

- Berlin Moves its Center
- Readers' Forum
- Swiss Spa Hotels
- Berlin Cafés

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

October 24, 1996

**Gemütlichkeit Tour?**

Subscriber Freelyn Jeffers asks if we have ever considered leading a group tour for *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers. It's not something we considered 10 years ago when we started *Gemütlichkeit*, but there have been enough inquiries that we are considering a "rally" style tour for a relatively small group (20-25). Rental cars would be provided and the itinerary would include some favorite country hotels and, in the course of the tour, perhaps three or four gatherings of the entire group. Everyone would stay at the same hotels on the same nights but the routes between tour stops and the daytime activities would be primarily independent. Let us know if you're interested.

**More WWW Talk**

Last month we discussed the Internet and its exponential growth as a source for travel information. As expected, we received several comments in the "don't have a computer...will never go on the Internet" vein. To the latter I say don't be too sure, within the next few years getting connected to the Internet is going to be about as easy as tuning in a channel on your TV. For those who don't have a computer and who would like to browse the web, public Internet access is available in most communities. I suggest starting with your public library.

By the way, the following bargain package deal is currently being advertised on **Switzerland Tourism's** web site at <http://www.switzerlandtourism.ch/na>.

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## SWISS SPAS

*"Taking the waters" has always been big in Europe. Now, at the same time it is spending millions on new facilities, Switzerland's spa industry is adding the concept of staying well to its traditional "cure" programs.*

**T**he spa vacation is a concept with which American travelers are largely unfamiliar. First of all, the spa experience requires a fairly long stay, at least four or five days, and we Americans are all about packing up and moving on after a day or two. Got to see that next museum, that next cathedral, that next charming village. A 15-minute dip in the hotel pool, or an hour or two at poolside with a cool drink and a good book, is part of American culture, but putting ourselves in the hands of strangers who assault our bodies with fingers of steel and jets of water at varying temperatures, sometimes for days and even weeks at a time, is not.

Maybe the time has come for us to get with the program. If nothing else, staying in the same place for a week is healthier because it means less stress and more relaxation. And to be fair, many European spas now recommend exercise as part of their protocol. What's better, for example, than a day of strenuous hiking or bicycling, followed by a late afternoon swim or whirlpool, a short nap, a leisurely dinner, a glass or two of wine, and, finally, coffee or brandy in front of a crackling fire before toddling off to bed to start the process



*The view from Bad Scuol's \$40 million spa.*

all over again? Break it up with an occasional daytrip to a nearby tourist attraction and you have the formula for a relaxing, healthful week in Europe.

For those interested in such vacations, there's good news from Switzerland. Swiss spa towns and

hotels have spent millions to improve their facilities. Older baths and pools have been renovated and opulent new facilities built. The industry's mission has expanded to encompass the concept of "wellness" to go along with the traditional "cure."  
*Continued on page 3...*

## BERLIN REBUILDS...AGAIN

*If you're headed for Berlin, take your hard hat. The town's some 2,000 construction sites are a major tourist attraction.*

**A**n American tourist named Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, visited Berlin in the late 19th century and called it "the German Chicago." "It is a new city," he wrote, "the newest I have ever seen. Chicago would seem venerable beside it."

Through the miracle of channeling and the World

Wide Web, *Gemütlichkeit* was recently able to contact Mr. C and give him a brief Berlin update:

*First off, Mr. Clemens, when's the last time you strolled Unter den Linden? Really? As long as that, eh? Well, since then, you see, they've had kind of a construction boom over there. More than one in fact.*

*Continued on page 5...*

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

Air + Land Best Buys start at only \$1,012\* for a complete Swiss vacation package. Price includes round-trip Economy Class airfare on Swissair to Zürich or Geneva; six nights at selected 3- and 4-Star Swiss hotels throughout Switzerland; Continental or buffet breakfast; one week car rental with unlimited mileage or, with a \$113 supplement, Eight-Day Swiss Rail Pass. Call 1-800-GO SWISS ext. 29. \*\$892 when booked with an American Express Card..

### Bad Food

One of the better hotel values we've reported on recently is the **Rebenhof** (tel. 07223/5406, fax 07233/52321), set smack in middle of rolling vineyards in the village of Neuweier about six miles southwest of Baden-Baden. But long-time subscriber and frequent business traveler to Germany, Bob Gillespie, stayed there recently and was disappointed enough in the food to pick up the phone and tell us about it. It's a great little hotel, just eat elsewhere.

### A Beer Museum

From the publication *Beer & Breweriana* (a quarterly newsletter for collectors of beer paraphernalia) we learn that there is a new beer museum in Bad Schussenried, about a 30 minutes south of Ulm. The **Schussenrieder Bierkrug Museum**, owned and operated by Jurgen Ott, is also a brewery, restaurant, beer garden, *Bierstube*, and hotel. The address is Wilhelm-Schuisen-Str. 12, D-88427 Bad Schussenried, Germany, tel. 44 /7583 4040, fax 44 /7583 40410. *Beer & Breweriana* is published in Prague but subscriptions can be obtained by sending \$30 to B & B, P O Box 9261, Newark DE 19714-9261.

