

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

The All New Gemut.com

The third version of www.gemut.com is now live on the World Wide Web. In every way it is an improvement over previous versions. Our first website was unveiled in 1999. Given the technology of the time, it was a useful supplement to the printed *Gemütlichkeit*, offering an archive of back issues and hotels.

Though version two, launched in 2003, was an improvement in appearance and functionality, those of us who lived with the site on a daily basis quickly realized it was only a stopgap.

Enter, in 2005, executive editor Nikki Goth Itoi, who proceeded to simultaneously pull-off two important projects, each taking about nine months. From the outset, creating a new Gemut.com was Nikki's "baby." She conceived the overall site plan, hired and supervised web designers and developers, then managed site construction, content migration, and the myriad other details. It all came together at approximately 2:30pm PDT, on June 9 when she tapped a key on her laptop that gave life to the new Gemut.com.

The second undertaking was also her baby—literally. The day after Gemut.com went live, Nikki entered a San Francisco hospital where her first child, Emmett George Itoi, was born, completing a remarkable double. Much support, technical and otherwise, was provided on both projects by Paul Itoi, her husband.

The new site looks better, works better and faster, is simpler to navigate and find what you're looking for, and has a lot more information. And there is much, much more to come. We are adding stories every day. Here are some of the features we think you'll find helpful.

- **Back issues.** This archive is

Continued on page 2...

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

WISMAR

On Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's Baltic seacoast, a proud old Hanseatic city has emerged from eastern Germany's socialist GDR decades.

Many of us have learned how to get oriented upon first-time arrival in a German (or Austrian or Swiss) city. We head to the *Altstadt* to find the central marketplace, invariably a hub of activity, crossroads of the populace, and reliably handy for direction-finding. Wismar's cobblestone-paved **Marktplatz** suits the purpose, especially because you can't miss this extra-wide open space, the biggest of its kind in northern Germany—measuring 100x100 meters, or two and a half acres.

Once you've reached the plaza, the urge to do some 360-degree panoramic viewing is irresistible, since

you're surrounded by a picture-perfect ensemble of patrician townhouses and public buildings, cleaned-up and restored since the demise of neglectful GDR administration 16 years ago. Styles exemplify various episodes of local history: 14th-century North German red-brick Gothic, Dutch Renaissance, Baroque fanciness, 19th-century Romanesque Revival—and, for rather severe contrast, the 1819 neoclassical, low-slung **Rathaus**, which is dramatically floodlit at night. Something curious but cute stands amidst lamp posts on the square's southwest corner: a Dutch-designed, wrought-iron **Wasserkunst** pumping station from 1602, topped

Continued on page 3...

Swiss Relais & Chateaux

*Lydia Itoi's winter weekend pig-out at Michelin three-star restaurants (see last month's story on top-end Swiss restaurants, **Rochat** and **Pont de Brent**) also gave her the opportunity to bunk-in at a pair of highly-rated Relais & Chateaux hotels near Lausanne.*

Properties bearing the Relais & Chateaux label are never in the budget travel category, but frequently they are immensely charming, unique places with a high standard of comfort and service. If you are going to splurge, it's hard to do better.

L'Ermitage de Bernard Ravet

This beautifully appointed small restaurant/hotel, located in the shadow of the imposing private chateau of Vufflens among

acres of vineyards near Morges, was our favorite stay. The main building is a 16th-century winery, where we were warmly welcomed. The atmosphere was more old-world inn than modern hotel, but without the kitsch. It's a family affair, run by Bernard and Ruth Ravet and their three children, Ruth, Isabelle, and Guy.

There are six rooms and three suites, tastefully decorated in country-chic reds and golds. We had reserved a regular room for CHF 450, but we were given a courtesy upgrade to a suite with high-beamed, vaulted ceilings and a view overlooking the tranquil duck

Continued on page 5...

Exchange rates as of 06/30/2006
1 euro = \$1.28
1 Swiss franc = \$0.82

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

now entirely in PDF, a format that allows subscribers to download and print the issues in their original format. Right now that's every back issue from January 1993 to July 2005, almost 13 years of *Gemütlichkeit*. (We don't put back issues up on the site until they are a year old.) First, log-in as a subscriber (see the box on this page for log-in and password codes), then click "Back issue archive" under "Browse Travel Stories."

• **Hotel Database/Reviews.** This is an evolving feature but currently more than 1,100 hotels are listed here. Most have links to the hotel's website and to an e-mail form to request info or a make a reservation directly with the hotel. About 500 have written descriptions, and more will be added. Clicking "Hotel Reviews" at the top of the Gemut.com page takes you to the hotel database page and from there you can search by country, city or price level, or combinations thereof. Alternatively, you can type any search criteria — city, hotel name, etc. — in the key-word box at the top of the page.

