

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

The Great Biz Class Hunt

September. The days dwindle down, and it's time for our winter trip. Some of you may empathize with my attempts to fly business class from Medford, Oregon, to Europe around Thanksgiving. While fares are low at this time of year in the aft cabin, that's not necessarily the case up front. **Lufthansa** offers a very convenient one-stop, Medford-Frankfurt itinerary for a cool \$16,111 for the two of us. Kayak.com, a travel website that searches a long list of airline sites and online sellers such as cheaptickets, orbitz, expedia, etc., yields better prices but too many stops; we can fly **American** for \$3900 per person but the route is Medford-Los Angeles-Chicago-Frankfurt and starts with a 4am wake-up. Besides, \$8,000 is still too much.

Perhaps we can do better if we get ourselves to San Francisco via one-way rental car, about a six-hour drive. I have 250,000 frequent flyer miles in an American Express Membership Rewards account that can be transferred to a number of airline frequent flyer programs including **Delta**, **Northwest**, **Continental**, **Virgin Atlantic** and others. Delta will take our miles but wants 250,000 of them *per person* for an incredibly tortuous, multi-stop itinerary. They'll sell us the other 250,000 miles for \$6875. Pass. Turns out Virgin Atlantic's critically-acclaimed Upper Class can be had for 100,000 miles per person. Or we can book Virgin's Premium Economy at about \$1500 each and upgrade to Upper Class for 40,000 miles.

An intriguing alternative is flying one of the new all-business class airlines: **Eos** (New York-London), **Silverjet** (Newark-London) **L'Avion** (New York-Paris) and **Maxjet** (non-stops from New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas to London). Of these, Maxjet from Vegas looks best for us.

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

Rothenburg

Often decried as a Disneyesque tourist haunt and tour bus stop, this fabled city's centuries-old allure is far from fading.

Been there, done that, already have the T-shirt? Because it attracts so many tourists, some veteran travelers tend to dismiss Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber. Nonetheless, its usassailable charm and convenient location on Germany's Romantic Road (*Romantische Strasse*), may warrant a repeat visit. The Romantic Road between Middle-Franconia and Bavaria exudes the essence of German culture and scenery, and Rothenburg's architecture and intact ring-wall are unrivalled in the country.

Repeat visitors will be happy to see that not much has changed: largely traffic-free streets, horse-drawn carriages, a maze of half-

timbered houses, all huddled amongst ancient ramparts, and tourist groups (avoid visiting on weekends if possible) stumbling over cobbled-stoned streets. And there's that familiar sensation of time-travel. The town's strict preservation laws, which thankfully continue to prohibit flashy neon signs and modern graphic displays, make sure some things always stay the same. But there's more to the city than a daytripper can unearth during a four-hour tour bus stop.

Start by learning more about Rothenburg's imperial past, when it was loyal only and directly to the Emperor: Visit the **Reichsstadtmuseum (Imperial City Museum)**,

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Danube Decision: Drive or Cruise

Let's suppose you're thinking about an easygoing one-week trip focused on truly attractive locales in regions where the Danube flows through Austria and Germany. That, of course, brings river cruising to mind. On the other hand, there's the rental-car alternative to consider, especially if you are an experienced traveler. Either way—waterways or roadways—such a route would entail a reasonable amount of sightseeing time in Vienna, Melk (primarily for the magnificently Baroque **Benedictine Abbey** looming high above Lower Austria's Wachau Valley), Linz, Passau, Regensburg and finally Nürnberg in the heart of German Franconia. Traveling for a week makes seven nights' accommodations a key part of the equation:

Would you rather sleep aboard a ship or in a series of three- to four-star hotels on land?

Cost is certainly a factor. For an example, we considered Viking River Cruise's eight-day Vienna-to-Nürnberg voyage aboard the 150-passenger *Viking Spirit* (Uniworld Grand River Cruises offers a similar itinerary at about the same price but gives *Gemütlichkeit* subscribers a 5% discount), timed for the Christmas market season. With three meals daily—including "continental gourmet" dinners each evening, complemented by a topnotch international wine list—six comprehensive guided tours, on-board enter-

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Exchange rates as of 8/29/07

1 euro = \$1.37

1 Swiss franc = \$0.83

DEAR SUBSCRIBER*Continued from page 1*

The fare on their 72-seat Boeing 767 is about \$1650 per person and we can fly to Vegas from Medford on **Allegiant Air** almost as inexpensively as we can drive to San Francisco. (While Maxjet has the lowest fares of the four, and would seem to be the choice for westerners, readers in the east should also check the more luxurious Eos, Silverjet, and L'Avion. Eos, with only 48 lie-flat seats/beds in a Boeing 757, a plane built for 220 seats, is particularly tempting.) While the Maxjet price is attractive—and we get to keep our miles for another day—online forum reports raise red flags; Maxjet has only a few planes and there have been cancellations and on-time problems. With that in mind, we chose Virgin's upgrade deal from Premium Economy to Upper Class (40,000 miles each). From London we will Eurostar to Brussels in under two hours.

Just How Expensive Is It?

Warren Buffett is betting the dollar will continue to fall against European currencies. The Omaha oracle says it's because of our trade deficit — we consume more than we produce — and that, as of 2006, the rest of the world owns more of us than we own of them. Some experts are even predicting the euro will go above \$1.50. What everyone seems to agree upon is that Europe isn't going to become a bargain destination for Americans anytime soon.

Fresh from the battlefields of the

dollar-euro/franc/pound war is numbah one son, Bob, major domo of Travel Essentials

(www.travelessentials.com; use the code "gemut2007" [no quotes] and get 10% off). He reports that, as bad as it is on the continent with the euro, the British pound is worse. At an Indian restaurant in London a large beer was nearly \$8. A London pub lunch for four—two adults and daughters age 12 and 10 — of hamburgers, chips, cokes for the kids, and one beer each for the adults, was more than \$80. A family pass to see the Tower of London: \$95.

Mobile Phones In Europe

Next time you get a new mobile phone you might want to make sure it's a GSM phone that can be used in Europe. Buy it unlocked if you can, or if you can't (many cell phone service providers electronically 'lock' phones so they can only be used with their service), go to www.thetravelinsider.info to find out how to unlock it yourself. Takes 10 minutes and costs about \$5.

