

**DEAR  
SUBSCRIBER**

### At Random

Maybe, just maybe, we are entering a period of less expensive travel to Europe. The euro has gone from a high of 1.62 to today's price of 1.42, a drop of about 12 percent. It's a start. That €100 hotel room is now \$142 instead of \$162. Everyone I know in the business of selling European travel reports a significantly lower demand for the rest of '08 and into '09: air tickets, hotels, rental cars, vacation rentals, rail tickets, the works. According to my Econ 101 professor, lower demand will inevitably mean lower prices, and perhaps bring the kind of inexpensive deals we haven't seen for several years. Let's hope.

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The price of jet fuel has dropped—from \$4.27 per gallon in July to \$3.32 at the end of August—but so far no corresponding drop in airline add-on charges for fuel. According to [FareCompare.com](http://FareCompare.com), surcharges on domestic airline tickets averaged \$20 a year ago. Today the highest surcharge on a domestic roundtrip is \$170. The average fuel surcharge for a transatlantic flight is currently \$340. You may also pay a fuel surcharge if you are lucky enough to get a ticket with frequent flyer miles. The airlines justify not cutting fuel surcharges by saying they were behind the curve in reacting to the rapid increase in oil prices earlier this year. Methinks fuel surcharges are simply disguised fare hikes more easily swallowed by travelers already conditioned by rising prices at the gas pump. Given the intense competition in airline ticket sales, and the lower price of jet fuel, somebody's going to reduce the fuel surcharge.

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Syndicated travel writer and consumer watchdog, Ed Perkins, ([www.travelsmart.com](http://www.travelsmart.com)) alerted me

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

## ST. GALLEN

*Eastern Switzerland's principal city and cultural center is far down most Americans' travel wish list. Here's what they're missing.*

Perhaps St. Gallen's two most important attractions are a church library and a textile museum. Doesn't sound exciting? Trust me, the library is one of the country's great indoor sights and, in a quiet, understated way, the museum's lace embroidery exhibition is almost as spectacular. Toss in a rich history, an interesting cuisine, a location tailor-made for daytripping, and you have a worthy destination—but one virtually unknown to Americans.

The city is named for Gallus, its first inhabitant, a wandering Irish monk who built a little hermitage there in 610. Several legends sur-

round this humble fellow, including stories about a helpful bear that gathered wood for him in a nearby forest. For that reason one still sees bear symbols in this saintly city.

The construction of a Benedictine monastery at the site where Gallus had settled began a golden age that lasted from the 9th to the 11th century when the Abbey reached its intellectual, and economic peak. It was then that the scholar-monks established a library that became one of Europe's most important centers of learning.

Meanwhile, a town grew up around the Abbey and, in 1524, St. Gallen embraced the Protestant

*Continued on page 3...*

## Munich's Beer Halls & Gardens

Münchners know that the best places to drink fresh beer and eat traditional Bavarian food at reasonable prices are the city's many beer halls, cozy taverns, and leafy beer gardens. Taken as a whole, these establishments are more than restaurants dispensing great beer and authentic local food, they are the city's everyday social centers, attracting business executives, laborers, students, families, shoppers, and, of course, tourists.

Beer gardens are generally open spring through autumn, and most also have a year-round indoor restaurant. Your first option is to dine outdoors in a garden's restaurant section (a designated area usually identified by tablecloths on the wooden tables), where ordering from the restaurant's

menu is required. Another is to serve yourself at tables without cloths, purchasing beer and food (sandwiches, sausages, grilled fish, rotisserie chicken) from outdoor stalls. Or, you can bring your own food (and tablecloth) for a picnic; the only rule being you must buy beer and other beverages on the premises. Picnicking at a beer garden is a great way to participate in an old Munich tradition—and save money.

Another nice thing about German beer gardens is that children are welcome, in fact many have kids' playgrounds. For nondrinkers there are soft drinks, juices, coffee, tea, and alcohol-free beer. It should

*Continued on page 6...*

**Exchange rates as of 9/5/08**  
**1 euro = \$1.42**  
**1 Swiss franc = \$0.90**

**DEAR SUBSCRIBER**

*Continued from page 1*

to a new problem with credit cards. For security reasons, most European credit cards contain a chip requiring a PIN (personal identification number) to complete transactions. In other words in addition to providing a signature, European cardholders often have to supply a PIN. Many American cardholders don't have such a number and have thus been denied use of their cards at some European establishments. However, Americans who have a credit card PIN are not advised to use it for normal purchases, since some U.S. banks treat these transactions as cash advances and impose various extra charges. Visa (and one assumes Mastercard as well) counsels cardholders in these situations to, first, advise the merchant that a PIN is not required with chip-less cards, then to swipe the card and follow the prompts in his card reader. If that doesn't work, ask the merchant to phone a Visa representative. Bottom line: Visa says your signature-only card should be accepted by all participating Visa merchants.

\*\*\*\*

Now is the very best time to book a cruise. Most cruise companies give their biggest discounts for early booking. **Uniwold**, for example, discounts some riverboat trips as much as \$1000 per person if booked prior to September 30 (plus you get a five-percent discount if you reserve through our travel department—800-521-6722x2). A

lesser discount is available for bookings made by the end of November. By the way, there's a ton of information to be mined on just about any cruise at our website, [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com). In the right-hand navigation column, under "Plan Your Trip," click "Cruise/Pack-age Tour Search."

