

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

October 25, 1997

Dear Subscriber:

In 11 years of *Gemütlichkeit*, the story which has drawn the most reader comment is Andy Bestor's recounting of his 1996 summer camping tour of Germany and Switzerland. This year he and his fiancée, Margaret Landeros, made their second European trip, this time spending more time in inexpensive hotels than in a tent.

Their tale, which will be told in two parts, contains several noteworthy discoveries and recommendations for budget-conscious travelers. — RHB

Who says a sequel never is as good as the original? Spielberg failed to match *Jaws*, but his success with *Indiana Jones* and *Star Wars* inspired us to make this trip... BETTER THAN THE FIRST.

Lessons learned in '96 were used in planning for this year. We were better map readers and better at simply planning a vacation day in Europe. Preparation also involved some physical training in hopes of building stamina for those long sight-seeing days. Using these strategies we planned an exciting and aggressive itinerary

We flew the charter carrier **Martinair** and thus started at Amsterdam's Schipol airport where we picked up a red Alpha Romeo 146 equipped with cassette player, four doors, a large trunk and a sporty look.

Having read so much about Bamberg we were anxious to get to this well-preserved jewel of a town. So after an overnight in Haarlem, we pointed the Alpha in that direction. Amsterdam to Bamberg, however, was too much driving for jet-lagged tourists so we decided on Kassel for a one-night stopover.

At the **Hotel Palmenbad**, just outside Schlosspark Wilhelmshöhe, our room was a bit dark but clean and comfortable. Traditional breakfast was served and the staff was

Continued on page 2...

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

ZERMATT

In Zermatt, where the big show is the Matterhorn, we return to a favorite restaurant and find some surprisingly affordable accommodations.

Walking north from the rail station up Bahnhofstrasse, Zermatt seems little more than a commerce-happy resort full of blond women in fur coats, sunburnt skiers clomping along in their boots and shops where \$10,000 gets you a decent watch. Then suddenly there's the Matterhorn. Though not especially lofty — at 4478 meters / 14,692 ft. there are nine higher peaks in the Zermatt area alone — and nowadays eminently climbable, one immediately is aware that this is a special kind of hill.

It makes touristy Zermatt worth visiting if only to sit and gaze at this most distinctive of mountains. Its unmistakable pyramid shape is visible from a good percentage of the town's several thousand hotel rooms and watching the sun set behind it never fails to thrill.

In 1857, when the Matterhorn was still considered unscalable, a group of Italian mountain guides became the first to give it a go.

They didn't make it, however, and for the next eight years numerous other ascents failed via the Lion Ridge and the Hörnli Ridge. Then, on July 14, 1865, a team of seven mountaineers, led by Englishman Edward Whymper, reached the summit only a few hundred meters ahead of an Italian team climbing from the Italian side. But tragedy quickly followed triumph; during the descent a rope parted and four members of the Whymper party fell 4,000 feet to their deaths.

England's Lucy Walker was the first woman to climb the Matterhorn, reaching the top via the Hörnli Ridge on July 22nd, 1871. The North Face of the mountain

Continued on page 3...

Europe Travel Digest

New low-cost airlines, Romantik Hotels discounts, new Basel museum.

■ Two new low-cost airlines to Europe: **CityBird** flies to Brussels from New York, Miami, Orlando, San Francisco and Los Angeles. One way fares from New York are \$188 to \$345 coach and \$625 Royal Eagle, a business class type service. From Orlando the prices are \$250 to \$406 in coach and \$703 Royal Eagle. From the West Coast the coach fares are \$297 to \$438 and Royal Eagle is \$781. CityBird has been in operation since March of this year. Telephone: 888-248-9247 or email athouse@skynet.be.

Swiss World Airways begins

operation in December with flights between Geneva and Miami and between Geneva and Newark. Flights to Chicago/Montreal and Orlando will follow in January of 1988. The aircraft is the Boeing 767-300ER. Roundtrip economy fares are \$499 from Newark and \$599 from Miami, Chicago and Orlando. Telephone: 888-82-SWISS.

■ Travelers considering rental of private accommodations such as a flat, apartment or house, should obtain a copy of the October issue of *Consumer Reports Travel Letter*. In it is a comprehensive report on vacation rentals and home exchanges including an extensive list of some 150 rental and exchange

Continued on page 6...

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

courteous. The double room rate, including breakfast, was 98 DM (\$56). Recommended to travelers on a tight budget.

Bamberg

After breakfast we charted a course for Bamberg that included a detour to **Schloss Spangenberg**, a hotel-castle out of our price range, but worth a detour just to walk it's grounds. With its deep moat, pointy towers and even shaggy-haired goats, Spangenberg felt like a time-warp, which is why we had come.

Then on to Bamberg for a couple of lazy days camping on the Regnitz. **Campingplatz Insel** has an excellent riverside location. From the shady meadow you can relax and watch boaters paddling the calm river. But with so much to see in Bamberg who has time to relax?

Thanks to the Park & Ride system we never had to drive to town and find parking. It's just one DM (\$.57) to park all day and the same to ride the bus to the center.

