

Tyrol



If you could bottle everything that sums up Austria surely Tyrol would be it: from the woody log chalets and wholesome food to the thigh-slapping tradition and alpine peaks rising like shark fins in a frothy white ocean. Few places can match it on a winter's day, with a big sky above, dazzling snow crunching underfoot and bracing mountain air filling your lungs. No wonder the locals are notoriously proud and independent. Who wouldn't be with all that?

There are plenty of reasons to fall for Tyrol: the people are down-to-earth, sincere and marvellously eccentric; the cities such as Innsbruck and Kufstein are gems (overshadowed by frosty mountains and complete with precipitous castles and medieval backstreets); the schnapps is potent; the powder deep; and the culture a happy marriage of old and new – shifting from rural farms and cobbled alleyways to Zen-like spas and crystalline edifices.

But it's the Alps that steal the show in a 'wow I'm in Austria' kind of way and nowhere else are they more prominent or accessible. Tyrol is a beauty with bumps and curves in all the right places, with resorts like Kitzbühel where you can find your ski legs, Mayrhofen where they'll turn to jelly on black runs, and St Anton where you can get legless in après-ski bars before wobbling down the valley. When sunshine spills across the green vales in summer, walks stretch from gentle strolls to week-long tramps over windswept passes where, with any luck, you might spot an eagle: Tyrol's most famous yet elusive high-flyer.

Tyrol's eastern region, Osttirol (East Tyrol), is cut off from the rest of the province by Salzburg and is covered in the Hohe Tauern National Park Region chapter (p323).

HIGHLIGHTS

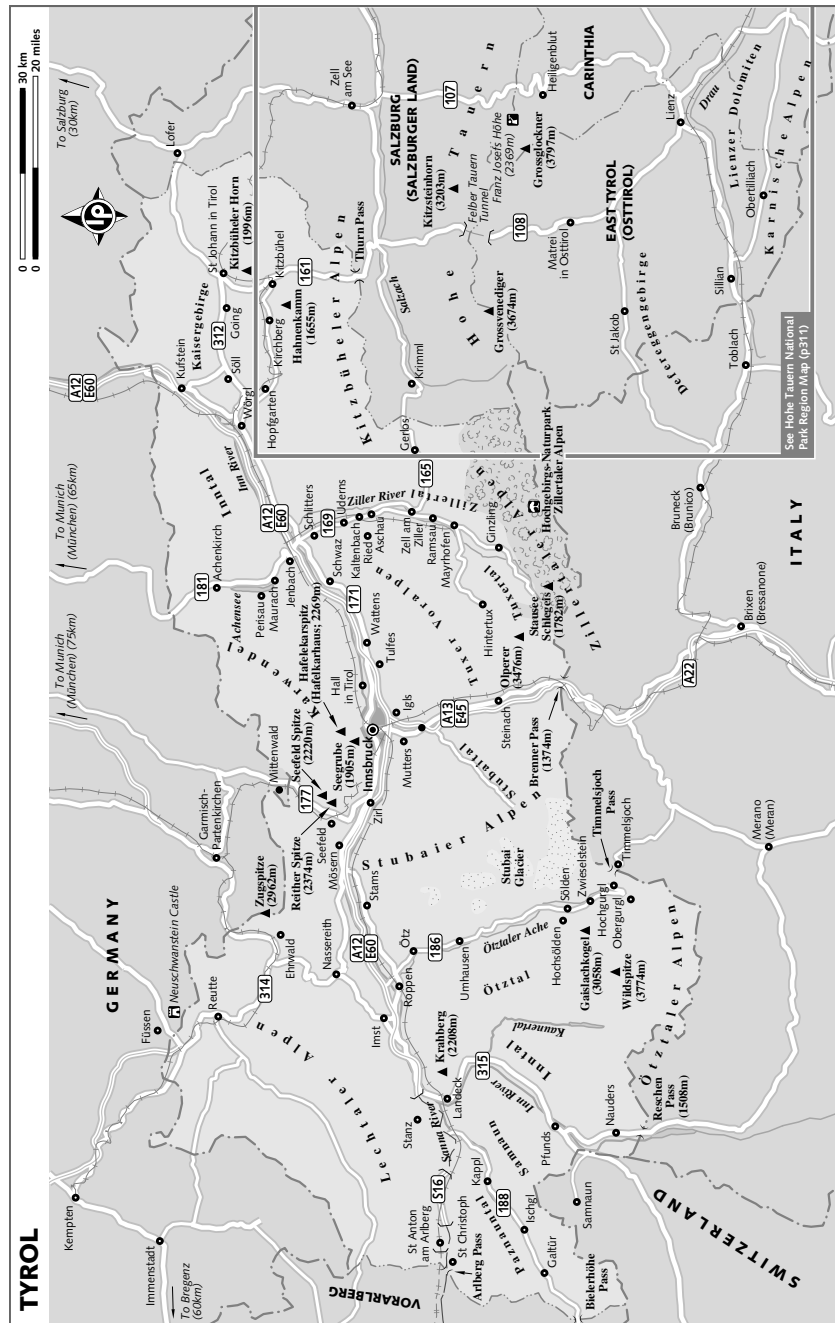
- Strolling cobbled lanes to gaze upon the shimmering **Goldenes Dachl** (p337) in Innsbruck
- Quaking in your boots before hurtling down Austria's steepest slope, the **Harakiri** (p348) in Mayrhofen
- Rising above **Kufstein** (p354) in a rickety chairlift for awesome Wilder Kaiser views
- Revisiting the Neolithic world of Ötzi and soaking in Aqua Dome's flying saucers in the **Ötztal** (p356)
- Bopping in your snow boots to Europop with the après-ski crowd in **St Anton am Arlberg** (p362)



■ POPULATION: 685,000

■ AREA: 10,626 SQ KM

■ HIGHEST ELEVATION: WILDSPITZE 3774M



History

Despite its difficult alpine terrain, Tyrol has experienced influxes of tribes and travellers since the Iron Age, verified by the discovery of a 5500-year-old body of a man preserved in ice in the Ötztal Alps in 1991 (see boxed text, p357). The high Brenner Pass (1374m), crossing into Italy, allowed the region to develop as a north–south trade route early in its history.

Tyrol fell to the Habsburgs in 1363, but it wasn't until the rule of Emperor Maximilian I (r 1490–1519) that the province truly forged ahead. His soft spot for Innsbruck boosted the region's status and transformed the town into the administrative capital and a cultural centre. He also drew up the Landibell legislation in 1511 that passed the border defence over to the Tyroleans themselves, thus creating the celebrated *Schützen* (marksman militia) which still exists today. When the last Tyrolean Habsburg, Archduke Sigmund Franz, died in 1665 the duchy of Tyrol was directly ruled from Vienna.

In 1703 the Bavarians attempted to capture Tyrol in the War of the Spanish Succession. In alliance with the French, they reached the Brenner Pass before being beaten back by the *Schützen*. But just a century later Tyrol passed into Bavarian hands under Napoleon. Bavarian rule of the province was short-lived and troublesome; in 1809 local innkeeper Andreas Hofer led a successful fight for independence, winning a famous victory at Bergisel (p336). The Habsburg monarchy unfortunately did not support his heroic stance and Tyrol was returned to Bavaria later that year. Hofer continued the struggle, and was shot by firing squad on Napoleon's orders on 20 February 1810.

The Treaty of St Germain (1919) dealt a further blow to the strong Tyrolean identity; prosperous South Tyrol was ceded to Italy and East Tyrol was isolated from the rest of the province.

A staunch ally of Mussolini, Hitler did not claim back South Tyrol when his troops invaded Austria in 1938. In the aftermath of WWII, Tyrol was divided into zones occupied by Allied forces until the country proclaimed its neutrality in 1955. Since then, Tyrol has enjoyed peace and prosperity: tourism (particularly the ski industry) has flourished and Innsbruck has twice hosted the Winter Olympics.

In 2008, all eyes are once again focused on the Tyrolean capital, as it gears up for the UEFA Euro Championships.

Climate

With almost 90% of Tyrol given over to mountains, the Alps rule much of the province's climate, with short summers, long cold winters and changeable weather. In the valleys the temperatures are surprisingly mild, helped no end by the *Föhn*, a warm south wind that sweeps down from the mountains.

Getting There & Away

Frequent international and national flights operate to Innsbruck. The main road and rail route in and out of Tyrol follows the Inntal (Inn River), with the east–west A12 autobahn cutting the province into almost equal halves, entering from Germany near Kufstein and exiting west of St Anton in Vorarlberg. The A13 connects Tyrol with Italy, crossing the Brenner Pass directly south of Innsbruck.

Getting Around

Regional transport comes under the wing of the **Verkehrsverbund Tirol** (☎ 0512-561 616; www.vvt.at; Innrain 25, Innsbruck; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Thu, 8am–noon Fri). Ticket prices depend on the number of zones you travel through; a single ticket costs €1.70 and it's €3.40 for a day pass. There are reductions for children, senior citizens and families. Tickets cover journeys on buses, trams and ÖBB (Austrian federal railway) trains.

Additionally, Tyrol is divided into 12 overlapping transport regions, which are individually covered by *Regio Ticket* (regional passes). A pass for individual regions costs €29/91.80 per week/month or €61/196.10 for all 12 regions. Innsbruck is an exception; see p343.

INNSBRUCK

☎ 0512 / pop 117,000

Tyrol's capital is a chameleon-like city: a place where you can spend the morning roaming medieval lanes and Habsburg palaces, and the afternoon ogling Zaha Hadid's spacey creations and sipping sundowners in riverside lounge bars. With its low-slung skyline, quietly confident air and the towering Alps as a backdrop, Innsbruck successfully blends past and present, urban and natural. Despite its prosperity and world-class museums,

the city remains refreshingly unpretentious and friendly.

Suspended above the deep-green Inn River, the Alps are Innsbruck's monumental attractions: creeping up on street corners, reflecting in glass façades and sneaking into every snapshot. And this old man of the mountain still knows how to rock; home to Austria's third-largest student population, Innsbruck is a youthful city that pulsates in brewpubs, beer gardens and funky bars after dark. Providing you don't overindulge on the *Nachtleben* (nightlife), you'll have energy to whoosh down Nordpark's slopes or pick up supersonic speeds on Igls' bobsled run.

History

Innsbruck dates from 1180, when the little market settlement on the north bank of the Inn River spread to the south bank via a new bridge that gave the settlement its name – Ynsprugg.

In 1420 Innsbruck became the ducal seat of the Tyrolean Habsburgs, but it was under the reign of Emperor Maximilian I (r 1490–1519) that the city reached its zenith in power and prestige; many of the monuments, including the shimmering Goldenes Dachl (p337), are still visible today. Maximilian was not the only Habsburg to influence the city's architectural skyline: Archduke Ferdinand II reconstructed the Schloss Ambras (p335) and Empress Maria Theresia the Hofburg (p334).

Aside from the two world wars, Innsbruck has enjoyed a fairly peaceful existence over the centuries. More recently, its importance as a winter sports centre reached the international stage – it held the Winter Olympics in 1964 and 1976.

Orientation

Innsbruck sits in the Inn Valley, scenically squeezed between the northern Karwendel Alps and the southern Tuxer Vorberge mountains. Extensive mountain transport facilities radiating from the city provide superb walking and skiing opportunities. The centre is compact, with the *Hauptbahnhof* (main train station) just a 10-minute walk from the pedestrianised *Altstadt* (old town). The main artery in the *Altstadt*, Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse, connects with Maria-Theresien-Strasse, which is a major thoroughfare but is closed to private transport.

Information

BOOKSHOPS
The best source of international papers can be found at a handy newspaper stand on the corner of Riesengasse and Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse (Map p334).

Freytag & Berndt (Map p333; ☎ 572 430; Wilhelm-Greif-Strasse 15; ☎ 9am–1pm & 2–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat) Excellent source for maps and travel books.

Tyrolia (Map p334; ☎ 22 33-0; Maria-Theresien-Strasse 15) Stocks travel guidebooks and a decent selection of English literature.

Wagnerische Buchhandlung (Map p334; ☎ 595 05; Museumstrasse 4) University bookshop with a sizeable collection of English books.

INTERNET ACCESS

International Telephone Discount (Map p333; ☎ 562 921; Südtirolerplatz 1; per hr €2.50; ☎ 9am–11pm) Cheap phone calls as well.

Telesystem (Map p333; ☎ 931 093; Rathaus Galerien; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8am–5pm Sat) Eight terminals with free internet access.

LAUNDRY

Bubble Point (☎ 56500-0750; soap & wash €4; ☎ 8am–10pm Mon–Fri, 8am–8pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Andreas Hofer (Map p333; Andreas-Hofer-Strasse 37); Brixner (Map p333; Brixner Strasse 1) Self-service laundries with internet access for €6 per hour.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Landeskrankenhaus (Map p333; ☎ 50 40; Anichstrasse 35) The *Universitätsklinik* (University Clinic) at the city's main hospital has emergency services.

MONEY

The *Hauptbahnhof* and Innsbruck Information have exchange facilities and *Bankomaten* (ATMs) are ubiquitous in the *Altstadt*.

POST

Main post office (Map p333; Maximilianstrasse 2; ☎ 7am–9pm Mon–Fri, 7am–3pm Sat, 10am–7.30pm Sun)

Post office (Map p333; Brunecker Strasse 1; ☎ 7am–5pm Mon–Fri) This second post office is handy to the *Hauptbahnhof*.

TOURIST INFORMATION

City Tourist Board (Map p334; ☎ 59 85-0; www.innsbruck.info; Burggraben 3; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri) Above Innsbruck Information, it mostly fields telephone inquiries.

Hauptbahnhof (Map p333; ☎ 583 766; ☎ 9am–7pm) Smaller office in the main train station.

INNSBRUCK

0 300 m
0 0.2 miles

INFORMATION

Bubble Point	1	B5
Bubble Point	2	C3
Freytag & Berndt	3	C3
International Telephone Discount	4	C3
Landeskrankenhaus	5	A4
Main Post Office	6	B4
Post Office	7	C3
STA Travel	8	C3
Telesystem	9	B3

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Altes Landhaus	10	B3
Annasäule	11	B3
Die Boerse	12	B4
Grassmayr Glockenmuseum	13	C5
Tiroler Landesmuseum		
Ferdinandum	14	C3
Triumphfontäne	15	B4
Zeughaus	16	D2

SLEEPING

Europa Tyrol	17	C3
Romantik Hotel Schwarzer Adler	18	C2

EATING

Billa	19	C3
Hofer	20	C3
Lichtblick	21	B3
Panino & Co.	22	C2
Romantik Hotel Schwarzer Adler Restaurant	(see 18)	
Sahib Pasta	23	C2
Solo Pasta	24	C2
Solo Vino	(see 24)	
SOWI Lounge	25	C2

DRINKING

360°	(see 21)	
Café Central	26	C3
Hofgarten Café	27	C2
Jimmy's	(see 8)	
Krahvogel	28	B3
Theresienbräu	29	B4
Treibhaus	30	C2

ENTERTAINMENT

Cinematograph	31	C3
Landestheater	32	C2

SHOPPING

Rathaus Galerien	33	B3
Tiroler Heimatwerk	34	B3

TRANSPORT

Avis	35	C4
Bus Station	36	C4
Denzeldrive	37	C4
Hertz	38	C3
Neuner	39	B4

Innsbruck Information (Map p334; ☎ 53 56; www.innsbruck.info; Burggraben 3; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 8am-6pm Nov-Mar) Main tourist office with truckloads of info on the city and surrounds, including skiing and walking. Sells ski passes, public-transport tickets and city maps (€1); will book accommodation (€3 commission); has an attached ticketing service (open 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 9am to noon Saturday); and has internet access (€1 for 10 minutes).

TRAVEL AGENCIES

STA Travel (Map p333; ☎ 588 997; innsbruck@statravel.at; Wilhelm-Greil-Strasse 17; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) Friendly student-focused travel agency with occasional specials.

Sights

HOFBURG

Demanding attention with its lavish façade and cupolas, the **Hofburg** (Imperial Palace; Map p334; ☎ 587 186; Rennweg 1; adult/student/child €5.50/4/1.10; ☎ 9am-5pm) was one of Maria Theresia's favourites; though it's barely a rabbit hutch when compared with her other home, Schloss Schönbrunn in Vienna (p135). The state apartments are a rococo feast, adorned

with gold swirls and chandeliers, but the real eye-catcher is the 31m-long **Riesensaal** (Giant's Hall). The hall is embellished with frescoes and paintings of Maria Theresia and her 16 children (including Marie Antoinette), who look strangely identical – maybe the artist was intent on avoiding royal wrath arising from sibling rivalry in the beauty stakes.

HOFKIRCHE & VOLKSKUNST MUSEUM

Both the following attractions are accessed from Universitätsstrasse 2, share the same opening times and can be visited with a combined ticket available from the **ticket office** (☎ 584 302; adult/child €6.50/3; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun).

Opposite the Hofburg is the majestic **Hofkirche** (Imperial Church; Map p334; adult/child €3/1.50), which shelters the empty sarcophagus of Emperor Maximilian I. Elaborately carved from marble, the tomb is one of the finest examples of German Renaissance sculpture. The twin rows of 28 giant bronze figures that flank the sarcophagus include Albrecht Dürer's statue of the legendary King Arthur,

INNSBRUCK CARD

To save on entry fees, invest in the Innsbruck Card, which allows one visit to most of the main attractions, a journey on the cable cars and free use of public transport including the Sightseer (see p338). It's available from Innsbruck Information (left) and costs €24/29/34 for 24/48/72 hours.

Free to those overnighing in town, the Club Innsbruck Card, available from your accommodation, gives discounts on transportation and admission fees. It also entitles you to join the free guided mountain walks from June to September; contact Innsbruck Information for details.

apparently Maximilian's biggest idol. Tyrolean hero Andreas Hofer (1767–1810) is also entombed in the church.

For an insight into Tyrolean craftwork, nip into the **Volkskunst Museum** (Folk Art Museum; Map p334; adult/child €5/1.50) next door. This rambling attic of a museum covers the entire spectrum of folk art, from handcarved sleighs and Christmas cribs to carnival masks and cow bells. On the 1st floor is the Gothic **Stube** (living room) complete with low-ceiling, wood panelling and antique tiled oven.

