

**DEAR SUBSCRIBER**

October 24, 2001

**A Time to Travel?**

A phrase we hear a lot, and one that keeps trying to work its way from my brain on to the page, is "at times like these." It doesn't work, though, because we've never had times like these: hijacked jetliners flown deliberately into famous buildings, a nation fearful of opening its mail or breathing the air of its work spaces, and the skies over our cities patrolled by war planes.

The bad news keeps coming thick and fast. Stories that would otherwise lead the evening TV news —such as the predicted failure of **United Airlines** by the guy who runs it— are relegated almost to an "Oh, by the way" status.

People are afraid. Real estate sellers in our small, southern Oregon town tell us there is a new motivation behind the rush of buyers coming here from major California cities — fear of terrorist attacks.

Yes, this is uncharted territory, a place we've never been before, and it's understandable that overseas travel has lost some of its appeal. Overseas, in large part, means Europe. Half the 24 million Americans who vacationed abroad last year went to the continent. We spent \$65 billion there and traveled more in Europe than the Germans, who, it should be noted, were already there.

Such numbers, however, are on the way down. Even before September 11, travel to Europe was soft

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## BALTIC GERMANY

*Our correspondent Jim Johnson goes way off the beaten track to Germany's northeast corner and the peaceful, bucolic and, yes, inexpensive province of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*

**M**ecklenburg-Vorpommern attracts more tourists than any German province except Bavaria. Barely one percent of these visitors is American, however. Indeed, few Americans have even heard of this province on the Baltic in the new Germany's northeast corner.

Despite its high tourism ranking, the region is by no means overrun by tourists. In fact, much of the province is pristine, protected wilderness. Most visitors congregate in a few coastal "resorts" and sleepy fishing villages. And, since towns are spread sparsely along the coastline, most of the beaches beyond the outskirts offer total refuge and privacy.

By Jim Johnson

Inland, the moors, heaths and woodlands of the coastal plain build gradually toward a distinctly rural landscape of rolling hills, meadows, farmland and dense forest. Farther south, the fields and forests are broken up by the 1,750 lakes of the Mecklenburg Lake Plateau, Germany's most sparsely populated region.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is perhaps Germany's least changed province, a backwater mostly untouched by war, the DDR times or commercialism. Cities are small, and the few towns and villages that break up the countryside seem like snapshots from the 1930s. Many are destinations unto themselves with

*Continued on page 3...*

## Finding Pre-War Germany

**E**ver since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Americans have made a beeline to the A-list destinations of former East German cities like Leipzig, Dresden and, of course, Berlin. Tourism dollars, private investment and government support are transforming them into showpieces, for their history as well as their modern glitz and glamour. However, thanks to Allied bombing, an East German focus on functionality rather than restoration, and a recent proliferation of striking modern architecture, these cities show few authentic signs of pre-World War II Germany.

Meanwhile, many smaller cities, towns and villages of the former East Germany offer travelers a unique view into pre-War Germany and the effects of the Communist years that

followed. Since bombing raids and East German frugality left most buildings outside the urban areas untouched, it's like a time warp back to the 1930s and earlier.

Much of the landscape has been untouched as well, thanks — ironically — to Nazi and Communist paranoia and elitism. Some areas, especially along the Baltic, were accessible only to senior political and military officials and their guests. For security reasons, a single road was often the sole entry point, a path carved through dense forest to small seaside villas. Today, these forests —untouched for a half-century or more — are protected national parks. Although more trails have been added for hikers, bicyclists and horseback-riders, explor-

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## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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and it has declined since then. Nielsen/Net Ratings report a 23% drop in travel-related on-line spending from August to September. Italy says travel from the U.S. is down 25%.

What surprises and encourages me, however, is that it isn't worse. If one of four Americans is canceling travel plans to Italy, three out of four — 75% — are still going.

Our own experience is equally upbeat; since September 11 not a single subscriber has asked us to stop sending *Gemütlichkeit*. Naturally, our travel booking department has had a handful of rail and air tickets returned as well as car rental cancellations, but in most of these cases the travelers had no choice, their flights to Europe had been canceled.

The travelers I've spoken with are concerned but pragmatic: traveling in Europe is a bargain, its venues are uncrowded, transatlantic air travel is inexpensive and extremely safe, and the hotels, airports, rail stations, streets and roads of the towns and cities of Germany, Austria and Switzerland are probably the most secure in the world. Many of you have rightly concluded it's a great time to go. And who wins when we stay home solely out of fear?

One question now is whether the trip across the Atlantic will remain cheap — currently \$250 to \$600 roundtrip, depending on gateway and destination. Many flights have

been discontinued and several major airlines are in deep trouble. Prices are low now because demand for overseas flights does not equal supply. That is changing.

**Austrian Airlines**, which now carries armed sky marshals on all flights serving North America, has suspended service to Chicago, Miami and Toronto. At the end of October, a dying **Swissair** had stopped service to Atlanta, San Francisco, and Newark, and dropped it's **American Airlines** code-share flight from Dallas.

