

**DEAR
SUBSCRIBER**

Tales of Travel Trouble

Gemütlichkeit has never done traditional advertising such as TV and radio. For years the same direct mail piece that describes our services has been the main source of subscribers. Thus, an advertising slogan is something we've never considered. Lufthansa's is "There's No Better Way to Fly." Hilton Hotels' say "Travel Should Take you Places." The Nike tagline, "Just Do It," seems good and I really like John Deere's, "Nothing Runs Like a Deere." Based on reports we get from returning travelers maybe ours should be, "Know Before You Go." This summer we've heard about some bad things that have happened to good travelers. A prime example is the family of five that booked and paid for airline tickets calling for arrival in Rome and departure from Frankfurt—without knowing in advance how much it would cost to get from Rome to Frankfurt. All available options have a substantial downside: air is probably the cheapest but baggage restrictions can raise the price considerably, plus you don't get to see the country between the two cities, and airports serving low-cost European airlines are sometimes remote (Frankfurt's Hahn Airport is 126 kilometers from the city). Rail is expensive (a three-country Eurail Pass for five people costs \$2,140), and the only really comfortable automobile for five adults on a trip of that length is a seven-passenger van, which will be frightfully expensive to pick up in Rome and drop in Frankfurt—well over \$3,000 on a 14-day rental.

One man renting a car in Frankfurt called the attention of the rental company's employees to scratches on the vehicle he was about to drive off in. The scratches were duly noted but the rental company

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

MUNICH

Munich is Germany's most popular destination, also it's most expensive. This month we show you how to make your euros go farther in the Bavarian capital.

Munich bills itself as "the city of laptops and Lederhosen"—an appropriate description of Germany's third-largest metropolis, where cutting-edge high-tech and old Bavarian traditions go together like *Bratwurst* and *Bier*.

Founded in 1158, Munich celebrates its 850th birthday this year, as well as its 175th Oktoberfest. It's often called "the northernmost city in Italy" because of its pastel-painted buildings and abundant sunshine. With 58 drama and musical theaters, 41 museums, seven orchestras, two top soccer teams, and its world-famous beer festival,

Munich attracts more than 4.5 million visitors a year.

And in a nationwide poll, 75 percent of Germans said if they could choose to live anywhere in their own country, it would be in Munich.

Castles and churches have long been an important architectural feature of Munich, the seat of Catholic bishops and German royalty for several centuries. In the center of the city, the **Residenz** of the Wittelsbach family, rulers of Bavaria from the Middle Ages until 1918, is a large complex of palaces built around seven courtyards. In addition to 130 richly decorated rooms

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Austrian Country Destinations

Another in our series of country destinations; charming and sometimes historic towns where hotel and restaurant prices are much lower than in the big cities.

Steyr

There's enough 'old world' charm here to keep a visitor interested for a couple of days, but Steyr is not so Disneyland-perfect that it attracts the multitudes. About a third of the way between Salzburg and Vienna, south of the main east-west Autobahn, the picturesque old town sits on the peninsula of land formed by the confluence of the Steyr and Enns rivers.

Past the arched stone entry to the *Altstadt* is the town's wide, main square lined with restored Gothic and Renaissance buildings. Further on, the square narrows to become the town's alley-wide main shopping street, the Eisen-

gasse, which eventually leads to the overlook where the two rivers join.

Most of the main sights are within a five-minute walk of the main square. The local tourist office on the main square at Stadtplatz 27 can direct you. A recommended excursion in the weeks prior to Christmas is to the hamlet of Christkindl, just two kilometers away. There is a small church and a post office where Austrian children send letters to "Father Christmas." Stamps and postmarks from here are collected. Don't miss the intricate, mechanical 'creche' built in the living room of a local man during the '30s.

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Exchange rates as of 7/31/2008
1 euro = \$1.55
1 Swiss franc = \$0.95

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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refused to provide the renter a copy of the paperwork and he left without a record of the damage. Guess what? At the end of the rental he was charged for the scratches and had no proof they weren't his responsibility. I don't like second-guessing but never, ever accept a damaged or scratched car without an initialed document that notes the damage. What this renter should have done is phone the toll-free number on his reservation confirmation and demand assistance or another car with a different company.

Sometimes you do everything right and things still go wrong. Rental car companies in Germany require a valid U.S. driver's license only, not an international license. A woman who had booked a rental car with Avis in Koblenz, however, was recently refused her rental because she did not have the international permit. The agent was dead wrong but the woman didn't get her car, she had to go to another company and pay a much higher price. International licenses are required to pick up rental cars in Poland and Austria and highly recommended—but not required—in other countries. To be on the safe side, get an international driver's license from your local AAA office.

