

**DEAR
SUBSCRIBER**

Remembering Schaffhausen, etc.

Were I to make a list of the 100 places in Germany, Austria and Switzerland European travelers should see before they die, the **Rhine Falls** would probably be on it. While not as high or imposing as Niagra, Victoria Falls in South Africa, or Brazil's Iguassu Falls, and probably others around the world, they are pretty impressive when you're in that little boat at their base. Sharon Hudgins' lead story on Schaffhausen—the logical place to stay when visiting the Falls—brought memories of our first Schaffhausen visit in 1987, *Gemütlichkeit's* earliest days. We stayed at the **Park Villa** (see page 4) in a room featuring a turret with a 270-degree view. (I think it's the one shown on the hotel's website with a carved wood canopy bed. You can see the opening to the turret at the right of the photo.)

What I remember most about that visit was dinner at **Fischerzunft**, then a new, rising Michelin-starred restaurant much-praised in *Gourmet Magazine*. This was when *Nouvelle Cuisine*—tiny servings, every plate of food a work of art—was much in vogue and, with its Chinese-French fusion dishes, Fischerzunft was one of Switzerland's leading practitioners. It was said to be the Aga Khan's (remember him?) favorite restaurant. Expensive? Of course. Even then the fixed-price menu was \$59 per person—for an astonishingly small amount of food. As I wrote in the September, 1987, issue: "at the end of the meal one had the feeling of having dined on a series of light hors d'oeuvres. Another feeling was hunger." The service was stiff and formal; after each pouring, our expensive bottle of wine was removed and put on a sideboard out of our reach—a pretentious practice

Continued on page 2...

GEMÜTLICHKEIT

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

Schaffhausen

Though best known as a German river, the Rhine starts in the Swiss Alps. Early in its journey it passes the frequently overlooked medieval Swiss city of Schaffhausen.

Schaffhausen is a city that combines the medieval, the modern, plus everything in between—and manages to do it with style, much like a woman who has lived a long time, still wears elegant clothes that never go out of fashion, maintains a contemporary outlook, and is comfortable with the contrast between present and past.

Such a place attracts the kind of visitor who enjoys wandering through cobblestone streets and narrow lanes, gazing at historic houses, listening to the burble of flower-bedecked fountains, or just sitting in a sidewalk cafe on a spacious square, sipping cups of dark, hot chocolate while watching

city life unfold at a leisurely pace.

On the Rhine River in the most northern part of Switzerland, almost an island in a sea of Germany, Schaffhausen was already a thriving market town when it received its city charter in 1045. The name probably derives from *Schiffhausen* (boat houses), referring to the little wooden sheds along the river that sheltered the boats that plied the Rhine's blue waters and brought prosperity to the city's merchants (especially salt traders).

Today Schaffhausen is the capital of the Swiss canton of the same name. Most of its winding border is with Germany, except for a small section on the southeast side which touches on the Swiss *canton* of Zürich.

Continued on page 3...

Stay a Little Longer

Last month we talked about the financial and cultural advantages of house and apartment rental as an alternative to the practice of frequent moves from hotel-to-hotel and city-to-city. Self-catering is a strategy we highly recommend but there's another to be considered, one employed by millions of Europeans but relatively few North Americans—extended hotel stays. Though they've gotten used to it over the past 15-20 years, many European hoteliers are puzzled by our need to pack up and leave after just a day or two. Vacation hotels in Germany, Austria and Switzerland are geared for longer stays. Rooms are often larger than in business-oriented hotels, there are more recreation facilities, more and larger public spaces, planned guest activi-

ties, and a greater range of services. Room rates frequently include meals, usually dinner and breakfast. Organized guests activities are typical, even in some less expensive hotels, and can include outdoor buffets with live music, group hikes, exercise classes, sleigh rides, even cooking classes. A one or two-page newsletter setting out the day's activities is often distributed at breakfast. Many high-end family hotels, especially in Austria, offer childcare and supervised activities for children.

The experience of settling-in for a week or more at a peaceful European country hotel (most vacation hotels

Continued on page 6...

Exchange rates as of 6/1/09
1 euro = \$1.41
1 Swiss franc = \$0.93
1 gallon diesel, Germany = \$5.56

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

that never fails to raise my hackles. Shaky might be another word to describe the service; while pouring our wine, the young server held the bottle by its very bottom, thumb-in-punt (indentation at the bottom of the bottle), a daunting procedure for very small hands. We held our breath at each pour as the bottle gyrated and looked like it might slip from her hand.

Other than the scant servings, the most unsettling part of this disappointing evening was the infant in a baby carriage at the next table who fussed and cried throughout the entire evening.

Fischerzunft still gets a Michelin star, though I have heard the portions are more substantial these days. At current exchange rates, the top fixed-price menu is about \$165 per person. On the premises now, however, is a second restaurant, the less-expensive **Vinopium** which gets Michelin's "good food at moderate prices" designation. My recommendation is to drive or take the train 22 km to the quaint village of Stein am Rhein and have fresh fish dinner on the terrace of the **Hotel Rheinfels** directly on the Rhine.

