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Spotlight on
Oeschinensee,
Switzerland

Yacht Week
in Croatia



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GERMANY

Wine Tasting in the Nostalgic Tram | Mainz | March 23–Oct. 12

Harry Potter the Exhibition | Munich | May 10–Sept. 5

Cologne Pride | Cologne | July 6–21

The Bayreuth Richard Wagner Music Festival | Bayreuth | July 25–Aug. 27

Drachenstich | Furth im Wald | Aug. 2–18

Enjoy Germany's oldest folk festival. This medieval festival and play features a mechanical dragon so large it's in the Guinness Book of World Records. It can move and breathe fire. Don't miss the Dragon City transform into a medieval wonderland of craftsmen, tents, swords, mead, traders and Bavarian festival food.

Reeperbahnfest | Hamburg | Sept. 18–21

Berlin Beer Week | Berlin | Aug. 30–Sept. 8

Oktoberfest | Munich | Sept. 21–Oct. 6

FRANCE

Impressionism Festival | Normandy | March 22–Sept. 22

2024 is the 150th anniversary of the Impressionist movement, led by some of the most beloved artists such as: Monet, Manet, Van Gogh and Renoir. A highlight of the festival is the "Cathedral of Light," a sound and light show projected onto the famous Rouen Cathedral throughout the summer by the American director and visual artist Robert Wilson.

Picnic in Paris | Paris | March–Oct.

Tour de France | Italy–Nice | June 29–July 21

Les Fêtes de Bayonne | Basque Country | July 10–14

The Paris Olympics | Paris | July 26–Aug. 11

The Paris Paralympic Games | Paris | Aug. 28–Sept. 28

Reopening Octave of Notre-Dame | Paris | Dec. 8–15

THE NETHERLANDS

The Nijmegen (Walk of the World) | Nijmegen July 16–19

This is the world's largest walking event spanning over four days with over 40,000 participants. Civilians walk 30km daily, and service members walk 40km daily with at least 22 pound rucksacks. On the last day, gladioli flowers special to the region are handed out to participants.

Festival Masterly the Hague | District of Binnenhof and Hofvijver | Oct. 21–24

The Amsterdam Light Festival | Amsterdam | Dec. 2024–Jan. 2025

SPAIN

Dolphin Watching Adventure | Estepona Bay | March–October

Tomatina Festival | Bunol | Aug. 28

About an hour away from Valencia is the world's largest tomato fight which dates back to 1945. A festival that takes place the last week of August and paints the streets and buildings red. People from all over the world travel to be part of this.

Castells "Human Towers" Competition | Tarragona | Oct. 5–6

Illes Balears Ballooning Festival | Mallorca | Oct. 23–27

SWITZERLAND

Swiss National Day | Across Switzerland | Aug. 1

Return of Cattle Parade | Plaffeien | Sept. 21

This is one of the best known, traditional Alpine Herdsman festivals, where visitors can watch over 1,000 decorated cows parade down from the mountains and return to village center.

Fête de l'Escalade: Celebration of Geneva's victory against Savoyard | Geneva | Dec. 7–8