There may be a gleam of hope for 2009 fares across the Atlantic. As you know, in response to higher fuel

costs, the major U.S. airlines—the so-called 'big six;' American, Delta, Continental, Northwest, United and USAir—are laying off workforce and reducing the number of domestic flights. Experts say they are turning their attention to more profitable foreign long-haul flights where British Air and Lufthansa are making big profits. This could mean an increase in transatlantic capacity in '09. That coupled with a drop in demand would almost surely mean a lowering of fares. Of course, any seats not taken by North Americans could be filled by Europeans, though some predict an economic downturn for the Continent. In any event, you can already book trips for this winter in the \$400 to \$500 range, not including, of course, taxes and a substantial fuel charge.

For the last few years, our advice regarding exchanging dollars for foreign currency has been to take your ATM card to Europe (make sure you have a four-digit PIN and ask your bank to raise the daily limit on the amount you can withdraw). You'll get the bank-to-bank exchange rate. In many cases—but not all—you'll pay a per-transaction fee of about \$1 to \$5. But what if, as subscriber Tom asks, you need a substantial amount of foreign currency upon arrival in Europe to pay for a month-long vacation rental in cash? (This is a bit of an unusual circumstance because most landlords want their money well in advance, long

before your U.S. departure.) Tom first went to his bank who offered to sell euros at an exchange rate 1.683 on a day when the bank-to-bank exchange rate was 1.556. I don't know the amount to be exchanged but if it's \$3,000, that's a difference of about €146 or \$227. Tom needs to get an exchange rate as close to that 1.556 as possible. Wells Fargo's foreign exchange service quoted an exchange rate of 1.6347, plus a fee of \$8 to ship the euros to Tom. That's \$45 better than his local bank. However, at fxglobaltransfer.onanda.com, I got an online quote of 1.557 plus a fee of \$25 to transfer the funds to a foreign bank. Tom will have to open an account with FXGlobalTransfer, a company with offices in New York (tel. 212-858-7690) and Toronto (tel. 416-593-9436), but it appears he'll save about \$200 on a \$3,000 transaction by dealing with them instead of his bank.—RHB

Using Gemütlichkeit

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

Logging on to Our Website

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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 |

MUNICH*Continued from page 1*

filled with furniture, paintings, tapestries, silver, porcelain, and other antiques, it houses the **Schatzkammer** (royal treasury) and the recently restored rococo **Cuvilliés-Theater**. Although 90 percent of the building was destroyed by bombs in World War II, the Residenz has been restored to much of its former glory.

You can spend the entire day at **Schloss Nymphenburg**, a huge baroque castle and park in the western part of Munich, with museums of painting and porcelain, royal apartments and ballrooms, and royal stables housing a fine collection of ornate, gilded coaches and sleds. More baroque palaces and pavilions are scattered around the spacious gardens. And another ensemble of important Bavarian baroque castles, parks, and paintings can be found at **Schloss Schleissheim**, just north of the city limits.

Among the notable ecclesiastic buildings in Munich are the landmark, late-Gothic **Frauenkirche**, in the city center, with its two iconic, green-domed towers. But more impressive interiors can be seen at the **Theatinerkirche**, with its Italian baroque decor, and especially at the **Asamkirche**, a stunning jewel of Bavarian rococo interior design. Another important house of worship is the modern **Synagogue Ohel Jakob**, one of the largest synagogues in Europe, which opened in 2006 (but not for public visits).

Another landmark is the neogothic **Neues Rathaus** (New Town Hall), built between 1867-1909 on the **Marienplatz** in the heart of the city (and the starting point for many city tours). Be there at 11 am, noon, or 5 pm when the historical **Glockenspiel** (carillon) on the city hall chimes its bells and dancing figures rotate in and out of the clock. (Tip: The dense crowds watching this spectacle, especially in summer, are a target for pickpockets in an otherwise very safe city. For a better view and no worries about your wallet, go to the third or fourth floor of the big

Munich Basics**Population:** 1,300,000**Elevation:** 518 meters (1700 feet)

Visitor Information: Tourismusamt, 80313 München, tel. +49/89-233-965-00, tourismus@muenchen.de, www.muenchen-tourist.de. Offices at the Neues Rathaus (New Town Hall, Marienplatz 8) and Hauptbahnhof (main train station, Bahnhofplatz 2). See also www.muenchen.de and www.oktoberfest.de.