CEO James Goodwin of United, by far America's biggest overseas carrier, has told his employees the airline may "perish sometime next year." And airline analysts we've spoken with wonder how much longer **US Airways** and **Continental** can carry on.

A new Swiss national airline will apparently be built on the ruins of Swissair. Coming to the rescue are the Swiss government, a couple of banks and three of the country's largest companies, including Nestle. What the new airline will be called and which U.S. markets it will serve was not known at press time.

With all this going on, caution must be used when booking and paying for travel. The advice of consumer experts is to pay for all travel products, especially airline tickets, with a credit card. If the travel service purchased is not ultimately provided, the credit card company must in most circumstances refund your money. There is, however, some fine

print. For example, tickets purchased far in advance of the travel date may not be covered. Check with the credit card company.

Travel insurance is also recommended. You can purchase coverage offered by a tour operator or cruise company but you'll get nothing if the company declares bankruptcy. To protect against travel supplier bankruptcy, buy trip insurance from a third party insurance company such as **Travel Guard International** or **Access America**. These policies insure against travel company default. Understand, however that the travel supplier must declare bankruptcy for you to be covered.

(In a rather amazing public relations move, Travel Guard International has been paying claims to travelers who simply say they are now afraid to fly.)

With the possible demise of some

### Using Gemütlichkeit

- 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".

### Logging on to Gemütlichkeit's Website

Except for the most recent 12, back issues in text format from January 1993 are available free to subscribers only at <http://www.gemut.com> (click on "For Members Only"). To access the issues enter the user name and password published in this space each month. The July codes are:

User Name: meck Password: 108

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

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**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.

major airlines, persons with substantial frequent flyer miles may want to consider insuring those miles. Such coverage is available from **Privilege-Flyer's AwardGuard** program (tel. 800-487-8893, [www.privilegeflyer.com](http://www.privilegeflyer.com)). Cost is \$119 per year for one person and \$79 for additional family members.

These are unusual times requiring unusual travel strategies. — RHB 

## BALTIC GERMANY

*Continued from page 1*

architectural, cultural and culinary delights and with centuries of history and decades under Soviet control behind them.

### Schwerin

Especially for those just arriving from overseas flights, Schwerin, an hour's train ride from Hamburg, is an ideal Mecklenburg-Vorpommern starting point. (Be sure to take a direct InterCity or InterRegio train — from 35-42 DM (\$16-\$19) — it will cut your rail time in half.) The province's capital and second-largest city, Schwerin is surrounded by seven lakes and an endless forest and its old city retains the culture, architecture and vibrancy of its 19<sup>th</sup>-century glory days.

For an initial perspective of what the city offers, climb the 220 steps and 130 meters of the Gothic red-brick **Schweriner Dom** (1 DM /\$.46). The view reveals as much lakescape as landscape. The town is surrounded by lakes including Lake Schwerin, one of Germany's largest.

The city's centerpiece is its **Schloss** (6 DM /\$2.75), an island castle (connected to land by two bridges) that is a fairyland mishmash of baroque and Gothic architecture overwhelmed by a neo-Renaissance make-over from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Inside, however, it's all business, a lavish ducal showpiece with intricate wood floors and paneling, a gilded throne room, lush tapestries and ornate stucco.

An artificial pond — the rectangular Pfaffenteich — comprises much of the city center. Once used to store water that powered the town's



## Baltic Basics

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Population: 1.79 million

**Capital:** Schwerin

**Elevation:** 179 meters / 590 feet

**Distance from Schwerin to:**

|              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Berlin       | 203 km / 126 miles |
| Frankfurt    | 536 km / 333 miles |
| Hamburg      | 110 km / 69 miles  |
| Kühlungsborn | 72 km / 45 miles   |
| Munich       | 723 km / 450 miles |
| Rostock      | 89 km / 55 miles   |
| Teterow      | 91 km / 57 miles   |

**Nearest airports:** Hamburg, Berlin

**Principal rail links:** Hamburg-Ludwigslust-Berlin, Berlin-Neustreulitz-Rostock-Warnemünde, Hamburg-Schwerin-Rostock

**Tourism Offices**

**Mecklenburg Lake District**, Turnplatz 2, D-17207 Roebel/Mueritz, tel. +49/0399 31 / 5 13 81, fax +49/ 03 99 31 / 5 13 86

**Mecklenburg Switzerland**, Am Bahnhof D-17131 Malchin, tel. +49/03994 / 22 47 55/57, fax 22 47 56, email:

[info@mecklenburgische-schweiz.de](mailto:info@mecklenburgische-schweiz.de), Web: [www.mecklenburgische-schweiz.de](http://www.mecklenburgische-schweiz.de)

**Schwerin**, Am Markt 10, D-19055 Schwerin, tel. +49/0385/56 09 31, fax: +49/0385/55 50 94, email: [stadtmarketing-schwerin@t-online.de](mailto:stadtmarketing-schwerin@t-online.de), web: [www.schwerin.de](http://www.schwerin.de)

