

## OKTOBERFEST IN MÜNCHEN

### 10 THINGS YOU'RE SURE TO NOTICE AFTER AN OKTOBERFEST VISIT

This year's festival **drew in the lowest crowds in 15 years** - bad for business, but good for those of us who didn't fancy queuing for hours in the rain in front of the beer tents. And it didn't seem to affect the atmosphere either. By the evening the main tents were packed.

But if you really want to be part of it, you need to take your chance and jump onto a bench - otherwise you'll be stuck down in an aisle, getting in the waitresses' way and missing the band.

You might ruffle a few feathers (prepare for a girl in a Dirndl to give you a sharp jab in the ribs). But stand your ground, raise your beer glass in a 'Prost' and the locals will accept you soon enough.

#### 7. You can have conversations in foreign languages

At Oktoberfest you will meet Italians, lots of Italians - and these Italians may very well speak neither English nor German. But don't worry, that won't stop them chatting your ear off in Italian, hugging you and taking selfies with you (and in my case offering me some menthol powder to snort up my nose).

#### 8. The drunkenness takes you by surprise

The beer is notoriously pricey at Oktoberfest. But on the other hand you don't need too much to get you drunk - with an average alcohol content of 6 percent, it's stronger than normal beer. And the drunkenness is surprisingly light. In fact I only noticed just how much poison I had in my system when I woke up later that night with a head like a carousel, gasping for water.

#### 9. It's not to everyone's taste

On the bus back to Berlin, I read an **article in Hamburg's Die Zeit** aghast that Oktoberfest was the thing most foreigners seem to associate with Germany. The journalist was horrified at how the festival romanticizes folk culture and implied that its recent success is an incubator for the far right.

Stuffy north Germans might also want to take note that it's popular with foreigners precisely because it's one of the few places in Germany they feel welcomed - and because it's one of the rare places Germans seem to be able to engage in silliness just for the hell of it.