

**DEAR
SUBSCRIBER**

Remembering Berlin

Part of the lure of Europe's great cities is their constancy. They don't change much. Except for normal maintenance, the major attractions of Rome, Paris, Venice, Prague and Vienna are much as they were a century ago; the Eiffel tower, the fountains of Rome, Piazza San Marco, the Charles Bridge, the music of Vienna, and so on.

But not Berlin. Consider for a moment the physical and political changes over the last 100 years. In the 20s and 30s, as a glamorous center of culture and high living, it attracted some of the most famous names of the century: Einstein, Gropius, the Vladimirs Nabokov and Horowitz, Dietrich, Brecht, Weill, Stravinsky, Billy Wilder, Paul Klee, Sol Hurok, Otto Klemperer, and, of course, Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels. Then came war and near total destruction, followed immediately by the stagnation and isolation of four-plus decades of communist rule. Amazing changes in an amazingly short period of time. But more were to come. A mere 20 years ago this November, the Berlin Wall, a desperate project designed to keep East Germany's most valuable human resources from migrating to the West, crumbled. The breach was seen by millions around the world on TV, a medium that undoubtedly contributed to its demise.

Having ventured behind it several times into East Berlin and East Germany during the 80s, the almost unbelievable pictures of that fearsome Wall being tamed by the very people it separated, stirred both emotion and memory.

Nearly as fascinating to watch as that historic scene, has been the Berlin of the last 20 years. The once-isolated West Berlin and the drab,

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

BADEN-BADEN

The famous spa continues to attract the world's richest and noblest tourists. Sharon Hudgins' report describes how mere mortals can also afford its healing waters.

Baden-Baden: Even its double name evokes a sense of excess, a whiff of high-rolling royalty and upstart *nouveau riche* by Sharon Hudgins risking fortunes at the roulette wheel or the race track, while their wives and paramours gossip in gilded salons or parade the boulevards in the latest designer dresses.

Welcome to one of the world's most-fashionable spas, historic playground of the rich and famous, from European royalty to Middle Eastern potentates, from wealthy industrialists to glamorous movie stars. Although its population includes the highest percentage of millionaires in any German city, it isn't necessary to

be one to enjoy the attractions of this elegant resort, once known as "the summer capital of Europe."

The Romans were the first foreigners to appreciate its potential. Attracted by the strategic position between the Black Forest and the Rhine River, as well as the mild climate and the hot waters from nearby springs, the Romans established a permanent settlement here around 70 A.D. Later it was named *Aquae Aureliae* (Waters of Aurelius) after a 3rd-century Roman emperor; another Roman ruler, Caracalla, was said to have soothed his arthritic aches and pains here. Ruins of the ancient baths built for Roman soldiers can still be seen near the

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Passion Play Tickets

In Bavaria, home of the annual world-famous Oktoberfest, preparations are well under way for a less raucous tradition that, except for rare exceptions, occurs just once a decade. In 2010, the

Oberammergau by Margie Gibson Passion Play, first performed in 1634 in the small mountain town an hour's drive south of Munich, will once more draw visitors from around the world. They will see an unforgettable production rooted in a southern German tradition of bringing the story of Christ's crucifixion to the stage. Tickets are already on sale and advance planning is critical to snagging a coveted ticket to a performance.

The 2010 Passion Play premieres May 15. It will be performed five

days each week until October 3, a total of 102 performances. For the first time in the play's history, performances will begin in the afternoon, break for a three-hour dinner intermission and resume in the evening, concluding about 10:30pm. Visitors attend performances in the 4,700-seat, open-air theater built in 1929, which has been outfitted with a roof to protect audiences during the frequent summer rains. Although viewers will remain dry, temperatures could be chilly. Even if the sky is clear, evenings often require a sweater, so be sure to pack warm clothing (including

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Exchange rates as of 10/10/09

1 euro = \$1.47

1 Swiss franc = \$0.97

1 gallon diesel, Germany = \$6.02

DEAR SUBSCRIBER*Continued from page 1*

decaying East Berlin, joined to undertake a gargantuan civic overhaul that secured the city's place once again among the great European capitols. Though most of us are aware of the many extraordinary new buildings, imagine problems presented by more mundane unity issues, such as linking phone, sewer, and underground and surface transportation systems that had been separate for decades. In his book, *Berlin Journal, 1989-90*, Robert Darn ton says the Wall so sealed off West Berlin that rabies disappeared from the city. Rabid foxes carrying the disease couldn't get in. But within a few months of the Wall's demise, dead, rabid foxes were turning up in West Berlin and all dogs, east and west, had to be inoculated.

