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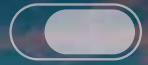
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By Katie Wells



GERMANY

Heidelberg Castle Illumination Festival | Heidelberg | June 1–Sept. 7

Medieval Festival at Cochem Castle | Cochem | Aug. 3–4

Potsdam: Night of Palaces | Potsdam | Aug. 9–10

Ludwigsburg Pumpkin Festival | Ludwigsburg | Aug. 23–Nov. 03

The Ludwigsburg Palace grounds host one of the largest pumpkin art exhibits in the world. They feature a different theme each year for artists to create sculptures out of pumpkins and gourds. Try a variety of pumpkin themed foods, and on select days, race a giant pumpkin in the water like a canoe.

Heidelberg Christmas Market | Heidelberg | Nov. 25–Dec. 20

AUSTRIA

Liechtenstein Garden Palace: Sommer Rhapsodie | Vienna | July 8–Aug. 7

Herbstgold- Music Festival Schloss Esterházy | Eisenstadt | Sept. 11–22

Klanglicht Festival | Styria | Oct. 24–26

This immersive festival is a visual and listening experience combining art, color, and music. Light installations are projected onto UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site, Eggenberg Palace and throughout its surrounding gardens for a full audiovisual experience.

BELGIUM

Around the World in 80 Days | Beloeil Castle Park | July 25–Aug. 18

Stroll through the castle park and follow in the footsteps of the eccentric Phileas Fogg. You will be seated in front of a few paintings to watch the performance. You will then be guided to the next immersive scene in the park. The show features, princesses, fiery cowboys, distant lands, acrobatics and chases.

Boullion Castle- Fete du Fromage | Boullion | Sept 21–22

Graventsteen Winter Wonder Castle | Ghent | Dec. 7–Jan. 5, 2025

CZECHIA

The Book is Art Exhibit | Prague Castle | June 7–Oct. 20

This special exhibit for book lovers features some of the most unique and beautiful Czech books from the beginning of book printing through present day. A highlight from this collection are the copies from Franz Kafka's original library that will be on display.

Dvorák's Prague | Cathedral of St. Vitas at Prague Castle | Sept. 6–24

House of the Falconer Exhibit | Prague Castle | Year round

FRANCE

Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte: The Styx, River of the Underworld | Maincy | July 4–Nov. 1

This interactive underground river adventure draws inspiration from La Fontaine's text, The Love of Cupid and Psyche. You will be equipped with a head lamp and thigh boots as you experience tests of logic and agility alongside experienced actors.

Le Château de Chantilly: Equinoxe Light and Shadow Show | Chantilly | July 17–Aug. 18

Le Château de Chantilly: A Day in Paris Exhibit | Chantilly | April 7–Oct. 31

Palace of Versailles Majestic Horses at the Heart of a Civilization Exhibit | Versailles | July 2–Nov. 3

Marathon Des Château Du Medoc | Gironde | Sept. 7

Autumn at Château Fontainebleau | Fontainebleau | Oct. 21–Nov. 12

Throughout the fall season, Château Fontainebleau has a diverse program including the Saint-Hubert festival Oct. 29, which will present the chateaux's historical heritage with a trumpet concert, falconry show and return from the hunt. Explore the chateaux in period costume rentals from Oct. 22–Nov. 5. And finally, enjoy the Imperial Chocolate Fair from Nov. 10–12.

Magical Fairy Tale illuminations of the Château De Breteuil | Choisel | Throughout December

THE NETHERLANDS

Kasteel de Haar: Park full of Stories | Utrecht | Sundays in August

Castlefest 2024 at Castle Keukenhof | Lisse | Aug. 1–4

Mindful Muiderslot: Yoga in the Plum Orchard | Muiden | Aug. 10

LIECHENSTEIN

Garden Palace: Summer Rhapsody | Bauernfeldplatz | July 8–Aug. 7

POLAND

WYSPIA Contemporary Art at Historic Wawel Royal Castle | Wawel | Jan. 26, 2023–Dec. 31, 2024

Magnificence of Rococo Kaendler's Meissen Porcelain Figures | Wawel | May 23–Sept. 29

Orgodzieniec Castle's: An evening with Ghosts | Podzamcze | Select dates from April 26–Sept. 28

Czocha Castle: Nostitz's Bar | Lesna | May–Sept.

