

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Subtle Effects of WTC

Rail Europe, a U.S. corporation owned by the French and Swiss railroad systems, late last month merged with longtime rival, DER (Destination Europe Resources). For decades, both companies have been in the business of marketing European rail passes, rental cars, hotel rooms, vacation packages, and transatlantic air tickets. Rail Europe sells to the general public as well as to travel agents. DER markets only to travel agents.

The two companies fought hard to win the loyalty and bookings of the nation's travel agents and between them held the U.S. marketing rights to virtually all European rail passes sold in this country. As a consumer, you might purchase a rail pass from a travel agent, but it's 99% certain your agent will get that pass from Rail Europe or DER (others have the right to wholesale rail tickets but as a practical matter, all European rail in this country is sold by these two companies.)

And thus we begin to see some of the ways — other than heightened airport security — in which 9/11 will affect those of us who enjoy traveling in Europe.

DER, like most travel companies, struggled to remain afloat in the weeks and months after 9/11. Not only had their flow of new bookings slowed to a tiny trickle, millions of dollars were going the other way in refunds. Apparently it was too much for a company that only a few years ago had been purchased by a few key

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

GRAZ

Ranked number four on our list of Essential Destinations for Austria, the Styrian capital is an authentic, charming European city, much more than just an old-world theme park.

Graz gets its name from the small castle that once sat at the foot of the Schlossberg, a rocky but verdant 400-foot outcropping located in the city center. Today, a small 16th century clock and bell tower perch above the Schlossberg, serving both as a symbol of the town and a wonderful spot to take in one of Austria's prettiest cities. From this elevated view you can look down on the centuries-old townhouse courtyards, the winding streets, and church spires of the extensive *Altstadt* (old town) along the River Mur, and the large swaths of park land that give the tourist office reason to call their town the "Garden City."

Although Graz doesn't attract the

attention of Salzburg or Vienna, it has its admirers, among them UNESCO, which has designated the city's *Altstadt* a World Heritage Site, and the European Union, which has named it Cultural Capital of Europe for 2003.

The town's cultured atmosphere and unique architecture are a result of a long and rich history, punctuated by strategic neglect. Many of the architectural treasures date from the 15th century when Graz served briefly as an imperial city under Friedrich III and during its years as the provincial capital of Inner Austria, which included the present Austrian provinces of Styria and Carinthia, as well as the Mediterra-

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What's New in '02

Perhaps you think of Europe as a place to make a better connection to the past. You go there for the "old stuff:" churches, castles, monuments, pictures, sculptures, even venerable hotels and restaurants. But Europe does change, "new stuff" is created all the time: art, buildings, events, even travel deals. Here are a few:

Switzerland's Expo.02

A big event that's had very little U.S. publicity is **Expo.02** (www.expo.02.ch) which runs May 15-October 20 in Switzerland's "Three Lake Region." The multi-city event will feature interactive, themed exhibits called "Arteplages." *Power and Freedom* is in Biel, while Murten hosts *Instants and Eternity*. *Nature and Artifice* is in Neuchâtel, *I and the Universe* can be seen in Yverdon-les-

Bains, and the mobile *Arteplage, Sense and Movement*, will be in the Jura. Each Arteplage will offer a unique architectural style and performances by local and international artists. The focus will be on Swiss society and how life is lived — and will be lived — in this extraordinary little country. Connecting the venues will be a series of catamaran boats and other means of transport. Organizers recommend three days to see it all.

The ticket pricing structure is complex but three-day passes purchased in conjunction with rail tickets (web: www.sbb.ch/pv/expo02/index_e.htm) are about \$60.

Patek Philippe Museum

In Geneva's Plainpalais district, the new **Patek Philippe Museum** is a

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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employees from its Germany-based owner, the massive DER Tours.

Press releases to the contrary, the effect of the merger is likely to result in a lessening of competition followed by inevitable increases in costs to consumers. Already this year, Rail Europe had been directed by its European owners to raise the price of most rail passes and at the same time cut commissions to travel agents. DER — obviously in negotiation at the time to sell out to Rail Europe — could only follow suit. Now, with just one company issuing rail passes in the U.S., it seems reasonable to expect higher rail pass prices and even lower commissions.

A further reduction in travel agent compensation means you, the consumer, can expect to pay fees over and above the cost of any tickets, passes or bookings made in your behalf. For example, Rail Europe's new, reduced standard travel agency commission for **Brit Rail** passes is 5%. A Brit Rail Classic Pass goes for \$279. That's a commission of just under \$14 to be divided between agent and agency owner. Let's say your agent spends perhaps 15 minutes explaining the various rail pass options, another few minutes recording your order and making sure your name is spelled exactly as on your passport, and then more time issuing the pass. At the end of the month the agency must prepare a rather complicated report for submission to Rail Europe that involves accounting for all numbered ticket stock (lose one blank ticket voucher

and Rail Europe can assess a \$500 penalty). Throw in overhead such telephones, computers, rent, insurance, employee benefits, and you can see no agency can remain in business on \$14 commissions.

