

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

March 21, 1997

La Terrasse Flop

Last December, in putting together the 10th anniversary issue of *Gemütlichkeit*, I was struck by how tough we have been on expensive restaurants.

In 1987 we roasted Schaffhausen's **Fischerzunft Restaurant** for its incredibly tiny portions and high prices (cheapest set menu: \$65 per person, 1987 prices). In 1990, we ripped **Le Marignac**, a Michelin-starred restaurant in Geneva for indifferent service and food we thought didn't measure up. Another establishment with a Michelin star, in the **Hotel Stadt Hamburg** on the island of Sylt, caught the rough side of our word processor for its uninspired dishes. Perhaps our harshest criticism came in 1992 when we bashed **Restaurant La Rotonde** in Zürich's **Dolder Grand Hotel**. The food, said our review, "fell miles short of justifying its prices." We also had some very unflattering things to say about our waiter. For this meal we paid just over \$200.

At each of these restaurants, with the exception of La Rotonde, we ate all the food we were served (at Fischerzunft, though we consumed everything in sight except the table linen, we left the restaurant so hungry we went straight to the nearest *Gästehof* to scarf down plates of *Schnitzel* and French fries).

Apparently, as prices go up so do our expectations. Which brings us to the **Victoria Jungfrau** in Interlaken, a hotel so good and so dear to our hearts we named it our favorite among the more than 600 reviewed in the first 10 years of *Gemütlichkeit*. Because many of you may, in the near future, include this outstanding hotel in your trip itineraries, I am duty-bound to pass along some unpleasant news.

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

THE VAUDOIS ALPS

This month's suggested auto tour of Switzerland's Vaud Alps offers much variety in a limited geographical area.

Whether you're looking for a day's scenic drive out of Lausanne or Montreux, a ski vacation or just a summer week or two of cool mountain air and quiet villages, the Vaud's Alpen region is just the ticket.

We find this mostly French-speaking part of Switzerland, just east of the eastern tip of Lac Léman, a serene and beautiful respite from more frenetic tourist activities. In addition to wide green valleys and rugged mountain peaks, some of its highlight attractions are:

- Villars, a pretty resort with a golf course.
- The thrilling cable car ride to Les Diablerets Glacier.
- Super chic Gstaad, where even the likes of Elizabeth Taylor, Julie Andrews and 007 Roger Moore, have to yield the right-of-way to the cows.
- Saanen, near Gstaad, where the language changes from French to German and where a homely little restaurant near the rail station serves some of the best comfort food we've ever tied in to.
- The village of Châ-

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Automobile Factory Delivery in Germany

If you're in the market for a new BMW, Mercedes Benz or Porsche AND are planning a trip to Europe, you might consider arranging a factory delivery in Germany. You may get a small discount on the car, you save the cost of a rental car and you'll probably enjoy the process.

Larry Olmsted, writing in *Investor's Business Daily* recently made these points about picking up a new car at the factory in Germany

- European delivery programs typically include a reduced price and such amenities as insurance, a factory tour, museum visit, and complimentary meals and lodging.
- You have to pay for your airfare and, of course, take the time to go to Europe.
- Manufacturers usually offer discounts of 10% to 15% off the manufacturer's suggested retail price to buyers who pick up their cars abroad. On a high-end model like the BMW 850 CiA, this means a savings of nearly \$12,000 from the list price of \$94,700. Of course,

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Europe Travel Digest

■ **Swissair** has "Air + Land Best Buy" programs starting at \$999. The packages include roundtrip economy class air on Swissair to Zürich and Geneva from New York or Newark (supplements from other Swissair U.S. gateways apply); six nights in a choice of 108 hotels throughout Switzerland; daily buffet breakfast; a one-week car rental with unlimited mileage or, with a supplement, an eight-day Swiss Rail Pass second class; and local taxes and service charges (airport taxes not included). The packages are effective April 1, 1997 - Oct. 31, 1997. Contact: Swisspak at 800-688-7947.

■ **LTU International Airways** says it is the first German airline to equip all its planes with electronic collision warning system TCAS (Traffic Collision Avoidance System).

■ **Swissair** says it will be the first airline in the world to offer video-on-demand. Choosing from a list of up to 20 movies which will be shown on individual screens, passengers will be able to start and stop their own movies - not the crew. In addition, the new entertainment service will offer computer games and audio-on-demand, including 60 hours of music.

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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Last November, the VJ's **La Terrasse Restaurant** served us one of the most disappointing and expensive meals we've ever had.

Relaxing for a couple days at our favorite hotel, we opted for a thrifty first night dinner at the simple but pleasant restaurant in the **Hotel Hardermannli**. The hearty, tasty meal cost 59 Sfr., not including beverages. That's \$41 at today's exchange rate and, as you'll see, about half what we paid the next night for a first-course rice dish.

But the next night we decided to go "whole hog" with a long, expensive, delicious dinner at Victoria Jungfrau's La Terrasse. Some say two out of three ain't bad; but in this case that stat doesn't wash.

