

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

The Hunt for October Rentals

Let's see, where were we? Oh, right, headed for Switzerland on October 1 with plans to find an apartment, flat or chalet overlooking Lac Léman (Lake Geneva) in the Montreux-Lausanne area.

Immediately on arrival, armed with cell phone and list of available apartments (provided by the Montreux Tourist Office), we began to call likely possibilities. After two days of phoning and driving, no apartment. Here are the statistics: 13 no answers, 8 recorded messages in French, 17 not availables, and two walk-throughs of small, dark, unsuitable basement apartments in a small town at the east end of the lake near the French border.

Moving west to Lausanne and Morges, still along the lake, our results were even worse. "Fully booked" rang in our ears.

Somewhat disappointed, we headed for Locarno in Italian-speaking Switzerland where the weather was warm and sunny. Our spirits lifted when the tourist office used its database to locate four apartments that might meet our requirements. The young woman who assisted us explained that both vacation rentals and hotel rooms in the region were heavily booked, and recommended we use her computer printout description to choose one of the four — they all sounded appealing — and pay on the spot with

Continued on page 2...

This Month in Gemütlichkeit

Features	Page
Romantic Rhine	1
Trip Notes	1
The Rhine: From Source to Mouth	3
Key Websites	8
Gemütlichkeit Hotel Recommendations	8
Commentary	
Dear Subscriber	1
Hotels/Restaurants	
Hotel Mecure, Koblenz G	5
Hotel Fährhaus am Stausee, Koblenz G	5
Hotel Brenner, Koblenz G	5
Hotel Zum Königstuhl, Rhens G	5
Restaurant Weindorf, Koblenz G	5
Restaurant Wacht am Rhein, Koblenz G	5
Restaurant Löffel's Keller, Koblenz G	6
Hotel Neu-Meran, Berchtesgaden, G	7

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

THE ROMANTIC RHINE

In this issue and the next, we'll look at the "Romantic Rhine," a river of myths, legends, and castles. This month we suggest how best to see the river, as well as information on Koblenz, our tour's starting point.

Last June, UNESCO designated the Middle Rhine Valley a World Heritage Site. The announcement read, "The 65 km-stretch of the Middle Rhine Valley, with its castles, historic towns, and vineyards, graphically illustrates the long history of human involvement with a dramatic and varied natural landscape. It is intimately associated with history and legend and for centuries has exercised a powerful influence on writers, artists and composers." The designation was timed to coincide with the 2002 bicentennial celebration of "The Romantic Rhine."

Don't worry if you miss the celebration, the Rhine will be there in 2003. The question is: What's the best

way to see it?

Well, if you're in a hurry, an express train can make it from Koblenz to Bingen in 34 minutes. With 20 castles, that's an average of one every 102 seconds, although the location of the track will keep you from seeing most of them.

If you have a car, you can see the Rhine at your own pace, but there are disadvantages: first, parking and traffic are often difficult and, second, you'll need to make frequent use of car ferries to visit sights on both sides. And besides, it's much more relaxing to see the Rhine by water. So park your car for a few days, and enjoy the river's scenery and history by boat.

Continued on page 3...

Short Notes from a Long Trip

Notes and musings from a month in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

■ **Sorry, but cross them off your list:** The small, charming, bargain hotel we've recommended for years in the posh suburb of Chernex in the hills above Montreux. **Auberge d'Chernex** has closed its doors and the phone is disconnected.

Also *kaput*, despite winning its first Michelin star in 2002, is Berlin's **Restaurant Adermann**, which got a glowing review from *Gemütlichkeit* in 2001.

■ **Little things we like about Switzerland:**

- Precisely marked streets and roads
- Manicured country roads, no matter how remote
- Drivers who never surprise and are amazingly courteous (except when you go too slow for them)

- The inexpensive but very good *offen* (open) wines sold by the glass in restaurants
- **Swiss Rail's** new double decker rail cars, the quietest and smoothest in Europe
- Rösti
- Calves liver at **Le Dezaley** (Römergasse 7-9) in Zürich

■ **Unfortunately, Switzerland is** substantially more expensive than Germany or Austria. We had trouble finding a double room in a good, three-star country hotel for under CHF 200 (\$134). Similar hotels in Germany and Austria go for around €100 (\$98). Main courses on Swiss menus in everyday restaurants are seldom priced lower than CHF 30 (\$20), while in Germany and Austria, the range is more like €12 to €15 (\$12-\$15).

Continued on page 6...

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

a credit card. Wisely, as it turned out, we decided to take a look at all four. I won't bore you with the details, but we found only one basement apartment that offered acceptable furnishings and amenities. The rest were dumps. One of the four did have a panoramic lake view but was otherwise filthy and creepy.

