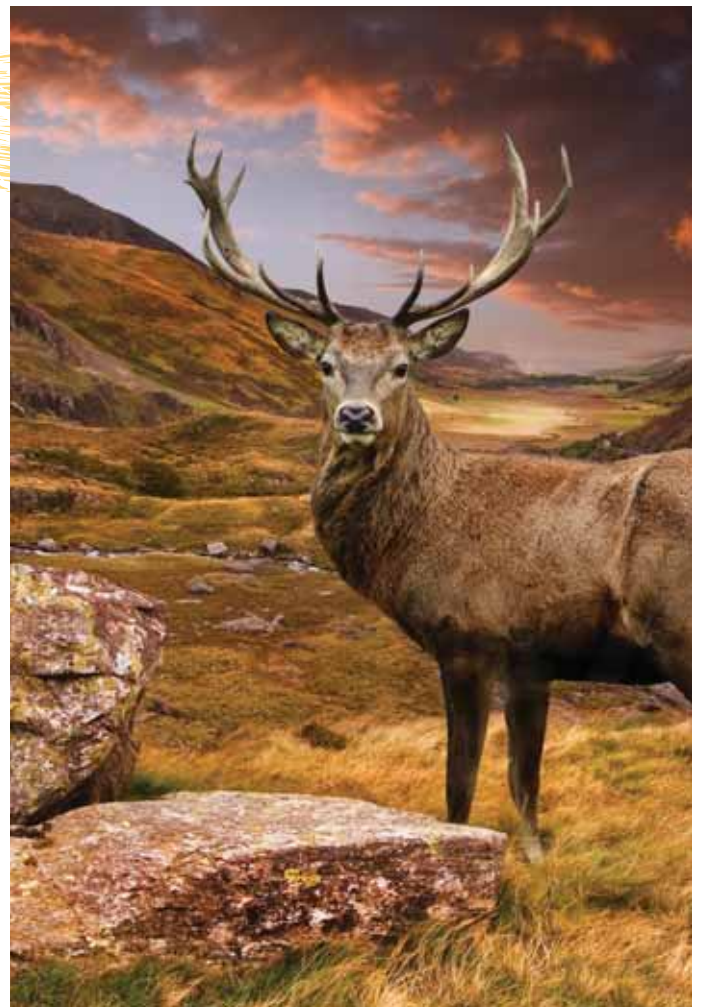
Established in 1935, Gauleiter Josef Bürckel presented the innovative idea of linking local wineries and villages in the Pfalz wine region with a single road. Hence, the Deutsche Weinstraße. During autumn, this 85-kilometer-long route transforms into rolling hills of blazing colors of yellow, orange and red. Take a day and stop at the different wineries to sample their fantastic yields. Be sure to stop in after the first frost of the season for a taste of Eiswein.

*Peak foliage viewing date: October*

## Scottish Highlands, United Kingdom

The Scottish Highlands are truly magical any time of year. Used as a backdrop for many famous films, it's easy to see why. Tall, sloping mountainsides carve wide valleys and create a dramatic landscape. The highest point in the U.K., Ben Nevis, is located on the western central coast of Scotland. With a plethora of rivers and lakes, it is an outdoor enthusiast's dream. Hike through the fantastic foliage and listen to the red deer stag's bellows echoing through the valleys. Be sure to stop at a local distillery for a sample of authentic Scotch whisky.

*Peak foliage viewing date: mid- to late October*





## Kraków, Poland

This beautifully preserved medieval city is one of Poland's oldest. During the fall, ivy-adorned buildings change from the camouflage of green and gray to a stunning gradient of golden leaves. Known as the Polish Golden Autumn, the best time to visit Kraków is around All Saints' Day. Lanterns and candles cast a soft glow around the city, illuminating the changing of colors even more. Enjoy the delicious stews, savory sausage dishes and root vegetables in season at one of the charming cafes at Rynek Główny, the largest market square in Europe.

*Peak foliage viewing dates: late September through early November*

## Transylvania, Romania

During October, Transylvania becomes one of Europe's most popular must-visit destinations. Home to Bran Castle, famously associated with the mythical legend of Dracula, this region of Romania is enchanting and spooky at the same time. To get the full effect of fall vibrancy, take a drive on the roads of the Făgăraș Mountains. With hairpin turns and steep curves, you'll get a spectacular view of the bright colors peeking through the misty clouds.

*Peak foliage viewing date: October*

## Douro Valley, Portugal

EDITOR'S PICK

The luscious fertile hillsides lining the Douro River in northern Portugal explode into fiery hues of crimson and gold in the autumn months. Easily accessible from the captivating coastal city of Porto, snap postcard-worthy photos as you glide along the water on a river cruise. Or taste your way through the internationally acclaimed wineries, sampling fantastic vintages and enjoying stunning vistas along the way.

*Peak foliage viewing date: late October*

## Bavaria, Germany

The German Alps are home to breathtaking scenery all year long, but fall is actually the optimal time to visit Bavaria. The mountain air is crisp and cool, and the leaves surrounding famous landmarks (think Neuschwanstein Castle) give a colorful frame and backdrop for iconic photos. Hiking is still doable this time of year, so be sure to hit up one of the jaw-dropping gorges. The trees lining the steep ravines turn various shades of burgundy, yellow and orange, in stark contrast with icy blue waters roaring through.

*Peak foliage viewing dates: late September through late October*

## Amsterdam, the Netherlands

It's easy to fall in love with Amsterdam. Bustling cafes line the sidewalks in front of canal houses with leaning gabled facades. Explore the plentiful city parks, or learn fascinating Dutch history and culture at one of the interactive museums throughout the city. Or simply take a stroll as the trees shed a beautiful array of leaves, creating a colorful carpet along the banks of the canals.

*Peak foliage viewing date: mid-October* ■

# BEAUJOLAIS

## Wine & Wandering

By Carrie Farrell



**N**ever heard of Beaujolais? Beaujolais often gets lost among bigger, more well-known wine regions such as Bordeaux and Burgundy. But if you're on the hunt for a beautiful French wine region that's driven by rustic country life, there's nowhere like Beaujolais. This region is under an hour from the city of Lyon, which makes it perfect for a day trip. It's a pleasurable experience all on its own to get lost on winding roads amid hills and vines. But around every corner, you'll find small, busy villages and wineries that are eager for guests.

The Beaujolais wine region is spread out, but it isn't too complicated to navigate. An important thing to understand is that the northern and southern halves are quite different. The north has rolling hills with stonier soils. In the south, closer to Lyon, you'll find flatter landscapes with Disney-esque villages, rustic churches and Renaissance châteaux.

The north/south split is not only visually noticeable, but it also results in distinctly different wines, not only in taste and aroma, but also price and approach.

You can explore Beaujolais in a day—but don't. Linger; take time to explore the unhurried lifestyle, combining the Route des Vins du Beaujolais (Beaujolais official wine route) with as many side roads as you can.

And while wine is certainly the theme here, there are many things that anyone can enjoy whether you are a wine enthusiast or not.

*continued on page 12*



# HEADING ABROAD?

Take us along for the journey.

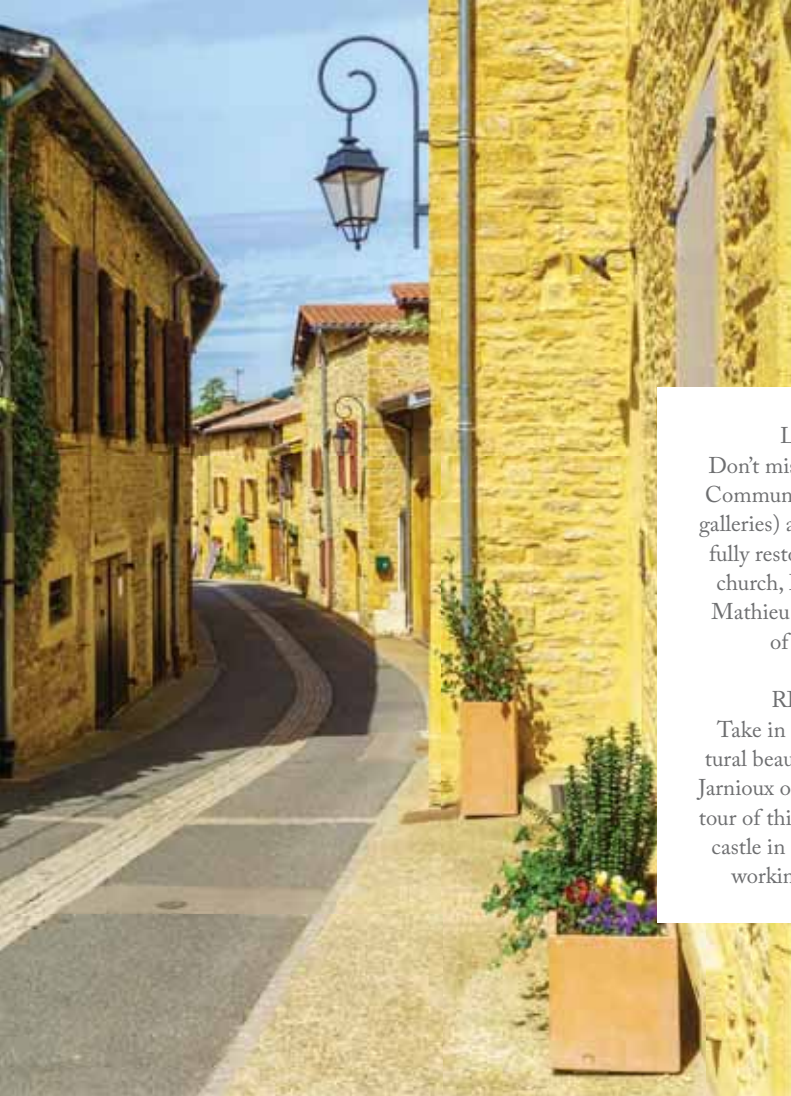
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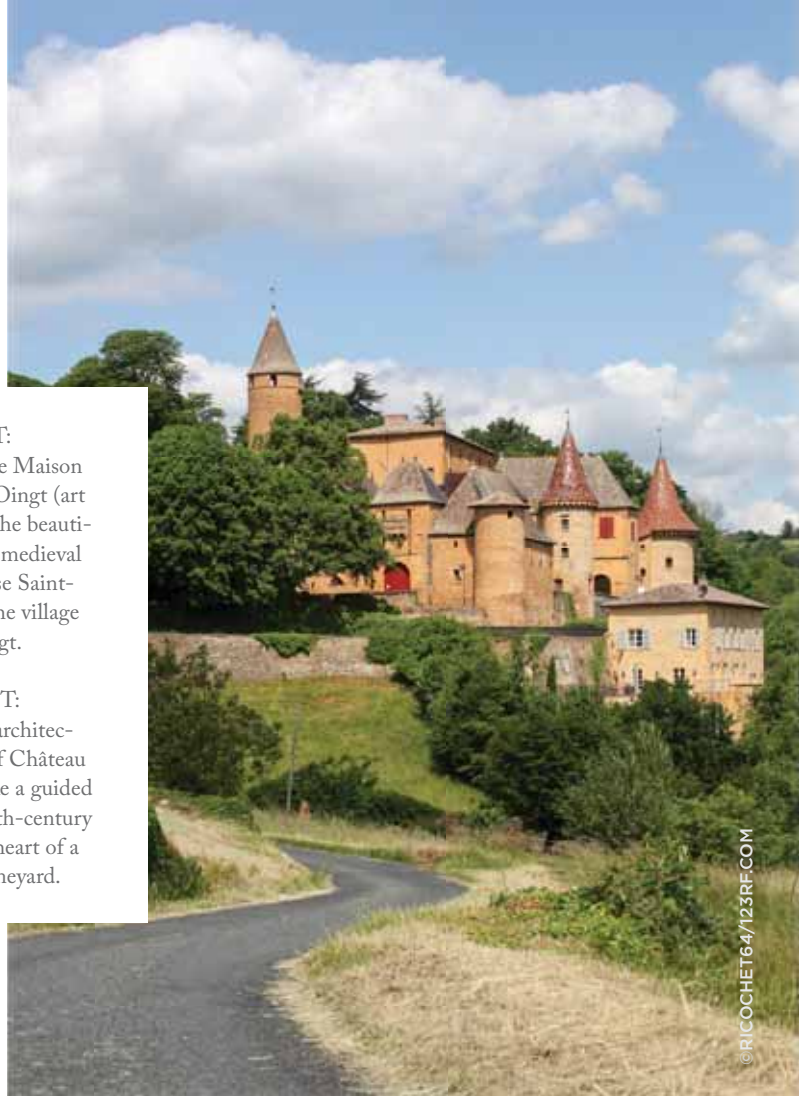


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**LEFT:**  
Don't miss the Maison Commune d'Oingt (art galleries) and the beautifully restored medieval church, Eglise Saint-Mathieu in the village of Oingt.

**RIGHT:**  
Take in the architectural beauty of Château Jarnioux or take a guided tour of this 13th-century castle in the heart of a working vineyard.



© RICOCHET64/123RF.COM

continued from page 10

## THINGS TO DO

### MEDIEVAL VILLAGE OF OINGT

This delightful village is a perfect, picturesque medieval town full of tiny, cobbled streets. Highlights include the old castle chapel and village church. Everything in this town looks like a painting and all the buildings are made out of the classic Beaujolais "pierre dorée," the golden stones from the local quarries. The village also has gorgeous views out over the valley. And in case you were wondering: Oingt is pronounced as a throaty "wahnt," like describing a baby's cry.

