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WHAT'S UP

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COMMANDER

Katie R. Fidler, LTC, U.S. Army

BUSINESS OPERATIONS MANAGER

John Rodriguez

PUBLISHING & MEDIA DESIGN, MANAGER

Carrie Farrell

WRITER-EDITORS

Tamala Malerk, Kat Nickola, Katie Wells

GRAPHIC ARTISTS

Amanda DeHart, Ryyan Joye

ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

Leah Geier

MARKETING COORDINATOR

Kristen Thoennes

MARKETING ASSISTANT

Al Green

MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING, MANAGER

Doug Dougherty

MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING, CONSULTANTS

Sean Adams, Heidi Bayfield, Kandace Blevin,
Nate Jamison, Capri Roe, Jeff Teeselink

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Danny Padro

ADVERTISING OFFICE

Unit 29480, APO, AE 09211
Postfach 1980, 67607
Kaiserslautern, Germany
+49 (0) 152-5672-5020

COVER DESIGN BY

Amanda DeHart

Washington Office

PUBLISHER

Max D. Lederer, Jr.

CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER

Laura Law

REVENUE DIRECTOR

Scott Foley

ENGAGEMENT DIRECTOR

Chris Verigan

PUBLISHING & MEDIA DESIGN, DIRECTOR

Marie Woods

TO ADVERTISE CONTACT:



HEIDI BAYFIELD

STUTT GART
MULTIMEDIA CONSULTANT
bayfield.heidi@stripes.com
TEL: 0152-56725021

CONTACT US:

Telephone: +49 (0) 0631-3615-9111
or DSN: 314-583-9111

Email: memberservices@stripes.com

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GERMANY

- Spring Festival | Nuremberg | March 30–April 14
- Art and Garden | Böblingen | April 13–14
- Spring Festival | Munich | April 19–May 5
- Medieval Market | Freisen | April 27–May 1
- BUGA24 | Mannheim | April–Oct. TBD
- Medieval Market in the Gartenschau | Kaiserslautern | May 4–5
- B2Run | Kaiserslautern | May 6
- The Green Sauce Festival | Frankfurt | May 11–18
- Handel Festival | Halle | May 24–June 9
- Carnival of Cultures | Berlin | May 17–20
- Classic Open Air—Europe’s Greenest Concert Hall | Nuremberg | July–Aug. TBD
- Potsdam Palace Night 2024** | Potsdam | Aug. 9–10

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- Imagination and Medieval Days | Saarbrücken | Aug. 15–18
- Berlin Beer Week | Berlin | Sept. 1–10
- Medieval Festival | Selb | Sept. 6–8
- Tannenwald Camp (Biking and Camping) | Dahn | Sept. 13–15
- Onion Market | Weimar | Oct. 11–13
- SantaCON Munich | Munich | Dec. 7

AUSTRIA

- Südsteiermark-Classic** | Gamlitz | April 25–27
- Considered one of the top three “most important” events in Austria, this classic vehicle race has more than 200 teams competing for 160 coveted starting spots. Cheer on your favorite car as it passes you on the route. Enjoy great food and wine while you watch.
- Summer Night Concert | Vienna | June 7
 - UCI Mountain Bike World Series | Salzburgerland | June 7–9
 - Silvretta Classic Rallye | Montafon | July 4–7
 - KAT100 by UTMB | Kitzbühel Alps | Aug. 1–3
 - Ischgl Ironbike | Ischgl | Aug. 2–3
 - Imperial Days | Bad Ischl | Aug. 9–18
 - Race Around Austria | 560-Kilometers around Austria | Aug. 11–18
 - Vienna Classic Days | Vienna | Aug. 24–26
 - E-Bike World Cup for Anyone | Ischgl | Sept. 6–7
 - Red Bull Dolomitenmann | Lienz | Sept. 9
 - KLANGWOLKEN 2024 (Clouds of Sounds) | Linz | Sept. 9
- ## LUXEMBOURG
- Éimaichen Festival | Luxembourg City | April 1
 - Wäimoart (Wine Market) | Grevenmacher | April 5
 - ING Night Marathon | Luxembourg City | May 11
 - Wine Taste Enjoy | Moselle River | May 19
 - Hopping Procession | Echternach | May 21
 - Useldeng in the Middle Ages | Useldeng | June 15–16
 - Summer in the City | Events in Luxembourg City | All summer

- Wiltz Festival | An der Schwemm | June–July
 - National Day in Luxembourg | Events around Luxembourg | June 22
- ## ESTONIA
- Grand Race around Lake Viljandi | Viljandi | May 1
 - Tartu Forest Marathon | Elva | May 10–12
 - Gardening and Flowering Days | Jäneda | May 25–26
 - Kevad Battles Sports Festival | Pärnu | May 25–26
 - Cross-Country Bike Marathon at Alutaguse | June 1
 - Saaremaa Peony Festival | Saaremaa | June 8–30
 - Midsummer Eve at the Estonian Open Air Museum | Tallinn | June 23

