

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

April 28, 1997

Trip Notes

Earlier this month we returned from another visit to Germany, Austria and Switzerland, with even a side trip to the Czech Republic.

We enjoy traveling in the off season because of the lack of tourists and because prices are often lower. For example:

- As you will read in this month's lead story about **Schloss Haunspurg**, we and another couple traveling with us, were the only guests in the hotel.

- Salzburg, in the first two or three days after Easter, was as deserted as I've ever seen it; meaning the Getreidegasse looked like a normal busy street instead of its usual summertime impersonation of St. Peter's Square greeting a new Pope.

- Arriving after 7:00 p.m. at the **Ramada Hotel** in Freising near the Munich Airport, we were given a room for 235 DM (\$138) instead of the rack rate of 355 DM (\$209) and also upgraded to a "junior" suite. Though it turned out to be just an oversize double and we had to ask for both discount and upgrade, such concessions are still a sign of the season.

Here are a few more random impressions and comments relating to the trip:

"Last Night" Hotel

I wish I had a crackerjack hotel near the Munich Airport to recommend but, alas, I do not. Unfortunately, the previously-mentioned **Ramada** (tel. 08161/9660, fax 08161/966281) is a charmless, modern, U.S.-style, airport hotel. And, at the rack rate price — plus a 25 DM (\$15) gouge for breakfast — it's poor value. Even at the discount we were given (no doubt because it

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

SCHLOSS HAUNSPERG

We return to a castle hotel near Salzburg that impressed us mightily in 1989. Is it as good today?

In 1989, when we made our first visit to ivy-covered Schloss Haunspurg in a Salzburg suburb, the highest rating *Gemütlichkeit* could give a hotel was three stars, defined as a "memorable experience."

Haunspurg became the first to get both our three-star rating and our "\$" (significant value) designation. It also won a 1989 "G Award." We saw it as a fairy-tale castle, the very essence of *gemütlichkeit*: full of priceless family heirlooms, old-world charm and operated by an energetic, gregarious husband-wife team who seemed to genuinely enjoy their guests.

Certainly the story has



fairy-tale elements: Patri- cian young couple restores old family castle that has lain moldering for decades and turns it into dreamy, movie-set hotel. The couple is not only handsome, gracious and utterly charming, but very good at the hotel business, with a born-to-it knack for making guests feel at home.

Now, eight years later, much wiser in the ways of European hostelries, we return to Haunspurg with

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The Grandest of the Grand is Reborn

On June 1, the new, \$300 million **Adlon Hotel** will open in Berlin on Unter den Linden at the Brandenburg Gate. During its "pre-opening phase" from June 1 through August 26, 1997, the Adlon is offering a special rate of 290 DM (\$171) single occupancy or 360 DM (\$212) double occupancy, inclusive of tax and service. To book call 800-426-3135.

The original Adlon opened in 1907 on this same site and set standards for hotels around the world: running water, 110-volt electric light bulbs and gas heating. Until it expired at the end of World War II (Russian soldiers, it is said, got drunk in the wine cellar and set fire to it), the Adlon was Berlin headquarters for the rich, famous and powerful.

Thomas Mann stayed at the Adlon on his way to

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Europe Travel Digest

■ During the periods, May 30 to June 29 and September 12 to October 12, travelers to Switzerland can get a free night at any of 422 participating hotels by booking three consecutive paid nights. Six nights lodging at the same hotel will yield two free days. The offer, which was jointly announced by **Switzerland Tourism** and the **Swiss Hotel Association**, is unprecedented in a country of conservative hoteliers notoriously reluctant to offer such sweeping discounts.

Prices for a double room among the participating hotels vary from 100 Sfr. (\$70) per night in a bed and breakfast type country inn, to 380 Sfr. (\$260) in a five-star deluxe hotel. Prices include daily breakfast and all taxes. Bookings must be made directly at the hotel by fax or phone.

For a list of participating hotels contact Switzerland Tourism at 415-262-6116 or 310-640-8900, or log onto their website at www.switzerlandtourism.com.

■ The **Sofitel** chain of European hotels has announced summer prices guaranteed in dollars. Though not as attractive as in past years, in most instances they still offer good value. The per room, per night prices are \$125, \$145 and \$165,

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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was late in the evening and there were many empty rooms) it's hardly a bargain. Worse than the Ramada, is the **Hotel Isar** in the same city. Double rooms have tiny, low, cot-like twin beds and the place smells like an entire posse of Marlboro men just spent a month there.

Road Permit for Austria

Like Switzerland, Austria now requires motorists to display a "vignette" on the windshield of their car. Essentially, it is a ticket or pass to drive the country's Autobahns. Unlike Switzerland, however, a visitor needn't purchase the full year pass. We got a one-week sticker at the Autobahn border crossing between Munich and Salzburg for 70 AS (\$6).

