

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

Who Do You Trust?

The nearly two years since the terrible events of September 11, 2001, have taken their toll on the business of travel, especially to Europe. Thousands of travel agents have left the business, the major U.S. airlines will probably never be the same, and, though behemoth Europe travel sellers **Rail Europe** and **Auto Europe** are still intact, they have taken some broadsides and live today with substantially lower revenues.

The biggest surprise to me, however, is the demise of the respected *Consumer Reports Travel Letter*. With a reported 50,000 subscribers it was the largest circulation travel newsletter in history. CRTL ceased publication with the January 2003 issue.

One of the reasons experts give for its downfall is the vast amount of travel information now available at no cost on the Internet, specifically from websites like **Frommer's Budget Travel** (www.frommers.com). Obviously many CRTL subscribers felt that what they once paid for they could now get free on the web.

That very thought may cross your mind the next time you get a renewal notice from *Gemütlichkeit*. (You see where this is going, don't you?) Well, just in case it does, here are some things that perhaps you should consider.

To begin with, we at *Gemütlichkeit* would agree that the Internet is a stupendously useful and rather fun invention. We're not breaking any news here when we say it has

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

THE MOSEL

The Mosel gets less publicity than the Rhine, and its winding, steep valley makes it somewhat less accessible. With fewer visitors it offers a more authentic travel experience.

"Rhine or Mosel?" Whether that question regards wine or travel, the answer is the same: "It's a matter of taste."

For travelers, there are certainly differences. The Mosel is much narrower and curvier than the Rhine, meandering nearly 200 kilometers (125 miles) to cover the 100-kilometer (62-mile) direct-line distance between Trier and Koblenz. It's slower and calmer than the Rhine and its microclimate is almost Mediterranean with cold-weather days often 8-10 degrees warmer than in towns off the river. There's a softer look to it, as if viewing the landscape through thin gauze. It's probably no coincidence that the Ger-

By Jim
Johnson

man language uses the masculine *der* for the Rhine and the feminine *die* for the Mosel.

The river is not as accessible as the Rhine. Trains cut through hills rather than follow the winding river and many towns are not served by rail. So except for the handful of popular ones, most villages are usually uncrowded, especially with the recent closure of nearby military bases.

Between Trier and Koblenz, winemaking is by far the leading industry and the fact that tourism isn't the region's economic engine, means a more authentic experience than in more visitor-dependent areas.

Here, villages feel like villages, where everyone knows everyone. In

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Great Dining Halls

In a world where computer chips double in speed every 18 months, and animal life is being created in laboratories, it is reassuring that a few things seem never to change.

For the first time in several years, *Gemütlichkeit* recently returned to the great **Augustiner Gaststätte**, the bustling brewery restaurant on one of the pedestrian-only streets leading to Munich's Marienplatz.

During those years of absence the Augustiner had been relegated to a storage shelf in our memory; tagged a good place indeed but very much on the beaten tourist path. When dusted off and taken out into the light, however, this extraordinary beer and food factory reminded us that it is one of a kind and a not-to-be-missed Munich stop.

After about two sips of the splendid Helles, we remembered just what a fascinating place the Augustiner is with its vaulted ceilings, stout pillars, dark paneling, tiled floors and a clientele that ranges from street people to corporate types; all of whom are ably tended to by smoothly efficient waiters who weave through the din with a practiced nonchalance. We had forgotten, too, just how good the beer and the Bavarian food is.

The Augustiner is one of what, for lack of a better term, we will call the "great dining halls" of Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Though more common in Germany, they are found in the large cities of all three of our countries.

Our "great dining halls" have most of these qualities in common:

- **Good food.** High quality, tradi-

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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brought to anyone with a computer and a modem, travel information that formerly was either impossible or very difficult to obtain. European rail timetables are a prime example, as are driving distances and directions between European cities. There are dozens, nay, thousands of useful travel websites. Every month we list a handful of the best of them in *Gemütlichkeit* and there are many more on our "Super Links" page at www.gemut.com (which, by the way, we think is a pretty useful web stop in itself). You can now look at a typical guestroom in almost any European hotel that's of interest. And the deals. Oh my, the deals. Sign up for free emails from a few online sellers of travel and soon your inbox will be filled with hundreds of packages and special offers.

