

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

Yours Truly, Johnny Euro

If the subtitle of this column has a familiar ring it's because I've stolen it from a 1949-1962 CBS radio show about a fictitious hard-boiled insurance investigator/private-eye who started every segment of this show with a side-of-the-mouth reading of items on his expense report. Sort of like this, "Expense account item A: 80 cents; downtown cab ride to the fifth-floor walk-up of Cherry Holiday, a dime-a-dance chick who was a little too cozy with the deceased." To end the show, the protagonist dutifully submitted his cheat sheet with the closing line, "Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar." At least that's how I remember it.

Johnny Euro, who debuts this month, isn't the least bit hard-boiled and won't be investigating any insurance frauds, but he does plan to look carefully at some of the expenses associated with traveling in Europe. So now, at the risk of mixing our broadcast entertainment mediums, "Heeeeere's Johnny."

• **Expense Item A: Cheapest single room at Zürich's chic Hotel Widder, CH 450.** At about \$361 that's expensive by almost anybody's standard. In fact, those who go there are quick to point out that Switzerland is an expensive country. Expensive and Switzerland; the words go together like Arctic and cold, Green Bay and Packers, Lufthansa and Germany. But by some comparisons it's a bum rap.

Using Michelin's *Red Guides* as my source I calculated the average rack-rate of the *least expensive single*

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

AUSTRIA'S LUNGAU

All Europe travelers seek charming but affordable accommodations, good food, beautiful scenery and an authentic, old-world experience. In the Lungau they'll find it all.

In a country where decades of tourism has left few secrets, Austria's Lungau may surprise even the most jaded traveler. Located in Salzburg Province's sunny south, it's one of Europe's most stunningly beautiful and culturally authentic areas.

Four distinct arms of the Alps form a daunting border around the Lungau. The peaks of the Tauern Alps block off its northern and western boundaries, while the gentler slopes of the Nockberg Alps reach mile-high plateaus to the south and east. Fifteen valleys join in a sprawling basin.

These primary valleys give access

to further side valleys with serene farmland, dense woods and mountains, and the occasional hamlet.

Most of the 24,000 residents live in 15 towns and villages, few of which have made it to guidebooks despite their treasures of ancient churches and mighty fortresses.

There are neither traffic lights nor rotaries. Much of the Lungau is wilderness; a rich countryside of tiny villages and sprawling farms set against a backdrop of mountains and waterfalls. Dense forests hide more than 60 mountain lakes. Quiet streams come together to form raging rivers.

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Frankfurt: First Night Sleep & Eat

Crossing the Atlantic in a metal tube is a tiresome business. And on arrival there's luggage to retrieve, euros to coax from an ATM, and perhaps a rental car to pick up (though in these days of huge airport surcharges on rental cars one of your arrival tasks may be to find a taxi to an off-airport car rental location). While all this is taking place one often begins to hallucinate about cool, dark rooms and down comforters.

Tired or not, we resist the temptation to dash to the nearest airport hotel. For our first night we like to get down the road a bit to a quiet hotel for a late afternoon nap, perhaps take a walk before an 8 o'clock dinner and then turn in at our usual time (local). When flying in to Frankfurt, Heidelberg used to be our first stop; it's a great town but heavy traffic, confusing jumbles of one way

streets and parking difficulties are not prescribed for the jet-lagged driver.

Then we discovered the **Hotel Anker** in Marktheidenfeld about 40 minutes east-southeast of the airport. Years ago, we called the Anker a "Mercedes Benz of a hotel; solid, not flashy, but everything works and is built to last. In two days we never encountered a single staff member, from owners to maids who at every contact did not give us a *Guten Tag* and a smile." Nothing has changed. The Deppisch family still rolls out as warm a welcome as you'll find in Germany.

The hotel is a short walk from

Continued on page 7...

Exchange rates as of 9/2/04
1 euro = \$1.21
1 Swiss franc = \$.79

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room in the top three Michelin-rated hotels in the cities of Zürich, Paris and Rome. The Paris threesome of **Meurice, Ritz and George V** averaged \$761. Rome's **Villa Medici, De Russie, and Eden** came in at \$620. The **Baur au Lac, Widder and Savoy** in Zürich averaged a trifling \$372.

Can't compare Paris or Rome with Zürich I hear you say? O.k., how about Lucerne, Florence and Lyon? The **Villa Cora, Albani and Grand Hotel Bogliani** in Florence average \$427. Lyon's **Cour de Loges, Villa Florentine and Tour Rose** check in at \$330, while Lucerne's **Grand National, Palace and Schweizerhof** average \$297.

So let's lighten up on the Swiss. When you compare them to France and Italy, they're not so expensive.

- **Expense Account Item B: Three nights double room at the Hotel Ermitage in Chateaux d'Oex, Switzerland, €240.** A pleasant, rustic little hotel with a decent country-style restaurant in a charming Swiss mountain village. The Ermitage is part of the **Minotel** marketing association which, at selected hotels in Switzerland, currently offers a "3 nights for the price of 2" (or 6-nights-for-4) special. The deal is available only at www.minotel.com.

