

2021/2022

# 17 SMALL HISTORIC TOWNS IN AUSTRIA

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SMALL HISTORIC TOWNS IN AUSTRIA  
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# EXPLORE EACH TOWN IN 48 HOURS ...

SEE ✨ EXPERIENCE ✨ ENJOY

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| EDITORIAL / MAP                                     | 4 – 5     |
| 1 BADEN bei WIEN The furnished garden               | 6 – 13    |
| 2 BAD ISCHL Tradition and modernity                 | 14 – 21   |
| 3 BAD RADKERSBURG Walking and cycling               | 22 – 29   |
| 4 BLUDENZ A wealth of possibilities                 | 30 – 37   |
| 5 BRAUNAU am INN Charm and comfort on the Inn river | 38 – 45   |
| 6 BRUCK a. d. MUR Nature and culture combined       | 46 – 53   |
| 7 FREISTADT A Varied History                        | 54 – 61   |
| 8 GMUNDEN A stylish town of leisure                 | 62 – 69   |
| 9 HALLEIN A multifaceted insider tip                | 70 – 77   |
| 10 HARTBERG The garden town                         | 78 – 85   |
| 11 JUDENBURG Flying high                            | 86 – 93   |
| 12 KUFSTEIN Cobblestones meet modern urban flair    | 94 – 101  |
| 13 LEOBEN Attractive town with great views          | 102 – 109 |
| 14 RADSTADT A break with a view                     | 110 – 117 |
| 15 SCHÄRDING Baroque treasure trove                 | 118 – 125 |
| 16 STEYR When culture's your fancy                  | 126 – 133 |
| 17 WOLFSBERG Castles, mountains and wolves          | 134 – 141 |
| AUSTRIA CLASSIC TOUR                                | 142 – 143 |



Markus Deisenberger,  
freelance journalist;  
lives and works in Salzburg and Vienna

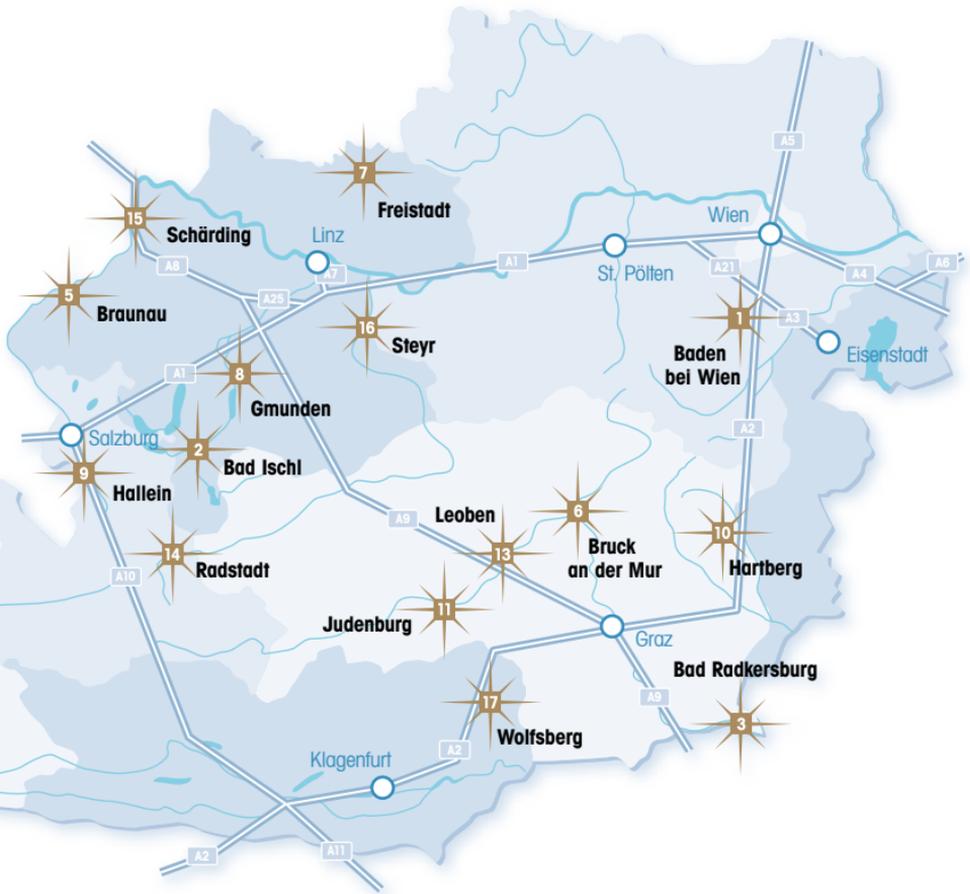
## Dear travellers, connoisseurs and friends of the **SMALL HISTORIC TOWNS** of Austria,

It typically takes about two days for visitors and tourists to get to know a town. With help from tourism experts and local guides I have thoroughly explored each of these seventeen **SMALL HISTORIC TOWNS** and am delighted to offer you my selection of "HIGHLIGHTS" for a two-day visit to each town.



I hope you have an enriching experience in discovering every one of these towns. I am sure you will enjoy the wealth of cultural offerings, spectacular sights, wonderful landscapes, fascinating events and culinary delights as much I did.

Markus Deisenberger



seventeen SMALL HISTORIC TOWNS are waiting to be discovered.



# BADEN BEI WIEN

## The furnished garden

Baden is a spa town, Baden is an imperial town. And, of course, you are expecting a big "but". Yet the cliché that other spa towns and imperial towns have to live with doesn't apply here – boredom is for other places. Baden sparkles with incredible variety.

I love Baden. As someone who has lived in Vienna for over a quarter of a century, I have been here countless times and I love the town not only for its excellent thermal baths, but also because of its beautiful surrounding countryside and rich cultural life. But when I come here to immerse myself in the town for 48 hours, I definitely want to take in the relaxing and healing powers of the sulphurous waters – of that you can be sure.

Its undeniable advantage over other spa towns is that the thermal baths are situated in the centre of town. Leave your car comfortably in the parking garage of the **Roman baths** and if you want to have a walk around the town or a shopping trip, it doesn't need to be moved again – something that will definitely contribute to your sense of relaxation. You could call it a "one-stop shop". I have heard it said that Baden has two natural treasures: one is its sulphur springs and the other is the **Wienerwald**. What



Frauengasse,  
Baden town centre.



© Rainer Mirau

## “... Vienna and the Wienerwald ...

that really meant only becomes clear to me as I stand at Josefsplatz and look in the direction of the Roman baths: the spa building, designed by the same architect as the Vienna State Opera House, rises up in front of you and the forested hills appear directly behind it.

The fact is, if you pay attention, you can always sense the Wienerwald. It is visible everywhere in the town skyline, because – unlike so many cities that are unadventurously located on an even plain – Baden is situated so that there is virtually always a visual connection to the forest.

The transformation from a pure spa town to a multi-faceted city can be seen through the story of the **bath houses** and their usage. There are five large bath houses spread across the town, while the smaller bath houses, which are nowadays too small to remain in operation, have been converted. The Leopoldsbad now houses the tourism office. The women's bathhouse, based on a design by Charles de Moreau, now houses the **Arnulf Rainer Museum**. And that is where I am headed, even before devoting myself to the sulphurous waters. Because, although I am a great admirer of his, I have never seen the museum from the inside before today. This is an oversight that must be fixed. And I am not disappointed: forty years of the great artist's works can be experienced as a journey



© Rainer Mirau

There are plenty of opportunities to taste the region's wines.

## GREAT SPAS *of Europe*

Baden bei Wien nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

through his different artistic phases. Paintings where the colour has been applied using the hands or spatulas, in order to feel art in the true sense of the word, are alternated with the classical overpaintings that made Rainer famous worldwide. The aspects of ugliness and humanity that were his primary focus are always present. The way in which the old bathing machines are used as niches to present the art is very effective. The old disused sulphur bath in the basement is also part of the display.

There are many contrasts, notably between Rainer's somewhat unsettling works and the preserved Biedermeier sculptures. But that is not all: other world-class artists are invited to exhibit here frequently. It wasn't long ago that Damien Hirst's ostentatious art engaged in a dialogue with Rainer's works here. Remarkable, but true. I was also able to experience another kind of dialogue: during my visit, there was an exhibition of works by refugee girls and women from the "House for Women" in Baden. What a place, and what a way to start my tour of the town. After this somewhat demanding art, it is time for some relaxation. The sulphurous waters of the Roman thermal baths help with rheumatic disorders and skin conditions. The architecturally spectacular modern extension of the Baden thermal baths is particularly beautiful: a suspended steel and glass construction ensures that plenty of natural light reaches deep into the interior of the thermal baths. Bitterly cold outside and blissfully warm inside – this is the life. Afterwards you can relax in your robe and lose yourself in a good book – the thermal baths are wonderful that way!

But Baden also gives you an appetite. You will find excellent steaks with great sides at **El Gaucho**, right around the corner. The tamales, based on their own recipe, are not to be missed. But the octopus and blood sausage salad is also divine.

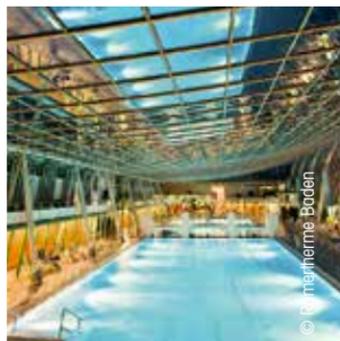
And now for some more culture: Ludwig van Beethoven spent seventeen summers in Baden, three of which were spent in what is now known as the **Beethovenhaus**. The reason for his frequent stays was that, like me, he was a big fan of the thermal baths. But what for me is purely for relaxation was for him somewhat more justified – there was hardly an ailment that he did not suffer from, including gouty headaches, hemorrhoids, and cirrhosis of the liver, to name just a few – not to mention his gradually



Sulphurous water:  
relaxation and healing  
for the stressed.



Arnulf Rainer Museum:  
a journey through the  
artist's creative phases.



Old and modern architectures  
complement each other in  
the Roman baths.

# Small historic town

Some of the composer's important works are displayed in the dining room of the Beethovenhaus.



Beethovenhaus: three of his seventeen summers in Baden were spent here.



A view over Baden bei Wien.

progressing deafness. And the visits seemed to be successful: "I would not have believed in my life that I could be as lazy as I am here", the composer once said about his beloved summer residence. But he was in no way lazy: when he wasn't walking in the Wienerwald for hours on end, he was composing. As a result, some world-famous pieces were written in the humble rooms of what is now a memorial site. A large part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony featuring the "Ode to Joy" is just one of these. This icon of classical music is given its own dedicated multimedia room. You can experience Daniel Barenboim conducting the piece in the Royal Albert Hall, while simultaneously reading along with the 88-page score in both digital and handwritten form – a unique experience for music lovers.

Some of the pieces which the master composed here can be heard at listening stations. I immediately immerse myself in the famous String Quartet No. 15 in A Minor and forget the time entirely. This place is a must-see if you come here; the interactive elements in particular have been prepared with great attention to detail.

The impressions of the Beethovenhaus stay with me for a while – even after I have long since strolled past the



© Lois Lammerhuber

Fascinating pictures – the “La Gacilly” photography festival in Baden.

famous Lanner-Strauss memorial in the spa garden. My destination: the **Beethoven Temple**. Situated roughly eighty metres above the town, this pavilion hosts summer moonlight concerts. Chill-out tunes from classical to jazz are on offer every Saturday from 9 pm, weather permitting. And it is free as well. The gorgeous view that it offers over the lit-up town of Baden is also free. Baden-based Joachim Roedelius, star of the Krautrock movement (Cluster and Harmonia) and later the founder of ambient sound worlds, performed here recently. His “More Ohr Less” festival moved from Lunz am See to Baden in 2016.

But first I soak up the atmosphere of the spa garden and decide that, next time, I’ll attend one of the many spa concerts in my bathrobe. To my left is Baden’s **Summer Arena** where historical operettas are performed – always with a packed audience. Presumably, the audience appreciates being able to experience the music under the starry skies, while still being sheltered if it rains, because the glass ceiling can be closed. The view over the town from the Beethoven Temple really is fantastic: you can see how the wine-growing town of Baden nestles against the Wienerwald. The last rays of sunshine fall across the soft hills – through great locations that are highly valued



© Lois Lammerhuber

Spa concerts still take place today in the music pavilion, just like in imperial times.

## Small historic town



Summer Arena:  
the operetta stage  
in the heart of Baden.



Hotel Herzoghof:  
a lovingly restored  
building from  
the year 1910.



The Rosarium: more than  
30,000 rose bushes across  
over 75,000 square metres.

by the vintners of this spa region. Down there you can also see the **Stadtpfarrkirche** (parish church) where Mozart's motet "Ave verum corpus", written in June 1791 for his friend Anton Stoll, schoolteacher and choir director in Baden bei Wien, was premiered. Constanze Mozart's spa trips resulted in a close collaboration between the two men.

But enough for today. Off to the **Hotel Herzoghof**, which is located in one of the most beautiful art nouveau buildings in Baden. The first big construction phase in the town took place earlier than that, following a big fire in 1812. The Biedermeier buildings that can still be seen today date from this period. The density of villas is unusual for a town of this size.

The next day begins for me with a walk through the Baden **Rosarium**. Across 75,000 square metres, over 30,000 rose bushes in more than 800 different varieties bloom during the Rosentage (rose festival), which takes place every June with a programme of fun and informative events. Many Baden residents picnic here or hire a boat from the boat rental store and row across the pond. The Helenental cycle path runs directly from the Rosarium, and I use this to cycle out of the city in the direction of the Wienerwald. My tour takes me through the historic town of Mayerling to Alland and back again.

Refreshment awaits me at the Cafe des Kaiserhauses. Here Herwig Gasser offers a particularly fine selection of baked goods. If you listen carefully, you can hear rehearsals of The Count of Luxembourg coming from the nearby Stadttheater. In addition to a focus on operettas, a collaboration with the Schauspielhaus Wien ensures that, in addition to operettas and musicals, more contemporary pieces are also on the programme. And the Max-Reinhard-foyer pays tribute to the Baden-born man with a small function room. The Lumpentür (door of the drunks), a historical attraction, is also not far away: in the olden days, the city gates would be locked at a certain time. Because, like today, the wine taverns were situated outside of the city walls, anyone who was "lumpen" (a bit worse for wear) would have to walk back to the city early in the morning through this low door. It is easy to imagine Mozart, who was known for being a bit of a libertine, stumbling through here arm-in-arm with his friend

Anton Stoll. My visit is coming to an end. And now I find out that Baden also has a "Naschmarkt" (snack market). What used to be purely a produce market now also offers cuisine: fresh and healthy food, regional delicacies, and a top-quality fishmonger who used to operate out of the Vienna Naschmarkt.

Relax, enjoy some art, and eat good food. Baden is a place of relaxation that you can visit many times in a year, and that is exactly what I envision for myself. With a bottle of Baden wine and some delicious Beethoven pralines, I embark on my journey home promising to return. To hear Roedelius by moonlight, to visit the Baden Hauervinothek winery and taste the region's wines, or to go out boozing in one of the typical wine taverns in which Mozart might even have once enjoyed a tipple – who knows?

#### Further recommendations:

**The La Gacilly Baden photography festival:** The biggest open air photography festival in Europe takes place in the town of Baden near Vienna from June to September. The best photographers in the world present a fascinating range of images at an open air gallery which is four kilometres in length, in which garden design and photography design blend together. With the aesthetic magic of 36 picture stories in 2,000 photographs on canvas screens which are up to 300 m<sup>2</sup> in size, the gardens, side streets and squares transform Baden into a "picture town".

**Genussmeile:** The longest bar in the world! You can walk along the 1. Wiener Wasserleitungswandersweg (1<sup>st</sup> Viennese waterway footpath) between Mödling and Bad Vöslau enjoying the wines and local delicacies of the region.



Tourist Information Baden  
Brusattiplatz 3, A-2500 Baden bei Wien  
Tel. +43 22 52 868 00-600  
[www.tourismus.baden.at](http://www.tourismus.baden.at)

#### THINGS TO SEE

**Arnulf Rainer Museum**  
[arnulf-rainer-museum.at](http://arnulf-rainer-museum.at)

**Beethovenhaus**  
[beethovenhaus-baden.at](http://beethovenhaus-baden.at)

**Fotofestival**  
**La Gacilly Baden-Photo**  
[festival-lagacilly-baden.photo](http://festival-lagacilly-baden.photo)

#### THINGS TO DO

**Casino Baden**  
[casinos.at](http://casinos.at)

**Bühne Baden**  
[buehnebaden.at](http://buehnebaden.at)

**Roman baths Baden**  
[roemertherme.at](http://roemertherme.at)

#### EATING AND DRINKING

**Marktamt**  
[marktamt.at](http://marktamt.at)

**El Gaucho**  
[elgaucho.at](http://elgaucho.at)

**Cuisino**  
[casinos.at/de/baden/restaurants](http://casinos.at/de/baden/restaurants)

**Herwig Gasser – Süßes vom Feinsten**  
[suessesvomfeinsten.eu](http://suessesvomfeinsten.eu)

#### WHERE TO STAY

**Hotel Admiral**  
[hotel-admiral.at](http://hotel-admiral.at)

**Hotel Herzoghof**  
[hotel-herzoghof.at](http://hotel-herzoghof.at)

**At the Park**  
[atthepark.at](http://atthepark.at)

**Hotel Schloss Weikersdorf**  
[schlossweikersdorf.at](http://schlossweikersdorf.at)

**Hotel Sacher Baden**  
[hotelsacherbaden.com](http://hotelsacherbaden.com)

#### SHOPPING

**Baden city centre**  
[baden.at](http://baden.at)

**Badener Zuckerlecke**  
[katiescakes.at](http://katiescakes.at)

**Badener Hauervinothek**  
(wine)  
[hauervinothek.at](http://hauervinothek.at)

**Produce market**  
**fruits, vegetables**  
**& delicatessen**  
Brusattiplatz,  
2500 Baden bei Wien



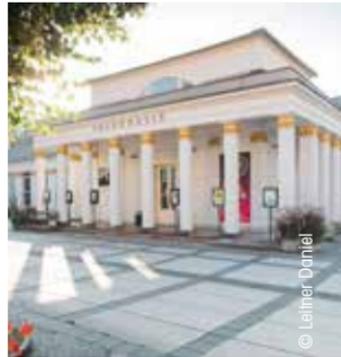
# BAD ISCHL

## Tradition and modernity

Bad Ischl is an imperial town and a first-class spa resort. The many parks and day trip options in the surrounding area make it easy to understand why the greatest composers and poets of the Danube Monarchy came here for rest and relaxation.

"You have reached your destination. Take a break from your everyday life." It's with pleasure that I accept this invitation, which is displayed across the parking lot of my hotel, park my car, and decide to head into the town. However, I find it difficult to leave my room, due to the spectacular view of the town and river from my balcony. Across the way is an enticing-looking restaurant with an outdoor dining area. It's called "Attwenger" and I promise myself that I will stop in for a bite to eat at some point during my stay.

The **Trinkhalle** in central Bad Ischl is the perfect starting point for a tour through the "Emperor's Living Room", the nickname of the largest town in Salzkammergut due to its closely intertwined history with the Habsburgs. At one point, the building, which was designed by the Viennese architect Franz Xaver Lössl and modelled after a Greek temple, was used as a saltwater spa. Today it serves as an event venue and houses the tourism office.



As a "place that welcomes visitors", today, the Trinkhalle is the town's main cultural centre.



© OÖTourismus

The Kaiservilla: where Franz Joseph spent sixty summers.

“... imperial and eventful ...

It's hard to believe it was almost two hundred years ago that the first spa guests came to Bad Ischl. The town owes its rise from a small saltern to an imperial spa resort to Franz Wirer, a Viennese physician who initially tested the effects of salt baths on ill miners and, when the results proved to be successful, rolled out his remedy to the rest of the population. After the previously childless Archduchess Sophie became pregnant immediately after her spa treatment in Ischl, the success of her salt therapy led to Franz Joseph and his two brothers being named the “the three salt princes”. From then on, everybody who was anybody wanted to come here for their “summer retreat”, and Bad Ischl became the most popular summer residence of the Viennese aristocracy. Chancellor Metternich, Franz Joseph himself, and the emperor's wife Sisi all came to Bad Ischl, and with them came the empire's most famous artists of the age, most notably Johann Strauss, Franz Lehár, Johannes Brahms, and Anton Bruckner.



In memory of the “Emperor of the Operetta”: the Lehár bust in the Kurpark (spa garden).

If you walk through the magnificent **Kaiserpark** up to the Kaiservilla today, you can see the abundance of buildings that once served imperial purposes, such as the stables and the imperial kitchen, and can imagine how enormous the court must once have been, with tents pitched on the grounds summer after summer. The **Kongress- & Theater-Haus**, which was renovated in 1999, organises conven-

tions, seminars, and celebrations of all kinds. Year after year, thousands of operetta lovers travel to Bad Ischl to attend the Lehár-festival, which takes place here every summer. With operettas such as "Die Fledermaus" or "The Merry Widow", the festival shows the classics, but it also contributes to the revival of lesser-known pieces with the performance of earlier works such as "The Mock Marriage".

The **Kaiservilla**. The Emperor spent sixty summers here – hard to imagine in the globe-trotting age we live in today. You don't have to be a monarchist, amateur historian, or have seen all the Sisi movies in order to get your money's worth here – the abundance of exhibits on display is absolutely breath-taking. Two thousand hunting trophies alone can be found in the house. Also displayed are private belongings such as the Emperor's lederhosen and toiletries, including the washbasins that are now coming back into fashion, in addition to plenty of gifts from foreign dignitaries. These include a horn from a Hungarian grey ox, from which wine was drunk, and Ottoman smoking pipes. But there are also all kinds of curiosities to be seen: a sedan chair, for example, on which those in power let themselves be carried up the mountains. But to be honest, even the beautiful star-patterned Ischl parquet floors make the visit worthwhile. However, the greatest impression is made by those objects that are connected to certain historical events, such as the table on which Franz Joseph signed the declaration of war against Serbia, or the pillow which was laid under the head of the Empress after her attempted assassination, the pillow on which she breathed her last breath. Yet this place isn't defined only by loss and tragedy, but also by female self-empowerment. This is the place where Empress Sisi gave her husband the so-called "Ischler Ultimatum", a document calling for the free determination of her children's upbringing, and free determination of residence. She was subsequently granted both.

In the former **Teehaus der Kaiserin**, a lavish marble palace, the subjects of the interesting exhibition include Sisi and the House of Habsburg, court culture, the history of fashion and lifestyle and the phenomenon of summer retreats. After that, anyone who wishes to follow in the footsteps of the Empress can climb the **Jainzen**, which isn't very far away. The Empress was said to have climbed her favourite mountain almost every day that she was in Bad Ischl.



© Leithner Daniela

The magnificent Kurpark is just one of the many reasons why Bad Ischl won 1<sup>st</sup> place in the 2016 Entente Florale, an international flowers competition.



© OOTourismus

The lovingly restored dining room of the Kaiservilla.



© Ischhofer.at

The little marble palace in the Kaiservilla park.



A panoramic view of Bad Ischl.

But the empire also left its mark in the centre of the town. The concentration of coffee houses is remarkable. In addition to **Café Konditorei Zauner**, which is famous for its pastries, a number of other cafés are well worth visiting, such as Café Ramsauer, which has been family-owned since 1826. On the basis of its excellent reputation, I decided to eat lunch at Zauner. The chef promised me delicious, traditional Austrian fare. And he kept his word. The Emperor, who became engaged to Sisi right here in the **Salzfertiger-Haus** on the esplanade, would no doubt have also enjoyed the classic pancake soup and roasted veal liver, which was wonderfully tender.

After the Zauner – whether you were here for lunch like me, or just for coffee and cake – and the purchase of one of the famous Zauner stollen, a walk along the **Esplanade** is recommended. When the harbour was no longer needed in Bad Ischl, a marvellous avenue of chestnut trees was planted. The author Karl Kraus once bitterly complained that here he met all the people he tried to avoid in Vienna. In fact, it must have been like a small version of the **Kärntner Straße** in Vienna, as everybody who was anybody would promenade up and down the street. Today there are freshly planted linden trees, the tops of which should form an archway when they eventually grow together. Strolling underneath the trees along the River Traun is a great idea, especially on hot summer days.



© Café Konditorei Zauner

Café Konditorei Zauner: home of the legendary Zauner stollen.



© Wolfgang Stadler

Shopping at the Bad Ischler Originals.



© Lechner Dornel

The esplanade:  
strolling along the Traun.

My first impression of Bad Ischl is that it is like one big park; a town-sized flower garden. This impression is partly due to the fact that the town hosted the 2015 **Landesgartenschau** and invested several million Euros into garden maintenance. It has certainly paid off: the first place prize for the Entente Florale 2016, a Europe-wide competition to increase quality of life and living, was awarded to Bad Ischl at a prize-giving in Brunn. The imperial town received the best rating ever awarded to a participant. Now it can't be doubted: the quality of life here is excellent.

Something else occurs to me: on the doors of some shops, I have come across "Bad Ischler Original" stickers. I have been told that the "Bad Ischler Originals" form a federation of artisan and craft businesses as well as general retailers and restaurant owners. Together, they invite visitors to shop and enjoy themselves.

But now it's time for something rustic, so I'm taking a cable car up Bad Ischl's local mountain, the **Katrin**. Our certified tour guide and Bad Ischl local, Luzia Gamsjäger, explains that the cableway has been rattling up and down this path for a long time. By changing from a year-round operation to a predominantly summer operation, it could be maintained and further expanded. Which makes sense; after all, Bad Ischl is a classic summer holiday destination. Some people make the trip in winter

#### CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2024

Bad Ischl has been named "European Capital of Culture 2024". Under the slogan "Kultur ist das neue Salz" (Culture is the new salt), the Salzkammergut has thereby proved itself to be a cultural region that stands for innovation, courage and the desire to shape its own future.



The town museum  
of Bad Ischl.

## Small historic town



Hiking on the Katrin.



The Siriuskogel is a popular excursion destination for the residents of Bad Ischl.



The Lehárvilla: the master composed thirty of his works here.

as well, but this is less common. Sport equipment is not allowed to be transported because the piste is not officially approved for winter sports. This attracts off-piste skiers, who stay longer because the small chalet, **Katrin Almhütte** is open until 22:00. It is very cosy here, and the view of the Dachstein Massif is unbelievable. The sheer impact of this spectacle will touch the heart of any nature lover. Ms. Gamsjäger also tells me that there is a via ferrata. And at the end of an excellent outing, she recommends that I head to the k.u.k. Hofwirt, which is well known for its good, simple Austrian cuisine. Afterwards, she says, I should simply head over to the adjacent **k.u.k. Hofbeisl**. According to the Salzkammergut native, this bar is nice – every song is a good one and the crowd is pleasantly mixed.