**Teterow**, 17166 Teterow, Mühlenstr. 1, tel. +49/03996/17 20 28, fax: +49/039 96/18 77 95, email: [tourist-info@teterow.de](mailto:tourist-info@teterow.de), web: [www.teterow.de](http://www.teterow.de)

**Other helpful sites:**

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourism: [www.all-in-all.com/english/index.htm](http://www.all-in-all.com/english/index.htm)  
Historic Highlights of Germany: [www.hhog.de/home.htm](http://www.hhog.de/home.htm)

mills, today it's purely recreational and a walk around it is just plain fun. Fanciful sculptures bring smiles, as does the massive and wonderfully out-of-scale Tudor Gothic Arsenal. In summer, the **Petermännchen**, a tiny ferry named for a mythical gnome, delivers passengers to various points along the pond's perimeter. On

warm evenings, crowds share gossip and sip espresso in the nearby *Altstadt*, while others make their way to a widening variety of restaurants and cultural events.

### Excursions

Two days barely do justice to Schwerin, especially if you plan a visit to the outskirts. An excellent daytrip is a scenic excursion by ferry (4.80 DM/\$2.19 round-trip) across Lake Schwerin to the white-sand beach at **Zippendorf**. From there, it's a 15-minute walk to the **Mecklenburgisches Volkskundemuseum** (2 DM/\$0.91) — an open-air museum that shows life in 18<sup>th</sup>-century rural Mecklenburg. If you have the energy, just take the ferry for the return trip and walk or bike to Zippendorf. The route winds through the 18<sup>th</sup>-century baroque **Schlossgarten** and leads past the **Schleifmühle** (2 DM/\$1.05), a water-driven grinding mill still in working order but once used to cut and polish precious stones that decorate the Schloss. The trail then cuts through the forest to the beach.

Schwerin is about an hour by car or 90 minutes by direct train (every two hours for 25.60 DM/\$12) to **Teterow**, a medieval town in the heart of a region known as *Mecklenburgische Schweiz* (Mecklenburg Switzerland). This Switzerland has no Alps, indeed no mountains at all. Its highest point is barely 500 feet.

Still, the undulating landscape makes for one scenic view after another. Hikers can follow signed trails past springs and streams and through valleys and old growth forests (some oaks are more than 1,000 years old). Other visitors ride horses or bicycles along the hilly ridges of the "Balcony Route." The area is so thick with lakes, rivers and canals, that guests can spend days exploring it by canoe.

Auto travelers will find a network of peaceful backroads linking sleepy villages. Many of these byways are tree-lined, with century-old lime trees forming a leafy canopy overhead.

The area is also famed for its manor houses and castles. Unlike the medieval fortresses of the Rhine and Danube, these were built as palatial

residences, primarily during the prosperous 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1945, due to housing shortages, many were divided into apartments. Others remained empty and neglected.

**Schloss Basedow** is perhaps the most haunting example, once an elegant palace, and now an empty warren of apartments. Overhead, wooden ceilings and intricate carvings remain intact, but vaulted halls and chambers are broken up by rotting drywall — complete with faded 90s rock posters. Work is underway, however, to transform Basedow into a hotel and conference center.

Over the past decade, millions of deutschemarks have been invested to renovate similar structures. Some remain private residences or businesses while others, like Burg Schlitz or the Sporthotel Teschow, have become fine hotels.

With so much land and water under permanent protection, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is likely to remain a paradise for generations. It also has the infrastructure to support consistent double-digit tourism growth. Over time, more buildings will be restored — or torn down. Rural villages will try to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century (or at least the 20<sup>th</sup>). Prices will move upward. For those who want to see the region in its pure, current and affordable form, now's the time to be a pioneer.

### Lodging

*Mecklenburg-Vorpommern offers accommodations that range from private rooms to castle suites. The least expensive are in private homes, especially in the countryside, starting at 25 DM (\$12) per person, with breakfast. Boathouses in the Lake District cost as little as 50 DM (\$24) per night. Contact any of the tourism agencies on page 3 for more information.*

#### Hotel Speicher am Ziegelsee Schwerin

Sorat Hotels has transformed a run-down, 60-year-old grain silo at an old port into a modern, comfortable, peaceful hotel.

Located directly on the Ziegelsee, the Speicher is about a 15-minute walk or five-minute drive from

downtown, giving a sense of distance, but not isolation. Inside, it has retained much of the wood and brick features of the original structure. Off the lobby, an open fireplace adds a cozy touch. The hotel opened in 1998 and the entire facility is spotless.

In guestrooms, angled walls lend themselves to large windows and lots of sunlight. Decor is in warm tones using such natural elements as leather, rattan and cotton. For a 20 DM/\$9.13 difference per night, it's worth it to get a lake view.