TIROLER LANDESMUSEUM FERDINANDEUM

A treasure-trove of Tyrolean history and art, this **museum** (Map p333; ☎ 594 89; www.tiroler-landesmuseum.at, in German; Museumstrasse 15; adult/child €8/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Jun-Sep, closed Mon Oct-May) showcases everything from Bronze Age finds to religious works and pewter creations. Highlights include brooding Dutch and Flemish masterpieces, Gothic altarpieces and famous paintings from the likes of Klimt and Kokoschka (see p52).

ZEUGHAUS

Emperor Maximilian's former arsenal, the **Zeughaus** (Map p333; ☎ 594 89-311; Zeughausgasse; adult/child €8/4; ☎ 10am-5pm Jun-Sep, closed Mon Oct-May) runs chronologically through Tyrol's cultural history. It kicks off with geological and mineral history, including the silver that made Hall and Schwaz medieval powerhouses, but mostly concentrates on Tyrol's much-loved historical figure, Andreas Hofer.

If you're a fan of Tyrolean music, check out the room housing over 100 CDs from the province's musical stars.

SCHLOSS AMBRAS

Perched dramatically above the centre, the city's biggest stunner is **Schloss Ambras** (off Map p333; ☎ 01-525 24-4802; Schlossstrasse 20; adult/student/family €4.50/3/6 Dec-Mar, €8/6/16 Apr-Oct, guided tours €2; ☎ 10am-5pm Dec-Jul, Sep & Oct, 10am-7pm Aug, closed Nov). Archduke Ferdinand II acquired the castle in 1564, the year he became ruler of Tyrol, and transformed it from a fortress into a palace. He was the mastermind behind the **Spanische Saal** (Spanish Hall), a 43m-long banquet hall with a wooden inlaid ceiling and Tyrolean nobles gazing from the walls. Also note the *grisaille* (grey relief) around the courtyard and the sunken bathtub where his beloved Philippine used to bathe.

Ferdinand instigated the magnificent Ambras Collection, encompassing three main elements. The **Rüstammer** (Armour Collection) features intriguing pieces such as the armour for the archduke's second wedding – specially shaped to fit his protruding belly! – and the 2.60m suit created for giant Bartlmä Bon. The **Kunst und Wunderkammer** (Art and Wonders Collection) is crammed with fantastical objects, including a petrified shark, gravity-defying stilt shoes and the *Fangstuhl* – a chair designed to trap drunken guests at Ferdinand's raucous parties.

The **Portraitgalerie** features room upon room of Habsburg portraits. Portrait No 158 (Room 10) features a whiskered Charles VIII masquerading as a peasant while wearing a hat masquerading as an armchair. Maria Anna of Spain (No 126, Room 22) wins the prize for the most ludicrous hairstyle. When portraits of Habsburgs begin to pall, you can stroll or picnic in the extensive **castle gardens** (admission free; ☎ 6am-8pm), home to strutting peacocks.

Guided tours are available, but English tours must be reserved. Entry is cheaper in winter as some parts of the castle are closed. To get there take tram 6 or bus K.

GRASSMAYR GLOCKENMUSEUM

If you're heading for Bergisel, listen out for the bells at **Grassmayr Glockenmuseum** (Bell Museum; Map p333; ☎ 594 106; Leopoldstrasse 53; adult/child €4.50/2.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri), which explores 400 years of the Grassmayr family's bell-making tradition and exhibits some formidable Romanesque



and Gothic examples. It's a hands-on kind of place where kids can watch the casting process and make loads of noise ringing bells to achieve different notes.

BERGISEL

Rising above Innsbruck like a celestial staircase is the glass-and-steel **Bergisel Schanze** (Bergisel ski jump; off Map p333; ☎ 589 259-0; www.bergisel.info; adult/child €8.30/4; ⌚ 9.30am-5pm). The brainchild of Iraqi architect, Zaha Hadid, the futuristic landmark was unveiled in 2002 and cost a whopping €15 million. From May to July, fans pile in to see athletes train, while preparations step up a gear in January for the biggest event on the ski jumping calendar, the *Vierschanzen-Tournee* (Four Hills Tournament).

It is 455 steps or a two-minute funicular ride to the top. From the 50m-high viewing platform, the panorama of the Nordkette range, Inn Valley and Innsbruck is breathtaking; though the cemetery at the bottom has undoubtedly made a few ski jumping pros quiver in their boots, not least plucky Brit Eddie 'the Eagle' Edwards, who broke his jaw and collarbone here in a spectacular missed jump.

Next to the stadium at the bottom, the **museum** is a small but fascinating hall of fame, crammed with black-and-white photos of death-defying daredevils that used to jump in leather shoes and without helmets.

Also worthwhile and included in the entry price is the nearby **Kaiserjäger Museum** (off Map p333; ☎ 582 312; Bergisel 1; ⌚ 9am-5pm Apr-Oct), the site of the famous battle in 1809 at which heroic Andreas Hofer defeated the Bavarians. On display are memorials to Tyrolean freedom fighters from this and other battles, and a handful of paintings from WWI by Albin Egger-Lienz.

ALPENZOO & AROUND

North of the centre, the **Alpenzoo** (off Map p333; ☎ 292 323; Weiherburggasse 37; adult/child €7/3.50; ⌚ 9am-6pm) is home to cuddly alpine animals including bears, chamois and ibex. To get there, walk up the hill from Rennweg or take bus W from the Marktplatz.

Almost directly south across the cold Inn River is the **Rundgemälde** (off Map p333; ☎ 584 434; Rennweg 39; adult/child €3/1.50; ⌚ 9am-5pm Apr-Oct), a 1000-sq-metre panorama painting depicting the Battle of Bergisel. The circular building that houses the painting also features an ex-

remely evocative exhibition detailing epic overland trips by Austrian travel writer Max Reisch (1912-85) in the days before long-distance travel became so easy.

Activities

With 2000m peaks on its doorstep, Innsbruck is among Austria's top cities for indulging in outdoor pursuits and one of the few places in Europe where you can whiz from the city centre to the slopes in a matter of minutes. Aside from skiing and walking, rafting, mountain biking, paragliding and bobsledding (see boxed text, opposite) are all available to the daring. Also see the Outdoor Activities chapter (p74).

SKIING & SNOWBOARDING

Innsbruck is the gateway to an excellent ski arena that has hosted world-class competitions, such as the Winter Olympics in 1964 and 1976. The brand-new **Hungerburgbahn** (Map p333; www.nordpark.at) is great news for powder freaks. Designed by Zaha Hadid of Bergisel fame, the sleek cable railway looks like something out of a sci-fi film and links the Congress Centre to Hafelekar (2300m) in just 25 minutes.

At the top, snowboarding dudes can pick up speed on the half-pipe and practise jumps at the **Skylinepark** (off Map p333), while skiers can take their pick of runs which include several reds and one black. Heading south or west of Innsbruck, there is plenty of variety: Axamer Lizum, Patscherkofel, Kühtai, Rangger Köpfl, Glungezer, Schlick 2000 and Stubai Glacier. Most of the region's 270km of slopes are geared to intermediates.

A three-/seven-day Innsbruck Glacier Ski Pass to all areas costs €96/182 and all are connected by ski buses, free to anyone with the Innsbruck Card. Alternatively, the Innsbruck Super Ski Pass is available, covering the above ski areas plus Kitzbühel and Arlberg. Passes covering four out of six days cost €155.50; five out of six days costs €206.

Note that skiing is not only restricted to the winter months – the Stubai Glacier offers year-round skiing (p345).

WALKING

Crisscrossed with well-marked trails, the mountains surrounding Innsbruck are perfect for walking. The easiest way to reach any kind of altitude from the city is to hitch a ride on

COOL RUNNINGS

The fast and furious **Olympia Bobbahn** (Olympic bob run; ☎ 37 71 60; ⌚ Tue & Thu Dec-Mar, Thu & Fri Jul-Sep) in Innsbruck-Igls was built especially for the 1976 Winter Olympics. Taking in 14 curves, a loop and a vertical drop of 124m, the bob run is 1.2km of pure hair-raising action. Thrill seekers can join a professional bobsled driver to give it a whirl; ice makes the run slippery smooth in winter, but it's also possible to race down in summer if you don't mind a bumpy ride. At €30 a pop, the minute of madness doesn't come cheap, but the buzz of whooshing down at speeds of 100km/h (miss a bend and you'll bounce like a pinball) is worth every cent. To reach Igls, take bus J from the Landesmuseum.

the Hungerburgbahn funicular to **Hafelekar**, where paths head off in all directions. You'll need a head for heights to tackle the **Klettersteig** (climbing trail); the ascent is not for the faint-hearted, traversing seven peaks and affording tremendous vistas of the Stubai, Zillertaler and Ötztaler Alps. Fixed ropes ensure safety on the high alpine route that takes around seven hours to complete.

In summer, the funicular runs from 8.30am to 5.30pm and costs €10.80/18 one way/return to Seegrube and €11.50/19.10 to Hafelekar.

From June to October, Innsbruck Information arranges daily hiking tours with a professional mountain guide, free to those with a Club Innsbruck Card and suitable for those eight years and older. Pop into the tourist office to register and browse the programme, which includes highlights such as sunrise walks to Rangger Köpfl and lantern-lit strolls.

ADVENTURE SPORTS

Die Boerse (Map p333; ☎ 581 742; Leopoldstrasse 4; ⌚ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) rents skis, snowboards and mountain bikes (€14 to €30 per day), and offers a free pick-up service from the airport, **Hauptbahnhof** or your hotel. For adrenaline-based thrills, check out the activities at **Inntour** (www.inntour.com) at the same address. This is the place to come if you want to white-water raft down the Inn River, bungee jump from the 192m Europabrücke (Europe Bridge) or ski on the Stubai Glacier.

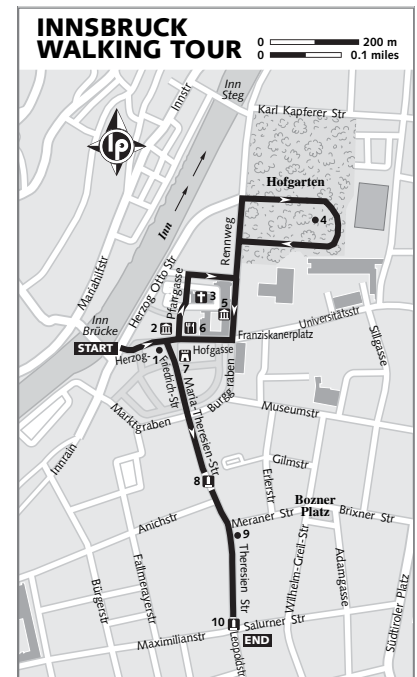
Walking Tour

Innsbruck is a compact, walkable city and this 1½-hour amble covers the blockbuster sights.

Kick off your tour by gazing up at the baroque façades along Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse; most of these buildings were built in the 15th and 16th centuries and still ooze medieval charm. Particularly outstanding is

the 18th-century **Helblinghaus (1)**, with its fussy rococo ornamentation.

Almost directly opposite is the **Goldenes Dachl (2)**; Golden Roof), the gem of Innsbruck's rich architectural collection. Its 2657 gilded copper tiles shimmer atop a Gothic oriel window; Emperor Maximilian used to observe street performers from the 2nd-floor balcony, which has a series of scenes depicted in relief (including the emperor himself with his two wives). Note the balustrade on the 1st floor, which bears eight coats of arms. Inside the building is a small but intriguing museum retelling the history of Maximilian, the **Maximilianeum**



(☎ 581 111; Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse 15; adult/child €4/2; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Sep, closed Mon Oct-Apr).

From the Goldenes Dachl, turn left up Pfarrgasse and then head towards Domplatz and **Dom St Jakob (3)**; St James' Cathedral; Domplatz; ☎ 7.30am-9.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-7.30pm Sun), where over-the-top baroque is everywhere to be admired. The Asam brothers from Munich completed much of the sumptuous art and stucco work, though the Madonna above the high altar is by the German painter Lukas Cranach the Elder.

Not far northeast of St Jakob is the **Hofgarten (4)**, a peaceful pocket of greenery with manicured lawns, a palm house and a wonderful Indian Bean Tree.

From the park, follow Rennweg to the **Hofburg (5)**; p334), Innsbruck's imperial palace, before nipping down Hofgasse for strudel and zingy juices at **Kröll (6)**, and back onto Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse

Turn left and bear south, stopping at the 51m-high **Stadtturm (7)**; city tower; ☎ 561 15 00; Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse 21; adult/child €2.50/1; ☎ 10am-8pm Jun-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-May); climb its 148 steps for 360-degree views of the city's rooftops, spires and surrounding mountains.

Once again on Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse, continue south until the street becomes bustling Maria-Theresien-Strasse. Rising in front of you is the slender **Annasäule (8)**; St Anne's Column), erected in 1706 to mark the repulsing of a Bavarian attack and topped by a statue of the Virgin Mary. After the next intersection, the fine baroque façade of the **Altes Landhaus (9)** sails into view; built in 1728, it is now the seat of the provincial government. Walk another 200m and you'll spy the marble **Triumphforte (10)**; Triumphal Arch), commemorating the marriage of the then emperor-to-be Leopold II.

Tours

Innsbruck Information (p334) organise guided city walks, which meander through the historical city centre for an hour or so. Tours leave at 11am and 2pm May to October and over Christmas, and cost €8 (€5 with an Innsbruck Card).

To capture more than the *Altstadt* in a tour, jump on a bright-red **Sightseer** (www.sightseer.at) bus, running between Alpenzoo and Schloss Ambras. Buses depart from Maria-Theresien-Strasse every 30 minutes between 9am and 5.30pm May to October, and every hour

from 10am to 6pm November to April. A day pass costs €8.80/6.20 for adults/children. Innsbruck Information sells tickets.

Festivals & Events

For three decades Innsbruck has been celebrating the **Festival of Early Music** (Festwochen der Alten Musik; ☎ 571 032; www.altemusik.at), a series of baroque concerts staged in July and August at venues such as Schloss Ambras (p334), the Landestheater (p342) and Dom St Jakob (left).

Other big bashes in this city include the **Innsbruck Summer Dance Festival** (www.tanzsommer.at, in German), held in June and July; **Eastern Celebrations**, which include concerts, markets and processions; and the ever-popular **Advent Christmas Markets**, which spring to life in mid-November and run until 24 December.

Sleeping

Most of Innsbruck's budget digs, guesthouses and boutique hotels cluster in the *Altstadt* within staggering distance of the star attractions and bars. Aside from the options below, Innsbruck and the villages of Igls and Mutters offer private rooms that cost between €20 and €40; Innsbruck Information (p334) can make the bookings for you.

BUDGET

Camping Innsbruck Kranebitten (off Map p333; ☎ 284 180; www.campinginnsbruck.com; Kranebitter Allee 214; campsites per adult/child/car/tent €5.40/3.50/3.40/3.40; ☎ Apr-Oct; (P)) West of town and flanked by mountains, this tree-shaded campsite is far enough from Innsbruck to have a rural feel, but close enough to make reaching the centre a doddle. There's an onsite restaurant and playground.

Jugendherberge Innsbruck (off Map p333; ☎ 346 179; www.jugendherberge-innsbruck.at; Reichenauerstrasse 147; 6-/4-bed dm €15.50/18, s/d €33/50; (P)) It may not be a pretty face, but don't be put off by this hostel's '70s façade. Dorms are clean and comfy and the excellent amenities include a kitchen, laundry, TV room and bike rental. It's 2km northeast of the *Altstadt*; bus O from Museumstrasse pulls up outside.

Volkshaus Innsbruck (off Map p333; ☎ 395 882; www.volkshaus.at; Radetzkystrasse 47; dm €16.10-21.60) Overlooking sports fields, this HI hostel doesn't have as many facilities as the city's other hostels, but the rooms are decent and staff welcoming. Take bus R from

DEVIL IN DISGUISE

The goat-horned and hairy *Krampus* runs riot through the village of Igls each year on 5th December, the eve of St Nicholas. But if ol' St Nick is the goodie, the mean and menacing *Krampus* is definitely the baddie; instead of dishing out sweets, this devilish character in a shaggy costume and grotesquely carved mask is out there to scare kids silly – growling and cracking his whip as he flits through the streets in the Krampuslaufen parade.

As if one weren't enough, around 70 ghoulish *Krampusse* turn out to menace anyone who dares cross their path (the smaller, the better...). The little 'uns get to let out all that pre-Christmas excitement screaming at the top of their lungs and the grown-ups see the event as a village-wide excuse for a booze-up, so everyone is happy. By nightfall, it's not unusual to see *Krampus* slurring after one too many schnapps; after all, the devil is allowed to misbehave and leave the good-guy stuff to Santa.

the *Hauptbahnhof*. It's 2km northeast of the *Altstadt*.

our pick **Nepomuks** (Map p334; ☎ 584 118; Kiebachgasse 16; www.nepomuks.at; dm/d €21/52) Could this be backpacker heaven? Nepomuks comes pretty darn close. The smiley sisters that run these central digs welcome you with homy extras like free cocoa in the kitchen. The high-ceilinged dorms have bags of charm with little touches from pot plants to books and CD players. Wake up to a delicious breakfast in Café Munding (p342) next door with homemade bread, jam, pastries and freshly roasted coffee.

Pension Paula (off Map p333; ☎ 292 262; www.pensionpaula.at; Weiberburggasse 15; s/d €36/58; (P)) Perched above Innsbruck in the quiet St Nikolaus district, this family-run pension occupies an alpine chalet and has super-clean, homely rooms (most with balcony). It's up the hill towards the zoo and has great vistas across the city.

MIDRANGE

Innbrücke (Map p334; ☎ 281 934; www.gasthofinnbruecke.at; Innstrasse 1; s/d €39/67; (P)) This 15th-century townhouse is Tyrol's answer to Fawley Towers with rather dated rooms, eccentric staff and an old-fashioned air. But you can't argue with the price and superb riverfront location.

Binders Hotel (Map p333; ☎ 334 36; www.binders.at; Dr Glatzstrasse 20; s €59-130 d €78-150; (P)) Just east of the *Altstadt*, a nondescript exterior hides this sleeping beauty with wi-fi and loads of snazzy art features. The individually designed rooms range from Smartie shades to all-white with teak floors; the spacious loft suite has a trampoline-sized waterbed. Spa access costs €9.

Hotel Weisses Kreuz (Map p334; ☎ 594 79; www.weisseskreuz.at; Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse 31; s/d €62/108; (P)) Beneath the arcades, this atmospheric *Altstadt* hotel has played host to guests for 500 years, including a 13-year-old Mozart. Creaking stairs pass a trickling fountain up to the antique-filled reception. The spotless rooms are country-style with chunky pine-wood and floral trimmings.

