



Germany Travel Planning Podcast

Ep 21 – Beyond Schnitzel: Tasting Germany with a Local Twist

Transcript is autogenerated

Cate (00:00)

If you want more on your Germany trip than just checking sites off a list, if you want to experience the culture, taste the history, and get a feel for what life is really like, you're going to love today's episode.

This is the Germany Travel Planning Podcast, the show that helps you plan a super fun trip to Germany. My name is Cate and I'm your Germany destination specialist. I'm here to help you plan the most delicious trip of a lifetime.

Today I'm joined by Margot from Walk With Us Tours. They offer food and beer tours in Berlin and Munich, and they're one of our preferred partners. Aaron and I have both done their tours. I did their gourmet food tour in Berlin, and Aaron did their craft beer tour in Munich, and we loved them. These are not cookie cutter experiences. They're designed for connection and packed with delicious bites, drinks, and stories that connect you to the real Germany.

So if you're wondering whether a food or beer tour is worth it, or if you're just trying to figure out how to get more out of your time in Berlin or Munich, this episode is packed with tips, insights, and inspiration to help you eat, drink, and connect your way through two of Germany's most exciting cities. Welcome Margot. Let's start with your introduction and also tell us a little bit about Walk With Us Tours.

Margot (01:20)

Hey everybody, I'm Margot and I'm from Walk With Us Tours in Berlin and Munich. And just a little bit about myself, my partner Alex, he's not here with me at the moment, but we offer three food tours in Berlin, as well as a craft beer tour. And we also have a



craft beer tour in Munich, where we explore different places, kind of go a little bit outside of the areas that might be discovered on your own in the center.

And yeah, we also kind of got started about eight years ago when I first moved to Germany. I needed a job that I could speak English because I did not speak any German. I moved here to get married to my now partner, Alex. And yeah, I stumbled upon becoming a food tour guide and I had no idea what that meant, but I knew that I liked food and people and I absolutely loved Berlin and knew a little bit about it and of course had a passion for it. So I got into doing food tours and quickly discovered like this was the best job for me. I love it.

And then I started creating tours and then I became a manager and I told Alex, I said, you should do this too, this is really fun, you will love it. And he created a craft beer tour and was doing that. And we decided, you know what, we know how to do the tours, we know how to give tours, we know how to create them, we know the management side, we should do this on our own. And we made a plan and we kind of had our first tour on March 13th, 2020 and a few days later the world shut down.

So we had about two and a half years of pretty much not doing any tours but getting a chance to really, you know, get to know our vendors, pick the places that we wanted to include on the tours. And it was really important when we created our tours to include places that we like to go to include foods that we enjoy eating.

I know a lot of people think that Germany is all about schnitzel and currywurst and kebabs and yes, those things are important, but we don't eat that every single day or at least I don't. So we wanted to include lots of different varieties of German food, not just German food, but also different international cuisines that you know, represent the diverse culinary scene here in Berlin.

Of course, beer is synonymous with Germany and craft beer is, you know, something really special here in Berlin and Munich's craft beer scene, it's on a much smaller scale, but it's very close knit and very much like a family down there with lots of really



interesting beers and not just your typical German beers that people are familiar with like lagers and yeah, so that's kind of our little story.

Cate (04:54)

Well, Margot, I am so excited to talk to you today because Aaron and I have done your tours and we absolutely loved them. Aaron did the craft beer tour in Munich and I did the gourmet food tour in Berlin.

And yeah, like we just had so much fun. We've been raving about them ever since. So I'm really, really excited to let everybody who listens to our podcast know more about your tours so that everybody can go on one because everybody listening to this podcast should absolutely sign up for one of your tours in Berlin or Munich. They're so well done and they were so much fun.

So I, you know, I used to think when I traveled, you know, for years and years and years, I always thought, I can just do it on my own. You know, wherever I am, I love exploring. I love just going and finding random places. So for a long time, I was like, why do I need a food tour? Can't I just go find stuff on my own? So why? I mean, I've now got my own thoughts about why people should do food tours, but I'd love to hear what do you think? What do you think somebody's missing? What are they missing out on if they don't do a food tour?

Margot (06:04)

That is an amazing question. And something very funny because, you know, when I go to visit another city, I am always, you know, scouring Google maps, the streets there, what, what are the top rated, what is on the blogs. And when I think about it, when I reflect on the amount of time I spent researching, it would have been great to, you know, if I would have just paid a certain amount of money and I just show up and somebody else gives me not only the best food, but maybe the history of the city, the culture of the neighborhood, the, why do they eat these foods? What is, you know, so it's not just going into a random restaurant and, you know, deciding out of



20 different items, what is going to be the best? And maybe I missed something important, or maybe I missed why is this place so popular? What about the chefs or the owners? There's more to it than just a dish or all of these ratings. What is the story of the people? And not just the story of the places that we visit, like the restaurants or the neighborhood or the streets.

