DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Surviving the Rental Car Counter

European rental car companies sell their highest profit items to travelers who are in a rush—a rush to pick up the car and a rush to drop it off. As a rental car customer, you are vulnerable when signing the rental contract and upon returning the car; times when rental car companies make their biggest scores. By not paying close attention to what they are signing, and perhaps because they are tired and thus more susceptible to a sales pitch, renters often wind up with credit card charges far beyond what they anticipated. Most of the time it's not until they return home that they discover their signature authorized unnecessary and unneeded items such as collision and theft insurance already covered by their credit card. It's also a nasty surprise to learn they paid for an extra driver or an upgrade they thought was free. Perhaps they misunderstood, but maybe they were misled—keep in mind that rental car agents get paid more when they sell extras.

Returning the car is also a time of peril. In a hurry to get to the airport, and perhaps noting the fuel tank is close to full, some renters decide to let the car rental company top it off. That's what happened to Tom and Sally Ryan (not their real names). Running late to catch a flight from Bologna, they turned in their car 2.9 gallons short of full. **Europcar** charged €19.14 for the fuel and a scandalous €21.6 refueling service fee. At an exchange rate of 1.41 that is \$57 for less than three gallons of gas.

But there's more to the Ryan story. Picking up the car in Rome they were aware of the mandatory collision (CDW) and theft insurance that comes with each car rental in Italy. On a seven-day rental

Continued on page 2.

GEMüTLICHKEIT

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

FRANCONIA'S WINE ROUTE

Some of Germany's best and most affordable food and wine—and most gemütlich accommodations—are found in the charming medieval wine villages along the Main River.

he scenic Franconian wine country, in the heart of Germany, extends along both sides of the meandering Main River, from a few kilometers north of

by Sharon Hudgins

Aschaffenburg almost to the western edge of Bamberg. It encompasses a landscape of rolling hills, medieval walled villages with stone watchtowers, and nearly 15,000 acres of vineyards that produce some of the finest white wines in Germany.

For more than twelve centuries the Franconians have been growing grapes on the steep slopes of the hills facing the Main River, where warmth reflected from the water, heat from the summer sun, and the particular geology of the region combine to make ideal microclimates for viniculture. Seventy different varieties of grapes are planted here, with Müller-Thurgau (Rivaner), Silvaner, Riesling, and Bacchus the most popular types. Known for its high quality and crisp flavor, most of the wine is bottled in green flask-like bottles called *Bocksbeutel* (possibly because their shape resembles certain private parts of a goat), which have been a symbol of Franconian wines for 250 years.

Summer is one of the best times to visit this region, when the vineyards are lush and green and the

Continued on page 3...

Germany's Auto Museums

ot to belittle Henry Ford's pioneering assembly-line accomplishments in Dearborn, Michigan, but the idea of manufacturing automobiles powered by internal-combustion engines had its bona-fide beginnings in Germany. Credit for that belongs to a pair of 1885 contemporaries: Gottfried Daimler and Karl Benz.

Working separately—but with remarkably compatible foresight—Bad Canstatt's Daimler and Mannheim's Benz each invented his own version of a wooden *Reitwagen* bicycle contraption. In both cases, ordinary store-bought kerosene fueled a tinny little putt-putt motor. A year later, partnering with Wilhelm Maybach, Daimler mounted a water-cooled engine on the rear end of a

stagecoach manufactured by Stuttgart's Wilhelm Wimpff & Sohn. Aha! The world's first four-wheel motorized vehicle.

Crude, primitive "horseless-carriage" stuff, to be sure. Never-theless, those close-together technological breakthroughs exemplify Germanic engineering know-how. Accordingly, it shouldn't come as a surprise that automotive museums (in various slots on the "prestige scale") have become plentiful throughout the federal republic.

If historical chronology is your travel-planning guideline, make metro Stuttgart your first destination.

Continued on page 7...

Exchange rates as of 7/6/09 1 euro = \$1.40 1 Swiss franc = \$0.92 1 gallon diesel, Germany=\$5.56

www.gemut.com July 2009

DEAR SUBSCRIBER Continued from page 1

they prepaid \$392 for this insurance, with a €350 deductible for collision and a €500 deductible for theft. You heard right, \$392 to insure a minivan for one week, not six months or a year. Of course, that price doesn't cover damage to the car's roof, undercarriage, wheels, tires, or interior. So when they got to the rental counter, they decided to insure against damage to those parts of the car at an additional €46.62. They also coughed up €63 to reduce the deductible to zero. Then there was something called "Vandalism Action Coverage" for €21. In total, the Ryans spent nearly \$600 to insure a \$27,000 car for a week.

There was one more small gouge visited upon the unsuspecting Ryans: Direct Currency Conversion (DCC). Asked if they wanted to pay their final €192 bill for these extras in dollars, the Ryans naturally said yes. This got them an exchange rate of about 1.45 instead of the 1.39 bank-to-bank rate they would have gotten had they insisted the credit card charge be in euros. So Europear and the company that peddles DCC split about another \$11 of the Ryan's money.

Verbal assurances mean nothing in the car rental business. When all is said and done, the rental is over and you're haggling about the charges, the rental company and your credit card company will rely

on the written documents, not any promise made by an agent. Sue and Jim Morton (again, not their real names) picked up a compact car in May at the St. Raphael (France) rail station. The agent suggested that as a precaution, and since it was free, the Mortons add both their names to the contract. Though the rental voucher they were issued prior to leaving the U.S. said: "Additional drivers sign on and pay a fee locally," the Mortons took the agent's word and signed the contract, which, of course, was in French. From a confusing list of possible fees listed on the contract—not all of which were to be ultimately charged—they failed to note the word conducteur (driver) at €29.6 (\$42).

