

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

January 23, 1998

Let the Good Times Roll

We may look back on these early days of 1998 as a "golden age" of travel to Europe. At least financially. In *Gemütlichkeit's* 11-plus years I can't recall a time when the elements of a low-cost European vacation were aligned as beautifully as they are right now.

- Transatlantic winter airfares are as low as I've seen them. Today, on the Internet (www.bestfares.com), for example, one could book a roundtrip for two persons from New York's JFK to Stuttgart for \$506 on Delta. That's \$253 per person.

- Car rental rates have dropped slightly within the last few months and free upgrades in some categories are being offered. For example, one can book a compact Opel Corsa for \$89 per week (not including tax) in Germany and be guaranteed an upgrade to a compact Opel Astra. Or book an Astra for \$99 per week and get upgraded to a midsize Opel Vectra or Audi A4, cars which can handle four passengers and luggage. For two or four persons traveling together, that's dirt-cheap in-country transport.

- The dollar fetches approximately 1.82 deutschemarks and 1.48 Swiss francs. It isn't so long ago that those numbers were 1.38 and 1.09 respectively.

By combining these elements with top value European self-catering accommodations (apartment or condo), one can devise a week's vacation for two persons for well under \$2,000. Here's how:

First, choose a village in southern Bavaria (see lead story this page) that suits as a headquarters from which to see the region. Using the local tourist office, locate a one-week rental (this time of year, in non-ski towns, there is probably no

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

BARGAIN BAVARIA

Is southern Bavaria the least expensive of the great tourist regions in all of Germany, Austria and Switzerland? We think so and offer some numbers to back our claim.

Where, in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, will the vacation traveler be certain of finding the following in 1998?

- Great scenery
- A plethora of natural and man-made wonders
- A wide range of charming accommodations
- Regional cuisine
- World-renowned castles, churches and museums

Lots of places, of course. The Black Forest or the Mosel Valley in Germany, the Bernese Oberland or the Grisons in Switzerland, the Salzkammergut or Danube Valley in Austria and several other regions of the three countries boast all these features to at least some degree.

But the region that has them all — in spades — and offers the vacationer the lowest prices, is southern Bavaria. We are speaking of the area south of Munich that stretches from Berchtesgaden near Salzburg to Lindau near the eastern end of the Bodensee.

In it are found some of the best reasons for visiting Germany:

- The Bavarian Royal Castles; **Linderhof**, **Neuschwanstein**, **Hohenschwangau** and, not to be missed on the Chiemsee, **Herrenchiemsee**.
- Great churches such as the massive one at **Ottobeuren**, the jewel-like **Wieskirche** and the **Abbey at Ettal**.

- Big lakes like the Bodensee

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Living Large in the Austrian Tirol

A top-of-the-line country hotel in Austria, particularly in the Tirol, is like a landlocked cruise ship with organized guest activities, big, posh dining rooms, and plenty of guest-pampering facilities. Not necessarily better than its counterparts in Germany and Switzerland, but different in subtle and pleasing ways.

With an emphasis on longer stays, these hotels invariably include breakfast and dinner in their rates and seem to have larger guestrooms and a higher percentage of rooms with separate sitting areas. Austrian hotels also seem to pay more attention to tradition and are more likely to have family ownership. The best of them have excellent restaurants.

For example, three of Austria's top country properties which we have covered in past issues — the **Post** in Lech, **Grüner Baum** in Badgastein, the **Tümmelerhof** in Seefeld — have highly involved family ownership, commodious guest rooms, very good kitchens and employees who show up for work in traditional dress.

Late last year, prowling the Tirol by auto, we tried three more hotels in this category. All, to varying degrees, fit the described mold and are recommended. In each, we spent one night and ate both dinner and breakfast in the hotel. Given the level of luxury and the quality of food, we think all offer good value.

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need to even book ahead). Prices start at about \$200 per week. Then purchase your air tickets, arrange for the car and away you go. The cost: air from the East Coast, \$800; condo/apartment rental for a week, \$250; VW Golf for a week including tax and airport pickup charges \$115; fuel for 800 miles, \$92. That's a total of \$1257 and leaves \$743 for meals and incidentals. The cost from other parts of the U.S. will be slightly more due to the higher airfare, but we are seeing ads on the West Coast for \$400 roundtrip fares.

Now is the time. Don't wait. — RHB ☒

BAVARIAN BARGAINS

Continued from page 1

and Chiemsee and lovely small ones such as the quiet Königsee, near Berchtesgaden.

- Germany's version of the Alps, including the jagged Wetterstein range with the country's highest peak, the Zugspitze.
- Quaint country towns full of ornately painted houses such as Mittenwald, which Goethe called "a living picture book."
- Historical sites like Adolph Hitler's "Eagle's Nest" and the scant remains of the Nazi sanctuary at Obersalzberg, near Berchtesgaden.
- Resort towns like Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Schliersee and Bad Reichenhall.