Thanks for the tip! As soon as I enter the Hofwirt, I am happy to find that jazz music is playing – a welcome change from the ubiquitous commercial radio broadcasting. Freshly tapped Augustin beer in a clay beer stein and an excellent steak do the rest to allow me to relax into the evening. In the k.u.k. Hofbeisl, tourists and locals meet and chat with one another. It is just what a bar should be: alive, atmospheric, and jolly.

After a delightful breakfast in my hotel, the **Siriuskogel** is my next destination for the day. It's only 130 metres tall and it takes a twenty-minute journey to reach the restaurant, where it's still a little bit too early for its culinary delicacies. What a shame. Nonetheless, I enjoy the incomparable view over Bad Ischl and the Ischl countryside to the fullest. However, given the fact that there is an animal enclosure and an adventure playground, I regret not having brought a child with me.

Back in the town, I decide to visit the Lehárvilla and **Lehárvilla**. Lehár composed thirty of his works here in Ischl. He earned so much money from "The merry Widow" that he was able to buy himself a house: the Lehárvilla. It is now a museum and, in addition to personal memorabilia, valuable paintings, and furniture, it also houses an excellent art collection. The Nestroyring, one of the most renowned prizes in Austria, awarded for acting performance and satirical critical thinking, is given once a year in the Lehárvilla, which now houses a cinema.

Keeping my earlier promise to myself, I stop in at Attwenger for lunch and learn that Bruckner was also a regular customer here. Local trout in almond butter makes my impending departure even more difficult. I receive a blessing for my upcoming journey home from the parish church of St. Nicholas, which proves to have been a good move, as the majestic organ on which Bruckner played when he resided here was being tuned while I was there. A truly unique experience.

What remains is my certainty that I am not here for the last time. I'll be back, if "only" to enjoy a spa treatment, or finally to have a custom pair of lederhosen made. One that will last for life.

#### Further recommendations:

**Goldener Ochs:** four-star hotel with an excellent restaurant that is known for its fish and game dishes. Franz Lehár also enjoyed eating here.

**Kaisertage (Kaiser festival) 11 – 18 August:** the 18<sup>th</sup> of August is the celebration of the Emperor's birthday, when Habsburg nostalgia fills the whole town.

**Bittner Hüte:** one of the most traditional milliners in Austria. Traditional and hunting hats have been made here by hand since 1862.

**EurothermenResort Bad Ischl:** The right place to combine relaxation, wellbeing, and tranquility.



Tourismusverband Bad Ischl  
Auböckplatz 5, A-4820 Bad Ischl  
Tel. +43 6132 27757  
office@badischl.at, www.badischl.at

#### THINGS TO SEE

**Kaiservilla & Kaiserpark**  
kaiservilla.at

**Town Museum**  
stadtmuseum.at

**Lehár Villa**  
stadtmuseum.at

**Villa Rothstein/PKS**  
viktor-schauberger.at

**Museum of Vehicles,  
Technology, and Aviation**  
fahrzeugmuseum.at

**Casino Keller**  
cafe-casino.at

#### THINGS TO DO

**Hausberg Katrin**  
katrinseilbahn.com

**Siriuskogel**  
siriuskogel.at

**EurothermenResort Bad Ischl**  
eurothermen.at

**City tours**  
badischl.at

#### EATING AND DRINKING

**Landgasthaus zur Nocken Toni**  
nockentoni.at

**Grand-Café u.  
Restaurant Zauner**  
zauner.at

**k.u.k. Hofbeisl zu Ischl**  
kukhofbeisl.at

**Stehbeisl**  
stehbeisl.at

#### WHERE TO STAY

**Hotel Royal**  
eurothermen.at

**Goldenes Schiff**  
goldenes-schiff.at

#### SHOPPING

**Trachten Schauer** (est. 1895)  
schauer-modern.at

**Bittner Hüte** (est. 1862)  
bittner.co.at

**Tausch Lebkuchen**  
ischler-lebkuchen.at

**Lodenfrey**  
lodenfrey-badischl.at

**Bad Ischler Originals**  
badischloriginal.at

**Ischler Gulden/  
Shopping cart coins**  
badischl.at



# BAD RADKERSBURG

## Walking and cycling

With a well-preserved Old Town centre with a Mediterranean flair, bubbling thermal springs, and cosy wine taverns serving top wines from local wineries, Bad Radkersburg has transformed itself from a medieval trading town into a health resort and tourist destination.

I have only been here for ten minutes when I make my first shopping purchase – this is definitely a new record for my town tours. But when I see a stall selling pumpkinseed oil at wholesale prices, I can't pass it by without buying a generous supply of this liquid gold. It is not only pumpkinseed oil that is on offer here at the Friday market – its companion the scarlet runner bean is also for sale, as are other delicacies from the farms and farm shops of the region, including pumpkin products, fruits, fruit juices, meat, sausages, vegetables, and more. Once again I'm in luck, having arrived in town on the day that the **main square** turns into a market, and the whole town is up and about. So I wander from stall to stall – an activity that, in Bad Radkersburg, is synonymous with immersing oneself in its history, as the town's market tradition is a very old one. In the late middle ages, the town, situated as it was at the crossroads of important trade routes, was one of the most important trading centres in Styria. The fact that



The three-storey heritage-protected renaissance arcade courtyard of the Herberstorff Palace is pure romanticism.



“... wines, guilds,  
and culture ...

it was exempt from taxes and tolls, and had a wine pre-emption right, also helped turn the town into a trading hub over the centuries. And this must all have taken place in the market square in those days – I am told that honey and other commodities were sold here by the ton, week in and week out.

Bad Radkersburg, which is located close to the Slovenian border, also held strategic importance. Its massive, well-preserved **circular walls** with their bastions and ‘curtains’ (the name for the parts of wall between the bastions) are still impressive today. Indeed, the townscape of today looks essentially like it did in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the local ruler ordered the town to be constructed. The good condition of the fortifications is also due to the fact that they were modernised by Italian master builders in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Domenico dell’Allio, who also built arsenals and fortifications in Graz, was personally responsible for the restorations.



Kultursommer in July and August: music, literature and cabaret take over the town.

You can get a sense of the imposing Renaissance fortifications at the **town fountain**, the shape of which is based on the fortifications. A walk around the fortifications strengthens this impression.

Some of the well-preserved bastions, now covered in greenery, can also be reached on foot. The one that I visit, for example, offers a wonderful view of the **Mur** and of the Slovenian town of Oberradkersburg, which is called Gornja Radgona.

A very strict policy of **historical protection** is responsible for the excellent preservation of the Old Town. It is no coincidence that this city received the European Gold Medal for the protection and care of historical sites in 1978. In all of Bad Radkersburg there is not one plastic window frame or modern set of blinds to be found – instead you will exclusively find carefully installed wooden window shutters and highly detailed, artistic flower decorations. Not a single gable faces the street, which indicates how large and beautiful the inner courtyards must be – a presumption that I later confirm.

My hotel proves itself to be a stroke of luck – the “Sporer” is a spa hotel located in the Old Town. I have nothing against hotels that are situated directly by spas – most of them are very comfortable – but personally I always prefer a dense, town environment to the usual spa environment of hotels, parks, and carparks. And in addition to a spa package, the entry to the Parktherme thermal spa is included in the hotel price. The name “Sporer” (meaning “spurrier”, or someone who makes spurs) harks back to a time when the town was still organised into guilds.

The **Museum im alten Zeughaus** (museum in the old arsenal) is directly next door. It has various exhibits that are worth seeing, and its inner courtyard, with its two-storey arcades, is one of the town’s most impressive, and also serves as an example of the influence of the Italian master builders.

After checking in, hunger starts to creep up on me. How lucky that there is a traditional inn on the same alley as the hotel and museum, in the form of the Metzgerwirt. As its name suggests, it has its own butchery, or Metzgerei – always a sign that the meat is locally slaughtered and



The fountain on the Hauptplatz shows the shape of the Renaissance town walls.



Historical protection is very important in Bad Radkersburg. And the result is a beautifully preserved town.



© pixelmaker.at

fresh to the table. However, I go for the locally-sourced wels catfish. And it hits the spot. I have rarely tasted such a tender, white-fleshed wels catfish. As we are in “**pumpkinseed country**”, it goes without saying that the crunchy pumpkin crumb is delicious.



© Eisenberger

The nave of the three-aisled gothic basilica arose out of a former military tower.

But back to the history of the town: turbulent times, characterised by fires and other disturbances, resulted in its gradual decline as a trading town. The **Stadtpfarrkirche (town parish church)** still bears the marks of the extent of this destruction, as one doesn’t ascend to it as one normally would, but descends because the rubble was simply spread out rather than removed. The nave of the three-aisled gothic basilica rises out of a former military tower. There is a fragment of a fresco by Johannes Aquila on the outer wall of the church.

More of his work can be found in the **cellar of the Pistor-kaserne**, for which the tourist information service has a key. A little later, armed with a key and a torch, I descend into the cellar where the oldest secular frescoes by the master await me as a reward for my efforts.

The paintings were only found and uncovered in 1951. The vaulted ceiling is decorated to look like a starry sky. With vivid images, the walls depict tournaments, a stag hunt, a love garden, “cat and mouse” designs, the storm-

ing of a city, and a battle scene. In the area near the floor, the painting has been destroyed over the centuries, but the sight is fascinating enough as it is, and I can hardly tear myself away.

After a short shopping trip through the town centre, I decide to take the advice that has been given to me sooner or later by every local I have met here: I drive to a **Buschenschank (wine tavern)**, and not just to the nearest one, but to the Markowitsch. The mild climate and fertile volcanic soil contribute to the fact that the **Tieschen und Klöch** growing areas, the region of the renowned Traminer wine grapes, produce top wines every year. Wine-growing has a long tradition in Bad Radkersburg, and can best be appreciated on a wine walk through the Klöch Traminer way, the Weg der Riede Tieschen walking path, or by purchasing a snack and a glass of wine in a wine tavern. Here I enjoy not only the homemade spreads, marinated scarlet runner bean salad, and home-smoked trout, but also the really welcoming hosts, who make one's stay as enjoyable as possible. Insider tip: **Heckenklescher**. This does not – as is mostly meant in the Austrian language – refer to an inferior and acidic wine, but rather to a hybrid type of grape that has traditionally been grown in hedges against the warm wooden walls of a house. The taste is not dissimilar to Uhudler, and it really is quite moreish. After that, I head off to the Urbani-Vinothek and the Rathaus-Stüberl for a nightcap of some sort.

The next day, a long-awaited cycle trip is on the agenda. It takes me over the Mur bridge, which was reopened on 12 October 1969 following the destructive conditions of two world wars. This reopening led to closer relations between Austria and the former Yugoslavia, now Slovenia, into which the bridge leads. There I cycle along the Mur. Once there were 94 mills along this river, and the **Babič-Mühle presso** dates back to this time. My tour confirms why Slovenia is known as one of the "greenest" travel destinations in Europe, and the hills and valleys contain some really demanding routes. The famous **vineyards** of the Ljutomer-Ormož region are worth every visit. A wonderful view awaits you at the top of the village of Jerusalem. And in the baroque church of St Maria is the image of the sorrowful mother of God from Jerusalem, brought back by knights from the Crusades, after which the village was named.



A Brettljlause (a platter of local meats and cheeses) in the local wine tavern, together with a good glass of wine. This is the life.



The wine region surrounding Bad Radkersburg offers recreation aplenty.



© pixelmaker.at



© Harald Eisenberger

Outdoor pool at the Bad Radkersburg Parktherme.



© pixelmaker.at

Enjoy the start of spring with the "Anradeln" event.

Back in the town, the pronounced cobblestones create a definite "Paris-Roubaix" feeling. Here the cobblestones are called "Murnockerl". Past the imposing **Russian monument** stands the bath house. This is the spring of the healing thermal waters. With a mineral content of approximately 9,000 mg per litre, it is one of the most mineral-rich springs in Austria. They searched for oil here in the 1930s. But to no avail. The "only" thing they found was the acidulous spring, that is to say, the mineral water that is now commercially available under the brand "Long Life". The health-promoting effects of the water were only discovered over twenty years later, following more detailed analysis.

In the 1970s, they finally began to drill for thermal waters here. However, it took a whopping 2,000 metres rather than the projected 1,600 metres to reach the spring. The fact that the town almost went bankrupt in the process is now merely a side note. But in those days, the project caused more than one sleepless night for those in charge. With a huge pressure of 17 bar, the water now reaches the surface from a depth of two kilometres. The temperature of the spring is 80 °C, and is cooled down to between 34 and 36 °C. The excess heat is used in an environmentally friendly way. But that's enough learning – now it's time for doing. For a couple of hours I enjoy relaxing in the wonderful Parktherme, which was selected as the Spa of the Year several times. My highlights: a 50-metre outdoor swimming pool that was almost empty of people when I visited – a luxury for someone coming here from Vienna. And a great slide that leads from the inside to the outside area, which plenty of adults also don't consider

themselves above using. Great regional cuisine is on offer in the Türkenloch restaurant. A cosy vaulted ceiling and the many seasonal mushroom dishes on offer mean that I stay longer than I had planned.

There is no question that Bad Radkersburg will see me again. Perhaps for the "AnRADeln", an event at which all of Radkersburg, as well as visitors, leap onto their bicycles to celebrate the start of spring with cycle trips of varying lengths and intensities. Or at the latest for "Flanieren und Radieren" (walking and cycling), a music and food festival that takes place over the whole summer, inviting guests to wander through the town when the weather is nice to attend various events. And every Austrian knows what a "cyclist" is: a person in a state slightly beyond tipsiness, brought about by too many glasses of Heckenklescher.

#### Further recommendations:

**Herberstorff Palace:** The 1583 building possesses the most beautiful renaissance arcade courtyard in the town.

**Bevog Brewery:** With all this wine, one also shouldn't forget the wonderful craft beer made by this small brewery. A 45-minute tour follows a tasting of various beers with bread rolls from local farms.

**Murauen:** The Mur meadows form the second-largest contiguous riparian area in Austria after the Hainburger meadows and the Natura 2000 network. The wet meadow landscape along the Mur was made a UNESCO biosphere reserve in 2019.

**Die Spezerei:** Here you can experience a cross section from the region – from woolly pig to fine cheeses, together with juices from farms of a fine drop of something.

#### THINGS TO SEE

**Herberstorff Palace**

**Stadtpfarrkirche**

**Renaissance fortifications**  
badradkersburg.at

#### THINGS TO DO

**Bad Radkersburg cycle region**

**Klöch castle ruins**

**Klöch wine museum**

**Schiffsmühle Mureck**

**Museum im alten Zeughaus**  
badradkersburg.at

#### EATING AND DRINKING

**Türkenloch**

tuerkenloch.at

**Metzgerwirt**

metzger-wirt.at

**Brunnenstadt**

brunnenstadt.at

**BacherlWirt**

bacherlwirt-ra.at

**Buschenschank Hoamathaus**  
hoamathaus.at

#### WHERE TO STAY

**Romantik Hotel im Park**

hotel-im-park.at

**Vitalhotel der Parktherme**

vital-hotel.at

**Hotel Sporer der Parktherme**

hotelsporer.at

**Thermalhotel Fontana**

hotelfontana.at

**Hotel Birkenhof**

birkenhof-radkersburg.at

**Gasthof Zum Lindenhof**

zumlindenhof.at

#### SHOPPING

**Die Spezerei**

diespezerei.at

**Vinothek Klöch**

vinothek-kloech.at

**Johannes Aquila**

Handwerkshof

**Kürbishof Majczan**

majczan.at



Tourismusverband Region Bad Radkersburg  
Hauptplatz 14, A-8490 Bad Radkersburg  
Tel. +43 34 76 25 45  
info@badradkersburg.at  
www.badradersburg.at



# BLUDENZ

## A wealth of possibilities

Bludenz is a city for nature-lovers. Vorarlberg's spectacular mountainous landscape lies just a few minutes outside the city. A series of smaller events and festivals works to create a truly unique connection between nature and culture.

Bludenz is pure panorama. Silvretta, Rätikon – here, everything is “just around the corner”. This intoxicating panorama follows you around town, peeking from behind the corner of a rooftop, melding into the cityscape. Why not come join us here, where you can experience the Alps up close and personal. The **Muttersberg**, the Bludenz local mountain, is not just a favourite for Sunday afternoon excursions. Since a single track was cleared several years ago, mountain bikers have flocked here. The track consists of four diverse sections. It starts off easy but then speeds up and features challenging jumps and obstacles. Sounds exciting. The summit is at exactly 1,401 metres, a fact that is always emphasised. The view from the expansive sun terrace at the **Alpengasthof Muttersberg** restaurant is phenomenal: The surrounding mountain ranges are arrayed in all their magnificence. The Mondspitze mountain is a popular destination for sunrise hikes. And I hear that the Sonnenkopf in Klostertal is particu-



View of Bludenz and the Rätikon from Muttersberg, Bludenz's local mountain.



## “...enchanted Alpine city ...

Early well-loved as a destination for skiing on real, natural snow. After just a few hours in Bludenz, I've already resolved to return – for winter skiing no less. Or for the mountain run in June.

The Alpengasthof is a wonderful starting point for a number of hikes of various lengths. The **hike to the Fraßenhütte**, which takes approximately two hours, is very popular. Today, I've decided on a cultural tour, the **“Alpine Art Muttersberg”** art trail. This outdoor art exhibition, which takes around one-and-a-half hours to visit, has been open since the summer of 2018. Artists from the Vorarlberg region present their perspectives on life in the mountains at six installations along the trail. Some of the installations stand tall and are visible from a distance, while others are inconspicuous and embedded in the natural scenery. An experience.

Schillerkopf, Sonnenkopf: I'm astounded by the area's beauty. Back in Bludenz, I try to calm my senses with a proper shopping tour. I start with the **weekly market**, which



There's a wonderful view of Bludenz from the Mondspitze.

I just manage to catch. Everything from fresh fruit and veg to poultry and wine, all produced by farmers in the area, is on offer here on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. Bludenz has long had an established market tradition, given its large urban catchment area, which includes the Walgau, Brandnertal, Great Walsertal, Klostersertal and Montafon valleys. In addition to the weekly market, you can find a **flea market** (every Monday) and – a real treat – the **Klostermarkt (abbey's market)**, which takes place annually sometime between early and mid-September and where around thirty abbeys in the Alp region sell their handcrafted products: dairy items, beer, honey, vinegar and oil are on offer, but you can also find lamb's wool pillows, pottery and wax Jesus figures. There's an enormous variety, all top quality.

But shopping also gives you an appetite. I decide on the **Schlosshotel Dörflinger**. The tender beef stroganoff and the fantastic Fohrenburg beer promptly lift my spirits. No small part is played by its stunning location above the old town, which gives me my second panoramic view of the day. It's clear that much has been done over the past two years, and much is still being done; the city is being restored and renovated with much attention to detail. In the course of the construction work, not only are the infrastructure, streets and squares being given a makeover, a new hotel, the Tschofen, is also being built in the heart of the historically-listed old town.

Opposite the new boutique hotel, Nepomuk, the Saint of Bohemia, surveys the town from his fountain. Nepomuk is the patron saint of silence and forbearance. The city fathers hoped the town's residents would reflect these characteristics, thereby quelling conflicts and discord in the city. There's no hint of these tensions today. Perhaps it's because Nepomuk is looking after things and Bludenz residents gladly submit to his silent authority. The little side streets are also well worth discovering. Small artisans' shops with an emphasis on quality, many of which are owner-managed, enliven the townscape. The colourful arcades are home to a variety of stores, whether it is Jackis flower shop, the Italian-inspired fashion store Ariane Felice, or the wide range of hand-stuffed cushions available from Jess Werkstatt. Hingucker is where to go for beautiful, high-quality eye-wear. The optometry store not only stocks fashionable glasses however, but also



Numerous events bring Bludenz town centre to life, including the Bludenz "Stadtfest" and the "Beats & Beer" live concert series.



The weekly market in Bludenz offers a rich range of seasonal products, from fresh fruit and vegetables to cold meats and flowers.



© Carola Eugster

The Nepomuk fountain in the heart of the old town.



© Alpenregion Bludenz Tourismus GmbH, Oliver Lerch

The Muttersberg not only offers visitors fun in the great outdoors, it is also home to six inspiring installations on the "Alpine Art Muttersberg" trail.



© Brunner, Fohrenburg

The water that is transformed into beer at the Fohrenburg brewery actually comes from their own two wells.

decorative items, jewellery and the perfect holiday souvenir – gin from Vorarlberg. On my stroll around the old town, in the Rathausgasse the **"Herr MUK"** cocktail bar catches my eye. It looks like a relaxing spot. I will stop by there later. But before that, I absolutely want to visit the **Fohrenburg brewery**. The unicorn is not just found throughout the city because it graces the city's crest. It's also to be found on nearly every table in every bar in town. According to legend it was at just such a bar table in 1880 that the industrialist Ferdinand Gassner promised his companions a beer. He was a man of his word. Fohrenburger beer was born at the right time. The building of the Arlberg tunnel brought more than just workers to this little corner of the country, it brought the first tourists too. There was no lack of thirsty customers. And the quality of the alpine water has always been unrivalled. The water in the brewing process is still drawn almost entirely from the brewery's own two wells, even today.

The unicorn is a symbol of unbridled power. As a crest, it was meant to prevent thieves from entering the city. This same unbridled power is found in this beer. I definitely recommend taking a tour of the brewery, which ends with a tasting. The brewery's varied past is brilliantly conveyed by pictorial display boards and numerous items on exhibit.

“Beer before wine makes you feel fine”, it’s said. And that is why my next stop is **Weinpunkt**. This cosy wine bar only serves wines with which its owner is familiar, and whose winegrowers he personally knows and maintains regular contact with. There is certainly an element here of respect for nature. What is also certain is that the best wines come from the thermal region stretching through to Tuscany. If you want to do good whilst eating well, you should visit **Eichamt**, a training restaurant. It is founded on the idea of making it easier for young jobseekers to enter the “normal” job market. The restaurant’s name is a reference to the history of the building in which it’s located. It was home in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the government’s office of weights and measures.

Every year in August, the Remise and its forecourt also serve as the venue for the Alpinale. This short-film festival selects the best 30 international short films from the 250-hour programme that is shown to the public. The judges then award the Golden Unicorn to the winners in the “Animation” and “Short Film” categories. The audiences choose their favourites after each screening.

Before I head off tomorrow on a **hike around the Lünensee lake**, I need some hiking boots. Not a problem. **Sportler Alpin** is an alpine sport shop for enthusiasts. I’m off to explore the store’s comprehensive stock, with everything from gear for a relaxing ramble to equipment for extreme mountain climbing. I break in the new hiking boots on a relaxing two-hour-long walk around the Lünensee, an ideal family outing. The area has much to offer to enthusiasts of high alpine activities too. After two hours, I can certainly appreciate the local tourism bureau’s motto: “Up on the mountain, that’s where your thoughts become clear and your soul can breath.”

Back in Bludenz, I take a leisurely stroll through the old town again. It must be great here in summer, too, when live bands whip up a fantastic atmosphere in the town’s narrow alleys as part of the “Beats & Beer” concert series. With uplifting music, good food – and, of course, beer – it’s the perfect place to spend a fun evening with friends after work or on weekends. There are ten dates in the summer from July to September. Cheers!



Remise Bludenz:  
Cross-regional cultural  
centre with cabaret,  
concerts and its own  
cinema programme.



The Lünensee lake, situated  
at the end of the Brandnerfahl  
valley near Bludenz, is a  
popular outdoor destination.

## Small historic town



© Alpenregion Bludenz, Tourismus GmbH

One of the seven stairways leading up to the Gayenhofen Castle and Church of St. Laurentius.



© Carola Eugster

The tower of the Church of St. Laurentius, towering over Bludenz's historic centre and visible for miles.

A stroll up to **Schloss Gayenhofen**, the castle standing majestically above town where the Bludenz fort once stood, is a pleasant digestive aid. The noble von Sternbach family had it built in 1750. Today it houses the district government administration. The tenderly manicured, almost enchanted garden is a truly unique place. You almost feel as though you've been transported to another time. An excursion to the **Church of St. Laurentius** is also well worth it. It used to be Bludenz's local parish church. The onion-domed, almost Swabian-style tower dates back to 1670 and features statues of the apostles and Bludenz's city crest.

My stay is slowly coming to an end. But wait, there are still a few things to look forward to. That's right. At the "Herr MUK" cocktail bar, I have a splendid gin & tonic and raise a glass to the excellent days I have spent in Bludenz. Afterwards, it's time for me to pick up a few souvenirs and gifts. There is a good selection of products from the region at the tourist office: Klostersal mountain herb tea, schnapps, a herb recipe book by the Alchemilla

herbalists, stone pine cushions, herbal salt and honey. And the **Milka store** is directly across the street from the rail station – a world of chocolate extravaganza. It suddenly becomes clear when I walk in why I was hit with such a strong desire for chocolate when I got off the train the previous day. As a matter of fact, the smell of chocolate drifts through the whole area, even up to about a kilometre away.

What we all want are clear thoughts and a soul at ease. But if the head is too clear, then one ought to cloud it up just a little bit with a freshly drawn Fohrenburger or a lovely bit of chocolate.

#### Further recommendations:

**The Dominican Convent of St. Peter:** The convent which is situated in the outskirts of Bludenz is a welcoming place of peace and contemplation with an attractive convent garden.

**Bludenz Ski Carousel:** In Bludenz in the winter, no two days of skiing are ever the same. Ten skiing areas with over 200 lifts and some 1,000 kilometres of pistes are a only few minutes' drive away.

**Woodrock Festival:** A pleasant alternative to large festivals, at which predominantly bands from the region play

#### THINGS TO SEE

**Church of St. Laurentius**  
**Schloss Gayenhofen**  
**Spitalskirche church**  
**Oberes Tor**  
**and Bludenz City Museum**  
**Nepomukbrunnen fountain**  
**Riedmiller Monument**

#### THINGS TO DO

**Int. Milka Chocolate Festival**  
**Int. Muttersberglauf**  
**Beats & Beer**  
**Alpine Short Film Festival**  
**"Sunna-Weg" themed trail**

#### EATING AND DRINKING

**Fohren Center**  
fohren-center.at  
**Restaurant Eichamt**  
eichamt.com  
**Cocktailbar Herr MUK**  
facebook.com/hermuk  
**Café Dörflinger**  
**Restaurant Eichamt**  
eichamt.com  
**Alpengasthof Muttersberg**  
muttersberg.at  
**Ristorante Luciano & Lidio**  
ristorante-lucianolidio.at

#### WHERE TO STAY

**Schlosshotel Dörflinger**  
schlosshotel.cc  
**Hotel Herzog Friedrich**  
herzog-friedrich.at  
**Val Blu Resort Spa & Sports**  
valblu.at  
**Hotel Einhorn**  
hotel-einhorn.at  
**das Tschofen**  
dastschofen.at  
**Der Löwen**  
loewen-bludenz.at  
**Panorama-Camping**  
**Sonnenberg**  
camping-sonnenberg.com



Alpenstadt Bludenz Tourismus  
Rathausgasse 5, 6700 Bludenz  
Tel. +43 5552 636 21-790  
tourismus@bludenz.at, www.bludenz.travel



# BRAUNAU

## Charm & comfort on the Inn river

Braunau am Inn is ripe for discovery. Here amidst the Innviertel region's delightful surroundings, the brewer's and distiller's craft meets pride in local traditions and a heartfelt sense of hospitality. The result is perfect calm.