I can think of no other major travel purchase fraught with more minefields than renting a car in Europe. Nonetheless, the careful traveler can navigate through them. After all, an automobile is still the most liberating way to see the countryside and you can get a four-door car with air for a week in Germany for \$244, including the 19-percent value-added tax and unlimited miles. For a couple, that's \$17.43 per person, per day for flexible, comfortable transport that will take you whereever you want, whenever you want—and it's your very own space. A four-day, second-class German rail pass for two persons is \$48.75 per day, per person.

Here are some suggestions for avoiding unwanted charges:

- **Get it in writing**. The agent at the counter is probably not a crook, but he or she may be poorly trained, inexperienced, and thus give you bad information. If you are told there is no charge for items such as an extra driver or an upgrade, make sure it's on paper. For example, if you are promised a free extra driver, ask the agent to write and initial the words "free extra driver" on the contract. Do not sign the rental contract until you know what you will be charged for. If you're uncertain, see "Have a safety net" later in this story (page 8).
- Know the terms of your reservation. Customers of Gemut.com are issued a voucher that guarantees the price of the rental in U.S. dollars and specifies what is included in the rental price and what is not. If there is a post-rental dispute over charg-Continued on page 8...

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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Vol. 23, No. 6 **July 2009**

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

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

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	<u>Scale</u>	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
		value Hatting	<u> Scale</u>
People/Service	30%	Outstanding Value	17 - 20
	30% 15%		
People/Service	0070	Outstanding Value	17 - 20
People/Service Location/Setting	15%	Outstanding Value Very Good Value	17 - 20 12 - 16
People/Service Location/Setting Guestrooms	15% 30%	Outstanding Value Very Good Value Average Value	17 - 20 12 - 16 9 - 11

FRANCONIA

Continued from page 1

roses are in bloom. Or travel there during autumn, when the grape harvest is in full swing and the villages are filled with the aroma of pressed and fermenting grapes. From March through November, 250 wine festivals are held in this region, and during any time of the year you can stop for a tasting at hundreds of local wineries.

Würzburg is the region's largest metropolis, an historic city where one can spend several days seeing the major sights. [Note: Würzburg was reviewed in the August 2002 issue of Gemütlichkeit.] Highlights include the ornate Residenz (the palace of the prince-bishops), a stunning example of Baroque design and its Hofkeller (Court Wine Cellar) in a labyrinth of man-made stone vaults; the Marienberg Fortress and the Main-Fränkischesmuseum, which holds the world's largest collection of sculptures and woodcarvings by Tilman Riemenschneider; and the new Shalom Europa (opened in 2006), the cultural center of the Würzburg Jewish community, with exhibits on 900 years of Jewish life in the city, including a unique collection of gravestones.

Würzburg's Christmas markets are a special attraction in December, with the main market held at the **Marktplatz** (Market Square) during Advent, and a medieval market at the Marienberg Fortress on the first weekend in December.

To tour the wine region beyond Würzburg, head eastward out of the city on Highway 13 to Sommerhausen, a pleasant wine village and artists' colony on the north side of the river. Stop at Gebhart's Weinatelier on the main street for a good selection of Franconian wines and local food products. Or sit in the shaded courtyard of an old winery, sipping some of the white wines for which the town is famous. Sommerhausen is also known for its special Christmas market, held on every Saturday and Sunday during Advent, with paintings, jewelry, pottery, glass-

Franconia Basics

Location: Along both sides of the Main River, from a few kilometers north of Aschaffenburg almost to Bamberg.

Largest city: Würzburg (population 130,000)

Visitor Information: Tourismusverband Franken, Wilhelminenstrasse 6, 90461 Nürnberg, tel. +49/911-941510, fax 9415110, info@frankentourismus.de, www.franken-weinland.de.

Tourismusverband Fränkisches Weinland, Am Congress Zentrum, 97070, Würzburg, tel. +49/931-372335, fax 373652, tourismus@fraenkischesweinland.de, www. fraenkischesweinland.de.

Driving distances from Würzburg:

Bamberg	96 km	60 miles
Berlin	495 km	309 miles
Frankfurt	120 km	75 miles
Munich	279 km	174 miles
Nürnberg	112 km	70 miles
Prague	396 km	248 miles
Rothenburg	68 km	43 miles
Salzburg	424 km	265 miles
Vienna	602 km	376 miles
Zürich	360 km	225 miles

City tours (Würzburg): Guided city tours in English, May to October at 1pm, June to mid-September at 6:30pm. Meeting point: Tourist Information Office in Falkenhaus, Marktplatz (E 5-6). Special guided tours of the city and the neighboring wine region can also be arranged through the Tourist Information Office.

Transportation: Nearest airport: Frankfurt (110 kilometers, 68 miles). Autobahns A3, A7, and A81 intersect at Würzburg. Take backroads along the Main River for a more scenic route. More than 350 trains service Würzburg daily, 70 of which are high-speed trains. Bus service from the main train station to many of the wine villages.

Recommended guidebooks:

Würzburg Tourist Guide (in English), 6th edition (2006), and "Fränkisches Weinland" detailed map (showing roadways, hike-and-bike routes, and GPS coordinates), both available at the Würzburg Tourist Information Office in the Falkenhaus on the Marktplatz. Reisen zum Frankenwein, Premium 2008 (in German), available from Tourismusverband Franken, info@frankentourismus.de

works, and traditional holiday crafts by local artists.