On the Road

Driving in Germany, Austria and Switzerland is a pleasure — mostly. Unlike California, drivers are polite and predictable; nobody passes on the right and everybody signals. Also, over the last few years I have noticed a reduction in the number of macho, left-lane, speed demons who flash their headlights to clear the way ahead. There are still plenty of fast drivers in Germany but they seem to be more gracious about asking slower ones to move over. In fact, I'm now noticing a new Autobahn maneuver that seems downright friendly.

Let's say you're in the right lane traveling at 140 kph (87.5 mph). A few hundred feet ahead is a slow truck you will soon have to pass. Your rearview mirror reveals a slightly faster vehicle in the left lane about to pass. There are two choices: brake and let the left lane pass, or — and this is neither legal nor polite — move into the left lane and force the closing vehicle to break its speed. Such situations in California often result in gun play. In Germany, however, the recriminations are

usually confined to gestures and hand signals. Recently, however, I've seen the faster car often lower its speed slightly and swing into the right lane *behind* your slower car. This is an indication that the faster car is willing to follow you around the truck and not force you to brake behind it. Of course, when you've passed the truck, etiquette requires that you immediately move to the right and allow the faster car to pass. Don't expect such consideration, however, if your right lane speed is substantially lower than the closing vehicle's.

But European drivers, Germans in particular, remain the world's motoring busybodies. Screw up on a German highway and they'll let you know about it. Consider this little Autobahn tableau that occurred earlier this month.

We were in the left lane between Munich and Salzburg, going maybe 130 kph (too slow). As we passed a sign imposing a 100 kph speed limit, I noticed a much faster car running up behind us. There was no room to immediately move over, however, so in order to get out of the way quickly I accelerated to about 140 kph, passed a car and moved to the right lane where I slowed down. But as I did, the 50-ish man in the \$90,000 black Mercedes roadster I had passed shook a disapproving head and finger at me and then flashed a small replica of the 100 kph speed limit sign.

That's right, he had it somewhere in the car with him and pulled it out to show me through the driver's side window. Advance planning is admirable, but this was over the top. He probably has an entire set of these little signs ranging from 30 to 130 kph in some kind of holder strategically placed so he can quickly grab the appropriate one when he spots yet another scofflaw.

It also occurs to me that perhaps somewhere in Germany, these little shame-on-you

signs are for sale. Meaning there is a market for them. Meaning there are lots of folks out there just waiting to let you know, in a graphic way, when you're not doing it right.

After following us for about three kilometers and shaking his head from side to side (this guy was really worked up), he roared around us with another scolding look and head shake, then disappeared into the distance — well before the 100 kph control was lifted. The incident had this effect on me; for the rest of the trip I was very careful to observe those 60, 80, 100 and 120 kph Autobahn slowdown zones. Doing so, I was passed by hundreds of cars.

Rental Car for Four

We get calls about which car to rent when the traveling party is three of four persons. Midsize cars such as the Opel Vectra are a great bargain at about \$18 per day (in Germany) plus tax but there seems to be a general skepticism about the legroom and trunk space. But stepping up to a car larger than that is expensive. The small Mercedes at twice the price offers less trunk room and about same passenger space. A full-size Opel Omega is \$57 per day plus tax.

As I have mentioned here before, we do not travel light. Neither do the other couple who joined us for a few days on this trip. We each had a car but decided to turn in their BMW 316i when we discovered the Vectra would be fine for the four of us. It seemed larger all around, with a much bigger trunk that accommodated two very large folding garment bags, two rolling 22" suitcases, one large duffel, one small duffel, a small backpack and one large briefcase. There was a sunroof, a terrific high-tech radio, a dashboard liquid-crystal screen that displayed the time, the radio station currently tuned in and the outside temperature. Though it was no great hill climber with its load of four adults

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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.

SCHLOSS HAUNSPERG

Continued from page 1

a more jaded, critical eye. Could this castle possibly be as appealing and authentically homey as we gushed in that April, 1989, issue? Is it really the idyllic hideaway we said it was or were we just easily impressed? Could the husband and wife team possibly maintain their wonderful enthusiasm and their almost unbelievable level of genuine hospitality? After all, the bed and breakfast business is notorious for turning enthusiastic inn keepers into cynical Walter Mathau types.

Amazingly, except for the prices and a change of phone numbers, our 1989 story holds up. Haunsperg is as delightful as ever. For the hotel itself, that may not be so surprising. If you're a castle going on 700, nine years isn't a long time. It's different, however, for humans. Energy can flag and enthusiasm wane. But Eike and Georg von Gernerth seem as resilient as their Schloss. Their special talent for making guests feel welcome is fully intact. And isn't that more than half the battle? If some dour duo were at Haunsperg's helm we'd no doubt be carping about the lack of an elevator, minibars, CNN and in-room direct dial phones. In any case, such amenities would be out of place at Haunsperg.