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Starting October 1, United will charge for meals served in economy class on transatlantic flights between Washington Dulles Airport and European destinations. Assuming no more than a dozen or so flight attendants are physically abused by starved, flat-broke passengers, this is a policy that will spread to other routes. Whatever. A good, fresh deli sandwich carried aboard beats the microwave TV-dinner fare currently being served.

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Because it's pretty much the same month after month, you may have begun to ignore the little *Gemütlichkeit* feature (usually on page four) that lists websites especially useful to Europe-bound travelers. Though the list hasn't changed much over the past couple of years, some of the websites have. [Viamichelin.com](http://Viamichelin.com), for example, just keeps adding features and is an indispensable tool for the auto traveler. At [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de) one can now purchase point-to-point rail tickets. The tourist office websites for Germany, Austria and Switzerland constantly add content and features to their thousands of pages of useful info. A site that's not listed, but probably

should be, is [www.slowtrav.com](http://www.slowtrav.com), where one can read thoughtful and, best of all, trustworthy reviews of European vacation rental properties.

The answer to 90-percent of European travel questions can be found in the dozen or so websites listed on page four.

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For this sordid little item you first need to know that Switzerland gets most of its oil from Libya. Recently, the Libyan government advised its citizens not to travel to Switzerland. Why? Two employees of Muammar Gaddafi's son, Hannibal, and wife, Alice, filed and then withdrew a criminal complaint against the pair for "bodily injury, restraint, and verbal threats" that reportedly took place in the Gaddafi suite at a Geneva luxury hotel. Three years ago in Paris, the gallant Mr. Gaddafi was given a four-month suspended sentence for slapping a pregnant woman and for carrying a gun.—RHB

**Using Gemütlichkeit**

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

**Logging on to Our Website**

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

User Name: **nmag** Password: **5082**

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**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

**ST. GALLEN***Continued from page 1*

Reformation. It was during the middle ages that the region became an important linen-producing center. Cotton later supplanted flax in the local spinning and weaving mills, and during the Industrial Revolution the machine-embroidery industry created new wealth for the city's entrepreneurs.

Today, the production of textiles and fabric in and around St. Gallen is in high gear, and the town remains a major Swiss cultural center, with a symphony orchestra, museums, and many fine buildings from medieval to modern. Its university is one of the leading European centers for the study of economics and business, and hosts the annual St. Gallen Symposium, a world-renowned forum on contemporary global issues.

**Sightseeing**

Compact enough to see the main sights in two or three days, the city is interesting enough for a longer stay, especially as a base for Bodensee excursions and to other nearby attractions. Most of the historic *Altstadt* is a pedestrian zone of narrow cobblestone lanes, spacious squares, and lively sidewalk cafes. Facing the streets are the wealthy textile merchants' houses, many of their facades adorned with the ornate oriels (bay windows) for which St. Gallen is famous.

Start at the old **Abbey District**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1983. The gems of this ecclesiastical complex are the **Monastery Library** and the **Cathedral of St. Gallus and Otmar**. The dazzling rococo Library rates three stars ("worth a journey") in Michelin's *Green Guide for Switzerland*. The current building (constructed in the 1700s) houses a priceless collection of books and illuminated manuscripts dating to the 8th century. Though the monastery was officially disbanded in 1805, the library remains intact, as does the splendid Baroque cathedral with its exquisitely carved wooden choir stalls and two impressive pipe or-

**St. Gallen Basics****Population:** 74,000**Elevation:** 675 meters (2,215 feet)

**Visitor Information:** St. Gallen-Bodensee Tourismus, Bahnhofplatz 1a, 9001 St. Gallen, tel. +41/71-227-37-37, fax 227-37-67, [info@st.gallen-bodensee.ch](mailto:info@st.gallen-bodensee.ch), [www.st.gallen-bodensee.ch](http://www.st.gallen-bodensee.ch)

**Driving distances from:**

Basel	170 km	106 miles
Bern	210 km	130 miles
Geneva	370 km	230 miles
Lucerne	140 km	87 miles
Munich	264 km	164 miles
Zürich	85 km	53 miles

**Discounts:** Some museum tickets are valid for other museums on the same day. Check with the tourist information office for other current discounts.

**Nearest airport:** Airport St.-Gallen-Altenrhein, served by Austrian Airlines. Nearest large airport is Zürich, with frequent train connections between St. Gallen and the airport.

**Rail service:** Numerous rail connections from the Hauptbahnhof on the Swiss national rail system, ICE express trains, and private railways with routes to the Alps.

**Recommended guidebooks:** *St. Gallen City Guide* (2007), available at the tourist office, bookstores, and museum shops (CHF 10). *Discover and Experience St. Gallen - Lake Constance Region 2008*, free booklet available from St. Gallen-Bodensee Tourismus, [info@st.gallen-bodensee.ch](mailto:info@st.gallen-bodensee.ch)

gans (check the schedule of organ concerts).

Museums of note include the large **Textile Museum**, with a permanent collection of Swiss embroidery, textile treasures from the 4th to 20th centuries, and special temporary exhibits. The hand-embroidered lace will bring oohs and aahs even from husbands.

