

DEAR  
SUBSCRIBER

### About your hotel room

Some years ago we sent surveys to a random sampling of readers. If you didn't get one, don't feel left out, for the sake of economy only about one in 100 subscribers was polled.

The anonymous surveys told us a lot we already suspected about your collective travel preferences. As to destinations, towns such as Munich, Salzburg, Lucerne and Vienna came up big. **Lufthansa** and the former **Swissair** were the top airline choices. Most people traveled by car and preferred mid-priced accommodations and restaurants.

The compiled results of one question, however, surprised us just a bit. It asked "How interested are you in seeing stories on these topics?" The 26 topics listed included museums, country walks, city walks, art, rail travel, restaurants, backroads drives, opera, spas, skiing, shopping and so on. For each topic the respondents had four choices: "Essential," "Great Interest," "Some Interest," and "Little Interest."

By a landslide the likes of which only Saddam Hussein used to get when he was, ahem, running for office, the categories "country hotels," "small hotels," and "luxury hotels," carried the day. Virtually all respondents marked at least one of the three as "Essential" or "Great Interest." We concluded that where you lay your head at night is important and thus you will note that a good portion of every destination

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## BONN

*Though Bonn is no longer the German capital, the city hasn't missed a beat. Its cultural offerings, diversity, and location on the Rhine, make it an attractive destination.*

**R**umors of Bonn's demise after the move of Germany's capital to Berlin are greatly exaggerated. Indeed, they are far from the mark. Yes, the city was vitalized by its role as federal capital. Culture and tourism flourished. The economy strengthened. Embassies brought a new international flair.

But none of this has changed. If anything, Bonn is better than ever.

Although many government offices, most embassies and the seat of government have moved to Berlin, Germany made significant commitments to Bonn as a "Federal City" and the country's second political center. Most ministry jobs remain in

Bonn and many agencies have relocated to Bonn from elsewhere in Germany. Quasi-governmental companies like Deutsche Telekom now headquarter in Bonn and many international organizations – including major United Nations agencies – are based there.

In the past decade, the federal government invested more than €1.5 billion in the area, most of it to create and expand scientific facilities and make Bonn a "region of science and research." Large sums also went to improve the transportation infrastructure and to cultural programs.

What does this mean for the

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## Rail vs Car: A Cost Comparison

**N**ever — at least in *Gemütlichkeit's* 18-year history — have European rail passes, when compared with travel by rental car, been such a financially attractive alternative.

Consider this: in 1999 you could buy a second-class, 5-day German rail twin pass (two persons) for \$282. On the other hand, you could rent a midsize Opel Vectra for 14 days, including tax, for \$229 — and this is a car that will handle four persons, plus luggage. The cost per travel day per person was \$8.18 by car (not including gas and parking) and \$28.2 per person via rail. If you put four persons in the Vectra the per person, per day cost was \$4.09.

What do these same two products cost in 2004? The German twin pass for five days is \$306 for two persons,

an increase of 8.5%. But the Opel Vectra is \$534 if you pick it up downtown and \$624 at the airport. The cost per day via rail in 2004 is \$30.60 and the car cost — again assuming two passengers — is \$19.11. But throw in, say, \$250 worth of gas and parking fees and the per person, per day auto rate is \$28. Pick up at the airport and it's \$31.21. Add additional days to your rail pass and the per day, per person price drops. An 8-day Germany pass, for example, is \$26 per day and a 10-day pass is \$24.

In Austria, rail is flat-out cheaper than an Austrian rental car, and less even than a car rented in Germany. Unfortunately, Austria's rail network is not as extensive as Switzerland's or Germany's.

*Continued on page 7...*

**Exchange rates as of 4/26/04**

**1 euro = \$1.185**

**1 Swiss franc = \$.76**

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

story deals with lodging options. A substantial portion of every research trip taken by my wife, Liz, and me, and our main writers Jim Johnson and Mark Honan, is devoted to inspecting accommodations. Of course, you can't really know a hotel until you've spent a night there, so we are forever packing up and moving on to the next one. In the last 20 years I estimate having personally toured over 800 hotels. Since we usually see at least half a dozen guestrooms at each, often twice that, I consider myself qualified to judge European hotel rooms.

What I am about to tell you will be revealing only in the sense that you may better understand how we rate hotels and what features we consider most important.

First, taken as a whole, the hotels of our three countries are quite good; better, I think, than in the U.S. (Of course it's impossible to make comparisons between a 15-room, family-run, country hotel with its own restaurant, and our country's hotel chains. The small, family-operated hotel is a category that simply doesn't exist in this country.)

When we rate a hotel "average" for quality — 8 to 11 points out of a possible 20 — it's not a put down. It simply means the hotel is average for its country. (Tip: look for hotels where our value rating is higher than the quality rating.)

The ratings key on this page indicates the emphasis we place on the various elements of the hotel experience; guestrooms are weighted at 30%, the same for people and service. Public rooms, facilities, restaurant, location and setting comprise the remaining 40%.

Perhaps greater weight should be given to the room itself. Unless it's a resort hotel you'll probably spend more time in your hotel room than anywhere else on the premises.

