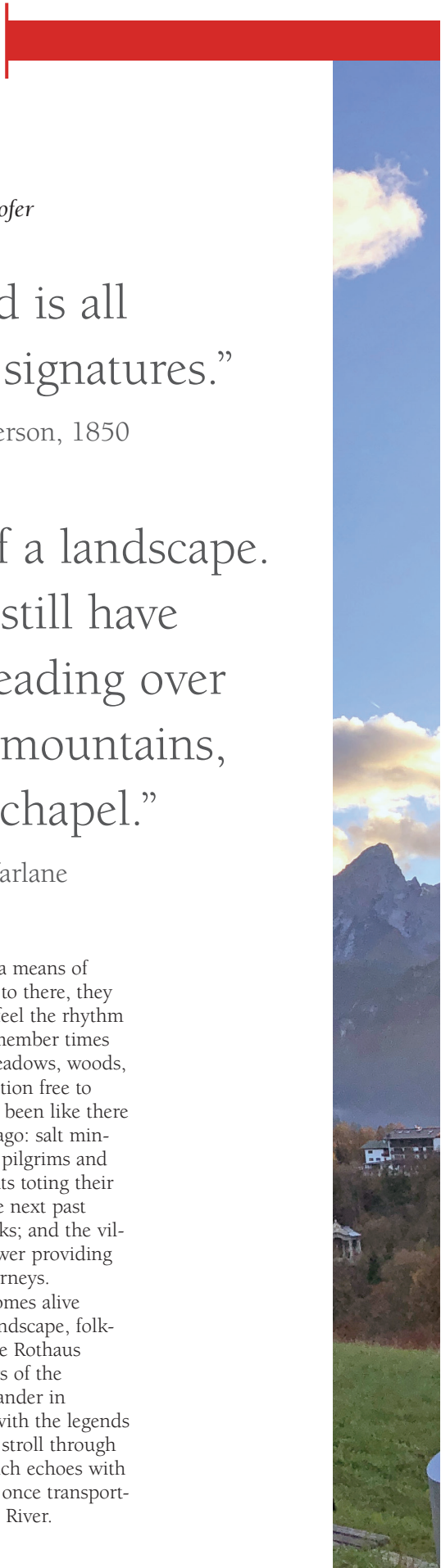




BEER HIKING **in BAVARIA**

Into the Mountains and Through the Woods

Photos courtesy of Franz D. Hofer



By Franz D. Hofer

“The ground is all memoranda and signatures.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1850

“Paths are habits of a landscape.

Many regions still have their old ways, leading over passes or round mountains, to church or chapel.”

— Robert Macfarlane

Paths are not only a means of getting from here to there, they are also a way to feel the rhythm of a place and remember times past. Wandering through meadows, woods, and villages sets the imagination free to ponder what life might have been like there a decade, or even centuries ago: salt miners and glassmakers passing pilgrims and monks on the trail; merchants toting their wares from one village to the next past shepherds tending their flocks; and the village butcher, baker, and brewer providing food and drink for these journeys.

Each hike detailed here comes alive through a combination of landscape, folklore, and of course, beer. The Rothaus hike plies the ancient byways of the Black Forest. The alpine meander in Berchtesgaden reverberates with the legends of tyrannical kings. And the stroll through the woods of southern Munich echoes with the sounds of raftsmen who once transported their wares along the Isar River.



ROTHAUS: BEER HIKING IN THE BLACK FOREST

Rothaus is a short train ride from Freiburg, southwestern Germany's city of Gothic spires and medieval gates. The ride up offers a preview of the hiking that awaits you in the region, like a curtain lifting on a stage. The train traverses meadows and trundles through narrow valleys with rushing waterfalls. Black Forest houses with sloped roofs and carved balconies dot the fields and cling to hillsides overlooking pristine lakes.

A Morning Beer at Rothaus

The rush of cool mountain air was bracing as I stepped off the train on the banks of the Schluchsee Lake. A short bus ride later and I was in front of an old beer wagon laden with barrels, the coral-colored



Rothaus brewery rising up in the background. By then the fresh air was starting to warm, mingling fragrances of the forest with the aromas of brewing.

Your trail choices are endless once you've had your morning beer on the terrace. You can do this 16-kilometer loop through pastures and brooding forests after the noontime brewery tour, followed by a quick lunch, and you'll be back in time for dinner.

