

DEAR  
SUBSCRIBER

### Stalking the Elusive Upgrade

The search for miles is never-ending. I want to fly business class but cannot afford the approximately \$8,000 it costs from the West Coast. I can purchase biz class tickets from a consolidator and pay around \$3,800 which includes \$500 worth of hotel vouchers, but that is still too rich for my blood. So it's 'upgrade city' and, with **American Advantage**, my frequent flyer program, that means about 50,000 miles per person, per trip. We don't fly much domestically so the miles must be accumulated via credit card purchases and various promotions — "collect our 100-mile certificates from specially marked Kellogg's cereal boxes," etc.

Occasionally, airlines put business class seats on sale, but you have to be paying attention. We are planning a November trip and throughout August and September haunted the airlines' websites as well as online sellers like **Expedia** and **Orbitz**. After trying many city pair combinations, we found on Orbitz a \$2,100 price on an **Air France**, San Francisco-Paris nonstop. The alternative was to pay \$757 each for upgradeable economy tickets on **American Airlines**, Portland to Frankfurt via Dallas/Fort Worth, and use 100,000 of our precious miles to upgrade. Considering the 100,000 miles, the Dallas stopover and the fact that we couldn't get the dates we wanted, we elected to pay the higher price and keep the miles. Did we make the right decision? Obviously, I think so. Since we paid \$4,200 total for two business class

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## SWISS MOUNTAIN HIGH

*The Jungfrau/Lauterbrunnen Valley region tops Gemütlichkeit's list of Essential Swiss Destinations. This month we report on two of its most popular villages; Wengen and Grindelwald.*

**T**he Jungfrau region has attracted throngs of travelers since the British tourism boom of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Then, as now, this four-season wonderland draws outdoor enthusiasts and adventurers, as well as those who come simply to relax and be overwhelmed by the incredible beauty of stunning mountains with blue-green glaciers.

Active visitors can ski, hike, bike, snowshoe, fish, paraglide, sled, swim, skate, ride horses, boat and climb — and that's the short list. Such adventurous types mingle amicably with the more laid-back visitors who are content to watch the world from their hotel balcony or from a cable car or funicular.

Whether arriving by train or car, visitors must pass through Interlaken, the valley gateway to the nearby mountain villages of Grindelwald, Lauterbrunnen, Mürren and Wengen — the Jungfrau region's main stops. While some make Interlaken their valley base camp for Jungfrau activities and take daily excursions into the mountains, travelers already *in* the mountains have a head start on most of the fun. There, rugged trails — for both hikers and cyclists — start at their doorsteps. In some villages, ski lifts are just a graceful glide away.

For many, the culmination of a trip to the region is a visit to the Jungfrauoch. From Kleine Sc-

*Continued on page 3...*

## Update: Berlin's Rebirth

**T**he German capital continues its phenomenal post-unification transformation. Though dozens of the great buildings begun in the mid-90s are now a reality, construction cranes still hover over the skyline and several huge projects — notably a new five-level rail station — are underway. Without so much as a blink in the German resolve to restore their centerpiece city, billions are still being lavished on the world's top architects and builders.

For those who remember the pre-1990 Berlin, both East and West, the changes are often disorienting; one must search diligently for a trace of the famous *Mauer* (wall), **Checkpoint Charlie** is gone, and the popular museum of the same name has been relocated from its former tacky, run-down digs to modern, air-condi-

tioned quarters.

The focus of tourism has shifted from the Wall, and all that it represented, to the restoration. The **Reichstag**, a deserted hulk surrounded by weeds in the 80s, is again the center of government with a brilliant new glass dome. After a recent multimillion euro buff and polish, the **Brandenburg Gate** has never looked better. A new **German Chancellery** is breathtaking. Foreign countries compete to build the grandest embassy — the British version is particularly splendid while, architecturally at least, the Swiss seem to have struck a sour note. The **Jewish Museum**, designed by American architect Daniel Libeskind (Twin Towers replacement), is the town's most popular. Crumbling and, in some cases, abandoned U-Bahn and S-Bahn stations have been turned into

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**DEAR SUBSCRIBER**

*Continued from page 1*

tickets, instead of \$1514 for two upgradeable economy seats, our additional cost for admission to the room with the big seats on Air France is \$2,686. But we still have the 100,000 miles. Since one can purchase up to 25,000 miles from American for 2.5 cents each or \$625, it might be argued that we could have purchased the two-person upgrade for \$2,500 (2.5 cents x 100,000) — except that you can't buy more than 25,000 miles per year. It is possible, however, to buy another 25,000 miles and give them to someone (spouses to each other, for example). That's another 25k per person for a total of 50k miles, but only half the needed 100,000 hard-earned miles which, if used correctly, can be worth much more than 2.5 cents each. For example, in high season about the best we'll be able to do on a biz class purchase is \$7,600 for two tickets from a consolidator. If we instead buy two upgradeable coach fares for, say, \$2,400 and use our 100,000 miles (50,000 per person) to upgrade, we'll save a total of \$5,200 and our 100,000 miles will have been worth 5.2 cents. We will therefore save our miles until then.

If, as we do, you play these mileage games and are continually looking to get upgraded, here are a couple of outstanding resources.

