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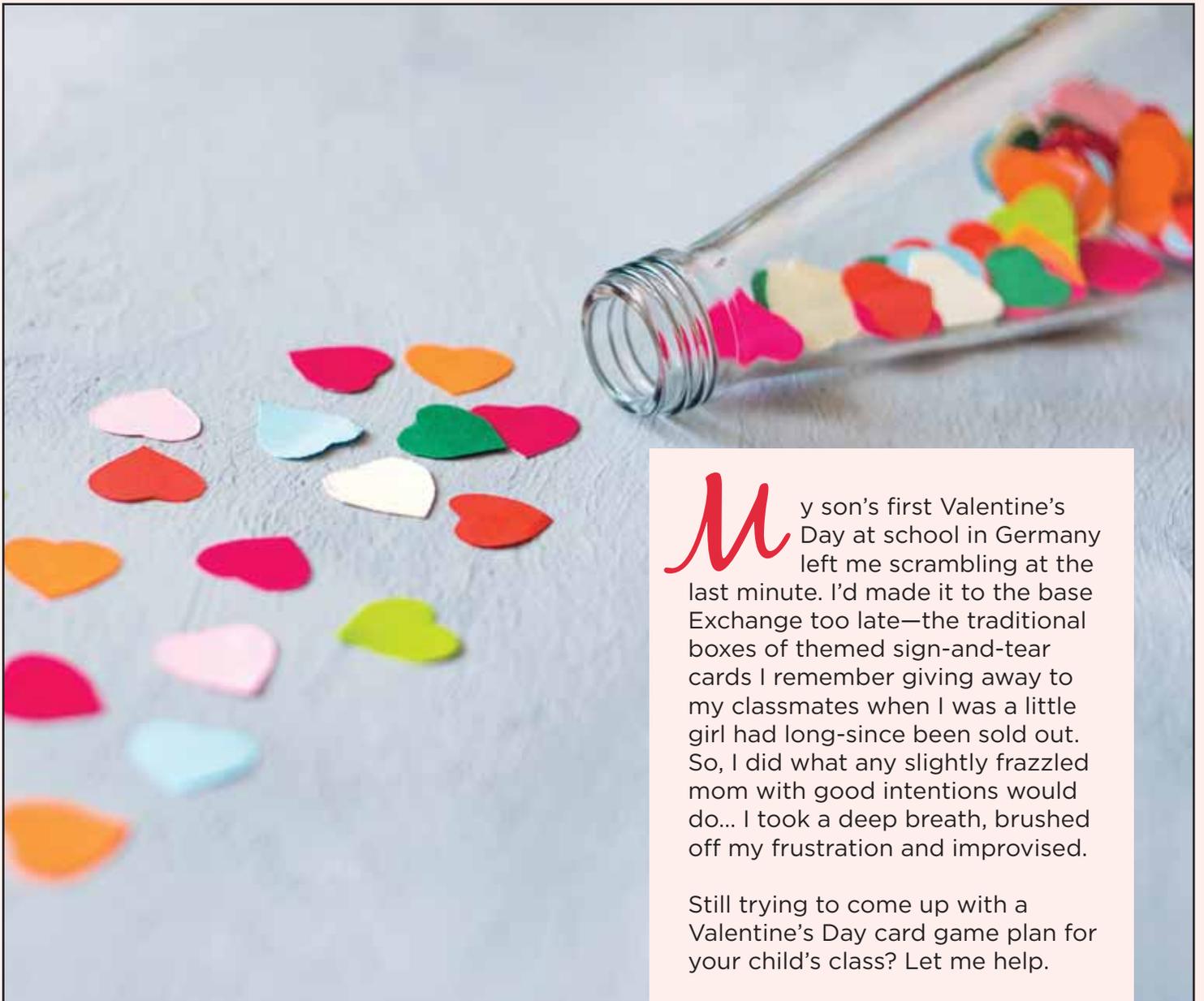


5



LAST-MINUTE
Homemade Card Ideas
for Valentine's Day

By Courtney Woodruff



*M*y son's first Valentine's Day at school in Germany left me scrambling at the last minute. I'd made it to the base Exchange too late—the traditional boxes of themed sign-and-tear cards I remember giving away to my classmates when I was a little girl had long-since been sold out. So, I did what any slightly frazzled mom with good intentions would do... I took a deep breath, brushed off my frustration and improvised.

