

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

The 'Cup' and Wolfie's Birthday

There are two big events this year in the part of Europe we cover: the World Cup of soccer/football in Germany and a massive observance of Mozart's 250th birthday in Austria. Elsewhere in this issue are some of our thoughts about the Mozart doings.

Based on e-mails and phone calls to our offices, the World Cup, a series of 64 soccer matches in 12 German cities between June 9-July 9, seems to be of greater interest; though that may be because it's limited to a 30-day period, whereas the hundreds of Mozart events are spread over the entire year.

Thus far, the hospitality and transportation industries have reacted to the world's biggest sporting event in predictable fashion: **Lufthansa** has declared the mid-May to mid-July period a "peak season" and raised fares even higher than their normal "high season" levels. Germany-based **Sixt** auto rental has instituted special, higher, rates during World Cup, and already soccer fans are hopping mad at German hotels that have dramatically boosted rates, some by as much as five times regular prices.

Entrance to the matches, of course, is another vital element. Tickets are being sold by FIFA (soccer's governing body) via an online lottery. Of course, thousands of them somehow find their way into the hands of "brokers" who charge far in excess of face value. I spoke to one reader who has already paid \$375 for each of three tickets to a first-round match involving the U.S. team.

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

GRAZ

Styria's provincial capital and Austria's second largest city combines Old World charm with a lively cultural scene, daring architecture and a special cuisine. By Tom Bross

There's much to like about Styria's not-too-big, not-too-small capital: youthful vitality, an eye-catching mix of old and new architecture, walkable dimensions, and an inner *Altstadt* featuring centuries-old courtyards, passageways, and notable historical landmarks. The easygoing, amiable Styrian lifestyle is appealing, too, as is the generally pleasant local climate—thanks to mountain ridges that shield Graz from inclement northerly weather conditions. This southern Austrian city's closeness to Slovenian and Hungarian borders augments its international flair.

Salzburg and Vienna may be overrun with visitors in the peak travel season, but a summertime visit

to Graz is ideal. Café and restaurant tables are set outdoors, Mediterranean-influenced weather prevails, and midyear festivals are on the agenda.

Crossroads of History

Initially documented in 1128, Graz remained barely more than a cluster of drowsy farmsteads until 1379, when Habsburg Duke Leopold III made the town his mini-capital. Municipal design and redevelopment was carried out by 16th-century Italian Renaissance artisans and architects; citizens concurrently withstood an Ottoman siege. Then came assaults and occupation (in 1797) by Napoleonic French forces.

Two centuries later, in 1999,
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So Much Mozart, So Little Time

How to experience the best of Mozart this year while avoiding peak season crowds

Mozart's 250th anniversary has Austria and neighboring countries in a frenzy of musical activity this year. If you go, you won't be alone, tagging along will be some 300,000 of your fellow Mozart appreciators. You'll have plenty of opportunities to hear his music and learn about his legacy, for there are more than 500 events planned in Salzburg alone. It's not just music either: there are films, lectures, museum exhibits, free street concerts and more. Naturally, good seats for performances by the major orchestras and opera companies in the top venues will carry high price tags, but many events will be free or inexpensive. The challenge will be choosing the Mozart activities that best fit your particular

itinerary and travel style. Here are some ideas to consider in your planning:

Salzburg/Vienna Alternatives

Since the overwhelming majority of Mozart events are scheduled for these two cities — and some of the best and most appealing will be in summer — the two towns are bound to be jammed with tourists. Prices for hotels and meals are also sure to be higher than anywhere else in Austria. So unless you like hot, expensive, and crowded, you might want to work around Vienna and Salzburg during July, August, and September.

During those warm months, plan
Continued on page 6...

Exchange rates as of 02/28/06

1 euro = \$1.19

1 Swiss franc = \$0.76

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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Such prices are fueled by press stories about a huge clamor for tickets. I'll concede that for some matches, the demand will far outstrip ticket availability. No doubt all games involving Germany, France, Italy, Spain, England, Brazil, and a few other teams are guaranteed sellouts. But Angola vs. Iran? Togo vs. Korea? U.S. vs. Ghana? I remain skeptical. If you watched any of the Winter Olympics from Turin or the summer games from Athens, you saw empty seats at most events, something that could happen this summer.

U.S. travelers headed for Germany this year seem to fall into two major categories: those desperate to see World Cup soccer matches — especially involving the U.S. team — and those who want to avoid the games and their attendant crowds and high prices. For this latter group, it's easy; just stay away during the June 9-July 9 period. If travel to Germany has to be during that period, don't go to the 12 Cup venue cities, especially on or around the dates when matches will be played (no city will host more than six matches).

There is actually a third category that includes those flexible souls who set off for Germany sans match tickets, but with the main goal of soaking up World Cup excitement and atmosphere, watching games on TV in convivial surroundings (the final in Berlin, incidentally, will be shown on

TV screens erected in some 16,000 churches throughout the country) and hoping to see a game or two.