But also a lot of times you get a chance to meet other travelers and you get a chance to learn why is the guide in Berlin? How did they end up here from Australia? And it's a really, really nice way to connect with other like-minded people that if you go on a vacation by yourself or maybe you go with your partner, and you don't get to meet other people.

And surprisingly, we actually get a lot of locals who come on our tours. So you might get a chance to meet some other locals and definitely other travelers.

Cate (08:14)

Those are all such good points. So, you know, it made me think of one time many years ago, Aaron and I were in Prague and I had been to Prague several times before that, but Aaron hadn't. And one thing I like to do back then was just sort of like get on public transit, get off at a random stop and go to a random restaurant. And so we did that. And we always kind of hit or miss, you know, and this time was a huge miss because we just went out to this place, we found a restaurant, we were starving, we're like, let's just eat here. And it turned out that it was the restaurant was connected to a hotel that was full of Americans. And we actually ended up sitting at a table next to an American family who were from the town next to where I grew up.

So it was like such a big fail because we were trying to find some interesting place and ended up with the complete opposite. Right. And I always think about that when. I don't want that to happen on a trip, especially if I have a very short period of time to make the most of my time in a place. And what I really liked about your tours is that they were places that I would not have found myself. And Aaron said the same thing about the beer tour.



Even though we were spending, when we did your tours, we were spending, I think we were in Munich at that time for like a month and we were in Berlin for about five weeks. And we were staying very, very close to the neighborhoods where your tours were and we still would not have found the places that we went to. So, you know, I just, I love that it's such an easy way to get deeper into the local culture.

You know, and like you said, like the amount of information out there is just overwhelming. And it's so hard to sort through and trust the reviews that you're seeing for restaurants, you know, like, this really a good restaurant or is it just a lot of good reviews? But I can say that the places that we went on your tours were really good. And I mean, yeah, there, there was not one thing that we ate that we didn't like. Nice. No, that, Aaron during, we still talk about them. We still talk about like the food that we ate, the beer that Aaron drank and it was just such a great experience, like absolutely worth it.

Margot (10:28)

Yes. I think also another thing I just thought of is, it can be very intimidating to just walk into a place, even if they have a million good reviews, even if it's super busy. Sometimes it's, I mean, for me personally, I think sometimes when you walk into a restaurant in Germany, it can be a little scary if you don't speak German or you don't know if they're friendly or not. It's not standard like in the American culture or the culture in the US where you walk in and it's like, hello, how are you? Welcome.

And yeah, I think it's nice to walk in with a local who knows what they're doing and kind of guides you. So you get that you get to relax a little bit and enjoy yourself.

Cate (11:18)

Yeah. And you get to try things that you probably wouldn't think about trying otherwise. We did a lot of things on that trip because we were doing a research trip. So we're trying tons and tons of things. But what we did on your tours, it's like a very vibrant memory for us. It doesn't just blend in with all the other things.



One of the other things that I really enjoyed was that I went on the food tour by myself, actually Mati, who is our preferred partner for Berlin, decided to do the tour. So it was fun that I knew him going into the tour. But we didn't know anyone else. And Aaron did the beer tour and he didn't know anyone else. And very, very quickly, we felt like in both groups, very quickly we got to know the guide. We had Alex in Berlin as our guide. And we felt like we got to know everybody and it was very, very quickly.

We all felt like it was just a group of friends who were going and trying different places together. And it was, that was also really nice. Like it was very comfortable and friendly and it was an enjoyable time. So it wasn't just the food, you know, it was like the food and then the insight into the culture, but also it's just fun to hang out with other people who enjoy the food as well.

Margot (12:36)

Absolutely. Yeah, that's definitely. If you ask people who have been on many food tours, that is one of the top reasons why, to go and meet other people. If you were doing historical walking tour where there's not really a chance for you to be conversating with some other person on the tour because you're listening to a guide talk about history, but on our tours, not only do we talk about the history and culture and why do we eat these foods and about the foods, but we also leave a space for everyone to talk about, know, what are the foods that you eat in your culture, where you're from.

And, you know, there's always that space for people to have a dialogue with each other, with the guide, maybe sometimes with the owners or the brewers.

