

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

The Summer of '06

We are about to enter the latter stages of what appears to be a record year for the number of U.S. travelers to Europe. This, despite history's highest transatlantic fares and a less-than-robust dollar.

At the height of summer, according to *USA Today*, there were 386 nonstop flights per day from the U.S. to Europe, most of them full. That's a 21 percent increase over 2003. The average cost per ticket in July was \$1,098, an increase of 44 percent over 2003.

Those who heeded our advice late last winter to purchase tickets early, paid less and had a better selection of flights. Those who waited, hoping for price cuts, ended up paying more.

With full airplanes, customer service suffers. Computers seem to arbitrarily cancel reservations, passengers arrive at airports hours before flight time only to be told they've been bumped, and harried, inexperienced ground personnel offer little sympathy to frustrated passengers—and scant ability to deal with them. Even when things go as planned, a full transatlantic flight is all too often an ordeal of cramped seating and indifferent food.

Getting to Europe is no longer fun. So what's ahead? One industry spokesperson told *USA Today* that bookings remain strong through the rest of the summer and early fall, far exceeding expectations. As this is written in late July, one could book a non-stop New York-Frankfurt flight for mid-August departure for around \$800. But for those willing to wait a couple of months the

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

AFFORDABLE ZÜRICH

Roland Reimann searches out affordable beds and meals in Switzerland's trendy, expensive financial center and finds lower prices in the summer season.

Ever wonder what is considered "affordable" in one of the world's most expensive cities? What one would pay for four-star luxury in most other parts of Switzerland is only worth three-star comfort in this alpine nation's trendy financial center. That means, in most cases, you'll have to spend around CHF 300 per night for a double room. On the bright side, prices often come down in summer, and discounts are given for weekend stays, when business travelers vacate the city.

Gemütlichkeit recently explored the city to identify a collection of small, centrally located hotels,

with a focus on charming establishments in the city's lively and colorful Niederdorf district. Within walking distance of Zürich's main train station, Niederdorf is crisscrossed by pedestrian lanes and alleys, counts numerous restaurants, take-out establishments and bars. Its eclectic mix of independent shops make it a window shopper's paradise, in stark contrast to the upscale and uniform boutiques of the city's more famous shopping mile along Bahnhofstrasse.

Hotels

Du Theatre

Located at the edge of Nieder-

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Encounter in Hechingen

Jim Johnson meets a charismatic historian while exploring Germany's Baden-Wurtemberg.

A taxi ride and ensuing evening in Hechingen brought this writer solid reminders that tourism is as much about people as places, and that towns off the tourism radar frequently have compelling stories to tell. The route from **Hohenzollern Castle** to the **Hotel Lamm** normally skirts Hechingen, the town closest to the castle. Asked if a detour through town would be possible, the driver (who knew nothing of his passenger's mission) smiled and started a sightseeing commentary. Pressed for more details, he said, "If you're interested, I know someone who has all the answers. I'll take you to your hotel and let

you know."

Forty-five minutes later, the driver called – "Success!" – and returned to pick up his fare. Soon he navigated through residential districts, pulled into a driveway, and knocked on a front door.

"Welcome," said Herr and Frau Werner, as if the visitor had been a long-awaited guest. "So you want to learn about our town. Come in and sit. Have you ever been in a German home?"

A tour by map (and accompanied by many glasses of *Sanft Rot*, a local red wine) followed. My host pointed out the **Catholic St.**

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Exchange rates as of 07/31/2006

1 euro = \$1.27

1 Swiss franc = \$0.81

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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October price is less than \$600.

Want to go next summer? Three words of advice: buy in January.

World Cup: Germany Scores

Germany played the perfect World Cup host, graciously finishing third and showing a peaceful, fun-loving face to a TV audience of billions. One hopes those images will help dispel some silly but widely-held stereotypes about the country and its residents.

Car Rentals Hold Steady

The unprecedented number of visitors, including soccer fans, put a strain on the inventories of Europe's car rental companies. After about May 15, vans in Germany were almost impossible to rent. Likewise in France. Vehicles with automatic transmission were also hard to come by. Rates, in general, were a bit lower than in 2005, though several companies raised them during the Cup.

Discount Air Now a Player

This year, air travel became a viable way of getting around Europe. There are now about 50 small, discount airlines filling European skies, offering fares that range from amazingly low to good value. One must buy online, live with the luggage limitations and some remote airports, but for long-

er distances air has its advantages.

Europe's railroads responded with complex, airline-style pricing that features non-refundable and non-exchangeable tickets and rewards advance bookings and off-peak travel.