- **Expense Account Item C: Concierge Rail, \$50.** Perhaps the ultimate in travel hand-holding is a new **Abercrombie & Kent** rail-to-hotel, hotel-to-

rail, escort service. Concierge Rail ensures you get to the right station, platform, train and onboard seat; or from the train to your hotel. A & K's "introductory" offer is \$25 per person per delivery (minimum two persons, so \$50). Of course you pay any taxi fares and must have also purchased one of the company's FIT (Foreign Independent Travel) vacations.

Now Playing at www.gemut.com

Our online Gemütlichkeit supplement is www.gemut.com. Each month we post a back issue that's one-year old. July 2003 and August 2003 recently went online. Among the main stories:

- **The Mosel:** What to see, where to stay and where to eat
- **Great Dining Halls:** Six of our favorites from Munich's Augustiner to Vienna's Gösser Bierklinik
- **Potsdam:** UNESCO World Heritage city; hotels, eats, sights.
- **Chalet du Lac:** Hidden treasure on Brienzensee

Also checkout the **Europe Travel Kiosk**. Topics currently under discussion include **Prague and Vienna hotels, German wedding protocol and Frankfurt Airport security.**

- **Expense Item D: Transfer digital photos to a CD while in Europe, about \$10.**

For those who can't stop snapping digital photos while in Europe, finding a safe place to store them may be a problem. Many images can be stored in your camera's digital card but if that card fails there go your pictures. Carry a laptop and you can copy your photos to it, but

you may not want to haul a computer around. A better idea is to find a camera shop in Europe that will transfer your images to a CD. Most charge around \$10. You will then have your photos on both your camera's digital card and the CD. If you want you can then erase what's on the card and start a new batch of pictures.

- **Expense Item E: Berlin's new "Call A Doc" service, €.24 (about 29 cents).** Need medical help in the German capital? Dial 01804/22 55 23 62 to reach a nonprofit service for tourists and business travelers in need of medical attention. At "Call A Doc" the traveler will be connected to an operator who will record symptoms, the caller's location and other contact info. The service will then identify an appropriate medical professional who will promptly phone the patient to arrange for a consultation. For more info visit www.calladoc.com.

*Yours Truly,
Johnny Euro*

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: **gaul** Password: **0044**

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Publishers: Robert H. & Elizabeth S. Bestor
Editor: Robert H. Bestor
Senior Wrtier: Jim Johnson
Contributors: Mark Honan, Nikki Goth Itoi
Consulting Editor: Thomas P. Bestor
Online Services: Kurt Steffans
Subscriber Travel Services: Andy Bestor, Laura Riedel

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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.

ERFURT*Continued from page 1***Paradise found**

It wasn't until the 1970s that the Tauern Tunnel connected the Lungau to the rest of Salzburg Province and, to some extent, the world. Even today, tourism concentrates in the winter months when the area becomes a ski wonderland. During the rest of the year, life goes on. Thanks to this relative isolation, visitors find an authenticity more often associated with Eastern Europe but with the infrastructure and fiscal strength of a Western nation. There's minimal commercialism and no pretense or artificiality. To the region's inhabitants, tourism is secondary to a centuries-old way of life.

Nonetheless, quality visitor services are available. Though tourists find no five-star hotels and just a few four-stars, there is a long list of family-owned, *gemütlich* establishments. While visitors from around the world may be a relatively recent development, hospitality is deeply rooted.

"Tourism is not that important to the economy, so we're not driven by profit," says Matthias Rauter, an 11th-generation farmer and 2nd-generation innkeeper. "We're driven by our hearts. It's a softer tourism here."

But whether it's the altitude — even at their lowest point valleys are 1,000 meters (3,300 feet) above sea level — the generally sunny climate, or the isolation, there's a different quality to both the air and the people. The landscapes seem more distinct and removed from modern influences. The inhabitants carry themselves with self-confidence and quiet pride.

"In the Lungau, the experience is much more authentic and pure," says Rauter. "In other parts of Austria, tourism has shaped the traditions. Tourism is still young here, and the traditions are strong."

