

The Best of Germany

In this chapter, you'll find our carefully compiled lists of the best that Germany has to offer, from castles and cathedrals to spas, restaurants, and sightseeing—and nearly everything else you'll want to see and do.

1 THE BEST TRAVEL

- **Exploring the New Berlin:** Anyone who lived through the fear of the Cold War can't help but shudder at the memory of the Berlin Wall. Since reunification, civic planners, with almost manic enthusiasm, have demolished large sections of what once stood as a scar across the face of a defeated nation. The architectural changes and urban developments that constantly update the cityscape around Berlin's Friedrichstrasse and Potsdamer Platz can be confusing. But regardless of which renewal program is churning up rubble at the time of your visit, a pilgrimage through what used to be the most bitterly contested urban turf in Europe can't help but provoke powerful emotions. See chapter 5.
- **Spending a Midsummer's Night in a Biergarten:** When the temperature rises, head for the unpretentious cheer of the nearest *Biergarten* (everybody in Germany seems to have a favorite, so we're not even going to try to name the "best"). These watering holes, which often feature trellises, climbing vines, Chinese lanterns, and arbors, offer low-cost fun on soft summer nights. You can order platters of hearty food with your beer or bring your own picnic.
- **Cruising the Elbe, the Danube, and the Rhine:** This trio of rivers, along with their tributaries, dominated German commerce for hundreds of years. Today, an armada of tugboats, barges, and cruise ships still plies the muddy waters beside riverbanks lined with the historic majesty (and sometimes the industrial might) of central Europe. Cruises begin and end at large cities of historic interest and last anywhere from 6 hours to 7 days. See "A Cruise on the Elbe" in chapter 6, "Cruising the Danube" in chapter 7, and "Cruising the Mythically Rich Rivers of Germany" in chapter 15.
- **Boating on the Königssee:** A romantic poet would praise this lake, near Berchtesgaden in Bavaria, for the forest-covered mountains that surround its cold, deep, dark waters. The baroque chapels and fairy-tale hamlets on its shores supplement its natural grandeur. The boat you ride will be powered by very quiet electric motors, so you can hear the extraordinary echoes that bounce off the rock faces. See p. 348.
- **Hiking in the Bavarian Alps:** In summer, Alpine hiking is a major attraction in Germany. Hikers can observe a variety of wildlife, often including endangered species. Two of the best areas are the 1,240m (4,070-ft.) **Eckbauer** peak, on the southern fringe of Partenkirchen, and the **Berchtesgaden National Park**, bordering the Austrian province of Salzburg. See chapter 10.
- **Ascending the Zugspitze:** If the gentle inclines of the Harz Mountains or the Thuringian forests aren't dramatic

enough for you, ride the cable car from Garmisch-Partenkirchen to the top of Germany's tallest mountain, 2,960m (9,700 ft.) above sea level. The view from the top is suitably panoramic, and you'll find an appealing aura of German-ness that comes from the many climbers and trekkers who fan out across the hiking trails. See p. 366.

- **Experiencing a German Spa:** In Germany, the question isn't whether to visit a spa, but rather which spa to visit. Each resort has its own virtues and historical associations and can supply a list of the health benefits associated with its awful-tasting waters. Regardless of your choice, you'll emerge from your treatment with a more relaxed attitude and a greater appreciation of German efficiency and sensuality. The most famous spas are in Baden-Baden. See p. 420.
- **Motoring along the Neckar:** The Neckar River meanders through about 80km (50 miles) of some of Germany's most famous vineyards. But the real appeal of the winding road along the water is the medieval castles scattered along the way. Highlights en route include Heidelberg, Neckarsteinach, Hirschhorn, Eberbach, Zwingenberg, and Burg Hornberg. Don't forget to stop en route for samplings of the local wines. See chapter 13.
- **Spending Harvest Time in the German Vineyards:** Springtime in Germany brings the promise of bounty to the legendary vineyards of the Rhine and Mosel valleys, but the autumn harvest is truly the time to visit. Between late August and mid-October, the banks of the rivers turn gold and russet,

and armies of workers gather buckets of grapes from rows of carefully pruned vines. Most of the medieval villages and historic castles scattered between Koblenz and Trier are associated with estates where you can sample the wines. See chapters 15 and 16.

