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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

July 29, 1995

### Austrian Gems

Reuters news service reports that 1994 was one of the worst for Austrian tourism since World War II. The number of overnight stays by foreigners fell nearly 5%. That, of course, means you'll be bumping into fewer fellow tourists on your next visit. While this is bad news for Austria — Reuters says revenue from tourism fell \$15 billion — it is an opportunity for the rest of us. An old-time baseball player, asked to explain his high batting average, said he "hit 'em where they ain't." One of our travel maxims is "go where they ain't," and where "they ain't" in 1995 is the Austrian countryside, one of Europe's best travel values. In such towns as Steyr and Maria Zell, in the hamlets of the Zillertal Alps, in the southeast near Klagenfurt, and in literally thousands of rural towns and villages one can find comparatively inexpensive accommodations and much to see and do. The scenery is beautiful and there are relatively few tourists. Here are some ideas:

- Longtime subscriber Frank Dunham, Chairman and CEO of Millers Group Insurance of Fort Worth TX, and his wife, Betty, recently wrote to share one of their recent Austrian finds, the village of Goldegg in the Pongau region of the Salzach Valley and its four-star **Hotel Seehof** (Hofmarkt 8, A-5622, Goldegg, phone 06415/8137, fax 06415/8276). The Dunham's paid \$156 per day including breakfast and a five-course dinner and report they heard no English spoken during their three-day stay.

- In the lakeside village of Hallstatt, double rooms with bath at **Haus Sarstein** (A-4830, Hallstatt, phone 06134/217), rent for about \$60.

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## HEIDELBERG

*With good reason, Heidelberg has become one of Germany's major tourist stops. Bruce Woelfel reports on a recent visit.*

**T**his storied place, a university city, slightly greater in population than Berkeley, California, became familiar to American moviegoers when Mario Lanza sang the male lead in Hollywood's version of Sigmund Romberg's operetta, *The Student Prince*. (Actually Lanza was too fat for the part and did a voice-over for actor Edmund Purdom.)

By  
Bruce  
Woelfel

Though it's been a long time since the handsome prince, masquerading as a "regular-guy" undergradu-

ate, hung out at the town's student drinking clubs, Heidelberg remains a delightful, vital city with lots of young people, beautifully preserved old buildings and a huge pedestrian zone.

The center of the *Altstadt* was converted to a pedestrian-only precinct in 1978 and numerous underground garages and a bus station were constructed on the perimeter. For visitors, most of the city's life and vitality is focused within this area and along the Hauptstrasse, its mile-long walkway. This central spine is entirely free of

*Continued on page 3...*

## READERS' FORUM

*One of Gemütlichkeit's most popular features is the comments and recommendations of our readers. The summer travel season is in full swing and your reports are trickling in. Here are a few.*

### Germany Hotel Recommendations

We just returned from an enjoyable June in Europe and thought we would share some information on a few stops we especially liked.

Topping the list is the **Landgasthof Zu Heidelberg** (fax: 011-49-37362-7201) by the village of Seiffen about 60 kms south of Dresden near the Czech border. Seiffen is a treasure trove for those seeking wood crafts of all kinds - nutcrackers, smoking figures, toys, pyramids, music boxes and Christmas buttresses. It is great fun to visit the home workshops and purchase items directly from their makers. The Landgasthof was six weeks new and the room very comfortable with all amenities. The restaurant's design is one of the most pleasant of any seen on our European travels, and it serves an excellent breakfast buffet which

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*Woelfel Rides the Rails...*

## London to Paris on the Eurostar

**T**raveling London to Paris will never be the same. By sea it is an inconvenient eight to nine hour trip: two hours by train from London's Charing Cross Station to Dover; a half-hour bus connection to the Dover port; an hour and a half voyage across the Channel; then four and a half hours by train to Paris Nord Station. Leaving London at 7 a.m. gets one to Paris (including the one hour time difference) at 5 p.m.

London to Paris via the new Channel rail tunnel, however, takes only three hours: leave London at 6:57 a.m. and arrive Paris Nord at 11 a.m. (one hour time difference).

But doesn't one miss the sea voyage, and isn't it claustrophobic and boring going through that long underwater tunnel?

Having tried both alternatives a number of times, I can say such fears are groundless. The sea voyage is not glamorous; an hour and a half ride aboard a huge catamaran with seating reminiscent of a Boeing 747 with a bumpier ride. The only deck space is a small platform at the stern with a view of the wake. As for

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## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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- Undiscovered Steyr, south of Linz in Upper Austria, has great charm and several good hotel values including the **Schwechater Hof** (Sieringerstr. 122, A-4440 Steyr, phone 07252/53067, fax 07252/5477054) where double rooms with breakfast are about \$90.

- In the old Hapsburg spa resort of Badgastein, the spotless **Landhaus Gletschermühle** (Gletschermühlestr. 7, AS-5640 Badgastein, phone 06434/20970, fax 06434/238030) offers doubles with cable TV, private balcony with view and even, in some cases, separate sitting area, for around \$75.

- Even in bustling Kitzbühel, one of Austria's best-known ski resorts, the neat little **Haus Christophorus** (Marchfeldgasse 3, A-6370, phone 05356/27 83, fax 05356/27 85) offers double rooms in summer for around \$80. The hotel is a five-minute walk to the town center.