Life in the Lungau

Though bound by custom, the region is not backward. Even Rauter's 17th-century farmhouse lodge offers high-speed Internet connections for its guests. There's a thriving economy with new cars, modern

Lungau Basics**Population:** 24,000**Elevation:** 1,000-2,800 meters / 3,300 -9,200 feet

Tourist Info: The regional tourist office is at Rottkreuzgasse 100, A-55822 St. Michael, tel. +43/6477/8988, fax 8988/20, email info@lunggau.at, web www.lunggau.at (most towns and villages also have their own tourist offices)

Driving Distances:

Innsbruck	183 miles	296 km
Klagenfurt	81 miles	130 km
Munich	158 miles	255 km
Salzburg	77 miles	124 km
Venice	216 miles	349 km
Vienna	231 miles	374 km

Nearest Airports: Salzburg Airport 62 miles (100 km), Klagenfurt 75 miles (120 km)

Nearest Train Stations: Radstadt 28 miles (45 km) with connecting bus service; Tamsweg (limited service)

Van transfers from Vienna and Salzburg to any address in the Lungau are offered by Bacher Reisen, Marktstrasse 94, A-5582 St. Michael, tel +43/06477/8111, fax 81114, email office@bacher-reisen.com. One-way fares range from €18 to 40.

appliances, and all the comforts.

Visitors won't find folk music evenings with yodeling and dancing. Instead, travelers experience genuine tradition at the frequent village festivals local residents conduct for themselves — as they have for centuries — with you as a welcome guest. There's the **Prangstangen Pageant** in late June when parishioners spend a week attaching more than 50,000 flowers to wooden poles. On Assumption Day in August, the flowers are removed, dried and stored to be used as incense during a winter procession.

On Holy Saturday, scores of "Easter Peace Fires" are lit in the mountains — a once-pagan tradition dating to before the birth of Christ.

"When you see us celebrating, we're not doing it for tourists," Rauter says. "We're doing it for ourselves."

Some of these customs are unusual and even take other Austrians by surprise. For example, there's the **Samson Procession**. Several times during the year, an honored (and powerful) townsman carries a huge figure — about six meters (20 feet) high and weighing nearly 175 pounds — on his shoulders. Cos-

tumed musicians and guards with muskets form an escort for Samson and everyone dances to the music as the procession winds through the town. At the end, the musket-carrying guards fire an "honor round."

For centuries, the ceremony has demonstrated the townspeople's belief in God's power to protect them, just as Samson protected the people of Israel from the Philistines. In all of Austria, the Samson procession happens in just 10 Lungau towns and villages and each has its own distinct Samson figure and tradition.

Rooted in religion

As with many Lungau practices, Samson is tied to deep religious beliefs. It's common to find processions going from farm to farm, accompanied by music, as prayers are offered for a bountiful harvest and a safe year. Parishioners frequently make full-day pilgrimages to local churches and other sacred sites.

Throughout the region, monuments have been built in thanksgiving or in the hope of protection, central elements of their faith and belief system. Altars, chapels and shrines appear in all sizes and forms such as the *marterl*, wooden pedestal crosses put up by farmers and townspeople.

"We're strong believers," says Margit Schlossleitner, a Lungau native who recently returned home to head the regional tourist office.

Many buildings have small murals of Christ raising his hands in blessing over cattle, or St. Florian extinguishing flames bursting through a barn roof.

Continued devotion to religion is revealed powerfully and graciously in the **Holy Family in the Pines**. The Prodingler family, who own grazing land, commissioned artist Ernst Adelsberger to carve images of the Holy Family as thanks for their prosperity. In 1999, Adelsberger found three trees that had grown together to form a massive trunk. Using local residents as models, he spent much of the next two years carving wooden images that are surprisingly lifelike, right down to dimples. The three figures are joined at the base and still

rooted in the ground.

Schlossleitner leans forward toward the wood, takes a deep breath and sighs: "This is Lungau."

Exploring the region

Although the Lungau is small, its towns and villages have distinct personalities.

In **Tamsweg**, the administrative center of the Lungau, the market square is surrounded by 15th-century inns and shops that were "modernized" during the 17th century. High above the town, the Gothic **Church of St. Leonard** has welcomed pilgrims for nearly 600 years, awing them with its magnificent stained glass windows.

Mauterndorf is the classic medieval village lovingly maintained. Statues of saints perch over doors and windows. From the town's 16th-century bridge strollers look down to the glacial waters of the Taurach River.

Restored to medieval magnificence, **Mauterndorf Fortress** is a primary Lungau attraction. Many of the fortifications — the six-story tower with its battlements, for example — date from the 13th century when it was built as a toll station and residence of Salzburg's archbishops. The Gothic chapel features an altar from

Key Websites for the Traveler

- www.gemut.com Gateway site for travelers to Germanic Europe, including car rental, rail passes, hotel bookings, traveler feedback, travel tips and past issues (free access to back issues for subscribers; see log-on info on page 2).
- www.viamichelin.com The Michelin database of hotels and restaurants plus great interactive trip planning tools.
- www.travelgearnow.com Guidebooks, maps, travel accessories, luggage, all at 10% off for subscribers.
- www.webflyer.com Informative frequent flyer forums make this a must for air travelers.
- bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en German rail. Train schedules throughout Europe, not just Germany.
- www.sbb.ch/index_e.htm Swiss and European rail schedules.
- www.ski-europe.com Top web resource for skiers with much data on Alpine resorts.
- www.myswitzerland.com Website of Switzerland's national tourist authority.
- www.germany-tourism.de Germany's national tourist authority.
- www.austria.info/us Austria's national tourist authority.
- <http://www.hhog.de> Website for an alliance of historic German cities.

