

THIS ISSUE:

- Morges/Lake Geneva
- Readers' Forum
- 100 Favorite Hotels
- The Fabulous L'Ermitage

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

April 30, 1995

We Reach A Milestone

This is the 100th issue of *Gemütlichkeit*.

Those who were here for issue number one may recall it was printed on heavier, darker paper that we immediately discovered wasn't practical and quickly changed. That first issue had these stories: driving Europe's backroads, *Excursions into the European Heartland*; winter airfare specials including a \$569 roundtrip to Germany from the West Coast on **LTU** and a \$398 roundtrip from New York on **Pan Am**; an excursion to Budapest from Vienna; off-trail skiing; the great German soccer club, **Bayern München**; and a favorite hotel and restaurant, the **Gasthof Fraundorfer** in Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

In the *Welcome to the Premiere Issue of Gemütlichkeit* column we commented that *Gemütlichkeit* "is a personal newsletter" and that we have "traveled often in these countries because we love doing it and wish to pass on to you the things we see and experience." This very first message to subscribers concluded "this is the start of another wonderful trip. We hope you will enjoy traveling with us." Reading those words again, I realize they still accurately reflect what we feel about our publication and its mission. With some we have struck a cord; a surprising number of you have been with us since that first issue. But whether this is your first or your 100th issue — or somewhere in between — thanks.

It is both fitting and ironic that one of the front page stories in this 100th issue is about a truly great country hotel and restaurant,

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

MORGES

Beautifully situated on Switzerland's Lac Léman, Morges, is only 49 kilometers Geneva and the center of the La Côte wine-making region.

For years Morges has been, to us at least, just another Autobahn off-ramp on the way from the Geneva Airport to wherever. Just another lakeshore town.

But this year instead of again whizzing past, we took that off-ramp and discovered a town and a region well worth a visit of two or three days. While Morges is not one of those quaint medieval villages that attracts flocks of tour busses, it does have a pleasant pedestrian-only shopping area, an attractive waterfront, a very fine lakefront 13th century castle which houses an impressively maintained collection of Swiss armaments dating as far back as 1798, a spring tulip festival and a handful of decent hotels, that by Swiss standards, aren't too expensive. Several of the town's restaurants take good advantage of their lakeside location and walkers and runners will enjoy the flat promenade that goes all the way into Lausanne (11 km/6.875 miles) without leaving the lakeside, save for a brief detour in St. Sulpice.

The best thing about Morges, however, is its location in the center of the Vaud wine-making region between Lausanne and

Geneva, called La Côte.

The countryside here has a different, more bucolic, charm than the wine-making area east of Lausanne. Here there are more farms and rolling green hills and most of the vineyards are much less steep.

Our best day in the region was one spent touring the wine villages. The countryside is beautiful, there is little traffic and it's way off the tourist track. It's fun to pull into a little town, park the car and walk the town, winding up perhaps in a little *pinte* (simple wine restaurant).

Also of interest are the lakeside towns of Nyon and Rolle. Interesting in the former are the 16th century castle and a Roman museum. Rolle has an older castle and the **Restaurant du Marché**, which insiders tell us serves the best deep-fried perch on the lake.

Further along toward Geneva, and worth a visit, is the Château Coppet in the town of the same name.

Accommodations

Hotel Fleur du Lac
Four-star hotel whose undeniable charm and elegance is getting just a bit

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**100TH ISSUE SPECIAL:
100 Favorite
Hotels**

(See Page 5...)

L'ERMITAGE AT VUFFLENS-LE-CHÂTEAU

We report on a near-perfect Swiss hotel & restaurant.

The *Michelin Green Guide* for Switzerland

EDITOR'S CHOICE

describes Vufflens Castle as "one of the proudest buildings in all of Switzerland." We agree.

Surely everyone must gasp just slightly at their first glimpse of the castle when approaching the village of Vufflens-le-Château by road from Morges. Actually, it isn't a glimpse. One last turn in the road and suddenly there it is, spread out before you. The great brick structure, whose keep rises to a height of 200 feet, commands a scene of neat vineyards and farms for miles around, and shelters the tiny town huddling behind it. The Château, which, unfortunately, is privately owned and cannot be visited, remains in the family of Horace Bénédict de Saussure, whose face is found on Switzerland's 20-franc note.

Particularly if one's destination is a couple of
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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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L'Ermitage near Morges on Lac Léman (Lake Geneva). Fitting because, considered together, the restaurant and hotel together equal anything we have ever reviewed. Ironic because the dollar's weakness, coupled with the strength of the Swiss franc, makes it frightfully expensive. In late 1986 and early 1987, places like this were affordable to perhaps half our readers. Today, judging by your phone comments and letters, only about one in 10 are willing to spend the money required to both sleep and eat at L'Ermitage. In our second 100 issues we'll spend more time and effort researching modest accommodations than we did in the first 100. Next month we'll get going on that second 100, in the meantime, read on...

The Swiss Franc

We are just back from a 10-day trip to Switzerland, full of impressions and eager to tell you what we found. You'll be getting it all in several reports over the next few months.

But first we must discuss a crucial subject, the rate of exchange between the dollar and the Swiss franc. The reality of a dollar that fetches only 1.1 francs has to be dealt with when planning a trip to Switzerland. (For those who have trouble quickly converting Swiss francs to dollars, there is one small advantage to this rate. Just assume that price in the store window or on the menu is in dollars and that you get a 10% discount.)

Though a low dollar costs them the most, those whose everyday travel style is five-star will no doubt simply shut their eyes and swallow hard at check signing time. At the other end of the spectrum, the traveler who lives close to the land, eating out of a backpack and staying in private homes or hostels where bathrooms are shared, won't be too much affected either. His or her per night room costs will be up \$8 to \$10 over last year and food costs will increase perhaps another \$6-\$8. Still, that \$15 to \$20 per day is a substantial increase for a budget traveler who has little alter-

native other than avoiding the country.