A pretty Rhine town near Schaffhausen is Büsingen. Though physically in Switzerland it is a German exclave whose citizens drive cars with German plates and pay taxes in Germany. The currency though is the Swiss franc. Last time I was there

the food at **Alte Rheinmühle** (www.alte-rheinmuehle.ch), overlooking the river, was very good.

Those who should know tell me the famous Christmas markets of western Europe have become over-commercialized, sometimes impossibly crowded venues, that have strayed from their former emphasis on handmade merchandise produced by highly-skilled craftsmen and women. The more authentic markets, I am told, are in towns of the former Eastern Bloc such as Prague, Krakow, and Warsaw. That's why for a true old-time Christmas market experience we recommend Karen Pasold's *Christmas Markets of Imperial Europe* tour, a 12-night itinerary that visits Prague, Krakow, Warsaw, Pilsen, Leipzig and Dresden. At \$4,490 it's more expensive but you'll get much more for your money —most dinners and lunches, first-class rail with double sleeper compartments, five-star hotels, the Prague ballet, etc. — than with the assembly-line major tour operators. Ms. Pasold who is bursting with energy and knowledge of Eastern Europe, personally leads her small group each year. Contact: Classic Europe, 1 Glenmoor, Frisco TX 75034, tel. 972-625- 6050, email classic europe@yahoo.com.

We get a lot of questions about where to buy overseas medical insurance from readers on Medicare who don't have coverage outside the

USA. Here's a tip: Buy regular trip insurance but with zero coverage for trip cancellation. That way you get the medical coverage without trip cancellation insurance, which you may not need unless you have high nonrefundable, prepaid trip expenses such as for a cruise or house rental. Here's how to do it. Go to www.gemut.com, click "Buy travel insurance" in the upper left hand corner of the page. On the subsequent page indicate your state; California, Nebraska, etc., then click the "Buy Now" button on Travel Guard's Platinum coverage. When you fill in the form put "0" in the "trip cost" box. You'll find that a couple in their early '70s can get \$50,000 in medical expenses coverage and \$1 million in emergency evacuation coverage, for a little over \$50 each. You'll also get the policy's lost baggage and trip delay insurance plus a few other perks.—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".

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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

SCHAFFHAUSEN*Continued from page 1*

As one of Switzerland's best-preserved towns dating from the Middle Ages, Schaffhausen boasts a number of beautiful buildings, including several impressive guild houses. Most are made of stone instead of the *Fachwerk* (half-timbering) characteristic of many other medieval cities. After a devastating fire in the 14th century, the town council forbade wooden constructions within the city walls. In earlier times, 10 stone houses belonging to wealthy citizens were adorned with colorful frescoes. Today only three remain, including **Zum goldenen Ochsen**, with paintings depicting scenes from ancient Babylon and Greek myths, and the **Haus zum Ritter**, one of the most important frescoed facades north of the Alps.

More than 170 *Erkerfenstern* (oriel, bay windows) protrude from the first and second stories of houses in the *Altstadt* (Old Town), many are ornate examples of the stonemasons' and woodcarvers' arts. Expensive status symbols touting the wealth of their owners, the windows were once places where inhabitants could privately observe the streets below from behind the curtained panes. In 1972 most of the *Altstadt* became a pedestrian zone, allowing passersby to wander at will, looking up at these Renaissance and Baroque windows without fear of being run down by traffic.

For another side of the city's history, visit the Romanesque **Münsterkirche** (Abbey Church), established in the 11th century, rebuilt in the 12th century, and renovated in the 1970s. The adjacent cloister, the largest in Switzerland, encloses a cemetery where important city officials were buried from the 1500s through the 1800s. Just beyond the cloister, sniff your way around the reconstructed medieval herb garden filled with plants used for medicinal and culinary purposes. Next visit the **Museum zu Allerheiligen** (All Saints Museum), a labyrinthine part of the old monastery complex containing a variety of exhibits on the history of the city and the region, with archaeo-

Schaffhausen Basics**Population:** 34,000**Elevation:** 403 meters (1,322 ft)

Visitor Information: Schaffhauserland Tourismus, Herrenacker 15, 8200 Schaffhausen, tel. +41/52-6324020, fax 6324030, info@schaffhauserland.ch, www.schaffhauserland.ch.

Driving Distances:

Basel	90 km	56 miles
Bern	145 km	90 miles
Geneva	300 km	186 miles
Lausanne	240 km	149 miles
Luzern	90 km	56 miles
Lugano	225 km	140 miles
Zürich	45 km	30 miles

Visitor information: Guided tours on Tuesdays and Saturdays (German or English), provided by the tourist office (CHF 12/person, or free with "Bodensee Erlebniskarte"). Tourist Service, Oberstadt 3, 8260 Stein am Rhein, tel. +41/52-7422090, fax 7422091, tourist-service@steinamrhein.ch, www.steinamrhein.ch.

