

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

April 26, 1999

A Backroads Drive

What we enjoyed most about a recent visit to Liechtenstein was renting a car for a day and getting out into the countryside, stopping here and there to enjoy a view or a peek inside a church.

Foolishly, we didn't plan well and wound up looking for a one-day rental on a Saturday morning. Most agencies were closed but we found one small operator (**Linsi Tours**, tel. +41/075/392 1388) who delivered to our hotel the only vehicle he had available, a very comfortable 7-passenger Peugeot van. Next morning he retrieved his van and dropped us at the rail station in Sargans. The car cost \$215, the pickup and delivery was free.

We wanted to see **Gutenberg Castle** in Balzers, the ski area at Malbun, and, even though it didn't sound like something we'd enjoy, the so-called "Heidiland," over the border into Switzerland, which surprisingly turned out to be the best part of the day.

Even on our 1:200,000 scale map of this area (*Die General Karte #2* for Switzerland), some of the roads and villages mentioned in this story are in very faint print or simply not shown. Before setting out you should stop at the tourist office for directions and advice.

Here's our rough itinerary: Leave Vaduz via the Red Road #28 south toward Sargans. Look for signs to Maels which is behind or south of Balzers. You'll begin to see glimpses of the castle. (Tip: always keep the castle on your left). On Echolz Str. in Maels find the pretty little **Chapel of Maria Hilfe**.

Returning to the main road, there will be fine views of the castle spiraling up out of the vineyards and the old stone church at its right.

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

LIECHTENSTEIN

A business and tourist-friendly little country that offers quiet pastoral villages, good skiing, Michelin-starred restaurants, gorgeous mountains and a real prince and princess.

Liechtenstein seems more like a club than a country, though its members are happy to have you visit as often as you like.

Actually, this little slice of Alpine nirvana is a principality; like Monaco but without the flash and opulence.

Definitely without the opulence. Only the **Bob Bestor** "Princely Castle" and one hotel, the **Sonnenhof**, come anywhere near splendor, and even these are pretty low-key when compared to their counterparts elsewhere in Europe.

So if it's cutting edge culture, grand palaces, and hotels with uniformed doormen you seek, scratch Liechtenstein. For a principality, it's pretty down-home. Even

Hans Adam II and Marie, the Prince and Princess, are occasionally seen shopping (sans bodyguards) in downtown Vaduz and once a year, on August 15, they throw a lawn party for the entire country at which they personally help pour the beer and serve the sausages.

Don't get the wrong idea, Liechtenstein isn't hurting, they just don't flaunt it. This is a tax haven made prosperous by laws favorable to businesses, many of which exist there only on paper. It is thus a country of lawyers and bankers, as well as farmers and princes. Unemployment is counted in dozens rather than thousands or millions.

Liechtensteiners seem to have made a number of smart decisions.

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READERS' FORUM

Snowbound, Part II

This is a response to the "Snowbound" section in the March *Gemütlichkeit* "Dear Subscriber" column.

My impression is that the McKenzie family experiences were not typical, or should not have occurred. It is difficult to sympathize with visitors who were apparently inconvenienced, but not seriously at risk, as were many others at the same time.

The extent of the snowfall was not anticipated. In fact, it was one of the greatest in recent history. The avalanche situation became a regional, actually national, crisis requiring the mobilization of all emergency services, even those of the American military services.

Helicopter evacuation was provided without charge to several thousand guests in the Paznaun valley. In addition, these people were given temporary accommodation, free rail transportation back to their homes in Europe, and even generous assistance to return later to retrieve their automobiles (or to have them shipped home).

Of course, helicopter services were provided as a priority to areas of high risk. Other villages, such as Lech were considered secure, and visitors were urged to stay put. Voluntary departures were at the visitor's own expense. By the following Saturday, the normal end of European vacations, the road connections to Lech had been reopened.

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April, 1999

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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If you have children along, there is a playground below the castle.

At the main road go right toward Switzerland and Maienfeld. Driving up the gentle slope just at the border, you'll see battlements from World War I when Liechtenstein was aligned with Austria. The fortifications were put there to keep the Austrians out of Switzerland.

Then, in a park-like section of open fields and forests, you're suddenly in a Swiss military training area. The realistic Swiss village on your left with the boarded windows is deserted. To the right is more training apparatus; various jumps, obstacles, and overhead cables.

Ahead is the narrow, arched fortress gate through which you'll drive (in the uphill direction you have the right-of-way), and a good spot for a picture down the valley.

Go on through the fortress, past the stables and out a second gate. This rock-lined road is the old San Bernardino route.

Pass through tiny St. Luzisteig and start down hill. You are in "Heidiland," the region which inspired Johanna Spyri's tales of the little Swiss girl and her grandfather.

Stop at the "P4" sign to see the Heidi fountain built with donations from school children. If you've brought food this is a good place to picnic.

