

# The Best of Austria

There's so much to do in Austria, from exploring historic castles and palaces to skiing some of the world's finest alpine slopes. All the choices you'll have to make when planning your trip can be a bit overwhelming. We've tried to make your task easier by compiling a list of our favorite experiences and discoveries. In the following pages you'll find the kind of candid advice we'd give our close friends.

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## 1 THE BEST TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

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- Skiing in the Alps:** Skiing is the Austrian national sport and the reason thousands of visitors come to Austria. The country abounds in ski slopes, and you'll find the best ones in Tyrol, Land Salzburg, and Vorarlberg, although most parts of Carinthia, Western Styria, and Lower Austria also have slopes. The season lasts from late November to April, depending on snow conditions. At 1,739m (5,705 ft.), the Obertauern region extends its ski season until May. Daredevils can ski glaciers at 3,355m (11,010 ft.), even in summer. See "The Best Ski Areas," later in this chapter.
- Feasting on the "Emperor's Dish," *Tafelspitz*:** Get a taste for typical Austrian cuisine with the fabled *tafelspitz* (boiled beef dinner), favored by Emperor Franz Josef. It might sound dull, but *tafelspitz* is far from bland. Boiled to a tender delicacy, the "table end" cut is flavored with spices, including juniper berries, celery root, and onions. An apple-and-horseradish sauce further enlivens the dish, which is usually served with fried, grated potatoes. The best *tafelspitz* is served in Vienna, where the chefs have been making the dish for decades. See chapter 5.
- Listening to Mozart:** It's said that at any time of the day or night in Austria, someone, somewhere is playing the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. You might hear it at an opera house; a church; a festival; an open-air concert; or, more romantically, in a Belle Epoque café, performed by a Hungarian orchestra. Regardless, "the sound of music" drifting through Vienna is likely the creation of this child prodigy. Try to hear Mozart on his home turf, especially in Vienna and Salzburg. See chapters 6 and 9.
- Watching the Lipizzaner Stallions (Vienna):** Nothing evokes the heyday of imperial Vienna more than the Spanish Riding School. The sleek white stallions and their expert riders demonstrate the classic art of dressage in choreographed leaps and bounds. The stallions are the finest equestrian performers on earth. You can watch the performances, but you'll need to make reservations 6 to 8 weeks in advance. See p. 144.
- Cruising the Danube (Donau):** Johann Strauss took a bit of poetic license in calling the Donau "The Blue Danube," as it's actually a muddy-green color. But a Danube cruise is the highlight of any Austrian vacation. The legendary DDSG, Blue Danube Shipping Company, Handelskai 265, A-1020 Vienna (☎ 01/588800; [www.ddsg-blue-danube.at](http://www.ddsg-blue-danube.at)), offers 1-day trips. On

board, you'll pass some of the most famous sights in eastern Austria, including Krems and Melk. See "Cruising the Danube," p. 165.

- **Heurigen Hopping in the Vienna Woods:** *Heurigen* are rustic wine taverns that celebrate the arrival of each year's new wine (*heuriger*) by placing a pine branch over the door. Austrians rush to these taverns to drink the new local wines and feast on a country buffet. Some *heurigen* have garden tables with panoramic views of the Danube Valley, whereas others provide shaded, centuries-old courtyards where revelers can enjoy live folk music. Try the red wines from Vöslau, the Sylvaner of Grinzing, or the Riesling of Nussberg, while listening to a *Schrammelmusik* quartet and all the revelers singing "*Wien bleibt Wein*" ("Vienna loves wine"). See "The Wienerwald (Vienna Woods)" in chapter 7.

- **Reliving *The Sound of Music*:** In 1964, Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer, and a gaggle of kids imitating the von Trapp family filmed one of the world's great musicals. The memory of that Oscar-winning movie lingers on, as a steady stream of visitors head to Salzburg just to take *The Sound of Music* tour. You visit the Nonnberg Abbey and that little gazebo where Rolf and Liesl danced in the rain. There's also a stop at the Felsenreitschule (Rock Riding School), where the von Trapps gave their final performance. See p. 257.
- **Driving on Top of the World on the Grossglockner Road (Land Salzburg):** For the drive of a lifetime, you can take

Europe's longest and most panoramic alpine highway, with hairpin turns and bends around every corner. It begins at Bruck an der Grossglocknerstrasse at 757m (2,484 ft.); continues through the Hochtortunnel, where the highest point is 2,507m (8,225 ft.); and ends in the province of Carinthia. The mountain part of the road, stretching some 22km (14 miles), often at 1,983m (6,506 ft.), has a maximum gradient of 12%. You can drive this stunning engineering feat from mid-May to mid-November, although the road is safest from mid-June to mid-September. The views are among the greatest in the world, but keep your eyes on that curvy road! See section 6 in chapter 10, "Land Salzburg."

