

Baden Baden Bollywood

By Musafir

“Baden Baden is so nice, you have to say it twice.” This quote by Bill Clinton is engraved in the main town square of Baden Baden, Germany with his smiling picture.

“What was Bill Clinton doing here in the Black Forest?” I wondered.

My friend Bill (not Bill Clinton) and I wandered through a colorful crowd of tourists, shoppers, skaters and, oddly, some business people. The old Alsatian architecture surrounding the city’s Main Square seemed to illustrate a movie set – a reminder of many Bollywood (movie city of India) movies’ song sequences.

“Do you know Bollywood?” I asked Bill.

“Of course I do! ‘Kuchh Kuchh Hota Hai!’” answered Bill. I was surprised at his knowledge of Bollywood. “And you look like a Bollywood star in your fedora and sheds,” Bill made a crack at me after a pause.

“Well, you yourself resemble Alec Baldwin,” I returned his compliment.

“Yes, I do,” Bill accepted the compliment with a firm approval.

Finally, we decided to eat dinner at *Restaurant Stahlbad*, one of the finest restaurants in Baden Baden. As we entered into the restaurant, Bill introduced me to Katrina, the hostess as a famous Bollywood star. To my surprise, Katrina too was familiar with Bollywood. She believed Bill.

“And you must be knowing Mr. Baldwin,” I gestured towards Bill.

We were given the best seat in the house with a view. Through the window I could see numerous parks, water fountains and picturesque shops. Baden Baden is a city of space where people seem very happy. This has inspired many Bollywood filmmakers to shoot their musicals there.

Soon after we settled down, the chef came with a bottle of wine. “This one is on the house,” he said.

“So, you like Bollywood movies?” I asked the chef.

“Not that much the movie, but I know some songs,” he replied. “Should I fix rice curry and mango chutney for you?”

I was taken aback by his knowledge of Indian cuisine. “I am impressed,” I said to him in appreciation.

Through our conversation I came to know that a famous Bollywood composer turned actor, Himesh filmed his movie, “Aapka Saroor” in Baden Baden. He was a fan of rice curry and mango chutney prepared by the same chef. While the chef was attending me, Katrina was more interested in Alec Baldwin. Bill was busy enjoying *Filet vom Weideochsen auf Wirsingkraut*.

After the dinner we decided to visit *Das Casino Baden Baden*. That is the largest casino in the Alsatian region. The decoration of the casino was overwhelming with velvet, glitz and red carpets. As bill and I tried to enter the main hall, we were stopped by the guard.

“You need a jacket and a tie to enter,” he declared.

“He is from Bollywood,” Bill introduced me again.

“Bollywood? Please wait here.” The guard left the room and returned with pairs of jackets and ties for Bill and me.

Before we entered the main gambling hall, the word had spread that dignitaries from both Hollywood and Bollywood were in the casino. Both Bill and I were scared to see the gamblers betting unholy amounts of money on black jack, keno, craps and poker tables. We decided to leave the place sheepishly before someone found out our true identity.

The rest of the time we decided to give up our celebrity status and walked through the art galleries, boutiques and arcades listening to the beats of techno and squat parties coming from the terraces of the nearby restaurants. I could sense why the Bollywood crowd would flock there, but kept on wondering, “What was Bill Clinton doing here in the Black Forest?”