

DEAR  
SUBSCRIBER

### On our best behavior

When it first became a regular feature in August of 1990, *Dear Subscriber* was envisioned as a place to expound some sort of “*Gemütlichkeit* philosophy” where lofty ideas about the more cerebral and spiritual aspects of travel could be explored. Though a conscious decision was never made not to, the notion never became reality. The result of this aimless policy is that we have left the deep stuff to those who beat the drum for politically correct travel; the ones who use terms such as “sustainability” and sometimes go so far as to question whether ordinary Americans are even culturally sophisticated enough to travel abroad. The *60 Minutes* reporter, Morley Safer, once suggested too many American visitors are a factor in the rapid decay of Europe’s ancient treasures. His solution? Stay home.

Given year after year of record travel numbers to Europe, we’ve obviously rejected Morley’s silly suggestion. Nonetheless, I suppose keeping us clueless, shorts-clad American tourists on our best behavior overseas is a job somebody has to do. (Don’t misunderstand, *Gemütlichkeit* is all for good manners abroad: please don’t take pictures in the cathedral when the sign says “please don’t take pictures;” wear appropriate clothing; don’t use the hotel’s buffet breakfast to build your picnic lunch; do try to speak a little of the language; be observant of local customs, and so on.) Though there are times I’ve cringed in the presence of fellow Americans acting foolishly, I wish I could say I was without sin. As an invited dinner guest to private homes, I took gifts of wine until I discovered that some European hosts interpret this gesture of goodwill as indicating their own wine isn’t good enough. In my

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## Bern: The Swiss Capital

*From museums to gardens to—bears? —Switzerland’s underrated capital offers an appealing blend of medieval roots and modern culture.*

**B**ern ranks among the most beautiful and unique capital cities in the World. Indeed, in 1983 its *Altstadt* was selected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its “positive example of how a medieval urban structure can be adapted to fulfill functions which are increasingly complex, notably the function of a capital city of a modern State.” While the *Altstadt*’s (old town) low-key atmosphere, cobblestone streets, and many shops, are typical of other Swiss towns, Bern manages to set itself apart in myriad ways.

Its straight, wide, arcade-lined streets—first laid-out in the 12<sup>th</sup> century—are different from Switzerland’s more typical narrow, winding lanes. (Watch out for trams and buses

that hurtle down some of the otherwise car-free streets). The architecture also has a strikingly unified feeling: The city’s arcades (covered walkways) are framed by tall arches; elaborate fountains built in the sixteenth century depict men, women, and animals wearing bright colors; and stone building facades, sharing the same shade of soft brownish gray, are distinguished only by slight differences in their ornate, gold-accented window grates. Squeezed inside a tight, horseshoe bend of the Aare River, the *Altstadt* is also home to several impressive bridges that not only offer views of the fast-moving, crystal-clear river, but of the surrounding hills.

*Continued on page 3...*

## Great Black Forest Eats

*This review of Baiersbronn’s two most celebrated restaurants is the second and final installment of Lydia Itoi’s report on the Black Forest resort.*

### Restaurant Bareiss

The dining room is small and feels very old school formal. Tall silver candlesticks flicker over the white marble fireplace, and the rich silk curtains and paneled walls shut out the rest of the world. We got off to a predictable start with solemn little canapés and the now required spoonfuls of chopped raw tuna tartare and tiny nibbles of cured salmon prepared three ways. The first call to attention was the rosy slice of veal raised right here at the Bareiss’ Morlokhof farm. It was draped over a square of tomato and olive-stud-

ded polenta with a creamy chive sauce. Next was an oddly pink Breton lobster, probably marinated and served cold on avocado-basil puree with a second cantaloupe sauce. I couldn’t decide if this combo was successful, but the marriage with a Baden 2003 Myophorium was brilliant. Mr. Fendt, the sommelier, was a wonderful guide to the local wines, explaining that the area was full of sea fossils and that this particular wine had spent a year and a half in oak grown not 200 yards from the vineyards. The long barreling had created a marvelous creamy complexity that did not overwhelm the fruit. The kitchen then sent out a

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**Exchange rates as of 7/3/2007**

**1 euro = \$1.36**

**1 Swiss franc = \$0.82**

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ignorance I have no doubt committed many gaffes of which I was totally unaware. Others have been quickly brought to my attention. Once driving between Munich and Salzburg on the Autobahn, I passed a man in a \$100,000 Mercedes sports coupe going at precisely the 80 kmph speed limit marked for that section. As I eased by him at about 100 kmph, he chastised my disregard for the law by flashing at me from his car's window a small replica of the 80 kmph speed limit sign. No doubt he had more signs at the ready for other scofflaws. (By now you've spotted the cultural difference; Teutonic advance planning vs. the New World's spur-of-the-moment single digit.)

A Navy friend told me this story: On a Christmas Day sometime in the '70s he and his family drove from his base in Italy to Garmisch-Partenkirchen. During the trip they ran into snowstorms and passed through highway construction zones. At the end of the trip, his car was a muddy mess. In Garmisch, however, roads were covered in fresh, packed snow and the sky was a deep, cloudless blue; in other words a glorious day. Pausing at a red light in the center of town he looked over at the car stopped in the lane next to him, a gleaming BMW, obviously washed that very morning. Its driver, a 60ish woman, passed her steely eyes slowly over the length of my friend's filthy

car. After a few seconds she looked directly at him and, while slowly shaking her head, waved one long index finger from side to side like a metronome. Message delivered: get that hog washed.

