

**DEAR
SUBSCRIBER**

Voice from the past

Having been involved in other, more remunerative activities, Consulting Editor Tom Bestor, a *Gemütlichkeit* co-founder, hasn't been heard from in these pages since late '80s. This 17th anniversary issue seems an appropriate time for him to step to the podium and says a few words. — RHB.

One of the best things about *Gemütlichkeit* readers is their attitude toward travel. You don't simply share our love of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, you also seem to share some of our philosophy about how you experience places foreign to you. A few weeks ago, as my brother and I sat late one evening on his deck, sharing a bottle of wine with his friends, the discussion turned to just this topic; how does one maximize the travel experience? Time and money, after all, are in short supply.

My answer is simple: travel deep.

The cliché of American travelers (and like virtually all clichés, it's based in truth) is that we tend to skip from place to place, cramming as much variety into a trip as possible. This penchant was epitomized in the 1969 movie "It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium." The British version might be Monty Python's famous travel agent sketch, in which Eric Idle talks non-stop to a travel agent about wanting to avoid the sort of package tours where one is "carted around in busses, surrounded by sweaty mindless oafs in their cloth caps and their cardigans, complaining about the tea, 'Oh they don't make it properly here do they — not like at home.'"

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

FREIBURG

The Black Forest capitol is a university town with a network of narrow, winding streets lined with restaurants and shops and where fresh, clear water runs in narrow channels.

There's a Freiburg saying that perhaps is a bit of an exaggeration: "There are two kinds of people in this world: those who live in Freiburg, and those who wish they did." After a few days in the town, you may feel that way. At the very least, you won't want to leave.

By Jim Johnson

Quite simply, the city is a joy to visit; relaxed but electric, calm but alive, a small city dressed in smaller-town clothes. It's German but with an almost Mediterranean climate and the *joie de vivre* that goes with it. France, after all, is just 15 miles away. The Austrians, too, left their cultural fingerprint here, thanks to the city's 400 years under Habsburg rule.

Pride is expressed everywhere. The sidewalks are paved with dark pebbles from the Rhine. In front of each shop, quartz and other stones form mosaics of medieval trade symbols: a boot for a shoe store, a mortar and pestle for an apothecary, a bear in front of the **Gasthaus Zum Roten Bären**, and an ice cream cone — with three scoops — in front of an ice cream parlor. This is no easy task: three men are employed full-time and each day can complete only a small area of sidewalk. The shops share the costs.

The **Minster** — the city cathedral — is further evidence of civic pride. For more than a century, its upkeep has been supported purely by dona-

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Gemütlichkeit: 1987-2004

The first issue of *Gemütlichkeit* was January 1987. The lead story was about driving Europe's backroads and, though we didn't intend it, the first wordy sentence, *Surely the greatest of the considerable pleasures of automobile travel in Germany, Austria and Switzerland lies in exploring the maze of backroads which overlay the countryside like a vast network of fine capillaries*, established a tone and philosophy — though that's much too grand a word — for the next 200 issues. A few years later we soothed the ire of a substantial percentage of our readers by acknowledging — after discovering for ourselves — the joys of rail travel.

Another accidental portent of issues to come, was a story on Garmisch-Partenkirchen's **Gasthof Fraundorfer**, still the most *gemütlich*

place we know. It is somehow reassuring that this modest inn has changed so little. The atmosphere is still as we described it 17 years ago.

Perhaps it's just the beer, but something transforming happens right around 10 o'clock. It is similar to the moment in "The Wizard of Oz" when the movie changes from black & white to color. One is drinking the same beer, in the same place, served by the same waitress — but somehow everything is different.

It is about this time that Josef and Friedl begin to sing and yodel as well as play their instruments. Deeper into the night their harmonies begin to include achingly sad songs of unrequited Alpine love. The tourist tables are emptying and one or two large tables reserved for

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Exchange rates as of 11/19/03
1 euro = \$1.19
1 Swiss franc = \$.76

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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On a first trip somewhere, it can be valuable to spread your net wide in order to see what calls to you, to make mental notes of regions to which you want to return and explore more fully on subsequent journeys. But I still hear of people who trot off to Europe for three days in London, three in Paris and somewhat less than a week in Northern Italy, which gives them time to do Florence, Venice and a day trip to Siena and/or Pisa. Short attention span travel.

If that satisfies you, fine, but ultimately, all travel is about choices; after all, you can't go *everywhere*. The "travel deep" philosophy simply means choosing to narrow one's focus. Like many philosophies, it doesn't have a lot of rules – just guidelines. And only three at that:

• **Stay longer in one place**

For example, you could take a two-week trip consisting of three days in Berlin, three touring the Mosel valley (Trier, Bernkastel-Kues, Cochem,), a couple of days in Munich, two more in Salzburg, two in Zürich and two for traveling between those places. Or, you could choose to spend a full week in Berlin, and another week at the **Chalet du Lac** near Interlaken. Or do a couple of weeks in Vienna. Or rent a house in the Ticino.