Now in November Berlin will observe, with typical style, creativity, and thoroughness, the fall of the *Mauer*. The official date is November 9.

Unfortunately, I won't be there but on that day I'll sort through a few Berlin memories.

In the years before this newsletter was even a gleam in anyone's eye, and we were making annual Germany trips, West Berlin was far down my list of places to visit. First was the problem of getting there—one had to negotiate the harassing border crossings—then there was my mental image of the city as a

bombed-out husk. But it was Liz who noticed how many Germans said, "Have you been to Berlin yet? You must see Berlin." So, in 1981, having read all the warnings about not stopping while driving through East Germany, not leaving the Autobahn, and keeping our speed at no more than 100 kph (62 mph), we set off for the Helmstedt crossing point, near Braunschweig. Except for a ticket (10 West German DM, payable on the spot) for failing to re-buckle my seat belt as we left the checkpoint, a stare-down with a young East German soldier (I blinked first), and the washboard highway, the three and a half-hour trip was uneventful. As we rolled slowly along the road toward Berlin, we glimpsed rotting villages and ancient, horse-drawn farm implements. We had booked a double room for about \$40 at the **Hotel Am Zoo** (currently \$148 to \$414), close to the **Europa Center**, **Ka De We**, **Zoo Station**, and, of course, in the very heart of West Berlin action on the broad, exciting Kurfürstendamm (in my opinion still the town's best street).

Past **Checkpoint Charlie** aboard a tour bus, we made our first visit to East Berlin. Guards boarded to check passports—no sunglasses—and employed large, wheeled mirrors to examine the vehicle's undercarriage. Except for a visit to the **Pergamon Museum**, a brief look at the **Soviet War Memorial**, and a "refreshment" stop—warm beer and a few sorry

prepackaged snacks—we weren't allowed off the bus. On its P.A. system, the uptight tour director maintained a flow of useless statistics and blatant, laughable propaganda.

That night, back in the West, we dined at **Fofi's**, a wonderful upscale Greek restaurant whose owner, according to John Le Carre in *The Little Drummer Girl*, "was a woman of cosmopolitan wisdom." A sense of the restaurant's character can be gleaned from this 1987 *New York Times* excerpt on Berlin nightlife:

"Not long ago, at one of the most fashionable restaurants, called Fofi's, a small man in overalls came in, seated himself at the bar, placed a clown-style red bulb on his nose, then set up a rather elaborate easel and canvas and proceeded to paint throughout the evening. No one seemed to feel that this was anything but normal."

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".

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	Scale	Restaurant Criteria
Excellent	16 - 20	Food 65%
Above Average	12 - 15	Service 20%
Average	8 - 11	Atmosphere 15%
Adequate	4 - 7	
Unacceptable	0 - 3	

Hotel Rating Criteria	Value Rating	Scale
People/Service	30%	Outstanding Value 17 - 20
Location/Setting	15%	Very Good Value 12 - 16
Guestrooms	30%	Average Value 9 - 11
Public rooms	5%	Below Average Value 5 - 8
Facilities/Restaurant	20%	A Rip-Off 0 - 4

BADEN-BADEN*Continued from page 1*

city's two large public baths.

A fast forward to the French Revolution in the late 1700s found scores of aristocrats scurrying to safety across the Rhine and setting up household in Baden (or Baths, the German name of the town since the Middle Ages). Then when France banned gambling in the 1830s, Parisian casino owners moved their operations to Baden, adding another layer of French flair and soon establishing the city as the gaming center of Europe. The French connection lasted until after World War II, when the city (undamaged by war) became the headquarters of the occupying French forces in the region. By then, its name was Baden-Baden (meaning the city of Baden in the state of Baden, the official designation since 1931), and its luster had already faded.

The resort's heyday came earlier, during the *Belle Epoque* of the 19th century; initially because of its casino, the oldest and largest in Germany, and later for its thermal bathing tradition, revived in Baden to attract tourists after Bismarck closed the casinos in 1872. Today one can still luxuriate in a three-hour "Roman-Irish" regimen of progressively hotter and cooler pools at the massive neo-Renaissance **Friedrichsbad**, a public bathing palace of marble columns, painted tiles, allegoric frescoes, and intricate mosaics, which opened in 1877. A totally nude bathing facility, the Friedrichsbad has separate sections for men and women, with mixed bathing twice a week.

A short walk away, the much newer, more modern **Caracalla Spa** (circa 1985), offers a more family-oriented, with-bathing-suit, experience of indoor and outdoor swimming pools, hot- and cold-water grottoes, whirlpools, solariums, and saunas. Both these large public baths also provide specialized hydrotherapy, massages, cosmetic treatments, and other related services at extra cost.

