

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

August 27, 1998

A Night in Old Vienna

When I've spent money to travel to Europe, I want to feel like I'm in Europe. That's one of the reasons we're so enthusiastic about the **Restaurant Beograd** (see page 6). Here, in strange surroundings, hearing strange languages, and tasting strange food and drink, we felt very far from home. Sort of what the travel thing is all about.

Near us one night at Beograd was a large, convivial party of about 20 at one very long table. Midway through the evening, two young women from the group approached the musicians. Though we didn't hear what was said, it was obvious their business consisted of more than a routine request for "Melancholy Baby." Something had been arranged.

About an hour later, one of them returned to the podium to sing. She and the piano player conferred briefly on the proper key and then it was announced to the room that, as a birthday present for the honored guest at the long table, she would sing.

From Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* she did *Summertime*. Dozens of times in my life I've heard people get up to sing at parties and in bars and restaurants. But nothing like this. After just a few seconds I'm sure everyone in the room realized this is a woman whose livelihood is singing. Maybe even the Staatsoper or Volksoper. She had a marvelous, clear voice, all the accompanying gestures, facial expressions, and absolute confidence. Everybody stopped eating and talking, and the waiters stopped serving; it was an extraordinary three or four minutes.

Stuff like that doesn't happen very often in Hayward.

But on to other business...

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

LOCARNO

Locarno, on the "Swiss Riviera," is full of La Dolce Vita, where the 'sweet life' can mean a day's lake cruise to Italy, a long mountain tramp, or just an umbrella table on the Piazza Grande.

One of the things that sets Switzerland apart from other European countries is its diversity. Go from the German-speaking cantons in the north to Ticino in the south and a line from Monty Python comes immediately to mind: "and now for something completely different."

By Bob Bestor

What's different? Just the language, the food, the architecture, the landscape, the climate, and the lifestyle. All are Italian. And, as thousands of not-so-politically-correct travel writers have pointed out before, you still get Swiss order and punctuality. It's a nice combination.

One of Ticino's most pleasant stops is Locarno on Lake Maggiore

where, in our view, autumn is the best time to visit. At 197 meters (646 feet) elevation, it is the lowest city in Switzerland and, like a few other Swiss towns, claims to get the most sunshine of any place in the country. The summers are hot.

In the fall, however, the sun shines more gently and the masses of tourists who came for Locarno's great film festival in August have packed up and gone.

Life is easy by the lake. The vistas are breathtaking, the food and wine simple and comforting, and the sub-tropical vegetation luxuriant with palm trees and bright flowers (Locarno is famous for its several hundred varieties of camellias). There are cobblestoned,

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Vienna Update

Vienna is a city we will never tire of. If we were to make a list of big-city "bests" in our three countries, Vienna would probably come out on top in the categories of architecture, music, urban walking, old-world charm, street musicians, and moderately-priced, cozy little hotels and restaurants.

We were there recently to track down some new places of that ilk as well as to revisit a couple of old favorites.

Here, in a kind of mixed-bag fashion, is our report.

Carlton Opera Hotel

Mid-priced accommodations are never easy to find in Vienna.

On a side street, just outside the Ring near the fascinating Naschmarkt, is the 52-room Carlton Opera Hotel.

Mostly patronized by business travelers, this air-conditioned hotel is recommended for its comfortable rooms and Art Nouveau style. The ancient lift is right out of *The Third Man*.

Our room, Number 202, had that Old-Vienna feel — high ceilings, wood floors, a bank of big double windows — leaving no doubt you're in Europe and not at a Ramada or Holiday Inn in Omaha or San Diego.

The furniture was new, the bed comfortable and the bathroom

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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German Car Rental Fees

Because of intense competition, car rental companies in Germany have been losing money for the last several years. Though rates have risen steeply this summer, they are still lower than 10 years ago and the lowest in Europe. Now, however, the rental companies have discovered a way to pad the bottom line without raising rates. This year Auto Sixt began charging a 6% "premium station" fee. (A "premium station" is an airport or rail station.) In midsummer the rest of the rental companies — who had been charging a flat fee of \$10-\$12 — switched to the 6%. Alamo charges 10%. If your rental is an Opel Vectra for two weeks and the tab is \$133 x 2 weeks x 16% VAT for a total of \$308.56, most rental companies tack another \$18.51 to your bill. That's not too bad compared to the previous system, but if you want a more expensive vehicle, such as a van for two weeks, the total is \$950 and the extra charge is \$57.

You can avoid this by picking up at a downtown location, but these are often not open on Saturday or Sunday. In addition, with a van you've got probably five or more people in your party and by the time you herd the group — and wrestle the luggage — to the rental location via public transport you're better off financially, physically and emotionally to just pay the 6%. The car rental companies know this.

But look at the positive side, car rentals in Switzerland and Austria are substantially more expensive than in Germany and they each charge 12% for airport pickups.

