

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

November 29, 1999

Deals on the Web

Here's a couple of good reasons to stay in touch with our website, www.gemut.com. On November 10 we learned of special **Icelandic Air** Minneapolis to Frankfurt, Amsterdam, London and Paris fares of \$99 each way. They could only be applied for via email and there was a five-day window of opportunity.

The day prior to that we posted a special **Lufthansa** deal that offered 50% off on the purchase of two economy class tickets to Europe. This one had a 10-day window.

Website of the Month

Speaking of the Internet, earlier this month **Switzerland Tourism** launched its new MySwitzerland.com website with an online press conference.

The new site, of course, has many of the same features and information as the old Switzerlandtourism.com, but there are several significant new wrinkles

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

AUSTRIA'S TIROL

Our man in Europe, Nick Selby, visits Austria's glorious Tirol. He checks out a pair of castle hotels in the countryside and gives us a rundown on Innsbruck, of Winter Olympics fame.

To say that Austria's Tirol region is heavily touristed is about as much of a news flash as the announcement that cars are made in Detroit, or that New York is a fairly large city. The Tirol, a gorgeous region of towns almost too pretty for their own good, nestled amongst the mountains of western Austria, has long attracted visitors. By the busload.

By Nick Selby

But it's not all package tourists, and if you're there during the shoulder seasons of early autumn, mid-winter and early and late summer, there's plenty to do and relatively less competition for it all.

On a recent trip, my wife Corinna and I slept in one castle, visited another, had several pleasant days of driving and sampling the local specialties, and spent one lovely night in Innsbruck.

The best thing about the region is that, while it's possible to see it in three days, and feel that you've done it all, it's just as possible to spend a month exploring the mountains, hiking the paths, and riding the trails without feeling bored.

The key strategy is don't stay in one place too long; keep moving and discovering and this beautiful region will reveal its treasures to you.

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Accommodations

Capsule reviews of recent hotel experiences by the Gemütlichkeit staff.

**Hotel Tillmans
Erbach, Germany**

I boarded a plane to Germany recently, somewhat disappointed to be spending a quick two-day business trip in the rather corporate and unexciting metropolis of Frankfurt.

Had I read my itinerary more carefully, however, I would have noticed that Frankfurt proper was not my final destination. In fact, my colleagues and I were headed 30 minutes southwest of the city to the tiny town of Erbach, in the beautiful Rheingau wine country.

Most of my colleagues lodged at the posh **Schloss Reinhartshausen**,

a riverside resort offering a romantic ambience, complete with fine dining and a luxurious fitness center. But a few of us late arrivals stayed instead at the much more personal and *gemütlich* Hotel Tillmans. Though my stay was brief, it was long enough to appreciate the hospitality and small town feel of this friendly inn. I decided that a return trip is a must.

Erbach is situated roughly 40km (25 miles) from Frankfurt, not far from Rüdeshheim, but much less crowded with tourists, even in the height of the summer season. Hotel Tillmans is located a convenient 500 meters from the local train station and only one kilometer from highway A66. The Tillmannses have

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and more to come.

First, there is the capability for each user to create his or her own travel profile and folder. You sign in, provide name, street address, email address, phone number and a password. From that point on, when you see something interesting you simply add it to your folder.

From the main page's basic offerings — summer, winter, business, wellness, youth, cities — we chose "winter" and were presented with a list of perhaps 30 winter resorts. We picked Leukerbad, a not-so-well-known-by-Americans village tucked into the mountains just north of the Rhône river, above Sierre. On the Leukerbad page was information one would expect: tourist office info, a brief description of the area including a "more info on Leukerbad" link, a list of events, a list of Leukerbad hotels with websites, and the price for two and seven-day ski packages.

Also on the page are a couple of features above and beyond the usual tourist authority website. The most intriguing of these is the "online help desk." Here users can connect online to a real person and, using their computer keyboard, ask questions and make reservations. Of course, these matters can also be handled by email, but with much less immediacy. One downside for U.S. users; the help desk is currently only open Monday through Friday from 0800

to 1800, Zürich time.

Early next year there will also be an international toll-free information phone line that will provide a voice connection to an actual person at Switzerland Tourism.

Another interesting and potentially useful feature is one which enables users to write destination reviews. Maybe you were especially pleased or displeased (hard to imagine in Switzerland) with a place. Click on "Write Review" and make your views known. You can also read previous reviews left there by other users

Down the road it is possible the site may be used to sell unused travel inventory on short notice. A priceline.com-style online auction would be a way for Swiss hotels facing a weekend with unrented rooms to quickly get rid of some of their unused inventory.

