

**DEAR
SUBSCRIBER**

The Cost to Drive in Europe

When I want to know the price of fuel in Germany, or any other country, I go to <http://gasoline-germany.com/statistik.phtml>. The site's prices are updated hourly. Though they vary from city to city, as I write this the average price for 95 octane and for diesel in Germany is about €1.5 per liter. That translates to a per gallon price of about, gulp, \$8.80. In Austria it's about \$7.43 and \$6.95 in Switzerland. The place to fill up, however, is Liechtenstein where premium is \$5.95 (fyi, diesel in Saudi Arabia is 35 cents a gallon). Of course these dollar prices are made worse by the current unfavorable exchange rate. If the dollar and euro were a one-to-one ratio the per gallon price would be about \$5.68.

Such prices are a concern if one plans to rent a car in Germany. However, it might not cost as much as you think. Last winter I rented a car in Berlin to drive into Poland. Avis gave me an Opel Signum diesel with automatic transmission—even though I asked for a standard transmission. There were four of us and we traveled 850 kilometers (531 miles) and didn't have to refill the tank until we got back to Berlin. The refill cost was \$97; 18.3 cents per mile, 4.6 cents per mile per person. I pumped 13.2 gallons into a 14.5 gallon tank at a per gallon cost of \$7.35. Our mileage was slightly better than 40 miles per gallon. Since then, of course, the dollar has weakened and the price of fuel in Germany has increased. Today, the same tank of fuel costs \$116 or 21.8 cents per mile.

For highway and city driving here in the U.S., I get about 22 miles per gallon. Yesterday I paid \$4.20 for premium or about 19 cents per mile, not that much different from

Continued on page 2...

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

THE BERLIN 50

You might want to interrupt those country itineraries for a few days in the German capital, Western Europe's most affordable major city. Here are "50 Great Things to do in Berlin."

In 2008, this year of the undernourished dollar, *Gemütlichkeit* has emphasized travel in the countryside where things like hotels and restaurants don't cost as much as in the cities. Berlin, however, is somewhat of an exception. A deluge of hotel construction since unification has driven hotel rates to the point that they are the lowest for any major city in Europe. For example, the website biddingfortravel.com currently lists successful bids of from \$70 to \$85 at four-star Berlin hotels. And the city is loaded with small, inexpensive restaurants with good food and wine.

Of course Berlin is not just another big city. One can make the case that,

when viewed as whole, it's the European pacesetter in contemporary art and architecture, music, and film. Throw in the city's turbulent history over the past 80 years—European preeminence, Nazi rule, near total destruction, 50 years of suffocating communist rule for half the city, isolation for the other half, and now the great resurgence—and you have what many feel is the continent's most exciting city; bold, cutting edge, and diverse, a place of thinkers and doers.

In a bit of a departure from our usual story format, this month we recommend 50 great things to do in this great city. They are grouped by activity but otherwise offered in no

Continued on page 3...

Swiss Country Destinations

Continuing our series on euro-beating country destinations with three out-of-the-way Swiss towns.

Airolo

Most auto travelers headed for Lugano, in Switzerland's Italian-speaking canton, emerge from the Gotthard Tunnel and whiz right by Airolo, a village of 1,800 inhabitants, slate roofs and narrow streets—the first town at the tunnel's south end. What they miss is a good base for a two or three-day reconnaissance of a seldom visited part of Ticino, and a small hotel with an excellent but affordable restaurant. For example, 20 minutes south by car is Piotta and the Ritom, a funicular that surely must be Switzerland's steepest. Not a cog wheel, it instead rides on

tracks and is pulled by a cable. The ascent takes 12 minutes and portions of it are near vertical, an 88.7 percent grade. At the top, a 25-minute walk leads to a lake formed by a dam where a small restaurant serves the many hikers and walkers that pass this way. Further perambulations lead to more lakes in this mainly treeless landscape.

A bit farther south is the Michelin one-star town of Giornico with its 12th century church (don't confuse it with the newer church virtually on the same site).

Activities for another day might include a train trip into Lugano for

Continued on page 7...

Exchange rates as of 6/2/2008
1 euro = \$1.56
1 Swiss franc = \$0.95

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

our per mile costs in European rental cars last year. For a variety of reasons I won't go into here, the mostly small, manual transmission cars in Europe's rental fleets achieve better mileage than we do here in the U.S. Over there, a standard midsize car gets over 30 mpg in normal driving. With a diesel engine in a compact car (suitable for two or three persons) you can expect well over 40 miles per gallon. A midsize diesel, such as a Passat or Vectra, should attain 38 to 42 mpg. If these numbers are not good enough for you, Volkswagen is building a hybrid electric/diesel that is predicted to achieve 69 mpg. Some European auto journalists say the car will be in showrooms and rental car fleets late next year.

Your problem, of course, is that you can't be guaranteed a diesel engine on a rental car in Europe. I'm told rental fleets in Germany are about 60 percent diesel, slightly higher among compact and midsize cars. (Tip: the Avis compact car category in Germany is almost entirely diesel).

