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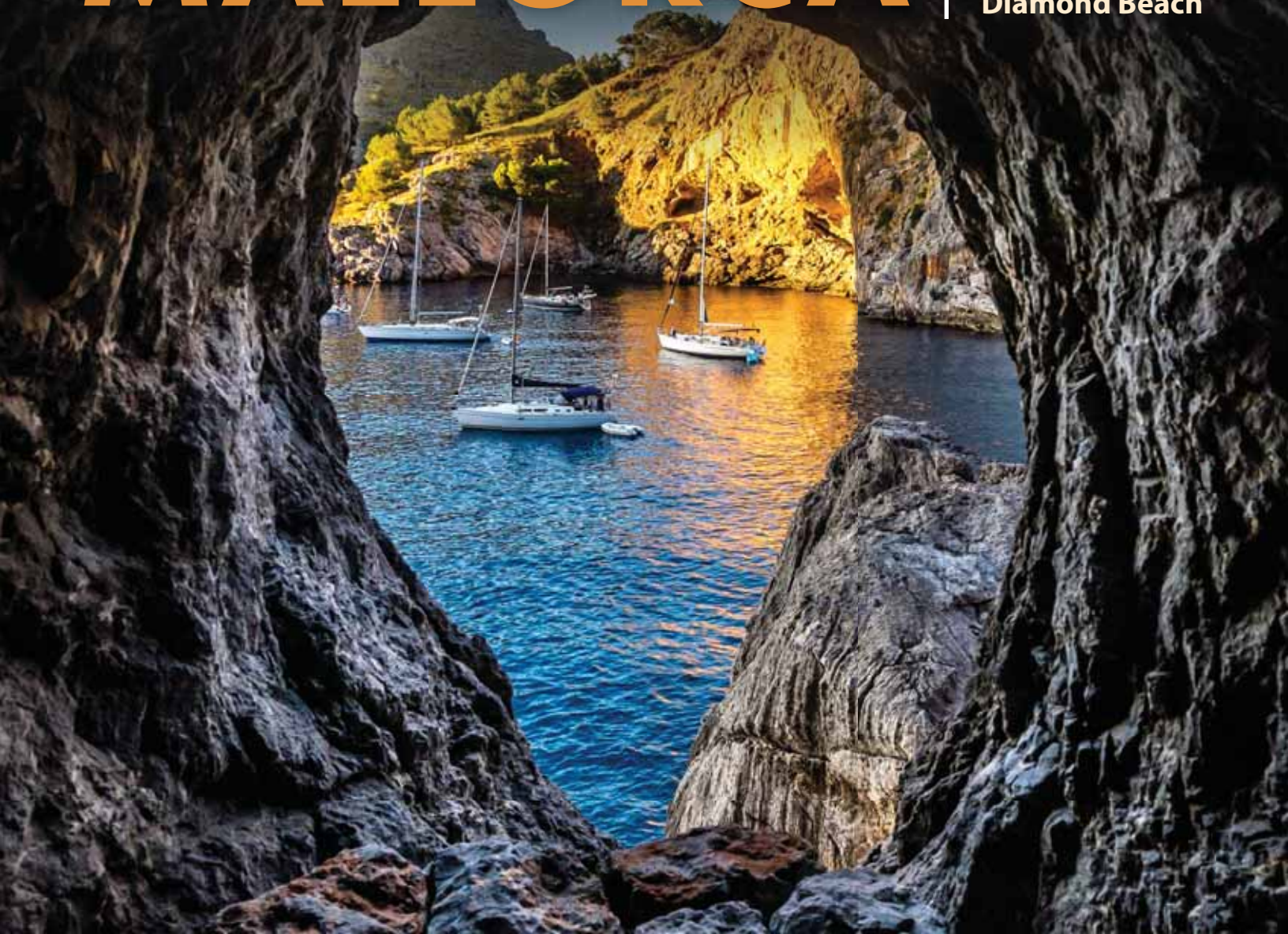
WHAT'S UP WIESBADEN

A Winter Reprieve in
MALLORCA

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Escape to
Sylt Island

Spotlight on
Diamond Beach





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STARS AND STRIPES. WHAT'S UP