The castle has eight rooms / suites for rent, every one a charmer. They come in a variety of shapes, sizes and furnishing. Some are very large and each has a special character. High ceilings, ancient three-foot thick walls, squeaky wood floors, antique furnishings and glorious *objet d'art*, most of which have been in the family hundreds of years, will do that for a hotel room.

You'll be happy with any of the eight rooms, but two couples traveling together should ask for what we had, the suites that connect with the music room. Our quarters consisted of a giant corner bedroom and sitting room plus separate rooms for toilet and bath and a second small bedroom that could have been used for a third person. On the

other side of the almost opulent music room, with its black Bösendorfer grand piano, numerous windows and crystal chandelier, our companions occupied an equally comfortable bedroom and separate sitting room. The four of us shared the music room, thus having most of an entire floor to ourselves — a total of at least 1,500 square feet of living space. The price in off-season for four is 4,200 AS (\$350).

Luckily, (for us, not the von Gernerths) we were the only four guests in the hotel. In the morning, in a cozy room with vaulted ceiling on the ground floor, a splendid table for four was set for breakfast with fresh flowers, gleaming glass and silverware and starchy linens. There were



The parlor where we were served breakfast

boiled eggs from free-range chickens, plenty of juice, fresh cantaloupe, and the freshest cheeses, thinly sliced meats, breads and rolls.

If it is solitude you seek, the von Gernerths will leave you alone. The rest of us are invited to join them for glasses of Austrian wine — in their garden in summer, at other times in the comfortable leather furniture of a small parlor, and occasionally at a nearby *Gasthaus*.

They are also delighted to show you their castle and share its history. There seems to be an interesting story behind every apartment, every picture, every rug, every piece of porcelain and China, and every antique

From World War II through the early '60s, for example, the top floor was occupied by a family displaced by the war. For some 20 years they

lived in the von Gernerth's castle, rent free. During the war the government allowed such families to occupy vacant buildings all over Austria. By law, they cannot be evicted by the owners except under rare circumstances. In fact, Mrs. von Gernerth told us some apartments in Vienna remain occupied by families who were put there by the government more than 50 years ago and who still pay virtually no rent.

Haunsperg's *piece de résistance* is its Baroque chapel. The ornate altar appears to have been executed in marble. However, the area around Hallein is so rich in marble that the stone was bypassed as being too common. Instead the altar was made of wood and then a *faux marbre* finish was applied by craftsmen. In the tabernacle is a rotating platform which turns to show three scenes, including a carved mother and child

Eike and Georg von Gernerth seem as resilient as their Schloss. Their special talent for making guests feel welcome is fully intact.

and a reliquary with a sliver of wood which is purported to be from Christ's cross. Mass is said there four or five times each year but the ancient bell (1570) in the tower above is rarely rung — the last time was several years ago at the wedding of the von Gernerth's son.

Though the approach to Haunsperg is through an industrial neighborhood, that is forgotten once you enter the parklike, six-acre grounds. Tall trees surround the property, there are a couple of acres of lawn and a clay tennis court.

Don't stop here just for an overnight. Pack your underwear in the drawer of an antique chest and hang your clothes in a hand-carved armoire. Spread out, put your feet up and unwind for a few days. Shop and sightsee in Salzburg during the day and dine casually at nearby **Restaurant Hammerwirt** (next page) in the evening. Take a daytrip to the Königssee, a walk in the forest, drive the Rossfeld Ringstrasse or just hang around the castle and read. Whatever

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SCHLOSS HAUNSPERG


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er you do, don't miss Schloss HaunspERG, a special place run by special people.

HaunspERG is easy to find. Go south from Salzburg on the A10, exit at Hallein, then come back north toward Oberalm. In short order you will see signs to Schloss HaunspERG. It is west of the Autobahn and east of the Salzach river.

Daily Rates: Per person, per day rates in high season range from 850 AS (\$71) in a double room to 1250 AS (\$104) in the largest suite. Price for a single bedroom in the suites is 500 AS (\$42). There is a 10% reduction in these prices during the off-season. High season is March 21 to April 4; May 15 to May 22; July 18 to September 19 and December 20 to January 7.

Contact: Schloss HaunspERG, Hammerstrasse 32, A-5411 Oberalm bei Hallein, tel. 06245/80662, fax 06245/85680.

Rating: QUALITY 18/20 VALUE 18/20 

Dinner in Oberalm

Restaurant Hammerwirt

This lively village *Gasthaus* seems almost an extension of the HaunspERG. The family-run Hammerwirt's service is friendly and its food above average. The von Gernerth's, naturally, made our dinner reservation and, even though it is only a short walk, insisted on delivering us to the front door in the hotel van.