From the waterfront, guests can board one of the boats of the Weisse Flotte for a lake excursion.

The Speicher offers a "Wellness" area with steambath and Finnish sauna, as well as its **Restaurant Aurum**, specializing in regional cuisine.

Though the immediate area is somewhat run-down, it's safe and on the way up.

**Daily Rates:** Singles 150 to 210 DM (\$68-\$96), doubles 170 to 250 DM (\$78-\$114). Approx. 10% off for AAA and AARP. Free parking, reasonable disabled access.

**Contact:** Sorat Hotel Speicher am Ziegelsee Schwerin, Speicherstrasse 11, D-19055 Schwerin, tel. +49/0385 500 30, fax 500 31 11, email [speicher-schwerin@sorat-hotels.com](mailto:speicher-schwerin@sorat-hotels.com), web [www.sorat-hotels.com/speicher-schwerin/index-e.htm](http://www.sorat-hotels.com/speicher-schwerin/index-e.htm)

**Rating:** QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

#### Hospiz am Pfaffenteich

Renovated in 1992, this family-run hotel is typical of the region's many inexpensive alternatives. What these accommodations lack in luxury, they make up for in personal attention.

Guestrooms look out over the Pfaffenteich, and the hotel is across the street from the ferry landing, making it a short boat-ride and five-minute walk to the train station. The *Altstadt* is 15 minutes away on foot.

The Hospiz may not have the latest in furnishings, but it is comfortable and has the usual amenities. Ask for one of the balcony rooms when you reserve; they seem larger and offer delightful water views.

**Daily Rates:** Singles 70-90 DM (\$32-

\$41), doubles 120-130 DM (\$55-\$59).

**Contact:** Gausstr. 19, D-19055 Schwerin, tel. +49/0385/56 56 06, fax 56 96 13, web: [www.hospiz-am-pfaffenteich.m-vp.de/](http://www.hospiz-am-pfaffenteich.m-vp.de/). On-street parking, difficult disabled access.

**Rating:** QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 15/20

#### Golf- and Wellnesshotel

##### Schloss Teschow

Here's a hotel that almost guarantees you'll leave rested and stress-free — even when you see the bill.

**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

Nestled in the rolling hills, meadows and woodlands of Mecklenburg Switzerland, Schloss Teschow is a delightful retreat, a renovated classical-style castle completed in 1824. Opened as a hotel in 2001, it has a friendly staff that loves to pamper. Guests seeking a stress reprieve can hike or bike in the countryside, sweat it out in the sauna, or simply read a book by the indoor-outdoor saltwater pool. Physiotherapists stand by to provide sport massage and there are a wide variety of spa treatments for both men and women.

More interested in golf than wellness? No problem. The hotel's 18- and nine-hole courses are rated among the top 50 in the country.

Most visitors, of course, come simply to relax or explore. A 20-acre park and some of the region's most beautiful countryside surrounds the castle.

Others come to eat, and the hotel has four restaurants, including Thai, French and regional. Each offers the opportunity to dine on the terrace that overlooks pastures, woods and — in the distance — Teterow Lake. At night, the terrace provides a perfect vantage point for the sunset, as candles flicker on the walls.

Guests arrive along a tree-lined boulevard and up a crescent, cobblestone drive to the entrance. Inside, marble floors, rich red and teal carpets, and pedestals with rose-filled vases in full bloom seem to say, "Relax."

Guestrooms are alike only in their use of colors and motifs designed to soothe and calm. The castle itself has 17 rooms, while the new wing has 77. Note that castle rooms do not have elevator service.

Room Number 197 in the castle is typical. The original wood beams are exposed, and furnishings include a king-size bed, love seat and two matching chairs. The view is to the lake, past stands of trees and grazing horses. In the evening, the only sound comes from the birds and, as sun sets, from crickets.

The best value perhaps is Number 491 in the new wing overlooking the courtyard. At 335 square feet, it's the smallest room but not confining. And the price is a bargain at 190 DM (\$87) for two, including breakfast.

Many repeat guests request Number 233, with its bright skylight and view of the park and lake. It can also connect to the next room as a suite. For those travelling with children, Number 421 has a kitchenette and small side room for children to play and sleep.

**Daily Rates:** Singles 160-260 DM (\$73-\$119), doubles 190-230 DM (\$87-\$105), suites 380-560 DM (\$174-\$256). Free parking, easy disabled access.

**Contact:** Golf- und Wellnesshotel Schloss Teschow, Gutshofallee 1, D-17166 Teschow, tel. +49/03996/14 0-0, fax 14 0 -100, email: [info@schloss-teschow.de](mailto:info@schloss-teschow.de), web: [www.schloss-teschow.de](http://www.schloss-teschow.de).

**Rating:** QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 17/20

### Burg Schlitz

In the heart of Mecklenburg Switzerland, the classically-styled Burg Schlitz lies hidden in a deeply wooded landscaped park. It's just a short ride up a gravel road to the castle's entrance, where one might expect the Count von Schlitz to emerge to greet guests — but the good count died more than 100 years ago and the estate's restoration wasn't quite that extensive.

