

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

November 30, 1998

Sorry we're late

Gemütlichkeit is mailed at the end of each month. It is usually written during the third week of the month, then laid out and printed in the fourth week. The date appearing at the top of the *Dear Subscriber* column is typically the day we go to the printer. Thus you get your November issue in December, your December issue in January and so on.

This month, however, because of our move from the San Francisco Bay Area to Ashland, Oregon, we are a few days late. Please accept our apology.

About the Move

First, the newsletter will not change. We plan to continue as in the past 12 years.

Our decision to relocate was based on several factors; none having to do with *Gemütlichkeit*. Ashland, a small college town in southern Oregon, has been a weekend and holiday escape for us for the past eight years. In 1994, we opened a luggage and travel store — Travel Essentials — on the main street. We also have two grandchildren in Ashland who live with their parents, our oldest son and his wife, who co-own and operate the store.

Ashland revolves around the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, which, I believe, is the largest in the U.S. Its plays run eight months of the year in several venues; two indoor theaters from February to November, plus an outdoor theater from June to mid-October. Most, but not all works are by Shakespeare, and more than half a million tickets are sold annually. The product is first-rate and entirely professional. Dozens of well-known actors have done seasons at Ashland and the town is home to many whose livelihood is in the arts, including writ-

Continued on page 2...

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

GÖTTINGEN

This is a town of Nobel Prize winners, the Brothers Grimm, half-timbered houses, and some 30,000 university students, many of whom harbor a crush on a so-called "Goose Girl."

The traveler on a first or second trip to Germany who wants to hit the country's main attractions — Munich, Berlin, Bavaria, Rothenburg ob der Tauber, the Black Forest, etc. — should probably give the small university town of Göttingen a pass.

But for more experienced Germanophiles seeking pleasant, relatively tourist-free, off-the-beaten track towns, Göttingen, in lower Saxony about 75 miles south of Hannover, is very much worth a day or two.

One of Germany's four principal university towns — the others being Heidelberg, Tübingen and Marburg — Göttingen has more going for it than most cities of its size.

The university boasts 40 Nobel prize winners and the Brothers Grimm once taught here.

And, as with most college towns, Göttingen comes with an extra dose of interesting cafes, galleries, nightlife and cultural offerings.

Handy for rail travelers, the train station is on the edge of the old town and several good hotels are within easy walking distance.

There is a nice network of narrow streets and alleys in the *Alt Stadt* which, when combined with a little window shopping, will take about half a day to explore.

Major sights include the 13th

Continued on page 3...

Winter Deals

Those of you who can sneak away for a week or two in the next three months, will travel to Europe about as inexpensively as it's possible to do these days. Airfares are dirt cheap; car rental rates remain near their lowest levels of 1998; and rail passes can still be purchased at 1998 prices. And, since they don't require activation for six months, the can be used into 1999. In addition, there are hundreds of discounted package deals offered by airlines, hotels, tour operators, and tourist authorities.

Here are some we've come across:

Hotel Deals

- First of all, subscribers are reminded that the fabulous **Beau Rivage Palace Hotel** in **Lausanne**

has a special 10% to 20% off arrangement in effect for *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers through March 31, 1999 (see box page six).

- Subscriber Bob Gillespie, who gets to Germany several times a year on business, reports a rate of 95 DM (\$56) single at the **Frankfurt InterCity Hotel**, based on a senior citizen discount. InterCity hotels are near the main rail stations of many large Germany cities and are oper-

Continued on page 6...

Gemütlichkeit Has Moved

Our new address is:

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288 Ridge Road, Ashland OR 97520

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

ers, actors, directors, artists, sculptors, etc.

The festival, Southern Oregon University, and the tastes of theatergoers have created a cultural richness that is extraordinary for a town of this size — about 20,000. There are galleries, interesting shops, good restaurants, concerts, and a very lively downtown. In addition, Ashland has a small-town atmosphere that is a throwback to another time. Fourth of July here — a day of parades, concerts in the park, picnicking, a craft fair, dozens of food stalls and fireworks — is not to be missed.

Ashland is also appealing to us for things it doesn't have such as traffic jams, drive-by shootings, smog and not nearly as much time spent listening to messages like "press seven to hear more options."

While waiting for our house to be ready, we are in temporary quarters and have more than a month of daily restaurant fare under our belts. Since some readers I've spoken with are regular visitors, here are our top five Ashland restaurants: 1. New Sammy's Cowboy Bistro; 2. Kat Wok; 3. Cucina Biazzi; 4. Alex's; 5. Quinz. The only consistent one, however, is New Sammy's. The rest can, now and then, have an off day.

Croatia?

