

**Austrian hidden treasure:
day-hiking in the western Karwendel Alps**
July 9-16, 2023 trip #2318



Karwendel Alps at dusk

Trip Overview

The Karwendel Alps lie along Germany's southern border with Austria. Its limestone composition translates in bizarrely shaped peaks, nearly vertical north faces, and many fine hiking routes. In the late 1400's it belonged to the Holy Roman Emperor Kaiser Maximilian for use as a private hunting preserve. In 1928 it became the first nature preserve in middle Europe as well as Austria's largest to this day. Approximately 400 square miles in size, 50% of which is forested, it welcomes ~one million visitors per

year. The Karwendel Naturpark has abundant natural resources including ~90 climbable peaks, 340 natural springs, 1300 types of plants, ~100 varieties of birds, and several hundred varieties of butterflies.

To explore this wonderful area, we have created two adjacent one week trips. In the map below the blue rectangle outlines the location of the Karwendel alps. The first week explores the western edge of the range starting in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and thereafter based in historic Mittenwald. The second week is focused on the eastern side and is based in the charming lakeside resort town of Maurach am Achensee. We hope that you decide to join us on both one week adventures, but the choice is up to you. The balance of this prospectus focuses on the western Karwendel activities exclusively. It's companion eastern Karwendel prospectus may be found [here](#).



Map of Germany/Austria with the Karwendel Alps contained in the blue rectangle

Trip highlights [western Karwendel Alps]:

- Six great days of hiking with bases in Garmisch-Partenkirchen [henceforth Garmisch], Germany and Mittenwald, Austria.
- One overnight at a high mountain hut.
- Free afternoon to explore Mittenwald, a town of unusual visual and cultural interest.
- Comfortable hotel accommodations, most meals, and all transportation internal to the trip.



Garmisch-Partenkirchen landscape

Trip Difficulty

This trip involves hiking every day between 10-20KM [6-13 miles] and climbing ~400-1150m [1300' - 3800']. This trip is rated [vigorous](#). The terrain is rugged and steep in places, and requires agility. There will be sections on narrow trails with steep drop-offs. We will hike at a moderate pace, which will permit time for photos and rest breaks. Participants should be in excellent physical shape and be able to hike for most of every day. Carrying a 10-15lb backpack one should be able to ascend 500' in 30 minutes. We will carry daypacks and lunch each day. The overnight at the mountain hut will require carrying some extra clothes and a minimal toiletry kit.

Daily Itinerary

Abbreviations:

- Meals paid by the trip: B - breakfast D - dinner
- Hike statistics: the metric system is used because the [guidebook](#) and local signage use it. km = kilometers with 1 km = .6 mile hr = booktime in hours XXXm/YYYYm = ascent/descent in meters with 1.0m = 3.3 feet.

Day 0 Saturday July 8 - Depart the US

Day 1 Sunday July 9 - Arrive at Munich airport and take a train to Garmisch, about a 2.5 hour ride. When you reach Garmisch, if you have time, consider taking a 30 minute bus ride to the bus stop Eibsee Zugspitzbahn, Grainau and riding the cable car to the top of the [Zugspitze](#), Germany's tallest mountain. To do it comfortably, allow ~three - four hours in total so that one has time to enjoy the magnificent views from the top. D



Day 2 Monday July 10 - Using mounted walkways we traverse the [narrow Partnach gorge](#) [photo below] with the Partnach stream flowing briskly below. Gradual climb to a summit. Descent through Wamberg, Germany's highest village. This is our guidebook's top hike in the G-P area. B 16km 4.8 hours 550m/550m



Day 3 Tuesday July 11 Moderate climb to the summit of Wank and a promenade around its peak offering excellent views of the Wetterstein mountain range including the imposing Zugspitze. Opportunity for a restaurant lunch at the top. Gondola descent to Garmisch. Balance of the afternoon is free to explore the city. B, D 13km 5.0 hours 1040m/0m

Day 4 Wednesday July 12 An optional early morning walk that starts at the Pflegersee and visits the ruins of the Werdenfels castle. Mid-day transfer by private bus to Mittenwald to deposit our luggage and then onward to the trailhead of the [Noerdlinger Hütte](#), the highest elevation hut in the entire Karwendel range. A stiff climb to the top is amply rewarded by a fantastic panorama on both sides of the ridge upon which the hut is perched. B, D

Morning: 5km 2.0 hours 80m/230m
Afternoon: 7km 4.0 hours 1150m/30m



Day 5 Thursday July 13 Descent from the Nördlinger Hütte and return to Mittenwald, our home for the next three nights. The afternoon is free. [There is much to do](#). Some options: wander through the town and enjoy its famous [Luftmalerei](#) [baroque frescoes found on many homes and buildings], take the [Karwendel gondola](#), Germany's second highest cable car ride after the Zugspitze, and explore the summit region, visit the [violin museum](#) [Mittenwald is a famous center for violin manufacture since the 1700's], etc. B 7km 2.5hr 30m/1150m