But can you duplicate *Gemütlichkeit* on the Internet? Let's say you're looking for an inexpensive hotel with local color in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Go to Google and type "hotels Garmisch-Partenkirchen" and you are presented with some 37,000 websites containing that phrase. Somewhere in the top couple of hundred sites will no doubt be the huge Frommer's Budget Travel — an extensive and practical website, no argument here about that. But how about that hotel in Garmisch? Click Destinations, click Europe, click Germany, click Bavarian Alps, click Garmisch-Partenkirchen, click accommoda-

tions, and, from a list of seven hotels, click **Gasthof Fraundorfer**. You'll next see a short, accurate — though rather juiceless — description of the hotel and the price for a double room, €74 or \$66.10. The price is a bit puzzling since €74 these days is more like \$84 and we paid €90 (\$102) last October for a double room there. But a glance at the fine print explains it; the information is taken from the printed 2003 Frommer's guidebook for Germany, the data for which was probably compiled sometime in 2001. So what's there is guidebook information and every traveler should know that guidebook writers, and those who annually updates guidebooks, are miserably compensated and receive little or no reimbursement for their travel. Thus *many if not most of the hotel and restaurant reviews in the old-line guidebook series' — and here I exclude Rough Guide and Lonely Planet — are written from brochures or a visit to the hotel's website.*

You can compare Frommer's description of the Fraundorfer with ours on page 7, or, better yet, go to our website to read what we had to say about it in our June, 1996, issue. You see, we've been to the Fraundorfer a couple of dozen times and as many of you know it is a very special place. With all due respect to the excellent Frommer website, that is something we know and they don't. Have we been 25 times to every hotel we write about? Of course, not. But we visit or stay in every hotel we review, and eat in every restaurant. And, when you read it in *Gemütlich-*

keit, the info is almost always fresh. To gather impressions and data for this month's lead story, Jim Johnson was on the Mosel in May. My piece last month on the **Chalet du Lac** was based on an October visit (*Gemütlichkeit's* third) and Jim's information for his July Potsdam story was less than 90 days old.

Remember, too, that Frommer's covers the whole world, while our little oyster is just three countries. When it comes to quantity of information, we will never compete with Frommer's or Fodor's or Lonely Planet or the myriad of online travel chat rooms. Even in our three countries there are worthy restaurants, hotels, cities, perhaps entire regions, that we may never get to. We've never advanced the idea that our coverage is complete. The Marines are "looking for a few good men," we're looking for a few good places. I've always

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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

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: **lesom** Password: **3191**

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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.

THE MOSEL

Continued from page 1

tiny Longuich, Mayor Josef Schmitt recently officiated at a street festival and later was seen in a green apron taking lunch orders at an outdoor café.

“We don’t think of ourselves as a tourist attraction,” said a vintner in Bremm, a charming village midway between Trier and Koblenz. “We just do what we do, in some ways no differently today than 200 years ago. People don’t sightsee here; they visit.”

Most of “what they do” relates to winemaking, and indeed vineyards stretch as far as the eye can see — or at least until the next curve in the river. Many visitors come to the same vintner year after year, to restock their Rieslings and swap family stories. And many vintners run cozy guesthouses to augment their incomes (and hedge against bad years).

This isn’t to say the Mosel lacks a tourism infrastructure; there are charming inns and elegant hotels, and chefs take full advantage of local produce — and abundant wine. But across the board, travelers will find lodging and food prices here generally lower than along the Rhine and more touristed areas.

Nor does the Mosel lack attractions beyond the vineyards. There is much to see, including Roman ruins, stunning castles and half-timber towns.

In Longuich and across the river in Mehring, are two Roman villas, rebuilt in part but with much of their ancient foundations intact. Neumagen-Dhron, displays a replica of a giant stone carving of a Roman wine ship (the original, discovered in the village, is in Trier’s Municipal Museum).

At the other end of the architectural spectrum, Traben-Trarbach’s primary architectural style is *Jugendstil* (art nouveau). Much of the town was rebuilt after a series of fires in the late 19th century and at the time *Jugendstil* was all the rage.

Bernkastel-Kues remains the postcard-perfect Mosel town, with castle ruins, half-timber houses, a medieval marketplace and architectural styles spanning nearly two millennia. There’s another compelling reason to

Mosel Basics

Tourist Information: Mosellandtouristik. D-54470 Bernkastel-Kues, tel +49/6531/2091, fax 2093, email: info@mosellandtouristik.de, web: www.mosellandtouristik.de.

Driving Distances Koblenz to:

Frankfurt	123 km	77 miles
Munich	489 km	306 miles
Trier	124 km	78 miles

Driving Distances Trier to:

Frankfurt	240 km	150 miles
Munich	520 km	325 miles
Koblenz	124 km	78 miles

Rail: Though Koblenz and Trier have good rail service, many river towns have infrequent or no service. Rail lines often follow straight lines though tunnels, which cut out some of the most scenic stretches.

Air: Closest major airport is Frankfurt/Main 186 kilometers (116 miles) from Trier and 125 kilometers (76 miles) from Koblenz. However, budget carrier **Ryan Air**, flies to Frankfurt-Hahn Airport, just 19 kilometers (12 miles) from Traben-Trarbach. The airport has frequent bus service to major points along the Mosel.

Bus: Frequent service between villages. Buses will carry bicycles.

Boat: Available between Trier and Koblenz, but the full distance requires about 11 hours with two ship companies. Better bet: take a sightseeing cruise or use your hotel as home base and do an “out and back.”

visit this delightful town: the **Vinothek**, where €9 (\$10) opens the door to an unlimited sampling of 130 wines from the region. (Weinkulturelles Zentrum, Cusannustrasse 2, D-54470 Bernkastel-Kues, tel. +49/6531/4141, fax: 4155, web: www.bernkastel-vinothek.de, email: info@bernkastel-vinothek.de.)

