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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

September 25, 1995

Online Travel Planning

It's Saturday morning and you decide to fire up the home computer and log onto the Internet. You're planning a trip and want to access travel files on computers all over the world. Your first online stop is the German Tourist Office's Internet site. You do a search for Munich and Berlin hotels offering double rooms under \$100. Then, with a few keystrokes, you book a room in each city. Next comes a search for a low airfare to Europe. You find charter, standby and other special opportunities you never knew existed. Again, you make the booking online, using a credit card to pay for the tickets. Once your airline and hotels are taken care of you reserve a pair of tickets to the Vienna Philharmonic. And finally, after calling up a detailed on-screen map, you plan a backroads drive through a corner of Austria.

Is this possible in 1995? Not quite. Subscribers of **America Online**, **Prodigy** or **Compuserve** can book hotel rooms and air tickets on *Eaasy Sabre*, but the rest is still in the "someday" category. An Internet site for the German Tourist Office is still in the talking stage. Even *Eaasy Sabre*—a collection of travel product databases similar to those used by travel agents—has limitations which we will discuss later.

But first, let's talk about other online travel planning resources. For years I subscribed to Compuserve but finally gave it up as a lost cause. Sure, there was *Eaasy Sabre* and I could also search various databases and access travel articles from publications such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, but at that time the process was expensive and the information of mar-

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

LUZERN

It has taken us nine years but we finally get around to what for many tourists has long been one of Switzerland's must-see destinations, lovely Luzern on the Vierwaldstättersee.

For more than 100 years Luzern (Lucerne) has been one of Switzerland's most popular tourist destinations. Visitors come to walk the narrow lanes of its old town, cruise the Vierwaldstättersee (Lake Lucerne), buy

expensive watches in famed jewelry marts like Bucherer and set off on excursions to nearby peaks such as Pilatus, Rigi and Burgenstock, the summits of which can be reached by cable car or funicular. Queen Victoria spent a month in Luzern in 1868 (having by that time been on the job for more than 20 years she was entitled to four weeks vacation) and the composer, Sergei Rachmaninoff, often retreated to his home across the lake in Weggis.

Through the 1980s, Luzern was particularly favored by Americans. No self-respecting package tour would dream of bypassing this beautifully situated town of 60,000. Then came the '90s. The Gulf War reduced American visitors to a trickle and the dollar fell significantly against the Swiss franc. Americans are returning, we are told, but not in prewar numbers.

It would be nice if this translated to lower hotel and restaurant prices but that doesn't seem to be the case. As you will soon see, Luzern's prices are very Zürich-like. A double room for under 200 Sfr. (\$167) is a rare commodity. Due to the strength of the Swiss franc and the dollar's weakness, expect to pay a premium to visit this favored region. Keep in mind, however, that the lakeside strolls, the mountain walks and the glorious scenery all cost zero Sfr. (\$0.00).

Recently, our man Bruce Woelfel spent several days in Luzern and his report follows.

Luzern Hotels**Hotel Montana**

From its hillside site, the Montana offers expansive views across the city and lake to imposing snow-capped peaks.

It was built in 1910 following the completion of the Gotthard railroad tunnel which brought more tourists to the region. The funicular which was once used to carry guests to the hotel has now been replaced by an automatic elevator-like cable car.

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

By Bruce Woelfel

READERS' FORUM

A Vote for Würzburg

To one stationed five years in Germany, four in Würzburg, your August issue strikes some chords. While agreeing with the Franconian towns included on your Grand Tour, it is hard to imagine being in the area and not visiting Würzburg. As you know, that jewel of a city has everything an American loves about Germany. Since you must travel to Frankfurt you might have considered including that nice **Wasserschloss Hotel** (phone 06092/6080, fax 06092/608 100) at Mespelbrunn.

Regarding Mr. Bell and his air-conditioning, he should be reading one of the other travel magazines mentioned in your "Dear Subscriber." Get a life! His closing sentence revives images of the Ugly American of yesteryear.

Does Germany have a statute of limitations on photo traffic tickets? I ignored one upon leaving in 1988 and do plan on returning some time.

David P Halbach, Colorado Springs CO

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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ginal use. (Here it should be noted that searching large computer databases is an acquired skill and other travelers may have had more success than I.)

Next, came Prodigy. It was simpler and cheaper but seemed much slower and offered less information. True, one could log on to a bulletin board where people asked and answered each other's travel questions, but this was a process in which I quickly lost interest. To be fair, there were other travel resources on Prodigy, but for the independent traveler to Europe, I found little that wasn't available in a decent guidebook.

Currently I'm trying America Online, an improvement over Prodigy and Compuserve. Though many of its travel databases are rather shallow and contain only cursory information, from the AOL platform one can jump off onto the Internet, that vast, amorphous collection of worldwide computers that are somehow all linked together. When truly useful travel information is available online, the Internet is where you'll find it.