So, chances are, you're going to be given a rental car that gets 35 to 45 miles per gallon. One with a 12-gallon fuel tank will take you 420 to 540 miles. To provide some perspec-

tive, it's 245 miles from Vienna to Munich; about the same from Munich to Frankfurt, and 344 miles from Frankfurt to Berlin. Accurate point to point mileage computations can be found at www.viamichelin.com.

As you can see by the chart in the box, the difference in cost between driving a 45 mpg car 1,000 miles in Switzerland vs. a 30 mpg car in Germany is \$293 minus \$154 or \$139. Perhaps the days of the Vienna-Ber-

	Price Per Gal	Costs per mile in cents			
		30mpg	35mpg	40mpg	45mpg
Germany	\$8.80	29.3	25.1	22.0	19.5
Austria	\$7.43	24.7	21.2	18.6	16.5
Switzerland	\$6.95	23.2	19.8	17.3	15.4

lin-Paris-Rome driving itinerary are over. Better to meander from Frankfurt to Koblenz and down the Mosel, then south through the Black Forest, east into Bavaria, and back north up the Romantic Road to Frankfurt. Add a few short sidetrips and you have a relaxed, mostly country vacation of about 1,000 miles full of good things to see and experience. Depending on the car you drive and your fuel type—all of it in this case purchased in Germany—such a trip should cost from \$195 to \$293. A similar 1,000 mile journey in Austria would be \$165 to \$247, and from \$154 to \$232 in Switzerland.

Of course, that's just the price of

fuel. For a compact rental car (4 doors, air, manual) for two weeks in Germany you'll pay about \$480 including value added tax and unlimited miles. If you want a midsize car it will cost about another \$80.

GPS Update

In other car rental news: except for some high-end vehicles, Europcar no longer offers free GPS in Germany. For three euros per day they'll give you a portable GPS. Avis in Germany still offers it free, on request, on vehicles larger than the economy and compact categories. There is a nine euro per day charge (max. 90 euros per rental) on the smaller car categories. With the exception of Hertz's Neverlost system—\$25 per day/\$121 per week—rental companies' navigation systems only work in the countries in which they are rented. ☒

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: **nbrl** Password: **3131**

Vol. 22, No. 5
June 2008

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

Publishers: Robert H. & Elizabeth S. Bestor
Executive Editor: Nikki Goth Itoi
Contributors: Tom Bross

Consulting Editor: Sharon Hudgins
Online Services: Thomas P. Bestor
Subscriber Travel Services: Kurt Steffans

Andy Bestor, Laura Riedel

Gemütlichkeit (ISSN 10431756) is published 10 times each year by UpCountry Publishing, 288 Ridge Road, Ashland OR 97520. TOLL FREE: 1-800/521-6722 or 541/488-8462, fax: 541/488-8468, e-mail travel@gemut.com. Web site: www.gemut.com. Subscriptions are \$67 per year for 10 issues. While every effort is made to provide correct information, the publishers can make no guarantees regarding accuracy.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO:
Gemütlichkeit, 288 Ridge Road., Ashland OR 97520

HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	Scale	Restaurant Criteria	
Excellent	16 - 20	Food	65%
Above Average	12 - 15	Service	20%
Average	8 - 11	Atmosphere	15%
Adequate	4 - 7		
Unacceptable	0 - 3		
Hotel Rating Criteria	Value Rating	Scale	
People/Service	30%	Outstanding Value	17 - 20
Location/Setting	15%	Very Good Value	12 - 16
Guestrooms	30%	Average Value	9 - 11
Public rooms	5%	Below Average Value	5 - 8
Facilities/Restaurant	20%	A Rip-Off	0 - 4

COUNTRY LIFE*Continued from page 1*

particular order of preference. They aren't the 50 "best" things to do because, as you will see, we've excluded most of the well-known sights, hotels and restaurants. (Much of what we left out can be viewed at www.gemut.com. See also the May 2006 issue of *Gemütlichkeit* at the website.) This issue's list of 50 emphasizes the less touristy, the less expensive, and the more off-beat. Here they are:

1. Headquarter at Hotel Art Nouveau

OK, it's time for disclosure. When it comes to the Art Nouveau I've lost all objectivity. Since we first discovered their then-new hotel in 1997, Christine and Gerd Schlenzka have become personal friends. Liz and I have vacationed with them in the U.S., in Canada, in Poland, in Germany, and shared many meals in restaurants all over Berlin. It was Gerd who introduced us to Rogacki and Tavola Calda, two simple, authentic restaurants that have become reader favorites. Christine knows Berlin art and architecture like a 13-year-old baseball fan knows batting averages, and enjoys directing her guests to the newest art venue and the latest architectural masterpiece.

Located in a pre-war building in the highly desirable Savignyplatz neighborhood, — near the Ku'damm and full of good restaurants and interesting shops — Art Nouveau's guestrooms feature hardwood floors, high-ceilings, tall windows, and the special decorating touch of Christine Schlenzka.

The hotel's pleasant common room seems always full of sunlight and is a cheery spot to partake the daily breakfast buffet or, in the evening, to sip a beverage from the honor bar.

