

The Salzkammergut



Sometimes called the ‘cradle of Austrian culture’, the Salzkammergut is a spectacular region of alpine and sub-alpine lakes, picturesque valleys, rolling hills and rugged, steep mountain ranges. The highest mountains climb to almost 3000m. Not least because of the Salzkammergut’s startling beauty, parts of this region – especially those lakes easily reached from Salzburg – can at times be swamped with visitors. But don’t despair – much of the region is remote wilderness, and even in those heavily visited parts such as the Wolfgangsee and Mondsee, you’ll always find isolated sections where peaceful, glassy waters provide limitless opportunities for boating, swimming, fishing or just sitting on the shore and chucking stones into the water. The popular Hallstätter See is no exception. When the pretty streets in Hallstatt township are full of summer visitors, across the lake a sleepy, swampy Obertraun retains a village atmosphere. Strike out deeper into the region, and you will be rewarded with isolated splendour.

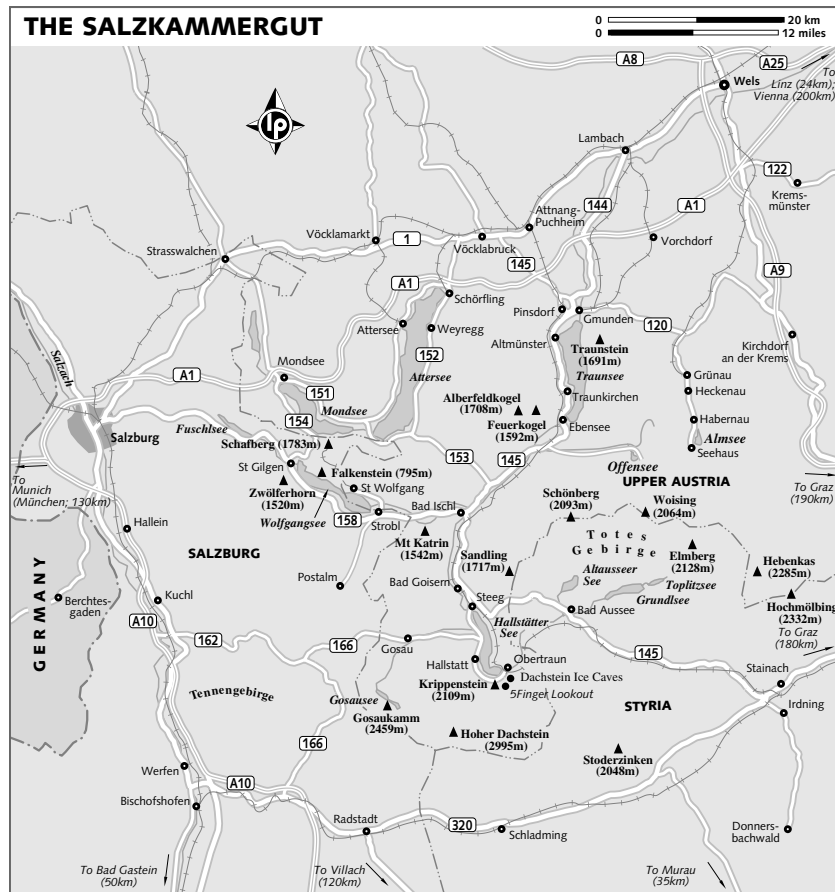
Salt is the ‘white gold’ of the Salzkammergut, and the mines that made it famous now make for an interesting journey back in time to the settlers of the Iron Age Hallstatt culture, and to the Celts and Romans – all of whom sullied their hands in the mines. Along the western side of the Hallstätter See is a pipeline reputed to be the oldest in the world, used to transport brine. Today, the narrow swathe cut out to build and service the pipeline is a lush hiking trail.

Whatever your reason for coming to the Salzkammergut – swimming, boating, hiking, climbing or exploring cultures – this region rewards the curious and adventurous.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Reeling from views at the surreal **5Fingers platform** (p253) in the Dachstein Mountains
- Hiking around the **Hallstätter See** (p249) from Obertraun to Hallstatt and cooling off in the crystal waters between trails
- Exploring the Wolfgangsee and the remarkable pilgrimage church in **St Wolfgang** (p260), filled with priceless works of art
- Strolling through the **Kaiservilla** (p247), Franz Josef’s summer residence, now a handsome museum set in parkland
- Plunging into the chilling depths to masterfully illuminated towers of ice in the **Dachstein Caves** (p252)
- Finding the toilet in Gmunden’s **Museum für Historische Sanitäröbekte** (p257) – a museum dedicated to loos? They must be potty...





Orientation & Information

The Salzkammergut falls within three provinces: Upper Austria, which takes the lion's share; Styria, comprising the small area around Bad Aussee; and Salzburg province. For general information, check out www.salzkammergut.at.

History

Mining has been the principal activity in the Salzkammergut since Celtic times, when tunnels were hacked into the rock and water sloshed down them to release the salt. After the demise of the Celts, the prince-archbishops of Salzburg took over the shafts and used the profits from the dark, dank mines to build their elaborate palaces and pleasure gardens.

Ironically, considering its later popularity as a tourist area, the whole of the Salzkammergut region was banned to visitors until the early 19th century because the Salzburg government, which held a monopoly on salt mining here, wanted to prevent salt from being smuggled out. Later, Emperor Franz Josef's patronage brought central European aristocracy to the region in their droves. They came to promenade around the parks of the elegant spa towns like Bad Ischl, or to tramp through the snowy mountain forests in search of unwary deer.

Climate

Summers down by the Salzkammergut region's lakes tend to be quite warm, with an av-

erage temperature of 15°C to 25°C. In spring and autumn especially, beware of the so-called 'string rain' – a soft, yet drenching rain that can soak you through before you've even noticed it. During winter (mid-November to February) the average lies at around -4°C.

Getting There & Away

To reach the Salzkammergut from Salzburg by car or motorcycle, take the A1 to reach the north of the region, or Hwy 158 to Bad Ischl. Travelling north-south, the main road is Hwy 145 (the Salzkammergut Bundesstrasse) which follows the rail line for most of its length. By train, the main rail routes into the province are from Salzburg or Linz, with a change at Attnang-Puchheim onto the regional north-south railway line.

Getting Around

The Salzkammergut is crossed by regional trains on a north-south route, passing through Attnang-Puchheim on the Salzburg-Linz line and Stainach-Irdning on the Bischofshofen-Graz line. The rail line linking these two access points is 108km long, and hourly trains take 2½ hours to complete the journey. Smaller stations on this route are *unbesetzter Bahnhof* (unattended train station); at these you'll have to use a platform ticket machine or pay on the train. Attersee is also accessible by rail.

Regular bus services connect all towns and villages in the area, though less frequently or not at all on weekends. For bus times and prices from Salzburg to the various towns in the region, see p281.

Passenger boats ply the waters of the Attersee, Traunsee, Mondsee, Hallstätter See and Wolfgangsee.

The non-transferable Salzkammergut Erlebnis Card, available from tourist offices and hotels, costs €4.90 and offers significant discounts for 21 days between 1 May and 31 October.

BAD ISCHL

☎ 06132 / pop 14,070

This spa town's reputation snowballed after the Habsburg Princess Sophie took a treatment here to cure her infertility in 1828. Within two years she had given birth to Emperor Franz Josef I; two other sons fol-

lowed and were nicknamed the Salzprinzen (Salt Princes).

Rather in the manner of a salmon returning to its place of birth, Franz Josef made an annual pilgrimage to Bad Ischl, making it his summer home for the next 60 years and hauling much of the European aristocracy in his wake. The fateful letter he signed declaring war on Serbia and sparking off WWI bore a Bad Ischl postmark.

Today's Bad Ischl is a handsome town that makes a handy base for visiting the region's five main lakes.

Orientation & Information

Bad Ischl's town centre is compactly contained within a bend of the Traun River. There are moneychanging facilities at the post office and train station.

Post office (Bahnhofstrasse; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat)

Salzkammergut Info-Center (☎ 240 00-0; www.salzkammergut.co.at; Gützstrasse 12; ☎ 9am-8pm) A helpful private regional agency with bike rental (per 24hr €13) and internet (per 10 min €1.10).

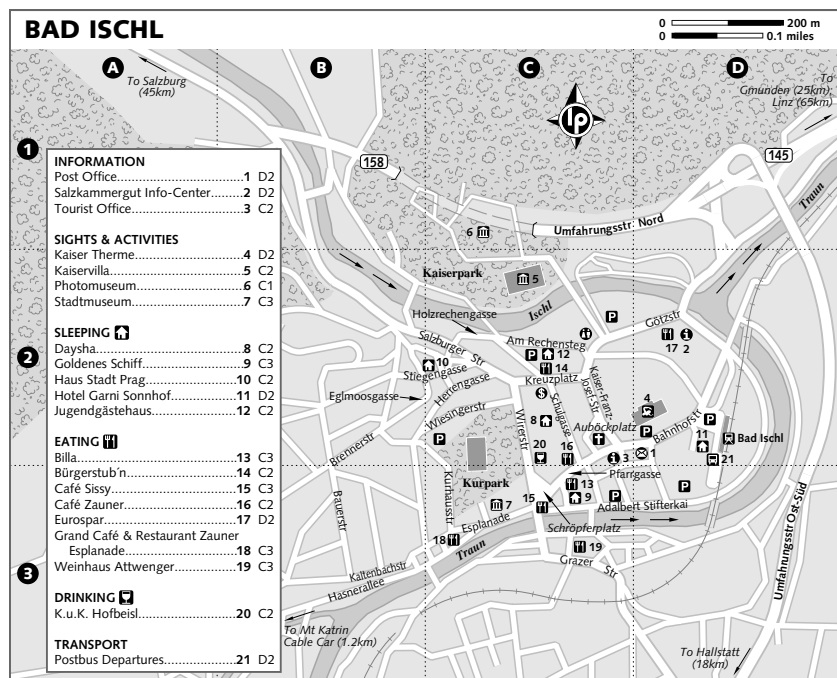
Tourist office (☎ 277 57-0; www.badischl.at; Auböckplatz; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) A telephone service (8am to 8pm) for rooms and information complements this office.

