

DEAR
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Germany and the Movies

I was only allowed to watch the Saturday afternoon cowboy movie, typically a Roy Rogers or Hopalong Cassidy, but that day there must have been a mix-up because there was no sagebrush, no horses and no sign of "Hoppy" or Roy. Having missed the film's first few minutes I had not a clue what was on the screen. There were athletes, it seemed to be set in Germany and the images were hypnotic. At age 11, I had stumbled onto one of the great documentaries of the century, *Olympia*, Leni Riefenstahl's ground-breaking chronicle of the 1936 Olympics.

The controversy that followed the extraordinary Ms. Riefenstahl throughout her long life (1902-2003), is a topic for another time, but I mark my lifelong interest in German films — and films about Germany — from that Saturday afternoon in 1949 in that crummy little theater in Coos Bay, Oregon.

Since then, of course, I've seen *Olympia* several times and many other German films as well, including Fritz Lang's *M*, the great submarine movie, *Das Boot*; *Mephisto*; *Metropolis*; *The Marriage of Maria Braun*; *The Nasty Girl* (set in *Pas-sau*); *Run Lola, Run*; and *The Tin Drum*.

Four fairly recent German films are very much worth your time — provided you can find them at your local art house theater or, much more likely, on DVD.

Downfall tells of Berlin's last days in WWII from the perspective of Hitler's private secretary. There

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

THE RHEINGAU

Where the Rhine flows west, Germany's oldest and noblest vineyards are the center of a culture that honors wine, food and hospitality.

At almost every point along the Rhine, the river flows northward. But at Wiesbaden, the hills of the Taunus range cause its path to shift west for 19 miles (30 kilometers) until it reaches Rüdesheim. The result is a southern exposure landscape that is perfect for growing grapes and exudes a warmth that extends to both the countryside and the people who live there.

This is the Rheingau, a swath of land that rises slowly from the right side of the Rhine to the Taunus hills. The region includes 13 towns along the river and seven "inland" villages. It is serene, genteel, and noble, and the pace is slow. Visitors relax with a

glass of wine and don't feel they need to get to the next stop; they're already there. More than a series of sights, the Rheingau is a place to experience.

Life goes on here, as it has for centuries: tourism is secondary, and winemaking is primary. The big rush in the morning isn't to buy film. It's to the butcher shop or bakery, or to work in the vineyards. In the evenings, local residents relax in the market squares or dine with friends at a local vintner's tavern. Visitors are conspicuous, but especially welcome. As local guide and lifelong resident Karl Wahl puts it, "You're looking at life, not just history."

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Vienna 2005

The city is looking well these days. Prosperous, in fact. Expensively-dressed Viennese and out-of-towners fill its shops, restaurants, and cafes. Opera houses and concert venues are sold out night after night. Virtually every building within the Ring has a dignified, recently-scrubbed look.

They're lifting the roof of the fabled **Hotel Sacher** in order to insert an entire new floor without disturbing the architectural character. When finished, the hotel will look much as it has for the past 125 or so years, but cast a slightly larger shadow.

The massive steel and glass **Haashaus**, whose construction a few years ago caused a commotion, now seems the right counterpoint to the gray stone eminence of its Kärntnerstrasse neighbor, towering **Stephans-**

dom. The two buildings are separated by a few meters and almost 1,000 years.

Kohlmarkt, which leads from the Graben to the Hofberg, is now pedestrian-only.

In a town that arguably has as much high-brow culture as any, the huge new **MuseumsQuartier** seems almost a case of the rich getting richer. Surrounded by the same Baroque walls that once enclosed the Imperial Stables, the \$130-million attraction is said to be one of the world's 10 largest cultural complexes, home to major museums, including the **Leopold**, that features Austrian artists Egon Schiele, Gustav Klimt,

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Exchange rates as of 05/31/05

1 euro = \$1.23

1 Swiss franc = \$0.80

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have been other "docudramas" on this subject over the years but this is by far the best. The film is of special interest because it's a *German*, not an American or British, view of the Third Reich's end. Some scenes are difficult to watch and the film evokes a range of emotion. For example, it's easy to despise Magda Goebbels at first meeting but less so near the end when she gently and reluctantly — in obedience to her monster of a husband, propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels — administers first a sleeping potion then instant death in the form of a cyanide capsule to each of her six children.

Much easier to handle is *Schultze Gets the Blues*. This deliberately-paced story of a retired salt miner is rich in detail and good humor. The film's characters are easy to warm to, particularly Schultze, and the depiction of life and culture in a small town in eastern Germany is squarely on the mark. You can almost taste the beer served at the *Stammtisch*.

In *Good-bye, Lenin!*, a party-loyal East Berlin woman goes into a coma just before the Wall comes down and awakens shortly afterward. Fearing the shock of capitalism will be a danger to her recovery, her son devises elaborate, and often hilarious, ways of fooling his mostly bedridden mother into thinking nothing has changed. He scrounges for the awful canned food stocked by grocery stores in communist times and even

rigs her television to show only pre-Wall GDR programming. Besides the funny stuff, it's an interesting look at how East Berliners dealt with the almost overnight change in their culture and way of life.