Affiliated with the Vinothek is the adjacent **Wine Museum**, whose tools and equipment show how the industry has changed over the centuries.

Something that hasn’t changed is how vines are tended and grapes are picked. It’s as manual today as ever. Travelers who want a first-hand experience should visit the **Weingut Schauf**, a popular winery in the village of Ediger-Eller.

Its vineyards are on the Bremmer Calmont, at 65 degrees (90 is vertical) the steepest vineyard in Europe. Hiking up is an option, but Karl Schauf offers an easier way: a two-person funicular wagon, powered by a lawnmower engine that climbs about two-

thirds of the way up the 376-meter (1,233-foot) slope. The passenger faces to the rear and gains a stunning perspective: straight across to the ruins of 12th-century **Cloister Stuben**, soft light drenching its ancient walls and streaming through its Romanesque arches.

Perhaps to distract his passenger from fear, on the ascent Herr Schauf explains the challenges these vineyards present, like maintaining centuries-old drywalls and how 23 times each year he must cut and tie each vine to a wooden stake.

At the end of the line, a trail splits left to a series of ladders farther up the slope or, thankfully, right to a storm shelter that doubles as a picnic area when Herr Schauf gives tours. His son has brought up wine, bread, sausage and cheese. Life is good.

Back below on terra firma, Herr Schauf drives his guest a few minutes to the village. As in many towns, nearly every house belongs to a vintner or someone involved in the wine trade, and visitors are likely to be invited into ancient wine cellars — sometimes hidden below modern houses — to view room after room of prized bottles. Perhaps a tasting will follow, and maybe a multi-bottle purchase will follow that, although there’s no pressure. (Weingut Schauf, St. Jakob Strasse 18, D-56814 Eller/Mosel, tel +49/2675/288)

Castle-lovers will not leave the Mosel region disappointed. Among the most popular are the **Landshut** ruins in Bernkastel-Kues, the **Imperial Castle** in Cochem and the **Ehrenburg** in Brodenbach. Some, like **Treis Castle**, are little more than tumbled walls and a sturdy keep. Others are visited for their views, like the **Grevenburg** ruins in Traben-Trarbach, which looks west across the river to perfect sunsets behind the ruins of **Mont Royal** fortress.

The Mosel also claims one of Germany’s most beautiful, romantic, and best-preserved castles, **Burg Eltz**, about an hour’s brisk walk from the river, or a scenic 15 minutes by car. Though in its ninth century of ownership by the von Eltz family, it is open to the public with guided tours.

With Cochem, Burg Eltz is one of the Mosel's most popular attractions. But all towns fill up during their wine and harvest festivals. And visitors should also be aware of Rhine in Flames weekend celebrations, since Mosel towns, especially those close to Koblenz, often get overflow from booked-solid hotels along the Rhine. The opening of Frankfurt/Hahn Airport, although far closer to Trier than to Frankfurt, has had minimal impact on tourism.

Lodging

Hotel Winzerhof

Ernst and Gabi Schanz make pleasant accommodations an even greater delight in their winery hotel. Service is enthusiastic and sincere, and guests are treated like family. Rooms are spacious with upbeat décor and interesting prints. Some have balconies, although there's a small terrace for all guests to enjoy. For late risers, breakfast is served until noon in a cheery room brightened by a large bay window. The room is also used for wine tastings and, on request, dinner for guests.

While a small group recently enjoyed a wine-tasting in the dining area, a newsletter writer savored a dinner platter with two imposing slivers of forearm-wide sausage so

fresh the other pigs were probably still in mourning. Add to that Westphalian ham, local cheese, *Schmaltz* and some dense, moist bread — all complemented by a glass of half-dry Riesling from the family vineyard — and life doesn't get much better.

The hotel offers good-quality rental bikes and will transport guests and bikes up to 25 miles away, with route suggestions and map, for a pleasant ride "home" along the river.

Contact: Hotel Winzerhof, Bahnhofstrasse 8, D-54498 Piesport/Mosel, tel +49/6507/92520, fax 925252, email: Hotel-Winzerhof-Piesport@t-online.de, web: www.hotel-winzerhof-piesport.de. Proprietors: Ernst and Gabi Schanz.

Daily Rates: Single €50 (\$56), double €76-82 (\$85-92). Parking is €5 (\$6).

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Weinromantikhôtel Richtershof

If you arrive at the four-star Weinromantikhôtel Richtershof in a horse-drawn coach, you won't feel out of place. A gravel driveway, shaded by a spreading chestnut tree, leads to the 300-year-old winery/estate converted to a hotel in 2001. It's a charming collection of half-timber, Baroque and *Jugendstil* buildings connected by modern structures to create an "ensemble" feeling. Public spaces, the restaurant and guest rooms have an understated elegance. Understated too, are the room rates, which would not shock at twice the price.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The idyllic setting, next to a wooded park with pond and waterfall, is enhanced by the presence of an active winery. Guests can tour its 17th-century colonnaded, barrel-filled cellars or hike through vineyards with a guide to explain the winemaking process.

