DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Winging It

My concept of a great European vacation has always included a rental car and no planned itinerary, allowing the daily travel experience to dictate each succeeding move. Find a place you like, stay an extra day or so. A town or hotel disappoints? Move on. A few times, as I've boasted before, we've landed in Europe and not known until we put the rental car in gear at the airport whether we would go north or south, east or west.

To many, this has all the charm of traveling by freight car on the Siberian railway. Some people only feel comfortable when each 15-minute segment of the trip is accounted for prior to departure from North America. Still, a goodly percentage of travelers wouldn't mind trading some prearranged rigidity for a bit of flexibility. They just don't know how.

Recently I spoke to a woman headed to Europe for the first time. She and her husband planned to rent a car but neither had a clue what to do after that except start booking hotels and looking at maps to plot how to get from one to the next. My suggestion of another, less structured, style of seeing the country was met with interested curiosity. "Can we really travel over there without booking in advance?," she asked. Sensing a receptive audience for my preachments, I launched into a fast independent auto travel primer. Its elements were these:

The Essentials

- Current *Michelin Red Guide* (hotels/restaurants) for the country you will travel.
- Maps scaled at 1:200,000 or better yet 1:150,000. Not only do they show all the backroads and tiny hamlets, but they also highlight interesting towns, and use special Continued on page 2...

GEMüTLICHKEIT

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

FRANKFURT

Best known for its massive airport, Frankfurt gets scant respect as a European tourist destination. Sharon Hudgins tells us why she thinks that reputation is undeserved.

or many European travelers, Frankfurt am Main is no more than its busy international airport—a point of arrival or departure, the place to catch a connecting flight to another city, or pick up a rental car and head for a different destination.

But Frankfurt has attractions of its own; enough to entertain the visitor for several days.

Established by the Romans as a strategic settlement on the Main River, Frankfurt became an important market town and trade center in the Middle Ages, as well as the coronation site of several German emperors. Much of the city, includ-

ing its historic center, was badly damaged by bombing in World War II. The metropolis that rose from the rubble is now one of the most modern in Germany, a cosmopolitan city of 663,000 people, nearly a quarter of whom are from other countries.

Nicknamed "Mainhattan" because of its striking skyline and river location, Frankfurt boasts more skyscrapers than any other German city, including the 299-meter Commerzbank, Europe's tallest office building. Also known as "Bankfurt," Frankfurt is one of the world's major financial centers, the seat of the German Stock

Continued on page 3...

Pedaling Berlin

ant a *really* close-up, ground-level Berlin sightseeing experience?
My answer: head out on a bicycle. I'm not fudging the challenges.

Extra-busy big-city traffic. Countless converging intersections. People-packed crosswalks. Vehicles

by Tom Bross intersections. People-packed crosswalks. Vehicles turning (suddenly!) out of curbside parking spaces. Direction-finding while handlebar-steering your two-wheeler. Bumps, ruts, *Strassenbahn* streetcar tracks and other urban hindrances to balance and mobility.

But don't let any of that discourage you. Germany's spreadout *Hauptstadt* capital is flat, abundantly green and interlaced with designated bike lanes. My experience began in the hip, edgy east-

side Prenzlauer Berg neighborhood, where an outfit called **Berlin on Bike** provides equipment for do-it-yourself or guided touring. Its location is just off the Schönhäuser Allee boulevard, a cobblestone-paved courtyard of a former Schultheiss brewery—converted since reunification into the hulking brick **Kulturbrauerei** complex, containing artists' studios, performance stages and a 1,200-seat Cine Star movie theater.

With this year's 20th-anniversary of the Wall's downfall in mind, I chose a planned-out half-day route recalling that hateful GDR

Continued on page 7...

Exchange rates as of 9/9/09 1 euro = \$1.46 1 Swiss franc = \$0.96 1 gallon diesel, Germany=\$5.87

www.gemut.com September 2009

DEAR SUBSCRIBERContinued from page 1

markings for scenic roads and major tourist sites.

Not Essential, But Very Handy

- Cell phone
- Portable GPS
- Laptop computer or Blackberry/smartphone (for the latter, be sure to check how much your service provider charges for Internet access in Europe)
- *Michelin Green Guide*. Best reference for sights and history

Travel with no itinerary is easier than it used to be. These days there's little reason to not carry a cell phone that enables easy calling ahead to check hotel availability. With a laptop and a WiFi connection (perhaps sitting in you car outside a coffee house) the vast resources of the Internet (those fabulous Google maps, to name one) are at your fingertips. Use a smartphone and you don't even need WiFi. The portable GPS removes the guesswork from the process of finding that hidden little country hotel you just booked via your cell phone.

