

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

Lost in the Wine Maze

Of all life's decisions, few are less important but more complicated than ordering wine with dinner, especially in Europe.

From long restaurant lists we make semi-educated guesses as to which bottles will go with the dishes we will eat — and fit our pocket-books. We must weigh such variables as grape variety, vineyard, region, country, and year of vintage. If it is our job to order for the table, we must also take into account the tastes and preferences of our companions. Some may want red wine, others white (a circumstance that leaves almost no room for compromise). But even if there is general agreement on the color of the wine, there may not be on such matters as how dry, how sweet, how light, how heavy, how tannic, or how acidic it should be.

When it comes to a complex wine list with bottles from several countries and dozens of regions, few are sufficiently knowledgeable to make a *truly* informed decision on the entire list. (Don't fret if you're not one of those few; 'wine authority' often equates to 'wine bore'). For instance, a Bordeaux savant may not know a *Trockenbeerenauslese* from Blue Nun, and vice versa.

Too often, in an attempt to appear knowledgeable, we apply our limited wine wisdom and assume — probably correctly — that the more we spend the better the wine will taste. That's not a wholly reliable process. And in Europe, wine lists are often even more intimidating than in the U.S.

Still, the non-connoisseur who wants decent wine at a decent price gets a couple of breaks in Europe. First, everyday European wines are better than their U.S. counterparts. Most small and medium American vintners are only interested in making great wine (though far too many

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

RHINE JOURNEY III

In this, the third and final segment of our tour along the Romantic Rhine, we travel the river from Boppard to Rüdesheim.

As primary launching pad for tours to the nearby Loreley, St. Goar throbs with tourists. Many of them clog shops lined with cuckoo clocks and *Mozartkugel* and talk excitedly about the store with the "World's Biggest Beer Stein." Unfortunately, compared with other towns, relatively few buildings of historic interest remain in St. Goar.

Still, the town is a must-see, if only for **Burg Rheinfels**, perhaps the best castle experience on the Rhine. It is the region's most massive ruin, with nearly 100 rooms, defensive walls, ramparts, drawbridge, moat, parade grounds and tunnels. Ruin is a relative term, since the Rheinfels still presents a full and powerful pic-

ture of a medieval Rhine fortress. And, unlike most castles, visitors are allowed to walk freely — after paying E4 (\$4) for adults, E2 (\$2) for children — through almost all of it, including a labyrinth of underground passageways and rows of massive rooms. Since there's little signage, a guided tour (available in English) is a good idea before wandering around. Also recommended is a visit to the castle museum. By learning the history of the fortress, visitors also gain a historical context for other Rhine castles and villages.

During the last two weekends in August, a cast of 60 townspeople and professionals presents the Rheinfels SAGA, a stunning multi-media

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Readers' Forum

No Anti-U.S. in Munich

Regarding your "We Are Not Loved" column in the latest *Gemütlichkeit*: I just returned from a week stay in Munich where I did not experience any anti-American feelings at all. Thought you might like to know.

I leave for Amsterdam on March 28 for a week. I'll let you know how the Dutch react.

DON ALCORN
VIA EMAIL

Will Boycott Germany

My usual excitement at seeing *Gemütlichkeit* in the mailbox was missing today. It has been replaced with emptiness. The joy I once felt as I savored each page, and made mental notes of possible places for the "next trip" is gone. Perhaps some day I will feel differently but in all good

conscience my husband and I have decided, with great personal sadness and sacrifice, that we cannot travel to Germany now or as long as the Schroeder government is in power. We are not afraid of anti-Americanism. We agree with your comments that such sentiments are being blown out of proportion. And certainly the hotels want "us" (spelled US\$).

But I would take you to task for comments that I feel trivialize the problems between the two countries. It is not anti-American sentiment towards us, personally or as a country, that keeps us away. There have always been anti-American factions in Germany and many other countries. Rather, it is as Mr. Winters wrote in his letter to you that "Though they may not support our

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make 'good' and price it like 'great') and the giant wineries like Gallo appear to be only interested in making money. Here there seems to be no middle ground.

Another advantage in Europe is the availability in restaurants of good to excellent wines without the necessity of purchasing an entire bottle. Some local products are invariably sold as *offen wein* (open wine) by the deciliter (one-tenth of a liter) or 3.38 ounces. Order 5-DL and you get 16.9 ounces, about two-thirds of a bottle, a perfect alternative for two persons who don't want the expense or the quantity of a full bottle. For a lone traveler, a typical order is 2-DL, nearly 7 ounces of wine, just over a quarter bottle.

EUROPEAN WINE MEASURES

Bottle of wine	= 25.6 oz.
1 DL	= 3.38 oz = small glass of wine
2 DL	= 6.76 oz = quarter bottle
5 DL	= 16.9 oz = two-thirds bottle
10DL	= 33.8 oz = bottle plus 8 oz.

