

"They say, 'See Naples, and then die!' But if you come and enjoy the beauty and wonders of Wiesbaden you won't have to die afterwards...you'll probably live longer."

The Wiesbaden school teacher who blurted this out over a glass of dry Riesling in the wine garden of the Schloss Vollrads vineyard, like many residents of this city by the Rhine, lives the Wiesbaden cure.

He bathes once a week in the thermal waters that have been bubbling up from 6,000 feet down for millenia: barring heavy rain or snow, on Saturday or Sunday he hikes the trails that zigzag the dense, verdant, surrounding forests, and, of course, frequents the nearby wine gardens of one of Germany's most renowned wine-producing regions.

Wiesbaden is a spa, known best for its mineral-rich curative waters. But this is only one part of the Wiesbadener's cure.

This is a stop for travelers who are serious about vacationing for their health, but want to live a little too. You just have to jump into the everyday Wiesbaden swing of things.

On the heights above the center of the city is the "Heathen's Wall," the remains of the Roman fortress which gave birth to a country town in the shadow of its bastions — later to become Wiesbaden, literally meaning "baths in the meadows."

The Romans first discovered the tremendous powers of the 110,000 gallons that bubble up each day at 150-degrees fahrenheit from 26 separate sources. Over the centuries, those who have suffered from every type of rheumatic complaint have come from around the world to bath in the waters.

During medieval times, it is written, "men and women enjoyed themselves freely in the baths." Alas their name at the time, "The Merry Baths of Wiesbaden."

Between 1850 and World War 1, it was one of the world's most visited spas. In 1913, the city hosted 192,000 guests — almost double Wiesbaden's population at the time.

Though its popularity has diminished, available treatments have been greatly expanded. Following a diagnostic examination, modern spa clinics will provide a specific course of treatment prescribed by experienced physicians. The large bathing houses offer not only thermal swimming pools and saunas, but also massages, mud packs, electro-therapy, physical therapy, chambers for inhaling hot steam infused with menthol of eucalyptus, and herbal or pine needle baths.

Wiesbaden's treatment, however, only begins with the spas. Tree-lined streets, spacious and well-tended parks, garden restaurants, outdoor cafes, cultural life and fountains in the squares created an environment for unwinding.

You can ride into the forest on the Nerobergbahn, a one-car tram that ascends the hills above the city. At the top, relax in the terrace restaurant gazing across Wiesbaden's rooftops, walk among ferns and deciduous trees or take some time to explore the Russian chapel built by the Duke of Hessen (Wiesbaden is the state capital of Hesse) in 1848.

Wiesbaden also boasts of more than its share of typically German garden restaurants for pleasant eating and drinking in the sunshine or under the stars. One of the oldest and most atmospheric is the Bobbeschankelche, 'the little inn of the little dolls,' at 39 Roderstrasse. It is one of the few remaining buildings from the Napoleonic era when the people were forced to pay a tax proportional to the size of

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their windows. As you can guess, small, quaint houses became the rage.

Stroll down the bustling bazaar-like pedestrian mall, the Kirchgasse, and sit in one of the outdoor cafes and watch the shopping hordes pass by as aspiring musicians perform their latest compositions.

You may also want to make your appearance on the Wilhelmstrasse (a mini Champs Elysees of Wiesbaden) with its elegant boutiques, restaurants and cafes. It's the place to see and to be seen.

Opposite the coffee sippers on the Wilhelmstrasse are the Hesse State Theater (which offers a year-round program of operas, plays, ballets and musicals), and the Kurhaus (one of Germany's biggest casinos).

You'll also not want to miss the Kurpark's mile-long strip of lush greenery, flower beds, tiny lakes, ponds. A two-hour hike from Sonnenberg (a suburb of Wiesbaden) into the Taunus Mountains brings you to the Kellerskopf, a medieval watchtower in the forest with a cozy restaurant and patio and a panorama for miles in every direction. If you want to blend in with the locals, stop in for a cold beer or applewine and a long rest. Trails are well marked, but you might want to stop in a bookstore beforehand to pick up a map with trails, forest cafes, distances and walking times well marked.

Running along the Rhine there's another hiker's path which once was used to pull boats up river. Now it leads into the Rhinegau, a wine lover's paradise and a most enjoyable part of the Wiesbaden cure. This lush, sundrenched 20-mile strip on the northern bank of the Rhine is studded with castles, chaateaus and monasteries among miles and miles of grapevines.