Weinhaus Happ (Map p334; ☎ 582 980; www.weinhaus-happ.at; Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse 14; s/d €72/88; (P)) Happ exudes old-world atmosphere. The '70s-style rooms could do with a lick of paint, but its plus points are many: prime views of the Goldenes Dachl, a cavernous wine cellar and a rustic restaurant (mains €9.50 to €22.50).

Mondschein (Map p334; ☎ 227 84; www.mondschein.at; Mariahilfstrasse 6; s €75-95, d €115-140; (P)) The moon beams down as you enter this riverside hotel, housed in a 15th-century fisherman's hut. Rooms painted in blues and sunny yellows give way to Swarovski crystal-studded bathrooms glittering like a night sky.

Bierwirt (off Map p333; ☎ 342 143; www.bierwirt.com; Bichlweg 2; s/d €80/123; (P)) In a tranquil enclave 10 minutes' walk from Schloss Ambras, this chalet-style hotel has a country feel and comes complete with a wood-pannelled restaurant and mosaic-tiled spa. Three of the spotless rooms are fully wheelchair accessible.

Weisses Rössl (Map p334; ☎ 583 057; www.roessl.at; Kiebachgasse 8; s/d €90/130; (P)) An antique rocking horse greets you at this 600-year-old guesthouse. The vaulted entrance leads up to spacious rooms recently revamped with blonde wood, fresh hues and crisp white linen. The owner is a keen hunter, so it's no surprise that the restaurant (mains €7 to €18) has a meaty menu.

TOP END

Goldener Adler (Map p334; ☎ 571 111; www.goldener-adler.com; Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse 6; s/d €87/128; (P)) Since opening in 1390, the grand Goldener Adler has welcomed kings, queens and Salzburg's two biggest exports: Mozart and Mrs Von Trapp. Rooms are elegant with gold drapes and squeaky-clean marble bathrooms.

Romantik Hotel Schwarzer Adler (Map p333; ☎ 587 109; www.deradler.com; Kaiserjägerstrasse 2; s €103-162, d €145-220, ste €260-480; (P) ☎) Calling all loved-up honeymooners... This romantic boutique hotel is arguably the top dog in town, particularly if your bank balance stretches to a spin in the white limo featured in Madonna's *Material Girl*. The fabulously OTT suites glitter with Swarovski crystals; the black-and-gold one is where Versace once snoozed in a solid marble bed! The spa is stunning with crystal fountains and Qigong treatments.

The Penz Hotel (Map p334; ☎ 575 657; www.thepenz.com, in German; Adolf-Pichler-Platz 3; s €135-190, d €180-240; (P)) Behind a sheer wall of glass, the Penz is a contemporary design hotel next to the Rathaus Galerien. The minimalist rooms in muted hues are glammed up with iridescent screens, flat-screen TVs and shiny chrome fittings. At breakfast, a whole table is piled high with exotic fruits.

Europa Tyrol (Map p333; ☎ 59 31; www.europatyrol.com; Südtiroler Platz 2; s €145-185, d €204-264, ste €324-424; (P) ☎) Facing the *Hauptbahnhof*, this five-star hotel's marble lobby gleams as though elves spent the entire night polishing it. The Biedermeier rooms are decorated with stripy wallpaper and ruby-red carpets. Mick Jagger and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II top the list of famous past guests.

Eating

Innsbruck's *Altstadt* is crammed with restaurants, trattorias and pavement cafés, dishing up everything from steaming plates of Tyrolean *Gröstl* (potatoes and bacon topped with a fried egg) to fiery curries and cheap snack-bar grub. There are gourmet haunts if you want them, but eating out here needn't bust the budget.

RESTAURANTS

Mamma Mia (Map p334; ☎ 562 902; Kiebachgasse 2; mains €5-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) This no-frills Italian bistro has a great buzz, alongside huge pizzas, fresh salads and healthy pasta dishes. The sunny terrace is a favourite spot in summer.

Lichtblick (Map p333; ☎ 566 550; Rathaus Galerien; lunch €6.50-12, set menu €32-42; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Elegant simplicity sums up Lichtblick on the 7th floor of the Rathaus Galerien. The panoramic views over Innsbruck through glass walls are as appetising as flavours like duck breast on artichokes and nectarines.

Lotos (Map p334; ☎ 578 663; Seilergasse 5; lunch buffet Mon-Fri €7, mains about €9; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) You'll need both chopsticks to tackle the generous portions of chop suey and *Verrücktes Huhn* (crazy chicken) at this Chinese haunt, tucked down an *Altstadt* alleyway.

Solo Pasta (Map p333; ☎ 587 206; Universitätsstrasse 15b; mains €7-18; ☎ 10am-1am Tue-Sat) This high-ceilinged spaghetteria draws a young crowd with its hip vibe and yummy pasta. Next door, Solo Vino has a more upmarket feel with Italian wines, antipasti and fresh fish on the menu.

Gasthaus Goldenes Dachl (Map p334; ☎ 58 93 70; Hofgasse 1; mains €7-18; ☎ lunch & dinner) Near the Goldenes Dachl, this snug tavern uses locally sourced produce to rustle up classic Tyrolean fare – try tender veal with sauerkraut or hearty lamb stew and dumplings.

Sahib (Map p333; ☎ 571 468; Sillgasse 3; mains €8-17; ☎ lunch & dinner) The aroma of Indian spices wafting from Sahib's humble doorway should tempt you in for scrummy tandoori and vegetarian dishes.

Tapabar (Map p334; ☎ 586 398; Innrain 2; mixed tapas €8.40-12.60; ☎ 8.30am-1am) Popular for its chilled vibe and late-night nibbles, this riverside Spanish bar is the place to order a plate of tasty tapas and a glass of Rioja. Catch free flamenco concerts every second Wednesday.

Cammerlander (Map p334; ☎ 586 398; Innrain 2; mains €8-17; ☎ 9am-1am) Tapabar's twin, this buzzy restaurant has a huge terrace on the banks of the Inn. The menu is a mixed bag of Austrian and world flavours, from schnitzel to chilli.

Thai-Li-Ba (Map p333; ☎ 567 888; Rathaus Galerien; mains €10-20; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Thai chefs cook up a storm in the show kitchen at this open-plan restaurant with pillar-box red walls and teak floors. The noodle and curry dishes are garnished with delicate orchids.

Papa Joe's (Map p334; ☎ 583 046; Seilergasse 12; mains €11-16; ☎ 4pm-1am Sun-Wed, 4pm-2am Thu-Sat) Toucans, waterfalls, palms, sharks... you name it, Papa Joe's is a snippet of Mexico. This wacky party haunt has a menu packed with jumbo steaks and jambalaya, and a Caribbean bar for after-dinner caipirinhas.

Romantik Hotel Schwarzer Adler Restaurant (Map p333; ☎ 587 109; Kaiserjägerstrasse 2; mains €12-20; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Zebra stripes and cow prints give this wood-panelled restaurant a groovy twist. Expect seasonal flavours, attentive service and eye-catching presentation.

QUICK EATS

Kröll (Map p334; ☎ 574 347; Hofgasse 6; snacks €2-3; ☎ 6am-midnight) Forget plain old apple, this hole-in-the-wall café has plenty of strudel varieties, including rhubarb, poppy, feta and plum. The fresh juices pack a vitamin punch.

Panino & Co (Map p333; Universitätsstrasse 3; paninis €3; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri) Blink and you'll miss this Italian deli, where you can create your own panini with Parma ham, cheese and olives. It's a good place to stock up on picnic supplies and the cheery owner makes a mean espresso.

SOWI Lounge (Map p333; ☎ 507 799-5; Universitätsstrasse 15; 2-course menu €4-5; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri) Brimming with students, this *Mensa* (university restaurant) has quick, cheap menus and outdoor seating on a grassy quarter.

SELF-CATERING

Pick up groceries at the large indoor food and flower **market** (Map p334; Herzog-Sigmund-Ufer; ☎ 7am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 7am-1pm Sat) by the river in Markthalle, or at Billa (Map p333) and Hofer (Map p333) supermarkets, close together on Museumstrasse.

Drinking

BARS

Innsbruck's healthy student population keeps the bar and clubbing scene upbeat. Aside from the gaggle of bars in and around the *Altstadt*, numerous drinking dens huddle beneath the railway arches on Ingenieur-Etzel-Strasse, an area known as the Viaduktbögen.

Treibhaus (Map p333; ☎ 572 000; www.treibhaus.at, in German; Angerzellgasse 8; ☎ 10am-1am) This cultural complex draws a boho crowd with its big terrace, regular DJs and live music (salsa libre Monday, jam session Tuesday, alternative Wednesday). In August, it hosts an open-air cinema.

360° (Map p333; ☎ 0664-84 06 570; Rathaus Galerien; ☎ 10am-1am Mon-Sat) Clean lines, cream leather and lounge music create a relaxed mood in this sphere-shaped bar beside Lichtblick. Grab a cushion and drink in 360-degree views of the city and Alps from the balcony skirting the bar.

Hofgarten Café (Map p333; ☎ 588 871; Rennweg 6a; ☎ 11am-4am) DJ sessions and a tree-shaded beer garden are crowd-pullers at this trendy café-cum-bar set in the greenery of Hofgarten. Sip cocktails beneath the stars or gaze up at the star-studded ceiling in the pavilion.

Krahvogel (Map p333; ☎ 580 149; Anichstrasse 12; ☎ 10am-2am Mon-Sat, 5pm-1am Sun) A big black crow guards the bar at this industrial-style pub. It doesn't make much noise, but the punters do after one too many Mind Sweeper cocktails. There are regular live bands and big-screen sports.

Elferhaus (Map p334; ☎ 582 875; Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse 11; ☎ 10am-2am) Eleven is the magic number at Elferhaus, where you can nurse a beer beside Gothic gargoyles at the bar or take a church-like pew to hear live rock bands play. The haunt attracts a 20-something crowd that spills out onto Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse.

La Copa (Map p334; Badgasse 4-6; ☎ 6pm-3am Mon-Thu, 6pm-4am Fri & Sat) Every Thursday, flamenco fans squeeze into this vaulted bodega to see José Márquez and amigos. Guitars, tapas and copious amounts of sangria keep the tone strictly Spanish. Even Mr lightning footwork himself, Paco Peña, has performed here.

La Habana (Map p334; ☎ 570 888; Rathaus Galerien; ☎ 8am-1am Mon-Sat) Che Guevara and Fidel Castro grace the walls of this so-smooth Cuban bar. Join the locals to sip cuba libres and puff fat cigars.

Dom Cafe-Bar (Map p334; ☎ 238 551; Pfarrgasse 3; ☎ 11am-2am Jun-Sep, 5pm-2am Oct-May) Flickering candles, vaulted ceilings and an HMV gramophone set the scene in this Gothic-style bar. Sink into a squishy sofa for a glass of red or a hot *Waldbeerpunsch* (wild berry punch) in winter.

Theresienbräu (Map p333; ☎ 587 580; Maria-Theresien-Strasse 53; ☎ 10am-1am Mon-Wed, 10am-2am Thu-Sat, 10am-midnight Sun) Copper vats gleam and rock plays at this lively microbrewery, which opens onto a garden seating 120 beer guzzlers and pretzel munchers. The ceiling is studded with 10,000 dried roses.

Jimmy's (Map p333; ☎ 57 04 73; Wilhelm-Greil-Strasse 19; ☎ 6pm-1.30am Mon-Thu, 8pm-2.30am Fri & Sat) Buddha enlightens this party-hearty bar in a courtyard near STA. Vodka shots are the tipples of choice and the music is a blend of hip-hop and funk.

CAFÉS

Café Katzung (Map p334; ☎ 586 183; Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse 16; snacks €4-8; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Sat, 9am-midnight Sun) Expect lounge music, a lively vibe and the best hot chocolate in town at this cool café. Menu favourites include all-day breakfasts and warming carrot-mango soup.

Café Central (Map p333; ☎ 59 20; Gilmstrasse 5; coffee €2-4; ☎ 7.30am-11pm) The piano tinkles and newspapers rustle in this Viennese-style coffee house with chandeliers, high ceilings and naughty-but-very-nice cakes.

Café Munding (Map p334; ☎ 584 118; Kiebachgasse 16; |coffee €2-4; ☎ 8am-8pm) Modern art gives this 200-year-old café a contemporary kick. As well as whipping up delicious cakes – try the *Mundingzopf* – the family roast their own coffee and make preserves with fruit freshly picked from local farms.

Entertainment

Innsbruck Information (p334) produces a helpful monthly guide to the city's key events and exhibitions; it's mostly in German but is easy to navigate. The city has its own symphony orchestra that performs regularly in various venues. Schloss Ambras hosts a series of classical concerts in summer.

Landestheater (Map p333; ☎ 520 744; www.landestheater.at, in German; Rennweg 2; tickets €3-38; ☎ ticket office 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 5.30-8.30pm Sun) Tyrol's seminal theatre stages year-round performances ranging from opera and ballet to drama and comedy.

Cinemas around town offer a special deal on Monday, when all seats are sold at the cheapest rate. For independent films shown in their original language head to **Cinematograph** (Map p333; ☎ 578 500; www.cinematograph.at, in German; Museumstrasse 31; tickets €6-8).

Shopping

Maria-Theresien-Strasse, the narrow cobblestone streets of the *Altstadt* and the Rathaus Galerien provide a quick shopping fix; here you can spend on handmade Tyrolean crafts, glitzy crystal jewellery and tasty local specialities.

Spezialitäten aus der Stiftsgasse (Map p334; ☎ 576 580; Stiftsgasse 3; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) An Aladdin's cave of homemade goodies, this vine-clad shop stocks honeys, oils, preserves and – if something more potent appeals – 600 types of liqueur.

Tiroler Heimatwerk (Map p333; ☎ 582 320; Meraner Strasse 2; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) If you're looking for high-quality crafts, this place sells everything from *Dirndl* to hand-carved nativity figurines, stained glass and Tyrolean puppets.

Speckeria (Map p334; ☎ 562 068; Hofgasse 3; ☎ 9am-7pm) Carnivores are in their element at this vaulted deli in the *Altstadt*, where the shelves are stacked with smoked ham, sausage and *Hirschschinken* (venison ham).

Christmas & Easter in Innsbruck (Map p334; ☎ 579 580; Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse 30; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun) This marvellously kitsch shop brims with spangly decorations, painted eggs, crib figurines and nutcrackers.

Swarovski Crystal Gallery (Map p334; ☎ 573 100; Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse 39; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) Part of the sparkling Swarovski empire, there's no room for clumsy shoppers in this gallery crammed with crystal trinkets and jewels.

Rathaus Galerien (Map p333; Maria-Theresien-Strasse 18; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) High-street shops, boutiques and cafés line this glass-roofed mall.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Innsbruck's **airport** (off Map p333; ☎ 225 25-0; www.innsbruck-airport.com; Fürstennweg 180), 4km to the west of the city centre, caters to a handful of national (Vienna and Graz) and international flights (London, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Bern, Frankfurt and Hannover), handled mostly by Austrian Airlines, BA, Lufthansa and Welcome Air.

BUS

The bus station (Map p333) is at the southern end of the *Hauptbahnhof*; its ticket office is located within the station.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The A12 and the parallel Hwy 171 are the main roads heading west and east. Highway 177, to the west of Innsbruck, continues north to Germany and Munich. The A13 is a toll road (€8) running south through the Brenner Pass to Italy. En route you'll cross the 192m Europabrücke (Europe Bridge), spanning the Sill River. Toll-free Hwy 182 follows the same route, passing under the bridge.

TRAIN

The *Hauptbahnhof* is Innsbruck's most convenient station, though some local trains also pull up at the Westbahnhof (actually to the south) and at Hötting (to the west).

Fast trains daily depart every two hours for Bregenz (€28, 2¼ hours) and Salzburg (€33.80, two hours). From Innsbruck to the Arlberg, the best views are on the right-hand side of the train. Two-hourly express trains serve Munich (€33.80, two hours) and Verona (€40, 3½ hours). Direct services to Kitzbühel also run every two hours (€13.20, one hour) while six daily trains head for Lienz (€20, three to five hours); some pass through Italy while others take the long way round via Salzburgerland.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport is served by bus F. Buses depart every 15 or 20 minutes from Maria-Theresien-Strasse (€1.70); taxis charge about €8 to €10 for the same trip.

CAR & BICYCLE

Most of central Innsbruck has restricted parking, indicated by a blue line. You can park within these areas for a maximum of 1½ or three hours during set times (approximately shop hours). The charge is €0.50/1/1.50 for 30/60/90 minutes; tickets are available from pavement dispensers. Parking garages (such as the one under the *Altstadt*) will set you back about €15 per day.

Innsbruck's major car rental agencies and bike hire shops:

Avis (Map p333; ☎ 571 754; Salurner Strasse 15;

☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat)

Denzeldrive (Map p333; ☎ 582 060; Salurner Strasse 8;

☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri)

Hertz (Map p333; ☎ 580 901; Südtiroler Platz 1;

☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat)

Neuner (Map p333; ☎ 561 501; Maximilianstrasse 23;

☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Rents mountain bikes for €16/20 per half/full day.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Single tickets on buses and trams cost €1.60 (from the driver; valid upon issue), but if you plan to use the city's public transport frequently you're better off buying a 24-hour ticket (€3.40). Weekly and monthly tickets are also available (€10.70 and €36.20, respectively). Tickets bought in advance, which are available from *Tabak* (tobacconist) shops,

Information Innsbruck (p334) and the **IVB Kundenbüro** (Map p334; ☎ 53 07-500; Stainerstrasse 2; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri), must be stamped in the machines at the start of the journey.

TAXI

For a taxi call ☎ 0800 222 22 55 or 53 11.

AROUND INNSBRUCK

HALL IN TIROL

☎ 05223 / pop 12,000

Nestled beneath the Alps, just 9km east of Innsbruck, Hall is caught in a medieval time-warp: slim townhouses and cobblestoned lanes lit by lanterns reveal that not an awful lot has changed since the 15th century when this small town grew fat on the riches of salt and silver. If you're in town for the *Weinherbst* festival in September, watch as the water in the Wilden Mannes fountain miraculously turns to wine...

Information

Staff at the **tourist office** (☎ 455 44; www.regionhall.at, in German; Wallpachgasse 5; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) can point you in the direction of the town's attractions. They also organise daily **guided tours** (adult/child €6/3.50; ☎ 10am Apr-Sep).