(Interesting aside: the traveler who finds a good glass of German beer and a TV screen showing Cup matches will have one big advantage over fans inside the 12 stadiums. In what can only be characterized as an astounding, insensitive and stupid decision, FIFA has awarded the exclusive beer concession to the Anheuser Busch Company of St. Louis. That's right, fans attending the 64 World Cup matches in Germany, the greatest beer country in the world, are stuck with Budweiser.)

Based on conversations with soccer fans headed for Germany in June, there are two major concerns: getting tickets and finding hotel rooms. My advice regarding the former is not especially insightful: go to the FIFA website (fifaworldcup.yahoo.com) and enter the ticket lottery. Otherwise, pay scalpers' prices or go to Germany without tickets and search for them there. I predict, just like every past World Cup, that not all games will sell out and tickets for some matches will be available, probably up until game time.

Most complaints regarding unfair room rates are directed at city center hotels. The savvy traveler will avoid these artificially high prices by staying outside Cup venue cities in small, country hotels which are minimally affected by World Cup fever.

The country's efficient public transportation system and its vast inventory of overnight accommoda-

tions will undoubtedly make it possible for Cup goers to locate rooms at affordable prices within a 20- to 45-minute train ride, or car trip, of all 12 match sites.

So, how does one find *suitable* accommodations in these areas outside the venue cities? One way is to look at a map of Germany, choose a likely-looking small town, then do a Google search on the Internet for hotels in that town. Though that strategy will get you a list of hotels, it doesn't address the 'suitable' part of the problem. For that, you need a filter or a source you can trust; one familiar with the hotels and who knows which are the best and, more important, the best value. You might consult Tripadvisor.com, which posts reader reviews of hotels, but with the recent *New York Times* disclosure that some hotels employ shills to post favorable reviews, [Tripadvisor](http://Tripadvisor.com) became a source with a credibility problem. No, you'll want something a bit

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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 (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: **zarg** Password: **5023**

Vol. 20, No. 2
March 2006

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

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Gemütlichkeit (ISSN 10431756) is published 10 times each year by UpCountry Publishing, 288 Ridge Road, Ashland OR 97520. TOLL FREE: 1-800/521-6722 or 541/488-8462, fax: 541/488-8468, e-mail travel@gemut.com. Web site: www.gemut.com. Subscriptions are \$67 per year for 10 issues. While every effort is made to provide correct information, the publishers can make no guarantees regarding accuracy.

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

HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

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

Special Designation

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

GRAZ*Continued from page 1*

Graz got a major dose of prestige—when its central *Altstadt*, on the left side of River Mur promenades, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Styria's capital achieved additional stature as the 2003 European City of Culture.

Ascending the craggy, 474-meter (1,312-ft.) **Schlossberg** guarantees a panorama over the city's pinnacles, turrets, domes, and jumbled red-tile rooftops. Reach the top by climbing the zigzag, 260-step **Felsenseig** stairway, ride the modern glass elevator, or take the 1893 **Bergbahn** funicular. The high-altitude clock tower has been a civic symbol since the 13th century. Graz's former citadel also features the **Herbersteingarten** and, on the summit, **Aiola Café-Restaurant**. Passageways and casemates drilled into the rock became air-raid shelters during World War II.

Creative Impulses

Some 50,000 students at four in-town universities generate much youthful buzz. The **University of Music & Dramatic Arts** employs Europe's only full-time jazz faculty. Daredevil ideas get hatched at the **Graz School of Architecture**—enough to make the city fertile ground for striking old/new contrasts. Hartmut Skerbish's steel-frame **Light Sword** pokes high above the 19th-century Opera House (Austria's second-largest). An angular glass footbridge leads down to New York artist Vito Acconci's bizarre 2003 conception: the shell-shaped, steel-grid, translucent **Murinsel** (Island in the Mur), with a chic nightclub wrapped inside. Then came a Peter Cook-Colin Fournier collaboration that transformed the riverside **Grazer Kunsthaus** of contemporary art into a blue-skinned structure locals have nicknamed the "friendly alien." Passersby see swirling night-light patterns on its bloated exterior, which bristles with nozzles that illuminate gallery spaces, a museum shop, and a curvilinear café. Love it or hate it.

Primary Altstadt Attractions

Ah, but evocative Old World perspectives endure. Graz remains a city

Graz Basics**Population:** 240,278**Elevation:** 353 meters (1,158 feet)

Visitor Information: Graz Tourist Information, Herrngasse 16, 8010, Graz, tel. +43/316/807 50, fax 316/807 555, info@graztourismus.at, www.graztourismus.at. Austrian Tourist Office, 120 West 45th Street, New York NY 10036, tel. 212-944-6880, fax 212-730-4568, www.austria-tourism.at.

Flight Arrivals: Thalerhof Airport is in Feldkirchen, 15 km/9.3 miles south of the city center. Figure on €15 taxicab fare, or pay €1.70 by opting for a commuter train (10 minutes) or bus (25 minutes) into town.

Train Travel: Frequently scheduled OSS Austrian Railways trains arrive at and depart from Graz's main station (Hauptbahnhof) at Europaplatz, a walkable distance west of the mid-city riverfront via Annenstrasse. The nonstop southbound rail trip from Vienna's Südbahnhof takes 3.5 hours.

