

# HOHE TAUERN N.P., AUSTRIA

10<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> June 2023

7 nights, £2700

*co-lead with*

WILLI ROLFES

FOOD AND  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
RETREATS

*with the Benches*

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General information



*The high Alps,  
marmots, flowers and  
waterfalls.*



## THE RETREAT

**F**OOD AND PHOTOGRAPHY RETREATS are for people who enjoy a house-party style of holiday in a lovely setting where they can immerse themselves totally in photography, mix with like-minded guests—and eat very well too. We're free of the restrictions of hotels and work mealtimes around photography, rather than vice-versa. If you're weary of being herded from one "photo-opportunity" to another and want the time and space to make your own work, then our Retreats are for you.

This seven night summer Retreat is based at [Oberer Gollmitzer](#), a lovely Austrian chalet sitting high above the village of Heiligenblut in the southern Alps. Charlotte and her team will look after you and provide you with lovely meals, as well as joining us in the field whenever possible. From here, we have easy access, via the [Großglockner Hochalpenstraße](#), to one of the most spectacular mountain landscapes in Europe. There are plenty of interesting spots we know and places to pull in!

Co-leader, well-known German photographer, Willi Rolfes, is very familiar with this area and will help you get close to marmots, ibex and alpine chough. We'll also lead you to our favourite waterfalls and alpine meadows. The Alps is a rapidly changing environment but there is still an opportunity to enjoy the high alpine biome on this Retreat, while reflecting on its fragility.



## WHAT'S ON OFFER

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED in learning one of the [particular skills](#) Niall is known for (including field studio photography, "Colour Transects" or "Chocolate Bars"), take an eLearning class before the Retreat and have a chance to practise what you've learned, with him in the field. During the Retreat, we'll take time to look at each other's work, discuss it and offer informed critique. Subjects we can work with include:

- Marmots. Here, they are habituated to people and will allow a close approach. Bring a wide angle!
- Ibex. Normally shy, these icons of the Alps are more tolerant of people than normal here, often giving the opportunity for some striking portraits.
- Mountain landscapes. From grand vistas featuring ice-honed summits and glaciers to alpine meadows, the Hohe Tauern is the largest Alpine National Park and features every upland landscape type.
- Alpine flowers and butterflies. It's still early in the season so expect the first flush of exquisite alpines, in rare abundance.
- Lush coniferous forests lower down with streams and woodland plants including Martagon lily.
- A cultural landscape shaped by traditional farming practices where hay is still cut by hand with a scythe.



## ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

**Y**OUR ACCOMMODATION WILL BE in the [Oberer Gollmitzer](#), a traditional alpine chalet providing comfortable modern accommodation. surrounded by hay meadows and forests. Have a look at their website (click on the name above) to see the accommodation and setting. On a south-facing slope, It is situated above the attractive village of Heiligenblut, dominated by the striking Church of St Vicent. In the background is Austria's highest peak, *Grossglockner* that rises to 3798 m (12,460 feet). It is a truly spectacular base for our stay.

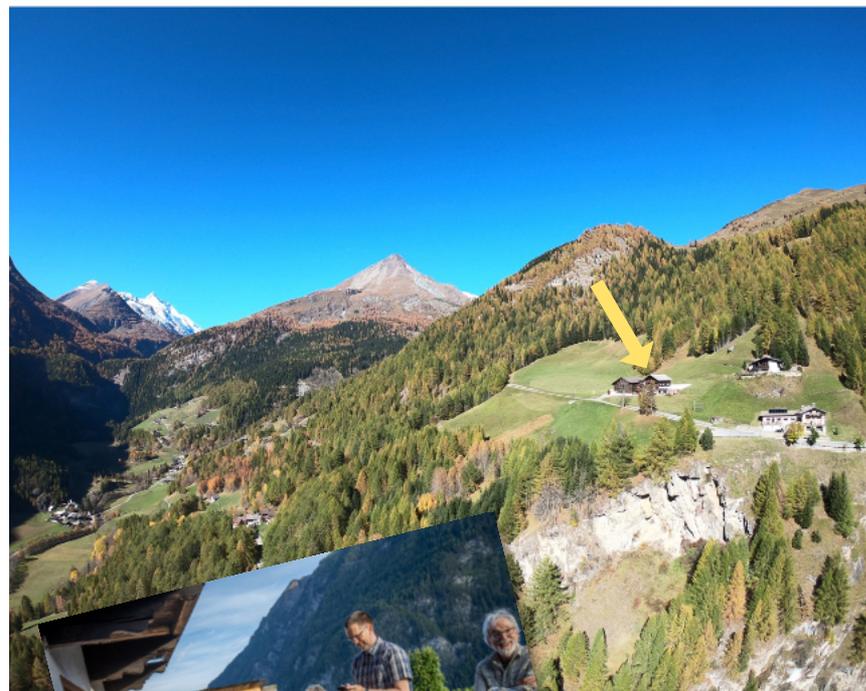
We don't make a charge for single occupancy of the rooms and we will be the only people using this family-owned property.

