

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

Answering Your Travel Questions

There's a rather tired allegorical tale we've all heard. It goes something like "give a man fish and you have fed him for a day; but teach him to fish and you have fed him for a lifetime" (and you can also sell him fishing equipment). So this month, let's talk about "fishing."

It's a time of year when our small staff at *Gemütlichkeit* gets a lot of questions from folks planning trips. These queries come by phone and many more via e-mail through our website. Most are from nonsubscribers and not very specific — "I'm going to Germany, do you have any suggestions for hotels, restaurants, and sights?" Well, um, yes, it's called *Gemütlichkeit*. Others — "we are driving from Füssen to Berchtesgaden, what should we see along the way?" — are more to the point but require lengthy replies that often entail research. Unfortunately, we're not in a position to respond to all these queries. We try to assist paid subscribers and travel buyers — if we can quickly provide a hotel recommendation or the price of gas, we're happy to help — but if the answer requires research, about the best we can do is schedule a trip planning consultation. Yes, there's a charge, but I can assure you it will be money well spent.

The answers to most of the questions we hear are easily found, one just has to know where to look. A good part of our days is spent seeking travel information from maps, books, and the Internet. It's not, as they say, brain surgery; anyone can do it. Here's a list of our MFAQs (most frequently asked questions), each with a short synopsis of where

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

BERLIN UPDATE '06

In a mere 16 years, heavy doses of sweat and euros have restored Germany's dynamic capitol to its former place in the front rank of Europe's great cities.

Whether it is one of Europe's great travel destinations probably depends how you define that term. Though it may lack Rome's antiquities, London's sophistication, and the romance of Paris, no other European city can match its risk-taking, cutting-edge style, its extraordinary contemporary architecture, or its ability to get the visitor in touch with some of the 20th century's most significant events.

Of course, we are talking about Berlin, a town that in just 16 years has undergone the municipal equivalent of a face-lift, tummy-tuck, liposuction and multiple organ transplants. It seems only yesterday that it was two cities, one dispirited and crumbling,

the other vital and lively but hemmed in by concrete, barbed wire, and armed watchtowers. Traces of the divided city can still be found, but they are fast disappearing.

In 2006, Berlin is a city of cultural as well as urban renewal, with frequent openings of new and restored museums, monuments, and institutions. About to go fully online is the spectacular, glass-canopied, multi-level **Lehrter Bahnhof**, said to be Europe's largest transportation hub, able to handle nearly a quarter of a million passengers daily. Last year's most significant addition to the long list of Berlin must-see destinations was the haunting Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, a short

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Index Compares Hotel Costs

A travel-savvy friend, just returned from London, used the word "breathtaking" to describe the hotel rates he encountered there. His comment reminded us that hotel room costs are an important consideration when it comes to deciding which cities and countries to visit. Our friend's remarks also spurred us to do some analysis on the prices of hotel rooms in our three countries. To get a better fix on the relative cost of accommodations we have devised a simple index.

Our low-tech cost comparison method uses rates published in the *Michelin Red Guides* to create tables that show average prices for double rooms in three-star hotels in 11 major European cities, 30 cities in Germany, and 25 in Switzerland. Since there is

no Michelin red guide for Austria, we could not include it in our index, although Vienna is listed in Michelin's *Main Cities Guide*, which allowed us to include it in the major cities list.

Michelin uses the outline of a building to symbolize the various hotel categories it rates. One with five roof peaks is top of the line, five-star, while double and single roof symbols usually denote three-star accommodations. Within those categories, Michelin lists properties in order of preference. For each city indexed, we chose the first six hotels with two roof peaks listed in Michelin. If there were fewer than six we used hotels with the single roof peak symbol.

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Exchange rates as of 05/02/2006
1 euro = \$1.26
1 Swiss franc = \$0.81

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and how we search for answers.

Can you recommend a hotel in....? The number one MFAQ. First, check the hotel database at www.gemut.com. It lists over 900 properties we've personally inspected. Currently there are no descriptions in the database, but most have links to the hotel's website and/or are described in the archives (remember, you'll need the latest login ID and password — nbrl and 6710 this month — to access this info).

A wonderful hotel source we use every day is the *Michelin Red Guide* series. These books are available at www.travelessentials.com for 20-percent off, and when it comes to Europe travel, you won't make a smarter investment. Use the maps in the back of the book to pinpoint the best hotels and the best value hotels, but keep in mind Michelin only lists properties it recommends.

If you don't want to buy the book, most of the hotels Michelin rates can be found at www.viamichelin.com.

I would not rely too much on user-review websites like Tripadvisor, Expedia, or Fodor's. Many hotels have admitted offering incentives for positive reviews. On the other hand, joining an e-mail listserv of European travelers, such as Idyllchat (sign up at www.untours.com), is a good way to get travel advice from peers and share hotel finds.

Remember, many European hotels can be booked at www.gemut.com (click Hotel Bookings).

How long a drive is it from A to B?

How far is it from A to B?

What is there to see along the way?

For those who have Internet access, the answer to how far and how long is a snap. There are several websites, including www.mapblast.com and www.mapquest.com, that can quickly provide the basic info. The leading choice, however, is www.viamichelin.com. This is one of the Internet's most useful travel websites and an essential resource for the European auto traveler. Under Driving Directions simply enter your point A and point B cities and countries and click Ok. There isn't enough room here to fully describe the information provided by this process, but we'll hit some of the highlights.