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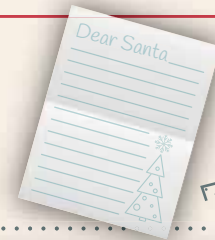
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By Katie Wells



FÊTE DE LA COUILLE SAINT-JACQUES (SCALLOP FESTIVAL)

GERMANY

Mainau Island Christmas Garden | Mainau
Nov. 19, 2024–Jan. 6, 2025

Sellin Christmas Market | Sellin | Dec. 20–22

The Westerland Christmas Swim | Sylt
Dec. 26

Every year, tradition invites brave swimmers to wear a fancy dress or swimsuit and plunge into the icy North Sea off the island of Sylt. Participants are awarded a certificate and glass of hot punch to warm up after. Several thousand spectators come out to watch and join the swimmers in having a hot drink to celebrate the act of courage.

Kliffmeile: Sylt's Longest Party | Wenningstedt
Dec. 28–Jan. 1, 2025

New Year's Eve Run | Westerland | Dec. 31

Open-air New Year's Eve Party | Westerland | Dec. 31

Silvester 2024 | Hiddensee | Dec. 31

Say Goodbye to Winter | Biikebrennen
Feb. 21, 2025

Krishna Beach Yoga Festival | Rügen
June 20–22, 2025

Rügen Rund Tour | Rügen | June 6, 2025

FRANCE

La Route Du Rock Winter | Saint-Malo
Feb. 27–Mar. 1, 2025 tentatively

Fête de la Coquille Saint-Jacques (Scallop Festival) | Saint-Quay-Portieux | April 2025

Galloping scallops! The scallop fishing season occurs from October to the end of April. This festival, honoring the most “elegant” shellfish of the sea, is

a celebration of the last catch of the season. Each year, you can visit the craft and fishing village to taste many variations of fresh scallops. On Saturday morning, you can follow the ‘Knights of the Scallop’ in a fun parade leading to concerts and street entertainment.

Big Game Fishing Excursion | Belle Île | Mid-April–Sept. annually

Art Rock | Saint-Brieuc | May 2025

Rock'n Toques | Saint-Brieuc | May 2025

Cannes Film Festival | Cannes | May 13–24, 2025

Monaco Grand Prix | Monaco | May 22–25, 2025

ITALY

ChocoModica | Modica | Dec. 6–8, 2024

This rich and indulgent chocolate lover's festival offers plenty and is in Modica, Sicily's chocolate village. Visitors can learn about the unique process of making Modica chocolate which dates back to the 1700s and sample plenty of chocolate-inspired delicacies. You can also participate in workshops, games, presentations, and laboratories as well as enjoy live entertainment.

Festa della Santa Lucia | Siracusa | Dec. 13 & 20

Sagra del Mandorlo (Almond Blossom Festival) Agrigento | Mar. 2025 TBD

Acireale Carnival | Catania | Feb. 16–Mar. 4, 2025

The Artichoke Festival | Samassi | Mar. 13–16, 2025

International Kite Festival | Trapani | May

Genoa Aquarium- Europe's Largest Aquarium
Genoa | Year round

SPAIN

Festes de Sant Antoni | Jan 17–19, 2025
Mallorca

This traditional festival is deeply rooted in Mallorcan culture and honors Saint Anthony Abbot, the patron saint of animals. People bring their pets and livestock to be blessed by the local priest, then celebrate with a feast where you can try sobrasada, a Balearic sausage, and other local foods cooked over open flames. Gather around bonfires and listen to folk music and dancing. There are colorful, lively parades, games and contests.

Los Indianos Carnival | La Palma | March 3, 2025

Santa Cruz de Tenerife Carnival | Tenerife
Jan. 31–Mar. 9, 2025

Las Palmas De Gran Canaria Carnival | Gran Canaria
Feb. 8–Mar. 16, 2025

Poema del Mar Aquarium | Gran Canaria | Year round

Dolphin Watching Adventure | Estepona Bay
March–Oct. Annually

GREECE

Dalmation Pelicans and Meteora Monasteries Photo Tour | Thessaloniki | Jan. 17–27, 2025

