

History

Although Austria's territorial heartland has always been modest in size, its monarchy ruled an empire that spanned continents and was once the last word in politics and high culture. How did it happen and how did it all change over time? To really understand this, it's useful to know more about the civilisations and empires that figure in its colourful past. Civilisations & Empires is therefore where this history starts. Afterwards we take a trail through themes of post-WWII neutrality (Neutral, Nice & Not Guilty), uprisings (To the Barricades), Jewry (Jewish History in Austria) and foreign invasion of its territory (The Enemy at the Gate), culminating in one of the world's most enduring family dynasties (Keeping it in the Family – the Habsburgs).

CIVILISATIONS & EMPIRES

It would be an understatement to say that alpine regions of Austria were inhospitable places during the Ice Age some 30,000 years ago. They were virtually impenetrable for human and beast. It's therefore not surprising that while mammoths were lumbering across a frozen landscape, the more-accessible plains and Danube Valley in Lower Austria developed into early showplaces of civilisation. A visit to the Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna (p129) contains two fascinating stone Venus statuettes that are reminders of this era.

When the Celts settled in the late Iron Age (around 450 BC) they also chose the valley of the Danube River and salt-rich regions around Salzburg, encountering Illyrians who had wandered there from the Balkan region. Gradually an Illyric-Celtic kingdom took shape, known as Noricum, that stretched from eastern Tyrol to the Danube and eastern fringes of the Alps in Carinthia.

The Romans, who crossed the Alps in force in 15 BC and settled south of the Danube River, carved up these regions into administrative areas and built fortresses (*Limes*) and towns such as Carnuntum (p178), Vindobona (the forerunner of Vienna), Brigantium (Bregenz; p368), Juvavum (Salzburg; p266), Flavia Solva (Leibnitz in Styria), Aguntum (p325) and Virunum (north of Klagenfurt). However, the Western Empire created by the Romans collapsed in the 5th century, leaving a vacuum that was filled by newly arriving tribes: the Germanic Alemanni in Vorarlberg, Slavs who pushed into Carinthia and Styria, and Bavarians who settled south of the Danube in Upper and Lower Austria, Tyrol and around Salzburg. The Bavarians proved to be the most successful, and by the 7th century they had most regions of Austria in their grip, creating a large German-speaking territory.

Discover more about the history of Austria from the Babenbergs through to the country's entry into the EU in *The Austrians: A Thousand Year Odyssey* by Gordon Brook-Shepard.

TIMELINE

30,000–25,000 BC

The 30,000-year-old Venus of Galgenberg (aka Dancing Fanny) and the 25,000-year-old buxom beauty, the Venus of Willendorf, are crafted – both are now in Vienna's Naturhistorisches Museum.

5300 BC

The Neolithic 'Ötzi' dies and is mummified in a glacier in the Ötztal. He's found in 1991 and several Austrian and Italian women ask to be impregnated with his frozen sperm.

800–400 BC

The Iron Age Hallstadtkultur (Hallstadt Culture) develops in the southern Salzkammergut, where settlers work salt mines. Around 450 BC Celts arrive in the region and build on this flourishing culture.

THE CAROLINGIANS STRIKE BACK

But at this time it was still possible to talk only about tribes, not fully fledged empires. This changed in Europe and in Austria itself with the growth of the so-called Carolingian Empire in the 6th century. This was Europe's most powerful empire in its day. It originated in western France and Belgium, grew into a heavyweight under Charlemagne (747–814) and took its inspiration from the Romans. Significantly for future Austria, Charlemagne created a buffer region in the Danube Valley, later dubbed Ostmark (Eastern March), which shored up the eastern edge of his empire, and in 800 he was crowned Kaiser (see boxed text, below) by the pope.

Fate took another decisive turn in 976, when the Eastern March landed in the hands of Leopold von Babenberg (940–94), a descendent of a noble Bavarian family. The Babenbergs were a skilful family who in the 11th century expanded their small territory to include most of modern-day Lower Austria (with Vienna), and a century later Styria (1192) and much of Upper Austria. In 1156, under the Babenberg monarch Heinrich II 'Jasmirogott', the Eastern March (still a political fence at that time) was elevated to a duchy (ie with its own duke and special rights) and Vienna became its capital.

THE EMPIRE OF THE HABSBURGS

The Babenberg dynasty, however, ran out of heirs in 1246 when one of its rulers, Duke Friedrich II, died in battle with neighbouring Hungarians over a border dispute. This had enormous ramifications for future Austria because it led to the catapulting of another noble family, the Habsburgs, to power in Europe. In a twist of bad fortune, a Bohemian monarch of the day, Ottokar II, married Friedrich's widow and in 1273 refused to recognise the election to king by prince-electors (see boxed text, opposite) of another noble whose star was rising in Central Europe – the Habsburg Rudolf I (1218–91).

This caused one of the most celebrated clashes in Austrian history when in 1278 the House of Habsburg and Bohemian arch rival Ottokar II (who also controlled Styria and Carinthia) fought it out on the Marchfeld, situated 30km northeast of Vienna. Ottokar, held up while trying to penetrate Drosendorf's fortress en route to the battle (p178), was killed in battle, allowing the Habsburg family to reign over the Holy Roman Empire.

That was pretty much the way things remained for over 500 years. It's only a modest simplification to say that between the era in which mammoths roamed the frozen wastes and the next important change – the arrival of 164cm, low-rise Napoleon in the early 19th century – Austria had seen early human settlers (the ones who carved those Venus statuettes), two major civilisations (Illyrians and the Celts), one Roman Empire and two families (the Babenbergs and the Habsburgs) control the land.

The patron saint of Austria is Saint Leopold III of Babenberg (1096–1135).

The distended lower jaw and lip, a family trait of the early Habsburgs, is discreetly downplayed in official portraits.

AUSTRIA & THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

The Holy Roman Empire was Europe's oddest 'state'. Its foundations were laid when Charlemagne's father, Pippin, rescued a beleaguered pope and became Patricius Romanorum (Protector of Rome), making him Caesar's successor. The title 'Kaiser' is derived from 'Caesar'. Pippin, with Italian spoils on his hands (one being the present-day Vatican), gave these to the pope. Charlemagne continued this tradition as protector, and in 962, with the crowning of Otto I (912–73) as Holy Roman Emperor, the Empire was officially born.

Kings in the Empire were elected in political horse-trading by a handful of prince electors, but to take the next step and become Kaiser (and protector of the pope), the pope had to crown the king. Depending on how feisty the pope happened to be, this brought other troubles. In 1338 enough was enough, and the electors threw the pope overboard, deciding they could elect their own Kaiser.

In 972, just before Otto I died, borders of the Empire included present-day Austria, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Germany, Holland, Belgium and much of the Italian peninsula. These borders ebbed and flowed with the times. When Rudolf I arrived in 1273, it all – or what remained of it – belonged to the Habsburgs.

The Empire was formally buried in 1806 when Napoleon Bonaparte tore through Europe, and by the time the Austro-Hungarian Empire took shape in 1867 (a dual monarchy of Austria and Hungary), it was little more than a dim and distant reminder of medieval times.

