GEMüTLICHKEIT

The Travel Letter for Germany, Austria & Switzerland

Dear Subscriber

Year 25, Part One

First issue of the year and time for what I've rather pompously begun to refer to as our annual "state of Europe travel" message.

In this post-9/11, post-financial meltdown, Internet era, the Europe travel landscape seems to be changing more profoundly and rapidly than at anytime since the 60s when everyday Americans first started going there for pleasure.

The changes have not always for the good. Invasive, maddening, airport security coupled with inexperienced, harassed, uptight airline employees have turned our airports into stress pits. Technology and the Internet have given airlines the tools to insure their aircraft are fitted with the maximum number of seats and that they almost always fly full. At the same time, new baggage fees (except on most international flights) insure overhead bins are also full.

Yes, the fees. Apparently, the airline industry has just begun to fight on that front. In addition to charges on some flights for pillows, blankets, meals, aisle and window seats, and early boarding, next on the fee horizon are charges for checking-in at the airport with an airline employee instead of online or at an airport electronic kiosk; carry-on bags, and traveling with an infant even though the child won't occupy a seat. Cancel and change fees are already astronomical. A longtime subscriber told us in 2010 how, when it became necessary to change the date of his return flight from Germany, Lufthansa charged him and his wife $1800, more than the total cost of the original booking. Now we know how airlines' ancillary income rose to $22.6 billion in 2010 from $13.5 billion in '09.

When business travel slowed to a crawl in 2009, rental companies reduced fleet sizes and car manufacturers slowed production. Now, in 2011, the

Continued on page 2...

SALZBURG

It's the sound of music, the sight of majestic mountains, the smell of freshly brewed coffee, the taste of lighter-than-air dumplings, and the touch of an alpine breeze.

by Sharon Hudgins

On the Salzach River, Salzburg rises from the river valley up the foothills of three "city mountains," the Mönchsberg and smaller Rainberg on one side of the river, and the Kapuzinerberg on the other. Over the centuries, salt and religion brought prosperity to this city, whose name derives from the mineral that was mined nearby and shipped down the river to market. The domes and spires of important ecclesiastical buildings define a skyline that is towered over by the massive **Hohensalzburg Fortress**, considered Europe's best-preserved medieval citadel. Much credit for the city's development as a center of Baroque architecture goes to controversial Archbishop Wolf Dietrich, whose mistress, Salome Alt, a Jewess, bore him 15 children and for whom he built the **Mirabell Palace**. He was eventually imprisoned in the fortress, where he died. His Mausoleum is the most elaborate of **St. Sebastian's Cemetery** in the New Town.

Start your walk through Salzburg history by taking the funicular up to the fortress to visit the fortifications, museum, and Gothic royal apartments, including the stunning Golden Chamber and Golden Hall. Stop for a beer at the *Gastätte* beer garden inside the fortress walls, with a fine view over the snow-capped mountain ranges beyond the city. Then walk downhill from the fortress, while enjoying the panorama of Salzburg and the river below.

Continued on page 3...

Touring the Berlin Wall

If you're marking the new year's significant, worldwide anniversary dates, don't neglect August 13th. Fifty years ago, during that Sunday's pre-dawn hours, construction began on the *Berliner Mauer.* Bernauer Strasse residents woke up to find the center lane of their East Berlin street barricaded by the beginnings of a 12-ft.-high "anti-Fascist protective barrier"—which suddenly separated them from the adjacent Wedding neighborhood. There it stood: Europe's ultimate symbol of Cold War tensions and ideological divisions.

by Tom Bross

Well-planned despite the hasty buildup, it cost 16,500,000 East German marks ($3,638,000) and had formidable and forbidding dimensions. Curving and zigzagging around and through the widespread area, overall circumference amounted to 96 miles/155 km. First came crude cinder blocks and coils of barbed wire, eventually replaced by 45 sections of pre-cast concrete slabs. Twenty-seven miles/43 km. of them were sufficient to effectively separate East from West Berlin. Average width: 14.7 inches. The thickness, plus steel reinforcing rods and parallel deep-dug trenches, made it impossible for even a heavy-duty truck—racing at full speed—to slam through to the opposite "free" side. Smooth metal tubing atop the slabs repulsed grasping clamps and desperate rope-climbers.

Impervious to urban realities, planners allowed the hateful Wall to cut through 192 streets, enough to hugely

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Exchange rates as of 2/06/11
1 euro = $1.36
Swiss franc = $1.06
1 gal. diesel, Germany=$6.70

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

Continued from page 1

effects of the economic downturn are still felt in the car rental industry; vans and automatic transmission cars in Europe are scarce and expensive. Prices were generally higher last year, even though the dollar was stronger than in '09.

Much of the good news has to do with technology. It has enabled us to research and book hotel rooms, flights, rental cars, cruises, travel packages, travel insurance, you name it, at literally hundreds of thousands of websites (yes, it's easy and fast but be sure to read the hard-to-find small print, and whom do you call when something goes amiss?). And there isn't enough space here to even begin to enumerate the wondrous things that amazing, revolutionary smartphones—and tablets like the iPad—do for the traveler: watch a movie, read hotel and restaurant reviews, listen to music, dictate a memo or email, browse the Internet, call home, take photos, shoot some video, read a book, listen or watch a live sports event, or layout a backroads driving route to the next town.

The very best news is that, in spite of everything, Germany and Austria are brimming with thousands of affordable—yes, even for North Americans—hotels and restaurants. Switzerland, not so much. Its powerful franc has gained 14% against the euro in the past year and, at 1.06 to 1.00, is leaving the dollar in the dust. In tourist mecca Lucerne it's hard to find a three-star hotel with double rooms under CHF 300 ($318). Even far off the beaten track, in the tiny mountain village of Evolène, the cheapest double room at the two-star **Hotel Hermitage** is CHF160 ($170).

Here's what I see for 2011.

Transatlantic Air: Sorry to say, the days of high-season under $1,000 air fares to Europe are mostly behind us and probably not coming back. Nonstop summer fares on the major airlines are in the $1400 to $1800 range ($200-$300 less with a stop each way), depending on your U.S. departure city, and not many experts see them coming down. With oil prices back on the rise, fuel surcharges can't be far behind. The best fares are currently with lesser-known carriers such as **Condor**, **Iceland Air**, and **Air Berlin**. **Singapore Airlines** and **Air India** are also worth checking. You'll do better, of course, if you travel in the early spring, late fall, and winter.