One of my favorite trips was two weeks in a studio apartment in Paris, attempting the life of a Parisian. (Albeit a Parisian without a job, and only basic skills in French.) I'd already seen

the major sights (the Louvre, Musee d'Orsay, Notre Dame, Eiffel Tower, Pompidou Center, etc.) and had gone deeply into second tier sights, as well: the Rodin Museum, Victor Hugo's house, the catacombs, etc. Thus freed from my normal desire to "bag" attractions like I was on some sort of cultural safari, I was able to experience the city in a different way.

On the first three mornings I was there, I tried three neighborhood bakeries. When I had decided which I liked best, I went there for the next 11 days for a morning baguette and brioche. I spent hours in the Parc Monceau reading and people-watching. I wandered through department stores and watched Parisian kids whining about what their moms wanted them to wear – and didn't even need French to know what was being discussed.

The point is, focus brings freedom. Suddenly time seems to stretch out in front of you. And that makes vacation time (which is precious for most of us) more relaxing. And it all comes from narrowing your options.

This works no matter how much time you have – if you have only a day in a city, you can decide to concentrate on one neighborhood, maybe even a single intersection, rather than trying to cover it all. If you have a month, try spending it all in one country, or even one region.

• **Live like a local**

Even if you're only in a place for a few days, traveling deep means jumping feet first into the lifestyle of

the place. Get around the way the locals do – often by public transit. Go to a cultural or sporting event. Pick up the local paper. Read it if you can. Go shopping for mundane things like shoelaces or writing paper. Go to the same place often enough and you might even be invited to sit at the *Stammtisch*, the table reserved for regulars in many German, Austrian and Swiss restaurants. Order food and wine that comes from the region. Stay away from places with translated menus, and from other tourists.

• **Avoid Americanized places**

Sure, locals go to Starbucks and McDonald's – they're now global brands – but hanging on to such lifelines of familiarity prevents you from fully experiencing the foreignness of a place. And isn't that at least partly why you're traveling?

So on your next trip out of the country, think about traveling deeper – you might be surprised at what you find below the surface. ☒

Using Gemütlichkeit

- 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

Back issues in text format from January 1993, except for the most recent 12, 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: **anniv** Password: **4445**

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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.

FREIBURG*Continued from page 1*

tions. Scaffolding surrounds it, as it has for years and perhaps will for eternity, thanks to the fragility of the sandstone and extensive filigree. When one section is repaired, another awaits. As a local saying goes, "When the scaffolding comes down, we'll know it's the end of the world." Just a few blocks away 13 stonemasons apply ancient techniques in recreating statues and intricate scrollwork (a wonder to watch).

The Minster's construction spanned four centuries and was supported in great part by local guilds, whose symbols are still seen in stained glass windows. Don't miss the gargoyles, including one that spouts water not from his hideous mouth but rather from his naked bottom. If your legs are sturdy and the weather's good, consider the 330-step climb up the spire for an outstanding view of the Old Town, the Black Forest and the Rhine plain.

Tradition is important in Freiburg. Farmers and craftspeople still sell their wares daily (except Sunday) on the cathedral square. On one side, farmers sell local fruit, vegetables, meats, cheeses, sausages and bread, as well as teas and spices. On the other, craftspeople offer wooden toys, carvings and candles, many of them from the Black Forest. Most buyers are not tourists. As they have for centuries, Freiburg's residents come to the marketplace at least once a week — usually Saturday — to shop, even though it may be less convenient or more expensive than a supermarket. They know where the goods came from; they have known the sellers for generations.

Retailing is by no means restricted to the market square. Freiburg is a shopper's city, with values in department stores along the Kaiser-Joseph-Strasse and high-end buys in boutiques and galleries on Konviktstrasse and Königstrasse. Young designers round out the mainstream stores with a trendy jewelry and clothing scene. Browsers will love the antique shops in the Insel (Island) District and along the Gerberau.

Freiburg Basics**Population:** 230,000**Elevation:** 1,068 feet (323 meters)

Tourist Office: Freiburg Wirtschaft und Touristik, Rotteckring 14, D-79098 Freiburg, tel: +49/761/3881-880, fax: 37003, email: touristik@fwt-online.de, web: www.fwt-online.de

Driving Distances:

Berlin	802 km	498 miles
Cologne	433 km	269 miles
Constance	124 km	77 miles
Frankfurt	374 km	232 miles
Munich	410 km	255 miles
Vienna	858 km	533 miles
Zürich	150 km	93 miles

Rail Connections: ICE trains run south to Basel and north to Karlsruhe and Frankfurt. Trains to Stuttgart and points east (as well as most points in Austria) connect through Karlsruhe.

