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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

May 30, 1996

**One More Time**

Let's give this rude waiter/Americans-don't-know-how-to-behave contretemps one more go around then be done with it.

You may recall this all began in the February issue when our reporter, Bruce Woelfel, described an unhappy experience at the Hamburg restaurant, **Peter Lembcke**. Bruce wrote that he and his wife Sally had been given a chilly reception, an indifferent waiter and food priced far too high in relation to its quality.

Then came the first salvo from Mrs. Paul Wildman, a German expatriate who lives in San Francisco. Perhaps it was the tone of her letter rather than its substance — that Americans traveling in Europe consistently underdress and are often oblivious to local customs — that stirred up the troops. Last month readers responded with numerous faxes and letters, several of which we published. A few offered mild support for the Wildman position, but the rest disagreed vigorously and used such terms such as snob, insulting and ill-informed.

Hard words, but one has to admit the letter was a little tough on Americans. The business about being "amused, because any German, Parisian, Swede and other northern European who knows typical American travelers, could have predicted the scene at Peter Lembcke" was, to say the least, undiplomatic. And then the part about having the "common sense" to notice upon entering a restaurant whether one "fits in," a concept to which "Americans, for some unknown reason, seem to be

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## STOPOVER ZÜRICH

*During a short stay in Zürich we discover a terrific Vaudoise-style restaurant and revisit a couple of old favorites who are as good as ever.*

**T**he plan was to fly to Zürich, stay overnight, then catch a not-too-

early morning train to Munich. One night to wander the town, eat a good meal and get a good night's sleep at an expensive hotel — a few hours of luxury to soothe the jet-lag. There would be time later for realistically priced accommodations.

The first thought was to really strain the plastic and

reserve a room at the **Dolder Grand**. But, though the Dolder's location in the hills above the town is conveniently accessed via street car and then rack railway, we wanted to be downtown where we could walk the streets to scout out a restaurant to match our casual attire. And, when the batteries were fully discharged, our bed would be nearby. Proximity to the railway station for our 9:41 a.m. departure to Munich was also a factor.

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## Daytrips Around Lac Léman

**I**f you were to live in Europe, where would it be?

Perhaps a big city like Berlin, Munich, Vienna or Zürich, where the theater, music, art, restaurant and other cultural choices surpass nearly every American city except New York and possibly Chicago. (A tourist office brochure listing concerts offered at Berlin's various classical music venues notes at least 15 of the world's most prominent soloists and conductors performed there in just *the first three months of 1996*.)

Or you might opt for a

quieter life in the country, in an Alpen village or by a quiet lake. Others, we know, dream of living in an ancient farmhouse outside some tiny village in the south of France or the Tuscan hills of Italy.

While these all sound appealing, whenever we contemplate life in Europe, the Swiss shore of Lac Léman (Lake Geneva) gets most of the votes. There's more than enough culture in the cities of Geneva, Lausanne and Montreux to hold one's attention for a lifetime; the weather is some of the best in Europe;

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Country Hotel of the Month

## Weinhaus am Alten Markt

**O**n a great bend in the Main River, tucked back in the Odenwald, is Miltenberg, a picturesque town of classic *Fachwerkhauser* architecture.

Facing the prettiest corner in town is the hotel **Weinhaus am Alten Markt**, on the Marktplatz, overlooked by a 15th century castle.

This is without a doubt one of the most photographed squares in Germany with its Renaissance fountain dating to 1583.

*Fachwerk* houses are typical to this wooded northern Bavarian countryside. Large coded squares of timbers were assembled on the ground and hoisted into place with block and tackle, then pegged. Spaces between were filled with stone, plaster or bricks, adding to their unique design and charm.

Am Alten Markt is primarily a wine bar/restaurant with nine rooms to rent. Decoration is very simple, contemporary Germanic built-ins of dark wood. Rooms are tidily kept and pristine in appearance. A few open to the Marktplatz while others hug a small side street. Two very pretty front rooms with oriel windows have French-

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## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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oblivious" and thus "ask for it when treated shabbily," further fanned the flames.

As a result, her point that many Americans don't "get it" when it comes to understanding German customs and etiquette, got lost.

She may be right, but I'm not sure I "get it" either and, what's more I don't think it's a matter of great importance when it comes to the way I'll be treated as a tourist. No doubt dozens — maybe hundreds — of German waiters, shopkeepers, hotel owners, gas station attendants and others with whom I have come in contact over the years, have thought to themselves, "now this fellow's a bit strange," all the while treating me with respect and courtesy.

Who cares if American men don't wear a coat and tie to Sunday breakfast in Europe? Some, but surely not most. On the other hand, who cares over here if Europeans put their fork in the left hand and use a knife to scrape food onto the underside of it? Hardly anybody. And for those who do care, could it possibly justify rudeness? Of course not.

Is it rude to ignore local customs? Certainly, but most people on both sides of the Atlantic are tolerant when they know such acts are borne of ignorance not malice.

So, while I strongly recommend knowing local customs and taking great care not to offend, I suggest Mrs. Wildman lighten up a little.

