

It's amazing how many business meetings there are in Munich in late September

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During my emergency vacation, we stopped at a German supermarket, and my friend loaded up on all sorts of odd and fascinating products. This is something he does every time he travels abroad. At the register, my friend did the work of unloading the cart onto the conveyor belt while I went ahead to bag and to deal with any questions from the cashier, since I was the only German-speaking person in our little group. The woman behind my friend looked at what he was buying and made some remark that implied that he did not make the most price-efficient choices. My friend replied, “Oh, we’re from the United States, and I’m just buying things that we don’t have in the States.” The woman’s demeanor changed. She was no longer upset that my friend failed to purchase the sale items. Instead, she said with concern, “But these are not typical German items.” My friend explained, “I just like buying different things.” I was out of earshot for this conversation. Otherwise, I would have quipped, “Keine Sorgen. Letztes Mal haben wir typische deutsche Sachen gekauft.” (“Don’t worry. Last time, we bought typical German things.”) **Bonus chatter:** As we loaded the groceries into the car, a gentleman noticed that we were speaking English and pegged us for foreigners. He asked us, “What brings you to Munich?” My friend explained, “I’m here for a business meeting.” The gentleman replied with a twinkle in his eye, “It’s amazing how many business meetings there are in Munich in late September.”

By popular demand: A few people wanted to know what sort of odds and ends my friend bought. To be honest, I don’t remember because, after all, it was seven years ago. But it included novelty candies (for example, in the United States, candy cigarettes are difficult if not impossible to find), food packaged in squeezable tubes, and cans of fruit cocktail. I don’t know why he got the fruit cocktail.

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