

# The Way of St. James

The cathedral in the Spanish city of Santiago de Compostela has been one of the major objects of pilgrimage in European Christianity since the Early Middle Ages. Millions of people have traveled the various routes marked by the scallop shell, the traditional emblem of St. James, over the past centuries to seek forgiveness or mercy at the tomb of St. James in the cathedral. The Camino Frances, extending for 780 kilometers from St. Jean-Pied-de-Port to Santiago de Compostela, is one of the most prominent of these routes. The distance from Vienna to Santiago is 3200 kilometers. In 1987 the historical Way of St. James from the Pyrenees to Santiago was declared the first European Cultural Route.



St. James from Compostela  
Wooden Statue from 1515/20, originally  
from the chapel of Wolfstein castle,  
since 1620 owned by Göttweig  
Göttweig Abbey - Museum im Kaisertrakt  
Foto: Bildarchiv Stift Göttweig/Tourismus

# The Pilgrimage with Paulo Coelho

The renowned writer Paulo Coelho, born in Brazil in 1947, bridges all cultural and social divides with his stories of the spiritual quest for the meaning of life.

In his international bestseller *The Pilgrimage*, Coelho describes his journey to Santiago de Compostela not as a mere pilgrimage but as a truly initiatory experience. He undertook the trip at the suggestion of a member of a Catholic brotherhood he was studying with at the time, the ancient R.A.M. Order (Rigor, Adoration, Mercy). This experience should be passed on to the pilgrim while using the exercises, suggested by Paulo Coelho.

# The Way of St. James in Austria

Coming from Hungary and the Slovak Republic, the Austrian portion of the Way of St. James begins at the Hainburger Pforte water gap. From there, it follows the course of the Danube upstream along the remnants of the old Roman Limes Road, through Vienna, Linz and Innsbruck and on to Feldkirch. The way leads to Switzerland, where Maria Einsiedeln, a famous meeting point of the Santiago pilgrims, marks the next important step of the pilgrimage. It is here that the historical "Oberstrass" (the High Road) begins.



Among the magnificent monasteries and churches along this route there are the two famous Benedictine abbeys of Göttweig and Melk. They are about 50 kilometers apart. The two Benedictine abbeys mark the endpoints of the scenic Wachau section of the Danube Valley – a UNESCO World Heritage Landscape since 2000 – and are certainly two of the most important stations of the Way of St. James in Austria.

# Österreichischer Jakobsweg

Section  
Göttweig-Melk



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# Österreichischer Jakobsweg

Abschnitt  
Göttweig-Melk

## road description

Our starting point is the Abbey of Göttweig, often called "Austria's Montecassino" in an allusion to the Italian abbey where the Benedictine Order originated.



The Baroque abbey complex was built by the architect Johann Lucas von Hildebrandt to replace an older monastery on the same site which was destroyed by fire in 1718.

Göttweig

It was founded by St. Altmann, bishop of Passau, in 1083, and was bequeathed to the Benedictines in 1094. We set off on our journey by taking the Way of St. James down the abbey hill to Aigen (path no. 475). Now we cross the railroad tracks and walk through narrow passes and over a plateau on the left, passing by Furth. We proceed on asphalted paths through the lush vineyards to Mautern.

Before reaching the barracks in Mautern, we turn left and go through the lovely town.

Returning to the road (path no. 06), we proceed to Mauternbach. As we leave that town, we turn to the right and ascend the steep path to the "Ferdinandswarte" (Ferdinand's Outlook). We are on a section of the Roman Road, also known as the Limes Road. The Roman Museum Mautern houses well-preserved finds from this period.



In Roman and Carolingian times, Mautern was always a crossroads of important trade routes. In a document from 903, the "Raffelstett Customs Regulations", the town is referred to as a toll and customs station. The German word for toll is "Maut" and the town derives its name from this function. Mautern is also mentioned in the Lay of the Nibelungs (circa 1200) as "Mutaren". In 1463 a wooden bridge was built across the Danube at this point, the second on Austrian territory after Vienna. The town's coat-of-arms featuring the Passau wolf was bequeathed to Mautern in 1467 by Emperor Friedrich III.

Mautern

Following the clearly marked trail, we pass the junctions to the Ferdinandswarte and Unterbergern. Just before reaching Oberbergern, we can either continue straight, in the direction of Maria Langegg or to Oberbergern (path no. 06) and treat ourselves to a rest stop at the local country inn.



About 1 kilometer down the road, there is a fork in the Way of St. James. Turn around here and you can enjoy a wonderful view of the Abbey of Göttweig.

After a pleasant rest, we walk on the path B20 and enter the mystic forest depths of the Dunkelsteinerwald.

The pilgrim route takes us past the "Seven Tombstones", believed by some to mark burial mounds dating to Illyrian Celtic times, and the "Red Cross", an old shrine of the type seen throughout Austria. From there, we proceed to Schoberstein and



Originally built in the early 12th c, the fortress was destroyed in the Turkish siege of 1529 and rebuilt in Renaissance style.