I'm sure she would take issue, and with good reason, with American references to "typical Germans." As we have learned the hard way in this country, making assumptions based on race, religion, gender or nationality is a sure way to find trouble. (At least in most cases. There are exceptions. For example, when was the last time you saw or heard a German character sympathetically por-

trayed in a TV or radio advertising spot?).

What happened to the Woelfels in Peter Lembcke had nothing to do with manners or "cold" northern Germans or ugly Americans or political correctness. And, the Woelfels weren't treated badly because they wore the wrong clothes. (Mrs. Wildman *assumed* they were improperly dressed but, in fact, they were not; Sally Woelfel even wore a fur coat — politically incorrect in some parts of the U.S. but still chic in Europe).

No, it all comes down to a restaurant that virtually all parties agree is average and overpriced, and a waiter who is either incompetent or a jerk — maybe both. Bad restaurant experiences happen in San Francisco, New York, Dismal Seepage, Oregon...anywhere. This time it was Hamburg.

So let's give Peter Lembcke zero points out of 20 and move on.

### Use Debit Card In Europe

Last month we urged readers to rely on their credit cards not only for overseas purchases but for obtaining cash from ATMs. What we should have noted is that your bank will charge a fee — usually about \$2 to \$10 — if you use a credit card at the ATM and also charge interest from the date of the transaction. However, there won't be any interest charged if you use a debit card and the transaction fee will be less.

### Read it Here First

Every now and then somebody complains about the price of *Gemütlichkeit* vs. such travel magazines as *Condé Nast Traveler* and *Travel & Leisure*. To them we point out that our total focus is almost entirely on Germany, Austria and Switzerland — about 7,000 words every month. Most people subscribe to *Gemütlichkeit* because they are interested in a concentration of information on our part of the world. We seldom do pictures or use space-wasting layouts. The two travel magazines mentioned cover the entire world. Consider yourself lucky if either publishes five or

six meaty stories per year on Germany, Austria or Switzerland. They have hundreds of thousands of subscribers and we have a few thousand.

Amazingly, these magazines see *Gemütlichkeit* as competition. They are extremely reluctant, for example, to rent lists of their subscribers to us. (I know what you're thinking; you abhor "junk mail." But let me assure you, without "junk mail" there would be no *Gemütlichkeit*. Direct mail is the only viable way to market our product and without qualified lists to mail to we would soon be out of business.)

Not only are we competition, apparently we are now an editorial source. The May issue of *Travel & Leisure* carries a story entitled *Holy Fahrvergnügen*. It is a brief auto tour whose overnight stops are Bamberg and the village of Muggendorf. The author recommends the **Hotel St. Nepomuk** in Bamberg and a visit to **Brauerei Schlenkerla**. In Muggendorf the overnight is the **Hotel Feiler** and its Michelin one-star restaurant. The piece also suggests the drive include the towns of Tüchersfeld and Pottenstein and a visit to the Teufelshöhe, a series of caves. There were a couple of other restaurants mentioned but the towns, hotels and sights mentioned above were the essence of the piece. It was a good story.

But the interesting, almost eerie, part is that our "Grand Tour-Part I" story published last August, included, almost exactly, the itinerary offered by the story in *Travel & Leisure* — towns, hotels and things to see. Using us as a source isn't illegal, in fact it's a bit of a compliment. So, for once, those who dropped us because they could get "the same stuff" in *Travel & Leisure* and *Traveler*, are right. Of course, they got it nine months later — along with about 900,000 other people — and what took four pages of text, pictures and graphics for T&L to present, we did in less than two columns. By the way, we first reviewed the Hotel Feiler in January of 1988 and the St. Nepomuk in August of 1993. Thanks for letting me get that off my chest. — RHB ☒

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## GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

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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%

## ZÜRICH STOPOVER

Continued from page 1

### The Hotel...

Given our requirements, the **Savoy Baur en Ville** was an easy choice. Its location on Bahnhofstrasse at the Paradeplatz could not be more central and the hotel's air of quiet, clubby luxury is the perfect atmosphere in which to collapse after an 11-hour Swissair flight from Los Angeles.

Except for service, the style of the Savoy is not "Grand Hotel." There are no immense, opulent public rooms with soaring ceilings and dazzling chandeliers. The lobby, in fact, is quite small but the scaled-down atmosphere exudes quality and competence. It is a place for heavy hitters keeping a low-profile; a home-away-from home for the mysterious super rich on a Bahnhofstrasse "bank" holiday. The Savoy's uniformed staff is a precision outfit, ever alert to the needs of guests.

Forgive us if we make the Savoy sounds coldly efficient; it is not. It is warmly efficient. What we wrote after our last visit in 1991 still holds: "The Savoy is owned by a Swiss bank but Manfred and Christina Hörger manage it as if it were their own. They live on the premises, are visible and available at all hours and treat guests with the special warmth that is unique to small, family-operated hotels."

Why Michelin's *Red Guide for Switzerland* has chosen to omit the Savoy from its pages is inexplicable and without justification. In our view, it easily rates the "red" designation Michelin reserves for "particularly pleasant or restful" hotels.

The Savoy, of course, is expensive — its published rack rates are identical to the Dolder's and other five-star Zürich hotels.