On the subject of car rentals, we've always recommended against paying \$10 for an International Driver's License. We are now learning, however, that it is required for driving in Poland, and the Austrian Tourist Office tells us such has always been the case in their country.

Raves for New Berlin Museum

Recently we reported on the debut of Berlin's new **Gemäldegalerie**, which contains about 1,000 paintings in 59 halls and galleries. The museum is apparently a big hit. Pierre Rosenberg, director of the Louvre in Paris, said "the great achievement of the Gemäldegalerie is the light." All paintings are exhibited in natural daylight. Another expert is quoted as saying, "on days when there is a relatively even covering of clouds, you get the impression that the paintings are igniting."

The Gemäldegalerie houses a collection of great works that, because of World War II, were dispersed to other museums and even other countries. They are all now reunited in this spectacular Berlin setting. Admission is 8 DM (\$4.50).

Factory Outlet for Loden

Subscriber Joan Hawkins of Glen Cove, New York, calls to tell us of a factory outlet for Lodenwear, the traditional clothing seen in many parts of Germany, Austria and

Switzerland, but more commonly in southern Bavaria and in the Austrian Tirol and Styria. **Lodenwalke** is in Ramsau am Dachstein (tel. +43/03687/81930), near Filzmoos, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) southeast of Salzburg. They take no credit cards and don't ship but will accept U.S. currency.

In Filzmoos, Ms. Hawkins gives high marks to **Geniesserhotel Hubertus** (Am Dorfplatz, A-5532 Filzmoos, tel. +43/06453/204, fax 2066) whose restaurant gets three red chef's toques (red meaning creative cuisine) in the 1997 *Gault Millau* for Austria.

Where To Taste Wine

This is the time of year to visit the German wine country. If you're headed that way, be sure to take along the *Vintners to Visit* guides recently produced by the **German Wine Information Bureau**.

This series of booklets contains hundreds of winery listings, road maps, and lists all available services (including which properties offer tasting).

When ordering the brochures, please specify the wine region(s) or city intended for travel. The German Wine Information Bureau accepts phone calls but would prefer your request for their free material arrive via a postcard or email.

German Wine Information Bureau, 245 Fifth Avenue, #2204, New York NY 10016, tel. 212-896-3336, fax: 212-896-3342, email: sullassoc1@aol.com — RHB

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

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

Special Designation

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

arcaded piazzas, narrow alleys, ancient stone churches, grand old Italian-style villas, and, of course, hundreds of umbrella tables at dozens of outdoor cafes from which to savor it all.

Scattered over the steep hillside above the town are its toniest suburbs and finest hotels. From the town center a funicular rises a few hundred feet to Orselina where the main attractions are the lake view and the striking **Madonna del Sasso**, a monastery and church precariously perched on a forested, outcropping of rock.

It was across Maggiore, from Italy to nearby Brissago, that Lt. Henry, a young American ambulance driver, rowed with his English lover, Miss Barkley, in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*. They stayed one night in Locarno where a customs official tried to convince them to settle because of the healthy climate. Despite his warning, "you will regret leaving Locarno," they went on to a chalet in the mountains above Montreux. There, of course, Miss Barkley died in childbirth.

Maybe Hemingway was saying don't just pass through, stay awhile.

Excursions from Locarno

The Valleys

Some of the best excursions from Locarno are into the mountain valleys to the north such as Valle Onsernone, Valle Maggia, Val Rovana, Val Bavona and, to the west, the Centovalli (100 valleys) region.

This is a rugged and somewhat wild country sprinkled with charming little villages with slate-roofed, stone houses and crisscrossed by a web of hiking trails.

The most extensive of the valleys is the Maggia with its branches, the Rovana, Bavona and Lavizzara valleys. Hard times in the 19th and early 20th centuries caused the abandonment of many of the villages. Some residents emigrated to

America. The founders of the Italian Swiss Colony wines north of Santa Rosa in Northern California came from this region of Switzerland.

Now a few of these pretty hamlets are returning to life. Among the attractions in the Maggia Valley and its offshoots are the church of the Madonna delle Grazie in Maggia, the town square in Cevio, the marble sculpture school in Peccia, the church

the **Navigazione Lago Maggiore** (+41/091/751 1865, fax 751 3024). These large, sturdy vessels call at some 20 towns around the lake, many in Italy. Fares are based on the length of trip, but a one-day **Lago Maggiore Holiday Card** costs 33 Sfr. (\$22) and allows unlimited travel as far south as Arona in Italy, near the lake's southern tip.

Special boat trips are also available to the Italian markets in Cannobio, Luino and Intra. Prices from Locarno range from 21 to 27 Sfr. (\$14-\$18), depending on the destination. Reservations are required. The Swiss rail passes are not honored on these boats. Take your passport if you'll be going to Italy.

