

THIS ISSUE:

- Dresden
- A German Train Lunch
- 1st Winter Air Fares
- Swiss Grocery Shopping

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

August 27, 1994

Mr. October

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel, and robb'd me of my Robe of Honour — well, I often wonder what the Vintners buy one-half so precious as the Goods they sell — Omar Khayyám

The summer of 1994 is, in showbiz lingo, a wrap. Or, as Bill Stern, the Colgate Shave Cream Man, would say, "that's the 'three-oh' mark for tonight." (Any newspaperman over the age of 50 can tell you who Bill Stern was and what the "three-oh" mark refers to.) However you want to put it, it's over. The large lady has broken into song.

Though it is the end of August, and the change of seasons in the San Francisco Bay Area is much more subtle than in most of the rest of the country, this morning I feel the coming autumn. And with it, I am reminded that late September and October is the best time of year to be in Europe; autumn leaves, the grape harvest, crisp air but still warm enough in the sun to enjoy lunch outdoors, and, except for Munich and Oktoberfest, not so many tourists.

Our first visit to Europe was in October, 1973. I was much into wine then. Had my picture taken in front of some of the famous properties of Bordeaux: Chateau Latour, Chateau Margaux, Chateau Petrus and beneath the arch that is on the label of bottles of Chateau Leoville Las Cases. At Chateau Mouton Rothschild we took home movies of the harvest being brought in through the rain.

In the old, hilltop town of St.

Continued on page 2...

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

DRESDEN

Rebirths are happening all over eastern Germany, but no city has had more to overcome than Dresden. If there is an award for comeback city of the century, surely Dresden is a leading candidate.

The night following allied bombing raids that killed tens of thousands of civilians and totally destroyed six square miles of the center of Germany's most beautiful city, RAF General Arthur "Bomber" Harris arrived to dine with Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister. Churchill: "What is the news from Dresden?" Harris: "There is no such place as Dresden."

In mid-February 1945,

General Harris may have had a point. But not today. The resurrection of Dresden, delayed by some 45 years of Soviet dominance, is now well underway, though the difference between it and western cities is still striking.

On a June train ride from Munich, physical differences were still evident. The western part of the country appears prosperous and full of life; but further east the dark, dirty buildings in

the small cities seem neglected. Only the countryside was as green and apparently well-tended as in the west.

My first impressions of Dresden were disconcerting. I got off the train in the black, hulking Neustädt Station, across the river from Dresden's center. A short walk from my hotel near the station took me to Marienbrücke, which bridges the Elbe west of Augustusbrücke. From

Continued on page 3...

APARTMENT RENTAL IN SWITZERLAND

Renting one of Switzerland's many apartments is usually cheaper than hotel living. In this article, Canadian travel writer John Herbert tells how to do it.

The slow, endless rise in the value of the Swiss Franc since 1970, has made Switzerland expensive for most visitors. One way to moderate its high cost is to spend accommodation dollars on apartments instead of hotel rooms. Switzerland has thousands of apartments that are rented to tourists for stays as short as 3 or 4 days. Europeans, including the Swiss themselves, have been using them for years, but for most North Americans, they remain a

secret. Rarely are they mentioned in guide books and even the excellent Swiss National Tourist Office has little information about them. Detailed apartment lists, however, are available from most local tourist offices.

In June of this year, my wife and I stayed in a typical Swiss apartment on the outskirts of Lugano. To compare costs with hotel prices, I searched the hotel brochure published by the Lugano tourist office, looking for the cheapest

hotels. Of the 240 listed, 65 were zero or 1 star (out of 5) and offered a double room with bath and breakfast. Their April to October median price was 108 Sfr. (\$83).

We paid 81 Sfr. (\$62) per night, on a weekly basis, for a two-bedroom apartment in a four-plex in Muzzano, a pleasant Lugano suburb, a six-minute drive to the Lugano railway station. The building was constructed in 1983, and our apartment's floor plan

Continued on page 6...

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

Emilion, we stayed in a hotel that occupied the town's highest point. It had a fine restaurant, but the hallway near our room had a gagging odor that assaulted us each time we entered or left the room.

In Reims, we toured the Mumm's champagne cellars. Arriving without an appointment about 10 a.m., we were guided, just the two of us, by a young English-speaking girl. At every stop she greeted each worker, the women with a little left-cheek-right-cheek-kiss-kiss, and the men with a one-pump handshake. At the end, the three of us shared a bottle of champagne. After that I drove to Strasbourg and yawned all the way.

In Alsace, we drank Gewürztraminer and now sometimes I'll order a bottle in a restaurant simply because one whiff of it and for an instant it's 1973 again and I'm back in Colmar or Ribeauvillé.

There's a lot more I could tell you about that trip. In fact, I have the slides right here if you'd like to...

Since your eyes are beginning to glaze over, maybe we should shift our attention to the present, like where to go in the fall of 1994.

