

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

August 25, 1997

Prime Travel Time: Fall '97

There's good news tonight, especially for those of us hooked on Switzerland. This exquisite little country, you see, seems to be getting affordable.

In the last two years, our dollar has risen nearly 50% in value against the franc. A 200 Sfr. hotel room that translated to \$183 in the spring of 1995 now goes for \$125. A 25 Sfr. entree in a restaurant was \$23 then but is now less than \$16. A 4 Sfr. beer that was \$3.67 is now \$2.50. Big savings.

There are even a few genuine bargains. You will note in our story on Sion that Pierre Menegale-Duc, owner of **Hotel des Vignes**, has extended a special

Inside:

- Private Wine Tasting
- Readers' Forum
- The Great Gianadda

15% discount to *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers (you must reserve in advance and identify yourself as a subscriber). This means his standard east-facing double rooms will cost you less than \$100 (175 Sfr. less 15% = 148.75 Sfr. = \$93). I don't know in the last five to seven years that I've seen any double room in what I would consider a decent Swiss hotel for less than \$100. *Des Vignes* is an elegant building in a beautiful setting and operated by a family who cares. If somehow we could place a blinking neon sign on this page it would blink BARGAIN! BARGAIN! BARGAIN! with an arrow pointing toward the words "Des Vignes."

The news is equally good in Germany and Austria. Earlier this month the dollar neared 1.9 marks but at press time had fallen back somewhat to 1.82. In Austria it now buys almost 13 schillings.

The surge in the dollar, coupled with continuing low car rental prices

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

ANCIENT SION

French-speaking, vineyard-ringed, Sion is Switzerland's oldest city and the capital of the Valais. Add it to your "hot list" of places to visit on your next trip

For years, we thought of the old city of Sion as merely an intriguing-looking town we often passed on the way to somewhere else. But now, after two visits, we're not sure why this French-speaking city near the west end of Switzerland's Rhône valley doesn't attract more visitors.

One reason may be that it has to compete for attention with several more famous destinations in its own canton, the Valais. More familiar names such as Saas Fee, Crans-Montana, Verbier and Zermatt get most of the attention.

Approaching Switzerland's oldest city from either direction on the main valley road, one is immediately struck by Sion's medieval, almost Moorish, skyline. Out of the valley's rocky soil rise two imposing fortresses, the twin castles of Valère and Tourbillon.

Valère is actually a church which,

by
Bob Bestor

incidentally, contains the world's oldest playable organ, and Tourbillon was the summer residence of the Prince Bishop of Martigny until it was destroyed by fire in 1788. It remains in ruins.

Tourist office brochures tout Sion as the "capital of Swiss California" and call it a "warm, sunny land of vineyards, orchards, strawberry and raspberry fields." Like several other Swiss destinations, local boosters claim Sion has the country's best climate with the least rainfall and the most days of sunshine.

Whether true or not, Sion is a place to be visited in any weather.

In winter, it is the center of the val d' Herens ski region including such little-known (in this country) villages as Arolla, Evolène, Nax, La Sage, Thyon, Les Collons and others. Most are within a few minutes drive of Sion.

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An Authentic Swiss Mountain Village: Evolène

If we wanted to virtually disappear from the face of the earth for a week or so it might be to the little hamlet of Evolène, about a 25-minute drive into the mountains above Sion.

There, among the wooden, weathered, brown/black Valasian houses, we would find a simple hotel or pension or perhaps rent a small chalet. Days we would walk the easier mountain trails and evenings eat hearty mountain food and drink Valasian wine alongside grizzled locals at one of the town's cheery inns.

In the heat of summer, the weather will be warm but not oppressive during the day and cool at night, sometimes chilly. In spring and fall, days will be cool and nights cold. In winter, of course, we'll expect to find roofs and streets piled high with snow.

The phrase "a village where time has stood still" is a travel-writing cliché usually applied to places where tens of millions of marks, francs or schillings have been spent on restoration. But in

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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(less than \$17 per day including tax for a compact VW Golf or Opel Astra in Germany) and low airfares currently being announced for late fall and early winter travel, make the next few months perhaps the best time to go to Europe so far in this decade. And, since most American tourists will be back home by mid-October, you can have the continent virtually to yourself.

Gemütlichkeit & the WWW

You may be wondering why there is not yet a *Gemütlichkeit* page on the Internet's World Wide Web. All I can say is it's coming. We have the domain name reserved — *gemut.com* — and hope before the snow flies to have it up and running.

The idea is to build a page that will be THE place to go for those planning a trip to Germany, Austria and Switzerland. We'll have links to the best web sites on those three countries; there will be frequent updates of special airfares plus hotel, rail and car rental deals and an opportunity to look at past issues.

Gemütlichkeit Via Email

While some of you have told us you'll never be on the Internet, it is obvious that more readers than we imagined have on-line access.

