

Bavarian Alps

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Fly Salzburg; transfer to Bischofswiesen.
- Day 2/7** Natural history & cultural walks in Berchtesgaden National Park, Bavarian Alps.
- Day 8** Transfer Salzburg; fly London.

Departs

June

Focus

Alpine flowers, birds, butterflies, mammals & reptiles; plus mountain walking & local history & culture.

Grading

B. Mountain day-walks at a gentle pace, although can be steep in places (up to 10km maximum and longest walks are optional).

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code DEU01) or brochure.

Highlights

- Spectacular scenery includes Königssee & Mount Watzmann.
- Flora includes Herb Paris, Twayblade, Globe Flower, Alpenrose & orchids
- A rich variety of butterflies including Camberwell Beauty, Clouded Apollo and Mountain Clouded Yellow
- Montane birds such as Alpine Accentor, Alpine Chough, Golden Eagle, Black Woodpecker & Spotted Nutcracker



Ramsau Church



Lady's Slipper Orchid



Clouded Apollo



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

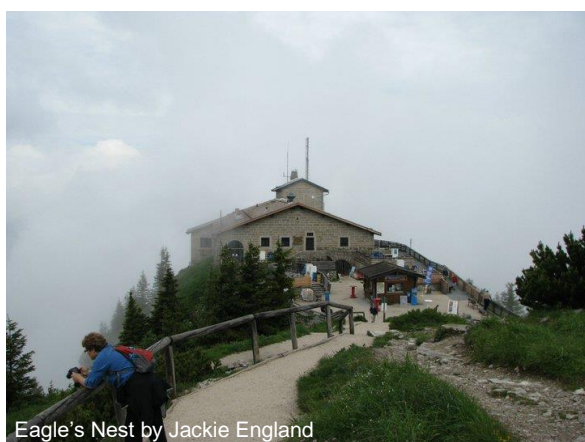
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Introduction

One of the oldest states in Europe, Bavaria is located in the southernmost region of Germany, along the border with Austria, and covers 20% of the country's total land area. Rich in culture and home to some of Europe's most beautiful mountain scenery, there is a saying that Bavaria is 'not part of Germany but near it'. Indeed, the state has a very strong and colourful identity of its own, with Bavarians taking great pride in their traditions, which include playing the Alpenhorn and Maypole dancing, the regional dress of lederhosen for men and dirndls for women, such culinary specialities as white sausage and excellent beers (served by the litre!), and centuries-old folk music among the many charms of the region. At the heart of the Bavarian Alps, the Berchtesgaden National Park, situated between the Austrian City of Salzburg and the historic spa town of Bad Reichenhal, conserves the very best of this unique region and is the focus of



Eagle's Nest by Jackie England

this exciting new 8-day holiday. The town of Berchtesgaden is very picturesque and the Berchtesgaden National Park offers a wealth of forests and meadows to explore in search of birds, wild flowers and other wildlife. The whole area is incredibly scenic and the visitor cannot fail to enjoy the spectacular views which the region offers, from the imposing Mount Watzmann to the glacial Königssee Lake. Our main aim on this tour is to enjoy the area's mountain scenery, wildlife and flowers, but a visit to this region is not complete without the chance to discover aspects of Bavarian history and culture. There will be

opportunities to visit the beautiful city of Salzburg and Hitler's Eagle's Nest retreat, perched high above Berchtesgaden town on Kehlstein Mountain.

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Arrive Bischofswiesen

Depending on flight schedules, we will either fly to Salzburg or Munich, on a morning flight from London.

In the afternoon we will be able to check in to the beautiful and comfortable, family-run hotel on the opposite side of the valley above Bischofswiesen. There will be plenty of time to settle in before we set off to another local gasthof for our evening meal as the hotel restaurant is closed on Monday evenings. Weather permitting we will take a short walk along the panoramic "Soleleitungsweg" which should whet our appetite for the week-long tour and our Bavarian meals to come.

