

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

January 25, 2002

A New, Better Year?

Hello 2002. Let's hope you do a better job than your predecessor.

O.k., enough of formalities, what about travel to Europe this year? Here's a quick, topic-by-topic, round-up of how we see things right now.

Air Travel

Newspaper ads and email promos are full of headlines like "London from \$199" and "Frankfurt \$209," but just try to book them. Such extremely low fares do exist but airlines offer only a few seats at these prices and for a very limited number of dates. Ask for a quote on the airline you want, on the date you want, and the price is usually much higher. It's all eyewash unless you can actually book the low fare.

The number of flights to Europe has been reduced substantially and we're hearing of full airplanes, even at this time of year. **Swissair**, which declared bankruptcy and nearly gave up the ghost, is reporting higher loads than a year ago.

Fares are about what they were at this time last year, though there are some decent high season deals for those willing to commit now. Of course, you can roll the dice and wait to see if fares drop in the spring or early summer. Those who don't care which airline or what time of day they travel, can set their own price at www.priceline.com. Another deep discount possibility is **Lufthansa's**

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

ROSTOCK/WARNEMÜNDE

The former East Germany, with its vastly improved tourist infrastructure and low prices, offers an ever-growing list of prime tourism destinations. This is one of them.

Though they're virtually the same city, Rostock and Warnemünde couldn't be more different. As it was in the Hanseatic days, Rostock is all business. Traffic fills its streets and bombed-out areas have been replaced with the functional, postwar buildings of the times.

The fishing village of Warnemünde, on the other hand, is just plain fun and despite its rise to resort status has lost little of its charm.

But lively Rostock is still worth a few days' exploration. Examples of medieval and renaissance architecture are plentiful throughout its *Altstadt*. There's the 1490 **Hausbaumhaus**, one of the few remaining wooden structures; the **Marienkirche**

(St. Mary's Church) continues to cast a dramatic shadow, and the 355-foot steeple of the **Petrikirche** tops the skyline. And nearby is the 13th-century **Rathaus**, with its 18th-century baroque make-over. Traditional gabled patrician houses line Wokrenterstrasse and some of the original city wall still remains.

The pedestrian Kröpelinerstrasse bustles with window-shoppers and sidewalk cafes. The **Universitätsplatz**, with its Fountain of Happiness, is a magnet for young people and fine restaurants abound.

The town also remains a vibrant seaport. From its Warnow River piers, boats leave every half-hour (10:30am-4:30pm, \$3.75 RT) for the

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Essential Austria

Ten favorite Austrian towns and regions wrap up our three-part series on the leading destinations in each of the three countries we cover — the essential Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

This is what we would say to the Austria-bound traveler who might ask "I only have a few days, what should I see?"

The destinations are listed in order of our preference and have the first-time traveler in mind. You may not agree with our choices or the order in which we rank them, but as we said with Germany and Switzerland, this little compilation of places to go and things to see isn't *the* top 10, it's *our* top 10. With that in mind, here are the choices for Austria:

#1 Vienna

Without question this is Austria's number one attraction. A city rich in culture and one that more than any other in our coverage area retains an Old-World atmosphere. Its wide boulevards are lined with stupendous buildings, its narrow lanes sequester charming shops and restaurants, and its museums display old masters by the thousands. But above all, Vienna is a city of music. It's operas, symphonies, chamber orchestras, even its street musicians, are the world's finest. It is also the best walking city in our three countries.

This is a must-see town if ever there was one. Two days is not enough and two weeks not too much.

Top Sights: • Schönbrunn Palace • The Belvedere • The Hofburg and its

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

online auction at www.lufthansa.com. If these don't work for you our consolidators are quoting fares as low as anything we've seen on the web, with the possible exception of last-minute online deals such as at **American Airlines'** www.aa.com. Call for a quote at 800-521-6722.

Rail Passes

Rail Europe — which is owned by the **Swiss Rail** and **French Rail** systems — has increased 2002 prices for rail passes sold to Europe-bound Americans. Under the current circumstances of a strong dollar (which converts to about 20% more of their own currency than it did a couple of years ago), and reduced demand for most overseas travel products, the price rise seems badly timed. However, we must admit that rail prices haven't increased all that much in the past five years: a 5-day **Europass Saverpass** is \$306 today vs. \$253 in 1997; a 5-day 1st class **German Twin Pass** is \$217.50 now vs. \$207 in 1997; and the 4-day **Swiss Pass** is actually down from \$264 in 1997 to \$245 in 2002.

Just announced at press time is a special deal on the 5-day, 3-country **Eurail Selectpass Saver**. The regular price of \$294 is now \$199, provided purchase is prior to April 30, travel starts by May 1, and is completed by June 30. The Selectpass Saver is for two or more persons traveling together. And, purchasers of an **Austrian Rail Pass** by April 30 get an extra, free day of travel. Contact: 800-521-6722.

Car Rental

This is going to be shameless self-promotion, but if you plan to rent a car in Europe this year and don't get a quote from our auto rent expert, Eric Poole, at 800-521-6722, it will almost certainly cost you money. Yes, rates in Germany are no longer the super bargain they were two years ago, but we still have the lowest. Let me give you just one example. A longtime subscriber phoned me the other day to say he had gotten a price from us on an economy car for a week out of Frankfurt. We gave him a price of \$163 with taxes and airport fees, his choice of **Avis** or **National**. Thinking our price a little steep, he contacted National who quoted him \$249 for the same car, and then Avis, who came in at \$209. We think our car rental rates are a great subscriber benefit.

