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*A Guide to the world of Hospitality and Tourism*



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**Frankfurt Christmas Market**



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# Enjoy Christmas in Frankfurt Region



Frankfurt Christmas Market is one of the largest Christmas markets in all of Germany and can be a feast to ones eyes and ones tastebuds feels **Chandragupta Amritkar**.

**T**hough having been to Germany several times, never had the opportunity to cover their Christmas Market – basically avoided it as December is a very cold month. But Dr. Annette S. Biener, Manager International Marketing Tourismus+Congress GmbH, Frankfurt am Main was quite insistent that I once at least experience it. Giving due respect I decided to visit Frankfurt in December. Thank my lucky stars it wasn't very cold and I had a great time.

Dr. Annette and her colleague Laura Hett, Assistant International Marketing, Tourismus+Congress GmbH Frankfurt am Main put a wonderful itinerary covering two more cities - Bad Homburg and Bad Salzhausen.

Again flying Oman Air (which is turning out to be my favourite airline) I reached Frankfurt in the evening. At the Frankfurt airport tourism counter I picked up my train tickets that Dr. Annette had been kind enough to arrange for my internal travels.

## Bad Homburg

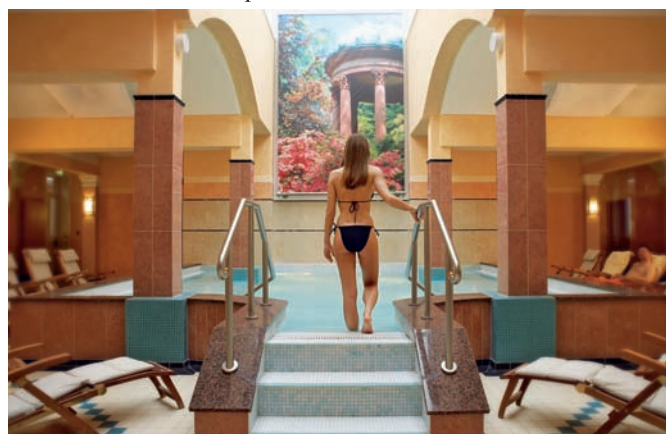
Taking the train to Bad Homburg, I reached the Maritim Hotel at 9pm. They gave me a nice cozy room and after a good nights rest I was all set to see the town. My first meeting was with Burkhard Bigalke Director-Marketing, Bad Homburg at Kur-Royal Day Spa. The reception advised me it was short walk across the Kurpark. Enjoying the not so cold weather I walked across the park to Kur-Royal Day Spa. Bigalke then took me around the Spa. He explained that the town was best known for its medically used mineral waters and spa and for its casino. Kings and princes came from all over the world to rest, relax and rejuvenate. The Kaiser-Wilhelm-Bad's Kur-Royal uses local, natural elements, such as Bad Homburg's medicinal clay and the medicinal waters of its numerous underground springs for these treatments. Some of the popular ones are - Stone Oven Bath, Aqua Salina, Saltwater Relaxation Pool, Wave Dreams (Dr. Eigenmann Method).

After the tour of the spa, Bigalke introduced me to a local guide

who took me around the town. We again entered Kurpark. She explained this used to be the summer residence of the German Emperors and their families and traces of this can be found in the Castle and its park as well as in the Kurpark. The spa town enjoys an excellent reputation as a center for health. The acute clinic and spa clinics offering post-hospital treatment, rehabilitation and preventive treatment are equipped with the very latest medical technology.

The Kurpark which covers an area of nearly 40 hectares is one of Germany's largest and loveliest spa parks that offer endless possibilities for strolling, jogging, Nordic walking, but also for cycling and horse riding. François Blanc, who founded the casino, wanted to create something very special and got the park designed as an English landscape park, with spacious lawns and solitary trees, dense groups of bushes, avenues, curving paths, and a small lake. Many may not be aware but Germany's first golf course was built in the middle of the Kurpark.

Bad Homburg is the only place in the entire world - with the exception of Thailand itself - to boast two Thai-Salas in one town. Located in the Kurpark it was gifted by King Chulalongkorn of Siam who came to the spa town to cure an illness. There's also the





Landgraves' Castle & Castle Park as well as the Russian - All Hallows Church worth a visit. The traditional casino is also a place to go in the evenings.