This site, which is easily the best of its kind we've seen, is well-organized and attractive but in the couple of hours we spent exploring it, we noted some drawbacks.

First, and most important, is the speed at which pages come up on your screen — too slow. Even with our office cable modem connections, which run many times faster than a 56K phone modem, some pages took more than just a few seconds to load.

One would also hope for more hotels. We assume the database is limited to members of the Swiss Hotel Association, but that may not

be enough to satisfy some travelers. A search for three-star hotels in Zermatt, for example, yielded none. And, though a restaurant is something not usually booked from the U.S., the site apparently doesn't list any. A strange omission.

However, this a brand new site and there are bound to be a few early glitches in such an ambitious undertaking (MySwitzerland.com is published in six languages). If Switzerland is on your itinerary, plan to spend a few hours on this promising web site.

New Hitler Documentation Center

Last month we talked about how Germany has allowed few reminders of the war. At that time we hadn't heard about the new \$2.2 million center in Berchtesgaden that documents Hitler's time in that area.

The center, which opened October 20, shows how Nazi propaganda was created at Hitler's Obersalzberg complex and how military leaders commanded their forces from the mountain retreat. — RHB

Notes for Readers

- Foreign currency prices are converted to U.S. dollars at the exchange rate in effect at the time of publication.
- Hotel prices listed are for one night. Discounts are often available for longer stays.
- All hotel prices include breakfast unless otherwise noted.
- Local European telephone area codes carry the "0" required for in-country dialing. To phone establishments from outside the country, such as from the USA, do not dial the first "0".

Vol. 13, No. 11
November, 1999

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

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Gemütlichkeit (ISSN 10431756) is published monthly by UpCountry Publishing, 288 Ridge Road, Ashland OR 97520. TOLL FREE: 1-800/521-6722 or 541/488-8462, fax: 541/488-8468, e-mail gemut@mind.net. Web site: www.gemut.com. Subscriptions are \$67 per year for 12 issues. While every effort is made to provide correct information in this publication, the publishers can make no guarantees regarding accuracy.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO:
Gemütlichkeit, 288 Ridge Road., Ashland OR 97520

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.

THE TIROL

Continued from page 1

Tirol is well-known for its outdoor activities, with possibilities for all levels and ranges of hiking, climbing, skiing, swimming, trekking, tramping, snowshoeing and snowboarding, as well as fishing in its many rivers and streams.

Don't panic, more traditional attractions will keep you cheerfully occupied: for example, stunningly opulent rococo architecture and dramatic views from the **Hungerburg**, which is ascended by cable-car in stomach-tingling delight. Innsbruck's royal **Kaiserliche Hofburg** and jaw-dropping **Goldenes Dachl** are also must sees. In fact, the early 18th century saw what amounted to a "baroque-ing" contest, drawing artisans from across Europe, including the brothers Asam, to bedazzle the region's churches.

In spring and summer, and near Christmas-time, there are free outdoor concerts throughout Tirol, with particularly good ones in Innsbruck's Hofgarten.

Not a bungee-jumping fitness guru or a member of the concert-and-museum set? Between the extremes are the simply beautiful scenery and the unique family-owned shops and restaurants of the region. Wonderful and definitively *gemütlich* restaurants serve up Tirolean specialties with a smile.

No one in their right mind comes here to begin a slimming regimen, but the rich food in the region is hard to resist, with main courses like *Tiroler Rindersaftbraten* — temptingly juicy roasted beef smothered in a melted, Parmesan-like hard cheese.

For dessert (some actually even use it as a main course!), do not miss *Kaiserschmarrn*. This "Emperor's Mess" is pancake nuggets laced with raisins and chopped almonds, doused in rich, Austrian rum and dusted with powdered sugar.

Little family-run shops dot the countryside, turning out some of the

Innsbruck Info

Population: 120,000

Altitude: 1,886 feet

Distance From:

Salzburg	150 km/93 miles
Vienna	410 km/254 miles
Munich	120 km/74 miles
Hamburg	750 km/465 miles

Tourist Information:

The efficient Innsbruck Tourist Office in the city center seems to offer every pamphlet ever printed on the region. They also have an excellent ticket booking agency, sell ski passes, the Innsbruck Card and Innsbruck city transport tickets. There's a smaller tourist information office in the central train station.

Main Office: Burggraben 3, A-6021 Innsbruck, Tel. +43/0512/59850, fax 59850 7, email ibk.ticket@netway.at, open Monday to Saturday from 8am to 7pm, Sundays and holidays from 9am to 6pm.