Then you have a choice: you can either get an overseas roaming plan from your service provider, with calling rates typically around 99 cents per minute, or, in Europe, replace your SIM card. If you choose the latter you'll have a different phone number but the per minute calling rate will be far less.

If you happen to be the proud owner of a new iPhone, beware of overseas charges. AT&T, exclusive iPhone service provider, charges two

cents per kilobyte of data. So if you use the device for emails and surfing the web, the charges quickly mount. For example, sending or receiving an email with four or five photos that total 200KB will cost you \$4. A larger file, say 1.5 megabytes, costs over \$30. *New York Times* technology writer, David Pogue, says one man returned from two weeks in England to a \$5,000 telephone bill; and this was just the data charge for sending and receiving emails and surfing the web. For phone calls he bought a local SIM card. So be careful in Europe using any phone for more than telephone calls.

Lost and Found: Favorite Hotel

In the early days of this newsletter (late '80s) the **Romantik Hotel Bierhütte** in the Bavarian Forest near the Czech border, was one of our favorites. In fact, it rated a spot in our 1989 book, *The 50 Best Country Inns & Small City Hotels in Germany, Austria & Switzerland* (out of print,

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Using Gemütlichkeit

- Hotel prices listed are for one night. Discounts are often available for longer stays.
- All hotel prices include breakfast unless otherwise noted.
- Local European telephone area codes carry the "0" required for in-country dialing. To phone establishments from outside the country, such as from the USA, do not dial the first "0".

Logging on to Our Website

Back issues in PDF format from January 1993, except for the most recent 10, are available free to subscribers only at www.gemut.com (click on "Members"). To access the issues, enter the user name and password published in this space each month. The new codes are:

User Name: **berg** Password: **1415**

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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

ROTHENBURG

Continued from page 1

located centrally off **Klostergasse**, a five-minute walk from Market Square. The building was erected in 1258 as a Dominican nunnery and the spacious priory kitchen remains intact. Cloister rooms now house a selection of artifacts, documents and rarities that testify to Rothenburg's status as a "free" city. Remarkable is the recently added **Baumann Collection**, a private donation of valuable faience porcelain and weapons used throughout European history, including a flintlock rifle, powder flask, and a hunting sabre that belonged to French Queen Marie Antoinette. Another curiosity: Rothenburg's **Gold Treasure**, unearthed by chance during reconstruction efforts in 1998. It's a simple clay pot with 82 gold coins dating from the early Middle Ages to 1697.

Aficionados of late medieval altar carvings take note: Master-Sculptor **Tilman Riemenschneider** (1460-1531) left some of his finest works in and around Rothenburg. His "Holy Blood Altar" at the **St. Jacob's** Franciscan Church is located directly behind the Rathaus. Two other "Riemenschneider-Churches" are in the vicinity: **St. Peter-and-Paul** in Detwang (a half-mile walk to the north of the old city, Detwang is the oldest settlement in the area, dating back to 950 AD). Last but not least, the **Herrgottskirche** in Creglingen (seven miles from Rothenburg) shows Riemenschneider's greatest piece of art, the world-famous "Altar of Mary." Cycling, hiking, or a bus tour will get you there. Check tourist information services.

Back at the Rathaus (climb the tower, see the view) tourists still flock to the **Ratstrinkstube** or **Counselor's Tavern** to watch the Mayor Nusch puppet down a tankard of wine. This glockenspiel-like commemoration goes back to the 1631 historic event of the **Meistertrunk** or **Masterdraught**, when Rothenburg was under siege from the Imperial forces and Count Tilly proclaimed the city would be spared if anyone

Rothenburg Basics

Population: 11,300

Elevation: 430 meters (1,394 ft.)

Visitor information: Rothenburg Tourismus Service, Marktplatz 2, D-91541 Rothenburg o.d. Tauber, tel. +49/9861/404 800, fax +49/9861/404 529, www.rothenburg.de, info@rothenburg.de

Driving distances to:

Berlin	509 km	316 miles
Frankfurt	182 km	113 miles
Hamburg	566 km	352 miles
Munich	134 km	395 miles
Würzburg	68 km	42 miles

Rail connections: Travel time is 2:31 from Frankfurt via Würzburg and Steinach. From Munich it's 2:28 via Nürnberg, Ansbach, Steinach.

Closest airports: Nürnberg Airport, Frankfurt/Rhein-Main-Airport

Guided Tours: The Tourist Office offers Guided Tours of Rothenburg in English, starting on Market Square (€4 Apr.-Oct. daily at 2 pm). A popular Night Watchman's Tour is led by Hans Georg Baumgartner, who appears in historical costume (€4 Apr.-Dec. nightly at 8pm). Info www.nightwatchman.de.

Walk the Wall: Along a mile and a half of covered ramparts, great for taking pictures, no special fitness or equipment (other than camera) needed, climb the Rödertor and off you go.

Activ & Vital Gesundheitszentrum: Wellness & Spa facilities just off Market Square, English-speaking, children's entertainment available, Kappellenplatz 12+13, phone 09861/87580-00.

Two Hotels Package: Two nights plus breakfast buffet, welcome drink, one four-course dinner at the **Hotel Eisenhut** and one four-course dinner at **Restaurant & Hotel Mittermeier** (Vorm Würzburger Tor 9, phone +49/9861/9454 0), each including one bottle of wine and one bottle of mineral water, plus guided city tour- €290 per person double.

Events

April, May, and September — Shepherd's Dance: Traditional shepherd dances in historical costume on Market Square, www.schaefertanzrothenburg.de.

May: Meistertrunk Reenactment: Rothenburg celebrates the drinking binge that saved its citizens with a festival performance in historical costume.

December: Christmas Market — One of the oldest Christmas markets in Germany.