My greatest travel humiliation came on our first trip to Germany many years ago in a restaurant where no English was spoken...whatsoever. To someone with zero German, the menu item *Matjesfilet "Hamburger Art"* might sound vaguely like meat. Wrong. It is several small whole, cold herring; heads, eyes, tails, fins, gills, scales, skin, the works. As appetizing as those dead fish were lying there on that bed of lettuce, they just weren't going to work as my dinner. I would pay for them, of course, willingly, but I needed something else, something hot, something, say, in a pig or a heifer or a duck or maybe a sheep. I would even take vital organs, but no cold fish, thank you. My attempt to communicate an apology to our most pleasant waitress for being an ignorant American, happy to consume one dinner but pay for two (I figured since I never touched the fish they could be re-sold as low-mileage, pre-owned *Matjes*), failed miserably. The good woman naturally assumed it was all her fault for not speaking English. The cook, a broad-shouldered, NFL linebacker-sized woman, saw it differently. As the waitress related the sad story to our cook at the kitchen entrance, Frau Butkus' face darkened and her eyes blazed across the room

at me. Thinking perhaps she spoke a little English, and that this could still be amicably worked out, I left my chair and approached her with my best pasted on smile. She took a couple of steps toward me and we both stopped, facing each other about 15 feet apart. By now, of course, we had the full attention of the entire dining room. I've never seen an angrier German. She pointed a bratwurst of a finger at me and in German said, "When in Germany, speak German." At that she turned and marched back to the kitchen, leaving me like Ralph Kramden, mouth moving but no sound. I rejoined Liz, the waitress brought us some perfectly good lamb chops, we ate quickly, paid and left. There was no charge for the fish.

So we'll leave the travel preachments to others and just keep pumping out the usual, where to sleep, eat, sightsee, and how to get around info—all the while trying to stay on our best behavior. — 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](http://www.gemut.com) (click on "Members"). To access the issues, enter the user name and password published in this space each month. The new codes are:

User Name: **bbrn** Password: **6924**

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**POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO:**  
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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

**BERN***Continued from page 1*

A good way to get a sense of the city is to stroll up to the Rosegarten, on a hill across the Aare. Walk down Nydeggbrücke street, past the Bear Pits (see below), and then follow the signs uphill to the garden. In spring and summer, you'll pass fields of yellow, purple, and white wildflowers before entering the manicured grounds. Bounded by a stone wall, the garden has shrub-lined pathways, subtle fountains, delicately designed flower beds, trellises and, of course, many roses, (depending on the season). There are big grassy areas, shaded by large birches and pines, where in good weather locals sprawl on blankets and kick soccer balls. There's also a café tucked in one corner.

But the best part of the garden is the view back down to Bern. In this single panorama, one gets a sense of all that makes Switzerland a unique destination: the *Altstadt's* red-hued roof shingles clustered within the curve of the Aare, steeples rising from the mass of more modern buildings beyond, all backdropped by a slice of the Alps. It's easy to spend an entire afternoon up here, admiring the view, smelling the flowers, or just lying in the lush grass watching the clouds.

In a country known for the homogeneity of its people, another noteworthy aspect of Bern is its cultural diversity. From drum-playing Africans to dreadlocked hippies to finely dressed politicians, the people-watching is never dull.

**The Pits**

And then there are the Bear Pits, an unlikely attraction, sure to spark debates about the humane treatment of animals. The two stone-lined pits at the end of the main drag in the *Altstadt* until recently housed three European Brown Bears. The last descendant of a long line of Bern-born bears, Urs, was euthanized in March 2007—by the looks of this scrappy fellow in November 2006, it seemed it was probably his time to go. Remaining now are two playful Pyrenees Brown Bears born in the Zoo of Barcelona. Despite the city's efforts to spruce up

**Bern Basics****Population:** 130,000**Elevation:** 542 meters (1,778 ft.)

**Visitor information:** Railway Station, CH-3001 Bern, tel. +41/031/311 6611, fax 312 1233, [info-res@bernetourism.com](mailto:info-res@bernetourism.com), [www.berninfo.com/en/welcome.cfm](http://www.berninfo.com/en/welcome.cfm)

**Driving distances from Bern to:**

Basel	101 km	63 miles
Geneva	156 km	97 miles
Interlaken	58 km	36 miles
Lausanne	106 km	66 miles
Lucerne	118 km	73 miles
Zürich	125 km	78 miles

**Rail/bus times to:**

Zurich	0:58
Lucerne	1:05
Basel	0:54
Lausanne	1:06
Interlaken	0:54
Geneva	1:41

**Closest airports:**

Zurich, Geneva, Basel/Mulhouse

**Events:**

Bern Dance Days, mid-June  
 Gurten Festival: music festival on Gurten hill in Bern, July 19-22, 2007  
 Bern Onion Market: 4th Sunday in Nov.  
 Carnival in Bern: February 2008

the pits a few years ago (by adding some dead trees and boulders) apparently animal laws prevent them from replacing Urs. Thus fundraising for a new bear park is underway.