AUSTRIA

Silvretta Classic Car Rallye | Montafane | July 4–7

The Kat100—Kitz Alps Trail Run | Kitzbuhel Alps | Aug. 1–3

World Body Painting Festival | Klagenfurt | Sept. 17–21

Mozart Week | Salzburg | Jan. 2025

BELGIUM

Ommegang 2024 | Brussels | July 3–5

Brussels Carpet of Flowers | Brussels | Aug. 15–18

CZECHIA

Summer Shakespeare Festival | Prague | June–September

Prague Pride Festival | Prague | Aug. 5–11

Signal Light Festival | Prague | Oct. 10–13

ESTONIA

The XXI Viljandi Folk Music Festival | Viljandi | July 25–28

Pärnu Film Festival: Magical Cinema Along the Seafrost | Pärnu | Oct. 6–13

GREECE

88th Thessaloniki International Fair | Thessaloniki | Sept. 7–15

International Hot Air Balloon Fest | Thiva | Sept. 27–Oct. 1

Extra



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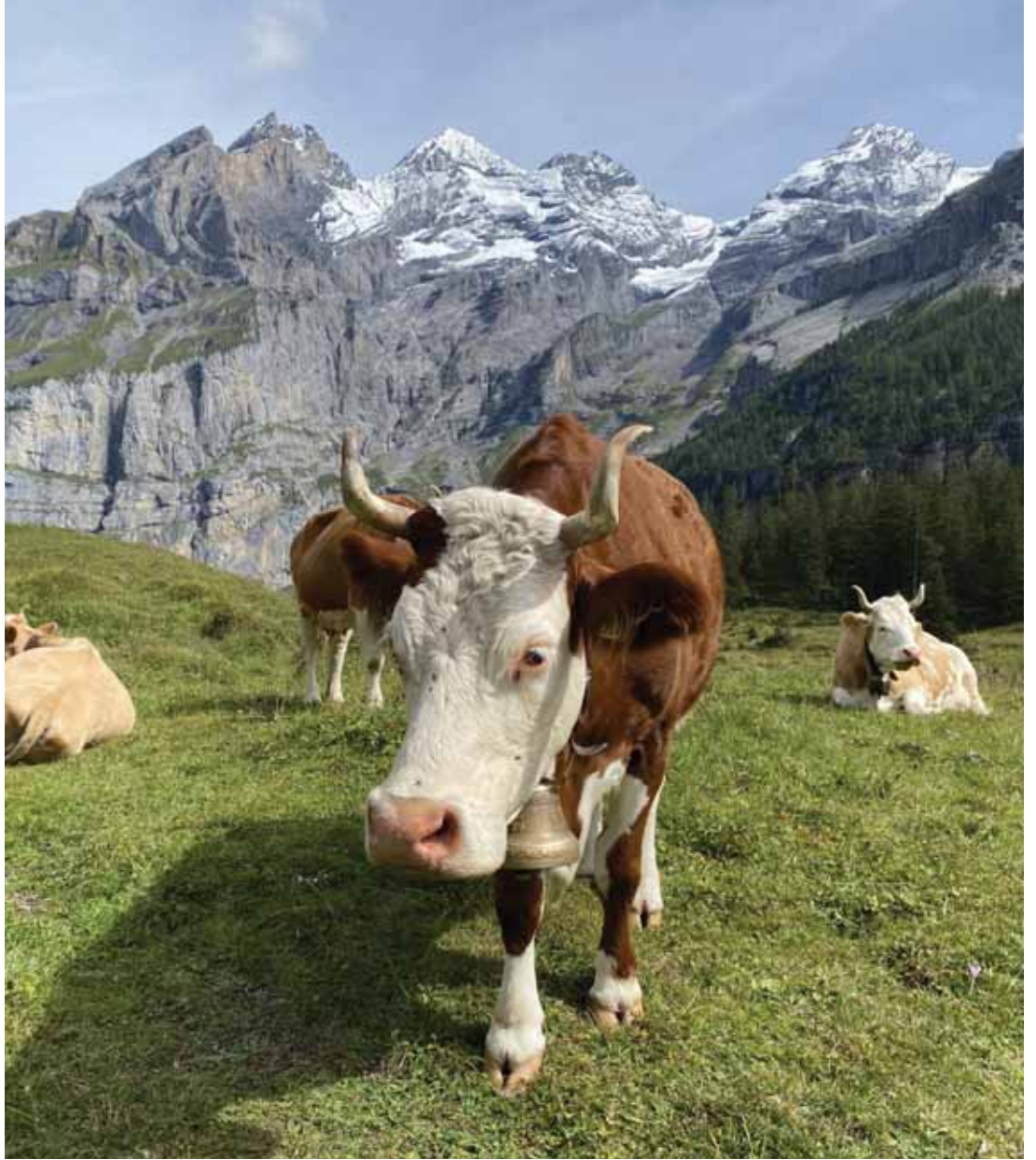


