

Chapter 4

THE BAVARIAN ALPS

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Updated by
Joseph Reaney



WELCOME TO THE BAVARIAN ALPS

TOP REASONS TO GO

★ **Herrenchiemsee:** Board a boat on the Chiemsee to visit the island housing King Ludwig II's last castle, a Bavarian take on Versailles.

★ **Remarkable nature:** From the powdery snow atop Zugspitze to the crystalline waters of Königssee, the Bavarian Alps region has everything a nature lover needs.

★ **Kloster Ettal:** Baroque ornamentation, a riot of frescoes, and the sound of the ancient organ that puts you in a deep, relaxing trance; a visit to this mammoth monastery is a deep meditative experience. A great brewery and distillery help bring you round.

★ **Tegernsee:** Hit the ski slopes or paddle out onto the quiet Alpine lake before pampering yourself at some of the country's finest spa hotels.

★ **Berchtesgaden:** A charming Alpine town that attracts history buffs (particularly at Obersalzberg, Hitler's mountain retreat), surrounded by a national park that attracts hikers and bikers.

Most Germans wouldn't refer to the "Bavarian Alps" as a whole, preferring to highlight the specific mountain ranges with them, from the Ammergau, Wetterstein, and Karwendel Alps in the west to the Chiemgauer and Berchtesgader Alpen in the east. But when you do add the adjoining ranges together, you are left with one of Germany's greatest escapes.

1 Oberammergau. Home of the world-famous decennial passion play, which will be performed next in 2030.

2 Ettal. This small Bavarian town is home to the largest Benedictine monastery in Germany, with a magnificently painted 18th-century ceiling.

3 Schloss Linderhof. Ludwig II's spectacular mountain hunting lodge is nestled in nature and surrounded by formal gardens.

4 Garmisch-Partenkirchen. This busy alpine spa and resort town hosted the 1936 Winter Olympics. The slopes here are typically open from December through April (and sometimes May on the Zugspitze).



5 Mittenwald. Widely considered the most beautiful town in the Bavarian Alps, Mittenwald is known for its gorgeous 18th-century church and violin-making school.

6 Bad Tölz. This old-fashioned Bavarian spa resort also offers good winter skiing on the Blomberg.



7 Tegernsee. A beautiful Bavarian lake that has drawn Germany's elite since the 19th century; its three main towns can be visited easily by car or ferry.

8 Chiemsee. Bavaria's largest lake has King Ludwig II's magnificent island castle Herrenchiemsee, modeled after Versailles.

9 Berchtesgaden. The gorgeous mountain town is busy with hikers in summer, skiers in winter, and World War II history buffs year round. The national park surrounding Berchtesgaden includes the lovely lake Königssee.

OUTDOORS IN THE BAVARIAN ALPS



Bursting up from the lowlands of southern Germany, the Bavarian Alps form both an awe-inspiring border with Austria and a superb natural playground for outdoors enthusiasts.

Visible from Munich on a clear day, the northern front of the Alps stretches over 300 km (186 miles) from Lake Constance in the west to Berchtesgaden in the east, and acts as a threshold to the towering mountain ranges that lie farther south. Lower in altitude than their Austrian, Swiss, and French cousins, the Bavarian Alps have the advantage of shorter distances between the summits and the valleys below, forming an ideal environment for casual hikers and serious mountaineers alike.

In spring and summer, cowbells tinkle and wild flowers blanket meadows beside trails that course up and down the mountainsides. In winter, snow engulfs the region, turning trails into paths for cross-country skiers and the mountainsides into pistes for snowboarders and downhill skiers to carve their way down.

LEDERHOSEN

Along with sausages and enormous mugs of frothy beer, Lederhosen form the holy trinity of what many foreigners believe to be stereotypically “German.” However, these embroidered leather breeches are traditionally worn only in Bavaria, where the durability and protection of leather are advantageous for those working as carpenters or farmers in the region. Handmade, tailored versions are worn on special occasions.

BEST WAYS TO EXPLORE

BY BIKE

You don't need to venture onto the slopes to appreciate the Alps' beauty; cycling through their foothills affords stunning views of the mountains combined with the luxury of refreshing stops in beer gardens and dips in beautiful lakes like Tegernsee. There's plenty of accommodation tailored to cyclists, and local trains are normally equipped with a bicycle carriage to transport you to more remote locations. The Alps also have thousands of miles of mountain bike-friendly trails and a number of special bike parks serviced by cable cars.

BY FOOT

There are more than 7,000 km (4,350 miles) of walking trails in the Allgäu region alone, conveniently divided into valley walks, mid-altitude trails, and summit hikes reflecting the varying altitude and difficulty. Hikes can be day trips or weeks-long endeavors, and there are campsites, mountain huts, farmhouses, and hotels to overnight in along the way, as well as a network of buses, trains, and cable cars to get you to your starting point. Get more information on hiking trails and current conditions from the Bavaria Tourism Office (bavaria.travel) or the German Alpine Club (alpenverein.de).

BY SKIS

Neither as high nor as famous as their neighbors, the Bavarian Alps are frequently overlooked as a winter-sports destination. Resorts on the German side of the border may have shorter seasons than places like Zermatt and Chamonix, but they're also generally less expensive, and many, including the Zugspitze, are easily accessed from Munich for day trips.



BEST PHOTO OPS

No matter where you are around the Alps you'll be inundated with sights worth snapping. Here are just a few of them:

■ West of Oberammergau, **Neuschwanstein Castle** sits theatrically on the side of a mountain, its grand towers set against a background of tree and snow-covered peaks.

■ The panoramas from the 9,718-foot-high **Zugspitze**, Germany's highest mountain, takes in 400 peaks across four different countries.

■ Reputedly the cleanest lake in Germany, **Königssee** is also endowed with steep rock formations that soar high above the lake, beautifully framing its crystalline waters.

■ From **Tegernsee's** lovely Benedictine monastery, you can wander down to the lake for spectacular vistas of its glittering surface and the Alps beyond.

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The Bavarian Alps OUTDOORS IN THE BAVARIAN ALPS



Fir-clad mountains, rocky peaks, Lederhosen, half-timber houses with geranium window boxes: villages in the Bavarian Alps embody what many of us envision as “Germany.” Quaint towns are enlivened by houses carefully frescoed. Snow glistens on the mountain peaks in winter and lakes below shimmer all summer long. The castles of King Ludwig II, one of the last kings of Bavaria, are a favorite sight, as are the more modest monasteries of Benedictine monks. Sporting opportunities abound throughout the area year-round.

Upper Bavaria (Oberbayern) stretches south and east from Munich to the Austrian border. Leaving the city, you’ll soon find yourself on a gently rolling plain leading to lakes surrounded by ancient forests. The plain merges into foothills, which suddenly give way to jagged Alpine peaks.

Continuing south, you’ll encounter cheerful villages with richly painted houses, churches, and monasteries filled with the especially sensuous Bavarian baroque and rococo styles, and several salt deposits in the area have created a spa culture where you can relax as you “take the waters.” Some of the best sport in Germany can be enjoyed here: downhill and cross-country skiing, snowboarding, and ice-skating in winter; tennis, swimming, sailing, golf, and

above all—sometimes literally—hiking, paragliding, and ballooning in summer.

MAJOR REGIONS

With Germany’s highest peak and a host of picture-perfect Bavarian villages, the **Western Bavarian Alps**—including the Wetterstein, Ammergau, and Karwendel mountains—offer a splendid mix of natural beauty combined with Bavarian culture. This area’s main hubs are the fresco-filled Oberammergau, the monastery-dominated Ettal, the winter sports-mad Garmisch-Partenkirchen (gateway to the Zugspitze, Germany’s highest mountain), and the impossibly-pretty Mittenwald.

Further east, the **Upper Bavarian Lake District** is a natural paradise of rolling hills and serene lakes in the shadow of the

Alpine peaks. The spa town of Bad Tölz is a good entry point for the region, but it's the two biggest lakes—Tegernsee and Chiemsee—that draw the most visitors (and holiday homes). The region is also dotted with several other smaller, sparkling blue lakes, which you are more likely to have all to yourself.

Southeast from here lies **Berchtesgaden-er Land**; the Alps at their most dramatic and most notorious. Although other peaks may be higher, the steep cliffs, hidden mountain lakes, and UNESCO-protected biospheres make this area uniquely beautiful. It's centered on the main town of Berchtesgaden, full of antique houses and quaint streets, but there's much to discover around, from the medieval spa town of Bad Reichenhall, to Hitler's infamous Eagle's Nest, to stunning Königssee and Berchtesgaden National Park.

Planning

Discounts and Deals

One of the best deals in the area is Deutsche Bahn's Bayern-Ticket, which allows between one and five people to travel on any regional train and almost all buses in the region. Prices per day range from €29 for a single traveler to €69 for five people in second class.

The Zugspitz region's ClassicCard (from €77 for three days) offers free and discounted attractions in almost every city near the Zugspitze; upgrade to the ZugspitzCard (from €128.50 for three days) for an included ride on the Zugspitzbahn, a cog railroad and cable car that takes you to the top of Germany's highest mountain.

Visitors to spas or spa towns receive a *Kurkarte*, an ID that proves payment of the spa tax, either upon check-in (the nominal fee is already included in your

bill) or by dropping in at the tourist office. The document allows discounts and often free access to sights in the town or area. If you've paid the tax, be sure to show the card everywhere you go.

Many higher-end hotels also include some form of *Gästekarte*, which offers free transport and sight discounts within the area.

Getting Here and Around

AIR

As the international airport of Bavarian capital, Munich (MUC; 🌐 www.munich-airport.com) is the obvious main gateway to the Bavarian Alps; it's less than 1½ hours' drive from here to most towns in the region. However, there are two towns that are significantly closer to Austrian airports: Mittenwald, just 45 minutes from Innsbruck (INN; 🌐 www.innsbruck-airport.com); and Berchtesgaden, less than 30 minutes from Salzburg (SZG; 🌐 salzburg-airport.com). Both have fewer international flights than Munich—Innsbruck is particularly small and mostly domestic—but there are some European budget-airline flights, as well as seasonal charters, so it's worth checking schedules at all three airports before booking your transport.

CAR

While an extensive network of buses link even remote Alpine villages, the schedules can be unreliable, so those in a hurry may prefer to visit the area by car. Two main autobahns head out from Munich into the Bavarian Alps region: the A95 runs southwest to Eschenlohe, within easy reach of Oberammergau, Ettal, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, and Mittenwald; while the A8 runs southeast via Chiemsee towards Salzburg, close to Berchtesgaden. Bad Tölz and Tegernsee sit in the middle of these two autobahns, almost directly south of Munich. Even smaller roads in quiet villages are well maintained. ■ **TIP → Statically, the busy A8 is the most dangerous**

autobahn in the country. The driving style is fast, and tailgating is common, although illegal. While some stretches have no speed limit, it's recommended to stay below 130 kph (81 mph) at all times; if an accident occurs at higher speeds, your insurance may not cover it (though that may be the least of your concerns).

TRAIN

Most Alpine resorts are connected with Munich by regular express and slower service trains. Due to the rugged terrain, train travel in the region can be challenging, but with some careful planning—see Deutsche Bahn (🌐 bahn.com) for schedules and to buy tickets—you can visit this region without a car. The Bavarian Alps are furnished with cable cars, steam trains, and cog railways that whisk you to the tops of Alpine peaks, allowing you to see the spectacular views without hours of mountain climbing.

Hotels

Hotels or *Gasthöfe* in the Bavarian Alps and lower Alpine regions generally have high standards; many are traditional in style, with balconies, pine woodwork, and gently angled roofs on which the snow sits and insulates, though you'll also find a few more contemporary choices. Many in the larger resort towns offer special packages, including spa or “wellness” packages online. Private homes throughout the region offer Germany's own version of bed-and-breakfasts, indicated by signs reading “Zimmer frei” (rooms available). Their rates may be less than €40 per person for renting a room with a shared bathroom. As a general rule, the farther from the popular and sophisticated Alpine resorts you go, the lower the rates. Note, too, that many places offer a small discount if you stay more than one night. By the same token, some places frown on staying only one night, especially during the high seasons, in summer, at Christmas, and on winter weekends. In spas and many mountain

resorts a *Kurtaxe* (spa tax) is added to the hotel bill. It amounts to no more than €5 per person per day and allows discounted use of spa facilities and may provide entry to local attractions and concerts, or use of local transportation.