Nowhere in Africa is the true story of a well-to-do Jewish family that escapes Nazi Germany by emigrating to Kenya. In a much different way than *Good-bye, Lenin!*, the film examines how a German family grapples with a radical life-style change.

Currently there are 495 forums on travel to Germany at Frommers.com. In contrast there are 1207 on France and 1440 on Italy. These numbers seem a fair indication of American tastes in European travel destinations. Is there any doubt that this country's interest in visiting Europe was fueled by postwar, romantic films such as *Roman Holiday* (1953, Gregory Peck, Audrey Hepburn) and *Charade* (1963, Audrey Hepburn, Cary Grant) featuring gorgeous on-location scenery? No such movie pastry was ever cooked up about Germany. Instead we got caricatured, anal-retentive Germans, both military and civilian, and lots of war — not Cary and Audrey cruising the Rhine. It is a bias that continues to this day. I can't think of a single Hollywood movie that presents a romantic view of Germany. Even Japan has gotten the Hollywood travelogue treatment, the most recent being a glowing look at Tokyo in *Lost in Translation*.

Bias or not, give me an American-made movie with location scenes in

Germany and I'm there with the popcorn. There are too many to mention, but here are some of my favs. *One, Two, Three* (1961, directed by Billy Wilder), is James Cagney and Coca Cola vs. communism and has good shots of post-War, pre-Wall, Berlin.

The Great Escape (1963) is a terrific Hollywood version of the true, amazing tunnel escape by Allied flyers from a German POW camp. Several cast members had actually been POWs — some held by the Germans, a couple by the Americans — and Steve McQueen did all his own motorcycle stunts except for one 60-foot jump. The movie was shot entirely in Germany and the motorcycle scenes were done near Füssen. The actual POW camp was in Upper Silesia, about 100 miles from Berlin.

Another Hollywood winner is *Cabaret* (1972), which followed the 1966 Broadway musical of the same name. Both were based on the book

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Using Gemütlichkeit

- 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 Our Website

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User Name: **rgau** Password: **8777**

Vol. 19, No. 5
June 2005

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

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Gemütlichkeit (ISSN 10431756) is published 10 times each year 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 travel@gemut.com. Web site: www.gemut.com. Subscriptions are \$67 per year for 10 issues. While every effort is made to provide correct information, 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.

THE RHEINGAU

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Vineyards stretch from the river, across a broad plain and up gradual hills where they meet with meadows and forest. "Two kilometers away from the Rhine, you lose any sense of the hectic," says Wahl. "Two kilometers further, and it's where the fox and rabbit say goodnight."

Winemaking

The Rheingau forest was first cleared for winemaking in the 11th century by order of the Archbishop of Mainz. By the end of the 13th century, monks tended vineyards covering about 7,500 acres—just slightly more than today's 7,261 acres. After secularization in 1803, vineyards—like much religious property—went to the state, which continues to own and operate many of them. Other vineyards and property were handed over to nobles.

(Nobility continues today. Many retain their titles, but few display aloofness. That woman buying fresh asparagus looks like any other townsperson until you hear the grocer address her as 'baroness.')

In early spring, vintners begin the painstaking task of pruning vines and forming new growth to stakes and wires. In September, as the grapes ripen, they use instinct, sight, touch, taste, and instruments that test sugar content to know exactly when to harvest. And then it's a mad rush to gather the harvest. Tractors rumble through the streets, carrying trailers laden with grapes. For visitors, the vintners' work is not just an abstract concept; it's usually just a short walk from any town or village to watch life in the vineyards.

Exploring the region

While most towns can be accessed easily by train, you'll have to take a bus to reach the rustic interior. For those traveling by car, signs for the 43-mile (70-km) **Riesling-Route** between **Wicker** and **Lorchhausen** will guide you to major sights and attractions. By all means leave the B 42 and use local roads. Cyclists and hikers abound in the region. Many dirt roads and paths through the vine-

Rheingau Basics

Elevation: 295 feet (90 meters)

Tourist Info: Rheingau-Taunus Culture and Tourism, An der Basilika 11A, 65375 Oestrich-Winkel, tel.: +49/6723/995533, fax: 95555, e-mail: tourist@rheingau-taunus-info.de, Web: www.rheingau-taunus-info.de.

Nearest Airport: Frankfurt

Rail Information: Regional rail service connects with major routes through Wiesbaden, Frankfurt, Mainz, and Koblenz.

Tip: If you have a car, hire a guide through the Rheingau tourist office to show you around. **Karl Wahl**, a retired teacher active in Rheingau culture and activities, is top-notch.

