



Austria and Germany: Bavaria & the Tyrol Trip Notes June 29 to July 14, 2016

Overview:

This was an 8-day hike in the Tyrol and Bavarian Alps. We added three days pre hike in Munich where we reacquainted ourselves, and three days post hike in Salzburg where our memories from the 1970s were pretty vague. The hiking was rather wimpy but by the last day I was getting tired anyway which tells an unhappy tale-- but at this age, I shouldn't be disappointed with my body. It's still going and likely stronger than many of the others.

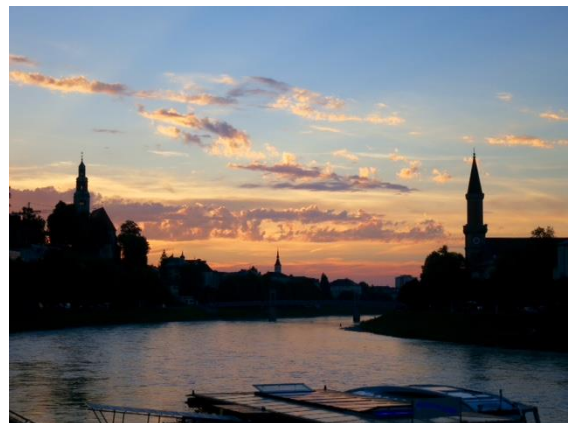
Highlights:

- Guides Christian and Dominic were excellent, accommodating (also to Tom), talented, interesting, and very Austrian. They didn't look it but they were brothers.
- Friend Sonya from Texas accompanied us in Munich and on the hike. We met in Amalfi hike, in a Deer Valley reunion, in Italian Lakes Region hike, and on at least the Ojo Calientes/Santa Fe hike with Parks Plus Hiking. We have signed up for a Netherlands hike in April and looking at Barcelona and Costa del Sol in the fall.
- The weather cooperated for the hike. Once we had an hour or so in the drizzle. At the very last we had heat. Yet all-in-all it was much better than predicted. They'd just had record rain pre trip then record heat post trip.
- The mountains and valleys are absolutely Swiss-special. Tom has even suggested that he might have gotten over his Swiss-Fix-Need so we now won't push to go to Grindelwald anytime soon (which reunion trip has twice been aborted). The main thing better in Switzerland is that they've never suffered a war and their perfection of buildings, roads, trails, and wealth show.
- The Sound of Music was a constant theme as our hiking areas showed where it was filmed and our towns and especially the palaces and lakes of Salzburg were filming locations.
- Hotels on both ends of the trip were employee deals and gave us luxury hotels for Holiday Inn prices. I LOVE bargains and these were with nice upgrades too. Here is the Munich hotel:





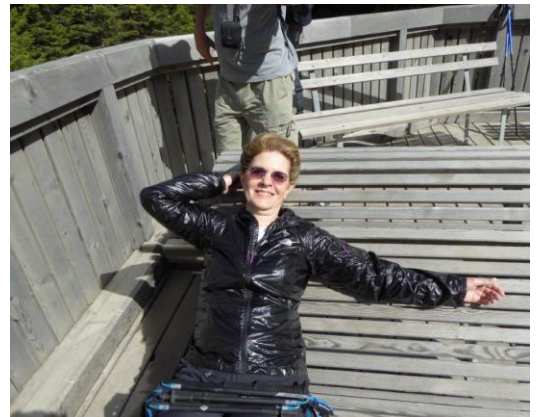
- Hotels on the hike were very Bavarian and the last of the three was upgradable to a junior suite with a balcony view to-die-for. It is one we will remember forever like our balconies in Grindelwald. We only missed the sight of the glacier out our window in Switzerland; yet we had view of Hitler's Eagles Nest in lieu.
- Mountain lakes, huge waterfalls, rocky peaks, and well maintained trails were the order of the days. The Magic Forest was memorable for the lush mountain streams, heavy moss, and well maintained trails.
- Mountain huts for breakfast and lunches gave some good eating and while not the Swiss rosti, there was the Bavarian grosli, somewhat similar. I had at least three. (Grated or sliced potatoes, browned, with a sunny side egg on top).
- Fresh caught trout was frequently available, the best, and the hut with smoked trout was worth another trip. Delicious and I declared it my best meal of the trip though not fancy.
- Food was rarely excellent or memorable but plentiful and good. But we were just in France so we were understandably somewhat jaded.
- Tom best memory and highlight was the Berchtesgaden (last of the hike) hotel. Food, buffet, and the hugest dessert buffet we have ever seen, and especially the balcony view. There was a canopied bed, on a platform, mood lighting, a fireplace in the sitting area, a Jacuzzi tub, and candles for the fireplace. But no air conditioning because after all "this is the mountains" as though air conditioning weren't needed.
- Salzburg is a little jewel and after the tour we were fortunate to have arranged to stay three nights in center city. Near the river. See the evening sunset picture.
- Hallstatt village tour our next to last day out of Salzburg is what I expected him to say was his favorite. It's been his screen saver for years and it's just as



glorious and quaint as expected. On a lake with a funicular to the top of the steep surrounding mountains where there is a skywalk that is a UNESCO rated and protected site. It is the area of the famous Salt Mines that we visited in the 1970s.

