

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

September 22, 2000

Good News for Travelers

Europe is cheaper than it's been since we started this newsletter 14 years ago. With about 2.27 marks, 1.77 Swiss francs and 16 Austrian schillings to the dollar, and trans-Atlantic winter airfares in the process of dropping to around 50% of what they were during the summer peak travel season, there is no better time to visit our three countries than in the next six months.

A recent call from son Andrew, an occasional contributor to these pages, and who was at the time in Vienna, really brought it home to me. He and his wife, Margaret, had rented a small car and were traveling without a pre-set itinerary. Approaching Vienna from the west, they stopped at the roadside office maintained by the **Vienna Tourist Office** where they were given a choice of accommodations in their

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

LEIPZIG

Known as "the book town" for its many publishing houses and also as the city of J. S. Bach, Leipzig is emerging nicely from 50 years of war and communist neglect.

The year 2000 saw celebrations commemorating the 250th anniversary of the death of composer and cantor Johann Sebastian Bach. One of the largest celebrations took place in Leipzig, where Bach lived and worked for most of his creative life. His grand Passions were reserved for the **Nikolaikirche**, while the day-to-day, transcendent cantatas were performed alternatively at the **Nicholaikirche** and the **Thomaskirche**, Bach's church of residence. During the recent celebration, both churches were used as performance venues, along with the old town hall, the central market square, and the arrival hall of the city's enormous train station. After listen-

ing to a Bach cantata in one of the Bach churches, a visitor could tour the museum which was once Bach's home, view the painting of Bach at the old town hall, have a gander at the Bach statue in front of Thomaskirche and the Bach memorial behind. Certainly, Bach can be found all over town, but, besides remembering this great composer and musician, is there anything else to do in Leipzig?

The answer is plenty. In fact, Bach is just one piece—albeit a large one—of the attractions awaiting visitors in Leipzig. Ten years after the fall of the Wall, this eastern German city has become a bustling and revived university

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Accommodations

Reports on recent hotel experiences by the Gemütlichkeit staff.

Romantik Hotel Florhof
Zürich, Switzerland

Zürich's Hotel Florhof can trace its history a long way back. The light blue stuccoed five-story building with white shutters first appeared on Zürich town plans in 1576. The first owner of record was Zürich Town Council Speaker, Hans Heinrich Hofmann. In the early 1700s, Captain Jakob Oeri — one of the city's first millionaires — bought the house and it remained in his family until 1811.



When *Gemütlichkeit* first reviewed it in 1988, the Florhof was operated by the Schilter family, whose kindly

ways had attracted a cadre of devoted followers who returned year after year. We gave it an above average rating, particularly citing the warmth of its welcome.

Six years later, the Schilters retired and new managers, Brigitte and Beat Schiesser, entered the picture. They refurbished the hotel at substantial expense, raised it to four-star status and were able to have it added to the popular "Romantik" hotel group. The Schiessers also raised room rates and somehow ruffled a few feathers among the regular guests. An excerpt from a letter written by a subscriber who had stayed at the Florhof for 13 consecutive years, and was not satisfied with the new regime, is

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price range. When they had picked one, the friendly and very helpful young woman made a reservation for them, explained about parking at the hotel — they could leave the car on the street — and highlighted their route to it on a map. For these services they paid a small charge of \$2 or \$3.

They chose **Hotel Aramis** (Döblinger Hauptstrasse 55, tel. +43/1/3698673, fax 3692480, web: www.albertina-hotels.at/), three-star accommodations about 10 blocks north of the Ring. A tram to the center stops outside the hotel. For a fairly Spartan double room with private bath they paid 650 AS (\$40), though the published rack rate is 900 AS (\$56). (Andrew suspects the tourist office booking center and the hotels are cooperating in a kind of "priceline.com" maneuver in which hotels with open inventory make their rooms available at reduced prices for 11th hour bookings.)

Think about it for a moment: that's a three-star hotel with private toilet and shower, in downtown Vienna, for \$20 per person.

He also raved ("these people are great!") about a return visit to a hotel he discovered a few years ago for *Gemütlichkeit*, the **Gasthof Waldrast** (tel. +43/05672/62443, fax 62443) in Reutte, Austria. For a very large, nicely furnished double they paid \$45.

A little arithmetic demonstrates just how inexpensive our countries have become. A 200 DM room in a four-star hotel back in the bad old days of a weak dollar was \$145. Today that same 200 DM room is \$88. In Switzerland, a 150 Sfr. room in a three-star hotel that was \$136 is now \$85.

