

It's a Kinder surprise

Hills are alive with the sound of children - and there's plenty for adults too

ON a recent trip to Austria we found that the hills are actually alive with the sound of children.

We took a trip to the Austrian Alps for a five day family holiday in one of the countries many 'Kinder hotels'.

The concept is simple. Instead of a hotel for adults with a few things to do for the kids, this is a hotel for kids which happens to have a lot for adults too.

Kids rule in these hotels and in ours there seemed to be an endless amount of play parks, indoor and out, as well as bikes, go-karts, trampolines and even a small cinema.

Add to that three pools - including one heated indoor and one heated outdoor - and you have a complete set.

If anything there was too much to do for our three year old as he couldn't sit still enough to eat a full meal because he had hectic plans of his own!

There are fully trained child carers (with excellent English) who run a range of fun activities for kids of all ages meaning mum and dad can do something completely different altogether.

The hotel boasts a first class spa and wellness centre - which is only for mums and dads - possibly, as we found out because the sauna, steam and solarium are clothe free zones!

Even during dinner time the kids have the option to enjoy themed dinners together so parents can relive what it's like to have a romantic candlelit meal without little Johnny demanding ice-cream before the starters have

arrived.

Our particular hotel was the Family Egger Hotel in Hintertglemm, set 1000 metres above sea level in the stunning scenery of the Alps.

Around 50 km from Salzburg and roughly the same distance to Innsbruck it's a great base for day trips in case you get bored of the breathtaking scenery.

We flew to Munich direct from Belfast and hired a car. The journey was only a couple of hours and the roads in both Germany and Austria are superb and open up a large part of central Europe for tourists.

A day trip to Salzburg, the home of Mozart, is strongly advised and if you have a sweet tooth you must try out their famous afternoon teas with their pick of sticky and creamy buns and cakes.

If you are completely mad you could take a four hour Sound of Music tour which takes you to all the main scenes.

Only about 15 km from Hintertglemm is Zell Am See which is an enormous and stunning lake surrounded by mountains and supported by a small but pretty tourist town.

But if you don't have a car, don't worry, the resort of Hintertglemm has plenty to do and is well serviced by public transport.

The hotel is right in the middle of the village which in winter is a superb ski resort and by summer is swarmed by hikers - of all ages - armed with Nordic walking poles.

Whether you come in winter or summer the village has plenty of bars and restaurants to rest aching limbs and during our stay there was no end of traditional festivals complete with lederhosen clad dancers and yodels.



Above: The outdoor pool at the Family Egger Hotel in Hintertglemm and below, kids can have fun in the baby club

We took one of the many cable cars in the areas to the top of the nearest peak, the Schattberg, which happened to be over 2000 metres above sea level. Slieve Donard is a mere 800 metres so you get the idea.

Not surprisingly the views at the top were truly breathtaking with dozens of snow-capped mountain peaks in clear view - but thankfully no Julie Andrews.

Well mapped out hiking trails from the top of the Schattberg offer walkers enough variety to keep you occupied for several days but if walking is a little pedestrian for you then you could always hire a free ride mountain bike and hurtle your way to the bottom.

And with it being Austria there was also at least three different play parks at the top along with a large and well stocked bar/restaurant resulting in happy kids and well refreshed parents.

On our way back to Munich we spent a few nights in the Bavarian Alps where we took a trip to Hitler's Eagle's Nest and spent a cou-



ple of nights in the beer capital itself which was mightily impressive, hic.

Nights in the Family Egger Hotel start at 67Euro per person per night in a double room but remember all your meals are included in the price and the hotel offers several packages.



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