**Webflyer.com**

The first is [www.webflyer.com](http://www.webflyer.com). This is a huge website with something of interest to every air traveler,

but the most informative pages are email forums on each of 30 frequent flyer programs. FF rules are complex, often arcane, and many times the best deals are not well promoted by the airlines. The vast majority of Webflyer's email posts are from *very* savvy, *very* frequent travelers who know from years of experience how to work the system.

Let's say, for example, you have 100,000 points in the American Express Mileage Rewards (MR) program and you want to transfer all or some of them to **Lufthansa**, which is not an MR participant. Is such a transfer even possible? That very question was recently asked on Webflyer's MR forum and here is one of many responses:

*If you are willing to move your points to another Star Alliance partner to redeem them on LH, you can do either of the following:*

1. *Move AMEX MR points to either Mexicana or ANA directly since both are in the Star Alliance and part of the AMEX program. You can then redeem points on LH!*

2. *Wait till October 26, 2003 and move the points to USAirways directly through the AMEX program. USAirways will be part of the Star Alliance on that date and you can then also redeem US points on LH.*

**Mr. Upgrade**

Those lacking the time or inclination to regularly monitor a dozen or so websites will do well to let someone like Matthew Bennett, aka "Mr. Upgrade," do it for them. His website ([www.firstclassflyer.com](http://www.firstclassflyer.com)), monthly

newsletter *First Class Flyer* (\$187), and *raison d'être*, are all about finding the cheapest 'front-of-the-bus' fares and getting the most out of frequent flyer programs. While the price for his newsletter will deter some, the serious business and first-class flyer will find it a bargain.

With resources such as these, one must now approach the traditional ways of getting a deal on a business class ticket with skepticism. For example, the American Express two-for-one platinum card deal that offers a free international business class ticket with the purchase of a full-fare ticket. There are a couple of hitchhikes; the card's annual fee is \$395 and you pay tax on the free ticket. Right now, for a late November departure from the West Coast, Lufthansa's website wants \$7,694 for the roundtrip to Frankfurt. Add the annual Amex fee of \$395 (I can think of no other reason

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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 "Members"). To access the issues enter the user name and password published in this space each month. The new codes are:

User Name: **dlrow** Password: **9753**

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**POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO:**  
*Gemütlichkeit*, 288 Ridge Road., Ashland OR 97520

**HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY**

Rating Scale	Scale	Restaurant Criteria	
Excellent	16 - 20	Food	65%
Above Average	12 - 15	Service	20%
Average	8 - 11	Atmosphere	15%
Adequate	4 - 7		
Unacceptable	0 - 3		
Hotel Rating Criteria		Value Rating	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.

**IN THE MOUNTAINS***Continued from page 1*

heidegg (a high plateau accessible by train from either Grindelwald or Wengen), the **Jungfrau Railway** travels primarily through a tunnel to the "Top of Europe" station, where visitors can view the panorama from an observation terrace or outdoor viewing areas, tour the **Ice Palace** in the Aletsch glacier, dine in a variety of restaurants, and ski (generally April-October), hike, or go sledding with huskies.

Grindelwald and Wengen are foremost among the many alpine communities in the Bernese Oberland region: farm towns that have migrated to the less physically demanding profession of tourism. Today, it is the number one industry, with all the attendant pluses and minuses. On the plus side, the tourism infrastructure is strong, excellent lodging exists in all categories, and restaurants meet most tastes. Even the region's six independent railways recently got their act together to create a single ticketing authority.

On the other hand, the commercial centers of each town have an almost cookie-cutter, post-1950s feel. Even car-free Wengen can seem congested. Though in both villages souvenir stores dominate, it's not the shopping areas people come for. It's the mountains, the glaciers, the clear air and the outdoor activities.

**Grindelwald**

The village lies at the base of the legendary North Face of the Eiger, one of climbing's best-known challenges. The mountain stands starkly as a nearly vertical wall, climbing to a 13,025-foot (3,970-meter) summit. Behind it looms the Jungfrau in snow-topped majesty. Between them, two glaciers carve through stone. Lifts carry guests to adjacent ski and hiking areas, or higher toward activities nearer the Jungfrau.

Vestiges of the Victorian golden age remain in structures like the Grand Hotel Regina, the Hotel Schweizerhof and the chalet-style Hotel Kirchbühl. Rustic charm is just a short distance away where chalets overlook valleys, farms and, of

**Jungfrau Basics****Wengen****Population:** 1,300**Elevation:** 4,180 feet / 1,274 meters**Tourist Information:** Tourist Information Wengen, CH-3823 Wengen, tel.: +41/33/855 14 14, fax: 855 30 60, email: [info@wengen.ch](mailto:info@wengen.ch), web: [www.wengen.ch](http://www.wengen.ch).**Grindelwald****Population:** 3,876**Elevation:** 3,393 feet / 1,034 meters**Tourist Information:** Grindelwald Tourismus, Postfach 124, CH-3818 Grindelwald tel.: +41/33/854 12 12, fax: 854 12 10, email: [touristcenter@grindelwald.ch](mailto:touristcenter@grindelwald.ch), web: [www.grindelwald.ch](http://www.grindelwald.ch)**Transportation**

**Rail:** Interlaken Ost is the transfer station for all points. From there, Jungfraubahn trains follow the Lütschine River until the village of Zweilütschinen, where they separate; some cars go to Grindelwald, others to Lauterbrunnen where they have the further choice of boarding trains to Mürren or Wengen. From Wengen, yet another train goes to Kleine Scheidegg and then on to the Jungfrauojoch.

