

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

Our Food Guru

Over the past year we have had the good fortune to again count London-based Lydia Itoi among our small stable of writers. Her first assignment for us was in 1999 when she and her sister-in-law, Nikki Goth Itoi, now our executive editor and website manager, reported on various destinations in northern Germany. After that, Lydia became a food writer for the *San Jose Mercury News* and now regularly contributes articles on restaurants and food to a variety of well-known publications, including the European edition of *Time Magazine*. As you might imagine, we pay less than *Time* but Lydia says she has a soft spot for *Gemütlichkeit* because we gave her her first paid writing assignment.

Her article this month on the Black Forest resort of Baiersbronn has me itching to get there—amazingly, in 34 years of annual travel to Germany, I've never been there. By the way, we've saved her reviews of the region's highly-rated restaurants for next month.

I hope you enjoy and admire, as I do, Lydia's ability to size up a town, a hotel room, a plate of food, or a glass of wine, and describe it with clarity, expertise, and humor.

To Package or Not to Package

Travel packages are everywhere: in emails, on the Internet, and in the media. We are bombarded with them. Get it all for one price. Bundling products is a way for hotel and airline suppliers to get rid of excess inventory without undermining price credibility. In a \$1,200 weekend package that includes air, hotel, and ground transport, a hotel can easily disguise the fact that it is selling its rooms for \$40 a night. Theoretically, the tour operator pays less because he buys in bulk and passes part of the savings on to you. Of course, he has to purchase some or all the elements of the package, market them to the consumer, and still make a

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

Baiersbronn

We discover where to find nature, relaxation, and a stash of Michelin stars in the northern Black Forest

It must be the water. Or the clean forest air. Or maybe the high percentage of sunshine and mild summer weather. Or the high percentage of people named Klumpp. There must be some reason why Baiersbronn, with a total population of 16,351 scattered along the Murg River valley in the northern Black Forest, has managed to collect more Michelin stars per capita than any other place in Germany.

Even nearby Baden-Baden, with its more fashionable international crowd, manages to offer just two one-star joints. Incredibly, Baiersbronn eclipses much bigger towns with a constellation of six Michelin stars: three for the **Schwarzwaldstube** in the **Hotel Traube Tonbach**, two for the **Restaurant Bare-**

iss in the **Hotel Bareiss**, and one for the **Schlossberg**. People go to Baden-Baden to be beautiful, but they go to Baiersbronn to be happy.

Part of the area's appeal is its mix of old-fashioned luxury resorts and back-to-basics forest wanderer's paradise. Thanks to that magic water or whatever, quality remains high at every price point. It's easy to feel like you are getting away from it all and still eat like royalty, even at the non-starred restaurants and humbler hotels.

Getting away from it all and getting back to nature is what Baiersbronn is all about. Before package tours to Thai or Spanish beaches, this is where genteel Germans have traditionally come to relax. Despite the

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Rail Daytrips from Zürich

Zürich is a great town, but there may come a time when you'd like to get away for a day's change of scenery. Switzerland's incredible transportation system makes it an obvious choice for such one-day out and back sojourns. Of course, if you have a Swiss Pass—or a Eurail Pass that includes Switzerland—you just hop aboard the next train departing from Zürich's busy main rail station, grab a seat, and away you go—reservations are almost never needed in Switzerland and the frequency of service is amazing. Here are four suggested one-day destinations.

SCHAFFHAUSEN

Michelin calls this town, built beneath **Munot Fortress** on terraces along the Rhine, and mostly ignored

by North American visitors, one of the most attractive in Switzerland.

What to See:

- **Altstadt.** Dozens of intricately designed oriel windows, extensive rococo facades and eye-filling Renaissance frescos.

- **The Rheinfall.** Europe's largest waterfall (500 feet across, 70 feet high), is reached in seven minutes from Schaffhausen via Bus 1, direction Neuhausen. Take the boat to the base of the falls (CHF 6.50 adults, CHF 3.50 children).

- **Stein am Rhein.** This nearby village features a gorgeous, fairytale town square with painted fa-

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Exchange rates as of 5/31/2007

1 euro = \$1.347

1 Swiss franc = \$0.817

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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profit. But can he do that and offer the deal to you at a lower price than if you purchased the individual elements separately? Maybe, maybe not.

Before you buy a travel package, try to figure what each element would cost if you bought it separately. Take a simple Glacier Express package offered by DER Tours, a reputable travel seller. You get three days second-class rail, including a ride on the Glacier Express, plus two nights at a three-star hotel. Cost is \$345 per person, double occupancy, or \$690 for two persons. Since a three-day second-class Swiss Saver Pass (good for travel on the Glacier Express) costs \$312 for two persons, the question becomes, can you find two nights lodging at three-star hotels—one at the start of the trip in or near St. Moritz, and one at the end in Zermatt—for less than \$378? A double room at the **Hotel Darioli** in central Zermatt in high season is CHF 130 or about \$107. In St. Moritz the **Stille Sporthotel** is CHF 158/\$129. Of course, there are better three-star hotels in both towns but we know these, and they are acceptable. With them your total price for hotels and the rail travel is \$548, so you save \$142 by purchasing the elements of the package separately. Of course, DER may use more luxurious three-star hotels, but since they say they don't know the names of the hotels in this package it's difficult to make a comparison. Nicer hotels are the **Du-four** in Zermatt, where a double room is about \$147, and the **Bernina** in Pon-

tresina (a charming village very near St. Moritz), where a double is \$180. Using those hotels you're \$51 to the good.