Weird:

- Dietary problems? Of our group, maybe only 2 or 3 didn't have some special need. I was amazed that our guides were so helpful and calm when it came to ordering with all the no-no stuff. Whatever has happened to us?
- There is an emphasis on health and many hotels specialize in spas. There are wellness villages supported by the government. The insurance covers the costs if wellness thought to ease some disease or discomfort. (You might ask how they have such comprehensive health coverage compared to the U.S.? Very high taxes).
- Once we hiked to a huge waterfall where scientists have studied the effects of the heavy spray and determined it to help cure lung and asthma ailments. The state has installed wooden lounge chairs so one can properly enjoy and take in this supposedly ionized air. I did.
- Air conditioning either didn't exist (we were reminded that we were in the mountains) or was inefficient or had a governor on it that was too warm. I doubt it's needed very often.
- German and Austrian words can be amusing. A restaurant Got Grubb. Exit sign is Ausfahrt. A town might be Bad Tolz. I don't remember what Gute Fahrt is. Fuch always causes a pause. Some words take up a whole line of print. Lake is see. A whole lot of moos on end of words. I'd think those Germans are very smart to figure out these words.
- German, Austrian and Swiss areas are always so much neater, cleaner, and classy compared to Italy. Swiss being the best. You know when you cross the border though there are no more border crossings. You see and feel it.
- German autobahns still have no speed limit. Tom said a Lamborghini whizzed by him while he was speeding himself. I've always figured an accident on German roads just finishes one off versus maiming. We lived it in the 1970s but probably only really enjoyed it in a Ferrari 365 GTC that Tom bought in Venice area.
- Salzburg's main street which is pedestrian (and was the site of our hotel) has maintained the old look to include original type street signs. They originated when people didn't read, so a cobbler shop might be a shoe, a meat market a pig, etc. We had a big laugh at the old-fashioned McDonald's sign of the M/Golden



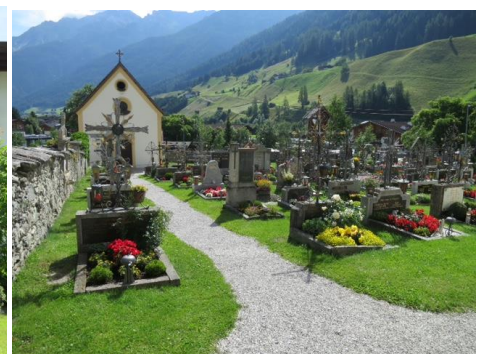
Arches.

Special Treats:

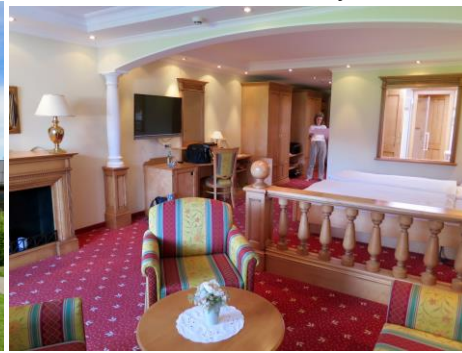
- In Munich we took a Beer Tour. Stupid move to drink all night and hike the next morning but it was great fun until I had to face the morning. There was the introductory beer, the three beers at the beer museum, the pretzels, and then the big salty sausages and kraut and finally the visit to the famous HofBraHaus where we'd eaten a couple years ago.



- Barclay the Rescue Dog. When asked if we minded the guide bringing his rescue dog, I had in mind an orphan dog recently rescued. Ha ha. He was an amazing trained dog who rescues people in mountain terrain. He is said to love hanging by a rope from a helicopter and swinging through the rock cliffs. We were shown a demonstration of his finding someone "down" and oddly found not like a bloodhound. A lost or hurt hiker or rock climber wouldn't have left anything for a bloodhound to sniff. Barclay has the sense to know injured (or a handicapped person would confuse him).
- Snapps is their eau d'vie or grappa. The Bavarian one made of some purple flower was to my liking and yet most thought it tasted grossly like medicine. Like in Croatia it was on the breakfast buffet. (As was champagne at the last hotel).
- Beer houses: In Munich we had the above mentioned beer tour and four beers later and close to midnight on Saturday night pre Sunday tour gave me an intense thirst and doozy of a headache for the first hike. Saturday night we saw a few more hofbrahaus and had more than a few beers and/or their white wines. Most memorable was a revisit to the famous Munich Hofbrahaus and finding a new Hard Rock Cafe across the street. How dare they!
- The first hotel had a view that we thought was the best, but then the locations just kept getting better.
- The second hotel with a fabulous view and a hang gliders dream:



- The favorite hotel of the hike – the one with the balcony and wonderful view:



- Last hotel, the Hilton at the airport, gave us a much needed surprise: a major upgrade to a corner suite, free lush and generous breakfast buffet, fresh fruit and beverage in the room upon arrival, and any and everything in the mini-bar (because their executive lounge was not yet completed.)

The trip theme:

This trip might be remembered as *THE CAR TRIP*. Tom had upgraded in a rather dramatic fashion: a luxury sporty Mercedes.

- Austria requires a toll tax which is a sticker one purchases at a Tabac. It was at first believed we had one, then found to only apply to Switzerland, and hopefully correctly purchased and installed before ticketed. Tickets come in the mail along with a size able administration fee from the rental car. We know from experience.
- A camera got us on an AutoRoute but we could think of nothing we did wrong. Hopefully it was just a false alarm
- Ms. Suzi aka Mr. Garmin GPS took Tom on some equally dramatic circuitous routes.
- Frightening and stressful for me when he didn't show up until hours later at first hotel. I couldn't think of a good scenario. (He had a European international SIM card phone after all!).
- [Tom's vision failed him while filling up his diesel car on the way to the airport. With gasoline. Damn but it takes a specialist to clean out the gas from the diesel tank and then decontaminate it so the engine isn't blown.]
- or
- [The glorious car had a mishap on the way to the airport. Tom would have to explain the situation.]
- Do they have to send a wrecker? Yes at 130€. So we were towed to Mercedes but it was their lunch break. The quote of 600€ almost blew my gasket but to get it done before missing our flight was "priceless".
- The Mercedes dealership bill ended up being under 300€. Add a big tip, lunch and stress and I'll be curious if Tom still loves the automobile idea versus the train.



