

DEAR  
SUBSCRIBER

### Beware the "Open Jaw"

It's tempting to think of flying into Frankfurt or Munich, getting a rental car, slowly working your way south, ending the trip in Italy, then returning to the U.S. on a flight from Rome. Before committing to such an itinerary, however, it's wise to know what the ground transport will cost. "Open jaws," especially those involving Italy, can be expensive.

Case in point: family of six buys Frankfurt-Rome "open jaw" air tickets, only to discover the cost of a van for two weeks, pickup Frankfurt and drop-off Rome, is over \$3,500. No company other than Avis will even allow such a rental, and the company's one-way international drop fee alone is around \$1,800. This family's solution: a three-country rail pass at \$316 per person. Problem is, they get only five days of actual travel and are restricted to mostly larger cities. (They could spend more and add more travel days, but it's still not easy to see the countryside by rail.)

Here's another miscalculation. A couple vacationing in Bavaria wants to visit Venice for a week. They don't need a car while in Venice, but point-to-point rail is expensive, so they figure they'll rent a car for one day in each direction. Can't be more than a couple of hundred dollars each way, right? Unfortunately, it's not that easy.

With drop charges and minimum rental period rules (three or five days, depending on the company), the price for *each* rental is over \$500.

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## APPENZELL

*Ultramodern museums, and hotel rooms with high speed Internet connections, serve only to accentuate that tradition still rules in this picture-postcard Swiss mountain town.*

**A** principal reason for travel is to experience another culture. If that culture's connections to its past are evident and still part of daily life—not staged or kept alive simply because they promote tourism—all the better.

By Bob Bestor It's impossible to know how much of the Europe that draws American visitors exists mostly for tourism; parts of it, certainly. We're glad when a government goes to the trouble of preserving the past, even if the results are somewhat artificial; but when ancient things and places retain a practical use—an old clock that keeps time, a 1000-year-old church that's still a place of worship—and

a citizenry maintains customs and traditions because they choose to, not because of a chamber of commerce policy, the travel experience seems more satisfying.

No doubt the current residents of Appenzell, Switzerland's most tradition-bound canton, stay with the old ways because that's the way they want it; not because it attracts tourists. Either way, a past woven into the fabric of everyday 21st century life is one of the canton's most appealing features.

Like many Swiss mountain towns, a custom that continues to survive involves the movement of cows to and from the high pastures.

*Continued on page 3...*

### Beating the Euro...

## Minotel Deals

**M**inotel is a Lausanne-headquartered marketing combine of some 700 independently-owned, modestly-priced hotels in 30 countries, including Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Based on inspections and stays over the years by *Gemütlichkeit* writers and editors, we can report with confidence that they offer a consistently high value-to-price ratio. Some, of course, are better than others.

Long a staple of the Minotel marketing strategy has been a "three-nights-for-the-price-two" promotion. The deal applies to longer stays as well, so travelers can get six nights for the price of four and a dozen nights for the price of eight. All prices include breakfast and taxes. In this time of a weak dollar, the deals seem especially attractive.

The company maintains a user-friendly website in English at [www.minotel.com](http://www.minotel.com). Reservations with a credit card are easy to make online and can be cancelled without penalty as late as two days prior to arrival.

Not all Minotels participate in the "3 for 2" program—none in Austria—but it's a simple matter to find which do at the website. Several have excellent restaurants, and all have private bath, TV, and direct-dial phone. Listed below, with the per-night, double-room price, are a few Minotel "3 for 2" deals currently on offer. We are familiar with most of these hotels:

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**Exchange rates as of 04/30/05**

**1 euro = \$1.29**

**1 Swiss franc = \$0.84**

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One-way drop charges among the countries of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, and the Benelux countries are more reasonable—add to the price of the rental drop fees from about \$125—but beware when Spain, Portugal, Italy, Scandinavia or former eastern bloc countries are involved. Of course, there are usually no drop fees within the same country, making one-country "open jaws," such as Berlin-Munich or Nice-Paris a practical option.

An open jaw solution we didn't have just a few years ago is discount airlines flying within Europe. There are now about 70 of them, at least a dozen based in Germany alone, and their fares range from almost free to prohibitively high. Find them at [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net) and [www.whichbudget.com](http://www.whichbudget.com).

**Hotel Deals**

The two best major-city hotel deals we know about are the **Hotel Acanthus** in Munich, offering *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers double rooms for €85 (two-night minimum), and Berlin's **Hotel Art Nouveau**, which gives readers a 10% discount. For contact information, see the list of recommended hotels on page 8.

**Airline Update**

Swiss Airlines is soon to be purchased by **Lufthansa**. Since we probably could find something close to a consensus among readers that these are the two best airlines flying be-

tween Europe and the United States, the news is received with mixed feelings. On the one hand, we can stop worrying about Swiss; it will survive. On the other, will its "culture"—that indefinable something that translates to what, for my money, is the best service across the Atlantic—endure?