Seeing as how it's still recovering from a war and all, Croatia is probably not on anyone's list of red-hot

European destinations. Yet earlier this month our son Bob, his wife Nancy, and their daughters, Emily (4) and Sarah (2), spent two weeks there.

Afterward, they flew to Italy and explored Florence and Siena from a rented house. But it's the Croatia part that's most interesting.

It is the country of Nancy's roots and she, Bob and our grandchildren went to visit various aunts, uncles, cousins, and a homestead that has been in her family for some 300 years. She had been there before as a small child, but not since.

Because a band of Serbian paramilitary destroyed the family home during the war, they were guests of an aunt and a cousin in their tiny (600 square feet) apartment in the village of Mokosica, about 20 minutes from Dubrovnik. There, as you can imagine, the American visitors were treated royally. Each morning there was a big breakfast of sliced prosciutto, salami, ham, fresh bread, cheese, and usually a bowl of home-grown tangerines. Lunches and dinners consisted mostly of meat but always there was a big platter of roast potatoes. Stuffed veal was a delicacy and once an entire octopus was stuffed and cooked. The local beer, and a rugged, homemade red wine, flowed freely.

They explored the stone city of Dubrovnik on the Adriatic and were dazzled by its beauty. (Among the things I learned from the kids' debriefing; nearly every structure in

Croatia is built of stone — obviously it's a plentiful material — and Croatia, when one considers its many islands, has a substantial coastline, one of the longest in Europe.)

Nancy had a contact lens repaired by the one man in Dubrovnik qualified to do so: a Serb, oddly enough, who works out of his home.

Nancy's relatives got through the war *relatively* unscathed. As the Serbs neared her town, Nancy's aunt locked her apartment and, along other family members, moved with thousands of others into whatever quarters they could find in Dubrovnik. Tragically, Nancy's grandparents did not survive this displacement.

After the war her aunt returned to the village. Though there were bullet holes in the exterior of the building, inside her key still worked and, amazingly, everything in the apartment was just as she had left it. (Apparently the regular Serbian army which occupied Mokosica was more respectful of property than the renegade paramilitary bands.)

In another village, about 20 minutes away via a one-lane road, the family homestead, a series of buildings, actually, did not fare so well. Only its stone walls were left standing at the war's end. This, too, was on the kids' sight-seeing itinerary.

Nancy's aunt pays \$19 each month for her apartment and, in time, will own it. A good thing, since her pension is only \$100 per month. Another relative is a policeman and

Continued on page 8...

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

Special Designation

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

GÖTTINGEN

Continued from page 1

century **Altes Rathaus** (which also houses the town's first-rate tourist office); **Gänseliesel**, a bronze statue of a girl with a goose which, tradition requires, must be kissed by university students when they pass their exams; the Gothic **Johanniskirche**; and the **Städtisches Museum**, which offers a collection of religious art and locally produced glass and porcelain.

Though Göttingen is small, it doesn't shut down after dark; the 30,000 students are no doubt responsible for the lively night life. Jazz and blues clubs, such as **Blue Note** at Wilhelmsplatz 3, provide a variety of live music; a handful of student taverns, including **Zum Altdeutschen** (Prinzenstr. 16) and **Zum Szültenbürger** (Prinzenstr. 7), serve inexpensive food and, of course, plenty of beer; and cultural venues such as the **Deutsches Theater** and **Stadthalle** offer top-flight theater, symphony, opera, and concerts almost daily.

On a chilly November night in Göttingen, we obtained tickets at the tourist office for a performance of the Don Cosack singers, a small a cappella Russian choir. The tickets cost only 25 DM (\$15) and the group's mesmerizing concert took place in one of the town's secondary music venues, **St. Albani Church**.

The accessibility of Göttingen's rail station makes excursions to nearby towns a simple matter. Kassel, with its **Brothers Grimm Museum** and the **Wilhelmshöhe Castle** with its great **Old Master's Gallery**, is just 30 miles distant; Hannover, site of **Expo 2000** and the glorious **Herrenhausen Gardens**, is about an hour by train; and such villages as **Duderstadt**, with more than 500 half-timbered house and once known as the "Nürnberg of the Eichsfeld," are just minutes away.

Hotels

Stadt Hannover

The Stadt Hannover's undistinguished exterior gives little hint that inside is a well-run small hotel of better

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Göttingen Info

Tourist Information:

Altes Rathaus, Markt 9, D-37073 Göttingen, tel. +49/0551/540 00, fax 400 2998, email

Population: 130,000

Altitude: 159 meters/522 feet

Distances from:

Berlin	340 km/213 miles
Frankfurt	230/144 miles
Hannover	122 km/76 miles
Kassel	47 km/29 miles

Rail Connections: Trains run almost hourly to Berlin and the trip can take as little as 2 hours, 13 minutes. They run even more frequently to Hannover, a journey that can take as little as 30 minutes; and there are about two trains per hour during the day to Frankfurt, a trip of about an hour and 45 minutes.