Note: the best your rail pass can do on the private Jungfrau Railway is get you a discount.

**Auto:** Cars are allowed in Grindelwald, though parking is difficult downtown. Drivers to car-free Wengen must leave their vehicles in Lauterbrunnen and continue by train.

course, those prime drawing cards, mountains and glaciers.

Though cars are allowed in Grindelwald, there's not a lot of traffic. Still, visitors will find the town's charm increases in direct proportion to distance from the train station and the main road.

**Wengen**

Though higher, car-free, and more remote than Grindelwald, some visitors find less charm in Wengen. Much of the town's activity—away from the hills and slopes—is focused in a small commercial area, and when it's busy the town can feel uncomfortably confining. When it isn't, it seems a bit desolate.

Wengen appeals especially to visitors who want to be close to the outdoor action. In Grindelwald, though hiking routes crisscross the town, skiers and mountaineers still must travel a short distance on foot, by bus, car or lift. But access to such activities is virtually at your doorstep in Wengen.

**Lodging Grindelwald****Grand Hotel Regina**

Built in 1902 for the British tourist boom, the Regina retains much of the character of that bygone era. The exterior is still impressive with Victorian facade and turrets. Inside, public spaces are elegant, made even more so by centuries-old clocks, paintings and sculptures from the owners' private collection. Its 100 rooms are generally spacious, comfortable and well-appointed, most with superb views to the Eiger North Face.

The hotel is across from the rail station on the south side of the main road. Among the south-facing rooms, Room 414 is a double with a stunning view straight to the Eiger. Walls are whitewashed plaster, and the décor emphasizes brass and glass. Room 416 has the same view but its wooden ceilings and fabric wall coverings give it a more historic feel. South-facing second-floor rooms have large terraces but the views aren't quite as spectacular.

Sauna fans will especially enjoy the Regina's new Alpin Wellfit Club, which contains an extensive and creative sauna complex.

**Contact:** Grand Hotel Regina, CH-3818 Grindelwald, tel. +41/33/854/8600, fax: 854 8688, email: [info@grandregina.ch](mailto:info@grandregina.ch), web: [www.grandregina.ch](http://www.grandregina.ch).

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 295 to 400 (\$222-301), doubles CHF 430 to 500 (\$323-376), Jr. suites CHF 640-820 (\$481-617). Breakfast is an additional CHF 35 (\$26) per person.

**Rating:** QUALITY 18/20 VALUE 10/20

**Central Hotel Wolter**

The three-star Central Hotel Wolter offers views to the Eiger but over the main street. For many guests, this is an acceptable trade-off for lower prices. Some also like the theme-based rooms and ask for them specifically. There are Flower Rooms with flowers and vines carved into head- and footboards, blue sky with tiny "star" lights overhead, and floral murals throughout. The Cliff Rooms give insecure sleepers the chance to look up and see realistic "stone" outcroppings looming over their beds. Cheese Rooms and Cow Rooms

(where you open the closet doors by putting your fingers in a cow's nostrils) offer less threatening motifs. Farm Room 459, with cows and goats carved in the headboard, is the best bet with a balcony and bathroom with tub/shower.

**Contact:** Central Hotel Wolter, CH-3818 Grindelwald, tel. +41/33/854 3333, fax: 854 3339, email:

[wolter@grindelwald.ch](mailto:wolter@grindelwald.ch), web:

[www.central-wolter.ch](http://www.central-wolter.ch). Proprietor: Andreas and Monica Kaufmann.

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 105-125 (\$79-94), double CHF 210-250 (\$158-188). Parking is CHF 5 (\$4) per day.

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

### Schweizerhof

Although the Schweizerhof was built just a decade before the Grand Hotel Regina, it seems much older — not in the sense of rundown but in Old World charm and character. During an extensive 1994 makeover, the owners obviously put more emphasis on restoration than renovation. The place is gorgeous.

To the left of the lobby is a quiet sitting area with richly upholstered furniture, fireplace and extensive library. Antique farm furniture such as giant chests and wardrobes lend a sense of permanence and country charm to landings, hallways and other public spaces.

### Key Websites for the Traveler

- [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com) Gateway site for travelers to Germanic Europe, including car rental, rail passes, hotel bookings, traveler feedback, travel tips and past issues (free access to back issues for subscribers; see log-on info on page 2).
- [www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com) The Michelin database of hotels and restaurants plus great interactive trip planning tools.
- [www.travelgearnow.com](http://www.travelgearnow.com) Guidebooks, maps, travel accessories, luggage, all at 10% off for subscribers.
- [www.webflyer.com](http://www.webflyer.com) Informative frequent flyer forums make this a must for air travelers.
- [bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en](http://bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en) German rail. Train schedules throughout Europe, not just Germany.
- [www.sbb.ch/index\\_e.htm](http://www.sbb.ch/index_e.htm) Swiss and European rail schedules.
- [www.ski-europe.com](http://www.ski-europe.com) Top web resource for skiers with much data on Alpine resorts.
- [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) Website of Switzerland's national tourist authority.
- [www.germany-tourism.de](http://www.germany-tourism.de) Germany's national tourist authority.
- [www.austria.info/us](http://www.austria.info/us) Austria's national tourist authority.
- <http://www.hhog.de> Website for an alliance of historic German cities.

Guestrooms are bright and cheerful, and many have large balconies and windows. All doubles have both tub and shower. The new section has less character than the old.