Here are a few wine ordering strategies that have worked for me over the years:

- **Stay local.** In Germany, Austria and Switzerland you'll find excellent low-priced locally produced wines almost everywhere and I've rarely been disappointed, even with the often-maligned German and Austrian reds. European winemakers came to terms long ago with the fact that they are limited by soil and climate and, no matter how hard they try, the best

many of them can do is make pleasant, everyday wines that taste just fine but will never be auctioned decades from now for a king's ransom. Most Swiss wines, for example, are sold in screw-top bottles — not cork — and many are absolutely delicious.

- **Ask for advice.** If it's the less expensive, local, *offen* wine you want, simply ask your server which he recommends. He may inquire as to your preference — dry-sweet, light-hearty, etc. — and there may be levels of quality, so you'll need to indicate about how much you want to spend.

The same goes when ordering a bottle. Give the server or wine waiter a price range and ask for a recommendation within it. On rare occasions you'll run into a restaurant that touts certain wines because of business affiliations, higher profit margins, kickbacks, family connections, or reasons other than quality and value. But making your wine choices with the help of the server or wine waiter is almost a guarantee of wine at a good price. Much of the wine drunk in Europe is made only a few miles from the places where it is consumed, and the people who serve it do so with pride.

- **Drink beer.** Wine is not always in order. If you're eating simple, hearty food, beer may be a better choice. Remember, many of Europe's very best wines are readily available in the U.S. but its quality beer *vom fass* is not.

- **Know the territory.** It's a good idea to know a bit about grape varieties and wine regions.

Though almost totally unknown in the U.S., the best German reds I've had are from the vineyards around Freiburg im Breisgau, the Baden region, especially the village of Müllheim. Local restaurateurs are quick to say that the quality of their wines has dramatically improved over the past 40 years. For example, Müllheimer Reggenhag (about \$35), made from the *Spätburgunder* grape, is silky, delicious and great with roast lamb.

A tiny region that has recently won fame for its reds is the Ahr Valley (*Gemütlichkeit*, July '98). The Ahr flows into the Rhine from the east just below Remagen. Grape varieties are mainly *Spätburgunder*, *Portugieser*, and *Dornfelder*.

The *Rieslings* of the Mosel and Rhine are Germany's most famous but, with minor exceptions, they have an edge of sweetness many feel is best before or after meals. But don't

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Using Gemütlichkeit

- Foreign currency prices are converted to U.S. dollars at the exchange rate in effect at the time of publication.
- Hotel prices listed are for one night. Discounts are often available for longer stays.
- All hotel prices include breakfast unless otherwise noted.
- Local European telephone area codes carry the "0" required for in-country dialing. To phone establishments from outside the country, such as from the USA, do not dial the first "0".

Logging on to our Website

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User Name: **cyob** Password: **1076**

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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

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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.

RHINE*Continued from page 1*

performance that highlights major events in the 13th-century history of the town and castle. At times, the audience is led by torchlight to various areas of the fortress, the walk being punctuated by convincing explosions and fireworks. Though it's in German, the experience is still worthwhile for those who don't speak the language. It's helpful, however, to take the previously mentioned tour or pick up *Burg Rheinfels: A Historical Guide*, available at the tourist office.

The Loreley

Across the Rhine, St. Goarshausen is the starting point for trips to the Loreley. While the top of the Loreley cliffs has attracted visitors for years, the **Loreley Visitors Center** opened just over two years ago, an offshoot of Expo 2000.

Vivid displays (most with signs in English) present information about the history of shipping on the Rhine, the advent of tourism in the early 19th century (spread by Romantic painters and poets), the 1000-year-old heritage of winemaking, and the flora, fauna and geology of the region. The center also contains the *Mythosraum*, a brief multimedia show about the myths and emotions connected with the Loreley. English narration is available through headsets. A pleasant 10-minute walk leads from the Visitors Center to the actual cliffs with views to the river below.

The center is open daily from April through October from 10am to 6pm; adults E4 (\$4), children E1.50 (\$1.58). (Besucherzentrum Loreley, Auf der Loreley, D-56346 St. Goarshausen, tel. +49 06771 599093, email: info@besucherzentrum-loreley.de, web: www.besucherzentrum-loreley.de) Don't confuse this with the tiny, ill-named **Loreley Museum** in the medieval toll tower at the southern end of town.

The Visitors Center is about a 15-minute car ride from the ferry landing at St. Goarshausen, or about 45 minutes by foot from the landing (the path also passes **Burg Katz**, privately owned). In addition, a shuttle-bus

runs almost hourly from the Köln-Düsseldorfer pier in St. Goarshausen. (Loreley Express, Forstbachstr. 17, D-56346 St. Goarshausen, tel. +49 06771 2643, fax +49 06771 2349; round-trip for adults E4 (\$4), children E2 (\$2).