Nearest Airports: Basel (70 km / 43 miles), Stuttgart (205 km / 127 miles)

Water, water everywhere

Visitors to Freiburg quickly note a unique city feature, the so-called *Bächle* — or little streams — that flow in neat, narrow trenches through most streets. They were built nearly 600 years ago as a water supply and to fight fires. The Dreisam River, above the city, was split into multiple channels and follows a network through the *Altstadt*. The downstream flow is collected on the other side of town and eventually reaches the Rhine. A team of cleaners scrubs the stones and removes obstructions to ensure a steady flow of clean water.

Today, the *Bächle* is a way for tired backpackers to cool their feet, a race course for kids with rubber ducks — and a challenge for inattentive visitors. Local tradition has it that any visitor who stumbles into the water must marry a Freiburger. The waters can also reflect a sense of renewal, as in the stream emerging from the Star of David statue at the new synagogue. There, the town has erected a plaque acknowledging its "shame and sorrow" for the Jewish community that was torn from Freiburg during Nazi times.

Architecturally, Freiburg doesn't follow any cookie-cutter image of an old German city. Unlike many towns its size, it has no castle standing watch from above; the French turned it to rubble nearly 200 years ago. And, except for a few barely visible

exceptions, the defensive wall disappeared long ago, much of it replaced in the 18th century by the ring roads that encircle the Old City. Today, those same boulevards circulate automobile traffic away from the *Altstadt*, allowing for one of Germany's largest pedestrian zones.

Although Freiburg was damaged greatly during World War II, the city was rebuilt following its medieval layout. Builders used similar construction materials and styles, and even the modern structures within the *Altstadt* blend in beautifully.

With more than 30,000 students in a population of 200,000, a youthful spirit pervades the old city. There's an active pub and club scene, and cafés spread their tables across plazas and sidewalks until the wee hours (the Universitätstrasse has the liveliest concentration). When plays and concerts let out in the evening, the city gets a second wind. Live music is popular in the Platz, a popular student gathering ground. For music with a beer chaser, there's the **Hausbräuerei Feierling** (Gerberau 46 (tel. 0761/2-66-78)). The brewery / restaurant is on one side of the Augustiner Platz and pipes beer under the road to the beer garden across the street.

From the Black Forest to the Rhine

Local residents affectionately refer to Freiburg as the Metropolis of the Black Forest. Technically, geographers will tell you, Freiburg's *Altstadt* lies outside the Black Forest. However, cross one street on the eastern fringe of town — the Schlossberggring — onto the wooded Schlossberg hill, and you're in the *Schwarzwald*.

With a Freiburg region transit pass, guests can board streetcars or buses and quickly find themselves in the deepest Black Forest, on the rolling vineyards and farmland of the Breisgau or Markgräflerland, and even at the banks of the Upper Rhine. From Freiburg, it's just a few miles to the Breisgau Region and the rolling hills of the Tuniberg and Kaiserstuhl, an area increasingly known as German Tuscany, for its sultry and sunny climate, extensive wine-growing, and amiable populace.

Excursions

A popular day trip within the city

limits is the **Schauinsland**, Freiburg's 1,284-meter (4,213-foot) "hometown" mountain, where a cable car travels 15 minutes to the summit. The view from the cable car reaches far out over the Rhine plain, past the Tuniberg vineyards toward the French Vosges mountain range. From the summit, the view extends deep into the Black Forest and south to the Alps.

Hilltops—the worn remnants of long-extinct volcanoes—bear lush vineyard landscapes that alternate with sprawling tobacco farmland and orchards. Red roofs and narrow steeples set off tiny villages at all compass points. Ivy drapes off the ruins of ancient castles.

For a novel ground-level view of the countryside, consider a two-hour journey, perhaps with an accompanying bottle of wine, aboard a small flat-boat in the **Taubergiessen Nature Preserve**, a remote region often referred to as "Germany's Jungle." (Contact Klaus Kossmann, tel. 49/7643/6775, fax 9339985, email: info@freiburg-taubergiessen.de)

Just across the Rhine, **Neuf-Brisach** (New Brisach) is an example of Alsatian charm and historic military architecture. Protected by massive octagonal walls, imposing gates and star-shaped fortifications, Neuf-

Brisach was built by King Louis XIV as a fortress town. Today, its central square, church, officers' quarters, barracks and private homes are still intact. Despite the proximity to Germany, Neuf-Brisach is fully Gallic in character with delightful French bakeries, Alsatian restaurants (try the fresh trout at **Ville de Paris** at 13 rue de Bâle, +33/389/72/5355) and corner bistros.

Winemaking

Thanks to its soil and favorable weather, winemaking has been central to daily life in this part of Germany for at least 1,500 years. In September, town markets and produce stands burst with dozens of varieties of ripe grapes as well as plums, pears and apples.

Many vintners give tours. At the **Weingut Felix and Kilian Hunn** in Gottenheim, about midway between Freiburg and the Rhine, Kilian Hunn and wife Martina are proud to show off an operation which produces about 70,000 bottles annually. Guests can take a guided stroll through the vineyards and sample five wines for €3.50.

