

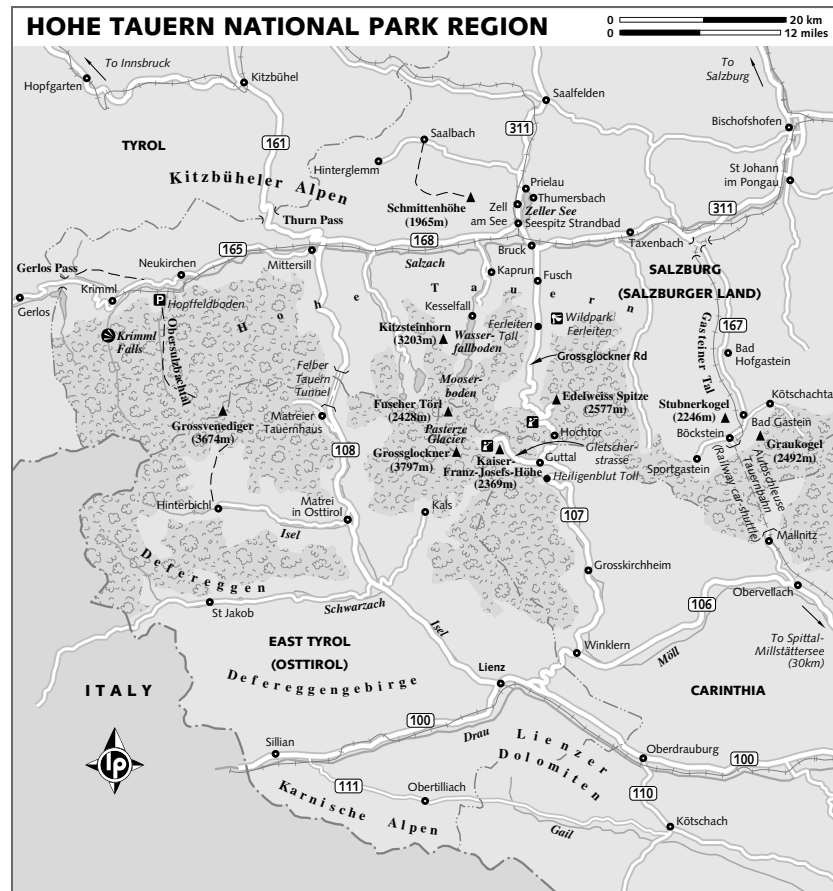
Hohe Tauern National Park Region



Hohe Tauern National Park is no place for acrophobes: you're constantly on a high. This vast tract of mountainous terrain is Austria's largest nature reserve, and three is its magic number: almost 300 peaks towering 3000m create enormous ripples in the landscape. The park is carved up between Carinthia, Tyrol and Salzburgerland (which naturally stole the biggest slice of the strudel). The scenery invites applause: waterfalls gouge deep ravines, Pinzgauer cattle graze spongy pastures, vultures wheel in a china-blue sky and glaciers shimmer like diamonds in spiky tiaras. It is amazing.

The central vein is the precipitous Grossglockner Road, which twists like a ribbon through a crumpled white sheet at the foot of Grossglockner (3797m), the granddaddy of the Austrian Alps. Down south the Dolomites give you a toothy grin in Lienz, a Roman-rooted city with Italian pizzazz, while stepping west the Krimml Falls begin to thunder when the ice cracks. Further north it's a different picture, with life spiralling around the lake at Zell am See and Bad Gastein serving up a winning combination of ski and spa.

This is where Austria's wild things are, but it's no empty wilderness and the resident marmots, chamois and ibex share their playground with active types. The locals have been legging it up these peaks since the Stone Age, so it stands to reason that opportunities for serious hiking are plentiful. If you'd prefer to freewheel over hill and dale, tourist offices hand out maps of the cycling routes that crisscross the reserve. Up for an adventure? Nearly every village offers an array of pursuits for those keen to throw themselves down a cliff, along a river or off a mountain's edge. Tempted...?



HIGHLIGHTS

- Getting high on glacier views on the precipitous **Grossglockner Road** (p318)
- Bathing in radon-rich waters and basking in *belle époque* glory in **Bad Gastein** (p320)
- Kicking off your ski boots to chill in the igloo at **Kitzsteinhorn Glacier** (p314)
- Soaking in the misty spray of **Krimml Falls** (p317), Europe's highest waterfall at 380m
- Letting llamas lead the way through the dramatic Dolomites in **Lienz** (p323)



■ AREA: 1816 SQ KM

■ HIGHEST ELEVATION: GROSSGLOCKNER 3797M

History

The Austrian Alps once formed the boundary between the more-established southern Roman territories and their newer, less stable conquests to the north. The main trade route for pack animals ran along the pass at the end of the Tauern Valley, but few settlements were established due to the Romans' distrust of the treacherous climate (tales of malevolent, snowy spirits abounded) and difficult mountainous topography.

In 1971 the provinces of Carinthia, Salzburg and Tyrol agreed to the creation of a national park; regions were added in stages between 1981 and 1991 until it became Europe's largest national park. Today it's widely regarded as one of Europe's biggest conservation success

stories, an example of an approach where the needs of the local population are addressed right from the start.

Information

All tourist offices in places bordering the park have maps of and information on Hohe Tauern. *The Experience in Nature* map (in English) shows information offices, overnight accommodation and tour ideas. You could also investigate the national park's website at www.hohetauern.at, listing the various provincial tourist offices responsible for the national park.

Climate

The national park has an Alpine climate with high rainfall, short summers and long winters

with heavy snowfall. Avalanches are common in spring. Be aware that the sun is intense at high altitudes.

Dangers & Annoyances

Extremes of climate and terrain make parts of the park potentially dangerous for walkers and climbers. Always come prepared for abrupt changes in weather conditions and visibility, bring warm clothing and adequate maps, and consider taking a guide on more difficult routes. For more tips on staying safe in the mountains, see p86.

The number for emergency mountain rescue services is ☎ 140. Call ☎ 0512-291600 for weather information.

Getting There & Around

The main hubs for train services are Zell am See (for services to Salzburg and points north via St Johann im Pongau) and Lienz (for trains east and west into Tyrol and Carinthia).

The authorities are determined to limit the flow of traffic through the park, so most of the roads through it have toll sections and some are closed in winter. The main north-south road routes are Felber Tauern Rd, open year-round, and the Grossglockner Road (p318). The 5.5km-long Felber Tauern Tunnel is at the East Tyrol-Salzburg border: the toll is €10 for cars

and €8 for motorcycles. Buses on the Lienz-Kitzbühel route operate along this road.

Getting around by bus is made more attractive by special passes; such deals change periodically, so make inquiries upon arrival. Buying zonal day or week passes for provincial transport should work out significantly cheaper than buying single tickets.

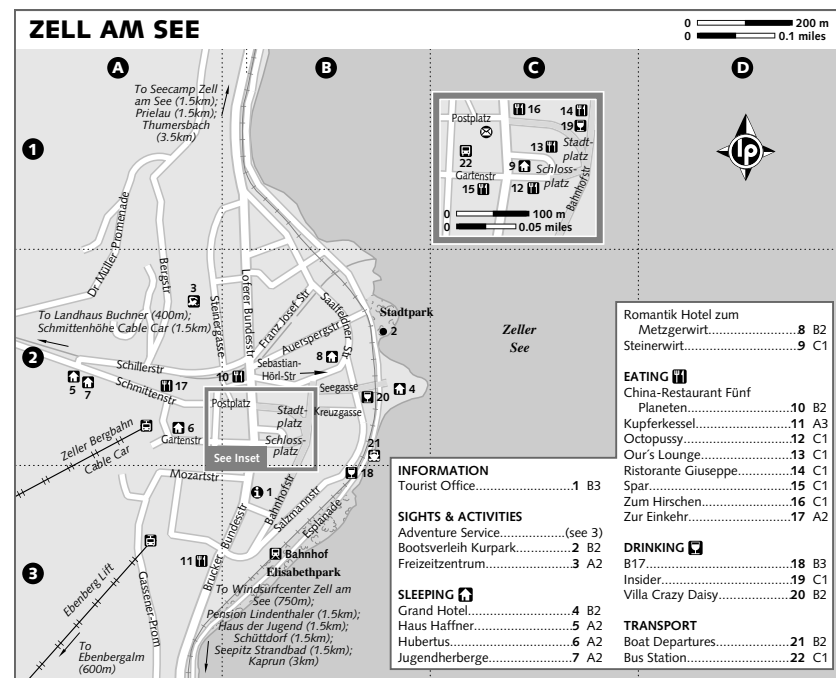
ZELL AM SEE

☎ 06542 / pop 10,050 / elev 757m

Zell am See is Austria's Van Gogh – it lays on its colour thick. Taking the ice white canvas of the Hohe Tauern range, it suffuses it with a sapphire blue lake, emerald spruce forests, golden moors and the multicoloured sails of windsurfers. Step into the picture in summer and you're within easy reach of High Alpine walking trails, the Krimml Falls and the awe-inspiring Grossglockner Road. In winter, the scene shifts to downhill thrills in Zell am See and Kaprun, which together form the Europa Sports Region (p75). In both seasons, Zell am See's medieval centre serves up excellent dining and nightlife in its tangle of pedestrianised streets.

