

DEAR  
SUBSCRIBER

### Riding Around in Airplanes

In a recent email, longtime New Jersey subscriber, Virginia Kiehn, addressed the following question to me and to her fellow readers: "Do you find the service getting poorer on Lufthansa?"

Having not flown LH for several years I was unable to provide an informed answer. Perhaps you can.

Her query, however, set me to thinking about riding around in airplanes and how the experience has deteriorated. Simply put, flying is no fun anymore — especially across the Atlantic. The planes are too full, the seats too close together and there's the oppressive but, I presume, necessary security. It wasn't always this way.

In 1984, Tom Bestor, my youngest brother and co-founder of *Gemütlichkeit*, convinced his then employer, Sprint, to underwrite his participation in a **United Airlines** promotion that awarded a free first-class pass on United for one year to anyone who, within a 50-day period, would fly United to all 50 states (UAL being the only airline serving all 50).

Tom did them all in 21 days and was the first to finish the "United 50 State Marathon." Among the 65 other slightly wacko frequent flyers who successfully completed this grueling exercise were golfer, Craig Stadler, and meat-packing heir, James Hormel, later to be ambassador to Luxembourg.

United's route system, like most airlines, is organized in a "hub and spoke" fashion. As a result Tom flew into Chicago 27 times and to Denver 16 times. Most days he flew from 6am to midnight. Even at 27 years of age, it was a physical challenge. Some who

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## SURPRISING LINZ

*Through the eyes of our Austria-watcher, Mark Honan, we get a glimpse of Linz and its environs. It is a destination to be taken a bit more seriously than we have to date.*

Let's face it — Linz, a little-known industrial town on the banks of the Danube, is unlikely to make it into the top five of anyone's Austrian 'must see' list. But once you've done Vienna, Salzburg, Graz, and  
By Mark Honan  
— maybe Innsbruck, plus a few picture-perfect mountain resorts, you're likely to want to see the rest of Austria.

And Linz, beguiling with its mixture of traditional and technological, ancient and avant-garde, should be on your list. There's plenty to enjoy in the city center. And when you add in a range of enticing regional attractions within easy reach of the city, you'll realize that Linz deserves a higher status on the tourist wish-list.

### The Town

The heart of Linz is Hauptplatz, a broad square edged by patrician buildings and dominated by 20-meter-high **Trinity Column**. Radiating out from this is a warren of small streets and picturesque alleys, which are well worth a leisurely wander. A good way to get an understanding of the evolution of Linz into a modern city is to drop into the old town hall on the east side of the square for a look round the **Linz Genesis Museum**. Entry is free and it's open Monday to Friday. You won't find too much about Adolf Hitler in this historical overview, even though the *Führer* grew up here and planned to retire here, had

*Continued on page 3...*

## 20 Great Second-Tier Sights

After you've worked your way through the major tourist attractions of our three countries — such as Bavaria's **Royal Castles**, Vienna's several palaces and its great **Kunsthistorisches Museum**, the wonderful **Swiss Transport Museum** in Lucerne, **Castle Chillion** in Montreux (said to be Switzerland's most visited tourist spot), **Mozart's Birthplace** in Salzburg, the most storied cathedrals and abbeys, and ridden to the tops of the highest mountains — you may choose to turn your attention to less expensive, less crowded venues. And, with many top attractions, one visit may be enough. Standing in line for an hour or more on a hot day to troop with 50 other tourists through **Schloss Neuschwanstein** (the castle Disney copied decades ago) is an essential travel experience but one that, for many,

doesn't need to be repeated.

For those seeking alternatives to the big name attractions touted by all the guidebooks, we've compiled a starter list of 20 of our favorite lesser-known ones. They are not as expensive (some are free), not as crowded and, for the most part, less intellectually demanding. Some are a bit offbeat, a few are inspiring, and several are simply fun.

We'll continue to add to the list and will welcome your suggestions for additions.

### Austria

**Arsenal, Graz (A):** A supermarket of the medieval art of war. It's four floors contain every conceivable

*Continued on page 6...*

**Exchange rates as of 5/28/04**

**1 euro = \$1.22**

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

## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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met him along the way predicted he wouldn't finish. But finish he did and won the free year of unlimited travel.

(There was just one hitch; what do you do with one free pass when you have a wife and no money? Tom did travel during the free year, but not as much as you might think. He once took a Friday night red-eye from San Francisco to Boston where, on Saturday morning, he purchased live Maine lobsters. There were 14 for dinner at our house that Saturday night back in California and I think you can guess the main dish.)

Tom's odyssey took place when there was less airport security. Today the 50-state marathon would be far more arduous, perhaps impossible.

It was also a time before airlines had the tools — computer software and the Internet — that let them fill up nearly every flight by changing and marketing fares on a minute-to-minute basis in order to obtain the highest load factors. (There is a price at which people who weren't planning to travel will do so just because the deal is so good.) Selling every seat is a goal with which I can't argue, but these days there are just too many of them in too small a space.