Furnished period rooms from 16th and 17th century St. Gallen are featured at the **Museum of History and Ethnology**. The **Museum of Fine Arts** offers a rich collection of paintings and sculptures from the Middle Ages to the present. There is even a **Beer Bottle Museum** at the

Schützengarten Brewery (Switzerland's oldest), with 2,000 bottles from around the world.

Every Wednesday and Saturday the **Marktplatz** hosts an open-air market, and flea markets are frequent in summer and fall (the tourist office has schedule info).

**Guided tours** can provide a good overview of a city. St. Gallen's tourist office offers walking tours every Saturday (January to April), Monday through Saturday (May to October), and an additional tour on Sundays in June and July (CHF 15 for adults). Each Tuesday's tour focuses on a single theme, such as art and architecture, houses and their inhabitants, or witches and saints, with special Christmas-theme tours in December. English-language tours on request (phone ahead). Meeting point: Tourist Information, Bahnhofplatz 1a.

**Day Trips**

Two commodities Switzerland is famous for—cheese and chocolate—should be tasted at their source, and St. Gallen is a place to do just that. A short drive away, in the tiny village of **Stein**, at the **Appenzeller Schaukäserei** (Demonstration Cheese Dairy), the public can view the entire cheese-making process in a modern, automated factory. Its shop sells a good selection of cheeses, other milk products, jams, chocolates, local wines, and fruit liquors. In the adjacent restaurant, a tasting platter of five Appenzeller cheeses costs CHF 7.50/person, and the menu offers a variety of local cheese dishes for CHF 8-26. (Appenzeller Schaukäserei, 9063 Stein AR, tel. +41/71-368-50-70, fax 368-50-75, [info@schaukaeserei-stein.ch](mailto:info@schaukaeserei-stein.ch), [www.schaukaeserei.ch](http://www.schaukaeserei.ch))

Save time for the superb **Appenzeller Folk Art Museum** next door, and its three floors of fascinating regional folk art and exhibits on daily life in this part of Switzerland. (Appenzeller Volkskunde Museum, 9063 Stein AR, tel. +41/71-368-50-56, fax 368-50-55, [info@appenzeller-museum-stein.ch](mailto:info@appenzeller-museum-stein.ch), [www.appenzeller-museum-stein.ch](http://www.appenzeller-museum-stein.ch))

Also near St. Gallen is **Schoggiland** in the town of **Flawil**, site of the big **Maestrani chocolate factory**. ("Schoggi" is the Swiss diminutive for "chocolate.") Follow a free self-guided tour along the factory's Visitors Gallery (weekdays are best, when the machines are running) or a guided walking tour, with chocolate tasting, every Wednesday afternoon, March through November. The factory-outlet shop sells a huge variety of high-quality chocolate at favorable prices. (Schoggiland, Toggenburgersrasse 41, 9230 Flawil, tel. +41/71-228-38-88, fax 228-38-00, [info@maestrani.ch](mailto:info@maestrani.ch), [www.schoggiland.ch](http://www.schoggiland.ch))

### St. Gallen Hotels

It can't be sugarcoated, at current exchange rates, hotels in Switzerland are expensive when compared with the rest of Europe. Guestrooms in the center of the city generally cost more (and are often smaller) than those outside the center. If you're traveling by car, parking in town can be expensive. The trade-off is convenience; in the center visitors can

#### Key Websites for the Traveler

- [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com) Gateway site for travelers to Germanic Europe, including car rental, rail passes, hotel bookings, traveler feedback, travel tips, and past issues (free access to back issues for subscribers; see log-on info on page 2).
- [www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com) The Michelin database of hotels and restaurants, plus great interactive trip planning tools
- [www.travel essentials.com](http://www.travel essentials.com) Guidebooks, maps, travel accessories, luggage, all at 10 percent off for subscribers. Use discount code gemut2008.
- [www.webflyer.com](http://www.webflyer.com) Informative frequent-flyer forums make this a must for air travelers
- [bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en](http://bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en) German rail website, with train schedules throughout Europe, as well as Germany
- [www.sbb.ch/index\\_e.htm](http://www.sbb.ch/index_e.htm) Swiss and European rail schedules
- [www.ski-europe.com](http://www.ski-europe.com) Top Web resource for skiers with much data on Alpine resorts
- [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) Website of Switzerland's national tourist authority
- [www.germany-tourism.de](http://www.germany-tourism.de) Germany's national tourist authority
- [www.austria.info/us](http://www.austria.info/us) Austria's national tourist authority
- [www.historicgermany.com](http://www.historicgermany.com) Website for an alliance of historic German cities
- [www.thetravelinsider.info](http://www.thetravelinsider.info) Info on electronics for travelers — cell phones, computers, etc.

walk or take public transportation to the major sights, thereby saving time and money. Train travelers are virtually bound to the center.

Guestrooms in mid-priced two and three-star hotels all have telephone and television; many have Internet connections, but none are air conditioned. At the four-star level, prices are of course higher, but there are more amenities such as air conditioning, mini-bars, and coffee-makers (although the rooms themselves may not be any larger than in lower-priced hotels). Hotel bills can often be settled in both euros and Swiss francs.

### Hotel am Ring

This small, romantic, old-Vienna-style hotel has only 10 rooms (13 beds), so booking in advance is a necessity, says the friendly owner, a fluent, English-speaking woman with a healthy sense of humor, who has run this popular hotel for 32 years.

EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

Entering the building is a bit like stepping back into the 19th century. Each guestroom is different, filled with antiques and decorative textiles, including bed linens hand-embroidered by the proprietress. Every room has one or more stained-glass window, and oriental rugs are scattered throughout the narrow halls. Most rooms include a separate, ornate, custom-made porcelain sink and mirror as well as a small *en suite* stall for toilet and shower (one room has a large full bath), obvious recent additions to this *Jugendstil*-era building.

The stairs from the tiny lobby are steep (there's no elevator). "We don't have a fitness center," laughed the landlady, "but our stairs will keep you in good shape."

A generous buffet is served in the richly decorated breakfast room, which looks more like an overstuffed antique shop than a small hotel. Every surface is covered with decorative objects from earlier times, and at least a dozen glass chandeliers hang from the ceiling.

Am Ring is centrally located, an

easy seven-minute walk from the main train station. Visitors arriving by auto can park on the street or at a nearby public garage.

**Daily rates:** Singles CHF 95-125, doubles CHF 135-145

**Contact:** Hotel am Ring, Unterer Graben 9, 9000 St. Gallen, tel. +41/71-223-27-47, fax 222-83-87, [info@hotelamring.ch](mailto:info@hotelamring.ch), [www.hotelamring.ch](http://www.hotelamring.ch)

**Rating:** QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 15/20

### Hotel DOM

It's an easy walk to St. Gallen's major sights from the modern, three-star DOM, in the heart of the *Altstadt*. The 41 rooms are bright, spotlessly clean, and almost monastically simple, with plain white walls decorated with modern art. There is an elevator, and free but limited parking in the courtyard (reserve ahead).

The breakfast buffet is in the sleek self-service dining room on the ground floor, which is also a public restaurant (Mon.-Fri. 6:30am-5pm, Saturday 7am-5pm), with a special all-you-can eat brunch on Sunday (10am-2pm, CHF 26/person).

Locals laud the DOM's policy of hiring the disabled.

**Daily rates:** Singles CHF 140-155, doubles CHF 205; kids under 12 free.

**Contact:** Hotel DOM, Webergasse 22, 9001 St. Gallen, tel. +41/71-227-71-71, fax 227-71-72, [info@hoteldom.ch](mailto:info@hoteldom.ch), [www.hoteldom.ch](http://www.hoteldom.ch)

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

### Hotel Vadian

Just steps from the cathedral, the two-star Vadian offers 20 modern guest rooms accessible by elevator. They are simple but clean, with white walls and pale wood floors. Some are small, so you may want to request one of the larger rooms. Breakfast is served in a light, pleasant room, and parking is available for CHF 8/day (reserve ahead).

The hotel is alcohol-free and a member of the International Organization of Christian Hotels.

**Daily Rates:** Singles CHF 96-115, doubles 150-190, lower rates for

room with sink in the room but shared toilet and bath in the hall.

**Contact:** Hotel Vadian, Gal-lusstrasse 36, 9000 St. Gallen, tel. +41/71-228-18-78, fax 228-18-79, [info@hotel-vadian.com](mailto:info@hotel-vadian.com), [www.hotel-vadian.com](http://www.hotel-vadian.com)

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

### Hotel Walhalla St. Gallen

This member of the Best Western group is across from the main rail station and thus convenient for train travelers, but only a couple of blocks from the edge of the historic city center. Though the 56-room Walhalla is in an ugly, gray seven-story building, its interior has been nicely renovated, and the staff is friendly and accommodating. The relatively small guest rooms are "modern functional" with large beds (even in single rooms), wood floors, a desk and chair, armchair, and an espresso machine. All are nonsmoking—not always the case in Switzerland, where smoking in many public places is still permitted.

At CHF 25-30/day, parking is pricey (reserve in advance).

A copious breakfast buffet is served in the restaurant, which is open daily for all meals from 6:30am-11pm. Lunch and dinner menus feature Tuscan specialties: soups, salads, and appetizers (CHF 8-28); pasta and pizzas (CHF 10.50-29); and garnished main dishes (CHF 20-48). Most can be ordered in two sizes—as a smaller (and lower-priced) starter or as a full portion. The Sunday breakfast buffet is popular with older locals, who spend the morning reading newspapers and lingering over coffee or cappuccino.

The hotel's next door brasserie offers several beers on tap, along with a variety of salads, including several made with Swiss smoked sausages and local cheeses (CHF 12-21); soups (CHF 5-10); classic Swiss *Rösti* (grated-and-fried potato pancake) with ham, cheese, and fried egg (CHF 16); grilled meats (CHF 16-33); and vegetarian dishes (CHF 11-21). The two-course daily lunch special features a soup or salad and a

garnished main dish (CHF 15-19).

**Daily rates:** Singles CHF 195-225, doubles CHF 270 (but lower prices sometimes available online)

**Contact:** Hotel Walhalla St. Gallen, Bahnhofplatz, 9001 St. Gallen, tel. +41/71-228-28-00, fax 228-28-90, [info@hotelwalhalla.ch](mailto:info@hotelwalhalla.ch), [www.hotelwalhalla.ch](http://www.hotelwalhalla.ch)

**Rating:** QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 9/20

### St. Gallen Restaurants

This is a city that likes to eat well: local cheeses (in fondue, raclette, and salads); its own succulent *Olmabratwurst* sausages; *Rösti*; *Chäschüechli* (savory cheese tarts); and *Biberli* (marzipan-filled honey-spice cookies) are among the traditional specialties you'll find at restaurants, cafes, taverns, pastry shops, and street stands.