Brothers Grimm Museum In

Kassel: Bellevue Palace, Schöne Aussicht 2, D-34117 Kassel, tel. +49/0561/787 2033, open daily 10am-5pm.

than average warmth and comfort.

Since it is only a three-block walk to the station, the Stadt Hannover is an especially good choice for rail travelers

Our room, Number 32, was perhaps a bit small but well laid out with a large window, a comfortable bed, good reading lights, a couch and an overstuffed chair.

A staff that seemed to go out of its way to be pleasant and helpful prompt us to give the Stadt Hannover our "G" rating.

Daily Rates: Singles 98 to 128 DM (\$58-\$75), doubles 145 to 185 DM (\$85-\$109).

Contact: Goethe-Allee 21, D-37073 Göttingen, tel +49/0551/45957, fax 45470.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Eden Hotel

The Eden is another hotel not to be judged by its simple street-front facade. This modest little building connects to a series of larger ones which contain spacious, elegant

public rooms, two restaurants, an Italian delicatessen, and 100 guest rooms with all the big-city amenities.

Our one quibble is that rooms are a bit staid. Much needed is the public rooms' lighter touch.

Nonetheless, this is a well-run hotel; book it without qualm.

Daily Rates: Singles 125 to 170 DM (\$74-\$100), doubles 190 to 280 DM (\$112-\$165).

Contact: Eden Hotel, Reinhäuser Landstrasse 22a, D-37083 Göttingen, tel +49/0551/76007, fax 76761

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 11/20

Hotel Central

The Hotel Central, in the heart of the old town, uses brick and leather furniture in its lobby/public areas to create a slick, modern atmosphere. The few recently refurbished guest rooms reflect that same style but the older rooms are not as desirable.

Daily Rates: Singles 90 to 180 DM (\$53-\$106), doubles 120 to 170 DM (\$71-\$100), junior suite 250 DM (\$147)

Contact: Hotel Central, Judenstrasse 12, D-37073 Göttingen, tel. +49/0551/57157, fax 57105

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 11/20

Hotel Kasseler Hof

Travelers seeking good accommodations at inexpensive to moderate prices will find them at this sedate, family-run hotel in a residential part of the city just outside the ring.

The best rooms are in a separate guest house. Each is a bit different and all have the feel of a private home. Ask for Number 31, a large double with herringbone wood floors and a spacious bathroom.

Daily Rates: Singles 68 to 120 DM (\$40-\$71), doubles 115 to 185 DM (\$68-\$109)

Contact: Hotel Kasseler Hof, Rosdorger Weg 26, D-37073 Göttingen, tel +49/0551/72081

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 14/20

Editor's Note: *A place to avoid is the hotel Michelin places first in Göttingen, the Gebhards, whose owner ranks as the rudest, most arrogant hotelier we have ever encountered.*

Continued on page 4...

GÖTTINGEN

Continued from page 3

Restaurants

Ratskeller

It looked promising: massive pillars supporting vaulted ceilings; historic murals; granite floors; lamps with fringed shades; and large, comfortable banquettes set against pillars and walls. The table coverings were white linen but the flowers were artificial and the napkins a heavy ersatz cloth/paper. Nonetheless, it was a medieval atmosphere with pleasant, friendly service.

The food, however, was a disappointment.

Wildschweinkeulenbraten mit Pilzsoße, Preiselbeeren, Apfelrotkohl and Knödel (roast wild boar with mushroom sauce, cranberries, red cabbage with apples, and dumpling) for 29 DM (\$17) was awful; dry and off-tasting. Nothing helped it, not the sauce, the *Apfelrotkohl* or the *Preiselbeeren*. The *Knödel*, which had been sliced and then toasted, was barely edible.

Slightly better was a roast leg of venison served with a blackberry mousse, a few tiny vegetables sprinkled with bacon, and small rounds of roast potato, 30 DM (\$18).

The mixed salads (6.50 DM/\$4) which preceded the main dishes were of fresh ingredients but in a bland dressing.

The restaurant had just brought in a few cases of the first wine of the year from France's Beaujolais region and a half liter (20 DM/\$12) of that, at least, was some solace.

For some reason, one of the canned background music selections that evening was that popular dinner time favorite, "Taps."

Our dinner for two, without beverages, was 72 DM (\$43). Nice people, but bad food.

Ratskeller, Markt 9, D-37073, tel. +49/0551/56433, fax 45733.

Rating: QUALITY 4/20, VALUE 4/20

Diwan

The Turkish restaurant Diwan, recommended by Göttingen's wel-

coming and responsive tourist office, was a far better choice.

