

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

January 20, 2001

Off the top of my head I'd say...

- **Travel to Europe** will be down this year due to economic conditions; times seem uncertain and many retirement portfolios took a licking in 2000. Fewer travelers could mean lower high-season airfares and maybe a few hotel deals.

To stay in touch with these, send your email address to hotstuff@gemut.com and you'll receive *Germanic Travel* the periodic email supplement to *Gemütlichkeit*. It's free.

- **Car rental rates in Germany** show no sign of falling back to 1999 levels. Reserve now and you can always re-book later if rates drop. If they go up, you're sitting pretty. Actually, that goes for renting in any European country.

- **Belgium is now the cheapest** country in which to rent. Here's a little table that compares the current (Jan. 12, 2001) cost for one week in a standard shift, mid-size car, picked up at airport or rail stations. Prices are basic rate –

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

DRESDEN RISES

Once considered Germany's most beautiful city, Dresden is recovering nicely from 50 years of communist neglect and the fire bombing that leveled the city in 1945.

Dresden brings to mind two contradictory images: The stunning Baroque legacy of August the Strong and the city's tragic destruction in the firestorm of 1945. Both have left their mark, obviously, one for better, the other for worse.

Today, after the collapse of communist East Germany and a new infusion of funds and freedoms, the city is trying to rebuild its way back to its glorious past, when the Saxon elector turned King of Poland took this pretty city on the Elbe and transformed it into a Baroque jewel.

August left the city an array of treasures: the elaborate **Zwinger**, the

Frauenkirche, and the **August Bridge**. His reign set the standard for what was to follow: the city's **opera house**, the **Academy of Arts building** and the **Brühlsche Terrace** over the Elbe, known as "the balcony of Europe." August also assembled an extraordinary art collection and commissioned the exquisite jeweled collection that fills the **Green Vault**. Although Saxony eventually fell to the Prussians, the city of Dresden remained a cultural leader of Europe and the prettiest city in all of Germany.

This changed on February 13, 1945. Because Dresden had no real military targets, the city had gone

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Zürich Dining

With the strengthening of the dollar over the past two years, a meal in Switzerland's largest city is no longer one of those "wanna know how much I paid for a bowl of soup in Zürich?" experiences.

To be sure, if you want Michelin rosettes or five-star hotel dining rooms, you can post some breathtaking numbers. For the most part, however, good food can be found at reasonable prices.

Here are four recommendations:

Meré Catherine: Charming, French/Mediterranean-style bistro in the old town near the Grossmünster. Most menu choices are light with usually a pasta dish or two and lots of seafood. Start with very fresh

Normandy oysters (about \$1.50 each when available) served with tiny rounds of pumpernickel bread and butter. Specials change daily but we've had such dishes as primavera pasta of corn noodles served with carrots, cauliflower, zucchini and broccoli; and a wedge of firm white scorpion fish in a lobster bisque sauce with basmati rice. The very fresh salads often arrive with a tray of additions: seeds, chopped egg, onion, parsley, and croutons. Recently, we paid 36 Sfr. (\$22) for a pleasant bottle of Saint Amour Beaujolais.

Starters range from 7 to 15 Sfr. (\$4.30-\$9.20) and main dishes are in the neighborhood of 20 to 30 Sfr. (\$12-\$18)

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except for Italy which requires the purchase of collision and theft insurance — and include VAT, airport and road or license taxes, if any. Members of AARP or AAA can probably get a small discount off these numbers.

Airport or Rail Station Pickup

Brussels	\$164
Luxembourg	\$200
Frankfurt	\$208
Amsterdam	\$218
Paris	\$245
Zürich	\$287
Vienna	\$321
Milan	\$386

If you can manage to avoid airport or rail station pickup, the rankings change somewhat:

City Pickup

Brussels	\$144
Amsterdam	\$183
Frankfurt	\$187
Luxembourg	\$192
Paris	\$225
Zürich	\$254
Vienna	\$284
Milan	\$321

• **Deciding whether to rent a car** or travel by rail used to be a “no-brainer” — at least from a cost standpoint — for couples arriving in Germany from North America. Now it’s very much a “brainer.” For those traveling only within Germany, the **German Twin Pass** offers two per-

sons five days rail travel in a one-month period for \$426 first class and \$294 second class (and second class travel on Germany’s ICE trains will make you question how much better first class could possibly be). If you’re visiting a couple of extra countries, say Austria and Switzerland, the new **Eurail Selectpass** charges two persons \$560 for first class travel in three countries for five days within two months.

