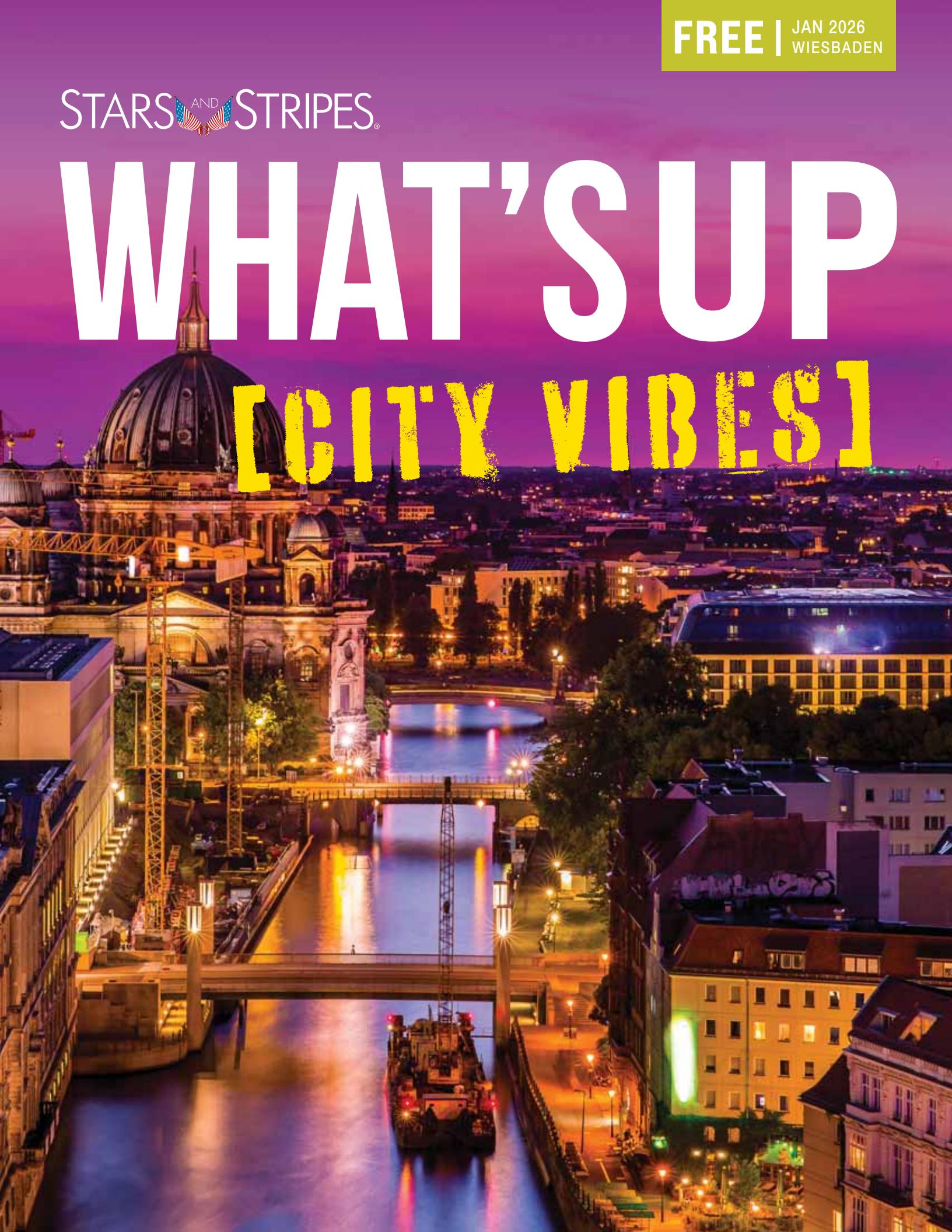


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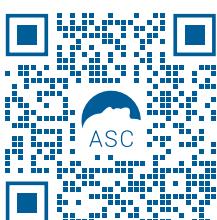
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# PLAN AHEAD

By Katie Wells



## BAVARIA

BavariaCon 2026, Munich | Feb 14–15, 2026

"Pack your dice bag, grab your little brother, and then it's off to... **BavariaCon 2026!**" This event is for everyone: from those curious to learn more about tabletop gaming and role-playing games to serious gamers. Special role-playing sessions are held for kids. Visitors can explore Artist Alley, sign up for role-playing sessions led by game masters, shop plenty of vendors to stock up on loot and attend a workshop or reading from special guests. Last year's event sold out, so be sure to secure your tickets early.



