

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

February 24, 2000

Paying for Hotels in Advance

The growing number of hotels that require full or partial advance payment, and then assess cancellation penalties, is a sorry trend.

On the "links" page of Switzerland Tourism's labyrinthine website (www.switzerlandtourism.com), I recently discovered a bed and breakfast booking service. What a great idea, says I. Then came the fine print. All reservations require full payment in advance. For cancellations, there is a 60 Sfr. (\$38) fee plus the loss of additional money depending on how long in advance the reservation is canceled. No-shows lose half their money plus the 60 Sfr. (\$38). Those who plan to stay three nights but must leave after two, still pay for three.

With the profusion of B&Bs — or *Zimmer frei* — in our three countries, most of which need to be booked in advance only at the very busiest times of the year, this is an obviously bad deal. Few are the circumstances in which a local tourist office can't find a good B&B

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

AUGSBURG

Our Munich-based reporter, Nick Selby, visits Augsburg where, amid the venerable buildings and cobbled streets, he finds a few decent hotels and a surprising number of good restaurants.

At first glance, Augsburg seems a rather meek little city, with a medieval skyline, a lovely walled town center and a couple of brightly sparkling canals. But beneath that mild-mannered exterior lies the heart and spirit of a lion. Straddling two of Germany's wealthiest states, Augsburg has long been prosperous and decidedly independent.

About 15 years before the birth of Christ a bevy of Romans first settled here, at the convergence of the Lech and Wertach Rivers. As it grew and the first incarnation of the stunning **Dom Maria Heimsuchung** cathedral was erected, the town evolved into a

walled fortress and eventually one of Europe's most important trading centers.

A Walk Through History

The Old City's cobblestone streets are a pleasure to explore. Lanes and alleys twist and swerve and become impossibly narrow passageways in a manner more Anadalousian than Germanic. The city's architecture — not just the palaces but even ordinary buildings — clearly reflects the international influence.

By the 11th century the town had already established itself as a major trade post, and by 1530 had bred its own Middle Ages version

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Accommodations

Capsule reviews of recent hotel experiences by the Gemütlichkeit staff.

Gasthof Schorn
St. Leonhard, Austria

Autobahn travelers in the Salzburg area will find delicious traditional food and comfortable overnight accommodations at



Gasthof Schorn, 8 kilometers (5 miles) south of Salzburg at the Salzburg-Süd-Grödig exit on the

Autobahn toward Hallein. The Schorn offers 16 double rooms all equipped with private toilet and shower or tub, direct-dial phone, satellite TV and balcony. Breakfast is buffet style and parking is free for guests.

The hotel is done in the style of

the region, with elaborate frescoes both inside and out. The massive dining room is more like a church than a restaurant with domed ceiling, marble floors, concrete pillars, arched side galleries and a raised altar-like area at the far end. It is a lively local favorite, however. Mostly because of what comes out of the kitchen; heaping plates of hearty, delectable food delivered by traditionally dressed servers.

How about *Steirische Salatschüssel mit Kernöl und speck würfel* (80 AS / \$5.65), a massive salad of giant white beans, chunks of smoky bacon, potato and zucchini slices, carrot slivers, shredded cabbage and greens, all in a wonderful Styrian dressing? Or slices of incredibly

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on the shortest of notice.

The on-line service doesn't seem to be such a great bargain either. What are referred to as "simple" rooms go for 50 Sfr. (\$31) per person, while "average" ones are 60 Sfr. (\$37) per person. The site notes that breakfast may not be included with these prices. (Rather odd for a bed & breakfast service, wouldn't you say?) "Luxury" rooms are priced at 150 Sfr. (\$92) per person single and 100 Sfr. (\$61) per person double.

The charming **Schloss Matzen** (*Gemütlichkeit*, November, 1999), near Innsbruck, also has what I consider a restrictive booking policy. There is a two-night minimum and full payment for one night must accompany the reservation. The balance is due 30 days prior to reservation. There is a \$25 service fee, provided cancellations are made 30 days in advance. For cancellations of less than thirty days, any refund will be based upon the hotel's ability to rent the room.

A non-refundable deposit on any travel product limits the flexibility that is so important to independent travel. A credit card as insurance against a no-show is one thing. A non-refundable advance payment is quite another. There are too many great places to stay that don't require such payments to bother about those that do.

Another little gripe about the Matzen: it is the only hotel in Germany, Austria or Switzerland I know of

which does not include an 11% tax in its published room rates. This is not something Matzen tries to hide, but when planning a trip not everyone realizes that a \$185 per night quote will become a \$205 room bill. So, when you're comparing the price for the best suite (huge, with grand piano) at **Schloss Haunsperg** (2500 AS/\$179) near Salzburg, with the Teddy Roosevelt room at the Matzen, the per night price difference is \$26, not \$6. (Haunsperg, by the way, gets the nod for accommodations, though it may not match Matzen's forest setting.)