So beginning now, we're making *Gemütlichkeit* available via email. That way you'll get it as soon as it's written, even before it's printed. The printing, mailing and delivery process currently takes from two to three weeks. Email

compresses that to a few minutes. If you're interested in email delivery, here are your choices:

- Replace your regular mail delivery with email delivery and the price stays the same.

- Select email *in addition* to regular mail and the charge is \$3 per month.

Call us at 800-521-6722 to start your email service.

Swissair-Delta Code Share

You may be aware that **Swissair** is now involved in a close relationship with **Delta Airlines**. Called "code sharing" in the industry, what it means is the two airlines book some of their passengers on each others flights.

This, as it relates to their low fare privileges with Swissair, is good news for *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers. It means that many of you who, in the past, couldn't use the Swissair deal because you live in a city not served by Swissair, can now do so. From many cities — other than the "Swissair Gateways" of Boston, Los Angeles, New York, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Washington, Cincinnati, Chicago, Toronto, Montreal — Swissair will now either fly you to Europe on a Delta flight or pay the fare on another airline to get you from your town to one of these gateway cities.

I said most cities, but not all, unfortunately. In order to obtain the Swissair/*Gemütlichkeit* fare reductions some of you will still have to find your own way to a gateway city.

Perhaps at this point we should review the bidding regarding the Swissair deal.

sair deal.

- 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.

Mea Culpas

Several of you who pointed out our use of the non-word "sufferage" in the June issue instead of the correct "suffrage." Somehow that got past our spell-checker.

Our geography-checker didn't do so well, either. The Austrian town of Bregenz is, of course, at the eastern rather than the western end of the Bodensee (Lake Constance). — RHB ☒

Phone Numbers: *Gemütlichkeit* will henceforth print phone numbers beginning with the country code followed by the city code and then the number. The "+" indicates one must first dial 011 for overseas. To save space, fax numbers following regular phone numbers will be shown without country and city code. When dialing from the U.S. do not dial the first zero in the city code.

Vol. 11, No. 8
August, 1997

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

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Gemütlichkeit (ISSN 10431756) is published monthly by UpCountry Publishing, 2892 Chronicle Avenue, Hayward, CA 94542. TOLL FREE: 800-521-6722 or 510-538-0628. Fax: 510-582-8296. e-mail *gemut@pacbell.net*. Subscriptions are \$67 per year for 12 issues. While every effort is made to provide correct information in this publication, the publishers can make no guarantees regarding accuracy. Periodicals postage paid in Hayward, CA.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO:

Gemütlichkeit, 2892 Chronicle Ave., Hayward, CA 94542

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.

SION

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On the slopes of the Rhône are thousands of acres of steeply-terraced vineyards. The rocky soil and sunshiny climate encourage several grape varieties and the wine trade flourishes.

But the wine comes at a price; the narrow terraces, some of which contain only two or three short rows of vines, are an engineering wonder and, when one realizes that each vine must be tended by human hands about eight times a year, a maintenance headache of Excedrin proportions.

Where to Stay

Hotel Des Vignes

Easily the best hotel in or near Sion (it is located in Uvrier, about 5 km east) Des Vignes looks better now than on our first visit in 1992: the Romanesque architecture fits better with the matured landscaping; guestrooms have held up well, and a few subtle additions have made the stunning lobby even more inviting. The latter still features a shiny black grand piano, a 360-degree black granite fireplace and a view past the vineyards to Sion's twin fortresses.

It's hard to believe this is a small, family-run hotel. With that lobby, the immaculately tended grounds and gardens, and a perfect vineyard setting, Des Vignes at first glance looks the part of a luxurious four or five-star property. But it is owned and run by a congenial former teacher and wife, Pierre and Christiane Menegale-Duc, and there is no uniformed doorman or concierge. Relaxed, three-star ambience all the way.

The restaurant has been upgraded and the indoor Astroturf putting green remains, as does the pool that juts into the vineyards under a glass roof and there are still tennis courts and a pleasant library off the lobby.

Guestrooms are spacious but we offer the same mild criticism we did five years ago: the lack of comfortable furniture for sitting in some

MORE ABOUT SION

Population: 23,000

Altitude: 512 meters, 1,680 feet

Distances to:

Geneva	159 km	99 miles
Lucerne	83 km	114 miles
Martigny	29 km	18 miles
Montreux	68 km	43 miles
Zürich	277 km	173 miles

Rail Connections: There are frequent trains from Sion to virtually all points in Switzerland. Depending on routing and connections, the trip to Zürich can take as little as three and one-half hours, Geneva one hour-20 minutes, Munich about eight hours and Vienna about 13 hours.

Sion Tourist Office

Place de la Planta, CH-1950 Sion, tel. +41/027 322 85 86, fax 322 18 82

Excursion to Saillon: After exploring this small village, which is about nine miles from Sion, one can walk up a steep path to the ruined castle of Peter of Savoy.

Excursion to Isaérables: At Riddes, on the N9 Autobahn between Martigny and Sion, one can either ride the almost vertical cable car or choose to drive the switchbacks up to this village set on a precarious slope overlooking the valley. Inhabitants carry the name "Bedjuis," possibly because it is thought they descended from Bedouins, part of the Saracen hordes who overran several of the Alpine valleys in the 8th century.