Lunch with Agnes

If you do nothing else, take the train or drive to the town of Intragna for a meal at **Stazione "da Agnese"** where Agnes Broggin, co-owner and chef at this tiny hotel near the local rail station, makes the best risotto we've ever tasted.

Signora Broggin is also famous for her pepper strawberries, a delicious and amazing amalgamation of chopped

fresh strawberries, a blizzard of ground black pepper, sugar, a couple of liqueurs and whipped cream.

In addition to the restaurant, there are 11 guestrooms ranging in price from 120 to 160 Sfr. (\$80-\$107).

"Da Agnese" is only a few kilometers from the Italian border on a "yellow" road just off "red" road 337 between Locarno and Domodossola. Use *Die General Karte #2* for Switzerland.

Stazione "da Agnese," Intragna, CH-6655, tel. +41/091/796 1212, fax 796 3133.

Hotels

Orselina

One of the premium pieces of property in Locarno is occupied by the Hotel Orselina. The hillside setting high above the town is mag-

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3 Days in Locarno

Day One

- Stroll the town, visit the **Madonna del Sasso**
- Take the cable car to **Cardada** from Orselina, then perhaps the chairlift to **Cimetta** where the view stretches from Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn to the Dolomites

Day Two

- Explore the **Centovalli**, see cheese made in a high pasture
- Lunch in Intragna at **Stazione "da Agnese"** (see story this page)

Day Three

- See the castles of **Bellinzona**
- Take a boat trip to Italy, stopping at **Cannobio**, **Brissago**, and the **Island of Brissago** for the **Botanical Gardens**

of Mogno designed by famous Ticinese architect, Mario Botta (designer of San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art), and some 700 kilometers (435 miles) of hiking trails.

Scenic Train Excursion

An interesting one-day excursion through the Centovalli — and an extraordinary train ride — is to take a morning train from Locarno to Domodossola in Italy and return in the late afternoon. One could, for example, board in Locarno at 9:35am, arriving Domodossola at 11:14am, then return at 3:18pm, arriving back in Locarno at 5:04pm. Roundtrip second class fare is 67 Sfr. (\$45), first class is 111 Sfr. (\$74). Of course, Europass, Eurailpass and Swiss Pass are all honored.

Lake Trips to Italy

A relaxing way to explore the lake and the towns on it is via the boats of

LOCARNO

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nificent. On stair-stepped terraces below the hotel's main building are lush gardens, grape arbors, lawns, tennis courts, a large swimming pool and spas, even a putting green and a place for golfers to hit balls into a net. Of course, there is also an indoor pool.

As marketing and maintenance costs increase, the number of European family-owned hotels of this caliber are dwindling. Hotel operators like suave and charming Alberto Amstutz are a rare breed. Like a handful of others we have seen, his rate ability to make every guest feel special is coupled with the management skills and tireless energy necessary to keep his hotel among the finest in the country. Always immaculately dressed in suit and tie, he greets new arrivals with a smile and perfect English — or French, or German, or Spanish, or Italian. He suggests excursions and gives directions. At dinner he drops by your table to recommend a wine or inquire about your day. At checkout, he sees to the luggage loading and sends guests away with a warm handshake and the belief that he's genuinely sorry to see them leave.

Such hospitality makes a hotel's physical elements seem less important. Still, the Orselina's guest and public rooms range from very comfortable to luxurious. Virtually every room offers panoramic views of the lake and mountains beyond. From a comfortable chair on your tiled balcony you can watch boats come and go in the harbor far below. Each room's end wall is just an expanse of glass. An overstuffed love seat and easy chair with coffee table are great for relaxing at end of day.

The hotel's dining room is a splendid affair which in good weather spills out onto the terrace overlooking the lake. The ceiling is vaulted and there are individual lamps at each table. Dinner at Orselina is a formal affair; men wear dark suits and ties, women are in long dresses and wear their best baubles. The half-board dinner was a five-course

Locarno Info

Tourist Information:

Ente Turistico di Locarno e Valli
Largo Zorzi 1, CH-6601 Locarno 1
Tel. 091/751 03 33, Fax 091/751 90 70,
email: locarno@ticino.com

Distance from:

Berlin	1204 km/753 miles
Geneva	440 km/275 miles
Milan	150 km/94 miles
Munich	421 km/263 miles
Zürich	215 km/134 miles

City Tours:

Two-hour Locarno city tours cost 10 Sfr. (\$6.67) per adult, half price for children 7-16 and are offered Mondays from April 13 to Oct. 30. Meet at the Casino at 9:45am. Reservations required: +41/091/751 9070.

Vacation Rentals:

In addition to hotels, Locarno and environs offers a multitude of vacation rentals, from studio apartments to grand villas. Some are on or near the lake, some are centrally located, others are in the hills above the city and offer lake views and still others are in the countryside in small villages such as Aurigeno, Menzonio, Borglio and Peccia. Rentals range in price from about 30 Sfr. (\$20) per person per night to about 260 Sfr. (\$173). Prices at most properties vary widely by season.