We had checked out of the Salzburg hotel by 9am and never left the edge of Salzburg and the Mercedes dealership until a bit after 2pm. The Mercedes dealership was lovely with a nice cafe and equally pleasant (and presumably well paid) employees. Smile. Plus I had time to finally write some trip notes.

We were spending the night at the Munich airport fortunately or the situation would have been double bad. Also good is having insurance which had been unintended but turned out it might be lucky

unless the "inappropriate handling" clause comes into play. Also good is that there could have been lots worse happenings.

History: Once our little Mercedes ceased operating, almost ran into the wall and nearly caught fire in the Rotterdam tunnel. That cost us a tow, an overnight, and in a memorably awful dive of a hotel. Once our rental broke down on the side of the roadway at night, no one stopped, we had forgotten our cell phone, and we had live fish in the car.

Other trip themes have been *THE POO HIKE* when hiking in sheep, cow and goat fields of Scotland. *THE OUTCAST HIKE* in Spain when Country Walkers disinvented Tom at the last minute to the usually inclusive dinners. The many *FAT HIKES* where we ate much more than we hiked. I mean 4-5 pounds more. All were better than the *ABORTED TRIP* of which we've had one (Paris for Tom's 80th) and I had one (Canyonlands when Tom was hospitalized).

We do still enjoy traveling? It's just another unforgettable experience.



Itinerary

Wed Jun 29

5:35pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#30

Thu Jun 30

7:40am Arrive Munich

Taxi to hotel – though train probably easier

From hotel website: When arriving to Munich Airport, take suburban train lines S1 or S8 towards the city center. Your final stop is Munich central station. The trip takes about 40 minutes.

The hotel is situated right at the main train station, a major railway hub connecting to many cities in Europe. Exit the main train station at the south side in direction "Bayerstraße". The hotel is conveniently situated right across the street. The hotel's address is Bayerstraße 41.

Hotel Le Méridien Munich – 3 nights
Bayerstrasse 41, Munich, 80335 Germany Tele: (49) (89) 24220
<http://www.lemeridienmunch.com/en> - Coffee yes Refrig yes

From its unique city centre location, Le Méridien Munich enables guests to unlock the unlimited facets of the Bavarian capital. The renowned shopping streets, museums and theatres are just steps away. All of the 381 hotel rooms are appealingly furnished, large and flooded with light - our Deluxe Rooms face the peaceful inner courtyard. With Unlock Art™ the room key grants, as well, free entrance to the expositions at the Museum Haus der Kunst.

Fri Jul 1 Sonya arrives after 12pm and staying at Le Meridien - departs Salzburg on July 10

Sat Jul 2

Host hotel Platzl Hotel – host hotel - we are not staying there
Sparkassenstraße, 10, 80331 Munich, Germany, Tel 011 49 8923 7030
Email info@platzl.de www.platzl.de

Located in the city center of Munich, the four-star Platzl Hotel is just a short walk from the famous Marienplatz, the Opera, and other major attractions. Guestrooms are cozy with traditional decor. In addition to two restaurants and bar, also within the hotel are a Turkish steam bath and sauna and a fitness room. Rates for a double room from 190 euros (including breakfast but exclusive of taxes).

Overview from www.CountryWalkers.com - This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep in to 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.

As the song goes, "The hills are alive with the sound of music." Such is the inspiration that walkers experience in the majestic mountains and tranquil valleys of Germany's Bavaria and the Austrian Tyrol, the same landscape that inspired the von Trapp family to sing. Your adventure on foot leads up gradual ascents and steeper slopes via gondola, to alpine trails, forest paths, and wildflower meadows. You encounter spectacular natural phenomena in dramatic settings—the Stubai Glacier, cascading waterfalls, impeccably preserved villages, and working alpine farmlands. Storybook castles and centuries-old churches mark your route, reminders of the rich 19th-century reign of Bavaria's "mad" King Ludwig II.

This tour of natural grandeur is complemented by visits to the famous cultural centers of Innsbruck and Salzburg. In many towns you have the opportunity to explore art treasures, or, in the ebb of a leisurely afternoon, relax at a sidewalk café by indulging in one of the region's customary pleasures of an afternoon beer or Kaffee mit Kuchen (coffee with cake). Your exploration of this region offers a perfect balance between rural and city life, natural beauty and cultural encounters. In the evenings, your lodgings in Bavaria and the Austrian Tyrol envelop you in the splendor of the region, offering you fine amenities and stunning views.

Sun Jul 3 – DAY 1 of hiking trip

8:30am Start of hiking trip in Munich meeting at Platzl Hotel in Munich (see info above) – taxi with Sonya

Pre noon Tom takes taxi to airport to pick up rental car
Thrifty rental car – later changed to Hertz

Transfer to southern Bavaria. Linderhof Castle and Ettal Abbey visits. Mittenwald guided tour; 2-3 miles, easy

You meet your guides 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 and orientation meeting, followed by a dinner of regional specialties at the hotel.

Hotel Post Hotel Mittenwald, Mittenwald, Germany – 1 night only – no upgrade available but changed to double room
Obermarkt 9, Mittenwald 82481, Germany Tel 011 49 8823 9382 333
Email info@posthotel-mittenwald.de www.posthotel-mittenwald.de
Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available. No coffee or refrig

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.