**Daily Rates:** Singles 330 to 430 Sfr. (\$264-\$344), doubles 480 to 630 Sfr. \$384 to \$504. Facilities: Restaurant Savoy (jacket & tie), Savoy Bar, Restaurant Orsini. Room service until midnight.

**Contact:** Savoy Baur en Ville Zürich, Paradeplatz, CH-8022 Zürich, tel. 01/211 5360, fax 01/221 1467.

**Rating:** 18/20 EXCELLENT G

### The Walk...

We took a couple of laps around Zürich that first night. It was Good Friday, and not much was open. Our track started at the Savoy, went via the Fraumünster, with its stained glass windows by Chagall and Giacometti, across the river to the old town, then turning left to follow the main walking street — Münsterstrasse which becomes Niederdorf Strasse — to its end at the Bahnhof Brücke. There we crossed the river back to Bahnhofstrasse then left again back to Paradeplatz and the Savoy. Of course, there were many side trips down little alleyways and various dead ends.

At Rennweg 7, just off Bahnhofstrasse, we sauntered into the lobby of **Hotel Widder**. Its location, exterior and general ambience seemed to suggest a charming, small hotel where one might be able to find a mid-priced double room (currently about \$250 in Zürich). Well, charming it is and relatively small, too — 49 rooms; but mid-priced, no. Doubles are the same as at the Dolder and Savoy, 480 to 630 Sfr. (\$387 to \$508).

On your way through the old town be sure to stop for a beer or coffee at the tiny **Rheinfelder Bierhaus** (19 Marktstrasse), an old favorite. This year it was the same as always, a little seedy to the point that some fastidious readers may fear to tread. But not dirty. Check out the fresh, clean bathrooms. Still, the Rheinfelder is pretty funky; its walls are decorated with signs showing the prices of various dishes: *Poulet* (half a chicken) 9.5 Sfr. (\$7.65); *Schnitzel Paniert* (pan fried veal) 10 Sfr. (\$8.10) and *Schwein Kotelette* (pork chops) 11.5 Sfr. (\$9.25). Half a liter of Cardinal beer is 3.8 Sfr. (\$3.10), about what we pay in California for locally brewed micro beers.

Booths, tables and chairs are plain wood and the floor is a rough tile. The place is full of regulars which, though most of them smoke, adds to its charm.

### The Restaurant...

This may sound a trifle immodest, but our terrific dinner at **Le Dézaley**, on the right bank in the old town, was a stroke of intuitive genius. Years of choosing restaurants by peeking through windows, examining menus

posted outside and sniffing around in general, has heightened our ability to select good restaurants based on limited sensory input.

Our flight had landed at 5:30 p.m. and from about 6:30 to 9 p.m. we walked the city keeping an eye out for likely dinner prospects. But because of the holiday, many restaurants were closed. The blue jeans attire which we were unwilling to change further limited our choices.

Three or four likely spots had been given the once-over when we came across Le Dézaley. A posted menu that included such familiar down-to-earth dishes as *Geschmetzeltes Leber* and *Kalbsteak vom Grill* was encouraging. It was to be the first meal of the trip, anticipated for several days, and our palates had been psychologically conditioned for plain food, good beer and tasty Swiss *vin ordinaire*. The fact that Le Dézaley was lively and full of customers — always a good sign — clinched the deal.

Inside, Dézaley Restaurant Vaudois, its official name on the menu, is a series of many small rooms with heavy beams, rough stucco walls adorned with pithy food and wine aphorisms in French, and — even at 9:30 p.m. — a constant stream of people coming to eat.

We got just what we wanted. First, came a traditional mixed salad of the freshest ingredients: julienned carrots, cucumbers, beets, radishes, sliced tomatoes, hard-boiled eggs, radicchio and lettuce greens.

*Kalbschnitzel* from the grill (veal steaks) served with *Pommes Frites* (33Sfr./\$27) and *Kalbsleber Geschmetzeltes* (calves liver chopped and sauteed) (32Sfr./\$26) with *Rösti*, were both wonderful examples of these common dishes. The veal was thicker than Viennese-style Schnitzel and not breaded, but moist and served with reduced pan juices. The bite-size pieces — strips actually — of liver were tender enough to cut easily with a fork and absolutely delicious. We surmised they had been given a light flour coating and fried in butter. The potatoes — *Rösti* and *Pommes Frites* — were heavenly.

Sadly, Dézaley has no beer on draught so we had to make do with bottled Hurlimann while we exam-

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## STOPOVER ZÜRICH

Continued from page 3

ined the menu. With the meal we shared a half bottle of red Pinot Gamay wine from the village of St. Saphorin, just west of Vevey on Lac Léman (Lake Geneva).

This kitchen cooks the "old standards" about as well as you'll find anywhere. We paid about \$85 for dinner for two including beer, wine and dessert.

Le Dézaley, Römergasse 7, near Grossmünster, CH-8001 Zürich, tel. 01/251 6129, fax 01/252 2702. Moderate prices.