Still trying to come up with a Valentine's Day card game plan for your child's class? Let me help.

1. Download free printables

Pinterest—the resource moms tend to either love or hate for its endless amount of inspiration—has free printable Valentine's Day cards for kids. Simply download, print, sign and cut! If you feel like going the extra mile, you can even attach it to a piece of your child's favorite candy.



3. Get crafty

Take an inventory of what you already have around the house (construction paper, homemade Playdoh ingredients, crayons, paint, snacks, bags of leftover candy, etc.) and come up with a quick-and-easy craft activity. You get to spend quality time with your child while he or she gets to make unique Valentine's Day cards to share with friends. Win-win. Visit SavingByDesign.com for inspiration. Looking for food-free alternatives? There are tons of crafty ideas on LiAllergyAdvocates.com.



2. Say cheese

Snap a photo of your child with his or her arm outstretched (as if he/she is holding an invisible balloon). Upload it to a free editing program like Picmonkey.com, and add text and clipart to your liking. Print the image at an instant kiosk (if you don't know where to find one in your community, ask crafting gurus on a local Facebook page). Cut a thin line on the top and bottom of your child's photographed fist with an X-Acto knife or a sharp pair of scissors. Insert lollipop, and your child is ready to pass them out to his or her friends. Check out this adorable example on JugglingWithKids.com.

4. Bake a batch

Encourage your child to help you bake a batch of his or her favorite sweet treat (cookies, brownies, rice cereal treats, etc.). Once they've cooled, place them in bags and attach a home-made label. Easy peasy.



5. Give a healthy sweet treat

Attach pairs of googly eyes to oranges or bananas. You can even draw faces or write messages on the skins with a permanent marker. Or bag them and attach clever sayings. My favorites for bananas are "I've picked you for my Valentine" and "Let's never split!" For oranges, choose something like "Orange you glad we're friends?" or "Peel the love, Valentine!"

