

THIS ISSUE:

- Over 65 Hotel Discount
- Hamburg
- Readers' Forum
- Zürich-Hamburg Via ICE

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

February 29, 1996

### Sweeping Up

Extra! Extra! Extra! This month in this space... The editor clears his desk! Sorry, no penetrating insights. No philosophical ramble. No shopworn tales of long-ago trips. Just a handful of scribbled phone notes, press releases and various brain burps.

So here we go, please fasten your safety harness and keep your hands and feet inside the vehicle at all times:

### Air Fare Info

With the scarcity of cheap summer airfares, charter airlines are worth a look. A good alternative across the Atlantic is **Martin Air Holland**, the charter line of **KLM Royal Dutch**, which flies 747s, MD-11s and 767s to Amsterdam from Florida, Newark, Denver, Seattle, Oakland and Los Angeles. Rates are from \$630 to \$770 roundtrip from the West Coast; \$748 to \$798 from Denver; \$748 to \$848 from Florida and \$498 to \$698 from Newark.

- For those who want to be more comfortable, Martin Air's Star Class (business class room and amenities) is less than half most regular business class fares to Europe. Roundtrip Star Class is \$1698 from the West Coast; \$1198 from Newark and \$1518 from Denver and Florida. Call your travel agent or Martin Air at 800-627-8462.

- Subscribers in the Minneapolis area can fly to Frankfurt this summer via the Saturday charters of **Rich International Airlines**. Roundtrip fare is \$648 (at press time seats were being sold for \$548 but the sale was to end on February 29). Bookings must be made

*Continued on page 2...*

# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## HAMBURG

*For American tourists, Hamburg is off the beaten track. Our Bruce Woelfel visits this stylish city of canals and lakes and declares it his favorite in all of Germany.*

**B**ig and complex, Hamburg is spread around a network of large and small lakes and canals.

These water areas allow for breathing space which compensates for the big-city congestion, as well as providing a reflective backdrop to the variegated peaks and towers of hotels, tall apartments, office buildings, shops and department stores. It is my personal favorite of German cities.

By  
Bruce  
Woelfel

The target of numerous Allied raids in late World War II, Hamburg suffered severely for the sins of its country. It was bombed almost to extinction, with nearly as many civilian casualties as Dresden. For more than a year its survivors lived without water, gas, or electricity.

One woman I know who survived the war remembers ice skating on flooded bomb craters and, at the end, her family sheltering a shipless submarine crew assigned to home defense.

After the war, while Dresden and other bombed cities of East Germany retained their scars, Hamburg, the largest West German city, was rebuilt. Bombed-out building shells became enclosures for modern shopping malls; roads were closed to automobiles and linked by escalators that crossed boulevards for shopping convenience. Lakeshores were landscaped and provided with walkways for strollers and sightseers needing

*Continued on page 3...*

## USING THE GERMAN RAIL SYSTEM

*Over the past 10 years, the prices for Eurail passes have risen to the point that they have lost their status as one of Europe's great bargains. Here we discuss alternatives for riding the German Rail system.*

**R**ail passes are easy. You pay an up-front lump sum before leaving the U.S. and simply show the pass whenever you want to travel. No buying tickets, no standing in line (other than to make a seat reservation), no hassle. However, as the cost of these convenient passes rises, more and more travelers are considering point-to-point ticketing and other, less well-known, pass options available "in-country."

Presented here are discount plans and other rail tips for the German

railway system. Most of this information was obtained on the Internet's World Wide Web. We refer you specifically to the Deutsche Bahn's web site at <http://www.bahn.de/>.

### Point-to-Point Fare Calculations

Using the table below one can calculate the approximate fare of a standard second-class German rail ticket.

10 km	DM 3.00
20 km	DM 5.40
50 km	DM 10.80
100 km	DM 21.40
500 km	DM 84.00

There is a 20% reduction off these fares for rides within 'Tariff Zone B' which is the territory that once was the German Democratic Republic, including Berlin. Rides that cross the border are divided into two parts to calculate the resulting fare.

First class tickets cost about 50% more.

This 'standard fare' is valid for all trains, with the following exceptions:

- Tickets on ICE (Inter-city Express) trains, depending on the route, are 10% to 20% more.

*Continued on page 7...*

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

through a travel agent.

• **LTU** (not a charter) offers service to Düsseldorf from Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and five Florida cities: Miami, Orlando, Ft. Myers, Tampa and Daytona Beach. Except for Daytona, all are nonstop. Passengers can elect to go on to Munich or Hamburg for no additional charge. Fares from L.A. and San Francisco are \$848 shoulder season and \$948 high season (June 1 through September 15); \$648 and \$748 from New York; and from Florida \$718 and \$848.

In past years, LTU has put its regular fares on sale and this may happen again, so pay attention. Monitor LTU fares via their Internet site (<http://www.ltu.com/ltu>) or by calling your travel agent or LTU direct at 800-888-0200.