Liz and I inspect rooms together, which is good because she places a value on features that I don't — bathroom space for toiletries, for example.

Cleanliness, of course, is basic and essential. It's o.k. for a hotel room to have a feeling of having been lived in, but dings on furniture, threadbare upholstery, spots on carpet, scuff marks on walls and baseboard, dirty tile grout, all send the message that management either isn't paying attention or is unwilling or unable to maintain the property. (Of course, if you're at a place like the beloved **Schloss Haunsperg** near Salzburg, the rugs may be a little worn and some of the furniture may bear a few marks; but that's the charm of getting to live for a brief time among the venerable objects that have been in the von Gernerth family for many generations.)

Here, in order of importance we place on them, are some of the things we seek in a hotel room:

• **Light and air.** Don't give me dark, don't give me stuffy. We're

partial to high ceilings, hardwood floors and plenty of windows. There should be no unpleasant smells.

• **Temperature.** Most hotels rooms in our three countries are not air-conditioned. We note those that catch the afternoon sun in summer and avoid them. (Heating has never been a problem except in Tsingtao, China, where, in early November a couple of years ago the Sheraton Hotel — or the city — still hadn't turned on the central heating.)

• **A place to sit.** Unless we're staying for just one night, we need a couch or a couple of easy chairs with a coffee table. Straight-backed chairs just don't get it done.

• **View.** I'm in Europe and I want to see it. Maybe the reason I never warmed to the popular **König von Ungarn** in Vienna is because we were shown to a room with just one window that opened to an interior atrium. Once in Italy we were given —

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: **nnbo** Password: **4176**

Vol. 18, No. 4  
May 2004

# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

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**Gemütlichkeit** (ISSN 10431756) is published 11 times each year by UpCountry Publishing, 288 Ridge Road, Ashland OR 97520. TOLL FREE: 1-800/521-6722 or 541/488-8462, fax: 541/488-8468, e-mail [travel@gemut.com](mailto:travel@gemut.com). Web site: [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com). Subscriptions are \$67 per year for 11 issues. While every effort is made to provide correct information in this publication, the publishers can make no guarantees regarding accuracy.

**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.

**BONN***Continued from page 1*

traveler? The old city that has drawn tourists for decades is as beautiful and vibrant as ever. Public transportation is comprehensive and inexpensive. Lodging is plentiful and for all budgets. Ethnic food choices are many and upscale restaurants abound. Cultural activities are almost constant, as if the city has tried to overcompensate for perceived shortcomings. New museums have been built and existing ones expanded.

Indeed, Bonn could easily be called the "Museum City." Its 14 major museums, many in the so-called Museum Mile, include the **Bonn Art Museum**, the **Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany** (*Bundeskunsthalle*), and the **German History Museum** (*Haus der Geschichte*).

If only for this latter museum, Bonn is worth a visit. The *Haus der Geschichte* concentrates on contemporary history from 1945 to the present and incorporates East, West and unified Germany. The compelling permanent exhibit, with more than 4,000 items from stamps to jeeps, follows a chronological storyline that confronts museum-goers with nostalgia, sadness, terror and celebration. It's a part of most visitors' lives.

Still, Bonn is more famous for its history. Even a two-hour walk gives a good overview of the Old City. Starting at the train station, stop first for maps and brochures at the nearby Bonn Tourist Information Office *en route* to the **Bonn Cathedral** (*Münster*). With its five towers and blend of Romanesque and Gothic elements, the imposing basilica was completed before the more famous Cologne Cathedral was even started. Then continue across the Cathedral Square past the Beethoven statue and along narrow medieval alleys — like the Mouse Path — to the Market Square. Here the view opens to the magnificent, rococo **Rathaus**, which dominates the eastern end of the triangular marketplace.

It's just a few blocks to the **Beethoven House**, where the composer was born in 1770. The museum

**Bonn Basics****Population:** 300,000**Elevation:** 60 meters (197 feet)

**Tourist Office:** Windeckstraße 1, D-53103 Bonn, tel. +49/228/77 50 00, fax: 77 50 77, email: [bonninformation@bonn.de](mailto:bonninformation@bonn.de), web: [www.bonn.de/tourismus](http://www.bonn.de/tourismus)

Bonn Regional Tourism, Ahrweiler, Adenauerallee 131, D-53113 Bonn, tel. +49/228/910 4132, fax: 910 4177, email: [freizeit@bonn-region.de](mailto:freizeit@bonn-region.de), web: [www.bonn-region.de](http://www.bonn-region.de).

**Driving Distances:**

Cologne	29km/18 miles
Frankfurt	175 km/109 miles
Munich	557 km/348 miles
Koblenz	88 km/55 miles
Trier	160 km/99 miles

**Best Buy:** The **Bonn Regio Welcome Card**, available at tourist offices, as well as at many hotels and attractions, offers free entry to most museums, free travel on regional trains and buses, and reduced prices on boat tours, sightseeing tours and some hotels. Prices are €9 for one day, €14 for two days and €19 for three days, and it's only double those prices for families of two adults and two children to age of 14, or for three adults.

presents a sense of life in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Bonn and a collection commemorating the composer's life and works. A new archive slated to open later this spring will give visitors computer access to Beethoven's original manuscripts, first editions and correspondence.