If you're like me you can hunker down and live with it for about three hours, but seven to 12 hours across the Atlantic is a different story. At best — first and business class — it's a tiring process. At worst, a bad flight experience can ruin your first few days in

Europe or even make you ill.

I wish I could reveal some secret strategy to make your next flight a restful, relaxing, joyous experience, but I can only offer a few well-worn bits of advice to ease the transatlantic pain.

• **Get Pre-Assigned Seats:** Well, duh, you say but be aware that these days not every ticket sold comes with a guaranteed preassigned seat. Airlines have tightened seat assignment rules to favor their highest paying passengers, making it more difficult for bargain travelers to get the seats they want. Air carriers don't want to tell frequent-flying, last-minute ticket buyers, who may be paying four or five times more than early-bird travelers who bought tickets from a consolidator, that only middle seats are available. Thus most airlines don't assign the last 30% of their seats until check-in begins on the day of the flight, usually three to five hours prior to departure. If you are first turned down for an advance seat assignment, call again. Sometimes it just depends on the person you talk to.

If all else fails, find out when check-in for your flight begins and be first in line. That way you're almost certain to get what you want.

• **Know Your Aircraft:** It's essential you get the seat location most comfortable for you, but to do that you need to know the configuration of the aircraft. The most sought-after seating for couples is an aisle and window together. For that to happen in coach, one has to be on a plane with a 2-4-2 or 2-5-2 configuration. The former is found on most Airbus 340 aircraft. (The seat nobody wants is the center seat of United's 777-

200 with it's 2-5-2 coach configuration.) The 3-4-3 config found on many 747s makes two together an impossibility. In that case, we choose aisle seats across from each other. When confronted with a 3-4-3 configured aircraft some couples purchase three seats in a row and keep the middle one empty. If that's your plan make sure the airline is aware of it and don't buy tickets without getting that row of three seats preassigned.

The best websites we've found for airline seating information (charts) are [airtravel.about.com/cs/seatmaps/](http://airtravel.about.com/cs/seatmaps/) and [www.seatguru.com](http://www.seatguru.com).

• **Let Go:** Once you've gotten the seats you want, you've done about all you can. It's time to realize that the whole process is out of your control and go with the flow.

• **Sedation:** Even three hours of airplane sleep will do wonders for your first day in Europe, so ask your doctor for something that will ensure it.

Other than that, lay off the booze, drink water, wash your hands frequently and don't overeat. — RHB

### 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: **linza** Password: **2299**

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### HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	Scale	Restaurant Criteria	
Excellent	16 - 20	Food	65%
Above Average	12 - 15	Service	20%
Average	8 - 11	Atmosphere	15%
Adequate	4 - 7		
Unacceptable	0 - 3		
Hotel Rating Criteria		Value Rating	Scale
People/Service	30%	Outstanding Value	17 - 20
Location/Setting	15%	Very Good Value	12 - 16
Guestrooms	30%	Average Value	9 - 11
Public rooms	5%	Below Average Value	5 - 8
Facilities/Restaurant	20%	A Rip-Off	0 - 4

### Special Designation

By virtue of location, decor, charm, warmth of management, or combination thereof, an especially pleasant establishment.

**LINZ***Continued from page 1*

he not retired permanently in a Berlin bunker at the end of WWII. In that bunker the victorious Allies found a scale model of Linz, incorporating Hitler's elaborate and sometimes fanciful designs for new building projects.

Next, you can cross the river and pass from the past to the future. On the north bank is **Ars Electronica**, Linz's so-called museum of the future. It displays all sorts of interactive technological gadgets — some frivolous, some esoteric, all ingenious. A high point is the cave of virtual reality, providing a vivid illusion of exploring a cartoon wood and a fictional Renaissance city. You can don a virtual reality helmet and overalls, and allow yourself to be suspended by wires from the ceiling; this enables you to guide yourself on a 'flying' trip round Linz. Entry costs €6 and it's open daily ([www.aec.at](http://www.aec.at)).

The newest attraction in town is the **Lentos Museum of Modern Art**. Opened in 2003, it's housed in a purpose-built building on the south bank of the Danube. The huge box-like structure of glass, steel and concrete absorbs the colors of everything around it, making it translucent and almost invisible from the outside. Inside, you encounter a permanent collection of Klimts, Schieles and Kokoschkas, among others, as well as high-profile temporary exhibitions. Entry costs €6.50 and it's open daily except Tuesday from 10am to 6pm (to 10pm on Thursday; [www.lentos.at](http://www.lentos.at)).

