

**DEAR SUBSCRIBER**

**Six Strategies to Travel Cheaper**

When rooms at very good hotels in Germany's major cities get down around the \$100 mark, where they have been within the past year, it's too good to last and the pendulum is about to head back the other way. That's what's happening now.

Last year, the best double room in Munich's very good, three-star, **Hotel Domus** was about \$117. This summer, after a price increase coupled with the dollar's drop against the euro, the rate is \$149, up 27%.

The Swiss franc is also stronger. At Bern's solid-but-nothing-special **Hotel Kreuz** in the heart of town, a double at the dollar's apex last summer was \$118. This year, with no price increase, you'll pay \$139, nearly 18% more.

We've been through this before. In the mid-90's the dollar fetched as little as 1.09 Swiss francs and 1.38 German marks. We're better off now than then, but for those of us who must get an annual or biennial Europe fix, perhaps it's time to discuss strategies to reduce trip costs.

• **Avoid high season**

It's been difficult this summer to find a fare to Europe from anywhere in the U.S. for under \$1000. But late fall and early winter consolidator fares can now be found from the East Coast starting at around \$350, not including taxes.

Many hotel rates are also seasonal. For example, last month in our

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## WÜRZBURG

*Würzburg, the northern terminus of the Romantic Road, is a surprisingly cosmopolitan Bavarian city filled with architectural and artistic treasures—and exquisite Franconian wine.*

**W**ürzburg has welcomed visitors for 1,300 years. It all started in 686 when three Irish missionaries urged the local duke to convert to Christianity. When his wife caught wind that getting rid of her was part of the deal, she got rid of them first. A few decades later, horses pawing a stable floor uncovered the bodies, which were found in perfect condition. In light of this miracle, the three were canonized as saints, and the pilgrims started pouring in.

Along with intersecting trade routes, a favorable climate, fertile soil and a primary waterway, this influx accelerated the city's growth, power and wealth, much of it in the hands of

the ruling prince-bishops. Symbols of this wealth — and the artistry it bought — are what still attract visitors: the massive, medieval **Fortress Marienberg** that towers over the city; the **Residenz**, arguably the most ornate Baroque palace in Germany; **St. Kilian's Cathedral**, with its Romanesque exterior and splendid Rococo interior; and **Neumünster Church**, built where the missionaries were killed in 689 and a destination for thousands of pilgrims every July 7. The prince-bishops hired some of Europe's finest architects, sculptors and painters, and their legacy can be seen on nearly every block.

Würzburg (and its visitors) also benefits from its prime location on

*Continued on page 3...*

## The Swiss Travel System

**T**here are those who go to Switzerland simply to experience its extraordinary public transportation. All day they ride trains, boats, buses, trams, and cable cars. For them, the "Swiss Travel System" is more than getting from place to place, it turns the country into one big amusement park ride.

In Switzerland, public transport is so reliable, so frequent, so comfortable, so integrated, and so fast and efficient that a visitor from the U.S., where trains are mostly a novelty and buses considered beneath our dignity, can only marvel. And though it may be an amusement park ride to some visitors, it is as essential to the Swiss as cheese and chocolate. In Zürich, citizens use public transport at a rate double the average of other major European cities. Clean-as-a-whistle trams, buses and little funicu-

lars take them from any part of town to any other, seemingly every three minutes, all day long.

The country believes in public transportation and when ridership flattens, rather than cutting service, as is often the case in the U.S., the government encourages increased use by investing large sums to improve it. Just last year, for example, SBB, the Swiss railroad introduced new, faster equipment and more frequent service. Half-hourly departures are now available on most Intercity lines, new late-night and early-morning trains were added, and tilting trains — faster around curves — have lowered travel times. Very early departures from all over the country now get passengers to Zürich, Basel and Geneva airports as early as 5:30am. There are also new double-

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**DEAR SUBSCRIBER**

*Continued from page 1*

story on Mürren we gave an "editor's choice" to the **Hotel Alpenruh**. In high season, its per person rate is CH 135 (\$94). In the mid-April low season the price drops to CH 95 (\$67).

• **Lower your sights**

Move down one or even two hotel categories. Travelers who stay only in five and four-star hotels might be surprised at the charm and comfort of three-stars such as the **Hotel Asam** in Munich or the **Kaiserin Elisabeth** in Vienna. And the next step down to the **Acanthus** or the **Kraft** in Munich, the **Art Nouveau** in Berlin, the **Alts-tadt** in Vienna is not that far, even for the most discriminating traveler. In fact, over the years we've seen well-furnished, spacious, comfortable hotel rooms in all price categories.

• **Spend less time in big cities**

Your euros and francs will go much farther in the countryside.

• **Don't try to see too much**

If you try to see Prague, Vienna, Salzburg, Zürich, Munich and Berlin all in a two or even three-week trip you'll either need an expensive rail-pass or spend long days on the Autobahn plus spend at least \$20 daily in parking fees. Limit your travel to a couple of adjacent regions, you can get by with a small car and — another plus — never drive the Autobahn.