Regrettably, we have not given as much coverage to the Austrian countryside as it deserves. There are plans to rectify that over the next 15 to 18 months, however.

In the meantime, head for the Austrian hills; they are alive with good bargains. As Mr. Dunham says, "My experience has been that throughout Austria these little jewels still exist, and — if far enough off the beaten path — the prices are still astonishingly low and the value astonishingly high."

### Assault on Heidelberg Castle

This summer, we observe the 50th anniversaries of V-E Day and V-J Day, victory in Europe and victory over Japan. Couple that with the fact that our lead story this month is on Heidelberg and it seems an appropriate time to reprint the following true story which originally ran in the September, 1989, issue of *Gemütlichkeit*.

"An incident that for decades has been hushed-up can now be told, thanks to fearless investigative

reporting by your *Gemütlichkeit* editor — aided somewhat by a few bottles of wine.

Here is what we have learned. Shortly after V-E Day, in reaction to intelligence reports of arms stockpiled by Nazis who had eluded capture, the allied command scheduled a coordinated raid on buildings all over Europe suspected of hiding weapons.

That is how, 50 years ago this spring, a U. S. Army artillery captain and his small detachment of men found themselves waiting in the chilly hours before the German dawn to launch an assault on one of Europe's most famous landmarks.

Before them, spread over the side of the hill above the river and the old university town, lay the great fortress, the **Heidelberg Castle**. At the prearranged moment, scheduled to precisely coincide with similar actions throughout the country, the young officer would lead the advance. At the appointed time, the Americans moved forward. The castle's garrison took one look at the steely-eyed invaders and ran the other way. The *Schloß* was taken without a shot.

That the 'garrison' consisted of one frightened old man, the caretaker, is but a footnote to this historic military victory. Captain John Kenneth Bestor, son of a small-town Nebraska hardwareman, would always be able to (in fact, does) say he led a successful assault on the great *Schloß* at Heidelberg, one of the few times it has fallen to an invader in its 600 year history."

*(Ed Note: Captain Bestor is a retired partner in a large Midwestern law firm and a member of our board of advisors. He is also my uncle. His tour of duty in Germany was not always the piece of cake it was the morning of the Heidelberg Castle caper. In the late stages of the war in Europe, when the American armies were pushing through Germany, he was an airborne artillery observer flying in tiny airplanes over battle zones. He has traveled to Germany every year since the early '70s. Occasionally he visits the Schloß. Below is his report on a portion of a recent month-long trip.)*

### The Uncle John Report

This Spring we went by train from Vienna to Prague (Praha) and stayed at the **Hotel Adria** (Vaclavske Namesti 26, 110 00 Prague 1, phone 42 02/24 21 65 43, fax 02/24 21 1025) on what is now Vaclavske Square (formerly Wenceslas Square). Though I had been to Czechoslovakia prior to the establishment of the Czech Republic, it was our first visit to Praha. The Adria is completely rebuilt and was quite nice with all the usual amenities. The buffet breakfast was perhaps the best we had on this trip. We booked through CEDOK and paid \$920 for five nights. It might be less expensive to book directly with the hotel.

Vaclavske Square, is actually a large boulevard with pedestrian benches in the middle. There are a few other hotels on the Square, none of which looked as good as the Adria, though the Europa is worth a visit to see its Art Nouveau decor. In my judgement, whatever charm the Square may have for historical reasons, is diminished by the significant number of street people who were present in the area, some undoubtedly attracted by nearby discos.

The food at Prague's better restaurants was more than acceptable. The beer was good as advertised, but everyday wine was quite ordinary. In fact, the best the Adria had to offer as a nightcap was a Gallo white wine.

Except for taxis to and from the train station and once in the rain, we walked everywhere with no problem. The walk from the Adria through the old town in Stare Mesto, and across the Charles Bridge to Mala Strana, was delightful.

The Prague Castle and surrounding area in Hradcany were impressive. This is obviously the more affluent area and most of the foreign embassies are here. We loved Hradcany, and Sunday Mass at St. Vitus Cathedral in the Castle area was very special.

Contrary to what we had read, we experienced no problem with overcharging taxis. In fact, one evening we asked a cab driver on the Square to take

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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%

## HEIDELBERG

Continued from page 1

automobile noise and pollution except in the morning before 10 a.m. when scores of delivery trucks, construction vehicles, and repair crews move in. After that the street is returned to walkers, with only an occasional horse-drawn tram for competition.

The margins of this cobblestoned former boulevard, where once carriages, then later streetcars and autos traveled, are lined with modern stores, specialty shops, restaurants, and food stores fairly overflowing with meat, cheese, wine and gourmet items of every description. The young, the old and the infirm move about their business at their own pace, sometimes briefly interrupted by a taxi or resident car slowly picking a path through the walkers.

Although not as convenient for those behind the wheel in a hurry to get somewhere, this timeshare of use seems infinitely more humane and serene than the center of most American cities. Early morning in quiet Heidelberg is a particular pleasure. One might awake to the ringing of cathedral bells echoing gently throughout the city and the occasional caw-caw of crows.

In the evening there is a magic quality to the city, broken again only by the sound of birds and the peal of church bells. Heidelberg is a city to be savored at leisure and on foot.