- **Touring the Fairy-Tale Road (Märchenstrasse):** This is one of the newer marketing ideas of the German tourist authorities, but considering its appeal, you'll wonder why they didn't think of it earlier. From the town of Hanau (a 30-min. drive northeast of Frankfurt), the route zigzags northward along the Weser River for about 600km (370 miles), through some of Germany's most evocative folkloric architecture, ending in Bremen. Scores of well-marked detours pepper the way. Required reading for the trip is a collection of the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and the Nibelungen legends. Don't overlook the psychological implications of Goldilocks, the Big Bad Wolf, and the Pied Piper of Hameln. See chapters 4 and 17.
- **Lounging on the Island of Sylt:** Don't expect a lush or verdant island—the climate is temperamental, the setting is savage, the winds blow cold from the north even in summer, and the grasses that manage to survive in the sandy dunes are as weathered and sturdy as the soldiers in a Prussian regiment. Why is it wonderful? Here, the nonsense residents of north Germany can preen, flutter, and show off to each other, far from the strictures of their workplaces and the hardworking grind of their everyday lives. See p. 653.

2 THE BEST MUSEUMS

Financial prosperity, artistic flair, and academic curiosity have helped the Germans develop some of the finest museums anywhere.

- **Bode Museum,** Berlin: One of the greatest museums of Germany, the Bode reopened in 2008 to great acclaim. Its Egyptian Museum remains among

- the greatest, along with its collection of late ancient and Byzantine art and its Burial Cult Room stuffed with prehistoric coffins, mummies, and funereal objects, some showing great craftsmanship. See p. 124.
- **Gemäldegalerie**, Berlin: This is one of Europe's leading art museums, with a celebrated collection of works from the 13th to the 18th centuries. The cavalcade of major European masters ranges from Botticelli and Bruegel to Vermeer and Velázquez. Divided during the Cold War, the collection has been reunited in one home since 1998. The lighting and displays are better than ever. See p. 206.
 - **Pergamon Museum**, Berlin: Built in 1930 on an island in the Spree, this museum contains entirely reconstructed temples from ancient Assyria, Greece, Rome, and Sumer. Don't miss the sprawling exhibitions devoted to the ancient art of the Islamic world and the Far East. See p. 125.
 - **Zwinger**, Dresden: A vast rectangular esplanade flanked with pavilions, heroic statues, formal gardens, and galleries, this museum was designed for August the Strong (elector of Saxony and king of Poland), by his favorite architect, Pöppelmann (1662–1736). The destruction of the Zwinger (in the final days of World War II), one of Dresden's most beautiful buildings, was a great loss, though its postwar reconstruction was a triumph for the East German government. Among the treasures amassed inside are paintings, 18th-century Dresden porcelain, and an ornamental collection of antique weapons. See p. 206.
 - **Deutsches Museum**, Munich: Since 1925, this museum has been one of the most important showcases of science and technology in the world. Occupying an island in the Isar River, it features many hands-on and historical exhibits. See p. 318.
 - **Alte Pinakothek**, Munich: This massive and symmetrical building is one of the most visible in Munich, with a wraparound garden where urbanites like to walk during lunch hour. Inside is a staggering assortment of important paintings from every era, scattered over two sprawling floors of dignified splendor. See p. 315.
 - **Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site**, Dachau, near Munich: Heinrich Himmler first organized Dachau as a concentration camp for enemies of the Reich in 1933. An escaped inmate, Joseph Rovin, described it as “implacable, perverted, an organization that was totally murderous, a marvelous machine for the debasement and dehumanizing of man.” Today, it's one of the most poignant museums in the world. See p. 339.
 - **Lenbachhaus**, Munich: Housed in the former villa of portrait painter Franz von Lenbach, this museum has a stunning and internationally renowned collection of modern art, including the Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider) period, best represented by Kandinsky. It also has a rich collection of Gothic artwork. See p. 319.
 - **Gutenberg Museum**, Mainz: This museum is one of the most comprehensive tributes to printing and publishing anywhere in the world. The bulky presses, on which Johannes Gutenberg used movable type (42 lines per page), and two of the earliest Bibles ever printed are the primary displays here. There's also a historical rundown on the science and technologies that have dominated the printing industry ever since. See p. 504.
 - **Museum Ludwig**, Cologne: This is the home of one of the world's largest collections of the works of Pablo Picasso, equaled only by the Picasso museums of Barcelona and Paris. The museum's collection was beefed up when Irene Ludwig, widow of the late German art

patron Peter Ludwig, donated 774 works of Picasso to the museum. See p. 531.

