

DEAR  
SUBSCRIBER

### Back to Basics

Questions via phone and email indicate that it's probably time to revisit some basic issues regarding travel in Europe:

#### Changing Money

My best, briefest advice is A-T-M. Forget traveler's checks, both in foreign currency and especially in U.S. dollars. Even if the checks are free, the exchange rate will be much less favorable than with your ATM card (4 digit PIN only). Traveler's checks are also becoming hard to cash, even at banks. Make sure your card displays one or more of these logos: Plus, Cirrus or Star. I've never had a problem finding an ATM in Europe, no matter how small the town. You'll pay \$0 to \$5 each time you get money overseas, though the bank that owns the ATM may hide some costs in the exchange rate. You'll still do better than with t-checks.

Credit cards are a different story; there is a litany of extra charges connected with cash advances so we recommend using them for getting cash only in a pinch. (I still pay for restaurants and hotels with a credit card because it's convenient, I don't have to carry much money and I get frequent flyer miles. But the FF miles come at a price; if I spend \$3,000 overseas my card company charges a 3% fee or \$90. For that same \$90 I could simply buy 3600 miles from my frequent flyer program.)

One final note: Credit card companies are now quick to shut down charging privileges when they detect "unusual activity" and sudden

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## ERFURT

*Best known as Martin Luther's headquarters, and for a pigment-producing plant that sounds like it was named by Elmer Fudd, this old East Germany town has much to offer visitors.*

**W**ith the reunification of Germany, Erfurt became a pilgrimage destination of sorts. Thousands of Americans poured into this formerly *verboten* city to see where Martin Luther studied, \_\_\_\_\_ to bow heads where he  
By Jim Johnson prayed, to walk the same  
\_\_\_\_\_ medieval streets, and even to sleep where he slept.

Luther came to the University of Erfurt as a student in 1501, served as a monk in the **Augustinian Monastery** starting in 1505 and was ordained as a priest in **St. Mary's Cathedral** in 1511. At almost every turn, there's a reminder of the man who launched the Reformation.

But Erfurt is much more than

Luther.

In the compact *Altstadt*, almost every major sight of interest — and there are many — is within a five-minute walk of the **Rathaus**. There's **Cathedral Hill** with the 14<sup>th</sup>-century **Cathedral** and 13<sup>th</sup>-century **St. Severus** with 70 stone steps leading to the sprawling **Cathedral Square**.

From the top of the stairs is the glorious view to the wide square bordered on the southern and western sides by shops and restaurants in restored Renaissance buildings. The recently resurrected **Zur Hohen Lilie** (High Lily), built in 1538, at 31 Domplatz is especially attractive.

Nearby, the hilltop **Petersberg**

*Continued on page 3...*

### What we like to do is...

## Switzerland: Easy Walk on a High Ridge

*Last month we asked readers to submit short (300 words or fewer) summaries of their favorite activities and destinations. This first one is from Ralph and Jan Walker of Arlington, Virginia. For more information they can be contacted via their website [www.Gruetzi.com](http://www.Gruetzi.com)*

**W**e have visited the Bernese Oberland in Switzerland 19 times, and have taken many different modest hikes. By far the best we've found is the ridge-top hike from the Rinderberg gondola at Zweisimmen to the Horneggli chair lift above Schönried, near Gstaad.

From the train station at Zweisimmen you follow the signs to Rinderberg Gondelbahn. Buy a combo ticket for the two lifts, using your Swiss Pass to obtain a discount. If you are travelling by car, park in the lift's parking lot and inquire about a ticket

that also includes the train ride from Schönried to Zweisimmen.

The very long ride in the 4-passenger gondolas hugs the mountain as you pass over pastures and chalets. At the middle station you remain in the car. At the top station you have a last chance to use the restrooms. A steep, 15-minute hike will then bring you to the peak, where you have an extraordinary view of the mountains of the Oberland and beyond.

As you walk towards the west you will lose 234 meters (768 feet) of altitude, but the path is not so steep that your toes are sliding down into your shoes. Yes, I said shoes. Hiking boots are o.k. but unnecessary. We

*Continued on page 7...*

**Exchange rates as of 7/30/04**  
**1 euro = \$1.20**  
**1 Swiss franc = \$.78**

**DEAR SUBSCRIBER**

*Continued from page 1*

overseas charges are definitely in that category. So it's a good idea to call your credit card company to let them know you're off to Europe.