Last year, for example, the least expensive London-Paris rail fare on the Eurostar was \$75. This year, it's \$45. At Europe's major rail stations, one sees large posters touting fares like Vienna-Rome for €29 and Berlin-Paris for €39. Most of these super low rail fares must be purchased in Europe.

Pricey Prague

Our May issue's attempt to provide readers with a reference point for hotel prices in major European cities seems to have offended the Czech Republic's tourism office in New York. Perhaps you will recall that our index was created using prices in Michelin's *Europe Main Cities Guide*. Prague's six leading three-star hotels, averaging \$392 for a double room, came in second only to London's \$419 per night, and ahead of Paris's \$302. Among major cities, Berlin was last at \$164.

Syndicated travel columnist Ed Perkins cited our numbers in a story that appeared in newspapers throughout the country, including the *Chicago Tribune*. In an e-mail to Mr. Perkins and various Tribune

employees, Katerina Pavlitova, director of CzechTourism USA, said she was "very interested in the methodology of the *Gemütlichkeit* report, and I am sure your readers would also appreciate learning how these figures mentioned therein, painting our capital as an unaffordably expensive city, were arrived at."

In a subsequent e-mail to the Trib (*Gemütlichkeit* was never copied on any of her missives), she questioned not only our process but also our integrity: "I am aware that *Gemütlichkeit* is not published in Germany but in the United States; nonetheless, given that their business is selling travel intelligence pertaining ONLY to German-speaking countries to consumers, I believe that it's reasonable to suspect something of a self-serving bias in their report on 'in-

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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 PDF format from January 1993, except for the most recent 10, 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: **grup** Password: **6289**

Vol. 20, No. 7
August 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.

dorf, du Theatre underwent a complete makeover in 2000 at the reliable hands of Switzerland's leading hotel architect and interior decorator, Pia Schmid. In addition to its distinctive design, this establishment wins high marks for service and location at an affordable price.

Schmid achieved the aim of conjuring up the theater spirit to pay homage to the old playhouse that used to adjoin the hotel (now a cinema). A glassed-in breakfast room directly above the reception area makes guests feel "on stage." Corridors are lined with small pictures of stage and screen stars, and snapshots of du Theatre performances from the 1950s are immortalized in Plexiglas in each room.

All of the singles and doubles on the first and second floor (no smoking) have flat screens, and if you are bored with the meager English TV fare, ask for an audio book, free of charge. The selection of English books includes works by a wide range of authors from Agatha Christie to John Grisham.

The rooms are bright and modern, yet warm and inviting. The disadvantage is their small size (double rooms measuring between 14 and 19 square meters), but this is where Frau Schmid works wonders. She not only has a flair for design but also knows how to use space creatively.

Large suitcases can be stored without having to trip over them every time you circle the bed, and in the smaller bathrooms, the sinks are just big enough to let you to move about without having to do contortions. Frau Schmid has accomplished this without having to compromise on counter space.

Wireless Internet access is standard in all 50 rooms, as are scales. Ask for one of the rooms on the quieter side of the hotel facing Zähringerstrasse, rather than on busier Seilergraben. A mini-suite on the top floor affords views across Zürich's rooftops and nearest mountain, Uetliberg.

Zürich Basics

Population: 345,300

Elevation: 409 meters/1,342 feet

Visitor Information: Zürich Tourismus, in Hauptbahnhof, Bahnhofbrücke 1, www.zurichtourism.ch.

Driving Distances:

Berlin	853 km	533 miles
Bern	126 km	79 miles
Frankfurt	406 km	254 miles
Geneva	279 km	174 miles
Hamburg	872 km	545 miles
Interlaken	130 km	81 miles
Munich	318 km	199 miles
Salzburg	457 km	286 miles
Vienna	753 km	471 miles
Zermatt	349 km	218 miles

Air: Kloten Airport is one of Europe's most convenient and is easily reached from the city by car and rail. Cab fare from downtown Zürich is about \$40 and takes 20 to 40 minutes, depending on traffic. By rail from the main station the fare is about \$4.50 and the trip takes 10 minutes.

Public Transport: The interlocking schedules of buses, trams, and boats mesh with amazing frequency and efficiency. The Zürich Card (about \$12 for 24 hours and \$24 for 72 hours) provides unlimited rides plus entrance to several museums and various discounts.

Boat Trips: Cruises on the Zürichsee and the Limmat River depart from the Bürkliplatz dock near the Hotel Baur au Lac.