DER is only the latest in what is becoming an ever-lengthening list of 2001/2002 European travel casualties. **Kemwel**, a U.K.-based travel wholesaler, mainly of rental cars, was acquired by **Auto Europe**. **Council Travel**, for decades a seller of discount travel to teachers and students, recently declared bankruptcy. **Maupin Tours**, a high-end tour packager owned by billionaire Carl Icahn, closed up its Lawrence, Kansas, headquarters and will continue on a scaled-down basis from Las Vegas. Belgium's national airline, **Sabena**, and its low-cost subsidiary, **CityBird**, are both gone. **Swissair** will be reincarnated as **Swiss Airlines** in April. **KLM** has downsized its charter subsidiary, **Martinair**, to a handful of flights from Orlando, Miami and four Canadian cities. **British Air** has reduced its workforce by 25%.

Air carriers have incurred huge financial losses. In the 4th quarter, **United** lost \$10 million *per day*. So, you say, this means empty planes and lower ticket prices, right? Sorry, no. Virtually every transatlantic carrier has eliminated flights and a report prepared for the **European Travel Commission** by the **Donald N. Martin Company** says 20% fewer seats across the Atlantic, keeps load factors "considerably higher" than a year ago. More tickets would have been sold if more seats were available. This lack of

supply, of course, is propping up ticket prices for 2002.

But some see a better tomorrow. Ron Kuhlmann, vice president of **R2A, Inc.**, a California transportation consulting firm, thinks all-year \$400-\$500 roundtrip fares to Europe are not at all far-fetched. "It's clear who has the model that works, it's the low-cost, low-overhead carriers like **Southwest** and **Jet Blue** in this country and **EasyJet** and **Ryan Air** in Europe," says Mr. Kuhlmann.

He notes that in a time when the major international carriers are mothballing airplanes, EasyJet and Ryan have just placed orders for hundreds of new ones. Kuhlmann thinks it's only a matter of time until such airlines apply the template that works so well for them in short and medium haul flights to transatlantic routes.

We all knew 9/11 would affect our travels, it wasn't clear just how. We're beginning to find out.— 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: **bones** Password: **9487**

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Publishers: Robert H. & Elizabeth S. Bestor
Editor: Robert H. Bestor
Contributors: Doug Linton, C. Fischer, R. Holliday, Jim Johnson
Web Master: Paul T. Merschdorf
Consulting Editor: Thomas P. Bestor
Subscription Dept: Kurt Steffans
Subscriber Travel Services: Eric Poole, Andy Bestor

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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.

GRAZ*Continued from page 1*

near peninsula of Istria (now divided among Italy, Slovenia and Croatia). During this period two Habsburg emperors resided here and Napoleon cared enough about the city to blow up the Schlossberg's walls, which have since been replaced by a thread of scenic paths and stairways leading to the aforementioned view.

In some ways, Graz's *Altstadt* seems older than Salzburg's. By the time of the Baroque heyday — 17th and 18th centuries — Graz had lost its importance, while an ascendant Salzburg was recast by (among others) architect Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, coincidentally a Graz native. And so the buildings of a "neglected" Graz remained untouched by Baroque remodelers.

But the city is more than a monument to the past. Thanks to a large university population, and a number of local businesses that have achieved enough global success to support a lively arts and cultural scene, the Styrian capital feels young, progressive, and eager to embrace the future. After dusk, this side of its character can be seen as the winding streets of the *Altstadt* fill with the young and the affluent, enjoying an evening out.

When visiting Graz, I simply wander: first, up to the Schlossberg's clock tower and then along the streets of the old town, stopping off to renew acquaintance with a few of the city's quirkier sights:

- **The 15th-century double spiral stairway in the Burg.** This tightly-spiraled stairway with its twin axis are all that sole remain of the imperial residence of the Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich III. It is entered via a small door off the prosaic entrance driveway of the provincial government buildings. The door is never locked — even in the wee hours — so you can climb these historic steps whenever you like.

- **The courtyard of the Landhaus.** Actually there is nothing quirky about the courtyard: it is an attractive 16th-century Renaissance structure ringed by a three-story arcade and a number of other striking architectural

Graz Basics**Population:** 240,000**Elevation:** 1,146 feet**Distance from Graz to:**

Frankfurt	746 km	463 miles
Innsbruck	427 km	266 miles
Munich	386 km	240 miles
Salzburg	276 km	172 miles
Vienna	194 km	120 miles
Zurich	697 km	433 miles

Rail Distances & Times:

Frankfurt	800 km	500 miles	10.0 hrs
Innsbruck	440 km	275 miles	6.0 hrs
Munich	390 km	242 miles	5.75 hrs
Salzburg	250 km	155 miles	4.0 hrs
Vienna	200 km	124 miles	2.5 hrs
Zürich	740 km	460 miles	9.75 hrs

Tourism Offices

Herrengasse 16, A-8010 Graz, tel. +43/0316/8075-0, fax 8075-15 email: info@graztourismus.at

Kaiserfeldgasse 15, A-8011 Graz, tel. +43/0316/8075-0, fax: 8075-55

details that will have you feeling you're in Italy.