After a few hours of shopping in the town centre, I head to the Stadtpfarrkirche church, one of the town's main landmarks. At 87 meters, the church tower is one of the tallest in Austria. The outer walls of the church are inscribed with interesting epitaphs. On the north side, these include one for the famous Hans Steininger, the "man with the long beard", who was the town captain of Braunau in the 16th century. A narrow spiral staircase winds up the first few metres of the tower. The steps are made mostly of the gravestones of workers who died during construction. This saved on materials, cut costs – and guaranteed a place in heaven for those who lost their lives. After a few meters, I reach the first big room of the tower. From there, a wide, well-built wooden staircase leads up to the gallery at a height of around 32 metres. The reward: On a clear day, you can see as far as the Tennengebirge mountain range and Burghausen. Despite all the excitement, you should still be careful when making your way up or down – because you might encounter the kestrel that lives here in the tower!



In the heart of the old town.



“...historical treasure  
on the Inn River...

Right, time for lunch. The Graf von Matera Restaurant & Café serves the finest Austrian-Italian fusion cuisine. The café itself is modern and stylish. And it's certainly a popular hangout – half the town meets here for lunch (and in the evenings, too). Afterwards, I make my way to the Heimathaus. Here you can marvel at the oldest preserved bell foundry in German-speaking lands. It looks as if the old master craftsman has just left the foundry moments ago. With the centimetre-thick layer of soot that still papers the wall after centuries, it's easy to imagine how bad the working conditions must have been back then.

The heavy Pesttür, a “plague door”, is also laden with historical meaning, but today it leads to a romantic inner courtyard. No doubt that staying here wasn't quite as romantic for those who found themselves on the other side of this door, whose dinner was pushed through the small opening with a stick. Just as interesting is the small museum dedicated to the Danube Swabians, who found refuge and a new home here in Braunau. I



La dolce vita on the  
Stadtplatz square.

also learn about the church keys filled with gunpowder, which the priest could use in case of an attack. And I find out what a "Suppenbrunzer" was: a glass ball that had been blessed and then hung over the dining table. When a hot soup was placed underneath it, the steam would condense on it and fall back down into the soup, thereby automatically blessing the soup. How convenient! You also learn a lot here about Innviertel customs. There's the collection of tools for reaping and threshing, for example, and the conical holes that were carved into wooden beams to trap illness in a lock of hair – or that was the superstition, at least. The collection is terrific, as is the tour.

From the Heimathaus, I head to Herzogsburg, the name of Braunau's main local museum. You can buy a practical combined ticket to visit both. There is a collection of various memorabilia related to the death of the Nuremberg bookseller Philipp Palm, who penned a protest against the French occupying forces and was executed by Napoleonic troops in Braunau as a result. You can also see the actual three-and-a-half cubit long beard of Hans Steininger, Braunau's legendary town captain in the 16th century. The story goes that he forgot to roll up his beard when a fire broke out in town. He tripped up on it, fell down the stairs and broke his neck. All we know for sure is that this is indeed his beard, which has been proven by microscopic analysis. And we mustn't forget Johann Georg Libigo's historical Christmas crib, the Wandelkrippe, with nearly 200 figures and a special surprise: Several Braunau residents in contemporary clothing have somehow snuck in between Mary, Joseph and the shepherds, and on the right-hand side, the Braunau town centre can be seen. So at least those who attended this miraculous birth could head down to the local pub afterwards. And that is precisely what I have planned as this day draws to a close.

But before I stop for a drink, I take a slight detour and pass the house where Hitler was born – a name that is still unfortunately associated with Braunau. The memorial stone in front of the house was erected in 1989 and weighs several hundred kilos. Inscribed on it are the words [translated from German]: FOR PEACE, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY. NEVER AGAIN FASCISM. MILLIONS DEAD ARE A WARNING. This serves as a reminder for visitors to



Heimathaus Museum:  
One house – countless curiosities. One of three museums in Braunau.



Wandelkrippe –  
How the people of Innviertel imagine the Holy Land.

actively deal with social and political issues, make a difference and not turn a blind eye to injustice and tyranny.

The house at "Salzburger Vorstadt 15" has been used for many things over the centuries, including an inn, a brewery, living quarters, a barn, a stable, a library and a school. And people were also born here, of course. One of these was Adolf Hitler (1889), who in 1939 went on to start an unprecedented war that would change the face of Europe and the world forever. After the war, the house was reclaimed by the Republic of Austria and eventually returned to its original owners. Most recently, until 2011, it served as the base of "Lebenshilfe", an organisation devoted to helping people with special needs. Following years of legal disputes over the expropriation of the property and the compensation of the owner, an architectural competition was held to redesign it. The aim was to remove the negative associations with the building by converting it. Whether you agree with the decisions or not: you would hope with all your heart that the people of Braunau can finally put the past to rest.



Memorial stone from Mauthausen concentration camp.

The next day, after an extended breakfast, I head to Simbach am Inn. Ever since the Innviertel region of Bavaria fell to Austria in 1779, a border has separated the two towns on the Inn river. But that never stopped anyone from commuting between the two states. The inhabitants thereby ensured that what belongs together stays together. Today, the whole area is referred to as Braunau.Simbach.Inn. Simbach itself is a unique blend of Lower Bavarian tradition and Art Nouveau buildings, as can be seen by the numerous guest gardens and the town hall in particular. As a former stop on the Orient Express, the town can look back on a long railway history. This is symbolised by the colossal steam locomotive that stands in front of the train station. The Schellenberg, the highest point in the region, offers breathtaking panoramic views.



Hans Steininger – A bearded apparition, from head to toe.

My last stop is the pilgrim church of St. Valentine's at the gates to the town, which has been carefully restored, and the Augenbründl spring adjacent to it. The spring tapped here was sought out and visited by both pilgrims and residents of the surrounding area from the Middle Ages up until the early modern period for its purported healing properties. Next door is Brauhaus



Historical town of Braunau –  
In the heart of the Lower Inn  
European Nature Reserve.

Haselbach. With its rustic interior and wide range of craft beers, it's the perfect meeting place for beer lovers. The cloudy "Amadeus Zwickl" unfiltered Märzen beer, the dark "1Stein" wheat beer and the amber-coloured "4-Korn" country beer are not to be missed. It goes without saying that food is also served here. And, as you'd expect from a traditional restaurant in the Innviertel, everything is freshly prepared in-house. Roast pork fresh from the oven, fried potatoes and Austrian dumplings are just some of the culinary delights on offer. In summer, the picturesque beer garden is packed with people enjoying a cool beer in the shade of the chestnut trees.

After a hearty brunch, I head to the Obergut by car. I've been told that they do the best fruit wine in the region. But that's not all: Thomas Ober is one of the country's top distillers. And since news of this distillery hasn't yet travelled to all corners of the globe, you can still buy his fruit brandies at eminently reasonable prices. He's always distilled spirits on his farm, he says, together with the neighbouring farmer. But at some point, things clicked and he put his career repairing car bodies to the side and studied to become a fruit wine and brandy sommelier, "because it's your palate that determines quality", as he



Augenbründl spring –  
An idyllic spot to take a break.



Nature on the doorstep.



Irresistible aromas.

explains. "You first need to know how it's supposed to taste." And he certainly does: the first schnapps that I try, a quince brandy, is a revelation. Delicate, not too sharp – but the sharpness builds gradually, in harmony with the acidity of the fruit. The fruit wines that Ober makes are also of the highest quality. My recommendation: the "Mostillon", the year's best fruit wine in his opinion. And I wholeheartedly agree. Thomas Ober carefully transformed the farm he inherited from his parents into a distillery with a restaurant and shop attached. Sitting here, where the calves used to be fattened, we are tasting our way through his work. Hardly a year goes by that Ober does not win some prize or another for his brandies. Most recently, his Calvados was awarded the gold medal at the "Ab Hof" trade fair in Wieselburg. So, naturally, I also have to sample that before I head home. And I am bowled over – doubly so: first, because it's one of the best things I've ever tasted; second, in the sense that I'm feeling a bit too tipsy to drive.

So I decide on the spur of the moment to delay my departure and take a sobering walk along the Inn river through the European Nature Reserve. It's a good decision on my part: the construction of the four barrages at the lower section of the Inn has slowed down the flow of the river, giving birth to new and unique habitats. Mudbanks, large reedy shores, willow-covered islands and untouched river woodlands. It is home to countless animal and plant species: three hundred different bird species, but also beavers, otters and even cormorants and sea eagles, which use the Inn reservoirs as a winter residence. In the newly opened information centre, the "Naturium am Inn", you can choose from a wide variety of guided tours. On the river, you go canoeing, kayaking or stand-up paddle boarding. But the most important thing from my point of view: the inn cycle path leads here and there (or "Drent and Herent", as they say in these parts) through the European Nature Reserve. I'd like to come back again when it's a bit warmer and go on a long bike ride. Then I'll head to the wonderful Obergut and enjoy the last of the day's sunshine in the apple orchard. That sounds like heaven! And the things I've brought along – books from the well-stocked Lauf bookshop, a bottle of Calvados and various Innviertel delicacies – are sure to convince my wife that it's a good plan.



**Further recommendations:**

**Napoleon's Bench:** This small bench in the Heimathaus used to stand in front of the former Gasthaus Schüdl inn. It is said that Napoleon twice spent the night there and smoked his pipe whilst sat on this very bench.

**Local Braunau Kipferl:** Made by the Bäckerei Nöbauer bakery from a centuries-old recipe.

**Hofladen Ober:** This speciality shop sells fruit wines, fine brandies and schnapps made on site, as well as items from other producers, including top-quality oils and pasta. You'll want to buy them all!



s'ENTDECKERVIERTEL  
Stadtplatz 2, A-5280 Braunau am Inn  
Tel. +43 77 22 626 44  
info@entdeckerviertel.at  
www.entdeckerviertel.at

**THINGS TO SEE**

**Old Town – tour**

**Panoramic views over the town from the church tower gallery**

**Museums**

entdeckerviertel.at

**Lower Inn European**

**Nature Reserve**

europareservat.de

**THINGS TO DO**

**Tour of the historical old town with Hans Steinger**

**Cycling or canoe tour through the Lower Inn European Nature Reserve**

**Trying on armour in the Herzogsburg Museum**

**Christmas market in the Palmpark**

entdeckerviertel.at

**EATING AND DRINKING**

**Brauhaus Haselbach**

brauhaus-haselbach.at

**Schnapsbrennerei Obergut**

obergut.at

**Bäckerei Nöbauer**

baeckerei-noebauer.at

**Schüdlbauers Bar**

www.schuedlbauers.at

**Nudelkuchi & Tafelspitz**

tafelspitz-braunau.at

**WHERE TO STAY**

**Altstadthotel Mayrbräu\*\*\***

mayrbraeu.at

**Hotel am Theaterpark\*\*\***

hotelamtheaterpark-neussl.at

**Schüdlbauer's Gasthof\*\*\*\***

schuedlbauers.at

**Pommers Schlosstaverne**

pommers-schlosstaverne.at

**WHERE TO SHOP**

**Braunau Merchants –**

**Shopping in Braunau**

shopping-in-braunau.at

**Wednesday market**

on the Stadtplatz  
(7:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.)

**Friday farmers' market**

in the Markthalle  
(12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

braunauer-bauernmarkt.at



# BRUCK AN DER MUR

## Nature and culture combined

Bruck an der Mur is right in the heart of the Styria region. It will capture the hearts of all those visiting it with its successful mixture of Styrian mountain landscape and urban culture on the banks of the River Mur.

The main square, **Hauptplatz**, in Bruck an der Mur is set out in the way that was typical for medieval town centres: all the streets and alleys lead towards it. This square, which was named Koloman-Wallisch-Platz, after the well-known workers' leader, has another special feature too: it is enormous! In fact it is the second largest city square in Austria – after the Vienna Rathausplatz (City Hall Square) – which provides a considerable advantage: it means large-scale events – such as a Business Run with 7,000 participants, followed by an award ceremony and party, or a brass band festival – can all be conducted right in the middle of the town, which really brings the centre to life. In summer, so I am told, pavement cafés blossom forth and visitors are really spoilt for choice when deciding which restaurant garden to visit for some culinary treats. When I arrive the square is also alive in the best sense of the word as preparations are under way for the local Christmas celebrations, the **Brucker Waldweihnacht**.



Bruck an der Mur has the second largest town square in Austria and is bursting with life.



“... a thousand-year romance, day after day ...”

The Kornmesserhaus, the Kornmess House, is one of the most beautiful Gothic secular buildings in Austria.

The first stalls are just opening up and there is punch on offer, as well as lots of regional products such as bacon, cheese and farmhouse bread to buy.

One of the town's top sights, the 'Iron Fountain' or **Eiserner Brunnen**, is also right here, on the main square. Its fine wrought-iron work, and particularly the delicately woven pergola which stands on four mounts in an almost half-dome form above the fountain, make it something really special. From the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards this fountain saved the townspeople of Bruck, who had no water supply of their own, from having to make the journey down to the River Mur. From then on, fresh water from the Mur was available in the centre of the town, as the fountain reached all the way down to the groundwater level of the river. The inscriptions on four plaques at the fountain tell the story not only of how it was created but also of the preferences of Hanns Prasser, the stonemason from Bruck who renovated the base of the fountain in 1626. It reads: "I, Hanns Prasser, prefer wine to water. If I liked water as much as wine, more riches would be mine" –and it still makes people laugh today. And the fountain itself? It doesn't work



The Iron Fountain: even in the winter one of the gems of the Kornmess town.

any more, but it certainly still has a function: it makes the people of Bruck happy. Especially at night, when it forms a real attraction which can be seen from far away.

From here you can also see the **Kornmesserhaus**, one of the most beautiful Gothic secular buildings in Austria. Pancras Kornmess achieved wealth through trading in iron and arsenate and between 1499 and 1505 he had the house built in the style of Venetian palaces of that period, as can be seen by the richly decorated arches of the façade. Later, after Kornmess had been forced to leave the city because of his Protestant beliefs, the house served as the residence of the mayor, among other purposes. Today it houses a restaurant, the **Pankraz**, and also the tourist information office – a piece of good fortune, as this can, and of course should also be visited – which means that some areas of the house can now be visited to which no access had been possible for a long time.

After my visit, I do precisely what the Eiserne Brunnen was meant to save people the trouble of doing: I walk down to the **Mur** River, through what is known as the Schiffgasse ('Ship alley') until I reach the chapel at the Hotel Landskron, the **Mariahilf Kapelle**. That's where the Mur comes into sight. A fantastic view. The Schiffertor ('Boatmen's Gate') is also to be found there: this was where boatmen and raftsmen used to enter the town. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards the town enjoyed a "staple right" for salt, which forced boatmen to land here and spend a day offering salt for sale before they could resume their journey southwards. The town prospered as large amounts of money flowed in from the mooring and toll charges levied. A duty-free zone was also established around the perimeter of the town: this and the size of the main square – ideal for holding annual markets – were other factors which contributed to the town's rapid growth.

Here on the banks of the Mur, the **Baderhaus** ('bath house') can also be found, where anyone wishing to enter the town had to be cleaned, to protect against plague. Warm water was provided from a fireplace and appropriately trained staff were on hand to help with washing. The Baderhaus today houses a restaurant, the **Weinerei**, which has been awarded a premium rating by the gourmet magazine, 'Falstaff'. More about that later. Excitingly, when the house was being renovated at the turn of the mil-



The Hohenlimburgbrücke, which also forms part of the wonderful walk around the old town all along the River Mur.



Visitors had to be washed in the Baderhaus before they were allowed to enter the town. Today, it provides superb dining facilities.



© TV Bruck-K. Pashkevskaya

Cyclists welcome:  
The cycle path along  
the Mur brings many  
cyclists to the town.

lennium, two foundations for cauldrons were unearthed, carefully constructed from bricks, together with heating channels for preparing the warm water, the foundations of furnace, a subterranean vaulted cellar and an indoor fountain. It's great that now you can also stay the night here, and really soak up the atmosphere of past times.

However much the Mur brought wealth in past centuries, it was nevertheless ignored in the recent past by the people of Bruck as well as Leoben, Judenburg and other towns on the Mur which can now all be reached by cycling for pleasure along the path known as the **Muradweg**. The primary reason for this was that in the 1980s the water was severely polluted with industrial effluents. But these times have now definitely been consigned to the past. Thanks to rigorous environmental protection rules and comprehensive nature and water protection measures, today the Mur is restored to drinking water quality. As a result, a local recreation area has developed all along the Mur in the past few years, with numerous interesting locations and events to visit.



© TV Bruck-K. Pashkevskaya

Bruck an der Mur – a bridge  
has given the city its name.  
Today, it is in the form  
of the new Europabrücke,  
erected in 2013.

A "portion of downtime and holiday atmosphere", for instance, is promised by the **"Beach on the Mur"** festival of sports and games. **"Riverside"** on the other hand is a summer festival which brings together nature, culinary skills and music of the most varied genres in the beautiful atmosphere of the Mur waterfront. The waterfront is frequently closed to traffic in summer and the population of Bruck then streams down towards the water after work to enjoy the early evening on one of the newly constructed terraces overlooking the Mur and to sample some treats from

the 'gastronomy mile' which has developed there. Some really interesting places to eat can indeed be found along the banks of the Mur, where a pedestrian walkway has been built. The Riegler Restaurant, for example, which is the oldest tavern in the city, dedicated to serving the traditional cuisine of Styria. Or the Johans Restaurant, which has been awarded 93 points by the 'Falstaff' gourmet magazine: its menu features local produce from the Mur and Mürztal regions, combined with premium products from all over the world. The Restaurant am Schiffertor, in the Hotel Landskron, is also to be recommended. And then there is the Weinerei, in the Baderhaus. I decide in favour of the latter today – after a stroll on the other bank of the Mur, returning over the Europa bridge, also known as the **"Brucker Harfe"** ('Harp of Bruck'). The Weinerei is a very successful mixture of wine store, restaurant and bar. The menu has a predominantly Mediterranean theme, but with an international streak too. After a long speculation, I finally decide to go for a combination of both: bhajis to begin with – small deep-fried balls of onion and pumpkin with mint yoghurt and mango chutney, followed by an Italian bread salad. To accompany this, I choose a Styrian wine – as anything else would be a sin here, of course.

After this, my journey takes me to the town's **Kulturhaus und Kongresszentrum**, an impressive construction from the 1920s, built by the social democrats of the time as an education centre and library for the working people. In 1934 workers were held here after fierce conflicts between the various political groups in Bruck. The education centre which had been built for workers was thus perfidiously misused as a prison for workers. Today there is a culture and congress centre here, with an art house cinema offering an extremely discerning programme.

After this, I go on to admire the heavy iron door of the **Stadtpfarrkirche** (parish church), which was a gift from the Kornmess family to the parish. The door knocker is modelled on a lady's necklace and was apparently even more impressive originally, I am told, as it was backed with red and blue vellum. Thousands of people come every year just to photograph this door. I take several shots myself as well. Back in the town centre, strolling through the narrow alleyways, it becomes clear to me why Bruck was often ablaze with fire – the worst occasion probably being on 3 September 1792, when 164 out of 166 houses



The Kulturhaus: Impressive workers' building dating from the 1920s. Today it functions as a congress and events centre with its own art house cinema.



The Stadtpfarrkirche (parish church) has a Gothic choir and a choir tower. The late-Gothic heavy iron door is a particularly favourite subject for photographers.

## Small historic town

were burned down. The narrowness of the gaps between the houses meant fire could spread quickly and easily from one to another. Well, now my day here is coming to an end. The really innovative illumination in the town shows up the Eiserner Brunnen and the **Schlossberg** (castle mountain) to perfection. What a beautiful, shining good night that is.



The Schlossberg: From here, you have a great view of the city. Jazz performances and other gigs take place here in the summer.

I start the next day with a short hike on the Schlossberg, which not only offers a superb view of the town and its surroundings, but which is also the location for many gigs and performances. **Kultur am Berg** is a series of events bringing jazz and suchlike to the mountain. To listen to a concert here and then enjoy a glass or two afterwards with this view in front of you seems a very pleasant prospect indeed to me. An information sign describes something rather less pleasant: at least twelve cannons were apparently once positioned here. There is, however, no evidence of this to be seen. What is certain, though, is that the cannons were seized by Napoleon's troops in 1809 and taken away as plunder. They were then later replaced by six others plundered from the French. These are still here today as a reminder of the turbulent period of French rule. Nowadays, however, only three are still kept on site and the others have been loaned to the Garnisonsmuseum in Graz. They are not, thank heavens, still capable of being fired.

At the foot of the mountain, I am shown an apparently ordinary house which was once the residence of **Heinrich Harrer**. This famous mountaineer and expedition leader attended primary school here in Bruck. Due to his somewhat controversial past during the Third Reich, it has evidently not been possible to place a plaque here informing people of this or to advertise the site to tourists. More attention is paid to another son of the town, the troubador **Hugo von Montfort**. A dedicated literature trail, the **Literaturpfad**, has been devoted to the minstrel, whose remains are buried in the Minoritenkirche. A delightful walking path near the Schlossberg includes stopping-points with literary extracts and information boards. That is a great idea, as Montfort really was an illustrious figure. The **Minoritenkirche**, visible from a long way off, is the church at the end of the pedestrian zone. It's worth a visit not just because of Montfort, however, but also for the remarkable frescoes from around the year 1400 which can be seen there. Not all have survived, but those which have all the more beautiful for that reason.



The Minoritenkirche: Resting place of the troubador Hugo von Montfort and impressive frescoes from around the year 1400.



The end of my visit is approaching. Bruck really has a lot to offer in both culinary and cultural terms. I will definitely be delighted to come here again, to explore the beauty of the area from the Murradweg, and then afterwards to enjoy the summer fun to the jazz rhythms at the "Riverside" by the Mur. Until then, it's time for me to say goodbye.

#### Further recommendations:

**Arkadenhof at City Hall:** Inner courtyard full of atmosphere which is used to stage events of all kinds, including serenade concerts. Due to the glass covering, it has great acoustics and is suitable for use in bad weather as well.

**An Eldorado for hikers:** Great hiking routes can be followed with Bruck an der Mur as their starting point. On the Susannensteig path to the mountain hut on the Hochanger peak, for example, or upwards to the neighbouring Rennfeld peak with Hochschwab-Gesäuse National Park and panoramic view of the Dachstein mountains, into the Weintal Nature Protection Centre or upwards to Madreck mountain. You really will be spoiled for choice.

**Murinsel Leisure Centre:** Tennis centre, stadium, lido with lots of action. Here there's streetball, street soccer, skateboarding and roller blading, including all the equipment required, with half-pipe and ramps etc.



Bruck an der Mur  
Herzog-Ernst-Gasse 2 (Kornmesserhaus)  
A-8600 Bruck an der Mur  
Tel. +43 38 62 30 60 1  
info@tourismus-bruckmur.at  
www.tourismus-bruckmur.at

#### THINGS TO SEE

##### Peter Roseggers

##### Waldheimat

waldheimat-semmering-veitsch.at

**Hikers' paradise in the Hochschwab Mountains**  
regionhochschwab.at

**Burg Oberkapfenberg with birds of prey displays**  
burg-oberkapfenberg.at

**The most attractive motor cycle routes around Bruck**  
tourismus-bruckmur.at

#### THINGS TO DO

**Nature protection centre at Weintal with wildlife rescue station, unique in Styria**

naturschutzzentrum.at

**The Grüner See, a jewel of nature, voted the most beautiful place in Austria in 2014**

tourismus-bruckmur.at

**The Bärenschützklamm, the longest water-bearing gorge in Austria**

tourismus-bruckmur.at

#### EATING AND DRINKING

**Johanns, gastronomy at gourmet level**

johanns.at

**Weinerei im Baderhaus, premium award by the "Falstaff"**

weinerei-baderhaus.at

**Bruck gastronomy mile**

tourismus-bruckmur.at

#### WHERE TO STAY

\*\*\*\*Hotel Landskron

an der Mur

hotel-landskron.at

**Romantic rooms in the historic Baderhaus**  
baderhaus.at

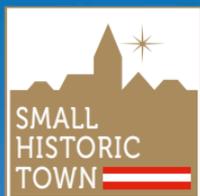
**Accommodation in the Kornmess town**  
tourismus-bruckmur.at

#### SHOPPING

**Shopping**

in Bruck's old town

tourismus-bruckmur.at



# FREISTADT

## A VARIED HISTORY

Mountain idyll and castle keep. Freistadt's medieval ambience can be truly enchanting, and its tradition of brewing is far from the only thing that the town offers in terms of culture and gastronomy.

In Freistadt, heaven and hell are side-by-side. The **Hotel Hubertus**, for example, which I have chosen for my stay, is jokingly referred to the "house of hell" because it is situated on Hölleplatz, which can be translated as "hell square". Meanwhile, the sweets and pastries on offer at the hotel's café-pâtisserie can be described as heavenly. The same can be said of the breakfast in the garden adjacent to the town's fortifications, with its excellent views over the surrounding area. For genuine heavenly blessings, however, the nearby Stadtpfarrkirche church is the venue, and that is where I decide to go. At twelve noon every Friday from May to July, a thirty-minute recital of organ music takes place here, making it an ideal place at which to rest and reflect. For many local people, attending **orgelpunkt 12** marks the start of their weekend. Today, that also means me. The cool of the church and the sublime music are the perfect antidote to my stressful journey and the hustle and bustle of the day. Visitors are welcome to climb the church steeple before and afterwards. I recommend doing so, as the views of the hills



The Böhmertor and the Bergfried (castle keep), two of the nine towers and gates in the medieval fortifications.



of the Mühlviertel, and the **Türmerstube** (steeple rooms) itself, are both worth seeing. It was here that the last watchman of the church steeple lived with his family, in cramped conditions, until 1945. There was a box for clothing next to the movement of the clock. Next to the black kitchen range, there was a "Schaffl", or a bucket, for nature's offerings which – almost inconceivable today – was taken down to the church hall and emptied once a day. Above the steeple rooms are five bells, the oldest of which, the **Armeseelenglocke** dates from the year 1512. The watchman in the church steeple kept watch at night, while the watchman at the Bergfried, or castle keep, for whom the nobles were responsible, carried out his duties in the daylight hours. A lookout therefore kept watch for the people of Freistadt around the clock.



Back at ground level, I head for the landmark of Freistadt, the **Linzer Tor**. This also marks the starting point for guided tours of the town, which was founded in the year 1220 on a trading route leading through the Norwald forest from the Danube to Bohemia by the Babenberg Duke Leopold VI. as the only sovereign town in the Mühlviertel. Its purpose was to enable trading with salt and iron and to protect the frontier with Bohemia. The settlers were given land and soil and built their home as their "free property", which was a rarity in an era of serfdom, and since "frei" means "free", it is the reason for the name of the town, which can also be read in the old spelling (with a "Y") on the Linzer Tor. The medieval fortifications – **some seven fortified towers, three walls and a moat** – have remained almost completely intact – which is also a rarity.