The Gemütlichkeit Hotel Rate Index

As a way of comparing hotel costs in various regions and cities we have devised a rather simple, decidedly unscientific index. It shows the average rack rate cost for the cheapest single room in each city's three-star hotels. For our source, we used the 1997 *Michelin Red Guides* for Germany and Switzerland.

Unfortunately, there is no Red Guide for Austria so Salzburg (included in the *Michelin Red for Germany*) is the only Austrian town listed.

(Since, for this first appearance of the index, we chose mainly small to midsize cities popular with tourists, it is probably not fair to include Salzburg. Because is it Austria's third largest city — behind Vienna and Graz — and probably attracts more tourism than any town on the list, its hotel room prices should more properly be compared with places like Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Lucerne and Zürich.)

Our methodology in creating the index was simple; in each town we

- Some of the world's best beer.

Best of all, compared to regions which equal its charm and popularity, southern Bavaria is a bargain. As you can see from the new **Gemütlichkeit Hotel Rate Index** (box above), the principal tourism cities of southern Bavaria are much less expensive hotel-wise than their counterparts elsewhere in Germany and Switzerland.

bypassed the four and five-star hotels and averaged the lowest price for a single room among the three leading three-star establishments.

The assumption is that the lowest single room rate is indicative of a hotel's overall rates and that our average for top three-star hotels is indicative of a town's overall hotel rates.

Salzburg (A)	\$126
Zermatt (S)	\$119
Interlaken (S)	\$95
Montreux (S)	\$94
Heidelberg (G)	\$93
Appenzell (S)	\$90
Garmisch-Partenkirchen (G)	\$82
Rothenburg (G)	\$78
Baden-Baden (G)	\$77
Sion (S)	\$67
Rudesheim (G)	\$61
Bamberg (G)	\$58
Trier (G)	\$58
Bad Reichenhall (G)	\$56
Lindau (G)	\$49
Füssen (G)	\$49
Berchtesgaden (G)	\$48
Schliersee (G)	\$44

Southern Bavarian towns in bold face type

Many use the Bavarian capital, Munich, as a headquarters when visiting the area. Others drive the busy, east-west, German Alpine Road, overnighing at the better-known towns such as Lindau, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, or Berchtesgaden. Nothing wrong with such plans, but there is an even cheaper, more peaceful, way to see the region.

For those a bit more adventurous,

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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.

there are dozens of places just slightly off the beaten path where plenty of comfortable accommodations can be found for well under \$100 for two persons.

This month we have compiled a sampling of lesser-known villages and towns offering low prices for three-star accommodations. Some are so small you will need maps at 1:200,000 or 1:150,000 scale such as *Die General Karte for Germany #25 & #26* or *ADAC Karte Deutschland #15* to find them.

We have listed the local tourist authority for each. In addition to the usual information provided on things to see and do, they are the best source of listings for self-catering rentals (apartments, condos, etc.), which are the least expensive way to vacation in Bavaria. Last year, a member of our advisory board rented a studio apartment in Garmisch-Partenkirchen — probably southern Bavaria's most expensive destination outside of Munich — with small kitchen and balcony with mountain view. The price was \$267 for one week for two persons.

The hotels listed have not necessarily been rated by *Gemütlichkeit*, we mention them only as possibilities.

NEAR FÜSSEN Nesselwang

About 17 km (11 miles) northwest of Füssen. Tourist Office, Hauptstr. 18, D-87484, tel. +49/8361/923040, fax 923044.

The **Hotel Post's** (Hauptstr. 25, tel. +49/8361/30910, fax 30973) best doubles rent for about \$83. The hotel has a beer garden and a beer museum.

Seeg

About 20 km (13 miles) north and slightly west of Füssen. Tourist Office, Hauptstr. 39, D-87637, tel. +49/8364/983033, fax 983040.

The **Pension Heim** (Aufmberg 8, tel. +49/8364/258, fax 10 51) has long received *Gemütlichkeit's* enthusiastic recommendation. Double rooms about \$72.

Halblech

About 13 km (8 miles) northwest of Füssen on Red Road 17. Tourist Office, Bergstrasse, D-87642 Buching, tel. +49/8368/285, fax 7221.

The 17-room **Hotel Giselstein**, in Halblech-Buching (Füssener Str. 16, tel. +49/8368/260, fax 885) has doubles for about \$70 and three-course meals under \$14.

Eisenberg-Zell

About 12 km (8 miles) west and a little north of Füssen. Take the road to Nesselwang and turn right at Kreuzegg. Tourist Office, Pröstener Str. 9, D-87637 Buching, tel. +49/8364/1237, fax 987154.

The **Burghotel Bären** (Dorf Str. 4, D-87637, Eisenberg-Zell, tel. +49/8363/5011, fax 73119) has a highly regarded restaurant and double rooms for about \$80.

