

## AUSTRIA: THE DACHSTEIN ALPS

8-day / 7-night self-guided or escorted walking holiday



The beautiful Upper Austria - the hinterland of Mozart's Salzburg is an area embracing the Dachstein Mountains and the Hallstättersee. It is arguably some of the best alpine hiking in Europe.

The tour starts at Bad Goisern, a small market town in the Goisertal Valley. You can walk onto the high trails of the 'Goiserer Hohenweg' with some spectacular viewpoints over the Dachstein peaks before heading to Gosau via the Goiserer Hutte at nearly 1600m (below Hoch Kalmberg peak at 1833m). Gosau offers a broad valley and a circular walk will take you to the Alpine Lakes of the Gosausee and Hintere Gosausee with some spectacular mountain panoramas of the Gosaukamm Mountains or alternatively you can walk along the forest edge above the valley. The next walk takes you via the flanks of Mount Plassen to perhaps the real highlight of this tour, the ancient town of Hallstatt.

This is a village of some 1,200 people, wonderfully remote, nestled between the Mount Plassen and the waters of Lake Hallstättersee. It grew rich from the trade in salt, which is plentiful in the surrounding mountains. The town is almost traffic-free and is a UNESCO World Culture and Natural Heritage site. A tiny ferry connects the nearest train station with the town's storybook square. Clinging to its lakeside ledge under the mountains, Hallstatt seems smaller than it really is with its ivy-covered guesthouses and cobbled lanes surround its square. The local museums and churches are worth visiting especially the charnel house with its macabre history. The funicular can take you up to the salt mine in a valley above the town or there are plenty of short walks including one to nearby Obertraun for a tour of the ice caves.

We also offer an **escorted tour** on selected dates each season: These are essentially the same as the self-guided tours, the main difference is that you will be met in the evening at your hotel on the first night by the leader on the escorted tours for a trek briefing. The leader will lead you around the route every day and normally eat with you in the evenings as well. He will look after your safety, group organisation, makes sure you get into the right hotels, and take care of navigation.

**Self-guided departures:** Daily on demand from mid June to mid October 2012

**Cost:** \$1265 per person twin share. Single supplement \$110

**Escorted departures:** Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> – Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June, Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> - Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2012

**Cost:** \$1480 per person twin share. Single supplement \$110

**Contact Outdoor Travel for details and reservations on 1800 331 582**

Single travellers on both the self-guided or escorted trips can sometimes be paired up with others, if they are prepared to share, and thus save single supplement charges. We will normally have 2 staff in the area to carry out the baggage transfers. They will also act as a local contact in case of any problems that may arise.

### **Travel Information:**

**Season:** Mid June to mid October. Early or late season walks may be affected by snow and this will vary from year to year. Some cable cars may not be operational in September/October. We suggest you avoid the week from 11<sup>th</sup> July 2012 due to a 2-day bike marathon in Bad Goisern

**Joining point:** First hotel of the tour in Bad Goisern.

**Nearest airports:** Vienna or Salzburg, Linz or Graz.

**End of Tour:** The tour ends on day 8 at Bad Goisern.

**Travel Information:** From Vienna airport there is a shuttle bus to Wien Westbahnhof (45-mins) and then the train to Bad Goisern takes between 3½ to 4 hours. Trains from Salzburg airport to Bad Goisern take approx. 2½ hours. From Linz the bus/train to Bad Goisern takes about 2½ hours. From Graz Airport to Bad Goisern it takes about 3.15 hours by train. These train/bus transfers are not included in the tour cost.

**What's Included:** The price is based on two people sharing a twin or double room and includes 3-star hotels throughout the tour and evening meals on 3 evenings. A twin room in this part of Austria generally means two mattresses within a wooden frame together with two separate duvets or one large mattress with two separate duvets. On Self-Guided walking tours we provide you with route notes and maps with luggage transfers.

**Not included:** Train or cable car services within Austria, lunches, snacks and drinks, entry fees etc.

### **General Information:**

**Hotels:** The hotels described are our usual choice of accommodation, however if these are not available then alternatives are used and if these are of a different standard you will be informed at the time of booking. Many rooms with ensuite/private facilities have a shower rather than a bath, usually because of limited space. Some hotels/guesthouses may however have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests.