The Linzertor is the landmark of the town and one of the oldest gated towers in Europe.

The outer wall of the town, also known as the **Mantelmauer** or "jacket wall", as it surrounds the town centre like a jacket, seems to accompany the visitor at every turn, which is a delight rather than a displeasure. One local resident tells me, with a little irony, how the people here are pleased that Freistadt has never really experienced a rapid urban development. "Otherwise, sooner or later, they would have pulled everything down." This means that the places of value, and therefore the age-old character of the town, have been preserved.

In the old days, while the natural gradient allowed the town's moat to be flooded to ward off invaders, these days it is a place of recreation. Today, the outer Mantelmauer wall and the former moat feature footpaths, with any number of pleasant places to take a rest, such as the newly opened park and the "Zwinger" (the area between the outer and inner wall); there is even a small **climbing garden**. This is a place where children run around while the adults relax on the park benches before the magnificent backdrop.

Walking into town at a leisurely pace from the Linzer Tor **you may notice some of the historic arrow slits and battlements** on the buildings. In the old days, each building was required to have at least three arrow slits and one battlement from which, if necessary, hot pitch, known as "Pech", could be thrown onto the invaders below. And they would certainly have been unlucky, as "Pech" also means "bad luck" in German!

Freistadt was never really occupied, however. Its defences fell only once, on 2 July 1626, during the thirty years war, when the town had been pledged to Bavaria due to war debts, and an uprising occurred. After the town had been besieged for several days, during a ceasefire - as the story goes - a country lad took his father's rifle and began firing indiscriminately towards the town. As fate would have it, at this very moment, the sheriff of the town was standing in an arrow slit surveying the townscape, and took a direct hit above his left eye. In the ensuing chaos, the country folk succeeded in breaching the town's fortifications. They were only able to hold the town for twenty days, however, before the Bavarian army quelled the uprising.

Stories like this have a tendency to make one hungry and thirsty. The **Brauhaus** is a must - after all, a zebra crossing



The "Höhenflug" is a combination of adventure and adrenaline in the heart of the old town.



The Scheiblingturm and the old smithy testify to the age-old history of the town to this day.

## Small historic town



The Freistadt Brauhaus, the only brewing commune in the whole of Europe.



leads more-or-less straight into its interior. In apologetic tones, I am assured that this is because of the local traffic situation, although for a lover of beer like me, such an apology isn't necessary, as I find the zebra crossing an honour. A glance at the history books is also worthwhile in this case: After the Habsburgs granted the town the Mile Law, according to which it was only possible for the residents of Freistadt to do business and trade, and to brew and serve beer, in a one-mile radius around the town, breweries began to appear everywhere. Initially, however, the beer was of such poor quality that it had to be imported from Budweis. In 1777, the local aldermen ensured that this is no longer the case when they decided to consolidate the brewing expertise and to build a joint brewery. Today, on a guided tour of the brewery, you can find out everything about beer and brewing, such as the fact that eight privately-owned Austrian breweries came together to create the CulturBrauer craft brewer's association. You can also brew your own beer in groups of five or more people, under the guidance of master brewers. Once it has matured, you will then be sent your do-it-yourself beer. A great idea! In 2013, the brewery itself was the main venue for the regional exhibition, and is also the meeting place for the annual Sunnseitn-Festival, at which a colourful musical programme of jazz, gipsy swing, world music and singer songwriters is on offer on six dance floors.

The brewery is still the only one in Europe to be organised as a commune. Which means that the 150 property owners within the town's walls are the owners of the brewery at the same time. The land register provides a record of how many buckets (1 bucket = 158 litres) were required to pay the brewery to buy the plot of land. In the old days, payments could be made in buckets, these days, "it is only" Euros. That's actually a shame, but Euros can be reinvested: in a glass of the local "Ratsherrntrunk" brew,



Visitors can pass through the Haiderhof – one of 27 inner courtyards in the town – on their way to the Böhmerort.

for example, or a well-rounded stout – which is also brewed here. Beer isn't normally recommended together with fish, but in this case, failing to have a beer with my trout meunière would seem to be an affront.

Sooner or later, I am called by the mighty **Bergfried** (castle keep), which is accessed through an arched doorway. Originally an observation or escape tower, it is now home to the **Schlossmuseum**, which is a must see, with Helmut Kreindl guiding the visitors with genuinely infectious enthusiasm through the collection – and with free entry on Fridays. Storey by storey, we make our way up the tower, and delve ever deeper into the history of the town. It starts with the **Hirschbach country furniture**, the biggest **collection of reverse glass painting** in Austria and the beautiful **filed stoves**, before continuing with impressive exhibits on **folk beliefs and traditions: "Schwammerlhauben"**, an item of clothing roughly equivalent to the liripipe, for instance, which people wore when suffering headaches in the hopes that they would relieve the pain. Or what is known as the **"Schergreberl"** – a lucky mole's paw which is supposed to bring money one's way. **Elaborately designed keys** – including those with which the Linzer Tor was previously locked – and **monstrances, amulets**, pilgrimage mementos and **votive offerings** as remedies for a variety of illnesses, not to mention "Breverl" – folded sheets of paper with holy images and prayers that were worn directly on one's body – as well as **devotional pictures intended for swallowing**. They were initially consecrated before being swallowed to prevent a specific illness. One display is dedicated to the **horse-drawn railway**, which opened in 1832 and originally went from Linz to Budweis, before then going on to Gmuden. The former stables showcase alternating **special exhibitions** on specific topics, and they are a must-see. It is here that I find out that during the first world war, Freistadt was home to a huge prison camp for Ukrainians which housed up to 16,000 prisoners of war. It was later used as temporary accommodation for the German refugees from the Sudetenland.

I make my way through the romantic **Schlossgässchen** with its three Gothic bay windows and return to the Hauptplatz, the venue for the annual **wine festival** which is taking place today. For one day, winegrowers from a wide variety of winegrowing regions, from Kamptal to Neudie-dlersee and from the Weinviertel to the Vulkanland, offer



The Mühlviertler Schlossmuseum isn't just home to cultural treasures showcasing the history of Freistadt, it also has numerous astonishing exhibits from life in earlier times.



The Bergfried offers exceptional views of the town and the Mühlviertel.

## Small historic town



In the evenings, the specially designed light concept turns the old town into a gleaming gem.



A meeting place for arts, crafts and gastronomy from the local region: the Mühlviertel Kreativ Haus MÜK.

their wines at reduced prices. After having picked up a broom, a variety of jams and fresh chanterelles at the Genussmarkt in the morning, I now decide it's time to round off the day with what the locals refer to as a Schlusssachterl – or a tippel of wine – as the night is slowly falling. This gives me an opportunity to admire the quality of the new Freistadt **light concept**, which demonstrates how space, architecture and light can form a wonderful oneness if they are only allowed to do so. The façades are gently illuminated and the medieval heritage, with its imposing towers, is delicately and thoughtfully accentuated. The Hauptplatz now has twice as many beer gardens as it did before it was redesigned – a trendsetting example which should be followed elsewhere. After enjoying a nightcap at **Foxi's Schlosstaverne**, which places an emphasis on the pleasures of beer and whisky, but also has a cheap and cheerful menu of menu of standard, down-to-earth Mühlviertel fare as well as unexpected vegetarian and oriental options, I decide that it's time for bed.

The next morning, I decide to visit the **Böhmertor**, which is situated in the northern part of the town and made from massive stone blocks. I then climb the **Scheiblingturm** tower, which can be explored on a guided tour and offers views into the old jail where delinquents from other areas were thrown until their trial and sentencing.

I then head to **Andrea Wurzinger's** small but well-stocked bookshop on the Hauptplatz main square. It's a real Aladdin's cave of fiction and specialist literature. Further along Samtgasse, we browse around the **Mühlviertel Kreativ Haus (MÜK)**, which combines art and culinary delights from the region under one roof. Here, creative professionals from a variety of artistic genres are able to present and offer their artwork or products for sale. Should you come here, be sure to put some time aside for your visit, because several exhibitions are always on show, not to mention any amount of regional gastronomic products to taste and buy, such as the excellent cider vinegar, as well as the indigo fabrics from Blaudruck Wagner. With exhibition workshops during town's festivals and pop-up restaurants, the initiative is genuine asset for the town. I then unexpectedly come across a bizarre highlight: the **crocodile in the Pfarrgasse**. The best way to find out what it is doing there and how it found its way to Freistadt is on a guided tour of the town!

After a final meal at the **Vis a Vis restaurant**, which I am pleased to recommend, and an espresso at the **Café Suchan**, which has its own coffee roastery in which every variety of coffee is ground and available to buy and take home, it is time for an initial round up: I have been lucky enough to enjoy idyllic alleyways, markets, wine festivals, traditional fare and superb beer. Yet those who decide to enjoy and indulge themselves should also serve some penitence for their sins, so I decide to end my visit with a contemplative tour of the historically listed, late Gothic **Church of St. Peter** which looks down over the rooftops of Freistadt. It is from there that I once more admire the hilly country of the Mühlviertel region, and understand completely why Freistadt celebrated its 8,000<sup>th</sup> inhabitant a few months ago. The town is booming because it is exceptionally attractive and liveable.

#### Also recommended:

**The Salzhof:** The oldest building in the town, which was completely refurbished in 2003 and has been converted into a superb location for events. The result is a successful combination between the old elements and contemporary architecture. The inner courtyard features an early work by Hermann Nitsch.

**The Arkadenhof with arcade:** There are some twenty-seven inner courtyards in Freistadt, most of which are private. The passageway from the Samtgasse to the Böhmergasse, however, is accessible to the public. Here, the medieval stone-mounted doors and windows can be seen in their full glory.

**Freistadt cinema:** It is thanks to the tireless work of culture warriors such as Wolfgang Steininger, who also runs an art house cinema in the regional capital of Linz, that smaller towns like Freistadt are home to a cinema that offers an exquisite programme of art house movies.



Tourismusverband Mühlviertler Alm Freistadt  
Waaggasse 6, A-4240 Freistadt  
Tel. +43 50 726321  
freistadt@muehlviertel.at,  
www.muehlviertel-urlaub.at

#### THINGS TO SEE

**Historic, fully intact medieval fortifications, including 9 towers and gates, 27 inner courtyards and 1 crocodile.**

**Schlossmuseum**  
museum-freistadt.at

**MÜK Mühlviertel Kreativ Haus**  
Verkosten-Gustieren-Einkaufen  
muehlviertel-kreativ.at

#### THINGS TO DO

**Guided tours with night watchman, cellar, tower or beer tours**

**The Freistadt Brewery**  
Commune with Beer Academy  
and Brewery Hotel  
freistaedter-bier.at

**Local-Bühne Freistadt –**  
der kulturelle Nahversorger  
local-buehne.at

**Thurytal recreational area**  
with old hammer mill

**Freistädter Höhenflug**  
derhoehenflug.at

**Taking the forest air for**  
body and soul  
waldluftbaden.at

#### EATING AND DRINKING

**Suchan**  
including coffee roastery  
suchankaffee.at

**Foxi's**  
Specialist beers and whisky  
right on the Hauptplatz  
foxis.at

**Café-Konditorei Lubinger**  
World class pastries and  
finest gingerbread  
lubinger.at

**Vis á Vis**  
Tasty meals adjacent to the  
historic fortifications  
gasthaus-visavis.at

#### WHERE TO STAY

**Hotel zum**  
goldenen Hirschen\*\*\*\*  
hotels-freistadt.at

**Hotel Garni Hubertus\*\*\***  
hotelhubertus-freistadt.at

**Pension Pirklbauer**  
"Zum wilden Mann"\*\*\*  
pension-pirklbauer.at

SMALL  
HISTORIC  
TOWN



# GMUNDEN

## A stylish town of leisure

With boat rides and potteries, the deep Lake Traunsee, and houses that are built deep into the ground and therefore must contain one secret or another – exploring Gmunden is a multifaceted experience.

Arriving in Gmunden on Tuesday proved to be a stroke of luck, as it just so happened that this was the day of the **weekly market**. This is not just a place where you can shop for the Salzkammergut region's wonderful fresh produce – it's also an excellent place to stop and chat. Behind all the market stalls, you can see a flash of white from a smokestack in the distance: the **Gisela**. This ship is 146 years old, making her one of the oldest paddle steamers in the world. Just as agile as ever, the old ship ferries locals and tourists alike across Lake Traunsee in the months of July and August, weather permitting. But the Gisela can also be rented for events of all kinds. This indisputably demonstrates the primary advantage of this town: it's right by the water. Lake **Traunsee** is the deepest lake in Austria at 191 metres and, together with the **Grünberg** and **Traunstein** mountains, the so-called "guardians of the Salzkammergut" that rise up behind the lake, it forms a spectacular view. In order to enjoy it to the full-



The Gisela is 146 years old, making her one of the oldest paddle steamers in the world.



## “... the magical Traunseestadt ...

est, I grab a seat in the **Wiener Café**. My espresso has only just arrived when, to my delight, I hear the ringing of a **chime of bells**. What I didn't know is that a number of bells hang in a loggia on the front of the town hall. Although they are painted with the famous pattern of the Gmundner Keramik (Gmunden pottery), they are actually produced in the famous Meissener porcelain manufactory because, as I later learn, ceramic is not suitable for the ringing sound of the bells. The waiter in the café tells me that there are five melodies: the theme tune of the television programme “Schlosshotel Orth”, which is always played, and four others that alternate. Later, during my walk through the town, I will discover that even though it has been off the air for quite some time, the television programme is still omnipresent. The original filming locations are marked along a themed walk, for example. The front desk and editing table, along with other props, are on display in **Schloss Ort**. But it's not just fans of the programme who get their money's worth – the entire town has profited immensely. Whether it's cinema, television, or music videos, Gmunden is often used as a **filming location**. Two or three films are shot here annually.

The atmosphere of the harbour, with its ships, paddle steamers and weekly market, makes it tempting to stay down by the water. But the old town, which sits above the



Gmunden town hall:  
a chime of bells  
made of Meissener  
porcelain.

harbour, is also appealing. I discover another surprise on my way: there is a **tramway** in Gmunden – unusual for a town of its size. It was built in 1894 as a test route for the Viennese tramway and is relatively steep, the steepest in the country. The tram, which is known as the “Traunseetram”, now wends its way from Gmunden station to Vorchdorf

In the old town I come across a market stall selling fish, including the typical whitefish from Lake Traunsee. It seems like a crime to leave these delicacies behind, but, without a cooler bag, I have no choice. What a shame!

The **Virgin of Mercy** is situated in the **Stadtpfarrkirche** (parish church). The ceramic object was built by Emilie Schleiß-Simandl in 1947, as an offering of thanks for the protection of Gmunden from damage during the war. The artist was already seventy years old when she created this work. Also impressive is the altar, built by **Thomas Schwanthaler** in around 1678, which portrays the scene of “the Adoration of the Magi” on a large scale.

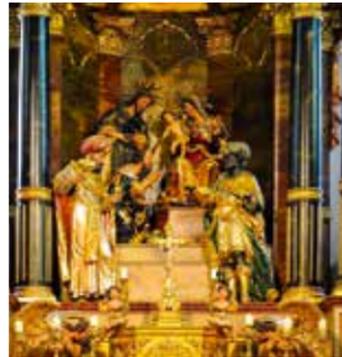
A modern counterpart to the old church art can be found in the **Galerie 10er-Haus**. It is well worth heading down one storey from the ground-level salesrooms, which are decked out with jewellery, art, and picture frames, to explore the recently uncovered vault below. Here, artists from all over Austria are offered a platform for presenting their works. The depth to which houses are built into the ground is particularly noticeable here, but there is a historical reason for it: the level of tax owed was historically determined by the width of a house’s façade. Thus, narrow, deep **houses with sumptuous courtyards** were built.

Above one of these houses is the local **public library**. A few tables and chairs invite you to take a seat. There’s hardly a better place to delve into a book that you’ve brought with you or borrowed from the library; it’s completely quiet in here. Another **courtyard** that you must visit is that of the **Huthaus Haas**. It’s always lovingly decorated with old furniture and objects and, during the time leading up to Christmas, it hosts an advent evening where people sing from the loggia.

Particularly impressive is the **Schloss Ort**, a moated castle from the 10<sup>th</sup> century and the main location of the previously mentioned television programme. Archduke Johann



Springbrunnen fountain with gnome in Franz Josef Park.



The altar in the Stadtpfarrkirche (parish church), built by Thomas Schwanthaler.

## Small historic town



The Schloss Ort: refuge and primary location of a television programme.

Salvator once acquired it for use as a refuge from the influence of the Habsburgs. Salvator was probably what you would nowadays call a revolutionary. Due to his progressive, liberal views, he was forever in conflict with the imperial family. When he finally decided to marry his long-time partner, a dancer from the imperial opera house, the Emperor refused to give his approval. This was the final straw. Salvator renounced all his noble titles and from then on simply took on the name of his property, becoming known as Johann Orth. The precise circumstances of his death remain a mystery to this day. It is believed that after he acquired his captain's license and set sail for South Africa, he was shipwrecked at Cape Horn and died.

The castle, which is now used for weddings, corporate parties, and seminars, still exudes a spirit of free thinking. However, the authority of the state is also depicted. Standing cells and all kinds of torture instruments that are on display tell the story of when the castle was used as a medieval prison. The fact that the castle is no longer habitable might disappoint fans of the television programme,

but you can at least have a splendid meal at the **Restaurant Orther Stub'n**. That's consolation enough for me. I am enchanted by the traditional food from the region and the view of the sun's reflection on Lake Traunsee. This is the life. Afterwards, it's worth making some time for the Orth bay nature reserve. In addition to tits, finches, and thrushes, rarer species such as the blackcap and the garden warbler also nest here. I watch the coots and enjoy the utter peace and quiet.

The **Esplanade** leads back into the town centre. There are some really nice shops here. First, I stumble into the **Teenest** at Rinnholzplatz, a specialty shop for tea, coffee, and books. This combination may seem strange, but when you learn that Martin Labacher previously ran a bookshop in Vienna, it makes sense that he would bring a piece of his old passion with him when he took over this tea and herb shop. I want to test the effects of the water of the holy Bründl, a fountain made in the pottery in 1848. Many people swear by its healing properties. But regardless of the potential benefits of the water itself, the fountain is definitely a place of power. With a book purchased at the Teenest in hand, I decide to end the day with a cosy dinner at the **Engelhof** inn.

Gmunden is a pottery town, and anyone who doesn't visit the **Keramikmanufaktur** (pottery) is definitely missing out. In the course of an extensive factory tour, we not only learn how ceramic is produced and how the finished pieces are then artfully painted; we also have the opportunity of putting the finishing touches on a piece ourselves. Just a few minutes into the demonstration, it becomes clear that one needs a very steady hand in order to pursue this profession. The quality standards are extremely high. Every flower, every deer, every decoration has its designated place. Even the slightest temperature fluctuations can cause the colours to be off. After brush painting, the firing technique, which is entirely unique to the region, is explained. The permanent colour is sprayed out of a nozzle. The piece must therefore be coloured in one go, without being set down.

But the best part is that volunteers are allowed to try firing. It's a skill I admit I'm not particularly good at. My plate didn't find a buyer. I can easily understand why one would have to complete a two-year apprenticeship and



Rinnholzplatz is one of Gmunden's many places of energy.



The unique firing technique used in the Gmunden Keramikmanufaktur (pottery).



At 191 metres, Lake Traunsee isn't just the deepest, but also one of the most beautiful lakes in Austria.



The Esplanade during the pottery market.



Treetop path on the Grünberg.

then still gain a couple of years' further experience before being allowed to apply this one-of-a-kind technique. In any case, one learns to appreciate the value of these unique items even more than before.

In the **painting studio** we are finally invited to create our own pieces using original colours and brushes, under the supervision of a professional. This offer is accepted with enthusiasm by the guests. Some people are done in a few minutes; others spend hours here enjoying the opportunity to immerse themselves in their own designs. This is followed by coffee and homemade cake.

And one last shopping trip before I leave: by chance, I end up in **B'jaks**, a specialty running shop with an excellent range of products and even better service. Thomas Bosnjak, a former competitive runner and passionate trail runner, is also a great salesman. In fact, he gives me such good advice that I give in and take a pair of trainers home with me, promising myself that I will train more. Right next door, I find the kind of record store that one would normally expect to see in a larger city, as it's so well-stocked. Alexander Sackel realised his dream of owning a record store when he opened **Goodthings**. After spending a long time as a journalist in the music industry, this next step was a logical one for him. "It doesn't look much different at my house – it's just a bit messier," he

laughs. His contacts in the music industry also benefit the public, as there are live gigs in his shop from time to time. Quite a discovery.

And how times change. In earlier times, the Salzkammergut region was really cut off from the outside world. The people didn't want their salt-extraction technologies to get out. Any trip outside of the region therefore had to be approved by the Salzamt (salt office). Today, Gmunden presents itself as a prosperous, cosmopolitan town. Next time I visit, I'll probably come in summer in order to attend "Jazz on the Lake" and sail across the lake on the Gisela to the tune of cool jazz music.

**Further recommendations:**

**Schloss Weyer Gallery:** The exquisite Weyer renaissance castle in Gmunden, with its arcade courtyards, houses within its historic walls one of the most important Meisener porcelain collections in Europe.

**Klo & So:** There is an unconventional collection of historic sanitary objects in the K-Hof in the centre of Gmunden. In other words, a toilet museum.

**Villa Toscana – Toscana Congress:** The Villa Toscana, with its many large rooms, is used as an event venue, as is the congress centre. Both the congress building and the villa are perfect locations for events such as weddings.

**The treetop path on the Grünberg:** 1,400 metres in length and with an approx. 40 metre high lookout tower, with its unique views, the path on the Grünberg is enchanting!

**THINGS TO SEE**

**K-Hof**

k-hof.at

**Keramikmanufaktur**

gmundner.at

**Schloss Ort**

(built in the 10<sup>th</sup> century)

schlossorth.com

**THINGS TO DO**

**Schiffahrt Eder** (est. 1839)

traunseeschiffahrt.at

**Grünberg – the local mountain with treetop path**

gruenberg.info

**City tours**

traunsee.salzkammergut.at

**Paint-your-own ceramics**

gmundner.at

**EATING AND DRINKING**

**Orther Stub'n**

schlossorth.com

**Gasthof Engelhof**

engelhof.at

**Landhotel Grünberg**

am Traunsee

gruenberg.at

**Café Brandl**

facebook.com/brandl.gmunden

**Hotel Hois'n Wirt** (est. 1896)

hoisnwirt.at

**WHERE TO STAY**

\*\*\***Superior Landhotel**

**Grünberg am See**

gruenberg.at

\*\*\*\***Seehotel Schwan**

seehotel-schwan.at

\*\*\*\***Seehotel im Weyer**

gmunden-seehotel.at

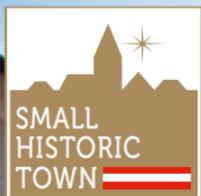
**SHOPPING**

**Shopping in Gmunden**

shoppinggmunden.at



Tourismusverband Traunsee-Almtal  
Toscanapark 1, A-4810 Gmunden  
Tel. +43 76 12 74451  
info@traunsee-almтал.at  
www.traunsee-almтал.at



# HALLEIN

## A multifaceted insider tip

A unique combination of the historic old town and Perner Island, cultural attractions, great shopping and the green Dürrnberg recreational area is attracting more and more visitors to this Celtic salt town that has something for everyone. Hallein has been an insider tip for years!

Only 16 kilometres separate Hallein from its big sister Salzburg. Today, Hallein is a star in its own right on the city tourism landscape, and an **insider tip** for those in the know. That's no surprise, considering how much the town on the Salzach has to offer. Such as the diverse cuisine: Austrian, Asian, Spanish, Italian, you name it – foreign cultures have been influencing Hallein's culinary landscape since time immemorial. Enjoy a wide variety of local and international delicacies at the many charming cafés and restaurants that can be found in the picturesque squares and medieval alleys. Such as **Confiserie Braun**: The family of head chef Gerd Braun has been running this confectionery since 1912. His sons are the fourth generation. "We are fortunate that the business year is very predictable, as it follows the local customs and traditions," he says. "We put a lot of effort into making what is needed over the course of the year." From baked goods for



View of the city of Hallein. In the foreground, one of the two Barmsteins, Hallein's rocky landmark.



## “...lively salt city along the Salzach ...

Krampus, Christmas and carnival, to summer truffles, each season has its own specialities. And there's one in particular that we could all do with: the "Geldscheisser" ("money crapper"), shaped out of macaroon dough and associated with New Year's Eve. For the evening, there are lots of restaurants, pizzerias and bars. And occasional live music, which attract guests from out on the streets into a warm and cosy pub environment.

If you'd like to find out more about the diverse culinary scene, you can take a **gastronomic tour of the town**. These enjoyable walks end at the **Guglhof Distillery**, run by Anton Vogl, one of the best distillers in the country. The diversity of his creations can be seen as soon as you enter the sales room: pear, apple, rowanberry, gin, whiskey – there's something here for everyone. **Hofbräu Kaltenhausen**, the oldest wheat beer brewery



Salt Mines in Hallein/Bad Dürrnberg: It's a swift slide into the mountain.

in Austria, is a real treat for beer lovers. It's been brewing the finest of beers since 1475. Today, the brewery is a blend of tradition and innovation, as proven by the many craft beers that are brewed on site. To round off the great range of food and drink options, some of the town-centre cafés also host a cinema breakfast: After a leisurely breakfast, you head over to the Stadttheater for a special film screening. It's a great idea and a fun way to start the day.

But the town on the Salzach is not just known for its culinary scene – it's also a place of creativity, as shown by the many studios and vernissages of domestic and foreign artists. But it wasn't always like this. While Salzburg has traditionally been thought of as the city of art, it's little sister Hallein was long considered an industrial town, due to its centuries-old salt mining industry. The **"white gold"** didn't just extend the shelf life of food – it also filled the prince-archbishop's coffers. Above all, it provided Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau with the funds he needed to transform Salzburg's architecture in line with his vision. At the time, 36,000 tonnes of salt were mined annually and transported north via the Salzach river to Franconia and Bohemia or southwards along the Tauern trails. Since it stopped making salt in 1989, Hallein has evolved and reinvented itself. Such as with the various music, cabaret and cultural events that make the town come to life throughout the year – be it the **wine market**, the **craft beer market** or the big **Stadtfest** town festival in summer, featuring artists from Austria and abroad.

The Schmiede art festival is now held each year in the former salt works, where brine was once heated in brew kettles. **Schmiede** emphasises collaboration and interaction, rather than mere presentation, to create a "playground of ideas". Art is celebrated for art's sake, in all its variations. "We wanted to create a kind of rhythm for a large group of diverse creators of art and culture," explains artistic director Rüdiger Wassibauer. Perner Island has been used as a venue by the **Salzburg Festival** every summer since 1992. Anyone who has attended an event there will be familiar with the location's appeal. Actors mingle with the audience before and after performances, highlighting the special charm of this event venue.