First, Viamichelin asks if you want the shortest route, the quickest route, or the route recommended by Michelin. The product of the search is a map, plus a graphic display of the route with road types and route numbers, distances and driving times, and even the estimated cost of fuel for the trip. The user can zoom in on the route map for more detail or zoom out for more perspective. In addition to the overall map, the graphic route display contains links to segment maps showing where the route turns or changes to a different highway. All maps are "zoomable."

At the end of the graphic you can

click on the Hotels at Destination link to see a list of hotels; each with a photo, brief description in English, star rating, price, etc. All hotels are spotted on an accompanying map, making it easy for the user to see where they are in relation to the rest of the town or city.

Another useful link is Tourist Sight. Clicking it in a Frankfurt-Rothenburg search yields a list of 30 churches, monuments, castles, and museums, all spotted on a map of the region. There is a description, address, and a map for each sight. Since the sights shown are primarily at the destination, not along the route, you may want to do a series of searches between your departure city and towns along your overall route.

How much is gas in Europe?

Not so easy to find. When we launch the new www.gemut.com in about 30 days, we plan to show the current price of gasoline in Germany

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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: **nbrl** Password: **6710**

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

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

Special Designation

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

BERLIN '06*Continued from page 1*

distance from the Brandenburg Gate.

Berlin is also a place of vast parks and waterways, nonstop nightlife, Germany's best shopping, and the finest and most varied cuisine of any city in our three countries. Best of all, its hotels and restaurants are priced lower than any major city in western Europe.

You may, however, want to avoid the city during World Cup time — June 9 to July 9 — especially during the final the week of July 9.

Here's a roundup of our suggestions for sights, hotels and restaurants.

Getting Around

Berlin is big and spread out. Plan to rely on its excellent rail and bus system. The **Berlin WelcomeCard** offers unlimited transportation for one adult and up to three children under 14, plus a discount of 25 percent or more to 120 cultural and sightseeing attractions. The 48-hour card is €16 and the 72-hour version costs €22. Sold at most train platforms.

A cheap, easy way to get to many Berlin sights is via the double-decker #100 bus that goes from the Bahnhof Zoo station to Alexanderplatz in the *Mitte*. It runs frequently, enabling sightseers to get on and off along the way at such attractions as the Kaiser-Wilhelm Memorial Church, the Siegesssäule (Victory Column), the Tiergarten, Bellevue castle, the Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate, the Deutsche Staatsoper and St. Hedwigs Cathedral. Ride free with the Berlin WelcomeCard.

Sights, Activities

To give Berlin a fair shake, you'll need at least three full days. The following list of things to see is far from complete; we've left out dozens worthy of your time: **Charlottenburg Palace**, the **Reichstag**, **Brandenburg Gate**, the **Gendarmenmarkt**, the **Tiergarten**, the **Zoo**, the **Transport and Technical Museum**, the **Olympic Stadium**, the **Airlift Memorial**, the **Dahlem Museums**, Berlin's rivers and lakes, and more.

• **Potsdamer Platz:** In the futuristic outdoor atrium, beneath the Sony

Berlin Basics

Population: 3,373,000

Elevation: 40 meters (131 feet)

Tourist Information: Berlin Tourism Marketing North American, Convention & Visitors Bureau, tel. 818-385-0631, fax 818-385-0632, berlintourimpr@adelphia.net, www.berlin-tourist-information.com

In Berlin:

Europa Center, Budpester Str.
Brandenburg Gate, south wing
Tegel Airport, opposite Gate 0
KaDeWe, Reisecenter, ground floor

Driving Distances:

Dresden	123 miles	193 km
Frankfurt	337 miles	539 km
Hamburg	182 miles	291 km
Munich	365 miles	584 km
Prague	219 miles	350 km
Vienna	422 miles	675 km

Boat Trips: A large choice of excursions is available on the Havel, Wannsee, Tegeler See, Spree, Möggelsee, Landwehrkanal, Dahme and other Berlin waterways.

Wassertaxi-Stadtrundfahrten does one hour trips from Zeughaus/Dom. Contact: tel. +49/030/65 88 02 03, www.berlinerwassertaxis.de.

Stern und Kreis offer a variety of boat tours. Contact: tel. +49/030/53 63 60-0, www.sternundkreis.de, info@sternundkreis.de

building's lofty dome, it's hard to imagine that early in the 20th century this ground was Berlin's Times Square, and just a few years ago was a vacant lot in no-mans-land between the two Berlins.

• **Kurfürstendamm:** This wide, tree-shaded boulevard is a fascinating stroll day or night and Berlin's best shopping street.

• **KaDeWe's Food Floor:** Europe's largest food hall: 400 kinds of bread; 1,200 varieties of sausage, bacon, and ham; 1,300 cheeses, and dozens of places to have lunch. A magnificent display of food and drink. Tauentzienstr. 21-24

• **Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe:** On the site of Hitler's chancellery, a block south of the Brandenburg Gate, this unique monument effectively communicates, without explanatory signage, a sense of unease and loss.

