



Oberammergau 2022

The Decennial Passion Play in Bavaria

24–30 May 2022 (M1 370)

7 days • £3,240

Lecturer: Tom Abbott

19–25 July 2022 (M1 430)

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This unique and moving event has taken place nearly every ten years since 1634.

Best seats and best available hotel nearby.

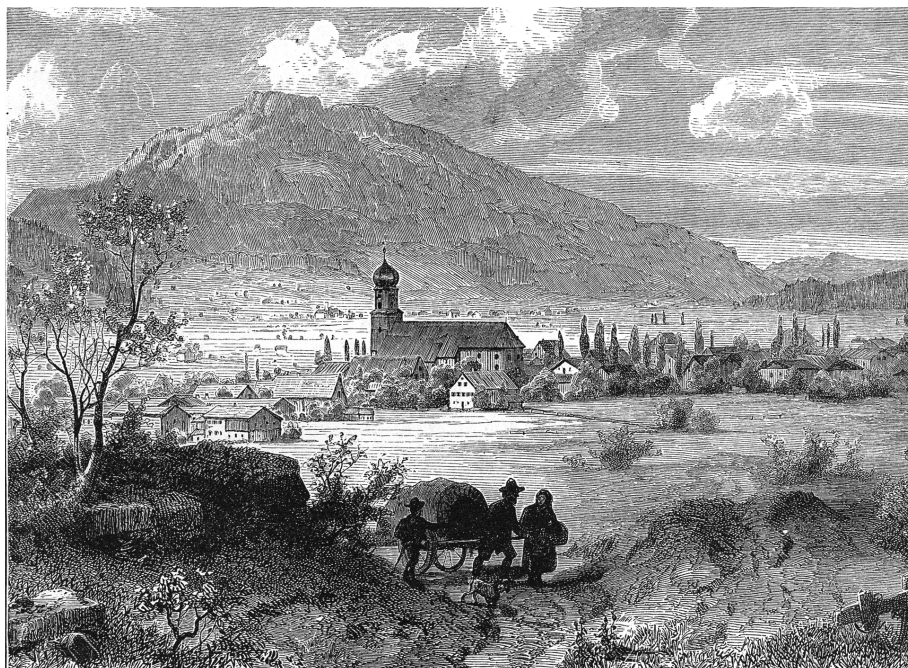
Preceded by several days based in Munich seeing some of Bavaria's finest art and architecture, towns and villages of Germany's most beautiful state. Theatrical spectacle or religious ritual? Living drama or a 376-year-old tradition? High art of international significance or a community-based amateur production? A world-famous tourist attraction or a sincerely felt devotional act of real local importance?

The Oberammergau Passion Play is all of these. Moreover, in each of the categories suggested, it towers above most or all of its fellows. Oberammergau is unique; it is rare (miss this and wait until 2030); and it is an exceptional and moving experience.

The drama has its origins in the Plague, coupled with the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), a protracted and devastating series of conflicts during which the population of much of Germany was reduced by half and many of the survivors reduced to penury. The people of the village of Oberammergau in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps vowed that, were they to be spared, they would perform every ten years a play portraying the last days of Christ's life on earth, his suffering, crucifixion and resurrection. This they did for the first time in 1634, and, excepting the odd wobble and a preference for round numbers (since 1680 it has been in the first year of the decade), the tradition has continued ever since.

Over 2000 people take part, almost half the inhabitants of Oberammergau (only those born in the village qualify for participation), and they rehearse for ten months.

Media rumours of conflict between traditionalists and modernisers flourish every time; some of the dramatic power does arise from the blend of continuity and novelty. Of course, the raw material is the most potently moving story in Christendom, whatever ones beliefs.



Oberammergau, wood engraving c. 1880.

Dramatisation of Christ's life and contemplation of his suffering was a crucial ingredient in Christianity in the late Middle Ages and Baroque eras and resulted in some of the finest works of art and music in the western cannon. JS Bach's St John and St Matthew Passions can be ranked alongside the Oberammergau Passion Play, though the latter, being specific to time and place, and evolving, retains a sense of occasion and of passionate engagement which comparable artworks can never yield in the 21st century.

Itinerary

Day 1: Munich. Fly at c. 11.00am from London Heathrow to Munich (Lufthansa). An afternoon walk passes through the core of the historic city. See the Marienplatz, dominated by the 19th-century city hall, and the little Baroque church of St John Nepomuk created by the Asam brothers. First of four nights in Munich.

Day 2: Munich. The morning is spent in the Residenz, rambling palace of the Wittelsbach dynasty, Dukes, Electors and Kings of Bavaria, with sumptuous interiors of the highest art-historical importance from Renaissance to Romantic, and a marvellous Rococo theatre. After lunch continue to Königsplatz, a noble

assembly of Neoclassical museums, and visit the Glyptothek, an outstanding collection of Greek and Roman sculpture. The Lenbachhaus has an outstanding collection of German Expressionist paintings.

Day 3: Munich. Drive out to Nymphenburg, summer retreat of the ruling Wittelsbachs. Set in an extensive park there is a Baroque palace and several delightful garden pavilions, the apogee of Rococo. In the afternoon there is an opportunity to visit more of Munich's many outstanding art collections.

Day 4: Landshut. Drive out to Landshut, an earlier capital of Bavaria. The broad main street is composed of Renaissance and Baroque house fronts, the Gothic church of St Martin has Europe's tallest brick tower and the ducal palace is one of the earliest examples of the Italian Renaissance north of the Alps. Return to Munich and visit the Alte Pinakothek, one of the world's greatest collections of Old Master paintings. Final night in Munich.

Day 5: Ludwig II's Castles. King Ludwig II of Bavaria almost bankrupted the state by his patronage of the composer Richard Wagner and his mania for building elaborate palaces evoking past eras. Visit Schloss Neuschwanstein, the famous fairytale turreted

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castle ordered by Ludwig II in homage to Wagner though never completed. 1870s Linderhof was reputed to have been the King's favourite castle; it draws on French influences, lavish interiors in Renaissance and Baroque styles, extravagant terrace gardens and Oriental adornments. First of two nights near Oberammergau.

Day 6: Oberammergau. Free time in the morning, with the option of a visit to the museum which documents the passion play – the performance is in two parts, each of two-and-a-half hours, beginning at 2.30pm and 8.00pm. Dinner is provided in the three-hour interval.

Day 7: Wies. On the way back to Munich Airport, stop at the astoundingly beautiful 18th-century pilgrimage church of Wies, whose success, like the passion play, derives from its integration of high art and local, peasant tradition. Arrive at Heathrow c.3.45pm.

Lecturer

Tom Abbott. Specialist in architectural history from the Baroque to the 20th century with a wide knowledge of the performing arts. He graduated in Psychology and Art History from Carleton College, Minnesota and studied at the Louvre School of Art History in Paris. Since 1987 he has lived in Berlin and has organised and led many academic tours in Germany. Tom has a particular interest in the German and American architectural and artistic modern including the Bauhaus and Expressionism.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,240 or £3,100 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,870 or £3,730 without flights.

Included: flights (economy class) with Lufthansa (Airbus 320); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; 1 lunch and 5 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Performance: top category tickets to the Passion Play have been confirmed.

Accommodation. Hotel Torbräu, Munich (torbraeu.de): a friendly, family-run, 4-star hotel in the city centre. Details of the four-star hotel in the Oberammergau area will be confirmed in 2021. *Single rooms throughout are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? This is a fairly strenuous tour with some long coach journeys and a lot of walking and standing around in churches and galleries. A good level of fitness is essential. Average distance by coach per day: 53 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.