

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

February 28, 1999

Car Rental In Europe

Because of upgrade promotions and discounted prices, the first quarter of the year is always the best time to book a rental car. Thus each year about this time we dispense a little advice for those planning to travel in Europe by car.

General Info

- The cheapest rental cars are in Germany, followed by Belgium and Holland. Switzerland and France are substantially more expensive, and rental rates in Austria are even higher. Italy is the most expensive. At press time a midsize car in Germany rented for \$137 including value added tax, unlimited mileage, airport fee, and third-party liability insurance. The same car in Italy was \$370 (it should be noted that this Italy price includes mandatory theft and collision insurance which is optional in other countries).

- Over the past year all car rental companies in Germany have instituted a 6% to 10% surcharge on rental pickups at airports and rail stations. Airport charges in Switzerland remain at 12% and in Austria 11%.

- Virtually every European rental car is equipped with a radio and cassette tape player. Bigger, more expensive cars may come with CD changer and/or telephone. Sunroofs can be found in all categories but requesting one at the time of booking is a waste of time. Ask when you pick up the car.

- More and more cars in Germany are air-conditioned. Nearly all rental cars have it in Italy.

- You'll pay substantially more for a car with automatic transmission; in some countries, Germany, for example, nearly twice as much.

- Children must be strapped

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

SMALL HOTELS OF SALZBURG

One of Europe's most popular tourist destinations is the enchanting city of Salzburg. This month we report on a dozen of its small hotels.

Salzburg is still alive with *The Sound of Music*. Subtle evidence of that fact is a yellowing check for \$20 stuck under the glass at the reception desk of the fading Hotel Elefant in the town's Altstadt. It was written in 1981 by Maria von Trapp, the Julie Andrews character in the 1965 movie.

Salzburg has been popular with Americans for several decades. There was a Helen MacInnes book, *Salzburg Connection*, a Cold War spy thriller, and out of the book came a very bad movie of the same name, with cars chasing up and down the Hohen-salzburg. Awful as it was, the movie at least gave us a look at a gorgeous little city.

But it was that Hollywood block-

buster of blockbusters, *The Sound of Music*, with Julie Andrews scampering through high Alpine Meadows, that forever changed life in Austria's third largest city.

Since the movie, Salzburg seemingly has been on everyone's European itinerary and the Sound of Music tour remains its number one tourist attraction.

But visitors are now a commodity with which Salzburg is over supplied. A tourism official once told *Gemütlichkeit* that an average of 700 tour busses flood the *Altstadt* with visitors each day during summer. Others arrive by rail, auto and air. Even in the dead of winter, in the first few days of January, the

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Window Shopping Zürich

It is probably the cleanest, safest, most expensive major city street in the world; a thoroughfare of much-maligned banks, incredible jewelry windows, and expensive shops. It isn't flashy but you feel the affluence. Forget the big shot financiers and too-thin ladies in fur coats with small dogs, ordinary bank clerks on this street make \$70,000 a year.

We are, of course, talking about Zürich's Bahnhofstrasse. Whenever we're in town, a window-shopping tour of the street is obligatory and almost always combined with a walk through the old town across the Limmat. Our route makes a kind of rectangular circuit and we refer to it as "taking a lap around Zürich."

Depending on how long and

often you stop along the way, it could take an hour or all day.

You can start anywhere, but for these purposes we'll begin at the main rail station, heading south up the street toward the town center.

You may want to immediately duck in at **St. Gotthard Cafe** (87 Bahnhofstrasse), a clubby, woody room where the specialty is Bouillabaisse.

Immediately you'll see a **McDonald's** and a **Planet Hollywood**. Walk on, pretend they're not there.

Across from the latter is **MusicHug** where you can purchase music tapes or CDs not readily found in the U.S.

At Uraniastrasse, look left about

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into a child's seat (even up to 12 years of age in some cases). Take your own or rent them from the rental company for about \$45/rental.

- **Book Early.** Prices are low this time of year but likely to rise April 1. In some countries and in some car categories, upgrades are available if booked prior to April 1. Don't worry if you have to change dates or cancel, the credit card chargeback laws in this country prevent you being charged for a travel service not received. Thus, if you pay a deposit or even the full rental price, you'll get it all back if you cancel.

- **Insurance.** By law, car rental companies in Europe must provide third-party liability insurance, which is included in the basic rental charge. The renter, however, is responsible for the car. Rental companies sell CDW (collision damage waiver) and theft insurance for from about \$12 to \$30 per day (plus tax, of course). However, some credit cards offer this coverage free if you use the card to pay for the car. Find out from your credit card issuer whether your account carries such coverage and, if so, what the rules are for making a successful claim.

