

What's it with the Germans? A Holiday Review

No Foamed Lattes and Cash Only!

"We only open at half twelve", the woman emerging from the shut kiosk replies harshly. Even though the connected restaurant has just sent me over to get my coffee-to-go here. Awkwardly I check the time on my phone, balancing the baby in my arms. I wait the three minutes to opening time and eventually order my coffee. "No lids or card payment", she says, as she hands me a small paper cup with black coffee from a percolator. It smells nice and strong and I have to add four plastic containers of coffee cream to make it drinkable. Welcome to Meck Pomm*, I think to myself as I return to our spot by the lake shore of the [Fleesensee](#), waiting for the rest of my family to arrive.



Swimming in Chilly 24 Degrees

The surface of the water is smooth. Just once in a while tiny waves ripple towards the edge when paddle boats pull into the small marina. Ducks and seagulls bob up and down in the water,

seemingly enjoying the free ride. I dip my feet into the shallow water, sand squishing through my toes. Behind me, the beach promenade is slowly coming to life. Restaurants are busy taking in deliveries and some joggers are trying to get ahead of the big heat. Back home in Ireland we are spoilt with gorgeous beaches at our doorstep, but not with 24 degrees at 10 in the morning and a water temperature of 23 degrees. Germans don't even bother showing up for a swim at 'chilly' 24 degrees, I was told.



Tourism Hot Spot...

When I walk with the buggy down to the beach again the next day, I notice the well-tended farm-style houses in the red-brick architecture, characteristic for the region. Surrounded by lush gardens and orchards they stick out like gorgeous little islands among the clean, almost sterile, holiday rentals that definitely outweigh them. That makes me wonder what it is like to be one of the 520 residents of [Göhren-Lebbin](#), dealing with ca. 450.000 overnight stays a year. Considering it is the end of the season, it almost justifies the brusqueness we have been experiencing by some locals. But does it excuse an above-average amount of retirees wearing neon pink hair dye or T-shirts with dubious prints? I am not sure.

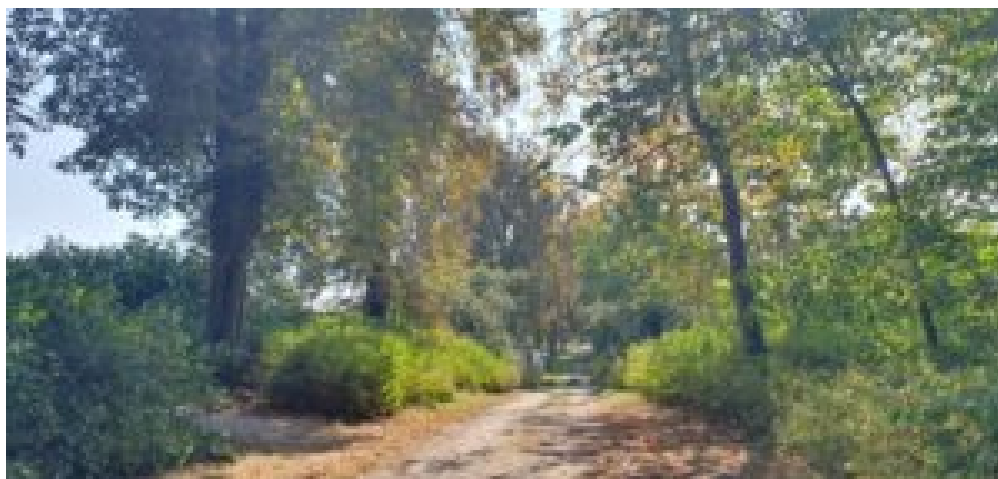


The resort we are staying in has the character of a village onto itself. Consisting of colourful timber-framed houses with self-catering units, restaurants, children's facilities and several adventure playgrounds including water play and a petting zoo. Our apartment on the ground floor is spacious and definitely designed with a family in mind. There is plenty to discover and do for all age groups. Our terrace is facing the fields, lined by a forest in the distance and is a lovely space to unwind. There are kids everywhere on the compound, bustling about on Go-karts or pulled along by their parents in handkarts. We are absolutely comfortable having our 7- and 4-year old roaming around on their own.