Though more Germanic than Turkish in decor, with Gothic arches and wood paneled wainscoting, Diwan's fare was unquestionably Middle-Eastern.

The Diwan *Teller* for two persons began with a refreshing, minty Greek-style salad with feta cheese, cucumber, and tomatoes accompanied by flatbread.

The main dish came on a sizzling platter and included spicy pork, beef, chicken, lamb chops, lamb kebob, eggplant, and several vegetables; enough for three regular eaters or four with smaller appetites.

The meal was a welcome change of pace and cost 70.40 (\$42), includ-

ing three beers. No credit cards.


Restaurant Diwan, Rote Str. 11, D-37073 Göttingen, tel. +49/0551/56085

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 14/20

Nudelhaus

For lunch, an odd-time snack, a midday or late-night beverage, or a very informal and simple dinner, you can't go wrong at the centrally-located Nudelhaus. A light meal of soup and a beer will run about 10 DM (\$6). Main courses, including the restaurant's numerous house-made pasta dishes, range from about 15 DM (\$9). In good weather, there is an inviting beer garden.

Nudelhaus, Rote Str. 13, D-37073, tel. +49/0551/44263.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 13/20 

Focus on..

Dresden

No city in Europe paid a higher price for World War II than did Dresden. Known in prewar days as the "Florence of Germany," the downtown was about 85% destroyed on the night of February 13, 1945, just at the end of the war. The huge Allied bombing raid triggered a firestorm that killed 35,000 people.

The city's greatest buildings — the Semper Opera, the Zwinger Art Museum, the Royal Palace, the Frauenkirche and the Cathedral — were burnt-out shells.

During communist times, Dresden was virtually inaccessible to the West. Since the city lies in a valley and couldn't even receive Western television, its residents had little notion of life elsewhere.

Except for the Semper Opera, little was done until reunification to repair the war damage.

Now, however, the pace of reconstruction is feverish. The great old buildings are being restored on a schedule that will have them ready by the year 2006 when Dresden celebrates its 1,000th anniversary.

Though relatively small at only

1,300 seats, the Semper is nonetheless one of world's finest opera venues. It hosted the world premieres of the *Flying Dutchman* and *Der Rosenkavalier* and has been restored to its original gold and red plush decor.

The Zwinger, too, is back in the "zwing." It is one of Dresden's 40 museums and home to a marvelous collection of paintings including Raphael's Sistine Madonna.

But Dresden's biggest rebuilding challenge has been the Frauenkirche which is being pieced together like a mammoth jigsaw puzzle. The construction, amazingly enough, may be as much as two years ahead of schedule and is financed in part by a lottery.

One of the first steps in the process was to raise, from 10 to 33 meters (108 feet), the nearly 10,000 square-foot roof which covers the inner construction site. Exterior walls are now over 50 feet high. The site is one of Dresden's top tourist attractions, attracting over 10,000 visitors a month.

If you're Dresden bound:

- A new city tour offers visitors the opportunity to interrupt their sight-seeing at any of 12 stops along the way and then continue the tour 30 minutes later. Break for a beer at the **Waldschlosschen Brewery**; checkout the **Fahrgarten**, the "most

beautiful dairy store in the world;” or shop the **Königstrasse** with its many boutiques and more than 20 pubs and restaurants. One don’t-miss stop would have to be the “**Green Vault**,” considered Europe’s finest collection of priceless jewels, exquisite glassware, gem-encrusted clocks, gold tea services, etc.

- The **Palace of Weesenstein**, 20 km from Dresden, has grown from an insider’s tip to one of Saxony’s major attractions. Built in the 13th century, the castle is one of the most unusual in Germany, constructed from uphill to downhill, which puts the stables on the 5th floor. Set on a jutting cliff in the narrow Muglitz Valley, the complex consists of an upper fort, lower palace and park.

There is an impressive banquet room, a palace chapel, a leather tapestry room, and the bird tapestry room. Valuable treasures such as the battling amazons of sterling silver by August Kiss, five haunting frescos on the monk’s floor, and an organ, built in 1741, the sound of which was said to heal the sick, are among a number of interesting items.

The palace can be seen daily and is reached via B-172 from Dresden to Pirna (at Heidenau junction in the direction of Altenberg) or by S-Bahn, Dresden-Schöna — change in Heidenau to the train to Altenberg.

- Fans of the Austrian artist-architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser, will be interested to learn that he is building a new Dresden landmark. The project will house apartments and a hotel and cost \$35 million.

Replete with bay-windows, balconies, gables and onion towers, the building will climax in a 100-foot corner tower suggesting a combination ship’s bow and the hanging gardens of Babylon.

