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WHAT'S UP

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TRICK OR TREAT!

tasty

HALLOWEEN TREATS

By Jeana Coleman



While recently woodworking in the garage, my husband had a small scuffle with the router saw. Router, 1. Fingertip, 0. And while I can happily report that his finger is healing nicely and we are no longer worried about the future of his mechanical dexterity, the gruesome mishap and E.R. visit were the inspiration for these bloody good Halloween treats.

Glass Shard Cupcakes

Ouch! This cupcake looks dangerous, but you'll risk a few stitches for its deliciously tangy cream cheese frosting. It's also surprisingly easy to make.

The cupcake and frosting: I found a delicious red velvet cupcake recipe from www.sallysbakingaddiction.com, but either white or red velvet box mixes would look great, too, if you're short on time.

Top them with my cream cheese frosting recipe: whip together an 8-ounce box of cream cheese, a stick of butter (both at room temperature), a tsp. of vanilla extract, and about one cup of confectioner's (powdered) sugar. Add more sugar if you prefer sweeter, stiffer frosting.

The "blood": Cherry pie filling worked well and tasted yummy with the cream cheese. Use a strainer to separate the cherries from the glaze, then use a food processor to blend the cherries till nearly smooth. Mix equal parts of blended cherries with glaze, and add one drop of blue food coloring to deepen the color.

The "glass": Using a spun sugar recipe from www.howtocookthat.net, I boiled the sugar as noted but instead of making spun strands, I carefully poured the mixture onto a rimmed baking sheet to cool, quickly tilting the pan from side to side to allow the mixture to spread out and create thin "glass." Let sit to harden, which took about an hour. Then tap the center with a large spoon to shatter into shards.

To decorate: Pipe frosting onto a cupcake with a large round tip, then dip the flat end of a shard into the cherry mixture, and push into the frosting. Spoon cherry mixture on either side of the shard till it begins to run down the side. Serve!

Severed Finger Cookies

The most gruesomely fun cookie you'll ever make is also a tasty one! I tweaked a recipe from www.rachaelraymag.com by substituting almond extract and adding red and yellow food coloring to create a fleshy color. Be sure to keep the dough cold and shape pinky-sized cookies or they will look like they were steamrolled. Use a butter knife to gently score a few creases, and press the blade's flat edge into the tip to make a space for the almond. Dip an almond slice into the cherry mixture (that you used for the



glass cupcakes) and press into the space. If almond tips break, don't worry! They'll look even more realistic after they bake. To add to the realism, gently brush a little cocoa powder into the creases. Once cooled, dip the severed end into the cherry mixture. Or, let guests dip the fingers into a bowl of the mixture. We were delightfully grossed out by the results. My friend even had goosebumps!

Mummy Cupcakes

We went through mounds of gauze dressing his finger — enough to wrap a mummy! In fact, it was easier to make these darling mummy cupcakes than wrap that wicked wound.

I found ready-made fondant and candy eyes at the local market and used chocolate and red velvet cupcakes. A bit of the cream cheese frosting helped glue down the eyes (tinted green to make the eyes stand out), and thinly rolled out fondant was cut into strips with a pizza cutter. Place trimmed strips strategically along the mummy's face, and done! And not a bit of flesh was spared.

Although making these creepy treats was in good ol' tongue-in-cheek fun, let this harrowing tale be a lesson for you: keep your digits away from sharp, severed or seeping things — unless they're slathered in buttercream! ■

Halloween Traditions

IN GERMANY

By Jessica Zen



Children running around decked out head to toe in elaborate costumes, desperately trying to collect the most possible candy before mom and dad take them home, is one of the many highlights of an American Halloween. Watching “Hocus Pocus” for the 20th time, carving pumpkins, singing the monster mash and roasting pumpkin seeds are a few other traditions in which children participate. Adults flock towards haunted houses and tend to use pumpkin spice in every imaginable food. But what about Halloween in Germany?

Though Halloween is primarily a North American holiday, Germany has started celebrating more and more. From media influence to the influx of American soldiers after the end of World War II, Germans have been exposed to American customs. While the Americans certainly play a large role, credit for bringing Halloween to Germany is also given to the German Association for the Toy Industry, which campaigned to promote Halloween after carnival was canceled in 1991 because of the First Gulf War. Since then, Halloween has become the third most popular holiday, after Christmas and Easter.