## KAISERSLAUTERN

Gimmeldinger Almond Blossom Festival | Feb. 21–April 6, 2026

Every year, the soft pink *Pfälzer Mandelblüte*, or Palatinate almond blossoms, line the German Wine Street. You can take a self-guided stroll or bike ride along the route, which is 100 kilometers from Bockenheim through the wineries in the Palatinate to Schweigen Rechtenbach. The main event is the Gimmeldinger Almond Blossom Festival, where visitors are invited to walk along the pink trail of more than 2,000 trees. Winegrowers, restaurateurs and other vendors set up stalls to offer regional wines like fitting pink Rosé and almond-inspired delicacies.



## SPANGDAHLEM

Cologne Carnival | Feb. 12–18, 2026

This week-long event is a staple in German culture. For six days before Lent, there will be parades, parties and balls. While all the days are packed with costumes and fun, the highlight is the **Rose Monday Parade** on Feb. 16, which has been one of the largest parades in Germany since 1823. Enjoy watching miles of dance performances, foot groups and decorated floats. Listen to music by the "Blaue Funken" while trying to catch sweets and flowers thrown by the parade members.



## STUTTGART

Stuttgart International Bach Festival | March 13–28, 2026

This annual festival of classical music is presented by the International Bach Academy. Famous Baroque composer, Johann Sebastian Bach was a German musician. The 15-day event showcases aspiring and seasoned musicians from around the world performing Bach's music along with the works that inspired him. There will be soloists and ensembles. In 2025, the theme was "Bach and Latin America." 2026's theme is yet to be determined; however, it is recommended to purchase your tickets in advanced.



## WIESBADEN

23rd Wiesbaden Easter Market | March 20–22, 2026

The Hesse region is known for its Batik eggs, where beeswax is used to resist the dyes to create interesting patterns and designs. At the Easter market, you can enjoy shopping from 70 stalls for hand-painted eggs and Easter decorations. There is also a craft and fabric market to explore. Stilt walkers and Easter bunnies will hand out candy, and kids can ride the carousel, get their faces painted or participate in crafting activities. Frankfurt will also have an Easter market around this time, located at the Dominican Monastery. ■



To see what is happening near you, check out the Your Community section on our website by scanning the QR code.

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## RING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH MWR

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Join Auto Skills for a basic maintenance class on Jan. 7 from 5:30–7 p.m. The class covers checking fluids, jump-starting a vehicle, changing a tire, and performing an oil change. The fee is \$25 per person. Register at Auto Skills or call civ (0)611-143-548-9817.

### ENGELBERG EXPRESS

Enjoy a day of skiing or snowboarding in Engelberg, Switzerland on Jan. 10. The bus departs from Clay Kaserne at 4 a.m. Passports are required for this trip. Fees are \$199 per person if renting ski/snowboard gear, or \$179 per person for those bringing their own gear. Lift tickets are not included in the price. Register at Outdoor Recreation.

### AUDITIONS: WAIT UNTIL DARK

Audition for this murderous thriller from Jan. 12–14. Open to ages 18 and up. Auditions will be held at the new theatre on Lower Hainerberg. Materials will be provided at auditions. Come prepared to move and read from the script. Visit the AEP Facebook page for more details.



### SPORT SHOOTING KNOWLEDGE COURSE

Sharpen your skills and earn your shooting certification from Jan. 22–24. Open to U.S. citizens with valid ID. Fees are \$90 per person. Includes one-year HFSS Membership. Register at Outdoor Recreation.

### LIVE COMEDY SHOWS

Come to the Wiesbaden Entertainment Lounge on January 23 from 7–9 p.m. for a live comedy show. Visit our website for line-up details. This is a free event, no registration required.

### RECREATIONAL SHOOTING

Outdoor Rec hosts Licensed and Qualifying Shooting at the JMTC Wackernheim Range on Jan. 24 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Firearms are available for rent on location. Clients new to the ODR Shooting Program must attend a mandatory safety briefing held at 10:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. on each range date. Please visit the website or call civ (0)611-143-548-9801 for full details.