- **The facade of the Hofbäckerei.** The former Imperial Bakery has such a stunningly ornate 19th-century wooden facade that I guarantee you will want to have your picture taken in front of it. By the way: if an intrepid visitor were to feel around near the doorway, she or he would find two hidden compartments.

- **The 1950s stained glass window with Hitler and Stalin in the Stadtpfarrkirche zum Heiligen Blut.** The left triptych behind the alter depicts the humiliation of Christ. Look very closely in the panel that is third from the left and fourth from the bottom to see Hitler and Stalin looking on from a balcony.

Accommodations

Hotel Erzherzog Johann

On a busy pedestrian street in the old town, just a few steps from the city's main square, the Erzherzog Johann is our choice for the best hotel in Graz. It offers just about everything *Gemütlichkeit* readers seek: good rates, a sense of history and a friendly, family-owned atmosphere — with a touch of surrealism thrown in as well.

The convex facade of this five-story former Baroque palace has just

enough decoration to make it stately and inviting. Guests enter through the old, vaulted carriageway, which has been converted into a small lobby with marble floors and a large wood-paneled reception desk. On the left is an opulent little bar designed by the surrealist Viennese artist, Ernst Fuchs. During the day, with its lack of windows and Freudian decor, the bar looks rather gloomy. At night, however, it is much more alluring. Fortunately, the spacious breakfast room behind it is brightly lit and vividly colored with canary yellow walls framing a large cobalt blue abstract painting.

Though the public rooms are stylistically very different, they show good taste and nicely complement one another. A favorite room is the sunny, covered atrium behind the lobby, which is framed on three sides by heavy wrought iron railings lined with a forest of old palm shrubs and rubber plants. The overall effect is Mediterranean...in a Central Europe sort of way.

Almost every floor of the Erzherzog Johann has an interesting little sitting area to display the hotel's attractive collection of antique furniture and porcelain cabinets filled with ancient bric-a-brac.

The attractive accommodations tend to be large with high ceilings and polished parquet floors, although a few have wall-to-wall carpeting.

The traditional furnishings are of good quality and handsomely accented with striped or floral fabrics. The sparkling mid-to large-sized baths have beige and white tiles and halogen lighting. Some rooms have separate toilets. The only sour note in the guest quarters are the TVs perched atop brown laminated minibars.

For a few dollars less than the "superior" accommodations, business rooms are available with fax machine, video recorder, a larger desk, and a bit more room.

Daily Rates: Singles 94-165 EUR (\$83-\$145), doubles 142-178 EUR (\$125-\$157)

Contact: Hotel Erzherzog Johann, Sackstrasse 3 -5, A-8010 Graz, tel. +43/0316/81 16 16, fax 81 15 15,

email: office@erzherzog-johann.com,
web: www.erzherzog-johann.com.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel Zum Dom

This small establishment serves as Graz's 'art hotel.' It features stylish modern rooms that successfully mix antiques with vivid colors and such "Po-Mo" designs as the large blown-up silkscreen of Raphael's angels that serves as the head board in one room. Unlike other so-called art hotels, this one doesn't just use loud colors to mask cheap commercial furnishings — it's actually quite luxurious. Given its central location and stylish decor, it is also quite reasonably priced.

Zum Dom is set on a sloping cobblestone street just below the Cathedral and Mausoleum, and next to a trendy restaurant called *Mod* ('Dom' spelled backwards, if you didn't notice), a name that could aptly apply to the hotel as well. The reception is on the second floor, as is the spacious breakfast room.

Whimsical ceramic door signs, such as little hand-sculpted scuba divers or mounted chicken heads, announce the number of each room. Inside are spacious, brightly colored spaces with parquet floors, high ceilings, Persian carpets, intricately patterned curtains — such as floral or leopard skin — and an antique or two to offset the otherwise modern furnishings. Many beds are draped with half- or full canopies for a more ethereal look. Baths have either showers or whirlpools, and room Number one, with its heavy mantle of cream and purple-veined marble, wins the award for the most lavish bathroom.

Staff is not plentiful, but cheerful and helpful.

Daily Rates: Singles 76 to 116 EUR (\$57-\$102), doubles 145 to 156 EUR (\$128-\$137)

Contact: Hotel Zum Dom, Bürgergasse 14, A-8010 Graz, tel +43/0316/824 800, fax 824 800-8, email: domhotel.co.at, web: www.domhotel.co.at

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 14/20

Schlossberg Hotel

The *Schlossberg* is an excellent choice if you are willing to pay for something small, historic and luxuri-

ous. Like the *Zum Dom*, the *Schlossberg* combines the contemporary and the antique, but here the scales tip toward the latter, and both are offered at a much higher level of luxury.

The modern world is represented mainly by the art on the walls (by such notables as Hermann Nitsch, who fortunately decided to use paint this time), while numerous antiques fill both guest and public rooms.

The lounge features an exceptionally attractive collection of Biedermeier sofas and old leather reading chairs, which are worth stopping by just to relax in. (If you need to justify your visit, you can buy a drink from the small lobby bar).

During warmer months, the main attraction is the hotel's open air terrace that rises in three tiers up the steep slope of the Schlossberg, offering wonderful views over the old town and the river.