The 44 guestrooms are spacious and individually decorated, many with antique furnishings. Napoleon once slept in Number 402, which has a four-poster bed and the original stove from 1809. Number 401, decorated in a peaceful floral theme, has a terrace overlooking the garden. A corner double, Number 406 overlooks the medieval portion of the estate, as well as the garden and vineyards. A new

wing is charming but lacks the character of the older buildings.

Contact: Weinromantikhôtel Richtershof, Hauptstrasse 81-83, D-54486 Mülheim an der Mosel, tel +49/6534/948/0, fax 100, web:

www.weinromantikhotel.com, email: info@weinromantikhotel.de. Proprietors: Armin Hoeck & Preuss Family.

Daily rates: Single €85-130 (\$95-146), double €120-150 (\$134-168), suite €200-350 (\$224-392). Free parking.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20 VALUE 18/20

Hotel-Restaurant Doctor-Weinstube

The Doctor-Weinstube, a longtime favorite of Europeans, is increasingly popular with Americans visiting the charming wine village of Bernkastel-Kues. Set among the town's cobblestone streets and half-timber houses, the hotel was built in 1668 as a tithe house and still maintains much of its Renaissance atmosphere. Guestrooms are average in size, basic and bright with a rustic feel. Through dormer windows they face either the narrow street or the courtyard terrace.

Contact: Hotel-Restaurant Doctor-Weinstube, Hebegasse 5, D-54470 Bernkastel-Kues, tel +49/6531/96650, fax 6296, email: doctor-hotel@t-online.de, web: www.doctor-weinstuben.de. Proprietors: Nau Family

Daily rates: Single €74-106 (\$83-119), double €112-170 (\$125-190)

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 13/20

Familienhotel Hutter-Bremm

The family-run Hotel Hutter is, quite simply, a steal. For the price of a mid-range dinner in most German cities, you get overnight lodging and breakfast. Add another €10 (\$11) for dinner.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The 42 rooms, mostly doubles, are plain but functional, clean and large enough for two. Ask for a river-view room on the first floor (our second) that opens to a patio panorama encompassing the 180-degree bend in the river, the steep vineyards of the Bremmer Calmont rising behind it, and the ruins of the **Kloster Stuben** monastery. Be sure to request a private bath or shower, since a few rooms have shared facilities.

Contact: Familienhotel Hutter-

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.

Bremm, Moselstrasse 30, D-56814 Bremm/Mosel, tel +49/675/212, fax 707. Email info@hotel-hutter.de, web: www.hotel-hutter.de. Prop: Jan Abruzzino.

Daily Rates: Single €28 (\$31), double €55 (\$62), discounts for multiple nights and off-season. Free parking.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20 VALUE 16/20

Moselromantik-Hotel Kessler Meyer

About 15-minutes walk upstream from Cochem, the four-star Hotel Kessler Meyer provides stunning views not just of the Mosel, but of cliffs, the town and the imposing **Reichsburg** (Imperial Castle). The hotel has been around — and much expanded — since 1978. While it may not have the character of older hotels, it has both elegance and charm. Service is top-notch.

Guestrooms are spacious and filled with light, many have balconies made private by a floral hedge. Numbers 48 and 49 in the newest part of the hotel offer the best views. In the twilight, it is bewitching to sit on the balcony and watch the lights of the town come on.

Contact: Moselromantik-Hotel Kessler Meyer, Am Reilsbach 12. D-56812 Cochem, tel.

+49 2671 97880, fax 3858, email: rezeption@hotel-kessler-meyer.de, web: www.hotel-kessler-meyer.de.

Prop: Kessler-Meyer family

Daily Rates: Single €74-106 (\$83-119), double €112-170 (\$125-190). Free parking. Bike rental €6 (\$7). Frankfurt-Hahn Airport shuttle is €10 (\$11).

Rating: QUALITY 16/20 VALUE 16/20

Gutshotel Reichsgraf von Kesselstatt

Though we did not visit it on this trip, we cannot do a Mosel report without including the Gutshotel, directly on the river nestled in the vineyards north of Neumagen-Dhron. We have mentioned it often, most recently it was a "Hidden Treasure" feature in the September 2002 issue.

There are 18 guest rooms, lovely grounds, a tennis court, and a uniquely-styled indoor pool. The intimate little restaurant is considered one of the best in the region and in fine weather one can dine on a terrace overlooking the river.

Ten minutes walk from the hotel is a small pier where day-trip riverboats stop for passengers.

This is a fine small hotel, with style and charm, and a tremendous value.