Driving distances from:

| | | |
|-----------|--------|-----------|
| Berlin | 596 km | 370 miles |
| Frankfurt | 412 km | 256 miles |
| Nürnberg | 162 km | 100 miles |
| Stuttgart | 210 km | 130 miles |
| Würzburg | 294 km | 183 miles |

Public Transportation: Munich's excellent system (MVV) of buses, trams, U-Bahns (subways), and S-Bahns (longer-distance suburban trains) is the best way to get around a city where traffic is dense and parking expensive. Discount fare tickets ("CityTourCard") are available at all MVV ticket vending machines and tourist offices for 1-, 3-, and 7-day periods, including reduced fees for more than 30 tourist attractions. For two or more people traveling together, get a CityTourCard "partner card" at even greater discount.

Nearest airport: Munich International Airport, 28 km (17 miles) northeast of the city, with direct bus and S-Bahn connections to/from the main train station (40-minute ride by S-Bahn) and several other locations in the city.

Rail service: The main rail hub for southern Germany, with frequent service to numerous locations throughout Europe.

Recommended guide books: *Munich Found*, monthly city magazine in English, with current information on local events (www.munichfound.com). *München im...[any particular month]*, official monthly listing of museums, theaters, concerts, exhibits, and other events, with addresses, opening hours, phone numbers, and prices; an essential guide (in German, €1.65). *Marcellino's München Restaurant Report 2008*, guide to restaurants, pubs, and beer gardens, with readers' ratings (in German, www.marcellinos.de).

Hugendubel bookstore across from the city hall and watch the mechanical clock performance from the picture windows there.)

Munich's museums cater to many interests. Art lovers can spend several days in the **Alte Pinakothek**, with more than 800 paintings from the Middle Ages through the rococo period; the **Neue Pinakothek**, with European paintings and sculptures from the late 17th to early 20th centuries; the **Pinakothek der Moderne**, a complex of four museums of modern art, graphics, architecture, and design; the massive 1930s-era **Haus der Kunst**, the venue for a variety of temporary exhibitions; and several smaller art museums such as the **Villa Stuck** and the **Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus**, the latter featuring a unique collection of "Blue Rider" artists.

Step back into ancient times at the **Glyptothek**, Munich's oldest museum, with its outstanding collection of Greek and Roman statues. The nearby **Staatliche Antikensammlung** has another important collection of antiquities, including the world's largest group of Greek vases. The **Archäologische Staatssammlung** traces the archeological history of Bavaria from the Paleolithic to Middle Ages, and the **Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst** in the Residenz showcases art and artifacts from ancient Egypt.

History buffs should also head to the **Münchner Stadtmuseum**, with its recently opened new exhibit on the history and culture of Bavaria's capital city. Across the square, the **Jüdisches Museum** documents the history of Munich's Jewish community from the 13th century. And the **Bayerisches National Museum** has three floors of exhibits on the arts, crafts, and folklore of Bavaria, including a wonderful collection of old Nativity scenes (call in advance to see if that section is open on the day you plan to visit).

Fans of science and technology shouldn't miss the magnificent **Deutsches Museum**, whose scientific exhibits attract more visitors than

any other museum in Munich. Branches of the museum in separate locations now house the historic trains, buses, cars, and bicycles (**Deutsches Museum Verkehrszentrum**) and 60 airplanes and helicopters (**Deutsches Museum Flugwerft Schleissheim**).

The recently redesigned and expanded **BMW Museum** is a must for anyone interested in cars and motorcycles. Combine your visit to the museum with a guided tour of the **Bavaria Motor Works Plant** (reservations required) and a walk through the futuristic **BMW Welt** with shops, restaurants, and exhibits of more BMW automobiles.

Another popular destination is the **Bavaria Filmstadt**, where you can tour the film and television stage sets, including the inside of the submarine set used for *Das Boot* ("The Boat"), learn how special effects are done, and watch stuntmen perform daring feats on an exterior set.

Two other small museums are worth a visit when you're strolling

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.

around the city center. The **Bier-und-Oktoberfestmuseum**, in a 14th century building, focuses on Munich's most popular beverage and festival; watch the short film on the third floor, then quench your thirst on the ground floor with a glass of local beer. The charming **Spielzeugmuseum**, in the old tower near the city hall, is chock full of old toys that will delight both children and adults. (Check on opening times; this museum will soon be renovated and expanded.)

For a change of scenery, relax at the **Englischer Garten**, the largest urban garden in Europe, along the banks of the Isar River. Hike-and-bike trails crisscross this 900-acre expanse of greenery, just northeast of the city center. Take your own picnic or refresh yourself at one of the park's beer gardens. (Tip: At the southern end of the garden, on Prinzregentenstrasse between the Haus der Kunst and the Bavarian National Museum, stand on the stone bridge to watch athletic young daredevils from all over the world surf the waves on the Isar River.)

Finally, if you enjoy watching wild animals in natural habitats instead of cages, spend a day at the famous Munich zoo, **Tierpark Hellabrunn**, where rare Siberian tigers bask in their green surroundings, polar bears swim in a glassed-in pool, penguins come out for a walk in the winter snow, and exotic birds flap their wings among tropical foliage. And yes, the zoo has a beer garden, too.