Rothaus to Schluchsee

At the bus stop across from Rothaus Tourist Information, drop down toward the Café Jägerklause, pass a cluster of houses, and then pick up the trail waymarked with a yellow diamond toward Seebrugg. Soon you'll cross the Mittelweg long-distance hiking trail before continuing along forestry roads past cows grazing on flower-bedded slopes, with brief stretches along the roadway.

In Seebrugg, cross the highway junction and stay south of the railway until you reach the station along the Schluchsee, the largest lake in the Black Forest. Then cross the tracks and climb up to the highway at Hubertus Gasthaus. Cross over to a trail that takes you up through the woods to the town of Schluchsee.

Schluchsee to the Dürrenbühler Hof

The second half of the loop elevates the hike a notch. Find the Faulmannweg (weg means "path" in German) out of Schluchsee and follow this narrow trail over rocks and tree roots to the intersec-

tion of the Glasweg and Hotzenweg, both indicated with wooden plaques.

Pause here to enjoy the stillness and let your imagination drift back to life in the depths of the Black Forest when hamlets were isolated from larger towns, especially when snow made the paths impassable. A friend whose family has a cabin nearby told me that the historical economies of these hamlets—the intricate tasks of wood carving, cuckoo clock making, and glassblowing—developed out of this isolation and remoteness. It was how families passed the time and eked out an existence during the long winter months.

Once you've collected yourself from your reveries, walk north along the Hotzenweg to the Mühlenweg, then follow this path to the intersection with the Mittelweg long-distance trail just north of the hamlet of Faulenfürst, and cross the quiet country road.

This gently descending stretch back into Rothaus is the most picturesque of the hike, with the Swiss Alps looming in the distance and meadows splotching the landscape with fifty shades of green. Along the way you'll pass through the Dürrenbühler Hof estate with its tiny Chapel of St. Cyriacus built by miners who once searched the area for iron ore. Dürrenbühler Hof is also a starring figure in a tale about the changes growing enterprises can have on local ways of life.

An Old Estate, a Growing Brewery, and a Need for Water

Let's step off the path briefly for a bit of local history. Rothaus had long enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the Dürrenbühler estate. Rothaus supplied spent grain that fed the animals on the estate. In return, Dürrenbühler provided Rothaus with horses and wagons for the brewery's delivery fleet, along with milk and cheese to nourish the brewers.

But then Rothaus, which had grown ever larger during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, needed the estate's water.



Counterclockwise from left:

The pristine Schluchsee near Rothaus; An old beer wagon in front of the coral-colored Rothaus brewery; An electric boat emerging from the morning mist on the Königssee; The diminutive chapel of St. Bartholomä beneath the Watzmann massif; A trail near the Dürrenbühler Hof.

Enter Max Jäger, then-director of Rothaus, who negotiated for the rights to tap the mill pond on the estate. The sticking point: This pond served several of the estate's needs. It provided the mechanical energy that powered the estate's grain mill, its lathe, and its sawmill. The estate's blacksmith and wainwright also drew on the pond to power their shops. Beyond that, the pond served as the estate's water reservoir in case of fire. In short, this little pond was important.

Jäger eventually secured the right to tap the source of the mill pond in 1933. But it was a hard bargain. In exchange, Rothaus had to provide electric generators to run the estate's workshops, along with a transportable motor for the lathe and the various mills. It also had to build a new reservoir for water to fight fires.

Rothaus eventually outgrew the pond and now draws its water from seven wells in the area.

A Nightcap in Rothaus

From these bucolic fields, it's only two kilometers to dinner and beers. Order Rothaus's Hefeweizen. You won't often see it outside of the Black Forest. It deftly weaves together banana custard and allspice flavors with a wheaty, citrus character that gives it a revitalizing edge after a day on the trails.

And while you're at it, go ahead and order that piece of Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte (Black Forest cherry cake). You're right at the source of this world-famous confection, after all.

SOARING PEAKS AND IDYLIC LAKES: BERCHTESGADEN AND KÖNIGSSEE

Berchtesgadener Land in southeastern Bavaria was once known for its salt. As the salt trade waned in the nineteenth century, interest in the region's spectacular scenery grew. It was a time when Europeans had discovered a new appreciation for nature, and the Bavarian Alps were the ideal balm for the perceived ills of industrialization.

Tourists, hikers, and mountaineers arrived in droves, drawn by the sublime landscape of the rugged Watzmann peak. Then, as now, Berchtesgadener Land is a hiker's paradise, one particularly well suited to beer hikers.