A Recommendation: The **Rheingau Music Festival** runs from June 25–September 3, with more than 150 concerts by chamber orchestras, symphonies, and soloists. But the locations are the stars: the basilica at Eberbach Monastery, the courtyard of Schloss Johannisberg, the ballroom at Schloss Vollrads, the Wiesbaden Kurhaus, Rhine ships, and castles and palaces that are otherwise closed to the public. Especially popular are the open-air concerts in vineyards (Rheinallee 1, 65375 Oestrich-Winkel, tel.: +49/1805/743464, e-mail: info@rheingau-musik-festival.de, Web: www.info@rheingau-musik-festival.de).

yards are accessible to foot- and two-wheeled-traffic only (routes are well marked), but there's plenty to see from the main roads.

Wiesbaden (see *Gemütlichkeit*, February 2005) is part of the Rheingau, barely 20 minutes by train to **Eltville**, a town made for strolling. Its narrow winding streets rival other Rhine favorites like Bacharach and St. Goar, but here there's nary a souvenir shop to be found: just cobblestone streets with ivy-covered walls, half-timber homes (inscribed dates as far back as 1365 aren't uncommon) and mighty structures like the former **Prince Elector's Castle** and the **Parish Church of Saints Peter and Paul**, with an inscribed stone dating from 975. You can also follow the trail of **Gutenberg**: The inventor of movable-type lived, worked and printed in Eltville, and you can dine and lodge at the estate where he worked.

The *Altstadt* reaches almost to the Rhine, where a peaceful promenade rambles along the riverfront. The view is dominated by the castle keep, where the Rhine once splashed its mighty stone walls.

At the **Café zur Rheinhalde**, along the promenade, guests can't get any closer to the Rhine without swimming. The outdoor terrace sits flush over the river. Dagmar Weidenfeller will welcome you with snacks, pastries, and regional specialties.

From the promenade, walk atop the walls of the old moat, today a quiet garden where 350 different types of roses are cultivated along with other fragrant flowers and shrubs.

Continue along the Riesling-Route to **Erbach**, a tiny wine village with vineyards dating to the 12th century. It's not often that your host is a baron, (and a dead-ringer for *Sound of Music* baron Christopher Plummer), but don't worry about protocol at **Weingut Maximilianshof**. Ritter und Edler Christoph von Oetinger inherited the title of Knight and Noble and is addressed as Baron—more out of tradition than a sense of formality—but he and the baroness make guests feel right at home. On a sunny day it's a sublime experience to sit in the quiet garden under the walnut trees behind their 16th-century manor and nod as Christian explains the various wines.

Kiedrich is known as the "Gothic wine village," due to its 1000-year history. John Sutton, a British baronet, visited and fell in love with the town in the 19th century and is responsible for much of the extensive restoration work. Kiedrich's parish church, **St. Valentinus**, completed in 1483, is a jewel of the Late Gothic period. While the church itself is worth a visit—with its Madonna from 1320 and elaborately decorated pews from the 17th century—a single grave within its peaceful walled grounds is most memorable.

About half of the congregation for Sunday's 9:30 mass consists of "music tourists," who come to hear the choirboys sing Gregorian chants with ancient Germanic texts and in a 14th-century style, using a different scale system that exists only here. The organ, built in 1500, is Germany's oldest still in use.

During a return visit in April to **Eberbach Monastery** (*Gemütlichkeit*,

February 2005), workers were toiling to divert damaging waters and repair mud and water damage where an underground stream had backed up and flooded the grounds and buildings. In addition to its impressive structures, a museum shows life in the monastery as well as its holdings throughout Europe. Wine has been produced in the monastery for more than 850 years, and visitors can look at a dozen wine presses going back 400 years. The Vinothek offers top vintages for taste and sale.

Hattenheim is less easily reached by public transportation, but the **Domaine Steinberg** vineyards are among Germany's oldest and most famous, founded by Cistercian monks in the 12th century. The vast vineyard is fully enclosed by stone walls, and a massive entrance frames the village behind endless rows of vines. It's the perfect setting-off point for vineyard hikes.

In **Oestrich**, the four-story Romanesque tower of the **Catholic Parish Church of St. Martin** looks more like a castle keep than a church steeple, especially with the narrow shooting slits in the outer walls. It's a reminder that many of the oldest churches were a refuge not just for the soul but for the body as well.

In **Mittelheim**, stop at the 12th-century Romanesque stone-and-mortar basilica. It's a simple structure with arcades instead of pillars and a flat wooden ceiling. There's minimal ornamentation, but the original decorative ironwork—nearly 1,000 years old—remains on the doors.

Continue along the route to **Winkel**, once a stronghold of the Romantic poets. Clemens Brentano lived and hosted Goethe here; his family still owns a manor and vineyard. At the church cemetery, there's a simple memorial to Karoline von Günderode, the 26-year-old poet, who died on July 26, 1806. After being spurned by an older lover, she stabbed herself on the banks of the Rhine. Her epitaph, carved simply in dark stone, turns out to be her suicide letter to her parents and brother. In the peaceful setting, shed a tear

perhaps. Then walk around town to see where she lived and why it attracted Romantics.

Also in Winkel, the **Grey House** has belonged to the Greiffenclau family since 1097 and was originally built in the first half of the ninth century. It is considered the oldest private house (rather than church or fortification) still standing in Germany.