On the other hand, you'll often save money and get added value on short-stay packages sponsored by local tourist offices. They don't have to worry about making a profit, their goal is simply to attract more visitors. Take a look at the deals mentioned in our *News/Deals* column on page 8. The two-night Trier package, for example, starts at €330 per couple. By comparison, if you stay two nights at our favorite Trier three-star, the **Petris**, you'll pay at least €180. You have to decide if a four-course dinner with wine, a tasting at a winery, a guidebook, and a city tour are worth an additional €150.

One problem in deconstructing these deals is that many packages contain elements you simply can't buy on your own. The **Untour** (www.untours.com), for example, offers air, a vacation rental, in-country support, and ground transportation. You can book airline tickets, rent your own apartment, and, of course, rent a car or buy a rail pass, but what you can't get on your own is the in-country support, or the assurance of quality lodging that comes with an Untour. That's why tour operators try to put unique features in their packages, such as castle and wine dinners, access to places not generally open to the public, and events involving celebrities. Recently, I saw a cruise advertised for \$7,000 per person that touted on-board talks by historians who were experts on

the regions to be cruised. On the web I found a cruise on the same ship, with the same itinerary, but with different dates and no historians, for half the price. Expensive seminars.

Another example of unique packaging is Doug DeBoard's "German Auto Tours" (www.germanautotours.com), which gets visitors behind the scenes in the Germany auto industry.

In general, we find that fly/drive and rail/drive packages are seldom cost effective. Buy them separately. Air and hotel packages, however, seem to have a synergy that works for everybody: airline fares are more attractive by adding lodging, participating hotels fill rooms that would otherwise be vacant, and the consumer saves—sometimes.

If you are considering packages that offer a "without air" option, be sure to shop independently for your air tickets. One couple I know saved \$400 each by taking Uniworld's "cruise only" option and buying their air separately.—RHB

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: **bbrn** Password: **6924**

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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

BAIERSBRONN*Continued from page 1*

international attention brought by the high Michelin ratings, tourism remains very local and low-key. Year after year, families return to the same places to spend a week or two swimming, hiking, and eating in casual yet high-quality surroundings.

The funny thing about Baiersbronn is that it is a town in name only. It's really a loose collective of nine villages banded together to keep administrative costs down. Even a municipality of 16,351 people and 500 guesthouses feels much, much smaller when they are strung along a narrow tributary river like beads on a string. You can drive 57 km along the Murg and still be within the town limits, 80 percent of which is covered with woods.

This is important to know when planning your trip, particularly if a car is not part of the plan. Each sub-municipality is really a self-contained community, and many accommodations are designed for guests who plan to do some serious kicking back and have little urge to run around. Since there is no town center, choice of accommodation, location, and transport is of the highest importance. Trains and public buses are available, but understandably far-flung. With so much good food around, it's not a bad idea to take advantage of Baiersbronn's wealth of outdoor activities and 680 miles of hiking trails. A healthy and vigorous way to get around without a car is by mountain bike. The locals also advocate inline skating in summer and cross-country skiing in winter, but unless you plan to spend all your time at a full-service resort, a car is very practical in a place like this, and strongly recommended, if only for scenic drives along Route 500, the *Schwarzwaldhochstrasse*, or to explore the five nearby lakes or the Sankenbach waterfall. The scenic Mummelsee Lake, incidentally, is said to have no fish, but local legend claims it has water sprites.

Other than the medieval monastery in Klosterreichenbach, there are no notable monuments except Nature itself and those fabled restaurants. Given that there is only so much you can say about trees, let's just cut to the chow, shall we?

If money is no object and you really want a relaxing time, just bivouac at

Baiersbronn Basics**Population:** 16,350**Elevation:** 534-790 meters (1,752-2,592 ft)

Visitor information: Baiersbronn Tourist Office Rosenplatz 3, tel +49/7442/8414-0, fax 8414-48, www.baiersbronn.de, info@baiersbronn.de

Driving distances from Baiersbronn:

Berlin	720 km	450 miles
Baden-Baden	138 km	86 miles
Frankfurt	209 km	131 miles
Karlsruhe	68 km	42 miles
Stuttgart	158 km	98 miles
Munich	170 km	106 miles
Zürich	203 km	127 miles

Rail Travel:

From the ICE-railway stations in Karlsruhe and Stuttgart, trains run hourly to Baiersbronn.

