

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

October 22, 1999

Swissair: Did You Fly?

For the past several years **Swissair** has extended special fares to *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers. We know some of you have taken advantage of these lower fares on what we think is the world's finest transatlantic airline.

It's time to decide whether or not to continue this program to which we have devoted a good deal of our promotional efforts and resources.

To help us make this decision, we would like to hear from those of you who traveled on Swissair in 1999. We would like to know the number of tickets you purchased and your date of departure from the U.S. If you are in this category we would welcome your phone call at 800-521-6722.

As compensation for this inconvenience, we will extend your subscription for an additional six months. Your input will be appreciated. Call 800-521-6722.

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

A HARZ DRIVE

Lovely countryside and villages seldom seen by American tourists await the auto traveler who ventures into what was once part of East Germany in the Harz Mountains.

In our opinion, there is no better European travel experience than an exploration by car of the backroads of Germany, Austria and Switzerland. By dint of its size and lack of mountainous terrain, Germany — in comparison with Austria and Switzerland — has the most to offer in terms of sheer mileage;

especially since the unification of the former East and West Germanys. Unification, in fact, has essentially given us auto wanderers a whole new country to traverse.

The East is of particular interest right now because it is still in the early days of reconstruction. The process of bringing the roads, rail-

ways, subways, bridges, sidewalks, buildings, farms, power plants, utilities, hotels and restaurants of the East up to western Germany standards is costing billions, perhaps trillions of deutschemarks. And Germans, of course, do nothing by halves; sidewalks are not simply poured concrete but labor-intensive cobblestones; rain gutters and downspouts are copper, not aluminum, and the substantial doors and windows of even the simplest structures are fitted with hardware found on only the most expensive homes in this country.

But there is still such a long way to go. In some small towns and villages, only one or two main

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Accommodations

Capsule reviews of recent hotel experiences by the Gemütlichkeit staff.

**Hotel Alpenruhe
Wengen, Switzerland**

First seen by *Gemütlichkeit* in 1993, this three-star property, located a short walk from the village center, remains under the stern but capable generalship of its redoubtable owner, Frau Marion Prevost.

The Alpenruhe is a model of efficiency and the somewhat plain guest and public rooms are immaculately maintained.

Six years ago, we made it an "editor's choice," a designation which, based on a three-night August stay, we must now reluctantly withdraw.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of *gemütlichkeit* at the Alpenruhe. Arriving by train we phoned the hotel and asked to be picked up. The young man who showed up in a little electric truck (no automobiles are allowed in Wengen) was unfriendly to the point of being surly. At the hotel, Frau Prevost, too, gave us a cold greeting. Perhaps it was because we arrived a single hour later than promised. Though we had phoned that morning to inform the Alpenruhe of our changed schedule Frau Prevost insisted she had heard nothing.

The atmosphere thawed somewhat in the course of our stay, but we were never quite comfortable.

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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Be Careful Out There

Here's something to think about. In our town, Ashland, Oregon, there is a company which acts as a rental agent for European homes and apartments. It advertises in travel publications and is listed on a number of prominent travel Web sites.

A few months ago the company, **Europa-Let**, closed its doors amid a flurry of local publicity. Its owner is under investigation for defrauding customers. Local authorities and the FBI believe that instead of forwarding customers' rental payments to the properties the company represents, Europa Let's owner used the money for her own purposes.

So far, this is only an investigation, there have been no arrests. But the business is closed and local newspapers quote customers who paid advance rental fees only to find no reservations upon arrival in Europe. The amount involved is expected to exceed \$350,000.

Those who paid by credit card, though seriously inconvenienced, are almost sure to get their money back. Those who paid by check can probably kiss their dollars good-bye.

The message is simple: when it comes to travel, pay nothing in advance by check or cash.

Let's See Those Bunkers

Last month we ran a short side-

bar piece on places in Munich frequented by Adolph Hitler. Like a lot of very bad eggs there is a fascination about Hitler that lives on (Charles Manson, we read, is the subject of admiring Web sites). Just last year, for example, another book about him — *Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil*, by Ron Rosenbaum — was published.

Interest in Hitler is just one element in a 55-year struggle Germans have had in coming to terms with their country's Nazi past. It simply won't go away. Whether it should or not is a point I am not now prepared to argue. However — and in no way do I suggest this should be at all considered in its decision — the way in which Germany deals with these issues affects tourists as well as its citizens. A case in point is the current controversy over what to do with Hitler's bunker. The location has been known for many years, but construction workers looking for undetonated bombs just south of the Brandenburg Gate recently uncovered its concrete remnants.