Cate (13:30)

Yeah, yeah, we really enjoyed that. And I've noticed with some of the walking tours we've done, it's the same thing like I want to connect with other people on the tour or the guide.



And it's not that just really isn't quite the atmosphere. But that is something I really like about the food tours.

You know, something else I really liked about your tours is when I did the one in Berlin, like I was trying to decide between the gourmet food tour and the street food tour. And I went back and forth about it for a really long time. And I decided to do the gourmet food tour. Because it was in a neighborhood that was a little bit closer to where we were staying. And I was curious about that. And I've had a lot of street food in Berlin. So I thought, let me try something a little bit different. .

I loved that we went to places that really represented the neighborhood and the diversity of the neighborhood. So it wasn't all just traditional German food. And I think one of the places we went to was a little Venezuelan place. And my god, it was so good. was absolutely delicious. I told Aaron that I have to bring him back there sometime. We haven't done it yet, but next time we're in Berlin, we're going to go back. It was so good.

And then we had that and then we went to more of a traditional German place and got to try some things that I hadn't tried before. And then we also had some wine, we had local beer, we had chocolate, we had like the best dessert ever. I just really liked the variety of it. I would love to hear more about how you guys kind of think about what to include on the tour and if there's something that you can think of that maybe tells, as an example, that tells more of the culture or history of the neighborhood or the place.

Margot (15:10)

Yeah. So on the tour that you went on, it's kind of a tribute to not only German foods, but also East Berlin foods, for example, the traditional restaurant we tried a dish called Senfeier, which are mustard eggs, or Königsberger Klopse, which are these delicious caper sauce with meatballs. And this is something that is not a dish that a lot of people know about, and it really is, you know, of this region.



So it's really important, like I mentioned, to show a different side of Berlin, a different side of German food. A lot of people come to Germany and they know about Schnitzel, they know about Currywurst, they know about kebab. But on our tours, we really like to show something different that you might not order like we talked about earlier. Why come on a food tour? Yeah, because you can go to a restaurant, you can get a Schnitzel on your own, you can go to a million different Currywurst stands. There are plenty of them and you should do that because it is obviously an important food.

But we wanted to show people something that was different that you're not going to get, that you might not even ever heard of. And this tour also, the store, this little shop that you went to where they feature products that are specific to the region of Brandenburg and Berlin. You know, different meats and cheeses that you will only find in this region that, you know, you could easily, yeah, you wouldn't find at the grocery store because, you know, you're going to get, it's just different. So it's this really special store with these really specialty products. And it's, yeah, like I wouldn't ever walk into that store if I, if I didn't know about it, but you know, as I mentioned earlier, during the long period that we were not able to do much, we had a lot of time to really go deeper and build these relationships with these special places and see, you know, what is a good route? Who are the people that we want to work with? Who has a story to tell us>

And the dishes have a story, the places that we go have a story, and obviously Berlin has a lot of stories, which is also interesting because, you know, you can walk, a lot of people, stay in different areas than where our tours are. They stay in the center by Checkpoint Charlie, by Brandenburg Gate, and they walk out of their place, their hotel, looking for something to do and there's nothing really to do over there. So it's also nice to just get people out of the regular places that everybody visits and go and walk around with the locals as well.

And the places that we chose, they really tell a story. The dishes that we chose are something that you wouldn't think of if you never heard of it.



Cate (18:45)

Yeah, yeah, we get a lot of clients who ask us, you know, they want to, like you were saying, they want to stay where it's really convenient and easy to get to a lot of the main sites and walkable. But they want to go out into a neighborhood and kind of explore and Berlin's big, there's a lot of neighborhoods. It's just such an easy way to combine so many different things by going on that food tour, seeing the neighborhood and trying food and you get a meal.

You know, after we did the food tour, I didn't eat dinner that night. Like it was just the right amount of food. It wasn't too much, but I did not need to eat anything in the evening. So, know, like you, just get all those things combined.

You know, before we started recording, we were kind of talking about like stereotypes of Germany and especially when it comes to food and there's so much good food in Germany, but either people don't know what it is or, you know, they're just kind of thinking like, you know, they have to eat this traditional German food all the time, which can be really good, but there's so many other things to try.

So in your opinion, having lived in Germany for a while now, what's something that you think is overlooked that people should know about?

Margot (19:56)

Yes. Well, that is kind of where our street food tour comes into play, which is, you know, really more exploration of foods that are not just in the region, not from the region. I mean, Berlin has, if not the most, one of the top countries in the world that has the most nationalities coming from everywhere. So we have incredible Vietnamese food. We have incredible Turkish food. So many different cultures and cuisines that you can find in Berlin that are being made by people who are from there that are really proud and passionate. And Berlin has such a competitive food scene that if it's not good, they're not gonna last long.