Travel the 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) between St. Goar and Bacharach by ship, whether on a K-D vessel or on any of several lines that run ongoing tours past the Loreley and to points up and down the river. Especially on smaller boats, the currents passing through this narrow S-curve of the Loreley give a hint of what boatmen endured in earlier times, when the river was less tamed and the boats powered by sail or horses. Even today, there's an extensive system of radar stations, traffic lights and a small "control tower" to ensure safe navigation.

After surviving the natural dangers of the Loreley, boats during the Middle Ages also had to face human dangers. Three castles follow in fast succession, each one built to collect tolls. Today, the **Schönburg Castle** still looks stern, towering over the delightful town of Oberwesel, with the most intact medieval city wall along the Romantic Rhine. Just beneath the lofty **Gutenfels Castle**, the island fortress of the Pfalz narrows the passage. It's easy to imagine the intimidation of passing the Pfalz, with the Gutenfels and its mighty cannons and where shooters could target ships. Better to pay the toll than to make a run for it.

Bacharach

If given the task of choosing just one town along the Romantic Rhine for a multiple-day stay, pick Bacharach. This enchanting city is rich with history and legends, a delightful amalgam of medieval architecture, and ripe for hikes along its ancient wall and into the hillside vineyards. Art lovers quickly see why many visual artists have chosen Bacharach for their studios and galleries. And despite its popularity, the town doesn't feel overrun by tourists, especially in the evening after less fortunate day-trippers leave.

Stop first at the tourism office in the Posthof (45 Oberstrasse). There's more than the tourist office hidden

away behind the wooden gateway of its medieval courtyard, including a choice of several restaurants with regional food, a wine cellar for tastings, and art galleries. Across the way, get a couple of scoops of Riesling ice cream at **Tarcaloro** (Oberstr. 4).

The 11th-century **Stahleck Fortress**, now a youth hostel (see "Accommodations"), still stands watch over the town. Just below the castle, the **Wernerkapelle**, once a pilgrimage church, is now a striking Gothic ruin of red sandstone. The legend behind its construction is a tale of loss, faith and prejudice.

Beyond exploring the town itself, follow the medieval walls surrounding the city. Along the Rhine, the wall is capped by a series of towers connected by a covered walkway. From the river, the fortifications reach up to the Stahleck Fortress, become part of the battlements, stretch from the fortress across into the vineyards, and then follow the hilly terrain back down to the river wall. The forward walkway runs along — and almost through — the walls of several houses built along the fortifications. Behind them, the view is to the Stahleck, Wernerkapelle and medieval **Peterskirche**.

But perhaps the best view is from the **Postenturm**, where the vineyard has filled in behind the wall. Some minor scrambling pays off with a stunning view of the medieval town and the river behind it.

A stop not on tourist maps is **Antique-Borniger**, a warren of rooms over several floors in the **Haus Utsch**, a 16th-century patrician home. It rivals many museums. Several rooms overflow with furniture from old castles as well as the throne of a Russian czar and a 15th-century gold box used for tolls along the river. Another is filled with altars, statues and carvings from secularized churches. There are also old prints and photographs that show Bacharach through the centuries. Many stories lie behind these pieces, and Herr Borniger, the town's unofficial and passionate historian, is pleased to share them. (Koblenerstrasse 7, D-55422 Bacharach, +49 061743 1369)

Bingen

At the upstream end of the Romantic Rhine, Bingen's somewhat commercial setting deters many travelers from its rich history. If for no other reason, visit the town to learn more about its most famous daughter. Hildegard von Bingen wrote and spoke out extensively on religious philosophy, women's rights, natural history and the medicinal uses of plants. Her music influenced many so-called "new age" compositions. She founded two convents. And, until her death in 1179 at the age of 81, she counseled popes and kings.

Her life, works and accomplishments are captured magnificently at the **Bingen Historical Museum**, opened in 1998. The museum also has an intriguing collection of 67 instruments from a 2nd-century Roman surgeon's kit found during archaeological excavation nearby. (Bingen Historisches Museum am Strom-Hildegard von Bingen, Museumstrasse 3, D-55411 Bingen, tel. +49 06721 990654, fax +49 06721 990653, email: historisches-museum@bingen.de, web: www.bingen.de)

Rüdesheim

Across the Rhine, Rüdesheim pleases both those who crave touristy settings and those who abhor them. For many visitors, the highlight of Rüdesheim is the Drosselgasse, a

noisy, kitschy street packed with people, and filled with restaurants and wine bars featuring various combinations of accordion, Sinatra and/or oom-pah music. But that's part of the attraction.

