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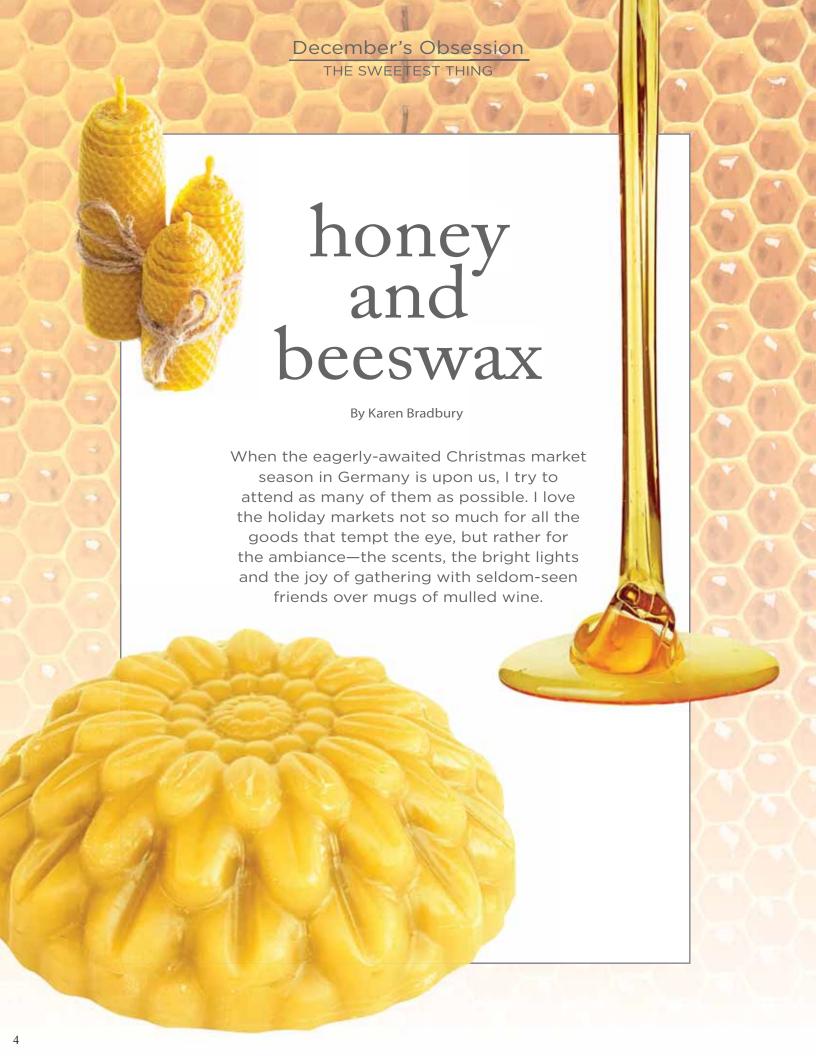
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There is a certain booth I flock to every year—not to browse—but to buy. The products there are natural, healing and one-of-a-kind. German honey, I'm making a beeline for you!

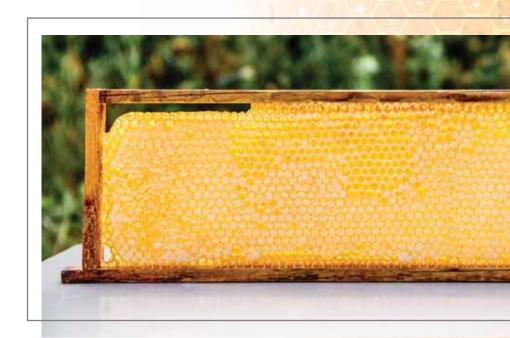
First-timers to the beekeeper's stand are in for a revelation. For beyond the bee's most basic gift of honey are found dozens, if not hundreds, of products to soothe, pamper and delight. Pillar candles made of thinly pressed sheets of beeswax, rolled into cylinders and embellished with press-pins of tiny bees. Hand and foot creams. Lip gloss. Soap. Honey gummy bears. Pollen supplements for extra vitality.