### DORTMUND HUNTING, HOUND AND FISHING EXPO

The Wiesbaden Hunting, Fishing and Sports Shooting Program hosts a trip to the Dortmund Hunting, Hound and Fishing Exhibition on Jan. 29 from 5:30 a.m.–10 p.m. This three-in-one exhibition space is one of Germany's largest. Fees are \$49 per adult and \$39 per children up to age 16. Fees include round-trip transportation and entrance to the exhibition. Bring Euros for meals and purchases. Register by Jan. 15 at the Outdoor Recreation Center or call civ (0)611-143-548-9801 for more information..



### LIVE BAND

Enjoy an evening of live music from R&K at the Wiesbaden Entertainment Center Lounge on Jan. 30 from 8–11 p.m. Must be age 18 or above. This is a free event, no registration required.

### RECURRING MONTHLY EVENTS:

- Jan. 1, 15:** Wood Shop Safety Class
- Jan. 3, 17:** Commissary/PX Shuttle
- Jan. 3:** Picture Framing 101
- Jan. 5, 19:** Off the Hook: Knit & Crochet Club
- Jan. 6, 20:** German Conversation Meetup
- Jan. 7, 21:** ASL Club
- Jan. 8, 22:** Sponsorship Training
- Jan. 11, 25:** Wiesbaden Writer's Club
- Jan. 12:** Military Appreciation Meal
- Jan. 13:** Kitchen Chronicles
- Jan. 20:** Life Here 101
- Jan. 25:** Welcome to Your Book Club
- Jan. 26:** Brick Builders





SPOT  
LIGHT  
ON...

## Köln Karneval

By Kat Nickola

**A**round the world, Christians of various traditions party hard before the somber period of Lent. It may be called Carnival in Rio or Mardi Gras in New Orleans, but in the Rhineland of Germany it is called *Karneval*, in Bavaria it is *Fasching* and in Baden-Württemberg this celebration is known as *Fastnacht*.

The city of Köln (Cologne), however, hosts the biggest *Karneval* in Germany, and this place does not hold back. It is a must to be dressed up in some kind of crazy costume, especially for the biggest event: the *Rosenmontag* (Rose Monday) parade, held this year on Feb. 16, 2026.

In Köln, the *Karneval* cheer is "Alaaf!" It is short for "All af Kölle," which means everything (all) below Cologne. Yell this at floats as they pass by and you can expect candy, or maybe even a rose, to be thrown in your direction. ■

