



Bountiful
Bavaria

With its deep gorges, dazzling lakes and massive peaks,
this beautiful German state becomes the ultimate
playground for an adventure-loving family

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Helen Werin...

... is MMM's Travel Editor and loves exploring mountainous countries with loads of opportunities to walk. She really doesn't like flat landscapes!

Imagine being inside a giant telescope-like structure jutting over the edge of a cliff with mountains as far as the eye can see. The effect is incredible. I imagine the telescope moving, but it's just the sensation of being 2,244m (7,362ft) high.

We're on the Karwendel mountain, looking down on the wide Isar valley. Below is Mittenwald, where a multitude of walks and cycle routes spread out and from where we've ascended in Germany's second highest cable car.

There are challenging via ferrata routes for adrenaline junkies on the Karwendel, but we take the Passamani Panoramaweg. Sophie, our teenager, who thinks she's a mountain goat, disappears towards a cross high above the easy path, pulling herself up by a steel cable and climbing up ladders to ledges. "It's like a playground, mum!" she declares as, once she's safely down, we chuck snowballs at each other from a few patches left on the slopes – even though it's July. And this is just the first day of the southern Bavaria leg of our summer trip.

This region of Germany gives us one exhilarating, fun-packed and memorable day after another. We've got off to a fantastic start with the first of our three campsites in Bavaria, Alpen-Caravanpark Tennessee. It sits in the shadow of the Karwendel, surrounded by sublime alpine scenery.

On our ride in the Karwendelbahn

cable car, we're told that there's a race up the mountain next day. I look down at the precariously narrow, shaly path above a nasty drop. I wonder how the runners do it, until the car attendant tells me the race is up the other side of the mountain. "But I walk up this way all the time," he shrugs as if it's nothing.

More adventures follow with our walk through the Leutasch Gorge. Our original plan to go to the Partnach Gorge is thwarted because it's closed for safety reasons, but we're so not disappointed. The Leutasch delivers as we negotiate a 970m (3,182ft) long section of metal grating walkway and bridges and steps clinging to the craggy sides high above the gorge and its churning Devil's Pool.

We've actually parked in Austria and followed the river, across the border, back towards Mittenwald. Along the way we pass chimes, a viewing mirror, even a scary 'mountain spirit' in a tiny cleft in the rock, to amuse youngsters. Every child that we see is far more excited about what is – indeed, isn't – beneath their feet.

Later, as we return along the narrow road level with the incredibly tall pines shooting up from the Leutasch Gorge we catch glimpses of the metal walkway. The road instantly widens as we come back into Germany and head for Mittenwald and the understandably popular 'Mittenwald

ABOVE LEFT The path to the summit of Karwendel Mountain

ABOVE The Marktplatz (marketplace) in Berchtesgaden with fountain and Hirschenhaus (deer house)

Special': huge scoops of rich raspberry, vanilla and chocolate ice creams.

We cram onto a bus to visit the Kehlsteinhaus – the mountain chalet built high above Berchtesgaden for Hitler's fiftieth birthday. We've been able to see the lights of the Kehlsteinhaus from Camping-Resort Allweglehen. Now we're weaving up the 6km (3¾ mile) road carved into the granite mountain.

It's impossible not to ponder the incredible amount of effort, manpower and engineering skills – not to mention cost (about £133m in today's money) –

that went in to the construction of what was codenamed the Eagle's Nest. The bus deposits us on a viewing platform near the rather eerie 124m (407ft) tunnel bored in to the mountain. At the end is the brass-panelled lift built to carry Hitler up to what was also known as the Tea House when it was used for private parties.

There's none of the usual excited chatter as we ride up to the chalet, now a restaurant, at 1,834m (6,017ft). The mood only lightens when we reach the spectacular panorama at the top. Hitler only made about 14 trips here but the Kehlsteinhaus >

Trip summary

OUR MOTORHOME

2002 five-berth Roller Team Auto-Roller 41 with Fiat 2.3-litre diesel engine. Roly's generous storage space and six seats suits our family



2002 Roller Team Auto-Roller 41

THE JOURNEY

We spent 10 days in Bavaria in July as part of a two-month European trip. We began our visit in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and left near Freilassing

THE COSTS

Fuel average 26mpg (€207.67).....	£187.61	Attractions family tickets for Karwendelbahn and salt mine; three adults for Almbach Gorge; Rossfeld panorama road and two adults/one student for Königssee boat trip (€172.80).....	£156.11
Ferry Dover-Dunkerque, return via Calais	£144		
Site fees (€247.60).....	£223.68		
Parking Leutasch Gorge, salt mine, Karwendel, Königssee (€20.50).....	£18.52		

909 miles

Total £729.92



“The sight of **sparkling** Waginger See and the **soothing** sound of the water gently lapping the pebbly beach is too **tempting**”

ABOVE LEFT View from Alpen-Caravanpark Tennsee to Karwendel Mountain

ABOVE RIGHT Inside the information centre on Karwendel Mountain, Mittenwald

INFORMATION

 [visitbavaria](http://visitbavaria.de) for general tourist advice on the region

Make the most of your visit to Waginger See

 waginger-see.de/tourismus

Find out about cable car prices and attractions of Karwendel Mountain

 karwendelbahn.de

For Königssee boat timetables and info

 seenschiffahrt.de

Get a sense of the views you'll see from the Rossfeld road

 rossfeldpanoramastrasse.de

For The Eagle's Nest

 kehlsteinhaus.de

was a popular destination for others in his inner circle.

