

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

November 25, 1997

Tübingen Tale

Since this month's lead article by Roger Holliday and Claudia Fischer is about Tübingen, there is a story that bears repeating. It concerns a visit we made there some 20 years ago.

On our first trip to Germany in the mid-'70s and not knowing a word or German, we found ourselves in Tübingen staring uncomprehendingly at a menu in a restaurant where no one spoke English. *Matjesfilet Hamburger Art* sounded like beef. It turned out, of course, to be several cold, whole herring — tail, eyes, gills, the works, resting on a few lettuce leaves. For a while we sat looking at it and wishing we could pull a lever that would drop us through a trap door out of our embarrassment. Cold fish was not what we had in mind for dinner.

Gathering our courage, we tried to explain to the gracious woman server that we had made a terrible mistake, there was nothing wrong with the fish but we wanted to order something else and would, of course, pay for both meals. That we didn't want the fish she understood. The rest, however, didn't get across. With apologies, she removed the fish and headed for the kitchen. About halfway there she met the cook, a woman I still see in bad dreams. She was huge — not fat, more along the lines of an NFL linebacker: rangy and rawboned; mobile, agile and about to become hostile. The sort of woman whose workday begins at 5 a.m. in the kitchen and ends late at night with a few beers at a back table in her restaurant. A cigarette hung from one side of her mouth and a hank of hair fell over her sturdy brow. As the full impact of the server's message — the Americans don't want (or don't like) the *Matjesfilet* —

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

TÜBINGEN

This month the Fischer-Holliday team report on Tübingen, likening it to Heidelberg but without the tourists and the high prices.

Probably the most surprising and beguiling aspect of the Swabian city of Tübingen is that so few tourists ever seem to go there. No camera-toting visitors roam these medieval streets and alleys. There are no lines of diesel belching tour buses. Or large, unsightly parking lots. Or block on retail block of tourist kitsch.

by
Claudia Fischer
& Roger Holliday

All of which is somewhat curious considering that Tübingen has so many of the same tourist attractions as its academic neighbor, Heidelberg. Both have a magnificent and original *Altstadt* (old town) that miraculously escaped the ravages of war. Both are dominated by dramatic hilltop castles and located on the selfsame Neckar River. Each has a world-class university over 500 years old—and all the concomitant student culture and

tradition. Fraternities and Wappens and beanies and such. And both are readily accessible by road or rail from Stuttgart, the state capital. But there the comparison ends. Rather abruptly.

For while Heidelberg has won the popularity stakes hands down — and profits royally from the legions of tourists storming its ramparts and seeking out glimpses of authentic Student Princes, "I Love Heidelberg" T-shirts or seats in the snuggeries of the 16th century *Bierstubes* — it has also paid a very heavy price in tourism overload. (To the point that high-season visits should probably be no-no's for *Gemütlichkeit* readers).

Tübingen, on the other hand, is exceedingly thankful for its relative anonymity and, recognizing its good fortune, likes to cock a snoot

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Budget Tour, Part II

A super bargain is found in Reutte and some Wieskirche visitors are scolded.

Though sorry to leave our great little Salzburg hotel, the **Trumer Stube** (*Gemütlichkeit*, October 1997), three days of crowded Salzburg was enough and we moved on to Reutte, a quiet country town in the mountains with easy access to some great sights. Just over the Fernpass from Innsbruck, and only a few minutes from Füssen in Germany, Reutte is very near Bavaria's Royal Castles and the beautiful **Wieskirche**.

Gasthof-Pension Waldrast, a ski hotel in winter, is away from the

town center and a huge bargain! Our corner room with large windows on two sides, Number 15, was beautiful. It included satellite TV in a separate sitting room, separate shower and toilet rooms, attractive, comfortable furniture and a deck. From the room and balcony the view is of the Ehrenberg ruins.

One night, with spectacular weather, we returned from dinner and wanted to sip a beer on the patio. Finding the lobby and reception deserted, we decided to sit outside and breathe the mountain air. Moments later, the owner's wife came down the path walking her dog. She greeted us and inquired if there was

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slowly dawned, she began to direct poisonous glances our way. Desperately wanting to get across the message that we accepted full responsibility and expected to pay for both meals, I left my chair and moved toward the two women.

Some travel lessons are learned hard. The chapter on never rejecting anything a German woman cooks was one of them. Frau linebacker straightened to her full six-feet, two-inches and brushed the hair from her eyes with one hand. With the other she pointed her cigarette in my direction and roared — approximately:

Wenn Sie in Deutschland sind, sollten Sie Deutsch sprechen!! (When you are in Germany, speak German.)

