**The Achensee region – a paradise for nature lovers and holidaymakers in the heart of Tirol**

**Nestled in the breathtaking scenery of the Rofan and Karwendel Mountains lies Tirol’s largest lake – Lake Achensee. The region around this natural gem is renowned for its unrivalled scenic beauty, while its wide range of sporting and leisure activities make it a popular destination for visitors.**

With the development of tourism infrastructure, the Achensee region became one of the most desirable destinations for holidays and excursions in Tirol. In 1887 the first steamship, the St. Josef, cast off onto the lake and the resultant Achenseeschiffahrt (shipping company) remains a magnet for tourists to this day. The same is also true for the historical Achensee railway. Every summer, year after year, this steam-powered cog railway puffs its way from the Jenbach station to Lake Achensee, covering incredible 400 metres of elevation over 6.7 km, with a maximum gradient of around 16 %. The villages dotted around Lake Achensee have also long been popular for winter tourism. Gentle slopes are particularly suitable for family skiing, while an extensive network of cross-country ski trails has established the region’s reputation as one of the best cross-country skiing destinations in Tirol. The Achensee region also became famous for its “black gold”, the Tiroler Steinöl®. The fossil oil has been mined from oil shale in the region for over a century and processed in skincare products. It boasts natural healing properties thanks to its high content of organically bound sulphur and is said to ease a variety of ailments.

**Lake Achensee – the “Fjord of Tirol”**

The setting of Lake Achensee with its dark blue waters against the backdrop of a stunning mountain scenery is reminiscent of a Norwegian fjord. Formed during the last ice age and flanked by the slopes of the Karwendel and Rofan mountains, Tirol’s largest lake is popular among swimmers, surfers and sailors in summer. Lake Achensee is fed by subterranean tributaries from the Ampelsbach and Dürrach streams and from the Achenkirch springs. In 1927 an underground tunnel was built from Seespitz to the hydroelectric power plant in Jenbach, making Lake Achensee a natural reservoir which also supplies water to the power plant. To take full advantage of Lake Achensee’s hydroelectric power, the lake’s southern outflow was re-routed to the power station in Jenbach. The drop in height of 400 metres is used to generate energy. As part of the reservoir management, more water is taken from Lake Achensee during the winter months (October to April) than flows into it, causing the water level to drop by up to five metres. Precipitation, meltwater and tributary streams replenish the lake’s water reserves until the summer months, and the water level usually returns to its previous level by mid-June at the latest.

Among Austria’s lakes, Lake Achensee has some of the best wind conditions which reach up to force 5 on some days due to strong gusts of wind coming from Bavaria. Divers will be in their element too, as the bottom of the lake holds plenty of historical treasures just waiting to be discovered.

**Lake Achensee – facts and figures**

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| **Altitude:** | 929 metres, 400 metres above the Inntal valley |
| **Area:** | 719 hectares |
| **Depth:** | 133 metres |
| **Temperature:** | Approximately 20°C in the summer months |
| **Boat cruises:** | May until early November |

**Karwendel und Rofan – the mountain ranges surrounding Lake Achensee**

Lake Achensee and the Achental valley form the border between the Karwendel and Rofan mountains. The **Karwendel mountain range** is 40 km long and part of the Northern Limestone Alps. The name Karwendel can be traced back to a Bajuwaric settler named Gerwentil who settled in the area around the year 1000. Today, the Karwendel mountains form the largest region in Central Europe that is not permanently inhabited. With approximately 200 peaks, this secluded mountain paradise is an attractive destination for mountaineers, photographers and nature lovers from all over the world. The Karwendel range is also home to Austria’s largest nature reserve – the Nature Park Karwendel. The park has an above-average level of natural habitats and is home to countless indigenous species of alpine flora and fauna such as golden eagles, sandpipers and German tamarisk.