St. Gallen is especially known for its *Erststockbeizli*—"first-floor restaurants"—located on the first story above ground level in old buildings in or near the medieval city center. Originally the houses in St. Gallen were constructed on soft ground and often had to be supported by wooden poles. The ground-floor rooms on the narrow streets were dark and damp, so the best room of the house was built on the first story, where it overlooked the street and had more light. Later some of these private parlors in historic buildings were converted into cozy restaurants characterized by dark wood paneling, low ceilings with exposed wooden beams, and slightly sloping floors made of wide wooden planks. Today, they're among the best places to eat well-prepared typical St. Gallen cuisine—a secret that locals gladly share with visitors.

Restaurant prices range from budget to stratosphere, and you can find an eatery for almost every taste. At most full-service restaurants, main-dish portions are very large. Many restaurant menus list whole portions at full price and a smaller portion of the same dish for fewer francs. As elsewhere in Europe, drinks are expensive: even at small cafes and street stands, expect to pay CHF 5-7 for a half-liter of beer, CHF

3.50-5 for the same volume of soft drinks or bottled water; and at least CHF 3 for a cup of coffee. Prices for drinks at restaurants are often considerably higher.

Note: Switzerland still allows smoking in restaurants and bars. Even if you are seated at a "non-smoking table," it might be near a "smoking" table. Your options are to move, sit outdoors, or find another restaurant.

### Zum Goldenen Schäfli

An iron sign displaying a golden lamb hangs over the entrance to this popular "first-floor restaurant" in a 15th century butchers' guild house. Known for its old-world decor and careful preparation of local dishes, Zum Goldenen Schäfli attracts a wide range of followers from prominent local politicians to visiting tourists.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

"Specialties from Grandmother's Kitchen"—such as *Spätzle nach Grossmutter-Art*, tiny dumplings with ham, tomatoes, onions, and cream (CHF 18.50) and grilled pork steak with asparagus risotto (CHF 25)—are among the featured dishes. This is also the place for organ meats, such as liver and kidney. The menu also offers a selection of savory soups (CHF 9.50-10.50); a variety of salads and appetizers (most around CHF 15); several meat or fish main dishes (CHF 23-54), with smaller, less expensive portions available; vegetarian meals (CHF 19-28); interesting desserts (CHF 9.50-17.50); and an extensive wine list.

Open Monday-Saturday 11am-2:30pm, 6pm-midnight; Sunday 11am-2:30pm, 5pm-11pm.

**Contact:** Zum Goldenen Schäfli, Metzgergasse 5, 9000 St. Gallen, tel. +41/71-223-37-37, fax 223-70-45, [priskaschudel@gmx.ch](mailto:priskaschudel@gmx.ch), [www.zumgoldenenschaefli.ch](http://www.zumgoldenenschaefli.ch)

**Rating:** QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 12/20

### Weinstube zum Bäumli

Another well known "first-floor restaurant," the Bäumli serves traditional local foods in a woody old building in the city center. Among

the favorites are such “*Klassiker Bäumige*” dishes as fresh calf’s liver with *Rösti*, and *Geschmetzeltes*, bits of sautéed veal in cream sauce (CHF 30-37).

The grilled *Olmabratwurst* is juicy but not fatty (CHF 12.80); an accompaniment of *Rösti* the size of a dinner plate is an additional CHF 7. Other grilled-meat specialties include several steaks (veal, beef, horse) with herbed butter and seasonal vegetables (CHF 32-43). Add a selection of potato dishes or pasta for CHF 7 more.

The wine bar on the ground floor is pleasant for tasting Swiss vintages. When the weather is pretty, sit at an outdoor table on the cobblestone pedestrian street and watch the world go by. Very friendly staff.

Open daily, 10am-11pm, closed during all of July.

**Contact:** Weinstube zum Bäumli, Schmiedgasse 18, 9000 St. Gallen, tel. +41/71-222-11-74, fax 222-14-33.

**Rating:** QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 12/20

#### MIGROS

At the other end of the price scale, one can eat well at MIGROS self-service restaurants in several St. Gallen locations (and throughout Switzerland). A subsidiary of the giant MIGROS supermarket chain, these basic restaurants offer fresh, well-prepared food (some of it “BIO,” i.e., organic) at reasonable prices.

The MIGROS on the first floor of St. Gallen’s rail station serves up a soup of the day (CHF 2.20); a salad buffet (CHF 2.60/100grams); large slices of thick pizza and quiche (CHF 3.60); sandwiches (CHF 3-6); hot foods such as *Spätzle*, *Schnitzel*, and *Bratwurst* with side dishes (CHF 8-15); and desserts (CHF 2-4)—all in a large, modern, self-service restaurant. There’s even an outdoor terrace.

Open Mon.-Fri. 7am-11pm, Sat. 8am-4pm, Sun. 9am-2pm.

