

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Heating Up the Leftovers

In last month's issue there were some things we overlooked in our stories on ground transport and booking hotels via the Internet.

- We failed to mention the regional rail passes that are available in Germany. At the website for the **Deutsche Bahn** you will find a listing of 11 "Länder-tickets." The **Bayern-Ticket**, for example, is valid for second class travel on one day of your choice in the Monday-Friday period. It can be used on all local trains throughout Bavaria and on the public transport systems of Munich and Nürnberg. The cost of the ticket is €21 (\$19) and covers up to five persons traveling together. For an additional charge of €13 (\$11) travel is also permitted on IR and D-trains. Costs and restrictions are the same for the other 10 regions. Visit: www.bahn.de/pv/int_guest/true/pv2_offers_national.shtml

- Though reservations for Swiss trains cannot be made through their U.S. sellers of rail passes such as **Rail Europe** and **DER**, you can make them yourself by emailing **Swiss Rail** at contact@sbb.ch.

- **Czech Rail** has a website with an English version (<http://idos.datis.cd rail.cz/ConnForm.asp>). It is similar to the German and Swiss rail sites in that there is an easy-to-use timetable search that delivers detailed itineraries with information

Continued on page 2...

This Month in Gemütlichkeit

Features	Page
Quedlinburg	1
Hidden Treasures	1
Readers' Forum	7
Gemütlichkeit Hotel Recommendations	8
Key Web Sites	8
Commentary	
Dear Subscriber	1
Hotels/Restaurants	
Hotel Theophano, Quedlinburg G	4
Hotel Am Brühl, Quedlinburg G	4
Hotel Zur Goldenen Sonne, Quedlinburg G	4
Schlossotel Zum Markgrafen, Quedlinburg G	5
Rest. Zur Goldenen Sonne, Quedlinburg G	5
Ratskeller, Quedlinburg G	5
Restaurant Theophano, Quedlinburg G	5
Restaurant Am Brühl, Quedlinburg G	5
Hotel Hermitage, Evolène S	6
Pension d'Evolène, Evolène S	6
Hotel Mader, Steyr A	7
Hotel Blankenburg, Coburg G	7
Hotel Goldene Traube, Coburg G	7
Burghotel Aug Schönburg, Oberwesel G	7

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

QUEDLINBURG

Though historic Quedlinburg survived World War II intact, it withered under 45 years of communism. Today its recovering Altstadt is Germany's largest historic preservation district.

Quedlinburg is a city of superlatives. The first German "Reich" began there with the coronation of King Heinrich in 919 A.D. It has the most half-timbered houses in Germany — about 1,500, nearly 900 of them are designated protected landmarks. It also contains the largest historic preservation district in Germany, the 200-acre *Altstadt*.

Thankfully, Quedlinburg was spared during World War II, and the buildings are original.

During four decades of communism, however, only 26 houses were rebuilt. Since reunification, Quedlinburgers have spent much of their time and resources restoring nearly 800 additional houses and cleaning

up the town. Indeed, in 1995, Quedlinburg joined the likes of Lima, Damascus, Quebec, Katmandu and Prague as one of only 187 UNESCO World Heritage Cities.

Local residents stress the reasons for restoration go well beyond tourism. It's a living city, — not, they point out, a theme park. "We don't want to become another Rothenburg," says a local innkeeper. "We don't want to be caught in a trap of nostalgia, or to make our *raison d'être* just being looked at. We live here and do business here."

Therefore, although Quedlinburg opens its arms to visitors, it does so without hype, attitude or artifice — and, for the most part, without

Continued on page 3...

Hidden Treasures

Consistent with a philosophy of travel that seeks places English-speaking tourists seldom visit, this month we begin a series on off-the-beaten-track destinations — Hidden Treasures. For the most part, they will be geographically defined; villages, towns, even regions. But a Hidden Treasure can also be a hotel, a restaurant, a gallery, a fountain, a vista, a country road, a museum, anything or anyplace, as long as it's worthy of your attention and is off the radar screen of most English-speaking tourists. Though some will be neither 'hidden' — a word that hardly applies to a town on every map of Europe — nor quite reach the 'treasure' level, we think you'll find all merit your consideration.

We'll start with three, one in each country:

Evolène
Switzerland

If you've a mind to virtually disappear from the face of the earth for a week or so, this just may be the hideout you're looking for.

Everybody wants to see Zermatt and Grindelwald, but after that if they're a little curious they might find themselves in Evolène and suddenly realize that *that* was where they really wanted to be all along. They sought remote, authentic Swiss villages, but what they got with the gorgeous views and four-star hotels was tee-shirt shops and lots of folks from back home.

Of course, this French-speaking mountain hamlet, about a 25-minute drive from Sion, is not without tourists — hikers and climbers in sum-

Continued on page 6...

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

about on-board services.

- Austria's rail system has a website — www.oebb.at — but its timetables are in German only. Most users, however, will be able to at least determine point-to-point train schedules.

- A hotel website we missed last month is www.lastminute.com. It finds eleventh-hour deals on hotels, flights, and holiday packages, but since it is London-based, only the hotel part of lastminute.com would seem to be of use to North Americans. We found rooms at Munich's five-star **Kempinski Vier Jahreszeiten** for from €175 to €216 (\$154-\$190), numbers that substantially undercut the hotel's own website. The best www.kempinski-vierjahreszeiten.de/en could do for the same dates in late April was €285 (\$251). Unfortunately, lastminute.com seems only to offer chain hotel in major cities. Our searches in towns such as Lausanne, Lucerne, Graz, Würzburg, and Nürnberg drew blanks.

