

2010 is Passion Play Year in Oberammergau! – Join us for our exclusive small group tour to the roots of German Christian Culture:

The Passion Play in Oberammergau is performed only once every 10 years! It is the oldest festival in Germany and the most famous passion play that is still performed today. The Passion Play depicts the last five days in the life of Jesus Christ, from Palm Sunday to Easter. Oberammergau, a picturesque village in the Bavarian Alps, has faithfully performed its passion play since 1633 in fulfillment of a vow dating back to the Thirty Years War. In keeping with centuries-old tradition, Oberammergau's passion play is an authentically local production. It is performed entirely by amateur actors. New in 2010, the 5-hour Passion Play performance will have an evening session implementing lighting effects and torches. In cooperation with the German Heritage Commission Fredericksburg (Texas), The German American Connection (TGAC) has created an unique and tailor-made ecumenical tour to the Passion Play 2010 in Oberammergau, Germany – and to the roots of German and European Christian Culture. This exclusive small group tour with a maximum of 22 travelers takes you to impressive and inspiring sites of German Culture – Catholic pilgrimage sites, Protestant Reformation and Luther sites, UNESCO World Cultural Heritage sites and much more.... **September 08 – 22, 2010 (15-days)**

Tour program: **Leipzig** – Luther town Eisleben – Cistercian Convent St. Mary's of Helfta – Feudal Castle Querfurt – Meissen – Dresden – Castle Leuchtenburg – Erfurt – Eisenach – Fortress Wartburg – Schmalkalden – Lauscha – Dinkelsbuehl – Munich – Altoetting – Wies Church – Oberammergau – Neuschwanstein / Murnau – Speyer – Heidelberg – Montabaur – Limburg an der Lahn – Frankfurt.

Tour price: \$ 2,854 (ground package, double occupancy)

Leipzig has been ranked number 10 of 31 Top Places to visit in 2010 by The New York Times. Being the only German destination to have been selected for the respectable newspaper's ranking, Leipzig is known for its art and music: Once home to composers like Bach, Schumann, Wagner and Mendelssohn, it is nowadays also an up and coming place for young artists and designers. The renowned New Leipzig School has been featured around the world. Galleries and art spaces like the former cotton mill "Spinnerei" make Leipzig one of the hottest places in "Creative Germany."

TGAC: http://www.thegermanamericanconnection.com/Passion_Play_2010.html

Our TGAC German Christmas Market Tour 2009 was a wonderful trip every guest truly enjoyed: This is what one of our dear guests said about the 2009 TGAC tour:

“Delightful Christmas market tour – lovely decorations and lights, great food and sights. Ute is ever attentive, efficient, and knowledgeable. I couldn’t have enjoyed myself more.” The German American Connection took the small group on a wonderful escorted 10-day tour for to Berlin and East Germany at Advent – We traveled to the roots of German Christmas traditions and modern crafts and art! We started in Germany's inspiring capital Berlin and enjoyed a wonderful organ and choir performance at the historic Berlin Cathedral. After a stop in Potsdam, we headed to the centre of young art and design, **Leipzig**. In Dresden, Saxony’s splendor, Germany’s oldest Christmas Market and an impressive organ cycle concert at the Holy Cross Church awaited us. A scenic ride took us to the toy-maker and woodcraft village in the Saxon Ore Mountain region Erzgebirge. Our final destination was Thuringia's medieval capital Erfurt and the glassblower village Lauscha deep in the Thuringian Forest. Every day we visited various Christmas Markets, savored local culinary specialties at the markets or at typical and authentic restaurants and enjoyed performances and concerts . But there was also enough time for individual excursions according to the special interest of each of our guests. Some went to Berlin’s biggest flea market browsing for collectible and antiques. Others went to art galleries and museums. In Dresden we organized an exclusive guided tour at the Volkswagen manufacture where the luxury model Pheton is assembled. Special shopping needs were as well satisfied as culinary likes. After 8 days on ground, everyone departed loaded with remarkable impressions, nice memories, plenty of souvenirs, Christmas decoration and presents – and with maybe a pound or two of good German food. In 2010, we offer our unique Advent Tours again to more friends of German Christmas.

TGAC: http://cultourinaria.com/Christmas_Markets.html

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Prussian Charme and Beer Brewing Tradition: Since 1689, at the Crowne Estate (Krongut) Bornstedt in Potsdam beer is brewed – a tradition which is again very much alive. Throughout the year, the small brewhouse brews two beer specialties, a top-fermented hops-aromatique lager and a malt-aromatique dunkel beer. During Christmas season, they additionally offer the so called “Bornstedter Buffalo Amber” – a darker full-flavored Bockbier. But the Krongut Bornstedt is much more than just a microbrewery. First documented in 1304, the manor went through an eventful history. It was used as a farm and food manufacture for the nearby Palace Sanssouci which needed fine food for the Prussian Kings and their guests. The brewery, distillery, bakery and gardens date back to the 17th century. Today, the Krongut Bornstedt is part of the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites in Potsdam. Especially the brewpub and the beergarden attract many visitors – locals and foreigners. No matter if your interest lays in fresh and seasonal food with austrian influence, in traditional food manufacture, beer, schnaps, in historic and modern handcrafts, in the scenic location of this manor set on a lake or in history generally – there is something to discover and enjoy for everyone! The “Brauhaus Krongut Bornstedt” in Potsdam is part of our “Cultural Beer Tours Germany – Go East”. These special small group tour takes you to many local microbreweries, brewpubs, beergardens and much more in Berlin and East Germany – all the way south to Saxony and Thuringia and all the way north to the Baltic Sea coast.

