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DECEMBER 2021

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RED SEA PROJECT STAYS

Nine luxury hotels sign up to regenerative tourism destination

A GUIDE TO EXPO EATS

From haute cuisine to bites on the go, taste the world at Expo

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THE FUTURE IS GREEN

Sustainable travel to define 2022

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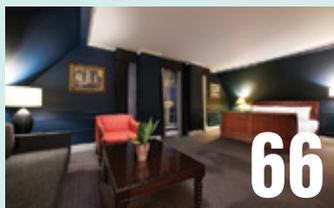
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For the well-healed



With its therapeutic waters, Black Forest charm, high-end boutiques, luxury cars and exquisite dining, health and wealth go hand in hand in Baden-Baden, a veritable playground for the rich and famous

WORDS ALLYSON PORTEE

Set in a valley of the Northern Black Forest in southwestern Germany, Baden-Baden is a magical destination popular with royalty, celebrities and travellers seeking a health and wellness retreat in its purest form.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site as part of the 'Great Spa Towns of Europe', this enchanting city in the state of Baden-Württemberg was founded 2,000 years by the Romans

"to do people good" after they discovered the healing properties of its waters.

It was originally named Aquensis, meaning Aurelia of the Waters, named after Aurelius Severus Alexander Augustus, but its current name, Baden-Baden, is German and simply means 'bath'.

Its UNESCO status is testimony to the complex historical, social and cultural phenomenon of the European spa tradition, which dates back to antiquity, but experienced its peak

DESTINATIONS



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in the 18th and 19th centuries, with Baden-Baden preserving the unique European spa town settlement features, including the use of healing springs.

In the 19th century during the Belle Époque era, European aristocracy started to visit, and Baden-Baden became known as 'summer capital of Europe'. This popularity continues to this day, with the town a regular retreat for anyone who's anyone.

"Baden-Baden has always been an international hotspot," confirms Bärbel Göhner, Head of PR and

Communications at Brenners Park-Hotel and Spa. "Even in Europe, it's hard to find a place that has attracted so many famous, illustrious and blue-blooded people."

Liliane Goschy Fritz, owner of The Legend health club, describes the destination as one of Europe's "best-kept secrets", with Baden-Baden's famous guests discreetly making the most of the thermal springs at private getaways for years.

The beautiful Black Forest surrounding the "fairytale city in a

ABOVE: Baden-Baden is a UNESCO World Heritage Site

valley" is also a drawcard, with nature putting on a stunning visual display all-year-round, she says: "With all four seasons you get the rich oranges, reds, yellows and browns of autumn; the light pinks, purples, and white flowers in the spring; the rich green of summer, and as you go into the mountains, the bright white snow and ski lifts."

Baden-Baden is certainly magnetic and there's a temptation to permanently relocate to the city for multiple reasons: you get bang





WHERE TO STAY

Brenners Park-Hotel & Spa, a grand property with more than 150 years of history and plenty of old-world charm, is the place to splurge, offering five-star hotel, dining, fitness, spa and medical services. Located in the centre of the city's main park, you won't find anything like it in all of Germany or even Europe. The staff are unbelievably welcoming, kind, and available when needed. Described as "a place of relaxation and diversion for the travelling elite since 1872", guests have access to one of the most advanced spas in Europe, **Villa Stéphanie Spa & Wellbeing**, offering "luxurious therapies and long-term cures" while surrounded by parkland and high culture.

There are many rooms and suites, some of which overlook the park and the River Oos. The Deluxe Stéphanie Room has a fresh modern feel with direct access to Villa Stéphanie. If you are travelling with family or a group, the luxurious 600sqm Parkvilla features six bedrooms, three living rooms and many terraces and a private garden. More a private home, and with spa and medical experts on hand, it's a popular choice with families visiting from the GCC.

The health and wellness services including medical and dental care, physiotherapy, nutrition, one-to-one fitness coaching, digital detoxes, and tailored spa treatments. An indoor pool, female-only sauna and a plunge pool are among the facilities.

Immunity boosters and detoxes have been popular during the pandemic, says Head of Spa, Timo Maier, whereas pre-COVID, weight-loss programmes were in demand.

"What's great is that we don't have a clinic atmosphere where you feel like you're in the hospital," notes Maier. "We are a hotel providing excellent service for our guests with the benefit of having a medical care team next to us." oetkercollection.com

WHERE TO FEEL WELL

At The Legend, a fitness and wellness centre located at 34 Luisenstrasse, which physiotherapist Liliane Goschy Fritz opened 10 years ago. Because Baden-Baden is such a small town, almost everyone is a member and Fritz knows all of her customers. She's personable, with a gentle aura, but she has a fiery passion for fitness.

"I offer a better life quality, from physiotherapy to psychology, burnout sessions to rehab and preventative sports, and for children, we have posture treatments," she says.

Every team member has a medical qualification, and their expertise encompasses weightlifting, weight loss, cardio building sculpting and more. It's also a facility for wellness and cosmetic treatments, hypoxic training, burnout renewal, physiotherapy, body healing and much more.



CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: Rizzi; Veal schnitzel; The Legend massage rooms; The pool at Brenners Park-Hotel & Spa; Brenners Park-Hotel & Spa



KIRILL WAGNER

WHERE TO EAT

Rizzi Wine Bistro and Restaurant is located in the city park in the pink Palais Gagarin building. Included in the Michelin Guide and having won the Knife Award, the menu is Mediterranean with various seafood and steak options. The only German dish on the menu is the veal schnitzel, which people come from all over the world to enjoy. Served with pureed potatoes and a cranberry jam, the advice is: come hungry. During the winter, the Thai-curry soup has a hint of spiciness, but melts in your mouth, and the shrimp tempura has a non-typical tempura breading and is paired with a special sauce, leaving you wanting more. If you're lucky, Friedrich will be your waiter and his extensive knowledge of the menu and pairings is captivating, as is his sense of humour. Without a doubt, Rizzi is a must try. rizzi-baden-baden.de

Moriki in the Roomers Hotel Baden-Baden, part of Marriott's Autograph Collection and located on Lange Strasse, is the place to experience modern Asian cuisine with Japanese influences. It's hard to get a reservation, so book early. Serving sushi, kimchi, tempura, salads, various wine options and sake, you can't go wrong. moriki-badenbaden.de



JODESIGN

It's a unique town that has had every US President of the last two decades visit

for your buck; you breathe in fresh mountain air; the spa and medical treatments are second to none; you can test drive and purchase a Porsche at the local dealership; the fine-dining options are endless; and the Baden-Baden Casino is the second most famous casino globally.

And there's more: the lifestyle is health and fitness oriented; you're 30 minutes from the French border; and the shopping is to die for, with some of the best bespoke services and boutiques that money can buy. Other highlights include the Merkur Mountain, Rose Gardens, and the Frieda Burda Museum.

But given its popularity, be warned: waiting lists are a real thing in Baden-Baden, from music festivals like the SWR3 Pop Up, that are known to sell out of tickets in one day, to restaurant reservations.

If you're looking to carefully curate your visit, What A Wonderful World (WAWW) guides, founded by Veronica Kohlbecker and Hershey Gargash and inspired by Louis Armstrong and their love of music, has partnered with hotels, restaurants, transportation services and spas to create tailored-made experiences in Baden-Baden.

"What a Wonderful World fell in love when visiting Baden-Baden. We love places with magic and this town



WHAT TO DO

Test drive a Porsche at Porsche Baden-Baden, a dealership that is happy to take visitors out on the country roads for a spin. When I visited, the new electric Porsche Taycan Turbo Cross Turismo was a showroom highlight. porsche-baden-baden.de

Buy a customised Porsche at the ClassicCars showroom by Autohaus Stefan, which was founded by Philipp Göller, who has a gift for customising cars and his father, a mechanic of 50 years. A year after establishing the showroom, Göller has started to travel the world meeting current and future clients, including those based in the Middle East.

“The most interesting thing about getting in this market is that you can produce your own tailor-made car,” he says. “There is only one car in your configuration; no one will have the same, even the colour is only produced once. That’s a promise to our customer.” classiccars-badenbaden.de

Tee off at Baden-Baden Golf Club, the third oldest golf club in Germany, founded in 1901. Located at the foot of the Fremersbergstrasse 127, the 18-hole course is full of steep hills, so it keeps you fit while challenging your golf game. Nine holes will take about two hours as you build up a hefty appetite for the restaurant at the clubhouse. golf-club-baden-baden.de



ABOVE: Porsche Baden-Baden

is full of mystery and secrets. There is nothing obvious or easily accessible, which is why we knew this was a great place for us to make a travel guide,” explains Kohlbecker.

Gargash adds: “WAWW Guides cover some of the world’s most well-travelled and enticing work, from travel cinematographers and photographers. We are constantly on the pulse when it comes to safe, idyllic and exciting destinations for 2022 and beyond.”

Having travelled and lived extensively around the world, their guides feature first hand researched articles on cities’ top restaurants, hotels, family travel and interviews with insiders, so they couldn’t pass up Baden-Baden, a town of 29 natural springs.

“It’s a unique town that has had every US President of the last two decades visit; it’s the place where Sheikhs walk the streets without security and Hollywood celebrities can escape the spotlight to have their Botox or weight-loss programmes,” continues Kohlbecker.

“Celebrities feel comfortable here with Michelin-star cuisines, artisanal custom shopping and beautiful classic cars ready for the test.”

GERMANY ADDS BAHRAIN AND UAE TO SAFE LIST

The German Federal Government recently added Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates to the German safe list, reducing COVID-19 implemented restrictions for travellers. The news follows the previous inclusions of Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia on the list. The lifting of restrictions applies to all travellers 12 years and above, regardless of individual vaccination status, with visitors now able to provide a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of travel, a valid vaccination certificate, or proof of recovery. For full entry requirements to Germany, refer to bmi.bund.de.



ABOVE: Florian Kohlbecker sells custom-made skis

WHERE TO SHOP

Antora, a boutique in the heart of the city on Lichtentalerstrasse 7, is owned by Andrea Wontorra, who curates her collection from Paris Fashion Week. Selling some of the world’s leading designers, from Valentino and Balenciaga to Theory and Aquazzura, she dresses men, women and children.

Black Forest Skis founded by architect Florian Kohlbecker sells custom-made skis. “I’m an architect by profession, a mountaineer at heart and a ski racer in spirit,” he says. “My biggest passion after skiing is carpentry. Ski-building came naturally to me

and was a hobby, which turned into one of my professions after my brother Matthias Kohlbecker asked me to start building skis while designing the Ski Jump for the Sochi Olympic Games.” Made out of ash wood, Kohlbecker’s skis are very durable. blackforestskis.com

Vickermann and Stoya is Baden-Baden’s only bespoke shoe brand. With 18 years of show craftsmanship, the namesake founders use top quality materials to create their clients’ shoes. Stopping by their shop at Merkurstrasse 3-5 will allow you to see the shoemakers in action, with all shoes handmade on site. vickermannundstoya.de