**Great Museums**

Notable museums are another Bern asset. Topping the list is the prestigious **Museum of Fine Arts** with the world's largest Paul Klee collection plus works by Picasso, Fra Angelico, Kandinsky, Chagall, and others ([www.kunstmuseumbern.ch](http://www.kunstmuseumbern.ch)). The **Einstein House** is where the scientist lived and developed the theory of relativity ([www.einstein-bern.ch](http://www.einstein-bern.ch)). The **Swiss Rifle Museum** offers a comprehensive collection of firearms since 1817. The **Museum of Natural History** contains Europe's largest diorama of mammals and birds presented in natural habitat, as well as the original "Barry," the fabled Saint Bernard rescue dog. Exhibits at the **Swiss Alpine Museum** include 27 alpine topographical models. The **Museum of Communication** displays a huge stamp collection and traces the history of the Swiss postal system and telecommunications.

Bern's Tuesday and Saturday street markets are lively and diverse. Locals and tourists meandering among the Bärenplatz vendor stalls can purchase everything from fruit to jewelry to stuffed animals.

Perhaps the best time to visit Bern is in the summer, when the many cafés have outdoor seating. But anytime is good for exploring the *Altstadt* and walking by the Aare.

**Bern Hotels**

The *Altstadt* is packed with hotels, but even in quieter digs on the outskirts of town, you're never far from the city's lively culture and attractions.

**Hotel Belle Epoque**

Since this hotel was last reviewed in 1998 there have been a few changes. Most notably, new owners took over in 2003 and, though they leased some of the wonderful turn-of-the-century / Art Nouveau art and furniture from the previous owners, much of it is gone. Each room now holds roughly 10 pieces of original art—down from about 50. Still there, however, is the original Toulouse Lautrec poster hanging across from the bar and pieces by Guimard, the architect who designed several Paris metro entrances. Furnishings and wall hangings throughout have been carefully chosen to coordinate with wallpaper and carpets, making each room its own work of art.

Number 52, on the top floor (one flight of stairs required—the lift stops a floor below) under the old building's sloping roof line, is on two levels. Entry at the upper level is into a cozy sitting area. A few steps down a queen-sized bed lies directly beneath a skylight. A painted amoire is tucked into a corner, and a small but sparkling bathroom holds another skylight.

Numbers 31 and 32, near mirror images of each other, are decked out in green and red. Both showcase quality paintings with ornate, gold frames, windows that overlook the street, and two comfy, antique armchairs.

Other highlights of the 17-room hotel (14 standard rooms and three

*Continued on page 5...*

# 15 Summer Festivals: Good Food, Wine, Music and Art

*Europe turns on the charm each summer. From art and antique cars to music, wine, and adventure sports, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland stage events for every pastime. We've scanned the calendars and tapped our own travel experiences to find the best of the bunch. Have you attended any of these events in years past? Send us your review or post it at our new travel forum online at [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com).*

## GERMANY Documenta

**Location:** Kassel  
**Dates:** June 16 – Sept. 23, 2007  
**Description:** The prestigious international art exhibition Documenta comes around only once every five years. This year's event is the 12th since 1955.  
**Hotel:** Residenz Domus  
**Contact:** [www.documenta12.de](http://www.documenta12.de)

## Richard Wagner Festival

**Location:** Bayreuth  
**Dates:** July 25 – Aug. 28  
 Enthusiasts of Wagnerian opera know all about this summer festival in Wagner's very own town and opera house. The event, which has taken on the aura of a pilgrimage, draws thousands of devotees annually and has consistently been sold-out since its inauguration in 1876. You'll have to apply far in advance to get tickets.  
**Hotel:** Lohmühle  
**Contact:** [www.bayreuther-festspiele.de](http://www.bayreuther-festspiele.de)

## Maritime Festival

**Location:** Bremen  
**Dates:** Aug. 3-5, 2007  
 An international lineup of musicians performs on island stages around the city's Vegesack harbor.  
**Hotels:** Lichtsinn, Hockzeithaus, Zur Post  
**Contact:** [www.city-marketing-vegesack.de](http://www.city-marketing-vegesack.de)

## Stuttgart Wine Festival

**Location:** Stuttgart  
**Dates:** Aug. 29 – Sept. 9, 2007  
 Now in its 31st year, the Stuttgart Wine Festival celebrates fine wines and regional cuisine.  
**Hotels:** Graf Zeppelin, Relexa Waldhotel Schatten  
**Contact:** [www.prostuttgart.de](http://www.prostuttgart.de)

## Oktoberfest

**Location:** Munich  
**Dates:** Sept. 22 – Oct. 7, 2007  
**Description:** Carnival tents and Oompah-pah bands, and many rounds of "Ein Prosit" make this an unforgettable

event, though like a sky dive or a mud-bath, once may be enough for this world-famous beer bash.

**Hotels:** Vier Jarhzeiten, Exquisit, Kraft, Acanthus

**Contact:** [www.oktoberfest.de/en/](http://www.oktoberfest.de/en/)

## SWITZERLAND

### Montreux Jazz Festival

**Location:** Montreux  
**Dates:** July 6–21, 2007  
**Description:** Enjoy a world-class musical event in an equally spectacular lakeside setting. This summer's lineup includes John Legend, Norah Jones and Wu-Tang Clan.  
**Hotel:** Masson  
**Contact:** [www.montreuxjazz.com](http://www.montreuxjazz.com)

### Locarno Film Festival

**Location:** Locarno  
**Dates:** Aug. 1–11, 2007  
 Each summer thousands of movie buffs head to Ticino to see debut films of both new and established directors. Films are shown nightly on a giant outdoor screen in Locarno's Piazza Grande.  
**Hotels:** Orselina, Mirafiori, Citadella  
**Contact:** [www.pardo.ch](http://www.pardo.ch)

