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COMMANDER

SEAN P. KLIMEK, Lt Col, USAF, PhD

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CAROLINE MILLER

**PUBLISHING & MEDIA DESIGN,
DIRECTOR**

MARIE WOODS

WRITER-EDITOR

MARY DEL ROSARIO, AMANDA PALUMBO

GRAPHIC ARTISTS

CARRIE FARRELL, LAURA HERSH,
ANDREA VARGAS

ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

KAREN LEWIS

MARKETING COORDINATOR

RACHEL COTTER

**MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING,
MANAGER**

DOUG DOUGHERTY

**MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING,
CONSULTANTS**

SEAN ADAMS, HEIDI BAYFIELD,
NATE JAMISON, TOM KEYS,
CLAUDIA STIER, JEFF TEESELINK

ADVERTISING COORDINATORS

AL GREEN, KRISTI KIMMEL

COVER DESIGN BY

LAURA HERSH

ADVERTISING OFFICE

Unit 29480, APO, AE 09211
Postfach 1980, 67607
Kaiserslautern, Germany
+49(0)631-3615-9000
or email: dougherty.doug@stripes.com

CONTACT US:

Telephone: +49 (0) 0631-3615-9111
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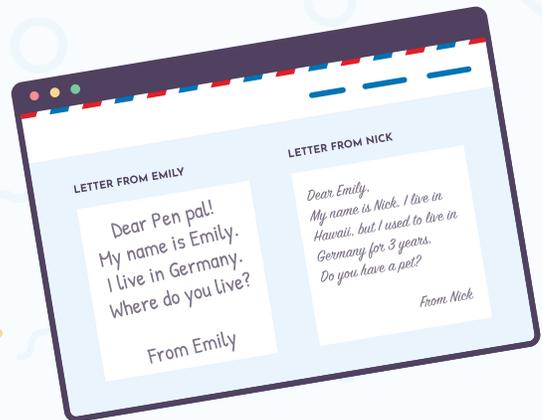
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Get Outside

WITHOUT
LEAVING
YOUR
COUCH

By Jessica Zen



WHEN THE WORLD
KEEPS ON TURNING BUT
YOU CAN'T LEAVE THE
COUCH, DON'T RESORT
TO BINGE WATCHING OLD
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AND LEARN ABOUT ANI-
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OR EVEN GO ON A DIS-
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COMFORT OF YOUR LIV-
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THESE FOUR AMAZING
VIRTUAL EXPERIENCES.

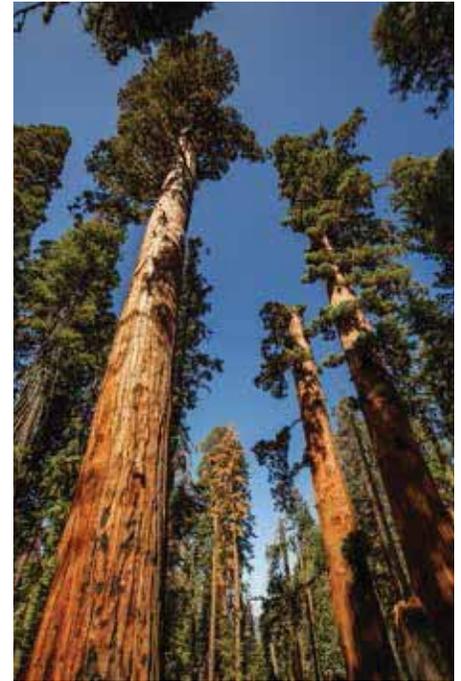


VIRTUAL FARM TOURS

If your kids love animals, these tours are just what they need! You can see the animals without smelling the various aromas that grace a farm. Children ages 4 - 9 can visit Dutch Hollow Farm. The tour lasts 50 minutes and visits a dry cow barn, milking parlor and calf barn. This is a great learning opportunity for young minds. Older kids, ages 10 - 13, can take a tour of Will-O-Crest Farm in New York. Start your tour in the calf area and the move on to the milking parlor. There you'll learn how much milk a cow produces in a year. End your tour in the cow barn. High school students can tour Jo Bo Holsteins Farm in Pennsylvania. Learn exciting facts about all the efforts that go into running a farm and all of the products that come from cows. How many cow facts can you learn on one tour?

VIRTUAL NATIONAL PARKS TOURS

If you've been searching for a way to tour National Parks without paying admission, there is finally a way! Virtual tours of various National Parks are now available using Google Earth. Discover the Badlands of South Dakota or climb the mountains in Denali National Park in Alaska. Have you ever wondered what a Redwood forest looked like? Now is the time to find out.



VIRTUAL GEORGIA AQUARIUM TOUR

Been wondering what the African penguins are up to at the Georgia Aquarium? Now, you can feed your curiosity. Watch live webcams of these cute little critters and see what trouble they get themselves into. You can also view the Beluga whales serenely swimming all day long or the mystical floating jellyfish. What other fish can you spot while watching the live cams?

