

**DEAR SUBSCRIBER**

November 26, 2001

**Our 15th Anniversary**

This month marks the end of 15 years of *Gemütlichkeit*. The first issue was January, 1987. Some readers have been with us the whole way and others are brand new. Sincerest thanks to all.

We started traveling frequently to Europe — and Germany, Austria, Switzerland in particular — in the mid 70s. But since 1987 Liz and I have made some 40 trips to our three countries to research hotels, restaurants, backroads, and destinations. These days we also rely on the good judgement of our correspondents Doug Linton, Jim Johnson and the Claudia Fischer-Roger Holliday team.

In the course of all this travel, we've stayed at or inspected hundreds of hotels and thousands of hotel rooms. Surveys tell us that most of you consider the choice of where to stay one of your most important travel decisions. There's are differences in what you're willing to spend for a night's lodging, so we have tried to cover a broad spectrum.

The majority of you seem to be about where we are, somewhere in the middle — mid-priced hotels most of the time, with the occasional foray into luxury.

At any level we are always conscious of the price-to-value ratio. Where can our readers get the most

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## STYRIA'S WINE ROADS

*Austrians liken the rolling hills and vineyards of the southern part of Styria to Tuscany. The similarities end, however, when it comes to prices and the number of American tourists.*

**T**ell an Austrian you've been to the Styrian Wine Road (*Südsteirische Weinstrasse*) and she look wistfully into the distance and say "Ahhh, the Styrian Toscana." In part, this is because of a memorable advertising slogan, but also because the landscape really does look something like the Italian region of Tuscany. Located on the border with Slovenia, the southern Styrian countryside is a blend of crescent hills, tall singular poplar trees, the occasional farmhouse, and vineyards one after the other.

Frau Jakobé, the owner of one of these vineyards at the top of the last crest before the border, prefers to

point out the differences. "If this were Tuscany," she says, "at this time of year, everything would be brown."

True, on a hot day in late July, the view is a palette of innumerable greens — the rolling fields, the shimmering leaves of the poplar trees and the broad pointed leaves strung along the vines — but not a hint of anything parched or withered. In fact, its downright humid: perfect weather to sit in the shade of a vine arbor and enjoy a cool, perspiring glass of fruitful Styrian white wine.

Which brings up another difference in the two regions. Rather than Tuscany's deep red wines, southern

*Continued on page 3...*

## Essential Switzerland

**T**his is the second in our three-part series on what we think are the 10 leading destinations in each of the three countries we cover — the essential Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

This month we offer our Switzerland answer to the frequently asked question, "I only have a few days, what should I see?"

The destinations are listed in order of our preference, as if we were advising a first-time traveler what to see in each country. This is obviously a subjective process and you may disagree with the choices. For example, Lucerne, a wonderful destination, is not included. This list isn't *the* top 10, it's *our* top 10. Here is Switzerland:

### #1. Lauterbrunnen Valley & Environs

For our money, this is Switzerland's number one showcase. High, slender waterfalls cascade in long, silvery ribbons straight down its green flanks. Quaint, traffic-free villages perch above it on grassy shelves, and towering over all are the famed mountain peaks Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau. Some of the world's most spectacular scenery.

**Best Towns:** Mürren, Wengen and Lauterbrunnen.

**Top Sights:** • The ride to the Jungfrauoch, Europe's highest railway station • Trümmelbach Falls

**Suggested Activities:** Ride the train to Schynige Platte (on the route to the Jungfrauoch), eat lunch at the hotel (or bring a picnic), then walk the approximately two-hour "pan-

*Continued on page 5...*

**DEAR SUBSCRIBER**  
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for their money? The most important element in our evaluation of a hotel is the room itself; cleanliness, quality of materials and furnishings, size, decor, view, lighting and air quality (we'll take an airy, cool room in a two-star over a hot, stuffy one in a five-star any day). After the room we look at people and service, location and setting, facilities, and, finally, public rooms.

The hotels that combine all these traits — and offer the best value — have become our favorites. Places such as the **Art Nouveau** in Berlin; **Hotel Anker** in Marktheidenfeld, Germany; the **Sonnenhof** in Bad Sachsa, Germany; **Zur Stadt Mainz** in Würzburg; **Gutshotel von Kesselstatt** in Neumagen-Dhron on the Mosel; **Schloss Haunspurg** outside Salzburg; the **Altstadt** in Vienna; the **Innere Enge** in Bern; and the **Waldhotel Doldenhorn** in Kandersteg, Switzerland, are just a few of the places we've discovered over the years. Interestingly, every one of the above-mentioned hotels is family owned and operated.