• **Topography of Terror:** There are only remnants of the foundation of the former Gestapo and SS head-

quarters. Powerful, nonetheless. Niederkirchnerstrasse 8

• **Soviet Memorial:** Dedicated to the Soviet soldiers lost in the 1945 Battle of Berlin. Before 1989, every Western tour bus was required to stop at this outlandish but moving monument in Treptow Park. The soldiers' remains rest in mass graves around the principal monument. Under terms of the unification, Germany continues to maintain this and other Soviet memorials on German soil.

• **Mercedes Welt am Salzuffer:** Yes, it's a new car showroom, but probably unlike any you've ever seen. The five-story, steel and glass, atrium-style building encloses two restaurants, a private club with indoor climbing wall and racquet ball courts, and, of course, all those gleaming Mercedes Benz cars, new and rare vintage models; some suspended by long cables from overhead steel girders. Enjoy a wurst and a beer while watching CNN on high-definition TV in the informal main floor restaurant. Salzuffer 1, off Strasse des 17. Juni, near the Tiergarten S-Bahn station

• **Jewish Museum:** The focus here is not on the Holocaust, as one might assume, but on Jewish life in Germany. Plan for at least half a day and don't, as we did, spend too much time on the early exhibits. There is much to see and you can wear yourself out before you've been through half of it. Museum personnel are extraordinarily helpful. Expect security measures upon entry. There is an excellent, reasonably-priced restaurant. Admission is inexpensive: €5 for adults and €2.5 for seniors. Lindenstrae 9-14, +49/030/25993 300, fax 25993 409, info@jmberlin.de, www.juedisches-museum-berlin.de

• **Checkpoint Charlie Museum:** Not-to-be-missed documentation of the history of the Berlin Wall and the many East-to-West escape attempts. One of the few sections of the Wall still standing can be reached from here via Zimmerstrasse. Checkpoint Charlie Museum, 43-44 Friedrichstrasse. Admission €9.5, students €5.5 (25 percent discount with WelcomeCard), www.mauermuseum.de

• **More Museums:** No one should miss the **Pergamon** and its thousands-of-years-old antiquities, the most spectacular being the Pergamon Altar and the Ishtar Gate.

See Raphaels and Vermeers at the **Gemäldegalerie** and then go next door on the same entrance ticket to view far-out modern stuff in the **Neue Nationalgalerie**.

Movie-goers will enjoy the **Berlin Film Museum** in the Sony Center at Potsdamer Platz. The Marlene Dietrich exhibit, which changes every six months, is part of the larger Dietrich collection of some 3,500 items.

• **Friedrichstadtpalast:** This surprisingly spectacular Las Vegas-style revue in the *Mitte* is a pleasant leftover from communist times, when tickets rewarded favored party apparatchiks. There are acrobats, a full orchestra, singers, dancers, opulent costumes, and elaborate stagecraft that includes a retractable, mermaid-filled glass swimming pool arising from the center of the stage. Even the cheap seats have good sightlines. Friedrichstrasse 107, tel. +49/030/23 26 23 26, fax 23 26 23 23, tickets@friedrichstadtpalast.de

• **Ballhaus Mitte**, an atmospheric, chandeliered ballroom in a prewar building in the *Mitte*, delivers the sort of entertainment Berlin is famous for. This off-beat restaurant/night club serves dinner with a variety of live music. Depending on when you're there, it could be Argentine Tango, American Swing, or Vienna *lieder* (songs). The Pasta Opera, scheduled about once a month (more frequently in summer), combines a multi-course Italian dinner with popular operatic arias sung by costumed performers (see video clips at www.pastaopera.de). Ballhaus Mitte, Auguststr. 24, www.ballhaus.de

• **Loxx Miniatur Welten Berlin** claims to be the largest model railway in the world. Computer-operated trains, trams, cars, trucks, buses, and even airplanes, relentlessly move through a vast scale model of the city of Berlin laid out over a 2,500 square meter space. The landscape presents hundreds of familiar scenes and buildings, including the Reichstag,

20 Examples of Great Post-Wall Architecture

The period 1990 to 2006 brought the world's leading architects and builders to Berlin. Here, in our opinion, are 20 of the best examples of their work.

1. **Apartment houses**, Nöldnerstrasse 1, 6-7, Werner Wöber, 1996
2. **Sony Area of Potsdamer Platz**, Potsdamer Platz/Bellevuestrasse, Helmut Jahn, 2000
3. **Reichstag Dome**, Scheidemannstrasse/Ebertstrasse, Sir Norman Foster, 1999
4. **Interior DZ-Bank Haus**, Pariser Platz 3, Frank O Gehry, 2000
5. **British Embassy**, Wilhelmstrasse, Michael Wilford, 2000
6. **Office, Residential & Commercial Buildings**, Linkstrasse, Sir Richard Rogers, 1998
7. **German Museum of Technology**, Trebbiner Strasse 10-15, Ulrich Wolff, Helge Pitz, 2001
8. **Jewish Museum**, Lindenstrasse 14, Berlin-Kreuzberg, Daniel Libeskind, 1999
9. **Austrian Embassy**, Tiergartenstrasse 12-14/Stauffenbergstrasse 1-3, Hans Hollein, 2000