Munich Hotels

As the prime destination for tourists visiting Germany, Munich has plenty of places to stay, from five-star hotels to small pensions, to rooms in private houses. Contact the Munich Tourist Office for a list of accommodations available.

Rated three-star on the official 1-5 hotel rating scale, the following hotels are all centrally located near the **Hauptbahnhof** (main train station) or the **Sendlinger Tor** entrance to the inner city. All

have tiled bathrooms or showers, TV, telephone, and elevators; most have Internet access and minibars, but air-conditioning is rare. Breakfast is included in the price, unless otherwise noted. Parking, when available, costs extra. These hotels were selected for their clean rooms, pleasant breakfast areas, convenient locations, and moderate prices, all important factors to consider when staying in Germany's most expensive city. Reservations are recommended year round and are essential well in advance of Oktoberfest (when rates are also substantially higher).

Conrad-Hotel de Ville

Don't let the plain facade of this hotel and the neighboring buildings on the street deter you from staying at this pleasant, recently renovated hotel only a couple minutes' walk from the train station. Attractive red porphyry (a kind of stone) stairs and hallways lead to 89 well-appointed, moderately spacious modern rooms, including some junior suites. Rooms with a balcony facing the inner courtyard are especially quiet; those on the street side have double-glazed windows to buffer the noise.

EDITOR'S
CHOICE

The Mayer bistro-restaurant on the ground floor offers reasonably priced meals in a pretty dining room that opens onto a small garden with tables where outdoor meals are served.

Daily Rates: Singles beginning at €105, doubles beginning at €127, but better rates are often available, such as weekend daily price of €75 for a single and €98 for a double, breakfast buffet included.

Contact: Conrad-Hotel de Ville München, Schillerstr. 10, 80336 München, tel. +49/89-54-55-60, fax 54-55-66-10, reservations 54-55-61-00, info@conrad-hotel.de, www.conrad-hotel.de.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel Deutsches Theater

For an older-style hotel that provides good value for the price,

try the 28-room Deutsches Theater, near the train station and only a few blocks from the Theresienwiese where the Oktoberfest is held. However, Landwehrstrasse can be noisy, and there are “adult” clubs and shops nearby.

Rooms are decorated in a variety of styles, from Old World to simple modern. Number 50 is very large, sleeps four people, and has a comfortable sitting area with a divan, table, and two love seats. Number 40 is a large double, with plenty of closet space. The breakfast buffet is served next to the small lobby. Friendly staff.

Daily Rates: Singles €65, doubles €85. Parking is €10/day (three places only) or in a public garage.

Contact: Hotel Deutsches Theater, Landwehrstr. 18, 80336 München, tel. +49/89-545-85-25, fax 545-85-261, info@hoteldeutschestheater.de, www.hoteldeutschestheater.de.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel Apollo

Very near the train station, but on a quiet street only one block long, the Apollo has spacious rooms with simple mahogany furniture, a pleasant ambience, and plenty of closet space. Numbers 106, 402, and 509 are large triple rooms, which can also be rented as doubles. The small, dark-wood lobby leads to an elegant wood-paneled breakfast room and adjacent bar. Good value for the money and location, especially if you want a large room to relax in after a long day of sightseeing.

Daily Rates: Singles €65, doubles €70, triples €99. Parking is €6/day (reserve in advance)

Contact: Apollo Hotel, Mittererstr. 7, 80336 München, tel. +49/89-53-95-31, fax 53-40-33, info@apollohotel.de, www.apollohotel.de.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 18/20

Carat Hotel

Those who prefer accommodations away from the busy train station area should consider the Carat Hotel,

with 70 bright, modern rooms. Some face the inner courtyard; others, on the busy street side, are air-conditioned and look out onto a nearby park. Among several nice extras are international newspapers and 24-hour coffee and mineral water available at no extra cost.

Although guestrooms are quite small, the hotel is conveniently located near the Sendlinger Tor, a bus and subway stop, and the inner-city pedestrian zone. The breakfast buffet, served in a cheerful room, features mainly organic food products.

Daily Rates: Singles start at €79, doubles at €82, plus optional breakfast buffet for €12/person. Parking is €13/day. Special room rates and packages available online

Contact: Carat-Hotel München, Lindwurmstr. 13, 80337 München, tel. +49/89-230-380, fax 230-38-199, info@carat-hotel-muenchen.de, www.carat-hotel-muenchen.de.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Note: For a smaller hotel in the same neighborhood, consider the Carat’s partner **Hotel Müller München**, around the corner on Fliegenstr. 4. Its 44-rooms offer many of the same amenities as the Carat, with breakfast served in a bright room decorated with modern art. Each guestroom is different, and several are comfortably large. Singles begin at €79, doubles at €109, though breakfast (mostly organic products) is €13 per person extra. **Contact:** Hotel Müller München, tel. +49/89-23-23-860, fax 26-86-24, info@hotel-mueller-muenchen.de, www.hotel-mueller-muenchen.de.