Nobody knows, but there are certain to be major personnel cut-backs among Swiss staff. As to the nonstops from the United States to Zürich, word is they are all money-makers and OK for now.

**Back in Business**

Those worried about the closing of a fine little hotel on the Mosel, **Gutshotel** (tel. +49/06507/2035, e-mail [info@gutshotel-kesselstatt.de](mailto:info@gutshotel-kesselstatt.de)) in Neumagen-Dhron, can breathe easy. It's back in business with double rooms starting at €99. Ask for the attic room at the top of the house.

Another hotel whose demise was rumored but which is very much alive is the **Hotel Dreieich** (tel. +49/06103/9150, e-mail [hotel-dreieich@gmx.de](mailto:hotel-dreieich@gmx.de)) in Langen, about 12 miles on the Autobahn from the Frankfurt Airport. With room prices that range from €64–72 double and €48–69 single, breakfast included, it's got to be one of the great "last night" deals near FRA. There's a decent Italian restaurant, and you can park your car for free.

**Garmisch-Partenkirchen**

Trouble in GAP. Last December, we observed 25 years of almost annual pilgrimages to the great **Gasthof Fraundorfer** (tel. +49/08821/9270, e-

mail [fraundorfer@gaponline.de](mailto:fraundorfer@gaponline.de)) with yet another visit. We stayed in a rented apartment (**Drawbridge to Europe**, [www.drawbridgetoeurope.com](http://www.drawbridgetoeurope.com), tel. 888-268-1148) but had dinner at the Fraundorfer two nights running. I'm delighted to report that virtually nothing has changed. Wish I could say the same for the rest of the city. Compared with what we saw in Appenzell a few days later, the Garmisch side of town seemed tired and down at heel. Perhaps it was the time of year, but many buildings needed paint and the town lacked the buzz I've seen on previous visits.

A pair of what once were among the town's most highly-regarded hotels, **Clausing's Posthotel** and the **Post-Hotel Partenkirchen**, have been dropped from the 2005 *Michelin Red Guide*, an ominous development for both. Our apartment was a short walk from Clausing's, and we planned to have dinner there one night. But one

*Continued on page 8...*

**Using Gemütlichkeit**

- Hotel prices listed are for one night. Discounts are often available for longer stays.
- All hotel prices include breakfast unless otherwise noted.
- Local European telephone area codes carry the "0" required for in-country dialing. To phone establishments from outside the country, such as from the USA, do not dial the first "0".

**Logging on to Our Website**

Back issues in text format from January 1993, except for the most recent 12, are available free to subscribers only at [www.gemut.com](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: **apri** Password: **2626**

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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.

**APPENZELL***Continued from page 1*

On such days, farmers turn out in black hats with ribbons and flowers, bright red vests, yellow knickers, knee-length white stockings, and buckled shoes. Locals and tourists line the route and occasionally offer wine to the herders. The cattle are also groomed and decorated, and prizes are awarded for the best teats and udders. Women wear ankle-length pleated skirts, tied bodices, huge embroidered lace collars and, in their hair, the *Schlappe*, a black-winged bonnet trailing a wide, red ribbon.

As you might guess, traditions die hard in Appenzell. It wasn't until 1990 that women were given the right to vote. Now they, too, participate in democracy in its purest form: an open-air vote of all citizens on the town square, the **Landsgemeindeplatz**. Election day in Appenzell, the last Sunday in April, gets national TV coverage and is a day of brass bands, parades, and traditional dress.

Citizens entitled to vote are required to attend. Ballots are cast by acclamation or a show of hands. Most men wear a sword or bayonet passed down from their forefathers. With Glarus to the south, Appenzell is the last canton that still conducts the business of government in this way.

Distinctive, traditional architecture is another convention to which Appenzellers cling. In the small business district, narrow streets are lined with elaborately decorated and painted buildings. Intricate wrought-iron signs, flower boxes, and an occasional Swiss flag project from their facades.

Given its old ways and peaceful setting one might be lulled into thinking that Appenzell is not only spiritually but physically far removed from the rest of the world.

Not so. Zürich is a little over an hour's drive by car and under two hours by the trains that depart every 30 minutes. Bregenz, at the easternmost tip of Lake Constance, is only 40 minutes by car, or an hour and 40 minutes by frequent train. St. Gallen,

**Appenzell Basics****Population:** 5,535**Elevation:** 2,575 feet (785 meters)

**Tourist Info:** Appenzellerland Tourismus AG, CH-9050 Appenzell, tel. +41/071/788 08 18, fax 788 08 19, e-mail: [info@appenzell.ch](mailto:info@appenzell.ch), Web: [www.appenzell.ch](http://www.appenzell.ch)

**Nearest Airports:** Zürich 58 miles, Innsbruck 114 miles, Munich 146 miles

**Driving Distances:**

St. Gallen	18 km	12 miles
Zürich	94 km	59 miles
Bern	215 km	134 miles
Frankfurt	438 km	274 miles
Munich	253 km	158 miles
Salzburg	365 km	228 miles

**Appenzell Card:** Includes travel throughout the region on a variety of rail lines and mountaintop cable cars, plus entrance to most museums. Cost is CHF 31 for one day, CHF 52 for three days and CHF 74 for five days. Children are half price.