**Don't Forget Local Tourist Offices**

We're sometimes thrown for a loss by calls and emails requesting info on hotels, vacation rentals, facilities, and things to do and see. Since, in 18 years of *Gemütlichkeit*, we've run stories on perhaps 150 different destinations — mostly of the Berlin, Munich, Salzburg, Vienna, Zürich, Lucerne variety, mixed in with some Sylts, Werfens, Sions, Altenburgs, Steyrs, and Chateau-d'Oeux — we don't have a lot of info at our fingertips for the several thousand other worthy destinations. But virtually every town, except perhaps for the tiniest hamlets, has a tourist office filled to its beamed ceiling with full-color brochures, maps, hotel listings, vacation rental catalogs, all just waiting to be sent to prospective visitors who request them. How do you find these local tourist offices? Three ways:

1. Contact the main Swiss, German or Austrian tourism authority in the U.S. and ask how to get in touch with the tourist office in the city or region where you're headed.
2. The Web. Do a Google search using words such as 'tourist office' or 'tourism' plus the name of your destination.
3. *Michelin Red Guides*. There is tour-

ist office contact info for many of the thousands of towns listed in the Red Guides for Germany and Switzerland. There is no Red Guide for Austria.

**Rental Car Savings**

I have no doubt that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Europe-bound travelers make this costly mistake every day. They call one of the giant car rental companies — **Hertz, Avis, et al** — to get a quote on a car for pick up upon arrival at a major German Airport. Let's say they pay \$1000 for a three-week rental. Probably in the reservationist's *Spiel* there's some language about what's included; unlimited kilometers, taxes, fees, liability insurance, etc. But what often gets glossed over is that one of the fees included in that \$1000 is a 19% tax levied on rentals commencing at airports and train stations. That same car is likely available at a price of \$840 just a short taxi ride from the airport.

Of course, *Gemütlichkeit's* travel department is aware of this situation and always offers off-airport alternatives (By the way, if you pickup a car off-airport you can return it to the airport with no extra charge). The town of Kelsterbach, for example, is about a 5-minute, 8-euro cab ride from the Frankfurt Airport and has both Avis and Europcar offices.

Germany's 19% airport tax is now the highest in Europe, but not by much. Switzerland's and Belgium are 17%, Austria's is 15% and Italy 14%. Holland charges a flat \$75 for airport rentals and France \$30.

**Buy Point-to-Point Rail in Europe**

This is no hard and fast rule, but if you've decided point-to-point rail tickets suit you better than a rail pass, it's often cheaper to purchase them in Europe, especially if two or more are traveling together and need seat reservations.

Here's an example. Hamburg to Munich, if purchased in the U.S. from **Rail Europe** (*Gemütlichkeit* is an authorized seller of Rail Europe products and does not charge shipping on most orders) is \$184 first-class and \$125 second class (\$368 and \$250 for two persons). The price in Germany for two persons is €250 or about \$300 first-class and from €58 to €167 (\$70-\$200) in second class. There seem to be more discount deals in second-class. To compare point-to-point prices go to [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de) (click Int. Guests) and [www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com).

Another factor is seat reservations. Purchased in the U.S. they are \$11 per person, per rail segment. In Europe they are \$3 per person, per segment. — 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: **turf** Password: **7531**

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

**HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY**

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

**Special Designation**

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

**ERFURT***Continued from page 1*

**Citadel**, started in 1664, is an almost completely preserved Baroque fortress and an excellent example of military construction through three centuries. (Take an evening torchlight tour through its passageways.) A quick stroll leads across the 14<sup>th</sup> century **Merchant's Bridge** lined with 32 narrow houses to form the longest such edifice in Europe.

The Gothic **Augustinian Monastery** dates to 1277 and offers an exhibition on the life and work of Martin Luther. Even those not interested in Luther will be impressed by the architecture. They'll also be saddened by a crater that remains where residents huddled in the library basement in a vain attempt to escape a late-war bombing raid. Instead of protecting them, the medieval columns and arches collapsed and those within were crushed.

Walking through the **Anger 1** shopping pavilion, an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century *Jugendstil* structure now teeming with capitalist-driven boutiques and eateries, it's hard to believe that this town was part of the former East Germany. The city is alive. Shoppers fill the streets. Sounds of kids in courtyard playgrounds pour into the streets in mid-afternoon. Their older brothers and sisters tend to congregate longer, with a surprising number of body piercings and bare female midriffs. University students also enliven the scene, though they actually seem more subdued than the teens.

**History to 'Dye' For**

The history of Erfurt begins with the 742 founding by St. Boniface. The city became one of the richest of the Middle Ages thanks to a plant called 'woad,' which at the time was the primary source of blue dye for textiles. The value of the finished dye powder matched that of gold until the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, when demand fell due to imports of tropical indigo dye. Even after woad fell from favor, Erfurt remained the crossroads of two major trade routes — an east-west route from Paris to Kiev and a north-south route between northern Germany and Italy — which brought

**Erfurt Basics****Population:** 217,000**Elevation:** 315 meters/1033 feet

**Tourist Info:** Benediktsplatz 1, D-99084 Erfurt, tel.: +49 3 61 66 40-0, fax: 66 40-290, email: [service@erfurt-tourist-info.de](mailto:service@erfurt-tourist-info.de), web: [www.erfurt-tourist-info.de](http://www.erfurt-tourist-info.de) or [www.historicgermany.com](http://www.historicgermany.com)

**Driving Distances:**

|           |           |        |
|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Berlin    | 187 miles | 303 km |
| Dresden   | 135 miles | 218 km |
| Frankfurt | 157 miles | 253 km |
| Hamburg   | 260 miles | 419 km |
| Leipzig   | 87 miles  | 140 km |
| Munich    | 255 miles | 412 km |
| Vienna    | 441 miles | 711 km |

**Major Events:**

March-April: Thuringian Bach Festival  
 June: Merchant's Bridge Festival  
 Aug.-Sept.: Cathedral Steps Festival Plays  
 Sept.: Festival of Church Music  
 Nov.-Dec.: Christmas Market

**Recommended:** Guided tour with English-speaking guide Hans Peter Ahr, bookable through the tourist office.

revenue and culture to the city.

