

CHRISTMAS IN AN ITALIAN CASTLE

11 UNIQUE DAYS – MUNICH TO LUZERN – ESCORTED GROUP TOUR

IMAGINE... Staying four nights over Christmas in a glorious Italian Castle set in the charming foothills of the Italian Dolomites. Now add the picturesque Austrian Lakes District, the Christmas Markets of baroque Salzburg and medieval Innsbruck, the chic ski resort of Cortina d'Ampezzo, the canals and hump backed bridges of Venice plus elegant, stylish Milan. An awesome experience!



DAY 1 - 18 DECEMBER MUNICH

Your tour commences this evening in wonderful Munich. Shopping is always excellent in Munich - particularly around the town hall and the decorated, wooden, Christmas market stalls. Before your Bavarian style buffet dinner enjoy a welcome drink in the hotel. (D)

Your Munich Hotel - Maritim. This First Class elegant hotel is in a superb location in the city centre just a few minutes from the Deutches Theatre and the main pedestrian shopping mall.

DAY 2 - 19 DECEMBER THE SALZKAMMERGUT

A leisurely start as we cross into Austria to spend lunchtime in Lake Mondsee and visit the church made famous in the wedding scene of the film the 'Sound of Music'. Later we drive deep into the Lakes District and visit Hallstatt. Set on a rocky terrace jutting into the quiet dark water of the lake surrounded by towering peaks, this is considered the oldest inhabited village in Europe and perhaps the most beautiful in Austria. Afterwards, passing Wolfgangsee (lake), we soon reach Fuschl - the tiny country village on Lake Fuschl. Only 30 minutes from Salzburg this is our home for the next two nights. This evening join in a torchlight village walk followed by a hot drink. (B, D)

Your Salzkammergut Hotel - The Mohrenwirt. Set in the old village centre this former Rustic Inn has been serving guests for over 150 years. You will be guests of the Schmidlechner family who have developed this hotel into one of the best country hotels in the region. Furnished with wood panelling your hotel boasts a charming lounge bar and lovely restaurant. Leisure facilities included sauna, solarium and wellness centre.

DAY 3 - 20 DECEMBER THE SALZKAMMERGUT

We have included a full day excursion today. En route to Salzburg our first stop is at the nearby village of Oberndorf where we visit the famous 'Silent Night Chapel' on the site the Christmas carol was first performed. We then continue on to Salzburg - the Baroque city of Mozart sitting beneath its enormous Festung (Fortress). A walking city tour with an expert local guide



Your Christmas Hotel, CastelBrando



will introduce you to this enchanting city, including several locations used in the film 'Sound of Music'. As a finale you will assemble amongst the fir trees in the small stone courtyard of the St Peter's Keller, dating back to the 1500's and Salzburg's oldest restaurant, for some hot chocolate and biscuits. The rest of the day is free to enjoy the city, take time to visit the huge castle for a fascinating view and don't forget to soak up the atmosphere of the famous Salzburg Christmas Markets. (B, D)

DAY 4 - 21 DECEMBER INNSBRUCK

A leisurely day as we follow the spectacular Inn Valley through the Tyrol and make a visit (entrance included) to the Swarovski 'Kristallwelten' (Crystal Worlds)... a weird and wonderful crystal experience. Just before lunchtime we continue the short distance to the winter resort of Innsbruck. After checking into our centrally located hotel you will have plenty of time to explore the Old Town on your doorstep. Make sure you enjoy the picture perfect Christmas Markets in the old medieval square beneath the famous 'Golden Roof'. (B, D)

Your Innsbruck Hotel - Grauer Bäer. Superb location just 200 metres from the historic city centre. This is a hotel with style and tradition, a restaurant, a bar, sauna, steam-bath, solarium and a gym. 91 rooms, with private facilities, TV, radio, hairdryer.

DAY 5 - 22 DECEMBER INNSBRUCK

Driving up over the beautiful Fern Pass we enter Southern Bavaria and visit the tiny village of Hohenschwangau. We start the day with a horse and buggy ride up the wooded hill to visit Neuschwanstein Castle and enjoy a fascinating guided tour inside 'Mad' King Ludwig's apartments. The staterooms, halls and throne room are all reminiscent of a Wagner operatic saga. In the afternoon we also visit the Passion Play village of Oberammergau, with its ornately painted buildings and stop at Kloster Ettal Monastery with its incredible painted ceilings. Dating back over 700 years this is one of the finest examples of Rococo architecture in existence. Your evening is at leisure. (B)



