

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

August 30, 1999

Travel Planning on the Web

A few minutes ago I logged on to the www.gemut.com web site and in the *Members' Library* page I initiated a search using the word "Internet." That is how I determined that *Gemütlichkeit's* first mention of that word was in the September, 1995, issue.

That month, your editor wrote a short piece about going "online" for travel planning and booking. The conclusion was that it was still easier to book flights, hotels and car rentals the conventional way, via telephone, and that real online travel planning was still in the "someday" category.

"Someday" has arrived. The Internet is rich with travel information. Typing the words "Europe travel" in the Alta Vista search engine yields over 3,500 Websites. The phrase "Germany Hotels" coughs up some 1,600 sites. Unfortunately, the first of the "Europe travel" sites Alta Vista listed was someone's amateur photos taken on a trip to Italy, a happenstance that underscores one of the Web's problems: separating the useful from the useless.

On that score, perhaps we can help. What follows is a list of sites of interest to the traveler to Germany, Austria & Switzerland. We have starred**** the ones we think are the most useful.

Gemütlichkeit****
www.gemut.com

Our own site. Not quite completed but usable. Right now you have free access to five years of reader recommendations, a list of links to pertinent Websites, car rental and rail travel tips and advice, and our *Hot Deals* page, continually updated with the latest and best airline, hotel, auto rental and travel package deals.

In addition, for \$4 per month (minimum six months), current subscribers

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

LÜBECK

The business center of the old Hanseatic League and still one of Germany's busiest ports, Lübeck hasn't lost its medieval charm and character.

Thomas Mann, one of Lübeck's most famous native sons, paid a fictional visit to the old town in his novel *Tonio Kröger*: "The narrow gables and pointed towers that greeted him over the nearest roofs... Good heavens, how tiny and crooked it all seemed! Had the narrow alleys always climbed with such quaint steepness up toward the town?" After our recent visit, we can assure Thomas Mann that yes, Lübeck's alleys remain narrow and quaint, and its towers and crooked gables still tilt up at the sky.

In fact, Lübeck retains so much of its medieval character that the entire *Altstadt* was named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1987. Lübeck's

crooked skyline, whose idiosyncrasies Thomas Mann played up in his novels, was deemed particularly noteworthy by the UNESCO commission. Our window at the **Mövenpick Hotel** (see page 5) provided a perfect view of that quirky medieval cityscape: a confection of fantastic church spires and a pre-industrial maze of twisting alleys, fronted by the massive pile of glazed brick known as the **Holstentor** or Holsten Gate. The Trave Canal wraps its broad ribbons of water around the *Altstadt*, and wooden boats bob up and down in front of the old salt warehouses that line the docks.

The old city core begs to be explored on foot at a leisurely pace; visitors should set aside at least an entire day to absorb its atmosphere.

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Waldhotel Doldenhorn

I am lying on the right side of the bed in room Number 205 of the **Waldhotel Doldenhorn** in Kandersteg, less than an hour by car or train into the Bernese Alps from Interlaken. It is my favorite room in one of my favorite hotels.

I have only to move my head slightly to the right for a straight-on view of the graceful strips of waterfall that drop perhaps a thousand feet from the high meadow shelf past a sheer rock face to the valley floor. Even for Switzerland, it is spectacular.

The Doldenhorn is an authentic country hotel, tucked amongst a few dozen tall, straight pines at the base

of the mountains that ring the Kander valley. It is located at the valley's southern end where it narrows just before the Löthschberg Tunnel; the falls are less than a mile away across the flat valley floor.

This is a corner room; to my left are French doors opening to a protected balcony that overlooks a small pond in a stand of trees. Through the open doors burbles the sound of the little creek that tumbles off the mountain and through the property. Directly below this room is the outdoor terrace and the hotel's new, all-glass wintergarden.

If our travel didn't require us to continually seek new Doldenhorns,

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EDITOR'S
CHOICE

By Bob
Bestor

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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can access a searchable database of 85 back issues (more coming). This is copyrighted material, but for your personal use you can quickly download to your own hard disk, every issue of *Gemütlichkeit* ever printed. I urge you to log-on, take a look around, leave your recommendations and comments on the *Reader Comments* page and, if you wish, sign up to use the *Members' Library*. We intend to make gemut.com an absolutely essential resource for the traveler to Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

The German Way****

www.german-way.com/german/
Collection of links to sites of interest to those seeking information about Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Great article here on using cell phones in Europe.

Rail Timetables****

bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en
Rail timetables for Germany and the rest of Europe. Invaluable site.

Currency Converter

www.travelnotes.org/General/currencies.htm
Quick and easy for the arithmetically challenged.

European Weather****

www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/weather/europe.htm
Outstanding site by the *Washington Post* provides weather status in most major European cities.

Lufthansa

www.lufthansa.com

LTU

www.ltu.com
Some good links.

