

By Dan Friesen

Beyond the festive sightseeing in Germany and Austria, the visits to Christmas markets and unique excursions on this tour, here are 3 More Reasons to enjoy Christmas in the Alps!

1. **Hildrun's family chalet in Mittelberg, Austria.**



Mittelberg hospitality

Mittelberg is in a lovely alpine valley called Kleinwalsertal that can only be reached through Germany. It's somewhat isolated and enjoys a little slice of Austrian Alpine paradise on a road to nowhere.



National Guide Hildrun Mathies

Our National Guide Hildrun Mathies has family who have lived there for generations, having migrated over from the Zermatt (Matterhorn) area of Switzerland a few centuries ago. Hildrun's parents established a lovely chalet-style hotel now run by Hildrun's sister, Karola. The town is small – about 4000 people – but feels smaller.



Making Cookies

The family hotel is Hotel Alpenstueble and there's a ski lift right behind the hotel. Hildrun told me that when she was a girl, her father was approached by developers about putting the lift in behind their house, and that if they were allowed to do so, Hildrun's family would receive free lift tickets for life. They were all skiers (Hildrun was an instructor for several years and still skies) and so she thought that was a pretty great deal!



Torchlit Stroll

The family hospitality is warm and we start our stay with a Christmas cookie baking demo before dinner. Following dinner, a torchlight walk through the town includes a visit to the local church where Hildrun's parents and other relatives are interred in the graveyard.

2. **Why finish the walk? Just wait for the rest stops.**



Obertsdorf Walk

Christmas in the Alps offers 2 walks, and highlights of both include the rest stops!

Our Obertsdorf walk in Germany usually stops at the Christlesee Café for lunch. After a walk over snow-covered hills, stopping in a traditional alpine guesthouse for lunch is a welcome break. Some walkers didn't want to leave!



Rest stop on our walk

The Abtenau walk in Austria offers stunning panoramas of mountains in the distance, with farmhouses dotting the hills our trail passes through.



Sights on Abtenau Walk

Our rest stop on this walk includes a visit to a dairy farmer who also produces schnapps, the fruit-based liqueurs well known throughout the Alpine countries. We enjoy a short tour of the farm and distillery, then sit down for apple strudel baked by the farmer's wife, along with hot coffee/tea.



The distillery

We had strudel more than once during the tour, but agreed that hers was the best! Again, it was difficult for some of us to get back on the trail, and not just because of the schnapps!



The dairy

3. Salzburg ~ Mozart and the Sound of Music



Salzburg at night

Salzburg has always been one of my favorite European cities. There's a charm about this small city that can likely be traced far back through its history as an independent bishopric. It was not incorporated into Austria until 1805. Before then, it was the birthplace of Mozart, the genius composer who changed the landscape of music.



Streets of Salzburg

Also encountered in Salzburg are sights connected with the filming of the huge Hollywood hit, *Sound of Music*, a movie that Europeans had to learn about from star-struck American visitors.



The famous gazebo from Sound of Music

Christmas markets are also a colorful subtheme of this Adventure, and Salzburg has some of the most colorful and interesting, all easily accessible through the delightful pedestrian area after crossing the footbridge over the Salzach River from our hotel.



Christmas in Salzburg

To see more details on this tour, check out the itinerary for [Christmas in the Alps 2018](#).