You should also be sure the term of your rental is not longer than the coverage provided by your credit card. For example, Mastercard Gold covers rentals up to 15 days. If your contract is 16 days or longer you

have no collision or theft coverage. Visa Gold, American Express (except most corporate cards) and Diner's Club cover rentals up to 30 days.

Gemütlichkeit recommends you decline the car rental company's offer of insurance and rely on your credit card for CDW and theft insurance, but only after first determining that you are in fact covered by your credit card for the specific rental you have in mind. If you are relying on your credit card for this insurance do not, under any circumstances, fail to initial in the "Nein" box relating to CDW and theft insurance. If you do not do so, your credit card will not provide insurance coverage. And, if you are somehow coerced into signing in the "Yes" box you will be charged by the car rental company for the optional insurance. No matter what the rental clerk says, do not initial in the acceptance box unless you want the insurance and plan to pay for it.

- **Eastern Travel.** Not a big problem to Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic or Slovakia with most car rental companies. However, only certain cars — usually Opels — are allowed to travel East.

If Romania, Croatia, Slovenia or countries of the former Soviet Union are your destination you'll pay a somewhat higher rate.

Be sure to state your intention to visit Eastern countries at the time of booking. Special documentation is required, even with Opels. Those who try to take a non-authorized car

into an Eastern country may find big trouble. It is illegal to even attempt to do so. Your car may be impounded and you will be charged impound costs and for the cost of returning the rental car to the original pickup location.

Choosing a Car

First, understand that no car rental company will guarantee a specific make and/or model. The words "or similar" are always used in the rental confirmation and the renter is promised only a category. Here are some of the principal car categories and some info on each:

Subcompact. Typical cars: Opel Corsa, VW Polo, Fiat Punto. O.k. for two persons who aren't interested in burning up the Autobahn. Limited trunk space. Cost: about \$82 to \$100* per week.

Compact. Typical cars: Opel Astra, VW Golf, Ford Escort, Fiat Brava. Comfortable at 80 to 90 m.p.h.. Good trunk — figure one big suitcase, two small ones and maybe a garment bag and/or a soft duffel or two. Both two-door and four-door models, occasionally with a sunroof. Fine for three adults who go easy on the luggage. Cost: \$95 to \$130* per week.

Midsized. Typical cars: Opel Vectra, Ford Mondeo, Renault Laguna, Audi A4. Our recommended category for two couples. The Vectra has a particularly spacious trunk. O.k. on the Autobahn but underpow-

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	Scale	Restaurant Criteria	
Excellent	16 - 20	Food	65%
Above Average	12 - 15	Service	20%
Average	8 - 11	Atmosphere	15%
Adequate	4 - 7		
Unacceptable	0 - 3		
Hotel Rating Criteria		Value Rating	Scale
People/Service	30%	Outstanding Value	17 - 20
Location/Setting	15%	Very Good Value	12 - 16
Guestrooms	30%	Average Value	9 - 11
Public rooms	5%	Below Average Value	5 - 8
Facilities/Restaurant	20%	A Rip-Off	0 - 4

Special Designation

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

HEIDELBERG

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Getreidegasse bustles and one hears American everywhere.

But Salzburg is far more than a movie set. It has a rollicking past and great charm. One cannot fail to be intrigued, for example, by the central figure in its history; the lecherous, egotistical Archbishop Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau, the man who built Salzburg while fathering 15 children out of wedlock — with the same woman, to his credit. (Unfortunately, things didn't end well for Wolfie, he got on the wrong side of the Pope and spent the last five years of his life a prisoner in the Hohensalzburg fortress. You may want to visit the ostentatious tomb he designed for himself in the St. Sebastian cemetery.)

All that history, God-given beauty, Archbishop-given buildings — and of course one 'lil 'ol movie — have been very good for Salzburg's hotel business, especially in the center of the city. Too good, maybe. This year we saw almost the same hotels we reviewed in 1992, which were the same ones we visited in 1988. Except for the pricey Radisson Altstadt, we found no new, interesting small hotels in the city's atmospheric heart.

Since this is where overnight visitors want to stay, and since there has been almost no new competition, this handful of little inns has been able to maintain high occupancy rates by simply keeping the doors open and the linen clean. Every hotel we inspected on the left bank of the Salzach — with the exception of the \$250-per-night Altstadt and the Hotel Struber — is in need of refurbishment: the Elefant, the Weisse Taube, the Blaue Gans, even the Pension Wolf — though it is the best maintained of these four.