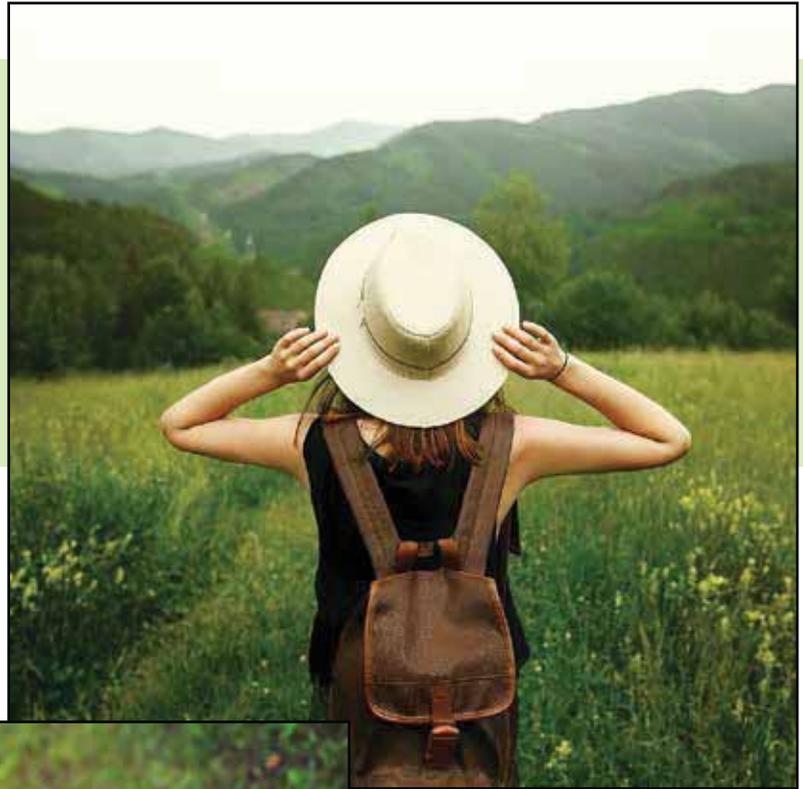


VIRTUAL DISNEY RIDES

Though the parks are closed and Mickey Mouse is taking a much deserved vacation, you can still experience the thrill of riding various amusement park rides. Cruise through Space Mountain or go on an undersea adventure with the Little Mermaid. YouTube offers a plethora of videos and clips that Disney fans have captured during their magical time at Disney parks.

Are you inspired to go to any of these places in real life? Start with a virtual tour and decide if you want to see for yourself some of the amazing places and attractions the world has to offer. Inspire your child to learn about a farm or be amazed at the incredible height of the Redwood tree. No matter which virtual adventure you choose, you're sure to return safe and sound and full of excitement for what's to come next.

GERMAN LIVING



One of my favorite parts about living in Germany is the opportunity to stay active and explore this amazing host country at the same time.

Embracing GERMANY

Active Lifestyle

By Stacy Roman

Living in one of the healthiest nations in Europe makes it easy to adopt healthier habits and increase activity levels. Now that flowers are blooming, the sun is making more than the occasional appearance and you can pack the parkas away, dust off your sense of adventure and start getting active. Here are some ways to get moving in the community.

USE YOUR FEET

Not a fan of running or competitive sports? That's okay! Germany is home to the fantastic sport of volksmarching. Developed and embraced during the 1960s, volksmarching is a non-competitive organized walk. Often traipsing through the local village or nearby forests, members of the community break out their walking shoes and hit the trail. The most common volksmarches are either 10 or 20 kilometers. However, with the lively crowd and great company, the distance goes quickly. Not to mention, delicious food and beverages await at the end.

Looking something a little more rewarding and tastier? Why not check out one of the culinary hikes? These family-friendly strolls wind through rolling green hills, charming towns and blossoming vineyards. Local vintners and/or brewers pair up with restaurateurs to provide a unique gastronomic experience. Pit stops are dotted throughout the hike, complete with food and drinks, entertainment and tables for relaxing. Just make sure to have a designated driver or plan to get home safely if you plan on drinking.

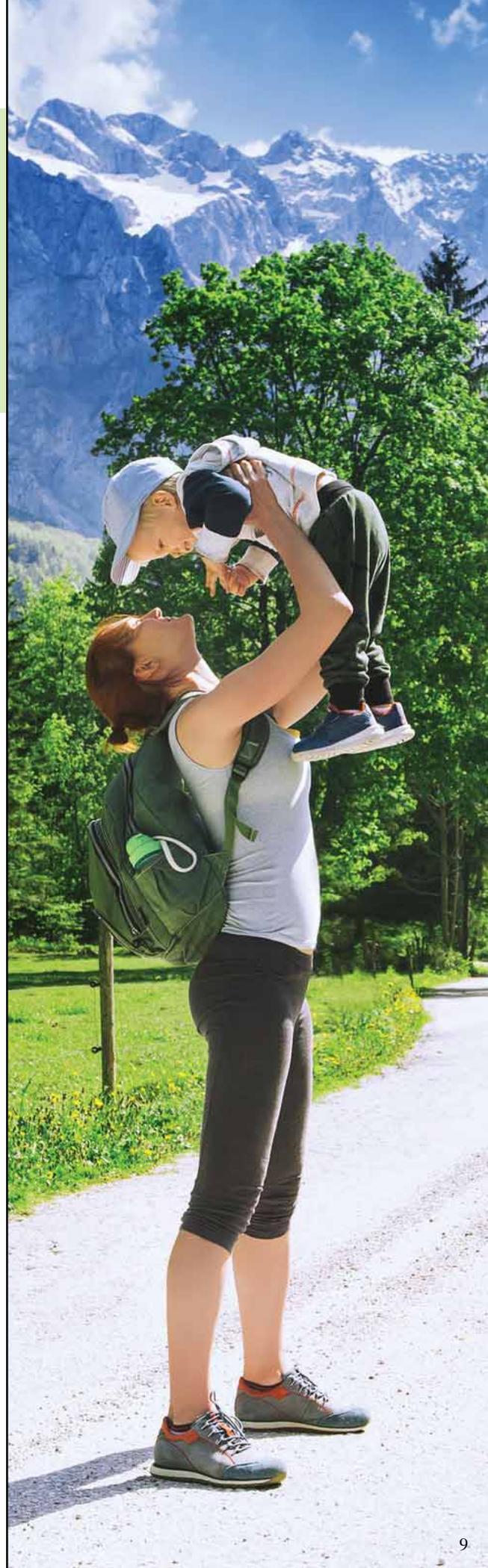
HAVE A FOREST ADVENTURE OR TWO

With drier days upon us, discover nearby forest adventure parks. Swing among the trees or whizz through the canopy along a zipline. Nestled in the Black Forest is Hirschgründ, an outdoor wonderland. With seven lines looping through the tall trees, visitors clamber along ledges, and zip over rushing creeks and lush landscapes. It's okay if you're a beginner, the experts provide plenty of safety instructions before you get hooked up and harnessed in. You can also head a little further south to Bavaria and slide down one of the longest Alpine coasters in Germany at Alpsee Bergwelt. Stretching almost five kilometers, visitors can get their workout by hiking to the top of the hill. A fantastic play area for kids and ropes course are adjacent to the start of the coaster.

