

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

June 26, 1998

I Love Berlin

Other than the first one, I don't think I've ever been more excited about an issue of *Gemütlichkeit*. Our four days in Berlin last winter constitute the most interesting and fun travel experience we've had in years.

As someone fortunate enough to have seen Berlin on a fairly regular basis since 1979, I have one word for the changes taking place there: thrilling.

No doubt many readers recall the Iron Curtain days when driving from West Germany to West Berlin through East Germany was 90% boring pain in the rear and 10% butterflies in the stomach. There was that 45 minutes to an hour delay getting through the border, the terrible roads, leaving the Autobahn was forbidden, and one had to dawdle along at 100 kilometers per hour (62.5 mph).

Most of the butterflies were reserved for the crossings. The border guards played their stare-down games and always spoke very quickly only in German (not that I would have understood much better if they had spoken slowly), and I never quite knew how to respond.

So, there was a great feeling of satisfaction when, in the spring of 1990 on our first trip to Berlin after the Wall came down, we were able to blast fearlessly through the newly-deserted border checkpoint at Helmstedt without even slowing down. Already weeds were sprouting between the cracks in the pavement and the ratty collection of buildings was as desolate as if abandoned 100 years before.

When you're seven years old, images get stuck in the memory for good. The pictures of Berlin I carried around until I actually saw the

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

BERLIN

Probably the most significant event of the 20th century was World War II. It's aftermath is still being played out in Berlin, right now the most "happening" city in Europe.

Travelers to Europe in 1998 and '99 have a rare and fleeting opportunity: to witness the epilogue to the final great battle of World War II in Europe.

By **Bob Bestor** That famous last battle, of course, was for Berlin, the German capital. With American forces reined in at the Elbe, a vengeful Russian Army encircled the city and then pulled the noose tight.

Between the damage done at the close of the war by the Russians, and the carnage left by earlier British and American bombing raids, much of the city was leveled. A seventh of all the buildings destroyed in Germany were in Berlin.

Afterward, the western part of the city was restored. The communist eastern sectors, however, were only partially rebuilt and not, for the most part, in a very pleasing style.

Now a unified Germany has reestablished Berlin as its capital and some 50 billion deutschemarks are being spent on a huge resurrection, most of it in the eastern part of the city.

Old buildings are being restored; the Reichstag has a futuristic new dome; ghost U-Bahn and S-Bahn stations, whose tunnels were sealed when the Berlin Wall was erected, are being refurbished and

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Europe Travel Digest

■ Bargain-seekers headed for Switzerland should consider the **Swiss Youth Hostel Association's (SYHA)** packages for independent travelers that include transportation and accommodations. Though the word "youth" is in the title, there is no age limit. The packages include a Swiss Pass valid for unlimited travel on Swiss trains, buses and lake boats, plus overnight accommodations with breakfast at any of 70 SYHA hostels. A package that includes four nights' accommodations and a four-day Swiss Pass is \$241; eight nights' and an eight-day pass is \$355; and 15 nights' accommodations and a 15-day Swiss Pass is \$512.

The lodging is in rooms which typically sleep from two to 10 persons. However, a number of hostels, including a newly-remodeled one in

Locarno which *Gemütlichkeit* recently inspected, offer several rooms with private bath for two and four persons. Contact the SYHA tour company, Jugi Tours, Schaffhauserstrasse 14, CH-8042, Zürich, tel. +41/1/360 1414, fax 360 1444.

■ Book now if you're planning to attend the **Oberammergau Passion Play 2000**. Performances begin May 22, 2000 and end September 9, 2000. Tickets are usually packaged with room and board, though a few are available separately. Contact: Verkehrs-und Reisebüro Gemeinde Oberammergau OHG, Eugen Papst Str. 9a, D-82487 Oberammergau, tel +49/08822/92310, fax 923190, website: www.oberammergau.de.

■ For many years *Gemütlichkeit* has recommended the **Hotel Birkenhof**

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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town as an adult were from newsreels, which I saw a lot of in 1944 and 45. For more than 30 years, Berlin to me was burnt-out husks of buildings, streets piled high with rubble, and lines of old women in shawls passing rocks to each other, bucket brigade style. How, I wondered, could such a place ever be put back together? I think I concluded that it couldn't.

Well, what those women started more than 50 years ago is just now being finished; by the best engineering, architectural and construction expertise the late 20th century can muster. It's quite a sight and you ought not to miss it.

What to See, How Long to Stay

Berlin is so big (nine times the area of Paris), and there is so much to take in, we can only hope to hit the high spots and point you in the right direction for more information.

Our story this month covers mainly things that particularly interested us. What we didn't have room for would fill a year's worth of newsletters. For the main sights we recommend Michelin's newly-published *Green Guide for Berlin*. With respect to what will be happening at the time of your visit, the Berlin Tourist Office (see opposite page) puts out an excellent quarterly magazine with a complete schedule of events plus stories in English on the city's tourist attractions. Berlin's Web Page (www.Berlin.de) is promising but we

found many links to be dead-ends. Still, it's worth a look.