### VISIT A CHÂTEAU

Enjoy a Michelin-starred lunch overlooking the hilly vineyards at Château de Bagnols. This 5-star boutique hotel is a beautifully restored medieval fortress. Part of the long list of this region's historic treasures that are also worth your time are Château Montmelas, Château Jarnioux and Château de la Chaize.

### HAMEAU DUBOEUF, A WINE THEME PARK

Yes, you read that correctly, it's a wine-themed amusement park. This kitsch experience includes

a wine history museum, tourist train and even has mini golf for the kids.

Full of interactive experiences and even a few rides, this is a family-friendly wine experience. I recommend approaching this from an attitude of humor and embracing a rare opportunity for wine to be a kid-inclusive adventure.

### GET THE LAY OF THE LAND

Avid wanderers and cyclists will love the rolling hills of the Beaujolais region that are excellent for wine-related hikes and views. Forgot to pack your bike? Add a fun twist to a wine-tasting experience by zipping up and down the vineyards on a Segway. Our tour took us to Chiroubles and included a quick wine tasting with snacks at a local wine cellar.

### DRINK WINE, OF COURSE!

Beaujolais is perhaps the most versatile of wines. Unlike many other wine regions, winemakers here are eager to experiment. There are so many wonderful Beaujolais producers to visit. The choices can be overwhelming. You will be tempted to research and seek out the perfect winery to

explore. But, I encourage you to stray from any set itinerary and simply be enticed by the charm of your surroundings.

### The Basics

Beaujolais wines are gamay-based wines. Most are simple rustic reds with fruity aromas of plum, strawberry and red currant. There are several classifications of Beaujolais wines. The most basic is Beaujolais AOC.

Grapes for Beaujolais Supérieur have later harvests at riper levels. Smaller vineyards with smaller yields help improve concentration of flavor, ensuring the wines are "superior" to AOCs.

Another classification, Beaujolais-Villages, covers 38 specific villages that are considered special for their terroir. The label uses the word "Villages" to distinguish these wines from Beaujolais AOC.

Cru Beaujolais is the highest and most-renowned classification in the region. There are 10 crus within the classification. Crus range in style, from lighter and younger-drinking to fuller, age-worthy wines.

# 10

## Crus of Beaujolais

Beaujolais' crus are specific communes at Beaujolais' northern end, renowned for their distinct terroir, complex wines and their unmatched ability to pair with a wide range of foods. Many of them are famous for aging well and for developing a flavor profile comparable to Burgundy over time. There's even a French word for this metamorphosis: "pinoter" – to turn pinot-like.

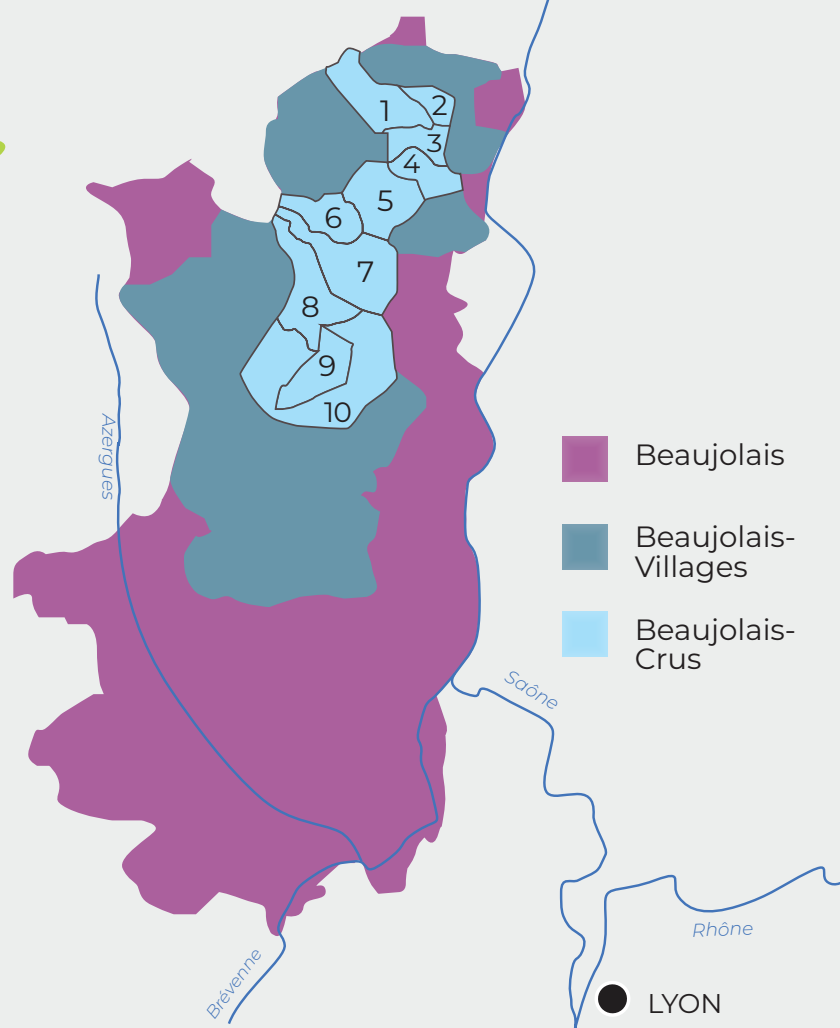
There are 10 crus in total, from north to south they are: 1. Julienas, 2. St. Amour, 3. Chénas, 4. Moulin-à-Vent, 5. Fleurie, 6. Chiroubles, 7. Morgon, 8. Régnié, 9. Brouilly and 10. Côte de Brouilly. Although each of the crus produces wine with its own personality, the overall narrative of cru wines is described as powerful, tannic wines with dark fruit, spices and other savory notes.

### 3 TO TRY

2014 - Moulin-à-Vent - Domaine Celine et Nicolas Hirsch

2015 - Morgon - Domaine Louis Claude Desgignes

2014 - Fleurie "1889" - Domaine Jean-Marc Despres de la Madone



## FUN FACTS



### WHY IS GAMAY CONSIDERED AN UNDERDOG?

In 1395, the Duke of Burgundy banned the gamay grape. Although the gamay was easier to cultivate, the pinot noir grape was considered superior. Despite the ban, rebellious farmers began cultivating in the extreme south of Burgundy. By the 17th century, vintners had discovered that the hilly, rocky terroir suited the grape uniquely. Thus, Beaujolais was born.

Even in recent years the gamay-based wines have endured a fair share of wine snobbery. But gamay's will to survive has developed into one of the world's most drinkable wines.



### WHAT IS BEAUJOLAIS NOUVEAU?

Beaujolais Nouveau is a separate category of Beaujolais and Beaujolais Villages wines that are designed to be consumed shortly after bottling.

Clever marketers during the 1960s created the famous slogan "Le Beaujolais Nouveau est arrivé," sparking a worldwide craze to see who could get their hands on the first bottle of the season. As the clock strikes midnight on the third Thursday of November, the wine officially becomes available, and the festivities of Beaujolais Nouveau Day begin.



### DOES BEAUJOLAIS TASTE LIKE BANANAS?

Ever caught the whiff of bubble gum or bananas when sniffing or drinking wine? The winemaking process responsible for these amazing aromas is carbonic maceration. In this process, the grapes are sealed in a vessel filled with carbon dioxide prior to regular fermentation, which gives Beaujolais wines their distinctive flavors.

Turning up your nose? Give it a try—banana may even add a pleasing twist to the flavor profile. ■

# Hadrian's Wall

## WHERE HISTORY AND HIKING MEET

By Anna Leigh Bagiackas

Sitting in a Dublin pub one rainy evening, I struck up a conversation with a father-daughter duo who, over a few enthusiastic pints of Guinness, gave me a new idea for my travel bucket list: hiking Hadrian's Wall.

Hadrian's Wall is a 2,000-year-old Roman wall that acted as the northern border of Roman territory between England and Scotland when it was built in 122 AD. The 84-mile (135 km) path is now a National Trail and UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is considered the largest Roman artifact in England. Along the trail are dozens of reminders of Roman history with forts, including the largest fort Housesteads, milecastles (small forts) and museums.

Hikers can choose whether they want to hike east-to-west or west-to-east. The latter choice is recommended for better weather conditions, but if you want to follow in the footsteps of the Roman soldiers, east-to-west it is. Depending on which direction you hike, the path runs between Bowness on Solway and Wallsend, with Segedunum being the final Roman fort on your adventure (for west-to-east hikers).

Hadrian's Wall winds itself through the English countryside and into the larger cities of Newcastle and Carlisle, giving hikers a well-rounded taste of northern England with gorgeous landscape views of rolling hills and valleys with some lively city energy.

### How to Hike It

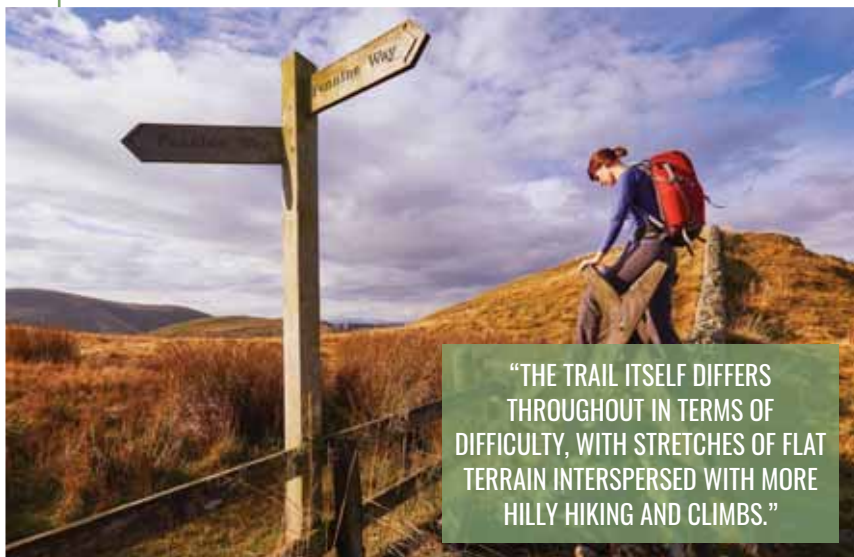
You can choose to find an organized tour company who can take care of accommodations, transportation and planning, or you can organize a hike on your own. For those interested in the full hike, you can find a number of proposed itineraries ranging from 5 to 10 days depending on your hiking experience, level of challenge and how much time you want to spend walking versus visiting ruins and museums.

You can also choose what kind of accommodation you want for your coast-to-coast hike across the country. Hostels, B&Bs, hotels and campsites are sprinkled throughout the walk, so if you plan ahead, you can have some good lodging options. After a long day of walking, there's something special about rolling into an English pub only to find fellow hikers sharing their day's adventure over a warm pub dinner.

You can also choose to carry all your belongings with you or make a reservation with Hadrian's Haul, a baggage transportation service that will pick up your bags and deliver them to your day's final destination.

The trail itself differs throughout in terms of difficulty, with stretches of flat terrain interspersed with more hilly hiking and climbs. The best time of year to make the hike is between May and October and it is busiest with other hikers in July and August. Lastly, consider getting a special Hadrian's Wall Path Passport. You can have it stamped along the way, giving you a certified souvenir for your achievement to take home.

If you have a hankering for history and an affinity for English traditions, consider making the trip to Hadrian's Wall. Because when an idea is given to you over pints of Guinness at the pub, how could it not be a brilliant one? ■



"THE TRAIL ITSELF DIFFERS THROUGHOUT IN TERMS OF DIFFICULTY, WITH STRETCHES OF FLAT TERRAIN INTERSPERSED WITH MORE HILLY HIKING AND CLIMBS."

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# The Alluring Spanish Oasis of *Albarracín*



By Stacy Roman

*“If you’re looking for an alluring and authentic Spanish experience, look no further than Albarracín.”*

## A Little History

Filled with archaeological ruins of its Roman past, visible architectural influence of the Moors and stunning frescoes found in the Catedral de Albarracín, the village is a veritable melting pot of history, religion and culture. Once the capital of the Moorish kingdom of Taifa, the village prospered with textile trading. As Christian crusades resurfaced and conquered the Moors during the Middle Ages, Albarracín soon converted to Christianity. During the War of Independence in the early 19th century, the small town was caught in the crossfire leading to a decline in population and economy. As the post-war recovery was under way, Albarracín once again fell victim to the spoils of war during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. Nearing abandonment, the remaining population banded together and ensured the preservation of the isolated village.

## A True Beauty

These days, as you walk past the old defenses of the Albarracín walls, the pink-hued stone buildings stand against a backdrop of hilly, cobblestone streets and craggy cliffs. At night, the orange glow of streetlamps provides a soft luminescence within the village, resulting in a breathtaking scene. During the day, the sun shines upon the brightly colored tile roof atop the cathedral that was built on the ruins of an old mosque. Visitors can catch a postcard-worthy glimpse of the village from the Torre del Anador, the tallest point in the town. Walk along the mighty stone walls that lead to the tower and drink in the stunning Spanish countryside. During the autumn months, the changing leaves transform from green to copper and crimson, framing the town in vibrant colors.