Across the Main River, Ochsenfurt is one of many attractive walled towns in this area, with an impressive Rathaus (town hall), a large Gothic church, several streets of handsome half-timbered houses, and museums showcasing local costumes and artifacts of daily life from the past. Back across the river, a few kilometers along the small riverside road toward Kitzingen, chow down on a "meterlong Bratwurst" in Sulzfeld, the village where this coiled sausage was invented. (If 39 inches of Bratwurst is too much for you to eat, you can always order a half-portion.)

Kitzingen is a larger town on the river, featuring the **Deutsches Fast-nachtmuseum** (German Carnival Museum), full of Fastnacht/Fasching (Carnival) masks, costumes, posters, and documents. Indulge in coffee and cake at **Rösner Back-stube**, in the half-timbered "**Poganietz Haus**," one of the oldest buildings in town (1580)—then go upstairs to the pastry shop's private **Conditorei Museum** (yes, they spell it with a "C") to see the collection of historic old cookie, candy, cake, and ice cream molds.

At Kitzingen cross the river on Highway 8 to Iphofen, another medieval walled village surrounded by vineyards, with a baroque Rathaus, narrow winding streets, and the Knauf Museum filled with fine replicas of ancient art from Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Asia. Then head to the tiny village of Mönchsondheim, home of the **Kirchenburg open-air** museum, where all the old buildings are located on their original sites, as part of the village itself. Inside you'll find several interesting exhibits on Franconian clothing, local trades, and rural life in centuries past.

Return to Iphofen and take Highway 8 back across the river, then turn right on the little riverside road to **Dettelbach**, a walled wine village bristling with more than 30 stone towers. Stop at **Cafe-Konditorei Kehl** or **Cafe Achtmann** for the local specialty, freshly baked *Musskatzin*-

en, soft little honey-spice cookies that are equally delicious with coffee or wine. Take them with you to a wine-tasting at **Weinkeller Apfelbacher**, just outside the city walls. The largest winery in Dettelbach, Apfelbacher has been owned by the same family for 400 years. Ask the friendly proprietors for a tour of their wine cellars, too.

Leave Dettelbach on Highway 22 in the direction of Schwarzach. Cross the river again, and turn left on the riverside road to **Volkach**, a major wine village with several good hotels and restaurants. The massive Rathaus on the central square has a large tourist office on the ground floor, with plenty of information about this entire section of the wine country. In the vineyards just northwest of Volkach, walk up the incline, past the Stations of the Cross, to the pilgrimage church "Maria im Weingarten" (Mary in the Vineyards), with its unique Riemenschneider woodcarving of the Madonna and Christ Child encircled by scenes from the Nativity.

Starting at Würzburg and driv-

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).
- <u>www.viamichelin.com</u> The Michelin database of hotels and restaurants, plus great interactive trip planning tools
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- <u>bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en</u> 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
- <u>www.myswitzerland.com</u> Website of Switzerland's national tourist authority
- <u>www.germany-tourism.de</u> Germany's national tourist authority
- <u>www.austria.info/us</u> Austria's national tourist authority
- <u>www.historicgermany.com</u> Website for an alliance of historic German cities
- <u>www.thetravelinsider.info</u> Info on electronics for travelers cell phones, computers, etc.

ing westward along the river road (on the north side of the Main), you'll soon arrive at **Veitshöchheim**. (Or take a boat excursion to Veitshöchheim from the Alter Kranen boat landing in Würzburg, a 45-minute trip each way.) The main attraction in this pretty village is the rococo garden at the prince-bishop's residence, one of the few (and finest) rococo parks in Europe. The small **Jewish Culture Museum** and **Synagogue** are worth a visit, too.

Following Highway 27 from Veitshöchheim, continue along the river in a northwesterly direction to Karlstadt, a large walled town facing the ruins of Karlsburg, a castle directly across the water. Known for its many streets of well-preserved medieval and Renaissance houses, Karlstadt also has a recently restored Gothic church and a very good local historical museum. Forty-five kilometers (28 miles) farther along the same road, past a southward-turning bend of the river, you'll come to Marktheidenfeld, a popular base for tourists to enjoy outdoor sports (boating, swimming, hiking, bicycling, golf) in this area, including walks in the nearby **Spessart Forest**.

The Franconian wine country can be explored by car, bus, or boat; by bicycle across more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) of car-free trails; and along numerous hiking routes throughout the region. Although there is no official "Franconian Wine Route" you'll occasionally see road signs saying "Bocksbeutelstrasse," referring to those typical Franconian wine bottles, leading to the vineyards and wine villages. And wherever you pause on your journey through this pleasant part of Germany, you can always count on finding a glass of fine Franconian wine to satisfy your thirst and revive your spirits.

Hotels in Franconia

For exploring the wine country, you can base in Würzburg and make day trips to the wine villages, or plan your own route from one village to the next, staying a night or two in the cozy little inns surrounded by vineyards. Contact the local

tourist offices in each wine village for a current list of accommodations and prices. In the smaller towns, prices are often considerably lower, with double rooms in *Gasthäuser* costing from €50-90, breakfast included. Rooms in private homes cost even less, usually ranging from €15-20 per person, breakfast included.

Hotel Würzburger Hof Würzburg

Located in the heart of the city, this hotel has been run by the same family since 1908. The CHOICE pretty lobby with antique furniture and oriental rugs is a prelude to the 34 large, comfortable rooms, each decorated differently, but all in traditional "Old World" style. Number 414 is particularly spacious and has a balcony. The ample breakfast buffet is served in an elegant dining room. If you're looking for charming European ambience in the middle of the Franconian wine capital, this is an excellent choice.