Of course, the key to all this is same-day hotel bookings. What we chain-hotel-frequenting North Americans don't "get" is that there is a kind of hotel in small-town Europe that doesn't exist here: family operated places with one or two dozen rooms, a restaurant, a garden for outdoor dining and relaxing in

good weather, perhaps a sauna, and other facilities. Yes, we have charming B&Bs, but precious few serve meals other than breakfast. What we further don't understand is that these hotels are everywhere and, unless there's some sort of local festival going on, seldom are they full. In the rare instance all the hotels in a small town are fully-booked you simply drive another five to 10 kilometers to the next village.

Other than visiting individual hotels, there are three ways to find and book a same-day hotel when traveling:

- 1. Visit the local tourist office upon arrival at your destination (*Michelin Red Guides* publish tourist office contact information for thousands of European towns and villages). Many will make a booking for you or provide a list of hotels/B&Bs to call or inspect before you make up your mind.
- 2. Book a hotel via the Internet. Use your laptop, smartphone, or find an Internet café. Reserve a room via www.gemut.com, other online booking service, or do a Google search for nearby hotels and book same-day via email, though it may take some time to get a confirmation from smaller hotels that don't use online booking software.
- **3. Book from your car.** Unless you have an iPhone or comparable device with Internet access, the only way I know to do this is with the *Michelin Red Guide* and a cell phone. Currently, it's my preferred method. Use the *Red Guide* to find your destination town

and begin phoning likely looking hotels. Want to be a little more discriminating? Here's a scenario that will get you a very nice double room for under 90 euros. Using the maps at the back of the *Red Guide*, find all the blue Michelin-man-head-on-a-pillow symbols near your location. Go to their listings in the main pages of the guide and start calling.

Perhaps you want a good meal at a moderate price. Consult again the back-of-the-book maps to find nearby Michelin-man symbols (this time in red) and book a reservation via cell phone. These maps also let you quickly locate quiet hotels, "especially pleasant hotels" (in several price categories), and starred restaurants near your current location.

Not knowing at breakfast where you'll eat and sleep — or what you'll see and experience that day—may add a dash spice and adventure to your European travels.—RHB

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: knar Password: 5208

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	<u>Scale</u>	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	<u>Scale</u>
People/Service	30%	Outstanding Value	17 - 20
People/Service Location/Setting	30% 15%	Outstanding Value Very Good Value	17 - 20 12 - 16
'		•	
Location/Setting	15%	Very Good Value	12 - 16
Location/Setting Guestrooms	15% 30%	Very Good Value Average Value	12 - 16 9 - 11

FRANKFURT

Continued from page 1

Exchange and home to more than 300 banks, including the German Federal Bank and the European Central Bank.

But tourists don't go to Frankfurt to see high-rises and banks. This dynamic city offers a wide range of cultural attractions, from 50 museums to world-famous opera and ballet companies, from music festivals to street fairs, from historic sites to chic bars and trendy cafes. It's also the top European location for conferences and trade fairs, including the annual Frankfurt Book Fair and the biannual International Automotive Exhibition.

To get a good overview of the city's layout, take the elevator to the panoramic observation platform on the 55th floor of the Main Tower skyscraper. From there you can see how Frankfurt has grown upward and outward. Visible also is the five-kilometer-long park that replaced the old city's defensive walls. Despite its image today as a modern glass-and-steel metropolis, Frankfurt is one of Germany's most "green" urban areas, with 48 parks and gardens and a 75-kilometer-long "greenbelt" that circles the city. Its Palmengarten is an internationally renowned botanical garden, and the Frankfurt Zoological Garden, with 5,000 animals, is the second oldest in Germany.

Visit the historic part of the city on foot, starting at the picturesque **Römerberg**, the main square surrounded by handsome half-timbered houses and the Gothic gabled **Römer** (Rathaus, City Hall)—all rebuilt in the 1980s after being destroyed in the war. In that same area you'll also find the 13th-century **Kaiserdom** (coronation cathedral), the historic **Pauluskirche** (St. Paul's Church), seat of the first German National Assembly in 1848, and several interesting museums. A few blocks farther away,

Frankfurt Basics

Population: 663,000

Elevation: 119 meters (390 feet)

Visitor Information:

Tourismus+Congress GmbH, Kaiserstrasse 56, 60329 Frankfurt/
Main, tel. +49/69-21-23-88-00, fax +49/69-21-23-78-80, info@infofrankfurt.de, www.frankfurt-tourismus.de.

Other Tourist Information Offices at the airport (Terminal 1/Arrival Hall B), main train station, and city center (Römerberg 27).

German National Tourist Office, 122 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10168-0072, tel. 212-661-7200, fax: 212-661-7174, <u>www.cometogermany.com</u>

Driving distances:

Berlin	564 km	350 miles
Hamburg	509 km	316 miles
Munich	393 km	244 miles
Nürnberg	235 km	146 miles
Prague	512 km	318 miles
Stuttgart	200 km	124 miles
Vienna	717 km	446 miles
Würzburg	130 km	80 miles
Zürich	408 km	254 miles

Discounts: Frankfurt Card, for unlimited travel on the city public transportation system and price reductions on city tours, museums, and some river excursions. Sold at Tourist Information Offices and all Ticketcorner distribution centers. Individual ticket, one day €8.70, two days €12.50; group ticket (up to 5 people), one day €15, two days €24.

