



mariazeller Land ...rich in Faith

On arriving in Mariazell, visitors are amazed by the wide range of languages, peoples and cultures they encounter. It is a town with an 850-year history and reflects the full diversity of European life. Many generations have left their traces here, as attested to by the treasure chambers, votive images and streams of countless pilgrims. The holy statue of the Blessed Virgin in Mariazell, known as “Magna Mater Austriae”, “Magna Hungarorum Domina” and “Mater Gentium Slavorum”, is a beacon for people searching for meaning in their lives.

As one of Europe’s most renowned pilgrimage sites, Mariazell is a member of the “Shrines of Europe”, along with Fatima, Lourdes, Loretto, Altötting and Czestochowa. Besides the Mariazell Basilica, Mariazeller Land has a host of other churches and sacred sites ideal for tranquil visits and contemplation.

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, Mariazell has resumed its role as a spiritual center for encounters between East and West. It is a focal point of concentrated European history under the auspices of a shared Christian faith. A highpoint of that faith was the “Pilgrimage of the Peoples” at the Central European Catholic Church Conference (Katholikentag) in May 2004. Some 100,000 pilgrims from around the globe converged on Mariazeller Land to join together in prayer and in celebration of a united Europe.

The spirituality and inspiration of this special place joins with its diverse landscape and wide-ranging recreational, cultural and sports offerings to create a composition of unique regional charm. Mariazeller Land is an ideal spot for relaxation or regeneration, for active recreation or some long-overdue day-dreaming.