Wine Road: Between Martigny and Leuk, a distance of about 30 miles, the **Vignoble du Valais**, or wine route of the Valais, passes through more than 20 wine villages.

The Subterranean Lake of St. Léonard: Open to the public since 1949, this underground lake near the village of St. Léonard is one of the largest in Europe. A half-hour boat ride on it is mildly interesting and costs 6 Sfr. (\$4) for adults, 4 Sfr. (\$2.67) for kids up to 18 and 2 Sfr. (\$1.33) for children under 12.

Sion Guide: The courtly **Pierre Chatelain**, a former **Swissair** and **Swiss Air Force** pilot, loves to share the history and legends of his town. Arranged through the Sion Tourist Office for 100 Sfr. (\$67), he conducts fascinating, private two-hour tours of the old town.

Walking/Hiking: *Bisse* is a special word in the Valais for canals used for agricultural irrigation. Along them are relatively easy walking paths which provide a wide variety of routes and vistas. There are trails through deep gorges and along steep ledges with views of valleys, mountains and villages.

These and many other walks and hikes, over 6,000 km of marked trails, are detailed in the booklet, *Sentiers Valaisians*, available free from the Sion Tourist Office.

Winter Olympics: Sion and the region are seeking the **Winter Olympics** in the year 2006. If they are successful, ice sports are scheduled for Martigny, Sion, Sierre and Visp; alpine skiing will be in Crans-Montana and Veysonnaz and bobsled and luge will be out of the canton in St. Moritz. Opening and closing ceremonies will be in Sion.

rooms.

One of the hotel's most desirable chambers is Number 222, a "duplex" on two levels with the living area below and bedroom above. There are bathrooms on both levels. M. Menegale-Duc offers *Gemütlichkeit* readers a 15% discount so the price for two persons in this room is 285 Sfr. (\$178) less 43 Sfr. (\$27) for a *Gemütlichkeit* price of 242 Sfr. (\$151).

Less elaborate and smaller is Number 111 at 175 Sfr. (\$109) for two persons or 149 Sfr. (\$93) with the discount. To obtain the lower price you must reserve ahead and ask for the *Gemütlichkeit* discount.

And this is a first for us; mineral water from your room's minibar is free!

This is an excellent hotel in a great setting. The 15% subscriber discount makes it also a genuine bargain.

Daily Rates: Singles 125 to 225 Sfr. (\$78-\$141), doubles 175 to 215 Sfr. (\$109-\$134), suites and duplexes 255 to 285 (\$159-\$178). Readers who reserve in advance and ask for the *Gemütlichkeit* discount will be granted 15% off the forgoing prices.

Contact: Hotel Des Vignes, Rue du Pont 9, CH-1958, tel. +41/027/203 1671, fax 203 3727.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 17/20* © (*with discount)

Hotel Europa

It would be nice if this modern, business-oriented hotel were closer to Sion's old quarter than the 10-15 minute walk it is. Though of the Red Lion/Marriott genre, the Europa offers slightly above average comfort and services. Due to the dearth of charming small hotels in Sion, it is our first choice *in town*.

Our corner room, Number 402, was quite large and had most of the usual features; satellite TV, minibar, even terrycloth robes. Under the windows were handy built-ins and desk space but electrical outlets were overlooked. Plugging in a laptop computer or a video battery recharger required disconnecting one of the lamps or the television.

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SION

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It also lacked comfortable furniture, the only place to sit was on one of two upright chairs.

The bathroom was good sized but poorly lit and lacked space to hang towels.

Special "business suites" which rent for 160 Sfr. (\$100) single and 200 Sfr. (\$125) double have small, separate rooms equipped with two phone lines and fax or modem connections.

Daily Rates: Singles 110 to 160 Sfr. (\$69-\$100), doubles 160 to 200 Sfr. (\$100-\$125). Free Parking.

Contact: Hotel Europa, Rue de l'Envol 19, CH-1950 Sion, tel. +41/027/322 2423, fax 322 2535, Prop: Fam. G. et J.-M. Rupp

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 13/20

Hotel Du Rhône

A good choice in the town center, though housed in an uninviting, circa 1960s or 70s concrete and steel building, is the Du Rhône, part of the **Best Western** group.

Forget the hotel's not very promising exterior, inside is better. The Du Rhône is family operated so the welcome and service is a cut above. Reception is one flight up from street level.

Rooms are simpler than at the Europa but substantially less expensive. Number 401 is a nice corner double with two comfortable chairs.

The restaurant serves excellent traditional Swiss dishes (see page 5).

Daily Rates: Singles 99 Sfr. (\$62), doubles 140 Sfr. (\$88). Prices for a full week with breakfast and dinner range from 678 Sfr. (\$424) in a single room to 1104 Sfr. (\$690) for two

persons in a double.

