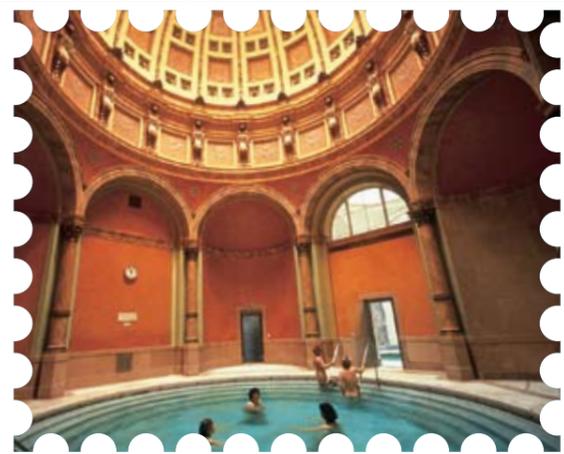


Baden-Baden

The Spa Capital of Europe!

Words: Kishore Rathod



Thermal springs, sprawling baths, rejuvenating treatments and the ultimate luxury for total indulgence make this German town the favourite spa destination of the rich and famous.

The word spa originally referred to a venerable European institution descended from a Roman bath centered on thermal springs. Where many a quaint town ensconced in picture perfect settings of the continent wears the tag of a spa destination riding on the reputation of the odd thermal spring or a spa attached to a luxury hotel, **Baden-Baden in South West Germany** is an entire town built around its thermal springs, baths and spas.

SERENE LOCATION

Thermal water is rarely as pure as it is in Baden-Baden. It flows from 12 springs, reaching temperatures of up to 68°C, unfolding its famous soothing effect on the body and soul. Some of the thermal springs from the Florentine Hill in Baden-Baden are 17,000 years old, gushing 8,00,000 litres (that's 9 litres per second) of thermal spring water every day. The Romans discovered its special healing effects 2000 years ago and with Emperor Caracalla, the spa culture in Baden-Baden began to thrive.

Located deep in the **Black Forest** – barely a few minutes from the French border – this resort has ever since been the playground of Europe's high-rolling elite. Royalty and aristocracy come from all corners to gamble in Baden-Baden's top casino and then indulge in the restfulness of the saunas, springs and spas.

The highlight of Baden-Baden, or rather a ritual, is a visit to the ancient Roman-Irish Bath, or the Friedrichsbad, where royals and aristocrats descended in the good old days.

Baden-Baden is a place so nice, that you have to name it twice – Bill Clinton

True to tradition, this steamy world of marble, brass columns and tropical tiles is strictly a no-textile (well, nude) area. Shed the clothes – and the inhibitions – for the unique two-hour regimen that takes you from zone 1 to zone 15. The routine is written on the



Where to stay?

From the 5-star deluxe Brenner's Park Hotel & Spa and Schlosshotel Buhlerhohe to luxury-for-value properties like Steigenberger Europaischer Hof and Radisson, right to the private apartments and guest houses, Baden-Baden has an amazing array of options.

Where to eat?

A meal at the classy Rizzi is as much about great Continental food, as it is about seeing and being seen amidst the swish set in the city. For those who just can't do without their fix of chicken-tikka and naan, there's the Indian restaurant Namaskaar.

Where to shop?

The main market area Kurhaus, where the cobbled pathways are lined with quaint stores that stock wines from the local vineyards and the stylish high street boutiques, is a great place to browse and buy.

walls with the recommended time and description in English. Take a shower and start with the warm-air bath for 15 minutes and the hot-air bath for five minutes. Shower again and lounge under sunbeams in one of several thermal steam baths; some time under the dome in the royal pool, take the cold plunge; dry in warmed towels; lay cocooned and clean on a bed for 30 minutes in the mellow, yellow, silent room.

showers, jacuzzis, hot springs, lounge chairs, saunas and yes, a cafeteria. After a few dips in the sprawling pools with varying temperatures, it's time to take the spiral staircase to the no-textile world of saunas, tanning lights, plunges and sunbathing. There are three eucalyptus-scented saunas of varying temperatures: 80, 90, and 95 degrees. Follow the instructions on the wall. A 40-minute massage in one of the contemporary treatment rooms leaves you feeling revived, rejuvenated and refreshed – like a baby, ready to take on the grinds of the world outside.

EXPERIENCING BLISS

For a more modern experience, you could spend a few hours at the Caracalla Spa, a huge palace of water, steam, and relaxed people. The baths are an indoor-outdoor wonderland of pools, waterfalls,

The destination for the rich and famous also has all the trappings to keep them engaged – from the world-class Casino Baden Baden and the classical music performances at the Kur Haus, to the 1.5-mile-long Lichtentaler Allee picnicking lane and all the high-street shopping action in the Marketplatz. Surely enough for a relaxing holiday so good, that you would want to go back again, for more! **SS**

