

CHRISTMAS IN THE SLOVENIAN ALPS

11 GLORIOUS DAYS – MUNICH TO MUNICH – ESCORTED GROUP TOUR

IMAGINE...A Festive Christmas with four days on the shores of magnificent Lake Bled deep in the Slovenian Alps, plus medieval Innsbruck, the Fairytale Castle of Neuschwanstein, Bolzano, the jagged Italian Dolomites and the snow fields of Kranjska Gora in the Julian Alps. Add to this the canals of Venice, the old city of Ljubljana, dramatic Lake Bohinj, Christmas Markets, Brass Band, the 'Sinking of the Bells of Wishes' and, to cap it all, staying two more nights in a dreamy Italian Castle. What a combination!



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 Deutsches Theatre and the main pedestrian shopping mall. The hotel boasts excellent facilities from the Piano Bar and restaurant to the sauna, solarium, massage, fitness centre and indoor swimming pool.

DAY 2 - 19 DECEMBER INNSBRUCK

Joining our touring coach we drive into the Bavarian Alps. First stop will be at the richly decorated Weiskirche (Church in the Meadows) with its incredible painted ceilings. Next stop will be in the tiny village of Hohenschwangau where we enjoy a light lunch at the Muller hotel before our visit to the famous fairytale Neuschwanstein Castle of 'Mad' King Ludwig. We've included a horse and carriage ride to take you up the wooded road to enjoy a tour through the Wagner inspired state rooms. Later this afternoon we drive over the scenic Fern Pass and down into the Inn Valley and the Winter Olympic city of Innsbruck where we will stay the next two nights. Dinner is included tonight and the Christmas Markets await. (B, L, D)

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

DAY 3 - 20 DECEMBER INNSBRUCK

Following the spectacular Inn Valley to Wattens we visit the Swarovski 'Kristallwelten' ('Crystal Worlds' - entrance included). Built into a small hill the entrance is through the mouth of a Goblin with huge crystal eyes. A weird and wonderful crystal experience lays within. Back to Innsbruck your



afternoon is free to explore the Old Town and see the famous 'Golden Roof' above the medieval town square with its delightful Christmas Markets. Time to do that last minute shopping, indulge in the mulled wine and ginger biscuits and take in the music, fabulously decorated trees and folklore displays. You simply must spoil yourself with a traditional tall aromatic coffee and a calories-busting apfel strudel! Maybe a rich chocolate torten cake? Mmmm! (B)

DAY 4 - 21 DECEMBER CASTELBRANDO

Crossing over the Brenner Pass we stop mid morning in the charming town of Bolzano. You'll have time to enjoy the delightful Town Hall square and shop along the covered arcades and arches of Via dei Portici. We've also included a visit to the Museum of Archaeology where you can see the mummified remains of Ötzi - the famous Ice Man - along with a fascinating exhibition documenting the Ancient History of Italy's South Tyrol. This afternoon we follow the Sugano Valley from Trento through the Italian Alps to the superb Castelbrando in the foothills of the Dolomites. 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 two evocative nights. Located above the medieval village of Cison di Valmarino this 2,000 year old Roman fortress was turned into a sumptuous noble's palace in the 13th Century. (B, D)

Your Castle Hotel - Castelbrando. Skillful 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. Amongst the leisure facilities there is an indoor pool, health spa and Turkish baths. For more information look at <http://www.castelbrando.it/>

DAY 5 - 22 DECEMBER CASTELBRANDO

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



Innsbruck Christmas Markets

Photo courtesy - Paul Maughan



Enjoy your Christmas by Lake Bled

is free to shop and explore the myriad of narrow, water lined streets and canals spanned by humped back bridges. Dinner this evening is back in 'our' castle. (B, D)

DAY 6 - 23 DECEMBER GLORIOUS LAKE BLEDED

Before crossing the Slovenian border we duck into Austria and visit the old town of Villach with its main square (Hauptplatz) surrounded by fine 16th-century houses. Entering the Julian Alps we reach the natural wonder of Lake Bled where the tranquil waters are surrounded by impressive snow covered peaks and overlooked by the imposing castle. A dramatic place to spend Christmas! Your afternoon is at leisure to take a walk around the lake or visit the castle. Over the next four nights all dinners are included. Christmas Eve is a buffet dinner with music and a traditional Christmas Turkey lunch is also included. (B, D)

Your Slovenian Christmas hotel - The Golf Hotel. This 4 star hotel is in the heart of Bled, with a surrounding of majestic ancient trees and full views across the lake, the island, the castle and the towering peaks of the Julian and Karavanke Alps. This hotel has been completely renovated with the addition of a modern wellness centre. We have upgraded all our rooms to have lake views.

