



## **Holiday Fact File**

### **AUSTRIA, EAST TYROL – One Step Closer to Heaven – Holiday Code AETS1**

#### **Holiday Overview**

Open your heart and be amazed. See the haunting beauty of towering peaks topped by glaciers, experience the purifying scent of meadows filled with wildflowers, walk the soft trails of larch-filled valleys, watch bearded vultures and golden eagles soar in the big sky. This is the perfect place for those wanting to escape the pressures of modern-day life, for here the air is exhilarating and clear and only the sound of cold, fast-flowing mountain streams interrupts the calm in this diverse land of plenty.

We offer you the chance to get to know one of the most beautiful and intact high alpine landscapes in Europe. The tiny enclave of East Tyrol in the National Park Hohe Tauern boasts some of the most outstanding scenery in the entire Alps. The rugged terrain has 400 imposing peaks over 3,000 metres (9,842 ft), with Austria's two highest mountains Großglockner (3,798 m / 12,461 ft) and Großvenediger (3,674 m / 12,053 ft) being the jewels of this magnificent landscape. This, the largest connected area of glaciers in the eastern Alps, contains numerous waterfalls, ancient cultural landscapes, traditional villages, and sparkling lakes; in short, picture book scenery characterises this region's appearance. This is a walker's paradise offering more than 1,300 kilometres (808 miles) of clearly marked walking trails at all altitudes.

#### **About the Area**

Captivatingly beautiful as it is, East Tyrol remains relatively untouched by the "package holiday trade". But no matter how small and provincial it may seem; owing to the close proximity of Italy and Slovenia, the area surprises with its international atmosphere. At 1,787 square kilometres (690 square miles), National Park Hohe Tauern is Europe's largest national park and one of the last undisturbed significant alpine regions in the heart of Europe. East Tyrol shares this magical landscape with the provinces of Tyrol, Salzburg and Carinthia. Mt. Großglockner is Austria's highest peak, which also boasts Austria's longest glacier (Pasterze Glacier, 9 km / 5.6 miles), and a road world-famous for its panoramic views, Großglockner Hochalpenstraße, which is easily accessible in summertime and offers some of the most spectacular views in Europe.

#### **Your Accommodation**

Concealed within a spectacular Alpine landscape lies the attractive village of Matrei in the Hohe Tauern region of East Tyrol. Matrei is almost equidistant from Mt. Großglockner, Mt. Großvenediger, and the charming town of Lienz. Here, where three impressive valleys converge (Isel Valley, Virgen Valley, and Deferegggen Valley), the scenery is awesome, and each valley offers plenty of easy-to-moderate walking. In addition, there is a cable car which takes you up to 2,190 metres / 7,185 feet, where you'll find wonderful walking on the 'Europe Panorama Trail' – a high-altitude path with a view of about 60 peaks that are higher than 3,000 metres / 9,842 feet.

Where you'll stay...

Our hotel is well-known for its warm hospitality and offers excellent facilities in a family-run establishment. It's graded 3\* superior and has 39 ensuite rooms. It consists of the original country inn dating from 1903, and a recent extension offering excellent modern facilities. All rooms are generously sized and are equipped with TV and telephone. Some rooms have balconies whilst others feature charming vaulted ceilings. There are lifts to most floors.

The hotel enjoys a central location just off the town square and within 5 minutes walk of the National Park Information & Visitor Centre.

Other hotel facilities include a restaurant where you can enjoy first-rate local cuisine with ingredients grown on the hotelier's own farm, a pleasant wine bar, and a sauna area (as a hotel guest you can use the sauna free of charge). There is private car parking adjacent to the hotel.

### History & Culture

There have been people living in the richly historical region of the Hohe Tauern since 30,000 BC - Stone Age skeletons were found in a cave in Tyrol, testifying to ancient settlements. In 15/16 BC the Romans arrived; North Tyrol was incorporated into the Roman province Raetia, East Tyrol into Noricum.

In 400 AD, the area was settled by Slavic tribes and Roman settlements were destroyed. Later on, Tyrol was a county of the Holy Roman Empire, afterwards the Austrian Empire, and finally a Kronland of Austria-Hungary. East Tyrol was originally part of South Tyrol but was isolated from the rest of the province by the Treaty of Saint Germain (1919) following World War I. German troops marched into Austria in 1938, and, subsequently, East Tyrol was handed over to Carinthia. A few years later, in 1945, East Tyrol was occupied by the English allies and then united with Tyrol. However, the relatively small East Tyrol is geographically cut off from North Tyrol by the imposing Hohe Tauern mountain range and shares no direct border with Tyrol. In 1962, the construction of a remarkable mountain road (Felbertauern Road & Tunnel) made East Tyrol easily accessible from the north.

