

# The Bad Kleinkirchheim region: Bathing with culture and tradition



Enjoying the outdoor thermal baths in Bad Kleinkirchheim in 1934 / Photo credit © Ingrid Pertl

## **Bad Kleinkirchheim's beginnings**

The first spa guest was in a hurry: Count Palatine Poto was on the run in 1055 and chose a hiding place, which is still used as a refuge nearly 1,000 years later by many of his descendants – but now it is rather to escape day-to-day life, stress and boredom. In the gentle alpine surroundings of the Nockberge mountains, you will find the idyllic village of Bad Kleinkirchheim, which these days is mainly known as a World Cup skiing venue, thermal spa destination and place of indulgence, which has always provided many wonderful moments of sunshine for its guests. Bad Kleinkirchheim can look back on nearly 1,000 years of history, from the Counts of the Middle Ages to modern-day ski champions, and the focal point is, and has always been, the region's healing thermal water.

Count Palatine Poto was drawn to the water, as he came to appreciate the wound-healing power of the thermal water at a fresh spring in the uninhabited Kirchheim Valley. Word of the beneficial hot springs soon spread, and Bavarians and Slavs settled in the Kirchheim Valley. The name Kleinkirchheim appeared on a document



by Pope Alexander II for the first time in 1177. From 1469 the village was governed by the St. George Knights in Millstatt. There were turbulent times, with attacks by the Turks and Hungarians as well as the peasant uprisings, all shaping the lives of the people there.

The village has always been characterised by the warm water springs there. In order to protect the spring tapping, the Millstatt monastery had a chapel built in 1492 and consecrated it to Saint Katharina. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when a second spring was tapped and its water was directed through a wooden pipeline to a "bathing house" where the water was re-heated and filled into bathtubs, the number of visitors increased. The local priest was instructed to say mass once a day, for the guests' spiritual salvation. In 1762, a bathing prospectus recommended that guests attend a three-week spa treatment. Times remained uneasy – Peasant Wars, invasions by the French, and bad harvests were the scourge of the people. Yet the soothing thermal water remained the basis of the village's history.

### **Kleinkirchheim moves with the times**

For the first time, the people of Kleinkirchheim turned to advertising, and so an advertisement by Josef Michael, the owner of the Kathrein baths, appeared in the Klagenfurt newspaper in 1831: it advertised that a bath in the hut was available for six Kreuzer, or in the pauper room for four Kreuzer. For 10 Kreuzer a day you could "relax" in a stone-walled room. This offer proved exceedingly popular. The first brochure from the municipality of Kleinkirchheim, which was founded in 1850, already shows "12 rooms for bathing guests" in 1884. The Ronacher family purchased a bathhouse for 30,000 Kronen in 1908. And, in 1928, the Pulverer family laid the foundations for their success with the opening of a small inn. Both businesses are still flourishing, family-run enterprises today.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century dawned – and Kleinkirchheim often kept one step ahead of the times. In 1934, the first outdoor thermal pool was opened. Two years later, the municipality with its 1,100 inhabitants already had 400 guest beds to offer. In 1956, the first ski lift was put into operation. With its 620 metres it was the longest of its kind in Carinthia at that time. In 1969, the people of Kleinkirchheim celebrated the opening of their indoor thermal pool. The re-naming to "Kleinkirchheim – Bad" (bath or spa) had taken place in 1935 and, in 1957, it finally became official: Bad Kleinkirchheim made it on to the village sign. In 1977, the Carinthian provincial government awarded the village the title of "thermal spa". In 1978, the first thermal spa resort in Austria opened, the Thermal Römerbad.



### **Special moments of sunshine: sport and relaxation**

First the exertion, then the reward: in the thermal region of Bad Kleinkirchheim, after an active day you can take a deep breath and relax – moments of sunshine all day long. The focus was never just on wellness (even before the term itself had actually been invented), but it was also on establishing the area as a venue for sporting events. In this respect, it is inextricably linked to one name: Franz Klammer. In 1971, he won his first European Cup downhill ski race on the Kirchheim K70 course. A star was born – in Bad Kleinkirchheim and for Bad Kleinkirchheim. These days, the Carinthian world star (since his Olympic win in the downhill in Innsbruck in 1976) is still a very popular ambassador for the World Cup location. In 1978, Bad Kleinkirchheim became a World Cup ski race venue for the first time and, by 1981, the municipality had become an internationally known destination with almost 930,000 overnight stays.

Further development was also made in the sporting realm: in 1983, the first artificial snowmaking machine was put into operation. In 1986, Bad Kleinkirchheim opened its 18-hole golf course, and the Ski World Cup was once again held here in 1988, this time with a men's slalom and a victory by Alberto Tomba. In 1993, the double chairlift on the Strohsack was put into operation. Under steady expansion and development, the Bad Kleinkirchheim ski region now has around 100 kilometres of slopes – nearly 100 percent of them can be covered with snowmaking facilities – and it is a modern arena for every requirement, even for the most athletic of events. In 2003, 32 years after his first European Cup victory in the downhill race on the old "K70", the village's famous ambassador received his own race course – the "Kärnten – Franz Klammer" World Cup downhill piste, on which World Cup ski races are held again. The Klammer-Stich is a particularly demanding section with a 34.7 degree incline.

### **Moments of sunshine for spa lovers**

Bad Kleinkirchheim has two thermal spas: the Thermal Römerbad, which was reopened in autumn 2007 following extensive renovation and expansion, and the St. Kathrein family and health thermal spa, which was reopened in autumn 2017 following comprehensive renovation. In the Römerbad you will find three storeys with an impressive, restorative sauna and wellness world. You can also re-charge your batteries in one of the free workshops, which take place in the meditation room, or you can let the "Aromaticum" carry you off into the world of fragrances and essential oils. The pools in the St. Kathrein family and health thermal spa boast the largest surface area of any Carinthian thermal spa, and the 86-metre long slide is one of the longest in the country. So it's no wonder that young and old children all love the fun that can be had here. But don't worry, there are also plenty of chances to relax. Be it in the wellness pool with its



panoramic views, in the Swiss pine relaxation room with its sun terrace, or in the diverse sauna world.

**Information:**

Nicole Kari

Presse und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit

Millstätter See - Bad Kleinkirchheim - Nockberge

Tourismusmanagement GmbH

Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Straße 49 | AT - 9872 Millstatt am See

T: +43-4766-3700-12 H: +43-664-181 79 22 E: [presse@mbn-tourismus.at](mailto:presse@mbn-tourismus.at)

[millstaettersee.com](http://millstaettersee.com) | [badkleinkirchheim.at](http://badkleinkirchheim.at) | [nockberge.at](http://nockberge.at)