**Contact:** Schweizerhof, CH-3818 Grindelwald, tel. +41/33/853 2202, fax: 853 2004, email:

[schweizerhof@grindelwald.ch](mailto:schweizerhof@grindelwald.ch), web: [www.hotel-schweizerhof.com](http://www.hotel-schweizerhof.com)

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 210-250 (\$151-180), double CHF 375-435 (\$270-313). Rates include parking, breakfast and dinner.

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

### Hotel Eiger

The four-star Eiger is about 500 meters from the railway station on the north side of the street. All 46 rooms are named after famous mountain peaks and were completely renovated in 2001. Rooms are generally spacious and bright and make extensive use of local wood. Closets and bathrooms are large and each room's namesake peak is depicted in a mural above the bed. Number 403 (the Mönch) sits high above the town and has a large balcony with Eiger view. Number 406 lacks the balcony and Eiger view but is much larger.

A nice touch for families with infants is walkie-talkies that enable parents in the restaurant to keep an electronic ear out for crying babies.

**Contact:** Hotel Eiger, CH-3818 Grindelwald, tel. +41/33/854 3131, email: [hotel@eiger-grindelwald.ch](mailto:hotel@eiger-grindelwald.ch), web: [www.eiger-grindelwald.ch](http://www.eiger-grindelwald.ch).

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 150-160 (\$108-115), double CHF 300-320 (\$216-230).

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

### Hotel Kirchbühl

In a quiet country setting about 10 minutes walk from the village center, this four-story, four-star, chalet-style hotel has large, airy guestrooms. South-facing ones offer stunning views of the Lower Grindelwald Glacier between the Eiger and the Lauteraarhorn. All have balconies. The style is Swiss-modern: lots of wood, glass and sunny spaces.

**Contact:** Hotel Kirchbühl, CH-3818 Grindelwald, tel. +41/33/853 3553, fax: 853 3518, email:

[hotel@kirchbuehl.ch](mailto:hotel@kirchbuehl.ch), web: [www.kirchbuehl.ch](http://www.kirchbuehl.ch)

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 165-210 (\$119-151), double CHF 270-340 (\$194-245).

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

### Wengen Lodging

#### Beausite Park

The sprawling six-story Beausite Park Hotel stands proudly over Wengen, with red-trimmed balconies and full four-star glory. From its glass-rimmed lobby, guests can look straight across to the Jungfrauoch.

Under the direction of owners Magrit and Erich Leeman-von Allmen, the Park places great emphasis on guest pampering, in large part via an extensive spa that offers massage, saunas, beauty treatments, and a grotto-like indoor pool overlooking the mountains. The 50 rooms are above average in size with plenty of closet space and room to spread out.

The house's best view is from the balcony of Number 416 and you can even mountain-gaze from your bed through the floor-to-ceiling sliders. If views and balconies aren't important, Number 206, a standard double, is as large as a junior suite.

**Contact:** Beausite Park Hotel, CH-3823 Wengen, tel. +41/33/856 5161, fax: 855 3010, email: [info@beausite-park-hotel.ch](mailto:info@beausite-park-hotel.ch), web: [www.beausite-park-hotel.ch](http://www.beausite-park-hotel.ch). Proprietors: Familie Magrit and Erich Leeman-von Allmen.

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 155-200 (\$111-144), doubles CHF 280-346 (\$201-249), suites CHF 380-430 (\$274-310).

**Rating:** QUALITY 16/20 VALUE 17/20

#### Hotel Caprice

For those who want to avoid the Swiss chalet or Victorian look, the Caprice is an 18-room boutique hotel that's more Laura Ashley than Heidi. Unlike many hotels passed from generation to generation, the Caprice is owned by an Englishman and managed by a Frenchman. It was built 12 years ago and just underwent a complete renovation. Rooms are large and well-appointed. Number 46, on the top floor, has a balcony with Jungfrau view, slanted ceiling, ample

closet and a big bathroom with a skylight and Jacuzzi-style tub. Number 26 is an especially large standard double with balcony and mountain view.

**Contact:** Hotel Caprice, CH-3823 Wengen, tel. +41/33/856 0606, fax: 856 0607, email: [caprice@wengen.com](mailto:caprice@wengen.com), web: [www.caprice-wengen.ch](http://www.caprice-wengen.ch).

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 160-270 (\$115-195), doubles CHF 230-300 (\$166-216), suites CHF 350-460 (\$252-332)

**Rating:** QUALITY 16/20 VALUE 15/20

### Hotel Alpenrose

The charming Alpenrose is set on a sunny terrace about a 15 minute-stroll from the village center. It feels farther than that and most guests prefer the isolation.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The 1881 hotel has a delightful sitting room, parlor, bar, and an excellent restaurant that looks into the Lauterbrunnen Valley. Most of the furniture and many of the carvings and artwork are original and passed down to the current fourth-generation owners (including the charming Frau von Allmen, whose Scottish accent and spirit have stayed with her since she moved here 30 years ago). Though rooms in the hotel proper are more than adequate (with Number 401 being your best bet, followed by Number 301), try to reserve a unit in the adjacent guest house, which feels like a private chalet. Number 506 is your best choice. In addition to spacious, pleasant quarters, it offers a large balcony that overlooks the Breithorn and the valley.

A tiny Alpenrose flaw is its thin walls, though that is somewhat mitigated by the absence of TVs.