I'm a cyberspace novice, but I didn't have any trouble tracking down LTU's page on the **World Wide Web** (its address on the Net, called a Uniform Resource Locator [URL], is <http://www.ltu.com/ltu>). Though it contains some typically useless online travel info, the LTU (the German airline) database offers a link to one very useful section entitled Public Transportation. Click on *LTU Information*, then on *Travel Guide to Germany* and from there to *Public Transportation* (or go direct via <http://www.ltu.com/ltu/pubtrans.html>). Here you'll find something called *Subway Navigator*. With it one can determine the subway route between any two subway stations in more than 50 major cities in the world. Let's say, for example, you'll be staying in the center of Vienna, near St. Stephan's Cathedral, have tickets to the Volksoper and want to know how to get there. Since you're near Stephansplatz you type "Stephan" as your starting station and "Volks" as your destination. (A complete list of subway stations is provided online). In

a few seconds your screen informs you there are two "Volks" stations; Volkstheater and Währinger Strasse/Volksoper. Choose the latter and you are quickly presented with a screen I downloaded and have reprinted here word for word:

"Route from 'Stephansplatz' to 'Währinger Straße/Volksoper' in the Vienna subway.

Result of the route search from 'Stephansplatz' to 'Währinger Straße/Volksoper'.

Estimated time = 25 minutes

Line U3, Direction 'Johnstraße'

- Stephansplatz
- Herrengasse
- Volkstheater
- Neubaugasse
- Zieglergasse
- Westbahnhof
- Line U6, Direction 'Heiligenstadt'
- Westbahnhof
- Burggasse/Stadthalle
- Thaliastraße
- Josefstädter Straße
- Alser Straße
- Michelbeuern/AKH
- Währinger Straße/Volksoper

Sorry, you can't display the graphical map. It is not available for your town. "

Pretty nifty, eh? And there's more. From the same *Public Transportation* page you can quickly link to the Web site *RailServer* which provides rapid (less than one day) response via e-mail to questions about rail travel between any of some 23,000 European railway stations. This free service provides accurate, up-to-date information, and is much cheaper than a copy of the *Thomas Cook Timetable*. The *RailServer* is maintained by Frederik Ramm of the University of Karlsruhe in Germany and can be accessed via any WWW browser at the following URL: <http://rail.rz.uni-karlsruhe.de/rail/english.html>.

The *Rail Server's* web site also offers links to a couple of dozen other Web pages of interest to

Europe travelers. Just one click away are databases with these titles:

Fly and Ride Stations at Airports in Germany, Railroading Around the World, Railroading in France, Railroading in The Netherlands, Dutch Railroading, Railroading in Finland, Railroading in Italy, Railroading in Denmark, Railroading in Norway, Railroading in Canada, Around Scotland by Public Transport, Railroading in the Czech Republic, Robert Bowdidge's Railroad Page, Christian X Nielsen's AOL Travel Information Page, Martin Smith's London Underground, Australian Timetables, Mercurio Server: Information for Railway Fans (ICE, TGV, Eurostar, European Railway News & train types) and the Subway Navigator.

I tried the *Czech Railroading* page and from there found a link entitled *Czech Republic*. Under "Praha" were usual choices such as "sight-seeing," "restaurants," "accommodations" and so forth. Clicking on "accommodations" brought forth a list of hotels, private rooms, booking agencies for accommodations, and this folksy message:

"I am sorry but being Prague inhabitants, we have got no experiences with lodging here. That's why we need your feedback! If you know about a hotel, hostel, private rooms or camp site which you want to recommend to the others, let us know. If you find here a recommendation you do not agree with, or you have got any other tip related to accommodation, write us as well."

This is just a beginning. I expect European tourist offices to soon establish Internet sites that will allow us Internet browsers to download to our very own computers a list of every hotel and pension in the tourist authority's city, region or country. (For example, Swissair's Web site will debut in early 1996.) The same for restaurants, events and sight-seeing. In addition, you'll be able to find out which mountain passes are open, the depth of snow on ski runs, which Autobahns are under repair, which sights are closed for repair and easily reserve everything from an airline ticket to a seat at the opera.

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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%

LUZERN

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Spacious guestrooms, most with lake views, are decorated in shades of rose and light pink, and have elegant marble baths. Number 405, for example, is a single with a balcony and view over the lake for 140 Sfr. (\$117) low season and 190 Sfr. (\$158) high season. Number 415 is a standard double with balcony but no lake view and costs 200-250 Sfr. (\$167-\$208). Number 410, a "superior" double with French doors that open onto a lakeside balcony, rents for 270-320 Sfr. (\$225-\$267).

The hotel's friendliness and fine service, together with the spectacular views, made our stay here the most enjoyable of a recent trip. The Montana offers Luzern's best combination of luxury, location and price.

Address: Hotel Montana, Adigenswil-erstrasse 11, CH-6002 Luzern

Phone: 041 / 516565

Fax: 041 / 516676

Location: Above lake, near town

Rooms: 16 singles, 44 doubles

Proprietors: Brioni & Heinz Gubser

Prices: Singles 140-195 Sfr. (\$117-163), doubles 200-320 Sfr. (\$167-\$267)

Facilities: Restaurant and bar

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Limited, no special facilities

Closed: Never

Parking: Free

Rating: EXCELLENT 16/20 \$

Hotel Schweizerhof

This palatial hotel is on the lake not far from the very center of town. Its building dates to 1844 and ownership has been in the same family since 1861. Early guests include Mark Twain, Leo Tolstoy, Richard Wagner, Napoleon III and Kaiser Wilhelm.

With lavish public rooms, marble columns and pilasters, crystal chandeliers, mirrored ceilings, huge paintings and overstuffed, flower-patterned furniture, the courtly Schweizerhof transports visitors to the age of grand hotels.

