

DEAR
SUBSCRIBER

Rounding up the usual items

We'll start this disjointed ramble with a correction. Last month we mentioned ways to find good but inexpensive sleeping accommodations. The web address for Bens-Bauernhof should have been www.bensbauernhof.com. Sorry, Ben.

By the time you read this you should be able to purchase from our website, prior to departure from the U.S., hundreds of European travel products such as the **Berlin Welcome Card** (public transportation in Berlin plus discounts for sights and museums), daytrips from major European cities, walking tours, concerts, dinner cruises, and much more. Don't waste precious vacation time searching these things out. Hit the ground running. Click "Book City Tours" at our website, www.gemut.com.

"I need a hotel in _____ (fill in city name). Can you book it for me?" Well, of course we can but we have to charge a service fee. But don't pay us, do it yourself. Go to www.gemut.com where, in the very center of the home page, you'll find our recommended online booking service. Simply type in a city name and some dates. You're searching a database of more than 40,000 European hotels. The information provided for each includes photos, maps, a description of facilities and services, user ratings, and, of course, prices. Or you can browse by country, city, or region. Looking for a hotel near Munich Airport. Click "Browse," then "Germany," then under "Airports in Germany" click Munich. I recently chose a date in April and found rooms available at 29 of the database's 34 hotels near the Munich Airport. They ranged in price from

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

BAD ISCHL

Close enough to much-visited Salzburg for a tempting side trip, this elite resort still evokes the summertime heyday of Kaiser Franz Joseph and his Kaiserin Elisabeth.

Attractively situated at mid-point in Upper Austria's Salzkammergut lake-and-mountain region, Bad Ischl rose to high-society prominence nearly 200 years ago. In 1823, two doctors—
by Tom Bross Franz Augustin Wirer and Josef Götz—discovered springs with 27 percent salt content, promising myriad therapeutic benefits. They did the initial promoting, stressing brine's curative qualities for rheumatism. The community became the first and most fashionable Austro-Hungarian health-spa resort.

Its reputation was secured when Emperor and Empress Franz Karl and Sophie arrived to "take the Is-

chler waters" for their infertility in 1827. Four Habsburg "salt princes" popped out in rapid succession. Franz Joseph, eldest of the bunch, ultimately made then-named Ischl his summer residence for 65 years beginning in 1849—and it was here in 1853 that he married moody Munich-born Wittelsbach glamor-girl Elisabeth Amalie Eugenie (famously nicknamed Sissi).

Given its location deep in the gorgeous Salzkammergut vacation country and ample opportunities for recreation, present-day Bad Ischl makes an enjoyable side trip from ever-popular Salzburg.

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Quedlinburg Revisited

Our first report on the splendid former East Germany city of Quedlinburg was in October 1999. A walk around the old town then was a ghostly tour of dilapidated structures (in 50 years of communism only 26 houses were
by Bob Bestor rebuilt). It was difficult to believe that such architectural riches had been allowed to rot. On the other hand we were struck by the energy, patience, and money being spent on resuscitation. UNESCO thought enough of Quedlinburg to put it on its World Heritage List and, on a return visit in May 2002, we learned that more than 800 formerly moribund buildings had been resurrected. Based on yet another visit, this one much more recent, it's obvious that more have been added to that list.

The Find

Besides seeing more of the town's almost magical transformation, our latest Quedlinburg sojourn was notable for **Kunsthau: Kunst + Logis**. This unusual marriage of retail museum and bed and breakfast has to rank as one of *Gemütlichkeit's* all-time discoveries.

Our discovery was purely accidental. Near the end of an after-dinner stroll, we were drawn by the well-chosen art and handicrafts displayed in the windows of an attractive but shut-for-the-night shop in the very heart of the city's splendid Altstadt. Next morning

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Exchange rates as of 3/1/2008
1 euro = \$1.52
1 Swiss franc = \$0.95

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€72 to €208 for a double room. You might settle on the four-star **Best Western Hotel München Airport** in Erding for €95. It offers a free shuttle to the airport and is within walking distance of the S-Bahn station in case you want to go to downtown Munich.

Many of you have commented on the fact that your issue now comes folded inside a #10 envelope. Though not as desirable as the larger, 9x12 envelope, we save on both the cost of postage and the envelope. I can't say we'll never raise prices to existing subscribers, just that we never have. We are trying to continue that policy; hence the change.

Euro 2008, the European football (soccer) championships are scheduled for June 7-23 in eight cities: Innsbruck, Klagenfurt, Salzburg, Vienna, and the Swiss towns of Basel, Bern, Geneva, and Zürich. Because hotels are likely to be scarce and expensive, you may want to avoid these cities at that time. But perhaps you are a fan and want to attend. Though all tickets have already been distributed, many, of course, are still available at inflated priced from tour operators and ticket brokers. For more info visit <http://en.euro2008.uefa.com>.