At the outset, it seemed the night would be a memorable one. The dining room was as beautiful and inviting as ever. Squadrons of epauleted waiters flitted here and there decanting venerable bottles of wine and replacing endless flights of silverware. Glass and tableware sparkled under the flickering candlelight and the pianist at the burnished grand piano rippled effortlessly up and down the keyboard. In a state of relaxed anticipation of good things to come we sipped champagne and read the menu. Unfortunately, that was as good as it got.

The food served was way out of whack with the prices charged.

Easily the biggest — and most costly — disappointment was an order of risotto with white truffles which we asked to be divided. This first-course rice dish was so heavily salted and thick with cheese it overpowered the taste of the truffles. By the way, we were charged an additional 20% for it to be split.

This pricing policy is a first for me and I can't imagine it is popular with the restaurant's customers. It boosted the price of that one small but incredibly expensive dish from 69 to 82.8 Sfr. or about \$64 (November exchange rates).

The two ordinary main dishes, lamb cutlets and veal piccata, were of a caliber that we find at much simpler and less expensive restaurants. The sogginess of the onion tart that came with one main course was evidence of its having been warmed in a microwave. The cutlets

2	Flute Champagne	30.00
2	Jungfrau Alpenwasser	12.00
1	Barolo Monpriva.	105.00
2	Taylor's port	19.00
1	Risotto Truffe	69.00
	40%	
1	Kleinere Port.	27.60-
1	Risotto Truffe	69.00
	40%	
1	Kleinere Port.	27.60-
1	Cote d'Agneau	43.00
1	Picatta de Veau	49.00
2	Picatta de Veau	30.00
2	Salatbuffet	30.00
2	Chariot de Fromage	400.80
		RECHNUNGSSAL
(Transcribed from actual bill.)		

had a nice, smoky grilled tasted but were hampered by a far too liberal dose of herbed butter.

I think of veal piccata as a somewhat delicate dish; the veal pounded thin, the sauce light and just a little lemony. In this case it was a brawny slab of meat covered with a glutinous gravy that had a taste I associate with prepackaged sauces. The accompanying

stuffed tortellini was also leaden and covered with a thick sauce.

These dishes might be acceptable at a lowly village Gasthaus, but at the show restaurant of the great Victoria Jungfrau they are an embarrassment. Quality ingredients microwave-heated and bathed in heavy-handed, possibly even prepackaged, sauces is a disgrace. Such food does not begin to do justice to this wonderful, enchanting dining room with its high windows and views of the Jungfrau.

Let me emphasize that the hotel itself is as good as ever; by all means go there. La Terrasse, however, should be avoided.

Swissair Clarification

Last month we may have unintentionally misled some readers with our explanation of how *Gemütlichkeit's* free business class upgrade on **Swissair** works. The upgrade is good only with purchase of a **full-fare** economy class ticket. The full-fare ticket is an airline's highest priced economy ticket and is much more expensive than advance purchase fares, sale fares or other restricted fares.

A full-fare economy ticket to Zürich from the West Coast, for example, currently costs \$3,310. Subtract the normal *Gemütlichkeit* \$150 price reduction and one ends up with a \$4,484 business class ticket for \$3,160, a 30% discount of \$1,324. Swissair's current lowest price economy fare from the West Coast is \$716, or \$666 with the usual *Gemütlichkeit* \$50 price reduction.

If you have general questions about the Swissair reduced price program for *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers, please phone 800-521-6722. If you need fare information or wish to be ticketed on Swissair at the special *Gemütlichkeit* rates, phone 800-238-0399 (not available from some area codes) or 310-335-5900 and ask for Shirley. — 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 Scale	Scale	Hotel Rating Criteria	
Excellent	16 - 20	People/Service	30%
Above Average	12 - 15	Location/Setting	15%
Average	8 - 11	Guestrooms	30%
Adequate	4 - 7	Public rooms	5%
Unacceptable	0 - 3	Facilities/Restaurant	20%
Value Rating	Scale	Restaurant Criteria	
Outstanding Value	17 - 20	Food	65%
Very Good Value	12 - 16	Service	20%
Average Value	9 - 11	Atmosphere	15%
Below Average Value	5 - 8		
A Rip-Off	0 - 4		

Special Designation

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

VAUDOIS ALPS

Continued from page 1

teau d'Oex, where actor David Niven lived his last years and is buried.

• Leysin, a town which hangs on the rim of the Alps looking over the lake and the Rhône Valley.

Villars

If you choose to see this region as a daytrip from the lake, take the Red Road along the lake south toward Martigny. At Bex, take the winding White Road through the vineyards up into the mountains toward Villars, about 18 km (11 miles). Since this road is closed in winter you may have to take the Yellow Road from Ollon (north of Bex).

Villars is a cheery resort town set among the trees. With the possible exception of Gstaad (not covered in this issue; see *Gemütlichkeit*, August, 1990), it offers the widest choice of hotels of any town along this route. Here also is a mountain goat, with some of the finest vistas from Pebble Beach to St. Andrews.

The Glacier

Continue on to Les Diablerets, in a lovely, open setting in the Ormonts valley. The town itself, however, is not much and we suggest continuing on to Col du Pillon where you can board the cable car for the ride to the Sex Rouge and Les Diablerets Glacier. The cost is about \$35 per adult. There is also a connection to the glacier from Reusch, but you miss the steepest, most interesting, leg of the trip. Once on top, there is a restaurant and you can hire a ride around the glacier on a snow-cat. Maybe the snow-cat still stops at the Yeti Palace and its small wooden deck that hangs above a sheer drop of about 5,000 feet. Not for the acrophobic.

