

# *Country Walks*

*for the best in guided walking holidays, weekends away and Nordic walking*

## **The Austrian Tyrol: Moderate 'B' Grade**

*28 August – 4 September 2010*

- Full programme of guided walks and excursions
- Optional Cycle Rides
- Optional Nordic Walking Tuition
- Superb 4-star hotel with excellent cuisine
- Heated swimming pool, Jacuzzi, saunas and spa
- Guided tour of Innsbruck
- Outstanding alpine scenery of dramatic valleys, snow-capped peaks, silent forest tracks, picturesque villages

*Eight days in the secret Leutasch Valley, one of the most tranquil, unspoilt high valleys in the Austrian Tyrol and an ideal retreat for people who want to relax and get away from it all. Our walks take you through beautiful alpine landscapes of extraordinary contrasts, from fertile, secluded valleys and flower-filled meadows to dramatic river gorges, lakes, dense forests and pretty alpine villages, all surrounded by the spectacular jagged peaks of the mighty Wetterstein mountains. An opportunity too to improve your health and fitness and extend your walking life by learning to walk the Nordic way with poles.*

*Climate:* Early September is an ideal time to walk in Austria when days are warm and sunny with temperatures averaging 16.5 degrees C. September brings mellow colours and numerous fine days, perfect for walking.

*Our base:* The Leutasch Valley is situated at 1130 metres above sea level, west of the delightful city of Innsbruck, less than an hour by road or rail. An excellent bus system serves neighbouring villages, making the towns of Mittenwald and Seefeld easily accessible.

*Nordic Walking :* The wide flat Leutasch Valley is ideal for Nordic Walking and has consequently been established as a Nordic Walking centre with numerous trails crisscrossing meadows, forests and villages. Tuition is available from fully qualified INWA instructors for both beginners and improvers throughout the holiday at any time you have an hour to spare. Video technique analysis will be available and poles will be hired for you locally. More experienced Nordic Walkers will also benefit from video technique analysis and pole hire. Once you have learnt the technique, there will be plenty of opportunity to practise your new skill if you wish.

*Grading of Walks:* The walks in our programme are designed for the average walker and in spite of the sheer size of the mountains viewed from the valleys, the walks are no more difficult than any of our 'B' grade walks in England. In fact only the Wetterstein Hut route involves a strenuous climb. And if you learn to Nordic Walk and use a pair or poles, you will be able to walk further without tiring and gain more enjoyment from your walking.

*Hotel:* The Xander Sport is a 4-star hotel in a superb location at Leutasch-Platzl surrounded by mountains and alpine meadows. It is family-run, friendly and efficient. The hotel boasts an excellent indoor pool and spa facilities, numerous treatments from massage to facials and special baths. There is also a bar, lounge and games room, The cuisine is excellent with extensive buffet breakfasts and four-course dinners which include buffet-style salad starters a wide range of desserts and a choice of eight main dishes.

All rooms are large, light and very well equipped with lounge area, fridge and basic cooking facilities; all rooms have both baths and showers. Our allocation of rooms includes 5 large suites comprising 2 separate bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and one shared lounge and kitchen area, ideal for 2 singles to share without paying a single supplement. Gaistal rooms have balconies while Panorama rooms have extra large raised lounge areas instead of balconies.

**Accommodation Available:** 5 suites for 10 singles; 5 Gaistal rooms for twin occupancy; 2 Panorama rooms for twin occupancy

**Holiday Price:** £639 for a couple sharing a twin room or for two singles sharing a suite; £699 for single occupancy of a twin room

**Price Includes:**

- Coach transfers to and from Innsbruck Airport
- Bus transport to and from the walks
- Full day excursion by train to Innsbruck
- Funicular rail and gondola tickets
- Guided walks
- Nordic Walking tuition from INWA instructors
- Cycle Hire
- Hotel accommodation as described above
- Access to pool and sauna complex
- Buffet breakfasts, four-course dinners and one packed lunch
- All tips
- Services of a certified city guide in Innsbruck
- Services of two leaders throughout providing optional activities
- Unique experiences that money can't buy

**Price Excludes:**

- Flights (see below)
- Insurance
- Lunches in alpine huts and in Innsbruck (5-12 euros)
- Hire of Nordic Poles (15 euros for 6 days)
- Drinks and items of a personal nature
- Treatments

*Regardless of fluctuations in the exchange rate, the price of the holiday will not change*

**Flights:** EasyJet are the only airline to fly from Gatwick to Innsbruck with a flight time of 2 hours, details as follows:

**EasyJet** (<<http://www.easyJet.com/EN/Book/index.asp>>)

Sat 28 Aug dep London Gatwick 1125, arr. Innsbruck 1420

Sat 4 Sept dep Innsbruck 1455, arr. London 1545

The above timetable is shown as a guide. Flight times may well change before 28 August and fares are not currently available now in mid-October for August. Fares for the last Saturday at the end of June are just over £100 return. We will advise you when fares become available.

## Itinerary

### *Wednesday*

Depart Innsbruck airport by coach for a 45-minute drive to Leutasch-Platzl and the Xander Sport Hotel. Today's activities will depend on flight arrival times; however a variety of options will be available including Nordic Walking tuition, cycle rides, swimming, spa treatments (bookable in advance) and an informal Welcome Meeting to meet your fellow guests.

