GEMüTLICHKEIT

The Travel Letter for Germany, Austria & Switzerland

Dear Subscriber

The Right Places to Avoid

He is everywhere: on public television, in your local newspaper, and on the shelves of your favorite bookstore. He's a syndicated newspaper columnist, a best-selling travel book author, and host of his own radio show. He tweets on Twitter, regularly posts on Facebook, smiles from every page of his hugely popular website, and his package tour company reportedly sells more than 10,000 tours at an average of more than about $4,000 per person. "He," of course, is Rick Steves, the man who has replaced—and far surpassed—Arthur Frommer as America's leading authority on European travel.

Steves operates his business out of a small town just north of Seattle and, though I've never met him, I suspect that beneath his relaxed, somewhat nerdy façade, lies a relentless drive to succeed and create, abetted of course by a first-class brain. I am told by a former Steves employee that he operates on less than five hours sleep. A friend who was on a flight from Europe with him a few years ago said he worked the entire 11-hour flight.

Ultra-successful, driven, white males are a dime a dozen in our society but Steves doesn't fit the stereotype. While single-handedly building a highly successful brand is pretty routine in America, having the guts to put that success at risk by actively and publicly supporting the legalization of marijuana is not (perhaps you've noticed that a huge percentage of travelers to Europe are over age 50…not a demographic known for its approval of illegal substance use). No doubt it's a stance that has cost him more than a few of those $4,000 per person escorted European tours that are surely his company's top revenue source. Agree with his politics or not, Steves'

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LEIPZIG

After the failure of the East German communist government in 1989, this distinguished old Saxon city had a lot of catching up to do. It found itself far behind the pace set by its own illustrious past.

by Sharon Hudgins

Located at a major crossroads of early trade routes and the junction of three rivers, Leipzig grew from an Imperial trading city in the Middle Ages to an industrial metropolis from the 19th to mid-20th centuries.

Prior to World War II, it attracted artists, writers, composers, philosophers, and religious reformers; all of whom contributed to the city's dynamic intellectual life. It hosted international trade fairs and was home to publishing houses and cotton mills.

All this was stifled by the devastation of World War II and then 40 years of communist rule in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Today, more than two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, and reunification, Leipzig is still closing the gap. Though remnants of communist industrial blight, Soviet-inspired architecture, and environmental damage remain, the city is making fast progress toward regaining its position as one of Germany's most vibrant cities.

Start your visit to this city on the move by exploring its historic center. Get your bearings and a stunning 360-degree view of the city by taking the elevator to the top of the 400-feet-high **Leipzig Panorama Tower**, the city's tallest building, on the Augustusplatz. Afterward, return to ground level to begin the tour. Plan on visiting this "core" of Leipzig on foot, since most streets in the inner city are

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New Autumn Wine

Early autumn is the beginning of the "new wine" season every year in northern Europe. In the wine-producing areas of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Alsace, and Italy's South Tyrol, locals can be found merrily imbibing a cloudy, light-beige liquid that combines the taste of yeast and freshly crushed grapes with the sparkle of champagne and the foam of beer.

by Sharon Hudgins

Neuer Wein, or "new wine," as the term is used in Germany, refers to grape juice that is in the process of becoming wine. It is still undergoing fermentation whereby yeast converts the grapes' natural sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide—and eventually into wine. Since the fermentation process is not yet complete, this "new wine" is lower in alcohol than true wine and still has some of the sweetness of grape juice. The carbon dioxide makes it bubbly.

In Germany and other adjacent wine-producing areas, most new wine is grape juice that's on its way to becoming *white* wine—hence the cloudy-beige color of the drink. Occasionally you'll also find new red (or even rosé) wine, which is mauve to deep dusty-rose in color, produced in some parts of Germany, Austria, and Italy.

Since the fermentation time for wines ranges from approximately two

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Exchange rates as of 8/17/12
1 euro = $1.23
Swiss franc = $1.03
1 gal. diesel, Germany=$7.09

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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books, newspaper columns, TV shows, and his website are reliable, instructive resources for the traveler planning to visit Europe.

Interestingly, his work makes no pretense of being comprehensive. He doesn't cover destinations he doesn't like and, contrary to his apple-pie on-screen persona, he's not an every-thing-in-Europe-is-wonderful kind of travel reporter. He kids that Bordeaux must mean boring in some ancient language, that Athens is "a smoggy mix of cement, traffic noise and tourists," calls Cornwall "a minefield of tourist traps," and is less than enraptured by Geneva and Zürich. So it's no surprise Steves is not held in high esteem by some in the business of European tourism. A few years ago the owner of a Mürren hotel rolled her eyes when I mentioned his name. She and others in the Jungfrau region are puzzled by his enthusiasm for the tiny (pop. 120), somnolent hamlet of Gimmelwald above the Lauterbrunnen Valley. Through the power of his media, Steves has turned it into a minor tourist mecca, despite the Mürren hotelier's contention that "there's nothing there"—except, of course, absolute quiet and stunning alpine beauty.

At about 20 billion francs per year for a country the size of the state of Maine, tourism is vital to Switzerland and the Swiss are sensitive to criticism. A few years ago, following his labeling of Zürich and Geneva as boring cities that should be avoided, Steves was verbally slapped around by *Le Matin*, one of the country's leading daily newspapers: "Americans haven't stopped surprising us. After bringing us fast food now they're bringing us fast travel. First they economize to find time to eat. Now they hurry up to travel." The newspaper called Steve an "effective apostle of fast travel" and a "ruthless American specialist of little assassination phrases." It concluded with a quote from the president of the Geneva Tourism and Hotel industry who said if Steves "is an influence, it is (only) superficial..." (which begs the question: if he is not influential where's the worry?) To his credit, Steves posted all this on his website.