We should also mention that, with the increase in rail pass prices, the pendulum in the ongoing rail vs. rental car controversy swings more to the car rental side.

Let's say you and your spouse plan to visit three countries — Germany, Austria, and Switzerland — for two weeks in July. You can purchase the 5-day, 3-country Eurail Selectpass Saver for \$294 each for a total of \$588. Of course, there will be some other public transport fees involved and you'll only be able to travel on five of the 14 days of your trip. (You can go to the 6-day pass for \$644 or the 8-day for \$756.)

Now, compare those numbers with a four-door, air-conditioned compact such as a Ford Focus, Opel Astra or VW Golf — very comfortable for two

persons — for \$313 including tax (add 15% for airport pickup) for the entire two weeks. Yes, you'll have to pay for parking and fuel but the car will be available to you every day of your trip, you won't be wrestling bags in and out of train stations, and you'll set your own schedule.

Train travel in Europe is a joy, and other scenarios — traveling entirely within one country, for example — will show less of a cost disparity, but for the budget-conscious traveler, a rental car is hard to beat.

Trip Insurance

One final thought; with recent events in mind we now recommend every traveler to Europe purchase an insurance policy which protects against trip cancellation and trip interruption. Most such policies also offer other benefits such as emergency medical transport, rental car CDW, lost baggage protection and so on. — RHB

Using Gemütlichkeit

- 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".

Logging on to Gemütlichkeit's Website

Except for the most recent 12, back issues in text format from January 1993 are available free to subscribers only at <http://www.gemut.com> (click on "For Members Only"). To access the issues enter the user name and password published in this space each month. The July codes are:

User Name: **stoc** Password: **1212**

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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.

ROSTOCK/WARNEMÜNDE

Continued from page 1

45-minute trip to Warnemünde (the 20-minute train ride is about \$5 RT).

The boat follows the river to its wide mouth at the Baltic where Scandline ferries bound for Copenhagen and Helsinki dwarf yachts and fishing boats. At the pier, the liner Crown Princess looms over the town, having discharged its 1,600 passengers, most of whom will simply board buses for a day-trip to Berlin.

Warnemünde

All along the short walk from the pier over the Alter Strom to the town center, fishermen sell a variety of seafood from large metal smokers.

Past the footbridge, most tourists turn right to the shops and the beach. To the left are narrow alleys lined with centuries-old gabled fishermen's houses. These quiet inner streets seem little changed from earlier times. No glitz here, just genuine charm.

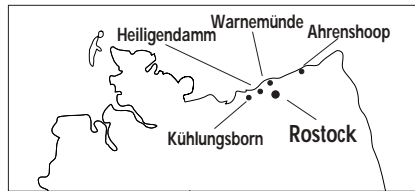
On the bridge's right are boutiques, cafes and galleries facing a channel lined with boats converted to takeout restaurants that sell everything fish: herring, salmon, squid, pickled fish, smoked fish, fish sandwiches, fish-kabobs, and fish cakes.

Nearby, the 92-foot-high **Warnemünde Lighthouse** has spread its protective beacon since 1897. For about \$1.50 it offers excellent views of the sea, harbor and town. Past the lighthouse, the **Westmole**, a walkable 1600-foot breakwater, provides the best vantage point for watching ships heading to sea.

For many, the wide beaches are the prime attraction. Some sections are marked "FKK"—literally *Freie Körperkultur* or "free body culture" (nude). Others are *Textil*. Some are o.k. for pets or wheelchairs and some are set aside for sports like windsurfing, parasailing and sea-kayaking. General rule: if there's no sign, the default designation is "nude."

Beach Resort Towns

Just west of Warnemünde, lie the beach resort towns of Heiligendamm and Kühlungsborn. With the charming town of Bad Doberan, they are worth a day-trip or more.



Rostock Basics

Rostock: Pop. 210,000

Elevation: 14 meters / 46 feet

Distance from Rostock to:

Ahrenshoop	44 km / 28 miles
Berlin	222 km / 139 miles
Frankfurt	676 km / 423 miles
Hamburg	191 km / 119 miles
Heiligendamm	22 km / 14 miles
Kühlungsborn	30 km / 19 miles
Munich	774 km / 484 miles
Warnemünde	11 km / 7 miles

Rail Times:

Berlin	2 hrs-53 min
Frankfurt	6 hrs-44 min
Hamburg	2 hrs-15 min
Munich	8 hrs-59 min

Tourism Offices

Rostock, Neuer Markt 3, D-18055 tel.

+49/0381/194 33, fax 381 2601

Warnemünde, Am Strom 59, D-18119, tel. +49/0381/548 00, fax 548 0030

Kühlungsborn, Ostseeallee 19, D-18225, tel. +49/038293/8490, fax: 84930

Ahrenshoop, Kirchnergang 2, D-18347, tel. +49/038220/234, fax: 300

Kühlungsborn became a major seaside resort more than 100 years ago and today only a strip of trees separates a mile-long stretch of elegant hotels from its beach.