In a district of former woad warehouses, narrow alleys still show the marks of medieval wagon wheels.

Interestingly, the dye was produced by grinding dried leaves to powder and fermenting it with a mixture of water and urine. The city's male workers were always eager to assist in the cause, and free beer was exchanged for a free liquid contribution. Houses where beer was available were indicated by straw bundles stuffed in so-called entry-way "beer holes," which still remain. Since much of the fragrant fermentation took place under the hot eaves of merchant's homes, some Erfurters say the olfactory challenges that had to be overcome by these wealthy merchants are the origin of the term "stinking rich" (*Stinkreich*).

**Architectural Treasures**

As evidenced by extensive examples of architecture in virtually every architectural style in every architectural period from medieval times to the present, the city experienced waves of prosperity during the 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. A short stroll along the **Anger** (the primary shopping street that once was a crowded marketplace where farmers sold woad to dye producers) offers a stone textbook of architectural styles from six centuries of European history. The

**Fischmarkt**, near the **New Town Hall**, is rimmed by interesting buildings, not the least of which is the New Town Hall itself, a Gothic Revival structure from the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The **Zum Breiten Herd**, was constructed in 1584 in High Renaissance style, then redone in the late 1890s in Neo-Renaissance. Another, the 1562 **Zum Roten Ochsen**, contains a colorful portal distinguished by a carving of a blood-red ox.

Although the outside of the Town Hall is relatively plain, the interior holds a few surprises — even beyond its monumental entrance hall and vividly colored neo-Gothic wall decoration. The greatest treasures are the large oil paintings that fill the stairwell and landings up three double flights of stairs. The pictures are detailed and compelling: In one, Martin Luther is slumped over a writing table as he translates the New Testament into German. Brilliant light streams through the window and it's obvious he has worked through the night, his candle is almost burned down to the holder.

**River City**

Along the **River Gera**, which splits as it flows through the Old Town, students and seniors alike dangle their feet over the walls. Others camp out for coffee and pastries on terraces built over the water. The **Little Venice** neighborhood, just a few paces from the Augustine Monastery, feels more rural than urban, as the river divides to create islands and riverside paths.

In the river-front area along and around the **Lange Brücke** (Long Bridge), four centuries of townhouses dating to 1268 line streets and alleys in their original medieval layout. Art galleries, restaurants, boutiques and clothing stores create an enticing mix. Balconies and decks stretch on stilts over the river.

**Walkable City**

To get a sense of how the town appeared at various times over its history, visit **Kunsthaltung Valdeig** at Kettenstrasse 10, just around the corner from the Cathedral Square. The in-residence artist, who is often in the shop (if not, his daughter fills

in), is known well beyond his region and country for historical sketches and watercolors. He combines his own knowledge of history with contemporary settings and old prints to create views of Erfurt through the centuries. (tel. or fax +49 0361 792 0367, [www.valdeig-fineart.de](http://www.valdeig-fineart.de))

An often overlooked quarter almost adjacent to the Cathedral Square is the **Andreasviertel**, once home to the city's craftspeople and artisans. The area has the feel of a village, a collection of modest, yet pleasing 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century homes, most of them two stories with gabled roofs. Urban pioneers have turned the Andreasviertel into yuppie heaven and are helping to ensure that many formerly derelict structures will find new life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A quick look beyond the entrances of these homes reveals modern and often completely refurbished interiors behind medieval façades.

Since they bisect the historic district, the city's trams can rest weary legs and speed visitors between key points. They also provide easy access to outlying areas such as the villas in the south of town, the product of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrialism, commerce and wealth. Tram and bus stops have signage with direction arrows, maps, and schedules.

### 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.

### City of Parks

Within a few minutes' walk of almost any point in the city, green space awaits visitors. One wonderful refuge is the **Predigerhof Church** park, surrounded on three sides by a high wall and on the fourth by the church itself. Only a small gateway off a nondescript alley allows access to a lawn made for lounging, a private picnic or simply quiet contemplation.

Behind the train station, **City Park** rises in a series of stone terraces. The old **Brühl Park**, built as a refuge for nobility in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and now gone quite literally to seed, is being tamed and manicured.

**South Park** runs the length of eight city blocks. Along the path one abruptly encounters rows of crosses in a quiet cemetery: "Here lie the bombing victims of spring 1945."

