

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

May 23, 1997

It's About That Czech Beer

I have been to the mountain. Figuratively speaking, of course. Since that phrase has religious connotations I can tell you our trip to the great **Budweiser Budvar** brewery in the Czech Republic (see lead story) was undertaken with the same fervor and zeal as a visit by a baseball fan to Cooperstown and the Baseball Hall of Fame.

An opinion I have often expressed in these pages is that Budvar is the world's best beer. That, of course, doesn't make it so; merely my favorite. This "best" business can be a little complicated. Last month, a subscriber wrote in praise **Bayerische Staatsbrauerei Weihenstephan**. That Weihenstephan didn't suit me counts for nothing. We all have different expectations and different ideas about what is "best." For some, the ultimate beer is a thick, black Guinness Stout served at room temperature. For others it is an ice-cold Silver Bullet. For me, it's a Budvar from the tap, and the nearer that tap is to Ceske Budejovice, the better.

My first Budvar was at the Prater, Vienna's big amusement park, in about 1985. I had known for several years the reputation of another Czech brew, Pilsner Urquell, but until then Budweiser to me was Anheuser-Busch, St. Louis. After that first taste I stayed on the lookout for "Budvar" signs and more than once a lunch or dinner decision was made solely because a restaurant served my favorite beer.

So how come these Czechs are so good at beer? Brewing experts say they have the best raw materials. Their malting barley is described as "sweet and clean" and grown in a temperate, "continental" climate. For hundreds of years, Bohemia has

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

BREWERY DRIVE

Who would believe the world's best beer is also among its least expensive? We find this and other delights in Southern Bohemia.

It was something of a pilgrimage. The goal was to visit the brewery at Ceske Budejovice, in southern Bohemia, where the marvelous Budvar (Budweiser) is made. Our little side trip turned out to be a three-brewery, two-day drive through the Bavarian Forest and the southwestern corner of the Czech Republic. We made stopovers in two Czech towns, one of which seems destined to someday rival such quaint tourist meccas as Germany's Rothenburg ob der Tauber and Gruyères in Switzerland.

We were interested in all this, but beer was the chief motivator.

A German Brewery

The journey began with dinner at **Weihenstephan**, the Bavarian State Brewery, in Freising near the Munich Airport. It was founded by Benedictine monks (those guys *did* enjoy an occasional beverage, didn't they?) in 1040 and claims to be the world's oldest brewery.

Located on the grounds of the Munich Technical University, it also operates a school for brewers.

We arrived about 9 p.m. and chose the lighter, cooler *Bräustuberl* located to the left of the entrance and down a couple of steps. It had tile floors, vaulted ceilings and plain,

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Moderately-Priced Hotels in Zurich

As a dining car attendant on Swiss trains, tourists often asked me to recommend reasonably-priced hotel accommodations in Zürich. Thus it was very interesting

to seek some out now for *Gemütlichkeit* readers. The hotels I came up with are not five-star deluxe but smaller, cozy, spotlessly clean, well-situated for tourists arriving or leaving by air or train, and presided over by friendly and helpful staff. Advance reservations are strongly advised. Unless otherwise noted, prices include breakfast and taxes.

Zürich Airport Area

• **Hotel Welcome Inn:** Situated in Kloten just five minutes drive from the airport, the Welcome Inn is one of the Wohlgemuth family hotels. Previously a **Swissair** steward, Mr. Wohlgemuth introduced an international flavor to this hotel not only in its various restaurants but

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Europe Travel Digest

■ *Investor's Business Daily* makes these points about obtaining cash from automated teller machines overseas:

- There are now more than 320,000 ATMs in more than 100 countries.

- The major advantage of an ATM in Europe — other than the convenience — is the wholesale rate on currency conversion. According to a 14-country study, using a U.S.-issued bank card in an ATM was on average 43% less expensive than exchanging currency at an airport money counter and 57% less expensive than at a hotel.

- On-screen instructions for obtaining cash are usually in several languages, including English.

- If you use a credit card instead of an ATM debit card the transaction is a cash advance and interest will be charged.

- Mastercard/Cirrus locations can be found online at <http://www.mastercard.com>. Visa/Plus locations are at <http://www.visa.com>.

- Obtain a four-digit PIN (personal identification number) before leaving the U.S. Most machines will not accept PINs longer than four digits. Use numbers not letters since most over-

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been famous for its hops. Microbrewers in the U.S. who import Czech hops can be relied on to brag about it on menus and in advertising. In fact, Lind Brewing, in the San Francisco Bay Area, makes a delicious lager called Zatec, named after the town in Bohemia where the best hops are grown. Few U.S. microbrewers even bother with lagers (most Czech beers are lagers) because the process takes longer and is more expensive.

Budvar was, and is, not available in the U.S. because, of course, Anheuser Busch owns the name "Budweiser."

In the late 19th century, when Adolph Busch went to Europe to study brewing, specifically lagering, he became intrigued with the town of Ceske Budejovice, once home of the royal court brewery. Old Augie copyrighted the name "Budweiser" and began calling it the "King of Beers." His Michelob is also named after a Czech town, Michalovce. So even though Ceske Budejovice had about a 600-year head start on Busch, the first and original "Budweiser" cannot be marketed in the U.S.

