

DEAR  
SUBSCRIBER

### Euro Beaters

These are the days that try men's souls. Women's too. In the last 30 months the Euro has gone from 84 cents to \$1.30. Today, February 23, it's about a buck twenty five. A double room that was \$84 (€100) in June of 2001 is now \$125 — provided the hotel's room rate is still €100.

If your hotels average €100 per night double, that means for a two-week vacation a couple will spend \$574 dollars more on lodging than in 2001, and \$322 more than last year at this time.

The same goes for food. Let's say the same couple spends €40 per day, per person. At €80 per day per couple, instead of it costing them \$67 per day as it did in 2001, they will pay \$100 a day to eat in 2004, an increase of \$462 over a 14-day trip in 2001 and \$260 more than last year.

The trip is now \$1,000 more than it was in 2001, almost \$600 over 2003, and we've not talked about such items as entrance fees to tourist sites and everyday stuff like newspapers, public transport, snacks, gifts, ice cream cones, etc., that cause euros to disappear from wallets and pocketbooks.

And this is a couple that's playing it pretty close to the vest. Those used to spending €150 or more for a hotel room, and who eat a bit "higher off the hog," can do the math.

### Affordable Luxury

So does all this have you ready to forgo Europe this year? The feeble dollar had subscribers Pat and Bob McLean ready to scrub their

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## SALZBURG UPDATE

*Salzburg is an old dog that has been taught some new tricks. Our U.K.-based Austria correspondent, Mark Honan, tells us about them and also re-visits some old haunts.*

History has left its mark so indelibly on Salzburg that it seems like nothing ever changes there. Returning to the city after a three-year gap I find that its permanent fixtures are still, well, very definitely permanent. There's the resplendent **Hohensalzburg** castle, high on the sheer cliffs of the Mönchsberg. In the old town, the harmonious pattern of Baroque spires continues to evoke wonderment in the minds of countless visitors. And pervading the atmosphere, providing the rhythm of everyday life, remains the enduring presence of favorite son Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Yet I did discover that there have been some changes, and more are on

the way. On the Mönchsberg, for example, a cluster of cranes at the top of the lift marks the imminent emergence of a new museum of modern art (scheduled to open in Fall 2004). More modern art has appeared in the form of strategically placed sculptures around town, such as the steel-and-neon 'igloo' constructed by Mario Merz close to the new museum. The igloo was constructed under the auspices of the Salzburg Art Project, which seeks to provide a contemporary counterpoint to centuries' worth of tradition. Further pieces will be commissioned over the next few years, and a 'sculpture park' will be established.

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## Good, Cheap Hotels

Strong dollar or weak, the question on every traveler's lips seems to be, "where do I find a good hotel — and not too expensive?"

Michelin's invaluable *Red Guides* are full of hotels. The Germany book, for example, must have about 9,000 of them, but not very many are cheap. The information provided about each is extensive and includes virtually everything you need to know, from street addresses to whether dogs are allowed. The guide's roof peak symbols indicate a hotel's level of services: five fancy peaks is "luxury in the traditional style," while a very plain roof hovering above a wine glass means "simple comfort." If the roof symbol is red, Michelin thinks the place is especially good. Red, however, seem to be reserved for the more expensive hotel categories. Until

2003, there was no way to tell what Michelin thought of simpler hotels.

Now, however, we can rely on a new "Bib Hotel" symbol (as in Bibendum, the Michelin Man). Using a blue icon, this useful *Red Guide* feature identifies hotels with a "warm welcome and good standards of comfort and service" that charge less than €90 (\$112) in Germany and CHF 176 (\$141) in Switzerland, for a double or twin room. There are some 240 Bibs in Germany and 85 in Switzerland.

The Bib symbol is placed by the hotel's listing in the main pages and is also spotted on the maps at the front of the book used to highlight special hotels and restaurants.

It was always relatively easy to

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**Exchange rates as of 2/23/04**

**1 euro = \$1.25**

**1 Swiss franc = \$.80**

**DEAR SUBSCRIBER**

*Continued from page 1*

annual sojourn until they got a bit creative. First, they decided to travel a bit earlier in the year and take advantage of lower airfares, in their case \$500 each for March travel. Next they logged on to [luxurylink.com](http://luxurylink.com) (see story page 7) where they successfully bid on two upscale hotel packages that got them first-class food and lodging at tourist-class prices. For \$850 they're getting five nights in a "designer" suite at the five-star **Pflaums Posthotel** in Pegnitz (near Nürnberg), and the deal includes three meals in the hotel's **Posthalter-Stube** and **Pflaumgarten** restaurants, a bottle of Louis Roderer champagne, private car tours of Nürnberg, Bayreuth and Rothenburg, a round of golf, massages, and other perks.

Their other successful bid was \$930 for four nights in a junior suite on Lac Léman at the gorgeous (best looking building in town), five-star, **Montreux Palace**. Included are three dinners, a bottle of champagne with hors d'oeuvres upon arrival, free admission to the Montreux casino, and a free body wrap in the hotel's spa.

The two packages account for nine of their 14 nights in Europe. For the other five, the McLean's will use points and mileage from a variety of frequent traveler programs at the rate of about 15,000 to 20,000 per night.

Taking advantage of the Gemütlichkeit Travel Department's free one-class car rental upgrade (for travel prior to March 31) they are paying

approximately \$31 per day, including VAT, for an economy car but will get a 4-door, compact with air.

By my own estimate the McLean's "luxury" European vacation will cost them about \$4,500. To illustrate just how wisely they have shopped, take a peek at the Montreux Palace's website ([www.montreux-palace.com](http://www.montreux-palace.com)). You'll see the hotel's junior suite rack rate is a scary €600 (\$750) per night, or \$3,000 for four nights. Then click on "Special Offers" to find a two-night deal, with similar amenities to the Luxurylink package, at €1326 (\$1658), or \$829 on a per night basis vs. the McLean's \$233.