Info: Hotel Art Nouveau, Leibnizstrasse 59, 10629 Berlin, tel. +49/030/32 77 44 0, fax 32 77 44 40, email: info@hotelartnouveau.de, web: www.hotelartnouveau.de. Doubles from €126, but ask for the *Gemütlichkeit* subscriber discount.

2. Buy a Berlin Welcome Card

Berlin is a sprawling city. Its main attractions are scattered over a large area. To see them, plan to rely on the city's excellent rail and bus system. The Welcome Card offers unlimited transportation for one adult and up to three children under 14, plus a discount of 25 percent or more to 120 cultural and sightseeing attractions. The 48-hour card is €16.5 and the 72-hour version costs €21.5. Sold at most train platforms or, before you leave for Europe, at www.gemut.com (click "Pre-book a sightseeing tour").

FOOD & DRINK**3. Lunch at Rogacki**

At this standup, four-sided seafood bar in a blue-collar district market, CEOs in handmade suits rub elbows with hard-hat laborers and TV stars. Choose from the menu board or find something at one of the market's vendor stands; see it cooked on the grill, garnished with crisp, fresh salad or amazing roast potatoes *mit Speck* (bacon)—or both—then served still sizzling. A wonderful *Nordsee* shrimp and bacon-sprinkled flounder, with the grilled potatoes, is €8.5 and easily serves two. Three oysters —tasting as though they were plucked from the sea within the last 15 minutes —including a brimming glass of crisp white wine are just €6.65. Info: Wilmsdorfer Str. 145, www.rogacki.de. Lunch only.

4. Budvar at KaDeWe

At some point in every trip to Berlin, I make my pilgrimage to the little Budvar/Pilsner Urquell concession on the sixth floor of KaDeWe department store. This quiet corner, which reverently and with understated ceremony, serves these two great Czech beers, attracts devotees from all income and social levels. I place my order, pay the €3.5, and watch the barman begin the process of filling my glass. After the initial flow from the tap he sets the glass aside for a moment to let the foam subside. It takes several fill-subside cycles—about seven or eight minutes—to produce a perfect head of foam. Typically he has six to eight glasses in various stages of fill. When each is

just right—the foam just peeking over the gold rim of the elegant glass, about an inch above the four-tenths liter line—he puts a little paper doily around the stem and over the base, then sets the glass before me on the correct Budvar or Pilsner Urquell coaster. The first sip is a moment I will have thought about for months. Usually I sit at the bar and watch the pouring ritual but sometimes I take my beer to the counter under the big window and look out over the city. Occasionally I get a sandwich or a sausage at one of the nearby food stands—only pretzels (one euro) are sold at the bar. When my glass is nearly empty I start thinking how long it will be before I'm back in Berlin and, at that point, almost always order a second beer. Which of the two beers do I prefer? It's very close and for many years I was partial to Budvar, but last December the Pilsner Urquell won my heart. Info: Tauentzienstrasse 21-24, tel. 2121 0, www.kadewe-berlin.de, info@kadewe.de

5. Pizza at Ali Baba

Who says Europe is expensive? At Ali Baba, in the Savignyplatz district, a generous slice of pizza is one euro and a short beer costs €1.8. The funky, comfortable back room is a popular neighborhood gathering spot. Info: Bleibtreustr 45, tel. 30 8811350, www.alibaba-berlin.de, mail@alibaba-berlin.de

6. Die Zwölf Apostel (12 Apostles)

Moderately-priced, but tasty Italian food served in rooms that are more Sistine Chapel than Berlin restaurant. Opulent wall and ceiling frescos, good pasta, fresh salads, and large, delicious pizzas. There are two "12 Apostles," one in the Savignyplatz neighborhood (open 24-hours), and another on Georgenstrasse in the old East, in a building under S-Bahn tracks in a row of antique shops. A daily business lunch of pasta and a small salad costs just €6.5. Live piano music after 9pm at the Georgenstrasse location. Info: Bleibtreustrasse 49 or Georgenstrasse 2, tel. 312 1433 or 201 0222, www.12-apostel.de

7. Ristorante Tavola Calda

This tiny neighborhood (Savigny-platz) favorite typifies the diversity and quality of Berlin restaurants. Top-notch calves liver, fresh fish, and, of course, pasta. Friendly service in a small dining room that's often still full at 11:30pm — always a good sign. It's handy, too, to the Hotel Art Nouveau. Main dishes €17-22. Info: Leibnizstr 45, tel. 3241048

8. Eisdiele Aldemir

Many Berliners believe this Kreuzberg shop has the best ice cream in town. Info: Falkensteiner Str. 7 - Kreuzberg, tel. 6118368

9. Cafe Richte

Delicious homemade cakes baked from scratch. In the Charlottenburg / Wilmersdorf district. Info: Giesebrechtstr. 22, tel. 3243722

10. Cafe am Neuen See

In fine weather this beer garden on a lake in the middle of the Tiergarten is a favored spot to watch and meet people—and for a beer and bite to eat. Hundreds of candles make it especially beautiful at night. Info: Liechtensteinallee 2

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.