The Rhine is just four blocks away, and the **Alter Zoll**, the medieval customs house, offers one of Bonn's best views to the river.

From here, it's back through the **City and Palace Gardens** past the University — the former Baroque Royal Residence — to the train station. Those with more energy can continue up the Rhine. The promenade in Bonn is the Rhine's longest and extends 29 kilometers (18 miles) south past the district of Bad Godesberg. It's a pleasant walk past baroque buildings, villas from the early 1900s (when this stretch of riverfront was known as the "Rhine Riviera"), the 19<sup>th</sup>-century **Palais Schaumburg**, and many former government buildings.

The walk continues to the "Rhein-aue," an extensive park with rolling hills, waterfalls, Japanese garden, ancient trees and lakes lined with weeping willows. It's hard to believe that it's all artificial. From here, head

back on foot or take the subway (lines 66 or 68) for the short ride back to the city center.

**Districts and Villages**

The city consists of four districts and 51 villages. Poppelsdorf and the Südstadt (South City), developed between 1860 and 1914 for the newly wealthy, offer their share of elegant villas. It's just a 10-minute walk down the Poppelsdorfer Allee from the Residence to the **Poppelsdorf Palace**, the former summer home of Elector Clemens August, where the parkland is now a **Botanical Garden**. The surrounding neighborhood has delightful sidewalk cafés, casual restaurants, bistros and shops that those who stay in the *Altstadt* will never see.

Fashionable Bad Godesberg, once a popular spa town, is still dominated by **Godesburg Castle**, the first of the romantic Rhine castles. Within the town, the village of Muffendorf offers a treasure of enough winding alleys and medieval buildings to impress even a Rothenburg fan. Take a break for wine and regional cuisine at the **Weinhaus Muffendorf**, (Muffendorfer Hauptstrasse 37, D-53177 Bonn-Bad Godesberg, tel. +49/228/33 02 39).

**The Region**

The **Siebengebirge** hills are one of Germany's favorite hiking destinations and its oldest nature preserve. Hike to the 13<sup>th</sup>-century **Löwenburg Fortress** and its view of five other hilltop castles.

One place to enjoy the view and have a meal or snack is from the **Löwenburger Hof** (tel: +49/223/24446, fax: 22837, email: [info@loewenburgerhofe.de](mailto:info@loewenburgerhofe.de), web: [www.loewenburgerhofe.de](http://www.loewenburgerhofe.de)).

The **Ahr Valley** (see Gemüt, July 1998) is about 25 km (15 miles) to the west of Bonn and easy to reach by car, train or bike. The region's more than 600 vintners make it Germany's largest producer of red wine. The medieval town of Ahrweiler features well-preserved town walls, four gate-towers and three turrets from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries

Ahrweiler also includes one of the best preserved Roman sites north of the Alps. The **Museum Römervilla** (Roman Villa) (Am Silberberg 1, D-

53474 Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler) is a country mansion built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, when the area was governed as a Roman province.

### Along the Rhine

Many Rhine lovers restrict their exploration to the famed portion between Bingen and Koblenz, but the Bonn region has its share of castles, wine villages and medieval towns.

One of the most beautiful, Linz, contains more than 240 half-timber homes as well as a 14<sup>th</sup>-century castle and 16<sup>th</sup>-century town hall. In the lower town, look to the second floor (the German first floor) for small escape doors used during high floods. Crafts lovers should stop at the glass blowers for a demonstration and possible purchase.

Near where the Ahr enters the Rhine is an impressive and sobering site: the **Bridge at Remagen**. It collapsed near the end of the war, taking with it many Allied soldiers who had fought hard to wrest it from the Germans. There's a recorder built into the wall and for a euro you can hear the history in English.

The **Köln-Düsseldorfer Steamship Line** offers cruises from Bonn including full-day tours to the Middle Rhine and **Lorelei** between Koblenz and Rudesheim. Although it looks a bit kitschy, the **Bonner Per-**

### 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.

**sonen Schifffahrt** line's "Moby Dick" offers perhaps the best viewing from its deck and its glass-enclosed panorama lounge. (For timetables see "Sightseeing/Romantic Rhine" at [www.bonn-region.de](http://www.bonn-region.de).)

The ship, made to look like a cruising whale, commemorates the strange 1960s visit of a Beluga whale that strayed 248 miles up the Rhine and lingered near the German parliament buildings for a few weeks before heading north to the sea.

### Lodging

#### Gästehaus Petersberg

The five-star Gästehaus Petersberg, located in the hills a few miles up the Rhine from Bonn, is a superb setting for modern history buffs. It was here that Neville Chamberlain met with Hitler in 1938. After the war, the hotel served as headquarters of the Allied High Commissioners and in 1949 Konrad Adenauer signed the agreement which significantly restored German sovereignty. Fifty years later, the Kosovo Peace Accord was signed here.