Obtain the *Case E Appartamenti Di Vacanza* 1998 brochure from the Locarno tourist office for a list of available rentals. Be sure to ask not only for the Locarno brochure but for nearby Ascona and for lists of rentals in outlying towns and villages. Because it has color photos of most properties, the Ascona booklet is the best of the lot. Choose rentals that fit your requirements and then contact the property owner(s) directly for further information and booking.

Wine:

Almost all vines planted in this region are Merlot, the same grape which is blended in Bordeaux with the highly tannic Cabernet Sauvignon, and which, in the last 10 years, has become immensely popular in the U.S as a stand-alone varietal wine. Most of the Merlots in Ticino are soft and early maturing. You will see them on every wine list ranging in price from cheap to very expensive.

If you wish to purchase a few bottles, the shop **Vino Veritas** in Locarno has a huge selection. There is a wine museum in Tenero, at the northern tip of the lake.

affair that started with Champagne cream soup, moved on to a choice of Danish smoked salmon or goose liver terrine or sweetbreads in puff pastry, followed by salad, then a choice of roast lamb or breast of Guinea-fowl and finally dessert and cheese. All was well-prepared and beautifully presented. Signor Amstutz's interest in wine is reflected in the extensive wine list.

Our only tiny quibble is the bathrooms are a little tight and one would hope for more substantial towels.

This is a wonderful hotel but by now you've guessed, it ain't cheap. **Daily Rates:** Singles 180 Sfr. (\$120), doubles 310 to 362 Sfr. (\$207-\$241), suite 452 Sfr. (\$301). For half board add 24 Sfr. (\$16) per day. Parking in garage 10 Sfr. (\$6.67), covered lot, 7 Sfr. (\$4.67), outdoor 4.50 Sfr. (\$3).

Contact: Hotel Orselina, CH-6644 Orselina, tel. +41/091/735 44 44, fax 735 44 66, email: hotel@orselina.com

Rating: QUALITY 18 / 20 VALUE / 20

Cittadella

This a popular restaurant in the old town that offers a few rooms to rent. You'll find authentic charm and clean, comfortable rooms with private bath that offer very good value.

There is no lift.

Daily Rates: Singles 60 to 100 Sfr. (\$40-\$67), doubles 100 to 150 Sfr. (\$67-\$100)

Contact: Hotel-Ristorante Cittadella, Via Cittadella 18, CH-6600 Locarno, tel. +41/091/751 58 85, fax 751 77 59

Rating: QUALITY 10/20 VALUE 13/20

Palm au Lac

A typical, four-star tourist hotel catering to groups. Though well-maintained, guest rooms need to be updated. A plus is its central location across from the lake front.

Daily Rates: Singles 120 to 175 Sfr. (\$80-\$116), doubles 230 to 310 Sfr. (\$153-&207)

Contact: La Palma au Lac, Viale Verbano 29, CH-6600 Locarno-Muralto, tel. +41 091 735 36 36, fax +41 091 735 36 16

Rating: QUALITY 9/20 VALUE 7/20

Ostello Palagiovani

Not just for young backpackers, this hostel at the edge of the old town offers a number of rooms with private bath for two, three and four persons. Renovated in 1997, it is exceptionally clean and bright and the staff professional and friendly.

A double room with balcony and private bath is 42 Sfr. (\$28) per person, including breakfast. Nonmembers of the International Hostel Association pay an additional 5 Sfr. (\$3.33) per night. A cafeteria serves three-course lunches and dinners for 11 Sfr. (\$7.33).

There are TV, telephones and a lift. A washing machine and dryer are available for 6 Sfr. (\$4), including soap. Towels can be rented for 1.5 Sfr. (\$1) and bicycles for 12 Sfr. (\$8) per day.

This is a terrific bargain.

Daily Rates: Singles 52 to 77 Sfr. (\$35-\$51), doubles 74 to 84 Sfr. (\$49-\$56). Lunch and dinner 11 Sfr. (\$7.33) extra. Bicycle rentals per day 12 Sfr. (\$8), half-day 8 Sfr. (\$5.33).

Contact: Ostello Palagiovani, Via Varenna 18, CH-6600 Locarno, tel. +41/091/756 15 00, fax 756 15 01

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 15/20

Mirafiori

Cozy and very charming three-star hotel high in the hills above town with the same great views as Orselina but at much less the price.

Guest rooms are slightly below average in size but nicely decorated and furnished. Ask for Number 30 in its own little cottage.

There is a warm welcome, an outdoor swimming pool, pleasant gardens and arbors, and an attractive dining room with large windows.

Daily Rates: Singles 80 to 120 Sfr. (\$53-\$80), doubles 140 to 196 Sfr. (\$93-\$131).