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Spotlight On



Oeschinensee, Switzerland

By Kat Nickola

Free-roaming cows with bells are an iconic site in the Swiss Alps. The tradition dates back to the Middle Ages when the bells helped distinguish domesticated animals and deterred predators. Without fencing, livestock was free to roam in the hills and forests. The bells also helped farmers identify their own animals. In the 1700s, crafting cowbells developed into a respected and specialized trade. Bells began to carry unique sounds to further help farmers locate their cattle. Cowbells are still used today as farmers allow their animals to freely graze in high pasture zones during the warmer months.

This photo, submitted by Angela Meyer, was taken while hiking near the Oeschinensee. This pristine alpine lake is surrounded by sheer cliffs and high pastures. The lake can be reached from the nearest town of Kandersteg by hiking, taking a gondola or riding an electric bus. Numerous hikes begin near the lake, all offering bucket-list photography opportunities.

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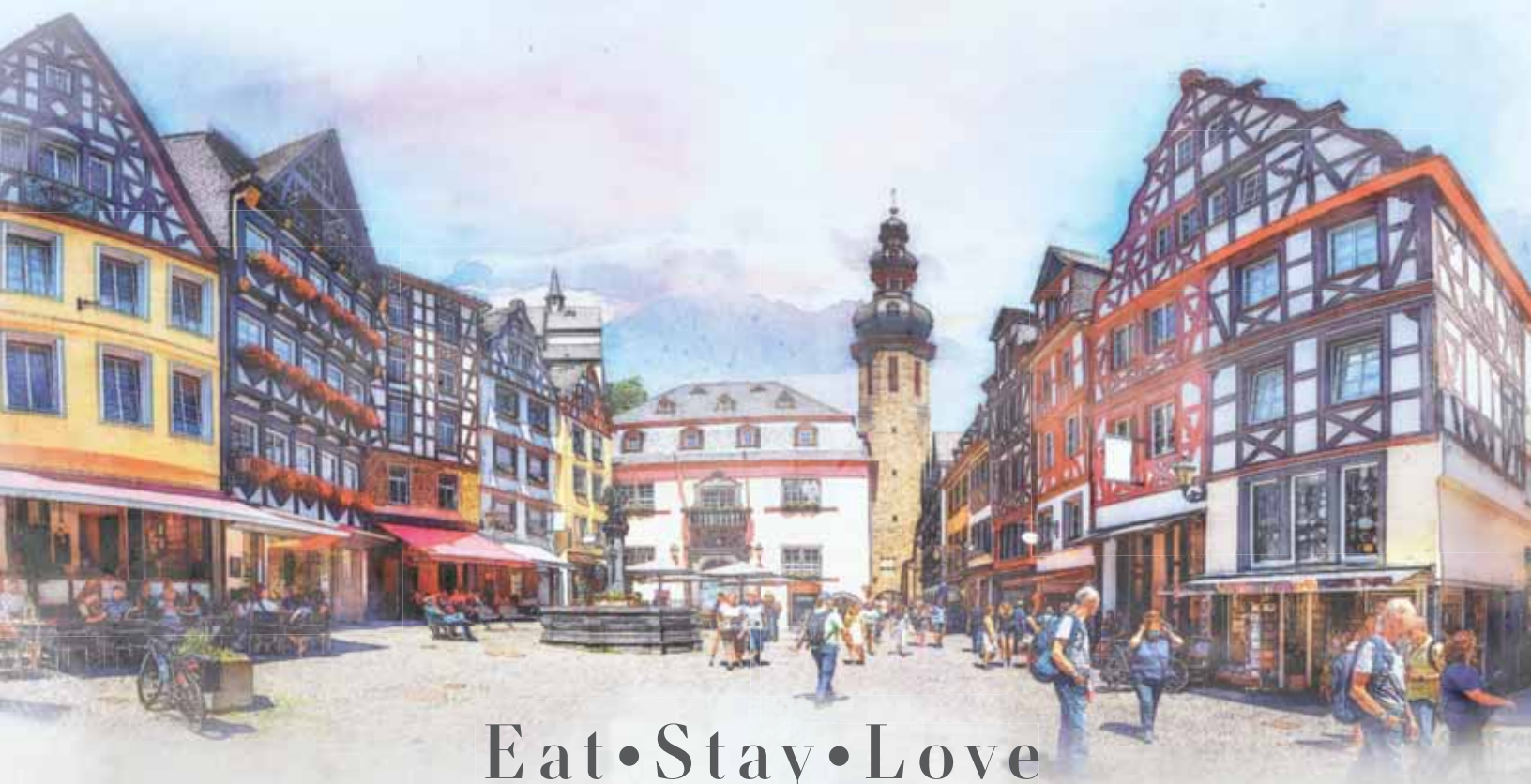