1360 and frescoes from the 1200s. A compelling feature is the "**Fortress Experience**" exhibition, a series of detailed and thorough displays showing life in the Middle Ages—specifically, life at the fortress. Nothing is idealized, and even those who yawned through history classes will remain wide-eyed. Signs are in English and German, and English audio tapes are available. Enjoy lunch in the Italianate receiving rooms or in the inner courtyard.

Moosham Castle stands over the town of **Unternberg**. It's the Lungau's answer to Salem, with a frightful history of witch trials and executions.

Mariapfarr's parish church is considered the "mother church" of the Lungau. For many, that makes it the region's emotional heart. The church was first mentioned in 923 and has elements — like the Romanesque fresco in the choir — that date from the 1200s. At night, from a distance, lights focus on the steeple cross and make it seem to float above the church.

A Roman road first crossed a narrow side valley into **Thomatal** in 50 A.D. The village church stands on the site of a former pagan temple and is still aligned with the sun as it rises during the summer solstice. During a recent renovation, workers found Roman coins. Even this small church shows distinctive styles from various periods in its history, with Romanesque styling to the west and Gothic to the east. A 102-foot tower rises over an ornate late baroque high altar, the 17th-century pews are hand carved, and the plank floors worn smooth by many decades of devoted parishioners.

Across the street, in the **Lungauer Webstube**, Ingrid Korbuly demonstrates traditional weaving methods and sells her colorful wares. (Elsewhere, guests can visit woodcarvers, distilleries, glassmakers, and even an organ-builder who is currently constructing a 4,500-pipe instrument that will be Vienna's largest.)

In the village of **Bundschuh**, the **Hochofen Museum** offers a taste of life in the 19th century when mining

and forestry dominated the economy. Visitors can walk through remnants of a 19th-century blast furnace and along the foundations of the old mining settlement. Nearby, an open-air museum offers replicas of foresters huts with dried-bark walls stretched across log frames. Smoke from the hearth turned the ceilings black. As recently as 70 years ago, this was home for weeks on end.

Much of the region is just collections of farmhouses. Most stand on stone foundations topped by hewn logs and display decorative carvings and paintings. Flowers pour from windows. Firewood fills built-in racks. *Troadkästen* are popular farm buildings: two-story barns that once stored bacon, seed, grain and other goods. Many date to the 16th century and feature intricate woodwork and ornate frescoes.

Elsewhere, broad meadows sprawl to the mountains' rise, and an occasional brook etches its way through moss and grass, bubbling over rocks. Cows occasionally block the roads. With the exception of an occasional farmer's hut or hunter's stand, the wilderness extends for miles.

For the adventurous, the Lungau is a hiker's paradise and a cyclist's El Dorado. Paddlers won't get bored, and cable cars above Mauterndorf speed access to mile-high peaks. A network of mountain huts covers most of the region. Although some huts are accessible only on foot, most have road access for cars or the popular *Tälerbus* (Valley Bus).

A favorite stopover is the Ludlhütte at Prebersee Lake, which offers a cozy log cabin for chilly days and a deck overlooking the lake in warmer weather. Sausages, meats, cheeses, fruit juices and fresh buttermilk are all produced locally.

Transportation

Getting to the Lungau by public transportation is a challenge. There are no airports (save a small field), and train service follows a circuitous route and either connects with a private, narrow-gauge railway or to buses.

Access by car is simple, scenic and follows one of two primary roads. From the northwest, the road travels through the Tauern Tunnel and opens into an expanse of hills, valleys and mountains. From the northeast, it follows an ancient Roman road (complete with Roman milestones) along switchbacks through the Obertauern Pass and Taurach Valley. After Tweng, a hamlet where post riders once swapped horses, the highway swoops down toward Mauterndorf. (As an interesting point of reference, Venice is closer than Vienna.)

Van transfers are also available to and from Salzburg (about 2 hours and €18 one-way) and Vienna (about 5 hours and €40 one-way).

For getting around without a car, the best day-to-day option is to use the *Tälerbus*, which offers frequent access to all villages and most attractions. Even if you do have a car, consider hiring a taxi (through the Tourist Office) with a local guide. You'll pay about €150-200 per day depending on how much you want to travel, but you'll get local insight and discover things that don't make it into any guidebook — or even into this publication.

Lodging

Elisabeth Vitalhotel

The four-star Elisabeth Vitalhotel is especially popular among health-conscious Austrians and Germans who come to hike, bike, ski and take advantage of the hotel's spa, athletic and beauty offerings. Others will enjoy a modern, upscale setting with frequent touches of elegance in public spaces and the 37 guestrooms.