Of course there are many outstanding hotels that have all these qualities, but at much higher prices: the **Beau Rivage Palace** in Lausanne, the **Victoria Jungfrau** in Interlaken, Berlin's **Ritz-Carlton Schloss Hotel**, the **Grüner Baum** near Badgastein Austria, the **Benen Diken Hof** on the German island of Sylt, the **Imperial** in Vienna, Lucerne's **The Hotel** and

**Vieux Manoir au Lac** in Murten, Switzerland.

Then there are the truly bargain hotels that may not have all the attributes we look for but whose prices are well below their peers. In that category are such places as Munich's **Hotel Kraft**, the **Pension Heim** near Füssen in Bavaria, **L'Auberge De Chernex** in the hills above Montreux; the **Pertrisberg** in Trier, and Salzburg's **Hotel Jedermann**.

A few favorite haunts are no longer in business or have slipped badly. Three in the latter category are the beautifully-located **Forsthau Grasek** in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Munich's **Hotel Adria**, and the **Brienzer-Burli** in Brienz, Switzerland.

Simply gone are **Schloss Neuhof** in Coburg, Germany, the wonderful **Hotel Geiger** in Berchtesgaden, and the fine restaurant of the **Markgräfler Hof** in Freiburg, Germany. Two splendid music venues we miss are Vienna's **Cafe Budva** (Gypsy music) and the **Ewig Lampe** (blues/jazz) in Berlin.

Because of their attitude toward Americans, there are just three hotels that are to be avoided under all circumstances: **Gebhards Hotel** in Göttingen, Germany, the **Benediktenhof** (if it's still in operation) in Ettal, southern Bavaria, and Vienna's **Mailberghof**.

Thanks to the strength of the dollar, hotel prices today are surprisingly close to what they were in 1987. According to the March 1987 issue of

*Gemütlichkeit*, A double room at the **Anker**, in Marktheidenfeld, was \$83. In late 2001, that same room is \$86. The dollar in 1987 brought 1.82 DM. Today it fetches 2.19 DM.

Fierce competition has kept car rental rates and transatlantic airline ticket prices about the same as they were 15 years ago. Remove that competitive element, however, and the picture changes. In 1987, a first-class ticket on the Glacier Express was \$67. Today, even though the dollar is about 8% higher vs the Swiss franc than it was in '87, the same St. Moritz-Zermatt trip is \$155. (By the way, Rail Europe is announcing increases in rail pass prices for 2002. Since most passes are good for travel up to six months after date of purchase, those planning to travel in the first half of 2002 would do well to take advantage of current prices by buying their passes no later than Decem-

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**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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**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.

## WINE ROADS

Continued from page 1

Styria is better known for its light, aromatic whites. The wine region is officially confined to a small delta of land on the west side of the Mur river. Most of the approximately 2000 hectares are under cultivation. In the last decades, a number of vintners have begun to produce world-class white wines, which are only now getting the international attention they deserve.

Complementing its numerous fine wines are a handful of scenic *Weinstrassen*, meandering rural roads that thread their way past stunning views along the crests and slopes of the vineyards. The oldest and most striking of these is the *Sudsteirische Weinstrasse*, which begins in Ehrenhausen, about 10 kilometers south of the town of Leibnitz and just west of A9 north-south Autobahn out of Graz. It winds its way along the border to Leutschach, threading past thick clusters of hills and narrow, secluded valleys.

A bit further north is the *Sausaler Weinstrasse*, which runs from Leibnitz to the small village of Höfern. Leave Leibnitz heading west on highway #74. At Glenstätten head north on a "yellow road" toward Preding. This part of the drive is up the Kogelberg with grand views over the extended plain below.

These are just two of the official routes; actually nearly all the small roads in the region contain some rewarding surprise or other. A two-day visit will provide ample time for a leisurely tour of the wine roads, as well as plenty of opportunities to sample the region's food and wine.

### The Schloss

The area also has two sights worth visiting. The first is **Schloss Seggau**, a 13<sup>th</sup> century castle that occupies a commanding position over a low valley. One of its interior walls is covered with worn marble plaques from Roman times.

Your reporter experienced a memorable and serendipitous mo-

## Styrian Wine Roads



ment while standing on the castle walls enjoying the view. On this hot day, a group of elderly Austrians on a church tour wandered to a cluster of benches under a tall horsechestnut tree. I watched them for a moment and then turned back to the view. Suddenly, in gentle, wavering voices, they began to sing an old hymn. It felt like a cool, refreshing breeze.

### The Mausoleum

The other not-to-be missed attractions is Ehrenhausen's mausoleum, which shelters the tomb of Ruprecht of Eggenburg, who fought the Turks at the end of the 16th century. While the Baroque funerary monument is impressive enough in itself, the best part of the experience is the process one must go through in order to visit it. The mausoleum is located on the grounds of a private castle overlooking town, but you must first go to the town's church in the center of town to get the key. There you will find the wizened old lady who looks after the church and it is at this point that the entire project begins to take on a fairy tale aura. She asks if you wish to visit the mausoleum. If yes, she leads you to a large book in which you must sign your name. She then produces a foot-long iron skeleton key with the admonition that it is the mausoleum's only key and, once inside, you must prop the door open a stone. If it closes, you will be locked inside for at least 4 or 5 hours

before being rescued. She then points the way to a small stone path that leads to the mausoleum on the hill.