- **Wallraf-Richartz Museum/Foundation Corboud**, Cologne: The oldest museum in Cologne presents one of Germany's grandest collections of art, covering the 14th to the 19th centuries. The collection of Gothic works alone is one of the finest in Europe, and the galleries are a virtual encyclopedia of art, from Flemish old masters to the French Impressionists. See p. 532.

- **Kunsthalle**, Hamburg: The leading art museum in northern Germany, the Kunsthalle is one of the most important in Europe, with some 3,000 paintings in its treasure-trove, along with some 400 sculptures. Some of its rare treasures date from the 14th century, including works by Bertram, the leading German master of the time. One section of the gallery also displays modern works, including pieces by such artists as Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys, and Picasso. See p. 629.

3 THE BEST CASTLES & PALACES

During the Middle Ages, Germany was divided into many intensely competitive feudal states and principalities. This unstable atmosphere encouraged the construction of fortified castles. As hostilities died down, architects began to design for comfort, style, and prestige, adding large windows, gilded stucco and plaster, frescoes, and formal gardens. As a result, Germany is full of all kinds and styles of *Burg* and *Schloss* (various names for castles and palaces).

- **Sans Souci Palace**, Potsdam: Friedrich the Great's retreat, where he came to read, listen to music, and generally renew his allegiance to the principles of the Enlightenment, is Germany's most successful blend of landscape and architecture. The more than 120 hectares (297 acres) of intricately landscaped gardens have enough pavilions, fountains, orangeries, and heroic statues to keep a visitor intrigued for days. The palace itself is an architectural highlight, approached by a terraced staircase of sublime beauty. See p. 167.
- **Schloss Wartburg**, Eisenach: Built between the 11th and 16th centuries, this was the headquarters of the Landgraves of Thuringia, a center of patronage for the *Minnesinger* (troubadours)

of Germany, and a place of refuge for Martin Luther, who completed his translation of the Bible within its massive walls. Wagner used it as inspiration for the setting of *Tannhäuser*, and Johann Sebastian Bach and Goethe both visited. Today, from its position on a rocky hilltop, it's a regional museum. See p. 182.

- **Residenz**, Würzburg: Built between 1720 and 1744 as the official residence of the powerful bishops of Würzburg, this is one of the most massive baroque palaces in Germany. It combines a *Hofkirche* (chapel) with gardens, a gallery of paintings, frescoes by Tiepolo, and enough decoration to satisfy the most demanding taste for ornamentation. Also within its showrooms are a worthy collection of ancient Greek and Roman artifacts and valuable paintings from the 14th to the 19th centuries. See p. 255.
- **Neuschwanstein**, near Füssen: When the creators of California's Disneyland needed an inspiration for their fairy-tale castle, this is the model they picked. Neuschwanstein is the most lavishly romantic (and impractical) castle in the German-speaking world. A 19th-century theatrical set designer drew it up in

a neofeudal style. The man who ordered its construction was (who else?) “Mad” King Ludwig II of Bavaria. See p. 284.