Mon Jul 4 - DAY 2 of hike

Mittenwald to Elmau; 5 miles, easy. Elmau to Klais; 4 miles, easy. Transfer to Neustift

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

This afternoon, you continue on the four-mile afternoon walking option 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.

Hotel Alpenhotel Tirolerhof, Neustift, Austria – 1st of 3 nights – No upgrade but double room
Stubaitalstrasse 69, Neustift, Austria Tel 011 43 5226 3278
Email info@alpenhotel-tirolerhof.com www.alpenhotel-tirolerhof.com
Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available - no Coffee

A seven-minute walk from the town center, this elegant Tyrolean family 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.

Tue Jul 5 - DAY 3 of hike

Stubai Glacier Walk (optional and weather permitting); 1 hour, moderate, 1,000-ft. elevation loss.
Neustift countryside; 2-4 miles, 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 Stubai Alpen, and the Dolomites. Based on local conditions, you are met by a local glacier guide and begin the descent on ice to the mid-station (crampons are provided). 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), where an array of typical sausages and cheeses are laid out, as well as soup with dumplings and a thick berry pancake for dessert. Afterwards, you may decide to continue

straight to your hotel in Neustift to enjoy the hotel spa facilities or to explore the streets and specialty shops of the town on your own. Alternatively, the afternoon walking option begins on the outskirts of town, passing by centuries-old working farms and mountain peaks, and arrives 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 specialties or international dishes, all a short walk from the hotel.

Hotel Alpenhotel Tirolerhof, Neustift, Austria – 2nd of 3 nights

Wed Jul 6 - DAY 4 of hike

Pinnis Valley and Besinnungsweg trail; 4-6 miles, moderate, 1,640-ft. elevation loss.

Additional option of 1½ miles, moderate to challenging.

Evening Innsbruck guided city tour; 1 hour, easy

Breaking from routine, you leave the hotel without 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 for a few hours, 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.

Hotel Alpenhotel Tirolerhof, Neustift, Austria – 3rd of 3 nights

Thu Jul 7 - DAY 5 of hike

Transfer to Schönau am Königsee. Alpbachtal; 2.5 miles, 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, returning back to Germany, you arrive at your country-style hotel in the Berchtesgaden area. 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 guides.

Hotel Alpenhotel Zechmeisterlehen, Schönau am Königsee, Germany – 1st of 3 nights
Wahlstrasse 35, Schonau am Königssee 83471 – upgrade in file
Schönau am Königsee, Germany, Tel 011 49 8652 9450
Email info@zechmeisterlehen.de www.zechmeisterlehen.de
Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.
Coffee? Minibar yes; Room includes a parking space

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.

Fri Jul 8 - DAY 6 of hike

Lake Königsee and Berchtesgaden National Park; 4 miles, 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 Bavarian kings, and today an inn and restaurant. 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!"

Hotel Alpenhotel Zechmeisterlehen, Schönau am Königsee, Germany – 2nd of 3 nights

Sat Jul 9 - DAY 7 of hike

Ramsau Countryside and Lake Hintersee; 7 miles, 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.

Hotel Alpenhotel Zechmeisterlehen, Schönau am Königsee, Germany – 3rd of 3 nights

Sun Jun 10 - DAY 8

Transfer to Salzburg. Guided city tour; 3 hours, easy. Departure from Salzburg

A short drive returns you 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. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage site, the city of Salzburg is well known for its association with the arts, in particular with music and its famous son, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Upon completion of this tour, you bid farewell at the central train station, where you may continue your exploration of this fascinating city, or depart at leisure for your next destination.

11:30am Departure point for hike - Salzburg central train station, Salzburg, Austria

Hotel Hotel Goldener Hirsch – 3 nights

Getreidegasse 37, Salzburg, 5020 Austria Tele: (43) (662) 80840

<http://www.goldenerhirsch.com/en>

Coffee? Refrig? See directions for getting into hotel area; Parking other than valet?

Situated on the renowned Getreidegasse road in Salzburg's old town, the historic 5 star luxury hotel in Salzburg Goldener Hirsch introduces guests to the city's captivating character. Since 1407 the hotel in Salzburg offers its guests traditional, original flair. The 65 guest rooms and five luxury suites boast authentic, handpicked Salzburg-style décor. The original antiques and handmade furniture honor 600 years of hotel history.

Cars: Guests who are arriving by car may take advantage our valet parking service, the charge for which is € 35-- per car and per night. See map of the city and directions to assist in locating the hotel.

If you are using a satellite navigation device, the following address should be entered into the GPS: Herbert-von-Karajan-Platz 5. The hotel address "Getreidegasse" is in the pedestrian zone and most GPS systems are not able to direct you to the hotel if this address is used.

By inclement weather Salzburg's city centre is turned into a car free zone during the summer months. If this is in place, cars which do not have a Salzburg registration plate will not be allowed to enter the inner city centre between 10:00 hrs to approx. 14:00 hrs, although this can be extended. Exempted from this policy are: public transportation, taxis and hotel guests with a valid booking confirmation. If stopped, please show your printed confirmation to the officers at the control stations in the city centre.

