



Don't tell anyone, but I'm on the light beers today

Security? I'd like to report a sober person

EUROPEAN BEERCATION

RALPH babe Tash Marti can't say nein to a stein as she hits the booziest beer barns around

AFTER a uni exam that felt like it dragged on for hours, I was ready to hit up Europe for Thirsty Swagman's Oktoberfest Pub Crawl. Only bummer was the day it took in a plane to get there. Jetlagged, I roll into my hotel and almost hit the sack. But I'm not here to sleep. Hello, Oktoberfest!

MUNICH

IF YOU don't like beer then stay home because there's plenty of it

here – and it's bigger than a Coffs Harbour banana. Don't even think mid-strength or low-carb – these guys have no idea what that is.

The Germans have definitely got their priorities in order. The ratio of girls to guys is about 15-1 and, in their dirndls, these babes are hotter than a Pomgolian beer. You haven't lived until you're spilling your stein to a German brass band version of "Highway to Hell" with 10,000 other pissed punters.



There are a variety of tents to drink from, all with their own theme. There's even a carousel venue where the horses and unicorns are substituted with a bar. Just be sure to make a landmark of where you got on – you'll be more lost than Oceanic flight 815 by time you leave.

The tents open at 10am and close at 10pm, so if you're in for the full 12-hour workout, make sure your arms are up to the challenge – the steins are only sold by the litre.

The tents are packed and no-one bails until closing time, when they all go on a series of rollercoaster rides then stumble home, only to wake up to a police siren and do it all over again the next day.

MARIA ALM

OUR next stop is a small town in Austria called Maria Alm. With a population of 2000, it's a bit of a shock coming from Oktoberfest, where the beer tents can hold that many. But quality soon overtakes quantity when we start drinking from roof-based wagon wheels with spirit bottles attached.



Self serve: Having beer taps at your table makes it hard to meet bar babes



“YOU ORDER BOOZE BY THE METRE – 10 BEVERAGES AT A TIME”

At these pubs you order booze by the metre – 10 beverages at a time. And that’s just for you!

This beaut town is easier on the eye than Miranda Kerr in a whipped-cream bikini and, with the Alps in every direction, the only way you can take a bad photo is if you’ve got the lens cap on.

We then venture off to a private residence worth about \$8 million. Alpine boozing at 1200m has never been better. We sit on the roof drinking cold beer and telling bad jokes all afternoon. All that was missing was a barbecue and some Cold Chisel. Maybe next year.

PRAGUE

WHAT’S six times better than a normal packed club? A seven-

storey packed club! Good luck trying to find your way around this place after you’ve had a few, though. Our tip? Tear up your coaster and leave a trail, Hansel and Gretel style.

This is one of about eight joints you’ll stumble across when you crawl your way through the streets with the guys from Prague Pub Crawls. They wait at each one with a shot of absinthe and it’s all downhill from there.

Each pub you go to, you find something different, from underground bars to rock bars. One of our favourites was U Sudu, a wine-cellar-turned-bar



Big jugs: No such thing as a quick drink when beers come in 1L steins





Mrs Claus is driving the sleigh tonight

that tourists don't really know about. The place is an underground maze of rooms, so you may want to try the coaster trick again.

Another great place in Prague is Harley's Bar. They call it the "coolest Hell on Earth" – they pump out solid rock tunes and the entire interior is dedicated to motorcycle history.

The highlight, though, is a joint called The Beer Factory, where each table has its own tap. You play bartender, serving yourself without the fear of getting cut off. The only time you need to get up is if you need a slash. The results are electronically recorded on a giant screen, like the horse racing at the casino, so you can measure up against other tables and do your country/city/mum proud.

One word of warning, though – if you keep the tap running to move yourself up the ladder, make sure you're cashed up because you still have to pay for the beer at the end of the night.

BAMBERG

THIS whole town has a traditional gothic vibe to it – in a hot *Buffy* kind of way. Even better, Bamberg has the world's largest amount of breweries per capita. They brew a variety of beers, the most popular being an ale flavoured like smoked pork. If German pubs are proving too much, you can also visit booze houses that are more Irish than Bono eating a potato while bathing in a tub of Guinness.

If you're yet to buy a shout on your trip, save it for Bamberg. There's a Mexican joint here that dishes up beers for about \$1.60 all night. But in Europe nothing is what it seems, and this ain't your ordinary Mexican restaurant. After dinner, the locals roll in and the joint's transformed into a pumping disco.



Saucy stuff: Tash reckons the snags in Prague really cut the mustard



DÜSSELDORF

IF YOU'VE ever dreamed of drinking in a different pub every day of the year, head straight to Düsseldorf. It's the hardest party pad in Europe, with over 350 pubs and bars end to end, so if you can't find what you're after at one place, you won't be struggling for other options.

Our group of 27 absolutely owned the pubs wherever we went – one house band even responded to our "AC/DC, AC/DC" chant with the power of "Hell's Bells" and "Thunderstruck". We're

not sure if this just works for Acca Dacca, though, so leave your Miley Cyrus chant at home.

The girls here are more smoking than the pork-flavoured ale in Bamberg. At the final bar we stumbled into, you can order any drink in a 5L cylindrical tube. It also featured a stripper pole. By this time, every single punter on the tour was spent. Time for a relaxing holiday somewhere... ♦

Reckon you can handle it? Visit www.oktoberfestpubcrawl.com for details of the 2010 Thirsty Swagman tour. The weak need not apply