**Euregeo Bodensee Day Ticket:** Costs CHF 40 for all zones or CHF 30 for two zones and is valid for a full day's rail, bus, and boat travel throughout a wide area of the countries around Lake Constance.

an interesting destination itself, is just 20 km (13 miles) distant and from there train connections lead to such attractive towns as Lindau in Germany (less than two hours); Konstanz (a little over an hour); Vaduz, capital of Liechtenstein (about an hour and a half); and Schaffhausen (less than two hours). Trains to St. Gallen from Appenzell run every 30 minutes and the trip takes about three-quarters of an hour.

A pleasant day for rail travelers might be to catch the 9:08am St. Gallen to Romanshorn train, then the ferry across Lake Constance to Friedrichshafen in Germany, arriving at 11:25am. After lunch there perhaps take in 1998's Museum of the Year in Europe, the **Zeppelin Museum** (Seestrasse 22, tel. 07541/38010). Then it's about half an hour east to Lindau. Following an afternoon stroll around that delightful lakeside city, catch the 4:25pm to Appenzell, arriving at 6:27pm. The ferry also carries automobiles, so you can do the same thing by car.

The village of Stein is also worthy of a half-day excursion. There you'll find the **Appenzeller Volkskunde Museum**, where most mornings a farmer makes Appenzeller cheese by

hand over an open fire. After that, go next door to the **Appenzell Schaukäserei** (Showcase Cheese-Dairy) to see the same basic process done with computer-controlled stainless steel tanks, vats, centrifuges, and presses. Have lunch in the dairy's restaurant.

There are several other picturesque villages in the canton which can be quickly reached by car, bus or tram, or you may even want to walk to some of them, (see "A Walk Through Toyland," page 4).

Appenzell has two new museums housed in extraordinary buildings that somewhat overshadow the works they display. The metallic, futuristic **Museum Liner** and the **Kunsthalle Ziegelhütte**, a converted brick kiln with stunning contemporary architectural elements, are both worth a visit if only to see the structures themselves.

Each Wednesday morning at 10am tours are conducted by the **Appenzell Alpenbitter**, a distiller of liqueurs, the most popular being Alpenbitter, a black aperitif served over ice. Though most tours are in German only, the hospital-clean plant is of interest, particularly a room containing huge open containers of dozens of spices. At the tour's end is a tasting and an opportunity to purchase product.

On a clear day, you might drive to Schwägalp and ride the cable car to Mt. Säntis, the highest peak in the Alpstein range.

Live Swiss mountain music is featured most evenings at a hotel or restaurant somewhere in the area. Traditionally dressed men, each with a single earring (a tiny version of the scoop used in cheese-making), play the concertina, piano, bass violin, and sometimes one or two other instruments. It is said the best Swiss yodelers come from here. Your hotel or the tourist office, which publishes a daily listing of events, can provide details.

Not in most guidebooks but worth a peek is the Baroque **Pfarrkirche St. Mauritius** on Hauptgasse across from the Hotel Hecht. Note the

extraordinary chandelier and the church organ.

## Hotels

### Romantik-Hotel Säntis

The steep gabled roof, lace-curtained windows, and elaborately painted facade of Appenzell's leading hotel anchor one side of the town's famed Landsgemeindeplatz, site of the annual open-air public voting.

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Inside, the dark wood paneling, marble floors, and comfortable leather-covered furniture—all of the finest materials—establish a tone of understated, countrified luxury. Commanding the dining room is an extraordinary carved-wood mural of life in Appenzell, done in 1956 by local artist, Hans Neff.

Number 358, a spacious, non-smoking, junior suite offers a separate seating area and desk, wireless Internet access and large bath with tub, shower, and two wash basins.

"Romantic" rooms, such as Number 354, are somewhat smaller, but have the charm of blonde wood beams and slanting ceilings.

Regular double rooms have the same amenities but come in a more straightforward package with a smaller bath and no sofa.

Each room projects its own personality through a variety of attractive features, such as four-poster beds and carved armoires.

We were reassured, on our fourth visit since 1987, to note the hotel is still in the capable hands of the Heeb family. For those who seek the best, and want to be in the town of Appenzell, the Säntis is the choice.

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 120—180, doubles CHF 180—300, half board CHF 40 per person. Free parking.