Since festivals are one of the most popular ways to celebrate in Germany, what better way to celebrate Halloween than to have a pumpkin festival? Though not all of the

pumpkin festivals have ties with Halloween, there are certainly some that encourage costumes and the Halloween theme. Other pumpkin festivals are more focused on the fall harvest season, though equally as fun.

For the ultimate haunted house, many Halloween enthusiasts find themselves at the Frankenstein Castle Halloween party in Pfungstadt, which promises to make your blood run cold while adrenaline courses through your body as you are scared senseless. Children can enjoy a less spooky party on Sundays filled with food, fun and no fear.

Trick-or-treating can be found in Germany, though mostly only in larger cities. This tradition isn't as widely practiced because children go out in costumes to collect treats on St. Martin's Day on Nov. 11. If you do see German children, or even adults dressed up for Halloween, their costumes are likely on the scarier side. With so many other opportunities to dress up during the year,

Germans tend to stick with more frightening masks and costumes. If you do have the pleasure of German trick-or-treaters, you'll hear them say “Süßes oder Saures!”

While Halloween is certainly present in Germany, there are still some that aren't fond of the celebration, as it directly interferes with a religious holiday. Reformation Day also falls on Oct. 31, and is a Protestant religious celebration of when Martin Luther started religious and social changes throughout Europe. There are some states in Germany where this is a public holiday, and many businesses are closed.

If you are looking to celebrate Halloween in Germany, it's likely that you won't have to search very hard. Embrace the local way and head to a haunted castle or pumpkin festival. Don't forget to find the scariest costume possible if it's a dress up event and definitely watch any of the “Halloween” movies to get in the holiday spirit! ■



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Embracing GERMANY

Superstitions

By Stacy Roman

Superstition is a “widely held but irrational belief in supernatural influences, especially as leading to good or bad luck...” In the States, we jump out of the way of black cats, avoid walking beneath ladders and try not to associate anything with the number 13 for fear of bad luck. In Germany, many commonly held superstitions or “Aberglaube” are similar. For instance, shattering a mirror brings misfortune and throwing a pinch of spilled salt over your shoulder will ward off evil spirits. However, there are a few different ones which may surprise you.

— THE “ABERGLAUBE” EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW —

Befriend the chimney sweep. Shaking hands with your neighborhood chimney sweep is thought to bring good luck, especially around the New Year.

Knock on the “Stammtisch.” If you’ve got a favorite pub or bar, be sure to knock on the “Stammtisch” or regulars’ table. According to the lore, tables are traditionally made of oak. Oak wood is considered holy, which the devil can’t touch. So, by knocking on the table, you’re proving to your peeps you’re not the devil. Win, win for everyone.

Pressing your thumbs together. Americans tend to cross their fingers for good luck, or use the phrase, “I’ll keep my fingers crossed!” Don’t. In Germany, crossing those digits means you’re lying and dishonest. Instead, press your thumbs together or say, “Ich drücke dir die Daumen!” — “I press my thumbs for you!”

Wish someone a happy birthday on the actual day — not before. If we know our friend is celebrating another trip around the sun, there’s usually no harm in wishing them a happy day before their actual birthday. Germans believe this is bad form and could bring bad luck, so please just wait until the actual day for well wishes and celebrations.

Don’t even think about toasting with water ... ever. Even if you choose not to imbibe the local brews, be sure you don’t “Prost!” with water. Essentially, you’d be wishing death upon your drinking buddies. Not exactly the best way to make new friends.

Beware of older women when walking. Old folklore has it out for elderly women. It’s said if you walk between two “old ladies,” you’re bringing nothing but trouble upon yourself.

Brot und Salz. To welcome a new neighbor or attending a housewarming event, bringing “Brot und Salz” (bread and salt) would be perfectly acceptable. This signifies wishes of the residents not going hungry in their new home. Just be sure to leave any knives at home; these are considered harbingers of injury and death. Definitely not a good first impression.

Cover your mouth when yawning. With good hygiene practices on the forefront of our minds, covering your mouth when yawning is not only polite and helps control the spread of germs, but it also helps ward off any evil spirits lurking around. Covering up prevents any demons from entering your body.

As you navigate the superstitious waters of German culture, I’ll press my thumbs for you and raise my favorite Hefeweizen while yelling “Prost!” ■



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GERMANY'S HIGHLIGHT

Creepy Castles

By Amanda Palumbo



There are roughly 20,000 castles throughout Germany, so you don't have to go very far to find one. Each one has its own unique history and spooky folklore.



