

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

November 20, 1996

That Gypsy Music

Many years ago, before I had been to Vienna and wasn't even 100% sure where it was, someone who had just been there for the first time told me it was "sort of eastern." As in eastern culture.

Unless, in a word association game, your first response to "eastern" is New York or Boston, the word fits the town pretty well.

It is this exotic influence that makes Vienna unique among western European cities. None other offers its mix of Hungarian, Yugoslavian, Rumanian and Bohemian — with just a touch of "Near East" tossed into the recipe.

Almost everyone has heard about the coffee beans the Turks left behind after their siege of Vienna in 1683 and how that has resulted in the still famous Viennese coffee house tradition. And, of course, in many of the city's thousands of old buildings one sees the architectural imprint of the east: here an onion dome and there a facade that could as well be in Constantinople.

But the strongest influence comes from farther west of the Bosphorus. In his book, *The Viennese*, Paul Hofmann says that before World War I at least 20% of the population were Moravians, Bohemians and Slovaks and that "all cooks, maids, tailors, building superintendents, musicians, cabinetmakers, and subalterns in government departments seemed to be Czech."

Remember, too, that this city was once the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire so the residue of Hungarian and Bohemia is everywhere. Especially in the music. As in gypsy music.

Apparently, the nomadic race known as gypsies originated in India and migrated westward into central Europe. Some, like the an-

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

THE MUSIC OF VIENNA

The orchestras, opera companies and choirs of Vienna are either the best or equal to the best on this planet. For those who want to see the world's greatest music performed by the world's greatest musicians, Vienna is the place. Concerts and operas are performed virtually every night.

Best known are the **Vienna Philharmonic** and the **Vienna Staatsoper** (State Opera). Between November, 1996, and June, 1997, the Staatsoper will perform

more than 40 different operas. But these two music giants are only the tip of the iceberg. The city teems with other first-rate musical ensembles: The **Vienna Volksoper** (people's opera) featuring lighter works, operettas, even an occasional musical, is the city's second world-class opera company. The **Vienna Symphony** is a number two orchestra that would be number one almost anywhere else, and the **Wiener Kammerorchester** (chamber orchestra) is a world-renowned chamber ensemble.

EUROPE TRAVEL BRIEFING

Off-season Hotel Discounts

• The **Kempinski** hotels have announced special rates through March 31, 1997, at these and other European hotels:

Hotel Bristol Berlin - 270 DM (\$180)*
Hotel Corvinus Budapest - 230 DM (\$153)
Hotel Taschenbergpalais Dresden - 340 DM (\$221)**
Hotel Gravenbruch Frankfurt - DM 248 DM (\$161)**
Hotel President Wilson Geneva - 440 Sfr. (\$347)**
Hotel Atlantic Hamburg - 260 DM (\$173)* Dec. 1-30, 1996, 275 DM (\$183)* Jan. 1 - Feb. 1997
Hotel Furstenhof Leipzig - 250 DM (\$167)**
Hotel Airport Munich - 199 DM (\$133)*
Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Munich - 280 DM (\$187)*

*Includes tax and service charge.
**Includes breakfast, tax, and service charge.

These are double room rates. To book, contact a travel agent or call 800-426-3135.

• The **Steigenberger** hotel chain offers a wider choice of properties than

the Kempinski and its special winter rates are guaranteed in dollars. The following are examples of Steigenberger's "Dollars & Sense Europe" rates.

Hotel Weisler, Graz - \$179
Hotel Europa Tyrol, Innsbruck - \$169-\$179
Hotel de France, Vienna - \$159-\$199
Parkhotel Schönbrunn, Vienna - \$139-\$159
Grand Hotel Bohemia, Prague - \$229
Hotel Amethyst, Prague - \$139
Hotel Diplomat, Prague - \$159
Hotel Savoy, Prague - \$199-\$219
Hotel Drei Mohren, Augsburg - \$159
Bad-Hotel Zum Hirsch, Baden-Baden - \$129
Badischer Hof, Baden-Baden - \$159-\$169
Hotel Europäischer Hof, Baden-Baden - \$169
Axelmannstein, Bad Reichenhall - \$159-\$169
Steigenberger Berlin - \$159-\$229
Bleibtrau, Berlin - \$179
Savoy Hotel, Berlin - \$199
Hotel Am Terrassenufer, Dresden - \$169
Steigenberger Frankfurt Airport - \$149-\$159
Lindner Congress Hotel, Frankfurt - \$129
Frankfurter Hof, Frankfurt - \$179-\$189
Lindtner, Hamburg - \$179
Steigenberger Hamburg - \$199
Palatin, Heidelberg-Wiesloch - \$149
Eden-Hotel-Wolff, Munich - \$179
Splendid, Munich - \$129

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Highlights

- Great New Vienna Hotel is Surprising Value
- How to Buy Opera and Concert Tickets
- Save \$\$ with the Vienna Card
- 22 Inexpensive Vienna Restaurants

ble that attracts big name guest soloists and conductors.

If one doesn't mind stepping down from the world's best to merely outstanding there is the **Vienna Kammeroper**, which specializes in rare and lesser-known works, the **Vienna Hofburg Orchestra** and the costumed **Vienna Mozart Orchestra**.

Others include the **Vienna Brass Ensemble**, the **Vienna Concert Duo**, the **Vienna Concert Quintet**, the **Vienna Akademische Philharmonie**, the **Haydn Sinfonietta Wien**, the **Vienna Waltz Orchestra**, which plays twice daily at the Kursalon, the **Chorus Viennese** and several others.

All that and we haven't mentioned what may be the city's best-known and best-loved group of musicians, the **Vienna Boys' Choir**.