Rick Steves' Germany, Austria & Switzerland guidebook recommends two days for Berlin. (Of course Mr. Steves doesn't much like what's going on in the city, commenting that "Hitler's dreams of a grand postwar Berlin seem to be resurrected on the 'Berlin 2005' posters." He goes on to say he fears a "*Blade Runner* future" — a reference to the 1982 science-fiction movie about a souless, bleak, sprawling city in the year 2019.)

When it comes to traveling in Europe Mr. Steves knows his onions, but we disagree with his see-Berlin-in-two-days recommendation. If that's all the time you have, so be it, but three days should be the minimum and a week is much better.

A three-day visit might include a day of walking in the east through the *Mitte* to see the Gendarmenmarkt, Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag, a revitalized Friedrichstrasse, Unter den Linden and some of the as yet unreconstructed neighborhoods.

You'll want to spend part of another day at the Infobox, visit the Pergamon and Dahlem Museums as well as the new Gemäldegalerie. Take half a day to window shop along the Ku'damm, stopping for lunch on the sixth floor of the department store Ka De We. Other musts are Charlottenburg Palace, Checkpoint Charlie Museum, the Memorial Church and the Tiergarten.

The foregoing will easily fill three

days and we haven't even mentioned Berlin's great zoo; interesting neighborhoods like Kreuzberg, Prenzlauer, Savignyplatz and Grunewald; boat tours on the city's network of rivers and lakes; Potsdam; the Olympic Stadium; dozens of museums; and the World War II memorials; Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz and Topographie des Terrors.

Editor's Choices

As you will see, we handed out an unprecedented number of "Editor's Choice" designations this month. Perhaps we were just in a great frame of mind, but I think each of the selections is justified. The **Art Nouveau** is one of the best big city hotel values we've seen in a long time, the **Spree Athen** and **Ewig Lampe** were great fun, the **Domus** remains a solid choice, the **Gendarm** is another extraordinary value, the elegant little **Luisenhof** could nearly double its rates if it was near the Ku'Damm, and the **Schlosshotel Vier Jahreszeiten** (not to be confused with the **Four Seasons** on Gendarmenmarkt) is the epitome of luxury.

With the exception of the **Domus** and maybe **Ewig Lampe**, these businesses have all been established since unification.

Oops

Last month we erred in referring readers to the **Eur Air Pass**. We didn't do our homework. Since no cities in Switzerland or Austria are included in the network of destinations, the service is of very limited use to *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers. ☒

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

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

Special © Designation

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

■ Berlininformation ■

Population: 3.5 million

Altitude: 40 meters/131 feet

Distances from:

Dresden	192 Km/120 miles
Frankfurt	566 Km/354 miles
Hamburg	289 Km/181 miles
Munich	585 Km/366 miles
Paris	1069 Km/668 miles
Vienna	642 Km/401 miles
Zürich	852 Km/533 miles

Tourist Information:

Berlin Tourism USA, 245 Fifth Ave., Suite 2204, New York NY 10016, tel. 212-896-3333, fax 212-896-3342

Berlin Tourist Office, Am Karlsbad 11, D-10785 Berlin, tel. +49/030/2647 4812, fax 2647 4899 (from the U.S. don't dial first "0")

Berlin Tourist Office 24-hour hotline for hotel bookings: +49/030/250025

Web site: www.berlin.de

Other Important Stuff:

■ The **Berlin WelcomeCard** for 29 DM (\$16), good for three days of unlimited travel on Berlin's extensive U-Bahn and S-Bahn lines, is essential. Though the pass comes with a stack of coupons good for various discounts at many of the attractions you'll want to see, it's a superior deal just for the transportation alone.

■ A cheap and easy way to see many of Berlin's current attractions is to board a double-decker #100 bus at the Bahnhof Zoo station to Alexanderplatz in the *Mitte*. Along the way it passes such attractions as the **Kaiser-Wilhelm Memorial Church**, the **Siegessäule** (Victory Column) in the **Tiergarten**, the **Bellevue castle**, the **World Cultural Center**, the **Reichstag**, **Brandenburg Gate**, **Humboldt University**, the **Deutsche Staatsoper** and **St. Hedwig's Cathedral**. Disembark at Alexanderplatz. The ride is free with the **Berlin WelcomeCard**.

■ Persons who book at least one hotel night through the Berlin Tourist Office (see above) are eligible for a **Rail Inclusive Tour (RIT)**. Sample roundtrip prices include: Dresden \$60 first class, \$39 second class; Hamburg \$108 first

class, \$72 second class; Munich \$139 first class, \$93 second class. These are substantial savings on regular point-to-point German rail fares.