After three full days of looking it was time to admit we had run into a buzz saw. Desirable vacation rentals with lake views in these regions at this time of year were simply not available on short notice. On the shores of both lakes — Geneva and Maggiore — the sun was shining, the leaves were turning and wine grapes were being harvested. It was a wonderful time to be in southern Switzerland — a fact that hadn't gone unnoticed by masses of other tourists.

The few apartments we did see only proved the wisdom of our own advice in the July 2002 *Gemütlichkeit*; never commit to a European vacation rental property without first inspecting it yourself or having it recommended by a reliable source.

Time for Plan B; hotels, many of which you'll hear about over the next few months.

Beam Me Up...Please!

While we're on the subject of trip difficulties and promises made in the October issue, let's discuss our access of the Internet — non-access, actually — while in Europe. I refer, of course, to our stated goal of creating the No-

member issue while in Europe during October and emailing it to the U.S. for printing and distribution.

I had visions of sitting with my day's notes — possibly on a balcony overlooking a lake with a cool beer at hand — forming them into intelligible narratives and tapping same into my laptop computer. At some point these would be fashioned into an entire issue and electronically flashed to our mailing house in Tennessee. We do it from Ashland, why not from Interlaken?, was my naive thought.

That I was unable to do so may be instructive to some who dream of sending and receiving work files via the Internet, thereby continuing to be a contributing part of a business while far away across the Atlantic. This does not refer to sending and receiving short, simple messages from an Internet café — of which there are plenty. That is relatively easy. No, I'm talking about emailing, both sending and receiving, work product created on your own computer.

As you've deduced by now, all did not go well. Getting to the Internet from a less than five-star hotel room in Europe ain't easy. From 99% of European hotel rooms your only possibility is a dial-up connection to a service like America Online or CompuServe. Of course, the room has to have a phone, the wall-jack for which has to be accessible, you must have the correct adaptor plug (there's a different one for each country) and the line has to be analog, not digital, otherwise you incinerate your modem. I went equipped with all the

adaptors as well as a phone line tester and even EuroSurge, a somewhat bulky device which claims to protect both computer and modem against voltage surges said to be common in Europe.

Also required is a local access number for an online service provider, AOL in my case.

First night, modern hotel near Montreux. Move furniture to get access to phone plug. Line tests o.k. Hook up computer to phone line, open AOL software and ask it to find local access number. Software messages that my internal modem will dial the U.S. to find a number. Even though the AOL software says it will, it won't. This I was told two days later by AOL in a call to their foreign access help line (703-264-1184, user pays the toll from Europe). I should have obtained a list of access numbers before leaving the U.S. And any-

Continued on page 8...

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 our 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: **enhr** Password: **0404**

Vol. 16, No. 10
November 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: Andy Bestor, Laura Riedel

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	Hotel Scale	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.

ROMANTIC RHINE

Continued from page 1

By steamship, perhaps the most traditional way to see the Rhine, it's six hours upstream (Koblenz to Bingen) and four hours downstream. And you'll see every village and every castle — at least from a distance.

But viewing the Rhine, even from a ship, is linear. You see the front door of the towns and some rooftops, but you don't see inside. And, if you don't stay overnight, you miss some of the charm and character of these marvelous villages — and the ability to experience them in relative peace after the day-trippers have left.

A Suggested Rhine Tour

For those who have at least three days, taking the steamship in stages provides one of the best ways to explore the region. For example, on day one leave Koblenz at 9am for Oberlahnstein, where you'll arrive at 9:55am. Stroll the narrow streets lined with half-timber homes, climb to **Lahnneck Fortress**, enjoy a leisurely lunch in town, and then board the 2:50pm ship for the one-hour trip to Boppard, where you spend the night and part of the next day.

Next morning, board the 11am ship to St. Goarshausen, arriving at 12:10pm. Take time to explore that town and then take the ferry across to St. Goar, guarded through the centuries by the massive **Rheinfels Fortress**, then depart at 5:15pm for the 70-minute trip (passing the Loreley) to Bacharach, your next port of call. After what will assuredly be a delightful evening and overnight stay there, take the next morning or day to explore the town, and then leave at your choice of 15 minutes past the hours of 11, 1, 3, 5, or 6 for the final 90-minute stretch to Rudesheim, with Bingen a quick ferry ride across the river.

These are just examples, of course, and your routes will depend on timing, interests and preferences.

(If you prefer to sleep in the same bed for more than one night, you can choose one or more towns as home base and head up- and downstream from there. You'll do some backtrack-

The Rhine: From Source to Mouth

Although we are focusing on the Romantic Rhine—the region between Bingen and Koblenz—it's important to remember that these 65 kilometers (40 miles) represent only about 5 percent of the river's 1,320 kilometers (818 miles), as it makes its way from the Swiss Alps to the North Sea.