If you enjoy a good long stroll and can tackle some low hills, Bamberg is *the* town to explore. We seemed to never run out of charming little alleyways or beautiful architecture and around each corner was something worthwhile.

In addition to its beauty, Bamberg is known for its unique *Rauchbier* or smoked beer. And unique it is! We visited **Schlenkerla** (Dominikanerstr.

6), *Rauchbier's* traditional home, for a taste. We also ordered food which may have been a mistake. *Rauchbier* is not a thirst quencher. It has a sharpness that does not marry well with salty food. After a bite of pork came extreme thirst, and sticking my nose in a glass that smelled like smoked salmon was not the solution. This beer is popular and *Schlenkerla* is a lively place, but *Rauchbier* is not for us.

One short excursion (7.5 km/4.7 miles) was to **Pommersfelden Castle**, also known as *Weissenstein Castle*, a baroque palace built between 1711 and 1718. The one-hour tour is in German (English brochures) and costs 7 DM (\$4). The art we saw was as beautiful as the castle in which it resides.

Coburg

We also made a day-trip to Coburg, the hometown of Queen Victoria's husband Prince Albert. The road from Bamberg is scenic and the drive relatively short. We parked below the **Veste** and hiked up about 15 minutes. After taking a few pictures and speculating on the purpose of the retractable iron and wood beam gate (we decided it was used to impale unwanted guests trying to enter the fortress) we were approached by a polite young man who spoke English, but not well. Through hand gestures and each of us speaking a bit of the other's language, it became apparent his friend wanted to buy my hat, a very purple University of Washington baseball-style cap. His friend Stefan loved it. I explained I couldn't sell

because the hat was needed for the trip, but that I had another just like it at home which I would give him. He was very excited and gave me his address. Stefan got the hat with a copy of this story.

Below the **Veste** is the modest looking **Schloss Ehrenberg** — Prince Albert's boyhood home — where we waited in the creaky old entry for someone to open the ticket booth. After about 15 minutes, a man appeared, sold tickets (8 DM/\$4.50 per person) to us and another couple and then stepped out of the booth and introduced himself as our tour guide. Though neither he nor the other couple spoke English, this was one of the best castle tours of the trip. It is not difficult to understand dates and names, but the history behind each room or artifact has a hard time getting through the language barrier. Both our charming guide and the German couple made every attempt to help us understand these fascinating stories and we did our best to comprehend them.

That night, our last in Bamberg, a dinner of *Bratwurst* and *Pommes Frites* was from an *Imbiss* on the market square. The weather was warm and clear, so we returned to camp and sat for awhile on the river's edge.

Regensburg

After the short, pleasant trip via back roads from Bamberg to Regensburg we rolled in to the **Hotel Peterhof** for a short siesta.

Rooms in this decaying old hotel are barely adequate for young low-

Continued on page 7...

Vol. 11, No. 10
October, 1997

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

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Gemütlichkeit (ISSN 10431756) is published monthly by UpCountry Publishing, 2892 Chronicle Avenue, Hayward, CA 94542. TOLL FREE: 800-521-6722 or 510-538-0628. Fax: 510-582-8296. e-mail gemut@pacbell.net. Subscriptions are \$67 per year for 12 issues. While every effort is made to provide correct information in this publication, the publishers can make no guarantees regarding accuracy. Periodicals postage paid in Hayward, CA.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO:

Gemütlichkeit, 2892 Chronicle Ave., Hayward, CA 94542

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.

ZERMATT

Continued from page 1

was not climbed until 1931.

These days the Matterhorn is like an old riding horse with a mean streak; day after day it placidly allows climber after climber to scale its summit. Then, a climber makes just the tiniest mistake, the mountain get spooked, and somebody gets thrown. Though a more popular climbing goal than ever, the Matterhorn is no less perilous. Every morning at about 4 a.m. — at least during summer — several groups set off for the top. Most make it, but so far this year eight climbers have died trying.

Local mountaineering history is documented in the town's **Alpine Museum** (3 Sfr./\$2) which is open four hours each day in summer and from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in winter. One room is dedicated to that historic but disastrous first ascent.

In the local **cemetery** are graves of mountaineers who did not survive their day on the Matterhorn.

If you don't plan to climb it, the best Matterhorn views are via the cog railway up the **Gornergrat**, with some three million passengers annually, Europe's most popular mountain railway. Sit on the right side on your way up.

Others say the **Klein Matterhorn**, at 3,820 meters the highest cable station in Europe, is the best way to see the famous mountain. It is also the more exciting ride.

The Gornergrat roundtrip fare — 63 Sfr. (\$43) — is discounted 25% to Swiss Pass holders but not at all to Eurailpass holders. The Klein Matterhorn ride, a series of four cable cars, costs 56 Sfr. (\$38), less the 25% discount if you have the Swiss Pass.

For nonskiers and hikers, Zermatt is a two-day town. Take half a day to explore the village, half a day for the Gornergrat, half a day for the Klein Matterhorn and half a day just looking at the mountain.