### Hepburn Museum

The little village of Tolochenaz, near Morges, on Lake Geneva (10 min. by train from Lausanne), once home to the late Audrey Hepburn, opened

the **Audrey Hepburn Museum** this month. The museum offers a chronological overview of the star's life. Exhibits include Hepburn's Oscars, family photographs, original posters and personal documents. The museum is open Tuesday - Sunday, 11 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (mid-November to mid-March) and 10 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. mid-March to mid-November). Entrance fee is 10 Sfr. (\$8) for adults, 8 Sfr. (\$6.50) for groups of more than 10 persons, and 5 Sfr. (\$4) for students and children. Audrey Hepburn Pavilion, Case postale 9, CH-1131 Tolochenaz, phone & fax 011 41/21-803-6464.

### Tinguely Museum

Basel has opened a museum honoring the late Swiss artist Jean Tinguely who was one of Europe's major modern artists in the post World War II era. Located in Solitudepark along the river Rhine, the museum was designed by the famous Swiss architect Mario Botta, designer of San Francisco's celebrated new Museum of Modern Art. The Tinguely Museum is open Wednesday through Sunday, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Entrance fee is 10 Sfr. (\$8) for adults and 3 Sfr. (\$2.50) for students. Children to age 16 years are free. **Museum Jean Tinguely Basel**, Grenzacherstrasse/Solitudepark, CH-4002 Basel, tel. 011 41/61-681-9320, fax 011 41/61-681-9321. Internet address is <http://www.tinguely.ch>.

### New German Shopping Hours

After years of wrangling and acrimony, the German parliament has voted to change the country's shopping hours. Under the new law, instead of having to close at 6:30 p.m. during the week, stores will be able to stay open until 8 p.m. Opening hours on Saturdays are also extended by two hours to 4 p.m.

And now there will be fresh bread for Sunday breakfast. Most stores will remain closed on Sundays, but bakers will be allowed to make and sell their wares for three hours. Previously, gas stations and train terminals in Germany circum-

vented the law by opening small supermarkets to sell food outside of shopping hours to "travelers."

### Hotel Rates

Last month we mentioned **Tradesco Tours** as a source for European hotel bookings. Here are some examples of Tradesco hotels and double room rates (rates may be substantially higher during trade fairs or special seasons): **Hotel Admiral**, Munich, \$148 to \$162; **Hotel Germania**, Munich, \$113-\$136; **Hotel Prinzregent**, Nürnberg, \$156-\$207; **City Pension**, Budapest, \$65; **Molnar Panzio**, Budapest, \$65-\$79; **City Pension Ring**, Budapest, \$65; **Hotel Hardenberg**, Berlin, \$166-\$188; **Erzherzog Johann**, Graz, \$179-\$209; **Hotel Wolf Dietrich**, Salzburg, \$162-\$213; **Kaiserpark Schonbrunn**, Vienna, \$122; **Hotel Josefshof**, Vienna, \$214-\$236; **Hotel Novomestsky**, Prague, \$106. Tradesco Tours 800-833-3402, fax 310-649-5852.

### 5-Star Hotel Value

**Sofitel**, the French hotel chain, again this winter offers guaranteed dollar rates of \$119, \$139, and \$159 per room, per night at select hotels throughout Europe. Available November 15, 1996 through March 2, 1997, the rates vary according to location and are available at 50 Sofitel hotels in 12 countries including Austria, Germany and Switzerland. Rates include daily buffet breakfast, service charges and government taxes (city taxes may apply in some locations). Prices are subject to availability as certain hotels have a limited number of rooms at the sale rate. The program offers exceptional value particularly in major cities. For example, the **Sofitel Vienna's** rack rate is about \$210 and doubles **Sofitel Zürich** are about \$258. The program also allows one child age 12 or under to stay free in the parents' room. One child over age 12 is charged a rate of \$50, also including breakfast. Reservations: 1-800-763-4835. ☒

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## GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

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### HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	Scale	Hotel Rating Criteria	
Excellent	16 - 20	People/Service	30%
Above Average	12 - 15	Location/Setting	15%
Average	8 - 11	Guestrooms	30%
Adequate	4 - 7	Public rooms	5%
Unacceptable	0 - 3	Facilities/Restaurant	20%
Value Rating	Scale	Restaurant Criteria	
Outstanding Value	17 - 20	Food	65%
Very Good Value	12 - 16	Service	20%
Average Value	9 - 11	Atmosphere	15%
Below Average Value	5 - 8		
A Rip-Off	0 - 4		

#### Special Ⓞ Designation

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

## SWISS SPAS

*Continued from page 1*

They hope to add younger, healthier customers and make health maintenance as important as the treatment of illness.

Between 1990 and 1996, to improve existing facilities and expand services to meet the demands of an increasingly health-conscious clientele, the 20 spas with natural sources of thermal or mineral water that comprise the Swiss Spa Association spent nearly \$600 million.

In 1993, for example, the remote Engadine town of Scuol opened a \$40 million spa in the village center. The space-age, multilevel complex of fountains, indoor and outdoor pools, saunas, steambaths, beauty and fitness facilities, boasts a therapy center staffed by medical professionals. Under certain arrangements, hotel guests are given access to the spa which has brought the town additional visitors.

While physical exercise is now recognized by researchers as enhancing the quality of life and possibly also lengthening it, the medical benefits of such activities as sitting in a pool of warm, mineral-rich water, or in a tiny, extremely hot, wood paneled room, are less certain. Even though "taking the waters" may not guarantee a longer life, for most of us it can be fun and relaxing.

This month we review a handful of Swiss hotels which currently offer special spa packages. Some have their own facilities and others, like the **Hotel Traube** in Scuol, offer programs that allow guests free use of a municipal spa.