**Rating:** 15/20 ABOVE AVERAGE \$

### The Comment...

Our time in Switzerland this trip was far too brief but it brought to mind comments we've heard over the years about the "cold" Swiss. As usual, we couldn't find any. The Swissair crew, the taxi drivers who drove us to and from the Bahnhof, the woman who sold us rail tickets, everyone at the hotel, the waiter at Le Dézaley and the people at the Rheinfelder, ranged in their attitudes from friendly, helpful and efficient to neutral and efficient. None was rude or impatient. No one threw their arms around us, but we'll take cool and efficient over warm and incompetent any time.

### The Rental Car Tip...

Zürich is a great gateway to Europe. Kloten Airport is compact and convenient, has its own railway station and is virtually on the Autobahn. Those renting a car in Zürich who want to avoid the 9% airport tax can take the train downtown to the main railway station (about 15 minutes) for 5.10 Sfr. (\$4.11) and then walk about one kilometer along the West side of the river Sihl to the Hertz station on Morgartenstrasse. ☑

## LAC LÉMAN DAYTRIPS

Continued from page 1

the public transportation is unmatched; and, of course, there are precious few drive-by shootings.

A two-bedroom condo in a small hillside town above the lake would do nicely. It would have a large balcony overlooking neat vineyards, the vast, sparkling lake and, on the

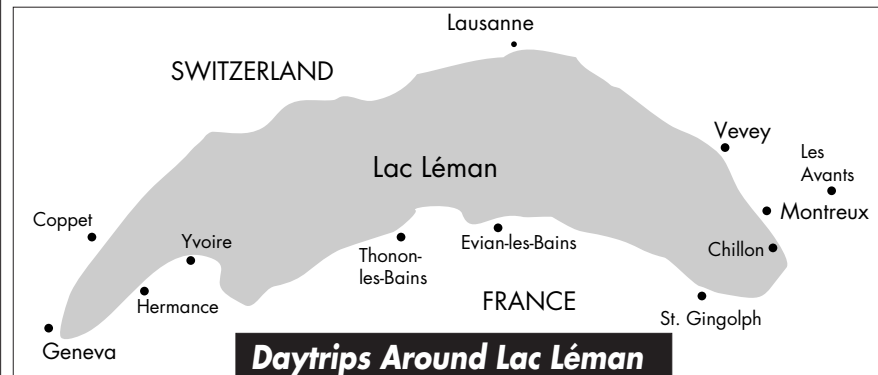
French side, drifting in and out of the clouds, the Savoie Alps.

One of the attractions of this area is its proximity to some of Europe's greatest delights. Of course, Switzerland is a small country and none of its many charms is much farther away than a three-hour drive. The variety of things to see within an easy drive of the lake is extraordinary. In less than an hour, one can be in fashionable Gstaad, see the Roman ruins at Avenches, stroll the hilltop fortress town of Gruyères or explore Fribourg, one of Switzerland's most picturesque towns. Lyon, at the heart of France's great Burgundy wine region and the center of some of the world's greatest cooking, is just 94 miles from Geneva. Milan is only about 200 miles in the opposite direction.

walled fishing town of Yvoire, which is worthy of a visit. Park the car at the gates to the town and walk the narrow streets of the village.

Some readers use Yvoire's immensely charming **Hotel du Port** as a "first night" hotel out of the Geneva Airport, which is only about 30 km (19 miles) distant. The hotel's ancient, vine-covered, stone building is directly on the lake, at the end of a narrow street crowded with flower-bedecked old stone and wood buildings housing small restaurants, galleries and shops. The du Port has a glass-enclosed restaurant that seems to hover over the water and, at from 500 to 750 FF (\$95-\$143) for an air-conditioned double room, is an excellent value.

Hotel du Port, Yvoire - 74140



Here are two easy daytrips. The first, into France on the other side of the lake, is by car. The other, an exploration of Vevey and Montreux, could be done mostly on foot or by bicycle, with an occasional assist from public transport.

### Circle the Lake

Map: *Die Generalkarte Switzerland* #2. This trip is mostly in France, where things are less expensive. Proceed east from Lausanne, along the Red Road by the lake, skirting the eastern tip and finally heading back northwest on Red Road #21 to St. Gingolph at the French border. Once in France, always choose the road nearest the lake to stay as close to the water as possible. You'll pass through Evian, with its spa and large casino, then another spa town, Thonon-Les-Bains, and then, on a piece of France that juts into the lake, the medieval,

Douvaine (France), tel. 50 72 17, fax 50 72 90 71.

Continuing on after Yvoire, being careful to remain as near the lake as possible, you soon will encounter the hulking structures of Chateau de Beauregard and beyond that, another town worth a stop, Hermance, which is back in Switzerland.

From there it's only 16 km (10 miles) into Geneva where, if you keep the lake in view on your right, you'll have no problem finding Red Road #1 heading back northeast toward Lausanne. If you've time you might stop at Chateau Coppet — about 13 km (8 miles) beyond Geneva — for a tour of this fine 18C house that once belonged to a banker.

### Celebrity Tour

Understandably, the Lac Léman region — especially around Vevey —

has attracted its share of famous names. Though there are few monuments to those that are gone, a willingness to explore will yield a few traces of their presence.

