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DEAR SUBSCRIBER


### The World's Best Beer

In the 1960s and 70s Americans began traveling to Europe in great numbers. What we experienced over there, including what we ate and drank, changed our culture. Suddenly breakfast in Fresno and Dubuque, just as in New York and San Francisco, might include French roast instead of Folgers or a croissant instead of a donut. The wine boom was ignited at least in part by American travelers who, having seen it on every table in Europe, sought to make wine a part of daily life over here. We became more interested in food. Cookbooks by Julia Child, who was billed as the "French Chef," began to outsell the ubiquitous, fictitious Betty Crocker.

Another thing we discovered was that beer didn't have to be what it was at home: fizzy, watery, headless stuff that looked like weak tea. The major breweries of America, intent on creating brand loyalty in males, 18 to 25 years old, marketed a product they hoped would win instant approval by that segment of

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### Missing an Issue?

Last month there was a computer error at the firm which mails *Gemütlichkeit*. Some subscribers were sent multiple copies of the newsletter while others were omitted from the mailing. If you did not receive the September 1994 issue headlined "Baden-Baden Hotel Review" please call 800-521-6722 and you will immediately be sent a copy. If you reach our voice mail please try to provide your five-digit subscriber number as well as your name. 

# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

The Travel Letter for Germany, Austria, Switzerland & the New Europe

## ITALIAN SWISS: LUGANO & ITS LAKE

*Associate Editor Bruce Woelfel pays a visit to the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino. There, among Lugano's sheltering palms, he rides lake steamers and sips the odd glass of Fendant.*

**U**ntil completion of 10-mile St. Gotthard railway tunnel, the Alps were a formidable barrier separating the rest of Switzerland from the canton of Ticino, its largest city Lugano, and the many picturesque smaller towns along the shores of Lakes Maggiore and Lugano. Though that geographical impediment is now reduced, the differences remain. Italian Switzerland is still singularly distinct from the rest of Switzerland in climate, language, food and culture.

While Ticino has the

subtropical climate, cuisine and architecture of Italy, it retains the prosperity, orderliness and efficiency that are uniquely Swiss. An excellent opportunity to observe the changing landscape is by traveling the rails from Zürich to Lugano.

In summer, take the late afternoon train, departing at 5:03 p.m. (two hours earlier in winter). The most exciting part of the journey comes after passing through the tunnel that pierces the Alps into Ticino. In this famous "triple spiral" section of

the route the train continually circles back on itself as it loses altitude. Negotiating the tight circles, wheels screaming in protest, we viewed the same scene from different vantage points. Perched among the mountains were a narrow meadow, a steepled church and a small town which we seemed to pass repeatedly. Waterfalls coursed down the sides of surrounding snowy mountains. At this point, only 45 minutes from Lugano, our concentration on the magnificent scenery was broken by an attendant pushing a refreshment cart offering "coffee, brandy, Kirsch, something to eat?" Hungry and thirsty travelers could select from its six shelves of food and drink.

Arriving at Lugano's hillside station, the delightfully balmy early evening air invited a stroll to the town rather than aboard the funicular, which is conveniently located near the platform.

No directions are needed, for all paths lead downtown. Narrow, sloping, paved walkways wind down, soon widen-

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## WINTER TRAVEL DEALS

**T**he very best travel bargains to Europe are available in winter. For many years **DER Tours**, the German-owned, Los Angeles-based travel company, has offered some of the best deals and 1994/95 is no exception.

For example, DER is currently selling six nights in London, including hotel with breakfast, a city tour, a flight bag and roundtrip air from the East Coast, for from \$498, double occupancy. These prices are for tourist class hotels — the **Comfort Inn Hyde Park** or the **Comfort Inn Kensington** — during the period January 8 through February 28. For a week in a better hotel such as the **Holiday Inn Bloomsbury** or the **Rubens**, the cost will increase by from \$60 to \$150. These packages are for travel from November 1 through March 31, 1995.

Here are the lowest prices for other city packages, all include five nights hotel (except London which is six nights) and roundtrip air.

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## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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the population. Beer with some complexity that was an "acquired taste" was to be avoided.

I was one of those blithely rolling through life content with Budweiser or, on special occasions, a Michelob. In the 1950s and 60s, these two Anheuser-Busch beers, along with Schlitz, Papst Blue Ribbon and a few others, were known in the west as "eastern beers" and usually cost slightly more than local stuff like Olympia (known, of course, to every high school kid on the coast as "Oly"), Lucky Lager, Blitz Weinhard and Burgermeister. We didn't know any better.

When I made my first trip to Germany in the 70s, my uncle John, already an experienced consumer of German brews, warned me that the beer there wouldn't come cold as in the U.S. That worried me some as I had heard tales of German beer being served at room temperature. However, he assured me I wouldn't care whether it was cold and he was right. From my first glass of *pils* I loved it. (Beer in Germany is actually served cool and not at room temperature.) It is one of the reasons I keep going back.

