



TRIP DOSSIER

# AUSTRIA



## *'Carinthia and the Dolomites'*

*£675 per person (land only)*

*Single Supplement: £55*

*Saturdays June to September*

***Grade: B***

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## Introduction

Welcome to Austria's Riviera! Blessed with a Mediterranean climate and long hours of sunshine, Carinthia's combination of lakes and mountains comes into its own. Pristine lakes you can drink from which are also warm enough for swimming and mountains that are never far away – from the rolling hills in the Nock Mountains National Park to the rocky peaks of the Hohe Tauern National Park. Towns are packed full of concerts, exhibitions, cultural events and culinary festivals and the area is perfect for soaking up the fresh alpine air and savouring the spectacular views.

This trip is centre-based in the charming town of Obervellach with use of a hire car allowing you to explore the area - the fabulous national parks with their waterfalls, glaciers, picturesque valleys and soaring mountains, including the famous Großglockner, Austria's highest, mixing days of challenging hikes with gentler jaunts through nature parks and gorges. You can even follow the Three Peak Circular Trail in the Italian Dolomites.

Daily walks are between 4 km and 18 km (walking time depending on difference of altitude and terrain); Difference in altitude: 200 / 800 m

Highlights:

- Nock Mountains National Park: drive along the panoramic road through the national park, a picturesque natural low-mountain region with gentle hilltops and endless Alpine pastures. Visitors can learn more about it at several information points along the way.
- Hohe Tauern National Park: the Pasterze glacier and a perfect view of the Großglockner (Austria's highest mountain at 3789 metres); The Gamsgruben Trail leads you through various tunnels showing the history of mining and various crystals which have been found there; Kölnbreinsperre Austria's highest dam at 2000 metres with a crystal and waterstones exhibition next to the dam
- Dolomites: drive alongside the famous Lake Misurina to the Three Peaks mountains in the Italian Dolomites, enjoy Italian wine, parmigiano, prosciutto and other Italian specialities at the Auronzo chalet.
- Gorge trails: vertical rock faces line the route through this wildly romantic gorge. Easier walks include the famous Kneipp trail.

Whistling marmots, bearded vultures, elegant ibex, close proximity to the UK and excellent access combined with inspiring walking opportunities all on well marked paths – what more could a walking trip to Europe offer?!

## About the Country

**History and Geography:** The Province of Carinthia is situated in the southernmost part of Austria on the border of Italy and Slovenia, nestling between the highest peak in the country, the Großglockner (3798 metres), the Karawanken and Tauern Ranges. Sparsely populated, barely 560,000 people live in an area of 9,500 square kilometres. Carinthia's capital is Klagenfurt, which is principally known for its picturesque old town and has an international airport and two national parks - the Hohe Tauern and the Nockberge. Austria's southernmost province is in fact the one with the highest concentration of art treasures from virtually every period. While Austria celebrated its millennium in 1996, the Province of Carinthia can boast that it is a few years older. Carinthia became an independent duchy in 976 – the oldest on Austrian soil. It is little wonder therefore that countless art treasures testify to this rich past - from the Celtic and Roman excavations on Magdalensberg to the incredibly diverse sacral art – Gurk Cathedral is one of the most significant Romanesque buildings in the German-speaking countries. Sights range from Renaissance arcaded courtyards to secular historical monuments, such as the seemingly archaic blast furnaces at Heft near Hüttenberg (19th c.) that serve as an exhibition centre today. The baroque Benedictine Abbey at St Paul/Lavant Valley is a veritable treasure trove.

**Climate:** Carinthia is situated south of the Alps, so the climate is almost Mediterranean. July and August are usually dry and hot (30°C). Autumn is dry but cooler than summer and can be the best time to go to the mountains. You will soon see that a visit to Carinthia not only offers lovely warm climate and very warm lakes (28°), but also the warmth of the people who live there.

**Language** German although English and Italian are widely understood.

## **A Typical Day on Trek**

**Routine** As this trip is self-guided it is up to you whether you start early or have a little lie-in. We do however advise that it is good to start reasonably early in order to maximise the time available during the day and to cover a fair amount of ground allowing for inclement weather.

