



# TRAVEL ESSENTIALS NEWS

ASHLAND, OREGON

www.travelessentials.com

## Big In Japan: Five and a Half Days In Tokyo

by Nancy Bestor

Our intention was to have a long weekend away without the kids. We were thinking New Orleans (pre-Katrina), Austin or Cleveland (not!) when we realized we had enough frequent flier miles for two tickets to Tokyo.

Our experience with frequent flier miles is the more flexible your dates, the easier it is to book a trip. Bob and I are nothing if not flexible, so we were able to book a week's trip to Tokyo in November out of Medford, Oregon. Everything we heard about Tokyo led us to believe a week's visit could break the bank. But as we got further into our research, we discovered, like many places, careful planning will save you money. Using [www.priceline.com](http://www.priceline.com) in tandem with [www.biddingfortravel.com](http://www.biddingfortravel.com), we booked the Crown Plaza

Metropolitan, a four star western hotel in the Ikebukuro neighborhood for \$90. Excellently located, the Crown Plaza is just five minutes on foot from the Ikebukuro subway station and from there we had quick access to the entire city.

After subtracting travel time, we had just five and a half days, so we studied several guidebooks to determine the sites and neighborhoods we wanted to visit. And of course, we marked several restaurants we thought we would enjoy. Each with just a small carry-on, we were off for a week of Japanese adventure.

Upon arrival at Narita airport in Tokyo, we bought tickets for an express train to Ikebukuro. This would be our first of many journeys on Tokyo's terrific public transportation system. We took subway trains everywhere, and other than our one-hour wait for the express, we never

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## Top Travel Product Review

by Bob Bestor and Steve Frazier-Rice

It's that time of year again, when we begin planning our next vacation, and get out all our travel accessories to see what we might need to take along to our next travel destination. Following are a few highlights of new and in some cases improved products that we're sure will make your travels easier.

### Sidekick Alert

Over the last year many a Travel Essentials customer has been disappointed by Eagle Creek's decision to redesign two of their most popular bags, the Sidekick and Mini-Sidekick. If you are one of those dejected customers who couldn't get a new Sidekick just like your old Sidekick, consider this your alert—Eagle Creek has recognized the error of its ways and brought back both bags in their traditional styling. See, sometimes manufacturers do

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## A Night at the Fraundorfer

by Bob Bestor, Jr.

As usual, the Gasthof Fraundorfer is roaring. The long tables, the booths and banquets, have been filled for more than an hour. Frau Fraundorfer and her staff tote trays heavy with half-liters of beer and steaming plates of Bavarian farm fare. The clear tenor voice of Friedl cuts through the din. He wears lederhosen, accompanies himself on the accordion, and has played this six-nights-a-week gig since 1959, with interruptions only for marriage and heart bypass surgery.

The 90 or so celebrants squeezed into the cozy, kitschy room are having the time of their lives, and judging by

the rising noise level, most are on their third beer—at least. Three teenaged boys, in traditional dress, are entertaining the crowd with a Bavarian dance involving high leg kicks and loud thigh slapping.

It is just past 8:30pm, everyone has been watered and fed, the noise level is peaking and Friedl has begun to roll out some of his yodel standards, sad songs of love and death on the mountain. This is the "tipping point;" will the evening coast on to a quiet close or will there be conga lines and dancing on the tables? Either way Garmisch-Partenkirchen's Gasthof

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## TRAVEL ESSENTIALS ASHLAND, OREGON

YOUR RETAIL OUTLET FOR LUGGAGE,  
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252 E. Main St., Ashland, OR 97520

(541) 482-7383 (800) 258-0758

e-mail: [travess@mind.net](mailto:travess@mind.net)

[www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com)

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# Big In Japan: Five and a Half Days in Tokyo

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waited more than five minutes for a train the entire week. We typically rode the subway four to six times a day. Each ride cost about \$1.50 per person, and the trains were almost always full, no matter the time of day. Amazingly convenient, we were able to get everywhere we wanted to go, and we never used another form of transportation.