• **Rent an apartment**

As noted in the July *Gemütlichkeit*, our three countries are full of short-term, self-catering rentals with kitchens. They start around \$300 per week.

• **Rent a car**

Trains are great but when two or more people are traveling together, rental cars are usually cheaper. Two persons renting an Opel Corsa in Germany at \$140 per week plus 16% VAT provides a per person, per day transportation cost of \$11.60 (not including fuel and parking costs). Four people together in a midsize car drop the per person, per day price to \$7.46. Second class rail travel with a German Twin Pass is \$33.75 per day. If you're going to all three countries the cheapest Eurail Selectpass is \$58.80 per person.

• **Rent a smaller car**

A compact is not much smaller than a midsize and still has four doors, air conditioning and a trunk with enough luggage room for two or three people. A subcompact — two doors, no air, smaller trunk — also works for two persons.

• **Eat more simply**

Most hotels offer a half-board deal that is much less expensive than ordering dinner a la carte in the hotel's restaurant. The extra cost to add dinner to the price of room and breakfast usually ranges from \$10 to \$25, depending, of course, on the hotel.

The *Michelin Red Guides* for Germany and Switzerland identify restaurants offering full meals for less than €14 EUR (\$14) in Germany and CH 20 (\$14) in Switzerland.

• **Pay with a credit card**

You'll get the very best exchange rate, won't be billed for from two to six weeks and if there's a dispute

over a transaction you've got some leverage.

• **Keep it in perspective**

Using the *Michelin Red Guide Main Cities of Europe*, we selected the top five hotels in each of six cities: London, Paris, Rome, Zürich, Berlin and Vienna. We computed the average price for the best double rooms in each city and got the following results:

Paris	\$822
London	\$675
Rome	\$602
Vienna	\$453
Zürich	\$398
Berlin	\$345

We found similar ratios in all price categories. The point being that hotel rates in our three countries are substantially lower than in Europe's three most popular countries: Great Britain, France and Italy. Keep the faith. — 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 June codes are:

User Name: **wburg** Password: **3181**

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**HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY**

Rating Scale	Scale	Restaurant Criteria	
Excellent	16 - 20	Food	65%
Above Average	12 - 15	Service	20%
Average	8 - 11	Atmosphere	15%
Adequate	4 - 7		
Unacceptable	0 - 3		
Hotel Rating Criteria	Value Rating	Scale	
People/Service	30%	Outstanding Value	17 - 20
Location/Setting	15%	Very Good Value	12 - 16
Guestrooms	30%	Average Value	9 - 11
Public rooms	5%	Below Average Value	5 - 8
Facilities/Restaurant	20%	A Rip-Off	0 - 4

**Special Designation**

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

**WÜRZBURG***Continued from page 1*

the Main river. The promenade makes for delightful strolls, and riverfront cafes overflow in good weather. Sightseeing boats offer excursions to neighboring villages, and passenger ships plying the Rhine, Main and Danube make the city a prime stop. And there are few better views from a hotel room than of a river, a castle rising above it, and vineyards stretching beyond sight.

As the northern starting point of the Romantic Road, Würzburg is often overlooked by travelers who prefer the immediate gratification of nearby Rothenburg. Those who do make the trip are generally surprised by its warmth, charm and extensive variety of art, architecture and culture. Würzburg is a surprisingly cosmopolitan Bavarian city, due in great part to its citizens' high appreciation of the city's cultural heritage. By some estimates, more than 600 classical concerts are held annually. Major events range from the Mozart Festival to the Africa Festival — along with a lengthy list of wine festivals. Clubs, bars and bistros abound. Some of the world's finest wines attract residents, visitors, and some of the town's 50,000 students, to wine cellars, courtyard restaurants and outdoor cafes that stay lively well into the night.

That the city is so alive and ripe with culture is especially noteworthy in that nearly 90% of it was destroyed in 17 minutes during Allied saturation bombing at the end of World War II. Thanks to extensive restoration, even the shortest walk reveals architectural masterpieces that span centuries. Many treasures were hidden outside the city during the war, however, and much of what visitors see inside the churches and palaces is original.

**The Fortress**

It is a substantial climb to the Marienberg Fortress. Those with limited endurance or time may wish to go by car (city buses also stop at the castle entrance), since the imposing structure is built high on a bluff overlooking the Main and the city.

**Würzburg Basics****Population:** 127,000**Elevation:** 182 meters / 597 feet

**Tourist Information:** Würzburg Congress and Tourismus Zentrale, Am Congresszentrum, D-97070, Würzburg, tel. +49 09 31/37 23 35, fax: +49 09 31/37 36 52, email: [tourismus@wuerzburg.de](mailto:tourismus@wuerzburg.de), web: [www.wuerzburg.de](http://www.wuerzburg.de)

Fränkisches Weinland, Am Congresszentrum, D-97070, Würzburg, tel. +49 09 31/37 23 35, fax: 37 36 52, email: [tourismus@fränkisches-weinland.btl.de](mailto:tourismus@fränkisches-weinland.btl.de)

**Volkach Tourismus**, Rathaus, 97332 Volkach, tel. +49 09381/40112, fax: 40116, email: [tourismus@volkach.de](mailto:tourismus@volkach.de), web: [www.volkach.de](http://www.volkach.de).