■ To "sidewalk supervise" the huge construction project at Potsdamer Platz, visit the bright red **Infobox's** viewing platform which overlooks the site. In addition, models, film, 3-D animation and computer simulations illustrate what the new heart of Berlin will look like. The Infobox is free and open 9am to 7pm weekdays — except Thursdays when it is open until 9pm — and 11am to 7pm weekends. Infobox, Leipziger Platz 21, tel. 226 62424. Potsdamer Platz U-Bahn and S-Bahn stations.

■ **Haus at Checkpoint Charlie**, the museum which documents the history of the Berlin Wall and the many East-to-West escape attempts, is not to be missed. A small surviving section of the Wall can be reached from here via Zimmerstrasse. Checkpoint Charlie Museum, 43-44 Friedrichstrasse. Admission 7.5 DM (\$4.16) (25% discount with WelcomeCard), open 9am to 10pm.

■ The last preserved original Wall watchtower, now the **Museum der Verbotenen Kunst** (Forbidden Art), offers photos, uniforms and various border guard paraphernalia. Museum der Verbotenen Kunst, Berlin-Treppow, Schlesischer Busch, Schlesische Strasse & Puschkinallee.

■ **Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz** is a permanent exhibition on the 1942 Wannsee Conference, where top Nazi officials decided on the "final solution" — the extermination of all European Jews. Called a memorial rather than a museum. Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Zehlendorf, Am Grossen Wannsee 56-58. Open Tues-Fri 10am-6pm, Sat & Sun 2pm-6pm. Take the S-Bahn to Wannsee, then bus #114.

■ Another memorial, the **Topographie des Terrors** is in what was once a Gestapo interrogation room. It illustrates the crimes of the Nazi era. Kreuzberg, Stresemannstrasse 110, open 10am-6pm daily.

Events:

■ This summer Berlin observes the **50th Anniversary of the Berlin Airlift**. *The Tempelhof Airport and the Berlin Airlift* is a guided tour conducted by airlift historian, Frank Schmitz, and costs 16 DM (\$9) per person. Tours are at 3pm on the third Saturday of each month through September. Contact the Berlin Tourist Office.

■ The 38th **German-American Volks Fest** is scheduled for July 24 through August 16, 1998. Commemorating the bond between Berliners and Americans, it's 1998 theme is "Arizona: the Grand Canyon state." Location: Hüttenweg (Dahlem).

■ The **Berlin Festival of Jugglers and Acrobats** is July 31 through August 9. Location: Forum Fridericianum, Unter den Linden between Staatsoper and the Kronprinzenpalais.

■ Berlin's new **Gemäldegalerie** (Painting Gallery), displaying some 1,300 paintings, hung on 2.8 kilometers of wall space, opens this month.

This priceless collection from the 13th to 18th centuries is now together for the first time in more than 50 years. At the end of WWII, the paintings were divided and removed by Allied forces. American troops took some works to the U.S. and the Russians transported paintings from the Kaiser Friedrich Museum to the Soviet Union.

After long and difficult postwar negotiations, the collection was returned to Germany; some paintings went to the Dahlem Museum in West Berlin, others to Museum Island in East Berlin.

Based on a core of works that once belonged to Frederick the Great of Prussia, the collection includes works by Cranach, Dürer, Van Eyck, Van der Weyden, Rubens, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Hals, Vermeer, Gainsborough, Watteau, Giotto, Titian, Raffael and Caravaggio.

Gemäldegalerie, Kulturforum, Berlin-Tiergarten, Matthäikirchplatz. Open Tues.-Fri. 10am-6pm, Sat.-Sun. 11am-6pm. U-Bahn/S-Bahn Potsdamer Platz. Admission 8 DM (\$4.44.)

BERLIN

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put back on-line; rivers are being rerouted and the world's best architects and richest entrepreneurs are returning once-famous boulevards to former glory. Potsdamer Platz, before the war the busiest square in town, but reduced to a vacant lot under communist rule, is now the world's largest construction site.

All this makes Berlin a prime destination for the traveler with even a passing interest in 20th century history. And, except for the Wall — small sections of which have been preserved — a lot of that history is still there to see: the reminders of the war and postwar eras, plus the new construction.

In a few years, the only remaining evidence of what happened between 1932 and 1990 will be limited to a few sanitized memorials like the Kaiser-Wilhelm Church in the western part of the town, a few yards of Wall, and whatever memorabilia is to be found in places like the Checkpoint Charlie Museum.

Today, though astonishing progress has been made, the reconstruction is far from finished; a fact that will be apparent when you walk through the long-neglected *Mitte*, formerly the heart of the city. Meander down side streets lined with crumbling gray apartment buildings still defaced by hundreds of bullet holes. Many are occupied and in some cases their residents live without such basics as hot water.