We ate at many delightful restaurants during our week. Our first night featured an excellent example of the innumerable and inexpensive noodle houses located throughout the city. *Lonely Planet's Tokyo* recommended **Jangara Ramen** under its Cheap Eats section, and we were not disappointed. Large bowls of steaming hot ramen, with a variety of toppings like bean sprouts, sliced pork, shrimp and much more, are available for about \$5-8 any time of the day or night. Noodle shops are Japan's "fast food", and we rarely saw westerners in these restaurants. Many have a vending machine near the front door where one purchases a ticket specifying their desired dish. These vending machines offer only Japanese characters and the price. No pictures and no English translations. So for us it was quite the adventure—putting our money into the machine, pressing the button of choice (I'll be having the 950 yen dish tonight, how 'bout you?), handing our ticket to the cook, and waiting for our mystery meal. No problem though, as everything was always delicious.

We awoke early on our first full day in Tokyo and headed for the Tsukiji Central Fish Market, one of Tokyo's most famous places. Over 5.5 million pounds of fish, worth more than \$23 million, are sold each day. To see the market in full swing, you'll need to arrive early, as restaurants, stores and other buyers are done haggling over fish and prices by 8am. We recognized many types of fish, but there was much more that we didn't recognize. Most of it was packed in ice inside recycled styro-foam boxes, and there were many exotic (and I might add

unusual) varieties. After watching the wheeling and dealing, and walking up and down rows and rows of fish stalls, we searched out Daiwa Sushi for breakfast. Daiwa is a popular sushi restaurant, and



*Lonely Planet* says it is Tokyo's "best and best-known sushi breakfast." It was not easy to find. We asked for directions and still had trouble (this was the running theme of our week in Tokyo as businesses don't have street numbers). Ultimately we saw the line outside of a tiny restaurant, with two narrow sushi bar counters. Once inside and seated we were served green tea, and then encouraged by our chef to order the fixed price meal. We agreed, and a pageant of very fresh and succulent sushi followed. Generally light on the wasabi, we westerners were the only customers given wasabi on the side. Our sushi special included octopus, shrimp, yellow tail tuna, rolls with fish eggs, another roll with tuna and more. It's all fabulous until... the sea urchin! YUCK! It was very gooey and very fishy too. I decided to attack it with one big bite, thinking the sooner I got it down the better. Bad idea. I nearly gagged and had to secretly pass the rest of it to Bob, who is more adventuresome and gladly ate it along with his piece. Our Daiwa Sushi breakfast was the most expensive meal of our trip, \$60.

Later the same day, we took what turned out to be a several mile walk around the walls, gardens and moat of the Imperial Palace. The Palace is only open to the public two days a year, January 2 and December 23. We hoofed it around the Palace's exterior, until we came to a small crowd standing outside one of the gates. The crowd included members of the

press, and many Japanese with cell phone cameras at the ready. Figuring something exciting was about to happen, but having no idea what it could be, we decided to wait. Very soon our little crowd began to stir as a small motorcade appeared on the palace grounds. As the very official looking black vehicles approached, the crowd clapped and some of the women began to cry. Soon the windows on one car rolled down, and inside were the Emperor and Empress of Japan smiling warmly and waving to all of us. Wow! It was lovely. Later we found out that their only daughter married that day, to a commoner, thus renouncing her title and right to the throne.

Another highlight of our stay was a visit to Tobu, a large department store in the Ikebukuro neighborhood near our hotel. A trip to Tokyo would not be complete without a visit to one of their major department stores at opening time. We arrived shortly before 10 am, the doors were unlocked, but we were not yet allowed to enter. Moments before opening, the employees simultaneously took to their stations, in this instance at cosmetic counters. At 10am on the nose, a bell rang, and we were welcomed in. As we walked through the cosmetics department, each and every Tobu employee murmured a greeting and bowed deeply to us. We felt like royalty. Apparently store employees bow to the first few customers in their store each morning. It was a fun and sort of wacky experience.