Transportation: Trains of the Deutsches Bundesbahn and the Swiss Bundesbahn both serve Schaffhausen's train station. Nearest major train hub: Zürich (45 km, 30 miles). Nearest airport: Zürich-Kloten, 32 km (20 miles).

Discounts: Bodensee Erlebniskarte, with three levels of services and prices, offering free or discounted entry to museums and other attractions in the Bodensee area. Available from local tourist offices or from Bodensee Erlebniskarte, info@bodensee.eu, www.bodensee.eu

Recommended guidebooks:

Schaffhausen: A Short Cultural and Historical Tour of the Old Town (the only local guidebook in English). Sold at the tourist office, bookstores, and museum shops (CHF 9). *Schaffhauser Monats Bulletin* (in German only), is a monthly listing of events and sights in and around Schaffhausen. Available at the tourist office and some hotel reception desks.

logical finds, oil paintings, carved furniture, rich textiles, gold and silver treasures, and entire restored rooms from old houses.

Those who enjoy modern art can cross the street to the **Hallen für Neuen Kunst** to view contemporary European and American paintings, sculptures, and spatial installations produced since 1965.

High on the hill overlooking the *Altstadt* and the river, the **Munot Fortress** is a circular stone bastion built in the 16th century to protect the town from its enemies. A watchman still lives in the fortress's tall tower and rings the Munot bell by hand every night at 9:00 o'clock, a tradition dating back to earlier times when the city gates and the taverns within the walls were closed at that hour. Walk up to the fortress from the Old Town, ascending 200 steep steps through the vineyards. After such a climb you'll definitely be ready for a glass of wine or beer at the top. (Or drive up the hill and park in the Munot lot.)

Excursions

Schaffhausen's nearest main attraction is the **Rheinfalls** (near Neuhausen), the largest waterfall in Europe, more than 150 meters (nearly 500 feet) wide and 23 meters (75 feet) high. Torrents of water rush over the falls, throwing off frothy rainbow-filled sprays. And every year on August 1 (a Swiss national holiday), a huge fireworks display over the waterfall attracts thousands of spectators from all over Europe.

Hike or bike the three kilometers from Schaffhausen to the falls along marked trails on both sides of the river. (Bicycles can be rented at the train station.) Or take a bus from the main train station in the direction of Neuhausen/Rheinfalls. Car drivers can park in designated lots below the falls and walk to several places for viewing the water.

It is possible to take a choppy boat ride across the river below the falls, including an excursion to the foot of the huge rock in the center, where iron steps lead to the promontory for a truly dramatic view. Wear rain gear.

Recommended restaurants at the falls are the **Restaurant Park am Rhein** and the **Schlössli Worth Panorama Restaurant and Wine Bar**, both on the Neuhausen side of the river. Situated on a large rock in the middle of the river, the Schlössli Worth is accessible by a small foot-bridge across the water. Its glassed-in dining room is suspended over the river and has a spectacular view. The restaurant at **Schloss Laufen** is high above the falls on the Zürich *canton* side. At these restaurants, one pays a premium for location and view.

For a less expensive meal, pack a picnic to eat on the riverbank, or buy food at one of the stalls near the parking lots. Next to the elegant Schlössli Worth restaurant, on the same little island, you can eat indoors or on the terrace at the reasonably-priced **Schlössli Self-Service Snack Bar**, as the water rushes below.

Up the river from Schaffhausen, toward the Bodensee, the medieval walled town of **Stein am Rhein** attracts hordes of tourists, especially in summer. Handsome houses with 16th-century frescoes line the central

Key Websites for the Traveler

- www.gemut.com Gateway site for travelers to Germanic Europe, including car rental, rail passes, hotel bookings, 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 gemut2009.
- maps.google.com Best maps on the web. Driving & walking. Zoom in-out. Great detail city & country. Satellite & terrain views.
- 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.

Rathausplatz (Town Hall Square), and narrow streets branch off in several directions, leading to sometimes surprising views around the next corner or through the next gate. Visit the **Rathaus** with its large council hall now turned into a museum displaying armor, weapons, and flags; the medieval **Klostermuseum St. Georgen**, a Benedictine abbey with a late-Gothic cloister and early Renaissance frescoes in the "celebration hall"; and the **Museum Lindwurm**, with exhibits on daily life and agriculture in the 19th century. The massive stone fortress, **Burg Hohenklingen** (recently restored), sits on a forested hill above the town, overlooking Stein and the Rhine riverscape for the past 800 years.