10. **Ku'damm-Eck**, Kurfürstendamm 227-228/Joachimstaler Strasse, von Gerkan, Marg & Partner, 2001
11. **Ku' 70**, Kurfürstendamm 70, Helmut Jahn, 1994
12. **Estrel Residence Hotel**, Sonnenallee 225, Hennes + Tilemann, 1995
13. **Residential and Commercial Buildings**, Brunnenstrasse 111, Josef Paul Kleihues, 1998
14. **Baumschulweg Crematorium**, Baumschulweg, Berlin-Treptow, Axel Schultes, 1998
15. **Quarter Schützenstrasse**, Schützen/Markgrafen/Zimmer/Charlottenstrasse, Aldo Rossi, 1997
16. **Quartier 206**, Friedrichstrasse 71-74, Pei, Cobb, Freed & Partners, 1996
17. **German Historic Museum**, I. M. Pei with Eller + Eller, 2003
18. **Marie-Elisabeth Lüders-Haus**, Schiffbauerdamm, Stephan Braunfels, 2004
19. **Mercedes Welt**, Salzufer 1, near Tiergarten S-Bahn, Lamm, Weber, Donath, 2000
20. **Swimming-and Bikingstadium**, Landsberger Allee, Paul-Heyse-Strasse, Dominique Perrault, 1997

the Brandenburg Gate, Alexanderplatz TV tower, the Zoologischer Garden, Hackescher Markt, railway stations, airports, harbor installations, military facilities, and, of course, dozens of streetcars, regional and long-distance trains, steam trains, high-speed ICE (Intercity-Express) trains, as well as a computer-controlled motor traffic system with cars, trucks and busses. Adult admission is €7.5, €4 for children 9-14, and €2 for kids under 9. Meinekestrasse 24 (Passage), info@loxx-berlin.de, www.loxx-berlin.de

Bike and Walking Tours

The flat topography of Berlin is well-suited to bicycling. The routes traveled by **Fat Tire Bike Tours** are almost exclusively on bike paths and roads with less traffic. Guides are native English speakers. Fat Tire offers a 4.5-hour City Tour that includes most of the major sights including the Reichstag, Soviet War Memorial, Potsdamer Platz, Unter den Linden, Hitler's Bunker, Topography of Terror, Brandenburg Gate, parks, beer gardens, and more. The Wall Tour focuses on the city's Cold War history, and enhances the visited locations with tales of escape and

espionage. Cost including bike, insurance, and guide is €20 for adults and €17 for seniors and students. Reservations not necessary, just show up. Tours start under the giant TV tower at Alexanderplatz. If you want a bike but no tour, rentals are €7 for a half-day and €12 for a full day. Fat Tire Bike Tours, Panorama Strasse 1a, tel. +49/030/24 04 79 91, info@fattiretoursberlin.com, www.fattiretoursberlin.com

Original Berlin Walks offers theme-based tours, all in English, including its basic Discover Berlin which costs €12 with the Berlin WelcomeCard and takes four hours. Other tours are Jewish Life in Berlin, Infamous Third Reich Sites, Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp Memorial Tour, and "Discover Potsdam. Private tours can also be arranged. Some tours may require a pass for public transportation. Original Berlin Walks, tel. +49/030/301 9194, office@berlinwalks.de, www.berlinwalks.de

Insider Tours offers Famous Insider Tour, Wall Tour, Third Reich Tour, and a Pub Crawl. Prices from €9 to €12. Tours take from three to five hours.

Lodging

The glut of hotels in Berlin makes for some of Europe's best rates. And for those who don't mind impersonal, formulaic chains, extraordinary bargains are sometimes available at Priceline.com. The excellent website, Biddingfortravel.com, reports successful bids in the \$55 to \$85 range for **Top Hotel Alsterhof**, **Mercure Hotel Berlin An Der Charité**, even the **Marriott Berlin**.

Where to headquarter — east or west — is an important question for every visitor. Most of the sightseeing is now in the east, where there are now many good hotels and an increasing number of good restaurants. Still, there are no east neighborhoods that offer the diversity of dining and shopping available in our preferred location, Charlottenburg, specifically its Savignyplatz district and the...

Art Nouveau

There are more luxurious hotels, and less expensive ones, but Art Nouveau's combination of charm, comfort, value, location, and warmth of welcome, place it at the top of our list of recommended Berlin hotels.

Both personally, and in the way they manage their hotel, owners Christine and Gerd Schlenzka typify the *avant garde* Berlin style that permeates the city's culture, especially its art and architecture. They are tuned to what's happening and enjoy directing guests to off-beat art exhibits, interesting shops, and their latest restaurant finds. It is therefore no surprise that they have built a sophisticated, loyal clientele from throughout the world.

Light and airy guestrooms in the prewar building have hardwood floors, high-ceilings, and tall windows. Furnishings and art have been carefully chosen by Frau Schlenzka. The pleasant common room, with its Berlin skyline view, is a cheery spot for the ample breakfast buffet, or to end the day with a beverage from the honor bar.

The neighborhood is full of good restaurants and interesting shops.

This an extraordinary family-run, city hotel.