Skiers, hikers and climbers will probably find a week's stay more to their liking and may want to take

Zermatt

Population: 4896

Altitude: 1620 meters, 5,315 feet

Travel Time from Airports

Zürich	Geneva	Basel
train car	train car	train car
5 hrs 4.5 hrs	4 hrs 3.5 hrs	5 hrs 4 hrs

Tourist Office

Bahnhofplatz, CH-3920 Zermatt, tel. +41/027/967 0181, fax +41/027/967 0185, Email: zermatt@wallis.ch, Open 7 days.

Climbing the Matterhorn

Must be in excellent physical condition and have appropriate equipment (can be rented locally). Guides recommended for even experienced climbers. Guide may require trial climb on a lesser peak prior to Matterhorn ascent. Spend the night at the Hörnli mountain-hut and begin the climb next morning at about 4 a.m. Climb takes 4-5 hours; same for the descent. Food taken consists of dried fruits, chocolate, tea. Carry glucose to prevent exhaustion. Best time is mid-July to mid-September. Often there are more climbers than can be allowed on the mountain and some are turned back. Rescue insurance is required. The rule is one guide per person on the Matterhorn. Expect to pay about 700 Sfr. (\$480) per day for a guide. Less dangerous guided excursions are also available for glacier crossings. Contact: Mountain Guides Office, +41/027/967 2460, open July through Sept. 30.

Packages*

Romantic Weekend. Jan. 8 thru May 31. Two nights at four-star **Seiler Hotel Monte Rosa** (tel. +41/027 967 33 33, fax: +41/027 967 11 60) including breakfast and dinner plus helicopter flight. Cost: 600-710 Sfr. (\$411-\$486) per person.

January Special. Available January 4-31, 1998 Six nights in the three-star **Berghotel Riffelalp** (tel. +41/027/966 46 46, fax +41/027/967 51 09) including breakfast and dinner and one day of skiing. Cost: Sfr. 600 (\$411) per person.

*Two of many; contact tourist office for complete list

advantage of the many package deals available through the Zermatt Tourist Office (see box this page).

Zermatt, as you probably know, allows no automobiles. The closest parking place is Tasch where, for from 3 to 10 Sfr. per day, you leave your car in a huge open lot and take the approximately 11-minute train ride to Zermatt (14.40 Sfr./\$10 roundtrip, free to Swiss Pass holders only).

Being car-free makes Zermatt quieter and cleaner, but not entirely safe. Electric taxis and hotel shuttles whiz up and down the narrow streets, all the while emitting a disconcerting whine. As sailors on

carrier flight decks are advised, keep your head on a swivel.

Bear in mind that this is an extremely popular and expensive resort that is often fully booked. Expect to pay top dollar, especially in high season. Hotel rates at other times, however, are often discounted by as much as 40%

Hotels

(Unless otherwise noted, all rates are for rooms with private bath and include breakfast. Hotels are listed in most expensive to least expensive order.)

Alex Schlosshotel Tenne

Art Nouveau meets Valasian farm rustic in this four-star property whose somewhat exhausting interior decor teeters between kitsch and authentic charm. The latest renovation was done in 1992 so let's call it "90s Swiss country rococo."

In the main public room, ornate marble columns define a small, granite dance floor and sunlight filters through gently arched Tiffany-style windows. Over all is a high, open ceiling of dark, almost black, beams.

The reception area's much lower ceiling consists of large rectangular, painted white wood panels inset with brightly colored frescoes. Of course, the place is littered with precious antiques, chandeliers, carved statuary and expensive rugs.

Each room is done in a different style and a few are extraordinary. Number 410, a junior suite, is one of them. It shows off its rough, rustic wooden walls and rock fireplace with contemporary halogen lighting. The contrast is most vivid in the bathroom where ancient, darkened beams hang above gleaming, modern fixtures.

All rooms have a Jacuzzi tub, most have a balcony and in the old part of the hotel every room has a fireplace.

The hotel's "Vitalcenter" is equipped with whirlpool, steambath, bio-sauna and Finnish sauna, solarium, and fitness room.

Though understated the Tenne is not, its luxury is undeniable and little expense was spared in choosing

Continued on page 4...

ZERMATT

Continued from page 3

furnishings or materials.

Daily Rates: All rates include breakfast and four-course dinner. Singles 140 to 250 Sfr. (\$38-\$79), doubles 280 to 500 Sfr. (\$192-\$342).

Contact: Hotel Alex Schlosshotel Tenne, CH-3920 Zermatt, tel. +41/027/967 18 01, fax +41/027/967 18 03. Proprietor: Sonja Perren

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 10/20

Mirabeau

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Each element of the four-star Mirabeau's physical plant, from interior design to building materials and furnishings, has obviously been seen to by someone with a good eye, good taste and a fat wallet. Attention has been paid to even the tiniest detail. The resulting overall impression is of quiet and efficient traditional elegance and a place where the difficult is made to appear easy.

Guest rooms are more straightforward — and perhaps less creative in design and layout — than at the Alex Schlosshotel Tenne, but the level of comfort and luxury is on a par.