With all this in mind you'll want to read an instructive letter in this month's Readers' Forum from a much-traveled, long-time subscriber, Roger Tyndall. Mr. Tyndall is correct, a few years ago we gave the **Schlosshotel Chastè** a strong recommendation; it is an extraordinarily beautiful hotel. However, though it may technically have been within its rights, the hotel's treatment of the Tyndalls is shortsighted and a surprising customer relations gaffe. One wonders if management would have insisted on charging for that final, unused night if the guest had been a regular visitor instead of an unlikely-to-return American tourist.

Austrian Politics

Some of you may be concerned about recent political events in Austria. I certainly am. For one thing, it's bad for business. Several people I know won't go near the place right now. I try to remind them that 72% of Austrian voters cast ballots *against* Herr Haider and the

demonstrations are massive and entirely anti-Haider.

I must say, for a country that depends more on tourism — 6% of its gross national product and 14% of its jobs — than any other in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, it seems a terrible financial risk to accept a government that includes among its leaders a guy who likes to hang out at SS reunions. According to a Reuters story (Feb. 19, 2000) there have already been 10,000 overnight booking cancellations. As Manfred Stallmayer, manager of Vienna's **Triest Hotel** put it, "Austria is not very 'in' at the moment."

If you've scratched Austria from your itinerary as a matter of principle, I tip my hat. But if you're worried about an anti-visitor attitude, don't be. Most Austrians will be delighted you came.

Correction

Last month we told you about a brief visit to "Freibourg" in Switzerland (not Germany, that's Freiburg). The correct spelling of course is Fribourg—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".

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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.

MURTEN

Continued from page 1

of Donald Trump: Jakob Fugger.

In the late 1300s, a weaver named Hans Fugger established a flourishing textile business, later taken over by sons Jakob and Andreas, who eventually became goldsmiths.

Jakob married the daughter of the owner of the Roman mint and by the late 1400s he and his sons, carrying on the family tradition, were, well, minting money.

The Fugger monopoly became powerful enough to include them on the list of Europe's wealthiest traders. They had their hands in just about everything, and Augsburg, as the seat of their operations, enjoyed a Renaissance some would argue has never really ended.

In 1516, the family established the 'Fuggerei', touted as the first low income housing project in Europe and certainly worth a visit.

What to See

Augsburg's focal point is its delightful and airy central square, the **Rathausplatz**, which is packed every spring and summer weekend with cafe society Augsburgians watching the world swirl past the statue of **Emperor Augustus**.

The square's pride and joy is the onion-domed **Rathaus**, whose treasure is its third-floor **Goldener Saal**. Standing in this enormous baroque salon and gawking at the 100-foot long ceiling painted in gold, it's hard to believe this is a restoration — the entire Rathaus was demolished and reconstructed after the war. For a look at the layout of the ancient city, stop at the wooden model in the lobby. Right next door is the **Perlachturm**, formerly a guard tower.

Leave the Rathaus, turning left and then left again, down the stone staircase to peaceful **Elias Holl-Platz**, home to both the 16th-century **St. Maria Stern Kloster** and my favorite restaurant in town, **Die Ecke**. Go right at the end of the square and navigate the maze of narrow, cobble-

Augsburg Info

Population: 260,000

Altitude: 1,436 feet

Distance From:

Munich	68 km / 43 miles
Berlin	560 km / 350 miles
Stuttgart	160 km / 100 miles
Frankfurt	358 km / 224 miles
Hamburg	739 km / 462 miles

Tourist Information: The city's best tourist information office is right on Rathausplatz (tel. +49/0821/502 070, fax 502 07 24), open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, Saturday from 10am to 1pm, closed Sunday and holidays. It's from here that they run the sightseeing walking tours.

A second office is located at Bahnhofstrasse 7, tel. +49/0821/50 20 70, fax 50 20 7 45

Guided Walking Tours: Absolutely first rate guided walking tours in English and German are run year round by the city tourist office. The tours cover the Dom, several museums, the Goldener Saal and the Fuggerei. They depart from in front of the Rathaus. From May to November the tours run daily at 2pm and cost 12 DM (\$6) per person. At other times of the year they only run on Saturdays at 2 pm and cost the same. You always have to pay an additional 3 DM (\$1.50) for entry to the Goldener Saal.

Guided Bus Tours: The city also runs bus tours covering the same areas and attractions. They run only from April to November, Thursday to Sunday at 10:30 am and cost 14 DM (\$7).

stone, canal-lined streets which will eventually lead you to one of the entrances to the Fuggerei.

