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PLAN AHEAD

By Katie Wells



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BAVARIA

Nürnberger Volksfest, Nürnberg | Aug. 28 – Sept. 13, 2026

Twice a year on the fairgrounds by Dutzendteich Lake in Nürnberg, the smell of classic Franconian fair food draws up to two million visitors for festival fun. There is dancing and music, plus culinary specialties like the Nürnberger sausage (I like to add a dash of horseradish and mustard to mine). Guests are invited every autumn to share aspects of their culture whether it be food, drink or artisanal crafts. Over the two weeks, there are events such as a keg tapping, parades, brass bands and fireworks.

volksfest-nuernberg.de



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KAISERSLAUTERN

Dürkheimer Wurstmarkt, Bad Dürkheim | Sept. 11 – 15, Sept. 18 – 21, 2026

Just 40 minutes from Kaiserslautern, the Wurstmarkt has been celebrated for over 600 years and has undergone many transformations: from a church festival to a medieval fair to a sausage market to what is now the largest sausage and wine festival in the world. *Schorle* is a wine staple, which is a spritzer cut with sparkling water. The wine is served by the half-liter in a *Dubbeglas*, or dotted glass, which a local butcher invented to better grip his beer while he worked. The fest features towering rides, carnival games, food, fireworks, live music and the crowning of the newest wine princess.

www.bad-duerkheim.de



PHOTO BY KATIE WELLS

SPANGDAHLEM

Middle Moselle Wine Festival, Bernkastel-Keus | Sept. 3 – 7, 2026

An easy day trip from Spangdahlem, this is one of the most popular wine festivals to attend. The highlight is trying local wines from the Moselle region which lies along the wine route. The program includes plenty of other attractions like the traditional Moselle Flower Evening as well as a grand parade and fireworks display. Live music is spread across five stages while you sip wine and enjoy tasty food like *Kartoffelpuffer mit Apfelmus* (potato pancakes with freshly made apple sauce). On Friday, don't miss the coronation of the new Mosella, the wine queen of Bernkastel-Keus. en.bernkastel.de



STUTTGART

Ludwigsburg Venetian Fair | Sept. 4 – 6, 2026

This special fair only takes place every two years. Visitors gather in the market square for magical performances, including music, stilt theater, drama, comedy and acrobatics. Watch a parade of people dressed in beautiful Venetian costumes and masks, and don your own. The event will also have face painting and a large Venetian arts and crafts market. Plan ahead early to get tickets for a Venetian masked ball at the Residenz Palace on Sept. 3. Visit.ludwigsburg.de



WIESBADEN

Wiesbaden City Festival and Fall Market | Sept. 25 – 27, 2026

Spread across the city, visitors can enjoy music, snack on fest food and sip specialty wines or shop for crafts, autumnal flower bouquets and more from over 60 market stalls at the Fall Market on Mauritiusplatz. Relax in a cozy atmosphere which features a traditional farmer's market, hunting horns, live music and pony rides at the Harvest Festival (*Erntedankfest*) on the Warmen Damm. This year's highlight is a large straw couch visitors can take pictures on. To end the festivities, shop from a variety of stores in the Historic Pentagon area at Open Sunday. www.wiesbaden.de/en ■



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A day at the Freibad



By Kat Nickola

It's a hot summer day and it seems that no amount of morning *Lüften* and afternoon *Rolladen* closing will cool off your non-air-conditioned home. Your solution: spend the day at your local pool.

The *freibad* is a great, inexpensive place to enjoy cooling off in the pool and relaxing in the shade. Most towns offer an outdoor pool complex. Many have a slide or two, a few lap lanes, a kids' pool and a diving board. Characteristically, there will also be a large lawn space. Visiting the *freibad* is an all-day activity. Germans will bring blankets to lay out on, a picnic and drinks (no glass). A badminton set is also popular. Adults claim a spot of lawn with their blanket and alternate between hanging out reading and taking a dip in the pool to cool off.

Kids run around to swim and play. It's important to understand that kids (and adults) are expected to behave properly, but it is also *freizeit*, or free-time, so some amount of goofing around is overlooked. Parents are responsible for teaching their children pool rules and the swimming skills needed. Lifeguard duties don't generally involve policing patrons for rule-abiding, which may feel a bit lax when compared to the U.S. Instead, German lifeguards are employed solely to ensure everyone's safety and will only whistle for risky behavior or to react to an emergency. ■

GERMAN WORD OF THE MONTH

There are a variety of names for swimming areas in Germany.