### *Thursday*

**The Leutasch Valley** (*9 miles, easy flat terrain*) Today we walk straight from the hotel alongside a gushing river to explore the gentle charms of the sunny Leutasch Valley, one of the most picturesque in the Austrian Tyrol. There are no crowds here: simply open meadows and forest trails, pretty villages and tiny hamlets, which run alongside the river at the foot of the Wetterstein mountain range. A highlight today is the beautiful lake at Weidach and lunch basking in the sunshine at the nearby trout restaurant, flowers all around. After lunch we join a riverside path to Puitbach, alpine meadows populated only with cows, bells clanging in Tyrolean fashion. A forest path takes us on to tiny hamlets that remain predominantly traditional farming communities; here pretty frescoed houses and onion-domed churches punctuate Alpine pastures backed by the mighty peaks of the Wetterstein range. Then back to our hotel via Gasse and its bakery famed for its Applestrudel!

### *Friday*

**The Wetterstein Hut** (*8-10 miles: moderate; some steep ascents, high mountain paths, easy walking to finish*) A walk into a Tyrolean idyll of lush alpine meadows, wooden chalets and burbling brooks, overlooked by jagged mountain peaks. After a flat start through meadows and hamlets, there is a fairly long steady climb of 580 metres up to the Wettersteinhutte where we lunch, enjoying fabulous views from the terrace over the Seefeld Plateau. This is the highest point of the walk at nearly 2,000 metres. After lunch, we embark on a stunning balcony walk which offers us panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. Finally we make a gradual descent to the Hammermoos Alm back to the entrance to the Gais Valley where there is a bus stop for the return to KirchPlatzl. Or, for 10 miles, simply walk back to the hotel along the valley rather than take the bus.

### *Saturday*

#### **Day in Innsbruck**

No trip to the Austrian Tyrol is complete without a visit to Innsbruck, the crossroads of Europe, the city in the heart of the Alps, surrounded by snow-capped mountains. A short bus ride to Seefeld followed by a scenic 40-minute train ride to meet our guide for a two-hour guided tour of the city's highlights, including the City Tower, the 15th century Helblinghaus and the Golden Roof. After lunch there will be free time to further explore this charming and lively city with its labyrinth of cobblestoned streets and jumble of mediaeval buildings. Then there are fascinating museums and monuments including the Hofburg Palace, home to the Hapsburgs, Austria's royal family. And you simply must sample coffee and scrumptious Austrian cake! Return by train to Seefeld and bus back to the comforts of our charming hotel.

*Sunday*

**The Gaistal Valley & Ganghofer Trail** (7-10 miles: easy; mostly flat terrain) A wonderful walk in the secluded and totally unspoiled Gaistal Valley. A short bus ride to the Salzbach Bridge, then a gentle, short ascent on an easy-going trail to the Hammermoos alpine pasture and Gaistal Alm. Here we stop for lunch in the most idyllic surroundings imaginable, breathing fresh mountain air, soaking up the sun from a flower-filled terrace, surrounded by jagged peaks, digital cameras clicking. Our route along the Ganghofer Trail winds through high pastures in the footsteps of Ganghofer who spent many months each year here in his nearby hunting lodge, entertaining well-known personalities such as Richard Strauss. A short, gradual descent to the valley floor to walk alongside the river to the bus stop and a short ride back to our hotel. Several bus-stops are accessible from the valley walk, providing the opportunity to finish after 7 miles, or even 8 or 9!

*Monday*

**Seefelder Spitze and the High Mountains** (6-9 miles, easy to moderate with the option of a more challenging walk to the Seefelder Spitze) A short bus ride to Seefeld to board the funicular for a thrilling ride to Rosshutte. After a short easy walk on the Zirbenweg we enjoy a coffee on the sunny terrace of the Rosshutte Panorama restaurant before being hoisted up by cable car to the Seefelder Joch Top Station at 2060 metres. Here you will enjoy quite spectacular views in all directions from the highest mountain top around. From the wide grassy ridge at the top you can continue on an optional walk to Seefelder Spitze at 2222 metres. Alternatively, you can opt for another cable car excursion across an awesome gorge from the mid-station at Rosshutte. Finally we all descend gradually and easily on foot via Lake Kaitwassersee and the Hoheggalm where we stop for a beer or a coffee in stunning surroundings. Our descent continues on a forest road to Seefeld. Return by bus to the comforts of our hotel, having spent an unforgettable day in the high mountains of the Tyrol. (Packed Lunch today)

*Tuesday*

### **Leutaschklamm & Mittenwald**

(7 miles: easy, few gradients) A short walk from the hotel to join the bus in the nearby hamlet of Gasse. We ride along the valley to Lehner where we join a riverside path to Reindlau via Porta Claudia, the old border gate. Then on to the spectacular Leutaschklamm. This is a favourite route in which you walk on an equally spectacular steel trail, clinging to the side of a dramatic gorge high above the teeming Leutascher Ache (don't worry - you are fully enclosed and quite safe!). The path crisscrosses the ravine below by a series of footbridges as you admire not only the scenery but also the feat of engineering which brought this about. Then from the gorge we cross a bridge, quite literally, between Austria and Germany to lunch at the Gletscherschliff Mountain Hut with stunning views of Mittenwald and the Karwendeljoch across the valley from the terrace. We gently descend to Mittenwald itself, wonderfully situated against a mountain backdrop: here you can stroll through pedestrianised streets, exploring pavement cafes, sampling traditional coffees and cakes, admiring historic buildings whose facades are adorned with brightly coloured frescoes. You can visit the church, one of the finest in the Bavarian Alps or the famous Violin Museum where you can watch a demonstration of the violin maker at work. The German writer, Goethe, called the town a 'living picturebook' and it has remained so ever since, 200 years later. Return by bus to Gasse and our hotel.

*Wednesday*

Depart after breakfast for Innsbruck and our flight to Gatwick.

*Please note that we reserve the right to change the above itinerary if circumstances dictate*