The Innsbruck Card:

An exceptionally good deal, it costs 230 AS (\$17) for 24 hours and 300 AS (\$23) for 48 hours, and grants entry to all museums mentioned here, plus the Stadtturm, the Hungerbergbahn, and all Innsbruck public transportation.

Bike Rentals:

Despite its mountainous surroundings, the city is actually very pedalable, and the main train station rents city bikes at reasonable prices: 120 AS (\$9) for a half day to 670 AS (\$50) for a full week. Mountain bikes for a bit more.

Innsbruck Main train Station, Tel 0316 67 45 46, email rentabike@aon.at

Guided Bus Tours:

Busreisen Tirol operates daily bus tours of the old city in several languages, leaving from the Central bus station at noon and, from June to October, there is an additional 2 pm tour. Prices are 160 AS (\$12) for adults and 70 AS (\$5.25). Buy tickets at the tourist office.

finest fresh-butchered and smoked meat specialties to be had on this planet such as *Tiroler Speck*, the fabulous bacon with a flavor so fine it improves anything it's paired with.

These shops also sell a wide range of Tirolean liqueurs and schnapps, made from a variety of local fruits and berries, at very reasonable prices. Especially in winter, a glass of hot fruit tea with,

say, a Tiroler *Pflaumenschnaps*, or plum liquor, is divine.

Innsbruck

There are two schools of thought on how to tackle Tirol: using Innsbruck as a base to discover the region, or staying in the smaller towns and making short visits to Innsbruck.

Die-hard independent travelers often scoff at Innsbruck because it's been "discovered" by the tour buses. Indeed, a walk through town on any given day will reveal several gaggles of name-tagged Globus-and-Cosmos packaged clusters, all following tour guides hoisting lollipop-shaped "Follow Me!" signs.

But before you relegate this delightful baroque city to the dross heap of travel plans, consider that tours are usually to rather interesting places — and Innsbruck certainly is that. It's also gorgeous, surrounded by dramatic Tirolean Alps. Almost every street is worth a photograph, if not a postcard.

The views stem from Innsbruck's fortuitous location in the valley of the Inn River (the town grew originally around the "Bruck" that crossed it), nestled perfectly between the Karwendel and the Tuxer Vorberge. Its location is such that even the least skillful photographer will come away with great shots of beautiful rococo buildings contrasted against the dramatic cliffs of the nearby mountains.

Get your bearings in the city in one of two ways - climb the **Stadtturm**, which affords lovely rooftop views of the city center, or go for the gusto and take the excellent cable-car ride to the Hungerburg, a 3000 foot mountain ascent at the north end of the city. Not high enough? From the Hungerburg summit you can catch a second cable car ride to the **Hafelkarspitze** which, at 7,655 feet, offers thrilling views of the entire valley.

Or stay grounded with an old-fashioned horse-and-carriage ride

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THE TIROL

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through the cobblestoned streets of the old center; they cost 300 AS (\$23) for up to four people and leave regularly from in front of the Kaiserliche Hofburg.

Innsbruck was founded as a border town, just north of the famed Brenner Pass, in the 12th century. Beginning in the early 1400s Maximilian I, and later Empress Maria Theresa went on an extended building spree, constructing and expanding what remains the heart of the city center. The famed **Kaiserliche Hofburg**, an architectural hodgepodge of a palace, is now open as a museum displaying Imperial furnishings and artworks and the gorgeous chapel. Don't miss the meticulously renovated **Gothic Cellar**, where you will marvel at the building techniques of the past and view rotating exhibitions of modern art.

The 1960s brought real change to Innsbruck, due to the buildup for the 1964 Olympic Games. It hosted them again in 1976 and the city is still referred to by the tourist board (and as well by the American ambassador at a party recently) as, "This Olympic City". Sports fans will take a ghoulish note that here stands the very **Olympic ski jump** down which a Mr. Vinko Bogataj so gracefully tumbled again and again ('the agony of defeat') throughout the '70s and '80s in the opening sequence of ABC's *Wide World Of Sports*.

Recently emerging from a renovation, the Hofburg now holds two treasures: a **museum** of art and sculpture, and perhaps of more interest, the Innsbruck branch of Vienna's **Cafe Sacher**, where visitors can sample, in suitably decadent surroundings, the famous Torte with a steaming *Milchkaffee*.

There are several Alpine-themed museums here, but no visit to Innsbruck would be complete without a stop in the **Volkskunstmuseum**, hands down the finest collection of regional folk art, furniture and

farming equipment you'll see, and a friendly, helpful staff.