**Contact:** Family Hotel Alpenrose, CH-3823 Wengen, tel.: +41/33855 3216, fax: 855 1518, email: [info@alpenrose.ch](mailto:info@alpenrose.ch), web: [www.alpenrose.ch](http://www.alpenrose.ch). Proprietors: P. von Allmen.

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 126-151 (\$90-108), doubles CHF 222-324 (\$160-233)

**Rating:** QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 16/20

### Hotel Schöneegg

The 100-year-old Hotel Schöneegg is known for its rustic, laid-back atmosphere and its simple but comfortable guest rooms with wrought-iron

balconies, green shutters, floor-to-ceiling windows and views to the Jungfrau. Frau Berthod, the hotel's delightful hostess, has filled the Schöneegg with charming antiques and matching, harmonious colors, as well as with old wood "recycled" from derelict farmhouses into charming walls and trim. With only 29 rooms, the hotel doesn't take groups, which allows its staff to focus on individuals. The restaurant, with fireplace and garden terrace, is a favorite coffee spot for local farmers, which adds even more character (and characters) to the setting. It's less than five minutes on foot from the rail station and from the cable car to Männlichen summit. The best room is the oversized Number 33 with a balcony facing south to the mountains. Backups would be the slightly smaller Numbers 3 or 8.

**Contact:** Hotel Schöneegg, CH-3823 Wengen, tel. +41/33/855 3422, fax: 855 4233, email: [schoenegg@tcnet.ch](mailto:schoenegg@tcnet.ch) web: [www.hotel-schoenegg.ch](http://www.hotel-schoenegg.ch)

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 100-125 (\$72-90), doubles CHF 200-250 (\$144-180)

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

### Lodging at Kleine Scheidegg

#### Hotel Bellevue Des Alpes

At 8,958 feet (2,700 meters), the base of the railway to the Jungfrau-joch, the Hotel Bellevue Des Alpes offers 19<sup>th</sup>-century grand-hotel luxury, not in its polished, refurbished form, but as it was — a once-grand hotel with plenty of Old World style.

Kleine Scheidegg isn't even a village, just a collection of buildings on a mountain plateau high above Lauterbrunnen, Grindelwald and Wengen. Beyond the hotel, the only structures are the train station, a few shops and some utility buildings. When the last train leaves the station that's it, unless you're game for a long, dark descent. But such isolation is exactly what many guests seek.

Every room looks out to one or more of the Eiger, Mönch, Lauberhorn, Wetterhorn, and Jungfrau, and though the hotel is very much alive and not a museum piece, a lot of its furniture, fixtures and decorations could be.

**Contact:** Andreas von Allmen, Hotel Bellevue Des Alpes, CH-3801 Klein Scheidegg, tel. +41/33/855 1212, fax: 855 1294, email: [info@scheidegg-hotels.ch](mailto:info@scheidegg-hotels.ch), web: [www.scheidegg-hotels.ch](http://www.scheidegg-hotels.ch).

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 170-210 (\$123-151), doubles CHF 270-410 (\$195-296) including dinner.

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

### Food

#### Schweizerhof

The restaurant at the Schweizerhof is charming; expansive and open, with sturdy wood beams, pastel table linens, an old tile oven and tons of character. It's been renovated without losing too much of its sense of tradition. One exceptional dining area has a terra-cotta floor, iron gates, scrollwork along the moldings and wood columns carved and painted with the signs of the zodiac.

The menu features imaginative approaches to traditional dishes. Guests can order entrées in either a large or, for about two-thirds the price, small version. The reduced size is enough for many, especially if preceded by an appetizer. Main dishes include lamb cutlets in a *Rösti* (fried potato) crust, beef fillet with vodka whole-ground mustard sauce, and poached sole stuffed with freshwater crayfish—each for about CHF 42 (\$30) for a large portion and CHF 31 (\$22) for the smaller size. A superb first course is carpaccio of smoked duck breast with apricot chutney and fresh shaved parmesan.

**Contact:** Schweizerhof, CH-3818 Grindelwald, tel.: +41/33/853 2202, fax: 853 2004, email: [schweizerhof@grindelwald.ch](mailto:schweizerhof@grindelwald.ch), web: [www.hotel-schweizerhof.com](http://www.hotel-schweizerhof.com)

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

#### Restaurant Kirchbühl

With perhaps the best view of any non-mountain top restaurant in the Jungfrau region, the Kirchbühl also offers one of the best overall dining experiences. There are actually three restaurants: the main dining room with Swiss and international cuisine, the *Stube* with Swiss specialties such as raclette and fondue, and an Asian restaurant.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Since you can select from all three menus regardless of where you sit, try the main restaurant (or on its outside terrace) just to the left of the Swiss flag. You'll find yourself staring straight down into the maw of the Lower Grindelwald Glacier between the Eiger and the Lauteraarhorn. Kirchbühl's décor is a blend of traditional and modern with a distinctly rural elegance: freshly cut flowers and Stoke-on-Trent chinaware beneath hewn wooden beams. Service is a blend of upscale formality and country warmth. In the main restaurant, entrées are priced in the CHF 35-45 (\$25-32) range. The *Stube's* main dishes are CHF 12-25 (\$9-18). The Asian restaurant falls somewhere in between.