The French Revolution of 1789–99 was a political explosion that ushered in a new age of republicanism in Europe, and it challenged surviving feudalistic anachronisms like the Holy Roman Empire. Thus, although Napoleon was soundly defeated in Leipzig in 1813 and, finally, at Waterloo in 1815, his advance across Europe caused its collapse. The Habsburgs survived, however, and in the post-Napoleon Vormärz (Pre-March) years, they dominated a loose Deutscher Bund (German Alliance) comprising hundreds of small 'states' cobbled together in a period of cultural flourish – called the Biedermeier period.

Given that ordinary citizens at the time were kept on a short leash by their political masters, it's not surprising that they began to seek new freedoms. In 1848, inspired by the February 1848 revolution in France, Austrians demanded their own parliament (p33). One was created and met (without Hungary, a Habsburg possession at the time, and without parts of Italy that had been in Habsburg hands) in July that year. But revolution and a democratic parliament failed to endure in Austria.

In 1867 a dual monarchy was created in Austria and Hungary, arising out of an attempt by the Habsburgs to hold onto support for the monarchy among Hungarians by giving them a large degree of autonomy. This Austro-Hungarian Empire would grow to include core regions of Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovine, as well as regions like the Voivodina in Serbia, and small chunks in northern Italy, Romania, Poland and the Ukraine.

The roots of Austria's Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP; Austrian People's Party) go back to 1887; a forerunner of the Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ; Social Democratic Party of Austria) was founded a year later.

Vienna's population peaked at more than two million between 1910 and 1914. After WWI, Vienna was one of the world's five largest cities.

15 BC–AD 600

The Romans establish relations with Celts and Celtic-influenced Noric tribes. From 15 BC Roman occupation begins in the three provinces of Rhaetia, Noricum and Pannonia. Slavic, Germanic and other tribes later overrun the territories.

800

The Frankish king Charlemagne is crowned Holy Roman Emperor. The troublesome Avars are routed and disappear, creating an Eastern March that passes into the hands of Charlemagne's successors Otto I (912–73) and Otto II (955–83).

976 & 996

The Babenbergs are entrusted with the Eastern March in 976, administer it as margraves, and in 996 this appears for the first time in a document as Ostarrichi.

1156

As consolation for relinquishing Bavaria, which fell into Babenberg hands after a local conflict, Austria becomes a duchy (Privilegium Minus) and the Babenberg ruler Heinrich Jasomirgott (1107–77) becomes Austria's first duke, residing in Vienna.

1192

Styria is given to Babenberg Leopold V (1157–94) on the condition that it stays part of Austria forever. Styria at the time includes chunks of Slovenia and various parts of Lower and Upper Austria.

1246–78

The last Babenberg dies in 1246 and Habsburg rule begins when Rudolf I is elected king of the Holy Roman Empire in 1273; he defeats Bohemian Ottokar II in the Battle of Marchfeld in 1278.

This was the so-called 'KuK' (König und Kaiser; King and Kaiser) monarchy – the Kaiser of Austria was also King of Hungary. In practice, the two countries increasingly went separate ways, united only by the dual monarch and a couple of high-level ministries like 'war' and 'foreign affairs'.

THE MODERN REPUBLICS

The turmoil caused by defeat in WWI, however, brought this to an end, laying the foundations for modern Austria. Austrians demanded a fully fledged republic, and they got one, ending 640 years of Habsburg rule.

This First Republic was the country's first experiment with truly democratic institutions, but the stigma of WWI defeat weakened it. Austria, now reduced almost to the size of the country we know today, lost access to resources beyond its own borders, which caused economic problems. Polarisation was another hurdle. This had a geographical edge in Austria: 'Rotes Wien' (Red Vienna) was controlled by a socialist city government, while rural regions were firmly in the grip of the conservative federal government of the Christian Socials. Chaos broke out in March 1933 when the Christian Socials chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss (1892–1934) dissolved parliament and, in what was virtually a putsch, prevented it from sitting.

Dollfuss' sympathies lay with the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) and the Catholic Church. He banned the communist party and the pro-German Austrian Nazi Party (this favoured annexation of Austria by Germany), and when he took up the battle with the Social Democrats, he sparked the Austrian Civil War in 1934.

By 1936, however, Hitler and Mussolini had created a Rome–Berlin axis and Austria found itself between a rock and a hard place. In March 1938, Hitler's troops invaded Austria, and Hitler, an Austrian himself, ruled the country as an appendage of Germany until 1945.

Soviet, not Allied, troops liberated Vienna in March 1945, triggering a twilight period in which the Soviet Union, Britain, the USA and France occupied Austria and carved up the capital into zones – the famous 'four men in a jeep' period. It was the beginning of the Second Republic (below) – today's Republic of Austria.

NEUTRAL, NICE & NOT GUILTY

In 1948 the British author Graham Greene flew to Vienna and roamed the bomb-damaged streets looking for inspiration for a film he had been commissioned to write about the occupation of post-WWII Vienna. As chance would have it, Greene penned the script for one of Europe's finest films about the era – *The Third Man*, starring Orson Wells as the penicillin racketeer Harry Lime. In a moment of improvisation the end of the film, Orson Wells as Lime waxes lyrical about how under the bloody reign of the Borgias' Italy produced some of its finest art. 'In Switzerland they

had brotherly love, 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did they produce? The cuckoo clock.'

Postwar Austria sought the kind of Swiss stability that makes a cuckoo clock fascinating. One day in April 1945, at the instigation of the Soviet Union, the country was proclaimed a republic for the second time in its history. The constitution from 1920 was revived (in its 1929 form), and pre-Nazi laws from March 1933 came back into force; free elections were held in November 1945.

The Soviet Union insisted on Austria declaring its neutrality as a condition for ending occupation in 1955. At the last minute, though, recognition of Austria's guilt for WWII was struck out of the State Treaty that paved the way for neutral independence. Its neutrality differs from the Swiss 'cuckoo clock' model, however, because Austria joined the UN and has even participated in international peace-keeping forces. The Second Republic became a mostly quiet, peaceful period during which the economy enjoyed solid growth or boom conditions, Austria played a moderating role during the East–West frost, and the world forgot about the past.

This silence was shattered in 1986, however, and not surprisingly it was the guilt question again. When accusations surfaced that presidential candidate Kurt Waldheim had been involved in Nazi war crimes, Austria seriously confronted its Nazi past for the first time. Evidence that he had committed war crimes while a lieutenant serving with the German army in the Balkans could never be proved, but nor was Austria's elected president willing to fully explain himself or express misgivings about his wartime role.

TO THE BARRICADES

While empires waxed and waned, Austria was wracked by revolt and resistance. Apart from frequent squabbles between sycophantic monarchs, the first large-scale uprising took place in the mid- and late-15th century, when peasants in Austria (as elsewhere in Central Europe) rose up against their nobility in the Peasants' Wars. These upheavals were spontaneous and directed at local despots, however, rather than against the empire itself. The roots of discontent could be found in a need for cash to finance defences against the Turks, or in some instances demands by an oppressive monarch during the drawn-out anti-reformation.

In April 1809, during the Napoleonic occupation, Tyrol – which had fallen into the hands of Bavaria – was the scene of another rebellion when innkeeper Andreas Hofer (1767–1810) led a rebellion for independence. For his troubles, Hofer was put on trial and executed at Napoleon's behest. His body is entombed in Innsbruck's Hofkirche (see p334).