### Lucerne Festival

**Location:** Lucerne  
**Dates:** Aug. 10–Sept. 16, 2007  
 Since moving to its new home in Jean Nouvelle's architecturally stunning and acoustically near-perfect concert hall in Lucerne's magnificent lakeside Culture & Congress Center, this gathering of the world's top conductors, musicians, and symphony orchestras has increasingly garnered a worldwide reputation that places it on a level with Salzburg.  
**Hotels:** The Hotel, Wilden Mann, Cascada  
**Contact:** [www.lucernefestival.ch](http://www.lucernefestival.ch)

### Grand Raid Critalp

**Location:** Verbier  
**Dates:** Aug. 18, 2007  
 A grueling bike race through the Swiss Alps provides an excellent opportunity for curious spectators. Camp out in Verbier, Heremennces, or Grimenz to get a view of the action. And stop by the bike festival in nearby Sion the Friday before the race.  
**Hotels:** Rosalp, La Rotonde  
**Contact:** [www.grand-raid-cristalp.ch](http://www.grand-raid-cristalp.ch)

More events online at [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com)

## Steckborer-Oktoberfest

**Location:** Steckborn  
**Dates:** Oct. 4-6, 2007  
 This town in eastern Switzerland serves up its own rendition of the international celebration of beer.  
**Hotel:** Frohsinn  
**Contact:** [www.oktoberfest-steckborn.ch](http://www.oktoberfest-steckborn.ch)

## AUSTRIA

### Öblarn Festival 2007

**Location:** Öblarn  
**Dates:** July 14–Aug. 15, 2007  
 The largest open-air theater in the Alps happens only once every five years.  
**Hotels:** Gasthof Bäck 'n Hansl  
**Contact:** [www.oeticket.com/portal/en/culture/opera\\_operetta/johann\\_strauss\\_walzerkonzerte/241/](http://www.oeticket.com/portal/en/culture/opera_operetta/johann_strauss_walzerkonzerte/241/)

### Salzburg Festival

**Location:** Salzburg  
**Dates:** July 27–Aug. 31, 2007  
 Austria's most popular arts festival includes operas, plays, and concerts.  
**Hotels:** Hotel Altstadt, Jedermann  
**Contact:** [www.salzburgfestival.at](http://www.salzburgfestival.at)

### Festival of 1000 Wines

**Location:** Eisenstadt  
**Dates:** Aug. 23–Sept. 2, 2007  
 Seldom-visited Burgenland is emerging as Austria's top wine producing region. The Esterházy Palace Park provides a scenic backdrop for this event.  
**Hotels:** Hotel Burgenland  
**Contact:** [www.austria.info](http://www.austria.info)

### 20th Red Bull Dolomitenmann

**Location:** Lienz  
**Dates:** Sept. 9, 2007  
 This town in the Dolomites hosts numerous summer sporting events. Athletes battle mountains, winds, and whitewater in a quest to become a "Dolomitenmann."  
**Hotels:** Gästehaus Masnata, Haidenhof Gasthof Hotel  
**Contact:** [www.austria.info](http://www.austria.info)

### Eddy Merckx Classic

**Location:** Salzburg  
**Dates:** Sept. 23, 2007  
**Description:** If you're not up for riding with the legendary Belgian bike racer, you can view the action from the sidelines in Thalgau, where the two courses (140km and 108km) diverge.  
**Hotels:** Hotel Struber, Markus Sitticus, Trumer Stube  
**Contact:** [www.eddy-merckx-classic.com](http://www.eddy-merckx-classic.com)

**BERN***Continued from page 3*

junior suites) include live jazz every Sunday, Bern's best old town location deep among shops and restaurants, a breakfast buffet featuring smoked salmon and champagne (not included in room price), and caring, personable owners, Jürg and Bice Musfeld-Brugnoli.

**Contact:** Hotel Belle Epoque, Gerechtigkeitsgasse 18, CH-3011 Bern, tel. +41/031/311 4336, fax 311 3936, [info@belle-epoque.ch](mailto:info@belle-epoque.ch), [www.belle-epoque.ch](http://www.belle-epoque.ch).

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 195-245, doubles CHF 280-340, not including breakfast

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

**Innere Enge**

An easy favorite when last reviewed in 1998, this four-star, jazz-themed hotel still shines. The public rooms, elegant and warm, include a lounge with a fireplace surrounded by red leather armchairs. The restaurant beyond features large picture windows looking over the city and, on clear days, the Alps. Adding to the hotel's special appeal are a rich, ornately carved wood bar and jazz memorabilia everywhere. The basement jazz club features professional lighting and sound, and accomplished musicians.

About half the 26 guestrooms bear the names and memorabilia of jazz greats. Number 26, the Eddie Condon room, displays signed records and photos, and is equipped with twin beds, two wicker chairs, and a flatscreen TV.

Number 29, on a corner, lacks a jazz theme, but engenders a spacious and cohesive feel. There is an antique desk and TV cabinet, love seat, wicker chair, and a dark wood coffee table. Bright flowery curtains frame the windows, and the luxurious bathroom has a separate tub and shower, and two washbasins.

Innere Enge's lone drawback is its location; a short bus ride, but long walk, from the city center. For travelers with cars, parking is free, and the atmosphere is decidedly quieter than at hotels in the busy *Altstadt*.