**Nature Park Karwendel – facts and figures:**

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| Area: | 920 km² (of which 727 km² are in Austria) |
| Flora and fauna: | 1,305 species of plants, 2,035 species of animals, the highest population of golden eagles in the Alps |
| Altitude: | 600 to 2,749 metres (Birkkarspitze) |
| Land usage: | 101 alpine pastures with approx. 10,000 hectares of forage  |
| Number of visitors: | Approx. 1 million visitors per year |

Known simply as “Rofan” to the locals, the **Rofan mountains** tower high between the Inntal valley and Lake Achensee. These mountains most likely took their name from a hefty rock fall in the 4th or 5th century BC. In pre-Roman Alpine language, the word “rova” meant “landslide” or “mudflow”. The Rofan mountains are famous for their jagged rock formations which enclose wide high alpine pastures. Hikers and climbers can be found here during the summer months, and in winter the Rofan transforms into a paradise for skiers and ski tourers.

**Flora and fauna in the Achensee region – a natural alpine paradise**

The Karwendel Nature Park and Lake Achensee are an exceptional refuge for countless species of plants and animals. There are few other spots offering such an experience of unspoilt alpine nature. The region has also become a retreat for endangered species and is home to **golden eagles, chamois, adders, alpine newts, bullheads** and **common** **sandpipers**. These rare birds find a safe retreat in the Nature Park Karwendel. Specially protected areas preserve the bird’s breeding grounds to give the birds a chance to survive.

For years, the **golden eagle** was in danger of extinction. The “king of the skies” found a new home in the Karwendel whose jagged ridges and peaks provide the perfect habitat. With 21 breeding pairs, the Nature Park Karwendel is the area with the highest population of golden eagles in the Alps.

The rare alpine rose can also be found in abundance in the Karwendel mountains, while the wet northern slopes are home to magnificent mixed woodlands consisting of **larch**, **spruce**, **birch**, **fir** and **beech**. However, the sycamore maple is the most characteristic tree of this region. The largest population of maples of the Alps – approximately 2,500 trees – grow on the pastures surrounding the village Eng. When the leaves turn flaming red in autumn, these giant trees provide an impressive natural spectacle.

Despite the busy boating activities, the cool waters of Lake Achensee are home to several species of **fish,** including **char, roach, tench, perch, pike, and lake and rainbow trout**. Secluded, tranquil bays provide nesting sites for countless wild ducks.

**Villages and attractions in the Achensee region**

Five villages around Lake Achensee have joined forces to create one tourist region: Achenkirch, Maurach, Pertisau, Steinberg am Rofan and Wiesing.

**Achenkirch**

Height above sea level: 930 m

Population: 2,194

This 22 km long municipality stretches from the northern shores of Lake Achensee to the German border which makes it the shortest connection between the Inntal valley and Munich.

Already in the Thirty Years’ War the favourable location was used to erect a defensive fortification. Achenkirch has several cultural and scenic attractions that are well worth a visit. The **Sixenhof**, a 650-year-old farming estate situated right by the lake, provides visitors with an insight into farm life of the Achensee region. History comes alive in the Sixenhof’s 21 rooms where visitors of all ages can marvel at farming and commercial equipment, a blacksmith’s forge, a cobbler’s shop and a weaving mill, along with exhibits related to hunting and fishing. In winter, the Christlum ski area and an extensive network of cross-country ski trails provide winter sports fans with countless recreational options. A highlight for horse lovers is the farm at the Posthotel which is home to Europe’s largest private Lipizzaner breeding stud.

**Municipality of Eben: Maurach am Achensee and Pertisau**

Height above sea level: 950 m

Population: 3,246

A 15-minute drive along the main Achensee road from Wiesing takes visitors to the village of **Maurach** which belongs to the municipality of Eben. Situated on the southern shore of Lake Achensee, this rambling village has been the terminus of the **Achensee railway** for over 130 years. This steam-powered cog railway is the oldest of its kind in Europe. Just as in imperial times, the train puffs its way over seven kilometres to the Seespitz station in Maurach in just 45 minutes. The railway transports some 100,000 guests in the summer months.