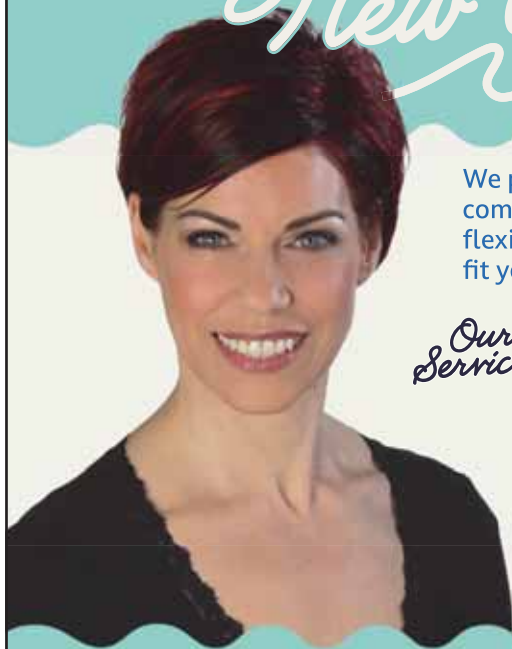
- Erlebnisbad – a pool for fun, not laps, translated as adventure pool
- FKK (Freikörperkultur) – used to indicate a designated nudist area
- Freibad – an outdoor pool complex, typically only open in the summer
- Hallenbad – an indoor pool complex
- Naturbad – a natural swimming facility, often a lake or chemical-free pool
- Planschbecken – a shallow paddling pool for babies and toddlers
- Schwimmbad – a general word for any kind of swimming facility
- Schwimmhalle – the building which houses an indoor pool
- Seebad – a coastal or lakeside resort
- Sportbad – a pool with lanes for lap swimming
- Sprudelbecken – a whirlpool or hot tub
- Strandbad – a beach and swimming area of a lake, river or coastline
- Therme – a mineral hot spring pool or wellness complex
- Waldbad – a pool or lake set in a forest

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SPLASH ZONES NEAR STUTTGART

By Katie Wells

RAIN OR SHINE

Rulantica | *Rust, Germany*

This Scandinavian island-themed water park has just about everything for all ages. It is open year-round and has plenty of indoor and outdoor spaces. As a colleague of mine who visits often says, "It's a dream for parents."

The park operates on a wristband system, so she and her spouse can fit the kiddos with their cool bracelets and send them off to splash in the water while the adults get some much-needed rest on the lounge chairs. If you are visiting for a weekend, you don't have to leave. There are plenty of food and drink options around the park, and there are special events and shows. On-site accommodations include earlier park entry and better ticket pricing. The attractions aren't just geared towards kids and thrill-seekers; there are also plenty of relaxation options. www.europapark.de/en/rulantica



Kids and Thrill Seekers

There are over 50 slides and rides at Rulantica; one massive slide even looks like a giant dragon. Visitors can experience virtual reality, racing slides, extreme thrill slides, tube slides and gentle family-friendly slides both indoors and outdoors.

Water rides without slides

- **Snorri's Saga:** Snorri is Rulantica's octopus mascot, and this lazy river experience is relaxing for everyone.
- **Snorri Snorkeling VR:** A special diving theater that lets you experience the virtual world while in the water.
- **Hoppanblad:** A balancing obstacle course that challenges you to get across the water without getting wet.
- **Vildstrøm:** A wild river with faster currents on the outskirts of Rulantica.
- **Surf Fjord:** A wave pool that mimics waves at the beach.
- **Tønnevirvel:** A boat ride carousel.

Adult R&R

Hyggedal sauna and wellness area

Visitors 12 and up can enjoy the relaxation area. For visitors 16 and up, who seek a dose of self-care, Rulantica offers access to three textile-free saunas and a steam room.

- **Kota Sauna Chalet:** Has a sauna stove and rustic tables where you can enjoy a cold beer while sweating out stress.
- **Saune "lille":** Enjoy a traditional sauna with treatments like scrubs and facemasks.
- **Sauna "Stor":** Nordic-style sauna with special infusions.
- **Damp Huset:** A colorful, cozy steam room.

Three heated relaxation pools with swim-up bars

- **Frigg Temple:** Enjoy the warm water and temple built by mer-folk to honor the goddess Frigg.
- **Skog Lagoon:** A soothing outdoor pool nestled within the pine trees with bubble loungers.
- **Svømmepøl:** Features a mystical landscape with geysers, a grotto and Nordic volcanic rock. It is partially-covered in the winter.

SUMMER SEASON

Badesee Buchtzig | Ettlingen, Germany

This natural lake with beach vibes features a separate swimming area for guests, along with tons of other beach-fun options, perfect for getting outdoors during the summer. Enjoy sipping a cocktail and soaking in the rays on the sandy beach area, where you can rent or bring your own lounge.