- **Exploring the Alps:** There are few places in the world that are as splendid as the limestone chain of mountains shared between Austria and Bavaria. Moving toward the east, the Alps slope away to the Great Hungarian Plain. The Austrian Alps break into three chains, including the High or Central Alps, the Northern Limestone Alps, and the Southern Limestone Alps. In the west, you discover fairy-tale Tyrolean villages, the Holy Roman Empire attractions of Innsbruck, and some of the world's greatest ski resorts, including St. Anton, Zürs, Lech, and Kitzbühel. Filled with quaint little towns, the Eastern Alps sprawl across the Tyrolean country, West Styria, and Land Salzburg. Castles and stunning views await you at every turn. See chapters 10, 12, 13, and 15.

## 2 THE MOST ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

- **Hof bei Salzburg (Land Salzburg):** Lying on Lake Fuschl (Fuschlsee), this chic resort is only a 15-minute ride from Salzburg; it boasts a breathtaking alpine backdrop of blue clear-but-chilly

waters, mountains, and evergreen forests. Based here, you can also easily get to Fuschlsee, Wolfgangsee, and Mondsee. The town offers some romantic places to stay, notably the **Hotel Schloss**

**Fuschl** (☎ 06229/22530; www.starwoodhotels.com). See p. 300.

- **St. Wolfgang (Upper Austria):** On the Wolfgangsee, one of Austria's loveliest lakes, St. Wolfgang lies in the mountains of the Salzkammergut. It's the home of the **White Horse Inn** (☎ 06138/23060; www.weissesroessl.at), which served as the setting for Ralph Benatzky's operetta of the same name. Lying 50km (32 miles) east of Salzburg, the resort is a summer paradise, with lake-front beaches and cafes, hiking opportunities in all directions, and skiing in winter. See section 3, "St. Wolfgang & Bad Ischl," in chapter 11.
- **Mutters (Tyrol):** On a sunny plateau above Innsbruck, this little resort has been called the most beautiful village in Tyrol (quite a compliment). Mutters, a central base of the 1964 and 1976 Olympics, attracts visitors year-round. The most romantic place to stay is the **Hotel Altenburg** (☎ 0512/548524; www.altenburg.com), which was a restaurant in 1622 and later a farmhouse before it converted into an elegant hotel. See p. 370.
- **Stuben (Vorarlberg):** The rich and famous might flock to Vorarlberg's stellar ski resorts, Zürs or Lech, but we think you should sneak away to the little village of Stuben, 10km (6 miles) north of Lech on the west side of the Arlberg Pass. A way station for alpine travelers for centuries, Stuben was the birthplace of the great ski instructor Hannes Schneider. In winter, you can take a horse-drawn sleigh from Lech to

Stuben. Once here, stay at **Hotel Mondschein** (☎ 05582/511; www.mondschein.com), a 1739 house converted to a hotel. See p. 413.

- **Pörtlach (Carinthia):** Many wealthy Viennese have lavish summer homes in this resort town on the northern perimeter of Lake Wörther. Known for its lakeside promenade, it attracts a sports-oriented crowd who want to hike, play golf, ride, sail, water-ski, or just enjoy scenic drives through the countryside. Lake Wörther is Carinthia's largest alpine lake, yet its waters are warm, often going above 27°C (80°F) in summer. We recommend staying and dining at the romantic **Hotel Schloss Leonstein** (☎ 04272/2816; www.leonstein.at), where Johannes Brahms composed his Violin Concerto and Second Symphony.
- **Bad Aussee (Styria):** An old market town and spa, in the "green heart" of the Salzkammergut, Bad Aussee is 80km (50 miles) southeast of Salzburg. In the Valley of Traun, it's set against the backdrop of Totes Gebirge and the Dachstein massif. June is a lovely time to visit, when fields of narcissus burst into bloom. Bad Aussee lies only 5km (3 miles) north of the lake, Altausee, and is situated in one of the most beautiful parts of Austria. Long known as a summer spa resort, it's also developing into a winter ski center. The best place to stay is the **City Hotel Erzherzog Johann** (☎ 031622/52507; www.erzherzog-johann.com). See section 4, "Bad Aussee," in chapter 15.

### 3 THE BEST CASTLES & PALACES

- **Schönbrunn Palace (Vienna):** This palace of 1,441 rooms was the summer residence of the powerful Hapsburg family. The great baroque architect J. B. Fischer von Erlach modeled his plans on

Versailles, though he ultimately surpassed the French palace in size. Even so, Maria Theresa spoke of the palace as "cozy," where she could retreat with her many children and paint watercolors or

work on her embroidery. The Hapsburg dynasty came to an end here when Karl I signed his Act of Abdication on November 11, 1918. See p. 151.

- **Hofburg (Vienna):** The winter palace of the Hapsburgs, Hofburg was the seat of an imperial throne that once governed the mighty Austro-Hungarian Empire. The sprawling palace reads like an architectural timeline of the Hapsburg family, dating from 1279 with subsequent additions continuing until 1918. Today the Hofburg houses everything from the offices of the president of Austria to the Spanish Riding School with its Lipizzaner stallions—even the Vienna Boys' Choir. See chapter 6.
- **Österreichische Galerie Belvedere (Belvedere Palace; Vienna):** On a slope above Vienna, this palace was designed by Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt, the last major architect of the baroque in Austria. Belvedere served as a summer home for Prince Eugene of Savoy, the country's greatest military hero. The palace was a gift from the imperial throne in recognition of the prince's military achievements, although he was (at the time) richer than the Hapsburgs. Not exactly pleased with his "gift," the hero made stunning baroque additions and improvements. As a collector and patron of the arts, he filled the palace with objets d'art. See p. 150.
- **Schloss Esterházy (Eisenstadt):** This castle in Eisenstadt, capital of Burgenland, was the seat of the Esterházy princes, a great and powerful Hungarian

family who helped the Hapsburgs gain control of Hungary. The seat of their power was built around an inner courtyard and designed by Carlone, the Italian architect. Work started on the castle in 1663, but the design was subsequently altered over the years and later received the baroque treatment. The family invited Haydn here to work on his music, and in the Haydnsaal, the great composer conducted an orchestra for the family's entertainment. See p. 207.