For a fun day-trip to Stein am Rhein, take a round-trip boat ride from Schaffhausen (about 2 hours each way). Stein has plenty of places to eat (and to stay overnight). The **Hotel-Restaurant Adler**, **Hotel-Restaurant Rheinfels**, and the **Badstube Stein am Rhein** are recommended—although less pricey restaurants and accommodations are available, too. And if you feel the urge to travel just a bit farther, take a boat from Stein to **Kreuzlingen** on the **Untersee**, an arm of the Bodensee from which the Rhine River flows westward toward Stein and Schaffhausen, then Basel, before heading north through Germany to the Atlantic.

Schaffhausen Hotels

All hotels reviewed here have *en suite* bathrooms and friendly, English-speaking staff. Prices (in Swiss francs, CHF) include breakfast, service, and all taxes—but rates can still seem high in relation to amenities, especially given the current dollar/Swiss franc exchange rate. (Note that rooms with both a tub and shower tend to cost more than rooms with only a shower.) In Switzerland, the following hotels are considered to be in the moderate price range.

Hotel Park Villa

This 4-story stone building, constructed in 1900 and surrounded by large trees, is about five minutes' walk from the *Altstadt*.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Each of its 25 rooms is different in size, shape, and decor. Many are lavishly furnished with antiques, oriental rugs, and flowered drapes.

The public rooms (lounge, dining room, breakfast room) are graced with more antiques, chandeliers, and fancy stuccoed ceilings; some of the windows have stained-glass panes. Outdoors, a tennis court and terrace cafe are surrounded by the lush, park-like grounds. The hotel's restaurant offers several salads (priced around CHF 15); small cold and warm dishes (CHF 18-27); and main dishes (CHF 25-40). The wood-paneled bar/lounge is a popular gathering place for locals, too. If you like the atmosphere of an old-fashioned, well-decorated private mansion, you'll enjoy staying here.

Contact: Hotel Park Villa, Parkstrasse 18, 8200 Schaffhausen, tel. +41/52-6356060, fax 6356070, hotel@parkvilla.ch, www.parkvilla.ch

Daily Rates: The hotel has three guestroom categories: standard, superior, and deluxe. Price ranges across these categories: Singles CHF 78-249, doubles CHF 130-308. Free parking in front of the hotel.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Promenade

For those who prefer a more modern ambience in the same tree-lined part of Schaffhausen as the Park Villa, the Hotel Promenade is an especially pleasant stop. Located in a 100-year-old building that was once the German consulate, the hotel has been completely renovated inside, with sleek, contemporary furnishings, a garden where guests can relax, a good restaurant, and a separate area for the breakfast buffet. Double rooms are large, and a few have a balcony. Many third-floor rooms have exposed wooden beams. Number 303 is a good-sized double, with a balcony overlooking the garden and a spacious bathroom.

The Promenade's restaurant offers a menu of soups and salads (CHF 7-9.50); appetizers and cold plates (CHF 14.50-23); vegetarian and egg dishes (CHF 15.50-19.50); and meat and fish main courses (CHF 18-34.50).

Contact: Hotel Promenade, Fäsenstaubstrasse 43, 8200 Schaffhausen, tel. +41/52-6307777, fax 6307778, info@promenade-schaffhausen.ch, www.promenade-schaffhausen.ch
Daily Rates: Singles CHF 132-175, doubles CHF 190-250. Free parking.
Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel Kronenhof

Conveniently located in the Old Town, the Kronenhof offers 40 rooms in a wide range of prices, sizes, and styles. The building dates from the 15th century and has been renovated many times. The large Antique Suite has a beautiful ornate stucco ceiling from the 1600s, and the Romantic Suite has its original wooden ceiling from the same era. Other rooms are decorated in much more modern style. Standard doubles can be small, so ask for a larger corner room. The best views are from rooms that face the Munot Fortress on the hill.

Parking can be a problem, however. Temporary parking is available in the lot directly in front of the hotel or at a public parking garage, but for longer-term stays it's better to leave your car in the much less expensive lot on Munot hill, then walk the 200 steps back down to the Old Town.

The hotel also has a good restaurant (see restaurant reviews) and a lively bar with a sidewalk cafe.

Contact: Hotel Kronenhof, Kirchhofplatz 7, 8201 Schaffhausen, tel. +41/52-6357575, fax 6357565, info@kronenhof.ch, www.kronenhof.ch

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 140, doubles CHF 195-245, suites CHF 300-320
Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 15/20

Hotel Zünfthaus Rügen

A member of the Sorrell group, the Hotel Rügen is an ultra-modern "design hotel" located inside a renovated medieval guild house in the Old Town. All that remains of the older interior is the wide stone staircase leading up to the first floor and the magnificent guild hall (with a ceiling like a richly decorated wedding cake), now used for concerts, banquets, and conferences.

Each of the hotel's 30 rooms is

different, with sleek contemporary furnishings; a few also have stone walls and exposed wooden beams. The modern breakfast buffet is in the large ground floor space that also houses the lobby, lounge, and a small self-service bar. No restaurant and no parking facilities, but there are plenty of places to eat nearby, as well as a public parking garage.