Reluctant to turn war-related sites into tourist attractions — and perhaps rallying points for fascists and the country's tiny Neo-Nazis minority — city officials immediately announced the bunker would be covered over by a new street. This is the way most Nazi-identified places and artifacts have been handled. Last year, the bunker used by Nazi propaganda chief, Joseph Goebbels, was

discovered but immediately reburied.

Of Germany's few reminders of the war, most seem to be in Berlin — a city which, by the way, never voted for Hitler. There, a stunning Holocaust Museum has recently been built; the Topography of Terror, where the Gestapo and SS did their grisly business, has been identified and preserved; the Anhalter Bahnhof is posted with signs identifying it as a place where thousands were herded onto trains bound for concentration camps, and the Wannsee house, where the "final solution" was plotted, can now be visited.

In the rest of the country, a traveler sees scant evidence of the war. In Berchtesgaden, for a few marks you can descend a ladder to clammy, grimy underground tunnels that once connected the vacation homes of high Nazi officials; but the whole thing is privately owned and has the aura of a circus sideshow. The grounds of Luitpoldhain Park, in southeast Nürnberg, where tens of thousands gathered for Nazi rallies,

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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. 10
October, 1999

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

Publishers: Robert H. & Elizabeth S. Bestor
Editor: Robert H. Bestor
Contributors: C. Fischer, R. Holliday,
Nikki Goth Itoi, Nick Selby
Paul T. Merschdorf
Web Master: Thomas P. Bestor
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.

BACKROADS

Continued from page 1

streets are paved. The auto traveler sees abandoned factories, farms and houses everywhere. Horses are still used to pull wagons and farm implements. Most of the older homes and commercial buildings still in use are clean but shabby. On the other hand, new sidewalks, new construction, restored buildings, spruced-up town centers, freshly-paved roads, and capitalism are slowly but surely taking over the landscape.

A leisurely drive through this part of Germany makes one understand the enormity of the undertaking. Most roads still await resurfacing. The worst have been repaired, but many miles of bumpy though serviceable tracks remain. To our unpracticed eye, even the farmland seems different; less meticulous, less organized than in the west, and large parcels lie uncultivated. Of course, there are no more east-west borders; but you'll know immediately when you've left the former West Germany. The road immediately changes; it narrows, has no center line and becomes rougher.

One scenic and interesting route through the eastern countryside begins in the Harz Mountain resort of Bad Sachsa and ends in Quedlinberg, a medieval treasure buried for almost 50 years under communism.

At both ends of the drive we found outstanding, moderately-priced hotels. The two we chose were booked the day before our arrival.

For auto travelers in Germany we recommend the German Auto Club's (ADAC) *Maxi-Atlas*. Its scale is a minutely-detailed 1:150,000 and its legend notes particularly scenic roads plus towns and sights of special interest. It also has symbols that identify gas stations, restaurants and overnight accommodations along Autobahns. Of course, individual maps, notably the applicable *ADAC Karte* and *Die Generalkarte* maps, will work as well.

Bad Sachsa Info

Population: 10,000

Altitude: 1181 feet

Bad Sachsa Tourist Office:

Kurbetrieb, Am Kurpark 6, Bad Sachsa D-37441, tel. +49/05523/300 90, fax 300 949

Distance From:

Berlin	273 km/171 miles
Hannover	129 km/81 miles
Erfurt	100 km/62 miles
Göttingen	62 km/39 miles
Braunschweig	95 km/59 miles

Quedlinburg Info

Population: 26,000

Altitude: 400 feet

Quedlinburg Tourist Office:

Markt 2, Quedlinburg D-06484, tel. +49/03946/77 3000, fax 773016

Distance From:

Berlin	208 km/130 miles
Magdeburg	56 km/35 miles
Erfurt	133 km/83 miles

Bad Sachsa

One doesn't go to Bad Sachsa, at the southern edge of the Harz Mountains, for glorious churches, splendid buildings, the night life or the fine restaurants. It is a health resort patronized by a mostly over-60 clientele. There is a pretty lake, a placid Kurpark and plenty of places to walk. Auto travelers can also make daytrips into the former East German countryside or explore such Harz sights as the Bode Gorge, the Rosstrappe and towns like Wernigerode, Schierke and Braunlage.

Hotel Sonnenhof

Though Bad Sachsa — for 50-plus years a West German town with East Germany close on two sides — is pretty much a yawn, it is worth visiting if only to spend a couple of quiet nights in its wonderful Hotel Sonnenhof. We've seldom had a hotel room that offered so much at such a reasonable price.