August: Tauber Tal Open Air Concert: Annual Open Air Rock Concert in the Tauber Valley, tel. +49/7251/981672, www.taubertal-openair.de (English version available).

could drink a giant tankard (six pints) of wine in one draught. Nusch, a former burgomeister, downed the wine and saved the town. Re-enactments take place on the hour from 11am to 3pm and 8pm to 10pm

If you haven't yet seen a medieval torture museum, this one is worth a visit. Rothenburg's **Medieval Crime and Punishment Museum** is centrally located in Burggasse 3-5, a five-minute walk from Market Square. Outside the entrance looms a timbered dunking cage, which fortunately has not seen water for centuries. The array of chastity belts, scolding masks, and other instruments of punishment, torture, and shame tell the story of more than 1,000 years of criminal history. All exhibits are painstakingly explained in English and there is a special section on witches. Open all year, €3.20; a €6 combo-ticket includes entry to the **Imperial City Museum**.

Käthe Wolfahrt and her perennial **Christmas Village** on Herrngasse is still going strong. From *Erzgebirgische* hand-carved ornaments to Santa's reindeer, the bauble-stuffed shop offers a complete Christmas street scene and decorations galore. The **Christmas Museum** on the second floor provides a more sophisticated form of entertainment. From WWI mini-trees to Kaiser-time postcards, to the Nazi period, this collection shows yesteryear's Christmas traditions (€4, Apr.-Dec. 10am-6pm daily, Jan.-Mar. Sat.-Sun. 10am-6pm; check in the off-season).

Rothenburg Hotels

For all its popularity and tourism, Rothenburg's hotels are comparatively inexpensive. The place to be is inside the town's medieval walls, and all the hotels rated here are in that area. None, however, are within walking distance, with luggage, of the rail station. One hotel outside the wall and not reviewed here is the **Mittermeier**, noteworthy because of its Michelin one-star restaurant and its "red" (pleasant) designation—the town's only such hotel. Another, this one barely outside the wall, is the **Hornburg**, a longtime

Gemütlichkeit favorite and still highly recommended. It rates Michelin's "Bib Hotel" designation ("offering good levels of comfort and service with most rooms under €90").

Hotel Eisenhut

Emblematic of Mr. Eisenhut's medieval wine tavern, an armoured helmet swings off this nobleman's building near Market Square. Inside the reception hall, the impression is of entering a castle: Dark oak paneling, sturdy carved wood, imposing oil paintings, and deep red oriental carpets welcome the traveler into a world long gone.

Originally three separate houses, the buildings are woven together by numerous staircases and window galleries that open into what was once an inner courtyard, typical of medieval patrician architecture. Wrought-iron chandeliers and electric lanterns cast their mellow rays on portraits of previous owners, as a labyrinth of corridors and ivy-patterned passageways leads to 78 individually decorated rooms. Both the deluxe double Number 128 (€215), and the Taubenschlag suite (€299), feature country rose upholstery, porcelain doves, a curtained-off separate sitting area, a view over the lovely Tauber Valley, and state-of-the-art bathroom with double sink. Single rooms have showers; doubles have baths. All have high-speed Internet and other amenities typical of hotels in this price category. The location, kitty-corner to the central Market Square is unbeatable. The Eisenhut, however, lacks the intimate, family-feeling of the smaller, privately-run hotels.

Contact: Hotel Eisenhut, Herrngasse 3-7, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/7050, fax 70545, www.eisenhut.com

Daily Rates: Singles €115-153, doubles €156-225, breakfast buffet features American pancakes, waffles, and doughnuts.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 10/20

Hotel Reichs-Küchenmeister

The warm welcome extended by the Niedner family

**Editor's
Choice**

has brought *Gemütlichkeit* readers back year after year to this ancient but homey hostelry in the very heart of town.

Parts of the building can be traced to the 11th century and it's been a hotel since 1455. Reichs-Küchenmeister means 'master baker of the realm' and the emblems of a knight's helmet and assorted cooking utensils have been in place for 800 years.

The thirty-five guest rooms are fully modern, however, with cozy painted wood furnishings and fresh flowers. Each has its own special touch and decor.

The dining room, decorated with old family portraits, serves reasonably-priced dishes, including vegetarian meals and fresh fish from the family's ponds.

There is a sauna, whirlpool, Turkish bath and solarium as well as a guest room accessible to the handicapped.

The hotel's best feature, however, is a lovely stone terrace where guests can spend a sunny afternoon under shade trees, enjoying the view of St. Jacob's Church and the chapel of St. Michael.

Contact: Hotel Reichs-Küchenmeister, Kirchplatz 8, 8803 Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber, tel. +49/09861/9700, fax 9790409, hotel@reichskuechenmeister.de, www.reichskuechenmeister.de

Daily Rates: Singles €65-90, doubles €75-135

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20

Romantic Hotel Markusturm

An old customs house that stood at the former old-town wall, the Marksturm today is part of the Romantik Hotels Group, a consortium of well-run, privately-owned hotels in historical buildings. The Berger family does its utmost to live up to this ideal and the atmosphere is one of loving dedication to first-class service. The hotel has been in family hands for more than 100 years since Herr Berger's great-grandmother received it as

**Editor's
Choice**

part of a dowry. Each room is individually decorated in a different style. Hand-picked antiques like the *Himmelbett* dating back to the year 1779 (Number 122), or the beds in the Empire Room (Number 128, our favorite) at €155-190, or the Biedermeier furniture in Number 127. Care has been taken to restore furniture of several generations and the hotel houses many private possessions, including a lock collection spanning 300 years, antique toys, grandmother's linen cabinet, and an assortment of stein-pitchers.

Legend has it that during WWII, the U.S. Army's commanding General McCloy had a picture of the Markusturm hanging at home in his living room. He liked it so much that he spoke out against further bombings and this part of the medieval city was spared.

Amenities include free Internet access via a desktop computer on the third floor, breakfast in the courtyard during the summer, and modern, stylish bathrooms. The service and personal attention of staff and owners is outstanding.