### Hotels

#### Romantik Zum Ritter St. Georg

In a central location across from the Church of the Holy Ghost, which was constructed during the period 1399-1441, the Ritter was built by a Huguenot refugee cloth merchant in 1592 and was the only major structure to survive the city's destruction by the French in 1693. It takes its name from the knight St. George whose figure crowns its Renaissance facade.

This meticulously remodeled building has been a hotel for 275 years. Its most recent renovation was in 1988. The hotel fronts directly on the busy Hauptstrasse and rooms

### Heidelberg Facts

**Population** 135,000, including 28,000 university students

#### Tourist Information & Room Reservations

Pavillon am Hauptbahnhof  
D-69115 Heidelberg  
Phone 06221/21341  
fax 06221/167318

#### Travel Time to other Cities by Train

Frankfurt	2 hrs (change Mannheim)
Munich	3 hrs
Cologne	3 hrs (change Mannheim)
Zürich	4 hrs (change Mannheim)
Hamburg	4.5 hrs
Berlin	6.5 hrs (change Mannheim)
Vienna	7 hrs (change Würzburg)
Paris	8 hrs (change Cologne)
London via Eurostar	11 hrs (change Brussels & Cologne)
Budapest	11 hrs (change Würzburg)

#### Rail Connections

To make rail connections at Mannheim for points beyond, catch a tram at Bismarckplatz — 30 to 40 minutes including stops — or a train from the Bahnhof which takes only 10 minutes. Both accept Eurail-pass. Consult the *Abfahrt* board in the station for track number, then at the track use the train diagram to find where to stand on the platform. Connections can also be made at Karlsruhe but for those who haven't reserved a seat the selection will be better in Mannheim.

#### Boat Rides

Two companies operate river craft: Rhein-Neckar-Fahrgastsschiffahrt. Phone 06221/20181. Personenschiffahrt Hornung. Phone 06221/480064.

#### Principal Sight

##### The Schloß

One of the world's great castles. Begun as a residence in the 13th century, the Castle was enlarged by Friedrich V in the late 16th century before being devastated in 1622 during the Thirty Years War, and almost completely destroyed in 1693 along with most of the city. Although never fully rebuilt, its ruins are a worthy sight for those interested in Gothic and Renaissance life. Guided tours 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 to 4 p.m.. Phone 06221/20070.

##### Alte Brücke

The fifth bridge in this spot since medieval times, it was constructed by Elector Karl Theodor in 1786-88 after an earlier one collapsed from the weight of ice. It has statues of Theodor and one of Athena. Cross to the north side for a classic view of the bridge, the town and the castle.

##### Heidelberg University

Germany's oldest, founded in 1386, celebrated its 600th anniversary in 1986. Has educated a number of Nobel scientists. Current enrollment is about 28,000 students. Its exhibitions and lectures are open to visitors.

facing that street have a reputation for being noisy; not from vehicular traffic — the Hauptstrasse has none — but from late night revelers and early morning delivery trucks. However, most of the small but extremely well-furnished guestrooms are quiet and many look directly to the Church. Due to the age of the building, and the wish to preserve its original design, hallways are narrow and some rooms are rather distant from the elevator.

My comfortably furnished single (Number 305), reached via a steep flight of stairs from the elevator, had large windows and a peaceful view of the city's rooftops. Number 204, a larger than average corner double with three windows looking out on adjacent buildings and courtyards, was furnished with a sofa and marble coffee table in period style and decorated in rose and blue with gold bathroom fixtures.

The Ritter's atmospheric restaurant (see page 6) specializes in fowl and game obtained from its own hunting grounds.

Central location and timeless charm are this hotel's principal attractions. It is, however, a bit overpriced and one should avoid rooms facing the Hauptstrasse.

**Address:** Romantik Hotel Zum Ritter St George, Hauptstrasse 178, D-6900 Heidelberg

**Phone:** 20203/24272

**Fax:** 20203/12683

**Location:** Central

**Rooms:** 9 singles, 30 doubles

**Proprietor:** G. Kuchelmeister

**Prices:** Singles 145-225 DM (\$84-\$124), doubles 245-325 DM (\$175-\$232)

**Facilities:** Restaurant and bar

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled:** Not suitable

**Closed:** One week prior to Easter

**Parking:** Public garage five minutes walk 12 DM per night

**Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 13/20

#### Gasthof Hackteufel

A small, informal and homey *residenz* hotel and restaurant near the *Alte Brücke* (old bridge). The building was first a guest house in 1590 and was

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## HEIDELBERG

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reconstructed in 1836 for a Turkish Emperor. Its name refers to a place in the river of rocks and narrow waters, literally a "hacking devil."

Each guestroom is different and individually furnished. Number three at 190 to 200 DM (\$136-\$143) per night, depending on the season, is a large room and private terrace with dining table and chairs. The room has a spacious bathroom with the usual fixtures plus — and this is rather strange — a refrigerator. Number 11 at 160 to 180 DM (\$123-\$138) is a spacious single decorated in blue with wood accents and a view of the castle. The Hackteufel's best room is Number 12, an extremely attractive attic room with sloping beamed ceiling and castle view. The large bath has a tub and, yes, a refrigerator. It rents for 230 DM (\$164) double.

The Hackteufel's informal, rustic restaurant (see page 6), has long been a *Gemütlichkeit* favorite.

