

**DEAR
SUBSCRIBER**

Cell Phone Madness

You may be aware the FAA has approved a study on whether cellular phones interfere with aircraft navigational equipment. If it is determined they do not, the presumption is that such phones could be used by passengers in flight. Let us all fervently pray that does not come to pass. Their omnipresence in the course of the excruciatingly tedious flight experience — from check-in at the departure airport to baggage retrieval at the destination — is already pushing the needle of my nausea meter into the red zone. It seems one cannot fly anywhere these days without some annoying oaf spewing, at high decibels to an entire airport concourse, his all-too-personal, all-too-tiresome, business.

Next time you're on an airplane that has just arrived at the gate, look around and see the number of phones that are immediately fired up. "Hi, it's me. We just landed. How's whozis? What's for dinner? Blah, blah, blah." Such extreme vapidity is not for public consumption. Then there's the VIB (Very Important Boor) who likes to run his company in public. "Tell 'em they got the order but this time I'm gonna personally be on the loading dock and if it ain't right it's goin' straight back and we'll let the attorneys figure it out." Imagine someone like this in the seat next to you for six hours? About 30 minutes of cell-prattle and the nastiest Al-Qaeda hardcase would be blubbering out bin Laden's GPS coordinates.

Maybe, like cigarettes 40 years
Continued on page 2...

in this issue

- 1 **Potsdam**
- 1 **Chalet du Lac**
- 2 **Christmas Market Tour**
- 3 **Potsdam Basics**
- 4 **Key Websites**
- 7 **Readers' Forum**
- 8 **Travel Quickies**
- 8 **Key Hotels**

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

POTSDAM

Our treasure-hunting Jim Johnson strikes gold in this gorgeous city of palaces, parks and gardens. Potsdam, he concludes, is much more than a Berlin sidewhow.

For nearly 40 years, Potsdam lay behind the Iron Curtain, a jewel of a city hidden to most of the world. Sadly, although the curtain has lifted, few Americans take the time to visit and most of them only on sightseeing buses from adjacent Berlin.

By Jim Johnson
That's a shame, since this UNESCO World Heritage city is a treasure.

It's rare to find such a wealth of history — old and recent — and such a concentration of architectural treasures, within so small an area. During a period of barely three centuries, Prussia's Hohenzollern kings built an amazing collection of palaces, parks and gardens. In the extensive parks

surrounding the city, the Hohenzollern's commissioned palace after palace, all set in carefully designed gardens. In the 19th century, renowned landscape architect Peter Joseph Lenné unified it all into the harmonious landscape of palaces and gardens that visitors enjoy today.

Most are within walking distance of each other — walks that cross a stunning aspect of 19 lakes, two rivers, expansive hills, forests and gardens. In fact, more than half of Potsdam is either forest or park.

As awareness of Potsdam grows, increasing numbers of visitors are opting to overnight there and do day trips to Berlin instead of the other way around. Hotels and res-

Continued on page 3...

Hidden Treasures...

Chalet du Lac on Brienzensee

About 15 years ago, public television aired a charming little BBC movie entitled *Hotel du Lac*. In it, a middle-aged London writer, following a failed love affair, takes refuge for several weeks in a genteel hotel on a Swiss lake —

where, of course, she finds more romance. Though the low-key story holds one's interest for the full 75 minutes, it is the images of lake steamers gliding through morning mists, of forested vistas, craggy mountains, and scenes in and around the hotel, that stick in memory.

The film's mood of serenity and charm may inspire a yen for a similar escape. A guess as to its location is the swank **Hotel Vitznau** on Lake Lucerne, but to try to duplicate the experience of the film's protagonist for a month there would require sev-

eral thousand dollars.

A worthy, less pricey, stand-in is the delightful **Chalet du Lac** in Iseltwald, on the Brienzensee, a few minutes from Interlaken.

On the lake's south shore, Iseltwald is a tiny, well-kept village with regular lake boat service (the upper right hand corner photo at www.gemut.com shows one about to dock in Iseltwald), a peaceful harbor, frequent Post Bus service to Interlaken (19-minutes to the town's East Rail Station), and, of course, those blood-pressure-lowering views of lake and mountains. And there are few more quiet hotel locations anywhere in our three countries.

The hotel is typical Swiss chalet, with lots of wood and country charm. On a wide terrace out front

Continued on page 6...

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

ago, cell phones are being passed out free on street corners. *Everybody* seems to have one. In the Portland, Oregon, airport last weekend I saw a 10-year-old child chatting away on one. What was mom doing? Why, talking on hers, of course. (I caught just two words: aroma therapy.)

In my memory book of cell-phone-conversations-I wish-I'd-never-overheard is one in which a young woman connected with a friend seconds after the wheels of our flight hit the runway in L.A. Unfortunately, it was 30 minutes before the plane got to the gate and allowed the talker's fellow passengers to escape what should have been a *very* private discussion. The dialogue involved a custody fight and those us trapped in our seats were privy to it all: the cheating husband, his new girl friend, his sleazy attorney, the children's ordeal, the whole sordid affair.