An unusual sight on Oranienburger Strasse is the *Tacheles*, a decayed former department store occupied by squatters while the building's ownership is being resolved after unification. "Government and businessmen destroy what belongs to the people" reads a banner hanging from fourth story windows. (There's a little bit of Berkeley in Berlin — or vice versa. The city's politics have always been left of center; remember, this is a town which never voted for Hitler.)

An adjacent field, scattered with weird metal sculptures and rusted

out buses and automobiles, has become a sort of "people's park," attracting not only Berlin's counter-culture but its mainstream youth as well. A proper young woman employed by the tourist office told us she goes there often and will be sorry when it's gone.

(An interesting aside about the city's "alternative-culture:" In the past few years, graffiti has proliferated throughout Europe and Berlin seems to have more than its share. There are exceptions, however. One is the restored Gendarmenmarkt. The entire square and its authoritarian, establishment buildings — the Schauspielhaus (theater), the German cathedral and the French cathedral — remain unmarked. Why? No one knows for sure, but it seems that even among what must be an army of spray can-equipped vandals there is respect for the institutions represented there.)

Not far from the *Tacheles*, along Friedrichstrasse, are the stunning results of some of that 50 billion D-marks. While the food department of the Paris department store Galeries Lafayette, at Friedrichstrasse and Französische Strasse, doesn't measure up to Ka De We's in the west, its glass atrium is worth a look.

One of the more appealing of the east's rebirths is the Hackesche Höfe, a linkage of residential buildings and their courtyards designed in 1906 by architect August Endell. Though they survived the war, these properties under communism were principally used for storage and parking. Now they have been beautifully returned to their intended use which was to combine residential space with restaurants, theaters, offices, shops and galleries. Located between Rosenthaler Strasse and Sophienstrasse, Hackesche Höfe's cafés and bars are popular eastern sector yuppie hangouts.

Despite the massive changes in the east and the move toward the *Neue Mitte*, for the time being most visitors will be more comfortable in the west, near the Kurfürstendamm. The big change in the east is yet to come; the capital remains in Bonn, moving to Berlin in stages over the

next two to three years.

Some overanxious businesses that headed east too quickly paid with their lives. The chic restaurant **Fofi's** is an example. For many years a Ku'damm area fixture, the restaurant discovered that even though it was ready to relocate, its customers weren't. Fofi's moved to the *Neue Mitte* in 1995 but failed last year.

This is not to say there aren't good hotels and restaurants in the east; it's just that the west has a much greater selection of both plus better shopping and strolling. Thus, our advice is sleep and eat (most of the time, at least) on the western side but don't miss the east. Those who choose headquarter in the *Neue Mitte*, however, will find substantially lower prices.

Hotels (West)

Art Nouveau Hotel-Pension

Open only a few months, this is a wonderful bargain in a very desirable neighborhood. Big, airy, high-ceilinged rooms, each with its own decor. You might ask for Number 10, a corner double with hardwood floors and a niche with a love seat, or Number 8 which is very large, though on the street side.

One block from Ewige Lampe (see box page 6) and around the corner from Spree Athen (see under restaurants).

Daily Rates: Singles 155 DM (\$86), doubles 180 DM (\$100), suite 210 DM (\$117). Prices are about 20% higher during trade fairs and conventions.

Contact: Art Nouveau, Leibnizstr. 59, D-10629 Berlin, tel. +49/030/327 7440, fax 327 744 40.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Domus

One of western Berlin's best values. In a good neighborhood with a nice selection of restaurants and only a five-minute walk from the Ku'damm.

Our large corner room (Number 319) had a separate sitting area, recessed lighting, and a very comfortable bed with a high-quality, soft cotton duvet and pillow covers.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The high-ceilinged breakfast room is cheery and bright with a spare, modern decor. The buffet was good but the orange juice had a tinny taste.

Location and price make this longtime *Gemütlichkeit* favorite an Editor's Choice.

Daily Rates: Singles 139 to 165 DM (\$77-\$92), doubles 198 to 265 DM (\$110-\$147).

Contact: Hotel Domus, Uhlandstrasse 49, 10719 Berlin, (Berlin-Wilmersdorf), tel. +49/030/8803440, fax 88034444

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Bleibtreu

Arty, elegant hotel in the area between the Ku'damm and Savignyplatz. Imaginative design and appointments make the small guestrooms seem bigger than they actually are.

An interesting, charming city hotel but prices seem out of line to us. Nearby Hotel-Pension Art Nouveau has much larger rooms at half the price.

Daily Rates: Singles 234 to 344 DM (\$130-\$191), doubles 274 to 384 DM (\$152-\$213). Breakfast is an additional 25 DM (\$14) per person.