Extra



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Spotlight On



The Reichburg

By Kat Nickola

The Reichburg looms large. Perched on a hill above the town of Cochem along the Mosel River, this medieval castle has a long story to tell.

Typical of a walled fortification built in the Middle Ages, the Reichburg was constructed by a local count to establish legitimacy and to require taxes from trade along the Mosel River. Originally founded in the early 1000s, it was passed within family dynasties until the area was subsumed into the Holy Roman Empire in the 1300s. The castle was given to the Archbishop of Trier and managed by a series of lords. Sadly, it was destroyed during the Wars of Palatinate Succession in the late 1600s and left to ruin.

It may have remained a ruin had it not been for a wealthy Berlin businessman named Louis Frédéric

Jacques Ravené. In the 1800s, castle-building became popular across Europe as aristocrats romanticized their own medieval histories. Ravené dove deep into the trend by purchasing the Reichburg ruins in Cochem to excavate and rebuild. His son continued the work after Ravené's death, but the beautifully restored castle then fell into Nazi hands and was used as a lawyer training base. It is now owned by the city of Cochem and managed by a private company.

The Reichburg is open daily from March to November, with guided tours available six times daily. There is a tavern with a scenic outdoor patio offering drinks and meals during summer months. All year, the castle holds special events like themed medieval knight's meals, festivals, and Christmas celebrations. Dogs are permitted at the castle, in its restaurant and on tours. ■

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Burg Rabenstein

By Katie Wells



EAT

There are plenty of gastronomic experiences to be had at **Burg Rabenstein**, where you can dine elegantly like a princess or feast like a king. The castle hosts many foodie events throughout the year, easily found on their website, www.burg-rabenstein.de, including a wild boar barbecue buffet, whiskey dinner and a special four-course meal in the state hall.

The main restaurant, **The Castle Kitchen** offers fine Franconian cuisine that is regionally focused with the option of a three-course or four-course menu. You can choose from a meat, fish or vegetarian option. If you're feeling adventurous, you can let the chef choose. Plus, there is a wide selection of Franconian wines available from classic silvaners to sauvignon blancs.

From March 23- Nov. 3, **Gutsschenke**, a tavern and outdoor beer garden, is open. They offer "down-to-earth Franconian cuisine." Some items include, Franconian roast, schnitzel, and medieval tart flambee. Most excitingly, **mystery dinner shows** (in German) are also regularly available to book, with topics such as magic, solving murders, and more.



STAY

On a plateau overlooking a lush valley sits the restored 12th-century castle, Burg Rabenstein. It is home to a falconry center, caves, and many hiking trails. Staying here is like staying at an all-inclusive medieval resort.

There are 22 rooms and suites you can choose from, all uniquely decorated and priced at various tiers depending on how much "royal treatment" you would like to receive. Each room has panoramic views overlooking a green forest and the Ailsbach valley, known for its unique rock formations. With the lavish style bedrooms, plenty of activities, and Franconian gastronomy, the hotel website boasts you will "sleep like knights and noblemen."



LOVE

The best thing about Burg Rabenstein is that you can stay high up in a castle with views for miles and then see an underground palace, **Sophienhöhle Cave**, one of the most gorgeous dripstone caves in Germany. The cave is still active, continuing to create stalactites and stalagmite formations such as the giant "millionaire" or "sinter flags." You can explore the caves with a guided tour or attend "Sophie at Night," where you can explore the caves at your leisure along with a sparkling light show, and music. You can also experience concerts in the antechamber of the cave. Music ranges from jazz and blues to Gregorian chanting amplified by the cave walls.

Another highlight of Burg Rabenstein is the Falconry Center which is home to over 80 of the largest birds of prey species. During flight demonstrations, guests can view up to 12 different species flying and hunting. These experiences are available from, April until October. Twice a year, the castle hosts medieval markets. The last one for 2024 will be August 2-4. There are also numerous hiking trails, one 6-km trail was even walked by the Bavarian King Ludwig I when he visited in 1830.