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Eat • Stay • Love

COCHEM

By Tamala Malerk

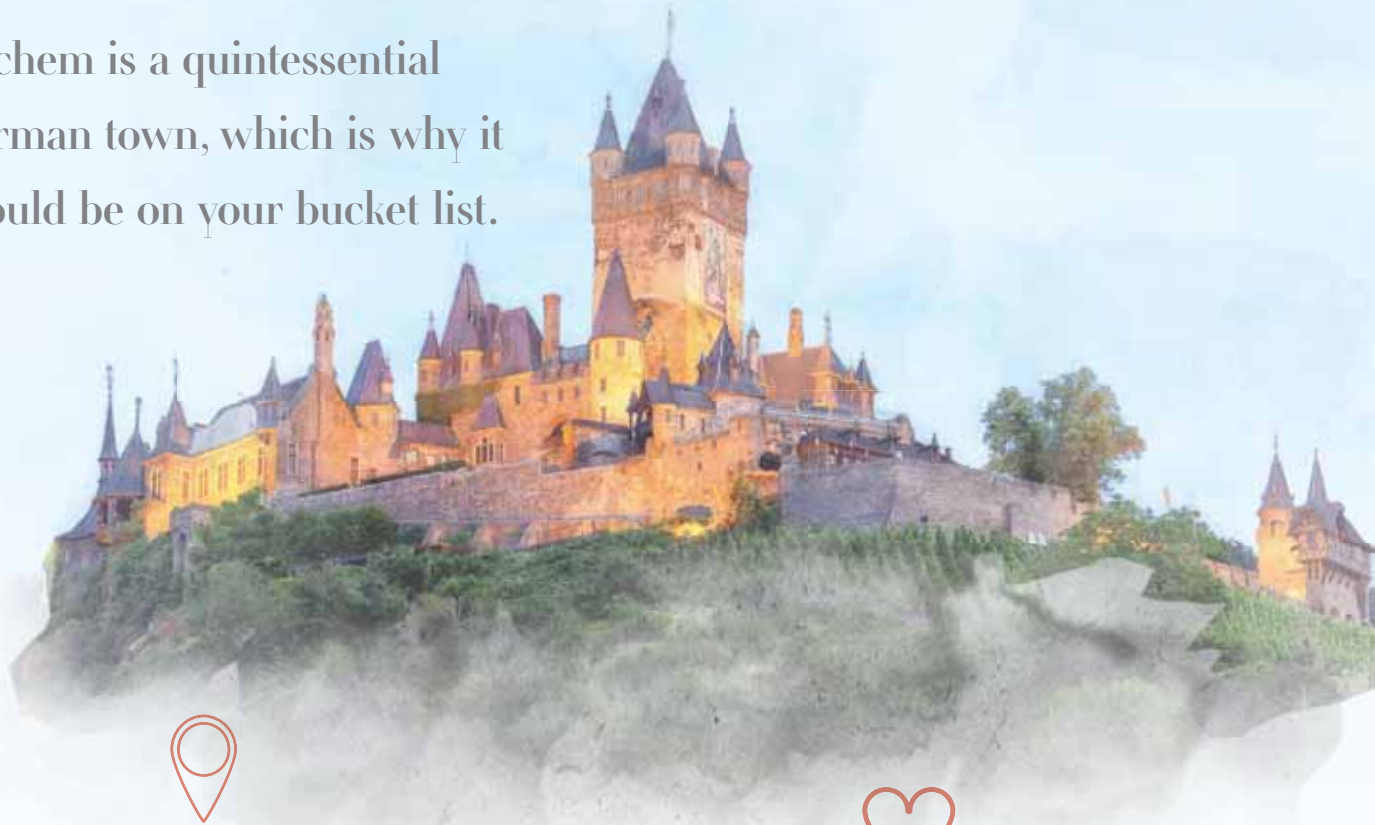


EAT If you are a lover of refined German fare, paired with wonderful wines, enjoy a picturesque experience at **Neos** in Cochem. With views of the Mosel River, Neos Restaurant and Wine Bar is set within the modern IchZeit Apart Hotel. The restaurant offers regional and seasonal fares as well as home-made favorites including schnitzel from the regional butcher, burger rolls from the regional baker, homemade Pinot Blanc, Riesling and crustation ravioli. You can choose to eat à la carte or make things simple with their delicious three- or four-course seasonal menu which takes you on a flavorful experience from salad to dessert.

Are you a mustard connoisseur? Head to **Historical Mustard Mill** (Historische Senfmühle Cochem). There are plenty of mustards and sauces for you to taste. For those with more of an appetite, they even sell wurst that you can put your favorite mustard on. People interested in learning more about the mill can see the small museum inside. Once you have found your favorite mustards, you can take them home in gorgeous ceramic jars with matching Senfmühle Cochem wooden spoons, so you get a souvenir after you finish the mustard.



Cochem is a quintessential German town, which is why it should be on your bucket list.



STAY

A trip to Cochem wouldn't be the same without booking a night in one of the half-timbered buildings that line the streets. **Alte Thorschenke** is the ultimate historical stay in this German town. It has been here since 1332 and has hosted some of Europe's most famous leaders such as Napoleon, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Maria Theresa of Austria. Stepping inside will undoubtedly take you back to the 14th century. The hotel