- Though you won't find many celebs, an interesting start to the day might be at the **Wine Museum at Aigle** with its 13C turreted castle splendidly set in the vineyards. Afterward, proceed northwest, back toward the lake, on Red Road #9.

- Stop at **Château de Chillon**, thought to be one of the best preserved medieval castles in Europe, and one of Switzerland's most popular tourist attractions. In its present form, the castle dates to the middle of the 13th century, but its fame began in 1816 when the English poet, **Lord George Gordon Noel Byron**, wrote his *Prisoner of Chillon*, a tribute to Francois de Bonivard who was held in its dungeon for four of the six years (1530-36) of his Chillon imprisonment. Byron's name carved on a dungeon pillar is thought to be a fake.

Byron met his friends, the Shelleys, in Geneva in 1816 and there, during an evening of story-telling, Mary Shelley is said to have first introduced her character, Frankenstein.

- Go on to Montreux. At Grand Rue 100 is one of the finest hotels on the lake, the **Montreux Palace**. **Vladimir Nabokov** and his wife settled in Switzerland in 1961 and for a time, in 1964, they lived in this luxurious hotel. The successful U.S. release in 1958 of his novel *Lolita* had given Nabokov financial independence and he loved to collect butterflies in nearby mountain pastures.

- Further on in Clarens, at Rue Sacre du Printemps 7, is the flat of composer **Igor Stravinsky** where he wrote *Sacre du Printemps*, the "Rite of Spring."

- Above Montreux, in the village of Chamby, is the **Hotel des Narcisses**, one of many European hangouts, in the early 20s, of American writer **Ernest Hemingway**. Hemingway also spent some time further up the hill, in Les Avants, where he enjoyed the bobsled run.

- Les Avants also attracted the immensely talented British novelist, playwright, actor and lyricist, **Noel Coward**. On the route de Sonloup he purchased a 10-room chalet on four acres of land. While his home was being renovated Coward stayed at the **Hotel Victoria** in nearby Glion.

- In Vevey (if its Saturday morning, your first stop should be the open air market), at 49 Rue d'Italia, is the **Hotel Trois Couronnes**, where American writer **Henry James** wrote his novel *Daisy Miller*. Published in 1878, the scene of the novel is Vevey and there are descriptions of the town, its people and the hotel.

- Following the death of his three-year-old daughter, Russian writer **Fedor Dostoevsky** settled in Vevey in 1868. At Rue du Simplon 13, he worked on his novel, *The Gambler*.


- On a terrace overlooking Vevey is **Eglise Saint Martin** (Church of St. Martin) which **Victor Hugo**, an exile from France because of his opposition to Napoleon III, sketched in 1861. His novel *Les Miserables* was published the following year and he returned to Paris in 1870.

- Just north of Rue de Lausanne, near the bus stop "Funiculaire du Mont Pelerin," is the Cemetery of Corsier where, among numerous other famous folk, are buried two prominent Brits, **Graham Greene**, author of *The Third Man* and *Our Man in Havana*, and film star **Charlie Chaplain**.

Greene, who had family in the area, died in Vevey in 1991.

Chaplain brought his fourth wife Oona O'Neill, daughter of playwright Eugene O'Neill, and nine children from Hollywood to the village of Corsier in 1953 where they settled in a luxurious estate. He had refused U.S. citizenship and been labeled a Communist sympathizer. Both Chaplain and Oona are buried in Corsier and their descendants still occupy the family home.

- In 1923, at Route de Lavaux 21, the architect Eduard Jeanneret, known as "**Le Corbusier**," designed a home for his parents. The family

lived in the house until 1972. It is now a museum. Le Corbusier, who played a key role in the development of modern architecture, drowned accidentally in the Mediterranean in 1965. 

## COUNTRY HOTEL

Continued from page 3

style furniture and are larger than the rest. Beds are new and have double feather pillows and duvets of down/feather. Gazing out from these rooms one imagines what life was like in the middle ages.

Breakfast is in a timbered room with ladderback chairs with tie-on floral pads. There is no buffet, but guests are served generous enough portions of bread and rolls, croissants, meats, cheeses, soft-boiled eggs and juice at the table. Frau Scheurich, who is extremely warm and welcoming, speaks limited English.

Parking is on the Hauptstrasse just across the Platz. The hotel has no restaurant but cold snacks of cheese and homemade *Wurst* are available.

Weinhaus am Alten Markt is a popular meeting place where locals gather to discuss daily happenings over a glass of wine. At the *Stammtisch* (table for regular customers) we met a former mayor of Miltenberg who informed us Franken wines are the house specialty.

Travelers who love Rothenburg ob der Tauber, will also enjoy Miltenberg. Testament to its popularity is the proximity of at least six ice cream shops to serve the daily tourist trade and weekend strollers.

Since it is only a 45-minute drive to the Frankfurt Airport, Miltenberg is convenient for the last night in Germany.

**Daily Rates:** Singles from 60 DM (\$40), doubles to 155 DM (\$103). Restaurant. Closed February. Little English spoken. No credit cards.