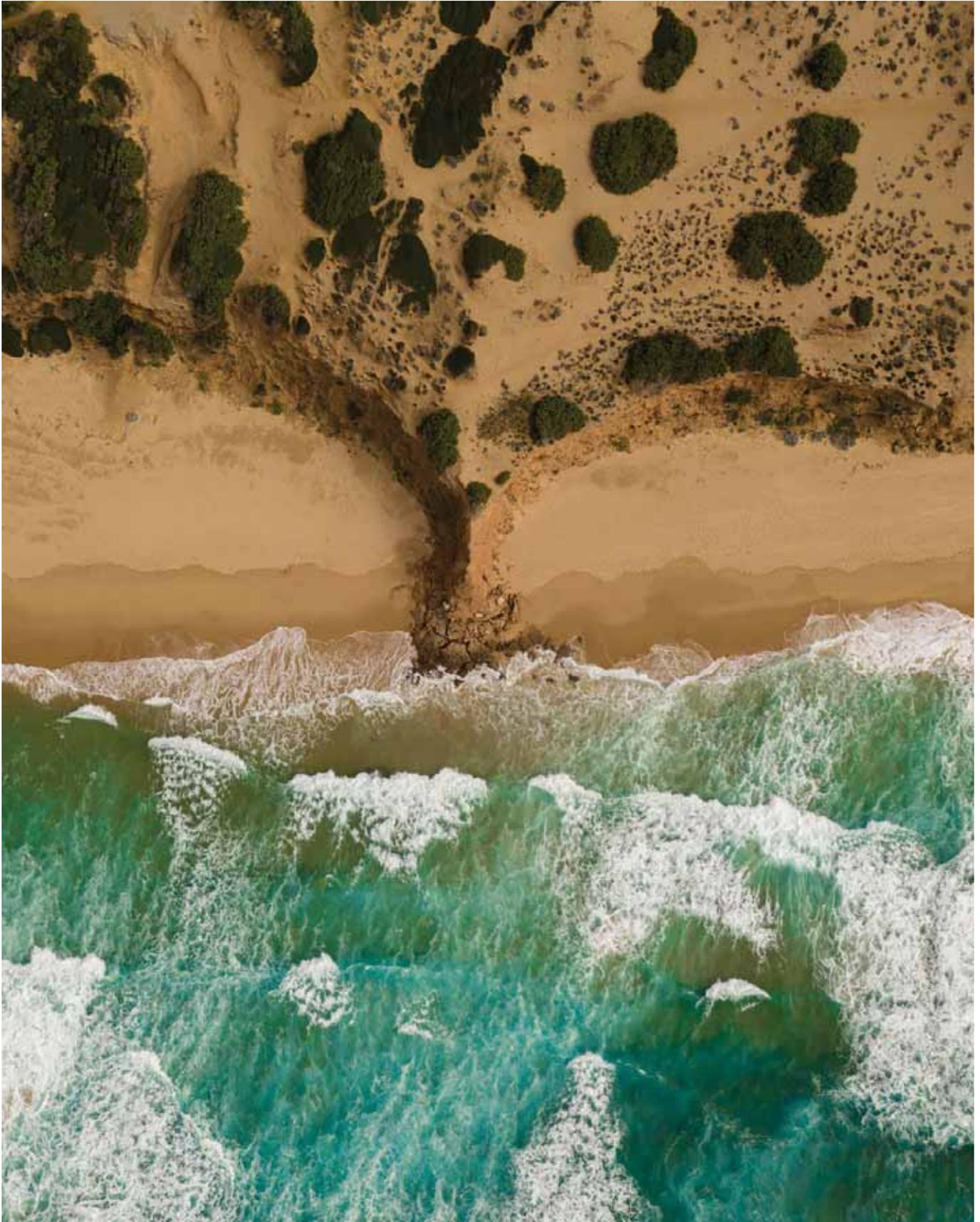


PHOTO of the month

Located on the western side of Sardinia's Costa Verde, Spiaggia di Scivu provides it all—beauty, unspoiled nature and a dreamy getaway. Divided by a small reef, the waters on this beach can be quite choppy due to rough winds.

Photo by Steven Gammon.

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THE TRACK

By Stacy Roman

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Living in Germany allows you to see the German automotive engineering genius up-front and in person. It's not surprising to see a Mercedes, BMW, Audi or Porsche fly past you on the autobahn. While each of these high-performance automakers has in-depth and hands-on exhibits at their headquarters and factories, getting behind the wheel and burning some rubber is an entirely different experience. Gear up for some serious adrenaline and head for a day at the track! If you feel a need for speed, you're in the right place.

Audi Driving Experience Center, Neuburg

Founder August Horch established his first car company in 1899. After inner turmoil within the company, Horch left and founded Audiwerke AG Zwickau in 1910 and produced the first Audi the same year. Two decades later, the company acquired three fledgling automakers. To incorporate all four brands, Audi created the iconic four-ringed logo still featured today. After the war, the automaker relocated to Ingolstadt in Bavaria. Since then, Audi has become renowned for its performance and high-end vehicles.

If you've wanted to sit behind the wheel and test the limits of an Audi, head to the Audi Driving Experience Center in Neuburg. Drivers can take an Audi R8 Coupe V10 or an Audi RS E-Tron GT on their specialized closed-circuit track. Choose from half-day sessions or take the plunge and do an all-inclusive multi-day tour through the Alps. If the schedule is booked up or you'd like a more personalized touch, Audi offers customized lessons and experiences.



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a day at

THE TRACK



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Porsche Experience, Stuttgart

Not quite as old as its Bavarian counterparts, Porsche was founded in the late 1940s by Ferdinand Porsche. In 1948, the Porsche 365 was the first model to go into production. Sixteen years later, in 1964, the Porsche 911 rolled off the assembly lines and quickly became a favorite among sports car enthusiasts. In 1975, the model's turbocharged version became the fastest vehicle in Germany at the time. With the small chassis, powerful engine and refined interior, Porsches are known for their incredible handling, speed and luxuriousness.

For a memorable adventure, head to the Porsche Experience at their headquarters in Stuttgart. Here, you'll find the factory and corporate offices and a museum with an array of different models on display. Want a little more thrill? You can rent a Porsche for anywhere from a few hours to a few weeks. One popular choice is to rent the classic 911 and head toward the Black Forest for a couple of hours. You'll feel the thrill of driving this incredible car on the autobahn and through the mountains. If you want the track experience, you can book times at their tracks at Hockenheim, Boxberg or Leipzig. Like Audi, Porsche also offers multi-day tours. They have partner tracks in 19 different locations worldwide and have tours and experiences specific to each of these locations.