NEAR GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN Kochel am See

Thirty-six km (23 miles) northwest of GP at the northeast corner of the Kochelsee. Tourist Office, Kalmbacherstr. 11, D-82431, tel. +49/8851/338, fax 5588.

The **Seehotel Grauer Bär** (Mittewald Str. 82, D-82431, tel. +49/8851/861, fax 1607) is on the lake and offers double rooms for about \$94.

Farchant

Four km (2.5 miles) north of GP on the main road to Munich. Tourist Office, Rathaus, Am Gern 1, D-82490, tel. +49/8821/961696, fax 961622.

The **Hotel Alter Wirt** (Bahnhofstr. 1, D-82490, tel. +49/8821/6238, fax 61455) has doubles for about \$78. The 14-room **Gästehaus Zugspitz** (Mühlhöfstr. 4, D-82490, tel. +49/8821/96260, fax 962636) is even cheaper, about \$61 double.

Grainau

Six km (4 miles) southwest of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Tourist Office, Waxensteinstr. 35, D-82491, tel. +49/8821/8970, fax 8488.

The 15-room **Hotel Wetterstein's** (Waxensteinstr. 26, D-82491, tel. +49/8821/8004, fax 8838) most expensive double rooms are about \$83.

ON/NEAR TEGERNSEE

Gmund am Tegernsee

At the north end of the Tegernsee 48 km (30 miles) south of Munich. Tourist Office, Rathaus, Kirchenweg 6, D-83703, tel. +49/8022/750527, fax 750520.

The **Golf und Country Club Hotel Margarethenhof** (Gut Steinberg, Gmund-Marienstein D-83701, tel. +49/8022/705060, fax 74818) is that rare European hotel actually on a golf course and as such double rooms at \$200 are a good value.

Lenggries

Just south of Bad Tölz and west of the Tegernsee. Tourist Office, Rathausplatz 1, D-83661, tel. +49/8042/82422, fax 7880.

Both the **Alpenrose** (Brauneckstr. 1, D-83661, tel. +49/8042/91550, fax 5200) and the **Altwirt** (Markstr. 13, D-83661, tel. +49/8085/91550, fax 5357) offer double rooms for about \$67.

WEST OF THE INN RIVER

Bayrischzell

An interesting little resort 37 km (23 miles) south and slightly west of Rosenheim. Tourist Office, Kirchplatz 2, D-83735, tel. +49/8023/648, fax 1034.

The **Gasthof zur Post** (Schulstr. 3, D-83735, tel. +49/8023/226, fax 775) has doubles for about \$83.

Fischbachau

On a scenic yellow road just north of Red Road 307 between Schliersee and Bayrischzell. Tourist Office, Kirchplatz 10, D-83730, tel. +49/8028/876, fax 2040.

In tiny Birkenstein, one km east of Fischbachau, the simple, 18-room **Hotel Oberwirt** (Birkensteinstr. 91, D-83730, tel. +49/8028/814) offers double rooms for about \$53.

NEAR BERCHTESGADEN


Schönau am Königsee

Five km (3 miles) southwest of Berchtesgaden on the Königsee. Tourist Office, Rathausplatz 1, D-83471, tel. +49/8652/1760, fax 4050.

In Unterschönau, the **Hotel Köppeleck** (Am Köppelwald 15, tel. +49/8652/61066) has mountain views and double rooms for about \$70.

Ramsau

Eleven km (7 miles) west southwest of Berchtesgaden. Tourist Office, Im Tal 2, D-83486, tel. +49/8657/988920, fax 772.

The **Hotel Oberwirt** (Im Tal 86, D-83486, tel. +49/8657/225, fax 1381) has double rooms for about \$70, a beer garden and three-course meals for under 25 DM (\$14). 

AUSTRIAN HOTELS

Continued from page 1

Rates for extended stays, of course, will be less on a per-day basis than we paid.

Though it is not in the country, we are also including a review of a popular Innsbruck hotel that is part of the Romantik group. It offers an interesting comparison with accommodations available just a few minutes away in the countryside.

We didn't reserve ahead at any of these hotels; we simply stopped and inquired as to the availability of a room for one night. In high season, this footloose approach might not work so well, but we were in luck.

Hotel der Bär Ellmau

The Bär's several buildings sprawl over the hillside above the town, a position that takes advantage of a fine view of the Kaisergebirge range. Five-star amenities include two swimming pools, a beauty center, free bicycle use, a long list of guest activities, supervised activities for kids, tennis and six golf courses in the vicinity.

On two visits, we have found der Bär's staff to be exceptionally friendly and helpful, though we required nothing more than a comfortable room and good meal.