- **Residenz (Salzburg):** The seat of the Salzburg prince-bishops, this opulent palace dates from 1120. Over the years, newer palaces were added to form an ecclesiastical complex. On the palace's second floor is a 15-room art gallery filled with the works of 16th- to 18th-century European masters. You can also walk through more than a dozen richly decorated staterooms. The Residenz fountain, which dates from the 1660s, is one of the largest and most impressive baroque fountains north of the Alps. See p. 251.
- **Hofburg (Innsbruck):** This imperial palace, built in the 14th to 16th centuries, was the seat of Emperor Maximilian I. In the 18th century, Empress Maria Theresia made major structural changes, giving it a rococo appearance; the Giant's Hall is an architectural marvel of 18th-century Austrian architecture. In the palace's main hall hangs a portrait of Maria's famous youngest daughter, Marie Antoinette—with her head. See p. 347.

## 4 THE BEST CATHEDRALS & ABBEYS

- **Domkirche St. Stephan (Vienna):** Crowned by a 137m (450-ft.) steeple, St. Stephan's, the Cathedral of Vienna, is one of Europe's great Gothic structures. The Austrian writer Adalbert Stifter claimed that its "sheer beauty

lifts the spirit." The Viennese regard this monument with great affection, calling it *Der Steffl*. Intricate altar pieces, stone canopies, and masterful Gothic sculptures are just some of the treasures that lie within. Climb the spiral steps to

the South Tower for a panoramic view of the city. See p. 145.

- **Melk Abbey (Melk):** This abbey church, situated on a promontory above the Danube, is one of the world's finest baroque buildings. Melk figures in the *Nibelungenlied*, the great German epic poem, as well as Umberto Eco's best-selling *The Name of the Rose*. The view from here is one of the most panoramic in a country known for its views. This baroque masterpiece has burned many times, the first time in 1297 and then in 1683 and 1735, but each time it has risen from the ashes. After a 1947 fire, the golden abbey church was restored yet again, including the regilding of statues and altars with gold bullion. See p. 203.
- **Salzburger Dom (Salzburg):** World renowned for its 4,000-pipe organ, this cathedral is the "most perfect" Renaissance structure in the Germanic countries, with a rich baroque interior and elaborate frescoes. It towers 76m (249

ft.) into the air and holds 10,000 worshippers. The present cathedral was consecrated with great ceremony in 1628, although records show a cathedral on this spot since the 8th century. In 1756, Mozart was baptized in the Romanesque font. See p. 252.

- **Abbey of St. Florian (St. Florian, Near Linz):** Austria's largest abbey is a towering example of the baroque style. On a site occupied by the Augustinians since the 11th century, the present structure was constructed mainly from 1686 to 1751. Honoring a 4th-century Christian martyr and saint, the abbey has as its chief treasure the Altdorfer Gallery, whose most valuable pictures are those by Albrecht Altdorfer, master of the Danubian school. Anton Bruckner, Austria's greatest composer of church music in the 1800s, became the organist at St. Florian as a young man and composed many of his masterpieces here. See p. 309.

## 5 THE BEST MUSEUMS

- **Kunsthistorisches Museum (Vienna):** This art gallery, across from Hofburg Palace, houses the stellar art collection of the Hapsburg dynasty. It's especially strong in the Flemish, Dutch, and German schools, with works ranging from Rubens and Dürer to Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Van Dyck. Also strong are the Italian, Spanish, and French collections, with works by Veronese, Caravaggio, and Tintoretto. See p. 147.
- **MuseumsQuartier (Vienna):** Vienna launched its new millennium with one of the major cultural centers to open in Middle Europe in some 2 decades. Architecturally stunning, this complex contains a treasure trove of art, being especially strong in modern works. The three major museums to visit here are

Kunsthalle Wien, Leopold Museum, and MUMOK (Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation). See p. 144.

- **Mozart's Geburtshaus (Salzburg):** Music pilgrims flock to see the typical old burgher's house where Mozart was born. You can still see many of his childhood belongings, including a lock of his hair, his first viola, and a pair of keyboard instruments. Mozart's first violin is also displayed. Even at the age of 4, he was a musical genius. See p. 252.
- **Mauthausen (Upper Austria):** The most unusual and horrifying museum in Austria lies 29km (18 miles) down the Danube from Linz. Mauthausen was a notorious concentration camp, used in World War II for the slaughter of Austria's Jews. It's estimated that

some 200,000 victims were killed here. Visitors today can bear witness to this scene of holocaust. See p. 317.

