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*Romanian Papanași*

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*10 Things to Know*

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# Important German Table Manners

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By Emma Bareihs

Experiencing Germany wouldn't be complete without trying the local foods. One thing to note about eating in Europe is the differences in table manners from what most Americans know. Although you don't have to fully adapt to the traditional customs, it doesn't hurt to try eating like a European. These top five tips can get you started in Germany.

1. When you "cheers" around the table, look each person in the eye as you clink glasses.

2. In Germany, it is a rule of thumb to hold the fork in the left hand and knife in the right hand throughout the entire meal. As opposed to cutting everything into bite-sized pieces at once, you should cut one piece at a time.

3. Like most countries in Europe, water does not come automatically before the meal. Instead, you should ask for the water you would like when ordering your drinks (still or sparkling).

4. When you are finished with your meal, lay the utensils at an angle on the plate. The tips of the fork and knife should be in the center of the plate and the handles should lay on the bottom right of the plate.

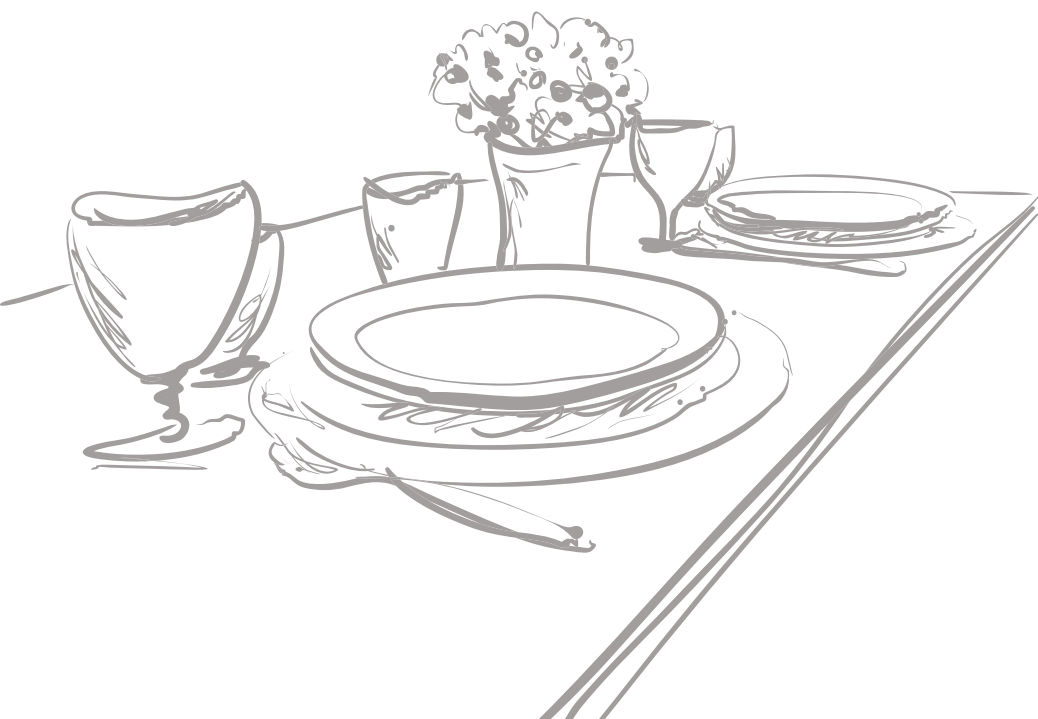
5. Unless you are in a larger city, many German restaurants are cash only. Bring cash with you, unless you call ahead to check their payment services. At the end of the meal, an average tip in Germany is about 10 percent.

Adjusting to new table manners might be difficult at first, but with practice, it can become second nature. Try applying these table manners into your routine to impress the Germans with the opposite impression of the "lazy American." ■

---

*"Adjusting to new table manners might be difficult at first, but with practice, it can become second nature."*

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# PHOTO of the month

Lago di Braies is the Dolomites' showstopper. Known as the "Pearl among Dolomite lakes," Lago di Braies provides the perfect photo opportunity. To avoid the crowds, it's best to go in the early morning.