Above Winkel, **Schloss Vollrads** rises from seemingly endless vineyards. First, a tower appears in the distance. Soon, the yellow walls of the 17th-century palace come into view, and then the high stone walls. As they have for centuries, the vines form a semi-circle around the palace and now take up 136 acres. It's one of Germany's oldest wine estates, dating from 1211. Visitors can walk the castle grounds and watch the carp in the pond that surrounds—and once protected—the 14th-century tower, now topped by a baroque roof.

Most guests come to sample or purchase the wines, which are considered among the country's best. Some combine this with a meal at the stylish, modern glass-enclosed restaurant, which occupies three stories of the former cavalier's house. An upstairs table gives an enchanting view to the gardens, castle grounds, and vineyards (Schloss Vollrads, 65375 Oestrich-Winkel, tel. +49/6723/660, fax: 6666, e-mail: info@schlossvollrads.com, Web: www.schlossvollrads.com).

A short distance to the west, winegrowing on the hills below the majestic Baroque **Schloss Johannisberg** palace dates at least from 817. The Roman Basilica—still standing—was built in 1130. Wine history was made several times at Johannisberg. The first Riesling grapes were planted there in 1720. In 1775, the delayed return of a courier sent to get permission to start the harvest caused the Johannisberg grapes to be picked long after the others in the region. The vintners despaired, since rot had set in on the grapes. A year later, the wine was heralded as the best ever. The concept of *Spätlese* (late harvest) was born. A statue honoring the courier stands in the courtyard.

To the left of the palace, the Goethe View still offers the same commanding view to the Rhine that inspired the poet during a hike in September 1814. (See Food section below for contact information.)

The Rheingau ends just past Rudesheim (see "Rhine Journey III," *Gemütlichkeit*, April, 2003).

Lodging

Hof Bechtermünz Hotel

The Hof Bechtermünz in the heart of Eltville has been long known for its wines and restaurant, but its history extends further. It was here in 1467 that Gutenberg, with brothers Heinrich and Nicholas Bechtermünz, published the world's first printed dictionary. The printing press is gone, replaced by wine presses that are kept busy during the harvest months. Last year, the estate's former barn was transformed into a 10-room hotel. Rooms are spacious, bright, modern, and upscale and integrate creative use of glass, wood, textile, and steel into the old stonework and wooden beams. The upper floors have more character and better views to the estate. Guests should take advantage of the restaurant, a richly historic and traditional setting that offers regional, seasonal specialties.

Contact: Hof Bechtermünz Hotel, Kirchgasse 5, 65343 Eltville, tel. +49/6123/2437, fax 81118, e-mail: info@weingut-koegler.de, Web: www.weingut-koegler.de. Proprietors: Koegler Family.

Daily Rates: Singles €75, doubles €95–115, suite €125.

Ratings: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 14/20

Gästehaus Weingut Maximilianshof

Although the main house was built in the 16th century and has been in the family for six generations (since 1828), the nine spacious, bright and cheerful guestrooms are in a separate building constructed in 1998. The modern construction replaces a dilapidated barn but blends beautifully with the historic structures around it. The guesthouse takes the form of twin turrets. For the best accommodations, climb the spiral staircase to the Tower Room (#6). The

larger apartment in the adjacent tower (#7) has a small kitchen and dining area, perfect for families, friends traveling together, or folks who want extra space and the chance to cook using local wine and produce. Ask the baron or baroness to show you around the public spaces of the manor house.

Contact: Gästehaus Weingut Maximilianshof, Rheinallee 2, 65346 Erbach, tel. +49/6123/9224/0, fax: 9224/25, e-mail: gaestehaus_maximilianshof@t-online.de, Web: www.maximilianshof.de. Proprietors: Baron Christoph and Baroness Heike von Oetinger.

Daily Rates: Singles €52, doubles €87–92.

Ratings: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Guesthouse Weingut Freyherr zu Knyphausen

Among vineyards established in 1141, the current seventh-generation owner, Gerko Baron zu Knyphausen, maintains an extensive estate with his wife Rena and their five sons. It's both thrilling and soothing to walk around the vineyards and historic buildings and grounds. Seven guestrooms are in one of the older buildings on the estate, reached by climbing worn stone steps. The interior spaces are modern, and Baroness Rena's frequent visits to Provence have rubbed off with a rustic yet cosmopolitan touch. The hallways feature contemporary art and photographs of vineyard scenes—some of which are almost as compelling as the views from the many windows. Number 7 features windows on three sides with one to the courtyard. Number 8, up a separate set of stairs, is an apartment with a full kitchen and living area. Three timber beams and skylights frame the bed, and the view sweeps across the vineyard to the steeple of the Erbach parish church.

Contact: Guesthouse Weingut Freyherr zu Knyphausen, Erbacher Strasse 28, 65346 Erbach, tel. +49/6123/62177, fax: 4315, e-mail: weingut@knyphausen.de, Web: www.knyphausen.de. Proprietors: Gerko and Rena, Baron and Baroness

zu Knyphausen

Daily Rates: Singles €65, doubles €85–90, suite €100.