In addition to a vast array of home-based talent, the city attracts the finest ensembles and per-

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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cestors of the currently popular musical group known as the Gypsy Kings, wound up in Spain while others went to Eastern Europe, concentrating in Rumania and Hungary. In the late 19th century their melodies and dances — which typically begin with innocence and delicacy and end in a furious climax — became part of the broader music culture. Franz Liszt was one of the first to incorporate this exhilarating folk music in his Hungarian Rhapsodies. My own favorite piece of gypsy music is George Enesco's *Rumanian Rhapsody No. 1*. (Listen to it some night with the lights out.)

I'm no music scholar or even a musician, so take this for what it's worth, but it seems to me *Zigeunermusik* (gypsy music) underlies much of what is considered Viennese music. Not the great classics — one doesn't identify what Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert produced here as being specifically related to the city — but the music that *is* Vienna: operetta's like Johann Strauss's *Der Fledermaus* and his *Die Zigeunerbaron* (Gypsy Baron), Franz Lehár's *Merry Widow* and Emmerich Kálmán's *Gräfin Mariza*.

The works of these three composers always constitute a substantial portion of the annual repertoire of Vienna's Volksoper, perhaps the most "old Vienna" of the city's many music venues. Two of the three, Lehár and Kálmán, were Hungarian and in my mind Hungarian music equals gypsy music. From this trio come many of the evergreen melodies one still hears daily throughout the city. Tunes like *Dein is mein ganzes Herz* (You are my heart's delight) by Lehár, Kálmán's *Grüss mir mein Wien* (Greet for me my Vienna) and his weepy *Komm Zigány* (Come, Gypsy), and Strauss's *Rosen aus dem Süden* (Roses from the South), are deeply imbedded in the Viennese culture. (If you want to hear this stuff I recommend a couple of CDs:

Vienna, City of My Dreams, featuring Plácido Domingo, CDC 7473982 by EMI and *Elisabeth Schwarzkopf Sings Operetta*, CDC 7472842, also on EMI.)

On our earliest trips to Vienna we found several restaurants which hired small gypsy bands to entertain patrons. The best music was at Cafe Budva where three lively players never failed to keep us enthralled until closing time. A clever, funny pianist anchored the group while a grandfatherly accordionist and a fiery fiddler worked the room for tips.

One evening we watched them rake in several hundred schillings when a table of Russians, teary-eyed and deep in their cups, uncrumpled 50 schilling note after 50 schilling note in requesting a series of heart-rending tunes. It made one recollect Gary Cooper's private gypsy band in the movie *Love in the Afternoon*.

About now you're expecting me to tell you where to hear good gypsy music in Vienna. My apologies. If such places exist I don't know of them. I think they are gone. In Vienna earlier this year we looked, we asked, but found nothing. Locals just shrugged. A woman who conducts walking tours all over the city said she knew of no place to hear real gypsy music. Oh, there are one or two places where a few bored musicians go through the motions. But they play without passion, the music has no life and the breaks between "sets" are longer than the "sets."

We'll keep looking but right now for gypsy music that moves your heart and your feet try Budapest.

Even if there aren't any good gypsy bands left in Vienna, it's an almost invisible blemish on a city that bursts with great music, good restaurants and fascinating things to see and do.

Here are a few suggestions to help you take advantage of this city's great music:

• **Go to the opera.** Obvious but essential —

unless music is of absolutely no interest. The best in the world is here. In the fall, winter and spring, the Staatsoper and Volksoper perform almost every night. The State Opera is glitzier and costs more (up to \$250 per ticket) but beware, it's easy for the non-opera aficionado to get in over his head. Take Wagner, for example. The music is often glorious and inspiring but there are times during his three to five-hour operas when there are two people on stage singing at each other for 30 minutes at a stretch. No movement, no dancing, no English translation.

The less serious music fan should try an evening at the Volksoper which offers its own unique reminders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The house is more intimate, the prices lower (best seats about \$77) and the melodies more familiar. The music, the voices and the production, however, are top class. I lean toward the Viennese standards such as *Der Graf von Luxemburg* (The Countess of Luxembourg), *Das Land des Lächelns* (The Land of Smiles), *Wiener Blut* (Vienna Blood) or the splendid *Die Fledermaus* (The Bat).

• **Take the tram to the Zentralfriedhof** (main cemetery, Simmeringer Hauptstrasse, section 32A) and visit the graves of Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Johann Strauss and other famous composers. Mozart is not here. Buried in an unmarked common grave, the whereabouts of his remains are unknown. There is an empty tomb in his honor at St. Mark's cemetery (3rd dist., Leberstrasse 6-8).

• **Visit sites where the some of the world's greatest music was written.** Beethoven had many Vienna residences and memorial rooms are located in: **Pasqualati House**, 1st dist., Mölker Bastei 8, tel. 637 06 65; **House of the Heiligenstadt Testament** (a letter of despair over his deafness, written in 1802), 19th dist., Probusgasse 6, in the village of Heiligenstadt, tel. 37 54 08; and **House of the Eroica** (Third

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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.

VIENNA

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formers from throughout the world. At the Konzerthaus — one of the two main symphonic venues, the other being the Musikverein — we recently saw the **Salzburger Camerata Academica**. Though the orchestra, its conductor Sándor Végh and the piano soloist, Zoltan Kocsis, were unfamiliar to us, their music was superb. The performance was part of the **Wiener Frühlingfestival** (Vienna Spring Festival). Our tickets cost 490 AS (\$46) each.

If you're looking for something less highbrow, there are a number of cafes and Heurigen (wine taverns) where Vienna's traditional *Schrammel* music is played (see Dear Subscriber, page 8).

Whatever your choice, Vienna is a city of musical riches without peer. Even the street musicians on the Kärntnerstrasse and the Graben are a cut above anywhere else we've been.

Hotels

Hotel Das Triest

Vienna's Hotel Das Triest is very new, very good and offers better than average value in a luxury hotel. It opened last December and is barely outside the Ring, just south of the Karlsplatz. It's street, Wiedner Hauptstrasse, is the extension of the Kärntnerstrasse.