Designed to assist Catholics in hock through no fault of their own, the **Fuggerei** complex is a collection of little three-room homes and one-room "widow's flats" the annual rent for which is still a rather fair 12.76 DM (\$6.50), plus a daily prayer and the occasional fine for coming home after midnight. One of the Fuggerei's most famous residents was Franz Mozart, Wolfie's great grandfather, who lived here for a dozen years. Right next to his house is the fascinating **Fuggerei Museum**.

Exiting the north gate, stroll up towards the center and turn right on teeny **Schmiedgasse**, where you'll pass the lovely home where poet/

dramatist Bertolt Brecht was born in 1898. Now it's a museum dedicated to the playwright's life and work.

From here you have a choice; keep walking or stop and eat. My recommendation is to take Augsburg slowly and get to know it through its restaurants. Enjoy a long lunch or even a picnic, and afterwards, take on opulent **Maximilianstrasse**. This grand boulevard is home to the astoundingly ornate **Schaezler Palais**, in which an afternoon is easily killed amidst the offerings of the Bavarian **Baroque Art Gallery**, including works by Dürer, Holbein, and Cranach. Nearby is the **Fugger Haus**, a former family residence.

Places of Worship

The Romantic Road has many great churches and Augsburg — which stands at its geographical center — seems to have more than its fair share of them. Aside from the **St. Ulrich** and **Afra Basilika**, whose tower is visible throughout the city, and the Art Nouveau **Synagogue**, now open as an important **Jewish Cultural Center**, the ecclesiastic star of the show here is the **Dom Maria Heimsuchung**, a Gothic and Romanesque gem. You can visit with a walking tour, but leave at least an hour to view the grounds - replete with Roman ruins - the absolutely amazing bronze doors at the south, and several panels by Hans Holbein the Elder.

Another important church is **St Anne's**, the tomb chapel of the Fugger family, which also boasts works by Cranach the Elder.

Accommodations

Augsburg's hotels seem to run to extremes, either very luxurious or somewhat Spartan. In two hotels we only recommend some of the rooms.

One thing to keep in mind; prices at all of them rise during Oktoberfest, but not as much as hotels in Munich, so they are good options to consider for those attending the famous beer festival. Augsburg is only a 30-minute train ride away from the tents, and it's a lot quieter at night.

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AUGSBURG

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Klostergasthof

This unique family run hotel housed in the former brewery of an adjacent Benedictine Kloster is, on weekends, anyway, Augsburg's best deal. Okay, it's not really *in* Augsburg, rather 25 kilometers north, but you'll soon see why — on weekends at least — it's worth the drive.

The 17th century building has been painstakingly renovated by the Riss family over a period of five years. They've retained the wood floors and wonderful vaulted ceilings while straightening out lines and adding modern furniture.

Guestrooms are stylishly furnished and all have showers. There's one wheelchair-accessible single, and a lift in the new wing but not the old. The former also has a sauna and solarium.

The restaurant features an impressive wine list and traditional Swabian and Bavarian food, but is not worth a special trip. You'll have a nice traditional meal but Augsburg's offerings are superior.

Here's the best part: on weekends the hotel offers a special which includes a double room, breakfast AND a five-course dinner for 250 DM (\$125) per night.

During the week it's not worth the price or the trip, but on the weekends it's an *Editor's Choice*.

Daily Rates: Mon.-Fri., singles 105 DM (\$53), doubles 145 DM (\$73), weekend special: 250 DM (\$125) per night with dinner for two.

Contact: Klostergasthof Thierhaupten, D-86672 Thierhaupten bei Augsburg, tel. +49/08271/81810, fax 818150

Rating: QUALITY 13/20 VALUE 16/20

Steigenberger Drei Mohren

Augsburg's leading hotel, Drei Mohren is five-star with excellent service and comfortable, spotlessly clean guestrooms, all of which face posh Maximilianstrasse. And on weekends the prices come down significantly.

Downstairs are two restaurants, the signature Maximilians and the Bistro, a comfortable spot for coffee or a light snack.

Request a renovated room, they're much nicer than the older ones. The hotel's four suites are recently renovated and, though on the small side, are well appointed and very comfortable. On weekends they're even a good value.

Daily Rates: Weekdays, single rooms 209 to 249 DM (\$105 to \$125), doubles 299 to 379 DM (\$150 to \$189), suites 450 DM, 550 DM, 1250 DM (\$225, \$275 and \$625). Weekends singles 179 DM (\$89.50), doubles 259 DM (\$129.50), suites 300 DM, 370 DM and 900 DM (\$150, \$185 and \$450).

Contact: Steigenberger Drei Mohren Augsburg, Maximilianstrasse 40, D-86150 Augsburg tel. +49/0821/503 60 fax 15 78 64

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 11/20

Dom Hotel Augsburg

In the shadow of the great cathedral sits the Dom Hotel Augsburg, a pleasant family-run place once you get past the YMCA-styled lobby.