If in-flight cell phone use is allowed I predict a spate of "air rage" incidents followed by the adoption of cell-free seating areas.

I'm confident that anyone clever enough to be a *Gemütlichkeit* subscriber would never offend fellow travelers in this way, but just in case someone thinks what they have to say to their wife, child, broker, mother, best pal, or business partner is interesting to rest of us, I'm here to assure them it is not. I'm not a Luddite, cell phones are great, but find a remote corner of the airport and have at it.

Free Travel Info

If you have email I suggest you sign up for two free *Gemütlichkeit*-sponsored information sources. At www.gemut.com, type your email address under the heading "Free Newsletter." Once on the list you'll periodically receive info on special deals, discounts and breaking news about travel in our three countries.

The second is our new listserv **Gemut Travel**. You can join at www.topica.com/lists/germanic-travel. So far it's just a handful of *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers exchanging travel information. If you have a travel question you simply ask the list via email and within a day or two you'll receive several answers from subscribers who've been where you're going and done what you plan to do. Recent topics have included New Year's in Vienna, Swiss hiking, Oktoberfest, and whether or not you need an International Driver's License.

Those who have never been part of a listserv should be aware they'll get every email posted to the list and when they reply to the list, every person on the list will see that reply. If you wish, you can reply 'off list' to a specific person, but that sort of defeats the sharing of information concept. And, if you don't want a lot of emails, you can opt to receive a daily digest of all list traffic.

The idea is to share the expertise of many savvy and experienced European travelers.

Great Christmas Market Tour

Every year *Gemütlichkeit* gets requests for information on Christmas

markets and Christmas market tours. There are many of both. Tour operator **DER** offers an unescorted six-nighter that includes the usual Frankfurt, Nürnberg, Munich itinerary with daytrips by rail to Rothenburg, Augsburg and Stuttgart. Priced at \$607 it features Best Western hotel accommodations and no meals but breakfast. Basic stuff; you'll see the markets and DER is reliable.

For something special, however, take a look at Karen Pasold's 11-night, **Olde World Christmas Markets** tour that covers Prague, Leipzig, Erfurt, Weimar, Dresden, Krakow, and Budapest. The hotels are top of the line and include the **Kempinski Taschenbergerpalais** in Dresden, **Le Meridien** in Budapest, Prague's **U Prince** and, for a spot of East Europe romance, first-class private sleeper compartments on the overnight Dresden to Krakow and Krakow to Budapest rail legs. *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 new codes are:

User Name: **telahc** Password: **1656**

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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.

POTSDAM*Continued from page 1*

taurants seem to have a small town friendliness (visit a restaurant or pub twice in Potsdam and they'll know you) and are less expensive than in Berlin.

"Berlin is masses of people," said one American visitor. "For me, Potsdam fills the same need that it did for the 18th-century kings. It is a refuge, a peaceful place. I can spend hours exploring the parks, and never hear a car horn or see a traffic light. If I want big-city action, I can be in the heart of Berlin in 25 minutes by S-Bahn or train. In Berlin, the evenings belong to the young. I'd rather stay in Potsdam."

That doesn't mean Potsdam is a sleepy backwater. As capital of the State of Brandenburg and a university town, it is lively by day or night, and benefits from an overflow of students and international residents from Berlin. So, despite being a city of barely 130,000 inhabitants, it offers a surprising variety of dining (and drinking) choices.

The Dutch Quarter

Many of those options are in the Baroque Dutch Quarter, a group of red-brick, gabled houses built in the early 18th century to attract Dutch tradesmen. The four-block district is filled with courtyard restaurants, cafés and pubs like **M18**, **Hollow Pear**, **Flying Dutchman**, **La Maison du Chocolat** and **Café Heider**. Adjacent to the Dutch Quarter is Brandenburg Street, an 18th-century residential area built to house both families and Prussian troops — six soldiers to a household. Today, Brandenburg and neighboring streets have been transformed into wide pedestrian boulevards filled with smiling shoppers, and many of the houses into eclectic book stores, antique shops, boutiques and bistros.