The old building, once known as the Stadt Triest, was the main station and stable for stagecoaches and horses that hauled passengers and freight between Vienna and the port city of Trieste. But today the horses and wagons are long gone. In their place is this stunning, four-star hotel, designed by Sir Terence Conran, the London-based architect-restaurateur-retailer-author who is famous in the U.S. for such coffee table books as *The House Book*, *The New House Book*, *The Kitchen Book*, *The Bed and Bath Book* and, most recently, *The Essential House Book*.

Das Triest is unlike any other hotel in town. Throughout are specially commissioned pieces of Biedermeier-style furniture and art — such as the mosaics on the buffet bar — that ensure the simple and clean, 90s-

Jugendstil-Bauhaus design is not only visually satisfying but also whispers of *Alt Wien*. There are clever touches which add a note of warmth to a scheme which can be rather chilly. Trieste being a port city, Conran has cleverly incorporated such design elements as Navy blue fabrics and small, burnished metal port holes to establish a nautical motif. Corridors, for example, with their twin rows of porthole-in-the-floor light fixtures remind one of passageways aboard a luxury liner.

A swath of plain white linen as wide as the bed and draped over the high headboards is a simple decorating touch that relieves the sterility often found in this ultra-clean style.

Furnishings and construction materials are first-cabin. The look is high-tech with obligatory halogen table lamps, cyber-age necessities such as fax lines and voice mail are in all rooms and of course everything is air-conditioned.

Guestrooms are spacious and several, such as Number 506, a junior suite for 3,700 AS (\$349), have been arranged to take advantage of excellent city views. The large bathrooms gleam with elegant fixtures.

Art and design are a matter of taste and opinion and not everyone may share our enthusiasm, but Das Triest bowled us over. (To get an idea of Conran's design style, glance through his *The Essential House Book*, next time you're in a book store.)

Daily Rates: Singles 2100 AS (\$198), doubles 2600 AS (\$245), suites 3700 AS to 4700 AS (\$349-\$443). 73 rooms, all with cable TV, voice mail, fax line, safe, radio, minibar, trouser press, direct dial phone and air-conditioning. Fitness center, sauna, solarium.

Contact: Das Triest, Wiedner Hauptstrasse 12, A-1040 Vienna, tel. 1-589 18-0, fax 11-589 18 18

Rating: QUALITY 17/20 VALUE 18/20

Pension Altstadt Vienna

What some might perceive as a negative — the Altstadt's location just outside the Ring — we see as an advantage. Though hotels on or near the Graben and Kärntnerstrasse are more convenient to many of the town's main sights, they are also at the center

of the city's tourism. Experiencing daily life in the Altstadt's virtually tourist-free neighborhood cafes, restaurants and stores not only makes for a more authentic travel experience but is an interesting change of pace. The Altstadt is about a 5-10 minute walk from the nearest underground station and from there all Vienna is quickly accessible.

Based on its creatively appointed guestrooms, its moderate prices and the go-the-extra-mile attitude of owner Otto Wiesenthal and his staff, this hotel was the 1994 "*Gemütlichkeit* Hotel of the Year."

This time around we found the rooms beginning to show traces of wear and tear but Herr Wiesenthal was as omnipresent and helpful as ever and the hotel's high-ceilinged main salon is still an inviting place for breakfast, a late afternoon cup of tea or a nightcap before bed.

One little story will demonstrate how the Altstadt looks after its guests.

We needed get to the airport for a 9 a.m. flight. The desk clerk advised a taxi for the following morning and volunteered to arrange one for us. Having had problems in the past with pre-booked taxis, we were a little nervous and called the desk very early next morning to confirm everything was still on for our 7:30 a.m. pickup. The woman patiently assured us that all was well. About 6:45 a.m., as we entered the breakfast room, a well-dressed young man introduced himself as our driver. He told us to enjoy our breakfast, there was plenty of time and, while we ate, he would be in the kitchen having coffee. Our ride turned out not to be a taxi but a car-for-hire, an unmarked, clean, late-model Mercedes. The cost, about \$30, was about the same as a regular taxi. The driver and Herr Wiesenthal loaded our luggage and the comfortable ride got us to Schwechat in plenty of time for our flight.

Herr Wiesenthal is not one to be left behind. Visit the hotel's page on the World Wide Web (<http://members.magnet.at/alt.vie/altstie.htm>) and see the latest prices, color photos of the hotel, and a Vienna map showing the hotel's location.

Daily Rates: Singles 1180 AS to 1480

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AS (\$111-\$140), doubles 1480 AS to 1680 AS (\$140-\$158). 25 rooms, none alike but all with cable TV, radio, minibar and direct dial phones. Special packages for the Opera Ball and other major Vienna events are available. The "Art & Culture" package includes three nights accommodations, tickets to the opera or symphony, a candlelight dinner, a city tour and other amenities and costs 3,980 AS (\$375) per person.

Contact: Hotelpension Altstadt Vienna, Kirchengasse 41, A-1070, phone 1-526 33 99-0, fax 1-523 49 01, e-mail: alt.vie@magnet.at

Rating: QUALITY 16/20 VALUE 18/20

Pension Aviano

Great central location, oversized, nicely decorated rooms and caring management make the Aviano one of Vienna's top hotel values. The best rooms are Numbers 413 and 304.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Tip: If you can't get a reservation here ask for one of Frau Kafka's other pensions, the **Pertschy** and **Christina**, both of which offer good value inside the Ring.

Daily Rates: Singles 620 AS to 760 AS (\$58-\$72), doubles 980 AS to 1500 AS (\$92-\$142). 32 rooms, all with cable TV, radio, minibar and direct dial phones.