• We have subleased space in our **Travel Essentials** retail outlet in Ashland, Oregon to **Explorer Travel**. I spent four days in Ashland over the President's Day weekend and watched ET's owner, Tom Smith, unearth some very attractive summer airfares to Europe via a Northern California consolidator. Tom is very knowledgeable about European travel and can be reached at 541-482-6698 or 541-488-0333.

### Travel Books

The 1996 *Michelin Red Guides* are on bookstore shelves. I've been poring over mine for the past four weeks. They are simply the most useful travel books in print. Sometimes I am asked to compare Michelin with, say, Frommer's or Fodor's. After all, with either of the latter you get a useful guide that covers hotels, restaurants, sights, historical and cultural information plus the usual basic travel advice. To get the same coverage from Michelin for a single country one must purchase both the red and the green guide (for sights). For Germany, as an example, that comes to about \$45, more than double the cost of a Frommer's or

Fodor's Germany guide. Even so, there really is no comparison. Michelin is the clear choice. Consider these factors:

• The German Red Guide offers detailed information on more than 10,000 hotels and restaurants. A typical Fodor's or Frommer's lists about 1,000 such establishments and simply omits literally hundreds of villages and towns which Michelin covers. Each of those 10,000 hotels and restaurants is visited at least once each year by full-time inspectors who are employed year round by Michelin. On the other hand, I believe many, if not most, of the Frommer's or Fodor's listings are updated from a hotel brochure or tourist office info. Hard to believe? Hear this story:

Last year, a friend of mine attended a weekend travel writers' seminar at which publishers' representatives spoke of paying a writing fee of a mere \$8,000 for a complete annual update of a country guide. This was the total fee out of which the writer was responsible for his or her own travel expenses! Think about that for a moment and you quickly realize how hotel and restaurant reviews come to be based on little more than a look at a brochure or a menu. I have since talked with well-known travel writers who confirm the fee and the procedure.

• A Michelin Green Guide (updated at three to four year intervals) is only published after three years of research and travel. First drafts are done by several top free-lance travel writers, each of whom is familiar with the assigned region. The book's overall editor visits every sight covered in the book. A chief editor oversees the book's editor who, in turn, oversees the free-lancers. Cartographers and editors decide on maps for selected towns. Finally, fact-checkers confirm such details as hours of operation and prices. It is the pros vs. the amateurs.

(Please note: I don't profess that Michelin publishes the only worthwhile travel guides. To some extent, all travel guides are useful. For budget travel, I especially like the *Let's Go* series.

In their niche, the *Lonely Planet* and *Rough Guide* series' are without peer and the *Eyewitness* and *Knopf* books have taken that style of guidebook to a new level. And, for those who want an overall travel reference for all of Europe, I recommend *Birnbaum's Europe*; it offers a wealth of information in its approximately 2,000 pages.)

### Over 65 Hotel Deal, Sort Of...

Subscriber Tom Trutner called to tell us about a unique **Radisson Hotel** discount program. Persons 65 years of age or over can obtain a percentage discount equal to their age, off rack rates at Radisson hotels throughout Europe. For example, a 65-year-old (for couples, the older of the two determines eligibility), can rent a double room at the **SAS-Palais** in Vienna for \$144 — 65% off the rack rate of 4950 AS/\$471. At the **Radisson SAS-Hotel Berlin** the cost will be about \$110 (454 DM/\$313 rack rate).

However, as the Tom Waits song goes, "the big print giveth and the small print taketh away" (words to live by if you're a traveler) — the small print in this case being "at participating hotels." At Salzburg's **Radisson Altstadt** the maximum discount is 25%. In Switzerland the only Radisson hotel is Lausanne's **Mövenpick Radisson** and it offers zero discounts.

I have one question; does the French woman who recently turned 121 get paid for staying in Radisson hotels?

Call Radisson at 800-333-3333.

### Hotel Deals, Part II

Subscriber and old Germany hand Bob Gillespie sends along a copy of a recent bill from the splendid **Parkhotel Adler** (four red roof peaks in the 1996 *Michelin Red Guide*) in Hinterzarten, Germany, in the Black Forest. The per night charge for his single room — which he termed magnificent — was 133 DM (\$92). Rack rates for singles at the Adler range from 165 to 285 DM (\$114-\$197). This is a **Steigenberger Hotel**, a chain which periodically

Continued on page 8...

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## GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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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%

## HAMBURG

Continued from page 1

access to the lake and canal boats as well as the many lakeside restaurants and cafes.

The new Hamburg downtown is a combination of sophisticated shopping and leisure activities unique for a city its size.

### Hotels

#### Hafen Hamburg

From below, on the pedestrian pier across from Landsbrücken Port, an imposing elevated site and classical-modern architecture, gives the Hafen Hamburg the look of a five-star hotel. Once inside, the impression remains. The hotel has gracious public rooms in a lovely art-deco style, with period chandeliers, stairways ornamented with spidery ironwork, and graceful hallways.

Many guest rooms have spectacular views of the port and the Elbe River.