In the spacious bar, the hotel's most appealing room, a wall of curving windows takes advantage of the view. The furniture is comfortable; couches and overstuffed chairs arranged around coffee tables are great for groups of four to six. It is particularly pleasant after dinner. Unfortunately, on this visit a rather obnoxious teenager had commandeered the room's sound system and played loud music that matched his personality.

Room Number 212 is on a corner with a balcony off one side, a window on the other and oddly decorated. There is a small sofa in hot-pink leather and the bed, covered by a pink and green striped spread, is too low to the floor for our taste.

Bright green curtains feature huge artichokes in various stages of bloom. The toilet is in the same room with the shower, which is a bit of a disappointment for a hotel in this price category.

Though guest rooms at Hotel der Bär are not quite on a par with the Post, Grüner Baum, Tümmelerhof — or the two other country hotels in this issue — its restaurant may be the best of all.

Dinner at der Bär:

After introducing himself — not usual in Europe — the young, tuxedoed maitre d'hotel, Fabian, escorted us to a large, booth-like window table softly illuminated by a single, low-hanging, shaded lamp.

Before us were starched linens, gleaming stemware and delicate, fresh blossoms floating in a giant wine glass. Somewhere, a piano rippled familiar show tunes.

Above us, of course, were heavy wooden beams and had it been summer the view across the valley to the mountains would have been a glorious one. The floor covering was a green/grey carpet with white bears woven into it.

Our traditionally dressed waitress served us Trumer Pils in tall, slim glasses.

The half-board dinner began with a few tiny baked shrimp followed by a morel mushroom soup sprinkled with tiny croutons. Next came a dish with Asian overtones; *Fischstrudel auf Wildreisrisotto*, flaky white fish in phyllo crust over a mixture of white and wild rice.

Following a bit of sorbet to reset the tasters came the featured course, three small pork medallions, first grilled then coated with a sauce of Gorgonzola cheese and quickly broiled to form a light crust.

There was also a better than average, serve-yourself cheese buffet and a rather dramatic dessert presented on black plates with wings of white chocolate mousse, *Tiramisueis* and fresh berries. A fine finish to an excellent meal.

With it we drank a somewhat pricey but excellent Italian red wine — Cru "Occhetti," Nebbiolo d'Alba, Prunotto, 1989 — for which we paid 520 AS (\$41). There were many less expensive choices.

Breakfast was the bounteous buffet one expects at a country hotel of this category.

We paid 2560 AS (\$202) for room, breakfast and dinner.

Getting there: Proceed east to Ellmau about 20 km (13 miles) on Red Road 312 from the Wörgl exit on A12 Autobahn just south of Kufstein. The nearest rail station is in St. Johann im Tirol, about 12 km (8 miles).

Daily Rates: Singles 930 to 1180 AS (\$101 to \$125), doubles 1460 to 2760 AS (\$196 to \$230). Rates include breakfast and dinner. No cards.

Contact: Hotel der Bär, A-6352 Ellmau, Tirol, Austria, telephone 53 58/23 95, fax 53 58/23 95-56.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Jagdhof Neustift

Austria's Stubaital, a few kilometers south of Innsbruck, is a narrow valley running at a southwestern angle off the main highway to Italy. Neustift is one of the larger villages along the valley road which deadends at the Stubai Glacier, where there is year-round skiing.

Arriving in the early afternoon by car, we inspected two rooms before choosing Number 211, a *Burgstall* apartment for 2840 AS (\$227), includ-

Ranking the Four Hotels

<u>Food</u>	<u>Room</u>	<u>Friendliness</u>	<u>Overall Ambiance</u>
der Bär	Jagdhof	der Bär	der Bär
Jagdhof	St. Peter	St. Peter	Jagdhof
St. Peter	der Bär	Schwarzer Adler	St. Peter
Schwarzer Adler	Schwarzer Adler	Jagdhof	Schwarzer Adler

Cost for one night with breakfast & dinner (not including beverages)

Jagdhof-\$227	Schwarzer Adler-\$218	der Bär-\$202	St. Peter-\$157
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ing breakfast and dinner. We chose it over a standard double room for about 300 AS (\$24) less. Number 211 was really three rooms: one with a queen-size bed, another with a single bed, and, between the two, a sitting room with huge L-shaped sofa, coffee table and TV. The large bathroom consisted of shower, tub and double sinks in one space, and the toilet in a separate room. Among the four hotels reviewed here, this was easily the best room we occupied.

The Jagdhof has all the five-star refinements: indoor and outdoor pools, beauty farm, fitness facilities and so on.

The welcome was routine and not especially warm.

Dinner at Jagdhof:

Dining rooms in Austria's five-star country hotels are the quintessence of rustic elegance and the Jagdhof's is a fine example of the genre. Walls and ceilings, of course, are light wood with frescoes, and the floor's scrubbed planks are scattered with Oriental rugs.