From early morning, when the promenade is empty except for a few early-risers, the seaside is a magnet for hotel guests. Some reserve large wicker *Standkörber*; semi-enclosed chairs that shield wind and sun.

If these beaches are too crowded (unlikely), consider a 20-minute ride east on the narrow-gauge railway "Molli" (\$6 RT) to Heiligendamm, Germany's first seaside resort.

If Kühlungsborn is a resort reborn, Heiligendamm, part of a \$425 million restoration project, is early in its gestation period. Building exteriors remain much as they were 100 years ago and visitors come not to swim but to explore what has become

a massive open-air museum.

In 1793, Duke Friedrich Franz I chose the site for its "healing powers" and spa facilities. Swimming pools, ballrooms and a casino were built, and by the early 1900s, Heiligendamm was well established as *the* elegant summer retreat.

But during WW II the buildings became hospitals and clinics and later, under communist rule, apartments. Today, restoration is in full swing and Heiligendamm will soon be a 21st-century resort with grand hotels, shops, condos and golf courses.

Fischland-Darss-Zingst Peninsula

About an hour northeast of Rostock, the Fischland-Darss-Zingst peninsula is home to busy farming communities and fishing villages as well as a rich variety of salt marshes, lagoons, chalk cliffs, and forests.

Much of the area falls under the protection of the Nationalpark Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft, which contains a 50-kilometer / 33-mile network of cycle and footpaths, one of whose primary destinations is the 107-foot-high Darsser Ort Lighthouse. (The lighthouse can also be reached via horse-drawn carriages from several nearby villages.)

The region's endless beaches have long attracted tourists, but unlike Warnemünde, there are few hotels and little commercialism.

Most villages have changed little since 1900. Ahrenshoop, for example, has inspired countless painters, sculptors and writers for nearly a century. Today, they live in well-tended homes, often opening their studios to passersby.

Though weekend tourism is comparatively light, weekdays offer an even greater sense of "getting away from it all." Avoid leaving on Sundays, when traffic backs up for hours.

Accommodations

Hotel Polar-Stern

Guests here are likely to hear English spoken with an accent—a Boston accent. Owner Albrecht Kurbjuhn spent five years outside Boston, where his father served as a German diplomat.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

When the East opened, Kurbjuhn and wife Dagmar began to explore their expanded country. In Kühlungsborn, they were “flabbergasted” at how much the Baltic beaches and waters resemble the Mediterranean, especially Cyprus.

Amid the many empty structures, they saw one “crying to be restored” and in 1993 opened their 24-room hotel.

While Polar-Stern’s three-story exterior is stark white with blue trim, inside all is light, airy and painted in pastel colors. Antiques and decorative woodwork evoke the early 1900s.

Rooms are small but not cramped and offer basic necessities: shower, phone, satellite TV, desk and comfortable bed. On drizzly days, guests can choose the clubroom to read or play board games.

A wooded “buffer zone” blocks the hotel’s beach view, so there’s no need to spend extra on a “seaside” room. Do, however, ask for one with a balcony — a private sunning spot with sea breeze.

There are two restaurants: the Steak-Bistro-Bülöw opens to a sidewalk terrace and the Grillarium, an open-air pavilion, overlooks a small beer garden. While the Bistro offers more high-end fare, the Grillarium, with its crackling fire to stave off the evening chill, specializes in ribs, chicken, pork hocks and other grilled specialties (probably reminiscent of backyard barbecues in Boston).

Guests feel part of the Kurbjuhn’s extended family and service staff is especially cordial and attentive.

Daily Rates: Singles 55 EUR (\$49); doubles 80-85 EUR (\$71-76). Free parking, difficult access for disabled guests.

Contact: Hotel Polar-Stern, Ostseeallee 24, D-18225 Kühlungsborn, tel. +49/038293/82 90, fax: 82 999, email: kborn.polar-stern@t-online.de, web: www.polar-stern.com

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE: 16/20

Ostseehotel Kühlungsborn

This upscale property, which opened last June, is at the eastern end of the promenade, only steps from the beach.

Though the *Jugendstil* exterior

blends nicely with the area’s traditional architecture, some find the five-story, 100-room hotel out-of-scale and too near the beach. But guests whose rooms and balconies have dune, beach, and pier views, are unlikely to agree.

The Ostseehotel is elegant and sprawling. Its expansive, glass-domed lobby has a wall of windows that overlooks the sea. Guestrooms are spacious and, thanks to floor-to-ceiling windows, feel even larger. Though furnishings and layout are different for each room, all follow a maritime theme.

There are indoor-outdoor pools, a variety of saunas, steambaths, rain forest showers, and relaxation grottoes, and a full range of treatments including massage, Shiatsu, Reiki and baths in mud (choice of Dead Sea or moor) or goat’s milk.

Visitors seeking charm and a family atmosphere should try smaller properties like the Hotel Polar-Stern.

Daily Rates: Singles 97-102 EUR (\$86-91); doubles 146-188 EUR (\$130-167). Handicapped accessible; special rooms for guests with allergies.