### Excursions

For a country diversion, head to nearby **Steigerwald Forest**, a series of low rolling hills and a popular recreation spot for Erfurters. Whether for a full meal or just *Kaffee und Kuchen*, (coffee and pastry) it's worth a trip to the **Waldcasino** (a restaurant, not a gambling establishment), the **Restaurant am Bismarckturm** or the **Waldhaus** (with its own microbrewery) on a ridge overlooking the city. Another good view is from the **Bismarck Tower**, temporarily renamed "Freedom Tower" during Soviet times.

On the far side of the Steigerwald is **Water Cress Park**, a unique attraction. Cultivated in the park since 1769, watercress was prized even by Napoleon. Tours run year-round, but the harvest takes place only during the cooler months of September through May. **Cafe Kresseschlösschen**, in the small "Water Cress Castle," offers watercress dishes and other fresh specialities.

As the capital of the State of Thuringia, Erfurt is also a good base for explorations into one of Germany's most picturesque states. The city actually lies in a broad "bowl" surrounded by wooded mountains. Within half-an-hour's ride by car,

train or bus, is the Goethe-Schiller city of **Weimar**, with its classical buildings, or **Arnstadt**, where the young Bach served as organist. Nearby, too, is **Eisenach** with its **Wartburg Fortress**, where Luther translated the New Testament.

Along the way, castles and fortresses often appear on the horizon; "**Drei Gleichen**," southwest of Erfurt, is a collection of three such citadels. **Molsdorf Palace**, less than 10 miles from Erfurt, is the Late Baroque "pleasure castle" once known as the Thuringian Versailles, with its English garden (and great café desserts). And **Wasserburg Kapellendorf** is one of Germany's largest moated castles.

At the **Thuringian Open Air Museum** in Hohenfelden, guests can explore more than 30 rural half-timber buildings that span four centuries and hundreds of acres. Structures include barns, farmhouses, stalls, aviaries and a one-room schoolhouse.

### Lodging

As with many cities in the former East Germany, prices for hotels and restaurants don't break the bank. It's easy for a couple to hold spending at €75 per day per person without sacrificing comfort. A frugal traveler could probably keep to €50.

### Augustiner Monastery

One of Erfurt's best values and certainly the most historic setting is the Augustiner Monastery, where Martin Luther spent five years as a monk (no such requirements face today's visitors). Rooms are clean, modern and sparsely decorated — bed, chair and desk but no television, radio or telephone — with private bathrooms/showers. (Note: Linens are provided, but you must supply your own soap and shampoo.)

Feel free to meditate in the cloisters, listen to organ concerts, or attend prayer services conducted by one of the seven resident nuns from the Casteller Ring Community, which also runs the Klosterstube, a pleasant café with tempting pastries. Breakfast is at long tables that promote communication.

**Contact:** Augustinerkloster zu Erfurt, Augustinerstrasse 10, D-99084 Erfurt, tel. +49 361 57 66 00, fax 57 6 099, email: [info@augustinerkloster.de](mailto:info@augustinerkloster.de), web: [www.augustinerkloster.de](http://www.augustinerkloster.de)  
**Daily Rates:** Singles €45, doubles €76.  
**Rating:** QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 14/20

### Hotel-Restaurant Gartenstadt

This small, friendly hotel is in a working-class neighborhood on the outskirts of town. As guests walk to the tram (perhaps 100 paces away), they join shoppers, workers and school kids for the eight-minute trip to town. Returning at the end of the day, they pass gardeners tending tiny patches of paradise, nod to folks relaxing on the restaurant terrace, retrieve their room key from a cordial desk clerk, and feel very much at home.

Home may admittedly be up several flights of stairs — no lift — so be sure when booking to let the staff know if your mobility is limited. Fourth floor guests (room 30 for two beds together, room 29 for two apart), however, have the bonus of a balcony overlooking neighboring red-roofed houses and west toward green hills and splendid sunsets. Light sleepers should request rooms facing the rear, since traffic on the Binderslebenerstrasse starts early.

The restaurant, with its home-style regional specialties and doting wait staff, is worth at least one lingering meal.

**Contact:** Hotel Gartenstadt, Binderslebenerstrasse 212, D-99092 Erfurt, tel +49 361 210 4512, fax 210 4513, email: [email@hotel-gartenstadt.de](mailto:email@hotel-gartenstadt.de), web: [www.hotel-gartenstadt.de](http://www.hotel-gartenstadt.de).  
**Daily Rates:** Singles €50, doubles €70  
**Rating:** QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 15/20

### Victor's Residenz-Hotel

Part of a small chain of residence-style hotels, Victor's four-star Erfurt property appeals to long- and short-term visitors alike. The expansive lobby sweeps across to an equally expansive restaurant. Both blend classical elegance with Mediterranean style.

Guestrooms are spacious and modern and feel more like designer bedrooms than hotel rooms. The suites are absolutely enormous with

floor-to-ceiling windows on two sides.