Contact: Pension Aviano, Marco d'Avianogasse 1, A-1010 Vienna, tel. 1-512 83 30, fax 1-512 83 30-6

Rating: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 19/20

Hotel Am Schottenpoint

The dirty, cave-like entrance to this hotel, through a deteriorating old building, borders on scary. There is nothing to fear, however, and once inside the Am Schottenpoint-owned spaces, you'll find a most pleasant welcome and cozy, sparkling guestrooms that offer excellent value.

Room Number 14, a double, has a separate sitting room.

Actually, the sorry building that fronts to the street creates a quiet refuge from busy Währinger Strasse. Am Schottenpoint is well outside the Ring, four underground stops from the Stephansplatz center.

Daily Rates: Singles 890 AS to 980 AS (\$84-\$92), doubles 1180 AS to 1400 AS (\$111-\$132). 17 rooms, all with cable TV, radio and direct dial phones. There is a small bar.

Contact: Hotel Am Schottenpoint, Währinger Strasse 22, A-1090 Vienna, tel. 1-310 87 87, fax 1-310 87 874

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 16/20

Hotel Wandl

We last reviewed this hotel in 1991 and other than the renovation of a few rooms not much has changed. It still seems a bit stodgy and lacks freshness and vitality. The central location, however, is ideal and the newer rooms, although pricey for a hotel of this caliber, are spacious and attractive.

There's really nothing much wrong with the Wandl, it's just that there are better choices in this part of Vienna.

Daily Rates: Singles 950 AS to 1300 AS (\$90-\$123), doubles 1500 AS to 1800 AS (\$142-\$170). 138 rooms, all with cable TV and direct dial phones. Bar and restaurant.

Contact: Hotel Wandl, Petersplatz 9, A-1010 Vienna, tel. 1-534 55-0, fax 1-534 55 77

Rating: QUALITY 11/20 VALUE 10/20

Pension Neuer Markt

Space is at a premium in this centrally-located, fairly-priced second-floor pension that has a strong English-speaking following. Hallways are narrow and guestrooms smaller than average. Management is friendly but brisk, and made a point to tell us returning customers often ask for specific rooms; requests they are usually unable to fill. It never hurts to inquire, however, and room Number 16 is one of the larger ones.

Daily Rates: Singles 700 AS to 880 AS (\$66-\$83), doubles 980 AS to 1380 AS (\$92-\$130). 37 rooms, all with cable TV, radio and direct dial phones. Hot meals available throughout the day.

Contact: Pension Neuer Markt, Seilergasse 9, A-1010 Vienna, tel. 1-1-512 23 16, fax 1-1-513 91 05

Rating: QUALITY 9/20 VALUE 13/20

Pension Museum

Occupying the first and third floors of a stylish old building near the Kunsthistorisches Museum, this place

has Viennese character and a charming owner, Frau Elvira Scheyrer, but is so much in need of renovation that we really can't recommend it. Most guestrooms are huge with high ceilings and vast floor space. Often, however, a lack of furniture makes these big spaces seem barn-like.

The owner spoke to us of imminent improvements. When that happens the Museum will be worth what it charges.

Daily Rates: Singles 800 AS to 1180 AS (\$75-\$111), doubles 1250 AS to 1600 AS (\$118-\$151). 15 rooms, all with cable TV, radio and direct dial phones. Parking 150 AS (\$14) per night.

Contact: Pension Museum, Museumstrasse 3, A-1010 Vienna, tel. 1-523 51 27, fax 1-523 44 26-30

Rating: QUALITY 5/20 VALUE 7/2

VIENNESE EATS

Spatzennest

We arrived in town late on a cold wet Sunday night hungry for some Viennese cooking. Because of the weather we didn't want to go far and the woman on duty at our hotel, the Pension Altstadt Vienna, suggested the nearby Spatzennest.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

It was exactly what we were looking for. A busy, neighborhood bistro frequented almost entirely by local residents and specializing in traditional dishes.

We opened with fresh mixed vegetable salads, then tucked into *Zwiebelrostbraten* (steak topped with fried onions) and *Wienerschmitzel* and finished with fresh strawberries and ice cream. With the meal we drank half a liter of local red wine and with dessert sipped a glass of port. The bill for two persons was 503 AS (\$47).

Service was quick, friendly and efficient.

For those who want good food but don't need fancy surroundings and shun high prices, the Spatzennest is a great choice. We only wish it were around the corner from our house. Spatzennest, 7th district, Ulrichsplatz 1, tel. 526 16 59, Sun.-Thurs. to midnight.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20 VALUE 15/20

Zum Leopold

The style is not very "old Vienna" at this beer restaurant near the Molkerbastei, a relic of the old walled city. The trendy bar could be in Chicago or Los Angeles and the dining area decor is too "franchise" for our taste. The food, however, is a different story. *Schnitzel*, *Tafelspitz* (boiled beef), baked *Emmenthaler*, *Pommes Frites* and *Apfelstrudel* all passed the moderately-priced-but-satisfying test with flying colors.
Zum Leopold, Schottengasse 7, tel. 1 / 533 9381-12

Nudel & Strudel

Another *Beisl* where you won't find many tourists, this one inside the Ring near the University, is the tiny, quirky, *Nudel & Strudel*, unique for the hundreds of pieces of old hardware framed and hung on the walls. There is a daily special that includes soup and entree for about \$7.
Nudel & Strudel, Schottenbastei 4, tel. 1 / 533 6128

Gasthaus Rippel

For 100% authentic neighborhood *Beisl* atmosphere, try the down-at-the-heel Rippel. It, too, is near Pension Altstadt but is only a place for a beer or two and maybe a sausage and *pommes frites*. Find someplace else for that special anniversary dinner.