Recently, one of his weekly columns was entitled *Don't go: Places to avoid in Europe*. A few of them were in our three countries. It reminded me of my own list of what's-all-the-fuss-about destinations. In some cases it agrees with Steves.

He takes a few gentle whacks at the Black Forest and, while I wouldn't use the word "avoid," there are many Germany destinations I put ahead of it. (The *Schwarzwald*, however, is book-ended by two lovely towns; Freiburg and Baden-Baden.)

While I join Steves in a yawn at the mention of Geneva, the city's stirring **Red Cross Museum** is worth a special journey.

We disagree about Zürich. I love to stroll both sides of Bahnhofstrasse, observing the street's wealthy shoppers, amazed at the prices in store windows, and ever aware of the billions in treasure that lie beneath my feet. Anchoring the city's marvel of a public transportation system is the giant rail station, the site of which is probably Europe's best indoor Christmas Market. Unlike Steves, I prefer Zürich to Lucerne but my favorite Swiss city is Bern, with the covered promenades, fountains, open squares and arcades of its wonderful *Altstadt*.

We are also on the same page about Interlaken, not much special to see or do in the town itself but it's the gateway to some of the world's most spectacular scenery; the **Bernese Oberland**.

In the canton of Ticino, I much prefer Locarno to better-known Lugano.

Why the rich and famous flock to the fabled resort of St. Moritz has always been a mystery to me; I'd rather headquarter at far more charming and cheaper Pontresina, six miles away.

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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".

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Password: **zigg**

Vol. 26, No. 7 August 2012

GEMüTLICHKEIT

The Travel Letter for Germany, Austria & Switzerland

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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 $69 per year for 10 issues, $49 via e-mail. 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	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

LEIPZIG
Continued from page 1

closed to cars and trucks. Bicycles are the preferred mode of transport here, so watch carefully when crossing the street, even in the pedestrian zone. Leipzig also has an excellent public transportation system, with trams and buses that run around the ring road and beyond to the greater part of the city and to many sights outside the center.

The history of Leipzig is written not only in its archives but also in its architecture, from the 13th-century **Gothic St. Thomas Church** (celebrating its 1,000th anniversary this year), to the many handsome 19th-century *Gründerzeit* buildings, the functional *Plattenbau* pre-fab concrete constructions of the post-World-War II era, and the shiny modern facade of the university's new main building, a 21st-century glass-and-steel cathedral of learning, on Augustusplatz. Although Leipzig is still "a work in progress" as it rebuilds and renovates, the contrast between old and new, functional and decorative, elegant and unrefined, is part of the city's charm.

It's fun to wander this historic city center, taking in whatever fortune sends one's way, from classic buildings to cozy cafes to funky street mimes. Another way to approach Leipzig is to pick a particular theme of personal interest and visit specific sites associated with it.

History buffs will want to start at the **Altes Rathaus** (Leipzig's **Old City Hall**), a beautiful Renaissance edifice dating from the mid-1500s. Inside is a fascinating museum of the city's past, including the **Martin Luther Room** with artifacts relating to the great religious reformer of the 1500s, who visited Leipzig several times. Outside the city center, the massive **Monument to the Battle of the Nations** commemorates 1813 Napoleon's defeat there in a decisive battle fought by 600,000 soldiers from all over Europe. In October 2013 Leipzig will celebrate the 200th anniversary of this famous battle, with historical reenactments by thousands of people dressed in period costumes.

Leipzig Basics

Population: 532,000

Elevation: 387 feet (118 meters)

Tourist Office: Augustusplatz 9 and Katarinenstrasse 8, tel. +49/341-710-4260 or 4265, fax: +49/710-4271, info@ltm-leipzig.de, www.leipzig.de, www.ltm-leipzig.de

Driving distances:

Dresden	116 km/72 mi
Berlin	190 km/118 mi
Hamburg	296 km/183 mi
Nürnberg	271 km/186 mi
Frankfurt	385 km/239 mi
Munich	429 km/267 mi

Nearest airport: A fast train from Leipzig Central Station runs to Leipzig/Halle Airport in Schkeuditz, seven miles (12 kilometers) from the city center. Berlin Linien Bus also provides service to/from the airport.

Rail connections: A major junction on north-south and east-west lines, with good connections from Leipzig Central Station on ICE trains to Berlin and Munich.

Public transportation: A good public transportation system of buses and trams, with Leipzig Card discount tickets available.

Discounts: Leipzig Card, €8.90 for 24 hours' or €18.50 for 48 hours' use on public transportation (buses, trams) and discounts on museums, concerts, sightseeing tours, cafes, and restaurants. Sold at the tourist offices, many hotels, and online (www.leipzig-card.de).

Travelers interested in the recent past should not miss the **St. Nicholas Church**, considered the birthplace of the peaceful protests against the communist government of East Germany in the 1980s. Leipzig prides itself, rightly so, for its part in helping to bring down that repressive regime in 1989. To learn more about what life was like in the old GDR, and how the peaceful revolution changed every Germans' world that year, be sure to visit the **Forum of Contemporary History**, an excellent museum with extensive exhibits ranging from the end of World War II to German reunification in 1990. A related site is the **Museum in der Runde Ecke** (Museum in the Round Corner) in the former district headquarters of the dreaded East German State Security Service, the so-called "Stasi" or secret police.