There are comfortable banquettes around the room and tables are decorated with pink and white linen cloths and napkins, real flowers and candles. Walls are hung with prints of familiar paintings.


The ubiquitous mixed salads were a tasty melange of the usual vegetables — chopped greens, corn, red peppers, sliced cucumbers — in a tangy dressing. Asparagus soup was delicious but mostly cream and butter — delicious but deadly. The best main dish consisted of juicy, perfectly done duck breast served with sliced *Knödel* and chopped cabbage and chard sauteed with

ham. Chunks of baby lamb deep fried was somewhat less successful. We finished with plates of various flavors of ice cream buried in whipped cream, hot chocolate and berry sauces.

Beverages were Kaiser *Bier vom Fass*, a bottle of Sonnhof Rotspon Blauburgunder Zweigelt (when in doubt for red wine in Austria, order the reliable Blauburgunder) and apricot brandy. For four, the bill came to 1775 AS (\$148). The Blauburgunder was 285 AS (\$24).

A most pleasant dining experience.

Landgasthaus Hammerwirt, A-5411 Oberalm, tel 06245/83664.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 14/20 

Lunch in Salzburg


St. Peter Stiftskeller

This landmark restaurant in St. Peter's Abbey has been criticized as being touristy but in the off-season it's snug, wood-paneled rooms are filled with locals. In summer, of course, you'll want to be in the open-air, vaulted courtyard, the rear part of which is dug from the side of the mountain. Started by Benedictine monks in 803, it is reputed to be the oldest restaurant in Austria.

The menu emphasizes such typical Austrian specialties as *Tafelspitz* (boiled beef) and *Schnitzel* cooked in the Vienna style so it flops over the plate. This is not *haute cuisine* but the dishes were good examples of their type. Main courses are in the \$12 to \$16 range. The uniformed male waiters provide quick, pleasant service.

As we left the restaurant, a bell began to toll and we stopped while a procession of mourners, all on foot and preceded by a rather small wooden coffin, exited the church and serpented around the little square. As we stood by the restaurant entrance, they passed in front of us on their walk to the cemetery. A sobering moment on a beautiful, sunshiny day.

St. Peter Stiftskeller, St. Peter Bezirk 1-4, tel. 0662/841268-0, fax 0662/841268-75.

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 12/20 

ADLON HOTEL

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Stockholm to receive the Nobel prize for literature. Albert Einstein's corner room had a view the Brandenburg Gate. Charlie Chaplin nearly lost his trousers in a throng of well-wishers while trying to enter the hotel during a movie premiere.

The hotel was so popular and so luxurious that some royal families even sold their winter palaces in Berlin, preferring instead to stay in the beautiful suites of the Adlon.

American guests included Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mary Pickford, Doris Duke and assorted Rockefellers and Vanderbilts.

Though the Adlon may have been ahead of its time when it came to running water and electric lights, it wasn't so up to date in other matters. Women who traveled on their own could only stay at the hotel if they were recommended by someone or were well-known to management.

According to a press release handed out by their U.S. public relations firm, the 1997 Adlon will set a new European "grand hotel" standard:

- Arriving guests will immediately be taken to their rooms. Check-in will be handled by a floor steward instead of the front desk.

- Every guest will have a portable phone to carry throughout the hotel to receive telephone calls in any location within the hotel.

- All rooms will feature an electronic key card system which will turn on the lights, the air-conditioning and music, simply by opening the door.

- Each room will have its own fax and fax number, or guests can use the state-of-the-art machines in the hotel's business center.

- Rooms will also feature an interactive CD player, PC docking capabilities, two ISDN telephones with voicemail, satellite television, personal safes, minibar, personalized

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Schloß Lembeck

Setting & History

Chevron patterned bricks lead visitors over a bridge through iron-gated arches alongside moats with swimming ducks. Rhododendrons proliferate beside the castle walls. Ahead is one of the most architecturally perfect examples of a Westphalian *Wasserschloss*.

Lembeck sits on two islets of land in a lake, thus forming natural moats and accounting for its unique three-winged Baroque shape. The castle is flanked by slate-roofed, onion-dome spires, creating one of the most alluring hotels in all of Germany.

Earliest mention of Lembeck is 1077 when the land was given to the bishops of Paderborn. The castle got its name from Adolph von Lembeck, a knight who was witness to the bishops papers, and also owned a

house in the territory.