As you know, it costs more to travel in Switzerland. However, most of the packages listed, while perhaps not outright bargains, at least offer good value, especially for Switzerland. All prices quoted are for double-room occupancy. Most of the hotels mentioned offer free parking and are convenient for rail travelers.

### Solbad-Hotel Beatus Merligen

This quiet spa hotel is directly on

Lake Thun, in Merligen, just 10 minutes by car from Interlaken. Most of its 77 comfortably-appointed rooms offer views of the lake and the Bernese Alps. Guests can stroll the hotel's extensive grounds or along the lakeshore or opt for a more vigorous outing, such as a hike to the St. Beatus stalactite caves. The hotel has two restaurants, the **Bel Air** and **Orange-rie**, an outdoor, 95-degree F. mineral bath, an indoor pool, sauna, and solarium. Every evening there is live piano music and guests have access to an 18-hole golf course nearby in Unterseen/Interlaken.

The hotel also schedules special events including classical music concerts, magic and fashion shows and boat trips. Each year, from November 19 to January 2, 100 Christmas trees bearing 20,000 lights greet guests at the hotel entrance.

The hotel's Vitality Wellness package includes six overnights, buffet breakfasts, five-course dinners, three guided hiking tours or excursions and two massages. Also included are entrance to the lakeside mineral baths with underwater massage jets, stand-up whirlpool, neck jets, aerated underwater benches and forced-current canal.

Some of Switzerland's greatest attractions — the Brienzer Rothorn, the Stockhorn, Wengen, Mürren, Grindelwald, the Jungfrauoch and the Kander Valley, for example — are within an hour's drive or train ride of the Beatus.

**Contact:** Solbad-Hotel Beatus, Merligen, CH-3658 Merligen-Interlaken, tel 41/33 528 181, fax 41/33 513 676

**Basic Package:** Six nights double room with breakfast and dinner.

**Per Person Price:** Through December 610 Sfr. (\$488) per person.

### Casa Berno Ascona

This very quiet four-star, 71-room hotel, between Monte Verita and Ronco, just 3 kilometers from Ascona, offers wonderful views of Lake Maggiore. All guestrooms have southern exposure and a balcony. The Berno's "Wellness a la carte" package includes three or five nights lodging

plus breakfasts and dinners, welcome drink, gala Ticino dinner, one free use of the hotel's sauna and solarium plus free use of the hotel's mountain bikes, fitness room, swimming pool and sun terrace. Three nights a week there is live piano music in the hotel bar or on the bar terrace. Optional activities include guided hikes (Tuesdays), accompanied bike trips, mini-golf or golf on Lake Maggiore (Wednesdays), breakfast at a local farm or a visit to the botanical garden or wine cellar (Thursdays), canoeing on the Ticino river (advance reservation only). Also available are windsurfing, sailing (sailing and surfing school), water skiing on Lake Maggiore, tennis, golf (special golf holiday packages available), horse riding, flying and paragliding school.

Ascona is in Switzerland's Italian-speaking canton of Ticino, on Lake Maggiore. It is a town of palm trees, artists and pretty lakeside cafes. For those not strapped to a chaise at Casa Berno, easy one-day excursions are possible to Lugano and to Varese, Como, Domodossola and Milan in Italy.

**Contact:** Casa Berno, CH-6612 Ascona, tel. 41/91 791, fax 41/91 792 1114. Disabled accessible.

**Basic Package:** Three or Five nights double room with breakfast and dinner.

**Per Person Price:** Three nights 640 Sfr. (\$512), Five nights 975 Sfr. (\$780)

### Grand Hotel Regina Grindelwald

Grand Hotel Regina, a stately, five-star, is located in the center of Grindelwald, within suitcase-carrying distance of the rail station. It is a member of the "Leading Hotels of the World" and "Swiss Golf Hotels." The Regina offers five-star ambiance and breathtaking views of some of the country's most famous peaks, including the Eiger North Face. Public rooms are graced with French and Swiss clocks, paintings and sculpture from the private collection of Alfred Krebs.

The "Eiger, Mönch Well-Being" package includes two nights' hotel, champagne buffet breakfast, five-course "wellness" dinner menu, two

*Continued on page 4...*



## SWISS SPAS

Continued from page 3

massage treatments and use of the solarium for two 30-minute sessions. Meals are prepared with organic produce from the Regina's own vegetable garden.

Hotel guests dance to a live piano and orchestra every night in the hotel bar and in summer, there is a nine-hole golf course and guided tours to the hotel's mountain hut.

The Regina has two heated pools, sauna, tennis court and sunbathing lawn.

Grindelwald is a somewhat touristy village that occupies one of the most beautiful sites on earth. Views from everywhere are stupendous and unforgettable. We suggest no excursions, just walk or sit and gaze at the awesome panorama. A train ride to Kleine Scheidegg and/or the Jungfrau-joch is also in order.

**Contact:** Grand Hotel Regina, CH-3818 Ascona, tel. 41/33 854 5455, fax 41/33 853 4717.

**Basic Package:** Two nights double room with breakfast and dinner.

**Per Person Price:** Two nights 570 Sfr. (\$456)

### Schloss Steinegg Hüttwilen

Just south of the western tip of Lake Constance, in the picturesque farming village of Hüttwilen, is Steinegg Castle, a newly-renovated, 45-room hotel known for holistic health and fasting regimens.