### GERMAN WORD OF THE MONTH

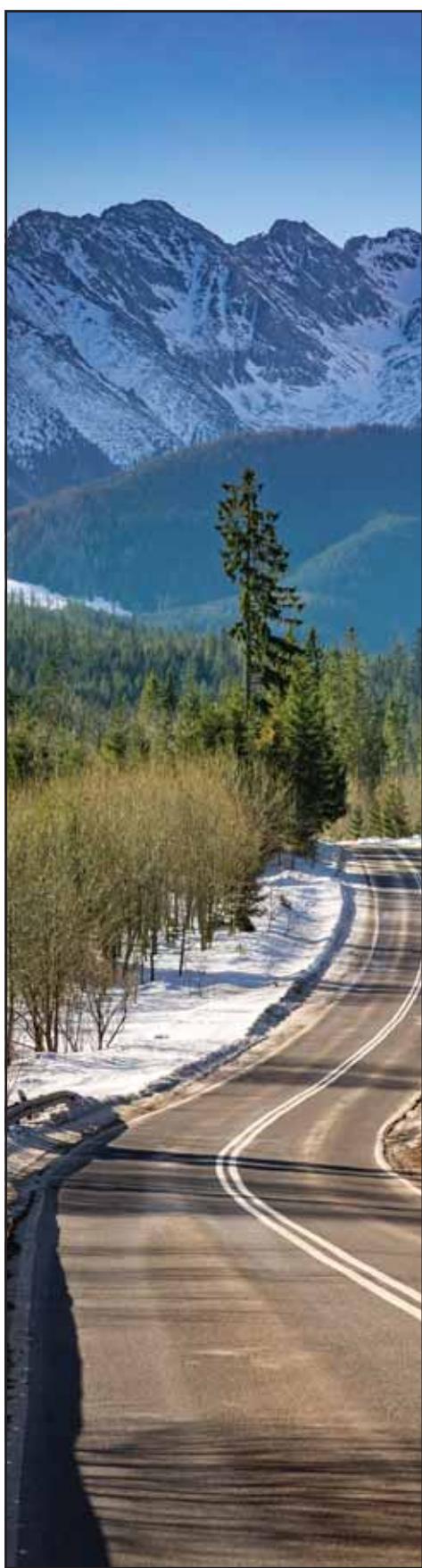
**Schnapsidee** (noun) *shnawps-i-deh*

Literal translation: Schnapps idea

Meaning: A crazy idea that seems like something you would come up with after drinking way too much alcohol. It seemed great at the time; now, not so much.

Germany's biggest *Karneval* and *Fasching* celebrations





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# EXPERIENCE THE GLOBE IN FRANKFURT

By Tamala Malerk



The emperor Charlemagne first mentioned the city of Frankfurt in a document in 794 CE, but evidence of the modern metropolis' existence goes back to 3000 BCE. In its storied history, Frankfurt has experienced royal inaugurations, revolutions, deportations and expansions. Today, it is the seat of the European Central Bank and a business magnet. This long and eventful past has led to Frankfurt becoming a diverse, international cultural hub where there is something for everyone.

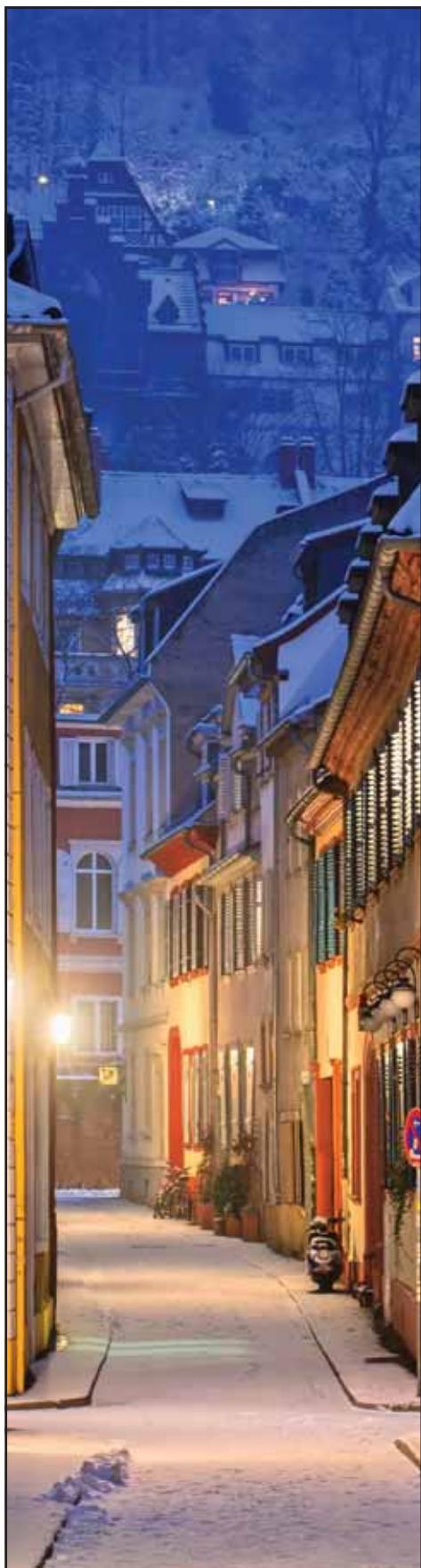
## FESTS, FESTS AND MORE FESTS ALL YEAR LONG

Frankfurt's large size allows for huge annual festivals to take up lots of space for all to enjoy. For those who like a traditional festival with rides, games, entertainment, food and drinks, the Spring and Fall Dippemess are the fests for you. There, you can try regional favorites such as apple wine and hop on classic rides such as the Ferris wheel, carousel, bumper cars and roller coasters.

