

Let's do the Lungau



Obertauern, only an hour from Salzburg and one of Austria's highest resorts, where Savills (020 7016 3740) has launched a development of apartments priced from £133,350

AUSTRIA is the second most popular European destination for British skiers but the little-known Lungau region is not getting its fair share of attention. New small-scale developments with prices from £133,350 could help attract more buyers to an area described locally as the "sunniest basin in Austria".

The Lungau is a million miles from the tourist hotspots of the Alps. In this region, south-east of Salzburg, farmers still live in the mountains with their cows, traditional dress is worn, there is no heavy industry and the cinema is often a makeshift screen in the village hall.

Yet the region has good skiing — there are five mountains covering 186 miles of piste, all on one ski pass and linked by bus. There are three glaciers for year-round skiing, while summer activities include golf, white-water rafting, horse riding and hiking.

St Martin Chalets are 10 traditional-style homes being built by Jodi and Herbie Bliem. Jodi, originally from Northamptonshire, has lived there for 15 years with her master cabinet-maker husband and two daughters. Their small hamlet of St Martin, at 3,445ft, links into the Grosseck mountain range, which peaks at 7,874ft.

On a one-acre south-facing plot next to their own house, 700 yards from the ski lift, the Bliems are building three-bedroom chalets using Austrian wood, and sheep's wool as insulation. They aim to create a self-sufficient eco-community using water from the village

'They aim to create a self-sufficient eco-community while providing much-needed accommodation'

spring and their own bio-fuels while providing much-needed tourist accommodation.

"There is a real shortage of beds here," says Jodi. "Lungau has higher slopes than the Tyrol but few top-end hotels. Getting permission for a tourist development in a residential area is difficult but good rental property is needed and a small-scale development is right for the Lungau." Local laws to discourage holiday homes lying empty means that owners at St Martin have to make their properties available to rent for 46 weeks a year. Prices start at €321,000 (£223,200) for the freehold, including all furnishings.

Owners looking for ski accommodation with no restriction on rentals should consider the 13 one- and two-bedroom apartments in nearby St Margarethen. They are within 100ft of the ski lift at the foot of the Katschberg slopes and a short walk from the village centre. Prices are from €217,840 to €331,600 (£151,440

Forget the crowded Alps, the Lungau region of Austria is unspoiled good value, says **Cathy Hawker**



The village of St Margarethen. Investors in Property (020 8905 5511) has apartments there from £151,440

to £230,590) through Investors in Property. Also in the Katschberg area but with dramatic modern architecture, Erna Low is selling Edel:Weiss, 62 apartments split between two structures that will tower above the existing chalets. These "vertical fir cones" have been designed by Matteo Thun, and owners can choose traditional interiors or a more appropriate contemporary design. Prices of these extraordinary one- to four-bedroom apartments start at €230,000 (£159,900).

One hour from Salzburg in the town of Obertauern, Savills has just launched 38 one- to three-bedroom apartments priced from €199,000 (£133,350). This is one of Austria's highest resorts, with an excellent snow record, and the Zehnerkar Mountain Resort apartments will have direct access to the slopes. "Austria has an unfair image as just a coach-party destination for older travellers," says Jodi Bliem. "We want to introduce the traditions and culture of this part of Austria to more visitors. More than anything, this is our home, and we need to create something that makes us proud."

Contacts

St Martin Chalets and Edel:Weiss from Erna Low Property (www.ernalowproperty.co.uk; 020 7590 1624). Investors in Property (www.investorsinproperty.com; 020 8905 5511). Savills (www.savills.com; 020 7016 3740).

For more about Austria, see page 41

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From £159,000: apartments at the Edel: Weiss "fir cone" development. Through Erna Low (020 7590 1624)

Fact file

- VAT at 20 per cent is payable at St Martin Chalets but this can be recovered against rental income. No VAT is payable if the property is kept for 10 years or more. Otherwise a sliding scale operates.
- Fees will average €2,000 (£1,390) a quarter.
- British Airways flies from Gatwick to Salzburg five times a week, while Ryanair flies from Stansted to Salzburg up to three times a day.



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