Explore Mother Nature’s handiwork and walk along the Paseo Fluvial. This relatively easy hike follows the bend of the Guadalaviar River around the town, providing different scenic views of the village. Be sure to wear sturdy shoes, as you’ll cross old stones, hanging bridges and wooden paths cut into the rocky canyon next to the river. Bring a picnic lunch or snack to enjoy while relishing the crisp fall weather at Fluvial Park and Zona Picnic at the other end of the trail. If you venture further south from the village, you’ll discover even more trails and tumbling waterfalls (the Cascada del Molino de San Pedro is amazing) in the nearby Albarracín mountains. Boulderling or rock climbing during the summer and fall are also popular for adventure enthusiasts.

## Must Eats

Foodies will rejoice with the delectable local flavors offered. Most restaurants and cafes are rather unassuming but serve up delicious Spanish fare. For fresh-baked breads and pastries, Panadería Marconell e Hijos is worth a stop. Restaurante El Serón in the town square offers dishes such as carpaccio from locally sourced beef and crispy house-made chips. For traditional tapas, head to the outskirts of town to Despensa de Tusta. Serving up savory cured meats, olives, albondigas and rich wines, you’ll want to make sure you go earlier to grab a spot. You could easily spend a few days just tasting your way through the village.

Once you’ve experienced all this exquisite area has to offer, you’ll understand why it was easily voted one of Spain’s most beautiful villages. Take time to venture out of your comfort zone and into the historical and fascinating town of Albarracín. ■



When you start planning a trip to Spain, it likely involves the sun-drenched beaches of Barcelona, the flamenco capital of Seville or the majestic city of Madrid. Maybe, if you’re feeling inspired (especially since it’s close to winter), a weekend in flashy San Sebastián or the Pyrenees is in the works. It’s easy to stay within the confines of the well-known; however, if you’re looking for an alluring and authentic Spanish experience, look no further than Albarracín.

Sitting in the middle between Madrid, Zaragoza and Valencia is a remote and seemingly desolate river plain. At first glance, the area appears so isolated one would think there’s nothing worth visiting there. If you look closer, tucked above the bend of the Guadalaviar River is one of Spain’s hidden treasures. Cropping up along the rocky hillside like a mirage in the desert is Albarracín, a fortified medieval hamlet. Consistently named one of the country’s most beautiful villages, it’s easy to see why as you explore the fortified walls, charming old-world buildings and narrow passageways.



# Get a Degree

## WHILE OVERSEAS

By Ruth Cuevas & Amanda Palumbo

Being stationed abroad doesn't mean you have to put your education on hold. You can continue your studies through DOD contracted schools for servicemembers and their dependents with a variety of options to fit your lifestyle.

### Central Texas College

[WWW.CTCD.EDU/LOCATIONS/EUROPE](http://WWW.CTCD.EDU/LOCATIONS/EUROPE)

Offers vocational associate degrees in automotive mechanics, child development, hospitality management and much more. Classes are offered online and in-person

### Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

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Offering undergraduate degrees in aeronautics, aviation maintenance, technical management, aviation security and unmanned systems. ERAU also offers master's degrees in aeronautics, unmanned systems, human factors and aviation maintenance. Each month there are new face-to-face and online courses.

### University of Maryland Global Campus

[WWW.EUROPE.UMGC.EDU](http://WWW.EUROPE.UMGC.EDU)

More than 90 degree programs to choose from with specializations and certificates in liberal arts and sciences. Some degrees can be completed entirely online. Classes are also offered in-person.

### University of Oklahoma

[WWW.GOOU.OU.EDU](http://WWW.GOOU.OU.EDU)

Three graduate programs are offered: Master of Human Relations, Master of Arts in International Relations and Master of Education. Professors from the university's main campus come to Europe to teach students in class while also offering a variety of online courses.



### Benefits of Online Degrees

- **Flexible Schedules:** Online students can still work full-time, spend time with families and travel while attaining their degree on their time.
- **Sharpen Time Management Skills:** If you're a notorious procrastinator, online classes could be that added push to get you more organized. Online students have to be diligent about scheduling their time for learning and course work.
- **Lower Cost:** Students on average pay less when achieving an online degree. While they're paying for tuition costs and books, they're avoiding fees like housing and transportation. Most universities will offer a military non-resident tuition waiver to avoid out-of-state tuition costs.
- **Comfortable Learning Environment:** Online students can also set up an environment that works best for their brain like comfy couches, music in the background and snacks readily on hand. You also get to avoid that one person in class that has an outrageous, argumentative opinion about every topic.

Not only can you continue your education but you could be eligible for financial aid and tuition assistance. Contact your installation's education center for more details. ■



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# discover the magic of switzerland's **LAUTERBRUNNEN VALLEY**

By Anna Leigh Bagiackas



**W**hen people ask about the most beautiful places to visit in Europe, Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland, is often on the list of answers. Nestled in a deep valley ringed with waterfalls, rolling hills and views of the Alps, this Swiss town is truly picture-perfect and has lots to offer an active traveler.

And if you're a "Lord of the Rings" reader, you might get the feeling you're stepping into Middle-Earth, because author J.R.R. Tolkien was once a hiker in Lauterbrunnen and was inspired by his surroundings, giving the valley the nickname "Sister of Rivendell."

*continued on page 22*

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**A**bout 20 minutes away from the larger city of Interlaken, Lauterbrunnen is a small yet bustling town filled with local chalets, fields of bell-wearing cows and trailheads on every block. The town is a great base for hikers, skiers and travelers looking for incredible panoramic views of the Jungfrau, Schiltorn, Mönch and Eiger peaks.

Sitting on the valley floor of a dramatic U-shaped crest, Lauterbrunnen is known for its more than 70 waterfalls, including the majestic Trümmelbach Falls. This set of ten glacial waterfalls are located inside the mountain, so they are only accessible via stairs or a tunnel elevator.

You may also travel through Lauterbrunnen if you are en route to one of the Alp resorts, such as Grindelwald for skiing or hiking, or the car-free resorts of Wengen and Mürren. With many forms of transportation available, such as the cable car, train, bus and gondola, there are lots of ways to access these different areas of the Jungfrau region.



If you plan to visit, note that the off-season in this area is mid-April to early June and mid-October to mid-December.

Hoping to experience these majestic views—and experience some “Lord of the Rings” magic—my husband and I traveled to Lauterbrunnen in early fall. While there were many ways to get up and down the valley and catch views of the surrounding peaks, we decided to spend our day on foot.

Following a Swiss breakfast of fruit, muesli, cheeses and coffee, we started our day early, with the goal of making our way up the valley and landing at the town of Gimmelwald, as recommended by Rick Steves.

We followed signs for Mürren, with the first part of our hike being the steepest as we made our way to the top of the valley. We saw mountain goats and occasional signs for fresh “Alpkäserei” (Alp cheese), where we stocked up on different flavors and aged cheeses from the small refrigerators sprinkled along the trail. We even happened upon a chalet serving up brunch, so we made a pitstop for Swiss beer and to enjoy some local Swiss accordion music.





*Nestled in a deep valley ringed with waterfalls, rolling hills and views of the Alps, this Swiss town is truly picture-perfect and has lots to offer an active traveler.*

The views along our hike were, of course, brilliant. With magnificent panoramas of snow-capped mountains and lush green fields, we could understand why Tolkien and so many others have been inspired by this Swiss paradise.

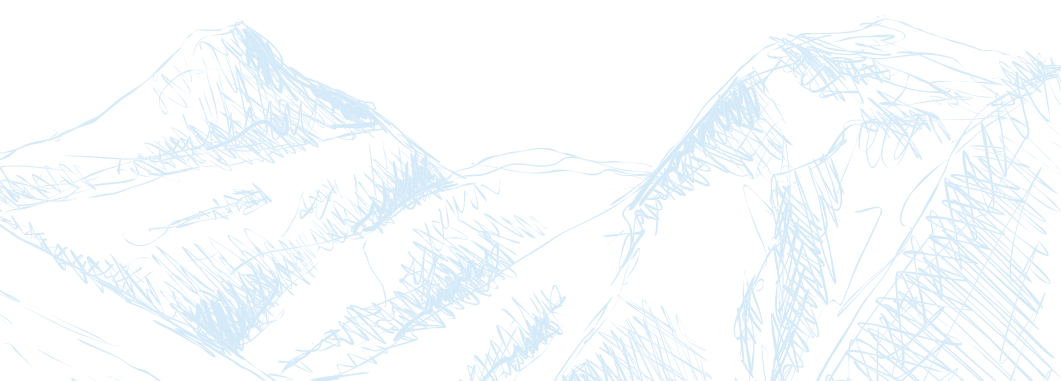
We made our way through the resort town of Mürren, passing by villas and chalets to make our way to Gimmelwald. This little village seemed so intriguing to us because it is undeveloped due to its rating as an “avalanche zone.” Without the large villas and towering hotels, Gimmelwald felt like the essence of “Swiss mountain village” with worn, wooden houses, bells hanging on the walls, charming flowers and a quietness not found in many of the tourist-filled places behind us.



Bringing us to early afternoon, we were lucky enough to stumble upon Gimmelwald’s own biergarten. We tasted their signature brew called the “Schwarz Mönch” or black monk, which shares a name with the mountainous peak across the valley. Described as “tall, dark and snow-capped” this was a perfect afternoon treat alongside a plate of Swiss meats, cheeses and breads, which would sustain us for our remaining hike.

From Gimmelwald, we began our descent down, which put us at the southern end of the valley. As we hiked back toward Lauterbrunnen, we stopped at Trümmelbach Falls for a few extra flights of stairs to see the powerful falls. As we walked the last mile back to Lauterbrunnen, hang gliders leapt from the top of the valley, cows and goats basked in surrounding fields and bikers and fellow hikers made the last of the day’s sunshine count.

It was a record hiking day for us, with 20 miles under our belts, and we were eager to relax over a pot of fondue, surrounded by the gorgeous landscape and sounds of cowbells ringing and waterfalls flowing. ■



# EGYPT

THE VACATION YOU NEVER KNEW YOU NEEDED

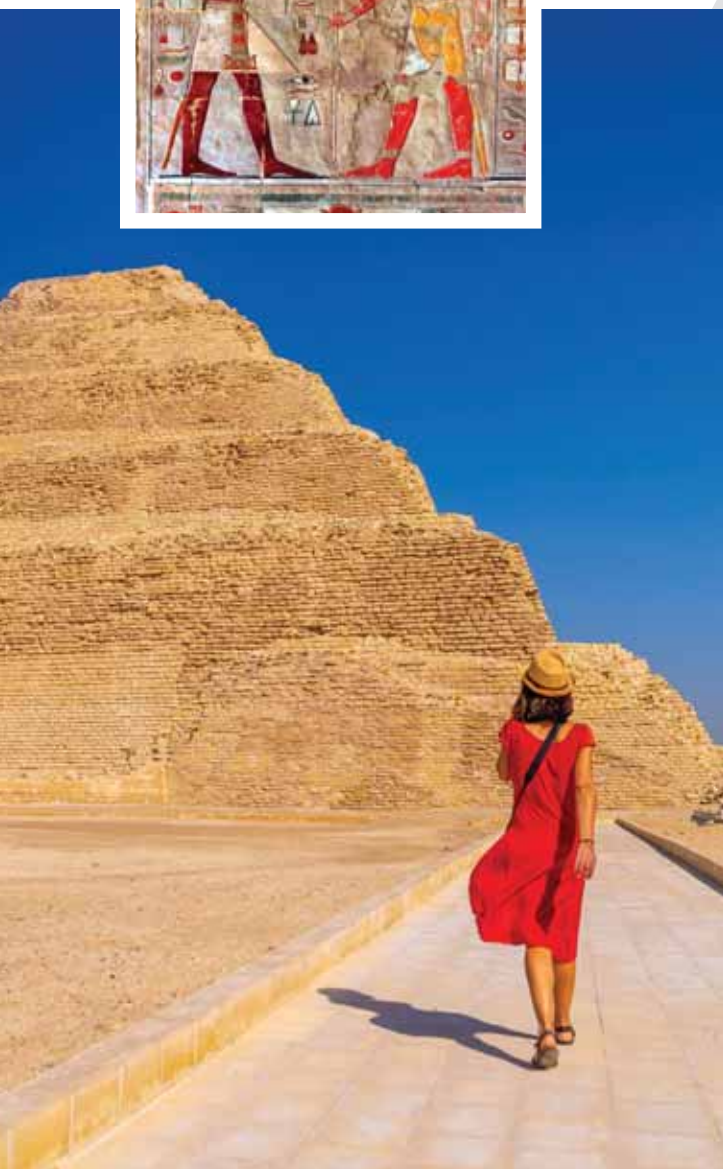
By Mary Del Rosario

While there are many European cities worth traversing, sometimes, it feels as if we've seen it all.

There are only so many churches and Old Towns we can explore before it meshes together. If you're wanting to seek out ancient history, yet live in the lap of luxury, delve into another world in Egypt. Since Europe is situated in an ideal geographic location, traveling to other continents such as Africa is easier than ever.

*continued on page 26*





## WONDROUS PYRAMIDS AND ANCIENT CITIES

No matter what calls you to tour Egypt, one experience that should not be missed is being shocked and awed by its historic cities and magnificent pyramids. The history behind these sites alone will impress you.

### MEMPHIS

Known as Egypt's first capital from 2950 BC to 2180 BC, Memphis was dubbed the place of worship of Ptah, the creator god. Though now in ruins after the capital changed to Alexandria in 331 BC, you can still see what used to remain in this once thriving city.