Contact: Mirafiori, Via al Parco 25, CH-6644 Orselina, tel. +41 091 743 18 77, fax 743 77 39

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 13/20

Villa Pauliska

This restored villa, set among soaring palm trees in the hills above the town, offers the best combination

of quality and charm for the money of all the properties we saw in Locarno.

Pauliska is best-known as a restaurant, but owner, Dahlia Togni, offers four open, airy guestrooms with high ceilings, tall windows, hardwood floors and pleasant bathrooms. The larger rooms are 150 Sfr. (\$100), the smaller one 130 Sfr. (\$87).

One drawback; there is no breakfast, only coffee. It isn't that it's not included, it's just not served.

Daily Rates: Singles 60 to 80 Sfr. (\$40-\$53), doubles 100 to 150 Sfr. (\$67-\$100). No breakfast served.

Contact: Villa Pauliska, Via Orselina 6, CH-6600 Locarno-Muralto, tel. +41 091 743 05 41

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20

Food

Villa Pauliska

Dinner is elegant but informal in either of the two cozy dining rooms of this graceful, turn-of-the-century Italian-style house. Ceilings and windows are lofty, floors are wood herringbone, and attractive pictures adorn the walls.

All patrons are served a fixed-price, five-course, meal which changes daily. The portions are modest but at the end it is enough.

We began with a few fresh greens bathed in a light, vinegary dressing scattered with finely chopped egg yolk. Next came a small cluster of fresh shrimp, grilled zucchini and strips of red bell pepper topped with a smooth, not-too-thick, 1000-island style dressing. The zukes gave the dish an appealing smoky taste.

Risotto in Ticino is as common as *Pommes Frites* in Paris and the Pauliska's was perfectly *al dente* and laced with pungent cheese.

The main course consisted of four slender slices of veal with a fat dollop of pureed carrot and potato that, with a rosemary sprig stuck in one end, looked like a carrot.

Afterward came thin slices of hard cheese and, following that, little footballs of feathery chocolate mousse and tiny rounds of various

flavors of gelato, sprinkled with shavings of dark chocolate.

At 51 Sfr. (\$34) per person for the five courses, and considering the restaurant's considerable charm and wonderful food, Pauliska is a bargain.

Villa Pauliska, Via Orselina 6, CH-6600 Locarno-Muralto, tel. +41 091 743 05 41

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel-Ristorante Dell' Angelo

Heartier, heavier but still satisfying food is served at Hotel-Ristorante Dell' Angelo on the Piazza Grande.

The clientele is shoppers, tradespeople and tourists, and ambience is slightly reminiscent of a Denny's.

Mixed salads — red cabbage, beets, cucumbers, tomatoes, corn, bell peppers, slices of hardboiled egg, carrots and greens — at 8 Sfr. (\$5.33) were a hefty, tasty start and either of the main dishes we chose would have been enough for two. The first third of Spaghetti carbonara (15 Sfr./\$10), rich with smoky bacon, butter and eggs, was fine, but one quickly hits the wall. The same with broiler-finished crepes bulging with porcini mushrooms (16.8 Sfr./\$11) and cream sauce. Three deciliters of an everyday local Merlot cost 8.4 Sfr. (\$5.60).

Hotel-Ristorante Dell' Angelo, Piazza Grande, CH-6601 Locarno, tel. +41/091/751 8175, fax 751 8256.

Rating: QUALITY 9/20, VALUE 12/20

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adequate. As is S.O.P these days, TV was cable-fed and offered a couple of English channels.

We hauled our own luggage up to the room but the lone person at reception was always helpful and friendly. Breakfasts, though not lavish, were adequate.

The Carlton has no restaurant but the Restaurant Beograd (see below) is half a block away.

Only a short walk from the Staatsoper, this is a far better value than

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comparable hotels inside the Ring.

Altstadt Pension

We've mentioned this hotel frequently since first reviewing it and making it our "Hotel of the Year" in 1994, so we'll only mention that many of the interesting, Art Nouveau-style rooms have been recently refurbished including one of the biggest and best, the "Green" room (2180 AS/\$176).

Many of you have written and phoned to praise the attentive, personal service. Though officially classified as a pension, the Altstadt offers many extras such as theater, opera and concert tickets, various business services, in-room video machines with a selection of films, even a hotel limo to the airport.

With doubles running from about \$100 to \$150, this is still our top mid-priced recommendation in Vienna. Pension Altstadt, Kirchengasse 41, A-1070 Wien, tel. +43/01/526 3399, fax 526 4901, email atl.vie@magnet.at. Singles 1080 to 1480 AS (\$86-\$118), doubles 1280 to 1880 AS (\$102-\$150), suites 1880 to 2480 AS (\$150-\$198).

Restaurant Beograd

For a non-touristy evening of old-world music, food and atmosphere, we know of no better spot in Vienna than the Balkan restaurant Beograd. Starting at 8pm, a violin and piano, joined occasionally an accordionist, play mournful Gypsy tunes and schmaltzy old-Vienna melodies, mixed with western show tunes and other standards.