Contact: Romantik-Hotel Markusturm, Rödergasse 1, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/94280, fax 9428113, www.markusturm.de, info@markusturm.de

Daily Rates: Singles €80-125, doubles €105-190

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Glocke

Set in the famous location near the Plönlein and the Spitaltor, this hotel has an honest and straightforward approach to hospitality. With the exception of a few painted armchairs and the Biedermeier Room (Number 24), which has antique originals but little space, furniture is nondescript and functional. Number four, a standard single priced at €64 was clean and decent, same as Number 29, a double with a covered alcove-balcony. The hotel, large breakfast room and adjoining Glocke Restaurant offer acceptable accommodations and together make a well-



Hotel Schloss Berg

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OPEL VECTRA	\$209	\$30
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AUDI A4	\$299	\$43
MBZ C180 (W/UPGRADE)	\$239	\$34
VOLVO S60	\$349	\$50
AUDI A6 (AUTO)	\$535	\$76
MBZ E200 (AUTO)	\$499	\$71
VW TOURAN	\$287	\$41
OPEL ASTRA WAGON	\$217	\$31
OPEL VECTRA WAGON	\$219	\$31
AUDI A4 WAGON	\$327	\$47
VW PASSAT WAGON	\$295	\$42
BMW 320 WAGON	\$477	\$68
BMW 530 WAGON (AUTO)	\$559	\$80
VOLVO V70 WAGON	\$427	\$61
VW SHARAN 7-PASS	\$660	\$94
VW MINIBUS 9-PASS	\$700	\$100

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What if you could actually relax on your next plane trip?

(And help beat your jet lag, to boot!)

Let's face it: airplane travel isn't quite as much fun as it used to be. What with the lines, the tight seats, the airlines' starvation diet plan and now the TSA snagging our toothpaste, we are always on the lookout for anything to make our trips more enjoyable.

Solitude Headphones = Peace & Quiet

For the past couple of years, we at Travel Essentials have found Solitude noise canceling headphones to be the best antidote for surviving a long-haul flight. With Solitudes, you can listen to your iPod or enjoy an in-flight movie in peace and comfort. They even work great if you just want to flip on the noise cancelation and drift off to sleep.

Plus, Solitudes have always been a superior value, delivering premium noise cancelation at a not-so-premium price. **(The Solitudes are even a better value now with the addition of the breakthrough Linx Audio technology at no additional charge, but more about that in a minute).**

You'll appreciate them most after you land

As much as we enjoy the Solitudes during a flight, they actually may be more valuable as an antidote to jet lag. For most of us, jet lag can eat up the first few days of a trip (not to mention those first few days back home). You're tired, cranky, out-of-sorts...makes for a great start to your vacation, huh?

Gemütlichkeit subscribers qualify for 10% off every Travel Essentials purchase. Just use the *Gemut2007* discount code when you check out at www.travelessentials.com. Or call us at 800-258-0758. Plus, every order over \$100 ships free!

We're convinced that the noise on the plane is one of the key causes of the symptoms of jetlag. When your ears are assaulted by the kind of loud, droning sound that is common in airplane cabins, it wears you down. More specifically, it wears your brain down, because your brain spends the whole time processing that noise and trying to keep you from being aware of it. So one of the key prescriptions for jet lag is simple: eliminate the noise. This is why some airlines offer noise-canceling headphones to their first-class passengers as a high-end perk.



New! Solitude noise-canceling headphones with Linx Audio™ technology...top-rated performance for only \$179.96 with your *Gemut2007* discount code.



Now, with Linx Audio technology, Solitudes break the music barrier (at no additional cost)

The knock on noise canceling headphones has always been that the "signal processing" needed to eliminate the noise also messes with the music or other programming you are listening to. The microchips in these headphones may be "smart," but they can't perfectly cancel out the noise of a 777 without having some impact on Beethoven's 7th.

But the newest Solitude headphones now incorporate the patented Linx Audio™ technology, which sets a new standard for music reproduction in noise cancelling headphones. Linx Audio is a sound enhancement technology developed for those with impaired hearing. (If you think about it, flying in a jetliner is a lot like having impaired hearing!) The folks at Linx describe their technology as the difference between hearing a "C" note and a "C" chord. The chord will always sound richer and fuller. With the new Solitudes, you get the same industry-leading noise cancellation, but now you hear clearer, fuller sounding music at lower volumes.

Enjoy your next plane trip—and save 10%—with your Gemut discount code at Travel Essentials

As a Gemütlichkeit subscriber, you can now get the new Solitude headphones with Linx Audio technology for an additional 10% off the regular \$199.95 price. **That's \$179.96, and shipping is free.** As always with Travel Essentials, you have our "Yes!" lifetime guarantee on everything you purchase. Just log on to travelessentials.com or call us at 800-258-0758. Happy Travels in 2007!

2007 European Rail Pass Prices

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The best place to purchase rail passes is at our website, www.gemut.com. There you can securely purchase all the passes listed here, as well as dozens of others. You can also call in your rail pass order to 800-521-6722x3, though we no longer book individual city-to-city tickets by phone. However, you can do that at www.gemut.com. From the main page at our website, click "Buy a European Rail Pass" to be taken to the rail page. To get help at the rail page regarding which pass to purchase, or whether you need a pass or point-to-point tickets, click the links under "Choosing Your Pass." If you need European timetable info go to www.bahn.de, click Int'l Guests.

If you still have rail questions, call us at 800-521-6722x3.

EURAILPASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl.	1st Cl.	2nd Cl.
15 consecutive days	\$675	\$572	\$440
21 consecutive days	\$877	\$744	\$570
1 month	\$1089	\$925	\$708
2 months	\$1538	\$1308	\$1001
3 months	\$1898	\$1617	\$1236

EURAIL FLEXIPASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl.	1st Cl.	2nd Cl.
10 days in 2 months	\$799	\$679	\$519
15 days in 2 months	\$1050	\$894	\$682

EURAIL SELECTPASS¹	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
<i>3 adjoining countries</i>	1st Cl.	1st Cl.	2nd Cl.
5 days in 2 months	\$429	\$365	\$279
6 days in 2 months	\$472	\$403	\$309
8 days in 2 months	\$562	\$478	\$365
10 days in 2 months	\$649	\$551	\$421

<i>4 adjoining countries</i>	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl.	1st Cl.	2nd Cl.
5 days in 2 months	\$478	\$406	\$312
6 days in 2 months	\$523	\$445	\$340
8 days in 2 months	\$611	\$519	\$396
10 days in 2 months	\$698	\$593	\$452

<i>5 adjoining countries</i>	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl.	1st Cl.	2nd Cl.
5 days in 2 months	\$528	\$447	\$344
6 days in 2 months	\$572	\$486	\$373
8 days in 2 months	\$662	\$562	\$429
10 days in 2 months	\$748	\$634	\$485
15 days in 2 months	\$928	\$807	\$618