A midsize car for two weeks, picked up at a German airport will cost about \$400 including VAT, airport charges and road tax. Then there is fuel at nearly \$4 per gallon and parking fees. Of course with a rail pass you don’t have nearly the flexibility but, as mentioned before, it’s not such an easy decision anymore.

For those who will travel only in Switzerland, that country’s rail passes present an even stronger case. They are good for lake steamers, busses and some public transport as well as trains. A two-week, midsize car rental from the Zürich Airport is about \$545. A **Swiss Saver Flexipass** for two persons, good for five days travel in a one-month period, is \$540 first class and \$360 second class. For six days the prices are \$612 and \$408. Switzerland is probably the easiest country in the world to travel in without a car.

• **The possible mergers of United and USAir and American and**

TWA can only be bad news for air travelers seeking low fares to Europe.

• **Most European tours** marketed in this country cost more than if you did the same trip on your own — assuming you might be foolish enough to try to cram the Rhine Valley, Heidelberg, the Black Forest, Schaffhausen and Lucerne into two days. That schedule is part of **Grand European Tours’** Germany, Switzerland & Austria, a 15-night motor-coach marathon for \$2799, including airfare, breakfasts and nine dinners. That’s \$5598 per couple or \$373 per night.

Just for the fun of it, without getting too specific about a routing, let’s talk about a trip that might cover much of the same ground but cost less money and allow us to travel at our own pace and not a bus driver’s. We’ll assume a June depart-

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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.

DRESDEN

Continued from page 1

through most of World War II unscathed. Ironically, this was its downfall. By 1945, British commanders were looking for cities that would be susceptible to a new technique of bombing called a firestorm. The idea was to create a self-perpetuating fire with incendiary bombs that would do more damage than even a deluge of conventional bombs. Dresden's firestorm devastated the city, killing as many as 130,000 — more than the atomic blasts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki — and practically wiped out the inner city. (One witness to the bombing was the novelist Kurt Vonnegut, at the time a young American prisoner of war. He described the event in his novel *Slaughterhouse Five*.)

After the war, communist officials were not quite sure what to do with this ruined city. Some wanted to tear everything down and build a monument to the new communist spirit. Fortunately, they didn't. A few of the more important structures were rebuilt, including the Zwinger, the August Bridge and parts of the **Residenzschloss**. The Frauenkirche had survived the bombing but collapsed as the sandstone cooled. It was left as rubble, a memorial to the destruction of the war. Other areas of the center were rebuilt with boxy buildings made from prefab concrete slabs, while the areas outside the city — the untouched residential areas along the Elbe filled with 19th century villas — were neglected and left to fall under their own weight.

Since the end of the GDR, the city has begun the overwhelming task of rebuilding, refurbishing and restoring as much of this beautiful city as it can. Some changes have been achieved quite quickly. A handful of the palaces in the old city have been restored and turned into luxury hotels or cafes, most notably the **Taschenberg Palace**, which is now a luxurious **Kempinski** hotel. The most ambitious task is the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche. The architects are trying to use as many of the old

stones and cornice pieces as possible. Dresdeners call it the world's largest jigsaw puzzle.

As the center rebuilds itself, life goes roaring on in the outer districts, especially the Outer Neustadt, a once grimy neighborhood of student and dissident homes, which is now filling up with trendy bars and cafes. Also, the residential neighborhoods — Loschwitz, Weisser Hirsch, Blasewitz and Pillnitz — are having their lovely 19th-century villas restored and refurbished. Most visitors come just to tour the city's museums, but they would be missing out if they didn't venture out of the old town to watch Dresden reclaim its past.

Accommodations

Hotel Martha Hospiz

This small, family-run hotel is located in a century-old corner building cradling a lovely garden, and around the corner from the revived Königstrasse, an 18th century neighborhood decreed by Albert the Strong.

While not as indulgent or extravagant as the district's most exclusive hotel, the **Bülow Residence**, the Martha Hospiz offers good rooms at about half the price.

A narrow entrance hall leads back to a wintergarden lobby and reception attached to the back of the hotel. A wall of windows overlooks a spacious, tree-shaded garden.

Guestrooms are decorated in a light Biedermeier-style, with reproduction antiques, pink fabrics and slate-blue carpets. Most of the small baths offer showers instead of tubs. The best rooms overlook the garden, though the streetside rooms are relatively quiet as there is little traffic on Nieritzstrasse.

Breakfast is served in a large room on the second floor with parquet floors and a string of chandeliers glittering overhead. The hotel offers 50 rooms, seven of which can accommodate disabled guests.

The combination of friendly staff, superb location, good price, and a touch of the historic makes this the best choice in town.