Staff is helpful and friendly, and the rooms clean and adequate, though those at the top of the hotel, with the views of the Dom and a terrace, are the best value. The less expensive rooms are not altogether recommendable. The lift doesn't serve the hotel's small indoor swimming pool; to get to that you'll have to navigate a narrow spiral staircase. The pool and sauna are available to guests at no charge.

Daily Rates: Singles 115 to 145 DM (\$58 to \$73), doubles 140 to 200 DM (\$70 to \$100).

Contact: Dom Hotel Augsburg, Frauentorstrasse 8, D-86152 Augsburg, +49/0821/34 39 30, fax 34 39 32 00

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 14/20

Romantik Hotel Augsburger Hof

What to do about this place? Here's a family-operated hotel in a nice location, minutes walk from the Dom and with one of the city's best restaurants (see below), and yet we

only recommend a certain type of room, the *Romantikzimmer*

After the cozy, warm lobby, and the helpful staff, it's a surprise to discover that many of the rooms are just not up to snuff. Standard singles and doubles are cramped, and many furnishings are in need of replacement. The carpeting is drab and in the hallways room numbers have been spray painted with a stencil. Many rooms facing the street are noisy.

The Romantikzimmer, on the other hand, are truly that: well lit, attractively furnished and with comfortable, spacious bathrooms; precisely what one would expect given the hotel's reputation.

Daily Rates: Singles 125 to 158 DM (\$63 to \$79), Romantikzimmer single 205 DM (\$102.50); doubles 149 to 175 DM (\$75 to \$88), Romantikzimmer double 250 DM (\$125).

Contact: Romantikhotel Augsburger Hof, Auf Dem Kreuz 2, D-86152 Augsburg, tel. +49/0821/343 050, fax 343 05 55

Rating: QUALITY 10/20 VALUE 9/20

Privat Hotel Ost am Kö

The building's not pretty, but downright excellent service makes up for it. The location, on the edge of the old town, is perfect.

This is a typical business-class hotel, very clean and with reasonably new furniture. Guestrooms are comfortable without being extraordinary. The roomy Anna Suite is colorfully furnished and, like most of the rest of the rooms, offers good value.

Daily Rates: Weekdays: singles 99 to 160 DM (\$50 to \$80), doubles 160 to 220 DM (\$80 to \$110). Weekends: singles 89 to 109 DM (\$45 to \$54.50), doubles 138 to 158 DM (\$69 to \$79). Anna Suite: 220 DM (\$110), no weekend discount.

Contact: Privat Hotel Ost Am Kö, Fuggerstrasse 4-6, 86150 Augsburg tel. +49 0821/50 20 40 fax 50 20 444

Rating: QUALITY 12/20 VALUE 13/20

Altstadthotel Ulrich

Another value hotel geared more to business travelers but still offering good service and pleasant amenities

is the nicely renovated 32-room Ulrich, with modern, clean, comfortable rooms. There are no suites and few frills, but it's very friendly.

Daily Rates: Weekdays: singles 140 DM (\$70) doubles 190 DM (\$95). Weekends: singles 110 DM (\$55) doubles 170 DM (\$85).

Contact: Altstadtthotel Ulrich, Kapuzinergasse 6, 86150 Augsburg, tel. 0821/34 61 0, fax 0821/346 1346

Rating: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 14/20

Sustenance

You can tell a lot about a city from its food, and Augsburg's cuisine is a wonderful fusion of Bavarian and Swabian, with a surprising variety of seafood offerings. Of course, fresh game is also a local favorite, but each of the city's fine restaurants has its own interpretation of "Augsburg dining."

Die Ecke

The most delightful of these interpretations is that of Restaurant Die Ecke. If you were to shake me awake in the middle of the night and demand a definition of *gemütlichkeit* I'd describe this restaurant. From outside it's not much to look at, but inside the work of local artists graces the walls and the ambiance is so cozy and warm we were immediately won over. Low-ceilinged and wood furnished, the decor is soft, glowing and welcoming. Fresh flowers are scattered throughout and in summer there is seating in the back garden. Service is exquisite.

Reservations are essential and it's common for customers to arrive at 7-ish and stay 'til 11-ish. We spent a recent evening there determined to sample as many as we could of the restaurant's outstanding dishes. Encouraged in our quest by Die Ecke's manager, Joseph Mack, we warmed up with two kinds of warm, yeasty, freshly baked bread and glasses of Tuscan wine from an extensive list.

What followed was so sensational and so remarkable, and we ate so much that...well, let's just say I've got a tailoring bill for Herr Mack.

We began with a simple beef consommé with veal strudel — a ravioli-like phenomenon — while discussing the house specialty, game. "We have our own land, so most of the game we serve is specifically hunted for us by family or friends," said Herr Mack.