Orientation & Information

Almost adjacent to the main resort of Zell am See is the residential area of Schüttdorf,



which is generally cheaper for accommodation. Both are on the western shore of the Zeller See. You should ask for the handy *Gästekarte* (guest card) wherever you stay and show it for discounts on activities, sights and transport.

Tourist office (☎ 770-0; www.europasportregion.info; Brucker Bundesstrasse 1a; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon, 2-6pm Sat, 10am-noon Sun mid-Dec-Feb & Jul-Aug). Staff at this office will help find rooms; there's also an accommodation board in the foyer with a free 24hr telephone.

LORD OF THE RINGOS

Zell am See has plenty of pedalos and rowing boats, but you might like to venture into the resort's wackier waters with a spin in the brand-new **BBQ-Donut** at Schmittenhöhe. From June to early October this giant Ringo (inflatable ring), complete with a charcoal grill in the centre and a shady parasol above to block the rays, floats leisurely across the summit's 2000m reservoir.

It's a deliciously different experience to glide across an Alpine lake with the aroma of steak filling your nostrils, an ice-cold beer on the side and 3000m-high peaks drifting into view. The Alps-meets-Australia experience costs €20 per person per hour for groups of up to five. Solo travellers keen to give the whole donut thing a go should turn up for the **Grilling & Chilling** picnic programme, which departs from the Schmittenhöhe cable car at 9.45am every Friday and costs €15.

HIKING & CLIMBING IN HOHE TAUERN NATIONAL PARK

Europe's biggest national park, Hohe Tauern is a mecca to hikers and climbers with its extraordinary landscape of verdant valleys, towering mountains, virgin forests and shimmering glaciers. The reserve has treks to suit every level of ability, from gentle day walks (see p102) to extreme expeditions to inaccessible peaks and ridges.

Freytag & Berndt produces nine 1:50,000 walking maps covering the national park and surrounding areas. If you plan to undertake major walking expeditions, you should plan your overnight stops in advance – some small-scale guesthouses provide food and accommodation, but they are widely scattered. Contact the regional or local tourist offices for accommodation lists.

Popular walking trails include the ascent of the **Grossvenediger** (3674m), a peak permanently coated with ice and snow and flanked by glaciers. The closest you can get by road is the **Matreier Tauernhaus Hotel** (1512m; ☎ 04875-88 11; www.matreier-tauernhaus.at; A-9971 Matrei in Osttirol) at the southern entrance to the Felber Tauern Tunnel. You can park here and within an hour's walk gain fine views of the mountain.

Anyone with mountain-climbing experience and a reasonable level of fitness can climb the mighty **Grossglockner** (3797m) via the 'ordinary' route, though guides are recommended. The main route for hikers begins from the **Adlersruhe (Eagles Rest) overnight hut** (☎ 04876-500), a four- to five-hour hike from Heiligenblut. From here, the route to the summit crosses ice and rocks, following a steel cable over a narrow snow ridge. The final ascent to the cross at the summit is relatively easy. It's essential to have the proper equipment (including maps, ropes and crampons) and to check weather conditions before setting out. For guides, contact the tourist offices in Heiligenblut or Kals, or ring the **mountain guides association** (☎ 04824-2700).

ICE, ICE BABY

High above Zell am See, the Kitzsteinhorn Glacier is one place you're guaranteed a frosty reception since the opening of the subzero **Volvo XC Ice Camp**. If you're game for giving up your warm Alpine chalet in exchange for a hollowed-out ice cube, this igloo village 2500m above sea level is the place to live out your wildest Eskimo dreams. Frostbite? Forget it. These dome-shaped dwellings may be built from snow, but they feel positively cosy once you've blown out the tea lights and slipped beneath your thick reindeer-skin cover. Staying here isn't cheap at €147 per night, but rates include a fondue feast and few experiences can beat drinking *gluhwein* (mulled wine) at an ice bar before taking a starlit stroll on the glacier.

The benefit of being up so high, of course, is that you can be the first to carve up the slopes in the morning. Snowboarding fans can also attend free safety and freestyle workshops during the day. The camp is open from mid-December to April and overnighting is possible on Wednesdays and Saturdays. For more details, visit Zell am See tourist office or see www.icecamp.at.

and snowboarding at the **Volvo XC Ice Camp** (see above).

Combined lift passes for the region cost per adult/child €68.50/34 for a two-day minimum period; ski buses are free for ski-pass holders. Ski/boot rental prices are roughly €22/37 for one day. Cable cars (Ebenberg Lift and cityXpress) from Zell am See ascend to the ridge on either side of the **Schmittenhöhe cable car** (adult/child return €20.50/10.25), which reaches 1965m. These operate from December to April.

HIKING

The hiking around Zell am See is some of the finest in Austria; almost everywhere you tramp you're rewarded with splendid vistas of **Grossglockner** (3797m), standing like a shepherd guarding snow-white flocks. Snowfields often linger till early summer above 2000m, but when they melt the region becomes a trekking wonderland comprising 400km of trails that stretch from gentle ambles through flower-speckled pastures to the glacier trail at Kitzsteinhorn. For a taste of the dramatic scenery this region has to offer, consider walking the five- to six-hour **Pinzgauer Spaziergang** (p102), leading from Schmittenhöhe peak to Saalbach.

From June to mid-October, the tourist office arranges guided walks including mountain treks, picnic tours to a 2000m-high reservoir and, the perennial family favourite, llama expeditions. They also hand out a free *Wanderkarte* (walking map) to help plan your own route.

SWIMMING

When the weather warms, the chilly waters of the **Zeller See** can be tempting for a quick dip.

Lidos dotted around the lake include those at Seespitz, Thumersbach and Zell am See, which feature sunbathing lawns, solar-heated outdoor pools and splash areas for the little 'uns; all cost €5.60/3.50 per adult/child. Unless you're a fan of ice-bathing, the **Freizeitzentrum** (Leisure Centre; ☎ 785-0; Steingasse 3-5; pool adult/child €7.90/5.70; ☎ 10am-10pm) is preferable to the lake in winter; it shelters a 25m swimming pool, plus a whirlpool and saunas perfect for an après-ski unwind.

BOAT TRIPS

A laid-back way to soak up the sights is to board a **boat tour** (☎ 789-0; adult/child €8.70/4.35; ☎ May-Oct) from Zell am See Esplanade for a 45-minute round trip of the lake. Boats also shuttle across the lake, occasionally stopping at **Seecamp Zell am See** (one-way/return €2.75/4.60). But if you'd prefer to row your own, a number of places along the promenade hire out rowing boats, pedalos and motorboats. Pick of the bunch is **Bootsverleih Kurpark** (☎ 0664-358 17 95; pedalo/motorboat per hr €10.50/13.50; ☎ 9am-10pm Apr-Oct), situated close to the Grand Hotel.

ADVENTURE SPORTS

A one-stop daredevil shop is **Adventure Service** (☎ 735 25; www.adventureservice.at; Steingasse 9), which offers a long list of adrenaline-charged activities from tandem paragliding (€100) and white-water rafting (€44) to canyoning (€51 to €69), climbing (€41) and guided mountain-bike tours (€22 to €29).

There's also plenty of high-speed action on the water, such as knuckle-whitening waterskiing or wakeboarding at **Strandbad Thumersbach** (☎ 0664-206 85 06; Pocherweg 28). The breeze that blows down from the mountains

creates ideal conditions for windsurfing. To master the fine art of balancing on a board, slip on a wet suit and head for **Windsurfcener Zell am See** (☎ 551 15; Seespitzstrasse 13; half-/full-day course €27/44).

Festivals & Events

Zell am See celebrates two summer festivals on the shores of its glistening lake. The first is held in mid-July and attracts a lively crowd with its line-up of fireworks, live music and sports events. The second, in early August, stages concerts and costumed parades. The **Zell Summer Night** festival runs from June to August and draws Dixie bands, street entertainers and improvised theatre to the town's cobbled streets and squares every Wednesday night.

Sleeping

Zell am See's best beds can fill up in a flash during high season, so it's wise to book ahead. Aside from the top-end hotels by the lake, there are loads of cheap-and-cheerful private rooms about town, which usually add 5% to 10% for stays of less than three nights; ask the tourist office for a list of such places. Expect winter prices to be roughly 50% higher than the summer rates quoted below.

BUDGET

Seecamp Zell am See (☎ 721 15; www.seecamp.at; Thumersbacherstrasse 34; campsites per adult/child €7.90/4.70; ☎) If waking up to views of Grossglockner appeals, camp out at this tree-shaded site on the lakeshore. Facilities include a shop, restaurant and kids club. Guided mountain-bike and hiking tours are available.

Haus der Jugend (☎ 571 85; www.hostel-zell.at; in German; Seespitzstrasse 13; 6/4/2-bed dm €17.50/19.50/21.50; ☎) For budget digs on the lake, head to this hostel with a waterfront terrace and prime vistas of the peaks. There's a windsurfing school and volleyball court a few paces away. The centre is a 15-minute stroll along the shore.