Also worth mentioning is the unusual theme restaurant in the cellar, called the *Kartoffelkeller*. Everything on the menu is made from potatoes: potato dumplings, potato goulash, potato casserole — even desserts like potato pie and, yes, potato ice cream.

Daily Rates: Singles 140 -165 DM (\$68-\$80), doubles 190 -230 DM (\$93-\$112)

Contact: Hotel Martha Hospiz, Nieritzstrasse 11, 01097 Dresden, tel +49/0351/8176 333, fax 8176 222. email: marthahospiz.dresden@t-online.de

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Am Blauen Wunder

While not exactly next to the Blue Wonder Bridge — Dresden's late 19th century steel bridge — this hotel is close enough, and just a short walk away from the lively restaurants (see reviews pages 4 & 5) and small market on the Schillerplatz.

The neighborhood retains its affluent 19th-century character with attractive villas and tree-lined streets. In contrast, the hotel is quite modern, with an attractive, four-story glass-and-stone facade in a contemporary European design.

The interior is equally up-to-date with a corner lobby of polished marble set with rattan chairs, potted palms and a large chandelier overhead that resembles an upturned glass. Glazed hallways lined with plush carpets lead to stylish guestrooms with textured, cantaloupe colored wallpaper, quality furnishings, and plush low-pile carpet in seafoam green and pearl blue. They are scattered with bright cherrywood furnishings embellished with marquetry. Half of the guestrooms have small semicircular balconies; all have small televisions, minibars, and full marble baths. Corner rooms are a bit smaller, but cheery with two walls of windows.

Good public transportation makes it easy to get to and from the center. A lot of care obviously went into the hotel and good maintenance helps retain its freshness.

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DRESDEN

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Daily Rates: Singles 145 -168 DM (\$71-\$82), doubles 168 -198 DM (\$82-\$97).

Contact: Hotel Am Blauen Wunder, Loschwitzer Strasse 48, Dresden 01309, tel +49/0351/33 660, fax 33 66 299. Web: www.leisureplanet.com/hotel/individual

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel Schloss Eckberg

Visitors who refuse to stay anywhere but in a castle have two choices in Dresden: the Schloss Eckberg or the **Schloss Pillnitz**. The Eckberg is a better choice because it is more tranquil (the Pillnitz is part of a busy tourist attraction) and has a more dramatic setting on a hill — almost a cliff, really — overlooking the broad Elbe.

The Eckberg, located in the Loschwitz district, an attractive area rich in late 19th-century luxury villas, was built in the 1860s by a student of Gottfried Semper for an English businessman who wanted an old English country manor, complete with crenulated towers.

The castle is set far back from the road, protected from the sounds of this century by semi-wild, forested grounds. Behind it is a small French garden and terrace with a spectacular view over the Elbe, which is worth seeing even if you are not staying at the hotel and especially on a sunny day sitting on the outdoor terrace.

The hotel's reception is in the carriage house near the entrance gate, while guestrooms are divided between the castle and the newly-built Cavalier House. Castle rooms are luxurious and very expensive, but Cavalier rooms offer good value with sensitive modern design and access to the castle grounds and facilities. They are conservatively decorated with slate blue carpets, pale drapes and built-in, dark wood furniture. The salmon-toned chairs provide a spark. Rooms at the back of the house have small terraces or patios. A wine bar and lounge, with

burgundy leather chairs, a fireplace and temperature controlled glass cases stacked with wine, is located in the cellar.

The castle's restaurant offers high-quality, formal meals with accompanying high prices. If you want to enjoy the spectacular view without the price, visit the café for coffee and cake in the afternoon.

The staff is helpful, but so spread out between the entrance gate reception and the castle that you sometimes feel like you are entirely on your own.

Daily Rates: Singles in castle 310 - 350 DM (\$151-\$171), singles in Cavalier's house 165 -185 DM (\$80-\$90); double in castle 410 -450 DM (\$200-\$220), double in Cavalier's house 230 -260 DM (\$112-\$127)

Contact: Hotel Schloss Eckberg, Bautzner Strasse 134, 01099 Dresden, tel +49/0351/8099 0, fax 8099 199. Email: e-mail@hotel-schloss-eckberg.de

Rating (Cavalier House): QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Villa Emma

Just past the Loschwitz district is the little village of villas known as Weisser Hirsch. One of these has been made into a privately-run hotel called Villa Emma. The half-timbered, turn-of-the-last-century building with flashes of Art Nouveau, adjoins the back of a large, forested park, the Dresdener Heide. This makes it quiet, though the hotel is still well-connected to town by a tramline that runs along the main road at the end of the street.