There is a dirty, herringbone wood floor, a small bar with a couple of beer taps and a coffee machine, a few wooden tables, plants in the windows, scattered magazines and newspapers, a clock set onto the sawed-off end of a wood barrel and pictures of soccer teams. Every half-hour or so the proprietress leaves her cigarette and wine glass at the *Stammtisch* (special table for regular patrons) to stoke a small coal-fired stove. On tap is the local Gösser Bier and Budvar from the Czech Republic.
Gasthaus Rippel, Neustiftgasse.

Here is a listing of other restaurants specializing in inexpensive, but hearty Viennese food. We have highlighted our favorites.

Figlmüller, 1st district, Wollzeile 5, tel. 512 61 77, daily to 10.30 p.m. Main courses from about \$8. Famous for huge portions of *Schnitzel*.

Reinthal, 1st district, Gluckgasse 5, tel. 512 3366, Mon.-Thurs. to 11 p.m., Fri. to 4 p.m. Daily specials from about \$7.

Smutny, 1st district, Elisabethstrasse 8, tel. 58713 56, daily to midnight. Daily specials from about \$9. Serving Budvar and Pilsner Urquell on draft. Interesting tile decor.

Hansy, 2nd district, Praterstrasse 67, tel. 214 55 72, daily to 11 p.m. Set meals from about \$7.

Schweizerhaus, 2nd district, Strasse des 1 Mai 116 (in the Prater), tel. 218 01 52, mid-March to the beginning of November, to 11 p.m. Set meals from about \$7, known for *Eisbein* (pigs' knuckles) and potato pancakes.

Bierteufl, 3rd district, Ungargasse, tel. 7126503, to 1 a.m. Set meals from about \$8. 100 brands of beer.

Weinhaus Wild, 3rd district, Radetzkyplatz 1, tel. 712 57 50, daily to 11 p.m. Set meals about \$7. Local wine.

Weissberger Stube (Hotel Biedemeier), 3rd district, Landstrasse Hauptstrasse 28, tel. 716 71-514, daily to 10 p.m. Set meals from about \$8.

Weidinger, 4th district, Danhausergasse 3, tel. 505 56 97, Mon.-Fri. to 11 p.m. Set meals about \$7. Garden dining.

Altes Fassl, 5th district, Ziegelofengasse 37, tel. 55 42 98, Tues.-Sun. to 1 a.m. Main courses from about \$10. Garden restaurant featuring Viennese specialities.

Silberwirt, 5th district, Schlossgasse 21, tel. 55 49 07, daily to midnight. Viennese pancakes served under old verandas

Blauensteiner, 6th district, Wallgasse 32, tel. 56 41 8B, Tues.-Sat. to 11 p.m. Main courses from about \$8. Near Raimundtheater.

Kauzchen, 7th district, Gardegasse 8, tel. 526 48 66, daily to 2 a.m., Sat., Sun. to 4 a.m. Set meals from about \$9. Varied clientele.

Stadt Krems, 7th district, Zieglergasse 37, tel. 93 72 00, daily to midnight. Main courses start at about \$8 at this 150-year-old *Beisl*.

Schnitzelwirt, 7th district, Neu-

baugasse 52, tel. 93 37 71, Mon.-Sat. to 11 p.m. Heavy on the *Schnitzel* for about \$7.

Zu Den 2 Lieseln, 7th district, Burggasse 63, tel. 93 32, Mo.-Sat. to 10 p.m. More *Schnitzel* in old-time Vienna atmosphere.

Zur Stadt Brünn, 8th district, Strozsigasse 36, tel. 42 03 88. Tues.-Sat. to midnight, Sun. and holidays to 3 p.m. Set meals from about \$7. Garden restaurant in the Josefstadt.

Waldviertler Eck, 8th district, Pfeilgasse 27 / corner Albertgasse, tel. 42 32 93. Mon.-Thurs. to 11 p.m. Fri. to 3 p.m. Set meals from about \$7.

Things Viennese

The Vienna Card

For those who plan to be in Vienna for more than a day or two, the **Vienna Card** for 180 AS (\$17) is a must. It provides 72 hours unlimited access to the city's public transportation system plus discounts at dozens of museums, galleries, theaters, music venues, cafes and shops. The card can be purchased from your hotel, at Tourist Information Offices (1st District, Kärntner Strasse 38, daily 9 a.m.-7 p.m.), at Vienna Transport (Wiener Linien) sales counters and at other information offices (Stephansplatz, Karlsplatz, Westbahnhof, Landstrasse / Wien Mitte) or prior to arrival with a credit card by telephoning 43-1-798 44 00-28.

Besides the Vienna Card, the following public transport tickets are available:

- 24-hour ticket 50 AS (\$5)
- 72-hour ticket 130 AS (\$12)
- Single ride tickets (block of five) 85 AS (\$8)
- There are also four and eight-day ticket strips.

Here are examples of the discounts offered with the Vienna Card:

Museums

Schönbrunn Palace - to 21%
Schönbrunn: Zoo -22%
Museum of Fine Arts -to 22%
Imperial Apartments, Imperial Palace -21 %
Ethnological Museum, Imperial Palace -20 %
Austrian Gallery, Belvedere -16 %
Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) -20 %
Museum of Natural History -20%
Historical Museum, City of Vienna -50 %
Clock Museum -50 %
Museum of Military History -50 %

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VIENNA

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Kunsthau Wien/Hundertwasser Museum - to 25 %
Kunsthalle Wien and Museum Quarter -30 %
Sigmund Freud's House -to 38 %
Academy of Fine Arts -33 %

Sight-seeing

Guided Walks in Vienna -20 %
Giant Ferris Wheel -20 %
Danube Tower -23 %
DDSG-Blue Danube-Schiffahrt, sight-seeing by boat -10 %

Music, Theater

Konzerthaus -10 %
Volksoper -10 %
Ronacher -10 %
Marionette Theater at Schönbrunn Palace -10 %
Vienna's Summer of Music -20 %