Some Potsdam visitors also feel a poignancy associated with the recent past, starting with the 1945 Potsdam Conference, which in many ways set the stage for the division of Germany. It is a drama that played out quickly with the Russian occupation and the creation of the German Democratic Republic. The town is still marked by those times which, after all, ended a

Potsdam Basics**Population:** 130,000**Elevation:** 30-50 meters (98-164 feet)

Tourist Information: Potsdam Tourismus GmbH, Am Neuen Markt 1, D-14467 Potsdam, tel +49/0331/275 58-0, fax 275 58-29, email information@potsdam.de, web www.potsdam.de

Driving Distances:

Berlin Center	35 km	22 miles
Cologne	540 km	334 miles
Dresden	220 km	136 miles
Frankfurt/Main	535 km	331 miles
Hamburg	280 km	174 miles
Leipzig	180 km	112 miles
Munich	575 km	356 miles
Vienna	866 km	536 miles

Nearest Airport: Berlin**Rail Connections:** Via Berlin

scant 14 years ago. As recently as 1994, Potsdam housed 60,000 Russian soldiers. Those interested in the Soviet presence can still wander the former "Forbidden City," a walled-off villa district, once controlled by the KGB, and the KGB prison, now regional headquarters for Amnesty International.

Potsdam also presents an excellent case study of a former East German city adjusting to life in unified Germany. Under communism, many significant structures were torn down by the government or simply neglected. Of those that remain and are accessible to visitors, quite a few have been open less than a year, with restoration work funded by foundations and philanthropists. Work continues in other areas, including the ruins of the City Palace, which was built in 1662, severely damaged in 1945, and nearly demolished in 1961.

Sanssouci

But, for most visitors, it's Sanssouci that's the prime attraction. Its Park alone covers 724 acres — compared to Central Park's 840 — and has three palaces: the rococo **Sanssouci Palace**, the Baroque **New Palace** and **Charlottenhof Palace**.

A king who joined his troops on the battlefield, Frederick the Great, commissioned Sanssouci in 1747 as a summer palace where he could find respite from the battle *sans souci*. His fatigue is evident in the statuary: the warrior in marble, his sword in its sheath, his shield down, and a look of weariness.

Most of what visitors see here are ornate originals — not reconstructions or duplicates — and perhaps Germany's most impressive example of rococo architecture. In front of the palace, terraced vineyard stretch in geometric shapes into the park.

Over the following century, others made their mark on Sanssouci Park with more construction. The New Palace, a massive, 200-room Baroque masterpiece, was built after the Seven Years' War to demonstrate Prussian pride — and in response to the palace at Versailles. The neoclassical Charlottenhof followed in 1826. A visual highlight then and now is the Orangerie, a 300-meter-long palace built to house large tropical plants — including 450 potted trees — during the winter. In warmer weather, the grounds in front of the Orangerie become a Mediterranean garden complete with palm trees.

Many visitors to the park neglect the small but exquisite **New Garden**, built as an English landscape garden in the late 18th century. Some Potsdam residents actually prefer the garden, a strip of green space between two lakes — the Heiliger See and the Jungfernsee. Relatively few tourists come here, even though it provides the setting for two charming palaces from two different eras: the **Marble Palace**, a Baroque jewel from the late 18th century, and **Cecilienhof**, the final Hohenzollern palace, built in 1917 in the style of an English country estate.

Cecilienhof

Although Cecilienhof is the youngest of the Hohenzollern palaces, it carries perhaps the greatest direct significance for Americans and modern Europe. In the summer of 1945, it was the site of the Potsdam Conference that addressed issues relating to post-War Germany. What we take for granted today was then being defined and discussed. In many ways, the future of Germany was negotiated here — and with that future, the hopes and opportunities of not just of that nation but of Europe and the world. The participants, Truman, Churchill, and Stalin, often did not agree and in a sense the Cold War started at Cecilienhof.

Much of Cecilienhof looks as it did in 1945. The conference room is the same, its circular table ringed by chairs. Flowers still form a large red star in the entry courtyard. The offices of Stalin, Churchill and Truman have also been preserved, and visitors can almost feel the personalities, especially in Stalin's red, no-nonsense office whose plainness seems to reflect his cold brutality. Visitors can also see evidence of some of the mind games that went on — such as the chair Stalin placed in Churchill's study that was too small for the rotund statesman. It was also at Cecilienhof that Truman got word the A-bomb was ready and where he gave the order to use it on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Babelsberg

Even less visited than the New Garden is **Babelsberg Park**, just across the Havel River. Located on a bluff, **Babelsberg Palace**, built in the early 19th century in English Tudor Gothic style, offers a commanding view of the Havel landscape and ample opportunities to explore the romantic park. Babelsberg is also adjacent to one of Potsdam's several villa neighborhoods, whose expansive *Jugendstil* homes reflect the relative wealth of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Some proud residents joke that

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, 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.austria.info/us Austria's national tourist authority.
- <http://www.hhog.de> Website for an alliance of historic German cities.

Potsdam is "Prussian Disneyland" due to the rich representation of other countries and cultures such as the Chinese Teahouse, the Dragon House, the Roman Baths, the Italian gardens around Charlottenhof, and, of course, the Dutch Quarter, the Mosque, and the Orangerie in the Sanssouci Park, the latter having been modeled in part on the Villa Medici in Rome. Then there's the **Russian Colony Alexandrowka**, with its 13 houses built in 1826 for Russian singers left behind after the Prussian-Russian victory over Napoleon.

