

**DEAR
SUBSCRIBER**

God, Man, Woman and the Universe

It's a bright, cool morning in the summer of 1944. For reasons I no longer remember, if I ever knew, we are ambling toward downtown. It's not far; Plattsmouth, Nebraska—about 18 miles from Omaha—is a small town of perhaps 5,000 residents. I'm six, he's 22 and a first lieutenant in the Army Artillery, but about to get captain's bars. It won't be long before he will be in Germany, sitting on the very tip of the Allied spear aimed at the heart of Berlin and Victory in Europe. But on this day he's letting his nephew tag along, treating him like a person instead of a kid. "Whaddaya wanna talk about?," says the lieutenant. "I dunno," replies the kid. "Well then, how 'bout God, man, woman and the universe?" And so began a conversation that lasted for 64 years and covered sports, politics, music, food, wine, the stock market, computers, and most of all, European travel—especially Germany. It all came to an end very early Sunday morning, October 5th, in a Kansas City, Missouri, nursing home. To be completely accurate, the actual talking stopped several years ago when the Alzheimer's began in earnest to do its awful work on his fine brain (he was a high school valedictorian who never cracked a book, top of his University of Nebraska law school class, and senior partner in what, at the time, was middle-America's largest law firm outside of Chicago).

I'm talking about my uncle, John K. Bestor, without whom there would be no *Gemütlichkeit*. While growing up, I never dreamed of travel in Europe, especially on my own, and especially in Germany. I knew no lan-

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

LEIPZIG

Saxony's preeminent university city has a rich, enduring musical heritage—and led the way to 1989's downfall of hard-line East German communist rule.

Newswatchers suddenly paid attention to this Saxon city two decades ago, when worldwide headlines proclaimed "the Leipzig miracle." Upwards of 70,000 angry citizens, fed up with repressive governmental controls throughout the socialist German Democratic Republic, took to the streets in autumn 1989. Night after night, they raised such a non-violent ruckus that the GDR bureaucrats backed down—leading directly to October's national reunification a year later.

Long before those outbursts shook the status quo, trade fairs—still mightily important locally, originally held in courtyards and pas-

sageways—made Leipzig prosperous and cosmopolitan. Johann Sebastian Bach, arriving from Thuringia in 1723, spent the last 27 years of his life as *Kapellmeister*: music director of the **Thomaskirche**, where J.S. founded the world-famous Thomaner boys' choir and lies entombed beneath a bronze slab at the altar. Accompanied by the church's 6,300-pipe organ, the group (when not on tour) sings Bach motets Fridays 6pm, cantatas Saturday 3pm and adds their voices to Sunday 9:30am religious services.

A much-photographed Bach statue stands outside the late-Gothic church. He premiered his *Magni-*

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Yellow Roads: Salzburg to Bad Gastein

It seems appropriate this month to reprint one of the several backroads stories contributed by John K. Bestor, who died in early October at age 87 (see Dear Subscriber). He coined the term "Yellow Roads," and loved to explore them. This report first appeared in Gemütlichkeit in March of 1993.

A drive from Salzburg south to Bad Gastein can become much more interesting by taking a less traveled route, part of which involves a delightful "yellow road" from Maria Alm (south-east of Saalfelden) to Route 311, or another — though much less direct — east to Bischofshofen. You'll need a detailed map such as Mair's *Die Generalkarte #7* for Austria.

Out of Salzburg, take any road to Bad Reichenhall. From there, follow the little yellow road past

Thumsee and pick up Route 21 to the Austrian border. Then take Route 312 past Unken in the direction of Lofer. (If you are coming from Munich, take the Traunstein exit, head south through Inzell on Route 305, and then turn toward Lofer where the road intersects Route 21.)

From Lofer there are views of several mountain peaks and the drive on to Saalfelden is through the Saalach Valley beside the Saalach River. Along the way are caves open for tours and places to stop for a wander through wooded gorges.

At Saalfelden, turn toward

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Exchange rates as of 10/20/08
1 euro = \$1.33
1 Swiss franc = \$0.87

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

guage but English and I pictured Germany to be the bombed-out, rubble-strewn place I had seen in newsreels. But in 1973 John introduced Liz and me to independent European travel when he convinced us to meet him in France, where we toured by car for a few days together, visiting Bordeaux, Burgundy and Alsace. He taught us the Michelin Red Guides, detailed maps, and the backcountry byways he called "Yellow Roads" (their color on the maps). Then, at my uncle's urging, using our new-found travel skills, the next European destination was Germany where he had been going annually for several years. I was immediately captivated and, somehow scraping up the money, we returned year after year. We didn't travel much with John, managing only a few times to connect with him for a day or two. He liked the solitude of his little rental car and the backroads, stopping at tiny inns where he could speak German and drink beer with the locals. On his last few trips he rented flats in the Partenkirchen end of Garmisch-Partenkirchen where he basked in the Bavarian country culture and the slow pace of village life. Regrettably, his first wife, Fritz, who died in the early '90s, didn't travel. I am sure it was one of his life's joys that his second wife, Lorena, accompa-

nied him on those last visits.