Fed by glaciers, two branches of the Rhine flow together in Switzerland and enter Lake Constance near Bregenz, Austria. Sixty-seven kilometers (42 miles) later, it flows from the other end by Constance, where the current is so strong that swimmers and boats have been swept from the wide lake into the narrow river passage. It broadens again, and for the next 34 kilometers (21 miles), the so-called "Lake-Rhine" nourishes wetlands as it makes its way to historic Stein am Rhein, where the "River-Rhine" officially begins.

A scant 20 kilometers (12 miles) later, just after Schaffhausen (see October 2002), it plunges 25 meters (82 feet) at the Rheinfall, a series of waterfalls where the river cut its way through Jurassic limestone eons ago. (Interestingly, the "official" source of the Danube is barely 35 kilometers (22 miles) north, at the Donauquelle—or Danube Springs — in Donaueschingen.) Briefly, it's bordered by Switzerland on both sides before creating the Swiss-German border. Just past Basel, it turns north to form what *today* is the

peaceful and undisputed border between France and Germany.

Here, the Rhine runs through a wide plain, the hills of the Black Forest to the east and the stark mountain wall of the French Vosges rising behind the Alsace plain to the west. The most visited city along this portion is France's Strasbourg, although Freiburg, Offenburg, Baden-Baden and Rastatt aren't far behind. By Karlsruhe, it fully enters German territory, gaining volume from the Neckar and the Main. In Bingen and Rudesheim, it becomes the familiar "Romantic Rhine," the Middle Rhine Valley that UNESCO named as a World Heritage Site earlier this year.

At Koblenz, it loses its World Heritage designation but gains more volume from the Lahn and Mosel. And it's just as scenic as it passes the majestic ridges of the Siebengebirge, the Godesburg fortress at Bad Godesberg, and the graceful promenades of Germany's Federal City, Bonn.

Shortly past the lofty spires of Cologne Cathedral, the Rhine takes on a different character. Reflected in its waters aren't towers and turrets, but smokestacks, as it travels through the megalopolis of Düsseldorf and the Ruhr region. After regaining its grace in the fields and forests of Münsterland, it leaves Germany at Emmerich for the final 150 kilometers (93 miles) to its mouth in Rotterdam. — JJ

ing, but the views stand up to multiple trips, and there's nothing like starting the day without having to pack.)

During peak months, **KD Rhine** has as many as five ships cruising this section of the Rhine daily, and numerous smaller companies offer additional options. And you can certainly blend in train transport, either to fill in gaps or accelerate travel. For example, if you've finished with Lahnstein and want to explore neighboring Braubach (with the **Marksburg**, the Romantic Rhine's only hill-top fortress that was never destroyed), don't wait for the next boat; more frequent trains will get you there in six minutes. And then continue on to Boppard from Braubach.

Local trains run at least hourly on both sides of the river. Just remember, there are no bridges across the Rhine between Koblenz and Mainz; so you'll have to depend on ships or ferries to get from one side to the other.

But what to do with luggage during the day, when you're exploring ashore? Even those who travel light will have to find a place to store their gear ashore. A €2 locker at a train station will hold two large suitcases for as long as 36 hours. If you've selected a restaurant for lunch, it may be amenable to storing your luggage for a few hours before or after. Finally, tourist offices are eager to help in any way they can. These are not large towns, and you'll usually find steam-

ship stops, train stations and tourist offices all within close proximity.

Which kind of tickets should you buy? Remember, the total distance is less than 40 miles. By ship, the route from Koblenz to Bingen costs only €23.20 (\$22.70) for an adult. Break it into two segments, say Koblenz-Boppard and Boppard-Bingen, and the cost is still just €24.60 (\$24.10). For the train, second class from Koblenz to Bingen costs just €9 (\$8.80). In two parts the price is €11.20 (\$10.95). So the best bet is to go a la carte. Even rate hikes scheduled later this year for short distance trip aren't likely to increase fares much more than 10 percent.

Buy ship tickets each time before you board, and buy train tickets at the multilingual automats located at each station. (If you present the train ticket you just used when you buy a ship ticket at the KD counter, you'll get 20% off.) Bottom line: Though both **German Rail** and **Eurail** passes are valid for free passage on trains and ships of the Köln-Düsseldorfer line, you might not want to spend one of your pass's travel days on a short \$20 boat ride.

There's another reason to travel by ship. Being on the river gives a strong sense of history and purpose. For example, you can see the castles in context. During the turbulent middle ages, they served as protection for bishops, nobles, prince-electors, robber knights and dukes. Many were also toll stations, each controlling their part of the river and collecting a percentage of the goods transported. At one time, a ship starting full in Bingen might arrive in Koblenz with only 10 % of its goods remaining.