### GIZA

About 17 miles north of Memphis, you'll stumble across Giza, Egypt's second-largest city and home to the famous Pyramids of Giza. The Giza Plateau is comprised of the Great Pyramids of Khufu, Khafre and Menkaure and the Sphinx. As one of the Seven Wonders of the World, I was transfixed on how the ancient Egyptians were able to build these incredible religious structures. Of course, touring the pyramids is a must. I recommend you hire a guide for your tour and go as soon as the tours open to avoid the crowds and heat.

### CAIRO

Cairo, Egypt's largest city is one that has many tales to tell. Formed in 2000 BC by King Menes, this city was the construction site of the Al-Azhar mosque and paved the way to a busy trading center. Now, it's Egypt's most populated city. For an authentic modern-day Egyptian experience, head to Khan el-Khalili, a massive bazaar selling everything from herbs to trinkets.

### LUXOR

EDITOR'S PICK

For the history buffs, you can't go wrong in the ancient city of Luxor. This giant open-air museum will give you an intense history lesson that can't be found in any textbook. What was once the ancient city of Thebes, Luxor was the place of worship of Amun, the Egyptian deity. While you can spend a few days touring this jaw-dropping place, start off with the Karnak Temple, a clash of decayed temples and chapels.

# THE BEACH LIFE

The pyramids and storied cities aren't the only selling points that capture the hearts of many tourists in Egypt. It's also the beaches and glamorous resort lifestyle. Below are a few noteworthy beaches and resort towns to put on your itinerary.

## SHARM EL SHEIKH

Located on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, Sharm El Sheikh boasts as a glitzy resort city. Known for its many all-inclusive luxury resorts to choose from, you won't have a hard time deciding where to spend your days. When you're not suntanning the day away, a snorkel excursion at Ras Um Sid Beach is a must—the vibrant explosions of colors in the reef will blow you away. If you're feeling ambitious, take a two-day certification diving course. The courses range from beginner to expert.

## EL GOUNA EDITOR'S PICK =

Another resort town that's dripping in luxury is El Gouna, which was developed by Orascom Hotels and Development in 1989. Since then, it's been dominated by mega yachts and grand resorts dotted along the marina. Situated on the Red Sea, El Gouna offers the bluest beaches, fabulous nightlife and scrumptious restaurants. I've spent two weeks traipsing through Egypt, but this town has been my favorite as I was not only able to take (exhausting, but worth it) trips to the pyramids from here, but also lived in the lap of luxury for an affordable price. Mangroovy Beach is one to put on your list, as you can watch the kite surfers surf up and down the beautiful sea. Like many of the coastal getaways in Egypt, snorkeling should not be skipped.

## HURGHADA

If you're looking for a family-friendly beach retreat, Hurghada is calling your name. Filled with many European tourists wanting to escape everyday life, the amount of sun and relaxation in this city is endless. What makes Hurghada special is that it caters to families more than other resort towns. There are plenty of affordable all-inclusive stays that are perfect for a family. For those who want a little alone time without the kids, a few of the resorts offer daycare for children. If you're feeling adventurous and want to experience something other than water activities, take a quad bike safari. You may even visit a traditional Bedouin village along your journey.

*continued on page 28*



**BOTTOM:** Parasols on a sandy beach in Egypt.





**TOP:** Lantern Shop in the Khan el-Khalili bazaar in Cairo.

**RIGHT:** Dried hibiscus for tea in baskets.



continued from page 27

## BUCKET LIST

Visiting Egypt alone is its own bucket list entry. However, to be sure you've made the most of your Egyptian trip, I recommend you do the following:

- ✓ Ride a camel as you gaze at the Pyramids of Giza.
- ✓ Drink hibiscus tea.
- ✓ Snorkel and see the colorful coral in Sharm El-Sheikh.
- ✓ Travel back in time to the Valley of the Kings and see the tombs of Ramses V and VI. **EDITOR'S PICK =**
- ✓ Delight your tastebuds with delicious foods such as Shawarma, Baba Ghanoush, Mahshi and Basbousa.
- ✓ Barter your way through the many markets.
- ✓ Channel your inner historian and get lost at the Egyptian Museum.
- ✓ Cruise down the Nile. Be sure to check out the Philae Temple.
- ✓ Spend some time in Luxor, Alexandria.
- ✓ Be amazed by the Karnak Temple.





## NEED TO KNOW

For active-duty members, be sure to check with your Command to see if you're able to travel to Egypt. You may need to fill out additional paperwork if allowed.

Since the water isn't safe to drink and there may be a chance you'll have stomach issues, take Antonil, which is similar to Maalox. Leave behind the Maalox, because this won't work here. Antonil can be found in the local pharmacies.

The cost for the visa is \$25. For a hassle-free experience, I recommend paying in cash and opening up your passport to a blank page where customs can easily place the sticker.

September to November are the best months to go. During the summer, the temperature is at about 104 degrees Fahrenheit, but can sometimes reach 122.

Egyptians are some of the friendliest people I have encountered. However, vendors at the markets may be pushy. Saying a firm "La Shukran," or "no, thank you," will go a long way.

Though I felt safe during my time here, it's still always best to be aware of your surroundings—the same as you would anywhere you travel to.

Egypt's currency is the Egyptian pound.

Tuk-Tuks are bikes that can be found everywhere. They'll be your lifesaver for when you want to get around, especially if you're in a resort and want to venture off a bit. Be sure to agree on a price beforehand.

Dress modestly. Though I was mostly at a resort area, anytime I left the resort, I made sure to dress appropriately. ■



On Your Radar

# Annecy, France

By Jessica Zen

**P**erched on the northern tip of one of Europe's most pristine lakes is the charming medieval city of Annecy. Nicknamed "Venice of the Alps," this city has three canals winding through it from the Thiou River. If you find yourself in southeastern France, don't miss wandering through the cobblestone streets, admiring the surrounding Alps or just enjoying the pastel-colored architecture. Learn about the city's history, lounge in a cafe along the river and revel in the glorious surroundings!

One of the main attractions in this area is Lake Annecy. Fed by mountain springs, the crystal-clear water is perfect for swimming and all sorts of water sports. Paddleboard, wakeboard or even scuba dive in the blue waters. Fancy sailing? You can try it at the lake! If you'd prefer to stay dry, there are plenty of sandy beaches where you can sunbathe to your heart's content.

*continued on page 32*

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## How You Can Shop More Safely and Securely Around the World

As a military member or military family member, life can be unpredictable. Luckily, the security of your finances doesn't have to be.

If you're looking for the safest way to make purchases in Europe, it is always a good idea to use a credit card. If your card gets lost or stolen, a member services representative will be able to help you right away so that you can avoid fraudulent charges. Many financial institutions also make it easy to keep tabs on your card usage so you'll know right away whether someone else is using your card; whether it's via an SMS alert making you aware of potential suspicious activity, or through app options that allow you to set spending, category and location limits.

Plus, you'll usually get better rates for foreign exchange fees with credit cards than by exchanging currency. In fact, some

credit cards offer no foreign transaction fees at all.

If you are just starting out, a credit card such as Service CU's Visa® Everyday Card can help you begin establishing your credit history, which you'll need if you ever apply for an auto loan, mortgage or even a home rental. If you're eligible for a card with higher limits, such as their Visa® Signature Everyday Elite card, you'll earn points on every purchase, which you can use to redeem for merchandise or cash back.

Last but not least, many new credit cards are contactless, which means they are virtually impossible to tamper with or clone. All you have to do is tap and pay!

To learn more about Service CU's Everyday credit cards, visit [servicecu.org/myeverydaycard](http://servicecu.org/myeverydaycard).

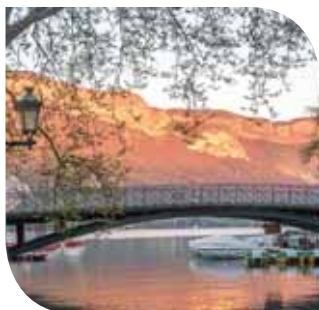
**F**or a leisurely hike near the lake with astounding views, consider taking the “Tour of the Taillefer Mountain” trail. In just three hours, you will complete one of the most beautiful hikes in the area. Stop for a rest on one of the many benches and gaze at the landscape or complete it at a faster pace and carry on to your next adventure!

The city itself offers a multitude of things to do. Visit Palais de l’Île, a 12th-century castle shaped like a ship that is now a history museum. Over the years, the castle has been a prison, courthouse, minting workshop and an administrative center. The castle is uniquely located in the river and splits it into two canals. Cross one of the two pedestrian bridges to access this amazing piece of history.

If you just can’t get enough castles, head to Chateau d’Annecy in Old Town. This restored castle was home to the Counts of Geneva in the 13th and 14th centuries. Today the castle is a museum. Pay special attention to the changing architecture, which ranges from Medieval to Renaissance. While in the Old Town, wander through the winding cobblestone streets, passing by pastel houses, lovingly decorated with colorful flower boxes.



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**A**fter all that sightseeing you are likely famished. Take this opportunity to dine al fresco next to one of the canals. Le Fréti is a delightful restaurant serving up cheesy French dishes. Try one of 10 fondue varieties or traditional Swiss raclettes with some homemade, crispy, hot bread. Of course, you can’t pass up the French onion soup or the cold cuts platter filled with dried ham, smoked noisette and lamb pancetta.

For more outdoor fun, visit Lover’s Bridge. This iron bridge joins Jardins de l’Europe and Pâquier Esplanade. Jardins de l’Europe are located in front of city hall and offer panoramic views of the lake and picturesque picnic spots. Lounge under a weeping willow or stroll along one of the many paths. Cross the bridge to the Pâquier and utilize the bike path or let your kids ride the mini horses. This area is perfect for just enjoying the great outdoors.

If you love Venice and are looking for another canal city, give Annecy a chance! From the fairytale castles to the astounding natural surroundings, everyone can find something to enjoy. The lake is the perfect place to spend a sunny day, but the churches offer shelter if it happens to rain. Regardless of the weather, Annecy is the perfect canal city for your next adventure. ■

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## Baden-Württemberg Tourism

Welcome to sunny SouthWest Germany, a very special vacation destination. Start with historic cities. Heidelberg is one of Europe's most romantic, with its castle, river and university. Stuttgart, the region's capital, boasts art museums, opera and two of the world's best car museums. After all, this is where the automobile was patented almost 135 years ago! For elegance and relaxation, nowhere surpasses Baden-Baden, with its natural mineral spas and stylish casino.

And SouthWest Germany is the country's best region for gourmets and wine lovers, with 73 Michelin-starred restaurants as well as informal taverns. Explore our local treats on one of our culinary hiking or biking trails. In the vineyards, pedal the Baden Wine Cycle Path or the Württemberg Wine Cycle Trail. Try free samples from bottles of locally-distilled fruit brandies cooling in "schnapps fountains" on the Schnapps Distillery Trails in Sasbachwalden. In Ehingen, taste award-winning beers at five breweries on the Beer Hiking Trail.

Discover our cultural treasures in our castles and museums. SouthWest Germany boasts seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites and newly added in 2021 was Baden-Baden, as one of the Great Spa Towns of Europe. For the perfect family escape you should head to the Black Forest Highlands. There are pretty villages and traditional farms, clean lakes and green meadows, low mountains and plenty of fresh air. And when it comes to holidays, the whole region is family friendly. Go for farmhouse stays, lakeside breaks or mountain getaways.

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# Cozy Cottages & Holiday Homes

By Stacy Roman

There is something idyllic about holing up in a rustic cabin during the fall and winter. Curling up with heavy blankets on a well-loved couch with heat emanating from a crackling fire while shutting out the brutal elements of the season sounds like a small slice of heaven. If you're not a big fan of the crowded city center scene, head away from the hustle and bustle for the perfect holiday. From thatched cottages in northern France to renovated horse stables in England and snow-covered chalets in the Alps, the lodging choices are endless. Here are some options to help inspire your search for a vacation bungalow.

## SECLUDED WOODEN CABINS

The U.K. is famous for its scenic and secluded countryside. Small, inviting villages pop up along the narrow winding roads, making them a great place to kick back and relax during the holidays. On the southwestern coast is Devon and Cornwall. Laced with legends and jaw-dropping scenery, you'll find plenty of log cabins and treehouses to discover. Several treehouse options in Devon offer a beautiful combination of the two. Perched high in the forest canopy, the cabins are accessible by a rope bridge. Outdoor baths and a wood-burning stove add to their cozy feel. If you'd like to unplug and unwind, head to log cabins near the Lake District. Situated along a lakefront, the cabins are so well-hidden and escape Wi-Fi and cell signals. The nearest city is Carlisle, a 25-minute drive from the accommodation. To find yours, go to [www.oneoffplaces.co.uk](http://www.oneoffplaces.co.uk).

## THATCHED-ROOF COTTAGES EDITOR'S PICK

Thatched-roof cottages are quintessential European lodgings. They are easily identified by their unique roofing materials and are usually comprised of densely packed, dried vegetation. The roofing serves both an aesthetical appeal and practical purpose by providing natural insulation. These adorable abodes are reminiscent of fairy tales. Set among the rolling vineyards of the Burgundy region in France, some are attached to centuries-old mills. Often found with exposed wooden beams running the length of their ceilings, many feature uneven red tiles lining the floor and large hearths as the central feature in the main living space. These cottages can be found in the Dutch and English countryside as well. While far enough from city life, they're often within walking distance of local villages. [VRBO.com](https://www.vrbo.com) is a great resource for booking one of these charmers.

