

The Salzkammergut: Where Culture, Tradition and Alpine Flair Blend

The Salzkammergut lies nestled among impressive mountains and crystal-clear lakes. Here in the heart of Austria, where nature is at the centre, traditions are preserved, and customs are alive and well. Rich in salt, culture and natural jewels, the region is known for its warm hospitality, which is inextricably interwoven with the excellent Alpine cuisine and tradition of the “Sommerfrische” or summer retreat.

The Salzkammergut stretches from Upper Austria to Salzburg and each of its seven tourism regions is a unique environment. However, they also have one thing in common: a beautiful landscape which beckons visitors to explore mountains and meadows, dive into the many lakes, enjoy nature and be enchanted by the irresistible Salzkammergut charm.

The Salzkammergut – A Centre for Vitality

Located in the heart of Austria, the holiday regions of Attersee-Attergau, Bad Ischl, Dachstein-Salzkammergut, Fuschlseeregion, Mondsee-Irrsee, Traunsee-Almtal and Wolfgangsee offer visitors a colourful variety of cultural and natural experiences all year round.

Whether guests want to enjoy water sports, swimming and relaxing at the crystal-clear lakes or explore nature on foot or by bike: the Salzkammergut is home to 212 scientifically confirmed “Glücksplätze” – places of happiness – which is the highest density for locations of vitality in the world!

Hiking Enjoyment in the Salzkammergut

From the Schafberg Mountain on Lake Wolfgang to the many peaks of the Osterhorn Group, the Hohe Dachstein and Totes Gebirge: the many mountains, alpine meadows and lakes of Salzkammergut make it one of the most beautiful hiking regions in Austria – for both beginners and advanced hikers.

The **BergeSeen Trail** is an especially enjoyable experience for active visitors and long-distance hikers. With over 370 kilometres of trails, hiking enthusiasts can enjoy the beauty of the Salzkammergut in 23 daily stages. Whether as a long-distance hike with multiple stages or a simple day tour, the BergeSeen Trail leads through all three states and includes 35 lakes, a mountain range crossing and 15 summits.

Biking in the Salzkammergut

Whether mountain biking, pleasure cycling, gravel biking or street cycling – with a length of over 1000 kilometres, the cycling path network of the Salzkammergut offers nature enjoyment on two wheels for all levels of conditioning. With the **BergeSeen eTrail**, e-bikers will discover true paradise along a route of over 620 kilometres with a total of 10 daily stages.

The Heritage of the Salzkammergut: Salt, History and Tourism

The Salzkammergut boasts a long history. For more than 7000 years, salt has been mined in the world's oldest salt mine located in the village of Hallstatt. Another salt mine can be found in Altaussee, where salt mining has been in operation since the mid-12th century. This location gained fame as an

art depot during the Second World War. Priceless art treasures by Rubens, Rembrandt, Vermeer and many others were hidden in Altaussee by the Nazis. Shortly before the end of the war, these precious artworks were slated to be destroyed. Thanks to the courageous efforts of local miners, the masterpieces were saved from destruction at the hands of the Nazis.

Both of the salt mines in Hallstatt and Altaussee are exhibition mines and continue to provide insight into the mining and transport of this valuable mineral.

The “white gold” shaped the lives of the people in the region for a long time and was of significant economic value to its owner, the Habsburgs. Tourism also owes a large debt to salt. Its healing properties attracted the imperial family and contributed to the discovery of the region as a location for recreation and relaxation, coining the term “Sommerfrische” or summer retreat.

Source of Inspiration for Nobility, Researchers, Poets, Painters and Musicians

The breathtaking landscape of the Salzkammergut has always exerted a magical attraction on people. This includes many famous personalities, first and foremost the Habsburg family. Emperor Franz Joseph I spent his holidays in the Salzkammergut for 60 years. Empress Sisi treasured Bad Ischl as a summer retreat.

When nature and culture blend in perfect harmony, creative minds feel at home. Literary figures like Adalbert Stifter and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, painters such as Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller, Gustav Klimt or Georg Ludwig Attersee, musicians like Gustav Mahler, Johannes Brahms or Franz Lehár and many singers and actors helped establish the superior reputation of the Salzkammergut over the years.

From Folk Music to the World Stage: The Diverse Music Scene of the Salzkammergut

The love of music blossoms in multifaceted splendour in the Salzkammergut. The former remoteness of the region has shaped a unique and deeply rooted musical culture. Even today, traditional dances like the Landler, Steirer and Schleunige as well as yodelling, alpine folk tunes and hunting songs are beloved musical pieces. “Paschen” – a rhythmic clapping to stanzas of folk music – is a Salzkammergut tradition rarely found anywhere else.