Contact: Ostseehotel Kühlungsborn, Zur Seebrücke, D-18225 Kühlungsborn, tel. +49/038293/415-0, fax 415-555, email: ostseehotel@tc-hotels.de, web: www.tc-hotels.de

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE: 14/20

Strandhotel Fischland

The 117-room Strandhotel Fischland stands alone between dunes and nature preserve. No village, no main road, just a quiet retreat on the Baltic. Park your car and forget it: meals, saunas, massage, beauty treatments, fitness classes, tennis, windsurfing, sailing — all are available on the property. One nice touch is a sauna in the dunes; get thoroughly heated and then run 100 feet for a Baltic plunge. With its many activities and a beach that runs unobstructed for miles, the hotel never seems crowded.

Built in 1968 as a “guesthouse” for political leaders, it was renovated in 1995 as a hotel. To stay in the suite favored by East Germany’s last president, ask for Number 300. It offers stunning sea views — from the sitting room and all three bedrooms. Guests

unwilling to part with \$400-plus per night (or unwilling to split the cost among two or three compatible couples) can have a well-outfitted double with sea view and balcony for a third the price. Guestrooms are spacious and feel even larger due to full-wall picture windows. About half are in adjacent townhouse apartments.

In addition to the main restaurant (including a terrace with retractable roof), guests can dine beachside. Five tables with starched linens sit atop a wooden platform behind Plexiglas walls that offer protection from the almost constant wind. This is no snack bar; it’s gourmet dining with postcard views. There’s also a tropically-themed (think Gilligan) grill area, where roasted whole pig is a specialty.

Daily Rates: Doubles 145-195 EUR (\$129-172); suites 245-470 EUR (\$218-419); townhouses 170-310 EUR (\$151-276). Breakfast an extra 13 EUR (\$12) for townhouse guests. Free parking. Rates about 20 % lower through the end of June and after mid-September.

Contact: Strandhotel Fischland, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Strasse, D-18347 Dierhagen-Strand, tel. +49/ 38226 520. Fax: +49/ 38226 52999. Email: info@strandhotel-fischland.de. Internet: www.strandhotel-fischland.de.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE: 13/20

Strand-Hotel Hübner

This Warnemünde hotel presents captivating views of the beach, the breakwater and the old lighthouse and is adjacent to both the promenade and the old town.

The Hübner’s 95 guestrooms are spacious, modern and cheery, many with balconies. For the best sea views, choose an outside room facing west or north. For example, Number 311, a standard double, offers Baltic views that follow the beach to both horizons. Number 407, a junior suite, is a step up in comfort and size — including a balcony that rivals the dimensions of many hotel rooms.

The hotel’s rooftop wellness area sits in a glass grotto under an expansive glass cupola. A deck surrounds the area, its panoramic views and lounge chairs giving the sense of being on an ocean liner. Even the sauna provides a view to the sea.

Daily Rates: Doubles 135 EUR (\$120), suites from 320 EUR (\$284). Handicapped accessible.

Contact: Strand-Hotel Hübner, Seestrasse 12, D-18119 Rostock-Warnemünde, tel. +49/0381/54340. Fax: 5434 444, email: info@hotel-huebner.de, web: www.hotel-huebner.com

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE: 14/20

Hotel Verdi

A small, budget hotel whose relatively low prices attract a mix of business travelers and "older" backpackers requiring secure, clean surroundings. The rooms are generally "cozy" but offer modern comforts such as color TV, minibar, direct-dial phone, Internet connection, writing desk and shower instead of tub.

The Verdi is next to the Petrikerirche, convenient to harbor and city center but winding stairs make access difficult, especially with heavy luggage. Ask for a room off the street.

Daily Rates: Singles 57 EUR (\$51), doubles 82 EUR (\$73) No credit cards.

Contact: Hotel Verdi, Wollenweberstrasse 28, D-18005 Rostock, tel. +49/0381/252 24 0, fax 252 24 29, email: info@hotel-verdi.de, web: www.hotel-verdi.de

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE: 14/20

Hotel Sonne

On Rostock's Neuer Markt, Hotel Sonne is smack in the middle of the action — and has been for more than 200 years. As early as 1824, newspapers raved about "this impressive inn" with its "elegance," "durability" and "spacious cowshed." The cowsheds are gone but the Sonne remains as impressive and elegant as ever.

The 124 rooms, which range in size from large to huge, offer specially-designed, modern furnishings and the most modern of conveniences, from high-speed Internet access to cordless phones. Some are nonsmoking and several are equipped for guests with disabilities. The wellness area features sauna, solarium and steam bath, as well as massage and beauty treatments.

The Reuters Restaurant is recognized as one of the best in the region, with typical Mecklenburg cuisine and a 28-year-old *wunderkind* chef. The

hotel's Havana Bar is for cigar aficionados and the Alte Apotheke is a quaint wine bar and pub.

Daily Rates: Singles 100-140 EUR (\$89-124), doubles 115-161 EUR (\$102-143)

Contact: Hotel Sonne, Neuer Market 2, D-18005 Rostock, tel. +49/0381/49 730, fax 49 73 351, email: info@hotel-sonne-rostock.de, web: www.hotel-sonne-rostock.de

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE: 15/20

Hotel Neptun

The Neptun has few challengers as one of the most luxurious, cosmopolitan hotels in Germany. Built in 1971 as a communist showpiece, it was once a reward and refuge for politicians, military leaders and other bigwigs. (How many hotels feature photos of Fidel Castro as a prominent guest?) Today, after a nearly \$3 million renovation, the Neptun carries on its tradition of luxury — open to anyone with cash, rather than connections.