Like many wineries, the Hunns also operate a "Strausswirtschaft," a seasonal restaurant with wines by the glass and homemade dishes — such as pork shoulder simmered in wine, smoked bacon and bread, and fresh potato salad — from the family kitchen. (Weingut Felix and Kilian Hunn, Rathausstrasse 2, D-79288 Gottenheim, tel. +49/7665/6207, fax 6223, email: weingut-hunn@gmx.de)

For a broader sampling of wine, the **Alte Wache** on Freiburg's Cathedral Square represents more than 30 local vintners and offers more than 100 wines. Formal tastings are generally reserved for groups, but call manager Alixe Winter, who may be able to merge you with an existing reservation. (Alte Wache, Münsterplatz 38, D-79098 Freiburg, tel. +49/761/202870, fax 2028713, email: service@alte-wache.com.)

Sekt—"German" champagne—has an extensive tradition in the region. To learn what makes champagne champagne (or sekt sekt), take a guided tour of the extensive cellars

and bottling operation at the **Geldermann Privatsektkellerei**. Two-hour tours, which run six times daily except Sundays and holidays, cost €5 and include a detailed and informative wine tasting (Geldermann Privatsektkellerei, Am Schlossberg 1, D-79206 Breisach, tel. +49/7667/834100, fax 834-351, email: info@geldermann.de, web: www.geldermann.de)

Lodging

Oberkirch Hotel

From your room at the Oberkirch, look on to the Cathedral and its busy square. Mornings you'll watch farmers set up their stalls in the marketplace. In the evening, listen to street musicians serenade guests at the cafés below. If you crane your neck out the window you'll see the hotel's famous neighbor, the 16th-century **Historic Merchant House** with its four splendid arcades.

The Oberkirch has been in the same family since 1738 and carries a sense of tradition. Each of the 26 guestrooms is individually decorated with soft colors, rich wall coverings and dark wood furniture. Except for a handful designed as "small singles," rooms are spacious. Although the hotel was last renovated in 1992, it feels more like 2002. Everything is spotless, with nary a smudge or scrape on the walls.

Ask for accommodations facing the Cathedral.

Daily Rates: Singles €56-107, doubles €126-147. Indoor parking garage €10.

Contact: Oberkirch Hotel, Münsterplatz 22, D-7908 Freiburg, tel. +49/761/2026868, fax 2026869, email: info@hotel-oberkirch-de, web: www.traube-freiburg.de. Innkeepers: Doris Hunn and Gudrun Johner.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 15/20

Hotel Kreuzblume

The Hotel Kreuzblume is a straightforward traveler's hotel on Konviktstrasse, one of Freiburg's new hot-spot districts. The rooms are bright, cheery and spacious with showers. It's on the outskirts of the pedestrian district but a quick walk to any point within the Old City.

Daily Rates: Singles €60, doubles €90.

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.webflyer.com Informative frequent flyer forums make this a must for air travelers.
- 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.

Contact: Konviktstrasse 31, D-79098 Freiburg, tel +49 0761 3119495, fax +49 0761 26836, email info@hotel-kreuzblume.de, web www.rotterbaeren.de www.hotel-kreuzblume.de
Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 16/20

Park Hotel Post

The reasonably priced four-star Park Hotel Post is midway (about 150 paces) between the train station and the pedestrian district overlooking peaceful Columbi Park. The hotel was built in the early 1900s in *Jugendstil* (art nouveau), and the interior is modern and stylish. Guestrooms are large and creatively decorated with pastel colors and fabrics, wood trim and soft lighting.

The best chambers have balconies overlooking the park with the Cathedral steeple rising over the *Altstadt*. Families and friendly couples traveling together should consider the two- and three-room apartments.

Daily Rates: Singles €89-119, doubles €114-159, two-room apartments €199-249, three-room apartments €249-299. Garage €8.

Contact: Park Hotel Post, Am Colombipark, Eisenbahnstrasse 35/37, D-79098 Freiburg, tel.: +49/761/385480, fax: 31680, email: info@park-hotel-post.de, web: www.park-hotel-post.de.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 14/20

Colombi Hotel

Few would dispute that the Colombi Hotel is the city's most upscale hostelry. Built in the 1950s, it recently underwent renovations "to eliminate all traces" of that often less-than-stellar architectural period. Indeed, there's nothing 50s about this place anymore (certainly not the prices). Guests walk in under a glass-covered entry and ascend a sweeping marble staircase from the open lobby. A feeling of luxury dominates, not least of all in the spa area with its circular swimming pool, Roman steam bath and extensive "beauty farm."

The 120 guest rooms feature subdued colors and elegant wood paneling, some with floor-to-ceiling windows and French doors opening to a balcony and overlooking the Old Town. (The views from the upper floors are quite stunning, especially

at night.)