Both brewers have used the name Budweiser for more than 100 years, ever since they forged an agreement that gave the Czech brewer the right to use the name in Europe and the former Soviet Union.

After the fall of communism, Anheuser Busch sought to end confusion resulting from two versions of Budweiser being sold in Europe. Seeing an opening when the Czech government decided to privatize thousands of government-owned businesses, A-B turned the full force of its economic and public relations might on the little Czech town and its brewery. In an attempt to buy the brewery and the trademark, it wooed the town with

big money, pouring millions into an elaborate "cultural center." Money also was spent on Czech schools and universities, and for advertisements in the country's leading newspapers.

The Czech's loved the cultural center, "oohing" and "ahhhing" over the high tech gadgets, but, God bless them, said no to the offer. Considering the average Czech earns in one day's work about what a six-pack of Budweiser costs in the U.S., it is a decision A-B may have found difficult to understand.

The mayor of Ceske Budejovice, brewery officials and the Czech government turned back the world's largest brewer (at 91,000,000 barrels per year, A-B makes more beer in a week than Budvar makes in a year) by forging an arrangement which excluded Budvar from the privatization movement and kept it under government control.

In the end, the Czechs decided they didn't want a lot of high-tech brewing equipment and western control. The loved their old brewery and, more than anything else, they were afraid the Americans would change their beer. After all, they contended, A-B brews bland, undistinguished beer.

The whole affair was the subject recently of an ABC-TV "Nightline" with Ted Koppel. There were many shots of foamy glasses of Budvar and one interior of the brewery's restaurant. It solidified my resolve to go there. I have been to the mountain.

Amex Reduces Coverage

Holders of the **American Express** card who rely on it for Collision Damage Waiver and Theft insurance should be aware they may no longer be covered for rental cars in Europe and certain other countries. Effective June 1, the Amex gold corporate card no longer covers CDW or theft insurance in Europe. Coverage in Ireland has also been withdrawn for holders of the regular green Amex

card. Italy has not been covered by any Amex green or gold for some time.

Remember, too, that coverage is limited to rentals of not longer than 30 days. Don't think that if you have a 31 day rental you are covered for 30 of those days. That's not the way it works. Contracts of longer than 30 days simply are not within the Amex coverage parameters.


Also pay attention to the kind of vehicles Amex does not cover. These include "expensive" cars costing more than \$50,000, "exotic" cars — regardless of value — and full-size vans. Examples of excluded cars include: Mercedes SL, SLK, S Coupe and E320; BMW M3, Z3 and 8 series; Porsche and 9-passenger vans. Minivans are covered. Check with American Express to make sure the vehicle you plan to rent is covered.

Gemütlichkeit Swissair Deal

There is some confusion among subscribers about the special reduced rate program with **Swissair**. Here are the salient points to remember:

- Paid subscribers are eligible for from \$50 to \$600 off Swissair's regular and sale fares. Right now the reduction is \$50 for economy tickets priced under \$1000, and \$150 if the economy fare is \$1000 or more. Business and first class reductions are \$400 and \$600 respectively. However, purchasers of full-fare economy tickets (about \$3300 from the West Coast) are entitled to a free business class upgrade.

- A coupon is not needed but you must book directly with Swissair. Reserve through Swissair at 800-221-4750, then call Shirley at Swissair in L.A., 310-335-5900. She will confirm with us your subscriber status and issue the tickets at the lower price.

- All persons traveling with the subscriber on at least one leg of the transatlantic journey are eligible for the reduced fares. — RHB 

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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.

BREWERY DRIVE

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blond wood furniture. Our foursome sat at a large table in an arcaded alcove and were served by an accommodating, pleasant woman in her mid-50s who spoke little English.

One almost assumes good beer and food at a German brewery/restaurant. Regrettably, however, both the beer and the meal at Weihenstephan were a disappointment. We tried *Helles*, *Pils* and *Weissen*; all fell short of our expectations. It all seemed light and fizzy, too much like what comes out of a Miller Genuine Draft or a Coors tap at home.

Other than a crisp mixed salad of julienned carrots, lettuce, cucumber, tomatoes, cabbage, and dressing with just the right tang, the food was worse. *Zwiebelrostbraten* (steak topped with fried onions) was tough and without a spark of taste, *Schweinlendchen* (pork tenderloin) was chewy and dry and the *Schweinhaxen* (pork shank) was only fair. Even a shared plate of *Pommes Frites* seemed soggy and lifeless.

Beer prices ranged from 3.8 DM (\$2.25) for a half-liter of Original (*Helles*) to 4.3 DM (\$2.56) for the *Pilsner*.

The meal for four, including the beer, was about \$75.