The walls are crowded with old photos, tapestries, maps, and other rustic knickknacks. Swarthy, costumed waiters speak just enough English to get by and the food is amazingly good for the price.

A plate of Balkan appetizers — dolma, roasted red peppers, smoked meats, potato salad and hard boiled egg — cost 70 AS (\$5.60) and was delicious. Ingredients for the mixed salads (probably purchased at the nearby Naschmarkt) included tomatoes, cucumber, green onions and butter lettuce and were the freshest.

A sprawling, greaseless *Wiener Schnitzel* (130 AS/\$10.40) got a star in our meal notes while a mixed grill (*Banarterteller*) of pork kebab, lamb, beef, veal, bacon and ground meat on a skewer was a wonderful bargain at 95 AS (\$7.60).

A *Balkan Patatschinken* (40 AS/\$3.20) consisted of two large crepes filled with chopped nuts and fruit and covered with chocolate sauce.

We asked our waiter for a wine suggestion and were pleased with Vranac, a Serbian red for which we paid 210 AS (\$17).

The meal for two persons cost 350 AS (\$28), not including beverages, of which we had too many.

When making a reservation early in the day we asked to be near the music and our table was the closest of any in the restaurant.

After dinner we drank Barack-Palinka — a Balkan apricot schnapps — (25 AS/\$2) and stayed on listening to the music.

Restaurant Beograd, Schikaneder-gasse 7, tel. +43/01/587 7444

Rating: QUALITY 13/98, VALUE 17/98

Tips from a Viennese

Otto Wiesenthal, owner of the aforementioned **Altstadt**, is a connoisseur of the good life. As such, he is an expert witness on Vienna's restaurants, from the simplest *Beisl* to the fanciest Michelin-starred establishment. For his guests, he has published a tiny booklet that lists his favorites. Over the next several months we'll share with you some of his Vienna choices. Here are a few which he lists in the category "Viennese:"

Plachutta

Achieved its fame with the best beef cuisine Vienna can offer, the world famous *Tafelspitz*. Twelve different kinds of boiled beef with traditional garnishes are the forte of the Plachutta family. Outdoor garden. A-1010, Wollzeile 38; Daily 11:30am-2:30pm, 6pm-10:30pm, tel. +43/01/512 15 77, fax 15 77 20. Dinner for two to 900 AS (\$72).

Karrer

A small restaurant with a very personal touch which recently was

taken over by a new and very young team. Creative Viennese cuisine. In immediate vicinity to the Volkstheater. A-1070, Neustiftgasse 5, Mon.-Fri., 11:30am-3pm, 6pm-11:30pm, tel. +43/01/526 94 48. Dinner for two to 700 AS (\$56).

Eckel

Located in the green area of the Vienna villa district. Classical restaurant with most charming service and plain cuisine on the highest level. Wonderful garden. Great Austrian wines. A-1190, Sieveringer Strasse 46; Tue.-Sat., 11:30am-2:30pm, 6pm-10:30pm, tel. +43/01/320/32 18, fax 66 60. Dinner for two to 900 AS (\$72).

Schnatl

Located close to the Theater in der Josefstadt, it is a meeting point for all friends of sophisticated Vienna *Beisl* culture with a creative touch. Classical Viennese cuisine, outdoor seating in the summer. Inexpensive lunch menu. A-1080, Lange Gasse 40; Mon.-Sat. 11:30am-2:30pm, 6pm-11pm, tel. +43/01/405 34 00. Dinner for two to 900 AS (\$72).

Weinkellerei Artner

The Lower Austrian vintner family Artner has taken over an old inn and completely remodeled it. The inexpensive lunch menu has quickly attracted employees from offices close by. Outdoor seating in summer. A-1040, Floragasse 6; Mon.-Fri., 11am-1am, Sat. & Sun. 5pm-1am, tel. +43/01/503 50 33. Dinner for two to 600 AS (\$48).

Zur Ebenen Erde Und Im 1 Stock


One of the smallest Viennese houses is home to this cozy restaurant named after a stage play by Nestroy. Seating is as intimate as in a Parisian bistro. The ground floor offers plain and rustic atmosphere, sophisticated ambiance can be enjoyed on the first floor. A-1070, Burggasse 13; Tue.-Fri., 12noon-2pm, 6pm-12midnight, Sat. 6pm-12midnight, tel. +43/01/ 523 62 54. Dinner for two to 800 AS (\$64).