This romantic, beautiful castle remains today after withstanding centuries of military occupation and war. Between 1200 and 1700, Lembeck was mostly a castle of defense. Spanish troops invaded around 1600 and during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) the castle was plundered. Reconstruction began in 1670, though it was not completed as we see it today until 1692. In 1757, 15,000 French soldiers occupied a night camp here during the Seven Years War. There was more war damage when 10,000 Cossacks took up quarters in the area during the Napoleonic wars in the early 17th century. In 1919, the Red Army bivouacked here before a fight with Marxists. Finally, at the end of WWII, the Schloss was damaged by bombs, gunfire and again pillaged. Trenches from the last war can still be found in the adjacent woods.

Rooms & Decor

The castle has an official museum of heirloom furniture, hand woven tapestries, oil paintings, porcelain and china and various decorative objects. It is difficult to distinguish the museum from the hotel. All ten castle hotel rooms are authentic relics of antiquity.

The style of Lembeck remains constant since ownership has been in the same family since 1708. Wide, darkened wood plank floors line the halls and are protected by red sisal runners. Classical paintings and portraits of noblemen gaze down on polished chests that are bathed in sunlight which streams through the mullioned windows. Original ceiling beams, ceramic stoves, majestic fireplaces, canopied beds, oriental rugs, damask chairs and sofas, mellowed writing desks and bulky armoires grace the enormous high-ceilinged bed chambers. Even the most conservatively priced rooms are of generous proportion. One room occupies a tower, another is the *Hochzeitzimmer* or bridal suite, but all are unique and charming with modern bathrooms and television.

Food

Lembeck includes a wine cellar, art gallery, disco, outdoor cafe, *Schlosskapelle* for weddings and a forested park. A dining hall in the red brick vaulted cellar, with tiled fireplace and ladderback chairs, serves regional wild game and Westphalian specialities. Game dishes include pheasant, venison, wild boar, guinea hen and quail and average about 30 DM (\$18). More traditional tastes can choose from fish, chicken, roasted meats and even *Züricher Geschnetzeltes* with *Rösti*. Most are under 20 DM (\$12).

Despite these tempting main courses, I will always remember the most divine dessert; *Vanilleeis mit*

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HOTEL ADLON

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stationery and business cards and exercise equipment (upon request).

To understand that the prewar Adlon was integral to upper levels of Berlin society, one has only to consult one or two of the many books written about this period in the city's history.

One story, told by Otto Friedrich in his book, *Before the Deluge, A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s*, shows a different side of life at the Adlon.

During a time of violent unrest in early 1919, known as the Spartakus uprising, mysterious special delivery letters were sent to certain rich Berliners warning them that the government would be overthrown and all banks would be seized.

Ignoring sporadic gunfire along Unter den Linden, a 50-year-old mailman named Lange arrived at the Adlon with a letter for a Baron

Winterfield, a hotel guest. A porter offered to take the letter but Lange, recalling the Baron had rewarded his last delivery with a ham sandwich, a prized tip during such hungry times, elected to take the letter himself. Poor choice.

Lange was found hours later, tied to a chair in a second-floor room, strangled with a curtain cord. He had been carrying 41 special delivery letters containing more than 270,000 marks. His mailbag was empty and the Baron, who occupied the adjoining room, was gone.

Three years later, a man named Blume was arrested in Dresden for the Adlon and other murders. As it turned out, he was a playwright who had had one of his plays, a comedy, performed at Dresden's Neustädter Theater. Following that success, he submitted a manuscript entitled *The Curse of Retribution* — a melodrama about the murder of a mailman in Berlin's Hotel Adlon. ☒

EUROPE TRAVEL DIGEST

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depending on the hotel. The **Sofitel Geneva**, for example, is \$165; a substantial saving off the published rack rate of about \$276. The **Sofitel Zürich**, at \$165, is well above the 1995 Sofitel summer special rate of \$138 but still decent value considering the difficulty of finding good rooms in Zürich for under \$200. The **Sofitel Vienna Airport Hotel** is \$125, a good price for a room the night before an early morning flight from Vienna.

■ Businesses looking for a place in Europe to conduct a meeting might want to consider the packages offered by a combine of **Swissair, Conferenc- es International Inc.**, and the **Palace Hotel** of Lucerne. For \$1,499 per person, groups get round-trip airfare on Swissair, four nights accommodation at the Palace Hotel Luzern, transfers, most meals, use of the meeting space, even coffee breaks and sightseeing. Contact: Dick Kisker, Conferenc- es International, 800-221-8747, or fax 617-266-5886.

■ **Beethoven's birthplace** in Bonn has recently reopened after a year of renovation. The 150 items on display in 12 rooms— ranging from grand pianos to brass hearing aids, even Beethoven's walking stick and compass — are now presented in a more organized and logical fashion.

Among the items on display are several original scores, including the *Moonlight Sonata* and musical instruments from the era, including some played by Beethoven himself: his viola and his last grand piano.