Baden-Baden Basics

Population: 54,000

Elevation: 528 feet

Visitor Information: Tourist offices located at Schwarzwaldstrasse 52 and Kaiserallee 3 (in the Trinkhalle), 76530 Baden-Baden, tel. +49/7221-275-200 and 275-201, fax 275-202, info@baden-baden.com, www.baden-baden.com

Driving distances:

Berlin	714 km/446 miles
Hamburg	663 km/414 miles
Frankfurt	182 km/114 miles
Freiburg	115 km/72 miles
Munich	320 km/200 miles
Nürnberg	288 km/180 miles
Stuttgart	113 km/74 miles
Vienna	768 km/460 miles
Zürich	235 km/147 miles

Nearest airports: Frankfurt (187 km/117 miles), Stuttgart (136 km/85 miles), Basel (166 km/104 miles), Strasbourg (72 km/45 miles). The new Baden-Airpark (Flughafen Karlsruhe / Baden-Baden) in Söllingen (14 km/9 miles) from Baden-Baden has flights within Europe and to some countries outside of Europe, but not North America

Rail service: The train station is located in the Oos district, a few kilometers from the city center, accessible by bus or taxi. You can also take public transportation directly from Karlsruhe to Baden-Baden (20 miles).

Recommended guidebooks:

The Tourist Information office has a helpful booklet (in German and English), titled "Baden-Baden," with thumbnail descriptions (and opening time) of the major sights and activities in the area. The tourist office also sells several books (in German) about specific aspects of the city and its history. The novel, *Summer in Baden-Baden* (English translation), by Leonid Tsyplkin, is a recommended fictional account of Dostoevsky's honeymoon there; buy it in the U.S.

Along the Oos River, the **Kurvietel** park area features three large buildings that have traditionally been the center of the city's social life. At the colonnaded **Trinkhalle** (Pump Room, or Drinking Hall), visitors can sip the warm, sulfurous, rather foul-tasting natural mineral water straight from a tap. (A **Tourist Information Office** is located here, too.) The adjacent **Casino** is an opulent gambling palace built in the 1830s, with four magnificent halls decorated in 17th- and 18th-century French styles, plush red carpets, gilded mirrors, and enormous crystal chandeliers. (Guided tours in the mornings; open for gambling daily from 2pm until early the next morning; dress code enforced.) Next door is the neoclassical **Kurhaus**, which, despite its name, is not for "taking the cure." The building houses several elegant rooms used for public concerts, exhibitions, and other special events, as well as a restaurant.

From the front of the Kurhaus, walk down **Lichtentaler Allee**, the tree-shaded pedestrian promenade and park extending 2.5 miles along the river. Several museums are located on this route, including the Art Nouveau-era **Kunsthalle**, which hosts changing art exhibitions; the ultramodern **Museum Frieder Burda**, with an impressive collection of 20th-century art; and the **Stadtumuseum**, focusing on the history of Baden-Baden from the Roman era to the present.

Strolling is a favorite pastime in Baden-Baden, one of Germany's "greenest" cities with numerous parks, gardens, and wooded areas. A special self-guided "Fountain Walk" leads past 52 fountains, sprays, and other water displays. Or just wander around the pedestrian zone downtown, past all the fashionable boutiques, jewelry stores, antique shops, and sidewalk cafes.

Don't be surprised to see many signs printed in Russian and frequently hear the language spoken on the street. Russians have been coming to Baden-Baden since the 19th century, when it was a favorite

haunt of such writers as Dostoevsky and Turgenev, as well as members of the Russian nobility. The beautiful **Russian Church**, built in the 1880s, is open daily for visitors. And the new **Fabergé Museum** displays Europe's largest collection of masterpieces from Fabergé workshops, including Russian imperial Easter eggs.

Though the relaxed pace of life in Baden-Baden is more Mediterranean than Germanic, the city offers many activities. Music lovers flock to world-class performances at the **Festspielhaus**, Europe's second largest opera and concert hall. They also enjoy the free concerts in front of the Kurhaus every afternoon at 4pm. Between May and September, bettors head to the horse races in the suburb of Iffezheim. And other sporting types play golf or tennis, or hike in the nearby Black Forest.

Whatever the chosen Baden-Baden activity, you'll always be following in the footsteps of the famous who've taken their pleasures here, too—from 19th-century writers, painters, composers, and

Key Websites for the Traveler

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crowned heads of Europe, to contemporary politicians as diverse as Mikhail Gorbachev, Vladimir Putin, Angela Merkel, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama. After all, the city's main industry is tourism.