At the top, is a little, domed building guarded by two grotesquely foreshortened statues that look like Gog and Magog, gigantic trolls dressed in armor and wielding clubs. They contrast sharply with the graceful Baroque and pale yellow of the rest of the structure. It is a thrill to be alone, opening such a big heavy door with such an enormous key, knowing that a dark turn of events could leave one locked inside for hours. It also seems totally outrageous to be given full responsibility for this 400 year-old structure by merely providing a signature.

Just a few quick comments before moving on to the reviews. Almost all of the accommodations along the Wine road are in small pensions usually attached to a vineyard or restaurant or both (which explains the multiple reviews you will find below). To give you an idea of the quality of the wineries listed here, the last edition of Austrian food and wine critics Christoph Wagner and Klaus Engle rated the area's best wines as follows: Willi Sattlerhof 20/20; Alois Gross 19/20; Hans Harkamp 19/20; and Erich and Walter Polz 19/20. A winery near Polz, Manfred Tement, also scored 20/20. And finally, *morillon* is a local Styrian name for Chardonnay.

### Lodging

#### Hotel Sattlerhof

This small luxury-style hotel is run by two gifted brothers — one who makes excellent wine; the other prepares the sumptuous meals that do it justice. Together, they run a very pleasant hotel. The Sattlerhof's best feature is that it manages to be upscale without being pretentious. The presence of the two families and the congeniality of the brothers themselves are sure to make most guests feel right at home.

The hotel is located in a cluster of yellow rural manor-style buildings

**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

with enormous red tile roofs on the quiet side of a small green hill outside Gamlitz just west of Ehrenhausen. The hotel doesn't have the views of some of the other hotels mentioned here, but it makes up for it with extra comforts and its excellent wine made on-premise.

The hotel's 29 rooms are in the same buildings as the restaurant and the winery nestled in the vineyard a few steps away. The spacious double rooms have comfortable furniture, wooden floors and separate sitting rooms. Marble baths have terracotta tile floors and both bathtubs and showers with separate toilets. All come with either balconies and terraces and the use of the hotel's small swimming pool.

**Daily Rates:** Doubles 45-63 EUR (\$40-\$55) per person; suites 71 EUR (\$63) per person.

**Contact:** Hotel Sattlerhof, Sernau 2a, Gamlitz, A-8462, tel +43/03453/44 54 0, fax 44 54 44, email [restaurant@sattlerhof.at](mailto:restaurant@sattlerhof.at), web [www.sattlerhof.at](http://www.sattlerhof.at). Open Mar.-Dec.

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

### Weingut Harkamp

Located just north of the Sausaler wine road, this restaurant, pension and vineyard are the friendliest and most down to earth of any reviewed here.

The 20 rooms range from simple to surprisingly elaborate. What doesn't vary is the feeling of being in the spacious home of a friendly relative who has a talent for wine-making. The large rooms have rustic furnishings, wood floors, tile baths with showers and separate toilets, and each is decorated in its own individual style. The best is Number 18 with a sunny wintergarden overlooking the valley. The more recently renovated rooms are on the top floor, while the ground floor has one room reserved for disabled guests.

**Daily Rates:** 23-25 EUR (\$20-\$22) per person.

**Contact:** Hotel Harkamp, Flamburg 46, St. Nikolai i. S., tel +43/03185/2280, email [weingutharkamp@aon.at](mailto:weingutharkamp@aon.at). Open April through October.

**Rating:** QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 14/20

### Weingut Kästenburg

The Kästenburg is just one of the many small family-run pensions strung along the old wine road. What sets it apart is its superb location on the highest point of the vine-covered hills overlooking Slovenia. The owner, Frau Jakopé, is a vivacious person who seems intent on making the most of what she has — which is quite a lot.

Guestrooms are tucked away in different parts of the property. Most are recently remodeled with antique furniture, bright fabrics, tile baths and laminated wood floors. All are non-smoking and have either a balcony or terrace with views of the woods or the faraway hills. The rooms on the upper floors have attractively sloped ceilings and the suite's steam bath is encased in a large wine barrel.

**Daily Rates:** Per person rates are 21-39 EUR (\$19-\$35)

**Contact:** Jakopé and Barthau family, Ratsch an der Weinstrasse 66, A-8461 Ehrenhausen, tel +43/03453/25 65, fax 20 260, email:

[kaestenburg@aon.at](mailto:kaestenburg@aon.at), web: [www.kaestenburg.at](http://www.kaestenburg.at). Open May-Nov.