Internet Café Guide

www.netcafes.com/
Internet connection from most European hotels is still very difficult. Search by country or city to find public places in Europe (and all over the world) to surf the Web and pick up email.

Austrian Tourist Office (U.S.)

www.anto.com/
Schedules and ticket ordering info on musical events, including the Staatsoper, Volksoper and symphonic performances.

Austrian Tourist Service****

www.alpen.net/austria/
Good overall Austria tourism site with several useful links.

Austrian Rail Schedules

www.oebb.at/
But not in English.

Austrian Airlines

www.aua.com/
Graz Info
www.graztourism.at/
Good hotel locator.

Salzburg Online

www.salzburg.com/engl/
Good hotel locator.

Vienna Online

www.vienna.at/
Nice Website but only in German.

Wien Online

www.magwien.gv.at/english/
Good general info Vienna web site.

Vienna Scene****

info.wien.at/e/index.htm
Vienna Tourist Board site. Excellent

hotel finder. Click also on *Info & Service* to go to an address locator map.

Vienna Airport

www.viennaairport.com/

German Tourist Board****

www.germany-tourism.de/
Top feature is *Events & Highlights*. Specify a time period plus areas of interest from 16 categories — music festivals, food, folk events, theater, etc. — to produce a list of events from the selected areas of interest that occur within the requested time period.

German Beer

www.beer.de/
Much info on German beer. Links to beer museums.

Expatriots Living & Working Germany****

expats.cjb.net/
Terrific site, loaded with dozens of useful links. Contains excerpts from the locally published *How To Germany* newsletter. Topics covered include customs and courtesies, banking, food, language, telephone, medical, train travel, driving, shopping. One link is entitled "Training for Germany" and

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Notes for Readers

- Foreign currency prices are converted to U.S. dollars at the exchange rate in effect at the time of publication.
- Hotel prices listed are for one night. Discounts are often available for longer stays.
- All hotel prices include breakfast unless otherwise noted.
- Local European telephone area codes carry the "0" required for in-country dialing. To phone establishments from outside the country, such as from the USA, do not dial the first "0".

Vol. 13, No. 8
August, 1999

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

Publishers: Robert H. & Elizabeth S. Bestor
Editor: Robert H. Bestor
Contributing Editors: C. Fischer, R. Holliday,
Nikki Goth Itoi
Web Master: Paul T. Merschdorf
Consulting Editor: Thomas P. Bestor
Subscription Dept: Andy Bestor, K. Steffans

Gemütlichkeit (ISSN 10431756) is published monthly by UpCountry Publishing, 288 Ridge Road, Ashland OR 97520. TOLL FREE: 1-800/521-6722 or 541/488-8462, fax: 541/488-8468, e-mail gemut@mind.net. Web site: www.gemut.com. Subscriptions are \$67 per year for 12 issues. While every effort is made to provide correct information in this publication, the publishers can make no guarantees regarding accuracy.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO:
Gemütlichkeit, 288 Ridge Road., Ashland OR 97520

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.

LÜBECK

Continued from page 1

Lübeck has a decidedly provincial, small-town feel, but with enough interesting restaurants, shops, and cultural events to support a visit of several days. Like the other Hanseatic ports of call in our series on Northern Germany, Lübeck is strategically located on a major waterway, so a boat excursion, preferably on a "traditional sailing ship," is also a must. In addition, Lübeck makes a convenient base of operations for exploring the surrounding countryside and the Lauenburg lake district. During the summer, camping, kayaking, and hiking tours can be arranged through the local tourist office. (Kanzleigebäude, Breite Strasse, tel. +49/0451/122 8106. Open M-F 9:30-6pm, Sat. and Sun. 10am-2pm.) Also not to be missed is the beach—only 15 minutes away by car in Travemünde, Lübeck's satellite spa resort and favorite weekend getaway. (For more on Travemünde, see the May 1999 issue.)

Approaching the imposing Holstentor, one is not surprised to discover that it has always been representative of Lübeck's position. First built ostensibly as a fortification, it quickly became a symbol of Lübeck's power and prestige as the leading city of the Hanseatic League during the 14th century.

The great gate's association with wealth extends to modern times, especially since the familiar twin towers used to be on the 50 DM bill. Moreover, Lübeck has traditionally served as Germany's gateway to the Baltic. In fact, until the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Holstentor stood sentry over the border between East and West Germany.