Everybody wants a GPS in their rental car these days. There's no argument they are handy devices. They come free with many rentals in Germany (much less prevalent in other countries). The problem with a rental car GPS is it works only in the country in which the car is rented. Pick up a car in Munich and as soon as you cross into Austria—or Switzerland, or France, or Holland, etc.—the GPS stops working. Because we travel there frequently, I purchased a portable Garmin Nuvi 660 GPS to take to Europe. It works great (even on some trains where it recorded a top speed of 173 MPH), but the Europe map software cost an extra \$300. However, the Garmin Nuvi 270 fully loaded with Europe maps can be purchased online for about \$325. Prior to leaving the U.S., you also can rent the Nuvi 270 with Europe maps for \$11 per day plus a \$40 shipping charge. Call 800-521-6722x1 for details.

If you're not visiting our blog, <http://TheEuropeTraveler.com>, you're missing out on what I not-so-modestly believe to be some of the most useful, how-to, nuts and bolts, European travel info found on the Web. We've posted more than 70 stories in our first 90 days online. Here are some recent headlines:

- What to do at the Rental Car Counter
- Don't Book Rental Car in Euros

- Rail Pass vs. Point-to-Point Tickets
- Renting a Van in Europe
- Rail Daytrip Destinations
- Minotels Offer a Free Night
- Rental Cars In Eastern Europe

It's easy to sign up to be notified via email of every new post.

Summer air fares over the Atlantic are so far impervious to a weak dollar. Vague predictions of increased competition because of the "open skies" agreement haven't materialized. Industry watcher Ed Perkins (www.smartertravel.com) says the agreement so far has "led to a trickle rather than a flood of new services." "Travelers looking for low-fare initiatives or any travelers looking for totally new nonstop routes" haven't found any, he said. On the other hand, many analysts believe higher fuel prices and the economy mean rocky times ahead for the airline industry. And that, of

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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: **badi** Password: **9267**

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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

BAD ISCHL*Continued from page 1***Touring the Town**

Wrapped inside a loop formed by two converging rivers, Bad Ischl can be explored in one or two easy-going days. Imperial yellow is the predominant color scheme, and the sheen of 19th-century nobility and refinement has never entirely vanished. Now, as then, citizens stroll a riverside Esplanade lined with plane trees and ornamental lamp posts. Train travelers arriving at the east-side Bahnhof can immediately spot a modernized Kurhaus complex combining all manner of wellness treatments with an upscale hotel and restaurant. Two blocks away, in the **Kurpark**, the grandiose **Kongress & TheaterHaus**, dates from 1873-75 and includes a gourmet-caliber restaurant/café.

Shoppers mingle on nearby Pfarngasse. Ceiling frescoes and a Baroque, richly sonorous *Jubiläum* organ make the 18th-century **St. Nikolaus Pfarrkirche** worth an inside look. The parish church overlooks Ferdinand-Auböck-Platz, frozen every winter for public *Kaisereis* skating. Here, too, is the 1831 colonnaded **Trinkhalle**, a saltwater pumping station remade into a community center where residents and hangers-on scan newspapers and magazines in the reading room (used for occasional art exhibits). Onstage, free Kurorchester concerts skim through golden oldies in the light-classical repertoire.

North from there, at an upper bend of the Ischl River, lanes curving through 55 acres of rambling parkland lead to the **Kaiservilla**, Franz Joseph's long-time summer residence, decorated in the Biedermeier style. Rooms and hallways are jam-packed with 2,000 hunting trophies (he bagged 200 chamois), portraits galore, his-hers personal memorabilia, Sissi's plush Gray Salon, her antique exercise equipment and the desk where—on July 28, 1914—the Kaiser signed Austria's fateful declaration of hostilities against Serbia, marking the beginning of World

Bad Ischl Basics**Population:** 14,133**Elevation:** 745 meters (2,445 ft.)**Visitor information:** Tourismusverband Bad Ischl, Trinkhalle 6, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/277/57, fax 277/57/77, office@badischl.at, www.badischl.at.Austrian National Tourist Office, 120 West 45th Street, New York NY 10036, tel. 212-944-6880, www.austria-tourism.at.**Driving distances:**

Vienna	79 km	173 miles
Linz	106 km	66 miles
Salzburg	54 km	33 miles
Innsbruck	234 km	145 miles
Klagenfurt	220 km	137 miles
Munich	194 km	120 miles
Passau	131 km	82 miles

