

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

March 23, 2001

When evening comes,
when the sun sets,
when the fiddle's song
sounds from the puszta,
I often sit alone here
with a glass of wine,
thinking how lovely it would be
To be with you now

When the old moon
reigns in the sky
and shines joyfully down,
I say: Your health, my friend.
Dear moon, break your journey,
listen to me,

for I want you to do something:
Grüss mir mein Wien. (Greet for me
my Vienna)

(From the operetta *Countess Maritza*, first heard in
Vienna in 1924 and written by the Austro/Hungarian
composer Emmerich Kálmán.)

City of Dreams

Here is a guy hung up not on a girl but a city, and if his song doesn't grab you just a little bit, you have the soul of a mortgage banker. Vienna is for romantics. To steal another Kálmán line, it is a "singing, echoing fairy tale" and we are devoting the bulk of this month's issue to it. Except for occasional updates, we haven't taken an in-depth look at this fabulous old town in nearly 10 years. It's been much too long.

Perhaps more than any other European city, Vienna remains

Continued on page 2...

This Month in Gemütlichkeit

Features	Page
Vienna 2001	1
Reutte Bargain Hotel	1
Readers' Forum	7
Recommended Web Sites	7
Commentary	
Dear Subscriber	1
Hotels/Restaurants	
Hotel Pension Waldrast, Reutte A	1
Hotel Altstadt Vienna, Vienna A	4
Hotel am Salzgries, Vienna A	4
Hotel Stephanie, Vienna A	5
Hotel Mercure Josefstadt, Vienna A	5
Pension Aviano, Vienna A	5
Hotel Römischer Kaiser, Vienna A	5
Café Diglas, Vienna A	6
Zum Schwarzen Kameel, Vienna A	6
Universitätsbräuhaus, Vienna A	6
Stiegl's Alte Ambulanz, Vienna A	6
Restaurant Konoba, Vienna A	7

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

VIENNA 2001

The opening of an ambitious complex of museums, restaurants and cafés highlights the first year of the new millennium in Vienna, a city already rich in culture.

Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, features two prominent musical selections, Richard Strauss's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and the famed *Blue Danube* by Johann Strauss (no relation). It is with this tenuous, yet chronologically relevant connection that we begin our Vienna 2001 report, a summation of what the city has to offer this year, plus hotel and restaurant reviews, including updates of some old favorites. So, as we proceed, imagine *Zarathustra's* trumpet fanfare and swirling violins rising up to introduce one of the most exciting cultural events to take place in Vienna in the last decade: the opening of the **Museumsquartier**.

The Dollarwise Traveler

Reutte's Hotel Waldrast

A few years ago we discovered the **Hotel-Pension Waldrast**, a terrific bargain in the small Austrian town of Reutte, near the **Bavarian Royal Castles**. A bustling ski resort and ski-school during the winter, the Waldrast is a peacefully quiet spring, summer and fall destination in a lush green mountain setting. But the best thing about this hotel is that the special warmth — *gemütlichkeit* — we felt on our first visit in 1997 is still there.

Owned and operated by the Huter family, the hotel makes a convenient and inexpensive headquarters from which to explore a region rich in sightseeing attractions.

First, there's the town of Reutte itself, which is about a 15-minute

The MQ, as it is being called, is an enormous cultural complex located in the former Imperial Stables just behind Vienna's Fine Arts and Natural History museums. The city is spending 2 billion ATS (\$130 million) to convert these noble equestrian buildings — designed by the imperial architect Fischer von Erlach — into a living and breathing modern art district, open 'round-the-clock (with just a short break when the coffeehouse/dance club closes at 4am and the Children's Museum opens again at 8:30am).

On an ordinary day, the MQ will offer a flock of exhibits, as well as dance, music and art performances. There will also be a host of cafes,

Continued on page 3...

walk from the hotel. Though not a ballyhooed tourist magnet, the village has a certain authentic charm. There are elaborately painted houses, interesting streets to window shop, and several outdoor cafés good for people watching while sipping a beer or mineral water.

For those who would rather move than sit, there's the ruins of **Ehrenberg Castle**, viewable, incidentally, from most of the Waldrast's guestrooms.

The ruins are about a 45-minute hike from the hotel. We made the trek in a summer rain, up the steepest ascent path we could find and enjoyed every minute of it. Reutte boasts some of the purest air on earth and we sucked down more

Continued on page 8...

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

connected to its past. The Habsburg era still lives in the Viennese heart and the tunes of Kálmán, the Strauss family, Leo Fall and, most of all, Franz Lehar, still make the charts. In fact, the best way I know to get in the mood for a Vienna visit is to give a few listens to the EMI CD *Wien du Stadt meiner Träume* (Vienna, City of My Dreams) with Plácido Domingo.

