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## The Best Place in the World to Buy Red Underwear... and 33 Other Travel Secrets

Dear *International Living* Reader,

In over 25 years of traveling the world, the editors, contributors, and friends of International Living have discovered quite a few secrets and too many favorite places to even remember them.

I'm sending you a special report, "**Travel Secrets**," with my compliments. Detailed in this report are 33 of my favorites...everything from the best place in Italy to shop for red lingerie to where to go for the best pastry in all France.

International Living exists to help you expand your world, to travel, better, farther and for less...to live a happier, healthier, and more exciting life.

I hope you enjoy this special report and that you have the opportunity to experience one of these great insider secrets in your upcoming travels.

Kathleen Peddicord  
Publisher, International Living

P.S. Here's a bonus favorite, one of my own:

Where's the best place in Ireland to shop for tweed? "You'll wear out two suit linings before you'll wear out a Donegal tweed." So boast the Irish. And I'd agree. In Donegal (which you'll find on the country's wild, undiscovered west coast), shop at Magee's Tweed Shop. Ask anyone in town for directions.

### Travel Secrets! 33 Great Travel Tips from International Living

#### AUSTRIA

The world's best music festivals.

The world's biggest and most famous music festival is the Salzburg Festival. Other important Austrian melomaniac delights include the Haydn Festival in Vienna and the International Chamber Music Festival. Tickets to the festivals are cheapest if you buy them in Austria. Tickets for Events in Austria is an information sheet which is available from Austrian National Tourist Office, tel. (212)944-6880; website: [www.austria-tourism.at](http://www.austria-tourism.at).

*The world's best horsemanship.*

The 400-year-old Spanish Riding School, located in the Hofburg, trains the noble white stallions that descend from the Spanish horses imported to Austria by Emperor Maximilian II in the 16th century. The horses dance to Viennese music, guided by expert riders wearing the traditional gold-buttoned brown uniform and gold-braided black hat.

Performances are held at the school most Sunday mornings at 10:45 a.m. and occasional Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. from March to June and September to December. It's difficult to get tickets; write six months in advance to the Spanische Reitschule, Hofburg, A-1010 Vienna, Austria; tel. (43)1-533-9031.

The most romantic hotel.

Less than an hour from Vienna, the Schloss Durnstein, A-3601 Durnstein, Danube; tel. (43)2-711-212, presides over a wide curve of the Danube River. Located deep in the wine district of Wachsu, this magnificent castle is surrounded by distinctive vine-clad hills, age-old ruins, and timeless picturesque villages with one-lane streets. According to the legend, it was here that the imprisoned King Richard the Lionhearted was reunited with his faithful minstrel, who had sung his way across Europe searching for his master. Also intriguing is the wine cellar (which can accommodate 8,000 "buckets" of wine), the arch-crossed cobbled courtyard, and the 33 chandeliered chambers fronting the

Danube.

## **BRITAIN**

### *The world's best maze.*

Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey; tel. (44)870-752-7777, (for ticket sales tel. (44)870-753-7777), contains England's oldest and most popular maze. The labyrinth is bounded by high hedges and reinforced with railing to prevent cheating. Arrive by boat from Westminster Pier or by train from the Waterloo station in London (a distance of 10 miles). The palace, which dates from the early 1500s, is open daily 9:30 a.m. until 6 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday and 10:15 a.m. until 6 p.m. on Monday. (The last entry is at 5:15 p.m.)

### *The oldest pub in the world.*

The George and Vulture is the oldest pub in the world. The original, called the George, was built in the 12th century. Sir Richard Wittington, the "thrice-round mayor of London," visited here in the 1500s just as Chaucer (and Chaucer's father) had done earlier. Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift and Charles Dickens were also customers.

The Pickwick Club meets at the George and Vulture quarterly, and members quote from the many Dickens passages about the place. The fictional Mr. Pickwick, when asked where he spent his leisure time, replied that he was "at present suspended at the George and Vulture." A framed check written by Dickens to the proprietor hangs on the wall.

### *The best outdoor theater.*

Penzance, a colorful old South Cornish town of pirates and smugglers, is nearly 300 miles from London. In the summer, open-air opera, including the apt Gilbert and Sullivan work the Pirates of Penzance, is performed at the Minack Theater at Portcurno. For information tel. (44)1736-810-181; website: [www.minack.com/](http://www.minack.com/).