Contact: Sorrell Hotel Rügen, Oberstadt 20, 8201 Schaffhausen, +41/52-6323636, fax 6323637, info@rueden.ch, www.rueden.ch

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 160-190, doubles CHF 260-290

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Zum Sittich

This very simple, 8-room, family-run hotel is located in a more modern structure behind an old building with a fancy facade housing the Restaurant Sittich on the *Altstadt's* pedestrian street. Rooms are clean, modern, and exceptionally large. Breakfast is served in a spacious, sunny breakfast room. Friendly staff.

Contact: Hotel Sittich, Vordergasse 43, 8200 Schaffhausen, tel. +41/52-6251372, fax 6251875, sittich@shinternet.ch, www.a-o.ch/8200-sittich

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 110, doubles CHF 160

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Schaffhausen Restaurants

Swiss, German, French, and Italian cuisines all meet on the same gastronomic ground in Schaffhausen. The city has many good places to eat, from cozy pastry shops to wood-paneled inns to one of the country's top rated restaurants, **Fischerzunft** (see *Dear Subscriber*). Those reviewed here are all in the Old Town, mostly in the pedestrian zone.

The regional red wine to drink is fruity Blauburgunder (Pinot Noir); this part of Switzerland is known for its fine white wines, too. As the Swiss say when you begin your meal, "*en Guete!*" (*Guten Appetit!*).

Restaurant Schützenstube

Planters filled with kitchen herbs greet visitors to this

EDITOR'S
CHOICE

cozy restaurant with its paneled dining room and clever, artistically simple table decorations. Plays and musical events are sometimes held on the small stage at one end of the dining room. The chef adheres to the "Slow Food" philosophy, using fresh, regional, mostly organic, ingredients. She makes her own stocks, soups, herb mixtures, and chutneys.

The daily soups are served in small or large portions (CHF 5.50-9.50). A tasty appetizer consists of cubes of goat cheese wrapped in bacon, lightly grilled, and garnished with fresh vegetables (CHF 16). Mixed green salads come with a choice of meat or cheese toppings (CHF 10.50-23.50). Five varieties of *Spätzle* are priced around CHF 19, and other pasta dishes range from CHF 15.50-21.50. Meat and fish main dishes are more costly (CHF 24.50-37.50), and house-made desserts are CHF 6-12.50.

Contact: Restaurant Schützenstube, Schützengraben 27, 8200 Schaffhausen, tel. +41/52-6254249, fax. 6243719, info@schuetzenstube.ch, www.schuetzenstube.ch. Reservations recommended.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 15/20

Restaurant Kronenhof

The Hotel Kronenhof's restaurant, known for its modern elegance and traditional dishes, is popular with both locals and tourists. The menu features such classics as *Wienerschmitzel* with french fries and fresh vegetables, and Zürich-style chopped veal with potato pancakes and onions (CHF 26-30); a choice of grilled veal, beef, pork, lamb, chicken, or salmon (around CHF 30, plus CHF 9 for a side salad); other main dishes such as veal roulade with ham and cheese, lamb entrecôte with dumplings, and beef filet stuffed with goose liver and truffles (CHF 34-46). The daily lunch menu (Monday-Friday) offers one-, two-, and three-course meals (CHF 15-26).

Contact: Restaurant Kronenhof, Kirchhofplatz 7, 8201 Schaffhausen, tel. +41/52-6357575, fax 6357565, info@kronenhof.ch, www.kronenhof.ch

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 15/20

Güterhof

This recently-opened restaurant and bar somehow manages to seem cozy within the cavernous space of a renovated salt warehouse on the Rhine River quay. Exposed beams and brown leather furniture provide a contrast to the modern food stations that hold salad buffets, sushi, and desserts, as well as take-out foods. The daily menu (CHF 18-25) offers a variety of main-dish choices, including vegetarian. Or just stop by for coffee-and-cake or a glass of wine at the pleasant sidewalk cafe and watch the boats glide by on the river.

Contact: Güterhof, Freier Platz 10, tel. +41/52-6304040, info@gueterhof.ch, www.gueterhof.ch

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 15/20

Haberhaus

Like many historic buildings in Switzerland, this one has a completely modernized interior. It houses a bar and restaurant on one floor and a small basement theater used for local drama and musical productions, even tango lessons. The short, eclectic menu (CHF 18.50-25.50) features dishes made with ingredients from local growers and farmers, including seasonal main dishes. Try the traditional garlic chicken or ground meat patties with onion-mustard sauce, both CHF 25.50. Delicious fresh bread is baked on site.