Those of us in the middle have more options.

- An obvious money saver is to step down in hotel and restaurant categories. This trip we spent a greater portion of our time than ever before looking for inexpensive accommodations. In the city, expect to pay \$90 to \$110 or more for a double room with toilet and shower in a private home. In a city such as Lausanne, Geneva or Montreux, you will look long and hard for a room with a toilet and shower in an acceptable one-star hotel, for less than \$115.

- Look for unpretentious restaurants with bare wooden tables and local clientele. Those with linen tablecloths and customers who carry guide books and cameras will invariably be more expensive. Scout out restaurants in the middle of the afternoon. The kind that have a table of card players and one or two ruddy-faced patrons whiling away the afternoon over a beer often have good food at low prices. That's the place to return to in the evening.

To travel in Switzerland these days we're going to have to change our ways.

- Get out of the city and into the country where hotels and restaurants are less expensive and parking is free. Treat the minibar in your hotel room as though it's rigged to explode if opened.

- Become a grocery store shopper. Buy your wine, beer and soft drinks there. Buy bread, cheese, meat and pre-made salads and eat picnic lunches.

- Rent a small car. The Opel Corsa is a great little car — lots of Swiss drive them — and will easily handle two people and a moderate amount of luggage. It also gets great gas mileage.

- My very best advice for beating the exchange rate in Switzerland is to rent an apartment. We saw some absolutely lovely chalets in Leysin in the Vaudois Alps (30 minutes from Montreux, 45 from Lausanne, an hour and half from Geneva) that rent for from 650 Sfr. (\$585) per week for a studio in

low season to 1500 Sfr. (\$1350) in the highest season for a stunning three-room, two-bath, two-level apartment that will accommodate at least six persons. Each of these units, from the smallest to the largest, was constructed of top quality materials. The gleaming blond wood walls and slanted beam ceilings look terrific — and smell even better. Kitchens and baths are beautifully lit and equipped with the finest fixtures and appliances. Many units have spacious balconies with wonderful views. You'll hear more in an upcoming report on Leysin, but for now you can make rental inquiries through the **Leysin Parc Hotel**, CH-1854, Leysin, phone 025/342034, fax 025/342011. This is an enthusiastic "Editor's Choice."


Good Hotel Deal

The 50 Sofitel hotels in Europe, including those in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, are currently offering excellent rates guaranteed in U.S. dollars. The cost per room per night is \$118 to \$138, including breakfast. Compare, for example, the \$138 rate at the four-star Sofitel in Zürich, 500 meters from Bahnhof with the hotel's rack rate of 250 to 350 Sfr. (\$221-\$309). Call 800-763-4835 to book.

German Train Deal

We got a call from Jerry Elenz of Michigan City, Indiana, regarding our item last month that in Germany it is now possible to travel the country on local trains for an entire weekend for 15 DM (\$11). Mr. Elenz reports the special fare, which applies only to second class travel, is so popular that, in his words, "they can't get the doors shut." He says he rode from Augsburg to Munich (68 km/42 miles) and at some stops along the way there was simply no room to take on additional passengers. With time the novelty of this incredibly low fare may wear off somewhat, but for now those who plan to take advantage of the fare should prepare to have lots of company.

Mistake

Last month we published a letter about a part of Germany we incorrectly spelled as "Schwabia." Of course, it is Swabia. 

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

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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%

MORGES

Continued from page 1

frayed around the edges. Fine location just outside of town on the lake with access to 20 km of paved lakeside walking/running path. Beautiful lakeside garden used by hotel for outdoor barbecues in summer. No two rooms are alike. Recommend Number 63. Number 44 good for disabled. Noted for its "table" and wine cellar. Menu changes monthly. Piano every evening except Sunday. Some nice touches like the never-empty basket of fresh apples in the lobby. Huge buffet breakfast. M. Schelbert speaks excellent English, is very friendly and slightly eccentric.

Address: Hotel Fleur du Lac, Quai du Mont-Blanc, CH-1110, Morges
Phone: 021/802 4311

Fax: 021/802 3474

Location: Morges outskirts, on the lake

Guestrooms: 30 rooms, no two the same, all with hair dryer, safe, trouser press and cable TV with CNN. Each room supplied with toiletries but they are not free.

Proprietor: Elsbeth & Rodolphe Schelbert

Prices: Singles 126 to 198 Sfr. (\$112-\$175), doubles 162 to 308 Sfr. (\$143-\$273)

Facilities: Beach, boat dock, terrace overlooking lake, garden

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Yes

Closed: Never

Parking: Free

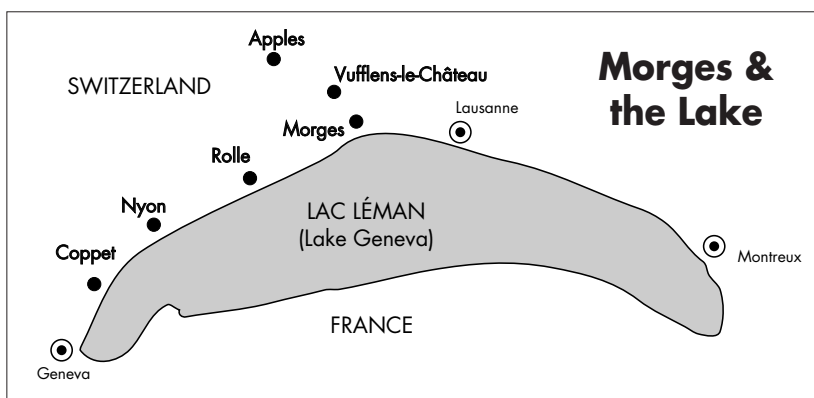
Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 15/20

Hotel du Mont-Blanc

Good modern hotel on the lake with average restaurant. Very pleasant, raised outdoor terrace optimizes lakeside location and view. A three-star hotel with some four-star amenities. Some air-conditioned rooms. We especially like Numbers 502 and 412. Best Western (800-538-1234)

quoted 185 Sfr. (\$164) for a "standard" twin-bedded room in July. Their quote for a lakefront twin was 200 Sfr. (\$176). A call direct to the hotel yielded July prices ranging from 163 Sfr. (\$144) to 210 Sfr. (\$186).