Each retains a degree of charm and all are acceptable lodgings. But at a time when small, family-operated hotels all over Germany, Austria and Switzerland are upgrading their facilities and services, it is disappointing to see tired public rooms, scuffed furnishings, and poorly-lit

Salzburg Info

Population: 147,000

Altitude: 114 meters/1,394 feet


Tourist Information:

Auerspergstrasse 7, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +41/662/889 87314, fax 889 8732, email: tourist@salzburginfo.or.at, website: www.salzburginfo.or.at

Distance from:

Innsbruck	177 Km/111 miles
Munich	140 Km/88 miles
Vienna	292 Km/183 miles

Parking in Salzburg: Many hotels are located on streets which limit vehicle access. As a visitor you can drive to hotels and pensions in the *Altstadt* at anytime, even on streets which restrict vehicles. You may creep along at 5 miles an hour among crowds of pedestrians but stay with it, as long as you're hotel-bound it's o.k. After check-in, however, you will need to find parking during your stay (forget the car except for excursions to the countryside). Some hotels provide permits for street parking but a public garage is the more likely solution. Most hotels have discount arrangements with these garages and you will pay approximately 120 AS (\$10) per day. Hotels out of the center usually offer free parking.

Salzburg Card: For admission to virtually all Salzburg attractions and unlimited public transportation, the Salzburg Card is a worthwhile investment. A 24-hour card is 200 AS (\$17), the 48-hour version is 270 AS (\$22), and the 72-hour card costs 360 AS (\$30). With it comes the *Salzburg Guide* which contains a city map and useful information. 

and equipped bathrooms in hotels which could and should be atmospheric little gems. Instead, they have the air of overused package tour hotels. All any of them have done in the past six years it seems is raise prices. In 1992, the least expensive double room at the Weisse Taube was 880 AS (\$72), now it is 1,150 AS (\$94), an increase of over 30%. The Elefant has jumped its cheapest double room from 1200 to 1480 AS (\$98 to \$121), an increase of 23%. The least expensive double at the Blaue Gans in 1992 was 700 AS (\$57); it is now 1,180 AS (\$96), a tidy increase of nearly 70%.

With two exceptions, the hotels

we prefer are on the right bank. They are only a few minutes walk from the old center and offer a much better combination of value and quality. And remember, not all of Salzburg's attraction are on the left bank. The Mirabell Gardens, Wolf Dietrich's tomb, and Mozart's house (not his birthplace) are on the other side of the river.

Left Bank Hotels

Hotel Altstadt

Those who seek the best accommodations will find them at the Altstadt Radisson SAS, open since 1992. Located between Rudolfskai, which fronts the river, and the pedestrian-only Judengasse, the hotel has entrances on both streets.

It's current site encompasses three ancient Salzburg addresses and the ground on which it stands was once the Höllbräu, an inn and brewery. A Jewish synagogue may also have stood on the site in the late 14th century and excavations for the current structure turned up parts of the wall which encircled the town in the 12th century.

Though corporately-owned, the Altstadt has made a conscious effort to keep the atmosphere of a small, intimate inner-city hotel. Its entrance from Judengasse is via a simple arched doorway over which hangs the traditional, Salzburg decorative wrought iron sign. There is no uniformed doorman. The reception area is small but very elegant with a patterned granite tile floor, recessed lighting and a richly burnished dark wood check-in counter.

Standard doubles are on the small side but solidly appointed. In the "Superior" category, Number 408 retains the old rough beams of one of the earlier structures that occupied the site.

"Deluxe" rooms, such as Number 310, are simply larger with a separate sitting area.

On the Rudolfskai side of the building, the hotel's long, narrow Restaurant Symphony (also the breakfast room) is lined with windows which overlook the river about

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60 feet below. A few of the restaurant's tables are in an adjoining glassed-in porch that hangs high above the Salzach.

At several times during the year the Altstadt offers a special three-nights-for-the-price-of-two arrangement that includes an upgrade to a deluxe room, one dinner, and a welcome cocktail. Prices start at \$3,560 (\$291) per person.

One of the hotel's packages, titled "Sissy, Following in the Steps of an Empress," offers a strange but intriguing option: for 40 AS (\$33) you can have a cocktail with Duke Markus v. Habsburg-Lothringen, a great-great grandson of the Empress Elisabeth.

Though it may lack some of the old world charm of the famed Goldener Hirsch, the Altstadt is our first choice in Salzburg.

Daily Rates: Singles 1,900-4,400 AS (\$155-\$359), doubles 2,800-6,600 AS (\$229-\$539)

Contact: Hotel Altstadt, A-5020 Salzburg, Austria, Rudolfskai 28 / Judengasse 15, tel. +43/0662/858671-0, fax 848571-6/8, email: office@hotel-altstadt.ping.at.

Rating: Quality 17/20, Value 10/20

Hotel Struber

In the shadow of the Hohen-salzburg Fortress and a 12-minute dawdle to ground zero Salzburg, including the Domplatz and Mozart's birthplace, the Hotel Struber continues to offer visitors a refined, comfortable and most amicable resting place.