Contact: Haberhaus, Neustadt 51, 8200 Schaffhausen, tel. +41/52-6200660, fax 6269429, info@haberhaus.ch, www.haberhaus.ch

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 15/20

Eats on the Cheap


- Portions tend to be very large at most Schaffhausen restaurants. Often a *Vorspeise* (appetizer) is equivalent to a full main course in the U.S. Prices are high, especially at the current dollar/Swiss franc exchange rate. Unless you're ravenous, you might consider splitting a main course with your companion, or just ordering a soup or salad, followed by an appetizer, for a filling meal.

- Italian restaurants serving pizzas baked in wood-fired ovens can be

some of the best bargains. Try **Pizzeria Romana** (Unterstadt 18/20), **Pizzeria Mama Rossa** (Bachstrasse 19), or **La Piazza** (Münsterplatz 38).

- Bakery/pastry shops offer a good selection of tempting sandwiches, quiches, cakes, tortes, puddings, and ice creams—for a picnic or to eat on premises. Highly recommended are **Cafe Müller Beck** (Vorstadt 25); **Zuckerbäckerei Ermatinger** (Fronwagplatz 11), with its house specialty, *Honignusstorte*; and **Confiserie Cafe Reber** (Vordergasse 21), bakers of the local specialty known as *Schaffhauserzungen*, oval-shaped cookies made of ground hazelnuts and almonds around a creamy vanilla filling.

- **Cafe Vordergasse** (Vordergasse 79) is a popular, old-world-style pastry shop and cafe with daily lunch specials such as quiche with a choice of salads (CHF 15-19), as well as their own cheesecake (CHF 6) and numerous rich hot chocolate drinks.

- Swiss chocolates are world-renowned. The Schaffhausen confectionery **ABACO** specializes in making top-quality chocolate candies, chocolate drinks, and 32 flavors of ice cream produced on the premises. There are two locations: Unterstadt 10 and Safrangasse 2. The interior of the Safrangasse shop is a grotto-like shrine to chocolate. Several of the city's pastry shops also sell their own hand-made chocolates. 

LONGER HOTEL STAYS

Continued from page 1

are in the countryside or small villages), moving shirts, socks, underwear from suitcase to drawer, dining at the same table each night, finding a quiet corner of the hotel to read a book, walking through the woods with a small group led by the hotel's owner, is a novelty to most North American travelers but one we think they will find rewarding in a variety of ways.

Here are some hotels—simple to moderately expensive—to consider for a longer stay.

Hotel Bären

Wilderswil, Switzerland

Few places on earth can match the

Jungfrau/Bernese Oberland region for sheer alpine beauty, but where to headquarter is a tough decision. Interlaken is somewhat touristy and expensive, and villages such as Mürren, Wengen and Grindelwald are lovely but a bit remote. A pleasant compromise is Wilderswil, a friendly stop on the rail line between Interlaken and Lauterbrunnen. A well-marked trail flows around and through the village, past a collection of medieval houses built around a square. A covered bridge, circa 1738, crosses the Lütschine River to a 12th-century church. It's off the beaten track but still in the center of the action.

Gabi and Fritz Zurschmiede's Hotel Bären, an inn since 1706, offers a typical country atmosphere to an international clientele of value-seeking vacationers. Antiques decorate public spaces, and bears are everywhere, from wood carvings and stuffed animals to painted pottery. Most of the 50 guestrooms are larger than average and the slanting roof lends character to top-floor chambers. The Bären is famous for its giant buffet breakfast which includes cooked-to-order eggs and even American-style dishes such as pancakes and waffles. In addition to a sauna, TV lounge, and small fitness area, guests have access to a self-service laundry and free bicycles and mountain bikes. The hotel is an 8-10 minute walk from the rail station. A standard double room for a week will be around \$1,300 with breakfast. Though the Bären offers no half-board arrangement it has three restaurants from which to choose. **Contact:** Hotel Bären, Oberdorfstrasse CH-3812 Wilderswil, tel. +41/33/828 3151, www.baeren.ch, info@baeren.ch

Gasthaus Alpenblick Appenzell, Switzerland

Among the 65 "best value" hotels cited in our 20th anniversary issue, as well an "Editor's Choice" in our May, 2005 issue, is Gasthaus Alpenblick, a classic four-story Swiss chalet-style hotel with a spectacular position on a little knoll above the Schwende rail stop just outside Appenzell. Views up the valley to the Alpstein range, gateway to many

miles of hiking trails, are breathtaking. Though the hotel is very much in the country, the train whisks guests to Zürich in two hours, St. Gallen and its fascinating **Textile Museum** and **Abbey Library** in an hour, and nine minutes away is Appenzell, one of Switzerland's most authentic and charming towns. For a seven-night, June stay in a "comfort" double room with balcony you will pay about \$1,430 including breakfast and dinner for two. **Contact:** Hotel Alpenblick, CH-9057 Schwende, tel. +41/71/799 1173, hotel@alpenblick-appenzell.ch, www.alpenblick-appenzell.ch

Haus Leitner Attersee, Austria

Sommerfrische is an old Austrian expression referring to long summer vacations in the countryside. While the aristocrats preferred Bad Ischl, intellectuals and the bourgeoisie went 40 kilometers north to Attersee, a lake in the Salzkammergut. Though there are no trendy shops or Michelin-starred restaurants, the lake and the village of Attersee continue to draw a middle-income crowd, lured by the area's charm, outdoor activities and reasonable prices.