Crossing the Border

Next morning we dropped our friends at the Munich Airport and set out, sans hotel reservations, for Ceske Budejovice in the Czech Republic, initially via the A92 Autobahn to Deggendorf. There we turned southeast on the A3 toward Passau. For those who enjoy fast driving, the stretch of Autobahn between Freising and Wallersdorf is relative new. The road is smooth and wide, and traffic, at least on a Wednesday morning in early April, was light. We made quick work of the approximately 140 kilometers (88 miles). Exit at the Autobahn sign to the Czech Republic north of Passau.

Since this sojourn was somewhat spur of the moment, we stopped at a

large Autobahn rest stop and picked up a Falk map entitled *Czech/Slovak Republic*. Though the scale is 1:750,000, far less detailed than the 1:200,000 scale we like for backroads travel, it got us where we were going.

The drive through the Bavarian Forest, via Freyung, to the border was a pleasant one. On this day, at least, there was little traffic.

To cross at Phillipsreut was a line of perhaps 20 cars, but the process took less than 10 minutes. We dis-

asked what we knew about the "label" which is required for cars driving Czech motorways. Approaching the border we, too, had noticed a sign that seemed to indicate we might need a pass similar to Switzerland's "vignette." However, since we saw no place to buy one, we drove on. The pass is a *dalinichni znamka* and sells for about \$20 at post offices, gas stations and, supposedly, at border crossings. It is only required on Autobahn-type highways.

The changes after the border were immediate. The road narrowed and became less well maintained. Flanking it were a succession of dusty, depressing little makeshift flea markets with rickety booths selling cheap clothing, plastic souvenirs and gaudy Christmas decorations. Each one seemed to feature brightly painted, life-size replicas of the seven dwarfs. Every couple of kilometers, posted on each side the road and interspersed among the merchandise stands, were young prostitutes (we assume) gotten up in short, tight skirts, high heels and heavy makeup. Always nearby were small billboards advertising "Amore Clubs" that promised a lively time.

Most villages contained many dilapidated and often deserted buildings.

The countryside, however, was pretty and peaceful and the road, which was as good as most California country lanes, wound easily through the forested hills and ploughed fields. About 30 minutes from the border, the hookers, the nightclub signs and the flea markets disappeared.

We left Red Road #12 at Vimperk, turning right toward Ceske Budejovice. Just beyond Husinec, there is a very sharp left and then an immediate right. At that point the road narrows and is not so well paved; but only for a short stretch. All roads were well signed.

Some three hours after leaving the Munich Airport we were in Ceske Budejovice, the biggest city in Southern Bohemia.

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Brewery Drive: The Data

Hotel Dvorak, Radnicni 101, CZ-381 01 Ceske Krumlov, tel. 0337/711020, fax 0337/711024. Singles 2800 to 3400 (\$96-\$117), doubles 3500 to 4300 Kc (\$121-\$148). Suites 4000 to 6000 Kc (\$138 to \$207). Free parking in hotel lot.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 18/20

Grand Hotel Zvon, Nam. Premysla Otakara II. 28, CZ-370 01, Ceske Budejovice, tel 042/0 38/731 1384, fax 042/0 38/731 1385. Singles 1395 to 2680 Kc (\$48-\$92), doubles 2060 to 2430 Kc (\$71-\$84), suites 2950 to 3200 Kc (\$102-\$110). Parking in hotel garage 250 Kc (\$8.62).

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 14/20

Budejovicky Budvar, Karoliny Svetle 4, CZ-370 21 Ceske Budejovice, tel. 0387/7705111. Tours available.

Restaurant Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 19/20

Pivovar Eggenberg, Latran 27, CZ-381 15 Cesky Krumlov, tel. 0337/3921, fax: 0337/3609

Restaurant Rating: QUALITY 6/20, VALUE 10/20

Rybarska basta, Kajovska 54, CZ-381 15 Cesky Krumlov, tel. 0337/67183

Restaurant Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 17/20

Bayerische Staatsbrauerei Weihenstephan, Weihenstephan 1, D-85350, Freising, Germany, tel. 081 61/13004, fax 081 61/71-32 59. Tours available.

Restaurant Rating: QUALITY 7/20, VALUE 10/20

Egon Schiele Centrum, CZ-381 01, Cesky Krumlov, Siroka 70-72. Open daily 1000 to 1800

Radio Praha has a good Internet Web page in English that includes the latest news from the Czech Republic, cultural listings and even a list of Czech breweries. (<http://www.radio.cz/english.html>)

played the handwritten document supplied by Avis which gave us permission to drive the car in the Czech Republic. The guard, a young woman, glanced at it, gave a short — I thought somewhat derisive — laugh and waved us on.

Once through, we stopped at the Czech side to exchange a few deutchemarks for korunas and were approached by a German man who

BREWERY DRIVE

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Grand Hotel Zvon

In the city center is one of the largest town squares in Europe. At the southeast corner of it we found the newly refurbished **Grand Hotel Zvon**.

For 2950 Kc (\$98), plus 250 Kc (\$8.33) for breakfast for two, we were given the V Lanner Suite, which was simply a double room. It had the usual amenities, but was rather narrow and overlooked the main square, making it somewhat noisy at night.

The staff, however, was helpful and spoke enough English for our needs.