Munich Restaurants

Munich is well known for the diversity of its restaurants, as well as for its traditional Bavarian cuisine. In a city of 5,000 restaurants, it’s easy to find a suitable place to eat on any budget.

Ratskeller München

The basement of Munich’s neogothic *Neues Rathaus* (New Town Hall) seats 1,200 people but avoids seeming like a big beer hall. Popular with both locals and tourists, the Ratskeller offers good food served in several small dining rooms and intimate alcoves with beautiful vaulted and frescoed ceilings, iron light fixtures, and wooden wainscoting.

The menu offers a large selection of traditional, modern, and seasonal Bavarian dishes, from hot and cold sausage plates (€5.80-14.50) to roasted pork shank with red cabbage and potato dumplings (€14.50) and roasted duck with sautéed regional vegetables and organic potatoes (€14.50). Vegetarian dishes include large salads (€8-12.50) and *Spätzle* dumplings with melted cheese, fried onions, and tomato salad (€10.25). Several dishes feature organic products (identified as “BIO”). The best deal is the daily lunch special (€10 for three-courses, €15 for four-courses), including a quarter-liter of beer or mineral water and a small glass of sparkling wine or a dessert. There is also an extensive beer and wine list.

Contact: Ratskeller München, Marienplatz 8, 80331 München, tel. +49/89-21-99-890, fax 99-89-30, info@ratskeller.com, www.ratskeller.com. Open daily, 10am-midnight.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Bratwurstherzl am Viktualienmarkt

Within a centuries-old building near a corner of Munich’s big open-air food market, are two cozy Bavarian-style dining rooms, where the main attraction is tasty Nürnberg *Bratwurst* cooked over an open, wood-fired grill (€5.60-10). Classic Bavarian dishes include soups and stews (€2.60-4.80); *Brotzeit* cold platters (€4-6.50); *Sauerbraten*, *Schnitzels*, and a variety of local sausages (€6-12.50); as well as a different lunch special each day (€6). Drink the Hacker-Pschorr beer tapped from

EDITOR'S
CHOICE

Eating Inexpensively in Munich

"Eating and drinking keep the body and soul together," goes an old Bavarian saying. But at the current euro/dollar exchange rate, it can also take your wallet apart. Still, it's possible to eat well in Munich without going broke. Some tips:

- Main dish portions at German restaurants are usually very large. Couples who want a lighter meal, might consider ordering two soups or two small salads, then one main dish to share.

- For a healthy and filling one-dish meal, order a large salad topped with chicken, pork, beef, or fish. German salads are made with a variety of greens, vegetables, and garnishes.

- Try a *Brotzeiteller*, a round wooden board covered with a variety of sliced cold cuts (sausages, ham, cheeses) and served with slices of country-style rye bread. (Note that restaurants usually charge extra for bread, rolls, or pretzels eaten from the basket set on the table, but with a *Brotzeiteller*, the bread is included in the price.)

- For a simple but hearty meal, order a *Bauernomelet* (farmer's omelet)—not a light-and-airy French omelet, but a large portion of beaten eggs cooked in a skillet with chunks of potato, ham, bacon, and onions. Often these omelets are served with a *Bunte Salatteller* (generous salad plate) comprising a variety of shredded, chopped, cooked, pickled, and raw vegetables dressed with vinegar and oil.

- Traditional Bavarian meals are some of the best values in Munich. You'll find good food and great beer at the city's many beer halls and cozy taverns. (Coming next month: "Munich's Beer Halls, Taverns, and Beer Gardens.")

- Turkish and Italian restaurants are especially popular and reasonably priced. On the bustling Bayerstrasse, across from the Hauptbahnhof (main train station) is a wide range of small restaurants, fast-food places, street stands, and sidewalk cafes, many of them offering Turkish *döner kebabs*, stacked pieces of meat roasted on a vertical rotary spit next to an open heat source. The cooked meat is sliced off and stuffed into big rounds of

flatbread, along with lettuce, tomatoes, onions, and yogurt-garlic sauce. Try **Maxi Döner** on Bayerstrasse, where the *döner kebab* sandwiches are made with 100% veal and fresh flatbread baked on the premises (€3). Turkish *döner kebab* stands can also be found all over the city.