## RENOVATED SPACES

Spending a relaxing getaway within the confines of a barn or stable doesn't usually sound appealing. Surprisingly, some of the sweetest spots to stay are refurbished and repurposed spaces. In the U.K., the Cotswolds are home to mews, old horse and carriage stables that are transformed into beautiful rowhomes and cottages. Close to the Benelux region, near the Ardennes forest in Belgium, old farmhouses are reimaged yet keep much of their original craftsmanship. The result is an old-world, cozy space perfect for families. Don't let the stone facades fool you. Most interiors are brimming with modern amenities and appliances. Visit [holidaylettings.co.uk](https://www.holidaylettings.co.uk) to find your favorite.



Picture yourself here with this as your view.

"In the cooler autumn and frigid winter months, spending the holidays in a cozy cabin or cottage away from the crowds is a *perfect* option for an authentic European *vacation*."

## ALPINE CABINS AND CHALETs

Winter in Europe is synonymous with world-class skiing and snow sports. Even if winter adventuring isn't your thing, the powdery snow blanketing evergreen trees is worth a stay in a local chalet. Granted, these are more like apartments or luxury cabins than a traditional cottage, but with plenty of features and space to unwind after a long day on the slopes, you won't regret staying in one. In Switzerland, alpine chalets combine the warmth of comfy wooden cabins and the convenience of ski in-ski out accessibility to the resorts. In the Black Forest, Garmisch-Partenkirchen and the Tyrolean Alps, traditional Bavarian architecture is incorporated into mountain living. Many of these accommodations can be found closer to the villages, which is great for those who love the après-ski scene. [Mychaletfinder.com](https://www.mychaletfinder.com) offers a vast array of choices throughout Europe.

In the cooler autumn and frigid winter months, spending the holidays in a cozy cabin or cottage away from the crowds is a perfect option for an authentic European vacation. From self-catering accommodations to luxurious lakefront properties, there is something for all tastes and budgets. ■

# FINLAND

## A NORDIC ADVENTURE

By Jessica Zen



The wilderness reigns supreme in Finland, a Nordic country covered in forests and lakes in northern Europe. With 40 national parks reaching from north to south, there's no shortage of outdoor activities to partake in. From bird-watching to fishing, Finland has an excellent lineup of ways to connect with nature for outdoor enthusiasts.

*continued on page 38*

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For an up close and personal meeting with the hearty animals that are built to survive the arctic weather, visit the Ranua Zoo, the world's most northern wildlife park in the village of Ranua. Open daily, this zoo features 50 arctic animal species. The animals are housed in large enclosures that are as close to their natural environment as possible. This zoo has polar bears, wolverines, manulis, owls and much more.

If you are planning to stay in the area, Ranua Zoo offers campsites for both RVs and tents. Amenities include kitchens, barbecues, saunas, showers, washing machines and a playground. This is a neat little spot to stay, as there are nature trails right off the campsites along with guided hikes, fishing and canoeing.

About an hour north of Ranua is the "official" home of Santa Claus, Rovaniemi. After being almost completely destroyed during World War II, it has been rebuilt and is now a modern city and the capital of Lapland. Since 1985, Santa has had an office in Rovaniemi. Legend has it that his real home is in Korvatunturi, which is in a secret location, thus the need for an extra office where he can meet his customers. Santa is available every day of the year at the Santa Claus Village and is happy to listen to what all the children want for Christmas.

When planning a trip to the arctic, a dog sled ride is the perfect activity. If you make it to Finland in the summer, you can still enjoy the huskies that pull the sleds, minus the snow. At Bearhill Husky, you can go on a summer excursion with the dogs. You'll get the chance to walk along the kennel's private coastline



WHETHER YOU COME FOR  
THE FROZEN TUNDRA IN  
THE WINTER OR FOR A  
CHANCE TO GET CLOSER  
TO NATURE IN THE SUM-  
MER, FINLAND IS A FAN-  
TASTIC PLACE TO SPEND  
YOUR TIME OUTSIDE.

with the dogs and see the working kennel. This is an excellent opportunity to learn about how sled teams work and function, without getting frostbite. If you do have the opportunity to visit

in the winter, you can be in charge of mushing your very own team of dogs!

All that fresh air will certainly work up quite the appetite. If you want something quick and easy that you know everyone will enjoy, head to Kauppayhtiö. This burger and pizza place also has wings and salads. If you're feeling daring, try a reindeer burger with thyme mushrooms, lingonberry mayo, vinegar cucumbers, red onion compote and arugula. You certainly won't find that on an American burger menu.

For some outdoor family fun, head to Lake Saimaa and stay in a fishing cottage. While there, you'll be able to go on a fishing trip with Jari Käyhkö, owner of Old School Trolling. This trip is best for fishing groups of 4 to 6 people and is family friendly. The cottage is located near a pond and river that are good for angling and pike spinning. The lake is best for spinning and trolling zander, pike and perch. If you want to swim, the pond has a sandy shore that is perfect for both children and adults. Take the guesswork out of where to stay and what to do on this trip. The cottage is equipped with kitchen items, a living room, two bedrooms, an indoor sauna and a bathroom. You'll be able to cook your own food and save some serious cash.

Whether you come for the frozen tundra in the winter or for a chance to get closer to nature in the summer, Finland is a fantastic place to spend your time outside. The wilderness is a great place to hike, bike, fish or even find some new furry friends at the zoo. Don't forget to pay Santa Claus a visit while you are there, as he's likely to get lonely in the off-season months! ■



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# AUSTRIA

## A Winter Wonderland

By Mary Del Rosario

©SBORISOV/123RF.COM

Austria is undeniably a beautiful country to visit no matter the time of year. However, once snow falls on the Alps, Christmas markets adorn enchanting cities and warm drinks enter your stomach, winter in Austria will be one of your favorite things.

### CITIES

Whimsical towns, friendly locals and delicious “sachertorte,” chocolate cake native to Austria, are what make this country worth visiting, especially during this magical season.

#### Vienna

Rendering itself a cultural mecca, snow-covered Vienna is a sight to behold with its twinkling Christmas lights and holiday spirit. To make the experience complete, be sure to warm your cold hands with a cappuccino as Vienna’s coffee culture is not to be missed. Though you can’t go wrong with any of the coffee houses, Café Mozart is a fan-favorite to refuel after a day exploring the city’s highlights to include Schönbrunn Palace, The Hofburg, St. Stephen’s Cathedral and the Belvedere Palace. For those who want to feel like royalty, don a white ball gown and a tux and head to the Viennese balls, which take place from December until February. With over 450 balls to choose from, you’re sure to leave Vienna cultured and a Viennese Waltz expert.

#### Innsbruck

With the sound of skiers coming down the Alps and snow silently falling, Innsbruck truly comes alive during the winter. Being the host of three Winter Olympics, Innsbruck is a snow-lover’s dream with its ideal mountains perfect for skiing, snowboarding and snowtubing. The jaw-dropping views of the

Alps are ones you won’t forget! Taking the cable car and a funicular from the city center to the Nordkette Seegube ski area is also a popular activity as panorama views of the city demand your attention. Be sure to head to Cloud 9, the Alp’s highest igloo bar, to indulge in drinks and stunning snapshots of the mountains. Before delving into all the snow activities, pay a visit to the Altstadt (old town center), Imperial Palace, Zaha Hadid Bergisel ski jump tower and, of course, Swarovski Crystal World.

#### Salzburg

As the birthplace of Mozart and the beloved Von Trapp family, Salzburg is peppered in Baroque architecture and is a city you need to cross off your Austria bucket list. Much like Vienna, Salzburg has a vast cafe culture and offers an abundance of cafes to get cozy in, so be sure to warm yourself up after a day of seeing the Hohensalzburg Fortress and the Hellbrunn Palace and Trick Fountains. Popular winter activities include attending the Christmas markets, seeing a winter concert comprised of Mozart’s famous pieces held at the Mirabell Palace and visiting the origin of the popular Christmas carol “Silent Night,” which is just outside of Salzburg.

#### Hallstatt EDITOR’S PICK

This picturesque village situated on Lake Hallstatt is the epitome of Austrian village charm. Named a UNESCO World Heritage site, one glance can lead your eyes to the beautiful Lake Hallstatt surrounded by quaint shops or the Dachstein Mountains blanketed in untouched snow. Though taking a

ferry ride across the lake and visiting the ice cave won't be an option for the winter, activities such as walking the Skywalk Viewing Platform, roaming the Christmas markets, visiting the Charnel House—a small catacomb—are not to be missed. If you're a fan of skiing and have a valid guest card, be sure to take advantage of the free ski bus that runs from Hallstatt Dachstein Salzkammergut to nearby ski centers such as Gosau and Obertraun.

## EXPERIENCES

Austria doesn't just provide striking mountain villages and upscale cafes, it also lures visitors to indulge themselves in all the activities this beautiful country has to offer. Whether you're after an adrenaline rush or looking for a relaxing retreat, there are no shortages of experiences to be had.

### Salt Mines

The salt mines in Austria are a sight to behold. Known as "white gold," this mineral we use today to enhance the flavor in our food ensured towns such as Hallein, Hallstatt and Berchtesgaden became powerful trading communities thousands of years ago. In the salt mines of Hallstatt, Berchtesgaden and Hallein, visitors will gain firsthand experience on how salt was mined by sliding down and discovering these mystical tunnels as well as salt lakes. It's also an informative place to learn about the life of salt miners. Be sure to dress warm as the temperatures in these mines are at a constant 54 degrees Fahrenheit.

### Thermal Spas EDITOR'S PICK

Alongside its coffee culture, Austria's spa culture is unbeatable and should be an experience to partake in. Feel like a new, rejuvenated person in the spas of Therme Wien near Vienna, Alpentherme Gastein in Salzburg, Aqua Dome in Tyrol, Therme Laa in Laan der Thaya and Heiltherme & Quellenhotel Bad Waltersdorf in Styria. These thermal spas are among the top five spas to immerse yourself in. From an array of saunas to the soothing thermal waters, Austria's health facilities make for a revitalizing getaway. Pair your winter-sports adventure with a day at these thermal spas for the ultimate mix of fun and relaxation!

### Skiing & Snowboarding

Native to Austria, its ski resorts are aptly known for its "Gemütlichkeit," coziness. Other than the snow-covered Alps, sitting beside a fireplace with a hot drink in hand in a rustic skiing hut is the ultimate experience to be had when in this winter wonderland. If you're a winter-sports enthusiast, bust out your ski and snowboard gear as Austria is heaven on Earth for all things snow related. Endless amounts of perfect, powdery snow, high altitudes and many north-facing slopes make for ideal conditions for skiing, snowboarding and snowtubing. However, if you're new to the winter-sports scene and don't have the confidence to try by yourself, Austria provides the best ski schools with having at least one English-speaking skiing instructor. The Arlberg ski region, which includes St. Anton, St. Christoph, Lech and Zürs are the more popular slopes to hit. However, Kitzbühel, Mayrhofen, Ischgl, Galtür, St. Johann and Sölden are also resort areas that can't be missed! To reward yourself after a long day, be sure to take part in Après-ski, which are after skiing social activities to include dancing, food and merriment.

### Christmas Markets

Every year from the middle of November until a few days after Christmas, Austria's Christmas spirit comes alive with lights twinkling above the beloved holiday stands, pine trees adorned with red and gold ornaments and glühwein warming your cold hands. The Christmas markets are the tell-tale sign that the holiday season is here. Though you can't go wrong when it comes to Christmas markets, the ones to put on your radar include The Viennese Dream Christmas Market and Christmas Village Belvedere Palace in Vienna, the Old Town Christmas Market and the Family Christmas Market at Marktplatz in Innsbruck, Salzburg's Christmas Market and the Christmas Market on the Main Square in Linz. From lebkuchen to handmade crafts, Austria's Christmas markets have got it all to put you in a holly-jolly mood. ■



**ABOVE:** Stop by one of Vienna's many cafes and warm your cold hands with a cappuccino!

**LEFT:** Enjoy the view of beautiful Lake Hallstatt, surrounded by quaint shops and the Dachstein Mountains.



# *Chasing the* **NORTHERN LIGHTS**

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By Jeana Coleman

*Experiencing the Northern Lights*  
takes a little astronomical forecasting and a bit of luck.

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*continued on page 44*

A close-up portrait of a young man with short brown hair, smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a green and brown digital camouflage military uniform, including a matching garrison cap. The background is a plain, light gray.

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## Solar Max and the Lights

During solar max, the sun's magnetic poles shift, causing an increase in sunspots and solar flares. These flares expel radiation and charged particles toward Earth in clouds of solar wind. As this wind enters the Earth's atmosphere, the radiation interferes with radio, satellite and electrical devices; the charged particles collide with gaseous molecules in the Earth's atmosphere. Once they collide, a phenomenal reaction occurs, creating an unusual colorful light display, simultaneously, at both of the Earth's northern and southern hemispheric poles. The reaction is called the Northern and Southern Lights, or Aurora Borealis and Aurora Australis.



## When and Where to Watch

*The Aurora is viewed best* on clear, dark nights, away from city lights or moonlight, from late September to early April and between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. local time. Scandinavian countries above the Arctic Circle are the best locations for witnessing the Northern Lights:

### Sweden

Abisko National Park, Kiruna and the Swedish Lapland are definitely the hotspots. The Abisko's Aurora Sky Station is touted as possibly the best place for viewing, where a chairlift takes you to the observation tower. Spaceport Sweden also offers flights to try to see the lights from high in the sky. For accommodations, check out the ICEHOTEL in Jukkasjärvi or IGLOOTEL in Arvidsjaur.