- Lighthouse Concert | Ida-Viru County | July 27
- Seto Kingdom Day | Seto | Aug. 3
- Supeluse Fair | Pärnu | Aug. 3
- Ironman Tallinn | Tallin | Aug. 25

ITALY

- Artichoke Festival | Chiusure | April 21–25
- The Floral Displays of Spello | Spello | June 1–2
- The Palio (horse race) | Siena | July 2 and Aug. 16

LIECHTENSTEIN

- Farmers Market on the Village Square | Eschen-Nendeln | Saturdays: April 27–Sept. 7
- Midsummer Unplugged | Schaan | June 20
- Summer in the Yard: Luigi Panettonne—Elvis Aloha from Hawaii | Vaduz | June 27
- Children and Youth Camp | Ruggell | July 21–27
- Children’s and Youth Camp for Advanced Learners | Ruggell | Aug. 4–10
- State Holiday: Folk Festival | Vaduz | Aug. 15 ■





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SATURDAY, 27 APRIL 2024

Spotlight On



The Bollenstreek

By Kat Nickola



Visiting the Bollenstreek, the flower bulb region of The Netherlands, is a springtime ritual that must be experienced at least once. This geographical area stretches from Leiden to Haarlem and encompasses the heart of the historical province of Holland. There are hundreds of tulip fields in the area, the most well-known being those owned by the Keukenhof Gardens. However, there is a lot more on offer in the Bollenstreek beyond the tourist attractions.

For a perfect Dutch-style spring outing, try biking. Cycle routes abound in The Netherlands and the paved trails are well marked. It is easy to simply hop on your bike with a string of villages in mind and follow the signs to create a route between them. For an outdoor adventure involving tulip fields, windmills, and a pop out to the beach, try an all-day 30 km loop between the towns of Voorhout, Lisse (where you will pass Keukenhof), Noordwijkerhout and Noordwijk. Bike rentals are available from the nationwide OV-fiets bike system at the Voorhout train station. See www.ns.nl/en/ov-fiets for details. ■

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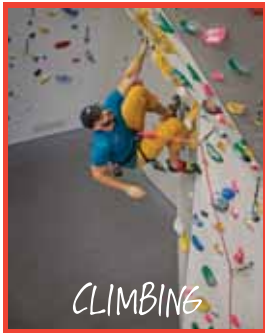
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Eat • Stay • Love

Brombachsee

By Kat Nickola



EAT

Savor an expansive Sunday brunch aboard the MS Brombachsee. This weekly three-hour event begins at 9:30 a.m. from Ramsberg port on the south side of the lake and includes boat fare for the circuit around the lake, plus the massive buffet and breakfast drinks.

The brand-new MS Brombachsee is a unique trimaran (three-hulled ship) that was specially designed for the variation in water levels at the lake. Its modern design has two decks of open-concept indoor space with floor-to-ceiling windows and a huge roofed open-air third deck.

For something totally different, try one of the themed Friday night boat parties departing at 7:30 p.m. and pulling back into port around 1:00 a.m. Be sure to book either option on www.ms-brombachsee.com well in advance, as they sell out.



STAY

The marina in the tiny hamlet of Ramsberg has been converted into a floating hotel. With 19 permanently attached floating holiday homes, the Brombachsee floating village offers guests the chance to stay right on the water. Each luxury holiday home is a large two-bedroom structure with expansive windows, an upscale kitchen and incredible views of the lake from the rear deck. There is even underfloor heating and a gas fireplace. Visit www.brombachsee-floatinghouses.de for details and booking.

If camping is more your style, there are plenty of options along the shore. SeeCamping Langlaur is almost a village unto itself with restaurants, playgrounds, events and numerous activities like sailing lessons or SUP rentals. You can stay in a camper that is already set up or even sleep in a wine barrel. A second camping option, Zeltwiese Absberg, is geared more toward outdoor adventure sports. With a large meadow dedicated to tent campers, a ropes course and a wakeboarding park, this is an active place.



LOVE

The Brombachsee reservoir is the largest lake in Franconia and has one of the largest dams in Germany. It was built in 2000 to help regulate water levels in northern Bavarian rivers, especially in times of drought.