Good food is at the heart of our Retreats, from breakfast through to after-dinner chocolates, all made by Charlotte. We take the view that any day is made better by the prospect of a lovely meal at the end of it. We

eat mainly vegetarian food at home but the range broadens to encompass all tastes on Retreat. Charlotte uses local ingredients, when they are available, in dishes that are delicious and imaginative without being fussy. Food allergies and intolerances are catered for sensitively when notified in advance on the booking form. Expect to eat well, for breakfast, lunch and dinner. And in between times too.

Most of your evening meals will be taken at the Oberer Gollmitzer and it may be warm enough to eat outside from time to time. When our dawn destination is a little further than usual from our base, we will have a snack before we leave and eat breakfast on return. Since it's summer, we'll normally have lunch in. Either way, our meals are fitted in around our photography

While we don't provide wine or other alcohol, there will be opportunity to buy it locally.



*Our guest house sits above the valley but is only a 10 minutes from the village by car.*

from the kitchen of  
Charlotte

## MENU

New season asparagus salad with  
herbed crème fraîche

Herb-stuffed side of salmon with  
new potatoes, roasted vine  
tomatoes and fresh greens

Seasonal fruit crumbles with  
vanilla ice cream boule

Tea or coffee and chocolates



## HOHE TAUERN

The Hohe Tauern is famed as the largest national park in the Alps, extending to almost 1900 sq. km. Of this, around two-thirds is strictly protected, where no economic development is allowed. It boasts more than 300 peaks over 3000 m and rises, at its highest point, to the summit of *Glassglockner*, at 3798 m. There are waterfalls and alpine lakes, pastures and alpine wildflower meadows. Over 330 glaciers cover 126 sq. km, although they are shrinking by the year. Its biological richness and integrity helped to gain it a Category II IUCN listing 20 years ago, marking it out as a national park of international significance. This is important not only for the 3 500 plant and 15 000 or so animal species (mostly invertebrates) that are found in the Park but for the economic welfare of the people who live outside the strictly protected core region.

Importantly for us, some of the most interesting and charismatic species are easily accessible, meaning less time hiking and more time photographing. If we're lucky we may also have a chance to photograph one of the bearded vultures re-introduced into the Park, originally, in 1986 or the more numerous griffon vultures.

This Retreat isn't only about wildlife photography and the Park's extraordinary features has plenty to keep the landscape photographer busy too.





# GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE RETREAT

**Price: GBP 2700, 10<sup>th</sup>- 17<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

## What's included:

- 7 nights' accommodation at [Ferienhof "Oberer Gollmitzer"](#), Untertauern 1, 9844 Heiligenblut am Großglockner, Austria
- All meals during the Retreat
- Transfer from and to Mallnitz Obervellach railway station
- Transportation and tolls during the Retreat
- Guiding and tuition from Willi Rolfes and Niall Benvie.

## What's not included:

- Your travel to and from Mallnitz Obervellach railway station
- Alcoholic drinks
- Travel insurance

- Admissions to attractions not mentioned here
- Any statutory COVID tests.

## Where we will go:

- Most of our photography will be done within a 40 minute drive of our base. We will use sections of the famous Großglockner High Alpine Road to access spectacular views of the mountains, as well as the get to the alpine animals and plants this Park is famous for. So, there will be a combination of short drives and relatively easy walking, generally of less than two km.
- We will make short excursions on foot to the woods and meadows around the house, as well as round the nearby village of Heiligenblut. There is plenty of scope for undisturbed hiking from the house.
- FWe will visit two waterfalls and their woodlands each within ten

minute's drive of of the village. The climbs to the waterfalls are quite taxing, but the distances are short. and there are riverside alternatives if you don't fancy the climb.

## The daily routine

Whatever we are shooting, it tends to look better in the early morning or late afternoon when low angled light shows relief and colours better. With dawn at around 05:30 and the sun leaving the summits at just after 21:00, it's potentially a long day. But if we shoot at dawn, there will be a chance rest after breakfast. We will have lunch in, then set off again. If we are going out for an evening shoot, we will eat dinner early, at about 17:30.

The plan for the following day is published at dinner, outlining the weather forecast, the locations and ideas for the next day, drive times, walking distances, where and when we'll eat and what gear you'll probably need. Experience has taught

that it's more productive, and satisfactory for you, to have a plan to follow than make it up as we go along. The dinner menu is published at breakfast time so that you have a chance to flagup if there is something planned that you really can't manage to eat.

We've learned over the years, too, just how much guests value being able to discuss the work they are creating, with Niall and other guests and to this end, we'd urge you to bring a laptop. Nowadays, we set up a Zoom meeting within the room to share our pictures; it's a convenient way to create a temporary network.