Though imposing, the Hafen Hamburg's location is not perfect, particularly if one is without a car. The nearest transit station to downtown is a five to 10-minute downhill walk from the hotel (through a park with a prominent statue of the statesman Bismarck) and the city center is another 10-minute ride on an elevated S-Bahn train.

Nonetheless, this is the best hotel for the money we saw in Hamburg.

**Address:** Hotel Hafen Hamburg, Seewartenstrasse 9, D-20459 Hamburg

**Phone:** 040/311130

**Fax:** 040/3192736

**Location:** St. Pauli district, overlooking Elbe River

**Rooms:** 100 singles, 150 doubles

**Proprietor:** Kai Hollman

**Prices:** Singles 166-180 DM (\$115-\$124), doubles 186-206 DM (\$128-\$142)

**Meals:** All available

**Facilities:** Restaurant and two bars including tower lounge open at night

Continued on page 4...

## Hamburg Facts

At a population of 1,688,000, Hamburg is second in Germany to Berlin and has the best air quality of any large German city. It has the most bridges and tunnels of any German city. Nearly one-third of Hamburg's housing units are connected to a central heating system. Its port is Germany's largest and employs 40,000.

#### Distances & Travel Times from Other Cities

City	Distance	by Train	by Car
Amsterdam	300 miles	5.0 Hrs.	5.0 Hrs.
Berlin	180 miles	3.0 Hrs.	3.0 Hrs.
Cologne	270 miles	4.0 Hrs.	4.5 Hrs.
Frankfurt	320 miles	3.5 Hrs.	4.5 Hrs.
Munich	500 miles	5.5 Hrs.	7.0 Hrs.
Paris	455 miles	9.5 Hrs.	8.0 Hrs.
Vienna	690 miles	14 Hrs.	15 Hrs.
Zürich	582 miles	7.5 Hrs.	8.5 Hrs.

#### Hamburg Tourist Offices

38 West 32 Street, Suite 1210  
New York, N.Y. 10001  
Phone: (212) 967-3110  
Fax: (212) 629-6052

Burchardstrasse 14  
Hamburg D-20095  
Phone: 040/300510  
Fax: 040/3005 1220

#### Public Transportation

##### The Hamburg Card provides:

- Unlimited travel on all mass transit
- Free entrance to many museums
- Price reduction for city, harbor, and Alster tours
- Price reduction for entrance to museum ships

##### One-Day Card

Individual Card 12.50 DM

Group/Family Card 24.00 DM

##### Multi-Day Card

Individual Card 24.50 DM

Group/Family Card 39.00 DM

#### 1996 Events

##### Spring Dom

Amusement Fair at the Heiligengeistfeld  
Mid-March to Mid-April

##### 1996 Port Birthday

Annual Port Birthday Celebration with numerous performances and activities on both land and water  
Beginning May

##### 22nd Hamburg Ballet Festival

Hamburg Opera  
May/June

##### Schleswig Holstein Music Festival '96

Classical concerts with international soloists, orchestras and conductors in Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg  
June 30-August 25, 1996

##### West Port

Germany's largest jazz festival.  
July

##### International Summer Theater

##### Festival Hamburg

Germany's largest theater and dance festival  
August  
Kampnagelfabrik

#### Alstervergnügen

Art and culture Inner Alster Lake  
August/Sept.

#### Hamburg Summer

A summer-long arts festival including open-air theater, concerts, film and art, mostly in downtown Hamburg.  
May to October

#### Musicals

##### Cats

Andrew Lloyd Webber  
Daily except Mondays  
Operettenhaus Hamburg

##### Phantom of the Opera

Andrew Lloyd Webber  
Daily except Mondays  
Neue Flora

##### The Buddy Holly Story

Alan James  
Neue Metropol  
Musicaltheater

#### Museums

##### Hamburger Kunsthalle

Paintings from the Gothic period to the present day, 19th and 20th century sculpture, coins and medals, drawings and prints.  
Open Tue to Sun 10 a.m. to 6 p.m..

##### Museum of Arts and Crafts

European sculpture and applied arts from the Middle Ages to the modern era.  
Open Tue to Sun 10 a.m. to 6 p.m..

##### Krameramtswohnungen

Historic almshouses for merchants' widows.  
Tue to Sun 10 a.m. to 6 p.m..

##### Altonaer Museum/Norddeutsches Landesmuseum

Municipal history, shipbuilding, pottery, textiles, ship's figureheads, toys.  
Open Tue to Sun 10 a.m. to 6 p.m..

##### Hamburg Museum of Ethnology

Exhibits featuring major civilizations of all continents, gold work from Central and South America, African Art.  
Open Tue to Sun 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

##### House of Art/ Art Club

Ferdinandstor Hamburg 1  
Open Tue-Sun 10 a.m.-6 p.m.,  
Wed 10 a.m.-8 p.m.