Over the years 1965 to the early '80s, my jobs with professional sports teams took me frequently to Kansas City. When I came to town with the Oakland Raiders, John would prepare great feasts for me and my colleagues and friends in the media. He was an adventurous cook and had what must have been one of the town's best wine cellars. Long before movie stars and dot.com multi-millionaires drove up the price of French wines in this country, John was laying down case upon case of classified growth Bordeaux, and top-of-the-line Burgundies, both red and white. For us, he poured Chateau Latour 1962, '59 Chateau Palmer, the fabulous dessert wine of Sauterne, Chateau d'Yquem, the great ports of the celebrated '63 vintage, and his favorite bubbly, Moet and Cristal. Some of my friends became his friends. The late Bill King, longtime San Francisco Bay Area football, baseball and basketball broadcaster, hooked up with John for lunch or dinner every time he was in Kansas City with the Oakland A's baseball team.

There was nothing John would rather do than practice law, often saying it was so much fun he'd do it for free. Among his clients were several Fortune 500 companies. His specialty was labor law, and he lived for the negotiations; the ultimate test of his experience,

knowledge, wit and nerve. At his funeral, his son-in-law, Les, told me he once saw a newspaper article that listed the midwest's best attorneys as rated by their peers; John was number one in the labor category. He kept the same clients for decades, only stepping down when, at the onset of Alzheimer's, he realized his mind might fail him—and his clients—at a critical moment.

It wasn't just how to travel in Europe that I learned from my uncle. Looking back over the past 40 years, it's clear he was a pretty hip guy. He told me about Warren Buffet more than 25 years ago. He managed his own investments, pouring over *Barron's*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Investor's Business Daily* and *Valueline*. He eagerly anticipated personal computers and in 1983 purchased one of the first IBM PCs. With a pioneer investment software called Dow

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Using Gemütlichkeit

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

Logging on to Our Website

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User Name: **zigi** Password: **3821**

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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

LEIPZIG*Continued from page 1*

ficat and *St. John Passion* oratorios at nearby **Nikolaikirche**. Now, though, the 12th-century “Nikolai” has newer renown as the site of Monday-evening peace prayers—beginning in 1983—that boiled over into ‘89’s revolt.

There’s more to see here in the midst of the *Innenstadt*. For instance: the three-part **Mädlerpassage** (1914), quintessentially *Jugendstil*-Art Nouveau, containing chic shops and café-bistros leading to a rotunda sporting 25 Meissen porcelain chimes. Same location for the free-admittance **Zeitgeschichtliches Forum Leipzig** (Leipzig Forum of Contemporary History), recalling daily life during the socialist era, complete with household products, grainy TV broadcasts, youth regimentation, workers’-paradise propaganda graphics, and clunky “Trabi” minis-dans.

In & Around the Marktplatz

Sandstone *Platz*-level arcades and blue-and-gilt tower clocks make the **Altes Rathaus** a definite eye-catcher. Come upstairs to browse a municipal history museum that includes a scale model of 19th-century Leipzig wrapped inside its medieval walls. Behind this 16th-century Renaissance edifice, café-sitters savor **Naschmarkt** ambience while looking up at 1687’s gorgeously Baroque, balconied, rooftop-balustraded **Alte Handelsbörse** (Old Stock Exchange), fronted by a statue of a dapper, skirt-chasing Leipzig University law student, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Three of the original trade-fair courtyards have recently been splendidly restored, drawing customers to cubbyhole shops and cafés: **Barthels Hof**, **Steibs Hof** and colorfully decorous, five-level, cartoon-frescoed **Specks Hof**.

A glass cube, the **Bildenden Künste** fine-arts museum opened on Sachsenplatz in 2004, exhibiting German Impressionist/Expressionist paintings by Caspar David Friedrich, Arnold Böcklin, Lovis Corinth, Adri-

Leipzig Basics**Population:** 510,615**Elevation:** 122 meters (486 feet)

Visitor Information: Leipzig Tourist Service e.V., Richard-Wagner-Strasse 1, 04109 Leipzig, tel. +49/0341/710/4620, fax 0341/710/4276, lipsia@aol.com, www.leipzig.de.