**Contact:** Romantik-Hotel Säntis, Landsgemeindeplatz 3, CH-9050 Appenzell, tel. +41/071/788 1111, fax 788 1110, e-mail [info@saentis-appenzell.ch](mailto:info@saentis-appenzell.ch), Web [www.saentis-appenzell.ch](http://www.saentis-appenzell.ch). Proprietors: Stefan and Catriona Heeb.

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

## A WALK THROUGH TOYLAND

Though it wasn't our first time in Appenzell, we were struck by the town's overall appearance. Every building, including those with the most intricate wooden facades, seemed to have been painted a day or two before, and the charming Hauptgasse pedestrian zone bustled with shoppers. (Appenzell snapshot: Many retail stores display merchandise out-of-doors. When closed for lunch for two hours, the racks of clothing are left outside and simply wrapped loosely in canvas, to protect more against sudden rain than theft.)

Through spotless windows of little cafés, we saw polished wooden tables, hardwood floors, and perfect stacks of gleaming glassware. Entering one, we each ordered a small glass of beer—a *Stange* in Switzerland—to accompany a shared order of fresh bread and a cut-to-order, smooth, rich, nutty slice of Appenzeller cheese (€6.5). Over the beer and cheese, we tried to come to grips with an overall level of order, symmetry, and cleanliness that is high even for this country.

The feeling of existing in a vast piece of stage scenery reached its zenith the next day on a walk from a nearby village. We took the train to the end of the line, Wasserauen, and returned on foot the approximately 5 miles to Appenzell, stopping for a light lunch along the way.

The little red cars of the local narrow-gauge railway, the **Appenzeller Bahn**, are always in showroom condition, looking freshly washed and waxed. Eleven minutes after boarding, we were in tiny Wasserauen at the end of the valley, hemmed in on three sides by the rugged Alpstein range. Naturally, there is a footpath that runs near a little river by the rail tracks. As we

ambled along in the cold sunshine toward Appenzell, it felt as though we were set pieces in an oversized model railroad layout with a too-good-to-be-true landscape of mountains, meadows, neat farms, and bright red trains tootling their way back and forth through the valley.

At Schwende, we paused to take care of some journalistic duties. A hundred yards or so up a narrow lane from the "rail station"—actually just a wide piece of concrete next to the road—is the **Hotel Alpenblick**, where we spent 30 minutes touring guest and public rooms (see review, page 6).

Back on the path to Appenzell we stopped in Weissbad for a lunch of salad, another hunk of great Appenzeller cheese, and a short beer. Like virtually everything else in this canton, the *Stube* of the **Hotel Weissbadbrücke** is a model of hygiene and efficiency.

The walk from Wasserauen to Appenzell is about five miles, entirely flat and mostly paved. Most of the way the path runs by the Schwendibach river. Food and beverages are available in Schwende, Weissbad, and Steinegg. If you want a shorter walk, about three miles, get off the train at Weissbad.

Final Note: For winter traveling in Europe, plan time in destinations that have a bit of elevation. Last winter, we found many of our days in the lowlands gray and dreary because of the horizon-to-horizon cloud cover. But ascending the winding road to Appenzell from the Rhine Valley, we broke out into bright sunshine. Parked cars jammed roadside turnouts, and paths visible from the road were filled with walkers. Weary of dark day after dark day, hundreds of locals had driven to higher ground in search of sunshine. ☑

### Hotel Appenzell

On the other side of the Landsgemeindeplatz is our second choice for an in-town stay. Though the Appenzell is a three-star, some of its raw materials are five-star caliber. In many respects,

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such as service, location, quality of fixtures, and furnishings, it equals the Säntis. Public rooms with crystal chandeliers, rich paneling, highly polished wooden door frames and lintels, and carved wooden ceilings speak of a commitment to quality.

The feel here is more intimate and small-hotel; guestrooms are a shade smaller than at the Säntis, but rates are lower. Each room offers the usual amenities, plus one that's not so usual: high-speed Internet access for guests with laptops.

A very good, all-fresh buffet is laid out each morning in a cozy room most notable for its stunning hand-carved breakfront/sideboard.

As one of the town's more popular gathering spots, the hotel's café-restaurant is busy from morning till night (see more under Food, page 6).

We can find no fault with the friendly, efficient Appenzell and recommend its three-night package for CHF 381 per person, including breakfast and dinner. For most travelers, that's just about the right length of stay for the town and, at about \$650 for two persons, is a good deal—remember this is Switzerland.

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 113–125, doubles CHF 186–210, half board CHF 30 per person.

**Contact:** Café-Hotel Appenzell, Am Landsgemeindeplatz, CH-9050 Appenzell, tel. +41/071/788 1515, fax 788 1551, e-mail [info@hotel-appenzell.ch](mailto:info@hotel-appenzell.ch), Web [www.hotel-appenzell.ch](http://www.hotel-appenzell.ch). Proprietors: Leo and Margrit Sutter.