Daily Rates: Singles €66 (\$75), doubles €85 to €99 (\$97-\$113)

Contact: Gutshotel Reichsgraf von Kesselstatt, Balduinstr. 1, Obere Mühlbrücke 9, Neumagen Dhron, D-96049, tel. +49/06507/2035, fax 5644, info@gutshotel-kesselstatt.de, web: www.gutshotel-kesselstatt.de

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 19/20

Food

Through the centuries, this region was generally poor, a fact reflected in its cuisine, which favors smoked meats and fish, sausages, cheese, bread, wild boar, turkey and potatoes. But modern tastes demand creativity, and the region's restaurants, for the most part, deliver. Wine, of course, plays a major role in many dishes.

Some of the best places to eat along the Mosel are *Strausswirtschaften* (literally "bouquet establishments"), small, temporary, vintner-run eateries set up in courtyards, backyards, driveways and cellars. Two regulations regarding these places persist from medieval times: they may open no more than four months a year and cannot post permanent signs. To get around the latter rule, the owners hang a straw broom or a bouquet of twigs (hence the name) wrapped in ribbon. Almost all sell simple but tasty fare, usually straight from the vintner's kitchen. Often the proprietor will not only take orders and serve, but also prepare the meals. It's good food and a great way to mix with the locals. Quality varies, but any shopkeeper can direct visitors to his or her favorite.

Culinarium R

The primary restaurant at the Hotel Richtershof is elegant, romantic and tranquil. Entering guests pass an open kitchen where aromas and sizzling pans put the taste buds on alert. Arched windows in the 1809 structure allow ample light and fabric-backed chairs seem to absorb much

of the sound. Service is formal, but not stiff. The menu is ambitious and successful: consommé of lemongrass and mussels, lobster ravioli on wild asparagus, brook char in lemon-thyme sauce, kangaroo with peanut sauce, and iced strawberry soup with champagne sorbet.

Most entrées are between €20-24 (\$22-27). With a glass of wine, an appetizer and dessert, the bill could easily come to €80 (\$90) per person. Perhaps the best value is the daily, four-course *prix fixe* menu at €33 (\$37). A five-course menu, with corresponding wines is €82 (\$92).

Contact: Weinromantikhof Richtershof, Hauptstrasse 81-83, D-54486 Mülheim an der Mosel, tel +49/6534/948/0, fax 100, web:

www.weinromantikhof.com, email: info@weinromantikhof.de. Prop: Armin Hoeck and Preuss Family.

Rating: QUALITY: 17/20 VALUE: 13/20

Goldene Traube

It's mostly locals who frequent this cozy pub, so there's lots of laughter and friendly greetings. Newcomers, too, are warmly welcomed; by the proprietor, the wait-staff and other guests.

Not surprisingly, wine is a dominant theme in the décor, from old winemaking equipment to framed photographs of "wine princesses." Wine also plays a role in many recipes, even in desserts, where it's often substituted for milk.

Almost all produce, meats and vegetables, like the recipes, come from local farms.

Regional specialties include potato soup, pork with bacon and *Gräues* (seasoned mashed potatoes with cabbage), beef filet with horseradish sauce, liverwurst, blood sausage, and such Mosel fish as perch, pike and eel. Dessert might be a tart and sweet rhubarb compote. Main courses are in the €9-12 (\$10-13) range and should, of course, be accompanied by local wine.

Contact: Goldene Traube, Am Markt 8, D-56841 Traben-Trarbach, tel +49/6541/6011, fax 6013, email:

allmacherhotel@t-online.de, web: www.allmacherhotel.de. Proprietors: Richard und Marlies Allmacher.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 15/20

EDITOR'S CHOICE


Alte Zunftscheune

Set in an old granary, the Alte Zunftscheune offers a variety of settings: a sunny patio, a garden courtyard shaded with trees and vines, an ancient stone cellar with working well, and the half-timber-constructed main dining area, split between the ground floor and an open mezzanine.

Each has its own atmosphere, but all share the same varied menu, with an emphasis on regional dishes prepared with creative flair — call it “Mosel Fusion.” Sure, potatoes are a Mosel staple, but one Zunftscheune version presents them sliced thin, filled with spinach and poached salmon, topped with hollandaise sauce and cheese, and baked. The salmon, of course, is poached in Riesling, which is another dominant theme: Riesling soup, Riesling cheese sauce and the decadent “Vintner’s Dream”—vanilla ice cream served with a warm Riesling cream sauce and marinated grapes.

Several entrées are served in the skillet, like the Butcher Platter with fresh blood sausage and liverwurst fried with onions and potatoes, or cheese *Spätzle* sautéed with onions. Less adventurous diners can choose from a great variety of meat and fish entrées, including a half-dozen types of *Schnitzel*. Despite the spread-out dining areas, service is consistent and good. Entrées range from €7-18 (\$8-20) but average around €14 (\$16).

Contact: Alte Zunftscheune, Familie Niedersburg, Neue Rathausstrasse, D-56841, Traben-Trarbach, tel/fax +49/6541/9737, email: info@zunftscheune.de, web: www.zunftscheune.de. Proprietors: Gerold and Christa Niedersberg.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20 VALUE 15/20 

GREAT DINING HALLS

Continued from page 1

tional, hearty cuisine, usually inexpensively priced.