**Address:** Hackteufel, Steingasse 7, D-6900 Heidelberg

**Phone:** 06221/27162

**Fax:** 06221/165379

**Location:** Central, near the *Alte Brücke*

**Rooms:** 8 singles, 12 doubles

**Proprietor:** Heinrich Scholl

**Prices:** Singles 100-130 DM (\$71-\$93), doubles 160-250 DM (\$114-\$179)

**Facilities:** Restaurant and bar

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled:** Not suitable

**Closed:** Three days at Christmas

**Parking:** Outdoor spaces five minutes walk for 15 DM per night

**Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 12/20

### Schnookeloch

This small inn, conveniently located in the heart of the *Altstadt* and renowned as Heidelberg's oldest student tavern, also rents 11 guestrooms. The best of which is Number 14, a most pleasant double with windows on two sides and a large balcony furnished with table and chairs. It rents for from 200 to 220 DM (\$143-\$157), depending on the season. Number 22 is considerably smaller, with twin beds and two

windows looking out on the narrow street, and goes for from 170-190 DM (\$121-\$136).

The restaurant serves good, reasonably-priced meals and there are even a few traditionally garbed students mixed in with the tavern's tourist clientele.

**Address:** Schnookeloch, Haspelgasse 8, D-6900 Heidelberg

**Phone:** 06221/22733

**Fax:** 06221/22377

**Location:** Central, near *Alte Brücke*

**Rooms:** 2 singles, 9 doubles

**Proprietor:** Herr Diederich

**Prices:** Singles 130 DM (\$100), doubles 170-220 DM (\$121-\$157)

**Facilities:** Restaurant and bar

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled:** Yes

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** Public garage two minutes walk from hotel, 15 DM per night

**Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 12/20

### Hollander Hof

The Hollander Hof occupies a fine corner site and has an inviting outdoor terrace with views of the Neckar. The building, originally constructed in 1750, was renovated in 1994.

Rooms are modern with contemporary furnishings. Number 123, a larger-than-average double with both tub and shower which rents for 235 DM (\$168), offers a view of the *Alte Brücke* and river through its two wide windows. Another double, Number 343, is smaller but has a river view and rents for 195 DM (\$139). Number 346 is a large street-side single for 155 DM (\$111).

The attractive restaurant offers regional specialties at moderate to expensive prices.

**Address:** Hotel Hollander Hof, Neckarstadt 66, D-6900 Heidelberg

**Phone:** 06221/1209193

**Fax:** 06221/22085

**Location:** Central, facing the river

**Rooms:** 8 singles, 31 doubles

**Proprietor:** Heidrun and Georg Kuchelmeister

**Prices:** Singles 120-220 DM (\$160-\$208), doubles 180-285 DM (\$256-\$304)

**Facilities:** Outdoor terrace

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled:** One room especially equipped

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** Public garage five minutes from hotel, 12 DM per night

**Rating:** AVERAGE 11/20

### Vier Jahreszeiten

Ideally situated with a view of the *Alte Brücke*, the Vier Jahreszeiten was rebuilt in 1710 after a fire destroyed the original structure. It served for a time as a toll gate for horse-drawn traffic crossing the river. Following World War II it was officers' quarters for the U. S. Army.

Room Number one, an average-sized double with attractive bath and shower, overlooks the bridge and the river and rents for 205 DM (\$146). There is moderate traffic noise. Number 4, which has a shower but no tub, goes for 195 DM (\$150). It, too, has a bridge and river view.

Unfortunately, the restaurant serves Chinese food. Location is this modest hotel's main attraction.

**Address:** Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten, An der Alten Brücke, D-6900 Heidelberg

**Phone:** 24164/27619

**Fax:** 24164/163110

**Location:** Looking out on *Alte Brücke* and the Neckar River

**Rooms:** 8 singles, 16 doubles

**Proprietor:** Familie Weil-Kasper

**Prices:** Singles 135-155 DM (\$96-\$111), doubles 185-205 DM (\$132-\$146)

**Facilities:** Restaurant and bar

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled:** Poor access

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** Hotel garage 15 DM/night

**Rating:** AVERAGE 10/20

### Perkeo

Small, modern lodgings midway along the length of Hauptstrasse with a very attractive restaurant and outdoor terrace.

The hotel's name comes from the dwarf court jester, Perkeo, who was able to down an amazing amount of wine from Heidelberg Castle's gigantic (221,726 liters) wine cask, the *Grosses Fass*.

Built in 1891, Perkeo has been continually renovated and now has

thoroughly updated public and guest rooms.

Some of the moderately-priced rooms are on a narrow side street. A few are without private facilities. Number 18, which opens on to a quiet courtyard, is of average size, with dark wood furniture, shower, French-style double bed and rents for 160 DM (\$114) double. Room Number 10, on the Hauptstrasse, has no private toilet or shower and is 125 DM (\$89).

**Address:** Perkeo Hotel-Restaurant, Hauptstrasse 75, D-6900 Heidelberg  
**Phone:** 06221 / 14130  
**Fax:** None  
**Location:** Central, on main pedestrian street  
**Rooms:** 25 doubles  
**Proprietor:** Klaus Müller  
**Prices:** singles 125-140 DM (\$89-\$100), doubles 170-190 DM (\$121-\$136)  
**Facilities:** Outdoor beer garden  
**Credit Cards:** All  
**Disabled:** Not suitable  
**Closed:** Two weeks at Christmas  
**Parking:** Public garage 5 minutes walk, 10 DM per night  
**Rating:** AVERAGE 10/20

Here are previously reviewed Heidelberg hotel options

- Holiday Inn currently offers a special price of \$99 per night at many of its European hotels.