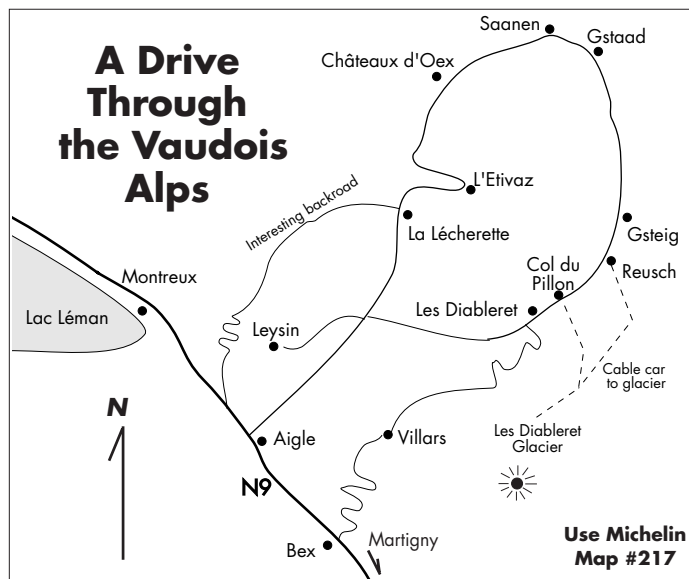
Many will disagree, but we rank the cable car ascent to the Sex Rouge, coupled with the snow-cat/Yeti Pal-

ace caper, as Europe's best ride-to-the-top-of-a-mountain experience — including the far more expensive and famous Jungfrauoch.

A Good Meal

Back on the road, continue on through tiny Gsteig (about 7 kilometers from Col du Pillon), over which loom several major peaks, including the Spitzhorn and the Schluchhorn.

From there it's about another 10 kilometers to Gstaad. Along the way you will cross the so-called "Rösti line," where the language changes from French to German — *Rösti* being that wonderful fried potato dish that is most popular in German-speaking Switzerland.



Gstaad is definitely worth a stroll, but we recommend stopping for lunch or dinner about three kilometers beyond in Saanen at the **Hotel Bahnhof**; or, if that is closed, the **Landhaus Hotel**. A Gstaad tourist office employee whispered the Bahnhof secret to us some years ago and it is one of our all-time favorites for simple, country food. The Landhaus has good food, too, as well as 18 pleasant guest rooms. It is a far less expensive alternative to the hotels of Gstaad.

Château-d'Oex

A few kilometers on — you are now on Red Road #11 — is Rougeмонт, a town of weathered wood chalets and a restored castle. You are now back in the French-speaking Vaud.

From there, it is another seven kilometers to the most appealing town of this circuit, Château-d'Oex, scattered over the rolling green hills and meadows of the Sarine valley. The best hotel on this drive, **Hostellerie Bon Accueil**, is here as well as a museum worth a visit, the **Musée du Vieux Pays d'Enhaut**, where one can see, recreated, the life-style of these mountain dwellers over a 700 year period. The museum also displays the region's unique art form, impossibly intricate paper cuttings.

Each January, Château-d'Oex is home to one of the world's largest hot air balloon events.

Cheese Tour

Inquire at the Château-d'Oex tourist office about visiting **La Maison de L'Etivaz**, a cheese-making cooperative. The cheese is made by individual farmers in the mountains in the summer, then brought to L'Etivaz to be stored and cured for up to three years. The facility is on the main road just beyond Château-d'Oex and the tour is worthwhile.

A Very Back Road

From Château-d'Oex the road winds through the Pissot Gorges and on to the Vallée d'Etivaz, where the road makes a

near 180-degree turn to the west and begins a steep climb.

As you drive through this rugged terrain, you will see huge, gray boulders beside the road. Some of them, however, are not really rocks. If you look carefully at just the right boulder or stone facing, you will see it is the camouflaged entrance to a tunnel. Inside these mountains are vast, mostly man-made, caverns which contain some of the materials and weaponry Switzerland has stored for use in case of foreign invasion. In fact, the keen observer will note many bridges on these mountain roads are constructed to be easily destroyed: the last man over sets off a small charge in just the right spot

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THE VAUD ALPS

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and suddenly there is no bridge and a pursuing army is confronted by a yawning chasm.

At Lecherette, an alternative route is a tiny road that heads off to the west. It runs past a large mountain lake, de l'Hongrin, and through areas that are obviously used for maneuvers by the Swiss Army. It winds its way eventually to Aigle, about 25 kilometers. A short section of it is marked on the map "difficult or dangerous." We turned down this very interesting road but were stopped after about 12 kilometers when we encountered several feet of snow. In summer, however, this is an option for the adventurous driver. Before committing to this route, inquire if the road is open to auto traffic all the way to Aigle.

Leysin

Those who continue on Red Road 11 may want to detour just after La Planche, to the Yellow Road which deadends at Leysin.