Photo by Elizabeth Jones.

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a day in

# BAD WIMPFEN

By Karen Bradbury

Photos by [www.badwimpfen.de](http://www.badwimpfen.de)

“The gem in Bad Wimpfen’s crown is the Hohenstaufen Kaiserpfalz, an imperial palace. Bad Wimpfen’s Kaiserpfalz was the largest such structure north of the Alps.”

*Umpteen centuries ago, travelers heading east along the Neckar River would have reached a small, rather unremarkable settlement. At this juncture, two major trade routes diverged, and our wanderers would have needed to decide which way to go.*

Today’s travelers fortunate enough to wind up in Bad Wimpfen, an under-the-radar spa town between Heidelberg and Heilbronn in the state of Baden-Württemberg, face a similar quandary. They could explore the surroundings via the touristic route called the Burgenstrasse, or Castle Route, which tempts with its 60-odd castles perched alongside rivers and on craggy hills. Should these travelers be moving with pedal power, as I was the day I discovered for myself this remarkable medieval town, the Salt and Brine Cycling Route might better serve as their guiding light.

Before leaving town, however, they would be well advised to soak up all the sights this beautiful town has to offer. And just as it was a long time ago, when it comes to where and what to explore, there are often two good options.





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## *Hill or Valley?*

Bad Wimpfen is a tale of two cities: there's the older Wimpfen im Tal (Wimpfen in the Valley) situated on the Neckar itself and Wimpfen am Berg (Wimpfen on the Hill) where the heart of the exquisite old center lies. In the lower town, there's the diocese church of St. Peter to see, along with the Gothic Cornelius Church.

Exertion is needed to reach the upper town; cobblestone alleys and a plethora of half-timbered houses reward for one's efforts. The gem in Bad Wimpfen's crown is the Hohenstaufen Kaiserpfalz. (The term Kaiserpfalz, or Imperial Palace, refers to one of several castles or palaces scattered across the Holy Roman Empire at which the emperor, his advisors and attendants would set up temporary quarters for weeks or months at a time.) Bad Wimpfen's Kaiserpfalz was the largest such structure north of the Alps.



## *Red or Blue Tower?*

Much of the walls and two towers of the Imperial Palace stand tall today. The Blauer Turm, or Blue Tower, forms the town's distinctive, medieval skyline and offers spectacular panoramic views to those who scale it. The Roter Turm, or Red Tower, presents itself in the guise of a defensive tour from around 1200 and displays replicas of weapons and items of daily use from around that time.

## *Thermal Bath or Swimming Pool?*

As the prefix "Bad" suggests, this was a place that attracted those in search of a water cure. Patients and those after deep relaxation still come here. They soak in the Solebad, a thermal bath with indoor and outdoor pools brimming with tiny bubbles. Swimmers can get their laps in at the Mineral Freibad, a spacious outdoor swimming pool open during the summer months.



## *Summer or Winter?*

Those who like to tie their visits to new places to large-scale events need not wait long for an occasion to visit Bad Wimpfen. Summer types can time visits to coincide with the Reichsstadtfest, a historical fest held biennially in June, or to the Talmarkt, a lively volksfest held several weeks later. Shortly thereafter, the weekend known as Montmartre Flair sees French merchants flock to town to sell their pretty wares. Fans of winter will be in their element at the Altdeutscher Weihnachtsmarkt, an old-timey Christmas market that makes the most of the city's lovely, one-of-a-kind ambiance. ■



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Romania provides the perfect getaway experience with its beautiful landscape and foggy sunrises over the fields of the Carpathian Mountain range.

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# Romania

## DISCOVER THE WONDERS

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BY STACY ROMAN

Romania has long been a hidden treasure in Eastern Europe. With majestic mountain ranges, glass-like lakes and villages that appear to be straight out of a fairy tale, it's no wonder this spectacular country is emerging as a must-visit destination. Hulking castles and fortresses lend themselves to mythical legends and creatures, such as Count Dracula. However, there is so much more to Romania than vampiric folklore and shadowy tales. Come and discover the wonder and beauty of this amazing country.



