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**DEAR
SUBSCRIBER**

June 29, 1994

Welcome Bruce

Our surveys indicate most of you travel by car. Still, a substantial number of *Gemütlichkeit* readers are dedicated to train travel. That's one of the reasons you'll be seeing a lot more in *Gemütlichkeit* of Bruce Woelfel, author of this month's lead story on Hallstatt and the scenic Austrian train story.

A former city planner, Bruce shares a home in Aptos, California, and a boat on Monterey Bay with his wife, Sally. Before moving to Aptos, he was an associate professor of environmental studies at Sonoma State College near Santa Rosa, California, and Sally, a published author with a Ph.D. in 19th century English literature, taught at Stanford. These days Sally writes and Bruce, who likes nothing better than a good long train ride where he doesn't have to dodge 125 mph BMWs, is a travel writer, photographer and rail buff. When planning a trip, we auto travelers bury our heads in maps. Bruce gets immersed in train timetables. That, plus nearly 40 years of European rail travel, sometimes visiting Europe more than once a year, make him a veritable savant of the rails.

Bruce brings a different style of both writing and travel than previously seen in these pages. It's a refreshing change. We'll still have plenty of auto touring-related stories, but overall our coverage will be better balanced.

News Clips

Lucy Izon of the *Los Angeles Times* writes that in summer — July 1 to early September — Geneva offers a unique information service called "The Car." Geared to travelers on a tight budget, it operates out of a large yellow bus in the center of town at Rue Mont-Blanc, outside the

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

HALLSTATT

Associate Editor Bruce Woelfel reports on the lakeside village of Hallstatt in Austria, inhabited for more than 3,000 years and often referred to as a "Cradle of Civilization." He visits ancient salt mines, is locked out of his hotel and finds several inexpensive lodgings.

The unique lakeside city of Hallstatt doesn't seem to fit the resort mold. It is a tourist town whose hotels have no elevators; a mountain retreat without ski trails. It is traversed by one narrow road — restricted to residents and delivery vehicles — which is regulated by five-minute stoplights at each end of town. And its train station is on the opposite shore of a large lake.

But Hallstatt's charm overcomes all. Consider my first approach to the town. After climbing down with three other passengers from a local train, we found no platform, only a small building, a stationmaster and a gravel path down a green hillside. Enclosed by trees, we descended the hill until we reached a small boat landing where suddenly were revealed pine covered, white-tipped mountains rising steeply from all sides of a blue-green lake. A mile across, a little storybook-like town spread along the shore. Two large churches and a few hotels

stood out against the mountainous terrain.

Soon a white launch appeared, rippling the glassy surface. A dog of mixed breed charged off, barking, smelled us and was rewarded with petting. I paid the mate 30 schillings as we headed across, the dog nuzzling, the captain warning him to behave. As we came closer the town was even more picturesque, hugging the narrow shoreline.

An amazing place: Hallstatt's striking element is its closeness to the precipitous mountain and the alpine-style houses, hotels, and a large church clinging to it; buildings literally climbing vertical rock walls, tight against the cliff. My first thought was that I didn't know how people endure walking up the many steps every time they come home (and most houses, I learned later,

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Austrian Scenic Train:

Along the Enns River - Selzthal to St. Valentin

My train from Selzthal, central Austria, was a local, #3602. The trip began in a narrow rural valley between jagged peaked mountains; horses grazing peacefully, farmers cutting hay with scythes. As we proceeded the valley widened, past tiny villages, curving along a rushing river in a narrow defile, a gorge lined with steep pine-covered walls. Alongside, the sparkling white river

was nearly eye level as we jiggled, clickity-clicking along. The village stations were little green shacks, a lone attendant standing by.

It was an exciting ride of breathtaking scenery. This section of the Enns River appeared too wild for white-water rafting. As the river cut more deeply through the rocks, we rose. It rushed past below, dangerous looking rocks sharply

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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shopping gallery under the main rail station. The Car's staff helps visitors locate inexpensive accommodations, restaurants, transportation and entertainment. For example, a woman traveler seeking a cheap hotel might be referred to **Home St. Pierre**, at 4 cour St. Pierre, where clean, shared-room accommodations are about \$11 per night.

The *New York Times* recently ran an informative piece by J. S. Marcus on the new café culture that has sprung up in Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg district (formerly in East Berlin).

- **Pasternak.** Russian café on Knaackstrasse. From noon to 4 p.m. breakfast is served as well as salads, Russian appetizers such as pirogi and hard-boiled eggs with salmon caviar, and Russian cakes. In the evening there is an excellent menu that includes borscht, beef stroganoff, pelmeni (like pirogi) and blinis. Food is served to 11 p.m., after which the place turns into a bar until 2 a.m. Live Russian music on Tuesday nights. Visitors from 20 to 60 will feel comfortable. Pasternak, 22-24 Knaackstrasse, phone 441-3399, breakfast \$6 to \$9, dinner entrees \$9 to \$15. Underground station: Seenefelder Platz.