And by the way, when you get there, *Grüss mir mein Wein*.

Medium rare, sir?

It was exactly 10 years ago that this space tried to drum up enthusiasm for vacation trips to Germany, Austria and Switzerland. A war in a Middle Eastern desert was going on and there was talk of terrorism directed at Americans. There were no terrorist attacks on U.S. tourists, but many stayed home.

Now there's another scare. We've had several inquiries as to whether trips should be postponed or canceled because of Europe's cattle diseases: "mad cow" and "foot and mouth."

First, while foot and mouth has the potential to devastate the industries that put meat on our tables, it virtually never affects humans.

On the other hand, mad cow (BSE - bovine spongiform encephalopathy) is a risk to humans. It is apparently acquired by eating the meat of animals infected with the disease and

is a fatal, terrifying malady that not much is known about.

The recent cause for concern is that the disease seems to have spread from Great Britain to the Continent. Though mad cow is a mystery, this much *is* known; since it was identified in Britain in 1986, less than 100 deaths are attributable to BSE — nearly all of them in Britain, none in Germany, Austria or Switzerland. That's a period of 15 years in the whole of the U.K., which has a population of about 60 million. I'm not second-guessing Brits who have stopped eating meat, but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration says beef infected with salmonella in this country kills 600 annually. So where is it safer to order a steak?

Go already. Eat fish.


Michelin Adds Email Addresses

Booking hotel rooms from the U.S. just got easier and cheaper. Michelin's series of Red Guides for European countries now displays email addresses among the data it lists for the tens of thousands of European hotels and restaurants it rates each year. No more phone calls, no more faxes. Just a quick, free email. At *Gemütlichkeit* we consider Michelin's Red Guides the number one resource for the independent traveler to Europe. Not only are they an indispensable advance trip planning tool, they are even more useful during a trip. The hardbound, 1247 page, 2001 Red Guide for Germany, for example, rates more than 10,000 hotels and restaurants in some 3,000

cities, towns and villages. The information provided is vast. The city maps alone are worth the price.

Red Guides are published for Germany, Switzerland, France, Great Britain, the Benelux countries, Spain, Portugal, and Italy. There is also a Red Guide for the main cities of Europe. Remember, Red Guides are for hotels and restaurants; Green Guides cover history, sights and culture. *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers get a 10% discount off all Michelin products at 800-521-6722 or www.travelgearnow.com.

Recommending Ski Europe.com

We are adding a new site to our list of *Key Websites for the Traveler to Germany, Austria & Switzerland* (see page 7). SkiEurope.com is, of course, designed for skiers but there is good info for the ordinary traveler as well. Be sure to sign up for the excellent free newsletters that are emailed every couple of weeks. 

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".

Members' Library Code* at www.gemut.com

User Name: Wien (*effective
Password: 118 April 1, 2001)

Vol. 15, No. 3
April, 2001

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

Publishers: Robert H. & Elizabeth S. Bestor
Editor: Robert H. Bestor
Contributors: C. Fischer, R. Holliday,
Nikki Goth Itoi, Doug Linton
Paul T. Merschdorf
Web Master: Thomas P. Bestor
Consulting Editor: Thomas P. Bestor
Subscription Dept: Andy Bestor, K. Steffans

Gemütlichkeit (ISSN 10431756) is published 11 times each year by UpCountry Publishing, 288 Ridge Road, Ashland OR 97520. TOLL FREE: 1-800/521-6722 or 541/488-8462, fax: 541/488-8468, e-mail travel@gemut.com. Web site: www.gemut.com. Subscriptions are \$67 per year for 11 issues. While every effort is made to provide correct information in this publication, the publishers can make no guarantees regarding accuracy.

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

HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	Scale	Restaurant Criteria	
Excellent	16 - 20	Food	65%
Above Average	12 - 15	Service	20%
Average	8 - 11	Atmosphere	15%
Adequate	4 - 7		
Unacceptable	0 - 3		

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

Special Designation

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

VIENNA 2001

Continued from page 1

bars, and garden restaurants — the best of which should be the beloved **Gleisebeisl**, which for years has occupied a part of the former city wall at the back of the complex. The project's architects have planned multiple entranceways to the quarter to encourage people to wander through in hopes of turning it into a popular pedestrian walkway.

MQ's anchor tenant is the **Leopold Museum** (www.leopoldmuseum.org), which is impressive enough to take a place among the city's most important fine art venues. It boasts the world's largest collection of works by the great Austrian artist Egon Schiele, including paintings and superb hand-colored drawings. The collection received outstanding reviews a few years ago when it opened at New York's Museum of Modern Art. There are also major works by Gustav Klimt and Oskar Kokoschka, as well as important arts and crafts objects by Otto Wagner, Adolf Loos, Josef Hoffmann and Kolo Moser. The Leopold is not to be missed.