To the Königssee

Mist hung like strands of cotton above the valley as we followed the Königsseer Ache stream through the woods toward the Königssee Lake and its namesake village. We boarded a wooden boat and then drifted toward the copper-red cupulas of the diminutive Chapel of St. Bartholomew. As we disembarked, everyone was quiet, seemingly struck by the mystical atmosphere of the mist's slow unveiling of the lake, the chapel, and the angular granite of the Watzmann peak.

With lunch still a few hours away, we hiked up a path leading to the Eiskapelle (ice chapel), the last ice-blue remnants of a glacier that once reached all the way down to the Königssee. It's lonely up there, the forlorn glacier surrounded by a spare landscape of gravel and boulders.

By the time we made the full descent, it was just in time for lunch at the Gaststätte St. Bartholomä beer garden, ringed on all sides by majestic scenery. The chiseled Watzmann juts up above the lake, and, St. Bartholomew's domes gleam in the sunshine.



Back to Berchtesgaden

We could have stayed there all afternoon, but there was more trail ahead of us. We caught the next sailing of boats on the Königssee. Just beyond the village on the eastern lakeshore is the Malerwinkel (Painter's Corner), which affords breathtaking views of the narrow, fjord-like lake carved into the mountains.

After watching another round of boats come and go at the lakeside Biergarten am Königssee, we returned to Berchtesgaden in the same direction we came. The footpath was once the railway bed for the Royal Bavarian State Railway line, terminating in Königssee. Completed in 1909, the extension from Berchtesgaden to Königssee was part of a direct line from Salzburg.

The Legend of King Watzmann

Near Berchtesgaden we came upon the Nasse Wand rock wall, a picturesque site favored by

artists who come to paint the Watzmann. A tavern once stood here, a place where artists and tourists gathered over beers to hear legends about cruel King Watzmann.

Locals refer to the Watzmann mountain group as a "family." Two hornlike peaks, the Watzmann itself and the smaller Kleine Watzmann (the queen), frame tines representing Watzmann's children.

Ludwig Bechstein (1801–1860), chronicler of German legends, narrates the story as follows. It is not for the faint of heart.

There once ruled a king in these lands named Watzmann, a cruel tyrant who knew naught of love and mercy. Hunting was his only passion. He pursued the timid game, trampling the fields and hopes of the peasants, his malevolent wife and devious children in tow.

One day the hunting troop came upon a shepherd's cottage. In front sat the shepherd's wife cradling their slumbering child. Their faithful dog lay next to her. In an instant the king's pack fell upon the family's dog and dragged the frightened mother and child to the ground.

Awakened by the cries of his wife, the shepherd jumped out of the hut and killed one of the king's dogs. Enraged, the cruel king set his dogs on the shepherd, who had just raised up his fainting wife. With a look of despair and a terrible curse to the heavens, the shepherd expired.

Even God's patience has its limits. There arose a roar of thunder in the heights and a howling in the depths, and the spirit of vengeance possessed the king's dogs. The pack attacked the king and his queen and his children, plunging them into the abyss. Turned to

stone and risen up as rock-cold mountains, Watzmann and his clan stand forever frozen as examples of the fate that awaits cruel deeds. (Condensed and translated by F. D. Hofer.)

Well, then.

A Chapel with a View and Local Libations

Just a stone's throw from the Nasse Wand and past chalets into Berchtesgaden, follow the gentle climb north from the Schlossplatz to the Kirchleiten chapel atop the Lockstein. The sky was taking on its twilight cast of orange and violet, and the old town of Berchtesgaden spread out before us, with the jagged peaks of the Watzmann etched against the sky.

We meandered back into the Altstadt for dinner and beers at Bräustüberl Bankhammer, right near Hofbrauhaus Berchtesgaden. Their dunkel, with its pecan nuttiness and notes of pumpnickel bread and chocolate, pairs fabulously with the Bierochse (beer ox).

A BEER GARDEN AMBLE IN SOUTHERN MUNICH

Munich. Beer gardens. Beer hiking. Three things I can't get enough of. Put them all together and you get a 15-kilometer stroll along the Isar River that takes you through woods and hamlets to some of Munich's most beloved beer gardens. Just as enjoyable as the beer gardens are the stories and legends attached to them.

Brückenwirt

Only a half-hour by tram from the center of town, Grünwald feels like a village, one presided over by a medieval castle.

Counterclockwise from left:

Ochsenbraten in Dunkler Biersauce; Twilight descending over Berchtesgaden; A field near the Dürrenbühler Hof; The lively tavern and restaurant at Bräustüberl Bankhammer; The Liberalitas Bavariae statue.