Ratings: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Tillmans

Built in early 19th century in the style of a French manor, Hotel Tillmans was later redesigned with an interior rich with neoclassical and *Jugendstil* elements, such as decorative pillars, etched glass, floral-themed skylights, and decorative plasterwork. It's a place of love and charm. Make the availability of Number 16 a prerequisite for a stay here; the only room with a balcony—really a second-floor terrace (actually bigger than the room) that looks over the park-like grounds that once stretched to the Rhine. (For Number 16, add two points to ratings below.) Like all 18 rooms, it's spacious, bright, and updated with a sitting area, desk, and oversized bathroom.

Contact: Hotel Tillmans, Hauptstrasse 2, 65346 Eltville, tel. +49/6123/92330, fax: 923366, e-mail: info@hotel-tillmanns.de, Web: www.hotel-tillmanns.de. Proprietor: Ilka Tillmanns.

Daily rates: Singles €70–80, doubles €95–110

Ratings: QUALITY 13, VALUE 14

Food

Visitors to the Rheingau can enjoy wines in dozens of fine restaurants in the region or in the wine restaurants at the larger estates. But the best options are the *Strausswirtschaften*, the vintners' taverns that open for just four months a year and may seat a maximum of 40 people. By law, they may serve only simply-prepared cold and hot dishes, as well as their own wines. This informality, and the fact that *Strausswirtschaften* are run by families and attract friends and "regulars," make them an ideal setting to get to know the locals, as well as to enjoy their warmth and hospitality.

Look for wreaths hanging outside wineries or what often appear to be private homes, or check with the local tourist office. Those who prefer year-round establishments have a wide choice as well.

Zum Krug

In the small village of Hattenheim, Josef Laufer lives up to his reputation as one of Germany's star chefs. The setting is rustic and authentic with wooden beams, old prints, and well-worn parquet floors. Silver candlesticks and single roses adorn each table. There's nothing showy or overdone. The food speaks for itself with a simple clarity of quality and excellence. Dinner begins with a scoop of green tea sorbet bubbling in a glass of sparkling wine. House-cured salmon arrives with potato bread and a perfect mustard-dill sauce. Steaming coconut soup brims with shrimp. Eight long stalks of tender white asparagus are served warm with olive oil, parmesan cheese, and paper-thin ham, rimmed in a brown pepper sauce—one of a dozen variations on the May harvest favorite.

Honey-glazed duck is the hit of the evening, presented in a ring of brown gravy and green olive oil. The leg, kept warm in the kitchen, arrives later. The vegetable is salsify root encrusted in pepper. Typical of the dessert menu: vanilla buttermilk crêpe brûlée served on pineapple-

EDITOR'S
CHOICE

Key Websites for the Traveler

- 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.travelgearnow.com Guidebooks, maps, travel accessories, luggage, all at 10 percent off for subscribers
- www.webflyer.com Informative frequent-flyer forums make this a must for air travelers
- bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en German rail website, with train schedules throughout Europe, as well as 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.austria.info/us Austria's national tourist authority
- www.historicgermany.com Website for an alliance of historic German cities
- www.thetravelinsider.info Info on electronic devices used by travelers — cell phones, computers, etc.

strawberry salad. A couple can easily pay €50–75, excluding wine.

Contact: Weinhaus Zum Krug, Hauptstrasse 34, 65347 Hattenheim, tel. +49/6723/99680, fax: 996825, e-mail: info@Hotel-Zum-Krug.de, Web: www.hotel-zum-krug.de. Proprietor: Josef Laufer.

Ratings: QUALITY 18/20, VALUE 17/20

Gelbes Haus

Guests enter the Gelbes House (Yellow House), a large half-timber building 100 paces from the Prince Elector's Castle in Eltville, and find an intimate, rustic interior. In good weather, continue through to the cobblestone terrace, where the view extends across vineyards to the Fortress Crass and the Rhine. As dusk falls, the terrace lanterns come on and a magical peace falls. Beyond nearby chatter, the only sounds are birds twittering in the vineyards and the distant hum of barges on the Rhine. Entrées are fairly straightforward, like lamb medallions with vegetables, grilled pork with French fries, and roast beef with pan-fried potatoes. Healthy salad dishes—with plenty of fresh, local veggies—can include meat such as tender lamb cubes lightly coated with pesto. Service is sincere, pleasant, and never intrusive. Most dishes fall under €13, with many under €10.

Contact: Gutsausschank Gelbes Haus, Burgstrasse 3, 65343 Eltville, tel. +49/6123/ 51 70. Proprietor: Doris Sinz.