The next show of strength from the people was the Revolution of 1848. Austrians suffered badly during the system of atrophy under Klemens von Metternich, a diplomat who rose to power in the splash caused by Napoleon's

Hella Pick's *Guilty Victim: Austria from the Holocaust to Haider* is an excellent analysis of modern-day Austria.

When Governor Schwarzenegger allowed an execution to go ahead in California in 2005, some Austrians wanted to revoke his Austrian citizenship. Austria first abolished capital punishment in 1787.

Austria's greatest military hero, Prince Eugène of Savoy, was in fact French. Refused entry to the French army by Louis XIV, Eugène went on to humiliate him on the battlefield.

Carl E Schorske magically interlinks seven essays on the intellectual history of Vienna in his seminal work *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*.

1335 & 1363

Bavarian Ludwig IV (1314–47) gives Carinthia (minus Tyrol) to the Habsburgs in 1335 and territories include Austria (Ostarrichi), Styria, Krain (in Slovenia) and Carinthia. In 1363 Margarethe Maultasch (1318–63) dies and Tyrol is added.

1517

Theology professor Martin Luther sparks the Reformation when he makes public his 95 Theses that call into question corrupt practices of the Church, and most of Austria becomes Lutheran (Protestant).

1556

Abandoning the idea of uniting an empire under Catholicism, Karl V abdicates – the Spanish part goes to his son Philipp II and Ferdinand I gets Austria, Bohemia and largely Turkish-occupied Hungary.

1618–48

Anti-reformer Ferdinand II (1578–1637) challenges Bohemia's confessional freedom. Habsburg counsels are thrown out of a window (the Prague Defenestration), triggering the Thirty Years' War.

1683

Turkish Siege of Vienna. This siege of 1683 comes after an even closer call in 1529 when Turks were thwarted by winter. Christian Europe is mobilised and the threat persists until 1718, after which the Ottoman Empire gradually wanes.

1740–48

Maria Theresia (1717–80) inherits Habsburg possessions, Prussia seizes Silesia (in Poland today) and the Austrian War of Succession starts a European power struggle between Prussia and a Habsburg-controlled Austria-Hungary.

fall. Metternich believed in the power of absolute monarchy and his police snapped ferociously at the heels of liberals and Austrian nationalists in the decades before revolution. This Vormärz era (ie pre-March 1848, and also called 'Biedermeier') was culturally rich, but socially the air was heavy with political resignation and Austrians grew insular. This was about to change, not least because atrocious industrial conditions were making the country ripe for change. Nationalism – the best chance of liberalising societies in those days – was also threatening to chip the delicate edges of the Habsburg empire.

The sparks of February revolution in Paris (1848) flared in Vienna in March, but, reflecting the city–country divide, failed to really ignite Austria elsewhere except in Styria. In one ironic twist, a similar revolution in Germany meant some Austrian revolutionaries supported being part of a greater, unified and liberal Germany. This was the tricky *Grossdeutsch-Kleindeutsch* (Greater Germany–Lesser Germany) question, and reflects the difficult affinity between Austrians and Germans.

The rebels demanded a parliament, and briefly they got one in May 1848. Kaiser Ferdinand I packed his bags and his family and fled to Innsbruck. This should have been the end of the Habsburgs. It wasn't. Parliament passed a bill improving the lot of the peasants, and Ferdinand cleverly sanctioned this, overnight winning the support of rural folk in the regions. Meanwhile, the Habsburgs received a popular boost when General Radetzky (1766–1858) won back Lombardy (Italy) in successful military campaigns.

In October 1848 revolution reached fever pitch in Vienna. Although this uprising was ultimately quashed, the Habsburgs decided to dispense with Ferdinand I, replacing him with his nephew Franz-Joseph I, who introduced his own monarchical constitution and dissolved the parliament in early 1849. It would only be revived properly in 1867.

By September 1849 it was time to weigh up the damage, count the dead and, most importantly, look at what had been won. Austria was not a democracy, because the Kaiser could veto the Reichstag's legislation. But revolution had swept away the last vestiges of feudalism and made state citizens out of royal subjects.

The Nazi Era

By 1927, these citizens inhabited a very different world. WWI had ended in defeat and armed paramilitary groups roamed the streets of Vienna and elsewhere engaging in bloody clashes. A July revolt broke out in 1927 when left-wing groups stormed the Palace of Justice in Vienna. This was prompted by a court having acquitted members of a right-wing paramilitary Frontkämpfer (Front Fighters) group charged with killing two people during demonstrations. The police moved in and regained control of the building, but about 90 people died in the revolt and over 1000 were injured.

In the late 1920s and the 1930s, the stakes were raised even higher and, with the annexation of Austria by Hitler in 1938, opposition turned to resistance. As elsewhere, whenever Hitler's troops jackbooted over a border, resistance from within was extremely difficult. Communists and Social Democrats were outlawed in the early 1930s and fought from underground. Members of the Social Democratic Worker's Party fought a four-day battle with police in Linz and Vienna before being banned and their leadership was arrested.

The role of Austria during WWII is one of the most controversial aspects of its modern history. Austria's home-grown brand of Austro-Fascism had favoured independence, but Hitler was popular inside Austria, and Austria itself supplied a disproportionately large number of officers for the SS and the German army. In short, what Hitler and the Nazis couldn't achieve through pressure, large numbers of Austrians themselves helped achieve through their active and passive support for Nazism and Hitler's war.

Interestingly, Tyrolean resistance leaders often rallied opposition to Nazism by recalling the revolt of innkeeper Andreas Hofer in 1809 (see p33). An *Österreichisches Freiheitsbataillon* (Austrian Freedom Battalion) fought alongside the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army, and partisan groups in Styria and Carinthia maintained links with other partisans across the Yugoslavian border. Tellingly, unlike other countries, Austria had no government in exile.

Resistance increased once the war looked lost for Hitler. The Austrian Robert Bernardis (1908–44) was involved in the assassination attempt on Hitler by military brass on July 20, 1944 and was then executed by Nazis. Another involved in that plot, Carl Szokoll (1915–2004), survived undetected. The most famous resistance group, however, was called O5, whose members included Austria's president from 1957 to 1965, Adolf Schärf (1890–1965).

With the Red Army approaching Vienna in 1945, O5 worked closely with Szokoll and other military figures in Operation Radetzky to liberate Vienna in the last days of the war. Although they were able to establish contact with the Red Army as it rolled towards Vienna, they were betrayed at the last moment and several members were strung up from street lanterns. The Red Army, not Austrians, would liberate the capital.

JEWISH HISTORY IN AUSTRIA

When the Nazis stomped into Vienna in March 1938, ordinary Austrians threw bouquets of flowers and cheered. A few days later, Hitler addressed tens of thousands of cheering Austrians on Vienna's Heldenplatz to declare the integration of his 'homeland' into the Third Reich. For those Jews who had not yet managed to flee the country, this must have been a depressing moment. Vienna's 'father' of modern psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), had not wanted to read the signs for a long time, but in June that year he fled to England. The 20th century's most innovative classical

The findings of the Historical Commission's report into Austria during the Nazi era can be found at www.historikerkommission.gv.at.

Women in Austria gained the right to vote in national elections in 1919.