What the tourists are all craning their necks to see is the shining **Goldenes Dachl**, or Little Golden Roof. Once a royal residence, the building's balustrade is swarming with reliefs and busts of royalty, including Maximilian, and coats of arms of Germany, the Holy Roman Empire, Austria and Hungary. The top of this is smothered with over 3000 golden-colored tiles.

Just behind the Goldenes Dachl is the fabulous, newly renovated and almost hysterically baroque **Dom St. Jakob**, constructed by Johann Jakob Herkommer and decorated, it's said, by the brothers Asam. Note the portrait of the Madonna on the high altar, the *Mariahilfbild*, by Lukas Cranach the Elder, painted in 1530.

Another must-see just southeast of the city center is the looming **Schloss Ambras**, which Archduke Ferdinand II began expanding in the late 1500s. The Renaissance palace holds the Ambras Collection; art, armor, portraits, medieval sculpture and, not as uncommon as you'd expect in these parts, a royal collection of bizarre curiosities. The grand **Spanischer Saal** ballroom is another highlight.

Accommodations

Goldener Adler

Late one afternoon in Innsbruck, wandering the streets with the hordes of tourists, we came upon the Goldener Adler. Its plaque, right next to the front door, lists the names of the luminaries who have stayed there since its opening in 1390. The first name, from 1494, was Kaiser Maximilian I, and the roster continued: Willhelm Herzog von Bayern, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart... You get the idea.

We went in to see how it looked. The receptionist was so disarmingly friendly that we asked to see a room, and it was simply fantastic: Number 410, a corner double with a view through its oval windows out over the rooftops and the mountains

beyond. The price, we were told, was 1600 (\$120). We asked if that was the best deal available and were given a 300 schilling (\$23) discount. Sold.

We looked at a few other rooms and found them all to be clean and comfortable, with private bath, phone, color TV and radio, mini bar, hair dryer, cosmetic mirror and safe. Some are more expensive superior rooms, but for our money, Number 410 is definitely worth more than the price. Breakfast was excellent, and the hotel's main restaurant has an excellent reputation.

Daily Rates: Singles 1080 AS (\$81) doubles 1600 AS (\$120), superior 2100 AS (\$158)

Contact: Best Western Goldener Adler, Herzog-Friedrich Strasse 6, tel. +43/0512/57 1111, fax 58 44 09

Rating: QUALITY: 17/20 VALUE 15/20

Weisses Rössl

Once upon a time we checked into this hotel but, due to a sudden emergency, had to checkout about an hour after arriving.

Despite our sudden retreat, we found the hotel to be a very pleasant, family-run place, with a nice cafe downstairs and simple but clean guestrooms.

As a less expensive option it's a pretty good one. Furnishings are a little worn, but, again, the rooms are clean.

Lest we make the place sound too dire, note that there is a good choice of rooms, and some of the more expensive ones are nicely furnished. All the rooms have private bath, TV and telephone.

Staff was very helpful, even at a busy time of the day, and they were surprisingly understanding when we just left which says quite a bit: they could have given us a hard time, but instead were gracious and polite.

Daily Rates: Singles 870 to 1010 AS (\$65-\$76) doubles 1220 to 1500 AS (\$92 to \$113)

Contact: Hotel Weisses Rössl, Kie-

EDITOR'S
CHOICE

bachgasse 8, tel. +43/0512/58 30 57, fax 58 30 575

Rating: QUALITY 10/20 VALUE 12/20

Schloss Matzen

Using Innsbruck as a base to explore the surrounding region has its advantages, but using the surrounding region to explore Innsbruck might have more. And, when you have the opportunity to spend a couple of nights in a 12th century castle for about \$200 double, you should snag it.

Schloss Matzen, now owned by Americans Margaret and Chris Kump, is about half an hour east of Innsbruck, nestled in the heart of the Tirolean Alps, near Wörgl.

Margaret and Chris, who inherited the castle in 1995 (in the family since 1957), have renovated up a storm over the last several years (the *New York Times* profiled the couple as having a money pit) and the cheerful castle now has 11 rooms open to visitors, all with private bathrooms and central heating.

Nearby are heaps of activities, like walking, cross-country and downhill skiing, rock climbing, biking and, in summer, river rafting and swimming.

Guests tend to be well-traveled Americans, including lots of visitors returning to the region for further exploration and expatriates, and the B&B is open from May to October and from Christmas to mid-February. There's an Austrian Wine hour daily, and breakfast consists of fabulous fresh-baked goods, assorted cheeses, yogurt, quark, fruit, and hot entrees like french toast and scrambled eggs.