© PORSCHE

Can't choose between the two? Go for both! Being stationed in Germany gives you a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see not only where these stunning cars are made but to test drive them on their home turf. Getting the opportunity to feel the thrill of the rubber meeting the road in such high-performance cars is absolutely worth spending the day at the track. ■



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A Visit the Azores

A LAND THAT ONCE WAS

By Kristy Alpert

Forlornly nestled among the azure waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the Azores islands are all at once strangely familiar and entirely foreign. Powerful salty waves crash harshly against dark volcanic stone on one coastline, while hearty herds of cattle graze freely within the low stone-stacked walls of pristinely maintained green pastures.

This grouping of islands could be worlds away judging by the unpolluted landscape and rustic remnants of settlers past, but in reality, a trip to this Portuguese province only takes about four and a half hours from Frankfurt International Airport, making the islands the perfect place to escape for a few days without wasting precious vacation time in the air.

The Azores are made up of nine separate islands that were completely uninhabited up until the Portuguese discovered them in the early half of the 15th century. Not one person had previously stepped foot on the islands until those first sailors walked ashore from their boats, literally laying the path toward what would become one of the world's most underrated oceanfront retreats.

Although more than five centuries have passed since the first group of Portuguese pilgrims

settled on the islands, the Azores have remained relatively un-influenced by mainstream Western culture, adding to its charm as a raw and unsoiled paradise. Temperatures fluctuate only slightly throughout the year between 14°C and 22°C, and one look around the scenic landscape proves exactly why the word stress isn't part of the local vocabulary. Sapphire blue and emerald green lakes dot the countryside between vibrant farmlands and volcanic craters, while seamlessly trickling into quaint cobblestoned villages.

Ferryboats and regional flights charter visitors to and from these sparsely situated islands. No two islands in the Azores are alike in terms of ambience and environment, and, although there is a uniform sense of commonality and harmony throughout the archipelago, each of the nine islands play their own unique role in the story of the Azores.



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São Miguel

Also known as “The Green Island,” São Miguel is by far the most popular island to start with when visiting the Azores. It is the largest in terms of land and has the greatest population in the archipelago, with most of the locals residing in the main city of Ponta Delgada. The island is a hub for all types of adventures, and one of the best tour operators in the Azores (Picos de Aventura) operates directly out of Ponta Delgada, offering whale-watching trips, dolphin encounters, hiking guides, canyoning tours, Jeep excursions and more. The only tea plantations in Europe are on this island, and there’s a huge surfing scene over at Praia de Santa Barbara, where it’s not uncommon to see pro surfers lapping up spoons of ice cream with locals and tourists near the beach. The Hotel Talisman and the Hotel Do Colegio are both great spots to stay for experiencing Ponta Delgada’s day markets (make sure to buy some pineapple at the Mercado da Graça), local lunch spots (Sardinha, a.k.a. Mane Cigano, was Anthony Bourdain’s favorite place to munch on fresh fish with locals), and local nightlife scene (check out Cantinho dos Anjos).



Pico

Anyone looking to unwind with some wine will find solace on Pico. The second largest of the islands, Pico is a UNESCO World Heritage site and is home to the highest point of all the Azores, Ponta do Pico, a stratovolcano located 2,351 meters above sea level. It’s the volcanic soil on the island that makes the wines produced here so unique among European blends. Light and mineral whites are sold all over the world, while visitors would do well to stock up on the island’s full-bodied reds before others catch on to the phenomenal vintages that have been bottled every year since 2011. These violet-hued wines are underappreciated by locals and undiscovered by industry heads, and they will age well over the next 8 to 10 years (Read: buy them now before they’re discovered and the price goes up!).



Sao Jorge

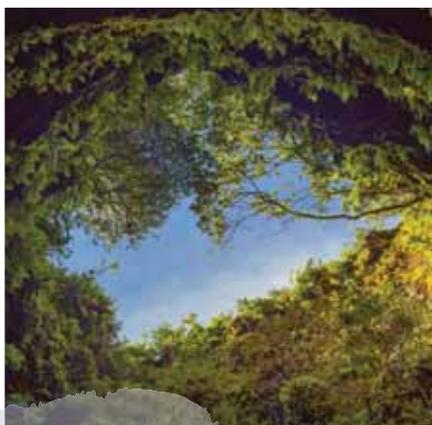
This long and lanky island was created by a series of volcanic eruptions in a straight line, creating an almost vertical coastline of cliffs interrupted sporadically by flat areas along the coast called fajãs. The island is great for exploring on foot, but tons of locals tend to take to the sea with sports fishing and scuba diving, luring most people to the water. The other main draw to this island? Cheese. Sao Jorge cheese is famous around the world for its “Queijo de Sao Jorge,” a cow’s milk cheese cured for months until the rind turns the color of honey and the cheese develops an almost peppery aroma that works as an appetizer or a dessert.