His personal interpretation of Augsburg cuisine includes such appetizers as tuna carpaccio; exquisite, thinly-sliced raw tuna served with wasabi (fiery Japanese horseradish); and Chinese cabbage over a bed of glass noodles (24 DM/\$12). A more traditional German offering is home-cured salmon with miniature potato puffs and crème fraîche (22/\$11 DM).

Main courses are fresh game when available, such as rare roasted venison fillet with fresh juniper berries, Brussels sprouts and *Spätzle* (49 DM/\$25); or what I couldn't get enough of, poached heavenly beef fillet, tender enough to cut with a spoon, with mixed crushed peppercorns in a simple red wine sauce, served with polenta, sugar glazed winter vegetables including snow peas, sliced beetroot, a ratatouille and perfectly steamed broccoli.

For dessert, I secretly lusted after the chocolate ravioli with mascarpone and marzipan filling, but Herr Mack insisted I try the house specialty, *Apfelkuchle*; deep-fried, thinly-sliced golden apples dusted with cinnamon sugar and served with walnut ice cream and freshly whipped cream. As I staggered out, barely able to carry my notebook, I made a foggy mental note to have my trousers let out, and to recommend Die Ecke as an *Editor's Choice*.

You'll spend about \$23 to \$43 per person, without beverages. Die Ecke, Elias-Holl-Platz 2, tel. +49/0821/510 600

Feinkost Kahn

Next to the city market, in a 60s building that should be arrested for architectural crimes, is Feinkost Kahn, a restaurant which fills several culinary bills. On the ground floor is the bistro, where light snacks and salads can be had in a hurry. A lunch

here will cost no more than 30 DM (\$15) and allows one to graze the finest olives, cheeses, and fresh seafood such as poached salmon, fish roulades and other light, tasty and healthy snacks.

One floor above is the Cafe, which we ignored to get to the restaurant yet another floor up. Though the atmosphere is a turn-off, the service is all it should be and the food is fabulous. The professorial-looking proprietor, Herr Kahn, runs around the place with boundless energy, fussing over customers.

The menu, while featuring traditional Bavarian and Swabian specialties, offers a number of light, fresh Mediterranean dishes.

The daily menu began with a sensational carpaccio of Bavarian beef, so tender I could have used a paper fork. It had a marvelous peppery crunch and came with extra-virgin olive oil, flakes of freshly grated Parmesan cheese and a scoop of salmon caviar. This was followed by a divine tomato-carrot-cream soup topped with fresh dill and then a fresh fish roulade in a light cream sauce served on a bed of broad egg noodles. The main course was riesling-steamed, corn-fed chicken breast with fennel-flavored fresh vegetables and a dollop of a rich onion mousse.

The daily fixed price six-course menu ranges from 60 to 85 DM (\$30-\$43) at both lunch and dinner. You may also order individual items from the fixed-price menu; the carrot-tomato soup was 8 DM (\$4), the carpaccio 18 DM (\$9) and the chicken dish 32 DM (\$16).

Feinkost Kahn, Annastrasse 16 tel. 0821/31 20 30, closed Sundays and holidays

Restaurant Augsburg Hof

Entering the Augsburg Hof, whose interior somehow manages to look like an Alpine cottage in the middle of the city, I took a deep sniff and instantly thought: Home. "We specialize in Grandma's recipes cooked to perfection," claims Chef Fassl and he seems to have got it

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AUGSBURG

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right — the place seems always packed.

Take the 90 DM (\$45) “romantic menu.” It includes guinea fowl roulade with fresh truffle and mango, a fresh seafood stew with tomato and fresh basil, and pan-fried venison medallions with fresh mushrooms. An unusual dessert is red wine ice cream served with fresh figs.

No less appealing is the daily menu (60 DM/\$30), which when we visited, featured a terrine of pike perch on cucumber, savory duck consomme with a liver *Strudel*, and venison dumplings in a luscious cream sauce followed by semolina cream with cherry ragout.

A la carte highlights include *Schwäbische Festtagsuppe*, a savory broth with sliced *Maultaschen* dumplings (9 DM/\$4.50) and several veal dishes ranging from poached veal slices with apple horseradish sauce, boiled potatoes and spinach to, so they tell me, braised calf cheek in Madeira sauce.

Romantikhof Augsburg Hof, Auf dem Kreuz 2 Telephone: 0821/343 050

Stadtmarkt Augsburg

Augsburg’s market, is one of southern Germany’s finest, with all the gourmet offerings of a big-city market but without the bustle, pushiness and cost. It’s a wonderful place to local-watch and a perfect inexpensive, delicious lunch stop. Try the Viktualien Halle for a picnic fit for royalty. Here are at least half a dozen cheese stands, several Greek and Mediterranean vegetable and specialty stands, and a stunning array of salads, pickled vegetables, smoked fish and a variety of cold meats. Against the back wall you’ll find Mexican, Thai, Vietnamese and Greek specialties, plus a wine bar.