Planning Your Time

The Alps are spread along Germany's southern border, but are fairly compact and easy to explore. Choosing a base like Garmisch-Partenkirchen or Berchtesgaden, the largest towns, will offer you the most convenient transportation connections.

Although the Alps are a popular tourist destination, the smaller communities like Mittenwald and Ettal are quieter and make for more pleasant overnight stays. For an unforgettable experience, try spending the night in an Alpine hut, feasting on a simple but hearty meal and sleeping in the cool night air.

Restaurants

Restaurants in Bavaria run the gamut from the casual and *gemütlich* (cozy) Gasthof to formal gourmet offerings. More upscale establishments try to maintain a feeling of casual familiarity, but you will probably feel more comfortable at the truly upscale restaurants if you dress up a bit. Many restaurants take a break from serving in the afternoon, often closing between 2:30 and 6 pm. If you want to eat during these hours, look for the magic words *Durchgehend warme Küche*, indicating warm food is served throughout the day, although you may be limited in options during the off-hours.

⇒ *Hotel prices in the reviews are the lowest cost of a standard double room in high season. Restaurant prices in the reviews are the average cost of a main course at dinner, or if dinner is not served, at lunch.*



The Zugspitze is the highest mountain in Germany and is reachable from Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

What It Costs in Euros

\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
RESTAURANTS			
under €15	€15–€20	€21–€25	over €25
HOTELS			
under €100	€100– €175	€176– €225	over €225

Visitor Information

VISITOR INFORMATION **Bavaria Tourism.**

✉ Arabellastr. 17, Munich ☎ 08921/23970

🌐 bavaria.travel.

When to Go

This mountainous region is a year-round holiday destination. Snow is promised by most resorts from December through March, although there's skiing on the glacier slopes at the top of the Zugspitze at least through May. Spring and autumn

are ideal times for leisurely hikes on the many mountain trails. November is a between-seasons time, when many hotels and restaurants close down or attend to renovations. Note, too, that locals are themselves sport lovers and in smaller towns they may take a vacation after January 6, with businesses not related to sporting closed for anywhere up to a month. The lakes are extremely popular in summer as families set up camp in July and August.

Oberammergau

89 km (55 miles) southwest of Munich.

Its location alone, in an Alpine valley beneath a sentinel-like peak, makes this small town a major attraction. Its main streets are lined with beautiful painted houses, many of which are occupied by families whose men are highly skilled in the art of wood carving, a craft that's flourished here since the early 12th century. Oberammergau is overrun by



Wetterstein, Ammergau, and Karwendel Mountains

tourists during the day, but at night you'll feel like you have a charming Bavarian village all to yourself. The village is most renowned for its elaborate, decennial presentation of the Passion of Christ; it's next on in 2030.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

To reach Oberammergau from Munich by car, take the A95 southwest to Oberau, then head northwest on the B23. The journey takes around 1¼ hours. By public transport, it's a 1-hour train from Munich to Murnau—worth a stop for a lakeside stroll—then an additional 45-minute bus to Oberammergau. There's no train station in the town itself, but frequent, half-hour buses also connect to Garmisch-Partenkirchen train station (via Ettal).

Once in town, you can walk everywhere you'll want to go.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS **Tourist Information Oberammergau.** ✉ *Eugen-Papst-Str. 9a, Oberammergau* ☎ *08822/922-740* 🌐 *ammergaueralpen.de/oberammergau.*

Sights

Oberammergau Museum

HISTORY MUSEUM | This museum dedicated to local traditions displays historic examples of the wood craftsman's art and an outstanding collection of carved Christmas crèches dating from the mid-18th century. There are also exhibits focusing on local Roman influence, Oberammergau's role in organ-building (and the influence that local organs had on the design of U.S. churches), and a collection of "reverse glass paintings." A media room displays videos on, among other

things, the art of traditional wood-carved wood puppets and the town's famous Passion Play. ☒ *Dorfstr. 8, Oberammergau* ☎ 08822/32440 🌐 oberammergaumuseum.de 📞 €5; €9 inc. *Passionstheater* ☺ Closed Mon.

Pilatushaus

HISTORIC HOME | Completed in 1775, this building is considered among the most beautiful in town due to the frescoes by Franz Seraph Zwinck, one of the greatest Lüftmalerei painters. Fronted by a lovely manicured garden, the house is named for the fresco over the front door depicting Christ before Pilate. Rather confusingly, the Pilatushaus Lebende Werkstatt (Living Workshop) is a two-minute walk away, set in another lovely building at Dorfstrasse 20; step inside to see local woodcarving craftsmen in their workshop, alongside working potters and painters. ☒ *Ludwig-Thoma-Str. 10, Oberammergau* ☎ 08822/949511 *Living Workshop* 🌐 oberammergaumuseum.de ☺ Closed Mon. and mid-Oct.–mid-May.

St. Peter und Paul

CHURCH | Built in 1736, this pretty church with its eggshell-colored exterior and pastel-pink interior, is regarded as the finest work of rococo architect Josef Schmutzer (although it was his son, Franz Xaver Schmutzer, who did a lot of the stuccowork). Striking frescoes by Matthäus Günther and Franz Seraph Zwinck depict Mary as the answerer of prayers as well as a scene from the crucifixion. The latter is said to date back to the 1633 promise by the elders of Oberammergau to hold the passion play every decade if the town were to be saved from the plague. ☒ *Frühmesserga. 1, Oberammergau* ☎ 08822/92290 🌐 pfarrverband-oberammergau.de.

Restaurants

Ammergauer Maxbräu

\$\$\$ | **GERMAN** | Part of Hotel Maximilian, this lively brewery is a great place for sipping tasty authentic beer alongside traditional local cuisine. Dishes change on a weekly basis, but expect Bavarian specialties, from roasted pork knuckle (with beer sauce, red cabbage, and potato dumplings) to schnitzels and *käsespätzle* (cheese dumplings). **Known for:** filling pork knuckle with beer sauce; frothy beer crafted in-house; tasty Kaiserschmarrn (scrambled pancakes). 💰 *Average main: €21* ☒ *Hotel Maximilian, Ettaler Str. 5, Oberammergau* ☎ 08822/948-740 🌐 maximilian-oberammergau.de ☺ Closed Tues. No lunch Mon.

Coffee and Quick Bites

★ Bäckerei Aurhammer

\$ | **BAKERY** | An exceptional bakery in the heart of Oberammergau, Aurhammer has the best selection of bread in town (try the lip-smacking walnut loaf, the “King Ludwig” crusty roll, or a classic soft pretzel), as well as a choice of pre-filled rolls, savory and sweet pastries, and cakes. Sit in with a coffee, or take your treats for a stroll. **Known for:** great coffee; delicious nuss-schnecke (nutty cinnamon rolls); closes early at weekends. 💰 *Average main: €6* ☒ *Dorfstr. 30, Oberammergau* ☎ 08822/3521 🌐 baeckerei-aurhammer.de ☺ No dinner. No lunch Sat.–Mon.

Hotels

Akzent Hotel Turmwirt

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | **FAMILY** | The rich wood paneling reaches from floor to ceiling in this transformed 18th-century inn, set in the shadow of Oberammergau's mountain, the Kofel. **Pros:** great option for families; good views of nearby mountains; central location. **Cons:** use of sauna and steam room costs extra; nearby church bells



Oberammergau, a quaint town in a picturesque valley in the Bavarian Alps, hosts a performance of the Passion Play every ten years.

ring frequently; no restaurant. 📞 Rooms from: €120 📍 Ettaler Str. 2, Oberammergau 📞 08822/92600 🌐 turmwirt.de ➡ 10 rooms 🍽️ No Meals.

★ Hotel Maximilian

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Modern and luxurious, this delightful retreat has comfortable rooms with local design touches—some even have vaulted wood ceilings—plus a small but lovely wellness area (Maximilian-Spa), an elegant restaurant (Ben-edikt's), and a historic brewery-restaurant with beer garden (Ammergau Max-bräu). **Pros:** nice views from front rooms; great in-house dining options; warm and modern Bavarian aesthetic. **Cons:** pricey for the area; gets booked up quickly in high season; brewery restaurant gets full (and loud). 📞 Rooms from: €225 📍 Ettaler Str. 5, Oberammergau 📞 08822/948-740 🌐 maximilian-oberammergau.de ➡ 20 rooms 🍽️ Free Breakfast.

🎭 Performing Arts

★ Passion Play

THEATER | Without doubt, the Passion Play is the top draw for Oberammergau. It was first presented in 1634 as an offering of thanks after the Black Death stopped just short of the village. In faithful accordance with a solemn vow, it has been performed every 10 years since 1680. Its 16 acts, which take 5½ hours (with a break for dinner), depict the final days of Christ, from the Last Supper through the Crucifixion and Resurrection. During the presentation year, it's presented daily (in Germany, without supertitles or translation) on a partly open-air stage against a mountain backdrop from late May to late September. The entire village is swept up in the production, with some 1,500 residents directly involved in its preparation and presentation. Men grow beards in the hope of an acting role, while young women have been known to put off their weddings for a shot at playing Mary, which only went to unmarried girls until 1990 (when, to much controversy,

a 31-year-old mother of two was given the part). But all performers must reside in Oberammergau. In the off-season—which includes the rest of this decade, as the next performance takes place in 2030—the Passionstheater hosts other plays, mostly in German, as well as opera performances and concerts. ✉ *Passionstheater, Theaterstr. 16, Oberammergau* ☎ 08822/835–9330 booking, 08822/949–880 information 🌐 *passionsspiele-oberammergau.de*.

Activities

BICYCLING

Sport-Zentrale Papistock

BIKING | You can rent bikes or e-bikes at this friendly little store, located just across the street from the train station. It's directly at the trailhead to Ettal—simply follow the scenic, 5-km (3-mile) path along the river, stopping for a swim or a picnic along the way—at which point it branches off in the direction of Schloss Linderhof. ✉ *Bahnhofstr. 6a, Oberammergau* ☎ 08822/4178 🌐 *sportzentrale-papistock.de* 🚲 Bicycles from €15 per day, e-bikes from €29 per day 🕒 Closed Sun.

Ettal

5 km (3 miles) south of Oberammergau, 84 km (52 miles) southwest of Munich.

The village of Ettal is presided over by the massive bulk of Kloster Ettal, a great monastery and centuries-old distillery.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Ettal is easily reached by bus and car from Oberammergau in around 10 minutes. In fact, it's so close, you might consider staying in Oberammergau and renting a bike; the 4-km (2½-mile) ride along the river is clearly marked, relatively easy, and a great way to meet locals. Once in Ettal, the monastery and around can be explored on foot. You can also cycle from Ettal to Schloss Linderhof,

Lüftlmalerei



The *Lüftlmalerei* style of fresco painting is unique to Bavaria and the Tyrol, where the opulently painted facades were used as a display of wealth. Commonly known by the French term, *trompe l'oeil*, the detailed frescoes give the illusion of three dimensions. They are painted directly onto fresh plaster, which preserves the painting for centuries. The term *Lüftlmalerei* originated in Oberammergau after the famous fresco artist Franz Seraph Zwinck painted a fresco on his house, the Zum Lüftl. Zwinck became the *Lüftlmaler*, or the painter of the Lüftl.

though it's a longer and hillier affair; there's also a regular bus from Oberammergau via Ettal.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS **Tourist Information Ettal.** ✉ *Ammergauer Str. 8, Ettal* ☎ 08822/922–740 🌐 *ammergauer-alpen.de/ettal*.

Sights

★ Kloster Ettal (Ettal Monastery)

RELIGIOUS BUILDING | This remarkable monastery was founded in 1330 by Holy Roman Emperor Ludwig the Bavarian for a group of knights and a community of Benedictine monks. It still houses 50 monks today, making it the largest Benedictine monastery in Germany. The monastery's highlight is its original 10-sided basilica, which was redecorated in the mid-18th century to become one of the foremost examples of Bavarian rococo. The church's chief treasure is its enormous dome fresco (83 feet wide), painted by Jacob Zeiller. German-language basilica tours are offered every Monday and Thursday at 3 pm, lasting up to 45 minutes.



The dome fresco at Kloster Ettal (Ettal Monastery) was painted by Jacob Zeiller and is an excellent example of Bavarian rococo.