Impeccably dressed in warm

wood, oriental carpeting and historic city portraiture, this family run, 14-room hotel reflects the taste and serenity and extreme hospitality of its owners, Frau and Herr Illmer.

In the 15 years that we have been visiting the Illmers, nothing seems to have changed, from the bountiful

Daily rates: Singles 780-1150 AS (\$64-\$94), doubles 1100-1700 AS (\$90-\$139)

Contact: Hotel Garni Struber, Nonntaler Hauptstrasse 35, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/0662/84 92 74, fax 84 37 288.

Rating: Quality 15/20, Value 17/20

Hotel Elefant

If you've ever been to a once-popular but now-fading restaurant or bar whose walls are adorned with pictures signed by athletes and politicians from another era, you know what's going on at the Elefant. The \$20 check written by Maria von Trapp displayed under-glass at the reception counter has that same feel.

This was once a lovely hotel, but that's been several years and a few hundred tour groups ago. Furnishings are of good quality, the reception area floor is that wonderful old herringbone hardwood pattern, there are some nice Oriental rugs, and many guestrooms have been wallpapered; the charm is still there, it just needs rescuing. A little refinishing, some painting, some new furniture, and updating the bathrooms would go a long way.

The other problem is the price; a small double with a tiny bath, like Number 303, rents for 1,705 AS (\$139) in high season and 1,480 AS (\$121) in low season. A larger double, Number 208, costs 2,165 AS (\$176) in high season and 2,000 AS (\$163) in low. These are poor values.

We were lukewarm on the Elefant in 1988 and again in 1992. It hasn't gotten any better, just more expensive.

Daily Rates: Single 950-1,150 (\$78-

A Von Trapp Gets Scammed

While *The Sound of Music* has been a financial boon to Salzburg and Hollywood, Maria von Trapp, the Julie Andrews character, didn't make out so well.


In 1956, according to Julie Hirsch's book, *The Sound of Music – The Making of America's Favorite Movie*, Maria was approached by a German film producer who offered \$10,000 for the rights to her story. Upon advice from a lawyer, Maria also asked for royalties and a share of the profits. The producer lied in telling her German film companies were forbidden by law from paying royalties to foreigners — she was by then an American citizen. A gullible Maria agreed to the deal and thus unknowingly signed away all the film rights to her story.

There was a German film version of the story but it was 20th Century Fox that created the blockbuster that might have made her a very wealthy woman.

After spending 30 years as a missionary in New Guinea, Maria von Trapp died in 1987 at the age of 82 and is buried next to her husband on their property in Vermont.

- *Edelweiss* is not an Austrian folk song. It was created by Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein and it was the last they wrote together, as Hammerstein died in August 1960, nine months after the musical opened and five years before the movie.

- The entire interior of the von Trapp villa, including the ornate ballroom, was built and shot at a studio in Hollywood. The set was eventually donated to the Hollywood Museum. The abbey courtyard/cloister scenes, and the graveyard scenes where the von Trapps hid from the Nazis, were also filmed in Hollywood.

- Magicians though they, the filmmakers couldn't quite reproduce those Alpine meadows and mountains. For that they had to go to Austria for the real thing. 

buffet breakfasts and ever-helpful front desk (usually staffed by a family member) to the pristine cleanliness and attention to detail.

But the Struber is more than just an affordable, conveniently located and comfy pied-a-terre...it's the sweetest, most *gemütlich* place to lay your head in all of Salzburg.

\$94) doubles 1,480-2,165 AS (\$121-\$177)

Contact: Hotel Elefant, Sigmund-Haffner-Gasse 4, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +41/0662/843397, fax 84 0109-28

Rating: Quality 9/20, Value 5/20

Weisse Taube

Management at the more country Weisse Taube is much friendlier and more helpful than at the Elefant, plus the prices are lower. But it, too, has a maintenance problem; like the Elefant, the time has come for a little urban renewal.

Daily Rates: Singles 760-1,040 AS (\$62-\$85), doubles 1,150 -2,100 AS (\$94-\$172)

Contact: Hotel Weisse Taube, Kaigasse 9, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. 0662/84 24 04, fax.

0662/84 17 83, email: wollner@weissetaube.co.at; Proprietor: Family Haubner-Wollner

Rating: Quality 7/20, Value 5/20

Hotel Blaue Gans

Some sections of this simple hotel, which is next door to the very grand Goldener Hirsch, have been upgraded within the last couple of years and they are the only acceptable accommodations in the house. The rest of the rooms, we were told, are slated for a redo in early 1999.

Among the newly refurbished guestrooms is Number 444, a fair-sized double which has a beamed ceiling, a skylight and rents for 1850 AS (\$151). Number 440 is another above average-sized double but without the beams or skylight and rents for 1550 AS (\$127). Number 330 is a single with a few old wood beams and costs 850 AS (\$69).