Unlike many castle hotels, Burg Schlitz strives to give its guests a sense of castle life. Rooms and suites are in the east and west wings, where the count and his family once lived. The Knight's Hall — with its Gothic dome, stained glass, stucco ceilings and parquet floor — is today an award-winning restaurant. The rest of the castle does nothing to alert guests that the 21<sup>st</sup> century has arrived.

The idyllic Schlosspark has been tended well over the past 150 years and is a wonderful refuge for guests. It's a restful walk from the Karolinenkapelle (chapel) adjacent to the hotel to the Luisenteig (pond). The hotel will even provide picnic lunches and a blanket.

Each guestroom is different and filled with antiques and custom-made furniture. Floors are oiled hardwood, and colored silk and other fabrics enhance the color scheme. For those with royal budgets (about 940 DM/\$429 a night), the Grafensuite has its own work room, salon, bedroom, walk-in closet, bath with separate tub and shower, and gilded ceiling. More economical (390 DM/\$178) double rooms include Number 28, with a view of the park; and Number 31 on the top floor, with a view to the Karolinenkapelle. Doubles have a dressing room or walk-in closet. All rooms have VCRs, CD players.

Considering its setting and the overall experience, Burg Schlitz — though expensive for this region — is a bargain.

**Daily Rates:** Singles 280-360 DM (\$128-\$164), doubles 360-440 DM (\$164-\$201), suites 690-940 DM (\$315-\$429). Free parking, difficult disabled access.

**Contact:** 2000 Schlosshotel Burg Schlitz, D-17166 Hohen Demzin-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, tel. +49/ 039 96/12 70 0, fax 12 70 70, email: [burg-schlitz@t-online.de](mailto:burg-schlitz@t-online.de), web [www.burg-schlitz.de](http://www.burg-schlitz.de)

**Rating:** QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 16/20

### Sustenance

#### Wöhler Historische Wein und Bierstuben

Perhaps the hottest new restaurant in Schwerin is also one of its oldest. Built in 1750, Wöhler was a tradition among townspeople as early as 1895. Even after it was taken over by the East German government, after five generations in the Wöhler family, the business retained a solid and loyal following — and a reputation for great wine and beer and excellent food. The tradition came to a temporary halt in 1983, when authorities

**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

closed the building because it was near collapse.

Thus, when investors started rebuilding Wöhler in 1998, crowds formed to share their excitement — and their opinions on how to restore it. Finally, it reopened in 2001 after “an 18-year sleep,” as its current manager says, and it has regained its position as a “cult favorite.”

“Although it's not owned by a Wöhler, tradition and loyalty are more important,” he said.

But tradition, loyalty and a beautifully restored building wouldn't bring townspeople back. The finest wines and beers wouldn't hold their loyalty. The food had to be as good as ever and most say it's better.

The menu reflects regional tastes. In general, Mecklenburg dishes draw from local streams, lakes and forests, and from the Baltic. Many have a sweet element; perhaps sugar, honey or local fruit. Recently featured, for example, was a choice of soups: a strong beef broth with carrots, onions, apples and plums; beer soup boiled to a froth with sugar, lemon, cinnamon and ginger, and Mecklenburger *Buttermilchsuppe*, buttermilk boiled with sugar and vanilla and served with a swirl of blackberry sauce.

Main dishes also reflect the regional sweet tooth: breast of duck with almond-honey sauce; *Schwinsrippenbraden* (in local dialect), a pork roast stuffed with apples and plums; and *Swartsuer*, goose stuffed with pork and simmered in a broth sweetened with sugar and pears.

Of course, more familiar dishes are available plus such lighter entrees as trout stuffed with salmon mousse. Most entrees are served with local vegetables.

The cost for two persons, with a glass of wine each, ranges from 60-100 DM (\$27-\$46). For those who just want to soak up the atmosphere, a sampling of wine and cheeses might cost 30-60 DM (\$14-\$27) or more.

Wöhler Historische Wein und Bierstuben, Puschkinstrasse 26, D-19055 Schwerin, tel. +49/0385/55583 0, fax 5558315.

**Rating:** QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 17/20

### Zum Stadtkrug

For lighter budgets and more straightforward food, Zum Stadtkrug is an excellent option. It's a combination restaurant, hotel, brewery and beer garden in the center of the *Altstadt*. In addition to its charm, Stadtkrug also offers a glimpse of the beer-making process, starting with the copper kettles at the entrance. If the weather is the least bit cooperative, head to the cozy beer garden.

Those with small appetites can choose a variety of sausages or salads, for 5-12 DM (\$2.28-\$5.48). Options expand as appetites expand. The *Brauhausteller* is hefty portions of pork roulade, smoked sausage and roast beef, served with sauerkraut and string beans. The *Schweinhaxe* (pork hock), unlike the more common broiled version, is simmered, and served over sauerkraut and boiled potatoes. A variety of trout, *Schnitzel* and poultry dishes rounds out the menu, with no entrée topping 15 DM (\$6.85).