Daily Rates: Singles €175, doubles €230-260, suites €275-820. Breakfast is an additional €9. (Weekend rates are about 20% less). Garage €13.

Contact: Colombi Hotel, Am Colombi Park, D-79098 Freiburg, tel. +49/0761 21060, fax 31410, email: rezeption@colombi.de, web: www.colombi.de. Proprietor: Roland Burtsche (twice German hotelier of the year)

Rating: QUALITY 17/20 VALUE 15/20

Hotel Barbara

The Hotel Barbara is a privately run hotel on a quiet side street one block from the train station and a few minutes' walk from the pedestrian zone. It is small — just 22 rooms — but offers many of the services of a larger hotel. Erika and Armin Wahl and their team will arrange for theater tickets, wine tastings, gourmet dinners, excursions, sightseeing tours and visits to area spas. If you choose the hiking package, they'll prepare a picnic and lend you walking sticks and rain jackets. There's Internet service off the lobby. And the comfortable rooms, many with balconies, offer the expected amenities.

Daily Rates: Singles €69-79, doubles €89-102, apartments €119-139.

Contact: Hotel Barbara, Poststrasse 4, D-79098 Freiburg, tel. +49/761/296250, fax 26688, email: mail@hotel-barbara.de, web: www.hotel-barbara.de. Innkeepers: Erika and Armin Wahl and family.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 17/20

Food

Thanks in great part to the young student population, an extensive offering of international cuisine complements Freiburg's regional and "down-home" restaurants and friendly beer gardens. Firmly in the "Three-Country Corner" of Germany, Switzerland and France, Freiburg also enjoys strong French and Alsatian influences. Wine plays an important role in both culture and cuisine, and restaurants make full use of local varieties on the table and in their cooking.

Two hilltop restaurants on the Schlossberg, afford superb views of

the Old City and surrounding landscape: the **Greiffenegg Castle** and the **Dattler Restaurant**. Reach both on foot or by lift. On warm days, sit on the terrace.

In the countryside vineyards near Freiburg, you can also stop at a seasonal **Strausswirtschaft** and enjoy cooking straight from the kitchen. Since they're seasonal, ask your innkeeper for recommendations.

For quick, cheap and eclectic fare, the **Freiburg Market Hall** (Kaiser-Joseph-Strasse 233) is a must. There's a strong international focus — Afghan, Arabian, Chinese, Thai and Italian—and you can also buy fresh French bread, wines, fresh-ground coffee, fruits and vegetables, smoked fish and deli foods. Just note that the Market Hall closes at 7pm on weekdays and at 4pm on Saturdays and is closed on Sundays.

Zum Roten Bären

By most accounts, Zum Roten Bären is the longest continuously-run inn in Germany, in business since 1403. Peter Hansen, the Bären's 50th documented innkeeper, has greeted guests with his wife Monika since 1980. Today, there are 25 guestrooms and the dining area is bright and cheerful with a dash of elegance.

Ingredients are fresh, and the dishes are exquisitely prepared. The Bären employs its own herb professional, who grows them in the garden of a former monastery. This allows chefs (and guests) to try unique and subtle flavorings.

Salad "straight from the Freiburg Marketplace" is served with chanterelles from nearby woods, sautéed in cream with bread dumplings. There's lamb roasted with rosemary-shallot sauce and served with polenta; breast of duck glazed with mustard and honey; and medallions of venison served in a choice of sauces with *Spätzle*. *Wiener Schnitzel* is listed as a regional dish — not a mistake but recognition that Freiburg was once part of the Habsburg dynasty. Most entrées range between €17-20.

Contact: Zum Roten Baeren, Oberlinden 12, D-79098 Freiburg, tel +49/761/387 870, fax 3878717, email: info@rotterbaeren.de

web: www.roter-baeren.de.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 18/20

Restaurant Zur Traube

Other restaurants may offer greater choices or more elegance, but Zur Traube is recognized locally and beyond as Freiburg's leading restaurant. Its chef, Sven Messerschmidt, is the youngest in Germany to have earned a Michelin star.

EDITOR'S
CHOICE

The Traube ("Grape") fuses regional and classical French cuisine with an eye toward inventive use of local wines. Entrées are creative: stuffed baby squid served on lemon risotto with mild curry sauce, carp with Brussels sprouts and caviar sauce, frogs legs in a chestnut crêpe, smoked eel with mussels. There's duck in two courses: breast with apples, chestnuts and mushroom dumplings followed by the leg glazed with honey and pepper and served on red cabbage and *Spätzle*. Or various preparations of lamb served together with sheep-cheese ravioli.

The restaurant, a national monument, received a facelift in 2002 under new innkeeper Doris Hunn with an eye toward historic charm. The dining area was reduced to eight tables (all antique wood), and a mural now displays a scene of the Cathedral market. A medieval tile oven from an Alsatian monastery literally and figuratively warms the room.

