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April Events

EDITOR'S

PICKS

By Karen Bradbury

Spring has sprung, and with the nicer weather comes more hopeful times. While it's still too soon to declare things back to normal, a steadily growing list of planned events is just as welcome as flowers after the rain. Given the times we're in, be sure to double-check that these events will be going forward before planning travel of any distance, and be sure to arm yourself with all the necessary paperwork to confirm you're fully up to date with the COVID-19 regulations in force at the time of the event.

Keramikmarkt / Ceramics Market April 2 to 3, Homburg



Some 100 artisans from Germany, France and the Benelux display and sell unique and colorful wares from garden decor to costume jewelry.

Short Night of Museums and Galleries in Wiesbaden April 9, Wiesbaden



Explore Wiesbaden's artistic and cultural side as 26 museums, galleries and other cultural institutions host special events and exhibitions.

Osterspektakel / Easter Spectacle April 16 to 18, Mainz-Kastel



The medieval world of jesters, fire artists, knights, damsels, musicians and birds of prey springs to life at a camp next to a mighty fortress by the Rhine River.

Stuttgarter Frühlingsfest / Spring Fest April 16 to May 8, Stuttgart



Thrilling rides, games of chance, tasty foods and free-flowing beer return to the Cannstatter Wasen. Fireworks set to music close festivities.

Living Arts and Crafts April 16 to 18, Maulbronn



Artisans from Germany and beyond present a vast range of high-quality goods from silks to ceramics in the courtyard of a monastery.

Wein am Dom / Wine by the Cathedral April 23 to 24, Speyer



A UNESCO-listed cathedral is the backdrop to this refined wine fair at which the best drops of the winemakers of the Rhineland-Palatine flow.

München Frühlingsfest / Spring Fest April 22 to May 8, Munich



Known as Oktoberfest's Little Sister, this folk festival at the Theresienwiese features fewer beer tents and rides but the same great atmosphere.

Kreativ Welt / Creative World April 28 to May 1, Offenbach



Crafty types can stock up on supplies from felt to feathers, or discover a brand new hobby at this trade show and market at the Messe Offenbach.

PLAN AHEAD

Die Blaue Nacht / The Blue Night May 7, Nuremberg

On this annual late night of art and culture, the Old Town is bathed in a blue light as museums, churches and clubs offer shows, music and performances. ■

PHOTO of the month

Known as the largest Saharan oasis of Morocco, the Tafilalet region is nothing short of amazing. Filled with lush palm trees, you'll forget you're in the Moroccan desert. The best panoramic views are found from atop a "ksour" overlooking the palm oasis of the Oued Ziz.

Photo by Ashlee Voyce.

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a day in

ULM

By Stacy Roman

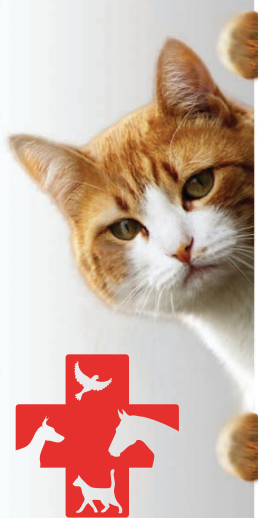
Living in Germany can make for some memorable day trips, especially if you live in the Bavaria or Baden-Württemberg regions. The excitement of Munich or the outdoor playground of the Black Forest is just a few hours away. It can be easy to overlook the cities a little more off the beaten autobahn. Take, for instance, the delightful medieval town of Ulm. Established along the banks of the Danube River, Ulm sits right on top of the border between Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. With a fascinating history, quirky museums and plenty to do, it's easy to spend the day here.



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What to See and Do

Believed to have been founded around 850, Ulm was once a haven for German royalty. Today, the city is known as a hub for transportation and communications and its iconic Gothic cathedral. The Ulm Münster was founded and began construction in 1377, and the massive house of worship would take more than 500 years to complete. Reaching more than 160 meters in height, it's the home to the tallest church spire in the world. Although the tower is not currently accessible to visitors, you can still tour the impressive nave, see the intricate stained-glass windows and stunning altars. Across the river and just outside Neu Ulm is Wiblingen Abbey. This Benedictine monastery dates to the 11th century and features breathtaking works of art. The exquisite library features ornate and stunning one-of-a-kind detailing.