The well-preserved guestrooms are huge, with high ceilings and furnished in period style, and lots of white lace on curtains and bed-

spreads. Prices are commensurate with this luxury, though special rates are often available. Number 150, in white and rose, has a 14-foot ceiling and its own reception area. The bedroom highlights marble and glass chandeliers and its marble bathroom has, in addition to a huge tub, two sinks and a shower. Number 123 is on a corner with a view over the lake, and Number 16, in green, gold and white, has a lovely detailed plaster ceiling and a panoramic lake vista.

Traditional old-world luxury for those willing to pay the freight.

Address: Schweizerhof Luzern, Schweizerhofquai 3, CH-6003 Luzern

Phone: 041 / 502211

Fax: 041 / 868157

Location: Downtown, facing lake

Rooms: 16 singles, 100 doubles

Proprietor: Victor Hauser

Prices: Singles 275-335 Sfr. (\$229-\$279), doubles 390-495 Sfr. (\$325-\$413)

Facilities: Three restaurants, bar

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: No special facilities

Closed: Never

Parking: Free

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 15/20

Château Gutsch

The striking Gutsch sits, castle-

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Luzern Facts & Things to See

Population: 60,000

Altitude: 1,440 feet

Tourist information: Frankenstrasse 1, CH-6002 Luzern, phone 041 / 517171.

Old Town: A delightful area for a stroll, with a wealth of old houses, squares and churches including the Collegiate Church, an important Renaissance building, and the Baroque Jesuit Church.

Kapellbrücke (Chapel Bridge): Medieval-style, covered, pedestrian bridge first built in 1333.

Mount Pilatus: Two cable cars ride year round to the summit. From May to November the "steepest cogwheel railway in the world" makes its 18-minute long trip up 48% gradients on the south flank. Queen Victoria rode a mule up in 1868. Restaurant at top. Pilatus-Bahnen und Hotels, Inseliquai 8, CH-6002 Luzern. Phone 041 / 239363.

Transportation Museum: A train and boat enthusiast, my personal highlight of this city was a visit to the Transportation Museum. This complex of modern buildings includes a Rail Transport section, Aeronautics section, Navigation section and "Cosmorama." My favorite Rail exhibits which included old trains of all descriptions — electric, steam gas and diesel — and a number of cable lifts, old and new.

Aeronautics had several outdoor exhibits including the first Swissair Lockheed six-passenger airliner, a faithful Douglas DC-3, and some relatively recent jetliners. Navigation included an amazing collection of ship models: sailing ships, container ships, ocean liners and some full-sized life boats. "Cosmorama" included the Mercury Space Capsule, some lunar rocks, and a space suit, as well as an 18-screen multimedia show depicting the history of space flight.

Swiss Transport Museum. Lidostrasse 5, CH-6006 Luzern (reached in 10 minutes by #2 bus from the train station). Phone 041 / 314444. Open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Richard Wagner Museum: The composer lived here in his "Haus Tribtschen" from 1866 to 1872 with Cosima von Bülow, daughter of Franz Liszt. His opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* was composed here. Wagnerweg 27, CH-6005 Luzern. Phone 041 / 442370. Open daily except Monday 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Picasso Museum: Many wonderful prints and drawings on three floors of a former private residence. Picasso Museum, Furrengasse 21, CH-6004 Luzern. Phone 041 / 513533. Admission 6 Sfr. Open daily 10 a.m. to 6 p.m..

Museum of Fine Art, Robert-Sund-Strasse 1, CH-6002 Luzern. Phone 041 / 231024. Adult admission 7 Sfr. Open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m..

Historical Museum, Pfistergasse 24, CH-6000 Luzern. Phone 041 / 245424. Admission 5 Sfr. Open daily except Monday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Boat Trips: Various trips from 30 minutes to a full day are available on Lake Luzern. All boats include on-board restaurants which serve beverages, snacks and full meals. Although there is more service during summer, some trips go year round. There is even a "fondue ship" which operates between September 30 and April 8 at 7:15 p.m. and 9:15 p.m. The cost is 19-23 Sfr. (\$16.50-\$20) and includes the meal and the trip ticket. Vierwaldstättersee, Schiffahrtsgesellschaft des Vierwaldstättersee, Werftstrasse 5, CH-6002 Luzern, phone 041 / 404540.— BW

LUZERN

Continued from page 3

like, on an extraordinary site atop its own forested hillside above the lake and the city. As a guest in this unique hostelry one feels entirely removed from the urban setting below.

In the 14th and 15th centuries a fire was lit on this spot to warn of approaching invaders. In 1590, an observation tower was built on the site and remained until the late 19th century. After a 1888 fire destroyed an earlier structure, the Gutsch was rebuilt in its present castle-like style and then extensively restored and modernized in late summer 1992.

Although the hotel can be reached via a rather indirect road, the most convenient access is via an elevator-style cable lift which is a short taxi ride from the rail station.

Guestrooms are large, well-appointed, and enjoy panoramic views. Number 32 is a double with French Provincial furniture, blue accents and flowered wallpaper. Its marble bath is large and has two sinks with gold-plated plumbing for 400 Sfr. (\$333). Number 45, a junior suite, has dark oak flooring, oriental carpets and, curtained off the bedroom, a huge Jacuzzi tub with gold fixtures. It rents for 450-650 Sfr. (\$375-\$542).