Shopping

Department stores Steffl, Herzmansky, Gerngross, Stafa -10 %
Hübner watches and clocks -10%
Köchert Jewelry -10%

Performance Tickets

Staatsoper, Volksoper: For postal bookings not later than 3 weeks before the date of the performance write Österreichischer Bundestheaterverband, Hanuschgasse 3, A-1010 Wien. More info: fax 431/514 44-2969, tel. 431/514 44-2960

Theater an der Wien, Raimund Theater: Wien-Ticket, A-1060 Wien, Linke Wienzeile 6, fax 58830-33, Credit card: tel. 431/58885

Wiener Kammeroper: A-1010 Wien, Fleischmarkt 24, tel. 431/513 60 72, fax 431/512 44 48-46

Ronacher: Etablissement Ronacher, A-1010 Wien, Seilerstätte 9, tel. 514 02, fax 431/514 11-522 (Internet: <http://www.ronacher.co.at/ronacher>)

Performance Tickets On-line

Those with access to the Internet can purchase tickets on-line to more than 4800 Vienna cultural events from **Carta Austria** (http://w3.carta.co.at/carta/events/homepage_e.html). Pay with a credit card or mail a check. Tickets are mailed or can be picked up at Carta's Vienna office or at the box office just prior to performance.

Tickets can also be ordered on-line from <http://www.atnet.co.at/jirsa/> or contact: **Franz Jirsa Ges.m.b.H.**, Lerchenfelder Strasse 13, A-1070 Vienna, Austria, e-mail: jirsa@atnet.co.at, tel. 1-5231931, fax 1-5230692

The **Vienna Tourist Office** home page on the World Wide Web has all the opera, concert and theater sched-

ules plus hotel and restaurant information. Some important parts are in German but it is nonetheless very useful. (<http://wvtv.magwien.gv.at/welcome.htm>).

Vienna Guide

Frau **Monika Koppl** charges 1,156 AS (\$109) for three-hour tours for from two to 40 persons. Tel./fax 022/43 35960.

Blue Danube Radio

Radio broadcasts in English, 6 a.m. till 7 p.m., are heard on Blue Danube Radio, 103.8 MHz and 92.9 MHz in Vienna. Programs include news, regional information and a broad music selection.

Tax Free Shopping

In Austria, Value Added Tax (VAT) is included in the listed sales price. As a non-European Union citizen you can reclaim the VAT when you leave the European Union (EU). The VAT rate is 16.7 % of the sales price. Travelers that spend more than 1001 schillings (VAT included) at Europe Tax-free Shopping (ETS) affiliated stores are entitled to have up to 15.5 % of the sales price refunded.

Mozart Week '97

From March 23 through 29, at the Palais Palffy, members of the **Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra** offer a blend of well-known "hits" and rarely heard Mozart chamber music. The **Neue Wiener Barockensemble** will perform the *Mozart Requiem* and a concert performance of the opera *Il re Pastore* at the Konzerthaus.

Tickets: Mozartwoche 97/Klangbogen, Laudongasse 29, A-1080 Vienna, tel. 1-4000-8410 (including credit card reservations), fax 1-4000-7217.

The Sound of Easter in Vienna March 22 to April 1, 1997

The **Vienna Philharmonic** leads off this festival with the *St. John Passion* by J.S. Bach at the Musikverein. The finale is Mendelssohn's *St. Paul Oratorio* performed by **Camerata Academica**. Events between include a concert of waltzes by the **Vienna Symphony Orchestra**, Schubert's *Lazarus Oratorio* and Wagner's opera *Parsifal* by the **Vienna State Opera**.

Order tickets beginning January 7 from: The Sound of Easter/Klangbogen, Laudongasse 29, A-1080 Vienna, tel. 1/4000-84 10, fax 1/4000-7217.

Vienna Brochures

For brochures on Vienna mail to **Austrian Tourist Office**, P.O. Box 1142, New York, NY 10108-1142, tel. (212-944-6880, fax 212-730-4568, e-mail: antony@ix.netcom.com)

Vienna On-line

This website offers an extensive list of small Vienna cafes and restaurants. <http://stud1.tuwien.ac.at/%7Ee9125830/lokale.htm>

Another site contains a list of hikes around Vienna. Written in English by a native German speaker. (<http://tph.tuwien.ac.at/~svozil/wan/wan.html>)

Danube Cruises

The river boats of **DDSG-Blue Danube Schiffahrt** offer a number of river cruises, most are just a few hours in duration.

- The Vienna-Dürnstein-Vienna trip operates Saturdays and Sundays costs 240 AS (\$23). Kids under 10 travel free and at half price between 10 and 15 years of age. The boat departs the Vienna/Reichsbrücke station at 0900 and returns there at 8:15 p.m. There are stops at Nussdorf, Greifenstein, Tulln and Krems on the outbound leg and at Krems, Tulln and Nussdorf on the return.

- Daytrips to Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, depart at 7:15 a.m., return at 9:15 p.m. and cost 240 AS (\$23) — half price for children 6 to 15.

- Also available are a number of evening cruises that get underway at 6:30 p.m. and end at 11 p.m. For example, the Candlelight Cruise on the Danube includes dinner, live dance music and a glass of champagne for 790 AS (\$75) per person. Other evening dance cruises that do not include dinner start at 200 AS (\$19).

Contact: **DDSG-Blue Danube Schiffahrt GmbH**, Handelskai 265, A-1020 Vienna, tel. 0222/272 50, fax 0222/727 50440.

Bibliography

Hofmann, Paul. *The Viennese: Splendor, Twilight and Exile*. Doubleday, 1988

Morton, Frederic. *Thunder at Twilight: Vienna 1913/1914*. MacMillan, 1989

Scherman, Thomas K. & Biancolli, Louis. *The Beethoven Companion*. Doubleday, 1972

READERS' FORUM

Swiss Bargain Hideaway

I hesitate writing about a favorite chalet apartment in Ringgenberg near Interlaken; I want to keep it to myself, but I also want others to enjoy it.