Driving Distances:

Salzburg	161 miles	257 km
Vienna	124 miles	200 km
Munich	248 miles	430 km
Zürich	460 miles	740 km
Milan	430 miles	690 km
Budapest	198 miles	320 km
Prague	292 miles	470 km

If you're driving, Austria's A2 and A9 Autobahns intersect on the southern outskirts of Graz, near the airport.

Best Buy: One-hour cash fare on the city-wide Grazer Strassenbahn trolley network costs €1.70. A 24-hour ticket is bargain-priced at €3.50, a 10-pack costs €13, or pay €8.70 for full-week use of the public transit system. Several lines converge at Jakominiplatz, the city's busiest trolley and bus junction.

Major Events:

Springsix Electronic Music Festival (techno-rock-pop): May 24–28

Graz Erzählt Storytelling Festival, May 27–June 5

Dance Summer (Opernhaus and Schauspielhaus), June 6–July 7

Graz Jazz Summer (annually since 1968), July 13–August 5

Steirischer Herbst (contemporary music, theater, film), September 29–October 15

Styriate Classical Music Festival (directed by Graz's own Nicholas Harnoncourt), June 6–July 30

Advent Christmas Market, November 26–December 24).

of hideaway inner courtyards and grand squares (**Freiheitsplatz**, **Tumlerplatz**, **Fäberplatz**), and alleys cutting through medieval buildings painted with heraldic frescoes. Stand amid food and flower stalls on the central **Hauptplatz** and gaze up at the late-19th-century **Rathaus**, steam-cleaned for City of Culture ceremonials three years ago. Typifying civic zeal for visual impact, giant multi-colored Advent-calendar numerals are projected onto the dome-topped edifice during each Christmas-market season. From that same vantage point, look in the opposite direction toward the thoroughly Baroque **Luegghaus**, its façade encrusted with elaborate stucco ornamentation.

Not to be missed: the Styrian parliamentary **Landhaus** with its arcaded, balconied, Italianate courtyard, a memorable setting for open-air concerts and Christmastime's Nativity ensemble of life-size ice sculptures. Step next door to enter the **Landeszeughaus**, 17th-century Inner Austria's principle armory, now amassing the world's largest collection of that era's weaponry and armor (for humans and horses), 30,000 items overall—plus period field artillery and military pipes and drums. Swing over to Hofgasse for a worthwhile peek into the courtyard of the late-Gothic **Burg**, another governmental building. Its **Wendeltreppe** is an unusual double-spiral staircase.

Shopping

Banners and colorful *Jugendstil* frontage make the **Kästner & Öhler** department store a Sackstrasse standout. You'll find an **English bookstore** on Tummelplatz; **Heimatwerk**, displaying Styrian handicrafts, literature, and clothing, is on the main Herrngasse shopping thoroughfare. Try on traditionally regional *Trachten* attire at **Seidl** (Schmiedgasse), **Rollet KG** (Murgasse), and **Gössl** (Landhausgasse). Don't ignore the narrower, store-lined alleys of the *Altstadt*, including the especially steep **Sporgasse**—plus **Franziskanergasse**, **Stubenberggasse**, **Stempfergasse**, and **Trauttmansdorffgasse**.

Out of Town

For a wellness sojourn in thermal-

springs terrain, head 60 kilometers (37 miles) south to **Rogner-Bad Blumau**, a spa complex designed in wild colors and contours by Austrian avant-gardist Friedenreich Hundertwasser (tel. +43/4285/815 10, fax 815 136, spa.blumau@rogner.com, www.blumau.com). Only 6 km (1.8 mi) due west of Graz, regally decorated and chandeliered, 17th-century **Schloss Eggenberg** houses the **Alte Galerie**, a topnotch repository of paintings ranging from early-medieval to late-Baroque periods (tel. +43/316/8017 9660, altegalerie@museum-joanneum.at, www.museum-joanneum.at).

LODGING

Contemporary Elegance Schlossberg Hotel

If you've a mind to splurge while visiting Graz, here's where you'll want to stay. Nestled against the eastern slope of its namesake hill and partially tucked into remnants of the medieval city walls, intimacy and understated luxury define this gem of a hotel topped by a roof-garden swimming pool. Timber beams overhang the carpeted lounge; aristocratic oil portraits adorn the walls; a corner bar warmed by a ceramic Biedermeier stove is a sociable gathering place. Stepping out the front door, guests find themselves on Sackstrasse's *Kunst Meile* of antiques shops, art galleries, and chic boutiques.

Consisting of three connected townhouses that were turned into four-star accommodations in 1971, the Schlossberg's interior niceties include contemporary artwork, arched/pillared corridors, skylit dining areas, and 50 spacious, individually decorated guestrooms with bright color schemes and tastefully elegant furnishings. Best of all, service is extraordinarily attentive.

Daily Rates: Singles €137–177, doubles €183–226.

Contact: Schlossberg Hotel, Kaiser-Franz-Josef Kai 30, 8020 Graz, tel. +43/316/8070, fax 316/8070 70, office@schlossberg-hotel.at, www.schlossberg-hotel.at.