### Norway

Tromsø, Kirkenes, Svalbard and Alta top the list. Stay at Kirkenes Snowhotel or Alta's Sorrisniva Igloo Hotel and take a husky safari, sledge or snowmobile excursion. Several cruise lines offer special Aurora excursions; try Hurtigruten, Transun and Fred Olsen Cruises for deals and pricing. You may even see a polar bear or two in Svalbard, Norway's northernmost tip. For more information, visit [www.visitnorway.com](http://www.visitnorway.com) and [www.nordicvisitor.com](http://www.nordicvisitor.com).



### *Iceland*

The whole country is a good place to see the lights, but the most popular spots are outside of Reykjavík and in Thingvellir National Park. Look for boutique hotels in rural areas, such as four-star luxury Hotel Rangá. For more hotel ideas, search [www.i-escape.com/iceland/boutique-hotels](http://www.i-escape.com/iceland/boutique-hotels). A lot of these hotels will also give you wake-up calls or alerts when an Aurora appears. Go to [www.northernlightsiceland.com](http://www.northernlightsiceland.com) for viewing ideas: during whale watching, from a glacier, while soaking in the Blue Lagoon hot springs, on a self-driven tour and more.

### *Finland*

Saariselkä, Kilpisjärvi and Inari are the best northern locations in Finnish Lapland. Two exceptional places to stay are the glass igloos of Hotel Kakslauttanen in the Saariselkä fell and Lainio Snow Village's Snow Hotel near Ylläs and Levi. Go to [www.visitfinland.com](http://www.visitfinland.com) for winter activities while in beautiful Lapland.

### *Greenland*

Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut are both top-rated viewing locations. Book a tour to watch for the lights, then take a dogsled and tundra tour, go ice fishing or hop on a sightseeing flight. Visit [www.wogac.com](http://www.wogac.com) and [www.greenlandtravel.com](http://www.greenlandtravel.com).

### *Denmark*

On clear days, the Northern Lights can be seen in areas along the northern coasts and in the Faroe Islands. However, these islands receive a lot of rain during the year, so forecasting is important to find the clear night skies perfect for viewing.

### *Scotland*

In the U.K., the Northern Lights are called "Merry Chasers." Your best bet is the Orkney Isles and remote locations of Dunnet Head, John O'Groats and the Highlands near Sutherland. ■

The websites [spaceweather.com](http://spaceweather.com), [www.geomag.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.geomag.bgs.ac.uk) and [aurorawatch.lancs.ac.uk](http://aurorawatch.lancs.ac.uk) map the astronomical forecast and track conditions, plus send you text alerts after solar flares, when conditions prove right or if Northern Lights are witnessed.

# Your European Christmas BUCKET LIST

By Elizabeth Jones



Stay in an igloo in Iceland to see the Northern Lights.

# 1

# 2

Get that adrenaline rush while skiing and snowboarding in Chamonix, France.

Visit the storybook town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber and stop in the Käthe Wolfhart store to buy a special Christmas ornament.

# 3

# 4

Visit one of Germany's oldest Christmas markets in Nuremberg.



*Living in Europe* provides amazing opportunities for the best vacations. Figuring out where to go over the holiday season can be overwhelming with so much to see and do. If you're looking to get away, here are some bucket-list worthy items to consider:

# 5

Collect all the glühwein mugs at Christmas markets during your travels.



# 6

Visit Santa's Village in Rovaniemi, Finland.



# 7

Spend time in Zermatt and hike towards the famous Matterhorn.



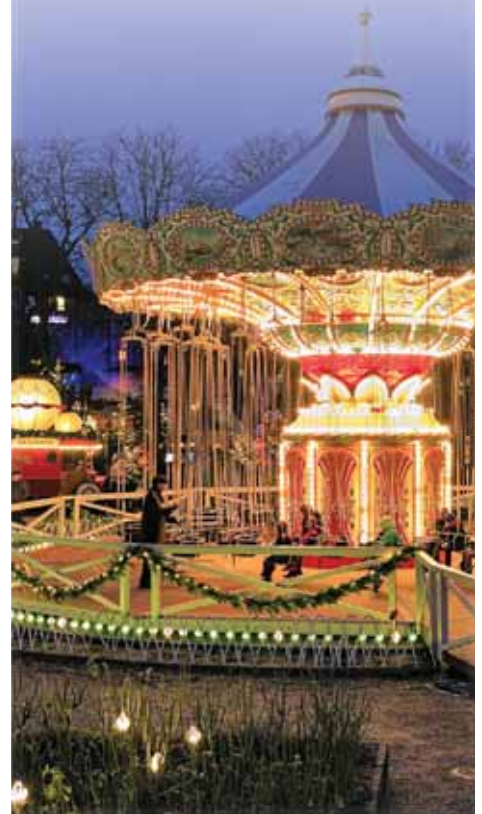
# 8

Relax, unwind and stay warm in Budapest's thermal baths.



# 9

Head to Copenhagen and visit the city's amusement park, Tivoli Gardens, for thrills and Christmas magic.



# 10

Not a fan of the cold weather? Spain, Greece, Portugal and Croatia offer warmer temperatures and are less crowded in the off-season. ■





The Zugspitze, at 2,962 meters above sea level, is the highest mountain in Germany.

A scenic view of a snowy mountain landscape, likely Garmisch-Partenkirchen, with a dotted line graphic curving across the lower half of the page.

# Germany's Snow Playground: GARMISCH- PARTENKIRCHEN

By Anna Leigh Bagiackas

Wintertime trips to Garmisch-Partenkirchen hold some of my most memorable travel experiences. Sharing a big basket of pommes frites and drinking a cold Hefeweizen beer after a morning on the slopes or watching my husband tumble down the ski slope at the end of the day (don't worry, he was okay and now has a fun story to tell), I always anticipate my return to this winter paradise. For those of you who celebrate the first snowfall and anticipate donning your favorite warm, chunky sweater, read on for more reasons to venture to this German snow playground this winter.

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*continued on page 50*

## ..... A Winter Paradise .....

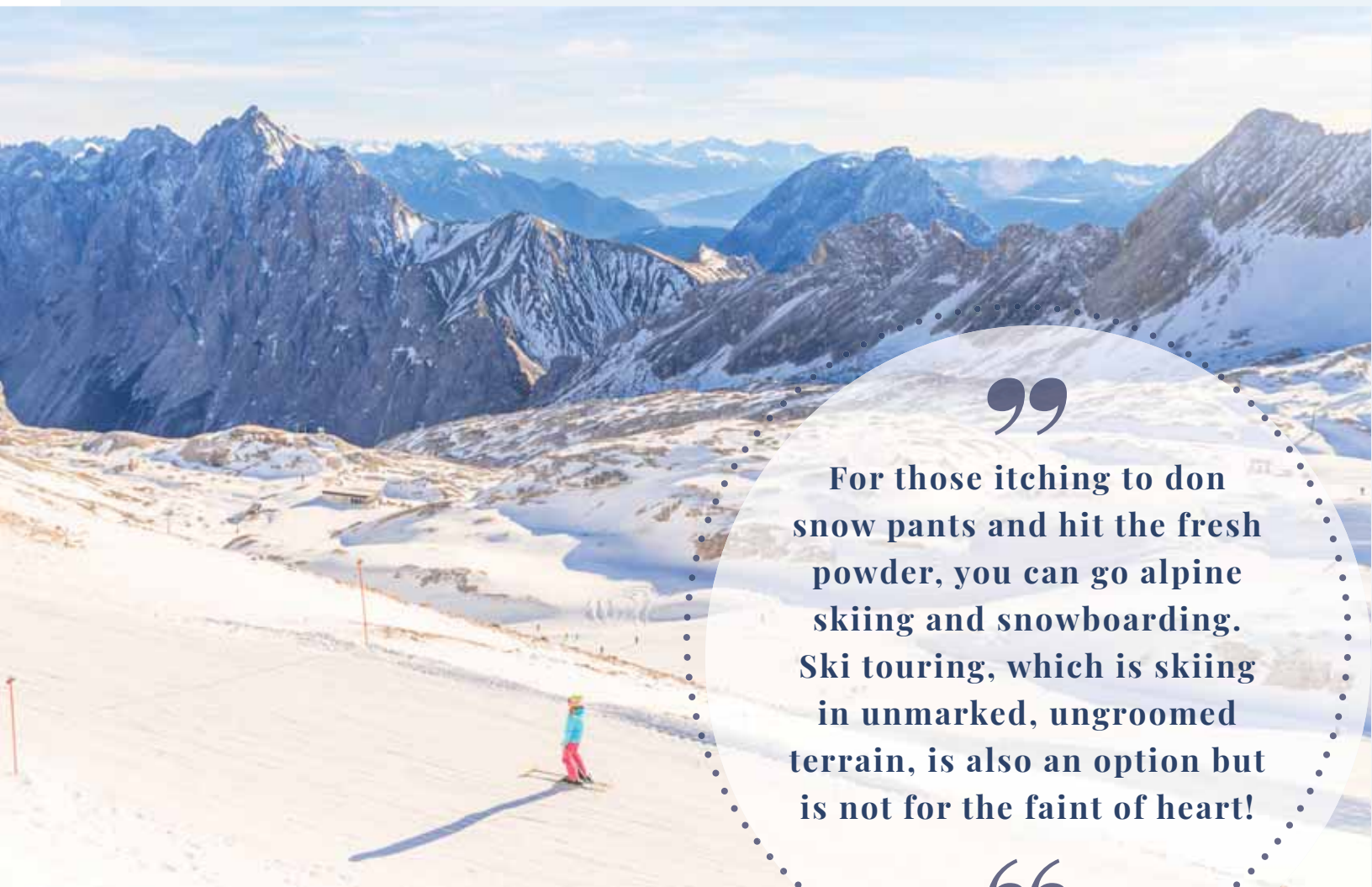
It is no coincidence that the 1936 Winter Olympics were held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen—this place knows about snow, snow sports and making the most of cold weather. But you don't have to be an aspiring Olympic athlete to take advantage or enjoy this winter paradise. There are activities for every level of adventurer, even if you consider reading in front of a warm and cozy fire your kind of adventure.

For those itching to don snow pants and hit the fresh powder, you can go alpine skiing and snowboarding. Ski touring, which is skiing in unmarked, ungroomed terrain, is also an option but is not for the faint of heart! You can also find opportunities for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing or winter hiking. Sledding, also known as "sledging," gets a lot cooler when you get to do it in the Alps. A couple of places for sledding include the Zugspitze, the sledge run on the Kainzen-

bad, St. Martin on the Grasberg and Partnachalm. If you don't know how to ski but would like to learn, you can take lessons at the nearby ski school.

What about some unique experiences that you may not have expected? How about signing up the family for a horse-drawn sleigh ride? Or maybe spending an afternoon building an igloo? It is also worth a visit to the Olympia Sports Center, home to the Olympic skiing stadium for ski jumping. A personal favorite though is the chance to go night sledding followed by steaming mugs of hot cocoa or tea in front of the fire, retelling stories of the wildest parts of the day.

Spending your vacation being warm and cozy is also never a bad idea, and Garmisch has a lot to offer when it comes to wellness and spa experiences, so get ready to be pampered.



”

**For those itching to don snow pants and hit the fresh powder, you can go alpine skiing and snowboarding. Ski touring, which is skiing in unmarked, ungroomed terrain, is also an option but is not for the faint of heart!**

“

Skier at Zugspitze Glacier Ski Resort, Bavarian Alps.

## ..... Lodging .....

One of five Armed Forces Resorts, Edelweiss Lodge & Resort in Garmisch-Partenkirchen can make your vacation even easier. Located at the foot of the Alps, the views are out-of-this-world, but with American amenities at the lodge, you and your family may even feel a little closer to home. For those interested in hitting the slopes, the Hausberg Sport Lodge makes it easy to rent equipment, buy lift tickets, sign up for skiing or snowboarding lessons and get all your questions answered. The resort also supplies a shuttle between the Sport Lodge and resort to avoid parking. In addition to Edelweiss, there are many other lodging options in the area, from quaint local hotels to charming Airbnbs, both in downtown Garmisch-Partenkirchen and the surrounding area.



“Fleischpflanzerl” with  
mashed potatoes and  
vegetables.

## ..... Eat & Drink Local .....

Every winter vacation needs to be accompanied by body and soul-filling meals, and if you're a fan of German meals, you won't be disappointed. Hearty, warm and filling is the name of the food game here, whether it's a slice of warm apple strudel in between snowy activities or a tasty bowl of goulash to thaw your frozen toes at the end of the day.

A few of the specialty eats include the “Fleischpflanzerl,” a mix between a hamburger patty and meatball with a side of warm potato salad, and “Obazda,” a melted, Brie-like cheese with butter and spices, perfect for a spread of cold cuts and bread. You could also try different game like wild boar, rabbit and venison. To curb your sweet tooth, try the “Auszogne,” a sweet fried pastry with powdered sugar sprinkled on top.

Since Garmisch welcomes in so many visitors from around the world, you will find a range of cuisines from Italian to American-style burgers and Indian, alongside the many Bavarian establishments.

*continued on page 52*

”

**It is no coincidence that the 1936 Winter Olympics were held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen—this place knows about snow, snow sports and making the most of cold weather.**

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## Tips for Your Winter Holiday

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If you are set on eating at a particular spot, make a reservation at the restaurant.