In the evenings, many guests retire to the quiet parlor or relax in the private gardens. Others sip *Sekt* on the terrace overlooking the adjacent village and castle of Mauterndorf, backdropped by the Grosseck and Speieck peaks.

Room 336 is a good choice; with its carved plaster ceiling and floral motif in wallpaper and carpeting, it recalls imperial times. On winter days, the seats along the large, tiled oven make

the room a welcome refuge. From the balcony, the view is to the castle.

Contact: Elisabeth Vitalhotel, Ledermoos 274, A-5570 Mauterndorf, tel. +43 /06472/7365, fax 7365/20, email vitalhotel.elisabeth@sbg.at, web: www.vitalhotel-elisabeth.at. Proprietor: Isolde Widmayer-Spreitzer.

Daily Rates: €63-109 per person including breakfast and dinner.

Ratings: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 16/20

Hansalhof

The Hansalhof is a working farm that's been in the Rauter family since 1661. Its idyllic setting includes a dozen milk cows, 28 calves, three horses, two pigs and acres of pastureland.

Matthias and Doris Rauter (along with Jacob, age 6, and Magdalena, age 9) are perfect hosts and Matthias is proud to discuss his lifelong farming experience. Guests learn as much or as little as they'd like about farming and watch as the Rauters milk cows, slop pigs, and churn buttermilk. (*Gemütlichkeit* Travel Tip: Don't stand aft of cows.)

The couple delight in taking guests on hikes and pride themselves on knowing "the best huts with the best food." Matthias has been known to share his passion for music with an impromptu yodeling lesson ("Real yodeling, not like you hear on TV," he says). Although Doris is a relative newcomer from western Austria, both love the Lungau and are generous with information and advice.

Guests can reserve either rooms or apartments, and all facilities are clean and modern, albeit pleasantly rustic. The best bet is the Mitterberg apartment with its kitchenette, sitting areas, sunny exposure and balcony view of barn and pastures. Guests have use of a communal kitchen and it's only a short walk to town and a full-service supermarket.

Your breakfast at Hansalhof is likely to include preserves made from apricots, grapes, cherries and blackberries that Doris cultivates, or from wild blueberries she picks in the mountains. When you savor the farm-fresh butter, buttermilk, cheese and milk, feel free to boast, "I know

the cow."

Contact: Hansalhof, Miesdorf 3, A-5571 Mariapfarr, tel/fax +43 /06473 8302, email rauter-hansalhof@sbg.at. Proprietor: Matthias and Doris Rauter.

Daily Rates: Singles €18-21, doubles €32-36.

Ratings: QUALITY 13/20 VALUE 14/20

Almhotel Schönfeld

Monika Leitner has transformed a typical winter ski hotel into a year-round oasis at the edge of the Nockberge National Park. The modern structure lies on a grassy plateau about a mile above sea level. Mountains rise nearly a half-mile higher on all sides. The northern summits are forbidding rock faces, but the sylvan southern peaks rise gradually and afford ample hiking opportunities.

Guestrooms are spacious and bright, most with balconies and all offer stunning views.

The Schönfeld is designed for sufferers of asthma and allergies. Monika lives with severe allergies and runs her hotel with a special sensitivity (and as allergen-free as possible). Dust mites and mold are not tolerated and special care is taken in the kitchen. Nutritionists and doctors are available and the hotel's wellness area offers various therapies and treatments.

If you don't choose the Schönfeld, consider stopping for lunch; order the *Jausenplatte*, a platter filled with sliced sausages, cheeses, boiled eggs, roast pork and pepperoncini and served with coarse breads. By all means, dine outside.

Contact: Almhotel Schönfeld, A-9862 Schönfeld/Lungau, tel. +43/04736/321, fax 321 55, email schoenfeld@sporthotel-leitner.at, www.schoenfeld.at. Proprietor: Monika Leitner.

Daily Rates: €35-42 per person, including breakfast and dinner

Ratings: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 14/20

Gasthof-Pension Schwaiger

Its spacious rooms and personal touches make the Gasthof-Pension Schwaiger a superb home away from home. It's modern but with traditional touches.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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Set on a hillside road away from what little traffic passes through St. Margarethen, it's just a five-minute walk to the village center, even less to the forest. Each room has a balcony. Number 2 is especially large and offers sweeping views across the valley. Three villages with their parish churches and two castles stand silhouetted against hills and mountains. Number 5 is a large corner room whose windows face pastures, barns and fruit trees. Those yearning for even more space can relax on the shared sun deck and terrace.

Contact: Gasthof-Pension Schwaiger, Schwaigweg 133, A-5582 St. Margarethen, tel. +43 /06476/888, fax 6476/555, email

pension.schwaiger@urlaub-austria.at, web: www.urlaub-austria.at. Proprietor: Elisabeth Schwaiger

Daily Rates: Singles €22-24, doubles €44-49.