### Flora & Fauna

This largely granite-based region, with its spectacular towering peaks, is home to the agile ibex, the European golden eagle and one of Europe's largest colonies of bearded vultures. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the bearded vulture was virtually extinct in the wilds in Europe - the reason being that it had been accused of carrying off and devouring lambs and even small children. Alpine authorities declared open season on the bird and the last one was shot in 1913. But the vulture, which is capable of digesting large bones (thus nicknamed the "bone crusher"), is back, thanks to a successful programme that introduces bred birds into the wild. The bearded vulture feeds mainly on the bleached bones of dead mammals; if the bones are too big, it drops them 50-80 metres (164-262 ft) onto rock surfaces to shatter them, and then eats the splinters. No other animal is capable of digesting bone, which means that the bearded vulture has no competitors for its food - its powerful stomach acids can dissolve even large bones. The bird doesn't look like a typical vulture and is often mistaken for a golden eagle. It has striking red circles around the eyes and a wingspan of up to 2.7 metres / 8.86 ft. A black strip over the eyes and the bristles at the base of the beak form the characteristic appearance of a "beard".

Rich green valleys reflect a history of cultivation and grazing - for centuries, the people living there have shaped the natural environment from the valleys up into the Alm regions (dairy farm dwellings, used in summer only) in harmony with nature. Animals such as the Pinzgau cattle were specifically bred at an altitude of 1,800 metres so they could withstand the high alpine climate of the upper regions of the Hohe Tauern. The fresh air and water and the herbaceous diet of the cattle, is reputed to have a positive effect on the flavour of their milk, with Pinzgau mountain cheese being a local delicacy.

### Places of Interest

- Großglockner High Alpine Road runs at the base of the famous peak and provides views of the park's most spectacular scenery at an average altitude of over 2,200 metres / 7,217 ft before it ends at the largest glacier in Austria (Pasterze). On your ascent from the valley floor to the highest point, the Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Höhe (2,450 metres / 8,038 ft), you'll pass through all vegetation zones, from cornfields to eternal ice. Großglockner High Alpine Road has been extensively developed for motor-powered tourists and is a unique drive incorporating panoramic viewpoints, information points and nature trails along its 6 km / 3.7 mile length. Open from May to October, during daytime only (toll road).

- Visit nearby Lienz; an attractive medieval town, the capital of East Tyrol - and its cultural and economic centre. Inhabited since Roman times, it is only 40 km (25 miles) from the Italian border, a fact that brings plenty of Italian visitors into the town and adds to the lively feel. Sunny Lienz is a good introduction to the laid-back ambience of southern Austria. While in Lienz, don't miss out on one of Austria's most notable tourist attractions: the ruined Roman town of Aguntum, which was the site of an Illyrian settlement (1100–500 BC).

### Airport Information

**Nearest Airport(s):** Separated from the north of Tyrol by Italy, East Tyrol is most easily approached from Carinthia (Klagenfurt). A further convenient option is Innsbruck. The Felbertauern Road & Tunnel (toll road & tunnel, expect to pay €10 one way) presents the region's main road link with Austria, north of the Alps, as well as Germany. The approximate travel time by car from the airport to your holiday destination is as follows:

- Klagenfurt, Austria - 2 hours to 2 ½ hours
- Innsbruck, Austria – 2 hours to 2 ½ hours
- Salzburg, Austria – 2 ½ hours to 3 hours
- Munich, Germany – 3 hours to 3 ½ hours

### Extend your Holiday

As with most of our holidays, we offer the opportunity to add extra nights at your hotel or enjoy an exciting city break. From your holiday location in East Tyrol we recommend spending some time in the following cities:

- Klagenfurt
- Innsbruck

### When To Go & Climate

**When to go: this holiday is available from arrival date 1 June to 1 October.** Thanks to its location to the south of the main Alpine chain, East Tyrol enjoys a milder climate than North Tyrol. Sun-drenched and warm summer months display an unbelievable vitality, with mountain pastures turning into fields bursting with colour, snow grouses meeting to mate, marmots sunning themselves on warm rocks, and various species of birds circling high in the sky.

### Prices & Booking

For prices and booking information please visit our website:

[www.touchingnature.co.uk](http://www.touchingnature.co.uk)