Jugendherberge (☎ 470 36; www.lsh-zell.at; in German; Schmittenstrasse 27; dm €23.50; ☎) Next to Haus Haffner, this place is a cut above your average HI hostel. The four-bed dorms are spotlessly clean and facilities include bike hire (per day €10), internet access, a gym and restaurant.

Haus Haffner (☎ 723 96-0; www.haffner.at; Schmittenstrasse 29; s €27, d €48, apt €60-73; ☎) Tucked down a quiet backstreet near the ski lift, this cheery guesthouse has spacious rooms and

family apartments with rag rugs, kettles and chunky wood furniture (the owner is a cabinet maker!).

Pension Lindenthaler (☎ 572 21; Porscheallee 43; s/d €30/54; ☎) This pension in Schüttdorf scores points for its chirpy staff, terrace and free internet access. The comfy rooms were recently revamped and painted in sunny shades. It's a 25-minute walk along the promenade into town.

Landhaus Buchner (☎ 720 62; www.landhausbuchner.at; Schmittenstrasse 57; s/d €39/58; ☎) The twittering birds in the forest behind Landhaus Buchner are likely to be your wake-up call at this quaint Alpine chalet. A short toddle from the lake, the light-filled rooms are a great deal. The party hut in the garden is a welcome bonus.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hubertus (☎ 724 27; www.hubertus-pension.at; Gartenstrasse 4; s/d €42/70; ☎) Facing the ski lift, Hubertus has made other guesthouses green with envy since being awarded the Austrian Eco-Label. The three-star chalet uses 100% renewable energy (solar and wind power), serves local organic produce and fair-trade coffee at breakfast. The rooms are country style with laminate floors, crisp linen and floral drapes.

Steinerwirt (☎ 725 02; www.steinerwirt.com; Schlossplatz 1; s/d €55/110; ☎) Steinerwirt has been around for donkey's years, but recently morphed into an arty boutique hotel. The light-filled rooms are defined by muted tones and untreated pinewood. Up in the attic, the Think Tank is a calm spot for early-morning meditation. The restaurant (open for both lunch and dinner) uses meat from Hohe Tauern pastures and fresh fish from the lake. Mains cost from €6 to €20.

Romantik Hotel zum Metzgerwirt (☎ 725 20; www.romantik-hotel.at; Sebastian-Hörl-Strasse 11; s €89-113, d €148-196, ste €199; ☎) Creeping ivy envelops this little love nest dating to 1493. It's the small details that matter here: from the roaring fire in the lounge to the 300-year-old apple tree in the garden. Guests can bathe beneath the stars in the solar-heated outdoor pool or in a chocolate-filled bath in the spa.

Grand Hotel (☎ 788-0; www.grandhotel.cc; Esplanade 4-6; s/d/ste €113/226/328; ☎) The *belle époque* beauty of Zell am See, this posh pad beside the lake has a private beach and waterfront spa that give it an exclusive air. The lobby is all chandeliers and sweeping staircases, while understated elegance sums

up the rooms. Hundertwasser's *Österreich-Brunnen* (Austria Fountain) adds a splash of colour outside.

Eating

Zell am See has a number of decent restaurants; many at the plush hotels afford mesmeric views of the lake. The pedestrian-only centre is a melting pot of Austrian and world flavours. Fish plucked fresh from the lake features on practically every menu.

Kupferkessel (☎ 727 68; Brucker Bundesstrasse 18; mains €6-23; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) Once upon a time this wacky place was a petrol station. It has now been reincarnated as a family-friendly restaurant, filling tummies instead of tanks with mammoth steaks and cheap pasta dishes. There are plenty of curios to feast your eyes on – from mounted Vespas to portraits framed in toilet seats.

China-Restaurant Fünf Planeten (☎ 701 34; Loferer Bundesstrasse 3; lunch €5.50-5.90, mains €7-11; ☺ lunch & dinner) Spicing up the centre is this Chinese den centred on a fish pond, where the midday crowds tuck into crispy spring rolls, beef with bean sprouts and huge plates of noodles.

Octopussy (☎ 470 42; Schlossplatz 2; mains €7-18.50; ☺ dinner) There's very little that's Bond about this Octopussy, but the fishy menu certainly delivers with juicy crustaceans, spinach-stuffed octopus and grilled calamari. Retreat to the terrace on warm summer evenings.

Ebenbergalm (☎ 0664-351 2307; Schmitten 38, Ebenburg; mains €8-12; ☺ lunch & dinner) Wild whiskered Günter and his (less hairy) sister, Gudrun, serve solid mountain fare at this little wooden hut near the top of the Ebenberg lift. Take a seat beside the tiled oven or on the panoramic terrace. You can walk up in around an hour or call for a lift (free pick-up from the town hotels).

our pick Our's Lounge (☎ 772 44; Schlossplatz 5; mains €8-18; ☺ 10am-1am) Floor-to-ceiling glass walls, throne-like red velvet chairs and rotating exhibitions of modern art draw your attention to this sassy lounge bar. The vibe is young and the heated terrace jam-packed at weekends. The menu is a successful blend of Austrian and Mediterranean flavours – try the fresh scampi and vitamin-rich juices. There's free wi-fi for customers.

Zur Einkehr (☎ 723 63; Schmittenstrasse 12; mains €9.50-19; ☺ lunch & dinner winter, dinner Mon-Sat summer) Near the slopes, this barn-style bistro is a local favourite. Sticky spare ribs and seafood lasagne

are polished off nicely with a pear schnapps (or three) at the crescent-shaped bar.

Ristorante Giuseppe (☎ 72 37 35; Kirchengasse 1; pizza €6-9.50, mains €10-22; ☺ lunch & dinner) This upbeat bistro and café in the pedestrian-only centre hits the spot with Italian flavours. The antipasti and salads are tasty and the pizzas enormous. There's a pavement terrace and a rustic wood-panelled restaurant upstairs.

Zum Hirschen (☎ 774; Dreifaltigkeitsgasse 1; mains €14-25; ☺ lunch & dinner) This smart restaurant creates an intimate mood with warm pine panelling, flickering candles and friendly yet discreet service. Signature dishes include Pinzgauer *Kasnocken* (cheese noodles) and crispy pork drenched in beer sauce.

Self-caterers can stock up on supplies at a number of supermarkets in the centre, including **Spar** (Brucker Bundesstrasse 4).

Drinking

Zell am See's nightlife gathers momentum in winter when ski bums descend on the town in droves. The following watering holes are also lively in summer high season.

B17 (☎ 474 24; Salzmannstrasse 2; ☺ 5pm-2am Mon-Sat) This corrugated shack is stuck in a WWII time warp. The shell recreates a B17 bomber and is festooned with engines, army combats and fighter-plane pictures. The cheery barman mixes excellent fresh fruit cocktails and the measures are generous. Check out the heated roof terrace and free sweets in the loos.

Insider (☎ 739 69; Kreuzgasse 1; ☺ 7pm-4am) This groovy underground haunt with blood red walls and neon light panels lures a young crowd with its daily cocktail specials (the frozen daiquiris and lychee shots pack a punch). DJ Rudi spins mostly funk, and up-and-coming bands perform here three times a week.

Villa Crazy Daisy (☎ 725 26; Salzmannstrasse 8; ☺ 9pm-4am) The maddest cow in town, Daisy rocks in high season and is the place for full-on après-ski parties in winter. The raucous drinking hole occupies a rambling villa next to the Grand Hotel; head upstairs for live music, DJs and lots of slapstick fun.

Getting There & Away

Train destinations from Zell am See include Salzburg (€12.70, 1¼ hours, hourly), Kitzbühel (€9.90, 45 minutes, every two hours) and Innsbruck (€23.30, two hours, every two hours). You can hire bikes at any of the sports shops in town.

Buses leave from outside the *Bahnhof* (train station) and the bus station behind the post office. They run to various destinations, including Kaprun (€2.80, 20 minutes, hourly) and Krimml Falls (€8.70, 1½ hours, hourly). For details of buses to Lienz via Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Höhe, see p318.

Zell am See is on Hwy 311 running north to Lofrer, where it joins Hwy 312, which connects St Johann in Tyrol with Salzburg (passing through Germany). It's also just a few kilometres north of the east-west highway linking St Johann im Pongau with Tyrol (via the Gerlos Pass).

KRIMML

☎ 06564 / pop 890 / elev 1076m

Most people come to Krimml for the mountains, fresh air and pure water – all 380m of it. The mighty roar of the three-tier **Krimmler Wasserfälle** (Krimml Falls) echoes through the valley. Hung in mist, the brilliance of Europe's highest waterfall illuminates the deep-green pine forest like a spotlight in the dark. It's worthy of all the attention it gets, but spare a little time for Krimml's other charms – alpine pastures, vistas of Grossvenediger and the earthy authenticity of a village that hasn't yet let fame go to its pretty head.

Orientation & Information

The Krimml Falls are on the northwestern fringes of the national park, within the protected area. The village is about 500m north of the falls, on a side turning from Hwy 165. There are parking spaces (€4 per day) near the path to the falls, which branches to the right just before the toll booths for the Gerlos Pass road (see p318).

The **tourist office** (☎ 72 39; www.krimml.at; ☺ 8am-noon, 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30-10.30am Sat) is in the village centre next to the white church. The post office is next door.