#### Heidelberg's Holiday

**Inn Crowne Plaza** is located west of the *Altstadt* near the Gaisberg Tunnel. At \$99 it's a great price but this is still a typical Holiday Inn. You'll think you're back home. Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Kurfürstenanlage 1, D-69115, phone 06221 / 9170, fax 06221 / 21007. U.S. reservations, phone 1-800-465-4329. **Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 13/20

- The historic, 20-room **Hotel Hirschgasse**, an easy walk over the Neckar via the *Alte Brücke*, is one of Germany's most atmospheric small hotels. And one of its most expensive. Room rates range from a low of 270 DM (\$193) single to 694 DM (\$496) double. The restaurant is very good. We remember staying here in the early 80s for less than \$60 double. Hotel Hirschgasse, Hirschgasse 3, D-

inlaid paneling and copper serving hoods. A "grand" hotel with prices to match. Der Europäische Hof - Hotel Europa, Friedrich-Ebert-Anlage 1, D-69117 Heidelberg, phone 06221 / 5150, fax 06221 / 515555.  
**Rating:** EXCELLENT 17/20.

### Food

#### Kurpfälzisches

For a taste of the good life go for a splurge lunch at

the delightful Kurpfälzisches-Museum Garden Café. Located about the midpoint of the Hauptstrasse, it provided my most enjoyable meal in Heidelberg, a city of many good restaurants.

A brick walk leads through a colonnaded entrance to a lovely garden with green lawns, tall pines and a fountain. There, on the brick terrace with the smell of fresh-cut grass, amid blue, yellow and red roses and peonies, I sipped a dry riesling ('91 Ensentzler Betschgräbler, 1/4 liter 7.40 DM or \$5.30) and listened to trickling water, birds chirping, and the quiet conversation of other diners.

After relaxing for a while, I ordered a salad of fresh vegetables in a light vinaigrette dressing. Then came pork tenderloin with homemade, slightly chewy, noodles in a creamy, rich pepper sauce. This was

accompanied by a light, somewhat fruity wine with a slightly stronger bite (Neuenberger Stiftsberg Riesling, Winzekeller Wiesloch, 1/4 liter 6.80 DM or \$4.86). Lunch was \$30, not including wine.

Kurpfälzisches Museum Garden Café, Hauptstrasse 97. Phone 06221 / 24050. Moderate to expensive.

**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

## Cruising the Neckar

Another special pleasure of Heidelberg is taking a boat ride along the Neckar, a major tributary of the Danube. Those who don't wish to spend an entire day on the river may opt for a shorter trip to Neckarsteinach and return which takes about 90 minutes. On both banks of the wide, sparkling river are tree-covered hills dotted with beautiful homes, palaces and castles.

The largest Rhine boats, some of which carry overnight passengers, are 360 feet long, 36 feet wide and weigh 3000 tons. The river for most of its length is about 12 feet deep. During its 127 miles it drops 480 feet by means of 27 locks and joins the Danube at Mannheim.

Our 600-passenger boat had only a captain and one crew member. As we pulled away from the dock I sat on deck alongside other tourists and was lulled by the gentle motion and refreshingly cool, breezy weather. Life took on a slower pace as we passed the red-roofed cities and towns along the riverbanks. The architecture, of course, is from an earlier age and the scene is marred only by the presence of yellow construction cranes thrusting skyward and a modern highway along the riverbank.

About every half-hour we entered locks, watery elevators which raised the boat twelve feet or more. The bow thruster turned momentarily to straighten us out as we moved into a space barely larger than our craft, wooden bumpers shielded the boat's sides, the gates closed behind us and then we waited while the flood of water lifted us to the next level. The trip is a pleasant respite from other sightseeing activities.

*River trips: Heidelberg-Neckarsteinach and return 15.50 DM (\$11). Lunch and dinner cruises with music are available roundtrip Heidelberg-Rudesheim for 52 DM (\$40). Rhein-Neckar Fahrgastschiffahrt, phone 06221/20211.*

69120, phone 06221 / 4540, fax 06221 / 454111. **Rating:** EXCELLENT 17/20 G

- Heidelberg's lone five-star hotel, the 135-room **Der Europäische Hof - Hotel Europa**, is on the west edge of the Altstadt, about three blocks from the Hauptstrasse. Don't miss the hotel's marvelous **Kurfürsten-Stube-Grill**. This is a clubby, old-world marvel of glossy carved wood ceiling,

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## HEIDELBERG

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### Zum Ritter St Georg


For dinner in a Renaissance setting, a good choice is the restaurant of the Hotel Zum Ritter St Georg. It has been exquisitely remodeled and refurbished, with furnishings consistent with the hotel's Renaissance ancestry.

For large appetites, there was a six-course, fixed-price menu (85 DM or \$61) that included asparagus with vinaigrette sauce and Parma ham, wild boar and flaming orange crepes. We opted for the smaller menu at 38 DM (\$27) which featured a rich mushroom soup, a kind of *Schnitzel* with cream gravy, a variety of fresh vegetables, potato croquettes and fresh pineapple with whipped cream and cookies. A romantic setting and an excellent meal though rather expensive and even the more abbreviated menu turned out to be a lot of food.