Were it me, though regrettably it is not, I would want to be near the vineyards and harvest. Here are some considerations for an October visit:

- Two or three days in the town of Marktheidenfeld, about 40 minutes east of Frankfurt, where I'd stay with the Deppisch family, wine-makers who also own one of Germany's most *gemütlich* hotels, the **Anker** (phone 09391/600 40, fax 600477). (Subscriber Bob Gillespie, who can't say enough good things about the Deppisch's hospitality and has made 47 business trips to Germany in the last five years, reckons he has stayed at the Anker about 20 times since first

reading about it in *Gemütlichkeit*.) I would dine at least one night at the **Weinhaus Anker** (phone 09391/1736, fax 09391/1742), being sure to quaff some of the Deppisch's Franconian wines.

- This time of year one shouldn't miss a drive down the Mosel, staying two nights at the **Gutshotel** (phone 06507/2035, fax 06507/5644) in Neumagen-Dhron. This is a busy time of year for wine properties, but I'd check with local tourist offices to see where I might be able to watch the harvest being brought in.

- In Vienna, I'd head for the suburbs, making a southern loop through the Wienerwald (Vienna Woods) and villages like Gumpoldskirchen, Mayerling (where, in 1889, Archduke Rudolf, son of Emperor Franz-Josef and Empress Elizabeth, and his 17 year-old lover, Maria, committed suicide), Baden and Heiligenkreuz. Gumpoldskirchen is the main wine village and I would look for houses displaying the green fir branch indicating new wine ready for sampling.

- The area around the east end of Lake Geneva would be my choice as a Swiss wine destination. I would stay two nights at little **L'Auberge de Chernex** (phone 021/964 4191, fax 021/964 6857), in the hills above Montreux. Walking and driving through the miles of vineyards perched on the hillside overlooking the lake would be pleasant, as would a visit to **Castle of Aigle/Vaudois Museum of Wine** in the vineyards at Aigle. For a light lunch of wine, cheese and dried meats, I would choose **Café Au Bon Vin** in Chardonne. Then I might drive the N9 past Martigny and into the Rhône Valley, stopping at **Hotel Des Vignes** (phone 027/311671, fax 027/313727) in Sion, a hotel set in the vineyards.

- If, near the end of the trip and short of money, I found myself anywhere near the southwestern part of Germany, I'd check out the Baden wine region from my base in the town of Kandern at the **Hotel Zur Weserei** (phone 07626/7000, fax 07626/6581) with its excellent restaurant.

And finally, even though it isn't in Germany, Austria, Switzerland or the "New Europe," I might sneak over the border into Alsace for just one more sip of October 1973.

Car Wars

There is a bloodbath taking place among Germany's car rental firms. The basic price per week, unlimited mileage, for an Opel Corsa is now \$85 per week; \$92 for an Opel Astra and \$106 for the Opel Vectra category. But, according to some industry sources, we ain't seen nothin' yet. By the time you read this, even lower rates will probably be in effect. Among the predictions: \$62 a week for an Opel Corsa and, get this, a weekly rate of less than \$100 for a Mercedes Benz 180C! Unfortunately, prices for cars in categories larger than the small Mercedes and the Vectra have either stayed the same or risen slightly, as have rental car prices in most other European countries. Call 800-521-6722 for a quote.

First Winter Air Fares

DER Tours, which buys seats to Europe from major air carriers and markets them at rates generally below what the airlines themselves do, will soon announce winter airfares on **Lufthansa**. Below is a sampling of midweek roundtrips during the period November 1 to March 31, 1995:

	Germany	Zürich	London
Bost/New York	499	527	527
Dallas/Houst	627	655	655
LA/San Fran	649	705	683
Atlanta	555	610	610
Miami	594	627	627
Chicago	516	544	544
Washington	499	527	527

The prices do not include taxes and there is a \$50 surcharge for weekend travel and a \$125 add-on for travel December 15-24. There are other restrictions, as well. You must book through a travel agent. Call 800-782-2424. — RHB ☐

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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%

DRESDEN

Continued from page 1

there the view to the east includes a large domed building which looks like a Mosque but is a cigarette factory, a survivor on the edge of the once flattened city center. Crossing the bridge and heading downtown, I confronted another bombing survivor, a huge warehouse, left blackened and peeling as it must have looked in 1945.

But even with these and the many other somber reminders of the fire storm and the dark days of communist rule, Dresden has vitality and charm.

As it flows peacefully between green banks, the River Elbe provides a gracious setting for the city it divides. Nearly a fourth of Dresden's urban area is made up of woods and parks. The river skyline was once world famous, depicted by Italian court painter Canaletto in the 18th Century. It was in this period that Architects Poppelman and Chiaveri built the beautiful Zwinger Palace and the huge Cathedral.