To step through the gate, which was finished in 1478 and has been slowly sinking ever since, is to step back in time. Although nearly a fifth of the buildings in the city were lost to WWII air raids, the townspeople have diligently preserved and maintained their architectural patrimony. Fortunately, the city has not been turned into a moldering old museum in the process of historic preserva-

Lübeck Info

Population: 215,000

Altitude: 15 meters/49 feet

Tourist Information: Holstenstr., Postfach 12 05, D-23502 Lübeck, Web:

www.luebecker-verkehrsverein.de/, tel. +49/0451/72300, fax 704890, email: tourist-service@luebeckerverkehrsverein.de

Distance from:

Berlin	263 km/164 miles
Copenhagen	255 km/159 miles
Frankfurt	544 km/340 miles
Hamburg	67 km/42 miles
Munich	817 km/511 miles

Coming Events:

November: Nordische Filmtag, premiers of new Scandinavian and Baltic films; Bereich Kunst und Kultur, Buddenbrookhaus, Mengstrasse 4, 23539 Lübeck, tel. +49/0451/122 4105

November-December: Kunsthandwerkmarkt, handmade arts and crafts, Buddenbrookhaus.

December: Christmas Market, Rathausmarkt, tel. +49/0451/122 7170

tion. The cobblestone streets are crowded with local residents running errands or meeting friends on their way home from work. We got the pleasant feeling that this charming old town still dances to the beat of modern life.

Although the city has its share of beautiful churches, monuments, and public buildings, the real treasure in Lübeck is the mysterious charm of its labyrinth of narrow streets and passageways. In places, the medieval foundations of the city peep out from under the layers of Renaissance, neoclassical, and modern structures that have accumulated above them. The streets are literally an architectural timeline. In the space of two blocks on Grosse Petersgrube, we walked past buildings that progressed from Gothic to baroque to rococo to neoclassical. As part of a massive restoration project, 22 of these historic but almost crumbling merchants' mansions along Grosse Petersgrube have been turned into the **Lübeck Academy of Music**.

Even more intriguing are the mazes of passageways, tunnels, and underpasses cutting into the facades of the large houses and leading to tiny cottages and cabins behind the houses or in inner courtyards. In past times, the town's wealthy and civic-

minded merchants provided shelter for local widows and orphans in these hidden corners.

One 16th century passageway called the St. Jürgen-Gang leads to our favorite stop, the **Museum für Puppentheater** (Kleine Petersgrube 4-6. Tel: +40/0451/786 26. Open 9:30am-6pm.). This astonishing collection of rare puppets and marionettes, handbills and stage props, representing nearly every puppet theater tradition that ever existed, is actually a private collection. Fortunately, the collector, Fritz Frey, decided to share his passion for antique puppets with the public. There is also a theater next to the museum where puppet plays are performed daily.

Although salt was perhaps the most important commodity traded by the merchants of Lübeck, we were more interested in two of the city's tastier products, *Rotspon* and marzipan. *Rotspon* is actually French red wine after it has spent time in the town's wine cellar under the Trave Canal. *Rotspon* dates to 1806, when Napoleon's officers found that for some reason the Bordeaux they stored during their occupation of Lübeck was better tasting than the wine they had left at home. The townspeople explain the phenomenon by saying that anything improves after a stay in their city.

Despite the fact that culinary history quite logically places the origin of marzipan in the almond-producing Arab world, some patriotic Lübeckers stubbornly insist that marzipan was created as an ingenious substitute for bread during the famine of 1407. Thomas Mann compromised by claiming that marzipan made its way from a sultan's harem to Venice and then directly to Lübeck's own Mr. Niederegger. Whatever the case, we spent a long time selecting edible souvenirs at the **Konditorei-Café Niederegger** (see review page 5), where the famous confection comes in every conceivable shape. We even found a marzipan rendition of the brand-new euro. Lübeck may be old, but it certainly keeps up with the times.

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LÜBECK

Continued from page 3

Hotels

Park Hotel am Lindenplatz

Our favorite accommodations in Lübeck are to be found at the Park Hotel am Lindenplatz, just 200 meters from the Holstentor and a short five minutes' walk to the inner city and train station. *Klein, fein, familiär* (small, fine, familiar) has been the stated motto here for 10 years, and based on our visit, we would guess the Behnck family does its best to exceed expectations.

Turn-of-the-century decor (German Art Nouveau/*Jugendstil*) defines the hotel, inside and out. From the front door, a flight of marble stairs leads to a small and elegant lobby. We were shown to room Number 10, three stories above (there is a lift) and reported to be the favorite among regular guests for its small balcony which faces the garden below. A sloped ceiling and skylight in the bath are added features. Each room is uniquely decorated, but all in tasteful, contemporary colors and solid wood furniture.

The Behnck's confess that their favorite room is Number 7, a double with a beautiful marble tile bath. Room Number 17 is a double with an additional pull-out sofa, and Number 3 is a smallish single, but features a double bed. Every room has a tub or shower, hair dryer, satellite TV, radio, and self dial phones. There are five non-smoking rooms.

The hotel sets out a lavish breakfast buffet and plans are afoot to renovate the breakfast room this year. There is ample street parking, or garage parking costs 8 DM (\$4) per day.