Here you can join two Heidi trails, the shortest is about 90 minutes round trip and includes the "Heidihaus" and the wine village of Maienfeld. The second, about four hours, winds much higher to the "Heidialp" and through the village of Jenins. Ignore signs to Heidihof, it is a modern, uninteresting hotel.

Drive on toward Maienfeld, enjoying fine views of the Rhine valley. At **Kunz-Keller** — at the corner with the barrel and signs to Chur and Fläsch — you can buy a bottle or two of the wine for which the town is famous.

Continue in the direction of Chur and at the town center note the mural on the Rathaus wall depicting members of the 1797 city council.

Further on, at the train station, you can pick up a Heidiweg pamphlet from the kiosk. From the station look for signs to Jenins where **Gasthof Bündte** (tel. 41 / 081 / 302 1223) specializes in air-dried meats and local wines.

Beyond the Bündte, go right at the stop sign — back toward Maienfeld — driving up through vineyards toward the Heidihof Hotel. At the large barn continue straight on. This road runs beside high walls protecting the vineyards. You are headed toward Vaduz, actually on the Heidiweg, a very narrow track which you may have to share with walkers, especially in summer. At the four corners, continue straight to the main road where you go right, back toward Vaduz.

In Triesen turn right toward Malbun. As you ascend the hill, look high above the road for a rambling, modern, yellow house. It is the former home of actor, Oscar Werner (*Ship of Fools*). He is buried in Triesen where he frequented the **Restaurant Linde**. Luzia Kindle, Linde's owner, sometimes shows visitors a book of poems written by Werner which he gave her.

From this road, you have the option of a side trip to the **Chapel of St. Mamerten** where a wine festival takes place annually on the weekend after the August 15 "National Day."

At Triesenberg the **Walser Heimatmuseum** rates a 30-minute visit, longer if you decide to watch the film in English.

Then just before the tunnel, the final link to Malbun, is a small restaurant, the **Rizlina**. Its deck has a wonderful view down the Rhine Valley and the simple food is worth a stop (see story page 5).

Leaving Rizlina, continue up the mountain to the aforementioned narrow tunnel. Watch the signal when entering, proceeding only if there is a flashing yellow light. Stop if it is red.

In Steg is cross-country skiing, a toboggan run, and a small rustic hotel. Malbun, at the end of the road, is where Prince Charles skis when visiting Prince Hans Adam II.

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Coming Soon: www.gemut.com, the website for travelers to Germany, Austria & Switzerland

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	Scale	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.

LIECHTENSTEIN

Continued from page 1

If you were running a small European country, and wanted to “out-source” a few services, who would you choose? Of course. Thus the telephones, the bus system, and the money are all Swiss, even though the country’s ties with Austria go back hundreds of years and the current Prince is Austrian. But you’ll want to keep the postage stamp rights because, coming from such a tiny country, they’ll become valuable and be a tourist attraction. So Swiss postage stamps don’t work in Liechtenstein.

As a travel destination, two words spring to mind when contemplating Liechtenstein: restful and intriguing. Intriguing simply because itty bitty countries that call themselves principalities are by definition that way; and restful because you’re in the country. And a beautiful country it is, with pretty villages, vineyards, green rolling farmland, and a few backroads, all back-dropped by breathtaking mountains.

Give yourself two or three full days to see it. There is no rail system so your options are car or bus. For the ultimate in flexibility, we prefer the former. If you arrive by train, as we did, the closest you can get is Feldkirch in Austria or Buchs or Sargans in Switzerland. From these you can catch one of the frequent postal buses to Vaduz.

Those who want to ski at Malbun — in the mountains about 30 minutes above Vaduz — may want to stay longer. There are four lifts and 12 miles of slopes with a vertical drop of 1270 feet. At Steg, near Malbun, cross country skiers glide over 11 miles of groomed tracks through the Valüna valley. One-week packages including seven nights’ hotel, breakfast, dinner, and six-day lift pass are offered at about \$400 to \$1,000 per person. Contact the Liechtenstein Tourist Office (see box this page).

Liechtenstein is, of course, full of walking trails and paths. The free *Tourist Guide 1999*, available at tourist offices throughout the country, outlines 19 different walking/hiking routes, from simple, one-hour walks

Liechtenstein Info

Population: 31,000

Capital: Vaduz (pop. 4,977)

Altitude: 468 meters/1,536 ft. (Vaduz)

Area: 61.8 square miles

Tourist Information:

Städtle 37, FL 9490 Vaduz, tel. +41/075/232 1443, fax 392 1618. Web: www.searchlink.li/tourist/index.asp

Distance from:


Frankfurt	550 Km/342 miles
Geneva	400 Km/250 miles
Milan	300 Km/186 miles
Munich	250 Km/155 miles
Vienna	670 Km/416 miles
Zürich	110 Km/68 miles

Arriving by Train: There are frequent bus connections from rail stations at Sargans (CH) (17 km/11 miles from Vaduz), Buchs (CH) (7 km/4 miles from Vaduz) and Feldkirch/Austria (15 km/9 miles from Vaduz) to all Liechtenstein communities.