Breakfast is served in a spacious room or in a sunny, nonsmoking wintergarden in the building's enclosed courtyard.

Rooms are decorated in muted tones with thick carpeting, well-made reproduction furniture, as well a good-quality antique or two, such as a centuries-old oil portrait or a small turn-of-the-last-century chair still clothed in its worn, original leather.

The marbleized tile bathrooms vary in size, but all have good sized tubs. Room Number 4 is an especially nice double with a heavy wood beam ceiling. Nearby Numbers seven and two (a ground floor twin) are also good choices. Parking is available for a fee in the garage across the street.

Daily Rates: Singles 130-170 EUR (\$114-\$150), doubles 182-225 EUR (\$160-\$198)

Contact: Schlossberg Hotel, Kaiser-Franz-Josef Kai 30, A-8010 Graz, tel. +43/0316/80 70-0, fax +43/0316/80 70 70, email: office@schlossberg-hotel.at, web: www.schlossberg-hotel.at

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 13/20

Romantik Parkhotel

Fond recollections of a memorable stay here with my family keep a soft

spot in the heart for this traditional hotel, located in a Habsburg yellow building across the ring road from the old town and city park.

The large, neo-traditional lobby has wood paneled ceilings, halogen lamps and brass accents. The comfortable lounge offers a quartet of antique, oversized wooden armchairs arranged on a spacious Persian carpet. A wintergarden at the front of the restaurant and café serves as the breakfast room.

Accommodations have high ceilings and are uniformly large. The decor is attractive and traditional with parquet floors, Persian rugs, graceful chandeliers, and wood furniture with burgundy-tinted floral fabrics. The white tiled baths all include tubs. One benefit of this slightly off-center location is the hotel's free parking lot.

Daily Rates: Single 89-120 EUR (\$78-\$106), doubles 139-168 EUR (\$122-\$148)

Contact: Romantik Parkhotel, Leonhardstrasse 8, A-8010 Graz, tel +43/0316/36 30-0, fax 36 30 50, email: romantik@parkhotel-graz.at, web: www.romantik@parkhotel-graz.at

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 12/20

Sustenance

Kirchenwirt

The journey to this large, family-run hotel-restaurant, on a little hill, next to a gracefully ornate pilgrimage church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, is a popular one. Its interior is divided into a number of cozy rooms, which during our visit were filled with families enjoying a leisurely Sunday lunch.

The friendly atmosphere, interesting menu and freezing temperatures outside encouraged us to settle in for a long, multicourse meal.

A selection of small breads was immediately set on the table with two spreads; one a herbed cream cheese and the other a flavorful *Schmaltz*.

We began by splitting a mostly fine mixed appetizer plate (7.41 EUR/\$6.50) of cantaloupe wrapped in prosciutto, terrine of game, smoked trout in aspic, chunks of delicious smoked duck breast, and a

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Parmesan-sprinkled venison carpaccio which, unfortunately, was still frozen. Next came a pair of 'wild' soups (3.05 EUR/\$2.70): a rather bland game broth — though with delicious flour dumplings — and a flavorful wild mushroom (*Schwamml* or *Pfifferling*) soup.

One main course, tender duck with red cabbage and sliced bread dumplings (12 EUR/\$11), maintained the wild theme but was sadly marred by a too-salty sauce that masked much of the duck's flavor. A hearty vegetarian dish, baked spinach noodles topped with cheese and a ladle of homemade tomato sauce (6.90 EUR/\$6) received better marks.

A dessert plate (5.45 EUR/\$4.80) of dark and white chocolate mousse, attractively served with a dusting of powdered sugar and fresh fruit, was enough for two.

From the Kirchenwirt's extensive wine cellar, which has been praised by *The Wine Spectator*, we sampled three imported reds and three Austrian white wines from Styria, the Wachau and Burgenland — about \$2.65 per glass.

Although the restaurant was full to overflowing, the service was prompt and friendly.

Accommodations in comfortable and well-furnished rooms are also available upstairs. The *Kirchenwirt* is a Best Western affiliate.

One strange feature — at least in the men's room — I feel compelled to mention is the small television screens carrying CNN in the walls above the urinals.

Kirchenwirt, Kirchplatz 9, 8044 Graz, tel +43/0316/39 11 12-0, email: office@kirchenwirtgraz.com, web: www.kirchenwirtgraz.com. Open Mon. and Wed.-Sat. 9 am-midnight; Sun. 9 am-5pm.

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 12/20

Delikatessen Frankowitsch

This temple of food, an elegant delicatessen/sandwich shop, wonderful for lunch or a light snack eaten in gourmet ambience, is divided into three parts. One is a deli counter that serves quality meats from Austria, Italy and beyond, as well as a broad

choice of wines by the bottle.

In a Deco-esque room to the left is a sandwich counter and bar whose glass cases illuminate trays of opened-faced artworks. They are constructed of smoked salmon, baked ham or caviar decorated with egg slices and a filigree of mayonnaise and cost a mere 1.30 to 2.11 EUR (\$1.14-\$1.86). Accompanying is a good selection of open wines or perhaps a little *Pfiff* (.2 liters) of beer. The third room on the corner is a newer-looking coffee house serving pastries and caffeinated drinks.