- For Italian food near the train station, try **Ca D'Oro Restaurant-Bistro-Pizzeria** (Bayerstrasse 31), with 24 varieties of pizza in three sizes each, priced from €3.90 for a small simple pizza to €17.50 for the big "mega" pizzas with several toppings. Pasta dishes are from €2.90 to €6.50, and salads from €2.80 to €7.40. A good place for vegetarians to eat well for a low price.

- For a quick meal when you're shopping or sightseeing downtown, go to the **C & A Cafe-Restaurant** (Kaufingerstr. 13) on the third floor of the big C & A clothing store, on the pedestrian zone near the Frauenkirche. Daily specials are €5.50, and the salad bar (one full plate) is €5.10. Most cakes and tortes are €2.50 per slice. (Open Monday-Saturday, 9am-8pm.)

- Picnic in a park, such as the huge **Englischer Garten**, or take your own food to a beer garden. In the basement of the **Kaufhof department store** on the Marienplatz, buy breads, cold cuts, cheeses, sandwiches, salads, cooked vegetable dishes, and cold drinks for your own "gourmet" meal in a park. Or go to the nearby **Viktualienmarkt** (big open-air food market) to purchase your picnic fare, then eat it at the wooden tables in the market's beer garden. The only requirement is that you buy your drinks from the beer garden, not bring them with you.

- Have a big bowl of soup at the famous **Münchner Suppenküche**, a popular soup stand in the center of the Viktualienmarkt. More than a dozen different kinds of hearty soups and stews, made from fresh, seasonal ingredients, are served daily (€2.88 – 4.98), with tap beer available, too. A good place to eat at any time of year. (Monday-Friday, 10am-7pm, 6pm in winter; Saturday 9am-5pm.)

- Many small restaurants and sidewalk cafes have chalkboards out front, offering two-course daily lunch specials for €5 to €6, or three courses for €8 to €10. At most places, a half-liter of good Munich beer costs around €3.

a wooden barrel (€3.25 for a half-liter).

Contact: Bratwurstherzl am Viktualienmarkt, Dreifaltigkeitsplatz 1, 80331 München, tel. +49/89-295-113, fax 29-16-37-51, mail@bratwurstherzl.de, www.bratwurstherzl.de. Open Monday-Saturday, 10am-11pm.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 17/20

Wirtshaus Ayinger am Platzl

This quiet, tastefully decorated restaurant-tavern is across the

square from the famous Hofbräuhaus. Known for its "new German cuisine" based on traditional Bavarian recipes and regional ingredients, Wirtshaus Ayinger is popular with Münchners who like a more refined version of local dishes—but still served in large portions.

The delicious horseradish-and-red-radish cream soup (€4) is copious enough as a meal on its own, and the *Altbayerische Pfefferhaxe* (old-Bavarian-style roasted pork shank) with dumplings is an excellent ver-

sion of this dish (€13.40). For a lighter meal, try the salad of grilled vegetables (€10.30), but leave room for the *Marillenknödel* (apricot dumplings) for dessert (€6.10). Daily lunch specials are €8.50, and beer lovers will especially enjoy the six kinds of Ayinger brews on tap.

Contact: Wirtshaus Ayinger, Platzl 1-A, 80331 München, tel. +49/89-23-703-666, fax 23-703-665, info@platzl.de, www.platzl.de. Open daily, 11am-1am (food until 11:30pm).

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 17/20

AUSTRIAN DESTINATIONS*Continued from page 7***Hotel Mader**

There's not a better Steyr headquarters than the comfortable digs inside the two Renaissance buildings on the town square that house the Mader. Guestrooms are spacious and bright with white walls and window curtains, floral draperies, and wood-accented furnishings. There are four separate dining areas including a vaulted wine cellar and an arcaded courtyard. Contact: Landhotel Mader, A-4400 Steyr, Stadtplatz 36, tel. +43/7252/53358, fax 53358-6, mader@mader.at, www.mader.at, doubles from €118.

Schwechater Hof

An amiable, family-run inn located just two-minutes above the square, next to the Parish Church. With just seven rooms, it is more tavern/restaurant than hotel, but the short walk from the square will save you money, and many will prefer the homey, family-run Austrian country ambience. Contact: Schwechaterhof, Leopold Werndl Strasse, tel. +43 7252 53067, www.schwechaterhof.at, doubles from €74.

Attersee

On the largest lake in the Austrian Alps, this village 35 miles east of Salzburg is the center of a relatively inexpensive Salzkammergut resort. Moderately-priced hotels and inexpensive vacation apartments abound. Do a lake tour with lunch on the Attersee-Schiffart or spend a day in nearby Bad Ischl, the summer headquarters of Emperor Franz Josef and the home of composer Franz Lehar. Other possible excursions by car might include such towns as Gmunden, St. Wolfgang, and especially Hallstatt.