Outside of the church, visitors can explore the lovely courtyard gardens and the historic brewery and distillery. Both the signature Benediktiner Weissbier and the seven different traditional “Ettaler liqueurs” (some made from centuries-old recipes incorporating dozens of mountain herbs) are local favorites. One-hour German-language brewery tours take place every Tuesday and Friday at 3 pm, with 45-minute liqueur distilling tours every Monday and Thursday at 4 pm. Both include tastings, and you can pick up bottles to take away in the monastery shop. ☎ *Kaiser-Ludwig-Pl. 1, Ettal* ☎ 08822/740 monastery, 08822/746–450 brewery, 08822/746–413 distillery 🌐 *kloster-ettal.de* 🆓 Free. Basilica tour €5; brewery tour €12, distillery tour €9.

Restaurants

Restaurant & Cafe Edelweiss

\$\$ | GERMAN | This friendly café and restaurant next to the monastery is an ideal spot for a light lunch, dinner with local ingredients, or a coffee with house-made

cake. You can wash it all down with a fine choice of brews from the abbey. **Known for:** delicious schnitzel with pretzel bread-ing; seasonal game from the Ammergau Alps; lip-smacking apple strudel. 💰 *Average main: €17* ☎ *Kaiser-Ludwig-Pl. 3, Ettal* ☎ 08822/4509 🌐 *edelweissettal.de* ☺ Closed Thurs.

Hotels

Klosterhotel Ettal Ludwig der Bayer

\$\$ | HOTEL | FAMILY | This bright and breezy Alpine hotel may be run by the Benedictine order, as evidenced by the exquisite religious carvings and motifs that adorn the walls, but there’s little monastic about it. **Pros:** excellent yet unfussy food and beer; indoor pool and spa; right across the road from the abbey. **Cons:** fills up quickly with tour groups; can be long waits at the breakfast buffet; minimum three-night bookings in summer. 💰 *Rooms from: €160* ☎ *Kaiser-Ludwig-Pl. 10–12, Ettal* ☎ 08822/9150 🌐 *kloster-hotel-ettal.de* 🚗 86 rooms 🆓 Free Breakfast.

Shopping

Schaukäserei Ammergauer Alpen

FOOD | FAMILY | It's not all about beer and spirits: this shop and "show dairy" also highlights Ettal's longstanding cheese culture. Sample a selection of specialist local cheeses (as well as yogurts, butter, and other milk derivatives) along with a coffee, then pick up a pack to take home. Arrive early for a glimpse of cheese production in action; otherwise, you'll find a video and information boards that explain the process. ✉ *Mandlweg 1, Ettal* ☎ 08822/923-926 🌐 *schaukaeserei-ettal.de*.

Schloss Linderhof

11 km (7 miles) west of Ettal, 95 km (50 miles) southwest of Munich.

The only one of King Ludwig's three castles to have reached completion before his death, this gilded hunting lodge lies secluded in the mountains, surrounded by well-manicured gardens. Though less visited than his other castles, Schloss Linderhof tells a fantastic story about the life of a king famous for his eccentricities.

Sights

★ Schloss Linderhof (Linderhof Palace)

CASTLE/PALACE | FAMILY | Built between 1870 and 1879 on the spectacular grounds of his father's hunting lodge a few miles west of Ettal, Schloss Linderhof was the only one of Ludwig II's royal residences to have been completed during his short life. It was the smallest of his country retreats but also his favorite; a charming, French-style rococo confection, it was inspired by the Petit Trianon at Versailles.

From an architectural standpoint, it's a whimsical combination of conflicting styles: lavish on the outside, somewhat overly decorated on the inside. The formal gardens contain interesting elements

such as a Moorish pavilion—bought wholesale from the 1867 Paris Universal Exposition. According to hearsay, while staying at Linderhof, the eccentric king would dress up as the legendary knight Lohengrin to be rowed in a swan boat on the grotto pond; in winter he took off on midnight sleigh rides behind six plumed horses and a platoon of outriders holding flaming torches.

The park around the palace is free to visit (parking is €3) but you'll pay for the exhibition, Hunding's Hut, and, of course, the palace itself, which is only accessible with a 25-minute guided tour. The Venus Grotto is closed for restoration until well into 2025. ✉ *Linderhof 12, Linderhof* ➔ 11 km (7 miles) west of Ettal ☎ 08822/92030 🌐 *schlosslinderhof.de* 🎫 €10 Palace and Hunding's Hut; €2 Exhibition King's Cottage; Park free.

Garmisch-Partenkirchen

14 km (8½ miles) south of Ettal, 90 km (56 miles) southwest of Munich.

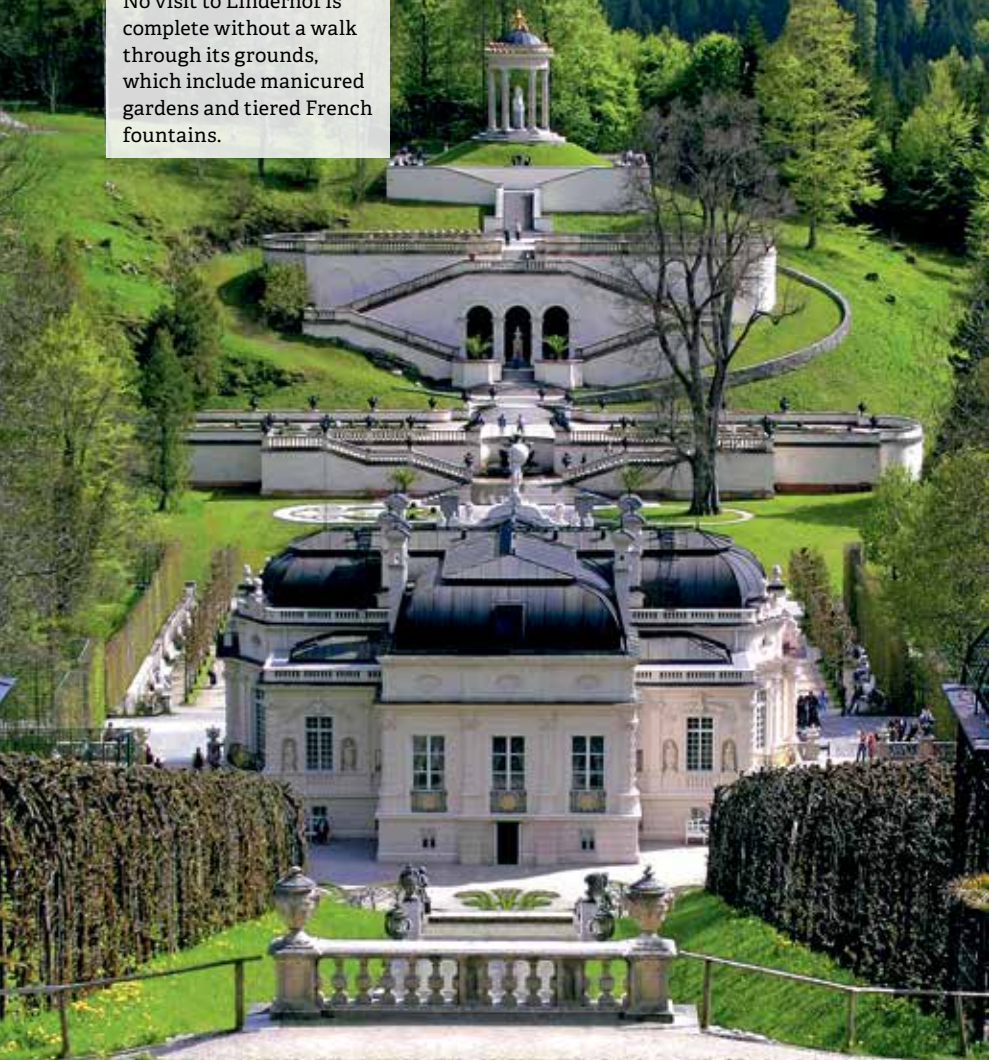
Comprised of two separate communities stuck together to accommodate the 1936 Winter Olympics, Garmisch-Partenkirchen has since grown into a bustling, year-round resort town. It's at the center of the Werdenfelser Land and large enough to offer every facility expected from a major Alpine resort.

The more urban—but widely pedestrianized—Garmisch is slightly closer to the ski lifts than the smaller and prettier Partenkirchen, where pastel frescoes of biblical and bucolic scenes decorate facades. Once in town, you'll realize that the two "town centers" are quite a way apart; prepare for regular back-and-forth walks between them.

Winter sports rank high on the agenda here. There are more than 60 km (37 miles) of downhill ski runs, nearly 30 ski lifts and cable cars, and 180 km (112

Did You Know?

Schloss Linderhof, built by King Ludwig II, was modeled after Versailles. No visit to Linderhof is complete without a walk through its grounds, which include manicured gardens and tiered French fountains.



miles) of *Loipen* (cross-country ski trails). One of the principal stops on the international winter-sports circuit, the area hosts World Cup races on two weekends every January. You can usually count on good skiing from December through April.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Ettal (which you'll pass through if coming directly from Schloss Linderhof), it's a 25-minute drive or bus east along the B23 then south down the B2. From Munich, it's a 1¼-hour drive straight down the A95 autobahn, or a 90-minute direct train. There also train connections to Innsbruck (90 minutes, via Mittenwald), making this the transportation hub of the Werdenfelser Land.

Once in town, Garmisch-Partenkirchen is a walkable city; you probably won't need to use its frequent city-bus services. The cog railway, which takes you to the base of the Zugspitze, starts near the train station.

Bus tours of local sights, including Kloster Ettal and Schloss Linderhof, as well as trips into neighboring Austrian Tyrol, can be coordinated by the local tourist office.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS **Garmisch-Partenkirchen Tourist Information.** ☎ *Richard-Strauss-Pl. 2, Garmisch-Partenkirchen* ☎ 08821/180-700 🌐 www.gapa-tourismus.de.



Alte Pfarrkirche St. Martin (*Old Parish Church of St. Martin*)

CHURCH | The original foundation for this church was laid all the way back in the 9th century, though the current building dates to 1280. It showcases Gothic wall paintings from throughout the centuries, including a 7-meter-high (21-foot-high), larger-than-life figure of St. Christopher from 1330 and a Passion of the Christ fresco dating to the 1400s. Starting at this old church, walk 10 minutes along pretty

Frühlingstrasse and across Schneggensteg bridge to find the “new” 18th-century Parish Church of St. Martin ☎ *Marienpl. 6*; its spectacular interior is adorned with vibrant stuccowork by Joseph Schmutzer and rococo work by Matthäus Günther. ☎ *Pfarrerhausweg 4, Garmisch-Partenkirchen* 🌐 pv-zugspitze.de.

Richard Strauss Institut

SPECIALTY MUSEUM | On the eastern edge of Garmisch, en route to Partenkirchen, stands the home of composer Richard Strauss, the town's most famous son. Although born in Munich, he settled in Garmisch in 1908 and lived in this house until his death in 1949. The property itself, which is still owned by the composer's family, is not open to visitors, but the attached institute and research center offers a popular exhibition dedicated to Strauss's life. Regularly symphony and chamber concerts are held here, and it becomes the center of activity during the *Richard Strauss Tage*, an annual music festival held in mid-June. ☎ *Schnitzschulstr. 19, Garmisch-Partenkirchen* ☎ 08821/180-7900 🌐 richard-strauss-institut.de 🎫 Exhibit €3.50 🕒 Closed weekends.

★ Wallfahrtskirche St. Anton

CHURCH | Perched on a hill overlooking Partenkirchen, this charming old pilgrimage church turned war memorial site is worth the walk (15 minutes up from Ludwigstrasse; 10 minutes back down) for its beautiful 18th-century frescoes by the renowned painter Johann Evangelist Holzer. The numerous memorial plaques combined with the peaceful mountain-side location makes this a contemplative stop. ☎ *Sankt-Anton 1, Garmisch-Partenkirchen* ☎ 08821/9670-080 🌐 franziskaner.net/haeuser/gap.

Werdenfels Museum

HISTORY MUSEUM | **FAMILY** | The region's culture and history are intriguingly presented in this Partenkirchen museum, mostly set inside a beautiful 17th-century merchant's house (but with parts of

Eating Well in the Bavarian Alps



Traditional Bavarian cuisine is rich and heavy, as it originated as staples for feeding farming families and those who spent their days outdoors doing manual labor. *Semmelknödel* (dumplings of old bread), pork dishes, sauerkraut, bread, and hearty soups helped sustain a person facing the elements. Those traditions live on, even as the menus have lightened up and (most) restaurants incorporate vegetarian options. There's an abundance of local produce and meats to draw on for sustenance—including *Forelle* (fresh brook trout), *Renke* (pike-perch), venison, and, of course, pork. This substantial fare is often washed down with a frothy beer, which is nourishment in itself.