Boheme

A wine tavern and restaurant with an excellent selection of Austrian vintages. Located in the romantic Spittelberg quarter it offers constantly good cuisine and classical back-

ground music. Outdoor seating in the summer months. A-1070, Spittelberggasse 19; Mon.-Sat., 6pm-12midnight, tel. +43/01/523 31 73. Dinner for two to 700 AS (\$56)

Meixner's Gastwirtschaft

Best reached by subway U1, this inn in the 10th district is a genuine refuge for connoisseurs. Viennese cuisine at its best accompanied by a large selection of Austrian wines and for true experts a variety of top choices of fine brandies and liquors. A-1100, Buchengasse 64, Ecke Herndlgasse, Mon.-Fri. 11:30am-11pm, tel. +43/01/604 27 10, 606 34 00, fax 606 34 00. Dinner for two to 700 AS (\$56). 

Europe Travel Digest

■ **DER Tours** has announced its winter packages, including escorted Christmas Market tours, for 1998. The **Famous Christmas Tour** begins November 29 in Munich and ends December 6 in Salzburg or Munich, your choice. Markets visited include Munich, Innsbruck, Rothenburg, Nürnberg and Salzburg. Cost is \$746 and includes six nights accommodations, breakfasts, two dinners, motorcoach ground transport, entrance fee to sights. Hotels are the **Forum** in Munich, the **Altes Brauhaus** in Rothenburg and the **Hotel Dorint** in Salzburg.

The **Festive Christmas Market** package uses Munich as a headquarters for day-trips. It costs \$825 but replaces one of the dinners with a *Glühwein* reception. Sightseeing includes Oberammergau, Linderhof Castle, Rothenburg, Munich's Nymphenburg Palace, Nürnberg and Salzburg. Choose either the **Regent** or the **King's Hotel**, both in Munich.

DER also offers an array of other packages, many of which include air and rental car. The **Austria Ski As You Please**, for example, ranges in price from \$990 to \$1275, depending on the dates chosen, and includes seven nights at the **Novotel** in

Salzburg, a midsize rental car, and all breakfasts and dinners. Two drinks are even included with dinner. Skiing is optional.

These and other packages, as well as hotel vouchers, are detailed in DER's 1998/99 Winter Holidays brochure. Contact your travel agent or phone DER at 800-937-1236 for the brochure.

■ **LTU**, the "other" German airline, introduces a new class of service — First Comfort — on November 1.

First Comfort will have a 2-2-2 configuration with three rows of seats. The nonsmoking cabin will offer leather seats, 42-inch seat pitch (space between rows), adjustable foot and headrests. Passengers will be given a Sony Video Walkman with a choice of 20 movie titles.

Ft. Myers, Florida, will host LTU's First Comfort debut. LTU says First Comfort will "eventually" be introduced to the airline's other U.S. gateways: Miami, New York, Orlando and Los Angeles. Roundtrip First Comfort from Ft. Myers to Germany is \$1698 plus tax. Contact: 800-888-0200.

■ **Expo2000 Hannover** is scheduled for June 1 through October 31, 2000. Tickets for the event are already on sale. Day tickets are 69 DM (\$38), afternoon tickets are 49 DM (\$27) and evening tickets are 24 DM (\$13). A seven-day pass is 434 DM (\$241). Tickets will be good on Hannover's local transportation system. Book tickets at +49/2000 or see their website at www.expo2000.de.

Organizers expect 300,000 visitors daily and some 40 million overall. The 1893 Chicago World Fair drew 27.5 million visitors.

To date, some 35 countries have reserved pavilion space.

■ Munich's **Oktoberfest** opens September 19 and closes October 4. If you're stuck for accommodations you might try the tourist office at tel. +49/89/2330300, fax 23330233.

■ **Heidelberger Herbst** (Heidelberg's Old Town autumn festival) is September 26. Contact:

Verkehrsverein Heidelberg, tel. +49/06221/19433, fax 167318.

■ Stuttgart's **Canstatt Folk Festival**, Germany's second largest folk event is September 26 through October 11. Contact: Stuttgart Marketing GmbH., tel. +49/0711/2228240, fax 2228217.

■ **API Travel Consultants** offers what it calls Private Label Lufthansa/Rheinland-Pfalz travel packages. Billed as "exclusive, customized trips to Europe's great wine regions," the deal consists of what API describes as "exquisitely detailed, self-drive programs with scenic drives and luxurious accommodations as well as privileged access into private homes and remarkable wine cellars."

The package includes roundtrip economy airfare on Lufthansa, use of a Mercedes Benz S230, deluxe accommodations at "elegant" castle hotels (**Burghotel Auf Schönburg** in Oberwesel and the **Historische Schlossmühle** in Horbruck, for example), personal assistance at the Frankfurt Airport, visits to the region's best-known wine cellars, reservations at premier restaurants, and a detailed daily itinerary with driving directions, maps and sightseeing suggestions. Prices for this eight-day, seven-night, self-drive tour start at \$2,999 per person double occupancy (\$3,299 from West Coast, Business class is \$5,999 and first class is \$7,899 from New York). Contact: 800-401-4274. 