**Contact:** Restaurant Kirchbühl, CH-3818 Grindelwald, tel. +41/33/853 3553, fax: 853 3518, email:

[Churchill@grindelwald.ch](mailto:Churchill@grindelwald.ch), web: [www.grindelwald.ch/churchill.html](http://www.grindelwald.ch/churchill.html)

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

### Barry's

The Hotel Eiger built its Barry's restaurant to resemble a "village" of chalets built within the main dining area. Guests can dine "inside" one of the chalets for privacy or sit on a terrace or balcony or along a passage-way. Either way, the otherwise large space is broken up creatively and lends a cheerful note. Although the menu has a range of local and international specialties, the best bet is Barry's Napf, where guests choose from a variety of meats, fruits and vegetables which are then cooked by the chef (Mongolian style). There's also an extensive salad bar with plenty of fruit. Both dishes are all-you-can-eat. Barry, by the way, is a St. Bernard, and you'll see plenty of his stuffed "puppies."

**Contact:** Barry's, Hotel Eiger, CH-3818 Grindelwald, tel.: +41/33/854 3131, email: [hotel@eiger-grindelwald.ch](mailto:hotel@eiger-grindelwald.ch), web: [www.eiger-grindelwald.ch](http://www.eiger-grindelwald.ch)

**Rating:** QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 16/20

For past issues covering the Jungfrau region visit [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com), click Members and enter the login ID and passwords on page 2. Mürren is featured in the July, 2002 issue and the Swiss Travel System was covered in August 2002. ☒

## UPDATE BERLIN

Continued from page 1

shiny steel and glass emporiums of transport with restaurants and shops.

Under communism, East Berlin's **Friedrichstrasse** was a dispiriting row of ugly buildings. These days, with its glittering **Galerie Lafayette**, five-star hotels and shops such as **Prada** and **Hugo Boss**, it's making noises about challenging the West's **Kurfürstendamm** as the city's premiere shopping street.

The *piece de résistance* of Berlin's comeback is **Potsdamer Platz**, once the city's center but a post-war vacant lot. In the '90s it was Europe's biggest building site and today it seems the incarnation of every futuristic architectural dream design of the past half-century. Housing an IMAX theater, a fascinating film museum, and the great buildings of Daimler-Benz and Sony, it is a must-see for every Berlin visitor.

At *Gemütlichkeit* we think Berlin should stand atop the itinerary of every first-time visitor to Germany, and that frequent travelers will find the city continues to reward regular visits. As New York is to the U.S., Rome to Italy, London to England, and Paris to France, Berlin is to Germany.

And it is our good fortune that the city is not as expensive as Rome, London and Paris. Last year, our survey of the top hotels as listed in the *Michelin Red Guides* showed that five-star hotels in Berlin are about half the price of their counterparts in Paris, London and Rome. In lower priced hotels the ratio is similar.

What follows is a summary of our discoveries of the past year as well as a recounting of a few old favorites.

To view *Gemütlichkeit's* Berlin coverage in past issues visit our online archive. (To browse the archive at [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com) use the access codes printed on page 2):

### What to See

#### Jewish Museum

The focus here is not on the Holocaust, as many assume, but on Jewish

life in Germany. Plan at least half a day and don't, as we did, spend too much time on the early exhibits.

There is a great deal to see and you can wear yourself out before you've been through half of it. Museum personnel are extraordinarily helpful and you can expect security measures upon entry. There is an excellent, reasonably-priced restaurant. Admission to the museum is inexpensive: €5 for adults and €2.5 for seniors.

**Contact:** Lindenstraße 9-14, Info: +49/030/25993 300, fax 25993 409, email: [info@jmbberlin.de](mailto:info@jmbberlin.de), web: [www.12-apostel.de/](http://www.12-apostel.de/), Transportation: U1, U6, U15, Hallesches Tor or U6, Kochstraße

#### Mercedes Welt am Salzufer

Yes, it's a new car showroom, but probably unlike any you've ever seen. In an ocean liner-shaped steel and glass atrium-style enclosure (designed by Bernard Maybeck) that rises some five stories above ground level are two restaurants, a private club with indoor climbing wall and racquet ball courts, and, of course, all those gleaming Mercedes Benz cars, priced from about \$15,000 to more than \$150,000. Brand new and rare vintage models, they are everywhere; on the ramps that wind to upper levels, perched here and there at various heights, and hanging on long cables from overhead steel girders.

About a dozen feet above the main floor, on the flat "roof" of interior office spaces, is an upscale, open-air restaurant whose tables are elegantly set with white linen and fine crystal. We chose a table in the main floor's more informal eating area where we kept one eye on huge, high-definition TV screens tuned to CNN and enjoyed a cool *bier vom fass* (on draft), salad and excellent bowls of soup — potato with sliced *Wurst*. Cost for two: €14 (\$16).

**Contact:** Salzufer 1, off Strasse des 17. Juni, near the Tiergarten S-Bahn station.

#### Frierichstadtpalast

This surprisingly spectacular Las Vegas-style revue in the *Mitte* is a pleasant leftover from communist times, when tickets to it were used to reward favored party *apparatchiks*.

There are acrobats, a full orchestra, singers, dancers, opulent costumes and elaborate stagecraft that includes a retractable, mermaid-filled glass swimming pool arising from the center of the stage.

The theater itself, which seats perhaps 3,000, has good sightlines and there is not, as they say, "a bad seat in the house." Though only the cheapest tickets (\$17) were still available on the day of the performance, the seats were excellent.