German National Tourist Office, 122 East 42nd Street (Suite 2000), New York NY 10168-0072, tel. 212-661-7200, fax 212-661-7174, www.cometogermany.com.

Driving distances from:

Berlin	153 km	95 miles
Chemnitz	66 km	41 miles
Dresden	102 km	63 miles
Frankfurt	397 km	248 miles
München	353 km	220 miles
Nürnberg	224 km	139 miles
Rostock	310 km	192 miles

Year-by-Year in Local History:

First documented, as urbs Libzi (1015); town charter (1165); university founded (1409); imperial trade-fair rights (1497), Martin Luther brings the Protestant Reformation (1539); opera-company debut (1693); Europe’s first daily newspaper, *Avisa Zeitung*, circulated (1650); J. S. Bach becomes St. Thomas’s choirmaster (1723); Germany’s first professional orchestra (1743); Gewandhaus Orchestra established (1781); Germany’s first music conservatory (1843); Germany’s first labor party (1863); German Imperial Supreme Court (1888-1945); German National Library (1912), arrival of U.S. 69th Infantry Division (April 20th, 1945); postwar opera house (1960); Neues Gewandhaus concert hall (1981)

Born in Leipzig: Composer Richard Wagner (1813), pianist Clara Schumann (1819); Communist Party boss Walter Ulbricht (1883); expressionist painter Max Beckmann (1884)

Rail: Check www.raileurope for frequent daily departures from Dresden via regional (RE) service to Leipzig, averaging 1 hr. 36 min. From Frankfurt: five departures daily via high-speed ICE (InterCity-Express) for cross-country travel, reaching Leipzig in 3 hr. 26 min. From Berlin’s Ostbahnhof, Zoobahnhof, big new Hauptbahnhof and the station at Berlin-Brandenburg

International Airport (Schönefeld), figure on about 1 hr. 16 min. for your high-speed trip. ICE service from Munich usually entails five stops enroute to Leipzig, taking between 4 hr. 20 min. and 5 hr. 2 min.

Airport: Flughafen Leipzig/Halle (code: LEJ) in Schkeuditz, 18 km/11 miles northeast of the city center. Upon arrival, get to downtown via rapid-transit Airport Express; 14 minute commute, €3.40.

Driving: From Berlin/Potsdam, head south on the A-9 Autobahn, then east to the A-9/A-14 interchange midway between Halle and Leipzig. Take the A-14 westbound for the quick way from Dresden and nearby Saxon Switzerland National Park highlands alongside the Czech border.

Best Buy: The Leipzig Card entitles holders to free city transportation, price discounts at selected restaurants and cafés, cost savings at selected shops and museums, plus discounted tickets for orchestral, operatic, theatrical and cabaret performances. Full-day €8.90 per person, three-day €18.50.

Guided Sightseeing: Comprehensive two-hour bus tours depart daily 1:30pm from the tourist office, €16 per-person.

2009 Events

Bach Festival: June 11-21, www.bach-leipzig.de. Churches, concert halls, outdoor venues. Starring Bach, co-starring Händel, Haydn, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Liszt and Bizet’s opera *Carmen*

Leipziger Bierbörse: June 19-21. Grounds surrounding the Volkerschlachtdenkmal battle monument. Worldwide brands of beer for taste-testing, high-decibel music for rocking and raving

International Choral Festival: July 6-14. Choral groups from around the world, performing in churches in and around the city

Mendelssohn Festival. Aug. 21-Sept. 18. Annually since 1997, devoted to Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy’s musical compositions

Leipziger Dokfest: Oct. 17-Nov. 1. First presented in 1955: Europe’s best-known awards competition showing international documentary and animation films.

an Ludwig Richter and Max Beckmann (born in Leipzig). Old Masters Cranach and Dürer, Rubens and Rembrandt are also well-represented. Don't bypass the 1902 polychromatic statue of Beethoven, sculpted in bronze, alabaster, marble and amber by Max Klinger (another Leipziger). For an utterly different experience, come to a Dittrichring corner close to St. Thomas's church, where insurance-company offices were requisitioned as headquarters of the Leipzig branch of East Germany's notorious STASI secret police organization. Today the free-admittance **Museum in der Runden Ecke** chronicles such spooky stuff as hidden cameras and recording devices, interrogation procedures, thick dossiers prying into the private lives of ordinary people, and other totalitarian intrusions.

Energized by 29,000 students (preceded by Goethe, Baroque composer Georg Philipp Telemann, existential philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, and current German chancellor Angela Merkel), main **Leipzig University** classrooms and lecture halls cover a substantial chunk of

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 gemut2008.
- 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 electronics for travelers — cell phones, computers, etc.

downtown. Purposely resembling an open book, nicknamed "the Wisdom Tooth," silvery metallic, 35-story **City-Hochhaus** (1970) looms above the academic layout.