From Innsbruck, take the Autobahn towards Salzburg, then the Kramsach, Rattenberg, Brixlegg exit. From there, go left toward Rattenberg and Brixlegg. Turn right at the traffic circle opposite the SPAR supermarket and go 1.3km, through a second traffic circle. Immediately after the blinking yellow traffic light turn left onto the narrow road which leads right to the castle.

Schloss Matzen's website says there is a two-night minimum stay requirement, but owner Margaret Kump tells us if you can only stay one night they won't hold you to the minimum.

You should also be aware of Matzen's cancellation policy. Reservations must be accompanied by payment in full for the first night's stay. A 30-day cancellation notice is required and in such cases there is a \$25 service fee. Cancel less than 30 days from the date reserved and you get no money back unless the room can be rented to someone else.

Since our first review of it in July 1996, several *Gemütlichkeit* readers have reported favorably on Matzen.

Daily Rates: No singles. Doubles range from \$145 to \$250, averaging \$200, including breakfast and wine hour but not an 11% tax.

Contact: Schloss Matzen, 10701 Gurley Lane, Mendocino, CA 95460, tel 888 837 0618, 707 937 0619, www.schlossmatzen.com, or in Austria, +43/05337/626 79, fax (Munich) +49/089/202 386 54

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 15/20

Schloss Hotel

The nicest, and most expensive, place we saw in the region was the highly-regarded Schloss Hotel in the village of Igls, just south of Innsbruck. Privately held by the Beck family for over 25 years, this exquisite hotel is set in a 19th century mansion on a hilltop overlooking Innsbruck.

We went in unannounced and, frankly, not really dressed for success, but the management and desk staff were absolutely shockingly polite, pleasant, friendly and helpful. Without saying why, we asked to see some rooms, and immediately an escort was dispatched to tour us through the property.

The five-star resort has only 33 beds, and you do have the impression that you're staying not in a hotel but rather with some incredibly wealthy distant relative who's invited you for the weekend. Igls

itself has a reputation as something of a spa town, and ski slopes and golf courses are all nearby, as are hiking and riding trails, tennis and other outdoor activities.

Inside the hotel there's a sumptuous living room, a very cozy fireplace bar, and what we thought was the highlight, a connected indoor and outdoor pool.

Rooms are, simply put, fabulous. The very best of everything, and all the amenities make this one of the best places to have an extravagant holiday in the Tirol.

It is, however, a splurge. Double rooms from May to October are 4300 AS (\$331), and at Christmas time they're 5500 AS (\$423). But if you're after the absolute best of everything, this is the place to be.

Daily Rates: Singles 2000 to 2900 AS (\$154-\$218), doubles 3600 to 5500 AS (\$271-\$413), suites 4240 to 6100 AS (\$319 to \$459)

Contact: Schloss Hotel, Family Beck, A-6080 Igls, tel. +43/0512/377 217, fax 378 679

Rating: QUALITY 19/20, VALUE 15/20

Sustenance

Restaurant Ottoburg

It looked suspiciously like a tourist trap, and so it was with great trepidation that we entered this comfortable cellar restaurant. We were nervous about its perfect location — smack in the touristy heart of the city, on the River Inn and in the cellar of one of the town's oldest buildings, sporting a guard tower that may have protected the Hofburg.

The room was slightly smoky, but we liked very much the way the modern furnishings and renovation complemented the historic architecture, and the staff were very welcoming — big smiles all around, and we had barely sat down before our waiter came around offering drinks — efficient and not at all pushy.

The menu changes daily. We had

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THE TIROL

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two absolutely delightful meals: *rosagebratenes Hirschentrecote auf pikanter Wildsauce* (rare roasted stag fillet in a mildly spicy sauce) for 235 AS (\$18), and a sensationally tender Brazilian steak fillet with *Pfeffersauce*, puffed potatoes and fresh steamed green beans that knocked my socks off for 330 AS (\$25).

Restaurant Ottoburg, Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse 1, tel. +43/0512-584 338, 0512-574 652, open Monday to Saturday, 10am to midnight

Pizza Subito!

A surprise inclusion here is Pizza Subito!, a small snack place opposite Restaurant Ottoburg. We noticed it several times while walking through the city, and each time we glanced in there were crowds of happy people; students, pensioners, tourists and locals. So before we left we tried it.

The large slices of pizza, which run from about 50 AS/\$4, are heavenly, with just the right amount of sauce, a crust that's not too thick and not too thin, generous portions of fresh mozzarella and a choice of several other toppings.

Service is very friendly, and we include Pizza Subito! as an option for grabbing a quick snack while on the run between sights. It's great for a light lunch, but remember; it's fast food and there's no atmosphere to speak of.