Inside, a small lobby at the foot of a cast-iron staircase leads to four floors of guestrooms. Most are spacious with high ceilings, bay windows and attractive decor. Rooms 10 and 11 are the best picks.

Top-floor rooms are smaller and influenced by the shape of the roof. Of these, Numbers 20 and 21 are good choices because of the large number of windows and good views, but not during the summer when the top floor gets a bit stuffy from the heat. All have TVs, minibars, large

wardrobes, and white-tiled baths with tubs.

The restaurant on the ground floor gets good marks for expensive, multi-course dining and serves an extensive buffet breakfast (especially good is the smoked salmon). Prices here are a notch higher than the others, but the hospitable atmosphere and historic surroundings make it worth the cost.

Daily Rates: Single 190-240 DM (\$93-\$117), double 290-340 DM (\$141-\$166)

Contact: Hotel Villa Emma, Stechgrundstrasse 2, 01324, Dresden, tel +49/0351/26 48 10, fax 26 48 118.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 14/20

Sustenance

Sophienkeller im Taschenbergpalais

This deep and labyrinthine cellar restaurant is popular with locals and tourists alike. To some it might bring to mind a permanent Renaissance festival, but most will find the kitschy medieval decor, dress and atmosphere to be loads of fun. Of course, the well-prepared Saxon dishes and genuinely friendly service certainly helps tip the balance in the right direction.

The atmosphere is supposed to carry guests back to the days of August the Strong. Large tables encourage patrons to sit with strangers and take part in the general feasting. Off in one corner, a suckling pig roasts over a fire. Nearby is a group of seats on a carousel and next to that is an 18th-century army tent. A part of the kitchen is under a covered wagon. Overseen by a hostess in a silk ball gown and wig, the wait staff is dressed in peasant outfits.

Of course, all of this hoopla would mean nothing if the food wasn't good, but fortunately it is quite tasty, and focuses on hearty Saxon dishes with a pasta selection for lighter palates. Offerings include a wonderful Saxon sauerbraten with dumplings and red cabbage (18.50 DM/\$9), homemade bread stuffed and baked with herbed pork (19.50 DM/\$10), and a large slice from the

roasted suckling pig (19.50 DM/\$10). This restaurant doesn't try to be serious and succeeds wonderfully.

Sophienkeller im Taschenbergpalais
Dresden, Taschenberg 3, 01067
Dresden, tel +49/0351/497 26 0, fax
97 26 11. Open daily 11 am-11 pm.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Pfund's Molkerei

The highly wrought Villeroy & Boch tiles that decorate this small 19th-century shop make it a popular stop on the tourist trail. But even those with no interest in tiles should still sample the atmosphere and the wonderful selection of cheeses and local wines.

The upstairs restaurant offers platters of domestic and international cheeses, but we recommend eating at one of the standing tables downstairs, amid the glory of the tiles.

The shop can be crowded at times, but most groups stay for only a short time, intent on keeping up with their tour bus schedules. This allows the more independent traveler to claim a table in the main room between the waves of bus travelers, and comfortably watch the ebb and flow of visitors.

Cheese platters are 19 to 27 DM (\$9-\$13), or you can assemble your own for 9 DM (\$4.40) per 100 grams.

Shop assistants are friendly and helpful, and will let you taste the selection of European cheeses before purchase. Local wines are offered by the glass for around 6.50 DM (\$3.17). The best time to stop by Pfund's is for a cheese breakfast or a snack in the late afternoon, when the crowds have died down.

Pfund's Molkerei, Bautzner Strasse 79, tel. +49/0351/808080. Open Mon-Fri 9 am-8 pm, Sat and Sun 10 am-4 pm.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 15/20

Restaurant Schillergarten

This lively restaurant is one of two flanking the Blue Wonder Bridge. The half-timbered building was erected on the site of a garden often visited by the poet Schiller during his Dresden days.

Schillergarten offers a variety of spaces in which to eat or drink: a wintergarden, a nautically-themed bar, a dance café, a café bistro, and a large, terraced *Biergarten* under leafy chestnut trees with views of the broad, beautiful Elbe. The garden is clearly the best choice. What could be better than enjoying a tall mug of beer and hearty *Biergarten* fare, enhanced by a panorama of the green banks of the Elbe, the riveted iron of the "pierless" Blue Wonder, and the forested hills of the far bank dotted with 19th-century villas?

Saxon specialties include a hearty pea soup with bacon and sliced sausage (6.50 DM/\$3.17); homemade bread stuffed with ground pork (26 DM/\$13); an iron pan filled with pork, sausage, sauerkraut and potatoes covered with melted cheese (14 DM/\$7); and braised leg of lamb with onion, sauerkraut and roast potatoes (17.50 DM/\$8.50).