Fuggereistube

This cozy bistro offers plain old Swabian specialties cooked well and for not a lot of money. It’s more comfortable in winter than in summer and service is iffy and some-

times a little snappy. But the food, while not excellent, is truly authentic, family-style Swabian with little pretense, and you’re likely to be the only tourists in the place. If you’re up for a simple meat dish with a nice glass of wine, Fuggereistube is worth considering. There’s always a vegetarian main course offered and the special when I last went was a Swabian mixed plate: *Maultaschen* (Swabian ravioli), *Schupfnudeln*, *krautkrapfen*, *Käsespätzle*, *Fleischküchle*, *Rostbraten* and *Schwammerl*, all 50 DM (\$25) for two. It’s right next to the north gate of the Fuggerei.

Fuggereistube, Jakobstrasse 26, tel. 3 08 70, closed Monday

Cafe Bei Den Barfüssern

After an afternoon of walking cobblestone streets, it’s good to get away from the noise of the traffic. Perhaps you don’t want the full “German experience,” just a good cup of coffee, maybe a sandwich, quiche or soup in a pleasant atmosphere. This charming cafe is the answer. Outside it looks dire — a small, dark graffiti-covered entrance — but walk through the gate and down the steps, and you’re in another world. Alongside a burbling sparkling-clear canal you can order a nice Quiche Lorraine (4.2 DM/\$2.10), homemade cakes and pastries (3 to 8 DM/\$1.50-\$4), soups and salads (3 to 8 DM/\$1.50-\$7), and very good coffee and tea. Sit in the garden or inside among the wood beams and brick.

Cafe Bei Den Barfüssern, Kanalstrasse 2, tel. 15 93 08

Ristorante Da Francesco

I asked Herr Mack from Die Ecke what was his favorite place — outside his own restaurant — to bring a date. He was unequivocal: Ristorante Da Francesco. “A wonderful, family-run place” he said, “and absolutely authentically Italian.” Indeed it is, with the entire family standing by to help — Poppa and one son in the kitchen, cranking out about 50 kinds of fresh, homemade pasta daily, Momma at the cash register and the other son acting as the waiter. It’s simply a wonderfully traditional Italian restaurant with reasonable prices and specialties from Calabria

and throughout Italy. Pasta dishes are the way to go here, with specials that change daily. Main courses are priced from 15 to 27 DM (\$8-\$14).

Ristorante da Francesco, Bäckergrasse 22, tel. 0821/51 65 47

READERS' FORUM

Used Services of EurAide

Your newsletter has been a joy to read all as well as a great help to my husband and me during our travels.

In fact, I wanted to write to say a special thank you for your issue on Munich (Sept. '99). My husband and I were there for 10 days the first week of December and had a wonderful vacation, much of it due to your newsletter’s assistance. We had excellent accommodations thanks to **EurAide**. Mr. Wissenberg and his staff were very helpful, choosing for us a small, lovely, very German B&B hotel near the train station.

The train passes we purchased through *Gemütlichkeit* also served us well. We found it wonderful to have our same hotel waiting for us at the end of each day. With the pass, we hopped on and off trains at will and had no winter travel worries even though we visited snowy Salzburg and Mittenwald, as well as Regensburg, Nürnberg, and Rothenburg ob der Tauber. Munich was also a joy with the recommendations in your article; the Christmas Markt, Viktualienmarkt and Nymphenburg Palace were highlights of our stay.

RACHEL DUKE
SCOTTSDALE AZ

(Ed. Note: *EurAide* offices are located in the Munich Hauptbahnhof and in the Berlin Zoologischer Gardens station.)

Great Hotel, Bad Experience

Your readers should know of our experience at **Schlosshotel Chastè**, Scuol-Tarasp, a member of Relais & Chateaux and located in Switzerland’s Engadine valley. It is owned and operated by Daniela and Rudi Pazeller. You recommended it a few years back.

Made reservations for seven nights for wife and myself via fax. Arrived on time for week's visit. On third night discovered we had to be in Zürich one day earlier than planned. At dinner that evening we told Daniela about our change in plans. There was no response, no comment. On departure day, we noticed our bill showed charges for seven nights, even though we were there six. We asked Rudi if Daniela had told him about change in plans. "Yes," he said. "But we have to charge for seven nights because we have no one else to take your room."

When we departed we were near the end of that season and the hotel was a few days away from closing. There were two other guests there when we left. We asked Rudi why Daniela did not tell us about their policy when we told her of our change in plans. And we asked why it was not mentioned in hotel literature or in any of the faxes we received when we made inquiries and reservations. We did not receive a reasonable, rational, logical response to our questions.