Leave the street, and the town takes on a different personality, with half-timber homes, the 10th-century **Boosenburg** and 11th-century **Brömsenburg** fortresses, and a row of 16th-century mansions along the Oberstrasse. One mansion contains **Siegfried's Mechanical Music Museum**, a charming and intriguing collection of historic "self-playing" musical instruments. Entry is E5 (\$5) for adults, E2.70 (\$3) for children. (Oberstrasse 27-29, D-65385 Rüdesheim, tel. +49 06722 49217, fax +49 06722 4587).

Rüdesheim has a superb color-coded and numbered signage system that makes exploration — and finding hotels and attractions — easy.

To escape the Drosselgasse completely, board the two-person cable-car for a "swing over the vines" to the **Niederwald Memorial**. The 20-minute ride climbs 225 meters (738 feet) from the Oberstrasse to an imposing, out-of-scale, hilltop monument erected by the Prussians to celebrate victory over France and the "Recreation of the Germany Empire 1870-1871." The views capture vineyards on both sides of the Rhine, the Niederwald woods, ruins of castles and convents, the mouth of the Nahe River, and the standing waves of Bingen Reef, the bane of sailors until a channel was blasted earlier this century. The cable-car is E6 (\$6) RT for adults, E4 (\$4) for children. (Seilbahn Rüdesheim, Oberstrasse 37, D-65385 Rüdesheim, tel. +49 06722 2402, email: info@seilbahn-ruedesheim.de, web: www.seilbahn-ruedesheim.de)

Accommodations

Hotel Hauser

A basic but nonetheless charming and quite comfortable hotel with friendly staff and onsite owners. Its 30 rooms are plain but pleasant and clean. Number 12 is on a corner with balcony overlooking the Rhine. Leave the shades open when you go to sleep, and the sun will wake you as it

rises over Burg Katz. Open the window and the only early-morning sounds you'll hear are ships chugging upstream. The room's only downside is a slightly cramped bathroom with pod shower.

The hotel is immediately across from the ship landing and a two-minute walk to the pedestrian ferry to St. Goarshausen. The ground floor features a small café and restaurant.

Contact: Hotel Hauser, Heerstrasse 77, D-56329 St. Goar, tel. +49 06741 333, fax +49 06741 1464, email: hotelhauser@t-online.de, web: www.hotelhauser.de

Rates: Singles E26-38 (\$27-\$40), doubles E52-76 (\$55-\$80)

Rating: QUALITY 11/20 VALUE 14/20

Schloss Hotel and Villa Rheinfels

The Schloss Hotel and Villa Rheinfels is built atop the outer walls of the mighty fortress over the Rhine. Though not cheap, it's a good value and you'll be generously pampered by a staff that is formal but not stiff. The 57 rooms are regal and palatial with lavish décor. Most have some combination of four-poster beds, chandeliers, live plants, plush draperies and modern, tiled bathrooms with tubs big enough for two. Larger rooms have both sitting and writing areas.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The views to the Katz and Maus fortresses, St. Goarshausen and the start of the Loreley are among the most stunning along the Rhine and worth the extra price for a riverside room, preferably with balcony. Since the hotel is a 20-minute walk uphill, factor in taxi fare (E4/\$4) — at least for trips with luggage.

Contact: Schloss Hotel and Villa Rheinfels, Schlossberg 47, D-56329 St. Goar, +49/06741/8020, fax 802802, email: info@burgrheinfels.de, web: www.schloss-hotel-rheinfels.de

Daily Rates: Singles E89-110 (\$94-\$116), doubles E128-150 (\$135-\$158), suites E155-205 (\$164-\$216).

Rating: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 16/20

Hotel zur Post

The Hotel zur Post's half-timber architecture, overhanging balcony and abundant window-box flowers capture the atmosphere of what is

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.

arguably the most scenic town on the Rhine. Inside, the hotel's personable staff immediately makes guests feel at home. The rooms are quite simple, but clean, spacious and comfortable, though without phones. The restaurant offers a variety of tasty Italian dishes at good prices.

Contact: Hotel zur Post, Oberstrasse 38, D-55422 Bacharach, tel +49 06743 1277, fax +49 06743 947600, email:

H.ZurPost@t-online.de, web: www.hotel-zur-post.de.

Daily Rates: Singles E25-35 (\$26-\$37), doubles E50-70 (\$53-\$74). Non-smoking rooms available.

Rating: QUALITY 12/20 VALUE 13/20

Altkölnscher Hof

The Altkölnscher Hof, with its delightful half-timber framework, small turrets, towers and balconies, is a slight step up from the Hotel zur Post. The 21 rooms are generally larger, with new carpeting and wooden or wood-trimmed country-style furniture (and also with phones). The location is central and just two minutes by foot from the ship landing and five minutes from the train station. Room 32 offers a large covered balcony with a view to the marketplace. (Check out the public restrooms for photographs of floods over the past decades.)