Contact: Hotel Würzburger Hof, Barbarossaplatz 2, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49/931-53814 or 53815, fax 58324, rezeption@hotelwuerzburgerhof.de, www.hotelwuerzburgerhof.de Daily Rates: Singles €72.50-100, doubles €115-150, suites €160-180, parking (11 places, reserve in advance) €7.50/day QUALITY: 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel Weisses Lamm Veitshöchheim

On the main street of this small wine-producing town, the Ho-EDITOR'S tel Weisses Lamm has 54 comfortable, well-decorated, modern rooms in two buildings (close together but not adjacent), one of them an historic half-timbered edifice that has been a Gasthaus since 1787. Guests also have a choice of adding half-pension meals (three courses €16/person, four courses €18/person) at the hotel's excellent Rokoko Restaurant (see restaurant reviews). Special wine-and-culinary hotel packages are available, too. Convenient for boat trips on the



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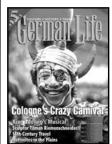
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4 adjoining countries 5 days in 2 months 6 days in 2 months 8 days in 2 months 10 days in 2 months	1 Adult 1st Cl. \$487 \$532 \$621 \$710		Saver* 1st Cl. \$412 \$454 \$529 \$602	Youth 2nd Cl. \$316 \$346 \$404 \$460
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AUSTRIAN RAILPASS 3 days in 1 month Avg Extra Rail Day (5 max.)	1st Cl \$201 \$28	2nd Cl \$140 \$19	Child 1st \$101 \$14	Child 2nd \$71 \$10

AUSTRIA-CZECH PASS					
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4 days in 2 months	<u>1st</u> \$24			<u>nd cl</u> 158	
Avg Extra Rail Day (6 max.)				321	
CZECH-GERMANY PASS		Adult	Save		Youth
5 days in 2 months	1st CI \$377	2nd Cl \$310	1st Cl \$310	2nd Cl \$266	2nd Cl \$266
6 days in 2 months	\$419	\$344	\$344	\$296	\$296
8 days in 2 months 10 days in 2 months	\$491 \$566	\$408 \$471	\$408 \$471	\$352 \$410	\$352 \$410
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Austria, Czech Republic, Hun	gary, Po	oland, Slo			
5 days in 1 month Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)			\$299 (10 \$36	3209 (13) \$2	
FRANCE RAIL PASS	Adı	ults	Senior	Youtl	
3 days in 1 month	1st Cl \$293	2nd CI \$250	1st CI \$268	1st Cl \$217	2nd Cl \$186
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)		\$37	\$40	\$ 33	\$28
FRANCE SAVER PASS				2 Adults	
3 days in 1 month			1st \$24	9 \$	<u>nd Cl</u> 3215
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)			\$ 39	9 5	\$ 31
FRANCE-ITALY PASS	1 A	dult	Sav	er*	Youth
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4 days in 2 months 5 days in 2 months	\$351 \$391	\$307 \$341	\$307 \$341	\$271 \$301	\$232 \$258
6 days in 2 months 7 days in 2 months	\$432 \$473	\$377 \$410	\$377 \$410	\$332 \$360	\$283 \$313
8 days in 2 months	\$513	\$448	\$448	\$394	\$341
9 days in 2 months 10 days in 2 months	\$554 \$595	\$483 \$519	\$483 \$519	\$426 \$454	\$366 \$396
FRANCE-SWITZERLAND PAS	SS				
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4 days in 2 months	\$376	<u>-</u>	\$319		\$265
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5 days in 2 months 6 days in 2 months	\$390 \$429	\$332 \$365	\$332 \$365	\$285 \$315	\$285 \$315
8 days in 2 months	\$510	\$433	\$433	\$372	\$372
10 days in 2 months	\$593	\$504	\$504	\$433	\$433
GERMANY-BENELUX PASS	1 Δ	dult	Sav	er*	Youth
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GERMANY-FRANCE PASS						
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Main River, since the hotel is only two blocks from the boat dock. Congenial staff.

Contact: Hotel Weisses Lamm, Kirchstrasse 24, 97209 Veitshöchheim, tel. +49/931-9802300, fax 4045025, <u>info@hotel-weisses-</u> <u>lamm.de</u>, <u>www. hotel-weisses-</u> <u>lamm.de</u>

Daily Rates: Singles €63-68, doubles €92-97, suites €103-130. Free parking. **Rating:** QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel Meintzinger Frickenhausen

In this quiet wine village on the Main River, the Hotel Meintzinger is also a winery that has been in the same family for eight generations. Located in a 500-year-old stone building, the hotel was completely renovated in 2006. Its 26 rooms (including five suites) are all different in size and shape, with a pleasing combination of antique and modern furnishings. Four guestrooms have their own balcony.

Breakfast is served in a pretty room with a terrace, and there is another sunny porch for hotel guests on the next floor. The affable owners are pleased to guide guests through a tasting of the hotel/winery's own vintages in modern tasting rooms on the ground floor.

Although the Meintzinger does not have a restaurant, there are several places to eat within a short walking distance, including local *Weinstuben* with good food at reasonable prices. The rustic **Ehrbar Fränkische Weinstube** (Haupstrasse 17), in an old half-timbered building, is especially recommended.