While in Salzburg, visit Hallstatt, between Salzburg and Graz:

<http://www.tourisontheedge.com/hidden-places/europe/hallstatt-lake-town>

[Hallstatt Never Changes...Except When It Does | Travels in Europe with Cameron](#) from Rick Steves

Wed Jul 13

Drive to Munich and stay at airport? Approx 2 ½ hours drive from Salzburg to Munich Airport

4:00pm Turn in rental car and shuttle to hotel is 11 Euros each

Hotel Marriott Munich Airport – 1 night – later changed to Hilton at the airport
Alois Steineker Strasse 20, Freising, Bavaria 85354 Germany Tele: 49 8161 966 0

Thu Jul 14

12:30pm Depart Munich MUC via UA#31

3:25pm Arrive Newark EWR

Tour participants:

Joleen and Roy Hanson, Menomonie, WI

Diana Burton, Middletown, NJ

Sonya Bland, Plano, TX

Lawrence (Larry) Kenyon and Patricia (Patti), Sunnyvale, CA

Keith Karasek and Daphne Kenyon, Watertown, MA

James (Jim) Hilyard, West Chester, PA

Tour guides:

Christian Gleirscher – Born and raised in the Stubai Alps of Austria, Christian has always enjoyed playing and working in the mountains. He started his career in the tourism industry as a ski and snowboard instructor, and then became an accredited hiking guide. As a young adult, Christian was part of the Austrian National Team of Mountain Running, and has participated in several major marathons. Nowadays he divides his time between Austria and Poland, promoting his home region by attending trade shows, leading press tours, and collaborating with a local hotel and the Stubai Tourism Office.

Dominik Gleirscher – A native of Austria's Stubai Valley, Dominik lives and breathes mountains. In the summertime, as an accredited hiking guide, in addition to guiding Country Walkers guests in the Bavarian and Austrian Alps, he is a member of the rigorous Tyrolian mountain rescue squad. He spends all his time on the mountains in the winter also – as a ski instructor and ski racing coach, as well as an examiner for both the Tyrolian and the Austrian Ski School Association.

Emergency:

For CW: One Call International, Email mail@oncallinternational.com. If communicating from within the US - Text 603.838.3169, Tel 800.555.9095

If calling from outside the US - Tel 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Tips and Travel Resources: International Access Codes).

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710.

US Embassy in Vienna, Austria: For US Citizens in need of immediate emergency assistance, please call (+43-1) 31339-7535 Mon - Fri 8:30 am - 5:00 pm. After hours the duty officer should be called at: (+43) 664 411 645.

US Embassy in Berlin, Germany: Clayallee 170, 14191 Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany
Tel.: +49-30-8305-0

HIGH-ALTITUDE WARNING - The highest elevation you will be walking at on this tour is approximately 10,500 feet. You will immediately descend from this elevation during the walk. The altitude may have some effect on travelers. Typical symptoms include nausea, a loss of appetite, insomnia, shortness of breath, dizziness, headaches, or other minor irregularities. There are actions you can take to help you adjust to the altitude, including drinking lots of water (more than you feel you need) and getting plenty of sleep. Also, take your time while walking, allow your body to adjust, and always keep your guides informed of how you are feeling. Please discuss with your doctor whether taking altitude medication would be helpful.

A WORD ABOUT ACCOMMODATIONS - Please note that hotels in both Germany and Austria do not provide twin-bedded rooms. Typical double-occupancy rooms have two single mattresses and two separate duvet covers in one bed frame.

Tour Itinerary Overview

TOUR MEETING POINTS AND TIMES

Platzl Hotel, Munich, Germany, 8:30 a.m. (June 19, August 28, and September 11)

Sparkassenstraße, 10, 80331 Munich, Germany, Tel 011 49 8923 7030

Email info@platzl.de www.platzl.de

Hotel Laimer Hof, Munich, Germany, 8:30 a.m. (August 26)

Laimerhofstraße 40, 80639 Munich, Germany, Tel 011 49 8917 80380

Email info@laimerhof.de www.laimerhof.de

NIGHT 1

Post Hotel Mittenwald

Mittenwald, Germany

Tel 011 49 8823 9382 333

Fax 011 49 8823 9382 999

Email info@posthotel-mittenwald.de

posthotel-mittenwald.de

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHTS 2, 3 & 4

Alpenhotel Tirolerhof

Neustift, Austria

Tel 011 43 5226 3278

Fax 011 43 5226 3278-112

Email info@alpenhotel-tirolerhof.com

alpenhotel-tirolerhof.com

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHTS 5, 6 & 7

Alpenhotel Zechmeisterlehen

Schönau am Königsee, Germany

Tel 011 49 8652 9450

Fax 011 49 8652 945299

Email info@zechmeisterlehen.de

zechmeisterlehen.de

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME - Salzburg central train station, Salzburg, Austria, 11:30 a.m.

EMERGENCY CONTACT - One Call International, Email mail@oncallinternational.com

If communicating from within the US - Text 603.838.3169, Tel 800.555.9095

If calling from outside the US - Tel 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Tips and Travel Resources: International Access Codes).

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710.

Tour Facts at a Glance

TOUR LENGTH - 8 days, 7 nights

SCHEDULED GROUP PRICE, TOUR ONLY - \$4,498 (Single+\$348)

TOUR MEETING POINTS AND TIMES - Platzl Hotel, Munich, Germany, 8:30 a.m. (June 19, August 28, and September 11) – July 3?

Hotel Laimer Hof, Munich, Germany, 8:30 a.m. (August 26)

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME - Salzburg central train station, Salzburg, Austria, 11:30 a.m.

ACTIVITY LEVEL - This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 4 to 8 miles per day and options on some days. There are daily ascents and descents varying between 300 and 1,200 feet. The highest altitude on tour is 5,700 feet, except for a glacier walk that starts at 10,500 feet and descends from that elevation. Walks are mostly on smooth terrain through meadows, woods, and villages at the foot of the Alps. Some trails with roots and rocks require good balance as they can be slippery when wet. The itinerary perfectly balances Alpine walks, relaxation, and cultural accents such as guided city tours and a castle visit.