Traube Tonbach or Hotel Bareiss—two luxury resorts that offer every reason never to leave. They are like family summer camp, where everyone knows each other, and where vacationing kids grow up together. Besides fabulous food and comfortable rooms overlooking the hills, there are spa treatments, sports, mind-blowing bathing facilities, cooking classes and organized activities for all ages, even evening concerts. They are in many ways remarkably similar. Both are family owned, located some five km from each other in an area that combines hillside rambles with Baiersbronn's more populated villages. Both employ almost the same number of staff as they have guests, and both are routinely voted among the top destination resorts in Germany.

But which to choose? Although the two look almost identical on paper, they are somewhat different in style, as we detail in the reviews below. Michelin correctly gives an edge to Traube Tonbach's Schwarzwaldstube restaurant over the flagship Restaurant Bareiss under Chef Klaus-Peter Klumpp, although we found the best overall dish of the weekend at Bareiss. Traube Tonbach is the more international, while the smaller Bareiss preserves a strong local character. For budget-conscious hedonists, the two hotels' more casual dining options offer an excellent and possibly even more interesting value for the thrifty non-guest. Please note that room rates at these exceptional properties are PER PERSON per day and include room, breakfast, in some cases dinner, most leisure activities, and use of the

sports facilities. Non-guests can visit the restaurants, of course.

Because of the fee structure, we do not recommend the Bareiss or Traube Tonbach for short overnight stays on a crowded itinerary. They are destinations in themselves, and you will want to have enough time to take advantage of all the amenities.

If these two high-flyers are a little too rich for your blood, there are many other pleasant choices along the Murg. Indeed, there is something here for everyone, from backpackers to classic car enthusiasts.

Hotel Bareiss

Although this 1951 hotel has been recently refurbished, it still retains the old-fashioned casual elegance that keeps its faithful clientele returning every year. From the cheerful begonias cascading over the hotel's curved balconies to the warm greeting by name when we arrived, we knew everything was going to be perfect.

A distinctive feature was the fitness and bathing complex, which went far beyond the usual hotel pool/gym/spa formula. Besides a decadent beauty spa offering everything from Thalago to week-long Ayurveda treatments, there is an elaborate indoor-outdoor system of waterworks. They have even built a self-cleaning, natural swimming pond in the garden complete with white sand beach and beach chairs. There is also a crazy but entertaining heated outdoor saltwater pool with a current channel and water mushroom fountain. At six in the morning, a group of rubber-capped Germans were dutifully taking a water aerobics class in the Homeric indoor seawater pool.

The other distinctive feature is that the Bareiss, despite being a large luxury hotel, feels like a local inn with unique character. Service by charming young staff in traditional dress reaches the highest levels of perfection without the least hint of stuffiness. Owner Hermann Bareiss, whose mother started the hotel, clearly loves his land and loves to help his guests discover its charms. He has purchased and restored a 300-year-old farmhouse and baker's mill behind the hotel, which now provides a fascinating glimpse into the past and authentic country cuisine for special events. (The farmhouse is open by prior arrange-

ment only, although the grounds and garden are open to the public.) Inside, there is an exhibit of a treasure trove of old folk remedies and healers' recipes found under the floorboards. Some tawny cows graze nearby, a heritage breed so sturdy that they thrive in the forest pasture all winter with no care.

As part of a community effort to bring together Baiersbronn's outdoor and culinary attractions, the hotel provides food for a public wanderer's hut called the Sattelai an easy 25 minutes' hike from the hotel. After walking gently uphill through the woods, the wanderer is rewarded with the best black forest cake in the Black Forest. Beer, grilled sausages, and other simple forest fare are available at low prices to all comers in a cozy log hut with views over the hills. That's all the motivation I need to climb up there for a pre-lunch.

The hotel runs a huge list of activities beyond the typical fitness classes. A daily bulletin informs guests about guided hiking, fly-fishing, Nordic walking, dancing, tennis, or local tours. There might be a concert or a sausage cook-out. Guests can also arrange a private hunting guide or a visit to one of the nearby golf courses or a drive in the hotel's 1928 Ford. I can see now why Bareiss holidays are ideally a week or more. There's too much to do, and there's a 20 percent rate discount for stays longer than four days.

Kids have their own luxury playhouse called the Villa Kunterbunt. When I visited, two little tykes were being entertained by three staffers and a puppet theater, playhouse, toys, and games. The hotel also has a special kids' program during European school holidays besides the daily age-appropriate programs. For the older kids, there is a pool table, ping pong, foosball, videos, and computer games. Grownups have card and casino games available in the evenings.

Although most of the hotel's interior has been updated from its original dark wood, the bright new look is still very classic. The hotel's dining rooms all have different decorations. One has Biedermeier furniture, one is hung with old photographs, while another has carved wooden beams and painted ceilings to remind guests that they are in the Black Forest. All are warm and inviting, especially for afternoon tea by

the fireplace on a winter's day. Corridors are decorated with chintz-covered chairs and ceramic chimneys.