Santa Maria

The low altitude of this island sets it apart from its sister islands in the Azores in that it maintains a dry, more Mediterranean type of climate year-round. The island has some of the best beaches in the archipelago and it's said that Christopher Columbus and his crew held a mass to celebrate their discovery of the New World at the church of Nossa Senhora dos Anjos Chapel before returning home to Spain.



Terceira

Despite its size, Terceira is the second most populated island in the Azores and is home to an American Air Force Base in the village of Lajes. The culture is incredibly vibrant on this island, with colorful chapels and ancient castle walls from a former royal prison acting as the backdrop for festivals like the Touradas a Corda (bullfighting on a rope), a Portuguese version of the Running with the Bulls that occurs weekly from May 1 through September 30.



Corvo

Ah, little Corvo. This petite stretch of seven square miles is the smallest in the Azorean archipelago, and daily life on the island is equally as simple. Wooden locks are the main handicraft on the island, and daily activities are centered around watching planes navigate through the peaks and cliffs toward the small airport or hiking down to the two lagoons set deep inside a volcanic crater.



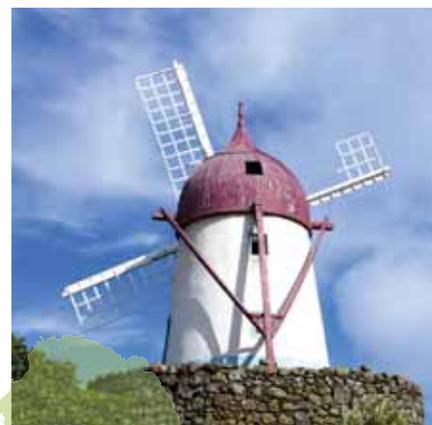
Faial

Although it's referred to as the "Blue Island" due to the abundance of hydrangeas that bloom blue in the central slopes of the island each year, the main activity on Faial actually takes place on another azure part of the island. The tide pools, black sand beaches and busy harbor make the water the place to be in Faial. Swimming, sailing, fishing, windsurfing and more, you name it and you can do it on the water surrounding this island.



Flores

Named for the abundance of ... wait for it ... flowers freckling the countryside, the isle of Flores is a raw and rugged frontier, bursting with a sort of weathered beauty that's amplified by the waterfalls and lakes saturating the landscape. Hiking and canyoning through the diverse terrain on this island is insanely popular and it's worth the trip to explore the seven lagoas (lakes) in the center of the island.



Graciosa

The island of Graciosa is peppered with quaint fishing villages set among ancient streets and grand manor houses and long-standing windmills. The churches on the island date back to the 16th century, and Santo Cristo Church acts as the main landmark for the city of Santa Cruz da Graciosa. Definitely check out the Furna do Enxofre around noon when the sunlight dances around a vaulted cave towering over an underground lake. ■

10 THINGS

to know about

VENICE

By Mary Del Rosario



1

Venice's Carnival season will be celebrated Feb. 22 to March 1. Venetian masks are iconic to this celebration and "fritole," fried dough balls dusted in sugar, can be found in many bakeries during this time.



2

The "Queen of the Adriatic," one of the few nicknames for this city, boasts around 400 bridges with roughly 150 canals. The Grand Canal is the main waterway.



3

Should you find yourself gliding along the canal in a gondola, appreciate the gondolier, as becoming a licensed gondolier requires immense training.

4

Though a bucket-list experience, be prepared to pay 80 euros for a 40-minute gondola ride. If you're wanting a romantic serenade, it will cost extra.



5

Since the city's layout was meant to cater around the canals, your chances of getting lost are great—just go with it! Getting lost in Venice is part of the experience.

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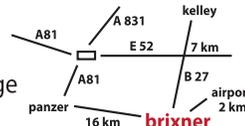
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6 There are 120 islands in Venice—Burano, a colorful island in the northern Venetian Lagoon—is only a one-and-a-half-hour ferry ride from the city of Venice.

