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What the good life costs

Samantha Lee, 10.11.99

There's inflation, and then there's inflation. In the past year, the Consumer Price Index went up a mere 2%, but the Forbes Cost of Living Extremely Well Index raced ahead 4%. The price of Thoroughbreds jumped the most, with the average cost of a yearling at the annual auction in Keeneland, Kentucky, rising 21%. Fuel costs, among other things, explain why a round-trip ticket from New York to London on the Concorde shot up 12%.

Some bargains include linen sheets from Italy, off 24% (an import tariff was dropped), and a meal at Paris' La Tour d'Argent, off 3% (the French franc remains weak).

The strong dollar kept the price of a Swiss-made Patek Philippe gold watch at \$10,800, unchanged now for five years. Also unchanged since 1995 is the cost of beluga caviar. Dom Perignon rose 5%, to \$1,319 a case. Yes, it's the Y2K thing.

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