For entry tickets, dinner reservations and booking rooms you can visit, burg-rabenstein.de/en. ■

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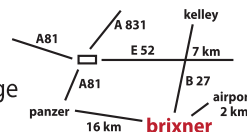
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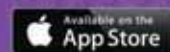
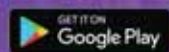
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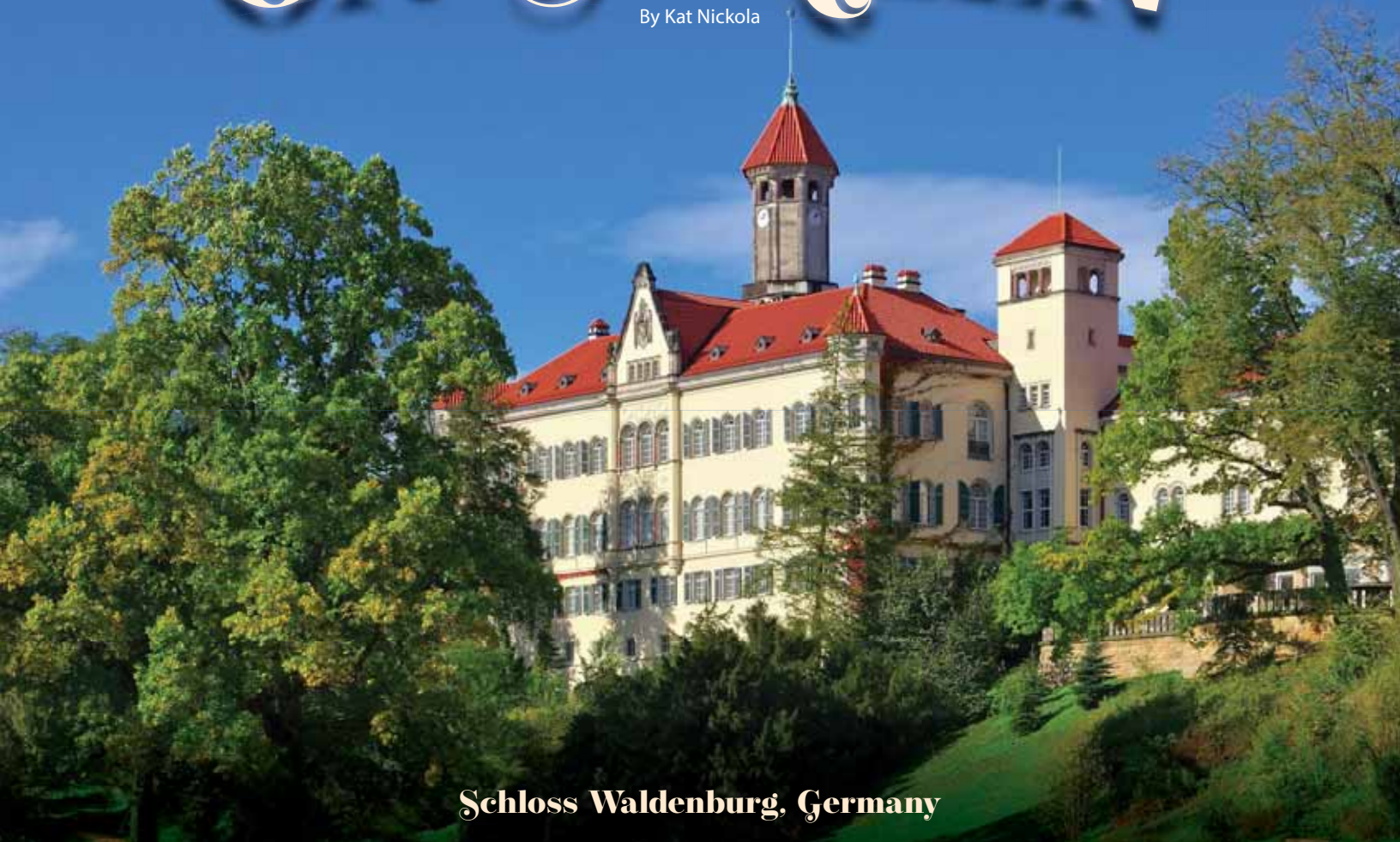


afngo.net

Plenty of films have been shot across Europe, but iconic castles are hard to miss. Here are some incredible castle filming locations to visit.