Honey liqueurs are a special treat, and if I'm in luck, the burly bearded gentleman is on hand to pour me samples into tiny plastic cups. Honey lemon schnapps, honey whiskey, honey rum—I could do this all day.

Sampling the honey itself is a no less spectacular experience. It's fascinating to explore how the nectar gathered by the bees influences the taste of the final product. These range from the light floral honeys—lavender and rapeseed—to the darkest, strongest varieties—chestnut, fir and pine. Somewhere in the mix is my particular favorite, linden blossom honey.

The bee-keeper with whom I keep my annual date hails from the Odenwald, a thickly forested region north of Heidelberg. But he's not the only one making business from beeswax. Many Christmas markets, even smaller ones, offer stands selling products made by members of the German Association of Beekeepers (Deutscher Imkerbund). A gold and green symbol of a beehive, flowers and trees on the product's label assures the consumer it's the genuine article.

Should Christmas markets be forced to take a hiatus again in 2021, there are other ways into the honey pot. Beekeepers are regulars at many farmer's markets. Supermarkets specializing in natural products sell genuine German honey. One can always place an order online. There's also the option of visiting a beekeeper's very own shop in the countryside. For a list of places to visit, see https://deutscherimkerbund.de/258-Honigmarkt.



GERMAN LIVING

Bavarian Valled Cities GERMANY'S HIGHLIGHT

By Anna Leigh Bagiackas

he feeling of stepping back in time isn't difficult to come across when traveling through Europe. With history lurking around every corner, it's hard to avoid. But stepping into a walled city speeds up that feeling, immediately jolting you back in time as you are surrounded by centuriesold fortifications built to protect the city's inhabitants. Today we go on a tour of three walled cities in Bavaria: Dinkelsbühl, Rothenburg ob der Tauber and Nördlingen. If you're itching for history and charming German towns, you can make a trip of traveling along Bavaria's Romantic Road and visit these three spots. While you can visit in any order or just choose one or two, we will move north to south.



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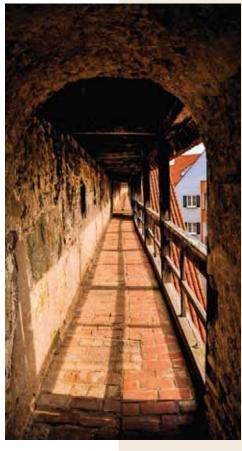
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Dinkelsbühl. BOTTOM LEFT: Dinkelsbühl old town center. BOTTOM RIGHT: Old city wall of Nördlingen.

TOP LEFT: Famous tower in



ROTHENBURG OB DER TAUBER

The most well-known of the three towns, Rothenburg ob der Tauber (on the river) is the quintessential Bavarian town with its medieval walls, colorful half-timbered houses and postcard-perfect photos waiting to be taken. Interestingly, during the Middle Ages, Rothenburg was the second-largest city in Germany, home to 6,000 people. While it can no longer claim that title, it welcomes in far more visitors every year. This will be the most touristy walled city to visit by far, but that's because you really can't mess with a classic. Visit the Town Hall tower for a gorgeous view of the town and surrounding landscapes, walk along the medieval wall—a 1.5-mile loop—or visit one of the town's many museums, like the German Christmas Museum or Medieval Crime and Punishment Museum.

DINKELSBÜHL

Next on our route is Dinkelsbühl, which has been named the "most beautiful old town in Germany." While we could argue with this, we won't, because Dinkelsbühl is a great option if you want to avoid the tourism of Rothenburg and still find the storybook, historic setting. The preservation of Dinkelsbühl's surrounding fortifications is in part because this town escaped ravaging by the Thirty Years' War and Second World War, unlike our other two towns. There are 16 towers along the wall, with the most famous ones being Rothenberger Tor and Segringer Tor. In terms of cuteness and charm, Dinkelsbühl's Wine Market is the main event, full of cafes, shops and beautifully colored buildings.