**Rating:** QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 13/20

### Schloss Seggau

For those who prefer to stay in a castle, the Seggau is an option. Located at the busy gateway to the *Sausaler Weinstrasse*, this sprawling complex houses a 100-room hotel, two museums (one concerning the castle's history and another with old wine-making equipment), a large courtyard, a wine shop, an enormous grassy field with an outdoor Olympic-sized swimming pool, and a large conference hall that can accommodate over 700.

Guestrooms are either cramped dorm-style or chic, ultramodern with large balconies. We normally would not recommend such a large conference hotel, but this one's unusual collection of the historic items and its grounds make it the exception.

Schloss Seggau is a good option for families needing space for children to roam or for anyone suffering

from the claustrophobia of sitting too long in a car.

**Daily Rates:** Singles 20-28 EUR (\$18-\$25); doubles in dormitory style rooms are 25 Euros (\$22) per person and 32 Euros (\$28) in the modern rooms.

**Contact:** Schloss Seggau, Seggauberg 1, A-8430 Leibnitz, tel +43/03452/82435-29, fax +43/03452/82435-10, email: [information@seggau.com](mailto:information@seggau.com), web [www.seggau.com](http://www.seggau.com). Open May-Oct.

**Rating:** QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 13/20

### Sustenance

#### Weingut Harkamp

On a trip of memorable meals, this was a favorite. The friendly, family atmosphere was instantly endearing, the food excellent and inexpensive, and the setting stunning.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

On warm days, tables are set away from the main building on a narrow path leading to a row of vines above a precipitous slope that plunges to a gentle valley. One is close enough to see activity in the valley but far away enough that it looks like a happy Bruegel painting. During lunch, for example, one can observe a toy-sized tractor plow a small field, while tiny farmer families go about their daily chores.

The menu is written on a blackboard leaning against one of the vine stocks. On a hot day in July, gusts of warm wind rose up from the valley and repeatedly knocked the menu over, which caused the waitress or a helpful guest to trundle over and prop it up again.

Feeling a bit rustic, I followed the a delicious, creamy wine soup spiced with cinnamon and orange peel (2.9 EUR/\$2.56) with the excellent *Hausulz*, boiled beef served cold in aspic with thin onion slices, enormous kidney beans and a drizzingly of pumpkin seed oil (4.7 EUR/\$4.15).

Others that day chose tasty slices of roast beef with pan-fried potatoes and neon-green creamed spinach (12 EUR/\$11) or the enormous portions of greaselessly crispy-fried chicken served with fresh salad (12.2 EUR/\$11). The Harkamps also produce an

excellent white wine that has a deservedly high reputation locally.

Remarkably, it's all done without the slightest bit of pomp or pretension.

Hotel Harkamp, Flamberg 46, St. Nikolai i. S., tel +43/03185/2280, email [weingutharkamp@aon.at](mailto:weingutharkamp@aon.at). Closed Tues.

**Rating:** QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

### Restaurant Sattlerhof

The region's best option for formal, multi-course meals that take up an entire evening. It is popular and reservations are necessary.

The main dining room is decorated in a modern rustic style with tall chairs of wood and woven wicker. Café tables are covered in creamy white linen. The enclosed balcony is the best place to sit; on pleasant days the windows can be opened to take in the breeze.

Guests dine a la carte or from either a multicourse Stryian menu or a special menu of varying themes (during my visit it was an array of Italian dishes). They range in price from about 28 to 31 EUR (\$25-\$27) for seven-course meal.

There is a less-formal bistro with an open kitchen for culinary entertainment and a terrace for enjoying the sun. Main courses here start around 7.2 EUR (\$6.50). A light lunch of creamy pumpkin soup sprinkled with toasted pumpkin seeds (3.25 EUR/\$2.90), followed by a pleasingly al dente risotto (8.66 EUR/\$7.66) with meaty Portabella mushrooms, all dusted with grated Parmesan cheese, was inexpensive and delicious.

Restaurant open Tuesday-Saturday 6pm-midnight (kitchen open until 9pm); bistro open Wed.-Mon. 11:30am-10 pm (kitchen until 6 pm). See page 4 for contact info.

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

### Weingut Erich & Walter Polz

Most of wineries in the region also run small *Buschenschank*, elaborate stands serving their own wine and smoked meats. Polz stands out because of its excellent wines and its unforgettable location on the steep

slope of a narrow, secluded valley with vineyards rising up sharply on all sides.

I sat at a long table on the shady porch with the late summer sun glistening on the vines. My cool glass of the Polz brothers' celebrated Graszitzberger Morillon (a Chardonnay from the best part of the vineyard for a mere 2.5 EUR/\$2.25). Accompanying was a large slab of fresh-baked brown bread piled high with shavings of tender smoked ham (1.8 EUR/\$1.60).

Hungrier guests might try the mixed platter of meats and cheese, which makes an excellent light lunch at 5 EUR (\$4.42). A group of celebrants were enjoying a similar meal around a large oil press that had been converted into a table. The entire scene was so pleasant that even at the time I couldn't wait to go back.

