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From a freshly brewed cup of coffee to a vase full of beautiful blooms, there are plenty of simple things in life which bring us joy. However, let's be honest for a second. Sometimes those little bundles of happiness can be a bit quirky. For instance, maybe you find delight in a small golden Maneki-neko (Japanese waving cat statue) or a shelf full of unique Polish pottery pieces. I'm not ashamed to admit one of my odd harbingers of joy are gnomes.

Garden GNOMES

By Stacy Roman

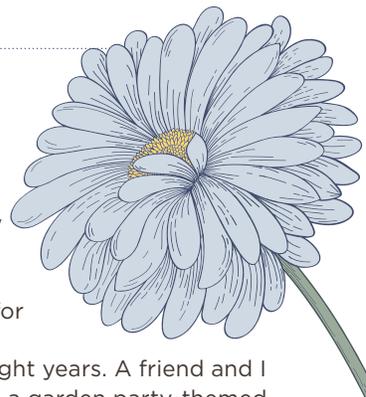
Gnomes have been a thing in Europe for centuries. In ancient Rome, statues of Pripus (a lesser god of fertility) were planted in gardens to help ward off bad juju and ensure a bountiful harvest. Spurred on by a Swiss chemist in the 1500s, gnomes were established as small, mischievous magical earth dwellers who roamed through gardens and fields helping crops grow. However, they weren't the cute chubby little guys we know and love. It wasn't until the early 1800s when they were firmly rooted in German folklore and fairytales that they became the instantly recognizable red hat-adorned shenanigan makers.

Garden gnomes grew in popularity when a British nobleman imported 21 terra cotta statues from German sculptor Philip Griebel in the 1840s. Gnomes were found in wealthy gardens throughout the U.K. until their decline in the early 20th century. When Disney released "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves," a renewed love affair began. Although most are manufactured elsewhere, Griebel's company is the lone

company still producing the classic pottery in Germany.

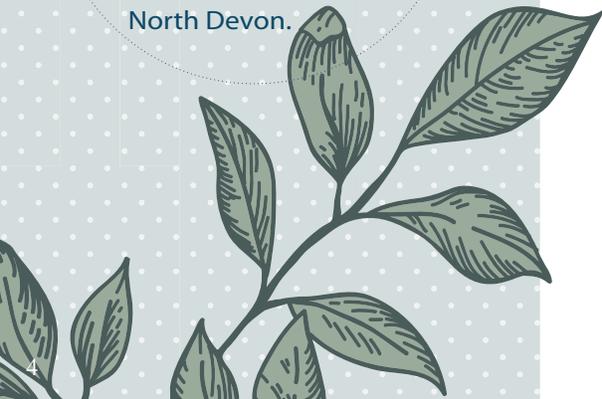
My fondness for gnomes goes back about eight years. A friend and I were going to a garden party-themed event and rather than going with the traditional fancy hat and dress, we decided to take the theme literally. We dressed as garden gnomes, complete with red conical hats with white yarn beards attached. From this singular event, I giggle every time I see one and think of my friend. I've amassed a small collection of Christmas "Heinzelmännchen" and was gifted Bubba, a New Orleans Saints garden gnome to help bring my favorite football team good luck.

You can find these cheeky little statues at most garden stores in Germany, especially during the warmer spring months. While they may not live up to their promise of helping around the garden, at least they'll bring you a smile. ■



Gnome Fact

There's a sanctuary for the statues in England. The Gnome Reserve, a garden featuring 2,000 various gnomes, remains a popular tourist attraction in North Devon.