Music lovers will delight in Leipzig's numerous sites associated with famous musicians from medieval to modern times. The birthplace of Richard Wagner, Leipzig was also a magnet for musicians from Bach to Mozart, Mendelssohn, Bartholdy, Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Robert and Clara Schumann, Mahler, and many more. Start at the **St. Thomas Church**, founded in 1012 and home of the famous **St. Thomas Boys Choir**. Johann Sebastian Bach was choir director from 1723 to 1750, and also conducted other Leipzig church choirs during that period. The new **Bach Museum**, which opened across from the church in 2010, offers interactive exhibits about the composer-conductor's life and works, as well as an extensive music and document archive. To delve further into Leipzig's musical past, follow the **Leipzig Music Trails**, two walking paths and one bicycle route that connect important sites related to the city's musical heritage.

On the spacious Augustusplatz, the **Leipzig Opera House**, home of Europe's third-oldest opera company, faces the contemporary **Gewandhaus Concert Hall** and its world-renowned **Gewandhaus Orchestra**, whose conductor (at the time), Kurt Masur, was a leading figure in the peaceful political revolution of 1989. In keeping with its strong musical heritage, Leipzig hosts numerous festivals throughout the year, from the **Leipzig Bachfest** to **Wave-Gotik-Treffen**, one of the world's largest Gothic festivals, with 150 groups playing music from medieval to new-wave punk.

Art connoisseurs will also find plenty to see in Leipzig. The **Museum of Fine Arts** displays a collection of paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Lucas Cranach, Peter Paul Rubens,

Neo Rauch, Max Beckmann, and others. The recently restored **GRASSI Museum** complex houses three different collections: **Applied Arts and Crafts**, **Ethnology**, and **Musical Instruments**. For a different art experience, head to the former industrial district of **Lindenau** in the southwestern part of the city. The big attraction here is the **Spinnerei**, a group of contemporary art galleries and artists' workshops inside a huge red-brick cotton mill, once the largest factory of its kind in continental Europe. Nearby, the **Plagwitz district** is another industrial area where factories and former workers' quarters are being restored or renovated as art galleries, restaurants, clubs, and attractive apartments for hip young families.

Literary types will want to visit the **Schiller House**, home of the 18th-century German poet, philosopher, historian, and playwright, best-known for his "Ode to Joy" sung in the final movement of Beethoven's 9th Symphony. And who could visit Leipzig without dining at **Auerbachs Keller**, the historic tavern where **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe** set a key scene in his drama, *Faust*? After that, get away from the interiors of the mind by wandering through the greenery of **Zoo Leipzig**, just beyond the busy city center, with its 850 species of animals, many of them living in natural habitats. A new attraction at the zoo is the recently opened **Gondwanaland**, an enclosed rain forest with dozens of tropical plants and exotic animals from three continents.

In addition to the always lively university district around the **Moritzbastei**, Leipzig's nightlife centers on two main areas. Just off the Marktplatz, the **Barfussgässchen** is a block-long pedestrian street of restaurants and sidewalk cafes, now mainly serving the tourist trade. For the more fun, earthy side of Leipzig, head south from the ring road to the **Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse**, with its blocks of restaurants, cafes, and taverns featuring food and drink from Turkey, Spain, Mexico, Russia, Ireland, the Czech Republic, France, and yes, even Germany. During the daytime, this is a lively arts district, too, reminiscent of 1960s hippie America. Regardless where your wanderings take you, Leipzig never ceases to surprise with its juxtaposition of past and present.

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
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- **bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en** German rail website, with train schedules throughout Europe, as well as Germany.
- **www.sbb.ch/en/** Swiss and European rail schedules
- **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.

HOTELS

In a city that has a long tradition of hosting trade fairs and business conferences, Leipzig's hotel rates vary depending on the season, day of the week, and room availability. During trade fairs, hotels are usually booked far in advance, and prices can double the usual rack rate. Value ratings for the following hotels are only approximate, since the price for any particular room can fluctuate considerably, and may not even include breakfast. It all depends on the deal available at the time of booking.

Steigenberger Grandhotel Handelshof

A new member of the reliable Steigenberger chain is the five-star Grandhotel Handelshof, opened in 2011. Conveniently located in the old city center, within easy walking distance of the main sights, this luxurious modern hotel occupies a historic building constructed in 1908-09. Completely renovated inside, the **Handelshof** is a blend of ultramodern decor within the sturdy stone edifice. Editor's Choice

In the glass-covered atrium-courtyard, the futuristic bar surrounded by stone archways takes center stage. One of the arches leads to the **Brasserie Le Grand**, featuring French-Mediterranean food and a selection of more than 170 wines. Weekdays, the restaurant's €12.50 lunch menu is a good bargain. Serious enophiles will enjoy the wine tastings offered in the brasserie's stone-floored wine cellar.

The Handelshof offers 163 superior and deluxe rooms, 14 suites, a spa, fitness center, concierge service, and valet parking. Since guestrooms had to fit the original structure of the building, each is different. All are decorated in a contemporary style with neutral, soothing colors, upscale furnishings and the amenities one expects in a hotel of this category, including air conditioning. Great location, pleasing design, and friendly staff all add up to an Editor's Choice rating for this new hotel.