Head west on Grimmaischer Strasse's broad pedestrian corridor to reach **Augustusplatz** (renamed Karl-Marx-Platz during GDR times), culturally important because Leipzig's neoclassical **Opera House** and radically angular, modernistic **Gewandhaus** concert hall stand on opposite ends of the square. Above the hall's main foyer hangs an enormous ceiling painting inspired by Gustav Mahler's *Song of the Earth* composition. A cascading Augustplatz centerpiece since 1886 is the fancily sculpted **Mende Fountain**.

Bauhaus-designed, surrounding a courtyard off east-side Johannisplatz, the **Grassi Museum** ensemble delves into arts and crafts, ethnology and the university's musical-instruments collection (arguably Europe's most extensive). Grassi's three museums are only a few blocks from Goldschmittstrasse's Biedermeier-furnished **Mendelssohn House**, where the composer, moving from Hamburg, lived (1847-49) and died. His studio has become an excellent Sunday music venue.

On Leipzig's western flank, five km/3.11 miles of woodland and Elster riverway running-hiking-rollerblading-biking trails loop through **Clara-Zetkin-Park** (named for German Communism's anti-Nazi politician), where performing rock and techno combos shake the Parkbühne stage. Untouched by war, late 19th-century Wilhelminian houses attract architectural connoisseurs to the parkside **Waldstrassenviertel** neighborhood. Also out this way: a green sprawl of **Auenwald** forests, lakes and flood-plain meadows.

Four Extra-Big Structures

At a southwest curve of greenbelt marking the circumference of long-gone city walls, the **Neues Rathaus** ranks as Germany's largest town hall, completed in 1905, filled with 900 municipal offices. This castellat-

ed whopper flaunts a watch tower, turrets, parapets, balconies, connector bridges and a horde of statues. Just as unmissable: the city's circa-1915 **Hauptbahnhof** railroad terminal; a two-part, vaulted-ceilinged colossus containing not just 26 tracks but 140 upscale shops in its triple-deck **Promenaden** super-galleria. Across town by way of Peterstrasse, Burgplatz's new (as of 2006) multi-level **Petersbogen** mall combines stores galore, food court, casino and eight-screen Cinestar movie theater.

At Prager Strasse on Leipzig's southwestern outskirts, the centennial of 1813's Battle of Leipzig inspired the 300,000-ton granite **Volkerschlachtdenkmal**, a 91-meter/299-ft.-high behemoth with inner crypt and pantheon, acoustically resonant for summertime concerts. A Prussian-Austrian-Russian-Swedish allied army trapped and defeated Napoleon's 200,000 French troops, ending the four-day conflict and Bonaparte's career. Full-scale anniversary reenactments draw big crowds each October. Nearby, **St. Alexei's Russian Memorial Church**—a Novgorod-style edifice topped by a white and gold onion-dome steeple—honors the czar's 22,000 soldiers who died in the battle.

Leipzig Hotels

Park Hotel

What used to be 1913's Grand Hotel morphed into this four-star property five years after German reunification. Its curvaceous *Jugendstil* façade remains as is, but all else has undergone a top-to-bottom, inside-and-out overhaul. Rail travelers appreciate the location, directly across Willy-Brandt-Platz from the main train station. The 288 floral-carpeted guest rooms—functional and of adequate size—include WLAN data-link for wireless computer networking. The wellness spa consists of fitness gear, saunas, solarium and whirlpool. The restaurant, Steaktrain, evokes Orient Express glamor from days gone by.

Daily Rates: Singles from €105, doubles from €125. Free parking.

Contact: Park Hotel, Richard-Wagner-Strasse 7, 04109 Leipzig, tel. 0341/9852, fax 0341/9852/750, info@parkhotelleipzig.de, www.parkhotelleipzig.de.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 13/20

Victor's Residenz-Hotel

Another name change, another thorough *Jugendstil* facelift. Situated at an eastern corner of the ring road for easy access to that side of the *Hauptbahnhof*. Known as the Continental Hotel prior to the Best Western rebranding in 1996, the 101 guest rooms have been upgraded to meet four-star standards regarding furnishings, décor and bathroom fixtures, plus cable satellite TV and communications hook-ups. The lobby area includes a bar/café, and a big stained-glass window adds color to the Brasserie restaurant. An antique ceramic stove warms the woodsy, Bavarian-influenced *Bierstube*. Guests arriving by automobile can park in the on-site garage, €13 per night.