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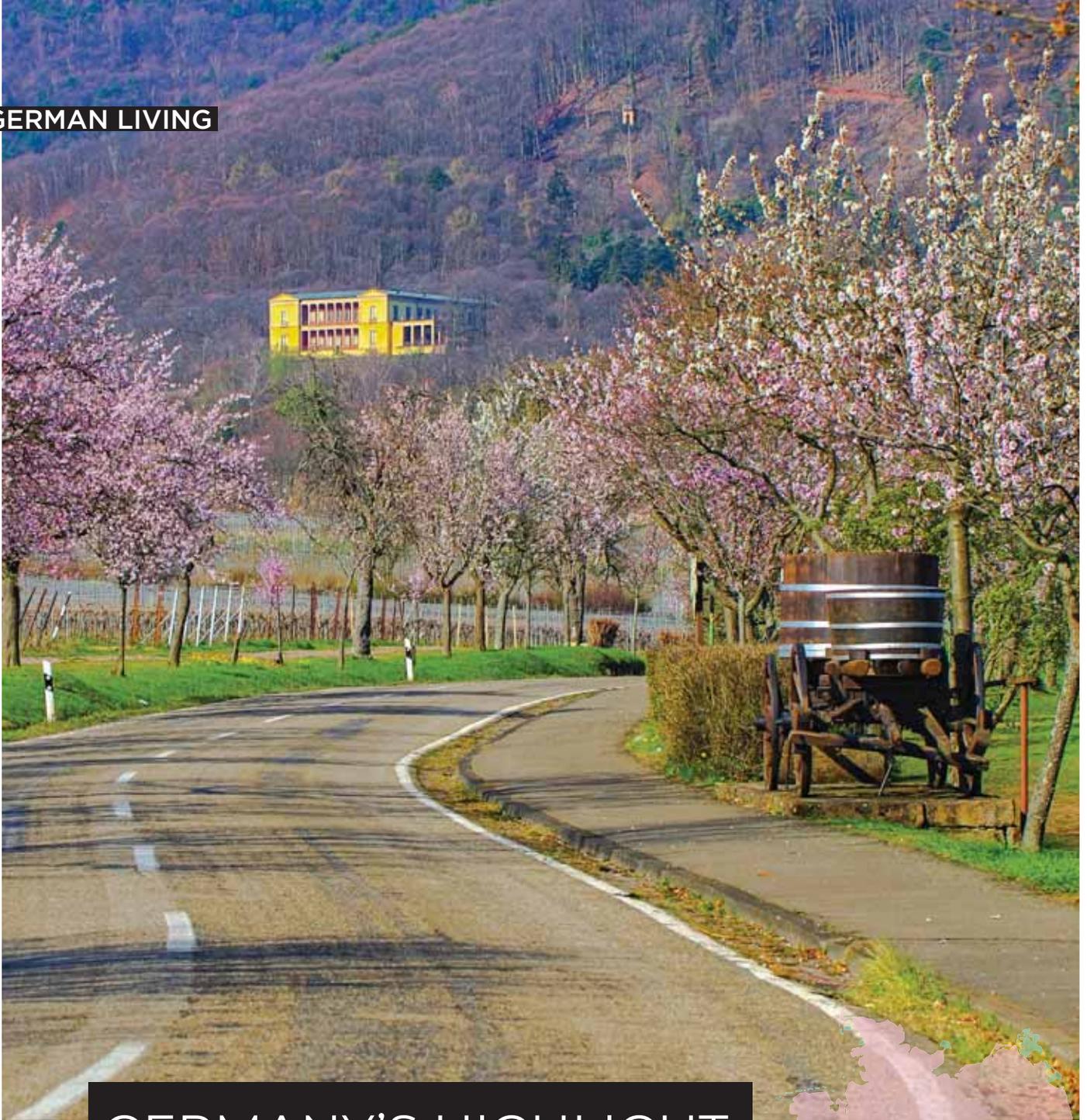
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GERMANY'S HIGHLIGHT

By Karen Bradbury

Klostermühle Herb Gardens

Edenkoben, one of the many charming villages along the German Wine Route, is home to the former summer residence of Bavarian kings, a chairlift up the Rietburg mountain and a remarkable garden re-established where Cistercian sisters once tended beautiful gardens.

Amongst a sea of healing, fragrant herbs, one in particular stands out. Some 45 varieties of lavender thrive in this corner of Germany where the climate approximates that of the Mediterranean.

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AMONGST A SEA OF HEALING, FRAGRANT HERBS, ONE IN PARTICULAR STANDS OUT. SOME 45 VARIETIES OF LAVENDER THRIVE IN THIS CORNER OF GERMANY WHERE THE CLIMATE APPROXIMATES THAT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN.



The medieval cloister

The touristic route known as the German Wine Road winds through the southeast corner of the Rhineland-Palatinate. This breathtaking beautiful area of quaint villages, rolling vineyards and steep hills aspiring to be mountains is known for its mild climate, early spring and flora one would expect to encounter at more southerly latitudes.