In a neighborhood of fine homes, the Sonnenhof seems more private residence than hotel. But those who shy away from the chatty, bed & breakfast-style togetherness that

often pervades *zimmer frei* accommodations needn't worry; there is no more invasion of privacy at the Sonnenhof than at an airport Hilton. (Less actually, considering how housekeepers at such hotels seem to barge in and out of guest rooms at all hours.) Nonetheless, the welcome is exceptionally warm. In fact, the young woman who greeted us at reception and showed us to room Number 3 acted as though our arrival was the best thing that had happened to her all day.

And what an exceptional room it was, almost a suite: huge, brightly lit, with an oversized, curving sectional couch, perfect for stretching out on with a book or to watch BBC-TV (Channel 17) or listen to the Philips stereo system (tune to one of a dozen or so preset radio stations or bring your own tapes and CDs). The spacious, sparkling, halogen-lit bathroom had a roomy shower stall and a separate toilet room, always a welcome feature.

The back wall is virtually all glass and opens to a large, tiled terrace with a view of lawn and trees. We paid 178 DM (\$98).

Regrettably, the hotel has no restaurant (your best bet is the **Hotel Romantischer Winkel**) but bountiful buffet breakfasts are served in a clubby room with well-spaced tables, circular, recessed ceiling lights, rich wood-trimmed furniture, and paneled wainscoting.

The Sonnenhof has a great feel and a warm, relaxed atmosphere. You'll be very much at home with Manfred and Lutz Rockendorf, even if you're there for only a night or two. Like most European resort hotels, the Sonnenhof is designed for longer stays.

Contact: Hotel Sonnenhof, Glaseberg 20a, D-37441, Bad Sachsa, tel. +49/05523/94 37-0, fax 94 37 50.

Proprietor: Familie Rockendorf.

Daily Rates: Singles 82 to 130 DM (\$45-\$71), doubles/junior suites 124 to 220 DM (\$68-\$121).

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 18/20

Continued on page 4...

BACKROADS

Continued from page 3

The Drive

As good as the *ADAC Maxi-Atlas* is, you're bound to get confused at times and take a wrong turn or two. But as long as you maintain the progression of towns described below you'll be following our route. Even if you get sidetracked, just remember, when it comes to Germany's backroads there is always more than one way to get from point A to point B — and yours is as good or better than anybody's.

Our route begins in an east-southeast direction along the southern boundary of the Harz and then turns sharply north through the fields and forest of the Eastern Harz.

From Bad Sachsa, go east following the Walkenried and Braunlage signs. Do not, however, go to Braunlage; instead go through Walkenried, Ellrich, and Niedersachswerfen. At this point follow signs to Harzgerode.

About 25 kilometers from Bad Sachsa, stop for a few minutes in **Neustadt** to see the historic center of this walled town. Another approximately 12 kilometers beyond, at Rottleberode, turn north toward **Stolberg**, a town noted for its half-timbered buildings.

Entering the town, you'll note how close the houses on your right are to the narrow road. Go through the old stone tower and enter the *Platz* surrounded by half-timbered houses. Here you may want to park for a while and investigate the town. When you're ready to leave, follow the signs to Hasselfeld and Breitenstein.

Just outside of Friedrichshöhe, at Road 242, go east. Then, at Güntersberge, head north toward Barenrode (also signs to Thale) where you'll turn left again. The part of the drive between Allrode and **Treseburg** is quite beautiful and the latter is another interesting town where you may wish to stop for a snack and

short walk.

Continue through Treseburg toward Wienrode, but shortly you'll bear right toward Thale. The road from Allrode to just outside Thale is very narrow, with no center line, and gently winds through tall stands of trees. (In June, the opposite lane was closed due to construction and it's possible you may have to detour from Allrode to Stiege and then back to Friedrichshöhe.)

From Thale, follow the signs to Quedlinburg. Just across the bridge into town, turn left. Our recommended hotel, the Am Brühl, is on your left.

Quedlinburg

This town is unification reconstruction in microcosm. Very old but beautifully restored *Faschwerkhäuser* (half-timbered buildings) stand alongside equally ancient but still dilapidated structures that look ready for the bulldozer. One marvels at the craftsmanship, energy, patience and, of course,

money, which is required to resuscitate just one of these edifices. Fortunately for Quedlinburg, in 1994 it was placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List (for complete German list see box on page 5), which means it receives special funding to aid the comeback.