Celebrate the end of summer with the **Museum Embankment Festival**. With over one million attendees annually, I can personally recommend this festival for its great combination of museums, musical acts, international mini-fests within the festival, markets, dragon boat races and food. I picked up some great handmade gifts for my friends and family (and myself) as well as cheered on my favorite dragon boat as I watched the race from one of the three nearby bridges that connect both sides of this huge festival. **Scan the QR code** to watch a preview of what to expect.



You can also warm up from the cool weather at the **Frankfurt Coffee Festival** or find your next favorite read at the **Frankfurt Book Fair** at these fall festivals. For wintery fun, make sure to check out the **Frankfurt Christmas Market**.



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## MEDICAL

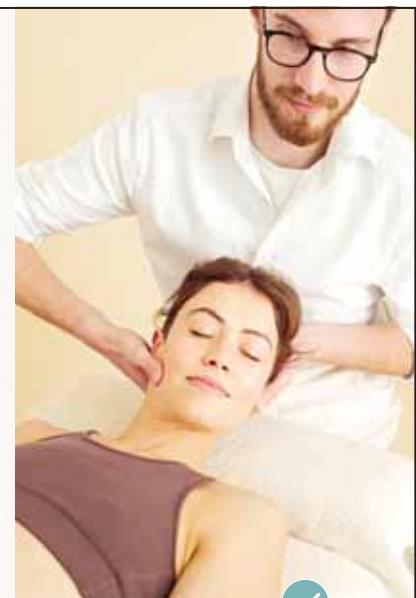

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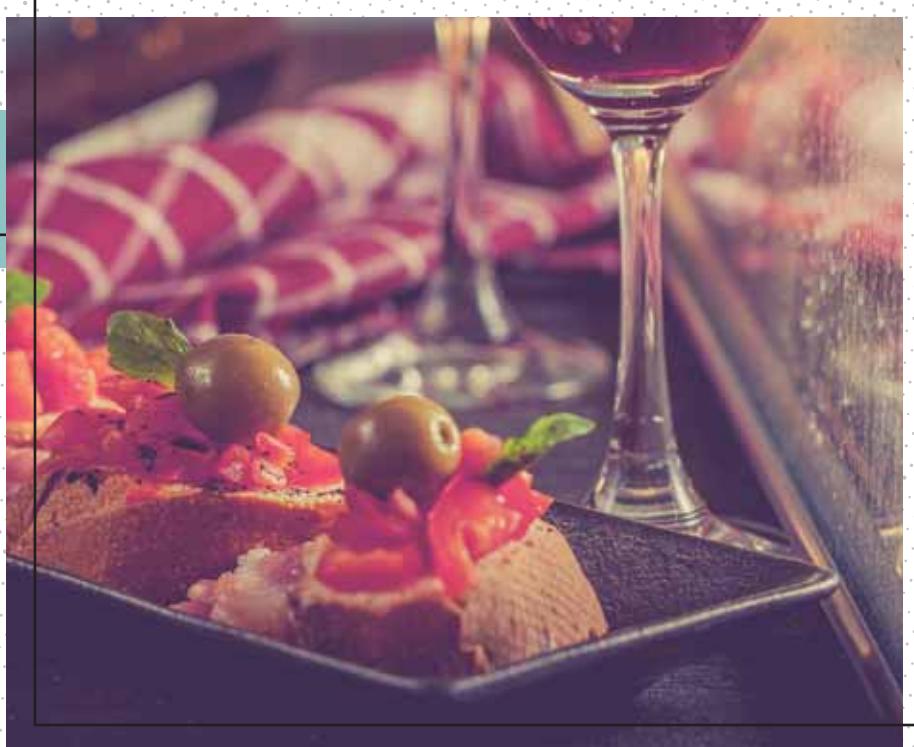


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# FRANKFURT IS A FOODIE'S PARADISE

Because people from all over the world have immigrated to Frankfurt, it has become a haven for delicious international cuisine. The crispiest spring rolls and most delicious duck Thai curry dish I've ever eaten comes from **Rama V**. The **Taverna Alexander's** has nice service, delectable lamb dishes and halloumi. The **Main Tapas Lounge** saved me in a pinch when I wanted something to snack on and a nice cocktail in a relaxing environment before settling in for the night. These three restaurants are just a few blocks from each other, and they barely scratch the surface of what all awaits your taste buds.