• **Travel Services.** Order rail passes online (target date on this is the end of July), obtain a car rental or air fare quote, reserve hotel rooms almost anywhere in Europe with our Venere hotel booking engine, or purchase guidebooks and maps, luggage, travel clothing and gear at 10 to 20% off by using the discount code gemut2006 at

www.travelessentials.com Access via the right-navigation of the main page and click on the required service.

• **Deals and discounts.** Check Gemut.com frequently for time-sensitive travel news and specials on car rental, air fare, cruise, and hotel deals that have a short window of opportunity. At press time, for example, we posted the special summer rate offered by Munich's **Hotel Acanthus** (see page 7).

• **Other stuff.** Want to know the price of gas in Germany? Need today's value of the euro vs. the dollar? Both numbers can be found in the lower right hand corner of Gemut.com's main page.

We're loading more content on a daily basis and have plans for online polls, forums, subscriber hotel reviews, and a lot more.

• **Advertisers.** Here, I'd like to make a somewhat delicate point. In the almost 20 years of *Gemütlichkeit*, we have never raised our annual rate to an existing subscriber. Rest assured, today's new subscribers shell out more than those who joined us in the late 80s; but those 80s and 90s subscribers are still offered their original price at renewal. Yes, the number of issues per year was reduced to 10, but a one-year renewal still costs the same as it did 20 years ago. In those 20 years, postage — by far our biggest expense — has virtually doubled. The cost of paper, printing and travel, too, are all substantially higher. Gemut.com is a

significant expense that just eight years ago did not exist.

I won't bore you with the financial realities of publishing a niche travel newsletter. Suffice to say, they are harsh and the ranks have thinned considerably. Newsletters on England (four that I know of), China, Switzerland, Italy, Ireland, and the Caribbean, are gone. *Consumer Reports Travel Newsletter*, with the most subscribers of any travel newsletter in history, gave up the ghost not long after 9/11. All that remain, that I am aware of, are *La Belle France* (\$85 per year), *Hideaway Report* (\$125 per year), *Passport* (\$99 per year) and *Gemütlichkeit* (\$59).

Don't mistake this as a "poor me" cry; we've done well. But without the supplementary income from the travel services we provide — car rental, rail passes, air tickets, cruise bookings, itinerary planning — *Gemütlichkeit* could not exist at its

Continued on page 8...

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

Back issues in PDF format from January 1993, except for the most recent 10, are available free to subscribers only at www.gemut.com (click on "Members"). To access the issues, enter the user name and password published in this space each month. The new codes are:

User Name: **wizr** Password: **5920**

Vol. 20, No. 6 **GEMÜTLICHKEIT**
July 2006
The Travel Letter for Germany, Austria, Switzerland & the New Europe

Publishers: Robert H. & Elizabeth S. Bestor
Executive Editor: Nikki Goth Itoi
Senior Writer: Jim Johnson
Contributors: Tom Bross, Roland Reimann
Consulting Editor: Thomas P. Bestor
Online Services: Kurt Steffans
Subscriber Travel Services: Andy Bestor, Laura Riedel

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.

by a curved bell roof.

But **Alter Schwede**, a 1380's mansion-turned-restaurant (in 1878), steals the show. Its six-tiered step-gabled façade sports dark-red brickwork in a filigreed pattern, accentuated—for extra ornamentation—with black glazed *klinker* bricks.

Red-Brick High-Rises

A quartet of mammoth, centuries-old brick church structures, “built sky-high to reach heaven,” looms a few blocks from the marketplace. Reconstruction of war-ruined **St. Georgen** began six years ago, with four more needed for expected completion. The same wartime fate befell **St. Marien**, after which—in 1960—its gutted shell was dynamited by GDR officials intent upon “political correctness.” What remains is the 80-meter-(262-ft.)-tall, peaked-roof *Glockenspiel* tower, still Wismar's dominating medieval landmark. In **Heilige-Geist-Kirche**, Baroque paintings of Old Testament scenes adorn the ceiling and altar. Fortunately untouched by air raids, 14th-century **St. Nikolai** draws admirers to its 37-meter-(121-ft.)-high nave, supported by flying buttresses and illuminated by a dazzling rose window.

There's a good-enough reason for all this architectural flamboyance. In the early 13th century, a founding membership in the Hanseatic League of seafaring merchants made Wismar an economic boom town. Its bayfront harbor on the deep-water Wismarbucht bustled with northern European shipping trade. The Hansa city also belonged to Sweden for two and a half centuries beginning in 1648. While strolling around, watch for large cartoonish **Schwedenköpfe**, sculpted heads depicting black-mustached Swedish noblemen, warily surveying local goings-on.