Contact: Bleibtreu Hotel, Bleibtreustraße 31, 10707 Berlin (Berlin-Charlottenburg), tel. +49/030/884740, fax 88474444

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 7/20

Schlosshotel Vier Jahreszeiten

Ignore the Adlon Hotel hype, this is Berlin's best hotel. Combines great charm with authentic luxury. Built at the beginning of the century for the Kaiser's personal attorney, it was the city's most beautiful and expensive home. Now, after an eventful 90 years, it may well be, as a rival Berlin innkeeper put it, "Germany's finest hotel." The remodeling job, directed by the famous German designer Karl Lagerfeld, cost one million DM (\$550,000) — per room.

The hotel sits on lovely grounds behind high walls and a gated entrance in Berlin's neighborhood of great mansions, the Grunewald. Unfortunately, the center of Berlin is 10-15

minutes away by public transport.

Among the five best hotels we've ever seen.

Daily Rates: Singles 545 to 675 DM (\$303-\$375), doubles 595 to 725 DM (\$331-\$403)

Contact: Schlosshotel Vier Jahreszeiten, Brahmsstrasse 10, D-14193 Berlin, tel. +49/030/895 840, fax 8958 4800

Rating: QUALITY 19.5/20, VALUE 13/20

Hotels (East)

Gendarm

Nice interior in an ugly shell. Nonetheless, a top value in the *Mitte*. Directly on Gendarmenmarkt, the building's exterior, which still shows a few bullet holes, had not been redone as of December 1997 but soon will be.

Ask for Room #37, a double at 160 DM (\$89). Number 33, a corner suite with splendid views of the Gendarmenmarkt's stately buildings, is one of Berlin's best bargains at 200 DM (\$111).

Daily Rates: Singles 140 to 160 DM (\$78-\$89), doubles 150 to 180 DM (\$83-\$100), suites 200 DM (\$111)

Contact: Hotel Gendarm, Charlottenstrasse 60, 10117 Berlin, (Berlin-Mitte), tel. +49/030/2044626, fax 2082482

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 16/20

Luisen Hof

This 27-room townhouse-style hotel is an elegant oasis in what is still a rather drab neighborhood near the *Mitte*. For this level of comfort west of the Brandenburg Gate, one pays about 20% more.

Most of the *Mitte's* attractions are within walking distance. Otherwise the Heinrich-Heine (U8) underground station is only a couple of blocks away.

The best hotel in this group, save the Schlosshotel Vier Jahreszeiten.

Daily Rates: Singles 175 to 290 DM (\$97-\$161), doubles 210 to 290 DM (\$117-\$161). Weekend rates are 175 DM (\$97) single and 185 DM (\$103) double.

Contact: Hotel Luisen Hof, Köpenicker Strasse 92, 10179 Berlin (Berlin-Mitte), tel. +49/030/2415906, fax 2792983

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 15/20

Restaurants

Spree Athen

The Spree Athen experience is this: dinner in the living room of an old Berlin house listening to old Berlin music.

The former is a six-course, fixed-price (78 DM/\$43 per person) meal, and the latter, at least the night we were there, was a young cabaret singer accompanied by a piano. She wasn't Lotte Lenya or Marlene Dietrich, but her throaty contralto voice singing Kurt Weill songs, the homey setting, just a little imagination, and we were in prewar Berlin

After reserving a table earlier in the day, we were seated on a slightly raised platform in the main salon. The piano is in an adjacent hallway and the singer roams between the two principal rooms. Walls are hung with an eclectic variety of 20's and 30's art and doo-dads. Suspended from the ceiling is a grotesque chandelier so ugly it's beautiful, perfectly evoking a prewar Berlin bourgeois household.

There are white tablecloths, candles, roses, and big-bowled, long-stemmed red wine glasses.

Immediately after sitting down, a *Kaiserbowle* (a mixture of champagne and grapefruit juice, we guessed) was slid under our noses. The table had already been supplied with bread, raw vegetables and a couple of creamy dips. Next, came an onion and bacon tart, then an intensely-flavored wild mushroom soup, a winter salad in a balsamic dressing and finally roast lamb with a tarragon sauce with bundles of tiny green beans and fried, diced potatoes. Dessert was a caramel mousse with fruit.

The food was good, not great, the service warm and well-timed. A delightful evening; we highly recommend it.

Spree Athen, Leibnizstrasse 60,

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D-10629 Berlin, tel. +49/030/324-1733. Reservations advised.

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 12/20

Die Möwe

Die Möwe is ideal for those seeking good food at affordable prices and an elegant, dress-up night out. It is located on the second floor of the Festhalle, behind the Memorial to the Victims of Fascism, in the city's *Mitte*.

Decor is formal and rather grand; dim lighting, red banquettes, white tablecloths, very tall windows on two sides, huge oval mirrors, and candles in hurricane glass covers. There is a pianist and waiters are formally dressed.