In 1978 it was purchased by the government as the new official residence for state guests. Queen Elizabeth II, Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin, Tony Blair and Bill Clinton have all been guests. (Ask the staff about how Leonid Brezhnev "borrowed" and crashed the state Mercedes.) Today, the hotel is operated by Steigenberger. There are two sections — public and state — and, when the state section isn't being used, guests can book rooms there as well. During some highly secure events, the entire complex may be closed to private guests. Rooms are small but sumptuous, service impeccable, and guests can live like royalty — literally.

Even for non-guests, the Petersberg is a worthy goal for hikes up the Siebengebirge, with a welcome — if not inexpensive — stop at the hotel's **Bistro Café**. Views are superb in nearly all directions; the Rhine, other peaks, even to the Cologne Cathedral.

**Contact:** Gästehaus Petersberg, D-53639 Königswinter, tel. +49/2223/74-0, fax: 74-443, email,

[info@petersberg.steigenberger.de](mailto:info@petersberg.steigenberger.de), web: [www.gaestehaus-petersberg.de](http://www.gaestehaus-petersberg.de).

**Daily Rates:** Singles €170-195, doubles €250-275, suites €500 (park view) €1300 (state guest suite with Rhine view) Last-minute "bargains" are often available on weekends.

**Rating:** QUALITY 19/20, VALUE 18/20

#### Hotel Garni Jacobs

If you don't mind a pleasant 12-minute streetcar ride to the city center and train station, you can get a spacious room — apartment, actually — in the pleasant Bonn neighborhood of Kessenich for barely €50 a person. This gem, unknown to most tourists, is a favorite of delegates to international conferences. The hotel is actually 52 rooms in three separate buildings.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Among Bonn's most attractive accommodations is Apartment 2 on the third floor of Bergstrasse 85-87. It occupies nearly half of one floor and includes dining room, kitchen, bathroom and large double bedroom. A wide private balcony, lined with windows, runs the length and width of the apartment. The building and apartment are modern but rooms have a relaxed and rustic feeling, thanks in great part to solid wood furniture, warm colors and lots of fabric. Though there is some traffic noise, the bedroom overlooks quiet courtyards. It's perfect for a couple who wants to spread out or for a small family. The neighborhood has plenty of small ethnic restaurants, some shops and quick access to hiking in the Venusberg. The tram stops near the building, and the streets are safe by day and night.

A surprisingly varied and extensive breakfast buffet is served in an adjacent building — a much older structure with exposed beams and decorated with farm and winery implements.

**Contact:** Hotel Garni Jacobs, Bergstrasse 85-87, D-53129 Bonn, tel. +49/228/232822, fax: 232850, email [hotel-garni-jacobs@t-online.de](mailto:hotel-garni-jacobs@t-online.de), web [www.hotel-jacobs-garni.de](http://www.hotel-jacobs-garni.de)

**Daily Rates:** Singles €45-70, doubles €80-110; about 25 percent lower on weekend.

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

### Kaiser Karl Hotel

The chic Kaiser Karl is a hidden treasure in a quiet neighborhood in Bonn's North City, a 15-minute walk to the train station or seven minutes to the pedestrian zone. The 42-room, four-story hotel feels like the upscale townhouse it once was. Guests ring the doorbell, walk through solid wooden doors, and are greeted by a receptionist who points to a leather chair. Registration takes place over an antique wooden desk. The staff greets you by name each morning and welcomes you home in the evening.

The parlor-style lobby offers the hotel's international clientele comfortable couches and plenty of newspapers. The breakfast area features rattan chairs and tables, marble walls and crystal light fixtures. Guest rooms are lush, spacious and stylish with antique furniture complemented by unusual art. There's liberal use of marble in the bathrooms. With its separate sitting area, room 23 is especially comfortable.

**Contact:** Kaiser Karl Hotel, D-53119 Bonn, Vorgebirgstrasse 56, tel. +49/228/65 09 33, fax: 63 78 99, email [info@kaiser-karl-hotel.de](mailto:info@kaiser-karl-hotel.de), web [www.kaiser-karl-hotel.de](http://www.kaiser-karl-hotel.de)

**Daily Rates:** Singles €145-160, doubles €145-230, suites €250-650; discounts of 50 to 70% weekends and during August. Breakfast buffet €13.

**Ratings:** Quality 17/20 Value 16/20

### Dorint Sofitel Venusberg Bonn

At the top of the Venusberg, Bonn's local "mountain," the elegant Dorint makes the city seem distant. If not for the stunning views down to Bonn, this five-star property could be mistaken for a modern wilderness lodge. It's surrounded by parks, woods and hiking paths and has the feel of a country house. The hotel forms a horseshoe, and both the terrace and many east-facing rooms offer balconies that look to the distant Rhine. It's a five-minute wooded walk to the bus stop, and impatient travelers (or those with mobility problems) may require a car or taxi. Its 55 rooms are spacious and well-appointed. Rooms 224 and 225 have superb views and balconies.

