

Stay a while in Stuttgart

 By [Brian Berkman](#)

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Stuttgart, Germany may be best known as the home of Mercedes Benz, Porsche and of Bosch but it is also within proximity of a charming and characteristic University town, Tübingen along the Neckar river, and worth a visit in its own right.

The Mercedes Museum is a must, even if you aren't a petrol head, as it brings home the history of the engine in the most engaging way. You'll need a full three hours to experience this and more if you want to read each of the panels, which I'd recommend.

Most people will travel to Stuttgart to attend an expo at the Stuttgart Messe which forms part of the airport and train station but I recommend you add on a day or two and explore.

The Karlsplatz on a Saturday is a great way to experience this city with its best foot forward. Market stalls with everything from bric a brac to delicious raw produce and cooked things are available. Saturday's, especially in summer, seems the city spends much of its time at sidewalk cafes and promenading the various squares. The 10th century Altes Schloss is a castle at the heart of the old city and open for visitors and nearby Karlsplatz.



Stay at Le Meridien, Stuttgart not only for the best coffee around (they have a partnership with Italian coffee brand Illy) but also for the suburb concierge service that will include free tickets to number of attractions.

The hotel, on Willy-Brand Strasse, is well placed to get you to the Hauptbahnhof to meet your train on foot although there is

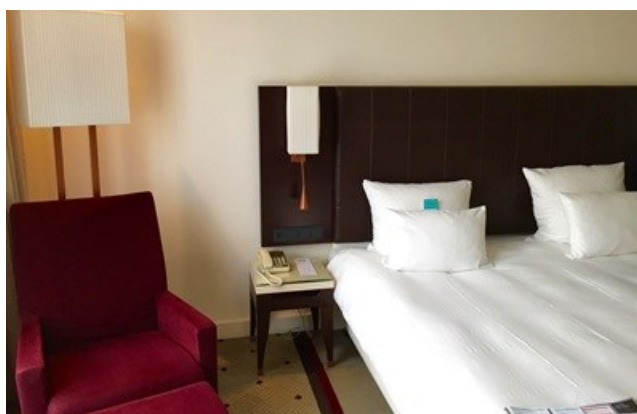
a U-station stop (commuter transport feeder system) right near the hotel, if you don't wish to walk. Although the hotel has secure parking, Stuttgart is a city best enjoyed on foot or with public transport.

I really enjoyed the vast park directly across from the hotel which had a number of casual eateries yet I opted to eat in for dinner at the hotel's terrace restaurant, Le Medoc. They had a brilliant grill buffet along with salads which at €29 represented good value, even in South African Rands and was more affordable than other dining out options in Stuttgart which, we thought, on the whole, were pricy.



Breakfast, if not part of your accommodation package is €25 but, that said, it is so excellent in terms of quality, variety and quantity that it can sustain you for the day.

As a five-star hotel, this property is at the top end in terms of pricing with rooms upwards of €600 but you can expect elegantly appointed rooms that are extremely generous in size for a European capital and contemporary in design. I missed having coffee-making facilities in our room but did like that an iron and an ironing board was neatly secreted into a cupboard along with a trouser press.



The impressive fitness centre forms part of the Le Spa on the ground floor where, for a €75 you will enjoy a 50-minute classic massage. Use of the pool, sauna, steam and fitness centre is complimentary for guests. Wifi is not automatically complimentary and I recommend that you ask for it as you negotiate your check-in. I think charging for wifi in today's always-on world is like charging separately for hot water or air conditioning.

I found our visit to Stuttgart quite different to other European cities with three things visitors need to know.



Firstly, credit cards are not as widely accepted as you would expect, secondly the purchase of train tickets is via a vending machine without human assistance and thirdly, avoid visiting the city on a Sunday as many stores and attractions are closed. The Mercedes Museum, is, however, open between 09h00 and 18h00.

For more, go to www.starwoodhotels.com

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