Contact: Hotel Du Rhône, Rue du Scex 10, CH-1950 Sion, tel. +41/027/322 8291, fax 323 1188. Prop: Anne-Marie Minder.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 14/20
Hotel du Midi

Another hotel in the town center is the du Midi which offers about a dozen modest but clean rooms above its cafe and restaurant.

Rooms have cable TV and direct-dial phones.

Daily Rates: Singles 65 to 105 Sfr. (\$41-\$66), doubles 85 to 120 Sfr. (\$53-\$75).

Contact: Hotel du Midi, Place du Midi 29, CH-1950 Sion, tel. +41/027/323 1331, fax 323 6173.

Rating: QUALITY 9/20, VALUE 13/20

Auberge du Pont

Outside the city, in the same area as the Hotel Des Vignes, is the Auberge du Pont, a restaurant with five rooms to rent.

Number 4, since it appears slightly larger than the others, would be our pick. It has cable TV on a tiny set and a small bathroom with shower, no tub.

This restaurant in the vineyards seems to be a neighborhood gathering place. The garden in the rear is very pleasant in fine weather.

This place is quaint, cozy and very good value.

Daily Rates: Singles 55 Sfr. (\$34), doubles 95 Sfr. (\$59).

Contact: Auberge du Pont, CH-1958, Uvrier-St.

Léonard, tel. +41/027/2032231, fax 203 5175.

Prop: M. G. Anthamatten.

Rating: QUALITY 8/20, VALUE 14/20

Places to Eat

Au Cheval Blanc

Those who seek restaurants which, in style and price, rest between simple meat and potatoes country inns and tony places with wine stewards, will feel very much at home at Au Cheval Blanc.

This storefront bistro offers interestingly prepared dishes from a menu that depends heavily on fresh and seasonal ingredients.

Obviously popular with the locals, Cheval Blanc is a lively spot in the center of the old town.

Continued on page 5...

Insiders Tip..Private Wine Tasting

In advance, book a free wine tasting with winemakers Mr. and Mrs. Philippe Savioz. This ebullient young couple owns the city's oldest wine cellar, **Cave Les Futailles** (cah lay foo-TIE), deep under the streets of the old town beneath a building of flats. This is a very private affair, there is no sign, no storefront. One must have an appointment to descend to caves that have existed for hundreds of years.



In a catacomb-like atmosphere, the Saviozes host private tastings which only the strongest willed survive. Expect to have substantial samples of all the dozen or so varieties of wine bottled by the Saviozes - Fendant, Johannisberg, Dole, Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Gamay, Syrah and others - eagerly pressed on you. Often the glasses will be filled directly from the barrel.

One or both will host the tasting.

Winemakers Philippe and his father Andre, once a shepherd, bottle only grapes from their own vineyards and restrict sale to a few restaurants and a list of about 600 private customers. The Chenin Blanc which you can purchase at the cellar for 16 Sfr. (\$11) sells in restaurants for 45 Sfr. (\$30).

Contact the Savoizes well ahead of your planned visit and, though there is no requirement to do so, *don't fail to purchase a few bottles of wine.*

Andre et Philippe Savoiz, Cave Les Futailles, Grand-Pont 44, CH-1950 Sion, tel. +41/027/323 7400 or +41/027/322 3965, fax +41/027/323 1874

Room Number four's three large windows — virtually floor to ceiling — give this corner double a pleasant, wide-open feel. The drawback is the shower and toilet are in a tiny space separated from the sink which is in the sleeping room.

Room Number 5 is small but has a larger, more conventional bathroom.

The decor takes its character from Van Gogh prints, granite floors, antique clocks and bright print table cloths.

Our first indication that Cheval Blanc leaves tradition to others was the Valasian beer served on draught. It is unfiltered, something rarely seen in Switzerland.

We began with appetizers of fresh oysters (6 Sfr./\$3.75), the price for which included a glass of very dry white wine.

A main dish of delicious grilled lamb chops came with both white and green asparagus and oven roasted potatoes. There were four chops in all, two were kept warm in the kitchen for a second serving.

One of the better dishes we've had anywhere in the past year was Zarzuela, a gigantic Spanish-inspired seafood stew prepared for two persons (42 Sfr. / \$26 per person). In it were mussels, chunks of lobster, shrimp, fish pieces, prawns, and potatoes, all swimming in a garlicky broth laced with olive oil and flavored with a variety of herbs including saffron. With glasses of chardonnay from Cave Les Futailles across the street, and baskets of good bread for dipping, it was sublime.

A dinner for two here, without beverages, will be about \$50-\$60.

Au Cheval Blanc, Grand-Pont 23, CH-1930, Sion, tel. +41/027/322 1867.

Prop: Olga and Alain Grosjean.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 13/20

Restaurant du Rhône

A no less popular place, though with a somewhat older clientele, is the restaurant of the Hotel du Rhône. In its rather staid dining room we had some of the best examples in recent memory of traditional Swiss dishes.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

No matter, with the sauce and veal it completed a plate of deliciously satisfying comfort food. And, there was a second serving.