Another wonderful food experience was a visit to Yurakucho Yakitori Alley, under the elevated railway tracks in the Ginza neighborhood. Yakitori is Japanese barbecue. Skewers of grilled chicken, eel, liver, various vegetables and more, along with beer and wine, provide a popular after work snack and social stop for the Japanese. Yurakucho Alley has several open-air restaurants, teeming with happy Yakitori eaters and beer drinkers. We had several small grilled dishes with our Sapporo beers, including chicken, pork, liver, green peppers and leeks. At one point, the staff led the rowdy customers in a clapping cheer that Bob and I quickly



"Give me a museum and I'll fill it." — PABLO PICASSO

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# Sipping Pacifico On the Sea of Cortez

by Mia Barnard

What do the movies *Catch 22*, *The Lucky Lady*, and *The Mask of Zorro* have in common? San Carlos, Mexico, of course! San Carlos is a sweet little town, perched on the Sea of Cortez. My father has a second home here and I have visited nearly every year since 1991. When I first walked down its narrow dirt roads all those years ago, I had only the faintest suspicion that San Carlos would turn into the rapidly expanding town it is today.

Relatively chilly winters protect San Carlos from mushrooming like holiday super-spots Mazatlan and Puerto Vallarta, yet its scenery blows them all away. It's perfectly situated—from the surrounding hilltops you can see the desert stretch all the way to the ocean, and while lounging on the beach you can gaze up at the cactus-covered foothills.

For a small town there is quite a lot to do. Golfing, hiking, water sports, horseback riding, boating, and my favorite—drinking Pacifico on the beach and soaking up the rays. I have gone on some great hikes, watched pelicans dive for their meals and, most memorably, gone SCUBA diving off San Pedro Island. That was a magical day—dolphins escorted our boat to the dive site, and sea lions played with us under water (a little scary but cool!). Another great late afternoon activity is the Sunset Margarita cruise—the 90 minute adventure takes you out onto the bay to watch the sunset in a few different picturesque locales, with Margarita-filled coolers, of course.

San Carlos has truly become a city of Norte Americanos, with over 60% of the population arriving from north of the border. A few stay all year around, but most are snowbirds that stay only for the winter months. So even though you are most certainly in Mexico, English is spoken everywhere, making things that much easier for the visiting Anglophone.

For more of a “local” feel, you can scoot around the bay to Guaymas, a distinctly Mexican city. There are some good restaurants, and a grand old hotel in the Miramar district, the Playa de Cortez,

where movie stars of the 1940s and 50s used to hang out. Miramar is also home to the Perlas de Guaymas pearl farm, where a veritable rainbow of pearls are cultivated and sold. Traditional orb pearls and oval pearls come in more colors than I ever imagined. Their tour is informative and engaging, and the gift shop showcases the creations of several designers who have fashioned quite a bit of exceptional jewelry.

Out on the Paseo Mar Bermejo, in the opposite direction of Guaymas, is a small fishing village that is worth seeing if, like me, you are fascinated by dramatic



juxtapositions. The village is home to a few fishing families who struggle to eke out a living. There's not much to see except their shacks and drying fish. All just a few kilometers from the lavish San Carlos Plaza Resort (rooms up to \$995 a night). Sometimes it's just important to remind yourself where you are.

Back in San Carlos, there is no shortage of great restaurants to choose from. My favorites are Piccolos, Blackies, the local hangout Bananas, and El Buen Café. In the evenings Jason and I often found ourselves at Froggies (a sports bar run by a former race car driver) or Tequila's, both of which feature live music from local bands most nights.

Where to stay? Well, you already know that I stay with my Dad, but there are plenty of established hotels and B&Bs in the town. Places on or near the water abound, but the price range is

mind-boggling—anywhere from \$20 to \$1,000 a night. I'd definitely ask to see the bathroom before committing to spend a night anywhere on the lower end.

Downtown, the Marinaterra offers the most upscale lodgings. And about two miles out of town the San Carlos Plaza Resort has everything you need on site to just sit and chill, rent jet skis or take a long beach walk. The Plaza Resort, however, is not easy on the wallet and feels a little remote.