Sights & Activities

All streets lead to the Oberer Stadtplatz. Bordering this square is the 15th-century **Rathaus**, with its distinctive courtyard, complete with crenated edges and mosaic crests. Directly across the square, the spire of the 13th-century **Pfarrkirche** (parish church; admission free; ☎ daylight hr) rises skywards. The highlight is the **Waldaufkapelle**, home to Florian Waldauf's grisly collection of 45 skulls and 12 bones, picked from the remains of minor saints. Each rests on embroidered cushions, capped with veils and elaborate headdresses, reminiscent of spiked haloes; the whole effect is both repulsive and enthralling.

A few paces away is the **Damenstift**, a convent founded in 1557 and graced by a baroque tower; unfortunately the convent's church is often locked. Not far from the Damenstift is the small **Bergbau Museum** (Fürstengasse; adult/child €3.50/2; ☎ tours 11.30am Apr-Sep), which delves into the town's history of salt mining and can only be visited on a tour.

Stepping south of the medieval centre, you reach the ivy-clad **Burg Hasegg** (☎ 442 45;

Burg Hasegg 6; adult/child €4/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Tue-Sat Nov-Mar), where a spiral staircase coils up to the 5th floor for far-reaching views over Hall. The castle had a 300-year career as a mint for silver *Thalers* (coins, the root of the modern word 'dollar'), and this history is unravelled in the **Münze Hall** (☎ 585 5165; Burg Hasegg 6; adult/child €6/4; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Tue-Sat Nov-Mar), displaying water-driven and hammer-striking techniques. Audio guides are included in the price and kids can mint their own coin.

Sleeping & Eating

Gasthof Badl (☎ 567 84; Innbrücke 4; s/d €41/68; ☐) A short dash across the Inn River, this gem of a guesthouse has immaculate rooms (most with river view) and a tavern that knocks up a great strudel. Little 'uns will love the playground and docile St Bernard, Max. Rent a bike here to pedal along the banks to Innsbruck.

Parkhotel (☎ 537 69; www.parkhotel-hall.com; Thurnfeldgasse 1; s/d €92/146; ☐) It's a surprise to find such an avant-garde design statement in little Hall. This cylindrical hotel's curvaceous glass-walled rooms are decorated in earthy hues and feature free internet access and stunning mountain views.

Wurstkultur (☎ 527 45; Krippgasse 8; sausages €2-4; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm & 4.30-9pm Tue-Fri, 11.30am-2.30pm Sat) This hole-in-the-wall place excels in *Würstl* (sausages). The arm-long list includes paprika, curry and vegetarian bangers. Picking mustard to slather on them is also an adventure – try the beer, honey and orange varieties.

Getting There & Away

Hwy 171 goes almost through the town centre, unlike the A12/E45, which is over the Inn River to the south. The train station is about 1km southwest of the centre; it is on the main Innsbruck–Wörgl train line, but only regional trains stop here. Buses take longer but they stop in the town centre. From Innsbruck (€2.80, 30 minutes), buses leave every 15 minutes.

WATTENS

The quaint village of Wattens has one claim to fame: it's the glittering heart of the Swarovski crystal empire. This unique brand of bling certainly reels in the tourists and **Swarovski Kristallwelten** (Swarovski Crystal Worlds; ☎ 05224-510 80; Kristallweltenstrasse 1; adult/child €8/free; ☎ 9am-6pm)

tops the list of Austria's most-visited attractions. Call them kitsch or classy, there is no doubting the popularity of these crystals, displayed in all their glory at this fantastical playground. A giant's head spewing water into a pond greets you in the park. Inside you'll find Alexander McQueen's crystal tree, zebras drifting past on ruby slippers in a twinkling theatre, and the world's biggest crystal, weighing in at 62kg. Terence Conran's shop by the exit is where, depending on your budget, you can buy a bejewelled pen for €1.30 or splurge on a €14,800 crystal-studded iguana. Decisions, decisions...

Swarovski Kristallwelten is best visited by bus (€3.80, 20 minutes). Leaving every half-hour (fewer on Sundays) from Innsbruck's *Busbahnhof* (bus station) heading for Schwaz, they stop at Swarovski Kristallwelten.

SCHWAZ

☎ 05242 / pop 12,400

Schwaz wielded clout in the Middle Ages when its eyes shone brightly with silver. In the 15th century it was, believe it or not, Austria's second-largest city after Vienna. For a taste of that past glory, go underground to the show silver mine or take a wander through the winding streets of this laid-back little town.

Information

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 632 40; www.silberregionkarwendel.at; Franz-Josef-Strasse 2; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat May–mid-Oct; 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat mid-Oct–Apr) provides information on sights and accommodation in Schwaz.

Sights & Activities

Schwaz' biggest draw is its labyrinth of cobble streets in the medieval centre. Taking pride of place on pedestrianised Franz-Josef-Strasse, the Gothic **Pfarrkirche** (parish church; admission free; ☎ daylight hr) immediately catches your eye with its steep roof bearing 14,000 copper tiles.

Not far south is the **Franziskanerkirche** (Gilmstrasse; admission free; ☎ daylight hr), blending Gothic and baroque styles. The church cloisters next door are a calm spot; Gothic windows and unfinished frescoes line its inner courtyard.

It's worth peering inside the **Haus der Völker** (Ethnography Museum; ☎ 660 90; St Martin; adult/child €6/4; ☎ 10am-6pm), just north of town, which presents the rich collection of local photographer Gert Chesl. Curiosities on dis-

play include Nigerian masks, Burmese gongs and voodoo ceremonial tools.

You almost feel like breaking out into a rendition of Hi-Ho at **Silberbergwerk Schwaz** (Silver Mine; ☎ 723 72; Alte Landstrasse 3a; adult/student/child €15/10/8; ☎ 9am-5pm May-Sep, 10am-4pm Apr & Oct, 10am-4pm Wed-Sun Nov-Mar), as you board a mini-train and venture deep into the bowels of the silver mine for a 90-minute trundle through Schwaz's illustrious past. The mine is about 1.5km east of the centre.

Sleeping & Eating

Pension Clara (☎ 639 11; Winterstellergasse 20; s/d €28/52) A peaceful garden, mountain views and old-fashioned hospitality define this charming guesthouse, five minutes' stroll from the centre. The large, well-equipped rooms are real value for money.

Café Luce (☎ 653 60; Burggasse 1; lunch €4.50; mains €6-7; ☎ lunch & dinner) This lively café is a local favourite for cheap lunches and post-work drinks in the courtyard. The simple menu features various takes on pasta, bruschetta and salads.

Hellas (☎ 677 04; Burggasse 4; lunch €6; mains €7-18; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Hellas is a classy little Greek place with vaulted ceilings, exposed brick and bold colours. The terrace is quite something; waiters have to cross the road to get there and perform a balancing act to ensure your tasty moussaka doesn't land on someone's bonnet.

Getting There & Away

Only 18km east of Innsbruck, Schwaz is an easy day trip. The train to Schwaz (€5, 20 minutes) is the quickest option.

STUBAI GLACIER

It's a bizarre feeling to slip out of sandals and into skis at the height of summer, but that's precisely what draws people to the Stubai Glacier. Just 40km from Innsbruck, the glacier is a year-round skiing magnet with great snow, no trees to dodge and around 100km of pistes catering to all levels. Summer skiing is limited to between 2900m and 3300m. Walkers are attracted to the network of trails lower down in the valley; a good hiking map for the area is Kompass' *Stubai Alpen Serleskamm* (scale 1:50,000). The Stubaital branches off from the Brenner Pass route (A13/E45) a little south of the Europabrücke and runs southwest.

Stubaitalbahnhof (STB) buses from Innsbruck journey to the foot of the glacier (one way/return €7.70/13.80, one hour) on an hourly basis; one-way tickets can be bought from the driver, return tickets need to be purchased in advance.

If you're based in Innsbruck and want to go skiing for the day on the glacier, consider the package tour offered by Innsbruck Information (p334). For €49.50, you'll receive a return bus journey, ski or snowboard rental and a ski pass.

SEEFELD

☎ 05212 / pop 3000

The pointy peaks are there, but Seefeld isn't just about the downhill rush. This alpine resort's first love is *Langlauf* (cross-country skiing) and there are 262km of groomed trails to prove it. When the white stuff turns to slush, locals limber up on the region's superb network of hiking trails or brave the chilly green waters of Wildsee.

The central **tourist office** (☎ 05-088 00; www.seefeld.at; Klosterstrasse 43; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun mid-Jul–mid-Sep, 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat rest of year) has stacks of info on accommodation and outdoor activities.

Sights & Activities

A must-see if you believe in miracles is 15th-century **Pfarrkirche St Oswald** (admission free; ☎ daylight hr). It was here that Oswald Milser gobbled a wafer reserved for the clergy at Easter communion in 1384. After almost being swallowed up by the floor, the greedy layman repented, but the wafer was streaked with blood – not from foolish Oswald but from Christ, naturally. Climb the stairway to view the **Blutskapelle** (Chapel of the Holy Blood), which held the original wafer.

It's a short stroll south of the centre to **Wildsee**, a bottle-green, pine-fringed lake that anchors **Reither Moor** conservation area; a 45-minute trail rings the lake and you can stop off for a refreshing dip at the *Strandbad* (bathing area). For longer, more challenging walks, cable cars ascend nearby **Seefeld Spitze** (2220m) and **Reither Spitze** (2374m); consult the tourist office for more information or join one of its regular guided walks.

Seefeld's raison d'être is **cross-country skiing**. Prepared *Loipe* (trails) crisscross the plateau to **Mösern**, 5km away, where there are fine views of the Inn River and the peaks beyond.

Downhill skiing here is geared towards intermediates and beginners. Seefeld is linked to other ski resorts, including Ehrwald (p358), Reith and Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany, all of which are covered by the **Happy Ski Card** (3 days adult/child €88/53). The two main areas are Gschwandtkopf (1500m) and Rosshütte (1800m); the latter connects to higher lifts and slopes on the Karwendel range.

Sleeping & Eating

For a resort of its size, Seefeld has a substantial choice of accommodation. The main drag around Dorfplatz is more low-key than après-ski, with a smattering of restaurants and bars vying for custom. Private rooms offer the best value, but expect rates to be a third higher during the winter season.

Landhaus Seeblick (☎ 23 89; Innsbrucker Strasse 165; s/d €28/56) Landhaus Seeblick is prettily situated opposite Wildsee. The warm, welcoming rooms open onto balconies – perfect for lounging and enjoying those lake views.

Hotel Garni Dorothea (☎ 25 27; hotel.dorothea@aon.at; Kirchwald 391; s/d €35/70; P) Sweeping vistas over Seefeld unfold as you trudge uphill to this three-star hotel. The rooms in natural colours are spacious and modern. After carving up the slopes, the indoor pool and sauna are just the ticket.

Gruggerhof (☎ 32 54; Leutascherstrasse 64; apt €45-83; P) This alpine chalet oozes charm, with a blooming garden in summer and easy access to the slopes in winter. Natural light pours into the spruced-up apartments that come complete with kitchenettes and balconies.

Putzi's (☎ 49 55; Bahnhofstrasse 33; snacks €3-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) For a beer and bite to eat, Putzi's is a safe bet, churning out good-value schnitzels, pizzas and burgers.

Strandperle (☎ 24 36; Innsbrückerstrasse 500; mains €8-15; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Apr & Nov) Overlooking the calm waters of Wildsee, Strandperle is a funky granite-and-glass place. The menu delivers fresh flavours such as jumbo green mussels and alpine beef filets. The decked terrace has the finest views of the Alps anywhere in Seefeld.

Restaurant Südtiroler Stube (☎ 504 46; Reitherspitzstrasse 17; mains €10-21; ☎ lunch & dinner) This low-beamed South Tyrolean restaurant pips the competition with delicious specialities such as rosemary-infused rack of lamb and tender venison medallions.

Getting There & Away

Seefeld is 25km northwest of Innsbruck, just off the Germany-bound Hwy 177. The road follows the Inntal until it rises sharply near Zirl. The track starts climbing soon after departing Innsbruck, providing spectacular views across the whole valley, especially if you sit on the left of a bus (€4.50, 35 minutes, 13 daily). Trains run to Mittenwald (€3.80, 20 minutes) every two hours and Garmisch-Partenkirchen (€11.80, 55 minutes), both in Germany.

NORTHEASTERN TYROL

THE ZILLERTAL

Sandwiched between the Tuxer Voralpen and the Kitzbüheler Alpen, the Zillertal (Ziller Valley) epitomises picture-postcard Tyrol. A steam train chugs through the broad valley, passing fertile farmland and limestone spires, affording glimpsed vistas of snowy peaks and the meandering Ziller River. As well as skis or walking boots, this is one place you'll be glad you packed that extra pair of lederhosen. It's an extremely traditional place, where down-to-earth locals still tune into *Alpen Rock* (alpine rock) and celebrate their heritage with gusto.

Practically every resort has its own tourist office, but the main **tourist office** (☎ 05288-871 87; www.zillertal.at; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat) covering the whole valley is in Schlitters, 6km from Jenbach. It stocks plenty of information on outdoor activities, along with the *Zillertaler Gästezeitung* (partially in English) magazine.

Four camping grounds are situated in the valley and there is a year-round **HI hostel** (☎ 05288-620 10; www.hihostels.com/dba/hostel004079.de.htm; Finsingerhof, Finsing 73; dm €17; P) at Uderns, 12km south of Jenbach. Most beds are in chalet-style pensions, private rooms, holiday apartments or farmhouses. Ask staff at the tourist offices for help in finding somewhere (they usually won't charge), as there are dozens of options in each resort. Wherever you stay, inquire about the resort's *Gästekarte* (guest card).

Note that many places close between seasons, usually early April to late June and early November to mid-December. This includes many of the hotels, restaurants and bars mentioned below.

Activities

Mayrhofen is a prime spot for serious **skiing**, but there is downhill and cross-country skiing elsewhere. The Zillertaler Superskipass covers all 150-odd lifts in the valley; it starts at €126 for the minimum four days, or €139.50 for four out of six days. Ski buses connect the resorts.

In summer, the alpine valley morphs into excellent **walking** territory. A famous network of trails is the Zillertaler Höhenstrasse in the Tuxer Voralpen, but paths also fan out from the resorts of Ried, Kaltenbach, Aschau, Zell and Ramsau. Mountain huts at elevations of around 1800m beckon weary hikers; the handy *Hütten-, Ausflugs- & Erlebnisführer* booklet (German only) lists all the huts in the valley. A detailed walking map covering the entire region is the *Kompass Zillertaler Alpen & Tuxer Voralpen* (scale 1:50,000). If you're planning on spending a week or more in the valley between June and October, the value-for-money **Zillertal Card** (6/9/12 days €39.80/54.80/68.80) covers public transport, one journey per day on any of the Zillertal cable cars and entry to swimming pools.

Other adrenaline-based activities include rafting, rock climbing, paragliding and cycling. The Ziller and its tributaries are also good for fishing, but permits are only valid for certain stretches.

Festivals & Events

From late September, the Zillertal celebrates the **Almabtrieb**, where cows are led down from the high pastures adorned with elaborate floral headdresses, garlands and tinkling bells. The parade takes place on the first Sunday in October in Zell am Ziller and on the first and second Saturdays in October in Mayrhofen. The locals see the event as an excuse for a bit of a party; merrymaking involves food markets, bands blasting out folk music and plenty of schnapps for farmers that want to drown their sorrows at the prospect of another harsh winter shovelling cow dung.

Getting There & Away

The Zillertal is serviced by a private train line, the **Zillertalbahn** (☎ 05244-606-0; www.zillertal.bahn.at), which travels the 32km from Jenbach to Mayrhofen.

Those with a thirst for nostalgia can take a *Dampfzug* (steam train) along the valley; it runs twice daily year-round (10.47am and

3.16pm). It takes about 85 minutes to reach the last stop, Mayrhofen, and costs €10.70 one way to either Zell or Mayrhofen. If you just want to get from A to B, it's better to take the *Triebwagen* (train) or bus as it costs €5.90.

ZELL AM ZILLER

☎ 05282 / pop 1840

Scenically located at the foot of knife-edge Reichenspitze (3303m), Zell am Ziller is a former gold-mining centre. There's now less sparkle and more swoosh about this rural and deeply traditional little village, home to 160km of pistes and a thrilling 7.5km floodlit toboggan run. Warm weather lures active types, who come to hike in the hills or pedal up the Gerlos Pass to Krimml in the Hohe Tauern National Park (p317).

Orientation & Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 22 81; www.zell.at; Dorfplatz 3a; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri) near the train tracks is a mine of information on walking, skiing and adventure activities in the area. At the other end of Dorfplatz is the post office, with bus stops at the rear.

Sights & Activities

The slender spire of the pink-and-white **Pfarrkirche** (parish church; admission free; ☎ daily) rises above the village and is surrounded by a sea of filigree crosses. You can peek inside the church, but you do so at your own risk – a sign on the door issues a warning that it is *not* a museum!

Abenteuer Goldbergbau (☎ 48 20; www.goldschau.bergwerk.com, in German; Hainzenberg 73; adult/child €10/5; ☎ 9am-5pm) is a two-hour tour of a gold mine 2km east of Zell on the Gerlos road. The entry price covers a cheese-making demonstration and a visit to the animal enclosure, where kids can come face-to-face with deer, emus and llamas.

Aside from trekking and skiing, the mountains around Zell are ideal for **paragliding**. Paragliding specialist **Fly Zillertal** (☎ 0664-87 25 913; www.fly-zillertal.com, in German; Freizeitpark Zell) offers piloted trips descending 500m to 2300m (€55 to €130). Several rival firms offer similar deals; ask for details at the tourist office.

Bicycles (half/full day €8/12) can be rented from the train station.

Festivals & Events

Wafting around on hot-air currents is not recommended after a bellyful of super-strong Gauderbier (reputedly over 10% alcohol) brewed specially for the **Gauderfest** (www.gauderfest.at, in German). The festival takes place on the first weekend in May, and participants show off long-established rural skills: playing music, dancing and drinking heavily. The lavish main procession (participants wear historical costumes) and wrestling take place on Sunday.

Sleeping & Eating

Zell is dotted with chalets offering accommodation, with many west of the river in Zellbergeben. Rates are around 30% higher in the winter season.