HOP ON A BIKE

For a different perspective of the beautiful scenery around you, why not hop on a bike? Many villages in Germany have bike paths leading through the city centers and out to the country sides. Leisurely pedal your way around a crystal-clear lake, or dodge fallen branches and boulders through mountainous terrain for a more challenging and thrilling ride. Or simply begin in your village, ride through one or two other villages and stop for a bite to eat before jumping on a train back to your starting point (very convenient if you've eaten a little too much).

One of my favorite parts about living in Germany is the opportunity to stay active and explore this amazing host country at the same time. ■



GERMANY'S HIGHLIGHT

Eifel National Park



By Amanda Palumbo



Whether it's a stroll through the forest with the family or camping out to see the night sky light up with hues of purple and blue, visiting one of Europe's most beautiful national parks is one to add to the bucket list.



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When the cold dark days of winter are finally behind us, something magical happens. The sun shines a little more, flowers and trees start to bloom and everyone seems to have a spring in their step. If you want to experience the magic of a European spring, head to Eifel National Park.

Eifel National Park is an area within the larger Hohes-Venn Eifel Nature Park. It spans 110 square kilometers complete with gorgeous trails and bright blue lakes, wild animals in their natural habitat and even stargazing.

The perfect family day trip

On a beautiful spring day with kids suffering from winter-long cabin fever, families can pile into the station wagon and take a two-and-a-half-hour drive north to Eifel National Park. The park has one of the best family (and stroller-friendly) hikes in the area. Wilder Weg is just 1.6 kilometers, so it can accommodate the tiniest of legs. This trail is filled with 10 hands-on exhibits that will teach kiddos all about nature, animals and the environment.

If you need a break from the elements, you can head to the National Park Center, where the new Dreams of Wilderness exhibit is located. This exhibit was designed for children to not only learn about the natural world around them but interact with it as well. This exhibit plays on most of the senses, including sniffing plant fragrances, listening to animal calls and touching stuffed models.

The seasoned hiker's dream trail

Eifel National Park is home to the Wilderness Trail, a 32-mile four-day hike that moves through every terrain possible. You'll walk along rushing rivers, through meadows filled with flowers and dense lush forests. There is no shortage of lookout points, giving you panoramic breathtaking views of the park. This area is a certified refuge for wild cats, so there's a good chance you'll spot a few furry felines along the way. The park offers hiking packages that can include accommodations, maps, guides and luggage transports.