- **Old World** on a grand scale. Spacious, atmospheric, and sometimes with extraordinary décor and art.
- **Egalitarian.** Popular with all levels of society and both tourists and locals.
- **Longevity.** Most have been in

business for centuries.

• **Timelessness.** Management makes a conscious effort to maintain the old ways.

Here are a few “great dining halls” where cuisine, environment and a diverse clientele have combined to become part of the local culture. They are places for people who think “they don’t make ‘em like that anymore.”

Augustiner Großgaststätte, Munich

This people-watching paradise is where Münchners of every stripe repair for a plate of consistently outstanding comfort food and Munich’s best beer. A mixed salad with *Schweinschnitzel* costs €12.1 (\$14). Half a liter of *Helles* is €3.15 (\$3.50). The various rooms are quite grand with an ageless elegance.

Augustiner Großgaststätte, Neuhauser Strasse 27, web: www.augustiner-restaurant.com

Zeughauskeller, Zürich

This, the most upscale of our “great halls,” is in the center of Zürich, on Bahnhofstrasse near Paradeplatz, and has been around since 1487. It is a single, huge, impressive room under massive beams supported by stone pillars with a giant clock at one end and ancient weaponry hung from the walls. The large tables are shared and the adroit servers have little time to chat as they glide through the chaos bearing large plates of delicious, farm-style food that goes down best with the Hürliemann *vom Fass*. In addition to the usual calves liver, *Schnitzel*, and *Geschmetzeltes* Zürich-style (sliced veal with mushrooms in a cream sauce), there are half-meter and one-meter pan-fried sausages, *Kanonенputzer*, and an extraordinary presentation of one long, thin slice of roasted meat skewered onto a three-foot sword, *Burgermeister Hans Waldmann Sword*. Main courses are in the CHF 25-35 (\$18-\$26) range. Draught beer is in the \$3 to \$4 range.

Zeughauskeller Zürich, Bahnhofstrasse 28a, at Paradeplatz, tel. +41/01/211 2690

Gösser Bierklinik, Vienna

The building dates to the 15th cen-

tury and the restaurant has been around since the late 17thC, though the current owners took over in 1988.

Dine here in the covered inner courtyard, a room recently restored and which looks like a set from a 19th century Lehar operetta. No menu surprises: *Schnitzel*, of course; *Tafelspitz* (boiled beef); excellent soups and Austria’s best beer, Gösser. Meals in the €11-22 (\$13-\$25) range.

Gösser Bierklinik, Steindlgasse 4, near Stephansdom, tel. +43 /01/533 75 98, web: www.goesser-bierklinik.at

Peterskeller, Salzburg

This well-known spot is pleasant for lunch after visiting St. Peter’s Church and it’s fascinating, lovely cemetery. Peterskeller claims to date all the way back to 803 AD and if that is true it is the oldest restaurant in Austria and easily the most venerable of our “great halls.”

Find a table in the indoor-outdoor vaulted grotto cut into the rock wall of the Mönchberg, or settle indoors in one of the cozy, wood-paneled dining rooms.

In the past few years, Peterskeller’s huge menu has gone a bit up-market, but you can still get a bowl of boiled beef soup for less than \$5, a plate of *Zanderfilet* (freshwater white fish) with potato salad is around \$12 and *Wiener Schnitzel* for \$15. A Steigl *Pils* is €2.70 (\$3) and a quarter-liter of Grüner Veltliner from the Wachau district is €3.8 (\$4.32)

Peterskeller, St.-Peter-Bezirk 1-4, tel. +43/0662/8412680

Ratsweinkeller, Hamburg

First opened in 1896, the Ratsweinkeller is a mere child in this company. The huge, atmospheric dining room borders on the spectacular. Large, detailed models of square-rigged ships hang from high vaulted ceilings that are supported by great columns. The floors are parquet, huge stained-glass windows are framed in rich, dark wood and walls are paneled to a height of six or seven feet.

The food is a bit more refined than at our other “great halls” and fish is recommended. Noteworthy on

our last visit were starters of smoked salmon; a scatter of tiny, deep-fried shrimp; and a delicate white fish over a small omelette with sliced tomatoes and a light horseradish sauce. Main courses of lobster served Newburg-style and salmon/trout in a shrimp sauce were first-rate. Expect to pay €26-38 (\$30-\$43) per person for a three-course meal

Ratsweinkeller Grosse Johannisstr. 2, Altstadt, tel. +49/040/364-153

Rogacki, Berlin

Since it was virtually unknown to American travelers when we found it (with the help of a Berliner) in 1997, we consider Rogacki one of the top discoveries in *Gemütlichkeit's* 17-year history. It may not belong in this company — it's not very old and there's no Old-World atmosphere — but it's the best value in the German-speaking world, serves huge portions of sensational food, and is a unique experience. At the stand-up, four-sided bar in this blue-collar district market, CEO's in \$4,000 suits rub shoulders with hard-hat laborers who rub shoulders with TV stars. It's lunch-only and seafood-only.