Krongut Bornstedt

After extensive restoration, the faux Italian village at the royal estate **Krongut Bornstedt** reopened in June 2002 looking much as it did 150 years ago and selling many of the same goods. There's a wood-oven bakery, a candlemaker, a glassblower, a potter and a jeweler. Everything sold there is created on premises, right down to the tailor shop with its whirring sewing machine and to the *Bornstedter Bueffel* ("Bornstedt Buffalo"), a rich, frothy brown beer brewed as it was in the 17th century.

The best time to visit Potsdam is from May through October, although the end of July through August can be hot and humid. Fewer tourists come in May and October and, with the flowers in full bloom, May and June are perhaps the most colorful.

For the parks — especially the palaces — go early in the day. This isn't just to avoid crowds but also total disappointment. As part of the preservation process, the palaces are limited to a certain number of visitors each day. When that number is reached, they close. Pay attention to which palaces are open on which days, since is shut on a different day. The New Palace is the only one open on Mondays. Don't neglect the less popular palaces — historic and architectural gems that often offer no lines, no waiting.

While the parks and palaces are the prime attraction, set aside some time to walk around the Baroque Old Town. Also, some of the best views of the parks and palaces are from the lakes and river. Relaxing cruises are offered in varying lengths and routes,

from 90-minute lake tours to full-day excursions from Potsdam to Berlin and back.

For English-speaking visitors, Potsdam does present a few challenges. The city and tourism websites are in German, and public sightseeing tours are in German only. For that reason, you may want to consider hiring a private guide, especially if you have specific interests in history, architecture or culture — and don't mind spending _120-150 (\$130-163) for a half-day. In addition, many city guides are also allowed to provide private palace tours which can cut considerable time from waiting in line. The tourist office — which does speak English — can help find and hire an appropriate guide. On a recent visit, Kevin Kennedy, an American who has lived in the Potsdam area most of his life and is working on a doctoral thesis relating to German history, was superb with his knowledge, passion and insight.

Potsdam features an efficient, comprehensive public transit system of trams and buses, which also connect with the S-Bahn and regional rail systems for travel to Berlin and throughout Brandenburg. Probably the least expensive way to explore Potsdam is on bus route 695, which makes an almost full circle past the major sights. Buy a single- or multi-day pass (_3/\$3.50 for one day to _10/\$11.63 for a week), step on and off at leisure, and explore.

Lodging

Hotel am Luisenplatz

The Hotel am Luisenplatz is a charming Italian-style palace built in 1726 and converted in 1997 to a four-star hotel. Upscale furniture is new as of November 2002. With just 25 guestrooms, all of them spacious and sumptuous, the hotel offers personal and cordial service — right down to the hotel dog, Boy, who greets guests and, with tail wagging, makes sure they arrive safely at their rooms. Inside rooms overlook the courtyard and hotel garden. Outside rooms view the Luisenplatz fountain, the Brandenburg Gate (Potsdam's, not Berlin's) and Sanssouci Park. Room 11 has three large,

Editor's
Choice

bright windows to the park, with a balcony hidden behind the balustrade. Room 74 is the largest, a suite with a spacious bedroom with work area, a kitchen with skylight, and a huge living room.

The hotel also runs the adjacent **Bed & Breakfast am Luisenplatz** with smaller rooms, fewer amenities and super prices.

Contact: Hotel am Luisenplatz, Luisenplatz 5, D-14471 Potsdam, tel +49/0331/97 19 00, fax 97 19 019, email: info@hotel-luisenplatz.de, web: www.hollaenderhaus.potsdam.de

Daily Rates: Singles €79-109 (\$92-127), doubles €119-139 (\$138-162), suites €129-169 (\$150-197). Bed & Breakfast building: singles €49 (\$57), doubles _69 (\$80).

Rating: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 16/20

Wohnen+Arbeiten, Das Kleine Apartment Hotel im Hollaender Haus

Hollaender House is in the heart of the Dutch Quarter, a red-brick, 18th-century building given 21st-century pizzazz. Though some of the oldest parts of the building still retain a Baroque character, the architect team that owns the hotel has created five showpiece apartments that recently made the pages of the German edition of *Architectural Digest*. The units are upscale, upbeat and fun.

The spaces are bright, spacious and airy — long, loft-like rooms with living areas set off by freestanding, box-like modules. Furniture and design are ultramodern. Unit 16 is on two-levels with kitchen and bath downstairs, living room and bedroom upstairs and a balcony overlooking the courtyard. Unit 25, a top-floor room with skylight, presents an 18th-century view over the rooftops of the Dutch Quarter.

While there's no room service or 24-hour reception, guests can enjoy a sauna and a bar. All rooms have kitchens. A nice touch, even for those who stay but a short time, is that your name goes on the doorbell. For travelers mixing business with pleasure, the Hollaender House also rents short- and long-term office space, conference rooms and provides secretarial service.