In the Town Hall's vaulted *Rathauskeller*, **Bilder einer Stadt** exhibits, artifacts, prints and photos give museum-goers a crash course in urban and regional history. The emphasis proudly focuses on *Innenstadt* Wismar's and Stralsund's co-designation four years ago as UNESCO

Wismar Basics

Population: 45,414

Elevation: 2 meters (6.5 feet)

Town charter: 1229

Visitor Information: Tourist-Information Wismar, Am Markt 11, 23966 Wismar, tel. +49/03841/194 33, fax 03841/251 3091, touristinfo@wismar.de, www.wismar.de

Driving Distances:

Hamburg	112 km	69 miles
Lübeck	53 km	33 miles
Rostock	45 km	28 miles
Schwerin	30 km	18 miles
Stralsund/Rügen	150 km	93 miles
Berlin	250 km	155 miles

The long-awaited completion of the full stretch of the A-20 *Autobahn* took place last December. Extending east-west near Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's Baltic (*Ostsee*) coast between Lübeck and Greifswald, it makes access to Wismar from both directions much speedier. To quickly reach the city from Berlin, take the A-24, then the A-241 via lakeside Schwerin.

Rail: Regional Express from Berlin (2 hours, 57 minutes), Regional Express with InterCity connection from Hamburg (1 hour, 32 minutes), and Regional Express with InterCity connection from Frankfurt am Main (5 hours, 15 minutes).

Air: Lübeck-Blankenese and Rostock-Laage are the nearest airports.

Guided Sightseeing: Two-hour *Wismar Entdecken* (Discovery) city tours (€4 per adult) are comprehensive and insightful. Book at Wismar Tourist Information.

Major Events in 2007:

- *Wismarer Hafentage* (international “tall ships” in the harbor; seafood, music, entertainment), June 8–10
- Folklore Festival, July 19–22
- Swedish Festival in the *Altstadt*, Aug. 17–19
- *Kunstverein* Arts & Crafts Market in Wismar's Town Hall, December 15–16

World Heritage Sites.

Where Karstadt Began

If you have an urge to go shopping, slim pickings locally mean you're better off in Lübeck or Rostock. Nevertheless, a few small specialty stores can be found on the sloping **Krämerstrasse** pedestrian lane, lined with beautiful step-gabled buildings. A modest-size **Karstadt** department store stands at the Krämerstrasse/Lübsche Strasse intersection. It is, in fact, the well-known chain's head office; Rudolph Karstadt established his retail empire right here in Wismar in 1881.

Allied aircraft made it to Wismar in the spring of 1945 with two primary targets in their bombsights: the

harbor facilities and the north-side Haffeld industrial district near the docks, where the Norddeutschen Dornier-Werke manufactured DO 17 planes for Hermann Göring's Luftwaffe. Turnerweg's winery cellars became a neighborhood air-raid shelter. Ironically, twin-engine Dorniers blitzed London earlier during World War II. More irony: Soviet troops used the flattened Haffeld grounds as a Cold War shooting range prior to their departure 13 years ago.

This northerly destination belongs on the agenda of any traveler who enjoys experiencing Germany's diversity. A rich seafaring legacy and imposing red-brick architectural landmarks make it a memorable stop.

Wismar Hotels

Steigenberger Stadt Hamburg

A respectable 19th-century *Gasthof* became a first-class hotel in 1953, leading ultimately to Steigenberger partnership four decades later. That was a smart corporate move, for Wismar was then on the cusp of a visitor upsurge, and its solidly built four-star property overlooks the sprawling marketplace from a corner vantage point. Above the skylit lobby, all 102 guestrooms are spacious and airy; hallways are carpeted in blue. A Finnish sauna is on the premises; as are an amiable café and **Am Markt**, a classy wine restaurant. Though used mainly for private group functions, the hotel's 14th-century barrel-vaulted *Bierkeller* is worth mentioning, too.

Daily Rates: Singles €81–115, doubles €104–135

Contact: Steigenberger Hotel Stadt Hamburg, Am Markt 24, 23966 Wismar, tel. +49/03841/2390, fax 03841/239 239, wismar@steigenberger.de, www.wismar.steigenberger.de.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel Alter Speicher

This cluster of six buildings functioned during bygone times as merchant's residence, warehouse, stables, and hayloft. Now, after laborious top-to-bottom renovation, guests

can settle into recommendable four-star accommodations with the convenience of being merely two short blocks from the *Marktplatz*. Each of 75 rooms has its own size, layout, and decor. Amenities include sauna, solarium, courtyard terrace, and an underground garage. The **Felsengrotte** beer and wine cellar is well-stocked; thick wooden beams augment the rustic charm of the two-level **Galerierestaurant To'n Ossen**, specializing in regional Mecklenburg cooking.

Daily Rates: Singles €66–105, doubles €90–140, breakfast extra, €11.