There are a number of special theme days and weeks — Africa week, French week and Spanish week — where various national dishes are served. An interesting one is "ostalgie-nacht," with one low price as in the "ostzeiten," or the Communist days.

Restaurant Schillergarten, Schillerplatz 9, 01309 Dresden, tel +49/0351/3 18 30 20, fax 3 18 30 30. Open daily 11 am-midnight.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 14/20

Restaurant Villa Marie

This is the more elegant of the two restaurants that flank the Blue Wonder. Villa Marie has the kind of picturesque setting that prompts people to have their wedding photos taken there. Like the Schillergarten, this lovely, intimate villa has memorable views of the Elbe, et al.

The rooms and terraces are relatively small, which makes this a wonderful choice for a romantic dinner (although it would be a shame to miss the views during the day).

The kitchen is accomplished without being too expensive. I had an enjoyable late lunch of tangy gazpacho (8.50 DM/\$4.14) followed

by penne with bacon and onion (14 DM/\$7). Other interesting dishes were rabbit aspic with wild mushrooms (17 DM/\$8.30), fusilli pasta with eggplant, tomatoes and basil (16.50 DM/\$8), and veal saltimbocca in a white wine sauce (29.50 DM/\$15). Pastry is good and the coffee excellent — something one can not say about every restaurant in Dresden.

Restaurant Villa Marie, Fährgasschen 1, 01309, Dresden, tel +49/0351/31 54 40, fax 315 44 14. Email www.villamarie.com. Open Mon-Sun 11:30 am-1 am. The kitchen closes at midnight.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Grand Cafe Coselpalais

This restored palace was once the home of Count Friedrich August Cosel, the son of August the Strong and his favorite mistress (though it all ended in tears). Today, it is a bright and cheery café with brilliant silk wallpaper, lush baroque furnishings, glistening chandeliers, and big, creamy pastries.

The palace consists of two wings, which flank an ornate main building and enclose a small courtyard, which in summer is filled with tables. Inside, the two wings are separated into elegant rooms of cobalt blue or burgundy hues.

The café offers a range of snacks and meals — one interesting choice is the *Gurkenparfait* — but most people come for the desserts. Tall, rich cakes are offered for 4.80 DM (\$2.34) and the warm favorite is the *Dresdener Heide*, two yeast dumplings dusted with cinnamon and powdered sugar on a bed of dark, purply bilberry compote (9.50 DM/\$4.63).

Best of all, the café is located near the Frauenkirche, just a short walk from the major sites in the Altstadt. This makes it a perfect place to recuperate with a sugar and caffeine fix after too much sightseeing.

Grand Café Coselpalais, An der Frauenkirche 12a, 01067 Dresden, tel. +49/0351/496 24 44. Open daily 10 am-1 am.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 14/20

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DRESDEN

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Raskolnikoff

Located in the Outer Neustadt quarter, the Raskolnikoff was a dissident rendezvous during the days of the GDR. Today, it is a hang-out for artists and young people, with an attractive back garden and food that is interesting, inexpensive, and mostly vegetarian.

The menu is divided into the directions of the compass: North is for dishes from Scandinavia, South for those from Africa, West for France and Germany, and East from Russian and Eastern Europe. Good choices are the fish soup (7 DM/\$3.41), cheese noodles (9.50 DM/\$4.63) and the filling *Srasimt pilzen*, a delicious fried potato pocket stuffed with chewy wild mushrooms (12.50 DM/\$6).

There is also a good selection of beers on tap as well as coffee and tea. The Raskolnikoff has the atmosphere of a coffeehouse, with young people sitting at candle-lit tables, perhaps discussing Hegel or Dostoevsky.

Raskolnikoff, Böhmische Strasse 34, 01099 Dresden, tel +49/0351/804 5706. Open Mon-Fri 11am-2 am, Sat-Sun 10am-2 am.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 16/20 

Readers' Forum

Loved Bled, Slovenia

As a longtime subscriber to your wonderful publication, we thought we would write regarding our latest "find."