Camping Hofer (☎ 22 48; www.campinghofer.at; Gerlosstrasse 33; campsites per adult/child/tent €6.60/4.20/6.80, guesthouse s/d €21/42; (P) (Q)) Full of happy campers, this tree-shaded site offers first-rate facilities including a playground, grill area and heated pool. If you don't fancy roughing it, check out the well-kept rooms in the guesthouse.

our pick Enzianhof (☎ 22 87; www.enzianhof.eu, in German; Gerlosberg 23; s/d €23/40) High on a hill, this chocolate-box chalet is the place to slip under the skin of the Zillertal: the farmer makes his own gentian schnapps, smokes his own ham and will even give you a lift from the village (call ahead). Open year-round, the farmhouse is perfectly located for hiking and skiing. Kids love the resident potbellied pigs and donkey, Julius.

Gästehaus Brindlinger (☎ 26 71; brindlinger.zell@aon.at; Gaudergasse 4; s/d €26/52; (P)) Tucked down a quiet lane, this chalet has bright rooms with plenty of pine, rag rugs and balconies affording mountain views. The sauna is popular after a day on the slopes and Mrs Brindlinger will let you borrow bikes free of charge.

Café Reiter im Park (☎ 22 89-0; Freizeitpark Zell; pizzas €7-10; (M) dinner) Reiter serves up enormous pizzas and après-ski during the ski season. In summer, the garden is a favourite spot to eat fresh mussels and enjoy a few drinks.

Self-caterers can head to the **Billa** (Bahnhofstrasse 3) supermarket

Getting There & Away

Normal trains to Mayrhofen (€2.20, 12 minutes) and Jenbach (€5.20, 45 minutes) are cheaper than the steam train. Zell am Ziller is the start of the Gerlos Pass route to the

Krimml Falls; buses tackle the pass from July to September up to four times daily (€4.50, one to 1½ hours).

Trains to and from Innsbruck (€10.20, 1½ hours, hourly) require a change at Jenbach.

MAYRHOFEN

☎ 05285 / pop 3900

Mayrhofen can feel like a sleepy village in summer with its alpine dairies, glass-clear lakes and trails twisting high into the mountains. But it dances to a different tune in winter. The skiing at Ahorn and Penken is some of Austria's finest: a double whammy of cruising and kamikaze in the shadow of the frosted Zillertal Alps. And when it comes to après-ski, this resort can strut in its snow boots with the best of them in slick bars and an incredibly cool igloo.

Orientation & Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 676 00; www.mayrhofen.at; Europahaus; (M) 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 9am-noon Sun) stocks loads of information and maps on the resort; look for the comprehensive *Info von A-Z*; it's free and written in English. There is a handy topographic model of the surrounding Alps and a 24-hour accommodation board.

Sights

For a fly-on-the-wall tour of a working dairy, head to the **Erlebnis Sennerei** (☎ 639 06-0; Hollenzen 116; admission with/without tasting €10.90/5.80, under 12yr free; (M) 10-11.30am & 12.30-3pm, closed Nov-mid-Dec). A glass-walled walkway reveals cheese-making processes, stepping from copper vats full of creamy milk to cheese ripening in salt baths. The final products are huge wheels of Tilsiter, Bergkäse and Graukäse, a mouldy grey cheese that is virtually fat-free. The dairy leaves the best till last: the **restaurant** (mains €7-14; (M) 10am-6pm) where you can savour local cheese-rich specialities like *Graukahmsuppe* (Graukäse cream soup).

Activities

Mayrhofen's ski region offers some fearsome runs including the mogul-free **Harakiri**, Austria's steepest piste with a knee-trembling 78% gradient. Snowboarders, meanwhile, are in their element on the kickers, boxes and half-pipe at **Burton Park** in the Penken area. A local ski pass, valid for ski lifts on Ahorn and Penken-Hörberg (157km of piste), costs €36 for one day. A welcome newcomer for skiers

is the speedy **Ahorn** cable car, accommodating 160 passengers in each gondola.

The resort provides easy access to year-round skiing on the **Hintertux Glacier**. The Hintertuxer Gletscher cable car is an attraction in itself, gliding above sheer cliff faces and a spine of peaks to the tip of the ice-blue glacier. The sundeck at 3250m affords phenomenal views of the Tuxer Alps and, on clear days, Grossglockner, the Dolomites and Zugspitze. Day passes cost €36. From Christmas till early May a free bus shuttles skiers from Mayrhofen to the glacier (included in the ski pass).

From late May to mid-October, the tourist office organises regular **guided walks** (free with a guest card), which include night ambles, herb trails and mountain hikes. If you prefer to go it alone, it also produces a list (in English) of popular walks heading out of the village. A detailed map of the region is the Kompass *Mayrhofen-Tuxertal-Zillergrund* (scale 1:25,000). From the village itself two cable cars give walkers a great head start; one-way/return fares on both the Ahorn (1965m) and Penken (1800m) are €9.50/14.50 in summer.

Action Club Zillertal (☎ 629 77; www.action-club-zillertal.com; Hauptstrasse 458) is the place to go for adventure sports from hydrospeeding the raging waters of the Ziller River (€33) to canyoning (€24 to €79), paragliding (€80 to €160) and skydiving from Radfeld/Kundl (€190). Next door, **Ski School Mount Everest** (☎ 628 29; www.habeler.com; Hauptstrasse 458) is run by famous Austrian mountaineer, Peter Habeler (see boxed text, p89), who offers day tours in the Zillertal Alps including the ascent of the 3476m Olperer (€79).

The stunning alpine scenery and mountain passes around the Zillertal encourage cyclists to grab a bike and get pedalling. The routes zigzagging up to Ginzling and Hintertux can be tough going, but the views are exhilarating. Inquire at the tourist office about tours. Bicycles can be rented from the **train station** (half/full day €8/12) and **Hervis Sports** (☎ 640 45; Einfahrt Mitte 433; half/full day €8/12).

Festivals & Events

Mayrhofen's hottest event is **Snowbombing** in early April when the masses descend on the resort for a week-long knees-up. Some of the world's top boarders battle it out on the slopes, but many just come for the crazy après-ski. Expect 24-hour bars, club nights,

a top line-up of DJs and wild inebriation. More details and tickets are available at www.snowbombing.com.

Sleeping

The tourist office can help you trawl through the mountain of sleeping options in the village; rates are roughly 20% higher in winter.

Gästehaus Emberger (☎ 644 37; Neu-Burgstall 303; www.gaestehaus-emberger.at, in German; s/d €19/36 (P)) It's worth the 20-minute walk out of town to this hilltop guesthouse. Pinewood, rag rugs and flower-strewn balconies give the rooms a homy touch. Other draws are the panoramic vistas of the Alps, a small sauna and gym.

Kumbichlhof (☎ 624 58; www.kumbichlhof.com; Kumbichl 874; s/d €27/46; (P)) This family-run farmhouse is a great budget choice. The décor teeters on the old-fashioned, but rooms are immaculate and have own balconies.

Hotel Central Garni (☎ 623 17; Hauptstrasse 449; s/d €40/52; (P)) You'll feel as snug as a bug in this friendly hotel, run by the same family since the 1930s. The rooms are simple and clean, and open onto balconies overlooking the mountains.

Hotel Kramerwirt (☎ 67 00; www.kramerwirt.at; Am Marienbrunnen 346; s/d €89/154; (P) (Q) (L)) Ablaze with geraniums in summer, this rambling 500-year-old chalet has corridors full of family heirlooms, spacious rooms and an outside whirlpool. Get your tongue in a twist at the restaurant (mains €8 to €21) asking for the tasty *Zillertaler Bauernschmaus* (farmers' platter with meat, dumplings and sauerkraut).

Eating

Mayrhofen dishes up everything from rustic chalets churning out cheese-heavy dishes to cheap-and-cheerful pizzerias.

Metzgerei Kröll (☎ 623 64; Scheulingstrasse 382; snacks €2.50-7; (M) 7.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 7am-noon Sat) This family-run butchery is famed for its unique *Schlegeis-Speck* ham, cured in a hut at 1800m for three months to achieve its aroma. There are a handful of tables where you can sample this speciality and the delicious homemade sausages.

China-Restaurant Singapore (☎ 639 12; Scheulingstrasse 371; mains €7-12; (M) lunch & dinner) A potbellied Buddha greets you at Singapore, which spices up the village with its tasty Asian fare. Fill up on Sichuan beef or shark fin soup before crossing the street for drinks in Scotland Yard.

Mamma Mia (☎ 67 68; Einfahrt Mitte 432; mains €7-9; ☺ lunch & dinner) Outside the plush Hotel Elisabeth, this vibrant pizzeria recreates Italy with its terracotta floor, bold colours and murals of Florence. The wood-fired pizzas and salads are unrivalled in Mayrhofen.

Wirtshaus zum Griena (☎ 67 67; Dorfhaus 768; mains €7-15; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Set in high pastures, this woody 400-year-old chalet is the kind of place where you pray for a snow blizzard, so you can huddle around the fire and tuck into *Schlutzkropfn* (fresh pasta filled with cheese).

Supermarkets include a **Billa** (Am Marienplatz) and **Spar** (Hauptstrasse).

Drinking

Gurpick White Lounge (☎ 622 77; Ahorn; ☺ Dec-Apr) Kick your skis off and chill at this 2000m-high igloo bar, sculpted entirely from ice. Squeeze into the Eskimo-style haunt for frozen cocktails or catch rays on the lounges at the snow bar outside. Things heat up at Tuesday's igloo party when partygoers race (or roll) downhill on sledges.

Mo's (☎ 634 35; Hauptstrasse 417; ☺ noon-1am) This popular American-themed bar attracts a young crowd with its chirpy staff, moreish finger food (try the nachos and mozzarella sticks) and live music at weekends.

Scotland Yard (☎ 623 39; Scheulingstrasse 372; ☺ 7pm-late) A snippet of Old Blighty in rural Austria, Scotland Yard is a British pub with all the trimmings: Guinness, darts and a red phone box where expats can pour their hearts out to folk back home after a pint or three.

For more après-ski action, head to the Schirm Bar at the top of the Penken gondola, where fired-up skiers and boarders shake their booties after downing €1 shots. Equally loud and lively at the bottom is the **Ice Bar** (☎ 67 05; Hauptstrasse 470), where go-go polar bears (we kid you not!) lure you onto the dance floor. Both stay open until around 8pm.

Getting There & Away

By normal train, it's €5.90 each way to Jenbach (55 minutes).

GINZLING

☎ 05286 / pop 400

Arriving in Ginzling, an adorable little village 8km south of Mayrhofen, is like travelling 100 years back in time. Silent, rural and

lacking any obvious tourist infrastructure, this place is pure escapism.

The **tourist office** (☎ 52 18; www.ginzling.at; ☺ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) is well set up for walking enthusiasts keen to explore the nearby Hochgebirgs-Naturpark Zillertaler Alpen. The park is an untouched alpine wilderness with a smattering of huts. Skiing is almost nonexistent; touring for experienced skiers is the only option.

In former lives, **Gasthof Alt-Ginzling** (☎ 52 01; www.altginzling.at; s/d €28/56; ☐) was a stable and a wayside inn for smugglers travelling to Italy. Today the 18th-century farmhouse oozes history from every creaking floorboard. The low-ceilinged, pine-panelled rooms are supremely comfortable and the restaurant (mains €7 to €16) serves locally fished rainbow trout.

During winter, buses to Mayrhofen are free for those with ski passes; outside the ski season it costs €2.80. A winding road (toll €10) continues on from Ginzling up the valley to the **Schlegeisseicher** (1782m) reservoir, the trailhead for the stunning Zillertal Circuit (p87).

ACHENSEE

North of Jenbach, flanked by wooded slopes and ringed with beaches, the turquoise Achensee is Tyrol's largest lake at 9km. The **Achenseebahn** (www.achenseebahn.at; one way/return €18/22), a private cogwheel steam train, trundles to the lake from Jenbach between May and October, connecting with two-hour **boat tours** (www.tirol-schiffahrt.at, in German; adult/child €13/6.50) of the lake. Far-reaching views over the lake and the surrounding mountains can be had from Erfurter (1831m), which is easily reached by the **Rofanseilbahn** (adult/child return €15/9; ☺ 8.30am-5pm) from Maurach.

KITZBÜHEL

☎ 05356 / pop 8500

Ask an Austrian to rattle off the top ski resorts in the country, and Kitzbühel will invariably make the grade. This resort has a winning formula: fine intermediate terrain and a few black runs to challenge veteran skiers. Kitz, as locals nickname it, rounds that off with a labyrinthine medieval centre and enough Porsches and Prada to rival St Moritz in the glamour stakes. It's a slalom playground, a magnet to the golf-club-toting rich and a postcard Tyrolean village.

Orientation & Information

The main train station is 1km north of the resort's hub, centred on Vorderstadt and Hinterstadt. The central **tourist office** (☎ 777; www.kitzbuehel.com; Hinterstadt 18; ☺ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jul-Sep & Christmas-Easter, 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat rest of year) has loads of info in English and a 24-hour accommodation board.

Banks and ATMs are everywhere and the **post office** (Josef-Pirchl-Strasse 11) is midway between the train station and tourist office. Internet access is available at **Kitz Video** (Schlossergasse 10; per hr €5; ☺ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 2-8pm Sun).

Sights

Kitzbühel's medieval core is a tangle of cobbled streets lined with gabled houses in candy colours. Perched above the town, the 15th-century **Pfarrkirche St Andreas** (☎ 666 59; Pfarrauweg 2; ☺ daylight hr) fuses Gothic and baroque elements. Next door the **Liebfrauenkirche** (Pfarrauweg 4; ☺ daylight hr) is a rococo church with a chunky 48m belfry and an interior adorned with gold swirls and frescoes.

Museum Kitzbühel (☎ 672 74; Hinterstadt 32; adult/child €5/2; ☺ 10am-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm early-Dec-mid-Mar, 10am-1pm Tue-Sat rest of year) traces Kitzbühel's heritage from its humble Bronze Age beginnings to the present day. The big emphasis is on winter sports and the town's famous son, champion skier Toni Sailer.

Ride to Kitzbüheler Horn to wander the serene **Alpine Flower Garden** (admission free; ☺ daylight hr summer), nurturing alpine blooms like arnica, edelweiss and purple bellflowers. It's best reached by **Kitzbüheler Horn cable car** (adult/child €15/8.50), but drivers can also wind their way up to the top of the mountain (road toll per car/motorcycle €4/2, plus €1.50 per person).

For a cooling dip in summer, venture 3km northwest of the centre to Kitzbühel's natural swimming hole, the tree-flanked **Schwarzsee**. There are two beach complexes, each costing about €3.50 per day.

Activities

Along with the activities listed below, Kitzbühel gets pulses racing with scenic flights, skydiving, ballooning, golf, water sports and even bungee jumping. **Element 3** (☎ 0664-1000 580; www.element3.at; Winklenfeld 1) is a one-stop shop for adventure sports, including rafting, climbing, canyoning and paragliding.

SKIING

The Kitzbühel region offers exceptional skiing on 150km of pistes geared mostly towards intermediates and accessed by 53 lifts and cable cars. Extending northeast, the **Kitzbüheler Horn** is much loved by snowboarders for its half-pipe and kickers, while beginners flock here for gentle cruising on sunny slopes.

Spreading southwest, the **Hahnenkamm** (1668m) connects with some heart-stopping black runs in the **Pengelstein** (1938m) area. A great way to find your ski legs is to tackle the red-and-blue runs that make up the scenic **Ski Safari**, linking the Hahnenkamm to Jochberg. The alpine tour is marked by elephant signs and is a good introduction to the entire ski area.

One-day/three-day and weekly passes (Christmas to mid-March) cost €38.50/101/202 in high season and €33.50/88/175.50 at all other times. Passes cover lifts, cable cars and ski buses as far south as Thurn Pass. For real powder freaks, the Kitzbüheler Alpen Skipass is ideal; it spans the whole region (including 243 lifts; Kitzbühel, Schneewinkel, Wilder Kaiser-Brixental, Alpbach and Wildschönau) and costs €196 for six consecutive days.

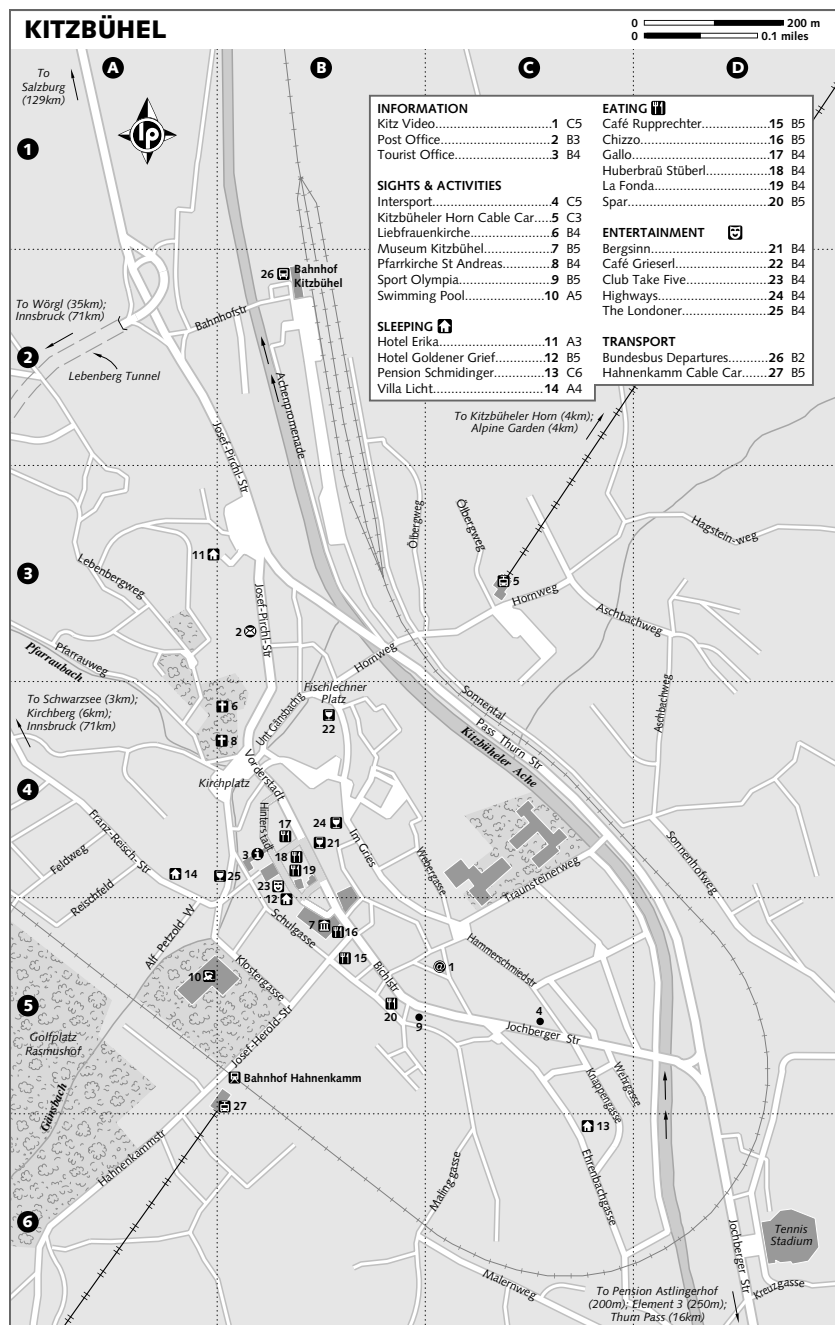
WALKING

Walking is Kitzbühel's main summer activity; zillions of walking trails head off in all directions from the town. The tourist office caters to walker's demands too, handing out a comprehensive *Wanderwegeplan* (hiking plan) free of charge. If you'd prefer some company on the trails, it also organises free guided walks daily at 8.45am for *Gästekarte* holders (mid-May to mid-October).

