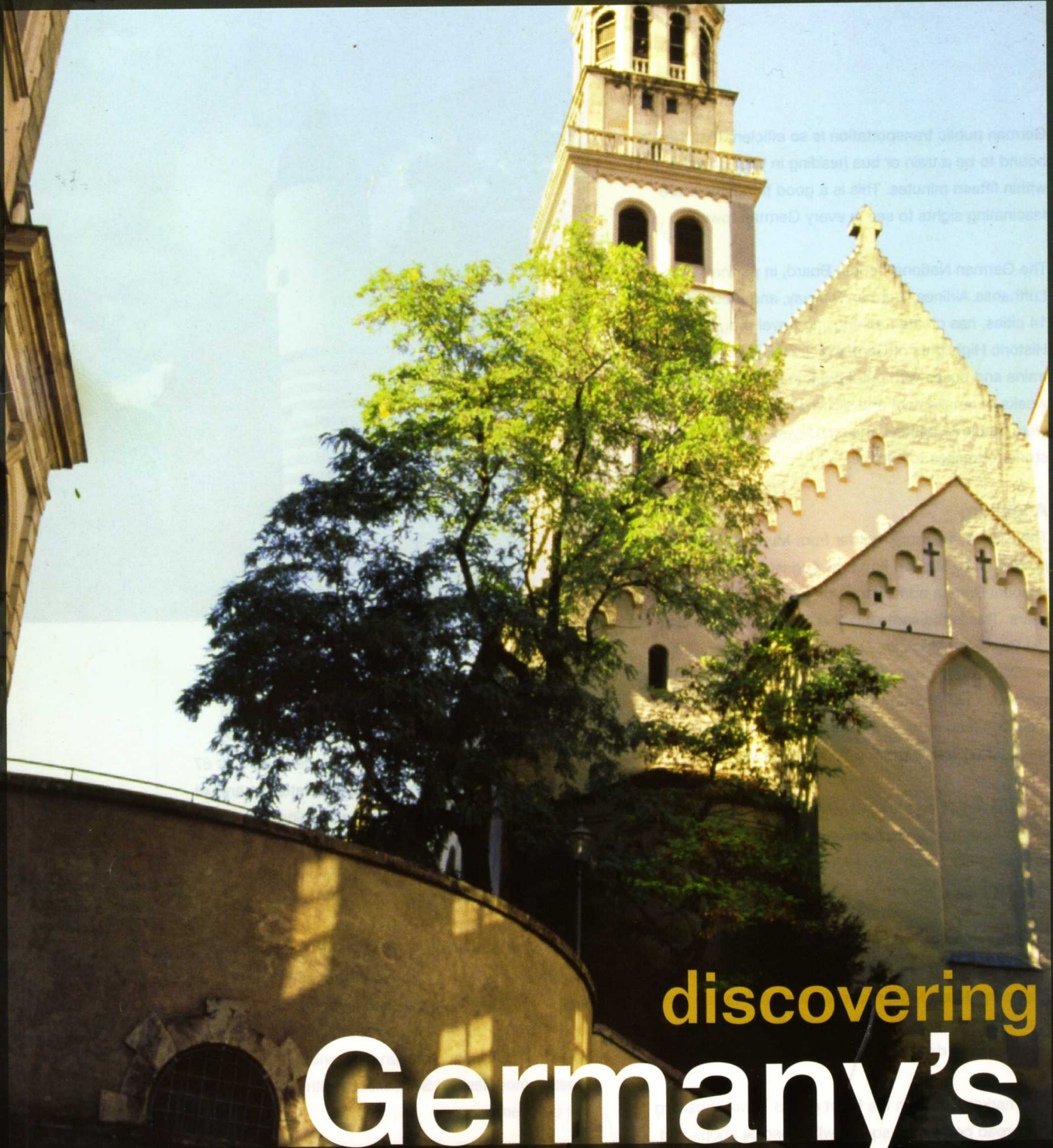


photos by Thomas Wilmer

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[ccmTRAVEL] ■ ■ ■



discovering

Germany's

historic
highlights

A recent journey to Germany revealed a country with an incredible living history melded with the finest high-tech Euro architecture, trend-setting commercial design elements, and unexpectedly fine regional cuisine.

German public transportation is so efficient that there's bound to be a train or bus heading in your direction within fifteen minutes. This is a good thing; there are fascinating sights to see in every German town.

The German National Tourist Board, in partnership with Lufthansa Airlines, German Railway, and a consortium of 14 cities, has created an enticing travel program entitled Historic Highlights of Germany. Traveling on intercity trains and buses with guidebook in hand, I spent two weeks of amazement and discovery. At every turn there were medieval castles, thousand-year-old churches, and stone fortresses to explore.

Augsburg

The City of Augsburg, not far from Munich, was founded in 15 B.C. by Roman Emperor Augustus and served as a regional Roman administrative center for more than 400 years. This is the same city that held Martin Luther at the Carmelite Monastery for an extended interrogation in 1518. Threatened with arrest, Luther was eventually spirited out of town by allies. Today, an Augsburg medieval gate remains known variously as the "Go this way Luther! Gate" and the "Down That Way Gate".