Choose from the menu board or find something from one of the market's vendor stands; watch it cooked on the grill, garnished with crisp, fresh salad or to-die-for roast potatoes *mit Speck* (with bacon) — or both — and then set in front of you still sizzling. A wonderful baked flounder, sprinkled with bacon and tiny fresh North Sea shrimp, served with the grilled potatoes is a mere €8.50 (\$10) and easily serves two. Half a lobster is €14.95 (\$17) and last October we watched as one of the chef/servers achieve what must have been a world record for the most mussels stacked in a 10-inch flat bowl, at least 30. Cost: around \$8. Three very fresh oysters with a glass of white wine is about \$6.

Go once to Rogacki and the memory will haunt you until you return.

Rogacki, Wilmersdorfer Str. 145, near Bismarck Str. U-Bahn Station.

Gasthof Fraundorfer
Garmisch Partenkirchen

No list of "great dining halls" is complete without Garmisch-Parten-

kirchen's Fraundorfer. Six nights a week the tables start filling around 6pm, mostly with tourists. An hour later, Friedl fires up his accordion in continuation of a "gig" that has been virtually uninterrupted since 1959. By 8:30, under the sharp eye of Barbara Fraundorfer, most of the crowd has been watered and fed, the noise level is about to peak and Friedl has sung a few of his yodel standards. This is the "tipping point;" will the evening coast on to a quiet close or will there be conga lines and dancing on the tables? Either way this is *the* Bavarian experience. Though the Fraundorfer dates to 1857, it took on its present style and format during the 1936 Winter Olympics.

The menu is long, the prices low, the portions generous, and we have seldom been disappointed with any dish. Roast pork with dumplings is €8.2 (\$9), half a roast duck costs €13 (\$15), calves liver Berliner-Art (strips dipped in flour and fried in butter) is €14.4 (\$16) and a small mixed salad costs €2.5 (\$3). Half a liter of beer goes for €2.8 (\$3).

The merriment goes on until midnight, though most tourists are gone by 10pm, when *Trachten*-dressed locals begin to gather around the *Stammtisch* (regulars' table). Reservations recommended.

When asked if there were other restaurants in town like the Fraundorfer, a woman at the local tourist office said, "There is only one Fraundorfer, there every night is a party"

Gasthof Fraundorfer, Ludwigstr. 24, tel. +49/08821/92 70, www.gasthof-fraundorfer.de


Bratwursthäusle, Nürnberg

In Nürnberg, bratwurst is a venerated food and the **Bratwursthäusle** is its temple. In the shadow of St. Sebald's, this best known of Nürnberg restaurants will sometimes serve in excess of 10,000 tiny, spicy sausages a day. Yes, it's full of tourists, but who cares when the food is delicious, service good and prices reasonable.

The bratwurst is usually grilled over an intensely hot, smokeless beechwood fire until the skin is crisp. Six pieces are €5.50 (\$6.25), a dozen €9.7 (\$11), including wine sauerkraut

or potato salad. They can also be ordered cooked in white wine, spicy vinegar and onions, or smoked over a beechwood fire and eaten with horseradish. Some even eat the sausages raw, like a steak tartare, with egg yolk, onion and paprika.

The Bratwursthäusle is best known for its sausages, but it also serves the best *eisbein* (ham hock) we've had the pleasure to sample. An entire knuckle costs €7.5 (\$8.50).

Bratwursthäusle Nürnberg, Rathausplatz 1, www.bratwurst-haeusle.de/ 

Readers' Forum

Harz Mountain Hotel

As part of our recent participation on the IRT Railfans Tour of Germany, we spent four nights in Wernigerode. This charming village complete with its huge castle is located in what was East Germany about two hours south-southwest of Berlin. The **Hotel Gothisches Haus** (Markt 1, 38841 Wernigerode, tel: +49/03943/6750; fax 34559) is real treasure. It has just been reopened after undergoing a complete restoration plus a highly compatible addition. It rates five stars in my book. The town is really neat and of course there is the steam train attraction. They have 15 operational engines. It's quite a destination for those so inclined.

The rail trip tour was great fun although a bit arduous. We traveled on over 50 trains, trams, streetcars and related rail vehicles in 15 days. Daily temperatures in the mid 90s with equal humidity coupled with several un-airconditioned hotels was a challenge at times.

HAMP & SUE MILLER,
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA

Hotel Near Berchtesgaden

I wanted to tell you about a hotel near the German-Austrian border, near Berchtesgaden, that I make sure I stay in on every trip to Bavaria, ever since I sort of stumbled into it 4-5 years ago. **Hotel Neuhäusl** (tel. +49/08652/9400, email: neuhaeusl@berchtesgaden.de) is simply my favorite place to stay in Germany. Consistently excellent service, big rooms, with balconies looking out on an immense forest, off-the-chart nice

folks, and very good Bavarian food. Birgit Rauh and family are terrific innkeepers and always make my time there a very pleasant experience.