Hotel Seegasthof Oberndorfer

The main appeal of this family-run resort hotel, in addition to the affable management and staff, is the constant panorama of water and mountains. At breakfast, dinner, or even while dressing for dinner in your room, the view is there for the taking. Guest rooms are well-lit, con-

temporary spaces that never fail to take advantage of the building's location directly on the water.

In summer, a stretch of lawn is pleasant for sunbathing, meals are served on a lakeside terrace, and there is a dock for swimming and small boats, which can be rented nearby.

World War II buffs should ask to see the book presented to Herr Oberndorfer by surviving members of the U.S. Third Cavalry. It contains an account of the U.S. Army's march through the region at the war's close as it routed German and Hungarian forces. General George Patton addressed Allied troops at Attersee in the spring of 1945 and the text of his speech is in the book. There is also an entry by a U.S. veteran who fell ill in the spring of '45 and was cared for by the Oberndorfer family. Contact: Hotel Seegasthof Oberndorfer, Hauptstrasse 18, A-4864 Attersee, tel. +43/07666/7864-0, hoteloberndorfer@attersee.at, www.oberoesterreich.at/oberndorfer, doubles from €100.

Pension Alpenblick

This rambling, four-story traditional Austrian country house is set in rolling hills above the lake along the Salzkammergut cycle path. Ask for room Number 210, which features a turret-like sitting alcove with five double windows affording a sweeping view of the countryside and the lake in the distance. Contact: Pension Alpenblick, Abtsdorf 56, Attersee, A-4864, tel. 07666 75 43, www.hotel-alpenblick.co.at, Doubles from €76.

Bad Hofgastein

About 75 minutes drive south from Salzburg, this surprisingly modern, off-the-beaten track village in the heart of a pretty Alpine valley, offers many opportunities for recreation, including golf. A very short daytrip is to the historic spa town of Badgastein which, during the Victorian era, attracted Europe's bluest bloods. Walk the Kaiser Wilhem Promenade past great houses and palace hotels, many of which have seen better times.

Hotel-Pension Zum Toni

The welcome is warm at this coun-

try chalet, where the 16 guest rooms are done in that oh-so-Austrian style that features blond wood, white walls, and gleaming bath tiles. Contact: Zum Toni, Eisenstein 1, A-5630, Bad Hofgastein, tel. +43/06432/6629, hotelzumtoni@aon.at, www.hotelzumtoni.at, doubles from €54

Neusiedler See

Get far off the track in this unique part of Burgenland, south of Vienna near the Hungarian border, one of Austria's great wine producing regions. The most interesting towns are Mörbisch and Rust, both on the rather strange **Neusiedler See**, a 124 square-mile body of water surrounded by reeds, only seven feet at its deepest point and which sometimes mysteriously disappears; the last time being from 1868 to 1872. Walk the towns, note the rooftop storks' nests and rest in the garden of a *Heuriger* (wine tavern) for a snack and a glass of fresh white wine made on the premises.

Hotel Am Rathausplatz

Directly on Rust's ample main square, at the heart of village life, is the unpretentious Hotel Rathausplatz. It offers surprisingly comfortable rooms at attractive rates. Contact: Hotel Am Rathausplatz, Rathausplatz 7, A-7071 Rust, Burgenland, Tel. +43/02685/6202, am_rathausplatz@rms.at, www.tiscover.at/huebner, doubles from €86

Hotel Johannes Zeche

On the other side of the lake, in the wine town of Illmitz, the simple rooms of Hotel Johannes Zeche are well off the paths trod by most American tourists. Contact: Johannes Zeche, Florianigasse 10, A-7142, tel. +43/02175/23355, office@johanneszeche.at, www.johanneszeche.at, doubles from €60.

Kremsmünster

Though Austria's Romantikstrasse gets little publicity, it traverses spectacular countryside as it finds its way through such towns as St. Wolfgang, Bad Ischl, Gmunden, Steyr, Grein, Melk, Dürnstein, Krems and Klosterneuburg. It can turn a tiring three-hour Salzburg-Vienna Autobahn run

into a more peaceful journey of several days. One of the route's lesser-known stops is Kremsmünster, a logical spot to overnight. The main attraction here, other than the bustling downtown, is a massive Benedictine Abbey which shelters a restaurant, a winery, shops, a school, and a Baroque library of some 140,000 volumes plus an art collection that includes the Tassilo Chalice, an extraordinary piece of goldsmithing from the 8th century. Housed in Kremsegg Castle is **Musica Kremsmünster** a museum noted for its enormous collection of brass musical instruments, including Louis Armstrong's trumpet.