Contact: Steigenberger Grandhotel Handelshof, Salzgässchen 6, 04109 Leipzig, tel. +49/341-350-5810, fax +49/341-350-581-888, leipzig@steigenberger.de, www.leipzig.steigenberger.com
Daily rates: Superior rooms, from €139; deluxe rooms from €169; suites from €259, presidential suite €2,500.
Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 17/20

Hotel Fürstenhof

Step back into Old-World elegance at **Hotel Fürstenhof**, housed in a neoclassical palace built in 1770, then converted to a hotel in 1889, and luxuriously refurbished in 1993 as a member of the Starwood Luxury Collection group. Located on the ring road that encircles the historic city center, the five-star-rated property features an attractive ground floor with gilded archways, marble floors, lofty ceilings, chandeliers, and tall windows. Editor's Choice

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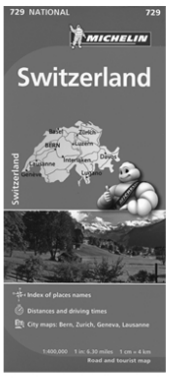

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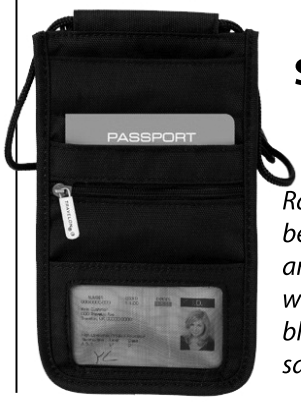

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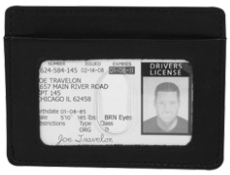

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EURAILPASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
15 consecutive days	$750	$638	$489
21 consecutive days	$967	$823	$630
1 month	$1191	$1014	$776
2 months	$1680	$1429	$1094
3 months	$2073	$1763	$1349

EURAIL FLEXIPASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
10 days in 2 months	$885	$753	$576
15 days in 2 months	$1161	$988	$756

EURAIL SELECTPASS

3 adjoining countries	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
5 days in 2 months	$475	$404	$310
6 days in 2 months	$524	$447	$342
8 days in 2 months	$620	$527	$404
10 days in 2 months	$718	$611	$468
4 adjoining countries	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
5 days in 2 months	$531	$452	$347
6 days in 2 months	$580	$494	$378
8 days in 2 months	$651	$575	$440
10 days in 2 months	$772	$657	$503
5 adjoining countries	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl.	Youth 2nd Cl.
5 days in 2 months	$585	$498	$381
6 days in 2 months	$634	$539	$414
8 days in 2 months	$731	$622	$476
10 days in 2 months	$824	$701	$537
15 days in 2 months	$1045	$889	$681

AUSTRIAN RAILPASS

	1st Cl	2nd Cl	Child 1st	Child 2nd
3 days in 1 month	$236	$166	$120	$85
Avg Extra Rail Day (5 max.)	$27	$19	$14	$9

AUSTRIA-CZECH PASS

	Adult 1st Cl	Saver* 1st Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	$264	$225	$173
Avg Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$ 36	$ 30	$ 23

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	$415	$342	$340	$293	$293
6 days in 2 months	$463	$380	$378	$324	$324
8 days in 2 months	$537	$447	$445	$388	$388
10 days in 2 months	$618	$517	$515	$450	$450

EUROPEAN EAST PASS

Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia

5 days in 1 month	$315 (1Cl)	$217 (2Cl)
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$38	$32

FRANCE RAIL PASS

	Adults 1st Cl	Adults 2nd Cl	Senior 1st Cl	Youth 1st Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
3 days in 1 month	$291	$235	$254	$209	$177
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$ 43	$37	$37	$ 31	$27

FRANCE SAVER PASS

	2 Adults* 1st Cl	2nd Cl
3 days in 1 month	$248	$202
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$ 37	$ 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	$401	$343	$343	$293	$261
5 days in 2 months	$447	$382	$382	$324	$293
6 days in 2 months	$493	$420	$420	$356	$321
7 days in 2 months	$540	$461	$461	$393	$351
8 days in 2 months	$590	$501	$501	$426	$382
9 days in 2 months	$634	$539	$539	$458	$413
10 days in 2 months	$680	$578	$578	$491	$443

FRANCE-SWITZERLAND PASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	$426	$363	$301
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$ 46	$40	$33

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	$344	$263	$210	$265	$194
Avg. Extra Rail Day (7)	$ 42	$28	$15	$29	$21

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	$424	$366	$366	$312	$313
6 days in 2 months	$467	$399	$399	$343	$343
8 days in 2 months	$556	$475	$475	$409	$410
10 days in 2 months	$648	$551	$551	$475	$474

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	$445	$336	$336	$272	$272
Avg. Extra Rail Day (5 max.)	$46	$35	$36	$27	$27

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	$429	$388	$388	$351	$301
5 days in 2 months	$475	$428	$428	$386	$332
6 days in 2 months	$520	$469	$469	$416	$367
8 days in 2 months	$609	$550	$550	$478	$429
10 days in 2 months	$699	$631	$631	$550	$496

GERMANY-SWITZERLAND PASS

	1 Adult 1st Cl.	Saver* 1st Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
5 days in 2 months	$453	$386	$318
6 days in 2 months	$499	$424	$351
8 days in 2 months	$588	$504	$415
10 days in 2 months	$680	$582	$478

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	$279	$228	$239	$196	$186
Avg Extra Rail Day	$33	$27	$28	$23	$22

AUSTRIA-SWITZERLAND PASS

	Adults 1st Cl	Saver* 1st Cl	Youth 2nd Cl
4 days in 2 months	$404	$344	$284
Avg. Extra Rail Day (6 max.)	$ 44	$38	$31

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	$493	$308	$417	$262	$370	$231
8 consec. days	$711	$445	$604	$377	$533	$334
15 consec. days	$862	$538	$732	$458	$647	$404
22 consec. days	$993	$620	$844	$529	$744	$466
1 month	$1093	$683	$930	$581	$821	$513