I love souvenir hunting, and San Carlos has offered up its share of tchotchkes. My two favorite souvenir shops are Sagitario and La Guelaguetza Artesanias, located up on the hill across from the Marinaterra. La Guelaguetza is my number one shopping choice. A sweet Mexican lady runs it and most things have a nice artisan feel to them.

The drive from the southern U.S. to San Carlos is long but relatively easy. It's about 250 miles from Nogales, AZ, and most drivers run it in 4-5 hours. There are four tolls along the way totaling less than \$20. Rest areas are numerous and offer gas, snacks, and bathrooms. Please note that you absolutely must have special Mexican auto insurance. Several online companies offer coverage ranging from basic liability to packages that also include towing, medical emergencies and even legal fees and bail. In our experience online insurance shopping is better in every way than buying it at the border.

Driving Mexico is always an easy adventure and the fact that it's become so convenient has allowed us to see for ourselves how diverse and...just...BIG this country is. It's always good to come back to San Carlos, though, where we can kick back and relax for a while, chat mindlessly with my Dad, think of home, and laugh at the cold winds we've left behind in the chilly north.

—Mia Barnard is the floor manager of *Travel Essentials*. She and her husband Jason are busy planning their next BIG adventure, the birth of their first child in late April.



“I traveled a good deal all over the world, and I got along pretty good in all these foreign countries, for I have a theory that it's their country and they got a right to run it like they want to.” —WILL ROGERS

# Top Travel Product Review

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listen to their customers.

For customers new to the Sidekick here's the scoop: For years both models were two of Eagle Creek's best designed and as a result best selling and most beloved bags. Then in late 2004 Eagle Creek announced that both Sidekicks would be re-designed in order to update and "improve" the product. Well, we all know that efforts to update and improve



upon a nearly perfect product can backfire to the detriment of the customer, retailer and company. Unfortunately this was one of those times. But now we're pleased to announce that the Sidekicks are both back to the designs we love.

Both models offer the choice of carrying as a traditional shoulder bag or as a handy fanny pack via the hidden, zip-out waist belt. Each offers excellent use of space with a roomy front organizer pocket complete with a zippered change pouch, key fob, pen slip and space for accessories. Measuring 6x5x2.5" the Mini offers a main compartment with plenty of room for small camera, extra glasses, Ipod, sunscreen, lip balm and even an energy bar or two. And with the full size (10x7x3") Sidekick you'll be able to add a guidebook and map to the main compartment as well.

Each features durable 420-denier waterproof rip-stop nylon, YKK zippers and fully taped seams for increased strength and weatherproofing. Both the Sidekick (\$40) and Mini-Sidekick (\$30) are available in palm, blue and black. Online at <http://www.travelessentials.com/departement/Luggage/Waistpaks/12000000437.html>

-BB

## Sunday Afternoons Passport Shirt & Island Breeze

The sun's rays cause more than 90% of the over 1 million skin cancers diagnosed each year in the U.S.

Everyone needs to do a better job covering up. The problem is that traditional sunscreen needs to be regularly reapplied. It is also messy, greasy, attracts dirt and stings when it gets in your eyes. It's also easy to miss a spot and certainly very difficult to spread on your own back!

On the other hand sun protective fabrics work as long you wear them, are not greasy and heck, they can even be stylish—like UV protective shirts from Sunday Afternoons of Ashland.

For women, the fashionably fitted



Passport Shirt (\$69<sup>25</sup>) offers a certified UPF rating of 40 in a cotton-like, moisture wicking, poly-coolmax fabric. This extremely lightweight shirt goes the extra mile to keep you cool with a mesh rear cape vent, mesh under arm venting and roll-up sleeve tabs.

For men the silky smooth Island Breeze Shirt (\$69<sup>25</sup>) also provides a certified UPF rating of 40 in a moisture wicking and anti-microbial quick dry

microfiber. Sunday Afternoons knows that versatility is paramount in a travel shirt and the Island Breeze, with its classic single button breast pocket, can be tucked in and worn with a sport coat or you can go shirt tail out casual if you prefer.