As good a deal as the McLean's have made, it isn't right for everyone. Some don't want the formality of five-star hotels and many budgets are more limited.

**Keeping it in Dollars**

Strategies for saving can be devised at all levels, but in making the "go, no-go" trip decision, there are a couple of obvious points to remember. First, it isn't free to stay at home. Second, not all trip expenses are in euros. Rental car, rail passes, air tickets can all be in fixed dollar amounts, and locked in prior to departure.

In fact, the number one trip expense, lodging, can also be nailed down in dollars prior to departure. If you have two weeks, why not plan a pair of one-week vacation rentals in different parts of Europe? Our recommended supplier of such properties in Germany, Austria and Switzerland is **Drawbridge to Europe** (tel. 888-

268-1148, [www.drawbridgetoeurope.com](http://www.drawbridgetoeurope.com)). Here are three of their offerings, one in each country:

- **Switzerland:** Schwendi, five minutes from Grindelwald. First-floor apartment with living room, kitchen, bedroom, satellite TV, terrace, garden, and mountain view, suitable for two persons. The electric railway to Grindelwald runs behind the house. Price: \$581-\$690 per week, less than \$100 per night. (Ref. 1238)

- **Austria:** 820 sq. ft. apartment in a country location outside the hamlet of Altheim, near Bad Griesbach. Convenient to München and Salzburg. All amenities plus spacious terrace with panoramic view of the Alps. Parquet floors, antiques, and Swedish wood oven. O.k. for family of four. Price: \$1620 per week. (Ref. 1255)

- **Germany:** Grainau, four miles from Garmisch-Partenkirchen. First-floor apartment done in charming Bavarian country style with great Wetterstein view. Private parking.

*Continued on page 8...*

**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: **zburg** 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.

**SALZBURG***Continued from page 1*

In **Festung Hohensalzburg** a new attraction in the castle grounds is a charming museum of marionettes. Salzburg has a strong tradition in puppetry thanks to the enduring appeal of the **Marionettentheater**, wherein puppets enact full-blown operas. Puppets from around the world are featured, including former 'stars' now retired from the Marionettentheater. It's open May to October and during Christmas and Easter. Entry costs €3, though as with most city sights, admission is included in the **Salzburg Card**, which now costs €19/26/32 for 24/48/72 hours.

Returning visitors should be aware that some of Salzburg's bus routes changed in December 2003; the airport-Hauptbahnhof bus, for example, is now No. 2 not No. 77, and the bus serving Linzer Gasse is now No. 4 not No. 29. Nowadays, though, you're not limited to the bus as a way to see the city. Since 2001 it's been possible to take a boat trip along the Salzach, something that hadn't been an option since the previous passenger ship was taken out of service in 1891. The trip departs from Hanuschplatz in the center and costs €11 (mid-April to mid-October only).

Relatively new is the **Steigl Brauwelt**, established in a 500-year-old brewery which first opened its doors to the public in 1995. It's at Bräuhaustrasse 9, open 10am to 4pm Wednesday to Sunday ([www.brauwelt.at](http://www.brauwelt.at)). Describing itself as Europe's largest beer exhibition, at first glance it would seem to be a relatively low-brow (low-brau?) alternative to the oodles of high-brow culture on offer in the city. But as you walk around the various displays you find quite a bit of erudition here too. The museum goes through the whole brewing process, from gathering the barley, to brewing, bottling and finally, consumption. (The last in a very real sense – two beers and a pretzel in the bar are included in the admission price of €9.

I wouldn't dare question the accuracy of the beer-related facts expounded, but what is presented is clearly not the whole picture. You

**Salzburg Basics****Population:** 147,000**Elevation:** 394 feet (114 meters)**Tourist Office:** Mozartplatz 5, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +41/0662/889 87330, fax 889 8732, email: [tourist@salzburginfo.at](mailto:tourist@salzburginfo.at), web: [www2.salzburg.info/](http://www2.salzburg.info/)**Driving Distances:**

Innsbruck	177 km/111 miles
Munich	140 km/88 miles
Vienna	292 km/183 miles

**Parking in Salzburg:** Many hotels are located on streets which limit vehicle access. As a visitor you can drive to hotels and pensions in the Altstadt at anytime, even on streets which restrict vehicles. You may creep along at 5 miles an hour among crowds of pedestrians but stay with it, as long as you're hotel-bound it's o.k. After check-in, however, you will need to find parking during your stay (forget the car except for excursions to the countryside). Some hotels provide permits for street parking but a public garage is the more likely solution. Most hotels have discount arrangements with these garages.

won't see any mention of alcoholism, drunk-driving accidents, alcohol-infused aggression or the like. Instead, the unremittingly pro-beer slant in the various (English) texts provides some unintentional humor. You'll learn that beer consumption does *not* make you fat (that's food's fault, in case you didn't know), but it does reduce heart attacks, enhance circulation and improve concentration. Oh yes – it also cleans the liver rather than damages it. Overall, you'll leave the exhibition with the happy conclusion that beer is nothing but a good thing. No less a personage than Paracelsus (pioneer of modern medicine who died in Salzburg in 1541) apparently claimed that 'beer is heavenly medicine for ill people.'

Something that's exciting many a local is the new **Hanger 7** complex by the airport. Conceived by Dietrich Mateschitz, founder of the Red Bull company, it's a striking glass-and-steel construction housing a collection of historic aircraft (free entry, open 9am to 10pm daily). Designed to look like a glass aircraft wing, the hanger contains a fleet of working aircraft, including a Douglas DC 6B and a dozen smaller craft.