Contact: Weingut und Hotel Meintzinger, Babenbergplatz 4, 97252 Frickenhausen, tel. +49/9331-87110, fax 87210, info@hotel-meintzinger.de, www. hotel-meintzinger.de

Daily Rates: Singles €55-95, doubles €75-150. Free parking.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel Ritter Jörg Sommerhausen

The welcome is warm at this family-operated hotel in the center

of the charming wine village of Sommerhausen, a good base for a tour of the region. Situated next to a venerable stone fountain topped by a statue of a knight in full armor, the Ritter Jörg has 22 rooms (14 doubles, eight singles) nicely decorated in a mixture of antique and modern styles. Room sizes vary; ask for a large room with a divan and/or balcony. The hotel's **Restaurant Ritter Jörg** is a fine place to eat (see restaurant reviews).

Contact: Hotel Ritter Jörg, Maingasse 14, 97286 Sommerhausen, tel. +49/9333-97300, fax 9730230, info@ritter-joerg.de, www. ritter-joerg.de

Daily Rates: Singles €55-58, doubles €80-96. Free parking.

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel Alte Schmiede Dettelbach

Opened five years ago in a building that once was the local black-smith's shop, this small hotel has eight modern, spacious guestrooms, some with balcony. The breakfast buffet is served in the pretty little restaurant on the ground floor, which is decorated with some of the old blacksmithing tools. The restaurant offers good food at reasonable prices, and features regional, seasonal specialties and wines from the proprietor's own winery.

For a more traditional, old-Franconian-style restaurant with woodpaneled dining rooms and stainedglass windows, go to the Altfränkischer Gasthof Grüner Baum (Falterstrasse 2), which is run by the same family and is known for its good cuisine and fine local wines. This Gasthof also has 16 modern rooms, priced at €42 for singles and €68-76 for doubles.

Contact: Hotel Alte Schmiede, Am Bach 5-7, 97337 Dettelbach, tel. +49/ 9324-98110, fax 981120, info@alteschmiede-dettelbach.de, www.alteschmiede-dettelbach.de

Daily Rates: Singles €44, doubles €72-80

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Previously Reviewed Hotels:

• **Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten** in the wine village of Volkach, reviewed in the August 2002 issue of *Gemütlichkeit*, remains a recommendation.

Daily Rates: Singles €78-98, doubles €115-135.

Contact: Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten, Hauptstrasse 31, 97332 Volkach, tel. +49/9381-84840, fax 848444, info@restaurant-sachs.de, www.restaurant-sachs.de

• In Marktheidenfeld, **Hotel Anker** has been a *Gemütlichkeit* recommendation for quality, value, and hospitality for the past 22 years and was named to the newsletter's "10 most *gemütlich* hotels" list in its 20th anniversary issue. Few hotels rise to the Deppisch family's level of cordial and gracious service. On that same 20th anniversary issue's list of "65 favorite restaurants" was the hotel's **Weinhaus Anker**.

Daily Rates: Singles €72-92, doubles €108-128.

Contact: Hotel Anker, Kolpingstrasse 7, D-97828 Marktheidenfeld, tel. +49/9391/6004-0, <u>info@hotel-anker.de</u>, <u>www.hotel-anker.de</u>

Restaurants of Franconia

Wine-producing regions seem to attract the best cooks, and Franconia is no exception. As the largest city in the Franconian wine country, Würzburg has many outstanding places to eat and where wines from throughout the region can be sampled. Many small wine villages are home to fine restaurants, too, including cozy inns where the wines come from the innkeeper's own vineyard. If you visited them all, it would take months to eat your way around this part of Germany...but you would eat very well indeed.

Regional specialties include rich soups made with Franconian white wines; *Blaue Zipferl*, thick pork sausages simmered and served in a sweet-sour marinade; *Fränkisches Hochzeitsessen* (a traditional holiday dish), slices of tender boiled beef topped with a creamy horseradish sauce and garnished with cranberry preserves; a variety of fish from the

Main River, often served with whitewine sauces; seasonal ingredients such as white asparagus and strawberries in summer, wild game in autumn; and desserts featuring fruits from nearby orchards.

Weinhaus zum Stachel Würzburg

Some of the finest food in Würzburg is served at this restaurant, which dates back to the 15th century. One of the few buildings to survive the bombing of Würzburg in March 1945, the Stachel has several dining rooms with medieval decor, including dark wood wainscoting, furniture, and floors, leaded-glass windows, and arched doorways. In nice weather, it's also pleasant to eat outdoors in the cobblestoned courtyard.

The Fränkisches Silvanersüppchen, served in a quarter-liter Römer wineglass and garnished with cinnamon-rye croutons, is an excellent beginning to any meal (€6.50). Wild boar with wine sauce, onions, and fresh asparagus, or traditional Fränkisches Hochzeitsessen, are elegant and filling main dishes (€18.50). For lighter fare in summer, try the *Spargeltorte*, a large slice of savory tart full of asparagus and other vegetables in a tender, flaky crust (€12. 50), accompanied by a glass of Franconian white wine from the Stachel's extensive wine list.

Contact: Weinhaus zum Stachel, Gressengasse 1, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49/931-52770, info@weinhausstachel.de, www.weinhausstachel.de

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Backöfele Würzburg

Locals and tourists alike enjoy this lively inn established in 1571. Walk through the stone archway into the courtyard to dine al fresco in summer. In cooler weather, retreat to the cozy interior dining rooms, with countrystyle furniture and "old German" murals painted on the walls.

The food is traditional Franconian, served in unstinting portions. Try the Blaue Zipferl with sourdough bread (€6.60), or the Brotzeit plates, cold cuts or cheeses with bread, including Gerupfter Käse, a popular cheese spread of Camembert, butter, paprika, and onions (€5.30-9.90). Main dishes and grilled meats range from €10-20, with daily specials offered at €9-16. The good selection of local wines at reasonable prices will tempt you to stay for another glass.