Celtic miners' working and living conditions are reconstructed in the Celtic village.



Meet the Celts in the Celtic Museum and experience thousands of years of the city's history.



© Zenzmaier



Exhibitions of regional artists can be visited in the Pro Arte arts space.

The discovery tour continues with the **Celtic Museum**, which houses an impressive collection of jewels. The amber jewellery, Celtic bronze vessels and the now famous Celtic flagon are worth the visit alone. In addition to these fascinating items, the history of salt mining is explored in great detail and a special exhibition takes visitors on a journey back in time to prehistoric Salzburg. The new **Silent Night Museum Hallein** is also well worth a visit – and not just when it's raining outside! Franz Xaver Gruber gained worldwide acclaim as the composer of the much-loved melody to "Silent Night". He was named choirmaster and organist in Hallein in 1835 and worked tirelessly to expand the local church's choir. His home is also in Hallein. The numerous drawings and watercolours are particularly interesting. Very few people know that Gruber was not only a composer, but also a very talented artist. However pride of place, of course, belongs to the original guitar of Joseph Mohr, the priest and poet whose lyrics for Christmas carol "Silent Night" are heard all around the world. When Mohr died, he was so poor that his estate was given away. The guitar ended up here after spending time in a few other places. For example, it served as a percussion instrument at the Täublwirt inn

in Kuchl after Mohr's death. That is to say, it was used to keep a modicum of order. The guitar then ended up in the estate of Felix Gruber, the composer's grandson, and finally found its way back to Hallein.

A trip to the **Salzwelten** salt mines promises to be something different. The mine has been fascinating visitors of all ages for centuries. And in the **salt factory**, built in 2019, you can still see for yourself how salt is made. But first I put on a protective suit and wish everyone "Glück auf!", the miners' traditional greeting on their way down the mines. I'm then ready to take the train into the oldest salt mine in Europe. Celts were already mining salt in these multi-branched tunnels over two-and-a-half thousand years ago. It's hard to believe, but they would chisel through the stone containing salt using only primitive wooden tools and then carry the excavated crystals 300 metres back up to the surface. As well as taking a ride on the long slides, crossing the salt lake by boat in the dark is also a magical experience. The faithfully reconstructed Celtic village of Salina also waits to be explored by young and old alike on the Salzwelten site. In the village just above the mine entrance, you can still see how the Celts used to live back then.

The 770-metre-high **Dürrenberg** is also a much-loved recreational area. Besides being home to the Bad Dürrenberg spa town, it is also a destination for hikers, Nordic walkers and cyclists. The green recreational area at the gates of the town is a great place to relax and have fun. It also boasts a 2.2 km-long summer toboggan run, called the "**Keltenblitz**" (Celtic blitz) – the longest one in the state of Salzburg. Visual highlights on a trip to the Dürrenberg include the magnificent views from the Zinkenstüberl, Truckenthannalm and Egglgut inns. But Bad Dürrenberg also offers just as many options in winter: Besides spending a day in the family-friendly **skiing area**, you can also embark on a snowshoe hike or a ski tour.

Hallein is the perfect place to spend a varied and **active holiday**. For example, the Tauern cycle path leads right past Hallein. The salt trade route is also very popular among cyclists. At the Hallein/Bad Dürrenberg Tourism Office, you can conveniently **hire bikes**, both normal or



The Badergässchen lane. There are more than 300 listed houses in Hallein's historical old city.



A colourful stage for artists and acrobats: the old town of Hallein as an open-air theatre.



Enjoying the sweet side of life is a piece of cake at the many cafés in Hallein.

## Small historic town



With a great new look in time for its 200th anniversary: the Silent Night Museum in Hallein.



The interior of the museum showcases several treats, including the composer's music room.

electric. The activity programme, which changes each year, provides an overview of the many opportunities to get active in and around Hallein. Go hiking on the Dürrnberg, or take a stroll through the charming alleys of the old town. Sit in a small café, or have a drink in a big brewery. Hear the stories of the night watchman, or experience history up close in the Celtic Museum. You can also go tobogganing in the summer, enjoy brunch up on the mountain or embark on a photo tour. The **activity programme** is always packed with various activities for people who like to discover new things, be it nature, culture or culinary delights.

But Hallein is not just rich in culture, history and leisure possibilities – it's also great for shopping. The many **small, owner-managed businesses** are known for their top quality, unique products and personal service. Be it umbrellas from Kirchtag, high-quality bicycles at Grundtner, or youthful fashion in the many smaller shops in the centre – as a modern and easily accessible shopping town, Hallein boasts a great variety of different stores. From traditional businesses with high-quality product ranges, through to speciality shops offering the personal touch, you're sure to find something to your taste. On weekends in Hallein, you can also experience the hustle and bustle of one of Salzburg's most beautiful outdoor markets. At the weekly **Grünmarkt**, farmers from the region sell their specialities between six in the morning and one in the afternoon. At "moonlight shopping" in the summer months, which has almost become a local tradition, the town turns into a shopping mecca under the starry sky.

Culture and nature, Celtic history, Silent Night, shopping and whiskey: Hallein has it all.

And Hallein also leaves nothing to be desired when it comes to accessibility. The town can be reached quickly and easily, whether by train or by car. And once you've arrived, you might never want to leave.

### Further recommendations:

**Moonlight shopping:** Between May and September, all shops are open until 9:30 p.m. on one day a month. There is a free shuttle from the spa centre in Bad Vigaun and from Bad Dürrnberg. You can bathe in comfort and then head off for a rich shopping experience.



Guglhof Distillery: Fine spirits from Salzburg's oldest distillery.



**Beer tastings:** There are regular tastings of house-brewed speciality beers at the Kaltenhausener Brauerei, including the culinary beer tour with the brewery's beer sommelier (Every Friday between May and October, register at the Tourist Board Hallein).

**Activity programme:** The diverse programme includes a range of mostly guided tours and activities relating to gastronomy, hiking, photography and culture, plus plenty to keep the kids entertained. [www.hallein.com](http://www.hallein.com)

**Salzburg Festival:** There are performances on Perner Island every year during the summer months. [www.salzburgerfestspiele.at](http://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at)

#### THINGS TO SEE

**Salzwellen and Celtic Village**  
[salzwellen.at](http://salzwellen.at)

**Celtic Museum / Silent Night Museum**  
[keltenmuseum.at](http://keltenmuseum.at)

**Hiking and skiing in Dürrenberg**  
[duernberg.at](http://duernberg.at)

#### THINGS TO DO

**Free tour of the town**  
[hallein.com](http://hallein.com)

**Gastronomic town tour**  
[hallein.com](http://hallein.com)

**Summer toboggan run**  
[duernberg.at](http://duernberg.at)

**Tours of the Hofbräu Kaltenhausen Brewery and Guglhof Distillery**  
[guglhof.at](http://guglhof.at)  
[kaltenhausen.at](http://kaltenhausen.at)

#### EATING AND DRINKING

**Bottega mattilia**  
[bottega-mattilia.at](http://bottega-mattilia.at)

**Cleitzlers Pizza Manufactur**  
[cleitzlers.com](http://cleitzlers.com)

**Genusskrämerei**  
[genusskraemerei.at](http://genusskraemerei.at)

**Konoba Pinna nobilis**  
[pinnanobilis.at](http://pinnanobilis.at)

**Stadtkrug and Freysitz Hallein Bar**  
[stadtkrug-hallein.at](http://stadtkrug-hallein.at)

**Schleckerei**  
[die-schleckerei.eatbu.com](http://die-schleckerei.eatbu.com)

**Toro Toro Spanish restaurant**  
[toro-toro.at](http://toro-toro.at)

#### WHERE TO STAY

**Hotel Kranzbichlhof**  
[kranzbichlhof.net](http://kranzbichlhof.net)

**Hotel Hafnerwirt**  
[hafnerwirt.com](http://hafnerwirt.com)

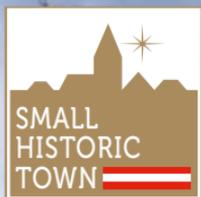
**Hotel Brückenwirt**  
[brueckenwirt-hallein.at](http://brueckenwirt-hallein.at)

**Camping Auwirt**  
[auwirt.com](http://auwirt.com)

**salt residence**  
[thesalt-hallein.com](http://thesalt-hallein.com)



Tourismusverband Hallein/Bad Dürrenberg  
Mauttorpromenade 6, A-5400 Hallein  
Tel. +43 62 45 853 94  
[office@hallein.com](mailto:office@hallein.com), [www.hallein.com](http://www.hallein.com)



# HARTBERG

## The garden town

Hartberg combines culture and tradition with a real proximity to nature. The town is surrounded by the East Styrian hills and covered with lovely greenery interspersed with historical, venerable buildings, which will make you feel as though you're constantly moving from one garden to the next.

**Hartberg Castle**, situated at the foot of the Ringkogel, is the highest point of the town and considered as the secular nucleus of Hartberg. It is where the story of the town began and where the Styrian Margraves lived from 1147. The path leads through the gate of the adjacent castle wall into the Stadtpark, where the public washing place was once located. A stone trough still stands there today, serving as a reminder that women once had to scrub their dirty washing by hand. A look back at the castle is a real sight to behold: The modern extension made of weathering steel (rusty steel plates) is an ingenious blend of old and new. It was added years ago and has since won awards.

My accommodation is just below it. Once the administrator's building ("Meierhof") of Hartberg Castle, the **Alter Gerichtshof** (old courtyard) is now a hotel that has stayed true to its name, as justice was once served here. In the breakfast room, you soon see why it's described as a "boutique" hotel – it has been tastefully decorated throughout, with great attention to detail. This is where



The late-Romanesque chapel is one of the most important art treasures of the Romanesque period in Austria.



© Bernhard Bergmann

“...a blend of history and modernity...

decisions were once made on whether to lock people up or set them free. It's hard to imagine now, because the host Doris Schneider-Manns Au does everything she can to make your stay as pleasant as possible. But the hotel also has other benefits: it is set in a very quiet location not far from the historic town centre.

My walk through town takes me to some **show workshops**, where you can watch masters of their craft at work. Here, the focus is on moderate consumption, rather than mass consumption, and on regionalisation not globalisation. I like that. I then drop by **Kalcher Optik**, where Chris Kalcher creates horn-rimmed glasses by hand from natural materials. All of his glasses are made to order. The horn comes from Indian water buffalo, and the horn plates can be chosen in the shop. Due to the special grain, no two are the same. In the workshop, Chris shows me another highlight: lots of vintage models from Ray Ban and Robert La Roche. As a glasses geek, I could spend days here.

My second stop is to visit Petra Saurugg. Her **“Keramik Saustall”** is both a workshop and a social hangout. “You can come along and watch me work, or you can browse and buy finished products,” says Petra. There are all kinds of things to see here: bowls, cups and fig-



© Bernhard Bergmann

Open-air gallery at the historic Stadtteich pond.

urines of different shapes and sizes, made using different techniques. I particularly like her “Princess and the Pea” espresso cups, which picture the princess on the cup, and the pea on the saucer. She’s also created some special cups for the roasting house in Hartberg (more on that later). Exciting! This is also a place where I’d like to spend more time. But I have another workshop on my list: **Rindler Jewellers**. Once the house of the Baders, the building has been owned by the Rindler family since 1978, when it was acquired by the grandfather of the current owner. You can hardly miss it, with its golden façade! Rindler Snr. would have liked it to be even more golden, but he wasn’t allowed, he laughs, before showing me an amazing collection. One of the things I really love is the special service offered to wedding couples: Not only can they watch the rings being made, they can also enjoy a five-course gourmet meal with wine. The session then finishes in the in-house wine cellar. This makes choosing the rings an enjoyable experience, even for those who aren’t big on jewellery.

For me, it’s time to hit the road again. I walk along the **Steirner Fluss** (stone river), a fountain installation by Hartberg-born artist Ulrike Truger, towards the Stadtteich pond. Truger’s installation traces the course of the Stadtbach brook, which flowed through the town until the mid-19th century but now runs underground. The **pond** itself once served as the first public open-air swimming pool. Today, the water surface acts as a floating **open-air gallery**. I marvel at pictures of birds from the **Gmoos**, the recreational area just outside town, where a wide variety of species come to nest – from common ones to rare ones, including water rail and lesser whitethroat. This nature reserve also has an interesting history: In the 1980s, a group of activists managed to thwart plans to convert the fen into building land. Like the pedestrian zone, the Gmoos is a project for which the initiators faced heavy criticism at the time, as it was not seen as a better alternative. Today, however, it makes a significant contribution to improving the urban quality of life.

Only a stone’s throw from the Hartberger Gmoos, surrounded by greenery next to the Maria Lebing pilgrimage church, stands the **Gasthof Pack “Zur Lebing-Au”**. The inn has existed since 1740, when it served as a stop-off for pilgrims. With David Pack at the helm, the inn’s more



The impressive frescoes take you back in time to a bygone era – eerily beautiful.



Historical fountain with contemporary design on the Hauptplatz square.



© Stadtmaking Postl



Music festival at Hartberg Castle – a highlight of the town's Kultursommer.

than 300-year history is in good hands. As the fourth generation of innkeepers after his father and grandfather, he runs the business with great passion and dedication. "It's important that the cuisine is regional," he says, which is why he maintains close relationships with the local farmers. David takes me through the wonderful courtyard and garden, which can be separated with a sliding gate if ever the guests want some privacy. He then proudly shows me the well-stocked wine cellar featuring shell limestone walls. When we reach the cosy guest garden, I'm spoilt for choice: traditional roast chicken, or perhaps fresh grilled trout from the Pöllau valley? I decide on the latter, accompanied by a glass of Sauvignon Blanc. What more could I ask for?

They say you should have a cup of coffee after a meal – and I already have the perfect place in mind: Günther Bohuslav's roasting house Short Black. But I first stop off at the town bookshop, where I meet Gerlinde Wiesenhofer, founder of the **Hartberger Literaturtage**. The concept involves presenting well-known writers, as well as less well-known but promising ones, in interesting locations. "We also want to showcase the town, especially places that aren't normally used for events," says the bookseller. It's an excellent way to experience great literature in beautiful courtyards and gardens with good food and music. So, what will it be: a Huila Supremo from Colombia or a Palmira Boquete from Panama? Any idea what I'm talking

about? Let me help: They are just two of the varieties of coffee served at the **Short Black roasting house**. Günther Bohuslav is a trained barista and coffee sommelier. But most of what he knows, he has taught himself, he tells me. "It's a classic case of learning on the job. Every bean has to be roasted differently – some quickly, others more slowly. You really have to concentrate to bring out the full flavour of each one. I focus on the taste, which is sensational. Seriously. The last time I tasted coffee this good was in Bogotá. Pre-Columbian artefacts dotted around the place also take me back to the great time I spent there.

The era when people were kept inside the **Reckturm** was also a long time ago, but not quite as pleasant. Part of the medieval town wall, it first served as a defensive tower, then later as a dreaded prison. I walk through the Stadtpark and along Kirchengasse until I reach the **Karner chapel**. With its impressive frescoes, it is a marvellous and historic work of art. In the main room, Christ is depicted in the centre as the ruler of the world with the twelve apostles. Some experts also believe that it represents the four world empires. Starting in 1893, the frescoes were brushed up, contoured and restored by the Viennese restorer Theophil Melicher. Many art historians don't believe in restoring a complete work of art. But I find it interesting because, on closer inspection, you can make out subtle differences. This close observation therefore takes you on a journey through centuries of art history. It is said that knights were sworn in here for upcoming crusades. Eerie!

It's now time to relax in Bella Bayer's **garden studio**. Her private garden realm covers an area of five thousand square meters. Bella is a landscape architect and collector of garden art. She and her husband Karl Lueger started to combine the two almost twenty years ago. This means that the artists spend four weeks decorating and compacting the garden. After the exhibition, almost all the works of art are removed again, but some are left until the following year. "We love what we do. And others like our work, too," she says. You can tell. The biodiversity here is amazing, and it is complemented and contrasted by the art. You can stroll around to your heart's content. Bella is also passionate about making the town a greener place. For example, she helped to revitalise the main square with sycamore trees, worked on the climatic forest in the Schlosspark and was also involved in planting the



© Gerd Kragol, Petra Saurugg

Keramik Saustall, showcase workshop of Petra Saurugg.



© Lueger

Garten + Kunst – international artists in the bellabayer garden studio.



© Stadlmarketing Postl

Hartberger Literaturtage – readings by great Austrian authors and up-and-coming writers, set against a musical backdrop.



© Bernhard Beigmann

hydrangeas in the Stadtpark alongside the existing trees. There's greenery on every corner – and Bella and her helpers have played a part in most of it.

At the “**Zum Brauhaus**” traditional inn on the Hauptplatz square, there's an evident desire to keep up with the times but stay true to their roots. It was already ahead of its time at the turn of the century, when it offered travellers between Vienna and Graz flowing water in hallways – the latest trend at the time. Today, it is run as a charming hotel in the old town. Its restaurant specialises in traditional Styrian cuisine. I make up for what I missed by choosing the trout for lunch. That's right, a classic roast chicken salad and a freshly pulled beer.



Ringwarte, historical lookout post on the Ringkogel, which was colonised long ago by the Celts.

It's clear that a lot of money has been invested in revitalising the **Hauptplatz**. The fountain, bought in Paris at the end of the 19th century, has been renovated and a seating area created. As it starts to get dark, you can really see how the efforts have paid off. Two cafés, a trendy bar, several inns, jam-packed pub gardens – the atmosphere feels almost Mediterranean and puts you in the mood for a good time. I eventually head to the **Quartier**, the hippest bar in town – but with none of the snobbishness you might otherwise find in a big city. The staff are extremely friendly, despite being very busy. It's the perfect place to bring the evening to a close with a glass or two of Styrian wine. And that's exactly what I do, while looking back on a great day. The next morning, I go to the **municipal museum**, where

you can embark on a journey through the history of Hartberg or visit one of the alternating special exhibitions. Here, too, the existing features of the age-old manor house where the museum is located have been skilfully blended with modern architecture. It seems almost as though the well-proportioned structures and the greenery have merged into one, as though the landscape is flowing over the building.

After that, I still have time for an extended bike ride. Passing the **Villa Rustica**, where you can see the well-preserved foundation walls of a large Roman country estate, I follow the East Styrian **Roman Wine Trail** westwards. It would, of course, be a shame if I didn't stop off at one of the numerous wine taverns along the way. I opt for Weinbau Schmallegger, next to the Kalvarienbergkirche church. Wolfgang Schmallegger, also called Sali, was the first winegrower in the area to switch to controlled organic cultivation – 25 years ago! A traditional Styrian food platter with a glass of organic wine – or Styrian “slow food”, as the locals like to say – rounds off a great weekend. I'll definitely visit Hartberg again, whether for the **Schlosshofserenade** in the romantic castle courtyard or to take a closer look at the Gmoos.

#### Further recommendations:

**History on the Ringkogel:** In the third century B.C., one of the most important prehistoric settlements in Styria, surrounded by a mighty ring wall, was built on the Ringkogel, Hartberg's “local mountain”. From the “Ringwarte” observation tower, you can enjoy magnificent panoramic views over the East Styrian hills.

**Culinary delights at the Pusswald:** For years, the Restaurant & Hotel Pusswald has been the place to be for anyone who appreciates good food and drink. Regional classics are given a modern slant, and Mediterranean delicacies are offered by the Alpe-Adria cuisine.

#### THINGS TO SEE

**Town wall** (12th century)

**2 town towers**

**Chapel** (13th century)

**Stadtmuseum Hartberg**

Celts, Romans

#### THINGS TO DO

**Posch Mühle**

poschmuehle.at

**Ökopark Hartberg**

oekopark.at

**Night watchman tour**

hartbergerland.at

#### EATING AND DRINKING

**Restaurant + Vinotheque**

**Pusswald**

restaurant-pusswald.at

**“Zum Brauhaus” inn**

brauhaus.co.at

**Gasthof Pack “Zur Lebing Au”**

gasthof-pack.at

**Quartier**

quartier-hartberg.at

#### WHERE TO STAY

**Hotel & Vinothek Pusswald**

restaurant-pusswald.at

**Hotel Alter Gerichtshof**

hotel-altergerichtshof.at

**“Zum Brauhaus” hotel**

brauhaus.co.at

**Gasthof Hotel “Zur Lebing Au”**

gasthof-pack.at

**Schreiners Berghof**

schreiners-berghof.at

#### SHOPPING

**Rindler Jewellers**

juwelier-rindler.at

**Saustall Ceramics**

keramik-saustall.at

**Kalcher Optik opticians**

Design by Chris Kalcher

**Short Black roasting house**

bohsbeans.com



Tourismusverband Hartbergerland

Alleegasse 6, A-8230 Hartberg

Tel. +43 33 32 603-300

tourismus@hartbergerland.at

www.hartbergerland.at



# JUDENBURG

## Flying high

Judenburg is known for its medieval City Tower, which for the past ten years has been home to one of Europe's most sophisticated planetariums. But there are also plenty of other things to be discovered in this medieval town. It is full of cultural treasures and has a relaxed, Mediterranean feel.

Even the approach to Judenburg is a delight. Snow-covered mountains rise up before you as you drive towards the town from the north-east via the Murtal motorway – above all the two popular mountains for day-trippers, **Zirbitzkogel** and **Kreiskogel**.

On the Obdach side of the Zirbitzkogel there are a few lifts that make this mountain a popular family skiing destination. So if you are not looking for a large, busy ski area but for something rather more manageable and relaxed, you have come to the right place. And later I am reminded of the ski lifts that are all around the city when I visit the **Judenburg Town Museum**. Because as part of a photography exhibition, there is a display of black and white pictures from the 1960s of families and school groups on ski trips, which show a scene so far removed from today's mass ski tourism that I spontaneously want to fasten on my skis. But there is more to do here than just skiing – the region around Judenburg is also popular among day-



From the viewing platform of the Star Tower, you can enjoy a wonderful view across the old town of Judenburg.



© FotoMitteegger

## “ ... an air of history with a scent of pine ...

trippers and hikers. The beautiful natural landscape of the Zirbenland region will lure you away from the ski slopes in favour of snowshoe hiking and tobogganing, and hiking boots are an essential piece of kit in the warmer months of the year. There are many paths leading up the Zirbitzkogel, Judenburg's local mountain, and quaint "hut" inns which ensure that refreshments are in plentiful supply. It is particularly beautiful in June when the alpine rose is in flower and the mountain meadows are covered in a vibrant pink. Gorgeous paths for cycling and walking can also be found in the valley, along the Mur river.

But back to Judenburg: debates over the origin of the town's name, the earliest record of which dates from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, are almost as old as the town itself. It is not certain whether the name is based on a medieval Jewish settlement or a local count named Judeo. The town elders argued successfully for the latter during the Second World War, and thereby prevented the town from being renamed. However, nowadays the former is seen as more likely, according to historian Dr. Michael Schiestl, Director of the Judenburg Town Museum. In any event, the town's considerable wealth, which was already established in the early medieval period, was based on numerous privileges. This was the only place where raw iron could be



A brass band at the Winterleitenhütte, the perfect start for walks to the 2,396 metre high Zirbitzkogel.



Fascinating displays on the history of Judenburg are on show in the town museum.

traded, for example. The town also possessed a **staple right**, meaning that merchants who were passing through had to offer their wares for sale for three days before they could continue on their way. The **trade in valerian**, an alpine plant which in earlier times was used not only for soap products but also for incense and to season wine and salves, also helped businesses to flourish. Judenburg was consequently granted **municipal rights** as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and from then on the town was systematically expanded. The Styrian troubadour and local politician Ulrich von Liechtenstein oversaw the construction of the town's first water pipe.

In more recent years, Judenburg has been known as a steel town. For decades, the chimneys of steelworks dominated the townscape. However, as is often the case in the history of a town, the focus has shifted: from the steel works to more illustrious industries. The smoking chimney stacks have disappeared from the townscape.

The Gasthaus Gruber on the town square, with its traditional home-cooked food, friendly service, and cosy atmosphere is the perfect place to gather my strength for the impending tour of the town. The sautéed liver with potatoes is a dream, and the apple strudel tops off the whole experience exquisitely. I then begin my tour at the **Körblerhaus**, one of the most beautiful and best-preserved town houses on the main square, which also includes one of the oldest pharmacies in Styria. A late medieval rounded arch leads into a delightful inner courtyard, which is a must-see. In Judenburg it is always worth visiting some of the inner courtyards when they are open to the public. One such arcaded courtyard houses the **Arkadia**, a restaurant serving Styrian and international specialities, which comes highly recommended.

But now I head to the **City Tower**, the main landmark of the town. With a height of almost 76 metres, it is the tallest free-standing tower in Austria. Construction was begun in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but it took sixty years to be completed. It was a superlative construction for its time. 2,500 m<sup>3</sup> of earth had to be removed to build the foundations, which perhaps explains why the tower only grew by about one metre per year of construction. Progress on the project was also hindered by a devastating town fire in 1504.



Visible for miles around, the Körblerhaus is among the best-preserved and most beautifully renovated town houses in Judenburg's main square.



Austria's tallest free-standing city tower burned down and was rebuilt five times.



© FotoMitteregger

After its completion, the tower was used by the church as a bell tower, and by the town as a fire station. But even a bellows-operated organ, which could be heard from far away, and was used to signal immediate fire danger, wasn't able to prevent the tower from burning down a further four times. Each time this happened, the citizens of Judenburg simply rolled up their sleeves and rebuilt the tower. Just as the tower was once considered a visible symbol of the town's power and independence, it can also be seen today as a symbol of the perseverance and indefatigable optimism of the people of Judenburg. The 90-year-old grandson of the last tower warden, **Rudi Lorenz**, still gives tours of the tower to this day, sharing various anecdotes about life in the tower, such as the struggle to hoist up food provisions during strong winds, or the excitement of the swinging freely at this dizzying altitude.



The Star Tower houses one of the most sophisticated planetariums in Europe.

The lift which takes me up through the glassed-in bell tower is quite unique, but the ascent also holds some surprises. It is frequently used as an exhibition space, meaning that you can enjoy contemporary art while you walk up and down the stairs. And the stair race is a regular competition held to establish who can tackle the 256 steps in the shortest amount of time.

The **Sternenturm (Star Tower)**, one of Europe's most sophisticated planetariums, is located in the dome. Its construction is something quite special, as the screen is suspended on chains. This is because a fixed construction would be prone to tears and cracks, as the tower sways slightly when the bell rings.

And I am in luck – I arrive in time for the start of a presentation for schoolchildren, and, on impulse, I join the audience. This allows me to appreciate fully that the advance praise I have heard about the Star Tower is entirely justified. Gazing at the stars it becomes clear how much there is to learn, details which are unfamiliar not only to the school students, but also to me. Other programmed events, such as **music shows**, are also on offer in the tower; currently it is showcasing a whistle-stop tour through the history of the pop band Queen. It is an excellent tribute to the band from the 70s and 80s, and it's not just the oldies who enjoy it. After the presentation, I take a moment to enjoy the view from the gallery across Judenburg and the surrounding area.