A better than average degree of creativity and refinement marked the dishes we chose: salad with terrine of goose; baby wild pig with sauteed carrots, turnips, and three mashed potato cakes flavored with parsley and ham; and roast lamb in a peppery tarragon sauce with crunchy pan-fried potatoes. Without beverages the meal for two persons was 83 DM (\$46), a very good value. A bottle of middling Bordeaux, Chateau Listrac, cost 69 DM (\$38).

Am Festungsgraben 1, D-10117 Berlin (Mitte), tel. +49/030/201 2039, fax 201 2081. Reservations advised.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 14/20

Hardtke's

A Berlin institution, well-known even before WWII: old men waiters, traditional food and smoky "old-Berlin" atmosphere. There was a big glitch the night we were there; the computer went *kaput* and we were invisible to waiters for at least 20 minutes. When the food finally did

come we waited another 10 minutes for something to drink with it.

In a word, service was lousy, but perhaps that was because of the computer problem.

A little band — guitar, saxophone, accordion — came through, played one number in our room and then passed the hat. A young woman moved from table to table giving away free cigarette samples.

This place is no bargain. A decent, greaseless, *Wienerschnitzel* with

style place that's good for lunch. A small (.3 liter) beer was 4.5 DM (\$2.50), housemade tomato soup 6.9 DM (\$3.38), a platter of *Erbensuppe mit Wurst* 7.5 DM (\$4.16), and *Bockwurst* with potato salad 9.5 DM (\$5.27). Lunch for two cost 32 DM (\$18).

Cafe Lebensart, Unter den Linden 69-73.

Besenwirtschaft

Funky, cozy wine bar on Uhlandstrasse near the Hotel Domus. Good place for a late beverage, dessert or light meal. Art on the wall is for sale. Desserts and drinks are about 5 DM (\$2.77).

Besenwirtschaft, Uhlandstrasse between Ku'damm and Pariser Platz

Hamlet

For a very late-night snack or final-final beverage on Uhlandstrasse, Hamlet has a slick 90s bistro atmosphere and is open until 3am. More chic and more expensive than homey Besenwirtschaft just up the street.

Hamlet, Uhlandstr. 47, tel. 882 1361

Café-Restaurant Weitzmann

A pleasant lunch or drink stop in the Prenzlauer district (Prenzlauer, we are told, is the trendy neighborhood of the 90's; Kreuzberg was the place of the 80's). A small beer (.3 liters) was 3.8 DM (\$2.11) and coffee was 3 DM (\$1.67).

Café-Restaurant Weitzmann, Husemannstr. 2, tel. 442 7125

EUROPE BRIEFING

Continued from page 1

(Von Eiff Str. 37+41, D-63456 Hanau-Steinheim, tel. +49/06181/64880, fax 648839) for the "last night" before a flight home from the Frankfurt Airport. The hotel, which is family-owned and has a welcoming private home atmosphere, has just notified us of new rates: singles 100 to 130 DM (\$56-\$72), doubles 130 to 150 DM (\$72-\$83).

Oh, The Night Life

Ewige Lampe

This hole-in-the-wall bar/jazz club in the upmarket Savignyplatz neighborhood recently provided a couple of *Gemütlichkeit* staffers two tremendously enjoyable evenings of music. A Friday night series of blues performers was almost as good as the New Orleans-style jazz ensemble the following evening. A modest five DM (\$2.77) paid the cover for two persons on Saturday and on Friday there was no charge.

The tiny bar opens to a larger showroom with a small stage and table seating for perhaps 50 to 75 persons. In two nights we never got there early enough to sit down except at the bar where you can hear the music but can't see much of the performers. The tunes begin at 9pm and end about 1am. The bands on both nights were absolutely first-rate.

A rushed but friendly bartender and one non-stop waitress, both of who recognized us on our second visit, served the entire mob. Some food is available and a small beer will set you back about \$3. This is not a see-and-be-seen place or a chatty social bar; people come to hear the music, not to talk. For those who like blues and jazz, Ewige Lampe is big fun.

Ewige Lampe, Niebuhrstr. 11a, tel./fax +49/030/324 3918.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

roast potatoes and salad cost 29.5 DM (\$16.38), and a somewhat chewy *Jägerschnitzel* in a thick mushroom gravy and pommes frites is 23.5 DM (\$13). Budvar, the Czech beer is 6.5 DM (\$3.61).

Hardtke's, Meinekestrasse 27a, tel. 881 9827.

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 8/20

Odds and Ends

Cafe Lebensart

Just east of the Adlon Hotel on Unter den Linden. Pleasant, bistro-

■ The Friedrichshafen **Technik und Kunst Museum** (Technology and Art) is principally known for its displays of lighter-than-air ships. The main attraction is the 130-foot-long reconstruction of a section of the Zeppelin LZ 129 Hindenburg in its original size. One boards by a gangway and can wander through authentically-equipped passenger and crew areas. The illusion of a Zeppelin ride is perfectly staged. The museum is open Tuesday-Sunday, 10am-6pm Contact: Tourist-Information, Bahnhofplatz 2, D-88045 Friedrichshafen. Tel. +49/07541/30010, fax 72588.