So people, I mean, it's really amazing and there's new places, there are new places popping up all of the time. You know, being a food tour operator, that is one of my favorite, that is my favorite part of the job is, you know, we have to do the research. We gotta get out there, we gotta try everything.

And here in Berlin, for example, on our street food tour, we don't offer Currywurst. We don't have kebab, döner kebab. But for example, one thing that we eat is kofta, which are these basically little meatballs that are on a sandwich. So yeah, you can get kebab on every corner, but have you heard of kofta?

Right now that is like my favorite dish. I'm eating it way too much. But yeah, I just, I love that there are so many other cuisines here because if we ate German food every day, it just wouldn't be fun. But we're lucky to live in a city like Berlin and even Munich has a very great food scene that is also lots of different cuisines. So yeah, that's just an example, like the Turkish food, the Vietnamese food, and also on our vegan food tour, we also have a lot of different variety, even Turkish food that like Manti, which is are these little Turkish dumplings, which are of course not traditionally vegan, but we have those too and it's really good stuff. And really great Vietnamese food on the vegan tour as well.

Cate (22:39)

Oh, we've had such good Vietnamese food. We eat Vietnamese food a lot of the time when we're out for lunch because you can get really great lunch specials. And we've had some really good Vietnamese food in Berlin and other parts of Germany. But next time we're in Berlin, I am definitely doing the street food tour. And I want to do a vegan food tour as well. We'll just do all of your tours.

Margot (22:59)

Yes, we might have a new one coming soon.

Cate (23:01)

Oh yeah? Do you want to tell us about it?



Margot (23:06)

Well, we might have a new tour coming soon that would be kind of similar to our vegan food tour, but not vegan. So it would be a tribute to the different international cuisines that we have here in Berlin. Kind of telling a story of the different immigrants who have come here during the last century, the Turkish, the Vietnamese, why did they come here, the Italians. So that should be coming soon.

Cate (23:46)

That one sounds good too. All right, that's going on my to-do list. Like you said, I love our job because we get to go and try everything, which is so much fun.

So let's go a little bit behind the scenes now. And I'd love to talk more about the craft beer tour in Munich. Aaron, when he came home from that tour, he told me all about every single stop, every beer that he had, all the different things. He actually took me out and showed me a couple of days later and showed me where all the places were. And we went to visit a friend of ours who knows and works with the tour guide that led Aaron's tour. And we were telling them about places Aaron went, they said, yeah, one of those places, we go there for date night all the time. So when they saw it, was really great.

So tell us a little bit about, I'm so curious, how do you choose the locations for that tour in Munich?

Margot (24:38)

So it's very interesting. When we first started doing it, we had a completely different tour set up. We wanted to start on a different side of the city and a different district. We thought we had put together the absolute most perfect tour. And when we tested it, there was a few rough patches like, you know, well, this is a little far or this place is not open on this day. And it pretty much made us have to rethink everything.



So we went back to the drawing board and coincidentally, we got put in touch with a really amazing couple and together they owned one of the breweries that we visited and we had a talk with them on the phone and we had a great vibe and we knew that their place was you know top for beer but it was not really close to the original route that we had chosen.

So what we did was is you know, we really liked them. We knew they had great beer and they also had incredible snacks. So we said, you know what, why don't we just start over and let's include this amazing stop because the people are amazing. The beer is amazing. The snacks are amazing. The location is amazing. So let's use that as our anchor point and you know, see what else we can include.

And so yeah, it's really funny because when you're creating a food tour or a beer tour, you have one picture in your mind and you just have to be, we had to be more flexible and see what is really gonna work. You don't want the people to walk too much, but you want them to get a good walk so that they can enjoy, you know, hanging out with others. And also one of the highlights on our craft beer tour in Munich and in Berlin is the Wegbier, which means like the roadie, the takeaway beer, which you can drink pretty much everywhere in Germany anytime you'd like. It's pretty much essential. You have to take a beer to go for your walk. So we wanted to leave enough room for that.

Yah, so we kind of built our Munich tour around this amazing stop that we have. And of course, all the other stops are amazing too. But that became our anchor. So we completely flipped sides, eliminated some, some places that yeah, maybe we would just recommend to our guests to go visit.