**Contact:** MIGROS, Hauptbahnhof (first floor), Bahnhofplatz, 9001 St. Gallen (and other locations)

**Rating:** QUALITY 10/20, VALUE 16/20

#### Zum Goldenen Leuen

No one goes hungry at the “Golden Lion.” The *gemütlich* atmosphere within this 400-year-old, half-timbered building seems a perfect fit for the hearty beer-tavern fare and the Leuen’s own “huusbraui”-label microbrews. Don’t miss the famous *Chäschiuechli* (cheese cake), rich, round, individual cheese tarts—plain, with mushrooms, or flavored with bacon, onions, and garlic (CHF 4.10-4.30). One of these savory tarts is the perfect accompaniment to any of the half dozen or so kinds of fresh draught beer (CHF 6.2/half-liter, smaller portions served, too).

Other menu selections include green salads (CHF 7-10) and main-dish salads full of meat and cheese (CHF 18-19); meaty sandwiches on a choice of buns (CHF 7-13.50); and a different daily special—in small, medium, or large portions—Monday through Saturday (CHF 10.50-25).

Open Mon.-Thurs., 9am-midnight; Fri. 9am-1am; Sat. 9am-6pm.

**Contact:** Zum Goldenen Leuen, Schmiedgasse 30, 9004 St. Gallen, tel. +41/71-222-02-62, fax 230-34-64

**Rating:** QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 13/20

Don’t leave St. Gallen without tasting the local *Olmabratwurst*, grilled thick veal-and-pork sausages served at street stands “*mit Bürl*” (in a crusty bun) or in restaurants with a side dish of *Rösti*. Join the queue at the outdoor counter of **Metzgerei Gempferli**, on the corner of Schmiedgasse and Webergasse in the *Altstadt*, to buy *Olmabratwurst*—and other classic local sausage—hot from the grill. Or try the excellent sausages at **Reitmann Traiteur** (Marktasse 3). “Just don’t order mustard or ketchup with them, or you’ll identify yourself as a tourist,” advises a local resident.

Cheese fondue is another classic Swiss dish that is especially good in cool weather. Try **Fondue Beizli Neueck** (Brühlgasse 26) or **Fondue Silvesterschlaus** (Sonnenstrasse 5).

For those with a sweet tooth, another “must-taste” local specialty

is *Biber* (or *Biberli*)—soft honey-spice cookies filled with marzipan and made in several shapes (hearts, bears, etc.), or formed in special molds that create beautiful designs on top. Find these and other St. Gallen temptations at **Confiserie Roggwiller**, an elegant pastry shop and tea room in the *Altstadt* (Multergasse 17, [www.roggwiller.ch](http://www.roggwiller.ch)). Or go to **Beck-Beck** bakery and pastry shops at several locations (Multergasse 18, Langasse 7a, and Bruggwaldstrasse 1) for another good selection of St. Gallen cookies, cakes, and pastries, including *Biberli* and *Birnweggen*, a Swiss pastry similar to a large Fig Newton ([www.biberhus.ch](http://www.biberhus.ch)). ☒

#### MUNICH

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be pointed out that, though beer is the main attraction, these are not places to get drunk and rowdy. They’re tree-shaded gardens where Germans go to relax with friends and family, sip a freshly brewed beer, discuss the news, gossip, and reminisce.

At most beer gardens (and at the annual Oktoberfest), beer is traditionally served in a one-liter glass or stoneware mug, known as a *Masskrug* (tankard) or simply *Mass* (a “measure”). However, *Wiessbier* or *Weizenbier* (white beer, brewed with wheat) is almost always served in special tall, half-liter glasses, narrow at the bottom and bulbous at the top. Other types of beer can be ordered by the half-liter, considered a “small beer” by beer-loving Bavarians.

Many restaurants and taverns specialize in beer from just one of Munich’s six big breweries: **Augustiner**, **Hacker-Pschorr**, **Hofbräu**, **Löwenbräu**, **Paulaner**, or **Spaten-Franziskaner**. Others are outlets for excellent beers brewed elsewhere in Bavaria: **Ayinger**, **Andechser**, **Schneider**. Most are decorated in typical Bavarian style, with rustic wooden tables and chairs, wooden wainscoting, blue-and-white linens (the colors of the Bavarian flag), and waitresses in dirndls.

The several restaurants associated with the Augustiner brewery are known for good food. My favorite (and that of many Münchners) is the **Augustiner Grossgaststätten** in the pedestrian zone between the Marienplatz and Karlstor/Stachus, and easily identified by the many outdoor tables (in good weather) and the name "Augustiner Bräu Ausschank" in old-fashioned lettering on the beer-hall side of the stone building. The interior is almost grand with a worn but ageless elegance defined by high vaulted ceilings, dark wood paneling and furnishings, and walls hung with antlers and faded prints of Bavarian scenes.

The lengthy menu offers traditional Munich dishes such as grilled *Bratwurst* (pork sausages) with mashed potatoes and vegetables (€6); *Sauerbraten* (marinated, pot-roasted beef) with red cabbage and bread dumplings (€12); and grilled *Schweinehaxe* (pork knuckles or hocks) with potato dumplings and sauerkraut (€13); as well as daily specials, both meat and vegetarian (€6-12). The menu also lists five kinds of soup (€2.70-3.80); light, cold dishes, including several salads (€5-11); sausage and cheese platters (€4.50-9); smaller portion meals "for seniors and children" (€3.65-9); and five types of Bavarian desserts (€2.60-8), in addition to a separate menu for ice cream concoctions. Look for seasonal specials such as fresh asparagus in May and June and wild game in autumn and winter. Augustiner beers, both *Helles* (pale) and *Dunkles* (dark), are, of course, fresh from the tap (€3.10 for half-liter, €6.20 for one-liter).