Daily Rates: Singles 650-950 AS (\$53-\$78), doubles 1150-1950 AS (\$94-\$159).

Contact: Hotel Blaue Gans, Getreidegasse 43, A-5020 Salzburg,

tel. +43/0662/84 2491, fax 8424919

Rating: Quality 8/20, Value 6/20

Pension Wolf

In 1988 we picked the Wolf as the Salzburg hotel which offered the best combination of value and comfort. We even included it in our book, *The 50 Best Country Inns and Small, City Hotels of Germany, Austria and Switzerland*. Were we to compile another such list, however, we could not include the Wolf. The rooms are rather Spartan, a bit small and seem to have changed little in the past six years. We still prefer it, however, to the Weisse Taube, Elefant, or Blaue Gans — and its prices are much lower.

Daily Rates: Singles 680-990 AS (\$56-

the street.

Parking is free, there is a new fitness room on the hotel's top floor with sauna, steam bath and roof terrace. Video players and fax machines are available in some rooms.

Daily Rates: Singles 1,090-1,490 AS (\$89-\$124), doubles 1,440-2,140 AS (\$118-\$175)

Contact: Hotel Auersperg, A-5027 Salzburg, Auerspergstr. 61, tel. +43/0662/88 9 44-0, fax 88 9 44-55, email hotel.auersperg@magnet.at. Proprietor: Family Raschhofer

Rating: Quality 12/20, Value 10/20

Markus Sittikus

This hotel, in an attractive Baroque-style building just out of the right bank's commercial area, has the great advantage of being a definite step up the quality ladder from most left bank hotels and also one step down in price. Guestrooms are more spacious and better maintained and furnished. The location is quiet and the welcome warm.

Daily Rates: Singles 690-850 AS (\$56-\$69), doubles 850-1,600 AS (\$69-\$131)

Contact: Markus Sittikus, A-5020 Salzburg Markus-sittikus-Strasse 20, tel. +43/0662/87 1121-0, fax 87 1121-58, email markus-

sittikus@austria.at. Proprietor: Wolfgang Sigl

Rating: Quality 12/20, Value 14/20

Trumer Stube

A few readers have been less than enthusiastic about this cozy little hotel just over the river from the old town. Though time has taken a bit of a toll since our very positive 1992 review, based on what we saw in January, the Trumer Stube is still a better deal than any hotel in its category in the old town. In fact, while left bank hotels have raised their prices from 20% to 70%, the

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Hotel Key

1. Altstadt
2. Auerhahn
3. Blaue Gans
4. Elefant
5. Jedermann
6. Markus Sittikus
7. Pension Wolf
8. Trumer Stube
9. Hotel Struber
10. Weisse Taube

\$81), doubles 980-1750 AS (\$80-\$143).

Contact: Hotel Wolf, Kaigasse 7, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/0662/84 34 530, fax 8424234.

Rating: Quality 10/20, Value 10/20

Right Bank Hotels

Auersperg

This four-star hotel, which seems to attract mostly business travelers, is in a quasi residential district about a 10-15 minute walk from the Old Town.

Guestrooms are spacious and well-appointed in a traditional old-world style. Ask for one away from

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Trumer Stube's remain virtually the same as in 1992.

In addition, the Hirschbichlers are very pleasant hosts and are able to offer guests passes for on-street parking in the neighborhood. That's not to say there will always be a spot available, but at least there is the possibility of free parking — a convenience that doesn't exist across the river.

This is a simple hotel — don't expect large rooms or piles of fluffy white towels — but for one its double rooms you'll pay \$25 to \$50 less per night than in similar accommodations just a 10-minute walk away.

Daily Rates: Singles 520-795 AS (\$42-\$65), doubles 880-1,295 AS (\$72-\$106)

Contact: Hotel Garni Trumer-Stube A-5020 Salzburg Bergstrasse 6, tel. +41/0662/87 46 66, fax 87 43 26, email hotel.trumer-stube.sbg@eunet.at. Proprietor: Family Hirschbichler

Rating: Quality 10/20, Value 12/20

Hotel-Pension Jedermann

Easily the best value we found in Salzburg. In addition to 16 thoughtfully furnished guest rooms with hardwood floors, guests can surf the Internet in the hotel's cozy reception area and parking is free.

The disadvantage is the old town is a 15 to 20 minute walk away. By bus, however, it is only three or four minutes away.

Number 13, for example, is a fairly large double that rents for from 920 to 1,100 AS (\$75-\$90), depending on the season. There is also a two-bedroom apartment (shared bath) that ranges in price from 1,600 to 1,800 AS (\$131-\$147) and would work well for a family.