'The Viennese are neither more abstinent nor more nervous than anyone else in big cities.'

SIGMUND FREUD

1764

The reformer Kaiser Joseph II (1741–90) takes the throne and the Age of Enlightenment that began under Maria Theresia is in full swing. The power of the Church is curbed, but Hungary drags its feet.

1793

Following a marriage to French king Louis XVI (1754–93), Maria Theresia's 15th daughter Marie-Antoinette (1755–93) – who the French call 'L'Autrichienne' (the Austrian) – is beheaded during the French Revolution. A new European age begins.

1804–05 & 1809

Napoleon (1769–1821) occupies Vienna in 1805. The Holy Roman Empire is abolished, Franz II reinvents himself as Austrian Kaiser Franz I, creating a Danube Monarchy. But in 1809 the Frenchman must return to re-take Vienna.

1848

Revolution topples Chancellor Klemens von Metternich, who flees disguised as a washer-woman. Kaiser Ferdinand I abdicates, but successor Franz-Joseph I (1830–1916) abolishes many reforms. Austria's first parliament is formed.

1866

Austria and its allied principalities in Germany fight the Austro-Prussian War (1866), which leads to victory for Prussia and creates the groundwork for a unified Germany that excludes Austria.

1867

Weakened by loss against Prussia, Austria is now forced by Hungary to create a dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy (the Ausgleich) in 1867. Austria establishes a democratic parliament.

composer, Arnold Schönberg (1874–1951), had already been booted out of his job as a lecturer in Berlin in 1933 and fled to the US. They were just two of many prominent Austrian Jews forced into exile.

Others were not as fortunate. The Holocaust (or ‘Schoa’), Hitler’s attempt to wipe out European Jewry, was a brutal and systematic act that saw some 65,000 Austrian Jews perish in concentration camps throughout Europe. It ruptured a Jewish history in Austria dating back to the early Middle Ages, and even today it’s not really possible to talk about a ‘recovery’ of Jewish culture in the country.

The first mention of Jews in Vienna was in 1194, when a minter by the name of Schlom was appointed by the crown. The very same man was subsequently murdered along with 16 other Viennese Jews by zealous crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. Gradually, a ghetto grew around today’s Judenplatz in Vienna (see p127), where a large synagogue stood in the 13th century.

Historically, Jews could only work in some professions. They were seldom allowed into tradesmen’s guilds or to engage in agriculture and therefore earned a living through trading goods and selling, or through money lending, which explains many of the clichés of the past and present. Two ‘libels’ in the Middle Ages made life difficult for Jews. One of these was the ‘host desecration libel’, which accused Jews of desecrating Christ by such acts such as sticking pins into communion wafers and making them weep or bleed. The second was the ‘blood libel’, which accused Jews of drinking the blood of Christians during rituals. In 1420 these libels culminated in one of Vienna’s worst pogroms, during which many Jews committed collective suicide. The synagogue on Vienna’s Judenplatz was destroyed and the stones of the synagogue were used for the building of the old university.

Out of the Darkness

Jews were officially banned from settling in Vienna until 1624, but this law was regularly relaxed. It did mean, however, that Vienna’s Jews had a particularly rough time of it, and in 1670 when Leopold I (1640–1705) drove them out of Unterer Werd, the quarter was re-christened Leopoldstadt, the name it bears today. They returned, however, and this district remained Vienna’s largest Jewish quarter prior to WWII.

When money was tight following the 1683 Turkish siege, Jews were encouraged to settle in town as money lenders. Interestingly, once the threat subsided from 1718, Sephardic Jews from Spain arrived and were allowed to establish their own religious community. An edict from Kaiser Joseph II (1741–90) improved conditions for Jews and after Kaiser Franz I reinvented himself as Austria’s Kaiser and allowed Jews to establish schools, some of Vienna’s Jewry rose into bourgeois and literary circles.

The revolution of 1848 (see p33) brought the biggest changes, however. Vienna’s Jews were at the forefront of the uprising, and it brought them

freedom of religion, press and schooling. Indirectly, it also led to the founding of the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde* (Jewish Religious Community), more than a century after the Sephardic Jews had founded their own. Today this is the main body that represents religious Jews in Austria.

Legally unfettered, Vienna’s Jews nevertheless found themselves walking a high tightrope. They owed much to the Habsburg monarchy and many therefore identified with it. Many also cherished the freedoms of revolution. And all inhabited an ‘Austrian–German’ cultural landscape. Somewhere in there, they also lived out their strong Jewish identity.

In 1878 Jewry in Austria was shaken up again by the arrival from Budapest of Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), who founded political Zionism, a concept that brought together the ideas of the workers’ movement with support for a Jewish state. His book *Der Judenstaat* (1896; The Jewish State) would later be crucial to the creation of Israel.

Beginning with Adolf Fischhof (1816–93), whose political speech on press freedom in 1848 helped trigger revolution, and continuing with Herzl and with the founding father of Austrian social democracy, Viktor Adler (1852–1918), Jews drove ahead reforms in Austria and played a key role during the Rotes Wien (see p32) period of the 1920s and early 1930s.

This, of course, poured oil on the fires of Hitler’s ideology. When Hitler’s troops reached Vienna in 1938, Jews were subjected to attack and abuse. The tragedy was that the Jewish community had contributed so much to Viennese cultural and political life, and now many of Vienna’s non-Jewish citizens simply looked the other way.

The events that followed, culminating in the Holocaust, are etched in the collective memory of Jews everywhere: the prohibitive Nuremberg Laws, the forced sale and theft of Jewish property, the *die Kristallnacht* (‘Night of Broken Glass’) on 9–10 November, 1939 when synagogues and Jewish businesses burned and Jews were attacked openly on the streets.

Because of this, today the Jewish community is only a fraction of its former size. About 7000 religiously affiliated Jews live in Austria, and about another 3000 to 5000 who are not affiliated with a community. The number was boosted by the arrival of Jews from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s. For a fascinating glimpse of Jewish life from the 13th century to today, don’t miss the Jewish Museum and the Museum Judenplatz, both in Vienna (see p127).

THE ENEMY AT THE GATE

The Celts, the Romans and various tribes have all swept across borders at one time or another to lay claim to Austrian lands. In fact, Austria itself was originally founded as a border *March* to keep out tribes (see p30). The Turkish sieges, though, are the ones that really got the European imagination firing.

Hear and read stories of Holocaust victims at the website of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (www.ushmm.org).

Take a virtual tour through Jewish history in Austria from the Middle Ages to the present in the Jewish Virtual Library at www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Austria.html.

1878

1908

1914

1918

1920s

1934

To prevent the Russians increasing their influence in the Balkans after they win the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, Austria-Hungary occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Fatefully, Austria-Hungary is given a mandate to occupy and administer Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the expectation that it would later be annexed completely.

Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated in Sarajevo, by a Serbian nationalist, triggering World War I, which sees Austria-Hungary in alliance with Germany and the Ottoman Empire.

WWI ends and Karl I abdicates after the humiliating defeat; the First Republic is proclaimed in Vienna. Meanwhile, the Habsburg empire is shaved of border nationalities and Austria keeps most German-speaking regions.

The Social Democratic Party of Austria controls ‘Red Vienna’, its heart set on Austro-Marxism, while the provinces are controlled by conservative forces.