- **Hohenschwangau Castle**, near Füssen: It was completed in 1836 and built on the ruins of a 12th-century fortress. Its patron was the youthful prince regent, Maximilian II of Bavaria, who used it to indulge his taste for “troubadour romanticism” and the life of the English country manor. See p. 284.
- **Schloss Nymphenburg**, Munich: It was originally conceived and constructed between 1664 and 1674 as an Italian-inspired summer home for the Bavarian monarchs. Subsequent Bavarian kings added on to its structure until around 1780, by which time the building and its lavish park bore a close resemblance to the French palace at Versailles. A highlight of the interior is the green, gold, and white banquet hall, with frescoes and ornate stucco that are among the most memorable in Bavaria. See p. 322.
- **Schloss Linderhof**, near Oberammergau: This palace was built in the 1870s as a teenage indulgence by Ludwig II. Its architects created a whimsically eclectic fantasy, inspired by Italian baroque architecture. In the surrounding park, Moorish pavilions and Mediterranean cascades appear against Alpine vistas in combinations that are as startling as they are charming. See p. 371.
- **Altes Schloss**, Meersburg: Legend has it that this palace’s cornerstone was laid in 628 by Dagobert, king of the Franks. The palace remained a Catholic stronghold even during the Protestant Reformation, housing bishops who appreciated its 3m-thick (10-ft.) walls as a bulwark against the rising tempest around them. In the early 1800s, when its owners threatened to tear the palace down, a German Romantic, Baron Joseph von Lassberg, bought it and transformed it into a refuge for writers, poets, and painters. Although it remains mostly a private residence, you can visit many parts of the palace. See p. 219.
- **Heidelberg Castle**, Heidelberg: This castle originated as a Gothic-Renaissance masterpiece in the 1500s and was massively expanded as rival rulers competed for control of the Rhineland. After the French sacked and burned the town and the castle in 1689, it never regained its original glory. Today, the ruins brood in dignified severity from a position on a rocky hilltop high above the student revelry and taverns of the folkloric city below. See p. 432.
- **Burg Eltz**, Moselkern, near Cochem: Its multiple turrets and towers, which rise amid a thick forest near the Mosel River, evoke the chivalry and poetry of the Middle Ages. This is one of the best-preserved medieval castles in Germany. See p. 549.

4 THE BEST CATHEDRALS

- **Kaiserdom (Imperial Cathedral)**, Speyer: Partly because of their age, Romanesque churches are the most impressive symbols of early medieval Germany. This massive church, from 1030, has four bell towers, a cornerstone laid by one of Germany’s earliest kings, Konrad II, and an undeniable sense of the (anonymous) architect’s aesthetic links with the traditions of ancient Rome. See p. 224.
- **Dom St. Peter**, Worms: This church is a grand example of High Romanesque style, its oldest section dating from 1132. The Diet of Worms, held here in 1521, condemned the beliefs of the

young Martin Luther and banished him to the far boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire. See p. 239.

- **Kölner Dom**, Cologne: Based on French Gothic models in Paris and Amiens, this cathedral was envisioned as one of the largest religious buildings in Christendom. It required 600 years to finish—work stopped for about 300 years (1560–1842), until the neo-Gothic fervor of the Romantic age fueled its completion. In 1880, it was inaugurated with appropriate pomp and circumstance in the presence of the German kaiser. Today, its vast russet-colored bulk

towers are instantly recognizable from miles away. See p. 530.

- **Dom (Cathedral)**, Aachen: Its size and the stonework dating from 1414 are deeply impressive, but even more so is the cathedral's association with the earliest of German emperors, Charlemagne. He was crowned in an older building on this site in A.D. 800. The cathedral's treasury contains gem-encrusted Christian artifacts from the 10th century, with heft and barbaric glitter that evoke pre-Christian Germania. See p. 569.

5 THE MOST CHARMING SMALL VILLAGES

- **Quedlinburg**: Spared in part from the ravages of World War II, this town in the Harz mountains still evokes the Middle Ages with its 1,600 half-timbered buildings, more than any other town in the country. Named a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Quedlinburg is a gem of yesterday and was an imperial residence for 2 centuries. Wander the cobblestone streets of the Altstadt (Old Town) for a journey back in time. See p. 194.
- **Meissen**: Some 25km (16 miles) north of Dresden, this is a romantic little town built along the banks of the River Elbe. It's celebrated for its porcelain, which carries a trademark of two crossed blue swords and is valued by collectors the world over. Even without its porcelain factory, the town merits a visit for its quiet charm, its old buildings, and its 15th-century castle. See p. 212.
- **Rothenburg**: If you have time for only one stop along the Romantic Road, make it Rothenburg ob der Tauber (on the Tauber River), which may be your only chance in life to see a still-intact

medieval walled city. Rothenburg exists in a time capsule, though 40% of the town was destroyed during World War II. Luckily, locals quickly rebuilt their Altstadt in its former style to reclaim their glorious architectural past. See p. 263.

