

# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## NINE YEARS OF GEMÜTLICHKEIT

## Hotel of the Year

### Dear Subscriber:

December 26, 1995

#### Memory

Very good wines are often said to have a "long finish," meaning their taste lingers in the mouth for some time after the liquid has been swallowed. One assumes this can be both bad and good. The finish of a classified Bordeaux from a good vintage will no doubt be a pleasant experience; but the extended aftertaste of a slug of castor oil will not.

Travel experiences are like that. Some stay long in the mind and in the senses. Close my eyes while listening to a recording of the late German tenor, Fritz Wunderlich, singing *Wien, du Stadt meiner Träume* (Vienna, city of my dreams) and I'm back in Vienna's seedy **Heuriger Restaurant**, drinking Budvar, the Czech beer, listening to Walter Meda and observing the local characters. For me, it was a travel experience with a "long finish;" I'll remember it for a long time. More later on Walter.

Flipping through nine years of past *Gemütlichkeits* reminded me of other memorable times; most of them like fine wine, but a few tasting more of castor oil. Roll the tape:

#### A Great Drive

• **February, 1987:** The Austrian country drive from Maria Zell to Hieflau on a glorious summer day. It was in the middle of the day, during lunch and the few tiny villages along the way seemed like deserted movie sets.

#### Sauerkraut Recipe

• **July, 1987:** Werner Behringer, owner of the **Bratwursthäusle**, Nürnberg's fabulous feeder, told us — in his words, transcribed from

*Continued on page 2...*

## 1995 "G" AWARDS

**W**ith the December, 1995, issue we complete nine years of *Gemütlichkeit* and it is time again for the annual "G" awards; those places — hotels, restaurants, museums, coffee houses, airlines, etc. — which in our opinion epitomize *gemütlichkeit*, the untranslatable German word that is so much a part of our travel philosophy.

Following is a list of establishments where, in 1995, we felt something extra; unusually caring management, a special warmth, sincere friendliness, great charm. Those we have chosen are not necessarily the best, just the most *gemütlich* — though friendly, caring management usually

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## EDITOR'S CHOICE '95

*A list and summary of our "Editor's Choice" selections for 1995*

### Brandenburger Hof Berlin

**O**bjets d'art and striking art nouveau decor highlight this sleek Berlin hideaway not far off the Ku'damm. Eislebener Strasse 14, D-10789 Berlin, phone 030/214050, fax 030/21405100. EXP

### Budapest Hilton Budapest

**M**odern hotel built into and upon the preserved ruins of a 13th century Dominican monastery and the 1688 Jesuit College. Great views of Pest. Hess Andras ter 1-3, H-1014 Budapest, phone: 360-1/1751000, fax 36-1/1560285. EXP

### Hotel Berner Zell am See

**F**ine resort hotel in residential section of Zell am See. Good value. Nikolaus-Gassner-Promenade 1, A-5700 Zell am See, phone 06542/2557, fax 06542/25577. MOD

### Hotel de la Couronne Morges

**O**ur 1995 'Best Hotel Value' choice. See story page 4. MOD

### Hotel Drei Könige Basel

**W**aters of the Rhein river lap at the foundation of this top class hotel. Blumenrain 8, CH-4001

*Continued on page 5...*

*Gemütlichkeit's* "Hotel of the Year" for 1995, **Hôtel-Restaurant de L'Ermitage**, in Vufflens-le-Château on Switzerland's Lac Léman, is the kind of small, luxurious inn that seems unique to Europe; with gracious service that is attentive to the smallest detail; a kitchen that produces memorable dish after memorable dish; sleep-inducing guestrooms you never want to leave; all in a tweedy, riding-to-hounds country setting. It was an easy choice.

L'Ermitage is the stuff of glossy travel magazines, of films set in Europe, and of dreams. But such rapture, particularly in Switzerland, comes at a price. Figure \$175 to \$400 per person per day for room, breakfast and dinner, depending on the season and one's ability to maintain control in the restaurant. And those who create a few empty slots in owner/chef Bernard Ravet's wine cellar will rack up even higher numbers.

Still, for a special occasion, or to put a fine finish on a European vacation (it's less than an hour from the Geneva Airport), a couple of days at L'Ermitage will be two you will always remember.

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## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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our tape recorder — his recipe for sauerkraut:

You put some lard in a pan, melt it, put the brown sugar in it, let it caramelize a bit. Then you put onions in, let them get a little like glass. Then you put in some caraway seed, bay leaf and juniper berries. Then you put the sauerkraut in (from a can is OK). And always put in the sauerkraut and the spices in layers. When it is filled up, you put in liquid: about 10-15% white wine, about 30% apple juice, and the rest you fill up with water and you let it boil about 45 minutes to one hour. That's all."

Almost. "Watch that you have enough lard. Sauerkraut needs more lard than you think to get a good boil."

### The Royal "We"

• **November, 1987:** That month we published a few responses to a readers' survey. One came from a gentleman who referred to himself as follows: H.S.H (His Serene Highness, I presume), then his name followed by XXVIR.v.P. His comment? "We are content with your publication."

### He'll Always Win

• **January, 1988:** Looking for a place to spend the night we came upon the **Hotel Hirschen** in Langnau in the Emmental where, after dinner, owner/chef Walter Birkhäuser bolstered his argument that Swiss wines are the equal of any in the world by opening and pouring bottle after bottle from his extensive cellar.

Next day, we were invited for a brief visit to the Birkhäuser home, a beautiful, quiet place, high in the Emmental hills with views stretching to the Alps. We were not the first guests of the Hirschen to be so honored — only the most hungover.