The candlelit table, designated as ours by a small ceramic plaque inscribed with a gold "Bestor," was set with pewter chargers covered by embroidered doilies. A slim pewter vase held a single rose.

The half-board dinner, accompanied by live zither music, started with a thick, slightly smoky tasting barley and bacon soup, followed by salad from a well-stocked and maintained buffet. Roast lamb in a reduction sauce served with house-made *Spätzle* and creamed carrots was satisfying but hardly *haute cuisine*.

From the lengthy but expensive wine list — Austrian wines \$30 to \$50, a passable Chianti from Villa Antinori at \$70, for example — we selected a disappointing-at-the-price (520 AS/\$41) Austrian cabernet from Neuseidlersee, south of Vienna.

Service was attentive but rather formal (the servers timed the lifting of the silver domed lids covering our entrees and whisked them off with a flourish).

There was a choice of attractive

Notes from a Traveler's Journal

- Across the road from the **Hotel Jagdhof** in Neustift, the Czech beer, **Budvar**, is available at the **Hubertus Bar**.

- A salami and cheese sandwich on a Kaiser roll at Neustift's village **Metzgerei** is a bargain at 15 AS (\$1.18).

- For those who don't hike or ski, there is little to do in the **Stubaital**, though the drive up to the glacier is quite scenic and Innsbruck is less than an hour away.

- In Seefeld, for local color, try the **Milchhof** on Münchnerstrasse. The beer is Puntigamer and the clientele earthy; many grizzled characters in Tirolean dress, but *very* smoky.

- A pleasant half-day excursion from Innsbruck is first to **Schloss Ambras**, in the forest just above the Autobahn southeast of the city, the favorite residence of the Archduke Ferdinand.

From there, take the yellow road south, then east and slightly north through Rinn and Tulfes, then back under the Autobahn and across the Inn river to **Hall in Tirol**, a very old town full of picturesque streets and buildings. Stop for refreshment at **Anisbrau**, Schlossegasse 15, a brewery from 1700 to 1900 and now a well-worn restaurant-bar with vaulted ceilings and wood wainscoting. This un-touristy "local" has the requisite smoky atmosphere and collection of weathered old men nursing a beer or glass of wine. We had a lunch here of soup and Zipfer beer for 109 AS (\$8.50 for two).

Continue on to **Schwaz** on the pretty yellow road that runs east northeast through farms and pastures above the Inn. You must again cross the river since the town is on the south bank. We found Schwaz not nearly so interesting as Hall. A quick return to Innsbruck is via the Autobahn.

Use map *Die Generalkarte for Austria #7*. 

desserts and/or a selection of cheeses from a buffet.

Overall, a good meal in very pleasant surroundings. The evening was slightly marred, however, by our after-dinner experience. We sat by the imposing fireplace in the bar waiting to be served. Other than two or three patrons on stools at the bar itself, we were the room's only customers. Unfortunately, something we had eaten had apparently rendered us invisible because no one ever inquired as whether we wanted a cup of coffee or a \$500 bottle of Chateau d'Yquem. Not really needing the calories, we toddled off to bed after about 10 minutes.

Despite the unenthusiastic welcome and being ignored in the bar, we like the Jagdhof and would happily return.

Getting there: From Innsbruck, take Red Road 182 south which parallels Autobahn A22 toward the Brenner Pass. (The Autobahn is much faster but you will pay a 50 AS/\$4 toll.) Angle southwest into the Stubai Valley at Schönberg. The nearest rail station to Neustift is in Fulpmes, about six km (4 miles).

Daily Rates: Singles 1270 to 1770 AS (\$100-\$139), doubles 1960 to 3100 AS (\$154-\$244), apartments 2840 to 4,080 AS (\$224-\$321). Rates include breakfast and dinner. No cards.

Contact: Hotel Jagdhof, A-6167 Neustift, Tirol, tel. +43 052/26 2234, fax 2666 503.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 13/20

Hotel St. Peter Seefeld

In the mountain resort village of Seefeld, northwest of Innsbruck, the traveler can select from a long list of hotels — except in late November when the whole town closes up and the list of open hotels dwindles to a very precious few.

Picking up a car at the Munich rail station about 3 p.m., with Seefeld as our overnight destination, we zoomed down the Autobahn, rolled through Garmisch-Partenkirchen, and eased into Seefeld just before 5 p.m. After stopping at or driving past

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half a dozen hotels and finding none open we asked a pedestrian if even one hotel in town was doing business. Yes, the St. Peter.

At this relatively new, four-star property we were quoted a rate, including breakfast and dinner, of 2000 AS (\$157).

After depositing the rental car in the hotel's basement garage, we rode the lift up to reception and were shown to a comfortable, spacious double, Number 107. In it we found a separate sitting area with couch, coffee table and television, a gleaming bathroom with thick towels and terrycloth robes, and a balcony with a mountain view.