AUSTRIAN RAILPASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
3 days in 15	\$198(1cl)	\$135(2cl)	
Avg Extra Rail Day (5 max.)	\$ 26	\$ 25	

AUSTRIA-CZECH PASS	Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl	1st Cl	2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	\$238	\$202	\$163
Avg Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	\$ 35	\$ 28	\$ 23

AUSTRIA-CROATIA/SLOVENIA PASS	Adult	Saver	Youth
	1st Cl	1st Cl	2nd Cl
5 days in 2 months	\$261	\$227	\$191
Avg Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	\$ 40	\$ 34	\$ 28

CZECH-GERMANY PASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl	1st Cl	2nd Cl
5 days in 2 months	\$367	\$301	\$256
6 days in 2 months	\$408	\$332	\$284
8 days in 2 months	\$478	\$396	\$342
10 days in 2 months	\$552	\$459	\$398

EUROPEAN EAST PASS	Adults	Senior	Youth
	1st Cl	1st Cl	2nd Cl
Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia			
5 days in 1 month	\$266 (1cl)	\$187(2cl)	
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	\$31	\$24	

FRANCE RAIL PASS	Adults	Senior	Youth
	1st Cl	1st Cl	2nd Cl
3 days in 1 month	\$267	\$243	\$198
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	\$ 39	\$35	\$28

<u>FRANCE SAVER PASS</u>	2 Adults*	
	<u>1st Cl</u>	<u>2nd Cl</u>
3 days in 1 month	\$228	\$195
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	\$ 34	\$ 28

FRANCE-ITALY PASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl	1st Cl	2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	\$352	\$306	\$271
5 days in 2 months	\$391	\$340	\$301
6 days in 2 months	\$431	\$375	\$330
7 days in 2 months	\$470	\$409	\$360
8 days in 2 months	\$509	\$444	\$390
9 days in 2 months	\$549	\$478	\$419
10 days in 2 months	\$588	\$513	\$449

FRANCE-SWITZERLAND PASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl.	1st Cl.	2nd Cl.
4 days in 2 months	\$368	\$314	\$258
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	\$ 43	\$36	\$30

GERMAN RAILPASS	1 Adult	Youth	Twin Pass*
	1st Cl.	2nd Cl.	1st Cl.
4 days in 1 month	\$296	\$229	\$188
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6)	\$ 41	\$27	\$14

GERMANY-AUSTRIA PASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl	1st Cl	2nd Cl
5 days in 2 months	\$378	\$321	\$273
6 days in 2 months	\$417	\$355	\$304
8 days in 2 months	\$498	\$422	\$365
10 days in 2 months	\$577	\$491	\$424

GERMANY-BENELUX PASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl	1st Cl	2nd Cl
5 days in 1 month	\$394	\$296	\$240
Avg. Extra Rail Day (5 max.)	\$41	\$32	\$24

GERMANY-FRANCE PASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl	1st Cl	2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	\$373	\$335	\$302
5 days in 2 months	\$413	\$370	\$330
6 days in 2 months	\$452	\$406	\$360
8 days in 2 months	\$531	\$477	\$416
10 days in 2 months	\$610	\$547	\$473

GERMANY-SWITZERLAND PASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl.	1st Cl.	2nd Cl.
5 days in 2 months	\$401	\$342	\$281
6 days in 2 months	\$442	\$375	\$311
8 days in 2 months	\$524	\$447	\$368
10 days in 2 months	\$606	\$518	\$426

ITALY RAIL PASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl	1st Cl	2nd Cl
3 days in 2 months	\$245	\$196	\$168
Avg Extra Rail Day	\$30	\$25	\$20

SWITZERLAND-AUSTRIA PASS	Adults	Saver*	Youth
	1st Cl	1st Cl	2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	\$368	\$314	\$258
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	\$ 43	\$36	\$30

SWISS SAVERPASS & SWISS PASS	1 Adult	Saver*	Youth
	1st	1st	1st
	2nd	2nd	2nd
	Class	Class	Class
4 consec. days	\$291	\$194	\$165
8 consec. days	\$414	\$276	\$235
15 consec. days	\$504	\$336	\$286
22 consec. days	\$585	\$390	\$332
1 month	\$651	\$434	\$369

SWISS SAVER FLEXIPASS & SWISS FLEXIPASS	2 or more Adults*	1 Adult
	1st	1st
	2nd	2nd
	Class	Class
3 days in 1 month	\$235	\$156
4 days in 1 month	\$283	\$189
5 days in 1 month	\$332	\$221
6 days in 1 month	\$377	\$252
8 days in 1 month	\$439	\$292

SWISS CARD	1 Adult	2 Adult
1 month - 1 round trip	\$187 (1cl)	\$139 (2cl)
plus 50% discount on rail tickets		

SWISS TRANSFER TICKET	1 Adult	2 Adult
1 month - 1 round trip	\$143 (1cl)	\$94 (2cl)

(*Prices per person, based on two or more traveling together at all times. **Junior & Youth fares apply only to passengers under 26. Where senior fares are offered, 60 is qualifying age. Children 4-11 pay half the adult fare including Saverpass fares except Switzerland where kids under 16 are free with a parent.)

2007 Rail Pass Prices: The US dollar prices on this page are based on the euro and can change with currency fluctuation. Pass orders will be processed in dollars, but amounts charged may vary from prices shown on this page.

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scrubbed impression. The restaurant is smoke-free as of this summer, and there is garage parking.

Contact: Ringhotel Weingut Glocke, Am Plönlein 1, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/95899 0, fax 95899 22, www.glocke-rothenburg.de, glocke.rothenburg@t-online.de

Daily Rates: Singles from €64, doubles €78-108, Biedermeier room €128

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 12/20

Hotel Klosterstüble

Originally a 1534 farmhouse, the building became an inn in the early 20th century and has since been extended and often refurbished.