Rooms are also all individually designed and decorated, generally with a country chic style in pastel colors. We were given Room 73, a spacious and rather quirky 50s modern retro-styled suite with a pink quilt-covered double bed, a semicircular seating area with an armchair and window seat upholstered in dusty rose, and an extra single bedroom plus a large curved balcony with sweeping hillside views. The enormous, brand-new bathroom was fitted with a high-tech power shower, his and hers vanities including luxury toiletries, and a large Jacuzzi tub. My favorite touch was a leather-handled rattan tote bag to bring to the pool.

Room 14 is a stunning double that opens directly onto a private garden terrace. Fresh-flowered curtains hang down to the floor over delicately striped wallpaper, and the wrought iron bed and seating area are done with coordinating red and white fabrics. The blue-and-white bathroom has been newly renovated in an old-fashioned style with two pedestal sinks, separate shower and tub. Room 26 is a spectacular double room in sophisticated yellow and bold black stripes. There is a corner fireplace and French doors leading to a patio garden, plus a claw-foot bathtub and a four-poster canopy bed on bare wooden floors.

Even if you aren't staying in the hotel, you can still enjoy Bareiss hospitality on a budget by hiking up to Sattelai (open all year from 11pm-5pm) for a well-deserved forester's lunch or booking a table in the cozy Dorfstuben. While you're at Bareiss, check out the lovely shops. They have a terrific selection of resort wear, home décor items, and a beautiful toy shop. Best of all is an extensive newsstand with a huge range of international press.

The drawback is that for some bizarre reason the hotel doesn't accept credit cards for rooms (credit cards are accepted for everything else, including shops and restaurants). Suddenly, I understand why the clientele is so devoid of non-Europeans. To pay for a room, you have to use Maestro EC card (a European debit card), travelers' checks, international wire transfers, or

cash. For stays longer than four nights, discount and seasonal rates apply. For shorter stays, specific rooms and categories are not guaranteed. The 99 rooms, suites, and family apartments are all very different, so it is worthwhile to examine them upon arrival to find the style and configuration that suits you. Most include balcony or patio, seating area, and private bath. Reservations at the Dorfstuben and Restaurant Bareiss must be made separately.

Contact: Hotel Bareiss in the Black Forest, Gärtenbühlweg 14, D-72270 Baiersbronn-Mitteltal, tel. +49/074/42 47 0, fax +49/074/42 47 320, info@bareiss.com, www.bareiss.com

Daily Per Person Rates: Singles €158-178, doubles €164-188, apartments €170-240, suites/penthouses from €240. Prices include breakfast and dinner. Discounts for children and for stays longer than four days.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 14/20

The Dorfstuben in Hotel Bareiss

If the main two-star Restaurant Bareiss (see our review in next month's issue) is formal, expensive, and international, the Dorfstuben is cozy, rustic, and unabashedly regional—not to mention a lot cheaper, and with the same excellent service and ingredients. In fact, I could argue that for the first-time visitor to the Black Forest, the Dorfstuben is the more interesting of the two restaurants. It feels like a 19th century forest cabin. One dining room is dominated by a huge green tiled fireplace and dozens of cuckoo clocks, the other by a portrait of a forest ranger and mounted hunting trophies. Iron chandeliers hung with fresh green wreaths hover low over the wooden tables, adding to the warm glow.

The food is honest, hearty, and nicely prepared without the least concession to international tastes, dietary concerns, or nouvelle cuisine. When I asked for a small portion of rich stewed lentils with sausages and onion marmalade (the menu says all dishes can be served in smaller amounts), they brought enough to feed a regiment (€9.50). The homemade bread was fabulous with sweet farm butter, lard, cream cheese, and raw radishes. The trout was local, wild, and lovingly cold-smoked. It came with a horseradish mousse with

EDITOR'S
CHOICE

trout roe and sliced hard-boiled eggs for €7.90. The plate of high-quality regional sliced cold cuts also came with a small side salad for €9.50. The Murgthtal grass-fed beef (€19.20), from the same grazing herd we had seen on the farm, fell short of perfection, being undersalted and overcooked. The beef itself is soft and very delicate and pale, without that big fatty flavor of American corn-fed beef. It was roasted and smothered in a thick blanket of onions and gravy, with a *Maultaschen* pasta pocket, salad, and handmade *Spätzle* on the side. The stuffed veal breast (€13.60) was much better, being full of flavor from its tasty ground meat filling. A Swabian potato and green salad were the accompaniments. But the dish to die for was the thick rings of apples fried like fritters, served on a cobweb of vanilla and raspberry sauces. I think this was the best Swabian meal we had the entire trip.