Though the hotel's public rooms feature the usual dark wood beams and paneling, white stucco vaulted arches and deep-cushion chairs and couches, the St. Peter might be just a whisker less richly decorated than the Jagdhof.

Looking at its opulent indoor pool and Jacuzzi spa, however, one sees little difference between this hotel and its five-star brethren.

Dinner at St Peter:

As virtually the hotel's only guests we were served in solitary splendor in the vast dining room. We supped on *gemischte salat* (brought from the kitchen rather than a buffet because of so few diners), onion soup, spaghetti in a light, rather bland, tomato sauce, and a main course choice of baked red snapper, lamb chops or *Kalbsgeschnetzeltes* (chopped veal). We chose the latter two. The juicy chops were served with lentils and potato croquettes, and the sauteed veal arrived in the usual creamy mushroom sauce with a side of buttery rice.

A bottle of Spanish red, Rioja Campo Viejo Riserva of 1994, 380 AS (\$30) had no rough edges and was a nice accompaniment to the pasta and meat dishes.

There was no cheese course and no choice of desserts, but the sponge cake with hot chocolate sauce and

dabs of whipped cream was more than we needed.

This was a well-prepared, satisfying meal and the simplest among these four hotels.

After dinner we adjourned to comfortable chairs by the bar's fireplace where we intended to finish the evening with a glass of port. A young man who had been talking loudly and animatedly on a cordless telephone, overheard our order and immediately rushed over to recommend a special vintage port. He was unusually fervent in his advocacy and it soon became clear there was, or had been, a party somewhere in the hotel and he had not only played an important role in the wine selection but in the consumption of it as well.

Obviously part of the hotel's ownership or management (though he knew us only as two American guests of the hotel), he then proceeded to tow this writer to the hotel's impressive, brick-lined wine cellar whose contents he passionately expounded upon with hardly a pause for breath.

Back at the fireplace he had the bartender bring a taste of the special port and pledged us one glass without charge if we would purchase the other. The wine was good so we agreed to the proposal and our benefactor returned to his telephone. On our bill when we checked out next morning was a bar charge for \$15. If that's the price for one glass, the wine was even better than we thought.

Getting there: Seefeld is about 20 km north of Innsbruck on Red Road 177. It is accessible by train from Innsbruck (about 35 minutes) and Garmisch-Partenkirchen (about 45 minutes).

Daily Rates: Singles 850 to 2150 AS (\$67-\$169), doubles 1700 to 4300 AS (\$134-\$338). Rates include breakfast and dinner.

Contact: Hotel St. Peter, A-6100, Seefeld, tel. +43/5212/4555-0, fax 455545.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 13/20

Schwarzer Adler Innsbruck

Looking for an overnight in Innsbruck prior to catching a morn-

ing train to Zürich, we inquired in person about a room at the Schwarzer Adler, a three-star hotel of the Romantik group near the town center.

We booked Number 401, which was spacious and comfortable enough but a definite cut below the three hotels we had just come from. The cost for two persons was 1900 AS (\$150) with breakfast.

Unlike its country cousins, the Adler has no spas and no great public rooms with massive fireplaces to cozy up to on cold nights. It is a typical city hotel with a tiny street-level bar and a restaurant.

Dinner at Schwarzer Adler:

The warm and cozy little dining room's handful of candlelit tables, head-high dark wood paneling, and leaded windows with deep sills filled with Tirolean knickknacks, is an appealing dinner venue. Add a menu with interesting-sounding dishes and we looked forward to the evening with some relish.

Alas, however, the food ranged between ordinary and dreadful. A shared "Romantik Variations" appetizer plate (150 AS/\$12) was mainly a collection of heavy — and heavily-salted — smoked meat and fish and soggy ratatouille-style vegetables.

Lifeless mixed salads (50 AS/\$4) were followed by medallions of Chamois (235 AS/\$18.50) in a garlicky crust and stuffed breast of guinea fowl (\$17) with a chanterelle mushrooms sauce. Sounds good but we surmise both had been prepared at an earlier time and reheated prior to serving.

For dessert, we asked for plain vanilla ice cream and hot chocolate sauce (60 AS/\$4.75). Though we were at first told the chocolate couldn't be heated, the ice cream came with a steaming boat of it. It was the best part of the meal.


Without beverages, the dinner for two was 851 AS (\$67).

The Schwarzer Adler is comfortable enough, the location excellent and the service pleasant, but the

restaurant is to be avoided. Your schillings buy much more in the countryside.

Daily Rates: Singles 900 to 1250 AS (\$71-\$98), doubles 1500 to 2300 AS (\$118-\$181). Rates include breakfast.