The dollar is now so strong that travelers who, a few years ago, had to step down a hotel category or two can now consider returning to more luxurious accommodations.

Let's look at prices for a few of our old familiar favorites:

- In the Austrian spa town of Badgastein, south of Salzburg, the **Hotel Grüner Baum** (tel. +43/06434/25160, fax 251625), which is as good a country hotel as we've seen, is now offering a four-day package that includes multi-course dinners, buffet breakfasts, a lake district excursion with lunch, a mountain picnic, a "Mozart gala" dinner, and one with live music and folk dancing, for 5990 AS (\$384) per person. This is five-star luxury in one of Europe's most beautiful country hotel settings.

- At the wonderful **Hotel Anker** (tel. +49/09391/60040, fax 600477), in Marktheidenfeld, which, because it is about 40 minutes east of the Frankfurt Airport, we recommend as a "first-night" hotel, the best double room in the house is now under \$100. The Deppisch family's hospitality is legendary.

- Want to spend a few days in one of the world's great cities and stay in one of its most stylish small hotels for less than \$150? In Berlin, try the **Brandenburger Hof** (tel. +49/030/214050, fax 2140 5100) with its Bauhaus interior and wintergarden breakfast room where standard doubles go for 310 DM (\$136).

- Zürich is probably the most difficult city in our territory in which to find moderately-priced hotels. For good rooms near the Bahnhof, try the **Arlette** (tel. 41/01/2520032, fax 2520923) at 195 Sfr. (\$110).

The Best of the Best

- Booking through the Leading Hotels of the World website (www.lhw.com) can get you a double room at the magnificent **Victoria-Jungfrau Grand-Hotel & Spa** or our "Hotel of the Century," the **Beau Rivage Palace** in Lausanne for just \$237 per night (rack rate \$400-plus). The same booking service offers a rate of 450 DM (\$198) at the **Brenner's Park Hotel** in Baden-Baden.

Where the Real Bargains Are

Solid three-star hotels in small

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Keep in mind that...

- 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.
- European telephone area codes carry the "0" required for in-country dialing. To phone most 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.

LEIPZIG

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town with enough attractions and atmosphere to command a visit. Many guidebooks say that anyone pressed for time should skip Leipzig and concentrate on Dresden, but you will be missing out if you don't make time for both.

What first attracted Bach to work in Leipzig was its importance as a cultural center, which was funded in large part by the town's economic importance as a trade and market town. The market stalls and trade shows generated the money that supported the city's flourishing artistic and intellectual development.

A Little History

The character of the town dates back to the 15th century, with the founding of the University of Leipzig in 1407 and the establishment of a regional trade monopoly by Emperor Maximilian in 1497. The university attracted such greats as the dramatist Gotthold Lessing, poet Friedrich Klopstock, and all-around-talented Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, all of whom came to the city as students, thus leavening the city's home-grown talents such as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz and Richard Wagner.

Goethe once said in a fit of purple prose: "Give me my Leipzig any time: it's a miniature of Paris and it cultivates the people who live there." This quintessential German Romantic used the town as a backdrop for his masterpiece, *Faust*. It is in Leipzig that the worldly scholar meets the devil, falls in love, and loses his soul.

But it was with trade fairs that the city both made its money and acquired its architectural character. Wandering through the old town, what you notice most is the multitude of 19th century shopping passages. These handsome turn-of-the-century malls have little to do with their gangly American counterparts. The arcades in Leipzig are models of decorative detail with *Jugendstil* relief sculptures, gleaming glazed tiled walls, and tall, glass-covered

Leipzig Basics

Population: 450,000

Altitude: 387 feet

Travel Distances/Rail Times:

City	KM/Miles	Rail Times
Berlin	180 / 113	1:38
Dresden	109 / 68	1:24
Frankfurt	386 / 240	3:14
Geneva	961 / 597	9:50
Hamburg	435 / 270	4:21
Munich	424 / 264	4:56
Paris	963 / 598	9:43
Vienna	746 / 463	8:24
Zürich	683 / 425	7:37

Tourist Information:

Leipzig Tourist Service, Richard-Wagner-Strasse 1, D-04109 Leipzig, tel +49 / 034 / 7104-260, fax 7104-271. Stocks a wealth of brochures and information about the city, even though the staff is not particularly responsive.