has gotten so popular that it had to open up an annex a short walk away. It is not only historical, but also conveniently located in the city center where you can easily access all of the food and fun. There is a restaurant on-site, so you won't go hungry. You can book your stay at thorschenke.de.



LOVE

Cochem is a quintessential German town, which is why it should be on your bucket list. It has a castle, a large farmers' and craft market, and wine vineyards to visit. Cochem's prime location on the Mosel River allows for beautiful hikes and awesome photo opportunities.

Reichsburg Castle offers guided tours in English and German. There is always something going on at the castle which is the largest along the Mosel River. On Friday and Saturday nights, you can enjoy a four-hour medieval feast and performance. In the first week of August, go for the medieval festival. And, during Advent, celebrate the holiday at the "Cochem Castle Christmas" event featuring the story of Christmas.

One of the best ways to see Cochem and the nearby area is on a **KD river cruise**. A late afternoon or early evening cruise is perfect for watching the sunset. They offer food and drinks on the boat as well as live music. I highly recommend enjoying a piece of apple cake while taking in the sites. The river cruise runs from April through October this year. You can buy tickets at the kiosk in the city center, or you can also buy them in advance at shop.k-d.com. ■

Madrid* Moments

By Kat Nickola

My father shed tears when he saw Picasso's "Guernica." The famous anti-war oil painting with its dramatic black, gray and white composition takes up an entire gallery wall at the **Museo Reina Sofia** in Madrid. Seeing it in person, decades after studying art in college, and following a long military career, was an emotional bucket-list moment for Dad.

