

**INSIDE:**

- 50% Off German Rail Tix
- A Scenic Drive to Ticino
- By Freighter to Europe
- The Romantic Road

# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

**DEAR SUBSCRIBER**

July 28, 1993

## Lower Car Rental Rates

Effective July 22, DER Tours reduced its basic weekly car rental rates in several categories and several countries. In Germany, for example, an Opel Corsa is now \$118 vs. \$129, a VW Passat is \$219 vs \$238, a Mercedes 190E is \$329 vs. \$338. In Switzerland, reductions are even greater. An Opel Corsa goes from \$155 to \$129, an Opel Astra is now \$169 vs. \$200, an Opel Vectra is \$199 vs. \$268, a Mercedes 190E with air conditioning and automatic transmission goes from \$478 to \$349, and a Ford minivan dropped from \$398 to \$298. Call 800-521-6722 for specific quotes.

## Swissair Winter Fares

Swissair has announced lower prices for travel commencing November 1 through March 31, 1994. Midweek roundtrip airfares to Switzerland start at \$518 from Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington D. C.; \$568 from Atlanta, Chicago and Cincinnati; and \$768 from Los Angeles. Weekend travel and during holiday periods will be slightly higher.

Swissair has extended its reduced fare promotion *exclusively* for current *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers. The amount of reduction on these winter *sale fares* is \$50 per ticket. To obtain the reduced price, you must first book directly with Swissair at 800-221-4750. Identify

*Continued on page 2*

# ROTHENBURG

We finally get around to Germany's most popular small town destination for Americans. Contributing editors Claudia Fischer and Roger Holliday find Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber surprisingly free of schlock.

**A**bsolutely *everybody* goes to Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber. In fact, the very thought of it is enough to convince any normal person *not* to go to there.

That, however, would be a mistake.

In spite of it all — the mega parking lots...the tour buses...the multi-lingual signs... the masses of tourists standing passively in front of one sight or another, collectively looking here,

looking there, moving as one behind upraised umbrellas — Rothenburg o.d.Tauber has retained its integrity as a perfectly preserved medieval town.

It can't have been easy. The place virtually cries out for sleazy souvenir shops and ice cream vendors, but for more than a hundred years the citizens of Rothenburg have stood fast against that sort of invasion. Not for a moment have they let their guard down as so many other picturesque

places have, to their eternal regret. No glass-sided department store squats on this market square. Commercial, yes. Tacky, no.

The one tiny overindulgence — the legend of the Meistertrunk — is easily forgiven.

It seems that during the Thirty Years War — which, just to refresh your memory, was a bitter 17th-century struggle between Catholics and Protes-

*Continued on page 3*

## Albergo Gardenia

# A COUNTRY FIND IN TICINO

Our report on an exquisite Italian-Swiss villa. On Lake Lugano, it's a change of pace from our usual Germanic rambles.

**A**nd now, to steal a line from Monty Python's Flying Circus, for something completely different. It's the Italian-influenced Swiss canton of Ticino (te CHEE no), whose southern tip pokes deep into Northern Italy. Not only is a different language spoken here (though less Italian is heard in Ticino than French in Vaud), the architecture, cuisine, climate and vegetation are decidedly Latin instead of Ger-

manic. Ticino is tropical plants, sunshine and red tile roofs. A simple, family-run restaurant is a grotto instead of a gasthof and serves risotto or polenta instead of *rösti* or dumplings.

Lugano, the canton's largest city and center of tourist activity, sits on the north shore of Lago di Lugano, a wandering lake on whose inlets and isthmuses are found dozens of charming towns and villages.

In one of them, Caslano, about eight kilometers southwest of Lugano, we found **Albergo Gardenia**, a beautifully restored villa with some 25 tastefully decorated and furnished bedrooms.

Those who have come down from Austria or Germany, or even from central Switzerland, will immediately be struck by the hotel's almost tropical setting and how different it is

**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

*Continued on page 6*

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

yourself as a *Gemütlichkeit* subscriber and reserve at the best fare available. Next, phone Shirley at 800-238-0399 who — after confirming with *Gemütlichkeit* that you are a current subscriber — will issue your tickets at the appropriate reduced price. The lower price can apply to everyone in your traveling party. This program is only for *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers. Regular economy fares will be reduced \$100, business class fares \$400 and first class fares will be reduced \$600 per ticket.

### Freighter to Europe

For a long time, charter subscriber **Martin Ems** of San Francisco has urged us to tell readers about the pleasures of sailing the Atlantic by freighter.

Last year, in a response to our report on a disappointing crossing aboard the Queen Elizabeth II, Mr. Ems pointed out that those who enjoy being at sea can do so in a spacious outside cabin at prices lower than what one will pay for an inside cabin in Trans-Atlantic (lowest) class aboard the QEII.