Comparing fares online has gotten more complicated now that **American Airlines** fares been removed from major travel websites **Orbitz**, **Expedia** and **Travelocity**. Visit AA's website or contact a travel professional (Laura Riedel, 800-521-6722 x 2).

If Europe is your destination in the June to October 15 period, I would not wait to buy tickets. There may be sales but they will be brief and fare reductions far from drastic.

Upgrades, too, are mostly a relic. Remember, when you could buy a coach ticket for $800 and upgrade to business class for 50,000 frequent flyer miles? No more. Unless you maintain elite status in a frequent flyer program, your chances of an upgrade are virtually zero. It's even tough to use FF miles to book directly into business class, even if you're willing to spring for the miles. I'm trying to book two business class seats for 2011 and so far the best deal I've found is on **Delta**, but the price for a November departure is 440,000 of my precious miles plus a couple of hundred dollars per ticket in various fees.

Rental Cars: European rates are about the same as 2010 but the dollar has slipped a notch of two lately so incremental price increases may be in the offing. As always, we recommend booking early. It's a no-lose proposition. By booking now you lock-in a U.S. dollar price. If rates go up you're all set, if they drop you can re-book at the lower price. For this scenario, of course, you must be able to cancel without penalty, which is always the case when you book with our travel service.

Those who plan to drive in Europe in 2011 will be well advised to scrupulously

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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".

Back Issues Website

Many back issues in PDF format from January 1993 are available free to subscribers only at www.gemut.com. To access the issues, enter the user name and password published in this space each month. The new codes are:

User Name: **grub** Password: **4486**

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	Scale
Excellent	16 - 20
Above Average	12 - 15
Average	8 - 11
Adequate	4 - 7
Unacceptable	0 - 3

Restaurant Criteria	
Food	65%
Service	20%
Atmosphere	15%

Hotel Rating Criteria	
People/Service	30%
Location/Setting	15%
Guestrooms	30%
Public rooms	5%
Facilities/Restaurant	20%

Value Rating	Scale
Outstanding Value	17 - 20
Very Good Value	12 - 16
Average Value	9 - 11
Below Average Value	5 - 8
A Rip-Off	0 - 4

SALZBURG

Continued from page 1

Salzburg's main sights are concentrated in the *Altstadt* (Old Town) below the fortress and in the New Town across the river. Starting at the **Dom**, the impressive Italianate cathedral consecrated in 1628, it takes only an hour or so to walk through the wide squares and along the narrow streets. But you'll want to linger longer, visiting the churches, museums, cafés, and shops for which Salzburg is famous. The **Old Residenz** of the former prince-archbishops of Salzburg, on one side of the Residenzplatz, houses an excellent art museum and several palatial staterooms; be sure to use the audio guide (included with the entrance ticket), which brings to life the several sparsely furnished rooms in this princely palace. The nearby **New Residenz** houses the award-winning **Salzburg Museum**, which presents the city's history through interesting and innovative exhibits.

Perhaps the most picturesque part of the Old Town is the Getreidegasse, lined with houses from the 13th to the 16th centuries, with their gilded wrought iron signs identifying the different places of business, just as they did in the time of the medieval craft guilds. Today it's a tourist-crowded pedestrian zone, with everything from fine restaurants to typical souvenir shops. Escape the crowds by ducking into the secluded little courtyards and passageways that branch off this popular street, where some of the more interesting shops are tucked away.

The town is a mecca for music lovers, who each year flock to the **Salzburg Festival** (last week of July through August) to hear world-class musical performances, many of them held in the large **Festival Hall** carved out of the Mönchsberg mountain. *The Sound of Music*, of course, was made in and around Salzburg and nearly half a century later, thousands still arrive to tour the film's locations (www.salzburg-info.at).

But Mozart is the biggest star in Salzburg's musical firmament. His birthplace at Getreidegasse 9 is the main tourist attraction. (Be forewarned: you have to climb three flights of steep stairs and there's very little to see inside.) Much more interesting is the **Mozart Residenz** across the river, on Markartplatz in the New Town, where the family lived from 1773-1787. A superb audio guide (included with your ticket) is both informative and entertaining.

A fun musical evening in Salzburg is attending a Mozart Dinner Concert in the historic Baroque Hall at the **Stiftskeller St. Peter**, where the Mozart family dined and made music in the 1700s. Today, between dinner courses, costumed performers play Mozart's music on period instruments, and sing his arias under the glittering chandeliers (www.mozartdinnerconcert.com).

Salzburg is also a good base for day-trips to the surrounding countryside: **Hellbrunn Castle and Garden**; the salt mines and **Celtic Museum** at Hallein; the largest ice cave in the world, near **Hohenwerfen Castle**; the pilgrimage church of **Maria Plain**; and the mountains and lakes of the **Salzkammergut** region. You can easily spend half a day at the fascinating **Salzburg Open Air Museum** near Grossgmain, 10 km southwest of the city, with its 60 furnished farmhouses, barns, and outbuildings from all over the province of Salzburg, a little steam train that runs in the summer, and rural craft demonstrations on weekends (www.freilichtmuseum.com).

Salzburg Basics

Population: 150,000

Elevation: 430 meters (1,411 feet)

Visitor information: Tourismus Salzburg GmbH, Auerspergstrasse 6, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/662-889-870, fax 889-8732, tourist@salzburg.info, www.salzburg.info. For walk-in information, brochures, maps, etc., visit Salzburg Information offices at the Mozartplatz and Hauptbahnhof (main train station).

Driving distances:

Vienna	312 km / 194 mi
Prague	384 km / 239 mi
Berlin	736 km / 457 mi
Frankfurt	539 km / 334 mi
Nürnberg	312 km / 194 mi
Munich	145 km / 90 mi

Rail service: Salzburg Hauptbahnhof (main train station), 15 minutes' walk from the city center, with excellent Eurocity, Intercity, ICE, and suburban rail connections.

Nearest airport: Salzburg Airport, four km from the city, 15 minutes by taxi or bus; also airport shuttle from Munich Airport in nearby Bavaria.

Discounts: The Salzburg Card offers free admission to museums, the Fortress funicular, the cableway, Salzach ship service, and all public transportation, plus discounts on cultural events and excursions (Price: 24 hours, €25; 48 hours, €33, 72 hours, €38). Available at tourist information offices and online at www.salzburg.info/en/sights/salzburg_card, cards@salzburg.info.