Baden-Baden Hotels

Such a well-known spa has plenty of elegant hotels catering to the rich and famous—or anyone else who wants to spend €200 to €575 per night for a double room. The city's most renowned lodging is the five-star-superior **Brenner's Park Hotel & Spa**, one of Europe's finest hotels and the preferred Baden-Baden choice for royalty, heads of state, and other luminaries. The **Dorint Maison Messmer Baden-Baden** and the **Steigenberger Europäischer Hof** are the city's other five-star properties, followed by a number of four-star-superior and standard four-star hotels. Nine miles away, high on a hill in the Black Forest, overlooking the Rhine Valley, the **Schlosshotel Bühlerhöhe** is a stunning five-star-superior beauty with a legendary past.

But it is still possible to stay at some very good Baden-Baden hotels without breaking the bank. To experience the relaxing aspects of this resort, book a hotel in the central part of the city, then walk to all the attractions and not worry about parking.

Rathausglöckel

This new four-star property in a historic building dating from 1632, completely renovated in 2009, is small, intimate, and family-run. Oddly enough, the German-born owner once lived in the United States and is an American citizen. He and his Ukrainian wife are both fluent in English and especially welcoming of North American guests.

EDITOR'S
CHOICE

On a romantic narrow street close to the Market Square and Friedrichsbad thermal bath, the Rathausglöckel is just five minutes' walk from most of Baden-Baden's major sights.

Each of its 16 rooms (including four suites) is different, decorated in tasteful Old-World style, with good quality wooden furniture and well-chosen textiles. Suites and junior suite have two bedrooms and two bathrooms. Because of restrictions on structural changes to historic buildings, there is no elevator, so be prepared for steep, though richly carpeted, stairs. The hotel's small library, and pleasant terrace are on the top floor, with good views over the city.

The breakfast buffet is served in the adjacent **Restaurant Rathaus-glöckel** (see restaurant reviews). Last year, when the current owner was having the rubble cleared out of the 14th century basement to build a wine bar, workers discovered two Roman granite pillars still intact and Roman-era walls that were part of the ancient baths, all from 300 A.D. These have been incorporated into the wine bar's decor.

Daily Rates: Singles €85-100, doubles €110-135, junior suites €130-200, loft suite €160-300, all with breakfast included (reduced rates for longer stays), parking €8/day.

Contact: Hotel & Restaurant Rathausglöckel, Steinstrasse 7–9, 76530 Baden-Baden, tel. +49/7221-90-610, fax 90-6161,
info@rathausgloekel.de,
www.rathausgloekel.de

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel am Markt

Just around the corner from the Rathausglöckel, this modest little hotel faces the Market Square and the Stiftskirche. Each of its 25 rooms (11 singles, 14 doubles) offers a view of the square or the city. Housed in a building constructed in 1716, am Markt also has an elevator, two lounges, a TV room, a light-and-airy breakfast room, a small outdoor terrace on the square, and a pleasant holiday apartment with kitchen. All rooms are decorated in a simple, modern style, and most doubles have a sofa, chair, table, and satellite TV.

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Anne McAlpin spent 280 days on the road last year and averaged 25 flights per month doing it. Anne's been traveling like this for years and her experiences have led to the design of her very own line of handy travel accessories. She has shared her packing 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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8 days in 2 months	\$735	\$622	\$476
4 adjoining countries	\$542	\$458	\$352
5 days in 2 months	\$592	\$505	\$385
6 days in 2 months	\$692	\$589	\$450
8 days in 2 months	\$791	\$671	\$512
5 adjoining countries	\$598	\$507	\$389
5 days in 2 months	\$648	\$551	\$420
6 days in 2 months	\$749	\$634	\$484
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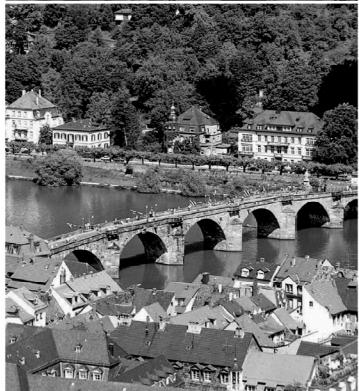
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am Markt is nicely located, offers good value, and is popular with guests (rated #1 by Tripadvisor.com among 51 Baden-Baden hotels), some of whom stay for two or three weeks in the holiday apartment. The friendly owners speak excellent English.