The **Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation Vienna** (www.mmkslw.or.at/MMKSLW) contains works by Picasso, Kandinsky and Magritte, as well as modern Austrian artists such as Arnulf Rainer and Hermann Nitsch. The impressive building is reminiscent of a big black basalt obelisk (notice the connection again to Kubrick's 2001!).

Additional modern and performance art can be found at the **Kunsthalle**, which will feature living artists as well as theme and multimedia exhibitions. The quarter will also house the city's **Architecture Center**, a refurbished **Tobacco Museum**, and a children's museum.

The MQ will host a number of performances and festivals, including the **Vienna Festival** in May (see box at right); **Viennale**, the city's film festival; and **Im Puls Tanz 01**, Europe's largest festival of contemporary dance (www.tanzwochen.at). At

Vienna Info & Events Schedule

Population: 1,640,000

Altitude: 156 meters/476 feet

Driving Distances:

City	KM/Miles
Budapest	208/129
Graz	193/120
Munich	435/270
Prague	292/181
Salzburg	292/181
Zagreb	362/224

Tourist Information:

Vienna Tourist office, Wien 1, Albertinaplatz / Maysedergasse, tel. +43/01/211140, fax 2168492, email: info@info.wien.at, Web: www.info.wien.at/

Special Exhibits & Music Festivals:

*Besides the Museumsquartier and Vienna's usual attractions — the Bruegels at the **Fine Arts Museum** or the Klimts at the **Belvedere** — visitors to Vienna can look forward to the following special exhibitions.*

El Greco: The Fine Arts Museum will be hosting an exhibition of the Cretan-born artist El Greco (1541-1615), which will include 40 of his chief works. The exhibition will be open May 3-September 2.

Herbert Bloekl: The Belvedere will host an exhibition of this Austrian expressionist from May 17 to September 2.

Austro-Hungarian Architecture: The Kunstforum der Bank Austria will host an exhibition focused on the architecture of the great cities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Lvov, Cracow and Ljubljana, and their successor states. The exhibition—which covers the period between 1890 and 1937, and features more than 300 exhibits—runs from June 14-August 26.

As an important center of European music, Vienna has a wealth of music festivals to choose from. Here are a few:

Osterklang Festival

(www.osterklang.at) This Easter event, which runs April 7-16, includes a performance of Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony*, Haydn's *Seven Last Words*, and an Easter Night Concert at **St. Stephen's Cathedral**.

Spring Festival

(www.musikverein.at) Scheduled for April 16-29. Performances by Anne-Sophie Mutter and the **Vienna Philharmonic** conducted by Zubin Mehta.

Music Festival of the Vienna

(www.konzerthaus.at) May 7-June 17. This year's theme is "On the Move." Festival will include a performance of Schoenberg's opera *Moses and Aaron*, directed by Kent Nagano.

Vienna Festival

(www.festwochen.at) May 11-June 18. Features a free concert in front of the City Hall conducted by George Pretre, two theater pieces directed by Peter Brooks, old and new operas, and the epic eight-day-long Chinese Opera masterpiece, *Midan Ting*.


Music Film Festival

(www.wienmarketing.at) The popular opera film series is seen on a large screen in front of the City Hall. Runs June 30 to September 2.

Klangbogen Festival

(www.klangbogen.at) July 11-August 23. Features a string of Beethoven concerts by the **Vienna Philharmonic** under the direction of Sir Simon Rattle.

Wien Modern

(www.wienmodern.at), a music festival featuring contemporary composers and founded by conductor Claudio Abbado, takes place from October 28 to November 30, and focuses on "Music and its Visual Aspects." Includes works by Pierre Boulez and Magnus Lindberg. 

VIENNA 2001

Continued from page 3

other times the hall will be known as **Tanzquartier Vienna**, the city's first permanent dance space.

MQ will launch in two stages, the first in June with the opening of the Kunsthalle, the main entrance and courtyards. The first summer event, entitled "**A Baroque Party**," will link Vienna's baroque heritage with its present-day artists. It all promises to be a mix of the interesting and the strange with attractions such as spoken commentaries in baroque choral style and sound recordings of the last European castrati.

More activities are scheduled for late September-early October with the opening of the aforementioned — and soon-to-be-world-renowned — Leopold Museum, the Architecture Center, and the children's museum.

For other important events in Vienna this year, see the sidebar story on page 3.

If, as directed, you've been imagining the 2001 *Zarathustra* theme — perhaps even humming it — you are no doubt finished by now. It's time to switch to the *Blue Danube* to accompany the hotel and restaurant reviews. (*Editor's Note: This is the first time we've had a musical score behind a Gemütlichkeit story. Perhaps again in 2001...*)

Accommodations

Altstadt Vienna

Our 1994 "Hotel of the Year" hasn't lost a step. The Altstadt retains all the endearing charms that first attracted us to it: Art Nouveau decor, pleasant guestrooms, and, most of all, owner Otto Wiesenthal's efficient but guest-friendly management style.