Although local chefs are not immune to eclectic culinary trends, as of late, the trend has been a shift to creating menus based on whatever's locally grown and in season.

One area that remains rich is the dessert menu. Served at nearly every *Alm*, those quaint mountain-top huts where hikers can refresh, is *Kaiserschmarrn*, a panfried sweet dough often served with apple sauce. Or try a large portion of warm strudel (usually served with vanilla pudding) fresh from the oven.

Schnapps customarily ends a meal, and most communities have their own variant extracted from local fruit by virtuoso distillers.

the exhibition space dating back to the 1200s, and others to 2018). Spread over 19 rooms and five floors, the exhibits explore traditional aspects of life in the Werdenfelser region (an independent state for more than 700 years, until 1802), from traditional folk costumes, jewelry, arts, and crafts to recreations of rural and bourgeois bedrooms. There are regularly-rotating temporary exhibitions showcasing modern local paintings and sculptures. The museum is located on Partenkirchen's historic Ludwigstrasse, home to dozens of colorful, ornate building facades, so continue exploring local history and culture with a leisurely stroll along the street. ☎ *Ludwigstr. 47, Garmisch-Partenkirchen* ☎ 08821/751-710 🌐 *werdenfels-museum.de* 💰 €5.50 🕒 Closed Mon.

★ Zugspitze

MOUNTAIN | FAMILY | Soaring to 9,718 feet, this is Germany's highest mountain and the number-one attraction in the area. Hard to see from Garmisch-Partenkirchen—and often mistaken for the nearby

Alpsspitze—it's worth going up to see the view, and the best way to do that is with a "Zugspitze Round Trip" ticket. From Garmisch you'll take the historic Bayerische Zugspitzbahn cog railway, which trundles all the way up to Zugspitzplatt, about 8,530 feet above sea level. From here, the Gletscherbahn cable car whisks you right to the summit. Once you've taken in the scenic views (on a clear day you can see four countries), you'll descend on the record-breaking Zugspitze cable car—dropping 2 km (1¼ miles) in just 10 minutes—to catch the cog railway back into town. ☎ *Bayerische Zugspitzbahn Station, Olympia Str. 31, Garmisch-Partenkirchen* ☎ 08821/7970 🌐 *zugspitze.de* 🎫 *Zugspitze round-trip* €72.



Restaurants

Bräustüberl

\$\$ | **GERMAN** | Adorned with frescoes depicting cheerful drinkers, this popular brewpub fills up with large groups and families every day of the week.

The menu features standard Bavarian pub fare—expect sausages, steaks, and schnitzels galore—to be enjoyed alongside a frothy liter of beer. **Known for:** hearty Bräustüberlpfanderl (a pork and duck banquet); good choice of “beer snacks” for smaller appetites; beers served by the liter. **☎ Average main: €18** ☒ Fürstenstr. 23, Garmisch-Partenkirchen ☎ 08821/967–9801 🌐 braeustueberl.org.

Gasthaus Zur Schranne

\$\$ | GERMAN | FAMILY | Situated opposite the “new” Pfarrkirche St. Martin, this classic, wood-paneled, 19th-century inn with lovely painted ceilings is one of the city’s most charming dining options. Friendly international staff serve up hearty portions of typical Bavarian food like roasted duck with potato dumplings and red cabbage, alongside a surprisingly wide selection of vegetarian and even vegan items; very rare for this meat-loving region. **Known for:** huge platters of food; delicious Bayerischer Zwiebelrostbraten (onion roast); beer garden during warmer months. **☎ Average main: €18** ☒ Griesstr. 4, Garmisch-Partenkirchen ☎ 08821/909–8030 🌐 zurschranne.de.

Hotels

For information about accommodation packages with ski passes, call the Zugspitze or get in touch with the tourist office in Garmisch.

Gasthof Fraundorfer

\$\$ | B&B/INN | Located directly on pretty Ludwigstrasse, in the heart of Partenkirchen, this family-run hotel has a colorfully painted facade and window boxes full of geraniums most of the year. **Pros:** lively dining experience in a rustic interior; excellent location in Partenkirchen; quieter than any hotel in Garmisch. **Cons:** minimum two-night booking in high season; breakfast is €17 extra and parking costs €6 a day; rooms can get cold in winter. **☎ Rooms from: €125** ☒ Ludwigstr. 24, Garmisch-Partenkirchen

☎ 08821/9270 🌐 gasthof-fraundorfer.de
☞ 31 rooms 🌐 No Meals.

Hotel Edelweiss

\$\$ | B&B/INN | Like its namesake, the “nobly white” Alpine flower of *The Sound of Music* fame, this small downtown hotel (not to be confused with the lodge on the edge of town) has plenty of mountain charm. **Pros:** friendly owners; homey atmosphere; some rooms have mountain or river views. **Cons:** no air-conditioning; it’s not possible to arrive on a Sunday; restaurant only serves breakfast. **☎ Rooms from: €114** ☒ Martinswinkelstr. 17, Garmisch-Partenkirchen ☎ 0228/3773–7222 Booking center 🌐 bundeswehr-sozialwerk.de/reiseangebot/unterkuenfte/hotel-edelweiss ☞ 25 rooms 🌐 Free Breakfast.

★ Reindls Partenkirchner Hof

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Taken over by the Reindl family just before the 1936 Olympic games, this chalet-style hotel was an institution in its heyday, receiving royalty and celebrities in the quieter part of Partenkirchen. **Pros:** comfortable rooms with modern bathrooms; charming pool and wellness area; handy for the train and Zugspitzbahn stations. **Cons:** a few front rooms are on a busy street; underground parking costs extra; public areas are showing their age. **☎ Rooms from: €195** ☒ Bahnhofstr. 15, Garmisch-Partenkirchen ☎ 08821/943–870 🌐 reindls.de ☺ Closed Nov.–mid-Dec. ☞ 52 rooms 🌐 Free Breakfast.

Romantik AlpenHotel Waxenstein

\$\$ | HOTEL | FAMILY | A 10-minute drive west of Garmisch, near the base of the Zugspitze cable car, is this delightful resort hotel with its unique take on Bavarian rustic. **Pros:** close to Zugspitze cable car; beautiful mountain views from north-facing rooms; excellent in-house restaurant. **Cons:** old-fashioned carpets in rooms and public areas; front desk staff lack English proficiency; hard to reach without a car (though parking is free). **☎ Rooms from: €170** ☒ Höhenrainweg 3,

Garmisch-Partenkirchen 📍 08821/9840
 🌐 www.waxenstein.de ➡ 41 rooms
 🍷 Free Breakfast.

Staudacherhof Hotel

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL | FAMILY** | The Staudacher family has built a name for itself as a purveyor of Bavarian-style wellness at their sustainably renovated hotel, where an indoor/outdoor pool area, as well as saunas, contribute to a relaxing vibe.

Pros: comfortable and renovated rooms; nice spa and pool areas; complimentary house-made cake each afternoon.

Cons: some balcony views aren't private; rooms vary widely in size and layout; in city center. 📍 *Rooms from: €210* ☒ *Höllentalstr. 48, Garmisch-Partenkirchen* ☎ *08821/9290* 🌐 *staudacherhof.de* ➡ 49 rooms 🍷 Free Breakfast.



Nightlife

During the winter season there's a busy après-ski scene. Many hotels have dance floors, and some have basement discos that pound away until the early hours. Bavarian folk dancing and zither music are regular nightlife features.

Gasthof Fraundorfer

THEMED ENTERTAINMENT | Wednesday through Monday, the cozy tavern-restaurant at this Ludwigstrasse hotel hosts traditional music, yodeling, and folk dancing. ☒ *Ludwigstr. 24, Garmisch-Partenkirchen* ☎ *08821/9270* 🌐 *gasthof-fraundorfer.de*.



Activities

HIKING AND CLIMBING

There are innumerable spectacular walks to be found on 300 km (186 miles) of marked trails that weave through the lower slopes' pinewoods and upland meadows. If you have the time and good walking shoes, try one of the two trails that lead to striking *klammen* (gorges). More experienced hikers and climbers will find plenty of opportunities to explore, from the Herrgottschofen

and Gelbe Wände (for all levels) to the Jubiläumsglat (which will test even the best climbers' limits). Before heading out, check with the DAV (the German Alpine Association) for passable routes and avalanche conditions; they can also assist with finding free mountain huts for multiday hikes and climbs.

Deutscher Alpenverein

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING | The country's leading climbing and mountaineering organization, the Munich-based Deutscher Alpenverein (German Alpine Association) has all the details on hiking and on staying in the mountain huts, and provides updates on mountain conditions for climbers and skiers. ☒ *Munich* ☎ *089/140-030* 🌐 *alpenverein.de*.

Höllentalklamm

HIKING & WALKING | A short but demanding hike at the base of the Zugspitze mountain range takes you on rugged paths alongside waterfalls and through grottoes to a magnificent gorge. It's a challenging uphill trek accessible only on foot and only open when there is no snowpack. Strollers, wheelchairs, and bicycles are not allowed. You can park your car and start your hike from the parking lot to the south of Grainau. ☒ *Höllentalklamm Hiking Car Park, Höllentalstr. 18, Garmisch-Partenkirchen* ➡ *From Grainau parking, walk 30 mins along Klammweg from Hotel Haus Hammersbach* ☎ *08821/8895* 🌐 *hoellentalklamm-info.de* 📞 €7 🕒 Closed mid-Oct.–Apr.

Partnachklamm

HIKING & WALKING | FAMILY | A less challenging hike than the nearby Höllentalklamm, the Partnachklamm route is a spectacular short hiking trail that is easily accessible by bus or car. A 30-minute walk from the Olympia-Skistadion (Olympic Ski Stadium) will take you through a spectacular, tunneled water gorge, past a pretty little mountain lake, and 2,300 feet into the Zugspitze range. Before you go, check the website, as the gorge is sometimes closed due to safety reasons.

☒ *Olympia-Skistadion, Karl-u.-Martin-Neuner-Pl. 1, Garmisch-Partenkirchen*
☎ 08821/180-700 🌐 www.parnachklamm.de 🏠 €10.

SKIING AND SNOWBOARDING

Garmisch-Partenkirchen was the site of the 1936 Winter Olympics, and remains Germany's premier winter-sports resort. The upper slopes of the Zugspitze and surrounding mountains challenge the best ski buffs and snowboarders, and there are also plenty of runs for intermediate skiers and families.

The area is divided into two basic regions. The **Zugspitze** is Germany's highest skiing area, with snow highly likely (though not guaranteed) from November to April. Access is via the Zugspitzbahn cogwheel train or the Zugspitze cable car to the Gletscherbahn cable car. Cost for a day pass is €66; a two-day pass is €124.50. The **Garmisch-Classic** has numerous lifts in the **Alpspitze**, **Kreuzeck**, and **Hausberg** regions. Day passes cost €64 for skiers and €35.50 for those on foot. A "Top Snow Card" covers both areas, with prices starting from €127.50 for two days, up to €772 for 21 days. Tickets are available at 🌐 www.zugspitze.de.

The town has a number of ski schools and tour organizers, and information about all of them is available from the local tourist office. The Deutsche Alpenverein is another good contact for mountain conditions.

Erste Skilanglaufschule Garmisch-Partenkirchen

SKIING & SNOWBOARDING | Cross-country skiers can take lessons, check on conditions, or book a guided tour here. ☒ *Sport Stiller Partenkirchen, Rathauspl. 2, Garmisch-Partenkirchen* ☎ 0171/218-1154 🌐 ski-langlauf-schule.de 🏠 Ski lessons from €62.50 per hr.

Skischule Garmisch-Partenkirchen

SKIING & SNOWBOARDING | **FAMILY** | A full-service ski, cross-country, and snowboard rental office stands at the base of

the Hausberg gondola; the shop offers daily lessons for all ages (snowboard lessons should be booked in advance). The Hausberg Resort is the shorter of the ski areas, with a kids zone at just around 4,500 feet. Lessons begin daily at 9 am, as soon as groups are sorted according to ability. Book online in advance for a discount. ☒ *Hausberg 4, Garmisch-Partenkirchen* ☎ 08821/4931 🌐 skischule-gap.de 🏠 Group ski and snowboard lessons €66 per day; private ski and snowboard lessons €161 for 2 hrs.