## FRANKFURT'S SIZE BRINGS ALL THE BIG ACTS TO THE YARD

Being away from the States can be hard for those used to seeing concerts or major traveling attractions that are typically reserved for American cities. However, Frankfurt has grown large and international enough to draw the attention of major artists and brands. In 2026, there is no shortage of great shows coming to town.

- **Holiday on Ice, "Cinema of Dreams"**  
Festhalle | Jan. 7-11
- **Fireworks of Gymnastics - VIVA Tour 2026**  
Festhalle | Jan. 15-16
- **Masters of Dirt - Freestyle Firestorm**  
Festhalle | Apr. 4
- **Gods of Ink International Tattoo Convention**  
Messe Frankfurt | Apr. 17-19
- **Metallica M72 World Tour**  
Deutsche Bank Park | May 22 and May 24
- **The Weeknd After House Til Death Tour**  
Deutsche Bank Park | July 30-Aug. 1
- **World of Hans Zimmer: A New Dimension**  
Festhalle | Oct. 18
- **Disney in Concert 2026 - The Anniversary Tour**  
Festhalle | Oct. 28
- **Tokio Hotel Arena Tour**  
Festhalle | Nov. 5 ■

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# Meet Germany's CITIES

With distinct personalities, each urban center has a different vibe.

By Kat Nickola

Let's say you just moved to Germany and were invited to a house party. It's time to get to know the locals and find out where you fit in, and Germany's most approachable cities have stopped by to introduce themselves. Perhaps you'll talk shop all evening with Stuttgart, reminisce alongside Nuremberg or dance the night away with Berlin. Grab a drink and mingle! You may just find a city that speaks to you.



## BERLIN

*Your edgy, cool older cousin that you hope will invite you to come along anywhere anytime, ever.*

Berlin has a storied past and isn't ashamed to recognize it, but that isn't what defines this city. This place is all about being intensely authentic and moving forward. It's the metropolis that embraces some of Germany's most distinctive restaurants and shopping, art and night-clubs, with special venues for any subculture imaginable. It is also full of evocative historical WWII sites that can leave you feeling ruefully reflective. There are over 200 museums in Berlin, each telling a unique story as varied as the city itself.



Tourism: [www.visitberlin.de](http://www.visitberlin.de)

Transit: BVG [www.bvg.de](http://www.bvg.de)



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## HAMBURG

*That creative, sophisticated musician acquaintance who only travels the world by boat.*

Hamburg has made dockside warehouses into heritage sites and old brick offices into architectural marvels. This port city has water everywhere, from canals and lakes to a riverfront harbor town, you can't visit without taking a boat of some kind. The port still connects Germany to the world with container ships plying up and down the Elbe River. Hamburg is also the hub for musicals, with a vibrant theater scene offering everything from big glitzy productions to tiny experimental stages.

Tourism: [www.hamburg-travel.com](http://www.hamburg-travel.com)  
Transit: HVV [www.hvv.de](http://www.hvv.de)



## COLOGNE

*A quiet, nice professor who you've heard is secretly notorious for uninhibited partying once a year.*

Cologne, *Köln* in German, still has the half-circle shape of its original Roman walls. Nestled against the Rhine River, there is history galore and a true commitment to maintaining the medieval tradition of partying hard. Visitors are in for a good time during those dark months between Christmas and Ash Wednesday during Cologne's fifth season: Karneval. Sure, the cathedral looms large (it is a must-see), but just around the corner you'll find an old town full of cozy pubs where you can drink a Kölsch with your newest friend.

Tourism: [www.cologne-tourism.com](http://www.cologne-tourism.com)  
Transit: KVB [www.kvb.koeln](http://www.kvb.koeln)



## FRANKFURT

*Your banker buddy who gets tickets to the best concerts and seats at the best restaurants.*

Frankfurt is often the first German city newcomers encounter, but this place is more than just an airport. Surrounded by steel and glass skyscrapers full of busy people, this place has a modern vibe and all the urban perks you want like a constant flow of musical acts, incredible restaurant options, big festivals and museums of all kinds.