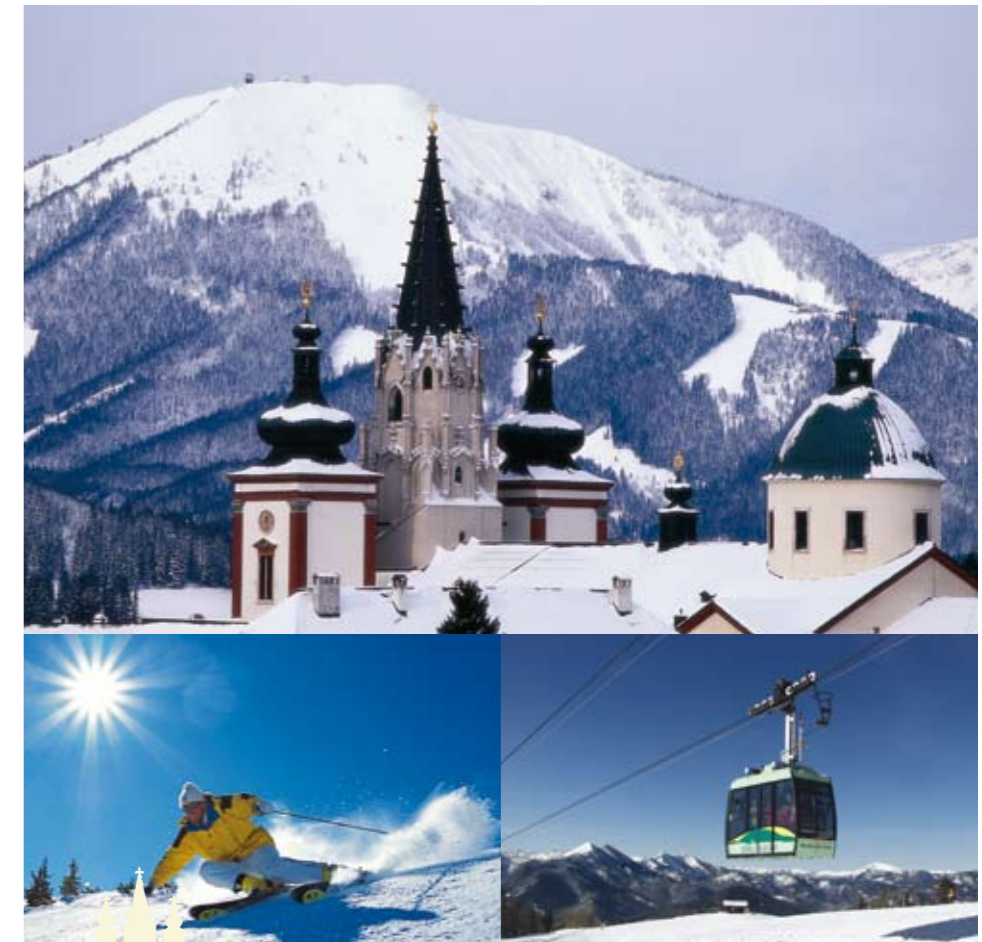


mariazeller Land ...rich in Summer Fun

Mariazeller Land is wonderful in the summertime with all its walking and hiking trails and its large range of sports and recreational options. Mountain bikers have a diverse choice of trails in all directions. The route of the Alpentour Austria branches off here from the Styria trail system to head towards Vienna. It also crosses the Romantic Tour here. This beautiful countryside attracts beginners and experts alike. Para-gliders, hang-gliders and sailplanes can take to the skies for a taste of pure freedom. Water lovers can plunge into crystal clear Lake Erlauf, the outdoor pool in Mitterbach and the indoor pool in Mariazell. Diving fans can explore the depths of the lake while canoeists or raft enthusiasts can enjoy the lively Salza River. And fishermen can cast away to their heart’s content on Lake Erlauf, the Erlauf River and reservoir, the Walster, the Hubertus Reservoir and the romantic Salza River.

The Mariazell Bürgeralpe is a popular destination for excursions and hiking with its theme park on the wood cutters who once dominated this area (“Erlebniswelt Holzknechtland”) and with the nearby Gemeindealpe in Mitterbach. Both peaks can be reached effortlessly on new cable cars.

Old-time railroad fans have two big treats in store for them. The first is the Mariazeller Railroad, a narrow-gage line running from St. Pölten to Mariazell. The second is the Museum Tram operating from Mariazell to Lake Erlauf. Both make wonderful outings and give you a chance to experience the magic of the railroads of yesteryear.



mariazeller Land ...rich in Runs

On the two skiing mountains in Mariazeller Land you have your choice of activities: skiing, carving, snowboarding, or touring. Modern lifts take you to the top of superbly groomed slopes. Snow machines assure a good cover of snow from December through March, and a free bus service operates between the two mountains.

The Mariazell Bürgeralpe (868 – 1267 meters above sea level) has a new cable-car lift with panorama cars plus 4-seater chair-lifts and two rope tows that assure fun on the slopes for everyone regardless of age. You can teach your kids how to make their first turns, venture a cool ride on a hot board with your pals or carve your way elegantly down the slopes with your friends. Rounding out the offerings are a sledding run and a fun park for snowboarders.