Tucked away in a small side-street off Herrngasse, this hotel is central but not to be found on the regular Rothenburg tourist map. Inconspicuous sliding doors lead down a few tiled steps into what was formerly an inner courtyard with brushed stone walls, reminiscent of a carefully restored excavation site. The lightness of the sand-coloured walls lends a Mediterranean flair with none of the heavy-duty Bavarian style furniture and fixtures. Straight lines and pastel shades combine old-world charm with modern furnishings. The hotel combines two parts, an older and a contemporary one. Ask for rooms in the contemporary section, as the old section is a tad stuffy. Couples should request the Falkennest/Falcon's Nest, a studio-loft (56 steps high) with ancient beams, and in-room bathtub and great views of the old city.

Contact: Hotel Klosterstueble, Herringsbronnengasse 5, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/6774, fax 6474, www.Klosterstueble.de, hotel@Klosterstueble.de

Daily Rates: Singles €50-70, doubles €80-120

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 12/20

Prinzhotel

Three large half-timbered buildings nestled against the medieval ramparts near the Rödertor raise expectations. But the regal welcome suggested by big wrought-iron gates

does not hold true, and this hotel's interior betrays none of the noble images its name suggests. Here, the motto seems to be "what-you-see-is-what-you-get." Standard rooms are clean, with a Holiday-Inn-style predictability. Bathrooms are no-frills but modern. The young staff is helpful, and eager to please both tour groups and independent travelers.

(Note: This hotel is stroller and wheel-chair friendly, with ramp and lift access to reception and all floors.)

Contact: Prinzhotel Rothenburg, An der Hofstatt 3, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/9750, fax 97575,

info@prinzhotel.rothenburg.de

www.prinzhotel.rothenburg.de

Daily Rates: Singles €75-135, doubles €95-155, Oct.-Mar. rates €60-100

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 8/20

The Burg-Hotel

Stay away if you don't like doll houses. Delft-blue porcelain displays, petite chandeliers, and a personal welcome from the owner are all part of the deal. No denying, however, the place has some flair. Room Number seven (€175, main season, €135 off-season) is romantically decorated with a *Himmelbett* and old-style (but mostly new) furniture. In a vault under the reception area lies the former torture-dungeon of Rothenburg. However, all torture paraphernalia was relocated to the current Medieval Crime Museum, and the 803-year-old cellar now houses a Steinway grand piano. Classical concerts are performed throughout the year. The basement has a wellness and spa area with a designer-sauna, spa bath tub (choose your favorite music), and tropical shower, but don't forget to reserve for exclusive use upon arrival. Breakfast is served all day – in bed, or in the breakfast area overlooking the Tauber Valley, or, in summer, on the cloister garden terrace.

Contact: Burg-Hotel, Klostersgasse 1-3, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/9481 0, fax 9489 40, www.burghotel.rothenburg.de, burghotel.rothenburg@t-online.de

Daily Rates: Singles €90-100, doubles €100-170, Tower Room suite €150, rent-a-bike €7.50, "Winter-schlaf (Hibernation) Special" from Jan. thru Good Friday: two nights for €97.50 per night.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 14/20

Goldener Hirsch

The 1476-built Hotel Goldener Hirsch exudes an air of fading 1950s glamour. But mustiness has made way for some modernization. En-suite bathrooms were added throughout and new carpeting laid out in the acclaimed Blue Salon with its views of the Valley and the Village of Detwang. The new owner has taken care to preserve some of the architectural quirks of the past, such as old-style twin sinks in the bedrooms. In Number 109 is an oil painting of Kaiser Friedrich II, who stayed here on a visit to Rothenburg. The grand ballroom is impressive. Newly installed air-conditioning was just in time for the hot summer months. If you want climate control, ask for a room facing the Tauber Valley.

Contact: Hotel Goldener Hirsch,

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.

Untere Schmiedgasse 16, D-6, tel. +49/9861/8749 90, fax 8749 9222, www.hotel-goldener-hirsch.de, info@hotel-goldener-hirsch.de

Daily Rates: Singles €69-89, doubles €89-130

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 12/20

Rothenburg Restaurants

Restaurant Hotel Eisenhut

A first-class gourmet restaurant with Franconian leanings, the Eisenhut is a place for candlelit dinners in a refined, traditional ambience. Your reserved table is marked with an original Meissen porcelain figurine. The lounge pianist tickling the ivories and the view over rose bushes may be a tad too *kitschy* for some. Depending on personal taste, the atmosphere borders on stuffy and service is professional but formal. Beef and pork dishes anchor a menu of light to substantial dishes (filet of hare €21, or filet of pike-perch €19.50). There are also two prix fixe options: the *kleines* menu at €25 per person or the *grosses* menu at €40 per person).

Contact: Hotel Eisenhut, Herrngasse 3-7, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/7050, fax 70545, www.eisenhut.com

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 13/20

Restaurant Hotel Markusturm

The scene here, complete with grandfather clock and fresh flower arrangements, is light and cheerful. Regional and international dishes comprise the honest soul of the Berger family's hotel. They specialize in home-made beer (6-7 percent alcohol), *Sauerbraten* (€13.40) and indigestible lamb in herb crust with potato gratin (€21). The beef-roulade with purée was tender and juicy (€14), and the meal cries out to be finished with home-made *Apfelküchle*, apple rings, cinnamon, and vanilla ice-cream (€7.50). Service is friendly but decidedly non-intrusive. Definitely a place for more serious wining and dining, though the leisurely pace may frustrate those in a hurry.

Contact: Romantik-Hotel Markusturm, Rödergasse 1, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/

94280, fax 9428113, www.markusturm.de, info@markusturm.de

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 14/20

Restaurant Glocke

A typical Franconian restaurant with about 10-12 small to medium-sized tables and meals at mid-range prices (*Schnitzel* with French fries and salad €9.90 beef roulade with home-made *Spätzle* and salad €12.70). The friendly, dirndl-clad waitresses may seat you at one of the tables near the tiled oven, or *Kachelofen*. Service is prompt, portions are large in a home-cooked way and, as the owner assures us, the wooden tables are scrubbed every night. This is a good place for a decent meal that doesn't take all night.