Main Sights:

- Altes Rathaus
- Alte Börse (Former Commodity Market)
- Fine Arts Museum
- Museum of Arts & Crafts
- Thomaskirche

courtyards. They were heavily damaged by bombs in the Second World War and then neglected in the days of the German Democratic Republic. Today, most have been painstakingly restored or rebuilt, and then cluttered with a wealth of shops and restaurants. The most famous are Speckshof, Bartelshof, Hansahaus, and the Mädlerpassage, but just about every block has one type of passage or another that is worth exploring, even if it is just to see how restoration work is coming along.

On a side note, one misguided innovation created in the trade halls of Leipzig is the proscribed walkway. This annoying shop design forces customers to walk through an entire store to get to the cash register (*a la* Ikea), thus forcing shoppers to survey all of the store's goods, even if they just want to buy a few paper clips or a mixing bowl. These evil

inventions were first used at the *Städtisches Kaufhaus* in Leipzig, and, since Goethe places Mephistopheles at the Mädlerpassage just down the street, maybe the inventor was the devil himself.

Leipzig also lent its name to the 1813 battle that took place just outside of town, the Battle of Leipzig, a.k.a. the Battle of Nations. The war saw the defeat of that *arriviste* Napoleon at the hands of the old-moneyed Russians, Prussians, Austrians, and Swedes.

Today, this clash is memorialized by the enormous 91-meter *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* (Memorial to the Battle of Nations). This massive pile of granite is quite a sight to behold and certainly worth visiting, even though most guidebooks emphasize its ugliness. A stone marks the spot where Napoleon surveyed the battle and a requisite diorama reenacts the battle's general mayhem.

The Fall of Communism

Not all of Leipzig's great moments in history are so long ago. The city played a key role in the collapse of communism in East Germany.

From 1982 on, the city's *Nicholaikirche* was the site of small peace services held every Monday afternoon. With all of the changes going on throughout eastern Europe in early 1989, these peace gatherings gained new importance and grew to over 8,000 demonstrators.

The communist government came close to a crackdown on October 9, but negotiations led by the director of the Gewandhaus, Kurt Masur, avoided a Tiananmen Square-style confrontation. The demonstrations were allowed to continue, swelled to as many as 300,000, and inspired similar gatherings across East Germany. The protest brought down the Honecker government about a week later and the entire political system a month later.

Since the *Wende* (turning point), the city has really rebounded with a purpose. Incredible rebuilding efforts have taken place to restore Leipzig to its former glory. Although

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the city was heavily bombed during the war, the compact layout of its old town has made it easier to rebuild. Some changes are hard to believe. For example the ornate neo-Gothic stone building on the corner of Barfussgässchen and Dittrich-Ring looks just as lovely as the day it was built, which obscures the fact that only a few years ago the building was missing the top three floors. One way to spend an afternoon is to get a book with photos of what the city looked like before and after the war, and compare how it looks today.

Touring Leipzig

The city's compact and mostly pedestrian city center is easily toured on foot. The main sites include the Thomaskirche and Nikolaikirche (the latter contains Bach's remains). The Bach Museum houses memorabilia from the his life, including musical instruments and furniture dating from that period. There is also an early 20th century statue at the front of the Thomaskirche. Originally, it had Bach holding a conductor's baton. Fortunately, before it was cast someone realized the anachronism — batons weren't used at that time — so it was changed to a scroll of music.

The great romantic composer Felix Mendelssohn, who did much to re-popularize Bach (he was the driving force behind the Bach memorial located behind the Thomaskirche), also worked in Leipzig. He was the director of the Gewandhaus, the city's highly regarded concert house, and its orchestra. Other famous conductors at the legendary Gewandhaus include Wilhelm Furtwängler, Bruno Walter, and Kurt Masur.

Besides the orchestra, the other treasure of the Gewandhaus is the statue of Beethoven by Max Klinger. In 1902, it was the guest of honor at a celebrated exhibition in Vienna's Secession building. The Viennese artist Gustav Klimt created his famous Beethoven frieze to surround the painting as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or

total art work (a term inspired by Leipzig-born composer Richard Wagner). Leipzig bought the statue before Vienna could make a bid, so today you can find the frieze at the Secession building in Vienna and Klinger's Beethoven statue in the Gewandhaus.

A sharp contrast to the Gewandhaus' brutalesque (from "Brutalism;" a term coined in England to characterize the rough, exposed-concrete style of certain buildings designed by Le Corbusier) is the 16th century old city hall designed by the eccentric architect Hieronymus Lotter (it is said that he made the windows crooked on purpose). Inside is a museum detailing the history of the city and displaying an assortment of curios, including the sword used to execute the real Wozzeck, memorialized in Georg Büchner's play and Alban Berg's opera.