Liechtenstein by Bus: Buses run often to all villages in the country. A weekly pass costs 10 Sfr. (\$7) and can be purchased at post offices as well as at bus stations in Buchs, Trübbach and Sargans.

Liechtenstein Postage Stamps:

The principality issues postage stamps four times a year at the beginning of March, June, September and December. This is usually a total of about 25 stamps with a face value of approx. 35 Sfr. (\$24).

Stamps can be purchased at all post offices and collectors of Liechtenstein stamps can place a standing order for new issues. A brochure about this is available from: Postwertzeichenstelle der Regierung, FL-9490 Vaduz, tel. +41/075/236 64 44, fax 236 66 55. 

to hard mountain treks.

The de rigueur Vaduz tourist stops include the Liechtenstein **Museum of Art** (Liechtensteinische Kunstsammlungen), where the Prince’s Art Collection is housed; the **National Museum** (Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum), which highlights the history of the principality; and the **Postage Stamp Museum** (Briefmarkenmuseum). The castle is also in Vaduz but, being the residence of the princely family, it is not open to the public.

But don’t stop there; rent a car for a day or two and see this charming little country from stem to stern (see Dear Subscriber). After a while you’ll want to know how to become a member of the “club.”

Hotels

Park-Hotel Sonnenhof
Pleasantly situated on lush grounds in a posh residential neighborhood on a forested hill above Vaduz.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Inside, the feeling is of being in a discreetly luxurious private residence. Decor and furnishings are underrated but top quality.

The most desirable rooms are the 12 like Number 32, a spacious double with separate seating area and private balcony. The hotel calls these junior suites and prices them starting at 390 Sfr. (\$264). In addition there are eight smaller, but equally well-equipped and furnished, doubles and nine singles.

There is an indoor pool, sauna and all around the hotel, both inside and out, are agreeable little niches inviting guests to sit for a quiet hour or two.

The Real family (son of Restaurant-Hotel Real in Vaduz) and their capable managers extend a welcome of genuine warmth. A stay at the Sonnenhof will be a memorable experience.

Daily Rates: Singles 190 to 280 Sfr. (\$128-\$189), doubles 320 to 450 Sfr. (\$216-\$331).

Contact: Park-Hotel Sonnenhof, Marestrasse 29, FL-9490 Vaduz, tel. +41/075 232 11 92, fax 232 00 53, email real@sonnenhof.lol.li, Web: www.relaischateaux.fr/sonnenhof. Prop: Real Family