Contact: Hotel Alter Speicher, Bohrstrasse 12 & 12A, 23966 Wismar, tel. +49/03841/211 746, fax 03841/211 747, info-wismar@hotel-alter-speicher.de, www.hotel-alter-speicher.de.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel Altes Brauhaus

One of the city's old prewar breweries operated out of a circa-1550 structure, about midway between the St. Marien and Heilige-Geist churches. Now, under Marion Willert's ownership, we have a three-star hotel, entered by way of green and white fan-windowed double doors for access to a reception area where ivy plants cling to exposed brick walls. Fourteen guestrooms, each with flower-filled window boxes, are modestly proportioned but kept impeccably clean. **Zum kleinen Mönch**, the onsite restaurant, is a citywide favorite. A separate *Fruhstücksraum* features 18th-century Baroque paintings on its wood-paneled ceiling.

Daily Rates: Singles €45–50, doubles €70–85

Contact: Hotel Altes Brauhaus, Lübsche Strasse 37, 23966 Wismar, tel. +49/03841/211 416, fax 03841/211 418, info@brauhaus-wismar.com, www.brauhaus-wismar.com.

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Am Alten Hafen

If you are cost-conscious and feeling "seaworthy," this three-star option with its colorful window shutters stands right on the edge of a

harbor inlet, directly adjacent to the historic step-gabled brick custom house. The 40-room hotel, opened in 1966, is by no means remote in compact Wismar; walking time to the city center amounts to just 10 minutes or so. No-frills sleeping and bathroom quarters are snug and frugal. Both bistro and restaurant are *gemütlich* hangouts. Weather permitting, you can order meals and drinks on the wind-sheltered courtyard.

Daily Rates: Singles €46–67, doubles €62–82.

Contact: Hotel Am Alten Hafen, Spiegelberg 61–65, 23966 Wismar, tel. +49/03841/4260, fax 03841/426 666, hotelamaltenhafen@freenet.de, www.hotel-am-alten-hafen.de.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 13/20

Other Accommodations

Ask at the tourist office about *Pensionen* and *Gästezimmer* availabilities in the *Altstadt* and vicinity. Such family-run establishments are plentiful. If you have a car, reasonably priced beach and lake resorts beckon, too. **Wohlenberg** and **Boltenhagen** are venerable beachfront resort communities on Wismar's western outskirts. Not far south of town, Mecklenburg-Western Pomeranian countryside pleasures include lake resorts on the **Neuklostersee**. East of Wismar, the Rügen-like island of **Poel** attracts travelers to waterfront lodgings in picturesque old thatched-roofed fishing villages—notably **Timmendorf** and **Kirchdorf**.

Wismar Restaurants

Many of Wismar's chefs habitually browse the harborside fish market each Saturday because seafood comes with the territory. Scan menus for such fresh delicacies as *Schollen* (flounder), *Heilbutt* (halibut), *Brathering* (fried, marinated herring) and the truly Baltic-Germanic *Rollmops* variation (pickled herring). From nearby Mecklenburg lake country comes just-as-fresh *Seehecht* (pike).

Alter Schwede

Admirers come from afar to enjoy the cuisine and unflinching gra-

cious service of Alter Schwede. After gazing at the marvelous exterior, choose an umbrella-shaded outdoor table or step inside. Old World atmospherics include scale-model Hanseatic sailing ships dangling from ceiling timbers, brickwork galore, paintings, vintage photos, and a massive fireplace. Multilingual German-English menus prove that the introverted GDR days are long gone. Seafood selections (€8.80–12.80) anchor the menu. For alternatives, consider the *Rippenbraten* with red cabbage (€11.80) or Mecklenburg duck stuffed with prunes, apples, and raisins (€13.80).

Contact: Restaurant Alter Schwede, Am Markt 19, 23966 Wismar, tel. +49/03841/283 552, fax 03841/283 588.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 17/20

Zum Weinberg

You might be surprised to come upon not one but two superior-class restaurants in such a small, ex-GDR city. Alter Schwede's worthy rival, occupying a narrow 14th-century Renaissance edifice replete with black oak woodwork, stained-glass windows, and painted rafters, has been serving food and wine since 1575. Narrowness results in intimacy, both at street level and on the upstairs balcony. The Mixdorf family, in charge since 1997, runs the place with obvious affection and expertise. Indulge in a seafood meal (€8.90–14.90) or a *mecklenburgisch* meat speciality (€8.30–13.30).

Contact: Restaurant Zum Weinberg, Hinter dem Rathaus 3, 23966 Wismar, tel. +49/03841/283 550, fax 03841/226 963, restaurant@weinberg-wismar.de, www.weinberg-wismar.de.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 18/20

Brauhaus am Lohberg

A harborfront mini-"restaurant row" includes this half-timbered *Fachwerk* survivor from 1452 (when 183 full-fledged breweries thrived in Wismar and vicinity). In what was handsomely transformed into a casual house brewery five and a half centuries later, patrons can choose

from six different kinds of beer—accompanied by heaping portions of food. For instance: stewed *Sauerfleisch* with fried potatoes (€8) and beer-doused *goulasch* with Mecklenburg-style dumplings (€8.30). Among tasty fish-and-salad-and-potato dishes are a sea bass fillet (€9.50) and sea salmon (€9.10).