Ratings: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 16/20

Pension Suppangut

It's a walk into history at the hill-top Suppangut farm, where the main house dates from 1464 and the four guest rooms still bear a medieval aura (but with modern amenities). The upstairs living room is filled with such museum quality items as old muskets and clocks as well as embroidery from the 1800s when the current family took over. The slanting, hewn-plank ceilings surely have stories to tell. In addition to the usual farm outbuildings, the Suppangut has its own baroque chapel.

Lucky guests can sample traditional foods such as *Rahmkoch*, made with milk, cream, and sugar; apple strudel, or a French toast variation stuffed with jam then dropped in egg batter and fried. Chase it down with fresh butter milk or *Molke*, a tangy whey-like dairy drink.

Contact: Pension Suppangut, Pichl 10, A-5571 Mariapfarr, tel. and fax +43 /06473/8269, email josef.prodinge@aon.at, web: www.tiscover.at/suppangut. Proprietor: Josef Prodinge.

Daily Rates: Singles and doubles €33-36.

Ratings: QUALITY 13/20 VALUE 14/20

Food

Restaurant Mesnerhaus

The Restaurant Mesnerhaus routinely attracts Salzburg residents craving one of the province's best dining experiences. Chef and owner Gerhard Gugg rarely disappoints as he creates culinary masterpieces in the medieval setting of an old inn near the Mauterndorf market square.

While guests can choose each course if they wish, for two or more people it's more fun to order multi-course dinners and share the tastes. The three-course menu is €29, while the gourmet seven-course dinner costs €69, or €104 with accompanying wines (superb choices come from the nearby Burgenland Province). The wait staff serves with choreographed care and efficiency and the presentation is perfect.

Bread is fresh from the in-house bakery and comes with a choice of butter, schmaltz or a light creamed cheese spiced with cayenne pepper. Thin-sliced bacon arrives with fat capers on a platter with a small fork for each person. Gugg has invented a new kind of pasta — *Trottole* — with curves and angles designed to retain the maximum amount of sauce. Served with fresh local mushrooms in an earthy sauce, it's a fine dish.

A central theme is the blending of formal with informal and tradition with innovation. When servers arrive with the palate cleanser, they crack open cans of Red Bull and pour it fizzling over the fresh lime sherbet.

Pork roast arrives next, served on the bone with braised cabbage tips, roast garlic, and colorful bits of carrot, broccoli and potatoes as well as sprigs of rosemary. Somehow space remains for the dessert potpourri: a cone of chocolate filled with cream and jam, chocolate mousse, mini-apple turnovers, mixed fruit "foam," and coconut and apricot sorbet.

Contact: Restaurant Mesnerhaus, Liftstrasse 56, A-5570 Mauterndorf, tel. +43 /06472/7595, fax 7595/20, email office@mesnerhaus.at, web www.mesnerhaus.at. Proprietor:

Gerhard Gugg.

Ratings: QUALITY 18/20 VALUE 18/20

Gasthof Weitgasser

Hans and Monika Walliner offer excellent regional cuisine in a traditional setting.

Built in 1651, the Weitgasser was converted to an inn a century later and continues to be a favorite for visitors and locals. The garden with its trestle tables is perfect for a relaxed Lungau evening.

In this restaurant three elements prevail: fresh ingredients, wild game, and dumplings. The latter come in various configurations: cheese dumplings with pumpkin, bread dumplings with bacon and eggs, cream cheese dumplings with fresh fruit, bread dumplings served with game stew, and so on.

While higher-priced dishes such as roast saddle of lamb are available, the dinner platters are superb. Three guests recently asked to share a combination of meat and cheese platters with salad and were served a feast of boiled beef, sausage, pork aspic, dried meats, a dozen local cheeses, and a heaping, colorful salad bowl topped with edible flowers. With a basket of bread and a bottle of Styrian wine, it was near perfection. Expect to pay €7-15 per person.

Contact: Gasthof Weitgasser, A-5570 Mauterndorf, tel. +49 /06472 /7366, fax 7366/6, email weitgasser@sbg.at, web: www.gasthof-weitgasser.at. Proprietors: Hans/Monika Walliner.

Ratings: QUALITY: 14/20 VALUE 15/20

Gasthof Neuwirt


The Neuwirt's specialty is fresh game, and much of it comes from the hunting skills of innkeeper and chef Franz Essl. He's equally adept in the kitchen, where he's known for venison dishes such as goulash or steak served with dense dumplings in a rich sauce. Pan-fried trout from local streams is another favorite.

What Franz doesn't hunt either comes from other local hunters and fishermen or from nearby farms. When Marianne Essl isn't showing off the couple's children to visitors, she provides top-notch service. Since

tables seat eight (below the arrays of antlers), you sit with other customers — which, of course, is half the fun.

Contact: Gasthof Neuwirt, Pfarrstrasse 23, A-5571 Mariapfarr, tel/fax +43/6473/8218, email franzessl@aon.at, web:

www.mariapfarr.net/neuwirt. Proprietors: Franz and Marianne Essl.