Souvenirs, Snacks, and Beer

Typical souvenirs from Salzburg are pretty little dried-flower-and-spice bouquets, sold in the open-air markets, and the ubiquitous Mozart Kugel. The "Original Salzburger Mozartkugel"candies—with their center of green pistachio paste, a layer of hazelnut nougat, and coating of dark chocolate—were invented by Paul Fürst in 1890, nearly a century after Mozart's death. Still handmade by his descendants, these richly-flavored, ball-shaped confections wrapped in distinctive silver-and-blue foil are, by law, the only ones allowed to be called "original," and are sold exclusively at the company's four shops in Salzburg (Alter Markt/Brodgasse 13, Mirabellplatz 5, Ritzerbogen/Sigmund Haffner Gasse, Getreidegasse 47). Their biggest competitors are the slightly less expensive red-and-gold-wrapped candies called *Echte Salzburger Mozartkugel*, which are mass-produced by Mirabell, a large chocolate factory in Salzburg. Perfectly round, their green marzipan centers are wrapped in layers of dark and light praline cream, then dipped in dark chocolate.

Salzburg confections with an older provenance are the Venusbrüstchen (Venus's Nipples), which supposedly date from Mozart's time. (In the film *Amadeus*, Mozart's wife swooned over these suggestively shaped confections.) Today, they're made from an Amarena cherry surrounded by chestnut cream and covered with white or dark chocolate, with a pink nipple on the top. Indulge at the atmospheric little **Scio's Specereyn** (Sigmund Haffner Gasser 16), where the

massive marble-top table came from the house where Mozart was born.

A more unusual souvenir is rock salt from Aussee, sold at **Salzburg Salz** (Wiener Philharmoniker Gasse 3). A pretty pinkish-brown with dark flecks, it's used as a table condiment, in beauty products, and for decorative objects such as tea-light candle holders carved from the colored salt and bricks of salt used for paperweights or doorstops. The shop's entire back wall is made of these translucent salt bricks lighted from behind.

Keep up your energy for sightseeing by stopping in at Salzburg's many tempting pastry shops for a pick-me-up of coffee and cake. Mozart used to play billiards at the **Café Tomaselli** (Alter Markt 9), Salzburg's oldest coffee house (1703) where the waitresses bring around trays of luscious sweets to select from. The **Café Fingerlos** (Franz Josef Strasse 9) is a popular local meeting place, its large glass display case filled with beautifully decorated cakes, pastries, and confections made on site by the award-winning pastry chef.

Pick up a snack for a picnic-in-the-park at the daily open-air market in the Universitätsplatz or the big Thursday morning market (until 1:00pm) on the Mirabellplatz. And who could resist the aroma of fresh bread baked in a wood-fired oven at the **Stiftsbäckerei St. Peter**, Salzburg's oldest bakery, dating from the 13th century? Located on the Kapitelplatz, adjacent to the historic St. Peter's Cemetery, it offers a variety of handmade buns and breads. Go early for the best selection (open weekdays except Wed. 7am-5:30pm, Sat. until 1pm)

Quench your thirst at Salzburg's several brewery-Gasthäuser and beer gardens. Two favorites are the **Stieglkeller** (Festungsgasse 10), at the foot of the Hohensalzburg Fortress hill, and the **Augustiner Bräu Kloster Mülln** (Lindhofstrasse 7), the largest beer Gastätte in Austria, situated in a pleasant wooded area, where your beer is still tapped from wooden kegs into stoneware mugs. Both places offer typical, tasty beer-hall food at moderate prices. Another popular brewery-Gasthaus is **Die Weisse** (Rupertgasse 10, see Restaurant Reviews). The **Stiegl-Brauwelt Museum** (Bräuhausstrasse 9), claims to be the "largest beer experience" in the world; at the end of your visit, you get to taste the products of the largest private brewery in Austria (www.stiegl.at/brauwelt). Special "Salzburg Bierkultur" package tours are available for those interested in learning more about the history of Salzburg's different breweries and sampling their wares on site (www.salzburg.info/bierkultur).

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 gemut2010.
- **maps.google.com** Amazing map resource. 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.
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- **www.ski-europe.com** Top Web resource for skiers with much info 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.

Salzburg Hotels

This is a city that lives off tourism (six to eight million visitors a year). The hotels fill up, especially during the annual Salzburg Festival, so if you plan to visit then book several months in advance. Rates increase considerably during the festival period, as well as during the Advent-Christmas-New Year season.

Hotel Auersperg

The family-run Hotel & Villa Auersperg is a restful retreat after a long day of Salzburg sightseeing. Located in two adjacent 19th-century buildings in the New Town, it's only a 10-minute walk to the Markartplatz, then five minutes more across the bridge to the center of the historic town. Or you can pick up a free bicycle at the hotel and pedal wherever you want to go.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The newer of the hotel's buildings houses 32 rooms, the reception area, small bar, breakfast room, and rooftop sauna with a view of the mountains. The older villa next door, which was renovated in 2009, has 23 rooms, all nonsmoking. Rooms in both buildings are decorated in a mixture of modern and classical styles and an emphasis on modern amenities such as flat-screen TVs, CD/DVD players, minibars, coffee/tea makers, and a selection of books about Austria. Both buildings also have an elevator.

An excellent breakfast buffet is served by the friendly staff in a pleasant room overlooking a garden and terrace for outdoor dining in nice weather.
Contact: Hotel & Villa Auersperg, Auerspergstrasse 61, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/662-88-944, fax 88-944-55, info@auersperg.at, www.auersperg.at

Daily Rates: Singles €99-130, doubles €145-188, suites €205-275. Parking, €10/day.
Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Hotel Goldener Hirsch

The clear choice for those who seek traditional Austrian luxury is this historic property in the heart of Salzburg's Old Town. Very near Mozart's birthplace and within easy walking distance of the city's major sights, the Hirsch opened as an inn in 1407, and since the 1920s has been a favorite of Salzburg Festival performers and their well-heeled fans. No longer family-owned, it is now part of the Starwood chain.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Behind the Hirsch's simple façade are 65 luxury rooms and four suites, all decorated in classic Austrian rustic style, with solid-wood furniture, quality textiles, and authentic antiques. Despite the emphasis on tradition, modern amenities are not neglected. Each room has air-conditioning, large flat-screen TV, minibar, soundproof windows, high-speed Internet, and all the other essentials one expects in a top-rated hotel, including a friendly and helpful staff.