Daily Rates: Singles 115 to 145 DM (\$62-\$78), doubles 145 to 195 DM (\$78-\$105)

Contact: Family Behnck, Park Hotel am Lindenplatz, Lindenplatz 2, 23552 Lübeck, tel +49/0451/97197, fax 87179-29. email: info@parkhotel-luebeck.de and Internet: www.parkhotel-luebeck.de

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 16/20

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Klassik Altstadt Hotel

Travelers looking for a healthy dose of culture in Lübeck might consider the Klassik Altstadt Hotel. Owner Hilke Flebbe has cleverly branded the hotel, *Das Theater Hotel*, and promotes a variety of live performances by offering special packages and tours.

Wanderers through the narrow alleys of the old town, will readily spot the Altstadt's pale yellow front. Though its facade portrays a distinctly contemporary establishment, inside, the 28 guest rooms are styled with classic romantic accents, including high ceilings, delicate lace curtains, and dark wood furniture.

One evening around 6pm, we found Frau Flebbe busily looking after a group of theater-goers who were enjoying a pre-show cocktail hour in one of the private party rooms. She took a few moments to describe her concept of promoting theater and culture by offering special packages: for example, one of her arrangements includes two nights accommodations, a cocktail, breakfast buffet, a tour of city theaters, a ticket for a show, and dinner at the Theaterbistro. Cost is 299 DM (\$162) per person.

Each guestroom is equipped with a phone, fax and modem connection, cable TV, radio and alarm clock. Two of the double rooms have bath tubs and the rest have showers. The entire complex was last renovated in 1997.

Daily Rates: Singles 125 to 155 DM (\$68-\$84), doubles 185 to 240 DM (\$100-\$130)

Contact: Hilke Flebbe, Fischergrube 52, 23552 Lübeck, tel. +49/0451/72083, fax 73778, www.klassik-hotel.com, info@klassik-hotel.com

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel Jenson

Though his Ringhotel Hotel Jenson is in an ancient patrician house built in 1363, owner Wilfried Rahlff-Petersson takes pride in blending Scandinavian tradition with modern comfort and high standards of hospitality.

Every one of 42 newly-renovated

rooms is decorated differently in contemporary color schemes and dark wood accents. Room 202 has a view to the Holstentor; in fact 18 rooms have desirable views of the surrounding city-scape. Five rooms have bath tubs, instead of showers. Room 203, a double facing the Holstentor, is the largest and features a luxuriously large bathroom with tub. For a special occasion, request the suite, which features old fashioned lace drapes, a table for four, a sofa with a view to the river, plus a palatial bath with ivory tile.

Amenities include radio, phone, hair dryer, cable TV, minibar, and modem connections. There are no non-smoking rooms. With its dark beamed ceiling, deep blue carpet, heavy wood doors, and fireplace, the breakfast room is inviting.

Daily Rates: Singles 125 to 155 DM (\$58-\$84), doubles 160 to 210 DM (\$86-\$114).

Contact: Wilfried Rahlff-Petersson, An der Obertrave 4-5, 23552 Lübeck, tel. +49/0451/71646-47, fax 73386, Hotel.Jenson@t-online.de, www.ringhotels.de

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel Alter Speicher

Despite its friendly staff, the adequate accommodations found in this hotel in Lübeck's *Altstadt* didn't quite offer the special charm we are searching for.

All 42 guestrooms have been recently renovated and come with telephone, TV (some rooms have cable), radio, safe, minibar, and hairdryer. Rooms in the older part of the hotel have separate bath and shower rooms, and there are seven designated non-smoking rooms. Highlights include a sauna/solarium and fitness room, three suites with whirlpools, a quaint garden and a sun terrace.

Daily Rates: Singles 120 to 190 DM (\$65-\$103), doubles 140 to 240 DM (\$76-\$130)

Contact: Birgit & Jürgen Lentz, Beckergrube 91-93, D-23552 Lübeck, Tel +49/0451/71045, fax 70 48 04

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 12/20

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Mövenpick Hotel

Though hardly *gemütlich*, the Mövenpick is a reliable European chain. And, as mentioned below, travelers should visit at least for the Sunday brunch. The location is convenient to the Holstentor, and some rooms have river views.

The hotel offers modern, but somewhat worn, accommodations. Common areas were decorated with Picasso reproductions. Our room, Number 292, was a double with a small window and rather appalling, mismatched furniture. The small bath was decorated in a bright red tile, with glaring florescent lighting. There are non-smoking rooms.

Daily Rates: Singles 170 (\$92), doubles 178 to 270 DM (\$96-\$146).