- If you have time for a second stop along the Romantic Road, try **Dinkelsbühl**. Though not as grand as the more celebrated Rothenburg, it has far fewer tourists and therefore retains more old-time charm. See p. 269.
- **Mittenwald**: This town has long been celebrated as the most beautiful in the Bavarian Alps. Its magnificently decorated houses have painted facades and ornately carved gables. In the mid-17th century, it was known as "the Village of a Thousand Violins" because of the stringed instruments made here. See p. 358.
- **Lindau**: Dating from the 9th century, this former free imperial town of the Holy Roman Empire is like a fantasy of what a charming Bavarian lakeside village should look like, if only in the movies. But this garden "city," under

landmark protection, is for real. Lindau is enveloped by aquamarine waters, and one part of it is known as the Gartenstadt because of its luxuriant flowers and shrubs. See p. 373.

- **Rüdesheim:** The Rhine Valley's most popular wine town is set along the edge of the mighty river. Rüdesheim is known for its half-timbered buildings and its Drosselgasse (Thrush Lane), a narrow cobblestone lane stretching for 180m (600 ft.) and lined with wine taverns and cozy restaurants. See p. 506.

- **Cochem:** If you're seeking an idyllic medieval riverside town during your "grape tour" of the Mosel River valley, make it Cochem, famous for its towering castle, dating from 1027. On the left bank of the Mosel, Cochem lies in a picture-postcard setting of vineyards. Little inns serving a regional cuisine along with plenty of Mosel wine make Cochem a highly desirable overnight stop and a nice alternative to the more commercial centers found along the nearby Rhine. See p. 547.

6 THE BEST DRIVING TOURS

The appeal of the open road is a prominent part of German culture. Some of the best drives include:

- **The Romantic Road:** This well-traveled route, which stretches between the Main River and the beginning of the Bavarian Alps, is dotted with lovely medieval towns. See chapter 8.
- **The Fairy-Tale Road:** The colorful characters of the Brothers Grimm live again along this 595km (369-mile) stretch, beginning in the little town of Hanau and stretching all the way north to Bremen. This is one of the great motor trips of Germany for those who thrilled to those nursery room favorites. See "The Fairy-Tale Road" in chapter 4 for an abbreviated route. For the complete route, see chapter 17.
- **Alpine Road:** Scenic majesty and architectural charm combine for an unforgettable experience on this 480km (300-mile) road through the foothills of the Bavarian Alps. See "Exploring the Region by Car" on p. 343.
- **Upper Black Forest:** Fairy tales always seem more believable when you're in the Black Forest, and the twisting secondary roads that connect Freiburg with Lake Titisee pass through lots of charming scenery and architecture. See the box "An Excursion to the Upper Black Forest," on p. 400.
- **Mosel Valley:** The road along this Rhine tributary passes by some of the country's most famous vineyards. At least a half-dozen of the cities en route are worth visiting as well. See chapter 16.

7 THE BEST WALKS

- **The Royal Castle Walk:** For one of the grandest panoramas in all of the Alps (in any country), hike up to the Marienbrücke, the bridge that spans the Pöllat Gorge behind Neuschwanstein Castle. From there, if you're up to it, you can continue uphill for about an hour for an amazing view of "Mad" King Ludwig's fantasy castle. See "Neuschwanstein & Hohenschwangau" in chapter 8.
- **Partnachklamm:** One of the most dramatic walks in all of the Bavarian Alps starts from the great winter sports resort of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. A signposted

trail leads to the dramatic Partnachklamm Gorge. Carved from solid rock, the route passes two panoramic bottle-necks amid the thunder of falling water and clouds of spray. See “Hiking in the Bavarian Alps” in chapter 10.

- **Mainau Island:** A walk across the foot-bridge to Mainau, in Lake Constance, is like a visit to a tropical country. Mainau is filled with exotic plants collected by the Baden princes and members of the Royal House of Sweden. Tropical brushwood and other botanical

wonders still thrive in this mild climate. You'll hardly believe you're in Germany. See p. 386.

- **Cochem:** Reichsburg Cochem (Cochem Castle), which towers over the little town of Cochem, can be reached on foot in about 15 minutes from the town's Marktplatz, or market square. Although hardly an Alpine climb, this walk is one of the most rewarding you'll find in Germany, with panoramas in all directions. See p. 547.