The hotel also has two very good restaurants (see page 10). Travelers who

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Fares available from all U.S. gateways

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European Auto Rental

Germany

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VW Passat (Auto)	$475	$68
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MBZ C180 (Auto/GPS)	$468	$67
MBZ E200 (Auto/GPS)	$521	$74
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VW Golf Wagon	$298	$43
VW Passat Wagon	$353	$50
Audi A4 SW (GPS)	$411	$59
MBZ E200 SW (Auto/GPS)	$751	$107
Volvo V70 SW (GPS)	$530	$76
VW Sharan 7-pass	$730	$104
VW Minibus 9-pass	$743	$106

Austria

Fiat Punto	$262	$37
Ford Focus	$291	$42
VW Golf (Auto)	$486	$69
Mercedes B-Class	$375	$54
Peugeot 407	$626	$89
Mercedes C-Class	$985	$141
VW Touran (Auto)	$513	$73
Ford Focus Wagon	$306	$44
Skoda Octavia Wagon	$468	$67
Peogeot 807 7-Pass	$889	$127

Switzerland

Opel Corsa	$288	$41
Opel Astra	$304	$43
Ford Focus (Auto)	$372	$53
Opel Vectra	$338	$48
Renault scenic (Auto)	$483	$69
VW Passat (Auto)	$593	$85
Ford C-Max	$349	$50
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Mercedes Vito 7-Pass	$784	$112

• Upgrades through 7/31/2011. Discounts for longer rentals. All rates quoted in this ad are as of 1/24/11, subject to change without notice but lock-in at booking. Rates based on one-week booking . Rates include Value Added Tax, unlimited mileage, 3rd party liability ins. but do not include CDW, theft insurance, road tax, and airport fees.

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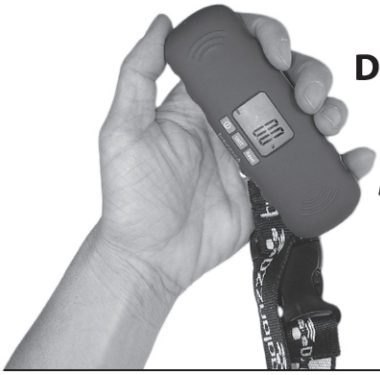

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EURAILPASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
15 consecutive days	$727	$619	$474
21 consecutive days	$938	$798	$611
1 month	$1156	$983	$752
2 months	$1632	$1387	$1061
3 months	$2012	$1711	$1309

EURAIL FLEXIPASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
10 days in 2 months	$859	$730	$559
days in 2 months	$1127	$958	$733

EURAIL SELECTPASS

3 adjoining countries	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
5 days in 2 months	$457	$389	$298
6 days in 2 months	$505	$429	$329
8 days in 2 months	$597	$508	$389
10 days in 2 months	$692	$589	$451

4 adjoining countries	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
5 days in 2 months	$511	$435	$333
6 days in 2 months	$559	$475	$364
8 days in 2 months	$651	$554	$424
10 days in 2 months	$745	$633	$485

5 adjoining countries	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
5 days in 2 months	$563	$480	$367
6 days in 2 months	$611	$520	$398
8 days in 2 months	$705	$600	$459
10 days in 2 months	$796	$677	$518
15 days in 2 months	$1009	$858	$656

AUSTRIAN RAILPASS

	1st Cl	2nd Cl	Child 1st	Child 2nd
3 days in 1 month	$201	$140	$101	$71
Avg Extra Rail Day (5 max.)	$28	$19	$14	$10

AUSTRIA-CZECH PASS

	Adult 1st Cl	Saver* 1st Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	$255	$217	$167
Avg Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$ 34	$ 29	$ 22

CZECH-GERMANY PASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl	1 Adult 2nd Cl	Saver* 1st Cl	Saver* 2nd Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
5 days in 2 months	$398	$328	$326	$280	$280
6 days in 2 months	$442	$364	$363	$310	$310
8 days in 2 months	$515	$430	$428	$372	$372
10 days in 2 months	$593	$496	$495	$431	$431

EUROPEAN EAST PASS

Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia

5 days in 1 month	$312 (1Cl)	$215 (2Cl)
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$35	$30

FRANCE RAIL PASS

	Adults 1st Cl	Adults 2nd Cl	Senior 1st Cl	Senior 1st Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
3 days in 1 month	$296	$239	$258	$209	$177
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$ 45	$37	$38	$ 31	$27

FRANCE SAVER PASS

	2 Adults* 1st Cl	2 Adults* 2nd Cl
3 days in 1 month	$252	$206
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$ 38	$ 31

FRANCE-ITALY PASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl	1 Adult 2nd Cl	Saver* 1st Cl	Saver* 2nd Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	$376	$320	$320	$272	$244
5 days in 2 months	$420	$356	$356	$302	$274
days in 2 months	$463	$393	$393	$334	$301
7 days in 2 months	$506	$431	$431	$368	$329
8 days in 2 months	$550	$468	$468	$398	$356
9 days in 2 months	$595	$504	$504	$440	$387
10 days in 2 months	$638	$542	$542	$460	$415

FRANCE-SWITZERLAND PASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	$407	$345	$287
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$ 45	$40	$32

GERMAN RAILPASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl.	1 Adult 2nd Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.	Twin Pass* 1st Cl.	Twin Pass* 2nd Cl.
3 days in 1 month	$335	$255	$204	$258	$188
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6)	$ 25	23	$15	$24	$18

AUSTRIA-GERMANY PASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl	1 Adult 2nd Cl	Saver* 1st Cl	Saver* 2nd Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
5 days in 2 months	$407	$350	$350	$299	$301
6 days in 2 months	$449	$383	$383	$329	$329
8 days in 2 months	$534	$457	$457	$391	$393
10 days in 2 months	$623	$530	$530	$457	$457

GERMANY-BENELUX PASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl	1 Adult 2nd Cl	Saver* 1st Cl	Saver* 2nd Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
5 days in 1 month	$428	$322	$322	$261	$261
Avg. Extra Rail Day (5 max.)	$44	$34	$34	$24	$24