London to the Continent by Air

Lately we've heard from subscribers seeking a convenient, inexpensive way to get from London to the continent. Low-fare, no-frills **Ryanair** has achieved big publicity of late for some extremely low cost flights. In late April, for example, its website — www.ryanair.com — quoted 10.99 GBP (\$16) for a London to Frankfurt one-way trip in May. Adding tax brought the total to about \$26. A

flight to Salzburg was about \$91, with tax. Still a good deal.

But how about Ryan's very best bargain? Try .01 GBP (1.5 cents) — that's right, less than two cents — for a London-Brussels one-way. With tax the cost is a little over \$10.

Though Ryan would seem to solve the 'inexpensive' side of the equation, when the 'convenient' side is addressed the picture is not so rosy. All Ryan flights to the continent are from Stansted Airport, more than an hour from the center of London and even farther than that from Heathrow or Gatwick. In addition, Frankfurt passengers will discover that Ryan flies not to Frankfurt/Main but to Frankfurt/Hahn, about 90-minutes east of the city, which offers very limited ground transport options, including no rail. **Lufthansa** contends Hahn is so far out it isn't really a Frankfurt airport and is seeking to prevent Ryan from advertising Frankfurt as a destination.

The nearly-free flight to Brussels lands at Charleroi Airport, about 55 kilometers south of the city.

Still, for the traveler who wants an "open jaw" trip — land in London, return to the U.S. from someplace on the continent — Ryanair is tempting.

The next best London to Frankfurt price found for the same date in May was \$122 on **British Midland** from London City Airport. Check www.europebyair.com and individual airline websites.

Of course there's always the **Eurostar** from the center of London via

the Chunnel to Paris and Brussels. One-way fares range from \$75 to \$399, depending on a variety of factors including class of service, age, how far in advance tickets are purchased and whether or not the traveler has a valid rail pass.

Setting the Record Straight

In the February issue of *Gemütlichkeit*, I blamed **Rail Europe's** owners, the French and Swiss railway systems, for the latest price increases in European rail passes. Apparently that is incorrect. According to Lazarus Communications, Rail Europe's New York-based public relations agency, the actual decision to raise prices for 2002 was made by the **European Rail Commission**, whose membership includes representatives from the rail systems of the 17 countries that comprise the Eurail system — including France and Switzerland. Lazarus says Rail Europe, opposed the increases. —RHB

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: **qued** Password: **1138**

Vol. 16, No. 4
May 2002

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

Publishers: Robert H. & Elizabeth S. Bestor
Editor: Robert H. Bestor
Contributors: Doug Linton, C. Fischer, R. Holliday, Jim Johnson
Web Master: Paul T. Merschdorf
Consulting Editor: Thomas P. Bestor
Subscription Dept: Kurt Steffans
Subscriber Travel Services: Eric Poole, Andy Bestor

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.

QUEDLINBURG*Continued from page 1*

bus loads of tourists. The experience is far more subtle and sublime. The food is traditional, the lodging historic, and the people warm and sincere. Kitsch is decidedly absent. And even the shortest walk yields a sense of exploration and discovery.

The best place to start a tour of Quedlinburg is atop the **Schlossberg** (Castle Hill), site of Heinrich's coronation. It's a short, cobblestoned climb to the castle courtyard, which rests atop a 75-foot-high sandstone outcropping. The hilltop is dominated by the **Renaissance Castle** (once a convent residence and now a museum) and the 12th-century Romanesque **Collegiate Church of St. Servatius**, with its three naves and flat ceiling. Among other rulers, Heinrich and his wife, Mathilde, are buried in the crypt, where visitors can see 13th-century frescos.

The church has two interesting footnotes in recent history. In 1938, recognizing it was where the First Reich began, the Nazis tried to make it a shrine to the start of their Third Reich. SS Commander Heinrich Himmler saw himself as the reincarnation of the first Heinrich and, at annual ceremonies, would rise from the crypt atop a wooden lift dressed as his ancient namesake.

Another bizarre tale involves the church's priceless treasury. Just after WWII, U.S. Army Lt. Joe T. Meador was assigned to guard the treasury where it had been hidden in a mine-shaft. He took his assignment as an opportunity to mail a few of the more valuable-looking pieces to his home in Texas. For decades after the war, the items lay hidden in a bank vault while Meador toiled in the family hardware store. But at his death in 1980, his brother and sister tried to unload the hugely valuable Samuhel Gospel, a 1200-year-old jewel-encrusted manuscript printed on gold parchment. Word of the sale, of course, quickly spread and, after years of lawsuits and diplomatic wrangling, Meador's heirs were paid nearly \$3 million by the German government. As a result, the items were returned in 1996.

Quedlinburg Basics**Population:** 24,500**Elevation:** 124 meters/ 407 feet

Tourist Information: Quedlinburg Tourist Office, Markt 2, D-06484 Quedlinburg, tel. +49/3946/90 56 25, fax 90 56 29, email: Q.T.M@t-online.de, web: www.quedlinburg-info.de

Distance from Quedlinburg to:

Berlin	211 km	131 miles
Frankfurt	278 km	173 miles
Hamburg	297 km	185 miles
Hanover	160 km	99 miles
Leipzig	121 km	75 miles
Munich	514 km	319 miles

Nearest Airports: Hannover and Leipzig

Rail links: Rail travel from most major cities will require at least one change of trains.