Rail: One daily train from Vienna's Westbahnhof; change at Attnang-Puchheim, travel time 3:30. Rail service from Linz (1:12), Salzburg (44 min.)**Airport:** Salzburg Airport (SGZ) one-hour transfer to Bad Ischl**Name change:** Ischl to Bad Ischl, 1906**Driving:** From Vienna, take the A-1 *Autobahn* west via St. Pölten, Amstetten, Enns and Linz. At Regau, exit to southbound Rte. 145 (the super-scenic *Salzkammergut Bundesstrasse*) past Gmunden and Altmünster, then alongside the Traunsee lakeshore. From Salzburg take eastbound Rte. 158 (also scenic!) to go via St. Gilgen and the Wolfgangsee.**Sightseeing:** Cost-free one-hour guided tours begin at the Trinkhalle Sundays (10am) and Thursdays (4pm)**Events:****Weindorf:** Kurpark grounds becomes a wine village hosted by regional vintners. Oom-pah Citizens' Band (May 22-25)**Operetta Festival:** *The Gypsy Baron* by Johann Strauss (July 12), then Franz Lehár's *The Tsarevitch* (July 19).**Kaiser-Gala:** Celebrates Franz Joseph's birthday. In '08, the Franz-Lehár Orchestra performs works by Lehár and Offenbach in an evening concert. (August 16)**Ischler Stadtfest:** Features concerts, parades and fireworks. August 23-24.**Kaiser-Messe** (Imperial High Mass): Franz Joseph birthday observance, in St. Nikolaus Church. Performance of Haydn's *Emperor's Hymn*; floral tributes; full-regalia gathering of regimental associations and descendants of Austro-Hungarian aristocracy (August 18).**Bauernherbst** (Farmers' Autumn): harvest festival with cows paraded from alpine meadows, farmers' market, food stands, folkloric activities (September 6-14)**Silverstergala:** New Year's Eve formal concert and dance, with entertainment by folkloric groups, then fireworks.

War I. He died here two years later. (Elsewhere, a statue next to the Eishalle Kaltenbach skating rink shows a youthful, slim Kaiser-huntsman looking jaunty in lederhosen and an alpine hat).

His wife had the park's separate building, the neo-Gothic marble Marmorschlössl, converted into her tea salon, now housing a modest **photography museum** mainly devoted to family albums, vintage views of the town and snapshots of visiting dignitaries. (Among them: Britain's Edward VII, a royal attention-getter in 1905, '07, and '08. When the king had one of his Rolls-Royce touring cars shipped from London in 1908, he took Franz Joseph on his first automobile ride).

With World War II on the verge of engulfing Europe, curators transferred paintings from Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum to Bad Ischl for safekeeping in area salt mines.

Notable musicians turned the spa town into a trendy holiday hangout during the early, peaceful part of the 20th century. One was operetta composer Emmerich Kálmán. *Merry Widow* creator Franz Lehár spent enough summers in his pink-stucco **Villa Lehár** vacation home (Leharkai 8) to complete two dozen operettas before dying here in 1948. (Watch for a Lehár statue in the Kurpark, erected by the citizenry on the 10th anniversary of his death). Years before him, symphonic bigshots Brahms and Bruckner stayed awhile—followed by waltz-king Johann Strauss, poet-dramatist Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, *The Chocolate Soldier* composer Oscar Strauss, operatic tenor Richard Tauber, actor Alexander Girardi and playwright Johann Nestroy (both from Graz), and songwriter and film composer Robert Stolz.

Their local comings and goings are chronicled in the **Stadtmuseum**—originally the Hotel Austria (Esplanade 10)—which offers a place to learn about salt-mining procedures, admire traditional Salzkammergut crafts and clothing, and inspect models of *Traunschiffahrt* riverboats. During each Christmas sea-

son, space is cleared for the mechanical *Kalss-Krippe*, a nativity crèche crafted in 1838 and populated by 300 figurines. The museum opened 17 years ago.

Playtime in Bad Ischl

Established in 1933, with alpine foothills looming beyond the fairways, the **Salzkammergut Golf Club** has a mildly challenging 18-hole, par-71 course. Hikers and skiers need only make a short trek to reach the forested **Katrin-Alp** on the city's southwestern outskirts. A red *Seilbahn* cable car lifts them to the 1542-meter/5,059-ft. summit, sufficient altitude for terrific views of widespread Upper Austrian scenery.

If you jog or walk for fitness, ask at the tourist office for a pocket-size map of Bad Ischl's extensive running and Nordic-walking routes. Distances over varying levels of terrain (in-town and beyond) range 1.80-4.50 km.

At the **Thermenhotel** (Bad Ischl's one and only full-scale spa), the complete two-hour Alhambra deluxe treatment costs €220.

