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Austria & Germany: Bavaria & the Tyrol

Travel Style - Guided Walking Tour

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep into the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.



From the baroque streets of Salzburg, which once inspired Mozart, to the window boxes bursting with flowers that grace the Tyrol's *erbhof* farmhouses, Central Europe is a land of sophistication and charm. Here, majestic Alpine peaks tower above highland meadows freckled with edelweiss and cinquefoil. The extravagant castles of "mad" King Ludwig II present a storybook vision of rococo excess: spectacular gardens, gilded fountains, and lavish chambers of tapestries. Gentle trails and gondolas lead to dramatic mountainside settings—the brilliant white of Stubai Glacier, cascading waterfalls, and the impeccably preserved village of Neustift. A tour of medieval Innsbruck reveals some of Europe's most beautiful streets, including the renowned pastel rowhouses of Maria-Theresien Strasse—just the place to stop and indulge in some *kaffee mit kuchen* (coffee and cakes). A journey in this region offers the perfect balance between rural and city life, natural beauty, and cultural encounters—plus a hearty mountain breeze to fill your lungs and warm your heart.

Tour Only Itinerary - 2019

Day 1

Join Your Country Walkers *Austria & Germany: Bavaria & the Tyrol* guided walking tour

Mittenwald guided tour; 2-3 miles walking, easy

Meeting Point & Time: The Platzl Hotel, 8:30 a.m.
Breakfast is included at your hotel.

Your guide(s) will meet you at 8:30 a.m. in the lobby of the Platzl Hotel. Your guides will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for walking.



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You meet your guide(s) in Munich and drive an hour south out of the valley and into the Ammergauer Alps, home to two of King Ludwig's famous fairytale castles. The first stop is Schloss Linderhof, Ludwig's only fully completed castle, built in homage to Louis XIV. Here you tour the manmade Venus Grotto (inspired by a scene from a Wagner opera), the interior, and the extensive gardens. Nearby you stop at the Ettal Monastery, one of the largest Benedictine communities in the world, originally founded in 1330. Re-built in the 18th century, its domed interior contains exuberant Baroque frescoes and decor.

Following lunch, just over an hour's drive takes you to the outskirts of Mittenwald, a charming Bavarian village nestled in the German Alps and your home for one night. From the outskirts of the village, you descend into town on foot, your view framed by the mountain backdrop of the Karwendel massif. Described in 1786 by the German writer Goethe as a "living picture book," Mittenwald features narrow lanes leading into the historic town center with its elegant shops, open-air cafés, homes adorned with overhanging eaves, flowering balconies, and *Lüftlmalerei*. While most of these elaborate frescoes are based on biblical themes, others recount the rich history of the area and portray the peaceful everyday life of mountain folk. At the heart of town stands the 18th-century parish church, one of the finest churches in the Bavarian Alps. Just outside the church is a memorial to Matthias Klotz, who introduced violin making to Mittenwald in 1684, making the town one of the world's most important centers of this highly specialized craft.

Arriving at your hotel, a former post office along the town's main pedestrian street, there is time to unpack and relax before gathering for a welcome cocktail followed by a dinner of regional specialties at the hotel.

Accommodation: Post Hotel, Mittenwald, Germany

A former post office dating to 1632, this charming Bavarian-style chalet hotel offers two restaurants, a sun terrace, an indoor swimming pool, and Finnish sauna. Located on the main pedestrian street of Mittenwald, it is within walking distance of the town's many shops, restaurants, and cafés.

Day 2

Mittenwald to Elmau

5 miles walking, easy. Elmau to Klais; 4 miles walking, easy

Following a buffet breakfast, you set off on foot for the day's walk into the neighboring Elmau Valley. Strolling past the picturesque homes of Mittenwald, you soon arrive at the outskirts of town and begin a gentle yet steady ascent through the woods alongside the Laintal Creek and past small waterfalls. The narrow trail soon opens up to a wider, packed gravel track and the Elmau Valley. Stretched between the Wetterstein and Karwendel mountains, this scenic valley is lined with pristine timber forests, wildflower meadows, brooks, and lakes.

You break for lunch at the historic Ferchensee Inn, a family-owned institution for over 85 years. Seated on the outdoor terrace overlooking Lake Ferchensee (weather permitting), you may choose



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from a number of local specialties—perhaps a dish of delicious homemade dumplings or freshly caught trout.

This afternoon, you continue on a trail that passes the Elmau and Kranzback castles, ending in the enchanting village of Klais. Arriving at a cozy café, you are welcomed by our friends and bakers, Claudia and Wilfried, onto the panoramic terrace for a *kaffee mit kuchen* break (coffee and cake). (Should you choose not to participate in the afternoon walk, you may transfer by bus directly to the café to relax and wait for the rest of the group.) In the late afternoon, a 1½-hour drive delivers you across the border into Austria, where you venture south into the broad Stubaital Valley, home to craggy mountain peaks and the mighty Stubai glacier. The drive through the Stubaital takes you past tranquil farm meadows, mountain slopes forested with larch and pine, thundering waterfalls, and the traditional Tyrolean villages of Schönberg, Mieders, Telfes, Fulpmes, and Neustift. You arrive at your hotel, a lovely Tyrolean property located just on the outskirts of Neustift, with ample time to relax before reuniting for dinner at your hotel's cozy restaurant.

