The Bavarian Lower Main is a real insider tip. Numerous national and international studies have shown that the region offers top quality of life, opportunities for the future and development potential. Innovation and tradition go hand in hand on the border between Hessen and Bavaria, home to around 370,000 people. Aschaffenburg, with around 70,000 inhabitants from 130 countries the “capital” of the Bavarian Lower Main region, boasts Germany’s first traffic intersection outfitted with laser scanners and cameras used to conduct research into accident prevention strategies. A few kilometers along the Main, in Miltenberg, Germany’s oldest inn is still serving guests. Travelers passing through have been stopping at the “Riesen”, a grand old half-timbered house in the middle of the picturesque old town, since the 12th century. And culturally too, the Bavarians are the frontrunners in FrankfurtRhineMain: Germany’s first music school was established in Aschaffenburg in 1810.

The Bavarians in FrankfurtRhineMain do not experience the greatest amount of acceptance from their fellow statesmen in the south of the Free State: The Bavarian Lower Main is for them too close to neighboring Hessen. Furthermore they speak in the Hessian rather than the Bavarian dialect, press applewine and distill schnapps. A quarter-liter jug of Franconian wine is ordered more often than a nice, smooth liter of beer. The north Bavarians enjoy views of the Frankfurt skyline, not Alpine peaks. They hold their own wine festivals rather than that famous ode to beer, the Oktoberfest. All this is not particularly surprising, given that they only became part of Bavaria just under 200 years ago. Around 860 years as part of the former Electorate and Archbishopric of Mainz have left lasting marks on the area.

Aschaffenburg was the second residence of the Mainz bishops and prince-electors who had the castle Schloss Johannisburg built between 1605 and 1619. Citizens of Aschaffenburg have the Archbishop and Prince-Elector of Mainz Friedrich Carl Joseph von Erthal to thank for creating one of the earliest landscaped gardens to grace southern Germany. From 1775, the former electoral game preserve was redesigned into an English-style park. With its artificial lake, watercourses meandering through meadows and small forests, mazes, a Temple of Friendship, Palace and Philosopher’s House, Schönbusch Park has been a popular attraction for the citizens of

During the afternoon some of the band members head upstairs to the performers’ dressing room, while the others prepare the sound check. Quite casually, wearing a T-shirt, shorts and sandals, Claus Berninger sits in his office on the 1st story above the concert hall and tells us about his job. He has been managing the club for 27 years. 25 events take place here each month – from Rock, Pop and Jazz to Heavy Metal and Hip Hop. For him that means a 70 to 80-hour week, starting at 6 a.m. every day. This has nothing in common with the classic sex, drugs & Rock ’n Roll cliché. It is rather a matter of professionalism, passion and responsibility – for the now eleven permanent employees. “I trained as a social worker,” says Berninger. “It gives you a different outlook on things.” His aim was never to hit the financial big-time, which one most certainly can do in this field if willing to take certain risks. He wanted nothing more than good music – regardless of the particular direction. So the amateur musician set about establishing the Colos-Saal’s position in the top ten German clubs – and that in a town with just 70,000 inhabitants.

www.colos-saal.de
Aschaffenburg and its guests even since. On balmy summer evenings in the Hessian-Bavarian border region the famous white-and-blue joie de vivre surfaces in the large beer garden there.

Erthal’s successor, the last Archbishop and Prince-Elector of Mainz Carl Theodor von Dalberg, supported the construction of the municipal theater, which will celebrate its 200th birthday in late October. On the occasion of its anniversary, the Classicist building will be presented in new splendor following more than three years of renovation work totaling €8.4 million. The new theater season will offer audiences both guest performances by renowned companies as well as events by the Aschaffenburg-based Kleinkunstbühne Hofgarten and the music club Colos-Saal. In recent years Hofgarten Director Urban Priol has made the region a key location of the cabaret scene with a string of prominent guests.