(The Minack Theater is carved out of a cliff. The audience watches the performance in the open air looking out over the Atlantic. Take along a warm sweater and a blanket.)

## **FRANCE**

### *The world's best pastry shops.*

The best pastries in the world are made in France, where layers of cake, as light as feathers, are molded together with airy, sweet buttercream and topped with curls of fine chocolate. Pastries in France are too beautiful (and too fattening) to eat but too delicious not to.

Within France, the most tempting Patisseries, or pastry shops, are in Paris where they adorn every corner. There are 2,300 of them!

One of the best known and most honored Patisseries is Dalloyau, which specializes in morrans glaces (candied chestnuts), mogador (layers of chocolate cake, chocolate mousse, and raspberry confiture), and sherbet cakes. Dallayau shops can be found at 99 rue Faubourg St. Honore, 2 place Edmund Rostand, 69 rue de la Convention, and 16 rue Linois.

The king of pastry is Gaston Lenotre, who runs Lenotre shops throughout Paris. His 350 pastry chefs and cooks use at least 12 tons of butter and 300,000 fresh eggs each month. Lenotre also has the best chocolates in Paris. His shops are at 44 rue du Bac, 5 rue du Havre, 44 rue d'Auteuil, and 49 ave. Victor Hugo.

The best ice cream in Paris.

The most delicious ice cream in Paris is sold at Berthillon, 31 rue St. Louis-en-l'Île. The list of rich, homemade flavors is long; so are the lines.

The prettiest ski resort.

Les Contamines-Monjoies, tel. (33)450-47-01-58, is one of the prettiest ski towns in the Alps—and one of the least known. This small ski area set in a high wooded valley is not far from Chamonix. It has 62 miles of slopes beginning at about 8,000 feet and served by 25 lifts. Facilities also include 15 miles of cross-country ski trails.

The best place to stay is Le Gai Soleil, tel. (33)450-47-02-94, just outside town in a small farmhouse. The building itself dates back to 1823

### *The most violent château.*

The Château d'Amboise has a violent history. In 1560, 1,000 Huguenots involved in a plot to abduct Francis II and his queen, Mary Stuart (later Mary Queen of Scots) were hanged in the castle courtyard.

Charles VII, who was born here, imported Italian architects, sculptors, decorators, and gardeners to embellish the chateau. He died from injuries received when he bumped his head on one of the castle's low stone doorways. Leonardo da Vinci spent his last years at Amboise and was buried in the adjoining Gothic chapel.

*The prettiest wine town.*

St. Emilion is one of the most picturesque villages in France. The medieval town is perched on a plateau looking over the valley of the Dordogne. In the 12th century, pilgrims stopped here on their way to the shrine of St. James of Compostela in Spain. While you are in St. Emilion, visit the seventh-century hermitage, which was hollowed out of rock.

Nearby is the entrance to a chapel with a strange underground shrine. It, too, was carved out of rock 900 years ago. A subterranean passage leads to catacombs containing skeletons in ancient tombs. (You must have a guide to visit the shrine.)

At the Syndicat d'Initiative, place des Crenaux, you can get a list of wine chateaux nearby. The Château Ausone produces the St. Emilion's vintage, among others.

## GERMANY

*Heidelberg, the most romantic town.*

Heidelberg is the hub of German Romanticism. Schumann began his career as a Romantic composer in this pretty town, and Goethe fell in love here. Heidelberg is also the oldest university town in Germany and the site of scenes from the movie and opera *The Student Prince*.

The best place to ramble in Heidelberg is the Hauptstrasse, which is lined with coffeehouses and little shops. Have a drink in one of the cafes beneath the rathaus. Or meander along Philosopher's Walk, where Goethe and Hegel wandered. From the path you'll have a bird's-eye view of the city and Heidelberg Castle. Don't leave town without visiting the Electoral Palatinate Museum, where the 500,000-year-old jawbone of Heidelberg Man is kept.

*Germany's best fish market.*

The best fish market in Germany is held on Sunday mornings in Hamburg. This raucous but fun affair is located by the docks in Altona and begins at 5 a.m.

*Worms: the strangest history.*

The city of Worms has a strange name and an even stranger history. It was named for a legendary giant worm with fangs and webbed feet that lived in the Rhine and demanded human sacrifices.