Contact: Beim Holstentor, 23554 Lübeck, tel. +49/0451/15040, fax 1504-111, MPHLLuebeck@aol.com, www.moevenpick-hotels.com

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 10/20

Lübeck Tasting Notes

Restaurant Lachswehr

An evening at Restaurant Lachswehr, one of the oldest as well as newest restaurants in Germany, is almost sure to be an unforgettable experience. The restaurant was first established in 1188 as a private fishing spot and public drinking place by Emperor Frederick I, also known to history as "Red Beard." Two years ago, a human dynamo named Lothar Tubbesing bought the graceful, historic structure and renovated it. The result is a first-rate contemporary restaurant serving exquisite, flawless food in an absolutely lovely setting.

Lachswehr is simply an extension of Lothar himself, the embodiment of his philosophy of food and hospitality and the art of eating. He even designed the interior, creating a simple but sophisticated dining room softened with cheerful striped blinds that drape walls of old glass windows.


Part chef, part showman, Herr Tubbesing is a businessman with the heart of a revolutionary and the soul of a poet. In addition to running his restaurant, he is a founding member and president of the German Slow

Food movement, an international society of professional chefs, artists and epicures dedicated to preserving and promoting local culinary traditions. If he were to have his way, every McDonald's in the world would have to shut down for lack of business and we would all spend our energy in the pursuit of a slower, more contemplative lifestyle.

While Lothar worked the front, personally seeing to the comfort of his guests and expounding on the connection between food and the meaning of life, his wife was busy in the kitchen, sending out dish after dish. She never joined the conversations, but her food spoke volumes: a salad of tender baby greens, an unusual, frothy hazelnut-lemon soup, poached salmon with a Gorgonzola sauce, a mousse of bright tropical fruits in the middle of winter. The food reflects the Tubbesings' passion for impeccably fresh ingredients prepared to order and with a fidelity to regional tastes. Their cooking style is simple and light, avoiding overly complicated sauces and preparations that can muddle the palate. Most importantly, the menu — which changes every two weeks — was designed to showcase the personally-selected Riesling wines of which the Tubbesings are so proud.

Lothar is an entertaining and accomplished storyteller, so when visiting Lachswehr try for a table in the charming glassed-in back porch and don't be surprised if you find a poetry reading or dramatic performance going on. (Lothar plays a game called *LiteraTisch* where he invites writers and actors to perform. A meal is included in the price of the program.) You won't go wrong striking up a conversation and asking him to order for you. Once he gets started, there's no telling where the evening will end. Dinner with Lothar is not just dinner — it is an experience.

Three-course a la carte dinner for two without drinks: 124 DM (\$67). Three-course set menus, and special lunch menus are also offered.

Contact: Restaurant Lachswehr, Lachswehrallee 38, 23558 Lübeck, tel. +49/0451/84114, fax +49/0451/8400. **Rating:** QUALITY 17/20 VALUE 14/20 

Konditorei-Café Niederegger

Everyone knows that Lübeck's premier marzipan confectionery is a required stop, but savvy travelers will plan their visit to coincide with breakfast, lunch or tea time. That way they can savor luscious nut tarts, fruit pancakes, and marzipan pastries with freshly squeezed orange juice and tea or coffee while eyeing the tempting displays of treats piled high in the windows. At lunch, the café serves daily specials using meat and vegetables fresh from the nearby market. Marzipan-molding demonstrations are also available by appointment.

The café, which consists of two salons behind the pastry displays, has been a popular meeting place since it opened in 1880. In those days, men held power breakfasts in the first-floor salon before the stock exchange opened, and the Niederegger was one of the few restaurants where ladies could feel comfortable without a male escort. Today, it still draws a diverse crowd. At one table a group of affluent dowagers in black dresses and hats nibbled on cakes; at the next, four teenagers, waiting for a friend to show up, lounged in chairs without ordering. We tried to remember the last time we saw North American teens and seniors hanging out at the same place.

Our sweet tooth forced us to pass over the veal cutlet special and skip right to dessert. We ordered an apple pancake and quark-filled raspberry crepes, both of which arrived piping hot, feather-light, and very sweet. After a few cups of tea, we felt up to the task of deciding which of the thousands of marzipan shapes to take home. Lunch for two was 15 DM (\$8).

Contact: Konditorei-Café Niederegger, Breitestr. 89, D-23552 Lübeck, tel. +49/0451/5301126. Open M-F 9am-7pm, Sat. 9am-6pm, Sun. 10am-6pm.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20

Mövenpick Hotel Lübeck-Restaurant

Although breakfast in a drab modern tourist hotel is usually none too inspired, we were in for a surprise the first time we went down for our morning coffee and rolls. An

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LÜBECK


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authentic Scandinavian buffet awaited, and the serving tables fairly groaned under the weight of so much food — eight kinds of cured salmon alone, not to mention a riot of salads, cold cuts, sausages, and herring dishes. For 42 DM (\$23) per person, the Mövenpick serves up made-to-order omelets and hot dishes, about 30 different pastries and preserves, pickles of all kinds, fruits, cheeses, and even champagne. The menu was ambitious in scale and scope, but each dish was carefully executed and thoughtfully presented.