### A Vienna "Local"

• **August, 1988:** A night in old Vienna: ...a scruffy neighborhood Beisl, the **Heuriger Restaurant**, attracted us on a warm summer night with the tenor voice of Walter Meda wafting through open doors and windows. Walter also plays the accor-

dion and knows every tune every Viennaphile wants to hear. He is not much to look at and speaks no English, but Walter has soul. Once you've had enough of the Heuriger's good Budweiser beer vom Fass, (from the heart of Bohemia — not St. Louis, Fairfield, Memphis, et al), ask him to sing *Grüß mir mein Wien* (Greet for me my Vienna).

...the Heuriger isn't for everyone. It attracts a working class clientele of truck drivers, clerks and laborers. It's clean enough but charm is not a word that comes to mind when describing it and, judging by the reaction to us, tourists there are a rare sight. The arrival of Martians couldn't have turned more heads than ours did.

...one grizzled customer, sporting one of the worst wigs in the free world and fueled by glass after glass of white wine, sat opposite Walter and his accordion, quietly but fervently singing along — word for word — every tune. This was accompanied by nearly as much hand-waving and facial emotion as Bernstein conducting the Vienna Philharmonic. We later learned he has occupied that seat virtually every night for eight years and once visited the U.S. as a prisoner of war; which we might have guessed — his English was limited to American slang phrases of the '40s.

### The Best Hotel

• **September, 1988:** Our first stay at Lausanne's **Le Beau-Rivage Palace**, the best hotel of these nine years of judging hotels in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and points east. *Maybe this little tableau will give you a glimpse of what life is like at Le Beau-Rivage Palace. We stumbled, exhausted and disoriented after the flight from San Francisco (change planes in New York) and train ride from Zürich, into the hotel's L'Orangerie terrace restaurant, looking for a late, light lunch before collapsing into bed. Despite our frightening appearance — matted hair, unfocused eyes and blue jeans — we were greeted as though we part of King Hussien's (a sometimes guest) entourage. A team of whispering, white-jacketed waiters hovered around our table, changing plates and silverware more often than the New York Yankees change managers. The beautifully poached salmon and carafe of white*

wine — probably from the nearby Lavaux vineyard — revived us enough to check out our luncheon companions: European aristocracy, the kind who take funny little dogs into restaurants and employ people to tuck blankets around their legs when they climb in to the back of the Bentley; the kind who feel at home at the **Ritz**, the **Connaught** and the **Beau-Rivage**. We rode the elevator to our nap knowing we were finally in the big time.

### 'I Want to be Alone'

One other indelible memory is evoked by a reread of that September, 1988 issue. Early one afternoon, while being escorted through a labyrinth of back hallways and semipublic rooms in Vienna's **Hotel Palais Schwarzenberg** we entered a large, private dining room: ...our escort, without a break in stride or slowing down, turned her head and made a quick acknowledgment to the room's lone luncheon customer. Two waiters lingered at the opposite side of the room, perhaps awaiting a summons to the lonely occupant's table.

In less than five seconds we crossed the room and exited through a door near the servers. There was time enough, however, to get an impression. The person to whom our escort spoke was a very old woman dressed entirely in black including a black hat with a wide, floppy brim. She sat alone at a large corner table, the room in front of her. A solitary, almost regal figure, presiding over the quiet room.

It was an odd scene. A mysterious stranger; one who lunches privately at a Michelin starred restaurant, is known to the hotel staff, and has the clout and/or money to command a private dining room. What sort of person lives this way?

I concluded that the lone diner was the reclusive Greta Garbo who, at the time, was said to be living in Switzerland. It was also written that she favored black clothing, including big black hats. Some weeks later I saw a photo in a newspaper of Garbo in her prime. The old woman in the dining room had, like the young star in the photo, high, distinctive cheekbones. The wispy white hair under the black hat could have once been blonde.

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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%

## THE 1995 "G" AWARDS

Continued from page 1

also means skillful, intelligent management. .

### **Hotel Berner Zell am See, Austria**

Sedate, comfortable (most guestrooms have separate sitting areas) and the best value we found in Zell am See. Very warm welcome from Eric and Anita Berner.

Hotel Berner, Nikolaus-Gassner-Promenade 1, A-5700 Zell am See, phone 06542/2557, fax 06542/25577. Least expensive double (LED) about \$110.

### **Hotel Brandenburger Hof Berlin, Germany**

Elegant retreat in the heart of Berlin. Rates a "G" for architectural design and well-chosen modern sculptures.

Hotel Brandenburger Hof, Eislebener Strasse 14, D-10789 Berlin, phone 030/214050, fax 030/21405100. LED\* about \$230.

### **Schlössli Bottighofen Bottighofen, Switzerland**

This "little castle" — 11 beautifully decorated guestrooms — on the Swiss side of the Bodensee is full of charm and elegance. An exceptionally well-run small hotel.

Schlössli Bottighofen, CH-8598 Bottighofen (near Kreuzlingen), phone 072/75 12 75, fax 072/75 15 40. LED\* about \$155.

### **Hôtel-Restaurant de L'Ermitage Vufflens-le-Château, Switzerland**

Our 1995 "Hotel of the Year." See story page 1.

Hôtel-Restaurant de L'Ermitage, CH-1134, Vufflens-le-Château, phone 021/802 2191, fax 021/802 2240. LED\* about \$175.