- **Tiroler Volkskunst-Museum (Innsbruck):** In an abbey with 16th-century origins, this museum of popular art contains Austria's most impressive collection of Tyrolean artifacts. You'll see everything from mangers to monumental stoves. The collections sweep from the Gothic decorative style through the Renaissance to the rich and opulent baroque era. The first floor contains models of Tyrolean houses. See p. 348.
- **Landeszeughaus (Graz):** This armory, built between 1642 and 1645, displays 3 centuries of weaponry, one of Europe's great collections. Here you'll see some

30,000 harnesses, coats of mail, helmets, swords, pikes, and muskets of various kinds, along with pistols and harquebuses. There are richly engraved and embossed jousting suits and a parade of armor. See p. 461.

- **Österreichisches Freilichtmuseum (Outside Graz):** Just 16km (10 miles) from Graz, in a wooded valley, is one of Austria's great open-air museums. This museum of vernacular architecture, spread across 50 hectares (120 acres), features some 80 rural homes with ancillary buildings that have been reassembled. The site presents an excellent overview of the country's rural heritage, from a Carinthian farmstead to alpine houses from the Tyrol. See p. 463.

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## 6 THE BEST HISTORIC TOWNS

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- **Krems (Lower Austria, Outside Vienna):** In the eastern part of the Wachau, on the river's left bank, this 1,000-year-old town incorporates the little village of Stein, with narrow streets terraced above the river. Many houses date from the 16th century. See p. 198.
- **Wels (Upper Austria):** Even in Roman times, Wels, on the left bank of the Traun River, was a flourishing town. Emperor Maximilian I died here in 1519. Its parish church has a 14th-century chancel with a tower from 1732. Across from the church is the house of Salome Alt, the notorious mistress of Prince-Archbishop Wolf Dietrich of Salzburg, who bore him 15 children. See section 6, "Wels," in chapter 11.
- **St. Christoph (Tyrol):** St. Christoph, the mountain way station of St. Anton in Tyrol, sits at an elevation of 1,784m (5,853 ft.). It was a famous settlement on the road to the Arlberg Pass, and was the site of a fabled hospice established in 1386. Members patrolled the pass

looking for frozen bodies and assisting wayfarers in trouble. See p. 378.

- **Lienz (East Tyrol):** Not to be confused with Linz in Upper Austria, Lienz, with an *e*, is the capital of remote East Tyrol. Set at the junction of three valleys, this colorful town stretches along the banks of the Isel River. In summer, mountain climbers use it as a base to scale the Dolomites. The town is presided over by Schloss Bruck, the fortress of the counts of Gorz. See p. 400.
- **Mariazell (Styria):** Pilgrims come here to see the Mariazell Basilica, dating from the early 1200s, and its trio of prominent towers. Both Fischer von Erlachs, senior and junior, the famed baroque architects, helped transform the church. The Chapel of Grace inside is the national shrine of Austria, Hungary, and Bohemia. If you're exploring Styria, this old town, both a winter playground and a summer resort, is worth a stop. See section 3, "Mariazell," in chapter 15.

## 7 THE BEST OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Skiing is the name of the game in Austria. See section 8, below, for a list of the best ski areas.

- **Biking Along the Danube:** The Lower Danube Cycle Track is a biker's paradise. The most exciting villages and stopovers along the Danube, including Melk and Dürnstein, are linked by a riverside bike trail between Vienna and Naarn. As you pedal along, you'll pass castles, medieval towns, and latticed vineyards. You can rent bikes from the train or ferry stations, and all tourist offices provide route maps. See chapter 6.
- **Ballooning over Styria:** Styria has some of the best alpine ballooning in Europe, as experienced by participants who have sailed over the alpine ranges of the Salzkammergut and a steppelike landscape that evokes the Great Hungarian Plain. A typical ballooning excursion will cross river valleys, mountain peaks, glaciers, and vineyards. For outfitters, see p. 452.
- **Canoeing & Rafting in the Salzburg Alps (Land Salzburg):** Known for their beautiful alpine lakes and roaring white-water streams, the lakes in and around Salzburg are some of the most ideal in Europe for canoeing, rafting, and kayaking. Waters aren't polluted and powerboats are restricted, making these safe and idyllic adventures. See p. 268.

- **Hiking in the Zillertal Alps (Tyrol):** This mountain paradise is the best place to hike in Western Austria. Instead of roads, you'll find footpaths winding through the scenic Zillertal Valley, east of Innsbruck. Alpine guides lead you to some of the most panoramic scenery you've ever seen. This alpine world is yours as you hike across mountain trails or ascend on lifts to higher elevations. You can even find year-round skiing at Tuxer Gletscher, a glacier. See section 7, "The Ziller Valley," in chapter 12.
- **Traversing Ice Age Valleys:** No scenic thrill in all of Europe quite matches that available in the Hohe Tauern National Park, Europe's largest national park. Part of the Austrian Central Alps, the Hohe Tauern range cuts across Land Salzburg, Tyrol, and Carinthia. Molded during the Ice Age, these valleys are filled with pastureland, alpine heaths, vast expanses of snow and ice, forested bulwarks, fields of rock, and gargantuan alluvial and mudflow cones. The park is also home to numerous nearly extinct species. Much of this vast and remote area has never been explored, but parts are accessible by car or government-owned Bundesbus (the route goes from Bockstein to Badgastein and from Zell am Ziller to Krimml). You can get car or bus information from the local tourist offices. See chapter 10.