The inhabitants of the town of Edenkoben, just a few miles south of Neustadt an der Weinstrasse, have long recognized they're on to a good thing. Smitten by the surroundings, King Ludwig I ordered the Villa Ludwigshöhe Palace be built as the summer residence of the Bavarian kings between 1846 and 1852.

Long before that, at the height of the Middle Ages, Cistercian monks from a nearby village built a convent here for their sisters of the same order. On land bestowed by the Counts of Leiningen, and with the blessing of the Bishop of Speyer, a cloister by the name of Heilsbruck, or "Bridge to Salvation," was completed here in 1262. The cloister thrived and became a center of spiritual, social and economic development in the region. In addition to their devotions, the sisters provided food and drink to the poor, tended to the sick, grew crops, milled flour and made wine.

A garden reborn

On the very grounds where the sisters grew their healing plants and sustaining crops so many centuries ago, life has been breathed back into the soil. Through the vision of Klaus Schlosser, a trained master gardener long fascinated by herbs and with a passion for Provence, the Klostermühle Herb Gardens took root here in 2006. In this quiet corner of paradise, Schlosser's devotion to the principles of organic farming, sustainability, self-sufficiency, a healthy diet and life in harmony with nature are on full display.

The Klostermühle Herb Gardens invite visitors to explore its colorful and fragrant world of plants, sprawling across seven thematic areas: a vegetable garden, spices and herbs for the kitchen, medicinal plants, fragrant herbs, fruits and berries, ornamental herbs and Mediterranean plants grown in a greenhouse. Many features of the ancient cloister were integrated into the design of the contemporary garden, making a meander through its heady-scented rows a bridge between past and present.

Lavender to-go

The farm store on-site sells products made from the bounty that surrounds it, including a variety of lavender-based products from candles to scented pillows, cologne, soaps, syrups and essential oils distilled on the farm. The shop also offers dried herbs, teas and living plants. An hour-long guided tour through the gardens is offered (in German) on Fridays at 3:30 p.m. A garden cafe serves drinks and light fare, incorporating ingredients grown amidst all the wonderful scenery. A glass of chilled lemon verbena lemonade goes down smoothly on a hot summer's day.

The garden is a popular stop throughout the warm months of the year, but never more so than in June and July, when its annual Lavender Fest takes place.

Kräutergarten Klostermühle is located at Klosterstraße 171, 67480 Edenkoben. The shop is open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesdays through Fridays, and from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturdays, April through October.

<https://kraeutergarten-klostermuehle.de> ■

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Ibiza

The Life of the Balearic Islands

By Mary Del Rosario

Situated in the Mediterranean, there is a gem. Though this beauty may be known for its vivacious atmosphere, the towns, locals, food and beaches are what make this island one worth coming back to. We're talking about Ibiza, the "Isla Blanca" (white island) of the Balearic Sea.



TOP: Traditional village in Ibiza.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Couple eating Iberic dishes.

BOTTOM LEFT: Tourists enjoying drinks and music.



PICTURESQUE TOWNS

The components of the towns in Ibiza are comprised of white-washed small buildings, a few small restaurants and bars, a market and a church. However, each village and town on the island offer a special kind of magic in their own way.

Eivissa

The town of Ibiza, or Eivissa, is brimming with beautiful, white-washed buildings and pops of color seen in the hanging bougainvillea and boutique shops. In fact, the Old Town, or Dalt Vila, is so picturesque that in 1999 it became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. While there, be sure to pay a visit to the Ibiza Cathedral located in the Old Town. A word to the wise: bring comfortable walking shoes, as you'll need to walk up a steep hill to get to it. Another can't-miss site is the Sant Lucia Bastion where you'll be able to see an old gunpowder magazine in the center, as well as the most captivating views of the harbor your eyes will have the pleasure of seeing.

Santa Gertrudis

Situated at the heart of Ibiza, the charming village of Santa Gertrudis is one you'll come to love. Encompassing bohemian flare, this village houses eclectic works of art in their galleries, boho-chic cafes and the famous Bar Costa, where back in the day, starving artists would swap paintings for food. Though the village may have adapted to the modern taste of tourism—it is aptly known as the chicest town in Ibiza—the bohemian beat still marches on. Be sure to roam around the village square for an authentic old town experience.