Carnival | Hydra | Mar. 2, 2025

Crete Marathon | Chania | Mid-April 2025

Valley of the Butterflies | Rhodes | Year round

National Marine Park of Alonissos | Sporades
Year round

ICELAND

Christmas Market | Heiðmörk Woods | Dec. 2–3,
Dec. 9–10 & Dec. 16–17

Dark Music Days | Reykjavík | Jan. 24–26, 2025

Reykjavik International Games | Reykjavík
Jan. 25–28 & Feb 2–5, 2025

Art in the Light | Seyðisfjörður | Feb 9–10, 2025

Viking Festival | Hafnarfjörður | June 12–17, 2025

Extra



Scan for more island-related events across Europe. ■

MWR GO

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ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING

The USAG Wiesbaden Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony takes place on Dec. 5 beginning at 5 p.m. In conjunction with Armed Forces Entertainment, Grammy-nominated pop-punk star Cassadee Pope will be performing. CYS will provide arts and crafts activities. Santa and the garrison commander will light the tree at 6:15 p.m. Children will have the opportunity to have photos taken with Santa. This is a free event, no registration required.

WORLD WAR II RADIO CHRISTMAS

The Amelia Earhart Playhouse performs "World War II Radio Christmas" from Dec. 5–7, 12–14 at 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 8 & 15 at 2 p.m. An inspiring look at strength in the face of hardship, this play is a reminder of the importance of coming together for the holidays. Tickets can be purchased at the Arts & Crafts Center or the Playhouse.



STRASBOURG CHRISTMAS MARKET TRIP

Visit the famed Alsace town of Strasbourg with Outdoor Recreation on Dec. 7 to experience this noted French Christmas Market. A passport is required for this trip. Round-trip costs are \$89 for adults and \$79 for children up to age 16. Please bring Euros for meals and other purchases. Register at the Outdoor Recreation Center or call civ (0611) 143-548-9801 for more information.

MAKE A GINGERBREAD HOUSE!

Visit the Wiesbaden Library for a fun holiday craft for all ages on Dec. 8 from 2–4 p.m. Create a delectable candy house creation while listening to holiday music (while supplies last). This is a free event, no registration required.

LIVE BANDS IN THE LOUNGE

Enjoy an evening of live music at the Wiesbaden Entertainment Center Lounge on Dec. 13 from 8–11 p.m. Must be age 18 or above. This is a free event, no registration required.



JINGLE BELL JOG

The Wiesbaden Sports and Fitness Center holds the Jingle Bell Jog on Dec. 14 at 9 a.m. The first 150 participants will receive a finishing medal. Participants may run or walk the five-kilometer course. Register for free from 7:30–9:15 a.m. on the day of the run. All pets must register at the front desk.

ARMY-NAVY FOOTBALL GAME

The Wiesbaden Entertainment Center hosts the Army-Navy Football Game watch party on Dec. 14 from 8 p.m. to midnight. Catch the game upstairs in the Lounge on the big screen and 15 other displays around the Lounge. It's going to be a party you don't want to miss! This is a free event, no registration required.

NUERNBERG CHRISTMAS MARKET

Outdoor Recreation travels to Bavaria on Dec. 15 to visit the Nuernberg Christmas Market. Round-trip costs are \$89 for adults and \$79 for children up to age 16. Please bring Euros for meals and other purchases. Register at the Outdoor Recreation Center or call civ (0611) 143-548-9801 for more information.

LIGHT UP THE MIND

Participate in the Wiesbaden Library's virtual winter reading program beginning Dec. 21. Log your reading to earn badges and tickets and enter into a weekly drawing for a possible door prize. Don't miss out on the extra special 12 days of Christmas! This is a free event. Register

online with the Wiesbaden Library beginning Dec. 1.

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Join the Wiesbaden Library for an interactive reading of *The Night Before Christmas* on Dec. 22 from 4–5:30 p.m. Enjoy holiday crafts, refreshments, door prizes and a whole lot more! This is a free event, no registration required.

LUXEMBOURG CHRISTMAS MARKET TRIP

Outdoor Recreation travels to Luxembourg on Dec. 22 to visit the Luxembourg Christmas Market. A passport is required for this trip. Round-trip costs are \$89 for adults and \$79 for children up to age 16. Please bring Euros for meals and other purchases. Register by Dec. 10 at the Outdoor Recreation Center or call civ (0611) 143-548-9801.



NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY

Ring in the New Year and spend time with your friends at the WEC on Dec. 31 from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. Bowl with family and friends under the cosmic lights. Head upstairs to the Lounge and enjoy the party with a live DJ (ages 18 and older). For information about Cosmic Bowling and Red Pin Bowling specials, contact the WEC. Free entry, no registration required.



Spotlight On



Diamond Beach

By Kat Nickola

We are focusing on islands for this edition of What's Up. While most of us will immediately conjure ideas of escaping this cold season for sun-washed beaches and palm trees, there is one European island that oozes winter vibes year-round: Iceland.

Along the southwestern coast of Iceland is Breiðamerkursandur, or Diamond Beach. This outwash plain is covered in volcanic black sand and sits at the mouth of the Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon. Ice is constantly calving off the massive glacier, roughly five

kilometers inland, and floating through the lagoon only to get trapped in the sand at Diamond Beach.

In photos submitted by reader David Kloberdanz, the incredible bright blue glacial ice is slowly making its way across the water. As it melts, the glacial ice loses its blue tint but retains a crystal-clear sparkle and gem-like structure. These ice chunks are a stark contrast to the black sand and their diamond appearance gives the beach its name. ■







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Burg Pfalzgrafenstein is one of six toll castles in Germany. A toll castle is a castle that guarded custom posts during the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era.

Eat • Stay • Love

Burg Pfalzgrafenstein

By Tamala Malerk

Burg Pfalzgrafenstein is located on Falkenau Island in the Rhine River. It is conveniently located 90 minutes from Kaiserslautern and less than 50 minutes from Wiesbaden by car.



EAT

Kaub, adjacent to Falkenau Island, is the smallest village in Rhine-land-Pfalz with less than 1,000 inhabitants. While small in size, there is still plenty for you to eat while there.

Weingut Bahles serves up specialties from the Free State of Flaschenhals such as wild boar and Wisper trout, a special local fish from the nearby Wispersee. They make their own wine and are happy to recommend the best one to accompany your dish. Weingut Bahles closes for winter holidays so, check the website before driving out: weingut-bahles.de/weinhaus.php.

For Flammkuchen, regional favorites and a menu that changes to fit the season, **Kaub-Mitte Artur'o Kitchen** is the place to go. You can have a full meal, like the delectable burger topped with burrata and caramelized onions, or a sweet treat like their handmade cakes with a cup of coffee. Visit their Facebook page at facebook.com/arturjudickij to see what's on the menu now.



STAY

You can only reach the island toll castle by taking a ferry from the local town of **Kaub**, so we recommend you stay there for ease. While you cannot stay in Burg Pfalzgrafenstein, you can stay in another castle: Burg Gutenfels.

Burg Gutenfels was built in 1220 and now serves as a private hotel rather than a fortress. This ideal location allows you to look over the riverside town and unwind after a day of exploring Kaub and Burg Pfalzgrafenstein. For the ultimate relaxation experience, you can curl up with a book from their ground-floor library or sweat away your stress in their small sauna.

Fun Fact: Flaschenhals, due to the turmoil of the area post World War I, was a free state from 1919 to 1923.



LOVE

Burg Pfalzgrafenstein was constructed in 1327 as a way for feudal lords to collect tolls. It survived several battles including a 39-day siege in 1504 and the movement of thousands of troops across the Rhein in the 1800s in pursuit of Napoleon.

The castle was last renovated in the 18th century and with its distinctive shape it's easy to see why it is known as "The Stone Ship." The short ferry ride from Kaub takes you to the island where you are on your own to explore and visit the castle at your leisure. Break out your camera on the ferry ride so you can get some great shots of the Rhein and the castle exterior as well.

The passenger ferry runs between Kaub and Burg Pfalzgrafenstein from 10 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. and from 2 to 3:45 p.m. The castle is closed in December and January and can also close due to the tide, but you can plan your visit by going to tor-zum-welterbe.de/pfalzgrafenstein.