Contact: Ringhotel Weingut Glocke, Am Plönlein 1, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/958990, fax 95899 22, www.glocke-rothenburg.de, glocke.rothenburg@t-online.de

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 15/20

Restaurant Hotel Roter Hahn

Ideally located just across from the Medieval Crime Museum, the Roter Hahn offers a good selection of meats, pastas and salads at affordable prices: lamb, *Schnitzel*, ravioli priced at €6.80, and €15.80 for the rump steak. A mix of international and Franconian dishes at reasonable prices, combined with friendly and quick service, makes this restaurant ideal for a mid-day meal.

Contact: Hotel/Restaurant Roter Hahn, Burggasse, tel. +49/9861/9740, www.roterhahn.com

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 14/20

Altfränkische Weinstube

Here you'll get the feel of a traditional Franconian farmer's tavern. Marvel at what's hanging from the ceilings: smoked hams, wursts, herb bundles, and onion plaits. Not exactly the place for a full-course menu, but great for wrapping up an enjoyable day with an evening of inexpensive local wines and hearty snacks; Franconian bratwurst and sauerkraut (€5.80), for example.

Contact: Klosterhof 7, tel. +49/9861/6404, www.altfraenkische-weinstube-rothenburg.de

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 14/20

Weinstube & Café "Zum Pulverer"

Just before passing through the Burgtor (Castle Tower) on the way to the Castle Gardens, we stopped here for a light lunch. The beer stein collections and carved chairs depicting medieval burghers give "Zum Pulverer" an authentic appeal—as did the *Käsesuppe* (Cheese-soup €3.50) served in a hollow bread roll. Other options include *Maultaschen* (€7.50), *Schnitzel* with French fries and salad (€6.90), and fillet of perch (€6.80). Our jeans-wearing waitress was friendly and down-to-earth. The low ceiling and wall-to-wall wood panelling is cozy but can become a little overwhelming when the restaurant is crowded.

Contact: Altfränkische Weinstube, Herrngasse 1, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/976182

Rating: QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 12/20

Weinstube "Die Höll"

When asked, Rothenburg hotel landlords and shop owners agree: This is a good place to catch some rustic, local ambience in true Franconian spirit. The building is over 900 years old and the name is literally translated "To Hell." The wine selection and Franconian farmer snacks (a selection of home-made sausages/cheeses served on pickle-garnished wooden boards) are savory and reasonably priced, ranging from €2 to €8.50. Or try the baked potato with shrimp and sour cream at €5, or the spare ribs at €10. In the warm summer months, enjoy meals at one of the rustic outdoor tables, under swinging geraniums and climbing ramblers.

Contact: Weinstube "Die Höll," Burggasse 8, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/4229, fax 87811

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 13/20

Day Trips

Fränkisches Freilandmuseum Bad Windsheim

Drive 15-minutes along the A7 toward Würzburg, follow the sign to Bad Windsheim, and go back 700 years in time at the **Franconian Open Air Museum**. Original and authentically reconstructed regional farmhouses form a village in which every building is a veritable museum. Furniture, pictures, tools, and laundry demonstrate life in the early days. Children can see sheep, horses, cows, goats, ducks, and geese. There are arts & craft activities and demonstrations. Fränkisches Freilandmuseum, Eisweiherweg 1, D-91438, Bad Windsheim, adults €5, kids under 6 free, open 10-4, tel. +49/9841/668040, www.freilandmuseum.de, info@freilandmuseum.de

Take a Balloon Ride

We didn't have time for a 90-minute trip over the picturesque Tauber countryside, complete with a piloting certificate and souvenir, but Georg Reifferscheid and his professional crew promised a safe and enjoyable flight. Happy Ballooning, Georg Reifferscheid, D-91541 Rothenburg ob der Tauber, tel. +49/9861/87888, fax 87880, mobile: 0171-6805243, info@happy-ballooning.de

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 7

but how's that for a jawbreaker of a title). Why the Bierhütte somehow dropped off the *Gemütlichkeit* radar, I have no idea, but thanks to 20-year subscriber Jack Koenig of Agoura Hills, the Bierhütte is back with us, though no longer affiliated with the Romantik Hotel group (it's so far off the beaten track in tiny Hohenau there probably wasn't enough of the mostly English-speaking Romantik Hotel clientele to warrant the cost of membership). Here's part of what we said about it in the *50 Best* book.

At the Bierhütte you know you are in the country because the hotel shares its plaza with two busy farms. On a recent visit the air was rich with the smells of haying, a task that went on from early morning until dusk.

Rooms are spacious, trimmed with knotty pine and comfortably furnished with sofa, easy chair, and writing desk. Ground floor bedrooms of the guest house have sliding glass doors opening onto a protected terrace with chaise lounges and a wide lawn which slopes gently to a small lake. In the guest house's hospital-clean basement are sauna, solarium and gym. The main building occupies the site of an ancient brewery that dates to 1535. Its sparkling public rooms are unmistakably Bavarian, with white vaulted ceilings decorated in the rococo style.

Bierhütte is an excellent example of what makes travel in the German countryside so enjoyable; it is a perfect place to relax in serene surroundings, passing the days with long walks, naps and paperback novels. The city of Passau, picturesquely positioned on a narrow peninsula at the confluence of the rivers Danube, Inn and Ilz, is about a 30-minute drive. Cozy evenings are spent in the rustic dining room, enjoying first-rate German food (with nouvelle leanings), and good beer and wine. When the air is warm and still, heavy with the aroma of animals and haying from the nearby farms, and one is reclining on a chaise, a cool beer at hand, the words "Summertime, and the livin' is easy..." may come to mind.

Hotel Bierhütte, Bierhütte 10, D-94545 Hohenau, tel. +49/08558/9612-0, fax 9612-70, info@bierhuetten.de, <http://bierhuetten.de>.

Beating the Reischtag Lines

Dr. Anton Chiari, a Laguna Beach, CA, subscriber of many years tells us how to avoid the persistently long lines to tour the Reichstag's stunning glass dome. Simply make a reservation for lunch, or even just coffee, at the Bundestag's roof garden restaurant (open 9am-midnight), tel. 030/22629933 or email

kaeferreservierung.berlin@feinkost-kaefer.de). Upon arrival walk past the line, enter the building below the west portal to the right (West C), then take the elevator to the restaurant. Afterwards you can walk around the dome to your heart's content.