Contact: Brauhaus am Lohberg, Kleiner Hohe Strasse 15, Wismar, tel. +49/03841/250 238, fax 03841/282 888, info@brauhaus-wismar.de, www.brauhaus-wismar.de.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 16/20


Reuterhaus

Facing the marketplace from its street-corner location, this high-gabled building—nicely done up in lemon yellow with white trimmings—has a 300-year history and began its existence as a distinguished restaurant in 1849. Two cozy dining rooms feature the original hand-carved dark furnishings and paneling, plus walls decorated with rows of blue Delft tiles and evocative pictures of prewar Wismar. Well-prepared, graciously served meat and seafood dinners range from €14.50–20.

Contact: Reuterhaus, Am Markt 19, Wismar, tel. +49/03841/222 30, fax 03841/222 324.

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 15/20

Konditorei Favorites

For *Kafee und Kuchen*, breakfast, light luncheon: **Café Lissi** (Grossschmiedestrasse 1); **Caféhaus No. 15** (Lübsche Strasse 15); **Café Hegede** (Am Markt 5); **Café & Rösterei Especial** (Sargmacherstrasse 8), **Zur Reblaus** (Neustadt 9). 

RELAIS & CHATEAUX

Continued from page 1

pond. The room was furnished with antiques, including a doll-filled vintage baby carriage and an old picnic table. The bathroom had a tiled shower and a rather old-fashioned toilet, all charmingly appointed for a weekend in the country. But for die-hard road warriors, the hotel is also equipped with wireless Internet access throughout. Rooms are non-smoking, but

there is a cigar lounge.

L'Ermitage specializes in serving as a base camp for outdoorsy fun—hiking, biking, sailing, fishing, hunting, waterskiing, even polo. There is a children's program available, and a golf course eight miles away. However, in February, only eating and chilling out sounded appealing, although we did take a walk through the vineyards and the village. (The impressive chateau is a private residence, but it can be enjoyed from the outside.) A fire was blazing in the old stone fireplace, and comfortable chairs and a well-stocked humidor invited us to linger. A small bodega in the reception offers treats from the highly regarded kitchen as well as the award-winning house wines.

Unfortunately, we were only able to put the kitchen through its paces for breakfast. It's a cozy affair, served fireside in the tearoom lounge. There were about 20 tiny bowls filled with a mini smorgasbord of fruits, cereals, and yogurts, as well as slices of artisanal processed meats and a selection of local cheeses. The restaurant has two Michelin stars and consistently places at the top of the "Top 100" list of best restaurants in Switzerland, so we'll be sure to grab a bite there next time.

(You can read editor Bob Bestor's review of his weekend at L'Ermitage des Ravet at www.gemut.com. Under "Browse Travel Stories," click "Read about Switzerland," and then click "Switzerland Restaurants.")

Contact: L'Ermitage de Bernard Ravet, Route du Village, 26 Vufflens-le-Chateau, tel. +41/0218/046 868, fax 022 240, lermitage@relaischateaux.com, www.ravet.ch; closed Sunday and Monday and at Christmas.

Daily Rates: Doubles CHF 450

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 17/20

Auberge du Raisin

Auberge du Raisin is another well-appointed Relais & Chateau restaurant/hotel where we missed the eats but enjoyed the sleep. Located in the heart of the lakeside resort town of Cully, between Lausanne

and Vevey and 44 miles from Geneva airport, it was our base while visiting Pont de Brent. Unofficial hotel parking is in the main square. We were instructed to put the hotel brochure on the dashboard and hope for the best, since the local cops usually don't ticket hotel guests. A refreshingly laid-back attitude for Switzerland, we thought.

Inside, the décor is classical elegance verging on the formal for a provincial inn, all creams and blond woods and panelled ceilings hung with chandeliers. Service was again friendly and welcoming, extending even to pets. The main surprise was that no room in the hotel seems to have a view of the lake, even though it is only a few steps away. (There is a building in between, blocking the view.) Since it directly fronts the main square of this small but rather elegant town, the setting does not feel like a country inn.

There are seven rooms for CHF 350 and two suites at CHF 490–580, which includes a hearty breakfast. Each room is different, named for the famous people that have patron-

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.travel essentials.com Guidebooks, maps, travel accessories, luggage, all at 10 percent off for subscribers. Use discount code gemut2006.
- 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.


ized the inn over the years. Ours was a spacious corner room with a large, airy white bathroom with a big bathtub. High windows with stately lace curtains overlooked the main street, and there was plenty of space for a comfortable cream-colored sofa and chairs. The queen-sized bed was luxuriously furnished with a heavy tapestry duvet. Some rooms have beamed ceilings and fireplaces, so it pays to ask to view the rooms while checking in. Modem connections, concierge, and babysitting services are available.