- **Anita Wronski.** Attracts a younger, more fashionable crowd than Pasternak. Café during day but restaurant and bar at night. Dinner is served from 6 p.m. to 1 a.m. Among the menu offerings are good vegetarian dishes like whole wheat Pfannkuchen with fresh spinach and goat's cheese. Breakfast buffet on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Anita Wronski, 24-26 Knaackstrasse, phone 609-7589, breakfast \$5 to \$7, dinner entrees \$6 to \$8. Underground station: Seenefelder Platz.

- **Café November.** Run by young East Germans and popular for excellent Italian coffee, imaginative food and unusual atmosphere created, in part, by the café's unique wax lamps made out of disarmed Soviet mortar shells and using halogen bulbs. Their effect, according to Marcus, is "fantastical — like candles turned inside out and then upside down." Food served until 1 a.m. Café

November, 15 Husemannstrasse, phone 442-8425, breakfast \$8, dinner \$7 to \$9. Underground station: Eberswaldstrasse.

- **Café Eckstein.** Features small menu of omelets, baguettes and cakes with dishes like schnitzel (\$8) in the evening. The Eckstein's front is seven 14-foot-tall windows and its interior mostly varnished pine. Serves four beers on tap. Food until midnight. Outdoor tables in warm weather where customers sometimes sit until 4 or 5 in the morning. Café Eckstein, 73 Pappelallee, no phone, entrees \$4 to \$8.

- **Weinstein.** This wine bar's decor is dominated by several 25-liter distillers' bottles of fruit brandy and by a collection of 200 and 300-year old, delicately colored schnapps bottles. Wine sold is mostly from small, private vineyards and from less well-known regions like Southern Moravia in the Czech Republic, considered among the finest vineyards of the old Hapsburg Empire, and the Tokay region of Slovakia, which, in Soviet bloc days, was required to be sent to Hungary and sold as Hungarian Tokay. A quarter liter of Southern Moravian Grüner Veltliner is \$2.50. Light appetizers served at night, including Topinsky, a strong Czech garlic toast. Weinstein, 33 Lychener Strasse, phone 441-1842. Open daily from 3 p.m. to 2 a.m., appetizers (\$4 to \$6) served after 7 p.m.

Elsewhere in the Times, Paula Butturini reviews Berlin hotels including:

- **Luisenhof.** A "small, quietly elegant hotel recently refurbished from attic to cellar." In the heart of old East Berlin, it was once a training academy for the Communist Party. Double rooms are \$130 to \$185. The Märkisches Museum underground stop is a two-minute walk away and the ride to the Kurfürstendamm, the west's major shopping street, is 18 minutes. Two stops in the opposite direction is the east's main square, Alexanderplatz. The restaurant serves "sturdy German fare" and Ms. Butturini paid \$14 for a fillet of beef. Luisenhof, 92 Köpenicker Strasse, phone 270-0543, fax 279-2983.

- **Hotel Ahorn.** Just off the Ku-damm. Doubles are \$120. Ms Butturini says rooms are simply furnished, the halls are narrow but the atmosphere

is cheery. Hotel Ahorn, 40 Schüllerstrasse, phone 881-4344, fax 881-6500.

- **Curator Hotel.** One block from the Kurfürstendamm and not quite five years old. The hotel is quiet and attractive, rooms are cheerful, if somewhat nondescript, with broad, tall windows. Doubles are \$170 to \$185 with breakfast. On weekends the price drops to about \$100. Curator Hotel, 41-43 Grolmanstrasse, phone 884-260, fax 884-26-500.

The Uncle John Report

(The following is from John K. Bestor, a Kansas City, Missouri, attorney, who was a U.S. Army artillery Captain in Germany during and after World War II. Since the early 1970s he has returned to Europe each year, spending much of his time in Germany. He is as knowledgeable about auto touring in Europe as anyone I know. — RHB)

The most interesting 'first visit' city on this trip was Weimar, in the former East Germany. By all means it should be the subject of an article in *Gemütlichkeit*. There will be much additional reconstruction over the next few years as the city prepares for 1999, a year in which Weimar has been designated "Cultural Capital of Europe." Construction activity is already much in evidence and in the city center are a number of pedestrian-only streets whose buildings have new fronts.

Weimar has some extraordinary treasures for those with an interest in history and culture. It was here that the Weimar Republic was born after World War I. Goethe lived and worked in Weimar, and was joined here for some years by Schiller. On the music side, Bach and later Liszt spent some years in Weimar. The houses of Goethe, Schiller and Liszt are very interesting visits. I am not certain of this, but I believe it was in Weimar that Schiller wrote *An Der Freude* which we know as the *Ode To Joy*. The complete text as sung in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is an exhibit in the Schiller Museum.