Rating: QUALITY 18/20, VALUE 14/20

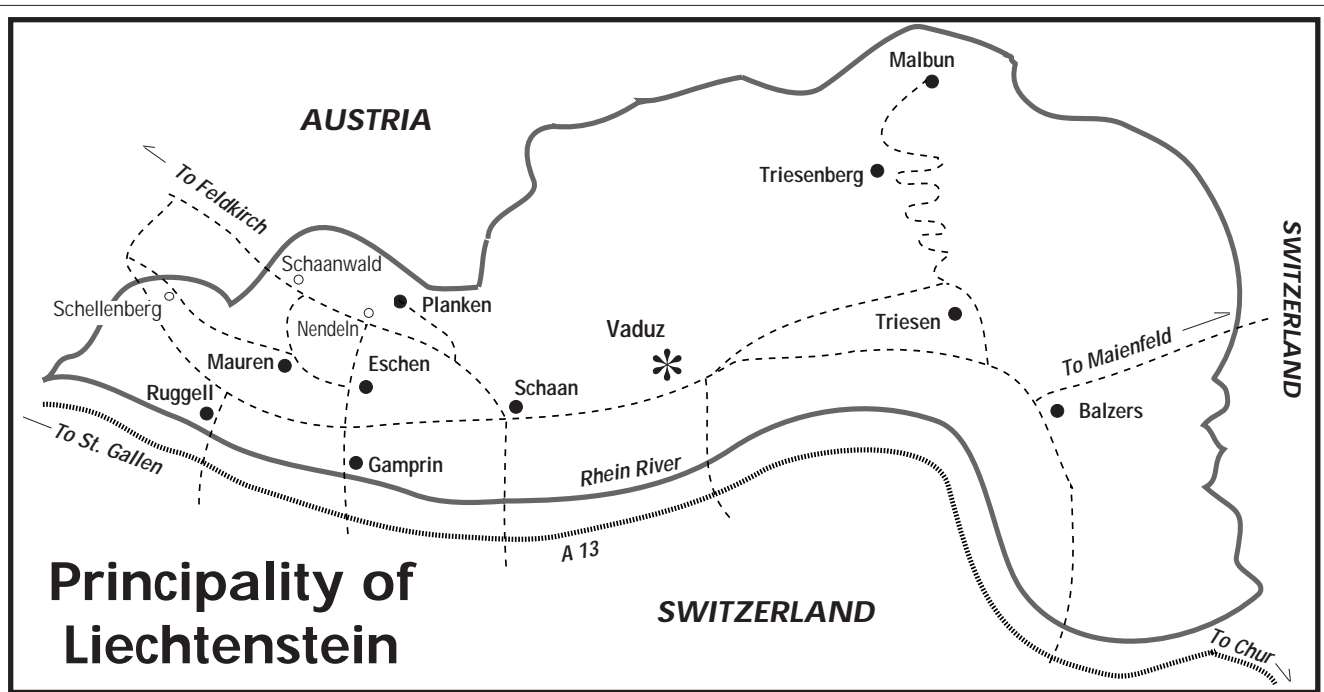
Gasthof Löwen

Seven gloriously refurbished guest rooms with period furnishings and gleaming state-of-the-art bathrooms are featured at the 600-year-old Löwen, a rustic gem of a hotel set in the vineyards of Vaduz.

The four best rooms, with multiple windows and huge, antique, carved wooden beds, rent for — gulp — 300 Sfr. (\$203).

In summer, the hotel’s restaurant moves outdoors to the edge of the vineyard where it becomes a Vaduz focal point. It is, in fact, the country’s

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Principality of Liechtenstein

most sought-after dinner reservation for viewing the annual fireworks on "National Day," August 15.

The Löwen has a load of charm but the price is a little steep.

Daily Rates: Singles 180 to 230 Sfr (\$122-\$155), doubles 220 to 300 Sfr (\$149-\$203).

Contact: Löwen, Herrengasse 35, FL-9490 Vaduz, tel. +41/075 232 00 66, fax 232 04 58, Web: www.hotels.li/loewen. Prop: F & A Gantenbein

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 7/20

Hotel Real

In a 60s-style building in the center of Vaduz's shopping district, the Real is famed for its restaurant — one Michelin star — but also has a dozen rooms for rent. There are two suites and 10 clean, comfortable, well-equipped, slightly undersized singles or doubles.

The simplicity of these rooms is somewhat in contrast to the elegance of the hotel's dining rooms.

Other than the restaurants, and a small but pleasant lounge adjacent to the first floor (our second) reception, there are no public rooms or other facilities.

Daily Rates: Singles 170 Sfr. (\$115), doubles 175 to 270 Sfr. (\$118-\$182), Jr. suites 310 to 395 Sfr. (\$209-\$267)

Contact: Real Hotel Restaurant,

Städtle 21, FL-9490 Vaduz, Fürstentstein, Liechtenstein, tel. +41/075 232 22 22, fax 232 08 91

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 10/20

Hotel Mühle

On the edge of Vaduz, on the main road from the north, Mühle is the best value we saw in Liechtenstein. It is a *Landgasthof*, an official Swiss Hotel Association designation for restaurants with guestrooms. Qualifying establishments must meet certain standards of service and cuisine.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The first impression here is of having entered a rather major hotel and restaurant operation. However, the restaurant accounts for most of the activity as the Mühle has only seven rooms to rent. But excepting the Sonnenhof, the Löwen and the Schlosswald, these accommodations are the equal of any of the other hotels reviewed here.

Daily Rates: Singles 90 Sfr (\$61), doubles 140 Sfr (\$95)

Contact: Mühle, Vaduz FL -9490, tel. +41/075 232 41 41, fax 232 14 58.

Prop: Martin Jehle

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotels Schlosswald & Meierhof

Two large, modern, business-style hotels on the hillside above the main north-south highway overlooking the Rhine valley and sharing the

same property and ownership.

The well-equipped guestrooms are above average in size and quite appealing though somewhat sterile.

The Schlosswald is preferred.

Contact: Hotel Schlosswald, Meierhofstrasse FL-9495 Triesen, tel. +41/075/392 24 88, fax 392 24 36. Prop: August Kindle

Daily Rates: Singles 125 to 140 Sfr. (\$84-\$95), doubles 175 to 200 Sfr. (\$118-\$135)

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 11/20

Contact: Hotel Meierhof, FL-9495 Triesen, tel. +41/075/399 00 11, fax 399 00 88, email meierhof@hotels.li. Prop: Elke and Roland Kindle

Daily Rates: Singles 114 to 160 Sfr. (\$77-\$108), doubles 162 to 450 Sfr. (\$109-\$304).

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 8/20

Hotel Kulm

Conveniently located on Triesenberg's main square, about halfway up the side of the mountain toward Malbun, this rustic, country hotel offers some rooms with outstanding views but is otherwise undistinguished.

The Kulm's restaurant, however, offers good daily specials for under 20 Sfr. (\$14).