A cable-car pass also covering local buses will set you back €37.60 for three days' travel within seven days, or €51.50 for six days in 10. Individual ascent tickets cost €15.50/8.60 for adults/children (discounts available with *Gästekarte*) on either Hahnenkamm or Kitzbüheler Horn, the descent is free. Of the two peaks, vista vultures consider the view superior from Kitzbüheler Horn: the jagged Kaisergebirge range dominates to the north, and beyond the Kitzbüheler Alps, Grossglockner and Grossvenediger are visible in the south.

CYCLING

For those with a thirst for challenging but rewarding mountain biking, there are over 30



cycle paths in, around and over the Kitzbühel area. All are marked on the *Mountainbiken und Radwandern* map available from the tourist office.

Bikes can be rented from **Intersport** (☎ 625 04; Jochbergerstrasse 7) and **Sport Olympia** (☎ 716 07; Bichlstrasse 26) for around €9 per day and can be transported free of charge on the Hornbahn, Hahnenkammbahn and Fleckalmbahn gondolas.

Festivals & Events

The legendary **Hahnenkamm** is the mother of all downhill races and one of the highlights of the FIS Alpine World Cup. Professional skiers from across the globe vie for the title in this notoriously tough race held in January. Late July sees tennis stars compete in the **Austrian Open** at the tennis stadium just off Jochberger Strasse.

Sleeping

Kitzbühel isn't the easiest place to find budget digs, but the *Gästekarte* (available from pensions and hotels) offers discounts to visitors and there are some good-value guesthouses outside of the centre. Expect a price hike of up to 50% during the high winter season.

Pension Schmidinger (☎ 631 34; Ehrenbachgasse 13; s/d €32/64; (P)) Five minutes from the main drag, this friendly pension has quiet, light-filled rooms with pine beds topped by fluffy duvets. The owners are clued up on skiing in Kitzbühel. Breakfast is a treat with local cheeses, hams and crusty bread.

Pension Astlingerhof (☎ 627 75; Bichlweg 11; d €60; (P)) This wooden chalet has oodles of country charm with a mountain backdrop, home-grown produce and a garden where kids can run around. It's 15 minutes' walk from the centre.

Hotel Goldener Greif (☎ 643 11; www.hotel-goldener-greif.at; Hinterstadt 24; s/d €85/114; (P)) With its painted façade and walls festooned with hunting trophies, the Goldener Greif is a work of folk art. The cosy rooms are full of wood panelling, as is its rustic restaurant (mains €8 to €18).

Villa Licht (☎ 622 93; www.villa-licht.at; in German; Franz-Reich-Strasse 8; s/d €85/150; (P)) Surrounded by shady gardens, this green-shuttered Tyrolean chalet features recently revamped rooms in warm hues. A children's tree house, an outdoor pool and free wi-fi are other bonuses.

Hotel Erika (☎ 648 85; www.erika-kitz.at; Josef-Pirchl-Strasse 21; s/d €105/190; (P)) Turrets, towers and high ceilings define this Art Nouveau villa with luxurious rooms and polished service. The spa pamperers with treatments from thalassotherapy to hay baths, and the manicured garden centres on a vine-clad pagoda and pond that are illuminated by night.

Eating

Aside from these options, the square is a safe bet for snacks and al-fresco dining. Many of the big hotels also have restaurants serving posh Austrian nosh.

Café Rupprechter (☎ 624 26; Josef-Herold-Strasse 3; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) Kitzbühel's best hazelnut ice cream, homemade strudel and pralines make the sweet-toothed locals squeal with pleasure at this family-run café.

Huberbräu Stüberl (☎ 656 77; Vorderstadt 18; mains €7-13; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Sat, 9am-midnight Sun) This vaulted tavern ditches the diet in favour of large portions of Austrian classics, such as schnitzel and liver dumplings, cooked to perfection.

Gallo (☎ 658 62; Vorderstadt 12; mains €7-16; ☎ 9am-midnight Tue-Sat, 2pm-midnight Sun) This trendy bistro-cum-bar jazzes up its minimalist interior with zebra stripes and mosaics. When the sun shines, diners spill out onto the terrace for antipasti, juicy steaks and wood-fired pizza.

La Fonda (☎ 736 73; Hinterstadt 13; mains €8-13; ☎ dinner) Bedecked with sombreros, copper pans and colourful throws, this cave-like Mexican haunt rolls out favourites like fiery jalapeno peppers, nachos and enchiladas.

Chizzo (☎ 624 75; Josef-Herold-Strasse 2; mains €10-25; ☎ lunch & dinner) A grandfather clock, white linen and fresh flowers create a refined ambience in Chizzo. The menu mixes Austrian and world flavours, from sander fillet on red wine risotto to Thai curry.

For self-caterers there's a **Spar supermarket** (Bichlstrasse 22).

Drinking & Entertainment

Kitzbühel rocks with fun-seeking skiers during the winter season. If you can muster up the energy after a day on the slopes, check out the following places.

The Londoner (☎ 714 28; Franz-Reich-Strasse 4; ☎ 6pm-late Wed-Sat) This raucous British den has great beer, crazy events and plenty of slapstick fun.

Bergsinn (☎ 668 18; Vorderstadt 21; 🕒 9am-2am Mon-Sat, 11am-2am Sun) Pop art and sphere-shaped lights glam up this funky bar with a cocktail happy hour (8pm to 9pm) and free wi-fi access for customers.

Café Grieserl (☎ 727 52; Im Gries 6; 🕒 3pm-4am) There's Newcastle Brown Ale on tap at this barn-style watering hole with big-screen sports, live music and DJs at weekends.

Highways (☎ 753 50; Im Gries 19; 🕒 8pm-late) This wacky American-themed bar is the place to chill in a 1958 Buick, get bumper to bumper on the dance floor and munch a hot dog. When midnight strikes, the Jägermeister shots are €1 a pop. There are events nearly every night, from live bands on Fridays to electro on Saturdays.

Club Take Five (☎ 713 00; Hinterstadt 22; 🕒 10pm-late) Bright young things pack the dance floor at this see-and-be-seen club with a trio of bars and a VIP area. DJs pump out house, soul and funk.

Getting There & Away

Direct train services from Kitzbühel to Innsbruck (€13.20, one hour) run every two hours, while most trains to Salzburg require a change at Wörgl (€23.30, 2½ hours). For Kufstein (€8.30, one hour), change at Wörgl.

Getting to Lienz by train is tricky, as one or two changes are required (€34.80, four hours). Bus is a better option as it takes two hours (€13.20, twice daily). Heading south to Lienz, you pass through some marvellous scenery. Highway 108 (the Felber Tauern Tunnel) and Hwy 107 (the Grossglockner Road, which is closed in winter) both have toll sections; see p318.

KUFSTEIN

☎ 05372 / pop 16,000

In the 1970s, Karl Ganzer waxed lyrical about Kufstein in the hit song *Perle Tirols*. His yodeling melody may be cheesier than Camembert but the lyrics ring true: this town squatting beneath the towering limestone pinnacles of the Kaisergebirge and hugging the banks of the Inn River is indeed a gem. Little wonder control of the town was hotly contested by Tyrol and Bavaria through the ages until it finally became Austrian property in 1814.

Orientation & Information

Kufstein is the northernmost town in the Inntal, just 4km from Germany. The

train station is on the west bank of river, a three-minute stroll from the main square, Stadtplatz. This is where you'll find the **tourist office** (☎ 622 07; www.kufstein.com; Unterer Stadtplatz 8; 🕒 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat). Staff will hunt down accommodation without charging commission. If you stay overnight, ask for the *Gästekarte*, which has different benefits in summer and winter.

Sights

The big draw in the centre is the gingerbread **Römerhofgasse**, a medieval lane that looks like a Disney film set with overhanging arches, lanterns and frescoed façades. Even the obligatory shops full of tourist kitsch detract little from this fairytale-like alleyway.

For an insight into Kufstein's turbulent past, head up to the cliff-top **Festung Kufstein** (Kufstein Fortress; ☎ 602 350; Oberer Stadtplatz 6; adult/child summer €8.90/4.90, winter €8/4.40; 🕒 9am-5pm summer, 10am-4pm winter). The castle dates from 1205 (when Kufstein was part of Bavaria) and was a pivotal point of defence for both Bavaria and Tyrol during the struggles. The round **Kaiserturm** (Emperor's Tower) was added in 1522.

The lift to the top affords sweeping views over Kufstein and the surrounding peaks. Inside is the small but imaginatively presented **Heimatmuseum**, showcasing everything from Bronze Age urns to folk costumes and – drum roll please – Andreas Hofer's shoe. Below the Kaiserturm is the **Heldenorgel** (Heroes Organ) with 4307 pipes, 46 organ stops and a 100m gap between the keyboard and the tip of the pipes; the delay in the sounding of the notes makes playing it a tricky business. Catch recitals at noon and, in July and August, 5pm.

When the fortress is closed in the evening you can walk up the path in under 15 minutes and roam the ramparts and grounds free of charge. Dusk is also the best time to photograph the castle silhouetted against the mountains.

Activities

The **Kaisergebirge** range is a sheer wall of limestone to the east of Kufstein, rising to 2300m and stretching as far as St Johann in Tirol. It attracts walkers, mountaineers and skiers alike. The Kaisergebirge is actually two ranges, split by the east-west Kaisertal valley. The northern range is the Zahmer Kaiser (Tame Emperor) and the southern is the Wilder

Kaiser (Wild Emperor) – no medals for guessing which has the smoother slopes! Pick up a free *Wanderkarte* (walking map) from the tourist office.

A real blast from the past, the 1970s **chairlift** (one way/return €8/11; 🕒 9am-4pm May-Oct) to Wilder Kaiser has become a cult attraction. A sign says 'bouncing not permitted' and it soon becomes clear why: only itty-bitty bars prevent you from plummeting to the valley floor on this precipitous ride, which traverses ravines and cuts a path through dense forest home to deer and red squirrels. The magnificent Wilder Kaiser slides into view at the top station, which is the trailhead for the **Kaisergebirge Circuit** (see p89).

The tree-fringed **lakes** around Kufstein are best explored on foot or by bike; the closest are in the wooded area west of the Inn River, where there's a network of walking trails. Hechtsee, 3km to the northwest, and Stimmersee, 2.5km to the southwest, both have swimming areas that cost about €4. A free city bus goes to Hechtsee in summer during fine weather (ask at the tourist office).

Sleeping & Eating

Camping Maier (☎ 583 52; www.camping-maier.com, in German; Egerbach 54, Schwoich; campsites per adult/child/tent €4/2.70/6; 📍) Bordering woodland, this friendly campsite 5km south of Kufstein has tree-shaded pitches, plus a playground and outdoor pool to keep kids amused.

Gasthof-Pension Felsenkeller (☎ 627 84; www.felsenkeller.at, in German; Kienbergstrasse 35; s/d €38/72; 📍) In the foothills of the Kaisergebirge, this guesthouse is a calm haven hidden among tree-covered rocky crags. The country-style rooms are bright, spacious and have balconies. The cosy, wood-panelled restaurant serves freshly caught trout.

our pick **Auracher Löchl** (☎ 621 38; www.auracher-loechl.at; Römerhofgasse 3-5; s/d €56/98) Squeezed between Römerhofgasse and the Inn River, this hotel marries medieval charm with 21st-century comfort. The contemporary rooms are kitted out with chunky pinewood beds and flat-screen TVs (river or fortress views cost a little extra). Cross the footbridge to the low-beamed restaurant (mains €8 to €15), the one-time haunt of Andreas Hofer, where creaking floors and grinning badgers create a rustic feel. Enormous portions of Austrian classics like *Schweinshaxe* (basically half a pig) mean you'll roll out of the door fit to burst.

Inn-Café Hell (☎ 645 23; Unterer Stadtplatz 3; snacks & sweets €3-7; 🕒 8.30am-8pm summer, 9am-6pm winter) Facing the fast-flowing Inn, this central café opens onto a sunny terrace and whips up scrummy homemade strudel and walnut ice cream.

Batzenhäusl (☎ 624 33; Römerhofgasse 1; mains €7-14; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Murals of merry wine-guzzlers reel you into Batzenhäusl, Tyrol's oldest wine tavern, which burrows into cliffs below the fortress. This eccentric, 500-year-old haunt is packed with curios from nativity scenes to 16th-century canon balls. The cuisine is seasonally inspired and the fluffy *Salzburger Nockerl* (Austrian soufflé) comes recommended.

Villa Masianco (☎ 636 33; Unterer Stadtplatz 18; mains €7-19; 🕒 lunch & dinner) This sassy bistro on the square satisfies Kufstein's Italian cravings with risotto, fresh fish and tender veal fillets. Chandeliers, wooden floors and leather stools give the vaulted restaurant a modern kick. The chestnut tree-shaded terrace hums with life in summer.

Self caterers can stock up on supplies at the central **Spar** (Unterer Stadtplatz 27).

Getting There & Away

The hourly train to Kitzbühel (€8.30, one hour) requires a change at Wörgl. The easiest road route is also via Wörgl.

Kufstein is on the main Innsbruck-Salzburg train route; direct trains to Salzburg (€27.90, 1¼ hours) run every two hours; those to Innsbruck (€12.90, 45 to 70 minutes) are half-hourly, as some trains funnel down from Germany (Munich), which is on a direct line a little over an hour away. Buses leave from outside the train station.

SÖLL

☎ 05333 / pop 3450

Söll is a well-known ski resort 10km south of Kufstein. Once a favourite of boozy, boisterous visitors in the 1980s, the resort has successfully reinvented itself and is now a family-oriented place with myriad outdoor activities in summer and winter.

The helpful staff at the **tourist office** (☎ 52 16; www.soeil.com; Dorf 84; 🕒 8am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 3-6pm Sat, 9am-noon Sun), in the centre of the village, provides information on activities and will help you find accommodation.

The highest skiing area overlooking the resort is Hohe Salve at 1828m, though Söll has also combined with neighbouring resorts Itter,

Hopfgarten, Kelchsau, Westendorf and Brixen to form the mammoth **Skiewelt** (www.skiewelt.at) area, comprising 250km of pistes. Passes are €35.50 for a day in the high season. Cross-country skiing is also a popular winter pastime, with trails running as far as St Johann in Tirol.

In summer, walkers are drawn to **Hohe Salve** (cable car one way/return €10/12). At the first stage of the cable car climbing the mountain is **Hexenwasser**, a walking trail dotted with fun family activities. Along the route are water obstacles, sundials, playgrounds, a working mill and bakery and an apiary. Throughout the summer you can see (and sample) bread, schnapps and cheese made the traditional way.

Getting There & Away

Söll is on Hwy 312 between Wörgl and St Johann in Tirol. It's not on a train line, but there are plenty of buses Monday to Saturday from Kufstein (€3.80, 50 minutes); only three run on Sunday.

WESTERN TYROL

STAMS

☎ 05263 / pop 1300

One of Tyrol's true architectural highlights is the ochre-and-white **Zisterzienstift** (Cistercian abbey; ☎ 62 42; Stiftshof 1; tours adult/child €4/2.50) in Stams, founded in 1273 by Elizabeth of Bavaria, the mother of Conradin, the last of the Hohenstaufens. Set in pristine grounds, the monumental façade stretches 80m and is easily recognised by its pair of silver cupolas at the front, which were added as a final flourish when the abbey was revamped in baroque style in the 17th century. The exuberant church interior is dominated by the high altar: the intertwining branches of this version of the 'tree of life' support 84 saintly figures surrounding an image of the Virgin. Near the entrance is the **Rose Grille**, an exquisite iron screen made in 1716. Crane your neck to admire the ceiling adorned with rich stucco work, gold swirls and elaborate frescoes by Georg Wolker.

The abbey can only be visited by guided tour, from 9am to 11am and 1pm to 5pm (afternoon hours are shorter in May and from October to April). Tours leave every hour on the hour, except in July when they're available every half-hour. Marmalade and schnapps made on the premises can be bought from the **Kloster shop** (☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm).

Stams is on the train route between Innsbruck and Landeck, but only (frequent) regional trains stop here (€7, 35 minutes). Both the A12/E60 and Hwy 171 pass near the abbey.

THE ÖTZTAL

pop 12,000

The Ötztal (Ötz Valley) is a place of raw elemental forces: rugged mountains and wooded slopes, shimmering snowfields and blue glaciers shape this corner of Tyrol. Guarding the border to Italy, this is one of three river valleys running north from the **Ötztaler Alpen** to drain into the Inn River. Dwarfed by Tyrol's highest peak, **Wildspitze** (3774m), the region is a year-round magnet to skiers, hikers and mountaineers.

Most villages in the valley have supermarkets, banks, camping grounds and tourist offices. The latter can supply you with information on activities and accommodation; room rates are 30% to 50% higher in winter. If you're here in summer, ask about the **Ötztal Card** (7/10 days €56/74), which covers public transport, cable cars and numerous swimming pools in the valley.

Sights & Activities

After Ötz, the first village of any size along the valley is **Umhausen**, home to **Ötzi Dorf** (☎ 05255-500 22; adult/child €5.90/2.80; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm May-Oct), a fascinating open-air museum recreating the Neolithic world of Ötzi the ice man (see boxed text, opposite). A visit takes in traditional thatched huts, herb gardens, craft displays and enclosures where wild boar and oxen roam. From here, it's a pleasant 40-minute amble along a forest trail to Tyrol's longest waterfall, **Stuibfall**, cascading 159m over slate cliffs and moss-covered boulders.