Mittenwald

18 km (11 miles) southeast of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, 103 km (64 miles) south of Munich.

Widely regarded as the most beautiful town in the Bavarian Alps, Mittenwald gained prosperity in the Middle Ages as the staging point for goods shipped from the wealthy city-state of Venice by way of the Brenner Pass and Innsbruck. From Mittenwald, goods were transferred to rafts, which carried them down the Isar River to Munich. By the mid-17th century, the international trade routes shifted elsewhere, and the town's fortunes evaporated—but, luckily, a new trade was just beginning.

In 1684, Matthias Klotz returned from a 20-year stay in Cremona, Italy. There, along with Antonio Stradivari, he had studied under Nicolo Amati, who developed the modern violin. Klotz taught the art of violin-making to his brothers and friends and, before long, half the men in the village were crafting the instruments using wood from neighboring forests. Mittenwald became known as the "Village of a Thousand Violins," and the locally crafted instruments are still treasured around the world.

Today, the town still has a violin-making school—on a warm day, you may even catch the odd sight of laundry lines hung

out with new violins, where they gain their naturally dark hue—and Mittenwald holds a violin- (and viola-, cello-, and bow-) building contest every four years in June.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Mittenwald is 25 minutes by car west of Garmisch-Partenkirchen via the B2, or from Munich it's 1½ hours down the A95. By train, it's 20 minutes from Garmisch, from where you can connect to Munich (add on 90 minutes). And by foot, it's a 4-hour walk along the Via Claudia Augusta, a Roman road built between Partenkirchen and Mittenwald, and once part of a major route linking Rome and Germany. Mittenwald town center is small and easily walkable.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS **Tourist Information Mittenwald.**

✉ *Dammkarstr. 3, Mittenwald*
☎ 08823/33981 🌐 *alpenwelt-karwendel.de*.



Geigenbaumuseum (*Violin Making Museum*)

HISTORY MUSEUM | Founded in 1930 and set within one of the town's oldest (and prettiest) buildings, this museum highlights the history and craft of violin-making in Mittenwald, with the main emphasis is on instruments made during the Baroque period. Ask the museum curator to direct you to the nearest of several violin makers—they'll be happy to demonstrate the skills handed down to them. ✉ *Ballenhausg. 3, Mittenwald*
☎ 08823/2511 🌐 *geigenbaumuseum-mittenwald.de* 🎫 €5.50 🕒 Closed Mon.

★ **Obermarkt**

STREET | Mittenwald's medieval prosperity is most clearly reflected on its main street, which is lined with splendid houses boasting ornately carved gables and brilliantly painted facades. Many are characteristic of *Lüftlmalerei*—where images, usually religious motifs, were

painted on the wet stucco exteriors—and were completed by renowned regional artists such as the great Franz Seraph Zwinck. Goethe once called this heart of Mittenwald “a picture book come alive,” and it still is today.

Take a stroll from south to north, starting at the pretty Müller drugstore on Dekan-Karl-Platz and keeping the small stream to your right. You'll find yourself stopping regularly to appreciate some of Germany's prettiest houses, including (but not limited to) the Blue House at Obermarkt 45, Parfümerie Wiedemann, Cafe Obermarkt, Bio Gasthof Post, Alpenrose, the Pilgerhaus mit Hofkapelle, and the Goethehaus. The latter, right at the end of Obermarkt, looks across to the similarly decorative St. Peter und Paul church. ✉ *Müller, Dekan-Karl-Platz 1-3, Mittenwald*.

St. Peter und Paul

CHURCH | The 18th-century church, with its eye-catching *Lüftlmalerei* exterior, along with the elaborate and joyful stuccowork coiling and curling its way around the interior, is one of the most important rococo structures in Bavaria. On the back of the altar inside—which, like Oberammergau's namesake church, was built by Josef Schmutzer and decorated by Matthäus Günther—you'll find the name Matthias Klotz, carved there by the renowned violin maker himself. Note that on some of the ceiling frescoes, the angels are playing violins, violas da gamba, and lutes.

In front of the church, Klotz is memorialized as an artist at work in vivid bronze sculpted by Ferdinand von Miller (1813–79), creator of the mighty Bavaria Monument in Munich. And at the rear of the church, a small garden contains a moving war memorial chapel and the decorative, candle-filled Lourdes Grotto. ✉ *Matthias-Klotz-Str. 2-4, Mittenwald*
☎ 08823/92290 🌐 *erzbistum-muenchen.de/pfarrei/st-peter-und-paul-mittenwald*.

Restaurants

Alpenrose

\$\$ | GERMAN | Once part of a monastery and later adorned with one of the town's most beautiful painted baroque facades, the Alpenrose features traditional Bavarian fare and is famous for featuring venison dishes the entire month of October. A sidewalk terrace is open on sunny days; a zither player strums away most evenings in the Josefi wine cellar. **Known for:** tasty knödel (dumplings); seasonal variations on pork; well-prepared schnitzel. **\$** Average main: €16 **☒** Obermarkt 1, Mittenwald **☎** 08823/92700 **🌐** hotel-alpenrose-mittenwald.de.

Gasthof Stern

\$ | GERMAN | FAMILY | This historic white house with brilliant blue shutters has a beer garden and a small playground that's perfect for families. Locals love this dining room and its meat-heavy Bavarian cuisine, with produce sourced from local farmers, butchers, and fishmongers. **Known for:** tasty Jägerschnitzel (with mushroom sauce); suckling pig served on Sundays; cozy rooms available. **\$** Average main: €15 **☒** Fritz-Prölss-Pl. 2, Mittenwald **☎** 08823/8358 **🌐** stern-mittenwald.de **🕒** Closed Mon.–Tues.

Coffee and Quick Bites

★ Bsonders & Guad

\$ | CAFÉ | FAMILY | With a prime location on Obermarkt, this is Mittenwald's best konditorei und kaffeehaus (patisserie and coffee shop), as evidenced by the rarely unoccupied sidewalk tables and the slowly creeping queue of locals and visitors. The elegant, bread-heavy window display is enough to tempt you in, but it's the cake displays inside—coupled with the aroma of freshly brewing coffee—that will guarantee you stay a while. **Known for:** great coffee-and-cake stop; crunchy bier-brot (beer bread); take-out deli products from chutneys to chocolate. **\$** Average main: €6 **☒** Obermarkt 16,

Mittenwald **☎** 08823/936–9100 **🌐** www.bsonders-guad.de **🕒** Closed Sun. No dinner.

Hotels

★ Das Kranzbach

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Situated on 13 hectares (32 acres) of land just over halfway between Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Mittenwald, this spectacular mountain retreat was commissioned in 1913 by the English aristocrat Mary Portman. **Pros:** elegant rooms and suites; lovely spa amenities; wonderfully peaceful mountain setting. **Cons:** car access is via a toll road; splendid seclusion means you're far from the major sights; extremely expensive. **\$** Rooms from: €595 **☒** In Kranzbach 1 **☎** 8823/928–000 **🌐** daskranzbach.de **🚗** 126 rooms **🕒** Free Breakfast.

Post Hotel Mittenwald

\$\$ | HOTEL | This town center hotel retains much of its historic charm—stagecoaches carrying travelers and mail across the Alps stopped here as far back as the 17th century—though the elegant rooms come in various styles, from Bavarian rustic to modern art nouveau. **Pros:** art nouveau rooms in the back; great location between train station and Obermarkt; relaxing pool and spa area. **Cons:** no elevator; street noise in the evening; some staff have poor English. **\$** Rooms from: €165 **☒** Obermarkt 9, Mittenwald **☎** 08823/938–2333 **🌐** posthotel-mittenwald.de **🚗** 73 rooms **🕒** Free Breakfast.

★ Schloss Elmau

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | FAMILY | A short way up the (toll) road from Das Kranzbach, and a 15-minute drive from Mittenwald, this luxurious castle hotel shot to fame when it hosted the G7 summit in 2015, and its varied history, artistic heritage, top-notch cuisine, and superior spa services have kept it deservedly popular. **Pros:** gorgeous location in the mountains; superb dining options include Michelin-starred IKIGAI; extensive spa facilities in a

peaceful atmosphere. **Cons:** incredibly expensive (even without a package); far from sights and only accessible by toll road; multnight stays are required.

📞 *Rooms from: €690* ✉ *In Elmau 2, Krün*
☎ *08823/180* 🌐 *schloss-elmau.de* 🚗 *162 rooms* 🍳 *Free Breakfast.*

Activities

Mittenwald lies literally in the shadow of the mighty **Karwendel** Alpine range, which rises to a height of nearly 8,000 feet. There are a number of small lakes in the hills surrounding Mittenwald. You can either walk to the closer ones or rent bikes and venture farther afield. The information center across the street from the train station has maps, and they can help you select a route.

The **Dammkar** run is nearly 8 km (5 miles) long and offers some of the best skiing, telemarking, and snowboarding in the German Alps.

Erste Skischule Mittenwald

SKIING & SNOWBOARDING | FAMILY | Skiers and snowboarders can find all they need, including equipment and instruction, at the Erste Skischule Mittenwald. ✉ *Skiverleih Luttensee, Am Luttensee, Mittenwald* ☎ *08823/928-484* 🌐 *skischule-mittenwald.de* 🚗 *Ski and snowboard group lessons from €30 per day; ski and snowboard private lessons from €40 per hr.*

Karwendelbahn cable car

HIKING & WALKING | FAMILY | Hikers and skiers are carried to an altitude of 7,180 feet for the beginning of numerous trails down, or farther up into the Karwendel range. ✉ *Alpenkorpsstr. 1, Mittenwald* ☎ *08823/937-6760* 🌐 *karwendelbahn.de* 🚗 *€25.90 one way, €36.90 round-trip.*

Shopping

It's not the kind of gift every visitor wants to take home, but if you'd like a violin, a cello, or even a double bass, the Alpine

resort of Mittenwald can oblige. There are about a dozen craftspeople whose work is coveted by musicians throughout the world.

Anton Maller

MUSIC | Anton Maller has been making violins and other stringed instruments for more than 40 years. This store, in the beautiful Goethehaus, is open weekdays only. ✉ *Obermarkt 2, Mittenwald* ☎ *08823/5865* 🌐 *violin-maller.de* 🕒 *Closed weekends.*

Bad Tölz

56 km (35 miles) northeast of Mittenwald, 50 km (31 miles) south of Munich.

Bad Tölz is a fascinating blend of the old and new. The *Bad* (meaning bath or spa) part is relatively new, dating to the discovery of the town's iodine-laden springs in the mid-19th century. You can take the waters, either by drinking a cupful from the local springs or going all the way with a full course of health treatments at a specially equipped hotel.

The *Tölz* part, however, dates back to at least the 12th century, while the area has been occupied as far back as the Bronze Age. And this is a town that clings to its ancient customs more tightly than any other Bavarian community. It is not uncommon to see people wearing traditional clothing as their daily dress.

If you're in Bad Tölz on November 6, you'll witness one of the most colorful traditions of the Bavarian Alpine area: the Leonhardiritt equestrian procession, which marks the anniversary of the death in 559 of St. Leonhard of Noblac, the patron saint of horses. The procession ends north of town at an 18th-century chapel on the Kalvarienberg, above the Isar River.

If visiting at any other time of year, try to make it a Friday morning, when a farmers' market stretches along the



main street to the Isar River and on the Jungmayr-Fritzplatz.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

There are two ways to get from Mittenwald to Bad Tölz by car, and both take around 1¼ hours. The more beautiful (and more fun to drive) way involves heading east on the Mautstrasse Wallgau-Vorderriss toll road, joining the B307 then the B13. You will pass over the spectacular Sylvenstein Dam (factor in a stop at the viewpoint in Fall), but you'll pay a €5 toll for the privilege. The alternative option involves heading north on the B11 to join the B472. This avoids the toll but also the dam—although you'll still pass by some lovely lakes, as well as Kloster Benediktbeuern (with frescoes by Hans Georg Asam, of Kloster Tegernsee fame).

Bus opt for the second route, though you'll need to change in Kochel, which

means the total journey time can be anywhere between 1¾ and 2½ hours. Driving from Munich takes less than an hour on the A8/B13, and there's a direct train, too.