Ratings: QUALITY: 13/20 VALUE 13/20 

FIRST NIGHT

Continued from page 1

the Main river and arranged around an inner courtyard. At night the arched gates are closed and guests feel safely tucked away in a protected little enclave. Part of the hotel's perimeter was once part of the wall that surrounded the town, which, though not particularly historic, has a pleasant charm and is worth a stroll.

Guestrooms are large and decorated in sort of modern Franconian style with such country touches as dark wood paneling and trim, and here and there an antique.

To reach the Anker simply take the Autobahn toward Würzburg, and get off at the Marktheidenfeld exit. When you reach the town follow the signs to the hotel, drive into the quiet courtyard and put yourself in the hands of the Deppisch family. A short nap and then there are two choices for your first dinner.

The restaurant **Weinhaus Anker** is just across the narrow pedestrian-only street from the hotel where in the fall one can tuck into such dishes as bacon-wrapped medallions of venison topped with pillows of *foie gras* served next to small mounds of sautéed wild mushrooms mixed with finely chopped onions, bits of bacon and other delights.

The restaurant's inviting rustic charm, perfect for your first night in the country, will drive home the point that you're no longer in Kansas or California.

Dinners not including beverages are in the € 20 to 41 range. For something a bit less expensive and simpler, but in the same caring, friendly, attention-to-detail style of the Anker, is the **Gasthof Lamm** in nearby Bill-

Dinkelsbühl Kids' Festival

This is the second in our series of readers' favorite activities and destinations. Please submit yours — 300 words or less — via email to bob@gemut.com or via regular mail.

One of my favorite destinations is Dinkelsbühl and its children's festival. The town, on the Romantic Road south of Rothenburg ob der Tauber, is similar to Rothenburg in that it still has its medieval walls and many of its old buildings. Dinkelsbühl, however, is more low-key, doesn't have quite as many tourist attractions and is not jammed with tourists every summer.

The Children's Festival (*Kinderzeche*, which means literally "children's tribute") is held during the third week of July and on adjacent weekends. Next year's dates are July 15 to 24.

The celebration is a traditional *Volksfest* commemorating an incident in 1632 during the Thirty Years War that threatened the town with destruction. It was saved, according to legend, by a group of young children who stood in the road and blocked the besieging army.

There is a dramatic presentation that begins in an auditorium. In it, the town council debates whether to surrender or try to hold out. When the fall of the town is inevitable — and according to custom a town which resists is subject

ingshausen.

The short 10 km drive to the Lamm through the rich farmland and one or two tiny villages makes a nice prelude to the meal. The rather massive 1883 stone building and its handsome wrought iron sign, are right on the main road through the town. Parking is in the rear. The dining room is small, brightly lit and tables are covered with crisp linen.

As one might imagine of a restaurant in a small farm village, the meat and produce are top quality and fresh and the servings plentiful.

Thin slices of venison, *Rehnhüssen*, came in a brown sauce garnished with half a baked apple which had been peeled and sliced into a fan shape and cranberries served in a funnel made from a very thin slice of

to sacking and burning — a 15-year-old girl leads a group of younger children, 5 to 10-years old, who are resolved to protect their town. The presentation then moves to a square just inside one of the gates where the Swedish force (actually they were German mercenaries in the service of Sweden) marches in. The council comes out to surrender but the children stand in the road singing and asking for mercy. The commander, a Colonel Sperreuth, decides to be merciful and the crowd bursts into song and all the town's church bells ring.

The ceremony is repeated several times during the week. On the last day (Sunday) it is followed by a parade of all the participants, dances by various groups of children and young people, a concert by the Boys' Band, and a military tattoo. Dinkelsbühl's website is www.dinkelsbuehl.de and the festival's is www.kinderzeche.de. Both sites have English pages, although the German pages have much more detail.

I stayed at the **Eisenkrug Hotel** (Martin Luther Str. 1, D-91550, tel. +49/09851/57700, fax 577070, email eisenkrug@t-online.de) which dates from that period and is just a few doors from the square where many of the events are held.

JIM MENTZER

JMENTZER@CONCENTRIC.NET

watermelon. Served on the side were two excellent dumplings. Accompanying were leeks and broccoli which had been steamed, breaded, then broiled for a moment, and a ratatouille-style mélange of sliced yellow and red peppers plus other vegetables. Medallions of lamb were draped in a peanut flavored sauce with tiny wild mushrooms. Beef "florentine" was a thick filet topped with a heavy mushroom sauce and finally, Steinbutt filets, a halibut-like white fish, wrapped pieces of salmon and spinach bathed in a shrimp sauce and served with a pair of hefty, grilled shrimp. It was a pretty dish, almost Japanese in presentation.

Only one of us had enough room for dessert, a cheese plate of Cambazola with a few slices of fruit. It was easily enough for two persons.

You can hardly ask for more: pleasant surroundings, good draft beer, attentive, friendly service, the freshest ingredients well prepared.