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2

1



Something many don't know about me is my parents are paranormal investigators. Really. They have all the scientific equipment, they go on ghost hunts and they've even captured "evidence." So, my "spook-meter" is probably more liberal than most, but after extensive research and internet rabbit holes, here are the top three creepiest castles Bavaria has to offer.

1 Neuschwanstein Castle

Neuschwanstein's epic architecture and fairytale beauty is always front and center. But what's lurking in the background is equally fascinating. The castle that inspired Disney's "Sleeping Beauty" was built on the ruins of two former castles. Full-body apparitions wearing 17th-century military uniforms have been seen floating about this 19th-century castle. The ghosts got quite the castle upgrade.

Then there's the man who commissioned this beast of a castle, King Ludwig II of Bavaria. Officially, Ludwig took his own life by drowning in the nearby lake, as he was recently declared "mentally unfit." However, an autopsy showed there was no water in his lungs and he had suffered blows to his head and neck. There were also signs of strangulation. Ludwig's ghost haunts the castle grounds, lamenting over being murdered and his beloved castle stripped away from him before it was completed.

You can visit and tour this bucket-list-worthy castle and see its ornate and intricate architecture up close. If you want that iconic shot from across the castle for your Instagram page, head to Marien Bridge.

2 Wolfsegg Castle

Burg Wolfsegg isn't much to look at when compared to its Bavarian brother, Neuschwanstein, but the legend behind it is just as captivating. Its primary paranormal tenants date back to the 1500s when Knight Ulrich von Laaber hired two farmers to kill his wife, Klara, for having an affair with his arch-nemesis. Soon after, Ulrich and his two sons were found dead. While nothing is officially documented about their deaths, many believe it was his wife's lover seeking revenge. For hundreds of years, there have been disembodied voices, bright orbs flying around and sightings of a woman in white around the castle, primarily in Klara's bedroom. A supposed psychic medium says the ghost is, in fact, Klara.

To make this property even spookier, in the woods surrounding the castle is a creepy cave the locals have named, "The Hole." It's not a very creative name but it is very spooky. For centuries, villagers have warned tourists not to go near it or they could disappear. Strange smells and crashing sounds often come from the cave. A group of investigators was brave enough to go inside where they found several tunnels and animal bones scattered about.

The castle now hosts tours, concerts and even weddings! Nothing says love like getting married in a castle where infidelity turned into murder. Patrons can even go see The Hole if they dare. The castle is not liable if you disappear.

3 Werdenfels Castle

Burg Werdenfels can be seen looming over Garmisch-Partenkirchen as if to remind the locals of its dark history. The late 1500s were not a good time for Bavaria. It was the "blame-everything-bad-on-witches" era. Whether it was a failed crop or an outbreak of the plague, it was all blamed on witchcraft. Over a seven-year period, 63 alleged witches were rounded up, imprisoned, tried and executed at Werdenfels Castle. The convicted were either burned at the stake or garroted, a very slow and painful form of strangulation. More than 10 percent of the village's people were found guilty of witchcraft during this time.

Werdenfels developed such a terrifying reputation of wrongly executed souls haunting the grounds, they performed an exorcism and used some of the stones to build a church. The spirits weren't satisfied and there are still reports of hauntings to this day.



The Werdenfels Castle ruins is a popular hiking destination. It also provides excellent views of the city's rolling green hills and the Wetterstein Mountains. While steep at times, the trail is easy enough for the older kiddos to hike up. But I wouldn't hang out there after dark.

After you visit Werdenfels you can head to Austria's Moosham Castle, which has a very similar story. It's where 150 people between the ages of 10 and 80 were convicted of witchcraft, many tortured and executed. Patrons have reported banging sounds, footsteps, doors slamming shut and floating white mists. ■

TRAVEL INSPIRATION

BELGIUM

EXPLORE THE BEAUTY OF

By Karen Bradbury

With its rugged, mountainous wilderness, unspoiled coastal towns, quaint medieval architecture, cutting-edge fashion sense and arguably the world's best beer, it's a wonder Belgium doesn't rank higher on the list of outbound destination countries for U.S. residents, falling short of perennial traveler favorites Britain, France, Italy and Spain.

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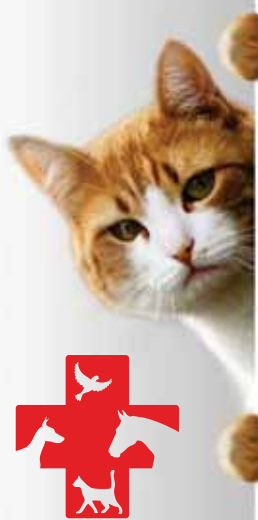


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TRAVEL INSPIRATION



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BRUGES

Those who wish to set their sights on a country smaller than the state of Maryland might be taken aback to discover that no Belgian tourist authority exists, for the country is divided.

