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Vorarlberg: Breathtakingly beautiful all year round

Located at the westernmost tip of Austria, Vorarlberg is on 'good-neighbourly' terms with adjacent Germany, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Vorarlberg's landscapes range from the gentle shores of Lake Constance and the low-lying Rheintal and Walgau areas to mountain valleys and Alpine summits reaching altitudes of up to 3,000 metres. The region is famous for the wide variety of its natural scenery, a thriving cultural life, stunning contemporary architecture, and culinary delicacies inspired by local tradition.

Vorarlberg is easy to reach and offers visitors, from wherever they might travel here, a wealth of attractions to explore through-out the year. And it is not just lovingly curated landscapes that this small region is proud of. Among its merely 400,000 inhabitants, surprisingly many show great pleasure in creating and innovating, a passion from which visitors stand to benefit: lively cultural activity and groundbreaking architecture – Vorarlberg is a pioneer when it comes to state-of-the-art sustainable building – authentic hospitality, excellent leisure facilities and culinary excellence. An outstanding public transport network provides climate-friendly options for exploring. "Respect your limits" is the guiding principle for mindful encounters with nature. Attentive hosts offer a heartfelt welcome, inviting guests to spend quality time in inspiring surroundings.

Summer fun

Forests and mountain summits beckon everywhere for hikers to explore. In many places, cable cars offer a convenient way to reach higher altitudes and enjoy panoramic views. Hop on a bike and get moving – along the shores of Lake Constance, down in the valleys, or on mountain trails. If you prefer swimming or water sports, linger awhile at Lake Constance or spend some care-free time at one of the many outdoor and natural pools. Another attractive option is taking a cruise on Lake Constance, crossing national borders along the way. If you are more into art and culture, interesting museums abound, and festivals staged at special locations present both locals and visitors with new cultural experiences. Prime among them is the internationally renowned Bregenz Festival, where the largest floating stage in the world is the perfect setting for open-air opera performances.

Autumn magic

Crisp autumn days with blue skies and stunningly colourful foliage add extra pleasure to hiking and biking. The lidos at Lake Constance keep their doors open until about mid-September. Swimming in Lake Constance is a pastime that is available all year round, with many natural bathing sites providing easy access. Cruise boats operate until mid-October. Museums accommodate visitors at any time of the year and have a range of attractions on offer, from contemporary art to Vorarlberg's specific flora and

fauna. Musical performances are being staged, and the theatre season is starting off. Freshly harvested produce gets expertly transformed into culinary delights.

Winter bliss

White is the colour that now dominates the landscape. Towns and villages alike stage romantic advent markets to ring in the Christmas season. The cruise boats on Lake Constance have special St Nicholas cruises on offer and bring the year to a close with a superb New Year's gala. Well-known ski resorts see skiers gliding down snow-covered slopes and hillsides, while others might prefer swishing along groomed cross-country trails, enjoying the peace and quiet of a winter hike or whooshing downhill on a sled. Some resorts offer classy après-ski events for relaxed evenings full of music and fun. Concerts, theatre and comedy performances can be found mostly in the towns, with exhibitions and museums opening up new perspectives. Many villages mark the end of winter with a special tradition called Funkenabbrennen: On the weekend following the last Sunday of the carnival season, bonfires built up several metres high are set alight, the fire meant to dispel winter.

Spring in the air

March sees the first trees along Lake Constance start to bloom. The vast lake stores heat and makes for a milder climate, with fresh green gracing its shores early in the season. In the towns, life is slowly moving back outdoors again, with cafés and restaurants putting out tables and chairs and menus featuring fresh spring produce. While some enjoy the spring sunshine in the valleys, others are still into winter sports, the higher lying resorts being open until early April. Sunshine skiers tend to follow a rhythm of their own, hitting the slopes in the morning and whiling away the afternoon on mountain lodge sun decks, some even with live music playing. Cultural events, such as the Bregenzer Frühling Dance Festival, also add to the charms of spring.

For more information see www.vorarlberg.travel/en