

“Take Me Home” – article in the German Life magazine about German Ancestry Tours:

An article about our "German Ancestry Tours" was just published in the December / January 2011 issue of the nation-wide magazine "German Life". In the bimonthly Family Research column, editor James M. Beidler reports on a custom trip of a Texan family to Germany – planned, organized and escorted by The German American Connection – TGAC. In addition to "classic sightseeing" this party of 12 family members – representing 3 generations – visited the places where their German ancestors come from. They experienced a very warm welcome and exciting encounters with the pastor, the mayor, a member of the local historical society, the community and – most importantly – with living relatives we had successfully searched for.

Quote: *"...what makes the service special is both the custom trip planning as well as offering assistance in family history research in Germany... Every tour is different and individually tailored to the needs, wishes, and budget of the group..."*

Complete article "Take Me 'Home'" as PDF for download:

http://www.thegermanamericanconnection.com/German_Ancestry_Tours.html

"German Ancestry Tours" is one example of tailor-made trips to Germany for small groups with special interests. We are working on a broad range of theme tours: family roots, cultural beer tours, porcelain art with painting classes, Bauhaus School for art/design/architecture, Christmas markets, Church Choir trips etc.

Toymaker town Seiffen in the Saxon Ore Mountains – a gem especially during

Christmas season: Located in a mining region, the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains) village of Seiffen has first been mentioned in written records in 1324 in connection with sieves for washing the tin ore. In the 17th century, the ultimate exhaustion of the tin resource forced the miners to seek side-line work. The rich local supply of wood and the miners' experience with this raw material led to the production of wooden utensils. For economic reasons, wood turning developed into the predominate method of production, decisively shaping the function and form of the area's products. The art of turning was known in the Seiffen area in the seventeenth century. With knowledge of this craft, the efficient production of wooden wares in a series

could be introduced quite early. By 1699 the Seiffen craftsmen were already selling their products at the Leipzig fair. More and more of the woodworkers, accustomed to the turning of plates, spindles, needle holders, and buttons, became toymakers in response to the growing market demand for toys in the eighteenth century. Christmas chandeliers and pyramids were originally created to meet the decorative needs of the local families. Created without outside pressures, these examples of folk art brought together different forms, colors and materials to become a backdrop or centerpiece for the Christmas festival. They were and are an experimental field for the technical ability and knowledge of the toymaker and an expression of regional and historical feelings deeply rooted in mining traditions and customs. The central Christmas figures are the miner himself as the carrier of light and the angel of light, standing often at the miner's side. Splendid Knappenfiguren (journeymen miners) were already known in the 17th century as carriers of the altar candles in the Erzgebirge churches. The angel of light in its turned wooden form can be traced to 1830, with her attire changing with the fashions. The 19th century also brought forth the Seiffen nutcrackers in the grim form of a soldier, policeman, king, or forester, each caricaturing a contemporary authority figure. In contrast, the "Räuchermann" (smoking man) represented the easygoing and sympathetic folk type, a reflection of the fact that pipe smoking had, by this time, almost become a folk custom. The origin of the candle arch (Schwibbogen) is closely tied to the Christmas gathering of the miners for Christmas Eve shift (Mettenschicht). Presumably the miners hung their burning lights around the arch of the entrance to the mine during their Christmas Eve service in the mine. The typical wooden toys of the area and the festive Christmas decorations are still masterfully made by over a hundred independent handworker families and in middle-sized factories.

Seiffen is a destination of our exclusive 2011 German Christmas Market Tour.

Toy Museum Seiffen: <http://www.spielzeugmuseum-seiffen.de/spmeng.htm>

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

The Luther Festival in Eisenach, Germany – One of the biggest historic festivals in Middle Germany: Every year in late August, the Luther town Eisenach hosts a big festival celebrating the life and work of Martin Luther. Located at the foot of the Luther fortress Wartburg, where Luther translated the New Testament from Greek into German, the town of Eisenach is the perfect location for a weekend long celebration. In addition to traditional medieval music, dance, handcraft, food, old customs and much more, performances of the life of Martin Luther take place in an outdoor theatre with historic costumes. The entire historic town appears as a medieval market square with hundreds of locals dressed as merchants, artisans, traveling artists, tavern

owners and so on. The air is filled with the scent of open fires and culinary specialties from the middle ages. At the main stage musicians, dancers and fire artists perform in the evenings. Born in 1483 in the small town Eisleben, Martin Luther has spent most of his life in the today's East German states Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia and Saxony. In the 16th century Martin Luther's challenging theological ideas inspired the Protestant Reformation and changed the course of Western civilization. Luther was born in 1483 in Eisleben where he died in 1536. Important stations of his life and work also are: Eisenach, Erfurt, Wittenberg, Leipzig, Torgau, Dresden, Schmalkalden.

Our **2011 Tour "Routes to Luther"** take you to the places where Martin Luther lived, to the time in which he lived, and to one of the most interesting cultural landscapes in German and European history. As part of the trip we will attend the Luther Festival.

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

Hat-trick for the German brewery "Stralsunder Brauerei" – European Champion in three categories: At Europe's biggest beer contest, the European Beer Star 2010, the Stralsunder Brauerei won gold medals in three categories. It therefore became the "2010 European Beer Star Brewery" as the most successful brewery in Europe. In early October 2010, 955 beers (2009: 836) from 34 countries were assessed by an expert jury, which the organizers – the "Association Private Brauereien" had prudently expanded to 88 tasters. The Stralsund brewmasters scored with the following beers:

"Stoertebeker Schwarzbier" – Category "German Style Schwarzbier"

"Stralsunder Traditionsbock" – Category "German Style Dunkler Bock"

"Stoertebeker Roggen-Weizen" – Category "Top fermented beer with alternative cereals"

According to the owners, the brewery "Stralsunder Brauerei" always strives to create the beer which is the fullest of character. In addition to that they use only the best hops preferably from organic farming, selected special brew and roast malt and water from their own mineral water spring in order to achieve the unique and smooth taste of the Stralsunder beers.