DAY 7 - 24 DECEMBER GLORIOUS LAKE BLEDED

This morning we join our local guide and visit Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana, which means 'beloved' in Slovene. Retaining the charm and warmth of a small town, it is literally filled to capacity with Baroque churches, palaces, museums and quaint bridges traversing the canals and rivers. Pedestrian areas in the historic Old Town overflow with cafe tables and street entertainers. This evening enjoy a special dinner with Zither Music. Those wishing to make their own way to attend midnight mass will enjoy pastries and a hot drink on their return. (B, D)

DAY 8 - 25 DECEMBER GLORIOUS LAKE BLEDED

Spend Christmas relaxing on the shores of Lake Bled and enjoying the magnificent scenery and excellent hotel facilities. A traditional Christmas Turkey lunch will be enjoyed by all. In the evening we gather on the lakeside to witness

the local ceremony of the 'Sinking of the Bells of Wishes'. Tonight enjoy a live band playing in your hotel. What a way to spend Christmas! (B, L, D)

DAY 9 - 26 DECEMBER GLORIOUS LAKE BLEDED

There is nothing quite like a day playing in the mountains! Joined by our local guide we drive through the Bohinj Valley which stretches through the Triglav National Park to visit the beautiful Lake Bohinj. We then continue our drive north to the breathtaking Zgornjesavska Valley and reach the resort town of Kranjska Gora, famed for its Ski World Cup competitions and Ski 'flights' on the giant ski-jump in Planica. Maybe take a chair lift to the top of the mountains for views that go on forever. Alternatively explore this vibrant ski resort packed with shops and restaurants. This evening we've included tickets to Bled's annual Boxing Day Brass Band concert. (B, D)

DAY 10 - 27 DECEMBER MUNICH

Driving north we cross back into Austria and reach Salzburg - the Baroque city of Mozart sitting beneath its enormous Festung (Fortress) where we enjoy a leisurely lunch time in the old town centre. Mozart's Birthplace makes a fascinating visit. Mid afternoon we depart Salzburg and arrive into Munich for our last evening together. Your farewell dinner tonight will be enjoyed in a local German restaurant. (B, D)

Your Munich Hotel - Maritim.

DAY 11 - 28 DECEMBER MUNICH

Sadly your Christmas tour is now complete, and its time to bid farewell. Maybe you will be joining one of our exciting New Year programmes. (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 on the shores of magnificent Lake Bled
- Fairytale Castle of Neuschwanstein
- Innsbruck Christmas Markets
- Stay in a glorious Italian Castle
- St Marc's Square & canals in Venice
- Passion Play village of Oberammergau
- Boxing Day Brass Band Concert
- Snow fields of Kranjska Gora in the Julian Alps
- Old city of Ljubljana and Lake Bohinj
- Special Farewell Dinner

Inclusions

- All sightseeing, scenic drives and excursions described in the itinerary
- Fully escorted by our experienced Tour Manager
- Luxury touring coach
- End of tour tips to Tour Manager, drivers and guides
- 10 nights First Class accommodation
- Upgrades to Lake View rooms at Lake Bled
- Hotel portorage (1 bag per person)
- Buffet breakfasts daily, and a light lunch
- 9 dinners including Christmas Eve dinner with Zither Music and Special Farewell dinner
- Christmas Day Turkey lunch
- Tea and coffee with all dinners
- Welcome drink in Munich and Lake Bled
- Local guides - Neuschwanstein Castle, Venice, Ljubljana and Kranjska Gora
- Entrance and horse and buggy ride to Neuschwanstein Castle
- Return waterbus in Venice
- Tickets to the Boxing Day Brass Band Concert

Tour Price

11 days only **\$3,669** pp twin share
Single supplement \$549 (land only prices)

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Less time on coaches, average 147 kms travelled each day



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



Guaranteed to depart with 7 or more passengers

Salzburg



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