## 8 THE BEST SKI AREAS

- **Innsbruck:** Tyrol's capital Innsbruck is set against a scenic backdrop of high mountain peaks, with good skiing in virtually all directions. Two Olympic Winter Games have been staged in the Innsbruck area. It's somewhat inconvenient to get to the slopes, but it's worth

the effort. There are five ski resorts around Innsbruck. Hungerburg is the local favorite, because a funicular from the city heads directly to the base station at Höch Innsbruck at 300m (984 ft.). Nearby Igls also enjoys great favor, with its extensive slopes under the



Patscherkofel peak. Although it's the farthest from Innsbruck, Axamer Lizum offers the most extensive all-around skiing. Good snow conditions are generally the rule. See chapter 12.

- **St. Anton am Arlberg:** This picture-postcard Tyrolean village sits at 1,304m (4,278 ft.), although its upper slopes climb to more than 2,801m (9,190 ft.). Massive snowfalls attract intermediate and expert skiers from all over. St. Anton lies at the eastern base of the Arlberg Pass. St. Christoph, 10km (6 miles) west, lies almost on the Arlberg Pass and is another chic winter enclave. Four major ski areas at St. Anton (Galzig, Valluga, St. Christoph, and Gampen/Kapall) form one big ski circuit. See p. 371.
- **Seefeld (Tyrol):** Seefeld is one of the major international ski resorts of Europe, and hosted the Nordic events for the 1964 and 1976 Olympic Winter Games and the 1985 Nordic Ski World Championships. On a sunny plateau at 1,052m (3,451 ft.), it has prime skiing conditions and a network of surface lifts, chairlifts, and cable cars that appeal to skiers of all levels. In addition, there are 200km (124 miles) of prepared cross-country tracks. Seefeld is also

known for its other winter sports, including curling and outdoor skating. See section 6, "Seefeld," in chapter 12.

- **Kitzbühel:** This home of the world's original lift circuit is a medieval walled city and regal resort that, in the 1960s, blossomed into a premier international spot. Visitors flock here in winter to ski forested trails and broad alpine ridges. The Hahnenkamm ski circus has more than 50 lifts at elevations of 800 to 2,000m (2,625–6,566 ft.). The main season runs from Christmas to mid-March. See section 8, "The Kitzbühel Alps," in chapter 12.
- **Lech & Zürs:** In Vorarlberg, these neighboring resorts feature the best skiing in Austria. They are also among Europe's most exclusive ski resorts, drawing a chic crowd. Both resorts cater to novice and intermediate skiers with broad boulevards winding between peaks and runs that fall straight back to the resorts. The resorts also offer high altitudes and good snow conditions, plus a high-tech lift system. Huge chunks of skiable terrain above both resorts provide a 20km-long (12-mile) circuit with generally superior ski conditions. See p. 406 for Lech; p. 413 for Zürs.

## 9 THE BEST LAKE RESORTS & SPAS

- **Baden bei Wien (Lower Austria):** Developed by the ancient Romans, and then studded with ocher-colored Biedermeier buildings during the early 19th century, this was once known as the "dowager empress" of Austrian spas. Today, frequent chamber concerts and elaborate flowerbeds keep the aura of old-fashioned grandeur alive. See section 2, "The Spa Town of Baden bei Wien," in chapter 7.
- **Bad Hofgastein (Land Salzburg):** A select annex of the larger, better-known resort of Badgastein, Bad Hofgastein appeals to anyone in search of peace, healing, and quiet. Civic architecture and hotels are appropriately grand and solemn. See section 3, "Bad Hofgastein," in chapter 10.
- **Badgastein (Land Salzburg):** This is Austria's premier spa, with a resort industry dating from the 1400s. Hotels are almost universally excellent, offering the densest concentration of fine lodgings in Land Salzburg. See chapter 10.
- **St. Wolfgang (Upper Austria):** The landscapes around this lake are so lovely that they served as the setting for the



popular musical work *The White Horse Inn*, by Ralph Benatzky. Adjacent to the grander and somewhat more formal resort of Bad Ischl, St. Wolfgang offers ample options for outdoor diversions. See chapter 11.

- **Bad Ischl (Upper Austria):** For more than 60 years, Franz Josef selected Bad Ischl as the summer holiday seat of the Hapsburg Empire. No other Austrian resort captures the glamour of the long-departed empire quite like this one. See chapter 11.
- **Pörschach (Carinthia):** This is the premier resort in Carinthia, the southeasterly Austrian province bordering the edge of Slovenia, and the site of dozens of fine villas.
- **Velden (Carinthia):** The region's most sophisticated resort, Velden is the heart of the so-called "Austrian Riviera." Despite the traffic, it offers a convenient combination of bucolic charm and Viennese style. See p. 444.