Heavy doses of fish and meat for breakfast are not usually appealing, but we couldn't resist the opportunity to sample so many new things. And even though we took only a bite of this and a taste of that, we still weren't able to try everything.

Clearly, Sunday brunch here is a local favorite. The dining room was crammed with Lübecker families, who outnumbered the hotel guests at least two to one. During the week, the chefs put on theme buffets: New Orleans Jazz night and happy hour, Europe buffet, Endless Noodle Night, and a Wellness buffet with health-conscious food. Prices for weekday buffets range from 22-36 DM (\$12-\$19) per person.

Contact: Mövenpick Hotel Lübeck Restaurant, Willi-Brandtallee 3, Lübeck 23554, tel. +49/0451/1504 470 or 150 40.

Rating: QUALITY: 15/20, VALUE 16/20 

KANDERSTEG

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this might be an annual stop but, as it is, we haven't been here for seven years.

Except for the wintergarden and a new spa and pool currently under construction, things are just as we remembered them. Room 205 has exactly the same furniture — including the brass floor lamp, the prints, the gold-framed beveled mirror, and the pretty little Luxa clock. Without refurbishment, the room has held up

amazingly well these seven years.

Downstairs, the dining room hovers somewhere between homey and luxurious, though we chose to eat in the wintergarden where one night a furious show of thunder, lightning and heavy rain entertained customers and staff.

Situated between the dining room and the wintergarden is a brightly-lit, rustic little *Stube* where guests can finish their evenings with a coffee, a drink and perhaps a card game.

On a previous visit we elected the *halbspension* plan and were impressed by the well-prepared four-course dinners. This time, however, we chose from the a la carte menu which was more expensive and left us wondering if we wouldn't have been more satisfied with the more straightforward, half-board fare.

Methinks the kitchen aims too high. The menu is lengthy and the dishes we tried seemed over-sauced, over-seasoned and too complex.

Slices of lamb from the loin came in a tomatoey sauce that tasted of too much sage and salt.

Medallions of beef were more successful, but with each medallion liberally draped with goose liver slices and an intense dill weed reduction sauce, the richness meter was definitely in the red zone.

Smoked salmon soup, veal steak with morel mushrooms, and chopped calves liver sauteed in butter, rosemary, chives and shallots, all contained fresh ingredients and were unquestionably edible, but we wished the chef would have backed off just a bit on the seasonings, sauces and salt.

Perhaps the best dish was a first course of white asparagus with noodles and morels, but worst of all was an artificial-tasting tomato/basil risotto.

Even the vegetables, bathed in heavy, rich sauces, seemed over-prepared. Cherry tomatoes were stuffed with a heavy spread that obliterated their tangy freshness.

Both the dessert and cheese carts

offered a wide assortment of delectables. Except for a delicious and fragrant Burgundian cheese — Epoisses by Jean Gaugry — all our choices were good but stopped short of sublime.

The wine list is lengthy and intriguing though there are few, if any, bargains. Les Pyramides, Grand Cru De Salquenen 1995 (59 Sfr. / \$39), a soft, Swiss pinot noir was a decent value. This is, after all, Switzerland.

The young servers were most friendly and eager to please and, of course, Frau and Herr Mäder, the innkeepers, made the rounds each evening.

Without beverages, our two dinners came to \$84 and \$65 respectively and here's an oddity: though we didn't complain about the awful risotto, we weren't charged for it. Apparently it was noticed that we ate no more than a bite or two and, unknown to us, the charge was waived. A pleasant surprise.

As you might expect, breakfasts are bounteous affairs. A name-card reserved our table each morning and a daily, one-page flyer in German told of village activities and the expected weather.

The Doldenhorn is one of the most restful hotels we have experienced and we strongly recommend it, even taking into consideration our reservations regarding the food.

Daily Rates: Singles 95 to 100 Sfr. (\$63-\$67), doubles 190 to 250 Sfr. (\$125-\$165)

Contact: Waldhotel Doldenhorn, 3718 Kandersteg, tel. +41/033/6758181, fax 6758185.

Hotel Rating: Quality 17/20, Value 16/20

Restaurant: Quality 12/20, Value 10/20

Landgasthof Ruedihus

Just across the road, a few hundred yards from the Doldenhorn, is the Mäder family's second hotel, a 16-bed, weathered but beautifully restored Swiss farmhouse. Despite its country authenticity, it is still quite comfortable.

The Mäders are so into making the Ruedihus an all-Swiss experience that all beverages and food served in

the hotel have to have been produced in Switzerland. So don't look for bananas at breakfast and forget about a campari and soda as an aperitif.

The restaurant features Swiss specialities such as raclette and fondue.

Guestrooms are cozy and, of course, decorated in the rustic farm style that features elaborately painted cabinets, beamed ceilings, lots of rough wood and antique furniture. There is no lift or television.