Romantik Hotel and Restaurant Zum Ritter St. Georg, Hauptstrasse 178, D-6900 Heidelberg, phone 06221/24272. Moderate to Expensive.

### Gasthof Hackteufel

For more reasonably priced meals we recommend the area near the *Alte Brücke* where there is a choice of several restaurants, some offering *alfresco* dining. Hackteufel, an inn with 20 guestrooms (see page 3), is a longtime *Gemütlichkeit* favorite whose cozy restaurant serves plentiful and traditional meals. You won't go wrong here.

Hackteufel, Hotel Altstadtgasthaus, Steingasse 7, D-6900 Heidelberg. Phone 06221/27162. Inexpensive to moderate. 

## EUROSTAR

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the tunnel, the time spent actually under the Channel is only about 25 minutes, just slightly longer than some Swiss tunnels, and is over before there is time for claustrophobia.

Besides being much quicker, the train is also more convenient. The old way was an ordeal of lugging baggage and showing tickets and getting

resettled after each change, and the French train from Calais to Paris alone took an hour and a half longer than the entire Eurostar ride.

Based on my June London to Paris trip, here is what you may expect if you book first class. I first took the tube to Waterloo Station and ascended to the upper floor, entering the Eurostar area by inserting my pre-purchased ticket in the magnetic gate. Twenty minutes early, I sipped orange juice in the glass-roofed lobby until departure. There was no passport check; no documentation to produce.

After the boarding announcement I rode an escalator up one level and boarded the coach which matched my reservation. Those who have already been aboard a French TGV will feel familiar with the terrain.

Due to the narrower British right-of-way, Eurostar coaches are a bit tighter than TGV's, but seats are comfortable and decor a pleasant mix of muted reds and grays, the whole effect not unlike airline business class. Seats are arranged in facing fours on one side and facing twos on the other, and provided with tables, each with a little lamp, reminiscent of French restaurant cars.

Seated with three Americans bound for Bern to visit friends, we were soon sharing travel tales. A friendly hostess offered us a choice of English or Continental breakfast. Juice, coffee, croissants, pain au chocolat, and hard rolls came right away, quickly followed by an omelet, sausage, bacon and mushrooms, as we tooted through the English countryside at about 80 MPH. The ride was smooth without sideways movement and seemingly effortless.

Soon we were passing through the huge staging area near Dover for cars traversing the tunnel aboard "Le Shuttle" railcars. Eating and chatting away, we hardly noticed the time underwater. Twenty-five minutes later we emerged in Calais and stopped for a brief "safety check."

A nudge of power was evident as we accelerated, and a few minutes later we were updated over the intercom, "the engineer has informed me that Eurostar has reached its maxi-


mum speed of 186 miles per hour."

With little sensation of speed other than the flying French countryside, we continued another hour and a half, pulling alongside our platform in Nord Station in Paris at precisely the scheduled time, joining a line of other high-speed trains from other destinations. Again there were no customs formalities.

Since I was booked into **Paris Nord Hotel** across the street, I was quickly ready for some sight-seeing. This had been an enjoyable though not adventurous trip, getting me where I wanted to be with a minimum of fuss. Its too bad it took all those years and squabbles to get the thing built. — BW

### Eurostar Ticket Prices

- 14-day round-trip advance purchase, 2nd class, restricted, non-refundable - \$134; one way - \$75
- Unrestricted 2nd class one way - \$123 (\$83 for Eurailpass holders)
- 1st-class with meal - \$154 (\$118 for Eurailpass holders).
- The least expensive Eurailpass, the three-day France pass, costs \$185 1st class, \$145 2nd class, or, when two travel together, \$150 per person 1st class, \$115 per person 2nd class.

Reservations and information:  
**DER Tours** 800-782-2424 or **Rail Europe** 800-438-7245. 

## READERS' FORUM

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will be hard to surpass. The restaurant is very good and reasonably priced. Our room cost 105 DM (\$75) double B & B. We almost hate to share this place but it is just too good not to do so.

For our stop in Dresden we stayed at the **Hotel-Restaurant Pillnitzer Elbblick** (fax 011-49-051-39222) in the southerly suburb of Pillnitz. This is by a boat landing on the Elbe River and is immediately adjacent to the **Schloss Pillnitz** which is a "must see". A river view room was 140 DM (\$100) double B & B and quite comfortable. The location is popular with riverboat passengers and the food is excellent. It was an easy drive to/from Dresden with a good map.



After an absence of six years we stayed again at the **Hotel Post** (fax 011-43-5673-2281) in Lermoos, Austria, and were not disappointed. A "Zugspitze" room facing the lovely valley and mountain was 1280 AS (\$129) double half-pension. Rooms are large and have beautiful woodwork with a sitting area. This is a good base to visit **Linderhof, Neuschwanstein, the Wieskirche** and **Oberammergau**.

A return visit to **Der Weingarten** (fax 011-49-4461-63517) near Prien/Rimsting was even better than remembered with its rural setting and views east to the Chiemsee and south to the mountains. This is a bit hard to find in its farm hilltop location but the reward is a quiet stop with fabulous views and excellent food. Cost was 100 DM (\$71) double B & B. A good overnight if you plan to visit Ludwig's **Herrenchiemsee Palace**.