Pizza Subito!, Kiebachstrasse 2, tel 0512-562 862

Cafe Sacher

A clone of the Vienna favorite, Cafe Sacher Innsbruck attempts to capture the opulence of its mother, and to a certain degree succeeds. The famed torte is of course available and scrumptious, along with superbly rich coffees and coffee-based drinks and exceedingly creamy desserts and sweets. The atmosphere is posh, with lots of wood and dainty furniture — in essence, an Austrian cafe from Central Casting.

But on our visit, service was less

than stellar, and the staff was darned high-fallutin' about the little they *did* do! Perhaps it was stage fright; we visited in September, just a couple of weeks after the grand opening. Since then, friends have gone and said it was great, so it could have just been a bad Herr day — regardless, it's definitely worth a try.

Cafe Sacher, Kaiserliche Hofburg, tel. +43/0512/56 56 26

Gasthaus Herrenhaus

Near Schloss Matzen we found two cozy restaurants, one nicer than the other but both worth recommending.

Since 1930, the Moegg family has run the **Gasthaus Herrenhaus** in the town of Brixlegg near Schloss Matzen, and the quality of food is consistently high. The staff is accommodating, and several speak English — even those that don't make an effort.

There's good news on two fronts: first, the menu is varied, with everything from Tirolean specialties like *Zwiebelrostbraten*, to the twice weekly fresh fish specials, to the fresh game shot personally by chef Christian Moegg. When there's venison it's served in a number of ways, from steaks to goulash, to ragout. But the repertoire is not at all confined to the local stuff; you're as likely to see grilled chicken breast served with ratatouille and homemade noodles as food from the region.

Second, there's nothing on the menu that's over 200 AS (\$13.50), and you can usually get out with a main course, appetizer, desert and a glass of wine for under \$25 a person.

The restaurant is open Wednesday to Sunday and closed in July. Gasthaus Herrenhaus, Herrnhausplatz 1, Brixlegg, tel. 05337/622230

Stockerwirt

In the town of Reith (pronounced, of course, "right"), we visited a second, less impressive, but still warm, welcoming and friendly restaurant. **Gasthaus Stockerwirt**, does immense portions of meat-and-potatoes traditional Tirolean cooking

at good prices with little fuss or bother .

It's not gourmet cuisine, and decor is a bit rough around the edges, but dependably good. Main courses average about \$12 to \$15. Keep it in mind as a second choice if you're in the region when the Herrenhaus is closed.

Gasthaus Stockerwirt, Dorf 39, Reith im Alpbachtal, tel. 05337 / 62213 ☒

READERS' FORUM

Keep the Bunker Closed

First of all, my thanks for an outstanding October issue. On a trip to Germany next summer, I will be visiting eight of the listed UNESCO World Heritage sites in Germany, including Goslar. I hope sometime to visit other places in the Harz Mountains, including Quedlinburg.

I do not agree with the opinion that the remains of Hitler's bunker should have been opened up and exhibited to the public.

First, from what I have read, there would be little to see except for broken pieces of concrete, as the Russian occupation forces blew up the bunker before covering it over, shortly after the end of the war.

Second, there are plenty of sites in and around Berlin to remind people of the Nazi era, including those you mentioned.

Third, there is nothing of historical value that can be learned from the remains of Hitler's bunker. The facts of how, where, and when he died are well known from the now-opened Soviet records. Whether or not the site would become a shrine for neo-Nazis, it would satisfy nothing for the rest of us but morbid curiosity.

Keep up the good work. Your newsletter is always interesting and informative.

JIM MENTZER
LOS ANGELES CA

Unhappy With Munich Story

Since my family came from northern Switzerland in the 1840s, and dates back to the 1100s in southwest Germany, I subscribed to *Gemütlichkeit* with considerable expectation. I've been disappointed.

Now I've received the latest issue. Munich. *München*, as you might have told your readers so they wouldn't insult the locals. Perhaps half the visitors to Munich come there by way of the Bahnhof and stay at a hotel nearby; I've stayed at two within the past two summers, one expensive (**Eden Wolf**, luxurious) and another further down the block at half the price. Of course, this is the west end of the center of town, with everything within walking (or U- or S-bahn) distance, yet you offer no accommodations in this area.

One of the special highlights of Munich is its four opera houses, one an exact replica of Bayreuth. The Cuvillies Theatre (next to the Munich Opera house) is the finest example of rococo architecture anywhere. To not mention these is like telling someone visiting Washington, D.C. to not see the Smithsonian or the White House.

As you see, I'm not impressed by your Munich expert Nick Selby. Maybe if he had to VISIT Munich he'd have written a different article.