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

### Hotel Löwen

Conveniently located in the pedestrian zone, only a few steps from the Landsgemeindeplatz, the Löwen's pride and joy are nine special "Appenzeller" rooms, which feature hand-painted furniture typical of the region. Frankly, they are a little over-the-top for our taste.

Though the hotel doesn't measure up to the either the Säntis or the Appenzell, it offers more than adequate accommodations, clean and comfortable, with all the necessaries.

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 80–140, doubles CHF 160–240.

**Contact:** Hotel Löwen, Hauptgasse 25, CH-9050 Appenzell, tel. +41/071/787 2187, fax 7872579, e-mail [info@loewen-appenzell.ch](mailto:info@loewen-appenzell.ch), Web

[www.loewen-appenzell.ch](http://www.loewen-appenzell.ch). Proprietors Rita Bircher and Hans Ulrich Rothenberger.

**Rating:** QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 9/20

### Hotel Traube

The simple Traube has the look and feel of a bargain hotel but isn't. Despite its location in one of the town's most handsome buildings, very near the Landsgemeindeplatz, it lacks panache.

Guestrooms are modern and clean and come with TV, radio, and direct-dial phone, but we recommend spending the extra francs for one of the other hotels reviewed here.

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 85–110, doubles CHF 150–180, half board CHF 35 per person

**Contact:** Hotel Traube, Marktgasse 7, CH-9050 Appenzell, tel. +41/071/787 140, fax 787 2419, e-mail [info@hotel-traube.ch](mailto:info@hotel-traube.ch), Web [www.hotel-traube.ch](http://www.hotel-traube.ch). Proprietors Kurt and Margrit Hunziker-Sager

**Rating:** QUALITY 9/20, VALUE 9/20

### Hotel Hecht

Eighteen years ago our first Appenzell stop was a rather plain little hotel run by two sisters. Though it didn't look like much from the outside, we fell in love with the Hecht's wonderful country meals, snug little dining room, comfortable guest rooms, and its homey atmosphere. Sad to say, even in rural Switzerland, running a hotel is a complex business that requires financial backing. Not long ago, the Heeb family, owners of the Hotel Säntis, purchased the property and began the expensive process of a complete make-over. Based on what we saw in December, the result will be a superb, small hotel—probably with far higher rates than the old Hecht.

**Daily Rates:** Not yet available

**Contact:** Hotel Hecht, Hauptgasse 9, CH-9050 Appenzell, tel. +041/071/788 2222, fax 788 2288, e-mail [info@hecht-appenzell.ch](mailto:info@hecht-appenzell.ch), Web [www.hecht-appenzell.ch](http://www.hecht-appenzell.ch).

**Rating:** NA

### Hotel Hof Weissbad

The best accommodations and guest facilities in the canton are found at this ultramodern wellness and beauty center in the tiny hamlet of Weissbad, about four kilometers southeast of Appenzell.

Built in 1994 under the looming Alpstein range, and recently refurbished and enlarged, the elegant Hof Weissbad is a gorgeous 21st century steel and glass hideaway with spacious guest and public rooms, and the requisite number of indoor-outdoor pools, saunas, spas, therapy systems, and a golf course.

The plush public rooms feature a glassed-enclosed elevator, lobby fountain, and gleaming grand piano that is played most evenings.

Sleek, well-lighted guestrooms are done in a modern Bauhaus-style, with hardwood floors to keep allergy inducing dust at a minimum. Some are designated nonsmoking, and most have balconies and the usual four-star amenities.

The restaurant is noted by Michelin as having a "particularly interesting" wine list

The hotel boasts a 24-hour medi-

### 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 percent 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 website, with train schedules throughout Europe, as well as 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
- [www.historicgermany.com](http://www.historicgermany.com) Website for an alliance of historic German cities
- [www.thetravelinsider.info](http://www.thetravelinsider.info) Info on electronic devices used by travelers — cell phones, computers, etc.

cal staff. Treatments range in price from about \$7 for 30 minutes in the Solarium to about \$213 for a “regeneration” treatment with massage and light therapy. Such group activities as Nordic walking and yoga are in the \$15–20 range.

For travelers seeking this sort of holiday, Hof Weissbad is a first-rate choice at surprisingly affordable rates.

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 200–260, doubles CHF 360–480, including breakfast and a four-course dinner. There are multiple-night packages that include various treatment programs. Free parking.

**Contact:** Hotel Hof Weissbad, CH-9057 Weissbad, tel. +49/071 798 8080, fax 071 798 8090, e-mail [hofel@hofweissbad.ch](mailto:hofel@hofweissbad.ch), Web [www.hofweissbad.ch](http://www.hofweissbad.ch). Proprietors Damaris and Christian Lienhard.