**Trekking conditions** Summer in the Alps is usually warm and dry. You can expect to be walking in shorts and T-shirts. Saying this, rain is possible (so waterproofs are essential), and you will need a warmer set of clothes for the evenings. Underfoot it is generally dry. You follow tracks and paths most of the time, some of which are the old packhorse routes that linked the villages before the roads came through. Attention: please mind that the weather does change very quickly in the higher regions (2.000 metres +) and temperatures can fall quite seriously too.

**What you need to provide** There is a full list of clothing and equipment at the end of this document..

**Ecological considerations** *We believe that we are one of the most ecologically aware tour operators. We ask for your full consideration and co-operation concerning all ecological matters, especially in the disposal of rubbish. Luckily the Austrians are a very clean and organised nation and litter along the paths is not a big problem. If you have any suggestions for improvements please inform us at Walks Worldwide on your return. It is with the tourists, the locals and the tour operators' co-operation that we can ensure that our tours are as eco-friendly as possible.*

## **Itinerary**

**Please be aware that although we will do our best to adhere to this itinerary occasionally events out of our control may prevent us from following the exact schedule. Please be assured that the clients' best interests will be foremost in any changes that may occur. A degree of flexibility is essential in travelling on such holidays! As this is a centre-based trip your actual day to day itinerary is flexible – below is a suggested schedule visiting the highlights of the region.**

**Day 1.** Fly from the airport of your choice into Klagenfurt (or Salzburg/Ljubljana), collect your hire car and drive to the charming village of Obervellach. You will get your detailed hiking maps and route notes on arrival at the tourist board of Obervellach. **D, Hotel, Obervellach**

**Day 2. Malta – the valley of falling Water** Kölnbrein dam – Osnabrück Chalet (hiking time about 2.5 hours one way, 8 kilometres, 2000 / 2200 metres). Drive from Obervellach to Spittal via the Highway A10 to exit Gmünd, then through the waterfall-filled Malta Valley on the panoramic road up to the Kolnbrein Dam. This scenic road leads you to the Kölnbrein dam at an altitude of 2000 metres (toll included in the Kärnten Card). Take the walking route next to the shores of the Kölnbrein reservoir and follow the path up to the Osnabrück Chalet. Experienced walkers can extend the walking tour to the Elend Valley. Otherwise take the path back to the dam. Stop to see the mineral exhibition at the Sporthotel (next to the dam). **B,D, Hotel, Obervellach**



**Day 3. Nock Mountains National Park** Zechner Chalet – Mt. Königstuhl (hiking time about 2.5 hours one way, 10 kilometres, 1900 / 2336 metres). Follow the road to Innerkrems and drive along the panoramic Nockalmstraße (toll included in the Kärnten Card) to Zechner chalet. From here hike up the path to Königstuhl peak. Enjoy the fantastic view where on clear days you can even see the Carnic Alps (bordering Italy). Walk back via the Glocken Chalet where you can enjoy lunch. Follow the scenic sweeping road to Ebene Reichenau and Bad Kleinkirchheim. You might take a swim in the thermal pools of Bad Kleinkirchheim or visit the National Park museum or take a cruise on the beautiful Millstätter See, known as the jewel of Carinthia. **B,D, Hotel, Obervellach**



**Day 4. Mt. Großglockner and the Pasterze glacier** Kaiser Franz Josefs Höhe – Oberwalder Chalet (hiking time about 3 hours one way , 10 kilometres, 2400 / 2972metres).

Drive from Obervellach to Heiligenblut and along the panoramic Großglockner-Hochalpenstraße road (toll not included in the Kärnten Card) to the Kaiser Franz Josefs Höhe visitor centre at 2400 metres. Walk along the Gamsgruben trail which leads you through mines and tunnels (findings here are on display in the mining and crystal exhibition at the Oberwalder Chalet). The last part of the path leads through the Pasterze Glacier, the largest in the Eastern Alps (please mind the crevasses which might occur on the path). After Lunch at the Oberwalder Chalet you return to the Kaiser Franz Josefs Höhe where you can take a walk down to the glacier tongue of the Pasterze glacier or stop for a visit at the rambler's cemetery at Heiligenblut. Please mind that the sun on the glacier is much more intense, we recommend using strong sunscreen, sunglasses and headgear today. **B,D, Hotel, Obervellach**



**Day 5. Dolomites in South Tyrol** hiking trail around the Three Peaks/Tre Cime (hiking time about 3 hours one way, 15 kilometres, 2330 metres / 2344 metres).