8 THE BEST BIKING

- **Munich by Bike:** You see so many locals riding bikes that you might think Munich is the biking capital of Germany. If you'd like to join the fun, pick up a copy of the pamphlet *Rad-Touren für unsere Gäste (Bike-Riding for Our Guests)* at the tourist office. It outlines itineraries for touring Munich by bike. See p. 328.
- **Lake Constance:** Rent a bike at the train station in the former imperial town of Lindau and set out in any direction to enjoy the views of this beautiful lake. The Lindau tourist office will provide a map and suggestions for the best routes to follow. See p. 377.
- **The Neckar Valley Cycle Path:** This signposted path allows you to follow

the source of the Neckar, beginning in Villingen-Schwenningen and going all the way to the confluence of the Rhine at Mannheim. Instead of going the entire way, many visitors prefer to pick up a bicycle in Heidelberg and cycle along the riverbanks until they find a good spot for a picnic. See “Exploring on Two Wheels” on p. 426.

- **Lüneburg Heath:** This wild heath in northern Germany is one of the country's major natural attractions. (Some of Germany's greatest poets have waxed rhapsodic about this shrub-covered land.) Rent a bike, pick up a map at the Lüneburg tourist office, and set out on your adventure. See “The Lüneburg Heath” on p. 601.

9 THE BEST SPAS

- **Bad Reichenhall:** Many spa lovers head for this remote corner of Bavaria to “take the waters.” Europe's largest saline source was first tapped in pre-Christian times and the place has a definite 19th-century aura. And though some of the hotels in the town are better than others, all have equal access to the spa and lie about a 5-minute

walk away. See “Bad Reichenhall” in chapter 10.

- **Baden-Baden:** There's no better spa in all of Germany, and certainly none more fashionable or famous. Baden-Baden is also the site of the country's most celebrated casino. The spa's been going strong since the leisure class of the 19th century discovered its healing

waters, although the Roman legions of Emperor Caracalla had discovered the springs long before that. As at Bad Reichenhall, all hotels, no matter the price range, have equal access to the spa. See “Baden-Baden” in chapter 12.

- **Wiesbaden:** One of Germany’s oldest cities, Wiesbaden attracted Roman legions to its hot springs, and lures today’s fashionable traveler as well. It’s not as chic as Baden-Baden, but Wiesbaden has one of Germany’s most elegant casinos and concert halls, along with two gourmet restaurants. In summer, the beer garden at the Kurhaus is one of the liveliest along the Rhine. See “Side Trips from Frankfurt” in chapter 14.

- **Bad Homburg:** Bad Homburg lies at the foot of the Taunus Hills in a setting of medieval castles and luxuriant forests. There are more than 31 fountains in the town’s Kurpark. The Bad Homburg Palace was once the summer residence of Prussian kings. See “Side Trips from Frankfurt” in chapter 14.
- **Bad Nauheim:** What do William Randolph Hearst and Elvis Presley have in common? Both stayed at Bad Nauheim—the newspaper czar by choice and Elvis on orders from the U.S. Army. The warm carbonic-acid springs are used in the treatment of heart and circulatory ailments and rheumatic diseases. See “Side Trips from Frankfurt” in chapter 14.

10 THE BEST LUXURY HOTELS

German efficiency and cleanliness are legendary, so it’s not surprising that you can choose from a great number of well-managed hotels.

- **Grand Hotel Esplanade,** Berlin (☎ 866/597-8341 in the U.S., or 030/254788255; www.esplanade.de): This strikingly contemporary hotel near several foreign embassies is one of the most prestigious in the German capital. With its collection of modern art, its spacious, cheerfully decorated rooms, and its first-class service, it is a prime address for the luxury-minded. See p. 95.
- **The Regent,** Berlin (☎ 888/201-1806 in the U.S., or 030/20338; www.the-regentberlin.com): One of Germany’s great luxury hotels, the Regent is all about opulence, superb service, and comfort. It’s discreet, tasteful, reliable, and a brilliant addition to the roster of luxury leaders in Germany’s capital. See p. 104.
- **Hotel Elephant,** Weimar (☎ 03643/8020; www.starwoodhotels.com): This is one of Germany’s most interesting

hotels because of its age (over 300 years), its name, its 50-year survival in Germany’s eastern zone, and its associations with such luminaries as Schiller, Liszt, and Goethe. Today, it’s a cost-conscious treasure chest of German history. See p. 170.