The 1:50 scale site model is already a tourist attraction and a souvenir shop peddling Hundertwasser articles is already up and running.

The ever modest Hundertwasser says his project will “realize and

Continued on page 6...

Stopover Cochem

Next time you explore Germany’s popular Mosel River Valley, plan to make an overnight stop in Cochem to stay at the historic **Alte Thorschenke** hotel and wine tavern.

By Nikki Goth Itoi It’s hard to imagine a more authentic old inn than this one. Built in 1332, the Alte Thorschenke stands adjacent to the remains of the old town wall, and it is now designated a *Gast im Schloss*, meaning it belongs to a distinguished class of castle-like hotels in Germany.

The narrow spiral staircase leading to rooms in the original part of the inn is made of wood and creak loudly at every step. Some rooms feature romantic four-poster beds with canopies; others offer picturesque views of the river. Exposed beams, antique furnishings, and ornate drapery and bedspreads add to the atmosphere. Though the Thorschenke has 75 beds in total (all rooms have modern, clean bath or shower and WC), the majority are located in a more modern annex to the original building. Request one of the more historic bed chambers in the *Alte Teil* for the full effect.

The common areas of the hotel are equally attractive. The dining room is modeled after a traditional hunting lodge, complete with old portraits, hunting trophies, and oriental carpets covering the hardwood floors. Guests take their buffet breakfast here, and in the evening, the *Weinstube* is open to the public. (The Alte Thorschenke has a 500 year-old winery on the premises.) Other amenities include an elevator, outdoor patio, and free parking garage.

The inn is centrally located along the main pedestrian way in Cochem, a scenic town that lies 51 kilometers southwest of Koblenz and exemplifies the idyllic character of the Mosel Valley. From the Alte Thorschenke, guests can stroll through the shops in town, rent bikes to ride along the river, hike up to the *Reichsburg* (Imperial Fortress) — a 900-year old castle that overlooks the town, or climb aboard one of the many boats that cruise the river offering fantastic views of the Mosel’s many terraced vineyards. (A pleasant, but relatively short — two hour minimum — tour on the *Stadt Bonn Schiff* departs Cochem at 10am en route to Beilstein, a town just five miles to the south. Passengers can wander around Beilstein’s shops and restaurants and then return at their leisure.)

The only real drawback to these accommodations is that you won’t escape the company of other American tourists. Many Americans have found the inn, thanks to mentions in mainstream travel publications like *Fodor’s*. Still, in a town like Cochem, we think travelers will be hard-pressed to find a place that compares to the Alte Thorschenke in its historical character.

Daily Rates: Doubles 125-225 DM (\$73-\$132). Closed Jan 5 to mid-March.

Contact: Alte Thorschenke, Brückenstrasse 3, D-56812 Cochem an der Schönen Mosel, Tel +49-2671-7059, Fax +49-2671-4202

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 14/20



expand the dreams and the longings of mankind. Something everyone has long hoped for."

- Three Romantik Hotels of Saxony — the **Pattis** in Dresden, the **Waldidyll** in Hartenstein in the Erzgebirge Mountains, and the **Deutsches Haus** in Pirna — are overnight stops on a tour through some of the most attractive sights of Saxony. Starting point is the Pattis (three red roof-peaks in the *Michelin Red Guide for Germany*) in Dresden's nature preserve area of Zschornergrund. Highlight of the trip is a two-day stagecoach tour *In The Tracks of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* from Hartenstein to the Bohemian spa of Carlsbad. Contact Romantikhotel Pattis, Merbitzer Str. 53, D-01157 Dresden, tel. +49/351/425 50, fax 425 5255.

- Ground was broken this month for a new Dresden synagogue next to the Brühl Garden in the old historical city center.

In May of 1840, a synagogue designed by Gottfried Semper, the architect for Dresden's great opera house, was opened on this spot. But, during the "pogrom night" of May 9, 1938, it was destroyed by fire. Dresden firemen were forbidden to extinguish the flames and members of the Jewish community had to pay to have the ruins torn down. The stones were then used to build streets. Only the Star of David was rescued by one of the firemen; it will now be placed on the new synagogue.

WINTER DEALS

Continued from page 2

ated by the Steigenberger chain. Mr. Gillespie says the accommodations are "first rate" and, in his opinion, represent the top value currently available among Germany's upmarket business hotels.

In some rate categories, InterCity hotels also provide guests with a pass good for local public transportation such as buses, trams and subways. With this pass, Mr. Gillespie uses the Frankfurt InterCity as a "last night" hotel before flying out of Frankfurt. He first drops his car at the airport the

night before his flight, and then, using the transport pass provided by the hotel, takes the 10-minute train ride back to the hotel. Next morning, unencumbered by the car, he takes the train back to the airport.