For example, a two-night, high-season stay in one of Haus Leitner's pleasant airy double rooms with balcony is €36 per person. But extend that to five nights and the price drops 28-percent to €26. A family of four or two couples can save even more in one of the Leitner's two-bedroom apartments that feature hardwood parquet floors, blonde wood trim and skylights for a total per night cost of €65 to €96, depending on the season. The apartments' combination sitting room/dining/breakfast room features polished, light wood built-in banquets, and comfortable sofas and chairs. The small kitchens are equipped with most necessities including coffee-maker, microwave oven and dishwasher. Each of the Leitner's five rooms and two apartments are equipped with shower, toilet, radio, cable TV, hairdryer, safe and balcony with lake view (more than a mile away). There are outdoor barbecue facilities, sauna, a heated pool, table tennis, and playground. It

adds up to good accommodations at very good prices. A week in a double room with breakfast will be less than \$500 and a family of four will pay a little more than \$900 for one of the apartments. **Contact:** Haus Leitner, Abtsdorf 6, 4864 Attersee am Attersee, +43/7666/7661, urlaub@hausleitner.at, www.hausleitner.at

Haus Hirt Bad Gastein, Austria

Though it's made somewhat of a comeback in the past 20 years, Bad Gastein is still a bit of a spa ghost town, full of Victorian buildings that were once grand hotels but are now something else. Though the great days of Bad Gastein are long gone, it's still a pleasant place to visit with its wonderful setting on a horseshoe-shaped shelf above the end of the Gasteiner Valley and a thundering white-water torrent crashing through the center of town toward the valley below.

Ten minutes walk from the waterfall along Kaiser Wilhelm Promenade, the pedestrian street that follows the horseshoe, is Haus Hirt, all things considered probably the best hotel in town. It sits high above the valley and most rooms have sweeping views toward the valley town of Bad Hof Gastein. This is not a short-stay hotel, its rate sheet lists prices for four days and a week, but they include breakfast and dinner (including dining away from the hotel at partner restaurants), tea and fruit in the spa, a lunch snack, a welcome drink, guided hiking and biking tours. All rooms come with balcony, satellite TV, CD-player, phone, broadband internet, and safe. Many are on two levels with living space below and sleeping room above. For a week during the month of July a "valley view" double room is €708 or about \$1,950 per couple. A "small and chic" double—still with a view—is about \$1,500. Off-season rates are about five to eight percent lower. **Contact:** Kaiserhofstrasse 14, 5640 Bad Gastein, tel. +43/6434/2797, info@haushirt.com, www.haushirt.com

Landhaus Tanner Waging am See, Germany

From the village of Waging am See, just east of the Chiemsee, the auto

traveler has many sightseeing options with a 30 to 40-minute drive: the treasures of Salzbürg; Burghausen to the north and one of Germany's most impressive fortresses; and, of course, to the west is the Chiemsee and the village of Prien, departure point for the frequent lake boats that service the island where Ludwig II built his least famous and unfinished castle, **Herrenchiemsee**, modeled after Versailles.

Other than its convenient location near the above attractions, perhaps the best reason to visit Waging am See is to stay at the 11-room Landhaus Tanner and dine in its excellent restaurant which rates a "Good food at Moderate Prices" Michelin designation. The high-ceilinged dining room shines with modern Bavarian charm — plank floors, light wood paneling, banquets lined with checkerboard padding and pillows, the usual country knickknacks—and draws a hip, under-50 crowd. Familiar main dishes demonstrate capable preparation with fresh ingredients. On our last visit there we found little fault with rich, buttery calves liver served over chard, with sauteed leeks and au gratin potatoes, or a first-rate rack of medium-rare, herb-crust lamb.

In materials and furnishings, the 11, spacious, still-new guestrooms and apartments seem designed to create a small country inn a cut above the competition. Couples will have plenty of space, a small kitchen, and balcony in one of the new 400 square-foot apartments at a high-season rate of €95 (€81 in low season). Add €32 per person for breakfast and dinner and a week at the Tanner with first-rate dining is under \$1,500. Cook your own breakfasts and knock about \$110 off that price. **Contact:** Landhaus Tanner, Aglassing 1, 83329 Waging am See, tel. +49/8681/6975 0, office@landhaustanner.de, www.landhaustanner.de

Wreecher Hof

Island of Rügen, Germany

Rügen is an island in the Baltic in the same way Alameda is an island in the San Francisco Bay; both are sur-

rounded by water but can be easily reached via automobile. In Rügen's case you can also get there by rail.