The pastoral side of the city can be seen in the **Botanical Gardens** (€2 entry), which is noted for its cacti collection. For good viewpoints, there's the **Postlingberg** hill on the north bank, easily spotted by the twin Baroque onion domes of the church on the summit, or **Schloss Linz** containing a historical museum and set on the edge of the old town overlooking the Danube. The Danube itself provides another fine diversion. Steamers run all the way along the river from Passau to the west or Vienna to the east, and there are hour-long pleasure trips or evening cruises

**Linz Basics****Population:** 200,000**Elevation:** 266 meters (873 feet)

**Tourist Info:** Linz City Tourist Office, Hauptplatz 1, A-4010, tel. +43/070/7070-1777, fax 772873, email [tourist.info@linz.at](mailto:tourist.info@linz.at), web [www.linz.at](http://www.linz.at)

Upper Austria Tourist Office, tel. +43/732/600221, web [www.oberoesterreich.at](http://www.oberoesterreich.at)

**Driving Distances:**

Frankfurt	153 miles	246 km
Munich	170 miles	274 km
Salzburg	85 miles	137 km
Vienna	114 miles	183 km
Prague	149 miles	239 km

**Best Buy:** The **Linz City Ticket** (€20), sold at the tourist office and some hotels, includes the following: • restaurant voucher worth €10, • sightseeing tour on the Linz City Express train, • admission to 12 museums including Ars Electronica Center and Lentos, • ride up & down the Pöstlingberg tram, • day ticket for tram line 3, • ride on the grotto railway, • admission to the Botanical Gardens and the Linz zoo, • 20% reduction for the boat trip Linz - Aschach - Linz

including music and dinner buffet.

Linz also has some fascinating festivals. The intriguingly named *Klangwolke* (clouds of sounds) event includes the Ars Electronica Festival of Technology, which kicks off with visual and acoustic compositions, and the Bruckner Festival of classical music. In 2004 the event runs from 4th September to the 2nd October.

The composer Anton Bruckner (1824-95) was born just south of Linz and became official organist at Linz's old cathedral, one of several churches to be explored in the city center. Among these is the new cathedral, which is hard to miss given that its 131-meter-high spire is Austria's second highest after Vienna's Stephansdom. Sadly, this sturdy edifice lacks Stephansdom's graceful contours, though it does feature exceptional stained glass.

**Excursions**

Linz is also a convenient base for exploring most of the attractions of Upper Austria. Just 20 minutes south-east by car or bus is the breathtaking **Abbey of St Florian**, with its Baroque spires rising majestically over the few buildings of the surrounding village. In the church is a massive organ upon which Bruckner was the resi-

dent player (from 1850-55) and under which his remains now repose. Don't omit the guided tour of the lavish, Baroque apartments of the **Augustinian Abbey**; this includes a small gallery of emotive religious works by Albrecht Altdorfer, which look as fresh as the day they were painted some 500 years ago. The tour costs €5.30 ([www.stift-st-florian.at](http://www.stift-st-florian.at)). Baroque explodes into Rococo excess at the **Cistercian Monastery at Wilhering**, five miles west of Linz.

Another possible outing is to picturesque **Steyr** (*Gemütlichkeit* May 2002, April 1994, [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com)), at the confluence of two rivers and reached from Linz by a 40-minute train ride to the southeast. Southwest of Linz lies **Wels**, just 15 minutes by train along the route to Salzburg. Though not as striking as Steyr, its historic town centre has plenty of charm. After taking the prescribed walking tour (commentary available from the tourist office), hop on a bus for the five-mile trip north to **Schmiding**. The zoo here started out as a bird park (with 350 bird species) and has recently expanded to include a range of other animal species, as well as an interesting evocation of the human species (in the ethnological museum). Find details at [www.zooschmiding.at](http://www.zooschmiding.at). Also within easy reach of Wels are two impressive **Benedictine Abbeys**, at **Lambach** and **Kremsmünster**. On a different theme, east of Linz there's **Mauthausen**, accessible by train or boat. You can spend a chilling couple of hours here touring Austria's most infamous WWII concentration camp.

Another worthwhile trip out of Linz involves heading north by (train or car) towards the Czech Republic. After about 20 miles of rolling countryside you happen upon **Kefermarkt**, a nondescript hamlet with an entirely unexpected treasure. In the modest parish church is a fabulous 15th-century altar carved out of lime-wood. Soaring nearly 14 meters high and depicting religious scenes in relief and statues of saints, it matches the beauty of the similar (but much more famous and fêted) altar in the church at **St Wolfgang** in the Salzkammergut. From here, it's just a few miles further north to the medieval



town of **Freistadt**, where most of the ancient city walls are still intact. **Freistadt Castle** contains a museum that features fine exhibits of engraved and painted glass. Afterwards, you can take a meal washed down with local Freistädter beer — Freistadt is a unique 'beer commune,' the town brewery being owned jointly by the 149 households residing within the city walls.

### Lodging

#### Drei Mohren

The four-star hotel lies directly opposite the impressive **Landhaus**. With just 25 rooms, the staff of this family-run place are willing and able to lavish personal service upon their guests.