Currently, InterCity is offering "Dollars and Sense, Europe" rates via their U.S. toll-free number (800-223-5652). Singles are \$109 per night, doubles \$119, and include buffet breakfast, service and taxes. The hotel's rack rate is 330 DM (\$194) double. At press time, the toll-free reservation service could not quote senior citizen rates for 1999.

- InterCity Hotels have deals for longer stays as well. For example, the **Freiburg Inter-City Hotel**

(Freiburg im Breisgau), has a two-night "surprise cultural offering" for 287 DM (\$169) single and 448 (\$263) double. The deal includes two nights lodging with breakfast, a bottle of wine, a guided city tour, and entrance to a "surprise" cultural event.

The **Weimar InterCity Hotel** has a three-night arrangement that includes lodging, breakfast, three-course dinners, tickets to a theater, concert or cabaret, plus other extras for \$249 single and \$392 double.

- Steigenberger can boast some of Europe's best hotels among its affiliates. It, too, offers a myriad of discount promotions at its various properties. For example, currently available under the "Dollars and Sense, Europe" program at the **Atrium Hotel Nürnberg**, Münchener Str. 25, Nürnberg, D-90478, are singles at \$99 and doubles at \$139.

Under the same program, the posh **Steigenberger Badischer Hof**, Lange Strasse 47, Baden-Baden, D-76530, offers singles at \$99 and doubles at \$159. These are far below the hotel's high season rack rates.

In **Vienna**, the **Hotel City-Central**, Taborstr. 8, A-1020, offers singles for \$109 and doubles for \$149.

- Like its InterCity cousins, Steigenberger hotels also have an extensive list of package offerings.

The beautiful **Steigenberger Gstaad-Saanen**, Auf der Halten, CH-3792, **Saanen-Gstaad**, has a two-night deal that includes lodging, breakfast, dinners, and participation in the hotel's wellness programs, including free use of steam bath, sauna, fitness room, etc. Price for one person is 418 Sfr. (\$299) and 716 Sfr. (\$511) for two.

In Austria, the elegant **Steigenberger Avance Hotel**, Schlosstr. 751, A-5710, **Kaprun**, has a seven-night package that includes breakfasts, dinners and a six-day regional ski pass for from 9740 AS (\$812) single and 16680 AS (\$1390) double.

It should be noted that it is necessary to pay in US dollars or US dollar travel-

er checks in order to qualify for the guaranteed dollar rates. Credit card payments may be subject to exchange fluctuations.

A Reliable Tour Operator

- **DER Tours** markets a wide range of excellent value winter packages through travel agents. In **Kitzbühel**, Austria, for example, seven-night, air-inclusive packages from New York range from \$715 to \$1360, depending on time of travel and hotel selected. (Prices from other U.S. gateways will be higher.)

Choose the **Pension Hörll** and you could pay as low as \$715 for seven nights' hotel, roundtrip airfare, buffet breakfasts, and transfers to and from the Munich Airport. Opt for the "first class" **Schwarzer Adler** in March and pay from \$1121 for the same package, except dinners are included. In early January, the "superior first class" **Goldener Greif**

Beau Rivage Palace Discount

The **Beau Rivage Palace** is currently offering *Gemütlichkeit* readers a 20% discount on regular rooms and a 10% discount for lake-view rooms. Reservations must be made through the hotel directly (not their toll-free U.S. 800 number and not through a travel agent). Please state that you are a *Gemütlichkeit* subscriber. This program is on a request basis (meaning if the hotel is at or near capacity the discount may not be available) and valid through March, 1999, excluding Christmas/New Years.

will cost \$1227 for roundtrip air, seven days hotel with breakfasts and dinners, plus airport transfers. These packages are available land-only for from \$284 to \$914.

DER offers packages to many resort location in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The company has spa hotel packages to six German hotels. They will, for example, book you into the **Dorint Hotel in Garmisch-Partenkirchen** at \$83 per person per night. Not a bad price, though *Gemütlichkeit* always recommends getting a comparative price quote directly from the hotel.

For DER bookings contact a travel agent.

Tourist Offices

Local tourist authorities are another source for the independent traveler.

- The tourist office of **Neustift** in the **Stubai Valley** just outside Innsbruck offers ski vacations including seven nights' accommodations with breakfast, six-day lift pass for the Stubai Glacier and six days free admission to the Neustift indoor swimming pool. Prices for the week start at 2,660 AS (\$217) depending on the hotel chosen. Contact: Neustift im Stubaital, Tourist board and Travel Agency, Neustift im Stubaital, Dorf 710, A-6167, tel: +43/5226/22 28, fax: 25 29, Email: tv.neustift@neustift.netwing.at.