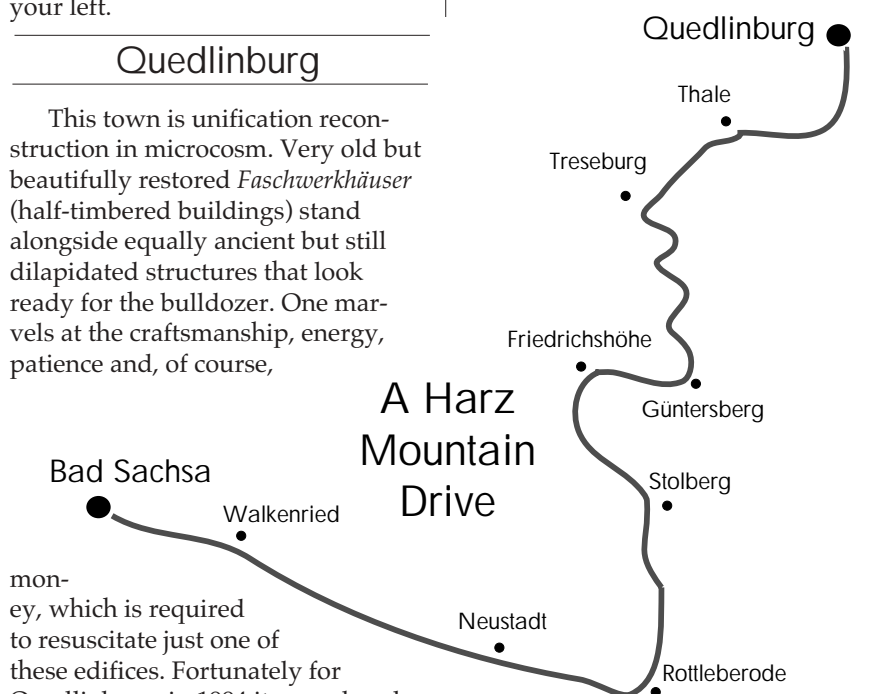
The town is good for at least a day's exploration and, though it may be less user friendly — uneven cobblestones, for example — than its more visited Medieval western counterparts, it seems a bit more authentic. Your first destination will likely be the castle and the **Church of St. Servace** which loom over the town. There you may want to visit the **Castle Museum** and see the church's main attractions; its **crypt** and its **treasury**.

Next, spend an hour or two meandering the narrow streets and alleys around the Markt Platz, stopping at galleries, looking at shop windows and, best of all, comparing the restored buildings with those under restoration and those still waiting their turn.

Hotel Am Brühl

Restoration is everywhere in Quedlinburg and the Am Brühl is a good example. The ivy-covered buildings of two former farms have been turned into a hotel of great charm.

Arriving guests enter a front



courtyard through a gated driveway. Inside, the hotel's public rooms have a wide-open feel and feature terracotta floors scattered with Oriental rugs. Tall Palladian arched windows are set in thick stone walls and exposed rough support timbers provide an interesting contrast with the modern lighting and furnishings.

Our room, Number 163, was on the first floor (our second) and its two windows overlooked the entry courtyard. Here Am Brühl's decorators and designers could have done a better job. We yearned just a little for our lodgings of the previous

night at the Sonnenhof in Bad Sachsa. Though rather large, the room was furnished as if it were one of those airport hotel cubbyholes. The bed against one wall took up only about a quarter of the floor area, making plenty of room for a small sofa and two comfortable chairs. But except for a couple of upright chairs and a small lamp table, the remaining space was unoccupied. Bedside lamps were cute but didn't supply much light. And, where our sense of the Sonnenhof was one of warmth and familiarity, our Am Brühl room was more impersonal and commercial. Even so, the 195 DM (\$108) one-night charge was good value for a hotel of this caliber.

Across the inner courtyard, in the half-timbered old stable, one huge room with a high brick and beamed ceiling with barrel roll vaults has become the hotel's restaurant. Its floor is square, polished terracotta pavers, wooden tables and chairs are substantial, and the white stucco walls are decorated with good art and antiques. It is a fine room to be in, though a little noisy.

The food was slightly above average. An appetizer of *Rauchforellenfilet mit Lachs Kaviar Sahne Metterich* (smoked trout and salmon caviar with creamy horseradish) was 15.5 DM (\$9) and not quite so glorious as it sounds. Sautéed *Kalbsleber* (calves liver) is seldom disappointing in Germany and at 27 DM (\$15) was the best dish of the evening. Another reliable, *Geschnetzeltes* (sautéed chopped veal in a cream sauce), 26 DM (\$14) and served with Spätzle and salad, was not memorable. A bottle of very good Rioja set us back 42.5 DM (\$24).

Following a shared dessert of vanilla ice cream and heated chocolate sauce (8.5 DM/\$5), our friendly waitress brought us shots of *Harzgeist*, a local Schnapps, on the house. Without beverages, the

more intelligent furnishings would move this hotel from an "above average" to an "excellent" rating.