If you're looking for something a little more outside of the box, head to the Museum of Bread Culture. Don't worry, you won't find any moldy loaves of bread inside. Instead, you'll find an in-depth and mesmerizing exhibit of the importance of bread within culture and civilization. Are you tired of being inside? Head to the Fischerviertel and step inside a fairy tale. With brightly colored half-timbered houses, this area once belonged to the fishermen and tanners. As you walk closer toward the water, be sure to keep an eye out for Hotel Schiefes Haus. Built in the 1400s, this crooked building leans precariously over the water. Strolling through the Altstadt, take a gander at the Ulmer Rathaus. The city hall is covered in vibrant frescoes from the 1500s and features a beautiful astronomical clock.

Ulm has a vast amount of green space and parks. Covering a large northeast portion of the city is Friedrichsau. In the warmer spring and summer months, it's the perfect place to spend the day outside. While not quite as impressive as the Munich or Berlin Zoos, the Tiergarten Ulm (located within the park) is home to a small collection of animals and smaller gardens. There is truly something for everyone with water fountains, playgrounds for little ones, lively "Biergartens" and a sports stadium.

Good Eats

Start your day off right with a strong coffee, at Kaffee Fred. About a block or two northeast of the cathedral, this hole-in-the-wall cafe is known for its delicious specialty coffees and freshly baked treats. For a filling lunch, head to Wirsthaus zur Brezel. This gastropub offers a modern twist on German favorites. Warm, gooey Käsespätzle, a variety of golden, crispy schnitzel and vegetarian and vegan offerings make this a great dining option for all palates. After trekking along the city's medieval walls, head to Ristorante Italiano San Remo. Offering hearty pizzas, handmade pasta dishes and boasting an impressive Italian wine list, you'll be happy you stopped by. ■



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Lovely Lithuania.

By Jolanta Jackson



Vilnius, the capital city of Lithuania, offers one of the largest and most beautiful old towns in central and eastern Europe.



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Vilnius

Vilnius, the capital city of Lithuania, will give you an in-depth look at a UNESCO World Heritage site and a great-value European city destination. Vilnius offers one of the largest and most beautiful old towns in central and eastern Europe with cozy cafes, restaurants and narrow, curvy streets full of new discoveries around every corner. You will also see impressive examples of Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and Classical domes as well as towers and castles spread throughout the medieval city. The historic center of Vilnius includes three castles, Upper, Lower and Curved, and the area encircled by a wall from the Middle Ages.

Start your Vilnius tour in the Cathedral Square, where you will find the magnificent neoclassical Vilnius Cathedral, the newly rebuilt Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania and the statue of Vilnius' founder, Grand Duke Gediminas. There is a magical tile between the Cathedral and the tower that says "Stebuklas" (meaning miracle). Step on it, close your eyes, turn around three times and make a wish. Legend says it will come true. Later, take a short climb to the Gediminas castle tower, which dates back to the 13th century, and enjoy the breathtaking views of Vilnius from above.

Strolling down the narrow downtown streets, you will find St. Anne's Church, a prominent example of both Flamboyant Gothic and Brick Gothic styles. According to a well-known legend, Emperor Napoleon, after seeing the church during the Franco-Prussian War in 1812, liked it so much that he wished to carry it home to Paris in the palm of his hand.

Later, enjoy your walk on Pilies Street visiting souvenir, jewelry, crafts and linen shops. Be sure to buy original pieces of jewelry made of amber or "Lithuanian gold." Amber has been harvested from the shores of the Baltic Sea since prehistoric times and Lithuanian people still believe it possesses the power of healing.

After a long walk, you deserve a good Lithuanian meal. The most popular traditional dish features "cepelinai," grated potato dumplings stuffed with minced meat or cottage cheese. The best place to eat is at Restaurant Forto Dvaras. Other traditional dishes include cold beetroot soup with hot potatoes, "saltibarsciai," roasted black bread, "kepta duona" and deep fried biscuits, "zagarelii." Don't forget to try one of 200 varieties of cold Lithuanian beer or make a toast with a glass of Lithuanian sparkling wine or the non-alcoholic "gira," made from black bread.

TOP Start your Vilnius tour in the Cathedral Square, where you will find the magnificent neoclassical Vilnius Cathedral.

MIDDLE "Cepelinai," grated potato dumplings stuffed with minced meat or cottage cheese, is one of the most popular traditional dishes.

BELOW Trakai Island Castle is a popular place for weddings, picnics and picture-taking.