Sights & Activities

KAISERVILLA

Franz Josef's summer residence was the **Kaiservilla** (☎ 232 41; Jainzen 38; www.kaiservilla.com; adult/student/child €9.80/6.50/4.50, grounds only adult/student/child €3.50/2.50; ☎ 9.30am-4.45pm May-mid-Oct), an Italianate building that was bought by his mother, the Princess Sophie, as an engagement present for her son and Princess Elisabeth of Bavaria. Elisabeth, who loathed the villa and her husband in equal measure, spent little time there, but the emperor came to love it and it became his permanent summer residence for over 60 years. His mistress, Katharina Schrott, lived nearby in a house chosen for her by the empress.

The interior of the villa can only be seen by guided tours (which leave every half-hour in summer), with English information sheets. You'll learn of the emperor's habit of rising at 3.30am each morning to take a bath before beginning his day's work punctually at 4am, and that the only recreation he allowed himself was hunting. The walls of the villa are liberally studded with the fruits of



his labours, including the stuffed corpse of the 2000th chamois he shot. There are various other exhibits, including a bust of the Empress Elisabeth, made when she was in her mid-40s (a grandmother and still an internationally famous beauty), and a death mask made after she was killed by a knife-wielding madman at the age of 60. The natural-style parkland surrounding the villa contains a small **Photomuseum** (☎ 244 22; adult/child/family €1.50/0.70/3.50; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Apr-Oct).

OTHER SIGHTS

The **Stadtmuseum** (city museum; ☎ 254 76; Esplanade 10; adult/child & student €4.50/2.20; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 2-7pm Wed Apr-Oct, also Mon Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Fri-Sun Dec-Mar, closed Nov) is the building where Franz Josef and Elisabeth were engaged (the day after they met at a ball). Today it showcases the history of Bad Ischl and stages changing exhibitions.

The local peak here is **Mt Katrin** (1542m), with walking trails and limited skiing in winter. A **cable car** (☎ 237 88; www.katrinseilbahn.com; return ticket adult/child €13.50/12, ☎ mid-May-Oct, mid-Dec-Mar) glides up there. If you'd like to fol-

low in Princess Sophie's footsteps, check out spa treatments at the **Kaiser Terme** (☎ 204-0; www.kaisertherme.co.at; Bahnhofstrasse 1; adult/child €11.50/6.90; ☎ 9am-10pm).

Festivals & Events

Daily free **Kurkonzerte** (spa concerts) take place in an open-air pavilion in the Kurpark or inside the nearby Congresshaus. Bad Ischl was the home of operetta composer Franz Lehár, and the **Lehár Festival** (www.leharfestival.at) takes place every year in July and August, with stagings of his own and other composers' works.

Sleeping

Staff at both the tourist offices can help find rooms.

Jugendgästehaus (☎ 265 77; jgh.badischl@oejvh.or.at; Am Rechensteg 5; dm/s/d €15/29.50/44) The characterless but clean HI guesthouse is in the town centre behind Kreuzplatz.

Haus Stadt Prag (☎ 236 16; stadt-prag@aon.at; Egelmoosgasse 9; s/d €33/66; ☎ closed Nov; (P)) Rooms are large and comfortable and this private pension has a peaceful, old-world atmosphere, situated just outside the town centre.

Hotel Garni Sonnhof (☎ 230 78; www.sonnhof.at; Bahnhofstrasse 4; s €65, d €90-120; (P)) Nestled in a leafy glade of maple trees next to the station, this lovely hotel has cosy, traditional décor, a beautiful garden (complete with a pond), a sunny conservatory and large bedrooms with interesting old furniture, rag rugs and wooden floors. There's a billiard room, sauna and a steam bath on site.

Goldenes Schiff (☎ 242 41; www.goldenes-schiff.at; Adalbert Stifterkai 3; s €85-95, d €115-162, apt €162; (P) ☎; mains €10-18) Most doubles in this four-star hotel have bath tubs, and the best rooms (junior suites) have large windows and overlook the river. Some rooms can be very plain, though. There's also a wellness centre with solarium and sauna, and a good restaurant serving classic Austrian cuisine.

Daysha (☎ 289 84; www.dayshahotel.com; Schulgasse 9; s/d/ste €95/177/280; (P) ☎) The latest addition to Bad Ischl's hotel landscape is a stylish and well-thought-out business hotel with pine floors, a refreshingly low-key colour scheme, a rooftop swimming pool and free wireless internet for guests.

Eating & Drinking

Café Sissy (☎ 241 73; Pfarrgasse 2; mains €6-16; ☎) 8am-midnight) Sissy was the nickname of the Kaiserin Elisabeth, unhappy wife of Emperor Franz Josef, and her pictures hang on the walls of this popular riverside bar/café. You can breakfast here, lunch or dine on a Wiener schnitzel and other simple fare, or simply nighthawk at the front-room bar till the midnight hour.

Grand Café & Restaurant Zauner Esplanade (☎ 237 22; Hasner Allee 2; pastries €7-14.50 ☎ 10am-9pm May-Oct, 10am-8pm Wed-Sun Dec-mid-Apr) This offshoot of Café Zauner, the famous pastry shop at Pfarrgasse 7, serves quite decent Austrian staples, some using organic local meats, in a pleasant location beside the river. The Pfarrgasse pastry shop (open 8.30am to 6pm) takes you back in time: founded in 1832, this was where Franz Josef's mistress ordered pastries for their breakfast every morning when the emperor was in residence.

Bürgerstub'n (☎ 235 68; Kreuzplatz 7; 2-course menu €9; ☎ lunch Thu-Tue, dinner Thu & Fri) Back from the street in a courtyard, this cheap and cheerful place has lots of plants studding its outside terrace and serves filling classics.

Weinhaus Attwenger (☎ 233 27; Lehárkai 12; mains €10.50-21.50; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Mon) This quaint chalet with a garden next to the river

serves prime-quality Austrian cuisine from a seasonal menu, with wines to match. It also has a couple of set menus (three/four courses €26/€30).

K.u.K. Hofbeisl (☎ 272 71; Wiererstrasse 4; ☎ 8am-4am; food €5-20) This *Beisl* is the scene of some of the liveliest late-night partying in Bad Ischl, but it also does a delicious plate of food. It has two separate drinking areas to choose from, DJs get the floors writhing regularly during events, and the drinks list would do a Russian novelist proud – about 150 cocktails in all.

Supermarkets include Billa on Pfarrgasse and Eurospar on Götzstrasse.

Getting There & Away

Postbus services depart from outside the train station, with hourly buses to Salzburg (€8.70, 1½ hours) via St Gilgen (€4.60, 35 minutes). To St Wolfgang (€6.40, 40 minutes), you often have to change at Strobl (the bus will be waiting and the same ticket is valid).

Hourly trains to Hallstatt (€4.40, 25 minutes) go via Steeg/Hallstätter See, at the northern end of the lake, and continue on the eastern side via Hallstatt station to Obertraun (€6, 30 minutes). A boat from Hallstatt station (€2) takes you to the township. There are also frequent trains to Gmunden (€7.60, 45 minutes), as well as to Salzburg (€19, two hours) via Attnang-Puchheim.

Most major roads in the Salzkammergut go to or near Bad Ischl; Hwy 158 from Salzburg and the north-south Hwy 145 intersect just north of the town centre.

SOUTHERN SALZKAMMERGUT

The Dachstein mountain range provides a stunning 3000m backdrop to the lakes in the south. Transport routes go round rather than over these jagged peaks.