Its "Fasting in a Romantic Castle" package includes 10 nights hotel accommodations, lectures on nutrition and fasting, morning walks with pulse measuring devices, two daily exercise classes, guided walks, individual and guided bike tours.

The modified diet, under a doctor's supervision, consists of seven days of herbal teas, broth, whey, protein drink and vegetable juices. Over the next three days guests are put on a select vegetarian regeneration diet. The program incorporates baths, massages, compresses, heat treatments, beauty afternoons, cosmetics and a lot of exercise. Other

dietary plans are also available. The hotel claims the typical weight loss is between 8 and 19 pounds.

Fitness room with light equipment, polar pulse measuring devices, cross-country bikes, ergometer bikes, table tennis, library and use of Hüttwil lake beach are among the facilities offered by the Steinegg. In addition, there are tennis courts and an indoor pool in nearby Herderen, riding stables in Frauenfeld and golf courses at Erlen and Niederbüren.

On a vacation such as this it is probably unwise to venture where temptations such as cold beer, *pommes frites* and sizzling, greasy sausages await. Those with unbreakable wills, however, should be aware that boat rides on the Bodensee and along the Rhine are nearby as are the towns of St. Gallen, Appenzell of cheese-making fame, and, of course, Zürich.

Consult your own physician before undertaking a regimen such as this.

**Contact:** Schloss Steinegg, CH-8536 Hüttwilen, tel. 41/52 747 1481, fax 41/52 747 1500

**Basic Package:** 10 nights double room

**Per Person Price:** 10 nights, through Nov. 26, 790 Sfr. (\$632); 10 nights, Nov. 26-Dec. 18, 711 Sfr. (\$569)

### Hotel Verena-hof Baden

Located in the pedestrian zone of the spa area of Baden, the Hotel Verena-hof was built 150 years ago in the romantic architectural style of the Belle Époque. It has 70 rooms and is the only hotel in the Baden spa area with direct access to the mineral baths.

The hotel's "Taking the Waters and More" package includes 7 nights hotel, buffet breakfasts and three-course dinners, welcome cocktail party, free fitness room, sauna, daily newspapers, hotel library and access to the mineral baths.

The hotel offers a different guest program — concerts, lectures, excursions, etc. — each week.

The spa town of Baden, on the river Limmat at the foot of Jura mountains, is only 20 minutes by rail or car from Zürich. The spa, considered the most mineral rich in Switzer-

land, goes back to Roman times. There is a castle to explore and the old town rates a Michelin star. Easy one-day excursions might include Basel, Schaffhausen and the Rhine Falls, the medieval town of Stein am Rhein, Freiburg in Germany and Lucerne.

**Contact:** Hotel Verena-hof, Kurplatz 1, CH-5400 Baden, tel. 41/56 203 9393, fax 41/56 203 9394.

**Basic Package:** Seven nights double room with breakfast and dinner.

**Per Person Price:** 980 Sfr. (\$784)

### Aparthôtel des Bains Ovronnaz

A new three-star resort hotel built in the chalet style of the region with a decor that emphasizes wood, is the Aparthôtel des Bains. Its location is particularly quiet, guestrooms offer the usual amenities and most have balconies with mountain views. A gallery connects the hotel to the modern, airy Thermalp Center with indoor and outdoor mineral pools, saunas, beauty institute and restaurants.

The hotel's seven-day package includes room, breakfast and dinner, baths, whirlpool, sauna, Turkish bath, weekly social program, underwater massage, daily pool gymnastics, a wine tasting, two guided hikes, a Valaisanne evening, introduction to the Sophrology relaxation method, a microkinetics therapy session and free mountain bike use. Tennis courts are five minutes from the hotel, there is a golf course in Sion, 16 miles away, and the region offers 150 kilometers of signed hiking trails.

Ovronnaz is a Valaisanne resort village on a sunny, south-facing terrace in the foothills of the Muveran range above the Rhône Valley, just north of the main road between Martigny and Sion. Convenient one-day excursions are possible to Sion, Montreux, Zermatt and Chamonix in France.

**Contact:** Aparthotel des Bains, Ovronnaz CH-1911, tel. 41/27 851 111, fax 41/27 851 114.

**Basic Package:** Seven nights double room with breakfast and dinner.

**Per Person Price:** 990 Sfr. (\$792) per person.

## Hotel Üja-Traube Scuol

The small, family-owned Üja-Traube hotel, with 20 pine-paneled guestrooms, is located near the center of Scuol, a two-minute walk from the town's opulent \$40 million spa which features waterfalls, grottos, a whirlpool, saunas, solariums and an impressive Roman-Irish bath. The space-age structure is built on several levels with indoor and outdoor pools, steam bath, three types of saunas and a medically-staffed therapy center.

The Traube's "Viva Engadina" package offers seven days room plus breakfast and dinner, daily tickets to the spa, and one free entry to the Roman-Irish baths.

At Scuol, the valley narrows considerably and the craggy peaks of the Lower Engadine Dolomites loom over the town. Below Scuol, the lake dotted valley widens and offers some of the best walking in all of Switzerland. Paths in the mountains are challenging, but throughout the valley are many miles of relatively flat trails. Guided walking tours through the National Park are easily arranged. The region is reputed to have more days of sunshine than any other part of Switzerland.

Though it is in the north corner of the canton, the rest of the Engadine, including such towns and villages as St. Moritz, Pontresina, Zernez, Zuoz and Guarda, can be easily explored from Scuol.