Trakai Island Castle

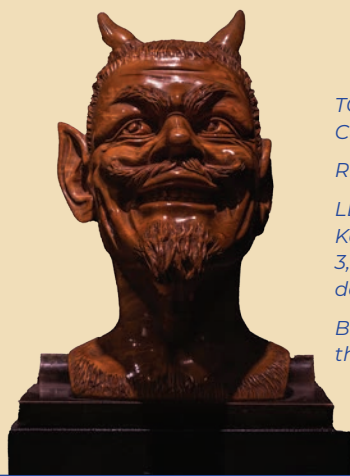
Just a half-hour train ride from Vilnius is Trakai, an island castle built in the 14th century that became a residential place for the dukes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania until the capital was moved to Vilnius. Now the castle is one of the most visited tourist attractions and is a popular place for weddings, picnics and picture-taking. Visit the castle's museum, which exhibits many treasures found at the site, and explore its secret passageways and spiral staircases. Be sure to enjoy the impressive stained glass and frescoes. You can also rent a rowboat or hop in a paddleboat and enjoy the serene lake with picturesque views from every angle. Since Trakai was a multicultural capital, for lunch try the most popular Karaites dish "kibina," pastries traditionally filled with mutton and onions.





Kaunas

The second-largest Lithuanian city is just a one-hour train or bus ride away from Vilnius. Some budget airlines fly directly there, and it is worth visiting. At the confluence of the two largest Lithuanian rivers, Nemunas and Neris, Kaunas was the capital city during the interwar period when Vilnius was annexed by Poland, and now it is called the city of museums. You can visit the War Museum of Vytautas the Great, Historical Presidential Palace or Devil's Museum (Zmuidzinavicius Museum), which has a collection of more than 3,000 sculptures and carvings of devils from Lithuania and all over the world. The Akropolis mall was built around a few original 18th-century old town buildings and is a good place to shop with a variety of stores and restaurants. From there, head toward the pedestrian avenue, Laisvės Aleja, and visit the city's oldest church, Vytautas' Church, and the 14th century Kaunas Castle.



TOP The sand dunes of the Curonian Spit.

RIGHT The port city of Klaipėda.

LEFT The Devil's Museum in Kaunas has a collection of over 3,000 carvings and sculptures of devils.

BELOW A pedestrian bridge over the Nemunas River in Kaunas.



Klaipėda and the Curonian Spit

If you are in Lithuania for a long weekend, you still have time to go to the Baltic Sea and visit the port city of Klaipėda and the Curonian Spit. From downtown Klaipėda, which features German-style, 18th-century wood-framed buildings, you could hop on a ferry to the Curonian Spit, a long thin sand dune in between the Curonian Lagoon and the Baltic Sea. The Baltic legend says the spit was formed by a giantess named Neringa, who was playing with the sand on the seashore. Now the Curonian Spit is a UNESCO World Heritage site with refreshing pine forests and huge drifting sand dunes. You could climb to the Panardis sand dune, which is 52 meters above sea level, and enjoy the enchanting views of the Curonian Lagoon and the Baltic Sea. Since the Lithuanian-Russian border is less than a mile away, make sure you follow the trails while hiking in the dunes, so you don't cross the border illegally. Take a quiet romantic sunset stroll on the seashore and search for pieces of amber. Legend says that the ruins of sea goddess Jurate's amber castle could be found here after it was destroyed as punishment for loving a fisherman.

Still doubting if you are ready to visit Lithuania? You are ready, because you already know one very important word in Lithuanian, "Aciu" (AH-choo), which means "thanks." ■

YOUR *Tuscany* BUCKET LIST

By Mary Del Rosario

Planning to explore the beautiful Italian region of Tuscany? Use this bucket list as your inspiration to create an unforgettable trip!

1 Eat all the delicious cuisine—such as *crostini Toscani*, chicken liver pâté served on crunchy toasted bread; *panzanella*, a salad where bread is the superstar; *tagliatelle al tartufo*, pasta doused in butter and garlic and sprinkled with black truffle and Parmesan cheese—to your heart's content.



2

If food is your love language, take a cooking class!



3 *Step back in time* and see breathtaking views of the Italian hillside in the towns of Cortona, San Gimignano, Siena and Lucca.