The municipality of Eben is famous as the area where **Saint Notburga** lived, worked and died. Probably the most popular Tirolean patron saint, the simple maiden Notburga did not let her hard-hearted masters deter her from her belief and her commitment to support the poor and needy. Visitors can learn more interesting facts about her life at the Notburga Museum. The **Achensee Museum World**, a museum village set on an area of approximately 8 hectares, centers on local customs and on the living and working conditions around Lake Achensee.

Situated right by the lake and lying close to the mountains, Maurach is a particularly popular destination for sports enthusiasts. The Rofan cable car operates both in summer and in winter. The mountain station is the perfect starting point for countless hikes in the Rofan mountains. The **Adlerhorst viewing platform** on the Gschöllkopf mountain affords breathtaking views of the surrounding mountainscape. Adventure seekers can go paragliding, canyoning or kitesurfing in Maurach.

**Pertisau** also belongs to the municipality of Eben and is home to the main landing stage of the **Achenseeschiffahrt** shipping company. Boats operated on the lake already in prehistoric times, and later the lake was used as a transport route for wood, coal, salt and grain. Steam ships have cruised on Lake Achensee since 1887. Today, five ships (MS Tirol, MS Stadt Innsbruck, MS Achensee, MS St. Josef and motorboat Tirol) and one motorboat (MB Tirol) transport hikers and tourists. The Achensee region can be explored by ship on 2-hour round trip cruises.

Pertisau is also the home of the famous **Tiroler Steinöl®** (shale oil), which is extracted from bituminous shale which contains fossilised deposits that are millions of years old. This natural product has been mined in the Karwendel since 1911 and processed in skincare products. The elixir is a traditional remedy for treating rheumatic diseases and sports injuries.

At the **Vitalberg**, the shale oil visitor centre in Pertisau, visitors can see exhibits depicting the history of the shale oil distillery. Pertisau is the oldest tourist resort in the region and was already renowned as a superb recreational area in the middle of the 19th century. Tirol’s first golf course was built in Pertisau in 1934.

**Steinberg am Rofan**

Height above sea level: 1,015 m

Population: 296

Approximately 10 kilometres from Lake Achensee lies “the most beautiful end of the world”, the village of Steinberg. This municipality is situated at 1,000 metres above sea level and is renowned for its idyllic location. Steinberg is the starting point for countless mountain tours. Among the most rewarding tours are the Guffert (2,196 m), the Unnutz (2,077 m) and the Rofanspitze (2,260 m). The romantic Steinberger Ache river gorge and the **cave of inscriptions on the Schneidjoch** are also worth a visit. In 1947, an eight-line inscription was found carved in the rock near a small stream. The mysterious symbols, which probably came from the north Etruscan alphabet, have remained a mystery to researchers to this day. It is presumed that the inscription refers to a holy stream.

**Wiesing**

Height above sea level: 568 m

Population: 2,142

The village of Wiesing lies at 569 metres above sea level at the foot of Lake Achensee between the road to Lake Achensee and the mouth of the Zillertal valley. Arrowheads and ceramic fragments found in the region suggest early settlements dating back to the Early Bronze Age. The name of the village can be traced back to the word "Visuinga", which is equivalent to “farm” or “settlement”. Wiesing experienced an economic upswing in the heyday of the Schwaz silver mines. This era ended in the 16th century, and agriculture became the main source of income. Wiesing was also a popular hunting ground for the Tirolean sovereigns for many years. The remains of a wall are still visible along the **Thiergarten hiking path**. The wall was built by Ferdinand the Second in the 16th century to fence in a game reserve.

One ski lift, various hiking paths, three tennis courts, an ice skating rink, a natural toboggan run and a riding stable complete the range of sporting activities.

**Tourism in the Achensee region**

Tourism has a long tradition in the Achensee region. In 1460, Lake Achensee and the surrounding woodlands and villages came into the possession of Duke Sigmund, who mainly used the lake for fishing and the woods for hunting. Emperor Maximilian I, who had a passion for hunting and fishing, and his court were frequent visitors to the region. In order to accommodate these guests, the "Fürstenhaus" was built in Pertisau in 1466. In Buchau the convent of Georgenberg built the "Prälatenhaus" in the Baroque style in 1783. In addition, a fleet of pleasure boats was transported to the lake. Big lake festivals were held especially under Ferdinand II, who had the "Fürstenhaus" expanded with a "Lusthaus" (mansion where festivities and receptions were held) and stables from 1568 to 1570.