Nearest airport: Frankfurt/Main Airport, 12 km (7.5 miles) south of the city, via A3, A67, and A5 highways. Frequent train service directly to the main train station downtown (11 minutes), on the S8 and S9 S-bahn lines, as well as bus and taxi service.

Rail service: Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof (Main Train Station), one of the largest in Europe, a major transportation hub with more than 1,000 trains a day offering passenger service throughout Europe, including high-speed InterCity (ICE) trains.

Recommended guidebooks:

Frankfurt at a Glance (booklet), Frankfurt Welcome Sightseeing Map, and MuseumsUferFrankfurt (booklet), all in English, available free at Tourist Information Offices. the **Goethe House** and **Goethe Museum** are dedicated to the life and works of Frankfurt's most famous son, the great writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Thirteen of Frankfurt's many outstanding museums are located on the south (Sachsenhausen) embankment of the Main River. The Städel (Schaumainkai 63) houses one of the world's top art collections. Along the same embankment you'll find the German Film Museum, the Communications Museum, the German Architecture Museum, the Museum of World Cultures, the Museum of Applied Arts, and the Icon Museum.

On the north side of the river, shoppers flock to Zeil, a pedestrian promenade of department stores, boutiques, and sundry other shops. Gourmets gather along the Fressgass', Frankfurt's "culinary mile" featuring restaurants, bistros, delicatessens, and sidewalk cafes. A large Flea Market occurs every Saturday from 9am-2pm, alternating weekly between Osthafen and the Schaumainkai. And during the four weeks of Advent, a Christmas Market with 200 festive stalls is held in the Römerberg square and adjacent streets.

For a change of pace from the rapid tempo of urban life, take a leisurely boat ride on the Main River between the Offenbach and Griesheim locks. Excursion boats leave from the **Eiserner Steg** (Iron Footbridge) dock. A round-trip lasts 90 minutes, but you can get off at the Gerbermühle landing near the Offenbach lock, enjoy a drink in the sunny beer garden, and board another boat later for the return trip to the city.

Frankfurt Hotels

Hotel prices in Frankfurt vary widely. If a big trade fair is in progress, prices at most hotels will be considerably higher (and rooms harder to get), but between trade fairs and in the summer, when there are fewer such events, rates drop, sometimes by as much as 50-

percent. "Prices change daily, just like the stock market, depending on many factors," said the manager of a large hotel near the main train station. Because of these fluctuations, many hotels do not have a standard price list, making it difficult to provide more than an approximate price/quality ratio in our ratings. A room that rents for €100 in low season (summer and between trade fairs) might be a good deal, but that same room at nearly €200 during a fair is no longer a bargain.

Complicating the situation further is the fact that, unlike most towns in Germany, many Frankfurt hotels don't include breakfast in the price of the room and the optional breakfast buffet can cost from €15 to as much as €25 per person. Still other hotels include breakfast with some price quotes but not with others. When looking for a hotel in Frankfurt (or anywhere else, for that matter), be sure to inquire whether or not the rate includes breakfast.

It's no good trying to get a gen-

Key Websites for the Traveler

- www.gemut.com Gateway site for travelers to Germanic Europe, including car rental, rail passes, hotel bookings, travel tips, and past issues (free access to back issues for subscribers; see log-on info on page 2).
- <u>www.viamichelin.com</u> The Michelin database of hotels and restaurants, plus great interactive trip planning tools
- www.travelessentials.com Guidebooks, maps, travel accessories, luggage, all at 10 percent off for subscribers. Use discount code gemut2009.
- maps.google.com Best maps on the web. Driving & walking. Zoom in-out. Great detail city & country. Satellite & terrain views.
- 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
- <u>www.ski-europe.com</u> Top Web resource for skiers with much data on Alpine resorts
- <u>www.myswitzerland.com</u> Website of Switzerland's national tourist authority
- <u>www.germany-tourism.de</u> Germany's national tourist authority
- <u>www.austria.info/us</u> Austria's national tourist authority
- www.historicgermany.com Website for an alliance of historic German cities
- www.thetravelinsider.info Info on electronics for travelers cell phones, computers, etc.

eral idea of hotel's prices. As you'll see later on, rates fluctuate wildly based on a variety of factors. Thus you will need specific dates. Start first at the hotel's website, then phone to inquire about special deals, keeping in mind that last-minute rates are often the lowest of all. Some hotels prefer to offer heavily discounted prices via third-party hotel booking services such as the one available at www.gemut.com. Over the past year, the best prices on wellknown chain hotels like Marriott and Mövenpick have been achieved by booking through the "opaque" booking sites Hotwire.com and Priceline.com where users can specify dates, general location, and hotel category (three-star, four-star, etc.) but don't find out the name of the assigned hotel until the booking has been confirmed with a credit card—no cancellations allowed.