Contact: Hotel Anker, Obertorstr. 6, D-8772 Marktheidenfeld, tel. +49 09301/600 40, fax 600 477 email info@hotel-anker.de web www.hotel-anker.de

Daily Rates: Singles €65-85, doubles €95-120

Ratings: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 17/20

Contact: Gasthof Goldenes Lamm, Untertorstrasse 13, D-8771 Billingshausen, tel.+49/ 09398/ 3 52. No cards. Inexpensive to Moderate.

Ratings: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 17/20

Readers' Forum

Suggests More Inexpensive Hotels

I think you would increase readership with reviews of hotel/B&B accommodations in the \$50-\$100 price range *much* more often. Be frank, but there are many that could pass a reasonable muster.

CRAIG HALEY
VIA EMAIL

Wants Gemüt to Aim Higher

For my taste it seems you occasionally aim too low. Some "seniors" crave comfort and sometimes a little luxury.

KURT KREUGER
BEVERLY HILLS

(Ed. Note: The two comments above are from longtime subscribers. We'd like to hear your thoughts on this topic.)

Recommends Austrian Hotel

We stayed at a wonderful small hotel in Austria last month, the **Hotel Schlair** (A-4550 Kremsmünster, Franz Hönig Strasse 16, tel. +43 /07583 /5258-0, fax 5258-52, schlair@hotelschlair.at, double rooms €72-80).

Driving from Innsbruck to Dürnstein, we wanted a place midway for just one night; would we had stayed longer! It is quiet and scrupulously clean with an attached *Konditorei* where breakfast is served. The dining room was closed the night we were there so we did not have a real opportunity to sample the kitchen, but lunch, breakfast and some superb

homemade apricot jam bode well. A real plus for the non-German speaker is Erik's Midwest background before he met and married Maria who is Austrian. Both could not be nicer or more helpful.

JOAN HAWKINS
GLEN COVE NY

Non-Tourist Budapest Restaurants

Here is a short list of my favorite "non-tourist" Budapest restaurants.

Fulemule (Jewish) (7th District)
Kofarago 5, Tel. 266-7947

Gosser (1st District)
Krisztina 3, Tel. 375-7573

Shalimar (Indian) (7th District)
Dob 50, Tel. 352-0297

Kisbojtár (13th District)
Dagaly 17, Tel. 350-3087

Szep Ilona (2nd District)
Budakeszi 3, Tel. 275-1392

Leroy (13th District)
Visegradi 50, Tel. 340-3316

JOHN CILLAG
VIA EMAIL

(Ed. Note: Mr. Cillag is a part-time resident of Budapest.)

In Praise of Us

I value the subscription to your travel newsletter more than any other periodical I subscribe to. I truly look forward to receiving each issue because it affords me the opportunity of once more reliving the experiences of places that I have so enjoyed visiting over the years.

I have often been asked to setup itineraries for family and/or friends planning to travel to these three favorite countries of ours. The first thing that I reach for is my personally annotated back issues of *Gemütlichkeit*.

They contain such a wealth of information and are a great resource for me. I have recommended your travel booking services to friends for rental cars and airline tickets and they have all without a doubt been very pleased with the results.

HERB ZWACK
VIA EMAIL

(Ed. Note: Usually we publish letter of recommendation, criticism, or commentary on travel. This self-esteem builder, however, was just too good to pass up.)

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. 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

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

Bern

Hotel Innere Enge, Engenstrasse 54, CH-3012, tel. +41/031/309 6111, fax 309 6112, email: info@zghotels.ch

Hotel Kreuz, Zeughausgasse 41, CH-3000, tel. +41/031/329 9595, fax 329 95 96, email: 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 (not in town)

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

Lucerne

Hotel Wilden Mann, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, email: 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

Munich

Hotel Exquisit, Pettenkofenstr. 3, tel. +49/089/ 551 99 0, fax 551 99 499, email: 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@t-online.de

Hotel Kraft, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24, fax 550 3856, email: 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

Salzburg & Environs

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

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

Hotel Jedermann, Rupertgasse 25, Austria A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873241-0, fax 873241-9, email: 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

Allstadt Vienna, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, email: hotel@allstadt.at, web: www.allstadt.at

Pension Aviano, Marco-D'Aviano-Gasse 1, tel. +43/01/512 8330, fax 512 8330 6, email: aviano@pertschy.com

Zürich

Hotel Florhof, Florhofgasse 4, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. 41/01/261 4470, fax 261 4611, email: 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

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

Hotel Birkenhof, von-Eiff-Str 37, Hanau-Steinheim, D-63456, tel. +49/06181/648 80, fax 64 88 39, email: 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

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

Hotel Fly Away, Marktgasse 19, Zürich-Kloten, Switzerland CH-8302, tel. +41/01/804 4455, fax 804 44 50, email: reservation@hotel-flyaway.ch