Accommodation: Alpenhotel Tirolerhof, Neustift, Austria

A seven-minute walk from the town center, this elegant Tyrolean family-run hotel features a warm and inviting interior, all modern amenities, restaurant and bar, an outdoor swimming pool, and extensive spa area with numerous saunas, steam baths, lounge areas, and massage facilities.

Day 3

Stubai Glacier Walk

1 hour walking, moderate, 1,000-ft. elevation loss. Neustift countryside; 2-4 miles walking, easy

The morning's option, following breakfast, will be determined by your guide on the basis of the day's weather conditions. One choice would be a short transfer to the end of the valley to reach the Stubai Glacier. Tremendous views are of the Ötztal Mountains (including the second-highest peak in Austria), the Stubaier Alpen, and the Dolomites. Based on local conditions, you are met by a local glacier guide and begin the descent on snow or ice to the mid-station (crampons are provided depending on conditions). For those not inclined to participate in the glacier walk, there is an option to return to the base.

Lunch is a short drive away down the valley at an inviting traditional Tyrolean *alm* (a working farm that provides meals for hikers); enjoy typical sausages and cheeses, or soup with dumplings and a dessert pancake. Afterwards, you may decide to continue straight to your hotel in Neustift to enjoy the spa facilities or to explore the streets and specialty shops of the town on your own. Alternatively, the afternoon walking parallels a rushing glacial brook, and you arrive into Neustift by midafternoon. A short walk around this classic ski and hiker's village concludes with a visit to its remarkable baroque parish church. Tyrol's second-largest church outside of Innsbruck, its rich interior is decorated with frescoes by well-known masters, and ornate metal headstones grace its graveyard.

Dinner this evening is on your own; you may choose from a range of restaurants offering Tyrolean



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specialties or international dishes, all a short walk from the hotel.

Accommodation: Alpenhotel Tirolerhof, Neustift, Austria

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Day 4

Pinnis Valley and Besinnungsweg trail

4-6 miles walking, moderate, 1,600-ft. elevation loss. Additional option of 1.5 miles, moderate to challenging. Evening Innsbruck guided city tour; 1-2 miles walking, easy

Breaking from routine, you leave the hotel before breakfast and drive 20 minutes to the Karalm (a traditional *alm*) for a hearty country breakfast of eggs, cheeses, sausages, and homemade jams and honey served by your hosts, Maria and Armin. Situated on a high plateau in one of the most beautiful side valleys of the Stubai valley—the Pinnis Valley—the Karalm sits in the highest pastureland at the foot of the mountain massif of the Habicht or “Hawk Mountain” (10,750 feet), the highest in the eastern Stubai region.

From the Karalm (at an elevation of 5,730 feet), you begin a gentle descent of the Pinnis Valley, surrounded by a panorama of craggy peaks, alpine vistas, and, along the smooth path, wildflowers such as Bavarian gentian and bluebells. With luck, a golden eagle may pass overhead or you may spot mountain goats and marmots. Continuing on, you arrive for lunch at the stunningly situated Issenangeralm at about 4,500 feet, with breathtaking views from the terrace, and a wide-ranging menu of Tyrolean traditional food, including fresh trout.

Afterward, from the inn, you continue along the wooded *Besinnungsweg* (“Trail of Reflection”)—as its name implies, a meditation trail with a series of benches, carvings, and boards inviting visitors to take a seat, breathe, and enjoy the beautiful views. Short (1½-hour) and long (2½-hour) options are offered, both terminating in Neder, on the outskirts of Neustift, where a transfer is provided back to the hotel.

This evening, after some time to relax back at your hotel, a half-hour’s drive brings you to the magical city of Innsbruck, appreciated for its combination of urban sophistication and Alpine charm. A guided city tour brings you across the Maria-Theresien Strasse, considered one of the most beautiful streets in Europe, and through Innsbruck’s picturesque medieval city center—other highlights are the Goldenes Dachl (Golden Roof) and Stadtturm (city tower). Following this stroll, you dine on Austrian classics, such as Wienerschnitzel and cheese dumplings, in the heart of the old city.

Accommodation: Alpenhotel Tirolerhof, Neustift, Austria

A seven-minute walk from the town center, this elegant Tyrolean family-run hotel features a warm and



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inviting interior, all modern amenities, restaurant and bar, an outdoor swimming pool, and extensive spa area with numerous saunas, steam baths, lounge areas, and massage facilities.