Our hotel on the market place, the **Flamber**

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Category	Scale	Hotel Rating Criteria	
Unacceptable	0 - 3	People/Service	30%
Adequate	4 - 7	Location/Setting	15%
Average	8 - 11	Guestrooms	30%
Above Average	12 - 15	Public rooms	5%
Excellent	16 - 20	Facilities/Restaurant	20%

Special Designations

G By virtue of location, decor, special charm, warmth of management, or combination thereof, an especially pleasant establishment.

\$ Offers significant value.

Restaurant Criteria

Food 65%
Service 20%
Atmosphere 15%

HALLSTATT

Continued from page 1

are heated with wood, thus requiring the portage of heavy logs in addition to groceries).

This is a very small town, only 1,000 full time residents, although 500 students take up some of the off-season slack. Near the cobblestoned main square, enclosed by several rustic inns, are a bar, grocery store, souvenir shops, bank, tourist office, post office, and a boat hire service, as well as a couple of small parking lots. The dominant sound is from a waterfall flowing down the mountainside in back of the buildings and out through a rock-lined channel to the Lake. Engine noises from approaching cars herald themselves minutes in advance. Sitting at a terraced restaurant facing the lake and sipping a glass of wine, I am enveloped by a deep sense of peace. Nearby, white swans and electric boats ply slowly back and forth. The late sun illuminates the mountains, white snow glistens on their tops.

Later I explore. The town is traversed by only one 10-12 foot wide road and there is little traffic except between 6 and 10 a.m. when a few delivery trucks enter. There are many spaces seemingly too small for vehicles of normal size. Next morning I watched a beverage delivery truck barely squeeze through a narrow alley underneath overhanging balconies, only inches to spare on all sides.

To the north for a kilometer or so the road is lined with guest houses and restaurants overlooking the lake, including a pizzeria and a bakery (the only place in town for early coffee). Beyond is a gated barrier with a stoplight allowing five minutes for traffic in each direction and displaying the remaining time before the next light change. Entry is limited to residents and guests who have already arranged for rooms or who do so by

using the nearby phone. The main highway bypasses Hallstatt, plunging into two one-lane tunnels which emerge at the other end of town.

South of the main square the road passes between houses clinging to slopes above and terraced down to the lake below. Space for new buildings is scarce. On the upslope side I looked at an addition being carved into the hill. New stone walls enclosed a circular

flight of stone steps built against a wall of vertical rock. The living space gained was tiny, only a small room two floors above. Nearby, a huge stone church sat 100 feet higher than the road, more steps leading up to it.

Few speak English fluently. Some know a few words here and there, others none at all. When I sat down on the terrace of a lakeside restaurant, a young waiter ap-

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ABOUT HALLSTATT

Population: 1,131

Altitude: 1,677 feet

Hallstatt Lake: 1,667 feet above sea level, 5 miles long, 1.5 miles wide, 684 meters deep. Clear mountain water - abundant fish stocks.

Approximate rail distance and travel times from:

Graz	205 km	128 mi	6.0 hrs
Innsbruck	332 km	207 mi	4.5 hrs
Salzburg	136 km	85 mi	2.0 hrs
Vienna	311 km	194 mi	4.0 hrs
Munich	289 km	180 mi	3.5 hrs
Frankfurt	747 km	465 mi	7.0 hrs
Zürich	607 km	378 mi	8.5 hrs

Tourist Information Hallstatt
Postfach 7
A-4830 Hallstatt, Austria
Telephone 6134-352

Important Dates

1000-500 B.C. - The "Hallstatt Period." Artifacts from this time are on display in the town's museum of prehistory.

1284 - The Rudolfsturm, named after the first Hapsburg, Rudolf I, was built by his son, Albrecht, as a defense tower to protect the Hallstatt salt mine. One of the oldest buildings of the Hapsburg reign.

1311 - Hallstatt salt mine reopened and new salt laws approved after the death of Albrecht. On the 21st of January, 1311, the citizens of Hallstatt were granted market privileges.

1504 - Emperor Maximilian I

traveled through the Salzkammergut visiting the Hallstatt salt mines and the Rudolfsturm. Today an inscription commemorating this visit can be seen on the "inscribed stone," which is on the path to the mines. .

1854 - On the 19th of September a number of graves in the old Hallstatt graveyard, especially rich in artifacts of the "Hallstatt Period," were opened in the presence of Emperor Franz Josef I and the Empress.

Places of Special Interest

- The Evangelical church and the Catholic parish church (with its magnificent carved Pacher-Astl Altar which is similar to the one in St. Wolfgang) in the idyllic surroundings of the Mountain Cemetery.
- The Prehistoric and Local Culture Museums with many finds from the Hallstatt Period.
- A visit to the oldest salt mine in the world (reached via the funicular railway to the Rudolfsturm and a 15 minute walk in the upper valley). You'll pass the historic Hallstatt graveyard.

