

GERMANY - BAVARIA IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF KING LUDWIG

8-day / 7-night **SELF-GUIDED** walking holiday



This walk, one of the most popular longer walks in Germany, links places particularly dear to the heart of the former King Ludwig who was a keen walker. It is not a mountain walk and much of the route is on farm tracks and country lanes, but the surroundings are delightful, with a host of splendid buildings to admire in magnificent settings and plentiful opportunities to stop to taste the many regional specialities including beers.

The plains surrounding Munich give way to gentle rolling hills that become ever higher as one approaches the great wall of limestone that marks the start of the Alps proper. The route passes two of Bavaria's most scenic lakes and through charming villages of geranium bedecked chalets with typical onion shaped church spires. There are masterpieces of baroque architecture, the Andechs monastery, the wonderful cathedral of Diessen on the Ammersee Lake; the monasteries of Wessobrunn and Rottenbuch, as well as the Wies or 'Meadow' church are on the route. The highest point (988m) on the walk is the summit of Hohenpeissenberg hill, considered by many to be the finest viewpoint in Bavaria. Other highlights of the walk are Neuschwanstein Castle and the opportunities to partake in the German tradition of *Kaffee und Kuchen* (coffee & cake).

Cost from: \$2160 per person twin share Single room supplement on request

Departs: Daily from May to mid-October

Starts: Starnberg **Ends:** Füssen

Includes: 7 nights' accommodation in comfortable hotels and guesthouses on a twin-share basis, with ensuite where available; 7 breakfasts; luggage transfers (1 bag per person max. 20kg); information pack including detailed route notes and maps (one set per room), emergency assistance.

Not included: Evening meals, lunches, beverages, travel to/from the start and end point of the tour, personal expenses, unscheduled transfers or taxis required during the trip, travel insurance, boat tickets on the Starnbergersee (optional excursion from Starnberg to Leoni or Berg on Day 1), ferry from Herrsching to Diessen on afternoon of Day 2, other tickets and excursions from Füssen.

Grading: Moderate. Daily stages 15 to 25km, which can be shortened by using taxis or public transport. Much of the walk is on gravel tracks or quiet asphalt lanes, but there are also long stretches of footpath. The traverse of the Ammerschlucht (Day 4) can be bypassed in wet weather. The trail is easy to follow and mostly well waymarked with a special distinctive King Ludwig 'k' logo and signposts with distances in kilometres.

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This route is also known as the Koenig Ludwig Weg or King Ludwig's Way. The eccentric Ludwig II succeeded to the throne of the then independent kingdom of Bavaria in 1864, as a young man of 18. In June 1886 he and his physician Dr Godden were found dead in the water of the Starnbergersee (Lake Starnberg); the question still remains - Did Ludwig fall or was he pushed? He was a strong swimmer and a post-mortem established that he did not drown. But no one has succeeded in unravelling the mystery. The Koenig Ludwig Weg was extended in 1995 (the 150th anniversary of King Ludwig's birth) to begin at the Votivkapelle (shrine), which marks the actual spot on the lakeshore near the hamlet of Berg where the bodies were found. The route ends roughly 100 kilometres away, near Ludwig's own fairy tale castle at Neuschwanstein.

We end our tour in Füssen, 5 kilometres from Neuschwanstein and the nearby castle Hohenschwangau, both in Allgäu on the Austrian border, where Ludwig spent most of his childhood. It is a popular walk so early booking is recommended. If you would like to walk around the time of the Munich Oktoberfest in late September and early October you must book very early as there is heavy pressure on accommodation in and around Munich at this time. Accommodation along the route can also be heavily booked in high summer (late July and August) - so book early!

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation is in guesthouses and hotels of a comfortable standard, most with private facilities. The hotels described are our usual choice of accommodation; if not available then alternatives are used (sometimes with a supplement) and you will be informed at the time of booking. Particularly around the time of Oktoberfest (late September and early October) alternative accommodation may be arranged. Breakfast is included, lunches and dinners are not. Picnic lunches may be available from hotels at extra cost; route notes indicate suitable restaurants or cafés for lunch stops.

Extra Nights: Additional nights (at extra cost) can be arranged at the time of booking at any point along the route. Perhaps stay an extra night in Starnberg, with easy access by S-Bahn to central Munich for sightseeing or even a visit to the opera (trains every 20 minutes until late evening, journey time 40 minutes). For an extra night in a quiet village with good opportunities for more walks we suggest Rottenbuch.

Luggage: Luggage transfers are provided for one bag per person (up to 20kg); charges apply for extra bags or overweight luggage. Porter service is not provided so you will need to manage your own bags to your room, sometimes up steps or stairs; most hotels do not have lifts.