The Mirabeau is the choice for "foodies." Its restaurant, **Le Courbeau d'Or**, gets two chef's toques and a 16 of 20 score in the Gault Millau guide for Switzerland. With bed and breakfast prices only 25 Sfr.

(\$17) per person less than the half-board rates, guests can hardly pass up dinner in the hotel. In winter, half-board guests are sometimes served a special Valasian dinner and on Friday nights in summer there is an outdoor buffet.

Among the Mirabeau's facilities

that operate under the watchful eye of a highly professional husband and wife team. Though architecturally less splashy than the Alex Schlosshotel, the Mirabeau's restaurant and warmer welcome make it our top choice among the properties reviewed here.

Daily Rates: All rates include breakfast and dinner. Singles 133 to 240 Sfr. (\$91-\$164), doubles 258 to 512 Sfr. (\$177-\$351).

Specials: "Guided Walks Weeks" is a seven-night package offered in June and September by the Mirabeau and priced at 1,150 Sfr. (\$788) per person. Each week features half and full day walks including an excursion to the hotel's mountain hut. Other packages also available.

Contact: Hotel Mirabeau, CH-3920 Zermatt, tel. +41/027/966 26 60, fax +41/027/966 26 65. Email: mirabeau.zermatt@reconline.ch. Closed most of May and October. Proprietor: Sepp und Rose Julen.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 11/20

Butterfly Hotel Zermatt

Located on a back street, on the west edge of the commercial center, the Butterfly is a homey sort of place

that makes English-only speakers feel at home. Views of the Matterhorn from most rooms in this hotel, however, are partial at best.

Accommodations are straightforward and typical three-star quality.

■ Lé Gitan: Superb Open-Fire Grilling ■

In 1987, we stumbled on to Zermatt's Lé Gitan, a not-too-formal grill restaurant tucked behind the **Hotel Darioli** on Bahnhofstrasse. It was so good we went back a second night. Our subsequent report in the February, 1987, issue of *Gemütlichkeit* read in part: "The entree — for which we will gladly make a special journey to again savor — was a marinated loin of lamb cooked while we watched over wood coals in the main dining room. This marvelous dish was served with scalloped potatoes worth traveling for."

Returning after many years to a hotel or restaurant one has held cherished in memory is a recipe for disappointment. Sometimes the place has gone out of business or there is new ownership or at least a new set of employees. Often, of course, the memory confuses excellence with a happy time.

So, after 10 years, we were more than a little wary about a return to Lé Gitan. Would it be equal to our fond memories? The short answer is yes. Same owner, same waiter, same grill, same atmosphere, and food as good as we remembered it. Ah, but there was one significant change — the prices: about double 1987.

We were shown to a table in a private little alcove at the rear of the restaurant though we would have preferred the main room near the grill.

The substantial wooden tables appeared to be cross-sections of trees. There were green placemats, print cloth napkins, rough textured white walls and ceilings, a few big square wood beams, and candlelight.

Starters included a *Spargel* soup (9 Sfr./\$6.16) so laced with butter the asparagus taste was muted, and *Spargel* salad (13 Sfr./\$9) consisting of a few green tips and the chopped, peeled stems served with a tangy mayo/mustard sauce.

We found no loin of lamb on the menu but our waiter — the same who served us both nights in 1987 — remembered the dish and recommended a similar cut. *Carre d'agneau* for two persons (78 Sfr./\$53) came perfectly cooked — medium rare — and, after the whole glistening piece was presented to us, was sliced and served with a sprinkling of fresh herbs.

The accompaniment to this glorious meat was potatoes *au gratin*,

Continued on page 8...

are an indoor swimming pool, tennis court, sauna and fitness room.

Located in a quiet neighborhood, but only a short walk from the busy commercial center, the Mirabeau is one of those smooth-running places

Rooms are equipped with such basic amenities as satellite TV, clock radio, minibar, hair dryer, direct-dial phone and luggage stand. All have a balcony.

There is a sauna, steambath, solarium and fitness room.

The guests-only restaurant does not allow smoking.

Daily Rates: All rates include breakfast and dinner. Singles 100 to 180 Sfr. (\$68-\$123), doubles 200 to 360 (\$137-\$247).

Contact: Butterfly Hotel Zermatt, CH-3920 Zermatt, tel. +41/027/966 4166, fax 027/966 4165. Email: butterfly.zermatt@reconline.ch.

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 8/20

Darioli

The three-star Darioli is a relatively small (40 beds) hotel on the touristy main street (Bahnhofstrasse) set among the many t-shirt and souvenir shops. For years it has catered to English-speaking guests and has many regular visitors in that category.

Our very small room, without Matterhorn view, was sufficient for a short stay and the owner, Marie-Therese Darioli, was reasonably cordial.

The hotel is designated "garni" (no restaurant) but the excellent **Lé Gitan** (see story, page 4) is located on the ground floor as is the adjacent **Zermatterstübli**.

This serviceable, well-maintained hotel offers above average value though some may prefer a more serene location.