Within the complex are also a bar, cafe and restaurant, which are fast becoming 'in' places to hang out. A fun feature of the **Mayday Bar** is

interactive animated aircraft that 'fly' around the surface of the bar. Art exhibitions are also hosted in the hangar. Find out more at [www.hangar-7.com](http://www.hangar-7.com), with pictures and English text.

And what of Mozart, the man who is represented in everything from festivals, statues, dedicated museums and even chocolate balls and liqueurs? The year 2006 marks the 250th anniversary of his birth and the city is already gearing up to celebrate.

Expect even more Mozart-related events to crowd into the already Mozart-strong cultural calendar. Mozart week (late January), for example, will stretch to two weeks in 2006. Actually, the celebration of Mozart in 2006 is not confined to Salzburg or even Austria – see [www.mozart2006.net](http://www.mozart2006.net) for a full outline of planned events.

Another musical anniversary is likely to make an impact this year – 2004 is the 40th year since the filming of *Sound of Music*, which brought many of Salzburg's major sights to celluloid fame.

All in all, there's plenty that's new in Salzburg to attract newcomers and to entice back old friends who have previously experienced its many charms. I am already looking forward to my next trip.

**Lodging**

I revisited most of the hotels we reviewed in *Gemütlichkeit* in February 1999, concentrating on those described as requiring updating or renovating. The hotels **Elefant**, **Weisse Taube**, and **Wolf** have all had some much needed-renovations, though in Weisse Taube's case they are not yet complete; hence there are still some gloomy, dated rooms to be had here. Elefant's rooms are now rather dull and corporate-looking, so like the 1999 reviewer, I would prefer Hotel Wolf to the other two – it has new bathrooms throughout and a touch of flair in its decor.

Sadly, though, Wolf's prices have almost caught up with those of its rivals. Prices are: Hotel Wolf (tel. +43/0662/8434530, [www.hotelwolf.com](http://www.hotelwolf.com)), singles €58-98, doubles €80-158; Hotel Weisse Taube (tel. +43/0662/

842404, [www.weissetaube.at](http://www.weissetaube.at)), singles €61-82, doubles €96-165; Hotel Elefant (tel. +43/0662/843397, [www.elefant.at](http://www.elefant.at)), singles €84-100, doubles €128-185;

The five-star **Hotel Altstadt** was described in 1999 as being preferable to the **Goldener Hirsch**. Though all the good things mentioned in the earlier review still apply, I experienced a few minor niggles during my stay. My room, though huge, had no air-conditioning. The wardrobe doors kept falling open. There was no view from the window (as there isn't from many of the guestrooms). There was no alarm clock, and but one English channel (CNN) on the TV. None of these complaints applied to the rooms I saw in the Goldener Hirsch. Nevertheless, the Altstadt (tel. 8485710, [www.austria-trend.at/ass](http://www.austria-trend.at/ass)) is the clear winner in terms of price with singles for €147 and doubles for €218-329, whereas Hotel Goldener Hirsch (tel. 80840, [www.goldenerhirsch.com](http://www.goldenerhirsch.com)) charges €204-350 for singles and €274-372 for doubles.

### Blau Gans

Another hotel mentioned in 1999 as requiring renovation, the Blau Gans has reinvented itself as an art hotel. Local artists were commissioned to liven up the corridors and other public areas, and mostly they have succeeded admirably. The trans-

### 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.

formation is less complete in the bedrooms, though even here they have managed to avoid the depressing identikit appearance that blights so many a hotel room.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €99-119, doubles €135-195.

**Contact:** Blaue Gans Arthotel, Herbert-von-Karajan Platz 3, A-5020, tel. +43/662/8424910, fax 424919, email [office@blauegans.at](mailto:office@blauegans.at), web [www.blauegans.at](http://www.blauegans.at)

**Rating:** QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 12/20

### Wolf Dietrich

An odd combination of corporate-style furnishings and floral motifs, which nevertheless works reasonably well together, distinguish the guest rooms of this four-star hotel on the right bank. It also scores in terms of facilities: there's a sauna and nine-meter indoor pool, as well as the highly-rated **Ährlich** vegetarian restaurant. The hotel also offers some romantic suites on the 2nd and 3rd floors, which are fun if rather over-the-top (e.g. the suite with a 'Magic Flute' theme, or the Papagena suite with the bathtub in the middle of the room). Some rooms are sited in the Residenz across the road.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €54-114, doubles €79-179, romantic suite €134-209.

**Contact:** Altstadtthotel Wolf-Dietrich Wolf-Dietrich Strasse 7, A-5020, tel. +43/662/871275, fax 8712759, email [office@salzburg-hotel.at](mailto:office@salzburg-hotel.at), web [www.salzburg-hotel.at](http://www.salzburg-hotel.at)

**Rating:** QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 13/20

### Kulthotel Stein

This three star property (perhaps soon to be four-star) overlooks the old town from the right bank of the Salzach. A recent change of ownership has seen a big investment in this once fading, seven-story hotel. Renovations will be finished by Easter, when all rooms will sport new bathrooms, modem connections and TV. The location is ideal and the rooms are sizeable, though it's difficult to comment further until the new facelift is completed.

But the reborn Kulthotel is likely to be a runaway success if its packed **Steinterrasse** cafe-bar is anything to go by. Located on the hotel roof, it features a stylish bar with mosaic

tiles, around which lie comfortable sofas and chairs, picture windows, and excellent views of the old town.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €80-105, doubles €120-150.