Proprietor: Helmut Marko

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 17/20

Old World Views Das Weitzer

This prestigious four-star hotel, in business under the Weitzer family's ownership since 1910, overlooks the right bank of the Mur at a corner where the *Tegetthoffbrücke* connects this side of Graz with the Old Town district. Its 200 extra-large rooms have high ceilings with parquet floors, wall tapestries, white wooden shutters on tall double windows (which effectively muffle street noises), ample wardrobe space, and halogen light fixtures. White tiles surface bathroom walls; bathtubs are deep-sided with European-style shower fixtures.

There are antique armoires and sculpted busts in wide corridors. Buffet breakfasts each morning in Restaurant Cassarolle are major productions. Street-corner Café Weitzer emulates a Viennese coffee house, complete with creamy pastries.

Daily Rates: Singles from €135, doubles from €189

Contact: Das Weitzer, Grieskai 12-16, A-8020 Graz, tel. +43/316/7030, fax 316/7038 8,

hotel@weitzer.com,

www.weitzer.com

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 15/20

Top Location Hotel Erzherzog Johann

Rich in tradition, this 63-room outgrowth of a 16th-century inn became a Baroque-influenced hotel in 1852 and subsequently attained four-star stature. The location at the *Altstadt's* pivotal Sackstrasse/Murgasse juncture and across Hauptplatz from Graz's magnificently domineering town hall is unsurpassed.

Slanted glass ceiling panels filter soft daylight onto the Wintergarten restaurant, with its flourishing greenery; chief chef Konrad Leinweber oversees kitchen preparations. Also on the premises: a Jägerstüberl mini-tavern and a Viennese-style coffee house named the Anna Plochl Zimmer. Antique furnishings and decorative accessories, costly carpeting, and gilt-framed mirrors are touches of class in all guestrooms.

Daily Rates: Singles €99–140, doubles €155–220

Contact: Hotel Erzherzog Johann, Sackstrasse 3-5, A-8010 Graz, tel. +43/316/8116 16, fax 316/8111 5, office@erzherzog-johann.com, www.erzherzog-johann.com. Proprietors: Romana and Bernhard Reif-Breitwieser

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 15/20

Quiet Boutique Romantik Parkhotel Graz

Serenity prevails over this east-side section of Graz, where the hilly *Stadtpark* is surrounded by *Gründerzeit* and *Jugendstil* houses, along with Archduke Johann's 19th-century Palais Meran—now the city's influential University of Music and Dramatic Arts. It is just the right urbane setting for a four-star, 70-room boutique hotel. The building, dating to 1874, is ensconced in a yellow edifice with white trim. Vintage inlaid-wood furnishings fill the lobby, which also houses Café Florian and Restaurant Florian, in which chef Kurt Mörth plans the daily menu. The wine cellars of both restaurants are extensive, and Saturday-evening wine buffets have become regular Parkhotel events.

In addition to spacious and attractively decorated guestrooms, spa facilities (including an indoor pool and sauna) are on the premises. Another plus: an umbrella-shaded, flower-spangled, Biedermeier beer garden out back.

Daily Rates: Singles €92–130, doubles €162–182

Contact: Romantik Parkhotel Graz, Leonhardstrasse 8, 8010 Graz, tel. +43/316/3630 0, fax 316/3630 50, romantik@parkhotel-graz.at, www.romantik-parkhotel.at

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Authentic Rococo Hotel zum Dom

Built in 1775, in a tamed-down version of rococo, this was the Palais Inzaghi prior to its emergence a decade ago as a nontouristy, 28-room hotel. Its name refers to the nearby Dom, Graz's Gothic cathedral and mausoleum (entombment of Kaiser

Ferdinand II). The Bürgergasse location, slightly upslope from the *Altstadt Hauptplatz* hub, means guests are—at most—a 10- to 15 minute walk from all desirable points of interest, and even closer to the opera house.

Exposed beams, heavy stone columns, royal red carpeting, wrought-iron chandeliers, pastel walls, antique knickknacks, and stone floors in public areas reflect the hotel's Rococo origins. Archways curve gracefully over the main staircase, as well as doorways, bedroom ceilings and window recesses. Here and there, *Jugendstil* add-ons and locally-created ceramic artworks combine for an atmospheric mix.

This discreet place was one of Austrian stage and TV star Elfriede Ott's preferred hideaways. She gets credit for the idea of the hotel's signature delicacy: the big, round *Domkuppel Haustorte*, purveyed as a guests' keepsake (and dessert treat) for €6.60.

Daily Rates: Singles €85-92, doubles €165, roof-terrace suite €280

Contact: Hotel zum Dom, Bürgergasse 14, A-8010 Graz, tel. +43/316/8248 00, fax 316/8248 008, domhotel@domhotel.co.at, www.domhotel.co.at

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 17/20

Convenience on a Budget **Hotel Daniel**

An ideal, affordable choice if you want or need to be directly alongside Graz's Hauptbahnhof, though not your ordinary, frumpy railroad hotel. Following a top-to-bottom transformation by hip Berlin designer Werner Aisslinger, the boxy 1950s building reopened in June 2005 as a Best Western affiliate.