These great fortresses came under frequent attack in disputes over territory, property and inheritance. During the Crusades, when the "good" knights headed east, robber knights seized many of them. Still, most survived the Middle Ages fairly well. It wasn't until the Thirty Years War and French occupations at the end of the 17th and 18th centuries that most damage and destruction occurred. What we see today is mainly due to a vast reconstruction effort after the Prussians chased Napoleon across the

Rhine on New Year's Eve 1813.

Life on the Rhine

Try to imagine steering a barge downstream, or even worse, being towed slowly upstream by horses or oxen. As you pass the island fortress of the Pfalz, with its turrets and gun slits, you almost feel the intimidation. You'd pay the toll.

The Rhine has its share of natural dangers as well. At the Bingen Reef, you can still see the standing waves and riffles as the Rhine pours over a series of ledges. Even today, ships must navigate a narrow channel blasted through the rock.

According to legend, the most dangerous point on the Rhine is below the Loreley cliffs at St. Goarshausen. (Actually, the Loreley — the longtime name for the cliffs — first referred to a woman in an 1801 poem, and it was she, not the sailors, who died.) Although a seductive blonde makes for better poetry and song, it's the narrow channel, sharp turns and steep cliffs that have plagued sailors for centuries. Radar installations along the river help control a sophisticated lighting and warning system for ship traffic.

That traffic is considerable. During a day on the river, you'll likely see ships carrying the flags of eight nations. Barges (including the incongruously named "Love Boat") plow through the current with containers or loads of coal, and cabin cruisers bounce in the waves. Flat, long excursion ships pass by on their luxury cruises between Basel and Düsseldorf or Rotterdam. Small ferries, some for passengers only, maneuver among the larger ships. Occasionally, an eel boat will pass, its nets at the ready. Local sightseeing boats carry tourists to view the nearest castles. And other ships in the KD fleet pass by, their passengers waving a kindred hello.

If you plan to start your Rhine journey in Koblenz, don't immediately head from the train station to the Köln-Düsseldorfer dock. The city itself is worth a visit. If you've just landed in Frankfurt from the United States, consider taking an hour's train ride from the airport up the Rhine (just a teaser) to Koblenz. Stash your

bags at your hotel, walk around town, grab an early dinner and regain strength for the coming days' explorations.

(Most passenger trains travel on the left — or western—side of the Rhine. If you've already been on this stretch of track, consider traveling the right side. When you buy your ticket, specify that you want to travel via Rüdeshheim. You'll miss most of the castles that you usually see from the other side, and you'll actually pass through the Loreley. But you'll have a stunning view of the villages and castles of the left bank — a view that few foreign train travelers know about. All trains are local, so expect an hour's trip from Rüdeshheim to Koblenz.)

Exploring Old Koblenz

Much of Koblenz was destroyed during World War II, and most buildings were rebuilt to support service industries and shopping both for its 109,000 residents and for the Rhine region. Thus, the city is alive and active, with enough pockets of discovery to satisfy history buffs. Pick up a map at the tourist office on the plaza immediately outside the train station (open 10am-8pm daily from May 1 through September 30). The main shopping street, the Löhrrstrasse, is just a few blocks away and will lead you to the Old City. From the Löhrrstrasse you can also catch a view of the stunning 19th-century, Neoclassical **Palace of the Prince Electors** (closed to the public).

The city's churches give snapshots in time: the Romanesque **St. Castor's Church** consecrated in 836, **St. Florin's Church** with its Romanesque triple nave and Gothic chancel, and the **Church of our Lady** with its mix of Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque features.

A relaxing walk is along the city's 8-kilometer (5-mile) promenade. Traveling clockwise from the Mosel to the Rhine, you'll pass the **Old Castle** and a collection of medieval buildings around the **Old Mosel Bridge**. In a few moments, you'll reach the **Deutsches Eck** — or German Corner — the park where the Rhine and Mosel meet. Standing at the tip of the park, you can watch the tea-colored

waters of the Mosel swirl into the coffee-colored Rhine. A monument of Kaiser Wilhelm I dominates the park. Originally erected in 1897, it was destroyed at the end of World War II. In 1953, a flag and flagpole were mounted on the base as a memorial to German unity. It was rebuilt in 1993 based on original plans. Today, flags fly from every state of the reunited Germany.

Across the Rhine, the **Ehrenbreitstein** continues its watch over the city and rivers, an imposing fortress built in stages from the 11th through the 17th and 18th centuries. The Prussians rebuilt it to its current neo-classical form in the 19th century.

The fortress is reached easily by ferry from the Rhine boat docks. From the ferry landing, a 30-minute hike or scenic chairlift ride will get you to the top. The view, especially over coffee and pastries at the terrace restaurants, is stunning: down both the Rhine and Mosel and across to Koblenz. (Ehrenbreitstein Fortress, D-56077 Koblenz, tel +49 0261 9742445, fax 9742450; adults €2.50 (\$2.45), children €1/\$1)

Accommodations

Hotel Mercure Koblenz

There's no sense of history but plenty of comfort at this 167-room high-rise on the Rhine promenade. The KD docks are almost adjacent, and it's about a five-minute walk to the *Deutsches Eck*.