(Source: Mag. Michael Fritz, www.geschichte-tirol.com)

**Summer tourism in the Achensee region:**

* **Occupancy rate**

In summer, the Achensee region is by far the leading Tirolean holiday destination in terms of occupancy.

* **Hotels and gastronomy:**

Approx. 30 4\* hotels, 4\*s hotels and 5\* hotels plus numerous excellent hotels, pensions, guest houses and holiday apartments; over 60 restaurants

* **Countries of origin of visitors to the region:**

After Germany (67.95 %), Switzerland/Liechtenstein (8.79 %), and Austria (7.24 %), the Netherlands (4.73 %) are the main markets of origin for visitors to the Achensee region.

**Infrastructure:**

*Summer cable cars:*Rofan cable car in Maurach and Karwendel cable car in Pertisau

*Hiking trails:*500 km of maintained and signposted hiking routes

*Climbing areas:* 12 (250 sports climbing routes)

*Via ferrata:* 8 via ferrata climbing routes

*Cycling and*

*mountain bike routes:*250 km of designated and signposted routes

*Running routes:* 183 km of marked running trails, 22 routes

*Golf:* 18-hole golf course in Pertisau and 9-hole golf course in Achenkirch

*Paragliding:* 4 providers

*Water sports schools:* 5 providers of sailing, surfing and kite lessons

*Riding:* 5 riding stables

Boat rental in Maurach, Pertisau und Achenkirch

*Achensee Shipping Company:*

5 ships with different capacities

*Campsites:* 5

**Winter tourism in the Achensee region:**

Infrastructure:

*Ski areas:*

4 ski areas and 2 practice terrains (53 km of ski slopes)

Christlum ski area (Achenkirch): 27 km of ski slopes

Rofan ski resort (Maurach): 11 km of ski slopes

Karwendel ski area (Pertisau): 12 km of ski slopes

Planberg and Wiesen lift in Pertisau – 1 km – blue: 1 km

Rofan lift in Steinberg: 1 km

Practice lifts at Astenberg and Bühel lift (Wiesing): 1 km

6 ski schools and free ski bus in the entire region

*Nordic skiing:* 211.5 km of classic and skating cross-country ski trails**,**

designated trails for adaptive skiing and dog-friendly trails

7 cross-country skiing schools

*Two ski touring areas:*

Rofan and Karwendel mountains

*Hiking:* 150 km of cleared winter hiking trails

*Tobogganing:* 6 natural toboggan runs

**Central location in the heart of Tirol**

All five villages of the region are located right in the centre of Tirol and are therefore easily accessible:

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| Symbol_Auto.gifBy car**:** |  | 400px-Bahn_aus_Zusatzzeichen_1024-15.svg.pngBy rail**:** |  | 7151675.gifAirports**:** |
| Via Kufstein: Inntal motorway A12 – Wiesing exit – Achensee Bundesstraße (main road). |  | IC/EC railway station in Jenbach. Onward journey by bus, taxi, Achensee railway or Achensee ships. |  | Innsbruck (approx. 40 km), Munich (approx. 80 km), Salzburg (approx. 150 km) |
| Via Tegernsee: Munich motorway A8 heading south – Holzkirchen exit – Tegernsee (or Bad Tölz) – Achenpass |

**More information**

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**Image database**

Printable images are available for download at [www.achensee.org](http://www.achensee.org).

Registration is required to access the database. After signing up you will receive an email to confirm your registration.

**Staying safe on holidays**

In the light of the current situation and the directives of the Austrian Federal Government regarding the coronavirus, appointed times and events may be cancelled at short notice. An overview of the current COVID-19 related safety regulations and recommendations in Tirol can be found at [www.welcome.tirol](https://www.welcome.tirol/) and [www.tyrol.com/information-coronavirus](https://www.tyrol.com/information-coronavirus).