I also went to see the exhibit of the 5300 year-old "Iceman" in Bolzono, Italy, about 90 minutes drive from Innsbruck. It was very cool and worth the trip.

ROGER BROWN
VIA EMAIL

Fine Hotel Near Zürich Airport

In early June we spent another night at the **Rote Rose** (tel. +41/01/853 1013, fax 853 1559, email: info@rote-rose.com, web: www.rote-rose.com) near the Zürich Airport in Regensberg, and continue to believe it is one of the most charming inns we've encountered in over 35 trips to Europe. Having stayed in the full suite for two nights last September, which would now be about \$325 per night, and with only one night this trip, we opted for a junior suite at CHF 270 (\$199). Marvelous!

Many of the furnishings were included in the building's purchase and are classic antiques. On the other hand, the bathrooms are very modern and high tech, but equally tastefully done. A small pool has been completed in a park-like setting on the backside of the property, with views for many miles. We sat there for over an hour observing three hawks circling over the roof tops, coming at times within 30 feet of us.

The Schafer family is extremely friendly and helpful, it's just like visiting relatives. It is difficult to see how they can generate enough income from the handful of rooms to cover the considerable sums they've obviously spent in making Rote Rose a very, very unique upscale hostelry, but my sense is that to a certain degree this has been a labor of love more than an economic venture.

BILL BOHNHOFF
SANTA FE, NM

Interlaken Restaurant

I greatly enjoyed the latest issue, especially the comments about **Chalet du Lac**. It's certainly one of the hidden gems. The view of Iseltwald's harbor is especially nice from the Chalet's breakfast room, a particular-

ly pleasant way to start the day. Our latest visit was just about this time of year, which is when Iseltwald holds its summer concerts in a tent a few minutes' walk from the center of the village. When we arrived, we knew nothing about the concerts, but after the local band marched under our terrace, it didn't take long to figure out that even this sleepy little village has its own summer entertainment. We went over to the tent, enjoyed the concert, and took advantage of the light foods available on the premises.

We also enjoyed a meal at the Chalet du Lac's Stube and would have done so again had it not been for our wanderlust and curiosity about restaurants in the region. The standout in Interlaken was at **Stelambiente** (Hotel Stella, tel. +41/0338/233075, email: info@stella-hotel.ch), where we had the unexpected pleasure of a few songs from the local yodeling society which was meeting (and eating) there.

RUSSELL WAYNE
VIA EMAIL

Cesky Krumlov

We recently were in Cesky Krumlov, a favorite destination of ours and one we have visited several times since the early 90s.

Upon our return to the U.S. we read your story about it in *Gemütlichkeit* (June 2002) and would like to confirm that it is a wonderful place. The castle guided tour is a must.

One warning: we did stay at the **Old Inn** and it was very nice. The food was good and reasonably priced and our room was pleasant. It faced the old-town square and provided a great view, however, the noise from several discos, well into the early morning hours, was a real nuisance. For those wishing to get to sleep a little earlier, perhaps a room to the back of the Inn might be better.

When returning to Frankfurt, we took your advice and stayed at the **Hotel Anker** (tel. +49/09391/60040, email: info@hotel-anker.de) in Markt-Heidenfeld. We can surely agree that it is a very nice place and that the staff is very friendly and helpful. The breakfast was outstanding!

PAT BORDEN
VIA EMAIL

Trouble in GAP

In April I reserved rooms at the **Hotel Reindl's Partenkirchner Hof** in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. They requested a credit card guarantee, and I received a final confirmation for two rooms for one night. After driving from Zürich we arrived in the early afternoon. However, the rooms were not available "because some other guests did not leave on the set date." We were offered reservations at another place, but believe me, not even horses or cows would stay there. Finally with the help of a gentlemen of Partenkirchen we found two nice rooms at the **Mercure** (Mittenwalder Str. 2, tel. +49/08821/7560, email: h2940@accor-hotels.com). I think that you as a serious journal should look into this matter and take some action.

ERNESTO MULLER
VIA EMAIL

(Ed Note: A troubling story. We have forwarded your email to the hotel in question.)

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

thought of us as experienced scouts, checking the trail ahead to advise those coming behind about the safe and dangerous places to camp, where the water's good, the best trails and where there's food for the horses. In the past 12 months, *Gemütlichkeit* writers have spent a combined five months in Europe doing just that. Our recommendations and cautions are based on what we have personally seen, heard, tasted, sniffed and touched.

What this comes down to is whom you choose to trust. For years we've been sending people to places like **Schloss Haunsperg** near Salzburg where Eike and Georg von Gernerth epitomize the word *gemütlichkeit*. While we are fond of saying — and know it to be absolutely true — that just one tip, one recommendation, or one warning, can easily save more than the subscription cost, *Gemütlichkeit* is about more than saving money. For some, Haunsperg is the experience of a lifetime. And what is that worth? — RHB

Book hotels at www.gemut.com