Walking Tour: Two-hour guided walking tours are available in English on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2pm, from May until September. €5 (\$4) per person. Book through Quedlinburg Tourist Office.

A book on the affair, *Treasure Hunt: A New York Times Reporter Tracks the Quedlinburg Hoard* was written by William Honan, who played an important role in locating the missing pieces.

The castle gardens provide a 360-degree view of the town below. Pathways wind around the hill, with terraced houses — once inhabited by castle servants — so close together neighbors can practically shake hands across the street. Space was at a premium, and one house is only six feet wide. To the north, the "newer," medieval part of the city takes typical form around the marketplace, with church spires poking through a sea of red-tile rooftops. It's not difficult to make out remnants of the town's 13th-century fortifications — including more than a mile of walls and six of the original 25 watchtowers.

To the south, the view shows signs of more recent prosperity. During the 19th century, Quedlinburg captured nearly 70 percent of the international market for vegetable and plant seeds. By the 1850s, the wealth translated into expansive villas for the seed "barons," who built their homes atop the filled-in moat of the walled town. Many of the old warehouses still stand, converted to apartments or offices.

The town's oldest — and Germa-

ny' second oldest — half-timbered house, the **Ständerbau**, lies at the base of the Schlossberg. Built in 1310, its austere Gothic structure contains the **Fachwerkmuseum**, devoted to the evolution of the half-timbered construction style which is depicted in a wealth of maps, photographs and models. (Descriptions in German.)

Quedlinburg's concentration of half-timbered houses makes it easy to put your new-found knowledge to quick use. Even a short walk through the city's narrow streets (wear sturdy shoes due to the omnipresent cobblestones) becomes an architectural primer of half-timbered styles.

For example, most streets feature several late Gothic houses with only a hint of decorative devices, while the many Renaissance houses are more intricate, with rows of hexagrams or carved, double-rope helixes thought to protect inhabitants against demons and sickness. During this period, the more upscale homes featured enclosed balconies that jutted into the street, so women could sit and watch the goings-on. The Latin inscription on one reads: "Mind Your Own Business." (Don't be surprised to see elderly women, elbows propped on pil-lows, watching every passerby.)

By the 17th century, bricks filled the spaces between the timbers in baroque houses, and builders used brickwork and timbers to create designs and figures — symbols to fend off illness and increase crop fertility. Through the early 1800s, styles became increasingly ornate and the half-timbered style became more decoration than construction scheme.

Since Quedlinburg is an historical work in progress, visitors can see houses in various stages of restoration — or lack thereof. Some fallen walls reveal layers of stone, brick and plaster (mixed with straw, horsehair and mud) framed by wooden beams.

Some walls have come down completely, revealing inner courtyards and farm yards. As early as the 12th century, farmers brought their families and animals to the relative safety of the town, and built houses around grazing areas, stables and barns. Today, these structures are distinguished by the large gateways

that allowed for the passage of carriages, and by the overhead pulleys used to lift grain and crops to the top floors.

Despite moving to town, many lost stored crops in fires and wars. As insurance, each farmer stashed a bag of seed in one of the honeycomb of cubbyholes in the tower of St. Benedict's, the market church. That way, regardless of what might befall the town, the "urban farmers" could always fall back on the stored seed to start planting again the next spring.

A walk through town reveals many interesting sights and curiosities. The only entrance to the windowless medieval treasury is from inside the Rathaus through a secret door leading from the council chamber. Unfortunately, the location of the button that opens the door was forgotten generations ago.

If you ask directions, don't be offended if a resident tells you to go to Hell. That's simply the name of an intersection. In medieval times, an alchemist's oven belched smoke through a hole in his roof. It wasn't the smoke or fire, but the "devil's work" being conducted that led to the name.

The town's narrowest alley — a tunnel almost — opens into the **Schuhhof**, where shoemakers set up shop and home in the 16th century. Like the alley, its houses are tiny. Since interior space was at a premium, shutters were built to open up and down so that the bottom one would become a counter, enabling the shoemaker to sell his wares without customers crowding inside his house.

The Schuhhof leads to Quedlinburg's bright, expansive **Marktplatz**. The best view of it is from the northern end; across the length of the cobblestone plaza to the Gothic **Town Hall** with its Renaissance façade (almost fully covered by vines and flowers) and the steeple of **St. Benedict's** rising behind it. As it has been for centuries, the marketplace is the center of commerce, surrounded by restaurants and hotels, with farmers' markets on Wednesdays and Saturdays. It's also the perfect place to finish one's explorations — or take a

well-deserved break.

Plan on at least two days to do Quedlinburg justice.

Accommodations

Hotel Theophano

The centuries-old Hotel Theophano has an extensive and interesting history — especially in the last 60 years. Built originally as a trading house in 1668 by a wealthy merchant, the baroque-style, half-timbered hotel has been in Reinhard Spilker's family since 1924. Toward the end of World War II, he moved there with his grandparents, out of the path of Berlin-bound bombing raids.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

In 1949, he and his parents fled to the West, and the socialist government forced the grandparents to convert the building into cheap apartments. Unable to maintain the structure on a small income, they turned it over to the government in 1985. After reunification, it was returned to the family, and Spilker undertook extensive restoration — starting with tearing down the cheap drywall that had divided the apartments.