Back on the ground, I head to the site of the former Jewish ghetto, where the Jews who had been expelled from the town settled, between the inner and outer town walls. I head down all manner of little passages and alleys and eventually find myself in the **Weyergasse**, which not only offers a beautiful view of the tower, but is also home to an Italian pizzeria, the **San Marco**. Judenburg has always had a good relationship with our neighbour to the south; after all, the old trading route led through the town. So where else should you be able to eat excellent Italian food if not here? The pizzas are indeed outstanding, and the finely sliced beef carpaccio is also of the highest quality. The cosy atmosphere of the restaurant makes for a pleasant end to the day.

En route, I decide to visit another former monastery, which houses a brand new museum: Museum Murtal. This historic building at Herrengasse 12 used to be a Minorite monastery. Today, it exhibits archaeological highlights from the region. Visitors can embark on a journey into the Mur valley during the Hallstatt period more than 3,000 years ago. Over an area of some 500 m<sup>2</sup>, the exhibition shows treasures from the rediscovered cult wagon grave, masterpieces of Hallstatt craftsmanship and ostentatious



Museum Murtal – archaeology from the region: Travel back in time to a world 3,000 years ago.



The rooms of the JUFA Hotel are within the ancient walls of the former Jesuit monastery.



The legendary Puch 500 is just one of the many treasures on display at the Puch Museum.



In honour of the "Zirbe" (pine tree)... specialities of the Zirbenland region include schnapps, liqueurs, syrups, regional dress, jewellery, and wooden beds.

weapons made of bronze and iron. In addition, a journey through time at six stations highlights important events in the individual cultural epochs. In the method room, you can gain insights into archaeological research. In the cult wagon and helmet grave rooms, everything revolves around the finds made on the Falkenberg in Strettweg. Not to be missed!

If you are in Judenburg you must visit the Puch Museum, which is dedicated to the Puch brand and to the people behind its unique innovations. What was originally intended as a temporary exhibition has developed over the years into a genuine tourist attraction. The Puch Museum in Judenburg is based around the life story and work of Johann Puch, born in Slovenia in 1862, who founded the Puch factories in Graz for the production of his legendary two-wheel and four-wheel vehicles. Judenburg was its major supplier of steel and springs. Puch also started out by producing wheels. Because he won several well-known long-distance races from Vienna to Berlin and Paris to Bordeaux using his own creations, both he and his steel frames gained wider attention, contributing to the company's rising sales. Later on, he started building mopeds, motorcycles, and automobiles. 1.2 million Puch-Maxi mopeds were produced. The mini Puch 500, produced in collaboration with Fiat, is also legendary. The first of these small city cars came off the line in 1957, and in 1966 it was the winner in its class at the famous and notorious Monte Carlo Rally in 1966.

The Haflinger, an all-terrain vehicle that I drove during my time in the Austrian Army, is used for a variety of purposes, from road service to the armoured vehicles at Zurich airport. The variety of vehicles on display is impressive. My favourites are the Puch Imp, a sports car with a Puch boxer engine built by Italian emigrants in Canada, and the road bike that Rudi Mitferegger rode to victory in the Glocknerkönig race. But the historic motorcycles on display in an extra room are also well worth seeing. The exhibits from the pre-war era, most of which are from the private collection of Albert Grieshofer, form part of a special exhibition that changes regularly. I look forward to seeing what's next.

Finally, I take a seat in one of the Puch sports cars. Actually I squeeze myself into the narrow cigar-shaped frame, finding it hard to imagine that someone reached

a speed of 207 km/h on the Österreichring racing track in this vehicle. It's better not to think about what would have happened to the person sitting in this racing machine if they had made even the smallest mistake – after all, the tank is directly behind the seat. Judenburg and motorsports – many people find this a winning combination. Visitors to the Austrian Grand Prix in Spielberg for example, often come a day early or stay on afterwards in order to have a look at Judenburg. Next I take a cycling trip into the surrounding countryside and end up in Weißkirchen, the other main town of the Zirbenland region, besides Judenburg and Obdach; here I stock up on Zirben schnapps (pine schnapps) and pine syrup. Judenburg will definitely see me again, whether during the Kultursommer (culture summer), a high-quality music festival, or the Toskanafest (Tuscany festival) which, with its Mediterranean specialities, perfectly fits into the southern flair of the town. Ciao, Judenburg!

**Further recommendations:**

**St. Nicholas parish church:** The “Madonna of Judenburg” dating from 1420-25 is on display here in the Chapel of St. Mary. The Reverend Martin Trummel is also a big Elvis fan, and organises an Elvis Christmas gospel concert.

**Town Museum:** Exhibits, documents, texts on the history of the city, newspapers, and 65,000 photographs are on display here. A large-scale model gives you an overview of the town in the time of Maria Theresa.

**THINGS TO SEE**

- Judenburg City Tower**  
sternenturm.at
- Puch Museum Judenburg**  
puchmuseum.at
- Parish church of St. Nicholas and church of St. Magdalene**  
judenburg.com
- Judenburg town museum**  
judenburg.com
- Eppenstein castle ruins**  
zirbenland.at

**THINGS TO DO**

- Sternenturm Planetarium**  
sternenturm.at
- Red Bull Ring, Spielberg**  
projekt-spielberg.com
- Aqualux Thermal Spa, Fohnsdorf**  
therme-aqualux.at
- Indoor playground**  
zirbelix.at

**EATING AND DRINKING**

- Gasthaus Gruber**  
facebook.com/gruberhubmann
- Restaurant Arkadia**  
restaurant-arkadia.at
- Restaurant Kastanienlaube**  
kastanienlaube.at
- Pizzeria San Marco**  
pizzeria-sanmarco.eu
- Café Mittoni**  
mittoni.at
- Mojito Cuban Bar**  
mojito-bar.at

**WHERE TO STAY**

- JUFA Hotel zum Sternenturm**  
jufa.eu/judenburg
- Stadthotel Schwerterbräu**  
1a-hotel-steiner.at
- Hotel Murblick**  
murblick.at

**WHERE TO SHOP**

- Goldsmith Moser**  
goldschmiedemoser.at
- UD Tischkultur & mehr**  
facebook.com/UDTischkultur
- Fashion boutique**  
**Sissy Leitner**  
judenburg.com
- Leuchtenstudio Pribas**  
leuchtenstudio.at



Tourismus- & Informationsbüro  
Hauptplatz 20, A-8750 Judenburg  
Tel. +43 35 72 85-000  
info@judenburg.com, www.judenburg.com



# KUFSTEIN

## Easy-going streets

An immense fortress steeped in centuries of history, a world-famous glassworks and the largest gin collection in the world: There's no shortage of superlatives when it comes to Kufstein. But the city's true hallmark is a certain calm balance between living tradition and a sense that you're experiencing the start of something new.

First the big shock. No, it's not the eye-catching **arte Hotel** in the centre of town, with its strikingly fresh design. It's the two old solo-chair lift seats that have been painted orange and hung on the wall in the entry area. They are both discontinued models, the staff at reception tell me, and so the lift company got rid of them several years ago. There's no question that they look good on the wall. But... looking a little more closely, I see that they're about as old as I am! I hope the city has something to offer discontinued models like me. I have already been told by a local who's often out on the town, but who would prefer to remain nameless, that the city is experiencing a revival of sorts. New restaurants and bars have opened regularly over the past five years, giving the place a new, youthful energy. There is an exciting dynamic here between the city's charming old architecture and its vibrant cultural



The charming lanes in the centre of Kufstein.



## “ ...on the trail of living traditions ...

scene. This is evident at the **Kultur Quartier**, the cultural quarter located not far from the hotel, which not only provides local cultural associations with a home, but offers a wide programme of events itself.

My journey first takes me to the fortress, one of Tyrol's most important cultural monuments. It can be reached easily by lift and explored freely on the tour. Immersing myself in the exciting world of the Middle Ages, I travel through time and experience the Kufstein Fortress like never before. Besides a hologram, a talking painting and an impressive 270-degree projection, there's so much more just waiting to be discovered.

From there, I went straight to the **Heimatmuseum** (Museum of Local History). Here you can discover more about the dynamic history of this very fortress, which has been under siege and conquered many times over. And there are many other things to see, such as the farmhouse parlour that was donated to the museum in 1913 by former mayor Josef Egger, and which has been recon-



Experience history  
and culture.



View over Kufstein.

structed exactly to scale. Or an original "Rauchkuchl", a type of smokehouse that used to be common in houses here. The Rauchkuchl didn't have a chimney. The smoke spread into every last corner of the house, which was good for dealing with pests, but was pretty bad for the eyes. Kufstein Fortress certainly has lots to offer. The covered fortress arena hosts a variety of events: from rock and pop concerts, to the Medieval Knights Festival, to magical Christmas events, to the summer operettas.

Since April 2019, an exhibition dedicated to Emperor Maximilian I has been held in the historical armoury of the Kufstein Fortress. The exhibition will focus on his close links with Tyrol and Kufstein – which he conquered and whose castle buildings he fortified.

The **Heroes' Organ**, erected as a memorial to the victims of the First World War, stands at the foot of the fortress. With around 5,000 pipes, it is the world's largest outdoor organ. "The Good Comrade" is played each day at noon on the dot in memory of all victims of war. The console's location in the Festungsneuhof poses a few challenges to the organist. One is the delay of about a third of a second in the notes, caused by the sluggishness of sound. Johannes Berger, the organist and custodian of the Heroes' Organ since 2009, gives it his all. And depending on the wind, the "full work" can be heard up to ten kilometres away in neighbouring Bavaria, supposedly even all the way at the top of the Kaiser mountains.

For lunch, I stop in the **Restaurant Purlepaus**, which is located right at the foot of the fortress. The restaurant, named after the cannon that played a key role in the capture of Kufstein, serves traditional Tyrolean cuisine. I tried the Schlutzkrapfen (a stuffed pasta similar to ravioli) with two different fillings, and I was not disappointed. I could eat the one filled with Tyrolean grey cheese every day, though the intense flavour is not for the faint of heart.

Larger cities have led the way when it comes to combining bookshops with cafés. Kufstein also has a book-café: the **Lippott**. I'm not really hungry, but I can try to find room for a passion fruit tart. The large assortment of detective novels here is noticeable right away. Kufstein is a city that likes mystery, it appears. Maybe Austrian TV's "Soko Kitzbühel" crime drama should be shot here instead.



Festungs- und Heimatmuseum (Fortress and Museum of Local History): Something for grown-ups and for kids.



Historical flair and urban living.



After a short stroll, I make my way down to the Inn River, where several cafés (Müllers Café, Martins) serve coffee and snacks with an incredible view. Simply wonderful. There's no hint here of the neglect that other cities often show their rivers.

Another of the city's characteristics is its greater than average number of business pioneers. You can learn more about one of them at the **Nähmaschinenmuseum** (Sewing Machine Museum): Josef Madersperger. A witty audio-visual presentation covers the life and work of this groundbreaking inventor. What was special about his sewing machine was that it wasn't the material that moved relative to the sewing head, but the sewing head that moved relative to the stationary material. Alas, the story has a tragic side to it. As often happens, the inventor seemed to be the only one who understood how useful his machine really was. No one bought it. So Josef Madersperger gave his first fully functional sewing machine to the Polytechnic Institute in Vienna. His ingenious discovery is appreciated today.



Historical flair and urban living.

Meanwhile, evening is upon us and I still have a must-see item on my list: the **Römerhofgasse**. Nestling between the promenade along the inn, the fortress and the Unterer Stadtplatz square, this charming lane draws visitors both day and night thanks to its traditional houses and historical buildings, to say nothing of its restaurants and bars.

Mein Ziel ist das »**Auracher Löchl**«: It was here, in the traditional wine bar of the Auracher Löchl and the Träumerei #8 boutique hotel, that Karl Danzer composed his famous song dedicated to Kufstein ("Kennst du die Perle..."/"Do you know the pearl...") in 1946. There is a commemorative plaque here today. I will dine this evening here at the restaurant that shares the hotel's name.

But the **Brückenrestaurant** does catch my eye. The tiny space, only 15 square metres in size, features two seats, five courses and a record player. You can play whatever vinyl record you like while eating. Delicious food, candle-light, crackling vinyl – it sounds superb.

The Auracher Löchl is known for its Tyrolean tapas. But when the head waiter shows me the dry aged beef, the decision is easy. The manager, who prefers the title "soul of the house", carves from what must be four kilos of beef a 400-gram piece for me right before my very eyes, and I can hardly wait until its served – as is the custom here – with corncobs, Mediterranean vegetables and country-style potatoes. Medium rare? Yes, please!

After my meal, I'm proudly shown the **Stollen 1930**. This chic bar, located in a former beer cellar carved into the hill on which the fortress is constructed is home to the world's largest collection of gin, which you might have thought would be in Manhattan. There are 1,000 different varieties, which have won the bar a place in the Guinness Book of World Records, including the everyday, like Gordon's, through to the exotic, such as Adler Berlin Gin, which comes in a unique ceramic bottle, of which just 500 units were made. From subtle to strong, from almost sweet to a hint of curry: If you can imagine it, they have it. This place is like Disney World for fans of gin.

Although he's not much of a gin lover, the bartender manages to entice me, first with a glass of Opihr. This is a Moroccan tippie that's served "oriental spiced" in a large, rounded glass. The flavour is stunning. Cardamom and coriander bring more than just a whiff of the Orient to this redesigned vault. Next, he lets me try other varieties, some made in-house. What a night! After that tasting, though, my head feels a bit like the hill must have done after they blew a hole in it 600 years ago. Which is to say: it's time for bed.



Tyrolean tapas  
at Auracher Löchl.



Stollen 1930 – The bar.

## Small historic town



Culture & Events  
in the Kufstein area.



Six shimmering pearls  
– Swimming lakes  
in the Kufstein area.



Where tradition and  
culinary delights meet.

I reserved the following day for another of the city's pioneers, one known to nearly any drinker of wine. Claus Riedel, along with his father, launched the legendary **Kufstein Glassworks**. The family-owned company produces 40 million wine glasses a year.

But what not many people know is that glass is still blown in Kufstein today. The top quality Sommeliers line and some carafes are made here.

If you have the opportunity to take a tour of the production line, you certainly shouldn't miss it. There is something both meditative and exhausting about watching glass being blown. Riedel discovered and perfected something truly revolutionary: a glass's form plays a part in a person's enjoyment of its contents. Riedel involved winemakers in the design process from the very beginning. The goal was – and remains – to produce a glass that best accentuates each wine.

Riedel glasses are available for purchase at very reasonable prices in the attached shop. Not only are the mass-produced glasses available; it is also possible to buy products from the Sommeliers line, the making of which I had marvelled at only moments before, at third-grade quality and at affordable prices. Tastings give you a chance to put to the test the core question behind the Riedel philosophy of glass – "What glass for which wine?". And that's why the visit ends up taking a bit longer than planned.

Time is running out but I still need to do a little shopping before I head home. I hit the jackpot in the **Tiroler Schmankerlladen**. Besides smoked sausage, cheese and ham, I put a couple of other small items in my shopping basket. At the Kronthaler Distillery, I'm served home-made liqueurs and can also choose from a wide selection of international fine wines and speciality spirits.

With the Kufstein song on my lips, I set off home, laden with gifts and memories. And of one thing I am sure: I'll be back. Either to dine with my wife in Brückenrestaurant or to enjoy a few glasses of gin at Stollen.

#### Further recommendations:

**Kultura – a top-level programme during the summer of culture in the Kufsteinerland region:** including the Tyrolean Festival in Erl, which takes place in the summer and the winter, the Summer of Operettas at the historic Kufstein Fortress, the Passion Plays in Erl and Thiersee, as well as the Master Classes of the Academia Vocalis. The glück.tage, a festival for literature, philosophy, nature and fun, is another highlight of the summer of culture in the Kufsteinerland region.

**Träumerei:** Small boutique hotel on Römerhofgasse, in which none of the meticulously designed, themed rooms are the same.

**Weinbar Vitus und Urban:** Kufstein residents of all ages consider the arte hotel's wine bar the place to be after work. It's nice when you don't have to sit alone in the hotel bar.

#### THINGS TO SEE

**Kufstein Fortress**  
festung.kufstein.at

**Riedel Glass**  
riedel.com

**Fohlenhof Ebbs stud farm**  
haflinger-tirol.com

**Guided tours of Kufstein**  
kufstein.com

**Places of activity and reflection**  
kufstein.com

#### THINGS TO DO

**Kufstein Operetta Summer**  
operettensommer.com

**Kaisertal Conservation Area**  
kufstein.com

**Motor Skills Park**  
kufstein.com

#### EATING AND DRINKING

**Purlepau**  
purlepau.at

**café.bar.bistro elephant**  
www.elephant-kufstein.at

**Vitus & Urban**  
vitusundurban.at

**Tiroler Hof**  
tirolerhof-kufstein.at

**Weinstadl Ebbs**  
weinstadl.net

#### WHERE TO STAY

**arte Hotel**  
arte-kufstein.at

**Alpenrose**  
alpenrose-kufstein.at

#### WHERE TO SHOP

**Trachten Stolzer**  
trachtenstolzer.at

**Shopping or coffee –  
Gitta's Wohnen & Lifestyle**  
gittas.at

**Brennerei Kronthaler**  
brennerei-kronthaler.at



Kufsteinerland  
Unterer Stadtplatz 11-13, A-6330 Kufstein  
Tel. +43 53 72 622 07  
info@kufstein.com, www.kufstein.com



# LEOBEN

## Attractive town with great views

Leoben can look back on a long and colourful history marked by monastic ambience and urban-industrial hustle and bustle. And the leisure opportunities are equally diverse – from brewery pubs to the Asia Spa, there's something for everyone.

The best way to explore Leoben town centre is on foot. So I drive straight to my hotel to "dump" my car. The Falkensteiner offers several benefits. It is situated in a green oasis on the banks of the Mur, but it is still practically in the heart of the city. You can walk to the main square in just five minutes. Plus: hotel guests enjoy free use of the adjoining Asia Spa, a unique wellness and relaxation centre. But more on that later.

The huge Chinese archway that you pass through when heading into town from the hotel is not a marketing gimmick devoted to Far Eastern wellness but, rather, a gift from the twin city of Xuzhou. It's quite impressive. Equally impressive is the fact that the shopping centre in Leoben is located right in the centre of town. This not only benefits tourists like me by allowing me to buy a few things while I'm here – it benefits all the locals, as it saves them the annoyance of having to travel to shopping centres on



© www.erlebnis-leoben.at

Bergmannsbrunnen (1799), an important relic of Montanist history.

the outskirts. And this mall is also something special: Historically important and listed elements of the former Dominican monastery have been stylishly integrated into the architecture. Where else can you go shopping inside an old religious church?

The main square/Stadtplatz has been the heart of town since the 13th century. It was redesigned by Serbian architect Boris Podrecca, the man behind many southern piazzas, which is exactly what you notice here. On weekends, when the cafés and restaurants are all full, there's certainly a Mediterranean feel about the place. But even during the week, if the weather is fine, the restaurants on the main square are filled with people drinking and having a good time. Thanks to the University of Leoben, an internationally renowned university of applied sciences, there is a very large population of students from all over the world, which helps make this town such a vibrant place. Incidentally, the foundation stone for the University of Leoben was laid by Archduke Johann, who founded the Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, which gave rise to the university as it stands today. He was not only regarded as a promoter and innovator of industry, agriculture and culture but also as a free spirit with strong roots to his homeland and nature. He cared for the country and its people, stood up for what he believed in and, because of his honesty and decency, was also known to cause the



© Foto Frelsinger

Austria's only university for mining and metallurgy.

occasional scandal in the imperial family – not least because he married the bourgeois Anna Plochl, a postmaster's daughter from Bad Aussee. The city made him a local hero, which is why you encounter him almost everywhere.

On the Hauptplatz, while enjoying my first coffee of the day, looking out over the plague column and the Engelsbrunnen and Bergmannsbrunnen fountains, I have the fortune to meet someone who tells me about the strange but interesting mining student customs of "Philistrierung" and "Ledersprung". The latter is the name given to the traditional initiation ritual for miners and their related professions. "Philistrierung", on the other hand, involves the graduate being beaten against the university gates once for every year they have studied. It goes without saying that it's all just light-hearted fun, usually enjoyed while drinking a beer or two. Nevertheless, if you want to make things easier for yourself, it is advisable to keep your length of study as short as possible! At the "Bergmannsbrunnen" fountain, the graduates then kiss the patron saint of miners – although there is no widespread consensus as to whether this really is Saint Barbara or just a miner. What do you think?

On the southwest side of the main square stands the Hacklhaus. Named after its former owner Georg Hackl, it can be recognised from a distance due its artistic baroque façade, the most significant one in town. The stucco works represent the four seasons as people and, above them, the six Christian virtues. Its three crested gables point proudly to the heavens.

Not far from here is the parish church of Leoben. With its early Baroque design, it dominates the entire old town. But its "inner values" are equally impressive. The magnificently furnished interior, including the high altar, was restored in 1993. And with great success. I can't remember the last time I had the fortune to admire such a brilliant creation. It shines so brightly that you almost have to squint. On the church square outside, a farmers' market is held twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, with local producers and farmers selling fruit and vegetables, flowers, meat, cheese and baked goods.

But first I check out the MuseumsCenter. Even from the outside, the building is a real sight to behold. Constructed in 1996, its modern extension was designed by top



This former Jesuit church in Leoben is now the Roman Catholic Stadtpfarrkirche.



© www.erlebnis-leoben.at

Experience the history of Leoben in the MuseumsCenter.



© Braunton

A place where nothing has changed for centuries – yet there's something new every day.

architect Günter Domenig and is made of glass and steel. This is “docked” onto the premises of the once important Jesuit monastery. Under the heading “7 rails into the past”, the history of the town is told across several floors. But why “rails”? In the nearby Voest steelworks in Donawitz, rail tracks are still being made today. The history of steelmaking consequently constitutes a major part of this interesting exhibition. Also interesting: it covers the history of women in the metal industry as well. Another part is dedicated to the stories of the two chroniclers Joseph Georg Karrer and Vinzenz Fichtl. The latter – town clerk, police constable and Leoben native – painted his own funeral procession whilst bedbound due to illness. Entitled the “Leobener Fries”, this unique, 14-metre-long work of art shows 450 important people from Leoben during the Biedermeier era. The adjacent Kunsthalle art gallery serves as a venue for special exhibitions on contemporary topics.

All this history makes me hungry. So I head to the “Schwarzer Adler” restaurant. I walk through a Renaissance door featuring two beautiful relief portraits and enter the historical, enclosed inner courtyard. For centuries, the inn was owned by ironworkers. Today, merchants and other people who work in the town come here to have lunch, catch up, or even to negotiate the odd business deal in the pleasant ambience created by the arches and

skylights. A Styrian roast chicken salad with a cold beer and I'm good to go again. There are many parks dotted around the city, where I can head to walk off my lunch. The Gärner Park and the Peter Tunner Park are perfect for a leisurely stroll. But I opt for the Stadtpark am Glacis instead, as it offers a short cut to the Massenburg, an ancient ruin from the 9th and 10th century. It was demolished in 1820, right down to the granary and a few remnants of wall. But, thankfully, the overgrown walls were unearthed again in 1937 and restored. The ruins were opened to the public in the year 2000 and provided with a viewing platform that offers spectacular views over large parts of the city and the surrounding area. I encounter many school children on the nearby forest nature trail. One of their teachers tells me that the ruin is lit up at night, which must look fantastic.

Back in town, I walk past the Stadttheater. It is the oldest civic theatre in use in Austria, a two-storey classicist building featuring Mariazellan iron sculptures on its door. I then arrive at the Schwammerlturm. The medieval tower is around thirty metres tall. Its distinctive mushroom-shaped roof, given to it after an earthquake, can be seen from afar. At the Café am Schwammerlturm, you can enjoy the views while sampling the Tower Ale brewed by Bierol. With a taste for beer, I head to nearby Göss. The monastery of the same name is the oldest convent in Styria. Founded in 1020, it was run by Benedictine nuns until its dissolution. You can visit the early Romanesque crypt – but not the Gösser Ornat, a fully preserved church vestment from the 13th century, as that is exhibited in the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna.

Strong beer has been brewed here in Göss for own consumption since way back. Today, Gösser is not only Austria's largest brewery, but also one of the first to discover sustainable management. For example, all of the hops and barley it uses originate from Austria, while the water comes from the nearby water conservation area. The "Gösseum", an interactive beer museum, has existed for over twenty years. The tour, including subsequent beer tasting session, takes about two hours and is highly recommended. You learn a lot about how beer was made in the past and how it's brewed today. You also hear one or two interesting anecdotes – such as how fine weather caused alcohol consumption in the nearby Donawitz



Life and work.

© www.erlebntis-leoben.at

steelworks to soar, or how the brewery's sales took a big hit for a while when the subsequent ban on alcohol was imposed. The abbey is also a popular place to get married, which is perfectly understandable in light of the really beautiful park. Another benefit of the venue: the beer is hardly likely to run dry!

A little light-headed, I make my way to Asia Spa. To spend the night here without trying the wellness centre would be a real waste. The ubiquitous bamboo and various other echoes of Far Eastern culture quickly get me in the mood. And after a few lengths in the swimming pool and two cherry blossom infusions, my everyday worries literally go up in smoke. The hotel's own restaurant enjoys an excellent reputation, and it offers an equally lovely view of the park. Nevertheless, feeling completely relaxed, I decide to hit the town again. After a drink in Zwanzger, a cosy bistro on the main square that serves regional cuisine and specialities in a laid-back atmosphere, I'm drawn to "The Kitchen", a modern bar-burger-steak-saloon, where I tuck into a delicious steak with an equally imaginative assortment of spring vegetables. All of the meat comes from animals raised on small farms in the Pöllauer Valley Nature Park and surrounding area. And you can really taste the difference. The lads assure me that they're still going to Central Dancing Leoben (formerly the Bodega). But I'm too tired to join them at this trendy nightclub. Tomorrow is another day, and I have a lot of things planned.



© AsiaSpaLeoben C. Woeltinger

The combination of public pool and recreational paradise makes this a special place.

After a delicious breakfast – made by the Falkensteiner's own omelette chef – I head up Leoben's local mountain, the Mugel. Hiking along the forest nature trail where I encountered the school children yesterday, I head to the Pampichlerwarte, a popular place to stop for a snack. From there I continue on forest trails, which turn into open alpine pasture land when I reach Gstatmoaralm. They tell me I should arrive at my destination – the Hans Prosl shelter, situated at 1,632 m above sea level – in about three hours. But it takes me a lot longer than that. After all, I had to climb more than a thousand meters. I'm rewarded with breathtaking views, which I take in while enjoying some Styrian treats.

After a while, I decide to head back down to the town centre to the Hacklhaus. The first time I was here, I missed the wall paintings by Biedermeier artist Johann Max Tendler, which are displayed in the stairwell. The daylight coming

through the domed window shines a golden spotlight on these artistic scenes of mining, hunting and metallurgy. A great end to the day.