HALLSTÄTTER SEE

The Hallstätter See, set among sharply rising mountains at an altitude of 508m in the Southern Salzkammergut, is one of the prettiest and most accessible lakes in the region. It offers some of the best hiking and

WATER, WILD MOUNTAINS, WONDERFUL VIEWS & 5FINGERS

- Rock swimming & kayaking** With its crystal clear waters, the Hallstätter See makes for good summer splashing. Rent a kayak or boat for the day from Hallstatt (opposite), paddle over to Obertraun and moor offshore north of the settlement for some swimming off the rocks. The FKK (naturist) beach in Steeg has a lovely, reedy swim as an alternative.
- Walking above the waters** The eastern shore of the lake is a breeze: flat in most places, and large stretches are even possible for cyclists. The western shore trail, though, is where the walking gets spectacular. Stunning views of the lake open up between lush deciduous forest, and a gruelling climb up steps beyond the waterfall may prompt cries for last-minute mercy.
- A cool drink and a view** Mercy comes in the form of one of the nicest places to eat or drink outdoors in the Salzkammergut. The restaurant at Rudolfsturm (opposite) – inside a former fortress – does a fine dish, but the killer-bee experience is sitting outdoors and enjoying the cool, mountain breeze on your face, sipping a beer or glass of wine, and watching the boats ripple the lake almost 800m below.
- When the water washes down** A late afternoon or early evening shower is common in the Salzkammergut, and one of the more enjoyable places to seek refuge indoors in Obertraun is at Restaurant-Pizzeria Simmer (p253). This friendly, family owned and run respite does delicious pizza; and if the rain sets in, two Kegelbahnen (bowling alleys) out the back help kill time. Once the shower passes, you can move back onto the cosy terrace.
- 5Fingers for the sure-footed** In a region where panoramas are plentiful, the 5Fingers viewing platform (p253) offers one of the most interesting. It's at Krippenstein, above the ice caves, and consists of five steely 'fingers' extending from a sheer 400m precipice. Each finger has a different character. One has a symbolic springboard, and the fifth has a transparent floor. The view from the platform over the lake is dazzling.

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BLUELIST.

swimming in summer, good skiing in winter, and a fascinating insight into the cultural history of the region any time of year. Just 5km round the lake lies Obertraun, the closest resort to the Dachstein ice caves; the whole Hallstatt-Dachstein region became a Unesco World Heritage site in 1997.

As well as excursions, **Hemetsberger** (☎ 6134-8228; Am Hof 126; 90min excursions €9; Jul–mid-Sep, weather depending) does a scheduled run between Obertraun and Hallstatt-Markt (€4.50, 25 minutes, three or four times daily from June to September) and the all-important year-round service between Hallstatt-Markt and Hallstatt train station (€2, 10 minutes, five to 12 times daily). This connects with trains in both directions on the main railway line here (see their pamphlet). If you're staying in Obertraun or Bad Aussee, your last boat leaves Hallstatt-Markt at 6.15pm. Going to Bad Ischl, 5.50pm is your last boat-train connection.

HALLSTATT

☎ 06134 / pop 950

With pastel-coloured houses casting shimmering reflections onto the glassy waters of the lake and towering mountains on all sides, Hallstatt's beauty alone would be enough to guarantee it fame. Boats chug tranquilly across the lake from the train station to the village, situated precariously on a narrow slate of land between mountain and shore. So small is the patch of land occupied by the village that its annual Corpus Christi procession takes place largely in small boats on the lake.

Salt in the hills above the town made it a centre of salt mining. The Hallstatt Period (800 to 400 BC) refers to the early Iron Age in Europe, named after the village and the Iron Age settlers and Celts who worked the salt mines here. Today the sheer volume of visitors can not only get annoying at times, but make finding a hotel room difficult in mid-summer.

Consider staying in Obertraun, which retains its village feel.

Orientation & Information

The train station is across the lake from Hallstatt – to get into town you have to take the ferry. Seestrasse is the main street in Hallstatt; some other streets are mere pedestrian paths.

Internet access (Seestrasse 145; ☎ 9.30am–10pm; per 15 min €1; ☎ May–mid-Oct) A small 'umbrella bar'.

Post office (☎ 8am–noon & 2.30–5.30pm) Near the tourist office.

Sparkasse Bad Ischl (Marktplatz 58; ☎ 8am–noon & 2–5pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 8am–noon Wed) Bank with ATM.

Tourist office (☎ 8208; www.hallstatt.at; Seestrasse 169; ☎ 9am–noon & 2–5pm Mon–Fri Sep–Jun, 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat Jul & Aug) Turn left from the ferry to reach the office. It has a free *Hiking Friends* brochure with walks in the region.

Sights & Activities

BEINHAUS

Make sure you don't miss the macabre yet beautiful **Beinhaus** (Bone House; ☎ 8279; Kirchenweg 40; admission €1; ☎ 10am–6pm 1 May–27 Oct) behind the church. This small chancel house contains rows of neatly stacked skulls, painted with flowery designs and the names of their former owners. Bones have been exhumed from the overcrowded graveyard since 1600 and the last skull in the collection was added in 1995. The Beinhaus stands in the grounds of the 15th-century Catholic **Pfarrkirche** (parish church; ☎ 8279; Kirchenweg 40) and has Gothic frescoes and three winged altars; arguably the best one, on the right, dates from 1510 and shows saints Barbara and Katharina, with Mary in the middle.

STADTMUSEUM

The revamped, high-tech **Stadtmuseum** (city museum; ☎ 8206; www.museum-hallstatt.at; Seestrasse 56; adult/child/family €7.50/4/19; ☎ 10am–6pm May–Sep, 11am–3pm Wed–Sun Jan–Mar, Nov & Dec, 10am–4pm Apr & Oct) covers the region's history of Iron Age/Celtic occupation and salt mining. All explanations are in German, but pick up the *Museum Hallstatt* booklet (€2; in English) which explains the exhibits. Not to be missed is the room re-enacting the fatal rockslides that may have led to the area being abandoned.

Celtic and Roman excavations can be seen downstairs in **Dachsteinsport Janu** (☎ 8298; Seestrasse 50; admission free; ☎ 8am–6pm), a shop oppo-

site the tourist office, or near the Salzbergwerk (below), where excavation continues.

SALZBERGWERK

Situated high above Hallstatt on Salzberg (Salt Mountain) is another major cultural attraction, the fascinating **Salzbergwerk** (Salt Mine; ☎ 06132-200 24 00; adult/child & concession/family €21/12.60/44.10; ☎ 9.30am–4.30pm May–mid-Sep, to 3.30pm mid-Sep–30 Sep, to 3pm 1 Oct–mid-Oct, closed mid–Oct–Apr). In 1734 the fully preserved body of a prehistoric miner was found and today he is known as the 'Man in Salt'. The standard tour revolves around his fate, with visitors travelling down an underground railway and miner's slides (a photo is taken of you while sliding) to an illuminated subterranean salt lake. Closing times given are admission for the last tour.

There are several ways of getting there – all of them enjoyable. The easiest is with a **funicular railway** (one-way adult/child/family €5.10/3.10/10.80) to the mountain station, from where the mine is 15 minutes' walk past Hallstatt's best lookout restaurant, **Rudolfsturm** (Rudolf's Tower; p102), and an archaeological dig. Alternatively, a switchback trail (about 40 minutes up) starts from the foot of the funicular. If you are feeling fit (and the weather is dry), you might climb the stairs behind the Beinhaus: take the trail until it joins the picturesque **Soleleitungsweg**, go left and follow the very steep trail past the **waterfall** and up steps. It's a tough climb, and not really for children. Last but certainly not least, masochists can walk 18km anticlockwise around the lake (see p99). Leave very early so you reach your sticky end in time for the last tour.

You can hire **boats and kayaks** (per hr from €9) on the lake, or scuba dive in it with the **Dachstein Tauchclub** (☎ 8286); see p100 for nice swimming spots.

Sleeping

Rooms fill quickly in summer, so book ahead or arrive early. If you haven't already booked, go straight for the tourist office and they'll help you find something, either in Hallstatt or Lahn (the southern part of the village). All of the following places provide free parking for guests within the town limits.

Campingplatz Klausner-Höll (☎ 8322; www.camping.hallstatt.net; Lahnstrasse 7; campsite per adult/child/tent/car €6.50/3.50/3.70/2.90; ☎ 15 Apr–15 Oct; ♾) This campsite is conveniently located south of the centre.

Gasthaus Mühle (☎ 8318; toeroe@magnet.at; Kirchenweg 36; dm €13; ☹ closed Tue & November) This youth hostel is part of the restaurant of the same name. It's handily situated on the way up to the church, and the dorms are quite decent.

Jugendherberge (☎ 8212; biene1005@aon.at; Lahn 50; dm €16; ☹ May-Sep) Only dorms are available here, and some can be cramped. Phone if reception is unattended. It's usually full with groups in July and August, and opening can change according to the weather.

Pension Hallberg (☎ 8709; www.pension-hallberg.at.tf; Seestrasse 113; s €60-80, d €70-130; Ⓟ) Book early in summer for Hallberg. Interesting artefacts rescued from the lake line the staircase leading up to the rooms, the best of which are light and airy, furnished with pale wood and have superb views over the lake.

Gasthof Zauner (☎ 8246; www.zauner.hallstatt.net; Marktplatz 51; s/d €48/96; ☹ closed mid-Nov–mid-Dec; Ⓟ) Gasthof Zauner is a quaint, ivy-covered guesthouse on the nearest square to the ferry terminal. It has very tasteful, pine-embellished rooms, some with a balcony and a view of the lake. The restaurant (mains €13 to €18) has some of the best food (especially fish) and wines in town.

our pick **Seehotel Grüner Baum** (☎ 8263; Marktplatz 104; r per person €65-100; Ⓟ) Officially, the Grüner Baum is three-star, but the quality of rooms and service is much more than its rating suggests. These are tastefully furnished without going overboard on décor to impress; three suites have enormous patios to the lake, and doubles have smaller balconies large enough for seating. A complimentary bottle of mineral water arrives each day, and staff will deliver breakfast to your bedside replete with those sweeping views of the lake, making this the ideal place for romantic lakeside sojourns.