Another down-home winner was Risotto with *Spargel* (white asparagus) and lots of cheese. A huge plate for 16 Sfr. (\$10).

Three course dinners for two here will be about \$45.

Hotel Du Rhône,
Rue du Scex 10, CH-1950 Sion, tel. +41/027/322 8291, fax 323 1188.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 14/20

EVOLÈNE Continued from page 1

Evolène it really applies. This little village of 600 souls probably looks and lives very much today as it did 50 years ago. A different dialect is spoken and there are no designer shops or Michelin-starred restaurants and a bare minimum of places sell Evolène mugs and tee-shirts.

Throughout the summer, women wear traditional garb and there are enough old characters hanging around to let you know there's something going on here besides tourism.

Of course there are tourists — hikers and climbers in

summer and skiers in winter — but this is a different breed of Swiss mountain town from the likes of Zermatt and Grindelwald.

It is also less expensive. The top hotel in town charges about \$80 for its best room, you can rent an apartment for as little as \$160 per week and a small beer is less than \$2.

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The Gianadda: Worth a Journey

A must-see in the region is the **Gianadda Foundation**, an eclectic gathering of fine art and cultural and archeological artifacts, founded in the late '70s by Léonard Gianadda in homage to his brother, Pierre, who was killed in 1976 trying to rescue friends from an airplane crash.

He built his futuristic cultural center on the site of the ruins of a Gallo-Roman temple he discovered while preparing to construct an apartment house.

Following are some of the Gianadda's current and future events.

- A season of some 15 classical music concerts featuring world-renowned musicians held in the center's concert hall.
- On exhibit every day through November 11, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., are 150 works of Joan Miro.
- Another exhibition running through November 11 is on Charlie Chaplain, the silent film star who lived in nearby Vevey.
- A permanent part of the Gianadda is 50 antique cars from the period 1897 to 1939, including a number of rare Swiss-made vehicles.
- The galleries of the Gianadda's Gallo-Roman Archeological Museum overlook the ruins of the Roman temple uncovered in the '70s. There are Roman coins, jewelry, weapons and other artifacts and a walking tour through the site is offered.
- On the Foundation's pretty grounds is a permanent sculpture exhibition that includes the works of many well-known artists including Miro, Rodin, Brancusi, Dubuffet, Arp, Calder and several others.
- Scheduled for 1998 are a Paul Gauguin exhibition and a Diego Rivera-Frida Kahlo exhibition. Beginning January 18, 1998, Russian icons from the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow will be on display.

Admission is 12 Sfr. (\$8) for adults, 9 Sfr. (\$6) for seniors and 5 Sfr. (\$3) for students and children over 10.

Pierre Gianadda Foundation, CH-1920 Martigny, tel. +41/027/722 3978, fax +41/027/722 5285. Web site: <http://www.gianadda.ch>.

Emince de Veau "Zürichoiser" (35 Sfr./\$22) is on menus all over Switzerland. Du Rhône's rendition of the standard was all one could ask for. The tender, sauteed veal chunks came bathed in a light mushroom cream sauce that had been flamed in cognac. The accompanying *Rösti* was somewhat loose, more like our hash browns, than the usual dense patty.

EVOLÈNE

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Bed & Board in Evolène

Hotel prices shown below are for rooms with private bath and include breakfast. Rooms without bath will be less.

Hotel Hermitage

Evolène's best accommodations are at the wonderfully rustic Hotel Hermitage, where the Queen of Holland once stayed during the war.

The interior is wood paneled walls and ceilings, slate entryways, parquet floors, oriental rugs, stuffed birds and game and plenty of antique knickknacks. The best place to be in the house is the inviting living room/sun room with its paneled walls and ceiling and expanses of windows on three sides.

Guestrooms, though in no sense luxurious, are comfortable and cozy. Ask for Number 16 under the eaves. There are no in-room telephones and the hotel does not have a restaurant though raclette and fondue are sometimes served to guests on winter evenings.

Daily Rates: Singles 55 to 65 Sfr. (\$34-\$41), doubles 110 to 120 Sfr. (\$69-\$75).

Contact: Hotel Hermitage, CH-1983 Evolène, tel. +41/027/2831232, fax 283 3212. Prop: Family Gaspoz-Chevrier.

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel Eden

This hotel, which in terms of cleanliness and charm is almost on a par with the Hermitage, offers only two rooms with full bath and you will have to carry your bags up three floors to get to them.

The Eden's most pleasant features are a large deck with fine mountain views and a garden where guest barbecues are sometimes held.

Cozy, pine-paneled guestroom Number 11 has low ceilings and a mountain view.

Daily Rates: Singles 55 to 65 Sfr. (\$34-\$41), doubles 110 to 120 Sfr. (\$69-\$75). Closed November through December 15.

Contact: Hotel Eden, CH-1983 Evolène, tel. +41/027/831112, fax 833 212. Prop: Family Maria-Thérèse Gaudin.