Here, from an article Mr. Ems wrote for the publication *Freighter Travel News*, are portions of his description of a 17-day freighter crossing from Montreal to Antwerp in 1991 aboard the MV Cast Otter.

*The passenger cabins were former crew quarters and the deluxe suites, cabins four and five, were made by combining two former crew rooms so that each of the suites retain two bathrooms, along with a good-size sitting room with a*

*two-seater sofa, matching upholstered chairs, two table lamps on side tables, a coffee table and another small table. The bedroom consists of two lower beds, each with one drawer underneath, two night-stands, each with one drawer and reading lamp, a writing desk, with four drawers, one of which can be locked, a mirror above the desk, plus two good-size wardrobe closets, each of which also contains two drawers and a mirror...*

*We were invited to be on the bridge at 4:30 pm to meet the ship's captain, to sip from a glass of champagne and partake of hors d'oeuvres...we also met our fellow passengers. There were only eight of us, although the ship can accommodate 12...*

*The ship has two lounges, a spacious one on C deck, shared with the ship's officers (and reserved for their use in the early evening hours) and the Otter Room, a smaller lounge on B deck for the sole use of the passengers. The former has a self-service bar (\$.50 per drink, on the honor system; each person keeping a written record of drinks poured), a television/VCR system, radio and a tropical fish aquarium. There are also upholstered chairs and sofas that seat about 17 persons plus four bar stools. The B deck lounge has seating capacity for six in upholstered chairs, plus an adjoining room for bridge players with table and four chairs... A basket of fresh fruit was kept full in each stateroom...*

*Outside deck space is limited, with narrow areas facing aft on each deck, except the bridge and flying bridge decks which are of ample size but unprotected from the wind and weather... A swimming pool is located on the stern, just aft of the funnel...*

*Passengers were welcome to visit any part of the ship, except the engine room; and there were no restrictions about visiting the bridge, even when entering or leaving ports...*

*Breakfast was served from 0700-0800, lunch from 1215-1300 and dinner 1730-1800. Breakfast included hot and cold cereals, eggs to order, toast and jams, coffee, tea and juices; occasionally grapefruit, croissants, pancakes or French toast were offered. Both lunch and dinner were full-course meals, with soup, breads, salad, appetizer, main course and dessert. Carafes of complimentary red and white wine were provided at lunch and dinner. Food seemed invariably well-prepared and there were sufficient choices so that if one dish was not to one's liking, another would most certainly be available...*

*Waiter service was provided by two very willing, but in this case in need of training, Filipino stewards. They also saw to it that the pantry, adjoining the passenger lounge, was supplied daily with the necessary ingredients for making sandwiches, preparing coffee or tea, and a steady supply of cookies.*

Mr. Ems recommends **Freighter World Cruises, Inc.** to those interested in this mode of travel. It bills itself as the largest travel agency in the world dedicated to freighter travel and is the passenger agent in North America for several shipping companies.

The July 1, 1993, issue of its publication, *Freighter Space Advisory*, contains descriptions of the sailings of some 25 companies which accept passengers. Also included were black and white photographs of exteriors and

Continued on page 8

Vol. 7, No. 7  
July, 1993

# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

**Editor & Publisher:** ..... Robert H. Bestor, Jr.  
**Associate Editors:** ..... E. Schiller, L. Troop  
**Contributing Editors:** ..... C. Fischer, R. Holliday  
**Design & Composition:** ..... Paul T. Merschdorf  
**Consulting Editor:** ..... Thomas P. Bestor  
**Subscription Dept:** ..... N. Badely, K. Steffans

**Gemütlichkeit** (ISSN 10431756) is published monthly by UpCountry Publishing, 2892 Chronicle Avenue, Hayward, CA 94542. TOLL FREE: 1-800/521-6722 or 510/538-0628. FAX: 510/582-8296. Subscriptions are \$67 per year for 12 issues. While every effort is made to provide correct information in this publication, the publishers can make no guarantees regarding accuracy. Second-class postage paid in Hayward, CA.

**POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO:**

*Gemütlichkeit*, 2892 Chronicle Ave., Hayward, CA 94542

### Rating Key - Hotel

- I** Basic accommodations or a hotel that underachieves. Suitable only for stays of one or two nights.
- II** Good hotel, typical of its class. Suitable for a longer stay.
- III** A cut above other hotels in its price category.
- IV** Excellent accommodations.
- V** A great hotel, world-class, could be a memorable experience.

### Restaurants

- ❖ Acceptable meals, but *only* if the price is right.
- ❖❖ Good food but not good value, overpriced.
- ◆ Serves good, plain food, typical of the region.
- ☆ A cut above other restaurants in its price category.
- ☆☆ Outstanding food and service.
- ☆☆☆ A great restaurant in every respect

### Special Designations

- G** By virtue of location, decor, special charm, warmth of management, or combination thereof, an especially pleasant establishment.
- Offers significant value.