Eating

Gasthaus Zur Mühle (☎ 8318; Kirchenweg 36; mains €6.70-8.80; ☹ lunch & dinner Wed–Mon May–Sep, 4–11pm Oct & Dec–Apr, closed Nov) In the same building as the hostel, this restaurant is a nice place to hang out and chomp on salad, pizza or an inexpensive meat dish.

Restaurant zum Salzbaron (☎ 8263; Marktplatz 104; mains €10-22; ☹ lunch & dinner, closed Nov) By a long shot the classiest gourmet act in town, the Salzbaron is perched delicately alongside the lake inside the Seehotel Grüner Baum and serves from a seasonal menu; local trout

features strongly in summer on a menu with a pan-European angle.

Bräugasthof Restaurant (☎ 8221; Seestrasse 120; mains €14-19; ☹ lunch & dinner May–Oct) Beef fillet in port is one excellent choice here, but you can also enjoy a few salads, trout, and other local specialities in this restaurant with a lovely lakeside terrace.

To stock up on provisions for a hike, you'll find a **Konsum** (Kernmagazinplatz 23) between Hallstatt and Lahn.

Getting There & Away

About five buses a day connect Hallstatt town with Obertraun (€1.70, 10 minutes) and Bad Ischl (€4, 50 minutes) until the late afternoon. Get off the Postbus at the Parkterrasse stop for the centre and the tourist office, or at Lahn (at the southern end of the road tunnel) for the Jugendherberge.

Hallstatt train station is across the lake. The boat service from there to the village coincides with train arrivals. The last ferry connection leaves Hallstatt train station at 6.29pm (€1.70, 10 to 45 minutes). Car access into the village is restricted from early May to late October: electronic gates are activated during the day. Staying overnight in town gives free parking and a pass to open the gates.

OBERTRAUN

☎ 06131 / pop 776

Quieter, more low-key than Hallstatt, this village offers access to the caves and is a good starting point for hikes around the lake or more strenuous ones up to the caves themselves.

Orientation & Information

The cable-car station for the ice caves is a 20-minute walk uphill through the woods from the village – turn right along the main road and follow the signposts. The trail (No 16) to the caves is a stiff 2½-hour hike from the valley station.

Tourist office (☎ 351; www.inneres-salzkammergut.at; ☹ 8am–noon & 2–5pm Mon–Fri Oct–Jun, 8am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat Jul–Sep) On the way to the Dachstein cable car from the train station (ATM next door).

Sights & Activities

Climb to the Dachstein caves and you'll find yourself in a strange world of ice and subterranean hollows extending 80km in places. The

ice in the Giant Ice Cave is no more than 500 years old, forming an 'ice mountain' 8m high – twice as high now as it was when the caves were first explored in 1910.

Both **caves** (☎ 5310; www.dachsteinwelte.at; cable car return plus one cave adult/child €23.70/13.80, cable car plus both caves adult/child €28.60/16.30; caves only adult/child €9.30/5.50) are 15 minutes' steep walking from the first stage of the Dachstein cable car at 1350m, and each cave tour lasts an hour. To make sure you see both caves, take the cable car up by 1pm and do the Mammoth Cave first, allowing 30 to 45 minutes to reach the Giant Ice Cave from the Mammoth Cave.

The best of the caves is the **Rieseneishöhle** (Giant Ice Cave; ☹ core tour 9.20am–4pm May–mid-Sep). The enormous ice formations here are illuminated with coloured light and the shapes they take are eerie and surreal. The cave can only be seen on a guided tour, and if you let the tour guide know, they will do the tour with English as well as German commentaries.

The **Mammuthöhle** (Mammoth Cave; ☹ core tour 10.15am–2.30pm mid-May–mid-Sep) is among the 30 or so deepest and longest caves in the world and is without ice formations. Tours give insight into the formation of the cave, which like the Rieseneishöhle, has installations and works of art based on light and shadow to heighten the experience.

The **Koppenbrüllerhöhlen** (guided tour adult/child €7.70/4.50; ☹ May–Oct) are water-filled caves and part of the same Dachstein cave system. They're down the valley towards Bad Aussee.

The **cable car** runs about every 15 minutes. After the middle station **Schönbergalm** (return adult/child €14.40/8.30; ☹ May–mid-Sep), it continues to the highest point (2109m) of **Krippenstein** (return adult/child €20.60/12.80; ☹ late-Jul–mid-Sep), with an eerie **5Fingers viewing platform** dangling over the precipice and walking trails, and beyond that to the Gjaidalm station. In winter Krippenstein is also a ski and snowboard free-riding area (€29.20 for a day pass).

Obertraun has a grassy **beach area** (admission free) with changing huts, a small waterslide, a children's play area and boat rental.

Sleeping & Eating

Obertraun has many private rooms (from €19) and holiday apartments, plus several hotels.

Campingplatz Hinterer (☎ 265; camping.am.see@chello.at; Winkl 77; campsite per adult/child/tent/car €8.40/4.80/5.20/2.80; ☹ May–Oct) This informal,

grassy campsite is by the lake south of the river.

Jugendherberge (☎ 360; www.jutel.at/obertraun, in German; Winkl 26; dm €20, s/d €20/40; ☹ check-in 5–7pm) This HI hostel is 15 minutes' walk from the train station: cross the river and take the first street on the left. Doors are locked during the day.

Gasthof/Pension Dachsteinhof (☎ 393; dachsteinhof@inode.at; Winkl 22; s/d €35/70; Ⓟ) This simple, traditional pension has an idyllic setting by the river on the way to the ice caves. The good-sized rooms are clean and functional, with the sound of rushing water to lull you to sleep at night. There's also a midrange restaurant here serving classics like schnitzel and steak, but also local trout.

Hotel Haus am See (☎ 26777; www.hotel-hausamsee.at; Obertraun 16/19; s/d €42/86; mains €8.50-19; Ⓟ) Situated conveniently alongside the boat station and swimming area, this comfortable hotel has rooms with views over the lake. While they lack frills, these are very clean and comfortable, and you can throw open the balcony door at night and sleep with a lakeside breeze.

Seehotel Wenk (☎ 462; www.wenk.at; Seestrasse 152; s/d €50/88; Ⓟ) This large hotel is another comfortable option near the lake, especially to escape Hallstatt crowds. Its large garden area out front and around the pool makes it ideal for families.

Restaurant-Pizzeria Simmer (☎ 335; Seestrasse 178; mains €7-11, pizza €4.80-6.50; 10am–midnight Tue–Sun Nov–Apr & Jun–Sep, closed Oct & closed lunch Tue & Thu May) One time we had the good fortune to get caught in this gem during a tremendous hailstorm fresh from a lake hike. The staff is friendly, the pizza is great, and we found it a cosy respite while the heavens opened up. There's ten-pin bowling out back.

The **Konsum** supermarket near the tourist office is convenient for hiking supplies.

Getting There & Away

See opposite for transport connections.

Obertraun-Dachsteinhöhlen is the train station for Obertraun village. Obertraun-Koppenbrüllerhöhle is the station for the water caves (€1.70, four minutes); trains only stop here in summer when the caves are open. There are frequent trains to Bad Ischl (€6, 30 minutes) via Hallstatt (€2.90, three minutes).

For taxis to the ice caves, call ☎ 542.

GOSAUSEE

☎ 06136 / elevation 923m

This small lake is flanked by the impressively precipitous peaks of the **Gosaukamm range** (2459m). The view is good from the shores, and it takes a little over an hour to walk around the entire lake. The Gosaukammbahn cable car goes up to 1475m (return adult/child €10.70/6.70), where there are spectacular views and walking trails. Before reaching the lake you pass through the village of **Gosau**, which has its own **tourist office** (☎ 8295; www.oberoesterreich.at/gosau; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-Apr, 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat May-Aug), with an accommodation board situated outside.

Getting There & Away

Gosau is at the junction of the only road to the lake and can be reached by Hwy 166 from Hallstätter See. One- to two-hourly Postbus services run to the lake from Bad Ischl (€5.70, one hour) via Steeg.

BAD AUSSEE

☎ 03622 / pop 5080

Quiet, staid Bad Aussee is the largest Styrian town in the southern Salzkammergut. It is close to two lakes and convenient by rail and a walking trail to a third – the Hallstätter See. If it's nightlife you're after, look further – such as Bad Ischl – this is not a high-kicking sort of place, and a stroll in the pretty Kurpark must suffice.

Orientation & Information

The train station is 1.5km south of the town centre. After getting off the train, dash to the bus stop out front to raise your chances of juggling one of the one- to two-hourly buses. The taxi trip is €6 (see p256).

Harreiter Online und Datenverarbeitung (☎ 53250; Bahnhofstrasse 115; per 30 min €1.50; ☎ 4-11pm Mon-Sat)

Post office (Ischerstrasse 94; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Doubles as a bus stop with timetable information.

Tourist office (☎ 523 23; www.ausseeerland.at, in German; Bahnhofstrasse 132; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat Apr-Oct, 9am-noon & 1-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat Nov-Mar) The entrance is on Pratergasse, the geographical centre of Austria. Pick up the town map, with hiking trails marked for the region.

Sights & Activities

The **Altaussee Salzbergwerk** (☎ 6132 200 2490; tours adult/concession €11.50/6.90; ☎ tours hourly 10am-4pm)

is still a working salt mine and was the secret hiding place of art treasures stolen by the Nazis during WWII. Tours include the treasure chambers, an underground lake and a chapel made of blocks of salt and dedicated to St Barbara, the patron saint of miners. Guided tours in English are available.