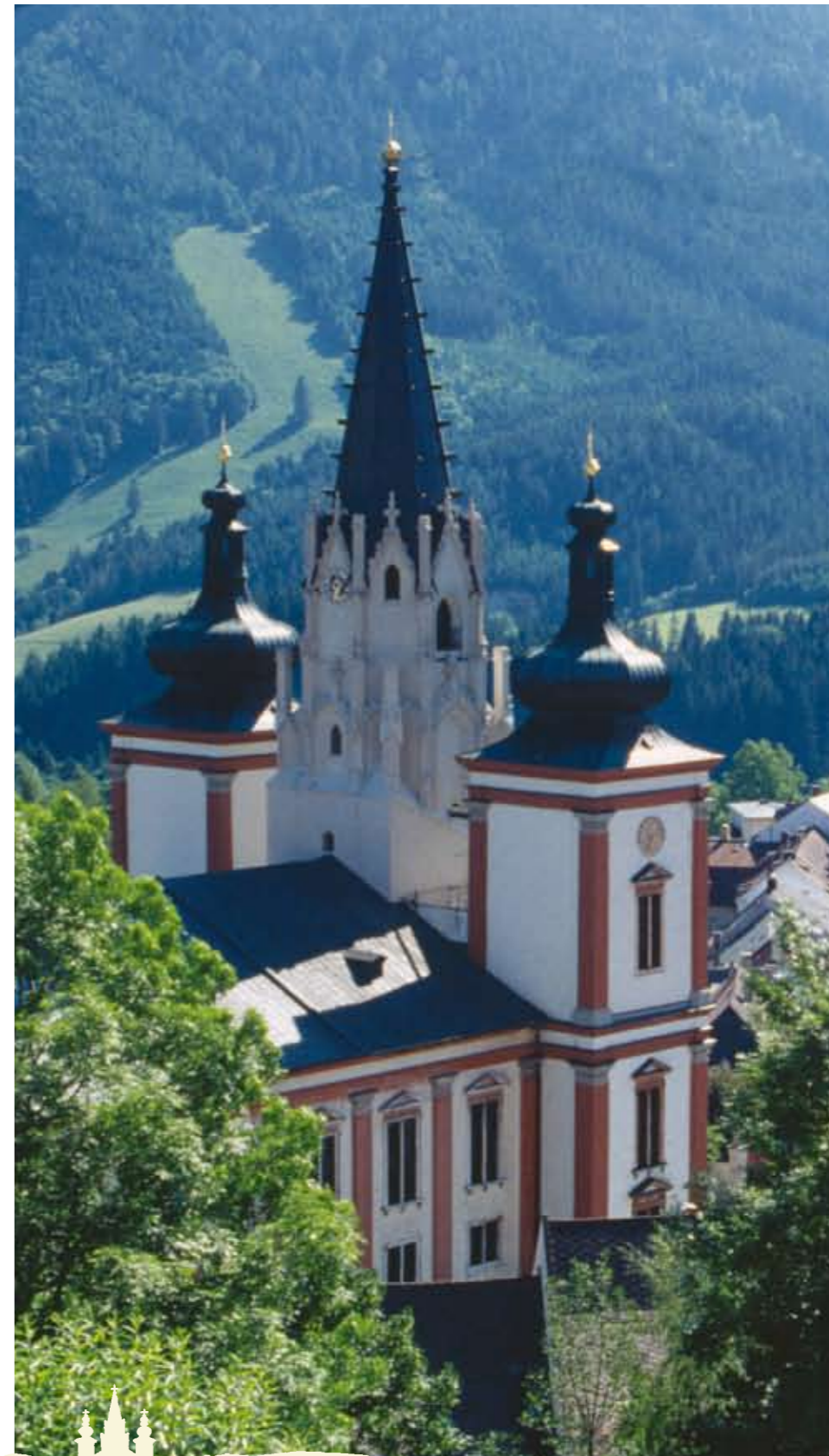
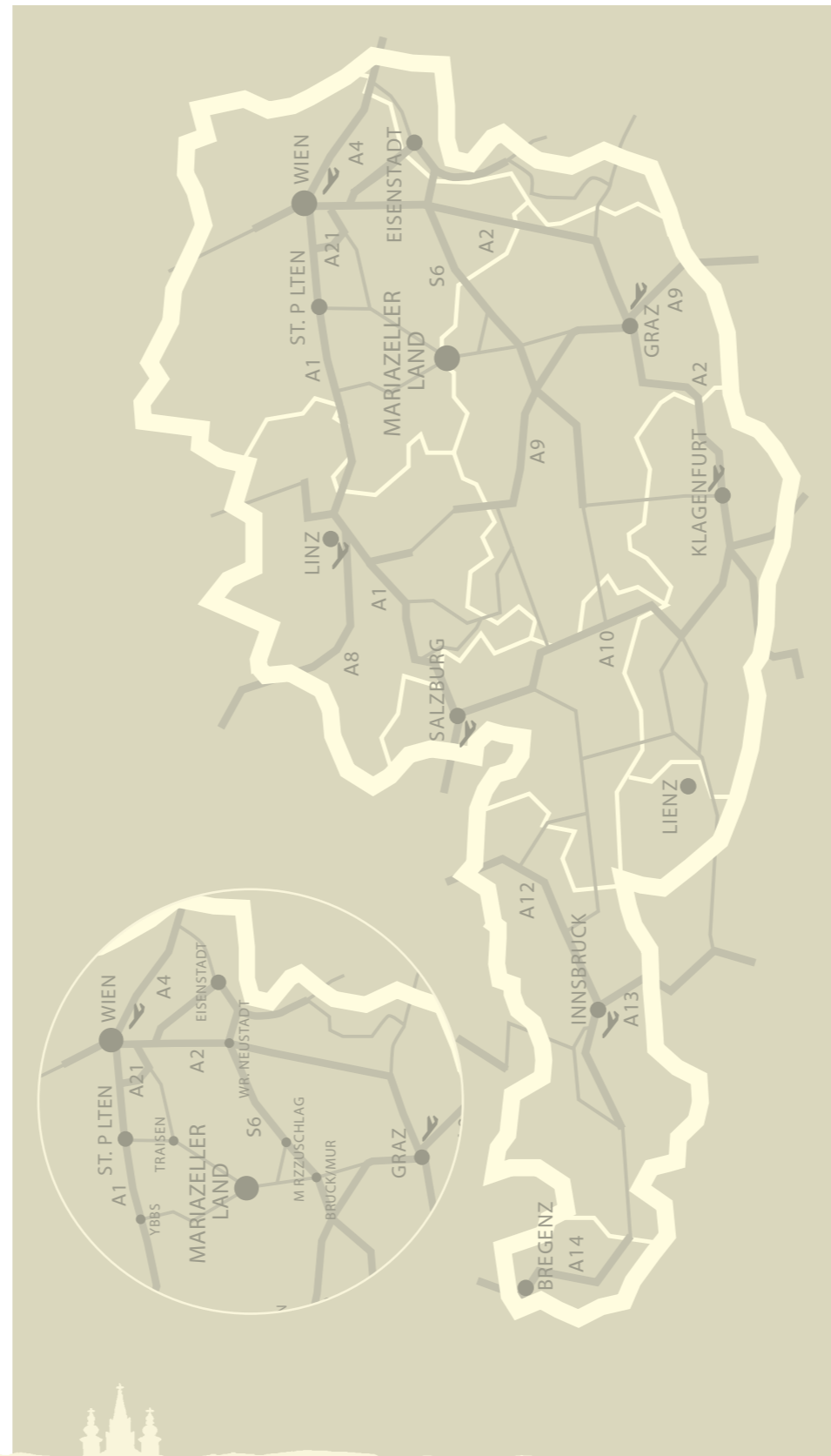
The Gemeindealpe in Mitterbach is ideal for high-altitude alpine skiing. It has two chair-lifts that whiz skiers from 800 to over 1600 meters above sea level in just 15 minutes plus a rope tow for easy ascents. With an incline of 43%, the steep slope is one of the most demanding in the Alpine foothills. It is a genuine challenge for skilled skiers eager to tackle broad, partially non-groomed slopes.