- **Villach (Carinthia):** The second-largest town in the province, it's the gateway to Austria's lake district, northeastern Italy, and Slovenia. The nearby village of Warmbad-Villach offers warm springs, favored by the ancient Romans. See section 4, "Villach," in chapter 14.
- **Bad Gleichenberg (Styria):** Set within one of the most undiscovered regions of Austria, near the Slovenian border, this is the most important summer spa in Styria. It stands among rolling hills and vineyards, and is an area rich in history, natural beauty, and imperial nostalgia. See section 2, "Bad Gleichenberg," in chapter 15.
- **Bad Aussee (Styria):** Lying at the junction of two tributaries of the region's most important river, Bad Aussee is known for its verdant beauty, healthful waters, and bracing climate. It's also the center of a network of hiking and cross-country ski trails. See section 4, "Bad Aussee," in chapter 15.

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## 10 THE BEST LUXURY HOTELS

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- **Goldener Hirsch** (Salzburg; ☎ 800/325-3535 in the U.S., or 0662/8084; [www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com)): For some 6 centuries, this mellow old hostelry has been welcoming guests to its patrician precincts. With the city's best and most professional staff, the Goldener Hirsch is the finest hotel in Salzburg. In the Old Town, near Mozart's birthplace, the building is a historical monument, rich in legend and lore. Although rooms vary, all are furnished with antiques, in traditional taste, but have modern plumbing and appointments. See p. 226.
- **Hotel Bristol** (Vienna; ☎ 888/625-5144 in the U.S., or 01/515160; [www.westin.com/bristol](http://www.westin.com/bristol)): Facing the Staatsoper, this classic six-story building is a Viennese symbol of luxury and

class. It ranks with the Imperial as the city's most glamorous hotel. The luxuriously appointed and often exquisite rooms boast a cornucopia of amenities. Velvet and silk, chandeliers, and double doors adorn the place, and the ever-attentive, gracious staff adds to the allure. See p. 99.

- **Hotel Grüner-Baum** (Badgastein; ☎ 06434/25160; [www.grunerbaum.com](http://www.grunerbaum.com)): A veritable village has grown up around this converted hunting lodge. The family-run hotel has sheltered everybody from Toscanini to the shah of Iran. Scattered chalets house some of the finest rooms at this fashionable spa—each in the typical alpine style. The hospitality is unequalled in the area. See p. 330.

- **Hotel Imperial** (Vienna; ☎ 800/325-3589 in the U.S., or 01/501100; [www.luxurycollection.com/imperial](http://www.luxurycollection.com/imperial)): Once a ducal palace, and now Vienna's most glamorous hotel, the Imperial is a landmark 2 blocks east of the Staatsoper. Built in 1869, it's Austria's official "guesthouse," often hosting visiting musicians (Wagner stayed here long ago). A wealth of antiques adorns the gracious public areas, and everything is gilt-edged, from the polished marble to the glittering chandeliers. Opulently appointed rooms vary in size but are generally regal. See p. 100.
- **Hotel Schloss Dürnstein** (Dürnstein, along the Danube; ☎ 02711/212; [www.schloss.at](http://www.schloss.at)): Near the medieval village in Wachau, this fairy-tale castle is perched above a bend in the river. Above the hotel are the ruins of a castle where Richard the Lion-Hearted was imprisoned. This exquisite gem of a hotel brims with history, glamour, art, and fantasy. See p. 202.
- **Hotel Schloss Fuschl** (Hof bei Salzburg; ☎ 06229/22530; [www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com)): East of Salzburg, this medieval castle and its outbuildings have origins dating from 1450. Everybody from Eleanor Roosevelt to Khrushchev has stayed in this rich, lush setting of oriental rugs, antiques, fine art, and vaulted ceilings. Diners sit on a terrace taking in panoramic lake and alpine views. The spacious rooms are beautifully furnished and well maintained. Sports lovers feel at home with a 9-hole golf course, indoor pool, and Turkish bath and sauna. See p. 300.
- **Grand Hotel** (Zell am See; ☎ 06542/788-0; [www.grandhotel-zellamsee.at](http://www.grandhotel-zellamsee.at)): Three "grand hotels" have stood on this site over the years, and the latest incarnation is the grandest of them all. Windows open onto incredible views of the lake and the Alps. Flanked by pillars, the glassed-in pool also offers lake views, and the hotel has an array of facilities ranging from a gym to a sauna. The contemporary rooms, which vary in size and design, are the best in town. See p. 297.
- **Romantik Hotel Post** (Villach; ☎ 04242/261010; [www.romantik-hotel.com](http://www.romantik-hotel.com)): With architectural origins from 1500, this is the most fabled hotel in Carinthia. A hotel since the 1730s, it's a cozy and charming retreat on the town's main square. A pianist plays on the terrace in summer. Rooms are richly furnished, often with oriental rugs on parquet floors, including the suite where Emperor Charles V once slept in the 1500s. A solarium, gym, and sauna keep the hotel up to date. See p. 449.