Drive from Obervellach in the direction of Winklern/Lienz through the Pustatal valley (Eastern Tyrol) to Doblach/Dobbiaco (Italy) and the Schluderbach Valley near the famous ski resort of Cortina. Follow the panoramic road (toll included in the package) to the Auronzo Chalet (2330 metres). Walk along the Three Peaks walking trail to Lavaredo and on to the chalet. The Tre Cime of Lavaredo are three dramatic limestone towers soaring to 2999 metres. They are the most recognisable peaks in the Dolomites and certainly some of the most stunning in the world, similar to the mighty Torres del Paine in Chile. A superb circular trail leads round the three peaks which change hues in different light and provide a dramatic vista throughout your day in the Eastern Dolomites. Enjoy Italian specialities for lunch at Lavaredo Chalet (2344 metres). Walk back on the north side of the Three Peaks to the Auronzo Chalet. On your way back take a break at Lake Misurina or Lienz, the capital city of Eastern Tyrol for a Tiramisu or Schluzkrapfen (the Eastern Tyrol version of the famous Kärntner Nudel). **B,D, Hotel, Obervellach**

**Day 6. Gorges Trail** Obervellach – Flattach (hiking time is about 2.5 hours one way, 18 kilometres, 680 metres / 1034 metres). Start your walk in Obervellach and hike along the romantic walking path next to the River Möll to Flattach. On your way you will admire alpine meadows, cows and old farm houses and finally the water of the Raggaschlucht gorge. Over thousands of years, the Raggabach brock has created one of the most beautiful natural gorges in the Alps. Vertical rock faces make the wildly romantic gorge narrow and the air is filled with the roar of the water. Skilfully chiselled paths make walking easier. The way back leads through the forest on a geological nature trail to the Launsberg Chalet. **B,D, Hotel, Obervellach**

**Day 7. Obervellach – Räuflach** (hiking time is about 2.5 hours one way, 16 kilometres, 680metres / 1360metres). After a free morning you can visit the charming village of Obervellach including the beautiful quarter of Räuflach. Start your trek through the Groppenstein Gorge. Walking time through the gorge will be approximately 1.5 hours. Follow the Kneipp trail through the woods and alpine meadows to the alpine pasture Himmelbauer. The Himmelbauer-farm (Himmel = heaven) is quite literally situated in heavenly surroundings! The local cold meats and cheese served on the National Park platter are all home made and extremely tasty. **B,L,D, Hotel, Obervellach**



**Day 8.** Drive back to the airport for your flight home. **B**

## Practical Information

**Passports and visas** British Citizens do not need a visa, however they do need a valid passport.

## Accommodation

\*\*\*inn/hotel: All rooms are with shower/WC, TV and telephone. The hotel has a sauna and steam bath.

**Meals provided** All breakfasts and dinners are included. Breakfasts are buffet style and dinners are three course meals (with two different choices) and usually hearty Austrian fayre. Lunch and drinks are extra except on Day 7 when the National Park platter is included.

**Local transport** Rental car from the airport of your choice (Klagenfurt, Salzburg or Ljubljana). We will need your flight information in order to make the car hire reservations.

**Baggage** Your baggage is limited to about 20 kilos by most airlines. Please ensure that your baggage is clearly marked with your name, inside as well as outside, in case the labels get detached. We will be sending you a Walks Worldwide kitbag before departure which is ideal for the purpose.

**Vaccinations and medical precautions** No vaccinations are necessary for Austria and health problems in the area we visit are quite rare. The only "medical precaution" that you might like to take is a small first aid kit to cater for blisters, headaches, coughs, colds, etc. However it is always advisable to be up-to-date with your tetanus jabs. A high factor sun protection lotion is essential, as sunburn can be severe on hot days in thin mountain air. Water whilst on the trek is mostly from springs and is generally safe to drink.

**Currency** Euros. The exchange rate usually hovers around £1: €1.42. Please see [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com). All major travellers' cheques and credit cards are accepted. Commission is not charged for changing cash or cheques, but shop around for the best rates (hotels usually have the worst rates).

**Electricity** 220 volts AC, 50 Hz. As the socket outlets require continental plugs it is advisable to carry an adapter if you intend to bring any electrical items with British plugs.

**Time** Austria is one hour ahead of Greenwich Time (GMT+1). Daylight saving time starts in early spring and ends in late autumn.