Rating: QUALITY 9/20, VALUE 14/20

Pension d'Evolène

An old-fashioned inn with a few simple rooms to rent, none with private bath. The café-bar is a hang-out for locals and the restaurant is probably the best in town.

Just off the café is the small slightly more formal dining room. Cowbells and rustic wood cabinets adorn the walls. There are green and white table cloths, cloth napkins and

Apartment/Chalet Rental

There are many short term rentals available in the town and surrounding area. Prices range from 250 Sfr. (\$167) per week for a studio in low season to 1320 Sfr. (\$880) for the five-room Chalet Echo des Monts. Contact: Evolène Vacances, CH-1983 Evolène, tel. +41/027/283 2121, fax 283 2233.

Evolène Tourist Office

CH-1983 Evolène, tel. +41/027/283 1235, fax 283 2258, email: info@Evolène.ch

Ski Prices at Evolène

1 day	30 Sfr. (\$19)	18 Sfr. (\$11)
7 Days	170 Sfr. (\$106)	102 Sfr. (\$64)

candles on each table.

Food, for the most part, is well-prepared country fare.

As usual in this sort of restaurant, we began with the mixed salad which turned out to be a refreshing blend of beets, corn, carrots, shredded lettuce and endive topped with a dollop of just-right dressing.

We batted .667 with the hefty entrees: four lamb chops with garlic sauce (28 Sfr./\$18) were perfectly cooked; pork chops *Forestiere* (21 Sfr. \$13) came with the usual rich sauce and, the disappointment, *Escalope Grillee* (25 Sfr./\$16), was one big veal steak served sauceless. Too dry.

A bottle of Dôle, Des Monts from Grilliar (27 Sfr. /\$17) went down easily.

One couldn't argue with dessert: fresh warm raspberries and blackber-

ries, some wild, with ice cream.

Dinner for three was about \$90.

Daily Rates: Singles 38 Sfr. (\$24), doubles 76 Sfr. (\$48). Seven day packages with dinner and breakfast are 340 Sfr. (\$213).

Contact: Pension d'Evolène, CH-1983, tel. +41/027/83 11 51.

Rest. Rating: QUALITY 9/20, VALUE 10/20

Chez Raymonde Aux Vieux Mazots

The "old barn," a little spot on the main street, is another place where locals go for a beer, a glass of wine and perhaps some air-dried beef or fondue. There is a small bar at which men stand but women do not.

READERS' FORUM

German Value Suggestions

One of the many pleasures of a trip to Europe is finding those new, small, special hotels as well as returning to old favorites. We would like to share a few of both with you.

The **Ostermann Hotel** (an der B49, tel. +49/02672/1238, fax 7789) is on the Mosel River four kms from Treis-Karden in Lützbach. A good base to tour the Mosel and to visit the delightful castle of **Burg Eltz**. Cost is 140 DM (\$77) double. Good rooms and food. To see Burg Eltz you must walk but ask about the shortest way as we walked in from the north side and it is a hard 30 to 40 minute trail - mostly down on the way in which means a hard return.

A quiet hotel between Hannover and Braunschweig is the **Zum Jagerheim** (Meerdofer Str. 40, tel. +49/05303/2026, fax 2056) in Rüper about nine km east of Peine. The cost is 150 DM (\$82) double and the rooms are modern and comfortable, but the food is the real treat. The restaurant has an extensive menu. The house-made beef *Sulze* (in aspic) is the best I've had anywhere and there are several housemade ice creams on the dessert list — the strawberry-rhubarb is supreme! The hotel has a sauna (fee) and a small indoor pool.

This is also a good place for nutcracker "nuts." The Steinbach nutcracker factory in the village of Hohenhameln is 13 km south of Peine. Costs here are 30% to 50% less than we've seen at retail throughout Germany. They don't ship so it is strictly cash and carry. We purchased a couple of limited edition nutcrackers at 200 DM (\$110) each. The three limited edition "Christmas Kings" are the same price. We saw these for sale in shops during a December trip priced from 275 to 325 DM (\$151-\$203).

For a quiet retreat in a heavily-wooded area north of Kronach, we like the **Posthotel Lauenstein** (Orlmünder Str. 2, tel. +49/09263/991 30, fax 991 399) located 4 kms north of Ludwigstadt. A double room is 140 DM (\$77). Rooms are large and have balconies to the dense forest. Food is excellent, sauna and indoor pool available, and the staff is friendly. Our only complaint was that the breakfast rolls on Sunday morning were more than a day old. The family Wagner also manage the **Burghotel Lauenstein** (Burgstr. 4, tel. +49/09263/9430, fax 94336) on the hilltop above the town. This is a fine old castle with terrific views and rooms are slightly higher at 150 DM (\$82).