Proprietor Walter Gmachl is an ebullient sort you will immediately warm to.

Daily Rates: Singles 650-750 AS (\$53-\$61), doubles 920-1,110 AS (\$75-\$91)

Contact: Rupertgasse 25, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. 0662/87 32 41-0, email

jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at.
Proprietor: Walter Gmachl

Rating: Quality 13/20, Value 15/20

Gasthof Auerhahn

A recent extensive refurbishment, including all new bathrooms, has raised this hotel near the rail station from a backpacker's flop-stop to one that we can recommend to a broader audience.

Guest rooms are pleasantly furnished and bathrooms now have convenient, fully glassed-in showers. There is no lift, however.

Though very near the rail station, the Auerhahn is nonetheless a long walk from Salzburg's main tourist sights. Public transportation, however, is readily available.

The Auerhahn is also one of Salzburg's most popular restaurants, rating a red toque and 14 out of 20 rating points in *Gault Millau* (see below).

Daily Rates: Singles 520-580 AS (\$42-\$48), doubles 880-980 AS (\$72-\$80)

Contact: Gasthof Auerhahn, A-5020 Salzburg, Bahnhofstrasse 15, tel. +41/0662/451052, fax 451052-3.

Proprietor: Family Pongratz

Rating: Quality 10/20, Value 15/20

A Restaurant

Gasthof Auerhahn

In the U.S., the holidays are behind us on January 2nd. In Salzburg, however, as we recently discovered, there is one more to go, the Feast of the Epiphany. This year it was on January 5th, a holiday for all Austrians and a day to dress up and have a big lunch at a *gemütlich* restaurant.

Based on a tip, we headed for Gasthof Auerhahn and the rustic dining room that is a favorite of many Salzburgers. The cozy warmth of its rough-hewn wood walls and its carved beams overhead was perfect on a chilly day. So was the food.

Very thinly sliced smoked goose breast served with a light vinegar dressing was not only delicious but had the added advantage of justifying

ing one's European trip. To wit: this is stuff we can't get at home.

Main courses of baked salmon in a lemony cream sauce and pan-fried perch (*Zanderfilet*) from an Austrian river left no doubt as to how every seat at the Auerhahn came to be occupied that Tuesday afternoon.

The salmon came with rice and a clutch of perfectly prepared winter vegetables, while alongside the perch were generous servings of buttery spinach, fresh green asparagus and small boiled potatoes.

There was no room for dessert, instead we sipped the last of the straw-colored wine from the province of Burgenland, south of Vienna.

Such was the level of our contentment that we purchased one of the dozen or so original watercolors by a local artist and on display at the Auerhahn.

Lunch or dinner for two will be about \$60 without wine. One of Marcus Witek's paintings will cost between \$250 and \$400.

Gasthof Auerhahn, A-5020 Salzburg, Bahnhofstrasse 15, tel. 0662/451052, fax 0662/451052-3.

Rating: Quality 15/20, Value 14/20

More Pubs & Grub

At **Hotel-Restaurant Gablerbräu** (Linzergasse 9, tel. 88965), on the right bank, not far from the Hotel Trumer Stube, the light Kaiser beer *vom Fass* (35 AS/\$3 per half liter) goes down easily but the food is several notches below the Auerhahn. Mixed salads of shredded carrots, white radish, cucumber, and lettuce had a watery dressing. *Rumpsteak* (185 AS/\$15) in a peppery sauce was a little tough but tasty and came with good *Pommes Frites* and green beans with bits of smoked ham.


Chunks of venison filet (158 AS/\$13), in an almost black reduction sauce, and the pasty Semmelknödel that accompanied it, were less to our taste.

The beer is good, the price is right (dinner for two without beverages, 423 AS/\$35), and you'll get enough to eat. No Gault Millau toques here, however.

Alter Fuchs (Linzergasse 47/49, tel. 882200) is a new, right bank, below-street-level, gathering spot for the under-40 crowd. For us it was an after-dinner stop for a drink and/or dessert. The suspicious sounding but delicious *Liwanzen mit Powidl und Rumzwetschke* (54 AS/\$4.50) is a couple of puffy pancakes, with a smooth prune-based sauce, three or four stewed prunes, a shot of liquor — possibly rum — all topped with whipped cream and sprinkled with chopped pistachios. We split it.

This is a very lively spot — jam-packed two nights running — but friendly and under control. Highly recommended.

Near the Hotel Auersperg, **Wegsheidstuben** (Lasserstr. 1, tel 874618) is one of those homey, corner beer joint/restaurants in a mostly residential part of town. It looked promising, but the food was a disappointment. *Zwiebelrostbraten* had had the salt shaker emptied into it and accompanying vegetables were canned. Enough said. To be avoided.