Guestrooms are spacious and modern with a small sitting area and work desk. Windows are double-glazed to keep out the minimal street noise and there's that rare summer comfort: air conditioning. Riverside rooms have a superb view of the Ehrenbreitstein Fortress.

Contact: Hotel Mercure Koblenz, Julius-Wegeler-Strasse 6, D-56068 Koblenz, tel +49 0261 1360, fax 1361199, email: H2004@accor-hotels.com, web: www.accorhotels.com.

Daily Rates: Singles €115 (\$112.50), doubles €141 (\$137.90) 15% weekend discount; lower rates off-season. Parking €12 (\$11.75).

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 14/20

Fährhaus am Stausee

The Fährhaus am Stausee is an old ferry house converted to a family-run hotel and restaurant. Because it's across the Mosel, it doesn't get many mainstream tourists. However, local residents advising guests put it at the top of their list, in part due to its excellent kitchen.

The setting is peaceful — seemingly far from the city. Several small piers jut into the river and at night you can hear the creaking of the docks in the wake of passing boats. The 20 guestrooms are spacious, bright and cheery with all the amenities, some with bath, others with shower. Ask for a Mosel view, preferably with balcony; it's only €5 (\$4.90) more per night.

Contact: Fährhaus am Stausee, An der Fähre 3, D-56072 Koblenz, tel +49 0261 927290, fax 9272990, email: info@faehrhaus-am-stausee.de, web: www.faehrhaus-am-stausee.de.

Daily Rates: Singles €49-54 (\$47.90-52.80), doubles €67-82 (\$65.55-80.20). Weekend package €75 (\$73.35) single, €128 (\$125.20) double. Free parking.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 16/20

Hotel Brenner

First impressions can be wrong. The Hotel Brenner is at best nondescript on the outside. Thus its interior elegance comes as a complete and pleasant surprise. Every detail seems attended to, including the hand-painted flower ornaments on ceilings and walls.

Guestrooms are spacious and stylish, with separate living and sleeping areas. Located downtown, the Brenner is convenient to the Old City, ship landings and train station.

Contact: Hotel Brenner, Rizzastraße 20 – 22, D-56068 Koblenz, tel. 49 0261 915 780, fax +49 0261 36278, email: go@hotel-brenner.de, web: <http://www.hotel-brenner.de>

Daily Rates: Singles €70-79 (\$68.50-77.25), doubles €87-118 (\$85.10-115.40).

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 15/20

Zum Königstuhl

If you don't mind traveling about 10 miles upstream, you can sleep surrounded by history. The medieval walls and tower in

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Rhens were constructed between 1336 and 1414. In 1557, the house Zum Königstuhl was built against the fortifications as the official home of Cologne's prince electors. It's been a hotel since 1706 and, though the adjacent tower also served as prison and torture chamber, you'll be very comfortable.

The hotel offers 10 doubles, all with toilet and shower or bath, four of which are exquisite, including a corner room with its own garden. Number 3 has a Chippendale bed — and a view straight to the Rhine.

Contact: Zum Königstuhl, 5401 Rhens, tel +49 02628 2244

Daily Rates: All rooms €65 (\$63.60). Free parking.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20 VALUE 15/20

Sustenance

Weindorf

If, as you walk along the Rhine promenade, you're tempted to stop at the Weindorf, an ersatz "wine village" built in 1925, by all means do. It's four houses built in varying traditional styles surround a flower bedecked central courtyard where you'll dine in good weather. Smaller appetites will be more than satisfied with a plate of cheese, sausage or ham with dark bread. Bigger eaters might enjoy a platter of warm sausages served with dumplings and sauerkraut. More formal dining choices include grilled salmon, grilled pork or beef braised in wine sauce. Prices range from €6-15 (\$5.90-14.70) with an average of €9 (\$8.80). Service is casual but attentive.

Contact: Weindorf, Julius-Wegeler-Strasse 2, D-56072 Koblenz, tel. +49 0261 1337190, fax +49 0261 13371919.

Rating: QUALITY 12/20 VALUE 14/20

Wacht am Rhein

Wacht am Rhein serves superb German and Rheinland cuisine in a choice of three settings overlooking the Rhine and Ehrenbreitstein: the casual Winzerstube (Vintners' Room), the terrace, and the more intimate restaurant. If you're in the mood for a fancy dinner, choose the restaurant. Both the food and service are excellent, whether you select a fish dish — like the mixed grill of fish

filets and river crabs — or traditional German dishes like *Sauerbraten* and *Tafelspitz* (boiled beef with horseradish). Entrees range from €13-25 (\$12.70-24.45). Cost-conscious travelers will enjoy the traditional dishes of the *Winzerstube* for less than €12 (\$11.75) such as herring with an apple cream sauce (€7/\$6.85); wild game ragout (€10/\$9.75); or marinated beef in raisin sauce with dumplings and red cabbage (€11/\$10.75). Also offered is a more familiar selection of steaks and *Schnitzels*.