GERMANY-FRANCE PASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl	1 Adult 2nd Cl	Saver* 1st Cl	Saver* 2nd Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	$412	$372	$372	$337	$288
5 days in 2 months	$457	$411	$411	$371	$318
6 days in 2 months	$500	$450	$450	$399	$352
8 days in 2 months	$585	$528	$528	$460	$412
10 days in 2 months	$673	$606	$606	$528	$476

GERMANY-SWITZERLAND PASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
5 days in 2 months	$434	$371	$306
6 days in 2 months	$479	$407	$337
8 days in 2 months	$565	$484	$398
10 days in 2 months	$654	$558	$460

ITALY RAIL PASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl	1 Adult 2nd Cl	Saver* 1st Cl	Saver* 2nd Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
3 days in 2 months	$256	$209	$218	$169	$169
Avg Extra Rail Day	$31	$24	$26	$20	$20

AUSTRIA-SWITZERLAND PASS

	Adults 1st Cl	Saver* 1st Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	$387	$329	$271
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$ 42	$36	$30

SWISS SAVERPASS & SWISS PASS

	1 Adult 1st Class	1 Adult 2nd Class	Saver* 1st Class	Saver* 2nd Class	Youth 1st Class	Youth 2nd Class
4 consec. days	$405	$270	$344	$229	$305	$203
8 consec. days	$586	$391	$499	$333	$440	$293
15 consec. days	$708	$472	$602	$401	$532	$354
22 consec. days	$816	$544	$694	$462	$612	$408
1 month	$899	$599	$764	$509	$675	$449

SWISS SAVER FLEXIPASS & SWISS FLEXIPASS

	2 or more Adults* 1st Class	2 or more Adults* 2nd Class	1 Adult 1st Class	1 Adult 2nd Class
3 days in 1 month	$331	$220	$389	$260
4 days in 1 month	$401	$267	$471	$314
5 days in 1 month	$464	$309	$545	$363
6 days in 1 month	$526	$352	$620	$413

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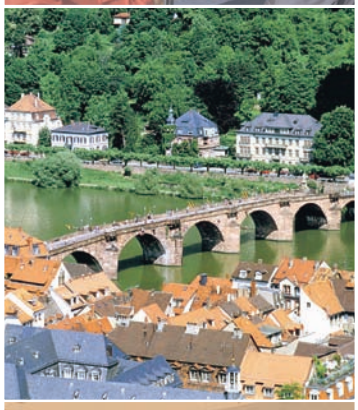

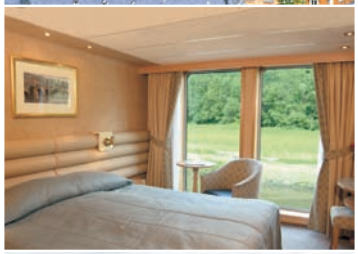

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Contact: Hotel Goldener Hirsch, Getreidegasse 57, A-5020 Salzburg, +43/662-80-840, fax 84-33-49, goldener.Hirsch@luxurycollection.com, www.goldenerhirschsalzburg.com

Daily Rates: Singles start at €150, doubles from €170, breakfast not included. Special rates available online, depending on season.

Rating: Quality 17/20, Value 15/20

Hotel Jedermann

Easily the best value we found in Salzburg is this 16-room, nonsmoking, design hotel. It is named for a Hugo von Hoffmannsthal play, Jedermann, that has been performed annually at the Salzburg Festival since 1920.

Editor's Choice

The open, airy guestrooms are of contemporary design and furnishings, with hardwood floors, in-room Internet access, high ceilings and large windows. With free parking the hotel solves a major Salzburg problem for guests traveling by auto. Jedermann's lone disadvantage is that the *Altstadt* is 15 to 20 minutes away on foot. By bus, however, it is only three or four minutes. Proprietor Walter Gmachl is an outgoing, affable sort that guests immediately warm to.

Inquire about the hotel's four-nights-for-the-price-of-three-deal frequently available outside the busiest times.

Contact: Hotel Jedermann, Rupertgasse 25, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43 662 87 32 41 0, office@hotel-jedermann.com, www.hotel-jedermann.com

Daily Rates: Singles €70-90, doubles €95-160, suites €259-420.

Rating: Quality 15/20, Value 17/20

Boutique Hotel am Dom

Half a block from Salzburg's cathedral, the four-star-rated Boutique Hotel am Dom is another small, recently redesigned, arty hotel located in an 800-year-old building. Each of the 15 modernized, air-conditioned rooms is different in style and features a witty piece of art. Several rooms have old wood-beam ceilings, and two have claw-footed bathtubs with a view of Salzburg's Dom and fortress. Friendly staff.

Contact: Boutique Hotel am Dom, Goldgasse 17, A-5020 Salzburg, +49/662-842-765, fax 842-765-55, office@hotelamdom.at, www.hotelamdom.at

Daily Rates: Singles €90-180, doubles €140-260, double superiors €180-290

Rating: Quality 13/20, Value 11/20

Hotel Wolf

This cozy, family-run hotel was tagged a *Gemütlichkeit* "Editor's Choice" way back in 1988. We still like its Old Town-pedestrian zone location, the ancient building, and traditional atmosphere, but like many hotels in the *zentrum*, guestrooms are heavily trafficked and not often enough refurbished. Most of the 16 rooms are decorated in traditional Austrian country style, with hardwood floors, printed textiles, and antique accents. Rooms 12, 38, 39, and 40 are especially large doubles. The breakfast buffet is served in a pleasant room with a vaulted ceiling.

Contact: Hotel Wolf, Kaigasse 7, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/662-843-453-0, fax 842-423-4, office@hotelwolf.com, www.hotelwolf.com

Daily Rates: Singles €68-108, doubles €110-214, junior suite €198-248.

Rating: Quality 12/20, Value 13/20

Hotel Sacher Salzburg

Like its Vienna sibling, the privately owned, deluxe Hotel Sacher Salzburg is in a category of its own. Located in the heart of the city, on the Salzach River just across from the Old Town, it has a commanding view of the fortress, the city's skyline, and the surrounding mountains. Originally built as the "Österreichische Hof" hotel in 1866, it was extensively renovated and reopened as the Sacher Salzburg in 2000.

History walks the halls of this elegant five-star. In 1945, the American military commander accepted the surrender of the city in its lobby. Photos of luminaries who have stayed there line the walls. The 112 rooms are richly decorated in Old World style, with all the contemporary amenities of a top-class hotel.

