

Pinswang

Pinswang is a picturesque historic Alpine village in the Austrian Ausserfern region of the northern Tirol. It lies on the border with the **Allgäu** region of Bavaria Germany.

Understand

Pinswang is a quiet, lovely village located in the northern-most region of the Austrian Tirol known as the Ausserfern. With a population of around 430, Pinswang sits in a lush verdant Alpine valley mid-way between two major marketing towns; Reutte, located about 5 miles to the south in Austria and Füssen lying about the same distance to the northeast in Germany. Pinswang is divided into two sections, Oberpinswang and Unterpinswang. The village government, school and Church are located in Unterpinswang.

Pinswang is one of the most ancient settlements of the Ausserfern. Extensive archeological exploration by scientists from the University of Innsbruck have revealed evidence that Pinswang was inhabited as early as 1700 BC. It is also known that Pinswang was home to Celts at around 200 BC. Later, the Romans, in their march to the North, eventually reached Pinswang, and used the surrounding mountains as a stone quarry. Their Via Claudia Augustus, better known as the "Roman Road", is still used today in Pinswang as a path for pilgrims to the Ulrichskirche, the way leading to the Schloß im Loch fortification and Celtic excavation site, the starting point to the mountain route to King Ludwig's nearby castles, and as the path for visitors strolling around the town.

Written records describing Pinswang date back to the 11th century. During the Middle Ages, Pinswang functioned as a strategic control point on the border between the Tirol and Bavaria. This is evidenced by the numerous remains of fortifications that abound in this region. An example of this can be found on the Burgschrofen where one sees what has become known as the Schloß im Loch, a Festung dating from the mid-13th century that was built directly into the face of the mountain. It and the fortress that stood along the nearby Kniepass (built later during the 30 Years War) were the only major fortifications used as outposts of Castle Ehrenberg near Reutte. It is interesting to note that Ehrenberg and the other fortresses in the area were later abandoned and sold by Kaiser Joseph II in 1782.

After changing ownership several times, Pinswang was finally incorporated into the Tirol in 1313. From the 16th 'til as late as the 19th century, Pinswang was also known as a toll station; a waypoint between Austria and Germany. There were two major toll collection points, one at the Weissshaus near Füssen and the bridge over the Lech River, the other on

the fortified Kniepass. There were two types of tolls collected; one toll to cross the border and the other to travel along the roads, akin to modern highway tolls.

Pinswang today remains a thriving agrarian community; a wonderful place to use as a base for exploration of the entire Ausserfern and nearby German Allgäu region. Its quiet, warm and quintessentially Tirolean Gemütlichkeit make Pinswang a much-beloved travel destination.

Get in

By train

There are two ways to reach Pinswang by rail; either via Austrian Rail (Österreichische Bundesbahn – ÖBB) to the nearby Austrian marketing town of Reutte or via Füssen; a large marketing town located directly across the border in Germany. From Reutte or Füssen, one can easily get to Pinswang via brief car, bus or taxi ride. <http://www.oebb.at/>

By car

From Reutte, head north to Pflach and then over the Kniepass to Pinswang. From Füssen one should travel via route 189, passing the former customs building at Weisshaus on the border with Austria or via Schnellstrasse E99 (also known as Route 7) southwest through the tunnel connecting Germany and Austria. There are a gas station and a rest stop with a restaurant on the Austrian side of the tunnel where you can stop for information about Pinswang. Take the first exit after the tunnel, turn left and cross the highway (what used to be E99 (7) in Germany now turns into Schnellstrasse 79 on the Austrian side of the border) and bridge over the Lech River. Turn immediately right onto the small, winding road running parallel with the Lech River. This will take you into Unterpinswang.

Get around

Pinswang is a small enough community such that one can easily explore the village and its environs via bike or walking; a car is not necessary. There are numerous mountain and village trails as well as a country road connecting Unter- and Oberpinswang. You can walk to neighboring Musau by crossing the Lech River via the Ulrichsbrücke. You can also hike to Füssen using several routes. The ancient Roman Road (**Via Claudia**) runs north-south through Pinswang.

Do

Pinswang is a most popular and inexpensive jumping off point for visits to a host of local sites. Many visitors stay in the inns or rent rooms in local homes (see SLEEP below), and from their visit the castles of Bavarian King Ludwig (Neuschwanstein and Hoheschangau) in Füssen, about a 1 to 1.5 hour walk from Pinswang. Hiking there is a

most memorable experience, as you find yourself walking on lovely fairytale forest paths across the border into Germany.