It's evident the restoration was done with love and care. After all, it's still Spilker's home; he lives in the rooftop penthouse with his wife, Gabriele, and three teenage daughters.

With views to the marketplace and Rathaus, the Theophano is also one of the most central hotels and guests will often see other visitors photographing its beautiful baroque façade.

Named for the Byzantine princess who ruled the German empire in the 10th century, Theophano has 20 double rooms and four singles, all appropriately decorated with antiques and furnishings in a kind of "Laura Ashley meets the Renaissance" style. Room Number One is spacious and romantic, with a small balcony overlooking the inner courtyard. Carved cupids spy on slumberers from each corner of the four-poster bed. Room Number 20 is king-size, gabled and on two levels, with superb views to the marketplace and town hall.

Daily Rates: Singles €62 (\$53); doubles €94 (\$81). Free parking, difficult access for disabled guests.

Contact: Hotel Theophano, Markt 13/14, D-06484 Quedlinburg, tel +49/3946 96 30-0, fax +49/3946 96 30-36. Email: theophano@t-online.de, web: www.hoteltheophano.de

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

Hotel Am Brühl

Restoration is everywhere in Quedlinburg and Am Brühl is a good example. The ivy-covered buildings of two former farms have been turned into a hotel of great charm.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Arriving guests enter a front courtyard via a gated driveway. Inside, public rooms have a clean, wide-open feel enhanced by shiny terra-cotta floors scattered with Oriental rugs. Tall Palladian arched windows are set in thick stone walls and the exposed rough support timbers contrast nicely with the modern lighting and furnishings.

We had hoped for more from the contemporarily decorated guestrooms. Though above average in size they seem a bit vacant, in need of a sofa or a couple of soft chairs to achieve optimum comfort. Bedside reading lights were clever looking but difficult to read by.

Though we find Am Brühl an attractive hotel, better use of guestroom space and more intelligent furnishings would move it from "above average" to the "excellent" category.

Daily Rates: Singles €78 -€88 (\$69-\$77), doubles €98 -€135 (\$86-\$119)

Contact: Hotel Am Brühl, Billungstrasse 11, D-06484, Quedlinburg, tel. +49/03946/96180, fax 961 8246, email: hotelambruehl@t-online.de, web: www.hotelambruehl.de/

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

Hotel Zur Goldenen Sonne

The Goldenen Sonne lies just off the marketplace in a 16th century half-timbered structure. And although its baroque architecture is similar and the history as extensive, the hotel lacks the familiarity and charm of its neighbor, the Theophano. Modern, somewhat sterile, guest rooms have

more a sense of renovation than restoration. Still, with rates about a third less than at the Theophano, it offers good value. For those who need it, many of the 27 rooms have Internet access.

Daily Rates: Singles €44 (\$38); doubles €67 (\$58). Free parking.

Contact: Hotel Zur Goldenen Sonne, Steinweg 11, D-06484 Quedlinburg, tel +49/3946 96 25-0, fax +49/3946/96 25-30, email:

info@hotelzurgoldenensonne.de., web: hotelzurgoldenensonne.de.

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

Schlosshotel Zum Markgrafen

In sharp contrast to the medieval and renaissance structures that dominate Quedlinburg, the 12-room Schlosshotel Zum Markgrafen is an art nouveau palace.

Built by a wealthy industrialist from 1898 to 1904 in neo-Gothic style, it is breathtaking — though somewhat out of step with what a Quedlinburg experience should be. Yes, it has beautiful stucco, carved timber ceilings, elaborate tapestries, chandeliers, extensive gardens, gabled guestrooms, and intricate leaded-glass windows, as well as a fitness area, but it doesn't feel like Quedlinburg. Still, with the marketplace only a few blocks away, the Quedlinburg feeling is always nearby.

In addition, the hotel lies near the old town wall, adjacent to a watch tower, and the view from the terrace café to the town is stunning, especially at night. At twice the cost of the Goldene Sonne, it is a matter of taste, preference and budget.

Daily Rates: Singles from €88 (\$76); doubles from €135 (\$116). Free parking and welcome cocktail.

Contact: Schlosshotel Zum Markgrafen, Weingarten 30, D-06484 Quedlinburg, tel +49/3946 81 14 40, fax +49/3946 81 14 44, email: info@www.schlosshotel-zum-markgrafen.de, web: www.schlosshotel-zum-markgrafen.de.

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

Sustenance

Those who prefer upscale dining will find numerous options in

Quedlinburg. However, for fast, cheap eats, head to the Steinbrücke, a small street immediately off the Marktplatz, where a variety of restaurants offers pleasant, if not stellar, culinary options. At #7, **Olli's Bistro** is a cafeteria complete with trays. Choose à la carte from a choice of goulash, dumplings, *Spätzle*, cutlets and other entrees and side dishes. Plan on spending €4-8 (\$3-7) per person.

Although **Pasta Mia** at #23 Steinbrücke features more expensive choices, inventive pizzas and pasta dishes range from only €3-5 (\$2-4).

At #18, **Hassler Fisch Schnell Imbiss** offers a variety of takeout fish creations such as fish sandwiches, breaded cutlets and pickled fish for about €2-€5 (\$2-\$4).