Daily Rates: Singles 90 Sfr. (\$61), doubles 112 to 152 Sfr (\$76-\$103).
Contact: Hotel Kulm, FL-9497 Triesenberg, tel. +41/075/262 87 77, fax 268 28 61. Prop: Family Schädler
Rating: QUALITY 9/20, VALUE 10/10

Restaurants

Restaurant Real

Michelin does not throw its restaurant stars about willy nilly. The city of Zürich, for example, has not even one; not the **Kronenhalle**, not **Baur au Lac**, not the **Savoy**, not the **Dolder Grand**. Thus our expectations for the Real were high.

There are two dining rooms; a bright, elegant one on the first floor with chandeliers and starched linen, and the one we chose, the less formal, clubbier one at street level.

The look is red cloths and napkins, wine glasses engraved with an "R," and rich wood walls and ceiling.

The wine list is extensive and pricey. A 1991 Robert Mondavi Cabernet Reserve is 170 Sfr. (\$115), a '67 Chateaux Mouton-Rothschild (which we recently had the opportunity to taste and found to be way, way, way over the hill) was 300 Sfr. (\$203) and a 1996 Petrus was marked 1,500 Sfr. (\$1,014). We chose one of the cheapest on the list, a 1997 Vaduzer Blau Burgunder from Harry Zech Weinbau, at 55 Sfr. (\$37). It was light and "spritzig" on the tongue, better suited for light meals or as an aperitif.

The four-course dinner menu at 149 Sfr. (\$100) per person seemed formidable both in price and quantity so we went a simpler route and ordered a salad, main courses and dessert. Without beverages, the total for two persons was 121 Sfr. (\$82).

The salad was served from a cart — a kind of moveable salad bar — and cost 11 Sfr. (\$7.43). We simply indicated what we wanted and the server put it on the plate. Very fresh ingredients and tasty.

The main courses — *Wiener Backhendl* (a large leg of fried chicken) and *Saucisson* (a thick, curling sausage) — were ample and satisfying but hardly the stuff of Michelin stars. Each was priced at 29 Sfr. (\$20).

We divided a dessert (17.5 Sfr./\$12) of vanilla ice cream ladled with passion fruit sauce and surrounded by slices of fig, strawberry, kiwi, banana and apple. It was delicious but not especially creative.

And there were a couple of missteps. The kitchen was out of *Tafelspitz* (boiled beef, a house specialty), something we didn't find out until we tried to order it. A glass of 1977 Dow port (23 Sfr./\$16), one of the great port vintages of the century, was such a disappointment one wonders if someone accidentally grabbed the wrong bottle. (It is customary in many restaurants, when a rare wine is purchased by the glass, for it to be poured from the bottle at the table. In this case, the wine was poured elsewhere and delivered to us.)

It isn't fair to judge a restaurant based on these admittedly simple dishes, so perhaps if we had chosen the more expensive four-course menu we would have a different opinion, but with that Michelin star fixed in our minds, we felt let down. Hotel-Restaurant Real, Städtle 21, FL-9490 Vaduz, tel. +41/075 232 22 22, fax 232 08 91

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 9/20

Wirtschaft zum Löwen

The old wooden building is protected as an historic monument and located on a quiet country road just before the Austrian border in Schellenberg. The Löwen has been in the same family for generations and Liechtensteiners consider it almost a national treasure. The clientele is decidedly local, not many tourists get this far off the beaten track.

Come here to try traditional Liechtensteiner farm recipes that go back hundreds of years such as *Schwartenmagen hausgemacht mit Senfsauce* (house-made head cheese with mustard, 6 Sfr./\$4 as an appetizer) or a Liechtenstein version of macaroni and cheese, *Käseknöpfle mit Apfelmus* (tiny dumplings in cheese with applesauce, 18 Sfr./\$12, as a main course including salad). Both were excellent.

This is one of those down-home

places where time-tested dishes are perfectly prepared with the best ingredients and the portions are huge (to avoid the dreaded "second serving" specify *Teller Gericht*).

One tradition that many Americans may not find appealing as an after dinner activity is the house snuff machine. We dined with a local resident who insisted we try it. Here's how it works. The machine is actually a board about eight inches square with a sort of clothespin/mousetrap device on it. A little snuff — in this case a brand called Löwen-Prise from Germany — is placed strategically at two spots on the board about half an inch apart. The board is then lifted to the nose and the "snuffee" inhales slowly but deeply while at the same time tripping the clothespin/mousetrap device with his or her index finger. The snuff is propelled straight up into both nostrils and the result is quite startling and not at all, at least to this writer, unpleasant. There is a sense of menthol and the nasal passages suddenly feel as though they have been expanded to size of the Gotthard tunnel.

As we looked around the restaurant we saw other patrons using the machine and our companion told us snuff use has somewhat of a following in Liechtenstein but can be habit-forming.

We finished the meal with another Liechtenstein tradition, a shot of Marc, the local firewater. Some of the best is made from Pinot Noir grapes by the Hopfkellerei des Fürsten von Liechtenstein, the Prince's winery. Local legend has it that a shot of this first thing in the morning and another before bed is a healthy practice.