Check out these and much more from Sunday Afternoons, including their revolutionary sun hats, both in our store and online at [www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com).

-BB

## Citysafe 100 & 200: The Secure Handbag

Peace of mind, style and function come together as one in the Citysafe, a sophisticated, tamper-proof women's shoulder bag from Outpac Designs.

With the Citysafe, protection comes in many ways. The adjustable shoulder strap houses two slash-proof high-tensile stainless steel cables. The side and bottom panels are lined with Outpac Design's



Exomesh interlocking stainless steel security system, once again designed to foil, slash and run thieves. A tamper-proof zipper as well as a shoulder strap that can be secured to a fixed object (like a chair when eating in a restaurant) also keeps the wolves at bay.

The Citysafe comes in two sizes, the 100 and the 200. Both feature detailed internal organizers with padded sunglass and cell phone pockets, credit card and pen slots and a key clip. The larger Citysafe 200 also provides an external zip-away water bottle holster and two rear quick access pockets.

The Citysafe is adaptable too. It can be worn over one shoulder like a purse, or its adjustable strap can be lengthened and the bag can be slipped over your head

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"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go." — OSCAR

WILDE

# Top Travel Product Review

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and worn crossways for more comfort and safety.

Your friends will think it's a great looking women's shoulder bag and you'll love it for both travel and everyday use. The bags come in black, red and taupe. The Citysafe 100, which measures 9x8x4" sells for \$49<sup>95</sup>, while the Citysafe 200 (13x10.5x4") sells for \$59<sup>95</sup>.

Online at [http://www.travelessentials.com/department/Luggage/Shoulder\\_Bags/22300000001.html](http://www.travelessentials.com/department/Luggage/Shoulder_Bags/22300000001.html)

-BB

## International Laptop Travel

With the travel season upon us, it is a good time to revisit the topic of international electricity and taking your laptop on an international trip. While I could go deeply into the esoteric and detailed world of electricity, I will spare you the trouble and simply tell you exactly what you need and why. The "why" is easy: We don't want any of our expensive digital devices melting while we are on vacation. Luckily, the "what" is easy, too.

## The EuroSurge Protector

The EuroSurge Protector is the smallest, simplest, feature-laden surge protector you can buy anywhere at any price. It adapts your plug to most international outlets without an additional adaptor. The few other adaptor plugs you may



need are available for just a few dollars and allow you surge protected access to every 220-240 volt outlet in the world. Additionally, the EuroSurge provides surge protection and



impulse protection for your modem  
 "He won't fly on the Balinese airline, Garuda, because he won't fly on any airline where the pilots believe in reincarnation." — SPALDING GRAY

(other accessories like phone adaptors are required). You can ask us what a tax impulse is, or just buy the Eurosurge and never have to worry about it. The Eurosurge sells for \$49<sup>95</sup>. See it online at [http://www.travelessentials.com/pages/1/18501030109\\_1.html](http://www.travelessentials.com/pages/1/18501030109_1.html) -SFR

## Digital Phone Line Tester

Fact: The world is switching to digital. Fact: Everyone else is doing it a lot faster than we are in the US. Problem: If you will be using your modem (in reality an outdated hardware tool), you should



never plug it into any international phone outlet without confirming what type of phone line you are accessing. Digital phone lines, which are becoming more and more prevalent internationally, are 10 times more powerful than analog but look exactly the same. The only way to ensure that you won't fry your modem is to get a Digital Phone Line Tester. Three lights tell you whether it is safe (green), safe but wired backwards (yellow), or unsafe (red). The only reasonable solution when you encounter red is to find another phone outlet. The Digital Phone Line Tester sells for \$19<sup>95</sup>. See it online at [http://www.travelessentials.com/pages/1/18501030050\\_1.html](http://www.travelessentials.com/pages/1/18501030050_1.html) -SFR