The property stands outside the ring streets near the Steigerwald Forest, with easy access to the Autobahn. It's just a three-minute walk to the nearest tram stop and then a 12-minute ride to the *Altstadt*.

The restaurant offers elegant but relaxed dining with a flair for Mediterranean dishes like ravioli with mushrooms, Castilian lamb with thyme and beans, and seafood in saffron cream with garlic dumplings.

**Contact:** Victor's Residenz-Hotel Erfurt, Hässlerstrasse 17, D-99096 Erfurt, tel. +49 3 61/65 33-0, fax 33-599, email: [info.erfurt@victors.de](mailto:info.erfurt@victors.de), web: [www.victors.de](http://www.victors.de).  
**Daily Rates:** Singles €105-150, doubles €115-160, Parking garage: €8.  
**Rating:** QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 14/20

### Sorat Hotel Erfurt

For those seeking modern comforts in a traditional setting, the Sorat is a good choice. Located in the heart of the city, the historic medieval inn formerly known as "The Old Swan" has been transformed into a designer hotel that does a good job of meeting the Sorat Group's philosophy of integrating old and new. From outside, the old building is restored faithfully, the stone construction covered with stucco and painted a traditional yellow.

The 85 French-designed guest rooms and furniture use mostly natural materials — beechwood and linen — with bright touches of aluminum and glass. The older construction dates to the Middle Ages.

**Contact:** Sorat Hotel Erfurt, Gotthardstrasse 27, D-99084 Erfurt, tel: +49 361 674 00, fax 674 0444, email: [erfurt@sorat-hotels.com](mailto:erfurt@sorat-hotels.com), web: [www.sorat-hotels.com](http://www.sorat-hotels.com)  
**Daily Rates:** Singles €99-142, doubles €119-162; weekends singles €80-93, doubles €100-113. Garage €9.  
**Rating:** QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 14/20

### Hotel Zumnorde am Anger

Don't be put off by the tiny, side-street entrance to the Zumnorde. What looks from the outside like a small pension expands quickly into a 50-room, four-star hotel overlooking the action of

the Anger. The lobby is as bright and cheerful as the hotel's staff.

Despite the relatively few rooms in this private hotel, several staff members seem always to be on hand to welcome and provide service. Their smiles and greetings are genuine and cordial, whether registering guests or pouring a dark beer at the seven-seat lobby bar.

Unless you're an extremely light sleeper (thick-glazed windows reduce even trolley sounds to a light rumble), ask for a room overlooking the Anger. The views are to a panorama of architectural styles, from early Renaissance to Bauhaus.

Guestrooms are very large with plenty of room to spread out over desks and sitting areas. Bathrooms and closet space are also generously sized (specify whether you want bath or shower). Beds are extra long and super comfortable.

**Contact:** Hotel Zumnorde am Anger, Anger 50/51, D-99084 Erfurt, tel. +49 0361 56800, fax +49 0361 5680400, email: [info@hotel-zumnorde.de](mailto:info@hotel-zumnorde.de), web: [www.hotel-zumnorde.de](http://www.hotel-zumnorde.de).  
**Daily Rates:** Singles €100-120, doubles €120-149; weekend discounts, doubles €100-113. Garage €9.  
**Rating:** QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

## Sustenance

### Rathaus Arcade Restaurant

Perfectly located in the center of the *Altstadt*, the Rathaus Arcade offers a fine variety of traditional Thuringian and German specialties: *Sauerbraten* with red cabbage and *Klößen* (potato dumplings), smoked trout (served whole), pork hock with *Sauerkraut* (better known as a Bavarian dish but quite at home in Thuringia), a giant Thuringian *Bratwurst*, and the butcher's platter with a variety of sausages, meats, cheeses, condiments and bread. A fine accompaniment is a super dark — black, really — brew from nearby Eisenach that will please beer-lovers.

Inside, dining is in the arcade, a space created between the original external wall and the new wall that glasses in the Gothic Revival arches and columns. Despite the starched linens, the setting is casual.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

If weather permits, dine outside on the raised stone terrace — almost a stage. It's perfect for people watching and for studying the historic buildings across the way. Inside or out, the wait staff is especially friendly and attentive.

Entrées range from €7-14 with most hovering below €10.

**Contact:** Rathaus Arcade Restaurant, Fischmarkt 1, D-99084, Erfurt, tel. +49/0361/655 2295 93, fax 655 2296.

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

### Parkkaffee Hopfenberg

If you didn't know someone in Erfurt (or read this newsletter), chances are you wouldn't stumble on the Parkkaffee Hopfenberg. It sits somewhat hidden in a residential area about 10 minutes by car from the *Altstadt*. But its remote location hasn't kept crowds of local residents from making it their new favorite — not a place to see and be seen, but one where they can relax with friends and be assured of superb dining, excellent service and no sense of being rushed.