An example of the baroque exterior wall paintings in Mittenwald

Day 6 Friday July 14 We take a train to Scharnitz where the trail takes us through the narrow Gleirsch gorge with its fast rushing waters, once used to transport logs from the upper slopes to the valley below. By mid-day we reach the Scharnitzer Alm which has a mountain restaurant for lunch/refreshments. B, D 19km 5.5 hours 355m/355m

Day 7 Saturday July 15 Today's focus is wildlife. The hike's German title "Rehberg-Runde", loosely translated as a loop hike in an elk mountain habitat, says it all. Walking directly from the hotel we climb through a forested region with good possibilities of observing, among other wildlife, several species of woodpecker, wood grouse, golden eagle, elk, and chamois. At the top we are rewarded with a 360 degree panoramic view. B, D 13km 5.0 hours 700m/700m

Day 8 Sunday July 16 - Trip ends after breakfast. Consider continuing onto Week II of the Karwendel Alps. Alternatively one can return to the Munich airport in ~3 hours.

Accommodations, Meals and Transportation

- Comfortable hotel accommodations, two persons/room excluding one night in a high mountain hut which will be multiple persons/room. Bedding is either twin beds or two mattresses in a single bed frame.
- All breakfasts are included as well as five out of seven dinners in local restaurants featuring regional specialties. The remaining two dinners at one's own expense, allowing you to

independently explore one night each in Garmisch and Mittenwald. The leaders will provide information regarding opportunities to buy lunch supplies: on some days one can have lunch at a mountain restaurant - highly recommended.

- All transportation internal to the trip is included. This will include gondola rides and bus or train transfers.

Summary of Daily Itinerary Table with location/times/distance/elevation

Day#	Location	Distance [km]	Hours	Ascent [m]	Descent [m]
1	arrival Garmisch				
2	Partnach Gorge	16	4.8	550	550
3	Wank	13	5.0	1040	0
4	Werdenfels and Nördlinger Hütte	12	6.0	1230	260
5	Nördlinger Hütte	7	2.5	30	1150
6	Gliersch gorge	19	5.5	355	355
7	Rehberg-Runde	13	5	700	700
8	depart Mittenwald				

Weather

Typical July day time temperatures in Mittenwald are 55-72 degrees. At the Noerdlinger Hütte it will be 10-15 degrees cooler. Rain is likely sometime during our trip.

Trip Price

The AMC Member price is \$2100. The non-member price is \$2200. To join the AMC (pricing \$50 individual, \$75 family) click [here](#).

Price does not include the optional pre-trip excursion to the Zugspitze or beverages except those served as part of a meal, e.g. coffee at breakfast.

Participant Expectation

Participants are expected to be seasoned hikers capable of multi-day hikes as described in detail elsewhere in this document. The Standard Terms and Conditions referenced below describes general participant expectations.

Application Process

The group is limited to 10 participants and two leaders. The trip is likely to fill quickly. To register for this trip apply [online](#) and send a deposit check of \$1,000 payable to the Appalachian Mountain Club to Stephen Cohen 2802 Arbor Drive #2 Madison, WI 53711. Upon receipt of an application and a deposit check a leader will contact you to discuss the trip. Final payment of \$1100 is due February 1, 2023.



Cancellation Dates and Amounts

Until the trip is confirmed to run on schedule, you may cancel with a full refund of your trip deposit. After that date the standard cancellation terms apply with a minimum cancellation fee of \$200.

Terms, Conditions and General Information

Please carefully read the [Adventure Travel Standard Terms and Conditions](#) - they are an integral part of this prospectus.

Trip Leadership



Since 2012 Steve has planned and led twenty-seven hiking/trekking-oriented adventure travel trips to such destinations the Haute Route (from Chamonix, France to Zermatt, Switzerland), the Alta Via I and II through the Italian Dolomites, the tour of the Jungfrau region (Switzerland), Patagonia, the high mountains huts of Austria, etc. He lived in Europe for four years and is fluent in both French and German. Steve is currently chair of AMC's Adventure Travel program. Visit www.adventuretravelwithsteve.com to learn more about Steve and his past/future travel plans. Contact Steve at scohen1234@gmail.com or 617 997-6861.



Dee Dice is a new Adventure Travel Associate leader who recently has led local trips in Western MA and Maine. She has been leading hikes, weekend trips and paddling trips with the AMC Western Mass and Worcester Chapters since 2018. Her passion is hiking and kayaking which has brought her around the world, traveling extensively to Nepal, New Zealand, South America and Europe. Spending a year in Germany and Austria during college, she majored in German (although may be a bit rusty) and is excited to return to the area that stole her heart. She has both SOLO Advanced Wilderness First Aid and CPR certifications. Contact Dee at dee@dicehome.com or 508-566-9565.

Photo credits

Page#	Image/Photographer
1	Karwendel alps/David Sessler
3	Zugspitze/Stephen Cohen, Garmisch landscape/Ulrich Scharwächter
4	Partnach gorge/Manual Keller
5	Nördlinger Hütte/Deutsche Alpin Verein
6	Mittenwald/Stephen Cohen
8	Karwendel Alps view/Patrik Walde