Ratings: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Schloss Johannisberg

The terrace at the Schloss Johannisberg restaurant feels like the balcony of the Rheingau looking down to the estate vineyards, the medieval town of Geisenheim and the Rhine. The view alone is worth the trip, but it gets much better thanks to the culinary and visual masterpieces of Chef Jens Langguth. The duck salad appetizer arrived as a work of art, with moist slivers of meat served on a colorful bed of lettuce, endive, orange slices, and sprouts with a light vinaigrette. The Johannisberger Vintner's Platter followed: a round cutting board covered with

EDITOR'S CHOICE

sausages from area butchers, bacon, cheeses, freshly grated horseradish, pickles, butter and dense bread hot from the wood oven. The beef roulade, rolled with delicate cheese and herbs, lay moist in hearty gravy next to fresh red cabbage and mashed potatoes. Entrées range from €11–21, with most less than €17. Dine as you sip a Johannisberger Riesling, and you'll remember the event forever.

Contact: Schloss Johannisberg, 65366 Geisenheim, tel. +49/6722/96090, fax: 7392, e-mail: info@schloss-johannisberg.com, Web: www.schloss-johannisberg.com.

Ratings: QUALITY 18/20, VALUE 18/20

VIENNA 2005

Continued from page 1

and Oskar Kokoschka, and the new MUMOK (Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien). But these are just the tip of the Quartier iceberg. Spread around its courtyards are other museums, including one for children, performing arts venues, the **Architektur Zentrum Wien**, trendy shops, and of course a variety of eating places.

Perhaps a fondness for Schiele and Klimt influenced our opinion, but we prefer the Leopold to MUMOK.

Vienna's central neighborhoods are so spiffed up one could almost make the case that the town has lost some of its "old world" character. Seemingly everywhere are chic new Italian restaurants, all with precious, graphically-correct menus listing various *Primi* and *Secondi Piatti*. They could be in San Francisco or London. There seem to be fewer cozy, well-worn, old Vienna *Beisl'n* serving time-honored dishes such as *Tafelspitz*, *Schnitzel* and *Kalbsleber*. And the eastern influence in restaurants and taverns offering Gypsy music is simply nowhere to be found, at least in the center. An amazing number of shop windows display mannequins clad in women's lingerie; skimpy thongs and bras, mostly in red and black.

On the other hand, the cafes are unchanged, with Habsburg-style light fixtures and dark wood paneling, lofty ceilings, big windows, and men waiters in black tie. We re-

nounced the **Hotel Sofitel's** overheated, over-crowded, over-priced (€17) breakfast room and ate each morning at **Café Schwarzenberg**, Kärntnerring 17. The *Frühstück klein* (coffee, rolls, butter, jam) was €4.20.

One much-anticipated new attraction fell short of expectations. The stylish **Haus der Musik** (Öffnungszeiten 10, www.hdm.at, admission: €10) was long on interactive displays but too technical for my taste. The flashy composer displays seemed somewhat superficial with few authentic artifacts, and the free English-language audio-tape distracted from, rather than enhanced, the static exhibits. One clever interactive exhibit, easily the museum's most popular, allows visitors to conduct the Vienna Philharmonic. As the baton slows down or speeds up, so does the on-screen orchestra. But there's only room for one "maestro" at a time and there was a lengthy queue, even in the dead of winter with only a handful of visitors in the museum. But our negative report is in the minority; Haus der Musik has received much praise and the Austrian Museum Prize.

A better experience was a Vienna institution we had ignored on many previous visits. The several floors and endless galleries of the **Dorotheum**, (Dorotheergasse 17, www.dorotheum.com), a high-class secondhand store and auction house, are a fascinating reflection of Austrian life, filled with objects from farmhouses to Vienna mansions. Oil paintings that seem to the unpracticed eye worthy of the Kunst Historisches Museum, are tagged with estimated values of from \$2,000 to \$15,000. One floor displays dozens of plain and painted country-style wooden armoires at about \$1,500 to \$3,000. Rustic farm tables start around \$1,000. Perhaps as many as 500 full-length fur coats, ready for auction that day, carried price tags starting around \$700. Only a few blocks away, on Stephansplatz, animal rights protesters appealed to fur-wearing shoppers.

Vienna Sight-seeing

Virtually all guidebooks identify the city's major sights: **Stephansdom**, the **Hofberg**, **Belvedere Palace**,

Schönbrunn Palace, Kunsthistorisches Museum, etc. Each, of course, is a “must see” and worthy of your time. At the Hofberg, be sure to visit the **Schatzkammer** and at the Belvedere — you’ve-seen-the-poster-now-don’t-miss-the-real-thing — Klimt’s famous *Der Kuss* (The Kiss).

Over the last 18 years we’ve often mentioned our personal favorites but perhaps a few bear repeating. Though a tad creepy, the **Capuchins’ Crypt** or **Kaisergruft**, which holds 100-plus fabulously ornate coffins of emperors, empresses and archdukes (but only the bodies are here; the hearts are in the Church of Augustinians and the entrails in the catacombs under St. Stephen’s) is a palpable connection to the days of empire.

Conceived by artists who “seceded” from what they considered false values of the times, the **Secession** building is a famous symbol of the Jugendstil / Art Nouveau movement. Derided when built in 1898, its dome was compared to a cabbage. In the basement see Klimt’s visual interpretation of Beethoven’s 9th Symphony.