Contact: Wohnen+Arbeiten, Das

Kleine Apartment Hotel im Hollaender Haus, Kurfürstenstrasse 15, D-14467 Potsdam, tel. +49/0331/279 11 0, fax 279 11 1, email:

hollaenderhaus@potsdam.de, web: www.hollaenderhaus.potsdam.de

Daily Rates: €100 to 180 (\$116-209) per unit, depending on size; weekly rates €450-810 (\$523-942). Breakfast €8 (\$9). Bike rentals €7.50 (\$9)

Rating: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 15/20

Hotel Vivaldi Garni

In 1750, Frederick the Great built a settlement for Bohemian weavers in Potsdam. The enclave, known as Old Nowawes, consisted of small two-family homes with residential spaces and workshops. Today, the neighborhood has become a meeting and living place for today's "Bohemians," sort of an 18th-century SoHo. A group of the houses surrounding a quiet, cobblestone courtyard has become the Hotel Vivaldi. The building's exteriors maintain the historic feeling, while interiors have been renovated into spacious, modern guest rooms. Room five is especially bright and spacious with a terrace to the courtyard.

The Vivaldi, two long tram stops away from the central Old Town, is a good bet for guests who want to be even farther off the beaten path or who want to save a few dollars off the more central hotels.

Contact: Hotel Vivaldi Garni, Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse 24, D-14482 Potsdam, tel: +49/0331/74906-0, fax 74906-16, email walter-lindner@t-online.de, web www.vivaldi-potsdam.de

Daily Rates: Singles from €70 (\$81), doubles from €80 (\$93)

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 15/20

Schlosshotel Cecilienhof

Cecilienhof, in the heart of the New Garden, is perhaps Potsdam's most historic hotel. It was a Hohenzollern residence until 1945, a prestigious hotel in GDR times, and the site of the Potsdam Conference. To blend with the manor house's English style, the management chose an English interior design for the 1995 renovation. The décor features soft pastels, linen fabrics, parchment lampshades, and carpets specially woven to blend

with themes of parks and gardens.

The 41 guest rooms are elegant and, despite the extensive renovations, still feel rich with history. Most have views to one of the palace's five courtyards, to the park or to the lake. Those who wish to splurge a bit can certainly take advantage of the hotel's expansive (and expensive) suites, like Room 40 — the Prince's Room — once the living area for the Hohenzollern children. (President Bush stayed in Room 44.) But doubles like Number 29, a spacious room with a brick fireplace (not functioning), view to the park and large bathroom, will be just fine for most folks. Although the double rooms and suites are expensive, the single rooms — once the bedrooms of unmarried women staying overnight — are quite reasonable. Travelers who favor palace hotels will like the Cecilienhof just fine. Others may find the historic, manorial setting a bit overpowering. If mobility is an issue, specify the first floor (*Erdgeschoss*), since there are no elevators.

Contact: Schlosshotel Cecilienhof, Neuer Garten, D-14469 Potsdam, tel. +49/0331/37050, fax 292498, email; potsdam.cecilienhof@relexa-hotel.de, web www.relexa-hotels.de

Daily Rates: Singles €110-135 (\$128-157), doubles _300-430 (\$349-500), suites from _450 (\$523)

Rating: QUALITY 17/20 VALUE 15/20

Food

Wiener Restaurant und Café

This quiet restaurant in a small neighborhood of art galleries across from Sanssouci Park is perfect for enjoying tea, coffee and pastries or heartier fare from south of the (Austrian) border. Creative and bountiful salads, such as arugula with pine nuts and strips of marinated duck breast in a honey-sherry dressing, are a speciality. You can also enjoy perhaps the best *Kaiserschmarrn* — that eggy, gooey, sugary fried-pancake dessert — north of Linz. Weekday breakfasts are extremely popular, and Sunday brunch is definitely worth any wait. Park-goers should note that picnic baskets are available starting at _20 (\$23) for two people.

Contact: Wiener Restaurant und Café, Luisenplatz 4, D-14467 Potsdam, tel +49/0331/967 8314

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 15/20

Café Heider

Located in the Dutch Quarter, the Heider is considered the most traditional café in Potsdam and its 1731 building has been a coffee house since 1872. It was rebuilt in 1995 with plans from an old Berlin café. Since residents and visitors of all ages and backgrounds come here to meet, eat, drink and relax, it's garnered the nickname, "Potsdam's living room." And it does have a nostalgic, parlor feel to it with sofas, gilded mirrors, wall-hangings and old black-and-white photographs. While service is attentive, the overall atmosphere is laid-back. Dishes are reasonably priced with tasty entrées like salmon with risotto, beef roulade and pork cutlets with Brussels sprouts for less than €10 (\$12). The café also offers a variety of pastries, teas, coffees, beers, wines and spirits inside or on its 150-seat terrace.