**Contact:** Hotel Üja-Traube, Scuol CH-7550, tel. 41/081 864 1207, fax 41/081 864 8408.

**Basic Package:** Seven nights double room with breakfast and dinner.

**Per Person Price:** 980 Sfr. (\$784) per person.

## BERLIN REBUILDS

*Continued from page 1*

*You must have missed it, but after 1945 there was quite a mess. It took about 20 years to clean it up and even then they weren't able to finish the job ... What's that? Well, it was a **big** mess. Anyway, as I was saying, they only got around to rebuilding part of Berlin because one neighborhood was kind of on the shorts and didn't have enough cash to buy new*

*lumber and stuff and so they pretty much had to leave things as they were, bullets holes and all. But a few years ago the first neighborhood and some of their rich overseas pals loaned their neighbors some bread — actually a lot of bread — and these days the town is pretty much the place to be if you own a construction crane or can pound a nail straight.*

*What happened over the last 120 years to warrant all this activity? Well, Mr. Clemens, that's a really long story but you should jump on some of these low airfares and go back. You'd probably still say Berlin looks newer than Chicago.*

## YOU ARE LEAVING THE AMERICAN SECTOR

### Berlin 1996

Mark Twain preceded us to Berlin by a little over 100 years. At the time, I didn't know he liked it but it instantly became one of our favorite cities. An avid reader of John Le Carre and Len Deighton, my imagination took wing. I saw spies and international intrigue everywhere. A visit to the city, surrounded on all sides by the "evil empire," was a bit of living on the edge, in some ways like an amusement park ride — sort of exciting but deep down you know you're as safe as if you were home in bed, except that every now and then...

We've been back a couple of times since the wall came down and maybe this is heresy but I prefer Berlin the way it was then. At the site of the former Checkpoint Charlie stands a scaled-down replica of the Statue of Liberty. Very nice but not what I came to see. The somewhat amateurish but riveting **Checkpoint Charlie Museum** hangs on by its fingernails but doesn't seem to capture the fancy of the powers that be. Privately owned, its survival is not assured. Others must feel as I do, because Berlin tourism fell 18% last year.

Don't misunderstand, I'm all for unification and delighted we are now able to easily visit such treasure cities as Weimar and Dresden, but I miss the little thrill of adventure when crossing into the mysterious, decay-

ing East. I also miss that feeling of relief upon returning to the West and the familiar sight of big fast cars, lively crowds and vibrant commercialism. Sure, I know it was an ersatz, utterly safe and somewhat manufactured thrill but that's the kind I like. No skydiving or Nepal mountain climbing expeditions for this lad.

Despite the fact that it's tamer these days, Berlin remains a fascinating town, even for a Walter Mitty-type like me. And it's going to get even more interesting. Currently there are about 2,000 construction sites in the city. In fact, Berlin's center is gradually relocating from the Kurfürstendamm/Europa Center area to the prewar city center on the Eastern side. Springing up are Hiltons, Hyatts and Marriotts and, in the bad news category, a Planet Hollywood, no doubt complete with deafening music, greasy burgers and life-size photos of Sylvester Stallone. (A more likely hangout for *Gemütlichkeit* readers is one of our favorite restaurants anywhere, **Fofi's Estiatorio**, a Greek restaurant that's moved from the old K'damm center to the East.)

Soon to be started is the conversion of the old German Democratic Republic airport at Schönfeld into the new Berlin-Brandenburg International Airport.

Many of these construction sites, such as the resurrection of the famous **Adlon Hotel** on Pariser Platz and the mammoth Potsdamer Platz project, welcome visitors.

In 1981, standing on a little platform on the west side of the wall, I got my first look at the famous Potsdamer Platz. There were no buildings, no streets, nothing; just desolate, weed-grown vacant land, part of the "death strip" between East and West Berlin. Yet, for nearly half of this century it was Europe's busiest crossroads, roaring with streetcars, automobiles and crowds of pedestrians. Now it is reputed to be the world's largest construction site, attracting 10,000 visitors daily. Potsdamer Platz will be a city-within-a city and the corporate homes of Daimler Benz and Sony.

*Continued on page 6...*

## BERLIN REBUILDS

Continued from page 5

Headquarters for visitors to the site is the three-story **Info Box**, where computer graphics help tell the story of this complex project. There are models of the planned buildings plus displays that explain how the huge amounts of soil moved from the site are disposed of and what kind of power, water and communications lines are being laid underground. There is also a sort of virtual reality in which the visitor can enter buildings and conveyances which do not yet exist, such as the high-tech casino or the magnetic levitation train.

Some remarkable things are being done. Early this year, the ballroom of the bombed-out **Hotel Esplanade**, all that remained of the turn-of-the-century hotel, was moved 75 yards along a specially built track to make room for a road.

Amazingly, Potsdamer Platz is said to be the world's largest *underwater* construction site. Divers work at the bottom of a pit, under the water table, to lay the foundation for the Daimler Benz building.

The Info Box, tel. 49 30/215-9868, is open daily from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tours conducted by art:berlin, tel. 49 30/215-9868, fax 49 30 215-3089, are \$10.

### Friedrichstrasse Revival

The great prewar Berlin business and entertainment street was Friedrichstrasse. It bisects Unter den Linden about five blocks east of the Brandenburg Gate.

Here cavorted the likes of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya, Paul Klee, Walter Gropius, Sol Hurok, Bertolt Brecht, Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Werner von Braun, Vladimir Horowitz, Joseph Goebbels and Adolph Hitler.