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## BUCHAREST

Located near the southeastern border near Bulgaria is the capital city of Bucharest. Since the fall of communism, the city has been slowly emerging as a vibrant and powerful metropolitan hub. One thing consistent throughout the capital is the sheer grandiosity on display. The Palace of Parliament was commissioned by former dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu and is jaw-droppingly huge. With more than 1,100 rooms, the Romanian government only occupies roughly 30% of the building. Other highlights include the impressive Romanian Athenaeum—home to the philharmonic orchestra and the Arch of Triumph, which boasts stunning vistas of the city from the top.



## TIMIȘOARA

Ruled by Turks, Austrians and Hungarians, Timișoara is a veritable melting pot of culture and history. The city was also the spark that lit the flame of the Romanian Revolution in 1989, leading to the government's downfall less than a week after the protests began. Today, Timișoara is filled with college students, well-preserved architecture and stately squares. Art galleries and museums are housed in former Baroque-style mansions, while bustling cafes awaken the old town streets. Stroll through the meticulous riverfront gardens lining the Bega River as it winds its way through the city.

## TRANSYLVANIA AND BRAȘOV

In the beating heart of this beautiful country is Transylvania. Known for its picturesque scenery filled with jagged peaks and castles, it feels as though you've stepped into a Brothers Grimm or Bram Stoker story. The most famous of these castles—Bran Castle—is the legendary home of Count Dracula. Further away toward the western edges of Transylvania is

Corvin Castle. This medieval fortress is actually the largest castle in Romania and is a testimony to Gothic and Renaissance architecture.

Centered in the Transylvania region is Brașov, a busy city filled with old-world charm and plenty of history. While many use it as a starting point for touring around the area, it's definitely worth exploring. Brightly colored Baroque buildings line the streets leading to the town square. The Black Church is an impressive Gothic-style church built by the local German community. After suffering a devastating fire in the late 1600s, the church derived its name from the remaining soot and smoke on the walls.

## THE TRANSĂGĂRĂȘAN

Made famous by the adrenaline junkies of the TV show "Top Gear," the Transăgărășan is a road stretching more than 150 kilometers north and south through the southern Carpathian Mountains. Initially built as a quick escape in the event of a Soviet invasion, the Transăgărășan has been deemed one of the most exhilarating roads in the world. The route is filled with hills, valleys, alpine glaciers, twisting hairpin turns and breathtaking views of Romania's beauty.





LEFT:  
Aerial view of the  
Danube River Delta.  
BOTTOM LEFT:  
The famous  
Transfăgărășan road.



## AMAZING ECOSYSTEMS

Romania is home to a variety of different ecosystems. From the steep mountain ranges to more than 12,000 caves found underground to the serene wetlands and shoreline of the Black Sea, it's easy to find the natural wonders. Approximately two hours northeast of Bucharest is Vulcanii Norioși Pâclele Mari, also known as Berca Mud Volcanoes. This geological phenomenon is a mix of natural gases, clay and salty mash water. As the gases release toward the surface, it causes the mud and water to erupt, creating small mud "volcanoes."

At the opposite end of the country toward the northwest is Salina Turda—the Turda Salt Mine. At 120 meters deep, this salt mine dates back to the 11th century and was operated until the early 1900s. After it shuttered, the mine was refurbished and is now considered one of the largest salt mine museums in Europe. It has an incredibly epic amusement park underground, including mini-golf, a Ferris wheel and a bowling alley.