In addition to summer outdoor activities, the hotel offers cooking classes with chef Adolfo Blokbergen. The restaurant is on the ground floor directly off the reception and is known for its classic cuisine and good wine list featuring both French and rare local vintages. Menu prices range from CHF 89–198.

A lavish breakfast is included and was served in the cheerful rear dining room at large round tables overlooking a small terrace patio. We were checking out early to drive to the airport, but they whipped up plates of eggs, cheese and country sausages, pastries and jam as well as coffee and fresh-squeezed orange juice right away. There was also a warm bowl of rustic muesli and dried fruit to ward off the chill. This was the perfect send-off after a marathon gourmet weekend in the Vaud.

Contact: Auberge du Raisin, 1, Place de l'Hotel-de-Ville, CH-1096 Cully, tel. +41/021/799 21 31, fax 799 25 01, raisin@relaischateaux.com, open all year.

Daily Rates: Doubles CHF 350, suites CHF 89–198

Ratings: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 14/20 

Readers' Forum

Südtirol Find

We just stayed 18 nights at the wonderful **Hotel der Pünthof** (I-39022 Algund bei Meran, Steinachstr. 25 Via Steinach, tel. +39/0473/448553, fax 449919, info@puenthof.com, www.puenthof.com), very near

Meran in the Südtirol, the German-speaking part of northern Italy.

This area belonged to Austria prior to World War I and is still more Austrian than Italian. Every sign is printed in both languages, and where we stayed (Algund/Lagundo) the German language, customs and dress prevail. The entire area around Meran is very historic with more castles than any other area in Europe. Some notables include **Schloss Juval** and **Churburg**. Juval is owned by Reinhold Messner, the first person to climb Mt. Everest without oxygen.

The Pünthof is the best hotel of any trip to Europe and this was our 14th. It is a converted farmhouse that has seen 400 years of Wolf family ownership. Alex and Gertrude Wolf, the present owners, both speak good English. She handles most of the inside activities and he the outside. He was on the Italian bob-sled team at the Lake Placid and Calgary Winter Olympics.

There are 12 very attractive rooms in the main building and a few cottages around the grounds. We had the first floor tower room with large fireplace and huge chandelier and loved it. The two breakfast rooms are very attractive and when the weather is warm one can sit outside on a terrace overlooking a beautiful, landscaped yard, garden gazebo, pool with snack bar, and the mountains beyond.

We got a 5% discount because of the length of our stay, but can't figure out why the prices are so low. Per person room rate range in price from €48 to €59, including breakfast and all taxes. The holiday apartments with kitchen facilities — two to four rooms plus bath — are priced for two persons at €72 to €89 per night. Breakfast is not included and extra persons are €10 per night.

The drive from the Munich Airport to Algund is about three and one-half hours, Autobahn all

the way.

This is special place. We will return.

WILLIAM H. WOOD III
HOBE SOUND FL

Rochat Dissenter

I read with interest (and astonishment) the June issue's review of **Restaurant Philippe Rochat** in Crissier. About five years ago, we had the pleasure of dining at Chez Rochat, fascinated with the thought of returning to the venue over which Fredy Girardet had presided in the 1980s. Our evening in 1985 at Girardet had been as good as it gets. The fare was every bit as good as the best we've had and probably better. That includes a myriad of places, including **Taillevent** and other three-star gems. What stood out was the ambience and the sheer level of unpretentious pleasure; only **Trois-gros** (which was great fun) came close in that respect.

Our 2001 visit to Rochat came about a week after a meal at Marc Veyrat's lakeside retreat in Veyrier, France. Our visit to M. Veyrat's restaurant was extraordinary in all respects, partially due to the setting on the western side of Lake Annecy and certainly due to the highly unusual fare. **La Maison de Marc Veyrat** was a very tough act to follow and, in our opinion, Rochat didn't come close.

In most respects, Rochat earned his three-star status. What was missing, however, was personality. When Girardet ran the show, the restaurant had great spirit and a wonderful feeling of enjoyment. With Rochat in charge, however, the restaurant has become sterile. On paper, it gets the grades. But in person, there's definitely something missing. At this level, one should expect outstanding food AND an outstanding experience. We couldn't have been more bored. The only clue to the possibility of the latter was Lydia's reference to "hushed Swiss formality." Her review needed to go beyond the food

to the total experience and, unfortunately, it really did not.

RUSSELL WAYNE
VIA E-MAIL

Rochat Supporter

Someone loaned me a copy of your fine newsletter so that I could read Ms. Itoi's review. I found it directly on the mark with respect to **Philippe Rochat**. My wife and I have spent more money dining in Michelin two and three-star establishments throughout Europe than I care to think about. I'm somewhat ashamed to admit that in the last 30 years, we've gotten to most of them. The obviously talented Ms. Itoi is right-on when she says Michelin tends to look the other way when its fabled three-star restaurants begin to slip, especially if they are in France. Michelin seems to hold restaurants in Switzerland and, in particular, Germany, to a higher standard. Rochat's rating is deserved. Its food and ambience surpass the Girardet I knew (years before the third star was lost in 1997): which was more a place to brag about having been to than a serious restaurant attracting a clientele of knowledgeable food lovers, which, in my view, Rochat does.