Address: Château Gutsch, Kanonenstrasse, CH 6007 Luzern

Phone: 041/220272

Fax: 041/311031

Location: Above the town

Rooms: One single, 30 doubles

Proprietor: Ivo Scala

Prices: Singles 230-370 Sfr. (\$192-\$308), doubles 250-450 Sfr. (\$208-\$375)

Facilities: Restaurant, bar, large outdoor dining terrace

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: Never

Parking: Free

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 14/20

Hotel Des Balances

This small, attractively furnished hotel is in a beautifully restored building in the heart of Luzern's shopping district. Des Balances was created from two ancient mansions

which date to the early days of the Swiss confederation in 1332. Later embellished with a clock tower, the building became the city hall in 1367. Following a fire in 1833, the present structure was rebuilt on the ancient foundation and decorated in Holbein style by a director of the Luzern School of Arts and Crafts.

Many guest bathrooms have bathtubs and bidets. Number 401 is an above average size double with antique furniture, twin beds and both river and city views from its two windows. Number 402 is a quiet junior-suite with French double bed and a view of Luzern's rooftops.

Though a step down from the preceding luxury establishments, Des Balances is comfortable and charming.

Address: Hotel Des Balances, Weinmarkt, CH-6000 Luzern

Phone: 041/511851

Fax: 041/516451

Location: Central

Rooms: Five singles, 55 doubles

Proprietor: Sandra Bungardt

Prices: Singles 175-235 Sfr. (\$146-\$196), doubles 233-385 Sfr. (\$194-\$321)

Facilities: Two restaurants, piano bar, outdoor terrace facing the river.

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: One specially equipped room

Closed: Never

Parking: Valet service to nearby garage at 20 Sfr. per night

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 13/20

Hotel Monopole

The Monopole's strikingly handsome building, built in 1898, is in the very center of Luzern, across from the rail station.

Guestrooms are comfortable and well furnished in a modern style, but fall well short of the opulence of the Gutsch or Schweizerhof. Number 510, decorated in red and green, is a reasonably quiet single with bathtub, that rents for 140 Sfr. (\$117). Number 506 is a double with tub and views of the city and lake for 265 Sfr. (\$221).

Restaurant Arbalète offers a French menu with complete meals priced from 55 to 130 Sfr. (\$46-\$108).

The trade-off for the central location of this mostly business hotel is traffic and noise.

Address: Hotel Monopole Luzern, Pilatusstrasse 1, CH-6002 Luzern

Phone: 041/230866

Fax: 041/236001

Location: Central

Rooms: 40 singles, 65 doubles

Proprietor: Mr. Wallimann

Prices: Singles 130-200 Sfr. (\$108-\$167), doubles 240-360 Sfr. (\$200-\$300)

Facilities: Restaurant and bar

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Limited access

Closed: Never

Parking: Garage, 20 Sfr. per night

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 13/20

Wilden Mann

This small, pleasant hotel is in the center of Luzern's Old Town shopping district, five minutes walk from the train station. The building was a staging post for travelers crossing the St. Gotthard pass over the Alps in 1517, centuries before the tunnel was built along this important trade route.

Everything is fresh and clean and there is a relaxed atmosphere in the small, comfortable lobby and dining room. The cozy lounge has a wood-burning fireplace. Guestrooms are larger than average, colorfully decorated and some are reserved for nonsmokers. Number 64 is a spacious single (or double) in blue and rose with lacquered French Provincial furniture, a double bed and a city view for 150-200 Sfr. (\$125-\$167). Number 62, a large corner double with a view of the city, is done in white with a deep blue carpet and silk wallpaper. It rents for 260-370 Sfr. (\$217-\$308).

Address: Hotel Wilden Mann, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern

Phone: 041/231666

Fax: 041/231629

Location: Central

Rooms: 11 singles, 32 doubles

Proprietor: Irene Roethlin

Prices: Singles 150-200 Sfr. (\$125-\$167), doubles 180-370 Sfr. (\$150-\$308), suites 290-420 Sfr. (\$424-\$350)

Facilities: Restaurant and bar

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Some accessible rooms

Closed: Never

Parking: Public garage 50 meters away for 18 Sfr. per/night

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 13/20

Hotel Hofgarten

The Hofgarten and the Hotel Rebstock (see below) are under the same management and both are housed in 12th century buildings near the main cathedral and the Lion Monument. Hofgarten is the more modern and convenient and, of the two, we prefer it.

There is a lovely wood sculpture in the front entry court and the lobby is bright and inviting. Many of the imaginatively furnished, ultramodern guest-rooms exhibit tasteful examples of modern paintings and sculpture. Management is cheerful and accommodating.

The delightfully furnished guest-rooms are all different and include some charming "garret" rooms with French-style double beds and sloping ceilings. Number 224 is a large sunny double with lounging area in bright red and black. Number 222 is a large room with kitchenette with three sunny windows facing a rear courtyard. Number 233 has a French-style double bed.