I slunk back to the table, feeling very much the ugly American. Plates of hot food arrived. We ate quickly, paid and left. The bill, despite our protests, did not include a charge for the *Matjesfilet Hamburger Art.* — RHB

BUDGET TOUR, PART II

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anything we needed. We asked if it was to late for a beer. She smiled, said no, and immediately brought us some. We sat undisturbed for an hour enjoying the night. Afterward, I carried the bottles in and set them on the bar. Our hosts were at a corner table in the dining room. I thanked them and said good night. We are more familiar with impersonal American motels and not

used to such warmth and hospitality. Gasthof-Pension Waldrast is a special little family hotel. We paid 700 AS (\$58) for our luxurious double room.

Reutte is about 30 minutes from Füssen, home of Germany's two most famous castles. **Hohenschwangau** and **Neuschwanstein**, I am sure, are sights most readers have visited. Thus, there is no need to attempt a description of them here.

I should note, however, that the Neuschwanstein tour was a disappointment. Our tour guide spoke very little English and her poor pronunciation was compounded by an inability to project. In addition, our tour was joined by a group of about 30 Japanese tourists whose English-speaking guide translated for this subgroup. The result was an echoing, interrupted presentation. We finally gave up, slid to the back of the tour and viewed the castle without benefit of guide. Tours are 10 DM (\$6) person for each castle.

The nearby **Wieskirche**, another well-known sight, possesses beauty which should be respected. Unfortunately, many of its visitors are too self-centered to do their part in maintaining the church's condition. There is no entry fee and no guards to monitor behavior. The church asks only for a small donation and that visitors follow a few simple rules. No picture-taking inside. But flashbulbs and camera clicks were a constant during our visit. Insensitive camcorder carriers saw the church through their view-finders and never

laid a naked eye on the place. I found this disregard for the wishes of the Wieskirche embarrassing and disturbing and, frankly, it tainted the whole experience.

While in Reutte we tried two restaurants. **Carina**, in Breitenwang, a nice Italian place, has an outdoor patio and family atmosphere. The other, **zum Mohren**, serves heartier dishes such as Hungarian Goulash with polenta. This restaurant also has outdoor seating and service is friendly. At zum Mohren, two dinners, four beers and dessert was 450 AS (\$38). Both places are affordable and serve well-prepared food.

From Reutte we headed north to the scenic Mosel Valley. Enroute we decided to revisit Heidelberg.

Haide Heidelberg, a campground, has cabins for rent at about 32 DM (\$19) for two persons. Having been there in 1996, we knew what to expect. The drive from Reutte took four hours.

In Heidelberg for only one night, we decided to return to a favorite restaurant from our 1996 trip. It was raining on first visit to **Gastätte Essighaus** and we couldn't sit outside. This visit, however, turned out to be the last of nine straight outdoor dinners. But Essighaus was very busy and the service suffered, though the food was still quite good and we were served by the same waitress. Specials include soup, salad and entree for around 12 DM (\$7).

Though it is very difficult to recap-

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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.

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at its up-river rival with the rather naughty, haughty taunt of *Tübingen halt, was Heidelberg verspricht* (Tübingen has, what Heidelberg promises).

This is no lucky coincidence, however. No haphazard occurrence. The city fathers have long made a conscious effort to exclude the vices of mass tourism — and the easy money that goes with it — preferring instead to maintain the city's architectural and academic integrity and small town persona.

Their efforts have been supported over the last two decades by a Left leaning city council—one of the few in Baden-Württemberg — and by the Green Party's success in beating back proposals for urban ringroads and commuter rail lines.

Their work has not gone unnoticed. The city's multiple attributes were publicly recognized in 1995 when the German news magazine, *Focus*, voted Tübingen number one in the country for "Quality of Life." It beat out Bonn and Münster and 543 other cities and communities based on several factors such as environmental health, life-style, prosperity, culture, safety and upkeep. "No industrial smokestacks darken the skies and no Autobahn cuts through this city," rhapsodizes the magazine. "Instead, unprecedented numbers of young people in this university town stroll through the historic Market Place, ride their environmentally correct bicycles through the old **Botanical Gardens** or visit the latest exhibit in the art gallery."

By any measure then, it is the university, founded in 1477, that is Tübingen's lynch pin and commanding feature. Half of the city's population — some 85,000 people — are associated with it in one way or another giving added credence to the local saw, "We have a town on our campus."

There is, of course, a downside to all this planned parochialism. *Focus* goes on to report that Tübingen's cost of living is extremely high, and

TÜBINGEN

Population: 85,000

University Enrollment: 24,000

Altitude: 341 meters, 1,119 feet

Distances from:	KM	Miles
Berlin	682	426
Freiburg	155	97
Frankfurt	225	141

Rail connections: Trains leave Stuttgart hourly at 22 minutes past for the one-hour journey. Regular service is also available from Hergatz near Lake Constance.

ATMs: Available everywhere.