I have bypassed **Pont de Brent** on the advice of Swiss friends and now your publication has confirmed their wisdom.

ROBERT FORBES MERRIWEATHER
NEW YORK, NY

Opposes East Coverage

Although I respect reader Tom Reese's request for coverage of Poland, Czech Republic, et al, it seems to this longtime subscriber that there remain countless destinations within Germany, Austria, and Switzerland that are yet to covered.

BILL POLCARI
MEDFORD MA

(Editor's note: Such as this month's lead story, *Wismar*.)

Breakup Long Flights

This might be a subject worth discussion.

Some travelers have difficulty

with very long flights (10-12 hours). Arthritis and other problems get in the way.

Is there a way to break up a long flight to Europe into shorter segments, with stops of 2-3 hours, without horrible connections (such as in London)? Some have suggested a break in Iceland, but that requires an overnight stay. Travel via the Canary Islands? Other approaches?

DAVID BORCK
ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, IL

Swabian Castle

Enjoyed your tour of the Swabian Alb in the June issue. I have seen most of these places while visiting with relatives nearby and your calls are right on the money. One place not mentioned, and not on the route you took, but still within the Swabian Alb, is in the vicinity of Göppingen, the capitol of the Holy Roman Empire under Friedrich Barbarossa. The view from his ancient castle ruins, **Hohenstaufen**, of the foothills and other castles on neighboring hills is worth a detour.

ROGER JONES
BROOMALL, PA

Saved by Travelers Checks

In a recent issue you strongly endorsed using ATMs as the preferred method of changing money. I certainly agree. As always, however, the adage of not putting your eggs in one basket applies. In September 2003, my wife and I were in Switzerland when hurricane Isabelle struck the U.S. East Coast. Financial communications apparently were disrupted, and we and other Americans we met found that our ATM card would not work. The machines were unavailable for about four days. Fortunately, we carried some travelers checks, as well as credit cards.

JEFFREY MYERS-HAYER
ALEXANDRIA VA

Travelers Checks Save Again

On a recent trip to Lithuania. I didn't have any local currency because I erroneously thought the

country used euros. When I arrived from Poland I had a meager amount of euros and expected to get money with my ATM card. Lo and behold, no ATM machine of any bank in Lithuania would take my ATM card. It just said that it would not connect with my bank or something to that effect. Fortunately I did have traveler's checks and was able cash them without having to pay an excessive charge. When I got back to Poland, my ATM card worked perfectly again.

RUSSELL N. SACCO
VIA E-MAIL ✉

News/Deals

■ **Bern Hotel Specials:** This summer, 11 hotels in Bern have agreed to run 3 for 2 specials, for a savings of CHF 70-210 on standard double and single rooms. For example, the Best Western **Hotel Bären**, a comfortable business-style hotel in the city center is offering standard doubles for CHF 231, for a savings of CHF 98. The **Innere Enge**, a *Gemütlichkeit* top pick among Bern hotels, has doubles for CHF 235, amounting to a savings of CHF 125. Check the full hotel listing and rate table under special offers at the Bern tourism website: <http://www.berninfo.com/en>

■ **Summer Deal in Munich:** A favorite Munich hotel of *Gemütlichkeit* readers, the pleasant 36-room **Acanthus** (An Der Hauptfeuerwache 14, Munich, tel. +49/089/23 18 800, fax 26 07 364, acanthus@t-online.de, www.acanthushotel.de) has announced a July and August special rate of €75 for single rooms and €95 for doubles. The price includes all taxes plus buffet breakfast.

On a somewhat relatively quiet, tree-lined street, steps from the Sendlinger Tor and a 10-minute walk to the Marienplatz via pedestrian-only Sendlingerstrasse, the Acanthus is located in a neighborhood of interesting shops and restaurants. The main railway station is also about a 10-minute walk.

Two categories of guestrooms are

DEAR SUBSCRIBER*Continued from page 2*

current price — and probably not at all, since to raise the annual rate to *Hideaway Reports / La Belle France* levels would put it beyond the reach of most current subscribers. The fact is, these other activities subsidize *Gemütlichkeit*. So when you refer a neighbor to our car rental service you help maintain the price of *Gemütlichkeit* at its current level.

Gemut.com is a vital element in the strategy which we hope in the years to come will keep our business on a sound financial basis. Though it doesn't begin to at this point, the goal is for the website to pay for itself, even generate a profit. That will allow us to continue to offer the printed newsletter at its current price, and to build and maintain a first-rate website to service the Germany, Austria and Switzerland traveler.