European Castles ON SCREEN

By Kat Nickola



Schloss Waldenburg, Germany

Castle (Schloss) Waldenburg, in Saxony, has one of the moodiest, most authentic wood-paneled interiors from medieval Europe. It has been used for numerous German period films and shows, but you may recognize it best for its use in "The Grand Budapest Hotel." In the film, the dark hallways, staircases and parlors of Madame Desgoffe-und-Taxi's (Tilda Swinton) Schloss Lutz were filmed in the interior of Castle Waldenburg.

When young Gustave (Ralph Fiennes) and Zero (Tony Revlori) steal the painting, it is from above the fireplace in Waldenburg's shadowy library.

Castle Waldenburg was built in the 1100s and has undergone numerous updates and remodeling since that time. The town and castle were ruled over by the Hohenlohe dynasty, who's descendent, Prince Felix zu Hohenlohe-Wald-

enburg-Schillingsfürst, still owns the property. Inside the castle are museum spaces dedicated to its history. In addition, there are two restaurants on the grounds offering both café fare and fine dining. When not in use for events or film projects, the interior rooms of the castle can be toured with an informational app. You can also do a virtual tour on the website at www.schloss-waldenburg.de.





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Schloss Frohnburg, Austria

Situated on the southern outskirts of Salzburg, Castle Frohnburg shot to fame in the 1960s as the Von Trapp family villa in the movie, "The Sound of Music." The bright yellow façade, gated entrance and scenic tree-lined access road provided an elegant depiction of the family's country estate in five scenes. When Maria (Julie Andrews) sings "I Have Confidence," she makes her way along Frohnburg's yellow wall before being awestruck at the iron gates and rushing across the entry courtyard.

Built in the late 1600s, Castle Frohnburg was used by counts and barons as one of the many country estates built just outside of Salzburg. After World War II, it was confiscated by the U.S. government, but later acquired by the Republic of Austria. Since then, it has been used by the Mozarteum University as the location of the Orff Institute for the study of elemental music and dance.

It is not open to the public, but you can walk Maria's path along Hellbrunner Allee to the gates at number 53.

“

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, Prague castle is the largest castle complex in the world.

”

Prague Castle, Czechia

The Prague Castle complex, or Pražský hrad, sits atop a steep hill and the many stairways on its western edge were used for multiple scenes in "Spider-Man: Far From Home" when Peter (Tom Holland) and his class visit Prague. Later in the film, Peter and MJ (Zendaya) share a charged moment on the beautiful stone Charles Bridge that connects the city's old town with the castle-side of the Vitava River. "Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol" was also filmed at Prague Castle. In the film, Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) and Benji Dunn (Simon Pegg) sneak into the Kremlin and pass through a courtyard, two severely stark rooms and an ornate hall. In reality, these were all filmed inside the Prague Castle.

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, Prague castle is the largest castle complex in the world. It was first built in 880 and became a seat of power for princes, kings and, later, Holy Roman Emperors. It is currently the official residence of the Czech president. A walled village grew below the castle, which is connected to the old town of Prague via the Charles Bridge. Like Peter and MJ, you can walk across the bridge and explore the Prague Castle grounds. There are also ticketed options, so you don't need to sneak around like Ethan Hunt to enter the castle buildings and exhibitions.



• Doune Castle, Scotland

This Scottish castle has been in many films and shows, but it was “Monty Python and the Holy Grail” that put it on the film industry map. Originally it was one of many castles slated for filming, but when the National Trust for Scotland revoked their permission for all but Doune, it became the filming location for nearly all castle scenes in the movie. It was later used as Winterfell in the “Game of Thrones” pilot episode and Castle Leoch in the “Outlander” series.