The 27-kilometer paved bike trail around the lake is a pleasant must-do day trip. The route can be peddled in either direction and hugs the shoreline, flowing in and out of forests, along beaches and over the dam. Outdoor cafés dot the circuit meaning you can eat and drink your way around the lake. ■



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CAMPING ADVENTURES

IN SCOTLAND

By Kat Nickola

For the wilder side of Europe, one of my favorite places is The Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Not only are there dramatic lochs, coastlines, peaks and glens but those magical spaces are available to anyone with the tenacity to venture into them.

Yes, you can wild camp in your tent out in the woods, on a beach or by a loch. You may also kayak along any body of water, or mountain bike on any trail. Scotland is one of the least prohibitive, most outdoor-friendly countries I've ever been to.

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code establishes the legal right for people like you and I to enjoy the wildlands without being bogged down with permits and complex rules. Most importantly, it also outlines what our responsibilities are as outdoorsy people. If you are familiar with the leave-no-trace policy in the U.S., then you understand the basics. You must bring all you need into the wilderness and leave nothing when you pack up and go. In Scotland, where farm property is also accessible, you are also expected to be respectful of animals, croplands and privacy.

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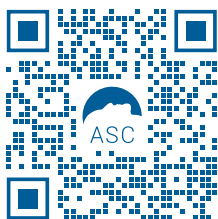


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IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE THE BEST PLACE TO WILD CAMP IN SCOTLAND. THE CHOICES ARE JUST TOO MANY.



BEST DAY HIKE

Rivaling its popular and crowded neighbor to the south (Glen Coe) for beauty points, Glen Nevis is my choice for the best day hike in The Highlands. My family lucked into a sunny warm day for this 2.25-mile route tucked into the far end of the glen. We drove up the Glen Nevis road as far as it would take us and parked in the small dirt lot. From there, the trail leads east as the valley gets narrower and narrower until it forms a gorge, takes a 90-degree turn south and opens onto the upper glen. But we diverged.

After a picnic lunch by the river, not far from the car park, we crossed the Water of Nevis and followed the less-traveled route up and over the adjacent hill. This route was steep and rocky and a bit tough to navigate at points, but when we emerged above the glen we had open views of Ben Nevis, the highest peak in Britain, and Glen Nevis's Steall Falls, the second-highest waterfall in the U.K. We lay in the grass on the hilltop for a long while soaking up the warm sun and marveling at the tranquility of the green valley below and the rocky hills above.

Eventually, our teenagers wanted to keep moving. They practically ran the downhill stretch to the river where they promptly got soaked and happily went barefoot the rest of the day. We explored an old rope bridge across the river and stopped to skip stones for a while. On the hike out, we used the primary trail as it hugged the steep sides of the glen. The trail is wide, but there was a precarious drop-off along the edge, and the heavily churning waters were loud as they carved their way along the gorge below. Barefoot and pleasantly tired, my son reached the car first after running the rest of the way.

RUNNER-UP:

Coire Gabhail, the lost (or hidden) valley of Glen Coe. This four-mile out-and-back trail is another beautiful hike with a bit of a scramble into a historic and bucolic glen. Keep in mind that this trail can get very crowded.





BEST WILD CAMPING

It is impossible to determine the best place to wild camp in Scotland. The choices are just too many. However, for a family outing with my teens, we tackled an overnight backpacking trip to Camasunary Bay on the Isle of Skye. This magical place has a beautiful natural sandy beach at the end of an open grassy glen. The rocky mountain peaks and ridges of Blabheinn and Sgurr na Stri bound the glen at the southern edge of The Cuillin, Skye's impressive mountain range.

The trail begins in the hamlet of Kilmarie and is three miles in each direction. It is a moderately difficult trail with 644 feet of elevation gain and loss as it wanders up and over Am Mam pass.

Once we adjusted to the steepness and stopped stumbling over rocks, my family appreciated the incredible views from the trail. We first wandered through croft land full of grazing sheep with the dramatic scree slopes of The Cuillin in the distance. Complaints ceased after we heaved ourselves over the pass and had our first look

at Camasunary Bay below us. The bright blue water, green slopes and rocky peaks wouldn't have been out of place in Hawaii.

We set up our tent on the meadow above the beach and got down to the serious business of relaxation. My teenagers messed around in the water where the shallow tidal flat made for a warmish wade. We buried my son in the sand. We sat around and read to the sleepy sound of the waves and the wind. We napped in the tent. We watched deer wander by. Eventually, the sun set, and we slept like rocks.

RUNNER-UP:

Strath na Sealga glen. For a longer backpacking trip, this glen has it all when it comes to scenery. It is roughly eight miles into the edge of the loch, which is surrounded by rocky peaks. The Shenevall bothy (camper cabin) can get full, so I recommend bringing a tent.