The chalet was built in 1993 and it is *Wunderbar*, from the spacious balconies overlooking Lake Brienz and the Alps to the sauna, whirlpool and indoor swimming pool.

I've stayed there four different times and just wish I could live there. The young couple who run it are great — attending to any need; train station pick up, etc. They speak English and the price is right, especially when I take my family of six. I'd be glad to answer any inquiries. Jane Dalbey, Overland Park KS

(Thanks to Ms. Dalbey for sending us a brochure with prices. Her hideaway looks very attractive in the photos. Contact: Ferien bei Schwizi's, Hans & Doris Schweizer, Gartenstrasse, CH-3852, Ringgenberg, tel. 36/233828, fax 36/234048. Apartments range from 80 Sfr. [\$63] per day for up to four persons in low season, to 195 Sfr. [\$154] per day for from six to eight persons in high season. — Editor)

Schloss Matzen, Yes

Your recent article about the **Schloss Matzen** (July, '96) in Brixlegg, Austria, tempted us into a stay.

We are happy to report that your evaluation of the castle fell short of our findings. It was better than you reported. We found the furnishings appropriate for the structure, rather than "worn." And "crumbling" was a fitting term for the only part of the castle we noticed that was in that condition: the Roman Tower. There was even a hint of spookiness evoked from the ambience that enhanced our stay.

The hospitality of Margaret Fox and Christopher Kump (owners of the castle) goes the extra mile. They joined us for breakfast and shared their experiences in ownership and maintenance of a castle (not the normal conversation you expect to experience as a guest at breakfast). Michael then provided a full tour of

the castle, filled with experiences he shared as an 8-year-old boy who visited the castle during summer vacations.

Our lasting impression was that this was a genuine castle, little changed over the last few hundred years (except, of course, for the modern plumbing!) including the furnishings and objet d'arts, as genuine as the owners are.

It's on our list for a return visit. . . and for a longer stay!

Milton P. Champas, Sacramento CA

Northern Germany

Here are a few thoughts on our recent trip to Northern Germany. We found the people as cold and dreary as the weather. Prices were high and neither the hotels nor restaurants were crowded.

We can't understand all the fuss about Hamburg, we did not find the people so wonderfully dressed. We went to the **Zum Altes Rathaus** for dinner, but left as it was empty. I would say that half the men at the **Ratsweinkeller** were without ties and jackets. The people at the Atlantic Hotel were fairly casual. We stayed at the **Hotel Wedina** (Gurlittstr. 23, D-20099, tel. 40/24 30 11, fax 40/280 3894) and I would definitely recommend it. It is two brownstones and soon to be three. They have good lighting and baths but I would request one of the larger rooms. It is near the Aussenalster and you can walk anywhere. The rate was 195 DM (\$130), including breakfast.

In Hanover we stayed at the **Georgenhof** (Herrenhäuser Kirchweg 20, D-30167, tel. 511/70 22 44, fax 511/70 85 59). They have a wonderful restaurant (expensive) and one would feel out of place there without a coat and tie. The room rate was \$170, including breakfast.

We found Münster to be a very interesting city. We stayed on the outskirts in the town of Handorf at the **Hof Zur Linde** (Handorfer Werseufer 1, D-48157, tel. 251/327 50, fax 251/328 209). Our room in the original building was large with a sitting area and good bath. They have a newer annex and the rooms are cheaper, I would recommend them. They have a good restaurant but the best part of our stay was meeting the

bartender, Charlie. He puts on quite a show serving wine and beer. He's very friendly (from Bavaria) and people are there to all hours. You'd love him. The rate we paid was \$170 including breakfast.

We would love to find some condo and apartment rentals. We love Switzerland but need to find an alternative to hotel living.

Pat McLean, Colorado Springs CO

No on Walter du Lac

There is a hotel you listed in your "Best Hotels of 1994," the **Walter du Lac** in Lugano. My husband and I based an overnight trip to Lugano in June upon your recommendation. We were terribly disappointed. We look for charm, value and comfort. This hotel not only did not have any of these qualities, it had an unfriendly staff. One of the many discomforts was the tiny, roofless concrete slab hanging over a noisy, congested main street clogged with fumes. I believe your description was "huge lakeside terraces."

Some relative passed on your newsletter to aid us in planning a three-month European vacation. Our only bad hotel experience was the Walter du Lac. This is our only *Gemütlichkeit* experience so we will not be subscribing. We continue to rely on *Travel & Leisure*. Their recommendations can be trusted.

Helen Albright, Jacksonville FL

(Imagine Ms. Albright's disappointment had she paid for Gemütlichkeit. — Editor)

Rips Airport Hotel

I would like to pass on one warning to you and possibly your readers: do not stay at the **Hotel Aston** in Kelsterbach (close to Frankfurt airport). Granted its location puts you close to your departure and they do provide a free airport shuttle service but please read on.

Problems:

1. We were told the hotel was air-conditioned...right; open both windows wide and hope for a breeze.

2. Located in an industrial park between two trucking firms, the German equivalent of American Moving Van Lines and Danzas Trucking. Both work around the

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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Symphony), 19th dist., Döblinger Hauptstrasse 92, tel. 369 14 24.

Johann Strauss. The "Waltz King's" former residence is in the second district at Praterstrasse 54, tel. 24 01 21.

Mozart wrote his opera *The Marriage of Figaro* in an apartment behind St. Stephen's Cathedral — now called **Figarohaus** — at Domgasse 5, in the first district.

Schubert has two important Vienna addresses: his birthplace at Nussdorfer Strasse 54 (9th dist.), tel. 34 59 924, and his last residence at Kettenbrückengasse 6 (4th dist.), tel. 573 90 72.