Nearby Lakeside Village

You can reach a typically idyllic Salzkammergut lake by way of a drive or train trip taking less than half an hour. Destination, on the Traunsee: **Gmunden**, 32 km/20 miles north of Bad Ischl. Plans for an overnight stay could feature accommodations at the shorefront **Landhotel Grünberg am See**, a sprawling 19th-century *grande-dame* resort (www.gruenberg.at). If you'd rather be in the cobblestone-paved heart of town, choose the less pretentious, 34-room **Goldener Brunnen** (www.goldenerbrunnen.at), within earshot of the Rathausplatz's *Glockenspiel*. Its Meissen porcelain bells do their tuneful clinking and clanging five times daily, first at 10am, finally at 7pm. *Gisela*, a sidewheeler steamboat launched in 1872, takes passengers to **Seeschloss Orth**, which dominates a midlake island linked to the mainland by a wooden footbridge. Avid European TV viewers recognize the medieval castle as the romantic lake-resort setting of a long-

running German-produced series, *Seeschlosshotel Orth*.

Bad Ischl Hotels

Thermenhotel Bad Ischl

The locally preeminent *Kurhotel*, decidedly slick and contemporary, amounts to 112 guestrooms connected to complete spa facilities for fitness and beauty treatments. Various packages range from €279 to €567 (depending upon length of stay) and cover the wellness spectrum—from Shirodara-Ayurvedic massages, Turkish steam baths and a solarium to hiking and golf. The Alhambra health center's swimming pool is extra-big; grownups and kids can also dip into or lounge beside two outdoor pools set amidst flower beds and verdant shrubbery. Three-course lunches, five-course dinners and a weekend buffet draw guests as well as outsiders to the hotel's classy Saliera restaurant, overseen by an attentive waitstaff.

Contact: Thermenhotel Bad Ischl, Voglhuberstrasse 10, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/204, fax 27862, reservierung@kaisertherme.at, www.kaisertherme.at.

Daily Rates: Singles €119-134, doubles €208-238

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20

Goldenes Schiff

Managed by three generations of the Gruber family, currently personified by Christine and Josef, the "Golden Ship" began existence as an unpretentious *Wirsthaus* restaurant/tavern in 1810. Since that long-ago period, the establishment (remodeled top-to-bottom three years ago) has grown into a four-star, 55-room hotel with balconied frontage and clean-cut, white neo-Bauhaus angles as seen from its Traun riverside location. Muted pastels prevail over indoor color schemes, illuminated by recessed ceiling lights and harmonized by walnut-veneer fixtures and furniture. Guests have access to high-speed Internet wi-fi hookup, both in their rooms and in the lounge area. In-room amenities include a 15-inch wall-mounted flat-screen Nabo-brand TV.

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White-tiled bathrooms are sizeable.

The on-site wellness center is fully equipped and well-maintained.

Küchenchef Wilhelm Eberl runs the cheerfully decorated restaurant, serving a-la-carte dinners in the main dining room and glassed-in, plant-filled *Wintergarten*. Menu choices invariably include delectable lake trout from the region's Traunsee, Attersee, Mondsee and Halstättersee. Weather permitting, guests have the option of enjoying their drinks while seated on the hotel's own section of the impeccably cared-for riverbank promenade. If you're driving to Bad Ischl, the hotel's private parking lot is advantageous.

Contact: Austria Class Hotel Goldenes Schiff, Stifterkai 3-5, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/24241, fax 24241/58, office@goldenes-schiff.at, www.goldenes.schiff.at.

Daily Rates: Singles €75-95, doubles €210-292

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 17/20

Goldener Ochs

A vivid yellow paint job with white window trimmings and an old-fashioned, pointy-topped corner turret make the four-star "Golden Ox" a visual standout on the Traun riverfront. Crossing a bridge gets you swiftly into central Bad Ischl. A humble inn stood on this site back in 1791. Today, Inge and Klaus Schweiger welcome guests to their 48-room hotel, nicely situated for Bad Ischl walk-arounds and discretely renovated to meet present-day travelers' expectations. Front rooms overlook the river and neighborhood rooftops. But you might prefer staying on the building's quieter backside, where balconies framed by carved-wood railings hang above a leafy garden. There are several parking spaces for guest vehicles.

White and cream walls and partitions brighten guestrooms, each with large windows; most have ample-enough floor space to include a lounge corner. Double beds are standard throughout. Arched window recesses and curved ceilings add charming shapeliness to the restau-

rant, which opens onto a terrace. Buffet breakfasts are generous. Keeping seasonal catches in mind, chances are good that you'll find fresh Salzkammergut fish and game entrées on lunch and dinner menus. A side nook called the Lehar-Stube is a clear-enough indicator that Austria's operetta maestro dropped by regularly for meals and drinks.

The Schweigers recently converted an entire upstairs floor into a tile-surfaced "vitality zone" with a sauna and fitness gear in addition to such spa indulgences as massages and salt-and-brushwood curative sessions.