##### Car Museum

Kurt-Schumacher-Allee 42  
Open Daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

##### Botanic Collection and Display Greenhouses

Botanic Institute of the University  
Marseiller Strasse 7  
Open Mon-Fri 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

##### Post Museum

Stephansplatz Ecke Dammtorwall  
Open Tue, Wed, Fri 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Thurs 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

## HAMBURG

Continued from page 3

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled Access:** Level entry, no special rooms

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** 10 DM (\$7) per night

**Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 15/20

St. Raphael

Located in a semi-residential district accessible to the harbor, train station and downtown shopping, this well-maintained hotel has been in business since 1940. Since then, the St. Raphael has been continuously remodeled and the current owners took over in 1970. St. Raphael and nearby City House Hotel (reviewed below) are adjacent and operate under the same management.

Guestrooms are furnished in contemporary style with muted colors. Number 344, facing the quiet, pedestrian side, is a large double with European-style beds and rents for 310 DM (\$214) in high season. The bathroom is done in marble tile. Similar in price is Number 412, a quiet double with twin beds, overlooking a small stand of trees. Number 405 is an average-sized single in white with natural wood furnishings and a city view for 200 DM (\$138).

**Address:** Best Western St. Raphael, Adenaueralle 41, D-20097 Hamburg

**Phone:** 040/248200

**Fax:** 040/20820333

**Location:** Five minutes from train station, 10 minutes from central shopping area

**Rooms:** 50 singles, 81 doubles

**Proprietor:** Jorg C. Kutta

**Prices:** Singles 160-240 DM (\$110-\$166), doubles 220-300 DM (\$152-\$207)

### A Visit to the St. Pauli Morning Market

Hamburg is a port city and to enjoy it to the fullest we recommend a visit to one of its most famous districts, St. Pauli, near the infamous Reeperbahn. At night, strippers and prostitutes, intent on fleecing customers, frequent the streets and numerous clubs. But a better time for most people to visit is in the early morning when it is unlikely that one will encounter any vices other than possibly gluttony.

The time to go is on a Saturday, between 6 and 9 a.m., and the place is St. Pauli Landesbrücken, a 10-15 minute walk from the elevated S-Bahn stop of that name. This extraordinary combination of flea market, fish market and farmers market takes place every Saturday and should not be missed.

Our visit was on a freezing, foggy morning after a 6 a.m. breakfast. Across the Elbe we could see the huge bulk of the British ocean liner QEII in dry dock, looking like an impossibly enormous beached whale. More than a mile of concessions' booths and tents stretched along the waterfront.

Steam rose from crowds of strollers and shoppers. There were all sizes and shapes of clothing, hats, boots, shoes, electronics, and endless varieties of meat, fish, vegetables and fruit. Tents sheltered raucous auctioneers who hawked fruit and frequently tossed examples of their wares to participants; a banana here, an apple there.

The cold awakened our appetites and as we strolled we stopped at several vendors' stands to sample various kinds of sausages. Offering many inexpensive and mouth-watering varieties of hot meat and fish, it is a sensational place for those with early morning appetites.

Of interest near the market, is an incredible combination of elevator and tunnel completed in 1911. It allows one vehicle at a time to cross the Elbe. A stone tower houses endlessly descending flights of stairs and a truck-sized elevator that drops 60 meters to a tunnel which crosses under the river to another elevator on the opposite shore.

Not far from the fish market, a pier lined with shops sits above the river. We finished our St Pauli visit on this pier with lunch at Flötkenkieker restaurant (see page 6). — BW

**Meals:** All available

**Facilities:** Whirlpool bath, sauna

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled Access:** Level access, no special rooms

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** 8 DM (\$6) per night

**Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 12/20

### City House

Located on a quiet residential street behind the St. Raphael and sharing the same management, is this small, homelike apartment-hotel.

Built in the 1920s as a private home, the building was converted to its current use after the War. The present owners took over in 1993. With a small lobby and no public

rooms, meals are obtained from the restaurant in the St. Raphael.

The larger-than-average size guest rooms are attractively furnished in contemporary style. There are two suites with kitchens and some double rooms have kitchenettes. Number 10 is a spacious double with shower and European beds facing a very quiet rear courtyard. It rents for 198 DM (\$137). Number 12, another large double, has two single beds, a sofa and the same quiet outlook for 280 DM (\$193). Number 17 has European-style beds (twins together with common headboard), two easy chairs, both tub and shower, and a pleasant city view for 208 DM

(\$143). Number 23, a double which rents for 198 DM (\$137), has a small kitchen.

Some single rooms, for less money, do not have private facilities.

**Address:** City-House, Pulverteich 25, D-20099 Hamburg

**Phone:** 040/2803850

**Fax:** 040/2801838

**Location:** Near main station and shopping district

**Rooms:** Three singles, 23 doubles

**Proprietor:** Alfons Kutta

**Prices:** Singles 98-138 DM (\$68-\$95), doubles 118-280 DM (\$81-\$193)

**Meals:** Restaurant in adjoining hotel St. Raphael

**Facilities:** Breakfast room only

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled Access:** Good access, no special rooms

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** 8 DM (\$6) per night

**Rating:** AVERAGE 11/20

### Continental

Built in 1929, the number of rooms in this hotel was reduced a few years ago from 70 to 35, leaving mostly large L-shaped suites. These are very comfortably furnished with pseudo-antiques and furnishings and reminds one of the American chain, Embassy Suites.