The staff delivers superb, friendly service and the Sacher's three restaurants are known for fine cuisine as well as a famous clientele. The Sacher Café is a typical Austrian coffee house offering a large selection of house-made pastries and confections, including the "Original Sacher-Torte," that sinfully rich chocolate cake.

For those with the means to do so, this is a place to live for a while.

Contact: Hotel Sacher Salzburg, Schwarzstrasse 5-7, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/662-889-770, fax 88-977-551, Salzburg@sacher.com, www.sacher.com

Daily Rates: Singles €219-354, doubles/suites €283-968. Breakfast not included when these rates are discounted.

Rating: Quality 18/20, Value 15/20

Schloss Haunsperg Oberalm bei Hallein

Though it's 11 miles south of town, no list of Salzburg hotels should ignore this wonderful little castle hotel. It was first mentioned in our April 1989 issue, when we wrote that it is "…the type of hotel we had in mind when we began to publish this newsletter. Just a handful of rooms in an old family house, the Alps surrounding quiet grounds, beautiful antique furniture everywhere and, best of all, a husband and wife team who treat their guests like honored family members." The story went on to call the owners, Eike and Georg von Gernerth, "two of the world's best hosts."

Editor's Choice

Now in 2011, Haunsperg is little changed; 22 peaceful years don't leave much of a mark on a building that's already nearing its 700th birthday. Even better news—and every guest's good fortune—is the von Gernerths are still at the helm, dispensing their extraordinary brand of Austrian country hospitality.

The castle has eight rooms/suites, every one a charmer. They come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and furnishing. Some are very large, and each has a special character. High ceilings, ancient three-foot thick walls, squeaky wood floors, antique furnishings, and glorious *objet d'art*—most of which have been in the family hundreds of years—will do that for a hotel room.

You'll be happy with any of the eight rooms, but a family or couples traveling together might ask for the suites that connect with the music room. This consists of a giant corner bedroom and

sitting room, plus separate rooms for toilet and bath and a second small bedroom that can been used for a fifth person. On the other side of the almost opulent music room, with it's black Bösendorfer grand piano, numerous windows, and crystal chandelier, is an equally comfortable bedroom and separate sitting room. With this arrangement, you will share the music room, and have most of an entire floor to yourselves—perhaps 1,500 square feet of living space.

If it is solitude you seek, the von Gernerths will leave you alone. The rest of us are invited to join them for glasses of Austrian wine in their garden in summer, at other times in the comfortable leather furniture of a small parlor, and occasionally at a nearby Gasthaus.

They are also delighted to show their castle and share it's history. Behind every apartment, every picture, every rug, every piece of porcelain, and every antique, is a story.

The *piece de résistance* is the Baroque chapel. Its ornate altar appears to be marble. However, the area around Hallein is so rich in the stone that it was rejected as too common. Instead, the altar was made of wood and then a *faux marbre* finish was applied by craftsmen. In the tabernacle is a rotating platform that turns to show three scenes, including a carved mother and child and a reliquary with a sliver of wood purported to be from Christ's cross. Mass is held there four or five times each year but the ancient bell (1570) in the tower above is only rung on special occasions.

Daily Rates: Doubles €130-170, suites €163-210
Contact: Schloss Haunsperg, A-5411 Oberalm bei Hallein, Hammerstrasse 51, tel. +43/06245/80662, fax 6245/85680, info@schlosshaunsperg.com, www.schlosshaunsperg.com
Rating: Quality 18/20, Value 18/20

Salzburg Restaurants

Gasthof-Restaurant Auerhahn

Behind an unremarkable façade on the Bahnhofstrasse, the Restaurant Auerhahn, in the Gasthof of the same name, offers outstanding food at moderate prices. The emphasis is on classic Austrian dishes made with fresh, seasonal ingredients, cooked creatively and plated beautifully—a perfect melding of traditional and modern. Appetizers (€11-12.50), portioned large enough for a light meal, include house-made gnocchetti with fresh mushrooms, and shrimp and smoked salmon with lime foam and green salad. Don't miss the creamy, foamy, spring onion soup (€5.50). Well garnished meat main dishes are in the €18-22.50 range. Offerings on the "traditional Austrian" section of the menu include such dishes as *Wiener Schnitzel* (€14.50) and pan-fried grated potatoes with chive sauce and apple-horseradish (€16.50).

Editor's Choice

The set-menus are a good way to sample the chef's range of skills: three-course seasonal menu (€32); four courses for €37 (€55 with appropriate wine for each course); and five courses for €48 (€69 with wine). Save room for the luscious desserts (€4.50-9), especially Austria's lightest *Topfenknödel* (curd cheese dumplings) with cranberry cream.

Open Tue.-Sun., 11:30am- 1:30 p.m, 6:30 – 9:30pm, closed Sun. evening and Monday.

Contact: Gasthof Auerhahn, Bahnhofstrasse 15, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/662-451-052, fax 451-0523, hotel@auerhahn-salzburg.at, www.auerhahn.at
Rating: Quality 17/20, Value 17/20

Restaurant Goldener Hirsch & Restaurant s'Herzl

Dishes from both restaurants in the historic Hotel Goldener Hirsch come out of the same kitchen and are made from locally-produced ingredients. The Goldener Hirsch has the more sophisticated menu, featuring both traditional Salzburg specialties and classic international dishes, with three-course lunches priced at €29 and three-course dinners at €34, plus a la carte offerings. The s'Herzl focuses on reasonably priced traditional Austrian fare with Bavarian influences, including the restaurant's signature Nürnberg Rostbratwürstl (grilled pork sausages) with sauerkraut and fresh horseradish (€11.50-14.50).

Start your meal at both with the Hirsch's special cocktail, "Susanne," a concoction of orange juice, cassis, Campari, and vodka. For dessert, indulge in the house specialties, Rigo Jansci, a rich chocolate cake with chocolate mousse filling (€4.80), or the famous *Salzburger Nockerln*, light soufflé dumplings (€19 for two people).