INCLUSIONS –

- » Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7
- » All meals except for two dinners; local wine or beer included with dinners
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point
- » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary
- » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International
- » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

GRATUITIES - Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency. Gratuities for your bus driver are included in the tour price, but additional tips are always welcome.

TOUR MEETING POINTS AND TIMES - Platzl Hotel, Munich, Germany, 8:30 a.m. (June 19, August 28, and September 11)

Hotel Laimer Hof, Munich, Germany, 8:30 a.m. (August 26)

Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for easy walking and cultural visits.

MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT - Munich International Airport (MUC), Munich, Germany
munich-airport.de

GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT - The most convenient way to travel to Munich is by air to the Munich International Airport. The Platzl Hotel, our meeting-point hotel in Munich's historic center, is located 20 miles from the airport. You may take a subway (S-Bahn) from the airport to "Marienplatz."

The journey takes approximately 1 hour and costs 10 euros. The Platzl Hotel is a 6-minute walk from Marienplatz; taxis are also readily available at Marienplatz for the short ride to the hotel. A taxi from the airport to the hotel takes 1 hour and costs approximately 70 euros.

You may also travel to Munich by train. From Munich's main railway station (Hauptbahnhof) you may take a 10-minute taxi ride to the hotel at a cost of approximately 10 euros. Taxis are readily available at the train station.

Approximate travel times for train travel to Munich from various cities are as follows: Frankfurt: 3-4 hours; Vienna: 4-5 hours; Salzburg: 2 hours. For further rail information, including reservations, schedules, and up-to-date fares, please call Rail Europe at 800.438.7245 or consult their website: raileurope.com. You may also consult the German railway website at bahn.de. We recommend making reservations in advance for major train routes.

PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS - tour meeting point hotel, the Platzl Hotel (June 19, August 28, and September 11 departures) or the Hotel Laimer Hof (August 26 departure). To make a reservation, please contact one of the hotels directly.

Platzl Hotel (June 19, August 28, and September 11)

Sparkassenstraße, 10; 80331 Munich, Germany; Tel 011 49 8923 7030

Email info@platzl.de www.platzl.de

Located in the city center of Munich, the four-star Platzl Hotel is just a short walk from the famous Marienplatz, the Opera, and other major attractions. Guestrooms are cozy with traditional decor. In addition to two restaurants and bar, also within the hotel are a Turkish steam bath and sauna and a fitness room. Rates for a double room from 190 euros (including breakfast but exclusive of taxes).

DELAYS AND LATE ARRIVALS - If you are delayed or miss the scheduled group meeting for any reason, we kindly request that you contact our emergency assistance provider, One Call International. This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to assist you with any type of travel delay. Please refer to the Emergency Contact details on your Tour Itinerary Overview page for One Call International contact details.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME - Salzburg central train station, Salzburg, Austria, 11:30 a.m. If you plan to schedule your return flights immediately following the tour's conclusion, please contact your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.

LEAVING SALZBURG - If you wish to return to Munich immediately after the tour ends, there are direct trains from Salzburg to the Munich main railway station (approximately 2 hours). The journey costs approximately 30 euros; reservations are not necessary. From the Munich central train station, you may take a subway (S8 or S1) to the Munich International Airport (1 hour and 10 euros), or a taxi to your hotel. If you are extending your stay in Salzburg, taxis are readily available at the train station to take you to your hotel for 8-12 euros. Shuttles from Salzburg hotels to the Munich International Airport can be arranged by contacting Salzburger Mietwagen Service (2½ hours and approximately 60 euros per person).

Salzburger Mietwagen Service (SMS)

Tel 011 43 662 8161, Fax 011 43 662 436 324, Email sms@flughafentransfer.at,

www.flughafentransfer.at

If you choose to fly out of Salzburg's W.A. Mozart Airport (SZG, salzburg-airport.com), you can take the train, the bus (line 2, departing the main train station every 20 minutes) or a taxi (20 minutes and approximately 15 euros).

CANCELLATION POLICY - Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150; cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. Up to 91 days prior to departure, you may transfer your reservation, depending on availability, from one departure to another in the same calendar year at no cost*. Please notify us in writing.

*One transfer per year; afterwards a modest per person transfer fee will apply. Please note that tours with seasonal prices may involve a higher price.

TRAVEL INSURANCE - We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS - Air or other travel arrangements to and from your tour are not included in the price of your trip. We encourage you to contact your local travel agent, or Better Travel, a Vermont-based agency (800.331.6996 or bettertravel@madriver.com), for any additional air, hotel, rail, or transfer arrangements you may need.

Austria at a Glance

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

U.S. citizens: Passports are required and must be valid for at least three months beyond the dates of travel. Visas are not required for stays of up to 90 days. For more information, see travel.state.gov.

Travel Tip - Have a variety of options to start your trip: ATM card(s), credit card(s), some dollars to exchange, and some euros in small denominations.

CURRENCY - Austria uses the euro (EUR). For up-to-date exchange rates, see oanda.com.

Many businesses in Europe will no longer accept credit cards without PIN numbers (chip and pin cards). Always contact your bank or your credit-card company for details on fees and card use when traveling.

TIME ZONE - Austria is in the Central European Time Zone, Eastern Standard Time plus six hours. For more information on worldwide time zones, see worldtimezone.com.