A recounting of our simple dinner in the hotel's pleasant **Restaurant Le Pavois** is a good indication what the dollar buys these days in Switzerland. After our bacchanal at L'Ermitage (see column four, page one) we were looking for something decidedly more downscale. The Brasserie-style Le Pavois was chosen after a brief look at the other restaurants in the town center. It seemed the most active (an empty or near-empty restaurant is a bad sign) and inviting,



with a view of the harbor; high, wide windows; tile floor; recessed lighting; paneled walls; a candle on each table and cloth napkins. Entrees of *Émincé de Veau Zürichoise* (chopped veal in brown sauce) with *Rösti*, and *Medallions du Porc* with tagliatelli and vegetables, were satisfying enough but far from great renditions of these familiar dishes. In both, the meat was too dry. We suspect microwave or a reheat job. The mixed salad, however, with sliced cucumbers, shredded carrots, corn, quartered eggs and tomatoes, topped by the "national" dressing (a creamy vinaigrette), was very good as were the tagliatelli and the carrots, turnips and zucchini served with the pork. The *Rösti* disappointed. Two mighty chocolate sundaes, strawberry sundaes-style desserts made for a strong finish. The total for two, including the desserts at 9.50 Sfr. (\$8.40) apiece, but not including beverages, came to 93.5 Sfr. (\$83),

MORGES

Population: 13,900

Altitude: 1240 feet

Tourist Office

Office du Tourisme

Place du Casino 1.

CH-1110 Morges.

Phone 021/801 3233.

Fax 021/801 3130

too much for an very ordinary meal. Three-tenths of a liter of Dôle was 9 Sfr. (\$8).

Address: Hotel du Mont-Blanc, Quai du Mont-Blanc, CH-1110, Morges

Phone: 021/802 3072

Fax: 021/802 5122

Location: Central, on the lake

Guestrooms: 46 total, all 5th floor rooms and some on 4th floor are air-conditioned. Hair dryers, complimentary toiletries and satellite TV with CNN

Proprietor: Family Heppel

Prices: Singles 100 to 145 Sfr. (\$88-\$128), doubles 145 to 210 Sfr. (\$128-\$186)

Facilities: Restaurant, café

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: Never

Parking: Limited, 8 Sfr. (\$7) per day

Comments: Best Western hotel, USA booking number 800-538-1234

Hotel Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 14/20

Restaurant Rating: AVERAGE 9/20

Hotel de la Couronne

Best value among hotels reviewed this issue. Clean, comfortable, nicely decorated guestrooms. We liked Number 403 with couch in separate sitting area for 138 Sfr. (\$122) in low season. Part of **MinOtel** chain. Book in the U.S. (800-336-4668) and pay \$106 per night for a double, plus a 15 Sfr. (\$13) per room, per night supplement. Dollar price in dollars guaranteed all summer, but MinOtel booking may not be a good deal if dollar rises vs. Swiss franc.

Continued on page 4...

EDITOR'S CHOICE

MORGES

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Address: Hotel de la Couronne, Grand-Rue 88, CH-1110, Morges

Phone: 021/803 2016

Fax: 021/803 12 97

Location: Central, on pedestrian-only street

Guestrooms: 34 total, all doubles or triples, with hair dryers, safes and cable TV.

Proprietor: Philippe Thuner

Prices: Singles 88 to 118 Sfr. (\$78-\$104), doubles 128 to 168 Sfr. (\$113-\$149)

Facilities: Restaurant, outdoor café

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: Never

Parking: Free on street 6 p.m to 10 a.m.

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 13/15 \$

L'Hôtel de Savoie

Simple hotel under new management. Guestrooms are clean, bathrooms small (no toiletries, soap only). For a larger room ask for Number 15. Number four is a good-sized single. Note fish tank in café. New owner says he is ready to deal on room rates. Better than average value.

Address: L'Hôtel de Savoie, Grand-Rue 7, CH-1110

Morges

Phone: 021/801 2155

Fax: 021/801 0329

Location: Central

Guestrooms: 14 rooms with TV (no cable), radio and direct dial phone.

Proprietor: M. Thierry, Mme. von Känel

Prices: Singles 70 Sfr. (\$62), doubles 100 Sfr. (\$89), triples 120 Sfr. (\$106)

Facilities: Restaurant, outdoor café

Credit Cards: Visa, Mastercard

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: Never (restaurant closed Sundays)

Parking: Free on street 6 p.m to 10 a.m.

Rating: AVERAGE 9/20

Auberge de la Couronne

In the quiet, picturesque wine village of Apples, about seven kilometers from Morges. Very good for

quiet, relaxing first night stop out of Geneva airport. Best known as Michelin one-star restaurant but has recently added five spacious guestrooms offering good quality and value. Number four is "duplex" on two levels; bedroom upstairs, large sitting room with sofa and two easy chairs downstairs. Small drawback: toilet and shower are downstairs. Number one is an even better deal; large double on one level for 115 Sfr. (\$102). Try the café for less expensive meals.

