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SWAPPING THE SEASIDE FOR SUMMITS: FIVE REASONS TO SPEND YOUR SUMMER BREAK IN THE INNSBRUCK REGION INSTEAD OF ON THE BEACH

Conveniently located at the heart of Europe, the Innsbruck region is quick and easy to get to from all directions. Why travel any further afield when there are so many fantastic things to see and do right here? Here are five compelling reasons why Innsbruck and its alpine surroundings offer a refreshing alternative to a classic beach break on the Med.

1. You can escape the heat (instead of roasting in the sun)

Summers are getting hotter. If you're the kind of person who would rather not get too sweaty and sticky, try heading to the mountains around Innsbruck to keep your cool. It's really easy to get up to the high alpine peaks from the down in the city centre – just take the Nordkettenbahnen funicular and cable cars, which will whisk you up there in just 30 minutes. The temperature on the panoramic terrace at Seegrube station (1,905 metres above sea level) is always comfortably cool, even at the height of summer. If you want a taste of the crisp mountain air right at the summit, carry on up to the Hafelekar at 2,335 metres, walk for just another ten minutes or so, and you'll soon be breathing in that fresh breeze. The forests at the foot of the Nordkette, or the fragrant spruce and pine woods at Natterer Boden, are also the perfect retreats for chilling out and cooling off. After all, the sea isn't the only place where you can dive in and emerge feeling refreshed and revitalised – forest bathing has the same effect, with the added bonus of soothing your mind and soul as well.

2. You can enjoy the peaceful alpine atmosphere (instead of busy overcrowded beaches)

If you're looking for peace and quiet, the Innsbruck region has a hidden gem just for you: the Sellraintal Valley and its idyllic tributary valleys, just 25 kilometres or so from the capital of Tyrol. The little hamlets of Sellrain, Gries and St. Sigmund have officially been designated as "mountaineering villages", which means they are archetypical alpine settlements built on traditional lines and full of age-old charm. There is nothing like a hike to quaint "Melkalmen" ("milking huts") like Almindalm or Seigisalm to give you a wonderful sense of calm. Here, the stress and noise of everyday life simply melt away in the tranquillity of the alpine pastures. And for a peaceful night's sleep, we recommend staying somewhere like Alpengasthof Praxmar towards the far end of the Sellraintal Valley. Perched proudly at 1,700 metres above sea level, this guest house has been run by the same family for generations and makes an ideal starting point for both leisurely walks through the unspoilt valley landscape and more challenging hikes up to the surrounding peaks.

3. You can get around easily (instead of sitting in traffic jams on the motorway)

With plenty of rail connections to Innsbruck, you can get there quickly and conveniently without a car, saving you the hassle of getting stuck in traffic jams and finding parking spaces. Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) offers special deals such as the "Sparschiene" savers' tickets and the "Nightjet in die Berge" ("Nightjet to the mountains") scheme. These, along with offers from the rail company WESTbahn, make travelling by train especially appealing. And for getting to your accommodation by public transport, there's the free Welcome Card for guests, which you can easily download onto your smartphone even before you get to Innsbruck. This card also enables you to travel around locally for free during your stay, covering the region's entire public transport network and the practical hiking buses too. If you prefer to get from place to place on two wheels, the Welcome Card also entitles you to free use of Innsbruck's Stadtrad city bikes for 24 hours.

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Tip: Nowhere is very far away in Innsbruck: lots of attractions are within walking distance from one another and are perfect for exploring on foot by following the routes in our “Walks to Explore”. More information is available at www.innsbruck.info/en/sightseeing/highlights/walks-to-explore.html.

4. You can have all kinds of fun in the mountains (instead of just digging holes in the sand)

Building mountains in the sand is all very well, but it's nothing compared to escaping to the real mountains around Innsbruck. This alpine landscape promises all kinds of exciting experiences for visitors of all ages – especially up on the Muttleralm, which boasts a vast adventure playground, a ball run and a “magic water” play area where kids can splash around to their hearts' content. Young explorers can even go on a scavenger hunt – with a surprise in store! This is also the perfect place for families with babies, as the gondola can easily accommodate pushchairs. From the mountain station, it's around a 40-minute (pushchair-accessible) walk to the Götzn Alm inn, which has earned accolades from the Falstaff and Gault&Millau restaurant guides for its cuisine. If you're the kind of person who spends your winters tobogganing down hillsides, you'll love whizzing down the Muttleralm toboggan run on a mountain cart in the summer – great fun for the whole family! Mountain bikers will be in their element here too, whether you're a seasoned pro or just starting out: the Bikepark Innsbruck offers various trails, along with a kids' park featuring some easy turns and jumps.

5. You can make the most of those rainy days (instead of hunkering down in a hotel room)

When the weather isn't so wonderful, don't despair – in the Innsbruck region, there are plenty of museums and other attractions to discover even on rainy days. The Swarovski Crystal Worlds in nearby Wattens, for instance, offer an unforgettable experience for visitors of all ages, with scintillating chambers of wonder guarded by an imposing giant and a garden complete with a play tower. If you're more scientifically minded, you could head to the Audioversum Science Center for an interactive journey through the fascinating world of hearing and sound. With the hop-on hop-off Sightseer bus, you won't just catch a quick glimpse of Innsbruck's must-see sights – you'll have the chance to stop and take a closer look too. You'll definitely want to spend a while at the fabulous Ambras Castle, for example, so you can explore its unique collections and splendid rooms. Summer also brings with it some exciting events to liven up the mood whenever the sky is looking ominously overcast – such as the Innsbruck Promenade Concerts, which take place in the Hofburg Imperial Palace courtyard every July whatever the weather, or the Bridge Beat Festival with its vibrant line-up of local and international acts. If you're a keen theatre-goer, don't miss the Tiroler Volksschauspiele theatre festival in Telfs, where pieces like “Romeo and Juliet – The Greatest Show on Earth” – a highly anticipated reinterpretation of Shakespeare's classic play – are set to be staged in a tent in the Kuppelarena.

About the Innsbruck region

The Innsbruck region is unique in its symbiosis of vibrant urbane space and captivating alpine landscape. It covers both Innsbruck itself – the capital of Tyrol – and over 40 locations in the surrounding area, with six distinct tourist regions: the city, the Inntal valley, Kühtai-Sellraintal, the Mieming Plateau and the south and west regions. Innsbruck offers all the sights and sophistication of a thriving city, yet sporting thrills and opportunities to conquer your next peak are never very far away. The free Welcome Card offers guests the chance to experience the region in all its diversity, with access to various attractions and free use of local public transport. The official destination management organisation for the Innsbruck region is Innsbruck Tourismus. Its 100 or so employees and eleven tourist information offices are on hand to help you enjoy unforgettable holiday experiences in true harmony with our local communities and natural surroundings.

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Further links

Website: www.innsbruck.info/en/

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Enquiries:

Innsbruck Tourismus

Colette Verra

Market Management

Burggraben 3

A-6020 Innsbruck

+43 512 5356

c.verra@innsbruck.info

www.innsbruck.info

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