Weingut Erich and Walter Polz, Grasznitzberg 54a, Spielfeld, A-8471, tel +43/03453/27 30, fax +43/03453/27 30-9, email: [buschenschank.polz@xpoint.at](mailto:buschenschank.polz@xpoint.at), web: [www.polz.at](http://www.polz.at), open year-round Monday-Saturday 11pm-10pm.

**Rating:** QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 16/20

### Winzerhaus Kogelberg

The Kogelberg would probably rate much higher if the other places reviewed here hadn't been so very good.

It took a bit of finding, as the address is a bit misleading. The easiest way to get there from Lebnitz or Schloss Seggau is just follow the signs for either the Kogelberg (a common name for a little round mountain) or the *Sausaler Weinstrasse* and then look for the intermittent signs leading to the restaurant.

The Winzerhaus clings to the quiet side of Kogelberg overlooking the plain that extend to the hills that crowd the border. On a hot afternoon under a cool vine arbor, I started with a smooth, chilled gooseliver-and-partridge terrine with blood-orange marmalade (11.5 EUR/\$10). Other choices include consume with sliced crepes (2.7 EUR/\$2.40) and slices of venison and Portabella

mushrooms gelled in aspic (5.8 EUR/\$5.31).

The main course was mildly spicy Hungarian peppers stuffed with meat and rice, served in a large bowl with a sweet sauce of cream and pureed tomatoes and accompanied by starchy boiled potatoes. Other options included the traditional Austrian boiled beef dish, *Tafelspitz*, served with spinach, boiled potatoes and applesauce spiked with shaved horseradish (12.7 EUR/\$11), or fried portabella mushrooms with tartar sauce (12 EUR/\$10.50), or perhaps a venison ragout with sliced bread dumplings and a dollop of cranberry sauce (12 EUR/\$10.50).

The wine list concentrated on local offering, so I settled on a glass of morillon from the respected Gross winery nearby.

Though not stellar, the service had a formal congeniality.

Winzerhaus Kogelberg, Kogelberg 10-11, Kaindorf an der Sulm, A-8430, tel +43/03452/83451., open Wed.-Sat. noon-11pm, Sun. noon-6pm

**Rating:** QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 16/20

## ESSENTIAL SWITZERLAND

*Continued from page 1*

oramic trail" which circles the summit.

**Places to Stay:** • Hotel Regina Wengen, CH-3823, tel. +41/033/856 58 58, fax 856 58 50, email: [regina@wengenc.om](mailto:regina@wengenc.om). Doubles from \$200 • Hotel Jungfrau, CH-3825 Mürren, tel. +41/033/855 4545, fax 855 4549, email: [jungfrau@mueren.ch](mailto:jungfrau@mueren.ch), web: [www.muerren.ch](http://www.muerren.ch). Doubles from \$102

**Food Suggestion:** Either hotel

### #2. Lac Léman (East)

Residents of this French-speaking part of Switzerland, who have included at one time or another, Vladimir Nabokov, Igor Stravinsky, Ernest Hemingway, Noel Coward, Henry James, Victor Hugo, Graham Greene, Peter Ustinov and Charlie Chaplain, would seem to have the best of all possible worlds; breathtaking scenery, a mild climate (often referred to as the "Vaud Riviera"),

cosmopolitan cities, proximity to the Vaudois Alps, and a cuisine and wine culture that blends the best of Switzerland and France.

**Best Towns:** Lausanne, Montreux, Vevey

**Top Sights:** • Olympic Museum in Lausanne • Chillon Castle, • Rochers de Naye • Vineyards along the lake.

**Suggested Activities:** Drive or bicycle along the Route du Vignoble (wine road) or visit cities along the lake – including some in France – via lake steamer.

**Places to Stay:** • Hostellerie du Débarcadère, 7 chemin du Cret, St. Sulpice, Switzerland CH-1025, tel. +41/021/691 57 47, fax 691 50 79, email: [debarcadere@swissonline.ch](mailto:debarcadere@swissonline.ch). Doubles from about \$200

• L'Auberge De Chernex, CH-1822, Chernex (above Montreux), tel. 021/9644191, fax 964 68 57. Doubles from about \$90

**Food Suggestion:** Both recommended hotels have fine restaurants.

### #3. Zürich

A nifty town on one of the country's largest lakes and divided by the river Limmat, Zürich has an amazing, second-to-none public transportation system and is perhaps the cleanest big city you'll ever see. On the Limmat's right bank, the commercial and banking center gathers along the posh Bahnhofstrasse where the stores are not flashy but verrrrry expensive (perhaps a \$1500 clutch purse from Louis Vuitton?). Across the river on the left bank, the old-town's narrow lanes have just the right mixture of odd shops, hole-in-the-wall restaurants, avant garde galleries, seedy bars, and lively beer halls.