Contact: Wacht am Rhein, Rheinzollstrasse 8, D-56068 Koblenz, tel. +49 0261 15313, fax +49 0261 9731026, web: www.wacht-am-rhein.de.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 15/20

Löffel's Keller

An evening in Löffel's Keller, in the heart of Koblenz's Old City, will send you back seven centuries as you sit in a 13th century cellar, bathed in candlelight that flickers against the stone walls and vaulted ceilings. The cuisine is as imaginative as it is tasty, and the presentations are works of art. The menu changes monthly, but you can expect items like sweet and sour pumpkin soup with smoked chicken breast, followed by pork cutlet with melted goat cheese in an herbed cream sauce, followed by a creamy pear parfait with marzipan sauce. Although you can order a la carte, the three-course dinners are often a better deal—generally around €25 (\$24.45). Add another €10 (\$9.75) for wine with each course.

Editor's
Choice

Contact: Löffel's Keller, Mehlgasse 14-16, D-56068 Koblenz, tel. +49 0261 1004715, fax +49 0261 1004716, email: kontakt@loeffels-keller.de, web: www.loeffels-keller.de.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 17/20

OCTOBER TRIP NOTES

Continued from page 1

■ **Gas in Switzerland** is 1.35 CHF/90 cents per liter or \$3.41 per gallon. In Germany, you'll pay about €1.08/\$1.06 per liter (\$4.01 per gallon) for Super *Bleifrei*. Fuel costs in Austria are about 10 to 12% less.

■ **Returning a rental car to the Frankfurt Airport**, for those who've never done it, is an unnerving experi-

ence. As one approaches terminal two there are no "car rental return" signs. Only as you are about to start up the ramp to the departure curbside drop zones is there a sign on the right requiring an immediate right turn. So go slow, stay in the right lane, and keep your eyes peeled. It's also a good idea to be familiar with the German word *Mietwagen* (car rental).

■ **How tremendously handy it is** to have a cell phone in Europe. Virtually essential to apartment hunting. Sit in your hotel room or car and wade through the list of possibilities. If you're using one with a SIMM card and plan to call the U.S., be sure to find out the per minute rate. It varies hugely from country to country.

■ **Odd sight; vineyards still** under harvest covered with mesh netting and crisscrossed with yellow crime-scene tape to scare away birds.

■ **Mr. Clean toilets** (you'll see them in railway stations) are definitely worth the 60 cents to \$1.25 charged. Super clean. Next best, of course, are the toilets in five-star hotels. Walk in like you're a guest.

■ **We wonder how many travelers** in Europe choose trains because of the absence of security checks. It's the same as ever; walk on, find a seat and away you go.

■ **ICE vs TGV. Germany's ICE's** seem a little sleeker, a little more stylish, but France's TGV's may be more comfortable with seats a bit softer and maybe even a shade wider. Both have 2-1 seating, though ICE has some four-seat cubicles and five-seat compartments. Ride about equal. The smoothest and quietest cars of all, however, are Swiss Rail's (SBB) new double-deckers.

On one ICE run between Zürich and Munich we sat in two of the six seats right behind the "cockpit," with a view down the track ahead.

■ **Why should you make seat reservations** in Europe, even though you purchase a rail pass in the U.S.? Cost. In Germany we paid €5.2 (\$5.10) for a pair of Berlin-Zürich ICE seats. It's \$22 (\$11 per person) if you do it in the U.S. In Switzerland we booked Geneva to Avignon (France) seats on the TGV for CHF 10 (\$6.70) vs. the same \$22 in the U.S.

■ **The new Swiss Airlines.** Having arrived in L.A. at 8:20am for our 3pm flight to Zürich, we were anxious to check-in and get rid of some of our luggage. A counter sign said check-in was to start at 11am. Fifteen minutes after the appointed hour they were ready to go. Un-Swiss like.

The shared — Swiss and **Asiana** (Korean) — first and business class lounge at the L.A. International terminal is woefully small and not equipped to handle business travelers. There are no Internet connections, no electrical outlets, not even a TV set. The room is furnished with about 36 tightly bunched chairs comfortable for no more than about an hour's wait (forget that nap) and six to eight small round tables. With 25 people in the room it seemed jammed. With passengers from two outbound flights waiting, there was soon no place to sit.

Boarding was chaos. Business class (we used miles) was never called, the harried ground staff was busy paging people to the check-in desk, presumably to fill the airplane.