As I strolled along a tree-lined Augsburg side street with a local friend, she addressed an elderly woman sweeping her porch with a melodic, "*Guten morgen, Frau Mozart!*"

My friend explained that although Wolfgang Mozart was born in Salzburg, Amadeus's father, Leopold was from Augsburg. Many Mozart descendents still reside here, and Leopold Mozart's former home is open to the public as a museum dedicated to Wolfgang's life and work.

The market square in the heart of Old Town Augsburg is a broad pedestrian square with upscale shops and restaurants housed in ornate 16th- and 17th-century baroque and rococo fenestrated buildings. The market square is used for seasonal festivals, most notably the annual Christmas Fair, actually a citywide affair with a legendary Angel Parade (a living Advent calendar), concerts, Augsburg Cathedral Choirboys' performances of Johann Sebastian Bach, and artisan fairs.

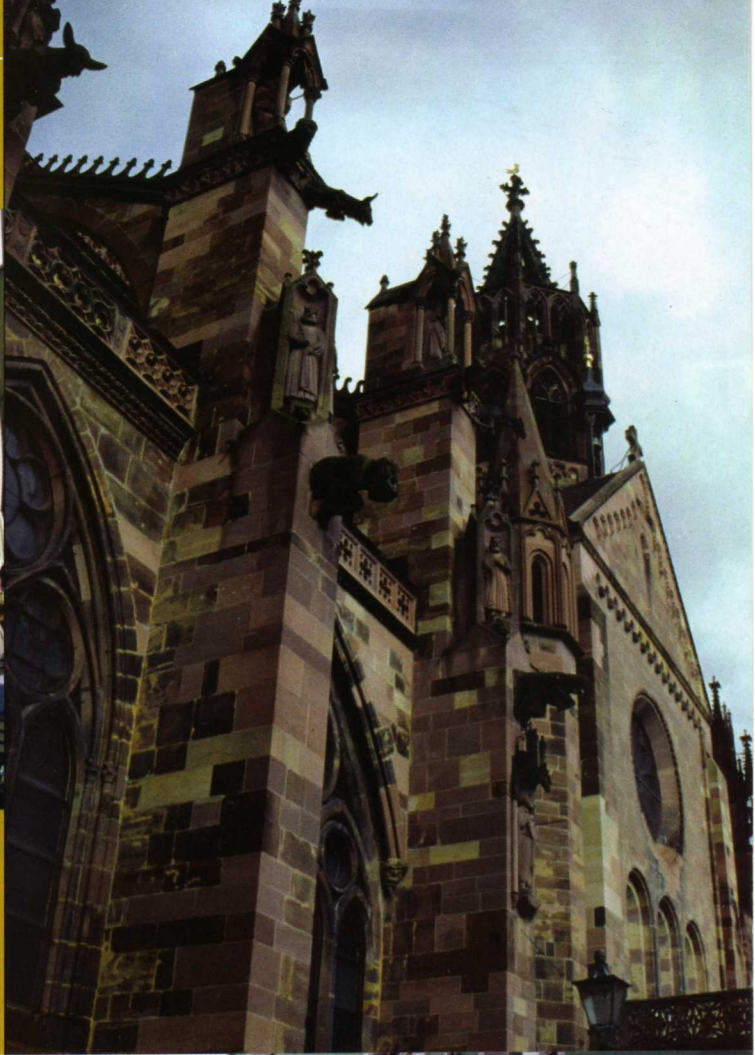


The Fuggerei, the western world's oldest community specifically planned for impoverished citizens, was founded in Augsburg in 1516. A wealthy Augsburg merchant, Jakob Fugger, privately funded and built 67 houses and 147 apartments, and stipulated an annual rent of one dollar per year (the fee remains the same today)—along with additional conditions that include tenants reciting the Lord's Prayer in Jakob Fugger's memory, three times a day!

I was elated to find some excellent culinary offerings throughout Bavaria. Known as Swabian fare, the regional cuisine is firmly rooted in country farm-style cooking. Dishes are honest, unpretentious, and incredibly delicious; Swabian pork and turkey cutlet with spaetzle (noodles), or Sauerbraten with gravy, spaetzle, and cranberries.

Heidelberg

In 40 A.D., Roman Legions maintained a castle fortress in the Heidelberg region. The University of Heidelberg, established in 1386, grew to become one of the world's leading centers of learning throughout the 19th and 20th century and presently educates more than 30,000 students.



The legendary Heidelberg Castle is a “must see,” hunkered on a granite rock outcropping 300 feet above the city, with commanding vistas of the city and the romantic River Neckar. Large portions of the castle were destroyed by French troops in 1693. Partially rebuilt in 1809 with Baroque accents, much of the castle remains in ruins from the French bombardment, but the multi-story stone skeletons still evoke enchanting images of the castle’s former glory days. Down in the castle’s dungeon cellar is the renowned 55,000-gallon wine barrel, circa 1751.

September is a great time to visit, as you can participate in the annual “Heidelberger Herbst,” an Old Town festival with numerous outdoor beer pubs, flea markets, craft fairs, and live music performances, from contemporary to traditional. Christmas season is an excellent time to visit and experience the outdoor Christmas Market in University Square.

In 1978, the Old Town District was transformed into a pedestrian-only zone, with ample parking on the fringes. The people-friendly heart of town is one of many reasons why Heidelberg is a mandatory stop on the



