



Salzburg: Its Hills Are Alive With More than Music

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart changed the world. He still “owns” the Austrian city of Salzburg where he was born, lived, and performed. His summer Salzburg Mozart Festival is like Wagner’s Bayreuth, a must on any music lover’s list. The Hollywood film, “Sound of Music,” didn’t change the world, but like Mozart, it put Salzburg on contemporary traveler’s horizon as it is generally agreed to be one of the most beautiful backdrops for a film worldwide.

The singing von Trapp family in SOM is what has been dubbed a “tourism engine” for the city, never more popular than now as the five-Oscar film is celebrating its 50th anniversary. About 300,000 international visitors arrive each year to seek out the sites where the real Trapp family lived and the film locations for the movie, where they did not. (The movie is mostly fiction. See below.)

What defines Salzburg aside from Mozart and SOM, is the stunningly wonderful setting – elegant 19th century buildings in the New Town, ancient, narrow pedestrian streets and cobbled squares in the Old.

Here are some suggestions for enjoying your stay in this beguiling city.

Dining:

Café Tomaselli, a 300-year-old coffee house ---and yes, where Mozart “probably enjoyed his almond milk. Must have- Strudel or Schnecke (nut pastry); homemade Glühwein, or cup of Mélange Tomaselli (mocha with milk and whipped cream).

Nordsee, for a fish lunch, freshest herring outside of a Danish fishing village, next door to Mozart’s birthplace.

M32 perched on top of the steep cliff of Monchberg Mountain, adjacent to the Museum of Modern Art. Go for lunch on the terrace to relish the spectacular views of the Old Town. You can hike up or take an elevator. The Museum is well worth a visit. Currently and through February 2015, the works of feminist artist Carolee Schneemann are on view.

K+K is in the heart of the Old City, located in restored medieval townhouse. Not especially Austrian, but hearty good food.

Probably the best chocolates in the Old Town are at Berger in the Old Town.

Art

“Kunst in Salzburg” is the name of a gallery and museum guide to exhibitions, especially to modern and contemporary art.

Where to Wander

Fortress Hohensalzburg, built in 1077, the time of Holy Roman Empire. Enlarged, fortified, and served as home to various prince-archbishops until Napoleon took it over in 1803.

Hellbrunn Palace, a 1612 Renaissance pleasure palace where an archbishop with a bizarre sense of play created water-driven jets that would arbitrarily spray his guests seated for an alfresco meal. The guests got soaked and only the archbishop remained as he was. Secret gardens, mythical fountains and grottoes, and water-powered figures are bound to appeal to kids and adults with a sense of whimsy. The mechanical theater, built in 1750, represents a small town of 200 hand-carved figures plying their trades. By some miracle, they are still industrious thanks to some ingenious water-powering.

Mirabelle Palace and Garden, next to the Sheraton Hotel (not a bad choice – clean, efficient, and mid-priced) where there is a farmers' market every Thursday.

The Dom Quartier, re-opened in 2014, is a mini-Versailles where you circumnavigate state rooms, royal residences, and even a cabinet of curiosities. The Cathedral and its magnificent pipe organ are one of the gems of the city. Salt, mined nearby, and gold made the Prince-Archbishop archbishops diocese rich and funded this grand Baroque palace complex, built to rival the papal estates of Rome.

Upscale Lodging

Hotel Schloss Leopoldskron, an 18th rococo palace, meticulously restored and now a hotel, set a on small lake surrounded by gardens. Rooms have artifacts and historic photographs of the Salzburg festivals. The 55-room hotel is a short walk to the center of town (The palace was another Salzburg location for SOM.)

Two other high-end choices are the **Hotel Bristol and Hotel Sacher** in the New Town and the **Goldener Hirsch** in the Old. The latter is as Austrian as it gets.

Salzburger Marionetten Theatre, playing of course SOM, as well as some Shakespeare and Mozart classics. Best Bet is "Magic Flute."

Separating fact from fiction: Tweaking Geography

Baron Georg von Trapp(1880-1947) had seven children with Agathe Whitehead whom he married in 1911. During WWI, he was an Austrian U-boat commander. His wife died in 1922 and the family moved from Vienna to Salzburg. Maria Augusta von Kutschera, (1905-1987) was a novice at the Nonnberg Convent in the Old City. She was hired as a governess to the seven motherless children. According to her autobiography, she was angry about getting married as she really wanted to be a nun "I liked him, but didn't love him. However, I loved the children," she wrote.

She married von Trapp in Salzburg in 1927, not at the church shown in the film. Two more daughters were born. In 1935, the family faced financial problems and moved to a villa outside of the city which during WWII became Heinrich Himmler's headquarters. Not in the film, but the person responsible for the children's musical education was Dr. Franz Wasner, an Austrian priest,

who gave the family music lessons. Under his guidance, the family choir won first place in a choral contest held during the Salzburg Festival in 1935. (They did not sing "Edelweiss" which was a Rodgers & Hammerstein show tune). Unlike the film, they left some three years after winning first place at the festival.

Hollywood also added a bit of fantasy to their escape from Austria. In the film, they "climb every mountain" and depart from what is now Schloss Leopoldskron and walk over the mountains to Switzerland. In fact, when you walk over the mountain at the Schloss, you end up at the Eagles Nest, Hitler's retreat in Germany, not the Swiss Alps. The family ---except for one son who was in medical school -- took the train in 1938 to Italy and emigrated to the U.S. The youngest child, Johannes, was born in the U.S and now, together with his daughter runs the Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe, Vermont.

Guided City

Visiting Salzburg with a guide who is knowledgeable about history, art, architecture, cuisine and shopping is an excellent option. Michaela Muhr, a licensed guide with impeccable English is a best bet. She can be reached at info@salzburg-experience.at.