To mark the reopening, part of the original score of the Sixth Symphony (Pastorale) is on display in Room 7, which has been set aside for changing exhibits from the 1,000 or so of the museum's handwritten Beethoven documents. Room 9 is devoted to the Bodmer collection, named for Swiss collector Hans Conrad Bodmer who assembled some 400 letters and 100 scores along with artifacts such as the composers desk.

Though there are 12 rooms, the family lived only in the cramped

dwelling at the rear of the present-day museum. Museum in Beethovenhaus, 18-26 Bonngasse, Bonn. Entrance is 8 DM (\$4.75), 4 DM (\$2.40) for children.

■ **Sormani Calendars** offers a catalog of their many calendars which specialize in scenes from Switzerland and Germany: Sormani Calendars, P. O. Box 6059, Chelsea MA 02150-0006, tel. 800-321-9327.

■ **The Montreux Jazz Festival**, Europe's most important event of its kind, is being held this year from July 4 - July 19. Some of this year's performers include: Ray Charles, B.B. King, Eric Clapton, Supertramp, Sheryl Crow, Roberta Flack, George Duke Band and many more. Ticket prices range from \$15 to \$75, but there are more than 200 free outdoor events. Contact Montreux Jazz Festival, Case Postale 126, CH-1280 Montreux-Territet, tel. 4121/962 8484, fax for Fondation du Festival de Jazz de Montreux is 4121/963 4705. Entire festival packages including tickets can be booked through Music in Paradise, 333 Washington Blvd., Marina del Rey, CA 90292, tel. 800-801-2188, fax 310-821-9381.

■ The German airline, **LTU**, discontinues service to Tampa effective May 1. However, the airline still offers eight flights each week to Germany from Florida and serves Miami, Daytona Beach, Fort Myers and Orlando. LTU also flies to Germany from San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York.

■ This year **Hamburg** honors the 100th anniversary of the death of composer Johannes Brahms with more than 100 concerts, lectures and special events. **Brahms Year 1997** begins with a concert by the Hamburg Symphony and ends with a New Year's Concert by the choir of St. Michaelis in the Freien Akademie der Kunste. Among the more notable events are a Brahms night in St. Michaelis, an open house in the Musikhalle, a Brahms Camp and a special Brahms Symposium. Each Friday at 2:30 p.m. a special, two-hour tour, will take participants from the Musikhalle to St. Michaelis with a visit to Brahms Memorials. ☐

READERS' FORUM

More Flak for Florhof

I have been a subscriber to your travel letter for several years and thought I would pass on a few comments, particularly in view of an article in your February, 1997, issue.

My wife and I have recently returned from a skiing vacation in Zermatt — our 9th year. We spent our first day/night in Stein am Rhein (just the cure for the first day's jet lag) and two nights in Zürich before going to Zermatt. In Stein, we stayed at the **Adler** (more than adequate) since our preferred choice, the **Rheinfels**, had not yet opened.

In Zürich, the **Florhof** has been our choice in the past but two incidents during this most recent visit have prompted us to look elsewhere for future visits. Without elaborating greatly, one incident involved a lack of concern in follow-up regarding a request I had made for a room with bath (vice shower) and the other involved erroneous extras appearing on our bill.

Neither of these is really significant, but the lack of concern or attention by the staff, in my opinion, is unbecoming for the type of hotel the Florhof is supposed to be and for the price one pays. We have always enjoyed the tranquility of the Florhof but it is no longer the warm experience that we knew with Herr Schilter and his staff. Your February issue arrived after we returned and it was interesting to read the letter from Ms. Kanuch regarding this hotel. I would now have to agree with her. At other times we have stayed at the **Kindli**, the **Rütli** and the **Züricherhof**. All were reasonable but we will continue to look for the "right" one now that the Florhof has lost its appeal. John C. Eller, Coronado CA

Bamberg, Regensburg Report

My wife and I spent a week in Bamberg last October, followed by a week in Regensburg. We followed many of your suggestions in *Gemütli-*

chkeit. Both are delightful cities, spared by most of WWII devastations and worthy of at least three or four days each. In Bamberg, we stayed at **Hotel Residenzschloss** (\$185/night double). Very pleasant hotel, well located and quiet. Highly recommend **Messerschmitt** for dinner (225 DM/\$132 for three, wine included). Pleasant local atmosphere and value at **Gastätte Hofbräu** (104 DM/\$61 for two, including wine). Great atmosphere but somewhat touristy at **Brauereiausshank Schlenkerla**. Lunch at **Hotel-Restaurant Nepomuk** highly recommended (93 DM/\$55 for two, including wine).