Once you're in Bad Tölz, it is easily walkable and has frequent city-bus services.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS **Bad Tölz Tourist Information**

✉ Max-Höfner-Pl. 1, Bad Tölz
☎ 08041/78670 🌐 bad-toelz.de



Sights

Tölzer Stadtmuseum

HISTORY MUSEUM | Housed in the Altes Rathaus (Old Town Hall), beside a second branch of the town's tourist information, this longstanding museum has a permanent exhibition containing more than 2,000 objects exploring the

history of Bad Tölz and its environs. Look out for the many fine examples of *Bauernmöbel* (farmhouse furniture), along with exhibits on the local patron saint, Leonhard. ✉ *Marktstr. 48, Bad Tölz* ☎ 08041/793-5156 🌐 *bad-toelz.de* 🚗 €2 ☹ Closed Mon.

Restaurants

Reutbergstüberl

§ | GERMAN | FAMILY | This small restaurant, which offers communal dining at large wooden tables, serves authentic Bavarian cuisine at fair prices: try the *schweinebraten* (pork filets with sauerkraut), or the turkey medallions in cream sauce. Ideally located between the Franziskaner-Kurgarten and the Kurpark, it has a quiet, comfortable atmosphere both inside and out on the fair-weather terrace. **Known for:** tasty weisswurst (Bavarian white sausages); peaceful setting on a quiet street; a steep 10-minute walk from the river. 💰 *Average main: €15* ✉ *Schuetzenstr. 5, Bad Tölz* ☎ 08041/70839 🚗 No credit cards ☹ Closed Tues. and Wed.

Hotels

Landhaus Benediktenhof

\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | Located about 7 km (4 miles) south of Bad Tölz, this eco-friendly “bio hotel” features comfortable rooms with wooden four-poster beds, woolen rugs, and cheery paintings on the walls, plus a charming relaxation area with sauna, whirlpool, and natural swimming pond. **Pros:** beautiful garden with swimming pond; welcoming staff; cozy wood-paneled bedrooms. **Cons:** a 10-minute drive from Bad Tölz; simple breakfast; not enough parking spaces. 🛏 *Rooms from: €185* ✉ *Alpenbadstr. 16, Bad Tölz* ☎ 08042/91470 🌐 *benediktenhof.de* 🚗 11 rooms 🍳 Free Breakfast.

Performing Arts

Tölzer Knabenchor Boys' Choir

(Knabenchor)

MUSIC | Bad Tölz is world renowned for its outstanding boys' choir. When not in Munich or out on tour, the choir gives regular concerts in the Kurhaus. ✉ *Kurhaus Bad Tölz, Ludwigstr. 25, Bad Tölz* 🌐 *toelzerknabenchor.de*.

Activities

Blomberg

SNOW SPORTS | FAMILY | Bad Tölz's local mountain, which lies 3 km (2 miles) west of town, has moderately difficult ski runs and can also be tackled on a toboggan through the snow in winter and on a concrete summer toboggan run in summer. The winter run of 2 km (1.2 miles) is one of the longest in Bavaria (though check conditions before you go as it's often closed due to lack of snow cover). The summer toboggan run snakes 4,265 feet down the mountain and is great fun, while the Blomberg Blitz runs in summer and winter, covering a distance of 4,281 feet. You'll reach the top with the Blombergbahn; a simple ascent or descent costs €9. ✉ *Blombergbahn Bad Tölz, Blombergbahn 2, Bad Tölz* ☎ 08041/3726 🌐 *blombergbahn.de* 🚗 €9 *Blomberg Blitz or summer toboggan run ride*.

Shopping

Bad Tölz is famous for its *Bauernmöbel* (painted farmhouse furniture), particularly cupboards and chests, and several local shops specialize in hand-carved pine pieces. They will usually handle export formalities. Ask at your hotel or the tourist information center for a recommendation on where to shop.

Tegernsee

14 km (8½ miles) east of Bad Tölz, 47 km (29 miles) south of Munich.

The beautiful shores of the Tegernsee are home to some of the most expensive properties in all of Germany. The interest in the region shown by King Maximilian I of Bavaria at the beginning of the 19th century attracted VIPs and artists, which led to a boom that has never really faded. Most of the town's amenities, from transport to restaurants to activities, still have reasonable prices, though hotels tend to be at the luxury end of the scale.

Tegernsee's wooded shores, rising gently to scalable mountain peaks of no more than 6,300 feet, invite hikers, walkers, and picnicking families. The lake itself, surrounded by russet-clad trees that provide a colorful contrast to the snow-capped mountains, attracts swimmers and sailors. And beer lovers are drawn to Tegernsee by one of the best breweries in Europe.

There are three main towns on the lake: Tegernsee (town) on the eastern shore, which has the lake's biggest sights; Rottach-Egern to the south, which has the lake's most luxurious hotels; and Bad Wiessee to the west, which has the lake's only casino. At the lake's northern end, Gmund am Tegernsee is a popular starting point, a pleasant little town that's easily accessible by train or the public boats on the lake.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

It's a 20-minute drive from Bad Tölz to Gmund on the northern shore of the lake; add on five to 10 minutes for Tegernsee town on the eastern shore, and the same again for Rottach-Egern further south. Regular buses connect Bad Tölz and Gmund in only 30 minutes; change for Tegernsee and other destinations.

From Munich, it's a 55-minute drive south to Tegernsee or a 1-hour BOB

Favorite Places



Joseph Reaney: The Bavarian Alps may be hundreds of miles from the nearest coastline, but when I'm visiting beautiful lakes like Chiemsee and Königssee, I always pack a beach towel and seek out those small slivers of sandy shore. My favorite lake beach? The crescent-shaped Strandbad Point on Tegernsee. The water is cold but very refreshing in the hot summer.

(Bayerische Regiobahn) train. From here, walk 10 minutes from Tegernsee train station to the dock, where you can catch a boat ride to the town's Benedictine monastery, Rottach-Egern, Bad Wiessee, and Gmund am Tegernsee. In general, this is the best way to get around the lake, though it's also possible to drive, bus, and cycle along its shore.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS **Tourist-Information Tegernsee.**

✉ Hauptstr. 2, Tegernsee ☎ 08022/927-380 🌐 tegernsee.com.



Grosses Kappl

VIEWPOINT | At one of the loveliest lookout points in Bavaria, Maximilian showed off this corner of his kingdom to Czar Alexander I of Russia and Emperor Franz I of Austria during their journey to the Congress of Verona in October 1821. You can follow in their footsteps on a 45-minute round-trip hike to the lookout; a plaque marks the spot from which they admired the open expanse of the Tegernsee and the mountains beyond. The 1¼-km (¾-mile) walking path starts just between 37 and 39 Seestrass—walk to the eastern end of the Schlosspromenade,

cross the road, and join the narrow path to the right of the large white building.

☒ *Ellingerstr. 17, Tegernsee.*

★ **Kloster Tegernsee** (*Tegernsee Monastery*)

MONASTERY | As well as being the most visible landmark on the lake, this vast Benedictine monastery turned royal residence is perhaps its biggest attraction—especially when factoring in its superb brewery. Founded in the 8th century, the monastery was one of the most productive cultural centers in southern Germany; one of the *Minnesänger* (wandering lyrical poets), Walther von der Vogelweide (1170–1230), was a welcome guest. Not so welcome were Magyar invaders, who laid waste to the place in the 10th century.

During the Middle Ages, the monastery made a lively business producing stained-glass windows, thanks to a nearby quartz quarry, and in the 16th century it became a major center of printing. The late-Gothic church was refurbished in Italian baroque style in the 18th century, and became the place where heirs to the Wittelsbach dynasty got married; step inside to see the spectacular frescoes by Hans Georg Asam.

Sadly, as 19th-century secularization sealed the monastery's fate—and almost half the buildings were torn down—the church and brewery are the only parts left that are open to visitors. The remainder was converted into a summer retreat by Maximilian I and is still used by members of the Wittelsbach family.

☒ *Schlosspl. 2, Tegernsee* ☎ 08022/3419.

★ **Wallberg**

MOUNTAIN | For the best vista in the area, climb the Wallberg, the 5,700-foot mountain at the southern end of the lake. It's a hard four-hour hike up, or a short 15-minute ride on the Wallbergbahn. At the summit are a restaurant and sun terrace with panoramic views, as well as several trailheads: choose between a 30-minute walk to the Wallberggipfel

viewpoint and back, a 6½-hour hike up to Zum Risserkogel and then down to the bottom of the cable-car, and everything in between. In winter, the nearby skiing is excellent. ☒ *Wallbergbahn Bergstation, Rottach-Egern* ☎ 08022/6800 *Wallbergbahn* 🌐 www.wallbergbahn.de 🚠 *Wallbergbahn: €15 one-way; €27 return.*

Restaurants

★ **Bräustüberl Tegernsee**

\$ | **GERMAN** | If there's one place you *have* to visit during your time at the lake, it's this immensely popular (yet still surprisingly great value) brewery-restaurant in Tegernsee. Part of the enormous Benedictine monastery Kloster Tegernsee, the Bräustüberl specializes in dishing up hearty Bavarian fare, from veal tenderloin to smoked pork belly, as well as tasty, low-cost Bavarian snacks: choose from a dizzying array of grilled sausages, fried herring, goulash soup, mixed salads, cheese platters, cold cuts, and more. **Known for:** the brewery is one of Germany's best breweries; Bavarian pub fare including weisswurst and leberkäse; incredibly good value for a touristy place. ☎ *Average main: €14* ☒ *Kloster Tegernsee, Schlosspl. 1, Tegernsee* ☎ 08022/4141 🌐 braustuberl.de.

Freihaus Brenner

\$\$\$\$ | **GERMAN** | High in the hills above Bad Wiessee, this attractive restaurant combines great food with unparalleled Tegernsee views. Begun by proprietor Josef Brenner, who brought a then-unfamiliar taste of nouvelle cuisine to the region, the restaurant's regularly-changing menu maintains its assortment of seasonal specialties; come in autumn for a veritable venison feast, from roasted saddle to braised shoulder to rich goulash. **Known for:** good local fish options including trout and char; delicious roast pork with wheat beer sauce; superlative vistas. ☎ *Average main: €35* ☒ *Freihaus 4, Bad Wiessee* ☎ 08022/86560 🌐 freihaus-brenner.de ☹ *Closed Tues.–Wed.*

Gut Kaltenbrunn

\$\$\$\$ | **GERMAN** | **FAMILY** | On the lake's northern shore, this self-sustaining restaurant has been created from a series of farm buildings dating back to the 19th century. There's a strong focus on meat-heavy regional delicacies here, from Bavarian veal steak tartare to medallions of venison loin, with a particular focus on beef dishes utilizing meat from the restaurant's own cattle. **Known for:** steak from their own cattle; locally caught fish and vegetarian dishes; wonderful views of the lake. ☎ *Average main:* €29 ☎ *Kaltenbrunn 1, Gmund* ☎ 08022/187-0700 🌐 *feinkost-kaefer.de/gutkaltenbrunn.*



Hotels

★ Althoff Seehotel Überfahrt

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | **FAMILY** | Located right on the shore, this five-star hotel is the go-to option for lakeside luxury, thanks to its elegant rooms and suites, its array of spectacular dining options, and its unparalleled service. **Pros:** choice of superb international restaurants; Überfahrt boat dock is right outside; exceptional service (including valet parking) from English-speaking staff. **Cons:** no Tegernsee Card included (though buses free with Guest-Card); sauna area feels a little dated; five-star luxury comes at a price. ☎ *Rooms from:* €455 ☎ *Überfahrtstr. 10, Rottach-Egern* ☎ 08022/6690 🌐 *seehotel-ueberfahrt.com* ➡ 176 rooms 🏠 *Free Breakfast.*

Das Tegernsee

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | The elegant, turreted hotel—and its multiple spacious annexes—sit high above Tegernsee, backed by the wooded slopes of Neureuth Mountain. **Pros:** historical elegance accents updated rooms; excellent spa amenities; spectacular lake views. **Cons:** a little away from the hub of the town; can get full if events are held; rooms with a view cost extra. ☎ *Rooms from:* €587 ☎ *Neureuthstr. 23, Tegernsee* ☎ 08022/1820 🌐 *dastegernsee.de* ➡ 92 rooms 🏠 *Free Breakfast.*

★ Parkhotel Egerner Höfe

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | The spa is the star at this upmarket boutique hotel, with its wellness facilities including a 20-meter (66-foot) indoor-outdoor pool, a fitness room, several beauty and massage treatment rooms, and an elegant (and very extensive) sauna area. **Pros:** spectacular spa includes a women-only sauna; two-Michelin-starred Dichter gourmet restaurant; Tegernsee Card includes free transport and sight discounts. **Cons:** a five-minute walk from the lakefront; shower controls are a little complicated; included breakfast buffet is good but not exceptional. ☎ *Rooms from:* €457 ☎ *Aribostr. 19-26, Rottach-Egern* ☎ 08022/6660 🌐 *www.eggerner-hoefe.de* ➡ 85 rooms 🏠 *Free Breakfast.*



Performing Arts

Every resort town has its **spa orchestra**—in summer they play daily in the music-box-style bandstands that dot the lakeside promenades. A strong Tegernsee tradition is the summer-long program of **festivals**, some set deep in the forest. Tegernsee's lake festival in August, when sailing clubs deck their boats with garlands and lanterns, is unforgettable.