Villa Orange

On a quiet side street in a pleasant residential neighborhood two blocks from the Musterschule aboveground U-Bahn (subway) stop, Villa Orange sits just outside the park-like green belt that replaced Frankfurt's old city walls.

Although this boutique hotel is only 10-years-old, the four-story villa it occupies dates from an earlier era. Each of the 38 rooms is different, with pleasant modern furniture accented by an antique or two and some whimsical modern art. All rooms are air-conditioned and have a coffee and tea maker, although no mini-bar (but a wide range of beverages is available 24 hours at the reception desk). In addition to the small pleasant lobby and bar area, there is also a private library where guests can find a quiet corner to

The hotel prides itself on serving all-organic foods in its spacious modern breakfast room and on the small outdoor terrace. Be sure to read the guest book, with

charming comments by famous German actors and politicians.

Daily Rates: Rooms are available in three categories: classic, comfort, and deluxe, with breakfast included. Singles €128-255, doubles €158-275 (prices considerably lower on weekends, Friday to Monday, except during trade fairs) Contact: Villa Orange, Hebelstrasse 1, 60318 Frankfurt/Main, tel. +49/69-405-840, fax +49/69-405-84-100, contact@villa-orange.de, www.villa-orange.de Rating: Quality 16/20, Value 16/20

Steigenberger Frankfurt-City

Although catering primarily to business customers, the Steigenberger's convenient location makes it attractive to tourists, too. Situated across a busy street from the Main River, with a tram stop in front, the hotel is only a few blocks from the city center and the museum district.

The 149 air-conditioned rooms are generally spacious, with modern, good-quality wood furniture. Amenities include a fitness center, solarium, and parking garage. A large buffet breakfast (not included in the room price) is served in the dark-wood dining area on the main floor, which also houses Flemings Restaurant & Wine Bar featuring Latin specialties.

Daily Rates: Singles €105-149, doubles €120-174, breakfast €18/ person. Room rates change daily, depending on trade fairs, and the best deals are found online. For a price quote, contact the hotel directly with specific dates.

Contact: Steigenberger Hotel Frankfurt-City, Lange Strasse 5-9, 60311 Frankfurt/Main, tel. +49/69-219-300, fax +49/69-219-305-99, frankfurt-city@steigenberger.de, www.frankfurtcity.steigenberger.de

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel National

This four-star property is near the Frankfurt *Hauptbahnhof* (main train station) in an area with many hotels in a wide range of price and



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(PARTIAL VEHICLE LIST)

`		•
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VW GOLF (W/UPGRADE*)	\$205	\$29
OPEL ASTRA (AUTO)	\$344	\$48
VW PASSAT (W/UPGRADE	\$246	\$35
VW PASSAT (AUTO)	\$363	\$52
AUDI A4	\$343	\$49
MBZ C180 (W/UPGRADE*)	\$267	\$38
MBZ C180 (AUTO/GPS)	\$378	\$54
MBZ E200 (AUTO/GPS)	\$473	\$68
VW TOURAN	\$327	\$47
VW GoLF SW	\$268	\$38
VW PASSAT SW	\$319	\$46
AUDI A4 SW (GPS)	\$343	\$49
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ing tips on Oprah, CNN, The View and HGTV. Hop over to www.TravelEssentials.com to see all her products and her new book & DVD, Pack it Up.

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two good-sized front pockets

Tarmac 20" Reg: \$245 Your Price: \$220.50
Tarmac 22" Reg: \$275 Your Price: \$247.50
Tarmac 25" Reg: \$295 Your Price: \$265.50
Tarmac 28" Reg: \$330 Your Price: \$297.00

space.



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- ADAC Maxi Atlas of Germany
- Michelin Maps and Atlases
- Lonely Planet Guides
- Fodor's Guides
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... and more!

2009 European Rail Pass Prices

AN IMPORTANT WORD ON BUYING RAIL PASSES IN '09

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If you still have rail questions, call us at 800-521-6722x3.

<u>EURAILPASS</u>	1 Ac 1st		Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
15 consecutive days 21 consecutive days 1 month 2 months 3 months	\$68 \$89 \$11 \$15 \$19	37 90 06 61	\$582 \$756 \$939 \$1326 \$1642	\$446 \$577 \$720 \$1015 \$1255
EURAIL FLEXIPASS	1 Ac 1st		Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
10 days in 2 months 15 days in 2 months	\$8- \$10	0	\$688 \$907	\$529 \$693
EURAIL SELECTPASS				
3 adjoining countries 5 days in 2 months 6 days in 2 months 8 days in 2 months 10 days in 2 months	1 Adult <u>1st Cl.</u> \$435 \$480 \$570 \$660		Saver* 1st Cl. \$369 \$410 \$487 \$559	Youth 2nd Cl. \$283 \$315 \$369 \$427
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FRANCE SAVER PASS				2 Adults	
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15 consec. days	\$591	\$394	\$50		\$335	\$444		296
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quality. Among these, the Hotel National is attractive because of its combination of Old World elegance and modern amenities, including 70 recently renovated rooms, red-carpeted hallways, and sparkling chandeliers lighting the lobby, the lovely breakfast room, and a comfortable sitting room.