## Laptop Computer Brief

The Briggs & Riley Big Screen Laptop Computer Brief fits all 17" laptop screens and has a convenient U-shaped opening allowing you to use your laptop while it's still inside the brief. An interior mesh computer pad has ventilation panels to keep the computer from overheating. A file divider fits letter and legal size file folders, while the front pocket organizer has a key keeper, padded pockets to pro-

tect your high-tech gadgets like PDA's and cell phones, and multiple pockets for CD's, DVD's, pens, business cards and more. The removable accessory pouch holds miscel-



laneous items and fits into a store-away pocket. On the outside you get a quick access front pocket for important documents and a dual purpose back pocket which allows the bag to slide over luggage handles for fast, convenient travel. The Briggs & Riley Big Screen Laptop Computer Brief is made from 2520 Denier Ballistic Nylon, which is water repellent, self-healing, and resistant to abrasions, color fading and soiling. The Computer Brief is available in two sizes, 17" (\$139) and 15" (\$119) See them online at [http://www.travelessentials.com/department/Briggs\\_And\\_Riley/Brief-cases/11206060056.html](http://www.travelessentials.com/department/Briggs_And_Riley/Brief-cases/11206060056.html). -SFR

—This often comes as a surprise to many customers, but Bob Bestor, Travel Essentials' co-owner, and Steve Frazier-Rice, Travel Essentials' manager, are not brothers, though when not working at Travel Essentials, they enjoy many of the same things, including biking, music and good beer.

To learn about more new travel products, and read more travel stories on Japan, New York, and more, go to our website, [www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com).

## Big In Japan: Five and a Half Days in Tokyo

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caught on to and took part in. It was a fun and lively atmosphere!

On our last day in Tokyo (a Sunday)



we visited Yoyogi Park in the Harajuku neighborhood. The beautiful park with lovely wide gravel pathways, huge wooden gates, and a classic temple was busy on this day, as several weddings were taking place in the temple, along with many blessings for small children. Families were dressed up in traditional clothing

everywhere we looked, mothers and daughters in kimonos with fancy hair and makeup, boys in special robes, and fathers in their finest suits. The weddings featured brides and grooms in traditional Japanese dress parading through the temple courtyard under red umbrellas with their impeccably dressed guests following behind. It was a beautiful spectacle on a perfectly clear and crisp autumn day. Interestingly enough, with these traditional ceremonies taking place inside the park, the entrance to Yoyogi Park is where the less traditional gather on Sundays. For more than 40

years, this area has been the hangout for Tokyo's youth culture, an exhibition of sorts. Girls called Cos-play-zoku (zoku meaning tribe) dress in outlandish costumes ranging from gothic to S&M to cartoon characters. It was an interesting end to a terrific week and an outstanding

cultural experience.

### Tokyo Practicalities

Few places in Tokyo accept credit cards. We used ATM machines for all of our cash needs and carried that cash with us everywhere we went, as the city is extremely safe. Our hotel appeared to be the only place we could use a credit card. Everywhere else was cash only. By the way, there is no tipping in Japan.

The Japanese people we came in contact with did not speak much English. Perhaps we did not spend much time in heavily touristed restaurants, but the language barrier was a difficult one to cross. Our Japanese phrasebook, and the few words we learned in Japanese, came in very handy.

END

## Naked with Strangers—A Japanese Bathhouse

by Nancy Bestor

"A few minutes in a public bathhouse will teach you more about daily life in Tokyo than any book you could ever read," says *Lonely Planet's Tokyo*. Public bathhouses, or "sentos", live on from the days when homes and apartments didn't have showers or baths. But to many Japanese, sentos remain an important cultural meeting place where social and economic status is literally stripped away.

Therefore, as a way to dive deeply into this culture (no pun intended), Bob and I decided to visit the Jakotsu-Yu bathhouse, a short walk from Senso-Ji temple in Asakusa. After a few wrong turns, we found Jakotsu-Yu tucked down an alley and of course, with no English signage.

At this moment, butterflies in the stomach began to flutter. As rank outsiders we were about to enter a revered and etiquette-filled Japanese institution.