**Contact:** Innere Enge, Engestrasse 54, CH-3012, Bern, tel. +41/031/309 6111, fax 309 6112, [info@zghotels.ch](mailto:info@zghotels.ch), [www.zghotels.ch](http://www.zghotels.ch)

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 220-255, doubles CHF 250-290. Breakfast buffet CHF 25 per person.

**Rating:** QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 11/20

**Hotel Bern**

With a distinct retro décor, this upscale property, directed by Peter Schiltknecht, has a friendly staff, spacious guestrooms, and two restaurants. The entire hotel, including its 95 rooms, were renovated five years ago in a minimalist, modern style. A raised lobby seating area sports orange, purple, and lime-green bucket seats around small metal tables. Fresh apples are offered on each floor. The fifth floor is nonsmoking. Deluxe rooms occupy the quiet backside of the building, while standard rooms overlook the busy street below.

Number 301's furnishings include two full-sized beds, a futon that converts to a bed, a quirky blue chair shaped somewhat like an orange-peel, a round glass coffee table, and a multicolored checkered carpet. A small, private balcony overlooks the *Altstadt's* shingled roofs.

Number 321, an average-sized single, has a double bed with wood headboard, tile floor and a lime-green, velvet-covered stool beside a metallic desk. There is no view; windows open to the center of the building.

Breakfast is from an ample buffet and, as of May 2007, is included in the room rate, though that may change within the next year.

**Contact:** Hotel Bern, Zeughausgasse 9, CH-3011 Bern, tel. +41(0)31 329 2222, fax +41/031 329 2299, [hotelbern@hotelbern.ch](mailto:hotelbern@hotelbern.ch), [www.hotelbern.ch](http://www.hotelbern.ch).

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 170-230, doubles CHF 195-340.

**Rating:** QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 10/20

**Hotel Kreuz**

Though efficient and a good value, this clean but spare business hotel lacks personality.

Number 310, a typical single,

comes with one narrow bed, small window, built-in desk, and spotless bathroom. On one wall hangs a small abstract print.

You get the same wall art in Number 322 but more space and twin beds. A kidney-shaped desk occupies one corner, and a full tub in the bathroom is an added feature (most rooms just have showers).

Each floor has a small glass-enclosed room with a different community purpose. One harbors a game room with a tiny billiards table and a foosball table; another has computers with free Internet access (there is also free wireless throughout the hotel), and yet another has a self-service tearoom.

The second floor restaurant often hosts large lunch groups from Parliament. The space is bright and open, with hardwood floors and high ceilings.

On the top floor is a small fitness room and sauna, but the rooftop deck is the building's best asset. From it you can see all the city's major landmarks and beyond, including, on clear days, Alpine peaks.

**Key Websites for the Traveler**

- [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com) Gateway site for travelers to Germanic Europe, including car rental, rail passes, hotel bookings, traveler feedback, travel tips, and past issues (free access to back issues for subscribers; see log-on info on page 2).
- [www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com) The Michelin database of hotels and restaurants, plus great interactive trip planning tools.
- [www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com) Guidebooks, maps, travel accessories, luggage, all at 10 percent off for subscribers. Use discount code gemut2006.
- [www.webflyer.com](http://www.webflyer.com) Informative frequent-flyer forums make this a must for air travelers.
- [bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en](http://bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en) German rail website, with train schedules throughout Europe, as well as Germany.
- [www.sbb.ch/index\\_e.htm](http://www.sbb.ch/index_e.htm) Swiss and European rail schedules.
- [www.ski-europe.com](http://www.ski-europe.com) Top Web resource for skiers with much data on Alpine resorts.
- [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) Website of Switzerland's national tourist authority.
- [www.germany-tourism.de](http://www.germany-tourism.de) Germany's national tourist authority.
- [www.austria.info/us](http://www.austria.info/us) Austria's national tourist authority.
- [www.historicgermany.com](http://www.historicgermany.com) Website for an alliance of historic German cities.
- [www.thetravelinsider.info](http://www.thetravelinsider.info) Info on electronic devices used by travelers — cell phones, computers, etc.

**Contact:** Hotel Kreuz, Zeughausgasse 41, CH-3000 Bern 7, tel. +41/031 329 9595, fax +41(0)31 329 9596, [info@hotelkrenz-bern.ch](mailto:info@hotelkrenz-bern.ch), [www.hotelkrenz-bern.ch](http://www.hotelkrenz-bern.ch).

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 120-145, doubles CHF 170-210.

**Rating:** QUALITY 8/20, VALUE 9/20

### Bern Restaurants

As one of Switzerland's most culturally rich and diverse cities, Bern has many fine dining options to choose from.

#### Ristorante Lorenzini

This compound, for lack of a better word (the place is huge), provides several sleek, elegant spaces in which to enjoy fine Italian cuisine or just a beverage or two.

At street level, are two separate bar rooms, each with a slightly different ambience. In one, an oval bar dominates the center of the room. In the next space, the bar is placed against the wall and black leather couches create a relaxed, comfortable ambience. An outdoor terrace under the arcade shelters several round metal tables, and a few wooden-slatted tables sit beneath umbrellas on the cobblestone street.

The first-floor (our second) Gran Ristorante has a clubby atmosphere, with white linens, black banquettes and bistro chairs, tall ceilings and windows, and parquet floors. Suspended halogen lights illuminate walls lined with contemporary prints, drawings, and old photos.

