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Barterman's



Barter

A world traveler starts his quest with an apple and trades up until he lands a home in Hawaii



PHOTOS COURTESY MICHAEL WIGGE

By Steven Mark
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Psst! Hey, I've got a deal for you. Don't worry, it's not somebody hawking hot watches or counterfeit designer bags out of the trunk of his car. It's not even Monty Hall of "Let's Make a Deal."

But it might just be Barterman, a world traveler who's used his ardor for bartering to transform an apple into a home on Hawaii island.

Barterman is the alter ego of Michael Wigge, a German television personality. Ever since he was a child, he'd dreamed of living in Hawaii, imagining it to be an exotic paradise as well as a refuge.

"I had all these posters in my room, when I was boy, 8 years old," said Wigge, whose adventure is told in detail in his new book "How to Barter for Paradise." "So I couldn't really tell where was Hawaii. It was more kind of an image, a dream location. And I think this is very common in Central Europe. ... And if you look from Germany, it's really the most secluded place. You really have to travel halfway around the world to reach Hawaii."

German TV personality Michael Wigge traveled the world bartering goods, trading from a half-eaten apple, left, up to a mobile home on Hawaii island, inset. Above, Wigge promotes his cause as superhero Barterman with two New York City vendors.

A few years ago, Wigge, now 37, met a Canadian who'd managed a series of barter transactions, starting with a paper clip and ending with a house. That spurred his own bartering bonanza, which started from the German city of Mainz in the spring of 2011 with a half-eaten apple to barter. His ultimate goal was to have a house in Hawaii within 200 days.

Wigge had certain things going for him. He got the backing of a German public television station, who sent two technicians along to film him as he sought barter transactions around the world. If that sounds like reality TV, there was a bit

Please see SWAPPING, D3

Slew of smartphone apps offers aid for better night's rest

By Molly Young
New York Times

Insomnia is always a miserable experience, but at least it used to be an eclectic one. On long nights a sleepless soul had options: toss and turn, pour a drink, smoke a



In late 2012 the American Medical Association issued a policy stating that "exposure to excessive light at night, including extended use of various electronic media, can disrupt sleep or exacerbate sleep disorders." But even without the association's corroboration,

by the dozen: offerings with names like SleepBot and eSleep, represented by icons of placid sheep or glowing moons. The offerings fall into two basic categories. One tracks sleep patterns through the smartphone's accelerometer (the doodad that recognizes when your phone is

By placing the phone next to you in bed and tapping a button, you record your movements and a sleep chart is created. But according to Dr. Clete Kushida, medical director of the Stanford Sleep Medicine Center, these apps are hardly precise.

"Without EEG — brain wave ac-

SWAPPING: Barterman shares tricks of the trade

Continued from D1

more to it, Wigge said.

"It's a bit more like a reality documentary," he said. "I always looked into the barter culture of each country. So do people still barter in India? How is bartering in the United States?"

Though he traveled to countries where bartering is perhaps more commonplace than the U.S., he felt confident about his chances here. "I knew that something like this — a fun project, with a challenge, the guy's trying to reach someplace — people like this in American society."

That's where Barterman appeared. Wigge bought a Flash superhero costume,

altered it a bit, and took to the streets of New York in an attempt to get attention. The stunt had little impact there, as Hurricane Irene was bearing down on the city, but in Los Angeles it landed Wigge on local television. He also used social media extensively to set up deals and publicize his mission.

His trip took him through 14 countries on six continents on an itinerary that was half-planned and half-spontaneous. But it was all in the name of bartering, such as the time when a billionaire jade collector in Singapore contacted him and offered him "a really good deal" in exchange for jade.

"Obviously I had to sponta-

neously go to Singapore, but since he requested jade, I had to go first to New Zealand, which is a typical jade country, and barter my Australian goods and then go to Singapore." Wigge got three gold coins and 3 ounces of silver for two pieces of jade.

His adventure went far beyond bartering. Wigge wound up climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, racing a former Olympic runner from Kenya and playing one-on-one basketball against a New York City street player, who schooled him. He met with a colorful cast of characters, from expat hippies in India, where he managed to obtain a tuk-tuk — a motorized rickshaw — to artists and musicians who bartered their works with him. One of the items he brought to Hawaii to barter was a contract with musician Coati Mundi for 25 percent of the proceeds from a single.



COURTESY MICHAEL WIGGE

Michael Wigge drives a motorized rickshaw called a tuk-tuk, one of several items that he bartered for during his journey, which ended with a mobile home on Hawaii island.

In all, Wigge conducted 42 transactions, acquiring items like cigarettes, a riding mower, bags of tea, a 300-

year-old Bible, travel vouchers for a trip to Africa and silk fabric. He arrived in Hawaii in the fall of 2012 with porcelain pieces, gold coins, an expensive wristwatch, surfboards, a painting, a voucher for a stay at a Los Angeles mansion, and the Coati Mundi contract and one of his records. He wound up with a mobile home on a property near Volcano, and he's still a bit astonished that he pulled it off.

"I'm so glad I didn't worry beforehand," he said. "I felt really confident — 'I could do this, so just do it.' I don't know why, maybe it's just my personality. Thinking back, there were a lot of risks where it would not work out.

"Maybe I'm really lucky, or

I just believed it."

Wigge is spending time on both Oahu and Hawaii island, traveling back and forth while he renovates his new mobile home, and gives speeches in Honolulu about travel. He's written another book, "How to Travel the World for Free," and produced several travel stories for German television. He can be contacted via his website, howtogetahouseforfree.com.

He'll let you stay in his mobile home, which has suffered a bit from the Big Island humidity, if you have some skills to barter.

"That was the idea when I reached the house," he said, "Someone who wants to paint the wall, he can stay there for a week."

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3D

NEED FOR SPEED 3D (PG-13) 12:55
3:55 7:00 10:00
300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE 3D (R) 11:45
4:15 6:45 9:15

NEED FOR SPEED (PG-13) 11:30 2:30
5:30 8:30

TYLER PERRY'S THE SINGLE MOMS CLUB (PG-13) 11:15 12:15 1:55 2:55 4:35 5:35
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300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE (R) 10:45 11:45
1:15 2:15 3:45 4:45 6:15 7:15 8:45 9:45

MR. PEABODY & SHERMAN (PG) 10:45

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3D

NEED FOR SPEED 3D (PG-13) 4:55 10:35
300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE 3D (R) 11:45
2:10 4:35 7:00 9:25

MR. PEABODY & SHERMAN 3D (PG)
10:40 PM

NEED FOR SPEED (PG-13) 10:30 11:15
1:20 2:05 4:10 7:00 7:45 9:50

TYLER PERRY'S THE SINGLE MOMS CLUB (PG-13) 12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30

300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE (R) 10:20 12:45
3:10 5:35 8:00 10:25

MR. PEABODY & SHERMAN (PG) 10:10
11:00 12:35 1:20 2:55 3:40 5:10 6:00 7:30
8:20 9:50

TABLOID TRUTH (NR) 11:25 2:05 4:45
7:25 10:05

NON-STOP (PG-13) 10:35 1:00 3:25 5:50
8:15 10:40

SON OF GOD (PG-13) 10:25 1:25 4:20 7:15
10:10

STAYING OVER AGAIN (NR) 12:00 4:45 7:30