Daily Rates: Singles 55 to 115 Sfr. (\$38-\$79), doubles 120 to 220 Sfr. (\$82-\$151).

Contact: Hotel Darioli, CH-3920 Zermatt, tel. +41/027/967 27 48, Fax 967 12 37.

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 12/20

Dufour

Located on the opposite (east) side of the river from the shopping district, this two-star property offers surprisingly high levels of comfort and convenience for

the price. It is the best value we saw in Zermatt.

We found guest room quality in Dufour's recently refurbished section above those in many three-star properties. Each has a heated towel rack in the bathroom, satellite TV, hair dryer, direct dial phone and minibar. There is no lift, however.

Room Number three is a small double with a large balcony and good Matterhorn view. Number four is bigger and has the same view. A room with separate sitting area and a nice bathroom enhanced by a large, clear-glass skylight in the slanting ceiling is Number 11; no Matterhorn view, however.

The Dufour offers no spa or fitness facilities, though guests have use of the indoor pool at the nearby Parkhotel Beau-Site.

Daily Rates: Singles 55 to 95 Sfr. (\$38-\$65), doubles 110 to 180 Sfr. (\$75-\$123).

Contact: Hotel Dufour, CH-3920 Zermatt, tel. +41/027/966 2400 48, Fax 966 2401. Proprietor: Fam. Andenmatten-Julen

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 14/20

Cima Garni

Another two-star, the 25-bed Cima, is a good choice for budget-conscious travelers, though not quite so comfortable or as good a value as the Dufour.

Pluses are a cheery breakfast room with a fine view of the Matterhorn and simple but clean guest rooms, some also with Matterhorn view.

We like the Cima for its friendly welcome, pleasant location and views.

Daily Rates: Singles 60 to 80 Sfr. (\$41-\$55), doubles 100 to 140 Sfr. (\$68-\$96).

Contact: Hotel Cima Garni, CH-3920 Zermatt, tel. +41/027/967 2337, fax 967 5539. Proprietor: Anne-Marie Perren

Rating: QUALITY 9/20, VALUE 12/20

Apartments, Chalets

Those who will commit to a week in Zermatt can save substantially by

booking one of the town's more than 1500 chalets or flats. Contact the Zermatt Tourist Office giving exact dates (from Saturday to Saturday) and the number of persons in your party.

Several Zermatt apartments have Internet sites with photos, prices and other data. Here is a sampling:

Haus Dianthus

Maria Machold-Lauber, tel: 0041 (0)27 967 17 13, fax: 0041 (0)27 967 43 30, URL: <http://www.holidaynet.ch/9603/homepage.htm>.

Three-room apartments for 4-5 persons, double-bedroom, large living room with two divan beds, bath-WC, kitchen, balcony. All have radio, TV and telephone. Utensils and linens provided.

Per Day Apartment Price: summer 75-90 Sfr. (\$51-\$62), winter Sfr. 150-170 Sfr. (\$103-\$116).

Haus Don Bosco

Familie Taugwalder-Lauber, tel. +41/027/967 2793, fax +41/027/967 5560, URL: <http://www.holidaynet.ch/donbosco/>.

Per Person/Per Day Prices: winter 31-55 Sfr. (\$21-\$38), summer 35-45 Sfr. (\$24-\$31).

Haus Baccara, Castello & Cristallo

Familie Peter und Dorli Herrmann-Graven, tel. +41/027/967 32 75, fax +41/033/744 36 20, URL: <http://www.holidaynet.ch/9704/homepage.htm>

Per Person/Per Day Prices: shoulder season 26-41 Sfr. (\$18-\$28), summer 30-48 Sfr. (\$21-\$33), winter 45-65 Sfr. (\$31-\$46).

Zermatt Holidays

Imboden & Co., P O Box 3920, CH-3920 Zermatt, tel. +41/027/968 11 30, fax : +41/027/968 11 32, e-mail: zermatt.appartements@reconline.ch, URL: <http://www2.cyber.ch/zermatt/eindex.html>.

This company offers new chalets built in traditional Valais style, all with Matterhorn-view balconies.

Per Person/Per Day Prices: May-Nov. from 49 Sfr. (\$34), Dec.-April from 69 Sfr. (\$47).



EUROPE DIGEST

Continued from page 5

agencies with phone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses and web page URLs. To obtain a copy send \$5 to: CTRL, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers NY 10703-1057.

■ Want to buy Swiss francs at a 20% discount? Here's one way. In 1998, to commemorate its 10th anniversary, the association of **Romantik Hotels and Restaurants in Switzerland** offers 100 Sfr., 250 Sfr. and 500 Sfr. gift certificates at 20% off. The vouchers will be accepted as cash for rooms and meal at Romantik Hotels' 20 Swiss properties through Dec. 31, 1998. To order contact **Romantik Hotel Beau-Site**, 3906 Saas Fee, tel. +41/027/958 1560, fax 958-1565.

■ A week in Gstaad, a favorite of jet-setters, and its expansive **Gstaad Super-Ski Region** can be had for as little as \$914. Included are roundtrip airfare on **Swissair**, seven nights hotel, breakfast daily, transfers and all taxes and service charges. Contact: **Swisspak** at 800-662-0021 ext. 33.