Shopping: The famed Bahnhofstrasse has some of Europe's most elegant and expensive shops, as well several department stores. For authentic handmade Swiss items visit Schweizer Heimatwerk on Rudolf Brun-Brücke.

The hotel has no restaurant but plans to use its stylish breakfast room as a bar or lounge beginning in September this year.

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 125–220, doubles CHF 170–260 (breakfast CHF 15 per person supplement)

Contact: Hotel du Theatre, Seilergraben 69, tel. +41/1/267 26 70, fax 267 26 71, info@hotel-du-theatre.ch, www.hotel-du-theatre.ch

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Arlette

This two-star establishment with 30 rooms lives off of its proximity to the station and low price. But I found my welcome at the reception impersonal, bordering on indifferent.

Almost all of the double rooms face the main, busy road, and

guests have to put up with the noise, even if Zürich doesn't suffer from heavily congested roads and the accompanying sound of honking horns and screeching brakes. All rooms are clean and have air conditioning. (The latter is the exception to the rule in mid-range Swiss hotels.)

The garish green wall-to-wall carpeting is a hint that the last renovation probably dates back a couple of decades, if not more. I was told that management is not planning to carry out any renovations in the near future.

A continental breakfast is included in the price. Groups are not accepted.

This place is fine for one night if you arrive late and have to depart early the next morning.

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 110–185, doubles CHF 150–250

Contact: Hotel Arlette, Stampfenbachstrasse 26, tel. +41/1/252 00 32, fax +41/1/252 09 23,

hotel.arlette@bluewin.ch

Rating: QUALITY 7/20 VALUE 10/20

The following hotels in Niederdorf are located a 10–15 minute walk from main station:

Hotel Rössli

Keep your eye on the map and street signs if you have reserved a room at the Rössli. Tucked away down a side alley, this boutique hotel has 22 individually appointed rooms, all recently renovated.

The doubles feel fairly spacious, and all have either light-green, tinted parquet floors or copper-colored tiles. Large bathrooms are an unexpected perk. Wonderful old sinks and faucets are topped with gigantic mirrors and generous counters. Ask for Number 203 if you want a very big bathroom with corner tub for two and separate shower. Rooms on this side are the quietest, but they also look out onto a wall of the next building.

If you want to splurge and enjoy an exclusive view of the city,

ask for the Rössli suite with the rooftop terrace. With the press of a button, a hideaway staircase folds down and leads up to the private outdoor space.

The Rössli offers wireless Internet access free of charge.

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 200–220, doubles CHF 270–300, suite CHF 410

Contact: Hotel Rössli, Rössligasse 7, tel. +41/1/256 70 50, fax 256 70 51, reception@hotelroessli.ch, www.hotelroessli.ch

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 10/20

Hotel Adler

Situated on picturesque Hirschenplatz in the heart of Niederdorf, this is a three-star hotel with five-star welcome and service. Apparently, the word is out, as the hotel has an occupancy rate of 90 percent. If you want to stay here, book early.

The Adler's management team, led by the gracious Hans Peter Kaiser, isn't resting on its laurels. Its recently completed upgrade of all 52 rooms is the second renovation in the past decade.

All rooms are cheery, with flat TV screens to save space, and management has a policy of not overcharging for the small things, such as phone calls or drinks and snacks from the minibar.

The minibar is cooled solely by a couple of ice packs, saving on energy and the aggravating hum from the motor of a standard refrigeration system. Wireless Internet access is available in all rooms.

If you want a view, go for one facing the leafy Rosenhof Square, with its lively outdoor restaurant and café patios.

Breakfast is served in the hotel's own restaurant, the popular **Swiss Chuchi** (see restaurants below).

Don't miss the old kitchen cupboard nailed to the wall in the reception. Try pronouncing the Swiss-German name for it: *Chuchichäschтли*. It's a guaranteed conversation starter.

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 140–200, doubles CHF 190–270

Contact: Hotel Adler, Rosengasse 10, tel. +41/1/266 96 96, fax 266 96 69, info@hotel-adler.ch, www.hotel-adler.ch

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel Franziskaner

This three-star establishment is just a few doors up from the Adler. Most rooms were renovated two years ago, and the rest should be completed by the end of summer. Doubles are spacious for this hotel category in Zürich, with room for a sofa and coffee table. All 19 rooms look out onto either a courtyard or pedestrian square.

As part of the renovation, the reception will be moved from the first to the ground floor, making way for six new rooms. Like the Rössli, there is an upper room with a rooftop terrace.