After you tour the castle and the island, there is still plenty to do in Kaub. You can hike up to **Burg Gutenfels**, even if you aren't staying there, to enjoy the views of the area from above. Transport yourself to the 1800s at the **Blücher Museum** where you can view art as well as military and contemporary memorabilia. If you haven't had enough of the river, take a cruise down the Rhein; I always book with **KD Cruises** at k-d.com/en. ■

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A Winter Reprieve in **MALLORCA**

By Kat Nickola

Driving my rental car past the windmills that dot the end of the Palma runway immediately lightened the dark mood I'd harbored since moving to Germany. The sunny, arid climate felt more like the Arizona heat we left behind. We had been so excited to move to Germany, but going from all-day sun to an exceptionally gloomy winter had taken a toll on my family's mental health.



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CASTELL DE PUNTA DE N'AMER

We followed the advice often given to newcomers to Germany: We exercised, took vitamin D supplements, upped our iron intake and set up a little grow-light garden for dark mornings. Those things had certainly helped, but nothing can fully mimic a good, old-fashioned sunny day. So, to provide the uplift we all needed, I booked a quick four-day weekend trip to Mallorca.

Heading to the Spanish Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean is one of the easiest, most budget-friendly vacations you can take from Germany. The Balearics are best known for the largest of the islands: Mallorca (mai-or-kuh), my sunny destination from cloud-covered Kaiserslautern.

The Palma de Mallorca airport is the third busiest airport in Spain, with Europeans flocking there year-round for some fun in the sun and sand. Our direct flight was one of many that come daily from across Germany. After landing, I picked up my

cheap rental car and drove out to the east coast tourist town of Cala Millor.

Cala Millor is one of many similar resort towns along the south and eastern coasts of Mallorca. We chose **Cala Millor** primarily because there was a hotel right on the beach in our price range. Like plenty of other resort towns, it had the restaurants, activities and soft sandy beach that we wanted. Travelling to this part of Mallorca is all about downtime in the sun, so any tourist spot fit the bill for us.

Our first full day was spent on the **sandy beach**. We lounged and read books while the kids played in the sand. We got a picnic of fruit, local meats, cheeses and breads from the nearby Lidl (a tourist town staple) and snacked by the water all day. In most of the Balearics, the Mediterranean is warm enough by April for swimming. When we went it was still a bit too cold for me, but the kids swam all afternoon.

In the evening, I needed to find some sunscreen and burn cream since we had quickly used our entire stash. So, I walked to the nearest open shop, passing a horseback riding outfit along the way, and a plan was born.

Our second day found us **riding horses** through the low Mallorcan Pine trees out to the end of the Punta de n'Amer. It is one of the many points of rocky land that jut out into the sea between beach towns. Our horses took us out along the rocky coast and then up the hill to see the local castle. The coastline of Mallorca was heavily guarded against pirate attacks and Ottoman incursions throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. The **Castell de Punta de n'Amer** is a singular square structure set high on the land but sunk into a circular moat. We tied up our horses and crossed the moat bridge to explore the one large interior room. A stairway led up to the rooftop lookout where a cannon still protects the two flanking bays.

Try a different island

While Mallorca is, by far, the easiest of the Balearic Islands to get to, the other three inhabited islands each have their own flare.

Ibiza

Its reputation is warranted: Ibiza is the island for **nightlife**. From clubs to cabarets, techno vibes to hippy sounds, this place has it all. In the daylight hours you can rest up at rocky cove beaches, take a horseback ride in the countryside or enjoy the quaint shops and markets that dot smaller towns around the island.

There are some direct flights from a few German airports to Ibiza. You can also take a ferry from Palma, Mallorca.

Menorca

As a biosphere reserve, Menorca has mostly avoided the influx of mass-market high-rise resorts. Instead, the island has a more **rural and rustic** feel, with beautiful sandy beaches and small villages. However, Menorca is also more expensive than the rest of the Balearics and not as easy to access.

From Germany, there are infrequent, summer-season flights straight to the Menorca airport. There are also daily connecting flights from Palma, Mallorca and ferries from both Palma and Alcudia in eastern Mallorca.

Formentera

The smallest island of the bunch, Formentera is primarily flat, making it a great **biking** destination. It's popular to visit as a day trip from Ibiza or Mallorca but staying on Formentera means easy access to the laid-back natural beaches and a plethora of water activities.