An early outcome of Americans traveling to Europe was that we began to import the beer. Mostly it came in bottles, but some restaurants brought it in by the keg. Doesn't work either way. Whether beer we import from Europe is simply not the same stuff served over there, or it can't stand the trip, or both, I don't know. What I do know is that the glass of Späten I can buy at any of several restaurants with a 30-minute drive from my home has little relationship to a glass of Späten in Munich. Beer is best when consumed soon after it is brewed, and the closer to the brewery the better. Sometime in the mid-70s I read an article which rated the Czech brew, Pilsner Urquell, as the world's finest. I purchased several bottles from a place which sold exotic beers and was greatly disappointed. It was terrible, flat and off-tasting. Now I realize that that

beer was probably several months old and in transit may have experienced a wide range of temperatures.

It was in Vienna in about 1983 that I discovered the real Budweiser, a Czech brew also known as Budvar from a town called Ceske Budejovice. At that time, I believe, it was just beginning to be exported along with Pilsner Urquell (enabling me to at last discover the *real* Pilsner Urquell). In my personal list of the world's best beers they are #1 and #2.

As good a reason as any to go to Europe is that you'll never see Budvar in the United States. About 50 years ago Anheuser-Busch cut a deal which gave it the exclusive U. S. marketing rights to the name Budweiser. Budvar kept the rights in Europe. Now A-B wants to play a role in Europe. Not a good idea says CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale), an organization of British beer lovers. We agree.

In a story in the magazine *Beer*, Stephen Cox of CAMRA is quoted as follows:

"As a consumer body, we have an enormous suspicion of any large brewery conglomerate that takes over an artisanal brewery. Any beer that Germans will go out of their way to drink is obviously a very important and classic beer. Such a beer should be preserved, and there have been too many instances where a large brewer has taken over a small brewery, promising that 'no, we'll never change the beer.' But then, the person who made the promise is fired, or a new managing director is hired, or the acquired brewery is spun off into a different division, and the quality of the beer suffers enormously. Budvar is one of the Czech national treasures..."

Budvar, you see, needs money to expand and become more modern. The article in *Beer* claims that Budvar's distinctive flavor is in part due to the yeasts that live in the planks of the thousands of its old wooden fermenting and lagering tanks. Under communism labor was cheap enough and plentiful enough to regularly scrub and maintain these

wooden barrels. With a rich, new partner the wood would likely be replaced with stainless steel tanks. Plans are for the Czech government to wind up as the brewery's majority owner with a foreign partner. Enter Anheuser-Busch which has mounted a campaign to be that partner. The courtship is a hot and heavy one. According to *Beer*, A-B has already opened a "cultural center" in Ceske Budejovice and purchased a four-story building on the town square where it offers business seminars for the local populace. A-B has also sponsored a Junior Chamber of Commerce and made a \$50,000 donation to the University of South Bohemia.

I believe in capitalism but I fear what Anheuser-Busch will do to the beer. Will it taste better? Get serious. The article in *Beer* had good advice for all of us: "For a taste of the real Budvar, hurry to the Czech Republic. It may be only a matter of months before the brand rights change hands — and perhaps the recipe, too."

### Ringhotels Special Price

Last month our piece on Baden-Baden included a review of the *Allee-Hotel Bären*, part of the "Ringhotels" group. We like this hotel very much but noted in our story that its rates — up to \$134 for a single room and as much as \$234 for a double — are somewhat high. Subsequently we have been apprised by Hans Boldt, whose company, Boldt International, is the U.S. reservations' agent for Ringhotels, that by booking through his toll-free service — 800-558-6850 — the guaranteed dollar rate is \$79 for single rooms and \$118 for doubles, including buffet breakfast. At these rates the Bären becomes a bargain.

These prices, in fact, apply at all Ringhotels except for certain four-star hosteleries in major cities. In these few there is, in addition to the \$79 single, \$118 double prices, a supplement of approximately \$10 to \$12 per person.

These guaranteed dollar prices also apply at another of Mr. Boldt's clients, *Idyll Hotels Schweiz*, a group of 19 hotels in Switzerland, where \$118 for a double room is an even better value. — RHB ☐

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## GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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### HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Category	Scale	Hotel Rating Criteria	
Unacceptable	0 - 3	People/Service	30%
Adequate	4 - 7	Location/Setting	15%
Average	8 - 11	Guestrooms	30%
Above Average	12 - 15	Public rooms	5%
Excellent	16 - 20	Facilities/Restaurant	20%

#### Special Designations

**G** By virtue of location, decor, special charm, warmth of management, or combination thereof, an especially pleasant establishment.

**\$** Offers significant value.

#### Restaurant Criteria

Food	65%
Service	20%
Atmosphere	15%

## LUGANO

Continued from page 1

ing to cobblestoned streets with Christmas-like strings of bright lights. Beautifully preserved stone buildings are set tight against each other. Shop windows are brightly lit and menus displayed outside small restaurants. The way levels to a plaza and soon passes the lower terminus of the funicular and into Lugano's car-free downtown at the edge of the Lake.

Soon we were ensconced at a table under the welcoming green awnings of **Ristorante Lungalago** (Riva V. Vela), enclosed by the quiet night and basking in the ambiance of this wonderful lakeside town. We sipped Fendant wine alongside a plaza alive with pink spraying fountains. The black waters of Lake Lugano reflected the outlines of brightly lit hotels and dimly illuminated passenger boats, which glided slowly back and forth.