Address: Auberge de la Couronne, CH-1143, Apples

Phone: 021/800 3167

Fax: 021/800 5328

Location: Village center

Guestrooms: Five total, some on two levels, all with cable TV, minibar and direct dial phone

Proprietor: Claude Joseph

Prices: Singles 100 Sfr. (\$88), doubles 115 to 150 Sfr. (\$102-\$133)

Facilities: Michelin one-star restaurant, café. No lift

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Not suitable

Closed: First week January, three weeks starting last week of July

Parking: Free

Rating: ABOVE AVERAGE 13/15 \$

Other Accommodations

Hotel Tête Noire at Grand Rue 94 in Rolle (phone 021/825 2251, fax 021/825 3962) is a two-star that offers acceptable rooms but at too high a price: 80 to 90 Sfr. (\$71-\$80) for singles and 100 to 130 Sfr. (\$88 to \$115) for doubles. Auberge de la Couronne (see above) at similar prices is far better.

The Nyon Tourist Office suggests these lower priced establishments:

Motel Le Léman in Commugny (near Coppet), phone 022/776 2521, fax 022/776 0178, singles 65 to 75 Sfr. (\$58-\$66), doubles 90 to 100 Sfr. (\$80).

Motel de l'Aérodrome in Prangins (two km from Nyon), phone 022/361 0055, fax 022/361 0533, singles 95 Sfr. (\$84), doubles 115 Sfr. (\$102).

Auberge de la Réunion in Coin-sins (10 km north of Nyon), phone

022/364 2301, fax 022/364 6690, singles 75 to 85 (\$66), doubles 110 to 130 Sfr. (\$97-\$115).

In addition, **M. Michel Manini**, in Mollens (about 14 km northwest of Morges, beyond Apples) offers room and breakfast for one person with private toilet and shower for 35 Sfr. (\$31). For two persons the price is 55 Sfr. (\$49).

Morges Notes

- Richard Maier makes wonderful chocolate and other sinful things at **Maier**, a Confiserie-Pâtisserie-Glacierie and Tea Room at 60 rue Louis-de-Savoie, CH-1110 Morges. As an indication of quality, though 90% of M. Maier's chocolate is sold from this modest store front, he does distribute to a small list of clients including the **Hotel Beau Rivage Palace** in Lausanne. Visitor tours may be arranged through the Morges tourist office, across the street from Maier.

- The late film actress **Audrey Hepburn** lived in the town of Tolochenaz, about a mile west of Morges. She is buried there. Her simple grave is in a small, roadside cemetery near her home. Here's how to find it: from the traffic roundabout on Rue de la Gare across from the railway station, follow the Geneva signs under the overpass and west toward Geneva. Shortly after the Vufflens turnoff is a sign pointing right toward Tolochenaz. Bear right and in a few hundred yards you will see a small cemetery on the right. From the grave site look west along the road toward Geneva. On the right side about 500 yards down the road is a barn. The Hepburn residence is across the road from the barn. The home is still occupied by members of her family. Be discreet.

- The wine region near the lake between Lausanne and Geneva is known as **La Côte**. Basic information about these vineyards is contained in a booklet that has an English version titled *Guide to the Vaudois Vineyards*. It contains suggested walking tours of both the vineyards of La Côte and

Continued on page 8...

100th Issue Special...

100 FAVORITE HOTELS

Here, in alphabetical order by country, by city and by establishment, are the 100 hotels we liked the best over our first 100 issues.

Austria

Landhaus Hubertushof, Puchen 86, A-8992, Altaussee/Steiermark, phone 06152/71280, MOD

Grüner Baum, Kotschachtal, A-5640, Badgastein, phone 06434/25 160, fax 06434/25 16 125, EXP

Haus Hirt, An der Kaiser Promenade, A-5640, Badgastein, phone 06434/2797, fax 0634/279748, MOD-EXP

Villa Solitude, Kaiser Franz Josef Str. 16, A-5640, Badgastein, phone 06434/5101/5102, fax 06434/5101 3, EXP

Der Bär, A-6352, Ellmau, 05358/2395, fax 05358/23 95-56, EXP

Erzherzog Johann, Sackstrasse 3-5, A-8010, Graz, 0316/81 16 16, fax 0316/81 15 15, MOD

Schlossberg Hotel, Kaiser Franz-Josef-Kai 30, A-8010, Graz, 0316/80 70 0, fax 0316/80 70 160, MOD-EXP

Golf-Hotel Ramushof, Ried-Ecking 16, A-6370, Kitzbühel, 05356/52 52, fax 05356/5252 49, MOD-EXP

Haus Christophorus, Marchfeldgasse 3, A-6370, Kitzbühel, phone 05356/27 83, fax 05356/27 85, MOD

Romantik Hotel Tennerhof, Griesenauweg 26, A-6370, Kitzbühel, phone 05356/31 81, fax 05356/36 36 70, EXP

Seehof am Mondsee, A-5311, Loichbichl Am Mondsee, phone 06232/50 31, fax 06232/50 31 51, EXP

Kohlmayer, A-5562, Obertauern, phone 06456/282, fax 06456/282, MOD-EXP

Schloss Haunspurg, A-5411, Obraalm Bei Hallein, phone 06245/80 662, fax 06245/8560, MOD-EXP

Pension Wolf, Kaigasse 7, A-5020, Salzburg, phone 0662/84 34 530, fax 0662/84 24 23, MOD

Trumer Stube, Bergstrasse 6, A-5020, Salzburg, phone 0662/74776, fax 0662/74326, MOD

Gartenhotel Tümmelerhof, A-6100, Seefeld, phone 05212/2571-0, fax 05212/2571104, MOD-EXP

Larchenhof, A-6100, Seefeld, phone 05212/2383, EXP

Schloss Plankenwarth, A-8113, St. Oswald bei Graz, phone 03123/2838, fax 03123/28 38 18, MOD