This south-slope village, known as the "Balcony of the Alps," perches on a ledge high above Lac Léman and boasts many days of sunshine. Here, at the **Residence Leysin Parc**, we found some extraordinarily appealing condominiums for rent.

Lunch in the revolving **Restaurant Kuklos**, at the top of the Berneuse, offers not only a meal but ever changing views of Lac Léman, the Rhône Valley and such peaks as Les Diablerets, Eiger, Mont-Blanc and the tip of the Matterhorn. On Friday evenings in summer, Kuklos opens for special sunset dinners.

Complete the circuit, by retracing your steps to Red Road 11, take the right turn and wind down the mountain to the wine village of Aigle.

Places to Stay

Hotel du Golf et Marie Louise
Chalet-style hotel with wonderful rustic, mountain ambiance. Lots of wood, spacious guest rooms and an easy walk to anywhere in the village. The "golf" in the name refers to "minigolf."

EDITOR'S CHOICE

MORE INFO ON THE VAUD ALPS

Tourist Office

CH-1837 Château-d'Oex
Tel: 029/924 77 88, fax: 029/924 59 58

Tourist Office

CH-1865 Les Diablerets
Tel: 024/492 33 58/Fax: 024/492 23 48

Packages Leysin

The tourist office offers seven-day and two-day packages that include welcome drink, half board, child-care, membership in the New Sporting Club with free access to swimming pool, ice rink, Turkish bath and other activities. Seven-day packages include dinner at a local restaurant of your choice.

Per person high season prices for the two-night packages range from 125 to 235 Sfr. (\$86-\$162). Low season two-night packages are 109 to 209 Sfr. (\$75-\$144). High season seven-night packages go from 429 to 817 Sfr. (\$296-\$563). Seven-night arrangements in low season are from 379 to 735 Sfr. (\$261-\$507).

Prices are dependent upon the category of hotel chosen. For a three-star hotel the two-night per person rate is from 175 to 190 Sfr. (\$121-\$131) and the seven-night packages range from 615 to 695 Sfr. (\$424-\$79).

The 1997 high season is 7/19/97 to 8/23/97

Leysin Fitness

Leysin's New Sporting Club offers six-day memberships for 35 Sfr. (\$24) per person. Facilities include swimming pool with Turkish bath, ice rink, tennis courts, squash courts, weight room, wall climbing, aerobic room, soccer field and curling. Except for the ice rink and pool, there are additional charges for use of the facilities.

Golf in Villars

Golf Club Villars, CP 152, CH-1884 Villars
Green fees on this 18-hole course are about \$35 on week days and \$40 on weekends. Golf packages that include seven nights double room, half board and five days of golf range from about \$375 to about \$1250 per person, depending on the season and hotel chosen.

Cable Car to the Glacier

Adult roundtrip prices from both Col du Pillon and Reusch are approximately \$35. Cars run from roughly 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The three-stage trip takes about 30 minutes each way.

Château-d'Oex Balloon Rides

These peaceful, 60 to 90-minute flights can be booked year round for approximately \$225 per adult and \$115 for kids 8-12 years old. Especially recommended are the summer evening flights. Contact the Château-d'Oex tourist office.

Fromagerie - Le Chalet - Château-d'Oex

See cheese made daily, except Monday, at 1:30 p.m. Model railroad. Restaurant. Admission about \$2.

Cheese-Making Package

Stay overnight at a local farm and help with cheese-making. The per person price is about \$30 and includes all meals. However, the accommodations are very rustic and there are no private bathroom facilities. Contact the Château-d'Oex tourist office.

Pays-d'Enhaut Museum - Château-d'Oex

Local history and handcrafts. Worthwhile, especially the unique paper cuttings. Admission about \$2.50.

Daily Rates: 130 - 285 Sfr. (\$88-\$194)
half board, doubles 210 -340 Sfr.
(\$143-\$231) half board.

Contact: Hotel du Golf et Marie Louise, Villars CH-1884, tel. 024 35 24 77, fax 024 35 39 78. 70 well-appointed, mostly south-facing, rooms, many with balcony. Terrace for outdoor dining, tennis, lawn for sunbathers. Garage 10 Sfr. (\$7).

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 11/20

Hotel Panorama Villars

Centrally-located, four-star hotel with three restaurants, indoor pool, sauna and solarium.

Daily Rates: Singles 110 - 195 Sfr. (\$75-\$133), doubles 170 - 290 Sfr.

Tourist Office

CH-1854 Leysin
Tel: 024/494 22 44, fax: 024/494 16 16

Tourist Office

CH-1884 Villars-sur-Ollon
Tel: 024/495 32 32, fax: 024/495 27 94

(\$116-\$197)

Contact: Hotel Panorama Villars, Villars CH-1884, tel. 024 36 21 11, fax 024 35 32 22. 110 rooms.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 9/20

Hotel Pension Les Papillons

Very clean, cozy family-run pension a short walk from the center. Very good value and lots of charm.