The hotel was built at an angle to the shore, so that each room has a sea view. Some corner "panorama" rooms offer nearly 180-degree views, and some luxury suites feature floor-to-ceiling windows. Guests can choose from a variety of motifs, such as "gull rooms" with a slightly masculine feel, or "rose rooms" that appeal mostly to women.

A pair of restaurants — Kranich Fish and Seafood Restaurant and Restaurant Koralle — are exquisite in both cuisine and service. The 19th floor Café Panorama is Germany's highest café and its Sky-Bar the loftiest bar. On summer nights, the hotel roof is opened for starlit dancing.

Extensive spa and fitness facilities offer a wide array of services.

Daily Rates: Singles from 135 EUR (\$120), doubles from 196 EUR (\$174), panorama doubles from 246 EUR (\$218), suites from 276 EUR (\$245). Many packages are available that reduce daily rates.

Contact: Hotel Neptun, Seestrasse 19, D-18119 Rostock-Warnemünde, tel. +49/0381/777 77 77, fax 540 23, email: info@hotel-neptun.de, web: www.hotel-neptun.de

Rating: QUALITY 18/20, VALUE: 17/20

Sustenance

Blue Marlin

Though open only since July, the Blue Marlin's extensive seafood menu (except for kangaroo steak), upscale feel, and superb cuisine, have already built a solid clientele.

The second-floor location is modern, airy and decorated with watercolor scenes of beaches, lighthouses and sailboats. Even a party of two gets a solid-wood table for six; a good thing, as plates and servings are very large.

The menu is a lesson in ichthyology. There's an illustration for each fish species with description, habitat information and a listing of related species. All are prepared creatively. Delicious, pan-fried flounder, for example, is served whole (minus head) with a light sweet and sour sauce flavored with onions and bacon. Trout comes with horseradish cream sauce, and *Zander filet* is baked with a topping of crabmeat, tomato sauce and mozzarella cheese. A party of two can eat well for 50-60 EUR (\$44-53), not including beverages.

Contact: Blue Marlin, Lange Str. 9, D-18055, Rostock, tel. +49/0381/4443231.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE: 13/20

Restaurant Kettenkasten

For more than a century, hungry sailors have been mooring their boats in front of what is now the Kettenkasten. Built in 1888 as a shop, it wasn't until a century later that it became a restaurant. A maritime theme features intricate model ships, antique maps, and oil paintings of ocean-going sailing vessels.

Among the better dishes are roasted Baltic herring wrapped in bacon, grilled salmon steak with caviar sauce, smoked salmon with peppercorns and horseradish, and a hearty fish soup. Another house specialty is *Mecklenburger Rippenbraten*, beef roulade filled with raisins, plums and apples, and served with red cabbage and boiled potatoes.

Dinner for two costs from 42 to 70 EUR (\$37-\$62), without beverages.

Contact: Restaurant Kettenkasten, Am Strom 71, D-18119 Rostock-Warnemünde, tel. +49/0381/512 48.

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

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ESSENTIAL AUSTRIA

Continued from page 1

Schatzkammer (treasury) • Kaisergruft (Capuchins' Crypt)

Suggested Activities: • Get J. Sydney Jones' *Viennawalks* and follow the directions • Attend a performance at the Volksoper; it's less expensive than the Staatsoper with lighter and more familiar music • Stroll the Prater, the city's amusement park

Places to Stay: • Hotel Römischer Kaiser, Annagasse 16, A-1010, tel +43/01/512 77 51 0, fax 512 77 51 13, email: info@rkhotel.bestwestern.at, web: www.bestwestern-ce.com/roemischer-kaiser • Altstadt Vienna, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, email: hotel@altstadt.at, web: www.altstadt.at • Pension Aviano, Marco-D'Aviano-Gasse 1, tel. +43/01/512 8330, fax 512 8330 6, email: aviano@pertschy.com, web: www.pertschy.com

Food Suggestions: • Zum Schwarzen Kameel, 1, Bognergasse 5, tel +43/01/533 8125 • Restaurant Beograd, Schikanedergasse 7, tel. +43/01/587 7444 • Café Diglas, 1. Wollzeile 10, tel. +43/01/512 57 • Gösser Bierklinik, Steindlgasse 4, tel. +43/01/535 6897

#2 Salzburg

As surely as we know what the hills are alive with we know too what the streets of Austria's third-largest city are alive with — tourists. Perhaps too beautiful for its own good, the town attracts armies of them. Nonetheless, Salzburg must be seen. The old town center is a glorious collection of palaces, churches, courtyards, and statuary, most of which were conceived and commissioned by a lecherous, ego-driven cleric, the Archbishop Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau, who fathered 15 children out of wedlock — all with the same woman.

Salzburg is also the birthplace of Mozart and he is still a major presence.