Just 10km down the valley is Längenfeld's futuristic spa, **Aqua Dome** (☎ 05253-64 00; www.aquadome.at; Oberlängenfeld 140; 3hr card adult/child Mon-Fri €14/7, Sat & Sun €16/9; ☎ 9am-11pm). Set against the backdrop of the Ötztaler Alps, the focal point is its trio of flying saucer-shaped pools, where thermal waters gurgle and pummel you into a blissful state of relaxation. It's particularly spacey at night when a fluorescent pyramid illuminates the tubs; pick a jet to gaze up at the stars and summits.

The thermal baths anchor the **sauna** (€7; ☎ 10am-11pm), a marvellously surreal experience for those who dare to bare. Abandon

ENTOMBED IN ICE

In September 1991 German hikers in the Ötztaler Alpen came across the body of a man preserved within the Similaun Glacier. Police and forensic scientists were summoned to the scene. The body had been found some 90m within Italy, but was appropriated by the Austrians and taken to Innsbruck University to be studied.

Experts initially decided it was about 500 years old. The ice man, nicknamed 'Ötzi' or 'Frozen Fritz', was thought to have been a soldier serving under Archduke Ferdinand. Carbon dating, however, revealed he was nearly 5400 years old, placing him in the late Stone Age and making him the oldest and best-preserved mummy in the world.

Ötzi became big news, more so because the state of preservation was remarkable; even the pores of the skin were visible. In addition, Ötzi had been found with 70 artefacts, including a copper axe, bow and arrows, charcoal and clothing. Physiologically he was found to be no different from modern humans. His face was reconstructed, right down to his dark hair and blue eyes. X-rays showed he had suffered from arthritis and frostbite, and his ribs had been broken.

For many years debate raged over how the Iceman met his end, but recent analysis has revealed Ötzi was involved in a violent struggle and died while trying to escape. Blood on his weapons and clothes were discovered to be from other persons, and an arrow wound to his back and knife gashes to his arms all pointed to a fight. His copper axe is still a matter of debate, however; while copper dating from the age of Ötzi has been found in other parts of Austria, Germany and Switzerland, it predates knowledge of the use of copper in the Ötztal area by 500 years.

Not everybody was worried about the finer points of his heritage, however. Several Austrian and Italian women contacted the university shortly after the discovery and requested that they be impregnated with Ötzi's frozen sperm, but the all-important part of his body was missing.

In 1998 Ötzi was relinquished to the Italians and became the centrepiece of a new museum in Bolzano.

modesty to swelter in barn-style saunas, hay rooms, honey-scented cabins and the vaulted **Dampf-Dom**, a steaming shrine where Gregorian chants play. For the ultimate chill-out, step inside the teeth-chattering ice chamber or the rain temple where you can choose to be drenched by a thunderstorm, a raging waterfall or fine morning mist.

Rolling 20km down the valley you hit **Sölden** (1377m), a ski resort with snow-sure slopes and pulsating nightlife. The resort's 150km of pistes include red and blue runs, glacier skiing at Rettenbach and Tiefenbach, plus the alpine rally on Big 3 – three summits over 3000m. The **tourist office** (☎ 05254-510-0; www.soelden.com, in German; Gemeindefstrasse 4; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun) can arrange accommodation and has brochures on activities in the area. There are two ways to reach the surrounding rugged peaks from the village; a chairlift climbs to **Hochsölden** (2090m; one-way/return €5.50/7.50), while a cable car rises to **Gaislachkogel** (3058m; return €19.50) where there are sweeping views of the entire Ötztaler Alps. Ski passes are €41.50 for a day in the high season.

Further south is **Obergurgl** (1930m), the highest parish in Austria. It's another well-known ski resort popular with families, as

pistes are mostly suitable for beginners and intermediates and continue right to the edge of the village. **Hohe Mut** (2659m) is a justly famous lookout, accessible by chairlift year-round. Obergurgl is actually at the head of the valley, but the road doubles back on itself and rises to **Hochgurgl** (2150m). Here the pistes are a little steeper and the views equally impressive. The Obergurgl **tourist office** (☎ 05256-6466; www.obergurgl.com, in German; Gurglerstrasse 18; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat, 9.30am-noon Sun summer, 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-noon Sun winter) covers both resorts, as does one **ski pass** (day/week pass €41.50/228.50). A gondola provides easy access between Obergurgl's and Hochgurgl's pistes.

Just beyond Hochgurgl, where the road makes a sharp right-hand turn, is another viewing point, the **Windegg Belvedere** (2080m). The road continues into Italy over the **Timmelsjoch Pass** (2474m; car/motorbike €13/11) where it joins the course of the Timmelsbach River.

Getting There & Away

Arriving by train, get off at Ötztal Bahnhof, from where buses head south into the valley. In the summer and winter high seasons buses depart almost hourly (only every two hours

in the low season) and go as far as Obergurgl (one way/return €8.30/16.60, 1½ hours). From mid-July to mid-September two morning buses continue as far as Timmelsjoch, on the Italian border, but a change is required at Obergurgl.

If you have your own wheels, you should be able to get at least as far as Hochgurgl all year, but the road beyond into Italy (via the Timmelsjoch Pass) is often blocked by snow in winter.

IMST

☎ 05412 / pop 9000

Beautifully situated in the wide Gurgltal (Gurgl Valley) and spreading towards a jagged range of peaks, Imst is one of the region's best-kept secrets. With its alpine-crisp air, undulating meadows and hidden ravines, this unassuming little town is a terrific base for silent uphill trudes. While skiers carve up the slopes in the nearby Ötztal, Haflinger horses graze on these hillsides – it's a taste of Tyrol before the tourists got there.

The **tourist office** (☎ 69 10-0; www.imst.at; Johannesplatz 4; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is highly informed on accommodation and activities in Imst and its surrounds; there's also free internet access.

Sights & Activities

Every four years, Imst plays host to a Shrovetide festival, the **Schemenlaufen** (ghost dance); the next takes place on 15 February 2009. The highlight is the vibrant parade of ghost-like characters, from hunchback *Hexen* (witches) to impish *Spritzer* that squirt water at spectators. To learn more about this age-old tradition, visit the **Fasnachthaus** (☎ 69 10; Strelweg 6; adult/child €4/1; ☎ 4-6pm Fri), which exhibits many of the handcarved ghost masks.

In summer, Imst is ideal for easy rambling with 350km of well-marked hiking trails heading off into the hills. A favourite among families is the three-hour loop that leads up the glacier-carved **Rosengartenschlucht** ravine to Hoch-Imst, where walkers can admire vistas of the Lechtaler Alps, bathe in a clear mountain lake and race downhill in a rickety roller coaster (see p91).

Sleeping & Eating

Imst has a sprinkling of good-value places to stay and eat. Drop into the tourist office for a list of private rooms, guesthouses and farms in the area.

HEAVY ROCK

Fans of rude rocks should make the pilgrimage to the bizarrely named **Erdpyramiden** (earth columns) in the little village of Roppen, 10 minutes from Imst. An hour's trudge along a narrow trail and past trickling waterfalls brings you to this collection of hoodoos – thin rock spires that suddenly pop up as you're wandering through the shady woods. Remnants of the last Ice Age and formed by erosion over centuries, these geological wonders assume various shapes and sizes. Among them are a couple of strikingly phallic monoliths that seem like ancient Austrian fertility symbols lost and long forgotten in this beautiful forest.

Camping Imst-West (☎ 662 93; Langgasse 62; campsites per adult/child/site €6/3/7.50) Perched above Imst, this friendly camping ground surrounded by pastures is a peaceful spot to pitch your tent. The first-rate facilities include a kiosk, snack bar and playground.

Gasthof Hirschen (☎ 69 01; www.hirschen-imst.at, in German; Thomas-Walch-Strasse 3; s/d €48/74; ☎ ☎ ☎) This central family-run guesthouse has comfy rooms, a swimming pool and free wi-fi. A plate of venison ragout is never far away in the wood-panelled restaurant (mains €10 to €18), where stag heads grace the walls.

Getting There & Away

The town is slightly to the north of the main east-west roads (the A12/E60 and Hwy 171), and is served by frequent buses and trains (from Innsbruck €10.20, one hour).

EHRWALD

☎ 05673 / pop 2550

The crowning glory of the small resort of Ehrwald is **Zugspitze** (2962m), marking the border between Austria and Germany. A speedy cable car (summer one way/return €21/32) sails to the crest, where there's a magnificent panorama of the main Tyrolean mountain ranges, as well as the Bavarian Alps and Mt Säntis in Switzerland. North of Zugspitze is Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany's most popular ski resort, which also offers access to the summit.

Ehrwald is linked with other resorts in Austria (including Seefeld) and Germany (including Garmisch-Partenkirchen) under the

Happy Ski Card (adult/child for the minimum 3 days €88/53). For information on accommodation and activities, contact the **tourist office** (☎ 05673-23 95; ehrwald@zugspitze.tirol.at; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat) in the heart of the town. Staff will help find rooms free of charge.

Trains from Seefeld (€9.30, 1½ hours) and Innsbruck (€16.30, two hours) to Ehrwald pass through Germany; you must change at Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Austrian train tickets are valid for the whole trip.

LANDECK

☎ 05442 / pop 7500

Sitting pretty above the fast-flowing Inn and Sanna Rivers, Landeck receives just a trickle of tourists. Yet it has an awful lot going for it: a cliff-top medieval castle to act out Rapunzel fantasies, a precipitous gorge, and orchards in neighbouring Stanz that are perfect for summertime schnapps-guzzling. The Alps are the town's natural skyscrapers and provide a backdrop for high-altitude activities from skiing to hiking, cycling and white-water rafting.

Orientation & Information

Most of Landeck's restaurants and hotels cluster on Malserstrasse. Here you'll find the **tourist office** (☎ 656 00; www.tirolwest.at; Malserstrasse; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat), where the friendly staff will help book accommodation. If you're staying overnight in summer, pick up the Tirol West Card for free access to the major sights, outdoor pools and the bus network.

The train station is 1.5km to the east; to get into town walk left on leaving the station and stay on the same side of the river. Local buses also make the trip (one way €1.60).

Sights & Activities

Your gaze is drawn upward to the turrets and vine-clad towers of 13th-century **Schloss Landeck** (☎ 632 02; Schlossberg; adult/student €6.50/4; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-May-Sep, 2-5pm Tue-Sun Oct). The 1st-floor museum showcases everything from Celtic figurines to handcarved *Krampus* masks. The castle is especially lovely at Christmas when the mechanised nativity scene is in full swing. For enviable views over Landeck and the Lechtaler Alps, climb the dizzying staircase to the tower.

Landeck attracts the odd skier or two to its 22km of gentle slopes (a day ski pass in high season costs €25), but is better known

for its excellent hiking trails. In summer, the **Venet cable car** (one way/return €10.20/12.20) zooms up to Krahberg (2208m), where there is a web of marked footpaths. The 280km Adlerweg trail (p86) also stops off in Landeck on its journey through Tyrol. The tourist office arranges guided walks, which are free with a Tirol West Card.

Adventurous types make for **Sport Camp Tirol** (☎ 646 36; www.sportcampatirol.at; Mühlkanal 1), offering activities from canyoning and paragliding to glacier tours, rock climbing and rafting on the Inn River. You can also rent **mountain bikes** (half/full day €18/22) there to head off on one of the tourist office's free GPS tours or tackle the downhill Inn Trail (p78).

A rollercoaster of water thrashes limestone cliffs at **Zammer Lochputz** (☎ 656 00; Hauptstrasse 53, Zams; adult/child €3.50/2.50; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm May-Sep, 9.30am-4pm Oct), a fine specimen of a gorge just outside of Landeck. Cutting a path through pine forest, the trail passes viewpoints and some interesting rock formations – look out for the head of a bull and a nymph.

If the fresh air and activity have worked up a thirst, pop over to **Stanz** (4km away). Set on a sunny plateau dotted with apple and plum orchards, the village is home to 600 residents and a mind-boggling 65 schnapps distilleries. There are a number of rustic huts where you can kick back and taste the local firewater before rolling back down to the valley.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Sonne (☎ 625 19; www.hotel-sonne-landeck.at; Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse 10; s/d €28/56; ☎) It's hard to miss this dazzling canary-yellow hotel on the main drag. The décor is nondescript, but rooms are comfortable and reasonably priced.

Gasthof Greif (☎ 622 68; Marktplatz 6; s/d €34/56; ☎) Greif sits on a square above the main street just down from the castle. Its 1970s-style rooms are large and well kept, and its restaurant (mains €7 to €13) serves solid Tyrolean cuisine.

Tramserhof (☎ 622 46; www.tramserhof.at, in German; Tramserweg 51; s/d €62/104; ☎ ☎) Nestled among trees, this lodge is a calm retreat 20 minutes' walk from the centre. The rooms are country-style with loads of natural light and warm pine. The spa shelters a whirlpool and sauna. Tuck into organic produce at breakfast.

Café Haag (☎ 623 28-0; Maisengasse 19; coffee & snacks €3-6; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-7pm Sat, 10am-7pm

Sun) Locally picked plums are the key ingredient in this café's divine chocolates. Once you've sampled them, try the cakes – just the sugar kick needed for the uphill trudge to the castle.

Hotel Schrofenstein (☎ 623 95; Malsersstrasse 31; mains €12-23; ☞ lunch & dinner) Schrofenstein's restaurant dishes up Austrian classics from veal goulash to spinach *Spätzle* (egg noodles) in wood-panelled surroundings. When the sun's out, pull up a chair on the chestnut tree-shaded terrace.

Getting There & Away

InterCity express trains operate hourly to Innsbruck (€11.90, 50 minutes) and every two hours to Bregenz (€19.90). Buses head in all directions, departing from outside the train station and/or from the bus station in the centre.

The A12/E60 into Vorarlberg passes by Landeck, burrowing into a tunnel as it approaches the town. Highway 315, the Inntal road, passes through the centre of town.

THE INNTAL

pop 11,250

Shadowing the turquoise Inn River, the Inntal (Inn Valley) extends for 230km within Tyrol. There are few major sights in this region but the scenery is beautiful, particularly around **Pfunds**, shifting from jagged pinnacles to gently rolling greenery. Many homes here are similar in design to those found in the Engadine in Graubünden, Switzerland, further up the Inn Valley.

South of Pfunds, you have the choice of routes. If you continue along the Inn you'll end up in Switzerland (infrequent buses). Alternatively, if you bear south to Nauders you'll soon reach South Tyrol (Italy) by way of the Reschen Pass (open year-round). Six buses daily run from Landeck to Nauders (€9.30, one hour), where it's possible to head on with public transport to Merano in Italy, but at least three changes are required.

THE PAZNAUNAL

pop 5950

Grazing the Swiss border and running west of the Inntal, the **Paznaunal** (Paznaun Valley) is a dramatic landscape overshadowed by the glaciated peaks of the Silvretta range. The villages are low-key in summer, but the lull is broken in winter when a deep carpet of

snow draws skiers to party-hearty resorts like **Ischgl** (below).

The valley is undoubtedly one of Austria's best ski areas, despite (or because of) its relative isolation. The **Silvretta Ski Pass** (2-day pass adult/child €80/45.50) covers Ischgl, Galtür, Kappl and Samnaun, a duty-free area in Switzerland. Its summer equivalent (3-day pass adult/child €32.50/19.50) comprises cable cars, lifts, public transport over the Bielerhöhe Pass into Vorarlberg, and a number of swimming pools in Ischgl and Galtür.

Around 10km from Ischgl is the uncrowded resort of **Galtür**. This unspoilt village suffered a major disaster in February 1999 when an avalanche all but swept it away. A museum documenting the event has been built on the spot, the **Alpinarium Galtür** (☎ 05443-200 00; www.alpinarium.at, in German; adult/child €8/4; ☞ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). Inside you'll find many poignant reminders of the devastation in the shape of photos, newspaper reports and some incredible video footage.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Only a secondary road (Hwy 188) runs along the valley, crossing into Vorarlberg at Bielerhöhe Pass (p378), where there are excellent views. This pass (toll cars/motorcycles €11.50/10.50) is closed during winter and rejoins the main highway near Bludenz. Regular buses travel along the valley as far as Galtür (€7, 70 minutes) from Landeck.

Ischgl

☎ 05444 / pop 1500

When the first flakes fall, the alpine village of Ischgl becomes a quintessential powdersville with snow-sure slopes and a boisterous après-ski scene that gives St Anton am Arlberg a run for its money. The resort is a bizarre combination of rural meets raunchy; a place where log chalets and lap-dancing bars, folk music and techno coexist. Love it or lump it, this is no place for retiring wallflowers, especially during the season-closing Top of the Mountain Concert, which has welcomed a host of stars including Sting, Bon Jovi and Elton John in recent years.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The **tourist office** (☎ 52 66-0; www.ischgl.com; ☞ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 4-6pm Sat, 10am-noon Sun) stocks heaps of literature on hiking, biking and skiing in the area. Ischgl is compact

and walkable, with most hotels, restaurants and bars huddling on Dorfstrasse, the main thoroughfare, which is just a short amble from the ski lifts.

ACTIVITIES

At the heart of the Silvretta Arena, Ischgl offers fabulous **skiing**, with ultramodern lifts and access to 230km of groomed slopes that are perfect for carving and cruising. The runs are mainly geared towards intermediates, but there are several black runs and off-piste opportunities to satisfy experts. The terrain is equally ideal for **snowboarding** with two half-pipes and a dedicated boarding park.

In winter, the 7km **toboggan track** (adult/child €10/4.50) offers a bumpy downhill dash through the snow from Idalp to Ischgl, which is particularly scenic when floodlit on Monday and Thursday nights.

There are few Austrian resorts that can match Ischgl for **mountain biking**. The mammoth Silvretta Mountain Bike Arena (p79) features 1000km of bikeable territory ranging from downhill tracks to circular trails and a technique park. Pick up a free map of the area at the tourist office. **Ischgl Bike** (☎ 52 62; www.ischgl-bike.at, in German; Ischgl 22) rents quality bikes for €23 per day.

Walking is another big draw in summer, ranging from gentle rambles alongside shimmering lakes to ambitious scrambling on the **Klettersteige** (fixed rope routes) at 2872m Greitspitz and 2929m Flimspitze. In total, the area comprises some 300km of trails interspersed with 18 mountain huts.