More would follow. We saw works by Salvador Dalí and Joan Miró, then went to the famous Museo del Prado to see paintings by Goya, Velázquez, Raphael, El Greco and my kids' favorite "The Garden of Earthly Delights" by Hieronymus Bosch. My daughter loved finding the unique creatures in that one and we joyfully spent hours longer than we expected at art museums. But that is the beauty of Madrid. It is a city that invites you to stop, look and linger.

My parents joined me and my two young children in Madrid for a weekend. Following the museum, we took an afternoon break in the hotel. Yes, things really do close from 2 to 5 p.m. in Spain, and I love that it forced us to slow down and refresh. It also meant we were all revived for an evening out. Family time is all the time in Spain, so our multi-generational group was not out of the ordinary enjoying Madrid late into the evening.

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Plaza Mayor is Madrid's main square and the best place to stop for evening coffee or drinks while watching some of the city's famous street performers. My children could not wait to show their grandparents the 'goat guy'—a performer whose costume is primarily made of rainbow tinsel and a goat skull that snaps its jaws, whistles, rattles and dances with joy when money is placed in its pot. The plaza comes alive in the evening, but at 7 p.m. dinner was still a long way off and we were hungry.

Luckily, nearby is the **Mercado de San Miguel**. In the daytime, there are fresh produce and fish vendors at this glass-walled market, but at night the space comes alive with tapas counters. We wandered, chose a small bite or two from a glass case and moved on to the next stall where more delicious options were waiting. The kids loved croquetas (fried cheese and meat nuggets) and albondigas (meatballs), while I couldn't turn down any beautiful pintxos (tapas made into finger food by putting it on a slice of baguette). Tapas at the market became our evening meal, so by 10 p.m. we were sleepily crashing in the hotel while the rest of Madrid finally sat down to dinner.

On our second day in Madrid, we hit the ground running and took the subway to the 'Opera' station. We then promptly got serious with our desayuno (second breakfast) while people-watching near the **Paseo de las Estatuas** (Way of the Statues). The kids quickly got bored and ran around the statues of the Spanish royal family while we finished our coffee. Outdoor cafes are plentiful in Madrid and will happily serve coffee, caña (a small beer) and tostada all day. My favorite tostada is "con tomate," which is toasted crusty bread topped with crushed tomato, but my parents enjoyed trying varieties with local Jamón or Manchego cheese.

We then happily made our way across the street on time for our pre-booked tickets for the **Palacio Real de Madrid**. It is the largest royal palace in Europe. The current building was constructed in