Delikatessen Frankowitsch, Stempfergasse 2-4, A-8010 Graz, tel +43/0316/82 22 12, fax 82 22 12-16, email: office@frankowitsch.at, web: www.frankowitsch.at. Open Mon.-Fri. 8:30 am-6:30 pm; Sat. 8:30 am-5 pm.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 14/20

Gambrinskeller

Because another restaurant was closed, we wound up at the *Gambrinskeller*, in the heart of the old town. It was a stroke of luck.

While there is nothing fancy about this rustic grill house, it has that wonderful, friendly tavern atmosphere one finds in a good *alt* Austrian establishment. Dark, stained wood tables and paneled walls, green porcelain ovens, large mugs of beer, grilled meats, and friendly staff and clientele are the hallmarks of this strangely above-ground *Keller*.

The menu ranges all over the former Empire with *Cevapcici* (minced sausage) from the Balkans, tripe soup from Hungary, and excellent Starobrno beer from Moravia.

We decided to go Slavic with a shot of plum brandy, or *Slivowitz* (2.20 EUR/\$1.94), to start the meal (my companion, who lives in Bratislava, assured me it is *very* good for the digestion). We passed on the tripe soup (which I actually like) and ordered a grilled Balkan platter (20.50 EUR/\$18 for two) that included *cevapcici*, *raznici*, *pljeskavica* and *dzigerica* (minced sausage, skewers of marinated pork, a spicy meat patty and chicken livers with bacon), all accompanied by another specialty of

the house, a large plate of pickled items: mounds of navy beans, lentils, kidney beans, cabbage, beets, peppers, and cucumbers. It was all very good though the meat needed the mustard and spicy condiments served with it.

The atmosphere couldn't have been better. Our jovial waitress had a sense of humor and the eclectic crowd of old and young, from a range of social classes, thoroughly enjoyed itself.

Gambrinskeller, Färbergasse 6-8, A-8010 Graz, tel +43/0316/81 01 81, web: www.gambrinskeller.at. Open Mon.-Sat. 10 am-midnight.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 13/20

Stainzerbauer

This small restaurant, squirreled away on a little cobblestone street below the cathedral, offers an interesting mix of *Gasthaus* food and *haut cuisine*. It consists of two cozy, rustically decorated rooms, both of which require reservations.

A rich, *Schilcher* cream soup (5 EUR/\$4.40) — named for the ruby red, slightly sour wine that comes from western Styria — was followed by seared veal (18 EUR/\$16), eye-catchingly arranged above a mild saffron sauce and snow peas. But the evening's best dish was light, tender spinach dumplings (6.70 EUR/\$5.90), deliciously enhanced by a brown butter sauce and Parmesan shavings.

Service was mixed. Our waiter was confused that I could speak German and my companion couldn't, and so just stopped speaking to us altogether.

At Stainzerbauer we recommend the homey, traditional dishes; the more expensive menu items were nicely presented but not worth the extra expense.

Stainzerbauer, Bürgergasse 4, A-8010 Graz, tel +43/0316/82 11 06, email: stainzi@aon.at. Open Mon.-Sat. 11:30 am-midnight.

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 12/20

Coffee & Cake

For a nice afternoon break, or *Jause*, try the pastries and coffee at the *Sorger* on Sporgasse 4 (Mon.-Sat. 7am-7:30pm) just off the main square. ☒

EDITOR'S CHOICE

NEW IN '02

Continued from page 1

collection about two thousand exceptional timepieces, automata, miniature portraits on enamel, and rare exhibits which trace some 500 hundred years of European horology. The collection, presented over four floors, consists of two departments; one dedicated to rare timepieces of European and mostly Genevan provenance, the other is exclusively devoted to Patek Philippe watches.

Contact: Patek Philippe Museum, Rue des Vieux-Grenadiers 7, CH-1205 Geneva, tel. +41/0807/09 10, web: www.patekmuseum.com

Lead the Vienna Philharmonic

Vienna's new **House of Music** is a collection of music memorabilia whose most publicized exhibit gives visitors a chance to conduct the Vienna Philharmonic. It's all done with digital technology and projection video. In the museum's Instrumentarium, one can play a huge drum and other oversized instruments or climb inside a giant organ pipe. In the Brain Opera, instruments translate body movements and touch into sound. Of course, there's plenty of Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Mahler, Schubert and their colleagues. House of Music Vienna, Seilerstätte 30, tel. +43/1/516 48, fax 512 03 15, web: www.houseofmusic.at

Slave Galley Launched on Lac Léman

La Liberté, a 190-ton, wooden, oar-powered Mediterranean galley — minus the cannons, soldiers and slaves — now floats on Lake Geneva at Morges, east of Geneva. Built by unemployed Swiss workers, the galley was launched late last summer and with further work hopes to set sail with passengers this summer. Boat and shipyard tours cost 7 Sfr. (\$4.25) for adults and 3 Sfr. (\$1.81) for children. Rue de Lausanne 45, Morges, tel. +41/021/803 50 31

Vienna's New Museum Complex

Though previously reported on here (see *Gemütlichkeit*, April 2001), we'll still consider **Vienna's Museum Quarter** as "new" since it's less than a year old. Anchored at either end by the new **Leopold Museum** and the **Museum of Modern Art**, the MQ has

been compared to the **Lincoln Center for Performing Arts** and ranks as one of the world's 10 largest cultural complexes. It's a 10-minute walk from the city center and occupies the former Imperial Stables. There are also performance halls, restaurants and bars, and a children's museum. The Leopold features works by Egon Schiele and Gustav Klimt and the Museum of Modern Art is a collection of 2,600 works formerly displayed in two separate locations.