DAY 6 - 23 DECEMBER CASTELBRANDO

Today we cross into Italy via the Brenner Pass and take a morning stop in Bolzano, capital of Alto Adige region. Intricately carved gables, painted timber façades and an elegant arcaded main street illustrate the influence of both Tyrolean and Italian cultures. At Trento we cut across the scenic Val Sugana and mid afternoon reach the foothills of the Dolomites and our superb CastelBrando. Located above the village of Cison di Valmarino this 2,000 year old Roman fortress was turned into a sumptuous noble’s palace in the 13th Century. On arrival we have included a guided tour of the castle – there is a lot to see - and this will be your home for the next four evocative nights. (B, D)

Your Castle Hotel – CastelBrando. Skilful restoration and sensitive modernization have brought the original magnificence back to life. Guelph style decorative battlements, stone cellars, tapestries, swords and suits of armour set the scene for the elegant halls, dining rooms, manicured gardens and terraces overlooking the valley. There is an extensive beauty and wellness centre connected to the hotel (entrance charge applicable) with an indoor pool, thermal health spa, massage services and Turkish baths. For more information look at <http://www.castelbrando.it>

DAY 7 - 24 DECEMBER CASTELBRANDO

Christmas Eve – Today we visit nearby Venice – arguably one of the most romantic cities in the world. At Tronchetto we board a boat to take us to St Marc’s Square where we join our expert local guide for a walking tour. The rest of the day is free to shop and explore the myriad of narrow, water lined streets and canals spanned by humped back bridges. Tonight we enjoy Christmas Eve with dinner back in ‘our’ castle. (B, D)

DAY 8 - 25 DECEMBER CASTELBRANDO

Christmas Day as it should be...in a wonderful location - relaxing, eating and drinking. A day to savour the delights of your castle. Maybe take the hotel cable car to the village below, have a ‘winter walk’ or warm yourself on

one of the castle’s sun terraces. Highlight of your day will be the exceptional 5 course Christmas lunch accompanied by welcome cocktail and a range of four local wines. A Christmas to remember. (B, L, D)

DAY 9 - 26 DECEMBER CASTELBRANDO

Boxing Day – Time to have some fun in the snow as we drive north into the spectacular Dolomites to visit the chic Italian ski resort of Cortina d’Ampezzo. The rest of the day is free to shop and enjoy the breathtaking scenery of the dramatic, snow laden peaks surrounding you. For lunch maybe take the cable car to one of the numerous mountain restaurants. (B, D)

DAY 10 - 27 DECEMBER MILAN

Leaving our castle we head for the shores of Lake Garda where we take a morning break in the incredibly picturesque town of Desenzano with its tiny harbour surrounded by cobbled stone walkways and cafes. Later we continue to the stylish city of Milan for time at leisure before enjoying a farewell dinner in your hotel. (B, D)

Your Milan Hotel – The 4 star Michaelangelo. This first class, modern hotel is in a brilliant location being right opposite the central railway station, transport links and only two subway stops to Cathedral Square and the central shopping district.

DAY 11 - 28 DECEMBER TO LUZERN

Sadly your Christmas tour comes to a close and it’s time to bid farewell. For those of you joining one of our wonderful New Year Tours, we have arranged a transfer to Luzern arriving early afternoon. (B)

Why not join us for New Year in Switzerland, Bavaria, Paris or London?

Our 4 exciting New Year tours have been specially designed to start as this Christmas tour ends. See pages 35, 36, 38 or 40.

Albatross gives you more...

Highlights

- Christmas in a stunning Italian Castle
- Picturesque Austrian Lakes District
- Baroque city of Salzburg
- Innsbruck Christmas Markets
- Swarovski Crystal World
- Horse and buggy ride to Neuschwanstein Castle
- Passion Play village of Oberammergau
- Torch light walk with mulled wine in Fuschl
- Canals and hump backed bridges of Venice
- Chic ski resort of Cortina d'Ampezzo
- Special hot chocolate and biscuits in Salzburg
- The stylish city of Milan

Inclusions

- All sightseeing, scenic drives and excursions described in the itinerary
- Fully escorted by our experienced Tour Manager
- Luxury touring coach for excursions and touring
- End of tour tips to Tour Manager, drivers and guides
- 10 nights in selected accommodation
- Hotel portorage (1 bag per person)
- Full buffet breakfasts daily
- Special Christmas Day lunch with drinks
- 9 dinners including Welcome dinner and Farewell dinner
- Tea, coffee and water with all dinners
- Welcome drink in Munich, CastelBrando, torch light walk with mulled wine in Fuschl, special hot chocolate and biscuits in Salzburg
- Entrance to Swarovski Crystal, horse and buggy ride and entrance to Neuschwanstein Castle

Tour Price

11 days only **\$3,689** pp twin share

Single supplement \$569 (land only prices)

Compare the Albatross Difference



Less time on coaches, average 169 kms travelled each day



Over \$1,200 value of extras already included no hidden costs



Guaranteed to depart with 7 or more passengers

...come share our love of Europe



Photo courtesy - Paul Maughan
Kloster Ettal