Daily Rates: Singles range from €45-245 and doubles from €57-265, depending dates. For example, in the autumn a three-day stay during the week can average €130/ night for a single and €150/night for a double. But on weekends and in low season, singles can be as low as €47-57, and doubles €57-72. Breakfast (€9) is usually not included, but some packages include breakfast.

Contact: Hotel National, Baseler Strasse 50, 60329 Frankfurt/Main, tel. +49/69-242-6480, fax +49/69-234-460, info@hotelnational.de, www.hotelnational.de

Rating: Quality 14/20, Value 14/20

Hotel Gerbermühle

Get away from the frenzy of urban Frankfurt at this relaxing retreat on the south bank of the Main next to a pleasant treelined park and one of the locks that makes the river navigable.

Opened in 2007, the modern Gerbermühle rests on the foundation of an older, historic building where Goethe celebrated his 66th birthday in 1815. The seven singles, six doubles, three small suites, and two large suites all are named for Goethe associates. Gurestrooms are furnished in minimalist modern style, and most have views over the river or the adjacent public park. The river side of the hotel offers a picturepostcard look at the Frankfurt skyline. The hotel's multilingual staff provides excellent service.

A nice breakfast buffet is served in the winter-garden or on the open terrace, with freshly squeezed orange juice, superb coffees, and eggs cooked to order. The hotel's riverfront restaurant and beer garden are popular with locals as well as guests.

On weekends and in the summer, the Gerbermühle area is a favorite destination of urbanites who like to jog or bicycle along the riverbank path, dine in the several outdoor restaurants fronting the river, feed the swans, and watch rabbits nibble grass in the park.

Parking is available, but the hotel is not near any public transportation. Taxis to the center of Frankfurt cost €8-12 each way, depending on the destination and time of day. Or take a boat excursion to downtown, from the landing in front of the hotel (afternoons only, in season, €3.70 each way; get off at the Eiserner Steg landing).

Daily Rates: Standard rooms (singles and doubles) €140, junior suites €350. Rates are higher during trade fairs, but considerably lower on weekends and with special promotional rates at certain times of the year.

Contact: Hotel Gerbermühle, Gerbermühlestrasse 105, 60594 Frankfurt/Main, tel. +49/69-689-777-90, fax +49/69-689-777-966, info@gerberbuehle.de, www.gerbermuehle.de

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 15/20 Frankfurt Restaurants

As a modern, international city, Frankfurt features a large variety of restaurants: Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Thai, Turkish, Austrian, Spanish, Italian, and others. They range from elite to simple and homey, with prices varying just as widely. Local food specialties include the city's famous Grüne Sosse (green sauce), a cold sauce made from at least seven kinds of green herbs pureed with onions, mixed with mayonnaise, sour cream, chopped hard-boiled eggs, and served as an accompaniment to boiled beef dishes or with small new potatoes cooked in their skins. Another favorite is Handkäse mit Musik, small, firm, somewhat rubbery-textured low-fat cheese

served with a garnish of vinegar, chopped onions, and caraway seeds.

Handkäse and the herbs for green sauce are among the hundreds of foods sold at the Kleinmarkthalle (Hasengasse 5-7), the colorful covered market in the city center. Stroll along the aisles where freshly-prepared foods can be purchased and then eaten at tables along the wall or taken away for a picnic. Wurst Dey on the ground floor sells more than 400 kinds of sausages, hams, and cold salads. Upstairs is an oyster bar, as well as Markt-Stubb, a little restaurant serving market-fresh meals, including lunch specials (€6.90-9.90) and three-course daily menus (€8.40-12.40).

Frankfurt's drink of choice is Apfelwein (apple wine), a refreshing, low-alcohol beverage made from fermented apple juice. Also known in the local dialect as ebbelwei, äbbelwoi, äppler, or stöffche, it's traditionally poured from a Bembel (a blue-and-gray stoneware pitcher) into faceted clear-glass tumblers. Apfelwein is available in many Frankfurt restaurants, but the city's Sachsenhausen district is the most fun place to drink the slightly bubbly brew in rustic little taverns known as äppelwoilokale. Go there in the evening when the taverns are full of locals and tourists sipping and singing together.