Contact: Hotel Am Brühl, Billungstrasse 11, D-06484, Quedlinburg, tel. +49/03946/96180, fax 961 8246. Proprietor: Ursula Schmidt.

Daily Rates: Singles 135 to 175 DM (\$75-\$97), doubles 180 to 195 DM (\$100-\$108), suites 200 to 225 DM (\$110-\$124).

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20

We saw two other hotels in Quedlinburg, both of which are less expensive than Am Brühl.

Hotel Zum Bär

Directly on the Markt, Zum Bär offers old-world decor and furnishings, though the latter are often a melange of styles.

Rooms have the essential western amenities: toilet and shower, direct-dial telephone, cable TV and minibar. Singles are 95 to 110 DM (\$52-\$61) and doubles rent for from 145 to 175 DM (\$80-\$97).


Hotel Zum Bär, Markt 8/9, D-06484, Quedlinburg, tel. +49/03946/7770, fax 700 268

Gashaus zum Goldenen Ring

Just two minutes walk from the Markt is the Gashaus zum Goldenen Ring, where the prices are lower and the accommodations simpler.

Guestrooms are equipped with modern but inexpensive and uninspiring furnishings, private bath, TV and telephone.

Singles are 80 DM (\$44) and doubles 100 to 120 DM (\$55-\$66).

Gasthaus zum Goldenen Ring, Neuer Weg 1, D-06484 Quedlinburg, tel. +49/03946/2266, fax 701280 

Germany's World Heritage Sites

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee publishes a list of "cultural and natural properties, considered to be of outstanding universal value."

One of the main responsibilities of the committee is to "provide technical cooperation under the World Heritage Fund for the safeguarding of World Heritage properties to States Parties whose resources are insufficient."

- 1978 Aachen Cathedral
- 1981 Speyer Cathedral
- 1981 Würzburg Residence, Court Gardens and Residence Square
- 1983 Pilgrimage Church of Wies
- 1984 The Castles of Augustusburg and Falkenlust at Brühl
- 1985 St. Mary's Cathedral and St. Michael's Church at Hildesheim
- 1986 Roman Monuments, Cathedral and Liebfrauen-Church in Trier
- 1987 Hanseatic City of Lübeck
- 1990 Palaces and Parks of Potsdam and Berlin
- 1991 Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch
- 1992 Mines of Rammelsberg and Historic Town of Goslar
- 1993 Town of Bamberg
- 1993 Maulbronn Monastery Complex
- 1994 Collegiate Church, Castle, and old Town of Quedlinburg
- 1994 Völklingen Ironworks
- 1995 Messel Pit Fossil site
- 1996 Cologne Cathedral
- 1996 Bauhaus and its sites in Weimar and Dessau
- 1996 Luther Memorials in Eisleben and Wittenberg
- 1998 Classical Weimar

dinner for two was 77 DM (\$43).

We would go back to the Am Brühl without hesitation, though better use of guestroom space and

ACCOMMODATIONS

Continued from page 1

The hotel's half-board dinner (28 Sfr./\$19) was at best adequate. The first course was a tomato stuffed with bits of *Wurst* and peas in a creamy sauce. Following a trip to the salad bar, came the main course, a single thin porkchop fried crisp on the outside, though still juicy, accompanied by a baked potato with sour cream sauce. Dessert was a canned pear covered with jello chocolate pudding.

We had better food on subsequent nights at the hotels Silberhorn and Schönegg. At the latter, we dined in a pleasant room with scrubbed wood tables on perfectly cooked *Schnitzel* with *Spätzle*. Accompanied by live music, our late evening meal at the Silberhorn consisted of a fine platter of air-dried meat.

At the price — we paid 216 Sfr. (\$146) per night total for a single and a double room — the Alpenruhe is still a good Wengen choice, just don't expect an open-arms welcome.

Contact: Hotel Alpenruhe, CH-3823, Wengen, tel. +41/033/855 2744, fax 855 2777. Proprietor: Marion Prevost
Daily Rates: Singles 82 to 104 Sfr. (\$55-\$68), doubles 148 to 208 Sfr. (\$100-\$141). Half board 28 Sfr. (\$19).
Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel Arlette
Zürich, Switzerland

You're on Jeopardy. The category is "Swiss Hotels." The answer is "Hotel Arlette." Your correct response is "where can I find a decent, not-too-expensive hotel near the Zürich railway station?"