A converted kiosk with a lakeside terrace offers food and drinks with a view. The Buchtzig Beach Bar offers a vacation atmosphere with their fun cocktails and non-alcoholic beverages. The venue also offers changing cabins, showers, restrooms and lockers. Prices are typically €5 for adults and €3.50 for children. We recommend checking the website for pricing and hours of operation, baeder-ettlingen.de/badesee-buchtzig/der-badesee.

Water activities

- Rent a pedal boat.
- Sunbathe or bounce on four floating islands.
- Little ones have a designated paddling and shallow water area to swim in.

Land activities

- Beach volleyball court
- Table tennis
- Outdoor giant chess
- Playground ■





WATER PARKS NEAR YOU

By Kat Nickola

Summer in Germany is time for warm, sunny days splashing outside at the local pool. Except, of course, when it is cold, cloudy and raining. But even in the dreariest of weather, or simply to avoid slathering on sunscreen, an indoor water park can keep those summer vibes alive.

Here we have the biggest water parks near U.S. military installations across Germany; they are destinations in their own right. In addition, there is information about your nearest and best smaller, budget choice, perfect for a last-minute splash.



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Kristall Palm Beach

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Therme Erding

BAVARIA REGION

Kristall Palm Beach

Roughly half an hour from Ansbach and just over an hour from Grafenwöhr, Vilseck or Hohenfels is Kristall Palm Beach, right outside of Nuremberg. Worth the day trip, this place has warm, thermally-heated water. There is a fun wave pool and 15 slides, including many that allow multiple inner tube riders or family races. Outside there is a big splash pad for kids and a swim up bar for adults. In addition, there are relaxation pools for enjoying the healing thermal waters. A separate textile-free wellness area is available for those willing to don merely a towel.

www.palm-beach.de

Adult/child weekend day tickets: €31.90/€23.90

Lower rates on weekdays and for shorter periods

Therme Erding

Further from USAG Bavaria and USAG Ansbach bases, at just over two hours away, is Therme Erding, which claims the title of the world's biggest spa. Thermal waters with healing minerals are kept at a comfy 93 degrees. There is a huge tropical, domed indoor water park with 10 tube slides and a large kids' splash zone, plus a wave pool and swim-up bar, with relaxation pools that

spill outside. Outside the dome there is another complex of slides that are only open in the summer. There is also a separate textile-free, 16+ wellness area called Vital Oasis.

www.therme-erding.de

Weekend day tickets (over 3 years of age): €59

Lower rates for evening visits, shorter periods and weekdays

Budget-Friendly Local Options

- **Kurfürstenbad, Amberg.** Under an hour from most USAG Bavaria installations, this small indoor waterpark has multiple pools, a toddler area, hot tub, adventure pool and a slide.
- **Thermenwelt, Weiden.** Roughly half an hour from Grafenwöhr, the thermal waters at this indoor park are used for the adventure pools, water slide, diving area, climbing wall and kids' play area.
- **Friezeitbad Aquella, Ansbach.** Under 15 minutes from most USAG Ansbach installations, this indoor pool has swimming lanes, a wave pool, long slide, a wellness pool and an outdoor flow channel.

STUTTGART AREA

Europabad

A sizeable indoor waterpark in Karlsruhe, Europabad is only about an hour from USAG Stuttgart installations. The warm adventure pool, fun kids splash park, overwater ninja course and warm outdoor pool make it a great day trip destination. There are eight slides, including a unique stand-up surfing slide, a spider-themed funnel, whitewater river and a free fall. A separate wellness area offers textile-free relaxation in unique themed saunas.

www.ka-europabad.de

Adult/child weekend day tickets: €26/€21

Lower rates for weekday visits, shorter periods and families.

Rulantica

Under two hours from USAG Stuttgart bases, this is the second-largest indoor water park in Germany. Rulantica is affiliated with the country's largest theme park, Europa-Park. The entire water park is Norse themed, with over 50 slides and attractions for all ages. There are bottom-dropping slides, racing slides and family slides. There is a



© THERME ERDING



Miramar

© MIRAMAR

large toddler play area, a huge outdoor splash park and calming relaxation pools. In true theme-park fashion, there are also stage performances, light shows and plenty of food options.

www.europapark.de

Adult/child day tickets: €39/€36.50

Lower rates in the evening and when combined with Europa-Park entrance.