The adjacent "Augustiner Restaurant" (separate front entrance to the building) has the same menu and same prices, with the meals served in dining rooms more upscale in decor: white table linens, fancier light fixtures and ceilings. Seating is also available in an enclosed courtyard resplendent with baroque and rococo decorations. (Augustiner Grossgaststätten—also known as

Stammhaus zum Augustiner—beer hall, restaurant, and beer garden, Neuhauser Strasse 27, on the pedestrian street; tel: 23-183-257; [www.augustiner-restaurant.com](http://www.augustiner-restaurant.com); daily 10am – midnight.)

Other Augustiner establishments are also held in high regard, and two of them are among Munich's largest beer gardens. Don't let that deter you, however, the food, beer, and ambience are typical Münchner, and you're far more likely to be sitting next to a table of Bavarians than a tour group.

The **Augustinerkeller**, one of central Munich's most attractive beer gardens, has seating for as many as 5,000. For a summer snack (enough for a light meal), try the *Radelteller*, a large white radish thinly cut into a tumbling spiral, rye bread spread with butter, sprinkled with chopped chives, and paper-thin cured ham (€8.50). Or go for the *Obatzda*, a Bavarian specialty of camembert-style cheese, butter, onions, and paprika, all mashed together and spread on bread (€6.80). Other traditional Bavarian dishes, both hot and cold, round out the menu, with plenty of choices for different tastes and budgets (€7-12). As in any beer garden, if the weather turns bad just retreat to the indoor section, a dry haven from any passing storm. (Augustinerkeller, Arnulfstrasse 52; tel: 59-43-93; daily 10am – 1am)

With room for 8,000 people, **Königlicher Hirschgarten** (Royal Deer Garden) is probably Europe's largest beer garden. Even so, its rambling spaces, shaded by towering chestnut trees, feel much smaller. There is also a cozy indoor restaurant. Several food stands offer typical Bavarian fare, including the popular *Steckerlfisch*, grilled whole fish on a stick. The nearly 100-acre park, a former hunting ground for the nobility, contains a large fenced enclosure for a herd of friendly deer. (Königlicher Hirschgarten, Hirschgarten 1; tel: 17-999-119; [www.hirschgarten.de](http://www.hirschgarten.de); daily 10am – 11pm)

More fine draught beer can be

found at **Augustiner am Dom**, next to the landmark Frauenkirche downtown. Daily lunch specials are €5.90 to 7.70, and other main dishes range from €5.50-14. Choose something from the large selection of sausage plates, for which the restaurant is well known (€6-10.50). (Augustiner am Dom, Frauenplatz 8; tel: 23-23-84-80; [www.augustineramdom.de](http://www.augustineramdom.de); daily 10am - midnight)

Nearby **Andechser am Dom** features beer from the **Kloster Andechs** brewery south of Munich. Known for its cuisine and rich decor, the restaurant serves up such dishes as potato-mushroom cream soup (€4), roast duck with red cabbage and potato dumplings (€14.50), and classic Bavarian *Dampfnudel* (steamed yeast dumpling) with vanilla sauce (€4.50). (Andechser am Dom, Weinstrasse 7a, tel: 29-84-81; [www.andechseramdom.de](http://www.andechseramdom.de); daily 10am – midnight)

Munich's **Hofbräuhaus** is surely the world's most famous beer hall. Founded as a brewery for the royal court in 1589, today it attracts tourists from around the globe. But many Münchners enjoy going there, too. The ground floor is noisy and boisterous, with an oompah band, foaming beer served in liter mugs, and more foreigners than locals. To avoid the hustle and bustle, ascend the wide stone staircase to the first floor, where it is much quieter, with warm wooden wainscoting, intimate alcoves, white linens, friendly waitstaff, and locals reading newspapers while sipping a beer. There's also a pleasant garden in the building's courtyard. The reasonably-priced menu offers a good selection of well-prepared Bavarian dishes: soups (€2.60-3.60); salads (€2.30-9); cheese and sausage cold platters (€5-9); hot sausage specialties from the restaurant's own butcher (€4.40-7.30); main dishes (€5-11); several classic Bavarian desserts (€3.20-4.80); and excellent Hofbräu beer (€6.60 per liter). (Hofbräuhaus, Platzl 9; tel: 290-13-60; [www.hofbrauhaus.net](http://www.hofbrauhaus.net); daily 9am – 11pm)

It's a Munich tradition to eat a

mid-morning "second breakfast" of *Weisswurst* (fresh white veal-and-pork sausage) with sweet Bavarian mustard, soft pretzels, and a glass of *Weissbier* (or *Weizenbier*). Some of the city's best white sausages are to be found at **Weisses Bräuhaus**, which also serves its own Schneider brand of wheat beer. (Weisses Bräuhaus, Tal 7; tel: 290-13-80; [www.weisses-brauhaus.de](http://www.weisses-brauhaus.de); daily 8am – 1am)

Another popular place for *Weisswurst* and *Weissbier* is **Zum Spöckmeier** (Rosenstrasse 9; tel: 26-80-88; daily 9:30am – 1am). Note that most Munich restaurants serve *Weisswurst* only before noon, a holdover from the days before refrigeration when fresh sausages had to be eaten before they spoiled.