Tübingen Tourist Office

Verkehrsverein

An der Eberhardsbrücke

Tel. +49/07071/91360

Fax: +49/07071/35070

Open: M-F 0900-2000, Sat 0900-1600, Sun/
Holidays 1400-1700

Publications available in English for a nominal charge:

Tübingen-A Brief History of the Town

Tübingen-A Tour Through the Old Town

Tübingen-The Hölderlin Tower

A useful fan map of the city is also on sale for 2.30 DM (\$1.35).

Open Air Food Market-Marktplatz: Open Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

the rent structure even higher.

From a casual visitor's perspective, the downside can more easily be seen in a tourism infrastructure that's somewhat underdeveloped. Hotel beds are a scarce commodity. Good restaurants are few and far between. And those that accept credit cards even harder to track down — as we found to our cost earlier this year during a horrendous Sunday evening rainstorm.

On that same visit, the Tübingen Tourist Office seemed uncharacteristically chaotic and disinclined to help us find lodgings for the night.

A look through the *Michelin Red Guide for Germany* helps to pinpoint the hotel problem. There are only half a dozen full-service hotels listed in Tübingen as opposed to 20 for Heidelberg. And *Frommer's Guide to Germany* devotes a full 10 pages to Heidelberg hotels, restaurants and sight-seeing. Tübingen gets a paltry two.

These difficulties aside, Tübingen is still very much "worth a detour" on anyone's itinerary. For discerning *Gemütlichkeit* readers, it's almost certainly "worth a journey!"

The city itself is neatly and distinctly divided into two parts. A medieval *Altstadt* of market squares and spouting fountains. Crooked bridges and drinking troughs. Moats and duck-filled ponds. Plunging alleys and ancient yards.

There are Gothic churches, convents and seminaries. And a plethora of plaques, towers and statuary commemorating favorite sons like poets Hölderlin and Mörike, writers Uhland and Hesse, philosophers Hegel and Schelling and astronomer, Johannes Kepler.

Add a placid, unhurried river where students guide their lantern-lit punts on summer nights and residents stroll along the tree-lined island, **Platanenalee**, and Tübingen's Old World atmosphere is complete. Cross through the **Botanical Gardens** on the north side, however, and both architecture and atmosphere change dramatically. From middle ages to modernity in the space of a few meters. From age-old dwellings to broad boulevards, gracious university buildings, libraries, halls of ivy and countless clinics — for Tübingen is known around the world for medical research and expertise that attracts kings, princes and potentates.

Before contemplating a walking tour of the city, drop by the Tourist Office and pick up two useful brochures in English: *A Brief History of Tübingen* and *A Tour Through The Old Town*. Be advised too, that Tübingen can be a little difficult to navigate for the physically challenged. Steep hills and cobbled streets don't make for easy walking.

The best place to start any Tübingen tour is at one of its two major squares. The **Holtzmarkt** — formerly a timber market — is a popular student gathering place with its fountain of St. George and close proximity to the gaunt and Gothic **Stiftskirche** which boasts one of

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Germany's most impressive interiors, gorgeous choir screens, a 5th century baptismal font, and stained glass windows from 1480 by Peter Hemmel.

The Holtzmarkt also offers wonderful views across the Neckar and out to the distant Jura Mountains.

Just a *Gasse* away is the even more dramatic and spacious **Marktplatz** dominated by the richly decorated four-story **Town Hall** (1435) and an elaborate astronomical clock created in 1511 by Johannes Stöffler...still ticking away and showing the course of the stars and the phases of the moon.

Center stage is a splendid renaissance fountain of King Neptune copied from one in Bologna while the perimeter of the square features animated bars and cafes covered with brightly colored canopies.

Market days are Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Climb from there up the steep Burgsteige — one of the oldest and most handsome streets — up to **Schloss Hohentübingen**, a renaissance successor to an 11th century castle and now used for various academic pursuits.

Guided tours of the castle with its prison, cellars and 18,700 gallon vat are possible April-September. But it's worth the walk up for the panoramic view alone.

This is also the part of town populated by the *Gogen* (Schwäbisch dialect for vine growers) well known in Swabia as much for their rich and earthy humor as for their delectable wines.

While the jokes themselves are hardly repeatable in such an up-standing publication as *Gemütlichkeit*, suffice to say there are frequent references to buttocks and outhouses. For those who still want to hear the jokes—but don't know their *Umlauts* from their *Ausfahrts*... translations are available in town.

Hotels

As previously mentioned, hotels are a bit scarce in Tübingen and it's a good idea to secure accommodations before arrival.

Hotel Am Schloss

Half way up the steep cobble street leading to the castle, the appropriately named Hotel Am Schloss turned out to be a treasure. Our first impressions of it as a lively, friendly, open place began as soon as our cab pulled up to the front door. Big tubs of imaginatively combined flowers flanked the recessed entrance and equally pretty window boxes covered the facade.