Es Cubells

One visit to Es Cubells will have you feeling as if time stood still. Though your "to do" list here may be scant (there's the Nuestra Señora del Carmen Church, two bars and an area for the kids to play in), the views from the church overlooking the cliffs make up for it. If you're wanting a quiet reprieve, there are also many luxury villas to choose from, ranging from all-inclusive to your own calm respite.

Santa Eulària des Riu

Wanting the best of both worlds? Head to Santa Eulària des Riu, where you'll not only be able to sunbathe the day away but will also be able to continue living the lively atmosphere Ibiza has to offer. In this town, many shops and restaurants await you and will not leave you feeling disappointed at all the options. Be sure to put Puig de Missa on your itinerary. This imposing church dates back to the 16th century and also lends itself as a great photo-op.

THE LIFE OF THE PARTY

It's no secret that Ibiza holds the title of the party spot in Spain. Chances are, if you've come to the island, partying until you hear ringing in your ears from the loud music is the main agenda for your trip. Below are the party hotspots to remember:

Pacha

The island comes alive at night at Pacha, the famous nightclub, where they house some of the island's biggest DJs. Be sure to dress to impress! Beachwear is prohibited.

Playa de'n Bossa

Perhaps the most popular resort on the island, Ushuaia, the well-known open-air club is the epitome of what you think when you hear "Ibiza." Sankeys, a smaller club, can also be found at this strip.

San Antonio

The nightlife in San Antonio can only be described as legendary. This buzzing resort area is a treasure trove for anyone who wants sun, beach and nightlife. Check out Es Paradis, Eden and the O Beach Ibiza beach club for a fun night.



TOP: View of Benirras Beach.

MUST-SEE BEACHES

Ibiza is also known for its jaw-dropping sunsets and crystal-clear beaches. Whether it's with your friends or family, dipping your sandy toes in these waters is a must.

Cala Conte

This beach, located on the west coast, is the perfect place to learn how to swim as the water is shallow. Note that because the coastline is rocky, there isn't much sand here.

Cala Tarida

With the long stretch of fine, white sand, Cala Tarida is a beach the whole family can enjoy. There is also an array of watersports to partake in such as waterskiing and diving.

Aguas Blancas

The locals may be mad their secret has been spoiled, but this less-touristy beach is perfect for those who want to avoid the crowds. You can even lather mud from the red clay from the cliffs on your body!

Benirras

Located in the northern part of Ibiza, Benirras is the beach to be seen. This beach is particularly known for its sunsets and is the place where the local "hippies" play their drums as the crowd dances along.

THE GASTRONOMIC SCENE

Though everyone knows the classic staples belonging to Spain—Iberic ham, tapas, sangrias and paella to name a few—the dishes below are worth trying as they are native to Ibiza.

“Sofrit Pagés” – Stew (chicken, lamb, Ibizan sausages and other meats can be used) that is served with potatoes and vegetables.

“Sobrassada” – The national sausage of Ibiza. It's made from pork mixed with paprika and other spices.

“Bullit de Peix” – Fish stew that came about when the fishermen used whatever fish they had on hand that day.

“Zarzeula” – Similar to paella, this dish is a mixture of shellfish and is cooked in a saffron-flavored stock with rice.

“Frigola” – After dinner, it's suggested to drink frigola, a thyme-based drink, as a digestive. ■

Barcelona Cathedral - Cathedral construction began in 1298 and was completed 150 years later.



Good Eats

No matter the time of day, the Gothic Quarter will have you covered in the food and drink department. All you need to do is make a few choices.

Choose between a relaxed cafe setting, some casual tapas or a little gelato from a small shop or tapas bar. This area also offers many options for drinks at a pub or a more formal dinner. Next, choose if you want to be on one of the squares, overlooking the goings-on and taking in the beauty of old and new, or if you want to get lost in the winding, narrow streets and stumble across a place that you might not be able to find again if you tried.