Daily Rates: Singles 38 - 80 Sfr. (\$26-\$54), doubles 100 - 170 Sfr. (\$68-\$116)

Contact: Hotel Pension Les Papillons, Villars, CH-1884, tel. 024 35 34 84, 024 35 42 31, 5, 11 rooms. Some lower priced rooms without shower or toilet. Discounts for stays of three

EDITOR'S CHOICE

days or longer

Rating: QUALITY 9/20, VALUE 13/20

Ermitage

Big, overpriced, adequate. Could change when scheduled remodel takes place.

Daily Rates: Singles \$105-\$127, doubles \$163-\$209

Contact: Hotel Ermitage, Les Diablerets, CH-1865, tel. 024 53 15 51, fax 024 53 23 91. Approx. 70 rooms.

Rating: QUALITY 9/20, VALUE 7/20

Le Chamois

The smell of cigarettes in public rooms is almost overpowering. Need we say more? Rooms very plain, most with linoleum floors. Not up to Swiss standards and not recommended.

Daily Rates: Singles 90 - 125 Sfr. (\$61-\$85), doubles 140 - 210 Sfr. (\$95-\$143)

Contact: Le Chamois, Les Diablerets, CH-1865, tel. 024 53 26 53, fax 024 53 26 06. 63 rooms, most with balcony.

Rating: QUALITY 6/20, VALUE 5/20

Hostellerie Les Sources

Nicely situated in the trees near a river, but we can't get excited about this hotel.

Daily Rates: Singles 88 - 120 Sfr. (\$60-\$82), doubles 136 - 180 Sfr. (\$93-\$122)

Contact: Hostellerie Les Sources, Les Diablerets, CH-1865, tel. 024 53 21 26, fax 024 53 23 35. 49 double rooms.

Rating: QUALITY 7/20, VALUE 8/20

Les Diablotins

Caters to kids' groups and families and bears the scars to prove it. There are two to four beds in each room and none has private toilet facilities. Inexpensive but rough.

Daily Rates: Singles 38 - 62 Sfr. (\$26-\$42), doubles 58 - 112 Sfr. (\$39-\$76)

Contact: Les Diablotins, Les Diablerets, CH-1865, tel. 024 53 16 33, fax 024 53 23 55. 62 rooms.

Rating: QUALITY 5/20, VALUE 10/20

Hotel Landhaus

In the center of Saanen. Friendly management, comfortable guest rooms, good moderately-priced restaurant. Willing to bargain on room price if not fully booked.

Daily Rates: Singles 95 - 125 Sfr. (\$65-\$85), doubles 150 - 210 Sfr. (\$102-\$143)

Contact: Hotel Landhaus, Saanen, CH-3792, tel. 033 744 58 58, fax 033 744 89 40. 18 rooms.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 11/20

Hostellerie Bon Accueil

Outstanding 18th century country chalet, full of antiques, fine rugs and cozy rooms. Rustic elegance. Dramatic views across the valley from a prime hillside site. Tremendous charm. Best hotel in the region (excluding Gstaad).

Daily Rates: Singles 90 - 130 Sfr. (\$61-\$88), doubles 140 - 200 Sfr. (\$95-\$136)

Contact: Hostellerie Bon Accueil, Château-d'Oex, CH-1837, tel. 026 924 63 20, fax 026 924 51 26. 21 rooms, some designated nonsmoking.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 17/20

Hotel Ermitage

This hotel has been spiffed up since our last stay here in 1988. Cozy public rooms, guest rooms on the small side. Management seems to care. Good, moderately-priced restaurant.

Daily Rates: Singles 80 - 100 Sfr. (\$54-\$68), doubles 130 - 160 Sfr. (\$88-\$109)

Contact: Hotel Ermitage, Château-d'Oex, CH-1837, tel. 026 4 60 30, fax 026 5 50 76. 21 rooms

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Florissant

Has the feel of a private home. Much charm and a very good value.

Daily Rates: Singles 48 - 60 Sfr. (\$33-\$41), doubles 90 - 116 Sfr. (\$61-\$79)

Contact: Hotel Florissant, Château-d'Oex, CH-1837, tel. 026 4 60 60. 10 rooms, most with balcony. Lovely garden.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 14/20

La Soldanelle

The emphasis at this family hotel is on health and fitness. There are nonsmoking rooms and various "cure" programs and health facilities are available. Probably not for the casual one or two night stay.

Daily Rates: Singles 75 - 120 Sfr. (\$51-\$82), doubles 110 - 180 Sfr. (\$75-\$122)

Contact: La Soldanelle, Château-d'Oex, CH-1837, tel. 026 4 45 45, fax

026 4 45 46. 48 rooms, some non-smoking.

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 10/20

Residence Leysin Parc

Perhaps the finest vacation rental units we have seen. Top quality construction with lots of wood. Spacious rooms. Great views. Outstanding. Remember, you are only 25 minutes from Montreux here.

Weekly Rates: Studios from about 600 to 1500 Sfr. (\$408-\$1020). Two room apartments from about 900 to 2000 Sfr. (\$612-\$1361). Three room apartments from about 1100 to 2300 Sfr. (\$748-\$1565)

Contact: Residence Leysin Parc, Leysin, CH-1854, tel. 024 494 26 22.

Rating: QUALITY 18/20, VALUE 15/20

Le Grand Chalet

Above average Swiss hotel in a very quiet location with splendid views. Pleasant management. Restaurant serves good meals for less than 20 Sfr. (\$14).