Zur Goldenen Sonne

Some of the most peaceful dining in Quedlinburg is on the sunny terrace of Zur Sonne. Even during cool, damp weather, a retractable canvas roof and gas heaters help maintain comfort. It's comfortably casual, set atop small stones cobbled together to form a mosaic of the sun. A flurry of flowers surrounds an old millstone in the center, and vines and roses drape across wooden trellises. Servers are young, attentive and friendly.

The cuisine is distinctly regional, with an emphasis on vegetarian and fish dishes, like trout with red cabbage and a vegetable-and-cheese platter with bread. The soups stand out: *Oberharzwildgulasch*, with tender venison pieces sweetened by red cabbage; Quedlinburger bean soup topped with watercress; and a rich, hearty and savory barley soup with Black Forest ham and carrots.

Two can dine well for €22-29 (\$19-25) for lunch, €28-35 (\$24-30) for dinner.

Contact: Hotel "Zur Goldenen Sonne," Steinweg 11, D-06484 Quedlinburg, tel +49/3946 96 25-0.

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE: 14/20

Ratskeller

Quedlinburg's Ratskeller doesn't get high points for ambiance, at least until they dim the lights. Only the vaulted ceilings inject a sense of his-

tory. However, the somewhat sterile setting is more than offset by friendly service, a limited but superb wine list, and reasonably priced and well-prepared dishes.

Guests will find a heavy focus on meat entrées like pork hock with sauerkraut, lamb cutlets with banana sauce and raisin-almond rice, and duck breast stuffed with pineapple, red cabbage and wild berries. Vegetarians won't starve, and fish eaters will love the salmon with hollandaise sauce, noodles and asparagus. Without wine, dinner for two will range from €14-€22 (\$12-\$19), lunch is somewhat less.

Contact: Gaststätte Ratskeller, Marktkirchhof 1, D-06484 Quedlinburg, tel +49/3946 2768

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

Theophano

The setting alone is worth a visit to the restaurant at the Hotel Theophano. Indeed, many guests spend hours in the quiet candlelight with only fine wine and exotic cheeses for nourishment. The setting is sublime in this medieval cellar, the rich history captured in every ancient stone and brick. Nooks in this one-time storage area lend privacy, and flickering candles a sense of intimacy. (In good weather, dining is also possible under the stars in the courtyard.)

The menu takes German fare to exotic levels. Appetizers may include salami of venison with olives, baked Münster cheese wrapped in pastry with fried apples, or arugula with roasted rabbit, cherry tomatoes and pinenuts. Under the category of "Substantial Starters/Light Main Courses," the current menu offers smoked salmon crepes with sour cream and red caviar, turkey liver sautéed with fresh mushrooms in balsamic vinegar, and pumpkin risotto. Larger appetites may want dishes like roast venison served with savory vegetables and potatoes au gratin. Some guests make a special trip just for the desserts, like sweet pumpkin strudel with vanilla flavored whipped cream, espresso with homemade French praline, and white chocolate mousse with elderberry sauce.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Two persons with light appetites can enjoy the setting and a pleasant dinner for €32-€40 (\$28-40), without beverages, while more complete dining satisfaction might cost as much as €80 (\$69) per couple.


Contact: Hotel Theophano, Markt 13/14, D-06484 Quedlinburg, tel +49/3946 96 30-0.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE: 18/20

Restaurant Am Brühl

One huge room in an old stable has become the Hotel Am Brühl's restaurant. There is a high brick and beamed ceiling with barrel-roll vaults and the floor is square, polished terra-cotta pavers. There are substantial wooden tables and chairs and the white stucco walls are decorated with interesting art and antiques. It is a fine room to be in, though a little noisy. The menu is mainly traditional dishes and you won't go far wrong with familiar selections such as *Kalb-sleber* (calves' liver) and *Geschnetzeltes* (chopped veal in cream sauce), but overall the food doesn't quite equal the room's charm.

Restaurant Am Brühl, Billungstrasse 11, D-06484, Quedlinburg, tel. +49/03946/96180, fax 961 8246, email: hotelambruehl@t-online.de, web: www.hotelambruehl.de/

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

HIDDEN TREASURES

Continued from page 7

mer and skiers in winter — but it is a much different breed of Swiss mountain town from the likes of Zermatt and Grindelwald.

Among the wooden, weathered, brown/black Valasian houses of Evolène, you'll find a simple hotel or pension, or perhaps a small chalet to rent. In the daytime you can walk mountain trails that range from easy to challenging, and in the evenings enjoy hearty mountain food and Valasian wine alongside grizzled locals at one of the town's cheery inns.

Evolène is also much less expensive than the famed mountain resorts. The top hotel in town charges about \$80 for its best room, you can rent an apartment for as little as \$175 per week and a small beer is less than \$2.

The phrase "a village where time

has stood still" is a travel-writing cliché usually used to describe places where millions have been spent on restoration. But in Evolène the phrase really applies. This town of 600 probably looks and lives very much today as it did 50 or 100 years ago. A different dialect is spoken, there are no designer shops or Michelin-starred restaurants and a bare minimum of places sell Evolène mugs and tee-shirts.

In summer, the weather is warm but not oppressive, cooling down at night. In spring and fall, days are cool and nights cold. In winter, of course, roofs and streets are piled high with snow.

