Munich plays host to numerous breweries, all claiming to serve the most authentic German *bier*.

Since my husband and I yearned to explore this most celebrated aspect of Bavarian culture, we conspired to "taste" our way through Munich.

As Americans, we learned some vital lessons along the way:

- Never, ever challenge a foreigner to a beer drinking contest.
- Small ladies or men with weak wrists should hold a stein with 2 hands to avoid injury.
- No one should plan early morning tours mere hours after leaving a beer hall.

The beer style of choice in *München* is *Helles*, which is a pale lager with malty tones. Munich's trifecta of most famous breweries is comprised of the
Hofbräuhaus
,
Löwenbräu
, and
Augustiner Keller
, the three of which Nick and I were determined to visit.

Our maiden night in Munich was destined to be **Hofbräuhaus** , despite the tourist trap it might be at times. It's easy to roll your eyes as much as you want to at the spectacle that is the German beer hall: the servers dressed in
dirndls
and the obnoxious polka band belting out regional tunes. And we cannot forget the numerous

tourists barely able to stand and entirely unaware of the volume of their voice, but let's face it, you'll be joining in as soon as you're staring at the bottom of your first beer stein.

Nick and I could hear the commotion of German music and the raucous crowd as we approached the *Hofbräuhaus* building. We ducked into the cove-ceilinged interior and made our way past the band, toward the back of the building and sat at a long table with benches that had two guys already seated. As we speak *no* German (in fact, Nick kept saying "*Gracias*" to everyone), we made awkward hand motions to the guys asking if we could sit there. They smiled kindly and gestured for us to sit down. Our groups cordially ignored each other for the first hour, except to take photos for each group.

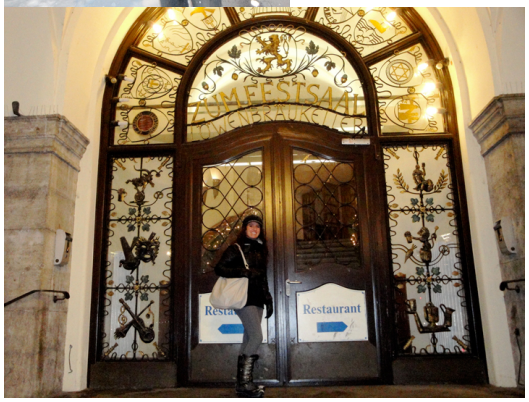
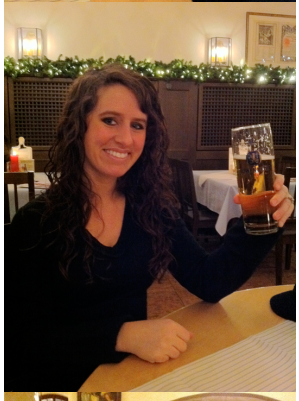
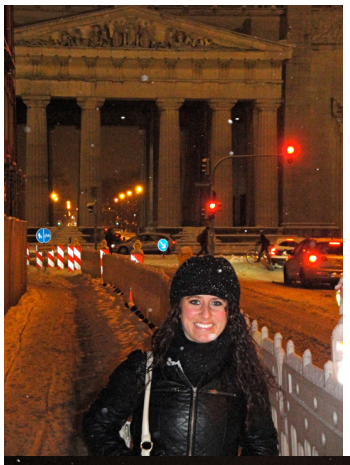
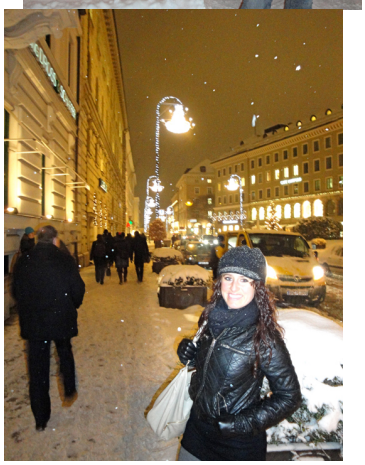
Nick and I ordered a pretzel and a reasonably priced entree for 9€: *Roast Bavarian pork in natural gravy, served with a grated potato dumpling*. From that first bite, I finally understood my husband completely. This German-heritage, meat-and-potatoes boy never had a chance of liking anything else, and as delicious as that meal was, I wondered that anyone could ever want anything else. I honestly did not expect it to be so tasty and satisfying. The pork was succulent and perfectly cooked, and the grated potato made the dumpling texture divine. A spousal territorial war ensued over the remainder of the plate, with Nick finishing it off and practically licking the dish. I should have known better than to share, although it really was plenty of food. (I once had a bad experience in Santorini sharing *souvlaki* with my sister, Jenny, and my cousin, Amber which ended in us bickering over who had the

most tatziki sauce. Totally not worth the money saved by sharing meals, if you ask me).

Nick and I were both drinking the *Hofbräu Original* (which we were already familiar with, being that we live in northern Kentucky where the first
Hofbräuhaus
outside of Munich was established). We toasted and relished the bitter golden brew running down our throats. One beer in, and suddenly we began conversing with the guys next to us. Their English was decent, especially considering we spoke no German, and with the help of speaking slowly with well thought-out sentences and a few hand gestures, we were able to find out the essentials. They were from Interlaken, Switzerland; Michel was a master chef, and Sven was his apprentice. Fast forward another round of beers, and we've scooted together, our arms all around each other, and Nick and I are badly singing along with the song played by the band that Michel and Sven tried to teach us. I never really got it, except the end, where you toast your mugs together, slam them down on the table, where it is likely you will splash out half of your beer, and then drink heartily. Afterwards, I discovered the song is called 'Ein Prosit' and had the lyrics, "Ein Pro-sit, ein Pro-sit... der Gemut-lich-keit! Ein Prosit, Ein Pro-O-sit der Gemut-lich-keit!" (Source:
www.destination-munich.com/oktoberfest-songs.html
). As many evils that alcohol can be responsible for, I am always amazed at the magical properties it possesses when consumed in moderation -- its ability to cross language barriers and transcend social circles.

At this point in the evening I was getting thumb fatigue from trying to hold up my heavy burden of a liter beer and trying to toast and slam the table. I had the makings of a infinitesimally small blister, which could only signify it was time to switch to the two-handed hold.

Biergarten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