The entire line of Storrers, be they Storre, Storer, Stor, Sturah, Zorrer, Zdora, Stohrer, Stohrer, Stoerer or other variant, are from Swabia. Yes, Baden-Württemberg and northeast Switzerland, the Stuttgartians refuse to accept Baden as truly Swabian. Since I subscribed, there's been nothing on Swabia, and the last article on Stuttgart is half a decade old. If you've never eaten *Maultaschen* you cannot say you know Swabia. *Spätzle* is Swabian, also. My family came to America from Siblingen, 10 km from Schaffhausen, and 8 from Neuhausen-am-Rheinfall, the largest waterfall in Europe (and the prettiest). Two years ago I ran a worldwide Storrer *treffen* / Reunion in Siblingen; Stor-

ers from around Europe, the U S of A and Brazil attended. We had over 300 people at a big outdoor festival in the town of only 740 people. The former *Gemeindepräsident* was a Storrer, and the contemporary one a seventh cousin Kübler. By now I know my way around the territory, and people know me as I was on Swiss TV regarding the *treffen*.

Is there any reason I should re-subscribe or recommend your publication to my thousand some US cousins?

WILLIAM ALLIN STORRER
NEWARK NJ

(Ed. Note: Nick Selby did, in fact, mention the Residenz, of which the theater designed by Cuvillies is a part, though to see it one must purchase a separate ticket. To learn more about Mr. Storrer and his family visit his web site at www.storrer.com)

Ballenberg Museum

We average three trips a year to German-speaking countries. Here are two items from a recent trip we thought worthy of passing along.

1. The **Swiss Open-Air Museum** in Ballenberg. It is an area of 10 square kilometers with buildings brought from all over Switzerland. There must be over 125 different structures of all ages. The exhibits are labeled in German, French and English. The English versions are not as in depth as the German. We have seen many of these types of museums throughout Europe and this is one of the best. The location is not signed well and takes some effort to find, but well worth the trip if you are interested in the Swiss life of old.

2. Finding a last night hotel near Stuttgart has always been a problem. If one has an early flight, there is always the concern of stopped traffic on the Autobahn approaches to the airport. The **Landgasthof Hotel Rössle** (tel. +49/07157/7380, fax 20326) is a three-star property that may not live up to your normal higher living, but it is clean, friendly and only 20 kilometers south of the airport using the less travel B27. We paid 160 DM (\$85) for a double room

and breakfast. The village of Waldenbuch is small, but with a well planned walking tour explaining it's history. The wall signage is only in German. Also in the town is an interesting Gasthaus called **Goldener Ochsen** that has a Gast Zimmer right out of the 50s. The food is traditional Swabisch but more important are the people. If you understand and speak German the *Stammtisch* will provide you a real insight into the way people feel and think. Also the village is the home of the Ritter Sport Chocolate factory.

PETE & TREVA FOURNIER
PHOENIX AZ

Passau Hotel

Highly recommend the **Hotel Residenz** in Passau (Fritz-Schäffer-Promenade, D-94032, tel. +49/0851/35005, fax 35008). For 235 DM (\$125) per person for four days, we got a huge no smoking room with a view, a boat ride on the Danube, a city tour, and an organ concert. It cost 10 DM (\$6) per day for the parking garage.

This is an older hotel but super clean, with a great breakfast buffet.

RENATE KASZNIA
UNIVERSAL CITY TX ☒

Europe Travel Briefs

■ The Zürich office of tourism offers "The Zürich Experience" package which includes:

- Two overnights with breakfast in the hotel category of your choice
- Two-hour city tour in new trolley bus
- One-day public transport pass for city and environs (including Uetliberg and Albiskette)
- The Zürich Night Card, good for an assortment of discounts and free drinks in 21 pubs and restaurants. Card includes a tram pass for the city network)
- Discount voucher booklet, city map and documentation

The per person, double occupancy rates range from 245 Sfr. (\$159)

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ACCOMMODATIONS

Continued from page 1

preserved the traditional character of their French country house while tastefully adding more contemporary interior accents. The tiny lobby is tiled in large black and white squares, and an adjoining breakfast room opens up to a beautiful, sunny terrace. When I arrived, Herr Tillmanns offered a hearty welcome and gladly trekked my bags up a narrow staircase to the second floor.

My double room, Number 11, featured modern furniture and royal blue bath and light fixtures, which added a cheery touch to an otherwise plain and simple room. Two ceiling-high windows gave the room an extra-airy feel, despite the stuffy July weather.

Hotel Tillmanns offers 15 double rooms, all with shower or bath tub, phone, satellite TV, safe, desk, and hair dryer. Each room in the hotel was fully renovated during 1996-97. Numerous wine cellars and restaurants are within walking distance.