North of the river is the half-mile long pedestrian street Hauptstrasse; two and three-story shops and cafes plus some rare prewar burgher houses are interspersed with fountains and sculpture. The street ends in Neustädter Market Place, one side of which is open to Augustus Bridge. Perhaps this is the best spot to view the city and imagine how it looked before World War II. On both sides of the wide river, broad grassy fields provide an unrestricted foreground to the old city's lacy black towers silhouetted against the sky. Except for the presence of numerous construction cranes — eye-catching signals of the massive rebuilding effort — one could almost imagine being in prewar Dresden.

And to be sure, the city is furiously rebuilding, with much of the downtown area walled off in the process. Construction seems to be underway everywhere. Some areas have already been meticulously restored to their former

DRESDEN

Population: 491,000

Altitude: 115 feet

Approximate distances from:

Berlin	198 km	123 miles
Geneva	1090 km	676 miles
Munich	455 km	282 miles
Prague	152 km	94 miles
Vienna	590 km	366 miles

Tourist Information

Prager Strasse 10 Neustädter Markt
Dresden D-01069 Dresden D-01097
Phone: 0351/495 5025 Phone: 0351/535 39
Fax: 0351-495 1276

Important Buildings

- **Zwinger Palace.** Possibly the best example of Late Baroque architecture in Germany. Built in 1710. The Semper Gallery in Italian Renaissance style was finished in 1847, destroyed in 1945, and rebuilt. Porcelain collection is world's largest.

- **Semper Opera House.** Built 1838-41 by Gottfried Semper. Guttered by fire 1869, rebuilt 1871-78 in high Renaissance style by Manfred Semper according to his father's plans. Destroyed in 1945. Guided tours arranged through the ticket office on Theaterplatz, phone: 0351/484 24 96.

- **Residential Palace (Residenzschloss).** A castle occupied the site 700 years ago. A palace comprising four wings was built in the late 15th century, enlarged in 1548-56. Destroyed by fire in 1701 and rebuilt under Augustus the Strong. Destroyed in 1945. Reconstruction begun in 1989 and still in progress.

- **Catholic Court Church (Katholische Hofkirche).** The largest church in Saxony, built in Baroque style 1738-54. Contains the sarcophagi of the Wettin princes and heart of Augustus the Strong. Guided tours of church and crypt: Mon-Thurs 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., Fri, Sat 1 p.m. and 2 p.m., Sun 1 p.m. Organ recitals every Wednesday. Organ vespers May to October every Saturday at 4 p.m. Special tours on request. Phone: 0351/495 51 35.

Museums

- **Albertinum.** Built 1884-87. Collection includes the New Masters Picture Gallery, the Green Vault treasure chamber (jewelry and other relics from the Wettin dynasty), including the *Household of the Great Mogul*, considered one of the greatest works of the Baroque period, comprising 165 items of massive enamelled gold, studded with more than 5,000 diamonds and precious stones.

- **Semper Gallery.** Houses the picture collections of the Old Masters Gallery, among them Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*.

Riverboat Trips


- Dresden has the world's biggest and oldest paddle steamer fleet. Trips from April to October between Dresden and Swiss Saxony (a three-star Michelin sight), calling at villages in the wine-growing district between Diesbar and Radebeul. One ship, built in 1882, has been completely restored to its original appearance. Also: a steam tugboat, with a heated salon, the last of its kind in operation, accommodating 115 passengers

Books on Dresden

The Last 100 Hundred Days, by John Toland, Random House, 1966

The Freedom Road, by Richard Collier, Atheneum, 1984

The Second World War, by Martin Gilbert, Henry Holt, 1991

Slaughterhouse Five, by Kurt Vonnegut. 

appearance. This replication of every past detail is extremely expensive, but Dresdeners are determined, no matter what the cost, to reproduce the old buildings.

A most successful and beautiful completed rebuilding project is Zwinger Palace, with its colonnaded baroque buildings enclosing fountains and a grassy public area. A palace guide claims the communists wanted to tear it down but locals adamantly refused and eventually Zwinger became first major reconstruction.

The old Baroque district along the Elbe is also beginning to regain its prewar splendor with the completed restoration of the royal castle and other buildings, including the Old Masters Gallery, Theaterplace, New Masters Gallery, and Albertinum Hall. The Opera House reconstruction has also been recently completed and already 30 museums are open.

In addition to opera, performances at the Semper Opera, now one of the best and most beautiful theaters in Germany, include Dresden's orchestra, the Kreuzchor boy's choir, various theater companies, puppet shows, and political cabaret.

The Semper Gallery, restored at the cost of 100 million DM, now has 650 paintings, about a third of its original collection. Like the Louvre, its display space has been expanded underground, although the visitors' entrance is still in its original location at the top of a wide staircase.

Hotels, still scarce in Dresden, are also being built. The Hilton, inside a classical Baroque shell, is near the site of another new luxury hotel, the Kapinsky, which is also being built to resemble the building originally occupying its site.