Hotel Art Nouveau, Leibnizstrasse 59, 10629 Berlin, tel. +49/030/32 77 44 0, fax 32 77 44 40, info@hotelartnouveau.de, www.hotelartnouveau.de, doubles from €110 (discount for *Gemütlichkeit* readers)

Brandenburger Hof

The small, stylish, Bauhaus-influenced Brandenburg Hof is our choice over the city's bigger, better-known luxury stops such as the Adlon, Four Seasons, Grand Hyatt, and Kempinski. The gorgeous guestrooms offer a mix of contemporary and traditional design with natural oak surfaces, white walls, and designer furnishings. With heavy soundproofing and silent radiant floor heating, they are unusually well protected from outside noise. Although conveniently located in the heart of the west, not far from the Kurfürstendamm, this is a lovely, quiet retreat.

Eislebener Strasse 14, D-10789, tel. +49/030/214050, fax 21405100, info@brandenburger-hof.com, www.brandenburger-hof.com, doubles from €240

Bleibtreu

Artsy, elegant hotel in the Ku'damm and Savignyplatz area. Imaginative design and appointments make the small guestrooms seem bigger than they actually are. An interesting, city hotel with charm, but prices seem out of line. Nearby Hotel Art Nouveau has much larger rooms at a lower price.

Bleibtreustrasse 31, D-10707, tel. +49/030/884740, fax 88474444, info@bleibtreu.com, www.bleibtreu.com, doubles from €152

Q!

Minimalism with attitude. The "we're so cool" manner of the hired help detracts substantially from this otherwise appealing quiet, Savignyplatz neighborhood hideaway. We like the spare décor and furnishings but *gemütlichkeit* is missing. A hotel so "in" there's no sign out front.

Knesebeckstr. 33-34, D-10623, Berlin, tel. +49/030/818 2570, fax 81 82 5777, info@loock-hotels.com, www.loock-hotels.com, doubles from €170

Domus

Just a five-minute walk from the Ku'damm, the Domus ranks just behind the Art Nouveau in the mid-price category. It offers 73 spacious, spotlessly maintained guestrooms in an upscale neighborhood with a nice selection of restaurants. Off-street parking available.

Uhlandstrasse 49, D-10719, tel. +49/030/8803440, fax 88034444, info@hotel-domus-berlin.de, www.hotel-domus-berlin.de, doubles from €115

Carmer 16

On a quiet street at the eastern edge of the Savignyplatz neighborhood, not far from the Ku'damm, the Carmer offers a good location and inexpensive accommodations. Rooms are spacious and well-equipped.

Carmer Strasse 16, D-10623, tel. +49/030/311 00 500, fax 311 00 510, office@berlin.nethotels.com, doubles from €89

Gendarm

Splendid location among the great buildings of the *Mitte's* Gendarmenmarkt. The 27 guestrooms are deco-

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.

rated in a sort of restrained Laura Ashley style. Has a loyal following. Charlottenstrasse 61, D-10117, (Berlin-Mitte), tel. +49/030/20 60 66 0, fax 20 60 66 66, doubles €154

Luisenhof

This 27-room townhouse-style hotel is an elegant oasis in what is still a rather drab east Berlin neighborhood. For this level of comfort you'll pay more west of the Brandenburg Gate. Most of the *Mitte's* attractions are within walking distance. Otherwise the Heinrich-Heine (U8) underground station is only a couple of blocks away.

Köpenicker Str. 92, D-10179 tel. +49/030/246 28 10, fax 246 28 160, info@luisenhof.de, www.luisenhof.de, doubles from €119

Märkischer Hof

Just north the Spree river, convenient to most *Mitte* sights, the Märkischer Hof offers adequate accommodations with *en suite* toilet and shower. Rooms have minibar, radio, TV, and phone. Parking available.

D-1011, Linienstrasse 133, tel. +49/030/2827155, fax 2824331, service@maerkischer-hof-berlin.de, www.maerkischer-hof-berlin.de, doubles from €59

Luxury in the Suburbs Schlosshotel im Grunewald

A few years ago, at a cost of more than \$.5 million per room, German designer Karl Lagerfeld breathed new life into what is now Berlin's finest hotel. Combining great charm with authentic luxury, the Schlosshotel sits on manicured grounds behind high walls and a gated entrance in the city's neighborhood of great houses, the Grunewald. Unfortunately, the city center is 15-20 minutes away by public transport. Among the five best hotels ever rated by *Gemütlichkeit*.

Brahmsstrasse 10, D-14193 Berlin, tel. +49/030/895 840, fax 8958 4800, info@schlosshotelberlin.com, www.schlosshotelberlin.com, doubles from €209

Food

Restaurant Florian

Since our first visit some 15 years ago, Florian has become a guidebook

staple. Happily, there's been no adverse effect on the wonderful southern German dishes like tender *Ochsenbrust* (boiled beef), rich *Sauerbraten*, housemade *Spätzle* or breaded cauliflower. Clientele is an interesting mix of neighborhood locals, arty types, Berlin yuppies, and, of course, tourists. Fine people watching. Reserve prior to your Berlin arrival via the restaurant's website. No credit cards. Florian, Grolmanstr. 52, D-10623, Berlin, tel. +49/030/313 91 8, www.restaurant-florian.de