But I still have time for a coffee: Café Steinscherer in the Hacklhaus is a very popular place for students, pensioners and all those who appreciate a pleasant coffee-house atmosphere. It also sells a range of delicious pastries, from Parisian tartlets to Dobosspitz. However, I'm told that the highlight is Leoben cake, consisting of a chocolate-almond middle, filled with Parisian cream and redcurrant jam, covered with marzipan and coated in chocolate. I feel obliged to buy a piece. But since I don't have a sweet tooth, they'll have to trust the judgement of my family, who will only be too pleased to try it.

I'll definitely come back to Leoben some time – whether to the Brau-Stadt-Fest, which is celebrated in the main square on International Beer Day, or the Weinfest, where wines from more than thirty different wine growers are on offer. Or I'll come with my bike and ride up the Präbichl, which is also great for skiing in winter.

#### Further recommendations:

**Eggenwald'sches Gartenhaus:** It was here in this classicist building that Napoleon Bonaparte negotiated and signed the Treaty of Leoben peace agreement on 18 April 1797.

**Faun playing the flute:** In front of the Goldschmiede Wieser jewellers sits a flute-playing faun, thought to be the god of the wild and a protector of farmers and shepherds.

#### THINGS TO SEE

**Hauptplatz square in Leoben**  
(Bergmannsbrunnen fountain, Engelsbrunnen fountain, plague column, Hacklhaus, old town hall)

**Mushroom tower**

**Stadttheater**

**Stadtpfarrkirche parish church**

**Massenburg ruins**  
erlebnis-leoben.at

#### THINGS TO DO

**Asia Spa Leoben**  
asiaspa.at

**Kunsthalle Leoben art gallery**  
museumscenter-leoben.at

**Gösseum**  
goesser.at

#### EATING AND DRINKING

**Arkadenhof Schwarzer Adler**  
arkadenhof.at

**Weinlaube Schwarzer Hund**  
arkadenhof.at

**Port 361**  
port361.at

**The Kitchen**  
the-kitchen.at

**Cafe Steinscherer**  
cafe-steinscherer.at

**Zwanzger**

#### WHERE TO STAY

**Falkensteiner Hotel**  
falkensteiner.com

**Hotel Kongress**  
hotelkongress.at

**Hotel Brücklwirt**  
bruecklwirt.co.at

#### SHOPPING

**LCS (Leoben City Shopping) and shops on Hauptplatz**  
leobencityshopping.at

**Woschner Tailors (est. 1882)**  
woschner.at



Tourismusverband Leoben  
Hauptplatz 3, A-8700 Leoben  
Tel. +43 3842 48 148  
office@tourismus-leoben.at  
www.tourismus-leoben.at



# RADSTADT

## A break with a view

Radstadt is the perfect starting point for walking and cycling tours through the surrounding mountainous terrain. There's an ideal route whatever you're looking for or your desired level of difficulty. The city has much to offer too, especially – and this is clear in the etymological root of the city's name – one thing: relaxation.

Why not ring in your city break with a simple but delicious dish like Salzburger Kasnocken (similar to spätzle with cheese)? The **Hotel Brüggler**, with its own wood-panelled, cosy restaurant, is the perfect place. Now that you've got some food in you, you're ready to up Radstadt's very own mountain, the **Roßbrand**. I'm told that a phenomenal view awaits me there. I found it a little hard to believe at first. It's quite gloomy out. But halfway up, we break through the thick cloud cover and find the sun smiling down on us.

Had I not already eaten some Kasnocken earlier, it would have been perfect to stop for some at the Radstädter Hütte (the Radstadt "cabin"), located about halfway up the mountainside. But the best bit was still ahead of us. It is just a few steps from the Hütte to the Roßbrand's summit cross, inscribed with the phrase "God, how beautiful is our home!" And I was granted one of



A view of historic Radstadt from the Kaiser Promenade.



© Andrea Bichler

## “...timeless testimony historical walls ...

the most spectacular views I have ever seen in my life: A **360-degree panorama** of over 150 remarkable Alpine peaks, including Bischofsmütze, Dachstein, the Tennen Mountains and Hagen Mountains, Hochkönig, and the High Tauern with the Großglockner and Großvenediger peaks. A telescope displaying the names made orienting oneself much easier. In spite of the rather cool autumn temperatures, it was hard to tear myself away. It was simply too captivating, having a view over all these gigantic mountains all at once.

I can see now that it was an unforgivable oversight not to have tried out the Altenmarkt/Radstadt linked ski area. Because the area is smaller than Flachau and Zauchensee, it tends to attract fewer skiers. The pistes are broad and family-friendly. Sounds like a wonderful destination for a family outing on a sunny Sunday.

Back in town, I stroll through the farmers' market, which is held here every Friday. Radstadt town centre has recently been given a fresh new look. The central pedestrian zone



© Hans Huber

Popular with families and skiing enthusiasts. The Radstadt-Altenmarkt ski area.

has brought even more life into the town. There are plastic armchairs in the middle of the square that offer a comfortable spot to take a break or – like me – sit and soak in the atmosphere and activity. I see on a billboard that Radstadt is playing host to a film festival in November. It is organised by the cultural association “Das Zentrum”, which annually hosts a Radstadt Arts & Crafts Market at the first weekend in September, featuring nearly one hundred artisans and their impressive creations. Other highlights include the Radstadt Dumpling Festival and the Guards’ Festival.

The first mention of Radstadt dates to 1074. No one knows exactly where the name comes from. Presumably it has to do with the spot being a place of repose – “Rast” in German – during trips across the Alps. That fits, I think with a grin as I lean back in my armchair. Five large fires devastated Radstadt between 1365 and 1865. But Radstadt’s inhabitants enthusiastically and lovingly rebuilt the town’s centre each and every time.

Concerns about defence dictated Radstadt’s city planning. Large parts of the city wall, which was meant to protect the town from invading Austrians, and the three city towers, which were built after 1526 as a form of punishment for the local peasants who had been defeated in the Peasants’ War and which were meant to complicate any future attacks on the city, still survive today. There are curiously three and not four towers because there is a steep slope on the southeast side, which offered a better means of defence than a tower would have done. A free audio guide for smartphones is now available in both German and English, providing interesting insights such as this one.

The next part of my journey takes me to **Mandlberggut**, a much loved destination in the region. There I am met by Bernhard Warter, Salzburg’s first certified schnapps sommelier. Warter has been making schnapps for over fifteen years now. “We didn’t invent distilling but we perfected it,” he says. He started off with a simple distilling apparatus. In 2008, he fulfilled a long dream of his by building the **Dachstein Destillerie**. This lovely space with a view of the Dachstein massif is now adorned with a premium distilling apparatus featuring the most up-to-date technology. I learn that the quality of Schwemmberg’s water is per-



There is plenty to discover on a stroll around the new pedestrian zone.



The historic Teichturm tower standing directly next to the Stadtteich lake, a relic of the defensive ditches that were dug around the northern half of the city.



© Markus Rohrbacher

fectly suited to distilling, as it contains the lowest levels of lime in the Alps. In addition to schnapps, Warter makes whisky that can certainly hold its own against top-quality Scotch. He has buried several casks of this premium distillate on the Hoher Dachstein. The conditions for maturation are ideal there, he says.

When it comes to fostering appreciation for handmade products, the Warter family does not limit itself to hand-distilled products. They also produce bread, bacon, cakes and tarts, along with an array of oils and balms. For example, they craft an essential oil from the needles of the mountain pine, which is a protected species and can only be harvested with special authorisation. This process is as elaborate as it is fascinating: it takes 400 kilograms of needles and twig tips to make one litre of oil. Linctus, soap and mountain arnica balm, whose therapeutic effects my grandmother swore by, are also available in the on-site shop. I went on a veritable spending spree. What will my wife, who is no particular fan of whisky, say to the Single Malt Face Care? We'll have to wait and see. The **Weissenhof** is a perfect example of how a successful concept can transform a small guesthouse into a four-star luxury hotel with two hundred beds but still stay a family business. The hotel, which is conveniently situated not far from the Radstadt-Altenmarkt ski area, was expanded bit by bit to become what it is today: a relaxing hotel and temple



© Mandelberggut

The Dachstein Distillery benefits from the high quality of Schwemmberg's water in making its premium schnapps.

to health and fitness in a class of its own. There are two golf courses available: a 9-hole practice course and an 18-hole championship course. The concept was to provide an opportunity for beginners to play a short round where they wouldn't get in the way of more experienced golfers. So the hotel is also perfect if you are looking to give your novice skill level in golf a boost while on holiday. The course is valued for its natural purity. There are no artificial rises and the whole course is optimally embedded in the surrounding landscape.

The only **golf cable car** in the entire world is a true highlight: The "Birdyjet" travels between holes 11 and 12, elevating golfers to airy heights. Play is then continued down towards the valley. Even non-golfers will be tempted to give it a try. The thought is just irresistible – riding up there and then teeing off towards Radstadt.

Beyond golf, visitors to Radstadt enjoy a generous choice of accommodation: 4,000 beds for all tastes and pockets, from comfortable bed and breakfasts to lavish holiday rentals and from inns with traditional Salzburg regional flair to feudal-style hotels. No desire is left unmet. A farmstead holiday is also an attractive option, and the Bäuerliche Gästering Radstadt is an organisation that can offer you a unique holiday.

That was a long day. I'm enjoying a well-earned dinner at the **Gasthof Löcker**. The best veal's lights stew (Kalbsrahmbeuschl) is meant to be had here. Such adamant assertions are certain to provoke the inner sceptic. Well, the only thing was to try it and let me just say: It lived up to its reputation. I enjoyed a fitting end to my wonderful day with a coffee in the beautiful guests' garden at the **Gasthof Stegerbräu**, which is situated directly against the city wall.

I'll start tomorrow with a hike along the **Milleniumspfad** (Millennium Path), which follows the city wall. One thousand steps through the history of Radstadt, the Salzburg region and Austria. This history is provided on 33 information boards along the outer city wall all the way to city hall in the city centre. Informative and actually very interesting! And I met a legend along the way: Didi Senft, the famous Tour de France devil, who enjoys attending the Radstadt cycle marathon as much as I do, is the force be-



© Armin Walcher

The Radstadt Golf Course offers both a 9-hole and an 18-hole course.



© Paul Servern

The only golf cable car in the world: The "Birdyjet" travels from hole 11 to hole 12.



There are some 500 kilometres of mountain bike paths in and around Radstadt for your enjoyment.



As a result of numerous fires in the city, the town parish church is today a fascinating mixture of Gothic and Romanesque styles.

hind the so-called cycle garden just outside the city wall, where some of his 200 cycles can be admired. These are gigantic, sometimes bizarre, moving models made from aluminium.

When it comes to metal, there's more. Not far away, metal handiwork is kept alive at the **Kunstschmiede Scheibner**. The blacksmith's workshop also happens to be the only house that belongs to the city centre but which is situated outside the city walls. After all those fires, the residents of Radstadt no longer wanted any kind of activity where sparks fly to be located in the city proper.

The **Stadtpfarrkirche** (town parish church) is also well worth a visit. On account of the damage caused by the fires, the church today is a mixture of Gothic and Romanesque styles. To be honest, I would not have noticed it myself, but once you are made aware of it, the mixing of styles seems quite exceptional. You should also make a stop at the **Schusterturm**. The original, late Gothic "light column", which dates back to 1513, still stands at the cemetery today. It was once a place of "eternal light". Not far from the centre, you'll find the **Schloss Lerchen** castle, which is today home to the **Museum of Local History (Heimatmuseum)**. The exhibitions explore peasant life and display relicts from the time of the archbishops.

The locals in Radstadt are particularly proud of their convenient and extensive **cycle path network**. There are about 500 kilometres of mountain bike paths available to enthusiasts. As a keen cyclist, I'm really eager to take on the Roßbrand mountain that we drove up in the car yesterday. And so before I head home, I turn Radstadt into my very own cycling city (in German "Rad" means "bicycle") by peddling my way up towards the Radstädter Hütte. But it starts to get dark as I approach the summit, so I decide to turn round and take the route back over the Bürgerbergalm, where I reward myself with a hearty Brettljause (a platter of local meats and cheeses). The ride was certainly worth it.

And I will definitely be back again – at the very least to finish that ride up to the Radstädter Hütte. I know from experience that the spectacular view from up there will be even more profound. Or I'll be back for skiing.



© Markus Rohrbacher

Whatever I end up doing, I'll be massaging my calves afterwards with some of that mountain pine oil from the Mandlberg distillery.

**Further recommendations:**

**Loden Steiner:** For nearly 130 years, this family-owned Austrian company has transformed luxurious wool into internationally renowned woollen textiles. Tours allow visitors to explore in detail how wool is prepared and processed. Insider tip: Cosy alpaca blankets.

**City Lounge:** Modern café offering top-quality espresso and delectable desserts. It also features a welcoming garden area under linden trees, directly on the shores of the city's Stadtteich lake.

**Hofhaimer-Sgraffito:** There is a wonderful example of sgraffito on the house where the Austrian organist and composer Paul Hofhaimer was born.

**THINGS TO SEE**

- City wall** (12<sup>th</sup> century)
- Three City towers** (16<sup>th</sup> century)
- Schloss Lerchen Museum & Kapuzinerturm**  
museen-radstadt.at
- Radstadt Radgarten**  
radstadt.com/radgarten
- Roßbrand** (1,768 m)  
radstadt.com/rossbrand

**THINGS TO DO**

- Radstädter Knödelfest**  
radstadt.com/knoedelfest
- Arts & Crafts Market**  
daszentrum.at
- Christmas Ramble**  
radstadt.com/weihnachts-wanderung

**EATING AND DRINKING**

- Restaurant Josef's**  
radstadtgolf.at/restaurant
- Restaurant Tauernblick**  
tauernblick-radstadt.com
- Berggasthof Rohrmoos**  
berggasthof-rohrmoos.at
- Restaurant Giustkuchl**  
giustkuchl.eatbu.com

- Fuggo**
- Road House**

**WHERE TO STAY**

- Hotel Taxerhof**  
taxerhof.at
- Hotel »Post«**  
posthotel-radstadt.at
- Gasthof Torwirt**  
torwirtradstadt.at

**WHERE TO SHOP**

- Tauernpass traditional fashion**  
tauernpass.at
- Wallner Strick**  
wallner-strick.at
- Spielwaren Oppeneiger**  
oppeineiger.at



Tourismusverband Radstadt  
Stadtplatz 17, A-5550 Radstadt  
Tel. +43 64 52 74 72  
info@radstadt.com, www.radstadt.com



# SCHÄRDING

## Baroque treasure trove

Schärディング is a baroque jewel and the oldest Kneipp health spa town in Austria. With elegance and an indomitable urge for renewal, this pearl of the river Inn exudes history and yet with every step you'll sense the living energy of the town.

The sight of the **Silberzeile** ("Silver Row"), which forms the north-east side of the upper town square, puts you in a good mood straight away. Its name refers to the Schärディング merchants, whose wealth came from the salt business, and who once traded here. The façades, painted in colourful pastels, were a sign of prosperity which could be seen from far away. They also served another purpose: the colours of the houses were originally determined according to the relevant guilds. For example, blue was for bakers and red for butchers. This was a definite advantage for those who couldn't read or write, as they could easily find their destination. Despite today's widespread literacy, this unique colour scheme has been maintained – much to the pleasure of people like me, who appreciate such a colourful townscape. There's something else here which hasn't changed since the baroque period: the bustling trade. To this day it's still flourishing. There is one store after another, side by side. Schärディング really does



Schärディング is enticingly nestled in the lower valley of the River Inn.



"Silver Row" is the town's colourful centrepiece.

## “ Silver Row – ...the colourful soul of Schärding...

have a lively centre, which you will notice right away. Schärding also has over 50 restaurants and bars. That's a pretty astounding number for a town with just 5,000 inhabitants. And so it's no surprise that you can find everything that makes your foodie heart beat faster in Schärding – from a cosy pub to haute cuisine. The best place to dive into Schärding life is definitely the **Wirtshaus zur Bums'n**. The name originates from old times, when the draymen would unload their barrels at the main entrance, where they would roll down the slightly sloped floor into the basement and there hit the wall with a loud "bang", colloquially called "bumsn". To this day the floor is still sloped, and most importantly there is still beer to drink – from the nearby Baumgartner brewery, the largest of the Innviertel region. Alongside the deliciously flavoursome beer there are tasty local treats too. After the weekly market on Thursday, about half of Schärding meets here to enjoy a leberkäs snack or to devour a "Bratl in der Rein". This consists of roast pork, bacon, Innviertler dumplings



The Wirtshaus zu Bums'n: All of Schärding meets here to enjoy a leberkäs snack or a Bratl in der Rein. With a side of freshly tapped Baumgartner beer.

and cabbage, often left in the oven to roast for hours at a time, and served in a large frying pan. From builders to bankers, everyone sits here together and is automatically on a first name basis. The restaurant is also completely full today, a normal week day, which is always a good sign. I decide on a classic: goulash and beer. Both are really excellent.

But rustic pubs aren't the only thing in the centre of Schärding – you'll also find haute cuisine and a steakhouse with a difference. With **three Gault Millau toques**, the restaurant owned by **Lukas Kienbauer** serves some real treats for the palate. And you'll also find the finest cuts and other delicacies in the young chef's second restaurant, **Lukas Steak**. In both the Unterer Stadtplatz and Oberer Stadtplatz squares, Lukas indulges his guests with outstanding specialities.

On a nearby house façade there is a striking fresco: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye", taken from the Gospel of Luke and written in elaborate lettering. With this fresco, the former owner of the house wanted to take revenge against the council members who had supposedly treated him unfairly in a legal dispute. Did it succeed?

The story crops up all over the town, especially on the **Via Scardinga**, a theme trail which allows the historical aspects of Schärding to be experienced in the true sense of the word. The trail was opened in 2016 to commemorate the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the town. In early texts, as far back as the year 804, Schärding was referred to as "Scardinga." The town was subsequently inherited, sold, exchanged, seized, fought for and won. In 1369, through the Peace of Schärding, the town became part of Bavaria. In 1779, as a result of the war of succession between the Wittelsbachs and the Habsburgs, it once again became a part of Austria; this limited the town's economic development for a long time, as declaring the river Inn to be a border meant that trade was only possible in one direction. In total, Schärding belonged to Bavaria for five hundred years, as the blue and white colours in the town's coat of arms still show today. Numerous installations and information boards along the walking tour tell the history of the town or explain its ancient traditions. The "Bäck-



In his vaulted restaurant on the Unterer Stadtplatz square, Lukas Kienbauer has already cooked his way to three Gault Millau toques with his creative haute cuisine.



On the "Via Scardinga", the historical theme trail, you can always find child-friendly explanations at each of the stops.



The health spa Barmherzige Brüder is the oldest Kneipp Cure resort in Austria. Today it offers Ayurveda and TCM healing too.



Wellness hotel Gugerbauer: Four-star resort with its own team of doctors, physiotherapists and a gourmet chef.

erschupfen" for instance. If bakers were dishonest, they were punished: if their bread was too light or inferior, they were put in a cage and lowered into the water by a kind of seesaw. Beforehand they were put in a pillory – like the one which can still be seen in the town square. Perhaps this is why the pastries at Konditorei Eibensteiner are so good? Is it the old fear of being plunged into water that inspires such high-level performance? One can only speculate, but this long established pastry-shop is one of those places where time seems to stand still. A coffee with a tender, buttery nut crescent and stress seems to melt away. I also buy way too much orange gingerbread; after all, the Konditorei is famous for its gingerbread as well as the pastries.

I learn a lot on the Via Scardinga: that the pillory was something like the local tabloid, that the granite in Moscow's Red Square comes from Schärding, and why the mighty clothmakers' scissors adorn the town's coat of arms: because there were once eight linen weavers in the town. The biggest highlights for me from the theme trail are: the masks of shame, which often had to be worn for days at a time as a punishment for petty crimes, and the fool's mirror, in which you can see multiplied reflections of yourself wearing a fool's cap – as well as many other child-friendly activities.

The **Kurhaus**, housed in a former Capuchin monastery, is impressive. When the physician Dr. Ebenhecht opened a Kneipp Sanatorium here in 1892, he could hardly have guessed that this form of healing, based on simplicity and self-contemplation, would still be relevant over one hundred years later. The traditional Kneipp natural healing methods aren't the only ones applied here now – Ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine ("TCM") are also practised. All sorts of celebrities have been here, probably due in equal part not only to the wellness programme but also the excellent cuisine on offer.

Right next to the health spa is the **Gesundheitshotel Gugerbauer** ("health hotel"), which I'm already familiar with from a private visit, and rate very highly. On the front of the building – like many others in the town – are markers which commemorate catastrophic floods over the last hundred and fifty years, showing clearly that life in this idyllic spot also has its dark side. In the last fifteen years

alone, the river Inn has burst its banks twice. But even catastrophes can have a positive side: forced renovation has transformed the building into an ultra-modern health centre with its own team of doctors and physiotherapists. Today it is known far and wide not only for its first class therapies but also for its excellent cuisine. Many guests also value the centre's expertise in fasting. Here the staff are experienced in managing alkaline diets and therapeutic fasting, and how to monitor the fasting process with professionalism and sensitivity.

The **Burgbrunnen** and **Burghof** were also refurbished. The former Burghof was redesigned in 1895 as a park. In the last few years an outdoor stage has been added, where concerts are held during the summer – from classical to jazz. The Burgbrunnen, a 26 metre deep well chiselled into the granite, was rediscovered in 2003. A votive painting was responsible for the discovery: it depicts a daring servant saving the daughter of the lord of the castle when she fell into the well while playing. The painting had hung for a long time in a pilgrimage church, until it was given as a gift to the people of Schärding. And so they once again became aware of the well, which had been buried in 1915, and began to search feverishly for it. With success. Today it's a popular destination and a stop along the theme trail. From up here there's also a wonderful view of the river Inn and the surrounding area. To the left you can follow the river Rott as it flows into the Inn, which is 250-metre-wide at this point, making it wider than the Danube in Passau. In summer you can see how the muddy water of the Rott darkens the Inn at this spot. The foreground is dominated by the old **Innbrücke**. And to the right you can see the foothills of the Bohemian granite massifs, the Sauwald and the surrounding hills in which Schärding is nestled.

Evening is arriving slowly and right next to me flame-red lanterns are being lit, which instantly give the area a romantic and exotic aura. The lanterns, I discover, are part of a comprehensive series of light installations in Schärding, the **Lichtkunst-Offensive**. In various places throughout the town, the buildings are specially accentuated by light. My path back into town is illuminated by the lanterns and along the way I come across an orangery. Once a summer house belonging to Georg Wieninger, it was carefully revitalised and serves nowadays – in the



The Burgbrunnen was rediscovered in 2003, after it had been buried in 1915.



The Silberzeile: The Schärddinger merchants once traded here. Today it's accentuated in the evening with artistic lighting.



The riverboat MS Schärding offers a romantic view of the beautiful Inn valley.

middle of a splendid park – as a top-class restaurant. Over the restaurant towers a church built on a granite rock – the Kirche am Stein. Speaking of churches: this hotel is housed in a former place of worship. The modern, comfortable rooms in the Stadthotel Schärding have been fitted into the vaulted interior of the former medieval public hospital and its church. The combination is thoroughly successful and its distinctive architectural features will definitely stay in my mind for a long time.

The next morning, the **Kubinsaal** is waiting for me; the new urban event hall, named after the well-known expressionist painter, Alfred Kubin. His father was the head of the land surveying office here and Kubin himself lived nearby in Zwickledt from 1905 until his death in 1959. It's said that when his paintings were deemed by the Nazi regime to be "degenerate", he could be seen around the town looking increasingly lonely and poor, and used his paintings to pay for things. You can still visit his home in Zwickledt.



The castle gate once served as the residence of the ducal castle guard.

It's nearly time for me to leave. But first I want to explore all the gates of the town. The **Passauer Tor**, **Linzer Tor**, **Schlossstor** and finally the **Wassertor** on the way down to the **Schiffsanlegestelle** (the quay). This is where Europe's first brewery ship is anchored, where Captain Schaurecker hopes to revive the town's somewhat forgotten brewing tradition. During a cruise along the river Inn up to Passau and back, you can witness how the wheat beer is brewed. The Pulverfass-Weisse. Schaurecker explains the basic concepts of brewing and anyone who is interested can help him when the malt is milled and

brewed right there on board the ship. Anyone who doesn't want to help, can simply drink the beer. Another advantage: to the best of his knowledge, this is the only brewery tour that can be completed while staying seated, laughs the captain and brewmaster.

Back in the old town, it's time to say goodbye. And how better than with a good glass of wine: I order one in the wine bar *Vino*, where, besides fine wines, Schäringer cheese is also sold. After a really fine espresso at *BARista* I can board my train, totally satisfied. Schärding, I'll be back when you're gleaming in the summer. The lovely, child-friendly activities and stories on the *Via Scaringa* are waiting for my daughter, and for me await the many bike paths and the brewery ship. Ahoy!

**Further recommendations:**

**Radweg-Eldorado:** In and around Schärding there are several bike trails: the *Innradweg*, the *Donauradweg* and the *Tauernradweg*. Close by in Bavaria are also the *Römeradweg*, *Rottalweg* and *Apfelradweg*. You can actually spend an entire week here and ride on a completely different bike path every day.

**Danube region:** Part of the Danube Upper Austria Tourism Association, Schärding also opens the door to an incredibly vibrant region. On the banks of the Danube, you'll find a real land of adventure just waiting to be explored. Be it on a tour along the Danube cycle route, or on a hike along the *Donausteig* trail – this mighty river is a constant companion, encouraging you to experience its cultural heritage up close while spurring you on with its natural power and beauty. Simply come along and let the Danube take you on an unforgettable adventure.

**Link tip:** [www.donauregion.at](http://www.donauregion.at)

Tourismusverein Schärding  
Rad- und Gästeservicecenter  
»Alte Innbrücke«  
Innbruckstraße 29, A-4780 Schärding  
Tel. + 43 77 12 43 00-0  
[info@schaerding.info](mailto:info@schaerding.info), [www.schaerding.at](http://www.schaerding.at)



**THINGS TO SEE**

**Silberzeile**  
[schaerding.at](http://schaerding.at)

**Schlosspark**  
[schaerding.at](http://schaerding.at)

**Wassertor**  
[schaerding.at](http://schaerding.at)

**Stadtpfarrkirche**  
[schaerding.at](http://schaerding.at)

**Schmalste Haus**  
[schaerding.at](http://schaerding.at)

**THINGS TO DO**

**Via Scardinga**  
[schaerding.at](http://schaerding.at)

**Innschiffahrt Schaurecker**  
[innschiffahrt.at](http://innschiffahrt.at)

**EATING AND DRINKING**

**BARista**  
[cafe-lachinger.at](http://cafe-lachinger.at)

**Wirtshaus zur Bums'n**  
[bumsn.at](http://bumsn.at)

**Restaurant Lukas**  
[lukas-restaurant.at](http://lukas-restaurant.at)

**Orangerie**  
[orangerie-schaerding.at](http://orangerie-schaerding.at)

**WHERE TO STAY**

**Hotel Forstinger \*\*\*\***  
[Hotel-Forstinger.at](http://Hotel-Forstinger.at)

**Stadthotel \*\*\*\***  
[stadthotel-schaerding.at](http://stadthotel-schaerding.at)

**Hotel Stiegenwirt \*\*\*\***  
[stiegenwirt-schaerding.at](http://stiegenwirt-schaerding.at)

**SHOPPING**

**Bauernmarkt**  
[schaerding.at](http://schaerding.at)

**Konditorei Eibensteiner**  
[eibensteiner-schaerding.at](http://eibensteiner-schaerding.at)

**Vinothek Vino**  
[vino-schaerding.at](http://vino-schaerding.at)

**BARista Genussplatzl**  
[cafe-lachinger.at](http://cafe-lachinger.at)

**Dahoam Einkehrt**  
[regional-dahoam.at](http://regional-dahoam.at)



# STEYR

## When culture's your fancy

Steyr doesn't just lie on a river, this city flows on the inside too. A truly wonderful mix of a Baroque old town, monuments to industry, and a rich cultural scene and festival calendar keep up the momentum.