The menu is traditional northern Italian, featuring a full page of pasta (housemade) and risotto dishes, plus Tuscan antipasti, fresh salads and the usual veal and other meat dishes.

A fresh seafood salad of cool, crisp lettuce, calamari, shrimp, olives, and peppers in a subtle oil and vinegar dressing with a lemon wedge was a fine sharable appetizer.

A speciality of the house, cappelletti, was essentially a ravioli/tortellini-style cheese-stuffed pasta, served in a rich coating of sage-infused butter and cream or, if you choose, a much lighter fresh tomato sauce.

Among the dessert offerings are several flavors of gelato and, of course, a top-notch version of the Italian staple, Tiramisu.

On a recent visit for lunch we ignored the extensive wine list and drank a serviceable house rosé.

White, custom-made "Lorenzini" china adds to an overall classy, elegant vibe. Postprandial, gift-of-the-house chocolates have customized wrappers with the restaurant's name.

The friendly staff gladly explains the menu and offers suggestions. Prices are moderate to expensive, with entrees in the CHF 15-50 range.

**Contact:** Lorenzini, Theaterplatz 5, CH-3011, tel. +41/031/311 7850

**Rating:** QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 14/20

#### Zimmermania

On a quiet side street in the *Altstadt*, this French-style bistro isn't as good as the best of its kind in Paris, but it's close. White lace curtains and wood-paneled walls hung with old drawings, photos, and an antique clock, create a cozy atmosphere in the two small dining rooms. Outside, red shutters and window flower boxes add to the decidedly quaint feel. The four outdoor tables set close against the building leave just enough space for passing motorists—if you sit here be careful you don't plunge a leg of your chair into one of the holes in the cobblestone.

The menu offers a selection of classic brasserie-style dishes. To start, the friendly staff brought sliced baguette accompanied by a rich, olive tapenade spread. The very freshest ingredients highlighted a Salad du Marché of lettuces, lentils, and sliced radishes in the traditional, creamy French dressing. *Escalope Viennoise*, a delicious version of *Wiener Schnitzel*, veal pounded very thin, breaded and fried, was served with a mound of extremely thin, crisp French fries.

Another winner was grilled shrimp with Mediterranean noodles tossed with sun-dried tomatoes, black olives, onions, capers, and cherry tomatoes in a light tomato sauce.

The dessert menu veers away

from the French theme and also offers sweets from Italy and Spain. A chocolate mousse, served in a glass resembling a votive candleholder, was extremely rich, thick, and satisfying.

The presentation here is simple and straightforward, with little embellishment, but—much more important—the food tastes great.

Prices may be on the expensive side, with entrees from CHF 35 to 58, but the quiet atmosphere, excellent service, and first-rate food make Zimmermania a top pick.

**Contact:** Restaurant Zimmermania, Brunnngasse 19, CH-3011 Bern, tel. +41/031/311 1542, fax 312 2822

**Rating:** QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 10/20

#### Schmiedstube


Offering traditional Swiss fare at reasonable prices, Schmiedstube fills up patrons with bratwurst, *Rösti*, braised beef, and lamb stew—among other hefty dishes. Inside, the décor is sleek and modern with large windows, a small marble bar, marble tabletops, red leather chairs, and a visually interesting ceiling of slanting metal grates.

Outside, Schmiedstube shares a large cobblestone square with several other restaurants. Blue and white stripes on the tablecloths and umbrellas give the outdoor seating area somewhat of a seaside feel.

A refreshing Märkt Salat consisted of spring greens, radish, cucumber, and tomato wedges in a zesty vinaigrette dressing. *Alpenmagrone*, a Swiss rendition of macaroni and cheese, came in a modest serving size with applesauce on the side. The creamy cheese sauce with parsley flakes was a little runny, but delicious. A topping of crisp, battered and fried onions, nicely complemented the creamy noodles.

The staff is prompt, if a little rigid, and prices are reasonable with entrees around CHF 15 to 25.

**Contact:** Schmiedstube, Schmiedenplatz 5, CH-3000 Bern 7, tel. +41/031/311 3461, fax +41/031/311 5244, [info@schmiedstube.com](mailto:info@schmiedstube.com), [www.schmiedstube.com](http://www.schmiedstube.com).

**Rating:** QUALITY 9/20, VALUE 10/20 

**BLACK FOREST EATS***Continued from page 1*

blandly classic Continental fine-dining staple, cod in creamy mustard champagne sauce, garnished with clams and diced zucchini. Mr. Fendt stopped by to pour a 2002 Zie Reisen, a light-bodied red with a lot of tobacco and leather and a bit too much wood. This time, the wine took backstage to the main course, two beautifully cooked red venison medallions with tiny chanterelles and a mini pastry stuffed with diced organ meat. This was exactly the kind of only-in-the-Black-Forest dish we were hoping to find, and we appreciated the effort to use special local products.