TGAC: http://www.thegermanamericanconnection.com/German_Beer_Tours.php

Homemade German cookies – a culinary delight not just at Advent: Christmas is just over, but unfortunately the delicious cookies are already gone also! Lucky us, we can just bake a new batch of the homemade delicacies. No matter if you are sipping your afternoon coffee in the Southern US or if you are trying to stay warm in Northern US – or in the winter of Germany – a cookie always goes well with a hot beverage. I would like to share a recipe of a new favorite Christmas cookie of my German family: “stags’ antlers button”. The name refers to the buttons of traditional Bavarian jacket buttons which are made of stags’ antlers – and our cookies imitate their shape and design.

Ingredients for dough: a tight 9 ounces (1 generous cup) of white wheat flour, 3.5 ounces (1 cup) of white sugar, a generous 5 ounces of butter, 1 small egg, 1 ½ tea spoons of vanilla sugar (or fresh vanilla), 3 tea spoons of baking powder.

Ingredients for the mixture for treating the outside (see recipe): 1 pinch of cinnamon, 1 table spoon of cocoa powder, 2 table spoons of white sugar, 2 tea spoons of fine white bread crumbs.

Decoration: Walnut pieces

Recipe: Prepare the dough mixing all ingredients thoroughly – Prepare the mixture for the outside treatment – Shape coils of a approx. 0.6 inch diameter out of the dough – Roll the dough coils over in the mixture until they are completely covered – Store the dough coils at least for a few hours in the fridge – Cut the cold dough coils into approx. 0.2 inches thick slices – Place slices on a cookie sheet and gently press a piece of walnut in each of the slices – Bake for approx. 10 min at approx. 350 degree Fahrenheit (center drawer of the baking oven) – Let them cool down – Done and Enjoy!

I transferred the recipe from German into English. You might need to experiment a bit with the amount of ingredients and oven setting. Just follow your intuition! Good luck.

As CULTOURINARIA we plan and organize exclusive Culinary Tours for small groups to Germany. We offer intense trips for culinary students as well as leisure trips with or without cooking classes and hands-on baking, brewing, cheese-making and many other fun seminars. Our specialty is customized special interest tours for existing small groups starting already with a party of 4 like-minded travelers. This way we can focus on what you, your friends, co-workers, family want to see, to do and to taste – We prepare your individual trip together with you – step by step!

CULTOURINARIA: <http://www.culturinaria.com>

Flea Markets in Germany – A Treasure Chamber for Collectible, Antiques, Books, Clothes, Jewelry, Art, Handcrafts and many odd items: Aside the fun shopping at boutique retail stores and fancy modern shopping malls, there is an entirely different shopping experience to be explored in Germany: Flea Markets. There is almost nothing you won't be able to find – if you do your homework and search for the right flea market at the right place and the right time. Every flea market has its own character and special items mostly depending on the vendors and the clients they expect. The spectrum of vendors starts with people having their occasional personal garage sales at a rented booth and goes all the way to regular professional vendors who can be highly specialized in collectible, old books, antique furniture or pretty much every item you can think of. Most flea markets take place on weekends and some of them only during summer season. In Berlin as an example, the oldest and largest flea market is located at the "Strasse des 17. Juni" near the S-Bahn station "Tiergarten" and takes place every weekend throughout the year. This is one of the more expensive flea markets but also the most comprehensive and versatile in town! Bargains on second-hand clothes, books, jewelry, handcraft, art, decoration and souvenirs you are more likely to find at the flea market at the "Kupfergraben" next to the Museum Island in central Berlin or at one of the many local and smaller district flea markets in the many neighborhoods. A young, alternative and adventurous Berlin flea market "Am Mauerpark" is located right where the Berlin Wall used to separate West and East Berlin 20 years ago. Every Sunday it's an event attracting the locals from the neighborhood of the scene district Prenzlauer Berg as well as many young tourists. Most items are so individual that there is only one advisable way to find what you are looking for: Visit the flea markets on-site yourself, find your favorite markets, pick your items of interest and make personal contact with vendors and collectors. TGAC offers a Individual Trip Planning Service for independent travelers to Germany. We plan, prepare and organize your unique trip together with you – step by step. We also assist you with shipping procedures, custom and German VAT refund options.

TGAC: http://www.thegermanamericanconnection.com/Independent_Travelers.html

More news & travel tips:
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