Though we'll save such phrases as "charming," "lovingly restored," and "endearing," for a more appropriate time, the Arlette fills the bill as a Zürich stopover in several ways. For travelers not too burdened with luggage, it is within an easy 10-minute walk of the station. All front desk personnel we encountered on a recent stay were friendly and helpful. Guestrooms, though on the small side, are modern, clean and

comfortable. And, of course, the price is right. Midsummer rates are slightly reduced and we paid 195 Sfr. (\$132) for a double and 145 Sfr. (\$98) for one person in a double room.

The only downer is the skimpy breakfast — no buffet and only a pre-wrapped, plasticky-looking cream cheese. An order of scrambled eggs (6 Sfr./\$4), however, was excellent.

Contact: Hotel Arlette, Stampfenbachstrasse 26, CH-8001 Zürich, tel. +41/01/252 0032, fax 252 0923

Daily Rates: Singles 145 to 195 Sfr. (\$55-\$68), doubles/suites 195 to 450 Sfr. (\$132-\$304).

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 13/20

Hotel Helvetia
Lindau, Germany

Put this one in the "find" category. The Helvetia combines charm and comfort with a perfect location. It overlooks Lindau's harbor on the Bodensee and is just three minutes walk from the rail station. Even closer is the boarding dock for the steamers which glide around the lake to several German and Swiss towns, even Bregenz in Austria.

The typical guestroom is oversized with a four-poster bed, separate sitting area, walk-in closet with armoire and a bathroom with stall shower and ample counter space.

The Helvetia also has a small indoor swimming pool and a fitness room with steambath and sauna. Its restaurant — which we did not try — extends to an outdoor terrace with lake view.

We paid 190 Sfr. (\$104) for our spacious double room, a bargain considering the hotel's location in the heart of one of Germany's most popular and delightful resorts.

Contact: Hotel Helvetia, Seepromenade, D-88131 Lindau, tel. +49/08382/91 30, fax 4004.

Daily Rates: Singles 80 to 175 DM (\$44-\$96), doubles 160 to 290 DM (\$88-\$159). Half-board 33 DM (\$18)

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel Kraft
Munich, Germany

Another longtime, moderately-priced *Gemütlichkeit* recommendation.

Comparing the Kraft to the Arlette in Zürich demonstrates the difference in mid-range hotel prices between these two cities.

EDITOR'S
CHOICE

Our double at the Arlette was about \$132, good value for Zürich. At the Kraft, where rooms are larger and doubles have a small sitting area with comfortable sofa, we paid \$88.

There are a few minor differences. Breakfast at the Kraft — a buffet — is better. The Arlette, which is closer to the Zürich rail station than the Kraft is to Munich's *Bahnhof*, has been more recently redone, while furnishings at the Kraft are looking a little dated.

Guests are treated with warmth and friendliness by Helga Kraft and her staff.

Contact: Hotel Kraft, Schillerstr. 49, D-80336, Munich, tel. +49/089/594823-24 fax 5503856. Proprietor: Helga Kraft

Daily Rates: Singles 140 to 180 DM (\$77-\$99), doubles 160 to 240 DM (\$88-\$132).

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 15/20

READERS' FORUM

Germany Hotel Bargains

Just returned from an early September 1999 trip to Southern Germany. A few tips: **Hotel Lippmann** (Marktplatz 3, D-56814, tel. +49/02673/1573, fax 1521, doubles to 150 DM/\$82) in Beilstein on Mosel River is the best; **Zum Goldenen Greifen** (Obere Schmiedgasse 5, D-91541, tel. +49/09861/2281, fax 86374, doubles to 135 DM/\$74) in Rothenburg (Tauber) is a great value. Both are small medieval family-run hotels offering friendly service, historic locations on town-squares, good restaurants, and

antiques.

Also, don't forget Internet the airline ticket auction-type site **priceline.com**. We got roundtrip tickets Minneapolis-Frankfurt on **Icelandair** for \$250 each! Had to change planes in Iceland but went smoothly. Gute Reise!

BRITT H.
VIA EMAIL

(Ed. Note: Our experience with *priceline.com* is in the September issue.)

Neuschwanstein Hotel

My wife and I would like to apprise you of one of our favorite small hotels in Bavaria - the **Gasthof Zur Post** (Münchner Str. 5, D-08362, tel. 49/08362/982155, doubles to 160 DM/\$88) in Schwangau, Germany. This jewel is extremely clean, has Bavarian hospitality, excellent food and been run by the Familie Lindner for many years.

We stay here often when we wish to visit the **Castle Neuschwanstein**. The ONLY drawback for the elderly is the lack of an elevator.

JACK MASON
VIA EMAIL

Switzerland Recommendations

We had a fantastic time in five locations in God's country. I thought I'd give you some of my opinions of the areas we traveled.