The shopping arcades make window-shopping feel like a history lesson, though the town's biggest arcade is the enormous train station, built in 1915 and extensively renovated in 1997. The station's massive size stems from the amount of daily rail traffic and from the fact that it originally had to house two equal parts: one side of the station was controlled by the Prussians, and the other side by the Saxons. Today, besides trains, the station holds a cornucopia of shops and a large food court. One treat is the coin-operated toy train set located just next to the train platforms.

The Communist Era

The GDR also left some notable architectural monuments. One of the more interesting is the wavy metallic Herta building which, during the days of communism, housed East Germany's largest department store. This 60's Op-art building stands exactly over the spot where Germany's bigoted operatic genius, Richard Wagner, was born.

Another noticeable period piece is the skyscraping University building, designed to look like an open book, though it's dated stylishness has earned it the nickname "the

jagged tooth."

Tragically, this and the correspondingly horizontal library were built on the grounds of the lovely old university building and the 16th-century St. Paul's church, both of which were razed to build these unworthy followers. A large, red iron frame in front of the library now marks the outlines of the old church building that survived the war but not communist esthetics.

The communist years are captured in two fascinating museums. The first is the **Modern History Forum** (Grimmaische Strasse 6), which charts the history of communism in Germany from the end of the Second World War to the fall of the Wall and a bit beyond. The multimedia exhibits include video footage of the destruction of the St. Paul's church and the building of the Berlin Wall, old Communist propaganda films, a real Stasi surveillance truck, and displays detailing the protests that led to the end of Communism.

One surreal montage is a videotape that shows the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the GDR intercut with footage of the peace protests which, a month later, led to the country's end.

One photo at the Forum shows a protester carrying a sign that says "*Krumme Ecke — Schreckenhaus/Wann wird ein Museum draus?*" That protest took place in front of the "**Round Corner**," the name of the building that housed the offices of the dreaded Stasi, the GDR's secret police. Translated, the sign means "Crooked corner, scary house, when will you become a museum?" Surprisingly, this protester got his wish — the building is now a museum, dedicated to preserving the former offices of the Stasi in all their evil blandness. These impersonal offices filled with cheap ready-made furniture controlled the lives of millions of East Germans, mostly through keeping files on its citizens. The museum is at Dittrichring 24, and has a permanent exhibition titled *Stasi: the Power and Banality*.

But we should not end on a dark

note, because the atmosphere of Leipzig today seems brimming with potential. The city has been tastefully rebuilt and offers a wealth of attractions. Bach and all.

Accommodations

Hotel Adagio

The family-owned Adagio is a comfortable, modern hotel set behind an attractive 19th century facade. It is well located in a nice, quiet neighborhood just a 10-minute walk to the Gewandhaus and the Augustusplatz.

The staff was especially friendly, always smiling and eager to please. The rooms had no surprises good or bad: they were just bright, clean and up-to-date. The doubles have built-in darkwood furniture with white walls and light blue fabrics and carpets. Singles differ only in that they have lightwood furniture with red and amber fabrics and carpets. The white-tiled baths are spacious and come with showers in the singles and tubs in the doubles. Most of the doubles face the quiet street, while singles face the verdant back garden (the preferred view). Nonsmoking rooms are also available. The hotel is not really made for disabled guests, as you have to climb a few steps to get to the elevator. Streetside parking is free.

One interesting feature for a small hotel is that breakfast is served "whenever you want." I didn't test this by trying to have breakfast at 3 am., but the staff assured that I could if I wanted to. I can, however, testify that breakfast at a normal hour was a very good selection of cold cuts, cheese, fruit and rolls, served with a selection of juices. The waitress was so genuinely cheerful that I looked forward to seeing her at breakfast the next day. The hotel also has a pleasant garden restaurant that serves food good enough to rival most options in town.

Overall, the Adagio is an attractive hotel with a friendly staff that made me feel right at home.

Daily Rates: Singles 150 -195 DM (\$67-\$87) without breakfast, doubles 230-280 DM (\$102-\$124) without

breakfast. Special prices for certain off-season and weekend dates: singles 165 DM (\$73) with buffet breakfast, doubles 215 DM (\$96) with buffet breakfast.