Room Number 601 is a nice double with a canopied bed.

Both the Doldenhorn and the Ruedihus discount their rates for children as follows: under 6, free; 6-12, half price; 12-18, 25% off.

Daily Rates: Per person rates range from 85 to 95 Sfr. (\$57 to \$63)

Contact: Landgasthof Ruedihus CH-3718 Kandersteg, tel. +41/033/751580, fax 751828.


Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 10/20

Kandersteg Excursion

On our one full day in Kandersteg we ate a late breakfast (served until 11am) then walked the mile or so to the chairlift into the mountains to the **Oeschingensee**. The ride up is some 5 to 10 minutes and costs 8 Sfr. (\$5) per person *einfach* - one way (13 Sfr./\$9 roundtrip). From the top it is about a mile walk to the lake.

Once there, you can rent a row-boat or a little electric-powered boat for a slow cruise through the green water.

Or do as we did, which is walk left about halfway around the lake to a waterfall. Along the way you'll notice a number of wood sculptures carved out of tree stumps.

Before heading back down the hill, either via the lift or on foot, there are a couple of simple but pleasant restaurants with terraces overlooking the lake and the steep rocky escarpments rising from it. Those who choose the approximately 30-40 minute walk down to the town should understand the trip can turn seldom-used quadriceps muscles to Jello. 

WEBSITES

Continued from page 2

explains such mysterious German institutions as Fasching, Fasnet, Karneval, Dirty Thursday, Kehrwoche, German jokes, road rules and more.

Driving in Germany

www.enconnect.net/greengrl/auto.htm
Good section on traffic signs & signals.

City Net's Germany

city.net/countries/germany
Links to dozens of German cities.

Bavarian Alpine Net

www.bavaria.com
Some tourist info in English.

Bavaria

www.bayern.de
General info site on Bavaria. Some pages in English.

Bookings DE****

www.bookings.org/de/bookings_uk.html
Germany hotel finder. Search process is easy and quick and can also be directed to find special discount offers.

Würzburg

<http://www.wuerzburg.de/index.eng.html>
Useful visitors' site.

The Aischgründer Bierstrasse

www.bierstrasse.de/
Aisch Valley Beer Trail runs for some 50 km between Bad Windsheim and Uehlfeld. Along the way are eight breweries and numerous Franconian inns. For a list of hotels with breweries, click on *Braueriegasthäuser*.

Metropolis Magazine****

www.zitty.de/metact/m_guide.htm
Site for Berlin's only English language magazine. Keeps track of Berlin activities, including a few wild and crazy ones. Good list of cafes and restaurants with brief descriptions.

Berlin Cultural Highlights****

www.berlin.de/new/TC/GTK/summary.html
Frequently updated guide to what's happening in Berlin.

Map of Berlin

www.berlin.de/map/index.html
Search by a Berlin address and have it displayed on a map. Click to zoom out to view the neighboring area. Slow.

Berlin Airports

www.berlin-airport.de/

Berlin Online

www.berlin.de/
Berlin's official Website but in German.

Black Forest

www.schwarzwald-online.com/st.maergen/peng.htm
Promotes so-called panorama route through the Black Forest from Waldkirch in the north to Hinterzarten in the south. Drop-down menus offer lists of hotels in each of six villages

Frankfurt Airport

www.frankfurt-airport.de/

Hamburg Highlights****

www.hamburg-highlights.de/int/
Outstanding site. Complete list of hotels, each of which has a public transport and map link. Click on the map link and the hotel is spotted on a city map. Click on the public transport link to find the best and quickest route to any destination in the city. A little complex but once you figure it out you'll get a route and timetable plus an estimate of the walking time.

Munich Tourist Office****

www.munich-tourist.de/english/offers.htm
Excellent feature is the *Munich Key* hotel booking page. Here, dozens of hotels are described and placed in five price categories. One of *Gemütlichkeit's* recommended Munich hotels is the **Kraft**, in price category #2 (second lowest). If you book the Kraft on the *Munich Key* program, the price for a double room ranges from 150 to 178 DM (\$81 to \$96) per night, depending on the time of year. Included in the room price is free travel on all Munich public transport and a booklet with discount coupons for most of the city's tourist attractions. A double room at another favorite, the **Hotel Exquisit**, can be booked for as low as 226 DM (\$122).

Munich Interactive

www.munich-tourist.de/english/m1.htm
Click on the red dots on the map of Munich City center to find out more about the town's historic sights.

Munich Airport

www.munich-airport.de/

Nürnberg

www.wi2.uni-erlangen.de/NueTour/index.html
A City-Net site with some info of interest.

Swissair

www.swissair.ch/ *Continued on page 8...*

WEB SITES

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Switzerland Tourism USA

209.144.99.25/

Click on *Newsflash* to find schedules of events and the latest deals to and within Switzerland.