• Jewelry shop with copies of "Hallstatt Period" jewelry.. Kunstgewerbe und Bootsverleih, Alois Riedler, Gosaumühlstrasse 98 (near the main square). Telephone 06134/320.



HALLSTATT

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peared and my German vocabulary (minuscule under the best conditions) deserted me. "Vino? Vin? Wine? Every language except German. He looked blank (perhaps he was from Turkey?) and left, returning with the owner who listened to my request: "I would like a glass of white wine." "Okay," he said and returned a couple of minutes later with a glass of red wine. But it didn't matter, because this is a unique and charming place.

Night life is limited: in some of the hotels during summer there are rock groups and folkloric dancing. Various activities may be enjoyed during the day. Besides the electric boats, there are 1 1/2 hour round trips on a motor boat for 70 AS (\$6.5). The water is cool for swimming (maximum 65 degrees Fahrenheit), but with the use of a wet-suit scuba diving is an option. A diving school in a building near the main square also rents rooms and maintains a restaurant. The lake waters are very clear (all waste is piped far away). In the past, archaeological treasures and some post World War II relics have been retrieved, including a large amount of five-pound sterling notes expertly counterfeited by the Nazis in preparation for their projected invasion of Britain.

The small, town museum has some fascinating remains of Hallstatt's prehistoric past, during the Bronze Age, more than 1000 years before Christ: chisels, ornaments and knives and evidence of salt-trading in that time. Also bones and mining implements plus a leather hat and jewelry from the "Hallstatt Period" 800-400 B.C. Some of these treasures were taken from the lake, others from the salt mines above, where more than 2000 graves were found and recorded in the late 19th century.

Salt Mine Excursion

My visit to the salt mines, operated since 1100 B.C., was a memorable experience. The tour

lasts close to two hours and costs about \$15 (half that with a coupon obtainable by hotel guests). Don't attempt it unless you are prepared for some rather strenuous exercise (as well as a considerable amount of fun).

After a 10-minute walk outside the north barrier, I reached the funicular and ascended 1000 feet up the mountain. From here I walked five minutes up a steep path to a building where, after buying my ticket, about 30 young and middle-aged, mostly German-speaking, tourists and I were shown into a sort of locker room where we donned cloth trousers and coats over our clothes. Although there were various sizes, nothing fit properly and everyone enjoyed a laugh at the results.

Valuables checked, but retaining my folding umbrella (it poured all day), we walked uphill to the mine entrance. With much joking and more laughter everybody straddled a wooden train, legs and torso tight against the person in front, and we were powered for 10 minutes through the narrow tunnel, heads down and legs close together to avoid being bumped. This was followed by a walk through a narrower shaft lit by electric lanterns, the taller members of our party (including myself) ducking and bowing to keep heads intact.

Next, in a sitting position, we slid down a wooden slide, everyone having a joyous time, to a room where guides lectured in German and Italian about the mine's history (one hopes that during tourist season the lecture will include English). Then, we ascended circular stairs along more shaft, to a theater-like space where a video (earphones with English spoken) described modern salt mining methods.

We were then shown an underground lake 1/4 mile in diameter which gleamed blackly in the dim light, reflecting the uneven ceiling. The lights were then turned off

momentarily so that we could enjoy the total darkness. Then more steps, a long circular stairway up to a display of miners from 1100-400 B.C.: a tall Celt with platinum blond hair and a very tired looking smaller man from a later period lugging rock salt chopped out of the mine, which was then carried down the mountain by women and floated away by barge to the Danube river. A very precious material salt; over the years forests have been cut to obtain it and wars fought over it.

The tour ended with more walks through passageways, another straddle-train, and out again to doff our "mining clothes" and return to town.

Hotels & Guest Houses

None of Hallstatt's hotels have elevators, although assistance with luggage is usually available to those who request it. High season is July 15-September 15. Prices are about 10% lower at other times of the year. Visitors may call in from the barriers at either end of town, obtain a room and get permission to bring in a car. There is some parking in the tunnel, some in the town proper and some at the barriers. Hotels give out a card for half-price admission to the salt mine and caves.

Hotel Grüner Baum

This is the best hotel, the friendliest and also the most expensive. It has the nicest rooms, including the only bathtubs in town (the others have showers). Except for Grüner Baum, guesthouses don't take major credit cards. Karin Jungmair, the owner, will provide money on Visa and other cards to meet bills at other guest houses when the bank is closed. Room Number two, a double with two separate beds, has a huge tub and a balcony with a lake view. Number 23 is large double corner room with lakeview on two sides, large bathroom with huge tub, European beds (two mattresses, one head-

board). Number 32 is a family apartment, two connected rooms and a lakeside terrace, with sofa and easy chairs in living room, suitable for four persons. Number five, a single, has its own terrace.