**Contact:** Kulthotel Stein, Gisela Kai 3-5, A-5020, tel. +43/662/874346, fax 8743469, email [reservierung@kulthotel.info](mailto:reservierung@kulthotel.info), web: [www.kulthotel.info](http://www.kulthotel.info)

**Rating:** NA

### Hotel Bergland

Round the corner from the **Jedermann Hotel** (1999 Editor's Choice) awaits this small-scale, sociable, three-star hotel run by Peter Kuhn, who painted many of the colorful, stylized paintings that cover the walls. Rooms range from the rustic (Number 302) to the modern (most of the rest), though all have spotless, white-tiled bathrooms with shower and toilet. There's a lift, movement-sensing lights in corridors and a bar area with musical instruments and English books. Outside there's off-street parking and a small Japanese-style pond. Herr Kuhn rents bikes (€6 a day) and offers Internet access. Buses run to the old town from close by. Rates are constant through the year, so they're excellent value in high season. Or better yet, in the winter there may be a 'pay two nights, stay three' offer; ask ahead about this.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

**Daily Rates:** Singles €56, doubles €86, triples €102.

**Contact:** Hotel Bergland, Rupertgasse 15, A-5020, tel. +43/662/872318, fax 8723188, email [kuhn@berglandhotel.at](mailto:kuhn@berglandhotel.at)

web [www.berglandhotel.at](http://www.berglandhotel.at)

**Rating:** QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 15/20

### Haus Wartenberg

This two-star choice lies in a quiet location on the west side of the Mönchsberg, reached by bus No 4. Three generations of Wächters have run the 350-year-old house as a hotel. The present incumbent, Johannes, wants to maintain it in an old style as homage to his grandmother, who largely gave the place its current appearance. She it was who extended the house, and paved the floors with fragments of marble from the WWII-bombed cathedral. She also rescued from a Franciscan church the Gothic

window (near the entrance) that was slated for the scrap heap. Rooms vary in size and style, though all do have a traditional appearance (expect rustic, painted wardrobes in some rooms), *en suite* bathroom, and an acceptable level of comfort. Johannes, who is described by his staff as 'eccentric', is fun to talk with, and he has plenty of tales to tell about Salzburg old and new. (See also under Food.)

**Daily Rates:** Singles €55-88, doubles €75-105, triples €105-120.

**Contact:** Haus Wartenberg Riedenburger Strasse 2, 5020, tel. +43/662/848400, fax 8484005, email [hotel@hauswartenberg.com](mailto:hotel@hauswartenberg.com), web [www.hauswartenberg.com](http://www.hauswartenberg.com)

**Rating:** QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 13/20

### Food

#### Gasthof Auerhahn

Favorably reviewed in *Gemütlichkeit* in February 1999, the Auerhahn has lost none of its ability to seduce the palate. What's new, though, is the 2003 extension to the original wood-beamed room. It's a more modern space, with generous gaps between tables, a fireplace, soft candlelight, and almost garish head portraits in the Warhol-on-Marilyn mould. Traditional Austrian main courses start at €11.50. The *Schaumsuppe* featured rich slices of tender duck breast (€5.20). Fish is highly rated here, so I tried the *Bunter Fischteller* (€21), a selection of choice seafood served with a leek risotto. I particularly enjoyed the mussels with a subtle cheesy sauce served in a scallop shell, and the oriental tang in the accompanying sliced vegetables. A dessert speciality is *Topfenknödel* (€3), a light, warmed dumpling made from curd cheese, which was nicely offset by the cool, slightly sharp cranberry puree.

Contact: Bahnhofstrasse 15, 5020, tel. +43/662/4510523. Kitchen open 11:30am-2pm & 6pm-10pm Tues.-Sun. afternoon; closed Sunday evening and Mon.

**Rating:** QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 13/20

#### Alt Salzburg

Forget modern cuisine and modern minimalism, here you really are back in 'old' Salzburg. It's like the 20th-century never happened, let

alone the 21st. Enjoy quality cooking in an old world environment, with a dark vaulted ceiling, red velvet seating, gilded mirrors and other Baroque signifiers. There's also background classical music and paintings (for sale) on the wall. Portions are smallish but carefully presented, and the waiter is happy to explain each dish. A fabulous prawn mousse was followed by the speciality fish soup (€6.90), a superior concoction with an enjoyable paprika flavor but rather tasteless cheese dumplings. Sifting through the Austrian standards for a main course (€15.29-22.90), I selected *entrecote* steak (€20.50) and found it to be tender, topped with a coating of herbs, and accompanied by delicately cooked vegetables. I just had room for dessert, *Griesspudding* (€7.20) – a traditional tapioca with a ragout of mandarins and dried plums around which were drizzled several sauces. Alt Salzburg has two small dining areas, so reservations are advised in the evening.

**Contact:** Bürgerspitalgasse 2, tel. +43/662/8414760. Open 11.30am-2pm & 6pm-10.30pm Tues.-Sun.; closed Mon. midday and Sun.

**Rating:** QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 12/20

#### Stadtkrug

'We're an insider tip,' the enthusiastic waiter told me, 'very popular with locals.' I would have dismissed this as mere marketing, but for the waiter's evident pride in his place of work, and for the fact that a local had recently told me the very same thing. They were right. Attached to the hotel of the same name, the dining area features an arched white ceiling bearing chandelier-style light fittings, carved wooden seats or benches, and a smattering of photos and paintings. Fish is a speciality (for around €16), and you can be sure it's fresh, as your choice will still be swimming in the large fish tank round the back while you make your order. Alternatively, you can choose from a full selection of Austrian dishes and wines, and at lunch there are keenly-priced midday offers (from €6.20).