It's a short walk from the Tram 25 terminus past the old castle and across the bridge to the first stop on this urban beer garden ramble, the Brückenwirt.

Built in the 1840s, the one-time estate served as a staging ground for the transport of stone hewed from a nearby quarry. The estate housed the quarry workers as well before becoming an inn with a fashionable beer garden around the turn of the twentieth century. Set idyllically in the woods along the Isar, the Brückenwirt is also one of the docking points for the log rafts (*Flöße*) that float by with their cargo of oompah bands and revelers.

The Flöße (Log Rafts)

River rafting on the Isar has a long history. As early as the Middle Ages, lumberjacks felled trees along the upper reaches of the Isar, bound the logs together, and floated the bounty of the forests downriver to the mills of Munich. The rafts also carried building materials and goods that had arrived across the Alps from Italy. Someone needed to steer these rafts safely to market, and the ones who did took advantage of the languid journey downriver by singing songs and drinking beer (what else?) along the way.

Trains eventually supplanted the need for river transport. But it was these same trainlines that kept the rafting tradition alive. Instead of cargo, the raftsmen began to carry people. By the late nineteenth century, log rafting on the Isar had become a popular weekend leisure pursuit, an escape from the city made possible by trains.

Waldwirtschaft

It's easy to be lulled by the landscape of the Isar valley along this 4-kilometer stretch between the Brückenwirt and the Waldwirtschaft, but keep a lookout for the sign that directs you up the steep embankment to the beer garden above.



Just beyond the gate you'll find a Liberalitas Bavariae statue standing sentry with her lion near the entrance to the beer garden. Pass the bandstand where jazz musicians regularly perform and find a spot at the edge of the beer garden for sweeping vistas across the Isar valley.

An impressive enough beer garden in its own right, the Waldwirtschaft is also famous for the role it played in the "beer garden revolution" of 1995. (For more, see "Finding Your Place in the Shade" in the March/April 2024 issue of *Zymurgy*).

Menterschwaige

The short walk from the Waldwirtschaft to the Menterschwaige takes you down a path toward the foot bridge spanning the Isar, and then to a wooded trail along the embankment high above.

A Swiss-style hut stands just off to the side of the beer garden on the grounds of this estate of the Wittelsbach dynasty. Once the location of the royal blacksmith, this unassuming hut was where King Ludwig I (whose marriage celebration occasioned the first Oktoberfest) allegedly met Lola Montez for their nightly trysts. Local historians have debunked the story about the love nest at the Menterschwaige, but the legend still echoes through the beer garden, adding a little extra spice to everything. Be sure to check out all the rustic cow bells on display at the stands where you order your beer and food.

Once you've replenished your energy reserves with a scrumptious

Krustenbraten (crisped pork roast), retrace your steps across the bridge and continue north along the Isar to Hinterbrühl, a rustic inn and beer garden that will make you feel like you're miles from the big city.



Hinterbrühl

Even though this chalet-style inn is surrounded by woods, it's the water features that'll draw your attention. The beer garden affords a view of the Hinterbrühler See, an artificial lake that was created at the beginning of the twentieth century as part of the extension of the Isar waterworks canal and the construction of the Ländkanal. This canal flows right past the terrace in front of the inn, which soon became a magnet for the Isar raftsmen.

Hinterbrühl's history shares something in common with that of the Brückenwirt upstream. Both were waystations for the raftsmen who floated their log booms downstream from the forests of Upper Bavaria. The *Flöße* still float by, but instead of lumberjacks, they carry revelers holding aloft frothy mugs of beer.

Zum Flaucher

Zum Flaucher is a convivial beer garden in the woods. To get there, head north from Hinterbrühl, then follow the Isar Canal past a yellow nineteenth-century hydroelectric plant that looks like a villa stretched across the water. Soon you'll come to a footbridge across the canal. Cross it, continue straight on through the woods, and you'll end up at Zum Flaucher.

Back in 1871, Johann Flaucher opened an inn and beer garden in what was once part of a Wittelsbach hunting preserve. Today "Flaucher" names both this ample stretch of one-time hunting preserve along the Isar, and the beer garden situated within its expanse of woodlands and meadows. With its proximity to the center of town, the parkland is a popular destination for picnics and grill parties. The secluded beer garden is a favorite haunt of cyclists, walkers, joggers, and families with kids.