**Contact:** Weinhaus am Alten Markt, Marktplatz 185, D-63897 Miltenberg, tel. 09371/5500, fax 09371/65511.

**Rating:** 13/20 ABOVE AVERAGE 

# READERS' FORUM

## **A Vote for Mrs. Wildman**

As a subscriber, I have been diligently following the "Readers' Forum" column in your newsletter regarding Mrs. Paul Wildman and the **Peter Lembcke** restaurant in Hamburg. I am amazed that Mrs. Wildman's letter has elicited so much controversy.

In the March issue, you mentioned that Mrs. Wildman was also a German instructor, so I called her and asked if she would like to give me lessons in the German language. We arranged for a beginning class, and I finally met this woman (whom I expected to be Brunhilde in disguise after having read your article). Much to my amazement, here was a lovely lady, somewhat formal at first, whom I found very charming. I have since had further weekly lessons and I find her a most able and friendly instructor. I have visited Hamburg and found it to be a "city for shoppers" with some of the finest stores I have ever seen in a city of its size. I also have been to Munich and am well aware of the differences in the people from each area. Although formal, I found the people in Hamburg to be very pleasant and had no experience such as your Associate Editor, Bruce Woelfel, and his wife.

The basic premise of this letter is merely to point out that Mrs. Wildman is like all of us, a human being, who may be a bit more formal than we. Remember, she had to come here and adapt to "our way of life" so we should try to remember that when we travel to other countries where we do not speak the local language, we should not be disappointed by a negative experience. Personally, I shall shun Peter Lembcke's restaurant should I visit Hamburg in the future.

Had it not been for this controversy, I would never have had the privilege of meeting Mrs. Wildman.  
Thomas J. Gilroy, Jr., San Francisco CA

## **Ugly Europeans?**

When I first visited Europe, in 1964, I stayed for a year and a half in order to see as many places as possible. I have returned many times since then, and have traveled to more than 100 countries around the world. It has always been apparent to me that the average American tourist is better behaved, and better dressed, than the average European tourist.

Far from being overbearing or insensitive, American travelers are usually more polite than Europeans. They are, especially, far less rude to waiters and other service personnel. There is considerably less reason for Americans to learn foreign languages, as they seldom have any use for them. However, when Americans do attempt to use them, Europeans are often critical of minor errors of pronunciation. They seem to be unaware of their own mispronunciations of English words, a fact that Americans are usually too polite to mention.

I suspect that many Europeans base their opinions of Americans on the distorted impressions shown in movies and to some extent on the American military presence. The latter can create resentment on both sides. Many American military personnel are not there from choice, and have little or no interest in European culture or people. If the same category of Europeans were in America, the situation would be much the same. I find many Europeans who can afford to travel in the United States see very little of the country - have limited contact with people outside the tourist industry - and make no effort to understand or appreciate local customs, which they often ridicule or deprecate.

My personal experiences have been overwhelmingly favorable. But I am realistic. Anyone who has traveled extensively will have encountered both poor service and excellent service everywhere. Sometimes people are turned off by a difference in style, which they perceive as poor service. There are variations within any country - but probably more variations can be found in the U.S. I have never encountered the "Hi, my name is Tony, and I'll be your waiter tonight" sort of familiarity in Europe

- but I have occasionally encountered European-style superciliousness in America. My own preference is for aloof, polite, efficient service, which can be found in both places. Friendliness is fine, if it seems genuine and that is found more often in the U.S.

I have never had any problems in northern Germany, and Germans all over the country have been friendly and helpful.

Ralph T. Kleymeyer, Jr., Austin TX

## **Vienna Recommendation**

Too bad that an expired passport precluded you from being present at the New Year's festivities in Vienna, which I was happy to attend. I am certain that you will enjoy the splendid Kaiserball at the Hofburg on New Year's Eve when you do go; it is certainly a memorable evening. May I suggest that you might prefer to attend the New Years Day concert at the Konzerthaus, rather than the better-known one at the Musikverein. Seeing the latter, later in the day on television in our hotel room, we were so glad that we attended the former, which, in our opinion, had the superior program.

Martin Ems, San Francisco CA

## **Austrian Hotel**

I am enclosing our check for the renewal of our subscription to *Gemütlichkeit*. We certainly enjoy every issue and look forward to its arrival.

In your last newsletter you spoke of enjoying the area around Salzburg and the Salzkammergut. Enclosed you will find a copy of the brochure of **Villa Brandauer** (A-5350 Strobl am Wolfgangsee, tel. 06137/205, fax 06137/5903). We did not stay there but enjoyed a lovely dinner on the back patio overlooking the lake. Although St. Wolfgang is a charming town, it is very "touristy" and we found Strobl (practically next door) to have the same lovely lake overlook and none of the crowds. Do try to stop by for a look (and a bite) next time you visit.

We will explore the Attersee next time we're in Austria!  
Caroline Jordan, San Rafael CA

## **Recommends Slovenia**

I just returned from Europe and have to tell you about one of the

world's best bargains. And it almost qualifies as a "German-speaking" country. Slovenia is now hosting the Austrians and Germans that used to go to Croatia for water activities.