Rooms are all doubles. Quality furnishings in dark wood are enlivened by the occasional quirky or homey element, such as the wrought-iron light shades and cutesy patterns on the bathroom tiles. It's a shame, though, about the ancient radios, the hard dimpled towels and the lack of a shower glass or shower curtain (the shower end of the bath is in a recessed corner, but water still spills out onto the floor).

The breakfast-buffet was slightly disappointing for a four-star, though the dining space — in the breakfast

#### 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.

room or the spacious, elegant adjoining lounge — was pleasant enough.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €98, doubles €130, suite €220

**Contact:** Hotel Drei Mohren  
Promenade 17, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/7726260, fax +43/732/7726266, email [hotel@drei-mohren.at](mailto:hotel@drei-mohren.at), web [www.drei-mohren.at](http://www.drei-mohren.at)

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

#### Hotel Wolfinger

Ideally central, this charming family-run hotel offers elements of Baroque style right on Hauptplatz. Part of a 500 year-old building that was once a monastery, it retains the original stone floorways worn into concave curves through centuries of use. The larger rooms are at the front, yet even those at the back are an acceptable size. These latter chambers face each other across a quiet, narrow, cobbled path.

The custom-made, sometimes antique room furnishings are shuffled among the family's three hotels every couple of years. You can expect the usual three-star facilities, including private toilet, shower or bath, TV and telephone. There is a lift, but to reach it one has to climb the steps to the first floor reception.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €67-81, doubles €94-114.

**Contact:** Hotel Wolfinger, Hauptplatz 19, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/7732910, fax +43/732/77329155, email [wolfinger@austria-classic-hotels.at](mailto:wolfinger@austria-classic-hotels.at), web [www.oberoesterreich.at/wolfinger/](http://www.oberoesterreich.at/wolfinger/)

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

#### Zum Schwarzen Bären

Once a rather nondescript three-star, the Bären underwent a designer makeover a few years ago. The result is best seen in the more expensive 'comfort rooms,' where the shower and sink are separated from the main part of the room by a half-built section of wall that rises in steps like a staircase. Apart from the designer flair, though, these rooms aren't actually any more comfortable than the standard rooms. Either way you get a reasonably spacious chamber, with television, toilet and bath or shower — and if inclined, you can pay more

for a room with a waterbed. On site is a stylish restaurant (doubling as a breakfast room), where pastel colors and summery tablecloths combine with design elements typical of both Austrian *Heurigen* and French salons. It's a pity the makeover hasn't extended to the reception or the reception staff, both of which could benefit from being a tad more engaging and welcoming.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €68-88, doubles €90-120, triples €114-135

**Contact:** Zum Schwarzen Bären, Herrenstrasse 9-11, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/7724770, fax +43/732/77247747, email [hotel.baer@aon.at](mailto:hotel.baer@aon.at), web [www.linz-hotel.at](http://www.linz-hotel.at)

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

#### Hotel Mühlviertelhof

It's difficult to enthuse about a hotel that makes guests suffer dimly lit rooms just so they can shave a few cents off their electricity bill. The Mühlviertelhof is not alone in this practice, but this is an extreme example — 40-watt overhead bulbs! Maybe they're trying to disguise the fact that rooms could do with some updating; for example, bathroom tiles in several places are old and cracking.

Some rooms (e.g. No 23) are too small for comfort, though all do have shower, WC and TV, as well as efficient double-glazing that eliminates traffic noise from the busy street outside.

The breakfast room is more cheerful, with colorful seat fabric and copious mirrors and pictures.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €98, doubles €130, suite €220

**Contact:** Hotel Mühlviertelhof, Graben 24-26, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/772268, fax +43/732/77226834, web [www.hotel-muehlviertelhof.at](http://www.hotel-muehlviertelhof.at)

**Rating:** QUALITY 8/20, VALUE 8/20

#### Gasthof Goldener Anker

Linz's most central two-star accommodation has changed little in the last couple of decades. The blue/grey exterior could do with a lick of paint and the vault-ceilinged, wood-panelled cafe has a rickety old feel that seems straight out of the post-WWII *Third Man* era.

Guestrooms are also somewhat

Spartan and gloomy (more dim light bulbs), but they are clean and reasonably spacious for the price. There's also a lift. All but two rooms have shower and toilet, and you can't complain about the convenience of the location — a pedestrian alley just off Hauptplatz.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €28-50, doubles €54-80

**Contact:** Gasthof Goldener Anker, Hofgasse 5, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/771088, fax +43/732/771088, email [goldener.anker.linz@aon.at](mailto:goldener.anker.linz@aon.at)

**Rating:** QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 11/20

### Wienerwald Hotel

Another two-star place, but over a mile west of the center and not really viable unless you have your own transport (the No 26 bus service makes its last run around 8pm). Prices offer good value though, there's a choice of aging, plain rooms using hall facilities or refurbished ones with private shower and toilet.

The hotel sits on a hilltop, in a rural setting, and meals are available in the Wienerwald restaurant downstairs. For those with a car, there's ample parking spaces.