• **Tap your feet to Schrammelmusik** at one of the many *Heurigen* in Vienna's suburban wine villages. These taverns, traditionally marked by a pine bough over the front door, have the right to sell new wine made on the premises and also offer light buffet meals. Often there is a musical group consisting of at least a violin and an accordion. Try the villages of Grinzing (many tourists), Sievering, Neustift, Heiligenstadt, Nussdorf, Grossejedlersdorf, Mauer, Oberlaa and Ottakring. The least expensive — a quarter-liter (*Viertel*) of wine for as little as 25 AS (\$2.35) — are in Stammersdorf and Strebersdorf. Look for the pine boughs and don't drive, ride the tram.

Great Web Sites

• **Swiss Rail** now has a great searchable database of Swiss train schedules. Type in your departure city, arrival city and date of travel and in a few seconds a schedule appears on the screen. (<http://www.nexpage.ch/cgi-win/rail.exe>)

• Schedules plus prices are also available on **Rail Europe's** website. Not all cities are included but it is still a very handy planning tool. (<http://www.raileurope.com/>)

• The **German Rail** website also has a searchable database which provides timetables. (<http://www.hacon.de/>)

• Microsoft's new travel website is **Expedia** (<http://www.expedia.com/>). Among sev-

eral excellent features is a database of 25,000 hotels. About 75 are listed for Vienna, including most of those reviewed in this month's lead story. For example, the **Pension Altstadt Vienna**. In addition to the usual information is a link to the Altstadt's own website which offers color photos of the hotel plus information about special packages. Clicking back to the Altstadt page in Expedia's hotel database, I was able to request and receive, almost instantly, room availability on specific dates, including prices. I could have booked on-line.

Another link led to a map of the city with the Pension Altstadt clearly marked on it. Very useful.

• Another Expedia feature I now use is its Fare Tracker which provides regular air fare updates on as many as three air routes. I chose San Francisco to Frankfurt, San Francisco to Zürich and San Francisco to Vienna. Now, every few days I get an e-mail with the lowest fares from San Francisco to each city, which airlines offer them, plus a summary of fare restrictions. Fare Tracker is free. 

EUROPE BRIEFING

Continued from page 1

Palace, Munich - \$199
Atrium Hotel, Nürnberg - \$129
Hotel Helia, Budapest - \$129
Hotel Gellert, Budapest - \$149-\$169
Steigenberger Gstaad-Saanen - \$149-\$179
Schweizerhof Zürich - \$309

Bookings must be made in the U.S. Tel. 800-223-5652

Hotel Coupon Deals

Ed Perkins, editor of *Consumer Reports Newsletter*, is an expert on finding the best hotel deals. His regular newspaper column recently dealt with the issue of hotel discount coupon books.

He cited **Entertainment Publications** new half-price hotel directory which lists some 5,500 hotels around the world, including more than 800 in Europe, and said it "far outstrips Entertainment's earlier directories, as well as those of its major rival programs."

Called the *Ultimate Travel*

Savings Directory, it comes with an ID card valid for at least a year and sells for \$59.95 from Entertainment 1-800-445-4137. The directory includes discount coupons for **American Airlines, Continental Airlines**, several cruise lines and car-rental companies. The Entertainment ID is also good for system-wide discounts up to 25% at several big mid-priced hotel chains.

Entertainment also publishes a separate book for Europe that includes discounts at participating restaurants and visitor attractions as well as hotels.

Perkins also mentions two other major hotel discount book sellers: **Encore** (\$49.95 per year, 800-342-0558) and **Quest** (\$99 per year, 800-742-3543).

In order to reserve a room at a discount rate, the Entertainment (or Encore or Quest) ID card holder must call a listed hotel directly (not the nationwide toll-free number). If the hotel expects to be less than about 80 percent full, the half-price rate is extended. These rates are not commissionable, so your travel agent may be less than enthusiastic about handling the booking for you.

Finally, Perkins points out that "half" price is usually 50% of an inflated rack rate that almost nobody pays. Nonetheless, he concludes these discounts are usually the best price the hotel has to offer.

It should also be noted that *Gemütlichkeit* has successfully used the Entertainment discount program in Europe.

Condor Goes Sked

Condor, the **Lufthansa** "holiday" airline, now has authority to fly scheduled service from Tampa and Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Las Vegas, Nevada and Anchorage, Alas-


ka. All flights are nonstop to Germany.

Though Condor has offered charter service for over 20 years, scheduled service approval allows them to be listed in computer reservations systems and allows travel agents to sell their tickets.

The winter schedule calls for only one flight per week from Florida and Las Vegas but a Condor spokesperson said it is "looking for at least twice weekly service" during the May-October summer season. Anchorage service begins in May of '97 and continues through mid-September.

Flights, via Boeing 767-300, offer a two-class arrangement. Comfort class is non-smoking and offers business class-style service with roomier seats.

Current low season — through the end of April, 1997 — roundtrip fares are \$598 economy and \$1348 comfort class from Florida and \$700 and \$1450 from Las Vegas.

Passengers may book by calling 800 524-6975 and, beginning in December, via a travel agent or through Lufthansa Reservations at 800 645-3880. 

READERS' FORUM

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clock as do their diesels.

3. Closest little town is Kelsterbach, a long, warm 5 kilometer walk and since it was before 6 p.m. no restaurants we open except pizza and ice cream.

4. Hotel did not offer a complete menu. I settled for the buffet at 28.50 DM (\$19) even though I don't particularly fancy curried dishes. My wife decided on the one-trip salad bar at 18.50 DM (\$12). All-in-all a fairly expensive bad meal. Be sure to carry antacids. Better yet, take the shuttle to the airport to eat.

David Oplet, Belleville IL 