Austrian politics is chronically polarised, paralysed by paramilitary groups and in 1934 parliament is in gridlock and Austria collapses into civil war – hundreds die in three-day fighting culminating in Social Democrat defeat.

The Ottoman Empire viewed Vienna as ‘the city of the golden apple’, but it wasn’t Apfelstrudel they were after in their great sieges. The first, in 1529, was undertaken by Süleyman the Magnificent, but the 18-day endeavour was not sufficient to break the resolve of the city. The Turkish sultan subsequently died at the siege of Szigetvár, yet his death was kept secret for several days in an attempt to preserve the morale of his army. The subterfuge worked for a while. Messengers were led into the presence of the embalmed body which was placed in a seated position on the throne. They then unwittingly relayed their news to the corpse.

At the head of the Turkish siege of 1683 was the general and grand vizier Kara Mustapha. Amid the 25,000 tents of the Ottoman army that surrounded Vienna he installed his 1500 concubines, guarded by 700 black eunuchs. Their luxurious quarters contained gushing fountains and regal baths, all set up in haste but with great effect.

Again, it was all to no avail, even though Vienna was only lightly defended by 10,000 men. Mustapha’s overconfidence was his downfall; failing to put garrisons on Kahlenberg, he and his army were surprised by a swift attack. Mustapha was pursued from the battlefield and defeated once again, at Gran. At Belgrade he was met by the emissary of the Sultan Mehmed IV. The price of failure was death, and Mustapha meekly accepted his fate. When the Austrian imperial army conquered Belgrade in 1718 the grand vizier’s head was dug up and brought back to Vienna in triumph.

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY – THE HABSBURGS

Possibly no other family has influenced the European continent – or the world for the matter – as much as the Habsburgs. Although its origins could never be described as humble, the family came a long way from its Habichtsburg (Hawke’s Nest) castle near Basle in present-day Switzerland.

Marriage, not muscle, was the historic key to Habsburg land grabbing. The Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus (1443–90) once adapted lines from Ovid when he wrote: ‘Let others wage war but you, lucky Austria, marry! For the empires given to others by Mars are given to you by Venus.’

The age of the convenient wedding began in earnest with Maximilian I (1459–1519), whose moniker was The Last Knight because of his late predilection for medieval tournaments. His other loves were Renaissance art, his own grave (which he commissioned during his own lifetime) and Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), who he commissioned to work on the very same grave before he stepped into it. It is now in Innsbruck’s Hofkirche (see p334).

But it was Maximilian’s affection for Maria of Burgundy (1457–82) that had the greatest influence on the fortunes of the Habsburgs. The two married, and when Maria fell from a horse and died as a result of a miscarriage in 1482, Burgundy, Lorraine and the Low Countries fell into Habsburg hands. In their

Really mad or really handsome? The Habsburg Johanna the Mad kissed the feet of husband Philipp the Handsome when his coffin was opened five weeks after his death in 1506.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE HABSBURGS?

They’re still around. Otto von Habsburg (1912–) is the current family head, but he renounced his claims to the Habsburg lands in 1961, a step that allowed him to re-enter Austria and launch a career in European politics.

Once asked why his name never surfaced in the tabloids, the 90-plus-year old ‘monarch’ replied: ‘I’ve not once attended a ball. I prefer to sleep at night. And if you don’t go to nightclubs, you don’t run into the gossip columnists.’ Somewhat of a sporting man, too, when Otto von Habsburg was quizzed about who he thought would win an Austria versus Hungary football match, he reportedly replied ‘Who are we playing?’

Most poignant is perhaps a comment by German President Paul von Hindenburg to Otto von Habsburg in 1933 (the year Hitler seized power in Germany): ‘You know, your majesty, there’s only one person with hostile feelings towards the Habsburgs, but he’s an Austrian.’

day, these regions were the last word in culture, economic high-kicking and the arts. The downside was a sticky relationship with France that stuck to the Habsburg shoe for centuries.

The ‘Spanish Marriage’ in 1496 was another clever piece of royal bedding. When Maximilian’s son Philipp der Schöne (Philipp the Handsome) married Juana la Loca (1479–55; Johanna the Mad), Spain and its resource-rich overseas territories in Central and South America became Habsburg. When their son, Ferdinand I (1503–64) married Anna of Hungary and Bohemia (1503–47), fulfilling a deal his grandfather Maximilian I had negotiated with King Vladislav II (1456–1516), Bohemia was also in the Habsburg fold. In the same deal, Maria von Habsburg (1505–58) married into this Polish–Lithuanian Jagiellonen dynasty, which traditionally purveyed kings to Poland, Bohemia and Hungary at that time. By 1526, when her husband Ludwig II (1506–26) drowned in a tributary of the Danube during the Battle of Mohács against Turks, Silesia (in Poland), Bohemia (in the Czech Republic) and Hungary were all thoroughly Habsburg.

Under Karl V (1500–58), the era of the universal monarch arrived, and the Habsburgs had added the Kingdom of Naples (southern Italy, including Sicily). That, unfortunately, was about as good as it got.

The rot set in with the Treaty of Augsburg (1555), which regulated religious bickering surrounding the Reformation. This treaty stipulated that each ruler could decide the religion of his or her own region. Not only does this explain the patchwork of Protestant and Catholic religions today in many regions that used to be part of the Holy Roman Empire, but it also made a mess of the Habsburgs because Karl V had dedicated his life to creating his so-called ‘universal Catholic monarchy’. Seeing the writing clearly on the wall, he abdicated in 1556 and withdrew to a monastery in Spain to lick his wounds and die.

1938

Nazi troops march into Vienna and Hitler visits his birthplace Braunau am Inn, his beloved Linz, and Vienna to address 200,000 ecstatic Viennese on Heldenplatz. After a rigged referendum, Austria becomes part of Hitler’s Reich.

1939–45

War and genocide in Austria. Over 100,000 of Vienna’s 180,000 Jews escape before the Anschluss but 65,000 Jews die. In 1945 the Red Army liberates Vienna. Austria and Vienna are divided among the powers.

1955

The Austrian Staatsvertrag (State Treaty) is ratified. Austria declares its sovereignty and neutral status and a decade of occupation ends. Neutral status draws post-WWII international bodies to Vienna, and the UN later establishes offices here.

1955–66

‘Grand coalitions’ of major parties govern Austria based on a system of Proporz (proportion), whereby ministerial posts are divided among the major parties. This becomes a hallmark of Austrian politics.

1986

Austria confronts its past when Austrian presidential candidate Kurt Waldheim (1918–2007) is accused of war crimes. Waldheim wins a tough election but is stained. An Historian’s Commission finds Waldheim unhelpful but no proof of crimes.

1995

Austria joins the European Union (EU) in 1995 but because of guarantees in 1955 to Moscow to remain neutral, it foregoes NATO membership.

The spoils were divided up among Habsburgs. The brother of Karl V – Ferdinand I (the same one who had married Anna of Hungary and Bohemia) – inherited Austria and (yes, you guessed it) Hungary and Bohemia, and Karl V's only legitimate son, Philipp II (1527–98) got Spain, Naples and Sicily, the Low Countries, and the overseas colonies.