The cheese cart featured a good-quality selection of mainly French cheeses served with lovely jams and gingered pears. Then we were nearly killed with an onslaught of gorgeous desserts: a frozen snowball of banana ice covered in coconut with pineapple sauce, a strawberry meringue tart with chopped pistachio, a vanilla custard cream with more strawberries, *Rote Grütze* (red berry pudding), and a fabulous minimalist Black Forest Napoleon made of home-canned cherries on a thin cookie with whipped cream, kirsch, and a curl of chocolate. Then they were evil enough to bring around a jeweled cart of *mignardises*, the lovely cookies, candies, and cakes that provide one last temptation with coffee. Mr. Fendt sends us one last treat, his own 2003 dessert wine from his Mosel vineyard. He makes one wine a year, and given the heat wave in 2003, he had decided to turn it into a crisp, firm, yet sweet delight. What I couldn't figure out is how people around here eat like this and still fit into those lovely slim-waisted dirndl dresses. When I asked our friendly waitress why only the female staff wear traditional uniforms, she glanced around carefully before answering, "Actually, I don't think you'd want to see the manager in lederhosen!"

Menu Prices: Appetizers €36-56, soups €22, fish and meat courses

€42-52, six-course tasting menu  
€106 per person, seven-course menu  
€128 per person

**Contact:** Restaurant Bareiss in the Hotel Bareiss, Gärtenbühlweg 14 D-72270 Baiersbronn-Mitteltal, tel. +49/074/42 47 0, fax +49/074/42 47 320, [info@bareiss.com](mailto:info@bareiss.com), [www.bareiss.com](http://www.bareiss.com)

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

### Restaurant Schwarzwaldstube Hotel Traube Tonbach

Three stars for Michelin mean "worth a special journey," which would indicate it's worth getting on a plane from London to Stuttgart, then driving over an hour through the Black Forest to spend enormous sums for one four-and-a-half hour lunch. Was it worth it? That depends. Yes, this is definitely the best restaurant for miles and one of the best in Germany. Yes, the service is

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*Then they were evil enough to bring around a jeweled cart of mignardises.*

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perfect, the surroundings sumptuous, and the wine cellar well stocked. But what I really want at this level is to be thrilled. I want the taste bud equivalent of shivering goose bumps. The meal was indeed excellent. But instead of that blissful feeling of wanting it never to end, I found I kept looking at my watch. Dining is no different from dating—and watches aren't a good sign. And I can't put my finger on any real reason, except that there just wasn't any chemistry between us.

The scene was set for romance. Panoramic windows provided a backdrop of sunshine and a sweeping view of the hills. Majestic carved ceilings, chandeliers and manorial chairs were offset by whimsical animal sculptures made of Christofl cutlery on every table. The meal started with some of the most interesting nibbles we'd had in a long time. Three spoons held salmon eggs with smoky liquid eel fat, a clear seafood gelatin with Japanese baby shiso leaves and wasabi

bi flying fish eggs, and a dollop of horseradish mousse mixed with another wonderfully fresh, crunchy fish roe. The intrigue continued with four elaborate preparations of tuna and five preparations of crab, including an eye-catching roll of striped gelatin of seafood consomme and crab bisque stuffed with creamy crabmeat. Despite the fact that all of the ingredients had been brought from far away, I could tell I was in a German, as opposed to French, restaurant. The flavors were lively, the combinations bold, the execution careful.

Then the seduction seemed to lose steam. The foamy asparagus velouté on foie gras cream with summer truffle was tasty but seemed heavy and fattening for summer. The rosette of sliced scallops spiked with chili and floating in a sea of coconut milk, macadamia and pineapple brought to mind tropical beaches wall to wall with German tourists. The octopus risotto was soggy, with no discernible octopus flavor, while the combination with grilled red mullet, artichokes, red wine sauce, and onion marmalade seemed busy and contrived.

The delicious Bresse pigeon breast perched on a paté of its own organ meats and a thin crouton had an extremely peppery pine honey crust. It was served with some sliced root vegetables and three enormous, mealy gnocchi instead of the customary *Spätzle*. The chef, I was informed, believes only professional old women can make *Spätzle* properly, and he is not an old woman. You won't find *Spätzle* at the Schwarzwaldstube, and I think that's a shame. I think gnocchi are also best left to specialists.

Instead of cheese, we had an excellent hot Parmesan mousse with sliced summer truffle and crunchy *fleur de sel* (sea salt). I correctly suspected the chef of using a gas siphon, a famous technique by Spanish avant-gardist, Ferran Adria, to create the foamy hot mousse.

The pace of the restaurant had been perfect thus far, but it started to flag around the desserts. Finally, a fantastic Black Forest "torte" arrived,


**BLACK FOREST EATS***Continued from page 7*

three perfect, preserved black cherries with gilded stems on the thinnest of spiced gingerbread crusts, sprinkled with crushed pistachio and hazelnut. It was accompanied by a mysterious frozen granite that might have been an elderberry ice. Next up was a mysterious modern dessert consisting of a frosty glass of flower-infused liquid, which I presume was marigold, accompanied by a strong saffron sorbet. After the *mignardises* with coffee came a fun pink popsicle of champagne encased in white chocolate.

I suppose I was a bit disappointed by certain attempts at fusion cooking that were neither innovative nor well conceived. There was a distinct rejection of local ingredients and regional traditions, which made me think that this was the cooking of a native son who wishes he were somewhere more exotic. Maybe the Schwarzwaldstube provides a cosmopolitan window into international culinary trends in the Black Forest backwater, but it seems hardly worth it to me to journey all this way to eat essentially a Teutonic Thai seafood curry or a French pigeon.