Daily Rates: Singles from €95, doubles from €115

Contact: Best Western Premier Victor's Residenz-Hotel, Georgiring 13, 04103 Leipzig, tel. +49/0341/6866, fax 0341/6866/899, info@victors-leipzig.bestwestern.de, www.victors.de.

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel Fürstenhof

Those who still need visual proof that GDR dowdiness has vanished here in Saxony's midsection, should come to an upper bend in the ring road, where developers daringly gutted 19th-century Löhr-Haus, a long-neglected neo-Renaissance mansion with gilt-trimmed window arches. Out came a five-star, 92-room hotel—the city's finest—that defines urbane continental luxury. Extra-spacious bedrooms feature deep-cushioned armchairs, myrtlewood designer furniture, thick carpeting, and floor-to-ceiling windows outfitted with sound-muffling velour draperies. Bathrooms (separate tub and shower) are marble-surfaced.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

A skylit, white-colonnaded rotunda enhances the intimacy of the Fürstenhof's lounge and piano bar. Crystal chandeliers softly illuminate haute-cuisine Restaurant Villers. The hotel's mirrored banquet facility's red wall panels are accentuated by black-marble serpentine framework and ceiling beams. At 1770, a vinotek bistro, choose from more than 100 wines. With a big free-form swimming pool as its focal point, the Aqua-Marin wellness spa invites guests to whirlpool, saunas, steambaths, fitness gear, massage and beauty treatments.

Daily Rates: Singles from €135, doubles from €160, breakfast €24

Contact: Hotel Fürstenhof, Tröndlinring 8, 04105 Leipzig, tel. +49/0341/1400, fax 0341/140/3700, fuerstenhof.leipzig@luxurycollection.com, www.luxurycollection.com/fuerstenhof.

Rating: QUALITY 18/20, VALUE 15/20

Galerie Hotel Leipziger Hof

On a tree-lined street in the east-side Neustadt neighborhood, not inconveniently far from inner-city goings-on, some 200 paintings and lithographs by *Leipziger Schule* artists add splashes of color throughout this well-maintained *Gründerzeit* building (one of many in the immediate vicinity), including each of its 73 guest rooms (smoking/nonsmoking options). They're modestly proportioned, furnished and paneled in wood veneers. As you'd expect, the hotel attracts a predominantly young, artsy clientele. You can unwind in the smallish sauna and whirlpool, and there's an umbrella-shaded beer garden in the courtyard. Parking spaces available, €7 nightly.

Daily Rates: Singles €73-135, doubles €85-155

Contact: Galerie Hotel Leipziger Hof, Hedwigstrasse 1-3, 04135 Leipzig, tel. +49/0341/6974, fax 0341/6974/150, info@leipzigerhof.de, www.leipzigerhof.de.

Rating: QUALITY 12/20, VALUE 14/20

Lindner Hotel Leipzig

Prefer a countrified setting instead of the crowded city center? Attracting vacationers as well as business travelers, this contemporary low-rise, four-star hotel nestles in Auenwald woodlands near suburban Leutzsch. Close proximity to an *S-bahn* rapid-transit station gives guests reliable access to Leipzig's cultural attractions. Complimentary round-trip shuttle service ensures another way of getting into town and back. Bicycles are available during summer season for exploring surrounding open spaces. The 200 guest rooms are airy and contemporary; the main building's Am Wasserschloss restaurant opens onto a garden terrace. Relaxation amenities include a gym and wellness center with steam bath and solarium.

Daily Rates: Singles, doubles from €109

Contact: Lindner Hotel Leipzig, Hans-Dreisch-Strasse 27, 04179 Leipzig, tel. +49/0341/4478, fax 0341/4478/478, info.leipzig@lindner.de, www.lindner.de.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 13/20

Leipzig Restaurants

Panorama Tower

Tops in two lofty respects: pricey, gourmet-caliber meals and, uppermost, 142-meter (466 ft.) City-Hochhaus altitude for sensational vistas while dining. A lengthy international wine list correctly implies big-city class. Ponder such entrée standouts as filet mignon with goat cheese (€23.50), rack of lamb with white tomato-risotto (€20.80) or stewed duck breast and asparagus lightly doused in balsamic vinegar (€18.60). Pasta dishes range €10.50-13.90; soups (go for the creamy celery and coconut) €3.70-4.50; six kinds of dessert €4.90-5.70. The all-you-can-eat Sunday brunch (9am-2pm, €19.50) draws a dressy crowd.

Contact: Panorama Tower, Augustusplatz 9, 04109 Leipzig, tel. +49/0341/710/0590, www.panorama-leipzig.de.

Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 16/20

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Zill's Tunnel

Established in 1841, and ever-reliable for authentic, hearty Saxonian cooking. If the tunnel-shaped street-level restaurant and its bar gets uncomfortably crowded (not unusual on midyear weekends), slip upstairs for a more relaxing *Weinstube*-with-fireplace atmosphere. Here's a good opportunity to order iconic *Leipziger Allerlei*—a springtime dish (invented by thrifty housewives during the Napoleonic Wars), mixing vegetables, mushrooms, cauliflower, bits of veal and crayfish (€14). Otherwise, three-course Saxon meals range €14.30-20.90; four-course €25.60.

Contact: Zill's Tunnel, Barfussgässchen 9, 04109 Leipzig, tel. +49/0341/960/2078, www.zillstunnel.de.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 17/20

Thüringer Hof

This venerable, *gemütlich* restaurant boasts 1454 origins as a students' hangout and later, 1515, hosted Martin Luther. Blown to smithereens by 1943 aerial bombardment, it reopened in 1949. The "Luther Special" (pork shank, cabbage, dumplings) costs €11.70. Order trout or salmon for €11.80-13.90. But Thuringian fare is the mainstay: Bratwurst with sauerkraut and boiled potatoes (€7.60); roast beef with onions and pan-fried potatoes (€8.70). A heaping-big dinner for two features chicken breast and pork shank (€33). Vegetarians have four entrée choices (€8.20-9.50). Würzburger Hofbräu draft beer was first poured *vom Fass* here in 1911.

Contact: Thüringer Hof, Burgstrasse 19, 04109 Leipzig, tel. +49/0341/994/4999, www.theuringerhof.de.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Bayerischer Bahnhof

A moderate distance south of the *Innenstadt*, 1842's neoclassical Bayerischer Bahnhof landmark functioned as one of Germany's oldest railroad stations. Now, post-GDR, Frank Wiegand and helpmates have

remade it into a hip, casual restaurant containing four cheerful dining nooks plus a *Beierseiderei* brew-pub and 400-seat beer garden. Choose between pub and *Garten* to sip frothy, top-fermented Leipziger Gose wheat beer.

For starters, soups range €2.90-3.40. Then to such meaty dishes as Sauerbraten (€9.50), pork shank cooked in beer sauce, with onions and boiled potatoes (€9.60) or a serving of Bratwurst sausages, dabbed with *Senf* (mustard) for extra zing (€7.30). Especially recommendable: the Brauhaus-Schnitzel (€11.80). At dessert time, take the plunge by ordering exclusively *Sächsische Quarkkeulchen*, an admittedly weird cinnamon-sprinkled concoction made with potatoes, eggs, flour, sugar, lemon peel and raisins (€4.10).

Contact: Bayerischer Bahnhof, Bayerischer Platz 1, 04103 Leipzig, tel. +49/0341/124/5760, www.bayerischer-bahnhof.de.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 16/20

Auerbachs Keller

Westphalian-transplanted proprietors Christine and Bernhard Rothenberger have Goethe to thank for surveys consistently confirming this 1530 old-timer's eminence as Europe's third best-known restaurant—trailing only Munich's Hofbräuhaus and Vienna's Sacher Café. In a pivotal *Faust* episode, the desperate alchemist debates Mephistopheles in this very place before zooming out astride a wine barrel. Beneath the Mädlerpassage, reached by descending a marble staircase, four chummy *Weinstube* rooms and the cavernous 250-seat *Grosse Keller* are adorned with Faustian murals and inscribed legends. Full-course dinners, heavy on Saxon standards, average €11.40-15.90.

Contact: Auerbachs Keller, Grimmaische Strasse 2-4, 04109 Leipzig, tel. +49/0341/216/100, www.auerbachskeller.de.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 14/20

Pub-Crawling

Nightlifers cruise a hip downtown corridor nicknamed **Drallewatsch** in Saxon dialect, jam-packed with rows of restaurants (Zill's Tunnel and Thüringer Hof among them) as well as late-night taverns and discos. It's easiest to reach them from the Marktplatz; turn from there onto narrow Barfussgässchen. A comparable splurge of trendiness enlivens the Südvorstadt district, south beyond the ring road, where a 24-block stretch of Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse (the "Karli") has been reenergized with its own "restaurant row."