During communist rule, all schools taught Russian rather than English as a second language, so communication, except in luxury hotels can be a problem. Store clerks also speak no English. On Hauptstrasse I found only one

Continued on page 4...

DRESDEN

Continued from page 3

book (a travel guide) in English. Clerks are generally helpful but not overly friendly.

One of the most astonishing sights is a non-building across from the Hilton. Occupying this prominent location is an awe inspiring ruins, reminiscent of the bombed-out Coventry Cathedral in England. It was Dresden's proudest building, the Frauenkirche Cathedral. What remains of the once huge building — there is no roof, only a few walls and a portion of one tower — has been left in its mutilated state, beside a boneyard of more than 20,000 blackened stone fragments, saved for reuse. A large sign describes the beginning of a reconstruction project, estimated to cost 320 million German marks, and requests donations to add to the total of 7 million raised to date. The decision to rebuild, however, created a controversy. It was first decided to leave the site in ruins as a memorial to the victims of the air raids, as had been done in Coventry and with Berlin's Memorial Church. But now the church will be rebuilt in time for Dresden's 600th anniversary in 2006. As a compromise, fresh, light-hued limestone is to be interspersed with fire-blackened fragments from the original church, creating a kind of checkerboard effect. Architects hope the final result will continue to proclaim the message of the ruined church.

Another controversy involves a huge shopping mall or "World Trade Center." When built it will be Europe's largest. Included is a 16-story building which some believe will disrupt the skyline, be out of character with the cathedral's 18th century Baroque dome, and disastrous to the goal of restoring the prewar skyline.

Despite the bickering, this is a strong and resourceful city, constantly making the best of what is available. As above-ground portions are being reconstructed, Dresdeners are making use of the underground city, extensive caves, originally built so tradespeople could

move safely in and out during sieges. These caverns provide spacious areas for concerts, parties and celebrations. Above ground, the air is becoming cleaner as most of the polluting two-cycle Trabant autos are replaced by modern Fords and Opels.

Shopping opportunities, lacking during the communist period, are improving. The best stores are along Welsdruffer strasse, with Pragerstrasse a second choice. And leisure activities are increasing with the repair of the waterfront and its paddle and cruise ships. Perhaps the best way to enter modern Dresden would be from a paddle steamer, around the graceful river bends, past vast green meadows and docking opposite silhouettes of the city towers. Or take one of the available dinner cruises, enjoying the scenery in the slowly fading light of a long summer evening, passing beautiful villas along the Elbe, near the 100-year-old "Blue Wonder" suspension bridge. You will see that some districts suffered little damage in the bombing and thus give an impression of Dresden's past glory.

Dresden is a continuing event. A visitor's wish to enjoy the present is equalled by the desire to return to see how the new city will turn out. — BW

Hotels

Hotelschiff Elbresidenz

This riverboat hotel and restaurant is moored beside old paddle boats on the Elbe, looking across to the skyline of old town. It's a marvelous location and the hotel has a very attractive restaurant.

Guestrooms are identical double ship's cabins with single and Pullman beds, a sink in the room, a small shower and toilet adjoining. These are beautifully designed small spaces but not for the claustrophobic. *Gemütlichkeit* recommends this hotel because of its reasonable prices, spectacular views, and appealing restaurant.

Address: Hotelschiff Elbresidenz,

Terrassenufer 12, D-01069 Dresden

Phone: 0351 / 459 50 53

Fax: 0351 / 459 51 37

Location: On Elbe River opposite city center

Rooms: 97 doubles

Proprietor: Yves Beelzacq, Regional Director

Prices: May-June and September-October singles 135 DM (\$88), doubles 150 DM (\$98), February-April and November-December singles 115 DM (\$75), doubles 130 DM (\$85), with American breakfast

Meals: All available

Facilities: Bar, restaurant, sun deck, outdoor swimming pool

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: Never

Parking: Free parking 60 meters away

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 13/20

Hotel Martha

Built prior to unification, this four-story hotel offers modern guest rooms in a residential setting a short walk from Neustadt Railroad Station.

The Martha's friendly proprietors also operate a reasonably priced restaurant and during *spargel* season a generous serving of the renowned white asparagus with ham, hollandaise sauce and potatoes costs about 21 DM (\$14). A large glass of 1991 dry and fruity Sylvaner-trocken goes for 7.20 DM (\$4.70).

Address: Hotel Martha Hospiz, Nieritzstrasse 11, D-01060 Dresden

Phone: 0351 / 5 24 25

Fax: 0351 / 5 32 18

Location: Across Elbe from town center, near Neustadt Station, 10 minute walk to downtown

Rooms: 12 singles, 24 doubles

Proprietors: Tilp family

Prices: singles 140 DM (\$92), doubles 200 (\$131), breakfast included

Meals: All available in excellent restaurant with reasonable prices

Facilities: Bar and restaurant in basement

Credit Cards: Mastercard, Visa

Continued on page 5...