**Breakfast:** in countries such as Austria they are usually buffet style, please don't offend your hosts by making up a picnic lunch from the breakfast buffet unless it has been specifically organised for you. It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

**Single Supplements:** are payable on most of our tours. The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms.

**Language:** When travelling in less frequented areas you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. Remember you are experiencing a different culture, buy a phrase book and try to learn a little of the local language!

**Luggage:** When staying in hotels, sometimes your luggage will have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival. However don't be surprised if your luggage is waiting for you to take it up to your room. Please politely ask someone if you need assistance.

**Route Notes:** Please note that one set of route notes per room booked is included in the cost of the holiday.

**Insurance:** All clients must have appropriate cover for the activities included for the duration of our trip.

**Level of difficulty & fitness:** We grade this tour as moderate - challenging; anyone used to hill walking with a daily height gain/loss of up to 1100 metres should find the tour within their capability. Most days are easier than this. You will find some steep, stony trails and maybe an element of exposure on a couple of occasions. Those who want to avoid the 'challenging' walks can use public transport to travel between centers: Good train and/or post bus system.

**Day Stages:** Average duration of walking per day is about 6 hours. Some of the walks may be shortened if desired by the use of cable cars/funiculars or local post buses.

**Waymarking:** As one would expect in Austria, the trails are generally very well marked and often signposted, but it is essential to both carry and be able to use a map and compass in case of mist etc. Waymarking is usually red and white paint marking but can also be yellow/orange and white.

In June and maybe early July there can be snow patches on higher trails above 1300m), while new snowfalls are of course possible from September.

**Accommodation:** 3-star hotels - rooms have ensuite facilities when available. We are not able to guarantee the accommodation exactly but the descriptions of the hotels and guesthouses below are the ones normally used.

Lunches are not included however, picnic materials can be readily bought on weekdays in each of the towns and villages you stay at and there are restaurants on the way on a couple of days. It is regarded as improper to prepare a picnic from breakfast materials.

**Night: 1, 2 and 7** In Bad Gaisern. A Warm welcome awaits you at our 3 star hotel, picturesquely located near the centre of town. It is a comfortable hotel located easily within walking distance of the railway station and the start or finish of quite a few of the walks. Rooms have regional character and there is a great bar/restaurant and terrace for outdoor dining. It is a good place to enjoy the feeling of getting away from it all!

**Night: 3 and 4** In Gosau. We use an attractive, efficient modern 3 star hotel in the great rural setting of the broad Gosau Valley. Lovely mountain views over to the Gosaukaum mountains from the dining room and south facing bedrooms and great forest and village views in other directions. Once again you have a friendly and attentive service and good cooking from sister act Brigitte and Anna who run the establishment. Anna makes some great desserts everyday in the best Austrian tradition! There is also a drying room.

**Night: 5 and 6** In Hallstatt. Our beautiful pinewood and stone hotel has been offering warm hospitality for a hundred years or so. It is also renowned locally for its gourmet cuisine. Hopefully you will be able to breakfast on the wooden carved balcony in the morning sun. At dinnertime you will be in the ivy-covered stone dining room. Bedrooms have modern comforts in a house, which is deeply rooted in the life and tradition of Hallstatt. The marvelous view from the balconies over the rooftops of perhaps the most romantic lake-village in the world is like a glimpse into a small paradise. The hotel is set back from the Halstattersee, but many of the rooms do have balconies

### **Suggested Itinerary:**

**Day 1:** Arrive Bad Gaisern. Once settled into your hotel, you can stroll along the riverside path but be back for dinner at hotel.

**Day 2:** Bad Gaisern Walk. There are different options today. If you are up for a bit of a challenge, you can take the train to the Spa town of Bad Ischl (15 mins) there is a 19km walk from here back to Bad Gaisern involving a climb up to the craggy peak of Predigstuhl 1278 metres (some steps & cables to summit but you can bypass the summit). There are great vistas towards the Dachstein group, which still looks quite far off at this point and over the Halstattersee.

A steep descent takes you along the Ewige Wand rock band before doubling back through some old salt workings bringing you out into the forest above Bad Gaisern.