Contact: Hotel Goldener Ochs, Grazer Strasse 4, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/23529, fax 23529/50, goldener-ochs@netway.at, www.goldenerochs.at

Daily Rates: Singles €43-62, doubles €74-110

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Villa Dachstein

Uphill from the railroad station on the east side of town, Villa Dachstein offers comfortable three-star *Garni* (B&B) lodgings in a turreted white mansion, completed in 1894 as a vacation home for an obviously wealthy Viennese banker. The Brändle family took over 37 years ago, hosting travelers in a stately edifice comprising six guest rooms—one of which is cozily squeezed inside the turret's curvature. The backyard garden adjoins a sun terrace that's outfitted with deck chairs and a kids' swing set and is ready for table-tennis competition.

Contact: Villa Dachstein, Rettenbachweg 3, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/23151, fax 2131/113, wilkommen@villadachstein.at, www.villadachstein.at

Daily Rates: Singles €33-40, doubles €72-76

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Pension Sonnhof

This comfy B&B is hosted by the Hrovat family. The location, directly across Bahnhofstrasse from the railroad station, couldn't be more convenient for arriving travelers. Along-

side the building—with its 23 guestrooms and strong chalet resemblances—lounge chairs are set in a garden, surrounding a pond and shaded by high-branching lime and maple trees. In addition to having a billiard room at their disposal, guests can sweat and simmer in the Sonnhof's sauna and steam bath. Ceiling beams overhang the spacious breakfast room, with rag rugs and a vintage Austrian country stove sure to attract admirers. For a delightful plus, the Hrovats' property includes a step-down conservatory, sporting glass-paned sliding doors, soothingly light-toned woodwork and topped by a lengthy triangular skylight.

Contact: Hotel Garni Sonnhof, Bahnhofstrasse 4, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/23078, fax 252/985, hotel@sonnhof.at, www.sonnhof.at

Daily Rates: Singles €55-80, doubles €70-120

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 15/20

Landhotel Hubertshof

A four-star in-town hostelry that looks humdrum-ordinary on the outside—but beguiles newcomers when they come through the front door. Some of the 28 guestrooms have canopy beds; two old-time ceramic stoves warm the timber-ceilinged dining room and its chummy little *Kaminstüberl*. The mini-spa's mineral saltwater swimming pool is impressively huge. And the property is run under the hospitable care of Johann Panhuber. The hotel stands adjacent to the Kaiservilla's gateway entrance.

Contact: Landhotel Hubertshof, Götzstrasse 1, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/24445, fax 24445/104, hotel@hubertshof.co.at, www.oberoesterreich.at/hubertshof

Daily Rates: Singles €58-69, doubles €98-116

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Bad Ischl Restaurants

Villa Schrott

This fancied chalet, 4 km./2.5 miles west of the city center, once tantalized gossipers

as Villa Felictas, the hideaway of Katharina ("Kati") Schrott, well-known Viennese actress and Franz Joseph's steady mistress and "soul friend." Now it's a top-rated restaurant with Gault-Millau credentials, a garden terrace and Rudi Hanke's well-mannered, unobtrusive management. Terrine of duck with red cabbage, choices of grilled salmon or *Zander* pike-perch, beef tenderloin and filet of venison with elderberry sauce regularly appear on Rudi's menus, complemented by an Austrian-Italian-French wine list. For dessert, try resisting the cheese dumplings bathed in fruit sauce. Full-course dinners range €42-52, entrées €14-28.

Contact: Villa Schrott, Steinbruch 48, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/27647, fax 27647-4

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 16/20

Restauration im Alten Sudhaus

Established five years ago in a section of a former saltworks refinery, youthful hipness is evident in such touches as exposed ventilation ducts and funky paintings spotlight-

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.

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ed on every wall. For food and mugs of Kaiser beer, choose seating indoors or in the *Gastgarten*. Pasta selections are €7.20-12.80, with the highest price entrée a heaping plate of spaghetti-with-shrimp. Menu alternatives include choices of grilled lake fish (€9.80-14.80) or mussels (€10.80) and various meat dishes (€8.90-14.80). For dessert, try an Ischler classic called *Kaiserschmarrn* (€7.20)—meaning pancake slices sprinkled with powdered sugar.

Contact: Restauration im Alten Sudhaus, Salinenplatz 1b, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/28992

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20

Café Ramsauer

Unpretentious with its aging purple drapes, worn carpets and fake-leather banquettes, Café Ramsauer is recommended for its breakfasts (€7-9) and *Kaffee und Kuchen*. There are 10 kinds of tortes in the display case and thick slices of homemade *Apfelstrudel* constantly available. Johann Strauss reportedly frequented this café, open since 1826, for snacking, imbibing and billiard-playing.

Contact: Café Ramsauer, Kaiser Franz-Josef Strasse 8, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/22408

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 13/20

Weinhaus Attwenger

From midtown Bad Ischl, if you aim for the south bank of the Traun by crossing the Hauptbrücke bridge, you'll come upon this timeless *Weinstube*, with a pedigree stretching back to the 12th century. The solid furnishings, blending with the homespun décor, frescoed alcoves, floral-curtained window frames and folksy knickknacks, are at least 300 years old. Sun umbrellas add splashes of color to the front-yard garden, an ideal spot for lunching and sipping wine while enjoying panoramic views of the river.