Mader, Stadtplatz 36, A-4400, Steyr, phone 07252/23358, fax 07252/233506, MOD

Kaiserin Elisabeth, Weihburgasse 3, A-1010, Vienna, phone 01/51 526, fax 01/51 5267, MOD-EXP

König von Ungarn, Schulerstrasse 10, A-1010, Vienna, phone 01/51 58 40, fax 01/51 58 48, MOD-EXP

Pension Altstadt, Kirchengasse 41, A-1070, Vienna, phone 01/526 33 99 0, fax 01/523 49 01, MOD-EXP

Pension Aviano, Marco d'Avianogasse 1, A-1010, Vienna, phone 01/512 83 30, fax 01//5337096, MOD

Römischer Kaiser, Annagasse 163, A-1010, Vienna, phone 01/512 7751, fax 01/512 775113, EXP

Sacher, Philharmonikerstr. 4, A-1015, Vienna, phone 01/5-14-56, fax 01/51-45-78-10, EXP

Jagdschloss Graf Recke, A-5742, Wald im Pinzgau, phone 065/65-64-17, MOD

Germany

Romantik Hotel Lindner, Marienplatz 5, D-83043, Bad Aibling, phone 08061/9 06 30, fax 08061/30535, MOD-EXP

Harzhotel Romantischer Winkel, Bismarckstr. 23, D-37441, Bad Sachsa, phone 05523/30 40, fax 05523/30 41 22, MOD

Brenner's Park, Schillerstrasse 6, D-76530, Baden-Baden, phone 07221/9000, fax 07221/38772, VEXP

Waldhotel Forellenhof, Gaisbach 91, D-76534, Baden-Baden, phone 07221/9740, fax 07221/974299, MOD

St. Nepomuk, Obere Muhlbruke 9, D-96049, Bamberg, phone 09 51/2 51 83, fax 09 51/2 66 51, MOD

Geiger, Stangas, D-83471, Bechtesgaden, phone 08652/96 55 55, fax 08652/965400, EXP

Brandenburgerhof, Eiselbenerstrasse 14, D-10789, Berlin, phone 030/21405 0, fax 030/21405 100, EXP

Gendarm, Charlottenstrasse 60, D-10178, Berlin, phone 00372/200 4180, fax 00372/200 4626, MOD

Hotel Domus, Uhlandstrasse 49, D-1000, Berlin, phone 030/88 20 41, fax 030/882 0410, MOD

Kronprinz, Kronprinzendamm 1, D-10711, Berlin, phone 030/89 60 30, fax 030/893 1215, MOD

Andrea, Holzweg 10, D-94249, Bodenmais, phone 09924/3-86, fax 09924/74 74, MOD

Schloss Neuhofer, Neuhofer Str 10, D-96450, Coburg, phone 09563/2051, fax 09563/2107, INEX-MOD

Gasthaus zum Kreuz, Grosstalerstrasse, D-79117, Freiburg-Kappel, phone 0761/62055, fax 0761/64793, INEX-MOD

Landhaus Sommer am See, Weidachstrasse 74, D-87629, Füssen, phone 08362/2481, fax 08362/2074, INEX-MOD

Boddenberg, Wildnauer Str. 21, D-82467, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, phone 08821/9 32 60, fax 08821/9 32 645, INEX-MOD

Gasthof Fraundorfer, Ludwigsrasse 24, D-82467, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, phone 08821/2176, fax 08821/71073, INEX-MOD

Abtei, Abteistrasse 14, D-20149, Hamburg, phone 040/4495 95, fax 040/449820, EXP

Vier Jahreszeiten, Neuer Jungfernstieg 9, D-20354, Hamburg, phone 040/3 49 40, fax 040/3494602, VEXP

Birkenhof, von-Eiff-Strasse 37, D-63456, Hanau am Main, phone 06181/6 48 80, fax 06181/64 88 39, MOD

Hirschgasse, Hirschgasse 3, D-69120, Heidelberg, phone 06221/45 40, fax 06221/454 111, VEXP

Romantik Hotel Bierhütte, Hohenau-Bierhutte, D-94545, Hohenau, phone 08558/3-15, fax 08558/23 87, MOD

Gasthaus-Hotel Zur Weserei, Hauptstrasse 70, D-79400, Kandern, phone 07626/70 00, fax 07626/6581, MOD

Dreiech, Frankfurter Str. 49, D-63225, Langen, phone 06103/2-10-01, fax 06103/5 20 30, INEX-MOD

Anker, Obertorstrasse 6, D-97828, Marktheidenfeld, phone 09301/6 00 40, fax 09301/600 47, MOD-EXP

Adria, Liebigstrasse 8a, D-80538, Munich, phone 089/293081, fax 089/227015, MOD

Exquisit, Pettenkofersstrasse 3, D-80336, Munich, phone 089/5519900, fax 089/55199499, MOD-EXP

Olympic, Hans-Sachs-Strasse 4, D-80469, Munich, phone 089/231890, fax 089/23189199, MOD-EXP

Gutshotel Des Weingut, Balduinstr. 1, D-54347, Neumangen-Dhron, phone

06507/20-35, fax 06507/5644, MOD

Rebenhof, Weinstrasse 58, D-76534, Neuweier, phone 07223/20 43 78, fax 07223/52321, INEX-MOD

Weinhaus Steichele, Knorrstrasse 2, D-90402, Nürnberg, phone 0911/20 43 78, fax 0911/221 914, MOD

Kneippkurhaus Christliches Hospiz, Ludwigstrasse 37-41a, D-87561, Oberstdorf, phone 08322/701-0, fax 08322/701 516, EXP

Wald Und Schlosshotel Friedrichsruhe, D-74639, Öhringen, phone 07941/6 08 70, fax 07941/61 46 8, EXP