Kammerhof Museum (☎ 525 11-20; www.badaussee.at/kammerhofmuseum; Chlumeckyplatz 1; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 4-6pm Tue & Sat, 10am-noon Fri & Sun Apr-mid-Jun & Oct, 10am-noon & 3-6pm mid-Jun-Sep), housed in a beautiful 17th-century building, covers local history and salt production. There are also some portraits of Anna Plöchl, the local postmaster's daughter who scandalously married a Habsburg prince. All explanations are in German but there's an English sheet available.

There are great views across the town and the mountains beyond it from **Ausseer Lebkuchen** (Gingerbread Bakery; ☎ 52 943; www.lebkuchen.at, in German; Pötschenstrasse 146; admission free; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-6pm Tue-Sat, 1-6pm Sun), a working gingerbread bakery that offers tours. Buy some gingerbread to take home, or eat it on the spot in the pleasant **café** (☎ 9am-10pm Wed-Mon).

Five kilometres northeast of Bad Aussee, **Grundlsee** is a longer, thinner lake, with a good viewpoint at its western end as well as walking trails and water sports (including a sailing school). Extending from the eastern tip of the lake are two smaller lakes, **Toplitzsee** (see boxed text, p256) and **Kammersee**. Between May and October, **boat tours** (☎ 03622 8613; www.3-seen-tour.at, in German; full tour adult/child €15/7.50) are available.

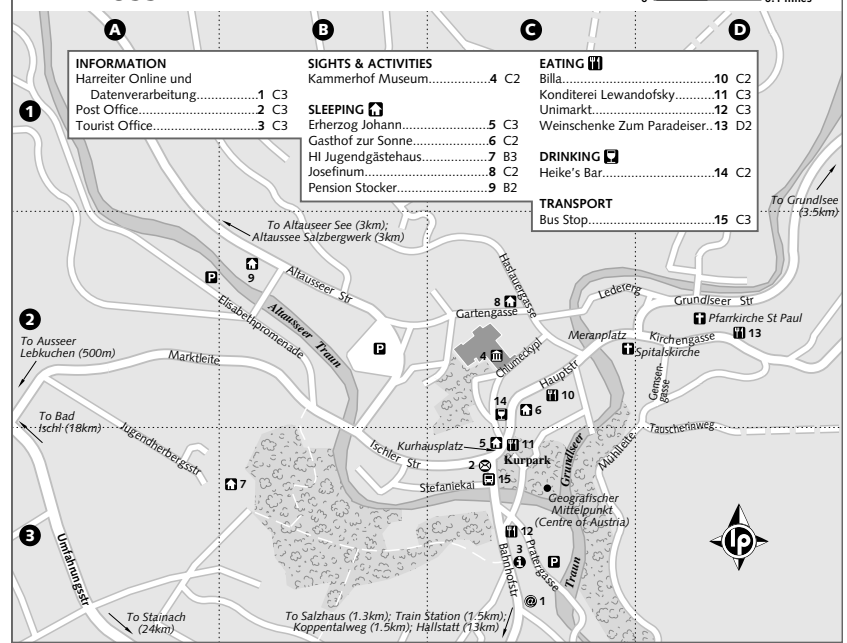
A scenic road, the **Panoramastrasse**, climbs most of the way up **Losner** (1838m), the main peak overlooking the Altaussee. The toll for the return trip is €15, regardless of how many passengers there are. You'll need snow chains in winter.

A new 10-km hiking trail, the **Koppentalweg**, runs west through the lush Traun River valley, connecting with the Ostuferwanderweg running along the Hallstätter See (see p99). The trail begins at the train station.

Sleeping

The staff at the tourist office is very helpful and knowledgeable; there's a 24-hour information touch screen and free phone to hotels outside the office. Pick up the Bad Aussee brochure available from the tourist office for listings.

BAD AUSSEE



HI Jugendgästehaus (☎ 522 38; www.jfgh.at/bad-aussee.php; Jugendherbergsstrasse 148; dm €20-23; P) This modern building is on the town's hill. It's 15 minutes' walk by road, but there are shorter (unlit) footpaths.

Pension Stocker (☎ 524 84; www.zimmer-ausseeerland.at/stocker; Altaussee Strasse 245; s/d €25/50; P) Located 500m northwest of Kurhausplatz, this is a very pretty pension with wooden balconies and flower-filled window boxes. It has clean rooms and a large garden that overlooks tennis courts.

Josefinum (☎ 521 24; www.tiscover.at/josefinum; Gartengasse 13; s/d €27/54; P) This peaceful retreat has lovely bright rooms with good views of the mountains. It's run by nuns so be on your best behaviour. Telephone ahead for evening arrival.

Gasthof zur Sonne (☎ 522 06; www.gasthofsonne.at; Hauptstrasse 150; s/d €42/84) Although this guesthouse is simple and short on frills, you'll find the rooms comfortable, and the hotel itself is very centrally located.

Erherzog Johann (☎ 525 07; www.erzherzogjohann.at; Kurhausplatz 62; s €86-118, d €142-208; P) Bad Aussee's four-star hotel has rooms

with comforts, but the facilities are what really catapult you into seventh heaven: a wonderfully large inhouse sauna and wellness area, a 30m saltwater swimming pool (public, with direct access for guests) and excellent bikes free for guests; they even lend out a GPS so you can get back in time for dinner. The restaurant (mains €16 to €20) is quite good, though quality can be uneven. Steak can be a bit average, but a chicken with herbs washed down with wine does the trick admirably.

Eating & Drinking

Bad Aussee is no great shakes when it comes to eating and drinking, so you're better off splurging elsewhere. The restaurant of Erzherzog Johann (left), however, has a very strong wine list, some good dishes and service with character.

Konditorei Lewandofsky (☎ 532 05; Kurhausplatz 144; Haustorte (house cake) per slice €2.30; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-8pm Sun, till 10pm Jul & Aug) The favoured place in town for coffee and cake or a post-work tippale on an outside terrace alongside the Kurpark.

DIVING FOR TREASURE – AND DEAR LIFE

The picturesque Toplitzsee is off-limits to divers. But that hasn't stopped them trying – and dying in the attempt – to explore its oxygen-free depths. Why does this lake, whose fragile ecosystem was all but destroyed during WWII when it was used in experiments with explosives, still attract rogue divers? Bernhard Schragl from Österreichische Bundesforste (Austrian National Forests), explains.

Herr Schragl, why is everyone so interested in the Toplitzsee? It's because of history and the various stories and rumours – above all, about treasure supposedly dumped in it by fleeing Nazis at the end of WWII.

When did these rumours first surface? Right after WWII. They're proving persistent, although a lot of treasure hunters have dived down there.

Have they found anything? Printing presses for producing counterfeit English pound notes. The notes were printed and circulated to destabilize the currency. Counterfeits were also found, but only printed on one side.

Who owns whatever is found in the lake? If an owner can be established, 90% belongs to the owner. The finder gets 10%. If ownership is open, the finder keeps half and the Republic of Austria holds onto the other half.

Are there any signs of treasure down there? Nothing concrete, just a lot of rumours about gold and Swiss bank accounts. These are without any basis whatsoever.

A few years ago Austrian National Forests began a cooperation with treasure hunter Norman Scott and his company Global Explorations. Bundesforste signed an agreement, but for personal reasons on the part of Mr Scott no diving was conducted. If we do sign a new agreement, a fixed component of this will again be that the whole lake is measured and mapped. We'll make these measurements and maps available to the public.

What does Austrian National Forests hope to get out of any agreement? We want to bring an end to all this talk about secrets, and an end to the disturbance this is causing the lake. A lot of illegal divers try their luck at finding treasure. This threatens the lake's ecology because they don't care about the fish and they leave a trail of pollution. We want the whole lake to be measured, mapped and researched so it can be left in peace at last and there are no secrets anymore.

Weinschenke Zum Paradeiser (☎ 2135 038; Kirchengasse 28; mains €5.50-12; ☎ 5pm-late Mon-Sat) This cosy and appealing *Heuriger* (wine tavern) with a red-brick floor and calico draped on the ceiling specialises in smoked trout.

Heike's Bar (☎ 548 02; Hauptstrasse 54a; ☎ 8pm-late) The most popular watering hole in the centre.

Salzhaus (☎ 536 53; www.salzhaus.com; Siessreithstrasse 165; disco €2; ☎ 5pm-late Wed-Sat) Always worth a shot on a good night – there's a pizzeria and lounge to complement its disco events, a stone's throw from the train station.

There's a Unimarkt supermarket on Bahnhofstrasse, by the tourist office, and a Billa on Hauptstrasse.

Getting There & Around

Bad Aussee is on the rail route between Bad Ischl (€6.60, 35 minutes) and Stainach-Irdning (€6, 35 minutes), with trains running hourly in both directions.

Buses run every one to two hours from the train station to both lakes (€1.70, 15 minutes). **Taxis** (☎ 540 08, 521 75) can be useful here.

NORTHERN SALZKAMMERGUT

The two most popular of the northern lakes are Traunsee – with the three resorts of Gmunden, Traunkirchen and Ebensee

on its shores – and Wolfgangsee, home to the villages of St Wolfgang and St Gilgen (the latter provides access to Schafberg mountain; 1783m).