11. Besenwirtschaft

Neighborhood wine bar offering small dishes and well-chosen German wines mostly from Baden Württemberg. Cozy atmosphere with low-hanging lamps and only the occasional tourist. A quarter liter of wine is about €3.5-4. Info: Umlandstrasse 159, tel. 8811623, www.besenwirtschaft-berlin.de

12. NÖ!

Lively, inexpensive bistro near the Komische Oper. Mostly light, Swabian influenced, dishes priced from €4 to €11. Baguette with Blutwurst is €4. The Winzerplatte of wurst, sliced meats, cheeses and olives is €10.5. Friendly service. Info: Glinkastrasse 23, tel. 2010871

13. Henne

Half a roast chicken costs only €6.5 at this one-dish Kreuzberg restaurant. A side of potato salad is €3. The original interior is said to be unchanged since 1905. Info: Leuschnerdamm 25, tel. 6147730, www.henne-berlin.de. Reservations essential.

14. Adana Grill

Known for its authentic mangal (charcoal grill). Typical Turkish dishes such as lamb shish-kebab. Cheap, clean and good food. Open all night. Info: Manteuffelstrasse 86, tel. 6127790

15. Horvath

Though it's in all the guidebooks, Horvath is worth your attention and without question one of the city's best restaurants. Rumor has it that Chef Wolfgang Müller could have a Michelin star but wants a broader clientele and thus keeps prices moderate. The five-course menu is €43. Info: Paul-Lincke-Ufer 44a, tel. 612 899 92, www.restaurant-horvath.de, mail@restaurant-horvath.de

16. Zollpackhof Am Kanzleramt

Rest here with a beverage and some simple food after a scenic walk along the "Kanzleramt." The business lunch is €7.50 and includes one soft drink. Not far from two Berlin architectural gems, the new Lehrter Bahnhof and the Bundeskanzleramt (Federal Chancellery). Info: Elisabeth-Abeg-Str. 1, tel. 33099720, www.zollpackhof.de

SIGHTS**17. Berlin in Miniature**

Loxx Miniatur Welten Berlin claims to be the largest model railway in the world. An all-encompassing variety of computer-operated, miniature transport vehicles relentlessly move through a scale model of the city of Berlin laid out over a 2,500 square meter space. The landscape presents hundreds of familiar scenes and buildings, including the Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate, Alexanderplatz TV tower, the Zoologischer Garten, Hackescher Markt, railway stations, airports, harbor installations, military facilities, and, of course, dozens of streetcars, regional and long-distance trains, steam trains, high-speed ICE (Intercity-Express) trains, as well as a computer-controlled motor traffic system with cars, trucks and buses. Airplanes land and take off with appropriate sound effects. Info: Grunerstrasse 20, near Alexanderplatz, www.loxx-berlin.com, info@loxx-berlin.de, adult admission is €8.9, €4.5 for children 9-14, and €2.2 for kids taller than one meter.

18. Mercedes Welt

Yes, it's a new car showroom, but the five-story, steel and glass, atrium-style building encloses two restaurants, a private club with indoor climbing wall, racquet ball courts, and, of course, all those gleaming Mercedes Benz cars, new and rare vintage models; some suspended by long cables from overhead steel girders. Enjoy a wurst and a beer while watching CNN on HD TV in the informal main floor restaurant. Info: Salzufer 1, off Strasse des 17. Juni, near the Tiergarten S-Bahn station, tel. 2510943, www.mercedes-welt.de, info.berlin@mercedes-benz.de

19. Berlin by Boat

The city takes on a relaxed personality when viewed from the sedate deck of a river boat. Berlin has miles and miles of waterways and more bridges than Venice. Reederei Bruno Winkler offers daily city tours from Schlossbrücke/Schloss Charlottenburg 10:15am/ 11:00am/ 2:15pm/ 3:00pm; one hour city tours from station Friedrichstrasse approx. every 45

min. starting at 10:15am from March through October. Info: tel. 349 95 95, www.reedereiwinkler.de

20. Reichstag Dome

Between the end of the war and unification, the Reichstag stood empty by the Wall, surrounded by weed infested vacant lots. Now it's the German seat of government, crowned by a stunning glass and metal dome providing visitors a 360-degree city view. Entry is free but lines are long. To avoid the crowds, some advise a visit late in the day, while others recommend bypassing the long lines by reserving a table at the roof terrace restaurant. Info: tel. 22 62 99 33, www.aviewoncities.com/berlin/reichstag.htm

21. Remains of the Wall

In most of Berlin the only reminder of the Wall is a double row of paving stones marking where it once stood. The last significant segment—a few hundred meters in length—is the so-called Wall Park along Eberswalder Strasse and Schwedter Strasse. The graffiti is remarkable. Info: Eberswalder Strasse/Schwedter Strasse, www.dailysoft.com/berlin-wall/guide/wallpark.htm