**Daily Rates:** Singles €22 or €27 with shower, doubles €38 or €44 with shower

**Contact:** Wienerwald, Freinbergstrasse, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/777881, fax +43/732/77788130

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

### Food

Linz has plenty of restaurants and if you visit the surrounding towns, you will also have no problem finding suitable places for lunch or dinner. St Florian, for example, has a handful of inns within a few yards of the abbey. Steyr's Stadtplatz (main square) has some fine places, including several tucked discretely away in courtyards off the square. Freistadt's compact historic center also has good choices, and the **Schmiding Zoo** has its own cafe.

### Promenaden Hof

Promenaden Hof has been wining and dining an ever-increasing clientele for about three years now, and despite offering several spacious rooms, it's hard to find a table on a

Saturday night. There's a bright, light, buzzy ambience in the semi-covered garden courtyard, the glassy conservatory or the wood-beamed interior. For more muted lighting and a slightly calmer aspect there's the cellar area to the left upon entering. Wherever you sit, energetic, young, yellow-clad servers ensure your order arrives in a timely fashion.

The lettuce salad was nicely complemented by warmed, slightly-garlicky shrimps (€8.50). As I was dining alone I dared another garlic dish, *Weidelammrücken* (€16) — two choice cuts of perfectly cooked lamb around which were carefully arranged thick spears of slightly bland, doughy 'noodles' and garlic-tomatoes. Afterwards, I could just squeeze in a raspberry cake from the dessert trolley (€6 per piece).

Other items on the menu include central European dishes such as Hungarian fish soup (€3) and a range of Austrian regional specialities including an assortment of special dumplings from Upper Austria (€6.50).

Main courses are in the range €6.40-16, and there's a cellar to tempt you with 100 varieties of wine.

Promenade 39, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/777661, web

[www.promenadenhof.at](http://www.promenadenhof.at), Open 10am-1am Monday-Saturday

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

### Pöstlingberg-Schlössl

High on the Pöstlingberg hill, north of the Danube, awaits this stylish restaurant.

Completely renovated a few years ago to reflect an earlier epoch, it features polished wood surfaces, elegant chandeliers, and a dapper serving staff in white shirts, yellow aprons and yellow bow ties. Some of the dining spaces have a romantic ambience (e.g. the secluded Turmstüberl), or there are the simpler surrounds of the terrace or the beer garden. From most areas you can enjoy a fine view over the city.

The food shouldn't disappoint — the menu is not particularly ambitious, but the Austrian and international dishes show good attention to detail in terms of quality of ingredients, preparation and presentation.

## 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: [hotelartnouveau@snafu.de](mailto:hotelartnouveau@snafu.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@zg-hotels.ch](mailto:info@zg-hotels.ch)

**Hotel Kreuz**, Zeughausgasse 41, CH-3000, tel. +41/031/329 9595, fax 329 95 96, email: [hotelkrenz@swissonline.ch](mailto:hotelkrenz@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@fh-hotels.ch](mailto:agora@fh-hotels.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**, Ruperigasse 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@rkhotel.bestwestern.com](mailto:info@rkhotel.bestwestern.com)

**Altstadt Vienna**, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, email: [hotel@altstadt.at](mailto:hotel@altstadt.at), web: [www.altstadt.at](http://www.altstadt.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)

The nouvelle cuisine-influenced main courses cost around €6.80-22.50. Options are mostly meat-based and include reliable standbys like Vienna *Schnitzel* (€8.60) or the simply-prepared yet tasty filet of trout with potatoes and side salad (€12.70). There's a wide selection of wines, or you could opt for the home-brewed Schössl Bräu beer.

Am Pöstlingberg 14, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/716633, web [www.poestlingbergshoessl.at](http://www.poestlingbergshoessl.at), Open 10am-1am Monday-Sunday

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

### Alte Welt

Doubling as a restaurant and a cultural centre (or even quadrupling, if you count the wine bar and cafe as separate entities), this place draws a sophisticated crowd.

The food is primarily Austrian in style, with the odd creative twist, and the prices (€7-13) represent decent value. House specialities include fish gulasch and homemade ravioli, and of the six midday menus (two courses for €6.40 up to four courses for €9.80), three are vegetarian or vegan. There's a guest garden out front. Inside, decor is understated, with whitewashed walls beneath a vaulted ceiling and plain wooden chairs and tables.

Alte Welt is located in an arcaded courtyard, which would be very stylish if it weren't so shabby.

Hauptplatz 4, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/770053, web [www.altewelt.at](http://www.altewelt.at), Open 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.50pm-2am Mon.-Sun., closed Sun. midday

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

### Stieglbrau Klosterhof

Located in a three-story, 17th-century building, this eatery with beer hall ambience offers several dining areas. Spaces range from the frivolous gaiety of the Stieglitz bar on the ground floor (with live music on Fridays and Saturdays) to the wood panels and historic coats of arms of the first floor restaurant. In the summer, though, most people head outside to the huge beer garden to eat and drink within the shade of mighty chestnut trees.