Daily Rates: Singles 72 - 107 (\$49-\$73), doubles 124 - 200 (\$84-\$136)

Contact: Le Grand Chalet, Leysin, CH-1854, tel. 024 34 11 36, 024 34 16 14. 30 rooms, most with balcony.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 11/20

Les Orchidées

Turn of the century building with high ceilings and large rooms. Good value. Very warm welcome.

Daily Rates: Singles 54 - 95 Sfr. (\$37-\$65), doubles 108 - 190 Sfr. (\$73-\$129)

Contact: Les Orchidées, Leysin, CH-1854, tel. 024 34 14 21, 024 34 18 10. Rooms are equipped with telephone and radio.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 15/20

Places to Eat

L'Ormonan

In the center of town. O.k. for a snack. Good mountain views. Some outdoor tables.

L'Ormonan, Les Diablerets CH-1865, tel. 024/53 18 38. Inexpensive

Les Lilas

Rustic, country atmosphere. Linen tablecloths and napkins. Pleasant service. Above average food.

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THE VAUDOIS ALPS

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Les Lilas, Les Diablerets CH-1865, tel. 024/492 3134. Moderate.

Restaurant Kuklos

The view is the thing here. This revolving restaurant is at the top of the Berneuse and makes one revolution about every hour and a quarter. Accessible only via cable car from Leysin. The food is typical Swiss country fare.

La Berneuse Kuklos, Leysin CH-1854, tel. 024/494 3141, fax 024/494 3140. Expensive.

Hotel Bahnhof


No view, no style, but country food as good as we've ever had. You'll get second servings of main dishes and, if you want, extra salad and *Rösti* (fried potatoes). A favorite of locals. Very friendly.

Entering the village from Gstaad, turn left on the main street and look for the sign to the Bahnhof Hotel. Turn right at the parking lot of the railway station. The hotel is on Marktgässli.

Hotel Bahnhof, Gstaad-Saanen, CH-3792, tel. 033/744 1422. Moderate.

Hotel Landhaus

In the very center of town. Pleasant dining room with polished wood and heavy beams. The typical Swiss country cuisine is better than average. Friendly management.

Hotel Landhaus, Saanen CH-3792, tel. 033/744 5858, fax 033/7448940. Moderate. 

EUROPE TRAVEL DIGEST

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Also available will be video games run by the Swiss lottery in which passengers can win up to \$3500. Swissair is currently testing customer response on selected aircraft and expects to have its entire long-haul fleet equipped by January 1998.

■ **Lufthansa** now offers nonstop service between Newark, New Jersey, and Munich. For passengers who purchase Newark-Munich tickets through April 30, the

roundtrip economy fare is \$411 and is good for travel through May 31, 1997. Lufthansa also has daily nonstop service between Newark and Frankfurt plus three flights daily from JFK to Germany.

■ **Geneva's Red Cross Museum** offers remarkable film footage. Some visitors weep when they view jerky World War I footage of former enemies, Germans and Englishmen, hugging and dancing as the armistice goes into effect, ending a war that killed 60,000,000 people. One especially poignant film, taken during the Spanish-American War, shows Red Cross nurses running out into gunfire to tend wounded soldiers.

Notable among several moving exhibits is the entire card index of the International Prisoners of War Agency, containing 7,000,000 cards.


Another exhibit is a 9' x 12' concrete block cell from an unnamed country in which 17 prisoners were held, some for as long as 90 days. The cell was dismantled and brought to Geneva. Seventeen pairs of footprints painted on the floor graphically show how crowded these prisoners were.

The building is intentionally stark. Human figures in exhibits are faceless.

The museum, which opened in 1988, was funded by government and private donations and has never taken funds from the International Red Cross.

Red Cross Museum, 17 Avenue de la Paix, Geneva, tel 022/733 2660. Admission is 10 Sfr. (\$7).

■ **Minotel Europe** includes over 200 small hotels and inns in Austria, Germany and Switzerland and 23 more in Eastern Europe.

Operated on a prepaid voucher system, the cost is about \$125 for a double room including private bath, breakfast and local tax. One child under 12 years is free with two adults in a double room and the seventh night is free for travelers staying six consecutive nights at the same property. Ask your travel agent to contact: 800-670-4857. 

READERS' FORUM

Service Above and Beyond

Re your Jan 1997 *Dear Subscriber* New Year's in Vienna mention.

After having standing room tickets for the 1981 New Year's Day concert of the **Vienna Philharmonic**, we were determined to see the concert sitting down. It took us nine years.

The procedure for obtaining tickets requires that requests reach the ticket office on New Year's Day, exactly one year in advance — a good trick if you can do it as mail is not delivered that day, and if it arrives early it is thrown out. We applied for eight years with no luck. When you published a review of the hotel **Römischer Kaiser** in 1988, we called the owner/manager in the fall of that year and he agreed to hand deliver, on New Year's Day, our letter requesting tickets for the next year.