Contact: Altkölnscher Hof, Blücherstrasse 2, D-55422 Bacharach, tel. +49 06743 1339, fax 2793, email: alt-koelnischer-hof@t-online.de, web: www.hotel-bacharach-rhein.de

Daily Rates: Singles E52-72 (\$55-\$76), doubles E70-110 (\$74-\$116)

Rating: QUALITY 13/20 VALUE 13/20

Jugendburg Stahleck

Though we seldom review youth hostels, most aren't located in an 11th century castle. And Stahleck Fortress makes for one of the most beautiful hostels in Germany. Lucky residents can walk within the courtyard, surrounded by half-timber buildings built on mighty ramparts. A round castle keep, capped by a tower, rises from the center. Of the 166 beds, many are located in single, double or family rooms, most with private showers and WC. While membership in a national youth hostel organization is required (American Youth

Hostels 202-783-6161, www.hiayh.org), the hostel welcomes guests of all ages.

Contact: Jugendburg Stahleck, Burg Stahleck, D-55422 Bacharach, tel. +49 06743 1266, fax +49 06743 2684, email jh-bacharach@djh-info.de.

Daily Rates: Singles E17.50 (\$18), doubles E29-35 (\$31-\$37).

Rating: QUALITY 8/20 VALUE 11/20

Hotel Lindenkurt

Just footsteps away from the craziness of Rüdesheim's Drosselgasse, the Hotel Lindenkurt is a collection of half-timber buildings joined around a large courtyard.

While most guests prefer the traditional rooms — spacious, modern and well-appointed — overlooking the courtyard, some choose to spend the night in a wine cask. Each giant cask opens to the courtyard, and you enter through a door cut in its side. With twin beds and a shower, the rooms are cramped but inexpensive and give guests one more story to tell when they get home. The hotel is one of the largest (90 rooms), most central and most popular in Rüdesheim, which may be a plus or minus depending on personal taste.

There's free parking in the courtyard, a convenience for car travelers that somewhat diminishes the historic environment and courtyard view for others.

Contact: Hotel Lindenkurt Drosselgasse 15, D-65376 Rüdesheim, tel. +49 06722 1031, fax +49 06722 47585, email: hotel@lindenkurt.com, web: www.lindenkurt.com.

Daily Rates: Singles E57-72 (\$60-\$76), double E82-104 (\$86-\$109), twin in a wine barrel E58 (\$61).

Rating: QUALITY 11/20 VALUE 11/20

Sustenance

Schloss Hotel and Villa Rheinfels

The restaurant at the Schloss Hotel and Villa Rheinfels is one of the best on the Middle Rhine. Service is impeccable, the food heavenly, and the view across to Burg Katz and Burg Maus a living postcard.

The restaurant buys most of its meat and produce from local farmers and hunters, and fish from local fish-

ermen (but not from the Rhine), and the freshness comes through. While the jumbo shrimp in the parsley soup assuredly aren't from nearby, the fresh parsley tastes just-picked and fragrant. And the pears poached in red wine and served with cinnamon ice cream are from local trees, the wine from local vineyards and the ice cream homemade.

My dinner began with a salad scattered with wild berries, wild mushrooms and goose liver strips in a blueberry dressing. Although tempted by melon soup, I moved straight to tender duck served with kohlrabi in red pepper sauce. Dessert was apple beignets with vanilla sauce.

With an appetizer, main course, glass of wine and dessert, expect to pay E40 (\$42) or more per person. You can also choose a four-course meal for E35 (\$37) or six-course for E48 (\$51), excluding beverages.

Be sure to make reservations, and request seating on the terrace.

Contact: Schloss Hotel and Villa Rheinfels, Schlossberg 47, D-56329 St. Goar, +49 06741 8020, fax 802802, info@burg-rheinfels.de, www.schloss-hotel-rheinfels.de.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20 VALUE 16/20

Weinhaus Altes Haus

Compare a modern sketch of the Altes Haus with a print from the 17th century, and there won't be much difference — perhaps just a Mercedes or VW in place of a trader's cart. It has the same half-timber construction, same slightly off-kilter gables and turrets, and same leaded-glass windows as centuries ago — an architectural jewel. Inside, it's a step into history, with original wood floors, thick-beamed ceilings and plaster walls with original prints.

For the past century, the building and restaurant have been in the family of current owner Reni Weber, who calls it her "great passion." It shows. The cozy, historic setting (the cellars date from the 14th century) complements a superb restaurant with attentive, cordial service and reasonable prices. The menu features both regional specialties and broader fare,

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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all with creativity and elegance: salmon poached in wine; pork cutlet with herbs and cheese; grilled sheep's cheese over fresh greens; and Camembert baked in orange sauce. Most entrees fall in the E8-13 (\$8-13) range.