**Driving Distances:**

Berlin:	520 km	323 miles
Cologne:	300 km	186 miles
Frankfurt:	110 km	68 miles
Heidelberg:	130 km	81 miles
Munich:	280 km	173 miles
Rothenburg:	60 km	37 miles

**Walking Tour:** In April-Oct., two-hour daily guided walks leave at 11am from the tourist office on Market Square. €12 (\$11.50). Call or email ahead to inquire about tours in English. (Art, architecture or history buffs should ask far ahead of time for private guide Max von Vacano.) Recorded tours available on cassette with a Walkman. €5 (\$5) plus deposit.

Walkers can pass the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Romanesque Town Hall and cross the river via the **Alte Mainbrücke**, built in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and lined with Baroque statues of saints. Two routes lead to the castle, one directly up a steep series of stairs and paths, the other along a more gradual trail that winds through the vineyards surrounding much of the castle. The latter route may take twice as long (about 50 minutes at a good pace), but it's more scenic — and easier on the knees and thighs.

The view from the fortress offers a good first stop to get one's bearings. To the east, across the Main, the *Altstadt* is bordered by a series of streets that (with a little imagination) form the shape of a bishop's hat. To the north, the vineyards of the Steinberg climb terrace upon terrace up a craggy, rolling hillside.

The skyline is dominated by churches representing nearly a millennium of architectural styles: St. Kilian's, Neumünster, St. Mary's Chapel, St. Peter's, St. Stephan's, St. Gertraud's, Augustinerkirche, St. Johannis', Karmelitenkirche, and — on a wooded hill to the south — the pilgrimage church Käppele, signifi-

cant not just for its impressive frescoes but for the stations of the cross — life-size sculptures — along the pilgrimage path.

Marked routes throughout the city make walking easy and match up with a free Visitor's Guide and map available at the tourist office and elsewhere. The tour (about two hours, excluding time spent visiting buildings) passes most major sights and provides a good orientation and starting point for more individualized exploration. Watch out for streetcars, which seem to come out of nowhere.

**The Residenz**

Any visit to Würzburg must include a few hours at the Residenz, built between 1720 and 1744 and now a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site. The center entryway is big enough for a stagecoach to turn around and leads to a massive grand staircase. Halfway up the stairs, eyes are drawn upward and overhead to "The Four Continents" (only Europe, America, Asia and Africa were known at the time), reputedly the world's largest fresco. It fills a vast, unsupported vaulted ceiling, which critics of the time said would surely collapse. Not only did it out-last the critics, it was the only part of the Residenz left standing after the 1945 bombing. (Open daily 9am-6pm, tours in English on Sat., Sun. and holidays at 11am and 3pm; admission with tour €6 /\$5.65.)

Tours show off just a fraction of the more than 300 Baroque and Rococo rooms, many of which are still under restoration.

**The Summer Palace**

Of course, any self-respecting prince-bishop needs a summer palace and **Veitshochheim** — just a few miles north of the city limits (40 minutes by boat; departures from the Alter Kranen for €8/\$8 round-trip) — is well worth the trip. Though the palace is charming, it's extensive Rococo gardens appeal most. Their formality is buffered by a strong sense of whimsy. Wooded boulevards branch off to hedge-rimmed pavilions. Statues of gods and mythological beings mingle with those of peasants and shepherds. A winged horse spouts water from an island fountain in an

artificial lake. (Bring some bread and watch the giant carp and ducks fight over it). Perhaps most interesting: a grotto inhabited by creatures formed entirely from seashells, like a hideous, razor-toothed monkey. Benches are placed every 50 feet or so for reflection or relief. (Open daily until dusk, no charge.)

**This is wine country**

Wine and wine-making are central to life in Würzburg. Since nearly 80% of Franconian wine — distinguished by the pear-shaped bottle, the Bocksbeutel (goat’s bladder) — is consumed within the region, overseas visitors are often surprised by its quality and variety.

In autumn, the hills surrounding Würzburg and throughout Franconia are dotted with pickers, who fill baskets and dump their grapes into waiting trailers. At the end of the day, tractors tow the trailers to wineries — from family operations in the villages to more elaborate facilities in the cities. Even the massive Baroque Residenz, once home to the prince-bishops, still has its own winery, and it is somewhat incongruous to see farm tractors pull up to this ornate masterpiece to unload their grapes.

Würzburg provides the perfect launching point for exploring the delightful towns and villages of Franconian wine country: such as the medieval market town of **Dettelbach** with its intact medieval wall and 19 towered gates; **Ochsenfurt** with its ancient fortifications; and **Gemünden**, the “Three-River Town,” where the Sinn and Salle Rivers meet the Main. Culinary delights, hiking and bicycling paths, quiet inns and remarkable architecture abound.