NÖRDLINGEN

Our last walled city is Nördlingen. What's most interesting about this city is that it is built into a 15-million-year-old crater called the "Nördlingen Ries." The town was the site of two prominent battles during the Thirty Years' War. There are five gates interspersed throughout the wall and they all lead to the center

marketplace and St. George's church. You can make your way to the top of the church tower to truly experience the sight of the crater, medieval walls, gates and colorful, historic buildings. Fans of the film "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" should also note that the final scene was filmed in Nördlingen.

Germany offers so many different sights, sounds and experiences to travelers. And if you're searching for the picturesque, charming and back-in-time side of the country, these three towns are sure to whisk you away.

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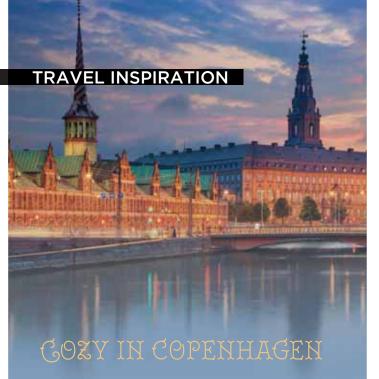
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Christmas time in Europe isn't complete without a market or two. You simply can't miss the Copenhagen Christmas markets. Head to the city center (Tivoli Gardens), a pedestrian-only area filled with lovingly decorated stalls selling artisan crafts, handmade ornaments and delicious treats. Be sure to try some "glogg," a mulled wine that is garnished with almonds and raisins. Another market staple is "aebleskiver," which are little pancakes topped with fresh jam and powdered sugar. To keep the merriment going, try some festive outdoor ice-skating at Frederiksberg Gardens.

To warm up, the Bastard Café is one of a kind and the only place in Copenhagen that entertains its patrons with board games. Play over 3,500 different games with your friends and family, from simple games for kids to card and dice games for adults. You're sure to be entertained for hours here! Have a beer or some coffee along with bar snacks for the perfect break.

season, Kronborg Castle is the place to be. It dates back to 1420, but has since been burned and rebuilt. The rooms are decorated with Renaissance and Baroque themes and are a testament to the lavish lifestyles of past residents. There are also crypts and catacombs hidden deep beneath the castle. This castle is perhaps most famous for William Shakespeare's drama "Hamlet," which takes place in the chambers of Kronborg.

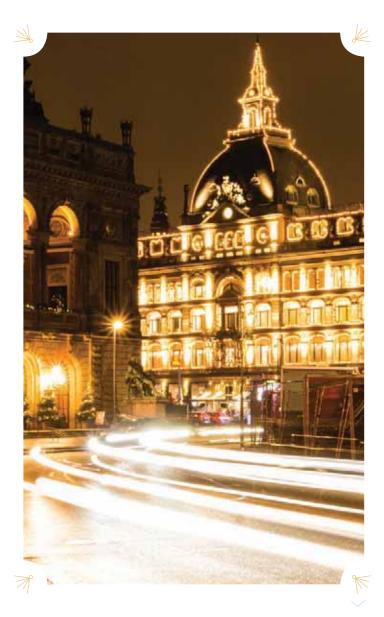




SHOW-FILLED FUN

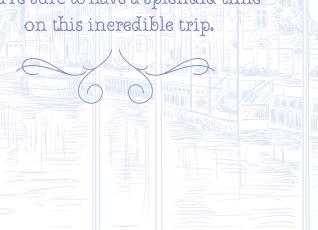
No winter vacation is complete without some outdoor adventures. For something truly unique, head to Helgoland Bathing Institution on Amagerstrand or the urban Islands Brygge Havnebad for some winter bathing, which is, unfortunately, exactly what it sounds like. Jumping into the freezing cold waters, this experience is sure to wake you up and be a oneof-a-kind experience. The locals claim it is good for the body and releases adrenaline, serotonin, cortisol and dopamine, amongst other benefits. For something a little less extreme, try skiing at Østerlars (Bornholm). Though this ski resort is by no means the ultimate skiing location, it will allow you to get out on the slopes. It's great for kids and has two lift systems.