Urban and urbane, yet relaxed, with all creature comforts at hand, it was an idyllic setting for a first go at Swiss-Italian cuisine. A light meal of salad with mixed lettuce and sliced cherry tomatoes, followed by Risotto Adriatico, richly-flavored rice with shrimp, scallops, calamari and small clams, came to 48 Sfr (\$38) for one including wine, and was a marvelous beginning to our Lugano sojourn.

Lugano offers an ample selection of moderately-priced hotels. Here is our appraisal of several:

### Lugano Hotels

#### Walter au Lac

Ideally located on Piazza Rezzonico, a square with fountains near the downtown boat landing, the comfortable Walter au Lac, with expansive water views, is the best value among the hotels reviewed in this issue. Though it has a small and unimpressive lobby and a rather modest restaurant, the Walter is spacious where it counts most: in the very large double guest rooms, many with wide terraces and tables and chairs overlooking the lake. Rooms are not air-conditioned, but this is seldom a hardship in the pleasant lake climate.

**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

## LUGANO

Population: 29,000

Elevation 937 feet

Lugano Tourist Office  
Riva Albertolli 5, CH-6901 Lugano  
Phone: 091/214664. Fax: 091/227653

Automatic Hotel Reservation System  
Riva Albertolli 5 / Via Stauffacher (Lugano Tourist Office)

#### Rail Information

SFR Railway Station, Lugano  
157/3333 1.40 Sfr. per minute

#### Other Transport Information

Obtainable from Lugano Tourist Office. Passengers should insert the correct fare into the machine at each bus stop before entering the bus. Passengers without a valid ticket must pay a surcharge.

#### Melide

The resort town is the site of Swissminiature - a scale model of the most picturesque features of Switzerland: towns, villages, monuments, and transportation. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Entrance 10 Sfr. (\$8).

#### Monte Bre (altitude 3,053 feet)

Accessible by automobile or funicular from Cassarate. View from the summit of the bay of Lugano, its surroundings and to the Bernese and Valais Alps.

#### Monte San Salvatore (altitude 2,995 feet)

By 15-minute funicular from Paradiso (see description of Restaurant Vetta San Salvatore). View of the Lake, the Matterhorn, and across the Plain of Lombardy to the Appenines. Scenic walks.

#### Gandria

Accessible by automobile, foot or by boat from Lugano. Picturesque lakeside village at the foot of Monte Bre. Narrow streets, fish restaurants (see description of Rockabella Restaurant).


#### Morcote

Lovely town with old houses, shops and souvenirs, 7 miles from Lugano. The village park, Parco Scherrer, has typical vegetation and architectural objects (see story on Restaurant Scherrer).

#### Campione

An Italian enclave within Switzerland. No customs formalities. Swiss currency and telephone service. Casino.

#### Monte Generoso

The highest mountain around Lugano. Reached by cogwheeled railway from Capolago. A panoramic view over the Alps, the lakes Lugano, Como and Maggiore. Interesting hiking trails. 

We found management to be particularly friendly, gracious and proud of its hotel.

**Address:** Hotel Walter au Lac, Piazza Rezzonico 7, CH-6900 Lugano

**Phone:** 091 / 227425

**Fax:** 091 / 234233

**Location:** Facing the lake, near the town center

**Rooms:** 6 singles, 30 doubles

**Proprietor:** A. Cereda

**Prices:** Singles 99 Sfr. (\$80), doubles 166 Sfr. (\$133)

**Meals:** All available

**Facilities:** First floor restaurant with lake view

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled Access:** Good

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** Public garage 5 minutes walk from hotel

**Rating:** EXCELLENT 16/20 G \$

#### International au Lac.

A quarter mile from the center of town, this distinguished looking six-story hotel facing Lake Lugano has been run by the Schmid family for the last 33 years. They continually remodel the 200 year-old building which, before 1900, was a monastery. The latest renovation, in 1994, added a tiled outdoor swimming pool. There is a gracious lobby and several public rooms with high ceilings and ornamental chandeliers. The comfortable dining room one level up has large circular skylights. In the rear garden, stone steps leads to another courtyard and the new sparkling-clean swimming pool and lounging area.

Most rooms have views of the lake with private balconies. A typical lakeside single, though narrow and sans TV or air-conditioning, rents for 155 Sfr. (\$125), has a wide balcony with lounge chair and a comfortable bathroom with a large bathtub. Average-sized lakeside doubles, which seem larger because of high ceilings, rent for 130 Sfr. (\$100) per person. Double rooms which look toward the city and the hills are 90 Sfr. (\$72) per person. A generous buffet breakfast is included in the room price.

**Address:** Hotel International au Lac, Via nassa 68, CH-6901 Lugano

**Phone:** 091 / 227541

**Fax:** 091 / 227544

**Location:** On the lake, one-half mile from the center of town

**Rooms:** 30 singles, 50 doubles

**Proprietor:** Gaglio Schmid

**Prices:** Singles 105-155 Sfr. (\$84-\$124), doubles 180-260 Sfr. (\$144-\$208)

**Meals:** All available

Continued on page 4...