In the main dining room, ask proprietors Ute and Ernst Siegesleitner to show you the *Stammtisch* reserved for symphony-superstar An-

ton Bruckner in bygone times. Menu staples include veal medallions in Riesling wine sauce (€10.80), choice of veal or pork *Schnitzel* (€10.80-12.80), fried chicken doused in Styrian pumpkinseed oil (€10.80), and a Viennese specialty: boiled-beef *Tafelspitz* (€15.80). Decide, perhaps, upon a four-course prix-fixe dinner (€35) or its three-course alternative (€31).

Contact: Weinhaus Attwenger, Lehárkai 12, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/23327

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 17/20

Gasthaus zur Bürgerstub'n

On a side street, tucked behind a courtyard, this is a low-key establishment with lofty arched ceilings, stencil-decorated yellow walls, down-home touches and Alt-Ischler Bräu beer on tap. Opt for the *Wiener Schnitzel* cutlets with cranberry sauce (€9), pork fillet with roast potatoes (€13), or grilled chicken served with French fries (€9).

Contact: Gasthaus zur Bürgerstub'n, Kreuzplatz 7, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/23568

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 14/20

Sissy

This chic café-piano bar-restaurant combo—situated where Pfarrgasse and the Esplanade intersect in the bustling heart of town—features floor-to-ceiling curved window panes and pictorial tributes to Franz Joseph's wife, (whose name had several different spellings). Six choices of lake fish (€9.30-12.30) are on the menu. Meat entrées include *Schweinebraten* roast pork with bread dumplings (€7.80), beef goulasch with parsley potatoes (€6.80), and *Hirschrückenfilet* venison fillet with red cabbage, pear, and cranberries (€15.90). Four vegetarian alternatives range €5.60-7.20.

Contact: Sissy, Pfarrgasse 2, A-4820 Bad Ischl, tel. +43/6132/24173


Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Less-Costly Food & Brew

Being Austrian means Bad Ischl has no lack of in-town *Gasthof* and *Gasthaus* places.

We especially like **Zum Pfandl** (Steinbruch 1), **Bachwirt** (Grazer Strasse 70), **Zur Salzmühle** (Esplanade 16), **Steininger** (Leitenbergerstrasse 2), **Rettenbachmühle** (Hinterstein 6) and **Grabenwirt** (Lindau 5). Eggenberg is the most prevalent Salzkammergut brand of beer. Other brands on the local scene are Kaiser, Zipfer, Kapsreiter, and Freistädter.

Royal Pastry

The honor of the Kaiser and Kaiserin's favorite pastry shop belongs to **Café-Konditorei Zauner** (Pfarrgasse 7), in business since 1832. Johann Zauner made it happen upon arriving from Vienna, tempting hungry Ischlers with such bakery selections as plump raisin-studded *Guglhupf* sponge cakes, crescent-shaped *Zipferl* sugar cookies, and his famous-all-over-Austria chocolate-covered *Zaunerstollen*. Some 200 assorted goodies (from €3) are displayed in the gorgeously gold and white rococo showroom topped by crystal chandeliers. Portraits of the extended Zauner family and full-length Kaiser-Kaiserin oil paintings hang on gilded-mirrored side-room walls. Elsewhere, **Zauner Grand-Café**, a glass pavilion where full meals are served, stands prominently on the Esplanade. 

QUEDLINBURG

Continued from page 5

we returned when the shop reopened. After 20 minutes or so of browsing, and trying to decide whether we could afford a piece of art that had caught our eye, the shopkeeper mentioned rooms for rent. We immediately asked for a tour. The word "guestroom" fails miserably to categorize these spaces. There are just two, but each reflects the art for sale in the store, clean and contemporary. Given their simple elegance, caliber of furnishings and first-rate original art pieces, the phrase "museum quality" is more accurate. Because

it has a small sitting room, we prefer Number one; but a stay in either will demand a page in your memory book—*especially at €75 double including breakfast*. Both offer private access via a small garden terrace at the rear of the building—where breakfast is served in good weather. We've inspected or stayed in most of the city's hotels, and the zen-like tranquility and simplicity of these two guestrooms, and the garden terrace they share, are the most appealing we've seen. Check the website and book far ahead, because this is special. We don't rate Kunsthau because it simply can't be compared to a regular hotel.

Contact: Kunsthau, Blasiistr. 16, D-06484, Quedlinburg, tel. +49/03946/919693, fax 916147,
www.kunsthauquedlinburg.de

Daily Rates: Single/doubles €75

Romantik Hotel am Brühl

Though the **Hotel Theophano** in the center of the town has its followers among *Gemütlichkeit* readers, we again chose to stay at the ivy-covered am Brühl. The buildings of two former farms have been turned into a hotel of considerable charm that is the only Quedlinburg property onto which Michelin confers its "red" (pleasant hotel) rating.