Like most hotels the Continental has its good and bad points. On the positive side are its large rooms and convenient location, especially for train travelers.

Not so convenient are the small, rather primitive bathrooms (linoleum floors, tiny wash basins and showers, no tubs). In addition, the room we occupied was poorly lit; too dark to read a newspaper. This was corrected, however, when we discovered six light bulbs in a chandelier had been unscrewed — apparently to save electricity. After that the light was adequate.

Service, too, fell short on occasion. Arriving tired and jet-lagged from our long flight, we asked about dinner reservations in a nearby restaurant. A surly concierge wouldn't lift a finger: "call from your room," was his reply.

Later, however, the hotel's young director apologized for the incident and things did improve after that.

**Address:** Hotel Continental Hamburg, Kirchenallee 37, D-20099 Hamburg

**Phone:** 040/2803357

**Fax:** 040/2803174

**Location:** Diagonally across the street

from the main train station, 10 minutes walk from the central shopping district

**Rooms:** Nine singles, 22 doubles

**Proprietor:** A. Resa Etmenan

**Prices:** Singles 205-250 DM, doubles 250-300 DM

**Meals:** Breakfast only

**Facilities:** Breakfast room

**Credit Cards:** All

**Disabled Access:** Level entry, no special rooms

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** 10 DM (\$7) per night

**Rating:** AVERAGE 9/20

### Germany's Best Small Hotel?

No report on Hamburg hotels should omit the delightful little **Hotel Abtei**, which we first visited in July, 1990. Meticulously and flawlessly run by Fritz Lay, this 11-room jewel is on a quiet street of fine old homes in Hamburg's Harvestehude section, about a 30-minute walk from the city center.

The Abtei offers amenities that would make most five-star hotels envious. The house abounds with antiques and fresh flowers. Herr Lay personally records the classical music on the dozen or so tapes provided for the individual stereo systems in each guestroom and bathroom. Coffee is brewed half-liter at a time and not until ordered by a guest. Nothing on the breakfast buffet comes in a jar or can; jams and jellies are made on the premises, as are the fresh-each-morning croissants and brioche. Even the Abtei's wash basins are works of art; several guest bathrooms contain these extraordinary, hand-painted beauties which were personally commissioned by — you guessed it — Herr Lay.

Five years ago, Lay told us of plans for an intimate restaurant of "six or seven tables, no more" that would be open only to hotel guests and what he called, "friends of the house." The restaurant recently opened and was quickly awarded a Michelin star.

We have seen no better small, city hotel.

Hotel Abtei, Abteistrasse 14, D-20149, Hamburg, phone 040/442905, fax 040/449820. Rooms range in price from 260 to 500 DM (\$179-\$345).

Major cards o.k.

**Rating:** EXCELLENT 19/20

## Restaurants

### Ratsweinkeller

This huge, high-ceilinged, 100-year-old restaurant in the basement of the city hall is decorated in an elegant style reflecting the seafaring traditions of this Hanseatic city.

**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

On this occasion, the vaulted ceilings, stained glass windows and dark wood paneling were enhanced by several large, lighted Christmas trees.

We arrived before noon without a reservation and had no difficulty obtaining a table, but the room soon filled and we felt fortunate for our early arrival.

The menu features a large variety of German favorites: seafood of various descriptions, beef, pork, goose, rabbit and venison.

Service was excellent with a cheerful waiter anxious to explain and answer questions. We chose a large marinated pork foot with prune gravy and apricot marmalade — a dish that tasted much better than it sounds — and a wonderfully strong-flavored *Sauerbraten* with red cabbage, potato dumplings and raisin gravy. Liters of excellent beer were perfect with the meal. The bill for two, including service, came to 80 DM (\$55). Lunch here was a highlight of our Hamburg visit.

Ratsweinkeller, Grosse Johannisstr. 2, D-20457 Hamburg, phone 040/364153, fax 040/372201. Moderate to expensive.

**Rating:** EXCELLENT 16/20

### Schiffer-Borse

This is a popular restaurant near the main railway station. The decor features ship models in glass cases and wood paneled ceiling murals and paintings — all depicting ships in various settings.

The atmosphere is informal and, as it was crowded when we arrived for dinner, we were pleased to be invited to sit down with a hospitable

*Continued on page 6...*

## HAMBURG

Continued from page 5

German couple.

Service was quick and friendly in spite of the rushed atmosphere. Thick asparagus soup, shrimp salad and fried cod, which arrived with a huge portion of potato salad, were all good basic German fare. The bill for two, including glasses of the house Riesling, came to 46.50 DM (\$32).