### **Hotel Feinschmeck Zell am See, Austria**

Two words: Phillip Prodingler, the hotel's youthful, live-wire owner/

manager. The Feinschmeck itself is fine — recently remodeled in a modern, almost chain-hotel style — but Prodingler is the story here.

Hotel Feinschmeck, Dreifaltigkeitgasse 10, A-5700, Zell am See, phone 06542/2549, fax 06542/254949. LED\* about \$140.

### **Hotel Florhof Zürich, Switzerland**

We like everything about this remodeled old favorite — quiet but central location, restaurant, guestrooms and gleaming bathrooms — but it is the cordial, meticulous attention-to-detail management style of Brigitte and Beat Schiesser that puts the Florhof over the top.

Hotel Florhof, Florhofgasse 4, CH-8001 Zürich, phone 10/2614470, fax 01/2614611. LED\* about \$250.

### **Romantik Hotel Krone Gottlieben, Switzerland**

On the Bodensee in the tiny, historic hamlet of Gottlieben, the cozy, half-timbered Hotel Krone offers unpretentious but comfortable rooms, excellent meals and a warm welcome from Georg and Ingeborg Schraner-Michaeli.

Romantik Hotel Krone, Seestrasse 11, CH-8274 Gottlieben, phone 072/69 23 23, fax 072/69 24 56. LED\* about \$115.

### **Hotel Sidi Prague, Czech Republic**

Contributing editor Roger Holli-day says we if would establish a category for hotels with the most character, the Sidi would top the list. It's tiny (only three rooms/suites), it's special, it's owners care and it gets a "G". Excellent location (near Charles Bridge) and value.

Hotel Sidi, Na Kampa 10, Prague 1, phone 536 135, fax same. LED\* about \$135.

### **Gasthof Steinerwirt Zell am See, Austria**

Casual dining. Traditional Austrian dishes flawlessly prepared. Service is friendly, knowing and quick. Dinner for two persons less

than \$50. Worth a detour.

Gasthof Steinerwirt, Dreifaltigkeitgasse, Zell am See, A-5700, phone 06542/2502, fax 06542/357871. INEX/MOD

### **Der Teufelhof Weinstube Basel, Switzerland**

Imaginative food, imaginative decor, a carefully chosen wine list and a lively atmosphere add up to a "G" for this fine Basel restaurant.

Kunst-Hotel Teufelhof, Leonhardsgraben 47, CH-4051 Basel, phone 061/691 1010, fax 061/691 1004. EXP.

### **The Olympic Museum Lausanne, Switzerland**

A unique collection, perfectly organized and presented on the edge of Lac Léman in Lausanne. Great Olympic memories and great art. A must see.

Olympic Museum Lausanne, Quai d'Ouchy 1, CH-1001, Lausanne, tel., 021/621 6511, fax: 021/621 6512. ☒

\* LED = Least expensive double room

## TOP HOTELS: 1987-1995

Continued from page 1

Gemütlichkeit's top hotels 1987-1995:

### 1995

Hôtel-Restaurant de L'Ermitage Vufflens-le-Château, CH-1134 Switzerland, phone 021/802 2191, fax 021/802 2240.

### 1994

#### Pension Altstadt

Kirchengasse 41, Vienna A-1070, Austria, phone 1/526 33 99-0, fax 1/523 49 01

### 1993

#### Hotel Victoria Jungfrau

Interlaken, CH-3800 Switzerland, phone 036/271111, fax 036/273737

#### Hotel Grüner Baum

Kotschachtal, Badgastein A-5640 Austria, phone 06434 25 160, fax 06434 25 16 125

### 1992

#### Hotel Geiger

Stanggass, Berchtesgaden D-83471 Germany, phone 08652/96 55 55, fax 08652/965400

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## HOTEL OF THE YEAR

Continued from page 3

### 1991

#### Hotel Beau Rivage Palace

Ouchy CH-1006 Switzerland, phone 021/26 38 31, fax 021/27-78-78

### 1990

#### Hotel Abtei

Abteistrasse 14, Hamburg D-20149 Germany, phone 040/4495 95, fax 040/449820

### 1989

#### Schloss Haunsperg

Oberalm bei Hallein, A-5411 Austria, phone 06245/80662, fax 06245/80680

### 1988

#### Hotel Römischer Kaiser

Annagasse 16, Vienna A-1015 Austria, phone 1/512 77 51-0, fax 1/512 77 51/13

### 1987

#### Hotel Benen Diken Hof

Suederstrasse, Sylt Ost D-25980 Germany, phone 04651/3 10 35, fax 04651/358 35

## Top Hotel Value of 1995

This year, the strength of the Swiss franc drove prices for North American travelers in Switzerland to new heights and made scarce reasonably priced hotels. Thus it was a pleasant surprise to come across the **Hôtel de la Courrone**, located in the center of Morges, a busy, interesting town on the shore of Lac Léman.

Part of the **MinOtel** marketing group, the Courrone offered double rooms last summer through the MinOtel reservation service (800-336-4668) for \$118 per night, a great bargain for Switzerland.

Our April 1995 issue bestowed an "editor's choice" designation on the Courrone and it would be a fine headquarters from which to explore this part of Switzerland. It is also convenient to the Geneva Airport.