The New Old National Gallery

After a three-year, \$62 million restoration, Berlin's **Alte Nationalgalerie** has reopened. Sometimes described as the jewel of **Museum Island**, the Old National Gallery resembles a Greek temple with its impressive staircase, pillars and ornamentation. It features a revamped collection of 19th century art including French Impressionists Monet, Manet, Renoir, Degas, Cézanne and the sculptures of Rodin plus German artists such as Max Liebermann and Friedrich Overbeck.

Many of the early 20th-century works once displayed here were sold or destroyed by the Nazis, and in the weeks before the Russian army occupied Berlin in April 1945 the museum's best 19th century works were evacuated and ended up in the West. Many of the latter can now be seen in the **Neue Nationalgalerie**. Contact: Alte Nationalgalerie, Bodestrasse 1-3, Admission approx. \$5.25.

Vienna Weekend with Music

A new **Opera & Operetta Potpourri** package offers Vienna weekends — Friday to Sunday or Saturday to Monday — starting at 178 EUR (\$157) per person. The deal includes two nights in a four-star hotel with buffet breakfast, a ticket to an opera or operetta performance at the Volkstheater, plus admission to the House of Music. Bookings through Mondial, tel. +43/1/588 04 173, fax 587 12 68, web: www.mondial.at/english/locations.html

More Things "New"

Vienna's new **Judenplatz Museum** is devoted mainly to 15th century Jewish life...Soon to open at Wilderswil near Interlaken is **Mystery Park**, a sort of theme park/museum that

will focus on such mysteries and marvels as the Pyramids, Stonehenge and space travel...Cologne's massive **Cathedral** has a refurbished **Schatzkammer** full of gold chalices and other religious treasures...The new **Lausanne Guest House & Backpacker**, which opened late last summer at 4 Rue des Epinettes (two minutes from the rail station), offers accommodations, some with private bath, for from \$18 per person... **Zeppelins** are making a comeback in the German city of Friedrichshafen on the Bodensee. Lifted by nonflammable helium they offer one-hour rides for about \$280. Email: info@zeppelin-nt.de ☒

Readers' Forum

Rostock/Warnemünde Advice

I applaud your recent article on the province of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. This area is popular with Germans but relatively unknown to English-speaking tourists. We have traveled to this region, particularly Warnemünde, for several years, usually in July/August when temps in Rostock/Warnemünde are in the 75F range. The only English heard on the streets is from cruise ship passengers in town for the day.

The Warnemünde beach is a fine tan sand with the westerly portion of it being clothing optional. This makes eyestrain as much of a problem as sunburn! While the Baltic water seldom warms to 70F, it is a welcome relief on sunny days. A comfortable way to spend the day is to rent a *Strandkorb* (about \$5/day), a covered two-person settee, usually of wicker, adjustable from a sitting to a reclining position which can be turned to face the sun or away from it if you've had enough for the day. It can also protect from a cool breeze.

Often we have stayed at the excellent small **Parkhotel Seeblick**, (Strandweg 12a-14, 18119 Warnemünde, tel. +49/0381/519550, fax 519 55113), located about one kilometer west of the village center across the promenade from the beach. It has tidy, well-appointed small rooms and a generous buffet breakfast. Prices are from about \$64 to \$84, depending on room size and view. Parking is about \$2.50 per day.

There are many good, reasonable restaurants in Warnemünde. Three of our favorites are the **Stranstubchen** (east of Luisenstrasse and just south of the promenade and the Seestrasse), the **Sealord** (about a block south of the lighthouse east of Alexandrinstrasse) and **Zum Stromer** (Warnemünde's oldest bar located at Am Strom 32, about 2 blocks south of the bridge to the Bahnhof). Two very good beers in the area are the local Rostocker and a regional beer called Lubzer. The community is full of quaint old fisherman's quarters and buildings, and many flowers.

The annual **Hanse Sail** is held over four days, concluding the second weekend in August. This international sailing festival begins in Sweden, moves to Rostock, then to Gdansk and ends in Norway. Last August some 240 sailing ships were there from all over Europe. The sea was filled with sails as far as the eye could see. One of them was the Russian ship, *Cedov*, the world's largest sailing vessel. This four-masted giant was built in Germany in 1921 but claimed by the Russians as a war prize at the end of WWII.

Don't miss the magnificent white chalk cliffs on the Island of Rugen, about 80 miles to the east. Wismar, another fine little harbor town, is about 35 miles to the west. Rostock is always full of activity.