## 11 THE BEST AFFORDABLE HOTELS

- **Hotel Alte Post-Wrann** (Velden; ☎ 04274/2141; [www.wrann.at](http://www.wrann.at)): In the sophisticated summer resort of Carinthia, at the western end of the Wörther See, this is an ideal choice for an "Austrian Riviera" vacation. Once the headquarters of a postal route station, it was long ago renovated, enlarged, and turned into this welcoming hotel. Rooms are sunny and traditionally furnished. The restaurant, with its massive ceiling beams, is very good. There's also a Viennese-style *heurige* (rustic wine tavern) serving the finest local wines. See p. 445.
- **Hotel Auersperg** (Salzburg; ☎ 0662/889440; [www.auersperg.at](http://www.auersperg.at)): A traditional family-run hotel with generously sized rooms, this charmer has an old-fashioned atmosphere but is still beautifully maintained, from its antiques-filled drawing room to its convivial library

bar. It's a warm, inviting, and cozy place to base yourself in the city of Mozart. See p. 230.

- **Hotel Goldener Adler** (Innsbruck; ☎ 0512/571111; [www.goldeneradler.com](http://www.goldeneradler.com)): This hotel, which has hosted everyone from Goethe to Paganini, has a history spanning 6 centuries. Genuine art decorates the public areas, and the four dining rooms (including a Tyrolean cellar) are local favorites for eating and drinking. Rooms vary in size but are nicely appointed, with Tyrolean touches. The place isn't luxurious, but it's historic and comfortable. See p. 353.
- **Hotel Kaiserin Elisabeth** (Vienna; ☎ 01/515260; [www.kaiserinelisabeth.at](http://www.kaiserinelisabeth.at)): Lots of famous folks, from Wagner to Franz Liszt, have stayed in this building, which dates from the 14th century. It manages to be stately and homey at the same time. Public areas are richly furnished with oriental rugs, a dome skylight, and marble floors. The most desirable rooms are furnished in a neo-baroque style with parquet floors. See p. 102.
- **Hotel-Restaurant Säger Blondel** (Dürnstein; ☎ 02711/253; [www.saengerblondel.at](http://www.saengerblondel.at)): Along the Danube sits this charmingly old-fashioned place, painted a bright lemon and accented with green shutters. It's named for the faithful minstrel who searched the countryside for the imprisoned Richard the Lion-Hearted. Today guests are housed in traditionally styled and cozy

rooms; if your windows are open, you can sometimes hear zither music drifting in from the courtyard. See p. 201.

- **Hotel Seehof** (Goldegg; ☎ 06415/8137-0; [www.seehof-goldegg.com](http://www.seehof-goldegg.com)): This hotel, on a small alpine lake south of Salzburg, dates from 1449. Rustic artifacts and local painted furnishings add to its old-fashioned charm. In summer, guests can enjoy the outdoor terrace, but in winter, they come here for skiing. The hotel rents ski equipment and directs guests to the nearby slopes. See p. 273.
- **Romantik Hotel Traube** (Lienz; ☎ 04852/64444; [www.tiscover.at/romantikhotel-traube](http://www.tiscover.at/romantikhotel-traube)): Deep in the heart of East Tyrol, this classic hotel, rebuilt after World War II damage, is the most desirable in this remote and offbeat part of Austria. Its prices are reasonable, and the hotel also offers the best restaurant in East Tyrol. Open your window, see the mountains, and imagine you're Julie Andrews. See p. 402.
- **Schlosshotel Freisitz Roith** (Gmunden; ☎ 07612/64905; [www.oberoesterreich.at/schlosshotel](http://www.oberoesterreich.at/schlosshotel)): Built as a summer house by the Hapsburg Emperor Rudolf II in 1597, this castle hotel, in one of the most popular summer resorts in the Salzkammergut, is now open to the masses. Converted into a hotel in 1965, it's a winning combination of a baroque private residence and a Victorian hotel. See p. 332.

## 12 THE BEST RESTAURANTS

- **Europastüberl** (Innsbruck; ☎ 0512/593-01): Head here for spectacular food served among meticulously re-created traditional Tyrolean decor. As business travelers and corporate bigwigs know, its setting manages to be simultaneously rustic and sumptuous. See p. 356.
- **Fabios** (Vienna; ☎ 01/532-2222): This is the most sought-after table in Vienna today, attracting the city's glitterati, who rave about the chef's finely honed Mediterranean and international cuisine. Precise, inventive fare is served here, celebrating the bounty of Austria and neighboring Italy. See p. 121.

- **Goldener Hirsch** (Salzburg; ☎ 0662/80840): Hospitality has been served up within its thick walls since 1407, but today the victuals are vastly improved, and the clientele is a little more refined. Few other places are as elegant, and during the Salzburg Music Festivals, this is definitely the place to be. The chef prefers the *grand bourgeois* tradition, and prepares meals with both a jeweler's precision and a poet's imagination. See p. 237.
- **Maria Loretto** (Klagenfurt; ☎ 0463/24465): This is the premier restaurant in the capital of Carinthia, site of Austria's summer lake district. A specialist in seafood, the restaurant hauls in raw ingredients from the Mediterranean and Atlantic, and its chefs fashion them into delectable platters. See p. 438.
- **Restaurant Ferwall** (St. Anton; ☎ 05446/3249): Set in the high

Alps near the Arlberg Pass, this place attracts some of the most discerning palates in Europe. Since 1972, the restaurant has been serving some of the finest fare in Tyrol, with a traditional Austrian and international menu taking on innovative modern twists. The restaurant celebrates Tyrolean country life. See p. 376.