We wrote the application for tickets and enclosed our previous seven or eight rejections and forwarded it all to the hotel in Vienna. In February of 1990 we received a letter from the Friends of Music stating that we would hear more in September. In September we received a layout of the Musikverein and prices. We had to submit a check in Austrian shillings. Next we received a letter stating that we must pick up the tickets December 29th. Since we would be in Budapest on that day, we called the Römischer Kaiser again, and they picked up our tickets.

On January 1, 1990, we walked to the concert hall at 10:30 a.m. The hall is exquisite, small with great acoustics. We had excellent seats, close enough to see the sweat on Zubin's face and a few rows in front of Walter Cronkite. The crowd was well dressed, many in black tie. We suspect there was scalping of tickets, judging from the many non-Austrians in the audience. It was one of our

greatest pleasures, but very expensive. The Römischer Kaiser is a lovely hotel.

Bill Chesnut, Charlotte NC

(What a great travel story. The hotel's owner is Dr. Gerhard Jungreuthmayer, one of the reasons the Römischer Kaiser earned one of our first "G" awards.)

Our Man in Munich

My family and I had the good fortune to spend last New Year's week in Munich, Germany. While there I met Art Horn who has been advertising himself as, "Your man in Europe" in recent issues of *Gemütlichkeit*. I thought you and your readers would appreciate knowing that Mr. Horn is exactly as he advertises himself and more. His English is flawless and he is a very interesting person to talk to. I recommend his services to your readers.

My wife and I thoroughly enjoy *Gemütlichkeit* and look forward to receiving each issue.

Robert J. Reilly, Pontiac, IL

Didn't Like Hotel Tiefenau

I enjoy reading your travel letter and generally take your suggestions. Sometimes I disagree but not enough to write a rebuttal. However, there is a reader's comment in the January '97 issue on **Tiefenau Hotel** Zürich that requires a prompt and vehement denunciation.

(1) The hotel's self-service elevator accepts two people, period. No luggage of any kind will fit. The porter had to follow with our luggage — four pieces — he was perched on one of the suitcases.

(2) The threadbare, dirty carpet matched the peeling wallpaper. The king-size bed had a mattress that almost touched the floor in the middle of the bed....never mind the squeaky springs.

(3) The telephone instrument was resting on the top of the radio, in the corner of the room, outside the bathroom door.

(4) You ate the meager breakfast that was served, or rather, bread and coffee on a table for you to help

Internet Travel

Site Name: *HaCon Ingenieurgesellschaft mbH*

URL: <http://www.hacon.de/>

An absolutely marvelous Internet site for European train travelers is operated by German Rail. This site allows visitors to access train schedules all over Europe. From the main page select the English version and you will immediately find yourself at a very simple interactive page which asks your departure city, your arrival city and estimated date and time of travel (remember to use the European date style and the 24 hour clock: March 31, 1997 is 31.03.97 and 8:15 p.m. is 20:15).

Next, click on "Search Connection," then on "Detail" and your itinerary will be displayed in a few seconds. Click on "Journey Guide" and you'll get an even more complete rundown, with arrival and departure times at every stop along the way.

Site Name: *Urlaub in Deutschland*

URL: <http://www.on-gmbh.de/reisen/urlaub.html>


Contains apartment and vacation home listings for Germany. Mostly in German but some English. By no means are the listings complete.

Unfortunately there is no consistency; some listings have no pictures, some have no prices or even phone or fax numbers. Still, a useful tool.

Site Name: *Hotels in Rothenburg o.b. Tauber*

URL: <http://www.rothenburg.de/Hotels.html>

Contains a fairly complete list of hotels from pensions at 35 DM (\$21) per day to the **Hotel Eisenhut** which charges 380 DM (\$232) for its best double room. Includes phone and fax numbers and prices.

Some have their own home page such as **Hotel Garni Hornburg** (tel. 09861/84 80, fax 09861 / 55 70), which, based on very attractive color photos of its castle-like exterior, guest and public rooms and reasonable prices (double rooms about \$72 to \$87), is worth consideration. 

yourself. You did have a choice of a hard-boiled egg.

(5) The paper-thin walls are the crowning glory to an unpleasant day at Sfr. 330, which in September '96 came to \$273.

(6) A small refrigerator was located inside a dirty closet, we were afraid to open it, expecting creepy crawlers would greet us with opening claws.

The sole redeeming feature was the tight parking space for eight cars. I needed a quick exit to a BMW forwarder to drop off my new 540i for shipment to the U.S. and hop on the plane for London. The old saying that there are no bad hotels in Switzerland is not true...we just found one. Hopefully by now, for future tourists, they have done a major remodeling job. For sure, we will never return and/or recommend this place to anyone. By the way, the travel agent who recommended and booked me into this dump got holy hell from me. V.E. Vacakis, San Francisco, CA

Hotel Report: Germany

Here is a report of a recent four-week trip to Germany with the primary objective of visiting some Christmas Markets we have wished to see for many years. Since we arrived before the markets began, we took a swing from Frankfurt down through the Black Forest and east along the southern border of Germany. The hotel rates that follow are for a double room with breakfast unless noted differently.

Triberg - Parkhotel Wehrle (Gästehaus) - 150 DM (\$90). Good location in city center with good food. Nice indoor pool and sauna facilities.