Restaurant Schifferbörse, Kirkenalle 46. Moderate.

**Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 12/20

### Brauhaus Johannes Albrecht

This simple and very informal downtown restaurant has wood tables, plain white walls and windows that look out on the Canal. Though it is essentially a bar with food service, we very much enjoyed a plate of sausage and roast potatoes served in a hot frying pan and a side dish of cole slaw. With two small beers the bill came to 20.80 DM (\$14).

Brauhaus Johannes Albrecht, Adolphsbrücke 7, Hamburg. Phone 040/367740. Inexpensive.

**Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 11/20

### Flötkenkeiker

This pleasant fish restaurant is on the pier overlooking the Elbe River, a short walk from the St. Pauli S-Bahn station and near the Hafen Hamburg Hotel. A simple meal of very good dark beer and sausage with *Sauerkraut* and potatoes was 17 DM (\$12).

Restaurant Flötkenkeiker, St. Pauli Pier. Inexpensive to moderate.

**Rating:** AVERAGE 10/20

### Peter Lembcke

Based on our experience, tourists get the cold shoulder at this handsome, antique-filled, club-like restaurant.

The staff's attention seemed to focus on those among the fashionably dressed over-45 crowd who appeared to be regular patrons. For us, service was inattentive and slow. Our waiter had no time for us and seemed indifferent to our requests.

With its antiques and 19th century paintings, we like the Lembcke's

ambience, but prices are too high for the quality of food (a forgettable beef Stroganoff and a nice mixed green salad with half-liter of house white wine came to 118 DM/\$81). And, of course, the attitude toward tourists needs a major tune-up.

Our inclination is to give Peter Lembcke an "Unacceptable" rating but we'll give them the benefit of the doubt and assume we there on a bad day — thus the "Average" rating.

Restaurant Peter Lembcke, Holzdamm 49, Hamburg, phone 040/243290, fax 040/4804123. Expensive.

**Rating:** AVERAGE 8/20

## READERS' FORUM

### One to Avoid

Badgastein is a fun-spa in the Austrian Alps. It has a grotto carved out of the granite inside a mountain containing a big swimming pool fed with hot spring water alleged to cure all ills.

**Weissmaier** is a leading hotel where my family has gone to the "baths" for generations, because of the customary fine treatment you so aptly described in the January issue. But the last time I went, there were three surprises which terminated our tradition.

Upon arrival, according to custom, the desk clerk offered to take my luggage to the room. But after a 20-minute wait at the desk I decided to take the luggage and the key myself. Not unlike the management the hotel had been remodeled; the windows of my room were exposed to a big neon sign on the other side of the street, flashing all night, unprotected by the flimsy curtains. In order to sleep, I had to tape the windows with newspaper and to warn the maid to leave it there.

At the end of my stay I asked for the bill. It was an unintelligible two-page computer print-out, ending with a total significantly higher than

the total any fifth-grader could calculate from the daily charges quoted to me on arrival. "The computer is always right" I was told when I suggested to recalculate with pencil and paper. Unable to cope, the cashier finally accepted my version. Werner Barasch, Los Gatos CA

### Rentals In GAP?

In your Readers' Forum section of a recent issue, subscriber Mary Ellen Hunter describes her experiences while staying at the **Landhaus Pirchner** which is located in or near Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Would you have access to either a telephone number or an address for the above mentioned facility?

We eagerly look forward to reading each new information packed issue of *Gemütlichkeit* since Germany is our favorite travel destination. We always read extensively before each trip and your publication is one of our favorite resources. One city which we like very much and have visited on several occasions is the Baroque city of Fulda. The city center hasn't changed much since ancient times.

One example is Michaelskirche which was built around 860 and is in perfect condition.

This historic city of 70,000 located in the Fulda gap has witnessed Roman occupation as well as untold armies seeking access to Eastern Europe through the mountain pass. In 1994 the city celebrated its 1250th anniversary. The entire town was festooned with flowers and there were daily activities throughout the summer months to celebrate the event. The restaurants and hotels compare favorably with others that we experienced in Germany. German tourists, aware of the many attractions, continue to flock to Fulda in droves. The absence of American tourists is compelling evidence that Germany's best kept secret is still well kept.

Edward Charles, Perkasie PA

(Ed. reply: Details on the Landhaus Pirchner and hundreds of other self-catering rentals are listed in the 120-page Garmisch-Partenkirchen 1996 hotel guide. Contact Verkehrsamt der Kurverwaltung, Richard Strauss Platz, D-

82467, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany; telephone 011 49 8821/1806, fax 011 49 8821/180 55.)

### A Prodigal Returns

I want to go to Italy this year — so I started a subscription with the competition, *The Italian Traveler*. Within the first issues I missed *Gemütlichkeit*. I missed the style, the succinctness, the travel deals, the notes from the readers...