This is a country of friendly people and bargain prices for hotels and (GOOD) food. Friends from Bad Nauheim picked me up in Trieste as they were in Isola for a stay at their small condo (the wife is from Slovenia). Isola is a beautiful area and the small-boat harbor is excellent. In fact all the coastal towns have harbors filled with boats owned by Austrians, Germans and Italians. I stayed in a very nice hotel - large room, balcony, view of Adriatic, breakfast - for about \$30 per day! The major tourist center with luxury hotels, casinos, tennis schools, etc. is at Portoroz - very nice.

In several small towns I visited relatives, and in one place stayed in a beautiful *Zimmer Frei* with bath and breakfast for less than \$20. As soon as we appeared, relatives greeted us with *Hausgemacht* (homemade) wine before we got out of the car!

Although Italian is virtually a second language, I found German and English to be widely understood. In fact, most areas are "signed" in four languages!

We spent one evening high in the hills above Isola at a farm that serves farm-fresh meats and bread and *Hausgemacht* wines of all colors. The lights of Trieste and towns near Venice could be seen in the distance. I want to return and explore further.

Also, I spent four days in the Mittenwald area before going on to "my" self-catering apartment in Schwangau. The village of Krun, about 5 km from Mittenwald, has some beautiful *Zimmer Frei* houses. The one I chose (**Gästehaus Monika**) provided a huge double room with bath and balcony (view of the nearby mountains and fields) and breakfast for DM45 (\$30). A great deal!

One lesson I've learned in selecting a "Gästehaus" or small hotel is to find one AWAY from the main road of the village. Traffic noise can be terrible in the most serene areas. The

advantage in choosing Krun over Mittenwald is that Garmisch is closer and trails to woods and lakes are easier to find.

I enjoyed sending self-catering info to several of your subscribers - most responded with nice thank you notes. Charley Longo, Tucson AZ

*(Ed Note: Please continue to write, fax (510-582-8296) and e-mail (rbestor@aol.com) your travel experiences to us. Due to space limitations, not all submissions can be published and we reserved the right to edit as needed.)* ☒

## EUROPE TRAVEL BRIEFS

### **LTU Chops Fares**

**LTU International Airways**, which offers weekly nonstop flights from San Francisco and New York to Düsseldorf, has lowered rates for 1996 summer and fall travel. The new fares have no expiration date but require a 14-day advance purchase.

From June until mid-September, roundtrip from San Francisco to Germany is \$798 and \$698 from New York to Germany. For fall travel, it is \$628 RT from San Francisco and \$448 RT from New York. Taxes up to \$35 are not included.

Fares apply to LTU flights between San Francisco and Düsseldorf and, with a connection, onto Munich; and from New York's JFK to Düsseldorf, and onto Munich or Hamburg. The flights are on MD-11 aircraft.

In November, LTU will begin service between Düsseldorf and Phoenix. The flights will operate on Monday.

Contact a travel agent or LTU at 800-888-0200.

### **Eisenach Concert Package**

The 1996 concert season at the Wartburg in Eisenach extends from April 27 to mid-October. The **Hotel auf der Wartburg** offers packages priced from 270 DM (\$180) per person including double room, breakfast,

welcome cocktail, concert ticket, concert dinner and tour of the castle. Contact: Hotel auf der Wartburg, D-99817 Eisenach, phone and fax 03691/5111.

### **Boat/Bus Tour**

A combined bus and boat tour "**Left and Right of the Danube — On the Paths of Emperors and Kings**" is available from April to October from Knauf's Reisen, Bahnhofstrasse 6, D-15344 Strausberg, phone and fax 03341-422124. The eight-day program (dates on request) starts at Kehlheim and includes stops at Passau, Regensburg, Vienna, the Wachau and Budapest. The package costs from 898 DM (\$619) per person, including seven nights accommodations, half-board, cruise, city tours and guide services. Other packages are also available.

### **Hermitage Exhibit**

An exhibit from St. Petersburg's **Hermitage**, entitled "The Good Life" is at the Prinz Max Palais in Karlsruhe April 13-July 14. In conjunction with the exhibit, the local tourist office offers weekend packages from 105 DM (\$70) per person. In addition to bed and breakfast, it includes entry to the exhibition and a voucher booklet good for numerous discounts. Contact: Verkehrsverein, Bahnhofplatz 6, D-76137 Karlsruhe, phone 0721/35530, fax 0721/355343.

### **Airlines Restricts Smoking**

Effective June 1, all **Lufthansa** flights between North American and Germany will be nonsmoking.

On May 15, in response to a "substantial majority" of its passengers, all **Swissair** flights operating within Europe became nonsmoking.

Swissair's new policy does not affect flights to and from North America.

### **German Wine Tours**

One of two packages offered by the **German Wine Academy** is a six-day session, scheduled for Oct. 6-12, 1996. It includes travel to five of Germany's 13 wine region, wine estate visits, tastings with winemakers, vineyard treks, cellar tours, a

*Continued on page 8...*

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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river boat cruise, lectures, seminars, accommodations in historic inns and meals featuring regional specialties.

The price, including all meals, hotel accommodations, lectures, tastings, visits, excursions, river cruises, ground transport and taxes is 2100 DM (\$1400) per person double occupancy.