Doune Castle is now maintained by Historical Environment Scotland as a tourist destination, and tickets can be booked online at historicenvironment.scot. You can explore on your own, pretend to heckle the guards or present your own Trojan rabbit at the front gate, dance with the knights in the great hall, or escape temptation in the kitchens like our favorite Monty Python actors.

“
*You can visit
Matera, stay in
a cave house
hotel and wander
the streets in
the footsteps of
Daniel Craig and
Gal Gadot, up the
winding stairs
and alleyways
for a view from
the Castello
Tramontano.*
”

Castello Tramontano, Italy

This Italian filming site is not simply the Castello (castle) Tramontano, but also the entire ancient town (Sassi) of Matera that stair-steps down the hills below it. The ancient look of the slightly unkempt stone buildings stacked upon each other has been used in many films set in biblical landscapes. It is where Jesus (Jim Caviezel) carries his cross and is crucified in “The Passion of the Christ,” it doubles for Bethlehem in “The Nativity Story” and, most recently, is a stand-in for Jerusalem in “The Book of Clarence.”

Castello construction began in 1501 by the Count of Matera to assert feudal control, but he was assassinated by overtaxed and disgruntled townsfolk in 1514 and the castle was left to ruin. It is still closed for repairs that began in 2008. The town below the castle is largely made of cave-dwellings dug into the hillside which are reported to have been occupied since the Paleolithic. The deep interiors are not apparent from the stacked house-like exteriors, a look that helped to create the town of Themyscira in “Wonder Woman.” The tiny streets were also subject to the opening shot car chase in the James Bond film “No Time to Die.” You can visit Matera, stay in a cave house hotel and wander the streets in the footsteps of Daniel Craig and Gal Gadot, up the winding stairs and alleyways for a view from the Castello Tramontano. ■

Tucked in at a Tudor Castle

By Tamala Malerk



“Divorced. Beheaded. Died. Divorced. Beheaded. Survived.”

These six words are synonymous with King Henry VIII's six wives and how their marriage to ol' Harry ended. I have been obsessed with these women since I was a senior in high school and once gave an unprompted 45-minute-long lecture on them while waiting to see the crown jewels at the Tower of London. I've read as many books and seen as many movies and documentaries as I can about them, and even wrote my master's thesis on Queen Catherine Parr (wife six). Recently, I had a dream-come-true-moment when I spent the night in Hever Castle and Gardens: the childhood home of Queen Anne Boleyn (wife two) and divorce present to Queen Anne of Cleves (wife four).

We arrived about 10:30 a.m. knowing that it was too early to check in to the bed-and-breakfast, but we were simply hoping to drop off our luggage. Much to our surprise, arriving early allowed us special access to the castle. We got 30 minutes to tour the castle with only fellow patrons of the bed-and-breakfast. This was advantageous for us because heavy rain brought the regular visitors swiftly past the gardens and straight into the shelter of the castle, which became crowded.

Throughout the castle, there are various re-creations of Tudor-era rooms. The Aster family spent 10 million dollars in the early 20th century to make the rooms as accurate as possible. Of course, modern amenities such as electricity have been put in the castle, but you get a real sense of how it was back in the 1500s and 1600s.

Throughout the castle, there are various re-creations of Tudor-era rooms.”



The castle is filled with painted portraits, furniture, tapestries and personal items of King Henry, Queen Anne Boleyn and Queen Anne of Cleves. My personal favorite was nerd-ing out over Anne Boleyn's music book and Book of Hours. There are several knowledgeable employees scattered around the castle to provide basic information for newcomers and niche information for longtime Tudor-obsessed fans such as myself.

There are plenty of places to eat while visiting the castle and gardens. The Moat Café offers an opportunity to sit down and enjoy a meal, offering a variety of sandwiches and cakes, plus hot and cold drinks. If you want to eat and meander around the gardens, several kiosks offer a variety of foods from barbecue to ice cream and macaroni and cheese (depending on the season). The deluxe hot chocolate with cream and marshmallows made walking the gardens in the cool air even more enjoyable.