Call in advance to get the Klavierzimmer — the Piano Room. It's a small and especially comfortable side-room with upright piano, tile oven and views to the marketplace.

Contact: Weinhaus Altes Haus, Oberstrasse 61, D-55422 Bacharach, tel. +49 06743 1209, fax +49 06743 919067

Rating: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 16/20

Weingut Fritz Bastian

Bacharach is filled with small wineries that offer inexpensive wine tastings or serve light meals with their own wines. The Weingut Fritz Bastian is typical, where guests can choose to sit inside the old tavern or outside under a shaded grape arbor. Tables are old wine presses fitted with slate tops.

Menus change with the seasons, but summer choices included a cheese platter with bread and butter, bread with three types of sausage; *Spundekäs* (a kind of cream cheese mixed with spices and wine) served with bread, pretzel or tomato; and sauerkraut soup. Most items fall in the E4-6 (\$4-\$6) range

Contact: Weingut Fritz Bastian, Oberstrasse 63, D-55422 Bacharach, tel. +49 06743 1208, fax +49 06743 2837

Rating: QUALITY 13/20 VALUE 16/20

Restaurant Café Seilbahn

In a town loaded with "touristy" restaurants, the Restaurant Café Seilbahn, named for the adjacent cable-car base station, is a surprising delight. And you have to love a restaurant where the chef's motto is "Quality is when the guest comes back but not the meal." The menu refers to the outdoor dining area as a "little green oasis," and the description is apt: a terrace garden filled with plants, flowers, grape vines and a small aviary. A partial roof protects against the elements, and ceiling fans keep the space cool in summer.

The restaurant offers a variety of well-prepared meat and fish dishes, most in the E8-12 (\$8-13) range. The

menu, also available in English, includes tortellini with cheese sauce, goulash in a wine-cream stock with *Spätzle*, pork loin simmered in pepper-cream sauce and served with croquettes, beef cooked in burgundy sauce with dumplings, and *Sauerbraten* in wine with *Spätzle* and apple sauce. A typical (and tasty) dessert is simmered cherries served with vanilla ice cream and whipped cream. Service is relaxed, friendly and extremely attentive.

Contact: Restaurant Café Seilbahn, Oberstrasse 43, D-65385 Rüdesheim, tel. +49 06722 2927, fax +49 06722 48187, web: www.cafe-seilbahn.de.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 15/20

Gutsausschank Peter Prasser

This peaceful patio is a pleasant retreat from the hustle of the Drosselgasse, just a block away. The setting could easily be distant countryside, not Rhine-side town. On a quiet side street under an arbor bulging with plump grapes, travelers can relax, enjoy a glass of wine and nibble on a snack. The setting is laid-back and conversations flow easily across the handful of tables, thanks in part to Frau Prasser, the vintner's amiable mother. Most glasses of wine (from the Prasser winery, of course) cost about E2 (\$2) and small plates of sausage, ham or cheese with bread about the same. Inside, a variety of the vineyard's excellent wines is available for sale.

Mondays are "Euro Days" with all wines only E1 (\$1) per glass.

Contact: Gutsausschank Peter Prasser, Christophelstrasse 8, D-65385 Rüdesheim, +49 06722 3469, email: info@weingut-prasser.de, web: www.weingut-prasser.de

Rating: QUALITY 12/20 VALUE 15/20

READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 1

actions, the least they could do is stay out of our way as we attempt to stop a dictator." It is the official leadership of the German government that we find offensive. And yes, even best friends do not agree on everything but to write that the "huffing and puffing (is) over one issue" makes it seem that we disagree on something relatively minor. And while best friends can respectfully disagree they

still expect support from each other in difficult times, not interference or obstructionism! Such support is the nature of true friendship and should be the nature of true allies!

I understand that as a travel editor you are trying to distance yourself from the political and chose to concentrate on anti-American sentiment as something feared by the "we're-staying-home-this-year-crowd" (that you seem to be criticizing and perhaps mocking) but please understand that many of us are not "staying home." We just aren't going to Germany (or France) but we are going to Italy, Spain and England!

VIRGINIA KIEHN
VIA EMAIL

No More German Travel

We have visited Germany twice a year for the last 10-12 years and carried your newsletter every time.

However, given Germany's position against the U.S. in the U.N. we will no longer travel to Germany and thus are not renewing our subscription.

If you decide to write in depth about England (U.K.) and the Slavic countries count us in.