And you'll insult the brewmaster if you don't order at least a quarter-liter of beer for 3 DM (\$1.37).

Zum Stadtkrug, Wismarsche Str. 126, D-19053 Schwerin, tel. 49+ / 0385 5936693

**Rating:** QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 15/20

### Burg Schlitz

You'll feel like royalty dining in the Knight's Hall at Burg Schlitz. It's not just the setting (see page 5); service is polite and indulgent and a typical seven-course dinner might include medallions of lobster, cannelloni stuffed with veal, risotto with mussels, grapefruit sorbet, rabbit with truffles, a platter of French and Italian cheeses, and a fig tart with red-wine ice cream. The cost: 183 DM (\$84). Drop two courses — the cannelloni and either the cheeses or dessert — and the price is 145 DM (\$66).

The a la carte menu offers veal filet for 48 DM (\$22) and halibut encrusted with horseradish and served in a red beet sauce for 52 DM (\$24). Even with lobster broth for 19 DM (\$9) and passionfruit parfait in a chocolate shell with mango-ginger compote for 19 DM (\$9), the price is

reasonable compared with similar feasts elsewhere in Germany. (For contact information see story page 5)

**Rating:** QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 14/20

## FINDING PRE-WAR GERMANY

*Continued from page 5*

ers can go for hours with minimal human contact. Eventually, the deep forests burst open to sea and sky. The more adventurous can make their way down steep paths to pristine—and empty—beaches.

In Quedlinburg, a sprawling medieval city northwest of Leipzig, more than 2,000 structures have been declared historic monuments by UNESCO. During the 45 years of Communist rule, 24 of these buildings were restored. In the 11 years since reunification, more than 500 additional buildings have been restored, using techniques perfected during a half-century of restoration in the West. A walk down the cobbled streets, however, reveals structures that are barely standing.

"Some German cities have been transformed into theme parks," said one Quedlinburger, making an oblique reference to Rothenburg. "We never want our city to become a 'tourist attraction.' People live and work here. We want tourism to be part of our fabric, not our reason for being."

Furthermore, he said, "We're not ashamed that so many of our buildings are run down. It allows visitors to see the impact of neglect and to watch buildings in various stages of restoration."

In the medieval Hanseatic City of Wismar, just north of Schwerin, restoration was not a priority during frugal East German times. Work has only recently begun on the 14<sup>th</sup>-century St.-Georgen-Kirche, and a 245-foot tower is all that remains of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Marienkirche.

"The Russians didn't tend to make churches a big priority," sighed one local resident.

Similarly, most castle tours include only their finished, polished chambers. But guides here are just as likely to spend time showing sections under or awaiting restoration.

Many buildings lie beyond hope of repair. In Basedow, a village northwest of Berlin, massive classically-styled castle stables lie in ruins. No fences or signs block entry. Walls and ceilings have fallen away and created a maze of beams and plaster. Pigeons fly freely through gaps in the walls. The structure's former glory is immediately evident in fading frescoes and intricate, yet chipped tilework. It's a frequent dilemma: too hopeless to restore, too tragic to tear down. So, in the meantime, it's a monument both to former glory and the perils of neglect. It also provides perspective; the stables are probably no worse than hundreds, if not thousands, of buildings that were rebuilt in West Germany almost immediately after the war. Tourists often take these buildings for granted. A walk through the stable brings immediate reflection on the massive efforts that brought those buildings in the West back to life.

Restoration is a slow but considered process, one often complicated by conflicting claims of ownership. During Nazi times and the subsequent Communist rule, the government seized most property. After reunification, multiple parties often clashed over ownership, and cases still linger in court. In other cases, especially with more dilapidated buildings, no one has stepped forward to assume ownership. In Quedlinburg, a once glorious home has tried to escape further neglect with a sign proclaiming: "Lady Seeks New Lover."

In many cases of abandonment, the government sells property for pocketchange in return for guarantees that the new owner will renovate. Such is the case with numerous castles throughout the Mecklenburg Lake District. For example, investors bought the Schloss Teschow for one deutschemark and spent 40 DM million / \$19 million to transform it into the Schloss-Hotel Teschow, a world-class golf and sports resort.

In some ways, whether it's a derelict district or a rundown room, the experience of seeing sights not manicured for tourists lends a feeling of authenticity. In an odd way, one feels

privileged to see the “unfinished” product and the magic of transformation. It’s like an artist allowing you to see a painting before it’s complete—a private showing, a peek behind the wizard’s curtain.

The absence of tourism is even more striking in the many hamlets spread across the countryside. Many buildings, whether they’re 100 years old or 500, haven’t been altered since the 1930s. The rampant commercialism prevalent in large cities and the West hasn’t arrived yet. For the most part, it’s just townspeople going about their daily lives. There are tractors (or horse-drawn wagons), not tour buses, and most people like it that way. Still, the rare tourist is greeted cordially.