The beer garden at the center of the **Viktualienmarkt**, the city's colorful open-air food market, is a place to relax from shopping or sightseeing. Every six weeks draught beer from a different Munich brewery is featured. Try the potato soup with sausage and bacon cubes (€3.40); roast pork with potato dumplings and cabbage salad (€9); or a portion of *Obatzda* cheese spread (€5). (Biergarten am Viktualienmarkt, Viktualienmarkt 9; tel: 29-75-45; Monday – Saturday 9am – 11pm; in winter 9am – 6pm; closed on holidays)

Munich's **Englischer Garten**, along the Isar River, one of the world's largest urban public parks, holds four beer gardens, including a popular restaurant and beer garden at the **Chinesischer Turm** (Chinese Tower, a wooden pagoda built in 1790) and the **Seehaus** on the shore of the Kleinhesseloher Lake. (Biergarten am Chinesischer Turm; Englischer Garten 3; tel: 38-38-730; daily 10am – midnight, shorter hours in winter. Seehaus im Englischer Garten, Kleinhesselohe 3; tel: 38-16-130; daily 10am–1am)

Visitors to **Tierpark Hellabrunn**, Munich's excellent zoo, should plan to have lunch in the zoo's beer garden or restaurant. Outdoor stands sell sausages, sauerkraut, fried potatoes, and soft drinks, as well as huge yeasty pretzels (€3) and Augustiner

beer (€6 per liter). The adjacent self-service restaurant offers daily specials such as rotisserie chicken with french fries, and pasta with fresh vegetables (€5.20-7), along with coffee, cheesecakes, and other sweets. (Tierpark Hellabrunn, Tierparkstrasse 30; tel: 62-52-80; [www.tierpark-hellabrunn.de](http://www.tierpark-hellabrunn.de); daily, April – September 8am – 6pm; October – March 9am – 5pm)

Of course, the place to sample all six brands of Munich beer in one place is at the annual **Oktoberfest**, the world's biggest beer bash. Quaff liter mugs of the local brews inside the crowded beer tents with blaring oompah bands, or sit outdoors at somewhat quieter tables and benches. Join other merrymakers in helping to drink an estimated six million liters of beer at this year's 175th Oktoberfest, September 20 – October 5, 2008. (**Oktoberfest**, Theresienwiese; [www.oktoberfest.de](http://www.oktoberfest.de); daily 10am – 11:30pm)

And finally, you can indulge in one last glass of fresh Bavarian beer while waiting for your flight to depart Munich Airport. **Airbräu** is the first microbrewery established at a European airport (in 1999). Drink unfiltered *Helles*, *Weissbier*, or seasonal beers indoors at the brewery tavern or outdoors in the adjacent beer garden. The brewery's restaurant offers a selection of Bavarian dishes (€5-15) for a final taste of south German cuisine. (Airbräu, located between Terminals 1 and 2; tel: 975-93-111; [www.airbraeu.de](http://www.airbraeu.de); daily 10am – 1am) 

## Readers' Forum

### *Rethinking the Kraft*

We have stayed several times at Munich's **Hotel Kraft** and found it to be both pleasant and well situated for our purposes. On our most recent stay, however, we were given a tiny, cramped room (perhaps we should have voiced an objection, but I recall there being "no other rooms available at the moment"). Beyond that, the formerly friendly atmosphere seemed to have dissipated somewhat, particularly with some of

the breakfast buffet staff. Maybe it was just a bad day for some.

It was not bad enough to write the *Kraft* off altogether, but it caused us to consider other nearby alternatives (e.g., the nearby **Hotel Exquisit**, [www.hotel-exquisit.com](http://www.hotel-exquisit.com)).

STEPHEN UNKS  
VIA EMAIL

*(Editor's Note: For many years we have recommended the Kraft for its excellent value, good service, and convenient location. This is the first negative report received. Anybody else?)*

### Vienna Report

Just a few words about our recent visit to Vienna. Actually, it was my 25th visit, but we stayed at a different hotel, which was really great, the **Erzherzog Rainer** (Wiedner Hauptstrasse 27-29, <http://rainer.schick-hotels.com>). It is on the street car line, and only a few blocks from the subway. I cannot praise this hotel enough, the rooms were nice, the breakfast was wonderful, and all the staff was extremely helpful and friendly. Our rate was €99 per day, which was a senior rate. We called the hotel directly to make the reservation, as most hotel booking web sites rates quote higher for this hotel.

Our second recommendation is the **Restaurant Plachutta**. They do have several locations in Vienna, but we visited the one at Wollzeile 38, and really enjoyed the evening. The food and the wine were both excellent, and the service superb. The *Tafelspitz* was the best I have ever eaten, and I have enjoyed this specialty in many restaurants in Vienna. The phone number is 01/512 15 77, and reservations are recommended.

I am a longtime subscriber to *Gemütlichkeit*, and enjoy every issue.

ANNA MANDL  
VIA EMAIL

*Readers' Forum is a way to share travel experiences with other readers. Email your recommendations and warning to bob@gemut.com or send via regular mail to 288 Ridge Rd., Ashland OR 97520. Please include related prices, email addresses, web addresses, street addresses, phone numbers, etc.* 