Sights & Activities

Near the entrance to the falls is **Wasserwunderwelt** (adult/child €7/3.50; ☎ 9.30am-5pm May-Oct), a water-related theme park with loads of hands-on activities for kids – from physics experiments to art installations and outdoor games where the aim is to get completely soaked.

Krimml's star attraction is, of course, the waterfall itself and the best way to get up close and feel the spray is to walk the **Wasserfallweg** trail (see Krimml Falls Loop, p104). The lower

levels are crawling with day-trippers in summer but the further you climb the quieter the path becomes. The **ticket & information office** (☎ 201 13; adult/child €1.80/0.50, free Dec-Apr; ☺ ticket office 8am-6pm May-Nov, unattended Dec-Apr) are a few minutes' walk along the path.

Sleeping & Eating

Krimml is easily visited as a day trip from Zell am See. It's a shame to hurry, though, as this unspoilt village has some beautiful places in which to stay; many are set on a hillside overlooking the falls. The staff at Krimml tourist office can help arrange accommodation. Winter prices are roughly a third higher than those given here.

Höhlzahnalm (☎ 0664-402 68 78; www.hoelzahnalm.at; dm adult/child €18/12; ☺ May-Oct) High above the falls, this wood-shingled farmhouse is a superb budget choice. You'll need to do the legwork, but that makes the *Kaspressknödel* (dumpling in gooey Pinzgauer cheese) all the more welcome. The ecofriendly chalet generates its own electricity, uses natural spring water and has comfy bunks for weary walkers upstairs.

Hotel Klockerhaus (☎ 72 28; Wasserfallstrasse 10; www.klockerhaus.at; s/d €39/68; P ♿) This family-run hotel has a unique claim to fame: it nurtures the largest free-roaming guinea-pig colony in Salzburgerland. What you'll get is also more than just a hutch – neat and tidy rooms with balconies, views of the falls while you eat breakfast, an untreated pool and plenty to entertain the tots (a playground, goats and ubiquitous racing rodents).

our pick Heimathaus Anton Wallner (☎ 71 17 67; Oberkrimml 8; apt €68-250) Way up there on Austria's most quirky list, this rickety chalet has heaps of charisma, with crooked beams and lantern-lit corridors that creak under the weight of their 400-year history. Owner Herbert has poured both love and labour into renovating the gorgeous apartments, where the horn-sledge beds (ask for the *Schlittenzimmer*) come with old-fashioned stripy nightcaps. The sign on the gate says: *Wanderer und andere lustige Leut willkommen* (Walkers and other fun-loving folk welcome). If you fit either or both of these categories, come on in.

La Piazza (☎ 75 34; Oberkrimml 94; mains €6-12; ☺ dinner) After walking your socks off in the mountains, this central taverna fills the gap with its large helpings of spaghetti and pizzas from a wood-fired oven.

Getting There & Away

Bus routes run all year from Zell am See to Krimml (€8.70, 1½ hours, last return bus 5pm). The Krimml Falls path begins near the starting point of the *Tauernradweg* (cycle path) to Salzburg (175km) and Passau (325km).

GERLOS PASS

This High Alpine pass links the Zillertal (p346) in Tyrol to Krimml in Salzburgerland, zigzagging 12km through high moor and spruce forest and reaching an elevation of 1630m. The viewpoint above the turquoise *Stausee* (reservoir) is a great spot to pause for a picnic and tremendous views of the Alps. On the approach to Krimml near Schönmoosalm, there are also fine vistas of the Krimml Falls. The pass is open year-round and there is a toll: €7 for cars and €4 for motorcycles.

Bus routes make the trip between Krimml and Zell am Ziller (one-way including toll €8.70, 1½ hours) in Tyrol from 1 July to 30 September. By car, you can avoid using the toll road by following the (easy-to-miss) signs to Wald im Pinzgau, 6km north of Krimml.

GROSSGLOCKNER ROAD

Surely one of Europe's greatest drives, the snaking **Grossglockner Road** (Grossglockner Hochalpenstrasse; ☎ 065-46 650; toll per car/motorcycle €28/18; ☞ 6am-8pm May-15 Jun, 5pm-9.30pm 16 Jun-15 Sep, 6am-7.30pm 16 Sep-Oct) is a 1930s feat of engineering and a feast of perpendicular towers, ice blue glaciers and razor-sharp peaks. If the 43km highway doesn't take your breath away with its hairpin bends, the incredible views of Grossglockner ringed by snowy peaks should do the trick.

Linking Bruck in Salzburgerland to Heiligenblut in Carinthia, the former Roman trade route comprises 36 stomach-churning switchbacks, passing gemstone lakes, pine forest and high pastures streaked with waterfalls. As the hills are steep, the easiest way to tackle them is by car or motorbike. If you're fighting fit and fancy a challenge, however, a free and more carbon-neutral alternative is to get on your bike and pedal it. The going is pretty tough uphill but the downhill stretches are exhilarating.

Just before the start of the tour, you'll reach **Wildpark Ferleiten** (☎ 06546-220; www.wildpark-ferleiten.at; adult/child €5.50/3; ☞ 8am-dusk May-Nov), a 15-hectare reserve home to 200 Alpine animals such as chamois, marmots and bears. Kids

can let off steam in the playgrounds or on the mini-roller coasters.

Once through the tollgate, the road begins to climb steeply. Situated at 2260m is the **Alpine Nature Museum** (admission free; ☞ 9am-5pm), screening films on local flora and fauna. A little further along, a 2km side road (no coaches allowed) cuts a path through a wall of ice up to **Edelweiss Spitze** (2577m), the highest viewpoint on the route with a lookout tower affording 360-degree views of more than 30 peaks of 3000m. You can refuel with coffee and strudel on the terrace at the hut.

Soon you'll want your camera handy for **Fuscher Törl** (2428m), commanding superb vistas on both sides of the ridge, and the petrol blue lake at nearby **Fuscher Lacke** (2262m). Here there is a small exhibition that vividly documents the construction of the road; originally conceived as a way of beating the economic depression of the 1930s, it was built by 3000 men over the course of five years.

Hochtor (2504m) is the second-highest point on the pass, after which there is a steady descent to **Guttal** (1950m). Here the road splits: to the east lies Heiligenblut and the route to Lienz, while to the west is the 9km **Gletscherstrasse** (Glacier Road). Following the Gletscherstrasse, the initial views south to Heiligenblut are fantastic, yet soon your attention is drawn to the looming Grossglockner massif. The road features signs warning *Achtung Murmeliere* (Beware of marmots); keep an eye out for burrowing rodents along the way.

The Gletscherstrasse emerges at **Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Höhe** (2369m), where there is a visitor's centre with mountain-themed displays. It's a stupendous viewpoint from which to admire Austria's highest peak, Grossglockner, and the 9km **Pasterze Glacier**, a swirl of fissured ice that shimmers when the light hits it. Steps lead down to the edge of the glacier which, despite its majestic appearance, is receding at a disastrous rate because of global warming (it has shrunk to half its size over the past 150 years and is predicted to disappear entirely within 100 years). A popular walk taking in the glacier is Gamsgrubenweg, a trail that winds above the glacier and leads to a waterfall (allow roughly 1½ to two hours return).

Getting There & Away

Bus 5002 operates between Lienz and Heiligenblut nine times a day from Monday

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Anyone who wants to get out and stride through the Hohe Tauern National Park should consider signing up for one of the back-to-nature guided tours led by a team of well-informed rangers. From July to September, Hohe Tauern offers 36 hikes (11 are free with a guest card) that aim to get every last lovely drop out of the reserve. The broad spectrum covers everything from herb discovery trails to High Alpine hikes, around-the-glacier tours, gorge climbing, wildlife spotting (bring your binoculars), and early morning mountain photography courses. For the complete programme and price list, visit www.nationalpark.at.

to Friday (€7.10, one hour); services are less frequent at weekends. From 24 June to 23 September, four buses run from Monday to Friday and three at weekends between Heiligenblut and Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Höhe (€3.90, 30 minutes). The buses connect neatly so that you can spend time in Heiligenblut and at Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Höhe and still do the trip in one day. From 3 June to 23 September, bus 651 runs twice daily between Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Höhe and Zell am See (€10.30, 1½ hours). Add an extra €2 per person to these fares to cover the toll.

HEILIGENBLUT

☎ 04824 / pop 1200 / elev 1301m

One of the single-most striking images on the Grossglockner Road is Heiligenblut, the needle-thin spire of its pilgrimage church framed by the glaciated summit of Grossglockner. The village's iconic scenery and easy access to the mountains draws skiers, hikers and (less-loveable) hordes of camera-toting tourists; stay overnight or get here early to avoid the crowds. The compact centre is lined with log chalets and, despite an overload of yodel-when-you-press-me kitsch, still retains some traditional charm.

Information

National park information office (☎ 27 00; www.hohetauern.at; ☞ 10am-5pm daily late May-early Oct, 3-6pm winter) In the Gästehaus Schober; has some museum exhibits. From 4pm to 5pm Monday to Friday someone from the Bergführerinformationsbüro (mountain guides office) gives advice on climbing and walking.

Tourist office (☎ 20 01 21; www.heiligenblut.at; ☞ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 4-6pm Sat Jul-Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri Dec-Apr, rest of the year 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 4-6pm Sat) On the main street, close to the Hotel Post bus stop. Books mountain guides.