The lobby is something of a nonevent — being small and doing double duty as a reception area for the restaurant (more about this later) — but the welcome received is genuinely warm and hospitable. And our jewel of a room now ranks high on our list of all time favorites.

Number 20 is two-and-a-half flights up (there's no elevator) and the hotel's flagship room. Someone with originality, a fine color sense and good taste has been at work here. Basic colors are a heraldic combination of rust red and deep bright blue. Above the sofa is a matted reproduction of an illuminated manuscript. And from the bed you look out French doors at a fabulous view of the *Altstadt*.

But the most incredible aspect of the room is a limed-oak armoire whose doors are entirely covered by a whimsical representation of a medieval prince and princess gazing wistfully into the distance as the prince dips a toe into the moat. The princess appears to be holding a sprig of tarragon.

The bathroom of Number 20 is also a marvel with Corian-style counters, double sinks, a big tub, power shower, heated towel bars and an excellent hairdryer. The only fault; thin towels.

There are 18 rooms in the main portion of the hotel and another 16 divided between two nearby buildings. A few are without *ensuite*

bathroom facilities. The standard rooms are simple and fresh with white walls and Scandinavian-style wood furniture. The excellent bathrooms are fully equipped.

Daily Rates: Singles 99 to 130 DM (\$58-\$76), doubles 124-148 DM (\$73-\$87), Room #20 185 DM (\$109).

Contact: Hotel Am Schloss, Burgsteige 18, D-72070 Tübingen, tel. +49/07071/9294-0, fax 9294-10.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 18/20

Hotel Krone

Across from the Tourist Office, is Tübingen's most prestigious hotel, a fact easily deduced from all the plaques and decals outside the front entrance. The critical ones identify the Krone as the site for local Lions and Rotary Club meetings; usually a good indication of quality — at least in Germany.

The Schlagenhauff family opened this centrally-located hotel in 1885 and has been running things ever since. It's not surprising that an aura of permanence and continuity prevails throughout, from the large, handsome lobby to the 47 comfortable guest rooms, half of which are air-conditioned. Interspersed with all the conveniences travelers expect today are the occasional grandmotherly touches — a lace doily on an armchair, cabbage-rose patterned carpeting and tasseled velvet drapes — which do nothing but add to the charm of this establishment.

Each guest room is decorated differently with good reproduction antique furniture, attractive fabrics and decent artwork. Small but often overlooked touches like closet lights and extra hangers add to the overall comfort level and the bathrooms are fully equipped with double sinks, magnifying mirrors, hairdryers and thick towels.

A gorgeous baronial wooden staircase curves down to the lobby where huge arrangements of fresh flowers are tucked into every corner and a welcoming bowl of shiny apples sits on the front desk. There are also two highly recommended restaurants within, one more formal with a full menu, the other with a

EDITOR'S
CHOICE

delightful *Bierstube* atmosphere.

Daily Rates: Singles 155-175 DM (\$91-\$103), doubles with WC/shower 190-250 DM (\$112-\$147), with WC/bath 230-290 DM (\$135-\$171).

Contact: Hotel Krone, Uhlandstrasse 1, D-72009 Tübingen, tel. +49/07071/13 31-0, fax 13 31-32.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel Hospiz

The Hospiz is situated at the base of the road leading up to Hohentübingen Castle, so there's less of a climb involved than to the Am Schloss, but since the lobby is up a flight of stairs, even that advantage is lost.

We liked the flower-bedecked exterior and the location of the Hospiz but otherwise found it ordinary. The 35 rooms were clean and outfitted with all the basics but starkly decorated. In the lobby, wicker chairs, banal impressionist genre posters and African violets completed the decorating statement. The staff seemed fairly capable but generally disinterested not only in us but in the guests they were checking out.

Daily Rates: Singles 105-130 DM (\$62-\$88), doubles 160-200 DM. (\$94-\$118)

Contact: Hotel Hospiz, Neckarhalde 2, D-72070 Tübingen, tel. +49/07071/924-0, fax 924-200.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 8/20

Hotel Domizil

Built in 1991, and beautifully located on the river bank, the Domizil offers terrific views of the *Altstadt*.

The operative word here is contemporary which can be refreshing — certainly there is no contrived *Schmaltz* to contend with. Essentially this is a hotel intended to attract business travelers who need confer-

ence, technical and fitness facilities.

Daily Rates: Singles 168 DM (\$99), doubles 202 DM (\$119), doubles/riverside 225 DM (\$132).

Contact: Hotel Domizil, Wöhrdstrasse 5-9, D-72072 Tübingen, tel. +49/07071/1 39-0, fax 139-250.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 13/20

Tübingen: Swabian to the Core

There should probably be a sign at the entrance of this city which says, "Attention! You are now entering true Schwab Country."