Disabled: Good access. One room especially equipped

Closed: Never

Parking: Two garage spaces 10 DM (\$6.50) each

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 13/20 \$

Bayerischer Hof

A brand new hotel with an elegant marble lobby in a remodeled building in the residential area near Neustadt Station. Everyone was friendly and very anxious to please although English speakers are in short supply. No other commercial businesses are nearby. Shopping on the pedestrian-only Hauptstrasse is about a 10-minute walk.

Dinner in the classically decorated formal dining room with gold chandelier and matching damask chairs was a modestly priced affair: tomato soup with sour cream, boiled white sausages in a terrine, and a large soft pretzel with sweet grainy mustard cost 15 DM (\$10).

Breakfast was 15 DM (\$10) extra, and included various meats and patés in addition to the usual orange juice, rolls, cereal, coffee and tea.

My corner room, a junior suite, was very large with high ceilings, TV, minibar, couch, easy chairs, a coffee table set with red wine and cookies and a huge bed with puff. In the large closet were slippers and a robe. The marble bathroom included a large bathtub, shower and hair dryer.

Address: Hotel Bayerischer Hof, Antonstrasse 35, D-01097 Dresden

Phone: 0351/5024 193 94

Fax: 0351/5780 589

Location: 10-minute walk from town center and shopping district

Rooms: 3 singles, 17 doubles, 3 suites

Proprietor: Herr Aasland

Prices: Singles 180 DM (\$118), doubles 240 DM (\$157), suites 320 DM (\$209), not including breakfast

Meals: All available

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: Never

Parking: 15 free spaces

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 15/20

Schöne Aussicht

A suburban inn set in a woody environment among palatial residences. On the hill across the Elbe from the center of town, the hotel is only a short walk from the funicular built in 1901 by the same engineer as the famous Wuppertal suspended monorail. Many of the lovely guestrooms, like Number two which has a French bed, offers views of the city and trees.

An enjoyable lunch in the hotel's restaurant featured thick, tender slices of *sauerbraten* in a rich sauce, for 20 DM (\$13).

Address: Hotel Restaurant Schöne Aussicht, Krugerstrasse 1, D-01326 Dresden

Phone/Fax: 0351/363 05

Location: 20-30 minutes drive or 30 minutes by public transit to city center

Rooms: 1 single, 8 doubles

Proprietor: Heller Engelmann

Prices: Singles 150-180 DM (\$98-\$118), doubles 180-210 DM (\$118-\$137) including breakfast

Meals: All available

Facilities: Common room, restaurant and bar

Credit Cards: Yes

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: Never

Parking: Free spaces in rear of building

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 13/20

Restaurants

Kügelgenhaus

The Dresden Museum of Early Romanticism has popular restaurants on three floors. I found the ground level crowded with a long wait and a somewhat arrogant waiter who asked twice if I was by myself. Since that seemed to be a problem, I decided to eat downstairs in the more hospitable *Bierstube*, a modern, cheerful place that was full of life. From a banquette by the well-stocked bar I watched glasses of pilsner beer so foamy from the tap it took 10 minutes to fill them. The main course was deep-fried fish

filet with a salad of shredded cabbage, red peppers, carrots and zucchini (23 DM or \$15). Kügelgenhaus, 12 Hauptstrasse, phone 0351/52791. Moderate.

Italian Village Café Albertinum Museum

At this elegantly restored Baroque café I had peach pie and coffee (8 DM/\$5.25). A wine and beer bar is downstairs in the same building and dinner is available in the beautifully appointed upstairs restaurant (25 DM or \$18 for three courses). Italian Village Café, Albertinum, Brühlsche Terrasse. Moderate.

Canaletto

Haut cuisine and *haut* prices are what you'll find at Canaletto in the five-star Maritim Bellevue Hotel, reputed to be Dresden's finest. The games dishes are recommended but you'll pay a high price for the genteel ambience. Fixed price menus from \$50 to \$80, a la carte from \$43 to \$58. Canaletto (Maritim Bellevue Hotel), Grosse Meissner Str. 15, D-01097, phone 0351/56620, fax 0351/55997. Major cards. Expensive.

Luisenhof

Take the funicular to this popular restaurant whose principal attraction is its view of city. The food is nothing special. Main courses cost from about \$12 to \$23. Luisenhof, Bergbahnstrasse 8, phone 0351/368-42. Major cards. Moderate.

Lunch at 125 MPH

This is the Mitropa Diner aboard "Heinrich Heine," where we are gliding along at 125 miles an hour between Dresden and Mannheim. This Eurocity run will continue on to Paris. I have just splurged 50 German marks (\$33) on lunch. A DSG waiter, in freshly pressed red coat inquires, "Did you like it?" Indeed I did. Nothing is more enjoyable, in my opinion, than a good train meal, with wine and plenty of time to contemplate the scenery.