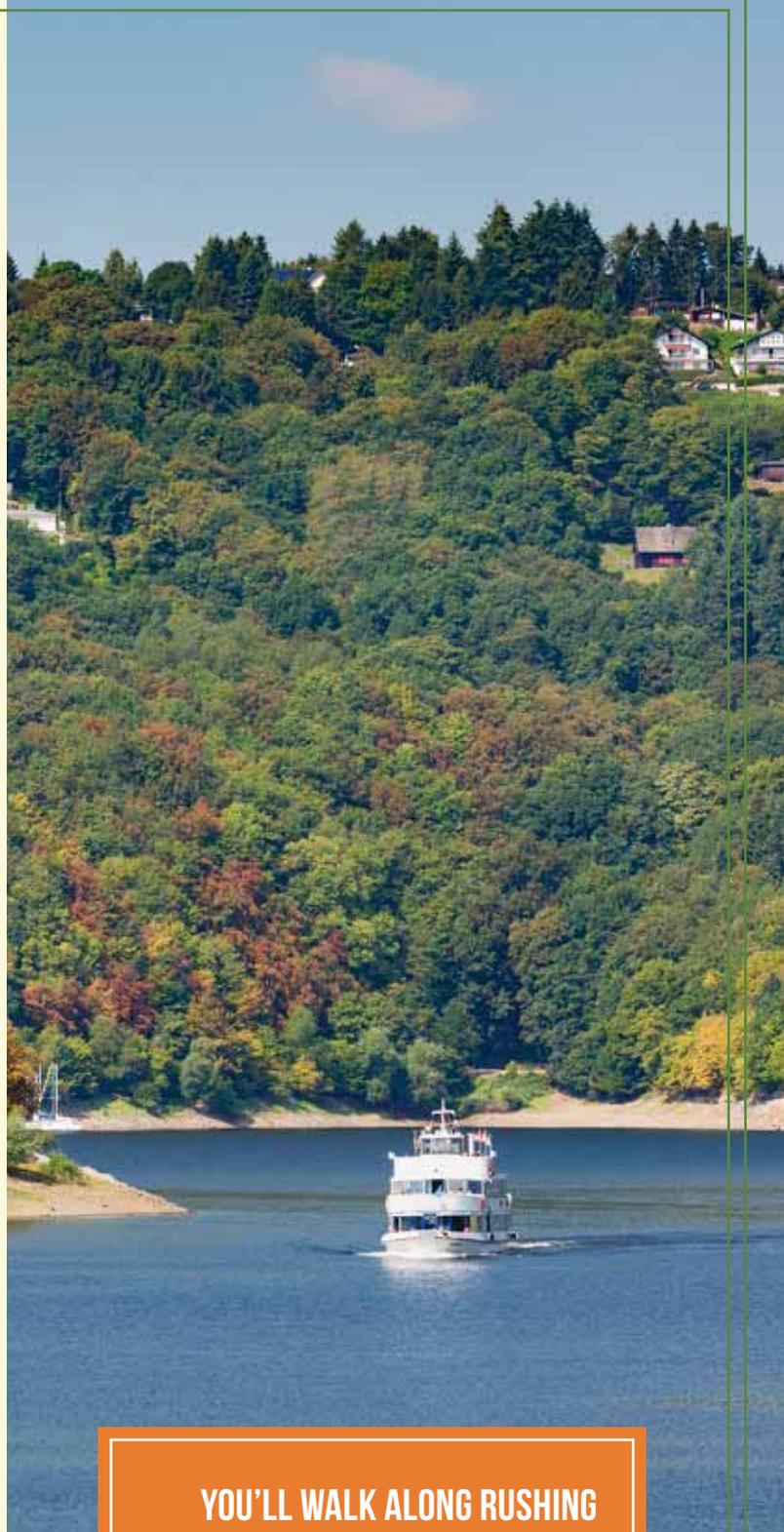
Park after dark

The park was designated an "International Dark Sky Park" by the International Dark Sky Association, a first for Germany. To receive this, an area has to have an exceptional nocturnal environment to see the stars and be protected from light pollution. Very rarely in life do you have the opportunity to gaze up at the sky and see hundreds of luminous balls of gas and a handful of planets with the naked eye. Guided tours are offered and are family-friendly with discounted rates for children. The tours are hosted by astronomy experts and you'll be able to gaze at the stars through high powered telescopes. If you're a photography nerd with a wide-angle lens, this is a tour you can't pass up.

All too often, we are distracted by big-tourism, racing towards places like Paris, Rome and London. Very rarely do we equate getting lost in the woods with seeing the Eiffel Tower but a trip to Eifel National Park will quickly change your mind. Whether it's a stroll through the forest with the family or camping out to see the night sky light up with hues of purple and blue, visiting one of Europe's most beautiful national parks is one to add to the bucket list.

Good to know:

The park is accessible by public transportation. Taking the train to Kall or Heimbach will lead you to shuttle buses that go to the park. If you're driving, the park is accessible from the A1, A44, E42 and A27. Large signposts will show you when to exit and lead you to the gates and parking. ■



YOU'LL WALK ALONG RUSHING RIVERS, THROUGH MEADOWS FILLED WITH FLOWERS AND THROUGH FORESTS AND UP HILLS TO GET BREATHTAKING VIEWS OF THE PARK.

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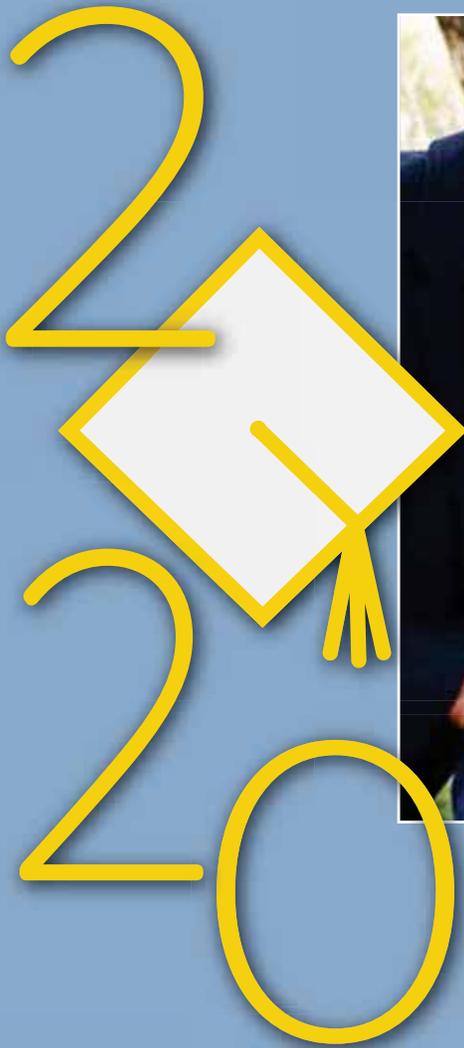
LUXURY IN THE French Riviera

By Jessica Zen

The Côte d'Azur (French Riviera) is a stunningly beautiful stretch of land along the Mediterranean coast of south-eastern France. Glamorous beach towns like Saint Tropez, Cannes and Nice grace the coastline and are remarkable locations to live a life of luxury, even if it's only for a few days. With around 300 days of sunshine, there is no shortage of opportunities to soak up the rays while touring this area.

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Next up is the medieval village of Eze. Like something out of a movie scene, the village is perched on a cliff high above the Mediterranean and full of winding cobblestone streets. Have lunch at La Chèvre d'Or for a fine-dining experience. Think cheese trolleys and panoramic windows enhancing the breathtaking view. See if you can spot a celebrity on a yacht in the bay! After, stop for a glass of wine at the Château Eza, a 400-year-old establishment with a restaurant that is built into the village's ancient walls.

Nothing screams luxury like an extravagant pink mansion. Stop in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat at the Villa and Gardens Ephrussi de Rothschild. This villa was constructed from 1905 - 1912 and is home to antique furniture, paintings, sculptures and rare porcelain. On your audio tour, you'll learn about Baroness Béatrice and her lavish decorating style and excessive amounts of exotic pets. Outside you will experience nine beautiful themed gardens. The best part? This villa is rose colored, making it an absolutely dazzling place to take pictures.

Just down the road is perhaps one of the most famous cities along the coast, Nice. Take a leisurely stroll along the Promenade des Anglais. The water glistens the most stunning color of turquoise and the architecture across the street is nothing short of amazing. Take special note of the famous Le Negresco Hotel, a staple of the city. This hotel's story began in



“GLAMOROUS BEACH TOWNS LIKE SAINT TROPEZ, CANNES AND NICE GRACE THE COASTLINE AND ARE REMARKABLE LOCATIONS TO LIVE A LIFE OF LUXURY, EVEN IF IT’S ONLY FOR A FEW DAYS.”