Based on a *New York Times* article, we visited Slovenia – specifically the small resort village of Bled, just over the border south of Villach. It is a beautiful little country, half the size of Switzerland, with two million people, 99% of whom love their country (new in 1991) and want you to love it, too. More people speak English than in Austria. More brochures, catalogs, menus, etc., have English translations and the people are the friendliest we've encountered. When we arrived at the **Hotel Villa Bled** (Cesta Svobode 26 PO Box

53, SL-64260 Bled Slovenia, tel. 386-4-579-1500, fax 386-4-574-1320, manager, Janez Fajfar) we were immediately given an upgrade from a double room (\$155 per night for two persons including breakfast) to a lakeview suite (Marshall Tito's former office). It included enough space in the hallway (with bar) and sitting room to host a 75 person reception. There was also enough closet space for an army, a huge bath with shower, a long balcony looking out on the lake, TV with CNN and a separate elevator. The hotel (a Relais & Chateaux) also has its own bathing area and boats on the lake. It also has a good tennis court and it sits in a 13-acre park loaded with gardens and magnificent trees.

Our waiter at lunch volunteered to give us a personal tour of the Bohinj Lake and Julian Alps region at no charge. This he did the next day. We toured an island in the lake, it's church, and Bled Castle, which sits above the lake on the opposite shore. The boats to the island are gondola types, powered by men with oars who stand in the stern.

A day later our most colorful, most humorous general hotel manager, took the entire day off to take us on a personal tour to the capital city Ljubljana, which we had heard was "not much to see." But, as presented to us by Mr. Fajfar, the city was beyond our fondest expectations. The food market area, the churches, river and bridges, the old town and many beautiful medieval buildings, the restaurants, were a real eye opener. It is a small city of 250,000 and has as much (or more) charm as Salzburg, Graz, or Innsbruck and is only 50 kilometers from Bled. Driving the side roads back to the hotel was a history lesson of its own, with many small villages right out of medieval times.

The two restaurants where we had dinner were located in the small village of Radovljica, a 15-minute drive from Bled. Both are highly recommended and located almost across the street from each other. The first, **Gostilna Kunstclj**, is owned by Anton (Tony) Stihlerle, a five-handi-

cap golfer, world class skier and a first-class innovative chef. Above all, he is a fun guy and likes to show his good customers his wine cellar, where cocktails are sometimes served before dinner. We ate twice at this terrific place accompanied by Mr. Fajfar, from the Villa Bled. The second, **Gostilna Lectar**, is just down the street in a medieval building with tons of atmosphere, ambience, and great food. Dinner for two in both places can be under \$30, depending on the amount of libation consumed.

Prices are reasonable in Slovenia; gas is a third less than in Austria, and everyone takes major credit cards. We will return for a longer stay.

The Slovenia Tourist Office sent me a terrific package. Their address: Slovenian Tourist Office, 345 East 124th St, New York NY 10003, tel. 212-358-9686, fax 212-358-9025, email Slotouristboard@sloveniatravel.com.

BILL WOOD
HOBE SOUND FL

Hotel on Lake Lucerne

On 30 Nov. 2000, we returned from a six-week trip to Switzerland, France, Germany, and Austria. We want to share a hotel experience with you.

Upon our arrival in Zürich on 17 Oct., we drove to Merlischachen, 12 kilometers from Luzern, for a three-night stay to rest before proceeding to the South of France.

In Merlischachen, we stayed at the **Schloss-Hotel Swiss-Chalet** (Luzernerstr. 204, Merlischachen, CH-6402, tel. +41/041/850 0250, fax 850 0252). This was our third stay and we were as pleased as before. The hotel is marvelous and the location beautiful. The hotel has various types of accommodations in several different buildings. We prefer the Jagdschloss on the hill overlooking the lake. The rooms are very large and nicely furnished in a hunting motif with a lovely view of Lake Luzern.

We enjoy this hotel and its location so much that we returned later in our trip for seven-nights. During

this later stay, we traveled extensively in the area including a boat trip around Lake Luzern. The rate in the Jagdschloss was 229 Sfr. (\$140) per night for the low season but they will give a reduced rate for seniors.

ROBERT FARGO
PENSACOLA FL ☒

Inside Travel

■ Warhol's New York in Basel

The **Beyeler Foundation** in Basel is now exhibiting "Andy Warhol — Series and Singles."

The show follows Warhol's career in New York, featuring the many serial paintings for which the artist is known. Some of the works exhibited have never been seen in public before and some were thought to be long lost. In addition, many of Warhol's early films are being shown. The exhibit runs through December 31, 2001. For more info visit www.beyeler.com

■ Swiss Science Fiction Museum

Switzerland has the distinction of having the world's only museum dedicated to science fiction. Called "**Maison d'Ailleurs**" (House of Elsewhere), the 25-year-old museum is located in Yverdon-les-Bains a small town north of Lausanne. The European Space Agency has asked the museum to investigate the possible benefits of concepts and technologies found in science fiction for space research. The agency will then pick the best ideas and present them at the museum.