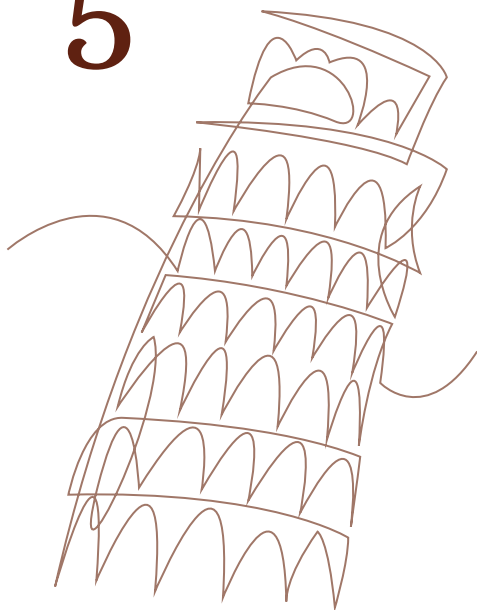
4



Become one with nature by hiking the *Uccellina Mountains*, unspoiled hills belonging to the Maremma Regional Park and the Alpi Apuane, a mountain range situated between the valleys of the Serchio and Magra rivers.



5



Become cultured in the more well-known cities of Pisa and Florence. If in Pisa, be sure to take a picture of yourself with the Leaning Tower of Pisa in the background.

6

Sleep in a charming Tuscan villa. Montechiello, Talamone, Sorano and Savona are a few romantic hilly villages to check out.



7

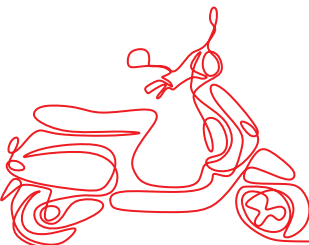


Tan and snorkel the day away at *Cala del Gesso*, an underrated remote beach in Argentario.

©CRISTINA GOTTARDI/UNSPLASH

8

Meander through the Tuscan countryside on a vespa.



9

Be on the hunt for truffles—San Miniato, Crete Senesi and Mugello are a few areas that may bring luck to your search.

10

Toast to a memorable experience with a bottle of *Chianti*. Bonus points if you do a Chianti tasting.



Amber:

A Souvenir From Lithuania

By Anna Leigh Bagiackas

Known as the “gold of Lithuania,” amber has been made into various items that are perfect for you to take home and remember your time in this beautiful country. While you can find amber elsewhere, it is said that Baltic amber (amber from the Baltic Sea) is some of the highest quality and comes from the largest deposit of the natural resource. Lithuania has become the place to find it.



What is Amber?

Baltic amber, which is also known as “succinite,” is fossilized tree resin transformed over time. The area surrounding the Baltic Sea was highly forested throughout history and when trees were damaged, they would release sap to naturally heal themselves. The sap would then make its way to the forest floor, where it would be washed away by rivers into the sea. Transformed and preserved by nature’s processes with wind, water, heat, pressure and time, it is said that the amber found in this region today could be from 44 million years ago. Throughout its long history, many have believed in amber’s power to protect and heal. Supposedly, amber protects from evil and encourages creativity, and it is frequently used in modern spas for aromatherapy.

It became such an important commodity to the area that the “Amber Road” trade route was important for moving amber from the Baltic Sea to southeastern Europe. While some places, such as Kaliningrad Oblast in Russia, have made an industry of mining amber, residents along the Baltic coast go searching for this fossilized tree resin after storms wash pieces of it onto the shore. You can travel along a modern Amber Road, which was inspired by the original route, and visit various cities along the sea’s coast.

Fun fact: One of the most well-known exhibits of amber was the “Amber Room,” a room in the Catherine Palace in St. Petersburg that was paneled in different shades of amber. During World War II, the room (or the pieces within it) was taken by the Nazis and although many believe it was destroyed, there are other theories that it still exists and has yet to be found.



Shopping for Amber

Finding amber while in Lithuania will not be a difficult task, as shops and vendors are plentiful where you can find various items. What will be more challenging is deciding what you want to purchase. Maybe it’s something small and inexpensive, perfect for packing away in your suitcase and bringing back as a gift, or maybe you want to invest more in a designer piece that you can pass down in your family. Some of the most popular items made from amber include necklaces, bracelets, earrings, decorative pieces and other objects.

You can also find different colors of amber, from yellow and honey colored to even green and red. It is sometimes translucent and sometimes opaque; and it can be treated and polished, depending on what kind of finish is desired. So, you will have lots of choices to make depending on what you are interested in. Seek out brands such as Ketri, Bambero, Opakopa and Kameja. If you’re in Vilnius, head to Pilies Street, where shops cater to tourists looking for a range of amber items. ■





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