We submitted our grievance to Swiss hotel mediation, and they ruled in favor of the hotel.

During our visits to Switzerland over the past 20 years, often for stays of several weeks, we've never before been charged for a room we did not occupy. And, we have, on occasion, made changes in our itinerary.

Lesson learned: ask when making reservations about hotel policy if there is a possibility of a change in your plans.

ROGER TYNDALL
FERNANDINA BEACH FL

The Voice of Authority

Re the Munich Brown House controversy. There was only one "Braunes Haus," formerly the Palais Barlow, at 45 Brienerstrasse, adjacent to the Königsplatz, which was the headquarters of the NSAPD from 1931 until the end of the war. It was in this building that Hitler, Goebbels, Goering, Himmler, and other party functionaries had their offices. Hitler's office was on the first floor,

sparsely furnished, with, I believe, a painting of Frederick the Great behind his desk, a painting of the battlefield in Flanders where Hitler was wounded (and won the Iron Cross), and a bust of Mussolini. This building, badly damaged during bombing raids, was destroyed by order of the Bavarian State government in 1951 or '52 as were all buildings like the Berghof (Berchtesgaden) so they would not become memorials or monuments to the Nazi Party or its leaders, especially Hitler.

I don't recall what is on the site now but I will be in Munich next week and I'll take a look.

The Gibbens are correct and the building they refer to was the headquarters, local, of the Brown Shirts. It was also the "party store" where one could buy uniforms, accessories, badges, flags, and such.

I am, however, mistaken in my report about the Hofbräuhaus. It was slightly damaged by fire but, for the most part, survived in its original and present day form. And it was used often by Hitler. The Italian restaurant **Osteria** was one of his favorites and I believe the table he favored is still there.

I'm not surprised that locals who work in the building the Howsers mention report that it was Hitler's office. Not many Germans know beans from bananas about the 1933-45 history of their own country. Older Münchener, those now in their 70's, 80's and 90's would probably remember these things but they were not spoken of much or taught after the war until the 60's.

And just to be picky, it is Feldherrenhalle, not Felderherrnhalle; the former translated to "General's Hall" but is usually given a now archaic meaning "Gentlemen's Hall" and the latter would be "Crop Man's Hall," a word that does not exist.

Remember Baron Munchhausen, the comic character of the 30's, whose famous line was, "Vas you dere, Scharlie?" Vell, I vas dere Scharlie, before dese dings vas destroyed.

BOB GILLESPIE
LAKE BLUFF IL ☒

Europe Travel Briefs

■ **Subscribers Tom and Gina Crisp operate an annual guided trip to Germany and Austria which this year includes Oberammergau's Passion Play.** The tour headquarters in the southern Bavarian towns of Garmisch-Partenkirchen (5 nights) and Grassau (8 nights). The itinerary includes most of the region's top sights including the **Royal Castles**, the monastery at **Ettal**, the **Wieskirche**, the **Grossglockner** road, Ludwig's lesser-known castle **Herrenchiemsee** on an island in the Chiemsee, a dinner concert at Salzburg's ancient **Peterskeller** restaurant, and time for independent exploring. The price, \$3395 (less \$50 for Gemütlichkeit subscribers), includes roundtrip airfare, all dinners except two, breakfasts, and tickets to the Passion Play as well as all other entrance fees. Contact: Crisp Tours 800-901-8044.

■ **KD River Cruises is offering fare reductions of 20% for most April cruises and 10% off most October cruises.** Phone 800-346-6525 from the eastern U.S. and 800-858-8587 from the west, or browse www.rivercruises.com.

■ **Swissair continues to introduce the Airbus A330 into its transatlantic fleet.** Fly the airbus out of Boston, Chicago, Newark, and Washington Dulles. All three classes of service have upgraded seating with adjustable headrests with swivel ears, lumbar support, leg rests and individual audio and visual screens.

Buy a 14-day advance purchase apex ticket with a Mastercard and a companion flies free through April 30. Through April 13, roundtrip fares range from \$348 to \$558. Under *Gemütlichkeit's* fare reduction program, subscribers purchasing tickets (more than \$450) directly from Swissair qualify for \$25 to \$600 discounts, depending on ticket cost and class of service. Phone 800-521-6722 (press 2) for more info or bookings can be made through Swissair at 800-238-0399. ☒

ACCOMMODATIONS

Continued from page 1

tender roast pork leg swimming in rich pan juices (*Schweinsbraten mit Semmelknödel und Kraut salat*) for 100 AS (\$7.16). A splurge might be an intensely flavorful game stew (*Wildragout mit Semmelknödel und Preiselberren*) for 125 AS (\$9). Finish up with *Eispalatschinken* (crepes with ice cream) drenched in chocolate sauce and whipped cream (49 AS/\$3.50, enough for two) and the world is suddenly a better place. Without beverages a recent meal there cost 354 AS (\$25) for two persons.

