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Oktoberfest 2010: A Holiday Worth Saving For

By PennyRay (view all posts by PennyRay) at 8:30AM Thursday September 16, 2010 under Holidays

In the U.S. we love our holidays. Any reason to take off from work and gather as friends around a grill with a couple adult beverages in hand is a good enough reason. And in every calendar month, except August, we have a legal U.S holiday--or other good enough excuse--to take off from work and get drunk.



There's one two-week observance not officially on any nations calendar, however, that some Americans would gladly vote to become a recognized holiday: Oktoberfest.

Many cities around the world celebrate their own version of Oktoberfest, including New Orleans. However, none can compare to the original festival in Munich. Celebrated from mid September through early October (Sept. 18-Oct. 3, 2010), this 16-day celebration of union hosts over six million visitors and is the largest folk fair in the world.

Alex Berger participated in the historic Oktoberfest celebration in 2007 as part of a backpacking trip through Europe. "I was on a comfortable backpackers budget, though it fluctuated and was more of an average. Total expenses a day were about \$100 including travel costs." Alex was able to manage this feat by sleeping in a hostel and engaging with locals who were willing to share food and festival ride tokens as a sign of respect and gratitude for acknowledging history--even if he was only there for the beer. He maintains a blog which documents his three-day adventure in Munich.

"I used Fly Cheap Abroad to find a ticket over, and then Kayak to find a ticket back," says Alex. "In retrospect, I'd have used Kayak's multi-leg ticket service if booking the flight again. Though I'd cross check the price and availability against the other airline search aggregators."

You may get lucky and find great deals on plane tickets and sleeping accommodations when booking late; however, it's always best to plan early, especially when visiting Oktoberfest. "I checked a number of different websites when looking for a hostel to book," he added. "The primary ones were Hostel World and Hostel Bookers." You should also search A&O Hostels.

Chris Samaras, owner of The Blue Dot, plans on taking his girlfriend to Germany this year and will be kicking off Oktoberfest from September 18-20. "We have a budget window set aside of \$1,500 - \$2,000 for each of us during the ten days we will be traveling," says Chris. "We generally find a place to stay once we arrive at our destination. Since Munich will be booked solid during Oktoberfest, we used Priceline for the two nights we will be staying for Oktoberfest and saved more than 75% off the asking price of our room."

Chris and his girlfriend began planning their excursion through Europe in April of this year and used Frequent Flyer miles to purchase their tickets:

"The other days we will be traveling around the south of Germany as well as parts of Austria, and Switzerland," he continues. "We have found that in the past we get much better rates finding places that still have an availability for the nights we stay and barter with them. I make it the point to mention that if the room is not full, it is just lost revenue to them."

Another way to experience Oktoberfest in Munich without breaking the bank is to volunteer to work near the city or for the festival itself. Of course this takes planning ahead. As well, you could save money on lodging by couch surfing through the use of websites such as Crashpadder and CouchSurfing. You could also make it a camping trip and camp in the Theresienwiese fields.

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There are also [Oktoberfest tours](#), such as one from Ludus Tours, which can be booked for as little as 850 Euro and include airport transportation, lodging within walking distance of the Oktoberfest grounds, Bavarian Welcome Dinner, daily breakfast, one beer tent reservation, an excursion to Neuschwanstein Castle, Bike tour of Munich, welcome pack and tour guide.

"Oktoberfest is a full-bodied experience. It's about much more than just great beer. It's about life, energy, food, sharing stories, music and making new friends," says Alex Berger.

"Visitors should also remember that Oktoberfest is all about tradition and while the traditional beer is a huge part of it, traditional food is equally important. Don't eat at McDonalds or order a hamburger."

The traditional Oktoberfest cuisine consists of bratwursts, fish on a stick, rotisserie chicken and giant-sized pretzels.

The festival may run for sixteen days, but it's unrealistic to assume that any sane American would try and experience the entire Oktoberfest while enjoying all of its fruits. Two to three days would provide you with an experience great enough to plan the trip year after year--and you just may learn why Oktoberfest is celebrated in the first place.

When asked if he would vote for Oktoberfest to be included on the American calendar as a two week observance, Alex replied, *"In a heartbeat!"*

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There are also a lot of Oktoberfest events throughout the US. Obviously none of them are as cool as the event but at least it could give you a taste of what to expect from the real Oktoberfest. Plus it's a lot cheaper which is always a plus.

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