- Visit **Schloß im Loch**, a medieval fortress built into the rock face towering over the foothills between Pinswang and Füssen. Visitors to the Schloß im Loch will find the forested trail leading up to the Schloß located at the Erschbach am Burgschrofen. There you will find a lovely placid pond and an ancient Celtic "mound". If you are in Pinswang in September, don't miss the wonderful **Pinswanger Erschbach Festival**. Attendees will be able to enjoy food and drink of the region, a day of music and a guided tour up to the Schloß im Loch.
- Climb **Säuling** and the other mountains surrounding Pinswang
- Attend a concert of Pinswang's **St. Ulrich's Choir (Ulrichschor)**
- There is a trail starting near Gasthof Schluxen that will take you into the surrounding mountains. It splits into several directions, but two warrant discussion here. The first continues up the mountain to the **Dreiländerecke**, the border meeting point of the previously autonomous regions of the Tirol, Augsburg and Bavaria. The views from there are spectacular. The other fork takes you across the border into Germany (the border patrol shack and gate are still in place). After about a 40-minute walk, the trail will take you to the castles of King Ludwig (**Königsschlösser**), Neuschwanstein and Hohenschwangau. You can then continue along the trail skirting Füssen (**Rote Wand**) that takes you to the Lech River. You can follow the river back into Austria, divert onto a short trail next to the water power plant and head over the **Kratzer** back into Pinswang. Ref: See <http://www.allgaeu-ausfluege.de/alpinrotewand.html> for excellent photos and descriptions of these trails in and around Pinswang (in German)
- Seek out the local mountain refuges and inns including the **Säulinghaus**, **Füssenerhütte**, and the **Otto-Mayer-Hütte**
- Visit the Baroque jewel pilgrimage Church of St. Ulrich (**Ulrichskirche**)
- Attend concerts at **Die Villa**
- Hike the ancient **Via Claudia** that runs North-South through Pinswang
- Swim in the nearby public lakes of Germany: **Alpsee**, **Obersee**, **Mittlerersee**, **Alatsee**
- **Mountain biking**
- Splendid downhill and cross-country **skiing** in the winter
- Hike to the famous original **Lechbrücke**, the old bridge crossing the Lech River
- Explore the **Lech River** that parallels Pinswang
- Attend village band (Musikkapelle) **concerts** at the outdoor stage during the Summer months and in the Gemeindesaal during the Winter (and during inclement Summer weather)
- Attend the much-beloved **Adventsing** at the St. Ulrichskirche (see photo above) in December. Most of the instrumentalists and singers you will hear come from Pinswang and local area villages. **A quick note:** The celebration of Advent and Christmas in Austria is very different from the very lively Christmas celebrations one encounters in the UK and America. In Austria and Bavaria, Advent is a more quiet, contemplative time, and the beautiful music played/sung during Advent reflects this exquisitely peaceful part of the Christmas season.

- If you are in Pinswang during early July, be certain to attend the **Kirchweihfest** that is held on the grounds in front of the Ulrichskirche. After a special Sunday morning Mass (it is recommended to contact the Pinswang Mayor's Office for the time: +435677861312 or buergermeister@pinswang.tirol.gv.at), be prepared to stay for the rest of the day to take part in this cherished tradition. Find yourself a place at any of the many outdoor tables and eat (delicious sausages, schnitzel and incredible homemade cakes (Torte)), drink (beer, schnapps, colas), listen to Tirolen folk music performed by the Pinswang and neighboring Musau Musikkapelle, and enjoy the splendid views of the Pinswang countryside. This is a highly recommended family activity.

Buy

Although there are no souvenir shops in Pinswang, one can purchase books, local folk music compact discs, videotapes and other Pinswang-related articles at the Office of the Mayor (Gemeindeamt). It is located on the main road running through Pinswang, in the same building housing the town elementary school. You can purchase souvenirs and other items about the Tirol and specifically, the Ausserfern part of the Tirol in nearby Reutte.

Eat

You can feast on traditional Tirolean local fare at any of the excellent inns in or near Pinswang.

- **Gasthof zum Schluxen**, Unterpinswang,
- **Gasthof Pension Säuling**, Oberpinswang,

Sleep

Pinswang is the perfect cozy spot to spend one or more restful, quiet evenings. Wake up each morning to a delicious Tirolean breakfast and return that evening after a day filled with adventure. There are a two larger inns, one in Unterpinswang and one in Oberpinswang, as well as a host of homes offering comfortable beds and delicious breakfasts.

Get out

- Visit nearby Reutte, Plfach, Musau and Vils. Whilst in Vils, don't miss visiting the beautiful Church of the Ascension of Mary and the Church of St Anna, the marvelous town museum and the romantic Vilseck ruins.
- From Pinswang, it is a short drive to the major cities of Innsbruck, Munich and Augsburg.

- Take a day trip to the beautiful Bavarian towns of Füssen, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Ettal, Oberammergau. Also, don't miss a trip to Lindau - a jewel located on Lake Constance.
- See Schloss Linderhof, the lesser-known but one of the most elegant of King Ludwig's Bavarian castles. It is located in Graswangtal, near the town of Ettal (where you will find a beautiful Benedictine Abbey).

For more info see: www.wikitravel.org

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