After the war, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) wanted to widen Friedrichstrasse and build great hotels and shops, but of course there was no money and the plan died along with the street.

Now a glorious rebirth is underway which will return the street to its twenties' prominence. Some of it has

already happened:

Recently completed is the Friedrichstadt passage in which the Paris department store **Galerias Lafayette** has opened.

Also dotted along its length are: at 158-164, the **Maritim Grand Hotel**; at the corner of Unter den Linden are exclusive restaurants — including a branch of the famous **Café Bauer** — and shops in the DM 500 million (\$333,000) **Lindencorso**; two blocks south are the **Hofgarten on Gendarmenmarkt** and the new **Four Seasons Hotel**; then come the previously mentioned **Galerias Lafayette**; the dazzling mosaics of **Quartier 206** and, near the old Checkpoint Charlie, the **American Business Center**.

Only a few prewar buildings remain, the most important are located between Behrenstrasse and Französische Strasse.

A memorial is planned for the Checkpoint Charlie site, but the old wooden building is gone. — RHB

### Getting Around Berlin

The Berlin Potsdam WelcomeCard for 29 DM (\$19.33) entitles the holder (plus up to three children) to 48 hours free bus and train travel throughout the city. With it come vouchers for free admissions or 50% discounts on sight-seeing tours, museums and recreational facilities in Berlin and Potsdam. There is also a 24-hour WelcomeCard.

The topography of Berlin is mainly flat but the area is so spread out that it is practical to tour only the central neighborhoods on foot. For the rest of it there is a good network of bike paths. Only experienced, urban cyclists should attempt the main roads. The local cycling association (Allgemeiner Deutscher Fahrradclub), Brunnenstr. 28, D-10119 Berlin, tel. 448-4724, fax 448-4729) offers a map which color codes streets as to safety for cyclists. The club also offers excursions through the city.

BVG (Berlin's public transport system) allows bikes on the U- and S Bahn, on ferries and in some cases even on the trams (space permitting) for the price of an additional ticket (DM 3.90). Bikes can be rented throughout the city and cost 15-30

DM (\$10-\$20) per day. Reserve in advance and inquire about special weekend or long-term rates.

- **Quo Radis, Tegeler Weg 105, D-10589 Berlin (Charlottenburg)**, tel. 34436 15

- **Zweirad-Bardt im Zentrum GmbH, Kantstr. 88-91, D-10623 Berlin (Charlottenburg)**, tel. 323 8129.

- **Berlin by Bike, Mockernstr. 92, D-10963 Berlin (Kreuzberg)**, tel. 216 91 77

- **Mietzner Fahrrad GmbH, Hagelbergerstr. 53, D-10965 Berlin (Kreuzberg)**, tel. 785 94 88

- **Motor- und Radsport, Gross-Ziehtener Str. 2, D-12309 Berlin (Lichtenrade)**, tel. 745 80 98

- **Fa. Kohnke Albrechtstr. 18, D-10117 Berlin (Mitte)**, tel. 281 66 87

- **Ostrad GmbH, Greifswalder Str. 9, D-10405 Berlin (Prenzlauer Berg)**, tel. 425 96 95

- **Fahrradvermietung Berlin am Europa Center, Europa-Center, D-10789 Berlin (Charlottenburg)**, tel. 26120 94.

- **City-Rad Potsdam, Am Bahnhof Potsdam Stadt, D-14473 Potsdam**, tel. 0331/6190

### Places to Stay

*Among the salutary effects of the Berlin construction boom has been a number of new hotels. The supply of hotel rooms is now better able to meet demand and, while rack rates remain high, some hotels will deal. When inquiring about rooms, be sure to ask about corporate, weekend, senior citizen and other special rates.*

#### Brandenburger Hof

Artfully remodeled, turn-of-the-century apartment building with works of art and halogen lighting. Conveniently located in the heart of the western section of Berlin, not far from the Kurfürstendamm. Very elegant. **Brandenburger Hof Hotel GmbH, Eislebener Strasse 14, D-10789 Berlin**, tel. 030/214050, fax 030/21405100, singles 250 to 395 DM (\$167-\$263), doubles 290 to 445 DM (\$193-\$297)

#### Radisson Plaza Hotel Berlin

Built in 1979 for officials and guests of the former East German government, this huge, 600-room



hotel was brightened and extensively remodeled in 1992. Located in the center of activity in the East, just off Unter den Linden. Check on special weekend rates currently as low as \$130 per night for a double room with breakfast. Travelers 65 or over may qualify for even better discounts. Phone 800-333-3333 to book. Not a lot of charm but this is a five-star hotel with all the services, in a central location, for a super price. The rack rates listed below are another matter.

Radisson Plaza Hotel Berlin, Karl-Liebknecht Strasse 5, D-10178 Berlin, tel. 030/23828, fax 030/23827590, U.S. booking 800-333-3333. Singles 290/440 DM (\$193-\$293), doubles 340/490 DM (\$227-\$327).

#### Hotel Domus

The best small hotel value we've found in the western part of Berlin is the Domus, an eight-minute walk south on Uhlandstrasse from the K'damm. Its 73 spacious, spotlessly maintained, guestrooms are rented only to independent travelers — not groups. Some are designated "no smoking" and there is free parking. Ask for a corner room.

Hotel Domus, Uhlandstrasse 49, D-10719 Berlin (Berlin-Wilmersdorf), tel. 030/882041, fax 030/8820410. Singles 159 (\$106), doubles 209 to 235 DM (\$139-\$157).