**Contact details** It is not our policy to provide addresses and telephone numbers as, due to frequent changes in contact details, it is very difficult to provide an accurate list for all our tours. Your Final Joining Instructions, which you will receive approx. two weeks prior to departure, will show any local contact details that are required for your tour. However we would be glad to provide you more details if you have a specific reason.

Mobile phones do work in Austria. If you have not used your mobile outside the UK before you will have to contact your operator to enable international calls. *Please ensure your phone is set for roaming if you are taking a mobile.* Please note that it is expensive to phone both to and out of a mobile when abroad. We do not however encourage mobile phone use whilst walking on any of our trips – out of courtesy to other clients please use your mobile phone discretely. If you do need to get in touch, or if anyone needs to get in touch with you, please contact the Walks Worldwide office (01524 242000) during office hours.

**Tipping** The usual courtesy tips *can* be left in restaurants as anywhere in Europe however tipping is rarely necessary as hotels, restaurants and bars are required by law to include a 15% service charge. Even taxi fares normally have a service charge included.

**Things to buy** Cheeses, irresistible chocolates, local handicrafts and sachertorte (if you can resist not eating it before you get home!).

**Maps** Local maps and general walking guides are available on arrival. If you want to purchase a map of the area ahead of time they are available at The Map Shop, 15 High Street, Upton-on-Severn, Worcs WR8 0HJ (Tel: 01684 593146) [www.themapshop.co.uk](http://www.themapshop.co.uk) or Stanfords at 12-14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP (Tel: 0207 836 1321) [www.stanfords.co.uk](http://www.stanfords.co.uk).

**Included in the price**

- 7 nights in a 3\* Hotel in Obervellach
- Welcome drink
- All breakfasts and evening meals
- National Park Platter (Carinthian cold meats) on the day you visit Himmelbauer Farm
- Local assistance
- Maps and route notes
- Kärnten Card (all inclusive card for sightseeing)
- Auronzo chalet toll
- Car rental (from Klagenfurt/Salzburg/Ljubljana)
- Daily use of the pool area in Obervellach

**Extra expenses**

- Lunches
- Flights and taxes
- Fuel
- Travel Insurance.
- Drinks.
- Souvenirs and personal spending.

**Flights** Flights need to be arranged to either Klagenfurt (preferred airport with a drive time of 55 minutes), Salzburg (1 ¾ hours) or Ljubljana in Slovenia (2 ½ hour). A number of airlines use regional airports. If you need assistance with booking flights we can help – an administration fee will be charged for this.

### Clothing and Equipment Lists.

On trek you must not worry about how you look: comfort and protection against bad weather are of prime importance. Because mountain weather is so very variable, we recommend a number of thin layers rather than a few thick ones. Take old, well-worn clothes rather than rushing out to buy new ones, since they will probably get rough treatment on trek. We do not expect any really cold conditions, but please bear in mind that there might be chilly evenings and cooler conditions at high altitudes.

CLOTHING	NUMBER	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking boots	1 pair		Torch / spare batteries	
Casual shoes/sandals	1		Day pack	
Socks	3+		Camera, film & accessories	
Underwear	3+		A variety of plastic bags (Rucksacks are not waterproof)	
"T" shirts	3		Sunglasses	
Long trousers / skirt / trackies	1		Binoculars (optional)	
Short trousers	1		Washing & shaving kits	
Long sleeve shirt	1		Water Bottles 2 litres	
Light sweater / inner fleece layer	1		First aid kit, with blister protection	
Water / wind proof jacket	1		Walking Poles, (optional but recommended)	
Water/wind proof trousers	1			
Thermal underwear	Optional			
Sunhat and woolly hat	1			
Warm jacket / outer fleece layer	1			
Swimming costume	Optional			
Gloves	Optional			

*The following items are most useful and those **in bold type are essential***

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Moisturising cream		Insect repellent	
Safety pins / sewing kit		Universal travelling adapter	
Penknife (not in hand luggage)		Small mirror	
Sweets / favourite snacks for energy		Padlock for your kitbags	
Reading material / notebook diary		<b>Suncream - lots of it!</b>	
Nail clippers / Scissors (not in hand luggage)		<b>MONEY / Travellers cheques</b>	
Cold water detergent		<b>PASSPORT</b>	
Spare glasses or contact lenses		<b>FLIGHT TICKETS</b>	
Money belt/pouch			
Matches / lighter			
'Dry' handwash/sanitiser			