## LUGANO

*Continued from page 3*

**Facilities:** Outdoor terrace and swimming pool

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled Access:** Good

**Closed:** The week prior to Easter

**Parking:** Hotel garage 18 Sfr. (\$14) per night

**Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 14/20

### Excelsior

The more luxurious, expensive Excelsior is next door to Walter au Lac and shares the quiet location, lake frontage and promenade. Its guestrooms are not as large as Walter au Lac but are comfortably modern with air-conditioning and most of the usual conveniences such as hair dryers and minibars. The hotel also has two restaurants, with Italian and international cuisine, as well as delicatessen service and a bar.

**Address:** Excelsior Hotel, Riva V. Vela 4, CH-6900 Lugano

**Phone:** 091/228661

**Fax:** 091/228189

**Location:** On the lake near the center of town

**Rooms:** 10 singles, 70 doubles

**Proprietor:** Rezzonico family

**Prices:** Singles 170-190 Sfr. (\$136-\$152), doubles 220-260 Sfr. (\$176-\$208)

**Meals:** All available

**Facilities:** Hairdresser

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled Access:** Good

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** Private garage

**Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 14/20

### Romantik Hotel Ticino

A small, luxurious and rather pricey hotel in the heart of the pedestrian district of Lugano, close to the funicular. Average-sized guestrooms in the renovated 500-year-old building have been very attractively restored and are luxuriously decorated with print wallpaper, gold mirrors and french provincial styled furniture. The restaurant includes an outdoor courtyard which is especially inviting for dining during spring and summer months.

**Address:** Romantik Hotel Ticino,

Piazza Cioccaro 1, CH-6901 Lugano

**Phone:** 091/227772

**Fax:** 091/236278

**Location:** In the center of town, near the funicular

**Rooms:** 4 singles, 16 doubles

**Proprietor:** C & S Buchmann

**Prices:** Singles 200-260 Sfr. (\$160-\$208), doubles 320-380 Sfr. (\$256-\$304)

**Meals:** All available

**Facilities:** Outdoor terrace

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled Access:** Good

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** Private garage for 20 Sfr. per night

**Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 13/20

### City Garni

This small, moderately-priced hotel is in an old, but nicely remodeled building, in Lugano's center. The average-sized guestrooms, entered via a covered inner courtyard, look out to a narrow, quiet pedestrian street and are decorated in neutral colors. They are equipped with radios and telephones but no TV. The small bathrooms have distinctively Swiss "sitz" baths (small tub-shower combinations in which one may bathe in a sitting position with legs and lower body immersed). There is also a tiny lobby and a pleasant breakfast room.

**Address:** Hotel City Garni, Crocicchio Cortogne 7 CH-6901 Lugano

**Phone:** 091/236244

**Fax:** 091/235789

**Location:** Center of town three minutes walk from funicular connecting to the railway station

**Rooms:** 12 singles, 18 doubles

**Proprietor:** S. Müller

**Prices:** Singles 80 Sfr. (\$64), doubles 130-140 Sfr. (\$104-\$112)

**Meals:** Breakfast only

**Facilities:** Television room

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled Access:** Good

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** Public garage five minutes walk from hotel

**Rating:** AVERAGE 11/20

### Nassa Garni

The Nassa is in Lugano's central zone, near the lake. Average-sized doubles, cheerfully decorated in white with brown print drapes are equipped with radio and telephone. Some rooms have a private balcony or terrace with a lake view.

**Address:** Albergo Garni Nassa, Via Nassa 60/62, CH-6900 Lugano

**Phone:** 091/232833-34

**Fax:** 091/232835

**Location:** In the central area, five minutes walk from the funicular

**Rooms:** 7 singles, 37 doubles

**Proprietor:** T. Forni

**Prices:** Singles 100-160 Sfr. (\$80-\$128), doubles 156-196 Sfr. (\$125-\$157)

**Meals:** Breakfast only

**Facilities:** Breakfast room and television lounge.

**Credit Cards:** All

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** Private garage

**Rating:** AVERAGE 11/20

### San Carlo

Another moderately-priced hotel, centrally located in the pedestrian zone, two blocks from the lake. Small to average-sized guestrooms, decorated in tones of green and brown, face the street which is used only by shoppers and delivery vehicles. All contain a small desk, television, radio and telephone. The least expensive rooms have private showers but share toilets down the hall. There is a breakfast room but no restaurant.

**Address:** Hotel San Carlo Garni, Via Nassa 28, CH-6901 Lugano

**Phone:** 091/221707

**Fax:** 091/228022

**Location:** Center of town three minutes walk from funicular connecting to railway station

**Rooms:** 8 singles, 18 doubles

**Proprietor:** Castro family

**Prices:** Singles 70-90 Sfr. (\$56-\$72), doubles 120-140 Sfr. (\$96-\$112)

**Meals:** Breakfast only

**Facilities:** Breakfast room

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled Access:** Good

**Closed:** Never

*Continued on page 5...*

**Parking:** Public garage five minutes walk from hotel

**Rating:** AVERAGE 10/20

### Lugano Restaurants

#### Restaurant Parco La Ciano

This elegantly modern, white concrete and glass building looks out to a dining terrace among trees and flowering plants on the edge of Park Ciano. We have found restaurants in the Mövenpick chain to be reliably good throughout Switzerland and Germany. La Ciano is not an exception.