22. Potsdamer Platz

The centerpiece of Berlin's rise from the ashes is Potsdamer Platz, once the city's lively heart, but a postwar vacant lot. In the '90s it was Europe's biggest building site and today seems the incarnation of every futuristic architectural dream design of the postwar era. Housing an IMAX theater, a film museum, and the great buildings of Daimler-Benz and Sony, it is a must-see for every Berlin visitor. Info: Potsdamer Platz, www.potsdamerplatz.de

23. Ride the #100 Bus

A cheap, easy way to get to many Berlin sights is via the double-decker #100 bus that goes from the Bahnhof Zoo station to Alexanderplatz in the *Mitte*. It runs frequently, enabling sightseers to get on and off along the way at such attractions as the Kaiser-Wilhelm Memorial Church, the Siegesäule (Victory Column), the Tiergarten, Bellevue castle, the Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate, the Deutsche

Staatsoper and St. Hedwigs Cathedral. Ride free with the Berlin Welcome Card.

24. Water Clock at Europa Center

This is a little quirky but if you have nothing better to do, duck into the Europa Center and see how this multi-story water clock keeps time. Info: Europa-Center, www.europa-center-berlin.de

25. Soviet War Memorial-Treptow

Dedicated to the Soviet soldiers lost in the 1945 Battle of Berlin. Before 1989, every Western tour bus was required to stop at this gaudy but moving monument in Treptow Park. The soldiers' remains rest in mass graves around the principal monument. Under terms of the unification, Germany continues to maintain this and other Soviet memorials on German soil. Info: Treptower Park

26. Tacheles in Old East Berlin

Walk the streets off Oranienburger Strasse, away from the new construction, and see crumbling buildings still with bullet holes. One of Berlin's strangest sights is Tacheles, a bombed-out, graffiti-ed to the max, former department store occupied by squatters while the building's post-unification ownership is being resolved. Over the years it has become the center of Berlin's alternative culture. There are shops, artists' studios, a cafe, and an outdoor 'sculpture garden' with half-buried buses and wildly painted old cars. Info: Oranienburger Str. 54-56

27. Stroll Kurfürstendamm

Though some trumpet Friedrichstrasse in the *Mitte*, Kurfürstendamm is still Berlin's best shopping street. Walk west from the Memorial Church to Adenauer Platz and return on the opposite side of the street, about four kilometers. Stop for lunch at Dressler (Kurfürstendamm 207-208). Along the way you'll find all the big shops, Cartier, Louis Vuitton, Hermes, Gucci, etc. For a good sidetrip turn south on fashionable Fasanenstrasse. Info: www.kurfuerstendamm.de

28. Zoologischer Garten

One of the world's largest and best, the Berlin Zoo is home to more

species than any other. Perhaps the most famous of the 14,000 animals are the rare giant pandas. Also on the grounds is a well-regarded aquarium. Info: www.zoo-berlin.de/en.html, admission: adults €12 to €18, families €20 to €45

29. Dorotheenstädtischer Friedhof

This pretty little urban cemetery is the final resting place of artists, musicians, and philosophers. A notable occupant is Bertolt Brecht, who collaborated with another Berliner, Kurt Weill, on *The Threepenny Opera* (from which came the popular song *Mack the Knife*). Brecht fled Nazi Germany in the '30s and wound up in the U.S. where he worked as a Hollywood screenwriter until being blacklisted as a communist. He lived out his final years in East Berlin (next door, at Chausseestr. 125, you can take a guided tour of his flat) and died in 1956 of a heart attack at the age of 58. His will called for a stiletto to be placed in his heart and that he be buried in a steel coffin so his corpse could not be eaten by worms. In 1990 the grave was vandalized with anti-Semitic slogans. Info: Chausseestr. 126, Kreuzberg

30. New Main Rail Station

Berlin's architecturally spectacular five-storey glass and steel railway station has now been in service for two years. Designed to handle a quarter of a million passengers per day, the structure has been called the most beautiful rail station in the world. "It looks like a giant glass spaceship has landed in the middle of Berlin," said one Stuttgart newspaper. Info: www.hbf-berlin.de

MUSEUMS

31. DDR Museum

This fascinating new hands-on museum recalls life in the former East Germany. Sit behind the wheel of a Trabant and rev its engine, watch government propaganda TV in an authentic DDR living room, and find out what it was like to be spied on in the museum's Stasi section. Info: Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse 1, tel. 847123731, www.ddr-museum.de, post@ddr-museum.de, admission €3.5 to 5.5

32. Berlin Film Museum

Occupies three floors of the 14-storey Sony Center in the Potsdamer Platz. An electronically guided tour of the museum (included in the price of admission) takes visitors through nearly 100 years of German filmmaking, with a few glimpses of Hollywood thrown in. Movie clips include excerpts from epics of the 1920s and 1930s, such as *Metropolis* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, while other presentations explore the dark era of the Cinema of National Socialism. Also on display is memorabilia of Billy Wilder, Ernst Lubitsch, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Klaus Kinski, Hanna Schygulla, Fritz Lang, and, of course, that legendary Berliner, Marlene Dietrich. Info: Potsdamer Strasse 2, tel. 247 49-888, www.deutsche-kinemathek.de, museuminformation@kulturprojekte-berlin.de, admission: €6 or €4.5 with Welcome Card

33. Checkpoint Charlie Museum

Not-to-be-missed documentation of the history of the Berlin Wall and the many East-to-West escape attempts. One of the few sections of the Wall still standing can be reached from here via Zimmerstrasse. Info: Friedrichstrasse 43-45, 253 7250, www.mauer-museum.com, info@mauermuseum.de, admission €9.5, students €5.5 (25 percent discount with Welcome Card).