Kaffee Kultur

It's always been serious stuff here. Bach, Richard Wagner, Franz Liszt, the Schumanns and ex-Gewandhaus conductor Kurt Masur socialized at **Zum Arabischen Coffe Baum**, Europe's most renowned such place, with 17th-century pedigree and an upstairs museum devoted to the history of coffee-making in Europe, Turkey and the Middle East. (Kleine Fleischerstrasse 4). **Café Riquet-Haus**, a *Jugendstil* beauty, has graced an *Innenstadt* corner across from the Nikolaikirche since 1908 (Schumachergässchen 1). **Café Corso** dates from 1912 (Brüderstrasse 6). **Café Concerto** and **Bachstüb'l** overlook St. Thomas's church from across the Kirchhof square. Time-darkened woodwork and whirring coffee grinders are the hallmarks of **Kaffee Richter**, in business since 1879 (Peterstrasse 43). Knowledgeable local caffeine imbibers munch on choices of four sweet tidbits: *Alt Leipzig* pralines, *Leipziger Lerchen* (larks) marzipan, *Bienenstich* (bee sting) honey almond tortes and *Blätterteiggebäck* puff pastries. ☒

Correction: Last month we printed an incorrect Web address for travel columnist, Ed Perkins. You can find Ed at www.smartertravel.com.

"YELLOW ROADS"
Continued from page 1



See and St. Johann, is very narrow and mostly only wide enough for one car. (Too narrow for a yellow line in the middle). There are turn-outs, of course, but traffic is light and there are few trucks. The road is curvy and most of the way is downhill to Route 311. At this point a turn to the west will take you to Zell am See or on to Kitzbühl. If you cross 311 and continue south, you enter the beautiful Gasteiner Valley leading to Bad Hofgastein and Bad Gastein.

The other option at Dienten is to continue east through Mülbach and on to Bischofshofen by way of the *Hoch Königstrasse*. Though this is a lesser road even than a "yellow road" (the map shows it in white with gray borders) it is paved and well marked. It, too, is a lovely drive.

At Bischofshofen be sure to follow the Zell am See signs or you'll end up on the Autobahn to Salzburg or Graz. Once back on red road 311 heading west toward Zell am See, you'll soon see signs for the road south to Bad Gastein. ☞

DEAR SUBSCRIBER
Continued from page 1

Jones Analyzer, he monitored his stocks and made buy-sell decisions. A wise and prudent investor, he made millions in the market.

Being a well-heeled, sought-after attorney changed my uncle not a bit. He belonged to a country club but never went there. Kansas City society bored him. Instead he spent much of his free time, probably too much for his marriage and family, in Luigi's, a small restaurant and bar that, for a time, ran a wide-open bookmaking operation, posting odds

on a chalkboard behind the bar. Its owner, Luigi Bonura, who became perhaps John's closest friend, was rumored to be "connected," a notion my uncle dismissed. On Sunday mornings after Mass, John would visit his mother (my grandmother) and then drop by Luigi's for a beer. Kansas City's "blue laws" prevented the sale of alcohol on Sundays, but Luigi did paperwork on Sunday and discreetly hosted two or three of his favorite customers. Among them was a tiny, shabbily-dressed man who owned a number of office buildings in the Kansas City area. One morning this eccentric, five-foot tycoon choose me to complain to about the run-around he was getting at the local power company. "In life," he said in a thick mid-European accent, "one God, one wife, but not one power company."

My uncle was also, of course, a member of the so-called "greatest generation;" those men who risked their lives for an ideal, got the job done, and never talked much about it afterward. I did coax one story out of him, however. As U.S. forces moved eastward across Germany, his assignment was to fly in a light plane over the German lines and assess their positions and strength. On one mission he and his pilot were forced down in the no-man's land behind the retreating Germans but ahead of the advancing U.S. Army. There was no choice but to spend the night with the airplane. At dusk, a handful of thin, raggedly-dressed men materialized in the gloom about 50 meters from the airplane. Gesturing toward a bucket on the ground before them, they beckoned the Americans to approach. With great caution and drawn pistols my uncle and his pilot slowly advanced. The scarecrows were, of course, DPs (displaced persons), Eastern European forced laborers, abandoned by the Germans to survive on their own. Cool white wine sloshed in their bucket. They led the way to a nearby cave where a river of wine splashed onto the cave floor from the open spigot of a huge cask. Needless to say, a good

Maria Alm then on to Dienten. Maria Alm is a very picturesque little village with many hotels and restaurants, and an abundance of flowers decorating the buildings. The road from there to Dienten is quite interesting, particularly that portion past Hintertal. But from there on it is narrow, seldom more than a car and a half wide and climbs to a summit shortly before arriving at Dienten. The trip from Maria Alm to Dienten is, as the Mair's map indicates, quite scenic many flower-covered houses. It is an interesting driving experience.

Dienten, a ski resort, is an exceptionally beautiful town. Buildings are decked completely with flowers. One house was covered with fuchsias.