Activities

GOLF

Tegernseer Golf-Club Bad Wiessee

GOLF | Besides swimming, hiking, and skiing, the Tegernsee area has become a fine place for golfing. The Tegernseer Golf-Club has an 18-hole course in the valley of Bad Wiessee overlooking the lake and with a view to the mountains. With three tee possibilities, the course is surrounded by old forests and has a number of hazards to challenge even the most advanced golfer. ☎ *Rohbognerweg, Bad Wiessee* ☎ 08022/271-130 🌐 *tegernseer-golf-club.de* ➡ €65 weekdays, €80 weekends for 9 holes; €100 weekdays, €130 weekends for 18 holes 🏌️ 18 holes, 5,500 yards, par 70.

Shopping

★ **Naturkäserei Tegernseerland**

FOOD | Situated at the southern edge of Rottach-Egern, opposite the turning to the Wallbergbahn station, this charming little dairy shop sells artisan cheeses, organic hay milk, yogurts, and butter—along with other deli delights, from coffee to chocolate. Don't worry if you arrive late, as there's a refrigerated outdoor vending machine that's stocked with dairy products. There's also a restaurant serving hearty breakfasts and simple lunches (no dinner) Wednesday through Sunday; diners get their €2 parking fee refunded. ☒ *Reissenbichlweg 1, Rottach-Egern* ☎ 08022/188-3520 🌐 www.naturkaeserei.de.

Chiemsee

64 km (40 miles) east of Tegernsee, 87 km (54 miles) southeast of Munich.

A worthwhile stop on a journey from Tegernsee or Munich to Berchtesgaden, Chiemsee is the largest of Bavaria's lakes. The main attraction is Schloss Herrenchiemsee, King Ludwig II's unfinished palace on one of the lake's idyllic islands. The main town of Prien am Chiemsee is the lake's principal resort, where boats for the castle tour depart, but other small lakeside villages are perhaps more worthy of your time if you choose to overnight in the area.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

A car is the best way to reach Chiemsee unless you are coming directly from Munich or Salzburg. It's a 1-hour drive from Tegernsee to Prien (the main towns on their respective lakes), and about 1¼ hours from Munich. Train connections from Tegernsee to Prien go via Munich, with two legs of around 1 hour each, or 2 hours altogether. From Prien train station, which is also directly connected to Salzburg (1 hour), jump on the 19th-century

narrow-gauge steam train for the short trip to Prien-Stock, the boat dock. The only way to reach the Herreninsel and the Fraueninsel is by boat, but you can explore the shores of the lake by car, bus, or (for long-distance hiking fans) foot.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS Chiemgau Tourism. ☒ *Seuffertstr. 12, Traunstein* ☎ 0861/909-5900 🌐 chiemsee-chiemgau.info. **Chiemsee-Alpenland Tourismus.** ☒ *Felden 10, Bernau am Chiemsee* ☎ 08051/965-550 🌐 www.chiemsee-alpenland.de.

Sights

Fraueninsel

ISLAND | FAMILY | Boats shuttling between Stock and Herreninsel (Gentlemen's Island) also stop at this small retreat, which translates as Ladies' Island. The Benedictine convent here, founded an astonishing 1,200 years ago, houses a small community of nuns. One of its earliest superiors, Irmengard, daughter of King Ludwig der Deutsche, died here in the 9th century; her grave in the convent chapel was discovered in 1961, the same year that early frescoes there were brought to light. The chapel is open daily from dawn to dusk. Otherwise, the island has about 50 private houses, a couple of shops, and a guesthouse where visitors wishing to take part in the nuns' quiet lives can overnight. You can walk around the island in about 20 minutes—just don't miss partaking in the Benedictine Sisters' delicious fruit liqueurs, gingerbread, and marzipan. ☒ *Fraueninsel, Chiemsee* 🌐 frauenwoerth.de.

★ **Schloss Herrenchiemsee**

CASTLE/PALACE | FAMILY | Beautiful Chiemsee has drawn generations of Bavarian royalty to its shores for its dreamlike, melancholy air—and it was on one of the lake's three islands, Herreninsel, that King Ludwig decided to build this castle. Painstakingly modeled after Louis XIV's



Schloss Herrenchiemsee, King Ludwig II's last building project, lies in the middle of Lake Chiemsee on the Herreninsel.

Versailles, the building (as with most of Ludwig's grand projects) was never completed, and Ludwig ultimately only spent nine days here. Nonetheless, what remains is seriously impressive—and seriously ostentatious.

The palace's decadent state rooms can only be visited as part of a 35-minute guided tour, with English-language tours taking place several times a day (and timed to coincide with ferry arrivals). The most spectacular room in the palace is the Hall of Mirrors, but also of interest are the ornate bedrooms, the “self-rising” table, the elaborately painted bathroom, and the formal gardens. The south wing houses a museum about King Ludwig's life.

Ferries to Herreninsel leave from Stock, the harbour of Prien, and between mid-April and late October a horse-drawn carriage can whisk you from the boat dock to the palace itself. Elsewhere on the island is the Augustinian Monastery where Germany's postwar constitution was drawn up; it is now a museum.

✉ *Herreninsel, Chiemsee* ☎ 08051/688–7900 🌐 herrenchiemsee.de 🗳️ €11 (incl. Monastery Museum and King Ludwig II-Museum); €5 horse carriage ride.

Restaurants

Schlosswirtschaft Herrenchiemsee

§ | GERMAN | Located beside the boat dock on Herreninsel (home to King Ludwig II's famous palace), this century-old-hotel-turned-beer garden and restaurant provides gorgeous views across the lake. The food is hearty and traditional, the portions are large, the prices are reasonable, and the service is friendly; what's not to like? **Known for:** Chiemsee-caught whitefish; beautiful lake views from inside and out; delicious desserts. 📄 **Average main:** €14 ✉ *Schlosshotel 5, Herreninsel, Prien am Chiemsee* ☎ 08051/962–7670 🌐 schlosswirtschaft-herrenchiemsee.de 💳 No credit cards ☺ No dinner.

Hotels

Hotel Gut Ising

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | **FAMILY** | In the hills above the north shore of Chiemsee, this horse farm and hotel has become one of the area's most venerated addresses. **Pros:** family-friendly (with childcare during school holidays); superior spa services; all amenities on-site. **Cons:** a working horse farm so dogs abound; not all rooms have been updated; can get very crowded.  *Rooms from:* €270  *Kirchberg 3, Ising*  08667/790  *gut-ising.de*  105 rooms  *No Meals.*

Kloster Seeon

\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | **FAMILY** | A renovated abbey directly on Lake Seeon—just a quick drive to the boat dock on Seebruck on Chiemsee, or 20 minutes to the boat docks at Prien—provides a unique, quiet atmosphere that is also child-friendly. **Pros:** modernized monk's rooms offer unique atmosphere; private pier for swimming; gorgeous lake views. **Cons:** no other amenities in the area; few touches of monastic life remain; very quiet.  *Rooms from:* €150  *Klosterweg 1, Seeon, Chiemsee*  08624/8970  *kloster-seeon.de*  92 rooms  *Free Breakfast.*

★ Residenz Heinz Winkler

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | The renowned Michelin-star chef Heinz Winkler started his own restaurant in 1989, and before long he had added this hotel, which created a gourmet dining experience that is a destination in itself. **Pros:** gourmet breakfasts and evening meals included; great service and attention to detail; views of the mountains from back rooms. **Cons:** a little way from Chiemsee itself; dated aesthetics in bedrooms and bathrooms; no elevator.  *Rooms from:* €290  *Kirchpl. 1, Aschau*  08052/17990  *residenz-heinz-winkler.de*  29 rooms  *All-Inclusive.*

Activities

GOLF

Chiemsee Golf-Club Prien

GOLF | The gentle hills of the region are ideal for golf, and this parkland course makes good use of the undulating terrain, along with well-placed water hazards, to provide a moderate-to-difficult challenge. Fairways and greens have views of the distant mountains.  *Bauernberg 5, Prien am Chiemsee*  08051/62215  *cgc-prien.de*  €50 weekdays, €60 weekends  18 holes, 6,300 yards, par 72.

WINDSURFING

Surfschule Chiemsee Kaufmann

WINDSURFING | **FAMILY** | For those wanting to learn windsurfing or to extend their skills, this *surfschule* (surf school) provides lessons for adults and kids and offers a package deal. You can also rent bikes or kayaks or take a lesson in stand-up paddleboarding.  *Rasthausstr. 29, Bernau am Chiemsee*  08051/697-0272  *chiemsee-kaufmann.de*  3-day beginner's windsurfing class €250.

Berchtesgaden

70 km (11 miles) east of Chiemsee, 153 km (95 miles) southeast of Munich, 21 km (13 miles) south of Salzburg.

A gorgeous mountain town right on the border with Austria, Berchtesgaden is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts all year round. From its location in a 2,300-foot-high valley, you can see Germany's second-highest mountain, the Watzmann, while the nature and diversity of the forests surrounding the town are unparalleled in Germany—as are its snowy winters. To the south, the vast Berchtesgaden National Park is an al fresco playground, characterized by spectacular mountain vistas and the impossibly



scenic Königssee. No wonder Berchtesgaden becomes a hive of activity in high winter and summer as tourists descend in search of sporting adventure, whether hiking, biking, skiing or bobsledding.

Beyond outdoor activities, this historic market town is perhaps best known for its brief association as the second home of Adolf Hitler, who dreamed of his “1,000-year Reich” while drinking in the beauty of the Alpine panorama. But before that, the town’s history (and prosperity) was shaped by white gold: salt. Consider booking yourself in for a specialized salt-based treatment in one of the region’s many wellness centers.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Chiemsee, it’s an hour’s drive east on the A8, then south on the B20, to Berchtesgaden. By train, it’s closer to 2 hours, including a change in Freilassing. Whichever mode of transport you choose, you’ll come via pretty Bad Reichenhall, a historic spa town of saline springs and wellness hotels; a worthwhile half-day stop (or even an alternative base to Berchtesgaden).

From Munich, it’s a solid 2-hour drive—follow the A8 past Chiemsee, then switch to the B20—or a 1½ train to Salzburg Hauptbahnhof followed by an hour’s bus ride (2½ hours in total).

Once in Berchtesgaden, frequent local bus service makes it easy to explore the town and the region around, including Königssee and Berchtesgaden National Park. Local buses are included in the *Gästekarte* (guest card) provided at many of the region's accommodations.

TOURS

Bus Schwaiger

BUS TOURS | The Schwaiger bus company runs tours of the area, including across the border into Salzburg year-round.

✉ *Brandweg 6, Schönau* ☎ 08652/2525
 🌐 *bus-schwaiger.de* 🚗 From €21.

Eagle's Nest Historical Tours

SPECIAL-INTEREST TOURS | Founded by American couple David and Christine Harper, this tour company provides private, historical, English-language tours of the Eagle's Nest and related sights around. It's the best way to learn about Berchtesgaden's important role in World War II. Children under eight are not permitted on the tours. ✉ *Berggasthof Obersalzberg, Salzbergstr. 43, Berchtesgaden* ☎ 08652/62172 🌐 *eagles-nest-tours.com*
 🚗 From €70.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS Tourist-Information Berchtesgaden. ✉ *Maximilianstr. 9, Berchtesgaden* ☎ 08652/656-500
 🌐 *berchtesgaden.de*.