■ On October 21, the **Beyeler Foundation** opened its doors to the public for the first time in Riehen/Basel. The private art collection of Hildy and Ernst Beyeler, owners of one of Europe's foremost art galleries, is considered one of the best private collections of contemporary art in the world and includes works of Picasso, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Matisse, Klee, Miró, Cézanne and van Gogh, to mention only a few. The Beyeler Foundation, Baselstrasse 77, 4125 Riehen/Basel (tel. +41/061/645-9700, fax +41/061/645 9719) will be open to the public daily from 11:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Admission is 8 Sfr. (\$5.50) for adults, 5 Sfr. (\$3.50) for children 6-16 and 14 Sfr. (\$9.50) for families. Visit the Beyeler website at www.magnet.ch/beyeler.

■ The **Hotel Casa Battista-Palazzo Salis** in Soglio, about 45 minutes by car from St. Moritz, has been selected as Switzerland's **Historical Hotel of the Year**.

Built in 1630, the Palazzo Salis is still owned by the descendants of the

original proprietors. In 1876 the Baroque mansion was turned into a hotel and has hosted visitors ever since. The hotel, which has only about 10 guest rooms, is filled with antique furniture, paintings and frescos collected over three centuries by members of the von Salis family. The entire property was recently restored including its 18th century gardens.

Contact: Mr. & Mrs. Philippe Cicognani, Hotel Palazzo Salis, 7610 Soglio, tel. +41/081/822-1208, fax 822 1600. Singles 70 Sfr. (\$48), doubles 170 Sfr. (\$116).

Other hotels considered for the award were: Hotel Kurhaus in Flühli (Central Switzerland), **Restaurant Schloss Wülflingen** in Winterthur (near Zürich), the **Romantik Hotel Schweizhof** in Flims (Graubunden) and the **Hotel Albrici** in Poschiavo (Graubunden).

READERS' FORUM

Aunt Maybelle Says "Hey"

Thank you for all of your kind words. Very sweet of you.

Do keep encouraging the old folks to travel. In 1995 I had a trip to England, Germany, Norway, Denmark, Sweden; crossed the North Seas twice. A Globus tour and very interesting. In 1996, went to London for four days then through the Channel to Paris for three days. In 1997 I went to Hawaii for my 90th birthday.

For next year its the Orient Express, London to Istanbul.

AUNT MAYBELLE
WALNUT CREEK CA

Munich Hotel

I don't believe I told you we stayed for a few days last December at the **Hotel Exquisit** in Munich.

They were wonderful; took very good care of us as well as upgraded us (4 persons) to a "maisonette" room.

They also sent us to some great places to eat. One Italian restaurant stood out — very plain and lots of locals — fantastic food. Try it. **Rusti-**

co is the name.

RANDY BAKER
CINCINNATI OH

Prague Resource

I want to advise you of excellent service our party of four received in Prague from a Mr. Jiri (George) Prazsky, owner of the Prager Agency, Zelena 26/1747, 160 00 Praha 6 - Dejvice, phone/fax 420-2-3111979.

I found information about Mr. Prazsky's agency on the Internet after being unable to reach our hotel of choice directly for reservations. I contacted him by facsimile and received an immediate response — in English. He was able to obtain bookings at the **Hotel Pod vezi**, (Mostecka 2, 110 00 Prague 1, tel. 420/2 533 710, fax 420/2 537 361) which turned out to be exactly what we had hoped for — newly-renovated in an elegant manner, with a welcoming and responsive English-speaking staff, an exceptionally clean and authentic atmosphere, and a perfect location in Mala Strana at the foot of the Charles Bridge.

During the months prior to our trip, I had occasion to correspond with George by fax numerous times, and always received immediate responses. He arranged cars to meet us and return us to the train station and airport (circumventing the corrupt taxi system) and also theater bookings, recommended excellent and inexpensive restaurants, and even was so kind as to handle cancellations when one couple in our party was unable to travel due to illness. We found his costs to be extremely reasonable and certainly competitive for the services we received.

When we arrived in Prague, George's assistant was waiting at the train, as promised, and delivered us and our luggage directly to the hotel. There, George was waiting. He helped us with questions and saw to it that we were settled in our rooms. He further instructed us about Prague and insisted we call him at any time, day or night, should we need assistance. This we did for transportation to the Austrian consulate, which required some time, during which his assistant graciously waited

and then drove us up to **Hradcany Castle**. We also contacted him to pick us up from a performance on the outskirts of the city late one night. That evening, on his own and as a true gesture of kindness (and pride in his beautiful city), he drove us up to Hradcany Castle to look out over his Prague by night, an outstanding view.

On our last morning, when the other woman in our party had to leave alone to return home, George not only drove her to the airport but also accompanied her to her gate, since she did not understand Czech.