The menu is typically Austrian,

with main courses costing €8.80-17.50. The high volume of business means the food lacks subtlety, but it's reliably turned out and portions are substantial. All the usual choices are here (*Schnitzels*, steaks, fish etc.), though they can get more creative in the daily specials — pike-perch in a potato crust with lemon whipped cream and zucchini (€13.90) worked pretty well.

Landstrasse 30, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/773373, web [www.klosterhof-linz.at](http://www.klosterhof-linz.at), Open 10am-midnight Mon.-Sun.

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

### Josef Stadtbräu

They brew their own beer here, and very palatable it is. The food doesn't particularly stand out, but it is competently cooked and efficiently served — meals come quickly, even when they're full to the rafters, which is usual. I tried the spare ribs (€7.90), a large portion, served with baked potato and two sauces; the meat was tender and subtly marinated.

Half the reason to come here, though, is the lively atmosphere and friendly ambience. Early on a Sunday evening, when there is live music, there was no shortage of patrons of all ages letting their hair down and swinging their partners around the dance area in country-and-western style twirls. There's a choice of eating areas, ranging from the attractive courtyard to the inner hall. Seating is on regular chairs and tables or high bar stools and small round, elevated tables. Food prices are reasonable, with popular 'city brunch' being available between 11am and 2:30pm for €6.90

Landstrasse 49, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/773165, web [www.josef.co.at](http://www.josef.co.at), Open 10am-4am Monday-Sunday

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


### Jindrak Konditorei

Linzner Torte is perhaps the most famous Austrian cake after the Sacher Torte. It features a thick biscuit base with a hint of almond supporting a layer of raspberry jam and topped-off by distinctive latticework strips of pastry. Jindrak, a fairly plain but smart cafe, is the main address for this speciality. There is a range of other

cakes for sale, as well as a lunch menu (one choice) for only €4.40-6.50. You can also buy complete Linzer Tortes in presentation boxes for €5.65-12.25. For some tastes, the filling of these cakes is a little too sugary and the biscuit base a bit too dry.

There's another Jindrak Konditorei at *Südbahnhofmarkt*, with a guest garden.

Herrenstrasse 22, 4020 Linz, tel. +43/732/779258, web [www.linzertorte.at](http://www.linzertorte.at), open 8am-6pm Monday-Saturday

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

## 20 GREAT SIGHTS

*Continued from page 1*

able specimen of 17th century technology, all appearing brand new. The ground floor contains six 16th century field guns, a bronze mortar from 1652, implements and materials for making rockets, armor for light cavalry and footmen, black armor, (breast and back plates), hundreds of matchlock arquebuses (cannons with cannon balls), countless 17th century matchlock, wheellock and flintlock muskets, pistols and rifles.

### Central Cemetery, Vienna (A):

Among the famous folk buried in this huge cemetery are composers Beethoven, Brahms, Gluck, Schubert, Schoenberg, von Suppe, Lanner, Stoltz, and all the famed Strauss family. You can also see the graves of actor Curt Jurgens; WWII German flying ace, Walter Nowotny, who shot down 255 Russian aircraft; and Geli Raubal, Hitler's niece with whom he had a scandalous affair that ended with her suicide. To find exact grave locations see [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com) and browse by cemetery.

### Christkindl, near Steyr (A):

This tiny village is where Austrian children send their Christmas letters and all are answered by the post office. You may wish to mail a card from here as the stamps and postmark are somewhat prized. There is also a massive, wonderfully intricate, 'Rube Goldberg'-style, mechanical Nativity scene on display. Completed just before the war, it is the work of a single local hobbyist who took some 40 years to build it — in his living room.



**Kaisergruft, Vienna (A):** The Capuchins' Crypt beneath the streets of Vienna is the burial place of the Imperial family and contains the remains of some 125 Habsburg emperors, empresses and archdukes. One thing to keep in mind when walking among these lavish, ornate coffins is that certain organs of those interred here have been removed and placed elsewhere: the **Church of the Augustinians** for the hearts and the catacombs of **St. Stephen's** for the entrails.

**Riedel Crystal, Kufstein (A):** The world's finest wine glasses are made by hand at this small factory. Riedel's suggested retail price for four of its top-of-the-line Bordeaux glasses is \$356. From an overhead catwalk, visitors can see them made. In a carefully choreographed series of steps involving several artisans, glowing red blobs become sparkling crystal glassware. The sales room offers good prices on seconds of wine glasses as well as other glass products and will ship.

**The Prater, Vienna (A):** This old-world amusement park is much more than just the giant ferris wheel that starred in the movie *The Third Man*. Of course there are rides, both usual and unusual, but also a planetarium, a casino, shooting galleries, a hall of mirrors, restaurants, beer gardens, and a museum. Since all are independently operated, admission to The Prater grounds is free.