Characteristically, there was a wide selection of food, much of it displayed under glass: salad bar, smoked salmon, fresh fish, steaks, ice cream, pastries and all imaginable varieties of wine and liquor. A three-course meal was 45 Sfr. (\$36). Some of the items available from the ala carte menu include house paté, large portion 14.50 Sfr. (\$12), small portion 9.50 Sfr. (\$7.50); main course of risotto with merlot wine, large portion 16.50 Sfr. (\$13), small portion for 11.50 Sfr. (\$9). The special of the day was Tuscan-style chicken with *risole* potatoes and green salad for 14 Sfr. (\$11). A specialty of the season was various dishes featuring fresh, wild chanterelle mushrooms.

From the extensive salad bar we composed a first course of several kinds of lettuce, mushrooms, olives, corn and carrots in a light vinegar and oil dressing. Our main dish was a brochette that combined veal steak, liver sausage and bacon, along with crisp french fries and a mixture of sliced, fresh vegetables sauteed in butter. With half a liter of beer this satisfying and tasty meal came to 26.50 Sfr. (\$21).

Parco Ciani Mövenpick, Palazzo del Congressi, CH-6901 Lugano, phone 091/238656. Moderate.

#### Scala

Conveniently located on the pedestrian street near the center of town. Formal inside, with an informal outside terrace, Scala is pleasant for coffee and pastries during the day. Although the dinner menu may be a bit complex and costly for some

tastes, the selection of a la carte items makes it a good choice for an alfresco late hours meal. In the mood for something light after having returned at 9:30 p.m. from a boat trip to Morcote (see below), we dined on green fettucine in a robust brown mushroom sauce (18 Sfr./\$14.50).

Restaurant Scala, Via Nassa 29, CH-6900 Lugano, phone 091/220958. Moderate.

#### Vetta Restaurant

This delightful restaurant is reached by taking two successive funiculars from a spot near downtown Lugano. In a white and yellow Victorian building perched on the top of Mount Salvatore, it has an unpretentious atmosphere with breezy, open dining rooms and terraces that offer sweeping views of the peaceful lake and city. Rather surprisingly, since it is the only restaurant in this rather remote spot (the only competition was a fast food stand), prices are reasonable by Swiss standards. Service was friendly and the featured lake fish fresh and delicately flavored.

Sitting at an outdoor table enjoying the sun and silence of this lofty spot, we were entranced by the panorama of the peaceful scene below. We ordered and were promptly brought a plate of lightly fried lake trout with a delicious butter and scallion sauce and boiled potatoes, creamed peas and sweet red peppers (19 Sfr./\$15). Other selections included veal scallopini and schnitzel (both 17 Sfr. /\$14). A half-liter of light Fendant was 14 Sfr. (\$11). A featured red, Merlot del Ticino, was 26 Sfr. (\$21) for a three-quarter liter bottle.

Restaurant Vetta, Paradiso stop (Mt. Salvatore funicular), Lugano, phone 091/543701. Moderate.

### Cruising and Dining Lake Lugano

One of the great pleasures of this part of Switzerland is riding a lake steamer and enjoying a meal either on the boat itself or at one of village stops around the lake. Few travel experiences are more relaxing and conducive to the enjoyment of food and drink and the "good life" in

general. Sliding over the glassy water, lulled by the motion, gives one an illusion of well-being, of an ordered, happy world.

On a misty morning, the lake lending a somber and murky presence, we caught the 10 a.m. ship for Morcote. The craft, one of a fleet of similar boats plying the lake waters, was 140 feet long, 32 feet wide, fitted with a 270 HP diesel engine, and capable of carrying 600 passengers. Amazingly, it was operated by a crew of two: a captain who expertly docked the huge and clumsy craft without mishap, and a mate who lassoed the pilings at each stop alongside the narrow pier landings. We plowed through the calm waters at slightly more than 16 miles per hour, making graceful waves.

Swiss Lake steamers are a revelation for someone used to American ferry boats with large crews and often poor food service. These are immaculately clean. Passenger accommodations are spacious, with outdoor seating, front and rear, an upper deck lounge and eating area and central cabin with entry, kitchen and restrooms. In both indoor or outdoor eating spaces one can choose from a menu which typically includes, along with tea and coffee, a wide choice of beers and wines and liquors as well as a list of food items, lake fish, meat, vegetables, salads and desserts.

At each stop we slid alongside, the gangplank was put in place, and a few passengers ascended and descended. One stop was at the "Swiss Miniature Village" (all of Switzerland in miniature). At the next town, Campioni, an Italian enclave with a couple of churches and a large gambling casino, we rocked gently in our own wake as we waited while a group of school children excitedly boarded with their teachers. Lakeside villas lined the water, each with its individual dock and boat-house. The tiny towns cling perilously to the steep slopes, some without access by land. Each has its own unique appearance, though all have terraced restaurants overlooking the lake, and private residences with "two-boat" garages.

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## LAKE LUGANO

Continued from page 5

The presence of the lake is dominant, affecting the climate, attracting the eye and bonding the little towns together.

### Rockabella Restaurant Gandria

Leaving from the Paradiso boat landing, we boarded an evening ship for dinner at Gandria, sipping coffee along the way. Our leisurely journey took slightly more than an hour including calls at other lake towns on the way.