**Volkach**, about 20 minutes by car or 40 minutes by bus (leaving from the main train station), is especially charming. At dawn, in the morning mist, it’s easy to imagine this wine village as it was 400 years ago: the only sound is the tolling of the bells in the **Gothic Bartholomäuskirche**. The steep, red-tile roofs of half-timber houses are topped with wooden gables and brick chimneys. Vines form leafy walls on the buildings, where clouds of pink and violet belladonnas explode from carefully tend-

ed flower boxes. During the harvest, grape-laden wagons squeeze through the medieval gates, clatter over cobblestone streets and disappear into half-hidden courtyards of family wineries.

At **Weingut Max Müller** (Hauptstr. 46, 97332 Volkach; phone 49 093 81/12 18), Rainer and Monika Müller will happily show you their cellar filled with nearly a century of family vintages. Monika also leads four-hour bicycle tours (advance booking required) through the vineyards, followed by a tour of the winery and a wine tasting including a bottle of wine (€30/\$30).

**Accommodations**

**Hotel Rebstock**

Under the careful supervision of its young owners, Christoph and Sabine Unckell, the Hotel Rebstock recently completed a four-year renovation project with major upgrades to all 72 rooms and suites. The result is a hotel with charm and tradition, more than comfortable accommodations, and an extremely service-oriented staff. An 18<sup>th</sup>-century building, the hotel attracts visitors who stop by just to see its exquisite Rococo facade. Although it’s just a five-minute walk to the center of the *Altstadt*, the hotel feels relaxed and somewhat separated from the hustle and bustle of downtown.

**Editor's  
Choice**

Rooms are spacious and modern, with plush carpeting, matching Laura Ashley upholstery and bedspreads, and soothing colors overall. Room location is not an issue, since windows are soundproof, and views are pretty much the same throughout (courtyard or streetside). The Restaurant Rebstock has been given high marks by *Gault Millau*, and the quality and care are obvious in the extensive breakfast buffet.

**Daily Rates:** Rooms €98 (\$98). Discounts for guests over 60. Garage parking €7.67 (\$7.67).

**Contact:** Hotel Rebstock, Neubaustr. 7, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49 0931 30930, fax 3093100. Email: [rebstock@rebstock.com](mailto:rebstock@rebstock.com), web: [www.rebstock.com/english](http://www.rebstock.com/english).

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

**Nichtrauch-Hotel Till Eulenspiegel**

Behind its ivy-covered walls and through its arched entryway, the Nichtrauch-Hotel Till Eulenspiegel provides a casual and friendly environment to a somewhat eclectic clientele. It’s on a street filled with bistros and cafes and itself has both a wine bar and beer cellar.

Its 15 guestrooms are comfortable with most modern features (showers, no baths). As the name states, this is a Nichtrauch — no-smoking — hotel, opened in 1993. The better rooms are 24 and 34, facing the courtyard, and 25 and 35, with balconies overlooking the street. The street becomes a pedestrian zone at night, eliminating traffic noises.

At most a seven-minute walk to the heart of the *Altstadt*, it’s also convenient to catch the trolley, which stops virtually at the door. Though the cost is comparable to the Rebstock, the level of pampering and luxury is lower — a trade-off for a much more familiar and intimate environment.

**Daily Rates:** Rooms €98-118 (\$98-\$118). Parking €7.67 (\$7.67). Cars can still access hotel when street closed.

**Contact:** Nichtrauch-Hotel Till Eulenspiegel, Sanderstr. 1a, 97070 Würzburg, tel. 49+ 0931 355840, fax: 3558430, email: [nichtrauch-hotel.eulenspiegel@t-online.de](mailto:nichtrauch-hotel.eulenspiegel@t-online.de). Web: [www.hotel-till-eulenspiegel.de](http://www.hotel-till-eulenspiegel.de).

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

**Schloss Steinburg Hotel**

For centuries, the Steinberg has been covered by the terraced slopes of Würzburg’s preeminent vineyard, Stein. At its crest, the Schloss Steinburg Hotel looks down on a stunning scene: the vineyard, the *Altstadt*, ships plying the Main, the Marienburg and beyond. Although the turreted Schloss looks authentic, it was in fact built barely 100 years ago as a villa for a local businessman. Today, as a sumptuous hotel, it continues to play the role of a medieval castle, with marble staircase, parquet ceilings, and period antiques and decor, including multiple suits of armor. The staff is extremely attentive and the Weinrestaurant a destination unto itself.

The hotel has 52 guestrooms, an indoor pool with a view to the city, a relaxing sun terrace and a newly remodeled sauna area. Each room has its own personality, and many have four-posters and canopy beds. The most charming rooms are in the original building (be sure to ask) rather than the expansion wings. Room 15, a spacious suite with a large balcony, overlooks the vineyards and city. Room 14 is smaller, but with the same view. Room 12 is a medium-size corner room with both a city view and a more extended view of the vineyards. Note: The hotel has no elevator.

A delight for some, a drawback for others, the hotel is a circuitous three miles from the city center. Cars and public transport travel along the mountain ridge and then through farmland and vineyards for the 10-minute ride to the city. Walkers can go more directly along the scenic Stein-Wein-Pfad, 30-minutes through the vineyard terraces into the city.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €80-90 (\$80-90), doubles €120-150 (\$120-150), suite €150 (\$150). Sauna €8 (\$8) per person. Garage parking €6 (\$6).