Menu Prices: Appetizers: €37-55, soups €18-20, main courses €42-52, cheese €16-20, desserts €20, degustation menu €140 per person

**Contact:** Restaurant Schwarzwaldstube-Hotel Traube Tonbach, D-72270 Baiersbronn im Schwarzwald, tel. +49/0744/2 492 0, fax +49/0744/2 4 92 692, [info@traube-tonbach.de](mailto:info@traube-tonbach.de), [www.traube-tonbach.de](http://www.traube-tonbach.de)

**Rating:** QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 10/20 

**Readers' Forum****Münster and Trier**

The **Hof Zur Linde**, just outside Münster is set in the woods, on a stream. We had a roomy junior suite with a large covered balcony overlooking the water for about \$180 and we highly recommend it. However, the dining room was excessively warm and we waited one hour between a gratuitous appetizer and the

next course, so we can't recommend the restaurant, although it is apparently quite popular with the locals.

We also stayed two nights at the **Hotel Petrisberg** in Trier, where we had a corner suite for \$180. The Pantenberg brother who tends the hotel directed us to a new downtown restaurant that was a winner. CUMVINO is owned by Friedrich-Wilhelm-Gymnasium, which if memory serves is a Jesuit school/winery that has been bequeathed a lot of vineyards over the years. Highly recommended for good food at moderate prices and free parking.

BILL BOHNHOFF  
VIA E-MAIL

**Vacation Rentals**

Please don't discourage readers from searching out their own *Ferienwohnung* in Germany. Anyone with a computer and a small knowledge of German will have a marvelous time looking at dozens of properties complete with color pictures, floor plans and often a history of the family that owns it. When they contact the owner directly they will find that they get first class treatment because Germans have an inborn sense of thrift that makes them prefer not sharing with a middleman.

I prefer the Garmisch area because it offers such splendid day trips in every direction. A friendly landlord on the premises will always be willing to offer tips on where to go, what to see, and where to eat and shop, and probably deliver breakfast rolls and wine if you are lucky. A much more *gemütlich* experience than dealing with an agent who hands you the key and says goodbye. The Garmisch site is excellently organized, as are many areas of the Black Forest.

MARY ELLEN HUNTER  
VIA E-MAIL

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**Berlin**

**Hotel Art Nouveau**, Leibnizstr. 59, tel. +49/030/327 7440, fax 327 744 40, [info@hotelartnouveau.de](mailto:info@hotelartnouveau.de), [www.hotelartnouveau.de](http://www.hotelartnouveau.de)

**Hotel Domus**, Uhländstrasse 49, Germany D-10719, tel. +49/030/882041, fax 882 0410, [info@hotel-domus-berlin.de](mailto:info@hotel-domus-berlin.de)

**Bern**

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

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

**Lucerne**

**Hotel Wilden Mann**, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, [mail@wilden-mann.ch](mailto:mail@wilden-mann.ch)

**Hotel Cascada**, Bundesplatz 18, CH-6003 Lucerne, tel: +41/041/226 80 88, fax 226 80 00, [info@cascada.ch](mailto:info@cascada.ch)

**Munich**

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**Hotel Acanthus**, An Der Hauptfeuerwache 14, D- 80331 München, tel. +49/089/ 23 18 80, fax: 2 60 73 64, e-mail: [acanthus@t-online.de](mailto:acanthus@t-online.de)

**Hotel Kraft**, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24, fax 550 3856, [office@kraft-hotel.com](mailto:office@kraft-hotel.com)

**Rothenburg ob der Tauber**

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**Hotel Hornburg**, Hornburgweg 28, D-91541, tel. +049/09861/8480, fax 5570, [hotelhornburg@t-online.de](mailto:hotelhornburg@t-online.de), [www.hotelhornburg.de](http://www.hotelhornburg.de)

**Salzburg & Environs**

**Schloss Haunsperg**, A-5411 Oberalm bei Hallein, Hammerstrasse 32, tel. +43/06245/80662, fax 85680, [info@schlosshaunsperg.com](mailto:info@schlosshaunsperg.com)

**Hotel Struber**, Nonntaler Hauptstrasse 35, Austria A-5020 tel. +43/0662/843 728, fax 843 728 8, [struber@sbg.at](mailto:struber@sbg.at)

**Hotel Jedermann**, Rupertgasse 25, Austria A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873241-0, fax 873241-9, [jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at](mailto:jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at)

**Vienna**

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

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

**Zürich**

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

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

**Frankfurt Airport**

**Steinberger Esprit Hotel Frankfurt Airport**, CargoCity Süd, D-60549, tel. +49/069/69 70 99, fax 69 70 94 44, [frankfurt@esprit-hotels.de](http://frankfurt@esprit-hotels.de)

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

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

**Munich Airport**

**Daniel's Hotel**, Hauptstrasse 11, Halberghaus-Goldach, D-85399, tel. +49/0811/55120, fax 551213, [info@hotel-daniels.de](mailto:info@hotel-daniels.de), [www.hotel-daniels.de](http://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](mailto:info@hoyackerhof.de)

**Zürich Airport**

**Mövenpick Zürich Airport**, Walter-Mittelholzerstrasse 8, CH-8152 Glattpfurg, tel. +41/01/808 88 88, fax 808 88 77, [hotel@movenpick-zurich-airport.ch](mailto:hotel@movenpick-zurich-airport.ch)

**Hotel Fly Away**, Marktstrasse 19, Zürich-Kloten, CH-8302, tel. +41/01/804 4455, fax 804 44 50, [reservation@hotel-flyaway.ch](mailto:reservation@hotel-flyaway.ch)