Sights & Activities

Soaring skywards and clearly visible from the Gletscherstrasse, the **church** steeple of Heiligenblut demands attention. Steeped in legend, the 15th-century pilgrimage church shelters statues of saints and a fine late-Gothic altar. The tabernacle is purported to contain a tiny phial of Christ's blood – hence the name of the village (*Heiligenblut* means 'holy blood') – which was discovered in the possession of a saint named Briccius. He was buried in an avalanche on this spot more than a thousand years ago.

Heiligenblut's 55km of snow-sure slopes (geared towards beginners and intermediates) and a Bobo's Kids' Club make Heiligenblut a top choice for families. Most of the **skiing** takes place on Schareck (2604m) and Gjaidtroghöhe (2969m) peaks. A one-day local lift pass costs €34 and will also get you into other resorts in Carinthia and East Tyrol. In summer, **mountaineering** is a popular pursuit (see p312). Inquire at the tourist office for details of mountain-bike trails in the park.

Sleeping & Eating

Heiligenblut has a smattering of places to stay and eat, with most clustered around the village centre. Private rooms usually offer the best value and the tourist office can make bookings. Expect rates to increase 20% to 30% in winter.

Camping Grossglockner (☎ 20 48; Hadergasse 11; campsites per adult/child/car €6.90/3/2.50; ☐) Open year-round, this green and pleasant site on the outskirts of the village features a restaurant and affords prime views of Grossglockner.

Jugendherberge (☎ 22 59; www.oehjv.or.at; Hof 36; dm/r €18.40/26.40; ☞ reception 7-10am & 5-8pm; ☐) Near the church, this chalet-style HI hostel has light, spacious dorms and handy extras including ski storage and a common room. It's right next to the public swimming pool, sauna and climbing wall.

Hotel Senger (☎ 22 15; www.romantic.at; Hof 23; s/d €64/130; ☐ ☞) The colourful prayer flags fluttering at this farmhouse are a tribute to the Tibetan monks that stayed here during a visit to Austria. There is a real sense of being

stuck in the mountains – think stone floors, open fireplaces and plenty of cosy nooks. All of the snug-as-a-bug rooms have balconies except room 24, which offers Grossglockner views instead.

Café Dorfstüberl (☎ 20 19; Hof 5; mains €7-12; ☺ lunch & dinner) Opening onto a tiny terrace, this smoky local den dishes up hearty, reasonably priced food. The *halbes Hendl* (half a roasted chicken) with a mound of potato salad goes down well.

Die Casa (☎ 20 28; Hof 9; mains €8-14; ☺ lunch & dinner) Step back to the 16th century at this alpine hut, where the walls are festooned with rams' heads, ploughs and leather boots. The first mountaineers to climb Grossglockner supped here, so expect wholesome fare (the grill platter and sander fillet are favourites). Retreat to the patio for stunning views.

Getting There & Away

As well as buses running to/from Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Höhe from late June to September, there is a year-round service to/from Lienz (see p318).

BAD GASTEIN

☎ 06434 / pop 6100 / elev 1000m

Bad Gastein runs hot and cold: thermal waters gush from its hot springs and deep powder beckons skiers to the slopes of the Gasteiner Tal (Gastein Valley). A far cry from your chocolate-box Austrian ski resort, this grand old dame is spiritually somewhere between Brighton and St Moritz. The town exudes an air of 19th-century gentility with sublime *belle époque* villas, scintillating spas and higgledy-piggledy streets that afford glimpses of the Gasteiner Ache falls. The elixir of life? Take a deep breath and plunge into the radon-rich waters to find out...

Orientation & Information

Clinging precipitously to the valley slopes, Bad Gastein's winding streets are punctuated with scenic viewpoints. Tumbling through the centre in a series of waterfalls is the Gasteiner Ache. Its thundering waters can be heard throughout the valley. The *Bahnhof* is to the west of town and the central hub, Kongressplatz, down the hill to the east; make your way down near the Hotel Salzburger Hof.

Post office (Bahnhofplatz 9; ☺ 8am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8-10am Sat) Next to the train station.

Tourist office (☎ 06432-3393 560; www.gastein.com; Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Strasse 27; ☺ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & 10am-2pm Sun high season) To get here, go left from the train station exit and walk down the hill. Staff will find you accommodation free of charge. There's information on the national park in the foyer.

Sights

Bad Gastein still mirrors the grandeur of its 19th-century heyday, with *belle époque* villas and elegant hotels hugging its sheer cliffs. The best way to soak up the resort's ambience is by strolling its steep streets and manicured gardens.

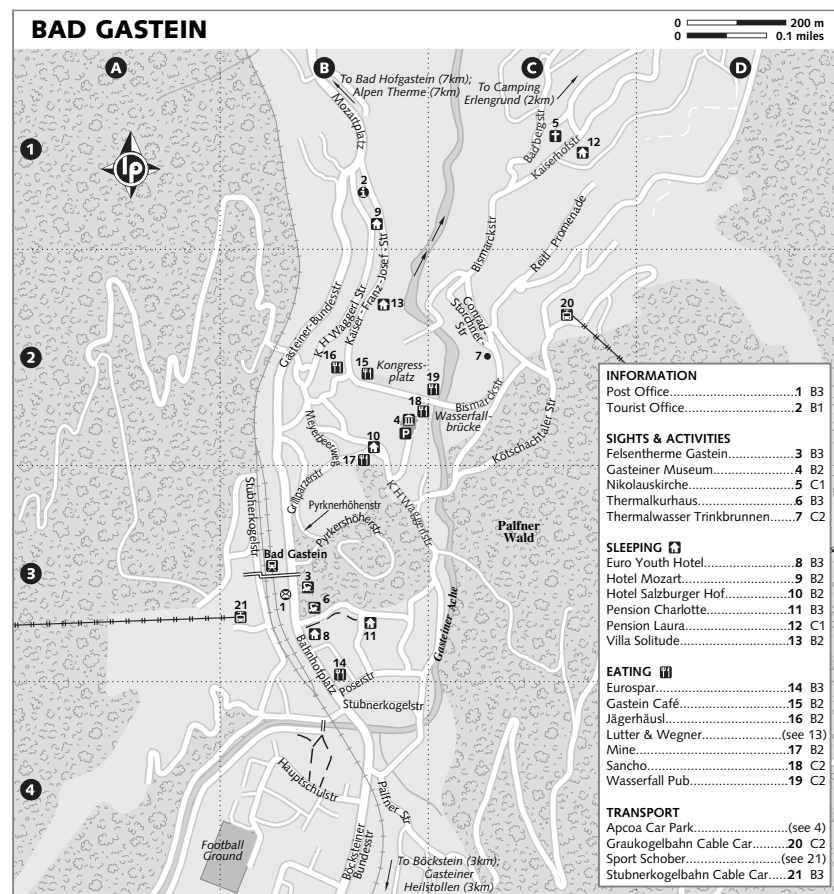
Worth a peek on the way down to the waterfall is the **Gasteiner Museum** (☎ 3488; 2nd fl, Haus Austria, Kongressplatz; adult/child €3/free; ☺ 10.30am-noon & 3.30-6pm, closed Nov & May). The collection is small but ambitious, spanning everything from minerals (including a 76kg-heavy rock crystal) to Stone Age artefacts, devilish *Krampus* (devil) costumes, vintage tourist posters and 19th-century oil paintings of Bad Gastein.

The nearby stone Wasserfallbrücke (waterfall bridge) is a great lookout point over the 341m-high **Gasteiner Ache** falls. Raging through the town and cascading into three brilliant turquoise pools, the waterfall has inspired painters and poets over the ages, and the negatively ionised air here is famed for its therapeutic benefits. The *Wasserfallweg* (waterfall trail) shadows the magnificent cataract.

Situated in the lower part of town, the late-Gothic **Nikolauskirche** (Bismarkstrasse) is a little gem of a church, tiled with wood shingles and built around a central pillar. Its interior is simple yet beautiful with an uneven flagstone floor, baroque altar and rudimentary frescoes that are fading with age. Look out for the statue of 16th-century physician Paracelsus outside.

Activities

Bad Gastein is famous for its **radon-laced waters**, which seep down from the mountains, heat up to temperatures of 44°C to 47°C around 2000m underground, then gush forth at 18 different springs in the area. Renowned since the Middle Ages for their healing properties, the thermal waters are said to repair human cells, alleviate rheumatism, boost potency and alleviate menopausal problems. Strauss and Sissi (Empress Elisabeth) both put the waters' benefits to the test; the empress was so impressed that she penned a poem beginning:



'Only sick bones I thought of bringing, where mystically your hot water springs...'

The product of 3000 years of geological forces, the radon is absorbed through the skin and retained in the body for nearly three hours. Most people take the cure by bathing in the radon-rich waters of the spa, but **vapour tunnels** burrowed deep in the rock and emitting radon gases are used for more intensive treatments. To sample the magical waters without splashing out, make the pilgrimage to **Thermalwasser Trinkbrunnen**. You can slurp or bottle the water for free at this fountain beside the Gasteiner Ache – two to six cups per day are recommended for glowing health.