German Catalog

Reader Mary Ellen Hunter recommends "German Sense" a catalog offering, says Ms. Hunter, "an unusual variety of German books in both German and English, German music CDs, and DVDs." The catalog is free and mailed twice a year. Sign up at www.germansense.com.

No More Paper Tickets

The day of the paper ticket for airline travel is just about over. Starting April 1, 2008, all tickets issued by 60,000 accredited travel agents in 162 markets will be electronic.—RHB

CRUISE VS AUTO

Continued from page 1

tainment, and all motorcoach transfers, per-person fares begin at \$1,999.

Customary tipping should be added to the total cost of \$3,998 for two passengers. Viking suggests \$10 per-person per-day, which amounts to \$140 for two passengers. Finally, arbitrary tips for local guides comes to a guesstimated \$60. So let's round it off to \$4,200 to cover a week for two cruising and touring the Danube.

Next, we compared the cruise with do-it-yourself traveling—same timetable, same route, same stopovers. For pricing benchmarks, our calculations focus on four recommendable, centrally situated hotels with fairly similar double-accommodation rates: **Pension Aviano** in Vienna, (€105-151), **Drei Mohren** in Linz (€130) **Kaiserhof** in Regensburg (€92-130) and **Burghotel Stammhaus** in Nürnberg (€89-120); daily buffet breakfasts are included at all hotels. The self-drive itinerary curves through prime wine country in Austria's Waldviertel and Germany's Franconia, hence the temptation

CRUISE VS AUTO*Continued from page 1*

to do a bit of splurging for at least a few dinners. Here are the costs:

Midsize rental car	\$290
Fuel	\$95
Parking	\$100
Double room-seven nights	\$1132
Tickets, tips, public transport	\$50
Lunches	\$190
Dinners	\$525
Auto Tour Total	\$2382

For either calculation, intangibles are tough to nail down. Unlisted benefits of Viking river cruising include constantly attentive service, utmost leisure, copious information (maps, brochures, even a satellite-beamed daily newspaper), the opportunity to socialize with fellow passengers, emergency medical care if needed, onboard fitness facilities, and a well-stocked library. On the other hand, set-menu meals might not suit picky tastes, and you might find certain shore tours too limited for your personal interests. (Solution: sightsee independently, at your own pace).

"What-ifs" could sneak into your independent-travel thoughts. Errorneous map-reading, language barriers, a flat tire or fender-bender accident, difficult parking, in-city traffic jams, scary *Autobahn* speeds, overbooked lodgings, and unfavorable euro-dollar exchange rate, to name but a few.

Whatever your concerns, it's tough to ignore the \$1800-plus cost differential.

Readers Call to Action: Have you taken a European river cruise? If so, we'd like to hear about your experiences, both the pluses and minuses. Email us at info@gemut.com.

Readers' Forum**Hotel Bierhütte**

Way back, about 20 years ago, *Gemütlichkeit* put out a paperback book "The 50 Best Places Small Hotels in Germany, Switzerland and Austria." I think if you renewed, or took a two-year subscription, or

something you got the book free.

The book was good. Over time I used most of the places in it. I remember **Der Hecht** in Appenzell, Switzerland. I stayed there five times.

But my favorite was one I hit in 1990 - **Bierhütte** in the Bayrischerwald. It was different. The main building was from the 15th century. The rooms were larger than most. The location was isolated, hard to find, peaceful, and still. Most of all it served exceptional food.

Over the years I never saw it mentioned again. It was not on your recent list of 100 hotels, etc.

In April I had to attend a wedding in Passau. It came to me, it would not be far. I found it! It was exactly the same. The very same first-rate chef. Best of all it was reasonable.

Next time you go to Germany, try it. I would like to hear about it again. I paid €85 for a prime room, with breakfast, for two.

JACK KOENIG
AGOURA HILLS, CA ☒

News/Deals

■ **Gault Millau's Top Swiss Restaurants:** The new *Gault Millau* guide is out, with reviews of the top restaurants in Switzerland. Unlike the *Michelin Red Guides*, *Gault Millau* focuses expressly on the quality of food, with commentary about services and atmosphere separate from the final rating. This year's highest marks go to:

- **Rheinhotel Fischerzunft**, Schaffhausen
- **Kunststuben**, Kusnacht (Zürich)
- **Domaine de Chateaux-Vieux**, Satigny-Geneva
- **Santabondio**, Lugano
- **Waldhotel Fletschhorn**, Saas-fee (Southeast Switzerland)

■ **Lausanne Four-Day Package:** Spend four days in Lausanne for under \$1,000. The package includes three nights' hotel and a range of other amenities. Breakfast is includ-

ed each day. The package also comes with an excursion through the Savoy Alps, from Montreaux to Rochers-de-Naye Station as well as admission to Chillon Castle and a guided tour of Geneva. Prices vary depending on whether you want a 3-, 4-, or 5-star hotel and single versus double occupancy. For reservations or more information call 800-995-7997.

■ **Free WiFi in Lucerne:** Lucerne now offers free wireless local area network (WLAN) service in select parts of its old and new town areas. Backed by the local energy company, the initiative gives visitors free Internet access via wireless connection. Coverage extends to both sides of the river, with an emphasis on the new town and rail stations.

■ **Ostel Hotel Turns Back Time:** A budget hotel that opened in May promises to give visitors a taste of some of the more enjoyable aspects of pre-unification East Berlin. The Ostel's themed single, double, four- and six-bed rooms remain true to the GDR style, featuring colorful wood or plastic dressers, original radios, heavy glass lamps, and the occasional portrait of party leader Erich Honecker. Contact: Wriezener Karree 5, Berlin-Friedrichshain, tel. +49/30/25 76 86 60, www.ostel-berlin.de.

■ **Calling from Overseas:** Hoping to take the sting out of high roaming charges for EU travelers, European Union governments have agreed on a price cap for roaming charges—called the Eurotariff—for calls between EU countries. Starting in August, when travelers with an EU-regulated cell phone provider cross a border they'll get a message on their cell phone telling them the per-minute cost of getting and receiving calls. The prices of the Eurotariff cannot exceed €0.49 for making calls and €0.24 for receiving calls for the next year (excluding VAT). Read more at Gemut.com. ☒

Do You Have a Question or Want to Share a Travel Tip?

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