All this is background to explain why you will see discreet ads for European travel services on most pages of the new site. When you click on an ad we make a few cents. When you book a hotel we make a couple of bucks (literally). When you buy a rail pass online we get a small percentage. We thus encourage you to support our advertisers, and to purchase travel services via the website. It is a way to help assure the survival of *Gemütlichkeit* and Gemut.com.

And finally, if you notice any malfunctions, links that don't link, typographical errors, inconsistencies, and imperfections, we'd be grateful if you'd let us know at info@gemut.com — RHB

NEWS/DEALS*Continued from page 7*

offered, Rustikana and Alba-Rose. Guests staying more than a night or two may want to pay a few extra euros to upgrade to the larger Alba-Rose chambers. Underground parking is available for €10 per night.

■ **Austria Loses Art:** "Golden Adele," other than "The Kiss," Gustav Klimt's most famous work, has been sold for \$135 million, thus

becoming, at least for a brief time, the world's most expensive painting. It now hangs in New York's **New Gallery** instead of Vienna's **Belvedere Palace**, where it had been for six decades. It and other Klimt paintings were seized during the war from a small town in Czechoslovakia by the infamous Nazi SS officer, Reinhard Heydrich, and wound up in Vienna.

After a long legal battle, the Austrian government finally restored "Adele" and four other Klimts to a Los Angeles woman, Maria Altmann, the 90-year old niece of the original owner, who then sold "Adele" to Ronald Lauder, a billionaire Estee Lauder heir and a former ambassador to Austria.

■ **Beer Tour:** Organizers of "Bierfest 2006" tout it as a tour for beer lovers who like a little culture with their beer. The September 25-October 3 package includes visits, and of course tastings, at some of the most famous Central European breweries of Austria, Czech Republic and Germany, including Augustiner Bräu, Aktienbräu, Pilsner Urquell, Budvar, and Hofbräu. Following Frankfurt arrival (air not included) the tour begins in Bayreuth, then visits Pilzen in the Czech Republic, followed by Prague, Ceske Budejovice, Salzburg, Berchtesgaden, the Andechs Monastery brewery, and finishing in Munich with lunch at the Oktoberfest. The \$1,850 land-only per person price includes three-star accommodations, deluxe motor-coach, and most meals. Contact Herzerl Tours, 800-684-8488 or visit www.herzerltours.com.

■ **Hazy Concept:** A German entrepreneur says he will start an all-smoking airline. **Smintair** (Smoker's International Airways) plans to allow smoking on its 747 flights from Düsseldorf to Tokyo. There will be 30 first-class seats, 108 business-class seats, and no economy class. Airline analysts don't give Smintair much of a chance, pointing out that business travelers choose airlines on more important factors than whether or not they can light up whenever they want.

We Recommend

This listing of good value, mid-priced hotels in popular destination cities is intended for fast reference. Additional hotels and links to hotel websites is in the **Hotel Review** sections at www.gemut.com. Hotels are arranged in price order, higher to lower.

Berlin

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

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

Bern

Hotel Bristol, Schauplatzgasse 10, CH-3011, tel. +41/31/311 0101, fax 311 9479, email reception@bristolbern.ch

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

Lucerne

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

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

Munich

Hotel Exquisit, Pettenkoflerstr. 3, tel. +49/089/ 551 99 0, fax 551 99 499, info@hotel-exquisit.com

Hotel Acanthus, An Der Hauptfeuerwache 14, D- 80331 München, tel. +49/089/ 23 18 80, fax: 2 60 73 64, e-mail: acanthus@t-online.de

Hotel Kraft, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24, fax 550 3856, office@kraft-hotel.com

Rothenburg ob der Tauber

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

Hotel Hornburg, Hornburgweg 28, D-91541, tel. +049/09861/8480, fax 5570, hotelhornburg@t-online.de, www.hotelhornburg.de

Salzburg & Environs

Schloss Haunsperg, A-5411 Oberalm bei Hallein, Hammerstrasse 32, tel. +43/06245/80662, fax 85680, info@schlosshaunsperg.com

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

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

Vienna

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

Altstadt Vienna, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, hotel@altstadt.at, web: www.altstadt.at

Pension Aviano, Marco-D'Aviano-Gasse 1, tel. +43/01/512 8330, fax 512 8330 6, aviano@pertschy.com

Zürich

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

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

Frankfurt Airport

Steinberger Esprit Hotel Frankfurt Airport, CargoCity Süd, D-60549, tel. +49/069/69 70 99, fax 69 70 94 44, frankfurt@esprit-hotels.de

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

Hotel Dreieich, Frankfurter Str. 49, Langen, D-63225, tel. +49/06103/91 50, fax 52 030, hotel-dreieich@gmx.de

Munich Airport

Daniel's Hotel, Hauptstrasse 11, Halbergoos-Goldach, D-85399, tel. +49/0811/55120, fax 551213, info@hotel-daniels.de, www.hotel-daniels.de

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

Zürich Airport

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

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