Daily Rates: Singles €32-50, doubles €64-85, holiday apartment (for two persons, five-day minimum) €72-80

Contact: Hotel am Markt, Marktplatz 18, 76530 Baden-Baden, tel. +49/7221-27-040, fax 27-0444, info@hotel-am-markt-baden.de, www.hotel-am-markt-baden.de

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 16/20

Bad Hotel Zum Hirsch

Offering old-world elegance at competitive prices among Baden-Baden hotels in its category, the historic, four-star-superior Zum Hirsch, is run by the Russian-owned Heliopark Group. The building dates from the 1600s, is on the city's cobblestoned pedestrian zone, and was reopened in 2008 following a €17 million renovation. Each of the 59 rooms and 12 suites is different, but all include antique furniture, custom wallpaper, and beautiful textiles; some also have chandeliers, oriental rugs, and marble bathtubs with taps connected directly to the spa's thermal waters. The ornate **Crystal Restaurant**, once the ballroom for Baden-Baden's high-society *soirées*, offers a selection of more than 100 wines.

Daily Rates: Singles €115-245, doubles €155-325, suites €325-630

Contact: Heliopark Bad Hotel zum Hirsch, Hirschstrasse 1, 76530 Baden-Baden, tel. +49/7221-9390, fax 939-111, info@heliopark-hirsch.de, www.heliopark-hirsch.de

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 15/20

Note: The Heliopark Group also operates the more modern, four-star, business-class **Heliopark Hotel**

Quellenhof, located in the central city, with 52 comfortable, spacious, tastefully furnished rooms and suites with contemporary decor, and an old-style **Cafe Vienna** coffee-house on the ground floor

(www.quellenhof-baden-baden.de). Singles €110-160, doubles €150-200, suites €180-300

Aqua Aurelia

The brand-new, ultramodern **Aqua Arelia Suite Hotel** opened in 2009 on a prime piece of land across from the Caracalla Baths. The building's Bauhaus-style facade contrasts starkly with the city's opulent 19th-century villas. Most of the 46 rooms, all designated as suites, are decorated in the same minimalist style, with simple, modern furniture, matching red plush *chaise* lounge and swivel chair, and flat-screen TV. A nice breakfast buffet (with superb coffee) is served in the chic little restaurant area on the ground floor, but if the weather is nice, you may want to linger over breakfast on the spacious terrace overlooking the park and thermal baths.

Daily Rates: All rooms are classified as "suites," which sleep two people, with prices ranging from €165-250. For single occupancy, the junior suites charge €35 less than the standard rate. Breakfast is an additional €16, garage parking €15/day.

Contact: Aqua Aurelia Suitenhotel Baden-Baden, Vincentistrasse 1, 76530 Baden-Baden, tel. +49/7221-18-330, fax 18-3318, info@acuaaurelia.de, www.acuaaurelia.de

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 10/20

Gasthaus Auerhahn

For relaxing accommodations just 10 minutes from the city center, drive to the suburb of Geroldsau, where the popular **Gasthaus Auerhahn** has been run by the friendly, hospitable Schindler family for many years. Located in a three-story old Black Forest building, with geranium-filled window boxes, this traditional German *Gasthaus* epitomizes *gemütlichkeit*.

The ground floor houses two beautifully decorated dining areas (see restaurant reviews), with a beer garden in front. The Auerhahn's 20 bedrooms are all oversize and comfortable, with traditional wooden

furniture (a few of the beds are even four-posters, hung with sheer curtains) and pleasant sitting areas; some rooms have balconies. The hearty breakfast buffet is served in an elegant room looking onto a pretty garden. A bus stop nearby makes for easy commuting to the city center.

Daily Rates: Singles €62, doubles €79-94. Reduced room rates for more than one-night stays, up to €10 less/day for seven overnights.

Contact: Gasthaus Auerhahn, Gerolsauerstrasse 160, 76534 Baden-Baden, tel. +49/7221-7435, fax 7432, Gasthaus_Auerhahn@t-online.de, www.gasthaus-auerhahn.de

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Baden-Baden Restaurants

The city offers a wide range of eating places, from small beer gardens to elegant dining rooms. Late afternoons find the pastry shops packed with people enjoying the traditional break for coffee and cake. Try the elegant **Cafe-Konditorei König** (Lichtentaler Strasse 12) or the **Conditorei-Cafe Beeg** (Gernsbacher Strasse 44), both of which serve elaborate house-made pastries and confections. Cool off with some excellent ice cream at the **Eiscafe Capri** (Sophienstrasse 1-b), or indulge in rich handmade chocolates at **Confiserie Rumpelmayer** (Kaiserallee 1).

Le Jardin de France

One of two Michelin-starred restaurants in Baden-Baden, **Le Jardin de France** earned its single star a decade ago and continues to be highly-rated among the region's eating establishments. Located in the inner courtyard of the Art Nouveau "Goldene Kreuz" building, the small restaurant has an indoor dining room housed under a glass roof and a pleasant open-air section for dining in good weather.