TRAUNSEE

Traunsee is the deepest lake in Austria, going down a cool 192m. The eastern flank is dominated by rocky crags, the tallest of which is the imposing **Traunstein** (1691m). The resorts are strung along the western shore and are connected by rail.

Hourly trains run between Gmunden, Traunkirchen (€2.90, 10 minutes) and Ebensee (€4.40, 20 minutes), continuing to Bad Ischl (€7.60, 40 minutes). Boats operated by **Traunsee Schifffahrt** (☎ 07612-667 00; www.traunsee-schifffahrt.at; Rathausplatz, Gmunden) tour the shoreline from Gmunden to Ebensee between late April and mid-October. The one-way trip between Gmunden and Ebensee costs €7.50/6 per adult/child. The paddle steamer *Gisela* takes to the waves on weekends and holidays in July and August (a €2.50 surcharge applies).

GMUNDEN

☎ 07612 / pop 15,075

With its yacht marina, lakeside square and promenades, Gmunden exudes a breezy, Riviera feel. It was formerly known for its castles and ceramics, and it also doubled as an administration centre for both the Habsburgs and the salt trade. Today it makes for an attractive stopover in the lakes region.

Orientation & Information

The town centre is on the western bank of the Traun River, with Rathausplatz at its heart.

Bürgeresspresso + Internetcafé (☎ 777 44; Am Graben 2a; per hr €3.60; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat) Self-service internet café.

Gästezentrum Ferienregion Traunsee (☎ 643 05; www.traunsee.at; Toscanapark 1; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun May-Jun & Sep-Oct, 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat Nov-Apr) Regional tourist office for the lake, with accommodation booking service.

Post office (☎ 0577 677-4810; Johann-Evangelist-Habert-Strasse 1; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-5.30pm Fri) Up the hill 200m.

Tourist office (☎ 657 520; gmunden@traunsee.at; Rathausplatz 1; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri May, Jun, Sep & Oct, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat Jul & Aug, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri Nov-Apr) The city tourist office for Gmunden,

with information and maps of town and the lake. Helps with accommodation bookings.

Sights & Activities

Once a famous centre for ceramics, Gmunden is now blessed with one of Austria's most unusual museums. The **Museum für Historische Sanitäröbekte** (Klo & So Museum, Museum for Historical Sanitary Objects; ☎ 794 293; Kammerhofgasse 8; adult/child €4.20/1; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-noon Sun May-Oct) is basically a monumental collection of toilets. Here you can discover the difference between 'wash-down' and 'wash-out' models, and if you thought the latter with its flat poop deck and horizontal splash is just an anally obsessive Central European quirk, this museum vividly explodes the myth. The British were perching on these in the 19th century. About 80 toilets are on display, including one used by the royal *Po* (bottom) of Kaiser Franz Josef in his hunting lodge near Ebensee.

By May 2008 the Museum for Historical Sanitary Objects will be housed in the same building as the **Stadtmuseum Gmunden** (☎ 794-420; www.museen.gmunden.at; Kammerhofgasse 8); the museum is closed for renovation until then. Once it opens you can expect displays on the history of Gmunden and the salt trade, as well as a gallery. North of the Rathausplatz is the 12th-century **Pfarrkirche** (parish church; ☎ 642 17; Kirchplatz), a Gothic building later remodelled as baroque and sporting an altar (dating from 1678) by the baroque sculptor Thomas Schwanthaler (1634–1707).

Flanking the lake on the eastern side, the Renaissance castle **Schloss Weyer** (☎ 650 18; Freygasse 27; admission €7.50; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat May-Sep) has a sizeable collection of porcelain, silver and jewellery. Also out here is the **Grünberg lookout** (984m). A **cable car** (adult/child return €11.50/6.80) takes you up, but it's also easy to walk.

On the western shore, a pretty nature reserve known as **Toscana Park** forms a backdrop to **Seeschloss Ort**. This castle on the lake is believed to have been built on the ruins of a Roman fortress. It dates from 909 or earlier (rebuilt in the 17th century after a fire) and has a picturesque courtyard, a late-Gothic external staircase and sgraffito from 1578.

Sleeping & Eating

Private rooms are the best deal for budget travellers – ask the tourist office to help you find one.

Haus Reiser (☎ 724 25; pension.reiser@aon.at; Freygasse 20; s/d €29/58) This good-value, private pension has a TV room and garden. There are seven bright, fresh rooms with radios, and all but two have their own bathroom.

Hotel-Gasthof Steinmaurer (☎ 704 88; www.steinmaurer.at; Traunsteinstrasse 23; s €53, d €84-92; P) This hotel is by the Grünberg cable car and across the road from a public beach. Rooms are modern, clean and – for the most part – large, and many doubles have a balcony or terrace. The busy restaurant (mains €7 to €15, open breakfast, lunch and dinner) serves the likes of vegetable cakes with tomato ragout, and smoked-trout-and-prawn salad at outdoor tables overlooking the yacht marina.

Keramikhotel Goldener Brunnen (☎ 644 310; www.goldenerbrunnen.at; Traungasse 10; s/d €58/90; P) This excellent boutique hotel in the centre has recently been renovated and upgraded with sauna and wellness facilities. Rooms are very tastefully appointed with modern fittings, ceramic art adds a decorative touch, and a plus is its midrange restaurant (lunch menu €6.80, open lunch and dinner) with Austrian dishes such as Styrian chicken and some international favourites.

Seehotel Schwan (☎ 633 91; www.seehotel-schwan.at; Rathausplatz 8; s €70, d €110-130; P) This up-market hotel is right in the middle of town and has lake views from all rooms. These are large, with modern furniture and balcony, but the corridors are a bit gloomy. There's a

smart restaurant (mains €14.50 to €24, open lunch and dinner) downstairs, serving fresh lake fish on a daily changing menu.

Café Brandl (☎ 641 85; Rathausplatz 1; lunch €2-5; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This smart café/bar has bright yellow walls, black leather sofas and cubist artworks spiking its interior. It serves breakfast, cakes and light meals during the day and turns into a drinking venue (with snacks) at night.

A Spar supermarket awaits self-caterers at Kursaalgasse 5.

Getting There & Away

The Gmunden **Hauptbahnhof** on the Salzkammergut Atnang-Puchheim to Stainach-Irdning line is the main train station for the town. The Bad Ischl-Gmunden train fare (€7.60, 45 minutes, hourly) also includes the connecting tram to the centre. The Seebahnhof, near the marina, services the slow, private train line from Vorchdorf-Eggenburg.

Getting Around

The **Hauptbahnhof** is 2km northwest of the town centre: tram G (€1.60) departs from outside it to Franz Josef Platz after every train arrival. Bus rides in town cost €1.60. The Bummelzug (an electric train on wheels) takes you to Seeschloss Ort from the Rathausplatz for €2.50/1.50 per adult/child every 30 minutes from 9am to 7pm.

TRAUNKIRCHEN

☎ 07617 / pop 1775

The attractive hamlet of Traunkirchen sits on a spit of land about halfway along the western shore of the Traunsee. It's chiefly famous for the wooden **Fischerkanzel** (fisherman's Pulpit; ☎ 2214; Klosterplatz 1; ☎ 8am-5pm or 6pm) in the Pfarrkirche. This was carved in 1753 and depicts the miracle of the fishes, with the apostles standing in a tub-shaped boat and hauling in fish-laden nets. The composition, colours (mostly silver and gold) and detail (even down to wriggling, bug-eyed fish) create a vivid impression.

For information on accommodation, contact the **tourist office** (☎ 2234; www.traunsee.at; Ortsplatz 1; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Sat Jul & Aug, 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun).

Hourly trains from Gmunden go to Traunkirchen (€2.90, 10 minutes, hourly).

EBENSEE

☎ 06133 / pop 8700

In 2006 Ebensee achieved renown as the setting for the Salzkammergut's unusual teenage splatter film, *In 3 Tagen bist du Tod* (In Three Days You're Dead). It lies on the southern shore of the Traunsee and a favoured past-time here is to take the cable car (adult/child €16/€9.30 hourly) up to **Feuerkogel** (1592m), where you can find walking trails leading across a flattish plateau. Within an hour's walk is **Alberfeldkogel** (1708m), with an excellent view over the two Langbath lakes. Feuerkogel also provides access to winter **skiing** (day pass €30) with easy to medium slopes.

In early January every year, the men of Ebensee don giant illuminated head-dresses made of tissue paper in a bizarre ritual known as the Glöcklerlauf.

For details on accommodation and especially for activities like hiking and mountain-bike hire and trails, the local **tourist office** (☎ 8016; www.ebensee.com; Hauptstrasse 34; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sat Jul & Aug, 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-Oct & May-Jun, 8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri Nov-Apr) by the Landungsplatz train station is very knowledgeable.

The train station for the centre and the boat landing stage is Ebensee-Landungsplatz, rather than the larger Ebensee station.