NELSON HELM
PLANO, TX

German Castle Hotel Report

Dresden. Felt a bit misled by some magazine articles which suggested the central area — Zwinger — has been largely rebuilt. Got very little sense of what it had been, or may be again. Even this far into reunification we found it dreary and still in a time-warp. Stayed at **Martha Hospiz** (Nieritzstrasse 11, tel. +49/0351/81760, fax 8176222, email: marthahospiz.dresden@vch.de) which was no great shakes, but reasonable value. We chose to eat in the hotel's "potato restaurant," which proved better than anticipated.

Berlin and the **Art Nouveau** (Hotel Art Nouveau, Leibnizstr. 59, tel. +49/030/327744-0, fax 327744-40, email: info@hotelartnouveau.de, web:

www.hotelartnouveau.de). The large, two-room suite was perfect for a four-night stay. Had two fine dinners at nearby **Tavolo Calda**; excellent, friendly service. Were given a free grappa following the second dinner. Despite windy, rainy weather the Ku'damm was a solid sea of people on a Saturday morning, and trying to get in/out of **Ka De We** was like bucking an exit after a Super Bowl game. My wife, who was with Marshall Field's, commented that Chicago/Minneapolis would die for traffic like we saw.

On to **Dornroschenschloss Sababurg** (Hofgeismar/Sababurg, tel. +49/05671/8080, fax 8082, email: sababurg@silh.com). Had one of the better tower rooms, separate from the main hotel. Decent room — standard bathroom — but no elevator and a lot of stairs. Outstanding restaurant; the best salmon I've ever eaten. Window tables provide stunning parkland/meadow/forest views — one of the best dining-table views we've had. Good breakfast buffet, including eggs to order and the best *Brotchen* of the trip. No English channels on TV but during WTC hotel staff provided daily CNN.com printouts in English. Great people. Lovely, remote setting. Approach Schloss via long, forested drive. At 390 DM (\$180) per night, a bit overpriced vis-à-vis the other three *Schlosshotels*, but still worth every DM. Must have car.

Parkhotel Wasserburg Anholt, (Klever Strasse, D-46419 Isselburg-Anholt, tel. +49/02874/4590, fax 4035) is almost on the German/Holland border, about 25 miles from Arnheim. Truly classic setting in park with formal gardens surrounded by large moat/lake. Relatively modern and tastefully decorated. Had two large rooms with Biedermeier style furnishings. Large bathroom with separate walk-in shower with "rain forest" showerhead, separate toilet/bidet, large freestanding tub. Restaurant good, but not memorable. Above average buffet breakfast. Well worth the \$225 per night cost.

Burghotel Schnellenbrg (tel. +49/02722/69 40, fax 69 41 69) at Attendorn, 131 kilometers straight

east of Düsseldorf. Beautiful forested, rolling countryside. Old and utterly charming *Schloss*, with the most "castle-like" feeling. Our Audi A4 rental car just squeezed through the stone gateway into a door-side parking area. Restaurant had old hunting lodge feeling; very good but not outstanding. Very good buffet breakfast. A steal at about \$170 per night, as overall accommodations equal to Wasserburg but with a more homey feeling. Off the beaten path. We hope to return.

Hotel Auf Schönburg (D-55430 Oberwesel/Rhine, tel. +49/06744/93930, fax 1613, email: huettl@hotelschoenburg.com) at Oberwesel. Overlooks Rhine from a high bluff. Long walk from the parking lot, baggage can be brought up via cart, but a tough climb for some. No elevator in *Schloss* and our steep stairs two floors up made me puff. We had one of the larger, "L" shaped doubles. Small balcony with table and chairs overlooking Rhine. One wall was half bookcase which opened to reveal a "secret passage" to the bathroom. The bathroom fell short. Single sink and tub/shower with hose and no curtain; all but impossible to avoid spraying the room. Good restaurant and typical buffet breakfast. At about \$170 per night not at all equal to Attendorn, but given the tourist route setting, not an unfair price. Many English-speaking guests but no CNN/BBC.

Last night at **Hotel Dreieich** (Frankfurter Str, D-63225, Langen, tel. +40/06103/9150, fax 52030), just off A661, about 22 kilometers from Frankfurt Airport. Doubles about \$88 for a short night's sleep. More expensive airport hotels aren't good value — we'd rather spend for something special, i.e., the *Schlosshotels*. Fairly modern but no elevator, so we requested in advance a main floor room because of heavy luggage which is repacked on last night. For the second straight year were given a quiet street level two-room apartment, ideal for spreading things out for the final pack. A good buffet breakfast begins at 6am, a good time for those catching mid-morning flights.

BILL BOHNHOFF
SANTA FE, NM

Scores with Hotel Database

Thank you for such an informative newsletter. My wife and I spent Christmas in Germany visiting relatives. While there we met up with other family and friends from the U.S. Our first week was spent with three friends visiting several towns and cities in Southern Bavaria. Your Hotel Database and reviews made me look like a well-seasoned European traveler in the eyes of our friends. The reviews of the **Hotel Asam** (Munich), **Gasthof Fraundorfer** (Partenkirchen), and the **Reichs-Küchenmeister** (Rothenburg) were spot-on. Each of these were excellent establishments with reasonable prices and very accommodating staff. This, combined with the *Weihnachtsmarkts*, *Glühwein* and snow, made our sight-seeing an incredible experience.