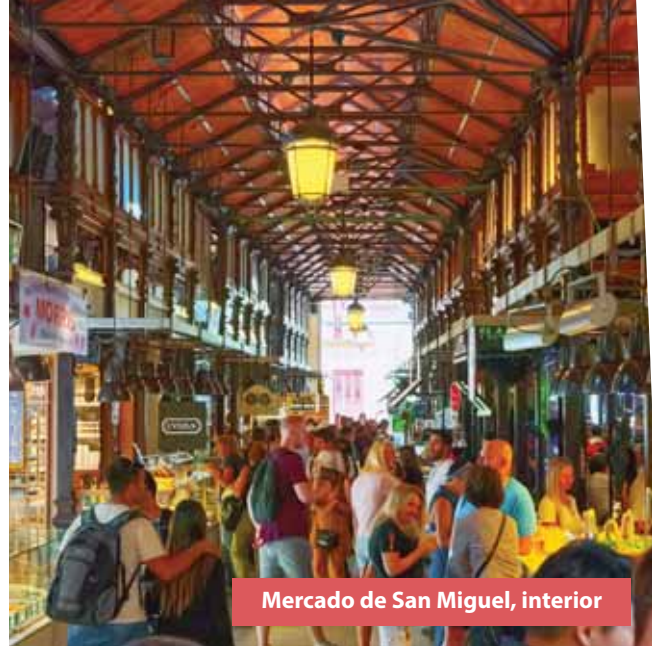


Mercado de San Miguel



Puerta del Sol





Mercado de San Miguel, interior



Pinxtos



Palacio Real de Madrid

1735 to replace an older much-remodeled alcazar (fort) originally built during the 9th century when Spain was part of the Muslim state of al-Andalus. We chose tickets for a basic self-guided visit and purchased one audio guide at the entrance. This let us move at our own pace while one person listened and explained for the rest of us. Highlights were seeing the huge ornate and gilded dining room and the throne room which is still used today for official ceremonies. We also visited the adjacent **Catedral de la Almudena** for a one-euro donation. The cathedral is huge and has colorful interior paintings, plus there is a massive crypt for Spain's royal family.

After the palace, we grabbed picnic food at a local grocery store and hopped on the subway to 'Retiro' for a picnic lunch in the **Parque de El Retiro**. The huge park was designed in the 1600s to surround a royal residence and is now a cool, shady green space. We found a spot near the Great Pond to relax on the grass, eat and watch people paddling below the monument to Alfonso XII, the 'peacemaker' who helped stabilize the constitutional monarchy. Small row boats are available to rent and there is a larger Barco Solar that offers rides around the pond. Our goal, though, was a tour of the playgrounds along the east side of the park to tire out the kids. Then we wandered past all the peacocks in the Jardines de Cecilio Rodriguez and visited the rose garden. The park has plenty of small surprises like fountains and formal gardens, cafes and snack vendors.

For our final evening, we visited the **Puerta del Sol** plaza where we lingered, ice cream in hand, to watch more street performers – this time break dancing was the highlight. We took pictures with Madrid's famous bear and tree statue. It was erected in 1967 and personifies the coat of arms of Madrid whose bear and tree icons date back to the 1200s. Then, we wandered along the shopping streets that fan out around the plaza, enjoying the smaller stores and souvenir stalls. We eventually found ourselves having dinner at an outdoor café and lingering late into the evening while the city bustled around us. That is what Madrid does best: bucket-list moments interspersed with time to relax and enjoy. ■

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Yacht Week in Croatia

By Tamala Malerk

Have you ever wanted to spend a week sailing the seas and partying on a luxury yacht? Then Yacht Week in Croatia is for you. There are other iterations of “Yacht Week,” however, Croatia has the original and biggest routes, and many argue that it is the best. Until Sept. 6, you can choose from eight one-week-long options to get your party on.

This “floating festival” has **red** and **black** routes to choose from. Both routes go to the same islands along the Croatian coast, but on different days. By booking directly with theyachtweek.com/croatia, you can get some awesome exclusives: a Skipper for your yacht who will act as a navigator and overall ocean expert, exclusive events, international DJs, six nights of accommodations on a yacht, a dinghy for whenever you want to get off the ship and exploring the islands, and what is probably most convenient, an end-of-trip yacht cleaning.

Yacht Week is all about relaxing, unwinding and partying however you want. When booking your reservations, you can choose the boat you'd like. Perhaps the Classic Monohull is for you, or the Premium Catamaran is more your style. You can book an entire yacht, or just a cabin for yourself and a few friends. There are daytime events, as well as an extensive nightlife. Chill on the yacht for the day or go explore the local island. Stops during the week include places like Natural Bay, Vis, Bol, Trogir and Hvar. Enjoy seaside yoga, go on a castle hike, try the floating raft party, explore Vis via a convertible, or take pride in your yacht by racing in the Regatta. Tickets begin at 638 euros per person, but book soon because slots are limited.