Address: Hofgarten Hotel, Stadhofstrasse 14, 6006 Luzern

Phone: 041/528888

Fax: 041/528333

Location: Near Cathedral and Lion Monument

Rooms: 4 singles, 14 doubles

Proprietor: Claudia Moser

Prices: Singles 140-185 Sfr. (\$117-\$154), doubles 225-260 Sfr. (\$188-\$217)

Facilities: Restaurant and Bar

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: One specially designed room

Closed: Never

been a hotel and was recently renovated in a contemporary, commercial style. The present owners, the Hilber family, have managed Des Alpes for 40 years.

Many of the simply furnished, plain rooms are equipped with showers rather than bathtubs and have balconies with lake views. Number

455 is an average-sized double in shades of tan, with French doors overlooking the lake. Number 460 is a quiet double, done in shades of deep red, yellow and beige with a balcony opening to a courtyard. Number 456 is a quiet double with balcony and city view.

The restaurant (see story page 6) is a sunny place with a friendly atmosphere and tables on a terrace facing the lake.

Address: Hotel Des Alpes, Rathausquai 5, CH-6004 Luzern

Phone: 041/515825

Fax: 041/517451

Location: Facing the lake along a pedestrian walkway

Rooms: Five singles, 40 doubles

Proprietor: Rolf Hilber

Prices: Singles 85-135 Sfr. (\$71-\$113), doubles 145-225 Sfr. (\$121-\$188)

Facilities: Restaurant and Bar

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: Never

Parking: Free outdoor spaces 5 minutes walk

Rating: AVERAGE 12/20

Hotel Rebstock

This moderately-priced hotel near the Cathedral (loud, early morning bells) is interesting but a little quirky. Most of the smallish, oddly-shaped guestrooms are decorated with contemporary furnishings and in bright

Continued on page 6...

The Lion of Luzern

Luzern's most poignant, almost heartbreaking, sight is the *Löwendenkmal* (Lion Monument), a memorial to the 786 officers and men of the Swiss Guards who, in 1792, died at the hands of a Parisian revolutionary mob while protecting Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

In dying agony, his heart pierced by a lance, the lion holds a protecting paw over the shield of the Bourbon kings. It is difficult to describe the emotional impact of this work, sculpted in rock out of a quarry wall. Mark Twain called it the "most mournful and moving piece of stone in the world."

So why did Swiss soldiers die defending a French king?

From the beginning of the 14th century, and for several hundred years, the Swiss, in defending their land against invaders, became known as the best fighters in Europe. However, after a significant defeat at Marignano, Italy, in 1519, they adopted a policy of neutrality and thereafter rented their famous warriors to other countries.

One customer was the French king, Louis XVI, who hired them as bodyguards. Louis, however, was most unpopular and the French revolutionaries detested the Guards. Still, the Swiss had given their oaths and were determined to obey his commands.

When things began to heat up and the crowd was asking for his head, the King tried to give up the guard and save his own life. He sent a message to the Swiss barracks for the guard to disband. It was misunderstood and the soldiers, prepared to die to save the King's life but outnumbered 100 to 1, fought their way to his side, losing 50 men in the process. With the mob at his gates, Louis ordered the guardsmen to lay down their arms. Aghast, they vehemently protested, finally complying with tears of frustration. Unarmed and helpless, they were engulfed and torn apart by the mob. The Lion Monument depicts their death.

Sources: *One Million Mercenaries: Swiss Soldiers in the Armies of the World*, by John McCormack, Leo Cooper, London, 1993.

The Swiss at War 1300-1500, by Douglas Miller and G.A. Embleton, Osprey Publishing Ltd, London, 1979.

Parking: Own garage, 12 Sfr./night

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 13/20

Hotel Des Alpes

This modest tourist hotel has a fine location directly on the lake, five minutes walk from the train station. The 200-year-old building has always

LUZERN

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primary colors. There is no elevator, and some rooms are reached only after a series of ups and downs and many steps. Bathrooms have showers rather than bathtubs. There is an attractive, highly-regarded restaurant with streetside terrace. A strong point in the Rebstock's favor is its friendly, helpful staff.

Address: Hotel Rebstock, St. Leodegar Strasse 3, CH-6006 Luzern

Phone: 041/513581

Fax: 041/513917

Location: Central

Rooms: Five singles, 28 doubles

Proprietor: Claudia Moser

Prices: Singles 130-150 Sfr. (\$108-\$125), doubles 210-250 Sfr. (\$175-\$208)

Facilities: Restaurant and bar with outdoor terrace

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: Never

Parking: Garage, 12 Sfr./night.

Rating: AVERAGE 12/20

Lower Priced Hotels:

Goldener Stern, Burgerstrasse 35, CH-6003 Luzern, phone 041/23 08 91, fax 041/23 08 92. Singles 95 Sfr. (\$80), doubles 135 Sfr. (\$113). Near the Franciscan church on the south bank of the Reuss river. Clean and plain. A Swiss bargain.

Hotel Derby, Falkengasse 4, CH-6004 Luzern, phone 041/51 26 62, fax 041/51 42 83. Singles 60-120 Sfr. (\$50-\$100), doubles 80-180 Sfr. (\$67-\$150). New two-star, 10 minutes from the rail station.

Zum Weissen Kreuz, Furrengasse 19, CH-6004, phone 041/51, fax 40 40 041/51 40 60. Singles 89-107 Sfr. (\$74-\$89), doubles 139-174 Sfr. (\$116-\$145). Popular three-star hotel on the water.