Because it was long part of East Germany and its communist government, North Americans have yet to discover Rügen. Germans, however, love it for its reasonable prices, sandy beaches, Victorian architecture, and towns and fishing villages that haven't changed much in the past 60 years. It is also home to what we consider one of Germany's ugliest but most interesting tourist curiosities, the **Prora**, a failed Nazi beachfront monstrosity that today is a three-mile series of abutting, identical buildings once meant to be a 20,000-guest holiday resort for the masses.

Just outside Wreechen, one of the island's tiniest villages, is the Wreecher Hof, a gathering of thatched-roof, white bungalows set on 10,000 square meters of colorful flower beds and clipped lawns intersected by walkways of red and gray pavers. A yellow awning shelters an inviting outdoor terrace next to a placid lily pond. This is relaxed, easy-to-live-in luxury, at amazing prices. The 43 guestrooms apportioned among the seven cottages are five-star in terms of size and quality of furnishings. All are equipped with satellite TV, radio, free Internet connection, phone, and free use of the sauna, swimming pool, and fitness equipment.

The hotel's outstanding restaurant deserves its red *Karte* designation from Michelin.

A double room for a week in high season is about €800 with breakfast. Adding a three-course dinner for two adds another €420, making the cost of a one-week stay around \$1,600. One-week rates for a four-person apartment with living room, terrace, bedroom and kitchen start at €735, with dinner another €210 per person, bringing the price for a one-week stay for four to just under \$2,200.

Contact: Hotel Wreecher Hof, Kastanienallee, D-18581 Putbus, tel. +49/038301-850, info@wreecher-hof.de, www.wreecher-hof.de/. 

Readers' Forum

Berlin Hotel Thumbs Up

We've just returned from a great trip to Berlin. We stayed at **Hotel Art Nouveau** and couldn't have made a better choice. Gerd and Christine gave us the royal treatment: our room was upgraded to a huge suite, we had welcome cocktails on the roof garden, and obtained answers to all the questions we had about planning our time in Berlin.

ELLIN JAEGER
VIA EMAIL

Finding Hotel Deals

Great column last month on hotel deals in Europe. A potential source you didn't mention was to call the hotels directly. Certainly domestically the national booking arms of the big chains seem to only be aware of the system-wide deals and know few details of the local ones. Despite the instantaneous exchange of information on the web, local managers sometimes offer specials for short periods of time or involving a limited numbers of rooms, tweak deals for unique features that their hotels offer (reserve for you rooms in better parts of the hotel, view rooms, those farthest from elevators or parking lots, discount or eliminate fees for parking, internet access, breakfasts, etc.) that national and international desks are unaware of.

Also, a surprising number of the *Grande Marque* hotels now have affiliations with large-system hotel operators, **Starwood** and **Fairmont**, for example. You can often get deals through these affinity associations with membership points. In addition, the combination of using points and a surprisingly small amount of cash can often yield a room in a fine hotel for a small fraction of the normal cost. For example, the four star **Intercontinental Hotel** in Paris has always occupied a great location on the Rue du Rivoli in the next block from **Le Meurice** and within easy walking distance of the Louvre. It has been re-branded **Paris Westin**, completely renovated, and is now a Starwood member. The layout is exactly the same as the **George V** with a beautiful, central, open air garden. The staff speaks English and the concierge group is terrific. One can secure a room for \$150 and one-third the

normal number of points needed per night. This is a great deal for a hotel whose rack rate is €700-800 per night and whose cheapest rooms on the web are €410.

If you have no points, don't forget the current Westin offer of a free weekend night after two stays in any Starwood hotel, not to mention other offers of free third or fourth nights. I don't work for Starwood, but this seems like too good an offer not to share.

CARY FEIBLEMAN
LONG BEACH, CA

No to Five-Star Hotels

While I have usually enjoyed your *Dear Subscriber* articles, recently they have not been holding my attention. You seem to be drifting away from discussing and informing us about the hidden gems in the small towns of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria.

May's discussion of luxury hotels might as well come from a Condé Naste magazine. Even after all of your discussion in the article, you ended it by saying that you would always be more comfortable with the "...late night cold beer..."

I think most of your subscribers would too, that's ALWAYS been why we stayed with you!

I really don't care to read any more about Berlin. There again, the shiny magazines beat that to death. How about the Gasthaus's in the tiny towns of the Schwarzwald? (Those family-run places that nobody else finds.) Those subjects are what I hope to see each month when my newsletter arrives. But it seems that I'm becoming more disappointed each month at the lack of this meaty information. PLEASE don't get like the rest of them, the newsstands are full of them and they are not about travel at all, only about spending lots of money at their advertiser's establishments.

Yes, I realize it takes more "hitting the ground" to come up with the kind of stuff that many of us want. If that's getting too hard for you to do, perhaps we can discuss a position at *Gemütlichkeit* for me!

MIKE HARASEVIAT
VIA EMAIL 