Contact: Dorfstuben/Hotel Bareiss
Gärtenbühlweg 14, D-72270 Baiersbronn-Mitteltal, tel. +49/074/42 47 0, fax +49/074/42 47 320,
info@bareiss.com, www.bareiss.com
Rating: QUALITY 18/20, VALUE 17/20

Hotel Traube Tonbach

It all started in 1789 when Tobias Finkbeiner opened a pub for wagon drivers and lumberjacks in the Tonbachtal. His son, Ludwig, added a bakery after returning as the only survivor of 25 local boys who invaded Russia with Napoleon. His grandson, Johann Georg, added a distillery and cider press. His great-grandson, Friedrich, got the idea of bringing in wine from Baden when his own attempts at winemaking failed. Great-great-grandson Heinrich started renting rooms at the suggestion of a lost hiker. During the war, the Traube was requisitioned, but in 1957 great-great-grandson Willi got things started back up again and turned the inn into a resort hotel. In 1978, he brought in chef Harald Wohlfahrt to head the restaurant's now-famed Schwarzwaldstube. Great-great-great-great grandson Heiner Finkbeiner took over from his uncle Willi in 1993, the same year Schwarzwaldstube was awarded three Michelin stars. Lots of places claim to have a long family tradition, but few with more right than the Traube. Elegant and gracious Heiner Finkbeiner

literally has the hotel business in his blood.

For all its long history—by the way, Tobias' original pub is now the Traube's informal Bauernstube restaurant—the Traube is quite contemporary country chic. If the Bareiss preserves a kind of retro German holiday atmosphere, the Traube is a tad more cosmopolitan. The interiors harmoniously combine streamlined modern fixtures with polished pine and warm country fabrics. Everything from the Schwarzwaldstube's use of exotic spices and coconut milk to the Qi spa treatments, show a more international fusion style. Maybe because of the prestigious three-star restaurant or the fact that the hotel agrees to take credit cards, clients are more international as well. Moreover, an astounding 80 percent have stayed three times or more, a real testament to quality.

Honestly, the differences in amenities, facilities, and service are fairly small, really coming down to décor and minor details. The Traube's public areas and spa facilities are more contemporary and luxurious, though the rooms lack the individual character of the Bareiss. Room 167 at the Traube is a large double in the main building with a wall of windows and a long balcony too narrow for a chair. Besides the carved pine headboard and the sunny hillside view, however, there is little of the romance of the Black Forest. The rest of the furniture, upholstered in red, has a practical, corporate blandness. The plain white tiled bathroom is nicely fitted with two wall-mounted basins, a tub with a hand shower, and chrome fittings, all chosen for that streamlined-yet-classic look.

Other amenities and activities are similar to those of the Bareiss. Children have their own daytime activities in the gymnasium-sized playroom, and there is a state-of-the-art cooking school for three-star culinary classes. Besides the facilities also available at the Bareiss, the Traube has an "igloo" bath, indoor tennis courts, a bowling alley, and a trout stream. Its location along the main street of Tonbach village does not feel like a Black Forest gated community, as even such a small street disrupts that feeling of seclusion. Despite that, the warm feeling of a family establishment pervades everything. It's hard to go

wrong at either property.

Contact: Hotel Traube Tonbach, 72270 Baiersbronn im Schwarzwald, tel. +49/744/2 492 0, fax +49/744/2 4 92 692,
info@traube-tonbach.de, www.traube-tonbach.de, Finkbeiner family

Daily Per Person Rates: Singles €105-185, doubles and apartments from €101-178, penthouse from €208 per person. Discounts for children. Half board available for €16 per person, two night minimum.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 14/20

(Next month, you can read Ms. Itoi's review of the hotel's famed Schwarzwaldstube, one of six Michelin three-star restaurants in Germany.)

Unfortunately, time and appetite did not permit her to try Traube Tonbach's informal pub, the historic Bauernstube. However, she says the menu had some interesting and updated-sounding regional specialties at attractive prices, at €7-18. A three-course regional menu was offered for €29.)

Forsthaus Auerhahn

Charming Forsthaus Auerhahn is about 15 miles north and a world away from the pricey big boys, but if you

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.travelessentials.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.

really want to get away from it all for a lot fewer euros, this is the place. The Hinterlagen bus stop serves this isolated hamlet of 10 people and two families, counting the Zepfs, the friendly owners of Auerhahn. Originally a 200-year-old forestry house, this beautifully maintained family inn feels very much like a little house in the Big Woods near some of the area's best hiking trails. The Auerhahn consists of three steeply roofed and flower-covered buildings clustered on a thickly wooded hillside overlooking a valley with a small stream. When we pulled up, families were basking on the sunny terrace while the chef was setting up a huge barbecue to grill sausages in the street. Clearly, this road doesn't experience a lot of traffic.

Inside, the lobby and rooms have warm, contemporary pine furnishings and clean, modern fabrics in soothing dark blues or pale pinks. Rooms are spacious, practical, and up-to-date with heated towel racks, double sinks, and sunny views on all sides. Some family apartments have kitchens.

The bathing and spa facilities are incredible for such a modest location. The indoor pool is surrounded by round boulders and potted palms and has cascading streams from a nearby creek. There are also indulgent Maria Galland and Thalasso treatments, plus a sauna and hot tubs. There are daily organized activities, including hiking, mountain biking, fishing, and farm visits. Children have their own facilities as well.