The tapas bar *Els Quatre Gats* will give you a brush with history and fame, as it was a spot famous for hosting Pablo Picasso and was home to his very first exhibition, welcoming many artists and musicians ever since. For the oldest restaurant in the city, try *Can Culleretes*. Opened in 1786, it offers delicious dishes of Barcelona and Spain, creating set menus to feature fish, meat and vegetable dishes. *Set Portes* is known as a must-visit eatery, serving traditional Spanish dishes as well as newer, innovative creations, all with a beautiful view through the seven arched doors that gave the restaurant its name. They are famous for their paellas, rice and seafood, featuring the products of the area.



What to Do

In your wandering, you may stumble upon the beautiful Gothic Barcelona Cathedral, the Roman temple and Roman forum or one of the many museums, like the Museum of History or the Gaudí Exhibition Center. Be sure to hop around to the various large squares, which are picturesque gathering spots surrounded by beautiful architecture, cute cafes and all sorts of lively activity. A few favorite squares are Plaça Reial, Plaça Del Pi and Plaça de Sant Jaume.

Whether you're ready to update your wardrobe or just window-shop, this neighborhood will give you a memorable shopping experience. Las Ramblas, the major pedestrian boulevard through the quarter, is home to the bigger, more well-known brands and side streets that contain many smaller and local boutiques worth exploring.

When it comes to nightlife, the Gothic Quarter will be buzzing. You will find many bars, pubs and clubs around Plaça Reial filled with locals enjoying the night and each other's company. And you can bet the Gothic Quarter will be buzzing into the early morning hours, so whether you're joining the fun or hunkering down after a day of wandering, be sure to plan accordingly. ■

Up Close and Personal *with the* Gothic Quarter

by Anna Leigh Bagiackas

Sometimes the journey is all about the destination. But when visiting Barcelona's Gothic Quarter (Barri Gòtic), that is not the case: it is all about the journey. The Gothic Quarter is the most historic neighborhood of Barcelona and the center of its Old Town, home to Roman wall remains, medieval landmarks and the Jewish quarter, called El Call or "little street."

What makes this area so unique is its labyrinth street plan, with lots of small, narrow side streets opening out onto large and open squares or "plaças." And as a very pedestrian-friendly neighborhood, your journey is about winding through these side streets, getting lost while finding the old cozied up next to the new and contemporary.

MWR GO

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Hit the trails this spring on foot or by bike

Please note: These events are all subject to change during the ongoing COVID-19 response. Please call the facility in advance to ensure the event is indeed happening as scheduled.

Memorial Day 10K Run

Go exploring on your favorite trails during a 10-kilometer run — and don't forget to record your time on your favorite app or smart device — anytime in the period of May 24-31. Post your time on the MWR Facebook page by 7 p.m. on May 31. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9830 for more information.

Poster Contest

The Wiesbaden Library (in cooperation with the garrison's Environmental Division) invites patrons to submit their entries in the Restore Our Earth Poster Contest in celebration of Global Earth Day. Posters can be drawings, photos or collages — and the contest is open to all ages. The top three winners will receive prizes and custom posters. The top 12 winning entries will be included in A Year 2022 "Restore Our Earth/Earth Day" calendar. Submit entries to the Wiesbaden Library by May 12, 2021. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9821 for details.

Memorial Day Murph

Athletes are invited to compete in the Memorial Day Murph on May 22. The event honors Navy Lt. Michael P. Murphy, a Navy SEAL who was killed on duty in Afghanistan and posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor — the first Navy sailor to earn the distinction since Vietnam. The Memorial Day Murph is a timed event including two one-mile runs, 100 pull-ups, 200 push-ups and 300 air squats. Cost is \$15 per person. Register at the Wiesbaden Sports and Fitness Center or call civ (0611) 143-548-9830.

Virtual Tour and Wine Tasting

Outdoor Recreation hosts a Virtual Tour and Tuscan Wine Tasting on May 1. The \$125 price



includes professional tasting instruction, white and red wines, cheese, salami and chocolate truffles. Register at Outdoor Recreation on Clay North or call civ (0611) 143-548-9801.

IMCOM-E Cycling Challenge

Wiesbaden Outdoor Recreation invites cyclists to join the self-paced 2021 IMCOM-Europe Cycling Challenge. Hit the trails on your favorite two-wheeler and keep track of the kilometers logged from May 1 to Aug. 31, 2021. Participants can attempt to reach 500, 1000 or 2000 kilometers to be eligible for corresponding prizes. The challenge is open to all authorized MWR patrons. Visit <https://wiesbaden.armymwr.com/happenings/imcom-europe-cycling-challenge> for registration details or call civ (0611) 143-548-9801.