Entrées start around €25, and dinner for two can easily exceed €100. Within the same building and under the same management, the **Restaurant Oberkirchs Weinstube** offers lighter and less expensive choices.

Contact: Restaurant Zur Traube, Schusterstraße 17, D-79098 Freiburg, tel. +49/761/32190, fax +49/761/26313, email:

restaurant@traubefreiburg.de,

web: www.traubefreiburg.de

Rating: QUALITY 18/20 VALUE 16/20

Hausbrauerei Feierling

This cheery and historic brewery welcomes guests at its outside garden (under spreading chestnut trees) and in its three-story restaurant. If you're hungry, enjoy the inexpensive entrées

(all less than €10) like smoked pork shoulder with sauerkraut, pork cutlet browned with cheese and herbs, sausage salad with fried potatoes, meat ravioli, and black bread baked with cheese, herbs and ham. Otherwise, the light "Vesper" menu will more than suffice with a variety of cheeses, dried meats and sausages for €5.

Contact: Hausbrauerei Feierling, Gerberau 46, D-79098 Freiburg, tel. +49/761/243480, fax: 25688, email: info@feierling.de, web: www.feierling.de

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

locals are now filled with ruddy-faced Bavarians, most in traditional dress, smoking and playing cards.

Sometimes, after midnight, Herr Fraundorfer, a huge, curly-haired man with bright red cheeks and wearing lederhosen made with enough leather to saddle a division of cavalry, will buy the house a round or two of schnapps. Often he will bring it to your table and, with a salute, knock one back with you.

Herr Fraundorfer, plagued for years by legs mangled in a bobsled accident, is now wheelchair-bound but still a late-night fixture. Though Josef has retired, the sweet, clear voice of Friedl is a poignant reminder of many past nights in this friendly tavern. Except for a few weeks off for heart bypass surgery several years ago, Friedl has performed six nights a week since 1959. And though she says she's turning control of the place over to her daughters, the linchpin of it all is still the indefatigable Barbara Fraundorfer. As you toddle off to your room after midnight she's likely playing cards with the men at the *Stammtisch* and, when you come down for breakfast at 7:30am, you'll see her, fresh and revitalized, bustling about, chatting up the guests. (Hardcore fans that want a keepsake to remind them of the Fraundorfer can purchase Friedl's CD *35 Jahre im Fraundorfer*. Our favorite cuts are #5 *Bergvagabunden* and #11, *Mit Musik und guter Laune*.)

We can't claim the Fraundorfer as our discovery, though we did first go there in 1979. Even then it had long

been a popular night-out for U.S. military families stationed in the area. Still, when we first wrote about it in 1987, it was pretty much a secret. Today it is well-known and in all the major guidebooks including those of Karen Brown, for many years a *Gemütlichkeit* subscriber.

Another story in that inaugural issue was on winter airfares across the Atlantic. Among the deals mentioned was a \$398 New York-Frankfurt fare on TWA. As this is written, 17 years later, there are several New York to Europe fares at less than \$200. This winter we here in Oregon can fly nonstop to Frankfurt from Portland for about \$350. Of course, TWA is gone, as are Pan Am, Swissair, Sabena, Western, Balair, and several others who flew the Atlantic.

Sadly, the experience has been degraded. Inflight food is often swill, more seats are crammed into the same space, and airline computers with sophisticated load-management software ensure that most planes are filled to capacity (the airlines offer deals so good they simply can't be refused). Add in the current tedious security procedures and flying is no fun anymore, and a prime reason why so many travelers frantically seek upgrades to business class where the seats are bigger and food almost edible.

If our so-called philosophy and the Fraundorfer have stayed the same, much else has not. Technology has changed the way we plan our travel, and in some cases, the travel experience itself. In 1987, though the facsimile machine was just beginning to be mass marketed, most of us still communicated with Europe via telephone or post. Later, as it became affordable, the fax became standard equipment at virtually every European hotel and the reservation process became faster and easier. Rare these days is the hotel that doesn't have CNN on its cable TV menu, and our ability to quickly and easily get in touch with home and the next stop on our European itinerary is vastly enhanced by the cell phones many of us now carry when in Europe.

But by far the biggest technological change to the traveler's life is the

Internet. The information one can unearth there is beyond comprehension. A simple Google search for "travel websites" yields some 11 million results. The Web gives us: driving directions and distances between any two points in Europe; personalized rail timetables; and online hotel bookings via websites that are virtual hotel brochures, complete with guestroom photos, prices, and restaurant menus. Of course with email we can almost instantly connect with tens of thousands of travel vendors and with like-minded travelers who share our particular interests.