**Top Sights:** • Fraumünster with Chagall stained glass windows • Swiss National Museum,

**Suggested Activities:** Window shop both sides of the Bahnhofstrasse, then explore the more down-to-earth old town.

**Places to Stay:** • Hotel Florhof, CH-8001 Zürich, Florhofgasse 4 tel. +41/01/261 4470, fax 261 4611, email: [florhof@romantikhotels.com](mailto:florhof@romantikhotels.com),

web: [www.romantikhotels.com/zueroich](http://www.romantikhotels.com/zueroich). Doubles \$198 to \$222

• Hotel Arlette, Stampfenbachstr. 26, CH-8001 Zürich, +41/01/252 00 32, fax 252 09 23. Doubles about \$120

**Food Suggestion:** The atmosphere Zeughauskeller near Parade-touristy but has great food at affordable prices.

### #4. Zermatt

Yes, it's full of tourists, but you must see the Matterhorn, one of creator's more distinctive mountain peaks. No cars but beware the quiet, battery-powered hotel jitneys that whiz through the streets

**Top Sights:** • The Matterhorn • The Alpine Museum with mementos of early, sometimes tragically failed, attempts to climb the mountain.

**Suggested Activities:** Ride the rack railway to the Gornergrat (10,272 feet) for the best views the Matterhorn and other peaks.

**Places to Stay:** • Hotel Alex, CH-3920 Zermatt, tel. +41/027/966 7070, fax 966 7090, email:

[hotel.alex.zermatt@spectraweb.ch](mailto:hotel.alex.zermatt@spectraweb.ch), web: [www.hotelalexzermatt.com](http://www.hotelalexzermatt.com). Doubles from \$185 • Hotel Dufour, CH-3920 Zermatt, tel. +41/027/966 24 00, fax 966 24 01, email: [dufour.zermatt@reconline.ch](mailto:dufour.zermatt@reconline.ch), web: [www.reconline.ch/dufour/](http://www.reconline.ch/dufour/). Doubles from about \$73.

**Food Suggestion:** Try the loin of lamb at Le Gitan in the Hotel Darioli.

### #5 Locarno

Another Swiss city on a gorgeous lake, Italian-speaking Locarno has more charm than Lugano and more life than Ascona, two other popular Ticinese destinations. Here, the vistas are breathtaking, the food and wine simple and comforting, and the subtropical vegetation luxuriant with palm trees and bright flowers (Locarno is famous for its hundreds of varieties of camellias). There are cobblestoned, arcaded piazzas, narrow alleys, ancient stone churches, grand old Italian-style villas, and, of course, hundreds of umbrella tables at dozens of outdoor cafes from which to savor it all.

**Top Sights:** The Madonna del

Sasso • the Lake

**Suggested Activities:** Take a morning train from Locarno to Domodossola in Italy and return in the late afternoon. Very scenic.

**Places to Stay:** • Hotel Orselina, CH-6644 Orselina, tel. +41/091/735 44 44, fax 735 44 66, email: [hotel@orselina.com](mailto:hotel@orselina.com), web:

[www.orselina.com](http://www.orselina.com). Doubles with breakfast and dinner from \$245 • Villa Pauliska, Via Orselina 6, CH-6600 Locarno-Muralto, tel. +41 091 743 05 41, fax 743 9517. Doubles from about \$75 (no breakfast served)

**Food Suggestion:** Go to the nearby village of Intragna for a meal at Stazione "da Agnese"

### #6 Pontresina

St. Mortiz is world famous but Pontresina, four miles to the west, is an authentic Engadine village in a beautiful setting with painted houses and meandering streets. We much prefer it.

The town is a center for walking, hiking, and mountaineering with many miles of marked trails.

**Top Sights:** • Muótas Muragl, a high ground (8,000 feet) above the valley with many walking paths and fine views

**Suggested Activities:** • Take a walk through the Tais forest • Go shopping in St. Moritz

**Places to Stay:** Hotel Saratz, Hotel Saratz, CH-7504 Pontresina, tel. +41/081/839 40 00, fax 839 40 40 mail: [info@saratz.ch](mailto:info@saratz.ch), web: [www.saratz.ch](http://www.saratz.ch). Doubles from \$160

**Food Suggestion:** Hotel Saratz

### #7. Sion

Tourist brochures tout Sion as "capital of Swiss California" calling it a "warm, sunny land of vineyards, orchards, strawberry and raspberry fields." Like several other Swiss destinations, local boosters claim Sion has the country's best climate with the least rainfall and the most days of sunshine. Whether true or not, Sion is a place to be visited in any weather.

In winter, it is the center of the val d' Herens ski region including such little-known (in this country)

villages as Arolla, Evolène, Nax, La Sage, Thyon, Les Collons and others. Most are within a few minutes drive of Sion.

On the slopes of the Rhône are thousands of acres of steeply-terraced vineyards. The rocky soil and sunshiny climate encourage several grape varieties and the wine trade flourishes.

