



Mannequins at the Tyrolean Folk Art Museum in Innsbruck model traditional clothing worn by women.

FROM PAGE 15

order to stay well.

Another day we learn more about wellness from local herbalist Viktoria Obinger. A certified traditional European healing educator, Viktoria believes there's a herb for almost every ailment. On the mountainside outside her family's farmhouse, she tells us that Austrians lost their knowledge of traditional medicine when pharmaceuticals became convenient after World War II. One day during a COVID lockdown she was sitting on a mountain meadow admiring a daisy and decided to learn more about it. "I was like, 'really — wow', I had no idea." She went on to be certified and now offers walking tours in the alps where she teaches how to identify plants and use them for medicine.

Austria may not have the highest mountains in the Alps (most are in Switzerland) but it has one of the longest and deepest gorges. Over thousands of years, a rushing rivulet has cut a gorge 300m deep into a mountain, forming the Liechtenstein Gorge. Today, a magnificent metal staircase spirals to the bottom where wooden walkways allow visitors close-up views of the raging stream.

Back on the train (so comfortable, so convenient) we head west to another mountain town, Seefeld in Tyrol, where we check into the Alpen Resort Sacher (the same Sacher as sachertorte fame). Situated on a high and wide plateau, Seefeld has hosted Olympic winter sports on three occasions, alongside nearby Innsbruck. It's also known as Central Europe's largest cross-country ski area with 260km of immaculately groomed tracks.

Even before sports tourism took hold, Seefeld had a long history of hospitality thanks to the Habsburgs, the family dynasty that ruled Austria from the 15th to 20th centuries. In 1516, while hunting in what was then called Sevelt, Emperor Maximilian I fell in love with the place and endowed a monastery. For the next 200 years, monks entertained and nourished pilgrims, nobles and



Horses await customers in Seefeld.



Friedberg Castle has been renovated but its historic character remains.

travellers with products from their labours, including beer. Today, the former monastery is the five-star hotel and spa Klosterbrau, where

travellers can still stop by, as we do, for a refreshing beer in the courtyard.

The entire town is a gem, dominated by the parish church of St Oswald. Inside, we admire colourful frescoes from the 15th century and a high altar of wood and gold in the late Gothic style.

Another day we bus into Innsbruck and visit the Tyrolean Folk Art Museum, considered one of the best heritage museums in Europe. The highlight is when a female singer wearing a traditional dirndl incorporates mooing (like a cow) into her yodelling. While I've not sought out reminders of The Sound of Music this entire week, I'm suddenly and joyfully transported to those mountain meadows once again.

Austria is also too small a country to not come across some mention of the von Trapps, the family the film is based on.

And so it happens that on our last evening we dine in a castle owned by a couple who are distantly related to that famous family. Christiane von Trapp and her husband Count Gaudenz Trapp greet us in their courtyard with champagne and welcome us into their 12th-century home where they rent out rooms for private parties, overnight stays and weddings. They've given



Friedberg Castle near Innsbruck is owned by distant relatives of the von Trapps. Picture: Suzanne Morphet

Friedberg Castle all the modern conveniences (internet, heating, a lift) while keeping its historic charm – including creaking floorboards and vaulted ceilings.

Aaaah, Austria, you're all I hoped for and more.

Suzanne Morphet was a guest of Austria Tourism. It has not reviewed or approved this story.

WYNTK  
what you need to know

- Hotel Aktivhotel Alpendorf is a four-star hotel in St Johann im Pongau with mountain-view rooms, a sauna on the top floor and spa in the basement. The kitchen serves excellent food with traditional and international dishes, including a vegan menu. [hotel-alpendorf.at/en/hotel.html](http://hotel-alpendorf.at/en/hotel.html)
- The Alpin Resort Sacher Seefeld-Tirol is newly renovated and a member of Leading Hotels of the World. It caters to people looking for active recreation (there's a daily program of hiking, cycling, etc.) and relaxation (it has an enormous spa with indoor and outdoor pools and other amenities). [seefeld.sacher.com/en/](http://seefeld.sacher.com/en/)