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’ company’s top revenue source.

GEMütLICHKEIT
The Travel Letter for Germany, Austria & Switzerland

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.

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 pedestrian-only.

Continued on page 3...

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.

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

Continued on page 11...

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

www.gemut.com August 2012
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 everything-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 booked 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 shopers, 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.

Continued on page 12...

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 are available free to subscribers at www.gemut.com. To access the issues, enter the password published in this space each month. Go to http://www.gemut.com/csub.html

Password: zigg

Hotel Restaurant Rating Key

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Hotel Rating Criteria

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Restaurant Criteria

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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.
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, cafés, 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.

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 sturdily stone edifice.

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, Salzgiesschen 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 neo-classical 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.
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- **Seattle** $1049
- **San Francisco** $1027
- **Washington DC** $974

Business Class $2700 to $5000

Fares available from all U.S. gateways

**European Auto Rental Germany**

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**Austria**

- **FIAT PUNTO** $262
- **FORD FOCUS** $285
- **VW GOLF (AUTO)** $550
- **MERCEDES B-CLASS** $361
- **SKODA OCTAVIA** $424
- **MERCEDES C-CLASS** $779
- **NISSAN SUV** $509
- **FORD FOCUS WAGON** $370
- **SKODA OCTAVIA WAGON** $458
- **RENAULT TRAFFIC 9-PASS** $933

**Switzerland**

- **OPEL CORSA** $271
- **OPEL ASTRA** $313
- **FORD FOCUS (AUTO)** $456
- **OPEL VECTRA** $512
- **VW GOLF PLUS (AUTO)** $622
- **FORD C-MAX WAGON** $541
- **VW GOLF WAGON** $427
- **SKODA OCTAVIA SW (AUTO)** $632
- **FORD GALAXY VAN** $1310
- **RENAULT ESPACE VAN (AUTO)** $1376

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(Reg. $12.95)

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- Slash-proof strap & side panels.
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(Reg. $69.95)

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$5.35 - $26.99
(Reg. $5.95 - $29.95)

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(10 pack)

$5.26
(Reg. $5.95)

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(Reg. $29.95)

1.25 oz  2 oz  3 oz
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### AUSTRIA-CZECH PASS

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### FRANCE SAVIER PASS

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### FRANCE-SWITZERLAND FLEXIPASS & SWISS FLEXIPASS

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### SWISS SAVERPASS & SWISS PASS

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| 50% discount on rail tickets

### SWISS TRANSFER TICKET

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<th>2nd Cl</th>
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### IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT PRICES: The US dollar prices on this page are based on the euro and are subject to change with currency fluctuation. Pass orders will be processed in dollars, but amounts charged may vary from prices shown on this page.

**Method of Payment** (Visa MC AmEx Diners)

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**TERMS & CONDITIONS:** Prices on this page subject to change. Canceled orders refunded 85% of total charge. Handling fee for cancels is $25. Fax form to 541-488-8468 or mail to: 288 Ridge Road, Ashland OR 97520
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(*** $2000 per couple in select categories if paid in full at the time of booking - Expires October 31)

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800-521-6722 x 2
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 Vinotherque 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, Troendlinning 8, 01405 Leipzig, tel. +49/341-140-0, 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.


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 décor 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 Pentahotel 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.


Daily Rates: Singles 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.


Daily Rates: Singles from €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-
Gose beer with a shot of Leipzig Al-(Umbrella), which is a Regenschirm (Bayerischer Platz 1, tel. +49/341-124-

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 Bachpfeifen, a rich confection, both concocted for the 250th anniversary of the death of Johann Sebastian Bach.
- Leipziger Räuchchen (Leipzig Raven), ball-shaped doughnut filled with a marzipan-stuffed prune, deep-fried, rolled in cinnamon-sugar, and served hot.
- Leipziger Lërche (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 pastries that were supposedly created in the 19th century to replace lark-filled pastries, after the hunting of songbirds was officially banned. 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 terrace (€7.90) to hot beef tartare based on a traditional recipe from 1876 (€12.50).
- Meat and fish main dishes are priced from €12.90 for the excellent Rinderrouladen (stuffed beef rolls) with braised red cabbage and Saxon potato dumplings, to medallions of venison in port wine sauce with herbbed apricots and wild mushrooms (€24.90). For less substantial dishes, there’s a good selection of salads and vegetable plates. Save room for dessert: Leipziger Quarkkäulechen, 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. +49/341-216-1011, 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 Gaststätte 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; Sauерbraten (braised sour 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. A 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.


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, €7.50).

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 stew 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.


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”—saut—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 other of the most common, general terms for this drink).

• 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”—reissl—or puckers your throat.
Neuer Süsser
Franconian wine
in
visitors to their courtyards, cellars, it at small wineries that welcome endipity. You’re most likely to find is often a matter of ser-

Neuer Wein
• 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 Neiurer 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 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.

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 Styr-ian 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 au-
tumn 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 downs 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. 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 bor-
der, 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 Zeeweluaia in the local dialect). And the Austrians like to serve their dusty-red Staubiger with roasted chestnuts. Whatever the accompani-
ment, new wine is an unusual but true taste of the autumn grape har-
vest season in northern Europe.

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 Königssee—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.