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	$399	$251	$470	$294
4 days in 1 month	$486	$303	$570	$356
5 days in 1 month	$561	$351	$659	$412
6 days in 1 month	$637	$398	$751	$469

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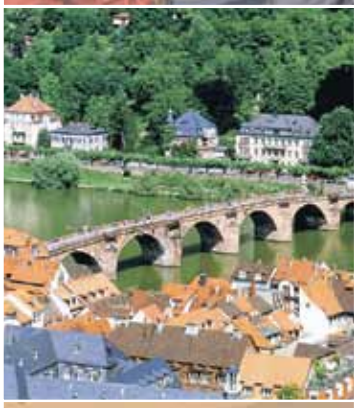

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The hotel's **Restaurant Villiers** exudes the ambience of an 18th-century salon. Degustation menus of four to seven courses range from €62 to €95, more with matching wines included. The **Wintergarten Bar** continues the opulent theme and is a nice place to relax with a cocktail or glass of *Sekt*; the bar also serves coffee and tea specialties, house-made cakes, and petits fours. The **Vinotheque 1770** is a comfortable, modern wine bar offering a choice of 80 open wines from around the world, accompanied by Italian antipasti, Spanish hams, and French cheeses. Be sure to at least take a peek into the richly decorated **Serpentine Salon**, built in 1865, its walls lined with precious green serpentine stone, known as "the marble of the Saxon kings."

The Fürstenhof has 92 rooms (17 singles and 75 doubles, classified as Classic, Deluxe, Grand Deluxe, Suites, and Salons), all well appointed in a traditional, unpretentious style. Every room features green marble bathrooms, air conditioning, wi-fi, mini-bar, and safe. The hotel's basement houses a Mediterranean-styled fitness area, with swimming pool, gym, sauna, spa, and even a bar.

Contact: Hotel Fürstenhof, Troendlinring 8, 01405 Leipzig, tel. +49/341-1400, fax +49/341-140-3707, fuerstenhofleipzig@luxurycollection.com, www.hotelfuerstenhofleipzig.com.
Daily Rates: Classic rooms (for two persons) from €150; deluxe from €170; grand deluxe from €190; and suites €270 to €810 (four to six persons).
Rating: QUALITY 17/20, VALUE 17/20

Arcona Living Bach 14

This new hotel is a modern guesthouse within a complex of buildings across from the **St. Thomas Church** and the **Bach Monument**. It encompasses a Renaissance house, one of the oldest in the city, a newer building erected around 1900, and a recently constructed one on the back side of the hotel overlooking a garden. It opened in 2011 with 52 apartments and rooms (in several categories) all decorated in a contemporary, somewhat whimsical style focusing on musical themes. Room categories are named after musical forms (fugue, sonata, etc.).

A cozy wine bar in the front will entice you explore the extensive wine list—and stay longer to sample the Mediterranean menu, too. Very good location and friendly staff.

Contact: Arcona Living Bach 14, Thomaskirchhof 13/14, 04109 Leipzig, tel. +49/341-496-140, fax +49/341-49-614-600, info@bach14.arcona.de, www.bach14.arcona.de.
Daily Rates: €89-109, breakfast €17 per person.
Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 15/20

Pentahotel Leipzig

The new Penta chain of "design hotels" bills itself as a group of laid-back, "lifestyle hotels" all of which share a similar philosophy and style. The four-star-rated Leipzig member of this group is a 365-room glass-and-steel structure tucked into quiet residential area just outside the old city center. The decor of the public areas is a mix of traditional and contemporary, whereas the rooms themselves are functional-modern, but rather small with upscale marble-and-granite bathrooms.

For those who can live with the combination of a small hotel room, designed mainly for sleeping, and use public areas for relaxing, this could be a good choice.

The Penta includes a pool, fitness area, and sauna, as well as a woody-leathery **Club Lounge** (€40/room extra) where you might feel like you're in an exclusive London men's club (ladies welcome, too).

Friendly, professional staff.

Contact: Pentahotel Leipzig, Grosser Brockhaus 3, 04103 Leipzig, tel. +49/341-129-20, fax +49/341-1292-800, info.leipzig@pentahotels.com, www.pentahotels.com/de/leipzig.
Daily rates: Singles and doubles from €75, junior suites from €105. Breakfast is €19 per person, and underground parking is €14.
Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 15/20

Victor's Residenz-Hotel

This four-star-property is termed a "residence hotel" because it belongs to a group of 12 hotels in Germany that also provide long-term living facilities for the elderly in a wing separate from travelers' rooms. Victor's is in a beautiful 1911 *Jugendstil* building with a modern extension at the back. The lobby features sinuous Art Nouveau paintings, heavy red velvet drapes, red plush furniture, and marble floors. The hotel is strategically located for the visitor, very near the main train station and the major bus and tram lines, on the busy ring road encircling the city. (Ask for a room on the quietest side.)

The 101 rooms (including four suites) are comfortable and attractively decorated, but not air-conditioned. Standard rooms in the older building are spacious, with high ceilings and tall windows overlooking the street. Many in the newer building have a view to the terrace in back. The hotel also features a restaurant with Mediterranean cuisine, a snug Bavarian beer *Stube*, and a *Belle Epoque* restaurant where breakfast is served.

A stay here may be reminiscent of the grand railroad hotels of a century ago.

Contact: Victor's Residenz-Hotel Leipzig, Georgiring 13, 04103 Leipzig, tel. +49/341-6866-0, fax +49/341-6866-899, info.leipzig@victors.de, www.victors.de.
Daily Rates: Singles €105-305, doubles €130-327, suites are €175-352
Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 15/20

RESTAURANTS

Saxon food has a reputation of sitting heavily on the stomach. But there are many good restaurants in Leipzig that serve lighter, more modern fare that poses less of a threat to the waistline.