**Top Sights:** • Église Notre-Dame-de-Valère, a church with the world's oldest playable organ • The ruins of the castle Tourbillon

**Suggested Activities:** Excursions to the mountain villages listed above

**Places to Stay:** Hotel des Vignes, Uvrier/Saint-Léonard, CH-1958, Rue du Pont 9, tel. +41/027/203 1671, fax 205 3727. Doubles from about \$105.

**Food Suggestion:** Order Zarzuela, a seafood stew at Au Cheval Blanc in the town center.

#### #8. Basel

This is a wonderful, interesting, compact city (pop. 170,000) that is overlooked by most American tourists.

Though only a quarter its size, Basel has more and better museums than the city of San Francisco, a better zoo (nearly 6,000 animals from five continents) and twice as many symphony orchestras. Most San Franciscans are afraid to ride their city's spooky, graffiti-ridden, catch-as-catch-can bus system. In Basel, 40% of the population regularly buys season passes on the Trämli, which runs at six to 10-minute intervals during the day and every 15 minutes at night. Basel has three railway stations; San Francisco none. In 1460, when the most important structure on what was to become San Francisco's Nob Hill was a teepee, Basel already had a university.

**Top Sights:** • Kunstmuseum  
• Basel Zoo

**Suggested Activities:** An excursion to Augusta Raurica, the remains of the oldest known Roman settlement on the Rhine. It is approximately 11 kilometers (7 miles) east of Basel and accessible by car, rail, bus, boat and bicycle.

**Places to Stay:** Hotel St.

Gotthard Basel, Centralbahnstrasse 13, CH-4002 Basel, tel. +41/061/225 13 13, fax 225 13 14, email: reception@st-gotthard.ch, web: www.st-gotthard.ch. Doubles from \$125

**Food Suggestion:** Restaurant Der Teufelhof, gets one Michelin star. For a less expensive meal from the same great kitchen, eat in its brasserie-style Weinstube.

#### #9. Neuchâtel

Like so many Swiss cities, Neuchâtel owes its natural beauty to a combination of mountains, vineyards and a large lake whose shore is lined with flowering quays, parks, promenades, marinas and fine hotels. A 12<sup>th</sup>-century castle and collegiate church are the most impressive of the town's well-preserved stone buildings. Why such an attractive city is virtually ignored by American tourists is a mystery.

**Top Sights:** • Jaquet-Droz Automaton in the Museum of Art and History • International Museum of Horology in nearby La Chaux-de-Fonds.

**Suggested Activities:** Visit one of the regions many Metaires, rustic country houses that serve simple on old wooden tables

**Places to Stay:** Hotel Alpes et Lac, Place de la Gare 2, CH-2000 Neuchâtel, tel. +49/032/723 19 19, fax 723 19 20, email: hotel@alpesetlac.ch. Doubles from \$90

**Food Suggestion:** La Maison des Halles, informal bistro but great food.

#### #10. Appenzell

A quiet village of intricately painted houses and a tradition-bound citizenry who observe ancient traditions and dress much as they did 100 years ago, Appenzell drips with country charm. Men wear black hats decorated with flowers, bright red vests, gold pants, white knee socks and earrings, while "Sunday best" for women is an ankle-length pleated skirt, tied bodice, huge embroidered lace collar and a black-winged bonnet trailing a wide red ribbon.


The region is home to some of the

country's strongest cheeses as well as Appenzell Alpenbitter, an inky, locally-produced aperitif which is served over ice.

**Top Sights:** Appenzeller Volkskunde Museum; cable car to Mt. Säntis, highest peak in the Alps range

**Suggested Activities:** • Visit the Appenzeller Volkskunde Museum in Stein to watch a farmer make Appenzeller cheese by hand over an open fire. After that go next door to the Appenzell Schaukäserei (Showcase Cheese-Dairy) and see the same basic process done the modern way • Visit St. Gallen (12 miles) and take in the fascinating Textile Museum and the breathtaking Abbey Library.

**Places to Stay:** Romantik-Hotel Säntis, Landsgemeindeplatz 3, CH-9050 Appenzell, tel. +41/071/7878722, fax 7874842, email:Romantik-Hotel Säntis

**Food Suggestion:** Try the *Kalbsleber und Rösti* (calves liver and fried potatoes) at the Säntis. 

## Readers' Forum

### Zermatt, Vienna Comments

First, thanks for the article on the Sud Tirol/Alto Adige. I think *Gemütlichkeit* should regularly cover the northern Italian area that has strong Germanic influence, including Cortina d'Ampezzo and virtually all of the Dolomites. It is a beautiful region not well known to American tourists but with all the amenities and outdoor activities of the rest of the Alps, including good food, beer, wine and accommodations.