FOOD

Zunftthaus zu Pfistern

In the old town near the covered bridge on Kornmarkt, the entrance to this ornately decorated former guild-house is one floor above street level. On our luncheon visit the lively Pfistern was crowded with locals.

Despite the bustle, service was very good; waiters were especially friendly and patient — not always the case in such a popular restaurant.

The simple dishes we ordered — pork, ham and veal meatballs baked in a puff pastry with creamy mushroom sauce, and grilled chicken accompanied by crisp potato croquettes — were delicious. The “desert of the day” was a luscious white meringue with chocolate, scoops of vanilla and chocolate ice cream, powdered sugar and lots and lots of whipped cream. With tea, our lunch for two came to 65.60 Sfr. (\$55) including tip.

Zunftthaus Zu Pfistern, Kornmarkt 4, CH-6000 Luzern. Moderate. Reservations not necessary.

Montana

The restaurant in this hotel enjoys the same panoramic view of the lake as the guest rooms. The dining room is large and not too formal. We found no fault with dishes that included a richly flavored French onion soup, a light and delicate cream of pumpkin soup, homemade ravioli in a brown sauce with walnuts, mushrooms, finely cut zucchinis and carrots and tortellini covered with a creamy, mild sauce of cheese and tomato. The bill for two including glasses of Fendant wine came to 87.20 Sfr. (\$73).

Restaurant, Hotel Montana, Adigenswilerstrasse 22, CH-6002 Luzern. Moderate to expensive. Phone 041/516565.

Des Alpes

The rustic Des Alpes is an excellent spot for a pleasant lunch: quiet; friendly service; a sunny, relaxed atmosphere; large portions and reasonable prices. Floors are covered with oriental carpets and walls are festooned with the coats of arms of various Swiss families. The restaurant faces the pedestrian walk near the covered wooden *Kapellbrücke* (Chapel Bridge). The dining room has a view over river and lake.

Des Alpes has been around since 1894, but current management took over in 1977.

On one occasion, the two-course “business lunch” special for 30 Sfr.


(\$25) included salad, scampi in beer batter with ratatouille and parsley buttered potatoes. From the dessert cart came a luscious German-style apple *kuchen* with vanilla sauce for an additional 7.50 Sfr. (\$6). Another, more modest meal consisted of a large homemade sausage with spicy mustard sauce and a mixed green salad. The bill, including a glass of beer came to 19.90 Sfr. (\$17) for one.

Restaurant, Hotel des Alpes, Rathausquai 5, CH-6004 Luzern. Moderate. Phone 041/515825.

Walliser Kanne

This likable Swiss fondue house offers specialties favored by the tourist trade. Dimly lit and casual with dark wood beams, white stucco walls and bare wood tables, it offers a busy, youthful ambience.

Specialties include spaghetti Bolognese and a green salad for 13 Sfr. (\$11) and pork schnitzel in Marsala sauce with angel hair pasta with tomato sauce and green salad for 19.50 Sfr. (\$16). We chose “Walliser” fondue, a bubbling, strong pot of melted cheese flavored with kirsch and garlic. A second main dish, fresh trout, was preceded by “Walliser” soup with pieces of white asparagus and tomato in a delicate cream base. Including a glass of Fendant and a cup of coffee the bill for two came to 55.80 Sfr. (\$46).

Walliser Kanne Speiserestaurant, Burgerstrasse 3, CH-6003 Luzern. Moderate. 

ONLINE

Continued from page 2

Right now, however, pickings are a little slim. *Eaasy Sabre* takes some learning, is rather tedious — it is still faster to get a price quote from a travel agent — and has its limitations. For example, I recently tried to book a hotel room in Heidelberg. My first request was for a double room under \$100. *Eaasy Sabre* had none. When I upped the ante to \$120, the lone suggestion was the **Ramada Inn** in Heppenheim, 32 kilometers away. Searching for a November airfare from Tampa to Frankfurt, the best *Eaasy Sabre* could do was \$658 plus tax on **USAir**. I got the same \$658 price directly from the airline's reservation service, but a call to **DER Tours** yielded a quote of \$572.

AOL also offers the *Traveler's Advantage*,

where for a \$49 annual fee, one can obtain various travel discounts plus a 5% rebate on travel booked through *Traveler's Advantage* or *Eassy Sabre*.

In AOL's *Traveler's Corner* are the *Weissman Travel Reports*. These are principally guidebook-style destination summaries. I checked one for Vienna and found a very general description of the city and its main attractions; far less than in the most basic guidebook and without phone or fax numbers, addresses, hotel or restaurant recommendations or, for that matter, any specific information. The so-called "professional" versions of Weissman's country reports can be purchased online for \$8.95. These are the same reports that many travel agents supply gratis to good customers.

Probably the most useful Europe travel information provided by AOL is in Rick Steves' *Europe Through the Back Door* folder in the *Travel Forum* section. Here, from time to time, the extremely knowledgeable Steves offers his comments on various aspects of budget travel to Europe. There is also a folder entitled *European Updates by Country*, though when I looked on September 16 there was nothing on Germany, Austria or Switzerland. The Steves' folder also includes letters from his "Road Scholars." Most interesting were those under the heading "rip-offs and scams" in which people described how they had been cheated by Italian waiters and Hungarian train conductors.