Switzerland Tourism International****

www.switzerlandtourism.ch/

Gateway to dozens of Websites for Swiss towns and tourist regions.

Holiday Home

www.holiday-home.ch/default_e.asp
Books vacation rentals.

Swiss Rail Timetable****

www.sbb.ch/pv/index_e.htm

Live Cameras on Swiss Mountains

www.swisspanorama.com

E & G Hotels/Guest Houses****

www.rooms.ch/index.cfm

Outstanding site for locating inexpensive hotels in Switzerland.

Geneva Airport

www.gva.ch/en/default.htm

Zürich Airport

www.zurich-airport.com/

Correction

Numbers printed last month for the **Park Hotel Post** in Freiburg should have been: tel. +49/0761/385480, fax 31680. — RHB

Europe Travel Briefs

■ Hoteliers seem to be squeezing every possible franc, DM and schilling out of the coming Millennium weekend. Here's a package offered by the **Kempinski Hotel Taschenbergpalais Dresden**, in the center of the city just steps away from the **Semper Opera House** and the **Zwinger**. The deal includes four nights in a double room, welcome champagne and fruit, guided tour, buffet breakfasts, five-course dinners, New Year's Day champagne brunch, a New Year's Eve performance of *The Csardasfürstin* at the Semper, and a Millennium celebration at the **Residence Castle**. Nice package except for the \$1,537 per person price tag. Reserve directly at +49/0351/4912-0 or via email at reservation@kempinski-dresden.de.

■ **LTU**, the German airline, has announced winter airfares from its Florida gateway cities to Germany. Flights will operate three times a week from Miami and Fort Myers and twice weekly from Orlando. Service from Los Angeles ends after October and resumes next May.

The winter roundtrip APEX fares start at \$403 from Orlando, \$438 from Miami and \$456 from Fort Myers. Fares are about 40% higher during the Christmas season. Rates are applicable to Düsseldorf, Hanover, Frankfurt, Berlin, Munich and Stuttgart. Contact: LTU 800-888-0200 or log on to www.ltu.com.

■ Hurry and you can join **Wanderweg Holidays' Five-Resort Walk**. This self-guided walking tour circles around five picturesque villages — Sierre, Chandolin/St. Luc, Zinal, Grimentz and Vecorin — in Switzerland's Valais. You walk between the villages and overnight in three-star, family-owned hotels. Luggage is carried ahead by van.

The seven-day price of \$769 includes accommodations, all meals — including picnic lunch — and luggage transfers. Contact: 800-270-ALPS.

■ We are frequently asked how to beat the high prices of air fares between destinations in Europe. **Swissair's Eurohopper** fare may be the answer. For \$130 per leg you can fly economy class between more than over 100 European cities. There are restrictions. The fare is valid:

- in conjunction with round-trip intercontinental flights commencing outside IATA Europe on Swissair, **Austrian Airlines**, **Delta Air Lines**, **Sabena** and **Air Canada**.

- with a minimum of three and a maximum of eight flight segments within two months.

- for citizens or permanent residents of a country outside Europe.

■ At press time, **Swissair** was offering a \$305 roundtrip airfare on its new Miami-Zürich route and a \$330 round-trip Newark-Basel fare. The fares are valid for travel through December 15.

Contact: Swissair 800-221-4750

■ We haven't seen it, but **Switzerland Tourism** has tipped us off to a new, affordable hotel in Basel's old town. **Hotel Au Violon** is in a converted jail.

The hotel dates to the 11th century, and over the years has been a church, a monastery, a police station and prison. All 20 rooms feature full baths and, says Switzerland Tourism, are quiet, comfortable, well-lit and individually decorated. Most overlook the courtyard, and six small suites overlook the old town, the cathedral spires and the southern hills of the Black Forest.

Single room prices are from 80 to 90 Sfr. (\$53-\$59) and doubles ranges from 120 to 160 Sfr. (\$79-\$105) Breakfast is extra and costs 10 Sfr. (\$7) per person.

Contact: Erica & Emmanuel Tre-scher, Hotle Au Violon, Im Lohnhof 4, CH-4051 Basel, tel. +41/061/269 87 11, fax 269 87 12

READERS' FORUM

Oberstdorf Self-Catering

We had a vacation rental last October in Oberstdorf, Germany which we recommend. Mayer-Dolpp Ferienwohnungen is located on Lorettostrasse 23A. The building was brand new; it had two units downstairs and two upstairs. All were lovely. Originally, we intended to rent three of the units, but one of our couples had to cancel and stay home. Each unit had a bedroom to sleep two, a full bath, a kitchenette, eating area and a convertible couch that slept two. All units were no smoking and there was adequate parking space on the property.

Owners Harald Mayer and his family live in Memmingen. Write them at Bodenseestr. 35, D-87700 Memmingen, or fax them at +49/08331/62491.

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