The **Parkhotel Seeblick** (Strandweg 12a, tel. +49/0381/519550, fax 519 55113) in Warnemünde-Rostock is excellent and only 100 ft. from the fine beach on the pedestrian strand. Cost is 160-180 DM (\$88-\$99) double depending on whether or not you have a sea view. Superior breakfast buffet with a constantly filled basket of specialty rolls. Only a few parking spots but parking on the adjacent street is o.k. Comfortable, clean rooms and helpful staff.

A couple of hotels we returned to on this trip must be mentioned as they more than fulfilled the memory of previous visits:

The **Rheinsberg am See** (D-13435, Berlin-Reinickendorf, Finsterwalder Str. 64, tel. +49/030/402 1002, fax 403 5057) is in the northern Berlin suburb of Wittenau. This is a true spa hotel with all the facilities to regenerate the spirit and body including

three dry saunas, a damp sauna, hot tub, warm indoor pool, a small cold outdoor pool, private sunning yard and several areas in the spa center to rest and cool down. The hotel offers nonsmoking rooms. Ample parking available unless the place is fully packed, then spaces on the adjacent street. Cost is 199 DM (\$109) double. Staff is helpful if you want to make reservations elsewhere in Germany.

This time in Berlin we visited the area known as the "Topography of Terror" which is the remaining foundations and exhibit area of the former Gestapo, SS and Secret Police headquarters of the Nazi regime — a very chilling reminder of the past.

On the more fun side, the flea market on Saturday and Sunday along the Strasse des 17 Juni from the Tiergarten west to the Ernst-Reutter Platz was great fun. While the eastern half of this market is the traditional "treasures/junk," the west half is filled with new crafts, artisans, jewelry and young designer clothing and other original items to make this an enjoyable 3-4 hour experience. The market is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends.

A return to the **Posthotel Rattenberg** (Dorfplatz 2, D-94371, tel. +49/09963/9500, fax 950222) was even better than remembered. In the small Bavarian Forest village of Rattenberg in the southeast part of Germany, the Posthotel is 25 km almost due south of Cham. We can't say enough about the friendly staff and excellent extensive menu. The hotel offers free use of its saunas and indoor pool. Rooms are large, comfortable and well-kept. This is a good base for visiting the many glass factories and outlets along the "crystal road" parallel to the Czech border. Each place seems to have its own distinctive style and it would take an act of supreme willpower to spend a day in these delightful shops and not purchase at least one item. It seems we bought a piece from almost each place we stopped!

Just reliving these stops whets the appetite for more travel.

SHARON & NELSON HELM
PLANO TX

Where Are the Festivals?

Thoroughly enjoyed your June *Breaking Away* column about avoiding American tourists in Europe. It is your philosophy that makes your newsletter so enjoyable for me. You mentioned the delightful local festivals, and I wonder if you or your other readers have information about the locations and dates of some of these events?

MIKE ELDER
TOPEKA, KS

(Ed. Note: Good suggestion. Others have said the same thing. We will do more in future. See bottom page 8.)

Better than Budvar?

I, too, have visited Cesky Krumlov and was delighted with the narrow streets, the Rozmberk Castle, the lovely little shops and the beer. I had heard also of Budvar and had tried it a couple of times when last in Czechoslovakia. It was good, but not as good as Pilsner Urquell, nor was it as good as Falkenberg Pivo, brewed in Cesky Krumlov. One evening, overlooking the city from a gray Stalinist hotel, a friend and I dined on a spread of chicken, vegetables and unknown starches. I ordered a Budvar, and a glass of the local beer for comparison sake. One sip of Budvar and we returned to the Falkenberg. It was smoother, fuller flavored and better balanced. We both ordered second glasses. Dinner and beer for two, by the way, came to just over \$8, about what we spent for two cups of coffee the next day on the Autobahn in Austria.

Cesky Krumlov (formerly Krumau when it was German) is my recommendation for a perfect honeymoon.

JIM SACK
JMSACK@CTLNET.COM

(Ed. Note: This editor thinks it's a tossup between Pilsner Urquell vs. Budvar. An on-line list of Czech breweries contains an Eggenberg Pivo brewed in Cesky Krumlov but no Falkenberg or Falkenburg.)

Trier & Füssen Hotels

As a long-time subscriber, I must write to follow-up on two of your recommendations from past issues.

In 1992 or so, you recommended the **Hotel Petrisberg** (D-54296, tel.

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READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 7

+49/0651/4640, double w/bath from 160 DM/(\$88) in the city of Trier. We began to visit it in 1994 and have made this wonderful hotel our headquarters for the past three years for our twice yearly visits to Germany. It has almost become our home away from home, and that for us is the ultimate compliment. Helmut and Wolfgang Pantenberg have come to treat us as friends rather than customers.

In May, we were treated to a wine tasting in their Weinstube. Expecting a small taste of a local wine or two, imagine our pleasure when Helmut brought out four vintage bottles of their local Rieslings and proceeded to open all of them for our tasting pleasure. With fine wine and the pleasure of his company in conversation, the evening passed too quickly. In December, remembering our pleasure at the May wine tasting, Helmut presented us two bottles as a departure gift and we again left with a warm spot for the wonderful hospitality of the Pantenberg family and their beautiful hillside hotel in Trier.