For Tübingen is not just the geographic epicenter of Swabia, it is also where you'll find the *echt* (real) *Schwob* at work and play. Schwabenland, although politically just another of the German Lander, often feels and acts like a different country altogether. It has its own language, carefully disguised as a dialect, but almost incomprehensible, even to other Germans; an instantly recognizable cuisine with *Spätzle*, *Maultaschen* (a sort of ravioli) and *Flädle* (pancakes) found on practically every menu; and a reputation for thrift that rivals the Scots.

The well known jingle, *Schaffe, Spare, Hausle baue, Hund verkaufe, selbe belle*, (Work, save, build a house, sell the dog and do your own barking) does a good job of describing the work ethic and thriftiness of the typical Schwab.

But it's a plaque above a wooden bench in front of the **Am Schloss Hotel** that probably best captures their wry sense of humor. Looking like something that might be seen on a Welsh railway station, the sign reads:

"DOHOGGEDDIADIAEMMERDOHOGGED"

Translating very roughly into, "Here sit those who always sit here," this mind and tongue-teaser is guaranteed to raise a smile from anyone who appreciates the Schwabs, their dialect and their distinct sense of the comic.

Restaurants

Hotel Am Schloss

While our rule of thumb is usually to avoid eating in hotels, we made an exception at the Hotel Am Schloss. And were very glad we did.

The decor of the Restaurant Mauganeschtle is simple, with a dark wood ceiling, white walls and wide, multi-paned windows overlooking the city rooftops. Robust green plants sit on broad windowsills and historical prints of Tübingen grace the

walls. In nice weather the dining room moves out onto a pretty garden terrace with the same lovely view.

The restaurant specializes in *Swäbisch* food, especially *Maultaschen*, the most famous of all Swabian dishes. These delicacies are best described as little rectangles of dough filled with meat and vegetables and topped with a sauce or gravy, a sort of Swabian ravioli.

There were 26 varieties on the menu, ranging in price from 13 DM to 20 DM (\$7.60-\$12) for a hearty plateful. In addition to the traditional meat and potato fillings there are some more inventive choices; pear, ham and grated cheese for 14 DM (\$8.20) or light tomato sauce with raisin, nuts and onions for 18 DM (\$10.50).

On our first visit, we tried *Gotz von Berlichingen*, three *Maultaschen* topped with goulash and grated cheese. Another version of the dish, called *Imog dü*, was a trio of *Maultaschen* with cauliflower, ham and light hollandaise sauce. These were priced at 18 DM (\$10.50) and 17 DM (\$10), respectively. All orders come with a good green salad with creamy dill dressing and potato salad.

We actually liked the Mauganeschtle so much we went back for lunch the next day to try the other local specialties. This meal began with semolina soup, a rich broth simmered with the grain at 7 DM (\$4). The main dishes were *Pfannkuacha*, a large crepe folded in half and filled with delicious goulash, and *Hausgemachte 'Schupfnudeln'*, a browned potato dumpling served with sauerkraut and a thick slab of very good, very smoky, bacon for 17 DM (\$10).

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The wine list is impressive, too, featuring local white wines such as 1994 Gennaut Tübinger Oberzwerch for 22 DM (\$13) and 1993 Schlossgut Hohenbeilstein at 37 DM (\$22). Wine by the glass is offered for under 7 DM (\$4).

Restaurant Mauganeschtle, Burgsteige 18, Tübingen, tel. +49/07071/9-29-40, fax 92 94 10.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 15/20.

Restaurant-Weinstube Forelle

Another worthy dining choice is the Restaurant-Weinstube Forelle, situated on a small street that leads down to the Marktplatz.

The dining room is dominated by wood paneling that runs about six feet up the walls. Above the wood, elaborate sepia drawings of grapevines and cupids fill the remaining space to a high ceiling which is similarly embellished.

There's an old ceramic stove and doves in a fountain are etched into the glass of the front window. Tables are covered with linen cloths, candles and pots of fresh ivy and tiny red roses. Very atmospheric indeed.

Many local favorites are served here including an assortment of pork and veal dishes with *Spätzle* and salad in the 18 to 31 DM (\$11-\$18) range. A few vegetarian dishes are also on the menu. But the name *Forelle* (trout) is a good indicator that here the real emphasis is on fish. Dinners of *Bachforelle* (stream trout) and *Seelach* (lake trout) costing 26 DM (\$15) and 23 DM (\$14) are understandably popular.

Our *Forellenfilets in Salbeibutter mit Petersilien Kartoffeln und Bratssalat* (three trout filets in sage butter with parsley potatoes and spinach salad) (27 DM/\$16) were perfectly prepared and delicious. Also a success were *Schweinemedallions mit frischen Pfifferlingen, handgemachten Spätzle und Salat* (pork medallions with fresh wild mushrooms, handmade noodles and salad) (27 DM/\$16). In both

cases, the portions were generous.