Arriving guests enter a front courtyard through a gated driveway. Inside, the hotel's spacious public rooms feature terra-cotta floors scattered with Oriental rugs and tall Palladian arched windows set in thick, stone walls. The stone and rough supporting timbers provide a nice contrast to the modern lighting and furnishings.

Guestrooms are quite large and decorated in a bright contemporary style.

Across the inner courtyard, in the half-timbered old stable, one huge room with a high brick and beamed ceiling with barrel roll vaults has become the hotel's restaurant. Substantial wooden tables and chairs rest on square, polished

terra-cotta pavers, and the white stucco walls are hung with attractive art and antiques. It is a pleasant room in which to dine, though a little noisy. We can't vouch for the food in 2008 but on a previous visit it was better than average.

You might consider renting one of am Brühl's five rooms in the restored **Palais Saalfeld**, at Kornmarkt No 5. Depending on size, they go from €75 to €95 with a minimum stay of three night.

Contact: Romantik Hotel am Brühl, Billungstraße 11, D-06484, tel. +49/03946/961 80, fax 9618246,
hotelambruehl@t-online.de,
www.hotelambruehl.de

Daily Rates: Singles €85, doubles €100-145


Rating: QUALITY 15, VALUE 15

Restaurant Benedikt

There's nothing *haute cuisine* about the Benedikt, but the place has old-world atmosphere, decent food, and is in the heart of the *Altstadt*. We ate in a cozy, low-ceilinged upstairs room whose dimensions give testimony to its venerable history—most 21st century adults seem just a bit out of scale in these surroundings. Nonetheless, the candlelit ambience, ample portions, friendly service, and Beck's *vom fass*, warmed our souls on a cold winter night. At €12.50, hearty thick pasta tossed with goat cheese, red caviar, olive oil, and fresh basil was a big hit, but nearly as satisfying were veal medallions swimming in a light brown sauce of morels and accompanied by al dente green beans and house-made gnocchi (€16.50). One pays a mere €2 for a small glass of Beck's or a fine after-dinner thimble of Sambucca. A half-liter of house merlot costs €7.

Contact: Restaurant Benedikt, Marktkirchhof 18, 06484, Quedlinburg, tel. +40/03946/526652,
www.benedikt-quedlinburg.de

Rating: QUALITY 11, VALUE 13

Quedlinburg deserves a place on your "must see" Germany destination list. Read more about it at www.gemut.com. 

Readers' Forum

Buy Austria Red Guide in U.S.

I was so glad to see your mention of the new *Michelin Red Guide for Austria*. I was able to find and purchase a new copy from Amazon (here in U.S.) for a total of \$23.86 (\$19.87 for book, \$3.99 for postage) by selecting superbookdeals from their list of "new and used" sellers. There were several other sellers listed here in the U.S. The ISBN# is 9782067133464 which might prove to be helpful to anyone searching for the book.

CHARLOTTE OLSTEAD
VIA EMAIL

Bring Your Tent

While packing for a trip with my 10-year-old daughter, I decided to include a two- to three-person dome tent and two light sleeping bags. It was the best decision ever. We had the best nights' sleep and fun experiences camping in Austria along the Altersee in someone's backyard for €8; Czech Republic in the middle of nowhere for €12; outside Melk below a castle along the Danube for €14; and at the lake campground near Neuschwanstein Castle for €22. All were clean, quiet (unlike our Hostel experiences), convenient, and fun. For budget travelers, I highly recommend camping (at least as a backup) and then splurging once in awhile on more expensive hotels.

DANIEL SRNA
VIA EMAIL

Bamberg Hotel Bargain

Last fall in Bamberg, we had difficulty getting a room for the period we wanted but finally found one at the **Hotel Lieb Café Bug** (Am Regnitzufer 23, D-96049, tel. +49/0951/56078). The great thing about this little family hotel was the beautiful walk along the Regnitz river into Bamberg's *Altstadt*. It was about a mile and half through beautiful woods, the Hain Park and then along the shore opposite the Concordia onto the bridge across the river at the **Hotel Nepomuk**. If too tired, we could take the bus back until 8pm. We stayed six days. The family

READERS' FORUM*Continued from page 7*

was great, meals were very good in the hotel, both Franconian fare as well as Thai (Mrs. Lieb is Thai). English is spoken and the price was great (€65 double). Rooms, though somewhat small, are nice with new bathrooms and we had a window overlooking a small lake.

JOHN AND NORMA CROMWELL
MISSOULA, MONTANA ☒

DEAR SUBSCRIBER*Continued from page 2*

course, translates to more empty seats resulting in lower prices. Of course, it may also mean extra charges for such things as aisle seats and checked luggage.