Aggstein

in the forest, passing by the "Kastlkreuz" to Maria Langegg, a local place of pilgrimage. Leaving Maria Langegg, we pick up the popular hiking trail 653 leading to the Aggstein fortress ruins. (path 653, 05).

After a brief rest taking in the magnificent views, we descend again to the Danube Valley. Before reaching the village of Aggsbach, we turn left and walk to Aggsbach Dorf via the

### The Name "Wolfstein"

Legend has it that St. Wolfgang stopped to sit on this rock and eat his meager midday meal on a trek through the valley. But sparrows and magpies swooped down and snatched the bread right out of his mouth. Furious, he jumped up and stomped on the rock with his foot leaving a footprint on its surface which can still be seen today. He cursed the birds and banned them for all eternity from the rift-valley. And in actual fact this area has no magpies at all.

Wolfstein



The pilgrimage to Maria Langegg took on great significance under the Servite convent, which was put in charge of the site in the mid-1600s. The chapel, built in 1605 as a sacred monument to the healing of the sick, was expanded in the Baroque period. The church "Maria - Salvation for the Sick" soon became known as a place where prayers were answered and miraculous cures occurred.

Ma. Langegg

Herrnplatzl (path no. 653). There we turn to the left, following the sign to Kreuzberg (path B10). Kreuzberg commands a fine panoramic view of the area, here is arranged a moon sculpture.

As we continue along the pilgrim route, we remain mostly

in the forest, passing by the "Kastlkreuz" to Maria Langegg, a local place of pilgrimage. Leaving Maria Langegg, we pick up the popular hiking trail 653 leading to the Aggstein fortress ruins. (path 653, 05).

The hammer forge is a museum today and features demonstrations of 19th c forging techniques. The Carthusian monastery was built from 1373 to 1380 and is dedicated to St. Bruno. The on-site museum documents the life of this saint, the history and work of the Carthusian Order, and the history of the Carthusian Monastery in Aggsbach.

Aggsbach

"Hartl". Now the route no. 653 takes us near a hammer forge and the Carthusian monastery of Aggsbach. We go through the Wolfsteingraben rift-valley to Wolfstein, which owed his name by an ancient legend (more details on the left side).

At the edge of the village, we bear to the right and traverse the Rain Valley to Gerolding. (path no. 653).

The path now takes us along the road through Hohenwarth and on to Schönbüchel (path no. 653, 05). Schönbüchel Castle and the Danube River can be seen from afar.

About 1 kilometer off the track the Servite monastery from the 17th century is located.

The pilgrim route then takes us past Schönbüchel Castle and to the left through the town. On leaving Schönbüchel, we trek up a steep hill to "Hub" (path no. 05), where our efforts are re-

### Servite monastery

Around 1667 the pious Count Conrad Balthasar of Starhemberg selected this spot to build a chapel on the rock, modeled on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

Count Conrad Balthasar was also set on building a church dedicated to the birth of Christ: In 1675 a church was erected precisely after the plans of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on the rock cliffs under the Church of the Holy Sepulcher to create a sacred ensemble that remains unique throughout Europe.

Schönbüchel

warded with a view of the magnificent Abbey of Melk. After crossing the confluence of the Pielach and the rocky slope of the "Steinwandleiten", we have only a short climb up the hill to the Abbey of Melk.

In Melk we can review the wonderful yet strenuous pilgrim route we have just covered, through the mystically tranquil and beautiful Dunkelsteinerwald between the two Baroque monasteries of Göttweig and Melk.



The Babenberg Leopold I, a margrave selected the fortress in Melk as his residence and his successors showered Melk with valuable treasures and relics. In 1089, Margrave Leopold II bequeathed the fortress to Benedictine monks from Lambach. The Benedictines have lived and worked here without interruption ever since in accordance with the Rule of St. Benedict.

Melk

- The Way of St. James, Section Göttweig-Melk
- The Way of St. James, "short-cuts" for pilgrims in haste (see "Auf dem Jakobsweg durch Österreich" by P. Lindenthal)
- hiking trail numbers
- accommodation
- gastronomy
- Position of the excercises by Paulo Coelho

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**Fam. Ringseis**, Aggsstein Nr. 21, Tel. +43 (0)2753 8428  
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**Gasthaus Pension „Zur Kartause“**, Aggsbach 38  
 Tel. +43 (0)2753 8243, pilgrims special offer: B&B EUR 25,-  
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**Maria Langegg**  
**Gemeinschaft der Seligpreisungen**, Ma. Langegg Nr. 1  
 Accommodation for pilgrims only. Sleeping bag required.  
 For advance reservation call Tel. +43 (0)2753 393