Gemütlichkeit's Website

One of those sellers of travel, of course, is *Gemütlichkeit* at www.gemut.com. There you can renew your subscription, send us a change of address, get a quote on car rental or transatlantic airline tickets, find rail pass prices, book a hotel room, compare prices on travel insurance policies and, of course, delve into our million-word archive of reports on travel in the regions of Europe we cover. There's a good deal of free information on the site, but only you as a subscriber have access to the vast majority of it (see page 2 for the latest login ID and password). It's a resource we at *Gemütlichkeit* use every day and if you have yet to browse it, you're missing something. Go to the site, click on "Members," enter the codes from page two of the latest newsletter, choose the Archive or the Hotel Database. Here are just a few of the stories that are as valid today as when they were first published:

December, 1994: 10 Favorite Train Trips. Includes such trips as the Glacier Express and the "Transalpin" Zürich to Vienna run.

May, 1995: Driving in Europe. Advice on renting and driving a car in Europe ends with five favorite backroads routes. We describe the scenery, the towns and villages, and recommend hotels and restaurants.

August, 1995: Grand Tour is a suggested 14-day "open jaw" auto trip that begins in Zürich and ends in Frankfurt. Three days are spent in Munich and other stops include Wald-Schönengrund near St. Gallen, Appenzell, Garmisch-Partenkirchen,

Hohenau, Bamberg, Muggendorf, and Marktheidenfeld. We offer specific route instructions, suggest the best maps, hotels, restaurants and provide information on what not to miss along the way.

October, 1995, Austria by Auto: The second part of our Grand Tour series. Includes four days in Vienna, short visits to Graz and Salzburg and some of Europe's most thrilling and beautiful mountain driving.

December 1995, Memory: Both funny and poignant recollections from the first nine years of *Gemütlichkeit*. There's the time in Vienna when we stumbled onto reclusive film star, Greta Garbo, lunching all alone in a huge, private dining room at the **Palais Schwarzenberg**; and a reader survey response from a subscriber who signed himself H.S.H (His Serene Highness), then his name, followed by XXVIR.v.P. His royal comment: "We are content with your publication."

July 1996, Castles: Ten of our favorite castles and castle hotels. (You'll have to update room prices and one of them, **Schloss Matzen** in Austria, is no longer open.)

June 1997, Avoiding the Summer Tourist Crush: A dozen interesting and charming alternative destinations to such household names as Salzburg, Lucerne, and Rothenburg that are often overrun with visitors.

May 1997, Brewery Drive: Starts in Germany and ends in the Czech Republic.

January 1998, Bargain Bavaria: Less visited villages and inexpensive accommodations in southern Bavaria.

June 1999, Pedaling the Danube: How the novice cyclist can leisurely negotiate the famous Danube's flat bike path between Passau and Vienna.

November 2000, Swiss Walks: Three Swiss cities, Samedan, Interlaken and Lucerne, are a base of operations for a series of easy to moderate, but spectacular, mountain walks.

March 2000: Great Swiss Train Rides: Four celebrated Swiss rail trips: the Golden Pass route, the Glacier Express, the Bernina Express, and the William Tell.

August 2001: Traveling Without an Itinerary. First installment of a two-part guide to footloose, flexible European travel.

August 2002: The Swiss Travel System. Switzerland's fabulously coordinated network of trains, buses, lake steamers, and cable cars.

Better Search & Sort Features

In the past year we've made some key improvements to [gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com). The most important of these being a better search capability. Perhaps you'd like to know what we've said in past issues about Friedl, the singer at the **Gasthof Fraundorfer** in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Enter the words "Friedl," "Gasthof," and "Fraundorfer," and choose "All of my keywords" from the drop-down menu. You'll get one match, the June 1996 issue, which you can then choose to read online or download.

The hotel database has also been improved. Hotels can now be sorted in ascending or descending order by several criteria including value rating, quality rating, price, location and Editor's Choice.

We plan soon to launch a forum at the site where visitors can post travel questions, pass on their own tips and advice, and comment in general on Europe travel. During late November through early December you *may* see your editor's trip reports emailed daily from Europe.

Gemut.com will continue to grow as we add more stories, more pictures, more deals, perhaps even video and, in the not too distant future, an email version of *Gemütlichkeit*. But whether it comes to you electronically or via regular mail, *Gemütlichkeit* is where you will continue to find our destination assessments, best value hotels and restaurants, off-the-beaten-track discoveries, and our sometimes cockeyed look at travel to Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

Ahead in 2004 we see a substantial increase in travel to Europe, higher airfares, stabilized car rental prices and no increase in rail prices.

Whether you've been with us for all 17 years or this is your first issue, we thank you for your support.—
RHB



Readers' Forum

Breaking a Leg in St. Moritz

In February 1999, on the second day of my Switzerland trip, I fell and broke my hip. I was in the hospital "Klinik Gut" in St. Moritz for 30 days.

Upon arrival at the Klinik, the one thing they did not ask me was to "show us proof of insurance." In fact the question of insurance did not come up until the fourth day, at which time Dr. Urfur came in and said "Oh, by the way, do you have insurance – we have no socialized medicine in Switzerland." When I told him I had Blue Cross, he replied, "That's wonderful, they are good to work with." In fact I saw only one bureaucrat the whole time in regard to the insurance. It took Blue Cross seven and one-half months to pay Klinik Gut a total of \$38,000 (the entire bill, by the way).