READERS' FORUM

More on Würzburg

Re: July '98 issue "In Praise of Würzburg".

1. Very well done as usual. May I add to it? The most famous art work in Würzburg, and considered to be superior world class, is the Tiepolo ceiling in the "Residence"-Bishop's Palace. Equals the Sistine Chapel.

2. The discoverer of the X-Rays,
Continued on page 8...

Centovalli Railway

LOCARNO-S. MARIA MAGGIORI-DOMODOSSOLA

The most beautiful and at the same time shortest connection between Lake Maggiore, French-speaking Switzerland and the capital Bern runs through the magical "Hundred Valleys," the Centovalli.

The ride is in panoramic cars from Locarno to Domodossola along deep gorges and ravines with tumbling, silvery waterfalls, over flowering meadows and awesome bridges, through vineyards, chestnut forests and picturesque villages. Unspoiled landscapes and lush vegetation change their appearance in the course of the seasons and make this journey an unforgettable experience.

The Centovalli Railway runs all year and offers 1st and 2nd class coaches, and panoramic coaches.

- Eurailtickets, Eurailpass, Europass are accepted on Centovalli railway trains
- No supplement required
- Carry frontier documents

Train Talk

The William Tell Express

LUCERNE- FLÜELEN-ST. GOTTHARD-LOCARNO/LUGANO

The William Tell Express links German-speaking Central Switzerland with Italian-speaking, Mediterranean-like Ticino.

The tour starts from Lucerne, boarding a nostalgic paddle steamer for a three-hour cruise on Lake Lucerne enjoying a gourmet meal in the first-class restaurant. At Flüelen, passengers board air-conditioned first class panoramic coaches (2nd class also available) to travel through the steep ravines and precipitous cliffs of the Reuss Valley, passing through the 15 km (9 miles) long historic Gotthard railway tunnel, Europe's most important north/south gateway. On the south side, many breathtaking bridges are crossed, passing charming villages down the valley towards Lugano or

Locarno

Reservations are compulsory and include seats on the boat and the train, the Swiss lunch as well as a detailed journey documentation and a William-Tell souvenir.

- Eurailtickets, Eurailpass, Europass and Swiss Passes are accepted
- A supplement (\$47) is required for lunch on the boat, documentation and the souvenir
- William-Tell-Express operates from May to October only

Railpass Sale

The Eurail Saver Flexipass has been discounted 50% from \$634 to \$317 per person for 10 days unlimited first-class travel throughout the 17 Eurail countries. The 15-day pass has been discounted from \$836 to \$418 per person. The Flexipass requires that two to five persons travel together at all times.

Travel cannot begin until September 16 and must be completed by December 15, 1998. Contact: 800-521-6722.

Professor Röntgen, made his discovery while teaching at the university there.

3. At a meeting at the Burg (fortress) in Nürnberg the Dean of the Würzburg Dental School was gulping down wine as if there was no tomorrow. When one of the participants remarked, "Professor, how can you drink so much?" His reply was, "It's the *Bocksbeutel* (the Baden-Württemberg wine bottle), it's my patriotic obligation." We all had a good time.

Part 2 of a 2 part story: When in Düsseldorf (Lörick) try the **Hummer Stubchen** (Bonifatiusstr. 35, tel. +40/0211/59 79 79) and bring your financial adviser *mit* you. "All that's good and expensive" is on the wine list. A magnificent selection of -half bottles. A party of four could easily try five or six wines. Fixed menu about \$100, before tax, tip and beverages. Count on \$250 per person just to be on the

safe side. It's worth every *pfennig* — if you get in.

DR. ANATOL CHARI
LAGUNA BEACH, CA

Garmisch-Partenkirchen Find

Why should only I benefit from the delights a favorite place has to offer? Four years ago, my husband and I almost gave up on finding accommodations in Garmisch-Partenkirchen during a gloriously hot summer. We made a last ditch effort and found a well-appointed apartment in the **Hotel Edelweiss**.

The then out-of-the-way location (because of bridge repair) now translates into tranquility only a bridge and a few steps away from the center of Garmisch. Lately, I have headed for the Hotel Edelweiss during the winter-season. Each time, I and obviously other guests, have been treated like old friends.

I tend to be suspicious of overt

friendliness, but there it is very genuine. Reservations for the end of year festivities should, however, be made in summer. The former tucked-away place seems to be accumulating quite a few delighted repeat guests who have been forming friendships among each other.

Visually, the hotel is exquisite. It has been in the Pilhofer family's possession for generations. The current owners, Johann Pilhofer and his partner, have appointed the hotel with art, antiques and quality furnishings. Wherever your eyes wander, you will find interesting and unique details. It will help knowing a few words in German. Mr Pilhofer and his longtime staff are most comfortable speaking German.

Although there is no elevator, a number of rooms of the hotel are wheelchair accessible, .

HEIDE BENTLE
OAK PARK, IL 