Open daily, noon-2pm and 6:30-9:30pm (Goldener Hirsch) and daily 11:30am-10pm ('Herzl)

Contact: Restaurant Goldener Hirsch, Getreidegasse 37, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/662-80-840; Restaurant s'Herzl, Getreidegasse 35, tel. +43/662-8084-889; fax 8084-845, goldener.hirsch@luxurycollection.com, www.luxurycollection.com/goldenerhirsch
Rating: Quality 17/20, Value 16/20

Carpe Diem

Chic, Michelin-starred Carpe Diem is known for its innovative "Fingerfood"—small, high-quality portions served in cones or shot glasses and creatively garnished. Each little dish is painstakingly and artfully presented Patrons order salads, vegetables, fish, meats, and desserts by the cone, at prices ranging from €4.80-9.20. Two examples are asparagus cooked three ways and served in a potato-based cone (€5.40) and red chicken wings with a spicy dip in a paprika-flavored cone (€4.90). There are also special Fingerfood menus ranging from three courses to seven courses (€16.50 -€36.50).

While Fingerfood is the main attraction on Carpe Diem's ground floor dining area, upstairs is the stylish Restaurant & Lounge, with both Fingerfood and, from the same kitchen, a more conventional menu of sophisticated dishes with appetizers in the €22 price range and main dishes around €32; the three-course lunch menu (Monday – Friday) changes weekly (€19.50). The food is excellently prepared and handsomely plated, with friendly service to match.

Open daily 8:30am – midnight; upstairs restaurant closed on Sundays.

Contact: Carpe Diem, Getreidegasse 50, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/662-848-800, 848-800-88, fingerfood@carpediem.com, www.finestfingerfood.com
Rating: Quality 16/20, Value 14/20

Magazin

Another fashionable, Michelin-starred restaurant, is in an unlikely location: within the concrete-walled, World War II-era air raid shelters tunneled into Salzburg's Mönchsberg (Monk's Mountain). The stylish contemporary décor matches the limited menu—seemingly simple, but creative and top quality. Appetizers such as mozzarella ravioli are in the €19 price range; or perhaps try the raspberry gazpacho with octopus, garnished with lime foam (€9). Main dishes include pigeon with chanterelle mushrooms and baby corn (€27). For dessert, choose an unusual sorbet (€2.20 per scoop) — lychee-ginger, banana-chile, or basil. Fixed-price menus change with the seasons: four-courses at lunch and dinner (€56), five- and six-courses at dinner (€63-69).

Wine is serious business here, with an extensive and interesting list—as befits a restaurant that also encompasses a wine bar, wine shop, cookware store, and cooking school.

Recommended to those who want to taste modern Austrian cuisine.

Open Mon.-Sat., 10am-midnight.

Contact: Magazin, Augustinergasse 13, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/662-841-5840, fax 841-5844, office@magazin.co.at, www.magazin.co.at

Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 11/20

Die Weisse

The problem here is avoiding the smokers. Once you've solved that you'll have a good time at this brewery-Gasthaus that mixes plenty of atmosphere with excellent fresh beer and well-prepared beer-hall fare. The menu features, naturally: sausages, schnitzels, potatoes, sauerkraut, cheese platters. Try the potato soup with bacon and leeks (€3.50), the *Spinatnocken* (spinach dumplings) with ham and cheese in cream sauce (€9.20), and the apple strudel with whipped cream (€3.80).

Open Monday – Saturday, 10:30am – midnight.

Contact: Die Weisse, Rupertgasse 10, A-5020 Salzburg, tel. +43/662-872-246, fax 872-2464, prost@dieweisse.at, www.dieweisse.at

Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 14/20

THE WALL

Continued from page 1

disrupt the livelihoods of 60,000 daily East-to-West commuters while causing traffic jams, delays and detours. Overall, the setup included powerful floodlights, 302 watch towers and teams of stern, green-uniformed *Grenztruppen* border guards. Round-the-clock engineering and construction required 40,000 workers.

Mass East-to-West Exodus

What prompted such huge expense and furious effort? Primary answer: an increasingly acute "brain drain." By 1961, an estimated 2,600,000 East German citizens, anxious for governmental democracy and better living conditions, had decided to move west, usually by merely departing through inner-city Berlin's seven border checkpoints. In addition, police and militia reported 5,000 attempted, mostly successfully brazen escapes during the repressive, economically tight-fisted GDR era.

Responding to the crisis on August 12th, GDR premier Hans Modrow ordered the closing of all borders. Hence the Wall's earliest appearance during the evening hours, destined to remain in place for the next 28 years. For visitors entering West-to-East, GDR officials mandated 1:1 currency exchange from deutschmarks (minimum DM 25) to less-favorable ostmarks—no refunds, no matter what the amount.

You'll learn a lot by visiting two permanent exhibitions. The American and Soviet military zones bumped into each other (seldom pleasantly) at Checkpoint Charlie, where Kreuzberg's Friedrichstrasse and Zimmerstrasse intersect. Here the **Mauermuseum** recalls East-to-West escape strategies: tunnels, kites, hot-air balloons, boats and makeshift gliders—also by stuffing fed-up Ossies in little trunks of clunky little Trabi sedans. Admittance: adults €12.50, students €9.50. Friedrichstrasse 43-45, tel. (030) 2537 250; www.mauermuseum.de.

Additional coverage can be found at the no-charge **Berlin Wall Documentation Center**, where Mitte's working-class Bernauer Strasse meets Gartenstrasse. Along with dioramas, digital archives and audio stations, an observation tower provides overviews of what had been a tightly secured system. Bernauer Strasse 111, tel: (030) 467 9866 66; www.berliner-mauer-dokumentationszentrum.de. Get there by transiting to the Nordbahnhof S-Bahn station.

Right after reunification made worldwide headlines, lengthy stretches of the concrete slabs were dismantled. Others fell victim to "wall-peckers," hammering, gouging, chipping and chiseling with a capitalist eye toward souvenir-trade riches. Surprisingly, however, some sizeable sections can still be seen-touched-pondered-photographed. Otherwise, pavement bricks and four kilometers of red-painted *Rote Faden* stripes merely hint at where the Wall was but is no more.

Friedrichshain & Prenzlauer-Berg

A well-known exception is Friedrichshain's half-mile-long **East Side Gallery** facing Spree-canal-side Mühlenstrasse, southeast of Alexanderplatz. Since 1990, this part of the intact Wall has been slathered with 106 anti-establishment paintings, cartoons, scribbled graffiti and rebellious slogans. Elsewhere, at Niederkirchnerstrasse in Kreuzberg, the Wall penetrates basement chambers now known as the **Topography of Terror**, referring to its Third Reich existence as the prison-and-torture netherworld run by Gestapo-SS chiefs Heinrich Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich. Free admittance.