"He who has seen one cathedral ten times has seen something; he who has seen ten cathedrals has seen but little; and he who has spent half an hour in each of a hundred cathedrals has seen nothing at all." — SINCLAIR LEWIS

While we had been told that the Japanese will generally forgive foreigners' ignorance of their social graces, the bathhouse is where this generosity ends.

We initiated the entrance, removed our shoes and paid the attendant about \$4 each for use of the facility, a locker and a towel. We then went our separate ways, Bob to the men's side, and me to the women's.

Our research revealed that locals will watch foreigners very carefully, to make certain they get 100% clean and 100% rinsed before entering the baths themselves. I put my clothing into a locker and smiled at many women, most of whom were older and fortunately didn't pay me much attention at all. I was given a bucket and stool, and took these into the cleansing area where there were about two-dozen waist-high showers. Here one sits on the low stool and washes, and washes, and washes some more. After

scrubbing and rinsing every single inch of my body several times, to make certain I didn't offend, I set my bucket and soap aside and chose a bath to start in. I tried the hot, hot, hot, hot burn pool first, which was the largest pool in the place. I later learned it was 109 degrees. I must have made quite a face, because a kind woman quickly pointed me to a separate room, where there was an ice-cold pool (whose temperature was actually 71 degrees) and a medium temperature pool (100 degrees).

Both pools were tiny, but everyone just seemed to scrunch in. Soon I decided that I was ready to try the hot burn pool again. As I headed back, I noticed that the area I had previously occupied was now full and started to climb into a different section. At this point another Japanese woman pointed to a sign (in

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# A Night at the Fraundorfer

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Fraundorfer is *the* Bavarian experience. Though it dates to 1857, this tiny family-run hotel and restaurant assumed its current role as goodtime headquarters for Southern Bavaria during the 1936 Winter Olympics, when it became an after-ski, after-sled, after-skate, hangout for both competitors and spectators.

We didn't find the Fraundorfer until 1979, but have returned many times since. In those 27 years, almost nothing has changed: the rough wood walls and ceiling darkened with age, the Olympic photos, the family pictures, the religious icons, the servers in traditional Bavarian dress, the music, and every night a full house of happy customers. The indefatigable Barbara Fraundorfer still greets hotel guests at 7am and can usually be seen playing cards at the Stammtisch (regulars' table) around midnight, when we finally give up the ghost. During her 16 to 18-hour days she seems to be everywhere; bussing plates, chatting up grizzled regulars, charming the Americans at breakfast, waving goodbye to departing guests in the parking lot, and caring for her husband, Peppi, injured in a bobsled accident that has, after decades of surgery, finally confined him to a wheelchair.

For a long time, Friedl sang duets with Josef, a ski instructor who played a 12-string guitar. Inscrutable and gruff, he seldom smiled but made eye contact with every pretty woman who came through the door. Ruddy, round-faced Friedl is more outgoing. I used to note what this pair drank during an evening and, though it was a prodigious amount from 7 p.m. to sometimes well after midnight, Friedl rarely left the stage for the men's room. And Josef never did—at least while I was keeping score. Josef retired from the stage about 12 years ago.

Since, in the way of simple German restaurants, strangers are seated together at the Fraundorfer, one meets people there. A memorable connection happened on our very first visit. We were placed with a group of German war widows who, when we sat down, arranged themselves so that the only English-speaker among

them, Mathilde, was next to Liz and me. At the end of the evening she invited us to her home in the north, near Hanover. A week later we were sipping wine in the sitting room of Mathilde's well-kept two-



*Fraundorfer circa 1979*

story house. On the wall were pictures of four men, all in German military uniform. One or two wore swastika armbands. They were her husband and three brothers, all killed in World War II. That night and the next we slept in a spare bedroom. Each morning Mathilde fed us a gigantic breakfast in her garden and played Beethoven's Pastorale on the stereo. One night, we were invited to the family home of her sister, Erna, for an outdoor barbecue. It was a warm summer evening, with daylight until nearly 11pm. The grilled lamb and pork, the beer, the wine, the schnapps, and the toasts, went deep into the German night.