Gandria hugs its rock cliffs, a highway passing further up and behind the town. Access to the town is via narrow stone walks and many steps. Roccabella was chosen from three other restaurants along the waterfront because it looked informal and had an attractive wooden terrace cantilevered over the lake. It also had the advantage of being close to the boat landing, from where one could watch the interesting water traffic.

We were alone on the terrace. The summer evening was still brightly lit by warm sunshine glittering off the water. It was a modest restaurant in a stunning setting and blissfully quiet. Over a beer, we sat enraptured. But our dreamy state was soon interrupted by a scene reminiscent of Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

A 1930 vintage Crisscraft speedboat, its varnished top gleaming and immaculate, rippled the calm surface of the water as it glided in to shore. After tying up, a fashionably dressed threesome, perhaps a couple with their daughter, either Italian jet-setters or affluent locals, disembarked and ascended the steps, their artfully restored classic awaiting their return.

The setting was so magnificent that it simply didn't matter when we discovered that very little was available from the two-page menu. A plate of tomatoes and mozzarella cheese drizzled with olive oil (32 Sfr./\$26 for one including beer) was all we needed in this captivating spot

After this abbreviated and rather

expensive meal we were informed that our boat was *kaput*, its engine inoperable. We willingly remained, perched on a bench by the lake. After an hour or so a replacement arrived to return us to Lugano.

Roccabella Restaurant, Gandria Boat Landing (reached by hourly boat from Lugano), phone 091/512722. Moderate to expensive.


### Grotto del Parco Morcote

Morcote, a lakeside fishing village, has a narrow road and stone buildings crowded along its waterfront. An arcaded walk, paralleling the lake, is lined with shops and restaurants displaying varieties of lake fish in glass cases. A big map of the town near the boat landing was of little use since it didn't show the street listed for the restaurant. A shopkeeper, however, directed us to our destination which is along the Strada Canale (turn left leaving the boat landing) about 500 meters. Grotto del Parco, in the Parco Scherrer, is up a flight of stone steps overlooking road and lake, a rustic and rocky premises. Its linen-covered tables are in an enclosed but roofless terrace behind windows that face the lake.

A very good mixed salad of fresh vegetables, a generous portion of fresh, flavorful trout fillets with tartar sauce and boiled potatoes, plus a half liter of Fendant, was 52 Sfr. (\$42) for one, including wine.

After lunch we had the option of continuing to the end of the lake and returning by train to Lugano but chose instead to wait for the "steamer."

Finding all shops closed on arrival in Lugano (church holiday), we checked the hotel library which had only one book in English *Westward Ho*, then returned via funicular to the train station to purchase a mystery novel.

Grotto del Parco, Parco Scherrer, Morcote, phone 091/692297. Moderate to Expensive. 

## E U R O P E T R A V E L B R I E F I N G

### Railpass Discount

DER Tours is offering a sale on the traditional first-class Eurailpass. Until February 15, for travel through March 31, purchasers of the pass can buy up to five additional passes at a 50% discount. For example, a \$498 full-price, 15-day pass enables the purchaser to buy up to four additional passes for persons in the same traveling party for \$249 each. Your travel agent should call DER at 800-782-2424.

### Cheap Sleeps in Zürich

The Hotel Biber is Zürich's new "City Backpacker Hotel." According to the Swiss Tourist Office, it "offers an affordable alternative for globe-trotters and young backpackers." The hotel is located in the old town, a short walk from the main rail station. The remodeled Biber has 64 beds spread over 15 rooms; mostly four to six beds per room. All rooms have hot and cold running water and there are showers and toilets on each floor. Common rooms and a kitchen are open to all guests. Rates range from about \$22 per person in one of the six-bed dormitory rooms to about \$50 for a single. Visa and Mastercard accepted. For reservations contact The City Backpacker (Hotel Biber), Schweizerhofgasse 5, CH-8001, Zürich, phone 1/251 9015, fax 1/251 9024.

### Swiss Ski Instruction


Ski Swiss, the annual ski school of the Swiss Ski School Federation, is at St. Moritz this year. Starting dates for the seven-day school are December 3 and 10. Prices range from \$924 to \$1,118 per person and include rail transfer from the Zürich airport, seven nights accommodation, six days ski instruction by certified Swiss teachers, a ski pass and various social events. Book the package through Swissspak at 800-688-7947.

### Innsbruck Skiing

The *Los Angeles Times* reports on skiing in Innsbruck: After staying

just one night, visitors are eligible for free **Club Innsbruck** cards which are valid for free travel on Alpine and cross-country ski buses operating in the region between December 19 and April 17. The cards — issued at hotels and hostels — are good for discounts on ski passes, mountain railways, the Alpine Zoo and for a free introductory cross-country ski lesson in Igls. The Innsbruck Super Ski Pass covers the six Innsbruck ski areas plus the Stubai Glacier, Kitzbühel and the Arlberg. An adult pass, valid four days in a six-day period, is \$140. Club Card holders can purchase the three-day Glacier Ski Pass, good for the six Innsbruck ski areas plus the glacier, for \$80. For six days it's \$150; for three days in a four-day period it's \$88; and for three days in a six-day period, it's \$94. Single day passes at the individual ski areas range from \$20 to \$36.50.