Cate (27:27)

You know, and I really liked that, that the places that Aaron got to visit were different from the places that we would go in, you know, when we go to the bigger beer gardens. So you really can combine both experiences. You can go to Hofbräuhaus, you can go to Augustiner Keller.



And we like Augustiner Keller, we've enjoyed going there. But then you can get a very different experience by going on the beer tour. And that just enhances the whole thing.

I think it's so important when you're thinking about your itinerary to have different types of experiences, you know, and kind of balance it out. Do some things that are more popular and well known, some things are more off the beaten path. And I think that just makes a really good experience.

Margot (28:05)

That's a good point. I would just say that, yeah, Hofbräuhaus, of course it's amazing and you have to visit there if you're visiting Munich. It is historical and everyone should go there. But if you've ever been there before, which I know you have, is, you know, it's a lot going on. There is a lot going on there. There's a lot of music. There are hundreds, if not thousands of people just walking around. It is a bit overwhelming.

And for example, when you come on our tours, you know, we have a max of 10 guests. sometimes 12 on our craft beer tour. So we like to keep our group small so that people can talk with each other and our tours they're absolutely, it's absolutely very important that we keep the group small so it's an intimate nice vibe and you know if we were gonna go to Hofbräuhaus with our craft beer tour or our beer tour it would just be complete chaos.

I think that everyone should go there. You should go there on your own. If you went with a tour, you wouldn't be able to hear the guides. You can barely hear the person that you're talking. So yeah, it's like you said, it's good to have a nice variety. In Munich, especially, it's small and easy to get around that you could spend the whole day in the center doing a historical tour and then ending your evening with a nice craft beer tour. Go to dinner before, go to dinner after, or get a snack after.

Cate (29:42)



Absolutely agree. So before we wrap up, let's talk about a couple of practicalities. One is how far in advance should travelers book?

Margot (29:53)

That's a great question. You know, in the past, it used to be very popular that people would book, you know, the day of or the night before and with a lot of our tours filling up quickly, especially in late summer. Obviously, spring is very popular, but yeah, a lot of our tours sell out. And as I mentioned, we have, you know, a capacity of 10 to 12 guests. And we always try to add additional time slots if something is booked, but we cannot always do that because we have a lot of private tours.

So if you know that you're coming to Munich or if you're coming to Berlin, the sooner you can book a tour, that's great. And if you get closer to the time and you say, no, you know, this doesn't really work. I want to change days. That's no problem. You can reach out to us and we can easily change your booking to another day. So we are very flexible. And especially when you book with your website, you know, it's perfect because we can manage everything ourselves and easily move you to a different day. Or if for some reason you needed to cancel your entire trip, we can also offer a refund. It's not a problem.

Cate (31:14)

And are there any age minimums or anything like that? Like, you know, on the food tours, can you bring kids or do you have any recommendations or suggestions for that?

Margot (31:25)

Yes. So for our craft beer tours in Munich and Berlin, we have an 18 years and up and a lot of people say, yeah, but you know, you can drink at a younger age in Germany and that is true. However, we want to, you know, for those particular tours, we like to keep it a little more adult friendly. So just, yeah, for the vibe.



For our food tours, all ages are welcome. We love to have kids and a lot of the foods, it's very interesting. Some kids are picky eaters. We will always try to find something that they like and some kids are a little more adventurous and they find some things that they love on the tour.

Cate (32:14)

Well, thank you so much, Margot. I absolutely encourage everybody to book a tour with you. If you're in Berlin or Munich, it's a must do. And if you'd like to save a little bit on your tour, go to our show notes or go to our website. You can save 5 % if you book through our link. Yeah, we also have another episode where Aaron talked about his experience going on the beer tour in more detail. So I'll link that up also in the show notes. And Margot, thank you so much for coming on and talking to us today.

Margot (32:45)

My pleasure. It was really nice chatting with you.

Cate (32:49)

Before you go, two quick things. First, if you found our podcast helpful, please leave a five-star rating and even better, a review. That helps more travelers find our podcast and that means we can keep creating episodes to help you plan an unforgettable trip to Germany and surrounding countries.

And second, if you're just starting to plan your trip, and you want to enjoy the best of Germany while also skipping those rookie mistakes most travelers unknowingly make, you'll love our best-selling DIY Germany travel planner. Think of it as your travel-savvy best friend who's handing you everything you need to know to plan your perfect trip.

And if you'd like personalized support, upgrade to a one-on-one consult, itinerary review, or even a complete custom itinerary and travel plan. You'll find everything on mygermanylvacation.com.



Thanks so much for listening to the Germany Travel Planning Podcast and until next week, happy travel planning!