The owners also run the **Hotel Altstadt** a little further up Niederdorf. Wireless Internet access is offered at a flat rate of CHF 7, no matter the length of stay.

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 170–250, doubles CHF 250–270, rooftop room CHF 290 (single or double)

Contact: Hotel Franziskaner, Niederdorferstr. 1, tel. +41/44/250 53 00, fax 250 53 01, service@hotel-franziskaner.ch, www.hotel-franziskaner.ch

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 12/20

Seegarten Hotel

A 15-minute tram ride from the train station, the Seefeld district of the city begins just beyond Bellevueplatz, on the north shore of the lake. This is an ideal location for travelers wishing to be close to the water in summer, since the Seegarten is only a couple of minutes from the Uto Quai lakeshore promenade and Uto Quai Bath, one of the city's hot spots for sunbathing and lake swimming lake.

Each of the Seegarten's 28 rooms is lovingly furnished, in some cases with rattan chairs and tables, and decorated in cheery

colors with parquet floors.

The "medium" rooms have the advantage of facing a quiet courtyard and are the least expensive, but have small double beds. The more spacious "large" rooms face a side street and are relatively soundproof, except on hot summer nights when you have to open the window for lack of air conditioning. But loud they are not: the side street is closed to traffic after hours. Half of the rooms are fitted with bathtubs, and the rest have showers.

Wide corridors are a nice touch, giving this hotel an aristocratic feel. The walls are lined with old Swiss tourism posters—reportedly all originals.

The friendly Seegarten has wireless Internet in all rooms and free Internet stations on two floors.

Breakfast is served in **Latino**, the hotel's trendy Italian restaurant. Its food and ambience have received a number of favorable reviews in the local press.

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 179–229, doubles CHF 269–289

Contact: Hotel Seegarten, Seegartenstrasse 14, tel. +41/44/388 37 37, fax 383 37 38, contact@hotel-seegarten.ch, www.hotel-seegarten.ch. Proprietor: Peter Berkemer

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 14/20

Restaurants

A compact city with a population of just 350,000, Zürich's 2,000 restaurants and bars mean you never have to walk far to still your hunger or quench your thirst. The following list of restaurants not do justice to the variety and wonderful eclectic mix of what the city has to offer, but provides a taste of how traditional, touristy, or nouveau dining in Zürich can be.

Hiltl

Meat eaters love this popular diner near Bahnhofstrasse, even though it is strictly vegetarian. You see everyone here: office

clerks looking for tasty, healthy, and quick meals, as well as Swiss bankers and politicians.

This summer Hiltl's temporary quarters are the former Swiss stock exchange building near Paradeplatz. (Its original location will reopen for business in late fall 2006 after completion of a major renovation.)

What has been Hiltl's key to success since it first opened in 1898 as Europe's first vegetarian restaurant? Food for every palate and budget, and when you can't make up your mind, a buffet with 40 different hot and cold dishes representing Swiss and international cuisine.

Like most patrons, I chose the latter (pay by weight: CHF 3.90 per 100g), piling my plate with fried Jalapeno peppers stuffed with sour cream, olives smothered in a chili sauce, Chinese asparagus, Brussels sprouts in a light cream, guacamole, egg plant caviar, falafel and tahina. All was washed down with a spicy mango fruit juice and readily available tap water (an unusual find in Switzerland). The bill came to CHF 23.85. A hot seller is the Hiltl cookbook, also available in English.

When the restaurant moves back to Sihlstrasse, it will be open from 6am to 3am, with a breakfast buffet until 10:30am with lunch after that, and a fine dining section with pricier dishes to compliment its reputation for quick and relaxed service.

Hiltl is also co-owner of the **Tibits** chain of extremely popular self-service vegetarian diners in Zürich (Seefeld district), Bern (main train station), and Winterthur. This is fast food, the healthy Swiss way.

Contact: Restaurant Hiltl, Sihlstrasse 28, tel. +41/44/227 70 00, info@hiltl.ch, www.hiltl.ch, Tibits, Seefeldstrasse 2, tel. +41/44 260 32 22, info@tibits.ch, www.tibits.ch

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Swiss Chuchi

When in Switzerland...do as the Swiss do. And yes, the Swiss do eat fondue and raclette. So if you must indulge, the Swiss Chuchi (kitchen) in the Hotel Adler is just the place, although your table neighbors are more likely to be American than Swiss.