Contact: Hotel Adagio, Seeburgstrasse 96, tel. +49/0341/21 66 99, fax 295 757, email info@hotel-adagio-leipzig.com.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 14/20

Seaside Park Hotel

This is the only small mid-class hotel within the Ring and is located across the street and a broad plaza from the train station. The exterior has a plain, early century look, while the interior is brash Art Deco that is at times stylish or over-the-top. For instance, the wall of TV sets in the lobby would fall into the latter category. Even without the TV sets, the lobby might have you seasick with all of the glittering chrome accenting the swirly marble pattern on the floor and the cut-away atrium overhead.

The restaurant located in a mock train carriage is meant to evoke the Orient Express, but all seems a bit overdone.

The rooms themselves, however, are quite nice. Their design is equally neo-Deco, but it somehow works in the smaller space. The open bathrooms are wonderful with diamond shaped windows looking onto the rooms and black marble counters set on dark cherry-stained cabinets. The floors are covered with dark carpets with vine-like Deco patterns that really enliven the room. The comfortable beds are cloaked in crisp white linens, and a smooth leather chair with footstool complete the furnishings. Tobacco-free rooms are also available.

While the Park Hotel is too brash to be cozy and comfortable, its prices are surprisingly good, especially considering the central location and the overdose of design.

Daily Rates: Singles 195-230 DM (\$87-\$102), doubles 233-268 DM (\$104-\$119); weekend rates single 150 DM (\$67), double 188 DM (\$84).

Contact: Seaside Park Hotel, Rich-

ard-Wagner-Strasse 7, tel +49/0341/98 52 1, fax 985 2750, email seaside-hotels@regionett.de.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Markgraf Leipzig

This small privately-run business hotel offers good rates and a modicum of flair. The setting is a bit uneven, with the hotel facing the partially developed Körner-platz (some buildings seem abandoned — a not too unusual situation in the neighborhoods outside the Ring), but it's just a 15-minute walk from the Ring, and just around the corner is the lively Karl-Liebkechtstrasse.

The lobby is small and perfunctory; the staff tall and efficient (at least on our visit). The lounge and rooms are well maintained, but not particularly memorable dressed in light tones and plain catalog furniture. Small tile baths are only large enough to accommodate showers. The hotel's most attractive feature—besides the price—is the lovely courtyard garden. The Markgraf is a good place to cut costs if you don't mind a business-y atmosphere.

Daily Rates: Singles 77 -127 DM (\$34-\$56), doubles 134 -139 DM (\$60-\$62), apartments 159 -199 DM (\$71-\$88) all without breakfast. Prices are

Key Websites for the Traveler to Germany, Austria & Switzerland

- www.gemut.com Gateway site for travelers to Germany, Austria and Switzerland, including car rental, rail passes, hotel bookings, traveler feedback, free travel advice and past issues (\$4 per month fee to access almost 8 years of back issues).
- www.mapblast.com Maps and automobile trip planning. Locates routes and distances.
- bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en German rail. Train timetables throughout Europe, not just Germany.
- www.rail.ch Swiss and European rail schedules.
- www.switzerlandtourism.com Website of Switzerland's national tourist authority.
- www.germany-tourism.de Germany's national tourist authority.
- www.anto.com Webstie of Austria's national tourist authority.

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substantially higher during main trade fares.

Contact: Hotel Markgraf, Körnerstrasse 36, tel +49/0341/30 30 30, fax +49/0341/30 30 3 99, email HotelMarkgraf@aol.com.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 14/20

Kosmo Hotel

This hotel—a pension, really—deserves mention because of its low price and quirky charm. The Kosmo consists of a few floors of guest rooms atop the Kosmopolitan revue and comedy theatre.

Each room is decorated in a different theme. There are rooms dedicated to countries and regions (the Spain room and the Arab room), as well as to art movements (the Romantic room and Pop-Art room). The reception staff is youthful and friendly.

While the Kosmo is not for everyone, those who would appreciate the hotel's artsy and personable atmosphere would probably not mind the throw-pillow comforts.

Daily Rates: 90 DM (\$40) with minibar and breakfast, 20 DM (\$9) more for a room with TV.

Contact: Kosmo Hotel, Gottschedstrasse 1, tel +49/0341/233 44 20, fax +49/0341/233 44 21.

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 14/20

Sustenance

Thüringerhof

This new/old restaurant, owned by the Würzburger brewery, has roots in the 15th century, though the building and interior date from a major restoration completed in May 1996. Pains were made to give the restaurant an historic look, especially in the arched and colonnaded main hall called the Luther Room. The Thüringerhof offers a variety of atmospheres to choose from, such as the dark wainscoting of the main hall, the bright skylight of the winter garden, and the outdoor breeziness of the streetside patio.