**Contact:** Friedrichspalast, Friedrichstrasse 107, tel. +49 (030) 23 26 23 26, fax 23 26 23 23, email: [tickets@friedrichstadtपालast.de](mailto:tickets@friedrichstadtपालast.de)

## Food

### Filou

Delightful, moderately-priced Italian restaurant on Bleibtreustrasse in the Savignyplatz neighborhood. Both the welcome and décor are warm, with the latter featuring brick walls, candlelight, large vases of fresh flowers, polished bare wood tables, and huge, deep stoneware plates. Dishes range from €11 (\$13) for pasta to €34 (\$39) for the five-course menu. Without beverages we paid €47 (\$54) for a late supper for two that included a shared anti-pasti plate (thinly sliced, very rare beef and salmon in top-grade olive oil, scattered with capers and finely chopped onion); hearty helpings in those stoneware bowls of bow-tie pasta with wild mushrooms and sautéed chunks of seafood and vegetables (€14/\$16); and, for dessert, a shared panna cotta (€7/\$8).

**Contact:** Filou, Bleibtreustr. 7, tel. +49/030/313 5543, fax 8867 5437, email: [info@filou-berlin.de](mailto:info@filou-berlin.de)

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

### "Die Zwölf Apostel"

Moderately-priced, but tasty Italian food served in a room that is more Sistine Chapel than Berlin restaurant. Opulent wall and ceiling frescos. Good pasta, fresh salads, and large, delicious pizzas.

There are two "12 Apostles" — one in the Savignyplatz neighborhood (open 24-hours) and another on Georgenstrasse in the old East, where we dined. The restaurant is located in

a building under the S-Bahn tracks in a row of fascinating antique shops.

Dinner for four was €64 (\$74), a price that included rather a lot of the house red wine, a decent merlot. Fet-tucine Pomodoro was €8 (\$9), and a large pizza cost €11.25 (\$13). The latter is half-price at lunch time and there is live piano music after 9pm at the Georgenstrasse location.

**Contact:** Georgenstrasse 2, tel. +49/030/201 0222, or Bleibtreustrasse 49, tel. +49/030/312 1433, web: [www.12-apostel.de](http://www.12-apostel.de).

**Rating:** QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 16/20

### Restaurant Diekmann

This slick little bistro not far off the Ku'damm produced one of the best Berlin meals in recent memory. The original of three locations, Diekmann has successfully inserted itself into that hard-to-locate slot between the expensive, fussy restaurants Michelin likes to award stars to, and the traditional meat and potatoes places.

Simple but attractive décor features herringbone wood floors, bent wood chairs, and white tablecloths.

What comes out of the kitchen — fillet of beef in a brown reduction sauce accompanied by mashed potatoes with celery, for example — *sounds* simple, even pedestrian, until your first bites. There must be secret ingredients. Given the atmosphere and quality of food, Diekmann is a bargain. The three-course menu is €35 (\$41); add a fourth and it's €41 (\$48).

A very pleasant surprise was the silky half-liter of Rioja house wine for €21 (\$24).

Dinner for four without beverages was €152 (\$176).

**Contact:** Meinekestrasse 7, 10719 Berlin Charlottenburg, tel. +49/030/883 33 21, fax 857 294 77, web: [www.j-diekmann.de/](http://www.j-diekmann.de/)

**Rating:** QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 16/20

## Where to Stay

### Hotel Art Nouveau

Savvy, world-wise travelers themselves, Christine and Gerd Schlenzka own and operate the hotel we think offers Berlin's best combination of comfort, location,

charm and value. The Savignyplatz neighborhood — near the Ku'damm and full of good restaurants and interesting shops — is our recommended Berlin headquarters locale and the Art Nouveau is on its southwestern edge.

Rooms in the pre-war building have hardwood floors, high-ceilings, tall windows, and no two are alike. Furnishings and art pieces are personally chosen by Frau Schlenzka, who has a decided flair in such matters.

The hotel's pleasant common room, with its view of the Berlin skyline, seems always full of sunlight and is a cheery spot to partake the daily breakfast buffet or, in the evening, to sip a beverage from the honor bar (just write down your room number and what you had).

The Schlenzka's steer their guests toward the neighborhood's best restaurants and recommend worthwhile sights that aren't in the guidebooks — the previously mentioned **Mercedes Welt am Salzufer**, for example.

**Contact:** Hotel Art Nouveau, Leibnizstrasse 59, 10629 Berlin tel.: +49/030/32 77 44 0, fax 32 77 44 40, email: [info@hotelartnouveau.de](mailto:info@hotelartnouveau.de), web: [www.hotelartnouveau.de](http://www.hotelartnouveau.de).

**Daily Rates:** Singles €95 to 140 (\$110-162), doubles €110 to 165 (\$127-191). *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers get 10% off.

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

### Art Hotel Am See

For bargain hunters who don't have to be in the center of the city, the Schlenzka's second hotel is our choice. Located in the Kladow district on the lake formed by the Havel, it was recently refurbished and has been open under Schlenzka management only a few months.

Rooms are large, decorated in the Art Nouveau style and many have lake views.

Frequent public transportation takes guests to the center in about 20 minutes. There is a 10% *Gemütlichkeit* discount.

**Contact:** Art Hotel am See, Imchenallee, Alt-Kladow, Berlin, tel. +49/030/36 50 033, email: [info@arthotelamsee.de](mailto:info@arthotelamsee.de).