Contact: Romantikhotel & Restaurant Schwarzer Adler, Kaiserjägerstrasse 2, A-6020 Innsbruck, tel. +43/512/58 71 09, fax 56 16 97.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 9/20 

READERS' FORUM

Eating in Zürich

For the price of a new Mercedes one can find obscene four-inch thick veal chops at **Jacky's Stampferstube** and slabs of roast Easter baby goat sliced off the cart at the **Kronehalle**.

But for those of us who aren't Imelda Marcos or Michael Eisner, the cost of eating well in this capital city is genuinely frightening. Ah, but lucky me! A Züricher brother-in-law introduced us to a small, unassuming restaurant called **Hiltl**, Sihlstrasse 28, Zürich city center, katty corner to the **Hotel Glockenhof** and the best food we found in Switzerland.

Carnivores will be astounded, it may taste like meat but it's all vegetarian - and astonishingly meaty delicious. Fascinating selection of entrees and a salad bar with almost a hundred tidbits. One gets carried away, but watch out, you pay by the gram at the end of the line!

Desserts are outrageous and the whole meal fits comfortably into a canny traveler's budget. Another nice plus — the waitresses are young, happy, speak English and are anxious to please. What a delightful discovery!

DAVID SWIFT
LOS ANGELES, CA

Appenzell & Arosa

Having just returned from a month in Switzerland I have a couple of items of interest I would like to

pass on. On a visit to Appenzell I found some changes at the **Hotel Hecht** (Hauptgasse 9, CH-9050 Appenzell, Fax +42/071/787 1047).

The owners, Maria and Regula Knechtle, have sold their interest in the hotel to other family members. The new owners are Arnold Knechtle and Felix Walker (his wife, Prisca, is Arnold's sister). The new manager is Sammy Engel who comes from the **Palace Hotel** in Lucerne and **Uto Kulm** in Zürich. Maren Leuthard is now the chef and comes from the **Hilton Hotel** in Basel and **Chrug** restaurant in Zürich.

Many excellent home cooked dishes are offered. My personal favorites were Appenzell cheese ball salad and the *Schnitzel* along with *Quollenfrisch* and *Hanfblüte* (made with cannabis) beer from the local **Karl Locher Brewery**.

This winter there are plans to do some remodeling and upgrading of the interior. All members of the staff were pleasant and went out of their way to be helpful. The rooms were comfortable and the hotel is very clean. The wood-paneled *Gaststube* is a relaxing and delightful place to dine as is the larger formal dining room. I would encourage readers to make a visit to Appenzell to stay at the Hotel Hecht and to meet Sammy Engel.

Another Switzerland discovery is the town of Arosa. From Chur, a trip up the mountain on the Rhaetische Bahn is something to remember. In summer, Arosa is a place to just get away and relax and enjoy the sheer beauty of the area. The *Luftseilbahn* to Weisshorn Peak or the *Gondelbahn Hörnli-Express* to the Hörnli Peak are unforgettable. There are many hiking trails to enjoy and in winter there is excellent skiing.

We were there in early October and stayed in a beautiful apartment at the **Hotel Kaiser** (Gerd Kaiser, Poststrasse, CH-7050 Arosa, Fax +41/81/377 4244, rooms \$80 to \$185). The apartment overlooked the mountains and lake and the

train goes into the hill under the hotel and on up to the train station in town. The apartment had living-dining area, kitchen, bath and two balconies. The owner-chef, Gerd Kaiser, had hot bread at our door each morning at 8 a.m.

COL. DAVID C. SNYDER SR.
EVERGREEN, CO

Old Gemütlichkeits Never Die

The highlight of a recent trip was a three-day visit to the Dolomite region of Italy and the **Hotel Cappella** in the tiny village of Colfosco. We save all our *Gemütlichkeit* issues in binders and whenever we plan a trip to Europe we begin by leafing through the issues to see where we would like to explore this time. We knew we were taking a chance going "cold" to a region we had never visited and using a recommendation nine years old (*Ed. Note: the Cappella was recommended in the November, 1988, issue*). However, we knew we would find the Dolomites unchanged from the description in an earlier issue and so used it to plan our itinerary.

Note: German became our common language in this region. We speak no Italian and sometimes encountered store personnel who spoke no English, although many did. Our pigeon German came to the rescue quite often!

We planned to spend our 35th anniversary in Colfosco. When requesting our reservation (via fax) I had mentioned it would be our 35th anniversary and therefore we would like a romantic room. We were given a choice of one in the main hotel or one in the newer Residence Cappella a few meters up the street. We flipped a coin and chose the Residence (160,000 Italian lira per person per day, breakfast and dinner included) which turned out to be a stroke of luck.

The town of Colfosco sits high in the Dolomites and sports many hotels. The Capella's main building is huge and built, like most of the others, in typical Bavarian style with window box laden balconies overflowing with bright flowers. Save for

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READERS' FORUM

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the Italian signs and flags it could be mistaken for any German Alpine village.