Here you have a decision to make. Your first option is to go straight south. This road, to the main highway between Zell am

deal more wine was drunk that night than the currently recommended, heart-healthy glass or two per day. Though the language barrier prevented meaningful conversation there were many toasts and much laughter. Very early the next morning, my uncle and his pilot awoke, no doubt massively hungover—an affliction John claimed he never suffered from—in a rain puddle under the airplane's wing. The small cask of wine they had rolled from the cave was too heavy or too large to fit in the plane so they hid it in brush, hoping to retrieve it later. They never found it. The day the war in Europe ended, John watched the celebration from a rooftop in Stuttgart. A German man tried to shake his hand but, with the fresh memory of a liberated concentration camp, he refused. I think it was one of the few acts in his life he regretted. He remained in Germany for several months after V-E Day, living with several other officers in a house in Heidelberg (2 Helmholtzstrasse, it's still there), near the Neckar River. He came home on a slow troop ship, playing poker constantly during the eight-day crossing. But something in Germany pulled him back and he returned many times.

Not many people got close to him, and I count myself fortunate to be among the few. He was a mentor whose advice I frequently sought. "What would John do in this situation?" was a question I often asked myself—a sensible exercise because he was perhaps the least impulsive, slowest to anger, clearest thinking person I've ever known.

"Iron-ass" was the joking term John sometimes used to describe a category of people he admired. Iron asses never break their word and never compromise their values. No matter how hard the winds blow, they stand fast. But most of all, regardless the circumstance, they can always, absolutely, be depended upon. I've only met a handful who meet those qualifications, and sad to say, as of October 5, 2008, there's one less than there used to be.—RHB ☒

Readers' Forum

Munich Hotel Recommendation

I read about the disappointment one of your readers had with his recent stay at the **Hotel Kraft**. As a possible future alternative, I recommend the **Mercure München City Center** hotel which is a bit closer to the Hauptbahnhof, but on a quiet side street (Senefelderstr. 9). It has a comfortable modern appearance, the rooms are comfortable and clean and the staff very pleasant and helpful. There is a bar, lounge and restaurant, although we did not use the restaurant on our stay this year. I can't remember the room price, but currently it is running from US\$147 to US\$177, depending on the day of the week. Hotels.com gives this hotel a 5.0 rating, and I would say it is deserving.

PHIL ROBERTS
HAYWARD, CA

Europe Cheaper Than Mexico

Here is our little report. My wife and brother and sister-in-law just returned from three weeks in Europe. We flew into Zürich rented a car, spent seven days in Switzerland, five days in Italy, seven days in Croatia, and three days winding our way back via Vienna to Zürich. We rented cars in both Switzerland and Croatia, stayed in three-star hotels, stayed in Managio with a balcony facing the lake, two nights in the Cinque Terra. First-class train tickets on 50 % of the trains we were on. We flew on points and you guys linked us up with great car rentals. We spent under \$6,000 per couple. That makes it \$142.00 per day, per person. We ate where we wanted, went where we wanted. Museums, wine, cappuccino, outdoor cafés. We stayed overlooking the old city of Dubrovnik for two nights. The trip was exactly \$29.00 per day per person cheaper than an all-inclusive in Mexico for two weeks. If I would have paid for the flights, it would have been \$224.00 per person.

VIC & LEE KRAHN
VIA EMAIL

Don't Wait 'Til Next Year

Regarding your discussion about "waiting" until next year to travel...we all have a LAST trip.

The motto for our little tour company, eeTours, is "Don't let your last trip be the one you DIDN'T take". We are always hearing: "I really want to travel with you but I'm going to wait until next year." In the last eight years some of those people died and some developed health problems that prevented them from ever going to Europe again.

GARY ELDRIDGE
EE TOURS

Car, Own GPS Work Well

We rented a car in Mainz on 25 August and returned 13 September at Munich Airport. We received a Mercedes A-class, which was a great little car. Rode great at 140 km/hour or more, and took us to Rothenburg (of course), Schwarzwald, Disneyland-Paris (we are cast members at WDW), Interlaken, Vienna, and Lower Bavaria. Although Avis (and everyone else) was not open yet at 5am at Munich Airport, a friendly security guard told us where to park and reminded us to leave the final paperwork in the car.

Hint: We bought a Garmin 270 GPS before we left, which is pre-loaded with Europe maps. We went to several very small villages to visit people and it (she) always directed us right to their driveway; how does she do it—in English and using feet and miles instead of kilometers?

Anecdote: The next time I used Miss Garmin was to go from Boston Airport to Salem, Massachusetts. Before she located the U.S. satellites, she had calculated the mileage at 3,800 from Munich. Loved it! (Didn't get to see how she was going to drive us across the Atlantic, though.)

BILL AND JAN PUCKETT
VIA EMAIL