Not far from the Hotel Jedermann, **Die Weisse** (Rupertgasse 10, tel. 72246) is a rambling old brewpub specializing in wheat beer. It is an acquired taste. 

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50 yards down the street and note **Brasserie Lipp**, the Zürich branch of the famed Paris bistro, and a popular watering hole. We stopped for a few minutes and tried the daily wine specials. A glass of classy, classified Bordeaux, 1988 Grand-Puy-LaCoste, for 11 Sfr. (\$7.75), and a lovely Sancerre at 8.5 Sfr. (\$6), came with little squares of toast and pate. Waiters are brusque but efficient and the people watching is nonpareil. Some take the elevator to the **Jules Verne Panorama Room** for even pricier drinks and a view of Zürich from on high. Between the Brasserie Lipp and the **Heimatwerk** is a chic food store that features such items as Balik Salmon, olive oil with truffles (27.50 Sfr./\$20) and truffle pate (45 Sf/\$32).

At 69a Bahnhofstrasse, it's

Séguin-Dorman for porcelain and glassware such as Riedel and Rosenthal. Some handsome Riedel wine glasses at 25 Sfr (\$18) were about \$4 less than the same glasses sold at a local wine shop here in Ashland.

If you're short on reading material, across the street is **Stäheli English Bookstore**. Prices will be substantially higher than in the U.S.

At number 67 is the inviting **Confiserie Sprüngli**, the 163-year-old chocolate maker who will deliver all over the world (fax +41/1/224 4735).

Just across the street at number 58 is **Riethmüller AG** for fine knives (Henckels), scissors, and small kitchen implements.

Continuing on the left side you'll come to **Pic nic Gourmando**, another upscale food shop. When we were there, the window displayed an extraordinary variety of liqueurs and Schnaps. One that caught our eye was an 800 cl bottle of Williams eaud-e-vie de Poire (pear Schnaps) priced at 1,350 Sfr. (\$950). Within the perfectly clear bottle, in addition to the Schnaps of course, was a perfectly clear glass-blown pear.

On the right side again, at number 47, is the **Rosenthal Studio-Haus** where we saw more attractive wine glasses (diVino by Rosenthal: 13 Sfr./\$9 for white wine glasses and 16 Sfr./\$11 for more amply endowed Bordeaux glasses). A small piece of Rosenthal is a can't-miss take home gift.

At the corner of Kuttel-Gasse and Bahnhofstrasse is **Bucherer**, Zürich's biggest jeweler, where one can spend \$100,000 or more on a wristwatch. Its several windows showcases many dazzling pieces.

Still on the left side, **Louis Vuitton** displays a tiny — no bigger than three inches — cube of a purse in powder blue patent-leather with brass clasp for a cool 1,450 Sfr. (\$1021).

At 44 is **Bruno's** where you can purchase men's Borsalino hats for around 480 Sfr. (\$338)

Then, on the corner of Münzplatz and Bahnhofstrasse is **Bulgari**, another high-end jewelry store.

Next comes the street's prestige florist, **Blumen-Krämer** at 38 Bahnhofstrasse.

On the right side of the street, at the corner of St. Peter Strasse is **Vidal**, an oriental rug shop displaying some gorgeous goods. Our knowledge of such merchandise is very limited but prices seemed somewhat lower than what we have seen in California and Oregon for similar rugs.

Next to Vidal is **Hermes**. Their filmy scarves are about \$200.

Staying on the right, a knockout antique store is **La Serlas**.

You are now at Paradeplatz, the hub of Zürich's light rail system. Trams continually snake in and around the kiosk, three or four seeming to come and go at intervals of every two or three minutes.

Across the street is Zürich's finest downtown hotel, the **Savoy Baur en Ville**, flawlessly managed by Manfred Hörger, who wouldn't discount the rack rate on the broom closet if the hotel had been empty for a week. Double rooms are 590 to 640 Sfr. (\$415-\$451) 365 days a year. The **Savoy Bar** is popular with the city's top bankers.

Also within a stone's throw of this little platz are several interesting restaurants.

The most popular of these is **Zeughaus Keller**. A tourist stop, yes, but also frequented by plenty of locals. In any event the country-style food is excellent and the great open room, adorned with cannons and other armaments, is one of the world's grandest places to eat a sausage — and never mind foot-long, some are more than a yard in length.

It's time to cross the river to the old city. Walk behind the Savoy (where you may want to spend a few minutes looking at the Marc Chagall stained-glass windows in the **Fraumünster Church**) and take the Münster bridge.

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The other side of the river is like a different country. Things here can be a little garish, a little loud, a little earthy, and here and there you'll see a few weathered souls.