Contact: Backöfele, Ursulinergasse 2, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49/931-59059, fax 50274, mail@backoefele.de, www.backoefele.de

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Alte Mainmühle Würzburg

At the foot of the stone bridge across the Main River in the center of the city sits Alte Mainmühle, a renovated mill with two large terraces jutting out over the water. It's a perfect place to sip Franconian wines on a summer day, looking out at the river, the vineyards, and the massive Marienberg Fortress across the way.

The aroma of sourdough bread baking in the restaurant's own wood-fired oven greets arrivals to the cozy dining rooms. The menu features familiar regional specialties, many made from ancient Franconian recipes. For a light summer meal, order a glass of wine and a salad composed of several kinds of greens topped with your choice of meats, fish, or mushrooms (€13-15). Or tuck into one of the sausage, fish, or grilled-meat dishes (€8-18). Tasty vegetarian choices (€11-13) are also available, all followed by a large array of tempting desserts, including strawberries in white wine cream (€4-8). Friendly staff.

Contact: Alte Mainmühle, Mainkai 1, 97070 Würzburg, tel. +49/931-16777, fax 3043019, gasthaus@altemainmuehle.de, www.altemainmuehle.de

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 15/20

NOTE: Würzburg offers many places to taste local wines and eat good meals at affordable prices, from little *Weinstuben* tucked away on side streets to more upscale res-

taurants with wood-paneled rooms, antique furniture, and stained-glass windows. Try the **Würzburger Ratskeller** (Langgasse 1), the **Weinstuben Juliusspital** (Juliuspromenade 19), and the **Bürgerspital-Weinstuben** (Theaterstrasse 19).

Restaurant Rokoko Veitshöchheim

Located in the Hotel Weisses
Lamm, this elegant restaurant
has multiple dining rooms,
decorated from traditional
to modern, and a pleasant terrace for outdoor dining. The Rokoko
specializes in regional dishes made
from fresh, local ingredients and
served with style in a friendly atmosphere.

Start with the large bowl of fish soup with garlic croutons (€7.50) or an appetizer of three broiled tiger prawns with tagliatelle pasta and homemade basil pesto (€9). Franconian main-dish specialties include Fränkisches Hochzeitsessen, the beef garnished with an apple-horseradish sauce (€13.90); Sauerbraten with apple-flavored red cabbage and potato dumplings (€12.80); and a Vitustöpfchen of pork medallions and little buttered Spätzle dumplings baked together with mushroom cream sauce, ham, and a topping of grated cheese (€14.90). The restaurant also offers a large choice of Franconian wines.

Contact: Restaurant Rokoko, Thüngerheimerstrasse 5, 97209 Veitshöchheim, tel. +49/931-9802300, fax 4045025, rokoko@hotel-weisseslamm.de, www.hotel-weisseslamm.de

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Restaurant Ritter Jörg Sommerhausen

Dine in traditional Franconian style in the nicely appointed dining rooms of this fine regional restaurant on the ground floor of Hotel Ritter Jörg. The house aperitif, made with local Sommerhausen sparkling wine scented with natural essence of basil, is a delightful way to start a meal. The restaurant offers classic dishes such as Franconian roasted beef with

caraway-seed crust and dark beer sauce, as well as special seasonal menus for wild game and fresh *Pfifferlinge* (mushrooms). The creative asparagus menu in May and June even features two desserts—asparagus parfait with strawberries and asparagus *Strudel* with warm asparaguswhite wine sauce. Main dishes are priced around €12-15.

Contact: Hotel-Restaurant Ritter Jörg, Maingasse 14, 97286 Sommerhausen, tel. +49/9333-97300, fax 9730230, <u>info@ritter-joerg.de</u>, <u>www.ritter-joerg.de</u>

Rating: Quality 15/20, Value 15/20

AUTO MUSEUMSContinued from page 1

In east-suburban, Neckar-riverside Untertürkheim, the architecturally stunning Mercedes-Benz Museum opened three years ago. Viewed by way of spiraling ramps on two exhibition levels, 70 vehicles include replicas of the one-cylinder originals, imposing 1930s limousines, deluxe touring coaches, a gorgeous red '37 540K-model convertible and a mint-condition 1950s-vintage Gullwing 300SL coupe—plus prewar Blitzen-Benz, Sauber Mercedes and Silver Arrow racing cars. Here, too: Daimler's earliest Mercedes-brand sedan, introduced in 1902, named for top-achiever sales agent Emil Jellinek's daughter. Contact: Mercedesstrasse 137, 70372 Stuttgart-Untertürkheim, www.mercedes-benz/museum.

Nearby next stop, in north-side Stuttgart's Zuffenhausen industrial district: the significantly expanded (since January '09) **Porsche Museum**, a radically futuristic \$130-million two-story attention-getter containing 80 sports cars spanning six decades of design "fathered" by Austro-Hungarian-born Ferdinand Porsche. All the iconic roadsters and coupes, models 356 to 911 (plus a collection of Formula-class racing cars) are showcased. Porscheplatz 1, 70435 Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen. Website: www.porsche/com/museum.

Swing cross-country over to Bavaria for more architectural bravado. It distinguishes **BMW Welt**, dating

from 1973, redeveloped in spectacular fashion 35 years later. Adjacent to 1972's Olympics athletic and entertainment complex in Munich's northoutlying Oberwiesenfeld area, the curvaceous, two-part, family-friendly layout includes a swanky restaurant, guick-snack bistro, auditorium, conference facilities, shops and a youngsters' drivers'-ed "junior campus." Museumgoers get closeups of 120 antique, factory-fresh and prototype "Beamers," motorcycles included. (BMW's first-ever automobile, the four-cylinder Dixi 3/15 coupe, made in Eisenach, had a 1928 debut). Contact: Petuelring 130, 80809 Munich, www.bmw-welt.com.