PHONE & INTERNET - Austria country code: +43

Cell phone coverage throughout Austria but cannot be guaranteed to be accessible on all American mobile carriers or to function at all times while on the trail or in remote areas. For more information regarding international phone use, please refer to countrywalkers.com/phones.

Internet access is generally very good in towns and villages, however, it is not guaranteed at all of the hotels used on the tour. For more details regarding Wi-Fi availability, please refer to the Tour Itinerary Overview.

LANGUAGE - The official language of Austria is German. While knowledge of German is not necessary, you may want to learn some fun and useful phrases; see bbc.co.uk/languages/german or the enclosed Reading Guide for a suggested phrase book.

ELECTRICITY - Alternating current of 230V and 50Hz is used in Austria. Plugs have either two round pins and a hole, or just two round pins. For a full listing of electrical outlets worldwide, see electricaloutlet.org.

WEATHER - Austria is in the temperate climate zone, however three distinct regions can be found: most of the country has continental patterns typical for Central Europe, with cold winters and warm and pleasant summer months ranging from May to September, and peak temperatures in July and August; the Eastern edge benefits from milder winters and low precipitation, while at higher altitude, Alpine climate brings high precipitation and long winters. Mountaintop and evening temperatures can be considerably lower than those during the daytime and at lower elevations.

For up-to-date forecasts, see qwikcast.com. For historical average temperatures and rainfall, see weatherbase.com.

FOOD & DRINK - Austrian food is wholesome and hearty with meat and dumplings, and famously the breaded and fried veal or pork cutlet Wiener Schnitzel. Dumplings, called Knödel, can be made either sweet or savory according to taste. Beef, sausages, potatoes, and broth soups all are on the menu, as well as fresh lake fish in Austria's lake region. Desserts and baked goods are also key components of the Austrian diet. Almost every village has a bakery with a large selection of rolls, white and rye. Well-loved desserts are, of course, Apfelstrudel (apple strudel), Linzertorte (a flaky cake with raspberry jam), and Sachertorte (two tiers of chocolate cake separated by a thin layer of apricot jam and topped with chocolate icing).

Austria has a number of tempting beverages, from its famous coffee, often served with whipped cream, to first-class wines, to high-quality lager brews. Also appreciated after dinner is Schnapps, fruit brandy from pear, apricot, or raspberry.

LIFE IN AUSTRIA

Shopping and banking hours - Shopping hours: Shops and stores are generally open Monday to Saturday from 8:00 a.m. or 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; in small towns they may close for one to three hours for lunch, check locally.

Banks are open from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday to Friday (and to 5:30 p.m. on Thursdays).

Meal times - Breakfast is served at hotels from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. In restaurants, lunch is served (almost exclusively) from noon to 2:00 p.m. and dinner is served from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Tipping - Gratuities in restaurants and bars are included (15 percent) in the total bill; for exceptional service, you could round up the total or leave one to two euros. Taxi drivers could receive one to three euros or a rounded-up total. For luggage assistance, a tip of one to two euros per bag is appropriate.

TRAVEL RESOURCES

National Austrian tourist board official site - austria.info

Public holidays - To assist in travel planning, it may be helpful to be aware of Austrian public holidays, festivals, or calendars of events. Visit the Austrian tourist board's website: austria.info, navigating to "Basic Facts" and "Practical Information."

TRAVEL IN AUSTRIA

Trains - Austrian Railway: oebb.at, Austria's national train company.

Raileurope: raileurope.com or 800.622.8600: a U.S.-based company that provides schedules, reservations, and ticketing for all European train networks (their multi-day/-week/-month passes in one country or combinations of countries may be an economical and convenient choice for European train travel.)

Other local transportation - Direct flights from the U.S. are available to Vienna, with short internal flights available to smaller cities such as Salzburg (salzburg-airport.com/en) and Innsbruck (innsbruck-airport.com/en). Reaching any destination in Austria is easy on its excellent rail network or via extensive regional bus lines. Taxis are available at all major airports, train stations, and in smaller towns, and can be reserved in advance (your hotel can usually provide assistance). Most major car rental agencies are available at Austrian airports and train stations. For more information, go to austria.info and click on "Basic Facts," then "Practical Information," and "Driving Regulations."

Travel Tip - Austrian Aristocracy and Music

Austria's lake district, the Salzkammergut (which means roughly "salt room depository") is brimming with human history. Referred to as "the Cradle of Civilization" because of archeological finds from the 12,000 BC Neolithic Stone Age, things were quiet up through the 18th century when its salt deposits were both mined and carefully guarded, leaving the countryside pristine. The Hapsburg dynasty was in on the secret, however, and appreciated the region's unspoiled beauty and mineral baths for centuries. Into the 19th century, it became a center for Austrian aristocracy to take the waters and enjoy the summer opera season.

- The legacy of the region's cultural heritage is the acclaimed annual Operetta Festival in Bad Ischl, held in July and August: leharfestival.at
- The famous Salzburg Festival, described as one of the best music festivals in the world, also runs from late July through August: salzburgfestival.at

Germany at a Glance

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

U.S. citizens: Passports are required and must be valid for at least three months beyond the dates of travel. Visas are not required for stays of up to 90 days.

For more information, see travel.state.gov.

Travel Tip - Have a variety of options to start your trip: ATM card(s), credit card(s), and some dollars to exchange.

CURRENCY - Germany uses the euro (EUR). For up-to-date exchange rates, see oanda.com.

Many businesses in Europe will no longer accept credit cards without PIN numbers (chip and pin cards). Always contact your bank or your credit-card company for details on fees and card use when traveling.