Parking the car was interesting. On the street behind the hotel we turned in to the hotel's garage. There, a man motioned us to drive onto a large lift which ascended to a small, secure rooftop parking area. He then helped us unload and carry our luggage to our room.

Despite the hotel's fancy looking **Gourmet Symphony** restaurant, which boasts a hand-carved wood ceiling, we opted to dine at the Budvar brewery. For snacks and beverages there was the **Cafe Mozart**, a Vienna-style, wood-paneled combination wine bar and coffee house.

Our favorite part of the hotel, however, was a ground floor bistro that opened to the town square. It has a pleasant, warm atmosphere with dark wood tables spaced well apart, good lighting and walls hung with framed clippings from old newspapers. The restaurant's centerpiece is a huge, highly-polished copper beer tank top that hangs umbrella fashion over the heart of the operation, draught-central, where the beer is pulled.

Here, after an afternoon walk, we settled in with the locals for half-liters of splendid Pilsner Urquell and a small plate of French fries. The total was less than \$2. A 50ish man in a tuxedo supervised the uniformed young servers, most of whom seemed to speak at least some English.

There was much to choose from at breakfast, but the experience was marred for us by too many smokers and a thermostat turned too high. The items on the buffet did not seem as fresh as they might have.

Overall, however, our experience at the Zvon was a good one and we recommend it without hesitation.

Dinner at Budvar

We inquired at the front desk for the best way to get to Budvar. A taxi was recommended and the cost estimated at 120 Kc (\$4). We took the first cab in line in front of the hotel and paid 130 Kc (\$4.33). The driver spoke zero English and only a few words of German.

Budvar is in a quasi industrial area on a wide, but at night rather deserted, boulevard and we asked the driver if he could return after dinner. There was difficulty in communicating this so we finally wrote '2200 hrs' on a scrap of paper and gave it to him. — along with a decent tip.

The Pivince (beer restaurant) at Budvar is a long, somewhat narrow room with no more than 20 well separated, heavy, dark wood tables large enough to seat about eight persons. Indirect lighting emphasizes the low, white-washed, vaulted ceilings. The floor is slate with runners down the center.

The night of our visit, the room was perhaps 75% full, mostly with young locals, and decidedly lacking in the oompah craziness of a German beer hall.

The simple, traditional food was terrific and the beer divine. Half a liter of this nectar, here at its source, is 15 Kc (50 cents).

Rather small mixed salads of sliced tomatoes, cucumbers, green peppers, kraut and lettuce, all with very little or no dressing, sounded the evening's only sour note.

The main course, a speciality of the house for two persons, included *Spätzle*, hefty potato pancakes (*Altböhmischer Kartoffelpuffer*) and two heavy-duty skewers of pork, onion, sausage and fatty bacon. In case there was not enough fat on the skewers, a small pitcher of "au fat" was offered.

The *Spätzle* had a slightly smoky taste, probably from being sauteed for a bit in bacon grease, and the potato pancakes were just right, with a crunchy outside. The skewered meats were tender, smoky and delicious.

For dessert we chose (menu available in German but not English)

something called *Liwanzer*, small puffy pancakes with *Heidelbeeren* (blueberries) and whipped cream. Luscious.

The dinner cost 369 Kc (\$12.20), including the three beers (two for me, one for her).

At 9:45, just as we walked out the front door, our cabbie pulled up to the curb.

A Medieval Treasure

Next morning's drive south to Cesky Krumlov, over good roads, was pleasant and took only 30 to 40 minutes. Outside the old town are visitor parking lots. We parked in lot #1 and walked perhaps 200 meters through huge arches, across the Vltava and into the maze of old cobbled streets.

Supported by UNESCO funding, this exquisite medieval town is rapidly being restored. Even the houses in crumbling disrepair are immensely charming and one can only hope the refurbishment is sensitive to these great old buildings.

A great castle, the largest in the country outside of Prague, looks straight down from a bluff across the river. Be sure to see its gorgeous **Baroque Theater**. Guided tours are available.

The Austrian artist, Egon Schiele, left Vienna to live briefly in Krumlov where he specialized in painting cityscapes and nude women. Under the communist government, Schiele's pictures were kept under wraps. Now, however, the town proudly displays his work at the **Schiele Centrum** on Siroka. On our visit, the gallery was also showing some early drawings of Schiele's pal, Gustav Klimt. Suffice to say both men had a strong interest in the female form.

Terrific New Hotel

Due to a lack of good hotels, several readers have said they visited this charming town on daytrips from Freistadt, in Austria. Now, however, Krumlov has a gem, the **Hotel Dvorak**, on the river in the castle's very shadow.

Refurbished inside and out in the Palladian style of an Italian country villa, the Dvorak has 13 double rooms, seven apartments and aspirations to be among Europe's finest small hotels.

Its public rooms emphasize polished brass and rich wood paneling and guestrooms are slickly done in a sort of toned-down Laura Ashley style. Ample, brightly lit bathrooms are luxuriously done in large, floor to ceiling marble tile.