At the eastern edge of Tiergarten greenery, a short restored segment on Ebertstrasse connects two major landmarks of imperial Germany: the **Brandenburg Gate** and the **Reichstag**. Toward the park's opposite side, sightseers aim for half a dozen propped-up weather-beaten slabs on the Stresemannstrasse side of the flashy **Potsdamer Platz** mega-complex.

A 656-ft. Wall remainder slithers beneath the Bornholmerstrasse S-Bahn transit bridge, on the western edge of ex-GDR Prenzlauer Berg. The span became instantly historic when borders were opened at 9:20 p.m. on November 9th, 1989. That prompted a surge of vehicles and 20,000 jubilant pedestrians, crossing in both directions from the two Berlins. Also in Prenzlauer Berg, walls and death strips between Schwedter Strasse and

Schönhauser Allee were replaced—in 1994—by the **Mauerpark**, where 20,000-seat Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn Stadium hosts Bundesliga Fussball matches and Max-Schmeling-Halle is a sports-and-showbiz venue. Here, too, an outdoor flea market draws Sunday bargain-hunters.

For high-tech orienteering, think about borrowing a hand-held GPS gadget called the **Walk the Wall Mauer Guide**—combining 22 touch-screen maps with audio directions. (English version available). Cost is €8 (four hours), €10 (full-day). Rent at Checkpoint Charlie, Brandenburg Gate and on Bernauer Strasse. Perhaps a better alternative for Smartphone users is the $2.99 app "Berlin Wall Walk" downloadable at the iTunes store or by visiting www.GPSmyCity.com.

All Around Berlin

West Germany's capital city was surrounded by an expanded ring of checkpoints and watch towers, amounting to 99 miles/160 km of "outer borders." In 2006, that encirclement became the Berlin Wall Trail. Comprising 14 sign-posted sections and 40 info stations, the hiking-biking route loops through outlying Wannsee, Zehlendorf, Steglitz, Helmsdorf, Schönefelde and other suburban locales.

Contact Berlin Tourism Marketing in Los Angeleles. email: kirsten.schmidt@btm.de; www.visitberlin.de. ■

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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obey speed limits, stop at stop signs and not drive in restricted zones (especially in Italy). These and other violations are being caught on Europe's ever growing army of traffic cameras. Readers report being ticketed in Switzerland for going as little as 2.5 kilometers over the posted limit. In Italy, lost drivers who wander onto restricted streets can be camera-ticketed multiple times within just a few minutes as they circle aimlessly trying to find their hotel. Each ticket is around €100 plus the approximately $50 admin fee the car rental company charges for providing your name and address to the ticket-issuing agency.

Rail Travel: Prices for Eurail passes fluctuate with currency exchange rates, and the Global and Select passes have dropped a few dollars. Last month Switzerland, which adjusts prices less frequently, raised all its pass prices by a small percentage.

As fuel prices increase and the "green" lifestyle takes hold, more Europeans ride trains. It's still not necessary to reserve a seat on most Germany, Austria, Switzerland trains but be careful on holidays, Friday and Sunday afternoons and evenings. France, of course, requires a seat reservation for all TGV trains.

The European rail network continues to expand: City Night Line introduces Karlsruhe-Copenhagen via Hanover, and there are now direct express trains from Frankfurt to Kiev and Moscow via Warsaw. EuroNight routes Salzburg-Zagreb, Salzburg-Budapest, and Dresden-Budapest have been added, and a new direct day train, Munich-Venice, departs at 11:31 and arrives 16:42. The Munich-Copenhagen overnight has been discontinued.

Book a six, eight or 10-day **Eurail Select Pass** through March 30 and get a free day of travel. The second-class **Austrian Rail Pass** is discounted 15-percent if purchased by March 30.

Hotels: Though business rebounded somewhat in 2010 for the major European chains such as **Accor**, **Marriott**, **Hilton**, and **Intercontinental**, it is still far from robust. That means deals in major cities like Berlin, Munich, Vienna, and Zürich can still be found on the "opaque" sites, **Hotwire** and **Priceline** (opaque because the hotel isn't identified until the booking is paid). Be sure to visit sites such as BiddingforTravel.com before making a Priceline bid.

To find smaller, family operated hotels use the *Michelin Red Guides* and Gemut.com's hotel search and booking engine in the upper right hand corner of the Gemut.com home page.

These days there is much more information available about European hotels. Rare—and suspect—is the hotel that doesn't maintain a website. With Google search it's usually a simple matter to find a hotel websites (but a curse upon those that don't display multiple photos of guestrooms or who don't post rates) and quickly get a feel for a hotel before booking. It beats sending away to Europe for brochures which we did up until just a few years ago.

Facebook: For those who want to know us better, share their own travel stories and tips, and also receive frequent updates on special deals and news about European travel, *Gemutlichkeit* now has a page at Facebook.com. If you're not already a Facebook user it will only take a couple of minutes to register. Once you're at FB, search for Gemut.com. Please click the "like" buttons and comment on our posts. In addition to travel info, there are a couple of photo albums of our past travels and of the Bestor family. We welcome your participation. ■

READERS' FORUM

Phone/Internet Advice

Just returned from our 33rd **Oktoberfest**, and a month in Germany. I learned a valuable lesson there: Early in our trip, I used my (T-Mobile) Smartphone, and paid a ridiculous $15 per megabyte fee for emails and Internet. It cost over $200.00 for a few days' use.

A T-Mobile store had nothing to offer to save me any money, so I tried a Vodaphone store. The clerk was very informative (in perfect English), and set me up with a prepaid SIM card for my phone on their "Call Ya" prepaid plan. The SIM card cost €10, and included €10 worth of phone calls in Germany at €0.29 per call.

However, the greatest savings of all is their unlimited Internet for only €14.95 per month. You do have to have an "unlocked" phone in order to use a different company's SIM card, but I had no trouble getting a free unlock code from T-Mobile.

I put an extra €25 into my prepaid account, and went merrily through Germany using the Internet as much as I wanted. I made several phone calls locally, and the call quality was fine.

I don't "text" so I don't know how that would affect the "Call Ya" service, but it would be worth looking into.

There is residual credit on my Vodaphone SIM card, so I'll just top it up when I return to Germany in June 2011.

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