JIM SHEA
GRANVILLE OH

Against Germany Boycott

What are we to make of the comments by Earl W. Winters, who seems to suggest that *Gemütlichkeit* provide less (no) coverage of Germany, because of the position that country has taken on the Bush administrations decision to go to war with Iraq.

It's that gentleman's right to choose to boycott Germany and its products, but *Gemütlichkeit* would be remiss in its obligation and responsibility to its readers if it failed to continue full coverage of Germany, because of a reader's political persuasion. To do so, would betray the trust of your subscribers.

Your quote in your *Dear Subscriber* piece is representative of how most Europeans feel: Europe is not anti-American; it is anti-Bush administration. (Mr. Winter's other concern — dare I say "anger" — seems to be misplaced. His quarrel should not be with

Germany, but with the Bush administration.

One wonders if Mr Winters is also going to boycott Mexico, Canada, Russia, France, Ireland, Belgium, Sweden, Turkey – and the products of those countries. They, too, do not endorse the Bush war.

And, oh yes, I trust that the writer will forego eating Chinese food, as he boycotts China.

Please, folks. Let's get a grip and have some sanity and reason here!

BILL POLCARI
MEDFORD, MA

Says Germans Like Us

I have just read Earl W. Winters letter to Readers' Forum (Will Boycott Germany). Mr. Winters is far, far off-base, and I am compelled to correct the record. I have spent two to three months a year in Germany and Europe for many years, and I feel safer there than in most of the United States, truly.

I returned this week from Karneval in Cologne, where I saw many paraders in Uncle Sam costumes, and several Statues of Liberty. Not very anti-American, is it? At no point was I treated with any less kindness and respect than any other trip by Germans.

September 11, 2001 I received calls from three Germans to express their concern and unity with America. One said "Kennedy said *Ich bin ein Berliner*, and I say today 'we are all Americans.'" Quite moving, indeed.

Germans are profoundly pro-American. I can't tell you how many times I have heard from older Germans about a Hershey bar, or a ham, or other kindness given by G.I.s to defeated Germans. I have heard these stories from Germans in their 20's too, so clearly they are passed down through generations.

After the Allied Troop Withdrawal from Berlin in 1995, a ceremony honored French, British and American troops. Helmut Kohl, Francois Mitterand, John Major, and Warren Christopher were in attendance. It was a moving tribute to the American soldiers who came as conquerors, but left as friends. Chancellor Kohl said,

"In the house of Europe, there is always a chair for America." Afterwards, a Berliner who must have been 80 tugged my sleeve, and said to me "This is not for the French or the British, this is for the Americans!" I still choke up thinking of the look of earnest gratitude in this man's face.

I detect no anti-Americanism in Germany.

BRYAN DANTONE
VIA EMAIL

Europe Hotels on Priceline

I just received the Interlaken issue and can't wait to go back to that area. While thinking about that, you might want to mention the **Bernese Oberland Regional Rail Pass**, which I've used a couple of times for travel anywhere from Gstaad over to Lucerne.

Meanwhile, I thought it would be worthwhile to pass on a suggestion for subscribers looking for another way to get the best bang for their bucks. The thought is **Priceline** (www.priceline.com), which I've recently used successfully for several domestic trips. We went down to Florida over President's weekend and got good quality hotel rooms (Hyatt, Courtyard) normally priced at \$150 to \$175 a night for about \$50 a night, all fees included. Similarly, we rented a car from Budget for four days at a cost of \$150. A friend who we met for dinner had rented the identical car (same color, too) from Avis and paid over \$300.

Priceline's European coverage is increasing. Their strong suit is hotels, where the savings can be as great as those we got in the U.S. In Zürich, for example, they offer a **Marriott** whose posted daily rates start in the \$250-\$275 range. Through Priceline, bidders have gotten rooms for \$100 or less. Other cities covered by Priceline include Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, Vienna, and Geneva. Winning Priceline bids in those cities are running far below the hotels' rack rates.

The hotels range from deluxe establishments to those that are far more humble. They are not, however, generally those mentioned in *Gemütlichkeit*, but may still be worth considering for the value received.

Priceline also offers airfare oppor-

tunities. Those who are flexible (departure dates may be selected, but times may not) may find the airfare option of interest.

Those who interested in learning more are advised to visit www.biddingfortravel.com, a site that has assembled a wide variety of information, from Priceline bidding strategies to a lengthy list of winning bids, including cities and hotels. With reasonable preparation, readers may find this a very worthwhile adjunct to their trip planning.

William Shatner aside, Priceline really does offer some great deals.