Room 202, a standard twin for which *Gemütlichkeit* paid 3500 Kc (\$121) has a queen-size bed and a view of the castle. Number 201, a much larger double on a corner with separate sitting area, rents for 4300 Kc (\$148).

The hotel has a small restaurant and a fitness room, neither of which we tried.

Beer & Food

Since we were on sort of a brewery mission, we tried the local pride, **Pivovar Eggenberg**. The beer was very good but not, we thought, quite up to Budvar or Pilsner Urquell. The room is impressive, a church-like interior with lofty, vaulted ceiling, street-style globe lights and separated seating areas on several levels.

Like most other beer halls we have seen in the Czech Republic, the beer is dispensed from a circular sort of control-central presided over by a middle-aged man in jacket, shirt and tie.

Unfortunately, the food took a long time to get to us and wasn't very good. Mushy, strange-tasting carp came with plain boiled potatoes. We left most of it. A thick soup with vegetables and potatoes was better. That, and the mixed salad, averted total disaster. There was an English menu.

The place to eat in Cesky Krumlov, however, is **Rybarska basta**, a cozy little fish restaurant behind the town square. Reminiscent of a rustic old English inn, there is a low, wood-beamed ceiling, a fireplace and rough wood benches.

Grilled pike-perch with french fried potatoes was perhaps the best dish we've had in two brief trips to the Czech Republic. Most impressive was the freshness of the ingredients and the restraint with regard to oil and fat used in their preparation. Lunch for two, not including beverages, was approximately \$17.

The Moldau

The road from Krumlov, south to the border, through Rozmbek (Rosenberg), is the prettiest of the entire drive. It meanders along the Vltava, a river immortalized by Czech composer, Bedrich Smetana, appropriately for this story, the son of a brewer.

Vltava (The Moldau) is the second in his cycle of six symphonic poems called *Ma Vlast (My Fatherland)*. He finished it in 1874, just after losing his hearing. The music follows the river's journey from its source as a trickle in the Bohemian forests until it flows into Prague and later merges with the Elbe.

Twice in this short drive we were waved over by police. None spoke any English. We were concerned we might be fined for not displaying the necessary "label" or pass for driving the motorways. The first squadron of cops looked briefly at our passports and motioned us on but five minutes later a second group brushed away our passports and wanted to see car rental papers. We were allowed to proceed only after we showed them the handwritten, Avis-supplied, document the woman border guard scoffed at on our way into the country. We assume they were looking for stolen cars.

The border crossing was uneventful and we proceeded on to Freistadt, Austria.

READERS' FORUM

Munich Airport Hotel

In the latest issue of *Gemütlichkeit* you suggested that you do not have a "crackerjack" hotel to recommend that is located near the Munich Airport for people to use for the "last night".

Two years ago I found and used the **Hotel Hoyacker Hof** run by the Schredl family. This is a relative new hotel, typically German, very friendly, exceptionally clean and well furnished. Parking is provided on the premises. The location is just off the A-9 in D-8046 Garching at Freisinger Landstrasse 9a. Their phone number is 089/3206965-68 and the

fax is 089/3207243.

The rate charged in May, 1995 was 130 DM for a single with a great breakfast. The hotel is quiet and I highly recommend it not only for the "last night" but for any time you need an excellent hotel north of Munich (about 20 KM)

GARY P. FORD
DAYTON OH

Rothenburg Hotel

We appreciate your Internet Travel tips. The Internet has certainly added a dimension to our travel planning that is most welcome. Thanks to *Gemütlichkeit* we are using **Expedia** for airline reservations and find it a great way to do business.

I especially want to comment on your mention of the **Hotel Garni Hornburg**. We stayed there last year for several days. It is a wonderful alternative to the more expensive hotels within the walls.

The Hornburg is literally just outside the walls and is a bit hard to find the first time around as it sits on a pedestrian only street, facing one of the town parking lots and the wall. This is not a detraction at all. The hotel garden is lovely as are the hosts, Martin and Gabi Wetzell, a delightful young couple who are anxious to make your stay as pleasant as possible. The rooms are spacious and attractive, the breakfast as good as any we've had in Germany. Gabi even made scrambled eggs for me one day!

While we were there a Volksfest was in full swing. The parking lot by the hotel was where the parade ended and was set up with food concessions, live music and the largest beer trucks we have ever seen! They looked like small milk trucks with hoses running from the trucks to the beer tents for true "vom fass." We had a great time. The Wetzells joined us in the hotel garden at a picnic table and we toasted everything we could think of. When the steins ran dry we walked back to the beer tent and got refills. We consumed more "beer and brats" that day than I care to admit but what fun we had. We could be part

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ZÜRICH HOTELS

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in meeting the needs of his many international guests. Excellent well-appointed, soundproofed rooms. Private parking, shops, main highway and railroad close by. Free airport shuttle bus runs 0600 to 1250 and 1645 to 2250.

Welcome Inn, Holbergstrasse 1, CH-8032 Kloten, tel. 01/814 0727, fax 01/813 5616. Singles Sfr. 115 (\$79), doubles Sfr. 154 (\$106), breakfast buffet Sfr. 12 (\$8).