On the Danube, 207 km/128 miles north from Munich, Ingolstadt's skyline bristles with medieval fortress ramparts. Head to the east side of town to tour the Audi Forum, a good chance to unscramble this carmaker's rather complex corporate genealogy. The company's familiar logo—four interlocked rings—symbolizes 1932's Horch-DKW-Wanderer-Auto Union merger. Later, in 1964, came Volkswagen partnership, followed five years later by ownership of NSU. Take a guided two-hour plant tour to see various Audi passenger vehicles being assembled. "Museum Mobile" provides an automotive chronology, 1910-2010, culminating in pricey R8 and Quattro models. Contact: Ettinger Strasse, Ingolstadt 85045, www.audi.de/foren.

Eisenach, at the northern edge of forested Thüringer Wald highlands in central eastern Germany-145 km/ 93 miles north of Leipzig—is best known as Johann Sebastian Bach's birthplace, also for its strong Martin Luther connections. Wartburg-brand "motor carriage" manufacturing dates from 1898, so this small city's Automobile Production (Automobilbau) Museum ranks as a worthwhile visitor attraction. GDR-era Wartburg 311 and 1.3 sedans (rolling off local assembly lines, 1966-91) outclassed the notoriously clunky-stinky Zwickau-made "Trabi." For cool prestige, however, nothing matches the museum's low-slung, narrow-nosed BMW

327 and 328 roadsters and cabriolets. These 1936-40 beauties are Eisenach originals, thanks a wartime licensing arrangement with Munich-headquartered Bavarian Motor Works. **Contact:** Rennbahn 6-8, 99817 Eisenach, www.ame.eisenachonline.de.

Composer Robert Schumann was born in Zwickau, 94 km/58 miles southeast of Dresden. Same for GDR socialism's much-lampooned Trabant sedans and mini-station wagons, introduced in 1957. But, as of 1911, a fancier birthright belongs to what August Horch inspired in the way of rich folks' personal transport-grand leather-cushioned status symbols that rivaled the best of Mercedes-Benz during the prewar 1930s. So welcome to the entrepreneur's namesake: this Saxon city's **August Horch Museum**. Its 80-plus exhibits include a 1932, 12cylinder Horch 870 as well as 1939's Horch 835-brand special roadster, powerful and showy enough to become the preferred staff car of World War II's high-ranking Wermacht army officers. The museum is housed in a former Audi factory, so expect numerous crossovers (DKW, Wanderer, etc.) mentioned above and indicated by the street address. Contact: Audistrasse 7, 68058 Zwickau, www.horchmuseum.de.

Adolf Hitler asked Ferdinand Porsche to design a "peoples' car" as a Third Reich morale booster (and income producer). In 1935, out came the Kdf, a.k.a Volkswagen. Among the best-known vehicles in automotive history, "Beetles" by the many thousands were manufactured in Wolfsburg, a Lower Saxon company town since 1938, located midway between Hannover and Magdeburg via the A-2 *Autobahn*. Adjacent to the plant, VW's Autostadt is a fullfledged, immensely popular vehicular theme park opened in June 2000. On-site: shops, test tracks, mobilitytech demonstrations, Mövenpickoperated restaurants, picnic spots, gardens and a five-star Ritz-Carlton hotel. Museum-wise, Autostadt's ZeitHaus displays a major collection of international brands, dominated by all types of Volkswagens and

their Audi siblings. **Contact:** Stadtbrücke, 38440 Wolfsburg, www.autostadt.de.

Readers' Forum

Fischerzunft Thumbs Up

As always, I enjoy reading *Gemütlichkeit*. Interestingly, we have a totally different memory of **Restaurant Fischerzunft** than the editor. While probably colored by the passage of time, our meal was elegant as expected, and the atmosphere quiet and pleasant. We also stayed at the hotel and in the morning could see the shaded banks of the Rhine. A truly memorable visit and Schaffhausen had a very good model train shop. I've always wanted to go back.

PHIL ROBERTS
VIA EMAIL

Franconian Find

Just back from a week in a vacation rental in the Franconian wine village of Volkach. A lovely town in a great location. The apartment we found was roomy, nicely furnished, and located directly inside the *Altstadt*. We were walking distance to a fantastic pool complex where the kids cooled off regularly. (By the way, as you might expect, German pool complexes have patios where you can cool off with a local beer.)

We did day trips to Würzburg, Rothenburg, and Pottenstein/Bamberg. We enjoyed swimming, kayaking, and biking in and along the Main right in Volkach. It seemed like we were the only Americans around. The locals were friendly, and we put our German skills to good use. The best restaurant in town was an Italian one called **Da Pino**: excellent salads, good Italian fare, nice ambience, friendly, etc. Franconia overall is quite good value for the money and makes the exchange rate difference quite tolerable.

Here's a link to the two-bedroom vacation apartment we got for €61 per night for the four of us: www.haus-gaenseplatz.de/rundgang.htm.

Dave Wertzberger Via Email

DEAR SUBSCRIBER Continued from page 2

es, this is the document that governs which charges made by the supplier are valid and which are not. However, if you choose to rent additional equipment such as ski racks, child seats, a navigation system or, as the Ryans did, purchase additional insurance, you can expect to pay in euros plus tax. These additional items are a main source of rental company profits.