Gemütlichkeit's top value hotels 1987-1995:

### 1995

#### Hôtel de la Courrone

Grand-Rue 88, Morges CH-1110, Switzerland, phone 021/803 2016, fax 021/803 12 97

### 1994

#### Hotel Rebenhof

Weinstrasse 58, Neuweier D-76534, Germany, phone 07223/5406, fax 07223/52321

### 1993

#### Haus Christophorus

Marchfeldgasse 3, Kitzbühel A-6370, Austria, phone 05356/27 83, fax 05356/27 85

### 1992

#### Pension Heim

Aufmberg 8, Seeg D-87637, Germany, phone 08364/258, fax 08364/1051

### 1991

#### Hotel Dorer

Franz-Schubert Str. 20□, Schönwald□ D-78141 Germany, phone 07722/9 50 50, fax 07722/9 50 530

### 1990

#### Hotel Anker

Obertorstrasse 6, Marktheidenfeld D-97828, Germany, phone 09391/600 40, fax 09391/600 477

### 1989

#### Garnihotel Reulein

Steigstrasse 28, Lindau D-88131 Germany, phone 08382/79099, fax 08382/75262

### 1988

#### Gutshotel Des Weingut

Balduinstr. 1, Neumagen-Dhron D-54347 Germany, phone 06507/20-35, fax 06507/5644

### 1987

#### Romantik Hotel Bierhütte

Hohenau D-94545 Germany, phone 08558/3 15, fax 08558/23 87

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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She died a few years later, but remember this folks: *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Life*, — even *Rolling Stone* — scoured the world for Garbo...but it was *Gemütlichkeit* that found her.

### Moseying the Mosel

• **October, 1988:** We visit the famed Mosel vineyards of **J. J. Prüm**, whose wines, particularly the Wehlener Sonnenuhr, we had known and enjoyed for many years. We were knocking at the front door of the very riverside house pictured on the label of the wine we knew so well:

*Having emptied a rather significant number of Dr. Prüm's skinny green bottles over the last 20 years, it was somewhat of a thrill for us to walk through that front door and be invited to share a glass or two with Dr. Prüm.*

*First though, he drove us across the river to the top of the Sonnenuhr vineyard where he opened a cool bottle of his 1981 Bernkasteler Badstube Kabinett. Publishing this newsletter has its moments, but none will be remembered longer than that late summer afternoon looking up the river past the endless ranks of vines to the pretty little town of Bernkastel. Below us we could see the Prüm house. Beside us stood the man who made the wine in our glasses and whose family have made wine in this town for more than 400 years. Yes, it was nothing like work.*

### Riding High

• **January, 1989:** From the Swiss mountain village of Château-d'Oex we rode a tiny helicopter to the Les Diableret Glacier, at nearly 11,000 feet. Heights are not my thing but I would do this again in a minute:

*The view between our feet was first of green hills then ridge after ridge of snow covered peaks. We seemed to clear each new, higher ridge line with only a few feet to spare. On our left we passed Rocher du Midi at 2,100 meters; to our right and above, the jagged Dents du Midi at 3,263 meters. One final, forbidding picket line of craggy rocks and the chopper was circling above the glacier, 3,243 meters. After waiting for a minute or so for the wind to do the right thing, our pilot made two tight, disorienting turns and landed us gently on a slight up-slope on the glacier, only a few yards from a waiting snow-cat.*

After a ride around the glacier in the snow-cat, a look 5,000 feet straight down from a rickety wood deck of a weather-beaten shack (the scariest part for me) and a light lunch, we descended via a three-stage cable car ride, the middle leg of which is reputed to be among the steepest such descents in all of Europe. We also found out about imbibing at altitude:

*By that time, however, we had snacked on meat and cheese accompanied by enough Yvorne (a light, white wine of the Vaud) that, had we been required to rappel 11,000 feet down the mountain bare-handed on dental floss, it wouldn't have fazed us.*

### Taking the Waters

• **September, 1989:** At **Hotel Les Sources des Alpes** in the Swiss resort of Leukerbad, we took the "cure," a process about which we were totally ignorant. For reasons I don't now recall, I privately referred to my interrogator — sorry I mean therapist — as "Mr. T" (wasn't there was a TV villain called Mr. T?) The first "treatment" was something called *Sprudelbad*:

*My head rested on a rubber pillow at the edge of the tub. Mr. T. positioned himself at its end, facing me. Grinning, he began to manipulate the various dials, switches and valves. Soon the tub began to vibrate and emit a series of noises that at once reminded me of a steam train leaving the station, the Blue Angels flying at Mach 1, 500 feet off the deck, and Jonathan Winters' imitation of the*

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## EDITOR'S CHOICE '95

Continued from page 3

Basel, phone: 061/261 5252, fax 061/261 2153. EXP

### Hotel Feinschmeck Zell am See

Lively, modern hotel in the very center of Zell am See. Dreifaltigkeitgasse 10, A-5700, Zell am See, phone 06542/2549, fax 06542/254949. MOD

### Hotel Florhof Zürich

Intimate, quiet, well-located hotel that has long been Zürich headquarters for many *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers. Florhofgasse 4, CH-8001 Zürich, phone 10/2614470, fax 01/2614611. EXP

### Hotel Montana Lucerne

Great view over Lucerne, big guestrooms, fine service. Hotel Montana, Adigenswilerstrasse 11, CH-6002 Luzern, phone: 041/516565, fax: 041/516676. EXP

### Hôtel-Restaurant de L'Ermitage Vufflens-le-Château (Morges)

Wonderful country sanctuary with magnificent restaurant (see story page 1). CH-1134 Vufflens-le-Château, phone 021/802 2191, fax 021/802 2240. EXP

### Hotel Savoy Berlin

Exquisite small hotel near Berlin's Zoo Station. Fasanenstrasse 9-10, D-10623 Berlin-Charlottenburg, phone 030/31103-0, fax 030/31103-333. EXP

### Hotel Sidi Prague

Tiny three-room hotel with superior Prague views and location near Charles Bridge. Hotel Sidi, Na Kampa 10, Prague 1, phone 536 135, fax same. MOD.