The cozy, nonsmoking restaurant is done in cheerful colors and modern lines and serves regional cuisine. They will also pack box lunches for hikers. And there is a smoker's lounge decorated as a hunting lodge with carved country chairs. Room rates include half pension (breakfast and dinner), but there is also a reasonably extensive a la carte menu with appetizers from €3.50-8.50, main courses from €11-20, and desserts for €4.90.

Hinterlagenbach is pretty far removed from anything else in Baiersbronn, but it is a great place to look for solitude if you have time and a car. Because of road construction, Hinterlagenbach is even more isolated than normal and can't be

reached directly from the Rhine River valley. But then, getting away from it all never felt so good.

Contact: Forsthaus Auerhahn, D-72270 Baiersbronn-Hinterlagenbach, tel. +49/07447/934 0, fax 934 199, hotel@forsthaus-auerhahn.de, www.forsthaus-auerhahn.de

Daily Per Person Rates: €63-90 during high season, including breakfast and dinner. Discounts for stays over four days. Two-night minimum.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20

Waldknechtshof Ferienappartements

"The traffic's very bad here," said the guide. There were all of two cars on the main highway passing in front of Waldknechtshof, including ours. We pulled in front of a steeply roofed converted farmhouse dating from 1769. Ten years ago, it was renovated in a rather wild ultra-modern fashion and turned into holiday apartments with a finer dining restaurant and pub. The result is a fanciful marriage of exposed timbers and steel beams.

The rooms, naturally, are all different, nicely decorated apartments with contemporary furnishings, and quite spacious. Some are entirely modern, while others show unexpected architectural features, like a naked wooden beam in the middle of a clean, white-tiled bathroom. The sloping attic rooms are the most atmospheric, with an interesting mix of old and new.

No Caracallan baths here, but at least Restaurant Meierei's menu shows the same wild fancy as the modern architecture. Christian Heinsohn serves a multicourse, multicolored creative Swabian tasting menu for €62 per person in a stone dining room filled with antiques.

The hotel does not have much in the way of extensive grounds, but there is a manicured lawn patio with a few picnic tables. When we visited, only one person was on duty to handle the hotel and the pub, so service was slow and hectic. However, the unique architecture and creative interiors make this a worthwhile short overnight option in Baiersbronn, where most places cater to longer-term guests.

Contact: Waldknechtshof, Baiersbronn Strasse 4, D-72270 Baiersbronn-Klosterreichenbach, tel. +49/07442/ 84 84 0, fax 84 84 410, info@walddknechtshof.de, www.waldknechtshof.de

Daily Per Person Rates: Singles from €104, doubles from €114

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel Gasthof Rosengarten

The first thing one notices about the Rosengarten is that someone is wild about minerals. There are pretty rocks and crystals and geodes everywhere, many on exhibit like a natural history museum, and some for sale. The next thing is the immaculate quality and excellent value of the hotel. Everything is beautifully kept up and in perfect order, with little welcome signs on the polished pine doors. The hotel is just a few steps away from the town square, but our room had a large private patio with an expanse of hill behind it. For €110 a night, it's hard to beat. Black granite bathroom counters, check. Heated towel rack, check. Shower but no tub, well ok. Since there's a nice indoor pool and spa downstairs, maybe we can do without the tub.

The only minus was the sour expression on our young waitress' face when we went for a light supper. We were the only ones in the restaurant that night apart from a few patrons having a drink on the patio, but she clearly wasn't happy to see us or take an order in English. It took quite a while to finally get the Swabian wurst salad (€5.10) and the plate of cold cuts (€8.80), the beverages, and finally, cutlery. Main courses €8-14. Good thing we had eaten so much at lunch at Schwarzwaldstube. Restaurant service notwithstanding, the Rosengarten makes an excellent, well-located budget sleep for anyone in town who wants to eat at one of the Bareiss or Traube Tonbach restaurants.

Contact: Hotel Gasthof Rosengarten, Bildstöckleweg 35, 72270 Baiersbronn/Schwarzwald. Tel: +49/07442/84 43 0, fax 84 34 34, info@rosengarten-baiersbronn.de, www.rosengarten-baiersbronn.de, Klumpp family

Daily Per Person Rates: €43-65

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel-Café Rundblick

I have to mention this place, a very basic B&B style family-run inn above a bakery. First of all, the plain guestrooms are extremely reasonably priced at about €20 a person including breakfast. And because of the bakery, which sells out some 2,500 pretzels a day, the bread couldn't be fresher.

The most outstanding feature, however, is the owner. Mr. Otto Klumpp is mad about restoring vintage cars. In the dozen or so garages under the hotel, he tinkers on about 10 of them, all lovingly resurrected from heaps of rust. There's a Ford Model T and a classic cream-colored Citroen convertible with rumble seat, popular for weddings. There's even a 60s vintage VW minibus, a Dixi, and a Model T Mini for the kids that can do about five miles an hour. Mr. Klumpp loves any excuse to take his babies on the road, making his morning bread deliveries in a 1936 Mercedes or giving tours of the Black Forest in a 1914 green touring car. In fact, earlier that day I had taken a picture of the blacktop Rundblick Express making its way past the Ba-reiss. This is a must stop for any classic car enthusiast, and, for a few euros, Mr. Klumpp will be thrilled to drive you around.