**Contact:** Dorint Sofitel Venusberg Bonn, An der Casselruhe 1, D-53127

## PUBLISHER'S TRAVEL JOURNAL: BONN

*This month's lead story on Bonn story was researched and written by senior writer, Jim Johnson, who recently spent several weeks in the city. Late last fall Gemütlichkeit publishers, Bob and Liz Bestor, stopped over for a couple of days on their way from Paris to Berlin. Here are relevant excerpts from Bob's trip journal.*

■ **Saturday, Nov. 29, 2003:** Our Bonn headquarters is the mid-priced **Sternhotel** on the main square next to the Rathaus. This is Beethoven's town and his museum is just around the corner. Our room, 307, is more than twice the size of our Paris digs, has separate toilet and shower rooms and noise-tight oriel windows over the square. The fully glassed-in shower enclosure is particularly welcome.

The Bonn holiday season is in full cry. The streets are jammed. We wander a Christmas market spread over the old town's streets and squares. Near the **Münster**, a six-piece Dixieland band wails from a portable stage. At the opposite end of the square are a ferris wheel, some kiddie-cars and a slide. The dozens of booths have plenty of customers but none are more popular than those selling *Glühwein*. It's three euros a glass and we plunk down our money. It's 8pm, 40 degrees with a chilling breeze and the hot, spicy red wine is just the ticket. We stand for a few minutes, sipping, watching and listening. It's good to be back in Germany. A few yards away a Greyhound-size police bus is a warm haven for bored cops. It's a lively gathering but peaceful. We do dinner at the traditional **Im Bären**, finding two open seats at an already-occupied table where we are greeted with a warm *Guten Abend* and nods of the head. Calves liver with fried onions is 9 euros and four-tenths of a liter of the local *Kölsch vom Fass* is 2.5 euros.

■ **Sunday, Nov. 30, 2003:** The Hallelujah Chorus on the breakfast room stereo matches my mood. It's the best night's sleep so far and there is *Muesli* with yogurt and fresh fruit to put on it. Liz is not so ebullient. Some sort of bug has done her in and she fiddles with her food before pushing it away. Nevertheless, she's game for the **Beethovenhaus Museum**. It's just around the corner from the hotel, in a restored house where he supposedly was born and lived the first 12 years of his life. We're in and out in 45 minutes and I'm a little disappointed. LVB is a favorite composer and I expected more — his music piped into every room in the museum, for starters. There are some compelling items: a viola and the remains of an organ, both of which he actually played, some documents in his own hand, and the clumsy, pathetic ear horns he employed as early as age 30 in a futile attempt to beat encroaching deafness. The death and life masks near the opening to the tiny, low ceilinged room where he was born are also poignant, but it's not enough. The guy was a GIANT and the few small rooms and their modest exhibits just don't do him justice.

There's other evidence that LVB is under-appreciated in his home country; just out today are results of a poll to name the greatest Germans of them all (no Nazis allowed). Konrad Adenauer led a top-10 list that included Karl Marx, Einstein, Goethe, and Martin Luther but not Beethoven. Remember folks, Hitler was an Austrian, and Beethoven, even though he achieved fame in Vienna, was a German.

We take another lap around the Christmas Market, but Liz is out of gas and so it's back to the room. From the ever-pleasant front desk guardian I get directions to the nearest open Apoteke and set off in search of something that might make her feel better. For \$16 the pharmacist sells me a potion that I have no doubt requires a prescription in the U.S. One pill and it's lights out. Four hours of shut-eye and she's ready to go back in the game. We head for the **Münster** and a 4pm concert by a local orchestra. It's 3 euros. We find a pew with an obstructed view but close to the action. There are no stringed instruments but lots of kettle drums, cymbals and a powerful organ. We hear the music of Bach, Tchaikovsky, and Schubert, but nothing from the local guy, Beethoven.

Dinner at **Grand Italia** is 77 euros including a bottle of Gattinara (Italian red) and dessert. Recommended. Liz eats and is obviously on the mend.

Bonn, tel. +49/0228 288-0, fax: 288-288  
**Daily Rates:** Singles and doubles  
€170-230, suites €360-607. Breakfast  
€18. Internet rates as low as €140.  
**Ratings:** QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 16/20

### Sternhotel

Occupying prime real estate on the Market Place immediately next to the Town Hall is the staid but comfortable Sternhotel. It's 17th century facade has probably appeared in more tourist photos than any other hotel in Bonn. It's ideal for travelers who enjoy strolling from their front door to the attractions, excitement and charm of the Old Town.

Guestrooms come in two styles: "classic" rooms feature hardwood floors, Oriental rugs, antique furnishings and buff-colored walls; "modern" chambers are decorated in warm, Mediterranean-style. Double-glazed windows permit almost total quiet. All rooms are spacious and most are bathed in light from double windows. And, although there's no courtyard, an inner atrium makes inner-city activity seen miles away.

**Contact:** Stern Hotel, Markt 8, D-53111 Bonn, tel. +49/0228/72670 (US toll-free 1-800-650-8028), fax: 7267 125, email [info@sternhotel-bonn.de](mailto:info@sternhotel-bonn.de), web [www.sternhotel-bonn.de](http://www.sternhotel-bonn.de). Proprietor: Clemens-Pascal Lutzke.