### Hotel St. Gotthard Basel

Best Basel choice for train travelers. Centralbahnstrasse 13, CH-4002 Basel, phone 061/271 52 50, fax 061/271 52 14. MOD/EXP

### L' Auberge de Chernex Chernex (Montreux)

Seven-room inn overlooking Montreux and Lac Léman. Great value. Great charm. Rue du vieux Four, CH-1002 Chernex, phone 21/964 4191, fax 21/964 6857. MOD

### Lausanne Palace Lausanne

Traditional Swiss elegance. Central Lausanne location. Lake view. Rue Grand Chêne 7-9, CH-1002 Lausanne, phone 21/331 3131, fax 21/323 2571. V-EXP

### Romantik Hotel Krone Gottlieben

Cozy hotel, fine restaurant in half-timbered, historic building in the hamlet of Gottlieben near Kreuzlingen. Seestrasse 11, CH-8274 Gottlieben, phone 072/69 23 23, fax 072/69 24 56. MOD/EXP.

### Schlössli Bottighofen Bottighofen

Exceptional small hotel on the Bodensee. Much charm. CH-8598 Bottighofen (near Kreuzlingen), phone 072/75 12 75, 072/75 15 40 MOD/EXP.

### Gasthof Steinerwirt Zell am See

Unpretentious restaurant in center of Zell am See serving down-to-earth but delicious food. Dreifaltigkeitgasse, Zell am See, A-5700, phone. 06542/2502, fax 06542/357871. INEX/MOD

### Kurpfälzisches-Museum Garden Café Heidelberg

Restful, pleasant restaurant on Heidelberg's Hauptstrasse. Hauptstrasse 97, phone 06221/24050. MOD/EXP

### Restaurant Aranybarany Budapest

Inexpensive, atmospheric restaurant in center of Budapest shopping area. Harmincad U. 4, Budapest, phone 1172703. INEXP.

### Restaurant Der Teufelhof (Weinstube) Basel

Cleverly decorated bistro in wonderfully restored old Basel house. Very good food and great

wine list. Leonhardsgraben 47, CH-4051 Basel, phone 061/691 1010, fax 061/691 1004. EXP.

### Restaurant Kampa Park Prague

Easy on the wallet, though upscale by Prague standards. About one-year old. Na Kampa 8b, Mala Strana, Prague 1, phone 534 856 534 800. INEX/MOD


### St. Gotthard Café Zürich

Exuberant Zürich bistro close to train station. Bahnhofstrasse 87, Zürich, phone 01/2115500. MOD/EXP

### Zeughauskeller Zürich

An institution. Huge portions, good beer, great room. Some call it touristy but still a favorite of Zürichers. Bahnhofstrasse 28 by Paradeplatz, Zürich, phone 01/2112690. MOD

### Zunft Haus zu Pfistern Lucerne

Popular, atmospheric Lucerne institution. Kornmarkt 4, CH-6000 Luzern, phone 041/51 36 50, fax 041/511145. MOD 

### Some Bests of 1995

**Best Zoo: Zoologischer Garten Basel.** See the gorilla house.

**Best Hotel Discount Program: Entertainment Europe** (800-445-3137). For \$43 you get 50% off at some 700 European hotels. Admittedly, many are plastic and charmless but last June one of our editors stayed at the **Hotel Gellert** in Budapest for \$99 per night.

**Best Short Boat Ride:** Heidelberg to Neckarsteinach and return, 90 minutes, 15.5 DM (\$11). A pretty and relaxing trip.

**Best Chocolate Factory: Maier** at 60 rue Louis-de-Savoie in Morges, Switzerland. Arrange a tour at tourist office across the street.

**Best Cheap Swiss Meal: Rösti** (fried potatoes) with wild mushrooms at **Café du Vieil-Ouchy** in Lausanne; 20 Sfr. (\$17). This is a tiny hole-in-the-wall but the simple food is well prepared.

# READERS' FORUM

## Internet Travel Advice

I always look forward to and enjoy each issue of *Gemütlichkeit*. I read with particular interest the article in the September issue about the Internet. I have a connection to the Internet and I am astounded by the travel information available — and more and more is added every day. I believe that the hypothetical situation that you set forth in your article is not years away — but a matter of months. I wanted to share with you just a few of the Internet sites I have found that might be of interest. Here are their addresses:

- <http://www.bayern.de/Muenchen/english/offers.htm> — This has general information about Munich as well as specific info about Oktoberfest.

- <http://www.bayern.de/> — Information site about Bavaria

- <http://www.vol.at/> — This is an Austrian newspaper—Voralberg Online — in German language only

- <http://simwww.iic.wifi.at/Graz/> — News and views of Graz. A great source of info about Graz. I visited there in September and had a wonderful time.

- <http://tph.tuwien.ac.at/~svozil/wan/wan.html> — describes hikes around Vienna and other areas of Austria

- <http://www.Austria.org/web/austria> — the Austrian Press and Information Service site in Washington D.C.

- <http://insti.physics.sunysb.edu/~mmartin/languages/languages.html> — Foreign languages for travelers. Has sound files for languages including German

- <http://http://www.reed.edu/~ccampbell/tkp/links.html> — Index to German cultural sights

- <http://Alpha.Solutions.Net/retravel/> — index of travel library

- <http://141.108.3.122/holidays/> — Budget holidays in Austria. This does not have much information currently but is expanding.