In Regensburg you were exactly right about **Park Hotel Maximilian** (238 DM/\$140 double) — beautiful location and exterior, inside run-down, dark and gloomy. **Bischofshof**, on the other hand, was charming. A suite (beautiful, roomy and quiet) was 290 DM/\$171. Wonderful gourmet meal at **Don Juan** (Fischgasse 4) 70 DM/\$41 for two, wine included, for lunch. Not to be missed: **Historische Wurstküche** at the bridge, have *Wurst* where Karl der Grosse did!

Good daytrip via train from Bamberg was Veste Coburg...great art and armor collection and Martin Luther Apartments.

Hotel Anker was excellent as always.
Chaney Aderholt, Birmingham, AL

France Warning

As a subscriber to your fine publication I wish to pass on a couple of bits of information to you and the other readers. One about a hotel in Munich, the second a word of caution for anyone venturing west out of Germany into France.

While in Munich in November of last year we found the **Europäischer Hof** (Bayerstrasse 31, 80335 München, tel. 089/ 551510, fax 089/ 55151222), literally across the street from the main train station. If one is brave enough to jaywalk the hotel entrance is directly across the street from the Bayerstrasse entrance to the station. If not, it is a short distance to the corner crosswalk.

In the finest German tradition it is exceptionally clean, well maintained and operated. The front desk staff is courteous, and while reserved, helpful as well as efficient. Particular mention needs to be made of a young man from Sri Lanka. In the morning he helps out in the breakfast room and during the day he is the porter. He is always smiling and wanting to be of service. An excellent breakfast buffet is served with more choices than the typical selections of fruit, meats and cheeses, etc.

We paid around \$110 for a standard double room outfitted with contemporary wood furniture, a large bed with a split mattress and individual duvets, and a large window that opens onto an interior courtyard. There is also a pleasant reading/sitting room on the first floor for the use of guests.

It is certainly not a small, quaint country inn, but for a city hotel it has everything we look for and more.

In several French cities, primarily in the area just south of the Alsace-Lorraine and in the Champagne region, many banks refused to accept \$100 denominated bills to change into French Francs. Apparently they have had a serious problem with counterfeit \$100 bills and have adopted a policy of not accepting any. Other denominations were not a problem.

Ronald E. Null, Sandpoint ID

Rheingau Discovery

I always like to spend the first night in the Frankfurt area in the Rheingau. My preference has always been the Oestrich-Winkel area. This locality is not terribly touristy as is Rudesheim but good accommodations have always been scarce.

This past October while on my way to the **Ruthman Hotel** which leaves something to be desired, I noticed an old Weingut had a hotel sign outside. The building has been there as long as I can remember but had been improved on the outside. I decided to check it out. When entering the reception area you are struck by the beauty of 200-year-old wood lovingly restored to its original light

grain. There is a small bar in the large dining-reception area and a nice open terrace on the Rhine side of the building.

The floor above offers eight double rooms of which five have Rhine view. The floors in all rooms and the hallway are spotless white tile. All rooms have Dusche/WC/Radio and TV. There is an ample parking facility on the grounds and they have a ramp where you can park your car and bring your baggage into the reception area. Double rooms were from 130 DM (\$76) for streetside accommodations and 150 DM (\$88) for river view with balcony. Rooms are large and cheerful.

The breakfast is great and the restaurant offers small local dishes — mostly light fare that goes well with wine. The night we stayed there they were catering a wedding. There was an entertainer for the affair and all the restaurant guests were able to take advantage of the music. In the course of the evening a number of locals were seated at our table. The owners made sure to tell each one that we spoke English. Nice touch.

The wine served in the restaurant is their own and typical of the fine rieslings in the area. Food and drink prices are reasonable and the atmosphere is great. When we checked out, Frau Schonleber presented us with a free bottle of the house wine. This was a first for me in fifteen years of staying in this area. I heartily recommend the **Hotel F.B. Schonleber** (D-65375 Oestrich-Winkel, Stadtteil Mittelheim Obere Roppels-gasse 1, tel. 06723/3475, fax 06723/4759).

Anyone who enjoys good German home cooking might want to visit the **Gasthaus Distelfink** a few blocks from the Schonleber hotel. This small restaurant is run by a husband and wife. Maria and Helmut Thum, the owners speak no English and there is never any tourist crowd here. They offer the typical *Schwein* dishes but the portions are huge even for Germany. We always order the senior portion and can barely finish it. The prices will make you think it's 1983 all over again.

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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and luggage, the plucky little 1.6 liter engine purred along easily at 150 kph (94 mph). Driver leg room? I'm 5-11 and was able to slide the driver's seat so far back that I couldn't properly operate the foot pedals.

Wrapping it Up

- Forget carrying a lot of cash in Europe. Using a Visa or Mastercard with a PIN (4 digits only) at an ATM will get you the cash you need; virtually anywhere, anytime. I left the U.S. with about \$400 cash, no traveler's checks and returned with the same \$400.