GRÜNAU

☎ 07616 / pop 2100

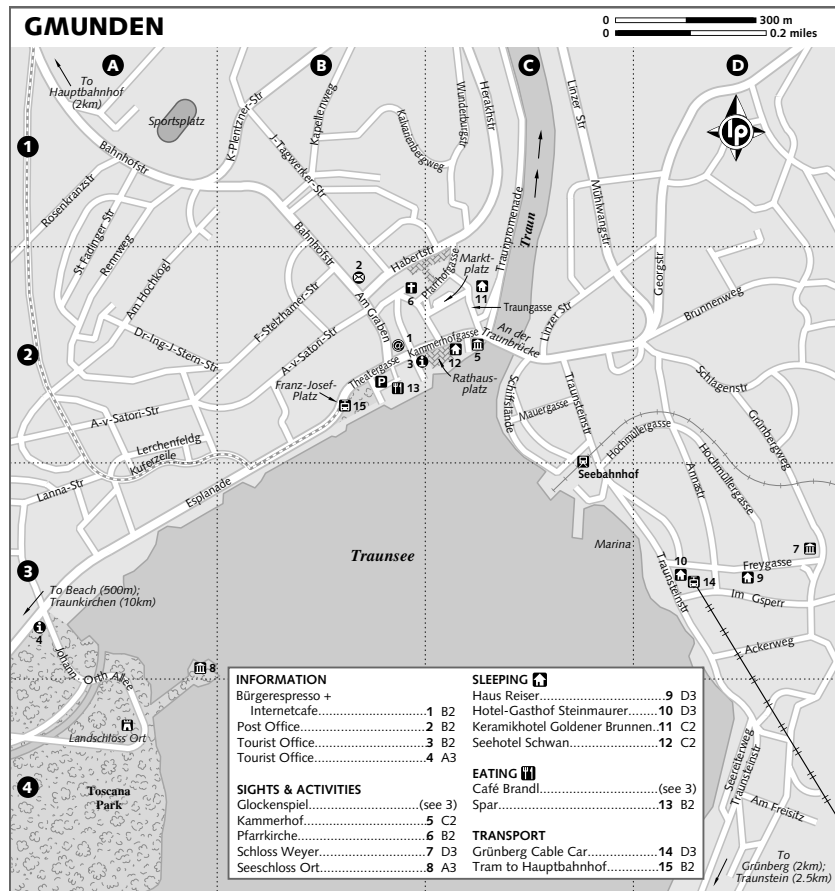
If you want to get off the beaten track, consider going to Grünau, east of Traunsee. Frequent trains run there from Wels (€9.30, one hour) and frequent buses run from Gmunden (€4, one hour).

The small, friendly **Tree House Backpacker Hotel** (☎ 8499; www.treehousehotel.net; Schindlbach 16; dm/d/tr €19/24/69) offers bike hire, horse riding, canyoning, rafting, skiing and snowboarding, among many other activities. Meals are available, there are bars for partying, and if you call ahead from Grünau station they'll pick you up.

ATTERSEE

☎ 07666 / pop 1500

The largest lake in the Salzkammergut is flanked mostly by hills, with mountains in the south. It's one of the less scenic and less visited of the Salzkammergut's lakes, but a few resorts cling to the shoreline, offering the usual water-leisure activities. The main



resort is **Attersee**, which has a museum and a couple of churches. Its **tourist office** (☎ 7719; www.attersee.at; Nussdorferstrasse 15; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat, 9-11am Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat May, Jun & Sep, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) can help with accommodation.

Attersee-Schiffahrt (☎ 7806; www.atterseeschiffahrt.at) does mostly alternating boat circuits of the north (€7.50, 1¼ hours) and south (€13, 2¼ hours) regions of the lake several times most days from early May to late September, and a daily full circuit (€16, 3¾ hours) in July and August.

Getting There & Away

Two lakeside towns, Attersee and Schörfling, are connected to the rail network, each by a line branching from the main Linz-Salzburg route (though only regional trains stop): for Kammer-Schörfling change at Vöcklabruck, and for Attersee town change at Vöcklamarkt.

WOLFGANGSEE

Named after a local saint, this lake has two very popular resorts, St Wolfgang and St Gilgen, of which St Wolfgang is the most appealing. The third town on the lake, **Strobl** (population 2750), is a less remarkable but pleasant place at the start of a scenic toll road (€3 per car and per person) to Postalm (1400m).

A **ferry service** (☎ 06138 22 32-0; www.wolfgangseeschiffahrt.at) operates May to October from Strobl to St Gilgen (€6.40, 75 minutes), stopping at points en route. Services are most frequent from June to early September. Boats run from St Wolfgang to St Gilgen almost hourly during the day (€5.40, 35 minutes); the free *Eintauchen & Aufsteigen* timetable from local tourist offices gives exact times that will help with planning day trips and connecting with buses or the Schafbergbahn.

Schafberg

The Wolfgangsee is dominated by the 1783m **Schafberg** mountain on its northern shore. At the summit you'll find a hotel, a restaurant and phenomenal views over mountains and lakes (especially Mondsee, Attersee and, of course, Wolfgangsee). If you don't fancy the three- to four-hour walk from St Wolfgang (early tourists were carried up in sedan chairs), ride the **Schafbergbahn** (cogwheel railway; ☎ 06138 22 32-0; one-way/return €14/24; 40 min), which runs from May to October. Departures are approximately

hourly between 8.25am and 6pm, but the trip is so popular that you probably won't be able to get on the next train. Queue early, purchase a ticket for a specific train and then go for a wander along the lake or around St Wolfgang until your time comes to depart.

ST WOLFGANG

☎ 06138 / pop 3000

St Wolfgang is a charming town situated on the steep banks of the Wolfgangsee. Although its streets can get clogged with visitors during the day, things usually settle down early evening, which is the best time for a tranquil stroll along the forested lakeshore past the gently creaking wooden boathouses.

The village's main fame came as a place of pilgrimage (see the boxed text, p101) and today's visitors still come to see the 14th-century pilgrimage church, packed with art treasures.

Orientation & Information

The main streets of Pilgerstrasse and Michael Pacher Strasse join at the pilgrimage church. A road tunnel bypasses the town centre, and there are car parks at either end of it.

Tourist office (☎ 8003; www.wolfgangsee.at; Au 140; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat May, 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sat Jun & Sep, 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sat, 2-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat Oct-Apr) At the eastern tunnel entrance.

Pilgerstrasse branch (Michael-Pacher-Haus, Pilgerstrasse; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri Jun-Sep) At the other end of town, near the road tunnel.

Sights & Activities

St Wolfgang's impressive **Wallfahrtskirche** (☎ 2321; donation €0.80; ☎ 9am-6pm) was built in the 14th and 15th centuries and is virtually a spectacular gallery of religious art, with several altars (from Gothic to baroque), an extravagant pulpit, a fine organ and countless statues and paintings. The most impressive piece is the winged high altar, created by celebrated religious artist Michael Pacher between 1471 and 1481 – it's a perfect example of the German Gothic style, enhanced with the technical achievements of Renaissance Italy. The luminous colours of the paintings on the wings are as fascinating as the gilded figures in the centre, and the detail is startling, right down to the notes of music played by the hovering angels. So important was the

altar that the wings were traditionally kept closed except for important festivals. Now they are always open, except for the eight weeks before Easter.

Another altar, made 200 years later, stands over the spot where St Wolfgang's axe is supposed to have landed (see the boxed text, p101).

A tourist-office booklet details the many **water sports** on offer. A few minutes' walk anti-clockwise round the lake is the start of the Schafberg railway.

Sleeping

St Wolfgang has some good private rooms in village homes or in farmhouses in the surrounding hills. Lists are available from the tourist office, which will phone places on your behalf.

Camping Appesbach (☎ 2206; Au 99; campsite per adult/child/tent €6.10/3.55/9; ☎ Easter-Sep) This campsite is on the lakeside 1km from St Wolfgang in the direction of Strobl.

Haus am See (☎ 2224; Michael Pacher Strasse 98; s/d without bathroom €20/50; ☎ P) This is a remarkable pension with features ripe for a Wolfgangsee mystery novel: it's run by a retired professor and his wife, evokes earlier decades, and the owner-couple also rent out four rooms in their boatshed down on the water (same price). Guests get free use of a boat and bike. It's conveniently opposite the Au bus stop.

Gästehaus Raudaschl (☎ 2561; www.haus-raudaschl.at; Au 41; s/d €23/46) Set back from the lake but with fine views over the rooftops to it, this pension run by a lovely old couple has a very homely feel and the advantage of being away from the tourist excesses in town.

Hotel Peter (☎ 2304; www.tiscover.at/hotel-peter; s €56-58, d €112-116; ☎ P) The generous-sized rooms at this four-star hotel have balconies looking onto the lake, large bathrooms and tasteful décor. The restaurant (mains €8.80 to €31.90, most under €15) also has a terrace overlooking the lake, with pasta and a good fish platter filled with poached, fried and baked local fish.

Im Weissen Rössl (☎ 2306-0; www.weissesroessl.at; Im Stöckl 74; s €124-140, d €170-248, ste per person €170; ☎ P) St Wolfgang's most famous hotel was the setting for Ralph Benatzky's operetta *The White Horse*, and a bed from the operetta today takes pride of place on one floor. Rooms are individually styled and somewhat idiosyncratic, but the more expensive ones

have a balcony and view over the lake. There's a large wellness area, and two pools – one pool literally floats on the lake (heated to 30°C), and another is indoors. It also has several good junior suites.

Eating & Drinking

There are dozens of hotels and cafés in St Wolfgang's compact town centre; stroll around and make your choice.