- <http://www.city.net> Index to travel info for cities worldwide.

I checked out each of these sites tonight before sending this letter. If you cannot reach them through the web it is probably a typing error on my part. Let me know and I will recheck my information. I have many other travel related sites; you can check foreign currency exchange, read foreign newspapers, etc. I am also exchanging e-mail with people in Cologne, Salzburg, Claustal and Plauen. The possibilities for someone interested in the German-speaking countries are almost limitless.

Feel free to share this information with your readers.

Patrick Musick, [phm@ns.gamewood.net](mailto:phm@ns.gamewood.net)

## Austria Discovery

During a recent business trip to Austria, I “stumbled upon” a delightful hotel worthy of consideration by your readers — the **Oberndorfer Seegasthof**, in Attersee.

Located on the northwest edge of the Attersee, it is perfectly situated for an overnight stay for those passing through between Salzburg and Vienna...or, preferably, for a resort vacation. The lake and mountain views are eye-popping; the hospitality provided by innkeeper Josef Oberndorfer and his family (an 84-year, three generation tradition!) is superb; and the accommodations are pleasant, reasonably-priced and convenient.

The menu at the hotel's restaurant provides the frosting on the cake — it is simply the best food I encountered anywhere in the area. (The fresh lake trout is out of this world — worth a trip to Attersee for that alone!)

The Oberndorfers work hard to provide a perfect experience for their guests. And, from my perspective, they have succeeded. Your readers will be well advised to see for themselves.

Frederick W Hoffman, Dearborn MI

## Self-Catering in Germany

In catching up on back issues recently, I noticed your discussion regarding self-catering units throughout Germany in the August 1995 issue, *Travel Briefing* article. It just so happens that I have stayed in the

**Haus Daniela** in Cochem and just returned from my third stay at **Ferienpark Alpina** in Schwangau.

After a six week swing through Micronesia and Hawaii in September/October, I could hardly wait to get to Germany and feel some cold weather after the sweltering heat of the islands.

I had reserved a unit for one week at Alpina on this trip. But when I stepped onto the balcony of the fully-equipped, one-bedroom unit and saw the Füssen “Schloss” across the open meadows, Schloss Neuschwanstein to the left and the Forggensee to the right, I immediately paid for a second week! What a bargain 210 DM (\$146) per week plus a nominal “Kurtax” and minimal charge for “daily bread” delivered fresh each morning from the very nice **Hotel König Ludwig** next door.

I walked at least five hours each day from November 23 to December 8 and still have not covered all the available trails after three visits — now I have to return in the spring. If any of your readers would like first-hand information, I'd be glad to correspond.

Charles Longo, Tuscon AZ

## Air Conditioning, Last Chapter

I was astonished at the vitriolic letter to you by that guy in San Francisco (was his name “Claytor”?). After seeing his opinion of *Gemütlichkeit*, together with your candid observations and evaluations that mean so much to the publication, it's obvious to me what the nature of his handicap is. Mental. He's the sort of person that would be far happier sticking to *Travel & Leisure* and packaged American Express type tours.

I see you refunded his subscription costs. It's my pleasure to send you a check to replace what you sent back to that turkey, for I have long felt that *Gemütlichkeit* was a bargain at twice the subscription cost.  
Frank Dunham, Ft. Worth TX

(Ed. Note: We are amazed how much fur flew over an innocent remark about air-conditioned hotel rooms. It's good to have readers like Mr. Dunham in our corner. We gratefully deposited his check and extended his subscription.)

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

## Swissair Adds Newark

In March, **Swissair** adds a non-stop flight from Newark, New Jersey, to Zürich. With the current two daily services from New York's JFK Airport, this flight gives travelers in the New York metropolitan area three daily connections to Switzerland.

The Newark flight, SR105, departing at 11:50 p.m., will be an Airbus A310 in dual-class configuration.

**Gemütlichkeit** subscribers — and those who travel with them — qualify for **Swissair** price reductions of from \$50 to \$600 depending on the fare and class of service. For fare quotes and to book a **Swissair** flight at the lower **Gemütlichkeit** prices phone 800-238-0399.

## \$399 RT to Vienna

Austrian Airlines (800-843-0002) offers a \$399 roundtrip fare for the period January 15 through March 29, 1996. This "Millennium Fare" is for departures from New York and Washington D.C. to Vienna. In addition, the program offers a one-week car rental rate beginning at \$132 per week and "Millennium" rates at some 40 hotels in Austria. Some sample hotels and double room prices include: Vienna — **Vienna Hilton** (1190 AS/\$119), **Imperial** (2800 AS/\$280), **Astoria\*** (900 AS/\$90); Salzburg — **Goldener Hirsch** (2200 AS/\$220), **Hotel Mercure** (890 AS/\$89), **Hotel Hofwirt** (680 AS/\$68); Graz — **Erzherzog Johann\*\*** (1400 AS/\$140), **Drei Raben** (780 AS/\$78); Innsbruck — **Europa Tyrol** (1700 AS/\$170), **Maria Theresia** (1300 AS/\$130), **Hotel Sailer** (900 AS/\$90).

\*Outstanding value at this four-star, centrally located hotel. \*\*Highly rated by **Gemütlichkeit**.

## LTU Adds Hamburg

The German airline, **LTU International Airways**, has introduced daily connections between its Düsseldorf hub and Hamburg for its transatlantic travelers. Flights between Düsseldorf and Hamburg connect with most of

LTU's transatlantic flights. Fares to Hamburg from North America will be common-rated with LTU's other German on-line destinations: Düsseldorf and Munich.