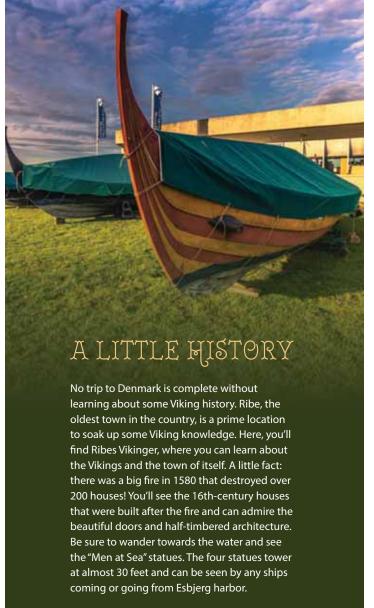






Whether you stay in the city and soak up the spirit of the holidays at the Christmas markets or venture out to one of the Viking museums, you're sure to have a splendid time on this incredible trip.





If you want even more Viking history, the city of Roskilde is brimming with it. Perched on the Roskilde Fjord is the Viking Ship Museum, giving insight into the fascinating world of Vikings. Here, you'll find not only incredible displays, but also opportunities to live the Viking life. The inside of the main hall of the museum features five original Skuldelev Viking ships from the 11th century. The Glendalough Sea Stallion is the museum's longest ship and is open for boarding. Outside, you'll find the boatyard where vessels were erected. Here, you can experience the culture of the Vikings while you view boats in full scale. Board a merchant vessel that is outfitted with war equipment. Dress up like a Viking or visit Tunet, a common place for the Vikings to gather. You can see what types of crafts were created during that time, such as metal, wood or rope work.

For your Denmark adventure, be sure to pack items like waterproof and insulated boots, wool stockings and a heavy coat. You don't want to get chilly while exploring all the incredible things this country has to offer.

TRAVEL INSPIRATION



Up Close and Personal

Nyhavn

by Mary Del Rosario

illing itself as the entertainment district in Copenhagen is the colorful waterfront neighborhood of Nyhavn.

Meaning "new harbor" in Danish, Nyhavn is the part of Copenhagen everyone must spend some time in—not just for Tivoli Gardens and the Little Mermaid statue—but also for a vibe that can't be experienced anywhere else in Denmark. If you happen to visit this corner of Scandinavia, get up close with this trendy area.





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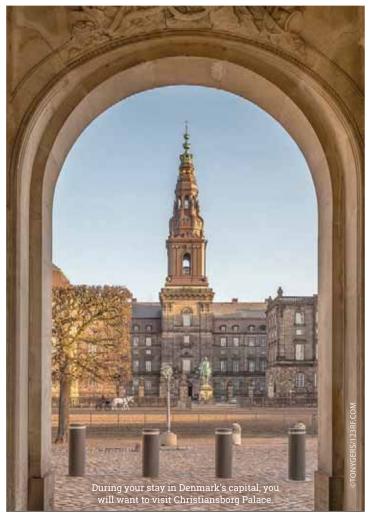


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During your stay in Denmark's capital, the sites you have surely crossed off your bucket list are Tivoli Gardens, Christiansborg Palace, Amalienborg, Strøget and the Little Mermaid. However, since Nyhavn is on the water, a must-do activity is taking a canal tour to see the best of Copenhagen—Stromma Canal Tours is a highly recommended company that charges around 99 Danish krone (13 euros) for a one-hour canal ride. While on the water, be sure to keep your eyes peeled for the restaurant on a boat, Vandvid. Beautifully located on the Copenhagen harbor, you'll get an intimate feel of waterfront dining with, of course, delicious food. The Veteran Ship and Museum Harbor and Nyhavn 18, where Hans Christian Andersen once lived, are other popular highlights.