VIA EMAIL
RUSSELL WAYNE ☒

Travel Quickies

■ Switz. Self-Guided Tours

Switzerland Tourism has introduced a series of self-guided tours, each with a different theme. The first, *Luxury & Design*, is detailed in an excellent, free, 70-page guidebook which plots the route; Geneva to St. Moritz via Lausanne, Montreux, Gstaad, Interlaken, Brienz, Lucerne, Zürich, Bad Ragaz, and Chur. Along the way are suggested hotels, restaurants, sights, shopping and cultural possibilities. The guidebook is a cut or two above the usual tourist office brochure. Contact info — address, phone, website, etc. — is listed for all establishments.

The tour's main thrust, of course, is Swiss design and luxury, thus the focus in on the most exclusive hotels, restaurants and shops. Perhaps most interesting are the latter. Among the 50 or so of the country's most elegant, chic and offbeat stores mentioned in the book are **Scot & Scotch**, a Zürich seller of fine whiskeys; **Creation Baumann**, a yarn-to-finished product creator of fabrics for furniture, curtains, wallpaper and decorator items; Geneva's **Caviar House**, a seller of *Foie Gras*, truffles, Balik smoked salmon and, of course, caviar; and **Hennesy's**, a "British Style" antique shop in Vevey.

Many who follow the Design & Luxury route will want to find less expensive hotels and restaurants than the brochures suggests, but the

sights, museums, and browsing the shops, will fit any budget. Travel the route either by rail or rental car.

A *Gastronomy & Wine* route will be announced this fall and *Art & Architecture* will follow in 2004.

Get the free *Design & Luxury* booklet at <http://usa.myswitzerland.com> or phone 877-794-8037.

■ Mystery Park to Open in May

Billed as a "unique and enigmatic attraction," **Mystery Park**, near Interlaken, opens May 24. Its operators say visitors will, through models and multimedia presentations spread over six theme pavilions, gain insight to some of the world's great unsolved riddles. They will walk the chambers of the pyramids at Giza and travel to Atlantis, under the sea. One pavilion, Nazca, will examine the symmetrical markings that stretch for miles across broad plains and steep mountain slopes. Another, Challenge, explores the possibility that generations to come will leave the earth and colonize other planets.

The park will also have submarine simulators and a 135-foot tower offering a view of Interlaken, the Bernese Oberland and lakes Thun and Brienz.

Admission is CHF 48 (\$36) for adults, CHF 28 (\$21) for children 6-13, and free to kid under 6. Contact: www.mysterypark.ch.

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 7

pass up a chance to sample Egon Müller's Scharzhofberger (actually from the Saar) or J.J. Prüm's Wehlener Sonnenuhr *Spätlese* from the Mosel. Wine titles here carry the name of the village (Wehlen) and the specific vineyard (Sonnenuhr).

Other areas where I especially look forward to the local product include Burgenland in Austria and the southern Swiss cantons of Vaud and Valais.

Burgenland is in Austria's southeast corner where one can drink refreshing white wine made from the Grüner Veltliner and Traminer grapes at any of the numerous and delightfully rustic *heurigen* in towns like Rust and Mörbisch. In addition,

the region has recently emerged as a producer of some of the world's finest dessert wines. Not long ago (*Gemütlichkeit*, March, 2001), we were served a heavenly after-dinner wine at **Gasthof Rusterhof** (tel. +43/02685/6416, fax 6416 11) in Rust for about \$6 per glass. It was *Kracher Trockenbeereauslese*, half bottles of which are recommended in this month's *Wine Spectator* at from \$60 to \$80. (Relax, most of Burgenland's wines are modestly priced.) The magazine says the region also produces the country's best red wines and lists several at \$13 to \$15 per bottle as well as a handful of white and dessert bottles at \$9 to \$15.

I particularly enjoy the light red wines of the Valais. Dôle is the predominant grape and you'll see it on every menu in a range of prices. I also order Merlot in Ticino, Switzerland's Italian-speaking canton.

In rare places where wine grapes are not grown (northern Germany, southern Bavaria, central and western Austria), I look to Spain and Italy. We are talking here about second and third rank wines priced in restaurants from \$20 to \$50 per bottle. In my experience, such wines from these two countries are better value than their French counterparts. The best Italian wines are the robust, dry reds that come from the Piedmont region. They can be labeled either by the variety of grape such as Nebbiolo (called Spanna in some parts) or Dolcetto, or by the name of the wine village. In addition to grape variety I look for place-names like Barolo, Alba and Gattinara. Occasionally, both grape variety and village are used on the label as in Dolcetto d'Alba. And it's hard to go far wrong with any wine labeled 'Chianti Classico,' from Tuscany.

Spanish wine is even easier. Knowing nothing of the individual villages or vineyards, I simply look for the word 'Rioja' on the wine list. Bottles designated 'Reserva' and 'Gran Reserva,' aged both in oak and in the bottle for a minimum period of time, are usually from the most successful harvests and more expensive.

Bottom line: ask for recommendations in a specific price range. — 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