Baby Boot Camp

Find support, network with fellow parents and get your questions answered during Baby Boot Camp classes with the New Parent Support Program. Classes are held on the first Tuesday of the month from 9 a.m. to noon and on the third Tuesday of the month from 5-8 p.m. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9211, -9218 or -9219 to sign up.

Bowling Specials

The Wiesbaden Entertainment Center hosts a Cinco de Mayo Red Pin Bowling Special on May 5. Every time you get a strike when a red pin is the head pin or five pin, you earn a free game of bowling. On Mother's Day, May 9, Mom gets to bowl for free. On

Armed Forces Day, May 15, the WEC will reduce the price of bowling by 50 percent. Call the WEC at civ (0611) 143-548-9406 to make reservations.

Friday Night Scrambles

Unwind after the work week with a little friendly competition at the Rheinblick Golf Course during

Friday Night Scrambles on May 7 and 21 starting at 6:30 p.m. Make your own four-person team for these nine-hole scramble tournaments. Call civ (0611) 143-548-5485.

Parent Support Group

Army Community Service's New Parent Support Program invites parents of infants up to age three months to join in a weekly Virtual Support Group Wednesdays from 10-11 a.m. Call ACS at civ (0611) 143-548-9201 for log-in information.

Four-Person Scramble

Compete in the Rheinblick Golf Course's Four-Person Scramble on May 15 starting at 9 a.m. Call civ (0611) 143-548-5485.

Licensed and Qualifying Shooting

Wiesbaden Outdoor Recreation hosts Licensed and Qualifying Shooting at the Wackernheim Range on May 15 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9801 for more information.

Wine and Cheese event

Learn more about the specialties of France during a virtual information tasting evening with Bijan's Wine Barrel Studio and Wiesbaden Outdoor Recreation. The evening will feature four different wines (whites and reds), cheeses and sausages. The cost of \$110 includes the four bottles of wine, two cheeses, sausages, a wooden wine crate and the professionally led tasting session. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9801 or visit Outdoor Recreation on Clay North to register.

48 HOURS IN LONDON

By Jessica Zen

There's nothing quite like a trip to the city. The lights, the shops, the food and the people all come together to create the perfect bustling atmosphere. The energy coming from the city itself can be magnetic. Get drawn into London's charm by spending just two days in this buzzing metropolis. Learn about the local history and government, indulge in some delicious cuisine and shop like never before in London.

A look back in time

London has the perfect blend of modern buildings and ancient architecture. No trip here is complete without visiting some of the most iconic sights. The Tower of London and neighboring Tower Bridge over the River Thames are not to be missed. Be sure to stop here for some essential London pictures. Next up is Westminster Abbey, a Gothic abbey that has been used for coronations since 1066. Be sure to mosey by Buckingham Palace, where the queen hosts events and receptions. These places alone have so much history and character you'll be hard-pressed to leave.



Cuisine to tickle your fancy

Nothing is as British as fish and chips, so you absolutely must try them while here. Head to Soho's Golden Union Fish Bar. Here you'll find fresh fish from British waters that is cooked to order and fried in homemade batter. To take part in a longstanding tradition, go for a spot of afternoon tea. For over 300 years, The Tea Salon at Fortnum & Mason in Piccadilly has been the epitome of sophistication. From cakes to scrumptious scones to tiny finger sandwiches with the crust cut off, this salon has everything your heart desires.



Shop 'til you drop

Chic clothes, fine bags and high-end jewelry are just some of the amazing finds you will come across when shopping in this iconic city. The perfect places to window shop or even make some purchases are on Oxford Street or Bond Street. For a one-stop shop that is sure to stun, visit Harrods. This department store brings together the best brands luxury has to offer. Think doormen, diamonds and high-class finds.

There's so much more to London than this simple list of things to see and do. Get your feet wet and see some highlights by initially spending just 48 hours here. It'll give you plenty of time to figure out the tube, find some incredible food and start planning your next trip to this lovely city. ■



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