The food was well prepared and

hearty. Soup choices included a creamy celery root soup and the traditional Saxon potato soup with sliced sausage for 7.5 DM (\$3.33) and 5.5 DM (\$2.44) respectively. The main course was tender braised lamb smothered in rosemary cream sauce and served with a spongy Saxon potato dumpling (19.9 DM/\$9). The pan of roast potatoes and mushrooms (23.8 DM/\$13) was also good, though a bit too oily. Beer choices were, of course, courtesy of the Würzburger Hofbrau, while the wine list was short but well-chosen. The desert selection was a bit minimal and the day so lovely that we decided to have ice cream somewhere else. Thüringerhof zu Leipzig, Burgstrasse 19, tel +49/0341/9 94 49 99, web www.thueringer-hof.de, open daily 11 am-midnight.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 11/20

Auerbachs Keller

This hotel has the good fortune of being mentioned in Goethe's *Faust*, thus insuring it a steady stream of customers. But even with all its touristy associations—including a souvenir stand—this *Keller* still manages to please. Fortunately, the decor avoids demonic themes, and instead manages to be quite elegant with stenciled arches, wood cloaked pillars, gleaming parquet floors and dark stained wooden chairs and tables.

The food was as tasteful as the decor. The soup selection sounded familiar with options such as Saxon potato soup (5.9 DM/\$2.62) and onion soup (7 DM/\$3.11), so we decided to split the smoked fish plate (22 DM/\$10) as a starter. The tasty lineup included delicate slices of smoked salmon, trout, and *Heilbutt* accompanied by thick chunks of chewy brown bread.

For the main course, I chose the special of the day, which was roasted pork with sauerkraut and the traditional Saxon potato dumpling (19.9 DM/\$9), while my companion had broccoli casserole with smoked duck breast and sliced potatoes (19.9 DM/\$9).

Another dish that looked good —

and was served to the table across from us — was the tender beefroulade with apples and sauerkraut. The beer was Radeberger, a locally appreciated brew that I haven't especially warmed to. The wine list, however, was ample and encompassed selections from Germany, Italy, France and Austria. Dessert choices were much better than at the Thüringerhof. The quark cake served with baked apples (9.5 DM/\$4.22) and the warm crepes filled with chocolate mousse and vanilla ice cream (10 DM/\$4.44), made two fine selections.

Auerbachs Keller, Grimmische Strasse 2-4, tel +49/0341/21 61 00, open 11-midnight.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 11/20

Also of Interest

Leipzig also has two good coffeehouses that should be visited. The lovely Art Nouveau **Kaffee Riquet** on Schuhmachergässchen 1, was once the headquarters of a coffee, tea and spice importer with a taste for exotic naturalist decor.

Although the **Zum Arabischen Coffe Baum** on Kleine Fleischergasse is located in a building that dates from the 16th century, it has only been serving coffee since 1711. This "coffee tree" also has an interesting museum dedicated to the black bean and all of its accoutrements. The cakes are especially delicious. ☒

ROMANTIK HOTEL FLORHOF

Continued from page 5

representative of several we received; "the friendliness, charm and warmth of the former managers is sadly lacking and I would no longer recommend the hotel to anyone."

In 1995 we took another look at the Florhof and had this to say: "an intimate, quiet hotel owned by Brigitte and Beat Schiesser, who have a cordial, hands-on management style. No detail of our comfort was overlooked. The Florhof is most appealing."

Perhaps the difference in the two viewpoints is that it was our correspondent's first visit to the hotel. He had never met the beloved Herr

Schilter.

Based on yet another visit last May, we have concluded that the difficulty veteran customers may have with the 21st century Florhof is one of style. The old one was a comfortable, three-star hotel with an almost country/cozy atmosphere, presided over by a gentle elderly couple. This new four-star version is chic and modern. Champagne is offered at check-in, a procedure efficiently handled by a phalanx of smartly dressed, attractive young women, each of whom speaks almost flawless English. Luggage is hauled from curbside to guestroom by uniformed porters and the whole arrival process seems more five than four-star. Only the tiny reception area reminds one of the three-star days.