- **Sacher Hotel Restaurant** (Vienna; ☎ 01/514560): A celebrity favorite since the days of the Empire, this is the home of one of the world's most famous pastries, the Sachertorte. Against a flaming scarlet background, you can enjoy dishes that pleased emperors—notably Vienna's famous *tafelspitz*, the most savory and herb-flavored boiled beef you'll ever taste. Come dressed to the nines and prepare to enjoy a banquet fit for a king. See p. 120.

## 13 THE BEST DINING BARGAINS

- **Auerhann** (Zug; ☎ 05583/275414): Warm, woody, and permeated with the aroma of good food and a convivial hubbub from the other tables, this inexpensive restaurant is in a building erected during the 1600s. Its three types of fondue and its fresh trout from nearby streams are among the best in the province. See p. 411.
- **Gulaschmuseum** (Vienna; ☎ 01/5121017): Imagine a "museum" devoted to goulash. Here you can find 15 varieties of this savory kettle of goodies inspired by neighboring Hungary, once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Each dish is redolent with the taste of paprika, Hungary's national spice. There's even an all-vegetarian version. See p. 127.
- **Herzl Tavern** (Salzburg; ☎ 0662/8084889): Owned by the city's most glamorous hotel, the super-expensive Goldener Hirsch, the Herzl—in the center of town—is frequented by some of Europe's most celebrated musicians, who for some reason always demand the finest in cuisine. Here they get hearty food prepared in a traditional style and made with only the finest ingredients. See p. 240.
- **Hirschen-Stuben** (Innsbruck; ☎ 0512/582979): This charming restaurant, in a restored 17th-century house, is known for its good Austrian and Italian cuisine served at affordable prices. From stewed deer to the best of alpine lake fish, this one is a winner. See p. 359.
- **Landhaus-Keller** (Graz; ☎ 0316/830276): In a historic building with outdoor tables in summer, this cellar serves some of the best local specialties, many based on old recipes handed

down from generation to generation. It's hearty drinking and dining here. See p. 467.

- **Plachutta** (Vienna; ☎ 01/5121577): The Viennese are fanatical about their *tafelspitz* the way Italian chefs are firm in their standards for tomato sauce, or American Southerners insist that theirs is the only true fried chicken. No place in all of Austria serves better *tafelspitz* than Plachutta, which produces 10 different variations. See p. 121.

- **Restaurant Wirt am Berg** (Wels; ☎ 07242/45059): With a pedigree dating from 1630, Wirt am Berg boasts a vast wine cellar and flavorful food. Its modest prices draw diners from as far away as Munich. See p. 335.
- **Weinhaus Attwenger** (Bad Ischl; ☎ 06132/23327): Some parts of it, built in 1540, were already well established when 19th-century composers Bruckner and Léhar adopted it as one of their preferred wine houses. See p. 326.

## 14 THE BEST CLASSIC CAFES

- **Café Bazar** (Salzburg; ☎ 0662/874278): This café has been a local favorite since 1906, enjoying a palatial pink stucco setting across the river from the Old Town. It's been fashionable since the days of Franz Josef and the menu never changes—only the prices. See p. 238.
- **Café Demel** (Vienna; ☎ 01/5351717): This most famous café in Vienna has a long-standing feud with the Sacher Hotel as to who has the right to sell the legendary and original Sachertorte. Demel claims that the chef who invented the torte left the Sacher to work for Demel, bringing his recipe with him. See p. 130.
- **Café Frauenschuh** (Mondsee; ☎ 06232/2312): Deliciously loaded with every imaginable kind of high-calorie pastry, this time-honored place is a cliché of old-fashioned Austrian charm. See p. 322.
- **Café Imperial** (Vienna; ☎ 01/50110389): Owned and operated by a grand hotel, this café was once a favorite of composer Gustav Mahler. Now it's favored by a chic local lunchtime crowd and offers "the most regal" cup of coffee, pastry, or glass of wine in town. See p. 131.
- **Café Landtmann** (Vienna; ☎ 01/241000): The newspapers it provides for its patrons are tattered by the end of every day, and a haze of smoke evokes the back-room machinations of a meeting of political cronies from another era. Sigmund Freud claimed it as his favorite café; and after your first 15 minutes inside, you might, too. See p. 131.
- **Café Munding** (Innsbruck; ☎ 0512/584118): Plushly decorated and upholstered, this café offers a setting from 1720, torrents of Tyrolean color, unusual murals, and platters of food followed by a scrumptiously fattening array of creamy pastries. See p. 363.
- **Café Tomaselli** (Salzburg; ☎ 0662/844488): Established in 1705, it provides a rich atmosphere as well as delectably fattening pastries and endless cups of coffee. See p. 238.
- **Konditorei Zauner** (Bad Ischl; ☎ 06132/2331020): It's the oldest pastry shop in Austria and the emporium that satisfied the long-ago sugar cravings of such Hapsburg monarchs as Franz Josef. Today, it trades heavily on the aristocratic associations of yesteryear, attracting droves of tourists to its baroque-inspired setting in the resort's center. See p. 327.