## Safety

We take your safety seriously during our Retreats. At locations with known risks - such as drop-offs, slippery tree-roots, busy roads etc., we will draw your attention to them before we leave the vehicle. Thereafter, you are responsible for your own safety. We provide guests with

a hi-vis- vest to attach to their camera pack—it makes you, and it, easier to locate. We also issue each guest with a two-way radio in order that we all may keep in touch in town or in other areas where the group scatters. This also makes it easier to access help or guidance from Niall. We do not recommend leaving any equipment in our vehicle when parked up away from our guest house. While there is a little more walking than on some of our Retreats, we take it at a comfortable pace. Two guides opens the possibility to split the group into the energetic and less so, should we need to..

### **COVID**

Each guest is required to have completed a course of vaccinations and have a booster at least two weeks before the start of the Retreat. Depending on the progression of the pandemic at that time, we may ask you to wear a mask when we are travelling in the vehicle. We may provide hand sanitiser at entry

points to our accommodation but ask you to bring your own supply of masks and hand sanitiser. See our Terms and Conditions for more COVID-specific information.

### **Travel**

Our pick up and return point for guests who are not driving is the Mallnitz-Obervellach Bahnhof (railway station), about one hour from our base. If you are flying to Austria, we recommend that you go into Innsbruck, take a taxi to the main railway station (Hbf), then a train to Mallnitz. But you can also do so from Salzburg. And there is a rail link from München to Mallnitz Obervellach. If you wish to drive, then set your Sat. Nav. for Heiligenblut am Großglockner, 9844, Austria. Once in the village, turn off towards the Panoramahotel Lärchenhof and follow the road past it (even although it looks like a dead end on approach). Zig zag through the forest on the single track road for about another few km, following the signs for Ferienhof Oberer Gollmitzer. Allow 10 - 15 minutes.

### **Spending money**

You can use your credit card to withdraw €'s in the local towns should you need to buy extra props, pay for admissions—or even to buy wine.

### **Insurance**

It is a requirement of booking that guests provide evidence of personal travel insurance to cover cancellation and curtailment, medical and emergency expenses (including repatriation), personal accident, injury and death in addition to loss of/damage to luggage and possessions, personal possessions and flight cancellations/ delays. We recommend you speak to your travel insurer to determine what COVID-related cover they provide.

### **Passport and visa requirements**

A passport valid for at least six months beyond the length of stay is required. No visa necessary for EEA/ Swiss citizens. UK citizens should check on the latest requirements for travelling to mainland Europe. If you

are a British driver, you may need an international driving permit. And all non-Austrian drivers need to display a vignette on their car windscreen.

### **Language**

The German-speaking Austrian owner of the guest house also speaks English, as does Willi.

### **Climate**

We're arriving near the start of the official "summer" season but owing to the altitude, and in spite of the often sunny conditions, we can expect daytime temperatures not to exceed 20°C

### **Clothing**

It will certainly be cool in the early morning and in the woods so bring an extra, lightweight layer of clothing. In addition to your normal casual clothes:

- Lightweight trousers or shorts

- A thermal under-layer
- Long sleeved shirt/tee-shirt
- Light wool jumper
- Lightweight waterproof jacket and trousers
- Walking boots in addition to trail shoes
- Sun hat and sun screen
- Light-weight warm hat
- Pair of light gloves
- Light scarf or buff to protect your neck from the sun
- Slippers for the house

### Photographic equipment

Bring as much of your photographic equipment as practical. You could end up using any of it, although real-

istically, a macro lens and mid-range zoom and longer telephoto will receive most use. For bird photography, bring the longest lens you have (although both the choughs and marmots are approachable, snow finches less so). Also:

- Ideally, a laptop with your usual processing software
- A tripod: there's no avoiding it!
- If you can, a beanbag to support a long lens for wildlife photography
- A remote release
- A means of backing up your images, such as a large capacity memory stick
- A head torch in case we're out after dark
- A rain-cover and towel to dry the camera.

### About us

After many years leading tours and workshops for other companies in the UK and abroad, we established Food and Photography Retreats in 2018. Our offer combines cultivating your photography in attractive locations with great hospitality, conversation and food.

**Niall** has been a professional photographer, writer designer and guide for 29 years with a massive publication record including six books and hundreds of articles. He has been involved in several of the biggest outdoor photographic initiatives of the last decade, including **Meet Your Neighbours, Wild Wonders of Europe and 2020VISION**.

For 28 years, **Charlotte** combined a career in the Civil Service with freelance catering and hosting roles before coming to work with husband, Niall. Guests value not only

her expertise in the kitchen and dining room but her attention to detail and her warmth. She has a keen eye for a picture too. She is a trained chocolatier.

Lower Saxony-based, [Willi Rolfes](#), is Director of the Catholic Academy of Stapelfeld, Clopenburg but also a highly accomplished and widely published photographer with 20 books to his credit and has worked with Niall and Charlotte previously.

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