Contact: Familie Tillmanns, Hotel Tillmanns (Garni), Hauptstrasse 2, 65346 Eltville-Erbach, Tel +49-6123-9233-0, fax +49-6123-9233-66

Daily Rates: Singles 90 DM (\$48), doubles 135 DM (\$72)

Rating: Quality 14/20, Value 17/20

Mövenpick Zürich Airport

If you have to stay in a huge airport hotel, the Mövenpick at Zürich's Kloten Airport will make the getting-out-of-town process pretty painless.

We recently had room
By Bob Number 717 which was
Bestor imaginatively laid out and well furnished in ultra-modern style. The TV could be seen from all angles and carried several English channels including CNBC and CNN. The room was well lit and functional with good work space. There was plenty of room for luggage and an exercise bike was cleverly hidden behind some curtains. Entrance to the granite and marble tiled bathroom was via a heavy,

frosted glass door.

There are four restaurants, lobby shops, an indoor pool, and, of course, frequent, free shuttle buses to the airport.

To get downtown via rail, walk to the rear of the hotel and cross the bridge over the Autobahn. On the other side, bear left at the large office building; at the street, go left under the tracks and finally up the stairs to the Balsberg station. The 2nd class one way fare to the Zürich Bahnhof is 5.4 Sfr. (\$3.50), a taxi on the other hand is 38 sfr. (\$25).

Gemütlichkeit has used this as a "last night" hotel three times and found the staff to be exceptionally friendly and helpful.

The hotel currently offers a 250 Sfr. (\$162) corporate rate for both single and double rooms. Ask for it.

Contact: Mövenpick Hotel Zürich-Airport, Walter Mittelholzerstrasse 8, Glattpfegg, Zürich CH-8152, tel. +41/01/8088888, fax: 8088877

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 10/20

EUROPE BRIEFS

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for a three-star hotel to 380 Sfr. (\$247) for a four-star property. Book online at MySwitzerland.com or contact the Zürich Tourist Office, Main station, CH-8023 Zürich, tel. +41/01/215 40 00, fax 215 40 44, hotel reservations, tel. +41/01/215 40 40, fax 215 40 4

■ **"Cézanne – perfection unfinished" is the title of an exhibition** examining the uncompleted works of the Impressionist artist.

The exhibition, scheduled for Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, from May 5 through July 30, will comprise some 70 canvasses, 20-30 watercolors, and selected drawings, all of them on loan from museums and private collections around the world. Entry fees will range from 8 to 16 Sfr. (\$5.20-\$10.40).

There is a special accommodations package offered in conjunction with the exhibit. It includes two overnight stays with breakfast buffet, admission to the exhibition at

the Kunsthaus, a booklet of vouchers (including, for example, a discount on the Art Walk), city map and documentation. The per person price in a double room is 246 Sfr. (\$160). The single room supplement is 120 Sfr. (\$78). Contact: Zürich Tourist Office (see above).

■ **LTU International Airways offers Florida and the West Coast** some of the best and least expensive air service to Germany. The airline flies to Düsseldorf (with connections to most major German airports included in the fare) from Fort Myers, Orlando and Miami.

Starting May 4, LTU will inaugurate service to Frankfurt from Ft. Myers. Florida summer fares begin at \$660 roundtrip economy and \$1698 first comfort. Current winter fares start at \$398.

Beginning May 6, LTU will operate nonstop scheduled weekly flights from Los Angeles to Munich on Saturdays, and twice weekly flights to Düsseldorf on Mondays and Thursdays. Roundtrip fares from Los Angeles start at \$728 economy class and \$1998 "first comfort" class. Fares also include connections to other major German airports as well as transport to the U.S. gateway from cities such West Coast cities as Phoenix, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland and others.

Next May, LTU will further expand its service to Germany by adding Toronto and Anchorage gateways. Contact: LTU, tel. 888-888-0200, web www.ltu.com.

■ **A group tour that will headquarter in Göttingen** and include visits to Weimar, Eisenach, Goslar, and the World's Fair - Hannover 2000, plus German language classes, is jointly sponsored by Acalanes Adult Center in Walnut Creek, California, and the Goethe Institute.

Tour dates are May 28-June 10. Cost is \$1,750 per person and includes lodging, tuition, all visits and entrance fees and two meals daily. Air fare is not included. Accommodations will be in private homes. For those who prefer to stay in a hotel the additional cost is \$400 double occupancy, \$650 single. Contact: Jacqueline Klassen, tel. 510-527-0113, email joffin@joffin.com. 