## Germany

**Botanical Gardens, Nymphenburg Palace, Munich (G):** The palace, of course, is a major tourist draw but too many bypass this extraordinary display of horticulture. The remarkable cactus exhibits and intensely humid tropical greenhouses put the visitor in a different world.

**Carriage Museum, Munich (G):** Another frequently overlooked corner of Nymphenburg is the former stable and its magnificent collection of harnesses and horse-drawn wagons, including the ornate state coach and sleigh of King Ludwig II; he of Neuschwanstein, Linderhof and Herrenchiemsee fame.

**Church at Ottobeuren, near Memmingen (G):** Only when you step inside the "Jewel of German Baroque," in the tiny town of Ottobeuren, do you become fully aware of its enormous size and stunning ornamentation. This is one of only a handful of individual sights in Germany to which Michelin awards three stars, "worth a journey."

**Mercedes Welt am Salzufer, Berlin (G):** Yes, it's a Mercedes Benz dealership showroom — but what a showroom. The five-story, ocean liner-shaped steel and glass atrium-style enclosure houses two restaurants, a private club with indoor climbing wall, racquet ball courts, and, of course, all those great cars — both brand new and rare vintage models — some of them suspended on cables connected to the overhead steel girders. In the main floor's informal eating area you can keep one eye on huge, high-definition TV screens tuned to CNN while having lunch, dinner or just a snack.

**Partnachklamm, Garmisch-Partenkirchen (G):** Go to the end of the road that runs past the Olympic Ski Stadium, then follow the signs to the steep, narrow Partnachklamm gorge through which a fast river thunders and crashes. The path is directly along the torrent and one is likely to get a little wet.

**Schloss Tambach's Falconry Show, Altenstein near Coburg (G):** A huge condor flying directly at you with its landing gear down is, to say the least, exciting. Diving falcons, soaring eagles and those big condors all share airspace in this exhilarating exhibition. Admission includes access to the castle and its hunting museum, as well as entry to the wild animal park.

**Villa Wahnfried, Bayreuth (G):** The house where **Richard Wagner** lived the last 12 years of his life. He and his wife, Cosima, the daughter of Franz Liszt, are buried in the garden. Anyone who enjoys Wagner at all will find it a moving experience to listen to a recording of his music while looking out upon his grave from the very room where he composed it.

*Continued on page 8...*

## News Briefing for the Traveler

■ **ATM Problems Abroad:** According to the website **Europe for Visitors** ([goeurope.about.com](http://goeurope.about.com)), some smaller banks and credit unions no longer allow their customers to obtain cash from ATMs outside the U.S. Credit cards can also present problems; EFV notes that a sudden change in buying patterns — such as a large purchase overseas — could cause the charge to be declined. What to do? Call your bank to make sure your ATM card will work in Europe and let your credit card company know you plan to use your card outside the country.

■ **Sex in the Czech Republic:** Anyone driving from Germany into the Czech Republic cannot fail to notice the proliferation of prostitution. Hookers, who work from shed-like brothels advertised as nightclubs, line roadsides near the German and Austrian borders. And, with the advent of low intra-Europe airfares, Prague has become a center for "sex tourism," mostly men from the United Kingdom and Germany. Lured by cheap beer and readily available sex, they arrive by the planeload on weekends. Most of this activity is confined to a couple of small areas of the city but some travelers may want to confine their Prague visits to the Monday-Thursday period.

■ **Swiss to Drop Border Controls:** Switzerland will end border controls with its European Union neighbors by 2007, EU and Swiss leaders agreed last month at a meeting in Brussels.

■ **Stuttgart Has Europe's Best Sushi:** With Germany's biggest contingent of Japanese residents, Stuttgart carries the unofficial title "Nippon on the Rhine." And it is said that an area of Japanese shops and restaurants near the rail station known as "little Tokyo" is where the best Sushi on the continent is found.

■ **Berlin's Newest Luxury Hotel:** The city's 17th five-star is the new **Ritz-Carlton** at Potsdamer Platz. It currently offers a weekend rate of 175 euros per night. It shouldn't be hard to take business from the haughty Adlon.

## Switzerland

**Appenzell Showcase Cheese Dairy, Stein near Appenzell (S):** In our opinion, this is the best of the half dozen or so Swiss cheese-making factories open to visitors. But you must start your visit next door at the **Appenzell Folklore Museum** and first watch cheese made the old-fashioned way over an open fire. Then see how it's done in the 21<sup>st</sup> century at the modern dairy.


**Basel Zoo, Basel (S):** More than 600 species and 6,000 animals are beautifully presented over the zoo's meticulously maintained 28 acres. One of Europe's best.

**Red Cross Museum, Geneva (S):** Among the many powerful exhibits is remarkable film footage that causes some visitors to weep when they view jerky World War I footage of former enemies, Germans and Englishmen, hugging and dancing as the armistice goes into effect, ending a war that killed 60,000,000. One especially poignant film, taken during the Spanish-American War, shows Red Cross nurses running into gunfire to tend wounded soldiers.