1913 and has been a destination for high society, and even royals, ever since. The inside boasts famous French artwork, sculptures and period furniture ranging from the 17th century to today.

SENSATIONAL CUISINE

After you’ve taken in the sights, it’s time for some local cuisine. The French Riviera has over 50 Michelin stars, and one of the newest restaurants on this coveted list is Jan. The swanky restaurant holds 24 seats and serves up local cuisine in a cave-like setting. Opt for a tasting menu and let your palate dance with joy from all the delectable flavors.

A trip to France isn’t complete without stopping in Antibes. Think mega-yachts and beautiful white, sandy beaches with bottle service. The old town is surrounded by 16th-century ramparts and is best explored on foot. Wind through the narrow, cobblestoned streets and stop for a glass or two of rosé. Art aficionados will love Musée Picasso, which is housed in a 14th-century castle. Here you’ll find 245 of Picasso’s paintings and sculptures, as well as work by other contemporary artists.

Cannes, land of luxury and haute couture, is the next city down the coast and the perfect place to shop until you drop. Hit up the iconic Boulevard de la Croisette. It stretches for almost two miles along the bay and the promenade is full of designer boutiques. Think Céline, Chanel, Valentino, Armani and more. If you feel like hitting the open water, take a ferry to the Lérins Islands. In just 15 minutes, you’ll reach Sainte-Marguerite, where you can stop for a waterfront lunch at restaurant La Guérite. Their Mediterranean cuisine is simply fantastic!

ROSÉ, ALL DAY

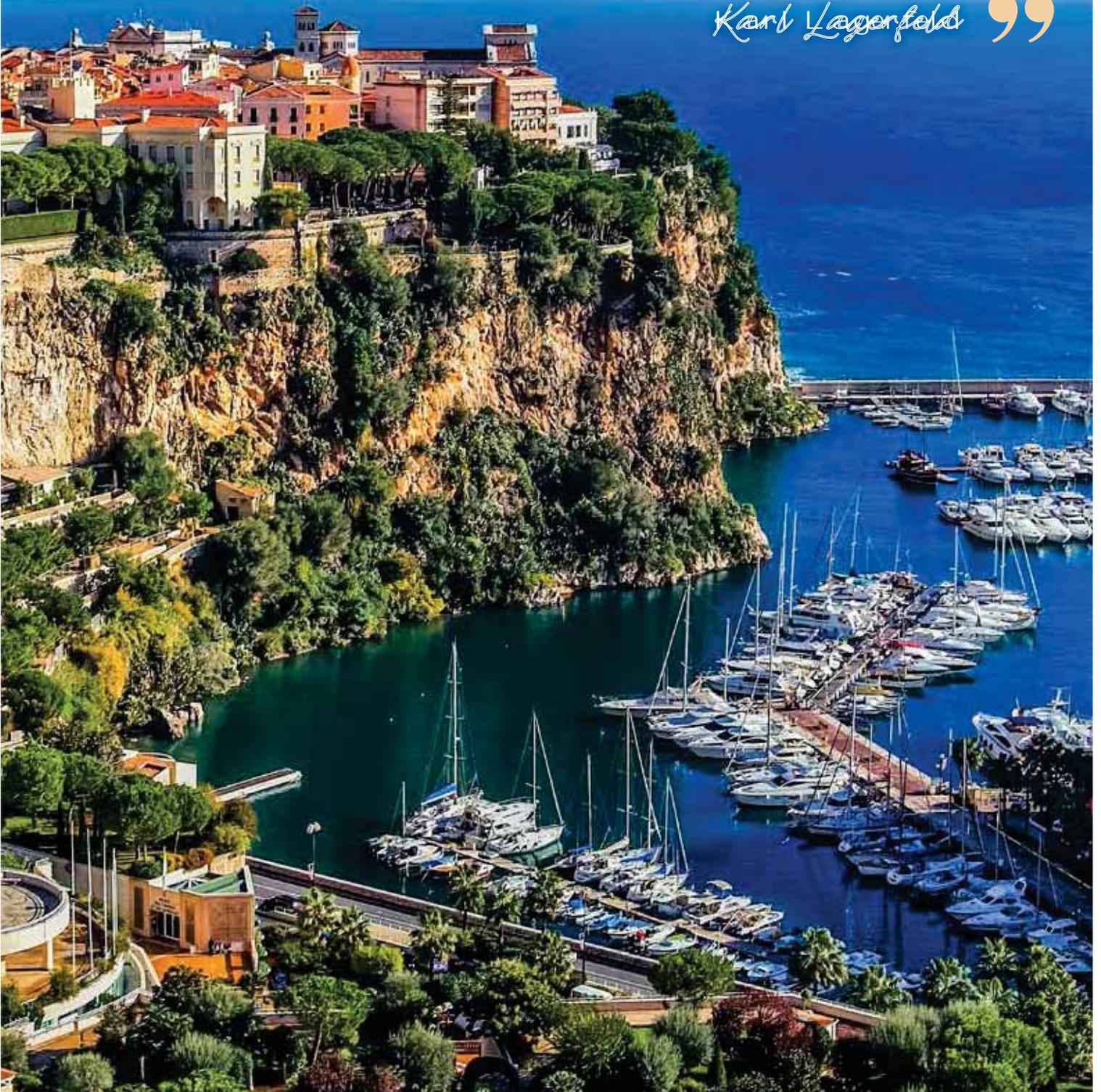
Last, but not least, is Saint Tropez. A tourism hot spot, this location is known for excessive extravagance. The rosés here are particularly wonderful, so plan a wine tasting. Head to Château Barbeyrolles for a truly unique experience. This vineyard is completely organic and the family that owns the winery can trace their ancestry back to the 13th century in the same region. Though operating on only about 30 acres, the family’s business is a labor of love. They use copper and sulphur treatments to avoid chemicals and harvest the grapes by hand, creating a delightful product.