Mathilde and Erna later came to visit us. It was their first and only trip to the U.S. They stayed three weeks. A few years after that, Erna's daughter came to the U.S. to live with us as an au pair and work in our business for several months.

Besides memories, music and beer, the

Fraundorfer serves good—if not American Heart Association-approved—food. The menu is long, the prices low, the portions generous, and we have seldom been disappointed with any dish. Roast pork with dumplings is about \$10, half a roast duck about \$15, calves liver Berliner-Art (strips dipped in flour and fried in butter) is \$17, and a small mixed salad costs around \$3. Half a liter of beer goes for about \$3.30.

The merriment goes on until midnight, though most tourists are gone by 10pm, when Trachten-dressed locals begin to gather at the Stammtisch.

I once asked an employee of the Garmisch-Partenkirchen tourist office if there were other restaurants in the area like the Fraundorfer. Her immediate reply: "There is only one Fraundorfer, and there every night is a party."

Gasthof Fraundorfer, Ludwigstr. 24, tel. +49/08821/92 70, Web: [www.gasthof-fraundorfer.de](http://www.gasthof-fraundorfer.de)

END

—Bob Bestor, Jr., is the editor of *Gemütlichkeit*, the travel newsletter for Germany, Austria and Switzerland ([www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com)). He and his wife Liz travel to Europe annually and he is always on the lookout for a great place to drink beer, hear live music, and have a good time (aren't we all?).

## Coming in June

Travel Essentials'  
Packing Workshop  
with America's  
Leading Packing Expert  
Anne McAlpin

Thursday, June 1  
at 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm

It's not too early  
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"The universe is a big place, perhaps the biggest." — KURT VONNEGUT



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## Naked...

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Japanese of course) and said something to me (also in Japanese, of course). I nodded and smiled politely, having no idea what the sign or the woman had said. Well, as it turns out, she was warning me, as this was the electric section, specially designed to simulate swimming with electric eels (true story!). I was shocked several times upon stepping in. I made a small noise, quickly hopped out, and gave a “now I understand” nod to the Japanese woman. It was amazing to see the locals sitting calmly in this electric bath, not batting an eye.

With my faux pas’ now out of the way, I was able to relax and enjoy myself. I hopped back and forth between pools without being shocked and had a very relaxing experience. After soaking my body until I felt like a wet noodle, I dried off, returned my stool and bucket, dressed and met Bob outside.

—Nancy Bestor is the co-owner of Travel <sup>END</sup> Essentials. Her fingers still look like prunes.

## Travel Essentials Sponsors Children

Travel Essentials wishes to humbly announce our “adoption” of four children throughout the developing world as a Childreach Sponsor through PLAN and PLAN USA.

One of the oldest and largest organizations of its kind, PLAN’s grassroots, self-help programs assist more than 1.3 million children and their families in poor communities around the world.

PLAN has many different ways of assisting children in need. We chose the Childreach Sponsorship program because of its direct involvement with an individual child and his or her community. In fact we’ve already “met” the children whom we are helping and will soon be sending letters and photos so that they can “meet” us.

Our four kids include Theeraphon Daengphuang, an 11-year-old boy from Kudduk, Thailand; Stenio Vincent, a nine-year-old boy from Dilaire, Haiti; Haguirata Ouedraogo, a six-year-old girl from Toequin, Burkina Faso; and Lumaria Sousa Da Conceicao, a two-year-old girl

from Brazil.

PLAN sends a couple of photos along with a profile written by a PLAN staff member working in their area. The profile details each child’s name, age, personality, aspirations, housing, general health and schooling. It also details both family and community situations and issues with regards to a number of variables including access to food and water and availability of employment and health care.

PLAN encourages ongoing contact with your sponsored child and keeps up its end of the bargain by providing annual reports that include information on the progress, problems and opportunities of your child, their family and community.

PLAN is audited annually by the independent public accounting firm of PriceWaterhouseCoopers and sends its sponsors a complete financial statement each year.

For more information on PLAN’s programs and practices visit their web site at [www.planusa.org](http://www.planusa.org), or call toll free at 1-800-556-7918.

END