**Contact:** Schloss Steinburg Hotel and Weinrestaurant, Auf dem Steinburg, 97080 Würzburg, tel. +49 0931/97020, fax +49 0931/97121. Email: [info@steinburg.com](mailto:info@steinburg.com). Web: [www.steinburg.com/english/](http://www.steinburg.com/english/).

**Rating:** QUALITY 18/20, VALUE 16/20

### Vier Jahreszeiten

In the charming village of Volkach, the Vier Jahreszeiten (Four Seasons) is a peaceful place with character, charm and a strong sense of history. A small but friendly staff welcomes guests with open arms.

In earlier times, "guests" weren't treated with such warm attention. The 1605 Renaissance building once housed the town's courthouse and jail. (To stay the night in one of the refurbished and enlarged cells ask for Numbers 5 or 6.) Each of the 20 rooms is spacious, with hardwood floors, writing table and antique furniture, rugs and paintings, as well as phone, television and other conveniences. Bathrooms are modern. The

top-story rooms — reached via a winding staircase in the former tower — have slanted ceilings, the original wood beams and gabled windows that look out on the steep roofs of equally old buildings. Rooms 106 and 109 are especially nice, with large sitting areas and four-poster, canopied beds. A cheery breakfast room is the site of a generous buffet. The inn also operates a splendid, intimate restaurant two doors down, the **Weinstube-Torbäck**. The **Max Müller Winery** (see page 4) is immediately across the street.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €44-55.50 (\$44-55.50), doubles €88-111 (\$83-105). Free parking, free bicycle use.

**Contact:** Vier Jahreszeiten, Hauptstr. 31, 97080 Würzburg, tel. +49 09381/8484, fax +49 09381/8484-44. Email: [vierjahreszeiten-volkach@t-online.de](mailto:vierjahreszeiten-volkach@t-online.de). Web: [www.vierjahreszeiten-volkach.de/](http://www.vierjahreszeiten-volkach.de/).

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

### Sustenance

Würzburg restaurants feature hearty and down-to-earth Franconian specialties like *blaue Zipfel*, sausages simmered in sweet-and-sour broth; *Knäudeli*, blood sausages served with bacon and sauerkraut; *Gerupfter*, camembert cheese blended with onions and spices and served on dark bread; *Schnickerli*, a sweet-and-sour fricassee of calf stomach-lining; and *Meefischli*, a deep-fried, finger-sized fish eaten whole. From May to June, most restaurants serve a seasonal delicacy — white asparagus — in as many incarnations as possible.

Of course, all dishes must be accompanied by a fine Franconian wine, available in every restaurant and wine bar. Or, for those who prefer to focus on the wine alone, wine bars abound. The scenic, riverside **Haus des Frankenweins** (House of Franconian Wines) is one of the few establishments that offers wine tasting. Operated by the Franconian Viticulture Federation, it pours as many as 100 different regional wines. A favorite for locals is **Riemenschneider Weinstuben**, hidden away in a narrow alley in the *Altstadt*.

**Der Schelmenkeller** (The Rogues' Cellar) is a typical Würzburg pub and

one that makes a point of making visitors feel welcome. English is spoken — in fact, Thursdays at 6, some of the regulars sit down to take English classes. It's a cozy, somewhat rustic setting, with as much appreciation of beer as of regional wines.

**Contact:** Haus des Frankenweins, Kranenkai 1, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49 0931 390110; Riemenschneider Weinstuben, Franziskanergasse 1a, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49 0931 571487; Der Schelmenkeller, Pleicherschulgasse 6, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49 0931 50700.

### Bürgerspital

Although the food at the Bürgerspital — primarily Franconian specialties — is excellent, it's the choice of quality wines and a strong sense of history that make the visit.

The Bürgerspital was established in 1319 as a home for sick and elderly and now covers a huge campus of buildings in the *Altstadt*. Much of its endowment comes from the nearly 200 acres of vineyards it owns throughout Franconia (including on the Steinberg) and 750,000 liters of wine stored in oak barrels in its massive cellars (themselves worth a visit). Dining is in the wine cellar, with its centuries-old vaulted ceilings.

Plan to spend €18-25 (\$18-\$25) per person for food and reasonable prices for fine wines. Its late hours are also noteworthy: open daily until midnight.

**Contact:** Bürgerspital, Theaterstr. 19, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49 0931 352880, fax +49 0931 352888.

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

### Ratskeller

The Ratskeller is charming and historic. The various rooms carry different Rococo and Baroque themes, and all have high, arched ceilings, frescoes and statues. There's also a delightful inner courtyard with fountain — a great place to relax with wine and cheese or to escape the summer heat with a cool beer and a snack. Baked camembert with berries is super, as are the trout with wild rice and the grilled pork with roasted onions. Although the meal bill could run as high as €25 (\$25), a hearty

snack might cost €8 (8) or less.

**Contact:** Ratskeller, Beim Grafeneck-art, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49 0931 13021, fax +49 0931 13022.