A favorite city of ours is Hann. Munden near Kassel. This city seems more interesting with each visit and is not on the normal tourist route. We like the **Jagdhaus Heede** (fax 011-49-5541-5133) located on the outskirts by a natural forest preserve. It provides a very quiet location and offers a delicious breakfast buffet. Cost was 110 DM (\$79) double B & B. There is a simple fast-food Turkish diner about half a block from the entrance bridge into the city. It serves a good *doner teller* for 10 DM.

An almost annual stop for us is the **Gasthof Zum Schwan** (fax 011-49-9861-3087) in the village of Hartershofen about 5 km north then 1.5 km east of Rothenburg o. b. Tauber. This friendly place has small comfortable rooms, some just remodeled, and is within a 10-minute drive of the crowded tour bus city. Try one of their dishes with *pfifferlinge*. A double B & B here is 76 DM (\$54).

A new place which deserves a return visit is Millstatt, Austria. Although we were there only one night we were able to get half-pension for 1400 AS (\$141) double at the **Hotel Postillion am See** (fax 011-43-4766-2777) on the Lake. This is a beautiful area with many interesting sights. A music festival runs from May to October.

Switzerland was VERY expensive. We stayed in Mürren, Zermatt, Malo-

ja and Zürich. The exchange rate was 1.11 Sfr. per US\$.

Sharon & Nelson Helm, Grand Island NE

### **Country Hotel Near Zürich**

Last year, we visited Zürich, Switzerland and were traveling by auto so planned to stay on the Zürichsee lake front. We checked out a couple of hotels going southeast along the shore and selected the **Seehotel Sonne** (Seestrasse 120, CH-8700 Küsnacht, phone 01/910 0201, fax 01/910 0252) seven kilometers from Zürich. This May we returned there because of our previous pleasant experience. The friendly, courteous service, choice rooms and location are worth recommending to your readers. Rates: 145-185 Sfr. (\$125-\$159) double with bath, 135-140 Sfr. (\$96-\$121) single with bath.

The last visit we utilized day transportation which is well suited to staying at the Sonne Hotel. The lake boats all stop in front of the hotel and the commuter train station is not more than a five-minute walk. The Sonne's restaurant provides very good food, service and atmosphere at moderate prices plus a good breakfast buffet.

If you were so inclined to splurge at a gourmet restaurant, the Sonne is located between two of Zürich's best; **Petermanns Kunststuben** (Seestrasse 160, CH-8700 Küsnacht, phone 01/910 0715, fax 01/910 0495), and, **Ermitage Am See** (Seestrasse 80, CH-8700 Küsnacht, phone 01/910 5222, fax 01/910 5244).

Donald Walrod, Fallbrook CA

### **Berchtesgaden Tips**

Here is an update on **Hotel Geiger** (D-83471, phone 08652/965555, fax 08652/965400) in Berchtesgaden. Clara and I went there for either our 19th or 20th time last March. We stayed in room 305, which is a two-bedroom suite on the highest floor of the "new" wing. The view of the Watzmann and neighboring Alpine peaks is outstanding. The price was somewhat high for half-pension, but this reflects the fact that the dollar has gone to hell. The breakfast is still excellent and the dinners are tasty. We personally miss the expansive menu of mainly German dishes, but

understand that most places cannot afford to offer so many different dishes and many guests probably eschew the rich Bavarian cuisine.

The biggest news is that Hugo Geiger has sold the business to his son, Stefan. Hugo is still very much in evidence, however, and his style (and that of his ancestors) permeates the establishment. We had a long, liquid talk with both Geigers and Stefan swears that the spirit of the Hotel Geiger will remain the same. My wife and I are confident that this is true and we will continue to happily return to our home in Berchtesgadener Land!

Parentetical note: local Oberbayern lore concerns the mysterious Worpeltinger. This is an animal which looks like a combination of other animals, e.g., webbed feet like a duck, the body of a marmot, the wings of small raptor birds, the external teeth of rodents as well as the horns of small mountain creatures. Worpeltingers can actually be purchased in Berchtesgaden; ask Herr Geiger or Stefan where to buy them. Worpeltingers dislike ugly women and are generally seen only at night. They are ideal conversation pieces in American homes and they don't argue or talk back.

Further parentetical note: The **Panorama Park Supermarket** which is located on the road between Berchtesgaden and Bad Reichenhall has been completely remodeled and is an interesting tourist goal in itself. All manner of fresh, dried and canned foodstuffs are available; there is a huge choice of wine and alcohol at reasonable prices and all German cosmetic products such as "4711" are there as well. One can grasp the high living standard in Germany by seeing the quantity and quality of what is available at the Panorama.

Visitors to the area should take an electric boat ride on the Königssee and hear the boatman play his trumpet and then luxuriate in the echoes of the horn off the surrounding mountain walls. They should also drive to the Hintersee which is on the same road as the famous chapel at Ramsau. Another "must" is the church at Maria Gern above the town. Also,

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us to a recommended restaurant. He explained that because of one-way and pedestrian-only streets, the fare would be more than the ride would be worth. We thanked him and walked the six blocks.

Many street names have changed, so be sure to get an up-to-date city map rather than rely on guide books that at best are a year or two old.

Like most of Europe, Praha is expensive, but it is a unique experience and we will go back.