The Kirchner-Haus opposite the new Aschaffenburg Main Station is also of supraregional significance. The Expressionist painter Ernst Ludwig Kirchner was born there in 1880. As a young boy he would observe the hustle and bustle on the street from his first-story apartment. “As a boy I always sat at the window and drew what I saw; women with baby carriages, trees, railway trains…” wrote Kirchner in a letter in 1916. The new “Kirchner-Haus Aschaffenburg” association remembers the cultural city’s famous son. Some fans of the artist in Aschaffenburg want to set up a room documenting Kirchner’s childhood in the house in which he was born.

Aschaffenburg The magnificent red-golden sandstone Schloss Johannisburg roosts high above the city. From here you can also walk to the Pompejanum, a perfect replica of a Roman residential villa.

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For the purposes of tourism advertising, the region between the hills of the Odenwald and Spessart and along the River Main now describes itself as “Churfranken”. Churfranken, or Churfranconia, encompasses 20 small towns and villages, including the wine-producing towns of Klingenberg, Miltenberg, Bürgstadt and the handball stronghold Großenstadt, which all attract tourists with their palaces, castles, vineyards, half-timbered houses and hiking trails. With the new name, the region is calling to mind its historical connection to Mainz. Churfranconia is a wine-producing country: The Franconian Red Wine Trail invites guests to explore the vineyards. The famous Pinot Noir, with which vintners such as Paul Fürst and his son Sebastian from Bürgstadt have achieved international renown, thrives on the steep red sandstone terraces. The castles of Churfranconia offer more than just beautiful views of the Main Valley. In the summer months they serve as the backdrop for a number of festivals and concerts. Visitors from all over Frankfurt/RhineMain attend the annual Clingenburg-Festspiele in Klingenbg. This summer “Museum.Burg.Miltenberg” opened at the Miltenburg. The Medieval castle, which was closed to visitors for three decades, has been restored at a cost of 2.8 million euros and now, as opposed to the old, clattering suits of armor one may expect, houses icons and Modern art from the 20th and 21st centuries. Yet it is not only art from the 21st century that can be found in the region, but modern companies and market leaders, too. The Lower Main is a hub for the automobile supplier industry; the airbag was developed here 30 years ago. Along-
Arnold Dirker takes a deep breath. Delightful. For him delivering the fruit is one of the best moments. “The smell of the ripe fruit. Just marvelous. This aroma should be preserved forever,” says the distiller. Dirker took up this career path out of necessity. By the mid-1980s there was little money to be earned with fruit-growing alone. That is when he came up with the idea of distilling the fruit. He obviously had a good nose for it. In 1995, he was voted the international “Schnapps distiller of the Year” and since then his business has been growing at a double-digit rate. With twelve employees he today produces over 25,000 schnapps, liquors and spirits for 16,000 clients and 1,800 businesses in the gastronomy industry – this also includes a number of starred restaurants such as the “Traube Tonbach.” Of the now more than 70 kinds of schnapps, “Damson Plum” is their bestseller. Dirker is especially proud of his patented “Hazelnut Spirit.” The whole range is available to sample every year on the last Sunday in October at the festival “Der Kahlgrund brennt,” where local distillers present their products.

As of this year, the Lower Main has been covered by the Aschaffenburg University of Applied Sciences Research Initiative Center (ROI-FAS), which focuses on the development of new intelligent sensor technology. Here, cars are equipped with sensors, which are to warn drivers of potential dangers ahead of time. 25 million euros have been made available to the project for accident prevention. Research is taking place, amongst other destinations, at the busy Aschaffenburg interchange.

The research being conducted in the Bavarian Lower Main is not just restricted to enterprises and universities. The region regularly takes the top places in “jugend forscht” competitions. This year, two students became national winners with their “magic formula” against bad breath. The research duo from the Hanns-Seidel school will be going to Helsinki at the end of September to take part in the European round organized by the European Commission, where they will present their “No Bad Breath” magic formula to a jury. Whether the boys will describe themselves as Bavarian or as coming from Frankfurt-Rhine-Main? Who knows?