"Steyr and the surrounding area are more beautiful than anyone could imagine," **Franz Schubert** once wrote to his brother in Vienna. "I shall enjoy my time here very much." And what's more: "In the house in which I'm staying, there are eight young ladies, almost all of whom are beautiful. You can see that there is much to do." Schubert had his hands full in Steyr. It's the same story for me, as I have just two days to get acquainted with this city. Schubert's praise is not to be taken lightly. He was devoted to beauty and was never one to abstain, as his letter to his brother demonstrates.

The city's landmark, the pretty **Bummerhaus**, has more than earned the right to be visited first. It dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Gothic-style burgher's house, which belonged to a well-off ironmonger, was home to the restaurant "Zum goldenen Löwen", and was meant to be graced worthy emblem. But townsfolk soon mocked the



Baroque St. Michael's Church, with its "Bürgerspital" at the confluence of the Enns and Steyr.



View of the confluence of the Enns and Steyr with Lamberg Castle and St. Michael's Church.

“... a thousand-year romance, day after day ...

lion (“Löwe”) at the entrance, calling it a “Bummerl”, their dialect’s term for a mix of pinscher, poodle and dachshund, which they believed the figure resembled more than the lion that its owner had intended. It has cheekily stuck its tongue out towards city hall for more than 500 years, and the label has stuck. Locals even call the bank that is now housed in the building the “Bummerl Bank”.



“The Bummerl”, decoration on the Bummerlhaus’s projecting sign.

A few doors down, a **memorial plaque** commemorates Franz Schubert’s stay in Steyr, but that’s not all. The city also plays a role in the creation of Schubert’s **Trout Quintet**. He wrote it in response to a commission from a well-off Steyr resident. The city managed to amass an almost unfathomable fortune over centuries thanks to **iron crafts**. Just imagine: the Erzberg once provided up to 25 % of the iron used in all of Europe. That is why Steyr was once the second most important industrial city in Austria. The

economic boom in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries attracted many craftsmen to the city, and its houses reflected that in terms of space. **Stone houses** that only the rich could afford were built. The German expression "steinreich" ("stone-rich") comes from this. Shops were located in front, with the living quarters, stables and servants' rooms behind. Beautiful inner courtyards were situated in-between. Many have been preserved up to today. One of the prettiest among them is now home to **Café Restaurant Rahofer**, where I drink my first coffee on arrival. The courtyard, thoroughly isolated from street noise outside, provides the perfect setting.

Back on the **Stadtplatz** square, I simply can't resist the aromas wafting over from the **sausage stand**. So I have a late breakfast. But you can still get your money's worth here even if you don't eat meat. A bit further down you'll find the truly impressive **fruit and vegetable shop**, which also has some small prepared snacks.

I stroll up the **Enge Gasse** towards the pedestrian zone. It's hard to believe that today's shopping paradise was a thoroughfare up until 1980. My eye is caught by an ice cream shop with the catchy name "Buburuza". There was recently an item in the Oberösterreichische Nachrichten newspaper saying it has the best ice cream in Austria. Be that as it may, demand was going strong even in the middle of autumn, and many were ready to defy the cooler temperatures for a visit to Buburuza, which is Romanian for "ladybird".

My next stop is the **Schloss Lamberg**. After being destroyed in a catastrophic city-wide fire in 1727, it was rebuilt by the Count Lamberg as an exemplary Baroque castle. The **castle's library** is amongst the largest private libraries in the country. It can be visited, along with the papered room, on one of the tours. There are changing exhibits in the castle's gallery, and the Lamberg halls can be hired for events. It's practical, too: There's a registry office in the former chapel. That's not the only reason the castle and the orangerie in the castle's park, where abundant green makes a beautiful setting for dinner or drinks, are popular locations for weddings. And then, a complete surprise: I see an ibex! Even before anyone has told me that there is a **group of ibex** here, I see one with my own eyes. At first I think it's a statue, my eyes playing tricks



Historic old town with local parish church.



Burgher houses on the historic town Stadtplatz square.



Steyrian night guards on the parish church tower.



Steyr Music Festival, Open Air Stage in the castle's moat.

on me. I don't know what to believe when our gazes first cross. It plays out like in a comic book. I turn, see its face and horns, and then turn back around, asking myself whether what I think I just saw is indeed real. I turn around again to find it still motionless, but just a little bit different. It is moments like these, ones that make you worry you're starting to go mad, that you are truly grateful for later. Unbelievable, what powerful, sublime creatures they are. It's hard to tear myself away from the sight of these lounging ibex. Part of the castle's moat is used to stage open-air operettas, musicals or operas during the summer **Music Festival**. Popular singers from the Vienna Volksoper often perform here too.

Locals have learned to live with the crowds during the festival. Early concerns that the animals would be disturbed by the music have proven unfounded. The programme seems to please not only human visitors, but the ibex as well. This peaceful coexistence between the animal world and the world of culture is surely unique not only in Austria, but in the entire world. Hardly anyone would suspect that underneath this idyll, there lies a former **air-raid shelter** of quite considerable size.

After checking in to the centrally located **Hotel Mader**, which boasts a superb kitchen and a **Sunday brunch** that is famous far and wide, I take the car to Christkindl. Yes, that's what the place is called: "Christ child". There is a church of pilgrimage and, in the parsonage, a collection of cribs. The Christkindlwirt hotel restaurant opens a **Christkindl Post Office** every year during Advent. The **church's** history can be recounted fairly quickly: In 1695 the gravely ill tower keeper and musical director Ferdinand Serfl placed a small, baby Jesus made of wax in a cavity in the side of a spruce tree. He would go back several times a week to pray. He was finally cured of his epilepsy, it is said, and after that so many pilgrims began visiting that it became necessary to build a church. The small baby Jesus made of wax can still be viewed today. Right upon entering the **Hotel & Restaurant Christkindlwirt**, the "Poststube" catches your eye. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, the Österreichische Post sets up a temporary post office, from which nearly 2 million items of post are sent, complete with a special stamp and postmark. After some Fleischstrudelsuppe (soup with meat strudel) and young venison in a red currant sauce with dumplings and red cabbage, I take some time to enjoy the view over the surrounding hill country.

Next stop: the cribs in the parsonage. Your visit starts with finding a place in the cinema-style seating on the ground floor. And it feels cinematic once the **mechanical crib crafted by Karl Klauda** is turned on. An ingenious system of gears, corrugations and bicycle chains bring almost 300 figures to life, guiding them through Biblical landscapes to the sound of a Bohemian barrel organ. The locksmith from Bohemia worked on this masterpiece for nearly forty years. It's fascinating how Klauda's impression of the Holy Land and the birth of Christ is brought to life, figures bustling about at different speeds, all at the touch of a button. My personal favourite is when the reclining baby Jesus briefly sits up to wave before lying back down. It's astounding that the crib has been in regular use for sixty years now. That Klauda hand carved all of the figures, too. Another crib awaits me on the floor above: the whopping 18-metre long **crib by the South Tyrolean Ferdinand Pöttmesser**. What's impressive is that no single figure resembles another, no animal is the same. A tremen-



© Nico Lehner Photography

Today, Josef Werndl's former factor is home to the "Working World Museum" and an event centre.



Christkindl pilgrimage church.



© TVB Steyr Foto Leutner

Steyrer Christkindl in the Postamt Christkindl.

## Small historic town



Historical Christmas tree ornaments in the 1st Austrian Christmas Museum.



Dunklhof, picturesque inner courtyard in the Steyrdorf section of the city.



Steyrtal Railway Museum.

dous piece of work. The parsonage's cribs draw 18,000 visitors a year – a clear sign of how adults and children alike value these special works of art. Steyr seems generally to have a profound relationship with those magical weeks of Advent. There's even a **Christmas Museum** here. There are currently some 14,000 antique Christmas decorations from the Kreuzberger collection on display here. You can even climb the stairs in the museum in vehicles resembling dodgems, which is just terrific fun, and not only for kids!

Back in Steyr, I visit the **Dunklhof**, where the poet Dora Dunkl used to hold serenade-filled evenings in the arcaded courtyard. "We are sat here in a room whose ceilings are the heavens", the author Gertrud Fussenegger wrote enthusiastically about an evening she spent there, "and the heavens are beginning to fill with stars." It's getting dark here and now, as a matter of fact, and I decide off the cuff to eat in the hotel's restaurant. And what would be more appropriate than a local trout from the Steyr River as we are just steps from the house where Schubert's Trout Quintet was first performed?

I start the next day with the **Stadtmuseum**, situated just a short walk from my hotel. The show in the Innerberger Stadel was redesigned in 2021 for the Upper Austrian State Exhibition "Arbeit. Wohlstand. Macht" (Work. Prosperity. Strength) and is dedicated to the living environments of yesterday, today and tomorrow. I then head off on an extended walk which will take me along a panoramic path to the place where the Steyr flows into the Enns. The speed of the river's flow has been sped up as a result of flood-management measures, which allows the water to drain off more quickly, always exposing the gravel banks. But it's still a picturesque view. Somewhat diagonally across the way is the Hotel Minichmayr, where I stop for lunch and enjoy the wonderful view of the confluence of the Enns and Steyr rivers, while eating fried trout from the Steyr valley. I then walk over the Schlossberg to the promenade with the **monument to the industrial pioneer Josef Werndl**. With his invention of the "Tabernakelverschluss" sealing system, among other things, he created an enormous industrial enterprise that employed more than 10,000 people at its Steyr factory at its peak. The factory was moved to the eastern edge of the city in 1912. These days it's home to M.A.N. and AVL, amongst other companies.

The end of my visit is approaching. One last shopping trip takes me to the well-stocked **Buchhandlung Ennsthaler** bookshop. But there is still so much more to discover. It was unfortunately too cold to visit the **swimming school**, the oldest “workers’ pool”, filled with water from the Steyr. Not to mention the **Nightwatchmen City Walk**, an evening walk through the city ending with an ascent up the local parish church’s tower, from which you have a magnificent view over the city. It will have to wait till next time. Or discovering Steyr with ease on a **Segway**. That would be something. Which is to say: Good bye, lovely Steyr! But just for now.

#### Further recommendations:

**Schmollgruber Iron Clock Museum:** Iron was being used to make clocks at Schmollgruber’s business as far back as 400 years ago. Discover old church tower clocks and much more. Pre-booking required. An absolute must for clock lovers.

**Röda:** Röda is where the city – perhaps unexpectedly for one of its size – strives to offer something exceptional when it comes to pop culture. And it succeeds.

**Steyrtal Railway Museum:** Austria’s oldest narrow gauge railway. This 17-kilometre long route between Grünburg and Steyr travels through the wild and romantic pastures along the Steyr River.

**Kalkalpen National Park:** The national park with the largest forested area in Europe and the country’s biggest karst spring. A plethora of opportunities for cycling and hiking.

**2021: Upper Austria Exhibition “Arbeit. Wohlstand. Macht.”**



Tourismusverband Steyr und  
 die Nationalpark Region  
 Stadtplatz 27, A-4400 Steyr  
 Tel. +43 72 52 532 29-0  
 info@steyr-nationalpark.at  
 www.steyr-nationalpark.at

#### THINGS TO SEE

**Old town with panorama lift and viewing platform**  
 steyr-nationalpark.at

**Christkindl pilgrimage destination**  
 steyr-nationalpark.at

**Working World Museum**  
 museum-steyr.at

**Tunnel of Remembrance**  
 museum-steyr.at

#### THINGS TO DO

**Segway Tour**  
 segway-in-steyr.at

**BMW Motoren Plant Steyr**  
 bmw-besuchen.com

**Steyrtal Railway Museum**  
 steyrtalbahn.at

**Nightwatchmen City Walk**  
 steyr-nationalpark.at

#### EATING AND DRINKING

**Knapp am Eck Pub**  
 knappameck.at

**Orangerie im Schlosspark**  
 orangerie-steyr.at

**Beer Pub Schwechaterhof**  
 schwechaterhof.at

**Café-Restaurant Rahofer**  
 restaurant-rahofer.at

**Red Rooster**  
 theredrooster.stadtausstellung.at

#### WHERE TO STAY

**Hotel Minichmayr\*\*\*\***  
 hotel-minichmayr.at

**Hotel Mader\*\*\*\***  
 mader.at

**Stadthotel & Parkhotel Styria\*\*\*\***  
 styriahotel.at

**Gasthof Pöchhacker\*\*\***  
 gasthof-poechhacker.at

#### SHOPPING

**Weekly market  
 Thursdays and Saturdays**  
 (7:30–11:00 a.m.)

**Stadtplatz Leo**  
 stadtkult-steyr.at

**Steyr city centre**  
 steyr-shopping.at



# WOLFSBERG

## Castles, mountains and wolves

Wolfsberg is a town well worth visiting, not least for its laid-back, almost Mediterranean atmosphere. Surrounded by wild and romantic mountain scenery, it offers something for everyone, whether you're looking to explore its rich culture, the local cuisine or the many hiking trails.

My first stop is **Hotel Alpengasthof Hohegger**. I've broken with tradition this time and opted to stay a little outside town. The advantage of this is that it doesn't take very long to get into town, and the skiing and hiking here in Klippitzförl are second to none. Spending one day in town and one on the mountain seems like a good plan to me. There's also a **summer toboggan run** behind the hotel, which is not only great fun for children. After two rides, I have to drag myself away, as I've arranged to meet someone. In the historic old town, I meet Walter Richter, who has been studying the town's history for a long time and offers guided tours to share his wealth of knowledge with others. The historian has taken some time out of his busy schedule for me.

Our walk starts from the **Minoritenplatz** square, the spiritual centre of the town until 1816. Heinrich, Bishop of Bamberg, brought the Minorites to Wolfsberg to provide pastoral care for the citizens and to train the new generation of priests, giving them a large amount of property. It wasn't Joseph II (who closed all monasteries that had



© TVB Wolfsberg

no social agenda) but, rather, a lack of clergy that caused the dissolution of the monastery in 1816. The land went to the municipality. Offices and the Tourism Association are now based there. A beautiful inner courtyard offers a reminder of its former grandeur. “700 years of Bamberg rule had a decisive influence on the town. The town then went its own way,” Richter tells me as we’re walking to the **Stadtpfarrkirche** parish church. It had to be rebuilt several times after fires, and was recently converted into a purpose-built development for financial reasons. Only one tower has been completed. But it’s still worth going up there: The platform at a height of 33 metres offers a fantastic view of the old town and castle. At the same time, places like this have many stories to share. For example, the bells tell of two wars: During the first war, one of the bells was melted down; during the second, all five were dismantled to add to the armoury. Two were found again by chance in a hall in Hamburg after the war – both of them unscathed. The well-preserved **tower apartment** also takes you back to a time when it was still the tower warden’s job to walk around town looking for fires.

The town was first mentioned together with the **“Wehrburg”** (fortified castle) in a document in 1178. The name “Wolfsberg” was chosen because there were a lot of



© TVB Wolfsberg

Tower of St. Markus parish church.

wolves in the area at that time. But the last remaining one of its species was shot in 1914. This magnificent specimen was stuffed in the town hall then presented to the amazed press. But this was overshadowed by another event – the heir to the throne had been murdered in Sarajevo two days earlier. But the last wolf of Wolfsberg is making up for it today: on display in all its glory at the Museum in the Lavanthaus.

Despite several attempts, the town was never taken. The fortress and town walls stood firm against every onslaught. However, it did burn down several times, most recently in 1777. The wooden buildings were eventually replaced with stone ones. Beautiful **Biedermeier houses** were built. What is unique about them is that their sloping roofs all face towards the Hoher Platz square.

Besides the Bambergers, the history of the town is also inseparably linked to the noble family of Henckel von Donnersmarck. One day, as the count was travelling through the Lavanttal valley on his way to the summer retreat in Opatija, he found out that it was for sale. The worldly aristocrat seized the opportunity. In the decades that followed, iron ore, gold, silver and lignite were found here, making Henckel-Donnersmarck a pioneer of the Industrial Revolution. And the economic fortune of the valley has continued over the years: In 1966, a mineral collector found lithium on the Koralpe. And in 1848, the year of the Austrian Revolution, the Count unceremoniously blew up the old castle and had a **Tudor-style palace** built according to the plans of Viennese architects and an English design, in order to create an adequate residence for himself. Completed in 1853, it was the first historicist building in Austria.

From the **Annakapelle** chapel, built in the late 15th century with sandstone from the Lavanttal valley, we hike down to the river itself. Flowing from north to south, the river divides the town into two parts: the upper old town and the lower new town. You can see the many high-water marks on the houses from the frequent floods caused by heavy storms over the years. The river was channelised in the 1960s, slowing down its flow and thus reducing the risk of flooding. Unfortunately, the wildlife in and around the Lavant was also pushed further back as a result. Areas along the river's lower meander are therefore being built back, so that species can settle again. These efforts have been very successful, I'm told.



St. Anna's chapel. Inside you'll find one of the most beautiful late-Gothic winged altars in Carinthia.



© TVB Wolfsberg



© TVB Wolfsberg

Café Orpheo has a terrace looking out over the Lavant river.

The relatively new **Café Orpheo** has a wonderful terrace looking out over the Lavant. Many Wolfsberg locals enjoy meeting here for a coffee and a chat. The excellent coffee – my first of the day – gives me the energy I need to continue on my sightseeing tour. My next stop is a small **Renaissance castle** nearby. It's the oldest building outside the town walls. It once served as the centre for the Lavanttal Protestants. After the Peace of Augsburg, most of the protestants emigrated. But the owner stayed behind and decided to conceal his faith from then on. The little castle became a place of secret Protestantism. It has had many other owners since. But the last ones didn't take very good care of it and it has looked rather run-down in recent years. The local tourist associations have long been pushing to have it restored – unfortunately in vain.

From the Lavant, I then walk along the **Gassersteig**, enjoying the shade of the willow trees. A somewhat darker shadow over the town's history is associated with Gregor Gasser, town mayor from 1928 to 1930: His two sons were ardent National Socialists. Herbert became the first district leader, while his brother Paul made a career in the SS and was an employee of Odilo Globotschnig, one of Heinrich Himmler's right-hand men. The strong affinity to National Socialism can also be seen in other areas, the historian tells me, and goes all the way back to the July Putsch coup in 1934, during which 1,300 rebels took

control of the Lavanttal valley for several days. Of the 36 small communities around Wolfsberg, 23 later became so-called "Führer communities". Wolfsberg makes no attempt to hide this dark side of its past, and there are many special tours to take. The decision of whether to rename the Gassersteig, where the city's Christmas market is held in December, is also a hot topic of debate. Here's the issue: Gregor Gasser himself, after whom the trail was named, was a German nationalist, but he wasn't a Nazi. So where do you draw the line? This question is likely to occupy this town and others for some time to come.

But let's return to more pleasant things. Every Saturday, there's a great **market** here in the old town. It was created by a private initiative, the "Stadtmachern", with the aim of revitalising Wolfsberg. And the association has certainly succeeded in doing so. There's a great atmosphere, with lots of busy stands and live music. Many people come here to start the weekend with a drink or two and pleasant jazz sounds. There's a great selection of goods on offer: Dried mushrooms, home-made pasta, grooming products and, of course, some Lavanttal wine all find their way into my backpack. Speaking of wine from the Lavanttal valley: in the year 1600, there were still about a hundred vineyards around Wolfsberg. The viticulture continued up until the time of Maria Theresa, when protection tax was abolished and Wolfsberg was flooded by cheap wine from abroad. There have been great efforts to revive the wine culture since the 1970s. A small glass of the fruity Isabella-Frizzante convinces me that these endeavours have been a resounding success. For lunch, I head to the **Landrichterhaus**. This was once the home of the Bamberg district judge who decided whether people would be tortured or sentenced to death. The restaurant now located here is called **Kainz**. Although it specialises in steak and burgers, I opt for the calamari fritti – crispy on the outside, tender on the inside – accompanied by a light white wine. Confessions were once extracted from people here in the Reckturm tower. I confess that I've rarely been anywhere north of the Austria-Italy border that feels so Mediterranean.

To walk off my lunch, I take the "**Schloßbergweg**" up to the castle of the Henckel-Donnersmarcks. The northern wing is private, but in the southern wing you'll find a lovely restaurant with a guest garden. The signposted route takes me back to the old town, straight to the "Haus der



Weekly market on Saturday  
KulturKulinarikMarkt.

© Sabine Wall

Regionen", a regional marketing platform that presents a range of delights from the Lavanttal valley under one roof. Not only hams, juices, oils, schnapps, cider and Lavanttal wine, but all kinds of locally produced textiles are also sold here by the predominantly small and micro businesses. The manager Roland Bachmann was already big on regionality when people were still scoffing at it. The range now comprises 1,500 items. Not only can you buy things here, you can taste them as well. And the concept also scores highly on a social level, as people who struggle to find work are employed here. It's a great project. I buy almost everything I lay eyes on: organic oregano, Lavanttal wine, ham, Carinthian sausage... they're all coming with me!

After a busy day, I'm looking forward to dinner at the Hotel Hohegger. And there's **venison goulash** on the menu, as though I'd requested it. The game served here was shot by the husband of the landlady himself, who is a passionate hunter. That's something they're very proud of. And rightly so, as it tastes fantastic. Even the **Speick schnapps** that I'm talked into trying later is home-made. It's special, very good. After dinner, it's time to relax in the hotel's own whirlpool. What more could my body wish for?

In the morning, the son of the house, junior manager and tour guide Georg Hohegger takes us **hiking on the Geierkogel**, a considerably sized mountain at 1917 metres. We set off with the Koralm and the Weinebene in view. Georg is full of interesting facts and stories, such as where the Weinebene got its name. It comes from lifting. When the Carinthians realised that the Styrians had the better and cheaper wine, the Styrians lugged their wine up there and placed it by the rocks. The Carinthians then collected it for cash. He also has a story about the Hundsofen, which we pass on our hike. It was called so because a hunter, on his last legs, once laid down there to die. His loyal dog did the same and passed away alongside him. It's a sad story, but also wildly romantic, like the whole area. Hiking to the summit is well worth the effort: Pasque flowers and alpine roses line the way, stones glitter silver in the sunlight, and there are shiny blueberries as far as the eye can see. Georg is an extremely knowledgeable and entertaining hiking guide. And I find out that he also loves rock 'n' roll. He organises the **Fuzzstock music festival** together with musician Herwig Zamernik. The stage



Haus der Region, centre for regional direct sellers of food and crafts.

for the bands is erected next to the Hotel Hohegger, while the food and drink is provided by the Haus der Regionen, which takes things full circle. I wonder why you have to travel so far to encounter such a harmonious concept. It's a perfect mix of rock, mountain scenery, regional products and local delights.

On the way back, we stop at the **Naturfreundehaus** just below the top of the pass. It's a cosy alpine hut serving tasty classics. This is when I know for sure that I'll be returning one day to climb the mountain where the Lavant springs up: the mythical Zirbitzkogel. But Koralpe and its surroundings are also a paradise for hikers, offering plenty of possibilities. Do the Styrians still have the best wine? Not necessarily. Have I ever experienced a better mixture of nature and urban culture anywhere? I don't think so. See you next time, probably at Fuzzstock, the Lavanttal wine festival or, even better, at both!

#### Further recommendations:

**Christine Lavant:** The Museum in the Lavanthaus also commemorates one of Austria's greatest writers, Christine Lavant.

**Nixluke:** a hidden cave on the western side of the Klippitzförl. This conservation area is said to have been created when the devil with the godless soul of a farmer left the Lavanttal valley to go to hell.

#### THINGS TO SEE

##### **Wolfsberg Castle**

[schloss-wolfsberg.at](http://schloss-wolfsberg.at)

##### **Museum in the Lavanthaus**

[museum-lavanthaus.at](http://museum-lavanthaus.at)

#### THINGS TO DO

##### **Guided tour of the old town & wine tasting in the Haus der Region**

[museum-lavanthaus.at](http://museum-lavanthaus.at)

##### **Summer toboggan run at the Klippitzförl**

[klippitz.at](http://klippitz.at)

##### **Flow Trail Koralpe**

[koralpe-kaernten.at](http://koralpe-kaernten.at)

#### EATING AND DRINKING

##### **Restaurant**

##### **Schloss Wolfsberg**

[schloss-wolfsberg.info](http://schloss-wolfsberg.info)

##### **Kainz – Das Restaurant**

##### **Wine taverns**

##### **around Wolfsberg**

[tourism-wolfsberg.at](http://tourism-wolfsberg.at)

#### WHERE TO STAY

##### **Hotel Torwirt**

[torwirt-wolfsberg.at](http://torwirt-wolfsberg.at)

##### **Hotel Hecher**

[hecher.at](http://hecher.at)

#### SHOPPING

##### **Haus der Region**

[hausderregion.at](http://hausderregion.at)

##### **Wolfsberg town centre**

**KUKUMA weekly market**



Tourismusverband Wolfsberg  
 Minoritenplatz 1, 9400 Wolfsberg  
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A diverse range of routes through breathtaking stretches of land ensure that both **day tours**, **weekend tours** and **week tours** are packed with unforgettable highlights. There's the Silvertta Hochalpenstraße, for example, which has 32 sharp bends and ascends to the Silvertta Reservoir at just under 2,000 m, or the Timmelsjoch, one of the oldest alpine passes in the country. The Staller Sattel pass is so narrow on the Italian side that it can only be traversed in one direction at certain times. Those who prefer something a little less

dizzying can navigate the gentle hills of **Styria's vineyards** and **orchards** or opt for an **Austrian-Hungarian tour of Lake Neusiedl** and Austria's unique steppe landscape in the Neusiedler See – Seewinkel National Park. Things get a little wilder at the **Gesäuse National Park**, but more peaceful after crossing the Danube into the **picturesque Mühlviertel**, Innviertel and Hausruckviertel. Finally, we head over the Trumer Lakes and into the **Salzkammergut region**, which enchants visitors with its unique spots, mountains and lakes.

Well-known winter sports regions, such as Kitzbühel further to the west, are also very enticing at other times of year, too, inviting you to linger a while before the travel bug bites again.

[www.austriaclassictour.info](http://www.austriaclassictour.info)

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