Also on AOL are a lot of interesting looking titles which turn out to be deadends. The *Travel Articles Library*, for example, is a collection of files that can be downloaded to your computer, but most are just brief subscriber comments and only a few of them are about Germany, Austria or Switzerland.

There is also a *Travel Cafe* where one can have a live, online conversation with other AOL members. In addition, there are *Travel Boards* where members ask and answer each other questions on a variety of travel topics. The *World Travel* board lists about 500 postings in the Austrian folder over the last two years, 438 for Germany and about 600 for Switzerland. Most of these, however, are brief questions, answers and comments by AOL subscribers.

In my view, America Online is not yet an important trip planning tool for the Europe traveler. The Internet, however, shows great promise. When European tourist agencies establish a presence on the World Wide Web and open their databases to anyone with a computer and a modem, having the means to access that information will almost be a necessity.

Whether it's a service such as America Online, or the Internet itself, locating useful information online is a time eater. Going from Web site to Web site on the Internet can be a particularly slow, tedious process, even with the fastest modem (currently 28,800 bauds per second). My computer is a Power Macintosh 7500 with a too-slow SupraFaxModem (14,400 bps). The basic America Online charge is \$9.95 per month and includes 300 free minutes. After that it's \$2.95 per hour. Other online services are similarly priced, or you can go direct to the Internet.

Let us know your favorite online travel information sources and we'll pass them on. By the way, our E-Mail address is rbestor@aol.com. — RHB

Fruit of the Internet: LTU's Suggested Tourist Library

The following bibliography was downloaded from LTU's World Wide Web Site as just one example of the information found there.

Babel Translations, Eds., *Germany, A Phaidon Cultural Guide* (1985). A German guide which has been translated into English. It is for the traveler who wants more detailed background on the artistic, architectural, and cultural sights of Germany.

Julius Baum, *German Cathedrals* (1956). Two hundred photographs with detailed account of Germany's cathedrals.

Waltraud Coles and Uwe Koreik, *Simple Etiquette in Germany (East and West)* (1991). This useful introduction to basic German customs in east and west Germany covers such topics as giving presents, meeting people and the German home.

Robert Darnton, *Berlin Journal 1989-1990* (1991). The first eyewitness account describing the events that led to the opening of the Berlin Wall.

Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany* (1990). A clear and informative guide of German history from the Middle Ages to the present.

Michael Jackson, *The New World Guide to Beer* (1977). This comprehensive guide, recognized as the standard in its field, covers the world and Germany is justly recognized.

Hugh Johnson, *Atlas of German Wines and Traveller's Guide to the Vineyards* (1986). Written by one of the world's leading authorities on wine. This book includes maps and a glossary of German wine terms.

Gottfried Lindemann, *History of German Art* (1971). A comprehensive survey in which the author discusses the special characteristics of German architecture, sculpture, painting, and the graphic arts.

William E. and Clare F. Marling, *The Marling Menu-Master for Germany* (1971 and reprints). A guide for translating the German menu into American English.

Horst Scharfenberg, *The Cuisines of Germany: Regional Specialties and Traditional Home Cooking* (1989)

Mark Twain, *A Tramp Abroad* (1989). Twain's account of his travels in Germany are must reading for any visitor today.

Speaking of "dear," we have just returned from a long trip to Europe which included a two-week sojourn in Switzerland. While always a delight to visit, it was terribly expensive this year, even traveling in our style!

We began at **Rote Rose** in Regensburg (an admitted splurge), just a few miles into the countryside from Kloten Airport and light years away from the hustle and bustle of Zürich. Please, try it some time! When you do, ask for the Lady Sylvia suite.

Such a peaceful spot to recover from jet lag and to begin ones meanderings through this beautiful country.

This trip we traveled to Lake Constance and Stein am Rhein. We loved staying in Stein and particularly enjoyed a day at the Rheinfall and the boat trip back to Stein. We also loved visiting Mainau and Meersburg by car and ferry.

The old town of St. Gallen was really pleasant to walk through on Sunday and we stopped early Monday morning to visit the wonderful library on our way to the Chur area and our beautiful scenic trip to Arosa on the Rhaetian Bahn.

Our stay at your recommendation, **Hotel Crusch Alva** (phone 082/713 19, fax 082/724 59) in Zuoz, was perfect for visiting the Engadine and the beautiful lakes of the St. Moritz region. This is,

indeed, a delightful hotel! We finished our Swiss itinerary with a night in Soglio and a beautiful drive through the Val Bregaglia to Italy.

Thanks again for your interesting and informative newsletter!

Caroline Jordan, San Rafael CA

Sauna Exposé

Some comments and recommendations:

1. The Eastern Frisian islands in the Nordsee. My wife and I visited Norderney this past Spring. The train

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READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 1

(Ed. note: Sounds like you're in the clear. The German Tourist Office referred us to the German Consulate who thought that unpaid traffic tickets would "go away" in five years, and then went on to book us a little guilt trip with the admonition that "we encourage our tourists to pay their traffic tickets in the United States.")

Switzerland Report

Your "Dear Subscriber" article fit us to a "T" and we enjoyed reading about the kind of travel we hold dear.

READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 7

stops at Norden Nordeck (right next to dock) from which a large boat takes you to this island (50 minutes). Fantastic: only Germans, 98-99%. In fact, in the sauna at the **Vier Jahreseiten Hotel** ... no clothes ... both sexes. Unbelievable but true! Probably best time of year to visit, April-October.