Worms was the fifth-century capital of the legendary Nibelungs. The tribe left the area, according to legend, after the wicked Hagen slew their hero, Siegfried, and threw their treasure into the river. A huge statue of Hagen commemorates the story. The town was destroyed in A.D. 436 by Attila the Hun.

In the center of the town's old section is the tall, spired Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, built in the 11th and 12th centuries. Worms has a huge statue of Martin Luther; the oldest synagogue in Germany, built in the 11th century and restored in 1961; and the oldest and largest Jewish cemetery in Europe. Tombstones date from the 11th century. The synagogue and the cemetery are among the few remaining traces of pre-World War II German Jewry.

*Hitler's favorite hideout.*

The Kehlsteinhouse (also known as Eagle's Nest), perched on a rocky crag above the town of Berchtesgaden, was Hitler's favorite hideout. No wonder—the view from the hideaway-turned-restaurant is exhilarating. Anyone could develop delusions of grandeur here. Alpine peaks rise above cottony clouds at this level. The snow at their summits glistens in the sun. Below, a thick carpet of dark green pines stretches toward the valley.

The road to Eagle's Nest is so steep and dangerous that cars are not allowed to use it; you must take a special bus from the Obersalzberg-Hintereck parking lot. You can dine in the restaurant from mid-May through mid-October.

*The world's best passion play.*

Every 10 years, the world's most moving passion play is performed in the shadows of the Alps in the little artisan town of Oberammergau. From May through September in years ending in zero, local amateur actors put aside their daily professions and devote themselves entirely to the play.

Written in the 17th century, it enacts Christ's suffering between the Last Supper and his death. Because the text is so old, many consider it anti-semitic. It blames the Jews for Christ's crucifixion. Villagers have performed the play every 10 years since the 17th century, when they vowed they would perform the passion if the black plague ceased. It did, and they have.

The picturesque Passionsspielhaus (Passion play Theater) can be visited any time of the year. The immense open-air stage holds 700 actors, and the theater's wooden benches hold 5,200 people. You can see the elaborate costumes used during the passion play when you visit. Performances begin at 8:30 a.m. and finish at 6 p.m., with a two-hour break for lunch.

The best hotel Oberammergau is the Alois Lang. This quiet place has rooms with private bathrooms and three good dining rooms.

#### *The world's best asparagus.*

Every spring, Germans go stalk-raving mad, gorging themselves on the country's Weisser Spargel, or white asparagus. The German asparagus, introduced 2,000 years ago by the Romans, is plump and ivory white with delicate purple tips. It is prized among epicurs, who come from around the world every April, May and June to the world's asparagus mecca. Asparagus is especially big business in Finthen, near Mainz, where all 5,000 inhabitants are engaged in the cultivation of the white vegetable; in Lampertheim, between Worms and Mannheim, where every housewife grows the prized vegetable in her back yard; in Schrobenhausen, the center of the only area in southern Bavaria where asparagus is grown; and in Tettngang and Schwetzingen, known together as the asparagus capital of Germany.

## **IRELAND**

The oldest pub in Ireland.

The Brazen Head, Bridge Street, Dublin, is the oldest pub in Ireland, dating back to the 12th century. It is five minutes away from the antique shops on Francis Street, and it's a perfect break from your shopping. The Guinness here is superb; the brewery is only a stone's throw away, and the smell of hops stays with you for hours after you've moved on.

#### *The holiest mountain.*

Ireland's holiest mountain is Croagh Patrick in County Mayo. More than 2,500 feet high, it was from here that St. Patrick reputedly banished all snakes from the island. Each Garland Sunday, the last Sunday in July, 60,000 pilgrims clamber to the summit.

## **ITALY**

#### *The best places to buy red lingerie.*

Every December, Romans buy new red lingerie to wear when they usher in the New Year. As a result, the city is home to many shops that specialize in red underwear. For the finest lingerie in Rome (red and otherwise), visit the via Frattina area. Try Vanita, via Frattina 70, which has beautiful lace slips, hand-embroidered silk items, and a good selection of beachwear. More lacy, tantalizing creations can be found at Tuddeda, via Frattina 25,. Also visit the elegant shop Tomasiini, via Sistina 119, run by Luisa Romagnoli. Romagnoli's silk slips are works of art. Gentry, via Frattina 100, sells designers' mens' lines, including Valentino and Cardin.