Thinking of staying at Edelweiss? Make your reservations soon! The resort fills up quickly, especially during long weekends. Be sure to bring your swimsuit.



Don't have the right gear? Don't worry, the Hausberg Sport Lodge lets you rent snow pants, helmets and most other essentials for keeping warm and dry.



If you're going skiing, take advantage of the shuttle if you can. The parking lot at the bottom of the ski hill fills up quickly.



If you're driving to Garmisch, note that there are routes that go through Austria, which require a vignette on your vehicle for entry. You can also navigate to stay in Germany. ■

.....

A woman and a young girl are looking at a small American flag. The woman is holding the flag, and the girl is looking at it with interest. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be the interior of a vehicle.

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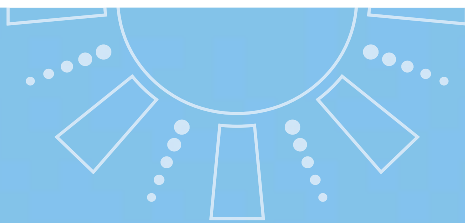
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# Encounter

## Nature and Winter Sun on These Southern European Islands

By Karen Bradbury

Around the time of the summer solstice, residents of northern Europe are blessed with seemingly endless hours of daylight. But all that glorious light comes with a cost. The bill is due from November through February, when the weather is often gray for days on end and darkness falls before the sun has even bothered to make a cameo appearance.

While there are few places in continental Europe where you can expect to splash and swim between Christmas and Valentine's Day, Europe's southern reaches are much less sun-starved. A few days' time strolling beneath the green fronds of palms or casting one's gaze across a glittering bay may be just the antidote to a bad case of the winter blues. Here are a few cities, all of which happen to be located on beautiful islands, where life during the low season doesn't grind to a halt and encounters with nature are there for the taking.



Experience the  
**huge sand dunes**  
**of Maspalomas**  
on the back of  
a camel.

continued on page 56



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## Larnaca, Cyprus

The island nation's third-largest city after Nicosia and Limassol can boast of a palm-lined seafront, a yacht-filled port and a busy strip heaving with bars and restaurants. Things to explore include the Larnaca Castle and its collection of antiques and Byzantine wall paintings; the 9th-century Church of St. Lazarus; the narrow streets of Skala, the city's old Turkish quarter and the Catacomb of Phaneromeni Church, a rock cavern reputed to possess mysterious healing powers. Finikoudes and Mackenzie Beach are fine places for a stroll in any season.

Between November and March, up to 20,000 flamingos make Cyprus's salt lakes their home base. These lakes, bone dry in the summer, fill up with the rains of winter. Tiny shrimp eggs, which somehow manage to survive the summer drought, hatch into the food that gives flamingos their vibrant pink color. The salt lake nearest to Larnaca is easily reached by a short drive or a long stroll along the road leading to the airport.



## Ajaccio, Corsica

The capital of this French island is obviously proud of its connection to Napoleon Bonaparte, who was born there in 1769. The house of his birth serves as a museum devoted to the life and times of the much-debated military leader and his family. Art lovers won't want to miss the Musee Fesch and its extensive collection of Renaissance paintings. Having feasted on art and history, visitors can turn their sights toward sampling Corsica's famed cuisine, including its charcuterie, cured meats and sausages, alongside various cheeses made of sheep and goat's milk. Should a poster advertising an "oursinade" be spotted, an offer to feast on sea urchins awaits.

The most mountainous of all the Mediterranean islands offers a handful of places in which it's possible to downhill ski. The resort of Val d'Ese, approximately a one hour's drive outside of Ajaccio, offers nine slopes suitable to all levels of expertise as well as spectacular coastal views. Snowshoeing, cross-country skiing or photo safaris to spot bighorn sheep are other ways to ensure a winter break here is an active one.



## Maspalomas, Gran Canaria

The Canary Islands, located just under 100 miles off the Atlantic coast of northwest Africa, offer reliable winter sun and enough warmth to make a dip in the ocean an enjoyable prospect. With its seven-mile sandy beach and vibrant nightlife scene, Maspalomas recommends itself as a top destination. This town is famed for its carnival celebrations, particularly its drag queen competitions and the big parade, best attended in the most outrageous costume one can find.

A unique means by which to experience the huge sand dunes just south of town is on the back of a camel. Half-hour plods through a nature reserve while perched on a double-seated saddle are led by turban-clad guides from the Sahara. The experience, suitable for all ages, goes for around 12 euros per person.

*Don't miss the fantastic **botanical gardens** in Funchal.*



EDITOR'S PICK

## Funchal, Madeira

Madeira is a small but picture-perfect island located in the Atlantic Ocean about 670 miles southwest of mainland Portugal. Its mild winters with frequent rain showers keep the flora lush and verdant green. Funchal, Madeira's capital, is a city of just over 100,000 inhabitants and offers many flavors of fun. Not to be missed is its vibrant central market with fish and flowers in varieties not seen elsewhere, a quaint old town and fantastic botanical gardens. A must for first-time visitors is a ride to Monte by cable car, followed by a steep and fast descent back to town by means of a wicker toboggan expertly steered down the pavement by the fancy footwork of two dapper gentlemen.

A type of hike that's unique to Madeira is the levada walk. Levadas are narrow canals that were carved into the hills centuries back to allow for the cultivation of sugar cane and other crops. For a walk that's all downhill, board a bus from Funchal's central bus station to one of the nearby towns and meander your way back alongside one of these ancient waterways. The official Madeira tourism website maintains a constantly updated list of the trails open to hikers, which can change due to landslides or other natural phenomena. Consult <http://www.visitmadeira.pt/> before setting out. ■





# PHOTOGENIC Winter Destinations

By Elizabeth Jones

It's no secret that Europe is teeming with alluring destinations. From charming, cobblestone-street-filled cities to jaw-dropping landscapes, there is no shortage of beautiful places. While the majority of Europe is breathtaking no matter the season, there are some cities and countries that are undoubtedly more magical during the winter months. Here are our top picks for Europe's most photogenic winter destinations:

*continued on page 60*



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**ROVANIEMI, FINLAND**

If you're looking for a true winter wonderland that even Santa Claus would approve of, head to Santa's Village in Rovaniemi. Not only is the village located in a fairytale-like area, it provides countless photo opportunities from selfies with elves and adorable reindeer to even Santa himself.



**PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC**

Enchanting Prague won't disappoint during the winter season. Whether you find yourself walking across a snowy Charles Bridge, overlooking the city from St. Vitus Cathedral or immersed in the magical atmosphere of the Old Town Square Christmas market, Prague always serves as a gorgeous winter destination.



**LUCERNE, SWITZERLAND**

Lucerne is the best of both worlds, colliding city life and nature with its old-timey, medieval atmosphere, and sparkling Lake Lucerne and the Alps serve as the perfect backdrop. No matter where you are in this city filled with rich history and breathtaking views, photo opportunities will be plentiful—especially in the winter.



**PARIS, FRANCE**

The City of Love is even more romantic during the colder months. Capture a snowy Eiffel Tower during the day or twinkling at night. Embrace your inner "Emily in Paris" moment as you document your time in France's most iconic city during the most wonderful time of the year.



**LOFOTEN ISLANDS, NORWAY**

If you're looking for a photogenic winter escape that will make you wonder how a place like this could exist on Earth, head to Norway's Lofoten Islands. Filled with coastal towns, quaint fishing boats, red rorbuer cabins, hiking trails and snowy mountains, Lofoten is a dream. If you're really lucky, you may even catch a glimpse of the Northern Lights.



**LAKE BLEĐ, SLOVENIA**

Typically known for being a great destination in the warmer months, you can't deny the beauty Lake Bled exhibits in the wintertime. A snow-capped church on Bled Island in the middle of the famous lake makes for the perfect backdrop for any photography and nature lover. ■

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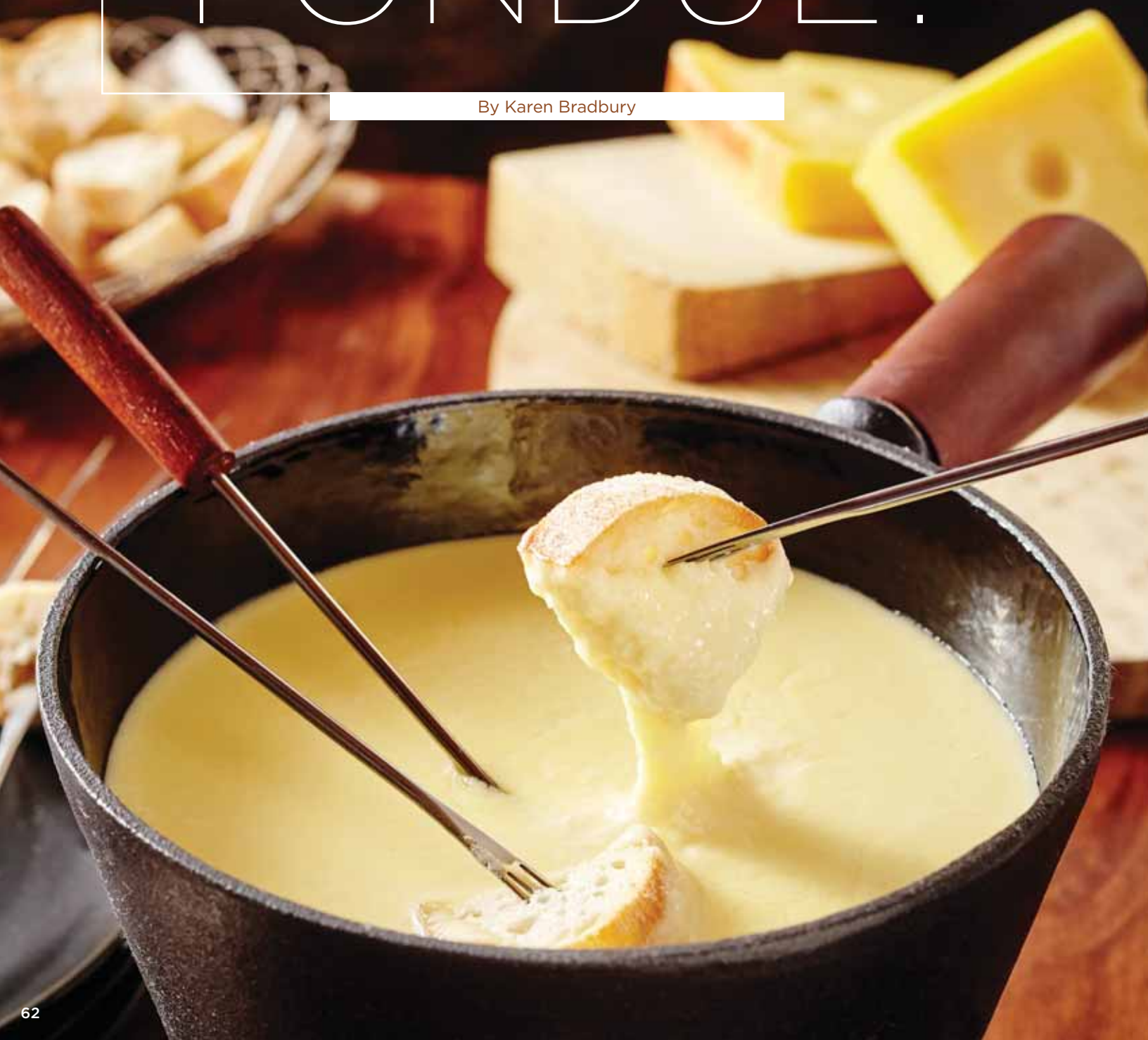
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# ARE YOU FOND OF FONDUE?

By Karen Bradbury





Across northern Europe, the crops have been sown in the fields, and soon we'll be feasting on freshly-grown fruits and veggies such as new potatoes, crisp radishes, asparagus and strawberries.

Before we enter a new culinary season, however, let's pay a final ode to one of winter's greatest treats: the gooey, savory cheese fondue.

If the word sounds vaguely French, that's because it is. It's the past participle of the word "fondre," meaning to melt. The caquelon is the name for the pot in which the cheese is melted, usually with the help of a réchaud, a portable stove powered by a candle or wick doused in spirits.

The most traditional way to enjoy cheese fondue is swirled around chunks of crusty bread. As classic as the cheese and bread pairing might seem, fondue as we know it today isn't a particularly old dish. Some sources suggest that in Switzerland, the undisputed land of its origin, it was a way for farm families of meager means to make use of their limited resources. Other sources dispute that, pointing out that a rich cheese such as Gruyère was hardly an item poor rural folk could afford to put on their tables.

The perception of fondue as a specialty of the Swiss Alps has much to do with a cheese cartel and clever marketing techniques. By the late 19th century, recipes were being published for what was coming to be seen as the country's national dish. Fondue got another boost when the Swiss Cheese Union took control of the dairy market. They created slick marketing campaigns to promote the consumption of cheese and gave away fondue kits as promotional swag. At the World's

Fair held in New York in 1964, fondue was served at a restaurant in the Swiss Pavilion, and soon Americans were converts too.

You don't need to go out and buy fancy equipment to host a family fondue party. As the cheese is best melted slowly, a crockpot will do nicely, as will the double boiler method, in which a bowl sits atop a pan of simmering water. To keep the cheese warm, a sturdy ceramic pot is set atop a tea light candle holder. If you'd like to have your very own fondue set, instead of splashing out on a new one, keep your eyes peeled next time you're at a flea market or thrift store.