Are you daydreaming about spending a significant amount of time chasing the sun, tasting delicious Mediterranean cuisine and sipping on some seriously fabulous wines? Experience all the luxury the French Riviera has to offer in these amazing coastal towns. Let the azure waters calm your soul and the sun soak over your skin while you satisfy your appetite with some of France’s finest fare.



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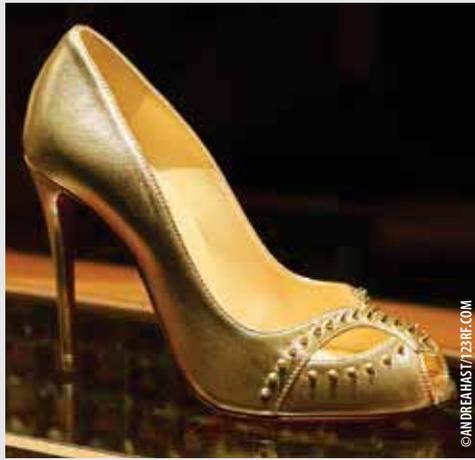
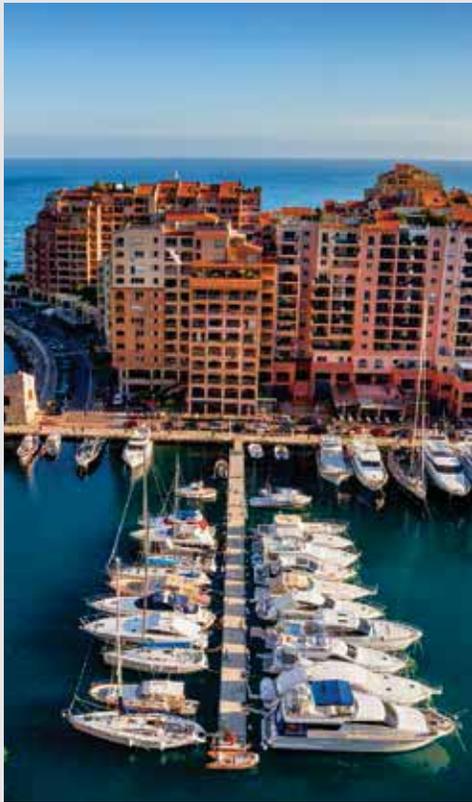
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TRAVEL INSPIRATION

Known as the second-smallest country in the world, Monaco is a glitzy city-state that is bordered by France. What lacks in size makes up for in glamour, yachts and history. With the warmth of the French Riviera calling your name, here are a few reasons why Monaco will be your next favorite vacation spot.





10 Reasons to Love Monaco

By Mary Del Rosario

1. You can channel your inner Grace Kelly or Prince Rainier and pretend to live in the lap of luxury as Monaco is known for its allure.
2. The Oceanographic Museum is one not to be missed.
3. There are no shortages of heavenly Italian and French food, especially "Barbajuan," a fritter that's stuffed with ricotta and Swiss chard.
4. Shopping is to be taken very seriously here.
5. Active travelers will love to cycle on Col de Braus, the famous, winding mountain pass.
6. The beaches of Larvotto and Marquet is the epitome of what the picture-perfect Mediterranean has to offer.
7. The Monte Carlo Casino is otherworldly and must be experienced.
8. Monaco's backdrop of yachts dotting Port Hercule is a sight you'll always remember.
9. The Exotic Garden is breathtaking and will make the prettiest pictures.
10. The Monaco Grand Prix, held every May, is a car enthusiast's dream.

Tyrrhenian Coast



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WHY GO THERE

Sun worshippers flock to the Tyrrhenian coast when the weather really heats up, and for obvious reasons. Maybe it's the glistening azure waters or the pristine beaches. Perhaps the craggy cliffs that provide the perfect backdrop draw in visitors. It could be the gorgeous coastal towns that draw the crowds. Whatever your reason is for visiting this holiday hotspot, don't delay on scheduling your trip now. Get ready to say "ciao" to one of the best vacations of your life!

Tyrrhenian Coast

ON YOUR RADAR

By Jessica Zen

Surrounded by some of the most beautiful landscapes, the Tyrrhenian Sea provides coastlines to its visitors that are sure to shock and awe. Get ready for some fun in the sun in Italy and on the islands of Sardinia and Corsica with crystal clear waters and pillow-soft sand that stretches for seemingly endless miles along the coast. Nothing screams summer like the ultimate beach trip to one of Europe's most fabulous countries!

Though you may not have heard of the Tyrrhenian Sea, it is part of the glittering Mediterranean. The Tyrrhenian includes the western coast of Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, the French island of Corsica and several smaller islands. It is a major trade and transportation route, as well as a popular tourist destination.

Consider basking in the sun in Palermo, Sicily. It was dubbed "kingdom of the sun" by Normans in the 12th century and earned the "Capital of Culture" title in 2018. For a taste of the local culture, hit up a market for some truly outstanding food. Capo, Vucciria and Ballarò are some of the main markets and feature all of the fruits, vegetables, meats, spices and trinkets you could imagine. But the beach is where the magic happens. A quick 20-minute bus ride from the city is Mondello. Once a fisherman's village, the beach promenade is now full of Art Nouveau style villas and lounge chairs that are nestled between Mount Gallo and Mount Pellegrino.