Throughout the summer, women wear traditional garb and there are enough old characters hanging around to let you know there's something going on here besides tourism.

Accommodations & Food

Evolène's best accommodations are at the rustic **Hotel Hermitage**, where the Queen of Holland once stayed during World War II.

The interior is wood paneled walls and ceilings, slate entryways, parquet floors, oriental rugs, stuffed birds and game, and plenty of antique knickknacks. The most pleasant space in the house is the inviting living room/sun room with its paneled walls and ceiling and expanse of windows on three sides.

Guestrooms, though in no sense luxurious, are comfortable and cozy. Ask for Number 16 under the eaves. There are no in-room telephones and the hotel does not have a restaurant though raclette and fondue are sometimes served to guests on winter evenings.

The café-bar of **Pension d'Evolène**, an old-fashioned inn with a few simple rooms to rent, is a hang-out for locals and, by all reports, including our own, has the best food in town.

Just off the café is the small, slightly more formal, dining room. Cowbells and rustic wood cabinets adorn the walls. There are green and white tablecloths, cloth napkins and candles on each table.

The food is mainly plain country

fare, well-prepared with the freshest ingredients. Expect to pay about \$30 per person with dessert and wine.

Steyr Austria

Though it gave its name to Styria, this Austrian town is actually in the province of Upper Austria, about a third of the way from Salzburg to Vienna, south of Linz and the east-west Autobahn. Your first look at its picturesque *Altstadt*, set on a peninsula formed by the confluence of the Steyr and Enns rivers, will make you wonder what took you so long to get here.

Entrance to the town is through an arched stone gate, part of the wall that protected the city in medieval times. Inside, a broad square is lined with well-preserved Gothic and Renaissance buildings. Further on, the square funnels down to become the town's alley-size main shopping street, the Eisengasse, and eventually passes through another gate and on to where the rivers join.

Town records go back to 980 when the Styraburg — now Lamberg Castle — was built. A fire destroyed Steyr in 1727, but in the middle of the 19th century a local lad named Joseph Werndl came to the rescue. He began to manufacture guns and Steyr became one of Europe's main weapons suppliers, an activity that continued through two world wars. (On a more positive note, Werndl and Steyr are given credit for erecting Europe's first electric street lights in 1884.) Werndl's company eventually became Steyr-Daimler-Puch, a World War II arms producer and the town's industrial installations were heavily bombed in 1944. Until 1955, Steyr was the border town between the occupied American and Soviet zones. These days the city still makes its living in the iron trade: the Steyr-Puch company builds motorbikes and there is also a BMW truck assembly plant.

Most sights are within a five-minute walk of the town square and for information about them use *Michelin's Green Guide for Austria* or stop by Steyr's amiable and efficient tourist office which is on the square at Stadtplatz 27.

Not to be missed in the weeks prior to Christmas is the nearby pilgrimage hamlet of **Christkindl**, where you'll find a pretty church and a very busy post office. This is where Austrian children send their Christmas letters and all are answered by the Christkindl post office. You may wish to mail a card from here as the stamps and postmark are somewhat prized. There is also a massive, wonderfully intricate, 'Rube Goldberg'-style, mechanical Nativity scene on display. Completed just before the war, it is the work of a single local hobbyist who took some 40 years to build it — in his living room.

Where to Stay

Our "Editor's Choice" Steyr headquarters is the hospitable and charming **Hotel Mader**, on the town square.

The comfortable, spacious guestrooms have white painted walls, light wood ceilings and substantial dark wood furniture. They come equipped with cable TV, direct-dial telephone, minibar and a sparkling, well-lit bathroom.

Breakfast is downstairs in the café where you'll be joined by local farmers and shoppers dropping by for coffee or a morning snack.

Coburg Germany

In the "old days," before reunification, Coburg was stuck in a corner of West Germany, surrounded on three sides by East Germany and, as a result, tourism suffered. Except for a few adventurous souls headed for Berlin via the potholed communist-maintained Autobahn, it wasn't a place where one stopped on the way to anywhere else.

Things have picked up in the last 10 years but, despite the town's historical importance, its interesting buildings and charming setting, American tourists are still rather scarce. Enough so that it qualifies as a "Hidden Treasure."

Coburg may be physically in Bavaria but with the grape vines of Franken growing only a few kilometers away, and its massive **Veste** dubbed the "Franconian Crown," Coburg's heart and culture are solidly in Franconia.

One of Germany's largest fortresses, the **Veste** looms above the town, fading in and out of the clouds. It was in this triple-walled citadel that Martin Luther holed up for five months in 1530, awaiting his day in court before the Augsburg Imperial Diet. You can tour his apartment and there is a decent collection of paintings including some by Rembrandt and Albrecht Dürer. But to us the Veste's best attraction is its **Kunstmamlungen**, a museum especially designed for visitors whose eyes have glazed over from too many religious paintings by Cranach the Elder or Holbein the Younger. It is filled with things of interest to non-scholars; items such as antique wedding carriages, Germany's largest display of ancient armor and weapons, and a cabinet filled with some 20,000 medals and coins.

Downtown, on the Schlossplatz, is **Ehrenburg Castle**, where the chain was pulled on Europe's first flush toilet. Ehrenburg was also the boyhood home of Prince Albert who married England's Queen Victoria and fathered her nine children. This potent fellow's likeness is found not only on millions of cans of cheap pipe tobacco, but Victoria erected a statue of him in Coburg's Marktplatz. It is in this part of town, by the way, where you are mostly likely to encounter street vendors selling the delicious Coburger bratwurst, grilled on the spot and served on a roll.