Heading away from the Kehlsteinhaus we reach a cross and a narrow path between rocks to yet another stunning view just as the clouds drop down. Making a rapid descent to the sunnier panorama terrace, we marvel at the sight of so many mountains – including the just-visible peaks of the Reiter Alpe ranges – and the sparkling Königssee lake. Unfortunately, we spend such a long time admiring the gorgeous scenes from the top that the Documentation Centre and the underground bunker beneath it has closed.

We face far cooler (12°C) and dimmer tunnels at the Berchtesgaden Salt Mine. This time it's a train on which we sit astride, tightly packed, which whisks us 650m (2,132ft) deep in to the mountain to see where the high-quality 'white gold' is mined.

Sporting overalls and hard hats (provided) we follow our guide under low roofs, learning about the mine's more than 500 years of continuous extraction of salt from deep within the mountains and fascinating snippets about the workers' lives along the way. We float across an underground lake, though undoubtedly, the most fun comes with whooshing down the wooden slides to the next level (there are steps/walkways if you don't want to slide).

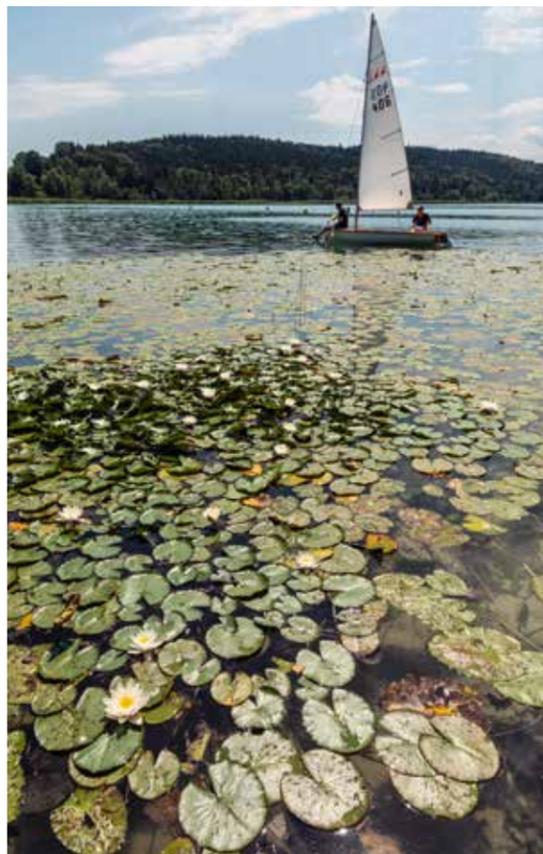
We're told to keep our hands and legs up

else we could get hurt. Though that makes me a little bit nervous, I'm more concerned about making an undignified landing at the bottom, so make sure that I'm last in the queue to save embarrassment. 'Sliders' go in groups of three or four so I tuck myself in tightly between my husband's knees and, with my legs raised stiffly around Sophie, who's in the front, they whizz down. By the second slide, I'm enthusiastically trying to queue jump.

Some of our biggest thrills in Bavaria are distinctly damp ones. It's raining as we park for the Almbach Gorge (Almbachklamm) about 3.7km (2¼ miles) from Camping-Resort Allweglehen. The water dripping down the sheer sides and thundering just below us considerably enhances the drama of the experience.

We may be squelchingly wet as we negotiate metal grating bridges and slippery steps clinging to the cliffs here, as in the Leutasch Gorge, yet the weather effects a more exciting atmosphere, particularly as we're much closer to the roaring water most of the time. Wooden bridges and steep steps hewn from the rock lead us upwards and onwards with steel cables to hold on to in most (but not all!) places. We edge past overhanging rocks and through a tunnel, gazing down in fascination at the mighty river and up at the towering cliffs.

We could spend all day here; there are ►



lots of walks indicated by bright yellow signposts from the gorge car park. However, Sophie's spotted a leaflet for the highest scenic road in Germany at Rossfeld; the mountains are calling again...

Let me make this clear; Roly is not a powerful 'van and we probably frustrate many queues of motorists behind us as we tootle up hills. However, the Rossfeld Panoramastrasse – which wends 15.3km (9½ miles) to the summit with an altitude difference of around 1,097m (3,600ft) – is easy, plus a brilliant sun comes out.

We cough up €8 (£7.22) at the toll booth; it seems a small price to pay considering the road costs nearly three times as much as a state highway to maintain and it's kept open all year. That's also despite up to 5.8m (19ft) of snow on the summit in winter.