The EU marches on: You no longer have to stop at the border to show a passport to enter the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia from another EU country. We've come a long way since 1989.

We are nearing parity between the dollar and the Swiss franc. One franc is now worth 95 cents. This is a mostly negative item, but I've talked to a couple of people in the last day or so who, perhaps comparing the dollar's value to the pound, think that's good. Uh-Uh. An ordinary double room at Zürich's great little hotel **Florhof**, which we used to tout as "moderately-priced," is CH 370 or about \$352. In 2001, when you could get a double there for CH 230, and the franc was worth 55 cents, the cost was \$127. These latest moves by the Swiss franc make **Untours'** (www.untours.com) U.S. dollar guaranteed rates for *two weeks* in a Swiss apartment, of \$2,200 to \$2,600 per person (cheaper if there are more than two people traveling together), including air and Swiss rail passes, look *very* attractive.

Let's finish on a up note. Seldom more frequently than once a year do we come across a hotel or restaurant

that is simply not in step with its competition. Usually these places are so good and so inexpensive that they're almost too good to be true.

Such is the case with **Kunsthaus: Kunst + Logis**, lauded in this month's Quedlinburg story. In the same category you can put **Gasthof Ubl** (Pressgasse 26, tel. +43/01/587 6437), a neighborhood *Beisl* near Vienna's Flohmarkt. Entering Ubl's old-Vienna atmosphere is like walking onto the set of *The Third Man*—poorly lit, a bit seedy, a trifle smoky, and paneled in dark wood. A Harry Lime hangout, for sure; missing only is the twangy zither. But when they bring the food you don't care about seedy or smoky. We had eaten the night before at an old favorite, **Smutny**, near the Staatsoper, but Ubl put them to shame. Tender slices of veal loin (€13) bathed in their own rich juices, and the cooked-just-right, crispy Schnitzel (€9.5), were both superior examples of simple, down-home Vienna cookery. With accompanying salads, a beer each, and a shared dessert, the bill for two was €32.50. Reservations advisable.—RHB. ☒

News/Deals

■ **Vienna Exhibitions:** Two of special interest this year:

- **"Monet to Picasso: The Batliner Collection,"** is a showing of mainly French and German Expressionism at the **Albertina** through April 6, 2008. It includes masterpieces by Monet, Renoir, Cézanne and Matisse; German artists Kirchner, Feininger, Kandinsky and Nolde, plus Austrian Expressionist Koko-schka and the elongated, thin figures of Swiss sculptor Giacometti. Also displayed are 10 paintings, 15 drawings, printed graphics, and eight ceramic works by Picasso, never before seen in public. Albertina, Albertinaplatz 1, tel. +43/01/534 83-0 www.albertina.at.

- **Golden Treasures from the Tomb of Tutankhamen.** Burial gifts made of gold, silver, and bronze for the youthful pharaoh are featured at the Museum for Ethnology through

September 28, 2008. Over 150 objects lend a glimpse of the ancient Egyptian civilization on the Nile. The high point of the show is an exact reconstruction of the burial chamber discovered in 1922. Museum for Ethnology, Hofburg, 1 Heldenplatz, tel. +43/01/525 24-0, www.ethnomuseum.ac.at.

■ **Hotel Rates in Berlin:** According to Berlin Tourism Marketing, the city currently has 90,723 hotel beds with an additional 8,000 rooms scheduled to be available soon. The average room rate in a four or five-star hotel in 2006 was quoted at €140, compared to rooms of similar quality for €298 in Paris and the equivalent of €314 in London. A three-star property costs an average of €67. Budget travelers have a choice of 30 hostels (13,000 beds), with rates as low as €10 per night. Book Berlin hotels at www.gemut.com.

■ **Linz is "Culture Capital:"** Sharing honors with Vilnius, Lithuania, Linz, Austria's third largest city behind Vienna and Graz has been designated European Capital of Culture for 2009 (www.linz09.at). The signature event in the year-long schedule of more than 30 diverse programs and activities is September's **Klangwolk-en** (Clouds of Sound) which is expected to draw huge crowds to Danube riverbanks for fireworks and orchestral music.

Other culture-year exhibitions are planned for Linz's **Lentos Modern Art Museum** and the futuristic, interactive **Ars Electronica Center**. Audiences anticipate **Brucknerfest** (Sept. 14-Oct. 8) in the world-class Brucknerhaus concert hall, followed by a **Vienna Philharmonic** guest appearance on Oct. 26.

■ **Walking Tours:** Deborah Lewis of **Bredeson Outdoor Adventures** will lead a walking tour entitled "Hiking Austria and Bavaria: From Tyrolean Mountain Huts to a King's Fairy Tale Castles" June 21-28. The land cost of \$2700 per person, double occupancy includes four and five-star hotels (one a Relais & Châteaux property) and most meals. Email info@gemut.com for full details. ☒