**Contact:** Linzer Gasse 20, tel. +43/662/873545. Kitchen open noon-2pm & 6pm-10:30pm Wed.-Mon.; closed Tues.

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

## TRAVEL AIDS AT WWW.GEMUT.COM

■ **Gemütlichkeit Bulletin Boards:** Want to share your travel discoveries and experiences with others? Perhaps you'd like to know what other Germany/Austria/Switzerland travelers think of a destination or hotel you're considering for your next trip. Maybe you'd like to access the expertise of *Gemütlichkeit's* subscriber-base, many of whom have made dozens of trips to Europe. Well, now you can.

A few weeks ago, on our new online bulletin board, we launched the following travel forum titles: **Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Other Travel Issues**. Each of these will develop several topic threads. You are encouraged to go to the website ([www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com)) and register. The forums are free and open to anyone.

Once at the website, click on the **Travel Forums** bar in the upper right-hand corner of the page. Next click on "Register" and fill in at least the required four fields. Following registration you will be returned to the main page from where you can choose an existing thread, create one of your own, or simply browse the comments of others. If you get lost, the top headline, "Gemütlichkeit Travel Bulletin Boards," will return you to the main forum page. The FAQs will answer most of your questions.

■ **Europe Travel Alert:** To get this free emailed report all you have to do is go to [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com) and enter your email address under the **Free Newsletter** bar on the lower left of the page.

The latest edition of ETA is located on the website's index (main) page just above the box with the photo. A typical edition contains time-sensitive air, hotel, and river cruise packages and special deals. Earlier this month, for example, we told readers about a \$329 LTU *peak season* fare with a very brief booking window.

■ **Research Back Issues:** Use the password and user name on page 2 of each issue to access hundreds of stories that have appeared in *Gemütlichkeit* since 1993. It's all at [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com).

### Haus Wartenberg

If you're seeking local color away from the mainstream tourist routes, this could be the place for you. The menu is simple and unpretentious, and their slightly contradictory motto is 'unconventional and traditional'. What makes this place special is the ambience — the owner readily admits that diners are attracted as much by the conversation as the food.

As you enter past the staircase, to the right is the smarter dining area, with marble floor, tablecloths and wood stove, and to the left is a simpler space with Gothic statues and rough-hewn wood tables. The menu features the usual *Schnitzels*, though a popular choice is the potato-cheese burger with salad (€6.40). Nothing costs above €14.20, and the two-course lunches (Monday to Friday) are particularly good value at €6.40.

**Contact:** See under "Lodging" for contact details. Kitchen open noon-2pm & 6pm-10pm Mon.-Sat.; closed Sunday and holidays

**Rating:** QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 14/20

### S'Herzl

There are plenty of tourist voices to be heard here, and late evening there's often a quick influx of finely-dressed folk seeking a post-theater meal (the Festival Halls are just down the road). This rustic restaurant, where waitresses wear traditional Dirndl skirt and bodice, is one of two restaurants attached to the Goldener Hirsch Hotel.

The open wine was mediocre and the service brisk rather than friendly. The standard menu (€10.60-21 for main courses) is meat-dominated, so I bowed to the inevitable and opted for mixed grill (€18), which was substantial but otherwise unremarkable. Before this was an overly-salted *Gulasch* soup and afterwards came a pleasant dessert (a light parfait with warm morello cherries) chosen from the *Tageskarte*.

It's no coincidence that dessert was the most successful course, as it was exactly the same as was on offer next-door at the Goldener Hirsch, though you'd pay more for it there. It is primarily this quirk — that some starters and desserts on the daily card come from the kitchens of its high-

class sibling next door — that makes S'Herzl worth a visit.

**Contact:** Getreidegasse 37, tel. +43/662/80840. Closed Sunday

**Rating:** QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 13/20

### Wilder Mann

While S'Herzl goes for the no-nonsense, country inn approach, you never forget you're in downtown Salzburg. The same does not apply in the Wilder Mann. If S'Herzl is the touristed, somewhat contrived version, Wilder Mann is the genuine article. And the low prices (€5-12 for main courses) are remarkable. The place is generally packed with locals though, as evidenced by the menus in English, tourists are welcome.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The old-fashioned feel is emphasized by the fine porcelain stove near the entrance, and the large tables (eight or more seats), which mean you're likely to be seated with other diners. The menu is pure Austrian, and I opted for a traditional meal from the daily card, *Beuschel* with dumpling (€5.20); finely chopped calves lungs and hearts in a creamy, slightly sour sauce. It was well up to standard, and an ideal way to warm up and re-fuel after a bracing February walk along the Mönchsberg.

**Contact:** Getreidegasse 21, 5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/662/841787  
Kitchen open 11am-9pm Monday-Saturday closed Sunday

**Rating:** QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 15/20

### "BIB HOTELS"

*Continued from page 1*

find reasonably-priced accommodations in the *Red Guides* but, other than the fact that Michelin includes no hotels it does not recommend, there was no hint as which of these less grand was the best. Now with the new "Bib Hotel" designation — together with Michelin's handy front-of-the-book map pages — it is easy to locate good, moderately-priced accommodations near wherever you happen to find yourself.

"Bib hotels" are primarily in smaller towns. Last year we stayed at four of them, one in Switzerland and three in Germany (Michelin does not publish a *Red Guide* for Austria):

### Berghotel Berlin Bad Soden-Salmünster

Add this one to your list of hotels for the first or last night in Germany. An easy 45 minute drive northeast from the Frankfurt Airport in the village of Salmünster, we found the Berghotel Berlin a perfect first night refuge; quiet, comfortable, friendly, inexpensive and in a village that's worth exploring on foot for an hour or so.