Address: Hotel Grüner Baum, Marktplatz 104, A-4830 Hallstatt

Phone: 06134/263

Fax: 06134/420

Location: On main square

Rooms: 20 doubles, two singles

Proprietor: Karin Jungmair

Prices: Singles 750-850 AS (\$71-\$81), doubles 1500-1700 AS (\$143-\$162). Doubles rented as singles cost 850 AS (\$81).

A family apartment for four is 2000 AS (\$175) including buffet breakfast

Meals: All available

Facilities: Writing room, outdoor terrace

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: November 1-Dec 22

Parking: Outdoor adjacent to building. No charge

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 14/20

Bräu Gasthof

An old building with restaurant, built in 1472. Present management took over in 1850, ran it as a brewery until 1917, then converted it to a hotel. Average sized doubles with toilet and shower 700-760 AS (\$67-\$72) including breakfast. European beds, small windows looking out on lake, chairs, no desk. Renovated old furniture.

The restaurant, which is closed in winter, is typical of Hallstatt in style and price. A meal consisting of asparagus cream soup, pork cutlet, potatoes, mixed salad and fresh fruit was 145 AS (\$14). Ravioli in gorgonzola cheese with salad was 115 AS (\$11). Steak with potatoes cost 125 AS (\$12). A daily special of pork cutlet, veal sausage, noodles and sauerkraut was 125 AS (\$12).

Address: Bräu Gasthof, Seestrasse 120, A-4830 Hallstatt

Phone: 061 34/221

Location: Near main square

Rooms: 10 doubles

Proprietor: Familie Lobisser

Prices: 700-760 AS (\$67-\$72) including breakfast

Meals: All available in restaurant with outside lake terrace.

Facilities: Meeting room for 200

Credit cards: Not accepted

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: November-April

Parking: Outside spaces available at no charge

Rating: AVERAGE 10/20

Gasthof Simony

Originally a theater and partially destroyed in a fire in 1750, then rebuilt. Became a hotel in 1880.

Last renovated in 1979 and full of antiques. Rather dark rooms. Some have doors of head bumping height. Average sized doubles with windows facing lake 500 to 800 AS (\$48-

\$76). Less expensive doubles, like Number 12, have a toilet and shower shared by two rooms. Number two, a double for 600 AS (\$57) has shower and toilet down the hall but a good lake view. Number nine, a corner double for 750 AS (\$71) has toilet and shower, a view of the town square, and four beds.

Address: Gasthof Simony, Markt 105, A-4830 Hallstatt

Phone: 061 34/231

Location: Near the main square

Rooms: Two singles, 10 doubles

Proprietor: Familie Scheutz

Prices: Singles 300 AS (\$29), doubles 500-800 AS (\$48-\$76) with breakfast

Meals: All available but restaurant under separate management

Facilities: Common room

Credit cards: None

Parking: Free public garage, five-

minute walk from hotel

Rating: AVERAGE 9/20

Haus Sarstein

This excellent *pension* is *Gemütlichkeit's* pick as the place to stay in Hallstatt. A private house more than 100 years old, it was extensively renovated and became a guest house 1936. A continental breakfast is served on the lowest floor in a room facing the lake and an outdoor patio from which a diving board projects over the water.

Number 14 is a lovely lakeside double of average size with a balcony with chairs and table. The bathroom has a small "sitz bath" tub with shower. Rates are 280 AS (\$27) single and 560 (\$53) double. Number seven, another nice double, priced at 200 AS (\$19) single and 400 AS (\$38) double, also has a balcony with lake view, though the

The excellent Pension Sarstein is Gemütlichkeit's pick as the place to stay in Hallstatt.

path is down the hall. The shared bathrooms are exceptionally clean and nice. Upon arrival by car, contact Frau Fisher by phone.

Address: Haus Sarstein, A-4830 Hallstatt 83

Phone: 06134/217

Location: On the main road near the main square

Rooms: One single, 12 doubles, three with bath

Proprietor: Frau Fisher

Prices: Single 280 AS (\$27), doubles 400-560 AS (\$38-\$53) with breakfast

Meals: Breakfast only

Facilities: Outdoor terrace on lake

Credit cards: Not accepted

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: Never

Parking: Public garage, a 10-minute walk from hotel

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 14/20 G \$

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HALLSTATT

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Gasthof Zauner

Not recommended without changes. Amazing as it may seem, the hotel is routinely closed from 3 to 5 p.m. When I got there, though I had reserved ahead and informed the hotel of my approximate arrival time, the Zauner was locked. I searched for a way to get in. One entrance led up a flight of stairs to two locked doors appearing to be a kitchen and a restaurant. On the ground floor was a locked "reception room." The only unlocked door led to a toilet. After a wait of half an hour, during which I made futile inquiries in a nearby grocery store as to the whereabouts of the hotel's manager, a man finally appeared and asked, "You want room?" I was led up two flights of stairs to an 8' x 10' single room so small my opened suitcase nearly blocked its entrance. The room's best feature was a balcony overlooking the lake. It also had a small desk, bed and small bath with shower. The reading light was

poor, and there was no hot water the last night when I wished to shower. Breakfast is not served until 8 a.m., inconvenient for early risers.