Once on board, however, things improved dramatically. Cabin crew in both directions were first rate, capable, accommodating and unflappable. One assumes with the downsizing of the old **Swissair** only the most senior in-flight personnel were retained. It showed. On-board service personnel is what separates the foreign carriers — at least this foreign carrier — from U.S. airlines.

Food was unexpectedly good, especially the cold dishes.

■ **Zürich Airport is still the best.** Calm, uncrowded and easy to use. Our bags — no doubt the first loaded, given our arrival in L.A. seven hours prior to departure — were last off the plane in Zürich but we were on the road in our **Europcar** Passat Wagon (a gratis upgrade from a standard class midsize sedan) within 40 minutes after touching down.

■ **The Passat Wagon, by the way**, is a great car; smooth riding and driving, with a surprisingly powerful 2.0 liter gas engine, five-speed manual transmission and dial-in-the-temp climate control system. Had 19000

kilometers (11,875 miles). A little fuel thirsty, however. Assuming one extends the luggage cover to hide belongings, there's no more trunk room than a sedan. But, for those who don't mind exposed gear, there's substantially more luggage space. A Citroen C-5 wagon, also in the mid-size category, rented later in the trip didn't measure up to the Passat and guzzled fuel like an 18-wheeler.

■ **Short review of Interlaken Tourist Office** based on visits three years running: Not friendly, lacks *gemütlich*. They could learn from **Swiss Airlines'** in-flight personnel.

■ **The ease of finding and using ATM's** has changed the way U.S. visitors obtain local currency in Europe, but it's getting expensive. For example, Citibank AAdvantage card holders who use it to obtain a \$300 cash advance from an ATM in Europe will pay a 3% cash advance fee and another 3% conversion fee. This is in addition to a flat fee to use the ATM, usually about \$3. That's a total of \$21 (7%) to get \$300. For credit card purchases, such as hotel rooms or meals, only the 3% conversion fee applies.

Rather than use a credit card for cash advances, it's much cheaper to withdraw cash from your account with a bank-issued ATM card. We did and were charged a flat \$3 charge for each ATM withdrawal.

However, in order to accumulate miles, we used the Citibank card for purchases and incurred the 3% conversion fee on everything. There may be some cards that don't levy this fee but it's doubtful they offer frequent flyer miles. Your other alternative is to pay for everything out of cash obtained with your ATM card. ☒

Readers' Forum

Hotel Near Berchtesgaden

The May 2001 issue of *Gemütlichkeit* included an article on the delightful **Hotel Neu-Meran** (Nonn 94, D-83435 Bad Reichenhall, tel. +49/08651/40 78, fax: 0 86 51/7 85 20, email: info@hotel-neu-meran.de, web: www.hotel-neu-meran.de) located on the side of a mountain overlooking Bad Reichenhall. We just

spent a night there to rid ourselves of "jet lag" after landing at Munich for a three-week trip to Grundlsee, Austria, Bled, Slovenia and Munich. Your recommendation couldn't be better, we love it. The owners, Franz and Ingrid Weber are the best! The hotel is a perfect example of warm, cozy Bavarian ambiance. The food excellent and our room (#26) spectacular. It is a suite complete with balcony overlooking Bad Reichenhall and surrounding mountains. Can't understand why more Americans haven't been here as it is the epitome of a Bavarian paradise. Very close to Berchtesgaden and just over the border from Salzburg. I could go on, but we must get on our way.

JULIE AND BILL WOOD
HOBE SOUND, FL

Red Guide Comments

As always, your comments about the *Michelin Red Guides* are right on target. For any of the countries Michelin covers, all other guides are at best a distant second.

Although Michelin has yet to dedicate a guide to Austria, parts of Austria are indeed included in the *Germany Red Guide*. I recall that the area covered abuts Southern Germany, including Salzburg and the surrounding towns.

Thanks to the Red Guide, we had an extraordinary dinner at **Obauer in Werfen**, which is about 20 minutes south of Salzburg.

The other point you allude to in your comments relates to the restaurants noted with the Bib Gourmand designation. Michelin calls them "good meals at reasonable prices". That is an understatement. A listing in Michelin is by itself a recommendation and the red listing for those warranting a Bib Gourmand means the restaurants are distinguished in one or more ways and may well be en route to one-star status. On all of our trips, we try to build our meal plans around the Bib Gourmands, with an occasional starred restaurant along the way. After having eaten at dozens of these and an equal number of one, two, and three stars, I cannot overemphasize the value of giving the Bib Gourmands special attention.

They're easily the best bang for the buck in any of the countries that Michelin has rated.

RUSSELL WAYNE
VIA EMAIL

No Vote for "We Recommend"

Since you ask, I, for one, find the "We Recommend" section of *Gemütlichkeit* so much wasted space. If I need help with accommodations for any of those places listed, I refer to those back issues featuring said places.