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive Starnberg

Arrive Starnberg, which is easily accessed from Munich by S-Bahn (suburban train) or regional train (journey time approximately 45 minutes). This is a small resort town attractively situated by the Starnbergersee (Lake Starnberg), with views up the lake to the distant Alps. If arriving early you may like to take a ferry to Leoni (cost paid locally) this afternoon and walk the first 7 kilometres of King Ludwig's Way back along the lakeshore via Berg (where a chapel overlooks the point in the lake where King Ludwig was found dead) to Starnberg.

Our usual hotel is across the square from the railway station on the lakeshore. It dates from around 1900 and many of the spacious rooms, now all fully en-suite, retain original features. Breakfast is taken in a pleasant café, which is part of the hotel. On occasions such as Oktoberfest alternative hotel accommodation may be in the delightful lakeside village of Leoni, 1km from the start of King Ludwig's Way at Berg. Leoni has a ferry service from Starnberg; however if the ferry is not operating you will need to take a taxi from the S-Bahn station in Starnberg 7km to Leoni.

Day 2: Starnberg to Diessen

walking @ 20km

Walk from Starnberg via the Maisinger See wetland nature reserve and the Andechs church and monastery (famous for its brewery) to Herrsching on the Ammersee lake. Here take the ferry to Diessen (cost paid locally) on the opposite shore of the Ammersee. Stay in one of two hotels in Diessen am Ammersee, either in the village centre in an older building that has been extended in traditional style, or in a modern-style, low-rise building on the lakeshore.

Day 3: Diessen to Hohenpeissenberg Unterbau

walking @ 26km

The longest daily stage, mostly level although with a steep ascent and descent near the end. You start with an opportunity to visit the baroque cathedral (Marienmuenster) in Diessen before walking through the forest and across meadows to Wessobrunn monastery. Perhaps have lunch at a wayside tavern in Wessobrunn. Continue via St Leonhard-im-Forst (with a fine village church) to the summit of Hohenpeissenberg Hill (988m), the highest point on King Ludwig's Way, with splendid views. On the summit there is a pilgrimage church, an astronomical observatory and a café with a scenic lounge. Then walk down a steep descent and across hay meadows to the village of Unterbau. Stay in a small Gasthof (guesthouse) in a rural setting 1.5km from the village centre, on the lower southern slopes of Hohenpeissenberg Hill. There is a restaurant on the premises offering Bavarian specialities, where you may like to have dinner.

Day 4: Hohenpeissenberg Unterbau to Rottenbuch

walking @ 15km

This walk traverses the wildest landscapes of the tour. From Hohenpeissenberg village you descend into the depths of the romantic Ammerschlucht (Ammer Gorge). The main trail through the Ammerschlucht is a delightful mix of forest and riverside walking in a steep sided valley. This can be challenging in wet weather so there is a longer alternative route. Rottenbuch's Augustinian Abbey, now a Pfarrkirche (parish church), was originally a Romanesque basilica dating back to the 11th Century. Between 1730 and 1750 it was decorated in the Rococo style, with typical jovial cherubs. There are two possible hotels in Rottenbuch. Our first choice is a small hotel near the historic gateway of Rottenbuch itself. Rooms have en-suite or private facilities. Downstairs is a café popular with day visitors for *Kaffee und Kuchen* (coffee and cake). Alternatively stay in a small country hotel in a farming hamlet 1.5km from Rottenbuch. All rooms are en-suite and some have a balcony. The hotel has its own large enclosed garden, heated outdoor swimming pool, and restaurant.

Day 5: Rottenbuch to Trauchgau / Buching

walking @ 20km or 25km

Carry on to Wies (also known as Wieskirche), with perhaps Bavaria's most beautiful pilgrimage church, built in 1745-54. The name means 'meadow' or 'meadow church', and the vast church is still incongruously surrounded by hay meadows. Perhaps have lunch at the conveniently situated Gasthof, then continue along the base of the densely forested Alpine escarpment to the prosperous village of Trauchgau. On occasion you may stay in Buching, which is 5km further on.

Day 6: Trauchgau / Buching to Füssen

walking @ 26km or 22km

Walk via the Pollath gorge to the castles of Neuschwanstein. Descend to Hohenschwangau castle and the Alpsee, before walking to the historic town of Füssen, where you stay two nights in a comfortable hotel. Rooms have ensuite facilities, television and free Wifi. The hotel is conveniently close to the train station.

Day 7: Free day in Füssen

A day to explore the town of Füssen and its beautiful surroundings. Many walks and excursions are easily accessible, including the Tegelberg, a high level wonderland for walkers at 1800m, reached by cable car. Also close to Füssen are the beautiful Alatzee and Alpsee (lakes), with delightful circular walks. You can also take a boat trip on the Forggensee or nip across the border into the Austrian Tyrol, just over a mile away.

Day 8: Departure day

Tour ends after breakfast. There are several trains daily from Füssen to Munich, journey time about 2 hours.

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- Call toll free on 1800 331 582 or (03) 57551743 or Fax (03) 57501020
- Email: info@outdoortravel.com.au
- Web: <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au>
- Mail: Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd, PO Box 286, Bright, VIC 3741, Australia