■ This summer, the **Kempinski Hotel** group offers special "Rendezvous Rates" for a minimum two-night stay, one of which must be a Saturday. The program also includes a welcome gift, phone credits, luxury airport transport at "special prices," late checkout, a free bottle of wine with a meal purchased at the hotel, and other perks. Sample per night prices include **Kempinski Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Munich**, 314 DM (\$175); **Kempinski Hotel Elephant Weimar**, 225 DM (\$125); **Kempinski Hotel Sporting Club Berlin**, 233 DM (\$129); **Kempinski Hotel Gravenbruch Frankfurt**, 261 DM (\$145). Booking: 800-426-3135.

■ Michelin has added *Green Guides* for **Berlin** and **Vienna** to its list of products. Both guides use the star system to rate sights: three stars is "highly recommended," two stars is "recommended" and one star is "interesting." The books are priced at \$16.95 each.

■ **Automobile travelers to Austria and Switzerland** need be aware that special windshield stickers — called "vignettes" — are required for travel in those countries. Switzerland requires them for Autobahn driving; Austria requires them on all roads. It has been reported that enforcement of the vignette laws is vigorous in both countries and fines are steep for noncomplying motorists. The stickers can be purchased at border crossings. A one-week pass in Austria costs about \$6. In Switzerland the price for the annual vignette is about \$27.

■ For travel during the period Sept. 7 - Oct. 31, 1998, **Avanti Destinations** offers a **7-day drive and rail package to Switzerland** which includes nonstop San Francisco to Zürich roundtrip air on **Swissair**, six nights hotel, daily breakfast and dinner, a rental car for seven days and a rail excursion to the Jungfrauoch. The cost with air is \$1,699 per person or \$949 land only. Contact: Kendra Phillips or Gretchen Beck at 800-422-5053. 

READERS' FORUM

German Hotels

Our favorite first night hotel when arriving via the Frankfurt airport is **Haus Lipmann** (Marktplatz 3, D-56814 Beilstein/Mosel, tel. +49/2673-1573, fax +49/2673-1521), in Beilstein on the south bank of the Mosel River.

Overlooking the river and ferry landing, Haus Lipmann is small with a friendly staff, excellent wine and good food. Somewhat cellar-like and illuminated mainly with candles, a newly added *Weinstube* in an old building behind the hotel is a great way to while away a rainy afternoon. Rooms in the main hotel are unique, many with exposed beams. Most have balconies overlooking the river but be sure to make this request. No credit cards. Confirm reservations by phone the day before arrival. English spoken. We paid 150 DM (\$83), breakfast included.

A three-day stay at the **Gutshotel des Weingutes von Kesselstadt** (Balduinstr. 1, D-54347 Neumagen-Dhron, tel. +49/6507 2035, fax +49/6507 5644) (*Gemütlichkeit*, October 1988) was wonderful. The hotel and apartment remain exactly as described. Food, staff and wine are all excellent.

Not much English is spoken but they bring out a huge multilingual culinary dictionary and your host asks permission to join you at your table to help interpret the menu!

The hotel has its own wine label

which is excellent but pricey. (Visit Edgar Hermes, a vintner in the nearby village of Trittenheim. Ring the bell and someone will show you into the tasting room, a converted garage. Don't be deterred by the fact that you are at a private home on a village street. There is a sign. You will be hooked and carry home many bottles of their excellent wines. Trust me!) The apartment rented for 200 DM (\$111), breakfast included.

A great find in Munich, the **Hotel Acanthus** (An der Hauptfeuerwache 14, D-80331 Munich. Tel. +89/231880, fax +89/2607364) is a 5-minute walk from the Sendlinger Tor and the U-Bahn. The friendly staff speaks excellent English and the breakfast buffet is the best we have had in Germany.

Rooms, though small, are comfortable and the entire hotel is spotless and attractively decorated. There are two price ranges. At the time of our booking the Rustikana rooms rented for 165 DM (\$92) and those with an Alba Rose theme for 195 DM (\$108), breakfast buffet included. Parking in the underground garage is an additional 15 DM (\$8) per day (reserve in advance, limited spaces).

Ask for #505, a somewhat larger rear corner room with an Alba Rose theme. There is no restaurant but the bar is open 24 hours a day!

A disappointment: **Romantik Hotel Bierhütte**. We had long awaited a visit to this hotel and were sorely disappointed.

The reception staff was pleasant and helpful, but our room in one of the annexes was a definite disappointment. One step up from an old Holiday Inn, the bathroom was done in ugly green tile. The room itself was nothing special and also reminiscent of a nondescript American motel room.

The biggest problem was the service at dinner. We normally do not opt for half-board but for some reason decided to try it. This must have been our mistake because the service was perfunctory and indifferent at best. We had ordered a glass of wine with dinner.