7 Murano glass and Burano lace are two items you should bring back home with you to remember your trip.



8 Touring Italy by car? Park your rental outside the city center and take the train, bus or ferry in, for a more relaxed and less expensive experience.



9 Due to tectonic plates, Venice is sinking at a rate of one millimeter per year.



10 Many fish dishes include “risotto al nero di seppia”—risotto with cuttlefish ink and “sarde in saor”—sardines in a sweet and tangy sauce, are popular dishes belonging to this side of Italy.



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Tourists can visit the tea plantations, where they can experience the beautiful green tea fields, learn about the process from start to finish, understand the best way to brew tea and, of course, taste the tea.

AZORES

SOUVENIR:

Chá

By Anna Leigh Bagiackas

Tea is a staple in European kitchens, possibly even surpassing coffee's popularity in certain places. But where does all that tea come from? You might not often stop and consider European tea production compared to other parts of the world. But Europe has a hidden gem when it comes to tea. São Miguel, the Azores' largest island, is home to the only remaining tea plantations in all of Europe.

"Chá," the Portuguese term for tea, has become an important part of São Miguel's identity. Tea is not a native crop to these isolated Portuguese islands. While there is debate about how the first tea seeds actually arrived in the Azores, tea was given a chance when a cold blight wiped out the islands' primary export, oranges. In an effort to save their economy and protect future exports, they planted tea. The island's climate ended up being perfect for tea plants and it flourished. Another bonus? Common pests to tea could not survive in the Azores climate, meaning tea farmers did not need to use pesticides to protect their crops. At the height of its success, the islands had dozens of working tea plantations and they were producing an impressive amount of tea to export across the world. But after World War II when customs rules changed, tea production quickly decreased, leaving only a couple of tea plantations running.

Producing some of the nicest black and green teas on the market, there are currently two remaining tea companies on Sao Miguel: Chá Gorreana and Porto Formoso. Gorreana is the oldest and longest-running tea plantation—in business since 1883—and is one of the highlights of a trip to São Miguel. Tourists can visit both tea plantations, where they can experience the beautiful tea fields (which are green all year long), learn about the process from start to finish, understand the best way to brew tea and, of course, taste the tea. If there at the right time, tourists can also join in the annual tradition of harvesting tea at Porto Formoso with other community members at the very beginning of the harvest, the first Saturday in May.



TOP:
Tea room
at Porto
Formoso tea
factory.

BOTTOM:
From left to
right: Tea
machines
dating from
the 1840s;
Typical black
tea from
the region;
Entrance to
the Chá
Gorreana
factory.



Both tea companies produce organic green and black teas of the highest quality, including Broken Leaf, Orange Pekoe and Pekoe varieties. These varieties differ in what parts of the plant they are made from, leading to different flavors and strengths.

If you're visiting the Azores, it's easy to pick up a bag or two for a great souvenir whether you want to remind yourself of your amazing trip to the islands or share this tea with a friend. But luckily, it's not too hard to track down some of this beloved tea if you are need of more. Azores teas are exported primarily to mainland Portugal, Germany, the U.S., Canada, Austria, France, Italy, Brazil, Angola and Japan. Once you've found Gorreana or Porto Formoso brands, find your favorite mug, heat up your water and get ready to escape back to the beautiful tea fields of São Miguel, if only just for a moment. ■



Chá Gorreana
tea plantation
on Sao Miguel
Island, over-
looking the
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The Tampa Bay Buccaneers Cheerleaders will be visiting USAG Stuttgart! Tampa Bay Buccaneers Cheerleader schedule: 10:00 a.m. Meet & Greet @ AAFES Food Court on Panzer Kaserne. 11:30 a.m. Meet & Greet @ Panzer DFAC. 4:00 p.m. Cheer Clinic with CYS Sports at Panzer Fitness Center. In the situation that the Tampa Bay Buccaneers go to the Super Bowl, the Buccaneer Cheerleaders visit will be postponed to Mar. 4, 2022. No registration required for Meet & Greet. Register by Feb. 2 with CYS Sports for Cheer Clinic. DSN 431-2616 / CIV 07031-15-2616