Note: Welcome Inn has three sister hotels in the immediate airport area but somewhat more expensive, they are:

• **Hotel Fly Away:** Very new, modern hotel with full amenities almost next door to Welcome Inn.

Hotel Fly Away, Marktgasse 19, CH-8302 Kloten, tel. 01/813 66 13, fax. 01/813 51 25 - Singles Sfr. 145 (\$100), doubles Sfr. 182 (\$125), breakfast buffet Sfr. 14 (\$10).

• **Hotel Airport:** Fine four-star hotel in Glattbrugg with restaurants serving Japanese and European cuisine.

Hotel Airport, Oberhauserstrasse 30, CH-8152 Glattbrugg, tel. 01/810 44 44, fax 01/810 97 08. Singles Sfr. 162-180 (\$111-123), doubles Sfr. 212-235 (\$146-\$162), depending on day of the week.

• **Hotel Coronado:** Halfway between Zürich airport and the city, beautifully renovated with 80% of rooms air-conditioned. Parking, transport and a fine Italian restaurant.

Hotel Coronado, Schaffhauserstrasse 37, CH-8057 Zürich, tel. 01/363 06 50, fax 01/363 0656. Singles Sfr. 115-150 (\$79-\$103), doubles Sfr. 150-195 (\$103-134).

Other Choices Near Airport

• **Hotel Restaurant Landhus:** Situated in Zürich-Seebach, also just five minutes' drive from the airport. The hotel was completely renovated in 1996 in an extremely tasteful Mediterranean style. There are 28 well-fitted rooms with private bathrooms, radio, satellite TV, telephone and hairdryer. The new restaurant, including a large garden terrace at the front and back, is a delight, decorated in the attractive blue and

yellow colors of Provence. The menu offers a fine range of reasonably-priced French and Italian cuisine as well as Swiss specialities.

The situation is ideal: buses pass the door taking you directly to the airport and trams convey you to the city center without the worry of parking. Shops and sports facilities (tennis and swimming in summer) are at hand.

Hotel Restaurant Landhus, Katzenbachstrasse 10, CH-8052 Zürich-Seebach, tel. 01/308 34 00, fax. 01/308 34 51. Singles Sfr. 115 (\$79), doubles Sfr. 145 (\$100).

• **Hotel-Restaurant Bahnhof:** Alongside Glattbrugg railroad station, a stone's-throw from the Hotel Landhus and on the same bus route to the airport, eight newly refurbished rooms with bath/shower and five apartments offer a Swiss chalet atmosphere. A variety of eateries include the **Victoria Pub**, a grill-room, a veranda and a small, cozy fondue room with food and prices to suit everyone. Easy access within minutes to the main highway, airport and by train to Zürich city center.

The one-bedroom apartments are equipped with modern phone/fax and, upon request, worldwide computer linkups. One disadvantage; no elevator but a maximum of three flights of stairs and most accommodations on the lower floors.

Hotel-Restaurant Bahnhof, Schaffhauserstrasse 51, CH-8152 Glattbrugg, tel. 01/809 62 12, fax 01/809 62 09. Singles Sfr. 98 (\$68), doubles Sfr. 149 (\$102).

• **Hotel-Restaurant Frohsinn:** A family run hotel with 24 rooms (only 12 with private bathrooms), situated once again five minutes by car or bus from the airport, main highway and shops. Bus-stop to and from airport just 100 yards away. This small, traditional Swiss hotel has an elevator, free parking and large restaurant with an open-air terrace for fine weather. The latter offers an interesting assortment of meals and snacks at very reasonable prices

Hotel-Restaurant Frohsinn, Wallisellerstrasse 74, CH-8152, Opfikon-Glattbrugg, tel. 01/810 61 43, fax 01/811 22 42. Singles Sfr. 80 (\$55) and doubles Sfr. 130 (\$90).

Note: Hotels which do not have their own airport buses will arrange for

shuttle pickups - prices on request.

Taxis to and from the airport to any of these hotels cost approximately. Sfr. 17 (\$12); or public transport buses approximately Sfr. 3 (\$2) per person, tickets obtainable from the bus driver

Zürich City Area

• **Hotel Du Theatre:** Centrally located very near the main railroad station. Regular train service to and from the airport or shuttle bus upon request. Pleasant breakfast room, 56 light airy rooms with bath or shower, telephone, TV and minibar. Ideal situation for sight-seeing and shopping in both the old town and the city center.

Hotel du Theatre, Seilergraben 69, CH-8001, Zürich, tel. 01/252 60 62, fax 01/252 01 54. Singles Sfr. 90-130 (\$62-90), doubles Sfr. 130-180 (\$90-124). Public parking nearby.

• **Hotel Limmathof:** Situated virtually opposite the Hotel du Theatre at central alongside the Limmat River. Pleasant rustic hotel. 62 rooms with either bath or shower. Approximately 50% of rooms with TV.

Hotel Limmathof, Limmatquai 142, CH-8023, Zürich, tel. 01/261 42 20, fax 01/262 02 17. Singles Sfr. 100-110 (\$69-76), doubles Sfr. 128-160 (\$78-110). Prices 10% less in winter.