All 101 rooms have big windows, including lofts with balconies, and are furnished and appointed in functional modernistic style. Each features a unique, invigorating rain-dance shower. Surcharge for buffet breakfast: €9. Added attraction: a scooter park, where guests have access to four black Vespas, available for €15 half-day, €25 full-day.

Daily Rates: Singles €59-68, doubles

€68-79. Breakfast €9.

Contact: Hotel Daniel, Europaplatz 1, 8020 Graz, tel. +43/316/7110 80, fax 316/7110 85, hell0@hoteldaniel.com, www.hoteldaniel.com

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Budget Value

Comfort Hotel Drei Raben

On Graz's busiest (and tackiest) commercial shopping street, standing halfway between the railroad station and the inner-city riverfront, the Three Ravens does an adequate job of accommodating budget-minded travelers. Veneer furniture and orange-striped draperies and bed coverings decorate all 50 guestrooms. Up to five occupants can sleep comfortably in the top-floor family suite. Bathroom facilities were recently renovated; some are shower-only, others combine tub/shower.

Room rates include a breakfast buffet. For dining later in the day, a separately managed Wienerwald restaurant is on the Annenstrasse/Idlhofgasse street-corner intersection. The three-story building, dating from circa-1650, originally contained apartments for servants employed by former Grazer principedom's Eggenberg clan.

Daily Rates: Singles €61-78, doubles €96-117, family suite €137

Contact: Comfort Hotel Drei Raben, Annenstrasse 43, 8020 Graz, tel. +43/316/7126 86, fax 316/7159 596, dreiraben@viva.at, www.vivat.at/3raben

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 13/20

FOOD

Restaurants throughout Graz do justice to wholesome Steirisch cuisine, with its renditions of goulash, beef, lamb, pork, and regional versions of classic Austrian Schnitzels. You haven't truly experienced Styrian cuisine until you've had pumpkin-seed oil (*Kurbiskernöl*) sprinkled on your salad. *Knödel* dumplings add heft to meals, complemented by *Schwammerln* mushrooms and Schilcher and Zweigelt wines from local vineyards (hence the city's numerous *Buschenschänken* wine bars). Burenwurst, Debreziner, and Krainer sausages are fast-food favorites.

Landhaus-Keller

Arriving at an arched, lamplit entryway festooned with ribbons and curled ironwork, guests of the Landhaus-Keller proceed through one of *Altstadt's* many tunnels to reach a Styrian Renaissance courtyard used for warm weather. Inside Doris and Günther Huber's 1596 edifice—where a full suit of medieval armor guards the descending brick stairs—tables are set in random nooks and niches beneath reticulated cross-vaulted ceilings. Oil paintings portray knights and maidens.

Ponder the *Steireschnitzel*: a scallop of Styrian beef coated with roasted pumpkin seeds and served with parsley potatoes and dumplings in beef broth (€15.50), or a portion of grilled pork fillet layered with cream cheese and tomato sauce (€11-14.50). Worth adding to your entrée: black pudding dumplings (€9.50).

Contact: Landhaus-Keller, Schmiedgasse 9, A-8010 Graz, tel. +43/316/8302 76, fax 316/8302 766, mahlzeit@landhaus-keller.at, www.landhaus-keller.at

Rating: QUALITY 18/20, VALUE 17/20

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

Stainzerbauer

Another exemplary passageway-and-courtyard approach to an historic *Altstadt* establishment is managed to *gemütlich* perfection by Josef Pfeiffer, one of the best known and respected *maitre d's* in Graz. Old prints and engravings grace curved stone walls; sideboards are sturdy and rustic. High-sided dark-wooden booths with thick cushions make for quiet conversations amidst the midday commercial and political clientele.

Küchenchef Andreas Göllés and staff produce main dishes that include grilled chicken breast stuffed with *foie gras* and spinach leaves (€17.40) and a typically regional veal goulash and white-cheese pasta combination (€11.50). Other entrees include: grilled fillet of pike wrapped in ham on green cabbage in paprika sauce (€18.10) and ravioli stuffed with crayfish (€14.10).

Contact: Stainzerbauer, Bürgergasse 4, A-8010 Graz, tel. +43/316/8211 06, fax 316/8158 75, gasthaus@stainzerbauer.at, www.stainzerbauer.at

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 16/20

Stachen's Wirtschaft

Mingling with the locals in a neighborhood *Gasthaus* makes the experience of being in any Austrian city or town all the more memorable. This is precisely such a place—on the right bank of the Mur, two short blocks beyond Augarten parkland. In a show of kitschy abandon, leftover whatnots dangle from the rafters: bicycles, skis, toy airplanes, bird cages, milk cans, luggage, signal lanterns, and a kid's rocking horse. Old books fill a corner shelf; tin signs and crocheted lampshades round out the scene. Soups are homemade; Graz-brewed Puntigammer beer is on tap. Daily lunch and dinner specials (€7.70–11.90) typify no-frills tavern fare.