And the scenery? Breathtaking! An expanse of lush valley capped by a mammoth rock formation that changes color with the traverse of the sun and dwarfs otherwise huge buildings, this is the kind of scenery for which postcards were invented!

Upon arrival I asked the usual, "Sprechen Sie English?" The young lady at the reception desk said, "Yes, I do. You must be the Kiehn's. We have a lovely room reserved for you." Well, not many Americans must find their way here, we supposed.

The room turned out to be exquisite. Done in natural pine furniture, blue carpeting and with a blue patterned chintz covering the love seat and side chair the room was dominated by a canopy bed and replica of a built-in porcelain stove. Matching chintz curtains, cushions on the stove's attached bench, quilted coverlet and bed hangings completed the decor.

We giggled as we realized this was obviously a honeymoon suite. The entire underside of the pine canopy was a large mirror! Wall mirrors were placed strategically, though tastefully, on either side of the bed as well. Ah, the Italian sense of romance, even for a 35th anniversary!

The staff had placed a large platter of great pastries and a bowl of fresh fruit on the coffee table along with a hand written welcoming note from Signora Pizzanini. On each night table was a small fruit brandy nightcap and chocolates on each pillow.

The bathroom was large and luxurious, with marble tile, great fixtures and a towel warmer.

A keyless entry system allowed access to the room and was also needed to activate and maintain the lights.

Inquiring as to dinner serving time, the young lady advised us that

they had "prepared an aperitif for 7:15." Not quite understanding this ritual we were surprised to find what appeared to be a lavish private cocktail party in full swing in the hotel lobby. This, however, was the "aperitif" and consisted of champagne, wine or beer and a bountiful array of delectable hors d'oeuvres including thinly sliced salmon, cheeses, stuffed mushrooms, crudités, etc., all served by gracious waitresses.

The evening being cool, even in mid July, a fire was burning on the hearth near the piano player. We migrated toward both of these attractions and had just settled down on a leather sofa when a couple approached and introduced themselves. Signor and Signora Pizzanini, the owners, were making the rounds of the guests.

Upon hearing my American accented German, Signora Pizzanini exclaimed, "Oh, you are the Kiehn's!" (We were beginning to get swelled heads or did they have us confused with someone else? Do we have a famous relative of whom we are not aware?) She then called over to the piano player who broke into Mendelssohn's Wedding March while the entire room smilingly applauded us. Since we eloped 35 years ago it was touching to hear this march, which I as a former church organist have played so often, finally played for us.

Our reserved table in the dining room had been specially decorated with ribbons and a blue candle. At my place was a wrapped gift from the Pizzanini's, a small, gold painted heart shaped mirror with a lovely hand written card wishing us continued happiness.

After dinner we returned to the lobby and the piano player. Again, German was the common language although all the music was American! With the lounge almost to ourselves we danced the night away as he smilingly played our requests.

My husband asked to purchase one of the beer glasses as a souvenir. They would not hear of it, but washed and wrapped it for him as a

gift of the hotel! The next morning when we checked out the young lady asked us to wait while she summoned Signora Pizzanini who made a special point of coming to bid us *Auf Wiedersehen*.

The entire wonderful experience, including the aperitif hour, a varied salad bar, excellent half board entrees from which to choose, a superb bottle of a local Pinot Grigio with dinner, dessert, coffee, several after dinner drinks and a generous breakfast buffet, cost 400,000 Italian Lira. (\$231 at the time.)

It was a true *gemütlich* experience, a visit not soon to be forgotten and well worth a return trip and a longer stay. Thank you *Gemütlichkeit* for introducing us to this wonderful establishment! Hotel Cappella 1-39030 Colfosco (Corvara), Strada Pecei 17 - Dolomiti / Alta Badia, tel. (0471) 836183 / 836168., fax (471) 836561.

VIRGINIA KIEHN
STODDARD NH

(Ed. Note: *Traveling isn't always this good, but once in a while, for those who are open to it and can handle it, a little magic happens.*)

Briefly...

■ **United Airlines** discontinues service to Switzerland from the U.S. on March 1. Look for other airlines, possibly **Swissair**, to add new flights. ■ Our favorite small Salzburg hotel, the **Trumer Stube**, now has an email address: hotel.trumer-stube.sbg@eunet.at.

■ **Wanderweg Holidays**, long a reliable seller of walking vacations, has announced its 1998 program. Three-night, four-day tours in Austria start at \$290 and \$330 in Switzerland. Tel. 800-270-ALPS for free brochure. ■ The **Hotel Seegasthof Oberndorfer** (fax +43/7666/786491), right on Austria's Attersee, has released 1998 summer rates that range from 720 AS to 1220 AS (\$61-\$96) per person. ■ The delightful **Schloss Haunsperger** (fax +43/6245/85680), in Oberalm bei Hallein near Salzburg, announces 1998 per person rates from 850 to 1250 AS (\$67-\$98).