And this run is about perfect:

Continued on page 8...

SWISS RENTALS

Continued from page 1

resembled that of a modest American apartment. Kitchen (all pots, pans, dishes and utensils supplied) and the bathroom were modern, the floor was tiled and our second story unit had high sloping ceilings. There was TV (yes, CNN was available) and a telephone. Also a small balcony. As always in Switzerland, it was in immaculate condition.

Had we stayed only five nights, the cost for our unit would have increased about five Sfr. (\$4) per night. In July and August the price would have risen about another 10 Sfr. (\$7.70) and bookings of less than a week are difficult to obtain. By far the best value is when two couples or a family of four share the larger two-bedroom unit on the ground floor. Costs are 106/136 Sfr. (\$82/\$105) per day low/high season based on a weekly stay.

The price of our apartment was typical for the Lugano area which generally has higher prices than the rest of Switzerland.

Types of Apartments. Almost all Swiss apartments fall into one of three categories:

1. Apartments in private homes.

The largest group. Often one floor (usually top floor or basement) converted into self-contained apartment. Almost always smaller and cheaper than apartments in the following two categories. Complete privacy is typical and one will rarely hear the home's other occupants. Usual amenities: one or two bedrooms, a bath and a kitchen/dining room that may also include a couple of easy chairs. Rarely found: separate living room, dishwasher, washing machine. Sometimes found: TV and telephone. These "in-house apartments" are quite diverse. No two are the same.

2. Small apartment buildings.

In recent years many small apartment buildings with two to eight units have been constructed, solely for the tourist trade. Sometimes the owner occupies the unit. Expect separate living room and one or more of the following: TV, tele-

phone, dishwasher, washing machine, barbecue, and occasionally a pool.

3. Large condominiums. Built over the last 40 years in ski resorts and similar to condos found in Florida and Hawaii. Usually from three to 10 stories high, typically with studio, one and two bedroom units for rent. Owners rent their units through local rental agents when they are not occupying them. Almost all are available from April to November.

• Where to Find Apartments.

Virtually everywhere. Heaviest concentration in Bernese Oberland and Valais, with Grisons and Ticino also well served. The northwest of the country has the fewest. A limited number in the major cities.

• Prices. Expect to find a one bedroom "in-house apartment" for less than the cost of a double room with bathroom in a local one star hotel. A good example is Ringgenberg near Interlaken. This small town has seven hotels. The cheapest is the Heilsarmee, a guest house operated by the Salvation Army (no stars). Cheapest off-season double in 1994 with bathroom and breakfast is 80 Sfr. (\$62). More than half of the town's 60 odd apartments rent for less.

• Be aware of extras. Find out if your quoted price includes charges for such things as local tax, electricity, heating, and worst of all "final cleaning." This last one can run 50 to 90 Sfr. (\$38-\$69) and is the reason why stays of less than a week will cost more per day than a weekly stay. You have fewer days over which to apportion this cost.

"In-house" apartments tend to calculate their prices on a per person basis, while condos charge per unit.

• Length of stay. The usual stay is a week, from Saturday to Saturday. We often want to stay for a shorter period, say 4 or 5 days. In the off-season most owners will permit this and make an according reduction in your bill. Rental agents for large apartments are more rigid and often require a one-week stay.

• Reservations. Usually not necessary for travel in April, May, June, September (our favorite month with fine weather and excellent apartment availability) or November. Being able to view the apartment and its location before renting is a great advantage.

For those without reservations we suggest arriving at your destination when the tourist office is open — usually 8 a.m. to noon and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays, and 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. They will supply you with a list of apartments and a local map. Sometimes each apartment is marked on the map. If not, spend a few minutes scanning the list and ask the office to mark your choices on the map. The search, without a list and map, is difficult, because in most of Switzerland apartments will not have a sign outside (*fereinwohnungen* or apartment).

Most tourist offices will leave it to you to select an apartment from the list. Most won't phone ahead for you but always ask. Some do. A few of the smaller offices keep an unofficial list of vacant apartments which is useful. The tourist office we found to be most helpful was Lugano. Not only will they phone around for you, but if you write them in advance with specifics of your stay, they will circulate your letter, free of charge, to those apartment owners that fit your needs.

For travel in July, August and October (Germany and Switzerland both have two-week school holidays in October) reservations are advised. Our reservation of the apartment in Lugano is typical of the letter writing required. First we obtained the address of the Canton of Ticino's tourist office from a travel book. The SNTTO will also supply it. We wrote asking for a list of local offices. They replied with a list and a map of 16 offices. We wrote to four near Lugano. All replied with a page listing apartments and chalets (most had around 75). Details of each apartment included owner's name and address, price, and a description of each apartment - number of beds and bedrooms, kitchen or kitchenette, availability

of TV, phone, balcony, and much more - about 15 to 20 categories of information for each appointment. We wrote to six owners. Two didn't reply, one was full and three were available. The owner of the apartment we selected sent us a map giving the exact location and told us to pay on arrival. No deposit was required.