### Bad Salzhausen

From Bad Homburg I proceeded to Bad Salzhausen, another Spa town. Bad Salzhausen is one of the oldest saltwater spas in Germany. As I got down from the train and was wondering how far is the hotel (as no taxis were visible), I noticed a gentleman walking towards me. It was such a relief. He took me to the



Kurhaus-Hotel Bad Salzhausen which was less than a Kilometer away. The first thing I noticed was the calmness - no cars, hardly any noise and no hustle and bustle (I was later informed that the town had a population of just 500 people).

The Kurhaus hotel offers 49 modern and cosily furnished double and single rooms all offering a view of the park. The Justus-von-Liebig thermal spa is directly opposite and offers therapeutic treatments.



In the evening I was taken on a tour of the thermal spa. In the twenties of the 19th century the chemist Justus Liebig discovered the healing power of the salt springs making it into a spa town thus attracting visitors for reasons of energy and health. The spa has a nice swimming pool, massage rooms (I experienced a relaxing massage), salt rooms etc. The curative water has positive indications for various disorders. They also offer an extensive programme of physiotherapy, the healing salt energy in the form of a salt grotto. Powerful effects on allergies and skin diseases are attributed to the salt and micro-fine mist.

Over a nice vegetarian dinner I met with Matthias Engel, GM and CEO of the hotel group. He understands Indian food and vegetarian food as he has many Indian friends. Giving the backdrop of the hotel he said the building was built by Georg Moller in 1826. The group also has a nice property in Heidelberg.

The next day morning after a good breakfast I had the opportunity of interacting with two wonderful ladies - Patricia Bienko

and Petra Schwing-Döring. On a tour of the small town with a huge park - 52 hectares of park I got an insight of the town. The Kurpark is around 185 years old with acidulous saline springs and huge botanical diversity. The health-giving salt water comes from the Kurpark's six springs. The three salt water springs and the lithium, sulphur and steel springs are just a few metres from each other. They all have proven therapeutic effects, which are used for preventative and curative therapies as well as rehabilitation. I had the opportunity to taste the salt water right from the springs. Also visited one of the local artists and was impressed by his art as well as his keenness to teach students, ladies and art enthusiasts.

This small town has plenty of specialist clinics - the Asklepios neurological clinic, the Dr. Herzog clinic for integrative oncology, and the Rabenstein clinic for orthopaedics, internal medicine and psychosomatics. I also visited the Medizin Zentrum clinic where patients from across the globe come for well being. Met HP Yimin Sowa-Jiang the MD of the clinic as well as Dr. Krut Pflutzner. The clinic is attached to a small hotel so that guests can stay and take treatment.

### Frankfurt

From there I proceeded to Frankfurt. From the station I took a taxi to Hotel an der Messe which in reality was quite close. I was checked into a room having an Indian theme. I was pretty impressed and felt homely. As I was settling in Jens Sebbesse, Hotel Manager, Hotel an der Messe GmbH came to greet me. I thanked him for the Indian theme room. "All our 45 hotel rooms are different and in most rooms you will find a unique choice of special theme rooms like Africa, India, Thailand, etc. which I have noticed guests from that country love," said a smiling Jens Sebbesse.



The room was beautiful, spacious with a nice balcony. The design of the room or even the bathroom is beautifully and aesthetically done (though the exterior does not give you an impression on how beautiful the inside rooms are).

Laura Hett from the Frankfurt Tourism came down to meet me and we went for an Indian meal. Over the meal we discussed on the agenda which included a visit to Frankfurt Christmas Market, Wertheim Village and Tigerpalast, a variety show with numerous acts that amaze and entertain the tourists (which I unfortunately could not attend).

The next afternoon I left for Wertheim Village, a one hour drive by the Village's own Shopping Express coach which leaves twice a day from Frankfurt main station. Located in the picturesque wine growing region of the Tauber Valley, near Wertheim this village is a shopper's paradise. I am sure Indian ladies single or married will love emptying their fathers or husbands purses as they will tour more than 110 outlet boutiques providing fashion and luxuries for the home. I was pretty impressed.