Whether or not you're game for the snuff machine, the Wirtschaft zum Löwen is not to be missed. Wirtschaft zum Löwen, FL-9488 Schellenberg, tel. +41/075/31162
Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Panorama Restaurant Rizlina

Beside the road, hanging off the steep hillside on the way up to Malbun, is the very plain Rizlina. The view is spectacular and the food

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LIECHTENSTEIN

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excellent, including owner Ursula Schädler's mayonnaise and oil-based herb salad dressing which is as good as any we've ever had.

A bowl of soup, such as a fabulous *Gerstensuppe* (barley and white beans), or an almost as good *Leberknödelsuppe*, is 7.5 Sfr. (\$5). *Wurstsalat Garniert* (13 Sfr./\$9) was enough for two and included slices of *Wurst* with the freshest butter lettuce, diced beets, radish strips, shredded carrot, and curried corn, all bathed in that wonderful dressing.

Nussgipfel, a house dessert speciality consisting of walnut and hazelnut filling rolled into a jelly roll-like pastry, was a little dry.

Restaurant Rizlina, FL-9497 Triesenberg, tel. +41/075/262 0224

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 15/20 ☒

READERS' FORUM

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Had the McKenzies followed these guidelines, it is unlikely that they would have any tale whatsoever to relate.

During the crisis week, our company had over 200 guests in various parts of the Alps in all possible problem permutations: guests in resorts that could not get out, guests out of resorts that could not get in, and even a few in relatively normal circumstances!

The reactions of the McKenzie family were certainly not those communicated by our guests. Using cellular telephones, we were able to keep in contact with our staff and guests in isolated locations, even when (rarely) telephones and electricity were out. Overall, people took the situation in stride, and even viewed it somewhat as a travel adventure.

We did not anticipate the stress on our American office.

First, one of our staff was from Galtür. Although it rapidly became apparent that her family was safe, it is an enormous impact losing six lives in a village of under six hundred. (Plus, of course, over 30 visitors.)

Second, we did not anticipate the wave of inquiries, some by phone, but mainly by Internet from all over the world, which peaked at about 20 per hour. For the better part of a week, updating and communication became a round-the-clock operation.

It is nothing short of amazing the differences that modern telecommunications have made. Special Internet sites were created, where we could obtain literally up-to-the-hour situation reports. We received continuous live newsfeeds, and even quasi-live video pictures from Austrian television ("Zeit im Bild").

My favorite compliment came from an engineer in the Czech Republic who was amazed that he could obtain faster, more-detailed, information from Houston, halfway around the world.

A measure of the resilience and confidence of our customers is that we did not have a single cancellation among over 400 guests departing on the weekend following the crisis. (Actually, we find it strange that Kosovo is causing greater concern.)

In these circumstances, to suggest "LITIGATION" is an inappropriate conclusion.

There is never any excuse for false or misleading information, or discourtesy in honoring tickets. However, your readers might better have been served by drawing their attention to the magnitude of the crisis and the valiant actions taken to achieve resolution.

RICHARD DAVIDSON
HOUSTON TX

(Ed. Note: Mr. Davidson is President of SkiEurope/AustroTours, a company which operates ski vacation tours to Europe, particularly Austria. He is also a longtime Gemütlichkeit subscriber who makes several valid and enlightening points.

We presented the McKenzie story because it was an interesting firsthand account of a tourist in a situation most of our readers could identify with. That this family was merely inconvenienced while many others, at exactly the same time, were suffering terribly is an absolutely right-on point that we probably should have made instead of merely telling the story. We must say, however, that if the

McKenzies' were actually not told about Lech's isolation until 48 hours after the fact, their hotel acted irresponsibly.

As to the "can you spell LITIGATION" remark, it was a failed attempt at humor and was based on a cryptic comment Mr. McKenzie made regarding the bus line operator who struck him during their argument over the validity of the family's bus tickets. His comment was in the Financial Times story but left out of our synopsis of it.

If, in telling the McKenzie story, Gemütlichkeit seemed insensitive to the thousands who truly suffered as a result of these storms, it was not intended and we apologize to anyone who has been offended.)

Salzburg Hotel Find

Just read the *Gemütlichkeit* issue on Salzburg hotels. Here is another hotel in Salzburg that no one ever mentions. Stayed here in 1995 and again in 1998.

That is the **Apostolatshaus der Pallottiner** (Mönchsberg 24, Postfach 501, A-5010 Salzburg, tel. +43/0662/846543, fax 846347-86). The location is spectacular on top of the Mönchsberg while, at the same time, right in the center of the city.

The Apostolatshaus is near the **Cafe Winkler** and an easy walk to the Hohensalzburg or a quick elevator ride down to the old city.

Rooms are especially clean. Private shower and WC, but no telephone or TV. Breakfast included.