Ferries, hydrofoils and white steamers embark from Wiesbaden-Biebrich — across from the 17th century Biebrich Castle of the Dukes of Hessen — for day trips to the Rhinegau's villages.

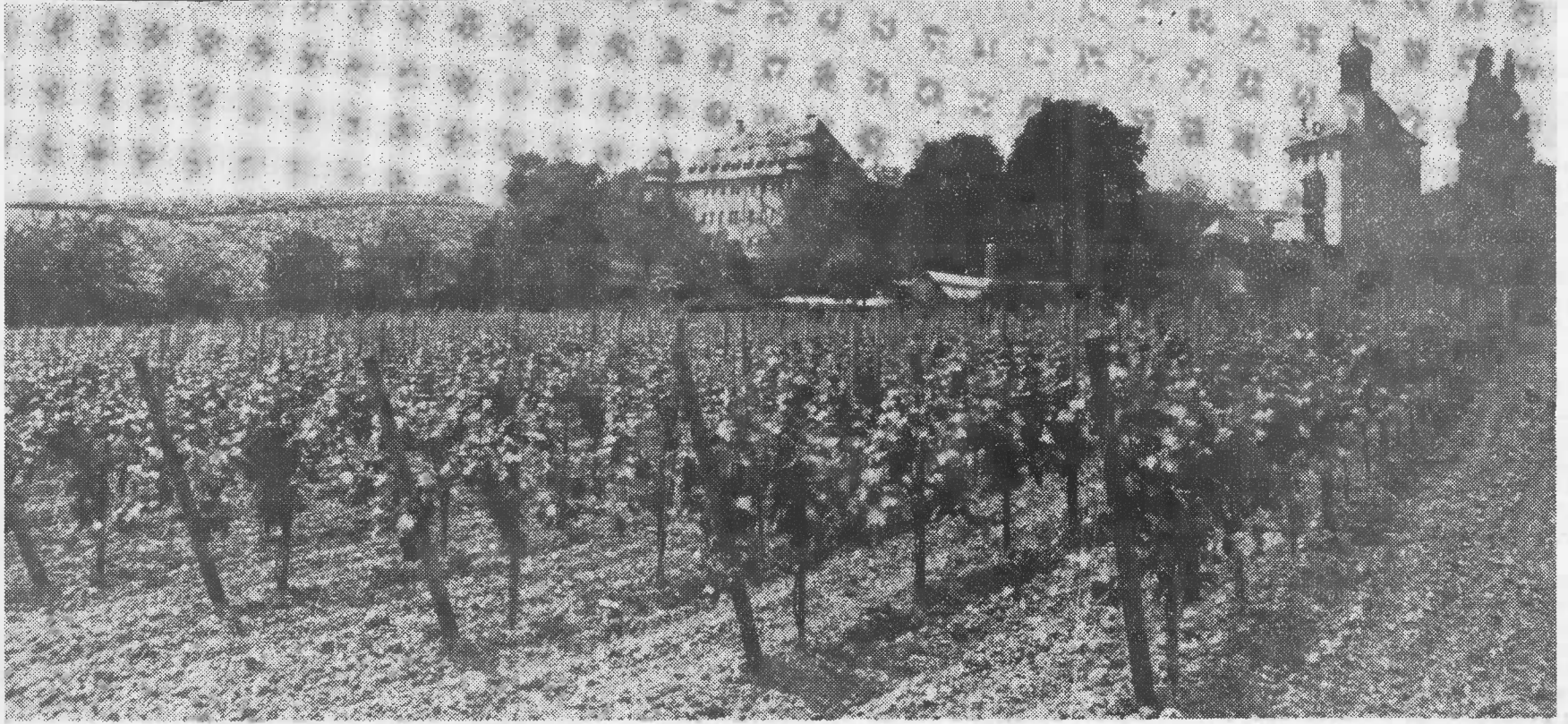
Wiesbaden is linked to nearby Frankfurt Airport by the extensive German autobahn network and is easily reached by car or bus. Trains, too, can take you there.

Oh yes, if you happen to hear a cuckoo bird while hiking in the forest, pull out your wallet or coin purse and shake it. Legend has it that this will insure that your pockets will always be full in the future.

As full, hopefully, as your memories of Wiesbaden will be.

For more information contact the local German Tourist Board office write to the Tourist Information Office at 49 Wilhelmstrasse, Wiesbaden, Germany.

The wonders of Wiesbaden



Vineyards of the Rhinegau's castles produce some of the area's fine wines. The Schloss Vollrads, one of Germany's most famous vineyards, was first planted some 800 years ago.