#### *The world's most beautiful crèches.*

During the Christmas season, Rome is decorated with creches rather than lights and Santas. The three most beautiful are the Spanish Steps, in the Piazza Navona and in St. Peter's Square.

The oldest Roman creche, in the Church of S. Maria Maggiore, contains figures crafted by Arnolfo di Cambio, the most celebrated architect of the late 13th and early 14th centuries. However, the creche most beloved by Romans is at S. Maria d'Aracoeli, at the top of 122 stairs on the Capitoline Hill.

It features the Santo Bambino. Every afternoon from Christmas Day to Epiphany (Jan. 6) children recite poems in front of the creche. Cosma e Damiano, via dei Fori Imperiali, houses an 18th century Neapolitan masterpiece-the only creche on display year-round.

#### *The best ice cream in Florence.*

Vivoli's, via Isola delle Stinche 7, behind Santa Croce Square, is one of the best places in the world to buy ice cream. The lines are long, but the choice of flavors is great and the ice cream out-of-this-world.

## **SPAIN**

#### *The best bull in town.*

While bullfights may seem barbaric to animal lovers, the Spanish believe the odds between man and bull are even. They see bullfights as a match between man and the untamed elements. The Spanish sense of fair play in a bullfight can be gruesome to the uninitiated. A recent match pitted a matador against the bull who had gouged out his eye.

In the rematch, the bull's eye also was removed. An eye for an eye, so they say! The rematch was one of the most heavily attended events in Spanish history. Incidentally, the matador won.

In Madrid, bullfights can be seen nearly every Sunday and Thursday from Easter through October at Las Ventas, Plaza de Toros Monumental, or at the smaller ring, Vista Alegre. Tickets can be purchased in advance at the counter at Calle Victoria 9, near the Puerta del Sol. But you usually can get a ticket at the door. Shows generally start at 5 p.m. or 7 p.m. (Make sure you buy tickets for the shady side of the ring, even though they are slightly more

expensive.)

**Pamplona:** the ultimate machismo.

Each July in Pamplona, the ultimate display of machismo takes place. The townsmen pit their lives against hundreds of bulls set loose in the streets and herded toward the bullring. To display their courage, the men run before the bulls, often injuring themselves.

Festivities begin when a rocket is fired from the town hall. Then bands of bagpipers march through town announcing the running of the bulls. Young people roam the streets singing, dancing, and drinking. The celebration was made famous by Ernest Hemingway in *The Sun Also Rises*.

All this revelry is in the name of the town's patron saint, San Fermin, a bishop and martyr from Pamplona. Buried in Amiens, France, his body mysteriously disappeared. The body was miraculously found six centuries later, and legend says that, although it was midwinter, the trees burst into leaf.

*The best nude beach.*

The Costa Brava has a number of lovely secluded beaches perfect for nude sunbathing. Cabo de Creus has clean water and little caves hidden among the rocks.

## **MEXICO**

The world's grandest canyon—and most exciting train ride.

Chihuahua's Barranca del Cobre (Copper Canyon) is four times larger and 300 feet deeper than the U.S. Grand Canyon. Its mountain peaks rise 10,000 feet, and its valleys drop 1,500 feet.

Until 1961, when the Chihuahua al Pacifico train line opened, the canyon was inaccessible and known only to the isolated Tarahumara Indians living in caves. The train line climbs from sea level at Los Mochis on the Pacific to 8,000 feet before descending to Chihuahua. It passes the most spectacular scenery in Mexico—sheer cliffs that change color as the sun sets, giant rock formations, deep gorges, and mountain peaks. You can catch the train every day in Chihuahua at 7 a.m. or in Los Mochis at 6 a.m. The cost of a one-way trip from start to finish is \$80.

The best place to stay in the canyon is the Hotel Cabanas Divisadero-Barrancas, Calle 7, No.1216, in Divisadero, midway along the route. This rustic log-cabin hotel is perched on the rim of the canyon and affords dizzying views. Several Indian families live in caves nearby. These timid people sell handwoven baskets, wood carvings, and necklaces. Surrounding the hotel are trails that the Indians follow to the bottom of the canyon, 5,000 feet below.