Rental of ski equipment starts at \$22 per day and \$94 for six days.

Three youth hostels will be open through the winter: **Jugendherberge Glockenhaus**, Weiherburggasse 3, \$9 for bed and \$4 for breakfast; **Jugendherberge Innsbruck**, Reichenaauerstrasse 147, \$12 for bed and breakfast; and **Jugendherberge St. Nikolaus**, Innstrasse 95, \$9 for bed and \$4 for breakfast. 

## READERS' FORUM

### A Vote for the Florhof

You may be interested in an update on a recommended hotel removed from your preferred list after a change in management.

My wife and I have stayed at the **Florhof Hotel** in Zürich under the previous management and found it quite nice. In September (1994) we again stayed there and found it even better. The new management has refurbished all the rooms and they are now outstanding. Even the restaurant has been redecorated and is lovely. The food and service were top notch.

At 290 Sfr. for a double, the rate is up slightly and certainly not cheap, but the traveler gets his money's worth in this very comfortable, well located small hotel. It definitely belongs back on your list of preferred hotels. We recommend it without reservation.

Robert D. Flori, Phoenix, AZ

*(Ed. Note: For the record, we never removed the Florhof from our "preferred" list, only noted that it was a hotel whose management had changed and for that reason would bear watching. In any case, thanks for the report.)*

### Hotel Evaluations

Comments for you: The **Anker Hotel** was fun and the family service tops, but we felt it a little pricey at \$132 for room and \$77 for dinner, considering the distance from Frankfurt. We found ordering dinner a little bit tough for no one there spoke better English than we speak German. This is not to say we wouldn't go back again — for we probably will, just to explore the town.

In Nürnberg we stayed at the **Hotel Maritim** — a downtown "business man's" hotel, high on service and facilities with excellent food. The breakfast buffet beats anything we have seen anywhere, including the **Victoria-Jungfrau**. Check it out.

What can I say about the Victoria-Jungfrau? It exceeded our expectations, even after your buildup. The staff was outstanding (particularly their ability to remember our names after helping us only once).

The hotel was not full so we received the promised upgrade — to a large, two-room suite. Our first afternoon we were treated to a "behind the scenes" tour of the hotel and the facilities including the underground corridors, wine cellar, etc. A nice touch.

At your special *Gemütlichkeit* off-season rate, this place is an outstanding value — only a few coins more than the Anker Hotel and look what you get! We will definitely go again. David J. Bennett, Louisville, Kentucky

*(Ed. Note: Mr. Bennett refers to a special offer made last year by the Victoria-Jungfrau to Gemütlichkeit subscribers. The hotel has proposed repeating the offer*

*[three nights lodging plus breakfast and dinner and full use of the spa for about \$435 per person] for the winter of 94/95 at a slightly higher rate. Interested parties can phone 800-521-6722 for more information.)*

### More Hotel Reports

We just returned from a two-week trip to Switzerland and Germany. We took advantage of the Swissair offer to buy one ticket and get one free. The flight was comfortable and the food and service excellent.

Our first stop was in Klosters (about three hours by car). It is a small, quiet village with fantastic scenery and excellent facilities. We stayed at the **Hotel Walserhof**. It is everything you said it was. We had a good, comfortable room and the food was outstanding. Gabi Bolliger is still a gracious hostess and her husband, Beat, is still a Master Chef. Klosters is good for daytrips to Davos, Chur, Arosa and over the Fluelapass. The road between Chur and Arosa, about 30 kilometers, has 365 curves (so I was told). It is really a scenic drive. In Klosters, I recommend taking a ride on both cable lifts, the Bergbahn and Luftseilbahn. The scenery will make the trips worthwhile.

In Garmisch-Partenkirchen, we also took your recommendation and stayed at the **Gasthof Fraundorfer**. Once again you were right on track. We had a three-room apartment (Number 35). It was nicely decorated in Bavarian style, comfortable, and with a balcony overlooking the Zugspitze. The Bavarian food was plentiful and outstanding. An accordion player and Bavarian folk dancers added the right touch to an enjoyable dining experience. Barbara Fraundorfer is a gracious hostess, helpful and accommodating, a really nice person to get to know. We took another of your recommendations and had a lunch and a dinner at the Alpenhof. As you said, the food was excellent.

On a previous visit to this area, we stayed at the **Hotel Alois Lang** in Oberammergau. This is an old, small, exquisite hotel with an excellent restaurant. It is currently closed for renovation. When it reopens, it will be worth a visit.

*Continued on page 8...*

## WINTER PACKAGES

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### DER City Packages

	East	Central	West
Berlin	\$788	\$838	\$998
London	\$498	\$568	\$658
Madrid	\$698	\$718	\$878
Munich	\$678	\$698	\$918
Paris	\$628	\$768	\$849
Rome	\$648	\$678	\$898
Vienna	\$638	\$788	\$878

The hotels in the Berlin package include the **Art Sorat**, the **Radisson Plaza** and **Schweizerhof**. Among the possibilities in Munich are the **Austrotel**, the **Regent** and the **Sheraton**.