Restaurant Gerbermühle

In the Hotel Gerbermühle, fronting the Main River a few miles upstream from the city center, this restaurant feels like an upscale country inn with a swank bar, elegant modern furnishings, and a lovely terrace overlooking the adjacent park. The menu offers a nice selection of traditional and modern dishes, an extensive wine list, and several good wines sold by the glass.

The list of soups (€5.50-12.50) includes a cream soup made with Frankfurt green herbs (€7.90). Starters and salads range from

traditional *Handkäse mit Musik* (€3.50) to six oysters on the half shell (€18); other appetizers are priced around €15. Fish and meat main dishes range from €13.90-32, and desserts are €6.90-15. Try the *crème brûleé* with mango-chili compote and exotic sherbet (€8.90).

The pleasant outdoor beer garden, separate from the restaurant, offers less expensive meals from the same kitchen, and a variety of local beers, wines, and apple wines, with snacks to accompany. Among the menu items is a variety of sausage plates (€4.90-7.90); two large baked potatoes with Frankfurt green sauce and hard-boiled egg (€7.90); grilled chicken, pork knuckles, and spareribs (€8.50-12.50); and three kinds of *Flammkuchen*, a kind of Alsatian thincrust "pizza" (€8.90-10.90)

Contact: Hotel-Restaurant Gerbermühle, Gerbermühlestrasse 105, 60594 Frankfurt/Main, tel. +49/69-689-777-90, fax +49/69-689-777-966, info@gerberbuehle.de, www.gerbermuehle.de. Open daily, 11:30am-11pm.

Rating: Quality 15/20, Value 13/20 Beer garden: Quality 12/20, Value 14/20

Restaurant Schwarzer Stern Located in a beautiful, historic,

half-timbered building (rebuilt after being destroyed in World War II), the Schwarzer Stern overlooks
Frankfurt's medieval main square.
Although the restaurant has had mixed reviews from some customers, it rates an Editor's Choice for its combination of location, elegant decor, friendly staff, seasonal selection of well-prepared traditional dishes, and reasonable prices.

The menu also lists many dishes in two sizes, small and large. Even the "small" portion can be substantial, and a "large" size is often enough for two people to share. Soups and appetizers (in two sizes) are €4.80-14.80; main dishes, €13.40-22.40; and desserts €6.80-7.20.

Try the potato-sauerkraut soup with strips of beef (€4.80 small, 6.80 large); the large ravioli-like Schwabian *Maultaschen* with tomato sauce and Parmesan cheese (€8.60 small, €12.60 large); stuffed roast pork in dark beer sauce with red cabbage and bread dumplings (€13.40); classic *Tafelspitz* (boiled beef) with Frankfurt green sauce (€14.80); and frozen black currant parfait with fruit sauce for dessert (€6.80). Three-course, seasonal, fixed-price menus are €36, and four-course menus €45.

Contact: Restaurant Zum
Schwarzen Stern , Römerberg 6, D60311 Frankfurt/Main, tel. +49-69291979, Fax: +49-69-280501,
info@schwarzerstern.de,
www.schwarzerstern.de
Open daily, 11:30am-3pm, 6pmmidnight, and continuously from
11:30am to midnight in summer.
Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 14/20

Klosterhof

A cozy, wood-paneled, traditional German restaurant that has served meals since 1936. Adjacent to a Carmelite monastery, it features several dishes made from recipes in old European monastery cookbooks. Good food, copious portions at reasonable prices, and a pleasant beer garden attract many businesspeople here at lunch, so go early if you want to get a table.

Hot and cold appetizers, many large enough for a full meal, are priced from €4.20 to 9.80; salads are €2.90-11.20. The meats come from a local source, and many are organic, including a variety of tasty pork dishes (€8.70-11.80) and rolled, stuffed beef in beer sauce (€14.80). Potato main dishes with several garnishes are €6.60-9.50, and scrumptious desserts €3.80-5.60. Don't miss the Klosterhof Naturtrüb pale beer and the delicious dark Schwarzbier.

Contact: Klosterhof, Weissfrauenstrasse 3, 60311 Frankfurt/Main, tel. +49/69-913-990-00, fax +49/69-

913-996-86, <u>info@klosterhof-frankfurt.de</u>, <u>www.klosterhof-frankfurt.de</u>

Open Monday-Friday, 11:30am-1am; Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, 5pm-1am

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 13/20

TABLE

This stylish new restaurant on the ground floor of the ultramodern Schirn Kunsthalle exhibition hall is a good example of the "casual fine dining" trend so popular in Frankfurt. The menu has an interesting selection of Italianinfluenced dishes, along with contemporary presentations of classic German dishes such as Schnitzel and Kalbshaxe. Ingredients are fresh and the cooking is light and healthy, with an emphasis on organic products, especially in the assortment of luscious "Bio" (organic) ice creams.