Then it was off to Füssen and a visit to the recommended **Landhaus Sommer** (Weidachstr. 74, D-87629, tel. +49/08362/91470, fax. +49/08362/914714, double w/bath from 84 DM/\$46). Extensive renovations in the past few years have created a larger facility with dining room for breakfast and luncheon. A lift has been added plus an indoor pool and spa as well as suites and we heartily recommend Suite 50, with a balcony overlooking the lake and looking up at the famous castles at Neuschwanstein.

Lastly, allow us to recommend a fantastic Italian trattoria, the **Trattoria Luigi** (Augsburger Str. 20, average price w/o wine 23 DM/\$13). We spotted it late on a winter night, with lights glowing in the residential area of town and after asking at the Sommer for a recommendation, which was forthcoming with enthusiasm from the owner, we visited for dinner. Without a doubt, the veal piccata was extraordinary. Our pasta dish Bolognese was the perfect side and the pleasure that the owner/chef Luigi took in describ-

ing and serving our meal made a perfect evening even more delightful. We take almost as much pleasure in adding this fine restaurant to your list as we do in reminding your readers of the Hotel Petrisberg and Landhaus Sommer.

COLIN F. MCGOWAN

MARRIOTSVILLE MD



Europe Travel Digest

■ **LTU International Airways of Germany has announced 1997/98 winter fares** to Berlin, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Munich from New York, Miami, Orlando, Ft. Myers, Phoenix, Los Angeles and Denver.

Roundtrip fares, not including tax, are \$348 from New York, \$428 from Florida and \$548 from Los Angeles, Denver and Phoenix. Contact: LTU 800-888-0200.

■ **The Swiss Ski School Association** will again operate its annual Ski Swiss camps in Davos, Saas Fee and Engelberg. At reasonable rates, skiers have a chance to learn under the guidance of SSSA experts. For six nights in a double room in Saas Fee, including breakfast and dinner, five days instruction and skiing, plus the opportunity to test new equipment such as Bigfoot or curved skis, the price is 1190 Sfr. (\$744) per person. In Davos, the deal is seven nights accommodations and six days skiing for 1390 Sfr. (\$869). Engelberg offers four nights hotel and meals with three days skiing for 750 Sfr. (\$469). Contact Heinz Rubl, Swiss Ski Del. SSSV, Sporthotel Eiger, CH-3802 Waldegg, tel. +41/033/841 1218, fax 841 1018.

■ **One of our favorite Austrian hotels, the comfortable, five-star Gartenhotel Tümmelerhof**, in Seefeld between Innsbruck and Garmisch-Partenkirchen, offers weekend packages for those with hearty appetites. The deal includes two nights accommodations (though you can occupy your room from Friday morning until Sunday evening), breakfasts,

afternoon snacks and five-course dinners. The Tümmelerhof's kitchen is rated one of Austria's finest. Prices begin at 2,230 AS (\$175) per person. Contact: Gartenhotel Tümmelerhof, A-6100 Seefeld, tel. +43/5212 /25 71-0, fax +41/5212/25 71104.

■ **The Goethe Museum** in Frankfurt, now 100 years-old, reopened this summer after four-years of renovation. The new gallery contains some 500 paintings, 16,000 graphics and more than a quarter of a million books and manuscripts. Goethe Museum, Grosser Hirschgraben 23-25, D-60311 Frankfurt, tel. +49/089/233 0320, fax 233 32003.

■ **The German Wine Academy** annually sponsors week-long sessions for traveling wine enthusiast. Conducted at historic **Kloster Eberbach** near Frankfurt, the academy's courses are conducted in English, with meals and accommodations provided. The program travels to six of Germany's 13 wine regions and there are wine estate visits, vineyard excursions, cellar tours, a Rhein cruise, seminars and, of course, tastings with winemakers. The next session is scheduled for Oct. 5-11. Contact: Carol Sullivan, German Wine Information Bureau, 79 Madison Ave., New York NY 10016, tel. 212-213-7028, fax 212-213-7042.

■ **Speaking of wine, following is a list of wine festivals** during the months of October and November in the Mosel, Saar, Ruwer wine region.

Date	Village/Town	Date	Village/Town
October		10-11	Kröv
2-5	Koblentz	10-12	Piesport
2-5	Lieser	10-12	Ediger-Eller
3-4	St Aldegund	11-12	Zell
3-5	Klotten	17-18	Kröv
3-5	Piesport	24-27	Perl-Nennig
3-5	Ediger-Eller	November	
3-5	Erden	7-9	Cochem
3-6	Maring-Noviant	7-9	Willingen
3-6	Kröv	8-10	Löf
3-6	Waldrach	14-15	Kasel

There are a dozen other wine regions in Germany, all with numerous festivals scheduled from May through November. For a complete list contact the German Wine Information Bureau, 79 Madison Ave., New York NY 10016, tel. 212-213-7028, fax 212-213-7042.