Not only will those back issues provide me with in-depth coverage, but allow me to compare hotels/inns, etc., of comparable or near-comparable quality. Let's have more reporting or reader's letters.

On another subject, would you address the issue of smoking in European restaurants, perhaps in a "Dear Subscriber" piece? There are legions of us, I'm sure, who find cigarette smoking downright offensive, or cannot tolerate it for health reasons.

BILL POLCARI
MEDFORD, MS

(Ed. Note: Until Mr. Polcari's comments, we had had only a handful of responses, all favorable, to the "Gemütlichkeit Recommends" feature. We'd like to hear from more readers. The idea is to provide a quick reference to hotels we particularly like in popular destinations.

As to smoking in European restaurants, we, too, find it unpleasant. On our recent month-long trip, we were continually assaulted by secondhand smoke. Worst of all were three restaurants in which cigars polluted the atmosphere to virtually untenable levels. In one, we left before the meal was finished and advised restaurant management of the reason for our departure.

As Mr. Polcari and most readers are well aware, smoking in restaurants and other public places is still part of Europe's culture, though there are a few encouraging signs; nonsmoking hotel rooms, sections of rail cars and even a few restaurants now offer no-smoking areas. In fact, the World Health Organization says smoking is decreasing in Western Europe. Sadly, the tobacco companies' marketing efforts in Eastern Europe have more than offset gains in the West to the extent that there are now

READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 1

more smokers in Europe than there were five years ago.

The European hotel and restaurant operators we know are well aware of American attitudes regarding smoking and surprisingly sympathetic to them. But among their clientele, we are alone. The Japanese, the Brits and Aussies, seem to have no problem with smoking and, of course, their biggest customers, Europeans, still light up in large numbers.

Gemütlichkeit has no solution expect to urge readers to congratulate and patronize those hotels and restaurants that exercise smoking controls and to politely make their feelings known to those who do not.)

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

way, I also learn from AOL, most of the numbers won't work with my Macintosh G4 Powerbook with OS X operating system. In Germany, there is a single number for Macs running OS X. So, not only does one pay a monthly AOL fee, plus an approximately 7 cents per minute AOL overseas access charge, but also the long distance phone charges assessed by the hotel, which, if you plan to spend an hour or so downloading email attachments, can be substantial. Of

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.

course, AOL limits the size of files that can be sent via email, so, as it was in my case, the whole question of access may be moot. One final note on AOL: if you plan to use it for overseas access, you must have been an AOL member at least 60 days before you travel.

Even if AOL were not expensive, restrictive, and painfully slow, there are other Internet access issues. When tested by our \$19.95 line tester, about one out of three hotel room phone lines came up dirty or simply would not yield a dial tone through the adaptor.

My laptop is also equipped with an airport card, which enables it, via the so-called 'Wi-Fi' (Wireless Fidelity) technology, to connect without wires or cables to certain high-speed Internet networks. The availability of such networks in public places such as airports, public buildings, major hotels and even coffee shops, is growing, but still scarce in Europe. At the end of the trip I was able to make a wireless connection to the Internet from a Starbucks coffee shop in Berlin. The necessary hardware is not expensive — less \$100 to install an airport or "Wi-Fi" card in a laptop.

Right now, the easiest and cheapest way to send and receive simple emails from Europe, or perhaps check your portfolio, is still an Internet café or other public Internet access point, such as are found at many rail stations. These stand-up Internet kiosks charge about \$3 for 15 minutes online. Internet cafés charge about \$5 for 30 minutes. And forget AOL, sign up for a free email account at Yahoo! or Hotmail.

Those still determined to connect using their own laptop, might try a North American ISP that has roaming or reciprocity agreements overseas. One such is Toronto-based SoftCom which has POPs (point of presence) in many major European cities. Another possibility is iPass, which has POPs everywhere. Both SoftCom and iPass provide phone-numbers and dialing utilities you can take abroad.

And generally speaking, the best place to make such a connection is from the business center or guest room of a five-star hotel.— RHB

We Recommend

This listing of good value, mid-priced hotels in popular destination cities is intended for fast 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 is on page 2 herein. 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

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@fhotels.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@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

Salzburg & Environs

Schloss Haunsperg, A-5411 Oberalm bei Hallein, Hammerstrasse 32, tel. +43/06245/80662, fax 85680, email: info@schlosshaunsperg.com

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@rhotel.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 Arette, Stampfenbachstrasse 26, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. +41/01/25 20 032, fax 25 20 932

Frankfurt Airport

Steigenberger Esprix Hotel Frankfurt Airport, CargoCity Süd, D-60549, tel. +49/069/69 70 99, fax 69 70 94 44, email: frankfurt@esprich-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