Worse, the Zauner wasn't particularly friendly (although they arranged to get money from my Visa when I left). The young waitress in the breakfast room was sulky and grim. Initially, she told me where to sit but then moved me twice and never once smiled. When I left early in the morning no one was around and the front door was again locked. After a moment of panic, I used my room key to escape.

The restaurant is reputed to be the best in town, but my dinner was mediocre. "Gypsy brochette" was liver, bacon and sausage on a skewer with rice and a spicy red sauce. The rolls were good and the meal cheap, 110 AS (\$10).

Single rooms rent for 490-560 AS (\$47-\$53) and doubles for 980-1020 AS (\$93-\$97).

Hotel Rating: UNACCEPTABLE 3/20

Restaurant Rating: ADEQUATE 6/20

Gasthaus zur Mühle (Youth Hostel)

An attractive, inexpensive hostel. It has a typical Austrian restaurant with plenty of good food: pasta dishes \$6-\$7, soups \$2.50-\$3.50, pizzas \$6-\$8.50 (bacon and onions), mixed grill \$10 and roast venison \$11.50.

Rooms can be rented with from three to 20 beds.

Address: Gasthaus zur Mühle, Kirchenweg 36, A-4830 Hallstatt

Phone: 06134/318

Location: Close to the main square

Rooms: 60 Beds

Proprietor: Family Toro

Prices: 110 AS/bed (\$10) plus \$3 extra for sheets and blankets, \$3.50 for breakfast.


Meals: All available

Facilities: Restaurant

Credit Cards: Not accepted

Parking: Call from gate for instructions

Hotel Rating: ADEQUATE 7/20 \$

Restaurant Rating: AVERAGE 9/20 \$ 

SCENIC TRAIN

Continued from page 1


protruding from its foamy surface. As the train cut in and out of tunnels 60 feet above the Enns, old single lane bridges passed below; a slim concrete highway was overhead, crossing and recrossing the gorge. Then the river began to lose its wild character.

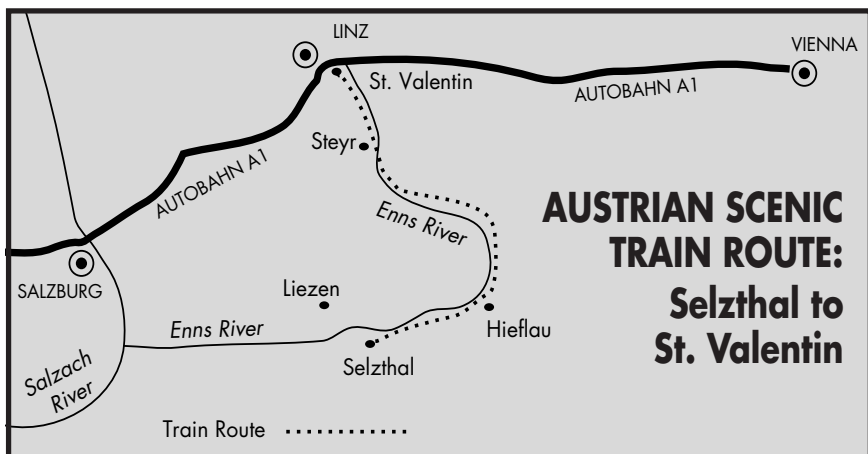
In the little town of Hieflau, halfway through our 70-mile trip, it widened and became less turbulent. Dikes walled it off from the tracks and we entered tunnels where the gorge was too narrow for us and the river. In Grosreifling, a valley town with a distinctive onion-towered church with a gold clock, the highway soared dramatically overhead.

Alone in the coach, it seemed like a private run. The ride continued along a more gentle river

course, more towns, each with its dominating church. In places the gorge narrowed, churches and alpine homes perched on its slopes. Wheels scraped around sharp curves as we passed several hydroelectric stations using the rivers' energy, then climbed 80 feet above to a wide valley past dairy farms, more hydro installations and small industrial plants, the

Enns now wide, still and quiet. At a stop at Steyr, with its towering Gothic church, the train came to life as a dozen teenagers boarded. After a pause in the small city of St. Valentin, the run continued past level fields to Linz.

This was a special train ride. Well worth a detour off the main line. 



READERS' FORUM

Dürnstein Not That Cheap

In the April 1994 edition you mention a drive through the Wachau-Danube part of Eastern Austria as a recommended destination. I have driven this route several times, most recently earlier this month, and agree that it is one of the most interesting and scenic areas in Austria.

In recommending the **Schloss Dürnstein** for overnighting, you chose an unusually fine small hotel, but I am afraid the price you quoted of "about \$110, including breakfast and dinner" might mislead some of your readers.