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

### Gasthaus Alpenblick

This prototypical Swiss country hotel sits in a meadow on a knoll approximately 100 yards above the Schwende rail stop, just off the road that leads from Appenzell to Wasserauen.

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The name Alpenblick (“Alpine view”), of course, is indicative of one of the hotel’s main attractions: marvelous vistas of the Alpstein range, including the Säntis, its highest peak.

Light wood dominates the décor in the sparkling, airy guestrooms, many of which have balconies offering the best views of any hotel reviewed here. There are four floors and a lift.

At night, the hotel’s cozy *Stubli* draws a varied crowd of locals, farmers and hotel guests, all there for the hearty Swiss fare or just to spend the evening in conversation and a beverage.

The premises’ majordomo is owner/chef Michael Fässler, one of those never-sleep dynamos whose lives seem dedicated to running a small hotel.

Though the location may feel remote, guests can walk the few steps to the rail stop and be in Zürich in two hours, St. Gallen in an hour, and

Appenzell in nine minutes. Trains run at least hourly.

The Alpenblick is a winner, and we recommend it without hesitation.

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 79–90, doubles CHF 138–160. Free parking.

**Contact:** Hotel Hof Weissbad, CH-9057 Weissbad, tel. +49/071 798 8080, fax 071 798 8090, e-mail [hofel@hofweissbad.ch](mailto:hofel@hofweissbad.ch), Web [www.hofweissbad.ch](http://www.hofweissbad.ch)

**Rating:** QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

### Food


In the great scheme of the cosmos, Appenzell is not a “foodie” destination. These days, when a six-bite, *objet d’art* entrée can cost \$100 or more, style often counts for more than substance. Not here, however.

Though there are no sacred altars of cuisine serving minuscule, perfectly-arranged portions, there’s plenty of substance in the canton’s traditional dishes, which are carefully prepared using the freshest ingredients. The farm tables of the past 100 years are the provenance of most menus, though there is a slight trend toward lighter fare with more emphasis now on fish, a greater variety of vegetables, vegetarian dishes, and moderately-sized portions.

The wood-paneled dining rooms of the canton’s hotels serve uniformly good to excellent food:

- In our experience, the best of lot is the **Hotel Säntis**, where such standbys as *Kalbsleber* with *Rösti* (calves liver and fried potatoes) are as good as you’ll find in the country.
- The more chic **Hof Weissbad** gets a 15 out of 20 *Gault Millau* rating and features a selection of lighter, low-calorie dishes. It grows some of its own produce and emphasizes private suppliers of meat and dairy products.
- Last December, selections on the menu at **Hotel Appenzell** included “Winterhit” (CHF 21), a variety of surprisingly satisfying winter vegetables, and “Winterpoulet” (CHF 22), half a roast chicken with multiple sautéed fresh vegetables; dishes not found in these parts just a few years ago.
- Dinner at the **Gasthaus Alpenblick**

honors the best traditions of farm fare with rib-sticking choices, such as *Schweinsteak* (CHF 27.5) and *Kalbsteak* with *Steinpilz* (CHF 39.5).

In Appenzell, you can expect to pay \$18–35 for main dishes, \$6–15 for salads and first courses, and about \$6–12 for desserts. A *Stange* (small beer) is approximately \$3, and a half-liter of house wine will be around \$15–20. 

### MINOTEL DEALS

Continued from page 1

#### Germany

**Hotel Bräutigam**, Ihringen near Freiburg, €76. Located less than 12 miles from Freiburg, this three-star hotel’s restaurant gets the red “Bib Gourmand” symbol from Michelin, in our experience a sign of excellent food at moderate prices.

**Hotel Zum Storch**, Schlüsselfeld, €61. On the Autobahn, about midway between Nürnberg and Würzburg, the hotel is a convenient, inexpensive headquarters from which to explore both cities. Michelin assigns its “two coins” symbol, meaning full meals available for less than €14.

**Hotel Schwanen**, Schonach near Triberg, €76. Small-town hotel in the Black Forest.

**Hotel Mönch’s Lamm**, Schömberg, €61. In a little spa town about 15 miles south of Pforzheim.

#### Switzerland

**Hotel Forni**, Airolo, €61. A hotel with an outstanding “Bib Gourmand” restaurant in a pleasant little town at the south end of the Gotthard Tunnel in Ticino, the Italian-speaking canton. Great for rail travelers, as the station is across the street. There’s more to see in this area than one might think.

**Hotel Ermitage**, Chateau-d’Oex, €66. A solid country hotel in a gorgeous mountain setting in Switzerland’s French-speaking Vaud region. The village is famous for its paper cuttings. Take a thrilling cable car up to Les Diableret Glacier or visit chic Gstaad, only nine miles away. Easy walk to rail station.