Contact: Café Heider, Friedrich-Ebert-Strasse 29, D-14467 Potsdam, tel +49/0331/320 5596

Rating: QUALITY 13/20 VALUE 14/20

Zum Fliegenden Holländer

Zum Fliegenden Holländer — The Flying Dutchman — is a pleasant, relaxed restaurant on the fringe of the Dutch Quarter. The building dates to 1736 and the restaurant to 1881, and the dining spaces feel historic: wood plank floors, exposed ceiling beams, soft lighting, and fireplace with Delft tiles. It's a good choice for travelers in search of Brandenburg specialties like roast pork rolled with plums and served with red cabbage and potato dumplings, stuffed cabbage with potatoes, or calves liver with apples and onions served with potato puree. And there are a number of fish dishes.

Most entrées are between €16-26 (\$19-30), though there are often superb specials for €12-15 (\$14-17). At lunch, soup and an entrée are offered for €8.50 (\$10). Service is attentive and well-paced, and food is tasty and piled high.

Contact: Zum Fliegenden Holländer,

Benkertstrasse 5, D-14467 Potsdam, tel +49/0331/27 50 30, fax 27 50 321, website www.prostmahlzeit.de/

zumfliegendenhollaender

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 14/20

CHALET DU LAC

Continued from page 1

are tree-shaded tables that overlook the harbor. On a fine day from this vantage point one could pass an entire morning, afternoon or evening, or perhaps all three, watching the lake, the comings and goings of its boats, the surrounding mountains, and the foot traffic on the lakeside walkway that runs in front of the hotel.

Inside, an unpretentious reception area is flanked by dining rooms. The one on the left and down a few steps is somewhat formal while a turn to the right is toward the livelier and, in our view, more desirable, *Stube*.

The hotel's food is a big plus. Excellent and down-to-earth, it has made the *Stube* the village social center and attracts customers from all over the region. After our first meal, we decided to look no farther and dined there four consecutive nights.

Though the *Stube* is our room of choice there seems to be something of a pecking order in who sits there and who doesn't, with locals perhaps given preference. After being taken to the *Stube* on our first night, we were surprised 24 hours later to be seated in the stiffer, less jolly, dining room. With but two other tables occupied it made for a rather dull evening. The food and the prices, however, are the same in both rooms. The next two nights we reserved early in the day and were accommodated in the *Stube*, but not without some knitted-brow consultations with the reservations book.

The four meals were consistently excellent — large portions, well-prepared, and assembled from top-grade, very fresh ingredients. As one might imagine, lake fish is the feature attraction and whether sauteed in butter and scattered with almond slices (*Zanderfilet meunière*/CHF 32/\$24), or in a hearty stew (*Felchen Geschmetzeltes*/CHF 32/\$24), it is first-

rate. The *Rösti* (fried potatoes) is faultless and a small carafe (5 DL/about two-thirds of a bottle) of Swiss Pinot Noir cost CHF 22 (\$17). A *Stange* (small beer) is CHF 3.3 (\$2.30) and desserts range from a scoop of ice cream for CH 3 (\$2.27) to Grand Marnier Parfait for CHF 10 (\$7.58). It is as the hotel's website proclaims: "fresh fish, Swiss wines and local beer at a fair price." One could hardly ask for more. Guestrooms are also very much of the genre; rustic and smelling pleasantly of the predominate building and decorative material, wood. Number 7, on the first floor had a low, wooden ceiling, rather small, multi-paned windows, a separate sitting area, a well-lit bathroom and, best of all, a balcony overlooking the harbor.

The price of accommodations facing the lake is about 10% to 15% higher than those with a view to the mountains, but worth the additional expense.

Those traveling by car will find free hotel parking while rail travelers can take the bus which leaves Interlaken's Ost Bahnhof at 38 minutes past the hour for the 19-minute ride to Iseltwald.

Here's an idea for a relaxed one-week vacation, especially for East Coast subscribers. Saturday morning fly to Zürich and board the train at the airport for the two-hour and 40 minute run to Interlaken, and from there the few minutes by bus to Iseltwald by bus. Stay the entire week at the Chalet du Lac, dividing time among long walks, lake boat rides, reading on your room's balcony, and eating well each night in the *Stube*. The following Sunday, do it all in reverse.

Daily Rates: Singles €110-135 (\$83-102), doubles €170-210 (\$129-\$159)

Contact: Hotel-Restaurant Chalet Du Lac, CH-3807 Iseltwald, tel. +41/033-845 8458, fax 845 8459, email: abegglen@dulac-iseltwald.ch, web: www.dulac-iseltwald.ch

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 15/20

Things to Do in Iseltwald

• The great Jungfrau Region is just minutes away. A Jungfraubahnen Pass (cost: CHF 165/\$127, or CHF 120/\$92 for Swiss Pass or Swiss

Card holders) includes unlimited access via rail, funicular, bus, and cable car to the region for five days, including the **Jungfrauoch**, Europe's highest rail station (11,332 feet).