Stay away.

## ROTHENBURG

Continued from page 1

tants — the citizens of Rothenburg made a big mistake. They sided with the Protestants, a decision for which they would pay dearly.

In 1631, General Tilly, a Catholic, stormed the gates, captured the town and was about to order wholesale destruction when someone offered him a conciliatory glass of local wine. So impressed was the General that he offered to spare the town, provided one of the assembled VIPs could drink a 3-1/4 liter tankard of the wine in one draught.

Former burgermeister Nusch rose to the challenge. He downed the wine, slept three days and supposedly lived to the age of 80.

At any rate, it's a great story and you can't go anywhere in Rothenburg without confronting yet another depiction of the good Nusch's noble deed.

In reality, the prosperous town was stripped of all its wealth by Tilly and left to sink into obscurity, remaining over the centuries much too poor to even consider civic improvement projects. Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber waited, untouched, until the late 19th-century when by chance a Romantic painter happened along and extolled to the world the virtues of this tiny little remnant of the past.

Time marched on until, in the darkness of night on March 31, 1945, Allied planes returned from a raid on Nürnberg with a few unused bombs. They dropped them on Rothenburg, severely damaging 40% of the old town. The damaged structures were carefully rebuilt using photographs, paintings and drawings to ensure accuracy on the exteriors. The interiors, however, were constructed to 20th-century standards of plumbing and electricity. The happy result is modernization within antiquity, a

## ROTHENBURG ob der Tauber

Population: 11,000

Elevation: 1,394 feet

Approximate distances from:

Ansbach	35 km	28 miles
Würzburg	60 km	38 miles
Munich	236 km	189 miles
Stuttgart	134 km	107 miles

### Tourist Information

Tourist Office On Marktplatz

Mon.-Fri. 9 am-noon, 2-6 pm

Sat. 9 am-noon, 2-4 pm

Phone: 09861/40492

24-hour room reservation service  
(in English) 09861/19412

Recommended publications in  
English at tourist office:

- *Rothenburg City Map for Tourists*. Free.

- *Rothenburg: Worth Seeing, Worth Knowing*. Self-guided walking tour.

- *Rothenburg Guide* with 124 color prints. In English. Well-written, detailed information about local sights. Expanded, self-guided walking tour including walks around both city walls. 92 pages. Approximately 7 DM (\$4.34).

Guided strolls in English daily at 11:30 am and 8 pm from Rathaus in the Marktplatz. Mid-April to end October. Tours last 1-1/2 hours and costs 4 DM (\$2.35).

### Annual Events

Meistertrunk Reenactment: Whitsun, 2nd Sundays of July/Sept.

Easter and Whitsuntide: Dates vary.

Reichsstadt Festtage (City Festival):  
Second weekend in Sept.

Christmas Market: During Advent

NOTES: Driving prohibited inside town walls Mon.-Fri. 11 am-4 pm, Sat. 2 pm-6 pm, Sun. 11 am-6 pm, nightly 10 pm to 5 am.

The revised *Michelin Green Guide for Germany* (new in 1993) is the best source for Rothenburg sight-seeing information.

characteristic that serves hotel patrons well.

### HOTELS

The good people of Rothenburg o.d. Tauber have made sure that no one should ever be turned away for lack of a decent place to sleep or eat. There are lots of hotels and restaurants in every price category.

Interestingly, while there are a number of quality hotels, none is graced with more than three 'bumps' by the venerable *Red Michelin for Germany*, presumably for lack of conference rooms and valet parking. The shortcomings of Michelin's rigid rating system are clearly illustrated when two hotels — one positively oozing charm, the other take-it-or-leave-it simplicity — both receive two 'bumps'.

Romantic Hotel Eisenhut

The best-known hotel in Rothenburg, the Eisenhut, is impressive from the moment you walk through the big front doors and into a lobby that can only be described as baronial. Stone arches supported by thick columns, heavy ceiling beams, helmets and spears, statues everywhere, all dominated by an enormous wooden staircase leading dramatically to the floors above. It's a challenge to even find the front desk, so inconspicuous is its presence.

The atmosphere, dignified and slightly formal, is suitable to the setting and a refreshing change from the usual forced jollity. Under the direction of Karl Prüsse, who's been at the helm for over twenty years, unobtrusive professionalism is in evidence from concierge to chambermaids.

The hotel, located just off Market Square, is made up of the separate houses of three 16th-century patricians, so locating your room may require some

Continued on page 4

## ROTHENBURG

Continued from page 3

interesting twists and turns through the corridors. The good sized rooms are typically equipped with color TV, radio, mini-bar, tub and shower, hair dryer and two phones, one of which is in the bathroom. Some rooms have balconies, many have magnificent views of the valley below.