Alsation-born chef Stephan Bernhard and his wife Sophie characterize their restaurant as "a little corner of France inside Germany." The menu changes with

Editor's
Choice

the seasons, emphasizing fresh ingredients and innovative preparation (but still solidly grounded in classical techniques). Prices match the cuisine's high quality, so the best bargain is the "business lunch," a €29 three-course, set-price meal offered at midday, Tuesday through Friday, or the Saturday three-course lunch menu at €39.

A lunch menu last summer consisted of an appetizer of boned chicken rolled around *foie gras* and served with a small salad, followed by fried duck breast seasoned with gingerbread spices, and a dessert of apricots with black currant juice and pistachio ice cream, all beautifully presented. As at most restaurants of this level an *ameuse gueule*—a tidbit of the chef's choice, not listed on the menu—is often served between courses.

Individual dishes ordered à la carte are considerably more expensive, but a wider range of the chef's art can be tasted by selecting one of the other fixed-price multi-course menus (also offered in the evening), which range from €49-105, some with matching wines included.

Contact: Le Jardin de France, Lichtenaler Strasse 13, 76530 Baden-Baden, tel. +49/7221-300-7860, info@lejardindefrance.de, www.lejardindefrance.de. Open Tuesday-Saturday, noon-2pm, 7-9:30pm.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 15/20

Kurhaus Restaurant

Baden-Baden's **Kurhaus** restaurant serves classically-prepared, French- and Italian-influenced cuisine in its elegant indoor dining rooms and on the more casual terrace in front of the Kurhaus. The best deal is on Monday evenings, when a fixed-price "two-for-one" menu for €23.50 (€11.75 per person, drinks extra) is on offer.

A recent dinner began with an *ameuse gueule*, followed by a first course of frothy zucchini soup

with chanterelle mushrooms, a main dish of braised lamb in thyme sauce with fresh vegetables and rosemary-seasoned potatoes, and *panna cotta* garnished with fruit and a *profiterole* for dessert, all accompanied by a bottle of 2008 Spätburgunder Rosé (€12.50/bottle extra). Regular à la carte prices range from soups and appetizers at €5-13, meat and fish main dishes at €15-24, and desserts for €6.

Contact: Kurhaus Restaurant Baden-Baden, Kaiserallee 1, 76530 Baden-Baden, tel. +49/7221-90-70, fax 90-7150, info@kurhausrestaurant.de, www.kurhausrestaurant.de. Open daily, 10am-midnight.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE* 15/20 (*based on the two-for-one price)

Restaurant Rathausglöckel

In the hotel of the same name, Restaurant Rathausglöckel is a cozy, nicely decorated, old-style **Gasthaus** serving standard German fare. Each month the menu features a different specialty, such as lamb or Kobe beef. Soups, salads, and appetizers range from €4.50-12.50. Some of the latter are large enough to be main courses, as are the lighter meat dishes such as bacon pancakes with salad (€8.50). Pastas are €8.90-10.50, and meat main dishes, such as pork filet in mushroom cream sauce, are from €12.50-22.50, with fish main courses at €16.50-18.50.

Contact: Restaurant Rathausglöckel, Steinstrasse 7 – 9, 76530 Baden-Baden, tel. +49/7221-906-100, info@rathausgloekel.de, www.rathausgloekel.de. Open daily, 5:30pm-11 pm. The basement **Weinkeller and Bar** (separate entrance) is open daily, 5:30pm-1am.

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 10/20

Gasthaus-Restaurant Auerhahn

Dine on well-prepared, traditional German dishes in the **Gasthaus Restaurant Auerhahn**'s cozy, rustic, wood-paneled *Stube*, or in the elegant dining room, or under the shade of spreading chestnut trees

in the beer garden, with the sounds of a nearby gurgling stream. Appetizers and salads (including large salads garnished with meats) range from €4.80-15.80; house-made soups are €4.80-6.80. Meaty main dishes (€12.80-24.80) include specialties such as the Baden versions of *Maultaschen* (hefty German "ravioli") accompanied by a big salad (€12.80), and *Sauerbraten* with Spätburgunder wine sauce. If you prefer fish (€16.80-21.80), try the fresh Black Forest trout with almonds in butter sauce. Desserts are as ample as the other courses. Occasionally the restaurant also hosts a *Grillabend*, an evening when a variety of meats are grilled outdoors in the beer garden (check for dates and times). Fresh game is offered on the special autumn menu.

Contact: Gasthaus Restaurant Auerhahn, Gerolsauerstrasse 160, 76534 Baden-Baden, tel. +49/7221-7435, fax 7432, Gasthaus_Auerhahn@t-online.de, www.gasthaus-auerhahn.de

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20 ☒

PASSION PLAY

Continued from page 1

caps) in case the weather is not cooperative.