34. Deutsches Technikmuseum

Locomotives, airplanes, manufacturing processes, machine tools, looms, computers, radios, cameras, diesel engines, steam engines, scientific instruments, paper machines, printing presses, and more. A new aeronautic and space collection opened in 2005. An automobile and motorcycle section is in the works. Many demonstrations and hands-on, interactive opportunities. Info: Trebbiner Str 9, tel. 49 30 90 254-0, www.dtmb.de, info@dtmb.de

35. Georg Kolbe Museum

Bauhaus/Secessionist-style sculptures from the first half of the 20th century. Even though he was blind the last 10 years of his life, Kolbe worked until his death in 1947. In one

work completed during this period, *Der Befreite* (The Liberated), a beaten down figure reflects the emotion of postwar Germany. To see his most celebrated work, *Die Tänzerin* (ballerina), a bronze nude, go to the National Gallery. Info: Sensburger Allee 25, tel. 304 2144, www.georg-kolbe-museum.de

ENTERTAINMENT

36. Ballhaus

This chandeliered ballroom in the *Mitte* recalls prewar Berlin and delivers the sort of entertainment the city is famous for. The program is dinner with a variety of live music. It could be Argentine Tango, American Swing, or Vienna *lieder* (songs). The Pasta Opera (about once a month; more frequently in summer), combines a multi-course Italian dinner with popular operatic arias sung by costumed performers (see video clips at www.pastaopera.de). Info: Auguststr. 24, tel. 282 92 95, www.ballhaus.de, barbara@ballhaus-berlin.de

37. Friedrichstadtpalast

This showy, Las Vegas-style revue in the *Mitte* is a fun leftover from communist times, when tickets to its performances rewarded favored party apparatchiks. There are acrobats, a full orchestra, singers, dancers, opulent costumes, and elaborate stagecraft. Even the cheap seats have good sight-lines. Info: Friedrichstrasse 107, tel. 23 26 23 2, www.friedrichstadtpalast.de, tickets@friedrichstadtpalast.de

38. Komische Oper

Top quality light opera at affordable prices—€8-62. This year's schedule includes Cole Porter's *Kiss Me Kate*, Lehar's *Das Land des Lächelns* (Land of Smiles), *La Boheme*, *Madama Butterfly*, and Berliners Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. Red velvet and chandeliers. Info: Behrenstr 55-57, www.komische-oper-berlin.de, info@komische-oper-berlin.de

39. A-Trane Jazz Club

Small, friendly nightclub in Savignyplatz district featuring modern jazz. Sometimes there is a small cover charge, but often not. Check the

schedule of performances and make advance reservations on the web. Info: Bleibtreustr. 1, 313 25 50, <http://a-trane.de>, info@a-trane.de

40. See a Movie

Berlin has dozens of theaters that frequently or occasionally exhibit English-language films with German subtitles. Look in the listings for 'OV' meaning the film is shown in its original version. For a long list of Berlin movie houses that show films in English visit www.berlininfo.com. For a list of movies shot in and around Berlin, go to http://german.about.com/library/blfilms_berlin.htm

41. Aquarium in Radisson Hotel

In the spacious atrium lobby of the Radisson Hotel, a great blue columnar aquarium containing 2,500 tropical fish rises several stories high. Worth a peek. Info: Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse 5, 49 30 23828-0, www.radissonsas.com, info.berlin@radissonsas.com

TOURS

42. Guided Art Tour with GoArt!

Even the *New York Times* has recognized Berlin's ascendance on the contemporary art front. So how does one find the galleries and studios of young, emerging artists? Enter GoArt! which offers a variety of thematic tours within the city's contemporary art scene.

- The *Art Now Berlin* tour visits public spaces and private galleries.
- *Berlin Artists* organizes studio visits and meetings with artists and designers. This is not for the "I know what I like" casual art buff; prices range from €70 to €79 per hour. Info: Halle am Wasser (behind Hamburger Bahnhof), Invalidenstrasse 50-51, tel. 3087 3626, www.goart-berlin.de, contact@goart-berlin.de

43. Tour the Wall and DDR Sights by Bicycle

On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, April 1 through October 31, take a seven-mile bike trip along the former "Death Strip." The tour passes the remaining sections of the wall and stops at several historic sites including the "Tränenpalast" (palace

of tears) built in the 1960s to process citizens headed for West Berlin. The name comes from the numerous tearful partings in its courtyard. Info: tel. 43 73 9999, www.berlinonbike.de, €17 including bike. Discounts for Welcome Card holders