There is no airport in Formentera. The easiest method is by flying into Ibiza and taking one of the frequent quick ferries, even with a bike or rental car. You can also take a car ferry from Palma, Mallorca, which takes roughly four hours. ■



We spent the rest of our day enjoying the pool and taking a walk along the beachside promenade to find a café and sip some Sangria in the sun. In short, it was exactly what we needed, a reset button before returning home to Germany where we could enjoy the transition from winter into spring.

There are plenty of other things you can do on Mallorca, if you prefer more sightseeing and have longer than a weekend. In the capital city of **Palma**, there are cobblestone streets around the cathedral to explore, world-class luxury shopping along the 'golden mile' and fortresses to see. The island also has a few massive, beautiful **cave systems** with intricate formations. If you love more natural environments, the northern part of the island is ruled by the **Tramuntana** mountain range, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The picturesque, winding MA-10 road is a must-drive route to the most scenic viewpoints, passes and mountain lakes.

 "Traveling to this part of Mallorca is all about downtime in the sun."



ESCAPE TO

Sylt Island

By Tamala Malerk

WHEN ONE THINKS OF ISLANDS, one might think of the Bahamas, Tahiti, Hawaii or Santorini, but Germany offers its own island getaways. Sylt, recently labeled in Time magazine as “the Hamptons of Hamburg” is one of those glamorous beach getaways.

While warming up with glühwein and cocoa in this winter weather, you might dream of the days when you can eat sunny island fare, or you could plan ahead for summer and book a trip to the nearby island of Sylt.

Sylt is all about the luxury life where the wealthiest of Germany reside within 12 villages. Dunes cover 33 percent of the island and the island itself is almost 100 square km. Sylt features 40 km's of beaches for those looking to relax on a beach chair (that you can reserve in advance online) while reading a book. It is also one of the best places in Europe for experienced kitesurfers to catch some extreme waves.



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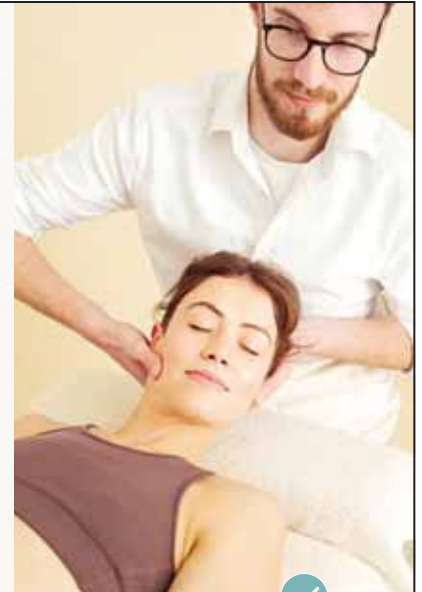
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Foodies will want to challenge their taste buds by trying as many of the 200 eateries on the island as they can. They range from cafés to beach bistros and three Michelin-star restaurants. Sylt is home to Germany's sole oyster farm, **Dittmeyer's Oyster Company**, where the oysters are ready for harvesting after two short years.

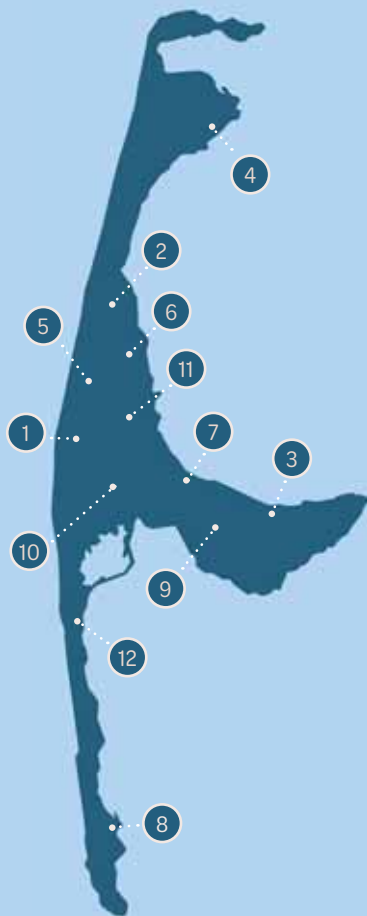
Beer lovers can venture to Germany's northernmost brewery, **WATT**, where beer is made from the condensate that collects when extracting Sylt's sea salt. Learn about this process by booking a brewery tour, a day-long brewing experience with a brewmaster or a beer-and-food-tasting at watt-syltbeerbrauerei.de.