Top Sights: • Hohensalzburg fortress • the Dom (cathedral) • Mirabell Gardens • St. Peter's Cemetery

Suggested Activities: • Visit Wolf Dietrich's ostentatious tomb in the St. Sebastian cemetery (Mozart's wife and father are also buried in this cemetery)

Places to Stay: • Altstadt Radisson SAS, Judengasse 15, A-5020, tel. +43/

0662/848 5710, fax 848 57 16, email: radisson-altstadt@austria-trend.at, web: www.rtk.at/601/default.htm • Hotel Jedermann, Rupertgasse 25, A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873 2410, fax 873 2419, email: office@hotel-jedermann.com, web: www.jedermann.com • Schloss Haunspurg, Hammerstrasse 32, Oberalm Bei Hallein (outside of Salzburg), A-5411, tel. +43/06245/80 662, fax 85 680, email: info@schlosshaunspurg.com, web: www.schlosshaunspurg.com

Food Suggestions: • Lunch at Peter-skeller (St.-Peter-Bezirk 1-4, tel. 0662/841-2680), Austria's oldest restaurant • Dinner at Gasthof Auerhahn, Bahnhofstrasse 15, tel. +43/0662/451052, fax 451052-3.

#3 The Tyrol

If it hasn't stopped altogether, time has at least adopted a slower pace in this region of rugged mountains and alpine meadows. In both dress and custom, Tyroleans cling to the old ways. There is, for example, no hotel experience quite like a country hotel stay in the mountains of Tyrol, where the old customs of warm hospitality, traditionally dressed staff, gracious dining, and oversized, comfortable accommodations, recall the days of the Habsburg Empire. The region is full of charming old villages and resorts as well as some of the best mountain drives in our coverage area. Try, for example, the road from Reutte southeast through Lermoos, Ehrwald, Telfs, Mösern, Seefeld, then north to the German border.

Best Towns: Ehrwald, Hall in Tirol, Igls, Lermoos, Mayrhofen, Neustift, Reutte, Schwaz, Seefeld, Stams

Suggested Activities: • Country walks and drives • Visit the capital, Innsbruck, for a walk through the old town • Drive the Stubai Valley, just south of Innsbruck to road's end • Cross-country ski in Seefeld

Places to Stay: Hotel Jagdhof, A-6167 Neustift, Tirol, tel. +43 052/26 2234, fax 2666 503, email: mail@hotel-jagdhof.at, web: www.hotel-jagdhof.at/ • Hotel St. Peter, A-6100, Seefeld, tel. +43/5212/4555-0, fax 455545, email: info@mountains.at, web: www.mountains.at/en/index.htm

Food Suggestions: Take the half-board arrangement at your hotel.

#4 Graz

The Styrian capital is for those who require their European cities to come equipped with a fascinating old quarter, plenty of gorgeous buildings, narrow cobbled streets with hidden passageways and surprise courtyards, good restaurants, few tourists and moderate prices.

Top Sights: • Zeughaus (Arsenal) • Landhaus • Mausoleum of Ferdinand II

Suggested Activities: • Take a country drive to Piber, home of the Lippizaner stallions of Vienna's famed Spanish Riding School • Another pleasant auto excursion is to the Südsteirische Weinstrasse, about 25 miles south of Graz

Places to Stay: Hotel Erzherzog Johann, Sackstrasse 3-5, A-8011, tel. +43/0316/811 616, fax 316 811 515, email: office@erzherzog-johann.com, web: www.erzherzog-johann.com/erzherzog2.htm

Food Suggestions: • Kepler-Keller, Stempfergasse 6, tel. 0316/82-24-49 • Horseradish soup at Hotel Erzherzog Johann

#5 Burgenland

This province of undulating vineyards and a huge, reed-ringed lake — the Neusiedlersee — is what rural European travel was 30 years ago; inexpensive and authentic. Last spring, we compared this region south of Vienna to a pair of European tourism icons, Provence and Tuscany. The three have much in common: a pastoral charm that appeals to overstressed Americans, miles of vineyards sprinkled with old wine villages, distinctive regional cuisine, and characteristic architecture. But when it comes to crowds and cost, the similarities end; a Burgenland visit will cost about half as much as a stay in Tuscany or Provence, and you'll seldom encounter another American tourist.

The wines of Burgenland, especially the white dessert wines, are just starting to be recognized among the world's finest.

Best Towns: Rust, Mörbisch, Eisenstadt

Top Sights: • Neusiedlersee • Schloss Esterhazy in Eisenstadt • Wine villages

Suggested Activities: Drive to the wine villages north and east of the Neusiedlersee, stopping to taste in the sales rooms of local producers • In Rust or Mörbisch, have a simple lunch in the garden of one of the many *Heurigen* (wine taverns).

Places to Stay: • Gasthof Rusterhof, Rathausplatz 18, A-7071 Rust, tel. +43/02685/6416, fax 6416 11 • Hotel Am Rathausplatz, Rathausplatz 7, A-7071, Burgenland, tel. +43/02685/6202, fax 6772, email: am_rathausplatz@rms.at

Food Suggestions: Restaurant Rusterhof (see above)

#6 The Wachau

Another of Austria's wine regions, the Wachau offers a beautiful drive past terraced vineyards along the Danube from Grein in the west to Krems at the eastern end.

Best Towns: Dürnstein, Grein, Krems, Melk, Weissenkirchen

Top Sights: • Melk's Benedictine Abbey with its fabulous church and library • Krems Wine Museum • Ruined castle at Dürnstein

Suggested Activities: • Bike the flat path along the Danube • Hike up to Dürnstein's ruined castle where Richard the Lionhearted was imprisoned • Walk Dürnstein's charming Hauptstrasse

Places to Stay: Hotel Richard Löwenherz, A-3601 Dürnstein, +43/02711 222, fax 222 13, email: loewenherz@netway.at, Hotel Goldenes Kreuz, A-4360 Grein, tel. +43/07268/316, fax 3168

Food Suggestions: Stadt Melk, Hauptplatz 1, Melk, tel. +43/02752/524 75, fax 524 75-19

#7 Gasteiner Valley

Far off the beaten track for most American tourists are Badgastein and Bad Hofgastein, in the Gasteiner Valley straight south of Salzburg. Though they are about as different as two Austrian towns can be, because of their proximity we are considering them together.