Langnau, Switzerland; **Hotel Hirschen**... best food of the entire trip. The hotel is getting a little tired looking, i.e., carpets worn, not as clean as we expected, but the people were terrific. This area of Switzerland does not get the tourists they deserve. I feel that the economy is not as good in the Emmental and that affects the Hirschen and other good inns in the area.

Kandersteg: Enjoyed a wonderful 3-star hotel acting as a 4-star... **Hotel Adler**. Not all rooms, but certainly Number 51 with a 12 x 12 ft. sitting room, large bedroom adjoining, a sunken bathroom with a whirlpool and a large skylight looking at the gorgeous sky and mountains....all for 190 Sfr. (\$128) per night for two....210 Sfr. (\$142) in season.

Ski Prices: Switzerland vs. U.S.

The following table, which was supplied by Switzerland Tourism, compares six-day lift ticket prices at major ski resorts. Low transatlantic winter airfares would seem to make Switzerland a financially attractive option for the North American skier.

Swiss ski resorts

Zermatt + Cervinia	354 Sfr.	\$239
Zermatt	296 Sfr.	\$200
Flims/Laax/Falera	290 Sfr.	\$196
Verbier	282 Sfr.	\$191
Saas Fee	270 Sfr.	\$182
Davos	265 Sfr.	\$179
Crans-Montana	265 Sfr.	\$179
St. Moritz	258 Sfr.	\$174
Grindelwald	244 Sfr.	\$165
Portes du Soleil	233 Sfr.	\$157
Gstaad	233 Sfr.	\$157
Lenzerheide/Valbella	229 Sfr.	\$155
Arosa	228 Sfr.	\$154
Engelberg	214 Sfr.	\$145
Villars	210 Sfr.	\$142
Adelboden	204 Sfr.	\$138

North American ski resorts

Deer Valley USA	498 Sfr.	\$336
Vail USA	481 Sfr.	\$325
Aspen USA	464 Sfr.	\$314
Sun Valley USA	430 Sfr.	\$291
Steamboat USA	430 Sfr.	\$291
Stowe USA	422 Sfr.	\$285
Mammoth USA	413 Sfr.	\$279
Jackson Hole USA	379 Sfr.	\$256
Park City USA	371 Sfr.	\$251
Crested Butte USA	363 Sfr.	\$245
Breckenridge USA	363 Sfr.	\$245
Squaw Valley USA	346 Sfr.	\$234
Copper USA	337 Sfr.	\$228
Snowbird USA	329 Sfr.	\$222
Taos USA	329 Sfr.	\$222
Whistler CAN	315 Sfr.	\$213

Hotel Excelsior, Zermatt. A very pleasant room looking at the Matterhorn from our balcony over the steeple of the town's little church. Excellent food, especially the fixed-price menu.....210 Sfr. (\$142) per night for two. A must is to go up to Gornergrat on a sunny day, outstanding and unbelievable.

Zermatt to Appenzellwhat a beautiful and long drive. We stayed at the **Appenzell Hotel** which was most *gemütlich* and had wonderful food...The manager was a gem... Two days in the Appenzell and I wanted to stay forever. We traveled the backroads to every little town in the area. The vistas were gorgeous as were the little towns and the people who put up with my poor try at speaking their language.

The last three days were spent in Zürich seeing the sights. We stayed at the **Hotel Adler** on Rosengasse directly off the quai. Not very "gemut," however, the people were gracious, the fondue in their restaurant was tops and we were in walking distance of everything for 210 Sfr. (\$142) per night for two persons. By the way, they won the toilet paper challenge of all the hotels. All in all, a very good place to stay in Zürich for a reasonable price.

We flew **American Airlines** from Columbus, Ohio, for \$485 per round trip through the AAActive over 62 program. Its costs to join, but is for a year and you may take anyone along for the same price.

GEORGE J. BOSER
COLUMBUS, OH ☒

Europe Travel Briefs

■ The lower Engadine is a rather remote, but beautiful region in southeastern Switzerland. In winter, access by road is difficult and costly to maintain due to heavy snowfall. Now there is a better, faster way. Nearly seven years in the construction, the **Vereina Tunnel** opens November 19. For travelers coming from the north, it connects Klosters (east of Chur) with Lavin (just north of Zernez) and avoids the Flüela Pass. The car-train schedule is every 30 minutes from Selfranga from the north and from Sgaliains in the south. Travel time will be 18 minutes and, depending on the season, the price will be 27 to 40 Sfr. (\$18-\$27).