LTU fares and schedules may be obtained through a travel agent's CRS system or by calling LTU International Airways at 800-888-0200.

## Brenner's Park Deal

From now through March 31, 1996, **Brenner's Park Hotel** in Baden-Baden offers a two-night "Winter Fantasy" package for \$420 per person double occupancy. Extra nights are \$175 per person double. Single supplement is \$125 for the package and \$65 for a third night. The package includes two nights accommodations; breakfasts; welcome fruit basket, flowers and mineral water; a massage at the Beauty Spa; use of indoor pool, saunas, fitness room and entrance to the Casino Baden-Baden. According to the *Deutscher Hotelführer '95*, rack rate singles at the Brenner's Park go from 330 to 620 DM (\$229 to \$431) per night, not including breakfast; doubles, also without breakfast, are from 430 DM to 980 DM (\$298 to \$681) per night.

## Zermatt Train Stuff

If you happen to be skiing in Zermatt this winter and want to zip over to Paris for some shopping, high speed TGV trains operate between Brig and Paris every Saturday through April 6. Leave Zermatt at 2:10 p.m. and arrive Paris at 9:39 p.m.

Groups of 50 or more looking for an unusual party venue can charter their own steam train for a Brig - Zermatt - Brig roundtrip for a tidy 7,670 Sfr. (\$6,555). Contact Zermatt Tourist Office, Bahnhofplatz, CH-3920 Zermatt, tel. 028/661181, fax 028/661185.

## Ski Museum in Vaduz

Vaduz, capital of the Principality of Liechtenstein has a new **Ski Museum** which presents 100 years of skiing history. Admission is 5 Sfr. (\$4.42) per person. Hours are 2-6 p.m., Monday through Friday or by special arrangement. Contact: Ski-Museum, Bangarten 10, FL-9490 Vaduz, Principality of Liechtenstein

## Free Info On Ticino

*Ticino Library*, published by the **Ticino Tourist Board**, is a 36-page brochure in which famous and not-so-famous residents of the Italian-speaking canton — Hermann Hesse, painter Aoi Huber, sculptor Pierino Selmoni, musician Marco Zappaof and racing cyclist Felice Puttini, for example — describe why they live and work there. The brochure, published in English, may be obtained free of charge from Switzerland Tourism, 608 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10020.

## Free Food Guide

Also available at no charge from **Switzerland Tourism** a new *Gastronomy Guide for Liechtenstein*. The book includes almost every restaurant, club, pub or hotel in the principality plus recipes and a discussion of Liechtenstein wines. Switzerland Tourism, 608 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10020.

## Romantic Road Hike & Bike

In 1996, **Adventure Horizons of a Lifetime**, an adventure travel company in Marietta GA, offers a combination hiking/biking tour of Germany's Romantic Road. Included in the seven-day tour are overnights in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Rothenburg ob der Tauber and visits to two of King Ludwig's great castles, Neuschwanstein and Linderhof.

Per person cost is \$1,895 double occupancy and includes four-star hotel accommodations, dinners and breakfasts, bilingual guides, daily briefings and use of a 21-speed Trek hybrid bike. A support van carries luggage to each night's stop. All levels of ability are welcome. Phone 800-246-3180 for more information and a free catalog.

## Swissair Ski Packages

**Swissair's** European ski vacations, which include roundtrip air from U.S. gateways, seven nights accommodations, ground transport, and breakfast or half-board, start at \$848 from New York or Boston, \$918 from Atlanta, \$913 from Chicago and Cincinnati, \$895 from Philadelphia and Washington and \$989 from Los Angeles. To book a package or obtain a free brochure, contact **Swisspak** at 800-688-7947 or call a travel agent. 

## DEAR SUB

Continued from page 7

Ohio State rooting section doing the O-H-I-O yell. The first sensation was of air or water — I'm not sure which or both — slowly at first, but with some force at its peak, directed at the bottoms of my feet. The pressure next found my ankles and worked its way along the contour of my body. It ended with a rather satisfying stream which traveled the length of my back. Once this rotation of feet, ankles, kidneys, elbows, etc., was completed (about 30 seconds) it began again. This went on for about 20 minutes. Strangely, the surface of the water was virtually undisturbed. Quite an unusual and agreeable experience, but not one which I think has extended my life appreciably. Twenty minutes of Sprudelbad cost 38SF (\$22).

Mr. T is a robust, 60ish man with a bushy grey mustache who speaks no English and little German. We communicated in grunts. Over the two days of "tare-a-pee" he must have grunted "Gute?" every three minutes. Whether it was a machine pummeling me, his hands bending my rib cage or jets of water and air attempting to bore through my body, his question was always the same: "Gute?"

I showed off my command of the German language by varying my replies among "Ja, Gute", "Sehr Gute," "Wunderbar" and "Schön". (Expansion on any of these themes is beyond my present linguistic expertise.) Some of the time I was even telling the truth.

There were other adventures. A fancy battery charger kneaded my back with little black suction cups, and Mr. T did it further damage during a massage in which he demonstrated steel rod fingers able to rearrange internal organs without the necessity of surgery.

But the best part of our "cure" was its epilogue. Swathed in robes and bath slippers, we would pad the few steps to the warm, sparkling little outdoor pool, with its fabulous view of the sheer rock wall looming over us, and luxuriate for 20 or 30 minutes. When we climbed into the cool air the "pool person" would be waiting with a large, heated bath towel.