From Munich, a two-night extension to Salzburg can be added for from \$120 to \$184, depending on hotel.

From Vienna, two-night extensions are available to Graz, Prague and Budapest for from \$129 to \$218.

DER also offers **Ski Austria!** packages to Innsbruck and Kitzbühel.

They include seven nights hotel with breakfast, roundtrip air from some 75 U.S. cities to Munich and transfer between airport and hotel. The lowest prices are:

### DER Ski Packages

	East	Central	West
Innsbruck	\$718	\$748	\$948
Kitzbühel	\$728	\$748	\$948

Purchase DER packages through your travel agent. ☒

## READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 7

In Zürich, we stayed at the **Florhof**. It was our third time there. There are new owners, however things seem about the same. They are doing some renovations and it is noisy during the day. This was not a problem because my wife likes to spend all the

daylight hours in Zürich on the Bahnhofstrasse. We ate a lunch and a dinner at the **Zeughauskeller**, another of your good recommendations. The food was excellent both times. A good place to have dinner on the last night in Zürich is the **Zunfthaus Zur Schmiden**. It is in the "Old Town," an easy 15-minute walk from the Florhof. They have been in business over 580 years. Prices are rather high; dinner for two was SF 98 (\$78). However, the food is excellent and the service is old-style European. Lynn Stuart, Bryan TX

(Ed. Note: The 2-for-1 Swissair offer referred to by Mr. Stuart was made some months ago to *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers and was for business class travel. Swissair says they may repeat the offer in the near future. Watch your mailbox. Of course, the Swissair discount program for *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers — \$50 off sale fares, \$100 off regular coach class, \$400 off business class and \$600 off first class — remains in effect.)

### More Hotel Reports

My husband, who spends much time in Germany in connection with his work at the University of Wisconsin, and I thoroughly enjoy *Gemütlichkeit*. Austria is like my second home, since my father is Viennese. I am a travel agent and use your recommendations frequently.

Practically every year we spend our vacation at **Hotel Hollweger**, A-5340 St Gilgen, Austria. The lake view suites are lovely. Frau Danner-Hallweger speaks excellent English and helps the many English-speaking guests. This hotel is family run and has an excellent kitchen. In Vienna I would give a high recommendation to

**Hotel Opernring**, Opernring 11, A-1010 Vienna, Austria. The owner, Susi Riedl, is charming and will help guests obtain tickets for all events. The location, across from the Opera House, couldn't be better. **Hotel Geiger** in Berchtesgaden also gets five stars in our book. The **Jasacherhof**, **St Jakob** in Defereggental, Austria, is a lovely property in a beautiful valley. This hotel has a good kitchen and excellent spa facilities. It is well worth the drive off the main highway. Another favorite is the **Hotel Hanneshof**, A-5532, Filzmoos, Austria. This is a low-key hotel with a very good kitchen and comfortable rooms. This area near Dachstein has wonderful hiking

Susan Adams, Madison WI

### Berlin Diary

During a 10-day stay in Berlin in June, we followed *Gemütlichkeit* recommendations regarding hotels and restaurants.

We stayed at the **Hotel Domus**, situated in the very pleasant Wilmersdorf neighborhood at Uhlandstr. 49 (tel (030) 88 20 41, Fax (030) 88 20 410), a 10-minute walk to Kurfürstendamm, a 20-minute walk to Zoo railway and S-Bahn station, the latter being far less crowded than Zoo Station. At DM 230 for a double room, the Domus is quite satisfactory, serves a good breakfast and seems to cater to business travelers rather than groups.

We ate one night at **Zlata Praha**, Meineke Str. 4, and found food and service to be excellent (although we were not in the rear room which *Gemütlichkeit* had suggested) and not overpriced. We also tried **Josef Diekman Restaurant**, at Meineke Str. 7, but, despite its interesting apothecary shelves and cabinets it did not have nearly the decor and ambiance of Zlata Praha, but did have higher prices and a limited menu. (A main course of *geschmetzeltes* pork was not tender.) We would not care to go back. **Fofi's Estiatar- io**, at Fasanen Str. 70, seemed to be the current "in" and "trendy" place and reservations are essential. Food and service were good but, again, we would rather return to Zlata Praha.

Our best dinner find, however, was in the former eastern part of Berlin at the **Goldene Gans Restaurant**, one of several in the **Maritim Grand Hotel Berlin**, Friedrich Str. 158-164, tel. 23270. It not only serves excellent meals and provides good service in pleasant, rustic surroundings, but features - from 7 to 11 p.m. - what has become even more difficult to find: a good zither player. Diners are not inexpensive - DM 173, including 15% service, for two persons, for excellent servings of soup, goose breast, fruit and ice dessert, mineral water and wine. We liked the Goldene Gans well enough to pay it a second visit on our last night in Berlin.

Cafes for afternoon *Kaffee und Kuchen* seemed few and far between in Berlin and we would gladly recommend **Cafe Möhring** at Kurfürstendamm 213, corner of Uhlandstr. (not far from Domus), as one of an apparent disappearing breed, even here in the center of Berlin (although Cafe Möhring does offer three other locations in the city and in Charlottenburg). The one problem we found was to choose from among the 28 different varieties of cake!

H. Martin Ems, San Francisco ☒