We tried the Stettener Pulvermächer Riesling Kabinett Trocken for 31 DM (\$18). Although there is an extensive list of wines by the bottle, or served in little handled mugs, we noticed many of the patrons drank beer with their meal.

The Forelle, owned for many years by the Family Bauer, is small with a seating capacity of just 40 and reservations are always recommended. On the night we visited there was only one server so, although remarkably efficient, the service was a bit slow — be prepared to relax and enjoy the lively scene.

Restaurant-Weinstube Forelle, Kronenstrasse 8, Tübingen, tel. 2 40 94, fax 2 44 39. No credit cards.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 12/20

READERS' FORUM

An Old Favorite Scores Again

We just returned from a 15-day trip to Germany, our sixth in 12 years, and wanted to share with you our satisfaction with the **Hotel Anker** (Obertorstrasse 6, D-97828 Marktheidenfeld, tel. +49/09391/600 40, fax 600 477) (*Gemütlichkeit* Aug. '95, July '91, Oct. '90) in Marktheidenfeld, just west of Würzburg.

Our room was large and well-furnished, light switches were conveniently located, and the bathroom was large and well-lit.

But what really made the Anker exceptional was the atmosphere of friendliness, warmth and desire to please the guests. The entire Depisch family is to be commended for its superb job in managing the hotel down to the last detail and making the guest feel at home. You can't walk down a hallway or past the reception desk without feeling that these people really care.

Breakfast was served at the table, a first for us in our several trips. The price of a double room was 220 DM

(\$129), worth every bit of it, in our opinion.

A bonus that comes with the Anker is the town of Marktheidenfeld itself, a pleasant little place surrounded by the Franconian countryside and convenient to Würzburg and to the Frankfurt Airport. It was a relaxing place to spend the last afternoon and evening after a busy two-week itinerary. The drive to the airport took just over an hour on A-3.

Other hotels worth mentioning are the **Turmwirt** in Oberammergau, **St. Nepomuk** (Obere Mühlbrücke 9, D-96049, +49/0951/98420, fax 9842100) (*Gemütlichkeit* Aug. '95, Aug. '93) in Bamberg and **St. Josef** in Würzburg.

Access and parking at the latter two was a challenge, but then we could all probably write a book about our experiences in accessing and parking at hotels in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It's part of the challenge and satisfaction of being an independent traveler.

ELLIS & ZITA BICK
WEBSTER GROVES MO

Bargain Near St. Moritz

Enclosed is a brochure for the **Hotel Maloja Kulm** (CH-7516, Maloja, tel. +41/082/43105, fax 434 66), located just a few kilometers south of St. Moritz, Switzerland, on highway #3. What a wonderful find I just had to pass on to my fellow readers.

I highly recommend this lovely, quiet hotel as a wonderful alternative to the more expensive hotels of St. Moritz. The staff was very friendly and helpful, rooms spacious, nice views of the high mountains, and a great breakfast.

Mr. Kirchner, the manager, speaks excellent English and provides excellent tips on travel in the area. It is a great place for hikers. The evening meals were very good with several choices.

The cost for the double room was 200 Sfr. (\$144) which included breakfast and dinner for both of us.

RONALD BLAKE
ALTAMONTE SPRINGS, FL

Meersburg Restaurant

I am enclosing my two-year renewal. I enjoy *Gemütlichkeit* very much.

A recent auto rental in Germany turned out to be a Hyundai Sonata! My immediate reaction was negative, but I must tell you it was a terrific car; larger than a Vectra, with air-conditioning, ample trunk space and comfortable for four or five. (More than two, take care to limit baggage.)

I also want to tell you about the **Alte Post Restaurant** on Seepromenade in Meersburg. Beautiful outdoor dining right where the Bodensee ships make regular passenger stops. Beautiful view of the lake and snow covered Alps in the distance. Lots of "action," with shops, other restaurants and people to watch.

Wonderful menu and reasonable prices. Average 20/25 DM (\$12-\$15) for delicious meat or fish platters. Local specialty from lake is *Felschen* (a fresh water whitefish) but they also have good *Forellen* (trout). I finished off with a mammoth piece of hot *Apfelstrudel* with vanilla ice cream and whipped cream for 4.5 DM (\$2.65) and it could easily have fed three persons.

The owners are Doris and Manfred Habrunner, great people. Doris is a beautiful and sophisticated woman of about 40. She handles the customers while Manfred takes care of the kitchen. This is a must if you are in the area.

You can take your car on the ferry to or from Konstanz, and that in itself is worth doing.

The Bodensee is a beautiful area, yet not on the usual American routes. Very few tours bother, yet it is a short trip from the Black Forest and well worth the time. We spent four wonderful days there...our fourth visit, and we will be returning before long.