Known as "the longest bar in Scandinavia," Nyhavn is home to some of Copenhagen's best bars and restaurants. Nyhavnskroen is the answer to the question, "Where should we eat dinner tonight?" This cozy restaurant features traditional Danish cuisine, and some dishes you can expect to find on the menu are fish fillets with fries, marinated herring and Bikesmad—Scandinavian hash. However, to keep with the nautical theme, Cap Horn is the place to be. Though known for its seafood, this restaurant makes the best roast beef sandwiches. For those who like to enjoy the nightlife, head to Fisken Pub, a quirky, nautical-themed bar. Other popular bars in the area include McJoy's Coice, NyhavnC and Nyhavn 17.





Fun Facts About Nyhavn

Though Copenhagen has its fair share of interesting history, Nyhavn provides some of its own fun tidbits:

- King Christian V brought Nyhavn to life by using Swedish prisoners to dig up the canal.
- In its early days, this area was famous for its beer, sailors and the debauchery they brought.
- House number 9 is the oldest one, dating back to 1681.
- Hans Christian Andersen moved around during his time here. Before moving to building number 18, he lived in building number 67.
- The best sunsets can be found at Nyhavn.
- To get a glimpse at the lives of the rich, pay a visit to the district's south side, where mansions dot the canal.
- The best time to visit Copenhagen is May through August.
 Although it is high tourist season, that is when the weather is at its best.
- You can find the best Hummer (lobster) at Nyhavn 63A.
- Denmark uses the Danish krone, which is a bit more expensive than the euro.

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By Stacy Roman

As the beginning of a new year rapidly approaches, the days are often filled with last-minute shopping, crowds and the yearning to get one more quick trip in before the close of the year. Straddling the border of France and Germany in the heart of the Alsace wine region is Strasbourg. Averaging between a two-and a three-hour drive from most U.S. bases in Germany, it makes for an easy and enchanting two-day escape from the ordinary during the hurried holiday season. If you've got 48 hours, we've got the itinerary.

WHAT TO DO

During December, Strasbourg draws tourists from around Europe for its "Marché de Noel," or Christmas market. Twinkling star lights are draped between buildings, a gigantic Christmas tree dominates Kléber Place and plenty of steaming mugs of "vin chaud" are consumed while perusing wares in small wooden chalets. Even if you choose to forgo the crowds at the market, the entire city is enveloped in holiday cheer. Take a stroll through La Petite France, the well-preserved medieval quarter filled with charming half-timbered houses and buildings that feel as though you've stepped into the middle of a fairy tale.

If you'd rather stay warm indoors, head to one of Strasbourg's magnificent museums. Built in the 18th century, the Palais Rohan was once the seat of nobility and clergy. Today, it serves as a museum of art and archeology. Once you've explored the Palais, make your way over to the Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. Filled with stunning pieces of art, you can find works by Kandinsky, Monet and more. If you've had your fill of art, head back across the river to Cathédrale Notre Dame de Strasbourg. Situated in the city center, this breathtaking cathedral is known for its impressive astronomical clock and ornate stained-glass windows; it's well worth visiting.

GOOD EATS

If the shopping and wandering have worked up your appetite, you're in a fantastic spot for delicious eats. Strasbourg draws its culinary influences from its French and German heritage. From the freshly baked brioche pastries and spiced gingerbread, there is no shortage of delectable Alsatian treats. "Kugelhopf" (or Gugelhupf) is a local favorite. Baked in a special Bundt pan, this light cake is a perfect late morning or early afternoon snack. Local patisserie Au Pain de Mon Grand-père on Rue des Hallibardes is a favorite among residents.

For a more savory dish, pop over to Le Clou on Rue du Chadron near Kléber Place. This quaint bistro offers traditional French, German and local Alsatian fare. Diners can find everything from escargots in garlic butter to bratwurst and sauerkraut. Or for a lighter, less expensive meal, head to one of the "tarte flambée" vendors. Consisting of a flatbread, rich creme fraiche, smoky bacon and lightly caramelized onions, you won't leave hungry.

While you can easily spend more than two days in Strasbourg, you won't regret a quick getaway during the holidays. ■









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