So here's my check for two years.  
Brenda Donaloio, Galveston TX

(Ed. reply: *Printing this letter is shamelessly self-serving but we couldn't resist. Thanks, Ms. Donaloio.*)

## GERMAN RAIL TRAVEL

Continued from page 1

• For EC/IC (Eurocity/Intercity) trains, add a DM 6 supplement regardless of trip duration.

### Discount Programs

#### Guten Abend Ticket (‘Good Evening Ticket’)

For rides starting at 7 p.m. or later and ending before 2 a.m. the cost is DM 59 and the ticket is valid throughout Germany. EC/IC supplements do not apply. (The 1st class price is DM 99 and the ‘Guten Abend Ticket’ is not valid for sleeper cars.)

There is a DM 15 additional charge to use the ticket on Friday or Sunday night. These tickets cost DM 69 and DM 109 first class.

Compared to the standard fares, the ‘Guten Abend Ticket’ generally saves money if the journey is more than 200 km; however, there may not always be a connection that matches the time restrictions.

In addition, the ‘Guten Abend Ticket’ can only be purchased at a station that is no farther than 30 km from the station from which the trip will commence.

#### Accompanying Persons Save 50%

This offer is only valid only if a full fare roundtrip ticket of DM 50 (DM 75 for first class) or more is purchased. Up to five accompanying passengers pay 50% of the full fare ticket.

#### Sparpreis, Supersparpreis (‘Saver Price’, ‘Super Saver Price’)

These are special prices for roundtrips that include a weekend (for example, Frankfurt-Munich on Thursday, Munich-Frankfurt on Monday). The price does not depend on the length of the ride. SP tickets cost DM 190 if one doesn't use ICE trains (no supplements for EC/IC trains required), and DM 270 for ICE travel. First class travel adds 50%.

SSP tickets are DM 220, regardless of ICE use (no supplements for EC/IC). With an SSP ticket, one is not allowed to travel on Fridays (until Saturday 3:00 a.m.) and Sundays (until Monday 3 a.m.). Add 50% for first class travel.

Both SP and SSP tickets may be combined with the 50% reduction for accompanying persons.

SP and SSP tickets are generally only a bargain on long rides.

#### Children

Children under four years of age pay nothing. Kids four to eleven years of age pay 50% of the standard fare, but cannot be combined with other reductions.

#### The BahnCard

The popular BahnCard is good for 50% off the standard fare and 50% off ICE fares; however (as always) the EC/IC supplement will not be reduced.

The BahnCard can be purchased by anyone and is valid for one year from date of purchase. For those who plan to travel extensively in Germany and cannot use the other discounts, the BahnCard may make sense even if used for as little as one week.

#### Prices

	(2nd cl.)	(1st cl.)
Adult Fare	DM 220	DM 440
Spouse	DM 110	DM 220
Age 18-22	DM 110	DM 220
Over 60	DM 110	DM 220
Students under 27	DM 110	DM 220
Ages 4-17*	DM 50	DM 100

\* Must be accompanied by parent

#### Schönes-Wochenende-Ticket (‘Nice Weekend Ticket’)

For only DM 30, this ticket allows unlimited use of all “low-class” German Rail trains for one weekend for up to five persons.

‘Low Class’ means ticket is not good on ICE, IC, EC, ICN, IR and D trains

The allowed trains (CB, RB, RSB, E trains and ‘Nahverkehr’ trains without letter designation) usually only travel short distances (usually less than 150 km). While one can use this ticket to get from, say, Munich to Hamburg or Berlin, the travel time will be about 14 hours. The ‘SWT’ is valid from Friday midnight to Sunday noon.

#### Other Discounts

Persons 22 and under (or students 26 and under) can purchase the ‘Tramper Monats Ticket’ for DM 350 which allows unlimited travel for one month (tack on an additional DM 115 for ICE use).

For about DM 7,500 (\$5,172) one can purchase a ticket valid for one year on all German Rail routes.

#### Reservations

Persons holding tickets can reserve seats for a specific train (highly recommended on weekends) for DM 9 or DM 3 if you buy your ticket at the same time. As many as five persons can use the same reservation when travelling together (i.e. 5 seats are reserved, but only DM 9.00 are paid).

Seats can be reserved right up to departure time.

#### Bikes

Bike are o.k. on most RSB, E, CB and RB trains. IR trains have eight special bike compartments which can be reserved.

Taking a bike on a train can range from free to as much as DM 8.60, depending on train type and situation.

#### Rail Tips


The all-German timetable (‘Kursbuch’) is not essential provided one

Continued on page 8...

## GERMAN TRAINS

Continued from page 7

follows these basic rules:

- Service in the West is better than in the East.
- One can rely on the ICE/EC/IC/IR 'inner net' to run trains at least every other hour, usually every hour, and in some highly frequented areas three times an hour.
- Some ICE/EC/IC/IR trains may also connect to less important cities ('outer net'). These always run at the same minute after the hour and they are very punctual.
- Missed a train? You may not be well-advised to take the very next train. Check before boarding. Many short-distance trains stop at rural stations and wait for long-distance trains to pass.
- Short-distance service is limited on Saturdays and Sundays and public holidays. 