BEST RESOURCES

MAPS AND GUIDES

I found the Walkhighlands website, www.walkhighlands.co.uk, to be the best resource for good hikes in the area. It has detailed descriptions and various map formats to suit your navigation preferences. There is even a free app with downloadable Ordnance Survey (OS) trail maps.

ACCOMMODATIONS

A bothy is a basic camper cabin – typically an old croft home or repurposed barn - available for hikers to communally use overnight for simple sleeping and shelter. Visit the Mountain Bothies Association website at www.mountainbothies.org.uk, to find bothies throughout Scotland.

AIRPORTS & TRAVEL

Both Glasgow and Inverness airports are accessible. From Germany, a flight to Inverness will usually require a layover. However, it is a good option if you'd like to drive along the Great Glen to see Loch Ness or explore the history at Culloden. Glasgow has convenient direct flights from Frankfurt and is a great choice if you want to drive through the scenery of Loch Lomond and Glen Coe.



What happens when a company that specializes in amusement park installation and an agency that prides itself in quality gourmet food combine their talents? An experience that "Forbes" has referred to as "one of the world's ten most unusual restaurants." It is the high-end and exclusive event of the year in Brussels, Belgium:

DINNER

in the sky

By Tamala Malerk | Photos by dinnerinthesky.com



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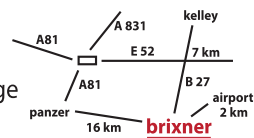


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Lunch and dinner packages will run you 325 euros per person and include a champagne reception, a four-course meal, food and wine pairing, beverages, and a coffee and digestif in the VIP Lounge when you are back on the ground. You will spend 90 minutes in the air enjoying the meal.

If you still want to enjoy the experience, but don't want to spend that much money, there is a Tapas and Cocktails option for 175 euros per person. This option includes 60 minutes of airtime, three cocktails, three dégustations (tastings of small portions) and coffee in the VIP Lounge.

If you are celebrating a special event, you can make your experience even more special with champagne or a birthday cake in the sky. Just make sure to add it when you book your tickets.

If you cannot make it to Brussels this summer, you can also experience Dinner in the Sky in Limburg this September. ■



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EUROPEAN

Holiday Villages

By Kat Nickola

Vacations don't need to be overscheduled sightseeing tours. Sometimes what you really need is simple relaxing downtime with your family and a place with activities and services that facilitate family fun. In Europe, holiday villages fill this niche and then some.

A holiday village is a purpose-built vacation resort that offers accommodations, activities, time out in nature and indoor pursuits to bring families together. Visualize a family-oriented summer camp, but with conveniences that both kids and adults want like lively evening events, restaurants and adrenaline options. This is quality time galore!

Reservations at a holiday village typically include your accommodation, use of facilities and some of the activities. Food at restaurants or on-site grocery stores costs extra, and most visitors self-cater to some extent. The accommodations range from glamping tents to luxury homes and nearly always include a basic kitchen. The most common room on offer is somewhere in the middle: a small equipped cabin.

Four well-established companies have holiday villages throughout Europe, and each has its own vibe.

Centre Parcs | www.centerparcs.eu

The villages at this Dutch-run company have the most upscale options on this list with cottages, fancy treehouses and luxury homes tastefully secluded and surrounded by nature. Centre Parcs guarantees that each park is 90 percent natural. There are numerous included activities like petting farms, adventure trails, playgrounds, sports fields, skate parks, evening entertainment and big indoor water parks called AquaMundo. There are also plenty of other paid activities like spa visits, ropes courses, paddleboarding, horseback

riding, paintball, archery and craft workshops. Each park will have cafés and restaurants plus a small grocery store.

EuroParcs | www.europarcs.com

Another Dutch-run chain of holiday villages called EuroParcs is less expensive than Centre Parcs, but still offers plenty to do. Here, the focus is on outdoor pursuits and proximity to local area attractions. Accommodations range from camp pitches and glamping tents to cabins and tiny houses. They are often purposely located near tourist sites and cities so it's easy to venture out. At the parks, there are sports fields, playgrounds, kids clubs and trails. Many also have pools, natural swimming lakes or wellness centers. In addition, there will be a restaurant and snack bar for meals you don't feel like cooking inside your rental.

Eurocamp | www.eurocamp.co.uk

Canvas Holidays | www.canvasholidays.co.uk

Both of these British companies call their holiday villages campsites, but don't let that deter you. There is no campsite available for a tent or RV. Instead, the word "camp" is used to refer to a fun family outdoors-focused experience; visualize grilling out at a nice state park while the kids play at the playground or your teenagers take a kayak out on the lake. Accommodations are in well-equipped mobile homes. Most of these holiday villages will have a pool, sports facility, small café, grocery store, and evening entertainment. Some take the resort feel up a notch with water parks or beachside locations. ■



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