If you'd prefer to stay on an island, consider Corsica's luxurious beaches. Palombaggia, on the southern side of the island, is particularly stunning. White sand dunes, shady pine trees and delightfully warm, shallow waters make this area perfect for families. If you want to escape the crowds visit Campomoro Beach. It offers a mountainous backdrop and is near solitude. It's a veritable paradise!

Sitting on one beach can sometimes make you feel restless. Curb that feeling by island hopping in La Maddalena, a cluster of pink granite islands and islets between Corsica and Sardinia.

These islands are considered the secrets of Sardinia and house turquoise lagoons, pristine beaches and an air of otherworldliness. The beaches are only accessible by boat, and therefore hardly touched. Don't worry, you'll still discover plenty of tiny restaurants and shops in the port towns!



Endless lounging on the beach is lovely, but you can also see some amazing things if you hop in the car and cruise on SP71 road along the Costa del Sud in southern Sardinia. Twist and turn along the rocky coast and pull off at all the stopping points to take endless amounts of pictures of the postcard-perfect area. A popular destination on this route are the beaches in Chia. Both families and divers love the shallow turquoise waters, and more active visitors will love windsurfing in this location. Let the golden beaches and copious amounts of vitamin D carry you away to your happy place while you relish this experience! ■

Growing a Container GARDEN

By Genevieve Northup

As a child, I watched brides pose for portraits among my mom's award-winning roses and picked green beans from my dad's bountiful vegetable garden. My brother started planting trees at age four and now preserves forests for a living.

Unlike my family, I had no interest in gardening while living in downtown Austin, and later Dallas. But once I moved to rural Germany, I envied the tidy plots of blooming flowers and abundant produce. On multiple occasions, I bought hydrangeas and ferns only to have them die within weeks.

When we became close friends with German neighbors who always served something from their backyard — champagne cocktails with homemade elderflower blossom syrup, strawberry and apple jellies, root vegetable soup — I was inspired once again. I asked my mom to help me start a garden during her visit last summer and quickly discovered that I could grow a garden. Now I want to pass on what I learned so that you can find your green thumb.



Why a container garden?

We chose the balcony over the backyard because of slugs, pesky moles and our exuberant Labrador who is frequently scolded for digging. There are other benefits of a container garden I found appealing: little weeding is necessary (ugh, weeding), and the plants can be shifted if they are not thriving in their current location (meaning I was less likely to kill them).

What you need

Many plants can live happily in terrace boxes, including squash, cherry tomatoes, eggplant, lettuce, spinach, peppers and herbs. Research online for varieties that can handle the amount of sunshine or shade of your proposed garden space before shopping, and translate the names to German.

You can purchase seeds to start from scratch or plants well on their way to producing yumminess; I highly recommend the latter if you are a beginner. Look for short, full plants that have healthy, green leaves; signs of new growth; and at least one strong, undamaged primary stem. Hold on to care instruction tags.

Now that you have a cartful of plants, you need soil and fertilizer. Look for all-purpose potting mix; if you're not sure, ask someone. Here's a handy chart for determining how many bags to buy: <https://bonnieplants.com/library/how-many-pots-can-you-fill-with-a-bag-of-soil>.

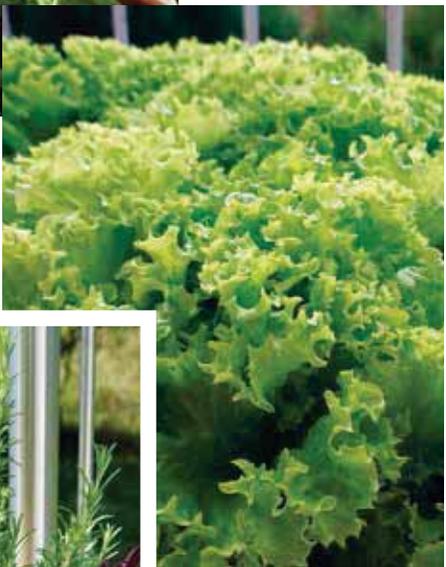
There are a number of organic and synthetic fertilizers available. I bought one container of Chrysal Universal Garden Formula, which did the job.



Select pots that are functional. Look for those with holes in the base so that water drains; otherwise, plant roots may rot. Also consider size and shape, such as wider, shallower pots for lettuce and wide, deep pots for squash. Gardeners.com offers these depth guidelines:

- 4-5 inches: chives, lettuce, basil, cilantro
- 6-7 inches: bush beans, garlic, kohlrabi, onions, peas, mint, thyme
- 8-9 inches: green beans, carrots, cucumber, eggplant, peppers, spinach, parsley, rosemary
- 10-12 inches: beets, broccoli, okra, squash, dill

You can make cute, functional planters out of vintage finds, like wooden wine crates, barrels and metal tubs; Pinterest has lots of inspiration. Wooden crates probably provide adequate drainage, but you'll need to drill holes in other containers.



How to transplant

Get your pots in position and fill with a layer of soil. Mix in fertilizer according to label directions. Remove plants from temporary pots, making sure you do not damage the

root system. Loosen constricted roots by softly squeezing. Add the plant to the appropriate pot and surround with soil up to an inch below the rim. Ensure the roots are fully covered, and water until the soil is damp.

Continual care

Now for the hardest part — keeping everything alive. Plants won't bark or cry if you've forgotten to feed them, so set a reminder on your phone and involve the family in garden maintenance.



Check the soil level periodically to make sure it remains one to two inches below the container rim. Have extra soil on hand to replenish as needed.

Supplement the soil with a water-soluble fertilizer every two weeks. I'll be honest; I didn't do this and still ended up with a healthy bounty.

Stick your index finger about half an inch into the soil to determine if the plants need water. If the soil is damp, it is not time to water. I did this every couple of days when the weather was mild, but during the 2015 heat wave, I checked and watered every evening.

Watch for wilting, pests, disease, weeds and overcrowding. On sweltering summer days, I shifted the lettuce and squash from our unsheltered balcony to the shade. I also hung netting around the cherry tomatoes to keep birds away.