2. Südtirol, Italy.

Many, if not most, speak German. We could not even find an Italian restaurant. We traveled a most spectacular road from Landeck, Austria south over the pass and then east to Merano. It's one of the most beautiful roads we have ever traveled. I think May-October is best, but ice and snow would be for the younger set.

3. The city of Goslar in the Harz Mountains. The mountains are beautiful, so are the cities in the area, Wernigerode and others. Al Fiedler, Camarillo CA

(Ed. Note: *Nude bathing and sauna lounging by both sexes is common in Germany.*)

Loves Bad Wimpfen

I have only subscribed to *Gemütlichkeit* for a brief six months. As I plan my 13th trip to Europe I can only say I wish I had known about you're newsletter 13 years ago. The focus of your information matches perfectly with my mode of European travel.

I would like to share with your readers one of my favorite small corners of Germany that is not too well known by American tourists.

A short drive south of Heidelberg is the ancient

town of Bad Wimpfen. This cobbled, half-timbered jewel sits directly on the river Neckar. It is easily accessible from Autobahn #6 or #81. The town is walled and there is a footpath along the side of the wall that offers lovely views of the river. The *Altstadt* is worth a full day of exploration so plan to stay overnight in one of the quite acceptable accommodations that are available. The town reminds one of Rothenburg on a smaller scale, but somehow feels more authentic. The heart of town is the Blauer Turm which can be seen long before you reach the city limits. The turm was erected in the year 1200 and the surrounding buildings are from the same era. There are some steep hills and all the streets are cobbled so be sure to wear comfortable walking shoes.

There are three hotels.

The **Weinman** (phone 07063/8582, fax 07063/1390) and the **Blauer Turm** (phone 07063/225, fax 07063/6701) are right in the main square area very near the *Rathaus*. The **Hotel Am Kurpark** (phone 07063/7091) is a five-minute walk north of the *Altstadt*. My favorite stop is the **Gasthaus Neckarblick** (phone 07063/7002, fax 07063/8548). As the name implies it overlooks the river in a quiet area near the Kurpark. The owners are a truly friendly young couple who keep everything spotless. Sit out on the terrace and watch the boat traffic on the river or go inside in the sitting room and enjoy the same view. In 1994, the rate for a double room with bath, shower and w.c. was DM 110 (\$91) including breakfast. If you like bicycling, they have a number of machines avail-

able for guests to use at no charge.

The rooms are not oversized but certainly comfortable and clean. I always look forward to returning to this "home away from home" when in Germany.

The town has numerous restaurants and *Gästehäuser*. Below the Hotel Weinman is a cellar bar that is worth visiting. There is something cozy about being in the bowels of an 800-year-old building. In my opinion, the only place to eat in Bad Wimpfen is the **Kreuterweible**. Just around the corner from the Weinman down a steep hill, this fine establishment is without peer. The house specialty is grilled chicken. This may not be considered a delicacy but here it truly is. People, myself included, have been known to travel from Frankfurt just for the *Halb Hühnchen*.

Don & Elizabeth Schaaf, Largo FL

EUROPE TRAVEL BRIEFING

Ski Packages

DER Tours is out with its annual winter ski packages to the famed Austrian ski resorts of Innsbruck and Kitzbühel. Prices, which include roundtrip airfare, seven nights lodging, breakfast and transfers, range from \$878 to \$1128 for the **Pension Horl** in Kitzbühel to from \$1298 to \$1798 at the **Hotel Golden-Grief**, also in Kitzbühel. Prices depend on dates selected, single vs. double occupancy and U. S. point of origin. A week at Kitzbühel's charming little **Hotel Christophorus** (1993 "G" Award winner, see

Gemütlichkeit, June 1993) is from \$1118 to \$1448.

Innsbruck choices include the hotels **Goldene Krone** (\$908 to \$1288), **Rotter Adler** (\$938-\$1358), **Alpin Park** (\$948-\$1368), **Maximilian** (\$998-\$1345), **Innsbruck** (\$1028-\$1448) and **Scandic Crown** (\$1048-\$1548).

Contact a travel agent or phone 800-521-6722.

Car Buying Overseas

We have had inquiries regarding purchase of new and used automobiles overseas, especially by persons contemplating a lengthy European trip. Many cars are cheaper in Europe than in the U.S. and European sales tax is not added to cars purchased by Americans. We are told that a Toyota Camry or Volvo 760 Turbo, for example, costs about \$2,000 less in Europe than in the U.S. There is, however, a 2.9% import duty and the shipping cost to get the car to the U.S. is about \$500 to the East Coast. Of course, if you plan to bring a car home it must conform to federal and state safety and emissions standards. For cars overseas try:

- **Iczkovits Tax-Free Cars**, Claridenstrasse 36, CH-8027 Zürich. Sells Audi, Mercedes, Saab, Volvo and VW to U.S. specs.
- **Shipside Tax-Free World on Wheels B.V.**, Shipside Building, Kruisweg 631, P.O. Box 430, 2130 AK Hoofddorp, Netherlands. Write for free catalog.
- **Trasco Export GmbH**, Steindamm 38, D-28719, Bremen 77, Germany. Luxury Mercedes Benz and armored cars.

Next Month:

The Grand Tour, Part 2