Tourism: [www.visitfrankfurt.travel](http://www.visitfrankfurt.travel)  
Transit: RMV [www.rmv.de](http://www.rmv.de)



## STUTTGART

*This factory manager friend will talk cars all night, but don't worry, he'll make sure your wine gets topped off.*

Stuttgart is off the rails with manufacturing, making it a super cool place to nerd out on everything from car engines to luxury vehicles. Both Mercedes and Porsche are vying for your attention, and a factory tour here is really a walk through the ultra-modern world of robots and technology. It's not all hard work, though. Stuttgart's financial success translates into a vibrant downtown and a city that throws some of Germany's biggest parties, with folk festivals that bring the region's outstanding beer and wine to the masses.

Tourism: [www.stuttgart-tourist.de](http://www.stuttgart-tourist.de)

Transit: VVS [www.vvs.de](http://www.vvs.de)



## NUREMBERG

*The older librarian neighbor who loves yapping about history and antiques to anyone who listens.*

Nuremberg, *Nürnberg* in German, is one of Germany's travel hotspots. However, outside of prime summer tourist season or peak Christmas market time, a slower pace makes wandering the medieval city walls, stone castle and cute old town a pleasant, nostalgic experience. It's not all gingerbread, though. The city saw huge Nazi rallies and propaganda campaigns, and the many WWII historical sites have been preserved to acknowledge and inform.

Tourism: [tourismus.nuernberg.de](http://tourismus.nuernberg.de)

Transit: VGN [www.vgn.de](http://www.vgn.de)



## MUNICH

*Your loud IT tech friend who is constantly at conferences, football matches and beer fests.*

Munich goes BIG. Their football club, FC Bayern, is a top-tier record holder. The world's largest beer festival, Oktoberfest, brings millions of visitors yearly. And, Munich, *München* in German, has huge museums of science and technology, art and history, that attract thinkers of all kinds. But under all that massive reputation is a clean, comfortable, city that makes way for pedestrians and bikes and offers small-town vibes in pocket neighborhoods full of cafes and parks.

Tourism: [www.munich.travel](http://www.munich.travel)

Transit: MVV [www.mvv-muenchen.de](http://www.mvv-muenchen.de)



## TAKE THE TRAIN

It may be tempting to drive to your new favorite city, but taking the train is often the best way to experience urban life. Many German cities have air quality restrictions requiring you to have a green low-emission vehicle compliance sticker in the *Umweltzone*. In addition, city parking is expensive and can be stressful with busy streets and underground parking lots designed for small cars.

The Deutsche Bahn ([int.bahn.de](http://int.bahn.de)) often offers ticket rates comparable to fuel and parking fees and eliminates concerns about traffic congestion. Kids up to the age of 14 are typically free when their tickets are booked with an adult, and young adults travel at discounted rates. The earlier you book, the cheaper your train fare will be.

For large groups, driving and parking outside the city may be the most cost-effective way to arrive. Using the local transit network can then be quite easy as most cities offer day passes and ticket kiosks in many languages. ■





# YOUR GUIDE TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

## IN GERMANY

By Mary Del Rosario and Tamala Malerk

Tired of driving on unfamiliar roads? Planning your next three-day weekend getaway? Relax and soak up the views of Europe as a passenger on the bus, train, trolley and tram.

### TAKING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ACROSS GERMANY

**TRAINS:** Germany's rail systems are efficient, comfortable and affordable. You can go to Paris for as little as €44 if you remember to book in advance. The **Deutsche Bahn (DB)** railway system is first-rate, and you can choose from four types of trains depending on your destination, schedule and budget.