Day 2

Klausbachtal Valley, Berchtesgaden National Park

Today we'll visit forests and meadows in the Klausbachtal Valley within Berchtesgaden National Park, which is a half-hour drive from our hotel. Known as the 'Valley of the Eagles', the top of this beautiful valley is actually in Austria. We'll take the National Park bus to the top of the valley and then have the rest of the day to wander back down the easy trails in search of a wide variety of wild flowers including Lady's Slipper Orchid, White Helleborine, Lily-of-the-Valley, Spring Gentian, Birdseye Primrose, Bird's-nest Orchid and May Lily among many others. We will cross a restored alpine meadow and walk past rushing streams bubbling up out of natural springs originating from deep in the surrounding mountains. We'll be hoping to see birds such as Golden Eagle, Black Woodpecker, Crested Tit, Spotted Nutcracker and Dipper, while keeping a vigilant look-out for Chamois. Afterwards we may have time to visit Ramsau, a quaint alpine village clinging to a steep sided valley, perhaps best known for its picturesque baroque church.

Day 3

Königssee (King's Lake), Berchtesgaden National Park

After a short drive to Königssee's harbour car park, we'll catch a boat down this fjord-like lake to the world-famous St. Bartholomew Church and hunting lodge (now a café). We'll then take a short walk heading away from the quay, following a lakeside trail that will soon lead us into interesting mixed woodland habitat. We'll be walking on a peninsular that has been created by shifting scree – slowly spreading into the lake as the towering sides of Mount Watzmann are eroded away and washed downwards into Königssee's crystal clear waters. Ancient woodland plants such as Herb Paris and Red Helleborine can easily be found here, along with varied orchid species including Lady's Slipper, Bird's-nest, Fly and Northern Marsh. There is also an abundance of reptiles including both Sand and Common Lizards and Adders, as well as birds such as Crested Tit, Pied Flycatcher, Redstart and a variety of warblers.



Red Helleborine

We will eat lunch during another boat ride to the end of the lake then walk for about a kilometre to the beautifully tranquil Obersee ('Upper Lake') – which resembles a serene mirror of water reflecting the surrounding mountains and sky. This will give us an opportunity to explore a marshy habitat. We'll go in search of the profusion of wetland flora and fauna here, including such specialties as carpets of Marsh-marigold and a variety of orchids, mosses and ferns. We may also find Grass Snake and Alpine Newt here as well as butterflies including the Clouded Apollo and Swallowtail.

As the sun starts to drop behind the mountains it will be time to make sure we catch the last boat back and then head home to our hotel for dinner and like the lake reflect on what we have seen!

Day 4 High alpine meadows, Berchtesgaden & Kehlstein (Eagle's Nest)

In the morning we will visit the Kehlstein house, or 'Eagle's Nest' – Hitler's diplomatic house perched high on a rocky peak, which was built for his 50th birthday. The Kehlstein is reached by bus, along the breathtaking and very panoramic Kehlstein Road, an astonishing feat of engineering that ascends almost to the very top of the mountain! The last 400ft is reached by using a brass-lined art deco elevator, accessed by means of a long tunnel bored into the mountain. The lift brings visitors straight into Eagle's Nest house, which now functions as a restaurant. Although busy, it is well worth tolerating the tourists in order to enjoy the house's stunning alpine views and to marvel at the building, which in itself is a statement of the power and dominance displayed by the Third Reich during the Second World War. Alpine Choughs are always present here and, with luck, Alpine Accentor, Peregrine Falcon and Black Redstart. At 1,800m, spring arrives late and it should still be easy to spot alpine flora such as Auricula and Alpine Snowbell as we zig-zag down again on an easy trail back to the bus stop.



Primula auricula

Just a short drive from our morning's outing is the Rossfeld mountain toll road, where we can explore high Alpine meadows awash with flowers such as Globeflowers, butterfly orchids, other orchids and Alpine Cat's-tail. The easy trail will lead us to a mountain café where some may wish to enjoy refreshments and admire the imposing Kehlstein and Hoher Goll mountains. Ravens and Alpine Choughs are never far away and there is often a good chance to spy Chamois on the opposite side of the valley.

The return home down the other side of the Rossfeld mountain back to our retreat takes about 40mins.

Day 5 High alpine meadows, Berchtesgaden

If the weather is good today, we'll take the cable car (a half-hour drive from our hotel) up the Jenner Mountain to 1,800m. Here we can walk along well-maintained paths through high alpine meadows and Krummholz (*Pinus mugo*) and pass Alpenrose, Alpine Snowbell, Oxlip, aquilegia and gentian species as well as look for mammals such as Alpine Marmots, Chamois and, if we are very lucky, Alpine Ibex (using a 'scope).

