

# Active Austria

**Experience Austria's landscapes by hopping on a bike or putting your best foot forward — and stop to catch some culture along the way**  
**Words: Bronwyn Griffiths**

## Alpbach

**ON THE TRAIL:** A host of multi-day hikes in the Alpbachtal Seenland, with overnight stays in mountain huts, are ideal for beginners. Alternatively, the shorter Tiefenbachklamm gorge trail, which follows a path between Kramsach and Brandenberg, offers another great option. Starting as a woodland walk, the trail leads to an observation platform overlooking the gorge, offering views of majestic rock formations separated by a gushing stream.

Experienced hikers and those looking for more of a challenge will enjoy the Inneralpbach-Farmkehralm hiking path, a moderate six-mile trail that starts in the Inneralpbach valley and ascends over 5,000ft through the Greit Valley region.

Sure-footed hikers should consider the Alpbach-Gratspitz route. The seven-mile path takes around six hours to navigate and adventurers are rewarded with views from Bischoferalm, an isolated mountain that lies between two valleys.

**WHAT ELSE:** When the balconies of the traditional Alpine buildings are bursting with flowers in summer, Alpbach is a postcard-perfect destination.

“Come summertime, the snowmelt reveals a summery side to this face of the Hahnenkamm peak”



## Kitzbühel

**ON THE TRAIL:** Experience the legendary Streif on foot. One of the world's most renowned ski runs is usually seen blanketed in white, but come summertime, the snowmelt reveals a summery side to this face of the Hahnenkamm peak. Alpine meadows and soaring mountain views set a stunning scene for this downhill walk, made easier with a zigzag trail that winds down the mountainside.

Perfect for budding geologists and historians, the Kitzbüheler Horn now has a geology trail, known as

the Karstweg. It's dotted with cave-like formations that are actually prehistoric sinkholes dating back 450 million years. Suitable for all levels, this two-hour circular route begins with a 10-minute walk up the valley from Alpenhaus to Trattalmulde and takes between 1.5 and 2.5 hours.

For advanced-level explorers, a multi-day hike between Alpine lodges is a great option in the Kitzbühel region. Each day holds a new challenge, with swathes of scenery for adventurers to immerse themselves in. Plus, hikers can

## Tiroler Zugspitz Arena

**ON THE TRAIL:** Situated at 5,436ft, the Seebensee is a brilliant turquoise lake with a number of trail options. Start at the valley station of the Ehrwalder Almbahn, reachable by the mountain gondola (or a one-hour hike), then hike for two hours through enchanting woodlands towards Seebenalm.

Just below the lake, hikers can find refreshments at a hut offering traditional Tirolean food. Add to the experience with a further 45-minute walk to Drachensee ('Dragon Lake'). The Zugspitz Arena is a great option for families, with a collection of holiday villages and multiple adventure paths.

**WHAT ELSE:** The Tiroler Zugspitzbahn cable-car whisks early risers to the Zugspitze's 10,000ft peak before dawn, where breakfast is served at a restaurant with panoramic views.



rest their weary feet during a cosy stay at a different lodge each night.

**WHAT ELSE:** More of the region's rich history can be discovered in the Kitzbühel Museum, which showcases a host of Bronze Age artifacts. Unearthed during archaeological digs in the area, the collection includes burial and commemorative goods. Pieces of baroque art and mementos of Kitzbühel's legendary 'Wonder Ski Team', which dominated the skiing world in the 1950s, are also featured in this award-winning museum.

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## Vorarlberg

**ON THE TRAIL:** The mountainous state of Vorarlberg has a range of cycle paths, from two-mile trails to the 50-mile Alpengross, which covers a section of the epic Transalpine route from Oberstdorf to Lake Garda.

Most of Bregenzerwald's villages are located in its valley, making it pleasant to discover by bike — think mountain pastures and dairies producing the delicious Bregenzerwald Alpine cheese. The ski resort of Lech Zürs am Arlberg and its surrounding areas flourish in the summer, with mountain bikers rolling down into valleys or attempting the mighty Itonskopf, sections of which even seasoned cyclists have to conquer on foot.

**WHAT ELSE:** Discover the scenic Brandnertal, on the Natursprünge-Weg. Perfect for families, this educational trail lasts around an hour and aims to teach hikers about how the Alps were formed, how local wildlife is looked after and about hazards on the slopes.

## Zell am See-Kaprun

**ON THE TRAIL:** The MTB-Trail Kesselfall is perfect for a casual mountain biking experience through this region. Starting in Kaprun, the trail requires little exertion from cyclists but provides impressive views of meadows, valleys and forests. The route runs for just over five miles, taking in a glacial lake and traditional restaurants that make excellent rest stops. For something a little more challenging, the Geisstein trail mixes impressive Alpine scenes with some serious speed and a number of small jumps. Catch the gondola up to the Alpine Centre and then enjoy the rapid descent.

**WHAT ELSE:** On summer evenings, the Magic Lake Show transforms Zell am See-Kaprun; the spectacle includes music, lights and lasers that wouldn't be out of place in Las Vegas. Make a beeline for the music pavilion in Elisabeth Park for the best views. Visitors can enjoy this free event every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday evening between May and October.



## Wildschönau

**ON THE TRAIL:** This part of the Tyrolean region features 190 miles of hiking paths that are lined in the summer by an idyllic mix of dairy cows, mountain huts and colourful Alpine wildflowers. A great option for nature-lovers is the walk up the Kragenjoch mountain. Suited to those after a bit of a challenge, this trail rewards walkers with an array of seasonal flowers that are rarely found in other regions.

**WHAT ELSE:** After dinner, the iconic *krautinger* — an intensely flavoured schnapps made from white beet — is the region's digestif of choice. The humble vegetable even has its own week-long festival in autumn; restaurants create menus around it and Harvest Festival Sunday is celebrated with a parade and the presentation of the coveted Krautinger Beet Schnapps of the Year award.



## Danube Cycle Path

**ON THE TRAIL:** The Danube Cycle Path runs from Bavaria's Passau to Bratislava, along almost 227 miles of scenic riverside. The journey takes in Dürnstein in the Wachau Valley, the imperial architecture of Vienna and the Schlägener Schlinge (pictured).

**WHAT ELSE:** Historic Linz has a modern edge: explore high-tech exhibits at the Ars Electronica Center, then head to the harbour to see the open-air graffiti gallery, Kulturverein Mural Harbor.



IMAGE: ADOLF BERGNER / BREGENZERWALD TOURISMUS; DOERK 2013; RAINER HOFMANN PHOTOGRAPHY; ALEX MAYR

## Interalpen-Hotel Tyrol

**ON THE TRAIL:** Near the hotel, Möserer See, Wildmoossee and Lottensee are the trio of mountain lakes that form a nine-mile bike tour, making it the perfect opportunity to spend a day cycling and swimming at an Alpine altitude. While Möserer See is there year-round, the other two depend on meltwater: as the local farmers' saying goes, *viel schnee, viel see* ('lots of snow, lots of lake').

**WHAT ELSE:** At an altitude of 4,265ft, the InterAlpen-Hotel Tyrol manages to be both secluded and spacious, with some impressively panoramic Alpine views. The sizeable luxury resort features 282 rooms and suites, six restaurants and the largest spa in the Alps.