Parts of some cities and towns, however, show more of the last five decades than of the last five centuries. Soviet practicality, functionality and frugality left their mark, often interspersed with architectural gems. As a guide in Rostock showing the impressive baroque facade of the Rathaus said, “Please don’t look at the ugly buildings to its right and left.” Near the Rathaus, a group of statues shows happy workers playing. Some residents say it should go; it’s a bad reminder of East German times. Others say it’s art and makes people feel happy. More obtrusive and troublesome are the building-block rows of apartment complexes. Yes, they’re ugly, but where would the residents live?

No one would ever suggest demolishing the five-star **Neptune Hotel**. It is neither ugly nor rundown. However, the 200-foot structure, built in 1971, looms over the beach in Warnemünde, an out-of-scale behemoth clashing against the backdrop of pastel villas and blue sea. The East Germans wanted to show off a bit, and the hotel can indeed be seen from dozens of miles off shore. (Interestingly, most of the hotel’s current staff has been working there since well before reunification.)

And it’s unlikely that Rostock will make any changes to the Langstrasse, which, after war damage to the area, now stretches the width of

three former streets and city blocks. The street was modeled after the Lenin Prospect in Moscow — serving as a monument to Rostock’s purported prosperity and, perhaps more important, the perfect place for frequent military parades.

“The troops used to go the length of the street and double back out of sight and form back into the parade,” one local resident said. “That way it looked like there were thousands and thousands more soldiers. They didn’t fool anyone.”


In another time, not so long ago, a statement like that could land a person in jail—or worse. While it’s impossible to speak with people who experienced the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, visitors can hear firsthand about more recent history and life under Communist rule. A young woman in Schwerin, for example, recalled her 10-year-old classmate, who asked his teacher why everything west of East Germany was grayed out in the geography books. “Because there’s nothing there,” the teacher replied. “But my father showed me all the countries on a map at home,” the pupil countered. The father was jailed the next day.

Conversations also often lead to the ambivalence felt by many former East Germans—or “Ossies.” Despite the political freedom and economic opportunity that came with reunification, many Ossies resent the “Wesies” as carpetbaggers. With the privatization that started in 1990, the German government sold off more than 14,000 state-owned companies, often for token amounts. With western capitalism came western efficiency. Plants closed. Jobs became redundant. Today, unemployment in the East is double that in the West, in some cases as high as 30 percent.

And, while most former East Germans supported reunification, many also say they were happier under the communist regime, with its guaranteed lifetime employment, low-cost housing and social welfare systems. Despite residents’ lingering concerns and attitudes, however, tourists are warmly welcomed.

Much of the former East Germa-

ny offers fundamental differences to the former West Germany. In smaller towns, few people speak English. After all, East German schools taught Russian rather than English (although no one seems to remember—or want to remember—a word of Russian). Travelers will also find that, in general, prices are far lower in the East, especially for lodging. It takes minimal effort to find a room in a sprawling palace-hotel complex for less than 200 DM/\$95 per couple per night or a guest room for 30 DM/\$14.50 per person.

Times are changing quickly, however. Tourism in some areas is increasing at an annual rate of 25 percent. And memories are dulling: Many visitors to the Schwerin tourist office, just a dozen miles from the former border, ask whether the city was part of East Germany or West Germany. Maybe, after another generation or two, the residents will forget, too. 

## Readers’ Forum

### **German Restaurants in U.S.**

Discretion being the better part of valor, I sadly cancelled our trip to Switzerland at the end of September and I’m not really certain when we shall next be sampling the wonderful *Schnitzels* and *Strudels* I always look forward to. If there are others who are cautious about European travel just now, perhaps you might consider a new column which recommends restaurants in the USA where at least the food of Austria, Germany and Switzerland can be found if not the atmosphere. Your readers seem to be pretty savvy and willing to share their finds. As a start I offer three: **Zum Stammtisch** in Glendale, borough of Queens, in New York City, **The Student Prince** in Springfield, Mass. and **Romy’s Alpenhaus** in Stowe, Vermont.

JOAN HAWKINS  
VIA EMAIL

### **Germanic Travel Alert**

Free email supplement to *Gemütlichkeit*. Register online at [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com) or send your email address to [gta@gemut.com](mailto:gta@gemut.com)

### Hotel on Chiemsee

Another way to do the drive outlined in the *Bavarian Drive* story (Sept. issue) is to make Prien home base and stay at the delightful **Yacht Hotel Chiemsee** (tel. +49/08051/6960, fax 5171, email: [info@yachthote.de](mailto:info@yachthote.de)). It has an excellent dining room right on the Chiemsee - just about a 10 minute walk south from the harbor - side-walks all the way. Another advantage is that Prien is on the main rail line — one hour from Munich and one hour from Salzburg. The trains run every hour day and night. You can leave your car in the hotel's free parking lot and arrive right under Marienplatz at 11:30am for the Glockenspiel. You don't need or even want a car in either city. There are several nice restaurants in Prien, mostly on the street that runs from the middle of the city to the harbor.