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

### Zum Stachel

Zum Stachel is one of the oldest restaurants in Germany, dating back at least to 1413. The nondescript facade of the entrance doesn't hint at the medieval character inside: leaded windows, dark wood furniture, plank flooring and stucco archways. Vine-draped walls surround an exquisite garden courtyard.

Editor's  
Choice

Equally exquisite is the food. Seafood is a specialty, and the grilled fish plate — with a variety of fresh fish — is especially tasty. Meat dishes abound, like the grilled sampler plate with fresh vegetables and mushrooms. Bolder diners may try *Schnickerli* (see above) in a white wine sauce. The courtyard is the perfect setting for wine with a cheese platter or for a typical Franconian dessert, pancakes filled with poached plums and cream. The most expensive entrees top out at less than €20 (\$20), with many — like the *Schnickerli* in the €7-10 (\$7-\$10) range. During asparagus season, Zum Stachel prepares a seemingly endless variety of dishes: asparagus with carpaccio and arugula, with hollandaise sauce, in a ragout with dumplings, with parsley potatoes, and so on.

A delightful, historic setting with extremely reasonable prices.

**Contact:** Zum Stachel, Gressengasse 1, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49 0931 52770, fax +49 0931 52777.

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

### Julius-Spital Weinstube

The Julius-Spital Weinstube is a pleasant, traditional and relaxed setting in a 1699 Baroque building. Like Bürgerspital, Julius-Spital is a charitable institution endowed by the wine industry. (The menu declares, "With every bottle, the buyer does a good deed.") Service is attentive and cordial.

A typical four-course dinner might start with a fresh salad garnished with turnips and dill, followed by Franconian *Mostsuppe*, a

creamy soup made with wine that's just started to ferment and flecked with cinnamon crisps. Then a pork cutlet, pounded thin and tender, lightly breaded and pan fried, followed by a stunning dessert, *Weinapfel*: an apple poached in wine, filled with cheese, baked briefly and topped with berries. Not bad at all for €28 (\$28), excluding wine.

**Contact:** Julius-Spital Weinstube, Juliuspromenade 19, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49 0931 54080.

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

### SWISS TRAVEL SYSTEM

*Continued from page 1*

decker trains featuring "quiet" cars (no cell phones, loud talk), "bistro" cars, and family cars with children's play equipment. In addition, peak-hour trains between Zürich and Bern have an on-board grocery store, the "Railshop."

#### The Trains

These new services were added to a rail network that was already the most dense in the world. About the size of the state of Maine, Switzerland has 1800 railroad stations and some 3,100 miles of track, most of it electrified.

Even in very small towns, a train seems to be leaving for somewhere every 15 minutes or so. One resident who lives on Lake Brienz near Interlaken commutes to Basel. If he takes the 5:33am train he's in Basel at 7:56. If he leaves at 6:39 he gets in at 8:56, but has to change in Bern. Another who lives in the remote Goms Valley (Goppenstein), between Kandersteg and the Rhône Valley, often takes the train to dinner and a movie in Bern, the capital. The ride is 75 minutes, and there are several direct trains running hourly. He can leave Bern for home as late as 11:26pm.

The frequency of service is quite amazing. A couple of examples: from Zürich in the north to Lausanne in the south, trains leave about every half hour, from 5:30am until 9pm. The trip takes a little over two hours. In most cases you do not have to change trains and IC (Intercity) trains stop only twice. Between Bern and the Zürich airport, during the hours 5:04am and 9:17am, you have your

pick of a dozen trains.

The Swiss rail gnomes must stay up nights thinking of ways to make their system more convenient.

- You can get a boarding pass and check baggage for your flight from Zürich, Basel and Geneva airports at more than 100 Swiss rail stations. It isn't a free service — CH20 (\$14) per bag or CH10 (\$7) if you just want a boarding card — but how nice to kiss your bags good-bye at some remote village rail station, such as Chateau d'Oex or Engelberg, and not see it again until the luggage carousel at your home airport.

- Bikes can be rented from more than 200 rail stations in Switzerland at prices starting around \$13. Take them with you on the train for as little \$4.

- Public phones are available on IC trains

- All IC and long-distance trains offer drink and snack service at your seat and also have snack and restaurant cars.

- Many rail stations have luggage lockers and major stations have shower facilities and hair dryers.

- This summer, the new IC tilting trains offer hourly shuttle service along the Geneva-St. Gallen route to Expo 02 in the Three Lakes Region.

#### The Buses

Fast, frequent trains are just the most visible part of the Swiss Travel System. Almost as amazing is the bus system. Together, the postbus network and local city and suburban buses cover every town and village in the country. In addition, each major city has a network of trams or trolley cars. Besides bringing the mail to rural towns, postbuses carry over 90 million passengers, 50 million miles a year. Behind the wheels of these distinctive bright yellow buses with the red stripe are some of the world's best professional drivers. In the whole history of the postal bus system, there have been but a handful of serious accidents. The buses themselves are equipped with three independent braking systems. Some of the routes over precarious mountain roads would dampen the palms of

even Chuck Yeager.