This is a hotel blessed with great "bones;" a wonderful building from a long-gone era whose legacy includes wide corridors, squeaky old wooden floors, high ceilings and soaring windows.

The Altstadt's spacious and inviting "Red Salon" is its *gemütlich*

heart. Here, on a late winter afternoon, guests warm themselves with hot drinks by an open fire while looking out over the roofs of Vienna to the neighboring Church of St. Ulrich. The room works equally well for a nightcap and, next morning, as a light and airy breakfast room.

The 29 guestrooms, no two alike, have been carefully decorated in a minimalist Art Nouveau style that includes halogen lighting and well-chosen modern art. Every room comes with a telephone in both bed and bathroom, master light switches, cable TV with CNN, and a selection of complimentary toiletries.


Added last year was a new floor of rooms including three new suites.

A capable and accommodating staff will see that your early-morning taxi to the airport is on time, arrange for opera or concert tickets, and recommend off-the-beaten track restaurants in a variety of price categories.

The Altstadt's location, outside the Ring, might be a drawback for some, but others will enjoy life in an urban neighborhood of interesting shops, good restaurants and few tourists. The *Zentrum* is only 15 minutes on foot or five minutes by underground. In an expensive city, this hotel is a remarkable value.

Daily Rates: Singles 1280 to 1580 AS (\$83 to \$103), doubles 1580 to 1980 AST (\$103 to \$129), suites 1980 to 2780 AST (\$129 to \$181)

Contact: Altstadt Vienna, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, email hotel@altstadt.at, Web: www.altstadt.at.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 17/20 

Starlight Suites Hotel am Salzgries

This hotel is part of a small local chain of business-oriented hotels that have sprung up in the last five years. Owner Dieter Jöbstl seems to have developed a winning formula: find a centrally located old building with an historical exterior in a tranquil street, fill it with a few dozen tastefully-decorated suites, and then offer them at a comparatively low price.

The results have been impressive.

The Hotel Salzgries is on a quiet but central street of imposing turn-of-the-20th-century facades in Vienna's *Innenstadt*. The building is entered through a massive, antique oak door that flings open automatically. The entrance and lobby retain the lovely stucco ceiling work, but everything else is stylish and modern. The high ceilinged lobby, which doubles as bar and breakfast room, is decorated in blue and slate gray, with marble accents and leather chairs.

A glass elevator rises to short hallways that connect the suites, each of which comes with a relatively spacious living room and bedroom, both with phone and TV. The former is attractively decorated with a chrome framed royal-blue leather lounge set, large corner desk, and a stylish bar with stainless steel sink, microwave, and complete coffee service.

Guestrooms have double beds with thick white linens, gold-hued bedspreads, retractable reading lamps, smallish open closets and broadly patterned curtains in gold, green and blue. The sparkling white bathrooms are separated into two rooms; one has the sink and the other the toilet plus either a bath or shower.

Other hotel amenities include a free sauna and three-machine exercise room.

This is the best of Vienna's three Starlight Suites hotels and a good choice for visitors who prize space and modern comforts over traditional Viennese décor.

Daily Rates: Singles 1780 ATS (\$116), doubles 2180 ATS (\$142). Breakfast is an additional 150 ATS (\$9.75), though you can do better at a nearby coffee house.

Contact: Starlight Suite Hotel am Salzgries, tel. +43/01/535 92 22, fax 535 92 22 11, email reservations@starlighthotel.co.at, Web: www.starlight.com

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 17/20

Next Month: **PRAGUE**

Hotel Stephanie

This 120 year-old hotel is operated by the Schick family, who also own the *Am Parkring*, *Erzog Rainer*, *Capricornio* and *City Center*. The family's other hotels have some unique attractions — for example, the view from the sky-high *Am Parkring* — but the Stephanie is still the best. It offers an excellent location across the Danube canal in the lively and somewhat trendy 2nd District, a short walk from the city center.

Although over a century old, the Stephanie stays looking fresh and clean with regular renovations and refurbishments. The facade, with its lights, pillars and striped banners, looks something like a Mississippi steamer. The lobby strives for a modern version of traditional elegance, with marble floors, beveled mirrors, dark wood, brass fixtures and leather sofas, all illuminated by a myriad of sparkling halogen lights. A few antiques add a touch of gravitas to the lobby, especially the massive museum-quality Augsburg wardrobe and the washbasin of the hotel's namesake, Princess Stephanie, wife of Rudolph and the forgotten victim of Mayerling.

Breakfast and all other meals are served in an imperial dining room or, during the warmer months, in the pleasant tree-shaded courtyard.