- **Eisenhut,** Rothenburg ob der Tauber (☎ 09861/7050; www.eisenhut.com): This hotel’s 16th-century walls and valuable collection of antiques enhance the appeal of the most authentic Renaissance town in Germany. See p. 264.
- **Kempinski Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten München,** Munich (☎ 800/426-3135 in the U.S., or 089/21250; www.kempinski-vierjahreszeiten.de): Munich’s most prestigious choice offers elegance and luxury. The wealthy and titled have checked in here for more than a century, enjoying the ambience, the antiques, the style, and the grace. See p. 295.
- **Bayerischer Hof & Palais Montgelas,** Munich (☎ 089/21200; www.bayerischerhof.de): This deluxe hotel

and 17th-century Bavarian palace together form Munich's answer to New York's Waldorf-Astoria. This is the only hotel in Munich to provide serious competition for the Kempinski Hotel. See p. 294.

- **Der Kleine Prinz**, Baden-Baden (☎ 07221/346600; www.derkleineprinz.de): This hotel's director once helped manage the New York Hilton and the Waldorf-Astoria. Today, he and his wife run a century-old pair of neobaroque houses in the heart of Germany's most elegant resort, Baden-Baden. Der Kleine Prinz is among the most romantic of Germany's many romantic hotels. See p. 417.
- **Krone Assmannshausen**, Rüdesheim-Assmannshausen (☎ 06722/4030; www.hotel-krone.com): Sprawling along the banks of the Rhine in an oversize, grangelike, gingerbread-laden fantasy, this hotel has witnessed the arrival of

many important Germans (including Goethe) in its 400 years. It also contains one of the best traditional restaurants in town. See p. 508.

- **Fürstenhof Celle**, Celle (☎ 05141/2010; www.fuerstenhof.de): This 17th-century manor, enlarged with half-timbered wings, stands out even in a town legendary for its medieval and Renaissance buildings. There's a cozy bar in the medieval cellar and one of the best dining rooms in Lower Saxony. See p. 603.
- **Fairmont Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten**, Hamburg (☎ 888/425-8227 in the U.S. and Canada, or 040/34943151; www.fairmont.com/hamburg): Its dignified interior is as opulent as its 19th-century facade. This hotel's appeal is correctly aristocratic, but it has a touch of the saltwater zestiness that makes Hamburg a great city. See p. 621.

11 THE BEST SMALL INNS & HOTELS

- **Art'otel**, Berlin (☎ 030/884470; www.artotels.com): This hotel in the heart of Berlin is chic, discreet, and unique. The swirling action of the Ku'Damm lies right outside the door, but inside, the decor is soothing and serene, the work of some of the Continent's top designers. See p. 201.
- **Altstadt-Hotel**, Passau (☎ 0851/3370; www.altstadt-hotel.de): This inexpensive hotel stands at the convergence of three rivers—the Danube, the Ilz, and the Inn. But the hotel offers more than river views—it's comfortably and traditionally furnished, and its regional cuisine and convivial pub attract the locals. See p. 242.
- **Gästehaus Englischer Garten**, Munich (☎ 089/3839410; www.hotelenglischergarten.de): This is an oasis of charm and tranquility, close to the Englischer

Garten, where buffed Munich lies out nude in the sun. The furnishings are in an old-fashioned Bavarian style, but the comfort level is first-rate. See p. 301.

- **Parkhotel Atlantic Schlosshotel**, Heidelberg (☎ 06221/60420; www.parkhotel-atlantic.de): This 24-room inn is on the wooded outskirts of Heidelberg, near the famous castle. Every room is comfortable and convenient, and in the afternoon you can go for long walks along the woodland trails surrounding the property. See p. 429.
- **Antik-Hotel Bristol**, Cologne (☎ 0221/120195; www.antik-hotel-bristol.de): In the heart of this cathedral city along the Rhine, this unique hotel is filled with antiques, both country rustic and town-house elegant, making the atmosphere both authentic and inviting. See p. 525.