With two Michelin stars and a superb view over the city, **Restaurant Falco** on the 27th floor of the **Westin Hotel** offers ultra-modern food at two-star prices in a sleek, cool setting. In addition to à la carte offerings, there are also set menus at €144 for five courses and €179 for seven cours-

es (Gerberstrasse 15, tel. +49/341-988-2728, www.falco-leipzig.de).

Located inside Leipzig's famous **Gewandhaus Concert Hall**, the Michelin one-star **Stadtpfeiffer** is another contemporary restaurant with artistically plated food to match. Go all out with the €106 six-course menu featuring several of the restaurant's well known specialties (Augustusplatz 8, tel. +49/341-217-8920, www.stadtpfeiffer.de).

For more familiar regional fare, well prepared and reasonably priced, try the atmospheric **Restaurant Ratskeller der Stadt Leipzig**, in the massive 1905 **New Town Hall** (Lotterstrasse 1, tel. +49/341-123-4567, www.ratskeller-leipzig.de).

Look for these local specialties on restaurant menus and at pastry shops:

• *Leipziger Allerlei*, a mixed vegetable dish of cooked carrots, turnips, cauliflower, asparagus, green peas, and morel mushrooms mixed with egg dumplings, covered with white sauce, and garnished with crayfish.

• *Bachthaler*, a special pastry, and *Bachpfeiffen*, a rich confection, both concocted for the 250th anniversary of the death of Johann Sebastian Bach.

• *Leipzig Räbchen* (Leipzig Raven), ball-shaped doughnut filled with a marzipan-stuffed prune, deep-fried, rolled in cinnamon-sugar, and served hot.

• *Leipziger Lerche* (Leipzig Larks), sweet, almond-paste-filled pastries, with a whole cherry inside (said to represent the lark's heart). These pastries were supposedly created in the 19th century to replace lark-filled meat pies, after the hunting of songbirds was officially banned.

• *Gose*, Leipzig's special top-fermented, unfiltered wheat beer flavored with salt and coriander. Drink it fresh, on tap, at the **Gasthaus & Gosebrauerei Bayerische-Bahnhof** (Bayerischer Platz 1, tel. +49/341-124-5760, www.bayerischer-bahnhof.de).

• Adventurous types might try a *Regenschirm* (Umbrella), which is a Gose beer with a shot of *Leipzig Allasch*, a caraway-flavored liquor that is also served ice cold as a digestif after meals.

And finally, stop for a coffee (a selection of many kinds) at **Zum Arabischen Coffe Baum**, one of the oldest continually operating coffeehouses in Europe and for centuries known as a hangout for artists, writers, and musicians. The building's four floors also house a small restaurant and coffee museum (Kleine Fleischergasse 4, tel. +49/341-961-0060, www.coffe-baum.de).

Auerbachs Keller

For its combination of Old World atmosphere, literary and historical connections, good food, and good drinks, **Auerbachs** has been a "must do" for every visitor to Leipzig for several centuries. Started in 1525 as a secret wine bar for students, the Auerbachs Keller has grown into a major restaurant serving hundreds of guests in several historic dining rooms with massive pillars, vaulted ceilings, and colorful frescoes.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Located beneath the **Mädler-Passage**, one of the 22 covered passageways (shopping arcades) connecting buildings in the central city, the entrances to the restaurant are marked by two large bronze statues, one of Doktor Faust and Mephistopheles (the Devil), and another of Mephistopheles and the students he has bewitched, from Goethe's famous play, *Faust*. Goethe was a regular at the Auerbachs Keller when he was a Leipzig student from 1765 to 1768. Later, a scene in the play was set in the tavern.

The menu is known for its traditional dishes typical of the region. Soups are priced from €3.90-4.70 and the Saxon onion soup (€4.30) is a good way to start. Other starters range from the house-made meat terrine (€7.90) to hot beef tartare based on a traditional recipe from 1876 (€12.50).

Meat and fish main dishes are priced form €12.9 for the excellent *Rinderrouladen* (stuffed beef rolls) with braised red cabbage and Saxon potato dumplings, to medallions of venison in port wine sauce with herbed apricots and wild mushrooms (€24.90). For less substantial dishes, there's a good selection of salads and vegetarian plates. Save room for dessert: *Leipziger Quarkkäulchen*, cheese pancakes with cinnamon ice cream and vanilla-almond sauce, a Saxon specialty (€5.90).

The restaurant also offers a special fixed-price meal (braised meat, red cabbage, and potato dumplings) on weekdays for €9.80 and in the evenings and on weekends for €12.90.

Contact: Auerbachs Keller, Mädler-Passage, Grimmaische Strasse 2 – 4, 04109 Leipzig, tel. +49/341-216-100, fax +49/341-216-1011, info@auerbachs-keller-leipzig.de, www.auerbachs-keller-leipzig.de.
Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Restaurant Thüringerhof

The **Restaurant Thüringerhof** claims to be "the oldest traditional *Gastätte* in Leipzig" and can trace its roots to 1454. It was a popular meeting place of Leipzig luminaries including Martin Luther, Goethe and the composer, Robert Schumann. Prior to World War II it could seat 1,200 guests in 17 rooms, but wartime bombing and subsequent repairs led to its total reconstruction as the "new old Thüringerhof" that reopened in 1996.