**Daily rates:** Singles €95-125, doubles €135-165; weekends without conventions, single €69, double €85

**Ratings:** QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 15/20

### Hotel Kurfürstenhof

The Kurfürstenhof offers good value within a two-minute walk of the train station. Located between the *Altstadt* and the fashionable *Südstadt* (South Town), it's just off Poppelsdorfer Allee and faces Poppelsdorf Palace. Surrounded by *Jugendstil* houses once owned by the city's upper middle class, the hotel's guestrooms are clean, modern and straightforward with pleasant furnishings, adequate space and the key necessities (TV, phone, shower and WC), but no frills. One nice touch is the rooftop terrace.

**Contact:** Hotel Kurfürstenhof, Baum-schulallee 20, D-53115 Bonn, tel. +49/0228/98 505-0, fax: 63 20 45, email [info@kurfuerstenhof-bonn.de](mailto:info@kurfuerstenhof-bonn.de), web [www.kurfuerstenhof-bonn.de](http://www.kurfuerstenhof-bonn.de)

**Daily rates:** Single €65-85, double €85-115, including off-street parking.  
**Ratings:** QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 14/20

### Food

#### Der Wasserträger

Named for the prince-electoral water carrier who lived there in the 18th century, the hotel is in a beautifully renovated building near Poppelsdorf Palace. The brick-arched cellar with torch-like lights creates a peaceful and nostalgic "Old Bonn" setting.

Prices appeal to student budgets with many entrées under €10, including field salad with mushrooms sautéed with bacon, fresh vegetables baked with cheese, noodles with basil and Gorgonzola, carpaccio with tomatoes and mozzarella and potato soup with bacon. A bit more expensive are dishes such as poached salmon in Riesling-butter and pork medallions in tarragon sauce.

**Contact:** Der Wasserträger, Clemens-August-Strasse 13, D-53115 Bonn, tel. +49/228/658787.

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

#### Bastei

This restored 19th-century station house of the Köln-Düsseldorfer Steamship Line, offers four settings for casual dining. The main space is upstairs in the old station house and in an enclosed glass patio.

The attractive decor is complemented by a view to the Rhine and Siebengebirge hills.

The cooking has a Mediterranean flair and offers various risottos and a variety of pasta dishes.

In good weather enjoy outdoor dining and lighter fare on the terrace or in the beer garden, or join joggers and cyclists at the street café. Although the Bastei is pleasant at any time, there's a sublime pleasure to candlelight dining as darkness falls across the Rhine Valley, the lights of barges ripple off their stern wakes, and the sunset reflects against the silhouette of the Drachenfels fortress.

Expect to spend €8-17 upstairs, snack prices in the outdoor spaces.

**Contact:** Bastei, Von-Sandt-Ufer 1/ Corner of Rheinallee, D-53173 Bonn-

Bad Godesberg, tel. +49/228/368/0433 34, fax: 368/0435, email: [basteibonn@aol.com](mailto:basteibonn@aol.com), web [www.basteia-bonn.de](http://www.basteia-bonn.de)  
**Ratings:** QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 15/20

#### Weinhaus Gut Sülz

The Weinhaus Gut Sülz is in a rustic, 17th-century vintner's manor house at the edge of a family vineyard. As with many wineries, the dining choices are somewhat limited; a basic menu of sausages, cheeses and meat plates.

The emphasis, of course, is on wine and there is an extensive list from the vineyard, the region and the country.

Inside, the dining is warm and intimate. Guests can also choose to sit on the terrace or at trestle tables overlooking pastures where horses graze.

The restaurant is open weekdays from 4pm, weekends and holidays from 2pm. It's a 20-minute ride by U-Bahn across and up the Rhine to Oberdollendorf, and then a short and scenic walk to the restaurant. If you go too far, you find yourself climbing the hillside vineyard — not an altogether bad idea.

**Contact:** Weinhaus Gut Sülz, Bachstrasse 157, D-53639 Königswinter-Oberdollendorf, tel. +49/2223/3010  
**Ratings:** Quality 14/20, Value 15/20

#### Weinwirtschaft Böllchen

During a recent dinner, some local residents were overheard referring to the Weinwirtschaft Böllchen as the most charming restaurant in the Bonn area and perhaps its best-kept culinary secret. If there's hyperbole in the statement, it's minimal. Located in a half-timber home in the Rhine-side village of Rhöndorf, the Böllchen's setting is rich with dark woods, antiques, old prints and artwork. Lanterns glimmer. The menu, which features regional and seasonal specialties, changes frequently and is posted on blackboards. Wine is a central focus and there is a courtyard garden for pleasant outdoor dining.