- **Ballenberg, The Swiss Outdoor Museum** is a collection of some 60 farm buildings — houses, barns, mills, all fully operational — which have been carefully dismantled and brought to this 200-acre site and reassembled. Very authentic. You won't just see a farm house, there will be shoes under the bed and clothes in the closet. In the kitchen the table may be set and bread baking. The garden behind the house grows the same crops as in 1850. In many buildings, Swiss artisans practice their crafts and you can see weaving, spinning, bobbin lace making, wood carving, wool dyeing, tating, netting and shingle making. There is an alpine cheese dairy, a bakery, a charcoal works, a lime kiln, a small lumber mill and a blacksmith shop. There are rare animals including peacock goats, Appenzell crested chickens and strange, wooly-haired pigs. There's a picnic area and three restaurants.

- **The towns of Thun and Spiez**, on the adjacent Thunersee, are accessible by lake boat, car or rail and worth a visit. Each has a castle. We rate Thun's, along with it's old town, the better of the two.


- **The Brienzler Rothorn** rail station is just across the lake in Brienz, and can be reached by rail, car or lake steamer from Iseltwald. The ride to the summit of the Rothorn, at 7700 feet, is via rack-railway.

- **H. Huggler Wyss**, in Brienz, where some 20 professional carvers produce wood sculptures, is one of the last of its kind in Switzerland. Call or email ahead to schedule a visit (tel. 011/41/036/511679, email: info@huggler-woodcarvings.ch).

- **Take a Daytrip to Bern**, the Swiss capital. Walk the arched, cobble streets of the old town. There are interesting shops on Spitalgasse, Marktgasse, Kramgasse, Gerechtigkeitsgasse and Postgasse. It's about 45 minutes by rail from Interlaken Ost and about the same by car.

- **Walk to Giessbach**. In front of the hotel, take a right turn on the

footpath that runs along the lake for the hour and 15-minute walk to Giessbach, site of the **Giessbach Falls** and the beautiful old **Hotel Giessbach**. Though the path is mostly flat, most of it is rough and rocky, so wear sturdy shoes. The hotel will make a sandwich to take along for about CHF 6 (\$4.60) or you can order lunch on the Giessbach's terrace. Return to Iseltwald via lake boat or walk. If you don't have a Swiss Rail Pass, tickets are sold on board for CHF 7.2 (\$5.50). Since they only run every hour or so, check the boat schedule before setting out — or take the boat to Giessbach and walk back.

- **An easier, shorter walk is to Sengg**, a hamlet of about 10 houses above the lake, some with beautiful gardens. In one rather dilapidated building is a pottery shop with interesting pieces. Look for the sign that directs walkers to a view point (*Aussichtpunkt*) above the lake. Where that path begins, note the immaculate little house on your left, with its brightly enameled green door, and a shiny outdoor red table and chairs sitting on a freshly laundered rag rug. Under the porch is a little cage of ceramic ducks. The exterior is cleaner than the inside of most houses. 

Readers' Forum

Lower Case Weimar

I am probably one of many who wrote to point out an error in your excellent report on Weimar. It was not the capital of the "Weimar Republic." I have seen this error perpetuated several times in print in various publications. Although the constitution of the republic that was established in Germany after the First World War was adopted in Weimar, the capital remained in Berlin.

I can second your recommendation of the **Hotel Amalienhof**. I stayed there for two nights in July 2000, and found it just as you described. As I remember, a brochure in the hotel revealed the origin of the name "Christliches Hotel" (Christian Hotel). At one time the building was used by the Protestant church as a women's shelter. I believe the hotel is still owned by the church and the income from it is used to support

their charitable work. There are several such hotels in various German cities. Weimar is, as you describe, one of those hidden treasures which is well-known to Germans but seems to be ignored by most Americans. Please keep this kind of article coming.

JIM MENTZER
VIA EMAIL

Hotel Near Coburg

I've been meaning to send you an email about a hotel recommendation you made a few years ago...but never got around to it. When you recently mentioned the hotel again it spurred me to write.

After your recommendation for the **Gasthof-Pension Hofmann** I decided to stay there. Altenstein turned out to be a delightful small town (love the lighting at night on the old castle ruins) and the Gasthof was a real value for the price. And you were absolutely right about the restaurant. I usually shy away from ordering steak in Europe but this small hotel restaurant may have had the best steak I've ever eaten in Europe. I had brought a copy of the *Gemütlichkeit* article with me and showed it to the hotel's owner. He was both delighted and surprised since he did not know he had been featured. All in all, a really wonderful small hotel value.

This is an example of why your magazine is head and shoulders above most others of the genre. You obviously love to travel in Europe and love this region...and you make it special for "normal" travelers by offering a variety of price and experience options in your hotel and restaurant recommendations. Thanks.