Stralsund is a beautiful Hanseatic city located on the coast of the Baltic Sea in East Germany. The historic city centre has the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site status. Some of the Stralsunder beers are named after the pirate "Klaus Stoertebeker" from the 14th century. He was was a leader and the best known representative of the "Victual Brothers". They were originally hired during a war between Denmark and Sweden to fight the Danish and supply the besieged Swedish capital Stockholm with

provisions. After the end of the war, the Victual Brothers continued to capture merchant vessels for their own account and named themselves "Likedeelers" (literally: equal sharers). A large number of myths and legends surround the few facts known about Klaus Störtebeker's life. Störtebeker is only a nickname, meaning "empty the mug with one gulp" in Old German. The moniker refers to the pirate's supposed ability to empty a four-litre mug of beer in one gulp. According to legend, in 1401, a Hamburgian fleet caught up with Störtebeker's force near the Island of Helgoland. Störtebeker and his crew were ultimately overcome and brought to Hamburg, where they were tried for piracy. Legend says that Störtebeker offered a chain of gold long enough to enclose the whole of Hamburg in exchange for his life and freedom. However, Störtebeker and all of his 73 companions were sentenced to death and were beheaded. The most famous legend of Störtebeker relates to the execution itself. Störtebeker is said to have asked the mayor of Hamburg to release as many of his companions as he could walk past after being beheaded. Following the granting of this request and the subsequent beheading, Störtebeker's body arose and walked past eleven of his men before the executioner tripped him with an out-stretched foot.

Brewery "Stralsunder Brauerei": <http://www.stralsunder.de>

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

The museum of Musical Instruments at the University of Leipzig – Search for the Perfect Sound: The renovated Grassi Museum in Leipzig, Saxony, allows for Germany's richest and most expensive musical instrument collection to once present itself in dignified surroundings. The most important eras of music history and instrument making are presented in 12 extensive chapters. The museum's history began in 1886, when Paul de Wit, a Dutch music publicist and passionate collector of musical instruments, opened his museum at the Bosehaus, located near St. Thomas Church. His vision was to create a space that would feature a collection of instruments as well as regular events of music making in order to present music history in a lively manner. It was not until 1926 that the University of Leipzig succeeded in obtaining the entire collection. The new museum was opened in 1929. Integrated with the university, the museum has since then been a vital part of research and teaching, while simultaneously presenting its treasures to a broad audience in a public exhibition. Today, state-of-the-art technology allows to bring music of centuries past to life. The Klanglabor (sound laboratory) lets visitors experience and play on instruments from all over the world.

Museum of Musical Instruments Leipzig : http://mfm.uni-leipzig.de/_eng/index.php

Travel with CULTOURINARIA: http://cultourinaria.com/cultural_culinary_tours.html

Advent time in Germany – Venison time in German kitchens – Pheasant with sauerkraut and wine – Recipe: In this newsletter issue we feature a holiday venison dish from the German cookbook “Dr. Oetker German Cooking Today – The Original” published by the Dr. Oetker Verlag: “Pheasant with sauerkraut and wine”:

Ingredients: 1 onion, 1 can sauerkraut (drained weight 770 g / 1 ¾ lb), one small bay leaf, a few peppercorns, a few juniper berries, salt, 250 ml / 8 fl oz (1 cup) white wine, 1 oven-ready pheasant of about 1 kg / 2 ¼ lb, 6 slices streakly bacon, 200 g / 7 oz black grapes, 200 g / 7 oz white grapes, some sugar, parsley, tomato segments.

- 1) Preheat the oven, top and bottom. Peel and chop the onion, then mix it well with the sauerkraut, bay leaf, peppercorns and juniper berries. Season with salt, put in an ovenproof dish or casserole and pour the wine over it.
- 2) Rinse the pheasant inside and out under cold running water, wipe dry, cut into quarters and rub with salt inside and out. Position it on the sauerkraut so that as much as possible is covered by the pheasant. Arrange the bacon slices over the pheasant. Cover the dish or casserole with a lid and put it in the oven.
Top / bottom heat: about 200 °C / 400 °F (preheated)
Fan oven: about 180 °C / 350 °F (not preheated)
Gas mark 6 (not preheated)
Cooking time: about 25 min
- 3) At this point, remove the lid and cook for a further 30 minutes at the same oven temperature.
- 4) Meanwhile, wash the grapes, drain, cut in half and remove the pips.
- 5) Remove the cooked pheasant pieces from the ovenproof dish or casserole, cover and let rest for 10 minutes.
- 6) Add the grapes to the sauerkraut, mix well and season with sugar. Cover the ovenproof dish or casserole with a lid and return to the oven. Cook for about another 10 minutes at the same oven temperature.
- 7) Arrange the pheasant pieces on the sauerkraut on a preheated dish and garnish with parsley and tomato segments.

Preparation time: about 1 ¾ hours, Accompaniment: Potato puree

Recipe for 4 servings, Per serving: P: 58 g, F: 16 g, C: 19g, kJ: 2108, kcal: 503

Travel with CULTOURINARIA: http://cultourinaria.com/german_cuisine_cooking.html

More news & travel tips: <http://www.tgac-us.com>