The hotel bar occupies one corner of a large lounge with small tables and comfortable chairs arranged into groups for easy conversation — it's a bit like being in someone's living room. An impressive piece of memorabilia you're not likely to have at home, however, is a big table top covered with the autographs of famous Eisenhut guests: Winston Churchill, Clement Atlee, Edward Heath, Marilyn Horne, Burt Lancaster, Franz Josef Strauss and the Crown Prince of Japan, to name a few.

The dining room lives up to the standards set by the rest of the establishment. Two soup options, cream of wild mushroom garnished with spring onions and cream of asparagus with Brittany lobster, cost 12 and 15 DM (\$7-\$9) respectively. Grilled salmon steak on a bed of fennel looked as good as it tasted (40 DM/\$24) as did a substantial plate of fresh asparagus accompanied by a rare fillet of beef (56 DM/\$33).

Eisenhut Hotel-Restaurant, Herrngasse 3-7, D-8803 Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber, phone 09861/7050, fax 09861/705 45. Singles 205 DM to 225 DM (\$121-\$132), doubles 285 DM to 380 DM (\$168-\$223). Major cards.

### Hotel Eisenhut: III

Restaurant Eisenhut: ☆ ☆

#### Hotel Goldener Hirsch

The facade of the Goldener Hirsch isn't particularly imposing but for visual excitement its location is hard to beat. Outside

the front door is the Plönlein, Rothenburg's most photographed scene, an intersection of two cobbled streets each ending in a tower and framed by half-timbered houses.

A short walk through the lobby to the Blau Terrace Restaurant in back reveals a stunning and completely unexpected view of the city walls and the lush countryside of the Tauber Valley that literally takes ones breath away. The local saying is that at the Goldener Hirsch a few short steps take you from the city into the country.

The building, which dates back to 1476 AD, features a balustered walkway overlooking a ballroom, big wrought iron doors, oriental rugs and dark wood paneling.

Each guestroom is different, some of the older ones are frankly a little funky and old fashioned but each has its own character. Ten recently remodeled rooms are the pride of manager, Wilhelm Hornn, who designed many of the special features which include pull-out luggage racks, a night light that comes on when you get out of bed and special granite countertops in each bathroom.

Note: some rooms do not have ensuite plumbing facilities.

Hotel Goldener Hirsch, Untere Schmiedgasse 16-25, D-8803 Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber, phone 09861/7080, fax 09861/708100. Singles with WC/bath or shower 120 DM to 195 DM (\$71-\$115), doubles with WC/bath or shower 170 DM to 295 DM (\$100-\$174). Major cards.

### Hotel Goldener Hirsch: III

#### Romantic Hotel Markusturm

The history of Markusturm goes back a few years, too. Markusturm, or St. Mark's Towergate, was part of the first city wall built in 1172. The building that now is the hotel was originally a customs house and it wasn't until 1488 when an inn and a brewery were added that the long

tradition of hospitality began.

Though somewhat unsophisticated and schmaltzy for a hotel with these prices, the general feeling is one of friendly comfort. A standard double that costs 270 DM (\$159) during high season is pleasantly furnished and has TV, radio, phone and a full bathroom with tub, shower and hair dryer. One of the 300 DM (\$176) rooms, on the other hand, was much larger with a sofa and leather chair in a separate sitting area and a huge bathroom. Some rooms have four-poster beds, *himmel betts*.

Romantic Hotel Markusturm, Rödergasse 1, D-8803 Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber, phone 09861/2370, fax (09861) 2692. Singles 140 DM to 170 DM (\$82-\$100), doubles 300 DM to 350 DM (\$176-\$206). Major cards.

### Romantic Hotel Markusturm: II

#### Hotel Reichs-Küchenmeister

The Hotel Reichs-Küchenmeister is definitely a family institution. Not only is the fifth generation busy running the hotel, but the rest of the Niedners seem fully occupied producing excellent sculptures and paintings to adorn guest rooms, hallways and staircases. This family's warmth and enthusiasm permeate the whole operation.

Parts of the building can be traced back to the eleventh century. The name Reichs-Küchenmeister means 'master baker of the realm' and the emblems of a knight's helmet and assorted cooking utensils have been in place for 800 years. It's been a hotel since 1455.

The thirty-five guest rooms are fully modern, however, with cozy painted wood furnishings and fresh flowers. Each one has its own special touches, some even have *himmel betts*.

Seventeen rooms which opened in a nearby annex in 1992

EDITOR'S CHOICE

are clean, bright and more standardized with hairdryers, minibars and good bedside lighting.