# TALKING CHEAP IN EUROPE

## Mobile phone strategies at a glance.

Communication technology and services have evolved considerably in recent years, making mobile phone access an increasingly affordable travel amenity. Today's traveler can choose among options for renting a mobile phone, purchasing a compatible phone, or adding international service to an existing U.S. calling plan. Each approach has its merits, and the right decision ultimately depends on several factors:

- Whom you plan to call—local hotels or friends and family back home?
- How many calls you expect to make—do you need to check in daily, or is the phone for emergency purposes only?
- How often you will travel to Europe—are you planning for a single two-week vacation, or several trips per year?

Here, at a glance, are the pros and cons of the most common options for staying in touch while you travel:

### RENT

**How it works:** Rent a phone from a car rental agency, airport, hotel, or other service provider.

**Hotel Engleberg**, Engleberg, €71. In the very center of a car-free mountain resort village, 500 meters from the rail station.

**Hotel Toscana**, Interlaken, €81. Good deal on a three-star hotel in an expensive town. Rail station is 500 meters away.

**Hotel AlaGare**, Lausanne, €76. Hotels at this price are hard to find in Lausanne. Central location near rail station, easy walk to Olympic Museum.

**Hotel Suisse**, Poschiavo, €51. In a charming Engadine town, this is a tremendous bargain for Switzerland. Hotel has "Bib Gourmand" restaurant and is close to rail station.

**Atlantis Guesthouse**, Zürich, €76. Modern hotel in the countryside, but just 10 minutes by S-Bahn to the city center. Free parking. 

**What it costs:** Pay shipping only (about \$35) if you rent a car from Auto Europe, but the per minute is \$1.99; \$30–50 per week through Cellular Abroad, plus a \$60–90 SIM card.

**Advantages:** Rent from a trusted provider, and keep the phone only as long as you need it. No extra communication equipment to store between trips.

**Disadvantages:** High base cost, plus per-minute usage fees that are often the same for local calls and those to the U.S.

### ROAM

**How it works:** Arrange for international service through your existing U.S. carrier and use your same number while on the road.

**What it costs:** From 99 cents per minute, plus a small subscription fee.

**Advantages:** Keep your same U.S. number; don't miss important calls from home; pay one consolidated mobile phone service bill.

**Disadvantages:** High cost, phone compatibility issues; not all carriers service all countries; possible bureaucratic approval process.

### BUY

**How it works:** Purchase a tri-band GSM phone and pre-paid Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) cards—country-specific or international. Add time with the purchase of recharge vouchers.


**What it costs:** From less than \$0.10 domestic to \$.75 to the United States for country-specific cards; higher for international SIM cards.

**Advantages:** Unlimited, free incoming calls; no bills to pay or contracts to sign; local mobile phone number makes it easy for locals to call you.

**Disadvantages:** Restrictions on foreign purchase of local SIM cards can be circumvented through service providers like Cellular Abroad.

**Tip:** Visit [www.thetravelinsider.info](http://www.thetravelinsider.info) to learn how to unlock a U.S.-purchased phone, then install a European SIM and make calls inexpensively.

For more information:

- [www.thetravelinsider.info](http://www.thetravelinsider.info)
- [www.german-way.com/handy.html](http://www.german-way.com/handy.html)
- [letsgo.com/resources/cellular](http://letsgo.com/resources/cellular)
- [www.autoeurope.com/cellphones.cfm](http://www.autoeurope.com/cellphones.cfm)
- [www.cellularabroad.com](http://www.cellularabroad.com) 

## Travel Notes

■ **Pilgrimage to Germany:** Catholic travelers may want to visit the childhood home of newly elected Pope Benedict XVI in the Bavarian town of **Altötting**, [www.altoetting.com](http://www.altoetting.com), or consider attending the World Youth Day festival for Catholic teens, which the Pope is expected to attend. Events take place in Cologne, Bonn, and Düsseldorf, August 16–21, [www.wjt2005.de](http://www.wjt2005.de).

■ **The Music of Strauss:** Contemporary composers accompany the music of Richard Strauss in the 17th annual **Richard Strauss Days** festival, June 24–28 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

■ **Jazz by the Lake:** Enjoy jazz on the shores of Lake Geneva during the **Montreux Jazz Festival**, July 1–16. In its 39th season, this year's event features The Corrs, Kraftwerk, Isaac Hayes, B.B. King, Crosby, Stills &

Nash, Laura Pausini, Alice Cooper, The Young Gods, Bobby McFerrin and other performers, [www.montreuxjazz.com](http://www.montreuxjazz.com).

■ **Princely Interiors:** View a rare collection of 18th century furnishing textiles, including silk wall hangings with lavish patterns and embroidered seat covers, at the **Abegg Foundation** in Riggisberg, Switzerland, through Nov. 13, [www.abegg-stiftung.ch](http://www.abegg-stiftung.ch).