■ **KD River Cruises of Europe** offers an early-booking discount of

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10% on cruises in the year 2000 if they are paid in full by December 15, 1999. The discount applies to cruises on the Rhine and its tributaries; the Main, the Mosel and Saar, the Elbe, the Main-Danube Canal, and the Danube, and can be combined with seasonal discounts of an additional 20% in April and 10% in October. Contact: KD River Cruises of Europe, tel. 800-346-6525 from the eastern U.S.; 800-858-8587 from the west. Web: www.rivercruises.com.

■ After a \$330 million restoration project, Berlin's 105-year-old **Reichstag** is once again the home of the German parliament; though portions of it still show bullet holes and graffiti put there by Russian soldiers during the fierce battle of Berlin in 1945. Sessions of the Bundestag are open to visitors and free one-hour guided tours are offered daily. The only English language tour is each Tuesday at noon. Visitors not interested in a tour can still ascend the building's spectacular glass dome for a fine 360-degree view of the city.

■ Twice *Gemütlichkeit's* "Hotel of the Year," the 138-year-old **Beau-Rivage Palace** in Lausanne has been voted Switzerland's "Historic Hotel of 1999." When it was built in 1861, its architectural design was considered revolutionary, with its facade and surroundings closely modeled after castles and palaces. Contact: Beau Rivage Palace, tel. +41/021/613 3333, fax 613 3334, Web: www.beau-rivage-palace.ch.

■ Skiers have reminded us of a Website we failed to mention in our August roundup of Internet resources for travelers to Germany, Austria & Switzerland. Houston-based **Ski Europe** (www.ski-europe.com) is an experienced and reliable seller of group and individual ski vacations. Their packages typically include:

- Round-trip air
- Rental car (except Zermatt)
- Seven-nights hotel
- Buffet breakfast daily or buffet

Website of the Month

www.hotelguide.com

Visitors to www.hotelguide.com can make hotel bookings throughout the world. The site claims to be the Internet's largest hotel directory with some 30,000 properties available for online booking; for many of them there is immediate confirmation, the rest — such as most small European hotels — are confirmed later via email. Registered users willing to pay a \$42 membership fee get a 10% discount. By providing an email address users can also receive a free weekly online newsletter entitled *Hotel Talk*.

Since hotelguide.com receives commissions from bookings, there are no links to individual hotel Websites. However, rate and facilities information seemed to match when compared to that found at the hotels' own sites.

The site also spots most hotels on a map. Using a 1-10 scale zoom-in/zoom-out graphic, the user can see a selected hotel in relation to its neighborhood or, as the numbers on the scale increase, in relation to its country and continent. We clicked the "Map" button for the **Gasthof Fraundorfer** in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. At "1" on the scale, the map showed four major streets and almost no detail. At "10" the view was all of Europe.

The listings are surprisingly complete. Our Garmisch-Partenkirchen search yielded a list of 25 hotels. Bad Hofgastein in Austria came up with 16. Even tiny villages, such as Seeg, near Füssen, and Morbach, way off the beaten track in the Hünseruck, have listings. One of them in Seeg is our longtime favorite, the **Pension Heim**.

If nothing else, this is a great site to find hotel addresses and phone numbers and get a general idea of where your hotel is located. We list it as a link on our site www.gemut.com.

breakfast and dinner daily

For example, their price for a week in March at Kitzbühel's **Hotel Strasshofer**, with breakfast and dinner, is an amazing \$759 — skiing not required.

If one of the established packages doesn't work, the user can, by completing a simple online form, obtain a price for a self-designed ski vacation. Periodic reports on European ski bargains, contests, and ski information are also available by registering at the site. Ski Europe can also be contacted at 800-333-5533. ☒

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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are overgrown with weeds and, last I heard, there is nothing to mark what went on there. Germany's former concentration camps, of course, have been preserved, but as memorials to their victims.

To present Hitler's bunker to the public would, admittedly, be a bit of

a tightrope act. With artifacts such as swastikas and photos of the "Fürher" around, a sober historic site could easily turn into a monument or memorial — at least, in the eyes of some.

Nevertheless, I come down on the side of those who say the place — and other WWII related sites — should be preserved and open to visitors. No matter how many bunkers get covered up, Germany isn't going to be — and should not be — allowed to forget or downplay in any way what happened.

As for concerns about such locations becoming inspiration for neo-Nazis, former head of Berlin's archaeological department, Alfred Kerndl, dismisses them and points out that the locations of the bunkers are no secret and "every neo-Nazi knows to the meter exactly where they are."

That the "Thousand Year Reich" ended in a dank, concrete bunker is a lesson that should not be lost. ☒