

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe



PHOTOS BY JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

A visitor to the Wildpark in Pforzheim, Germany, feeds a buck. Deer are among the many animals at this low-key outdoor zoo.

A walk among the wild things

German park lets visitors view and feed animals

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Every Sunday. Every holiday. Rain or shine. In a land where everything seems to shut down at one time or another, the Wildpark in Pforzheim is a rare exception in Germany. It's open 365 days a year.

Have an urge to feed a wild boar or marvel at a massive moose? That means you can satisfy those animal longings anytime.

The park is about 30 miles northwest of Stuttgart, a city with its own well-regarded zoo, Wilhelma. But Wildpark is nothing like your typical zoo experience, which often involves long lines and high prices.

Instead, Wildpark has an earthy, no-frills atmosphere that makes it a perfect place to enjoy a little nature without getting gouged.

The park is like a big animal playground and is more interactive than many zoos. With entrance the cost of parking fee — 5 euros per car on weekends (about \$5.50), 3 euros during the week — it also is a bargain.

One of the park's perks is that visitors can feed many of the animals. The sheep will suck snacks right out of your hand, while you can feed the huge antlered elk by sliding grain down a funnel — a hit with young kids.

There also are small play-



Signposts help direct visitors to various parts of the park. Those who want to catch a glimpse of the illusive lynx should visit during feeding times because the cat often remains hidden.

grounds scattered around the grounds for kids to enjoy.

Most of the animals, ranging from a red fox to massive Scottish oxen, are native to Europe. There are few exotic beasts here — no caged tigers or gloomy looking gorillas. The only ones that probably would qualify are the long-legged moose or perhaps the lynx, a small wildcat that slinks around in spacious outdoor area. The other animals seem happy grazing about in their natural habitat.

One top attraction is the otters, which are fed at scheduled times and put on a show from their big swampy pond.

The park is set in a forest with plenty of walking trails. A stroll through the grounds can take up the better part of an afternoon.

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The Wildpark is a popular destination for school children, who can feed many of the animals, such as miniature rams.



A pair of Scottish oxen nestle together on a chilly November day at the Wildpark. The big animals like to use their horns to scratch each other in hard-to-reach places.



NOGA AMI-RAV/Stars and Stripes

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Location: Tiefenbronner Strasse 100, Pforzheim. From Stuttgart, take the A8, heading toward Leonberg. Follow to exit 45b, Pforzheim-Süd and then continue on Wurmberger Strasse until you reach Tiefenbronner Strasse.

TIMES

Open daily from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

COSTS

Entrance is the cost of parking, 5 euros per car on the weekends, 3 euros weekdays.

FOOD

There is a snack bar. There also are tables for picnicking.

INFORMATION

Phone: (+49) (0) 7231-393328, email: wildpark@stadt-pforzheim.de website: tinyurl.com/psen42p

— John Vandiver