Such a price could never be per room per night, and even on a per person per night basis it is lower than the prices we were quoted and paid when we stayed there a couple of weeks ago. Frau Theiry (the owner) quoted us 2300 Austrian Schillings, including breakfast, for two persons in a double room, and 300 schillings per person per day extra of half-pension (breakfast and dinner). This would bring the price to 2900 schillings, or about \$264 per room per day, including breakfast and dinner for two persons. Schloss Dürnstein also has more expensive rooms than the above and the best accommodations facing the Danube River are not easy to obtain unless such a request is made well ahead of time and confirmed in writing.

It should also be pointed out that this hotel does a very large luncheon business with all the day-trippers arriving by excursion boat from Vienna. Good lunch tables on the hotel's outstanding veranda overlooking the river might be hard to obtain when one of these groups is in town. Matthias Sheeleigh, Summit, NJ

(Ed. note: We should have been a little more specific in our "15 Suggestions to Avoid the Summer Tourist Crush" story. With respect to hotel

prices we used the phrase "rooms from about" and thus the prices quoted were for each hotel's lowest priced single room. According to information supplied by the hotel, rates for a single room with breakfast and dinner start at 1,300 AS, or using an exchange rate of 11.5 schillings per dollar, about \$113. The exchange rate now is now closer to 10.5 and the same room will cost \$124. Two persons traveling together, particularly at high season, will, of course, pay substantially more.)

Vienna Restaurant

In a recent (I think February 1994) issue you featured "Cheap Eats—Vienna" and mentioned **Zur Hohe Brücke**, 1010 Wien, Wipplingerstrasse 23. We ate there and I gave the owner, Hans Rettig, a copy of the issue. This restaurant was close to our hotel. We went back a second time. The prices were moderate and the service, atmosphere and food were all excellent. We'll return next year.

Our hotel, **Tigra** (Tiefer Graben 14) is inside the Ring and has a good location for walking. The apartment at 1280 AS (\$117) was a good value.

Richard S. Werner, Richmond TX

Eastern Germany Comments

We have just returned from a motoring trip through the former East Germany and have a few observations. Finding one's way in the cities can be a maze-like adventure. One way streets, few road signs, pedestrian zones and reconstruction are some of the hazards. A good example is Weimar. Another is Dresden where arriving at the front door of the **Dresden Hilton** is nearly impossible. Another town with traffic problems is Eisenach. Try to reach the **Wartburg-Hotel** without going through the middle of town. Once there, the climb to the castle is very steep from the car park. Might be better to take the shuttle bus. Driving to Meissen to visit the porcelain factory and museum proved to be a mistake. We were caught in a monumental traffic jam as we entered the city. It took an hour to reach the factory and another hour to get out of town after the visit.

In Weimar, the **Christliches Hotel Amelienhof**, Ameklienstrasse 2, is a fine place to stay. It has recently been converted from a religious hospice and is moderately priced - 186 to 196 DM (\$116-\$123) for a double. The venerable **Hotel Elephant** has also been brought up to date, including the prices (doubles more than 300 DM/\$188). It's location on the Markt in the center of town is unbeatable.

We highly recommend overnighting in Potsdam. One reason is to beat the crowds to Sans Souci in the morning. Head straight for the ticket booth to be assigned a time for the palace tour. (We were there by 10 a.m. for the 11 a.m. tour.)

Despite the few hassles, a most rewarding and fascinating trip. Nancy S. Finnie, New Caanan CT

Hotel Recommendations

I have just returned from a six week trip to Europe - over four weeks in Switzerland and ten days between Hamburg and Rome. Since much of your newsletter covers areas I have visited, I thought you might be interested in a few comments and observations.

After having spent the last 15 or more years headquartered in the **Florhof** in Zürich, I decided to try another hotel because with the retirement of the Schilters, who were like family to me, I did not want to return. I have heard some rather negative comments about the Florhof and none of the former personnel is there anymore. Apparently the new managers are not spending very much time in the hotel.

This time I stayed at the **Hotel zum Storchen** on Weinplatz, in the very heart of the city, facing the Limmat river. The hotel is expensive to be sure but in a wonderful location and, if you get a room facing the Limmat, you have a special treat in store. The buffet breakfasts are elaborate and delicious. There is also an attractive terrace for dining.

Hamburg is certainly a delightful town. I should know - I was born there and lived there as a child many many years ago. It is a garden city,

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not overrun with tourists, has a fine opera house, elegant stores, and the Binnen Aussen Alster offer a special allure. One can take various boats on the Alster and through the canals, take a harbor and city tour etc., etc. On Tuesdays and Fridays there is an attractive market - the Isemarkt - in the Eppendorf area which is quite the "in" section now favored by people from the media. I stayed at the incomparable **Vier Jahreszeiten Hotel** which offers every amenity and is located in the heart of town. Incidentally, you mentioned the small hotel **Abtei** in a recent issue. Curiously enough my husband and I stayed there in 1977 when it was a Pension but delightful. However, it is a good distance from town.