Contact: Stachen's Wirtschaft, Radetskystrasse 20, A-8010 Graz, tel. +43/316/8025 82, fax 316/8025 824

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20

Mayers

At a corner on artsy Sackstrasse, architect Günther Domenig plunked

a glass cube atop an angular concrete office building. Developers instantly saw its potential as a third-story restaurant with terrific views—and so we have Mayers, a tempting alternative to Graz's venerable subterranean eating and drinking establishments. Daytime and evening panoramas are indeed impressive, with the Schlossberg's clock tower looming in the near distance. Tables are set on the roof deck for dining during mild-weather.

Adventurous cooks mix Austrian staples with international fare. For instance: prawn-curry with bamboo and rice (€19.80); lamb with carrots, fennel, couscous, and pine nuts (€15.20); roasted beast of duck with chili and chocolate sauce, and mango thyme corn stew (€16.10). Asian-style tuna dishes (€19.80) are recommendable, too.

Contact: Mayers Restaurant, Sackstrasse 29, 8010 Graz, tel. +43/316/8133 91, fax 316/8141 91, restaurant@mayers.cc, www.mayers.cc

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 14/20

Gösser Bräu


Gösser Bräu offers fundamental brewery-eatery zestiness, in a down-to-earth, informal, and amiable setting. It is located a few blocks from the river's left bank, with *Altstadt* landmarks and the Schlossberg in a northerly direction. Try the *Gösserschnitzel* with ham, mushrooms, and cranberries (€8.70), or deep-fried *Backhendl* (chicken) with spinach and herb-flecked potatoes (€6.90). The cooks also turn out a hearty Gössergulasch, accompanying it with potatoes, Frankfurter, cucumber, and fried egg for a heaping but inexpensive dinner (€7.90).

Appetizer, soup, and dessert menus are extensive, and the chance to choose among half a dozen different kinds of smooth Gösser beers goes without saying.

Contact: Gösser Bräu, A-8010 Graz, Neutorgasse 48, tel. +43/316/8299 09, fax 316/8299 092, office@goesserbraeu-graz.at, www.goesserbraeu-graz.at

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 17/20

Konditorei Favorites

Like their German neighbors, Austrians of a certain age always seem to find time to sit and schmooze in a *Konditorei*, best defined as a modest-sized pastry café—part bakery, part coffee house—exemplifying old-time ambience and easygoing tempo. Every city and town has its proportionate share, and Graz is no exception. In 1896, at **Strehly** (Sporgasse 12-14), master confectioner Josef Strehly created a snack treat called the *Grazer Schlossbergkugel*, reminiscent of a Styrian cannon ball that crashed through the bake shop's window during a 16th-century Ottoman siege. Established in 1569, **Edegger-Tax** (Hofgasse 8) sports a wooden, lovingly preserved neo-Baroque façade. A golden double eagle over the arched doorway signifies its imperial Habsburg-era *Hofbäckerei* legacy. 

MOZART 2006

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to visit lesser-known destinations like Graz, or popular cities that travelers may not associate with Mozart, such as Prague or Berlin. Prague, in particular, has a full lineup of concerts, exhibitions, music festivals, and operas listed at www.mozartprague2006.com. The top-flight **Czech Philharmonic Orchestra**, for example, will perform Mozart throughout the year.

Discover Mozart family roots in the **Salzkammergut**, where festivities will focus on Mozart in his youth, April 29 – October 28. Visit www.mozartfestival.org for details. Or attend one of four Mozart performances scheduled at the **Baroque Stiftstheater** in Lambach, May 6 – December 2. Visit www.barocktheater-lambach.at for dates and ticket info.

Innsbruck is another promising alternative: The 30th annual **Innsbruck Festival Weeks**, July 11 – Aug. 26, will feature a “raw and modern” interpretation of *Don Giovanni*, as well as a rarely seen performance of the opera *Il re pastore*. Visit www.altemusik.at for tickets. If you go, check out two sights that Mozart frequented: **Count Kuenigl's Palace** (Maria Theresien Strasse 38) and **Count Spaur's Palace** (Maria Theresien Strasse 29).

Baden, near Vienna, has a year-long schedule of Mozart music presented by the **Sinfonetta** and the **Lower Austria Tonkünstler Orchestra**. In addition, his Masses are planned on church holidays, and on June 17 the *Ave verum corpus* will be performed in St. Stephan's parish church, where it was first heard more than 200 years ago.

From May 1st through November 5, in memory of his visits there, Mozart's music will be performed in the park of the great **Abbey at Melk**.

The **Linz Harmonices mundi Chamber Orchestra** has scheduled a series of eight concerts, including the famed *Requiem* in the town cathedral on December 5.

Buy in advance

Many Mozart events and festivals are free, but it's wise to reserve now for performances at any of the major concert venues in Austria, including the **Vienna State Opera** (www.wienerstaatsoper.at), Vienna's **Volksoper** (www.volksoper.at) and the **Salzburg Festival** (www.mozart2006.at).