There is also a sauna, whirlpool, Turkish bath and solarium as well as a guest room accessible to the handicapped.

The dining room, decorated with old family portraits, serves reasonably priced meals that include some vegetarian dishes, not a common occurrence in meat-loving Germany. Dinners cost 16 to 40 DM (\$9-\$24). Fresh fish raised in the family's ponds is a specialty of the house.

But the hotel's best feature is a beautiful stone terrace where guests can spend a sunny afternoon under shade trees, enjoying the view of St. Jacob's Church and the chapel of St. Michael.

Hotel Reichs-Küchenmeister, Kirchplatz 8, 8803 Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber, phone 09861 / 2046, fax 09861 / 86965. Singles 85 DM to 130 DM (\$50-\$76), doubles 120 DM to 180 DM (\$71-\$106). Major cards.

**Hotel Reichs-Küchenmeister: III G \$**

Hotel Tilman Riemenschneider  
Tilman Riemenschneider, the 15th-century master sculptor whose works can be found throughout Germany, including the nearby St.

Jacob's, would no doubt be surprised to find a hotel named after him. The Hotel Tilman Riemenschneider is well located near the market square and has the usual amenities. Typical double rooms are attractively furnished, some with peasant style chests and armoires.

Hotel Tilman Riemenschneider, Georgengasse 11-13, D-8803 Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber, phone 09861 / 61 20 86, fax 09861 / 2979. Singles 140 DM (\$82), doubles 220 DM to 250 DM (\$129-\$147), triples 280 DM (\$165). All credit cards.

**Hotel Tilman Riemenschneider: I**

Glocke Ring Hotel

This more moderately-priced hotel is nicely situated across the street from the Hotel Goldener Adler. The rooms lack charm but are clean and comfortable.

Glocke Ring Hotel, am Plönlein 1, D-8803 Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber, phone 09861 / 3025, fax 09861 / 86711. Singles 87 DM-135 DM (\$51-\$79), doubles 144 DM-174 DM (\$85-\$102).

**Glocke Ring Hotel: I**

Glocke Restaurant

A better reason for stopping at the Glocke Ring Hotel is its downstairs restaurant where hearty, well prepared meals are served throughout the day. The traditional stube atmosphere features natural oak floors, benches and paneling set

off by wrought iron light fixtures and a vase of fresh apple blossoms on each table.

Main dishes are from 13.50 DM to 27.70 DM (\$8-\$16). The goulash soup at 6.80 DM (\$4) was bland but half a roasted chicken served with

**THE ROMANTIC ROAD**

The Romantic Road is a touristic brainstorm hatched in the 1950's that rather arbitrarily strings together some very quaint and picturesque towns in the southern half of Germany.

The route begins in Würzburg and winds its way 215 miles south to Füssen, home of Neuschwanstein, Mad Ludwig's castle of Disneyland fame. Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber is certainly the best known stop along the way, but many of the other towns and villages are also interesting and attractive, particularly Dinkelsbühl and Nördlingen. The countryside along the route isn't particularly noteworthy, however.

Unfortunately there's no train that follows the 'Romantische Strasse' but there is daily bus service designed specifically for tourists — Europabus #190 between Würzburg and Munich and #190A connecting Rothenburg and Füssen. The former takes just under eleven hours, the latter about six. Both include a 1-1/2 hour layover in Rothenburg for sight-seeing purposes. The trip is included on Eurailpass and all German Rail Passes; for non-pass holders the cost is approximately \$110. Space is limited and reservations are highly recommended.

For most people, renting a car is the best solution. They are then free to spend three or four days exploring the Romantic Road in a leisurely manner and timing their stops to avoid crowds at the most popular spots.

An interesting and recent development in the historic road department: one Japanese tourist was so impressed with the financial bonuses brought to the towns along Germany's Romantic Road that he decided to create one in his own country. There is now an elaborate scheme in place that has Japanese citizens rushing up and down the romantic roads of both countries, collecting stickers along the way as proof of visitation. It's called a 'visual sticker rally' and successful participants not only receive a certificate of completion but a chance to participate in a lottery for grand prizes. Signs marking Germany's Romantic Road are in German *and* Japanese. ☒

The hotel is perfectly acceptable but caters heavily to tour groups. The dining room menu, for example, is safely generic and prominently displayed in English. In the lobby, numerous trinkets, obviously aimed at tourists, are offered for sale.

## ALBERGO GARDENIA

Continued from page 1

from where they have just been: palm trees fronting a plain, square, white facade relieved only by shuttered windows and a little grey trim. Once inside the hotel, one's eye is immediately drawn to the distinctive contemporary art. It is what set the Gardenia apart. There are pieces in every guestroom and, in fact, the hotel publishes a list of the art and where it can be found in the hotel. In Number 11, for example, is a work by Christo entitled *Calle de Serano*. Among the other artists displayed are Franz Falch, J. P. Pincemin, Paul Rotterdam, Robert Indermaur, Max Reiser, Peter Frie, Steve Joy and Pierre Terbois.