BERNIE DAHLEM  
LOUISVILLE KY

### Praise for Michelin

Another excellent issue, particularly the *Bavarian Drive*, which is of special interest to anal-retentives such as me.

It was nice to read your laudatory remarks about the Michelin guides. With few exceptions, there's Michelin and there are all the others who are trying to write useful guide-

### Key Websites for the Traveler to Germany, Austria & Switzerland

- [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com) Gateway site for travelers to Germanic Europe, including car rental, rail passes, hotel bookings, traveler feedback, travel tips and past issues (free access to back issues for subscribers; see log-on info on page 2).
- [www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com) The Michelin database of hotels and restaurants plus great interactive trip planning tools.
- [www.mapblast.com](http://www.mapblast.com) Map and automobile trip planning. Locates routes and distances.
- [bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en](http://bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en) German rail. Train schedules throughout Europe, not just Germany.
- [www.sbb.ch/index\\_e.htm](http://www.sbb.ch/index_e.htm) Swiss and European rail schedules.
- [www.ski-europe.com](http://www.ski-europe.com) Top web resource for skiers with much data on Alpine resorts.
- [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) Website of Switzerland's national tourist authority.
- [www.germany-tourism.de](http://www.germany-tourism.de) Germany's national tourist authority.
- [www.anto.com](http://www.anto.com) Austria's national tourist authority.

books. Although we occasionally cross-check what we find in Michelin, their seal of approval is our gold standard and they've rarely misled us. We rely heavily on the 'Bib Gourmand' ratings, which are often pleasant surprises and occasionally are restaurants en route "to the stars."

The maps are great, especially those of the smaller areas that are available primarily where they are to be used. Ditto the Green Guides.

FYI, the website for hotels, restaurants, and routes is now [www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com). One last item: There is no Michelin Red Guide for Austria, but the *Red Guide for Deutschland* does include listings for Salzburg, which is how we came across the listing for **Obauer** in Werfen, just south of Salzburg.

RUSSELL WAYNE  
VIA EMAIL

### Hotel in Tirol

The November 1999 issue of your excellent publication had Austria's Tirol as its main subject. The article spoke primarily about Innsbruck but also included reviews of hotels outside the city. The **Schloss Hotel** in Igls was mentioned as a deluxe establishment above Innsbruck, sure to please any traveler expecting the best of everything. We've been guests there and agree with you - it's expensive but really fine. However, I want to tell you of a place that did not appear in the publication.

In August 2001 we spent two nights at the **Landhof Wilder Mann** (tel. +43/0 512/379696, fax 379139, email: [wildermann@tirol.com](mailto:wildermann@tirol.com)) just down the road from Igls in the small town of Lans. The Schatz family owns this fairly new inn of about 15 rooms, as well as the well-established restaurant in a separate building across the road known as **Zum Wilder Mann**.

This operation is a true delight and we enjoyed every minute we were there. There's something about smaller, friendly places that no larger hotel can ever equal. One gets the feel of the people and the countryside in a way that makes travel as interesting and rewarding as everyone hopes it will be.

We paid 1560 Austrian schillings (about \$102) per night for a nice double room with balcony, new bath and a view of the village church and beautiful mountains across the valley. A breakfast buffet, for which Austrians are famous, was included in the price and was served in the lounge area.

We also had two evening meals in the dining room across the road. They were excellent and nicely served in a typical Tirolean atmosphere. The restaurant is older than the inn and has been known locally for some time for its fine food.

The city of Innsbruck itself is easily reached from Lans or Igls by an electric railway which becomes a street tram once it reaches Innsbruck's city streets.

No traveler to the Tirol area of Austria could be disappointed in this area as an alternative to staying in an Innsbruck hotel. The **Landhof Wilder Mann**, either as a place to stay or because of its fine local restaurant, is highly recommended by us.

MATTHIAS SHEELEIGH  
VIA EMAIL

### We Stand Corrected

Enjoyed the issue with the feature story on South Tyrol. We have been vacationing there for the past 20 years and can attest to the area's beautiful scenery, tasty food, delicious wine, and reasonable prices.

I must question Mr. Linton's reference to Bolzan, however. In Italian, the city is called Bolzano, in German it's Bozen. We have never seen a reference to Bolzan. We too truly enjoy Meran and stop there each year for a supply of vinegar, pasta and mixed peppercorns to bring home to California. South Tyrol is truly one of life's great treasures.

MR. & MRS. L. OLSTEAD  
REDWOOD CITY CA

(Ed. Note: You and many other readers are correct, of course. The town is Bolzano or Bozen.)

### Coming Attractions:

- **The Essential Switzerland**
- **Rostock/Warnemünde**
- **A Styrian Drive**