If hotels in the Salzburg *Zentrum* are fully booked or too pricey, the Schorn is an inexpensive and charming alternative. Berchtesgaden, too, is just 14 km (9 miles) down the road.

Daily Rates: Singles 540 to 580 AS (\$39-\$42), doubles 840 to 960 AS (\$60-\$69), 140 AS (\$10) half board.

Contact: Gasthof Schorn, St. Leonhardstrasse 1, A-5083 St. Leonhard-Grödig, tel. +43/06246/72334, fax 72334-40. Prop: Familie Ziegler

Hotel Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 16/20

Restaurant Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 18/20

Deuring Schlössle Bregenz, Austria

Winter is not the best time for visiting castles — they can be pretty dreary at that time of year — which may partly account for why we were disappointed in our stay at Deuring Schlössle, a Relais & Chateaux property.

We telephoned for a room a day in advance after deciding to break up a Munich-Zürich train trip with an overnight in Bregenz, at the southeastern tip of Lake Constance.

Since there had been no offer of a ride from the hotel, we took a taxi for the short ride from the rail station.

The vine-covered stone structure above the town sits cheek-by-jowl with other buildings in a residential neighborhood, and exiting the taxi it took a moment to spot the hotel entrance. The welcome from the lone

young woman at reception, though not unfriendly, fell well short of effusive.

We were shown to a poorly-lit, barn of a room, Number 102. The floors were polished herringbone garnished with a couple of unimpressive oriental rugs and enclosed by totally bare walls save a single flowery, boring still life. The room's TV had a screen so tiny it was not viewable from either the couch or the bed. The antique furniture was rather impractical and not particularly comfortable.

The bathroom, however, was huge; with windows, a separate toilet cubicle, marble tile, and an elegant, gold-framed mirror over the stand-alone washbasin.

After check-in we immediately set out on a walk down the hill to see the town. Bregenz is noted for its massive, floating stage on Lake Constance; from it, musical and dramatic productions are presented to patrons in grandstands on shore. The annual summer music festival attracts world-class performers and no doubt the town has more charm at that time of year, but on this winter day we found little to attract us, not even a cozy *Bierstube* to escape a chilly wind.

Deuring Schlössle is renowned for its restaurant. In 1998, chef-owner, Heino Huber was named Austria's best cook.

We ate dinner in a nearly empty but attractive dining room (we may have been the only guests in the hotel). Tables are set well apart and draped with white cloths and napkins and topped with candles, real orchids and an array of glass and silverware. The room is partly in the castle's turret and there are deep window alcoves, herringbone floors and a low, dark wainscoting.

We chose the "surprise" menu in which each course was matched with an appropriate wine chosen by the house. The first, a flowery but surprisingly dry Wachau riesling, came with quenelle-like goose liver pate, a slice of papaya and a bit of cranberry aspic. After a refill of the Wachau

came a distinctly Asian *Zanderfilet* (pike-perch), with sesame seeds, rice vinegar, daikon radish, cabbage and cucumbers.

With a buttery, smooth lobster bisque enhanced with sesame seed oil and chunks of lobster, our server poured a sprightly, non-oaky Sicilian Chardonnay (Planeta 1997) which was perhaps the best pairing of the meal.

The main course was a wonton-wrapped filet of venison with *Spätzle* sprinkled with bits of apple and a sage-infused mixture of chestnuts and wild mushrooms. The accompanying red from Tuscany (1996 Vignai Covalieri) faded in the glass after a promising start.

Pastry-wrapped vanilla ice cream draped with poached plums was served with a lovely, sauterne-like Austrian dessert wine: Weissburgunder Burgenland, Ruster Alesbruch, from the Neusiedlersee, just south of Vienna. This we polished off with the *de rigueur* plate of small pastries and candies.

The per person price for the food was 580 AS (\$42) while the four wines were 340 (\$24). With mineral water and 40 AS (\$3) cover charge per person — not uncommon in fancy Austrian restaurants — we paid about \$150 for two persons. At such prices, excellence is expected. In this case we had to settle for very good.

To be fair, one can dine less expensively than we did. Ala carte first courses are in the \$10-\$12 range and main dishes about double that.

Deuring Schlössle was pleasant enough but hardly memorable.

Daily Rates: Singles 1100-1470 AS (\$79-\$105), doubles 1800-2970 AS (\$129-\$213), 2800-5600 (\$200-\$401), half board 480 AS (\$34) per person

Contact: Deuring Schlössle, Ehre-Guta-Platz 4, A-6900 Bregenz, tel. +43/05574/47800, fax 4780080, email: deuring@relaischateaux.fr, Prop: Bernadette & Heino Huber

Hotel Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 8/20

Restaurant Rating: QUALITY 15/20, Value 8/20