Maria Theresia

If Maximilian I was the Last Knight, Maria Theresia (1717–80) was the mother of the nation. Thrust into the limelight when her father died with no male heirs, she held onto power for 40 years, while also managing to give birth to 16 children – among them Marie Antoinette, future wife of Louis XVI. Maria Theresia's fourth child, Joseph II, weighed a daunting 7kg at birth.

Although Maria Theresia pushed through many enlightened reforms, she was remarkably prudish for a family that had married and copulated its way to power. One of her less popular measures was the introduction of the short-lived Commission against Immoral Conduct in 1752, which raided private homes, trying to catch men entertaining loose women – the commission even tried to snare Casanova during his visit to Vienna.

Maria Theresia's low take on fornication was no doubt coloured by the conduct of her husband, Francis I, who was apparently very adept in just that field. Yet despite his philandering, Maria Theresia felt she should remain loyal to her spouse, and when he died suddenly in 1765 she stayed in mourning for the rest of her life. She retreated to Schloss Schönbrunn (p135) in Vienna, left the running of the state in the hands of Joseph II (of 7kg fame), and adopted a low-profile and chaste existence.

Although the last Habsburg ruler abdicated in 1918, the family is still going strong in public life (see boxed text, p39).

For a succinct biography of every Habsburg ever born (including the current family), see www.antiquesatoz.com/habsburg.

1999

Austria introduces the euro and abolishes the Austrian shilling as its currency, having easily satisfied the criteria for the level of debt and the inflation rate.

2007

A grand coalition government of Social Democrats and Austrian People's Party is formed under Alfred Gusenbauer.

2008

Austria co-hosts with Switzerland football's European Cup.

The Culture

THE NATIONAL PSYCHE

Trying to put a finger on the psyche of a country that gave us the likes of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud is surely fraught with dangers. As Freud himself said, 'I know only one thing for sure. The value judgements of human beings are...an attempt to prop up illusion with argument'. So what was he trying to tell us? Maybe that whatever we decide about Austrians on a visit, some of it will be our own narrative.

Even Freud, though, couldn't deny a few things about the Austrians' mental topography. One is the self-styled conservatism you find in the deeper rifts and valleys of its regions. On top of this come a few historical grains that irritate the Austrian psyche. Once upon a time half the world was its oyster. Now it isn't. But what Austria now lacks in land it makes up for with a grandiose bureaucracy honed with vigour since the 19th century. Inside this bureaucracy you are likely to find (apart from the odd grump) a system of dividing up posts not on merit but consensus. Austrians see themselves – probably quite rightly – as more harmony-seeking than the neighbouring Germans, but they can also be greater sticklers for convention and public opinion is less fragmented, which has much to do with the country's size.

Austrians are self-made rather than born; strikingly 'New World' at times and also fiercely regional. Along with the national symbols, each state has its own anthem, which is sung by schoolchildren on important occasions, and each even has its own patron saint.

The Viennese are different because they see themselves first and foremost as Austrians. The capital lives and thrives from its Wiener Schmäh (Vienna humour), a concoction of morbid, wry, misanthropic wit, personified by dead rock singer Falco (p49). Some of the local Vienna Actionism art did too. Maybe it's also why one of Freud's most important works is his *Jokes*

'In Austria, everyone becomes what they are not.'

COMPOSER GUSTAV MAHLER

The Austrian Federal Government's official website www.austria.gv.at has plenty of information on the country's political situation in English.

DOS & DON'TS

Austria is a society of politeness; to ignore the rules is the height of rudeness. Stick to the following dos and don'ts and you'll do just fine:

- Do greet people with *Grüss Gott* or *Guten Tag*, whether it be in a social setting, shop, café, restaurant or information office. *Servus* is reserved for greetings only between friends or the younger generation. When departing, *Auf Wiedersehen* or *Auf Wiedersehen* is appropriate.
- Do shake hands when introduced to someone, even in younger, informal company. Likewise, shake hands when you leave.
- Do introduce yourself at the start of a phone call by giving your name.
- Do dress up if going to the opera, theatre or a top restaurant. A jacket and tie for men is the norm.
- Do use full titles at the beginning of formal meetings; *Herr* for men and *Frau* for women is the minimum required. If you speak German, always use the *Sie* form with the older generation and on the telephone; it's not so common with the younger generation.
- Don't cross at the traffic lights when the figure is red, even when there is no traffic in sight. Austrians rarely do it, and the cops can instantly fine you for jaywalking.
- Don't strip off or go topless at every beach in Austria. Nude bathing is limited to areas with FKK signs and if no-one else is going topless at other beaches, you shouldn't either.

and their Relation to the Unconscious. All very serious stuff, of course. But it also happens to be a fine collection of Schmääh.

LIFESTYLE

With their high material standard of living, a spectacular landscape on the doorstep lending itself to skiing, hiking and extreme sports, and its exciting cultural metropolises, Austrians enjoy a quality of life that is the envy of other Europeans. The Viennese lifestyle brings the excitement and perks of a big city at a pace that is more relaxed than in most other European capitals. This shows in the favoured Viennese pastime of enjoying a beer, wine or coffee with friends in one of the capital's many bars, restaurants or coffee houses. Vienna is also a magnet for artists, students and professionals from all over Austria, who go there to live and work, but return to their 'homes' in the provinces regularly for a shot of country life.

The roots of tradition still reach down deep into Austrian soil outside the cities, so sometimes Austrians live up admirably to bizarre images the world has of them. Women can still be seen in the *Dirndl* (a full, pleated skirt) with tight bodice, worn with traditional apron, bonnet, and blouse with short, puffed sleeves. Men, meanwhile, can be founding drinking a beer or wine in collarless loden jackets, green hats, wide braces and shorts or knee breeches. In early summer, hardy herders plod to alpine pastures with their cattle and live in summer huts while tending their beasts. Austria also has lots of traditional festivals.

All this is packed into in a small country with the fifth-highest standard of living in the EU and the 10th in the world in terms of earnings and purchasing power. It's coupled with a generous system of social security and healthcare funded by a percentage on the pay packet, and Austrians are also among the best educated in the world; 98% of the population (aged 15 and above) is literate.

ECONOMY

When Soviet tanks rolled into Austria in 1945, the government nationalised many of its industries to prevent them from takeover or wholesale dismantling and transportation to Siberia as war reparations. Since the 1990s, Austrians have watched the pendulum swing back and privatisation is bringing the country into line with current trends. Since joining the EU in 1995, it has also liberalised sectors such as telecommunications, steel and energy.

Women earn about 26% less than men on average (the biggest gap in the EU's 15 countries), and almost half of a person's gross wage goes in tax and social security contributions.

Although its farms still tend to be of the 'two cows, three fences type', it has strong export industries, particularly in chemicals, machine goods, electronics and steel. Most companies are small or medium-sized, however; less than 200 employ more than 1000 people. Tourism accounts for about 10% of GDP, and with 20 million foreign visitors each year, more people per capita visit Austria than any other country. Interestingly, for all this industrial flurry, the landscape has largely been spared the worst and it is not a big polluter – CO2 emissions are below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average, and less than half the level per person than in the USA.

POPULATION

Given the country's population distribution, Austria might be expected to tilt towards neighbouring Slovakia. Its two largest provinces are Vienna and

Lower Austria in the east, and it is here, too, that most of Austria's immigrants have settled (see p44).