...and Unspoilt Nature

Another morning I bring the baby for a walk on the sandy path right behind our apartment. It is hot as I push the buggy through the dust, welcoming every gentle breeze rustling through the trees. I appreciate their shady patches, giving the dirt track an alternating pattern. I truly enjoy those morning walks, focusing on the regular breaths of my sleeping baby, accompanied by the humming of bees. My destination is Kirch Poppentin, a red-brick church from 1882 with its attached cemetery. Surprisingly I don't encounter a single soul, despite of three big hotels based in the neighbourhood. Eventually I meet two well-gearred up cyclists with friendly faces who ask me for directions. Three indicators that they are not local.



English – Nein danke!

For Sunday mass we locate a Catholic church in the nearby town of [Waren](#). When we arrive, the car park is bursting out of its seams. People are welcoming and friendly, but keep their distance once they hear we are speaking English. An older gentleman is brave enough to approach us for a chat, encouraged by the Southern German number plate of our rental car. When I tell him – in German – that we live in Ireland, he nods friendly and swiftly makes his goodbyes.

It surprises me that the region of Fleesensee advertises itself as the largest Golf resort in Northern Europe and yet we stick out as English-speakers everywhere. Even our holiday resort seems to survive on a German-only policy, apart from Reception. I feel for the staff in the shop who had to explain to my husband one morning – using gestures and hand signals – that the pre-ordered chocolate croissants hadn't arrived.

What is it with the Germans?

As we potter through Waren, an old lady with a zimmer frame (but no pink hair dye) peeks into the buggy. I prepare for another shower of compliments on our baby when she tells me assertively that I am to put socks on the poor child. Baffled, I follow her slow movement as she shuffles on without another word. What is it with Germans getting involved in how we handle our kids? Only the other day a parent told our 4-year

old to not twist her baby sister's arm when she was playing with her on the beach, and I was standing right beside them. Um, excuse me?



Friendliness in Disguise

On our last day, I stroll down the foresty path to Lake Fleesensee one more time. As I drop into the village store, I open with a comment on the weather as you would when entering a shop in Ireland. Not expecting a huge response, I am all the more surprised when the girl behind the counter pours her heart out to me. When I finally leave, I smile to myself, remembering how curt she was the first day I came in.

Down by the lake I decide to give the woman in the coffee trailer a second chance, too. Judging by her still grim facial expression, I fear to get told off for changing my order half way through. Instead I get a "no problem" and a hint of a smile. Delighted I toddle off with my *Bulette im Brötchen**, excited to introduce this typical German snack to my family.

The Charm of Mecklenburg Vorpommern

I am no stranger to the 'Nordic charm' as I would call the 'friendliness in disguise' in Mecklenburg Vorpommern. In my twenties I spent four years in Stralsund, studying Leisure and Tourism Management at the local university. And despite some raised-eyebrow-moments during our vacation, I knew that people weren't intending to be rude. However, having lived in Ireland for over ten years has changed my perception of my fellow countrymen, [to being a tourist in my own country](#).

Fleesensee doesn't strike me as a big international player in the resort business. It rather feels like a rural holiday destination with charming flaws, representing the innate culture it is surrounded by: straight forward and down to earth. I value its authenticity over an all pleasing service industry. Although a few more friendly faces around could do no harm. The all prevelant cash payment adds to the holiday feel and so does not having a stable 4G connection at all times.

The natural beauty of the area and its amenities are great for a fun and activity-filled holiday, complemented by pretty towns with its regional architecture. That is what makes Fleesensee attractive to us as a family of five. The [BEECH Resort Fleesensee](#) is the ideal place to combine all our interests and give each of us their own little space to relax. We will be back for sure!



***MeckPomm = Short for Mecklenburg Vorpommern: One of Germany's 16 federal states. Located in the North East, it was part of the former GDR. Bordering the Baltic Sea it also features extensive lakelands inland.**

***Bulette is the name for a meat snack, similar to a burger patty, in Berlin and the North East of Germany (from French "small ball"). It is usually served in a roll. Its name varies depen.**