Budget-Friendly Local Options

- **F3 Das Wohlfühlbad, Fellbach.** Nearer to Robinson Barracks, this large local facility has an indoor *familienbad* with three big slides, a kids' area, lap lanes, climbing wall and wellness pools that connect to the outdoors.
- **Fildorado, Filderstadt.** Within 20 minutes of Patch, Robinson Barracks and Panzer, this water park is a little pricier than a local *hallenbad*, but the discounted family rate makes for a great day trip option. There are multiple pools both indoors and out, plus a kids' area and three slides, including a fun "ski-jump slide."

RHEINLAND REGION

Miramar

This big, indoor water park is a fun day out, roughly an hour from bases in the Kaiserslautern Military Community (KMC) or USAG Wiesbaden areas. The park is centered on a large wave pool, and vaguely themed around tropical animals. There is a large relaxation pool that connects to an outdoor portion with jets. The highlight here, though, is the slide tower where nine of the park's 10 slides are located. With speed slides, a funnel and family slides, there is fun for all. The park is expected to reopen their newly reconstructed sauna and thermal pools area this summer.

www.miramar-bad.de

Adult/tween/child day tickets: €29.90/€22.90/€8.90

Lower rates for evenings and four-hour blocks.

Tuesdays after 7 p.m. are textile-free (nude)

Budget-Friendly Local Options

- **Monte Mar, Kaiserslautern.** Near many USAG Rheinland-Pfalz installations, this indoor water park has two large slides, a kids' play area, relaxation pools and a wave pool. There is also a separate textile-free wellness area.

- **Azur, Ramstein.** Adjacent to Ramstein Air Base, this small indoor water park has a big slide, toddler pool, relaxation pools and lap pool.
- **Aqua Mundo, Bostalsee.** A half hour from Baumholder, this park is part of a resort complex, and a bit pricier. However, with three big slides, a wave pool, heated indoor and outdoor swimming, relaxation pools and access to other resort amenities, it can be a fun day trip.
- **Titus Thermen, Frankfurt am Main.** Only 30 minutes from USAG Wiesbaden, this facility has a family water park with slides, kids' play area and plenty of pools. There is also an adult textile-free wellness area. Both spaces use the mineral-rich thermal waters.
- **Cascade Erlebnisbad, Bitburg.** 20 minutes from Spangdahlem Air Base, this fun, local adventure pool has play spaces, a couple of slides, a sports area and an outdoor pool in the summer. ■



Six EUROPEAN Treats to Cool You Down

By Sherece Spain

BEAUTY & HEALTH



by Paola Wasem



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Summertime foods, especially desserts, are truly my favorite. They're usually much lighter, so it feels healthier (even if it really isn't). Now that you're in Europe, I invite you to try what summertime brings to European tables.

GERMANY:

Bavarian Cream

Not quite the same as the filling in one of Dunkin's donuts; however, oh so delicious! The traditional Bavarian cream (*Bayerische Crème*) dessert is more gelatinous and flavored with chocolate, fruit or liqueur.

FRANCE:

Parfait

Americans are used to a parfait being a layered dessert with yogurt, fruit and sometimes granola topped with whipped cream. However, the original version from France is actually more similar to ice cream with liqueur.

ITALY:

Panna Cotta

Hailing from northern Italy, this light, pudding-like dessert is usually infused with coffee, liqueur, vanilla or chocolate. It is often topped with a complimentary sauce made of fruit, chocolate or liqueur.

BELGIUM:

Waffles and Ice Cream

I felt obliged to include a familiar comfort food. Belgium is renowned for their delicious waffles. Top them with your favorite ice cream (and maybe chocolate syrup or caramel sauce).

NETHERLANDS:

Vlaai

This dessert will remind you of a traditional American fruit pie. A vlaai is thinner than the pie you're used to and can be filled with either fruit or a smooth custard.

SPAIN:

Gazpacho

Poor soup! It really gets left out in the summer, except in Spain. Served cold and sometimes in a glass, this tomato-based dish makes an excellent frosty appetizer to any summer meal. ■



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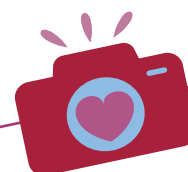
YOUR SNAPSHOT

PHOTO BY Chad Hoffman

In **Catania, Sicily**, and neighboring countries with increasingly hot summers, it is common to see canopies made from crochet, tarps and umbrellas lining shopping streets. Photographer Chad Hoffman captured this fun, vibrant way to block out the sun and reduce heat. If you find yourself under an umbrella canopy, it may just protect you from getting wet if it rains! ■



Heat and water also make perfect conditions for saunas. Have you visited any unique spas in Europe, perhaps a hot spring or volcanic lagoon? Send us Your Snapshot for a chance to be featured in a "What's Up" magazine!



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