Cost in peak season for a double for two nights was 1780 AS, or about \$70 per night. Much less cost than those other places on the left bank (I've stayed there) and far more peaceful and picturesque.

They very much want more tourists. The place was not very full last July.

JOHN KOELLER
BY EMAIL

Grindelwald Hideaway

We would like to tell you about our hidden gem in Grindelwald, Switzerland.

We have visited the **Chalet-Hotel Alte Post** (fax +41/33/8534288) at least five times during the past seven years and it has been always a

delightful stay. The hotel has 14 double rooms with balcony views of the Eiger. It is located adjacent to the First Station lift and across the street from the **Sunstar Hotel**. The rooms are spacious and super clean with full baths. Our room last September, Number 35, was 180 Sfr. (\$122) with breakfast.

An added bonus is the kitchen. Rudi and Anagret are the owners with Rudi in charge of the kitchen and Ana the hotel as well as the hostess for the evening meal. A delightful couple and an excellent place to stay in Grindelwald.

KEITH MOORED
GRANDVILLE MI

Ehrwald Accommodations

Enclosed is information about the **Sporthotel Alpenhof** (Alpenhofstr. 13, A-6632 Ehrwald, +43 5673 2345, fax: 2345 52, email: hotel@alpenhof-ehrwald.at, double rooms about \$165 per day including breakfast and dinner).

The reason we keep returning there is because of the innkeepers, the Pesendorfer family and their astonishing staff. They are so charming and accommodating to everyone that even though most of their guests are from Europe, they accept Americans quite cordially. Certainly their treatment of us has been superb.

Also included is information on the **Alpenappartements Cristall**, (Thörleweg 34, A-6632 Ehrwald, tel. +43/5673 23760, fax 5673 2228, apartments for two from about \$60 per day).

The two families who run the building are delightful and try to help in anyway they can. We have spent several winter vacations there because it was so much less expensive and it allowed us the freedom to eat where and when we wished instead of taking half-board. There are lovely small markets in town where meat and produce and necessities can be bought and it is very easy to cook in the apartment. There are many, many Dutch people who visit there for the holidays in February and they always are nice and easy with Americans. This is a place for families on small budgets.

The activities in Ehrwald and the

entire valley are rather simple. They include cross-country and downhill skiing in winter. In summer, the walking is superb and can either be very demanding or very easy. Both these choices offer so much to quiet, thoughtful American travelers and their families. There are no "bells and whistles" in this town but there are such superb opportunities to enjoy the countryside without any real problems as long as "attitude" is left at home in America. These are very nice, loving people who have become friends over the years. So this recommendation is totally biased.

Thank you for *Gemütlichkeit*, we love it and use it when we travel. In a world gone mad with technology and instant gratification, it is so reassuring to find a publication that simply describes what is available and how to enjoy it.

ANNE PATRICIA SMITH
STONY BROOK NY ☒

Europe Travel Briefs

■ It's getting easier to obtain money from a machine in Europe. The **Swiss Postal Service** and **Visa** now offer Visa card holders access to 570 Postomats (ATMs) throughout Switzerland.

You can withdraw up to 1000 Sfr. (\$676) per day anywhere in Switzerland, 24 hours a day. The Postomat cash dispenser network covers all towns and major localities nationwide. Make sure you have a four digit pin number.

■ While it may be getting easier to get money from a European ATM it's not getting any cheaper to use a credit card overseas. On the contrary. According to *Consumer Reports Travel Newsletter*, **First USA Visa** and **Mastercard** customers are now being hit with a 2% surcharge on all credit-card purchases made outside the USA. (Citibank card holders had already been paying the 2% gouge). This is in addition to the 1% currency conversion surcharge Visa and Mastercard are already passing on to

customers.

This means, of course, that for every \$1,000 in overseas credit card purchases cardholders will pay \$30 to Visa or Mastercard. However, since they get their bank's foreign currency exchange rate when making overseas purchases, it still is cheaper to use credit cards. You can't change \$1,000 into foreign currency for less than \$30. The banks know this; hence the new charges. **Providian Bank** in San Francisco charges its Visa and Mastercard holders a whopping 5%

American Express and Diner's Club continue to charge just 1%.