What I got for my money: excellent treatment (I found out later that the doctor was the Swiss Olympic bobsled team's doctor); excellent food (the Klinik had an actual chef who would come to my room every day in his big chef's hat and ask me if the food was o.k. and what he could make different for me); and I also got staff who actually came when I rang the bell. One thing I never got there was a lot of smart talk from staff.

I couldn't travel on a commercial airliner, so Blue Cross arranged for me to come home in a Lear Jet (cost of \$40,000).

The first thing the doctor told me on my arrival back in Minnesota: "you fell in the very best country in the world; they are the experts when it comes to fractures."

The Klinik had windows in the room that you could actually open; I had real fresh air (try that in the United States!). In the afternoon they would bring me up on the roof of the Klinik so I could sit and enjoy the mountains and the mountain air.

On the last day I was there (February 29, 1999), when I was sitting on the roof, a butterfly came and landed next to me. I found this unbelievable, as it was still very much winter! After an instant, it flew off again.

GEORGE HULSTRAND
WILLMAR MN

Austrian Country Hotel

Your article on Austrian country hotels includes some quite elegant lodgings – all great choices. One we visit or dine at on every trip to Grundlsee/Altaussee, is the **Seevilla** (Altaussee, A-8992, tel. +43/03622/71302, fax 71302-8, email: hotel@seevilla.at, web: www.seevilla.at) located directly on the lake looking up to the Loser mountain. It is "Old World," reasonably priced, great food (especially dinner buffet – with local musicians), and at one time hosted the composer, Brahms. Altaussee also includes one of the best tailors and clothing stores in Austria – named Haselnus. Another store is located nearby, Bad Aussee, and is owned by a wonderful couple, Georg and Traudi Haselnus. They custom-make beautiful traditional clothing and also offer great stuff off the racks by Schneider and Gössl of Salzburg.

WILLIAM H WOOD, III
HOBE SOUND, FL

More on Seevilla, Altaussee

Our week's stay in the **Seevilla** (Editor's note: see contact info above) was marvelous. This was our second visit and it certainly won't be our last. If you haven't been to Altaussee, I think you'll find it a delightful destination. There is so much to see and do. The hotel has a spa and a pool, there is swimming in the lake, there is a golf course nearby and if anyone is into paragliding this is a center for that sport. In the winter there is skiing and snowboarding. The hiking is wonderful. There are trails everywhere. Eating is a delight. If one tires of the cuisine in the hotel. (I really don't know why they would, as it is excellent) there are a number of restaurants in the town and vicinity. **Gasthof Loser** is a favorite of ours. Every Thursday they have folk music. Every Tuesday they serve smoked trout. It is to die for. Owner Hans Glaser's restaurant has been featured in the gourmet magazine "Essen und Trinken." The town of Aussee is five kilometers away. Excellent shopping here. An added inducement: all the salespeople in the town wear Trachten. The town of Aussee is near Lake Traunsee. A nice outing is to walk from Traunsee to Toplitzsee, a lake with a somewhat shady and mysterious past. Anyone interested in WWII would be enjoy reading up on Toplitzsee. Day

trips from Altaussee will take you all over the Salzkammergut. It is not far from any attraction, Salzburg included.

ED AND THEA REILLY
TORRANCE, CA

Upgrade Not Easy on AA

I found your October column about air upgrades interesting, but not consistent with our experience with **American Airlines' AAdvantage Program**. My wife is a platinum class member and these are our recent experiences.

- Last November we booked economy class to Zürich for a mid-May, 2003 trip — requested business class mileage upgrades at 50,000 miles per person — and had to wait until 10 days before the flight to finally get upgraded. Although the request had been on standby status for six months, we were charged \$50 for each upgrade as AA chose to view the confirmation (e-tickets so no paperwork involved) as a "rush" order!

- In April 2003 we inquired of AA's platinum desk about again using 50k miles per person for a business class upgrade to Rome for September 2003. We were told there were no business class upgrades available for any transatlantic flight for the entire month of September (we weren't even queried as to what category coach tickets, so presumably even a full fare coach ticket five months in advance wouldn't get the job done). We finally concluded my wife's 400,000-plus AAdvantage miles were becoming of limited value — our main goal being transatlantic upgrades — and we used 100,000 miles each to fly coach to Rome.

May and September are the months we typically travel to Europe, and it appears to us that using AA miles for business class upgrades (at least at those times) is no longer a realistic option. As a result my wife has switched to **Northwest** which on a worst-case basis at least offers business class without restrictions for 160,000 miles (theoretically also for 80,000, which probably only works in the dead of winter). Those who make trips to Europe at off-peak times may be able to get some AA business class upgrades on occasion. Good luck!

BILL BOHNHOFF
VIA EMAIL 