44. Templehof Airport

Better hurry, because the hub airport of the Berlin Airlift is scheduled to close in October. The tour takes two hours and costs €12. For €159 you can also take a 35-minute ride in a DC 3, called the "Candy Bomber" because many airlift pilots on final approach threw candy out of the planes to kids on the ground. In front of the huge building, part of the Airlift Memorial, is a plaque listing the 78 pilots and support personnel who died ensuring Berlin's food and other supplies in 1948-49 when the Soviets cut off highway and rail access to the city. Info: Air Service Berlin, behind counter 28, www.air-service-berlin.de

45. Berlin Underground

Berliner Unterwelten e.V. offers regular tours of Berlin's underground installations, predominantly in the spaces below the Gesundbrunnen U-Bahn station. The main theme of tour #1, *Dark Worlds*, is the Allied bombing campaign and civilian shelters. Another tour is in the Flak tower and explores two of the original seven floors of Berlin's largest bunker complex. Dress warmly and wear good shoes. Safety helmets are provided. Info: Brunnenstraße 105, in Gesundbrunnen U-Bahn Station, tel. 49 91 05 17, www.berlinerunterwelten.de

SHOPPING

46. Weekend Flea Market

The Saturday/Sunday flea market on Strasse des 17. Juni (200 meters from the Tiergarten Station) is Berlin's largest. Long rows of stalls feature art, handicrafts, antiques, and, of course, plenty of junk. Info: Strasse des 17 Juni, Tiergarten Station

47. Antique Shopping Under the S-Bahn

A string of upscale flea market quality shops and restaurants built

into the brick trestle supporting the S-Bahn tracks in eastern Berlin. All are connected by interior doors thereby allowing visitors to pass from store to store without going outside. Info: Friedrichstrasse/Georgenstrasse, tel. 2082-655, www.berliner-antikmarkt.de, info@antikmarkt-berlin.de


48. Hertha BSC Fanshop

Good place to find an out-of-the-ordinary gift for the young soccer fan is the Hertha Berlin Fanshop in the Europa-Center near the Kaiser-Wilhelm Memorial Church. Info: Europa-Center, www.europa-center-berlin.de

49. Kreuzberg/Bergmannstrasse

You might be surprised, as I was, to learn that during the Cold War, scruffy Kreuzberg was part of West, not East, Berlin. Prior to unification the district was one of the city's poorest, with a large percentage of immigrants, many of Turkish ancestry. Though smart shops and upmarket restaurants are popping up like mushrooms in May, the district retains its alternative ambience. The main walking streets/areas are York Strasse, Gneisenau Strasse, Bergmann Strasse and Viktoria Park. Lots of good, cheap restaurants, ethnic snackstands, funky bars and off-beat shops. Info: www.net4.com/berlin/Berlin_Kreuzberg61.e.html

50. Komische Oper Store

Fascinating shop that sells props from performances of the Komische Oper. Naturally, much of the merchandise for sale—and some of it is authentic—reflects the *Jugendstil*/Art Nouveau period in which light opera flourished. Info: Across from Komische Oper 

SWISS DESTINATIONS

Continued from page 1

a boat ride on the lake, perhaps disembarking for lunch at Gandria, a quaint but tourist-ridden hamlet built on the steep cliffside overlooking the lake.

Hotel Forni

Though its sleeping accommodations are more than adequate, one most remembers the Forni's restaurant, and wonders why Michelin withholds a star. This is serious cuisine but in a relaxed atmosphere, perhaps not a plus in Michelin's eyes. There are two eating areas, one a typical *Stübli* of bare-wood tables and a bar with beer taps, and the other a bright, inviting space of granite floors, light wood-slat ceilings, and white linen-covered tables, each lit by hanging halogen lamps. First courses, such as risotto with fresh asparagus and bacon pieces, are CH 24 to CH 28, while *primi piatti*, such as roast rabbit with *canederli* (similar to gnocchi), range from CH 32 to CH 49. I recall an appetizer of earthy, sauteed wild mushrooms in feathery phyllo pastry, and the most tender, least gamey, venison filets ever. The wine list gets a Michelin "particularly interesting" notation. A silky half-liter of local Merlot (CH 25), from nearby Losone and suggested by our waiter, was top-flight. Without beverages, expect to pay \$50 to \$70 per person for dinner. Contact: Hotel Forni, Airolo, tel. +41/091/8691 270, fax 691 523, info@forni.ch, www.forni.ch. Doubles start at CH 150

Bivio

Situated at the junction of two historic mountain passes—the Julier and the Septimer—at the edge of the Engadine preserve, and just 22 kilometers from the famed ski resort of St. Moritz, this alpine village of 260 residents offers convenient access to spectacular Alpine hiking, wildflower blooms, and skiing. Backcountry skiers do overrun the town during the winter high season, but they are primarily Swiss, German, and Austrian visitors, not Americans.

Summer brings hikers, mountain bikers, and motorcyclists to the winding roads and rugged terrain. (Also among Bivio's regular guests are herds of cows that arrive by train from farms near Bern to graze the surrounding pastures in summer—no wonder the milk chocolate tastes so good.) And in the spring and au-

tumn shoulder months, you have the place all to yourself.