**Contact:** Weinwirtschaft Böllchen, Rhöndorfer Strasse 33, D-5340 Rhöndorf, tel. +49/22 24/4365.

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

EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

## Rail Pass vs. Car Rental

Per person, per day costs

	Car rental: Germ.	Rail: Germ., 2nd Cl	Rail: Germ., 1st Cl	Car rental: Switz.	Rail: Switz., 2nd Cl	Car rental: Aust.	Rail: Aust., 2nd Cl	Rail: Aust., 1st Cl	Rail: 3 countries, 1st Cl	
21 days Car/10 days Rail	\$26	\$24	\$35	\$28	\$32*	\$48*	\$33	\$23	\$33	\$50
14 days Car/8 days Rail	\$28	\$26	\$37	\$30	\$32*	\$48*	\$35	\$23	\$33	\$50
7 days Car/5 days Rail	\$28	\$31	\$44	\$30	\$38*	\$57*	\$36	\$28	\$40	\$61

*This table's prices are based on two persons traveling together and assumes rental of a midsize car, manual transmission, not picked up at an airport or rail station, and includes value added tax and \$125 per week in parking and fuel costs. All rail prices are based on "flexi" passes (the specified number of days must be used in a one or two-month period), though in Switzerland a consecutive day pass may often be a better choice. The 8-day consecutive pass in Switzerland is \$26 per day second-class and \$38 first-class. The per day, per person costs for the 15-day consecutive pass are \$16 second-class and \$25 first-class, and for the 22-day consecutive pass it's \$13 second-class and \$19 first-class.*

### CAR VS. RAIL

Continued from page 1


Add other countries to your itinerary, however, and the equation changes in favor of the car; the per day, per person cost of an 8-day, 3-country, first-class Eurail Selectpass is \$50.

For those who restrict their travel only to Switzerland, and plan to move about the country on an almost daily basis, the consecutive day passes are exceptional value. For example, the 22-day consecutive pass is \$13 per person, per day in second-class and \$19 first-class. A three-week rental of a midsize car will cost about \$56 per day, or \$28 each for two persons

Cost, of course, is just one factor in the car/rail decision and for many not the most important. Some readers have told us they'd rather eat ground glass than drive a car in towns like Munich and Salzburg. Others simply prefer rail travel's relaxed style. There are also practical advantages. The traveler who wants to get from Ham-

burg to Munich in one day goes from city center to city center in a stress-free, five hours, 59 minutes. For the auto traveler it's a seven-hour run in average traffic. Reading and dozing for six hours on a quiet train delivers the human body and spirit in far better condition than seven hours in a rental car on the Autobahn.

Still, when two or more are traveling together and more than one country is involved, the car is almost always the least expensive choice. And nothing offers the flexibility of your own car. When it comes to romance, even auto travel has its moments; cruising with the windows down through green, rolling countryside over almost deserted backroads has a charm of its own.

In the end, we can't make your car/rail decision; only shed light on some of the elements involved. A choice that works for many — though not cost-efficient — is a combination of the two; rail for trips between distant cities and rental cars at the destinations. 

### Restaurant Rolandsbogen

Travelers and residents have been coming to the hillside **Restaurant Rolandsbogen** for more than 100 years to enjoy the stunning view across the Rhine to the Drachenfels. Today, the attraction is the extensive wine list — including many reds from across the river — and superb cuisine recognized by *Michelin* and *Gault Millau*. Many dishes are prepared on the terrace grill.

The restaurant is on the ruins of a 12<sup>th</sup>-century fortress built to protect

**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

the Nonnenwerth Monastery, which still stands on the island below. The ancient stone *Rolandsbogen* (Roland's Arch) is located in the middle of terrace. The setting is both elegant and reminiscent of a bygone era.

Entrées range from €14 to €22 and include creative choices such as beef filet with gnocchi, duck and pheasant with celery puree, herb-crusted lamb with Mediterranean vegetables, and *Sauerbraten* of bass with radicchio and white raisins. Smaller budgets or

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## Rail Pass News & Buying Tips

■ **New Rail Passes:** To their credit, **Rail Europe** keeps creating new products. With each new pass they take one more step in giving consumers no more than exactly what they need. A few years ago if you wanted to travel only in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, you had to purchase the 17-country Eurail-pass. New this year are the France 'n Switzerland Pass and the Switzerland 'n Austria Pass (for prices see page I-3).

■ **Rail Discounts for Seniors?:** The truth is there are none when it comes to passes that are good for travel in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Discounts are available, however, when purchasing point-to-point tickets in Europe. But a rail pass purchased in the U.S. prior to departure is usually a better deal for the traveler who wants to take more than a couple of medium-length trips — Munich to Frankfurt, for example.

■ **Flexipass Passes Not Always Best:** Take a close look at the flexi vs consecutive pass in instances where both are offered. In Switzerland, for example, you pay \$196 for a second-class flexi pass and \$240 for a pass that lets you travel eight days in a row. That's \$11 per day for four more days. And with a consecutive day pass you never have to worry about whether to use one of your precious days on a short trip, because for the duration of your pass every trip is covered.

■ **Travel Longer, Travel Cheaper:** Passes get incrementally cheaper as you add more days. For example, the second-class German Twin Pass is nearly \$34 a day for the first four days but only \$18 per day after that.

■ **First-Class vs. Second-Class:** The difference is not so pronounced as with air travel, but there *are* differences: in second-class, four seats occupy the same space occupied by three more comfortable first-class seats; and, since first-class is more expensive, it is less crowded.