The most reliable, perhaps least expensive, way to book tickets is through the Passion Play's website (www.passionsspiele2010.de), which ensures that ticket scams are avoided. Expect to buy a package (*Arrangement*) that includes a room and meals as well as a ticket for the performance. Tickets alone, without room and meals, are intended only for people living within an hour or two of Oberammergau and already are virtually sold out.

Keep in mind that for residents of Oberammergau, the Passion Play is a serious religious commitment and they make every effort to maintain an atmosphere that enables visitors to participate in their experience. The careful organization of visitors' time in the town allows for a sharing of

this sense of solemnity and an avoidance of excessive hucksterism. Though the visitor may lose some independence as far as meals and housing is concerned, they will enjoy a small, Alpine town surprisingly lacking in chain-style, heavily commercial tourist accommodations.

In order to attend a performance, visitors traveling from North America have three choices, all available on the Passion Play website:

- The first, easiest, and most expensive option is to buy an extended package tour that includes the performance through a recommended U.S. or Canadian tour operator (www.oberammergau-passion.com/cms/front_content.php?idart=130);

- The second is to purchase a one- or two-day package on the Passion Play's English website sold by a recommended U.S. or Canadian operator (www.oberammergau-passion.com/cms/front_content.php?idart=148). These packages are similar to those on the German language Passion Play website and include a theater ticket, a room and meals. However, they are sold through a U.S. tour operator. You will be conducting the transaction in English *but* you will pay a higher price for the service than you would if you booked through the German site. Wilcox Travel in Asheville, NC, for example, offers a two-night package that includes two-nights' accommodations and performance ticket for \$1,275.

(Editor's Note: Available through Gemütlichkeit's travel service via our partner Nonstop Travel in Los Angeles, are one and two-night packages mentioned above. They are priced from €199 to €839, plus a \$100 per person service fee. The higher the price, the better the accommodations and tickets. It should be noted that you can purchase these packages without the service charge via the Passion Play German-language website as described below.)

- The third option is to order a one- or two-day package (*Arrangement*) which includes tickets from the Passion Play's German website (www.passionsspiele2010.de/

[index.php?id=88](http://www.oberammergau-passion.com/index.php?id=88)). This option is offered directly through the Office of the Passion Play in Oberammergau. The package provides a ticket for the performance (on a Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday), meals, and a room. If the overnight accommodation is not in Oberammergau, it will be within 20 kilometers of the town and the package will include a shuttle to and from the theater. Prices for the one-night package range from €199-575. The two-night package, which provides for a more relaxed experience, costs between €275-839. Visitors are able to choose the accommodation category, which ranges from luxurious to simple, in hotels, B&Bs, inns, "Fewos" (holiday apartments) and private residences. Those who buy the more expensive *Arrangements* will have better seats, although the theater has excellent acoustics and good sight-lines, so a cheaper seat is not necessarily a bad seat.

Requesting a specific hotel on the booking form will reduce chances of getting an *Arrangement* for your requested date. However, a number of restaurants and hotels in the area have formed *Total Lokal*, (www.ammergauer-alpen.de/de/oberammergau/total-lokal-bei-dies-en-gastwirten-wird-regional-gekocht-mit-produkten-aus-den-ammergauer-alpen.html) in an effort to feature local products and hospitality. If a preference for a *Total Lokal* accommodation is noted on the ticket application form, the ticket office will make an effort to honor the request, although this is by no means guaranteed.

Nicole Greifelt, who handles bookings for the Passion Play Office, says that the *Arrangements* are being booked quickly. She added that after the ticket office receives the booking form (available on the website), it may take up to four weeks to confirm availability. If U.S./Canada tour operators return unsold tickets, more accommodations could be released by spring. The likelihood of this is a matter of debate: An article in the *Münchner Merkur*, a Munich-based newspaper with extensive

local coverage, asserts that U.S. sales have been severely hurt by the economic problems this year, but the Passion Play Office says U.S. sales are going well.

Individual tickets for Saturday performances only, set aside for locals, are already extremely scarce and according to Greifelt, are for all intents and purposes no longer available.

Tourist offices and hotels in the region expect more guests than usual next year, so even people traveling in the area but not attending the play will contend with higher prices and a smaller selection of rooms.

Tickets returned several days before a performance will be distributed according to a waiting list. Greifelt said that getting a ticket on the day of a performance is highly unlikely.

For further information and booking information, check the Passion Play website. Ticket packages can be purchased via the sites listed below:

1. www.oberammergau-passion.com/cms/front_content.php?idcat=14&lang=2

From the list on the left side of the screen, click on *How to Book* for ticket information. At the next screen, select 1 or 2 night packages. This will bring you to tours offered by U.S. operators, but these prices are higher than if booked through the German site below.