*The best place to hear the flutter of butterfly wings.*

A three-hour drive from San Miguel de Allende is the colorful old mining town of Angangueo. And only an hour from Angangueo, up a steep, unpaved road, is the Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary, now open to the public. The park's 12,000 acres became a protected area in 1986 in response to warnings from conservation groups that the logging operations threatened to destroy the area's unique butterfly habitat and migration site. The butterflies seclude themselves in the abies religiosas (a type of fir tree) at the summit of the 10,000 foot climb. When you climb to the top, you are overwhelmed by the noise created by the fluttering wings of 10 million butterflies.

## **AFRICA**

*The best adventure.*

The newest natural thrill available in South Africa is the underwater shark watching. Four shark spotters at one time can spend three hours in sturdy cages, watching the great whites circling in search of prey. Contact Exotic Drive Tours, 45 Rosmead Ave., Kenilworth, Cape Town 7700

The best Java.

Kenya produces the best coffee in the world and is one of the world's leading exporters of Arabica coffee. The Coffee Board of Kenya, Mama Ngina Street, serves the most tempting coffee in town, as well as light snacks. A snack of coffee, mandazi (fried dough), and samosa (meat pie in the Indian fashion as interpreted by Kenyan cooks).

Coffee was introduced to Kenya by the French Holy Ghost Fathers (who liked a good cup of coffee) in the 1890s. It was developed in the region north of Nairobi. African farmers were forbidden to grow coffee until 1954. It is now Kenya's main export crop (which causes problems when the coffee crop fails). The berries are handpicked twice a year.

The second leading export crop is tea—another crop Africans were forbidden to grow. Today the region around Limuru supports more than 100,000 African smallholders, who grow enough tea to make Kenya the third-largest producer in the world, after India and Sri Lanka.

## **CHINA**

*The best travel tips.*

Don't forget to carry a roll of toilet paper with you. It is not yet common in Central Asia. Bathrooms may be quite a shock. Portable water is also a problem in Kazakhstan. Don't drink the tap water. And limit your bottled mineral water intake, because it can be very salty. Bottled soda and juices are your best bet; they're plentiful. Drink boiled water when possible; carry a canteen with you and fill it with boiled water at every opportunity. Carry iodine tablets for when none of the above is available, and Lomotil just in case.

*The best opium dens and brothels.*

Until 1949, the area west of People's Park, off Fuzhou Road, was the heart of Shanghai's world-famous red-light district known as Blood Alley. Before it was cleared out, it was inhabited by thousand of opium addicts and prostitutes. Liberation Lane alone, then known as Meet-With-Happiness Lane, had 34 brothels worked by more than 1,000 women. From 1949 until 1954, the brothels and opium dens were closed, the prostitutes given new work and new identities, and the addicts detoxified.

## **HONG KONG AND MACAU**

*The best gambling tables in Asia—and the ugliest hotel in the world.*

Macau is famous for its casinos. The biggest is the Casino de Lisboa, avenida da Amizade, in the Lisboa Hotel. The Lisboa is probably the ugliest hotel in the world, designed to look like a roulette wheel, which it wears like a crown upon its head. The Macau Palace, known as the Floating Casino, is a more exotic place to gamble. This red and gilded Chinese boat is moored on the inner harbor off avenida de Almeida Riveiro.

Games include both those familiar to Westerners, such as blackjack, and Chinese games, such as dai-siu and keno. Slot machines are known locally as "hungry tigers."

*The best place to honeymoon.*

Macau's Pousada de Sao Tiago, avenida da Republica; tel. (853)378-111, became a hotel in 1980—it was built 350 years ago as a fortress (the Fortaleza da Barra). Every historical feature was preserved during the transformation, including the Portuguese marble, hand-painted tiles, ancient stonewalls, gentle cascades, hand-carved mahogany, and even the trees that shade the multi-level terraces.

Overlooking the South China Sea, enveloped in warm, salty breezes, the pousada is an ideal romantic hideaway, perfect for a honeymoon. You could have your wedding here too—small weddings can be arranged in the chapel (which holds only 15 people). The pousada is complete with restaurants, gardens, a pool, and reading rooms—you never need to venture beyond its grounds. The pousada has 20 rooms and three suites, starting at \$125 a night.