Not surprisingly, the hotel, which dates to 1840 but was completely redone sometime in the 1960s, is full of model cars. The hallways, which tend to be a little dark, have cabinets crammed with cars of all kinds. Otherwise the décor is very much like a normal home rather than a hotel, down to the mismatched lamps and little lace doilies. Some rooms have kitchen facilities. All are bright and clean, if a little worn. The three bathrooms we saw were immaculate and appear to have been recently remodeled.

The common rooms are both spacious and homey, and the lounge looks like somebody's grandmother's living room. And downstairs, they have their very own bowling alley! If you're looking for local character, the Rundblick has it in spades. Fair warning, the guestrooms are located above the dozen covered garages, so you may hear occasional backfires. There

are no nearby restaurants or shops, so either bring your own car or hire one of Mr. Klumpp's.

Contact: Hotel-Café Rundblick, Oberdorfstr. 37, D-72270 Baiersbronn, tel. +49/744/2 35 87, fax +49/744/2 6 03 39, www.cafe-rundblick.de, Otto Klumpp family

Daily Per Person Rates: Singles €20-24, doubles €19-23 per person, apartments €28-32, kids 6-12 pay €11.

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 15/20 

DAYTRIPS

Continued from page 1

cedes on 15th-century buildings along three sides facing the 16th-century Rathaus. Trains to Stein am Rhein leave Schaffhausen every half-hour. The trip takes 25 minutes and another five minutes on foot to the old town.

Lunch: Hotel Rheinfels, Stein am Rhein, Rhygasse 8, tel. 0527/424 242

Getting There: One-way rail fare, CHF 18 - 29; one-way travel time, 56 minutes; frequency, about every 30 minutes.

ST. GALLEN

Though not a preserved museum of the Rothenburg/Gruyères genre, St. Gallen's *Altstadt* has considerable charm with many fine 16C and 18C houses with painted facades. The main attractions here, however, are the Abbey's Library and Cathedral, which dates to 720.

For hundreds of years the city's main business has been textiles and many of France's leading couture houses come to St. Gallen for their fabrics. If it wished, St. Gallen could lay claim to being the brassiere capital of Europe as 65% of the total Swiss production of embroidery is in ladies' lingerie.

What to See:

- *Textile Museum.* The exhibition of hand-embroidered lace on the museum's upper floor is not to be missed.

- *Stiftsbibliothek.* The Abbey's rococo library rates three stars — "worth a journey." Its treasures have remained essentially intact over the centuries.

- *Cathedral.* Similar in style to — and matching the grandeur of — the great Baroque churches of southern Germany.

Lunch: netts schützengarten, St. Jacobstrasse 35, tel. 426 677, or Neubad, Bankgasse 6, tel. 228 683

Getting There: One-way fare, CHF 27 - 45; one-way travel time, 65 minutes; frequency, about every 30 minutes.

LUCERNE

Perhaps the most beautiful city in Switzerland, and the most popular with tourists. A favorite of Queen Victoria's and the part-time home of composers Richard Wagner and Sergei Rachmaninoff.

What to See:

- *The Old Town.* A network of old houses, squares, and churches including the Collegiate Church, an important Renaissance building, and the Baroque Jesuit Church, make for a pleasant stroll.

- *Kapellbrücke.* Medieval-style, covered, pedestrian bridge over the Reuss River, the oldest wooden bridge in Europe, built in 1333. Destroyed by fire in 1993 but meticulously restored.

- *Museum of Swiss Transportation.* The complex of modern buildings includes a Rail Transport section featuring old trains of all descriptions — electric, steam gas and diesel — and a number of cable lifts, old and new; an Aeronautics section, and Navigation section. Aeronautics has several outdoor exhibits including the first Swissair Lockheed six-passenger airliner, a faithful Douglas DC-3, and a few jetliners. Navigation has an amazing collection of ship models: sailing ships, container ships, ocean liners, and some full-sized life boats. (Lidostrasse 5, reached in 10 minutes by #2 bus from the train station).

- *Museum of Art Lucerne (Kunstmuseum) designed by Jean Nouvel.* Features mainly Swiss art from the Renaissance to the present day. The museum is probably best known as part of an architecturally-celebrated lakeside complex that includes a

concert hall and congress center.

- *Richard Wagner House*. The composer lived here in his "Haus Tribschen" from 1866 to 1872 with Cosima von Bülow, daughter of Franz Liszt, and where he composed *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. (Wagnerweg 27, open Mar. 15-Nov. 30, 10am to 12pm and 2pm to 5pm)

Lunch: Hotel Wilden Mann, Bahnhofstr 30, tel. 412 101 666; Hotel Rebstock, St Leodegarstr. 3, tel. 414 103 581

Getting There: One-way fare, CHF 22 - 37; one-way travel time, 50 minutes; frequency, about every 30 minutes.