Restaurant 44

Among the town's top culinary bargains are the exquisite, €21, three-course, lunches created in the kitchen of this sleek Swissotel eatery by chef Tim Raue. Last year, Gault Millau gave Raue its Rising Star award. We concur. Each dish has the look and taste of fine art. Augsburgstr. 44 (across from Caf Kranzler), tel. +49/030/220100, emailus.berlin@swissotel.com, www.swissotel.com

Wegner & Lutter

Ebony wood trim, brass rails, and friendly service, create a cozy, clubby charm. Try braised-then-baked lamb chops in a richly intense red wine sauce; fall-over-the-plate Wiener Schnitzel, or perhaps calves liver with *Spargel* sprinkled with crunchy bread crumbs in butter. Main dishes €13-19. Caution: Berliners who should know say the food at the Gendarmenmarkt Wegner & Lutter doesn't measure up to the Schlüterstrasse W&L and has different ownership and management. Schlüterstr. 55, tel. +49/030/881 34 40, lutterundwegner@gmx.de, www.restaurantlutterundwegner.de

Tavola Calda

Tiny neighborhood favorite that typifies the diversity and quality of Berlin restaurants. Top-notch calves liver, fresh fish, and, of course, pasta. Friendly service in a small dining room that's often still full at 11:30pm — always a good sign. It's handy, too, to the Hotel Art Nouveau. Main dishes €15-22. Book ahead. Leibnizstr. 45, tel. +49/030/3241048

Restaurant Diekmann

This slick little bistro near the Ku'damm has successfully inserted itself into that hard-to-locate slot between the expensive, fussy restaurants to which Michelin likes to award stars, and the traditional meat and potatoes places. Three-course menus in the €35 to €45 range. Good spot for an upscale dining experience where the bill won't make you light-headed. Meinekestrasse 7, 10719 Berlin Charlottenburg, tel. +49/030/883 33 21, meineke@j-diekmann.de, www.j-diekmann.de

Die Zwölf Apostel

Inexpensive, but above average Italian food served in rooms that are more Sistine Chapel than Berlin restaurant. Opulent wall and ceiling frescos. Good pasta, fresh salads, and large, delicious pizzas. Try the osso buco (€14). Business lunch for €6.

There are two Apostles, one near Savignyplatz (open 24-hours) and another in the *Mitte* among a row of antique shops. Live piano music after 9pm at the Georgenstrasse location. No credit cards. Georgenstrasse 2, tel. +49/030/201 0222, & Bleibtreustrasse 49, tel. +49/030/312 1433, www.12-apostel.de

Filou

Brick walls, candlelight, large vases of fresh flowers, and polished bare wood tables, set the mood in this delightful, moderately-priced, Italian restaurant on Bleibtreustrasse near Savignyplatz. Main dishes, served in deep stoneware plates, range from €12 for pasta to €28 for the five-course menu. Try the antipasti plate followed by pasta with wild mushrooms and sautéed seafood. Bleibtreustr. 7, tel. +49/030/313 5543, fax 8867 5437, info@filou-berlin.de

Paris Bar

No guidebook worth its salt fails to mention Berlin's best-known post-war watering hole and its upper-crust habitués. Touristy? For sure, but still a great scene and the French bistro food is reliable. Main dishes €20-25. Try the oysters. Kantstrasse 152, tel. +49/030/3138052, www.parisbar.de

Rogacki

A visit to Berlin is not complete without lunch at Rogacki. At this standup, four-sided seafood bar in a blue-collar district market, CEOs in \$4,000 suits rub elbows with hard-hat laborers and TV stars. Choose from the menu board or find something at one of the market's vendor stands; see it cooked on the grill, garnished with crisp, fresh salad or to-die-for roast potatoes *mit Speck* (with bacon)—or both—then served still sizzling. A wonderful baked flounder, sprinkled with bacon and tiny fresh *Nord See* shrimp, with the grilled potatoes is a mere €8.9 and easily serves two. Three oysters—tasting as though they were plucked from the sea within the last 15 minutes—with a glass of crisp white wine is just €6. Lunch only. Wilmersdorfer Str. 145, <http://rogacki.de/ro/main10.htm>

Dressler

We've had good and just OK food at this handsome, Paris-style bistro on Unter den Linden, near the Brandenburg Gate. Main dishes €17 to €22. Try the scampi (€22). Unter den Linden 39 (also at Kurfürstendamm 207-208), www.restaurant-dressler.com


Samos

Inexpensive, no-frills Greek taverna just down the street from the Art Nouveau featuring familiar Greek dishes. Most appetites will be satisfied with a plate of mixed Greek appetizers. Leibnizstrasse 56

Klemke

Amazing food at amazing prices. This neighborhood wine bar/restaurant serves hearty, home-style dishes to some 250 customers per day at indoor and outdoor stand-up tables graced with fresh flowers. A big salad is €3, a huge serving of strawberries and whipped cream costs €1.8, and main dishes of meat, potatoes or rice, and salad are in the €4.5-5.5 range. A generous glass of Pinot Grigio is just €2. Lunch only. Mommenstr. 9, tel. +49/030/8811909

Alibaba

For dirt cheap but surprisingly good food, try this Savignyplatz institution. A slice of pizza is still just one euro. Bleibtreustrasse 45 

HOTEL PRICES

Continued from page 1

Of the six selected, we tossed out the highest and lowest priced hotels and averaged the lowest double room price for the remaining four. Since the 2006 *Switzerland Red Guide* is not yet available, we used the 2005 edition which shows only the highest double room price. That explains why there is a different price for Zürich in the major European cities list than in the Switzerland cities list.