Austria has a population of 8.3 million. On average, there are 96 inhabitants per sq km, but this figure doesn't really tell us much. Vienna's density is well above this figure, while the rest of Austria's provinces (aside from Vorarlberg) are well below it; Tyrol, with only 53 inhabitants per sq km, is the least populated.

More females than males reside in Austria; at last count, the population was divided: 51.5% females to 48.5% males. Women die about six years later than men: at the ripe old age of 82 compared to the male average of 76. Based on current projections, however, Austria will have almost 9 million people in 2050.

SPORT

Peer into the pantheon of Austrian Olympic Games medallists and one thing becomes clear: Austrians are killer-bee at winter sports. Football, however, draws the largest crowds, and will no doubt be boosted by the European Championship in 2008. Ice hockey, handball, tennis and motor racing also enjoy a strong following. Except for motor racing, Austrians participate in these in large numbers too.

Summer is pretty much a time for niche sports like golf (except for snow golf), paragliding, and anything to do with running, swimming and windsurfing. With the arrival of autumn and winter, things get going on the pistes.

Football

The Austrian humorist and actor Alfred Dorfer (b 1961) reckons that staging a football European Championship in Austria is like putting on ski jumping in Namibia; but co-hosting the championship with Switzerland in 2008 hooks into a proud local history of the 'beautiful game'.

The halcyon days of Austrian football were in 1931–32 when local legend Hugo Meisl (1891–1937) coached the national team through 14 consecutive international matches undefeated. In 1932 the team lost narrowly to the England team at old Wembley and in the 1934 World Cup to Italy in the semifinal.

The national football league, the Austrian *Bundesliga* (www.bundesliga.at, in German), kicks off at the end of autumn and runs until the beginning of spring with a break during the severe winter months. Games are hardly ever sold out, so getting hold of a ticket is usually no problem.

Skiing

As much a national hobby as a sport, nothing gets an Austrian snorting more than the whiff of powder snow. It's hardly surprising, because some of the best conditions worldwide are here. Innsbruck has hosted the Winter Olympics twice (in 1964 and 1976), and World Cup ski races are annually held in Kitzbühel (p350), St Anton am Arlberg (p362) and Schladming.

Stars of the Austrian skiing scene abound, and one person who does this literally is the ski jumper Thomas Morgenstern (b 1986), winner of team and individual gold medals in large hill ski jumping events in the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino. Another, Salzburg-born Hermann 'The Herminator' Maier (see p44), has achieved superhero status in an alpine career spanning more than a decade and bristling with medals and cups.

Austria's first true superstar, Toni Sailer, is arguably the greatest skier the country has ever produced. At 17 he claimed the Tyrolean championships at downhill, slalom and giant slalom, and four years later won gold medals in all three disciplines at the 1956 Winter Olympics in Cortina d'Ampezzo.

A 2007 survey showed Austrians ranked health, a good marriage and good friends as most important for happiness. Hairdressers were the happiest employees.

National service is still compulsory for males in Austria, who can either serve their time in the military or perform civil service duties.

'If you want to abolish Austrian capitalism, first you have to create it.'

HANNES ANDROSCH, BUSINESSMAN AND POLITICIAN

In 2006 Lukas was the most popular boy's name. Leonie topped the list of newborn girls and other popular names were Tobias, David, Lena and Anna.

About 600,000 people play, organise or watch football each weekend during the season in Austria. The Austria Sports Organisation website www.bso.or.at, in German, showcases all sports.

SPORTING LEGENDS – TO HELL & BACK

In a twist of fate, three of Austria's great sportsmen stand out for one feature: they were badly injured at the height of their careers and made sensational comebacks.

The Formula One legend Niki Lauda is possibly most famous of all. He suffered horrific burns in a high speed crash during the 1976 season, yet he was back in his car after missing only two races. That year he narrowly failed to retain the world championship, losing out to James Hunt by a single point on the last race of the season. Undeterred, he regained the title the following year, and proceeded to net his third championship win in 1984.

The somewhat bumbling side of skier Hermann Maier has led to him being likened to Superman's human alter ego, Clark Kent. However, in the 1998 Nagano Olympics, Maier showed the amazing toughness that characterises his all-or-nothing skiing style. During the men's downhill competition, he misjudged a difficult curve, got too close to a gate, somersaulted 30m through the air, bounced over a fence and crashed through two safety nets before finally coming to rest. Austria held its breath as the man known as 'The Herminator' got to his feet, dusted himself down and waved at the crowd. He went on to win two gold medals in the next six days.

But worse was to come. In August 2001 Maier was involved in an horrific motorcycle crash that almost cost him his life. Doctors faced an agonising decision – amputate the hopelessly damaged leg or not. They tried to save it. Maier underwent some painful operations to insert a titanium rod into the leg to hold it together. His recovery was miraculous; in January 2003, only 18 months after the accident, he went on to win the Super G (super giant slalom) at Kitzbühel – his 42nd World Cup victory.

Thomas Muster, Austria's top tennis player during the 1990s, had his kneecap crushed by a drunk driver, just hours after a win at the 1989 Lipton Championship semifinal in Florida. It was doubtful he would ever play tennis again. Images of Muster hitting balls while strapped to an osteopathic bench evoked admiration and bewilderment among tennis fans. He went on to become world number one and in the process earned the nickname 'The Iron Man'.

Other Sports

Motor racing is enormously popular as an armchair sport, and only speed limitations prevent this from spreading to the highways. No Austrian has roared around the Formula One circuit more successfully than Vienna-born star of the 1970s and '80s, Niki Lauda (b 1949; see boxed text, above). Off the circuit, Lauda morphed into a local aviation mogul, and more recently founded the low-cost Niki airline and a car rental firm.

Gone are the days when Austria could claim a tennis ace of the likes of the Styrian *Laufstier* (running bull) Thomas Muster (b 1967; see boxed text, above), although tennis is still popular, and Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) tennis events are held in Vienna, Pörtschach am Wörthersee and Kitzbühel.

Ice hockey is also popular, and Austria's one and only superstar, Thomas Vanek (b 1984), currently plays in the National Hockey League (NHL) in the USA for the Buffalo Sabres.

MULTICULTURALISM

With just under 10% of her population on foreign passports, Austria has a lower percentage of foreigners than Switzerland and the Benelux countries, and is on par with Germany. In numbers, that means about 815,000 foreigners. The trend is upward: foreigners have a higher birth rate, and more people are arriving than leaving. The other important trend over recent years has been an increase in people taking the plunge to become 'neo-Austrians' (as the local statistical office quaintly puts it). A good indication of the situation on the ground is that almost 17% – or one in six people living in Austria – have a migrant background.

According to the Austrian State Treaty, Croatian and Slovenian minorities have a right to place name signs in both German and the minority language.

A tiny 1.5% of the population is made up of indigenous minorities, mainly from Eastern Europe. Most settled in Austria's eastern parts between the 16th and 19th centuries and include Croatians, Slovenes, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks and Sinti or Roma. A number of traditional languages have also crossed the border with them; Slovene is an official language in Carinthia and some town signs – much to the chagrin of the populist governor of Carinthia, Jörg Haider – are bilingual. Croatian and Hungarian are spoken in Burgenland.