A daily menu is offered from noon to 6pm, with salads, pastas, foccacia sandwiches, meat, and fish dishes listed for €8.5-16. The dinner menu is more expensive, with a choice of interesting appetizers from €8-14 and main dishes €8.5-26. Save room for one of the tempting ice cream desserts (€3-6) or a slice of an excellent house-made pastry. The Sunday breakfast buffet (10 am-3 pm) offers a tempting array of hot and cold foods, with eggs cooked to order and a glass of Sekt (German sparkling wine) included (€16/person).

Contact: TABLE Café-Bar-Restaurant, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Römerberg, 60311 Frankfurt/ Main, tel.+ 49/69-21-99-99-52, fax + 49/69-21-99-99-53, eat@table-schirn.com, www.table-schirn.com Open daily, 9am-midnight Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 14/20

Lorsbacher Thal

The **Lorsbacher Thal** is a friendly apple wine tavern in the Sachsenhausen district, where the proprietor makes his own natural product without any additives or

preservatives. Go there in the evening for a typical "apple wine experience," sitting on benches at long wooden tables in the cozy dining room or large garden outside, sipping the refreshing brew, and eating well-prepared rustic regional dishes.

Make a full meal by ordering a several cold dishes served with bread and butter, such as Handkäse mit Musik (€2.50), Schneegestober (a tasty cheese spread, €4.50), Wurstsalat (sausage salad, €6.80), thinly sliced raw smoked ham (€5.50), and handmade liver sausage (€4.80). More substantial meaty main dishes, with sauerkraut and potatoes, range from €5.60-14.50, with most priced around €8-9. A three-tenths liter of apple wine is €1.50, but it's so good you'll want to order a stoneware pitcher of it for the entire table.

Contact: Lorsbacher Thal, Grosse Rittergasse 49-51, 60594 Frankfurt/Main, tel. +49/69-616-459, info@lorsbacher-thal.de, www.lorsbacher-thal.de
Open daily 4pm-midnight
Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 14/20

Other recommended apple wine taverns in the Sachsenhausen district include **Dauth-Schneider** (Neuer Wall 5-7, Klappergasse 39), **Klaane Sachsenshäuser** (Neuer Wall 11), **Zum gemalten Haus** (Schweizer Strasse 67), **Zur Buchscheer** (Schwarzsteinkautweg 17), and **Adolf Wagner** (Schweizer Strasse 71).

BERLIN BIKE RIDEContinued from page 1

"protective" barrier. Overall distance totals 12km (about 7.5 miles).

So we venture north via Schönhauser Allee, turning left onto Eberswalder Strasse, then up Schwerdter Strasse to cycle past circa-1951 **Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn Stadium**, home field of the Bundesliga's BFC Dynamo *Fussball* team. Alongside this 20,000-capacity structure, kids play and families picnic in sloping **Mauerpark** open space—which, in haunting

retrospect, used to be a kilometerlong stretch of *Verboten* death strip, a minefield squeezed between twin parallel segments of the concrete-block Wall. If you're pedaling this way on a Sunday, consider parking the bicycle to browse through one of the city's biggest flea markets (8am-6pm).

Eberswalder Strasse and Schwerdter Strasse intersect at Bernauer Strasse, world-famous because of being abruptly split east-side/west-side when the *Berliner Mauer* was initially built (August, 1961), resulting in bricked-up housefronts, tearfully separated families and police-dog patrols. Take a break, learn much about such GDR repressions at the **Berlin Wall Documentation Center**, Bernauer Strasse 111 (www.berliner-mauergedenkstaette.de).

Then another dose of compelling Cold War flashback. Sense it by biking up to where Bornholmer Strasse once divided two workingclass neighborhoods: Wedding (west), Pankow (east). Pre-reunification, the street's S-bahn commuter-rail facility was a "ghost station," where trains clattering between the two Germanies weren't allowed to stop for passengers' pickup or dropoff. Right here, the Bösebrucke bridge became absolutely historic at 10:30am on November 9th, 1989. That's when GDR police removed the checkpoint's barriers, prompting the day's first massive westward surge of jubilant East Berliners. Plaques bolted onto bridge supports outline the story.

From that hot spot, bikers angle past abandoned barracks and watch towers over to Mühlenstrasse in Friedrichshain, where a permanent 1.3-km Wall remainder still grabs international attention as the graffiti-and-mural-splattered **East Side Gallery**. Continuing (after an irresistible photo op), we pedal our way into *Mitte*, the heart of old imperial Wilhelmine Berlin. On Invalidenstrasse, I

glimpse Hamburger Bahnhof, 19th-century railroad terminal transformed (since 1966) into a major contemporary-art museum. Going by way of Oranienburger Strasse, in the former Jewish quarter, gives me a chance to look up at the Neue Synagog's gilded cupolas—quickly followed by a fearless dash through traffic-swirling Hackescher Markt crossroads.