Continued on page 8...

READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 7

We were rushed through each course not even finishing our wine before being shown the dessert menu. We would have liked another glass of wine and some leisure time before deciding on dessert but the waitress, who spoke excellent English, ignored our request. (I tried both English and German to request more time.) We finally gave up, had dessert and left. We noticed other diners with regular menus were treated to far, far better service.

A questionnaire in the room asked for feedback. We gave it in great detail but never heard a word from the proprietors. We, sadly, will write this hotel off.

VIRGINIA KIEHN
STODDARD NH

Wants the Best

In reply to the reader interested in B&B and other moderately-priced accommodations; please be advised that you also have many readers interested in the finest and best accommodations.

PAUL BROYHILL
LENIOR NC

(Ed Note: Mr. Broyhill's email represents the majority of responses to the letter appearing in the April 1998 issue which complained that Gemütlichkeit leans too much to expensive hotels and restaurants. To be sure, there was support for both sides of this issue, but reader surveys over the years are clear: most subscribers seek moderately-priced hotels and restaurants, with an occasional splurge to more luxurious establishments. Nonetheless, there is a constituency to be served at both ends of the spectrum; those who want only the finest and those who want the most inexpensive accommodations and meals. Interestingly, the latter group is not always motivated by price. Many correctly point out that B & Bs and simple restaurants are the best way to get close to a country, its culture and people.

A quick look at the past 24 issues of Gemütlichkeit shows a coverage breakdown as follows: Inexpensive accommodations [one and two-stars hotels, pen-

sions], 30%; moderately-priced [three-star hotels], 41%; expensive [four and five-star hotels], 29%. These figures relate to the number of hotels reviewed, not to the number of column inches devoted to each category.)

Requests Restaurant List

I would appreciate your recommending to me your choice of the best restaurants (with phone numbers and addresses if possible) in Zürich, a city I much enjoy.

NAME WITHHELD

(Ed. Note: Scheduled to run later this year is a story on mid-priced Zürich restaurants. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient staff to process general inquiries of this nature.)

Austria Comments

I just returned from a trip to Austria where I used prior issues of your travel letter as reference. Particularly enjoyed the drive across the Grossglockner glacier area described in the September '97 issue. Found a great hotel in Bad Hofgastein — large rooms, picture postcard view from room balcony, superb breakfast, and all for \$100. This would be **Kurhotel Moser** (tel. +43/06432/6209, fax 620988). This resort is considerably more expensive during the winter ski season. Unlike Vail and Aspen, the Austrians have apparently not yet figured out how to market their resorts as a summer destination. I'd like to return to Hotel Moser for at least a week.

Was disappointed in Salzburg. Too many tourists. I ate in several restaurants where I heard nothing but English spoken — might as well have been in Chicago. Menus are laminated and printed in English also. I always ask for the German menu, since only it has the daily specials which usually include the freshest, seasonal ingredients (strawberries and asparagus during my trip).

Your May 98 issue recommends Lienz. I did not go there, but I particularly enjoyed Graz, which is Austria's second largest city, yet still relatively free of the tourist hordes. I also did not share other readers' enthusiasm for the **Hotel Trumer**

Stube in Salzburg. Only one step above a youth hostel, in my opinion.

Would like to reinforce your other readers' recommendation of **Hotel Hoyacker Hof** in Garching as a splendid "last night" hotel near the Munich airport.

Keep up the good work with your publication.

MIKE ELDER
TOPEKA KS

Country Hotel Near Bern

I enjoyed your recent feature concerning the small but interesting capital of Switzerland. Bern is charming and should not be missed.

Regarding accommodations in Bern and surroundings, I believe *Gemütlichkeit* readers would be interested in an utterly charming small country inn named **Le Vieux Manoir au Lac**, CH-3280 Murten-Meyriez, an easy 20-minute Autobahn drive from the center of Bern. It actually lies in Pays de Fribourg where French is the local language, but it's 31 KM (19 miles) from German-speaking Bern and the Managers, Mr. and Mrs. Erich Thomas, are fluent in English.

We stayed there a few years ago and paid 330 SF (\$220) per night per room for accommodations facing Lake Morat. The price included breakfast, service and taxes. A little expensive but well worth it.

The view of the lake from the rooms and dining area are delightful. There are 23 good-sized bedrooms and the restaurant is outstanding. It was one of the highlights of our trip.

The nearby walled town of Murten is an historic gem in itself, the sort of place one hopes to find when touring the Swiss countryside.

If one has a car, staying at the Manoir au Lac is preferable to suffering the parking problems, noise and traffic at the city hotels. Bern itself can be reached quickly and easily and visits to other mid-country attractions such as the Bernese Oberland and Gruyères can be made easily with detours around the city.

MATTHIAS SHEELEIGH
SUMMIT NJ ☒