The Salzkammergut also offers a rich spectrum of first-class musical events. Starting with the Salzkammergut Festival Weeks in Gmunden through the Attergauer Culture Summer, the Lehár Festival in Bad Ischl, the Music Days in Mondsee to the Goiserer Violin Festival – music is celebrated in all its facets in the Salzkammergut. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the region has produced many talented musicians including greats such as Hubert von Goisern, the Seer and Conchita Wurst.

A Region Steeped in History: UNESCO Awards for the Salzkammergut

From millennia-old salt culture to early settlement of the bleak alpine landscape or prehistoric structures to handed-down traditions, the Salzkammergut is full of significant UNESCO cultural and natural treasures.

The area around Hallstatt, in the holiday region Dachstein-Salzkammergut, was named a “UNESCO World Natural Heritage and World Culture Heritage Site” as early as 1997. Since 2011, the pile dwellings at Lake Mondsee and Lake Attersee have been deemed “UNESCO World Heritage Sites for Prehistoric Pile Dwellings in the Alps”. In addition, 14 handcrafts, rituals, festivals and traditions from the Salzkammergut are listed as “UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage”.

Traditional Handcraft in the Salzkammergut: From Old Masters and Young Talents

The Salzkammergut is Europe's cultural homeland and has always been fertile soil for traditional craftsmanship! What might seem like a journey back in time for some people is quite normal in the Salzkammergut. Handcrafters like hat makers, traditional tailors, soap manufacturers, shoemakers, potters and many others continue to revive almost forgotten traditions with their skills. In this way, old and rare handcrafts are kept alive and passed on with plenty of individuality and traditional techniques by young craftsmen in their workshops. In the industries of the region, traditional skills are not a guarded secret but are gladly passed along to those who are interested.

In the Hand.Werk.Haus Salzkammergut in Bad Goisern, a colourful array of regional handcrafts is presented to the public. In this centre for contemporary handcrafts, old traditions meld with modern trends and create a living testimony for the creative development of traditional crafts in the Salzkammergut.

How the Salzkammergut Tastes

In the Salzkammergut, you can enjoy fish which comes from crystal clear waters. However, not all fish are the same: what the Riedling is to the Traunsee, the Reinanke is to Mondsee - no matter which fish ends up on the plate, the restaurants of the region artfully prepare these delicacies so as to delight the palate.

A stroll through the many weekly fresh markets is truly a treat-filled culinary journey. In the Salzkammergut, tangy and mild cheeses from cow, goat and sheep milk are produced by local farms and dairies. Organically produced pork, beef and lamb have a direct route from farm to table. In autumn, there is wild game from the surrounding forests. Whether homemade sausage specialties, tasty smoked meats from the farm or aromatic wood-fired bread – high-quality regional food is prepared according to tried and tested recipes in local establishments.

These culinary specialties are complemented by award-winning brandies and liqueurs from the orchards of the Salzkammergut as well as local ciders and beers from traditional breweries and craft beer producers. Of course, the classic “Kaiserschmarrn” – a sweet pancake dish served in the historical location of the imperial summer retreat – must be enjoyed during any visit to the Salzkammergut.

Winter Adventure in the Salzkammergut

In winter, the Salzkammergut awaits its guests with numerous kilometres of ski slopes spread over five family-friendly ski regions. The largest area is the ski region of Dachstein-West, but beginners and professional skiers can also enjoy a wide range of alpine ski sports on the Feuerkogel, Kasberg, or Postalm. On the Krippenstein, visitors will experience one of the longest valley runs in Austria (11 km) as well as a 30-kilometre-long powder course for freeriders. While the large ski resorts excite skiers and snowboarders of all levels with a wide range of fun on the slopes, the small ski areas and lift operators offer optimal conditions for beginners.

Nature, freedom and adrenaline: during a ski tour, you experience the snowy mountain world of the Salzkammergut in a gentle way and at your own pace. With the prospect of summit happiness, hut magic and the anticipation of the upcoming descent along deep snow-covered slopes, mountain enthusiasts can look forward to many delightful winter sport moments away from the crowds. Whether on the Katrin in Bad Ischl, in the Dachstein region, or on Zwölferhorn, the entire Salzkammergut offers extraordinary nature experiences for ski touring fans of all levels.

Cross-country skiing is currently quite trendy: many kilometres of cross-country trails will inspire fans of the sport on the snow - the alpine routes of the Postalm just as much as along the sunny trails in the valley of the cross-country skiing village of Faistenau. Sledding, ice-skating, horse-drawn sleigh rides or snowshoe hikes are the perfect complement to classic winter sports.

Guests will find a respite from the clear winter air in rustic huts and cosy restaurants. The desire for wellness can be satisfied in the Kaisertherme Bad Ischl or in one of the beautiful wellness hotels.

Enchanting moments can be experienced during the many winter traditional events in the Salzkammergut. Whether at the Krampus Run during Advent, the traditional Glöckler Run on the last night of Christmas or the lively carnival hustle and bustle in Ebensee – authentic customs can be experienced first hand during the Salzkammergut winter.

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