Feb. 13: Super Bowl LVI Party

10 p.m., (kick-off at 12:30 a.m.), Galaxy Bowling and Entertainment Center, Panzer Kaserne. Watch the Super Bowl on more than 15 TVs in the right atmosphere. A special catered tailgate menu will be available. Every food & beverage purchase will provide a ticket for the prize drawing with a total value of \$700. Fun games and a half-time hot wing eating contest will keep the night interesting. Designated driver program available. For more information, DSN 431-2575 / CIV 07031-15-2575

Feb. 17: Bengt's Superstars Comedy Show

8 p.m., Swabian Special Events Center, Patch Barracks. Comedian Bengt Washburn is back in USAG Stuttgart! Bengt has performed

on Comedy Central, Conan O'Brien, and the Craig Ferguson Show. This time he'll be performing with his superstar comedy crew including Abigail Paul, Eva Meyer-Cording, Marko Mijatovic. BBQ menu provided by Armstrong Catering. Free admission. DSN 430-5433 / CIV 0711-680-5433

Sports and Fitness

Feb. 3 – Mar. 4: Get ready to play with CYS Sports!

CYS Sports, Panzer Kaserne. Don't wait, sign up today! Space is limited. The following are open for registration: Baseball (ages 5 - 15) \$60; Softball (ages 9 - 15) \$60; Soccer (ages 5 - 15) \$60; Track (ages 5 - 15) \$60; Tennis (ages 7 - 15) \$140; Volleyball skills (ages 9 - 15) \$45; Developmental Tee Ball (ages 3 - 4) \$25. Fitness (ages 6 - 15) \$45. A 15% multi-child discount is applied to the lower priced sport. Patrons may register online through webtrac or at Parent Central Services on Patch Barracks, building 2347. DSN 596-5386 / CIV 09641-70-596-5386

Feb. 19 – 20: Tournament of Champions

9 a.m., Patch Fitness Center. Community basketball teams in the IMCOM-E footprint are coming to Stuttgart to compete for basketball glory. They'll be bringing the best of the best, showing off their skills and getting the community's blood pumping with high-flying basketball action. Music will keep the crowd moving! Half-time competitions for a chance to win a prize! DSN 596-7136 / CIV 09641-70-596-7136

Recreation

Feb. 12: Second Saturday Scramble

8 a.m., Stuttgart Golf Course, Kornwestheim. The scramble takes place every second Saturday of the month at the Stuttgart Golf Course. Build your team (2, 3, or 4 persons) or sign up individually. Tee times (9 or 18 holes) and format will be determined based on weather conditions and participation level. Pro Shop will assign handicaps. Tournaments are open to US ID cardholders and GCN members and guests. Cost is \$15 for SGC members and \$35 for U.S. ID non-members. Fee includes green fees and prizes. Golf car and range balls are not included. Call Pro Shop to register. Registration deadline is Wednesday COB before each tournament. CIV 0714-187-9150

Feb. 26 – Apr. 10: Annual Membership Drive

8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Stuttgart Golf Course, Kornwestheim. We want you! To stay a member or become a member of the Stuttgart Golf Course. New annual green fee card-holders (members) can play unlimited golf from date of purchase, starting Feb. 26, 2022 thru Mar. 31, 2023. 2021 annual members can renew anytime in March.

Additional benefits include: Free rental clubs for the entire month of March. Enter the free drawing for prizes (drawing held Apr.10). Enjoy 10-40% discount on selected merchandise for the entire month of March. CIV 0714-187-9150

Theater

Feb. 5 & 12 at 1 & 3 p.m.

Feb. 6 & 13 at 3 p.m.

Feb. 13 at 2 p.m. EFMP Performance "XANADU JR."

Stuttgart Theatre Center, Kelley Barracks. A Greek muse inspires love, laughter and the world's first Roller Disco in this 1980s glitter explosion. Inspired by the Tony Award-nominated Broadway musical and Universal Pictures' cult classic movie starring Olivia Newton-John and Gene Kelly. Prices: Adults: \$10; Student and Children: \$8. Minimum age to attend any performance is 5 years. Minimum age to attend any performance is 5 years. For ticket reservations, go to: stuttgart.armymwr.com/programs/stuttgart-theatre-center For more details, contact the Theater Office (Tues.-Fri. 12:30-5:30 p.m.) DSN 421-3055 / CIV 0711 729-3055

Events & programs are subject to change depending on COVID-19 conditions.

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