Badgastein reeks of another time — the late 19th century — when its pretty setting, hot springs and radon tunnels attracted Europe's royal families, especially the Habsburgs. Its situation, a few hundred feet above the valley floor, laid out along the curve of the

valley's end, is especially appealing. The main street hugs the crescent-shaped hillside like a horseshoe and in the heart of town, slashing through the middle of that horseshoe, a roaring waterfall blasts its way wildly down the steep hillside. Continue on around the horseshoe and the road becomes Kaiser-Wilhelm Promenade, a wide, flat walking path that meanders past hotels, shops and crumbling *Belle époque* buildings.

Though it lacks the faded, but genteel charm of its higher neighbor, Bad Hofgastein, on the valley floor is a less expensive but livelier alternative.

Top Sight: • Kaiser Wilhelm Promenade

Suggested Activities: • Walk the Kaiser Wilhelm Promenade to the Gasteiner Hohenweg and follow it along the flank of the mountain to Bad Hofgastein. Return by bus.

Places to Stay: • Hotel Grüner Baum, Kötschachtal, A-5640 Badgastein, tel. +42/06434/ 25 160, fax 25 16 25, email: info@grunerbaum.com, web: www.grunerbaum.com/index_en.html, • Landhaus Gletschermühle, Gletschermühlestr. 7, A-5640 Badgastein, tel. +43/06434/20 970, fax 23 80 30, info@gletschermuehle.at, web: www.gletschermuehle.at/

Food Suggestions: • Villa Solitude, Kaiser Franz Josef Str. 16, Badgastein, A-5640, tel. + 43/06434/25 160, fax 25 16 25 • Hotel-Café Austria, Bad Hofgastein, tel. 06432/6223

#8 Salzkammergut Lakes

Austria's region of lakes, just east of Salzburg, where seemingly every town has a 'see' (pronounced zay) suffix, has long been a favorite for *Sommerfrische*, the old Austrian term for traditional extended summer vacations in the countryside.

The principal lakes are Fuschlsee, Mondsee, Attersee, St. Wolfgangsee and the Traunsee. In summer, they are crisscrossed by a variety of passenger craft while cog railways chug up mountainsides. There are also many backroads to explore and endless miles of walking paths.

Bad Ischl, though not on any of the lakes, is a famous spa and for many years the fashionable summer home of Emperor Franz Josef.

Other upscale resorts are St. Gilgen and Mondsee. Attersee is less expensive but still charming. Gmunden, at the northern tip of the Traunsee, is popular with artists and musicians

Best Towns: Attersee, Bad Ischl, Gmunden, Mondsee, St. Gilgen, St. Wolfgang

Suggested Activities: • See Gustav Mahler's home in Steinbach and the Gustav Klimt house in Seewalchen. Both towns are on the Attersee • In Bad Ischl, see Emperor Franz-Josef's Imperial Villa and the villa of composer Franz Lehar. • In Attersee, board the Attersee-Schiffart for a lake tour including an onboard lunch or dinner — the latter with live music.

Places to Stay: • Hotel Seehof, A-5311, Loibichl (near Mondsee), tel. +43/06232/5031, fax 503151, email: seehofnextra.de, web: www.seehotel.org/ • Hotel Attersee, Hauptstrasse 18, A-4864 Attersee, tel. +43/07666/7864, fax 7864 91, email: hoteloberndorfer@rtk.at, web:

Food Suggestion: 1er Beisl, Landungsplatz 6, Attersee, tel. +43/07666/7877

#9 Hallstatt

This tiny, unique village on the steep side of a Dachstein foothill above the waters of the solemn Hallstättersee, is traversed by one narrow road — restricted to residents and delivery vehicles — which is regulated by five-minute stoplights at each end of town. Its train station is on the lake's opposite shore. Hotels and food are simple and there is little nightlife.

Top Sights: • Parish Church • Chapel of St. Michael and its charnel house packed with skulls and bones (occupants of the tiny cemetery are exhumed and moved to the charnel house after just a few years in the ground) • Heimatmuseum

Suggested Activities: • Visit the local salt mines • Electric boat trip on the lake • Excursion to Dachstein Caves

Places to Stay: • Hotel Grüner Baum, Marktplatz 104, A-4830, tel. +43/06134/8263, fax 8420, web: www.hallstatt.net/gruenerbaum/unt-en-eng.htm • Haus Sarstein, A-4830 Hallstatt 83, tel. +43/06134/8217

Food Suggestion: Dine at your hotel.

#10 Lienz

A beautifully restored medieval city center, good weather, proximity to one of Europe's great mountain roads, and the influence of nearby Italy are this southern Austrian town's principal attractions.