If all this letter writing is too much for you there are a number of rental agents in the U.S. that, for a fee, will do the work for you. Best source of information about these firms is a page published in January 1994 by the SNTA headed *Facts on Switzerland - Rental of Apartments, Chalets and Villas*. It contains the names and addresses of 10 large rental agents, a brief description of the apartments each handles, plus brief information on home exchanges and time-sharing. The three largest agents are:

- Interhome Inc., 124 Little Falls Rd, Fairfield, NJ 07004, phone 201-882-6864 — 4000 properties in all parts of Switzerland.

- Europa-Let Inc., 92 North Main St. Ashland, OR 97520, phone 800-462-4486 — 2500 properties in the Ticino, Bernese Oberland, Grisons, Valais, and Middleland.

- Villas International, 605 Market St #510, San Francisco, CA 94105 — 2500 apartments throughout Switzerland

Here is some more precise information about apartments in Switzerland.

- **Ticino.** Wide selection, most in small towns in the hills around Lugano or the valleys that lead away from Locarno. Also has a good selection of small rental houses (chalets). These are included in the list of apartments available from local tourist offices. We would recommend our Lugano apartment

available from Trude Zazzi. Ticino prices are among the highest in Switzerland.

- **Valais.** New ski resorts built in Valais since WWII contain a huge number of apartments - most are in large condo style buildings and are reasonably priced during summer. Owners use them for a few weeks during the ski season, then rent them out during the remainder of the year. Towns offering the most choices: Nendaz, Super Nendaz, Verbier, Ovronnaz, Villars, Crans-Montana and Mayens De Riddes. All are located in the mountains just to the north or south of the Rhône Valley. This large selection

from the tourist office. The very efficient Madam Trachsel has 130 apartments and chalets available. After discussing your needs, she will give you the keys to two or three apartments and send you out on an inspection tour. When we rented from her in September most of the 130 units were available.

Her 1994 rental list divides units into seven categories, from studios to chalets sleeping from 10 to 12. Low season is from April 16 to July 9, and August 20 to December 17. Typical low season rates in 1994 were 78 Sfr. (\$60) daily for a one bedroom unit (including all the extras) on a weekly basis and 110 Sfr. (\$85) for a two bedroom apartment. In July and August prices are 40 to 50% higher and in the ski season they double.

If you can handle the daily drive up and down, Anzère is an excellent spot from which to tour central Switzerland. Day trips can be made from Zermatt to Montreux.

A distinctly different area you might consider in the Valais is the Herens Valley (two stars in Michelin) which runs south from Sion. In appearance it's about as far

from a modern ski resort as one can get. There is a great deal of tradition in the dress and the architecture of this interesting region. It is a fine area for mountain climbing, walking or just relaxing. The place to stay is Evolène, the major village in the valley. It is best remembered for the tall wooden houses and spring flowers. Unfortunately it is too far up the valley to use as a base for exploring the Valais.

Best apartment selections are from the Agence Evolène which offers over 50 apartments and chalets in Evolène, and 30 more in nearby villages. Prices are reasonable, taken on a weekly basis, a two-bedroom in the off-season starts around 75 Sfr. (\$58) per day.

Continued on page 8...

■ Grocery Shopping in Switzerland ■

If you live in a Swiss apartment you will likely become familiar with the local supermarket. It's mostly bad news. First the prices. Anything that is less than double the U.S. price should be considered a good buy. There are some adequate "no name" wines that are a true bargain. The stores themselves have little in common with a U.S. supermarket. Typically they are small, crowded, drab, with a poor selection. The food area is further reduced by the pots, pans, clothes, toys etc. that fill about one-third of the floor space. Parking can be tight, you do your own loading after supplying your own bag. Oh yes, they close between noon and two just when you want to pick up some lunch. — John Herbert

of reasonably priced apartments is offset by a couple of disadvantages. First, most are rather mundane. The word picturesque would never be used to describe these high-rise dominated towns and villages. Out of season they can be very quiet, with many stores closed. A more important disadvantage is the winding road up from the valley that one must use to reach any of these towns. Drives usually take 20 to 30 minutes. Our choice in the Valais is small town of Anzère, just north of Sion. It takes less time to reach — 15 to 20 minutes — than any other resort.

Renting here is best done by visiting a local rental agent, rather than the tourist office. In Anzère, your first stop should be Agence Trachsel, a couple of stores down

SWISS APARTMENTS

Continued from page 7

• Berner Oberland.