Understand and accept that many plants are seasonal. By mid-fall, my garden had stopped producing. I still had some herbs, but I emptied the other pots to start again after the "Eisheilige," Ice Saints, in mid-May, when it is unlikely to drop below freezing overnight.

The fruits of labor

My total investment was under \$100, and I soon had cherry tomatoes, zucchini, peppermint, cilantro, basil, rosemary, thyme and so much lettuce that we gave bagfuls away because we couldn't eat it fast enough. I still remember the first meal I made from my garden — beautiful, crisp greens topped with cherry tomatoes, candied walnuts, crumbled goat cheese and raspberry vinaigrette. I don't think I'd ever been as proud of a meal as I was that night.

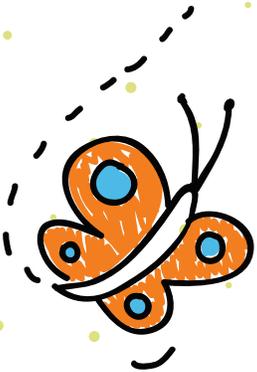
But the lessons I learned went far beyond how to grow a garden. I began to have more faith in myself. If I could grow a garden, maybe I could do other things that I'd been afraid to try. And that has made the return on my investment worth more than a green thumb. ■

Crafty

By: Shereece Spain

Kids

Finally! Spring is here and I realize in Germany that means tons of rain and cloudy skies. However, the temperatures are rising and spring weather is just around the corner. To get the family in the spring mood, crafting is a great way to pass the time on rainy days and keep the kiddos from driving you crazy ... I mean, keep them entertained.



Before you know it, the sun will be shining more often than not, so we decided on a craft that captures those rays and turns them into brilliant colors around the house - stained glass! I've always admired stained glass windows in churches and homes. Since we're renting our home here in Germany, we're not changing out any windows. Also, they're not exactly cheap even when purchased at a flea market. Without breaking any child labor laws or the bank, I put my toddlers to work.

What you'll need:

- Black construction paper or cardstock
- Contact paper
- Tissue paper - Cut into approximately one-inch squares.
- Wax paper
- Glue stick
- Scissors





HAPPY Crafting

What to do:

1 With the black paper, cut a thick outline (approximately half inch) of the design or shape you want to use. In this case, we did a tulip and a butterfly. If you're not comfortable free handing the pictures, you can find many templates online to trace. The designs can be very simple or very intricate. For more intricate details, I recommend cutting the tissue paper into smaller squares.

2 Put your cut-out shapes onto the sticky side of the contact paper. Put the white back underneath so you can see the shapes more easily.

3 Place the tissue paper squares onto the design making sure it's completely covered. Don't worry if it goes over the outside. It will be cut off at the end.

4 Tear off a piece of wax paper that's larger than the design and cover the area with glue from the glue stick.

5 Turn your shape over and place it pretty side up on top of the wax paper. Make sure you completely smooth out the two pieces you've put together and allow the glue to dry.

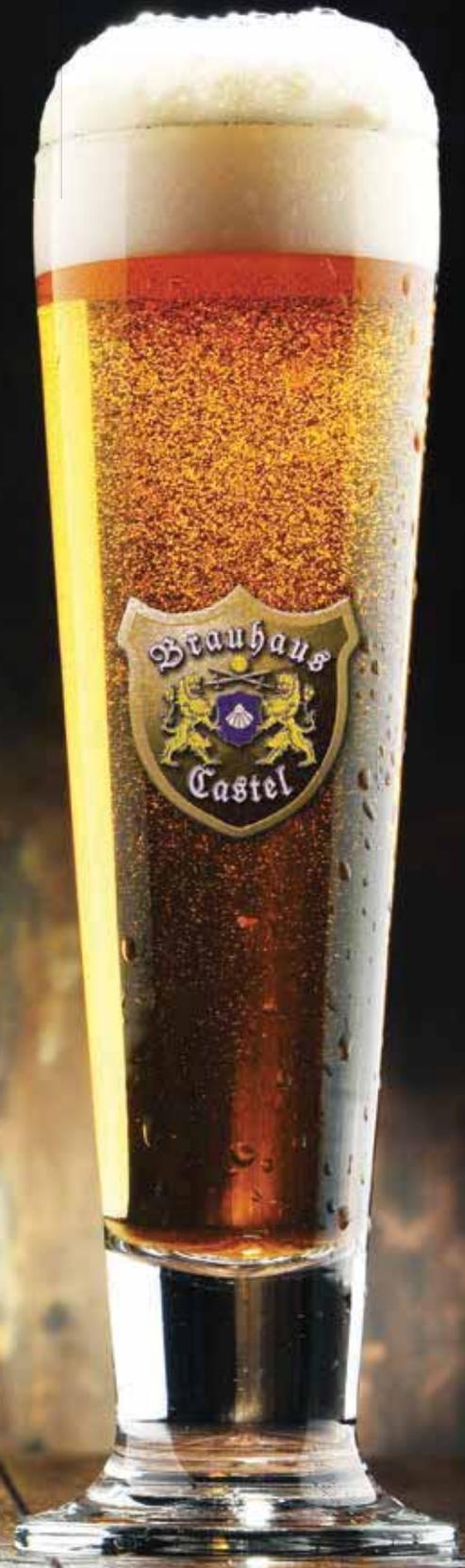
6 Trim the excess from around your design. Tape it to a window and voilà! You now have your own personalized stained glass creation. Don't forget to write their name and the year in permanent marker.

Tip:

This project is also a great way for kids to practice the coordination of using scissors. For younger ones, have them cut out the tissue paper. It doesn't have to be precise, so let them have at it. Simply draw lines across the paper for them to follow. If you have older children, cutting out the shape gives them more advanced level practice.

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