

# Welcome to Central Europe



## Old-World Appeal

Teutonic half-timbered villages, sgraffito-decorated Renaissance squares, medieval walled towns...if you're looking for old-world appeal, you've come to the right place. Wander the darkly Gothic alleyways of Prague, admire the baroque excess of Salzburg or take in the colourful old-Venetian influence on the Slovenian port of Piran. Poland and the Czech Republic seem to have more than their fair share of medieval masterpieces, but you can find narrow lanes and quaint townscapes throughout the region – from Bern, Switzerland to Bardejov, Slovakia. Smaller gems such as Bamberg, Germany are often far from the

tourist radar. On mornings when the mists lie heavy and crowds are few, you might imagine yourself in an earlier century.

## Atmospheric Eating & Drinking

Nourishing yourself is more fun in a great atmosphere, and Central Europe's abundance of outdoor cafes, beer halls and coffee houses offer just that. When the temperatures rise in spring, outdoor tables proliferate along with the daffodils and tulips. Enjoy a plate of pasta while admiring the Slovenian coast, nosh *pierogi* (dumplings) on a Polish cobblestone street

*At once natural and refined, folksy and cultured: the combination of mountain rusticity with old-world élan captivates in Central Europe.*

(above) Ride the cable car up Petřín Hill (p111) and admire the view of Prague, Czech Republic  
(below) Cyclists chasing their shadows along the embankment of Bremen's Old Town (p279), Germany



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or dip into fondue lakeside in Switzerland. Beer gardens across the region offer an opportunity to enjoy hearty food, a convivial atmosphere and a good brew alfresco. Once the weather cools, move inside to a boisterous beer hall. Or, for something a little sweeter, try a cake at a coffee house or pastry cafe. The most famous are in Vienna and Budapest, but you'll find many options – and other interesting places to eat and drink – all across the region.

## Outdoor Adventure

With mountains covering so many Central European states, it's no wonder that the outdoors holds such an attraction in the

region. The Alps rise to their highest in Switzerland, with jagged, Toblerone-like peaks such as the Matterhorn, and continue on through very southern Germany, across Austria and south into Slovenia. You can hike, bike, ski or just ride the gondolas and funiculars to enjoy the Alpine views. Other mountains, like the Swiss Jura and the Polish-Slovak Tatras, offer no less adventure. There are also sculptural sandstone 'rock towns' in the Czech Republic to climb, waterfall-filled gorges in Slovakia and Slovenia to hike and the bucolic Black Forest to walk in Germany. It seems that around every corner there is a new part of nature to explore.