Hotel Bavaria, Kienbergstr. 62, D-87459, Pfronten, phone 08363/90 20, fax 08363/68 15, MOD-EXP

Dorer, Franz-Schubert Str. 20, D-78141, Schönwald, phone 07722/9 50 50, fax 07722/9 50 530, MOD

Pension Heim, Aufmberg 8, D-87637, Seeg, phone 08364/642, fax 08364/10 51, INEX

Schloss Spangenberg, D-34286, Spangenberg, phone 05663/8-66, fax 05663/75 67, MOD-EXP

Benen Diken Hof, Suederstrasse, D-25980, Sylt Ost, phone 04651/3 10 35, fax 04651/358 35, EXP

Stadt Hamburg, Strandstrasse 2, D-25980, Sylt/Westerland, phone 04651/85 80, fax 04651/858220, EXP

Petrisberg, Sickingenstr. 11, D-54292, Trier, phone 0651/4-11-81, INEX-MOD

Feiler, Oberer Markt 4, D-91346, Wiesenttal, phone 09196/9 29 50, fax 09196/362, MOD-EXP

Gasthof zur Stadt Mainz, Semmelstrasse 39, D-8700, Würzburg, phone 0931/53155, fax 0931/58510, MOD-EXP

Switzerland

Hecht, CH-9050, Appenzel, phone 071/871026, fax 071/871047, MOD

Albergo Giardino, CH-6612, Ascona, phone 093/35 01 01, fax 093/36 10 94, EXP

Schlossli Bottighofen, CH-8598, Bottighofen, phone 072/75 12 75, fax 072/75 15 40, MOD-EXP

Grandhotel Giessbach, CH-3855, Brienz, phone 036/513535, fax 036/513707, MOD-EXP

Albergo Gardenia, Via Valle, CH-6987, Caslano, phone 091/711716, fax 091/712642, EXP

Hostellerie Bon Accueil, CH-1837, Chateaux d' Oex, phone 029/4-63-20, fax 029/4 5126, MOD-EXP

L'Auberge De Chernex, CH-1822,

Chernex, phone 021/964-41-91, fax 021/964 68 57, INEX-MOD

La Cigogne, 17 Pl. Longemalle, CH-1204, Geneva, phone 022/21 42 42, fax 022/21 40 65, EXP

Victoria, CH-1823, Glion-sur-Montreux, phone 021/963-31-31, fax 021/963 31 15, EXP

Romantik Hotel Krone, Seestrasse 11, CH-8274, Gottlieben, phone 072/69 23 23, fax 072/69 24 56, MOD-EXP

Le Grand Chalet, CH-3780, Gstaad, phone 030/8 32 52, fax 030/4 44 15, EXP

Victoria Jungfrau, CH-3800, Interlaken, phone 036/271111, fax 036/273737, VEXP

Chalet du Lac, CH-3807, Iseltwald, phone 036/45-11-12, fax 036/45 11 44, MOD

Waldhotel Doldenhorn, CH-3718, Kandersteg, phone 033/751818, fax 033/751828, MOD-EXP

Chesa Grischuna, CH-7250, Klosters, phone 081/692222, fax 081/692225, EXP

Walserhof, CH-7250, Klosters, phone 081/69 42 42, fax 081/69 1437, EXP

Hirschen, CH-3550, Langnau im Emmental, phone 035/2-15-17, fax 035/256 23, INEX-MOD

Beau-Rivage Palace, CH-1000, Lausanne, phone 021/613 33 33, fax 021/613 33 34, VEXP

La Residence, 15 Place du Port, CH-1000, Lausanne, phone 021/617 7711, fax 021/617 06 67, EXP

Les Sources Des Alps, Loche-Les-Bains, CH-3954, Leukerbad, phone 027-62-11-51, fax 027-61-35-33, VEXP

Le Beaufort, 1, Esplanade du Mont Blanc, CH-2000, Neuchâtel, phone 038/24 00 24, fax 038/24 78 94, EXP

Kronenhof, CH-7504, Pontresina, phone 082/6 01 11, fax 082/6 60 66, EXP

Schlosshotel Chastè, CH-7553, Scuol-Tarasp, phone 081/864 1775, fax 081/864 9970, MOD-EXP

Einstein, Berneggstrasse 2, CH-9002, St. Gallen, phone 071/20 00 33, fax 071/23 54 74, MOD-EXP

Hostellerie du Debarcardere, CH-1025, St.Sulpice, phone 021/691 57 47, fax 021/691 50 79, EXP

Rheinfels, CH-8260, Stein am Rhein, phone 054/41 21 44, fax 054/41 25 22, MOD

Rosalp, CH-1936, Verbier, phone

026/31 63 23, fax 026/31 10 59, EXP

L'Ermitage, CH-1134, Vuufflens-le-Château, phone 021/802 2191, fax 021/802 2240, EXP

Regina, CH-3823, Wengen, phone 036/55 15 12, fax 036/55 15 74, EXP

Alpenrose, CH-9658, Wildhaus (Obertoggenburg), phone 074/52121, fax 074/51052, MOD

Gasthof zum Löwen, Engsteinstrasse 3, CH-3076, Worb bei Bern, phone 031/839 23 03, fax 031/839 58 77, MOD

Florhof, Florhohgasse 4, CH-8001, Zürich, phone 01/261 44 70, fax 01/261 46 11, EXP

Savoy Baur en Ville, Am Paradeplatz, CH-8022, Zürich, phone 01/211-53-60, fax 01/221-14-67, EXP

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nights at L'Ermitage, the restaurant and hotel of Bernard and Ruth Ravet, this splendid tableau is a fitting gateway.