If you thought fondue was limited to a simple blend of cheese, wine, and garlic, think again. The Chuchi chefs serve up 10 different varieties—adding pear brandy and pear, or ham and mushrooms, and one with the unusual combination of green pepper and mustard. The fondues go for CHF 24.50–29.50 per person.

Order raclette and you'll be asked if you want it with rabbit filet, mini veal sausages, farmer's ham, or pork escalope. These dishes range in price from CHF 23.50–34.50 per person. Also popular are meat fondues (*bourignone*).

I chose the tender, well-cooked braised beef grandmother's style (CHF 24.50) and my companion ordered the *Zürcher Geschnetzeltes* (pieces of fried veal served in creamy sauce) for CHF 33.50. The beef was topped with croutons, glazed baby onions, and bacon, and I eagerly soaked up the tasty gravy with slices of fresh, dark bread. The broccoli and carrots on the side were fresh. This definitely was just as good if not better than a home-cooked meal.

The *geschnetzeltes* came with homemade *rösti*, light brown and crisp, and the veal sauce had just the right hint of sweetness.

For dessert, we tried the apple juice cream—Emmental style for CHF 8.50. It was a sweet and sour combination that was tangy and light, which was all we could handle after the rich Swiss dishes.

The only thing not to our taste was the Swiss folk music playing in the background.

This restaurant is not officially nonsmoking, but the practice is frowned upon and ashtrays are not placed on the tables in order to

make the point. We did not see anyone light up during our meal.

Contact: Swiss Chuchi, Rosengasse 10, tel. +41/1/266 96 96, fax 266 96 69, info@hotel-adler.ch, www.hotel-adler.ch

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 15/20

Oepfelchammer

What was Zürich like 200 years ago when it began to develop into the city it is today? It's easy to find out. Just reserve a seat in the Weinstube room of the Oepfelchammer (apple chamber). The Niederdorf building housing the restaurant dates back to 1352, and the Weinstube (wine tavern) part has remained virtually unchanged since 1801.

I was a bit hesitant to take a seat in this low-ceilinged, crooked room. Every inch of the long, blackened wooden tables, walls, and ceiling beams is scarred with graffiti, as if the owners had abandoned it to a demolition crew. But that is its unusual charm, and why it attracts casual Zürich students, businessmen in neatly-pressed suits, and the odd tourist.

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.travel essentials.com Guidebooks, maps, travel accessories, luggage, all at 10 percent off for subscribers. Use discount code gemut2006.
- 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.

The names carved into the wood are from patrons who over the years have succeeded in pulling themselves up onto the lowest beam, climbing through the tight space underneath the ceiling and drinking a glass of wine while hanging upside down.

The tavern was the haunt of the famous 19th century Swiss writer, Gottfried Keller, who is honored in pictures on the walls, but it was the drinking rite initiated by a German literature professor and his students in the first half of the 20th century that immortalized it.

There is room for 50 guests squeezed cheek to jowl on long benches. If you want to rub shoulders with the locals, you've come to the right place. If someone needs to get up, they are asked not to bother their neighbors, but simply to climb over the table. This is just one of many peculiar house rules. (I did not get the impression from my visit, or talking to other patrons, that the atmosphere ever descends into rowdiness.)

The owners respect the Weinstube's past, when its license permitted only wine to be served. In the evening, you can order wine or drinks made from grapes, including port wine and grape juice, but not stronger distilled beverages such as grappa.

With so much ambience, ordering food became a bit of an afterthought. The fare turned out to be as hearty as the history – the pickings unpretentious, and the portions generous if not cheap.

A fine starter was bread soup laced with pumpkin seed oil for CHF 11, followed by vegetarian capons—a traditional dish with diced vegetables replacing the air-dried beef inside a *spätzli* dough wrapped in a chard leaf (CHF 31). It was served with a carrot leek sauce. Best of all, however, was the classic homemade meatloaf bathed in a morel sauce with vegetables for CHF 38.

Lunch and dinner are also served in the Oepfelhammer's other

two historic yet more formal rooms. The food comes at the same price, so it is a good option for a candle-light dinner for two before crowding into the Weinstube for a glass of wine and a lot of local flavor.

The bad news: This restaurant is closed during the height of summer, from mid-July to mid-August.