Tips to Make the Most of Yacht Week

- **Be prepared for extra costs.** Port fees, food and drinks, essentials (toilet paper, paper towels, etc.), yacht fuel, water, shore power and a refundable yacht deposit are **not** included in your initial price. The Blonde Abroad blogger, who has done this experience four times, estimates these extra costs, not including the yacht deposit, at approximately 2,000 USD.
- **Hydrate and be safe!** Summer sun, alcohol and a constant party atmosphere is a fun time, but remember to hydrate with water to ward off dangerous dehydration that will put a damper on the trip. Also, lather on the sunscreen. No one wants to be burdened with sunburn.
- **Booking an entire yacht is cheaper than booking individual cabins when estimating “per person” costs.** If you don't have enough people in your group to book a yacht, The Yacht Week website offers a “crew finder” option to help you fill your boat.
- **Pack light and small.** Cabins are small and hard, bulky suitcases will take up unnecessary space. You will be spending the week in your bathing suits, so consider fitting it into a duffle bag or small carry-on. You can view your itinerary before your trip to know how much and what to pack.
- **Bring a flag (or two).** This doesn't just help you represent your country, but also helps you find your boat after a long day on shore.
- **Hope for the best, plan for the worst.** Blogger “Chasing Sole” has some great things on their list: Bring tweezers for plucking out sea urchin spikes, vitamin C to ward off any sickness, a travel-size first-aid kit and nausea/sea sickness aids.
- **Buy travel insurance.** Emergencies and accidents happen, especially on boats with copious amounts of alcohol consumption. Save yourself thousands of dollars in potential medical expenses with travel insurance. ■



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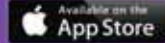
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A Few Moments in MILAN

By Jessica Zen

The Italian metropolis of Milan packs so much punch into one city it's hard to know where to begin when planning a trip. There's just so much to see and do! Not only is Milan one of four fashion capitals of the world, it is also the fifth most Michelin-starred city in the world. These two facts alone let you know that there's some seriously good food being turned out and the shopping here will be nothing short of incredible. Add in the outstanding architecture and Milan just might steal your heart. Even if you only have minimal time here, be sure to make your few moments memorable!

No trip to Milan is complete without visiting the **cathedral**. Located in the heart of Milan, and construction started on this masterpiece in 1386. Surprisingly, it took until 1965 to complete! With its Italian Gothic style, the front of the cathedral is an elaborate work of art. It's almost impossible to take in all of the details, considering there are 3,400 statues, 135 gargoyles and 700 figures. Imagine being in charge of designing one of the biggest Catholic cathedrals in the world! Be sure to make the trek up to the top via the steps or an elevator for sweeping views of the city from this architectural giant.

As with almost any European city worth its salt, you must visit the resident castle. In Milan, that castle originated in the 15th century and is known as **Castello Sforzesco**. One of the most defining features of the castle is the massive brick wall with towers that surrounds it. You can also see where the moat would have been. The central and most dominating tower, Torre del Filarete, has undergone many renovations and is a modern reconstruction. If you venture inside, you'll be delighted to find seven museums that chronicle the city's culture and civic history. Don't miss out on seeing artwork by Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci.

Since Milan is one of Italy's most fashionable cities, don't pass up an opportunity to at least window-shop in the area. You'll see some incredible fashion pieces, especially at the **Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II**. This is one of the world's oldest shopping malls and takes opulence to the next level. The mall is in the shape of a cross and features a glass ceiling. Inside you'll find only high-end designers.

After admiring all the beautiful architecture and doing a little shopping, you should probably consider some refreshments. From Michelin star restaurants to local trattorias, Milan has something for everyone's tastes. **Enrico Bartolini al Mudec** is the perfect place to experience haute cuisine. This three-star restaurant boasts a refined atmosphere, new flavors and food that "perfectly encapsulates the Italian lifestyle."

If you're only able to steal a few moments of bliss in Milan, be sure to use them to the fullest! Admire the incredible architecture, visit one of the largest cathedrals in the world and eat some of the most incredible food. Milan is full of incredible opportunities and just waiting for you to stop by. ■



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