We looked at a few hotels, all of which would be suitable Prague headquarters for your readers.

The **Jalta** is a remodeled or newly constructed hotel on Vaclavske Square. **Hotel Sax, U Tri Pstrosu** (The Three Ostriches) and **UPava** (At The Peacock) are located in Mala Strana. The simpler Hotel Sax is off the beaten path in an area of little foot traffic and few tourists. The popular U Tri Pstrosu is so close it almost touches the Charles Bridge. At times the bridge is very crowded and the hotel may be noisy in the evening. I would prefer the U Pava which is about three blocks away. I do not have prices for the Pava, but I believe they are about the same or perhaps slightly lower than U Tri Pstrosu. In any event, when I told the desk clerk at the U Tri Pstrosu that I had made several attempts to make a reservation more than two months in advance, he told me in perfect English that the hotel had been fully booked for that time period at least four months in advance.

• U Tri Pstrosu, Drazickeho nam. 12, 118 00 Praha 1, phone 02/24510779-82, fax 02/24510783. Doubles about \$140 to \$200.

• U Pava, U Luzickeho seminaru, Praha 1, phone 02/24510922 fax 02/533379. Doubles priced about the same as U Tri Pstrosu.

• Hotel Jalta Praha, Vaclavske nam. 45, 110 00 Praha 1, phone 02/24229133, fax 02/24213866. Doubles about \$220.

• Hotel Sax, Jansky vrsek, 328/3 Praha 1, Mala Strana 118 00, phone 02/538422, fax 02/538498. Doubles about \$100.

## Traffic Tickets By Mail

One final note, in over twenty years of driving in Germany, I had never received a ticket for speeding until I returned from our last trip.

Recently I received by mail, with friendly greetings in German, a ticket for traveling on a Sunday morning at 11:53 a.m., at the speed of 57 kilometers per hour in a 50km/h zone. The stated fine for such 7km/h transgression is listed on the ticket as 30 DM (\$21).

Apparently we were caught by camera on a two lane road (No 298) north of Schwäbisch Gemünd in an area called Gschwend Seelach. Obviously there is a speed trap on this picturesque country road.

For 30 DM you would think they would send me a copy of the picture. Since I expect to travel by car in Germany again, I will pay the fine. ☒

## READERS' FORUM

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there is a new toll road on the Rossfelderstrasse which goes from Hitler's Kehlstein Haus toward Austria. The road is on the absolute ridge of the Alps and one can see for miles in all directions.

Victor P. Obninsky,  
Tiburon CA

## Autobahn Comments

I read with great interest your article on driving in Europe. I must say, it was extremely accurate and informative. I have driven well over 200,000 miles in Europe on many trips and lived in Germany for five years with the military. I definitely feel much safer driving in Europe, even with high speeds, than in the U.S. I'm sure this is due to the mandatory driving schools that Germans must attend rather than having Mom or Pop teach the kids. Also the roads are in so much better shape than here.

My European friends tell me the two most impor-

tant things are looking ahead and looking to the right, since drivers on the right have priority in an uncontrolled intersection.

Considering car rentals in Germany, many times I order a BMW 500 series or a Mercedes Station Wagon because I like to drive in the left lane. About 50% of the time I get upgraded to a BMW 735 with air conditioning and cellular phone, which, of course, drives like a panther on the Autobahn. It does cost more to order the BMW 500 at first, but I imagine they don't have too many of them and for the same price you end up driving an awesome machine. *Gute fahrt*

George Burns, Clearwater FL

## Zell am See No

It says: "Zell am See is a pleasant, though busy resort..." then I read, "...its location on the lake surrounded by mountains is quite lovely..."

Both of those comments make me wonder, were you and I in the same town? I really found nothing "lovely" or "pleasant" about Zell am See. What I encountered was a traffic-clogged town, insulated from the lake by rail lines, and a community with no discernible center or character. Maria Von Trapp was with Betty and me and our group the entire week we hosted our directors and agents in Salzburg, and I learned quickly not to make these kind of comments about Zell am See to her. It seems she was born in Zell am See, her grandparents lived there, she spent summers on the "other side" of the lake, and she genuinely feels that this is the "pearl of Austria." Darned if I see it. Now, admittedly, from the "other

side" of the lake, you do have a magnificent view of some spectacular mountain scenery, including the highest peaks in Austria. But Zell am See, itself...? hardly worth writing about in *Gemütlichkeit* and certainly not favorably.

On the other hand, I have made every one of the five "favorite" drives listed in the same issue of *Gemütlichkeit*, and I enthusiastically agree with their selection.

Frank Dunham, Jr., Fort Worth TX

## Weekend Rail, Part IV

Having just returned from Germany, I noted with interest your comments on the German weekend fares on local trains which appeared in the March and April issues of *Gemütlichkeit*.

Some of the features of this ticket were not fully described:

1. Each ticket is valid for a group of up to five adults traveling together in Second Class on Saturday and Sunday.

2. The ticket is invalid not only on ICE, IC and IR trains but also on D and E trains even though these trains do not require a surcharge with regular tickets.

The Schönes Wochenende Ticket was designed to fill otherwise empty seats on 25,000 local trains on Saturdays and Sundays. It did this so well that beginning June 1995 the price doubled to 30 DM. Free use of local transit systems in some cities is being added.

Reference:

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