

HALLEIN: AUSTRIA'S CELTIC TOWN WITH A BIG, SALTY HEART



Edited by

TRAVEL WEEKLY

TRAVEL WEEKLY'S MARIAN MCGUINNESS HAS RETURNED TO PEN ANOTHER GUIDE TO THE MANY GORGEOUS CITIES OF EUROPE. MOVING ON FROM **SALZBURG** 'A CITY OF FESTIVALS AND ART', MCGUINNESS HAS A FEW WORDS TO SAY ABOUT HALLEIN'S CHARM AND WONDER. CHECK IT OUT BELOW!

The medieval town of Hallein nestles between the Salzach River and the Bavarian Alps, bordering Germany. Add to the skyline the Barmsteins, two majestic, limestone pinnacles, and Hallein, like its more glamorous sibling Salzburg, earns the descriptor, picturesque.

A short 15-minute train ride from Salzburg, Hallein makes a great day trip. For the keen cyclist, there's a river-scenic ride between the two districts that takes less than an hour.

Walking around historic Hallein you appreciate how unchanged it is from its origins in the Middle Ages where many of its medieval and burgher houses were built on a slant for stability. The town is an exciting contrast of old and new. Wander the cobbled streets and squeeze through narrow passageways into spacious squares with their treasure-trove boutiques. Stop at a café to enjoy local and international cuisines or indulge in the liquid fruits of the oldest distillery in Austria, the Guglhof Distillery.



Crossing the underground border from Austria into Germany

Hallein has a salty past and a Celtic history. Its narrow stretch of flat land between mountains and river limited its growth over the centuries. Its ancient history is embedded in every centimetre of its footprint making it a unique Austrian town.

Long considered the industrial heart of the area, Hallein's bountiful salt was the money-earner for the imperial city of Salzburg, transforming it into the showy jewel it is today. Many of Hallein's buildings are associated with salt production that date back thousands of years.

For a fascinating adventure take a trip up the Dürrnberg Mountain and enter the underworld tunnels and chambers carved out by Celtic salt miners over 2600 years ago.



Prehistoric salt mummies have been discovered in the Hallein mines

Don a pair of overalls and straddle the cave train that transports you deep into the mountain. Once there, a multi-lingual guide leads you on a walking tour where the fascinating history of mining this white gold is divulged. As the mine is multi-levelled there are two, long, steep wooden slides that slip you further underground where you cross the Austria-Germany border. To complete the hour-long tour there's a raft ride across the briny, subterranean lake before exiting the mine. Back on the surface you can wander the reconstructed Celtic miners' village.

If that's not enough to fill your history void, the multi-tiered Celtic Museum on the banks of the Salzach River is one of the most extensive archaeological museums of Celtic culture in Europe. Including ice-age burial grounds, exquisite jewellery and art, it also has a dedicated, interactive space for children.



Men carrying salt cones in Hallein's historic centre

A more intimate museum is the former home of Franz Gruber, composer of the world-famous Christmas carol, *Silent Night*. His grave lies in front of his home.

Hallein offers many markets to explore including a wine market, a craft beer market and Moonlight Shopping that takes place from May to October.

The old salt works on Perner Island in the middle of the Salzach River, are the site of the Christmas markets held during Advent and Hallein's cultural highlight – the summer Salzburg Festival.

Medieval or modern, Hallein punches well above its unspoilt, authentic weight.

Find more information [here](#).

Email the Travel Weekly team at traveldesk@travelweekly.com.au

HALLEIN