For more info visit Yverdon-les-Bains Tourist Office at tourisme.info@yverdon-les-bains.ch

■ New Five-Star Zermatt Hotel

Located on a plateau above the town, Zermatt's newest luxury hotel, the 63-room **Riffelalp Resort**, open since December, offers exceptional views of the Matterhorn and boasts its own spring water. Quoting the hotel's press information, "old-world charm is married to modern world convenience: the burnished wood paneling belies such amenities as cable TV, direct-dial phones and modem and fax jacks.

The hotel's accoutrements in-

clude a massage therapist, a sauna (with a separate room for women), a steam room, and a gym, as well as the hotel's very own skiing guide. The property has several restaurants and lounges on the premises and has a dine-around program with sister properties in Zermatt, offering French, Italian, American, Japanese and Swiss cuisines."

Rates, which include dinner and breakfast, start at 280 Sfr. (\$172) single and 480 (\$295) double.

Contact: www.zermatt.ch/riffelalp

■ Geneva on the Cheap

Geneva's new **City Hostel** offers a range of inexpensive accommodations. Dorm rooms are 24 Sfr. (\$15) per person, single rooms 50 Sfr. (\$31) and double rooms rent for 78 Sfr. (\$48) Each has its own wash basin. Showers and lavatories are located on each floor. Prepare your own food in one of the communal kitchens available for visitors.

The City Hostel is a five-minute walk from the main train station. For more info visit www.cityhostel.ch ☒

ZÜRICH RESTAURANTS

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Meré Catherine, Nägelihof 3, tel. +41/01/250 5940. Until midnight.

Brasserie Lipp: The famed Paris bistro has locations in both Geneva and Zürich. The Zürich store is just off Bahnhofstrasse and one of the city's best see-and-be-seen watering holes. The atmosphere is bright and upbeat and the efficient, white-aproned, all male waiters are reassuringly brusque.

The food is very good and surprisingly affordable. Sole de France, grilled or meunière, for example, is 15.20 Sfr. (\$9.33); half a lobster Thermidor is 35.50 Sfr. (\$22) and Entrecôte (pan fried beefsteak) in a pepper sauce goes for 37.50 Sfr. (\$23).

If you just want to soak up the scene, you can try one of the wines featured each day for tasting. We recently sampled a delicious Sancerre (8.50/\$5.20 per glass) which with came a tiny plate of paté and toast, a nice touch.

Inside the restaurant is the elevator to the plush **Jules Verne Panorama Room**, where one can enjoy great views of Zürich and environs while sipping an expensive cocktail.

Brasserie Lipp/Jules Verne Panorama Bar, Uraniastrasse 9, tel. +41/01/211-1155.

Caduff's Wine Loft: We haven't been there yet, but some Zürich foodies say this is one of the two or three best restaurants in town; California-style, industrial-chic in a big, brightly-lit high-ceilinged room. To quote one review, "the freshest ingredients, purchased at the morning market, impeccably prepared and served the same evening, with no unnecessary frills." Starters are priced at 12 to 30 Sfr. (\$7.40-\$18) and main dishes from 28 to 52 Sfr. (\$17-\$32). Book well in advance.

Caduff's Wine Loft, Kanzleistrasse 126, +41/01/240 22 55, fax 240 22 56, email: info@caduffs.ch

Le Dézaley Vaudois: Near Meré Catherine, this lively spot serves up wonderful meat-and-potato dishes; veal and pork steaks, sauteed calves liver, and heavenly *Pommes Frites* and *Rösti*. Main dishes 28 to 33 Sfr. (\$17-\$20) range. No beer on draft, but reasonably-priced Swiss wines.

Le Dézaley Vaudois, Römergasse 7, tel. +41/01/251 6129, fax 252 2702 ☒

Key Websites for the Traveler to Germany, Austria & Switzerland

- www.gemut.com Gateway site for travelers to Germanic Europe, including car rental, rail passes, hotel bookings, traveler feedback, free travel advice and past issues (\$4 per month fee for access to 8 years of back issues).
- www.michelin-travel.com The Michelin database of hotels and restaurants plus great interactive trip planning tools.
- www.mapblast.com Map and automobile trip planning. Locates routes and distances.
- bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en German rail. Train schedules throughout Europe, not just Germany.
- www.sbb.ch/index_e.htm 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 Austria's national tourist authority. ☒

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 7

ture from Chicago.

We'll have to guess on airfare but right now consolidators are quoting about \$750 for a Chicago-Frankfurt roundtrip in June.

That's leaves us \$4100 for the ground portion. Since we're covering a lot of territory – Frankfurt, Lucerne, Geneva, Innsbruck, Vienna, Salzburg, Munich, and other points, we'll use the new **Eurail Selectpass**; eight days first class travel for two persons is \$716. We've got \$3384 left for our 15 nights and 16 days.