12 THE BEST RESTAURANTS

- **Die Quadriga**, Berlin (☎ 030/214050): Critics hail this gastronomic wonder in the Hotel Brandenburger Hof as Berlin's finest dining choice. Celebrated for its modern Continental cuisine, it's where the president of Germany takes his favorite guests when he wants to "show off." While seated in a 1904 chair designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, you can enjoy food that is, in a word, sublime. See p. 110.
- **Essigbrätlein**, Nürnberg (☎ 0911/225131): Food critics single this out as the best dining spot in Nürnberg, and we heartily agree. Its upscale Franco-German and Continental cuisine is reason enough to visit the city. See p. 229.
- **Weinhaus Zum Stachel**, Würzburg (☎ 0931/52770): This is the oldest (ca. 1413) wine house in a town loaded with them. Food is good, portions are copious, the wine flows, and everyone has a wonderful time. This is old-time Deutschland at its most appealing. See p. 254.
- **Tantris**, Munich (☎ 089/3619590): Savvy German food critics have honored Tantris's Hans Haas as the country's top chef. He definitely serves some of the finest and most innovative food in Bavaria. See p. 313.
- **Hanse Stube**, Cologne (☎ 0221/2701): Located in a landmark hotel, this restaurant lies on the same square as the fabled Rhineland cathedral. French cuisine in Cologne doesn't get any better than this—the chefs have a prodigious talent for preparing food using only the finest and freshest ingredients. See p. 527.
- **Victorian Restaurant**, Düsseldorf (☎ 0211/8655020): Regulars know what a treasure they have in this restaurant: Market-fresh ingredients and a steady hand in the kitchen produce award-winning traditional and modern food. See p. 540.
- **Waldhotel Sonnora**, outside Bernkastel-Kues (☎ 06578/406): In the Mosel Valley, the Waldhotel Sonnora is one of the most justifiably acclaimed restaurants in the country. Be sure to make a reservation as far in advance as possible and prepare yourself for a gastronomic adventure in Continental cuisine. Herr Thielges, the chef, told us, "We don't just serve dishes—rather, culinary masterpieces." We agree. See p. 555.
- **Fischereihafen Restaurant**, Altona, near Hamburg (☎ 040/381816): Patrons from Tina Turner to Helmut Kohl have pronounced the food here delightful. From a window seat, you can overlook the boats that might have hauled in your sole, eel, turbot, herring, or flounder from the seas that day. See p. 626.

13 THE BEST BEER HALLS & TAVERNS

- **Auerbachs Keller**, Leipzig (☎ 0341/216100): The most famous tavern in eastern Germany, this is where Goethe staged the debate between Faust and Mephistopheles. The tavern dates from 1530 and has a series of murals evoking the Faust legend. See p. 186.
- **Hofbräuhaus am Platzl**, Munich (☎ 089/221676): The Hofbräuhaus is the world's most famous beer hall and can accommodate some 4,500 beer drinkers on any given night. Music from live bands and huge mugs of beer served at wooden tables combine to

produce the best of Bavarian nighttime fun. See p. 335.

- **Zum Roten Ochsen**, Heidelberg (☎ 06221/20977): Over the years, “The Red Ox” has drawn beer drinkers from Mark Twain to Bismarck. Students have been getting plastered here since 1703, and the tradition continues to this day. See p. 435.

- **Ratskeller**, Bremen (☎ 0421/321676): This is one of the most celebrated Ratskellers in Germany. A tradition for decades, it serves top-notch German and international food and some of the best suds along the Rhineland, as well as one of the longest lists of vintage wines from the country’s vineyards. See p. 594.

14 THE BEST SHOPPING

The best way to approach shopping here is to make it a part of your overall experience and not an end unto itself. Though Berlin and Munich are the major shopping centers in Germany, the rest of the country is okay—neither a shopper’s mecca nor the bargain basement of Europe. Still, you can find some good buys here, such as:

- **Porcelain:** For centuries, Germany has been known for the quality of its porcelain. Names such as KPM, Rosenthal, and Meissen are household words. KPM, for example, has been a Berlin tradition for more than 2 centuries.
- **Handicrafts:** In the Bavarian Alps, woodcarvers still carry on their time-honored tradition. The best place to purchase woodcarvings is in the Alpine village of Oberammergau. See “Shopping for Woodcarvings” in chapter 10.
- **Timepieces:** Corny though they may be, carved Black Forest cuckoo clocks remain an enduring favorite. See chapter 12.
- **Cutlery:** WMF (Württembergische-Metalwaren-Fabrik) and J. A. Henckels are two of the country’s premier producers of fine cutlery. Their knives are expensive, but longtime users say they last forever. Both WMF and Henckels stores are found all over Germany.