#### Hotel Kronprinz

At the west end of the Ku'damm, is the Kronprinz, a small, turn-of-the-century town house priced below the more centrally located hotels. The hotel's Biergarten, under half a dozen chestnut trees, is a lovely spot on a warm evening and, in winter, one of the tall chestnuts is set ablaze with thousands of lights.

Hotel Kronprinz Berlin, Kronprinzendam 1, D-10711 Berlin, (Berlin-Wilmersdorf), tel. 030/896030, fax 030/8931215, singles 145 to 185 DM (\$97-\$123), doubles 185 to 240 DM (\$123-\$160).

#### Novotel Berlin Airport

Travelers arriving on late flights or departing in the early morning may want to spend a night close to the airport. The most convenient hotel for Berlin-Tegel airport is the Novotel

Berlin Airport. There is a shuttle bus to the airport.

Novotel Berlin Airport, Kurt-Schumacher-Damm 202, D-13405 Berlin, tel. 030/41060, fax 030/4106700, singles 187 DM (\$125), doubles 219 DM (\$146).

#### Places to Eat

*Berlin: Das Magazine* recommends places to eat and drink in the emerging sections of town:

**Galleries Lafayette**, Center, Friedrichstrasse/ Französische Strasse. Food stalls on the ground floor feature cuisine from the Mediterranean coasts.

**Café Adler**, Kreuzberg, Friedrichstrasse 206, tel. 25189 65. In an historic pharmacy at the former Checkpoint Charlie. No doubt many spies hung out here. During the Cold War it was the only restaurant with a view of the border fortifications.

**Cafe Bauer im Grand Hotel**, Center, Friedrichstrasse 158-164, tel. 20 27 32 03. The atmosphere is Berlin in the twenties.

**Cafe Lebensart**, Center, Unter den Linden 69-73, tel. 229 0018. Near the Brandenburg Gate.

**Café Einstein**, Center, Unter den Linden 42, tel. 204 36 32. A new branch of a famous café.

**Borchardt**, Center, Französische Strasse 47, tel. 238 54 50. A beautifully restored bistro dating from the 1870s.

**Sale e Tabacchi**, Kreuzberg, Kochstrasse 18, tel. 252 1 1 55. Refined cuisine.

**Reinhardts**, Center, Poststrasse 28, tel. 242 52 95. Another bistro.

**Fofi's Estiatorio**, Center, Rathausstrasse 25, tel. 242 34 35. Longtime *Gemütlichkeit* favorite has relocated to the new center.

**Porta Brandenburg**, Center, Wilhelmstrasse 87/188, tel. 229 95 87. Italian.

**Skales**, Center, Rosenthaler Strasse 12, tel. 283 30 06. Greek. Chic.


**Oren**, Center, Oranienburger Strasse 28, tel. 282 82 28. Middle eastern.

#### Recommended Berlin Reading

Vassiltchikov, Marie. *Berlin Diaries, 1940-1945*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.

Clare, George. *Before the Wall, Berlin Days, 1946-1948*. Dutton, 1990.

Shirer, William L. *Berlin Diary, The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent, 1934-1941*. The American Past, Book-of-the-Month-Club, Inc., 1987.

Friedrich, Otto. *Before the Deluge, A Portrait of Berlin in 1920's*. Harper & Row, 1972. 

#### Major Christmas Markets in Germany

Nov. 22-Dec. 23	Hamburg
Nov. 25-Dec. 23	Düsseldorf
Nov. 25-Dec. 23	Kassel
Nov. 26-Dec. 23	Wiesbaden
Nov. 27-Dec. 22	Frankfurt
Nov. 28-Dec. 22	Lübeck (Town Hall)
Nov. 28-Dec. 22	Heilbronn
Nov. 28-Dec. 23	Freiburg
Nov. 28-Dec. 23	Bremen
Nov. 28-Dec. 23	Bamberg
Nov. 29-Dec. 22	Rothenburg
Nov. 29-Dec. 1	Schwabisch Hall
Nov. 29-Dec. 9	Lübeck (Holy Ghost Hosp.)
Nov. 29-Dec. 23	Stuttgart
Nov. 29-Dec. 23	Würzburg
Nov. 29-Dec. 23	Aschaffenburg
Nov. 29-Dec. 23	Bayreuth
Nov. 29-Dec. 23	Coburg
Nov. 29-Dec. 23	Lübeck (St. Mary's)
Nov. 29-Dec. 24	Nürnberg
Nov. 29-Dec. 24	Augsburg
Nov. 30-Dec. 22	Chemnitz
Nov. 30-Dec. 19	Stralsund
Nov. 30-Dec. 22	Rostock
Nov. 30-Dec. 22	Dresden
Nov. 30-Dec. 24	Munich
Nov. 30-Dec. 22	Hanover
Dec. 1-Jan. 5	Berlin

Many of these cities offer special Christmas Market packages as well as city passes. For further info contact the German National Tourist Office 122 E 42nd St, New York NY 10168-0072, tel. 212-661-7200, fax 212-661-7174 or 11766 Wilshire Blvd., #750, Los Angeles CA 90025, tel. 310-575-9799, fax 310-575-1565.