Gabriele Strassburger, Head of PR & Communications Germany, Value Retail Management (Ingolstadt Village) GmbH who gave me a brief intro along with the literature on the shops, vouchers for food and drink plus a special gift card of Euro 50 to purchase any item at select stores.

Wertheim Village can consume a lot of your time if you don't plan to move around systematically. Being Christmas time, there was a lot of crowd and I spotted a few Indians. The village offers a unique selection of German and international brands with savings of up to 60% on the former recommended retail price, six days a week and all year round.

"The Village has become a shopping destination for both German and International visitors. Apart from shopping outlets we also have a selection of restaurants and cafés resulting in some visitors who come to spend a day out with their families. In order to stay in touch we provide free Wi-Fi and for parents with kids we also have a children's play area," said Gabriele Strassburger.

Talking over the phone with Kirsten Boos, Director Tourism, Value Retail Management Germany GmbH she said, "Our company Value Retail tries to bring some of the world's leading global luxury brands at a single location creating a Shopping Destination for global tourists. We have created similar villages in key tourist markets located within an hour of the major city. A few years back we expanded to China and the first Village in China, Suzhou Village, opened in 2014, 50 miles west of Shanghai." When queried about a similar project in India she said there were no plans but India being a growing economy will certainly be a potential contender. Late in the evening I reached back to Hotel an der Messe for a good night's rest.

The next day I caught up with my good friend Horst Lommatzsch, GM, CHL-Asia Tourism Consulting who was earlier Director Destination Management Asia, GNTB and had hosted me several times to Germany. Later he dropped off at the Frankfurt Christmas Market which he called Weihnachtsmarkt - a street market associated with the celebration of Christmas during the four weeks of Advent.

Entering the street I was pretty impressed by the vibrancy, the crowds, decorations, the cafes the scenic surroundings on the Römerberg and St Paul's Square and the huge Christmas tree etc. A guide took us around explaining its traditions. Held annually in Frankfurt's old town, this festive end-of-year celebration is one of the largest Christmas markets in all of Germany and its history dates back to 1393. Over the years it's become the show in December attracting tourists from all over the globe.

The Frankfurt Christmas Market's culinary delicacies are par-

ticularly famous; they include time-honoured specialities like Bethmännchen (small marzipan and almond biscuits named after the famous Frankfurt banker), hot apple wine (prepared with cinnamon and cloves) and Quetschemännchen

(edible figurines made of dried plums). The honey house at St Paul's Square is equally unique. This 300-year-old timber-frame structure is the traditional point of sale for honey, mead, candles and other products made of beeswax.

I loved the historical timber-frame buildings, Germany's tallest Christmas tree and the nostalgic ride on a vintage merry-go-round (there were two merry-go-rounds at the venue). Open Christmas market tours take place every Saturday and Sunday during the Advent season for individuals and groups.

The next morning after breakfast (which was good with plenty of choices) I met up with Jens Sebbesse who took me for a tour of the hotel. Hotel an der Messe is a 4\* boutique hotel in Frankfurt ideal for business and leisure travelers. Just 5 minutes by walk to the main entrance of the Messe (fairground) it's ideal for those attending trade shows. "Not just that we also are in close proximity to the Congress Centre, the event location "Festhalle", the financial district. For tourists wanting to see the city the subway in only 5 minutes by walk, the botanical garden "Palmen-garten" and the Skyline Plaza shopping mall with 170 shops and restaurants is walking distance. Museums, cultural highlights, sports events and a wide range of nightclubs are also not far off," said Jens Sebbesse. Next to the restaurant is a lounged garden which is quite peaceful. In spite of the cold weather I found it fresh and relaxing.

After the tour Jens Sebbesse introduced me to the owner of the hotel Alina Kerste-Gavriluk who along with her husband Jaroslav Gavriluk were kind enough to take me out for an Indian lunch. Over lunch she told me her plans to expand the hotel brand to other cities. I felt it was a good idea.

Late in the evening I departed to the airport to take Oman Air back to India - fully satisfied by the excellent tour organized by the tourism department.



Alina Kerste-Gavriluk