We'll take our lunch at the Schneibsteinhaus, a mountaineer's refuge where we can enjoy traditional Bavarian lunchtime snacks or cakes and a choice of drinks. If the weather is fine we can sit on the terrace and be accompanied by butterflies such as Swallowtail and Wood White, and birds including Crossbill, Ring Ouzel and Golden Eagle. After lunch we'll



Globeflower

go back down the mountain through the forest which will provide an opportunity for seeing species such as Crested Tit, Black Woodpeckers and Spotted Nutcracker.

We return across the lower meadows back to the middle station and ride down in the cable car back to the car park. After a full day exploring the high-altitude meadows and forest trails, we'll head home for a welcome rest and dinner.

Day 6

Sightseeing, Salzburg

Today we may make a sightseeing trip to Salzburg (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), to enjoy the city, its parks and woods. We'll drive to Hellbrunn Palace on the outskirts of Salzburg – this is a good place from which to start our tour of the city, and we will begin by enjoying the palace's stunning parkland setting which includes lakes, fountains and an arboretum, before catching a city bus into the centre of Salzburg. We'll then do a short walk which includes the well-known Mirabell Palace and gardens (famous for scenes from the film 'Sound of Music'), Mozart's houses and St. Peter's Monastery, which includes one of Europe's oldest restaurants (dating back to 803AD!) and the well-known Café Tomaselli.

Then you will have free time to enjoy the city.

For those who wish to, we'll follow a path leading us along the wooded cliffs above the city where we'll look for Red Squirrels – the ones found here are typically far more tolerant of humans than elsewhere!. Views across the old baroque city are superb from here, and then we'll return weaving our way down through narrow streets of the 'old town' below Europe's oldest preserved fortress (1100 AD) and into the Cathedral Square.

After re grouping we catch a city bus back to Hellbrunn and drive back to the peace and tranquility of our Bavarian Hotel.

Day 7

Wimbach Gorge and Valley

Today we will venture in to the Wimbach gorge and valley which is only a 15 minute drive from our hotel. After a short but steep 10 minute walk through Wimbach village we enter a deep gorge cut by the raging Wimbach River over a 50 million year time scale!



Walking on secure gantries and steps above the thunderous power of the river we may glimpse Dippers and Grey Wagtails, totally at home in the wild water. Interesting ferns and other moisture-loving plants will be seen here in the constant spray and dripping cliffs.

The narrow gorge then opens up into a truly impressive 'U'-shaped valley surrounded by towering, crumbling limestone mountains that have over the millennia eroded

and filled-in a 300 metre deep lake, to become a bed of scree, stones and rocks. Here is a botanist's

delight as some high elevation alpine plants can be found growing on the scree, having been washed or blown down into the valley by the wind and rain or simply carried on the descending stones.

There is a good chance of spying Golden Eagles, Crag Martins and Chamois high above us.

By mid-afternoon we will leave the scree and find the Wimbachschloss, picturesquely nestled in a small clearing beneath a vertical cliff. In the past, the Schloss was a hunting lodge for Bavarian royalty but today it is a welcoming café in the wilderness. Here we will enjoy a variety of homemade cakes and refreshments before returning downhill through the mixed forest clinging to the steep valley side. Crested Tit, Nutcracker and woodpeckers may be observed along with swathes of orchids and many species of butterflies.

After a visit here there will certainly be additions to the species list, which will sadly be the last update and the last evening meal at the Hundsreit hotel.

Day 8

Return London

After an early final breakfast at our hotel, we will reluctantly have to leave the stunning views and tranquility of the Berchtesgadenland and drive back to either Salzburg or Munich Airport in time to board our flight back to London.

Tour grading

This tour is graded B (moderate/difficult) and includes day hikes of up to 5 to 7 miles over mountain trails and tracks, some of which can be steep in places. To enjoy this holiday you will need a good standard of fitness to manage short uphill and long downhill sections.

Food & accommodation included in the price

All food and accommodation are included in the price of this holiday. We will be based in a delightful, traditionally Bavarian, hotel near Bischofswiesen, which has lovely alpine views. All rooms have private facilities. The hotel has spacious grounds and a restaurant serving traditional Bavarian cuisine.

Single rooms

The hotel has 4 genuine single rooms available which are available (no supplement) on a first come, first served basis. After that, singles will be accommodated in twin/double rooms for the advertised supplement. If you are single and would prefer to pay the supplement for single occupancy of a twin/double, please let us know upon booking.

How to book your place!

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

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