While chunks of bread are the most traditional item for dipping, they're far from the only thing that benefits from a cheesy coating. Pair fondue with apple slices, steamed broccoli, carrots, cherry tomatoes, boiled potatoes, roasted bell peppers, radishes, pears, figs and whatever else around the house might need eating up.

As for the star of the show, the cheese itself? Classic recipes call for a half-and-half combination of Gruyère with another cheese such as Emmentaler, Gouda or Fontina, grated and combined with dry white wine, pepper and nutmeg, along with cornstarch to prevent the cheese from clumping.

If you live in the heart of Europe, you'll find a specially prepared fondue cheese widely available that needs no more than to be heated up, sold even in the most modest of discount supermarkets. This ready-made fondue is a hot seller around Christmastime, but there's nothing stopping you from enjoying it at other times of year. ■



The first time my husband and I had this dish, we were visiting a tiny restaurant in the Beaujolais wine region in France. On the menu the dish was listed as “simple pears stewed in a red wine syrup.” That description is a complete understatement. This fruity dessert is intensely decadent. It can be best described as Christmas in a bowl. I fell in love. The following Christmas, we decided to make it. I was intimidated and thought for certain it would be complicated to make. It turns out that the French menu was right—this dish is actually simple, but not in flavor.



# POIRE À LA BEAUJOLAISE

## *Poached pears in Beaujolais wine and black currant sauce*

By Carrie Farrell

### INGREDIENTS:

4 ripe but firm pears  
1 bottle of Beaujolais red wine  
1 cup of crème de cassis  
(black currant liqueur)  
3/4 cup brown sugar

1 fresh vanilla bean  
2 cloves  
1 small cinnamon stick  
6 black peppercorns  
1 medium orange, sliced

1 lemon  
OPTIONAL:  
Mint leaves  
Ginger snaps

### PROCESS

#### Step 1

Start by adding to a sauce pan the whole bottle of Beaujolais wine along with the peppercorns, cloves, oranges, vanilla bean pod (split in two), cinnamon stick and sugar. Cook on medium-high heat and bring to a gentle boil.

#### Step 2

While you are heating the sauce, you can prepare the pears. Peel the skin but leave the stem in place. Cut a small slice off the bottom of each pear so they will sit up straight. Cut the lemon in half and rub the lemon all over each pear to gently coat with lemon juice.

#### Step 3

Add pears to the sauce. Reduce heat to low setting. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes.

#### Step 4

Gently remove pears and place in a separate bowl. Scoop out about 2/3 cup of the wine sauce and pour over pears. Then add 20 ml of black currant liqueur. Let the pears cool for about 30 minutes to an hour.

#### Step 5

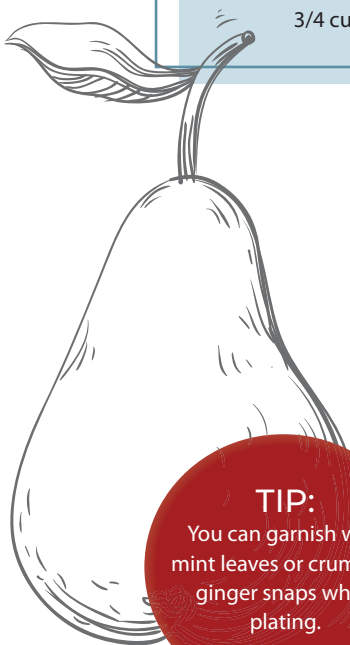
Remove the oranges from the sauce. Reduce the remaining liquid. Increase heat to medium and let the sauce cook until it has a syrup consistency. The longer you reduce the liquid, the more intense the flavor will be. Usually about 20 to 30 minutes with an occasional stir. Strain the sauce to remove the whole spices. Let cool for about 30 minutes.

#### Step 6

Serve! This dish can be served warm or cold. I like it best at room temperature. You can serve the pear whole or cut into slices. Garnish to your taste. ■

### TIP:

You can garnish with mint leaves or crumbled ginger snaps when plating.



Adapted from French Cooking Academy.

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# DELFTWARE

## The Perfect Touch of Dutch

By Karen Bradbury

**D**elftware is known, if not by name, by sight. Those pretty white plates, vases and figurines with the vivid blue trim you see throughout the Netherlands are all examples of such. You'd be hard-pressed to find a souvenir shop anywhere in Amsterdam that didn't offer diminutive clogs or whimsical windmills made of this pottery. While tiny knick-knacks with cheap price tags are likely Chinese knockoffs, authenticity in one's key chain or fridge magnet is hardly essential.

Delft pottery takes its name from the postcard-perfect Dutch city of Delft, perched roughly between Rotterdam and The Hague, and the history of its production is a twisting, turning tale of migration, imitation and international trade.

### A Little History

In the 15th century, potters from southern Europe made their way north and eventually established a manufacturing base in Antwerp, Belgium. A century later, due in part to religious pressure, many of these craftsmen relocated to the Netherlands. When Delft's beer-brewing industry fell upon hard times due to how polluted the city's water had become, potters began

repurposing disused breweries for their own needs. The pottery trade got a lucky break when wars in China interrupted its domestic production of porcelain and the Delft potters began successfully imitating their wares.

Although nowadays there's just one factory left in Delft that produces this souvenir, the pottery's legacy is seen and felt all over town. "Koninklijke Porceleyne Fles" (Royal Delft) offers a museum and factory tour in which visitors can see firsthand how the clay is processed, painted and fired, as well as learn more about Delftware through time. After a break for coffee and a sweet treat, the tour concludes with a pass through the factory store. While the items there don't come cheap, buyers can rest assured they're purchasing only authentic items. How to identify a genuine product and avoid knockoffs is a useful takeaway skill gained from the tour.

### Where to Buy

It's possible to get a good eyeful of Delft even without traveling to its native town. The Kunstmuseum Den Haag in The Hague, Centraal Museum in Utrecht and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam all have collections displaying some

of its finest examples. And when it comes to purchasing Delftware, Amsterdam has plenty of reputable dealers. Sellers of the real deal include Aronson Antiquairs, Madame Blue, Heinen, Kramer Kunst & Antiek, Royal Delft Experience and Galleria D'Arte Rinascimento, among others.

For an item with a truly Dutch touch, consider a unique vase specifically designed to showcase tulips. A "Tulpenvaas" has multiple tiers of spout-like protrusions, each of which is meant to hold a single flower. A brand-new Royal Delft Flower Pyramid vase, based on late 17th-century examples, stands nearly four feet tall and goes for upwards of 10,000 euros. Smaller, more modest versions of tulip vases come in at just under the 30-euro mark.

Those who enjoy the thrill of the chase as much as the acquisition itself will find chasing down Delftware at a flea market a most delightful pursuit. The one held on Saturday mornings in Delft during the warm months of the year yields all manner of wonderful surprises and has a delightful canal-side location to boot. Pieces such as a cake-serving spoon or coffee grinder are not only attractive but will find practical use in the home. ■



*You'd be hard-pressed to find a souvenir shop anywhere in Amsterdam that didn't offer diminutive clogs or whimsical windmills made of this pottery.*



# Souvenirs

## from European Countries to Snag

By Ethan Merrifield

Collecting souvenirs is an important part of travelling for most people. But how do you avoid tacky figurines of famous landmarks? I found that the best way to get souvenirs that you actually like is to focus your search on a few themes.

The most universal themes are “something to eat,” “something to use” or “something to wear.” Thankfully, these categories can make the difference between an item that will remind you fondly of your travels and resenting a space-wasting souvenir. Here are a few suggestions for interesting and valued collectibles to keep in mind when travelling in Europe.

### Switzerland

**Chocolate** - Everyone has heard of the quality of Swiss chocolate. Whether it's Lindt, Toblerone or any of the local chocolate shops, you are sure to enjoy the world-famous sweets.

**Swiss Army Knife** - These multi-tools have long held international recognition for their quality and versatility. You can be sure that you will use this tool often and for many situations that may give you a warm remembrance from your trip to Switzerland.

**Watches** - As the pinnacle of luxury and craftsmanship, Swiss-made watches are a souvenir that could last a lifetime of wear.

### Poland

**Amber jewelry** - The warm color of these precious stones will light up your eyes when you remember where you picked them up.

**Ceramic pottery** - The quality of this pottery will stand out to guests when you bring out the fine dishware at dinner parties.

**“Krówki” (Polish fudge)** - A snack with a unique texture, firm on the outside and almost runny on the inside, definitely a novel experience to take home with you.

### France

**Beret** - Berets are still a fashionable piece of clothing all around the world and it will certainly look chic.

**Books or postcards from the bouquinistes in Paris** - All along the Seine River you will find little shops selling books, postcards and street art. Pick up something to remember.

**Wine** - Bordeaux, Provence, Rhône or Burgundy all are well-known for quality and what better wine to break out than French wine to accompany the memories of your trip as you sip it?

### Greece

**Anything to do with olives** - Enjoy the salty and bitter fruits that define the Mediterranean region.

**Leather sandals** - With the humidity of Greece, open shoes are essential for your feet and back home, sandals are a summer favorite.

**“Tavli” (Greek Backgammon)** - This board game is well-known in the region around Greece and Turkey. Similar in style to Backgammon, the game would be a hit at board game night.

### Germany

**Beer stein** - What better way to remember your time in Germany than by drinking beers from a stein?

**Hugo Boss** - Invest in a sleek suit that you can use for many formal events. You'll look great, and Hugo Boss is known for quality all around the world.

**Sausages and bread** - These hearty foods will stick in your memory like they will stick to your hips.

### Hungary

**“Pálinka” (fruit brandy)** - This special alcohol is made purely from fruit exclusive to Hungary.

**Porcelain jewelry** - Pure and white, these delicate pieces are a lovely accessory.

**Rubik's cube** - Believe it or not, this little puzzle fad was created by a Hungarian sculptor and architect.

### Ireland

**Claddagh ring** - Symbolizing love, loyalty and friendship, this ring is great to give your significant other as it indicates your relationship status depending on how it's worn.

**Guinness or Irish whiskey** - Bring home the warm character of Irish people by sharing a drink with your buddies.

**Irish music (The Dubliners)** - Easily the best kind of music for sharing a sing-along with strangers in the pub.

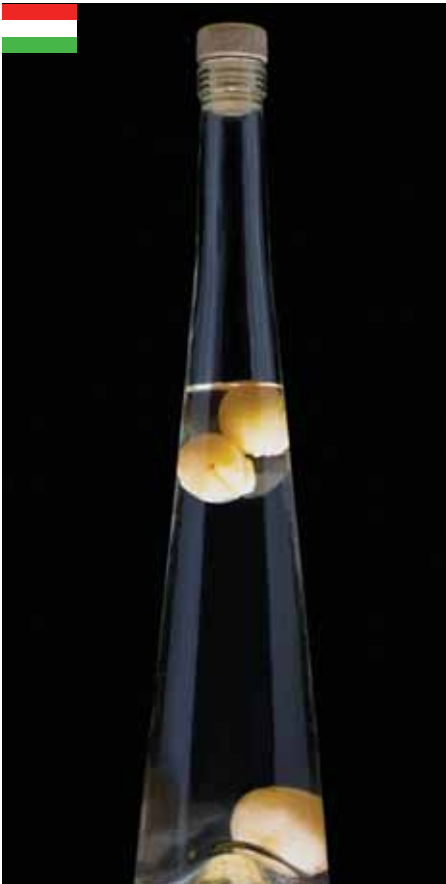
### Denmark

**Butter cookies** - These blue tins won't have your grandmother's sewing supplies for once.

**Big sweaters** - Denmark is renowned for the concept of “hygge,” which is a feeling of coziness and well-being. Think of sitting around a comfy fire or snuggling up on the couch in your new sweater.

**Legos** - Taking its name from the Danish words “leg godt” meaning “play well,” these little bricks have captured the imagination of kids since 1932.

There are far more souvenirs in Europe than what is listed here, but hopefully these suggestions will help guide your souvenir hunt and ensure that the things you take home with you bring happiness (and not clutter) to your house. ■



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# Staff Picks

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From community news to travel and PCS tips, StripesEurope.com has got you covered to conquer your tour in Europe!

In this edition, we asked some of our staff **"What will you never take for granted when traveling again?"** Check out what they have to say!



Chad Garland  
REPORTER

"Hand sanitizer. Always."



Kevin R. Miller  
CUSTOMER SERVICE  
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"Spending time with family and friends abroad. You don't realize how precious this time is until you are unable to travel due to unforeseen circumstances and/or a pandemic."



Jolanta Jackson  
SUPERVISORY  
ACCOUNTANT

"Having a perfect cup of cappuccino in a ceramic cup (not paper!) and enjoying it for a long time in a tiny cafe while watching the world go by."



Jeff Teeselink  
MULTIMEDIA  
CONSULTANT

"Perhaps have a backup credit card in case the one you always use doesn't go through or gets declined."



J.P. Lawrence  
REPORTER

"I miss feeling out the energy of people as I sit in cafes and restaurants in new places. Just being able to watch strangers as they eat, talk and joke, and feeling the energy of the room ebb and flow."



Leah Geier  
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"Being able to simply book and go—no tests, no cards, no questions or last-minute anxiety when you check in or land, wondering if where you are going is going to change rules or levels... Just booking, packing and going."

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