Our visit to Vienna to see my grandfather led us again to the Hotel Database to find **Pension Aviano** - another wonderful, reasonably-priced establishment with a great staff. All this with a location just a few blocks from the Stephansplatz. Also, your room recommendation was excellent; from the corner room we had a wonderful view of the snow covered Stephansdom while we opened the windows a bit to hear the street performers below playing Christmas music! How's that for at-

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.

mosphere!!

As I type this, we're planning our next trip to Germany and I can assure you that *Gemütlichkeit* will never be out of arms reach.

BRIAN & JEAN HILL
ALEXANDRIA, VA 

Gemütlichkeit Recommends

This listing of recommended good value, mid-priced hotels in popular destination cities is a new *Gemütlichkeit* feature intended for quick reference. Please let us know whether or not you find it useful. Additional hotels and links to websites of these hotels can be found in the Archives section of our website at www.gemut.com. The required subscriber user name and password for access this month can be found on page 2 herein. The hotels are arranged in price order, higher to lower.

Berlin

Hotel Art Nouveau, Leibnizstr. 59, tel. +49/030/327 7440, fax 327 744 40, email hotelartnouveau@snaflu.de

Hotel Domus, Uhlandstrasse 49, Germany D-10719, tel. +49/030/882041, fax 882 0410, email: info@hotel-domus-berlin.de

Bern

Hotel Innere Enge, Engestrasse 54, CH-3012, tel. +41/031/309 6111, fax 309 6112, email: info@zghotels.ch

Hotel Kreuz, Zeughausgasse 41, CH-3000, tel. +41/031/329 9595, fax 329 95 96, email: hotelkreuz@swissonline.ch

Lausanne

Hostellerie du Débarcadère, 7 chemin du Cret, Saint Sulpice, CH-102, tel. +41/021/691 5747, fax 691 5079, email: debarcadere@swissonline.ch (not in town)

Hotel Agora, Av. du Rond-Point 9, CH-1006, Tel. +41/021/617 1211, fax 616 2605, email: agora@fhotels.ch

Lucerne

Hotel Wilden Mann, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, email: mail@wilden-mann.ch

Hotel Cascada, Bundesplatz 18, CH-6003 Lucerne, tel: +41/041/226 80 88, fax 226 80 00, Email: info@cascada.ch

Munich

Hotel Asam, Josephspitalstrasse 3, tel. +49/089/230 9700, fax 230 970 97, email: info@hotel-asam.de.

Hotel Kraft, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24 fax 5503856, email kraft.hotel@t-online.de

Rothenburg ob der Tauber

Reichs-Küchenmeister, Kirchplatz 8, Rothenburg o.d. Tauber, Germany D-91541, tel. +49/09861/97 00, fax 97 04 09, email: hotel@reichskuechenmeister.com

Salzburg

Hotel Struber, Nonntaler Hauptstrasse 35, Austria A-5020 tel. +43/0662/843 728, fax 843 728 8, email: struber@sbg.at

Hotel Jedermann, Rupertgasse 25, Austria A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873241-0, fax 873241-9, email: jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at

Vienna

Hotel Römischer Kaiser, Annagasse 16, A-1010, tel +43/01/512 77 51 0, fax 512 77 51 13, email: info@rkhotel.bestwestern.

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

Zürich

Hotel Florhof, Florhofgasse 4, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. 41/01/261 4470, fax 261 4611, email: info@florhof.ch

Hotel Arlette, Stampfenbachstrasse 26, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. +41/01/25 20 032, fax 25 20 932

Frankfurt Airport

Steigenberger Esprix Hotel Frankfurt Airport, CargoCity Süd, D-60549, tel. +49/069/69 70 99, fax 69 70 94 44, email: frankfurt@esprix-hotels.de

Hotel Birkenhof, von-Eiff-Str 37, Hanau-Steinheim, D-63456, tel. +49/06181/648 80, fax 64 88 39, email: info@HotelBirkenhof.de (25-minute drive from airport)

Hotel Dreiech, Frankfurter Str. 49, Langen, D-63225, tel. +49/06103/91 50, fax 52 030 (15-minute drive from airport)

Munich Airport

Kempinski Hotel Airport, Terminalstrasse/Mitte 20, D-85356 Munich, tel. +49/089/9782-0, fax 97822610, info@kempinski-airport.de

Hotel Hoyacker Hof, Freisinger Landstrasse 9a, D-85748 Garching b. München, tel. +49/089/326 9900, fax 320 7243, email: info@hoyackerhof.de

Zürich Airport

Mövenpick Zürich Airport, Walter-Mittelholzerstrasse 8, CH-8152 Glattbrugg, tel. +41/01/808 88 88, fax 808 88 77, email: hotel@movenpick-zurich-airport.ch

Hotel Fly Away, Marktgasse 19, Zürich-Kloten, Switzerland CH-8302, tel. +41/01/804 4455, fax 804 44 50, email: reservation@hotel-flyaway.ch 

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