Top Sights: • Bruck Castle and its Museum of East Tyrol and Gothic Chapel • Parish church of St. Andrä

Suggested Activities: • On the way south to Lienz, drive the Grossglockner Road, which ascends to more than 8,000 feet • Have a picnic on the shores of Tristacher See, four kilometers south of the town • Visit Aguntum, a Roman settlement dating to the 1st century

Places to Stay: • Romantik Hotel Traube, Hauptplatz 14, A-9900 Lienz, tel. +43/04852/64444, fax: 64 1 84, email: hotel.traube@tirol.com • Haidenhof Gasthof Hotel, Grafendorferstrasse 12, A-9900 Lienz, tel. +43/04852/62440, fax 62440-6, email: info@haidenhof.com

Food Suggestion: Mamma's, Hauptplatz 14, tel. +43/04852/644 44

ROSTOCK/WARNEMÜNDE

Continued from page 5

Meyer's Mühle

From 1866 to 1920, the windmill sails at Meyer's Mühle whirled in the Baltic breezes, forcing power through drive shafts and gears to the stones that ground the grain. When first built, the wind-

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Key Websites for the Traveler to Germany, Austria & Switzerland

- www.gemut.com Gateway site for travelers to Germanic Europe, including car rental, rail passes, hotel bookings, traveler feedback, travel tips and past issues (free access to back issues for subscribers; see log-on info on page 2).
- www.viamichelin.com The Michelin database of hotels and restaurants plus great interactive trip planning tools.
- www.mapblast.com Map and automobile trip planning. Locates routes and distances.
- bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en German rail. Train schedules throughout Europe, not just Germany.
- www.sbb.ch/index_e.htm Swiss and European rail schedules.
- www.ski-europe.com Top web resource for skiers with much data on Alpine resorts.
- www.myswitzerland.com Website of Switzerland's national tourist authority.
- www.germany-tourism.de Germany's national tourist authority.
- www.anto.com Austria's national tourist authority.

mill, which was one of hundreds that lined the Baltic (most were dismantled for firewood during World War II), was in a field. Today, shielded from the wind by villas, homes and hotels, the sails are quiet, but the beams and millworks, along with paintings and old photographs, remind guests of a former time.

Service is casual and cordial at the eight tables. Large candles cast a soft light on a peaceful, rustic setting. Food is plentiful and good with an emphasis on fresh ingredients. The Greek salad (a non-regional exception) was enormous, served with a variety of lettuces plus watercress, tomato and radishes, topped with turkey, feta cheese, sliced green olives, and drizzled with a cucumber-garlic yogurt sauce. Bread came straight from the oven with green, yellow and red pepper slices baked in — perfect for absorbing the last of a stew of fresh fish chunks and sliced vegetables in a light tomato broth. The *Schweinshaxe* (roasted pork hock) nearly filled the plate, slow-roasted to perfect tenderness and served with potatoes and a horseradish wine sauce.

A couple could work hard to spend 60 EUR (\$53), without beverages, but a slow walk the length of the entire promenade would be required as *digestif*.

Contact: Meyer's Mühle, Mühlenstr. 44, D-18119 Rostock-Warnemünde, tel. +49/ 381 5 42 50.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE: 17/20

Readers' Forum

Bavarian Hotel

I was in Germany the first two weeks in September (Yes, I was there during the WTC attack, driving up to Munich from Lindau when my son called on the cellphone. Ironically, that evening I stayed at the **Four Points Sheraton** at the Olympic Village.)

The prior week, I had the pleasure of spending a couple days in my favorite part of Germany, a small town called Schliersee, which is south of the *Autobahn* about halfway between Munich and Salzburg.

It's a popular vacation site for the Germans, but like everywhere else in Germany, everybody knows English.

Previously, I picked up a link to the web site for the **Hotel Schliersbergalm** (tel. +49/08026 /6722, fax 6685, email: info@schliersberg.de, web: www.schliersbergalm.de). The web site has a livecam from the hotel overlooking the Alps, valley, and lake for which the town gets its name. The hotel is reached by a cable-car from the town of Schliersee. Terrific, friendly place with surprisingly modest prices. Spectacular view. While I was there, they were "doing" a wedding for an obviously wealthy Munich family. Weather was lousy, still had a great time. Stefan and Simone run a great hotel.

I also had the treat of tagging along with Stefan Schimke, manager of the Schliersbergalm, as he was going to get some special cheese for the wedding participants. Acker Alm is just inside Austria, no more than a 25-minute drive from Schliersee. The "cheese shop" is up a private mountain road (.8 EUR), paved but rough. Almost to the top of the peak, and where the paved road ends, is this small cheese "factory". Of course, milk cows graze everywhere.

The shop, in an old farmhouse, is about 40-feet square and divided into a cheesemaking facility and a small tasting area with two large tables. Ten to 12 large wheels of different cheeses are laid out on a counter and the cheesemaker slices off pieces from them for eating there or taking out. This could make a cheese enthusiast out of anyone. Best cheese I've ever had. It's great fun to sit there and see the cows that made the milk that was used in the next room to make the cheese that you're eating now.

Keep up the great newsletter!

JOE MCKEE
VIA EMAIL

(Ed. Note: Your emails and letters are most welcome. We publish those whose content includes hotel/restaurant contact information, and are brief, concise and of interest to the broadest segment of our readership. We have a sizeable backlog of your letters and in the next few months plan to devote more space to Readers' Forum.)

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