And, except for size, the handsomely furnished and decorated guestrooms are also five-star quality. Number 225, for example, a corner double, had red striped wallpaper, beige wainscoting in a herringbone pattern, rose carpeting flecked with green, a handsome pair of small but comfortable chairs, superb bed linens, bedside lamps that were both attractive and practical, and a bright, well-equipped bathroom. The hotel's slightly undersized rooms require creative layout, hence the curving wooden shelf under one window that doubles as a desk.

Yes, we miss Herr Schilter but our stay was without a hitch: fine rooms, pleasant and helpful staff, and excellent buffet breakfasts. What's not to like? At 350 Sfr. (\$198) maybe the price,* but this is Zürich. In New York, the superbly located, exquisite little Florhof would fetch \$350 to \$400 per night.

Daily Rates: Singles 210 to 260 Sfr. (\$119-\$147), 320 to 350 Sfr. (\$181-\$198).

Contact: Romantikhof Florhof, Florhofgasse 4, CH-8001 Zürich, Tel. +41/01/ 261 44 70, fax 261 46 11, email info@florhof.ch

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 14/20

* For a less expensive Zürich headquarters see this month's Dear Subscriber column

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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towns, especially in Germany and Austria, are particularly good value right now:

- For sheer *gemütlichkeit*, hearty Bavarian food, and the most fun night you'll have in Germany, we've been recommending Garmisch-Partenkirchen's **Gasthof Fraundorfer** (tel. +49/08821/9270, fax 92799) for more than 20 years now. It's gone from a \$136 splurge to an \$84 per night bargain. And for about \$20 per person you can drink several beers, eat a hefty farmer's dinner followed by a Coupé Denmark (chocolate sundae), and even have enough left over to have a *Schnapps* or two as a finish to a long evening of folk dancers and Freidl's down-home singing and accordion playing.

- The top double room at the **Hotel Petrisberg** (tel. +49/0651/4640, fax 46450), in the Mosel river town of Trier, is 150 DM (\$66).

- Doubles at the **Romantik Weinhaus Messerschmitt** (tel. +49/0951/27866, fax 26141) in Bamberg, Germany, start at 189 DM (\$83).

- In Seeg, Germany, near Füssen, the **Pension Heim** (tel. +49/08364/258, fax 1051) has large, well-equipped doubles for 144 DM (\$63).

- In touristy, but charming Rothenburg ob der Tauber, the **Reichs-Küchenmeister** (tel. +49/09861/9700, fax 970409) prices it's best doubles at 220 DM (\$97).

- The four-star **Stadt Hotel Styria** (tel. +43 /07252/51551 - 54, fax 51551 - 51, web: www.stadthotel.at/) in Steyr, Austria, offers doubles at 1280 AS (\$82).

- Just north of Salzburg, in tiny Lengfelden near Bergheim, the **Gasthof Bräuwirt** (tel. +43/4522163, fax 45216353) has double rooms for \$90 and three course dinners for about \$11.

- In Switzerland's Emmental, 140 Sfr. (\$80) gets you a cozy double at the **Hotel Hirschen** (+41/34/402 15 17, fax 402 56 23, email: info@hirschen-langnau.ch) in Lang-

nau. Michelin marks the hotel's restaurant as "good food at moderate prices."

Enough already. Suffice to say, unlike just a few years ago, all three countries are full of good hotels where two persons can stay for less than \$100 per night.

READERS' FORUM

Touring WWII Sites

In recent issues I have I noted several comments about "Hitler sites" and agree with the thought of keeping them available for those who are interested.

In Berlin, I took the "Third Reich Sites Walking Tour" offered by **Berlin Walks** and found it fascinating. The bunker, at the moment, is under a parking area next to an apartment building.

Although you commented about the Nürnberg site of the huge Nazi rallies as being overrun with weeds, the reality is otherwise. Not only is it marked, but one can see the rally area, the colosseum, and the arena where the Cathedral of Lights took place. We took an exceptional walking tour provided by an organization in Nürnberg devoted to history. Their website is <http://geschichte-fuer-alle.de/start.htm>.

We were led on a three and a half hour private tour by John Jenkins, a Welshman, who is one of 40 tour guides (but the best for English-speaking people) used by this group. For the seven of us, we paid 130 DM (\$57). This was the highlight of our trip and I commend it to you.

Next, Salzburg. While visiting last year, we went out to the **Restaurant Karl-Rudolf Obauer** (tel. +43/06468/521220, fax 521212) in Werfen, which was the finest meal of that trip. Werfen, 45 km (28 miles) south of Salzburg, is a small resort village that we might well have considered for a few days of peace and quiet.