Though PBS's *Antiques Road Show* doesn't want them on the premises, many Americans are interested in **Hummel** figurines. Even if you have no use for them, a visit to the factory, six kilometers away in Rödental — where Sister Maria Innocentia Hummel was born — is worth an hour's visit. There is a short film presentation followed by a brief tour where visitors can observe the handmade production process. The figures are for sale, but the prices seem no better than elsewhere in Germany. There may be a larger selection, however.

Places to Stay

The serviceable **Hotel Blankenburg**, which is about a 10-minute walk from the Marktplatz, is now affiliated with the Best Western hotel marketing group. Its invitingly rustic

Restaurant **Krautergarten**, with raised-hearth open fireplace and beamed ceilings, has been a favorite in the region for several decades. Most of the vegetables, herbs and spices used by the Krautergarten's kitchen are grown in its private garden.

Perhaps a more upscale overnight choice — though we must caution that we have no first-hand experience with it — is the **Goldene Traube**, part of the Romantic Hotels & Restaurants combine. Its restaurant rates a red 'menu' symbol in the 2002 *Michelin Red Guide for Germany*.


Hotels/Restaurant Data

Hotel Hermitage, CH-1983 Evolène, tel. +41/027/2831232, fax 283 3212. Singles 75 to 90 Sfr. (\$34-\$41), doubles 110 to 130 Sfr. (\$69-\$75)

Pension d'Evolène, CH-1983, tel. +41/027/83 11 51. Daily Rates: Singles 38 Sfr. (\$24), doubles 76 Sfr. (\$48). Seven day packages with dinner and breakfast are 340 Sfr. (\$213)

Hotel Mader, Stadtplatz 36, A-4400 Steyr, tel. +43/07252 / 53 358, fax 53 358 6, email: mader@mader.at, web: www.mader.at. Singles €65 to €74 (\$57-\$65), doubles €96 to €110 (\$84-\$97)

Romantik Hotel Goldene Traube, Am Victoriabrunnen 2, D-96450, Coburg, tel. +49/09561/8760, fax 876222, email: goldene-traube@romantikhotels.com. Singles €74 to €87 (\$65-\$77), doubles €102 to €135 (\$90-\$119)

Hotel Blankenburg, Rosenauerstrasse 30, Coburg, D-96450, tel. +49/09561/64 40, fax 644 199, email: info@blankenburg.bestwestern.de. Singles €51 to €97 (\$45-\$85), doubles €70 to €125 (\$62-\$110) 

Readers' Forum

Auf Schönburg Controversy

In a letter I wrote a couple of months ago I tried to give your readers a sense of what they might expect at some upscale *Schloss* hotels I'd not seen mentioned before in *Gemütlichkeit*. But apparently I struck a raw nerve with your subscriber, Rip Rice, and I'd like to respond.

I've stayed at **Burghotel Auf Schönburg** on three different trips, beginning in 1984, and with about 25 trips into Germany, I'm not exactly a

neophyte in German hostelries. I confess to being a bit perplexed by Mr. Rice's reaction. My comments about this hotel were as follows:

- A long uphill climb from the parking lot (probably about two blocks, and a more difficult walk than any I've encountered anywhere in Germany).

My point was and is that on the assumption that your readership is not largely 20-45 year-olds, that some might find it more than they had bargained for. In fact as we first walked up from our car this trip, we passed some elderly people who were obviously struggling with what is a lengthy, uphill walk.

- No elevator and steep stairs.

This is all true. There may be an elevator in the new section, but that is not where we stayed. It's my perception that the "older area," where we've stayed all three times, is where the more interesting rooms are; they are definitely the most expensive. No one offered to help with our luggage, and while I was fully capable of handling it myself, the fact remains that many would find the stairs (with or without luggage) a bit trying.

- In size, lighting and bathing arrangements, bathroom was far below what one expects in a hotel in this price range.

Key Websites for the Traveler

- 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 The Michelin database of hotels and restaurants plus great interactive trip planning tools.
- www.travelgearnow.com Guidebooks, maps, travel accessories, name-brand luggage, all at 10% off for subscribers.
- 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.ski-europe.com Top web resource for skiers with much data on Alpine resorts.
- www.myswitzerland.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.
- <http://www.hhog.de> Website for an alliance of historic German cities.

Granted, on our first stay here the bathroom would have held 12 people, but this one was a squeeze for two.

- Did not offer English-language TV.

Given it's location and popularity with English-speaking tourists, the lack of BBC/CNN is somewhat unusual for an upscale hotel 40 miles from Frankfurt. We didn't have English TV at Sababurg or Wasserburg Anholt either, but didn't expect it in those much more remote locations that probably don't have the regular constituency of Brits/Americans Auf Schönburg does. We don't go to Germany to watch American TV, but getting the news is rather nice, and probably important to some. I might also mention that we were at Auf Schönburg only a week after September 11, and while I understand some German, we yearned for news in English, which was not available.

- I said the hotel had a good restaurant, a traditional buffet breakfast and, given it's touristy Rhine valley location, offered reasonable value.

These are hardly negative comments.