Once you're done with your beer, it's just shy of a kilometer to the U3 subway line and the big city beyond.

WORDS OF WISDOM

It's worth repeating a few of the words with which I ended part one of "Beer Hiking Bavaria" (*Zymurgy* May/June 2024). Know your limits, because it's you and only you that'll get you to the next place. And stay hydrated.

Happy hiking!

Franz D. Hofer is a cultural historian, beer judge, and author of the Tempest in a Tankard blog. When not brewing, teaching, or writing, Franz enjoys hiking and cycling—preferably when there's beer involved along the way.



HANS & FRANZ FESTBIER

Recipe by Franz D. Hofer

Landbier Märzen is still king of the Oktoberfest hill in North America, but an increasing number of brewers, professional and amateur alike, are turning to the silky, honeyed, and eminently drinkable festbier found on the Oktoberfest *Wiesen* in Munich.

Known colloquially as *wiesensbier*, festbier is a crystal-clear beer the color of liquid gold. It's smooth and elegant like a helles, but packs the punch of a pale bock, like a goat's horns wrapped in velvet. A subtle note of honey suffuses festbier, intertwining with hop and malt fragrances that recall freshly mown hay and alpine meadows.

Batch volume:	5 gallons
Original Gravity:	1.055 [13.6°P]
Final Gravity:	1.010 [2.6°P]
Efficiency:	78%
Bitterness:	28 IBU
Color:	6 SRM
Alcohol:	6% by volume

MALTS

8 lb.	(3.6 kg)	German Pilsner malt [1.6° L]
3.5 lb.	(1.6 kg)	Munich I malt [6° L]

HOPS

0.9 oz.	(26 g)	Hallertauer Mittelfrüh,	4.4% a.a. @ 60 min
0.75 oz.	(21 g)	Hallertauer Mittelfrüh,	4.4% a.a. @ 30 min
0.50 oz.	(14 g)	Hallertauer Mittelfrüh,	4.4% a.a. @ 10 min

Hallertauer, Perle, Spalter, Tettnanger—all are fair game in a festbier. You want a beer that's got more background bitterness than a Helles but less than a Pils. You also want a fine floral-spicy hop aroma that doesn't overpower the malt.

OTHER INGREDIENTS

yeast nutrient @ 10 min
Irish moss or desired clarifying agent @ 10 min

YEAST

White Labs WLP830 German Lager Yeast or Wyeast 2124 Bohemian Lager Yeast. Make an ample starter and aerate the wort before pitching.

WATER

Soften your water with your usual procedure or prepare 10 gallons reverse-osmosis water treated with ½ tsp lactic acid for mash acidification. Alternatively, add acidulated malt (Sauermais) to the mash tun (5 percent of the grain bill). Add ½ tsp gypsum (approx. 2 g), ½ tsp Epsom salt (approx. 2 g), and 1.5 tsp calcium chloride (approx. 5 g).

You could also do what brewers at both Kansas City Bier Company and Chuckanut Brewery in Washington state do: Use Vienna malt in place of Munich malt. You could also up the ratio of Pils to Munich/Vienna to as high as 50/50. If you don't decoct, Carahell or melanoidin malt (2–3% of the grain bill) will give you an added malty dimension.

BREWING NOTES

Mash in for a short 10-minute protein rest around 137°F (58°C). Use hot water, heat, or decoction to raise the mash temperature for a beta amylase/maltose rest at 144°F (62°C) for 40 minutes to favor fermentability, followed by a 20-minute alpha amylase/dextrin rest at 162°F (72°C). Check for starch conversion before mashing out at 169°F (76°C) for 10 minutes.

You can also perform a single-infusion mash @ 151°F (66°C) for an hour or until conversion is complete. Whichever mash regimen you choose, keep in mind that Festbier needs to be drinkable by the *Maß* (liter).

Sparge to collect 6.75 gallons of wort. Boil for 75 minutes, cool, pitch your yeast, and aerate well. Ferment between 46 and 48°F (8–10°C) until primary fermentation is finished (7–9 days), then lager for 4 weeks around 32°F (0°C). Fine or filter your beer if it hasn't dropped bright, and carbonate to 2.4–2.5 volumes of CO₂.

Put on your lederhosen and serve your festbier in your favorite German beer mug. Don't forget the pretzels and bratwurst!

I would like to thank Chaz Lakip (Chuckanut) and Karlton Graham (Kansas City Bier Co.) for sharing their expertise on brewing festbier.