A few hundred yards beyond the fortress, in a house once used by the castle's servants, is the Ravet compound. This old farm building's premises are now a mecca for food-loving film stars, captains of industry and anyone else who can afford L'Ermitage's magnificent cuisine, wine cellar and hospitality. Be assured that all who come here bring thick stacks of M. de Saussure's likeness.

If you choose to pay the freight, a weekend, an overnight or even just a lunch, will be a memorable experience.

Not since we reported on **Les Sources Des Alps** (Aug. '89) have we found a small, country hotel and restaurant that offers such across-the-board excellence. L'Ermitage delivers the whole package: idyllic location, beautiful grounds, superb food, personal service, wonderful guestrooms and great charm.

Arriving by car in the middle of lunch, we parked in the graveled lot, grabbed our bags and headed toward reception. We hadn't gone five steps before we were met, relieved of our luggage and immediately shown to a corner room, Number two, on the first floor of an annex which contains all nine guest rooms.

Number two's best feature is its bed; a single, large mattress, probably queen-sized, soft without being mushy or saggy, and equipped with three hefty, down pillows and a long headroll positioned against the headboard. The latter is perfect for reading in bed. One sleeps between luxurious sheets covered by a wool blanket and a down comforter. We cannot recall a better bed in Europe.

One window in Number two overlooks the garden and the main house's terrace where meals are often served in summer; the other affords a view into the first-floor kitchen, where, from early morning to very late at night, uniformed Ravet minions slice and dice their way to culinary fame. The bathroom, which also has a window, is equipped with a double sink and both shower *and* tub. The toilet is separate from this room.

Like most affluent villages, Vufflens at night is very quiet. The only sounds we heard were from the beloved Ravet ducks. (L'Ermitage seems to be the Swiss version of Ducks Unlimited. They are everywhere: on the menu, splashing in the pond, in pictures and displayed in the hotel's boutique, even your room key comes linked to a fist-sized, wooden duck.)

We inspected several other rooms in the hotel and found them equally comfortable. We especially liked the spacious balconies of the first floor doubles, which are perfect for breakfast.

In Europe, hotels with charming settings, buildings and furnishings abound. L'Ermitage backs its charm with service that is faultless and friendly.

M. Ravet himself is a gracious, if somewhat retiring, host. His wife Ruth is equally friendly but does not speak English (try your German). Genius is said to be 10% brains and 90% hard work. M. Ravet definitely qualifies in the hard work category. Based on what we saw over three days, the man is a dynamo. In addition to cooking at both lunch and dinner, he personally bakes all the hotel's breads in a wood-fired brick

oven. (Bakers as you know are early risers, and when we were guests in the hotel M. Ravet was still in the kitchen at midnight.) Whether or not he also tends the L'Ermitage's flower, herb and vegetable gardens we can't say, but we did spot him one early morning with a box of plantings digging away in a flowerbed. He also — along with Christian Martray, the hotel's bright and engaging young sommelier — chooses the wines for the hotel's 30,000-bottle cellar.

The Restaurant

Guests are first seated in the antique-filled salon on the ground floor, offered an aperitif (12 Sfr. for a glass of Chasselas made especially for M. Ravet to 20 Sfr. for a flute of champagne) and presented with the menu. One of several formally dressed young waiters are available for menu consultation and one of them, or Mme. Ravet, takes your order.

After a few minutes your party is invited upstairs to the dining room. We went via the operating-room-clean kitchen where approximately a dozen men in white chef's gear with red toques furiously chopped, kneaded, blended, sliced and sauteed under the watchful eye of M. Ravet himself, who nodded and smiled as we passed through; the only person in the kitchen who had the time to acknowledge our presence. Though all were working flat-out, barely under control, the scene was perfectly ordered, unmarred by dirty dishes, utensils or spilled puddles of sauce or stray ingredients.

There were perhaps 30 diners at large tables, well-spaced over two high-ceilinged rooms adjoined by a wide pass-through. The entire process from aperitif to final *bonbon* took over three hours. There is one sitting and we didn't finish until after 11:30 p.m.

As you may already have surmised, L'Ermitage is expensive. The restaurant more so than the hotel. Only a serious "foodie," or someone not worried about the cost of things, will be comfortable spending the money it takes to dine at the Ravet table.

The "A" menu, *La Saga Des Gourmandises*, is seven courses, not including a selection of candies at the end and the delectable little warm-up plate of "kisses from the kitchen" that is brought for nibbling while perusing the menu, and costs a cool 170 Sfr. (\$150) per person. Our choice was one step down, *Le Panier de Saint-Fortunat*, another multi-course adventure — again, including the starting and finishing delicacies — for 115 Sfr. (\$102); that is unless one chooses *foies gras* or caviar as a first course. In that case the numbers are 135 Sfr. (\$119) and 150 Sfr. (\$133) respectively.

We were so busy enjoying the food, our own conversation, and the wonderful mood and aura of the room that we lost count of the courses. The menu says five but there seemed to be more. Perhaps most memorable among them were small rounds of duck and goose liver *paté*, so smooth, so subtle and so absolutely delicious they beggar description — at least by this writer. The duck, particularly, which had a slightly smoky flavor, was off the chart. We were somewhat surprised when M. Martray, the sommelier, suggested sauterne — traditionally a dessert wine — with this course, but it was an inspired pairing.

There was a small piece of *char*, a white lake fish, bathed in a warm broth flavored with chervil, and surrounded by tiny bits of morel mushroom, tomato and wispy asparagus tips. Next came a marinated, spit-roasted duckling from Bresse and after that the magnificent cheese cart, offering perhaps 25 or 30 choices from France and Switzerland. Just when it seemed we could do no more, revival came in the form of fruity and refreshing house-made sorbets, the opening round in a series of sweet dishes. Now, two weeks after the meal, these desserts are just a blur of remembered tastes: fresh strawberries and rhubarb, flaky pastry, thick cream, honey, mocca, caramel and, of course, chocolate. The ingredients sound ordinary, but in the hands of the brilliant Ravet team they are shaped into things celestial.