Three separate authorities tout Belgium's touristic pull: the Tourist Office for Flanders - Brussels promotes the Dutch-dialect speaking Flemish community; Wallonia Belgium Tourism extolls the wonders of French-speaking Wallonia and the Brussels Tourist Agency keeps visitors informed about the capital's hopping cultural agenda.

While tourists need not ponder the reasons behind this political and cultural divide extensively (language and economics), it's helpful to know of its existence. Following in the model set by the official tourist agencies, we propose three separate itineraries, taking in the best sights of each region:

Wallonia

Our tour of Wallonia begins in Bastogne. The place where the Battle of the Bulge was fought and won is an essential stop for U.S. military history buffs. Retrace the steps of the heroic American soldiers who stopped the Nazi advance, but at great cost: By the time the largest battle ever fought by the U.S. Army ended on Jan. 25, 1945, 10,276 Americans were killed, 47,493 wounded and 23,218 missing. Pay tribute to the lives lost at the Bastogne War Museum and Mardasson Memorial.

Heading northwest, we stop in La-Roche-en-Ardenne. One of the most popular destinations within the mountainous and heavily forested Ardennes region, this city perched prettily by a bend in the River Ourthe is overlooked by a feudal castle.

Next stop is Wallonia's capital city Namur, where a hulking fortress keeps watch over the confluence of the Meuse and Sambre Rivers. The large golden statue of a man riding a turtle is the work of high-profile contemporary artist Jan Fabre. Fans of striking architecture shouldn't miss the beautiful 17th century Baroque Saint-Loup Church with its vaulted ceiling of carved sandstone.

Bruges delights with a fairy-tale perfect medieval core lined with cobblestone streets and handsome stone edifices.



We continue west to our last stop of Mons, described as “charming” by Victor Hugo back in 1837 and no less lovely today. The beauty of its belfry, collegiate church and Grand Place landed it a spot on the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites. Before leaving, pat the head of the Monkey of the Grand Garde with your left hand, which according to local folklore, assures you of good luck.

Flanders

We begin exploration of Flanders in Antwerp, Europe’s second-largest seaport. The don’t-miss sights here include the lively Grote Markt, a square of gabled houses that once belonged to powerful guilds. It’s dominated by a majestic Town Hall, and nearby stands the Cathedral of Our Lady, Belgium’s largest Gothic church. Visits to Antwerp must include a stroll through the diamond district to browse shop windows brimming with bling.

We head west to Ghent, an exquisitely preserved gem of the Middle Ages. Saint Bavo’s Cathedral houses the Van Eyck brothers’ masterpiece “The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb,” a painting that’s stirred much buzz on social media due to a restoration of a lamb’s face some describe as alarmingly human. Other architectural highlights include the Gravensteen Castle and the facades of the houses along the gentle River Leie. Overnight visitors should try to catch a concert in what UNESCO has deemed a “City of Music” — just one of five worldwide.

A short jaunt further west, Bruges delights with a fairy-tale perfect medieval core lined with cobblestone streets and handsome stone edifices, overlooked by the Belfort bell tower. The jewel in Bruges’ crown is its network of canals spanned by arched bridges. If the weather is inclement, head inside to shop for exquisite lace designs or decadent chocolate pralines.

Our tour of Flanders concludes on the North Sea coast, not in the bustling seaside town of Ostend but slightly further north, in Knokke-Heist. This resort town is definitely high-end, with designer clothes shops and art galleries attracting well-heeled vacationers. Rent a bike and cycle past sweeping expanses of sand to your left and the Zoute district’s extravagant villas to your right. Keep pedaling northward and soon you’ll hit a nature preserve and the Dutch border.

Brussels

Don’t be dismayed if your first impression of Brussels is one of urban sprawl—like many large cities of international stature, it has its share of bland infrastructure and grit. Strolling through Brussels’ diverse neighborhoods reveals a more beguiling nature. The Sablon is an old and elegant quarter known for antiques markets and chocolatiers. The Mont des Arts area heaves with museums and historical monuments. Sainte-Catherine is known for hipster cafes and trendy restaurants. In Marolles, where the “real people” live, you’ll find secondhand stores and traditional eating establishments.