A great glass elevator zooms from street level up to **Felsenherme Gastein** (☎ 222 30;

Bahnhofplatz 5; 3hr/day ticket adult €17.50/19.50, child €10/12; ☺ 9am-9pm Apr-Nov, 9am-10pm Dec-Mar), where you can take the rejuvenating waters. The spa shelters grottos, an adventure pool for kids and an outdoor thermal bath with pummeling massage jets, and superlative views of the mountains. Curative massages, radon baths and electrotherapy are available next door in the **Thermalkurhaus** (Bahnhofplatz 9; ☺ 8am-noon, 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat).

In winter Bad Gastein's slopes and spas are a match made in heaven; a place where you can cruise challenging red runs before indulging in a little radon therapy. **Skiing** and **snowboarding** are centred on Stubnerkogel (2246m) and Graukogel (2492m), where the varied terrain is aimed mostly at intermediates.

The resort is part of the expansive Sportwelt Amadé arena, comprising 865km of slopes. A day ski pass in the high winter season costs €38. **Cross-country skiing** is also big news in Bad Gastein, with 90km of prepared *Loipe* (tracks) including a floodlit trail at Bökkstein (3km south of Bad Gastein). **Sport Schober** (☎ 32 68-0; Stubnerkogel; ☞ 8am-6pm) rents skis for around €20 and cross-country sets for €11 per day.

When the weather warms, both Stubnerkogel and Graukogel are excellent for **walking**, with plenty of high-altitude trails traversing Alpine pastures and craggy peaks. The two-section Stubnerkogelbahn cable car near Bad Gastein's train station costs €15 return. The Graukogelbahn cable car, 300m northeast of the centre, is the same price. From June to September, the tourist office organises daily guided walks and can give tips on family favourites such as llama trekking.

Sleeping

Pick up a list of budget hostels and private rooms from the tourist office. Some of the resort's *belle époque* hotels feature their own spas and are surprisingly affordable. Expect rates in the winter high season to be roughly 30% higher than those quoted in these listings.

Camping Erlengrund (☎ 27 90; www.kurcamping-gastein.at; Erlengrundstrasse 6; campsites per adult/child/tent €7/4/7.50; ☎ ☑ ☑) Close to a natural lake, this campsite offers shady pitches and, in summer, a heated pool. It's 2km north of Bad Gastein in Kötschachdorf and accessible by buses departing from the train station.

Euro Youth Hotel (☎ 233 00; www.euro-youth-hotel.at; Bahnhofplatz 8; dm/s/d €16.45/25/40; ☞ doped Apr & Oct-Nov; ☎ ☑) These backpacker digs occupy a rambling turn-of-the-century manor. The superb facilities include a restaurant, TV lounge and barbecue area. Ask the staff about adventure sports such as rafting and canyoning (costing about €38 per day) and bike hire (€10 per day). The hostel is 50m from the slopes and spa.

Pension Laura (☎ 27 04; Bismarckstrasse 20; s/d €24/42; ☎) Opposite Nikolauskirche, this pension's rooms teeter on the old-fashioned with loads of wood panelling and gingham, but they're cosy and good value. The restaurant downstairs has a gamey menu and walls smothered in stuffed animals.

Pension Charlotte (☎ 24 26; Paracelsusstrasse 6; s/d €25/50) Hidden down a side alley, this guesthouse is run by the super-friendly Weghofer

family and their docile Great Dane, Aramis. It's a homy place with a flower garden and plenty of curios – from handcarved *Krampus* masks to chattering budgies. The bright, spotless rooms open onto balconies overlooking the forest and mountains.

Hotel Mozart (☎ 268 60; www.hotelmozart.at; Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Strasse 25; s/d 46/82; ☎ ☑) With a name that reflects the founder's passion for Mozart melodies, this smart three-star place pushes the right buttons with professional service, a radon-rich thermal bath and sunny, spacious rooms (some have balconies). The high-ceilinged breakfast room is glammed up with polished cherry wood, chandeliers and portraits of the virtuoso.

Villa Solitude (☎ 51 01; www.villasolitude.com; Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Strasse 16; ste €150-250; ☎ ☑) The one-time home of an Austrian countess, this 19th-century villa shelters six suites crammed with oil paintings and antiques. The intimate salon downstairs is the place to slip into your role as lord or lady of the manor beside the grand piano. Lutter & Wegner is next door (see below).

Hotel Salzburger Hof (☎ 203 70; www.salzburgerhof.com; Grillparzerstrasse 1; s/d 103/176; ☎ ☑ ☑) This *belle époque* beauty is knocking 100, but still charms the birds from the trees with her lemon-meringue façade and lavish interior. The lobby is swanky with chandeliers and a roaring fire, while the rooms are dressed with plush fabrics and polished wood. Other pluses include a galleried piano lounge, kids' play area and a spa offering thermal baths, whirlpools and indulgent treatments.

Eating & Drinking

Bad Gastein has a generous sprinkling of restaurants, cafés and snack bars; most line up along Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Strasse and offer appetising views of the thundering Gasteiner Ache.

Mine (☎ 301 41; Grillparzerstrasse 14; snacks €3-5.50; ☞ noon-1am summer, 9am-1pm winter) Crimson walls, cushion-filled nooks and wi-fi create a hip vibe at Mine – hands-down the best spot for a quick beer or bite to eat. The snacks are scrawled on a blackboard – try the delicious tortilla wraps.

Jägerhäusl (☎ 202 54; Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Strasse 9; mains €6.50-10; ☞ lunch & dinner) A zesty lemon-and-lime paint job and arched windows give this galleried villa an avant-garde twist. The menu is packed with Austrian staples such

as tender beef and smoked trout, which are served on the maple tree-shaded terrace when the sun's out.

Gastein Café (☎ 50 97; Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Strasse 4; mains €6-14; ☞ lunch & dinner) Gastein Café is popular for its enormous terrace and smorgasbord of cuisines from Austria, Italy and virtually every other country under the sun. Dishes range from salmon-and-shrimp pizza to the humorously named *Pongauer Kasnocken* (a cheesy pasta dish).

Wasserfall Pub (☎ 5470; Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Strasse 2; mains €6-14; ☞ lunch & dinner) The name makes no secret of the fact that this no-frills pub is right opposite the falls. There are a handful of tables outside where you can drink in the view over sizeable portions of pasta and schnitzel.

Sancho (☎ 217 62; Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Strasse 1; mains €12.50-18.50; ☞ dinner) Kitsch, colourful and as lively as a Mexican jumping bean, Sancho is a flamboyant affair decked out with dangling sombreros, stuffed cockatoos and Mayan murals. The jalapeno peppers and burritos are tasty, but the sizzling steaks are the stars of the show – thick, juicy and drenched in salsa.

Lutter & Wegner (☎ 510 11; Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Strasse 16; mains €15-24; ☞ lunch & dinner Fri-Sun, dinner Tue-Thu) The fairy-tale tower setting, fusion cuisine and terrace overlooking the Gasteiner Ache make this smart restaurant at Villa Solitude a top choice. Fine wines (choose from 180 bottles) accompany flavours such as porcini risotto and creole lamb curry.

Supermarkets in town include the **Eurospar** (☎ 60 01; Bökksteiner Bundesstrasse; ☞ 8am-7pm Mon-Thu, 8am-7.30pm Fri, 7.30am-5pm Sat) south of the train station.

Getting There & Away

IC express trains trundle through Bad Gastein's station every two hours, connecting the town to points north and south including Spittal-Millstättersee (€9.90, 40 minutes), Salzburg (€12.70, 1¼ hours) and Innsbruck (€30.20, three hours). When travelling north from Bad Gastein to Bad Hofgastein, sit on the right side of the train for the best views.

If you're driving south, you'll need to use the Autoschleuse Tauernbahn (railway car-shuttle service) through the tunnel that starts at Bökkstein (€18 one-way).

AROUND BAD GASTEIN

Stepping three kilometres south of Bad Gastein, you reach the unassuming village of

Bökkstein, whose medieval gold mine has been reinvented as a much-celebrated health centre, the **Gasteiner Heilstollen** (Gastein Healing Gallery; ☎ 375 30; www.gasteiner-heilstollen.com; ☞ mid-Jan-late Oct). Visitors board a small train at the Gasteiner Heilstollen that chugs 2km into the depths of Radhausberg mountain, where you absorb the healing radon vapours. The trial session costs €26, while the full three-week cure will set you back €513 (includes 10 entries to the tunnel).

Seven kilometres north of Bad Gastein is the sibling spa town of **Bad Hofgastein** (858m), where the big draw is the state-of-the-art **Alpen Therme** (☎ 06432-829 30; www.alpentherme.com; Senator-Wilhelm-Wilfling-Platz 1; adult/child €19.50/12; ☞ 9am-9pm Sat-Wed, 9am-11pm Thu, 9am-10pm Fri). This mammoth spa is split into six different worlds, where experiences stretch from relaxing in radon-rich thermal baths to racing down white-knuckle flumes. The sauna village comprises brine grottos, loft saunas, red-hot Finnish saunas and an ice-cold plunge pool. For some pampering, pop over to the beauty centre offering treatments such as goat's milk wraps and silky smooth hot-chocolate massages.