Be flexible

There are many ways to experience the music of Mozart, so if your first choice is sold out, consider adjusting your travel times or destinations. This month, the **Mozarteum Orchestra** and **Salzburg Chamber Soloists** begin a series of 29 weekend concerts that run through November. With these and other events scheduled through year-end, it should not be too difficult to plan around the busiest travel times.

Free stuff

There will be plenty of ways to experience Mozart without buying expensive concert tickets.

• **Surprise Vienna concerts:** Chamber music ensembles of young musicians will play spontaneous, unannounced concerts at various locations throughout Vienna, including public parks such as the Burggarten, Türkenschanzpark, and the Papstwiese, as well as at the MuseumsQuartier, Volkspark, and Kurpark Oberlaa. The players will be Vienna-based professional musicians.

• **Vienna's Mozart "Hotspots":** Some 50 locations, mostly in the city center, have been designated as having historical connections to the composer's life. Each is marked by an information kiosk or pillar of "memorable" design, and both audio and visual information is available. The stations are listed in chronological order from October 6, 1762 to December 5, 1791, and even beyond to include Mozart memorials.

• **Calling Mozart:** Visitors can obtain information about the significance of each Mozart "hotspot" via cell phone or a rented audio guide. The information may also be downloaded in MP3 format at www.callingmozart.at. More information about this program, maps of the hot spots, as well as audio guide rental is available at the **Wiener Mozartjahr 2006 Infocenter** on Herbert-von-Karajan-Platz near the Vienna State Opera.

• **Mozart movies in Salzburg:** A series of films, mostly his operas including *The Magic Flute*, *Don Giovanni*, and *The Marriage of Figaro*, will be shown late-July to mid-August on Salzburg's Kapitalplatz, near the Dom, in the *Altstadt*. Of special interest: the 1982 film, *The Magic Flute for Children* and the 1999 *Memorial Concert Herbert von Karajan*.

Mix it up

In an extraordinary undertaking, this summer the **Salzburg Festival** will perform all 22 of Mozart's operas. Remember, however, that he composed much more than opera, and there are different interpretations of each of his works. To experience the many dimensions of Mozart, combine a traditional performance with an avant garde one; an opera with a symphony; or a well-known concert hall with a smaller venue. For example, check the events calendar at www.mozart2006.net for chamber music performances at the **St. Peter-Bezirk** or **Franziskanerkirche** in Salzburg.

It's more than the music

For more context, you might also add a museum or lecture to your itinerary—such as the **Mozarthaas** or

the **Austrian National Library**, both in Vienna.

Better yet, combine culture and outdoor activity with a bike ride along part of the 400-km **Mozart Cycle Path**. The route is marked with Mozart signs and passes through parts of Salzburg, Chiemgau, and Berchtesgaden, connecting places of historic significance to Mozart and his family.

Get in a Mozart frame of mind

Read up a bit on "Wolfie," listen to his music, and rent a DVD of *Ama-deus*, the film version of his life in Vienna (shot on location in Prague), with, of course, the greatest soundtrack of all time.

Find more info here:

www.wienmozart2006.at

www.mozart2006.at

www.mozartprague2006.com

Salzburg Hotels

Gasthof Auerhahn, A-5020 Salzburg, Bahnhofstrasse 15, tel. +43/0662/451052, fax 451052-3. Proprietor: Family Pongratz

Hotel Jedermann, Rupertgasse 25, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. 0662/87 32 41-0, email office@hotel-jedermann.com Proprietor: Walter Gmachi

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

Markus Sittikus, A-5020 Salzburg Markus-sittikus-Strasse 20, tel. +43/0662/87 1121-0, fax 87 1121-58, email markus-sittikus@austria.at. Proprietor: Wolfgang Sigl

Hotel Struber, Nonntaler Hauptstrasse 35, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/0662/84 92 74, fax 84 37 288.

Hotel Trumer-Stube, A-5020 Salzburg Bergstrasse 6, tel. +43/0662/87 46 66, fax 87 43 26, email hotel.trumer-stube.sbg@eunet.at. Proprietor: Family Hirschbichler

Hotel Wolf, Kaigasse 7, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/0662/84 34 530, fax 8424234.

Vienna Hotels

Altstadt Vienna, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, email hotel@altstadt.at, Web: www.altstadt.at

Pension Aviano, Marco-D'Aviano-Gasse 1, tel. +43/01/512 83 30, fax 512 83 30 6, email aviano@pertschy.com, Web: www.pertschy.com

Hotel Römischer Kaiser, Annagasse 16, Vienna A-1010, tel +43/01/512 77 51 0, fax +43/01/512 77 51 13, email info@rkhote.bestwestern.at, Web: www.bestwestern-ce.com/roemischerkaiser

Starlight Suite Hotel am Salzgries, tel. +43/01/535 92 22, fax 535 92 22 11, email reservations@starlighthotel.co.at, Web: www.starlight.com



DEAR SUBSCRIBER*Continued from page 2*

more reliable than glowing reports written by five of the hotel manager's best friends.