The main street meandering the old town is Münstergasse, which is a block or so up the hill from the river. Turn left on it start back north. Along the way you'll note a number of intersecting alleys and streets, mostly from the right. Exploring these will unearth dozens of interesting small shops, bars and restaurants.

Continuing on Münstergasse, you may wish to look in at **Le Papillon**, a 90s Art Deco furniture store.

If your walk is at night, you can stop at the **Casa Bar** for some live Jazz. There is a tiny stage, about a dozen bar stools and a few tables. You are very close to the musicians. The night of our visit, six 60ish Australians, calling themselves the **Spirit of New Orleans**, wailed away on drums, clarinet/sax, cornet, trombone, bass, and banjo.

The Casa Bar is rough-edged and pretty tacky, but well-behaved. There is no cover charge but when the music's on they want 9.8 Sfr. (\$7) for a short beer.

For a cheap meal stop at the corner of Marktgassee, number 19, at **Rheinfelder Bier Halle**.

Further on is another Rheinfelder Bier Halle, but this smaller one has more atmosphere.

After a short stroll of perhaps five minutes you'll join the busy street fronting the Limmat. Off to your left about 300 yards is the Bahnhof. Your circuit is complete. ☒

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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ered with four people and luggage. Cost: about \$115 to \$185* per week.

• **Fullsize.** Typical cars: Opel Omega, Renault Safrane. A bit more passenger room and luggage space. Some companies put the BMW 316i in this category, but that is a midsize

car not suitable for four persons. The Mercedes 180C is better but still not as large as the Omega or Safrane. Cost: from about \$251* per week.

• **Wagons.** Come in three sizes: compact (Astra), midsize (Vectra, VW Passat) and fullsize (Volvo 850, Omega). You pay more for a wagon than for the comparable sedan. Holds more luggage but it is often exposed. For four people we like the midsize sedan over the compact wagon; more passenger comfort and almost as much luggage room. In a pinch, the midsize and fullsize wagons can carry five people but someone has to ride in the rear center seat.

No European sedans and wagons we know of have a front bench seat, so carrying six passengers is not an option in these vehicles. Costs: range from about \$114 to \$350* per week.

• **Vans.** Most in Europe are seven or nine-passenger and, with three rows of seating, similar to what is found in the U.S. The nine-passenger assumes three persons per seat — three in front, three in the center seat and three in back. Seven-passenger vans have front buckets, a shorter center bench seat and a rear bench. Minivans are great for four or five people, but beyond that, luggage space can be a problem. Beware of relying on a credit card for CDW and theft insurance when renting a nine-passenger van. Most credit card companies claim these vehicles are on a truck chassis and thus exclude them from their insurance coverage.

Vans become scarce every summer. Book early. It's much cheaper to rent two midsize sedans. Van cost: starting about \$490* per week.

• **Luxury Cars:** Power and engineering make them somewhat safer than the run-of-the-mill Opels and Fords, but at a hefty price. Expect to pay about \$390 per week, not including taxes or airport fees, in Germany for a Mercedes E200 or BMW 520i. Prices go to about \$580 for a Mercedes E320 and over \$1400 for a "S" class Mercedes. — RHB

(* In Germany and exclusive of taxes, CDW or theft insurance or airport surcharges.) ☒

READERS' FORUM

Memorable Meals

I particularly enjoyed your "Dear Subscriber" column in the January issue. After 15 years I still remember the fabulous breakfast buffet at the **Weisses Rössl Hotel** in St. Wolfgang, Austria, as well as the single best meal my wife and I have ever had, our 10th anniversary dinner at the **Waldhotel Fletschhorn**, in Saas-Fee, Switzerland.

We were staying at the Fletschhorn and I gave Hansgeorg Duetsch \$200 for a special "surprise" dinner. His wife, Irma, cooked a spectacular meal for us.

We came into the dining room after most guests had started dinner, so my wife had no idea what the "pension" meal was for the evening.

We had such wonderful dishes as scrambled quail eggs served in their shells, and sauteed frogs' legs served on two clear glass plates with local flowers pressed between the top and bottom plates.

One dessert course consisted of small scoops of six homemade sorbets, decoratively arranged on a serving plate. Each course came with an outstanding bottle of local Valais wine, which by the third course we had to start sharing with our neighboring tables.

The real fun was listening to the rest of the tables, who started muttering almost immediately: "Why are they getting that? We didn't get that course!" It took my wife almost three courses to figure out that something special was happening. I think it was the uproar over the frogs' legs that finally alerted her.

After almost three hours, nine courses and six bottles of Switzerland's finest wines, we repaired to our room for a well-earned rest.

The Fletschhorn and its owners certainly deserve their Michelin star and three red "forks and spoons."

JOHN FELLOWS
TORRANCE CA ☒