

Postcard from ABROAD



THE TOWN OF GÖTTINGEN

BRATWURST, BEER, AND KISSING GÄNSELIESEL

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It's early morning and the sun is gleaming over the tarmac as the direct flight with Condor airlines lands in Frankfurt Germany. In a mere six hours after leaving Halifax, I am standing at the Frankfurt airport completely satiated from the scrumptious German inspired breakfast of fresh breads, flavourful gourmet cheeses and smoked salmon. All served up on the roomy Condor flight.

Once off the plane I can't stop thinking about enticing my palette by indulging in cold and frothy German beer, but it's only seven o'clock in the morning. I decide to board the modern and fast ICE train towards the university town of Göttingen in Lower Saxony. It's about two hours and fifteen minutes from Frankfurt's bustling main station Hauptbahnhof.

The German town of Göttingen has intrigued me for some time since moving to Halifax. It shares a strong historic connection to Halifax's main street of the same name, but of course with a completely different enunciation that I just can't seem to perfect.

Halifax's historic Göttingen Street is celebrating its 250th

anniversary this year. At one time Göttingen Street was the most happening place in town, with its bright lights big city feel. Streetcar tracks ran up and down the main road, vintage diners lined the sidewalks and two movie theatres beckoned you to catch the latest film. It was the place to be.

Long before that in 1774 Göttingen Street was known as Germantown and Dutchtown Street. However, the number of German settlers that lived in the area dissipated, leaving for Lunenburg. The remaining German community petitioned for the name of Göttingen, an homage to the British monarch of the time, King George II. His ancestors were German and he had founded Göttingen University.

Nova Scotia's German roots are strong, and the province is home to Canada's oldest German settlement. When my train pulls into the town of Göttingen in Lower Saxony, I feel an almost instant affinity to this University town of around 150,000 people. The young student vibe in the air is infectious as I meander the terraced streets, while gazing at the quaint German houses with their red roofs, some of which date back to the 12th century.

As I pass several pubs and restaurants the smell of German



food permeates the air. I realize that it is indeed time for a beer and bratwurst (when in Rome). I ask the locals if this fabulous city boasts its own beer and they tell me of course it does. As I sip on a local pint of "Gottinger", nicknamed for the locals, I can't help but wish this smooth premium beer that boasts over six hundred years of brewing tradition could be found back home.

Next stop is Göttingen University, which was founded in 1734. The school is famous for its Nobel Prize winners and its esteemed academic reputation. I am anxious to see The Paulinerkirche Church, which used to be the library where the "Brothers Grimm" worked and is still used as part of the university library today. Its vaulted ceilings and array of historic weathered books lure me in. I want to linger there all day, however time is of the essence and I could have sworn I passed by a handmade ice cream shop in the town centre. A few winding streets later finds me enjoying Göttingen ice cream on a waffle cone. Consisting of almonds, pistachios, vanilla and a German staple Nutella, the taste is delectable.

My time surrounded by the magic of Göttingen is nearing an end. Dusk is settling in as kids clamour for another ride on the carousel at the town centre. I am on a mission to kiss the goose girl "Lizzy" or "Ganseliesel" in German, a statue of a young girl who sits atop the fountain in front of Göttingen's medieval town hall. It is a tradition of the Göttingen university students, upon finishing their doctorate, to climb the fountain and kiss the statue dubbed the "most kissed girl in the world". No doctorate in hand, but with the notion that it may be a long time before I am here again, I climb up lean forward and kiss a girl. ■



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