Crossing a narrow little Spree bridge gets us onto Museum Island, where grassy Lustgarten expanse becomes an ideal rest stop, flanked (another photo op!) by the neoclassical Altes Museum and the high-and-mighty Berliner Dom cathedral. After that sojourn, we're on the final one-kilometer leg of our feel-good journey, returning to Prenzlauer Berg's Kulturbrauerei courtyard.

Bike Tour Basics:

Wall tours: Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday, staring 11am (April 1-Oct. 31).

Cost of bike rental and guide: ¤17. Ride your own bike: ¤12.

Contact: Berlin on Bike, Kulturbrauerei Hof 4, Knaackstrasse 97, Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg, tel: +49/3043/73/999,

www.berlinonbike.de.

Readers' Forum

Gemütlichkeit Via iPhone

First, I applaud the e-format as it is not only a way to save on postage but is much more convenient to transport *en mass* via laptop, e-reader or smartphone. Helps with the packing light philosophy!

However, I'd suggest a flow revision as the PDF version matures. The page jumps and multicolumn format are not easy to follow on many computer monitors and downright cumbersome on smaller devices like smartphone.

Regardless, keep up the good work. I always look forward to new issues, especially those focused on the smaller, more gemütlich locations (vice the chain hotels, regardless of the number of stars and reputation).

Brian Hill Sent from an iPhone

Festival in Geseke

Just finished reading through the first e-mailed edition of *Gemütlichkeit*. Everything worked just fine.

We have relatives who live in a small village called Geseke. It is located north of Frankfurt, between Paderborn and Münster. My parents ancestors came from that region. We visit about every two years, then vacation around other areas, though our favorite is along the Mosel during their wine festivals. We really love to visit Geseke when they hold the annual Schuetzenfest, a real traditional German celebration. Everyone should plan a day (and night) at one of these happenings. Lots of music, beer, wine and plenty of gemütlichkeit for four days plus the shooting of the bird and the crowning of the new King of Schuetzenfest. All the small towns in that area have a different weekend to celebrate and they all get together to support all of the events.

ELMER ENTROP
VIA EMAIL

Salzburg Festival Report

Our *Gemütlichkeit* on Schwerin arrived, and we read it cover to cover as usual. In it you discuss renewal fees and email delivery. Since we are online anyway, we will opt to receive it henceforth on the Web. We will miss the fun of opening the printed letter, but the times are taking over.

Just returned from Europe and can report that the Hotel Bär (Editor's Note: a longtime *Gemütlichkeit* recommendation) in Ellmau in Tirol is now a large conference center with high prices. Ellmau is still very beautiful and worth a stop.

In Salzburg, we ended up at

Best Western Elefant, in the old town. It can be recommended for friendly service, cleanliness and wonderful location. Since we ran from one concert to the other in various churches, the interim pit stops at the hotel were invaluable for us super-seniors. The price was comparatively reasonable for the *Altstadt*.

A tip for the music lovers at **Salzburg Festival** time: the price of tickets is notoriously inflated, but we were able to purchase at the door of the Mozarteum at less than half price just before the performance. A note: no jeans or shorts!

Anny Newman via Email

Munich Hotel Report

In Munich we stayed at the **Europaischer Hof**, right across from the station, requested a room off the street side, and had a HUGE buffet breakfast, enough to skip-well, almost skiplunch. We had sliced meats, ham, several cheeses, mozzarella and tomato salad, cucumbers, pickles, Brotchen, several grain breads, croissants, fresh pineapple, kiwi, watermelon, four kinds of juice, bacon, sausages, soft boiled eggs, scrambled eggs, a pitcher of ice water, butter, jam, Nutella, yogurt, cereals, and a choice of regular coffee, or Italian specialty coffees, tea, or hot cocoa. Wow! We were stuffed. It was a good room, have stayed there before, but being literally steps from the S-Bahn and the train station was sheer heaven! The cost was 603 euros for five nights for a double.

Also visited **Ober-Schleis-sheim**—the **Deutsches Muse-um's** air museum. Being a native of Oshkosh, having done EAA (The Spirit of Aviation) many times, it was quite a bit smaller scale but the importance of the airfield and it's history was quite interesting.

Linda Klein Via email 🖼

We Recommend

This listing of good value, <u>mid-priced</u> hotels in popular destination cities is intended for fast reference. Additional hotels and links to hotel websites is in the **"Hotels"** pages at <u>www.gemut.com</u>. 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, hotelkreuz@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, Pettenkoferstr. 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, Homburgweg 28, D-91541, tel. +049/09861/8480, fax 5570, <u>hotelhornburg@t-online.de</u>, <u>www.hotelhornburg.de</u>

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

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

Hotel Birkenhof, von-Eiff-Str 37, Hanau-Steinheim, D-63456, tel. +49/06181/648 80, fax 64 88 39, info@HotelBirkenhof.de, www.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, Haupstrasse 11, Halbergmoos-Goldach, D-85399, tel. +49/0811/55120, fax 551213, info@hoteldaniels.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