Today's customers are served by a friendly staff in a pleasant, traditional-style dining room with vaulted ceilings, butcher-block tables, and dark wood furniture. This is the place for German comfort food. The menu features the food of Saxony, well prepared and served in large portions at reasonable prices. The fixed-price "Thüringerhof Menu" offers three courses of classic Saxon dishes for €18.50: potato soup with sausages; *Sauerbraten* (braised soured beef in a rich sauce) with apple-seasoned red cabbage and very good Thüringer potato dumplings; and a dessert of red berry pudding with vanilla sauce and whipped cream. À la carte main dishes are priced from €8.80 to €17.10. A copiously portioned "Seniors' dish" at €8.90 turned out to be more

than one person could manage: a rich pork goulash with creamed mushrooms and large potato dumplings, garnished with fresh red radish slices and arugula. The half-liters of beer at €3.60 were a good deal, too.

Contact: Thüringerhof zu Leipzig, Burgstrasse 19, 04109 Leipzig, tel. +49/341-994-4999, fax +49/341-994-4933, reservierung@thueringer-hof.de, www.thueringer-hof.de.
Rating: QUALITY 15/20, VALUE 16/20

Gasthaus Barthels Hof

This time-honored Gasthaus is located in an historic mid-18th century courtyard. It's known for a large selection of appetizers made from local ingredients, in addition to the usual menu of classic Saxon foods. The intriguing regional menu includes cold starters and hot soups from €2 to €13, and the Saxon main dishes "with a light touch"—cabbage rolls with ham and tomato foam, €9.70; beef with mustard crust and herbed potatoes, €12.60); hearty *gratins* (€12.40-18.70); rustic cold platters (€9.30-14.50); and irresistible desserts (try the warm chocolate soufflé with melting vanilla foam core, €7.10).

If the choice is too difficult, try the recommended three-course menu (€21.50): an appetizer of goat-cheese-and-tomato terrine and basil soup with roasted mushrooms, followed by stuffed turkey steak with mushrooms and cream cheese on herbed rice with garden vegetables, and ending with warm apple candy baked in filo pastry, served with coffee ice cream.

Contact: Gasthaus Barthels Hof, Hainstrasse 1, 04109 Leipzig, tel. +49/341-141-310, fax +49/341-141-3120, info@barthels-hof.de, www.barthels-hof.de
Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 15/20

Panorama Restaurant "Plate Of Art"

Flying high above Leipzig near the top of the 400-feet-high Leipzig **Panorama Tower**, this restaurant consists of four dining areas with floor-to-ceiling glass windows that look out over different sections of the city.

The eclectic menu spans a variety of cuisines, from German to Italian to South and East Asian dishes. Begin with an appetizer of smoked salmon with cucumber aspic, honey-mustard panna cotta, and sour cream, or perhaps the soft cheese terrine with tomato aspic, black olives and crostini (both €9.80). Main dishes include bison bratwurst with paprika chutney, curry, and roasted potatoes (€19.90), and kangaroo steak with sour cherries, chocolate flan, and rosemary (€21.70). For dessert try the cold strawberry soup with basil ice cream and mascarpone mouse (€7.50).

The three-course "business lunch," Monday through Friday, is €8.90, and Sunday brunch (from 9am to 2pm) is €24.50. Another €3 buys a ticket to the top of the Panorama Tower, with its panoramic view of Leipzig and environs.

Contact: Panorama Tower – Plate of Art, Augustusplatz 9, 04109 Leipzig, tel. +49/341-710-0590, fax +49/341-710-0589, info@panorama-leipzig, www.panorama-leipzig.de.
Rating: QUALITY 11/20, VALUE 10/20 ■

NEW AUTUMN WINE

Continued from page 1

to six weeks (white wines ferment longer than reds), new wine is available only in the autumn, during the grape harvest and the few weeks immediately following, in other words from around mid-August to mid-November (depending on the region, the grape, and the weather).

In the German-speaking areas of Europe, new wine is known by several different names. Some of the terms come from local or regional dialects. Others describe the various stages of the grape fermentation process. And sometimes the exact definition of the term depends entirely on the person to whom you are speaking.

• *Bitzler*, from a word in the German Pfalz dialect, meaning "bubbly" or "effervescent."

• *Bremser*, a term used in the Franconian wine region of Germany, describing new wine in the early stage of fermentation when it's still sweet like grape juice.

• *Federweisser*, meaning "feather-white," a name referring to the wine's light beige color. This is very common name for new white wine in Germany, especially in the Rhineland-Pfalz region. In some places it refers specifically to grape juice in mid- to later stages of fermentation when the liquid is less sweet.

• *Federroter*, or "feather-red," describing the dusty-rose color of new wine made from red grapes.

• *Most* or *Moscht*, another term for fermenting new wine, from the German word for "must," or freshly pressed grape juice. Often used in reference to the grape juice itself or juice in the earliest stage of fermentation, when it's still very sweet.

• *Neuer Wein*, or "new wine," another of the most common, general terms for this drink.

• *Sauser* is what new wine is often called in the Italian Tirol, because the wine "rushes"—*saust*—to your head (and can quickly make you as soused as the term implies).

· *Staubiger*, an Austrian term for fermenting grape juice in the latest stage, after turning from *Most* to *Sturm* to *Staubiger*.

• *Sturm*, an Austrian term for new wine because the wine looks cloudy or "stormy." The Austrians distinguish between *Weisse* (white) *Sturm* and *Schilcher* (red) *Sturm* (fermenting red grape juice from the Styria region of Austria, although *Schilcher* is also the term for completely fermented rosé wine from this region).