Our personal favorite for apartment living in Switzerland. There are more "in-house" apartments here than in any other region. We like the town of Ringgenberg. It is well located on the north shore of the Brienersee, just a five-minute drive to Interlaken. Here you will find "Fereinwohnungen" signs outside the homes. Try for a second or third floor unit with a balcony facing south for some beautiful views across the lake to the mountains around Grindelwald. Ringgenberg apartments are generally not as large or modern as in other parts of the country, but they are perfectly adequate and prices are among the lowest in the country.

The local tourist office apartment guide describes over 60 apartments with a color picture of each. Except in the summer, you should find a one bedroom for 60 to 80 Sfr. (\$46-\$62) a night. Rentals for less than a week are easily negotiated. There are only a few chalets around Ringgenberg.

For the Berner Oberland in general, the best source of accommodation information is the *Budget Catalogue of Alternative Accommodations, 1994*, available from the SNTÖ or the Bernese Oberland Tourist Association. It lists 17 towns that have apartments for rent and the address of each tourist office. Included are Wengen, Gstaad, Beatenberg, Grindelwald, and Interlaken. This very helpful 39-page brochure

also provides information on farm holidays, group accommodations, youth hostels, and camping.

• **Engadine Valley (The Grisons).** St Moritz is the center of this eastern region. Just five miles away, the small town of Silvaplana and the neighboring village of Surlej are the best bets for good accommodation values. Prices are substantially lower than in St Moritz and there is a good selection of apartments available in all sizes and styles. The local brochure lists over 200 units.

• **North-Eastern Switzerland.** This area, south of the Bodensee and centered on St Gallen, isn't as majestic as some other parts of the country, but with pleasant towns, traditional villages and prosperous farming country, it's worth a few days. Both Austria and Germany (don't miss Lindau) are a few miles away. The old town of Appenzell with its big wooden houses should be your base. Their 1994 "Ferienwohnungs-liste" contains descriptions of nine rental houses and 35 apartment units. An accompanying map shows the exact location of each one. Prices are average.

Rental Agencies

Ente Ticinese Per Il Turismo, Casella Postale 1441, CH-6501 Bellinzona, phone 092/25 70 56

Trude Zazzi, Postweg 300, CH-4624 Harkingen, phone 062/61 27 09

Trachsel Agence Immobilière, CH-1972 Anzère, phone 027/38 16 09

Agence Evolèna, Case Postale 15, CH-1983 Evolène, phone 027/83 13 59

Verkehrsbüro Ringgenberg, Hauptstrasse, Postfach 21, CH-3852 Ringgenberg, phone 036/22 33 88

Verkehrsverband Berner Oberland Jungfraustrasse 38, CH-3800 Interlaken, phone 036/22 26 21

Tourist Info Silvaplana, CH-7513 Silvaplana, phone 082/48 151

Verkehrsbüros Appenzellerland, CH-9050 Appenzell, phone 071/87 41 11 ☒

A TRAIN LUNCH

Continued from page 5

good service, good wine, good food and a good time. Six hours of smooth passage through level farmland with occasional medieval towers, lots of trees and a few cities. Some rivers and, here and there, a hilltop fortress. For me, train time is time to write, to read, to contemplate, but above all, to eat!

I always try to have a train meal when between cities, but Switzerland is a small country and only a few runs offer the time to fully enjoy food and sights without feeling rushed. Austria is a bit larger, and has one line, Vienna/Linz/Salzburg/Innsbruck/Zürich which provides ample time and also a great view. (See next month's description of dining aboard the "Transalpin").

Of the three countries, only unified Germany is large enough to offer multiple opportunities for lunching and dining aboard its trains. The now merged Mitropa and DSG catering services offer the largest restaurant car operation in Europe and, in my judgement, the best.

A secret: you can eat as well or better on Ger-

man trains as in most restaurants. A six-page menu offers three choices of soup, two of fresh salads, five hot main courses, five "cold table specialties," and four dessert choices. Also offered are five hot beverages, four nonalcoholic drinks, three different beers, five choices of alcoholic beverages (brandy, whiskey, aperitifs), six kinds of white wine, two of red and three different champagnes.

Everything is available from the first city of departure until 45 minutes prior to arrival at the last destination. Credit cards are accepted as are all varieties of European and North American currency. Both smokers and nonsmokers are accommodated in different sections of the dining car (although not a smoker myself I think this will be good news to American smokers frustrated by Amtrak's sweeping nonsmoking policies).

On this occasion I opted to sip from a half bottle of 1991 Macon Superieur red wine, dry, light and fruity, as I contemplated the choices on the menu. I began with fresh tomato and cucumber salad with red lettuce in a dill dressing. Next came a tender, juicy rib-eye steak, with thinly sliced pan-fried potatoes, and garlic-herb butter. I finished with freshly baked chocolate cake topped with whipped cream. Hardly a diet meal, but a most enjoyable way of passing time between Dresden and Mannheim. — BW

EC56, the Heinrich Heine, leaves Dresden at 8:45 a.m. daily, arrives Frankfurt at 2:43 p.m. and Paris at 9:05 p.m. ☒