- Carts at the Munich Airport cost two marks, but you can pay in several other currencies. They are free at Kloten Airport in Zürich. Hey, Switzerland's a bargain.

And finally, since we've already offended readers of German decent with insensitive stereotyping of their driving habits, we may as well insult the rest of Europe with the following politically incorrect definitions of Heaven and Hell. We found them posted in the reception area of the **Hotel Butterfly** in Zermatt. —RHB

Hell is...

- German cops
- British cooks
- Swiss lovers
- French mechanics
- All organized by the Italians

Heaven is...

- British cops
- French cooks
- Italian lovers
- German mechanics
- All organized by the Swiss

READERS' FORUM

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That is the Gasthof Dis-telfink, An Der Basilika 6. 65375 Oestrich-Winkel, tel. 06723/2459

Gemütlichkeit is still the best newsletter for Europe that can be found. Keep up the good work. Don & Betty Schaaf, Largo FL

Hotel Near Coburg

While travelling in Germany last fall we stumbled upon the **Hotel Bauer** in Kronach, 32 kilometers east of Coburg and 58 kilometers north and slightly east of Bamberg.

We arrived late after finding nowhere to stay in the small town we intended to visit the next day. We were directed to the **Hotel Bauer** (Kulmbacher Str. 7, D-96317, tel. 09261/94058, fax 09261/52298) by a young fellow that we stopped in the street.

Kronach is a well-preserved town with small, winding cobbled streets. It is dominated by a castle built in the 1600's during the Thirty Years' war that is still well-preserved and worth a visit.

The **Bauer** was the find of our trip. It had a recently constructed separate guest house set in the back yard of the property. Bed and breakfast were 126 DM (\$74) per night.

The restaurant was first rate. It featured two daily chef's menus plus a full al a carte menu. The local Franken wine was a great accompaniment to the fabulous food.

The staff and the people at the Bauer, of course, made the experience. When we arrived the first evening, we caught the staff off guard because our German and their English were equally poor. To the rescue came the chef who not only showed us the room, but also personally waited on us with the help of the other serving staff.

One of our travelling companions described to the chef a cold plate that he often ordered when in Germany. He inquired if it

was still available because he hadn't seen it on any menus. The chef explained what it was and described how he prepared it.

We had originally intended to spend only one night in Kronach, but were so impressed by the Bauer that we decided to stay another night. We left the next morning to do some shopping at the many porcelain outlets nearby. We returned to the hotel rather late and went to the dining room for dinner.

The chef was off that evening so we were served by the regular staff. Communication was difficult, but interesting. We were all looking forward to the meal, each of us having decided to try a different item from the menu. As usual we were served a complimentary appetizer. Then the waitress started to remove the table centre and most of the items on the table. At no time were we given menus.

This seemed a little strange, but we thought perhaps they were busy and that we would be looked after when they had a minute. After a short while, the waitress returned bearing a slate platter on which was arrayed the most wonderful cold plate, just as the chef had described it the night before. He had gone to the trouble to prepare it and to surprise us with it.

Surprised we were and delighted. It was delicious. We slowly and deliberately tried to eat it all, but even four of us couldn't finish it.

Things like this are the highlight of any trip. Ken & Shelby Love, Regina Saskatchewan

SCHLOSS LEMBECK

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heissen Himbeeren (vanilla ice cream served with a gravy boat of hot red raspberry syrurp). *Brombeeren* or blackberry syrurp is also available, 6 DM (\$3.50). As I look back through my travels, Lembeck is one of the most irresistible and memorable places to stay.

Rooms*

- **Städtezimmer** (shower) 128 DM (\$75)
- **Hautelisse** (shower) 138 DM (\$81)
- **Moses** (shower, ceramic stove, French canopy bed) 148 DM (\$87)
- **Napoli** (4-poster bed, tub and shower) 148 DM (\$87)
- **Wiesenturm** (tower room, shower) 148 DM (\$87)
- **Baroness** (shower) 148 DM (\$87)
- **In der Motte** (shower) 148 DM (\$87)
- **Fürstenzimmer** (Princes Room, tub and shower) 148 DM (\$87)
- **Herkulesblick** (tub and shower) 168 DM (\$99)
- **Jan und Gret** (bridal suite, 4-poster, fireplace, tub and shower) 198 DM (\$116)

(*Prices are for two persons)

Getting There: North of Essen take A43 out of Recklinghausen. Exit Haltern. Take B58 to Wulfen and head north towards Reken.

Contact: Schloss Lembeck, D-46286 Dorsten-Lembeck, tel. 2369/7213 or 7283, fax 2369/77370

Daily Rates: Doubles 128 to 198 DM (\$75-\$116), singles 89 DM (\$52).

Rating: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 17/20