EINSIEDELN

A pilgrimage town chiefly interesting for its magnificent and gigantic Klosterkirche, a Benedictine monastery built early in the 18th century. Michelin says it's "worth a detour." The rest of the town is unremarkable but deserves a 30-45 minute stroll.

What to See:

- *Klosterkirche* (Abbey Church). The breathtaking interior is mostly the work of the Asam brothers, the same duo who designed Munich's Asam Church. See the tiny, but stunning, chapel of the "Black Madonna," and the Grosser Saal, the Abbey's Great Hall, on the second floor of the monastery. Follow the signs around to the right.

Lunch: Linde, Schmiedenstr. 28, tel. 0554 184 848, or the terrace of Hotel Drei Könige, with its view of the Klosterplatz backdropped by the imposing monastery and church.

Getting There: One-way fare, CHF 16 - 27; one-way travel time, 49 minutes; frequency, about every 30 minutes. ☒

News/Deals

■ **Berlin's New Natural History Museum:** After undergoing a €17.7 million overhaul, Berlin's Museum of Natural History will reopen five newly designed and reconstructed exhibit halls this July. Its renowned dinosaur hall boasts the world's tallest mounted dinosaur skeleton, the *Brachiosaurus Brancai*. Contact: Museum für Naturkunde, Invaliden-

str. 43, www.naturkundemuseum-berlin.de. Open Tuesday-Friday 9:30am-5pm, weekends and holidays 10am-6pm, adult admission €3.50, children €2.

■ **Star of the Show:** All eyes at the **Berlin Zoo** this summer will be on an adorable baby polar bear named Knut. Born in December 2006, the zoo's newest addition has already made the cover of *Vanity Fair* magazine. Contact: Berlin Zoo, Hardenbergplatz 8, www.zoo-berlin.de, open daily 9am-6:30pm. Adults €11; children €5.50.

■ **Art from a Vienna Supermarket:** Do you shop for art in Europe but have trouble finding galleries with affordable prices? Try **M-ARS**, Vienna's new art supermarket where "real art at affordable prices" is the watchword, and where 50 young artists have been chosen to display and sell their work. Selections constantly change in an inventory of about 1,000 pieces. Scanner checkouts and shelf-edge labeling create a supermarket atmosphere. Quality is important as a respected jury decides which artists go on sale. M-ARS, 7th district, Westbahnstrasse 9, Mon-Wed 10am-7pm, Thu-Fri 10am-8pm, Sat 10am-6pm, www.m-ars.at

■ Germany Summer Packages:

Erfurt. A pair of two-night packages: "First Taste of Erfurt" includes hotel, breakfasts, a Thuringian-style dinner at a traditional restaurant, and a guided tour of the city at rates from €123 per person, double. The "Happy Weekend" deal includes hotel and breakfasts, plus a tour of Petersberg Fortress's underground passageways, admission to museums, free travel on trams and buses, and a stop for coffee and Erfurt cake at rates starting at €119 per person. Contact: www.erfurt-tourist-info.de, info@erfurt-tourist-info.de

Heidelberg. Offers one to three nights deals through October. Rates per person, double, start at €70 for one night, €110 for two nights, and €150 for three nights. All include lodging with breakfast, a guided walking tour of the city, a Neckar

River excursion, unlimited travel on the funicular railway, entrance to Heidelberg Castle, a castle tour, and admission to 12 museums. Contact: www.cvb-heidelberg.de, info@cvb-heidelberg.de.

Lübeck. A "City of Seven Spires" package includes lodging with breakfast, public transportation, sightseeing admissions, and discounts. Prices are €105-159 per person, double, through Dec. 20, except for a €10 discount during October-November. Contact: www.luebeck-tourism.de, marketing-hl@luebeck-tourismus.de

Münster. Germany's "Bicycle City" offers a "Münster a la Carte" deal that includes two nights lodging with breakfast, a bus ticket or use of bicycle for one day, a guided tour of Old Town, and a visit to the city museum. Rates start at €99 per person, double. Contact: www.tourismus.muenster.de, tourismus@stadt-muenster.de.

Trier. "Romans and Wine" initiates guests to the noble vintages of the Mosel Valley, where 2,000 years of viticulture has shaped Germany's oldest town. The two-night arrangement includes accommodations with breakfast, city walking tour, wine tasting at a local winery, a vintner's supper, a city guidebook, and a four-course wine-tasting dinner or a Roman-themed wine dinner prepared according to ancient recipes. Rates range from €165-205 per person, double, through Nov. 4, and €152 to €191 Nov. 5 through Dec. 31. Contact: www.trier.de, hotel@tit.de.

■ Frankfurt-Paris Rail Time Slashed:

On June 10 a new Frankfurt-Paris rail line will open to high speed ICE and TGV trains. At speeds of up to 200mph it will cut travel time on direct trains from about 6.25 hours to below four hours. The 2nd-class fare will be €99. ☒

One-Stop Shopping:

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