Contact: Restaurant Oepfelhammer, Rindermarkt 12, tel. +41/44/251 23 36, fax 262 75 33, www.oepfelhammer.ch

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 13/20

Zeughauskeller

Immensely popular with both locals and tourists, this centrally-located Zürich institution has been around since 1487. It is a single, huge, impressive room under massive beams supported by stone pillars, overlooked by a giant clock, with ancient weaponry hanging from the walls. The large, wooden tables are shared and the adroit servers have little time to chat as they glide through the chaos bearing heavy plates of delicious, farm-style food that goes down best with the Hürlimann vom fass. In addition to the usual calves liver, *Schnitzel*, and *Geschmetzeltes* Zürich-style (sliced veal with mushrooms in a cream sauce), there are half-meter and one-meter pan-fried sausages, *Kanonensputzer*, and an extraordinary presentation of one long, thin slice of roasted meat skewered onto a three-foot sword. Main courses are in the CHF 25-35 range. Draught beer is \$3 to \$4.

Contact: Zeughauskeller Zürich, Bahnhofstrasse 28a, at Paradeplatz, tel. +41/01/211 2690

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 14/20

Rheinfelder Bierhaus

Cheap meals and good beer in an authentic setting can be found at this longtime *Gemütlichkeit* favorite along the pedestrian-only walkway that winds through the old town. As the years have rolled by the Rheinfelder never seems to change, always just a bit seedy to the point that some fastidious readers may fear to tread. But not dirty; note the fresh, clean

bathrooms. Still, the place is pretty funky; its walls are decorated with signs showing the prices of various dishes, a TV flickers, and you will have to deal with cigarette smoke. Booths, tables and chairs are plain wood and the floor is a rough tile.

The Rheinfelder is full of regulars—some of them a bit worse for wear—which adds to its charm. Basic dishes such as half a chicken, *Schnitzel Paniert* (pan fried veal), and *Schwein Kotelette* (pork chops), are all in the CHF 10-13 range. Half a liter of Cardinal beer is CHF 4.

Contact: Rheinfelder Bierhaus, Marktgasse 19, tel. +41/44/251 2991

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 17/20

Quick First Impressions

Globus at Bellevueplatz

This self-service restaurant inside the upscale Globus department store is stylish. Hot international cuisine is the name of the game here—everything from Asian noodles to sushi and Spanish tapas.

Sprüngli Tearoom

Benefiting from the reputation of the company's chocolate confectionery on the ground floor, this tourist trap on Bahnhofstrasse at Paradeplatz is always busy. A cup of coffee for CHF 4.60 may be normal for this part of town, but customers expecting attentive service for that price will be disappointed. ☒

HECHINGEN

Continued from page 1

Jakobus (“pure classicistic style”); the Renaissance **St. Luzen** (“from outside it's nothing, but inside it's a treasure”); how the first synagogue was built in 1564 and, by 1842, 25 percent of the population was Jewish and a major driver of the local economy; how that number dropped to 2 percent by 1933; and how the second synagogue, built in 1767, was destroyed in 1938, and the remaining Jews were “deported.”

Sensing a curious audience, Herr Werner asked, “Are you in-

terested in our Jewish history?"

Herr Werner, it turned out, had made the town's extensive Jewish history his passion. A former schoolmaster, he has devoted years to researching the subject through the centuries. (His wife is now a city guide.) He compiled an extensive volume of every known Jewish resident of Hechingen since 1800 including the 19th-century rabbi Dr. Samuel Mayer, Elsa Einstein (Albert's second wife), and Dr. Ernst Rosenfeld, who was hidden in a small storage room at Schlosstrasse 1 from November 1943 until the arrival of the French on April 25, 1945. He published a guidebook about "Jewish Hechingen." Today, nearly 80 percent of visitors to town come to visit the synagogue, rebuilt in 1983.

Three hours passed quickly. "I'd better call your ride before it gets too late for you," Herr Werner said.

"Na und?," said the driver. "How was it?"

As the taxi approached the hotel, the driver noticed an emerging wallet. "Nein!" he said. "This isn't business. This is because I love my town."

(Taxi Höpfel can be reached at +49/07471/6900. Contact the Werners through the Hechingen Tourist Office, Kirchplatz 12, 72379 Hechingen, tel. +49/(0)7471/940-211, fax 940-210, tourist-info@hechingen.de, www.hechingen.de.) 

News/Deals

■ **Roman Trier:** The Trier tourist office is advertising two good deals this month: First, three days at **Karlsmühle Hotel-Restaurant & Winery**, including two overnight stays in a double room and a four-course candlelight dinner, accompanied by a bottle of Riesling from the hotel's first-class winery. Price per person: €99. Contact: www.karlsmuehle.de, info@karlsmuehle.de, tel. +49/651/5123

Second, feast on varied theme buffets in the **Trier Park Plaza Hotel** on Friday evenings this summer. The menu traces a culinary jour-

GENEVA STOPOVER: HOTEL BEL 'ESPERANCE

Arriving by plane from Amsterdam for a short stay in the Swiss Alps, we found ourselves with a night to pass in Geneva. The plan was to catch a train to Bivio early the next morning, so we booked a night at the always reliable Hotel Bel 'Esperance.