Accommodations are squirreled away off very long hallways. All offer traditional design with a modern twist, though there are a number of versions, some more dated than others. The clean baths are decorated in flat gray tiles, and offer a mix of bath or showers.

The old-fashioned staff is formal, but obliging, making the Stephanie a good — and more Viennese — choice.

Daily Rates: Singles 1380 to 1860 ATS (\$90-\$121), doubles 1680 to 2620 ATS (\$109-\$171)

Contact: Hotel Stephanie, Taborstrasse 12, A-1020, Vienna, tel +43/01/211 50 0, fax 211 50160, email stephanie@schick-hotels.com, Web: www.schick-hotels.com

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 12/20

Hotel Mercure Josefstadt

Although part of the French hotel chain, the Josefstadt manages to retain an owner-operated atmosphere. Instead of the Mercure's flashy Eurodesign, the Josefstadt is a charming hostelry in a baroque manor house located on a quiet cobblestone street in one of Vienna's favorite neighborhoods. The **Vienna English Theatre** is next door, the restaurant-rich Josefstadt district surrounds, and the Rathaus and Ring are just a short walk away.

Guestrooms are spacious and tastefully decorated with a light classical touch. Most have parquet floors, dark wood furniture, rich fabrics, and brass chandeliers dangling from high ceilings. A few come with small kitchenettes.

While the staff might not be very numerous or experienced, they are remarkably friendly and do their best to make one feel at home.

Daily Rates: Singles 1200 to 1690 ATS (\$78-\$110), doubles 1680 to 2270 ATS (\$109-\$148). Rates do not include breakfast; try the nearby **Café Eiles** or **Café Rathaus**.

Contact: Hotel Mercure Josefstadt, 1, Josefsstrasse 4, tel +43/01/404 190, fax 40419 150, email H2806@Accor-Hotels.com, Web www.josephof.com.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 12/20

Pension Aviano

This longtime *Gemütlichkeit* favorite continues to impress. It certainly has one of the friendliest staffs in town as well as pocket-friendly rates. The location is almost unbeatable: in a tall, attractive turn-of-the-last-century building overlooking the Neumarkt, where the emperors' hearts are buried, and the Kärntnerstrasse, Vienna's most elegant and popular promenade.

The Aviano occupies the top two floors and is reached by a poky little elevator that can handle only one request at a time. All rooms are attractively draped in a commercial, classical style, though the best are on the lower floor and have high ceilings and the original wood- and stucco-work. Ask for Numbers 302,

303 and 304, which overlook the street rather than the less interesting courtyard (the rooms are high enough that street sounds are not a problem). Number 301 is small, but has a nice view.

Daily Rates: Singles 910 to 1020 ATS (\$59-\$66), doubles 1360 to 1560 ATS (\$89-\$102), junior suites 1540 to 1840 ATS (\$100-\$120)

Contact: Pension Aviano, MarcoD'Aviano-Gasse 1, tel. +43/01/512 83 30, fax 512 83 30 6, email aviano@pertschy.com, Web: www.pertschy.com

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 18/20

Hotel Römischer Kaiser

Though this hotel benefits by comparison with its rude neighbor (see below), it is a winner in its own right. Over the years, *Gemütlichkeit* has had numerous pleasant experiences with this beautifully located *Alt Wien* charmer; the welcome has invariably been warm and the staff helpful and efficient.

The bonus is that over the last two years the Römischer Kaiser has undergone extensive renovations and is better than ever. The maroon- and ivory-toned lobby and breakfast room have been expanded and refurbished, and the guest quarters enhanced.

Guestrooms have been refreshed with striped silk fabrics accenting the carved ivory-toned furniture. We prefer the newly renovated Biedermeier rooms with cherry-wood wall panels framing rich silk insets. Good choices among the new rooms include the classically decorated room Number 9 and the Biedermeier rooms numbered 17, 34, and 43 (the latter is on the top floor and a bit lower priced.)

The Kaiser is for visitors who want a small hotel with a touch of imperial Vienna.

Daily Rates: Singles 1490 to 1990 ATS (\$97-\$130), doubles 1890-3190 ATS (\$123-\$208)

Contact: Hotel Römischer Kaiser, Annagasse 16, Vienna A-1010, tel +43/01/512 77 51 0, fax +43/01/512

Continued on page 6...

EDITOR'S CHOICE

EDITOR'S CHOICE

VIENNA 2001

Continued from page 5

77 51 13, email

info@rkhote.bestwestern.at, Web:
www.bestwestern-ce.com/roemis-
cherkaiser

Rating: Quality 15/20 Value 16/20

Hotels to Avoid

(Editor's Note: For the second time in 10 years, a scheduled review of the **Hotel Mailbergerhof**, located on the same cobblestone street as the Römischer Kaiser, had to be scrapped because its management refused us access. We can only conclude they are not interested in North American guests.