Hotel Solaria

The Solaria is in every way a family business—from the friendly vibe at the front desk to an all-around do-it-yourself work ethic. Current co-owner Giancarlo Torriani's grandfather opened the Solaria as a small hotel in 1935, and the original building retains a rustic charm.

Though it has only 36 rooms, the hotel is almost entirely self-sustaining, with two restaurants, a bakery, a bar, wine cellar, laundry facility, bowling alley, and even a bocce ball court on the premises. The decor is basic but immaculate throughout. Additional amenities include a small sauna, excellent homemade cuisine, and numerous terraces for outdoor dining.

Rooms in the original house (Stammhaus) are the least expensive but also among the most charming, with low ceilings and small baths. Number 202 is relatively large, with a beamed ceiling and spectacular mountain views. During the early summer runoff, you can hear the river roaring into the valley from some of the rooms. They are tastefully designed in natural pine and white bath tile with heated towel racks. Low pile industrial carpet was installed presumably to handle the winter slush. As part of the Minotel marketing group, the Solaria occasionally offers good deals, such as three nights for the price of two. Contact: Hotel Solaria, Strada del Guiglia 43, CH-7457 Bivio, tel. +41/081 684 5107, fax 5290, solaria@hotelsolariabivio.ch, www.hotelsolariabivio.ch, doubles from CH 160 but Solaria is a Minotel and at press time you could book three nights for the price of two, € 220 at www.minotel.com

Appenzell

In any competition to choose Switzerland's most picture-postcard perfect small mountain village, Appenzell would have to be in the top three. In the small business district, narrow streets are lined with elaborately decorated and painted buildings. Intricate

wrought-iron signs, flower boxes, and an occasional Swiss flag project from their facades. Traditional dress is worn daily by many Appenzell citizens.

Given its old ways and peaceful setting one might be lulled into thinking that Appenzell is not only spiritually but physically far removed from the rest of the world.

Not so. Zürich is a little over an hour's drive by car and under two hours by the trains which depart every 30 minutes. St. Gallen, an interesting destination itself, is just 20 km (13 miles) away, and from there train connections lead farther afield to several destinations within daytrip distance such as Lindau, Friedrichshafen, and Bregenz.

The village of Stein is also worthy of a half-day excursion. There you'll find the Appenzeller Volkskunde Museum, where most mornings a farmer makes Appenzeller cheese by hand over an open fire. After that, go next door to the Appenzell Schaukäserei (Showcase Cheese-Dairy) to see the same basic process done with computer-controlled stainless steel tanks, vats, centrifuges, and presses. Have lunch in the dairy's restaurant.

Gasthaus Alpenblick

This proto-typical Swiss country hotel sits in a meadow on a knoll approximately 100-yards above the Schwende rail stop, just off the quiet Appenzell-Wasserauen road.

The name Alpenblick ("Alpine view"), of course, is indicative of one of the hotel's main attractions, marvelous views of the Alpstein range, including the Säntis, its highest peak.

In familiar Swiss style, light wood dominates the decor in the sparkling, airy guestrooms, many of which have balconies offering mountain views. There are four floors and a lift.

At night the hotel's cozy *Stübli* draws a mixed crowd of guests who come for the hearty Swiss fare or just to while away the evening

over a beverage or two.

The premises' major domo is owner/chef Michael Fässler, one of those never-sleep dynamos whose lives are dedicated to running a small hotel.

Though the location may feel remote, guests can walk the few steps to the rail stop and be in Zürich in two hours, St. Gallen in an hour, and Appenzell in nine minutes. Trains run at least hourly.

Contact: Hotel Appenzell, tel. +41/071/799 1173. fax 799 14155, hotel@alpenblick-appenzell.ch, www.alpenblick-appenzell.ch.
Doubles from CH 142



News/Deals

■ **The Mercedes Benz of Christmas Market Tours:** It's personal, exclusive, upmarket, and led by a woman who's more savvy about traveling in eastern Europe than anyone I know, Karen Pasold. Her annual "*Christmas Markets of Imperial Europe*" emphasizes five-star accommodations and delves far deeper into the European Christmas culture than the standard, highly-commercialized Nürnberg-Salzburg-Munich-Rothenburg itineraries operated by the major tour operators. This year, Karen's 13-day, 12-night tour starts November 30 in Prague and visits Dresden, Weimar, Leipzig, Pilsen, Krakow, and Warsaw, with an optional three-night stay in Riga, Latvia. First-rate hotels are Prague's U. Prince, Taschenbergpalais in Dresden, Hotel Fürstenhof in Leipzig, Palac Bonerowski in Krakow, and Warsaw's Bristol Hotel. The \$3,890 per person, double occupancy price includes five-star hotels, all breakfasts, 13 dinners (most include beer or wine), four lunches, ground transport via first-class rail (double sleeper car compartments) or luxury motor coach, scheduled sightseeing tours, all admissions to scheduled activities, guides and tips. Get a brochure with a complete description of the trip at Classic Europe, 1 Glenmoor, Frisco TX 75034, tel. 972-625-6050, email classic europe@yahoo.com.