Upon arrival, it's likely you'll get a warm greeting from owner Thomas Hoefit who will make sure you're properly tended to. Among your fellow diners will be members of parliament, which is located nearby, and residents from the surrounding, upscale neighborhood.

From behind the bay windows of the restaurant's "winter garden," or from under the spreading chestnut trees of the garden terrace (perfect for the restaurant's summertime grill parties), it's a gorgeous green view to the spires of Erfurt's *Altstadt*.

One recent delight was roast duck with traditional Thuringian dumplings, made not with bread as in much of southern Germany and Austria, but with potatoes (and a few white-bread croutons) half mashed, half grated and raw, molded into a ball and dropped into lightly boiling water. They're served with extra gravy because, as Herr Hoefit explains, the dumplings must "swim." Red cabbage in a potato "basket" rounded out the plate.

Although the wine list offers

many other options, an almost sure bet is the Dornfelder, a red wine grape from vineyards near Dresden, in one of eastern Germany's two wine regions.

Plan on a reasonable €15-25 per person with beverage.

For those who don't mind a short walk, the best way to the Hopfenberg is via streetcar. From the stop, it's about 10 minutes on foot through beautiful residential neighborhoods. (A taxi ride will run just under €10 each way.)

**Contact:** Thomas and Silvia Hoefit, Parkkaffee Hopfenberg, Am Hopfenberg 14, D-99096 Erfurt, tel. +49/0361/373 5321, email 373 2388, email [info@hopfenberg.de](mailto:info@hopfenberg.de), web: [www.hopfenberg.de](http://www.hopfenberg.de).

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

### Gasthof zur Hohen Lilie

In the months after it opened in October 2002, the design of the Gasthof zur Hohen Lilie was a favorite subject of discussion among local residents. Some liked the renovation of the original building, the clean modern look of the newly-built section added on to the rear, and how both integrated modern and medieval. Others claimed that such a historic building — kings, reformers and conquerors hung out here — should have been more restored than renovated, that it had lost its connection to the past.

Enter from the Domplatz through the blue façade and broad gate, and enjoy both "perspectives." Despite the high-class look, presentation and taste, the restaurant is aimed more at light, relatively inexpensive dishes. Any of the following cost less than €7: Tureen of bean soup with crispy bacon, herring filets with boiled potatoes, or a platter of local sausages and cheeses. For a few euros more, there's rabbit in buttermilk sauce with carrots, or duck with apple red-cabbage and dumplings.

**Contact:** Gasthof zur Hohen Lilie, Domplatz 31, D-99084 Erfurt, tel. +49/0361/60 11 99 0, fax 11 99 9, email [info@hohe-lilie.de](mailto:info@hohe-lilie.de), web: [www.hohe-lilie.de](http://www.hohe-lilie.de).

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

Editor's  
Choice

## Deals & Events

■ **Trier Package:** Germany's oldest city offers a "Get Acquainted with Trier" package for as little as €39 per person. The double occupancy price includes an overnight stay with breakfast, a guided city walking tour, and a full-color guidebook on Trier. Contact: [www.trier.de/tourismus/english/packages/getacquainted.htm](http://www.trier.de/tourismus/english/packages/getacquainted.htm)

■ **Swiss Week With Air:** Seven-day Switzerland vacations, valid September 6 through October 27, start at \$999\* per person and include roundtrip air from the U.S., a four-day Swiss Flexipass (travel days need not be consecutive), and two nights hotel with breakfast in each of three cities: Lucerne, Interlaken and Montreux. (\*Rate does not include up to \$140 per person in airfare taxes and government fees.)  
**Contact:** 800-521-6722.

■ **Rubens in Vienna:** The city's **Albertina Museum** will exhibit the works of Peter Paul Rubens Sept. 15-Dec. 5. Immensely successful during his lifetime, the Flemish artist ran a large workshop and often did sketches which were then turned into large-format oil paintings by assistants. For the first time, the Albertina will devote an exhibition to works by Rubens himself, from sketches to oils. The museum's extensive Rubens' holdings will be supplemented by a number of loaned items from around the world. Contact: Albertina, tel. +43/01/53483-0, web: [www.albertina.at](http://www.albertina.at).

■ **Vienna's Spittelberg:** One of the town's most charming, hidden lanes is Spittelberggasse (very near our recommended hotel, **Altstadt Vienna** — see list page 8) Through Sept. 12, the old wooden Viennese stage of **Theater am Spittelberg** (Spittelberggasse 10, [www.theateramspittelberg.at](http://www.theateramspittelberg.at)) offers a wide variety of music, theatre, dance, cabaret and slapstick humor.

The baroque Spittelberg district, which attracts handicraft enthusiasts, art buyers, gallery hounds, and furniture buffs, also is home to culinary attractions such as **Plutzer Bräu, Lux** and **Amerlingbeisl**.

**SWISS WALK***Continued from page 1*

do, however, use walking sticks.