Oysters and beer aren't the only locally-made fare on the island, and I love it when I can truly immerse myself in a place by tasting its food and drinks. **Sylt Bonscherei** is a candy store that provides handmade sweets for kids and champagne gummy bears for the adults. The **Sylt Distillers** specialize in locally sourced ingredients like salts and herbs for their whiskeys, gins and liquors.

Sylt has a rich history and culture. It first appeared as an island in the 1100s, has its own dialect of the Söl'ring language and sits along the **Wadden Sea**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

You can get to Sylt via plane, train, ferry or automobile. Catch a flight or train from Frankfurt, Munich or Stuttgart (among other smaller stops). Catch the ferry from Rømø or Cuxhaven. If you go by car, you will need to cross over to the island by either driving onto the motorail car train or taking a 40-minute ferry ride.

To learn more about reserving your spot on the beach, watersport rentals, seal encounters or where to find the best cocktail, go to sylt.de/en. Many seals swim in Sylt's waters and if you come across one, make sure to keep your distance. Several beaches on the island are nude-friendly; do your research beforehand if you're not ready to have that conversation with the kids yet. ■



THE 12 VILLAGES OF SYLT ISLAND

Westerland (1): This is the capital of Sylt and a great central location to begin your adventures.

Kampen (2): Known for luxurious shopping opportunities, culture, art, nightlife and Germany's northernmost golf course.

Morsum (3): For those who want a rural getaway with 10 million years of geological history.

List (4): The northern most point of Germany and has a "famous fish sandwich."

Wenningstedt (5) and **Braderup** (6): Two villages in one and the perfect child-friendly escape featuring a circus, nature center and beach-side bistros.

Keitum (7): For the history buffs, Keitum has cozy tearooms, 18th-century architecture, Sylt's oldest church and organ concerts.

Hörnum (8): This sunny southside village offers beaches, fragrant rose bushes and several daily excursion boat trips.

Tinnum (9): Another child-friendly village with a central location and a popular castle with plenty of E-biking paths.

Archsum (10): The smallest village on the island where you can relax and watch the sheep graze or ride a bike through the salt marshes.

Munkmarsch (11): A popular harbor for sailboats that offers great windsurfing opportunities.

Rantum (12): Featuring Sylt's narrowest point, Rantum has a great fish smokehouse and thatched-roof cottages.



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Strolling on the HOLY ISLAND

By Tamala Malerk

In 793 CE, the Vikings invaded Lindisfarne, the Holy Island, in what is now England. This was the center of Christianity in the area during this era. This historical attack has recently been re-enacted on the screen on popular shows such as “Vikings” and “The Last Kingdom.” You can visit this historical island today.

The Holy Island features several restaurants, pubs, cafes, the famous priory and a castle. However, you can only visit during certain hours of the day because the road to and from the island gets too flooded with water to safely cross over. Thankfully, the day I visited the road was open from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. We left around 3 p.m. just to be safe.

There is a car park located at the front of the island for visitors which is where it is requested you park and be sure to have pounds to pay for your parking. Keep in mind that the island has citizens who live on it year-round, so be courteous when parking and walking around.

After we parked, we walked to the outdoor **Pilgrim’s Café** where I had a delicious sticky toffee cake with my coffee. We then made our way to the **Priory Museum**. Unfortunately, it was closed because it is only open on limited days during the winter months. However, we still got to see the outside, walk around the cathedral and essentially enjoy the space alone because there were no other tourists.

We then walked out to the **Lindisfarne Castle** area which provided a breathtaking view and pleasant stroll. Again, unfortunately, we didn’t

get to see the inside of the castle due to the limited operating hours, but the view on the walk and from the castle was worth it.

There were several restaurants and pubs that were open and any one of them would be a great stop, especially since they had central heating, and it was 30-something degrees outside. There was also **Lindisfarne Mead**, a gift shop which provides mead tastings—I can personally recommend all of the offered flavors.

The Holy Island in winter provides some great views, just be sure to look up the safe times to cross on the Northumberland County Council website at holylislandcrossingtimes.northumberland.gov.uk. For the full experience, go during the warmer seasons when the castle and priory have less restricted opening hours. ■





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