

To Future Bavarian Traveler:

This short note is to encourage you to release all doubt and book your tour with Astrid Baur. Get rid of all previous thoughts and notions about “rigid schedules” while traveling on a tour, the “dangers” of privately owned or small tour companies, and the “insecurity” of having a woman lead you around a country. Astrid comes so highly recommended that there are barely words enough to convey that thought to you.

Astrid is not your average woman leading a group of people. She has an easy going, quiet and friendly countenance that makes her very approachable. Having literally grown up in the shadow of Neuschwanstein, she is a wonderful storyteller who can pass on the knowledge of rulers, Bavarian history and German trivia painlessly. All the while knowing when it is just fine to let the passengers on the bus look out the window or sleep. That is not a balance in judgment I have seen very often on previous tours. By the end of the tour you really will feel like you “spent 6 months there one week.” I know I left *knowing* a lot of the inner workings of a fascinating country and why they do some of the things they do. It was not a list you could learn from a textbook or travel brochure, but *real life* in Bavaria.

We were at all times safe, relaxed and eager to follow our leader, because she led with such ease and much caring about the opinions of her group and what we wanted to accomplish while in her country. She even went so far as to warn us of steep hikes and stairways so we weren't surprised physically. If we ran into unexpected traffic or the weather was going to make a section of the tour less enjoyable, she was quick to change plans or locations and rearrange our days so we still covered our path, but in a way that was the most enjoyable for us. Her knowledge of every road in and out of the area was inexhaustible and we were amazed with the way a one hour ride was still a one hour ride, even though the location was on the opposite side of a mountain or valley. Her driver, Hans, was excellent and an extremely safe driver. Even mountain passes were lovely and carefree with him at the wheel.

The answer to “why this tour?” is this; I think it was one of the most comprehensive overviews of an area that has so much to offer. Visiting the places that all travel books highlight while enjoying scenery that went from Alpen peaks to quiet forests, bustling cities to quaint towns, rolling valleys to rolling rivers was almost too much for any camera. Summer weather that gave us rain, sunshine *and* snow but still managed great temperatures proved her wardrobe suggestions to be totally accurate and complete. The food everywhere was wonderful, and we were guaranteed a great start to the day with our morning breakfast. Astrid learned enough about us to know that she had a café group and made sure we had many opportunities to explore cafes, bakeries and strong German coffee. Add to all of this that there is virtually no language barrier-practically everyone I did business with or bumped into spoke English.

Rest assured, booking one of Astrid's tours will not disappoint you, rather leave you longing for another visit and wishing you could replenish your travel budget more quickly so you can get back before the memories fade too much. Please feel free to contact me through Astrid if you have any questions or want to hear more about what “an average day” was like.

Sincerely,  
Suzanne Handley