During much of this hike you are presented with many spectacular views and photo ops. At the midpoint you'll find the **Hornberg Hotel & Restaurant**. Have a snack or drink on their terrace, or just go through the restaurant and down the stairs to use the restroom.

About half of this hike, especially the part approaching and leaving Hornberg, is a dirt road, so you can concentrate on the scenery and not on your feet.

From Hornberg follow the sign to Horneggli, though you could extend the walk an hour or by instead hiking down to Gstaad. But I highly recommend you follow the trail to the lift at Horneggli. You will have hiked 3 hours by then. If you have a little time left you can continue around the mountain for about 20 minutes for grand views of Saanen and Gstaad, but be sure to be at the lift before the last *Talfahrt* or valley trip, at 5pm. Those who are young — or just young at heart — can ride the tire swing on a cable next to the lift station.

The chairlift holds three persons and has a folding dome for use in bad weather. You descend to Schönried at treetop level, with even more beautiful views. From the valley station walk two blocks to the train station and return to Zweisimmen. This 20-minute ride is aboard the Montreux-Oberland-Bernois or MOB railroad, part of the Golden Pass system. I consider the MOB to offer the best alpine scenery per mile of any route in Switzerland, including the Glacier Express. You can return on the regular train, the Panoramic Express or the sleek Crystal Panoramic Express. No reservation is required for this short segment of the run.

These lifts are open from the 3rd Saturday in June until the 4th Sunday in October (check). Hiking is best later in the season, after the snow has completely melted and the ground has dried. Don't begin this hike if rain or snow is predicted on the mountains. — you want the best possible weather. ☒

**Readers' Forum****Stuttgart Hotel/Rail Package**

I would like to echo Ralph Lovell's positive comments on the **Hotel Traube** at the south edge of Stuttgart. Five guys on a German car tour used that lovely little hotel as our headquarters for a week last fall. The rooms are spacious and nicely appointed. The hotel is located about five minutes from the airport but it is outside the flight paths in a small little village area. Hence, it is quiet. The food was five-star. Their restaurant is favored by the locals who know a good thing. A novel feature is their "stube." It is called Ricki's and located across the driveway from the main hotel building. They don't serve food in the stube, just drinks, as far as I know. The fine restaurant is located in the hotel. They don't have elevators but the climb up to the third floor wasn't bad to get to my room.

On another topic, last year I wrote to you after Sue and I toured Germany on the **International Railway Travelers Society** trip. That one was great, especially the little village of Wernigerode, southwest of Berlin. This year we went on the Swiss Alpine tour sponsored by the same organization. Would you believe 49 real trains in fifteen days! Virtually the entire trip was in the Alps. None of the individual train rides took more than a couple of hours. Our luggage was transported ahead of us so most of us carried small backpacks and nothing else other than cameras. Our guide was the same Werner Schoen that took us around last year, a real pro.

The itinerary started at the **Hotel Wilden Mann** in Lucerne, wandered down to Interlaken (**Hotel Beau Rivage**), on to Montreux, Zermatt and then via the famous Glacier Express to Chur. From there we made a gorgeous trip to Ticino on the Bernina Express. The whole tour was just one spectacular route after another.

For those readers of yours who do not wish to drive, these tours are a superb alternative. Next year they are

**Travel Cautions**

■ **Ryanair to Phaseout Checked Luggage:** The Ireland-based, low-cost airline has announced plans to restrict passenger baggage to a single carry-on piece. One method Ryan will use to discourage checked luggage is to charge about \$90 to check a single bag. Precisely when the new policy will be fully implemented is not clear, but several media reports have used the phrase "sometime next year." Already the airline's weight limit for checked luggage is about half that of the average transatlantic carrier and it charges about \$8 per kg (2.2 pounds) for overweight luggage. Each Ryan passenger is currently restricted to a total of 15kg (about 32 pounds) in checked luggage and 10kg (about 22 pounds) carry-on.

■ **Car Rental Documentation:** European car rental counter employees who want to play strictly by the rules can refuse to rent a car to persons not in possession of a valid passport or who *they deem* to be without a valid driver's license.

*Gemütlichkeit* is aware of one instance in which a traveler was refused a car because he carried only a copy of his passport. Another, who presented a "Class C" (trucks) Texas license was denied a car because the rental company clerk was uncertain as to the 'C' designation shown on the license. In Germany, car rental personnel can be held legally responsible if they rent a car to a person without a valid driver's license.

To ensure you have no problems at the rental car counter, you may want to carry an International Driver's License as well as your state license. A further safety net for those who rent through *Gemütlichkeit's* travel department is the toll-free-from-Europe help line which is staffed 24/7 and is displayed under 'Terms & Conditions' on their car rental voucher.

■ **Travel Questions Asked and Answered:** Visit our **Europe Travel Kiosk** at <http://gemut.com/TravelPortal.asp> ☒

doing the railways of Austria followed by rail in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Poland.