★ Dokumentation Obersalzberg und Kehlsteinhaus

HISTORIC SIGHT | Located in the hills above Berchtesgaden, this center documents the notorious history of the Third Reich, with a special focus on Obersalzberg and its role in the Holocaust and World War II. The permanent exhibition looks at how the area was transformed from a remote mountain community into a Nazi power center, where Hitler spent more than a quarter of his time in office. It includes some surprisingly rare archive material, as well as access to the bunker complex.

English-language multimedia guides are included in the low entrance fee; choose between the short (40-minute) or standard (80-minute) tour.

Dokumentation Obersalzberg is also the starting point for a visit to Kehlsteinhaus (known in English as the Eagle's Nest), the last remaining Nazi-era building of Hitler's once-luxurious mountain retreat. A 15-minute shuttle bus and 45-second elevator whisk you all the way up—alternatively, skip the elevator and walk the last leg in around half an hour. Once at the Kehlsteinhaus (now a restaurant), explore the free history exhibition on the sun terrace, and consider the 1¼-hour scenic round-trip hike to the Kehlstein summit cross. It's also possible to follow the long mountain path back to Berchtesgaden. ✉ *Dokumentation Obersalzberg, Salzbergstr. 41, Berchtesgaden* ☎ 08652/947-960 🌐 *obersalzberg.de*
 🚗 *Dokumentation Obersalzberg: €3. Kehlsteinhaus bus/elevator round-trip: €32* 🕒 *Closed mid-Oct.–mid-May.*

Haus der Berge (House of Mountains)

VISITOR CENTER | FAMILY | This popular information center and educational museum in the heart of Berchtesgaden, which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary, brings the surrounding national park to life for children and adults alike. The interactive exhibition focuses on the wildlife and diverse nature to be found in Germany's only Alpine national park, divided into four main habitats: water, forest, alpine pasture, and rock. There's also a library, a cinema, and a restaurant with mountain views, making it a great rainy-day option for families. ✉ *Hanielstr. 7, Berchtesgaden* ☎ 08652/979-0600
 🌐 *www.haus-der-berge.bayern.de* 🚗 €4.

★ Nationalpark Berchtesgaden

NATIONAL PARK | FAMILY | Head 4½ km (3 miles) south of Berchtesgaden town, into the heart of Nationalpark Berchtesgaden, and you'll arrive at the tip what may be Germany's most scenic lake, the Königssee. It's almost certainly the cleanest,

with its exceptional clarity maintained by a longstanding ban (since 1909) on motorboats; only electric-powered passenger ships—along with pedal and row boats—are permitted. Hop on one of these charming wooden ships to explore the lake, passing by tiny Christlieger island on the way to St. Bartholomä, a twin-tower, 17th century chapel on the western shore. En route, don't be alarmed if the boat engines are turned off and the skipper whips out a trumpet, as the ensuing fanfare demonstrates a remarkable natural echo, with notes reverberating around the almost-vertical cliffs. Hikers may wish to continue from St. Bartholomä to Salet, at the southern end of Königssee, where you can walk via the pretty green Obersee to the 1,540-foot-high Röthbach waterfall; it takes about 3 hours there and back.

Boat service on the Königssee runs year-round, except when the lake freezes over. A round-trip to St. Bartholomä lasts a little over an hour, excluding time ashore. To Salet and back, it's almost two hours.

Beyond Königssee, the spectacular Nationalpark Berchtesgaden covers a total area of 210 square km (81 square miles), sharing around two-thirds of its border with Austria. This is wild mountain country, where flora and fauna have been left to develop as nature intended. No roads penetrate the area, and even the mountain paths can be difficult to follow—though you'll find plenty to choose from, for all levels of ability. The park administration organizes guided hikes during the summer; ask at the tourist office. Altogether, the park attracts more than 1½ million visitors each year: a true testament to its popularity. ☒ *Königssee Ticket Office, Seestr. 33, Königssee* ☎ 08652/963–696 *Schiffahrt Königssee* 🌐 www.seenschiffahrt.de/koenigssee 🚢 *Park free; Boat: €22.50 St. Bartholomä round-trip; €28.50 Salet round-trip.*

Salzbergwerk Berchtesgaden

(Salt Mine Berchtesgaden)

MINE | FAMILY | For centuries, salt was the basis of Berchtesgaden's wealth. In the 12th century, Emperor Barbarossa gave mining rights to a Benedictine abbey that had been founded here a century earlier. The abbey was secularized early in the 19th century, when it was taken over by Berchtesgaden's princely rulers. Where once only select guests were allowed to see how the source of the city's wealth was extracted from the earth, today an hour-long tour will transport you—via a miniature train—nearly 1 km (½ mile) into the mountain to an enormous chamber where the salt is mined. This is one the region's most popular family attractions, as tours also include rides down the wooden chutes used by miners to get from one level to another, as well as a boat ride on an underground saline lake the size of a football field. Adult visitors may wish to join one of the special four-hour dinners inside the mine; they're very popular so book early. ☒ *Bergwerkstr. 83, Berchtesgaden* ☎ 08652/60020 🌐 salzbergwerk.de 💰 €24.50.

Schellenberger Eishöhle

(Schellenberger Ice Caves)

CAVE | FAMILY | Germany's largest ice caves lie 10 km (6 miles) north of Berchtesgaden. Drive to Parkplatz Eishöhle, just north of Marktschellenberg village on the B305 (10 minutes), or take bus 840 from Berchtesgaden train station to the Eishöhle stop at the same location (15 minutes). From there, you can reach the caves on foot by walking 3½ hours along the clearly-marked route. Once there, a guided tour of the caves takes about 45 minutes; bring warm clothes, even at the height of summer. A small restaurant and bunkhouse, Toni Lenz Hütte, is close to the caves and open daily during the season. ☒ *Parkplatz Eishöhle/Eishöhle Bus Stop, Berchtesgaden* ☎ 08650/984–560 🌐 eishoehle.net 💰 €12.50 🕒 Closed Nov.–May.



The gemlike Königssee Lake is the most photographed panorama in Germany.

Schloss Berchtesgaden

(Berchtesgaden Castle)

CASTLE/PALACE | FAMILY | The last royal resident of the Berchtesgaden abbey, Crown Prince Rupprecht (who died here in 1955), furnished this place with rare family treasures that now form the basis of this permanent collection. Fine Renaissance rooms exhibit the prince's sacred art, which is particularly rich in wood sculptures by such great late-Gothic artists as Tilman Riemenschneider and Veit Stoss. There are two weaponry rooms exhibiting hunting tools, including rifles from the 19th century, and a beautiful rose garden out back. You can also visit the abbey's original, cavernous, 13th-century dormitory and cool cloisters. Castle visits are only possible on an hour-long guided tour, which takes in 30 of the total 214 rooms; these are held four times a day (except Saturday) between mid-May and mid-October, but only once or twice a day (and only midweek) during low season. Check online in advance for

unscheduled closures, as the Wittelsbach heir still occasionally stops by for a visit. ✉ *Schlosspl. 2, Berchtesgaden* ☎ *08652/947-980* 🌐 *schloss-berchtesgaden.de* 💰 *€15* 🕒 *Closed Sat. Closed Sat. and Sun. mid-Oct-mid-May.*



Hotels

Berghotel Rehlegg

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | A 10-minute drive west of Berchtesgaden, on the way to the Watzmann (the region's highest mountain), this upmarket Alpine retreat has a spa and pool and includes meals in the rates. **Pros:** quiet location with views of the Watzmann; great swimming and spa area; friendly staff. **Cons:** mazelike layout; a little way outside of town; restaurant can get busy. 📍 *Rooms from: €310* ✉ *Holzeng. 16, Ramsau* ☎ *08657/98840* 🌐 *rehlegg.de* 🚗 *86 rooms* 🍷 *All-Inclusive.*

★ Kempinski Hotel Berchtesgaden

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | **FAMILY** | It's hard to imagine a more majestic hotel location than this one, high in the hills outside Berchtesgaden, surrounded by quiet woods and with sweeping mountain panoramas.

Pros: quiet location offers unparalleled views; great restaurants and spa area; near Dokumentation Obersalzberg and Kehlsteinhaus. **Cons:** can get busy with conferences; extra charge for underground parking; a steep 10-minute drive east of Berchtesgaden. 📞 *Rooms from:* €375 📠 *Hintereck 1, Berchtesgaden* ☎ *08652/97550* 🌐 *kempinski.com* 🚗 *138 rooms* 🍳 *Free Breakfast.*

★ Klosterhof

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | This family-run resort hotel northwest of Berchtesgaden—and southwest of Salzburg—really is the ultimate Alpine hideaway, a refuge of relaxation surrounded by lush green meadows and craggy mountain peaks. **Pros:** extensive spa includes heated pool with Alpine views; apple-wood furnishings and artworks galore; superb breakfast buffet, lunch, and dinner included in rates. **Cons:** gourmet dinners are not quite fine dining; naked sauna users visible from rooms and corridors; true seclusion requires a 25-minute drive from Berchtesgaden.

📞 *Rooms from:* €385 📠 *Steilhofweg 19, Berchtesgaden* 🚗 *16 km (10 miles) northwest of Berchtesgaden* ☎ *08651/98250* 🌐 *www.klosterhof.de* 🚗 *65 rooms* 🍷 *All-Inclusive.*

Activities

Given its location in the Alps, Berchtesgaden is a place for the active.

In winter, the Rossfeld ski area is a local favorite, thanks to its abundance of natural snow. The piste down to Oberau is nearly 6 km (4 miles) long, with bus service at the end to take you back to Berchtesgaden. There is a separate

snowboarding piste as well. Berchtesgaden also has many cross-country trails and telemark opportunities. Another popular area is on the slopes of the Götschenkopf, which is used for World Cup races. Snow is usually artificial, but the floodlit slopes at night and a lively après-ski scene make up for the lesser quality.

In summer, hikers, power-walkers, and paragliders take over the region. The Obersalzberg even has a summer luge track. Avid hikers should ask for a map featuring *Berghütten* (refuges) in the mountains, where one can spend the night either in a separate room or a bunk. It's common for simple, solid meals to be offered, but in some of the smaller refuges you will need to bring your own food. While the Königsee is beautiful to look at, only cold-water swimmers will truly appreciate its frigid waters.

Golf-Club Berchtesgaden

GOLF | This is one of Germany's highest courses, nestled on the 3,300-foot-high plateau of the Obersalzberg. Several local hotels (including Kempinski Hotel Berchtesgaden) offer their guests a 20% reduction on the green fees here, so it's worth checking with your accommodation or the club before you book a tee time. 📠 *Salzbergstr. 33, Berchtesgaden* ☎ *08652/2100* 🌐 *golfclub-berchtesgaden.de* 📞 *€50 weekdays; €60 weekends* 🏌️ *18 holes, 5,760 yards, par 70.*

Berchtesgadener Bergfuehrer

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING | Professional mountaineers and rock climbers from this organization can help you find the right way up any of the surrounding mountains, including the Watzmann. 📠 *Berchtesgadener Str. 21, Bischofswiesen* ☎ *08652/978-9690* 🌐 *berchtesgadener-bergfuehrer.de* 📞 *From €550 for a guided rock climb.*

★ Jennerbahn

HIKING & WALKING | FAMILY | This gondola carries hikers, skiers, and sightseers up the 6,148-foot-high Jenner Mountain, where you'll find walking trails galore with stupendous views of Königssee. There's also a small exhibition on wildlife in the national park, a souvenir shop, and the surprisingly excellent restaurant Jennerhof; try the lip-smacking *Kasnock-en* (Bavarian cheese gnocchi, similar to *käsespätzle*) and wash it down with a local dark beer. ✉ *Jennerbahnstr. 18, Schönau* ☎ *08652/95810* 🌐 *jennerbahn.de* 🚗 *€43 round-trip.*

Watzmann Therme

SPA | FAMILY | Don't fancy a dip in the bracing Königssee? Visit these family-friendly thermal baths, where adults can use the elegant pool, fragrant steam rooms, saunas, and whirlpools, while kids will love the large children's area including an adventure pool and 263-foot-long slide with light effects. ✉ *Bergwerkstr. 54, Berchtesgaden* ☎ *08652/94640* 🌐 *watzmann-therme.de* 🚗 *€13.50 for 2 hrs, €20.50 day ticket.*