The most tangible element of Vienna’s greatness is its buildings. One of the most intriguing is the **Hundertwasserhaus**, an uneven, quirky apartment complex that looks like it could have been concocted by a clever fourth grader. Friedensreich Hundertwasser also designed Vienna’s **KunstHaus**, which exhibits his work and that of such 20th century artists as Joan Miro, Marc Chagall and Picasso. Hundertwasser, who died in 2000 on the Queen Elizabeth II, was a rule-breaker; square corners can be round and places that convention says should be level often are not.

The **Flohmarkt**, a wild collection of people and central European antiques and curious remnants, makes an ideal Saturday morning stroll.

Several of the world’s greatest musicians and composers came to the end of the road in Vienna. Take the tram to the **Zentralfriedhof** (main cemetery, Simmeringer Hauptstrasse, section 32A) and visit the graves of Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Johann Strauss, and others. Don’t look for Mozart, he’s buried in an unmarked

common grave, the whereabouts of his remains are unknown. There is an empty tomb in his honor at St. Mark’s cemetery (3rd dist., Leberstrasse 6-8).

We once spent a pleasant hour in the **Uhrenmuseum** (clock museum).

Lodging

If money isn’t an issue, by all means join heads of state and royalty at the **Imperial** (+43/01/50 11 00, hotel.imperial@luxurycollection.com), whose opulent suites evoke Habsburg grandeur. A small step down is the **Sacher** (+43/01/51 45 60, wien@sacher.com) and yet another rung lower — in the €250-300 double range — is the modern **Das Trieste** (+43/01/58 91 80, rosi@datrieste.at), a wonderful hotel designed by British architect Terrence Conran.

For an unbeatable dead-center location and old-world authenticity, we like **Kaiserin Elisabeth** (+43/01/51 52 60, info@kaiserinelisabeth.at). Its spacious doubles start around €200. A hotel popular with Americans for decades, but which has never caught our fancy, is the **König von Ungarn** (+43/01/51 58 40, hotel@kvu.at), with doubles from €198.

The location is just as central and the rooms just as large as the Kaiserin Elisabeth at nearby **Pension Aviano** (+43/01/512 83 30, aviano@pertschy.com) where high-season doubles start €130. We know of no better value in the center. Frau Kafka also operates Pensions **Pertschy** (+43/01/534 490, pertschy@pertschy.com), **Christina** (+43/01/533 29 61, christina@pertschy.com) and **Baronesse** (+43/01/405 1061, baronesse@pertschy.com). All offer acceptable accommodations at lower prices. In that same price and comfort category is the **Pension Nossek** (+43/01/533 70 410, reservation@pension-nossek.at), where the affable Bernard sisters roll out a warm welcome.

Another good value in the center is the three-star **Post** (+43/01/515 830, office@hotel-post-wien.at), where doubles are €115.

Though a bit removed from the center, we dearly love Otto Wiesenthal’s Art Nouveau-style, **Hotel**

Altstadt (+43/01/526 33 99, hotel@altstadt.at), behind the Neue Rathaus in a neighborhood of interesting shops and restaurants. Doubles start at €129 and Herr Wiesenthal is a great resource for restaurant recommendations.

The big chains such as **Hilton**, **Marriott**, **Le Meridien** are bereft of old world charm but sometimes offer attractive prices via the Internet. It was such a rate that put us at the **Sofitel**. Still, the deal wasn’t good enough to make up for the impersonal service.

Michelin’s *Main Cities of Europe Guide* awards a red roof-peak symbol (pleasant hotel) to a pair of three stars; the **Kaiserhof** (+43/01/505 1701, info@hotel-kaiserhof.at) and the **Rathaus** (+43/01/400 1122, office@hotel-rathaus-wien.at), both of which offer doubles for about €150.

A final thought: www.biddingfortravel.com reports successful bids at www.priceline.com for Vienna four-star hotels from \$109 to \$122. Among the hotels mentioned are the Marriott, the Sofitel and **Intercontinental**. The Marriott at \$122 is an outstanding value.

Food

Neither *Cuisine Minceur*, involving intricate, low-cal recipes with complicated sauces, or its successor, California cuisine, emphasizing simpler dishes, ever attracted much of a Viennese following. The city’s restaurant menus still display tried and true Austrian dishes influenced by the country’s Bohemian, Hungarian, German and Italian neighbors.

Vienna restaurants don’t get more traditional than longtime tourist favorite, the 73-year-old **Drei Husaren** (Weihburggasse 4). The question is, can its elegant Viennese ambience compensate for prices higher than justified by the food? In addition, there is a per person cover charge.

An authentic *Beisl* (small Vienna tavern serving traditional cuisine) we’ve been going to for about 25 years is **Smutny** (Elisabethstrasse 8), just outside the Ring, not far from the Staatsoper and Musikverein. The great Czech beer, Budvar (€3.2), is

served *vom fass* and you'll pay €9 to 13 for hearty dishes such as *Tafelspitz* and *Wienerschnitzel*.

At the more upscale **Zum Schwarzen Kameel** (Bognergasse 5), a sort of combination luxury restaurant and stand-up delicatessen, the old recipes have a lighter touch. Noteworthy are the several fish entrees including feathery light perch filets.