Bad Gastein, Bad Hofgastein and Bökkstein are linked by both bus and rail. There are two access roads to the national park (with parking spaces at each road's terminus): the toll road (€4 per car – price included in the ski pass; see opposite) to Sportgastein; and the road that turns east just south of Bad Gastein and follows the Kötschachtal.

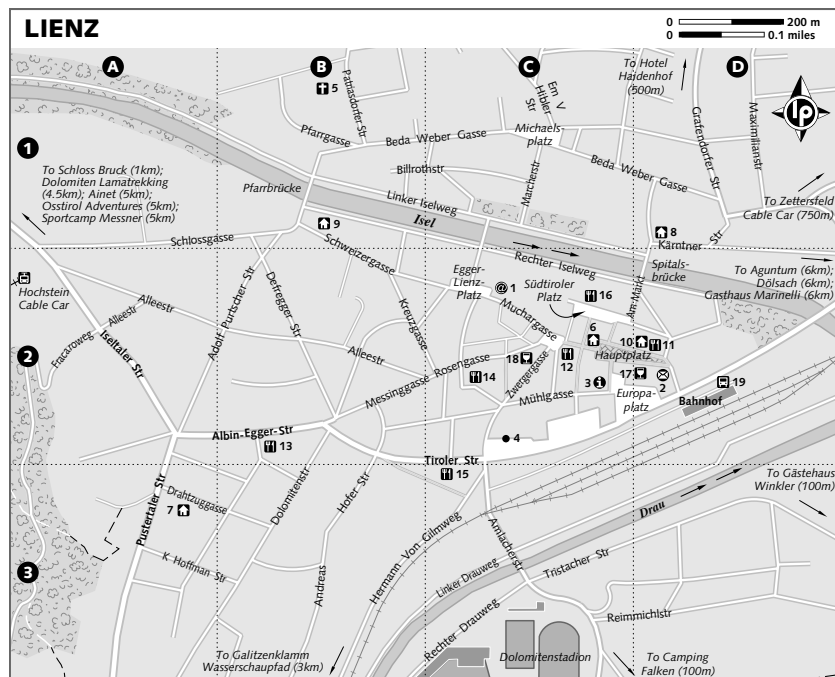
LIENZ

☎ 04852 / pop 13,000 / elev 673m

With the jagged Dolomites on its doorstep, Lienz dishes up Italian charm around its cobble street, where chirpy locals kick back with *gelato* (ice cream) in the palm-studded square. Just 40km north of Italy, this snippet of East Tyrol expertly blends big wilderness with cultural clout: the glacial Isel River, Roman treasures and a medieval castle brimming with art are all there for the savouring. But it's the mountains that really demand attention – austere beauties piercing the town's southern skyline and looking their best when the last of the sun makes their pinnacles blush.

Orientation

The town centre is within a 'V' formed by the junction of the rivers Isel and Drau. The pivotal Hauptplatz is directly in front of the train station; three other squares lead from it



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(Europaplatz, Südtiroler Platz and Bozener Platz). Hauptplatz has lots of parking in its *Kurzparkzone*, with a 90-minute limit during indicated hours.

Information

The Osttirol Card, available from the tourist office, gives free access to cable cars, pools and museums. It costs €35/17.50 per adult/child for eight days and is valid from June to September.

Library (☎ 639 72; Muchargasse 4; ☎ 9am–noon & 3–7pm Tue & Thur, 9am–1pm & 3–6pm Wed & Fri, 9am–noon Sat) Free internet access at four terminals.

Osttirol Werbung (☎ 653 33; www.osttirol.com) For information about the wider East Tyrol area. The office sends out information, but isn't set up for visits.

Post office (Bozener Platz 1; ☎ 7.30am–6.30pm Mon–Fri, 8–11am Sat) Opposite the train station.

Tourist office (☎ 652 65; www.lienz-tourismus.at; Europaplatz 1; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon & 5–7pm Sat Jul–mid-Sep, 10–noon Sun Jul & Aug) Staff will help you find accommodation (even private rooms) free of charge.

Sights

STADTPFARRKIRCHE ST ANDRÄ

A Gothic gem just north of the Isel River, **Stadtpfarrkirche St Andrä** (St Andrew's church; ☎ 621 60; Pfarrgasse 4; ☎ daylight hr) is a quiet spot for

contemplation. Peer inside the rib-vaulted interior to see 14th-century frescoes and a pair of tombstones sculpted in red Salzburg marble. Its hidden gem is the solemn **Kriegergedächtniskapelle** (war memorial chapel) sheltering Albin Egger-Lienz's eye-catching relief sculpture of Jesus in nought but a skimpy loin cloth, which scandalised the Vatican when it was unveiled to the public in 1925. To visit the chapel, pick up the key that hangs on the door at Pfarrgasse 13 (across the bridge facing the main entrance).

SCHLOSS BRUCK

Lienz's biggest stunner is this medieval fortress situated slightly west of town. Once the seat of the counts of Görzt, the hilltop castle now houses the **Heimatsmuseum** (☎ 625 80; Schlossberg 1; adult/child €7/2.50; ☎ 10am–6pm Palm Sunday–1 Nov), which chronologically runs through Tyrol's heritage in its atmospheric rooms, displaying everything from oil paintings to Cold War memorabilia. The tower rotates exhibitions of avant-garde works and is worth climbing for exhilarating views over Lienz. The real highlight, however, is the sprawling gallery devoted to the emotive works of Albin Egger-Lienz (1868–1926), whose brushstrokes reveal recurring themes of toil, conflict and death. Among his masterpieces are the *Totentanz* (Dance of Death) and *Das Kreuz* (The Cross). When asked what he was working on shortly before he died in 1926, the artist bluntly replied '*Ich bin fertig*' (I have finished).

AGUNTUM

This **Roman archaeological site** (☎ 615 50; www.aguntum.info; Stribach 97; adult/child €5/3; ☎ 9.30am–4pm Apr–May & mid-Sep–Oct, 9.30am–6pm Jun–mid-Sep), with an ultramodern museum to boot, is unique in these parts. Excavations are still under way to piece together the jigsaw puzzle of this 2000-year-old *municipium*, which flourished as a centre of trade and commerce under Emperor Claudius. Take a stroll outside to glimpse the Roman spa, artisan quarter and a reconstructed villa. The glass-walled museum explores Lienz's Roman roots in greater depth, with interactive stuff for the kids (a virtual tour through Aguntum and dress-up costumes) and an exhibition featuring fun elements such as traditional Roman recipes. Sow's udder with sea urchins, anyone?

Activities

SKIING

The skiing in Lienz is geared mainly towards beginners and intermediates, with just a handful of knee-trembling black runs. Its downhill offer is not huge by Austrian standards, but the views of the rugged Dolomites are awesome. Most of the action takes place around **Zettlersfeld**, where a cable car and five lifts whizz skiers up to slopes reaching between 1660m and 2278m. Slightly west of Lienz, **Hochstein** (2057m) is also popular for its groomed pistes; a free bus runs from the train station to the cable-car valley stations in summer and winter high seasons. One-day ski passes for both mountains cost €28.50 and the ski lifts run from 1 December to Easter, depending on snow. Multiday passes (eg two days for €70) cover all of East Tyrol's ski lifts (see www.topski.at, in German, for full ski-pass details). Several peaceful cross-country trails also criss-cross the valley. Ski hire (from various outlets in town) starts at €20 per day, including boots, while cross-country equipment will set you back around €10.

WALKING

The tourist office can advise on the high-altitude trails that wriggle around the steely peaks of the Dolomites. For something more family-oriented, check out the **Galitzenklamm Wasserschaupfad** (☎ 0664-1567 457; adult/child €3/2; ☎ 9am–6pm Jul & Aug, 10am–5pm Jun & Sep, 10am–5pm Sat & Sun May & Oct, closed winter), a specially built walkway that clings to sheer cliffs above the gorge of the Drau. To get there, head for Leisach, 3km from Lienz.

You'd be forgiven for thinking you were in the Andes when on a trek with Karl-Peter, who runs **Dolomiten Lamatrekking** (☎ 680 87; www.dolomitenlama.at; Oberlienz 36; 2hr trek €30; ☎ year-round) and is a dab hand at getting those stubborn llamas to walk his way. The llamas obligingly lug the heavy packs, leaving walkers free to enjoy the stunning Hohe Tauern scenery. Tours take place come snow or shine and stretch from two-hour taster sessions to four-day uphill hikes.

The cable cars spring back to life for the summer season (June to September). The ride up to Hochstein costs €11 return, while Zettlersfeld costs €10, or €17 including the chairlift to 2214m. Family and child fares are also available. If you're planning on making more than one trip, it makes sense to buy the Osttirol

Card. Both lifts are run by **Lienz Bergbahnen** (☎ 639 75; Zettlersfeldstrasse 38).

CYCLING

A network of mountain-bike trails radiates from Lienz, taking in the striking landscape of the Dolomites. Ask the tourist office for the map *Rad und Mountainbike Karte Osttirol*, which details cycling routes. **Probike Lienz** (☎ 735 36; Amlacherstrasse 1a; half-/full-day €13/18; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is the most central place to hire your own set of wheels.