Day 5

Transfer to Berchtesgaden

2.5 miles walking, easy to moderate

Today you leave the Stubaital and drive along the wide Inn Valley to another Tyrolean side valley, the Alpbachtal (which takes its name from the Alpbach stream that flows through the entire valley). The walking destination for the day is Alpbach, voted Austria's most beautiful village for its magnificent display of authentic Tyrolean architecture and flowers. Another "hiker's village," Alpbach offers endless walking options with numerous lifts and extensive footpaths. Today's lunch features Tyrolean fare in an Alpine Erbhof, a centuries-old farmhouse that has been in the family for hundreds of years and is specifically designed to welcome hikers on their way. Time permitting, you visit historic Rattenberg, a tiny medieval town on the Inn River, famous for its glass-making tradition, that features museums, a pedestrian shopping zone, artisans at work, and another opportunity to relax over a refreshing drink.

In the late afternoon, you drive back into Germany, arriving at your next hotel for three nights. Tonight, you dine independently, either enjoying your hotel's excellent cuisine or dining at one of the restaurants in town, with guidance and transport from your guide(s).

Accommodation: Alpenhotel Zechmeisterlehen (or Hotel Edelweiss, Berchtesgaden, Germany), Schönau am Königsee, Germany

Situated in a picturesque Alpine meadow outside of town, this lovely four-star property features comfortable accommodations with flower-filled balconies, a spa, and indoor and outdoor swimming pools.

Day 6

Lake Königsee and Berchtesgaden National Park

4 miles walking, easy to moderate

The morning begins with a short drive to the Königsee, a deep fjord-like lake with emerald green water flanked by the Walzmann mountain range. Königsee, literally "King's Lake," is in the heart of Berchtesgaden National Park and was a favorite retreat of Bavarian kings for many generations. Riding in an electric boat, you glide silently for about five miles, stopping along the way at the famous "echo wall" to listen to the *Flugelhorn* (trumpet) played in a serene mountain setting. The boat also docks at the 17th-century pilgrimage church of St. Bartholomä with its onion domes and red-domed roof, built in baroque style with a floor plan modeled on Salzburg Cathedral. Until the beginning of the 19th century it was the summer seat for the prince abbots of Berchtesgaden, later a hunting castle of



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Bavarian kings, and today an inn and restaurant. Once off the boat, you begin a walk to Obersee, a small lake that was once part of the Königsee until it was cut off by a large landslide. Nearing the end of the meadow, the Hagen Mountains are reflected in the crystal clear waters of the lake. Continuing on for another 45 minutes, you reach the idyllic mountain pasture, Fischunkel, surrounded by a natural amphitheater. Depending on the weather and route chosen, lunch could be authentic Bavarian fare in a traditional alm or a trailside picnic lunch. An additional (optional) 30 minutes brings you to the Röthbach Waterfall—the highest waterfall in Germany—plunging 1,540 feet.

Retracing the route to the boat, the scenic hour-long ride returns to the lake's opposite shore. Rounding off the day's adventure, you drive into the historic center of Berchtesgaden for independent touring and strolling (with maps provided by your guides) before reuniting for a *Heimatabend*, a traditional Bavarian evening of music and dancing at a favorite and historic local pub. Beer has been brewed here since the 17th century, and it continues to flow accompanied by music, dancing, and huge platters of local specialties—“*Prost!*”

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Day 7

Ramsau Countryside and Lake Hintersee

7 miles walking, easy to moderate, 600-ft. elevation gain and loss

The walk today starts in Ramsau at the Ramsauer Pfarrkirche church, one of the region's most-photographed spots. Many painters, including amateur painter Dwight D. Eisenhower, have captured the beauty of this setting from the opposite side of the stream where you begin the walk. The route takes you through the Zauberwald (“Magic Forest”) with its garden gnomes, ancient trees, and moss-covered boulders. The halfway point is Lake Hintersee, a source of inspiration to many German artists at the end of the 19th century.

Nearby, lunch is served at a local inn, and later, the remainder of the walk takes you around the lake and into an open meadow with sweeping views of the Reiteralpe, Hochkalter, and Hoher peaks. You enter the forest once more and return to the starting point. There is plenty of time to relax at the hotel and indulge in the spa facilities before reuniting for a final celebratory dinner in the hotel's dining room.

Accommodation: Alpenhotel Zechmeisterlehen (or Hotel Edelweiss, Berchtesgaden, Germany), Schönau am Königsee, Germany

Situated in a picturesque Alpine meadow outside of town, this lovely four-star property features comfortable accommodations with flower-filled balconies, a spa, and indoor and outdoor swimming



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pools.

Day 8

Your Country Walkers *Austria & Germany: Bavaria & the Tyrol* tour concludes

2-3 miles, easy

Today you return to Austria for a special “Sound of Music” tour featuring the history, architectural sights, and cultural highlights of Salzburg, along with some of the main locations used in the film. Upon completion of this tour, you bid farewell to your companions at the Salzburg central train station at 11:30 a.m. before continuing your exploration of this fascinating city or departing at leisure for your next destination.