But even without high-quality art, the Gardenia would be a special hotel. Breakfast in good weather — much of the year in Lugano — is served on a sheltered terrace overlooking the grounds. In very good weather the hotel's excellent **Restaurant Bacco** sets tables on small, individual patios scattered over the garden. As twilight deepens on a summer night, and candles flicker at each table, it is a lovely place to be. To put a final touch on the evening, stroll to the center of the village, find a table at the water's edge under strings of bare electric bulbs and order coffee, mineral water or something more fortifying. Watch the people and the lights on the other shores. There are only a one or two hotels in Caslano and the crowd will be mostly locals.

But back to the Gardenia. The guestrooms have a sort of minimalist elegance about them and

are quite comfortable. All amenities are offered including terrycloth robes. Our black and white marble-tiled bathroom was large, well-lit and had a window overlooking the inviting, rock-lined swimming pool. At night, when no one is in it and the pool lights are on, it looks like all the water has been removed.

This an absolutely first-rate hotel in a fascinating part of the world.


Albergo Gardenia, Via Valle, CH-6987 Caslano (Lago di Lugano), telephone 091/711716, fax 091/712642. Singles 120 to 180 Sfr., (\$80-\$120) doubles 220 to 350 Sfr. (\$146-\$233). Major cards.

**Albergo Gardenia: IV G**

### ■ A SECNIC DRIVE TO CASLANO ■

A more interesting route into Ticino than the usual autobahn through the Gotthard tunnel is southwest from St. Moritz into Italy to Chiavenna then straight south to Varenna on the east shore of Lake Como. There, catch the car ferry (about 20 Sfr.) to Cadenabbia with a stop at Bellagio (where *Gemütlichkeit* advisory board member, John K. Bestor, gives high marks to **Hotel du Lac**, telephone 031/950320, fax 031/951624, top double room price about \$86).

From Cadenabbia head north on red Route #340 to Menaggio and then west to Lugano and finally Caslano. You'll see beautiful scenery all day.

One tip: to drive along the edge of Lake Como between Adda and Varenna, rather than on the autobahn which has lots of tunnels and few views, turn off the main road just after you cross the Adda River and follow signs to Colico, Dervio, Bellano. 

#### Restaurant Bacco

The best country hotels have outstanding restaurants and the Gardenia's is Restaurant Bacco. On a hot night we dined in the cool garden. We reserved a table in the afternoon and when we presented ourselves for dinner there was no hesitation or referral to a reservations book, we were immediately and graciously ushered to a good table.

Our French waiter (who turned out to be a fanatic NFL football fan

who spends several weeks in the U. S. each winter going to games), was friendly and expert.

We started with a mixed salad in a white french dressing that came with the usual combination of items, including a variety of tomatoes one doesn't find at Safeway — the kind that have flavor.

The more impressive of the two entrees was *Entenbrust* in a raspberry sauce that was first spread on the plate and then the sliced duck breast laid over it. Small onions, sculpted carrots and zucchini accompanied. The plate was finished with potatoes cut to the size of small melon balls and sauteed with chopped bacon and pearl onions.

A lighter dish, scampi salad, was grilled scampi in a bed of greens over which was drizzled an olive oil dressing. Excellent.

For dessert we took a few things from the cheese cart followed by a couple of scoops of housemade sorbet. Our waiter's recommendation was a very good bottle of red, La Minerva, a cabernet/merlot from Ticino for 48 Sfr. (\$32).

#### Grotto Valle

Another alfresco dinner was at another of the Gardenia's restaurants, the Grotto Valle, on a hill above the hotel. We ate at an outdoor terrace overlooking the valley.

Mixed salad was served with individual cruets of oil and vinegar.

A divided order of risotto with mushrooms was a wonderful creamy, rich dish, just right as a *primi piatti*.

Continued on page 8

## EUROPE TRAVEL BRIEFING

### Half Price for Rail Travelers

Those planning an extended stay in Germany should consider a **BahnCard**. The cost is 220 DM (\$130) for the "main holder" and 110 DM (\$65) for a spouse. Persons 60 and older, or students under 26, pay only 110 DM. Children 4-17 years of age pay 50 DM (\$29) or there is a special family pass for 110 DM for family groups of one or two parents and at least one child. The cards, which are good for one year and available at railway stations all over Germany, entitle holders to 50% off second-class rail tickets in Germany. For more information contact the German National Tourist Office, 11766 Wilshire Blvd #750, Los Angeles CA 90025, phone 310-575-9799, fax 310-575-1565.