## Zürich to Hamburg by ICE

This is an especially comfortable and stress-free way to cover the distance between these cities, with much of the trip made up of velvety-smooth high-speed track.

The ICE's (for Intercity Express) are roomy and

By  
Bruce  
Woelfel

comfortably appointed smooth riding trains, more luxurious than French, Spanish, Swedish or Italian designs. Any ICE journey will be a treat for a first-time rider.

Passengers stretch out on comfortable large reclining seats either corridor-style or in roomy five-passenger compartments. The sleek coaches are well appointed, with closets, plenty of luggage space, videos, individual headphones, and most important of all, a smooth ride.

These are the only fast trains in Europe which carry separate dining cars. (The other new designs offer airline type service at your seat.) In addition to the diner, there is a self-service "bistro," which sells snacks and beverages. Coffee in a big mug at your seat or in the bistro is 5 DM.

Rising too early for complimentary breakfast at our Zürich hotel, we had coffee and rolls in the Zürich station and boarded. We passed up breakfast in the attractive dining car and settled back, alone in a glassed-in compartment for five.


An hour later, after a stop in Basel we were in Germany, cruising along at about 100 m.p.h. By 9:40 a.m. we had moved onto the high-speed track and our speed rose to 155. By this time the train had filled with German business people and we were glad we had reserved seats.

The scenery was pleasant, though not spectacular, alternating between tunnels and bright sunshine. We passed through graceful, grassy rolling hills, with brief glimpses of rivers and towns. By the time we stopped in Kassel at 12:15 it was time to eat.

Lunch in the white-linen restaurant was a highlight. We ate tortellini stuffed with spinach with a tangy Gorgonzola sauce and a juicy veal steak with herb butter,

mushrooms and thinly-sliced, crisp fried potatoes with a lettuce and tomato garnish. With a 1/3 liter of German red wine and coffee, the bill for two came to 50.30 DM (\$35), including tip.

The ICE described here leaves Zürich daily at 6:45 a.m. and arrives at 2:21 p.m. in Hamburg. The train was available for boarding at 6:20. It is best to reserve a day or so beforehand to be sure of a seat (3.50 DM). If you hop aboard at the last minute, look for an unreserved seat (no card in the slot above the seat). There was a smoking car at each end of the first and second class portions. One-way fares Zürich-Hamburg are \$322 first class and \$215 second class. For the roundtrip fare double those numbers.

Three ICE's run each day from Frankfurt to Basel and two connect directly to Zürich. High speed service is also available to Stuttgart, Mannheim and Hamburg, about three trains each way per day. 

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

cally offers attractive discounts at its European properties. Phone 800-223-5652.

## What to Pack

My wife, Liz, reminds me that as we lower our hotel sights because of a weak dollar, we must now pack items we stopped taking to Europe 15 years ago. Many of Europe's less expensive hotel rooms can be a bit Spartan. Think about taking such things as wash cloths, hand towels, soap, soft toilet paper, shampoo and Kleenex.

## Tours Poor Value

Ah, here's a brochure from **Globus Tours** and a 14-day "Grand Tour of Germany" for \$1519 per person, double occupancy, including all breakfasts and 10 dinners. I get tired just looking at the little

brochure map of a route that includes Frankfurt, Cologne, Hamburg, Berlin, Dresden, Würzburg, Munich, Freiburg and back to to Frankfurt.

Don't do it. A couple can travel for 14-days on their own in Germany for less. Figure it this way:

Compact car	\$275
14 nights hotel @ \$80	\$1120
10 dinners for 2 @ \$70	\$700
Entrance fees	\$150
Gas, parking	\$400
Total	\$2645

In addition to saving \$393, the couple will travel at their own pace and whim, stay in hotels that are more authentic and charming than the sterile tour stops, probably eat better, and see and meet more Germans.

## Self-Guided Walks

Many company's offer walking and biking tours. Look carefully at the routes, particularly with respect to distance and elevation. (Since they list altitudes and mileages to nearby towns, the Michelin Red Guides are a good source for this information.)

For example, a company called **Uniquely Europe** offers a "self-guided," eight-day walk from Interlaken to Zermatt for \$1120 per person, double occupancy. The first leg is from Interlaken to Grindelwald. The brochure doesn't mention the distance or the change in altitude but it's 12.5 miles and nearly 1,600 feet, respectively. The brochure says there are three routes: "advanced, intermediate and a gentle option." My guess is the "gentle option" is via train and/or cable car. Whatever the route, persons planning to get from Interlaken to Grindelwald on their own two feet — without a guide — had better be in a decent state of fitness and have recently done some hilly walking on a regular basis.

Most of the distance of this seven-night tour is taken up with a train ride from Lauterbrunnen to Zermatt.

By the way, the price works out to \$160 per night per person including dinner and breakfast. Again, with a little research and planning you can do something like this on your own for less money —RHB. 