I have mentioned these services in detail because I want to stress how George and his assistant went far beyond what would have been expected. Their kindness gave us a great deal of confidence in a city where we did not know the language. George made our visit to Prague an unforgettable experience and a highlight of our entire trip, not only due to the ease with which we were able to navigate it, but in the experience of meeting two fine people, who gave Prague a human and welcoming face.

I exuberantly recommend the Prager Agency. George truly was "our man in Prague."

JAN QUINN FREYBERG
BROOKFIELD WI

(Ed. Note: Ms. Freyberg told us she paid about \$200 per night at the Pod vezi and \$75 for Mr. Prazsky services. In addition, the driver was paid about \$20 per trip.)

Munich Airport Hotel

First, a thank you for your recommendation of **Berggasthof Panorama** in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. We enjoyed our night's stay there (mid-September) very much, and in fact wished that we could have stayed longer. Hotel staff was most accommodating (our request for room Number one was honored), and we enjoyed a nice dinner on the patio and the plentiful breakfast buffet the following morning. All in all a most pleasant beginning to our vacation.

For our last night we chose the **Mövenpick Hotel** at Hallbergmoos,

near the Munich airport. The hotel's location, in an industrial park, is kind of off-putting, but we were able to overlook that aspect. Our spacious room (in a nonsmoking wing) was brightly decorated and comfortable and came equipped with terrific reading lamps. The bathroom was similarly well-equipped, with hair-dryer and makeup mirror and good-sized bath towels.

Dinner in the hotel restaurant was better than expected; the entire staff was unfailingly polite and helpful. At the height of Oktoberfest the place was quite crowded, but everything seemed to run smoothly.

The hotel operates a shuttle to / from the airport at a cost of 10 DM (\$5.70) per person. We didn't partake of the breakfast buffet since we felt the charge of 23 DM (\$13) was pretty exorbitant.

At 195 DM (\$111) per night, we feel this is a viable option to much pricier downtown hotels. It was a short drive to the airport in the morning where we returned our rental car.

CHARLOTTE OLSTEAD
REDWOOD CITY CA

(Ed. Note: Ms. Olstead sent us a *Mövenpick brochure which lists prices as follows: both singles and doubles 175 to 195 DM (\$100-\$111) and a very reasonable weekend rate of 135 DM (\$77) for both singles and doubles.*)

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

budget travelers and we do not recommend it to the average *Gemütlichkeit* reader. Double rooms range from 86 to 114 DM (\$49-\$65), depending on facilities.

The Peterhof does have a few appealing features, such as large rooms, a central location and proximity to parking, but our experience at breakfast negated them all.

Though we don't smoke we understand about smokers in European restaurants. This, however, was off the chart. The hotel manager, plus friends and family, sat at one table collectively blowing smoke like a broken Yugo. There were at least 10 cigarettes burning right next to the food! The buffet had been raided and

never replenished. The milk was warm and the bread tasted like an ashtray. Afterward, we had to return to the room for a shower and a change of clothes. We passed on breakfast the next day.

Like Bamberg, Regensburg is ideal for walkers. Michelin (Green) suggests an excellent route that starts at the **Domplatz** and leads toward the Donau, past the **Historische Wurstküche** and the **Steinerne Brücke**. The **Altes Rathaus** and seven different churches or chapels also highlight this excellent tour of Regensburg's center.

Bistro Rosarium (Hopperstr. 3a), our choice for dinner that night, has a beautiful rose garden setting with umbrella tables and is adjacent to the lush Dörnbergpark, perfect for an after-dinner stroll. Unfortunately, the spaghetti we ordered tasted like it came from a bottle. The menu is extensive and other dishes appeared to be better prepared. In fairness, we would try this restaurant again, it had a lot of appeal and spaghetti is probably not the house specialty.

For very casual dining we enjoyed **Pizzeria Datino**, (Haidplatz 4). During summer the lively Haidplatz has many restaurants with outdoor seating, and Datino was bustling the night we visited. The evening was warm, we'd walked all day and pizza and beer was what the doctor ordered. (This began a streak of nine consecutive evenings of outdoor dinners!)

Leaving Regensburg, we stopped at **Valhalla**. This imitation Greek temple stands on a prominent spot, high above the Danube's north bank. Modeled after the Parthenon, it was built in the mid-19th century by Ludwig I of Bavaria to pay homage to the greatest Germans. A look around costs only the hike up the steep steps.

Salzburg

Since we missed it '96, Austria was a country we were eager to visit. Salzburg, a world-renowned city with a fascinating history and stunning appearance, was our destination.

Based on recommendations by *Gemütlichkeit* staff and positive reports from readers, we chose the **Hotel Trumer Stube**, located on a quiet street just across the river from the

Continued on page 8...

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 7

old town and a big step up in class for us. Marianne and Hermann Hirschbichler, the owners, were very kind and helpful. Each morning, Mrs. Hirschbichler prepares a lovely breakfast served at the table with eggs to order. Her husband is quite a man-about-town, with the inside track to concert tickets or any of the theme tours (Sound of Music, Eagle's Nest, salt mines etc.). The pair provides comfort and service, all with a great deal of care.