The service was, in a word, perfect. Each course arrived at just the

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right time and, after we had had a bite or two, someone arrived to explain it. Everyone, including both Ravets, the sommelier, the waiters, were unfailingly polite and helpful, without a trace of condescension.

Was it the best meal we've ever had? Taken as a whole, it was probably our finest dining experience ever. As for the food on the plate, let's put it in our top five with the likes of **Auberge de l'Ill in Illhausern** (France), **La Grappe d'Or** in Lausanne and **Les Sources des Alpes** in Leukerbad.

Michelin gives L'Ermitage two stars. Fifteen minutes down the road in Crissier, the famed **Girardet** is Switzerland's only three-star restaurant. But not everyone agrees with Michelin. *Gemütlichkeit's* not so scientific survey of gourmands — three Swiss and one American ex-patriot — turned up a slight, but unanimous, preference for L'Ermitage. Each gave same reason: atmosphere. Girardet's ambience, they say, suffers from the fact that by referring to it as the world's best restaurant, many food and restaurant writers, perhaps putting down the real or perceived arrogance of some of France's great three-star establishments, have turned Girardet into a tourist attraction. Whatever. L'Ermitage is very special.

Address: Hôtel-Restaurant de L'Ermitage, CH-1134, Vufflens-le-Château
Phone: 021 / 802 2191
Fax: 021 / 802 2240
Location: Tiny village in the vineyards

Guestrooms: Nine total, seven doubles and two larger "suites"

Proprietor: Bernard & Ruth Ravet

Prices: All rooms 250 to 400 Sfr. (\$221 to \$354)

Facilities: Restaurant, terrace, garden

Credit Cards: All

Disabled: Difficult

Closed: 24 December to 12 January. Restaurant closed Sunday and Monday.

Breakfast served to hotel guests every day.

Parking: Free

Hotel Rating: EXCELLENT 17/20 G

Restaurant Rating: EXCELLENT 19/20 G

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Lavaux (east of Lausanne). To obtain a copy, contact the Office des Vins Vaudois, Avenue Tivoli 58, CH-1007, Lausanne or the Lake Geneva Region Tourist Office, Avenue d'Ouchy 60, CH-1006, Lausanne, phone 021 / 277202, fax 021 / 277240.

• **The Morges Tourist Office**, 1 Pl. du Casino, CH-1110 Morges, phone 021 / 801 3233, fax 021 / 801 3130, offers a special "**Touristic Passport**" which grants various privileges and discounts on hotel guests in the region. The vouchers include a free ice cream or aperitif on the terrace at one of several local hotels; a wine tasting, a bottle of local wine and a souvenir glass; a half-price train ride to local villages; free entry to the two major museums; a seven-day pass for workouts at a local gym and a 5 Sfr. (\$4.50) reduction on any purchase of more than 50 Sfr. (\$45) at a Morges department store. ☒

READERS' FORUM

Beer Tour

It's always a pleasure to receive your fine publication. A recent column that dealt with breweries was a special treat. My wife and I went on a great beer tour in late September/early October. We covered 3500 miles and seven countries — 35 breweries throughout Europe. We stayed at several of the brewery *Gasthaus* inns, two of which were truly memorable. We, too, traveled to Ceske Budejovice where, in the center of town, is a newly refurbished treasure called the **Hotel Zvon**. For less than \$100 per night we had a palatial room that compared favorably to any five-star hotel we've seen. It even has free garage parking! The food was great with four restaurants to choose from.

This great experience was overshadowed about 10 days later outside Munich. We stayed at the **Brewery Schloss Hotel Odelshausen**, room Number six in the tower. Someday, we'll go back and stay a week and do day-trips, just so we can enjoy the hotel. The hotel is family-owned and the brewery equipment is worth a trip in itself — the belt driven brew-kettle dates back to the turn of the century while the whole place is hundreds of years old.

Some readers might get a kick out of visiting the **Pfunstadt Der Grosse Bier Markt der Wald** store near Darmstadt. I can't verify it is the biggest beer store in the world, but when we were there they had 2,229 brands on the shelf!

Other notable stops included the **Burghotel Auf Schönberg** on the Rhein (Oberwesel); about 12 different five-star hotels in Madriana Lazne (Czech), an incredible secret in the northwestern part of this emerging country; the art deco bar of the **Hotel Europa** in Prague, worth a stop for a drink or two; **Brauerei Gasthof Eck** (Bobrach, Germany); Janka Brau's **Gasthof Deutscher Rhein** were excellent overnights too.

A most unusual treat is the brand new addition to the **Hotel Grenzgasthof** (Furt a. Berg - near Coburg and Neustadt). We stayed here several nights and did day-trips to the former East Germany. The hotel is built on the actual site of the Iron Curtain. They still have some of the barbed wire from the wall, etc.

Several years ago, I wrote to recommend the **Hotel Grüner Baum**. You subsequently visited this fine place and were equally pleased. I now encourage you to sample the hospitality of the **Schlossbrauerei Odelshausen**, Family Eser (grandpa Eser is a fine old gentleman!). Make sure you try a room in the tower. It's only 20 miles west of Munich and just off the Autobahn to Augsburg.

We are now about to start another Great Beer Tour, heading your way via back roads and visiting micro-breweries on the way. Retirement is tough work but somebody has to do it.

Hampton Miller, Flemington NJ

(Ed. Note: Thanks for the brew-tour. When you get to the San Francisco Bay Area, you might find some of the *Gemütlichkeit* crew at Buffalo Bill's, in Hayward, one of California's first micro-breweries.) ☒