

Travel

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(L.P.C-70.R-50)(B.T.R.6,9,F3C)

Heidelberg

Famed town of 'Student Prince' has rich history

By Iris Jones

HEIDELBERG, West Germany — Mind doesn't always win over matter. Some days, like this one, a flu bug or some other bodily ailment attacks and you can't travel with your usual vigor. Such strokes of bad luck don't happen in convenient places, so I am walking very slowly through the city of Heidelberg, immortalized in song by "The Student Prince."

I am seeing the city in slow motion, each scene a snapshot of the city on the Neckar River. Heidelberg has about the same population as Ann Arbor, and it too is dominated by university students, so the snapshots I carry in my mind have a lot of students in them.

Students leaning against the fountain and sitting in sidewalk cafes around the great cathedral that dominates the center of the old town. Students walking in and out of McDonalds, with its antique-looking wrought-gold sign. Younger students eating ice cream as they giggle their way through the school tours at the ruined castle on the hill.

FROM THE terrace of Heidelberg Castle, high on a hill above the town, these school groups look down to the Neckar River flowing out of the hills and under the many historic bridges that are Heidelberg's postcard signature. The red rooftops of the city tilt

and cant below in the sunlight, the cathedral a crown in the middle and other spires piercing the sky in both directions.

There are great open marketplace spaces between the buildings where people gather at certain times: the Kornmarkt, the Fischmarkt, the Marktplatz. On the hills across the river, vineyards make bright green patches between the darker forest trees that climb above the square houses with their carved windows and rooftops.

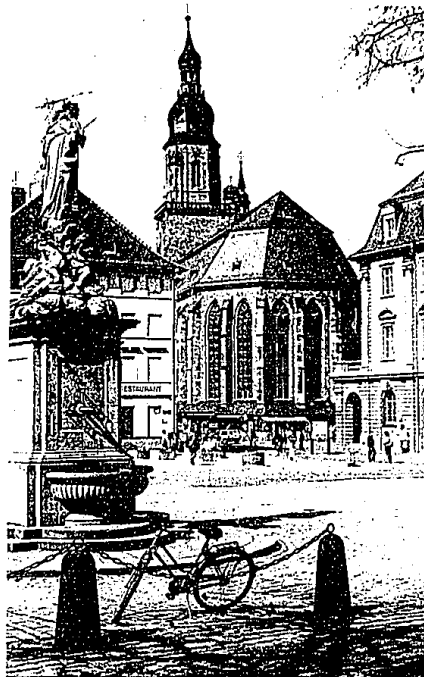
What you can't see from up here are the "pedestrians only" signs around the historic old city and the cars trying to find a place to park.

Medieval cities were not designed to cope with automotive traffic jams, so the malls are much appreciated when you are on foot.

Most European cities have converted their main shopping streets into pedestrian malls, and the Hauptstrasse or main street of Heidelberg is one of the longest

pedestrian malls of them all. MEDIEVAL CITIES were not designed to cope with automotive traffic jams, so the malls are much appreciated when you are on foot; they are not so popular when you are trying to get your luggage to the front door of a hotel in the old city.

We are staying at the Hotel Zum Ritter, an historic inner city inn directly across the Hauptstrasse from the cathedral. The Ritter (which means knight) is one of the oldest and most historic buildings in



town, built in 1592 and the only renaissance building to survive the War of Succession. It is one of the numbered highlights on a walking tour of the city.

Nobody thought of a small red car rented from Autohansa when they designed the old city, so we circled many times before we found the narrow street that leads to the cathedral and got instructions from the hotel desk on how to find our way to

public parking structure number 12. Everything in the old city is a medieval stone's throw from anywhere else, so the funicular railway that runs uphill to Heidelberg Castle leaves from the lower level of Parking Structure No. 12. It is a small blue train climbing steep tracks through a tunnel to the Schloss and on to the hilltop beyond.

This hillside has been important as long as man has been in Europe. The 550,000-year-old bones of Homo Heidelbergensis, or Heidelberg Man, were found here. The Romans built the first bridges across the Neckar at the foot of the hill. Important political events have taken place here for 1,000 years, with the castle ruling everything the eye could see until the French destroyed much of it in 1689.

Several generations have tried to rebuild the castle and failed. Its main function today is as a museum where tourists walk the cobblestone courtyard, pointing with wonder at carved figures that remain in stone on the walls that still stand.

It would be nice if every day we travel could be a good day, energy intact, but even when it doesn't happen you can sit in the sun like this or collect memories as you walk down the steep curved street back into town.

Maybe tomorrow I can take advantage of the 300 pubs and restaurants in this fascinating town, but for now the only thing that interests me is a hot cup of tea at a cozy sidewalk cafe and enjoying snapshot



MICKY JONES

Old Heidelberg is full of exciting sights. Photo at left shows a corn market, a cathedral (center) and the Rathaus (city hall, right). In the summertime, it's easy to find a flower stand in the Marktplatz, pictured in the above photo. No one would want to miss the Heidelberg Castle, pictured below, which overlooks the city.



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scenes of one of the most interesting small cities in Germany.

THE SIXTH annual Hot Air Balloon Festival, sponsored by the Mayflower Hotel in Plymouth, will take place Friday, Saturday and Sunday, July 11, 12 and 13. The festival begins at 8 p.m. Friday with a mass ascent from the grounds of Plymouth Canton High School at Canton Center Road and Joy Road in Canton Township.

The Balloon Ball will follow at 8 p.m. under the stars on the deck of the Mayflower. Tickets are \$6 at the door. Saturday starts with a sunrise inflation sale 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. Things are 50 percent off at 6 a.m. and the discounts are reduced hour by hour.

for slugsabeds. A 6 a.m. ascent, also, from Plymouth Canton High School, is followed by a 7 a.m. fly-in pancake breakfast at Mettetal Airport, Joy Road and Lilley.

Art in the Park is on from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday. More than 150 artists and craftsmen, from 37 Michigan cities will exhibit and sell their crafts. There is a soccer ball race at 8 p.m. and the Balloon Ball is on again at 8 p.m.

Sunday's race starts at 6 a.m., and the day will culminate when balloonists attempt to "pick keys" from atop a pole at their launch site at 8 p.m. Tune in to WSPD 88.1 FM for launch information, traffic status, etc., during the weekend. For balloon information, call 445-1777 or 624-5157.

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