Worse was the Best Western **Hotel Tigra** where the reception staff kept swearing under their breaths about customers and fellow staff members. These are two hotels to avoid.)

Sustenance

Café Diglas

My favorite coffeehouse in Vienna is owned by the co-president of the Coffeehouse Owner's Association, Hans Diglas. This café-restaurant offers delicious pastries, excellent food, good coffee, and true Viennese coffeehouse atmosphere. A glass case overflows with tempting *Torten* (cakes) that are among the best in town, all made at the coffeehouse's private pastry shop (*Konditorei*). Nearby are trays of *Schintten* (row cakes), strudels, and even a pan or two of quiches or gratins. Best of all, the portions are large.

The food is also very good, and the three daily menus are a particularly sumptuous bargain. A typical lunch might include a small bowl of tangy wine cream soup followed by a main course of pork ragout with mushrooms and sweet cream over verdant spinach curd noodles, and a dash of cranberry compote. Dessert might be warm apple cobbler with almond vanilla sauce. All this for a mere 165 ATS (\$11).

One can spend just a bit more and order the soup (42 ATS/\$2.75) and main course (125 ATS/\$8) sepa-

ately in order to have a choice of cake (around 40 ATS/\$2.60). The truffle torte is always good as is the yogurt and blueberry cake. Or you might choose a white butter-cream cake covered in smooth marzipan icing.

A *krugel* (half liter) of Ottakringer beer costs 42 ATS (\$2.75) and with dessert one of the excellent coffees — *kleiner brauner* (29 ATS/\$1.90) — is recommended.

Other Diglas' attractions are the waiters, archetypes of their profession: wry, formal, unctuous, or bemused, and the exquisite atmosphere, with tiny little red velvet booths, dark wood chairs, crystal chandeliers, ivory walls and white marble table tops touched with an acceptable hue of pink.

The Diglas is recommended for dinner, dessert, breakfast—anytime, really. The only drawback is that it is almost always full, but a table is sure to free up after a few minutes wandering around.

Café Diglas, 1. Wollzeile 10, tel. +43/01/512 57 65, email: diglas@via.at

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 18/20

Zum Schwarzen Kameel

Entering this elegant restaurant and import shop is like going back 100 years. The Black Camel is many things: import store, luxury restaurant, and stand-up delicatessen. The interior has oak wainscoting, tile floors and the dim lighting of a dream. Around the top of the walls a tile relief shows ships at sea laden with exotic goods from exotic lands.

The restaurant is pricey, but gets consistently stellar reviews for its top quality Austrian dishes. Those meager of purse can enjoy a light lunch or snack in the main room, while people watching and soaking up the atmosphere.

The crowd is an elegant mix of ladies in fur coats and jewels; dapperly dressed elderly men, some with cravats; and businessmen and women from the nearby banks and offices. There are a number of counters to choose from. On the left is a delicatessen case chock full of quality salamis, prosciutti and hams,

as well as salads, pickles, olives and a vast selection of appetizers and prepared dishes. Another case holds a small selection of petit fours, strudels and sliced cakes. Continuing from the main counter is a long bar facing backlit oak shelves lined with rows of distinguished liqueurs, *Schnapps* and aperitifs.

Right of the entrance is a counter with rows of small breads covered with different spreads, such as salmon, herring, salami, herbs, eggs, and pumpkin, all for only 11 ATS (72 cents) — though you will need at least three to make up a light lunch. At the far right is the coffee and drink counter. There are a few tables at the back, but most people stand along the wooden counter that snakes its way through the room.

Black-tied waiters dart here and there taking and delivering drink and menu orders and settling bills. The atmosphere is warm, vivacious and, for those who can tolerate a little smoke, endearing. If you require further testimony as to the uniqueness of this food emporium, the Schwarzen Kameel is the only place where the city's nobility can be found eating sandwiches standing up.

Zum Schwarzen Kameel, 1, Bognergasse 5, tel +43/01/533 8125, fax +43/01/533 812510, open Monday-Saturday 8:30-midnight.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 15/20

Universitätsbräuhaus & Stiegl's Alte Ambulanz

These two restaurants are located in the large, park-like courtyard of the city's 19th century former hospital complex, which now houses the University of Vienna's new campus.

Despite sharing the same address, they are a bit different. The Universitätsbräuhaus, or UB, is a rustic Austrian brewpub with hearty food and good, homemade beer. The Alte Ambulanz is a stylish brewery-owned pub that offers traditional Austrian food, beer and even a few well-chosen wines.