Bottom line is I think I fairly portrayed Auf Schönburg; it's an o.k. hotel, but if the difficult walk from the parking lot, no English TV, and at least some expensive rooms with marginal bathroom facilities, poses a problem for someone, it's not where they should stay. It is hardly a "bad" hotel, or we wouldn't have stayed there three times. We'll probably go again, but we don't have a love affair with it like Mr. Rice.

BILL BOHNHOFF
SANTA FE, NM

(Ed. Note: *Normally we would have ended this exchange last month at Mr. Rice's rebuttal of Mr. Bohnhoff's first letter. Auf Schönburg, however, is an extremely popular hotel among American tourists and we have received many letters and comments about it in the last 15 years — most, but not all, have been positive.*)

Germanic Travel Alert
Free email supplement to *Gemütlichkeit*. Register online at www.gemut.com or send your email address to gta@gemut.com

We Recommend

This listing of good value, mid-priced hotels in popular destination cities is a new *Gemütlichkeit* feature intended for quick reference. We'd like to know if you find it useful. Additional hotels and links to websites of these hotels can be found in the Archives section of our website at www.gemut.com. The required subscriber user name and password for access this month can be found on page 2 herein. The hotels are arranged in price order, higher to lower.

- Berlin
Hotel Art Nouveau, Leibnizstr. 59, tel. +49/030/327 7440, fax 327 744 40, email hotelartnouveau@snaflu.de
Hotel Domus, Umlandstrasse 49, Germany D-10719, tel. +49/030/882041, fax 882 0410, email: info@hotel-domus-berlin.de
- Bern
Hotel Innere Enge, Engestrasse 54, CH-3012, tel. +41/031/309 6111, fax 309 6112, email: info@zghotels.ch
Hotel Kreuz, Zeughausgasse 41, CH-3000, tel. +41/031/329 9595, fax 329 95 96, email: hotelkreuz@swissonline.ch
- Lausanne
Hostellerie du Débarcadère, 7 chemin du Cret, Saint Sulpice, CH-102, tel. +41/021/691 5747, fax 691 5079, email: debarcadere@swissonline.ch (not in town)
Hotel Agora, Av. du Rond-Point 9, CH-1006, Tel. +41/021/617 1211, fax 616 2605, email: agora@hotels.ch
- Lucerne
Hotel Wilden Mann, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, email: mail@wilden-mann.ch
Hotel Cascada, Bundesplatz 18, CH-6003 Lucerne, tel. +41/041/226 80 88, fax 226 80 00, Email: info@cascada.ch
- Munich
Hotel Asam, Josephspitalstrasse 3, tel. +49/089/230 9700, fax 230 970 97, email: info@hotel-asam.de
Hotel Kraft, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24 fax 5503856, email kraft.hotel@online.de
Rothenburg ob der Tauber
Reichs-Küchenmeister, Kirchlplatz 8, Rothenburg o.d. Tauber, Germany D-91541, tel. +49/09861/97 00, fax 97 04 09, email: hotel@reichskuechenmeister.com
- Salzburg
Hotel Struber, Nonntaler Hauptstrasse 35, Austria A-5020 tel. +43/0662/843 728, fax 843 728 8, email: struber@sbg.at
Hotel Jedermann, Rupertgasse 25, Austria A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873241-0, fax 873241-9, email: jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at
- Vienna
Hotel Römischer Kaiser, Annagasse 16, A-1010, tel +43/01/512 77 51 0, fax 512 77 51 13, email: info@rkhote.bestwestern.com
Allstadt Vienna, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, email: hotel@allstadt.at, web: www.allstadt.at
Pension Aviano, Marco-D'Aviano-Gasse 1, tel. +43/01/512 8330, fax 512 8330 6, email: aviano@pertschy.com
- Zürich
Hotel Florhof, Florhofgasse 4, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. 41/01/261 4470, fax 261 4611, email: info@florhof.ch
Hotel Arlette, Stampfenbachstrasse 26, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. +41/01/25 20 032, fax 25 20 932
- Frankfurt Airport
Steigenberger Esprit Hotel Frankfurt Airport, CargoCity Süd, D-60549 , tel. +49/069/69 70 99, fax 69 70 94 44, email: frankfurt@esprit-hotels.de
Hotel Birkenhof, von-Eiff-Str 37, Hanau-Steinheim, D-63456, tel. +49/06181/648 80, fax 64 88 39, email: info@HotelBirkenhof.de (25-minute drive from airport)
Hotel Dreieich, Frankfurter Str. 49, Langen , D-63225, tel. +49/06103/91 50, fax 52 030 (15-minute drive from airport)
- Munich Airport
Kempinski Hotel Airport, Terminalstrasse/Mitte 20, D-85356 Munich, tel. +49/089/9782-0, fax 97822610, info@kempinski-airport.de
Hotel Hoyacker Hof, Freisinger Landstrasse 9a, D-85748 Garching b. München, tel. +49/089/326 9900, fax 320 7243, email: info@hoyackerhof.de
- Zürich Airport
Mövenpick Zürich Airport, Walter-Mittelholzerstrasse 8, CH-8152 Glattbrugg, tel. +41/01/808 88 88, fax 808 88 77, email: hotel@movenpick-zurich-airport.ch
Hotel Fly Away, Marktgasse 19, Zürich-Kloten, Switzerland CH-8302, tel. +41/01/804 4455, fax 804 44 50, email: reservation@hotel-flyaway.ch