Our average hotel price will be \$125 per night which will put us in good quality, small, family-run hotels instead of the charmless boxes specialized in by tour companies; which it should be noted, are located well outside town centers. For example, Grand European Tour's Munich hotel, the **Sheraton Arabella Bogenhausen**, is about three miles from the Marienplatz. Our hotel, however, is the **Asam**, in a neighborhood of interesting shops and restaurants in the very heart of Munich. The tour's Vienna hotel is the **Ananas**, outside the Ring. Ours, the **Kärntnerhof**, is very much inside the Ring, a few blocks from the Stephansplatz.

After paying for our airfare, hotels, and rail passes, we have \$1509 left over for the nine dinners provided by the tour, and the public transportation needed to supplement our train passes. If we spend \$75 for each of the dinners and another \$300 for streetcars, busses and entrances to museums and tourist sights, we've still saved more than \$500 by traveling independently. In addition, we've moved at our leisure, coming and going whenever we wanted, taking more time for sights that interested us and skipping over those that didn't. – RHB

www.gemut.com

The website for travelers to
Germanic Europe

Film Museum Berlin

Movie buffs will want to add the new Film Museum Berlin to the list of things to see on their next visit to Berlin.

Located in the Sony Center in the city's space-age Potsdamer Platz development, the museum opened in September and occupies three of the building's 14 floors. Two floors display the permanent collection and the third is for visiting exhibits.

Sets, props, equipment, costumes, scripts and scores are displayed over 16 rooms. Included are a film library, a multi-media room, an online center with links to film, television and new media, plus various theme rooms and a screening room where some 1,000 films can be viewed.

An electronically guided tour of the museum (included in the price of admission) takes visitors through almost 100 years of German filmmaking, with a few glimpses of Hollywood thrown in. Movie clips include excerpts from epics of the 1920s and 1930s, like *Metropolis* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*; while other presentations delve into the dark era of the Cinema of National Socialism.

The museum pays homage to a number of movie celebrities, among them Billy Wilder, Ernst Lubitsch, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Klaus Kinski and Hanna Schygulla. Also featured are historic items and memorabilia from the estates of Fritz Lang, Paul Kohner, Heinz Rühmann, and the legendary Berliner, Marlene Dietrich.

The Dietrich Exhibit

Three of the 16 rooms are devoted to the **Marlene Dietrich Exhibit**, part of the larger **Marlene Dietrich Collection Berlin**, which is housed separately because of its size (the total collection includes some 350,000 items).

Gathered from Hollywood, New York, London and Paris, where the film star lived in later years until her death in 1992, the Dietrich memorabilia was a major acquisition and

ranks among the world's largest and most valuable privately owned movie-star collections. The Dietrich Exhibit will change every six months, rotating items from the main collection and giving visitors a reason to return.

Many of the glamorous gowns from Dietrich's famous wardrobe are on display, including creations by Balenciaga, Balmain, Dior and Schiaparelli. Fans will recognize film costumes by leading designers like Jean Louis, Travis Branton, Edith Head and Eddie Schmidt. Accessories include jewelry, hats, purses, gloves, shoes ... and even the luggage that carried them around the globe for her many film and singing engagements.

Stills and off-screen shots from famous Dietrich movies recall important film moments, and the many family and private portraits include studies by artists such as Cecil Beaton, Irving Chidnoff, Tony Armstrong Jones and Edward Steichen. Paintings, sketches, posters and costumed figurines round out the exhibit, plus letters from friends and admirers like Noel Coward, Jean Gabin, Hildegard Knef, Kurt Weill and Orson Welles.

Though Dietrich became a U.S. citizen in 1939, Berlin was always home. The title of her autobiography, *Ich bin, Gott sei Dank, Berliner* (*I Am, Thank God, a Berliner*), is clear evidence of her attachment to the city. In the Billy Wilder films, *A Foreign Affair* (1948), and *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957), her characters were German women; and in *Judgement at Nuremberg* (1961), she portrayed the widow of a German general.

The museum is open to the public Tuesday through Sunday from 10am to 6pm with extended hours each Thursday until 8pm. General admission is 12 DM (\$6); students and seniors 8 DM (\$4); children DM 6 (\$3). Special rates are available for families and groups.

Film Museum Berlin, Deutsche Kinemathek, Sony Center, Potsdamer Strasse 2, D-10785 Berlin, tel: +49/030/300 903 0, fax 300 903 13. Web: www.filmmuseum-berlin.de.