My particular interest is the area of heavy fighting high in the mountains between the A-H Empire and Germany and Italy, Great Britain and France (U.S. involvement was minimal) in WWI. There are a number of good museums, restored trenches and galleries, cemeteries, monuments, etc., which are of interest to tourists, especially descendants of all the nationalities that fought in the region. *Dolomitenfreunde* and other organizations work together to maintain and restore areas of significance.

Some other comments:

In Zell am See we spent two nights at **Hotel Heitzmann** (Weissberggasse 1, tel. 42 72152, email: heitzmann@gold.at, web: http://gold.at/heitzmann), a 4-star small hotel near the center of the *Altstadt* and pedestrian area. We had a nice little suite with a sitting area, bedroom with queen bed, a large bath and a bit of a view across the lake to the mountains to the north, all for 1400 AS (\$90), with breakfast.

In Zermatt we had a very good dinner at a small restaurant, **Le Mazot** (tel. 027 967 2727; email: le.mazot@reconline.ch) located in the Hinterdorf area right at the bridge over the river. The chef/owner, Roger Muther, specializes in grilled lamb and the menu is more French than Germanic. Dinner for two was about \$82.00 (137.5 Sfr.) including salad, entrees of grilled lamb chops and a chicken stroganoff, dessert and coffee (one with a liqueur, very tasty) and a liter of fendant. Our waitress, Antoinette, was very pleasant and we looked forward to returning there on Tuesday night the 11th but after seeing the terrible news on CNN found it hard to work up any interest in fine dining. If you put this in *Gemütlichkeit* perhaps some reader will go there in our stead.

There is a small hotel garni at-

### 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.

tached to Le Mazot also operated by Roger Muther. We were booked to stay there but due to construction were given a small studio apartment in a nearby new building and did not get to stay in the older units above the restaurant. However, assuming that they are renovated and are managed as well as the restaurant, they may also be a good location for a stay in Zermatt.

Our last night in Vienna was at a decent but somewhat dated hotel right across from the Westbahnhof, the **Hotel Fürstenhof** (Neubaugurtel 14, tel. 43 1 523 3267; email: reception@hotel-fuerstenhof.com, web: www.hotel-fuerstenhof.at). We had a large, rather old-fashioned corner room with high ceilings and long drapes and a view across to the Westbahnhof for 1251 AS (\$81) with breakfast. We selected it because of its proximity to the rail station and its proximity to the bus stop for direct and inexpensive bus connections to the airport. Not a great hotel, but adequate and very convenient.

MARTIN VITZ  
VIA EMAIL

### Bargain Hotel in Meiningen

We stayed at the **Hotel an der Kapelle** in Meiningen (Anton-Ulrich-Strasse 19, D-98617 Meiningen, tel. +49/03693/44920, fax 470174, email: kapelle.meiningen@vch.de), about 80 kilometers southwest of Erfurt, and I just loved it and the owners — they were so kind and considerate. Food was great and the price more than reasonable.

EDYTHE HOOVER  
VIA EMAIL

[*Editor's Note: Double rooms at an der Kapelle are 58 to 62 EUR (\$51-\$55) Ms. Hoover not only brought this hotel to our attention, but the association it belongs to: VCH-Hotels Deutschland (web: www.vch.de).*]

### DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

ber 31, 2001.)

Though prices may have shown stability, the travel experience itself has changed. We have new airports in Munich and Frankfurt and big improvements in Zürich. Germany

has introduced 160 mile-an-hour ICE trains. In 1987, few hotel rooms had cable TV. Now they have CNN via satellite. The cellular phone now seems more prevalent in Europe than here at home. Most European rental cars are now air-conditioned. Only a few luxury models had air 15 years ago. In 1987, we were almost always able to book hotel rooms in advance without providing a credit card number, and most hotels didn't even ask for a credit card at check-in. Today, some require a non-refundable deposit when reserving in advance and most want to take an imprint of your credit card at check-in.

We have more territory to cover. In 1991, the Germanys — East and West — unified, opening travel to cities like Dresden, Leipzig, Weimar, Rostock and the former East Berlin. Excursions into the Czech Republic and Hungary became routine.

And now, starting January 1, we will see another major change. The euro, a new currency will replace the deutschmark and the schilling (not Switzerland's franc) plus the currencies of 10 other European countries. (If you have marks or schillings left over from your last trip, you can use them for payment until February 28, 2002. March 31, 2002, is the last day you will be able to exchange them — notes only, not coins — without charge for Euros at Central Banks in the 12 countries. Until December 31, 2002, commercial banks will also exchange old notes and coins for euros but there will be a charge. From 2003 onward, it will still be possible to exchange old currencies at the Central Banks.)

Changes notwithstanding, the mountains, the lakes, the meadows, the forests, all look virtually the same as they did 15 or 150 years ago. And late at night, when we're sipping a glass of local wine under a shaded lamp in a rustic little hotel deep in the countryside, it's as good as it ever was and as good as it ever gets. See you in February. — RHB

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