HAMPTON MILLER  
SAN LUIS OBISPO CA

### Garmisch-Partenkirchen Caution

We have just arrived home after two weeks in Germany and Switzerland driving through the Alps. Many of your tips made our vacation very enjoyable. Wanted to pass along some information:

- **Lufthansa**, even in coach, continues to be the best flight experience.

- One of our best memories when we were in Garmisch-Partenkirchen over 10 years ago was staying at the **Post Hotel**. So we decided to stay there on this trip to the Alps. While the hotel remains one of the most beautiful we have stayed in, we were very saddened by its depressed state. It appears that the new owners are having financial difficulties. None of the restaurants were open; the service was minimal; no credit cards were accepted (which we discovered upon check-in requiring a trip to the bank in order to pay our bill); and it definitely needed a good cleaning.

Thank you for your newsletter. It is a great bargain!

TERRY FERGUSON  
VIA EMAIL

### Luxury Auction Delivers Value

(Editor's Preface: In March we reported on two luxury hotel packages purchased at [www.luxurylink.com](http://www.luxurylink.com) by subscribers Pat and Bob McLean of Colorado Springs. For a bid of \$850 they got five nights in a suite at the five-star **Pflaums Posthotel** in Pegnitz near Nürnberg. The deal included three meals in the hotel's once-Michelin-starred **Posthalter-Stube**, a guided tour of Nürnberg, plus other perks.

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

The McLeans have kindly taken the

time to tell us what happened.

This is a report on our experiences with our auction bids at **Luxury Link** ([www.luxurylink.com](http://www.luxurylink.com)).

Our suite at the **Palace Hotel** in Montreux was wonderful and we were greeted with a chilled bottle of Clicquot champagne, pastries and fresh fruit (the fruit was replenished daily). The spa is wonderful and we enjoyed our treatment. The meal in our room was very nice and when we really did not want the menu that they suggested, we were able to order anything off the menu — that was true in the restaurants as well.

We agree with *Gemütlichkeit* in regard to the service in their gourmet restaurant — the wait between courses was unbelievably long. We really enjoyed the **Bistro** and when my husband did not see *Schnitzel* and *Rösti* on the menu he mentioned it to the waiter and they made it for us and it was great. We could have breakfast either in our room or in their breakfast room and they were the typical Swiss ones.

This was a wonderful bargain when you consider the cost of things in Switzerland and we would certainly recommend it to anyone who could get it at the low price we did.

Our next auction brought us to **Pflaums Posthotel** in Pegnitz — which is the weirdest hotel we've ever stayed in. They lost their status with Relais & Châteaux and that's understandable. The hotel is very old and some of the rooms were decorated in that period but others were something from another planet. Our suite was all mirrors, steel, concrete and miniature lights. It could have been in the hotels.com ad.

The amenities we received could not compare to the Palace. The spa was nothing to rave about and we found that the food was not that outstanding. The wine prices were way out of line. We got a good value for our money and we enjoyed touring the area but we would never go back to this hotel.

PAT AND BOB MCLEAN  
VIA MAIL 

## 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**, Engestrassse 54, CH-3012, tel. +41/031/309 6111, fax 309 6112, email: [info@zghotels.ch](mailto:info@zghotels.ch)

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

### Lucerne

**Hotel Wilden Mann**, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, email: [mail@wilden-mann.ch](mailto:mail@wilden-mann.ch)

**Hotel Cascada**, Bundesplatz 18, CH-6003 Lucerne, tel. +41/041/226 80 88, fax 226 80 00, email: [info@cascada.ch](mailto:info@cascada.ch)

### Munich

**Hotel Exquisit**, Pettenkoflerstr. 3, tel. +49/089/ 551 99 0, fax 551 99 499, email: [info@hotel-exquisit.com](mailto:info@hotel-exquisit.com)

**Hotel Acanthus**, An Der Hauptfeuerwache 14, D- 80331 München, tel. +49/089/ 23 18 80, fax: 2 60 73 64, e-mail: [acanthus@online.de](mailto:acanthus@online.de)

**Hotel Kraft**, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24, fax 550 3856, email: [office@kraft-hotel.com](mailto:office@kraft-hotel.com)

### Rothenburg ob der Tauber

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

### Salzburg & Environs

**Schloss Haunsperg**, A-5411 Oberalm bei Hallein, Hammerstrasse 32, tel. +43/06245/80662, fax 85680, email: [info@schlosshaunsperg.com](mailto:info@schlosshaunsperg.com)

**Hotel Struber**, Nonntaler Hauptstrasse 35, Austria A-5020 tel. +43/0662/843 728, fax 843 728 8, email: [struber@sbg.at](mailto:struber@sbg.at)

**Hotel Jedermann**, Rupertgasse 25, Austria A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873241-0, fax 873241-9, email: [jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at](mailto:jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at)

### Vienna

**Hotel Römischer Kaiser**, Annagasse 16, A-1010, tel. +43/01/512 77 51 0, fax 512 77 51 13, email: [info@rkhotel.bestwestern](mailto:info@rkhotel.bestwestern)

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

**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) 