GENE LOPOTEN
LOWER GWYNEDD PA

Europe Travel Digest

■ A double room in a five-star hotel in Zürich for \$88? Amazing but true. It's at the **Hotel Inter-Continental**, about two kilometers northwest of the Zürich Bahnhof. The hotel's normal rack rate for a double room is about \$270. The \$88 deal can be found at **TravelWeb** (<http://www.bestwest-ern.com>) on the Internet. At the site, go to "Clickit weekends" for a worldwide list of hotels that offer special rates for the coming weekend. In mid-November we found these prices:

Berlin: **Forum Hotel**, 132 DM (\$78)
Berlin: **Inter-Continental**, 197 DM (\$116)
Frankfurt: **Forum Hotel**, 197 DM (\$116)
Frankfurt: **Inter-Continental**, 232 DM (\$136)
Geneva: **Inter-Continental**, 290 Sfr. (\$209)
Leipzig: **Inter-Continental**, 190 DM (\$112)
Montreux: **Royal Plaza Inter-Continental**, 137 Sfr. (\$99)
Stuttgart: **Inter-Continental**, 167 DM (\$98)
Vienna: **Bristol**, 2200 AS (\$183)
Vienna: **Imperial**, 2700 AS (\$225)
Vienna: **Inter-Continental**, 1625 AS (\$135)
Zürich: **Inter-Continental**, 122 Sfr. (\$88)
Zürich: **Sheraton Atlantis**, 185 Sfr. (\$183)

Each weekend's listings are posted the previous Monday.

Visitors to the site can determine availability and making bookings online.

Another interesting feature allows site visitors to register for e-mail alerts on a variety of discount travel deals. For example, each Tuesday morning since registering at the site we have been sent a list of the hotels offering discounts for the following weekend.

Those who can't get on the Internet, or are using unsecure browsers or ones that do not support forms, can book directly with the hotels.

■ **The Swiss Travel System** has announced prices for 1998. There is a 40% companion discount for the **Swiss Pass** and the **Swiss Flexi Pass**.

Swiss Pass

	Single Pass		Per Person Price for 2	
	1-C	2-C	1-C	2-C
4 days	\$264	\$188	\$211	\$150
8 days	\$316	\$238	\$253	\$190
15 days	\$368	\$288	\$294	\$230
21 days	\$403	\$320	\$322	\$256
1 month	\$508	\$400	\$406	\$320

Swiss Flexi Pass

Good for three or more days (maximum 6) travel in one month.

	Single Pass		Per Person Price for 2	
	1-C	2-C	1-C	2-C
Three days	\$264	\$176	\$211	\$141
Add'l days	\$30	\$24	\$24	\$19

■ **KD River Cruises of Europe** is offering a 10% discount for 1998 bookings paid in full by December 31, 1997. The discount can be added to seasonal discounts of 15% for April and May cruises and 10% discounts for July cruises.

Fares for the company's Rhine river Connoisseur Cruises, for example, which range from \$815 to \$1,170, can be reduced by early booking to \$624 and \$1,308. Two and three-night, "Three River Cruises" on the Rhine, Mosel and Main rivers, normally \$315 to \$665, drop to as low as \$241 and \$509 using the discounts. KD also offers cruises on the Danube and Elbe rivers.

Contact: KD River Cruises of Europe, 914-696-3600 or 800-346-6525 from the eastern U.S. In the west, phone 415-392-8817 or 858-8587. Web site: <http://www.rivercruises.com>.

■ The luxurious **Le Mirador Hotel and Spa**, located above the east end of Lac Léman (Lake Geneva) and the town of Vevey, is the first five-star European hotel to ban smoking throughout its public areas.

Well, almost. According to the hotel's U.S. public relations firm, one "separately-ventilated" lounge will remain for smokers as will a few guest rooms, also "separately-ventilated."

Rooms rates at Le Mirador range from 310 to 610 Sfr. (\$223-\$439). Contact: **Le Mirador Hotel and Spa**, CH-1801 Le Mont-Pèlerin, tel. +41/021/925 1111, fax 925 1112.

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BUDGET TOUR, PART II

Continued from page 7

ture the romance of a local joint on a rainy night, we still recommend this restaurant.

Before leaving Heidelberg, we took in **Schloss Heidelberg**, where our humorous, friendly guide helped make this the trip's best castle tour.

The Mosel

One of Germany's most famous wine regions runs north from Trier along the Mosel River, twisting and bending its way to Koblenz, where it meets the Rhine. Each weekend during the summer, towns up and down the river host festivals to celebrate their lush vineyards.

We spent one night at **Stolz Zimmer** in Cochem. Located in the private Stolz home, our room was large and included a shower and toilet. The cost was 60 DM/\$35 (discounts for longer stays) including breakfast with eggs to order. Mr. Stolz has access to a local parking lot and guests park free.