**Oberbergern**  
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**Gasthof-Pension „Zum goldenen Hirschen“**,  
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**Schenkenbrunn**  
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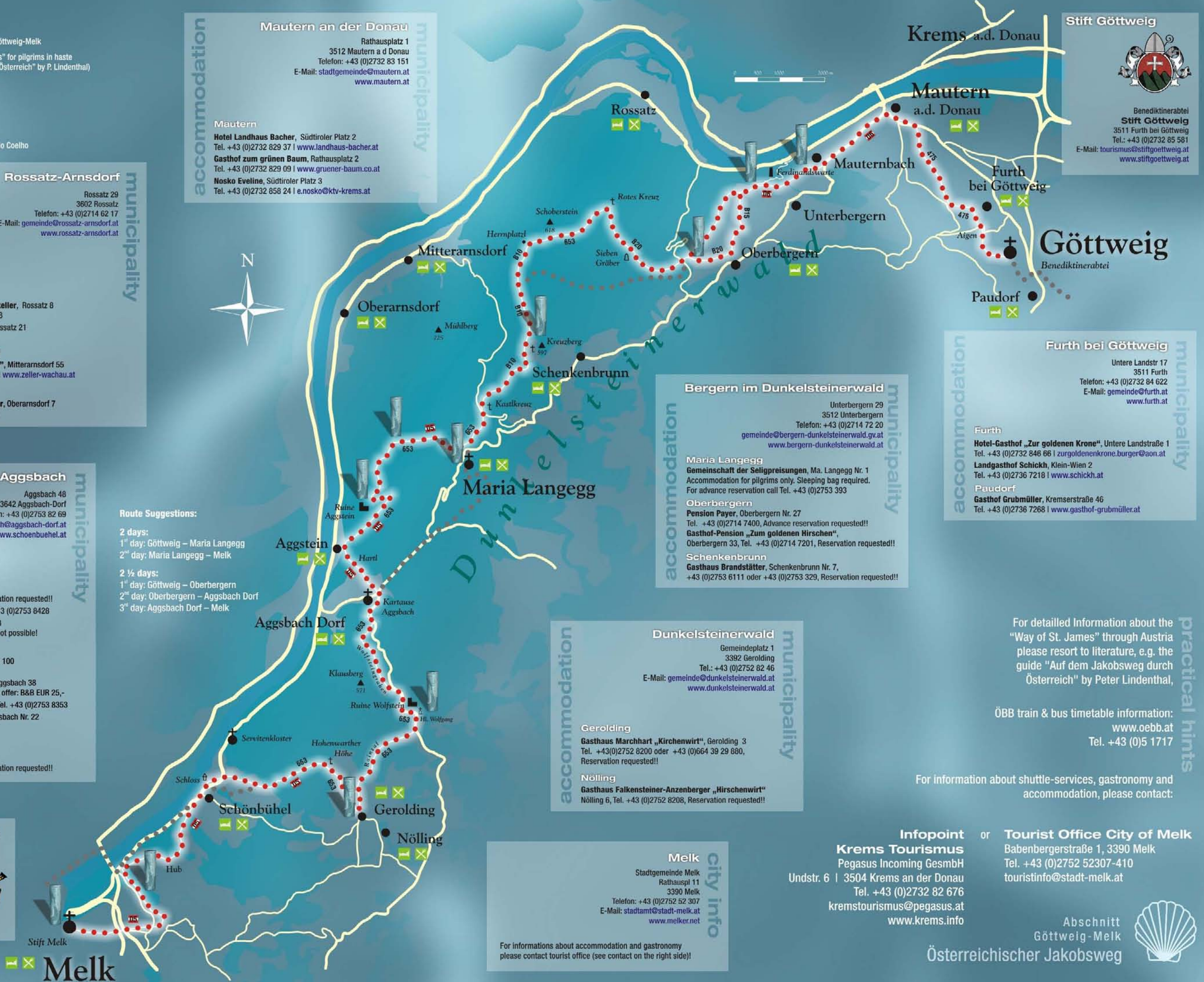
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For informations about accommodation and gastronomy please contact tourist office (see contact on the right side)!



**Route Suggestions:**  
**2 days:**  
 1<sup>st</sup> day: Götweig – Maria Langegg  
 2<sup>nd</sup> day: Maria Langegg – Melk  
**2 ½ days:**  
 1<sup>st</sup> day: Götweig – Oberbergern  
 2<sup>nd</sup> day: Oberbergern – Aggsbach Dorf  
 3<sup>rd</sup> day: Aggsbach Dorf – Melk

For detailed Information about the "Way of St. James" through Austria please resort to literature, e.g. the guide "Auf dem Jakobsweg durch Österreich" by Peter Lindenthal,

ÖBB train & bus timetable information:  
[www.oebb.at](http://www.oebb.at)  
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For information about shuttle-services, gastronomy and accommodation, please contact:

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