Hotel Schlair

The place to stay in Kremsmünster is with Maria and Erik Kux-Schlair, a hospitable couple who exhibit the tireless enthusiasm that in small hotels is often the demarcation line between "good" and "outstanding." The main hotel in the city-center features cozy public rooms with vaulted ceilings, large wood beams, and tile floors. A sitting area off the main lobby has stout leather furniture, a small bar, and a blazing hearth. The mostly contemporary guestrooms are suitable for stays of two or three nights.

Kremsmünster makes an excellent base from which to explore Upper Austria and such towns as Linz, Gmunden, Bad Hall, Steyr and Christkindl. In that case, consider one of the apartments in the Schlair's 800-year-old Zur Alten Mühle guesthouse, a few blocks from the main hotel and set in the shadow of the great Abbey. Prices start at €52 per day for two persons. Contact: Hotel Schlair, A-4550 Kremsmünster, Franz-Hönig-Str. 16, tel. +43/7583/5258-0, schlair@hotelschlair.at, www.hotelschlair.at, doubles from €80 ☒

Readers' Forum

Sylt Report

Here's a quick rundown on a visit to Sylt, one of the best places I've ever been to. The **Hotel Fährhaus** is first-rate, though for whatever reason, the one night we ate dinner in their Michelin one-star restaurant was a bit of a disaster; SLOW main course service

and the maitre d' had an attitude problem. Dinners at **Tappe's** in **Hotel Walter's Hof**, where my friend stayed in a sumptuous accomodation, were fantastic as were meals at **Sansibar**, **Sturmhaus**, and **Rauchfang**.

DR. BILL CREASY
VIA EMAIL

Vienna's Heurige

Last month's article on Wiener Heurige is a subject very close to home, since my wife, Dorothea, comes from a small village south of Vienna. Her family were active winegrowers, until her father died a few years ago, when the vineyards were leased to other local producers, some her cousins.

Most Austrian vineyards still in private hands are very small, much less than Mayer's 80 acres. In our region, a winegrower typically owns several plots in different locations, each nurturing a different variety of grapes. Combined with the steepness of some areas, this means that there is limited mechanization. Cultivation and harvesting is very arduous labor. (Personal attest!) Many of the larger holdings (and automation) are owned by the monastery holdings.

I assume that you know that, in Austrian dialect, "Heur" means "this year," and so "Heurige" is the possessive, "this year's." Heurige being the places where this year's wine is consumed, together with all the Weihauer's other vintages.

As you say, the buffet originally was only allowed to have cold snacks, such as *Lipauerbrot*, but now, as you observe, most have full hot meals. We certainly used to take our own food, but no longer, except at the big outdoor GrossHeurige summer winefest.

There is a misunderstanding about Martinmas. This is really the first day on which the current year's Heurige wines are sold. (Something like the Beaujolais Nouveau day without all the fuss.) Wines can retain the Heurige name until 31 December of the following year. (Martinmas is also the first day of Advent, and the first day of the official Vienna ball season.)

When the pine bough Buschen are displayed outside a Heurigen, now

usually with colored lights like horizontal mini Christmas trees, the Heurigen is *Aus g'steckt* which merely means "open," not solely that it is selling Heurige wines (but they usually are).

All that leads to a couple of somewhat curious synonyms for a Heurigen: *Aussteck Lokal* or *Buschenschrank* (Buschen cupboard).

Heurige also usually sell other grape products. *Most* is the cloudy unfermented grape juice, usually available from harvest in August or September onward. It is later accompanied by *Sturm*, incompletely fermented juice. If you suffer ill effects, other than from over-imbibing, it could be from the appropriately-named *Sturm* (storm), rather than from stable Heurige wine.

Our village, Pfaffstätten, has Europeanized October 31, with an event called "Hallo Wein." This is a mass tasting, prior to official launch, of local producers' Heurige wines. (Don't ask how many I sampled last year; enough to see goblins on the way home.)

While Vienna has some great Heurige, such as those you referenced, I think the genuine flavor is found in the villages. In Pfaffstätten, there are always a few open, populated both by local people, and visitors from Vienna. (The village is on the Südbahn, and streetcar from Oper to Baden, as well as direct buses.) But the nearby village of Gumpoldskirchen is better known.

White wines are the characteristic traditional vintages, which have improved immeasurably in recent years. (Probably since the antifreeze scandal!)

Personally, I think it a shame that new varietals and mixtures are supplanting the classic *Grüner Veltliner*, which is very dry, even slightly sour. (A creative entrepreneur unsuccessfully tried to make a position in the North American market with the branding "GruVe." Pronounce it!)

There are some really decent reds, too, such as *Zweigelt*.

RICHARD DAVIDSON
VIA EMAIL ☒