Our tour of Belgium concludes, fittingly, in the Grand-Place. One of the world’s prettiest central squares is surrounded by opulent guild houses, the soaring Gothic City Hall, and the Maison du Roi, home to the Brussels City Museum. If you’re feeling too overwhelmed to enter this treasure trove of paintings, tapestries and priceless artifacts including the original Manneken Pis statue, just take a seat at the Le Roy d’Espagne brasserie and contemplate the square’s beauty over another of the country’s greatest treasures: its beer.



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10 Reasons to Love Bruges

By Mary Del Rosario

1. The market is filled with colorful buildings and provides a gorgeous view of the Belfry Tower.
2. With many canal cruises, you're able to capture the essence of this city on the water.
3. Belgian eats such as fries, mussels, waffles and chocolate will leave your stomach wanting more.
4. Belgian beers come in many different varieties and will not disappoint!
5. There are 23 windmills to admire! Saint Janshuismolen is a well-known one.
6. For those who like the film "In Bruges," the 15 filming locations will keep you entertained.
7. There are so many bikes you can rent from to explore the city.
8. The beautiful autumnal foliage along the canals will be the star of your Instagram feed.
9. Romance will be rekindled at the Lovers' Bridge and Lake of Love.
10. Much like the buildings, the night-life is vibrant and colorful.

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Fragil

Giethoorn, Netherlands



WHY GO THERE

The scenic village of Giethoorn, often referred to as the “Venice of the north,” offers a similar experience to the famous canal city, but without the excessive crowds. Giethoorn should be on your radar as the perfect destination for a relaxing day spent on the water. From the charming thatched-roof houses to the calming waters, this fairytale village is sure to steal your heart!

Giethoorn, Netherlands

ON YOUR RADAR

By Jessica Zen

The charming water village of Giethoorn is home to less than 3,000 people and known as the “Dutch Venice.” This amazing village is located in the province of Overijssel in the east of the Netherlands. Here you can gently glide through the canals as you view traditional thatched-roof farmhouses. Spend the day drifting under wooden bridges, followed by enjoying delicious cuisine at a waterfront restaurant in this incredibly serene setting.

The village name originates from the discovery of hundreds of goat horns in the area that were left over from a flood in the 10th century! Though today you won't find any goat horns milling in the water, there is still plenty to see. Giethoorn's fascinating landscape can attribute its layout to peat harvesters. When they were cutting the peat (decayed vegetable matter used for fertilizer or fuel), they created ponds, canals, lakes and the islands where houses were built. As several houses and businesses are only accessible today from the water, the best way to get around Giethoorn is by boat.

A punter is a common narrow boat, propelled by a long pole, used in the area for transportation. If you'd prefer something a little more modern you can opt for a whisper boat, which is a dinghy powered by an electric motor. There are over 55 miles of canoe trails to explore in the area and over 150 beautiful bridges to glide under. Schedule a boat tour to learn about the area and the traditions that go along with these adorable thatched-roof cottages. For those with a more adventurous streak, rent a transparent inflatable ball that allows you to get inside and walk on water!

Perhaps the most relaxing way to pass the time in this fairytale village is dining on the water's edge. Enjoy a romantic dinner at De Lindenhof, where you will be pampered in a setting that has been awarded two Michelin stars! Indulge in the surprise menu which features 12 small courses, all lovingly prepared by Chef Martin Kruithof. If you are so inclined, you can even spend the night at the small hotel here. The cozy atmosphere and staff will make you feel right at home.

Another delightful restaurant option on the water is Hollands Venice. Here you'll find various terraces that overlook the

Weerribben-Wieden nature reserve. For over 80 years, this eatery has been serving up seasonal dishes made from pure ingredients that are sure to make your taste buds sing. If you have the pleasure of dining here for dinner, you'll find items like lasagna Bolognese or codfish with marinated vegetables on the menu.

While you're floating down the peaceful canals, be sure to stop at one of the village museums. “Het Olde Maat Uus” Museum features traditional farmhouses from a century ago. Museum



de Oude Aarde is home to a collection of gemstones and minerals. The Histomobil has a collection of old cars, motorcycles and carriages.

Located just an hour and a half from Amsterdam, Giethoorn is the perfect place to add to any Netherlands itinerary. Enjoy a day spent leisurely floating down the beautiful canals and admiring the quaint village houses that are lovingly tended to. Dine on some seriously sensational food and get away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Giethoorn is the ideal location to unwind and get lost with nature. ■

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