The buses don't automatically stop at all stations, so you may have to press a button to get the driver to stop. A sign (*hält an, arrêt*) inside the bus is illuminated if it is going to stop. If you're waiting for a bus at a 'request' stop, you'll have to flag the driver down.

Dogs ride for half-fare and bicycles go for free in the luggage compartment.

### The Boats

No doubt there are some Swiss residents for whom the country's lake boats fulfill a real transportation need. For most, however, they are just a very pleasant, unhurried way to get from point A to point A, and sometimes from A to B. More than 100 boats glide over the country's lakes and rivers, mainly from April to October. Aboard some of them you can have breakfast, lunch, dinner, dance to live music, or see a folkloric show. There are car ferry services on lakes Constance, Lucerne and Zürich.

One suggestion for an "A to B" route might be the 9:30 breakfast boat from Zürich to Rapperswil, an interesting town with a 13<sup>th</sup> century castle, a couple of museums, and a children's zoo. The trip is two hours and, if you wish, you can return via rail which takes 35 minutes.

A guest of the lakeside **Hotel Giessbach** near Brienz can ride a lake steamer to Interlaken for lunch and afterwards take the train to Brienz and there change to the **Brienzer Rothorn** rack-railway station for a trip to the summit (7,710 feet). Then it's back to the boat for the return to the hotel.

### The Cable Cars & Funiculars

The Brienzer Rothorn line is just one of 500 rack-railways, cable car lines and funiculars in Switzerland. The Swiss never saw a mountain top they didn't want to build a cable car to and put a restaurant on top. The highest and most spectacular — and most expensive — are the **Jungfrau-joch**, the **Klein Matterhorn**, and the **Schilthorn**.

In our opinion, the best of the lot is the two-stage cable car to **Le Dia-**

## Passport Confusion

Last month's Dear Subscriber ended with the following item:

"One reader found this out the hard way: in order to be allowed to leave the U.S. you must have at least six months left on your passport."

Though we have learned that is not a correct statement, there are things about this issue travelers to Europe should be aware of.

To begin with, the reader in question was told by the U.S. Passport Service he needed more than six months remaining on his passport to be allowed to enter Germany. He had a little over three. Believing what he was told, our reader tried unsuccessfully to obtain a new passport in the 48 hours prior to his flight. He ended up not traveling and paying a \$250 penalty to cancel his airline ticket.

The idea that passport validity must extend beyond the end of one's visit to Europe is bolstered by the following text appearing on the website of the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs (<http://travel.state.gov/foreigentryreqs.html>).

"Some countries require that your U.S. passport be valid at least six months or longer beyond the dates of your trip (*Gemütlichkeit's* emphasis). If your passport expires before the required validity, you will have to apply for a new

one. Please check with the embassy or nearest consulate of the country that you plan to visit for their requirements."

We have recently raised this issue with the German, Swiss and Austrian, consulates, reservations personnel at Swiss Airlines and British Air, three travel agents, the ticket managers of two large airline consolidators, and the German Embassy in Washington DC. Most said there was such a regulation, the rest said there was not.

The most authoritative response came from **Christina Brunsch**, press officer at the German Embassy in Washington DC. She told *Gemütlichkeit* that passport validity beyond the date of planned departure from her country is a guideline — not a law — set forth in article 13.2 of the Schengen Agreement, a document dealing with visas and passports to which most Western European countries are signators. *But, she said, it is rarely enforced.*

Thus, as a practical matter, it appears you need a passport valid only through the duration of your trip.

On the other hand, the guideline does exist and it would seem prudent to err on the side of safety. Our recommendation: before leaving for Europe be sure you are holding a passport whose expiration date equals six months plus the duration of your trip. ☒

bleret Glacier.

### Working Together

And isn't it nice that all these trains, boats and buses have integrated schedules? You take the 7:39am train from Lausanne on Lac Léman (Lake Geneva) to Evolène high in the mountains above the Rhône River. Arrive in Sion at 8:49 and there's the 8:50 bus waiting to take you the rest of the way up the steep mountain road. Or let's say you're in Bern and headed for the Hotel Giessbach on the Brienzersee. The 9:26am gets you into Interlaken at 10:20 where you change for Brienz at 10:30. Arriving Brienz at 10:47 you walk two minutes to the dock to catch the 11:05 boat to Giessbach arriving at 11:16. From the waterside boat station, a small funicular takes you to the hotel. Of course,

if you weren't quite ready for the hotel, you could have stowed your bags at the Brienz rail station and taken the rack-rail to the Brienzer Rothorn.

That's the way it is every day, all over the country; a complex system of trains, boats, buses, funiculars and cable cars meshing like — dare we say it — a precision Swiss watch.

Of course the best way to experience it all is with one of the several varieties of **Swiss Pass**. They are valid for travel on the vast majority of the country's trains, buses and boats. Though some rail lines, and virtually all cable cars, are privately owned and may not fully honor Swiss Passes, they almost always grant pass holders a significant discount. Expect to get about 25% off. ☒

## Readers' Forum

### Yes on Mürren

The article on Mürren in the July issue brought back some good memories of a visit there about 12 years ago. Some of the memories are:

- Walking halfway up the Schilthorn to a trailside restaurant lunch stop, sitting at an outdoor table with a bowl of *Gulaschsuppe* and a glass of beer, watching a man lay out a parasail on the slope behind him, then run down to the edge, jump off, and go floating down into the Lauterbrunnen valley.