Each of the hotel's 22 rooms has television (with 24-hr CNN), radio, sitting area, toilet and shower. The Mirabell garage is the best place to park, though the hotel has a few permits for street parking.

The Hirschbichler's explained how they are constantly renovating rooms. Each year several are selected for updating. This progressive style keeps the hotel immaculate with comfortable and modern amenities. Trumer Stube was worth the extra money, truly the best hotel of the trip and not just its comfort but for the warm hospitality.

For inexpensive food we recommend **Zum Fidelity Affen** (Funny Monkey), just around the corner from Trumer Stube, with outdoor picnic benches. Main course, salad, pretzels, bread and lots of beer cost a mere 443 AS (\$40). Our two delicious main dishes were spinach *Spätzle* in cream sauce topped with crusted cheese, and risotto with vegetables. The Funny Monkey draws a youthful crowd and service is very friendly.

We returned two nights later and were remembered by the wait staff. The food was just as good. This night we met Horst and Thomas, two friendly locals. As Zum Fidelity Affen regulars, they made us feel like regulars, too. For hours we discussed everything from cars to American sitcoms. *Married With Children* is their favorite and they think writing funny TV shows is the best thing Americans do. We bought each other countless beers until the place closed, then had a few more with the waitress who joined us after closing. The fun ex-

tended deep into the night and in that time we made some new friends.

The hills are alive with the sound of Mozart! His music is the soundtrack for this scenic city. We chose to experience one of his works in a very romantic setting, the Princess Chamber of the **Hohensalzburg** fortress, where a string quartet from the Munich Philharmonic performed *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* before an intimate gathering of about 150 people. As we watched and listened to this beautiful piece of music, lightning lit up the sky through the windows behind the musicians.

On Monday, fortunately, we had to do laundry. I say fortunately because next to the laundromat we found **Cafe Kafka** which serves Budvar. So many years and so many stories about this near-perfect Czech beer made this a discovery to celebrate and we immediately made plans to return later that day. When we did, we found the beer as advertised and a friendly owner partial to funky 70's music instead of Mozart.

The Königsee

That day we also took a day-trip to the Königsee where we strolled through the small village of hotels, restaurants and souvenir stands. I don't know why anyone would stay in one of these hotels. The Königsee is very beautiful, but this little strip of businesses is more like "Germany-town" in your local amusement park.

The boat ride on the lake is breathtaking. The water is clear and the mountains rise straight out of it in some places. Electric boats carry passengers to either or both of two destinations. We only went as far as St. Bartholomä, a pretty little spot between the edge of the lake and the jagged mountain side. We followed a trail along the edge of the lake, then up through a lovely meadow where we discovered a wood fence, a faded barn, long green grasses, the gray mountains and a bright blue sky with puffy white clouds — a perfect photo opportunity.

Returning to Salzburg, we stopped along the road for our usual lunch of fresh bread, cheese, sandwich meat and fruit. So simple, yet each day it was an anticipated meal.

We also took this time to write the folks back home a note.

Next month: Reutte, the Mosel Valley and Heidelberg.

Hotels & Restaurants

Hotel-Restaurant Palmenbad, Kurhausstr. 27, D-34117 Kassel, tel./fax: +49/0561/326 91, doubles rooms 98 DM (\$56)

Campingplatz Insel, Am Campingplatz 1, Bamberg D-96047, tel. +49/0951/563 20

Hotel Peterhof, Fröhliche-Türken Str. 12, Regensburg D-93047, tel. +49/0941/575 14., doubles rooms 97 DM (\$55)

Pizzeria Datino, Haidplatz 4, Regensburg

Hotel Trumer Stube, Bergstrasse 6, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/0662/87 47 76 or 87 51 68, fax: 87 43 26, singles 520-720 AS (\$42-\$58), doubles 880-1250 AS (\$70-\$100)

Zum Fidelity Affen, Priesterhausgasse 8, A-5020 Salzburg, dinner for two with beverages about \$40

Cafe Kafka, Paris-Lodron-Str., Salzburg. ☒

LÉ GITAN

Continued from page 4

oozing with cheese and topped with crunchy breadcrumbs, cracked pepper and served from a copper pan.

There were second servings of everything.

Plum sorbet (11 Sfr./\$7.50), definitely an o.k.-we'll-try-it-since-it's-the-speciality-of-the-house kind of dessert turned out to be a wonderful surprise. Though more routine, a flaky, cream-filled pastry (9 Sfr./\$6.16) with vanilla ice cream, chocolate sauce and a great gob of whipped cream, was also heaven-sent.

Heeding our waiter's advice on the red wine — a velvety 1995 Les Follaterres — was another smart move. Made from the Cornalin grape, which is new to the Valais, it was produced in Fully by André Roduit and cost 44 Sfr. (\$30).

Including wine, one beer and a mineral water the dinner for two cost 175 Sfr. (\$120); better than average value for Switzerland.

Who says you can't go home? Lé Gitan is as good as we remembered it, just not as cheap.

Lé Gitan, CH-Zermat, tel. +41/027/968 1940. Reservations are a good idea.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 13/20 ☉