Oberammergau - Hotel Wolf - 120 DM (\$72). Near city center and comfortable.

Berchtesgaden - Alpenhotel Denninglehen - 204 DM (\$122). Located seven kilometers east of the city with a marvelous view over the valley. Indoor pool and sauna facilities.

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FACTORY DELIVERY

Continued from page 1

similar savings could often be had through haggling, except on the most popular models. (However, California buyers can save as much as 8.25% state sales tax by leaving the car in Europe for 90 days. Since most travelers can't stay away that long, BMW, for one, will store your new car for \$2 per day before shipping it to the U.S.)

- Mercedes Benz of North America in Montvale, N.J., offers a generous package. Buyers get a 90-minute tour of the company's Stuttgart factory, complimentary breakfast or lunch at the delivery center, 15 days' comprehensive insurance with no deductible, and two nights lodging at a fine hotel. All transportation costs, including shipping, insurance, wharfage, customs duty, handling charges and ground delivery to your U.S. dealership, are covered.

- Mercedes also offers a suggested scenic driving route through Germany, Austria and Switzerland, including six nights' lodging and some meals, for \$1,000 per couple, at places that are normally \$300 a night.

- Delivery orders are placed through your local dealership. With enough advance time — usually three months but a minimum of three to six weeks — you can order your choice of model, color and options. You then pick a date to take delivery and arrange your own flight.

- Some companies offer discounted airfare through certain carriers.

- At the end of your trip, you simply drop the car off at your choice of ports. Some companies include insurance, while others make it available at a minimal charge. BMW includes a month, but it can be extended for up to a year. Mercedes includes 15 days.

- Once you drop off your car in Europe, expect a wait of six to eight weeks for it to arrive home.

- The cars are models designed for U.S. use and are identical to what is available from a local dealer. Some come with factory-installed European radios, which are then switched at no charge when your car arrives here. Certain U.S. options such as alarms, CD players and cellular phones can't be installed until the car is delivered.

- In Europe, buying a new car is a big event. It's normal for many Europeans to pick up their cars at the factory, a practice that's unheard of in the United States. So when Americans go to Europe to pick up their vehicles, they're treated to restaurants and welcome centers that were originally developed for the locals. ☒

READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 7

Passau - **Hotel Passauer Wolf** - 160 DM (\$96). Good location near city center. Small rooms.

Hohenau - **Romantik Hotel Bierhütte** - 150 DM (\$90). Great ambiance in beautiful area. Comfortable rooms. Good but limited menu.

Rattenberg - **Posthotel Bayerwald** - 120 DM (\$72). Best find of trip! Very

comfortable rooms and extensive menu in restaurant. Indoor pool and sauna facilities. Good location to visit the many glass factories in the areas, especially the Weinfurtner Glasshütten shops in the nearby village of Arnbruck — a glass shoppers supermarket! Other outlets in Bodenmais, Zweisel, Frauenau, Spiegelau and Freyung.

Augsburg - **Dom Hotel** - 176 DM (\$105). A five-minute walk from city center with very nice rooms, especially the attic rooms. Indoor pool and sauna facilities. Free parking.

Nürnberg - **Weinhaus Steichele** - 170 DM (\$102). Excellent location within walking distance to the city center and the huge German National Museum. Small rooms but restaurant is THE place to eat as evidenced by the packed house each night. Parking available 12 DM/day.

Würzburg - **Schloss Steinburg** - 510 DM (\$305) for two nights and one four-course meal. Fabulous view over city and very tastefully decorated. Attentive staff and package included full use of the indoor pool and sauna facilities. Free parking.

Aschaffenburg - **Hotel Klingerhof** - 170 DM (\$102). On weekends 150 DM (\$90). Hotel has a great hilltop setting overlooking the adjacent valley to the surrounding hills. Easy access (6.5 km) to the city center. Large rooms and good food. Indoor pool and sauna.

Darmstadt - **Hotel Waldesruh** - 125 DM (\$75). Located in the suburb of

Mühltal-Trautheim. Convenient final night stop for access to Frankfurt airport via Autobahn with a service station approximately half way if you need to fill the fuel tank of a rental car. Large rooms and excellent food. Indoor pool and free parking. Easy access, seven km to Darmstadt.

We planned to see the Christmas Markets in Munich, Augsburg and Nürnberg but ended up in Rothenburg, Würzburg, Aschaffenburg and Darmstadt as well. We were disappointed with the market in Munich as it seemed to be limited in its variety and lacked the atmosphere we found in the smaller markets. The large market in Nürnberg was very crowded and full of the fun feeling we had anticipated. But we thoroughly enjoyed the more friendly feeling of the small markets particularly in Augsburg and Aschaffenburg. I'm sure others have their favorites and have many different assessments than ours.

Two churches visited early in the trip are to be recommended - in Zwiefalten and Ottobeuren. Both contain extraordinarily beautiful baroque paintings, stucco work and statuary. Two cities warranting a return visit were Rottweil, a fortified town on a rocky point which is wrapped by a bend of the Neckar River, and Tübingen, with its riverside setting and narrow, twisting streets. A castle worth a stop is Hohenzollern near Balingen. Sharon & Nelson Helm, Plano, TX ☒