There's really only one solution: the 2006 *Michelin Red Guide for Germany*. Let's say you want to see the U.S. vs. Ghana match on June 22 in Nürnberg but don't want to pay the €188, 14-day advance purchase price the **Holiday Inn City Centre** was asking in late February. Instead, you open the guide to map page 50 in back of the book and look for blue symbols signifying "good accommodations at moderate prices." A bit northeast of Nürnberg you spot what you're looking for at the town of Lauf an der Pegnitz. Now, you turn to that town's alphabetical listing in the main part of the book on page 838, where you'll find the blue symbol beside the 40-room **Hotel Zur Post** (reservierung@hotelzurpost-lauf.de). It has a restaurant serving full meals from €14 to €27, and its best double rooms rent for €87 or about \$103. You also note the town has 210 inhabitants, a restaurant in the Rathaus, and is 20 kilometers (13 miles) from Nürnberg. A quick check of transportation options at www.bahn.de shows regular and frequent S-Bahn service to the center of Nürnberg. The trip takes 23 minutes. Using the hotel's e-mail address in Michelin, you send an inquiry and next day receive a reply with a quote of €89 per night. Obviously, this is a hotel that has not raised its prices for World Cup and has rooms available. Finally, you take a look at the hotel's website (hotelzurpost-lauf.de), are impressed by what you see, and confirm the booking with a credit card. You now have a headquarters for your Nürnberg World Cup match.

This is a process that can be duplicated for the remaining 11 World Cup cities. We looked at a handful of other close-in hotels and found much the same story. One near Munich, the 30-room **Hotel Neuwirt** (info@hotelneuwirt.de), in the village of Zorneding, 28 minutes by train from the Munich Hauptbahnhof, tells us their best double room during the 'Cup' is at the Oktoberfest rate of €98 instead

of the normal €82.

For travelers armed with the 2006 *Michelin Red Guide for Germany* (20% off at www.travelessentials.com), finding good hotels at attractive prices shouldn't be a problem, even during the World Cup.

A ticket to the July 9 final in Berlin? Mmm, that's a different story.—RHB ☒

Readers' Forum**Winter in the Bodensee**

On the final few days of our trip to the Bodensee, we visited Schaffhausen and can reconfirm your past recommendation of the **Hotel Park Villa**. In addition to pleasant service and a wonderfully quirky room in a quiet location, we also found that they have an excellent restaurant. As with any good restaurant in Switzerland, one must draw a deep breath before drawing deeply on the credit card, but the food (and service from our "waiter," who turned out to be owner Max Schlumpf) was excellent.

Across the park (the one in the name of the hotel), we also found another excellent restaurant, the **Restaurant Schaffhauserhof**, owned and run by Rolf and Dorothea Böhi. Rolf runs the kitchen and Dorothea runs the pleasant and inviting dining room. They specialize in seafood, especially Bodensee-food. Our meal for two, coincidentally, cost almost the same as the one at Park Villa: CHF 129.40 for two with wine by the glass vs. CHF 129.80 at Park Villa with a bottle of local Pinot Noir.

LARRY DEYOUNG
VIA E-MAIL

Multicountry Tour

We have just returned from a three-and-a-half-week trip through Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Switzerland, and have some comments on hotels and restaurants. First, if you are planning to pick up a rental car in one location and return it elsewhere, do not trust an Internet service to arrange the rental. Double check by phone or some other method that the car can actually be returned at the desired location. We reserved through Expedia for pick up in Frankfurt and drop off in Stuttgart. Expedia did not tell us the rental of-

vice was off-airport, (in Morfelden), nor did Expedia know the car could not be dropped off in Stuttgart. The closest office was in Munich. As in many situations in life, money resolved the issue, and we left the car parked in the lot in front of the Mercedes Benz new car delivery center.

For a first night or last night using the Frankfurt airport, I have two additional recommendations to the **Hotel Dreieich** on the Darmstadt highway. One, the least expensive and with no atmosphere but clean rooms and reasonable prices, is the **Holiday Inn Express**. It is right on the Morfelden/Langen exit of the A5 Autobahn and is convenient, with easy access to downtown Frankfurt and the airport. Note: Ask for a room at the back of the hotel, as the front rooms overlook the Langen/Morfelden/Rüsselsheim highway and it can be quite noisy at night.

The second, and I think best option in the area, is the **Landhotel Mönchbruchmühle**, located halfway between Morfelden and Rüsselsheim on the Morfelden/Rüsselsheim highway, B486. It is located just to the south of the airport in a rural woodland setting, with walking paths and riding paths available for wandering in the forest. The restaurant is excellent, and the beer garden can be lively on a warm summer night. This hotel offers a quiet, cool environment for a first or last night in Germany with 15-minute access to the airport. This is an old hotel with a pleasant, traditional feeling to either welcome you, or leave you with a memory of Old World charm before departure.

CHARLES GAETZE
VIA E-MAIL

Vienna Altstadt Update

I just surfed the Internet and saw your article on us. You may want to let readers know that we now have a new breakfast room, and the new private suite, with two sleeping rooms has also a huge bathroom. In early 2006, we will add nine rooms and air-condition the hotel, working with the famous Italian architect Matteo Thun. We've also got Aveda amenities.

OTTO E. WIESENTHAL
HOTEL ALTSTADT, VIENNA ☒