## READERS' FORUM

### Munich Insider

Having just returned from a week at the Oktoberfest (my traditional *Wohlfahrt* each year, the first was in 1965!), I have a few comments regarding your last issue.

a. I fully agree with your poking fun at the letter writer who spent 20 Sfr. (\$16) for a sandwich. Who would want a self-serve sandwich, anyway?

b. Munich Note. I agree that the **Hofbräuhaus** band is very good — there are two bands, by the way, and the Reinhold band is better. *Die Schwemme* has been steadily improving over the past 16 years under the present *Wirt*, Michael Sperger. His appointment runs out in 1999, I don't know what will happen when he is replaced. You wrote that the HB-Haus is "now" state-owned. It has been owned by the state since 1919, when the royal house of Bavaria ceded power. There is a current movement to privatize the place, but the HB brewery and the three state-owned *Wirtschafte* (HB-Haus, HB-Keller, and HB-Biergarten adjacent to the Keller) make so damn much money for the *Freistaat Bayern* that privatization doesn't look like it's gonna happen anytime soon.

c. A *Hotel-Vorschlag*. Even though this hotel might be a little "down-market" for the typical *Gemütlichkeit* reader, my experiences have always been good at the **Hotel Stachus**, Bayerstrasse 7, D-80335 Munich, tel. 089/592881. One of the few Mu-

nich hotels that doesn't surcharge during the Oktoberfest. My hotel room, a single with bath, was 150 DM (\$100) per night, including a very good breakfast buffet. Located adjacent to the **Mathäser Bierstadt**, the surroundings are a little less-than-genteel (right next door is a *Beate Uhse!*), BUT, as my realtor friends always say, location, location, location. Fifty feet from the Stachus Underground, within staggering distance of Mathäser (which has a BETTER band than HB and better food, too), and centrally located for those who want to explore the *Innenstadt* on foot, and who don't expect to spend much time in their hotel room. Another nice touch is CNN-International on the cable TV.

As usual, your August '96 issue is great — I always look forward to reading each one cover-to-cover as soon as I get it.  
Art Black, Carmel CA

### Factory Porsche

We especially enjoyed your July, 1996, Readers' Forum where Mr. Helm described in ebullient terms his joy and surprise in discovering that he could rent a new Porsche.

For those desiring the ultimate Porsche experience, my husband and I suggest doing what we did in September 1995 - taking delivery of a brand new Porsche at the factory in Zuffenhausen, a suburb of Stuttgart.

We flew to Stuttgart via Frankfurt the day before our scheduled pickup and stayed overnight at the **Hotel Traube** (D-7000 Stuttgart 70 (Plieningen), Brabantgasse 2, tel. 0711/45 89 20, fax 0711/4589220), a comfortable village inn composed of several buildings, including

a restaurant featuring grilled entrees. Only a 10-minute drive from the airport, in the village of Plieningen, the Traube provides a quiet refuge for guests recovering from jet-lag, and avoids the hustle-bustle of downtown Stuttgart.

The next morning we took a cab (Porsche picks up the cab fare) to the factory where we were welcomed and given an informal tour of the museum displaying vintage Porsche cars one can see and touch, and in some cases even climb into for that behind the wheel feeling. We then viewed the assembly line with great interest, and watched with delight as engine, frame, and chassis became one in what was described as "the wedding".

After a fine German lunch with *Bier vom Fass*, our excitement level increased dramatically as we were escorted to a very large room containing at least 75 gorgeous cars in every conceivable style and color, each awaiting a new owner. Our Porsche representative seemed to take an inordinate amount of time leading us through this maze to our car, but at last we found ourselves face to face with a brand new silver 993 Carrera - as ordered through our local dealer in the States.

After the obligatory photos, demonstrations, and signing of papers, we found ourselves heading out the main factory gate towards the Autobahn, direction Freiburg (va-room!).

Following two weeks of "thrill of a lifetime" driving, we returned our silver bullet to the factory with absolutely no hassle, and took a cab to our hotel in Stuttgart, the **Steigenberger Graf Zeppelin** (Postfach 10 23 53, D-70019 Stuttgart, tel. 0711/20

48-0, fax 0711/20 48-542), located near the *Hauptbahnhof*. Next morning we took the train to Frankfurt for the flight home. After returning the car to the Porsche factory, they prepare it for export to your dealer back in the U. S., who finally delivers it to you as a new vehicle, complete with standard U. S. specifications and warranty.

The car arrived in beautiful condition about eight weeks after our return, a wonderful reminder every time we drive it of one of the most unique travel experiences we have had in Germany.  
Freelyn & Bill Jeffers, Boulder, CO

### Hotel Bargains

Your travel letter readers might be interested in two fantastic places to stay and eat:

#### Gasthof Canisiusbrünnl

- in Rum near Innsbruck, Austria - Family Hölbling - Murstrasse 75 - 6063 Rum - Telephone 5 12/26 12 03 - Fax 5 12/26 12 03-81. Cost was 400 schillings (\$36) per person per day. Nice, clean rooms. They also have apartments. Well known in area for their food, especially wild game. The Hölbling family is very friendly and helpful to their guests. Closed on Monday.

#### Hotel-Gasthof Alte Post

- Siegsdorf, Germany, just off Autobahn 8 near Salzburg - Family Häglsperger - Traunsteiner Strasse 7 - Telephone (8662)7139, 9454 - Fax (8662)12526. Cost was 115 DM (\$77) per double room. Very clean and spacious rooms, newly renovated hotel first built in the 1400s as a tavern. Herr Häglsperger has dozens of awards for his cooking. He, his wife and staff were very friendly and helpful.  
Tim Pecsénye, Toledo OH ☐