Last summer, we were based in

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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Rougemont while our daughter was studying French there at The American School in Switzerland (TASIS). Rougemont is quite charming, great for those who like listening to cow bells and appreciating chalet architecture. No great restaurants or hotels, but pleasant, simple living. In Chateaux D'Oex, a few kilometers down the road, we had an excellent dinner at **La Rocaille** (tel. +41/026/924 6215, fax 924 5249), which you might want to check out when in the area. We also visited Gruyères, but found it overrun by bus tourists.

RUSSELL WAYNE
BY EMAIL

(Ed. Note: The Karl-Rudolf Obauer gets two stars from Michelin. Reserve well in advance.

The website Mr. Wayne speaks of is in German.)

Castles in Austria

A brief overnight stay at **Schloss Haunspberg** (tel. +43/06245/80662, fax 85680) with the von Gernerths was as wonderful as you have described.

After learning that we were driving south, they suggested we stop at **Schloss Moosberg** (tel. +43/04272/83206, fax 83206-23) northwest of Klagenfurt. After they had called the owner for a reservation they told us we were very lucky because at Moosberg we would be participating in a feast celebrating the end of Lent. A Catholic priest who presided over the event had spent several years in California and spoke excellent English. It was a truly remarkable experience. As you can see from the enclosed brochure the hotel has a beautiful site at the foot of the Alps.

I would like also to say that the **Hotel Benen-Diken-Hof** (tel. +49/04651/93830, fax 938383), on the North Sea island of Sylt in the town of Keitum, is still every bit as fine a hotel as you said it was several years ago.

Gemütlichkeit readers who visit the region must visit the **Sansibar**

Train Talk

Three-Country Rail Pass Available in 2001

Next year, a new European rail pass will be introduced that should prove popular as well as save a few dollars for travelers to Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

The **Eurail Selectpass** debuts January 1, 2001. For a lower price than either the regular Eurailpass or Europass, the new Eurail Selectpass allows travelers to choose three countries, linked by rail or ferry, from among the 17 countries normally covered by the Eurailpass.

In the past, travelers wishing to restrict their train travel to Germany, Austria and Switzerland, had to purchase a Europass — which includes Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France and Spain — plus pay an additional fee to be able to travel by train in Austria. The charge for two persons for the five-day Europass Saverpass is \$696. The new Selectpass Saver for five days for two persons will cost \$560.

The Selectpass is a flexipass, meaning that travel days need not be consecutive. Passes are available for 5, 6, 8 or 10 days within a two-month period. Prices vary depending on the number of days selected. (See prices below). In addition to the Eurail Selectpass for individual travelers, there is a Eurail Selectpass Saver which provides a discount for two or more persons traveling together. Both passes are for first class travel. There will also be a Eurail Selectpass Youth (under 26) for travel in second class. Prices start at \$230 for 5 days.

Restaurant (tel. +49/04651/964646, fax 964647) in nearby Rantum. The hotel tried to get us a dinner reservation but couldn't. We went there for lunch and met the owner, Herbert Seckler. He spent two or three years in California and is a wonderful host. We toured his basement cellar with over 50,000 bottles of wine. The food

Selectpass

Validity	Per Person Price
5 days/2 months	\$328
6 days/2 months	\$360
8 days/2 months	\$420
10 days/2 months	\$476

Validity	Per Person Price
5 days/2 months	\$280
6 days/2 months	\$306
8 days/2 months	\$358
10 days/2 months	\$406

Selectpass Saver

Validity	Per Person Price
5 days/2 months	\$280
6 days/2 months	\$306
8 days/2 months	\$358
10 days/2 months	\$406

No Price Increase for Eurail and Europasses

At press time, **Rail Europe** and **DER Tours**, America's lone marketers of European rail passes were set to announce that, for the second straight year, **Eurail** and **Europasses** will not increase in price in the new year.

Given the strength of the dollar, such an announcement would not be a surprise.

The two companies also market a variety of single country and regional rail passes to the travel trade and to the general public. All rail passes are priced the same throughout the United States, whether purchased from DER or Rail Europe or from a travel agent. *Gemütlichkeit* readers can buy the entire range of passes from 800-521-6722 for the going rate but without the DER or Rail Europe charge for express delivery.

The 2001 prices for individual country passes such as Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France and England was not available at press time.

is out of this world. Herbert told us we must return for dinner, which, of course, we did. We highly recommend the experience.

Gemütlichkeit has been a wonderful companion on this trip and others in the past.

PHILLIP T. BACKER
HAYDEN LAKE ID 