The hotel looks and feels more expensive than it is. We queried via email three days prior to our U.S. departure and the quick confirming reply of €75 (\$94) for a double room didn't prepare us for the hotel's modern, attractive reality. No kitschy, cozy dark spaces here; it's all windows and light beginning with the impressive entrance and continuing throughout the hotel. There are gardens, terraces and good views; *Berg*, after all, means mountain.

Our quiet room in the back of the house had a small sitting area with couch, table and chairs, and a gleaming, tiled bathroom with a good shower enclosure.

Given the mental fog and physical weariness of jetlag, a cogent evaluation of the hotel's restaurant is not possible other than to say the dinner experience was not unpleasant. Breakfast was a decent spread in a cheery room with a good view.

Considering the €75 double room price (good in 2004), we're putting Berghotel Berlin in the "find" category.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €49, doubles €75

**Contact:** Berghotel Berlin, Parkstrasse 8, D-63628 ,Bad Soden-Salmünster, tel. +49/06056/91220, fax 91 22 55, web: [www.berghotel-berlin.de](http://www.berghotel-berlin.de), email: [info@berghotel-berlin.de](mailto:info@berghotel-berlin.de)

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

### Zum Bürgergarten Stolberg in the Harz

About three hours south of Berlin in the Harz Mountains is Stolberg, a lovely, little-known town whose hundreds of half-timbered buildings line a winding network of cobbled streets. The operative word here is "authenticity;" Stolberg is not some theme-park-rebuilt-museum-town. It has survived war and communist rule intact. A castle looms overhead (it

was a restaurant and vacation house for party bigwigs during GDR days) but the town's main attractions, its half-timbered buildings, are in decent condition and none seem to be falling apart or abandoned. Seldom mentioned in guidebooks, Stolberg is truly a hidden treasure.

The town's Bib hotel is the modest **Zum Bürgergarten**, a cozy throwback to decades past and stuffed with kitschy German country paraphernalia. But it's all very pleasant and both dinner and breakfast were up to snuff. Little English is spoken.

We paid €71 for a clean, spacious room with a couch, decent reading lights, and one of those jury-rigged corner-of-the-bathroom shower installations.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €36-56, doubles €46-71.

**Contact:** Zum Bürgergarten, Thyratal, D-06547, tel. +49/034654/81 10, fax 811 00, email [zumbuergarten@t-online.de](mailto:zumbuergarten@t-online.de)

**Rating:** QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 15/20

### Brauereigasthof Zum Löwenbrau Adelsdorf-Neuhaus

A member of the association of private German "brewery hotels," the Brauereigasthof Zum Löwenbrau (apparently not connected to the Munich brewery) is about 25 minutes northwest of Nürnberg, just off the A3. Lured by its blue Bib symbol in Michelin, the Löwenbrau was an overnight stop on our way to Austria.

Neuhaus is a tiny gathering of farms and large, well-kept homes. There is a pleasant walking path that leads from the hamlet through adjacent fields and forests.

Without a formal reception desk, Saturday afternoon check-in was a catch-as-catch-can affair in which we were simply handed a key. No paperwork but very friendly.

Number 15 is a large, comfortable and nicely decorated double with separate sitting area, a bank of windows, good reading lights beside the bed, and the usual TV, phone, etc., but no CNN.

Sad to say, dinner was a letdown. The house beer, *Dunkels*, made on the premises and served in an earthen

mug, is surprisingly light and thirst-quenching but the house *Pilsner* falls short. A packed dining room is always a good sign, but in this case the locals must have come for the low prices and huge portions. A butter-laden apple and horseradish soup was tasty but became heavy going after about three spoonfuls. *Schnitzel* with *Pommes Frites* (€8) were decent but much-too-dry pork medallions wore a soggy egg batter and the accompanying beets had been cooked almost to mush. (Dine instead at **Landgasthof Nieber**, about three blocks away. It gets Michelin's red *Karte* designation for good food at moderate prices.)

Some baseball players are labeled "good field, no hit." Let's call the Löwenbrau "good room, no food." Had the kitchen not disappointed, our quality rating would have been higher.

We paid €74 for the room and €39 for dinner, including beer.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €45-77, doubles €65-90.

**Contact:** Brauereigasthof Zum Löwenbrau, Adelsdorf-Neuhaus, D-91325, tel. +49/09195/972211220, fax 8746, email [info@zum-loewenbraeu.de](mailto:info@zum-loewenbraeu.de), web [www.zum-loewenbraeu.de](http://www.zum-loewenbraeu.de)

**Rating:** QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 16/20

### Hotel Bel'Espérance Geneva

This is the only Bib hotel in a Swiss major city. Despite the good price, guests don't sacrifice cleanliness, cordial management or amenities like private bathrooms, phones and satellite television. Another advantage is the hotel's superb location in the *Vieille Ville* (old town).

Bel'Espérance is owned and managed by the Salvation Army which, until eight years ago, ran a women's residence on the site. At that time guestrooms were renovated. Spaces were enlarged, fresh carpet was laid, and a benefactor donated an extensive collection of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Louis-Phillippe furniture.

All fourth floor rooms have balconies, and — with two rooms and two balconies — Number 403 is an excellent value. Number 310 is a comfortable L-shaped double, but

## Deal Watch: Huge discounts on luxury packages by bidding on the Web

■ **Priceline.com** is becoming a factor in Europe. You can now bid on rooms in seven major German cities, plus Geneva, Zürich, Vienna and Innsbruck (the two Innsbruck hotels, the three-star **Tourotel Breinoss**, and the five-star **Hotel Europa Tyrol**, are offered at the set price of \$127 and \$251 respectively.