It rained that night and we were glad to be in a hotel. The following day we set up camp just north of Cochem at **Campingplatz Pommern**, right on the river, a great location. The shady, grassy bank of the Mosel made a comfortable home for the next three days. Two nights here only set us back 50 DM (\$29).

For dinner the first night in Cochem we found **La Baia** (Bruckenstr. 1), another Italian chow house. We found the quality of food a bit below average and the presentation very poor. A salad was drowned in Thousand Island dressing and full of cheese cubes the size of fuzzy dice. I had a calzone which looked delicious from the outside but contained uncooked ingredients. The onion, bell-pepper and mushrooms were all raw, much of the cheese was unmelted and some of the stuffing was just plain cold. La Baia uses low-quality ingredients and that is evident in the final product.

While strolling the streets of Cochem after dinner, we found **Römerstube** in the **Hotel Müller**.

The sounds of clanking dishes and lively conversation poured out into the alley. We stopped at the low window and peered inside. Warm lighting, happy faces and delicious-looking food were enough to convince us to return the next night.

Dishes like *Schnitzel Jäger art* (hunter's style) and Cordon Bleu are prepared in traditional style. Since the kitchen seems to be on the floor above, there is little dining room noise and the waitress had an odd way of appearing and disappearing. She simply steps behind a small partition and, presto, emerges with two steaming plates of food. Obviously, this restaurant utilizes a dumbwaiter to deliver food but for a moment, it was magic!

The first views of **Burg Eltz** when hiking to it are spectacular. This fairy-tale castle, completely surrounded by dense forest, is majestic. Unfortunately, there are no English tours and a printed version leaves something to be desired. However, I think this unscathed castle is a slice of history that everyone traveling this region should visit. The tour costs 8 DM (\$4.70).

On Sunday we went to Zell for the *Stadtfest*. The local youth band played and there was a long table full of homemade baked goods. Cakes, pies, cookies and other sweets were being sold and, of course, there was plenty of wine. This was a family event and the town's children were out in force. After lingering at the festival for a while, then window shopping on the main street, we stopped at a wine shop for a tasting of some of Zell's own *Schwartz Katz Wein* (Black Cat wine). We purchased a bottle as a reminder of an enjoyable day.

This was our last stop in Germany and it was time to head back to the Netherlands for a day or two and then the flight home. After three weeks of sight-seeing, walking, riding buses and boats, we were ready to slow the pace.

Accommodations & Restaurants

Gasthof-Pension Waldrast, on Ehrenbergstrasse, Reutte-Ehenbichel A-6600, tel. +43/05672/62443, fax 62443. Doubles 640 to

740 AS (\$53-\$62)

Restaurant Carina, Bachweg 17, in Breitenwang, near Reutte. Inexpensive.

Restaurant zum Mohren, on the main street, Reutte, tel. 2345. Dinner for two without beverages about 350 AS (\$30)

Gastätte Essighaus, Plöck 97, Heidelberg D- tel. +49/06221/22496. Dinner for two, without beverages, about 24 DM (\$14)

Haide Heidelberg, campgrounds, Heidelberg, tel. +49 06223/21 11

Stolz Zimmer, Obergasse 20, Cochem, D-56812, tel. +49/02671/1509. Rooms about 60 DM (\$35).

La Baia, Bruckenstr. 1, Cochem, D-56812. (Not recommended)

Römerstube in **Hotel Müller**, Moselpromenade 9, Cochem D-56812, tel. +49/02671/7131. Dinner for two, without beverages, about 60 DM (\$35).

Campingplatz Pommern, Moselweinstrasse D-56829, Pommern 

EUROPE TRAVEL BRIEFS

Continued from page 7

■ How about a week's vacation to Switzerland that includes hotel, breakfasts, dinners, rental car and roundtrip airfare for less than \$1000? That and similarly-priced packages are available this winter to both Switzerland and Austria from **Austria Ski**, for many years a reliable seller of vacation packages to the Alpine countries.

The under \$1,000 Switzerland package (\$959) is available from New York to Davos, Switzerland, in March. The company has also introduced a one-week arrangement to "Brig-The Matterhorn State" for from \$779 to \$949 (not including dinners) depending on the city of departure.

Other rates include \$959 to \$1129 St. Moritz; \$799 to \$1039 Interlaken; \$799 to \$1099 Zermatt; \$729 to \$1059 Kitzbühel; \$699 to \$939 Salzburg; \$699 to \$949; Innsbruck and \$799 to \$1099 St. Anton. Prices depend on gateway city and hotel category. Accommodations are in three or four star hotels, all with private bath.

Though designed as ski vacations, the nonskier will find plenty to do in most of these cities.

Contact: Austria Ski, tel. 800-333-5533. 