Run by the Salvation Army, this hotel is a basic, no-frills establishment, but you can't beat the price: We paid CHF 150 for a double room during the month of May.

It was after 10pm by the time we reached the hotel, and we found a key waiting for us at the desk. Our small and basic room on the third floor (Number 315) had a small window with an air conditioning unit perched above it, a double bed, and small TV anchored high in a corner of the room. The bathroom was clean, with fluorescent lighting and a corner shower stall, small sink, and thin towels. The room came with direct-dial phone and free Internet access, which we promptly tested out.

As soon as we were settled, we wandered out to find some late-night eats. A few minutes' walk up

Rue de la Vallée, we discovered a hilltop plaza with several outdoor cafes and ordered a pastry and gelato, just as the last café was shutting down for the evening.

Had we stayed long enough to find out, noise from the hotel's hallway might have disturbed us, but as it was we had time barely to shower, eat, and sleep, and then head straight to the train station the next morning. The Bel 'Esperance is conveniently located a short walk or tram ride away from the train station, making inner city transportation a breeze.

For travelers needing a quick stopover in Geneva without spending a fortune, the Hotel Bel 'Esperance delivers quality at an exceptional value.

Contact: Rue de la Vallée 1, 1204 Geneva, tel. 022 818 37 37, fax +41/022/8183773, belesp2swi.salvationarmy.org, www.hotel-bel-esperance.ch

Daily Rates: CHF 150

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 15/20


—Nikki Goth Itoi

ney through the cuisine of different countries for €18.50 per person. Make reservations at tel. +49/651/99930.

■ **Rest Your Head in a Yurt:** You don't have to be an adventure traveler to enjoy the new Mongolian yurts atop Switzerland's Rochers-de-Naye. Perched at the edge of a cliff, 2,000 meters high, each of seven new yurts has eight beds and a shared bath in a separate building. The overnight experience is decidedly unique and the views are unrivaled. Offered through the Swiss Goldenpass Services organization, an introductory 2006 package includes rental for CHF 240 plus CHF 40 per person for the trip by cogwheel railway, as well as an evening

meal and breakfast. Visit www.mob.ch/GPS/produits/yourtes.asp for details.

■ **Above the Treetops:** A new adventure park has opened at Signal de Bougy, where adults and children alike can test their skills in seven rope courses some 15 meters above the ground. **Parc Adventure Signal de Bougy** is located between Geneva and Lausanne, and the adult entrance fee is €36. Visit www.parc-aventure.ch.

■ **Eurail Bonuses:** Holders of any Eurail pass that includes Germany ride free on the S-Bahn system of all major cities except Berlin where the passes are valid only on routes shared by S-Bahn and DB (Deutsche Bahn). 

DEAR SUBSCRIBER*Continued from page 5*

expensive Germany' vs. 'expensive Czech Republic.'"

I guess I'd have to admit to a self-serving bias; we try to do what's best for *Gemütlichkeit* and its readers—similar to what Ms. Pavlitova is doing by attempting to keep alive the myth that, in the category of mid-range hotels, Prague is still an inexpensive eastern European city.

Her argument is really with Michelin. We simply did the math and reported the results. When it comes to hotels below the four and five-star level, Prague, if one can rely on Michelin's numbers, is more expensive than Rome, Paris, Brussels, and Amsterdam—forget about Berlin, Zürich, and Vienna, the cities for which we have a bias.

In any case, the fact that we've run a number of favorable Prague stories, complete with hotel and restaurant recommendations, should put to rest any notion that we are trying to make German, Austrian, or Swiss cities look better at Prague's expense.

Elsewhere in her e-mail, Ms. Pavlitova asserts there are many inexpensive three-star hotels in Prague. That may be the case, except that Michelin didn't find them and our trip-planning department can't find them when making Prague hotel reservations for clients.

Thinking we might have gotten skewed results by only looking at the top three-star hotels listed in Michelin, we computed the average double room price for the six least expensive hotels listed in Michelin's Main Cities Guide. But even in that category, Prague continues to lead all but London.