■ **Art Basel:** Leading galleries present 5,000 works by 1,500 artists in the city of Basel's annual fair for 20th and 21st century art, June 15–20, [www.art-basel.ch](http://www.art-basel.ch).

■ **Bern Happenings:** The **Swiss Alpine Museum** in Bern will host a photo exhibition of mountain and travel expeditions in Switzerland, some of them dating back to 1862, March 3–October 23, [www.alpinesmuseum.ch](http://www.alpinesmuseum.ch). Meanwhile, comedy takes the stage at the 18th **Bernese Dance Festival**, June 1–11, [www.tanztage.ch](http://www.tanztage.ch). 

**DEAR SUBSCRIBER***Continued from page 2*

look around the worn, lifeless dining room, and we headed elsewhere.

Which GAP hotels do we recommend? The Fraundorfer's simple rooms offer good value, and wherever you stay you must have dinner there at least one night, but perhaps the best hotel for the price (most expensive double €85) is the **Bergasthof Panorma** (tel. +49/08821/2515) overlooking Partenkirchen. Going upscale, it's the **Staudacherhof** (tel. +49/088221/9290, e-mail [info@staudacherhof.de](mailto:info@staudacherhof.de)) on a quiet street in Garmisch, with doubles from €120. — RHB

**Readers' Forum****Frankfurt Airport Hotel**

I just wanted to briefly update you on a recent experience at the Frankfurt airport. We used the courtesy hotel phone and called the **Frankfurt InterCity Hotel (Airport)** and rooms were €149. Our next call was to the **Holiday Inn Express** which had a shuttle service to the airport and it was €49 with an excellent breakfast. It seemed to be new and was very clean. We usually avoid American things when we are traveling overseas, but I would recommend this one anytime.

JERRY BUSHONG  
VIA E-MAIL

**Rental Car Experience**

The last time I was in Germany with my wife and two daughters, I reserved a rental car through the **Gemütlichkeit Travel Department** for pickup at the Frankfurt airport.

When I got to the car rental reservation desk, I was told the VW Passat I had reserved was unavailable. However, they offered a brand new Opel Signum 5-speed diesel, a two-class upgrade, but at the same price. What a nice car it was. Very roomy, comfortable, powerful, nimble, and a great car to drive.

It had every conceivable option. The best was the GPS navigation system, even though it did take a short time to familiarize myself with

it and program it so that it talked to me in English. Being able to set a destination point or address before setting out and then following the instructions on the screen, and audible warnings prior to any upcoming turn, proved invaluable.

My only complaint was that during the couple of times we drove into France, the navigation system would show only the Autoroutes (Autobahns). But once we crossed the border back into Germany, it seemed that every last detail of every road, no matter how obscure, was shown.

MARK REINHART  
VIA E-MAIL

**Forsthaus Graseck Not Good**

Just writing to say you are right on about the **Forsthaus Graseck**. We had a great experience there in the mid-80s. I even remember the St Bernhard. Then went back about five years ago. It was awful! It was filled with strange people who didn't seem to be staying there. Our balcony had old mattresses on it. Too bad.

CHARLES BROOKS  
VIA E-MAIL

**More on Forsthaus Graseck**

Your article on the promotion via mass e-mail of a sub-standard hotel by the **Alpine Tourist Commission** highlights an important issue. Ever since most national tourist offices and other so-called nonprofit organizations promoting tourism destinations were compelled to increase their marketing budgets because government funding is no longer adequate, they promote anything and anybody willing to pay the price.

A lot of people, especially old-timers, believe these institutions still stand for total neutrality and should "endorse" only the most reliable properties. It seems only fair that these organizations clearly state that a promotion fee has been paid by destinations/properties/products.

FORMER TOURIST OFFICE EMPLOYEE  
VIA EMAIL

*(Ed. Note: The author of the above email is well-known to Gemütlichkeit but requested that her/his name be withheld.)*

**We Recommend**

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

**Berlin**

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

**Hotel Domus**, Uhländstrasse 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 Bristol**, Schauplatzstrasse 10, CH-3011, tel. +41/31/311 0101, fax 311 9479, email [reception@bristolbern.ch](mailto:reception@bristolbern.ch)

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

**Lausanne**

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

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

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

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

**Zürich**

**Hotel Florhof**, Florhofgasse 4, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. 41/01/261 4470, fax 261 4611, email: [info@florhof.ch](mailto:info@florhof.ch)

**Hotel Arlette**, Stampfenbachstrasse 26, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. +41/01/25 20 032, fax 25 20 932, email: [hotel.arlette@bluwin.ch](mailto:hotel.arlette@bluwin.ch)

**Frankfurt Airport**

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

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

**Hotel Dreieich**, Frankfurter Str. 49, Langen, D-63225, tel. +49/06103/91 50, fax 52 030. email: [hotel-dreieich@gmx.de](mailto:hotel-dreieich@gmx.de)

**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)