• **Hotel Walhalla:** A three-star hotel beside of the main railroad station. Until recently was called "Arc en Ville." Important upgrades are foreseen in summer 1997 although the hotel was renovated not so long ago. 65 rooms have shower/bath/WC, hairdryer, TV, telephone and minibar. Excellent location for trains, excursions and shopping in Zürich. Parking possible and tram stops outside hotel. There is a restaurant. Ask for one of the larger rooms.

Hotel Walhalla, Sihlquai 9, CH-8031, Zürich, tel. 01/446 54 00, fax 01/446 54 545. Singles Sfr. 80-120 (\$55-83), doubles Sfr. 120-160 (\$83-110). Continental breakfast Sfr. 9.50.

*Englishwoman, Diana Nial, has spent most of her life in Switzerland, including six years as a dining car attendant on Swiss trains. She wrote **Tracking Across Switzerland**, a book about her experiences. Order it at 800-521-6722.*



Country Hotel Profile

Schloß Berg

Formerly known as the Park und Strand, the newly-christened **Hotel-Restaurant Schloss Berg** (not in, but named after, the castle) is a relaxing, beautifully situated hide-away, about a 25-minute drive from Munich.

The property, once two hotels, consists of two main buildings on several acres of prime property directly on the eastern shore of the Starnbergersee, below the village of Berg.

In addition to some newly redecorated guestrooms, the lakeside building houses a large restaurant with an outdoor component that consists of a sprawling, multilevel deck/terrace on the lake.

Actually, there are two restaurants, one is more formal with fine linen and glassware and the other is a rustic Bavarian *Stube* with plenty of rough wood trim. Both offer the same menu and lake views.

Most main courses are in the 20 DM to 27 DM (\$12-\$16) range. Fried filet of pike-perch in a Riesling sauce with vegetables and rice is 26.50 DM (\$15.77) and a quarter of crispy baked duckling with red cabbage and potato dumpling is 19.50 (\$11.61).

A room we particularly like in this building is Number 66, a large, corner double decorated in a fresh, contemporary style with separate sitting area and three big windows opening to the lake. It has a comfortable couch and spacious, fully-tiled bathroom. The dollar-guaranteed price for 1997 is \$130, less a 10% discount for *Gemütlichkeit* readers — \$117.

The Schloss Berg's second build-

ing, formerly the Park Hotel, is on a slight rise, perhaps 50 yards from the lakeside. It, too, has lake views but the decor is more typical of the region.

Breakfast for all guests is here in a pretty room with wide windows that look out over the Starnbergersee. Just outside is an inviting terrace for summer mornings.

Starnberg Mystery

The Starnbergersee, just outside Munich, is a lake of some notoriety. In 1886, Ludwig II, Bavaria's castle-building king, was placed under house arrest at Schloss Berg after being relieved of his royal duties by the state's ministers — at least in part for spending too much money on his fantastic castles: Linderhof, Neuschwanstein and Herrenchiemsee.

Late one afternoon he went for a walk with his personal psychiatrist. A few hours later, their bodies were pulled from the lake. Whether it was murder, suicide or an accident isn't known, but Ludwig was a good swimmer and, with no water in his lungs, it seems doubtful he drowned. The doctor's body showed signs of having been in a violent struggle.

The bodies were recovered about a half a mile from the hotel. A path leads through the woods to a chapel built in his honor. It overlooks a small memorial just offshore.

Guestroom decor is Bavarian country. Room Number 16, a huge double, has a substantial balcony and lake views through expansive windows. The price for *Gemütlichkeit* readers is \$170, less 10% or \$153.

There is plenty to keep guests occupied at Schloss Berg. The hotel

lends bicycles to guests at no charge, and there are many places to ride, the most popular route being south along the lake past the hundreds of homes where wealthy Münchener spend their summers.


From May through mid-October, triple-decked lake steamers stop regularly at the hotel to take passengers across the lake to Starnberg for a day of shopping or on a complete three-hour tour of the lake. The full circuit is about \$12; a one-stop ride is about \$4.

And, of course, the lake is there for swimming and sailing. As a former member of the German Olympic sailing team, owner Eric Hirt, has a keen interest in boating and his hotel can arrange for guests to rent a variety of boats.

Munich is an easy trip via S-Bahn #6, which leaves at 20-minute intervals from the town of Starnberg and stops at the Marienplatz in the center of Munich some 30 minutes later. The fare is about \$3, unless one has a rail pass or a Munich Card, in which case the ride is free. The hotel meets guests at the train station in Starnberg, provided arrangements are made in advance.

For those seeking a sanctuary outside the city, but still want easy access to it, the Schloss Berg is a fine choice.

Hotel-Restaurant Schloss Berg, Seestrasse 17, D-82335 Berg, tel 08151/963-0, fax 08151/963-52. Singles \$100, doubles \$130 and deluxe rooms \$170. To obtain the 10% discount on the hotel's guaranteed-in-dollar rates, phone 561-833-1251 or fax 561-835-9421.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20 

EUROPE BRIEFS

Continued from page 1

seas ATMs do not show letters.