The second package allows groups of 20 or more — travel clubs, wine and food groups, social clubs — to customize a tour of any length and wine region destination. Approximately six months advance notice is necessary.

### Tourist Offices

#### AUSTRIA

Austrian National Tourist Office  
P.O. Box 1142  
New York, NY 10108  
(212) 944-6880

Austrian National Tourist Office  
11601 Wilshire Blvd #2480  
Los Angeles, CA 90025  
(310) 477-3332

#### GERMANY

German National Tourist Office  
122 E 42nd St 52nd Floor  
New York, NY 10168  
(212) 661-7200

German National Tourist Office  
11766 Wilshire Blvd #750  
Los Angeles, CA 90025  
(310) 575-9799

#### SWITZERLAND

Switzerland Tourism  
608 Fifth Ave  
New York, NY 10020  
(212) 757-5944  
FAX: (212) 262-6116

Switzerland Tourism  
150 N Michigan Avenue, #2930  
Chicago, IL 60601  
(312) 630-5840  
Fax: (312) 630-5848  
Web Site:  
<http://www.switzerlandtourism.ch/na>

Switzerland Tourism  
222 N Sepulveda Blvd #1570  
El Segundo, CA 90245  
(310) 335-5980  
Fax: (310) 335 5982

The German Wine Academy is headquartered near Frankfurt at Kloster Eberbach, a 16C monastery. For a free brochure on this year's programs send a self-addressed, business-sized envelope to: German Wine Information Bureau, 79 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016.


### Rebirth for Leipzig Rail Station

The Leipzig rail station, the world's largest, was badly damaged by Allied bombing during World War II and, since unification and the demise of communism, more and more Leipzigers have forsaken trains for cars.

But the great old station will now be restored. Private entrepreneurs and public agencies are collaborating on a reconstruction plan that will include dozens of shops, restaurants, businesses, offices and even conference facilities. Most of these will be below the tracks in rooms used during the war as bomb shelters.

The idea is to not only physically get the station back to its glory of 80 years ago but to boost train travel which has fallen from 160,000 passengers per day six years ago to a current level of 80,000.

German railroad chief, Heinz Dürr says "the Leipzig station will be the most beautiful in Europe." The project is scheduled to be finished by the end of 1997.

In conjunction with the station restoration, the 105-mile rail line to Berlin is being rebuilt to handle faster trains that will cut travel time to Berlin to one hour. 

## Germany Remembers Martin Luther and the Reformation

This year Germany observes the 450th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther (1483-1546). From Magdeburg in the north to Augsburg in the south, festive events are planned in 12 "Luther" cities and another 30 of the reformer's sites of activity are also preparing special programs.

### Exhibitions and special events

Here are some highlights of the many exhibitions and special events scheduled:

- Augsburg City Hall, *Reformation and the Free Imperial City*, April 28-Aug. 8
- The Wartburg in Eisenach, *The Man Martin Luther and His Associates*, March 1-Oct. 31
- Nürnberg's Femohaus, *Nürnberg and Protestantism*, May-October
- The Lutherhalle at Wittenberg, *Luther and the Swan - The Death and Transfiguration of a Great Man*, February-December, and also at Lutherhalle, *Luther's Wedding*, June 7-9
- Eisleben celebrates its historic Old Town Festival June 14-16
- Erfurt presents organ concerts from April to October each Wednesday at 8 p.m. in the Prediger Church
- Wittenberg and Worms conduct city walking tours *Along Luther's Trail*.

The brochure *Reisen auf den Spuren Luthers* (Travel along Luther's Trail), available in English, can be obtained from the German National Tourist Board (DZT). It describes important events in Luther's life and contains an overview of places where he worked in Germany. There are also suggestions for individual tours. Addresses of appropriate local tourist offices are listed as a source of additional information.

Contact: German National Tourist Office, 11766 Wilshire Blvd #750, Los Angeles CA 90025, phone 310-575-9799, fax 310-575-1565; German National Tourist Office, 122 E. 42nd Ave., 53rd Fl, New York NY 10168, phone 212-66107200, fax 212-661-7174; or Deutsche Zentrale für Tourismus, Beethovenstrasse 69, D-60325 Frankfurt am Main, phone 069-75720, fax 751903.

### Luther Hotel Packages

The **Maritim Hotel Astoria** in Leipzig (Willy-Brandt-Platz 2, D-04109 Leipzig, phone 0341/1284811, fax 0341/1284749), for example, has a "Martin Luther Weekend" from 280 DM (\$187) per person including room for two nights, breakfast, welcome cocktail, meal, city tour, motel in St. Thomas Church and a Martin Luther dinner.

Three- to five-day Luther packages can be booked in Magdeburg's **Plaza Hotel** (Halberstadter Strasse 146-150, D-39112 Magdeburg, phone 0391/60510, 0391/6051100). The weekend package, for example, costs from 149 DM (\$99) per person and includes a room for two nights, breakfast, candlelight dinner, buffet and welcome drink.

Weimar's **InterCity Hotel** (phone 03643/2340, fax 03643/234444) offers a package for 246 DM (\$164) per person that includes a room for two nights, breakfast, four-course meal and sight-seeing program. 