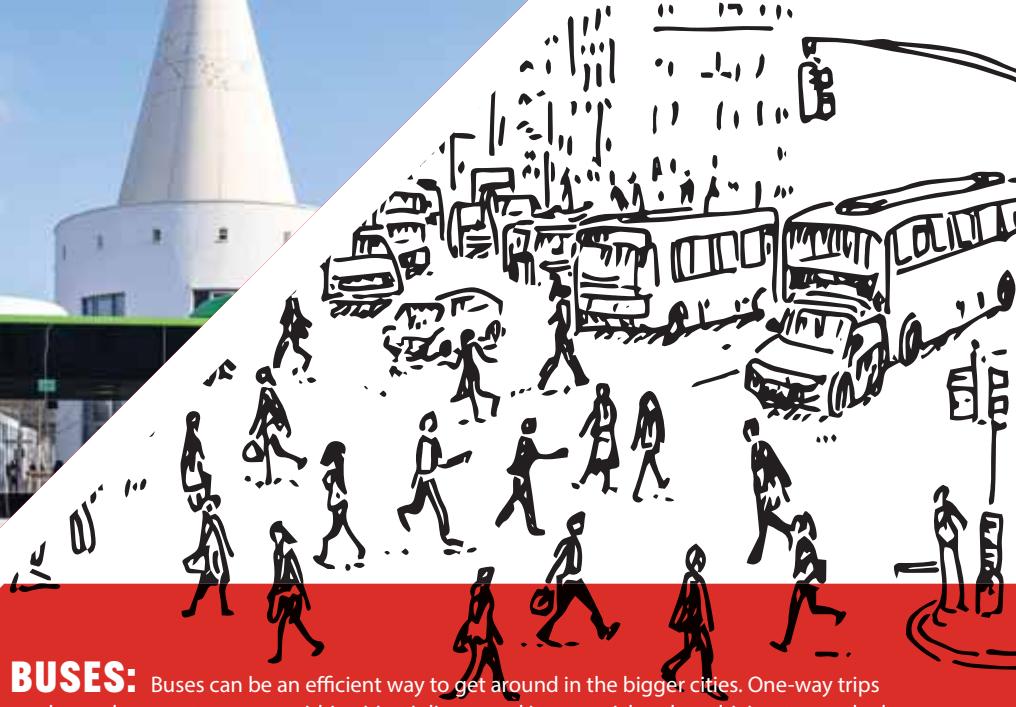
The **Inter City Express (ICE)** connects to major European cities, such as Munich, Hamburg and Paris. It is usually the quickest way to get from point A to point B, but it can be expensive. I took the ICE from Mannheim to Berlin, and it cut the commute from a seven-hour drive to a five-hour train ride.

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The **Regional Bahn (RB)** connects smaller cities and towns.

©DEUTSCHE BAHN AG



**BUSES:** Buses can be an efficient way to get around in the bigger cities. One-way trips can be as cheap as two euros within cities. I discovered it was quicker than driving to use the bus while in Frankfurt.



The **Regional Express (RE)** connects regional destinations with larger cities.



The **S-Bahn** (Suburban Train) stops at every station.

**HELPFUL TIPS:** If you are skeptical about public transportation, check out these apps and websites to make your travels in Germany a piece of cake.

**DB Navigator** is a free app where you can book tickets, get up-to-date information concerning delays/canceled trains, and, best of all, use the fare saver finder to look for the cheapest fares available.

**VRN Ticket** is a free app for the Rhein-Neckar region which gives real-time schedules for regional buses, pedestrian routes, ticket prices and local traffic. You can find out which bus number to take, when it departs and where to get on/off.

**TaxiFareFinder.com** is a website that helps those who want to calculate taxi fares between two destinations. For example, the estimated fare from Ramstein Air Base to Kaiserslautern is €30.69.

Purchase rail tickets for long-distance travel at your local station and use a value-added tax (VAT) form to save a percentage on fares within Germany. If you have travel flexibility, check out the last-minute deal section of the Deutsche Bahn website ([www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de)).

**Google Maps** has been indispensable for me when navigating public transportation across Europe. Whether I am on a bus, train or tram, this app informs which routes I can choose from and how many stops will be made. You can even search in advance to plan out the route for the day. If cell service could be an issue, download a local area map prior to travel.

Always carry cash, including small bills. Some buses or trains let you use a credit or debit card to board; however, sometimes only cash is accepted aboard busses and at ticket stands. Often machines will only accept small euro or local bills. ■



YOUR

SNAPSHOT

## SIMMOZHEIM, GERMANY

# Photo by Lillian Chekouras



Sometimes, the most enriching part of travel is being a quiet observer of small moments. It is easy to forget that the places we visit, rich with must-sees and must-dos, are also someone's home: where they work, grocery shop and go about their day like we do in our own respective places of residence. Thank you to photographer Lillian Chekouras for showing us a simpler side of the Black Forest in **Simmozheim, Germany**, by capturing this quiet moment and the mundanity that connects us all. ■



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