For nature lovers and bird-watchers, the Danube Delta is the second-largest yet best-preserved in Europe. The delta spans a massive 580,000 hectares and is home to more than 300 species of birds and wildlife, many of which have been on the endangered species list. While parts of the reserve are in neighboring Ukraine, much of the wetlands are found in Romania and are part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. ■

## *Fun Facts about Romania*

- It's been part of the EU since 2007, and its currency is the euro.
- Romania has won international acclaim for its wine production.
- Vlad III (also known as Vlad the Impaler) and Bran Castle are said to have inspired "Dracula;" however, the tyrannical ruler never stayed at Bran Castle.
- The Palace of Parliament is the world's heaviest building, consisting of more than 700,000 tons of bronze and steel and 4,500 tons of crystal.

# 10 Things to know about Paris

By Mary Del Rosario



# 1

A croissant, or Pain au Chocolat, is the breakfast of choice for many Parisians, which can be found at any "boulangerie," bakery.



For a more relaxed travel experience, it's best to take the train. Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est are the popular train stations in Paris.

# 2



# 3

Be wary of games such as the cup game near touristy places. Oftentimes, they are a scam and provide an easy distraction for pickpockets.



*“Bonjour!”*

# 4

The French are very proud of their language, so learning basic pleasantries and exchanges will go a long way when navigating the city.



5

Don't be upset if a restaurant is closed for lunch as many partake in "sieste"—resting hours during mid-day. Some businesses may close for two to four hours every afternoon.



6



There are 20 Arrondissement (neighborhoods) in Paris. The First Arrondissement is the most admired one, housing popular attractions such as the Louvre and the Royal Palace.

7

The origin of Paris' nickname, The City of Light, is believed to come from the Age of Enlightenment, when many intellectuals lived here.



8

Be aware when taking the metro as stops are not announced—it's best to count them.



9

The Paris Pass will be a money and time saver, as it gives you free entry to over 60 attractions and tours.



10

Locals recommend you do not visit in August since many businesses are closed for their holiday. August is also one of the hottest months. ■



# PAPANAȘI:

— *Your New Favorite Romanian Dessert* —



By Anna Leigh Bagiackas

If there's one kind of food that will get me buying a plane ticket to a new place, it's dessert. And with these fried cheese-filled, donut-like beauties, you can bet I'm pulling out my passport and credit card for a trip to Romania—right after I make these, of course.

Papanashi, pronounced papanash, are a traditional Romanian dessert that are found on most local restaurant menus. Topped with blueberry jam and a cream similar to sour cream or crème fraîche, the donut-like treats are made with a Romanian cow's milk soft cheese and fried to golden perfection. Adapted versions use ricotta or cottage cheese, as these cheeses are more widely available for the home cook. These are best served warm.

## PAPANAȘI

*Start to finish: 45 minutes*

*Serves: 8*

**1 pound ricotta cheese**

**1/2 cup sugar**

**2 eggs**

**1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour**

**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

**1/4 teaspoon baking soda**

**1/4 teaspoon salt**

**1 cup sour cream or crème fraîche**

**1 cup blueberry jam, or whichever flavor you prefer**

**Oil for frying**

In the bowl of a mixer, combine the cheese, sugar, eggs, vanilla, baking soda and salt. Mix until it is well incorporated and then gradually add the flour. Continue mixing; the batter will be sticky but do not add additional flour.

Flour your work surface well and dump the mixture onto the surface. With lots of flour on your hands, shape the dough into a ball. Then cut it into 8 equal pieces. Take each piece and cut a small portion from it, this will make the donut hole. You should have 16 pieces of dough.

Take the small pieces and roll them into small balls, flouring your hands as necessary. Do the same thing with the larger pieces, and then press them down flat and use your finger to press through the middle to make a hole.

Heat up the oil in a Dutch oven or large pot. When it's hot, fry the donuts, 4 at a time and flipping halfway through. When they are golden brown, remove and place on a paper towel-lined rack. Make sure the oil is back up to temperature before putting in a new batch. Fry all of the donuts and donut holes.

To serve, place warm donuts on a plate, dollop a couple spoonfuls of sour cream in the middle and then a heaping spoonful of jam. Place the donut holes on top and serve. ■

*(This recipe was adapted from Jo Cooks.)*



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