**Daily Rates:** Singles €65 to 110 (\$75-127), doubles €80 to 140 (\$93-162)

**Rating:** QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20

### Notes & Opinion:

We still think the place to head-quarter during a Berlin visit is the Charlottenburg district in the vicinity of the Ku'damm. As we've often mentioned in the past, we particularly like the Savignyplatz neighborhood.

The talk that Friedrichstrasse will supplant Kurfürstendamm as the town's premiere shopping street seems to us wishful thinking. The Friedrichstrasse's relatively narrow sidewalks will never physically be able to accommodate the crowds that roam the Ku'damm's vast, more inviting, tree-shaded spaces.

- For truly inexpensive and surprisingly good food it's **Alibaba** (Bleibtreustrasse 45). A slice of top-notch pizza is an even one euro (\$1.16).

- At **Tavola Calda** (Leibnizstrasse 45) a continuing Editor's Choice, don't miss the calves liver for €15.50 (\$18).

- **Sachs** (Knesebeckstrasse 29), one of many trendy, affordable Charlottenburg district restaurants, doesn't measure up to others mentioned in this story.

- A stand-up lunch at **Rogacki** (Wilmersdorfer Str. 145/46) gets our strongest possible recommendation. Eat at the four-sided bar and grill, not the cafeteria. Compared by a British website to the **Oyster Bar** in New York's Grand Central Station.

- **Paris Bar** (Kantstrasse 52), though discovered by tourists long ago, still has good food and is the Berlin version of another New York institution, **Elaine's**. Berlin people-watching at its best. Reserve ahead. ☒

## Readers' Forum

### On Location in Werfen

Can it be that your Mr. Honan has never seen *Where Eagles Dare* and so did not realize why Clint Eastwood and Richard Burton were once guests in the town of Werfen or why the **Castle Hohenwerfen** looked exactly like the forbidding **Schloss Adler** in the film? If he has any interest at all in seeing the best Alistair MacLean thriller ever filmed he can now get

hold of the DVD which was finally released on September 2 and has an added short feature in which the stars and director discuss the difficulties of filming on a mountain. From friends, I understand that Werfen has not changed a lot since 1968 when the film was made and, if you have seen it several times — as many of us have — you will recognize many of the streets and buildings in the town. Talk about a time warp!

As for the "Old World" travel experience, we have most often found it alive and well in the old hotels — still clean and comfortable but unviolated by so-called modernization — in towns never mentioned in the Sunday travel section, towns like Wels in Austria or Celle in Germany. For some reason it often helps if it's a spa town; Bad Mergentheim in Germany, Villach in Austria come to mind. It's important never to make a hotel reservation in advance because then you miss the chance to tour the hotel and see all the empty rooms before making your choice. Remember also to use the old staircase — sometimes these have been all but abandoned in favor of elevators — or you'll miss the antique treasures that grace every landing. Then, if the hotel you've chosen has a good restaurant in its whitewashed 'Keller' with a zither player who drops in to play during dinner, you've found the perfect "Old World" experience. (This happened to us in Bad Mergentheim and it didn't matter at all that the bath in our room was five feet wide and twenty feet long, and lit by a 40 watt bulb. We loved that hotel!)

Enjoy your publication tremendously as always.

MARY ELLEN HUNTER  
VIA EMAIL

### Add Old World Places

As veteran subscribers, we enjoyed your "search for the Old Country." In thinking about the Old World, there are two places that we would like to add to your list.

Monschau in Germany is thoroughly OW. We spent two days there and loved every minute.

Sylt is another delightful spot. Beginning with the piggyback train ride along the causeway, the unique

architecture and the North Sea, this out of the way place is a must for the traveller who has "seen it all." We stayed at the **Stadt Hamburg**, which in itself is a marvelous experience.

Thanks again for the many great articles and recommendations.

MARY & LOU KRONINGER  
WOODLAND HILLS, CA ☒

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

*Continued from page 2*

to carry the Amex platinum card than for this 'twofer' deal), the tax of \$82 on the companion ticket, and your total for two people is \$8,171, or a little over \$4,000 per person. Not bad, but consolidator fares are about \$3,800 and include \$500 worth of usable hotel vouchers. And, if you are flexible regarding arrival city, Orbitz is currently quoting low business class fares on several airlines. Some examples: San Francisco to...Paris, \$2,100; Amsterdam, \$2,300; Milan, \$2,300; Brussels, \$2,300 and Munich, \$2,200.

Deals like these make United's recent offer of a free economy ticket with each purchase of an international business class ticket seem almost laughable. Assuming Europe as the destination, you would likely have paid about \$7,500 (West Coast) in order to get one economy ticket worth from \$500 to \$800. (The free economy ticket, you see, is valid only between September 15 and March 31, when international coach fares are at their lowest.) So this is not a good deal; even in high season a consolidator business class ticket is about half the United published fare and a flexible traveler probably would have found something for less than \$3,000, even in July and August. For one international business class fare and one economy ticket the smart buyer would pay between \$2,800 and \$3,500 vs. UAL's "deal" price of \$7,500.

So, whether you have to clip cereal box tops or spend \$187 on a newsletter, never pay full-fare for business class. Your best option, of course, is miles, but how to accumulate them and how to redeem them is an art. To know more about it I suggest you consult, as I do, [www.webflyer.com](http://www.webflyer.com) and Mr. Upgrade. — RHB ☒

Book hotels at [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com)