Don't expect to find warm, cozy, family-run country hotels with Priceline, but if you need a good deal on an airport overnight, or a business-oriented chain in a big city, it's definitely worth a try. Reader Gary Eldridge reports the following winning bids: \$51 for a double room at Munich's **Marriott Airport**, \$77 for a double at the four-star **Hotel Stoller** in downtown Zürich, and \$68 for the **Novotel** near the Zürich Airport.

Be aware that with Priceline you don't know the precise hotel you're bidding on; you can, however, specify location and category, e.g. three-star, four star, etc.

■ **How much should I bid?** We've heard from several subscribers who strongly recommend [www.biddingfortravel.com](http://www.biddingfortravel.com), a kind of compendium of successful Priceline bids.

■ **Bidding on Luxury Deals.** [Luxurylink.com](http://Luxurylink.com) conducts auctions on short-term vacation packages, sometimes with air included. Like eBay, a few offerings are available for a set price, no bid required. Among the current packages are five nights at Zürich's **Dolder Grand Hotel** for \$3345, with air. The price is for two persons and the air provided is in B.A.'s World Traveler Plus cabin (more room than economy not as much as business class). For a \$2300 bid you have a good chance at seven nights for two persons in a junior suite (upgrade to suite if available) at the **Hotel Kristiana** in Lech, Austria. The deal includes breakfasts, dinners, transfers to and from Zürich airport, plus other goodies. Not a bad price for a week's luxury vacation. There are several other attractive offers for Germany, Austria & Switzerland.

without balcony.

The view from the rooftop terrace includes the cathedral, the *Jet d'eau* and the Jura.

**Contact:** Hotel Bel'Espérance, Rue de la Vallée 1, CH-1204 Geneva, tel. +41/022/818 3737, fax 818 3773, email [belesp@swi.salvationarmy.org](mailto:belesp@swi.salvationarmy.org), web [www.hotel-bel-espérance.ch](http://www.hotel-bel-espérance.ch).

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 95-115, doubles CHF 140-150

**Rating:** QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 15/20

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

*Continued from page 2*

Suitable for two. Price \$662 to \$732 per week. (Ref. 754)

There are even great apartment deals in cities. Last year, in Berlin's *Mitte* we inspected four extraordinary "Minilofts" whose one-week rental prices start at €560 (\$700). Essentially they are one large room (300 to 400 sq. ft) with ultramodern kitchen and bath, hardwood floors, multiple floor-to-ceiling windows, area rugs, high-speed Internet connections, satellite TV, and top location in the historic center with public transportation close by. Very impressive. One of the owners is American. See them at [www.miniloft.com](http://www.miniloft.com).

## More Ways to Save

There is an awareness among hoteliers that the euro has moved Europe beyond the reach of some Americans. For example, Munich's fine little **Hotel Acanthus** — a favorite of many readers — is offering *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers a special price of €85 per night on double rooms. The offer excludes times of trade shows and Oktoberfest and is for a minimum of four nights, three of which must be Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Contact the Acanthus at +49/089/231880, fax 260-7364, email [acanthus@t-online.de](mailto:acanthus@t-online.de), web [www.acanthushotel.de](http://www.acanthushotel.de).

Another area of sunlight is ground transport in Europe. Eurail passes are priced the same as last year and most single country and regional passes are at or near their 2003 levels. Though car rental rates have been in a relentless northern creep for the past four years, one can still rent a four-door sedan with air for less than \$35 per day, including tax.

Sooner or later the dollar will reverse course. Until then we'll be devoting a bit more space than usual to "euro beaters."

## LATE BREAKING NEWS

Two hours before *Gemütlichkeit* was due at the printer on Feb. 24, we were asked by Uniworld to inform readers of a last minute offer on four of it's 16-day **Grand Cruise** sailings between Amsterdam and Budapest.

The prices for these cruises start at \$4,048, including air. However, for departure dates May 15, May 29, June 12 and June 26, Uniworld will sell them *with air* starting at their cruise-only price of \$3298, plus port and security charges. The per person savings are around \$950. A small add-on charge will apply to departures from cities other than New York, Boston, Miami, Chicago, L.A. and San Francisco. Call 800-521-6722, press option 3. — RHB

## Travel Quickies

■ **Prague Summer Seminars**, sponsored by the University of New Orleans, offer courses in a range of disciplines. Taught in English and offered both for non-credit and transferable credit, this year's program will address issues pertaining to the changing face of the Czech Republic's society, government, and culture.

In addition to the seminars, participants can attend weekly film and lecture series, and go on walking tours, excursions and weekend field trips to Vienna, as well as Brno and Southern Moravia. There is also free time for travel within the Czech Republic and to other nearby countries.

Dates are July 10 to August 7 and the program cost and tuition are \$2,595, excluding airfare and housing. Contact: Irene Ziegler, tel. 504-280-7318, email [iziegler@uno.edu](mailto:iziegler@uno.edu), or visit <http://inst.uno.edu/prague>.

■ **A Week In Wengen from €428** Participating hotels in Wengen offer seven nights' lodging with breakfast and dinner plus a six-day **Jungfrau Rail Pass** starting at €428.

Packages are available May 22-July 2 and from August 21-October 8, 2004. For more information visit [www.wengen-muerren.ch](http://www.wengen-muerren.ch).

## We Recommend

This listing of good value, mid-priced hotels in popular destination cities is intended for fast reference. Additional hotels and links to hotel websites hotels is in the **Archives & Hotel Database** sections at [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com). The required subscriber user name and password for access this month is on page 2 herein. Hotels are arranged in price order, higher to lower.