- Standing outside the hotel in the evening and watching the alpenglow on the peaks across the valley — I still have a photo of it hanging on my living room wall.

- A rail trip to the Jungfrauoch (the highest railway station in Europe, we were told).

- Meeting a young man on the street wearing jeans and a T-shirt with "Don't worry, be happy" (in English), and with a Swiss army assault rifle slung on his shoulder — they were having a *Volksschiessen* (public shooting match) that day. They do that sort of thing in Switzerland.

- Lying in bed at night and listening to the cowbells ringing on the

### Key Websites for the Traveler

- [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.travelgearnow.com](http://www.travelgearnow.com) Guidebooks, maps, travel accessories, name-brand luggage, all at 10% off for subscribers.
- [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.
- <http://www.hhog.de> Website for an alliance of historic German cities.

meadow above the town — I didn't complain at all about being kept awake.

For all of its touristy features, Mürren gives about as true a picture of life in the Swiss mountains as you are likely to get.

JAMES D. MENTZER  
VIA EMAIL

### Heaven in Wengen

Can't help but comment on your new issue. Mürren is one of our favorites, too, although we never actually stayed there. Each time we went there we were staying in Wengen.

Coincidentally, the last time we stayed in Wengen we rented an apartment. Anne found it via the Internet. It was the fourth floor (gasp!) of the home/business of a family. A dairy and cheese shop was on the first floor. They lived on the second and the third and fourth were apartments.

We had a good size bedroom, a kitchen and dinette, a large (relatively) living room with balcony overlooking the town and looking out over the Lauterbrunnen Valley to, at night, the winking lights of Mürren, and a very small bedroom under the eaves. The cost figured out to \$65 a night for the two of us, and all the cheese we could eat (almost). The couple could not speak any English but we got along, including the time I had to go down and borrow a coffee grinder.

Each morning, I would walk down to the *Bahnhof* kiosk for newspapers (and cigarettes then, not now) and stop by the bakery on the way back. One afternoon, a herd of cows was driven up our street and under our balcony. We had a wonderful view of the Mönch and Jungfrau.

Another day I took the tram from the upper end of the Lauterbrunnen to Mürren. Spectacular. We did the Schilthorn, of course, and one day we hired a helicopter down in Lauterbrunnen for an incredible tour beginning with the Eiger north face so close you could almost touch it, the Jungfrauoch and back via Schilthorn and Mürren. Ah, I want to go back.

BILL STALL  
VIA EMAIL

## 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](http://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@snafu.de](mailto:hotelartnouveau@snafu.de)

**Hotel Domus**, Uhländstrasse 49, Germany D-10719, tel. +49/030/882041, fax 882 0410, email: [info@hotel-domus-berlin.de](mailto:info@hotel-domus-berlin.de)

### Bern

**Hotel Innere Enge**, Engestrasse 54, CH-3012, tel. +41/031/309 6111, fax 309 6112, email: [info@zhotels.ch](mailto:info@zhotels.ch)

**Hotel Kreuz**, Zeughausgasse 41, CH-3000, tel. +41/031/329 9595, fax 329 95 96, email: [hotelkreuz@swissonline.ch](mailto: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](mailto: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@fhotels.ch](mailto:agora@fhotels.ch)

### Lucerne

**Hotel Wilden Mann**, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, email: [mail@wilden-mann.ch](mailto: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](mailto:info@cascada.ch)

### Munich

**Hotel Asam**, Josephspitalstrasse 3, tel. +49/089/230 9700, fax 230 970 97, email: [info@hotel-asam.de](mailto:info@hotel-asam.de).

**Hotel Kraft**, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24 fax 5503856, email [kraft.hotel@t-online.de](mailto:kraft.hotel@t-online.de)

### Rothenburg ob der Tauber

**Reichs-Küchenmeister**, Kirchplatz 8, Rothenburg o.d. Tauber, Germany D-91541, tel. +49/09861/97 00, fax 97 04 09, email: [hotel@reichskuechenmeister.com](mailto: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](mailto:struber@sbg.at)

**Hotel Jedermann**, Rupertgasse 25, Austria A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873241-0, fax 873241-9, email: [jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at](mailto: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@rkhotel.bestwestern.com](mailto:info@rkhotel.bestwestern.com)

**Allstadt Vienna**, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, email: [hotel@allstadt.at](mailto:hotel@allstadt.at), web: [www.allstadt.at](http://www.allstadt.at)

**Pension Aviano**, Marco-D'Aviano-Gasse 1, tel. +43/01/512 8330, fax 512 8330 6, email: [aviano@pertschy.com](mailto:aviano@pertschy.com)

### Zürich

**Hotel Florhof**, Florhofgasse 4, Switzerland CH-8001, tel.41/01/261 4470, fax 261 4611, email: [info@florhof.ch](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:reservation@hotel-flyaway.ch)