Wrapped in these and our robes, we would sink exhausted onto chaises and complete the therapy with a good, healthy beer.

## Behind the Curtain

• **November, 1989:** If I found myself back in school and assigned to write about my "most unforgettable travel experience" I might well choose our 1981 crossing into East Germany. The destination was Berlin and it being our first time behind the Iron Curtain, I was a little nervous. Here are excerpts from the November '89 issue:

Our attitude essentially was: smile, keep a low profile, smile, be nice, smile, get through it. But as I found out, smiles don't work on everybody, and it's difficult to keep a low profile with your fly open, figuratively speaking.

After surrendering our passports at the first checkpoint station we rolled ahead to the next where a uniformed young man sat behind an open window, his head only a few feet away at our eye level. This is the person who, we fervently hoped, would return our documents and send us on with a friendly, "Gute Reise." Not quite. We nodded a "Guten Tag" and smiled. He did neither. In fact, he fixed me with a stare so unblinking and stony it was as aggressive as if he'd called me a capitalist pig. His 20-year-old, third-world eyes bore into my 44-year-old head attached to a body softened and pampered by life in the West. At first, I thought something was wrong, perhaps a second nose had just begun to grow out of my chin, or that I was being mistaken for an escaped ax murderer. It was awkward and uncomfortable. The stare went on and on, entire minutes passed and the man never moved or blinked.

A calculated tactic like this creates a dilemma for its target: after the first nervous smiles and nods fail, what does one do? I did what I suspect most poor, flustered non-German-speaking tourists do, I turned the back of my head to the stare-down and said something brilliant like, "So Liz, do you think we'll be able to find soccer shirts for the kids at Ka De We?" Her calm response, as I recall, was, "I haven't the faintest idea but if you'll turn around the nice man will give us back our passports and we can get the hell out of here."

In retrospect, I have thought of 40 or 50 better ways to handle what I have since learned was a form of amusement performed at the expense of fat-cat American tourists. The stare-down responses I most favor now, all involve being fluent enough in

German to break the ice with something like, "Hey man, lighten up, I'm bringing steroids for the swim club." Gemütlichkeit could then become the first travel newsletter published from a Gulag.

But soon we crept out of the checkpoint. The road was rutted and bumpy. Cars kept their spacing and went precisely the posted speed. The Mercedes that had whipped by us on the West German side at 120 MPH not long ago, was now timid as a kitten and dared not pass that two-cylinder East German popcorn popper ahead. The law was everywhere. Still in the border control area, maintaining as low a profile as we knew how, we passed one policeman who eyed us with interest, then ambled over to his car, reached inside, pulled out a walkie-talkie and spoke into it. The mind reeled. <<Is it our imagination or is he talking about us? No way, we're minding our own business, we're friendly, we're low profile, we smile.>> But there was no mistaking it; he looked directly at our car — at me really — then walked to his car and immediately said something to someone.

Our answer was over the next hill. Lolling against the fender of yet another police car was a potbellied East German cop. He carefully watched the slow-moving line of cars, all scrupulously moving less than the 30 km (19 mph) speed limit. As we got closer, the cop heaved away from the fender and positioned himself in the center of the road. <<This can't be happening! >>

But it was. With the merest movement of one hand, he signaled us to the side of the road. When stopped by the police at home, I immediately pop out of the car to show I am sober, alert and unarmed — in short, a solid citizen. But such behavior didn't seem appropriate here. I rolled down the window and tried, unsuccessfully, to flash my best "what seems to be the trouble officer" smile.

The cop spoke several sentences in German. I understood not one word.

Liz said, "He wants to see the passports." Trying to control my shaking hand, I gave them up along with the just-obtained transit visas. He examined it all while walking a slow half-circle around the car.

The needle on my imagination tachometer was well into the red zone. <<Will they let us make a phone call?

Do they immediately separate husbands and wives in East German jails?>> Returning to the driver's side of the car, the policeman resumed in German; long sentences, whole paragraphs. I turned again to Liz who this time was no help. "Spreche nicht Deutsch," I tried to say, but who knows how it came out.

Still more German from the cop. Both Liz and I shrugged and shook our heads. I figured if he spoke any English he would have used it by then.

Finally, exasperated and possibly angry, he reached through the window toward my head. But the hand bypassed my left ear and grasped the shoulder harness hanging by the door post. He gave the strap two hard jerks and the dawn came up like thunder out of Leipzig. We had forgotten to fasten our seat belts leaving the checkpoint!

The rest was easy. The cop wanted 10 West German marks and he wanted them immediately. He was careful to give us a receipt, we buckled up and were on our way. Three hours later, West Berlin looked far better than I ever dreamed it would.

## Forget the Castor Oil

When I started this piece I intended to pass on a few "castor oil" memories; the times when not only did things not go well, they weren't funny, either. The place for such remembrances would be here, but maybe it's best to keep things on a higher plane. Good and humorous memories are the best; bad, funny memories are next best and bad, unfunny travel experiences are best forgotten.

Actually, "funny" walks a fine line. Maybe you'll think this story is funny. It concerns a travel newsletter publisher who travels out of the country very often.

His passport expired after his last trip but he kept putting off renewal. A few days before Christmas, it became clear that he needed to spend about 10 days in the countryside of Germany and Austria. His departure date was to be the day after Christmas. But then along came a budget crisis and the passport offices closed. Here was a travel publisher, all set to go to Europe but who couldn't get out of the country. As this went to press our man had about three days to obtain a new passport, so our story isn't over yet. Maybe this story is not funny, just stupid. — RHB