Since there is usually a strong price correlation among hotel categories, these lists may be a useful guideline to the relative costs of all levels of accommodations among the cities. In other words, if the rates for leading three-star hotels in city A are 20 percent higher than in city B, it is fairly safe to conclude that city A will also have proportionally higher prices for both simpler and more luxurious accommodations.

Here are the results in price order starting with the most expensive.

Major European Cities

London	\$419
Prague	\$342
Paris	\$302
Zürich	\$278
Vienna	\$226
Budapest	\$220
Rome	\$213
Munich	\$210
Frankfurt	\$183
Salzburg	\$165
Berlin	\$164

Germany

Munich	\$210
Frankfurt	\$183
Berlin	\$164
Stuttgart	\$162
Freiburg	\$152
Nürnberg	\$145
Westerland (Sylt)	\$142
Bamberg	\$139
Heidelberg	\$137
Bonn	\$133
Rothenburg	\$128
Würzburg	\$128
Baden-Baden	\$127
Cologne	\$125
Rostock/Wärnemunde	\$124
Garmisch-Partenkirchen	\$124
Bremen	\$123
Hamburg	\$121
Regensburg	\$118
Lindau	\$112
Füssen	\$111
Augsburg	\$110
Trier	\$110
Dresden	\$107
Binz (Rügen)	\$104

Rüdesheim	\$103
Leipzig	\$102
Koblenz	\$101
Weimar	\$95
Berchtesgaden	\$88

Switzerland

Zürich	\$319
Geneva	\$295
Basel	\$269
Bern	\$247
Interlaken	\$250
Lucerne	\$224
Grindelwald	\$216
Pontresina	\$215
Montreux	\$214
Lugano	\$212
Schaffhausen	\$202
Zermatt	\$200
Klosters	\$194
St. Gallen	\$193
St. Moritz	\$188
Wengen	\$185
Gstaad	\$183
Lausanne	\$183
Locarno	\$172
Kandersteg	\$171
Leukerbad	\$171
Appenzell	\$158
Neuchâtel	\$150
Mürren	\$143
Sion	\$115

News/Deals

■ Since *Gemütlichkeit* is about independent travel in Europe, we seldom recommend guided tours. An exception must be made, however, for Karen Pasold's annual "**Christmas Markets of Imperial Europe.**" With a focus on Eastern Europe, the knowledgeable Ms. Pasold has created a small group product that offers superior accommodations and delves deeper into Europe's Christmas culture than the standard, highly-commercialized Nürnberg-Salzburg-Munich-Rothenburg itineraries operated by the major tour operators.

Her 13-day, 12-night sojourn this year begins November 27 in Prague, visits Dresden, Leipzig, and Krakow, then finishes with three nights in Warsaw. There is a Meissen lunch stop between Dresden and Leipzig. First-rate hotels are Prague's **U. Prince, Taschenbergpalais** in Dresden, **Hotel Furstenhof** in Leipzig, **Hotel Fancuski** in Krakow, and Warsaw's **Bristol Hotel**.

The \$2,799 per person, double occupancy price includes hotel, portage, two lunches, eight dinners, tickets to a performance of the National Ballet in Warsaw, ground transfers via luxury motor coach be-

CHRISTMAS MARKET TOUR

Continued from page 7

tween cities and towns, first-class train double sleeper car compartments, scheduled sightseeing tours, all admissions to scheduled activities, guides and tips. Complimentary airport arrival transfer is available in Prague. Contact: Classic Europe, 1 Glenmoor, Frisco TX 75034, tel. 972-625-6050, classic europe@yahoo.com ☒

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 2

on the main page. Until then go to <http://www.benzinpreis.de/statistik.phtml> or http://goeurope.about.com/od/transportation/a/gas_prices.htm.

Which is cheaper train or car?

Answering this question often involves considerable research. And, there's a third option that many overlook, air. Here are some Web resources that may offer enlightenment:

- www.raileurope.com: Provides point-to-point fares in U.S. dollars for some European rail routes as well as prices for the huge array of rail passes (to purchase phone 800-521-6722, press option 3).

- www.bahn.de: (Germany's national rail website) Timetables for all European trains plus fares for in-Germany travel as well as some fares for international travel involving Germany cities.

- www.rail.ch: (Switzerland's national rail website) Europe timetables and fares for Switzerland travel.

- <http://attitudetravel.com>: Links to dozens of low-cost European airlines such as German Wings, Air Berlin, Ryanair, Easyjet,

- To determine your rental car cost call 800-521-6722 or go to www.gemut.com and click on Car Rental.

What about cell phones in Europe?

Another complicated subject. Read David Rowell's seven-part series on international cell phone service at www.thetravelinsider.info/2002/0308.htm

Parting advice: When in doubt, Google. — RHB ☒

Readers' Forum

Needs More Hotel Info

We have been traveling in Switzerland for 30 years. In all that time, we have never rented a car. We always use the Swiss Pass (purchased from *Gemütlichkeit*). While there are certain advantages to driving, traveling by public transportation also has its rewards. Waiting for a local train or bus after a day's hike in the countryside, while surrounded by the beauty and peace of mountains and lakes, is a marvelous experience. This means, of course, that we use public transport to reach hotels, some of which we have discovered through *Gemütlichkeit*. Many of the articles seem to assume that everyone drives a car. This makes it difficult to determine whether the establishment is reachable by train, bus, or taxi. It would be a great help if your reviews routinely included transit information.