**Ritom Funicular, Airolo (S):** Located just south of the Gotthard Tunnel near the village of Piotta in Italian-speaking Ticino, the Ritom is not a cog wheel, instead it rides on tracks and is pulled by a cable. The ascent takes 12 minutes and portions of it are near vertical, an 88.7% grade. At the top, a 25-minute walk leads to a lake formed by a dam. Further walking leads to more lakes in this mainly treeless landscape. There is a restaurant by the dam where the Osso Buco looks promising.

**Swiss Open Air Museum, Balenberg near Brienz (S):** This collection of about 60 farmhouses, barns and mills, all fully operational, is well-known in Europe but according to tourist authorities, most U.S. visitors pass it by. Give it at least half a day.

**Textile Museum, St. Gallen (S):** Though the winning Super Bowl quarterback always seems to pick Disneyland over the St. Gallen Textile Museum, the exhibition of hand embroidered lace on the museum's upper floor is absolutely not to be missed.

**Jaquet-Droz Automaton, Neuchâtel (S):** Found in Neuchâtel's **Museum of Art and History** these highly-detailed miniature robots were built in 1769-1780 and consist of three figures: a woman 30 inches tall with tiny fingers articulated in great detail who breathes (the chest moves in and out) and plays music on a wind piano; and a pair of 24-inch child figures, one actually draws various objects and the other writes with a pen on paper. See them in action the first Sunday of each month, otherwise there's a short video. 

## Readers' Forum

### On Bonn and Balconies

Your May issue brought back good memories of my first visit to Germany in 1988, when I stayed two nights in Bonn at the **Kaiser Karl Hotel**. It was back then about as you describe it. It was a short walk from the hotel down Vorgebirgstrasse to a restaurant called the Wintergarten, and a short walk further to the **Beethoven Haus** and other old town sights.

With regard to your discussion of how you rate hotels, I agree on most points. On balconies, most of the time they don't get used, but in the right location a balcony can be very inviting. I recall staying at a country hotel, in a first (i.e. second) floor room, with a balcony overlooking a field of new-mown hay right next to the back of the hotel. Sitting there in the late afternoon with a glass of wine from the mini-bar and the smell of the hay field was something I wouldn't have missed.

On bathrooms, in my experience, tubs with hand-held spray nozzles (often without a curtain or other enclosure) are the most common bathing facility, as this is the usual setup in private homes, so people are used to it. If you learn to watch where you spray, so you don't soak the rest of the room, they work OK. If the room doesn't have air conditioning (they usually don't), it is critically important to have windows which can be opened at night.

JIM MENTZER  
VIA EMAIL 

## Travel Quickies

### ■ Christmas Market Tour for \$1099

Leading our list of reliable tour operators delivering excellent value is Houston-based **Ski-Europe**. Their **Eastern European Christmas Markets Tour** that includes **Lufthansa/United** roundtrip air; three nights in first-class hotels (Budapest's **Grand Hungaria** and Prague's **Crowne Plaza**); city tours; classical music concerts in both cities; and a Danube excursion to Szentendre, an ancient Hungarian village known as the "The Pearl of the Danube Bend," all for \$1099 (from New York, other gateways available) is a remarkable value. Contact: 800-333-5533, [www.ski-europe.com/deals/43553christ.html](http://www.ski-europe.com/deals/43553christ.html)

### ■ Switzerland Air/Hotel Deal: Picasso Travel in Los Angeles, offers a four-day, three-night air-and-hotel package for \$849 per person, double occupancy (singles add \$150). The deal includes L.A.-Zürich round-trip air, a Zürich hotel and daily breakfast. Air taxes are \$107.20; additional nights \$99. Add Lausanne, St. Moritz, Lucerne, Lugano, Bern or Geneva for \$100 each. Contact: 800-995-7997, [www.picassotours.com](http://www.picassotours.com)

■ **Switzerland Rail Week for \$1199: Go-today.com** offers a 7-night Swiss rail package that includes first-class travel on the William Tell Express, the Bernina Express, and the Glacier Express, plus air and overnights in Lucerne, Lugano, St. Moritz, Zermatt and Geneva. Depending on the U.S. departure city, costs range from \$1199 to \$1299. Book online at [www.go-today.com](http://www.go-today.com) or phone 425-487-9632.

### ■ Great Swiss Hotel Slips a Notch:

The 98-year-old **Le Montreux Palace**, for decades one of Switzerland's grandest of grand hotels, is now officially Raffles Le Montreux Palace. The international marketing chain, which has managed the hotel since 2001, says the Palace can now "tap into and benefit from cross-selling initiatives with its sister hotels and other marketing programs of Raffles International worldwide." Translation: expect the same offhand, disinterested and disorganized service *Gemütlichkeit* experienced last December.