There are loads of enticing walking paths and did I mention the sensational scenery? The vista takes in the huge mountain massif of Hoher Göll (2,522m/8,274ft), the Kehlstein to the south, Tennen and Hagen to the southeast, over the Berchtesgaden Alps and the southwest and the Salzburg Alps and Dachstein range to the east.

From the summit parking area we follow the short panorama trail, along which information boards tell us that this is where Julie Andrews and Christopher

ABOVE CLOCKWISE Waginger See; the twelfth century Collegiate Church in Berchtesgaden; the Kehlsteinhaus (aka the Eagle's Nest), Berchtesgaden

TOP TIPS

Parking at Mittenwald railway station is free and plentiful

You can take a guided nature walk at St Bartholomew on Königssee or accompany a park ranger on a rare plant and wildlife observation tour

 nationalpark-berchtesgaden.de

Get an AlpenweltCard when staying in the Alpenwelt Karwendel area to get free buses and guided hikes. Stay more than two nights to get a free chairlift ride and swimming pool entry

 alpenwelt-karwendel.de/alpenweltcard

Some sites have motorhome areas that are far cheaper than regular pitches

There's motorhome parking at Berchtesgaden Salt Mine  salzbergwerk.de

Plummer were filmed for some of the scenes in *The Sound Of Music*. Sophie is cheekily determined to record me doing my Julie Andrews' running-through-the-meadows stunt here. Inevitably, it turns out to be cringingly amusing for a party of Portuguese tourists. I laugh off any self-consciousness. I'm too 'high' on being in such a beautiful place to care!

It's a glorious day again when we drive from Camping Allweglehen to park at Königssee, Germany's deepest lake (up to 200m/656ft), in one of the designated motorhome spaces. We run the gauntlet of cafés, waffle makers and shops selling marble, dirndls, lederhosen and every size of cow bell to reach the clear emerald water in which the Berchtesgaden Alps are mirrored in its stillness. A quiet electric boat carries us on one of the loveliest lake trips that I've ever taken, below almost vertical cliffs and passing the 1,600m high (5,249ft) Königsbach waterfall.

The much-photographed seventeenth century church of St Bartholomew, with its distinctive onion-shaped domes, is set on a tiny peninsula jutting into the fjord-like Königssee. There is no path around the 8km long (5 miles) Königssee as the cliff sides are so sheer though, at Salet, the farthest landing stage, we can stroll about >

15 minutes to Obersee. Again, the scenes are dazzlingly pretty. The Hagen mountains are reflected in Obersee's clear waters and the Röthbach waterfall – one of Germany's highest – plunges 400m (1,312ft). Our day at Königssee is going to be very hard to better.

Our final Bavarian campsite is on the picturesque and popular lake of Waginger See in the heart of the Rupertiwinkel region. This is the gently undulating hill country close to the Austrian border.

Waginger See is the warmest lake in upper Bavaria, as Herr Stepper, the very helpful and friendly owner of Gut Horn Camping on its shores, is proud to tell us. He quickly reels off just some of the things to do here; fishing, kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding, windsurfing, sailing, innumerable other water activities, a network of hiking and biking paths including around the lake and one of those amusing barefoot paths at nearby Taching am See...

Phew, I'm overwhelmed. It's another sweltering day and, just over Herr Stepper's shoulder, the sight of sparkling Waginger See and the soothing sound of the water gently lapping the pebbly beach is too tempting to ignore. As soon as Herr Stepper's gone, I change into my swimsuit (I've never undressed so quickly!). A few steps and I'm in.

I can truthfully tell you that Herr Stepper hasn't been exaggerating about the temperature, in high summer, anyway. Drifting on my back, cares floating away,

WE STAYED AT

Alpen-Caravanpark Tennsee, Am Tennsee 1, 82494 Krün

☎ 0049 8 825170

🏠 camping-tennsee.de

📅 16 December – 3 November

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: From €25.50 (£23.03) plus electric at €0.75 (£0.67) per kWh

Camping-Resort Allweglehen, Allweggasse 4, 83471 Berchtesgaden

☎ 0049 86 522396

🏠 allweglehen.de 📅 All year

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: From €15 (£13.55) for the camperstop with use of facilities

Gut Horn Camping and Apartments, Gut Horn 2, 83329 Waging am See

☎ 0049 8 681227 🏠 gut-horn.de

📅 1 March – 30 November

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: From €25.90 (£23.39) plus electric at €0.75 (£0.67) per kWh

BELOW LEFT On a cycle ride to Tachinger See from Camping Gut Horn

BELOW RIGHT The suspended walkway through the Leutasch Gorge

I can just hear the faint hum of activity from the opposite side of the lake where people are getting ready for a traditional fish festival (fischerfest) at which there's to be delicious food and music and revelry later.

Our days at Lake Waging are spent swimming, kayaking and walking. We enjoy cycling through the pretty woods to neighbouring Tachinger See and across the bridge, along an off-road path, to Fischen and Waging am See. Evenings are spent in the good-value restaurant that dishes up some particularly tasty Turkish specialties, plus takeaway pizzas and enormous, super-yummy, ice cream sundaes.

Bavaria has served us up some fabulous treats; it's going to take some licking... **MMMM**