Intrigued by a recent article in your newsletter on the **Albergo Gardenia** in Caslano/Lugano, I booked a room there for one week. I have stayed many times in Lugano/Paradiso and wanted to try something new and different. The hotel is excellent and *gemütlich* since it is small and my room was large and attractive and had a balcony. The meals were exquisite, gourmet and delicious. However, without a car you are at a great disadvantage. The train station is a good distance away and so is the boat dock. May I suggest that therefore in future articles you specifically indicate that a car is essential and other transportation is not easily accessible. Susi E. Kanuch, Van Nuys CA

More on Steyr

I have enjoyed every issue of *Gemütlichkeit* I have received over the past several years, but the Steyr issue brought memories which led to this letter.

I was a medic in the 71st Infantry Division and, in May, 1945, we had spent a week moving east into Austria while, west-bound on the same roads, hundreds of German Army trucks and staff cars carried thousands of fully armed German soldiers. Kind of an interesting position for unarmed medics to be in, but all they wanted was to evade capture by the Russians. Finally, we arrived in Steyr, where we sat on the Enns waiting for the Russians to move up the other bank. As you pointed out in the article, this was the dividing line between east and west for a good number of years.

However, the real purpose of this letter is twofold. First, shortly before returning home in 1946, I was transferred to separate unit then located in Feldafing, just south of Starnberg on Starnberger See. We were quartered in several lakeside villas, and the **Forsthaus am See**, a gasthaus on the shore of the lake. My wife and I visited Germany, Switzerland and Austria in 1990 and behold!!, the Forsthaus looked just as it had in 1946, even to the swans (although, 45 years earlier, there were no boats tied up at the dock); but it was undergoing a considerable expansion. We didn't stay there, since we had chosen to headquarter in Munich, but I wonder if any of your readers has ever stayed at the Forsthaus.

Second, the American

Express agent who secured our hotel reservations suggested that, in Lucerne, we "just had" to experience the **Chateau Gutch** — we did for several nights. A really different environment just a bit reminiscent of **Hotel Eisenhut** in Rothenburg ob der Tauber. The Chateau is on a mountain on the left bank of the Reuss, reached off Baselstrasse (if my memory serves). It overlooks the old city, perhaps five or six towers of the city wall, and provides a fine view of Vierwaldstatter See. Pedestrians can reach Baselstrasse via a hundred plus year old funicular. I've just been idly curious why the chateau has not been mentioned in *Gemütlichkeit*. Eugene Neff, Phoenix AZ

(Ed. Note: *The Chateau Gutch has been favorably mentioned several times over the years in Readers' Forum. We are remiss in never having done a story on Lucerne.*)

We Stand Corrected

Excellent article headed "Eurotunnel." However, TGV stands for *Tres Grande Vitesse* or very great speed. "Trains a Grande Vitesse" is incorrect. Mark Beffart, author of *France on the TGV*, translates it that way, but he's wrong, too. The French would not use an English word to describe their pride and joy. They hate "Franglais" anyway. Another subject: would you consider doing an article on Slovenia (as part of the New Europe)? It's the greatest travel bargain in Europe today.

Robert G. Simons, Fond du Lac WI

(Ed. Note: *Thanks for setting us straight on TGV. Slovenia is under consideration for 1995.*)

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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Hotel Elephant, (Markt 19, D-99423 Weimar, phone 03643/61471, fax 03643/65310) was a completely new building finished in 1993 by a west German hotel company, but with an architectural style in harmony with other much older buildings on the square. The hotel company is also erecting two new buildings adjacent to the hotel. One, I believe is to be an office building and the other something like a convention center.

Much needs to be done in Weimar, but we had the clear impression that a small-size Vienna was developing.

P. S. According to the May issue of *Schau Ins Land*, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Russian President Boris Yeltsin will attend an August 31 ceremony in Weimar in observance of the departure of the last contingent of Russian soldiers from Germany. One week later, in another ceremony, they will recognize the departure of all allied troops (American, English and French) from Berlin.

In that same issue, *Schau Ins Land* noted that Weimar is just 10 kilometers from Buchenwald where "Nazis murdered some 50,000 people and where the Soviet secret service dispatched another 6,000 after the war." However, having seen a small concentration camp with a pile of dead bodies within a couple of days of V-E Day, and then years later Dachau, I was not inclined to spend the time to go to Buchenwald during our recent visit to Weimar.

(Ed. Note: *Schau Ins Land is published 11 times a year for advanced students of the German language. Subscribers receive specially produced audio tapes and an accompanying transcript. Subject matter usually centers on travel, history, current events and popular German culture such as music and literature. Subscriptions are \$118 for one year or \$69 for five issues. Contact: Schau Ins Land, P. O. Box 158067, Nashville TN 37215-8067, phone 800-824-0829, fax 615-297-3138.*)