■ Use an **American Express** card to pay for one of **Swissair's** vacation packages and receive a \$75 discount. Prices start at \$999 per person (double occupancy) and include roundtrip air from New York or Newark to Geneva or Zürich, six nights hotel, breakfasts and a rental car with unlimited mileage. Price applies to midweek travel from September 15 through October 31. Contact: 800-688-7947.

■ Groups of 15 or more can book **Swissair** packages that include roundtrip air, seven nights hotel accommodation, breakfast daily, hotel transfers and local taxes and service charges. Prices begin at \$677 from New York, Newark and Boston. Contact: 800-688-7947.

■ The Budapest restaurant, **Dreher Halaszcsarda**, recently charged four tourists more than \$6,000 for dinner and drinks. Apparently the restaurant has a policy of multiplying listed prices by a factor of 10 after 7 p.m. The restaurant's manager call the high tariff "night prices" and said the restaurant charges what the traffic will bear. The maximum fine for violating the city's consumer protection laws is 30,000 forints (\$176).

The U.S. Embassy in Budapest has warned about overpricing and strong-arm tactics employed in some Budapest cafes and nightclubs, although the Halaszcsarda was not among them.

■ **German Life** magazine,

which is getting better with each new issue, plans to increase coverage of Austria and Switzerland. The August/September issue will include a travel piece on Austria, specifically focusing on the cities of Innsbruck, Graz, and Linz. The October/November issue will carry a story on Bern, Switzerland. One-year (six issues) subscriptions are \$19.95. Write Zeitgeist Publishing, 1 Corporate Drive, Grantsville MD 21536, tel. 301-895-3859, fax 301-895-5029.

■ The **Zürcher Festspiele** takes place June 28 to July 20 and offers an extensive schedule of opera, ballet, theater, concerts and art exhibitions. A free booklet containing the full schedule of performances and other program information can be obtained by mail or fax from Zürcher Festspiele, Postbox 6036, CH-8023 Zürich, fax 011 41/1 215 4035.

■ The **Gasthof Fraundorfer** in Garmisch-Partenkirchen has new phone and fax numbers: 9270 and 92799. ☒

READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 5

of the festival and yet had our own private spot to retreat to. It was a memorable experience.

A few more things: The hotel's Web page is in German, but the Wetzels speak fluent English. When we made our reservations we did it via fax and got an answer from them in minutes. By the way, that is how we make most of our reservations now. We are planning a four-week trip to Germany and the Italian Tyrol in June/July and have made all our reservations this

way. Next time we will try some of the on-line reservation possibilities.

We heartily recommend the Hotel Hornburg and the Wetzels and think *Gemütlichkeit* should give it a try. (Of course then it will be always booked up when we want to go. We were jealously guarding this "find" but now that the word is out we just had to send an endorsement!)

VIRGINIA & ERIC KIEHN
STODDARD NH

Baden-Baden Report

To your very fine report on Baden-Baden recently, I would like to add the following:

The town which is known for ICE trains to stop for one minute only is constructing a new rail station. In the meantime the Bundesbahn is providing travelers with assistance for loading and unloading their luggage, and it is free.

The once dilapidated Roman-Irish **Friedrichsbad**, known for "mixed FKK type bathing" has been modernized and now provides a good and clean atmosphere for those who enjoy thermal waters.

While the **Stahlbad** under the direction of Uschi Moench remains the leading restaurant, a number of new eateries in the Neuweier section of town have opened up. **Zum Alte Gott** appears to be the best one. Their lamb and seasonal mushroom specialties are superb. So is the view from there, over vineyards and toward the Vosges mountains of Alsace. Unfortunately, this establishment does not accept U.S. credit cards.

A new convention center is being constructed

so that commercial and political gatherings can be handled. The April conference between Boris Yeltsin and Helmut Kohl has reestablished Baden-Baden as one of Germany's leading diplomatic retreats, similar to The Greenbriar in West Virginia.

HERBERT ST. GOAR
CHATTANOOGA TN

Spa Near Zürich Airport

How convenient **Hotel Verena** (Kurplatz 1, CH-5400 Baden, tel. 056/203 9393, fax -56/2-3 9394) is for a Zürich flight; about 20 minutes by car from the airport and certainly accessible by train. Both times we have arrived about 9:30 a.m. and had immediate access to our room, a double superior — nice size, clean with balcony with table and two chairs. If this were not the case, however, one could always check the luggage at the desk and still use the pools and solarium which is filled with chaise lounges.

Food is good but not outstanding. One large dining room for breakfast and half-board and a smaller one for ala carte.

Everything is well prepared and presented, even exceptionally so, but it's that ill-defined genre "continental" when what I'm after is more traditional Swiss. No doubt this is an unfair criticism since there are few Americans here and no doubt the Swiss and Germans who form the bulk of the guests are not interested in more of their familiar food.

No doubt we'll be back on our next trip to Switzerland — we do enjoy the way it starts our vacation.

JOAN HAWKINS
GLEN COVE NY