ADVENTURE SPORTS

The foaming rivers, narrow gorges and pine forests of the Dolomites around Lienz are the perfect place for adrenaline-pumping sports such as white-water rafting, canyoning, rock climbing and kayaking. The following two companies, both based in the village of Ainet near Lienz, will set you up: **Osttirol Adventures** (☎ 0664-356 0450; www.osttirol-adventures.at) and **Sportcamp Messner** (☎ 0664-897 8259; www.raftcompany.at).

Festivals & Events

Lienz hosts the testosterone-fuelled **Dolomiten Mann** (www.dolomitenmann.com) in September, a Red Bull-sponsored iron-man competition billed as the world's toughest team challenge. Headlining the programme is the cross-country relay race, where teams of mountain-runners, paragliders, kayakers and mountain-bikers battle it out for the title. Lively open-air concerts and parties complement the line-up.

In late July, a free street festival takes the centre by storm, drawing top circus and theatre acts from around the world. Summer also welcomes a series of events celebrating Tyrolean culture, plus free concerts on Hauptplatz and in other squares (8pm on Wednesdays and Sundays June to September).

Sleeping

For a town of its size, Lienz has oodles of decent hotels, pensions and campsites. The tourist office will help you trawl through them and hands out a free brochure listing inexpensive private rooms; expect to pay around €15 to €20 per person per night. Wherever you stay, ask your host for the *Gästekarte* to receive discounts on local sights and transport.

BUDGET

Camping Falken (☎ 640 22; camping.falken@tirol.com; Eichholz 7; campsites per adult/child/tent €6.50/4/8.50; ☎ mid-Dec-late Oct; 📍) Pitch a tent beneath the apple trees at this camping ground 10 minutes' walk from the centre. The first-rate facilities include a minimarket, restaurant and playground, plus free access to Lienz swimming pools.

Gästehaus Masnata (☎ 655 36; Drahtzugasse 4; d €38; 📍) Maria runs this little chalet with *Liebe* (love) and speaks good English. There's enough space to swing several well-fed moggies in the modern, balconied rooms. Rates don't include breakfast, but you can make a cuppa or snack in the kitchen. This place fills up quickly, so book ahead in high season.

Gästehaus Winkler (☎ 705 18; Roter Turmweg 5; s/d €19.50/39; 📍) Handy for the cycling and cross-country trails that are on its doorstep, this convivial pension on the town's southern fringes has eight comfy rooms. There's a well-kept garden, playground and ski storage room.

Goldener Stern (☎ 621 92; Schweizergasse 40; s/d €34/62; 📍) Framed by neat gardens, this 600-year-old guesthouse with bright, spacious rooms makes a great base for exploring Lienz. Breakfast is served in the pocket-sized courtyard in summer. Cheaper rooms with shared bathrooms are also available.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Altstadthotel Eck (☎ 647 85; altstadthotel.eck@utanet.at; Hauptplatz 20; s/d €42/74) It's not quite as plush as its neighbour, Hotel Traube, but this hotel still exudes old-world charisma with its grandfather clock and wood-panelled corridors smothered in oil paintings. The good-value rooms have tea-making facilities. Guests can soak up Lienz views over brekkie in the conservatory.

Goldener Fisch (☎ 621 32; www.goldener-fisch.at; Kämtnerstrasse 9; s/d €45/88; 📍) The beer garden shaded by chestnut trees is a big draw at this family-run hotel. The Goldener Fisch offers contemporary rooms kitted out with mod cons such as wi-fi and satellite TV. Other pluses include the sauna and cosy restaurant (mains €5 to €17), which dishes up a mean *Tafelspitz* (boiled beef with apple and horseradish sauce).

our pick **Hotel Haidenhof** (☎ 624 40; www.haidenhof.at; Grafendorferstrasse 12; s/d €61/110; 📍) Perched above Lienz, this retreat oozes coun-

try charm. Fringed by pear and plum orchards, Haidenhof is where rustic farmhouse meets 21st-century chic. Rooms are understated yet elegant, with plenty of natural light and honey pine. After steaming in the sauna, the roof terrace is a fine place to curl up in a blanket and enjoy the vista of the Dolomites. In the South Tyrolean-style restaurant (mains €7 to €20), nearly everything that lands on your plate is home-grown: the herbs, the trout and even the apples in the strudel!

Hotel Traube (☎ 644 44; www.hoteltraube.at; Hauptplatz 14; s/d €82/124; 📍) This green-shuttered hotel on the main square has bags of charm; it catapults you back to the Biedermeier era with its high ceilings, polished antiques and wrought-iron balconies. The 6th-floor pool is a calm oasis overlooking Lienz's spires and the brooding Dolomites.

Eating

Italy is but a hop and skip away from Lienz and it shows: menus are often a double whammy of Tyrolean and Italian fare. When the sun shines, the Hauptplatz fills with the hum of chatter as locals spill from pavement cafés.

Hendl Ortnr (☎ 623 91; Albin-Egger-Strasse 5; chickens €2.60; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Jan-Apr) The tasty rotisserie *Hendl* (half-chickens) sprinkled with spices make this one of the best fast-food joints in town, but you're pretty stuffed if you don't like chicken.

Gasthaus Marinelli (☎ 682 08; Dölsach 78, Dölsach; mains €5-10; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu-Tue) Locals rave about the home-cooked local food at this tiny restaurant in the schnapps-making village of Dölsach, just outside Lienz. It's best to reserve in advance.

Pizzeria Da Franco (☎ 699 69; Ägidius-Pegger-Strasse; pizzas €6-9; ☎ lunch & dinner) This hole-in-the-wall pizzeria isn't plush, but the thin, crisp pizzas baked in a brick oven do Italy proud. Top that with cheery staff and pocket-pleasing prices and you're onto a winner.

Adlerstüberl Restaurant (☎ 625 50; Andrä-Kranz-Gasse 7; mains €7.50-13.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) Adlerstüberl is the granddaddy of Lienz, where grizzled locals put the world to rights over beer, humungous schnitzels and plates of piping goulash. Find a cosy nook in one of the vaulted rooms and join them.

Spice Tapas Bar (☎ 634 73; Südtirolerplatz 2; mixed tapas plate €8-10; ☎ dinner Wed-Mon) A slither of Seville in the Dolomites, this funky tapas bar

has a menu full of the usual suspects (Serrano ham and chewy chorizo), plus a few wild cards such as kangaroo fillets and wild salmon in champagne froth. Grab a table outside to soak up the atmosphere.

La Taverna (☎ 647 85; Hauptplatz 14; mains €8.50-16; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Mon) A staircase twists down to this wood-panelled taverna in the bowels of Hotel Traube. Chefs whip up Italian and Tyrolean flavours in the show kitchen (try the rocket tagliatelle). The resident Bacchus gives an indication of the mind-boggling wine list – there are 800 bottles to choose from.

For self-caterers, supermarkets include an **ADEG** (Hauptplatz 12) and a **Spar** (Tiroler Strasse 23).

Drinking

Lienz tempts the night-active with a pick'n'mix of relaxed drinking holes and quirky lounge bars; most places huddle around the pedestrianised square.

Petrocelli's (☎ 643 64-44; Hauptplatz 9; ☎ 8am-midnight) The bustling terrace on the square is the crowd-puller at this ice-cream parlour, which doubles as a trendy bar in the evenings. Tuned-in locals come to sip caipirinhas and indulge in people-watching.

Joy (Hauptplatz 9; ☎ 672 22; ☎ 10pm-4am Thu-Sat) Venture downstairs from Petrocelli's to Joy, a party haunt where DJs spin dance music till the wee hours.

s'Stöckl (☎ 640 70; Zwergergasse 2; ☎ 6pm-2am Mon-Fri, 8pm-2am Sat) There are no airs and graces about this spit-and-sawdust watering hole – a fine spot for Gösser brews and long chats at the bar. Cocktails are a bargain €3.50 during happy hour (8pm to 11pm).

our pick **Deep Blue** (☎ 644 440; Hauptplatz 14; ☎ 5pm-2am) Stepping down to this wacky lounge bar is like plunging to the bottom of the ocean. It houses the kind of aquarium (apparently it's Tyrol's biggest) that even Nemo would gladly sacrifice the sea for. Dangling fish and lanterns continue the aquatic theme. The cocktail-master also knows how to shake 'em (for something with a kick, try a Moscow Mule) but beware – one too many and you'll almost certainly see the room swim.

Getting There & Away

Regional transport in Tyrol comes under the wing of the **Verkehrsverbund Tirol** (VVT; www.vvt.at). For information on VVT transport tickets,

valid for travel between Tyrol and East Tyrol, see p331.

BUS

Buses pull up in front of the train station, where the **Postbus information office** (☎ 8am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Fri) is located. There are bus connections to the East Tyrol ski resorts of St Jakob, Sillian and Obertilliach, as well as northwards to the Hohe Tauern National Park. Buses to Kitzbühel (€13.20, 1½ hours) are quicker and more direct than the train, but they only go one to three times a day.

TRAIN

Most trains to the rest of Austria, including Salzburg (€30.20, 3½ hours), go east via Spittal-Millstättersee, where you usually have to change. The quickest and easiest route to Innsbruck (€20, 3¼ hours) is to go west via Sillian and Italy.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

To head south, you must first divert west or east along Hwy 100, as the Dolomites are an impregnable barrier. For details of road routes to the north, see p312.