• *Süsser*, or "sweet," because not all of the grape sugar has yet been converted into alcohol or carbon dioxide. Referring to grape juice in the earliest stages of fermentation, this term is especially prevalent in the Rhineland-Pfalz and Bodensee (Lake Constance) regions.

• *Raucher*, or "smoky," another name for cloudy new wine, often used in the Rhineland-Pfalz.

• *Reisser*, a term for new wine that has been fermented longer and is not so sweet. The dryness supposedly "pulls at"—*reisst*—or puckers your throat.

• *Vin nouveau*, *Neuer Wein*, and *Neuer Süsser* are all terms that you'll see in the region of Alsace, where both French and the Germanic Alsatian dialect are spoken. In the regional dialect, fermenting grape juice is also known as *Neia Siessa*, *Neier Süsser*, and *Neujer Siesser*.

None of these terms should be confused with the more general French use of *vin nouveau* (literally "new wine") or the famous Austrian *Heurige* (meaning "this year's") wine. Both of these terms refer to new wines in the sense that they are the first *real* wines produced from the most recent autumn's harvest. These are true wines, completely fermented and ready for drinking by mid-November of that harvest year—although many people prefer to wait and drink them the following spring or summer, after the young wines have had more time to age.

So why is *Neuer Wein*—grape juice that's still fermenting in the tank—even sold at all? The vintner might have determined that this particular batch of grape juice isn't going to produce a good quality wine, so it might as well be drunk now. Or a vintner might have an excess of grapes or grape juice that he doesn't have room to make into and store as wine, or that he can't sell for an acceptable price to the big wine cooperatives. So he decides to market the liquid as soon as possible, as new wine. But tradition also plays a big role in the consumption of new wine. What grape harvest in Central Europe would be complete without new wine to fortify the grape pickers and to satisfy locals and tourists alike? New wine is as much a part of the grape harvest season as decorated evergreen trees at Christmas and egg trees at Easter.

For travelers, however, finding *Neuer Wein* is often a matter of serendipity. You're most likely to find it at small wineries that welcome visitors to their courtyards, cellars, and tasting rooms during harvest time. Look for new wine especially along the **Deutsche Weinstrasse** in the Pfalz region, the **Franconian wine route** along the Main River, the **Styrian wine route** in Austria, and the **Vosges wine route** in Alsace—all regions in which the tradition of drinking new wine is most firmly rooted.

Sometimes new wine is also available in local *Gasthäuser* and at autumn wine festivals. It's less common at more upscale restaurants, although I once drank delicious glasses of *Sturm* at the famous **Griechenbeisl** restaurant in Vienna's *Altstadt*. As in many restaurants, it wasn't listed on the menu; one has to know enough about the season and the customs to ask the waiter if they happened to be serving new wine that day. Earlier that same day I'd also downed a couple of glasses of dusty-red *Schilcher* at a wine festival in the pedestrian zone near **St. Stephen's Cathedral**. Since it's available only once a year, during a relatively short time period, new wine is a drink that you'll want to imbibe whenever you come across it—if you like this bubbly brew as much as I do.

Unlabeled bottles of new wine can also be purchased directly from some vintners, or occasionally at open-air markets or wine stores. Drink the bottled new wine within two days of buying it; otherwise it will go flat and lose the zingy taste. Keep bottles loosely covered and stored in the hotel room mini-bar or refrigerator. Bottles corked too tightly will explode.

New wine is customarily served in short fat glasses, or glass mugs, that hold about six ounces of liquid—not in the stemmed glasses used for real wine. It's reputed to be a healthy drink because of the low alcohol content and the B-vitamins from the yeast. But new can also be insidious. Because it doesn't taste very alcoholic, you can easily consume a large quantity of it before the effects suddenly become obvious. Then you'll truly understand why new wine is sometimes called *Sauser*!

It's best to eat something to slow down the heady effect of this bubbly drink. In Germany, the traditional accompaniment to new wine is a slice of *Zwiebelkuchen* (onion tart), eaten hot or at room temperature. Look for little handwritten signs in the windows of regional restaurants or inns advertising "*Federweisser und Zwiebelkuchen*." Just across the border, in the French region of Alsace, new wine is often served with whole walnuts and a slice of country-style rye bread, or with the Alsatians' own version of onion tart, called *tarte à l'oignon* in French (or *Zeewelkueche* or *Zeewelwaia* in the local dialect). And the Austrians like to serve their dusty-red *Staubiger* with roasted chestnuts. Whatever the accompaniment, new wine is an unusual but true taste of the autumn grape harvest season in northern Europe. ■

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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I've also never understood all the attention that's given to Germany's **Romantic Road**. Extending from Würzburg south to Füssen, it runs through and past a number of interesting towns—notably Rothenburg ob der Tauber—but the drive itself is mostly a tour bus-jammed snoozer that in many places isn't the least bit scenic.

Though it's near a spookily gorgeous lake—the **Königsee**—and the immensely popular **Kehlsteinhaus** (**Hitler's Eagles Nest**), the town of Berchtesgaden is of little interest. Stay in nearby Salzburg.

One of Austria's most widely publicized tourist destinations, Innsbruck, has never made my heart leap. Less celebrated Linz also failed to captivate on my first and only visit. Bregenz has little to offer except in July and August when outdoor opera is performed on a floating stage on the Bodensee. The sets are huge and fantastic.

This newsletter is much more about what we like than what we don't, but when popular destinations don't measure up, we've never been shy about letting you know.—RHB ■

Correction: Last month we erroneously reported that the biannual ***Bundesgartenschau*** (German Garden Show) would be in Koblenz in 2013. The event will actually be in Hamburg.