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

*Continued from page 2*

but not for long — a room whose only window overlooked the breakfast room. A corner room with windows on two sides is very desirable.

Balconies are a plus but somewhat overrated, mainly because they are so seldom used.

• **Good bathroom.** The basics here are cleanliness, space and good lighting. European hoteliers have told us that Japanese and British guests absolutely insist on a bathtub, but we prefer an enclosed shower. We grade down for shower curtains (they tend to wrap themselves around one) and tubs with a hand-held sprayer, but mark up for bathrooms with windows and those which put the toilet in its own little room. There is a regrettable move among hoteliers to provide soap in liquid form in squeeze bottles mounted on walls. Large, absorbent towels are a definite plus but we pay scant attention to hair driers, free toiletries and heated towel racks. They're nice but far down the list in importance.

• **Electronics.** Personally, I like a radio in the room. Of course, if the TV has English-speaking news channels I flip it on first thing in the morning and again when I return in the early evening. (Actually, if I must, I watch the news in whatever foreign language is available.) Last year, for the first time, we began to see wireless Internet access in smaller, less expensive hotels. Until all hotels have broadband access in guestrooms, this feature will be a key factor for some in deciding where to stay.

• **Bed reading lights.** They're getting better at it but far too many hotels in our three countries, even expensive ones, have awful reading lights. Good bed lighting is important to us, but perhaps not to everyone.

• **Storage.** We look for closet space with good hangers and places to put suitcases.

So there's our checklist. But how about the bed itself and the bed linen I hear you asking? I can't tell if a bed suits me until I've slept in it and beds are such a personal preference that

it's almost impossible to evaluate them. Often a bed Liz thinks is great I'll sleep poorly on. Of course, old and lumpy mattresses are an ominous sign, but we've rarely encountered them. The quality of bed linen is usually in direct proportion to the price of the room, and even in the least expensive hotels the linen is almost always clean and acceptable. Inexpensive, yes, but never dirty.

Hotel rooms with all the above features are costly and most of us are willing to accept less than ideal in several of the foregoing categories. We'll compromise on almost everything but "light and air" and "temperature" — and, of course, cleanliness. —RHB

## BONN

*Continued from page 7*

appetites can enjoy lighter dishes like bratwurst or grilled shrimp for less than €10.

**Contact:** Restaurant Rolandsbogen, Rolandsbogen 1, D-53424 Remagen-Rolandwerth, tel: +49/2228/372/8423. Proprietors: Karenine and Frank Böhm.

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

### Cassius Garten

This whole-foods cafeteria offers one of the best deals in town. Meals are purchased by weight, and hungry diners can pile on half a pound (about 200 grams) of tasty delights for less than €3. The salad buffet includes more than 50 different varieties of mixed salads, vegetables, grains and fixings — all with no chemicals and no preservatives. More than a dozen juices are freshly squeezed. More substantial dishes, from braised pork with pumpkin and raisins to creative vegetarian fare, are also available. Good food and good karma.

The restaurant is located in a modern, upbeat space across from the train station and takes a bit of finding. For those who are hungry, in a hurry, yet careful about what eat, Cassius Garten is the perfect choice

**Contact:** Cassius Garten, Maximilianstrasse 28, D-53111 Bonn, tel. +49/228/65 24 29, fax: 65 71 61, [info@cassiusgarten.de](mailto:info@cassiusgarten.de).

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

## Travel Quickies

■ **Hotel Search Improved at [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com):** In the Members section of *Gemütlichkeit's* website (accessed using the codes found on page 2 of this issue) is a list of the approximately 900 hotels reviewed by the newsletter. Until recently, the search has been a bit time-consuming. Now, however, each country's list has a drop-down menu of all cities in which hotels have been rated. Simply click on your city of choice and the result is a list of the hotels *Gemütlichkeit* has reviewed in that city. Each listing contains contact info (email, phone, fax, street and web addresses, etc.), our quality and value rating, and each is categorized by price. Editor's Choice hotels are also noted.

■ **East Driving Dangerous:** Statistically, it's more dangerous to drive in the former eastern bloc countries than in the west. Poland, for example, records 16.3 road deaths per 100,000 population vs. Germany's 10.9. The safest EU country to drive in is Britain, with 5.6 annual deaths per 100,000. Even tough new laws have failed to bring the road death statistics into line; in Slovakia and the Czech Republic the blood alcohol limit for driving is zero. Of course, many main roads in these countries still consist of two lanes lined with trees, with no central barrier to separate them.

## Readers' Forum

### Nürnberg's Rally Grounds

Regarding the Nürnberg article in the April issue, I strongly recommend that you let readers know of the tours that are available through *Geschichte fuer Alle*, the Institute for Local History. Several years back, our group of seven spent three and a half hours at the Rally Grounds, led by John Jenkins, a gentleman from Wales who provided the highlight of our trip with his knowledge of the events that took place in the area during the 1930s. Arrangements can be made through [www.geschichte-fuer-alle.de/fremd/](http://www.geschichte-fuer-alle.de/fremd/).

RUSSELL WAYNE

VIA EMAIL