2. www.passionsspiele2010.de

General information about the Passion Play in German. This is also your starting point to make a booking in English. Click *Arrangements* to go to www.passionsspiele2010.de/index.php?id=88. The following choices will be listed (our English translation is in parenthesis). Check these pages and make your booking using *Buchungsformular*.

1 Übernachtung (One night package)

2 Übernachtungen (Two night package)

Unterkunftskategorien (Accommodation categories corresponding with categories on the price list)

Preisliste (Price list)

Spieldaten (Performance dates)

Sitzplan (Seating plan for theater)

Buchungsformular (Package application form. Download and complete, then submit via mail or fax, see below)

Kreditkartenformular (Credit card form—gives the Passion Play office permission to charge your account.)

AGB (The fine print)

Telephone: +49/8822/923 10

Fax: +49/8822/ 923 152

Email: info@passionsspiele2010.de

Total Lokal: Hotels and restaurants offering local products:

www.ammergauer-alpen.de/de/oberammergau/total-lokal-bei-diesen-gastwirten-wird-regional-gekocht-mit-produkten-aus-den-ammergauer-alpen.html

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

We went to Fofi's each time we were in Berlin, but just after unification, she moved to the *Mitte* where, experts said, the glittery crowd would soon relocate. Unfortunately, the timing was wrong and her new restaurant closed for lack of business.

The next time we entered East Berlin, it was on our own via the Friedrichstrasse S-Bahn station, the last on the line before the West Berlin border, celebrated for its spy traffic. The one-to-one exchange of a few West German marks for East German ones was mandatory, even though they were difficult to spend. From one of a handful of desultory shops on East Berlin's showplace boulevard, Unter den Linden, we bought a poorly-cured leather wallet that stank so bad we threw it away. At a café thick with cigarette smoke, most of the menu items were unavailable.

Hotel Art Nouveau, owned by Christine and Gerd Schlenzka, who became friends and introduced us to the incomparable **Rogacki** and other restaurants in their neighborhood, including **Tavola Calda**, was a 1997 discovery. For us, Art Nouveau will always be *the* place to stay; high ceilings, tall windows, wood floors, homey and welcoming—but of course I've long since lost objectivity when it comes to Art Nouveau.

Since that skeptical first visit in 1981, Berlin has become an important part of my life. Despite all the changes, much endures. Take, for example, the goose-down comforter we bought at **Ka De We** (Kaufhaus des Westens, the famous department store) and shipped home. Pretty pricey at around \$500, but we slept under it every night for 28 years, only retiring it last spring when goose feathers began floating around the bedroom. The new one will never takes its place.

So, on November 9, raise a glass to "Bear-lean," back on top again. Who knows what's next?—RHB

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 "**Hotels**" pages 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, 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, hotelhornburg@t-online.de, www.hotelhornburg.de

Salzburg & Environs

Schloss Haunsberg , A-5411 Oberalm bei Hallein, Hammerstrasse 32, tel. +43/06245/80662, fax 85680, info@schlosshaunsberg.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. +43/0662/873241-9, 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, <http://altstadt.at>, web: www.altstadt.at

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

Zürich

Hotel Florhof, Florhoffgasse 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 Esprit Hotel Frankfurt Airport, CargoCity Süd, D-60549 , tel. +49/069/69 70 99, fax 69 70 94 44, frankfurt@esprits-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@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. +41/0804 4455, fax 804 44 50, reservation@hotel-flyaway.ch

Readers' Forum

Frankfurt Fan

Great article about Frankfurt in September's issue. Good airport, good transportation system, numerous people speak English and, if you know where to look, good restaurants. And a great hotel to stay, the **Hotel Florentina** on Westendstrasse, within walking distance of the **Hauptbahnhof** (main rail station). When we fly to Germany it's always to Frankfurt **Flughafen**. Then to the rail station for connections to anywhere in Europe via the rail systems.

Of course my secret for loving Frankfurt is 24 months stationed with the U.S. Army in Frankfurt.

ED PARR
VIA EMAIL

Baden-Baden's Christmas Market

There are many Christmas Markets all over Germany, Austria and other parts of Europe. Though my wife and I are big fans of these markets, we have often been disappointed when we discovered with some of the big city markets how many of the "local handicrafts" turned out to be made in China.

Baden-Baden is one of those markets where, among the 65-70 stalls, one finds mostly local handicrafts made in the Black Forest area—and Santa arrives by a hot-air balloon!

HEINZ NIEDERHOFF
VIA EMAIL