If you are seeking a true English pub experience, the King Henry VIII pub is just a five-minute walk from the castle. The menu is small, but you cannot go wrong with your choices. My spouse and I enjoyed it so much that we went for lunch and dinner. Your admission ticket to Hever Castle and Gardens is good all day, so feel free to see the castle, grab a bite to eat at King Henry's and then return to walk the gardens and grounds.

After lunch, we returned to the grounds where we walked around the

Kent and Sharpshooters Yeomanry Military Museum. It's a small museum included with admission and worth checking out.

There is a large playground for children to enjoy onsite as well as the "space walk," where model planets hang from the trees. I recommend doing the space walk at night for the best experience.

After spending all day at the castle and the surrounding area, it was time to call it a night. We initially booked a standard room but were surprised when upon our arrival, we were upgraded to a larger room. Each room is named after a historical figure. We opened the door which revealed an entryway with a table against the left wall featuring a folder with information about local things to do and restaurants. Further down was the entrance to the bedroom featuring a spacious area and a large bed to rest our tired bodies. The entry also leads to a bathroom with a giant shower and a bathtub to relax in. Thankfully, no royal ghosts haunted us as we slept that night.

There is plenty going on at Hever Castle no matter what time of year you visit. In the spring, enjoy the daffodils, craft fair, ECO week and Easter fun. During the summer, enjoy car shows, jousting events, falconry displays and more. The autumn brings fall color displays, a triathlon, craft fair, and Halloween events. During the winter, enjoy a castle light show and various hot chocolate vendors. Note that the castle is closed for most of January, so, plan accordingly. ■

There is plenty going on at Hever Castle no matter what time of year you visit."





EATING LUNCH AT MY

Backyard Castle

By Tamala Malerk



I should begin with the fact that the castle isn't really in my backyard, but it definitely feels like it. Just a short seven-minute drive from my home, a 30-minute drive from Ramstein and less than a 20-minute drive (or just under an hour on public transportation) from Baumholder is Burg Lichtenberg.

BURG LICHTENBERG is the largest castle in the Rheinland-Pfalz and one of the largest castle complexes in Germany. It is over 800 years old and offers plenty to do for the entire family.

The castle began as two separate complexes that expanded so much that they simply combined the structures. The castle has never been captured by enemy forces. Today, you benefit from its preservation. Climb up the winding medieval steps and look out onto the hills, which are covered in beautiful rapeseed in the summer. There are plenty of open areas to explore the stone ruins and plenty of photo ops. I even had my graduation photos taken there.

There are two museums onsite that make the castle a great place to visit even on a rainy day. The **Pfälzer Musikantenland-Museum** is a hands-on museum: featuring exhibits, instruments, mosaics and infographics about the musical scene in the area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The **Prehistoric Museum Geoscope** takes visitors back to the age of the dinosaurs in the Pfalz. The museum features rotating exhibits so you can see something new throughout the year. They also have adorable axolotls onsite.

After all that exploring and learning, you will work up an appetite. Fear not; there is a restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating, and the food there is delicious! We have gone to the castle simply to have lunch. I had the fried goat cheese with vegetables, and my spouse had the gnocchi and vegetables in white sauce. Both were amazing! When I say my spouse had the gnocchi, what I really mean is that I ordered the smaller goat cheese dish because I wasn't that hungry and then 'helped' eat a quarter of the gnocchi because it is just that tasty. The restaurant also features a daily cake special, and our berry cake was just as fantastic as everything else. Prepare to leave full.

The castle hosts various events throughout the year and it's worth your time to check them out. They hold seasonal markets. As well as semi-annual medieval markets. I attended last year's and there were tasty treats, animal exhibits and, of course, medieval wares vendors. It is also home to a medieval Christmas market in the wintertime. This is a great opportunity to warm up with gluhwein, shop for presents and buy a tiara for yourself (I plan on buying one this year.)

For those interested in an extended stay at the castle, there is a **youth hostel** on-site as well as camper van parking. The youth hostel is family-friendly, and they offer opportunities for family vacations and children's birthday parties. There is also a small coffee shop for a quick fuel up.

The museums and restaurant are open every day except Monday. I recommend calling ahead at +49-6381-9987236 and getting a reservation for the restaurant. The castle grounds are accessible 24/7. ■



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