An alternative is a shorter walk steeply up a forested rock ridge called the 'The Jochwand,' 9km approx. There are great views over the region before the path drops downhill again to Bad Gaisern. Lazier walkers can walk along both sides of the riverbank and explore the coffee shops of Bad Gaisern.

**Day 3:** Bad Gaisern to Gosau 16km (1100m ascent – 900m descent): The path climbs past the Goiserer Hutte 1598m. Hardened walkers may wish to spend an extra half hour or so climbing up to the peak of Kalmberg 1833m. It is then down hill to Gosau heading steeply through attractive Alps and then through forests and walk into the spread out village of Gosau.

**Day 4:** Walks from Gosau: You can take the local post bus to Gosausee and gain the ridge high above with a funicular car up to the 'Gablonzer Hutte,' 1522 metres and then from there follow a pretty path back down again

to Gosau called the 'Herrenweg' (The Man's Walk). On this 7km walk there are normally great views of the Gosaukamm Mountains.

You can also take the post bus up to the Gosausee and then walk the trail to the Hintere Gosausee, which is the smaller higher second lake, ascent and descent is about 300metres. This trip takes about 4 hours and on a good day you will get some very dramatic reflections of the mountains in the waters. So you can decide whether you want a full or half days of walking.

**Day 5:** Gosau to Hallstatt 7 hours walking approximately 16km ascent 900m, descent 1000m From Gosau you can walk to Hallstatt (literally 'Salt City') maybe with the assistance of local transport to shorten routes. Walking, the route follows the valley before climbing up through forest and alpine pastures liberally watered by mountain streams reaching the flanks of Mount Plassen. Here is a short steep section to descend, before a more gentle undulating general descent via the mines of Salzburg where you will find a salt mine where guided visits are possible depending on when you arrive.

Finally drop down to Hallstatt. If it is wet or if a storm beckons a little funicular will get you down.

**Day 6:** Walks from Hallstatt. Time is well spent utilizing cable cars and the Obertrauner Hohenweg to visit an 'Ice cave,' the 'Mammoth cave' and Mount Krippenstein, with more walking opportunities and views to the Dachsteins and their glaciers. Alternatively from the town a steep gradient leads you up to the salt mine, which originally gave the town its wealth. You could avoid the climb by using the little funicular railway instead. High above there are great views of the Hallstattersee and the high peaks. You can walk back on the 'Soleweg' path.

**Day 7:** Hallstatt to Bad Goisern (12km approx, 4 hours). The walk leads off northerly from above Hallstatt along the 'Solweg' the path by which they have pumped brine (liquid salt) towards Bad Ischl for a few hundred years. Originally the brine was piped via a wooden piping and is claimed to be the oldest commercial pipeline. Hopefully if the weather is clear and still you will get some beautiful reflections in the waters.

You can take a detour down to the lake at a place called Gosaumuhle where you may like to take a swim on a warm day. You then carry on into Bad Goisern and your first hotel once again.

Alternatively you can catch the ferry across to the railway station in the morning and walk round the eastern side of the lake to Bad Goisern. For the most challenging walk of the week you can opt to cross the lake and walk via the summit of Sarstein back to Bad Goisern.

**Day 8:** Depart. After breakfast return to your point of departure. Allow enough time for the train journey for your check in time – see the Austrian railways site at: [www.oebb.at](http://www.oebb.at)

**Other walking holidays** – guided in small groups or self-guided with inn-to-inn luggage transfers & meals are available in many parts of Europe through **Outdoor Travel** including in Switzerland the **Wildstrubel Circuit**, the **Alpine Pass Route**, the **Haute Route**, **Bernese Oberland** & centre-based walks at Meiringen.

For long distance routes we offer the the self-guided or guided **Way of St James** walk from Le Puy to Santiago, the route of Pilgrims along the River Yonne to Veزالay in Burgundy, the **Via Francigena** walk to Rome and St Cuthbert's Way from Scotland into England or the English **Coast to Coast** classic.

We also offer literary walking routes or trails in the footsteps of famous painters such as van Gogh in **Provence** or Robert Louie Stevenson in the **Cevennes** in France.

**Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations**

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