Cozy (11 tables) **Zum Kuckuck** (Himmelfortgasse 15), another old favorite of both *Gemütlichkeit* staff and readers, offers a cuisine more polished than the usual stick-to-the-ribs Austrian fare. Imaginative, fixed-price, four-course dinner menus start at €36 but a two-course lunch menu, featuring pan fried venison filets, in juniper sauce is only €14.

Restaurant Boheme (Spittelberggasse 19), a wine tavern in the romantic Spittelberg quarter near the Hotel Altstadt, offers moderate prices and consistently good food accompanied by classical background music. In the same neighborhood, but a bit less refined, is **Spatzennest** (St. Ulrichsplatz 1), where a fresh vegetable salad, *Zwiebelrostbraten* (steak topped with fried onions) and a glass of red wine is less than \$25.

Take the U1 to **Meixner's Gastwirtschaft** (Buchengasse 64), an Otto Wiesenthal favorite in the 10th district. He calls it "Viennese cuisine at its best."

Michelin awards its red, Bib Gourmand symbol (good food at moderate prices) to several Vienna restaurants: **Vestibühl** (Dr. Karl-Lueger-Ring 2) in the Burgtheater, **Fadinger** (Wipplingerstrasse 29), **Artner** (Floragasse 6), **Tempel** (Praterstrasse 56), **Hedrich** (Stubenring 2), **Gaumenspiel** (Zieglergasse 54), and the aforementioned Zum Schwarzen Kameel and Meixner's Gastwirtschaft.

The only restaurant with Gypsy music that's not strictly for tourists is the inexpensive Balkan entry, **Beograd** (Mühlgasse 15), near the Naschmarkt.

Doug Linton, a sometime *Gemütlichkeit* contributor and Vienna resi-

dent, wrote a book about the city's famed coffee houses (*To the Coffee House!*, Glattau & Schaar Verlagsges, ISBN 3-9500 828-3-2) and his favorite is **Diglas** (Wollzeile 10) which has excellent three-course lunch menus for around \$15. Two other places with *alt Wien* style are **Café-Restaurant Frauenhuber** (Himmelfortgasse 6) and **Café-Restaurant Schwarzenberg** (Kärntnering 17).

You can benefit from our mistake by never setting foot in **La Scala** (Elisabethstr. 13), near Le Meridian Hotel, where the food is barely edible, some of it possibly from cans. ☒

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

Berlin Stories, by Christopher Isherwood. Starring Joel Grey, Michael York, and Liza Minelli as Fraulein Sally Bowles, it is a story of Berlin decadence in the '30s, just as the Nazis are coming to power. Grey won a much deserved Oscar for his performance as the tawdry Kit-Kat Klub's salacious master-of-ceremonies.

Even though *Judgement at Nuremberg* (1961) is just starting to look a bit dated, I still watch it every couple of years, if only for Marlene Dietrich, the scenes of a bombed-out Nürnberg and the soundtrack (especially the stirring German martial music). *Judgement* asks the same question *Downfall* fails to answer 44 years later: "How did intelligent, highly civilized people allow themselves to be part of the madness?"

There's nothing Hollywood about **Shoah**, the nine-hour Claude Lanzmann Holocaust documentary. What you hear in this film—for the most part the pictures are benign—from both the survivors of the camps and those who operated them, may keep you awake nights. Some interviews with former Nazi camp officials were obtained under false pretenses, with Lanzmann making assurances that the conversations would be kept private. He then used concealed cameras to record the meetings. It's amazing, powerful and frightening stuff.

There are more but we've run out of space. Save me an aisle seat.—RHB ☒

Travel Notes

■ **Discover Your Roots in Germany** is a joint undertaking of the **German National Tourist Office** and **Non-stop Travel** of Torrance, CA.

Nonstop offers a variety of heritage-related tours and city packages. Typical of them is the nine-day **Explore Bavarian Heritage** tour, starting October 6. It begins with an introductory seminar on the migration experience and biographical research conducted by genealogy experts. It includes eight nights hotel accommodations with breakfast and dinner, a Danube river cruise from Vilshofen to Passau, ground transport, transfers, bilingual university genealogy consultant, and full-time tour director.

The itinerary visits Munich, the Glass Road, Regensburg, Bamberg, and Würzburg. Along the way the focus is always on the roles these towns and regions played in the emigration to America. Perhaps of most interest is an optional customized extension that includes visits to ancestral homes, pre-trip research, and two days with a private driver-guide. Explore Bavarian Heritage costs €1,349, land only. Contact Nonstop at 800-949-6362 or visit www.germanroots.org.

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- **May Issue Correction:** Here is contact information for Appenzell's **Hotel Alpenblick**: CH-9507, Weissbad, tel. +41/071/799 1173, fax 799 1455, e-mail: hotelalpenblick-schwende.ch, web: www.alpenblick-appenzell.ch. Singles CHF 79-84, doubles CHF 138-178. Discounts for longer stays.