Winter in Mariazeller Land has so many different faces. Over 70 km of cross-country skiing trails draw athletic and recreational skiers alike. Everyone enjoys gliding along and exploring this magnificent countryside. The trails are well groomed, as attested to by the Styrian seal of quality awarded to them. If you prefer barreling down the mountain on two metal rails, you won’t want to miss the sledding run on the Mariazell Bürgeralpe.



mariazeLLer advent ...an Old-Fashioned Advent

Does Christmas sometimes seem like it has become too loud and garish and commercial? Come to the Mariazell Advent and rediscover a magic you may have thought lost forever. For centuries, Mariazell has been a spiritual center and a meeting place for pilgrims and other seekers of peace and tranquility from around the world. It is no wonder that Advent here is so uniquely traditional. Against the backdrop of the basilica and the snow-covered mountains of Mariazeller Land, the focus here is on the quieter, more contemplative aspects of Advent. Experience the magic of Advent with all your senses. Close your eyes and let memories of Christmases past live again. As you stroll through the snow-covered lanes of Mariazell, you'll invariably find yourself humming a classic Christmas carol. You won't hear any "Ho, ho, hos!" here. In keeping with Austrian custom, it is the Christ Child himself who reigns supreme (with hosts of angels as helpers). Santa Claus can stay where he is, in the big cities. The heart of the market is directly in front of the imposing basilica. There, stands made of Styrian pine are set up for selling genuine and authentic products. With lovely carols and Christmas fragrances filling the air, everyone lingers and relaxes, far from the stress of shopping and the frantic bustle of garish markets. The attractions include the world's largest Advent wreath, a 5-meter tall lebkuchen house made of more than 1000 kg of real honey lebkuchen, the live Mariazell nativity scene, the house-high Mariazell Advent calendar, plus the Mariazell Railroad and the Mariazell Angel's Post Office... to name just a few. An extensive program of activities is lined up for each weekend in Advent. The events range from readings, Advent singing and Gospel music concerts to nativity plays, fairytale theater, regional choirs and music groups. There are also romantic Advent strolls, torch-lit hikes and much more. All this helps the people of Mariazell and their guests to approach the wonderful feast of Christmas with a better understanding of all its many aspects.



mariazeLLer LAND ...a gift from heaven



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