- Have a safety net. Travelers who book with Gemut.com are given a free, toll-free help line that's staffed 24/7. If there is any question or confusion at the rental counter make the call. If you've booked directly with a rental company or online through the likes of Orbitz or Travelocity, you're on your own.
- In Europe, pay in local currency. Direct Currency Conversion, the financial device that entices visitors to pay in their home currency, is really just a way for retailers to make a few more euros, francs, kroner, etc. on each transaction. For the privilege of knowing to the penny what will appear on their credit card statement, they get a less favorable exchange rate and a built-in extra fee that experts say ranges from three to five-percent. Demand to pay any local rental car charges in local currency. The same goes for hotels, restaurants, and retail stores.
- Dispute overcharges. If you suspect you've been billed too much, call your credit card company and dispute the charge. You won't have to pay until the charge is determined to be valid. This puts the burden on the supplier. European rental companies are notoriously slow in responding to requests for post-rental documentation of extra charges. Their policy seems to be "charge now and answer questions later-much later." If the rental company has your money there is little motivation to respond. But that all changes when the credit card company denies payment or initiates a "chargeback."

We Recommend

This listing of good value, <u>mid-priced</u> hotels in popular destination cities is intended for fast reference. Additional hotels and links to hotel websites is in the "**Hotels**" pages at <u>www.gemut.com</u>. Hotels are arranged in price order, higher to lower.

Berlin

Hotel Art Nouveau, Leibnizstr. 59, tel. +49/030/327 7440, fax 327 744 40, info@hotelartnouveau.de, www.hotelartnouveau.de Hotel Domus, Uhlandstrasse 49, Germany D-10719, tel. +49/030/882041, fax 882 0410, info@hotel-domus-berlin.de

Bern

Hotel Bristol, Schauplatzgasse 10, CH-3011, tel. +41/31/311 0101, fax 311 9479, email reception@bristolbern.ch
Hotel Kreuz, Zeughausgasse 41, CH-3000, tel. +41/031/329 9595, fax 329 95 96, hotelkreuz@swissonline.ch

Lucerne

Hotel Wilden Mann, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, mail@wilden-mann.ch Hotel Cascada, Bundesplatz 18, CH-6003 Lucerne, tel: +41/041/226 80 88, fax 226 80 00, info@cascada.ch

Munich

Hotel Exquisit, Pettenkoferstr. 3, tel. +49/089/ 551 99 0, fax 551 99 499, info@hotel-exquisit.com.

Hotel Acanthus, An Der Hauptfeuerwache 14, D- 80331 München, tel. +49/089 / 23 18 80, fax: 2 60 73 64, e-mail: acanthus@t-online.de

Hotel Kraft, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24, fax 550 3856, office@kraft-hotel.com

Rothenburg ob der Tauber

Reichs-Küchenmeister, Kirchplatz 8, Rothenburg o.d. Tauber, Germany D-91541, tel. +49/09861/97 00, fax 97 04 09, hotel@reichskuechenmeister.com

Hotel Hornburg, Homburgweg 28, D-91541, tel. +049/09861/8480, fax 5570, hotelhornburg@t-online.de, www.hotelhornburg.de

Salzburg & Environs

Schloss Haunsperg , A-5411 Oberalm bei Hallein, Hammerstrasse 32, tel. +43/06245/80662, fax 85680, info@schlosshaunsperg.com

Hotel Struber, Nonntaler Hauptstrasse 35, Austria A-5020 tel. +43/0662/843 728, fax 843 728 8, struber@sbg.at Hotel Jedermann, Rupertgasse 25, Austria A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873241-0, fax 873241-9, jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at

Vienna

Hotel Römischer Kaiser, Annagasse 16, A-1010, tel +43/01/512 77 51 0, fax 512 77 51 13, info@rkhotel.bestwestern.

Altstadt Vienna, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, hotel@altstadt.at, web: www.altstadt.at

Pension Aviano, Marco-D'Aviano-Gasse 1, tel. +43/01/512 8330, fax 512 8330 6, aviano@pertschy.com

Zürich

Hotel Florhof, Florhofgasse 4, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. 41/01/261 4470, fax 261 4611, info@florhof.ch

-otel Arlette, Stampfenbachstrasse 26, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. +41/01/25 20 032, fax 25 20 932, hotel.arlette@bluwin.ch

Frankfurt Airport

Steigenberger Esprix Hotel Frankfurt Airport, CargoCity Süd, D-60549, tel. +49/069/69 70 99, fax 69 70 94 44, frankfurt@esprix-hotels.de

Hotel Birkenhof, von-Eiff-Str 37, Hanau-Steinheim, D-63456, tel. +49/06181/648 80, fax 64 88 39, info@HotelBirkenhof.de, www.hotelbirkenhof.de (25-minute drive from airport) Hotel Dreieich, Frankfurter Str. 49, Langen, D-63225, tel. +49/06103/91 50, fax 52 030. hotel-dreieich@gmx.de

Munich Airport

Daniel's Hotel, Haupstrasse 11, Halbergmoos-Goldach, D-85399, tel. +49/0811/55120, fax 551213, info@hoteldaniels.de, www.hotel-daniels.de

Hotel Hoyacker Hof, Freisinger Landstrasse 9a, D-85748 Garching b. München, tel. +49/089/326 9900, fax 320 7243, info@hoyackerhof.de

Zürich Airport

Mövenpick Zürich Airport, Walter-Mittelholzerstrasse 8, CH-8152 Glattbrugg, tel. +41/01/808 88 88, fax 808 88 77, hotel@movenpick-zurich-airport.ch

Hotel Fly Away, Marktgasse 19, Zürich-Kloten, CH-8302, tel. +41/01/804 4455, fax 804 44 50, reservation@hotel-flyaway.ch