- **Landeck**, in the eastern part of Austria, offers a week's ski package that includes seven nights' lodging with breakfast, and a six-day lift pass for from 2660 AS (\$217). Contact: Tourismusverband Landeck u. Umgebung, A-6500 Landeck, Postfach 58, tel. +43/05442/623 44, fax 678 30, Email: tvblandeck@netway.at

- The village of **Villeneuve**, at the east end of **Lake Geneva**, has a year-round three-night arrangement which it calls "Unforgettable Days Between Lake and Mountain." The deal includes three nights' accommodations, dinners, two lunches, wine tasting and a visit to the **Aigle Wine Museum**, the rack railway trip to **Leysin** in the mountains, a visit to **Chillon Castle**, a boat trip on the lake and a visit to the **Swiss Vapeur Parc at Bouveret**. Per person prices

range from 310 to 565 Sfr. (\$221-\$403) double occupancy, depending on the category of hotel chosen, and 325 to 745 Sfr (\$232-\$532) single. Contact: Tourist Office, CH-1844 Villeneuve, tel. +41/021/960 2286, fax 968 1013, email info@villeneuve.ch.

- Four Alpine resorts near Lake Geneva offer packages that include seven nights half-board accommodations, and six-day ski passes, all starting at under \$450.

Chateau-d'Oex: \$434 (two-star hotel) and \$508 (three-star) including transfers. Tel. +41/026/924 25 25, fax 924 30 70; email: chateau-doex@bluewin.ch

Villars: \$509 (3-star hotel) and \$579 (4-star) including a cheese evening. Tel. +41/024/495 32 32; fax 495 27 94; email: villars@pingnet.ch

Leysin: \$470 (3-star hotel) and \$549 (4-star) including one dinner. Tel. +41/024/494 22 44; fax 494 16 16; email: tourism@leysin.ch

Les Diablerets: \$460 (3-star hotel) and \$599 (4-star) including two dinners. Tel. +41/024/492 33 58; fax 492 23 48; email: diablerets@bluewin.ch

Airlines

Airlines, too, have cobbled up some tempting deals. Using his \$50 subscriber price reduction on **Swissair**, reader Bruce Phillips tells us he paid \$424 roundtrip Chicago to Vienna in March. In addition, **Swissair** was able to book him an amazing \$44 per night per person rate at the **Römischer Kaiser Hotel**, one of **Vienna's** most charming small hotels and a longtime *Gemütlichkeit* recommendation.

- **Swissair's European Escapes** program offers roundtrip economy class travel to 13 European cities plus three nights in a three or four-star hotel with breakfast. Prices from New York start at: **Berlin** \$493, **Budapest** \$583, **Geneva** \$589, **Prague** \$580, **Salzburg** \$589, **Zürich** \$589. Fares from other Swissair gateways are slightly higher. For example, add \$25 to \$90 from Chicago; \$96 to \$235 from Seattle; \$54 to \$145 from Cleveland, Dallas and Houston; and from \$139 to \$214 from Los Angeles and San Francisco. Call Swissair for prices from other gateways. ☒

READERS' FORUM

Vienna Hotel, Restaurant

In planning our September, '98 trip to Vienna, I found your usual hotel recommendations full so decided to try the Best Western affiliate, primarily because of its location. **Hotel Reither**, on Graumannsgasse 16-18, is a family-run (three Reither brothers), modern hotel with enough Austrian flavor to be very comfortable. The U4-U6 underground station at Langenfeld, (two stops east of Schönbrunn Palace) is a short walk and there is easy access to either the A-1 Autobahn to Salzburg or A-2 to Graz.

We have been using the Best Western guide for Europe and have been pleasantly surprised at the quality and convenient locations of the hotels. I expected them to be overrun with bus loads of tourists, but have not found that to be so.

While in Vienna we happened onto a wonderful restaurant for dinner, **Zum Kuckuck**, Himmelfortgasse 15. This small (11 tables) restaurant is about two blocks off Kärntner Strasse near the Stephan's Dom. The duck breast was perfect and the service could not have been better.

JERROLD ELENZ
MICHIGAN CITY, IN

(One of our favorite Vienna hotels, the **Römischer Kaiser**, is a Best Western. **Zum Kuckuck** is another favorite — Ed)

Wolff's Art Hotel, Weimar

For a number of years, we have depended on *Gemütlichkeit* for recommendations on places to visit and hotels to stay. Your stories on Weimar last year convinced us to visit there and try Wolff's Art Hotel. It turned out to be a most enjoyable experience! We stayed in room Number 2 which, as you reported, was light and airy and most comfortable. The hotel decorations are charming.

As reported in your story, Weimar is Europe's Cultural Capital for

Continued on page 8...

READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 7

1999. As a result, the hotel's owner, Dr. Wolff, emphasized that it is important to make reservations for Weimar well in advance. We concur wholeheartedly with your selection of Wolff's as your "Hotel of the Year" for 1997!

We also took your advice on the **Hotel-Restaurant Schloss Berg**, on Lake Starnberg near Munich. It also was a very enjoyable experience. It snowed the night we arrived. The next morning we awakened to a winter wonderland. A beautiful sight. We chose to stay in room Number 42 in the building on the hill. It was large, nicely decorated and very comfortable with a beautiful view of the restaurant and lake. The food in the restaurant was delicious and reasonably priced. The staff was very courteous and helpful. We were able to obtain the 10% discount for *Gemütlichkeit* readers by showing a copy of your May '97 issue. It was well worth the detour.

Another hotel we chose was the **Romantic Hotel Deutsches Haus** in Pirna (about 20 km South of Dresden). The hotel is charming with an excellent restaurant. Pirna is an old historic city which was allowed to deteriorate under the Communist government. They are now restoring it and have made good progress. We rode the train into Dresden for sight-seeing. It is only a 25-minute trip. The next day, we explored Swiss Saxony. Pirna is a wonderful location for visiting sights in the entire area. Our room at the Deutsches Haus was 173 DM (\$102) per night. Dinner for two with wine was about 70 DM (\$42). We highly recommend this hotel!

CAPT. & MRS. ROBERT R. FARGO
PENSACOLA FL

Swiss Hotel Comments

Just "checking in" to report on a recent five-week stay in Switzerland.

Unfortunately, the trip began disastrously. I flew very comfortably in **Swissair's** Business Class but shortly after arrival began to experience stomach problems. Fortunately,

I was staying with friends in the town of Wil, near St. Gallen, because I became violently ill and had to be taken to the hospital by ambulance. I was hospitalized for five days — not a happy experience in a foreign country; though the care was excellent and up-to-date. The diagnosis was a severe intestinal infection.

I spoke to Swissair which investigated with the proper people in Los Angeles but no one else on the flight had reported any problem.

The few days in Zürich were again spent at the **Hotel Storchen**. It is quite expensive but the excellent location in the heart of the city, the terrace overlooking the Limmat river (lovely in warm weather) and the excellent breakfasts make it worthwhile.

In Lugano, I spent 10 days at the **Romantik Hotel Ticino** (my first try there) which is in the very heart of the old town and only a short distance from the lake. This hotel is also very pricey and I am not sure it is worth it. The room was small though certainly adequate (no TV). I opted for half-board and the meals were excellent, varied and elegantly served. Also very expensive. The one drawback was that the front desk was never staffed. Mr. Buchmann, the owner, was always busy in the kitchen and Mrs. Buchmann rarely appeared until the evening.

Prices in Switzerland continue to be very high even with the improved dollar exchange rate — \$35 to have a pant-suit and top cleaned, \$80 for a haircut, shampoo and color, and expensive meals even in medium-priced restaurants. My Swiss friends all tell me that they never go to restaurants anymore because of the high cost.

The night before my return flight home I stayed at the **Mövenpick Hotel** at the airport which offered a large, comfortable room for 250 Sfr. (\$175), but mediocre food.

And would you believe that the trip ended in disaster too? As I attempted to board the hotel bus to the airport, with nothing to hold on to, a very high step and no driver around

to assist me, I slipped and hit my leg against the metal step. It bled profusely and all I could do at that stage was get some band-aids at the airport shop. Three days later the wound was still bleeding so I needed to see my doctor. You might be amused to hear that I wrote to the Mövenpick to report what happened. They answered very promptly and apologized for the incident, sending me a package of band-aids!!!!!!

Incidentally, I took a full day bus tour from Lugano to Milano but found it extremely exhausting and devoting too much time to the city after the formal sight-seeing tour ended.

I enjoy your newsletter and will continue to do so even though my overseas trips are a thing of the past.

SUSI E. KANUCH
VAN NUYS CA 

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

earns about \$700 a month, an excellent salary.

No matter what their relationship to me, if I lived in a 600 square-foot apartment the departure after two weeks of a young couple with small children would be cause for a champagne celebration. But it doesn't seem to work that way in Croatia, because there were tears when Nancy, Bob, Emily and Sarah said good-bye.

They did, however, promise to come back in a few years. Maybe by that time the old stone family home-stead will be rebuilt. How, you may ask, on a \$100 a month retirement income or even a \$700 monthly salary? Well, there's reason for real optimism. The Swiss have contributed the money to rebuild the exteriors, including doors, windows and roofs, of thousands of Croatian dwellings destroyed by the war and construction is underway.

You remember the Swiss, those coldhearted, money-grubbers who live in that pretty little country with all the banks? — RHB 