### In-Home Stays

An outfit called **American-International Homestays** offers lodging in private homes plus roundtrip airfare and meals. The company's brochure says host families are selected according to occupation and interest and will be available to act as their guests' personal guides. You can choose from such cities as Prague, Budapest, Krakow, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, Sammarkand and Tashkent. Contact American-International Homestays, Inc., 1515 West Penn Street, Iowa City IA 52240, phone 800-876-2048.

### New Owners for River Ship

The luxury Danube river cruiser, the **M. S. Mozart** (see *Gemütlichkeit*, Jan. 1990), has been sold to a private firm, the Peter Deilmann Shipping Company. According to a press release issued by the Austrian Tourist Office, "installment payments and debt service caused heavy deficits and the Austrian government was not willing to absorb any more of the annual red figures." The new

owner will commence operation of a new cruise program in August. *Gemütlichkeit* has praised the ship's facilities but criticized its high prices and mediocre food.

### Chiemsee Package Deal

Prien am Chiemsee, in southern Bavaria, offers a "King Ludwig Special" for 210 DM (\$124) including six nights lodging, a visit to Royal Castle, Herrenchiemsee, on an island in the lake, and a ride on a narrow gauge railway built in 1887. Contact Kurverwaltung, D-W-8210 Prien am Chiemsee, phone 08051/69050, fax 08051/690540.

### Happenings in Austria

- The 1993 **Anton Bruckner Festival** at Linz, the capital of Upper Austria, is from September 11 to October 3. The event opens with an open-air sound and laser show on the Danube. Performing at the festival will be the Bamberg Symphony, the London Philharmonic and pianist Lazar Berman.


- The 9th **International Schubert Festival** in Vienna from November 19 to 27 will feature choirs from all over Europe.

- Eighty-one year-old Heinrich Harrer, mountaineer, explorer, ethnographer, photographer and writer, one of the four-man team to first climb the North Face of the Eiger, teacher and lifelong friend of the current Dalai Lama, donated much of his private collection of artifacts to his hometown of Hüttenberg in the '80s. The key items now comprise the **Heinrich Harrer Museum** in the Carinthian town. The museum, in a 1879 schoolhouse, was inaugurated by the Dalai Lama in 1992 and officially opened in May of this year. It is open daily from 9 am to 5 pm April through June and September through November; and 10 am to 6 pm in July and August; and by appointment only December through March. Adult admission is 70 AS (\$6), 50 AS (\$5) for children and students, and 55 AS (\$5) for senior.

- Each Tuesday and Friday at 8:30 pm, through September 10, the **Plainberg Folk Music Ensemble** performs at the **Augustinerbräu** in Salzburg's Mülln section. Monks have brewed beer at this location since 1621. Local vendors have food stalls on the premises selling sausages, smoked and roasted meats, grilled chicken, breads, salads, etc. Beer is drawn directly from large wooden barrels. Tickets for each performance are 250 AS (\$21), food and drink are extra.

- An exhibition of the work of Georg Raphael Donner, a sculptor of Austria's Baroque period and born just outside the walls of Vienna in 1693, will run through September at the **Austrian Museum of Baroque Art** in the **Belvedere Palace**. Archduchess Maria Theresa once objected to Donner's near-nude sculptures and ordered them melted down. But the man put in charge of the project was himself a sculptor. He put the works in storage and then lied that they had been destroyed. In 1801, the pieces were put back in place only to be removed and replaced by bronze copies in 1873 because of weather damage. The originals are still on display at the Belvedere.

- From September 14 to November 7 Vienna's **Museum of Fine Arts** will be the first in western Europe to exhibit the collection of Jewish sacred art seized in the Ukrainian diaspora of 1922 and believed lost until 1990. The silver and gold treasures represent the very best workmanship and include 19 torah crowns, 20 rimonim, 105 torah shields, kiddush cups, Chanukah candelabra, etc.

For further information concerning the foregoing, contact Austrian National Tourist Office, 212-944-6880 in New York, 310-477-3332 in Los Angeles or 416-967-3381 in Toronto. 

## ROTHENBURG

Continued from page 5

an excellent mixed salad was a good value at 13.80 DM (\$8). A somewhat unusual but tasty item on the menu is *hausmachte kässpatzen mit röstzwiebeln und bunter salat* (13.80 DM/\$8) — a sort of macaroni and cheese made with spätzle that came with crisp, fried onions and salad.

### Glocke Restaurant: ♦

#### Some Final Words

• Shops abound in Rothenburg and, despite the rarefied location, prices in the well-known stores seem about the same as elsewhere. One unique establishment, however, is **Käthe Wohlfahrt**. The theme is Christmas and with over 65,000 different items from inexpensive glass orbs to elaborate candelabras and nutcrackers, there must be a suitable Yuletide souvenir for just about anyone. The two main stores are on the Herrngasse and worth a stop.