Kraftstoff-Bar (☎ 2491; Markt 128; mains €8-19; ☎ lunch & dinner) Decked out like a petrol station, this chilled-out bar and restaurant is an unusual place to curl your fingers around a drink, accompanied by wings and potato wedges, pasta, salads or grills; check out the charming balcony.

Im Weissen Rössl (☎ 2306-0; Im Stöckl 74; mains €12.50-32; ☎ lunch & dinner) There are two restaurants and a lovely wine cellar in this highly respected hotel. The Seerestaurant (kitchen open all day) tempts with regional and international dishes like organic local lamb in a liquorish-root sauce with sage polenta.

There's a Konsum supermarket 200m from the Schafbergbahn.

Getting There & Away

The only road to St Wolfgang approaches from Strobl in the east. For ferries, see opposite. A Postbus service from St Wolfgang via Strobl to St Gilgen (€5.20, 35 to 50 minutes) is frequent out of season, but tails off somewhat in summer when the ships run. For Salzburg (€7.90, 1¼ hours) you need to connect in St Gilgen or Strobl (€1.90, 11 minutes). Wolfgangsee ferries stop at the village centre (Markt stop) and at the Schafberg railway.

ST GILGEN

☎ 06227 / pop 3700

The ease of access to St Gilgen, 29km from Salzburg, is one reason why this town is so popular. It has boomed in the last decade or so, not least because of its very scenic setting. This, along with quieter Strobl, is quite a good base for lake water sports, and it is not quite as crowded as St Wolfgang.

Information

Café Dallman (☎ 2208; Mozartplatz 2a; per min €0.20; ☎ 11am-7pm Jun-Sep) Slow internet access, near the Rathaus.

Tourist office (☎ 2348; www.wolfgangsee.at; Mondsee Bundesstrasse 1a; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri,

9am-noon Sat May, Jun & Sep, 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat Oct, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Apr) Helps find rooms. Brochures are also inside the Rathaus on Mozartplatz.

Sights & Activities

The cosy little **Muzikinstrumente-Museum der Völker** (Folk Music Instrument Museum; ☎ 8235; Aberseestrasse 11; admission €4; ☎ 9-11am & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Jun-mid-Oct, 9-11am & 2-5pm Mon-Fri mid-Oct-Jan, 9-11am & 2-5pm Mon-Thu, 9-11am Fri, 3-6pm Sun Jan-May) is home to 1500 musical instruments from all over the world, all of them collected by one family of music teachers. The son of the family, Askold zum Eck, can play them all and will happily demonstrate for hours. Visitors are welcome to have a go at anything from an African drum to an Indian sitar. There are some truly beautiful objects here and the family's enthusiasm is infectious.

The **Heimatkundliches Museum** (☎ 2642; Pichlerplatz 6; adult/child €3.50/2; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep) won an award a few years back for its eclectic collection ranging from embroidery (originally manufactured in the building) to 4700 animals and religious objects.

Water sports such as windsurfing, waterskiing and sailing are popular here. There's a town swimming pool and a small, free beach with a grassy area beyond the yacht marina.

The mountain rising over the resort is **Zwölferhorn** (1520m); a cable car (€18 return) will whisk you to the top where there are good views and two trails (2 to 2½ hours) leading back to St Gilgen. Skiers ascend in winter.

Sleeping & Eating

Jugendgästehaus Schafbergblick (☎ 2365; jgh.stgilgen@oejhv.or.at; Mondseer Strasse 7; dm €17.50-19.50, s €19.50-29.50, d €35-44; ☎ reception 8am-1pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri, 5-7pm Sat & Sun; 📍) This upmarket youth hostel has a good location near the town beach. Night keys are available.

Gasthof Rosam (☎ 2591; www.tiscover.at/rosam; Frontfestgasse 2-4; s €34, d €50-70; ☎ Easter-mid-Oct; 📍) Situated down near the lake, this family-run pension is well managed and refreshing, with clean rooms that are very good value for the location.

Pension Falkensteiner (☎ 2395; www.pension-falkensteiner.at; Salzburgerstrasse 13; s/d €40/56; 📍) Some of the rooms have balconies and all are large in this no-frills but spotless pension with helpful management.

Gasthof Zur Post (☎ 2157; www.gasthofzurpost.at; Mozartplatz 8; s €82, d €116-148; 📍) The 'Post-Geschichten' rooms at this old inn are beautifully designed in a cosily rustic style with shades of minimalism. There are heavy wooden beds, interesting colour schemes and wooden floors. The restaurant (mains €8 to €19, open lunch and dinner) serves national and regional specialities in a low-ceilinged, whitewashed dining room or outside on the elegant terrace. Try the game ragout.

San Giorgio (☎ 2605; Ischler Strasse 18; pizza €6-9; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun Feb-Apr, Nov & Dec, lunch & dinner Wed-Mon May-Oct, closed most of Jan) This Italian restaurant by the lake has eat-in (inside or in the garden) and take-away food. There's a bar/disco downstairs, the Zwölfer Alm Bar (open from 9pm), claiming to be the oldest nightclub in Austria (it was founded in 1930).

Fischer-Wirt Restaurant (☎ 2304; Ischlerstrasse 21; mains €7-17.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Jul & Aug, lunch & dinner Tue-Sun Sep-early Jan & Apr-Jun, lunch & dinner Thu-Sun Mar, closed early Jan & Feb) Situated on the water's edge, this popular seafood restaurant does a fish platter for two people for €35; some meat dishes also feature on the menu.

Restaurant Timbale (☎ 7587; Salzburger Strasse 2; mains €20-24, 6-course menu €62; ☎ lunch & dinner Sat-Wed, dinner Fri Sep-Jul, lunch & dinner Aug) Reserve ahead for a table in what is considered to be one of the finest restaurants on the Wolfgangsee. The atmosphere is informal and it specialises in seasonal regional dishes.

Getting There & Away

St Gilgen is 50 minutes from Salzburg by Postbus (€5.40), with hourly departures until early evening; some buses continue on to Stobl and Bad Ischl (€4.40, 34 minutes). The bus station is near the base station of the cable car. Highway 154 provides a scenic route north to Mondsee. For details on the ferry service to/from St Wolfgang, see p260.

MONDSEE

☎ 06232 / pop 3200

The town of Mondsee extends along the northern tip of this crescent-shaped lake noted for its warm water; coupled with its closeness to Salzburg (30km away), this makes it a highly developed, popular lake for weekenders Salzburgers.

The **tourist office** (☎ 2270; www.mondsee.at; Dr Franz Müller Strasse 3; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri Apr & May, 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat Jun & Sep, 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-

7pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug, 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar) is between the church and the lake.

Sights & Activities

If you're allergic to the film *The Sound of Music*, there's just one piece of advice: blow town. Even the lemon-yellow baroque façade (added in 1740, incidentally) of the 15th-century **parish church** (☎ 8am-7pm) achieved notoriety by featuring in those highly emotional Von Trapp wedding scenes in the film.

After that, make a beeline for the **Museum Mondseeland und Pfahlbaumuseum** (Wrede Platz; adult/child & student €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep) next door, with displays on Stone Age finds and the monastic culture of the region (Mondsee is a very old monastery site).

The **Segelschule Mondsee** (☎ 3548-200; www.segelschule-mondsee.at; in German; Robert Baum Promenade 3) is the largest sailing school in Austria and offers sailing (five days €214) and windsurfing (two days €99) courses.

Sleeping

For lists of hotels and restaurants, ask at the tourist office.

Jugendgästehaus (☎ 2418; jgh.mondsee@oejhv.or.at; Krankenhausstrasse 9; dm/s/d €19.50/29.50/44; 📍) This HI hostel is a few minutes' walk from the centre of town.

Gasthof Grüner Baum (☎ 2314; www.gruenerbaum.mondsee.at; Herzog Odilo Strasse 39; s/d with breakfast €47/76) Rooms in this small and no-frills pen-

sion have been renovated recently, but ask for one away from the busy street.

Leitnerbräu (☎ 6500; www.leitnerbraeu.at; Steinerbachstrasse 6; s €76-115, d €126-159; 📍) This four-star hotel faces the Marktplatz. Some of the light and airy rooms have a view of the square and the church – ask when booking. There's a sauna, steam bath and small gym on site.

Eating

Gasthof Blaue Traube (☎ 2237; Marktplatz 1; mains €8-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu-Tue) The 'Blue Grape', opposite the church, serves a good schnitzel and other classics for eating in or usefully as take away; check out its ice cream.

Mayrhofer's (☎ 36607; Marktplatz 4; mains €9-12.50; ☎ 9am-midnight Wed-Mon) If you feel like a light salad with prawns, Mayrhofer's is where it's done well. This restaurant and bar also stays open long after the tour buses have left town.

Restorante da Michele (Marktplatz 9; mains €10.50-15.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun). The homemade pasta and bread is especially popular at this delightful Italian restaurant in the centre of town.

For self-caterers, there's a Spar supermarket at Rainerstrasse 5.

Getting There & Away

Hourly Postbus services connect Mondsee with Salzburg (€5.40, 50 minutes), but only three direct buses a day go to St Gilgen (€3.70, 20 minutes). Expect to pay €24 for a ride to St Gilgen by taxi (☎ 0664-22000.22).

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