



media information...

Summer 2010

Riding a boat into a nature paradise

More than one hundred years of electric powered cruises and one million echos across Lake Königssee, the jewel of Berchtesgadener Land

There are no trails along the lakeshore: the mighty cliffs of the Berchtesgaden Alps drop almost vertically down to the shores of Königssee, a body of water that reaches a depth of some 200m (660ft). For this reason one has to ride the boat in order to enjoy the impressive landscapes that surround Bavaria's prettiest mountain lake. By so doing, one automatically hears the famed echo...

Listening for the echo is just as much a part of the Lake Königssee cruise as the quiet electric motors that have powered the fleet for over hundred years. In fact, this was thanks to Prince Regent Luitpold who was afraid that noisy boat engines might scare away the red deer from his favourite hunting grounds. On the other hand, Prince Luitpold was not bothered by the tradition of shooting a black-powder saluting gun (Handböller) the echo of which was said to bounce back and forth across the lake seven times. The shooting, however, did bother the nature protection pioneers and was forbidden from the 1930s on.

Thus the saluting shots traditional to Germany's south-eastern tip were replaced by the more melodious sounds of the Flugelhorn, the echo of which is heard once or twice, not seven times. "It all depends on who is playing" says Florian Hallinger (30) who works for the Königssee boat company, just like his father and grandfather before him, "and it varies with the weather."

In high season the fleet's 18 boats run at intervals of roughly 10 minutes and transport as many as 5,000 passengers a day. For Hallinger, it has always been a special privilege to play the Flugelhorn on exclusive evening crossings. "It always creates a romantic atmosphere" according to this Berchtesgadener who knows how to time his musical performance just long enough without getting behind schedule. It's a ten-minute ride to the echo cliff but St Bartholomew Peninsula must be reached within a half-hour from the dock.

St Bartholomew nestles at the foot of the awe-inspiring east face of Mt Watzmann. The Baroque pilgrimage church dedicated to St Bartholomew is world famous for its wine-red onion-capped towers: one of Germany's most photographed sights. Just behind the church stands the former royal hunting lodge, now a restaurant that lures visitors into its historic dining rooms or to spend some relaxing moments in its "*Biergarten*" under shady chestnut trees.

Another recommended stop is at the 400-year-old smokehouse where the lake's sole fisherman follows centuries-old traditions to transform small char into "Schwarzreiter" a beech-smoke specialty found only here on Königssee. Those who wish, can take part in a guided nature walk at St Bartholomew or accompany a National Park ranger on a rare plant and wildlife observation tour. Information to this effect can be found at the National Park information point or on the Internet at www.nationalpark-berchtesgaden.de

A mere 20-minute boat ride takes one to the dock at Salet at the far end of the 8km (5 mile) long Königssee and an entrance into the nature paradise of Berchtesgaden National Park. On the way, a highlight not to be missed is the distant Röhbach Waterfall, one of the highest in Germany, crashing down a cliff some 400m (1320ft) towards Lake Obersee, a body of water that was formed by a moraine that, long ago, cut off the tip of Königssee.

On the return journey the boat may make a halt at Kessel, a request dock. Hikers stop here to start or end their excursion to the idyllically located high mountain pasture called Gotzenalm (1685m). This strenuous but rewarding hike is one of the best in Berchtesgadener Land and affords breathtaking views from a high plateau across to the pyramid-shaped Schönfeldspitze and to the east wall of the towering Mt Watzmann. Those who make the final short ascent to Feuerpalfen viewpoint at 1,700m are well rewarded by storybook views of the shimmering turquoise waters of Königssee and the red onion towers at St Bartholomew.

By the way, vacationers are not the only passengers ferried across Lake Königssee: cows make the crossing as well! Every year they take the boat trip in early summer over to their luscious pastures in the National Park and return to their winter quarters in the valleys at the first signs of frost. As soon as the cows have reached terra firma they are brightly decorated with colourful rosettes, flowers and twigs (provided there has been no mishap during the summer months). This return from pasture, like so many others throughout the region, is a wonderful opportunity for visitors to witness an entertaining and traditional event.

Fares: Round-trip boat rides cost € 13.30 to St Bartholomew and € 16.30 to Salet. Children 6 – 17 pay half-price.

Visitor Information:

Berchtesgadener Land Tourismus GmbH, Bahnhofplatz 4, 83471
Berchtesgaden, Tel.: +49 (0)8652 656500
info@berchtesgadener-land.com, www.berchtesgadener-land.com

Press Contact:

Berchtesgadener Land Tourismus GmbH, Isabel Stöckl / Ursula Wischgoll
Tel +49 (0) 8652 6565030, presse@berchtesgadener-land.com