■ Here's a rundown on Switzerland's major summer festivals:

Zürich Festival
June 26 to July 18

Started three years ago, the Züricher Festspiele presents a wide variety of cultural events including opera, chamber music, choral works, Shakespearean theater, ballet and even tango. Tel. +41/01/269 90 90, fax 269 70 25. Web site: www.zuercher-festspiele.ch

Montreux Jazz Festival
July 2 to 17

One of Switzerland's top events presents the world's best musicians in a great setting. Tel: +41/021/963 82 82. Web site: www.montreuxjazz.com

Verbier Festival & Academy
July 16 to August 1

The year's program features classical music, jazz, theater, dance and master classes. Sir Neville Martinson and James Levine will both conduct the Symphony Orchestra of the Curtis Institute. A chamber music series will showcase Elisabeth Leonskaja and Sarah Chang and a "Tribute To Broadway" features Harold Prince, Joel Grey and Teresa Stratas. Tel. +41/021/922 40 10, fax 922 40 12, email: info@verbierfestival.com

Music Summer Gstaad-Saenenland
July 16 to September 4

This year's festival will pay homage to composers from Dvorak to Chopin, who died 150 years ago this summer. Tel. +41/033/748 83 38, fax 748 83 39, email:

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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On the way back down the mountain, just past the Rizlina, turn right to Rotenboden. Here, the road is narrow with rock walls on the uphill side and wood railings on downhill. The **Restaurant Samina** (tel. +41/075/262 2339) has a reputation for good food and excellent views from its terrace.

From this point, you should return to the valley by way of Triebenberg. — RHB

TRAVEL BRIEFS

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musiksommer@gstaad.ch; Web site: www.musiksommer.ch

Vevey Festival of the Winegrowers
July 29 to August 15

More than half a million visitors are expected for this rare event, held but once each generation. This is only the 11th festival since 1783. The program will consist of concerts, theater, parades and reenactments of historic traditions presented by a troupe of 4,600 performers. Tel. +41/021/(922 20 20, fax 922 20 24; email: tourism@vevey.ch; Web site: www.fetedesvignerons.ch

Locarno International Film Festival
August 4 to 14

Variety calls Locarno one of the world's six top film festivals. Films are shown at various screening theaters and at an outdoor theater in the Piazza Grande on a giant 85 ft. x 46 ft. screen. Tel. +41/091/7510232; fax 7517465; email: pardo@tinet.ch

Lucerne International Music Festival
August 14 to September 11

One of the world's top classical music festivals celebrates its 61st anniversary this summer with a series of 18 symphony concerts and a new series of midday concerts. Tel. +41/041/22644 80, fax 22644 85, email: LucerneMusic@LucerneMusic.ch; Web site: www.LucerneMusic.ch

Berne Dance Festival
August 27 to September 11
The country's leading celebration

Preparing for Europe's New Currency - The Euro

The euro, introduced January 4, 1999, is a new common currency among 11 participating countries — Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain and Portugal. European Union countries Britain, Denmark and Sweden, have chosen not to participate, for now. Switzerland is not an EU members. .

• How does the euro affect North American tourists now?

Because it does not immediately eliminate national currencies, the euro's impact will initially be limited. It is important to know that *all transactions with paper money and coins will continue in national currencies through Jan. 1, 2002*; only then will euro bank notes and coins be issued.

You can, however, purchase and spend euro-denominated traveler's checks. (*Gemütlichkeit* no longer recommends traveler's checks — use your ATM card or a credit card to obtain cash in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.) In addition, when making purchases by charge card, you can be charged in either euros or the national currency. (It's up to the seller; the conversion into dollars on your chargecard bill will be exactly the same amount either way.) Many hotel brochures, for example, already list rates in both local currency and euros.

On Jan. 1, 2002, U.S. visitors will begin receiving only euros when exchanging dollars in banks and at ATM machines, although national currencies may still be used in transactions with individuals and businesses. By July 1, 2002, however, it will be all euros in the 11 countries.

Here's what you can expect during the three-year transition period:

• **When exchanging dollars for notes or coins, you will still receive marks, schillings, etc.** These national currencies have, in actuality, become denominations of the euro. Their value is fixed to the euro and their exchange rate versus the dollar is determined by dollar-euro fluctuations. For instance, if the dollar gains 5% versus the euro, it will gain 5% versus the franc and mark as well.

The euro and the participating 11 national currencies now also fluctuate in tandem against all other currencies, such as the nonparticipating British pound and Swiss franc.

• **When exchanging one of the 11 national currencies for another, the rate will not fluctuate.** As of Jan. 1, 1999, when these currencies were fixed permanently to the euro, they were also fixed permanently vis-a-vis each other. No fees can be charged when converting euros to a member national currency and vice versa.

• **Many prices are already posted in BOTH national currencies and in euros.** This is intended to acquaint the public with the value of the euro during the transition period. *Again, all purchases with paper notes and coins are in the national currencies.*

• **Comparison shopping from country to country should become simpler.** Some believe this will tend to push up prices in less expensive regions and push down prices in high-cost areas.

of dance is staged in an old power plant on the banks of the River Aare as well as in bars and restaurants scattered around the Swiss historic capital, Tel. +41/031/376 03 03, fax 371 03 33; email: bernertanztage@access.ch

Blues to Bop & Worldmusic Festival
Lugano, September 2 - 5

Over 100 hours of free entertainment including country, folk, ragtime, jazz, be-bop, and the blues in piazzas all over the city. Tel: +41/091/913 32 32, fax 922 76 53, email: info@lugano-tourism.ch