SLEEPING & EATING

The following accommodation is open year-round. Ischgl's best beds fill up quickly in winter, so booking ahead is recommended. Expect prices to be roughly double those quoted below in the high winter season. Aside from La Candela, the restaurants close in summer.

Designers from Laura Ashley to Philippe Starck have put their contemporary stamp on the rooms at boutiquey **Hotel Madlein** (☎ 52 26; Ischgl 144; www.ischglmadlein.com; s €127-210, d €150-280; ☐ ☑ ☒ ☓). A few paces from the ski lifts, this hip hotel lures with its Zen-style garden and slick cocktail bar. If you're seeking budget rather than blowout, centrally located **Eveline** (☎ 53 10; Ischgl 187; s/d €32/60; ☐) and **Vereina** (☎ 56 40; Ischgl 277; d €36; ☐) are

both cosy chalet-style pensions with a homy atmosphere and clean, comfy rooms.

There are loads of dining possibilities in the centre. A great choice for thin and crispy pizzas is **La Candela** (☎ 55 80; Ischgl 175; pizza €6-12; ☞ lunch & dinner) at Hotel Victoria. Housed in a dark-wood chalet, **Bauernküche Loba** (☎ 52 89; Ischgl 45; mains €8-17; ☞ dinner) rustles up huge portions of Tyrolean favourites like **Kasnödel** (cheese dumplings). The new kid on the slopes is the stone-and-glass **Alpenhaus Restaurant** (☎ 52 70; Idalp; mains €6-15; ☞ 9am-4pm) next to the Silvretta lift, with charcoal grill specialities and a fabulous sun terrace.

DRINKING

Ischgl's après-ski is so hot it's a wonder the snow doesn't melt: a cocktail of oompah-playing alpine barns, saucy go-go bars and chichi clubs shake the resort. The following places, except for the Golden Eagle Pub, only open in winter.

There's nothing like a little slope-side socialising to gear up for a big night out in Ischgl; lively après-ski haunts include **Kuhstall** (☎ 52 23; Ischgl 80; ☞ 3pm-midnight) and **Feuer & Eis** (☎ 59 18; ☞ 4-7pm), both offering an electric vibe, ear-splinting music and plenty of bopping in moonboots.

For a pint of Kilkenny, a laid-back vibe and ZZ Top at full blast, make for the **Golden Eagle Pub** (☎ 56 71; Ischgl 6; ☞ 8pm-2am). Even party diva Paris Hilton has been spotted slurping prosecco at the legendary **Pacha** (☎ 52 26; Hotel Madlein; ☞ 10pm-5am), which brims with beautiful people and sidles up to the Coyote Ugly lap-dancing bar. Another celebrity favourite is the wild **Trofana Arena** (☎ 600-700; Ischgl 334; ☞ 9pm-5am) with frequent live music, laser shows and scantily-clad go-go dancers.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

An efficient bus service operates between Landeck (€5.90, 55 minutes) and Ischgl hourly from Monday to Friday and every two hours at weekends.

ARLBERG REGION

The Arlberg region, shared by Vorarlberg and Tyrol, comprises several linked resorts and offers some of Austria's finest skiing. Heralded as the cradle of alpine skiing, St Anton am Arlberg is undoubtedly the best known and

most popular resort. For other destinations in Arlberg, see p379.

The winter season is long, with snow reliable till about mid-April. Summer is less busy (and cheaper), though still popular with walkers. Even so, some of the restaurants, bars and discos that swing during the ski season are closed. Most others close between seasons, and open from late June to October. Many guesthouses and some hotels do likewise.

ST ANTON AM ARLBERG

☎ 05446 / pop 2600

In the beginning there was St Anton, a sleepy village in the rugged Arlberg. For centuries seasons were defined by the falling and melting of snow and the coming and going of cattle, until one day the locals beheld the virgin powder on their doorstep – and there was light! In 1901, the resort founded the first ski club in the Alps and downhill skiing was born. So if ever the ski bug is going to bite you, it will surely be here. Nestled at the foot of 2811m-high Valluga, St Anton am Arlberg is a cross between a ski bum's Shangri-La and Ibiza in fast-forward mode – the terrain is fierce and the nightlife hedonistic.

Orientation

St Anton is strung out along the northern bank of the Rosanna River. The modern train station is on the Rendl side, a few paces from the Dorfstrasse (pedestrian-only centre) and the ski lifts. A 10-minute stroll east is Nasserein, where novices can test out the nursery slopes. Further east still are the quieter slopes of St Jakob, easily accessed by the Nasserein gondola.

Information

The centrally located **tourist office** (☎ 226 90; www.stantonamarlberg.com; Arlberg Haus; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat & Sun summer, 8.30am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–6pm Sat, 9am–noon & 2–5pm Sun winter) has information on outdoor activities, maps and places to stay. There's an accommodation board and a free telephone outside.

The post office is near the Rosanna River, off the northern end of the pedestrian zone. **Mailbox** (Dorfstrasse 54; per hr €6; ☎ 8.30am–8.30pm winter, noon–5pm Mon–Fri summer) has internet access, but you can check emails for free in most ski shops.

Sights & Activities

The nostalgic **Ski & Heimat Museum** (☎ 24 75; Rudi-Matt-Weg 10; adult/child €3/1; ☎ 11am–5pm Tue–Sun Jul & Aug, 1–5pm Tue–Sun Sep–Jun) traces St Anton's tracks back to the good old days when skins were made of wood and men were as tough as hobnail boots.

St Anton is at the very pinnacle of Austria's alpine **skiing** and the spacey Galzigbahn gondola, launched in 2007, has further improved conditions. The terrain is vast and the skiing challenging, with exhilarating descents including the Kandahar run on Galzig and fantastic backcountry opportunities. Cable cars ascend to Valluga (2811m) from where experts can go off-piste all the way to Lech (with a ski guide only). For fledglings, there are nursery slopes on Gampen (1850m) and Kapall (2330m). Rendl is **snowboarding** territory with jumps, rails and a half-pipe. A single **ski pass** (1–3/–7-day high-season pass €41.50/114/224, discounts at other times of the year) covers the whole Arlberg region. It is valid for 83 ski lifts, giving access to 276km of prepared pistes.

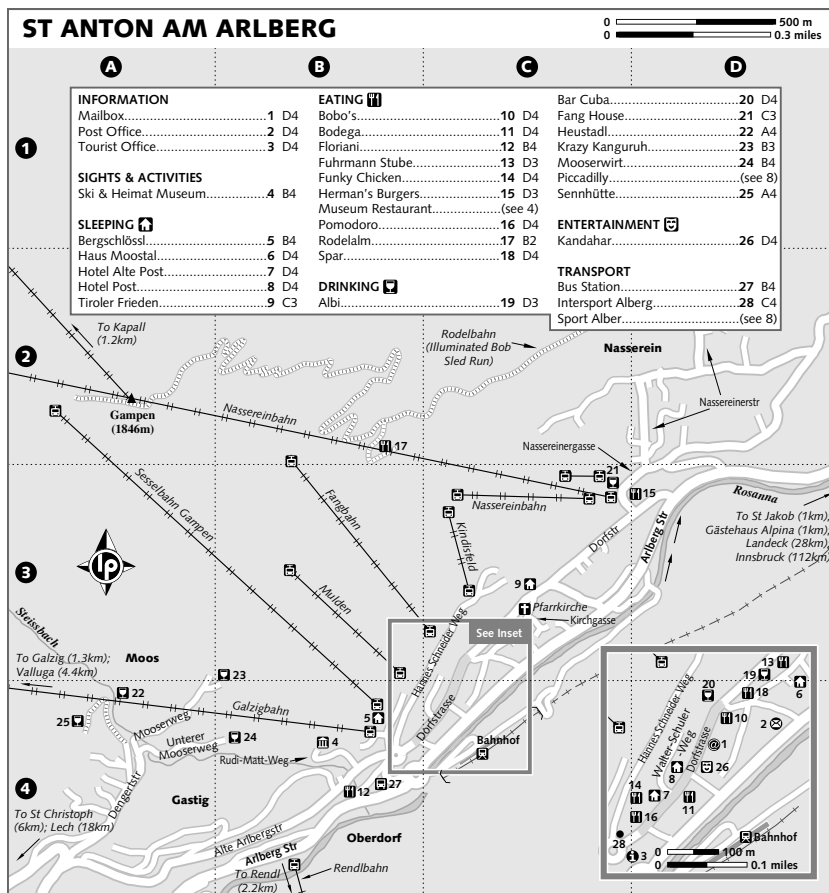
Adding to this enormous winter playground is the 4km-long **Rodelbahn** (toboggan run), where sledding fans can hurtle and bounce past snowy trees down to the valley; the track is floodlit every Tuesday and Thursday night. With glowing faces and frosty fingers, most sledders stop at the halfway hut, **Rodelalm** (mains €10–16), to warm up with schnapps and a big plate of **Schweinshaxe** (pork knuckles).

In summer, **walking** in the mountains is the most popular activity and the meadows full of wildflowers and grazing cattle are pure Heidi. During this time, a handful of **cable cars and lifts** (one way €4–18, return €5–20) rise up to the major peaks. If you're planning on going hiking, pick up a detailed booklet and map from the tourist office and consider purchasing a **Wanderpass** (7-day €30), providing unlimited access to all lifts, or a **St Anton Card** (€45), which offers the same benefits plus entrance to the town's indoor and outdoor swimming pool.

Cyclists are also catered for: the tourist office produces a small booklet (in German only) with a number of suggested trails in the area.

Sleeping

Budget beds are as rare as the yeti in St Anton, so it's worth booking ahead. Prices tend to drop the further you move from the centre; Nasserein and St Jakob are safe bets, just a



15- to 20-minute stroll away. There are hundreds of options in St Anton, but many of the smaller pensions only open in winter. The following places are open in summer (June to September) and winter (December to April). In the high winter season, rates can be as much as double as those given below.

Tiroler Frieden (☎ 22 47; tiroler.frieden@st-anton.at; Dorfstrasse 75; d €36; ☎) Backing onto the lower ski slopes, this quaint chalet is among St Anton's best budget digs. The no-frills rooms are old-style with heavy wood paneling and chintzy fabrics, but they're comfy and spotlessly clean.

Gästehaus Alpina (☎ 33 15; gaestehaus.alpina@st-anton.at; Gsörerweg 26; s/d €23/40; ☎) This lovely wooden chalet in St Jakob is a 20-minute walk

from the centre. Opening onto balconies, the tidy rooms are kitted out with cable TV and broadband.

Haus Moostal (☎ 28 31; info@hausmoostal.at; Marktstrasse 14; s/d €29/52; ☎) You'll receive a warm welcome at this little gem of a guesthouse. Dressed in blonde wood furnishings, the bright rooms have squishy beds and wi-fi. There's a tiny sauna onsite.

Hotel Post (☎ 221 30; www.hotel-post.co.at; Walter-Schuler-Weg 2; s/d €62/114; ☎) This hotel's large, modern rooms are full of little extras such as bottled water, fruit and wi-fi. The meditation room, saunas and whirlpool are ideal for chilling out after a day on the slopes.

Bergschlössl (☎ 22 00; info@bergschloessl.at; Kandaharweg 13; s/d €69/125; ☎) Right next to the

Galgzahn lift, you can't beat Berschlössl for easy access to the slopes and alpine appeal. The snug rooms have been decorated with a razor-sharp eye for detail, with fireplaces or tiled stoves and hand-painted tiles in the bathrooms.

Hotel Alte Post (☎ 54 46; www.hotel-alte-post.at, in German; Dorfstrasse 11; s/d €104/176; P) Centrally located, this 17th-century hotel exudes Tyrolean charm. Individually designed rooms feature four-star trimmings like fluffy bathrobes and internet access. The spa is a big draw with herbal saunas, a salt grotto and an arm-long list of treatments from hay baths to hot chocolate massages.

Eating

Because of the lopsidedness of St Anton's seasons, many restaurants only open in winter (high season times are given below). Quiet is not a word in St Anton's vocabulary and most places double as vibrant bars after dinner.

Bodega (☎ 427 88; Dorfstrasse 38; tapas €2.50-10; ☎ 3pm-1am) Tapas and *vino tinto* reel in crowds to this Spanish haunt, where live music creates a buzzy vibe.

Pomodoro (☎ 33 33; Dorfstrasse 5; mains €7-9; ☎ dinner) The homemade pasta and pizza at this lively bistro would make mamma proud. Prices are pocket-pleasing too.

Funky Chicken (☎ 302 01; Dorfstrasse 7; mains €7-11; ☎ 6pm-2am) St Anton's hottest chick, this livewire dishes up chicken in various guises, cheap beer and a pick'n'mix of DJs. The atmosphere is crazy, especially on Wednesday's so-called Swedish head-banging night when the place is packed to the gunnels.

Floriani (☎ 23 30; Alte Arlbergstrasse 13; mains €7-15; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun) This cheery family-run place rustles up a mix of Italian and Austrian grub

in wood-panelled surroundings; the pizzas are the stars of the menu.

Fuhrmann Stube (☎ 29 21; Dorfstrasse 74; mains €8-14; ☎ lunch & dinner) When snow blankets the rooftops, this cosy hideaway is a great spot to relax and tuck into a plate of steaming *Knödel* (dumplings).

Museum Restaurant (☎ 2475; Rudi-Matt-Weg 10; mains €15-25; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun) Under the Heimat Museum, this gorgeous Tyrolean restaurant cooks with locally sourced produce – you can even fish your own trout from the pond. Snuggle up by the open fire in winter or refresh with homemade ice cream in summer.

Bobo's (☎ 271 454; Dorfstrasse 60; ☎ 5pm-2am) Tex-Mex food and potent cocktails make Bobo's a perennial favourite. The party cranks up after fajitas and a fistful of nachos, with everything from karaoke to live bands and DJs.

Self-caterers have a choice of supermarkets. There's a centrally located **Spar** (Dorfstrasse 66), which houses the **Murr** (☎ 2202-0) deli, serving hot takeaway lunches from Monday to Saturday (€4 to €6).

Drinking & Entertainment

St Anton is Austria's Duracell Bunny: load the batteries in the form of several Jägermeister shots and watch it hop, bop and bounce off the walls till the wee hours. The après-ski is the wildest this side of the Alps and stamina is a prerequisite for completing (conscious) the infamous bar crawl.

Krazy Kanguruh (☎ 26 33; Mooserweg 19; ☎ 10am-8pm) Right next to the slopes, this drinking den is loud, fun and jam-packed after 5pm. Expect rounds of shots, an indoor snow machine and some serious ski stumbling back to the valley.

Bar Cuba (☎ 0664-6523 886; Dorfstrasse 33; ☎ 4pm-3am) This popular watering hole has big-screen

sports, chirpy staff and aptly named cocktails like Cuban Cocaine and Sex on the Piste.

Albi (☎ 31 72; Dorfstrasse 78; ☎ 4pm-1am) If a spit-and-sawdust pub is what you're seeking, this place delivers with local characters at the bar and Guinness on tap.

Mooserwirt (☎ 35 88; Unterer Mooserweg 2; ☎ 11am-8pm) St Anton's undisputed king of après-ski, Mooserwirt claims to sell more beer per square metre than anywhere else in Austria. By teatime, the hilltop terrace heaves with swinging steins and Europop. The challenge is to make it down to St Anton in one piece, which begs the question: how can you ski when you're legless?

Sennhütte (☎ 20 48; ☎ 11am-8pm) This snug alpine chalet scores points for its sunny terrace, burning schnapps and frolicsome crowd. The one-man band Didi Diesel regularly takes the stage by storm.

Heustadl (☎ 302 97; ☎ 9.30am-7am) Just north of Sennhütte, this woodsy slopeside chalet is always packed to the rafters with a post-ski crowd craving beer and live music. Check out the bizarre legged bar stools.

Fang House (☎ 0676-4091 010; Nassereinerstrasse 6; ☎ 10am-10pm) When in Nasserein, nip into this cheery watering hole for a chat with Maggie and Chris. The house wine is Jägermeister, chilled at a glacial -18°C. One too many and skiers show their fangs. Ravenous skiers should look out for Herman's Burgers, a nearby hut-on-wheels operation where you can sink your teeth into a humungous burger for around €5.

Piccadilly (☎ 2213-276; Walter-Schuler-Weg 2; ☎ 9.30pm-4am) Locals call this place pick a willy

(the mind boggles), but to everyone else this very British pub is loud, crowded and the best place in town for live gigs.

Kandahar (☎ 302 60; Dorfstrasse 50; ☎ 7pm-6am) The décor at St Anton's premier clubbing venue is full of Eastern promise. First-rate DJs keep the dance floor packed till dawn.

Getting There & Away

St Anton is the easiest access point to the region. It's on the train route between Bregenz (€16.20, 1½ hours) and Innsbruck (€14.20; 1¼ hours), with fast trains every one or two hours. St Anton and St Christoph are close to the eastern entrance of the Arlberg Tunnel, the toll road connecting Vorarlberg and Tyrol. The tunnel toll is €8.50 for cars and minibuses. You can avoid the toll by taking the B197, but no vehicles with trailers are allowed on this winding road.

Bus depart from stands southwest of the tourist office.

Getting Around

Free local buses go to outlying parts of the resort (such as St Jakob). Buses run to Lech and Zürs in Vorarlberg (one way €4.50); they are hourly (till about 6pm) in winter, reducing to four a day in summer. Taking a minibus taxi, which can be shared between up to eight people, is another option: the trip from St Anton to Lech costs €50.

Bicycles can be rented (half/full day €14/20) from **Sport Alber** (☎ 34 00; Dorfstrasse 15) and **Intersport Arlberg** (☎ 34 53; Dorfstrasse 1).

LOCAL'S FAVOURITE WATERING HOLES

Piccadilly (above) 'The live music is ideal for getting up on the bar to dance and the staff are super!' *Steffi, masseuse*

Funky Chicken (above) 'Because it's the craziest bar in St Anton. Cheap beer, lethal margaritas and insane staff – the perfect night out!' *Giles Dobson, student*

Heustadl (above) 'There's a very entertaining après-ski band where the waitresses are part of the show...' *Chris Ritson, powerline contractor*

Mooserwirt (above) 'You have to see this place to believe it – the lively crowd, DJs and lights make for a great après-ski experience. Bet your ski boots take you grooving...' *Jason, chalet worker*

Fang House (above) 'It's a good place to start your day with a coffee and finish it with a gluhwein. Great music, no Schlager!' *Maggie Ritson, mum to be*

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