TIME ZONE - Germany is in the Central European Time Zone, Eastern Standard Time plus six hours. For more information on worldwide time zones, see worldtimezone.com.

PHONE & INTERNET - Germany country code: +49

Cell phone coverage throughout Germany is extensive, but cannot be guaranteed to be accessible on all American mobile carriers or to function at all times while on the trail or in remote areas. For more information regarding international phone use, please refer to countrywalkers.com/phones.

Internet access is generally very good in towns and villages, however, it is not guaranteed at all of the hotels used on the tour. For more details regarding Wi-Fi availability, please refer to the Tour Itinerary

LANGUAGE - The official language of Germany is German.

While knowledge of the local language is not necessary, you may want to learn some fun and useful phrases; see bbc.co.uk/languages/german or the enclosed Reading Guide for a suggested phrase book.

ELECTRICITY - Alternating current of 230V and 50Hz is used in Germany. Plugs have either two round pins and a hole, or just two round pins. For a full listing of electrical outlets worldwide, see electricaloutlet.org.

WEATHER - Germany has a temperate climate with some regional variation, mainly based on elevation, with few extreme fluctuations in temperature. Rain can fall year-round, although precipitation is heavier in the fall and winter. Summer temperatures can range from mid-60s to low 70s, with warmer or cooler periods. Temperatures in the mountains are cooler, especially at higher elevations, and morning and evening temperatures, or those on high summits, can be much lower than at lower elevations.

For up-to-date forecasts, see qwikcast.com. For historical average temperatures and rainfall, see weatherbase.com.

FOOD & DRINK - German food is wholesome and varied, and while it can live up to its reputation for heartiness, it is based on seasonal produce and ingredients and has extensive regional variation. Germans are meat eaters, with emphasis on cooked sausages, Sauerbraten (pot roast), game such as venison and fowl, and breaded veal or pork cutlets—Wienerschnitzel; but both fresh- and salt-water fish can also be found on many menus. Soups, either creamy vegetable purees or broths with noodles and dumplings, are also common. Salads can be comprise a variety of vegetables, often with a thick creamy dressing, and you'll also find sautéed vegetables, potatoes, and of course cabbage in the form of sauerkraut.

Germany is a country of tempting baked goods: a large variety of breads and rolls, whole meal or white, are ubiquitous, as well as cakes containing a variety of fruits and berries, such as the decadent Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte (cherry, chocolate, and cream Black Forest Cake).

Germany is best known for its high-quality beer, predominantly pilsner. Weiss beer, or wheat beer, and other regional brews are also available. Germany also produces wine in the upper and middle Rhône River region—well-known whites are Riesling or Silvaner, and reds are Spätburgunder and Dornfelder.

Travel Tip

Oktoberfest: Oktoberfest is held annually in late September to mid-October in the Bavarian city of Munich, Germany's third largest. Centered in the Hofbräuhaus am Platzl (main beer hall), the festival has its origins in the celebration of a royal wedding in 1810. Munich's regional beers include "Weissbier" (also spelled as "Weizenbier"—wheat beer), golden-colored Helles, and the dark "Dunkles." Oktoberfest's culinary specialties include "Weißwurst" (white sausage), freshly baked pretzels, and apple strudel. A hearty "Prost!" or "Zum Wohl!" —both mean "cheers!"

LIFE IN GERMANY

Shopping and banking hours - Shops and stores are generally open Monday to Saturday from 9:00 a.m. or 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. or 6:30 p.m., and on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. On the first Saturday of the month, stores are open until 4:00 p.m., and stores are closed on Sunday.

Banks are open from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday to Friday and to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday.

Mealtimes - Breakfast is served at hotels from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. In restaurants and cafés, lunch is served from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. and dinner is usually served from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Tipping - In restaurants and cafés: if service is not included at a restaurant, it is customary to leave 10 to 15 percent of the total. Bedienung means "service is included," so you can just round up to the nearest euro. For taxi drivers you can also round up. For luggage assistance, one euro per bag is typical.

TRAVEL RESOURCES - National German tourist board official site www.germany.travel/en/

Public holidays - To assist in travel planning, it may be helpful to be aware of German public holidays, festivals, or calendars of events. For a list of public holidays, see officeholidays.com/countries/germany/index.php.

Travel Tips - Deutsche Bahn, the German rail network, often conveniently connects with airports and, depending on your airline, you may be able to check your luggage to your final railway destination.

Check with your travel agent, airline, or DB Rail for more information (bahn.de/i/view/USA/en/index.shtml).

TRAVEL IN GERMANY - A wealth of travel information is available at germany.travel/en/.

Airports - The majority of international flights arrive at Frankfurt's international airport (frankfurt-airport.com) or Munich's international airport (www.munich-airport.de/en/consumer/index.jsp), with short connecting flights to most other cities in Germany on an extensive domestic air network.

Trains - German Rail (DB Rail): bahn.de, the national railway company site with schedules, fares, and pass options.

Raileurope: raileurope.com or 800.622.8600: a U.S.-based company that provides schedules, reservations, and ticketing for all European train networks (their multi-day/-week/-month passes in one country or combinations of countries may be an economical and convenient choice for European train travel.).

Other local transportation - In addition to rail and airlines, Germany also has an extensive bus network that, for some towns and cities, may be more convenient and affordable than rail, see eurolines.de/en/.

Most major car rental agencies are available at airports and train stations. Taxis are available at all major airports, train stations, and in smaller towns, and can be reserved in advance (your hotel can usually provide assistance). For more information contact Country Walkers, or go to germany.travel/en/travel-information/along-the-way/along-the-way.html.