JEFFREY MYERS-HAYER
ALEXANDRIA VA

(Your request is a valid one. We have not done a good job in many cases of indicating whether or not hotels are convenient to rail travelers, but will endeavor to do so in the future. — Editor)

East Europe Coverage

Have you covered, or will you cover in the future, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, or the Baltic States.

TOM REESE
PALO ALTO CA

(We have written about destinations that are logical excursions for Germany, Austria and Switzerland travelers: See our Bratislava story in the June 2000 issue; Prague, May 2001; Cesky Krumlov, June 2002; and Budapest, July 2001, and September 1996. It is possible we will have more stories on these cities and countries; Poland is also a possibility. It is unlikely, however, that we will provide any coverage of the Baltic states. — Editor)

Dresden Milk Shop

Re the sights listed in your Dresden story: Add the **Pfunds Molkerei** (dairy). It's rooms are decorated with more than 1,000 Meissen tiles.

DR. ANATOL CHIARI
LAGUNA BEACH CA

We Recommend

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

Berlin
Hotel Art Nouveau, Leibnizstr. 59, tel. +49/030/327 7440, fax 327 7440, email: info@hotelartnouveau.de
Hotel Domus, Uhländstrasse 49, Germany D-10719, tel. +49/030/882041, fax 882 0410, email: info@hotel-domus-berlin.de

Bern
Hotel Bristol, Schaufplatzgasse 10, CH-3011, tel. +41/31/311 0101, fax 311 9479, email: reception@bristolbern.ch
Hotel Kreuz, Zeughausgasse 41, CH-3000, tel. +41/031/329 9595, fax 329 95 96, email: hotelkrenz@swissonline.ch

Lausanne
Hostellerie du Débarcadère, 7 chemin du Cret, Saint Sulpice, CH-102, tel. +41/021/691 5747, fax 691 5079, email: debarcadere@swissonline.ch (not in town)
Hotel Agora, Av. du Rond-Point 9, CH-1006, tel. +41/021/617 1211, fax 616 2605, email: agora@fhoteis.ch

Lucerne
Hotel Wilden Mann, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, email: mail@wilden-mann.ch
Hotel Cascada, Bundesplatz 18, CH-6003 Lucerne, tel: +41/041/226 80 88, fax 226 80 00, email: info@cascada.ch

Munich
Hotel Exquisit, Pettenkofenstr. 3, tel. +49/089/ 551 99 0, fax 551 99 499, email: info@hotel-exquisit.com
Hotel Acanthus, An Der Hauptfeuerwache 14, D- 80331 München, tel. +49/089 / 23 18 80, fax: 2 60 73 64, e-mail: acanthus@t-online.de
Hotel Kraft, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24, fax 550 3856, email: office@kraft-hotel.com

Rothenburg ob der Tauber
Reichs-Küchenmeister, Kirchplatz 8, Rothenburg o.d. Tauber, Germany D-91541, tel. +49/09861/97 00, fax 97 04 09, email: hotel@reichskuechenmeister.com

Salzburg & Environs
Schloss Haunspurg, A-5411 Oberalm bei Hallein, Hammerstrasse 32, tel. +43/06245/80662, fax 85680, email: info@schlosshaunspurg.com
Hotel Struber, Nonntaler Hauptstrasse 35, Austria A-5020 tel. +43/0662/843 728, fax 843 728 8, email: struber@sbg.at
Hotel Jedermann, Rupertgasse 25, Austria A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873241-0, fax 873241-9, email: jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at

Vienna
Hotel Römischer Kaiser, Annagasse 16, A-1010, tel +43/01/512 77 51 0, fax 512 77 51 13, email: info@rkhote.bestwestern.com
Allstadt Vienna, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, email: hotel@allstadt.at, web: www.allstadt.at
Pension Aviano, Marco-D'Aviano-Gasse 1, tel. +43/01/512 8330, fax 512 8330 6, email: aviano@pertschy.com

Zürich
Hotel Florhof, Florhofgasse 4, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. 41/01/261 4470, fax 261 4611, email: info@florhof.ch
Hotel Arlette, Stampfenbachstrasse 26, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. +41/01/25 20 032, fax 25 20 932, email: hotel.arlette@bluwiv.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@esprich-hotels.de

Hotel Birkenhof, von-Eiff-Str 37, Hanau-Steinheim, D-63456, tel. +49/06181/648 80, fax 64 88 39, email: info@HotelBirkenhof.de (25-minute drive from airport)
Hotel Dreieich, Frankfurter Str. 49, Langen , D-63225, tel. +49/06103/91 50, fax 52 030. email: 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

Zürich Airport
Mövenpick Zürich Airport, Walter-Mittelholzerstrasse 8, CH-8152 Glattbrugg, tel. +41/01/808 88 88, fax 808 88 77, email: hotel@movenpick-zurich-airport.ch

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