• Rothenburg's busy season runs from April through October and then picks up again for the Christmas Market which takes place in the market square during Advent. It is futile to try to miss the crowds but avoid weekends and realize that July and August are the months with the heaviest concentration of Americans and Japanese. Many, if not most, tourists come to Rothenburg by bus in the early afternoon and leave by six o'clock, so eve-

nings and mornings are relatively calm. Plan to stay a night or two and you'll have time to explore the pretty side streets and back gardens.

• Take a walk all the way around the city wall; you can do it on the ground or up on the ramparts themselves, an easy three-mile walk which we enjoyed very early one morning. All was peaceful and quiet with not much but the chirping of birds to break the silence.

And on December 26? You can almost hear every one of Rothenburg's 11,000 residents let out a collective sigh of relief as another year's tourist season finally ends and they begin to settle in for a long winter's rest. ☒

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

interiors of some of the ships involved. About 10 of the companies listed service to North Europe or the Mediterranean.

Here is a sample listing:

*Mediterranean Shipping (Cyprus and Panama Registry/Swiss Ownership) Departs from Boston with calls to New York, Baltimore, Newport News, Antwerp, Bremen, Hamburg, Felixstowe, Bremerhaven, and Le Havre, returning to Boston. Duration about 28 days. Passengers can board at any port. Fares: \$3200 per person doubles or singles; owner's cabin — \$4200 per person. One way rates begin at \$1400 per person double or single; owner's cabin — \$1890 per person. Ships carry 12 passengers. Most ships have swimming pool. Age limit 75.*

Some listings offered the opportunity for passengers to

take their automobiles at rates starting at \$650 one-way. Some ships sail with a doctor on board.

Freighter World Cruises, Inc., 180 S. Lake Ave., #335, Pasadena CA 91101, phone 818-449-3106, fax 818-449-9573. *Freighter Space Advisory*, published twice monthly, is \$33 per year.

Freighter Travel News, 3524 Harts Lake Rd., Roy WA 98580. Published monthly, subscription \$18 per year.

Mr. Ems has offered to answer readers' questions relating to freighter travel. Send inquiries to him at 74 Macondray Lane, San Francisco CA 94133.

## Changes at ANTO

The Austrian National Tourist Office in New York will move soon and the new mailing address is P. O. Box 1142, New York NY 10108-1142. The phone number, 212-944-6880, will remain. The ANTO will continue to provide travel advice and brochures but only via mail and telephone. Like most European tourist agencies, the ANTO is cutting back. No longer will its New York or Los Angeles offices service walk-in visitors. Accordingly, the new mailing address of the L.A. office is now P. O. Box 491938, Los Angeles CA 90049. It's phone number remains 310-477-3332. ANTO offices in Houston and Chicago had previously been downscaled and "converted to honorary representations by the Austrian Trade commissions" in these cities. Thankfully, for Austria-bound travelers, the ANTO still offers its marvelous service of free travel advice and attractive and informative brochures. About two years ago the French National Tourist Office replaced the practice of free advice with a caller-pays 900 telephone hotline. Germany, Austria and Switzerland are still doing it the old-fashioned way — they give it away. Count your blessings. ☒

## ALBERGO GARDENIA

Continued from page 5

Veal steak was cooked like a stew, with the small pieces of steak wrapped in bacon and a broth thick with mushrooms. Also very good. We can only find fault with the rather bland polenta and the fact that we had to toss our own salad. With dinner we drank a bottle of red wine — labeled Chateau Bacco — from the merlot grape, a Ticino speciality.

We again finished with refreshing sorbets, this time bathed in ice-cold vodka which kept a warm glow on the evening.

Restaurant Bacco (expensive) and Grotto Valle (inexpensive-moderate), Via Valle, CH-6987 Caslano (Lago di Lugano), telephone 091/711716, fax 091/712642. Major cards.

**Restaurant Bacco:** ☆ ☆  
**Grotto Valle:** ♦

## Caslano Notes

The lakeside villages of **Gandria**, **Melide** and **Morcote** are of interest. We went to Gandria via boat from Lugano (fare 12.2 Sfr./\$8, frequent service) and drove to Melide and Morcote.

In Melide is the **Swissminiatur**, a park of miniature replicas of Switzerland's main sights. The tiny trains and cable cars all work. Morcote is a Michelin two-star town of considerable charm. Gandria is terraced in several levels above the lake and would be a good place to disembark for lunch, catching a later boat.

A principal Lugano attraction, the private **Thyssen-Bornemisza** art collection at **Villa Favorita**, recently lost much of its appeal when most of the collection was moved by the family to Spain. ☒