By the way, I am a very experienced traveler in these countries ... and yet I still find new places to explore and excellent hotel and restaurant recommendations each month in *Gemütlichkeit*. This is despite the fact that I have spent about two to three months each year in Europe for the past 15 — with a significant portion in these countries. I am a tour guide with Rick Steves, I organize small group / private tours (via minibus).

RICK GARMAN
VIA EMAIL 

Travel Quickies

■ Deal in Bad Kohlgrub

The mushy moor peat of Bad Kohlgrub in southern Bavaria is said to relieve stress and joint pain. Even if mud treatments don't appeal, it's still a pleasant town and a good spot from which to explore the region, being near to such attractions as the **Wieskirche** (Church in the Meadow), the **Monastery and Abbey of Ettal**, the village of Oberammergau, Murnau with its collection of *Blaue Reiter* Expressionist paintings, and, of course, the famed castles of King Ludwig II, **Neuschwanstein** and **Linderhof**.

This year, Bad Kohlgrub is offering a four-day **Royal Package** in bed and breakfast hotels, inns and private rooms that includes four nights with breakfast, one mud pack and massage, and a ticket and bus transfer to a Thursday performance of the musical *Ludwig II - Yearning for Paradise*, for from €177 to €365 (\$206-\$424) for the four nights.

Contact: Helga Stark, Tourist office manager, D-82433 Bad Kohlgrub, Germany, tel. +49/08845/7422-0, fax 7422-44, email:

bad.kohlgrub@gaponline.de, web: www.bad-kohlgrub.de.

■ German Rail Pass Special

Through July 31, two persons traveling together can purchase a three-day **German Rail Twin Pass** for \$333 first class and \$222 second class. Travel days need not be consecutive but travel must be completed by August 31. That's \$55.50 per person, per day first class and \$37 per person, per day second class. Actually it's only a good deal if you need three or fewer days travel, since the first-class, four-day pass is \$48.75 per person, per day and the second class rate is \$33.75 per person, per day. Phone 800-521-6722, press option 3.

■ Buy Jungfrau Tix in the U.S.

Rail Europe also now offers a roundtrip ticket to the **Jungfraujoch** (11,333 feet) from Interlaken Ost, Grindelwald or Wengen. With a Swiss Pass, Swiss Transfer Ticket or a Eurailpass the price is \$116 first class and \$110 second class. With a Swiss

Card the prices are \$78 and \$72. Full fare is \$154 first class, \$143 second class. Phone 800-521-6722, option 3. ☒

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

The \$1975 per person price includes hotels, ground transport, nine breakfasts, seven dinners, five lunches, tips, and a welcome reception. The group will see the more authentic markets of Eastern Europe, and a number of guided walking and bus tours are included in the price. Itinerary stops that catch my eye are a visit to Oscar Schindler's factory (Schindler's List) in Krakow, dinner with Gypsy music in Budapest at Nostalgia Etterem and, on the last night, a ballet (possibly the Nutcracker) at the Budapest Opera House.

The main reason we enthusiastically endorse this tour is that it has been meticulously planned and will be personally escorted by the energetic Ms. Pasold. She is a longtime *Gemütlichkeit* subscriber who we consider an expert on Eastern Europe travel. She has selected every hotel and restaurant following in-person visits and careful inspection. Let me assure you, this is the "mother" of all Christmas market tours.

Ms. Pasold will send you a brochure and/or a CD. Contact: Karen Pasold, Classic Europe, 1 Glenmoor, Frisco TX 75034, tel. 972-625-6050, fax 972-370-2700, email: classicurope@yahoo.com

Exquisit Our Pick Over Asam

There is a change to the "We Recommend" list of hotels on this page. Munich's **Hotel Exquisit** supplants the **Hotel Asam**, whose prices are no longer in line with the level of service and comfort provided. The Asam now charges €158 for its smallest double rooms. Add breakfast, which is not included in the room price, and the cost for two persons for one night is now €182 (\$214).

The Exquisit, whose doubles start at €160 (\$188) and include breakfast, has larger rooms, is rated four-star rather than three, and as such offers more services than the Asam. In our view the Asam's only advantage is that it is five to 10 minutes closer to the center on foot. ☒

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@hotels.ch

Lucerne

Hotel Wilden Mann, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, email: mail@wilden-mann.ch

Hotel Cascada, Bundesplatz 18, CH-6003 Lucerne, tel: +41/041/226 80 88, fax 226 80 00, Email: info@cascada.ch

Munich

Hotel Exquisit, Pettenkoflerstr. 3, tel. +49/089/ 551 99 0, fax 551 99 499, email: info@hotel-exquisit.com.

Hotel Kraft, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24, fax 550 3856, 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@rkhotel.bestwestern.com

Altstadt Vienna, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, email: hotel@altstadt.at, web: www.altstadt.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 Alette, 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 ☒