If Ms. Pavlitova knows a few centrally-located three-star hotels offering double rooms under \$150 per night, we'll be delighted to pass them on to an eager reader-ship.—RHB

Readers' Forum**Good Eats in Budapest**

An extraordinary dessert in Budapest is called *somoloi galuska*. After lunching on interesting and delicious salads at **Cafe Angelika**, I indulged in this concoction of sponge cake flavored with rum, raisins, and walnuts; layered with custard; overcome with chocolate sauce; and slathered with whipped cream. Not very sophisticated, but I loved it! Cafe Angelika is a charming, old-style cafe on the Buda side, attached to a church, with a lovely terrace overlooking the Danube.

Another recommended restaurant, **Pesti Vendeglo**, serves chicken paprikosh like my mother used to make, along with salads of pickled cucumbers and fresh beets. Lonely Planet describes this as "a popular, family-run place conveniently located near the Vista Visitor Centre, offering a lighter take on standard Hungarian favorites." No Gypsy music, but the food was good and the servers were nice, unlike those at some of the more touristy places (such as **Cafe Anna**, where the waitresses seem put out by having to serve you). Contact: 1061 Budapest, Paulay Ede u. 5., tel. 266-3227.

For a different, more rustic take on Vienna, I recommend **Sur Alten Kaiser Mühle**. Located in the Alte Danau area, this restaurant offers indoor and outdoor seating along one of the canals and specializes in ribs barbecued outdoors, as well as a Greek salad, which I ordered. To get there, take the U-1 train to Kagren (the stop after the VIC—Vienna International City). Exit in the direction of the back of the train, go downstairs and left to Wagramer Strasse. Cross Wagramer at the light and continue 100 yards down the lane to the restaurant.

JANE STROMBERG

VIA E-MAIL

We Recommend

This listing of good value, mid-priced hotels in popular destination cities is intended for fast reference. Additional hotels and links to hotel websites is in the **Hotel Review** sections at www.gemut.com. Hotels are arranged in price order, higher to lower.

Berlin

Hotel Art Nouveau, Leibnizstr. 59, tel. +49/030/327 7440, fax 327 744 40, info@hotelartnouveau.de, www.hotelartnouveau.de

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

Bern

Hotel Bristol, Schauplatzgasse 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, hotelkrenz@swissonline.ch

Lucerne

Hotel Wilden Mann, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, mail@wilden-mann.ch

Hotel Cascada, Bundesplatz 18, CH-6003 Lucerne, tel. +41/041/226 80 88, fax 226 80 00, info@cascada.ch

Munich

Hotel Exquisit, Pettenkofenstr. 3, tel. +49/089/ 551 99 0, fax 551 99 499, 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, 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, hotel@reichskuechenmeister.com

Hotel Hornburg, Hornburgweg 28, D-91541, tel. +049/09861 / 8480, fax 5570, hotelhornburg@t-online.de, www.hotelhornburg.de

Salzburg & Environs

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

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

Hotel Jedermann, Rupertgasse 25, Austria A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873241-0, fax 873241-9, jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at

Vienna

Hotel Römischer Kaiser, Annagasse 16, A-1010, tel +43/01/512 77 51 0, fax 512 77 51 13, info@rkhotel.bestwestern.com

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

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

Zürich

Hotel Florhof, Florhofgasse 4, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. 41/01/261 4470, fax 261 4611, info@florhof.ch

Hotel du Theatre, Seilergraben 69, tel. +41/1/267 26 70, fax 267 26 71, info@hotel-du-theatre.ch, www.hotel-du-theatre.ch

Frankfurt Airport

Steigenberger Esprit Hotel Frankfurt Airport, CargoCity Süd, D-60549, tel. +49/069/69 70 99, fax 69 70 94 44, frankfurt@esprithotels.de

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

Hotel Dreieich, Frankfurter Str. 49, Langen, D-63225, tel. +49/06103/91 50, fax 52 030, hotel-dreieich@gmx.de

Munich Airport

Daniel's Hotel, Hauptstrasse 11, Halbermoos-Goldach, D-85399, tel. +49/0811/55120, fax 551213, info@hotel-daniels.de, www.hotel-daniels.de

Hotel Hoyacker Hof, Freisinger Landstrasse 9a, D-85748 Garching b. München, tel. +49/089/326 9900, fax 320 7243, info@hoyackerhof.de

Zürich Airport

Mövenpick Zürich Airport, Walter-Mittelholzerstrasse 8, CH-8152 Glattbrugg, tel. +41/01/808 88 88, fax 808 87 77, hotel@movenpick-zurich-airport.ch

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