The UB's imaginative management has made the most of its scenic location. In summer, a tent covering

a large grill in the spacious courtyard is surrounded by a sea of tables. Also nearby is a small playground for children. At Christmastime, a two story wooden "manger" is constructed. On one side of the bottom half is a petting zoo and on the other is a stand serving mulled wine and sandwiches. The top floor provides a stage for folk choirs and brass bands.

The Universitätsbräuhaus offers pork *Schnitzel* (95 ATS/\$6.18), filet of trout (95 ATS/\$6.18), prime rib from 'bio' beef (125 ATS/\$8.13), and a hearty hunter's plate with venison, boar, yams, lentils, and sliced dumplings (165 ATS/\$11).

Stiegl counters with fiaker goulash (the hearty Hungarian stew fortified with a fried egg and two frankfurters, 98 ATS/\$6.40), grilled spare ribs with two sauces (155 ATS/\$10), and tricolored gnocchi with blue cheese sauce (82 ATS/\$5.33).

At both places, beer is poured at 29 ATS (\$2) for a small and 39 ATS (\$2.50) for a large.

A friendly atmosphere is sure to accompany the meals.

Universitätsbräuhaus, Campus Altes AKH, Hof 1. 9, Alser Strasse 4, tel. +43/01/409 1815, open daily 9am-2am.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 16/20
Stiegl's Alte Ambulanz (same address as above), tel +43/01/409 57 84, open daily 9 am-2 am.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 16/20

Konoba

This Croatian restaurant recently opened in the Josefstadt area (8th district) and is already popular. Its name refers to the small, informal restaurants that dot the Dalmatian coast, serving good local wine and fresh-caught fish and seafood. The restaurant strives for simplicity, quality and freshness, accompanied by service that is formal yet extremely welcoming. The decor is Croatian bistro, with wicker-bottomed chairs, rustic wood tables dressed with thick white linens, and whitewashed walls sporting a few watercolors.

The day's selection of fish occupies a glass case, while an adjoining one displays the selection of hors

d'oeuvres and a leg of prosciutto. The open kitchen is a treat, as the chef is very much into his work (I watched him toss about 20 bowls of potato salad with unwavering gusto).

The menu focuses on fish and a few pasta dishes. Two crowd pleasers are mussels "buzzaka" (a bargain at 100 ATS/\$6.50) and grilled calamari with parsley potatoes (125 ATS/\$8.14). The mussels are steamed in a broth of white wine, garlic, olive oil and parsley that perfect for soaking up with the soft french bread.

A blackboard displays such daily specials as *risotto negro* (rice with cuttlefish, a Dalmatian specialty) and a fish platter for two.

We tried first courses of spinach soup (40 ATS/\$2.60) and prosciutto with honey melon (80 ATS/\$5.21), made memorable by the top quality cured ham. Then came the grilled fish platter for two with calamari, a pair of giant shrimp, a small sea bass, and slices of anglerfish and pike-perch, all for the low price of 490 ATS/\$32 for two persons. Accompanying were mounds of parsley potatoes and spinach. A veneer of garlic covered everything and few of the restaurant's dishes escape its wrath.

The wine list contains a short selection of Austrian and Croatian wines. Of the latter we preferred *grasevina*, a Riesling, over the *malvazija*. A complimentary and welcome glass of Croatian *Schnapps* came with the bill. The restaurant's only flaw — and this is a major one — is that there is no beach for an after-dinner stroll.

Konoba, Lerchenfelderstrasse 66-68, tel/fax +43/01/92 94 111, email konoba@chello.at, Web:

www.konoba.at. Not open for lunch weekends and holidays.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 15/20

Readers' Forum

Cell Phone Advice

I would like to advise you that VoiceStream Wireless offers an international cell phone service that is usable in 65 countries, including

virtually every one in Europe (VoiceStream is in the process of being acquired by Deutsche Telekom). I have their service and use a dual-mode Motorola phone that works just fine in the USA, Germany, and France.

I'm waiting for my first bill on calls from Europe to the USA, but calls to Europe cost \$.29/minute. I am highly satisfied with VoiceStream's service in the USA, and have 500 minutes/month for \$39/month (no other charges on calls anywhere within the USA). I've only found one place where the service was unavailable, and that was in rural Minnesota, where the locals told me that no other cell service is available, either.

ROGER JONES
VIA EMAIL

More on Cell Phones

The problem with using U.S. cell phones in Europe is not finding a phone that will work there, it's the cost of service, specifically, the cost of "roaming" that results from using one phone that works in both the U.S. and Europe, of which there are several now available. The economics of having two phones (they're called "Handys" in Europe) are far

Continued on page 8...

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 (free access to back for subscribers; see log-on info on page 2).
- 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.skieurope.com Top web resource for skiers with much data on Alpine resorts.
- 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.

READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 7

more favorable. For instance, I bought a Nokia 6150 phone in Germany for about \$50, with a 2-year contract that costs about \$12 per month, including Voicemail and text message service. This phone has exactly the same user interface as the Nokia 6160 that I use in the US, so it's not necessary to memorize two sets of key functions. In addition, I got a 100 DM (\$47) rebate on the monthly charge, so the first few months were free.

My contract is with Talkline, which is a reseller of D2 (Vodafone) service in Europe. D2 has by far the best network and service in Germany. It is a "D-netz" (900Mhz.) network, so the coverage is better than the "E-netz" services which run on 1800Mhz. Several big advantages of having a GSM (European) phone are that it can receive Email from a PC and short messages (called SMS) from another Handy. These messages are limited to about 160 characters.

These are a very cheap and easy way to communicate with someone who may not be available to talk at all hours of the day or night. Some American service providers are just starting to introduce such services, but they are embryonic compared to what is available in Europe. Also, it is possible to leave a Voicemail for a D2 German subscriber without disturbing the recipient by ringing the "Handy." The GSM standard in Europe makes roaming automatic and "seamless" in all the European countries, and switching from D-netz to E-netz service, depending on coverage, is also automatic.

The last time I checked, the cost of a call in Europe for a US AT&T subscriber was \$1.99 per minute, and the cost of a call in the U.S. for a D2 subscriber was 2 DM (95 cents) per minute. With my service plan, I pay 39 pfennigs (less than 20 cents) per minute. Both cases necessitate the use of a tri-mode phone, which costs anywhere from \$300 to \$600. So, it's very clear that the cost of two phones is immaterial.

My monthly bills are charged directly to my U.S. credit card, so there are no payment inconveniences. I used my cousins' German address to open the account, so I'm not sure if a U.S. address would cause any problems. I hope this information is helpful to some of your readers who are frequent travellers to Europe.

BURGESS JAMIESON
VIA EMAIL

Meersburg Hotel

I feel compelled to tell you about a discovery of mine. I take a small group to Europe each year and this past September stopped for a couple of night in the village of Meersburg, Germany, on the northern shore of the Bodensee (Lake Constance). Everyone agreed it was the most enjoyable stop of the trip.

The town is very quaint and historical. It has Germany's oldest castle and is divided between upper and lower, the lower town being on the lake, with many nice shops.

We stayed at the **Hotel Zum Bären** (Marktplatz 11, tel. +49/07532/43220, fax 432244, email: gasthofzumBaeren@t-online.de, rooms \$40 to \$88), which has been in the same family for five generations, and the present owner is also the chef. What great food and ambience. The Zum Bären is of such historical importance that it is pictured on the German 20 DM note. Boat excursions can be taken to Constance across the lake if you so desire.

DICKIE HEBERT
VIA EMAIL

PENSION WALDRAST

Continued from page 1

than our share of it. There are easier and shorter ways to reach the ruins and they all offer the same reward, a fantastic view of the town and surrounding environs.

The castle, of course, has an interesting history, which Herr Huter will happily relate at breakfast as you gaze across a green meadow to the deteriorating fortress that looms above it.

The Waldrast and Reutte are also a short drive from several notewor-

thy sights. The hotel can provide a map and also suggest the best sight-seeing routes. We spent one day chauffeuring our travel mates on a scenic drive which wound its way along the Plansee through a beautiful forest and into Bavaria where we toured **Schloss Linderhof** and the town of Füssen. In a single day, of course, one could also visit the impressive castles **Neuschwanstein** and **Hohenschwangau**, as well as great **Wieskirche**.


We recommend a pair of unpretentious restaurants near the hotel: the **Zum Mohren**, which serves traditional Tirolean farm fare, and **Alina** (formerly the Carina), which also offers good pizza and pasta in addition to Tirolean specialities.

Guest rooms at the Waldrast are far more comfortable than their prices would indicate. Our corner room, Number 15, had large windows on two sides and was equipped with satellite TV in a separate sitting room, separate shower and toilet rooms, attractive, comfortable furniture and balcony with castle view. We paid \$45.


The Hotel-Pension Waldrast has much to offer a first-time visitor to the region who wants to see the sights of Bavaria and experience the friendliness of a family-run hotel. But it also appeals to seasoned travelers who understand the joys of a town like Reutte and people like the Hutters.

Daily Rates: Doubles range from about \$45 to \$55

Contact: Hotel-Pension Waldrast A-6600 Reutte, Ehrenbergstrasse, tel. & fax. +43/05672 62 443 e-mail: info@waldrast.com. Prop. Familie G. Huter

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 18/20 

Restaurant Alina (Formerly Carina), Gemeindzentrum, Breitenwang, tel: +43/05672/65008

Zum Mohren, Untermarkt 26, Reutte/Tirol A-6600, tel: +43/05672/62345 

www.gemut.com

The website for travelers to
Germanic Europe