**Berlin**  
**Hotel Art Nouveau**, Leibnizstr. 59, tel. +49/030/327 7440, fax 327 744 40, email: [hotellartnouveau@snaufu.de](mailto:hotellartnouveau@snaufu.de)

**Hotel Domus**, Umlandstrasse 49, Germany D-10719, tel. +49/030/882041, fax 882 0410, email: [info@hotel-domus-berlin.de](mailto:info@hotel-domus-berlin.de)

**Bern**  
**Hotel Innere Enge**, Engestrasse 54, CH-3012, tel. +41/031/309 6111, fax 309 6112, email: [info@zghotels.ch](mailto:info@zghotels.ch)

**Hotel Kreuz**, Zeughausgasse 41, CH-3000, tel. +41/031/329 9595, fax 329 95 96, email: [hotelkreuz@swissonline.ch](mailto:hotelkreuz@swissonline.ch)

**Lausanne**  
**Hostellerie du Débarcadère**, 7 chemin du Cret, Saint Sulpice, CH-102, tel. +41/021/691 5747, fax 691 5079, email: [debarcadere@swissonline.ch](mailto:debarcadere@swissonline.ch) (not in town)

**Hotel Agora**, Av. du Rond-Point 9, CH-1006, tel. +41/021/617 1211, fax 616 2605, email: [agora@fhotels.ch](mailto:agora@fhotels.ch)

**Lucerne**  
**Hotel Wilden Mann**, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, email: [mail@wilden-mann.ch](mailto:mail@wilden-mann.ch)  
**Hotel Cascada**, Bundesplatz 18, CH-6003 Lucerne, tel: +41/041/226 80 88, fax 226 80 00, email: [info@cascada.ch](mailto:info@cascada.ch)

**Munich**  
**Hotel Exquisit**, Pettenkofenstr. 3, tel. +49/089/ 551 99 0, fax 551 99 499, email: [info@hotel-exquisit.com](mailto:info@hotel-exquisit.com)  
**Hotel Kraft**, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24, fax 550 3856, email: [office@kraft-hotel.com](mailto:office@kraft-hotel.com)

**Rothenburg ob der Tauber**  
**Reichs-Küchenmeister**, Kirchplatz 8, Rothenburg o.d. Tauber, Germany D-91541, tel. +49/09861/97 00, fax 97 04 09, email: [hotel@reichskuechenmeister.com](mailto:hotel@reichskuechenmeister.com)

**Salzburg & Environs**  
**Schloss Haunsperg**, A-5411 Oberalm bei Hallein, Hammerstrasse 32, tel. +43/06245/80662, fax 85680, email: [info@schlosshaunsperg.com](mailto:info@schlosshaunsperg.com)  
**Hotel Struber**, Nonntaler Hauptstrasse 35, Austria A-5020 tel. +43/0662/843 728, fax 843 728 8, email: [struber@sbg.at](mailto:struber@sbg.at)  
**Hotel Jedermann**, Rupertgasse 25, Austria A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873241-0, fax 873241-9, email: [jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at](mailto:jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at)

**Vienna**  
**Hotel Römischer Kaiser**, Annagasse 16, A-1010, tel +43/01/512 77 51 0, fax 512 77 51 13, email: [info@rhotel.bestwestern.com](mailto:info@rhotel.bestwestern.com)  
**Allstadt Vienna**, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, email: [hotel@allstadt.at](mailto:hotel@allstadt.at), web: [www.allstadt.at](http://www.allstadt.at)  
**Pension Aviano**, Marco-D'Aviano-Gasse 1, tel. +43/01/512 8330, fax 512 8330 6, email: [aviano@pertschy.com](mailto:aviano@pertschy.com)

**Zürich**  
**Hotel Florhof**, Florhofgasse 4, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. 41/01/261 4470, fax 261 4611, email: [info@florhof.ch](mailto:info@florhof.ch)  
**Hotel Arlette**, Stampfenbachstrasse 26, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. +41/01/25 20 032, fax 25 20 932, email: [hotel.arlette@bluwin.ch](mailto:hotel.arlette@bluwin.ch)

**Frankfurt Airport**  
**Steigenberger Esprix Hotel Frankfurt Airport**, CargoCity Süd, D-60549, tel. +49/069/69 70 99, fax 69 70 94 44, email: [frankfurt@esprix-hotels.de](mailto:frankfurt@esprix-hotels.de)

**Hotel Birkenhof**, von-Eiff-Str 37, Hanau-Steinheim, D-63456, tel. +49/06181/648 80, fax 64 88 39, email: [info@HotelBirkenhof.de](mailto:info@HotelBirkenhof.de) (25-minute drive from airport)

**Hotel Dreieich**, Frankfurter Str. 49, Langen, D-63225, tel. +49/06103/91 50, fax 52 030 (15-minute drive from airport)

**Munich Airport**  
**Kempinski Hotel Airport**, Terminalstrasse/Mitte 20, D-85356 Munich, tel. +49/089/9782-0, fax 97822610, [info@kempinski-airport.de](mailto:info@kempinski-airport.de)  
**Hotel Hoyacker Hof**, Freisinger Landstrasse 9a, D-85748 Garching b. München, tel. +49/089/326 9900, fax 320 7243, email: [info@hoyackerhof.de](mailto:info@hoyackerhof.de)

**Zürich Airport**  
**Mövenpick Zürich Airport**, Walter-Mittelholzerstrasse 8, CH-8152 Glattbrugg, tel. +41/01/808 88 88, fax 808 88 77, email: [hotel@movenpick-zurich-airport.ch](mailto:hotel@movenpick-zurich-airport.ch)  
**Hotel Fly Away**, Marktgasse 19, Zürich-Kloten, Switzerland CH-8302, tel. +41/01/804 4455, fax 804 44 50, email: [reservation@hotel-flyaway.ch](mailto:reservation@hotel-flyaway.ch)