The largest immigrant groups are Serbians, Bosnians and Croatians who arrived in the early 1990s, and Turks or descendants of Turks who arrived as guest workers in earlier decades, mainly in the 1950s and '60s.

As a result, Vienna has some fascinating quarters – such as the 16th district – that are colourful places for a plunge into multicultural life, but immigration has also produced a backlash. Anti-foreigner campaigns have been a feature of Austrian politics since the 1990s, particularly by the right-wing nationalist Freedom Party, (FPÖ), which played the anti-Turkish card with a slogan 'Home, not Islam' during the 2006 national elections, and by Haider, whose Alliance Future Austria (BZÖ), a break-away party from the FPÖ, campaigned on the platform of a one-third reduction of the number of foreigners in Austria.

MEDIA

Although mass media and press freedom has a long history in Austria, so too is a tradition of media being concentrated in just a few hands. Austria was the last country in Europe to abolish its state monopoly on TV and radio.

The state-owned *Wiener Zeitung* (www.wienerzeitung.at, in German), first published in 1703, is the oldest newspaper in the world. It is also one of the duller and least-read, selling only 22,000 copies of a weekday, and is a strong candidate for revamping. *Der Standard* (<http://derstandard.at>, in German) and *Die Presse* (www.diepresse.com, in German) are at the serious end of a spectrum of about 20 daily national or regional newspapers, but together account for less than 10% of readership. *Kurier* has a readership of about 10%, while the mass-circulation *Kronen Zeitung* (www.krone.at, in German) at the low-brow end of the rack has a massive 43% and wields enormous clout in politics and public opinion.

The TV staples of most Austrians are dishd up by ORF1 and ORF2, the two channels of the public broadcaster. There's also a good culture channel, 3Sat, also broadcast in Germany and Switzerland. Local private channels of quality are still thin in the ether, and many Austrians actually watch German private stations. The radio landscape has more depth in the field, although here ORF holds the reins on a swathe of national and local stations. Hitradio Ö3 is the most popular mainstream music station, FM4 serves up an entertaining dish of interviews, some English language programmes and news reports, plus music beyond the chart staples, and Ö1 strokes a classic number.

RELIGION

On the surface of things, religion would seem to play an important part in the lives of Austrians, and the country has certainly been a stronghold of Catholicism for centuries. Inquiring whether there's a church in town is bit like asking whether the pope is Catholic. In the latest census, 73.6% of the population said they were Roman Catholic, 4.7% Protestant and 4.2% Muslim. Freedom of religion is guaranteed under the constitution.

All is well for the Catholic Church then, right? It could be worse. Religion for most Austrians means observing the major rituals such as

For a good numbers crunch, visit the English and German language pages of the government statistic internet site at www.statistik.at.

For online information on Austria's cultural life, people and movements, see the Austrian Encyclopedia website www.aeiou.at.

baptism, confirmation and weddings and funerals; about one-third make it regularly to church.

ARTS Music

What other country can match Austria's musical heritage or the creative tones of its great composers? At the low-brow end of the shelf, Vienna was known as early as the 12th century for its *Minnesänger* (troubadours), and in *Heurigen* (wine taverns) today performers scratch out a uniquely Viennese folk music, known as *Schrammelmusik*, in combos with violin, accordion, guitar and clarinet. In the Alpine regions, *Volksmusik* (folk music), based on traditional tunes but often sawn or pumped out with modern instruments, echoes in hills and valleys.

The Habsburgs were prolific patrons of the arts, and in the 18th and 19th centuries Europe's finest flocked to Vienna in search of their generosity. In fact, some of the Habsburgs themselves were gifted musicians: Leopold I (1640–1705) composed, Karl VI (1685–1740) stroked a violin, his daughter Maria Theresia plucked a decent double bass, and her son Joseph II was a deft hand at harpsichord and cello.

Today, Austrian orchestras like the Vienna Philharmonic enjoy a reputation others would die for, and organisations such as the Vienna Boys' Choir, the Staatsoper (p152), the Musikverein (p152) and the Konzerthaus (p152) are unrivalled. Salzburg and Graz complement Vienna as major music centres and, like Vienna, host important annual music festivals. Linz has the international Brucknerfest (p205), Schwarzenberg in Vorarlberg hosts Schubertiade (Schubert Festival; p373), and Innsbruck has its own Festival of Early Music (p338). The Bregenz Festival (p370) is famous for productions performed on a floating stage on the Bodensee.

PAST MASTERS

Austria overflows with past masters and pretty much has been a weather vane registering the current direction of classical music in Europe. Most of the figures will need no introduction. Christoph Willibald von Gluck (1714–87) is important because he brought operatic music and drama together, setting the stage for opera as we know it today. Later in the century, Josef Haydn (1732–1809) ushered in classicism and influenced music like no other in his epoch with opera and operetta, symphonies, string quartets, piano sonatas and piano trios. His greatest works included the oratorios *The Creation* (1798) and *The Seasons* (1801) and Symphony No 102 (1794) in B-flat Major. Haydn thought Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91) to be the 'greatest composer' and Schubert effused that the 'magic of Mozart's music lights the darkness of our lives'. Mozart was born in Salzburg, where today his house of birth and his residence give

TOP FIVE CDS

- Mozart: *The Magic Flute*
- Schubert: *The Trout Quintet*
- Falco: *Falco 3* (try to get the original LP with the full version of 'Rock Me, Amadeus', rather than the CD)
- Kruder & Dorfmeister: *The K&D Sessions*
- Arnold Schönberg: *Pierrot Lunaire*

Austria has almost 2000 wind instrument orchestras in which about 100,000 musicians blow horns of one variety or another. Lower Austria has almost 500, Vienna just 19.

wonderful insights into his creative genius; a Mozartwoche (Mozart Week) is celebrated in late January.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was born in Bonn, Germany, but his musical genius blossomed in Vienna under Mozart and Haydn. He was totally deaf by 32, but that didn't stop him composing what many consider to be his best works, including Symphony No 9 in D Minor (1824) and Symphony No 5 (1808). Franz Schubert (1797–1828), a native of Vienna, was the last in the great line of composers from the Viennese School's Classical period (1740–1825). Although syphilis (or typhoid) took him to an early grave at 31, he composed a startling number of symphonies, overtures, masses, choral and piano works, chamber music and *Lieder* (songs).

The waltz originated in Vienna in the early 19th century and early masters of this genre were Johann Strauss the Elder (1804–49), who also composed the *Radetzky March* (1848), and Josef Lanner (1801–43). Johann Strauss the Younger (1825–99) followed up with Austria's unofficial anthem, the *Blue Danube* (1867), *Tales from the Vienna Woods* (1868) and his eternally popular operettas *Die Fledermaus* (1874) and *The Gypsy Baron* (1885).

The 19th century brought forth great composers such as Anton Bruckner (1824–96), who was long associated with the abbey in St Florian (p209); the Hamburg-born Johannes Brahms (1833–97), who worked in Vienna and died there; the director of the Vienna Court Opera from 1897 to 1907, Gustav Mahler (1860–1911); and Hungarian born Franz Lehár (1870–1948), who composed *Die lustige Witwe* (The Merry Widow; 1905).

Vienna also gave us the 20th century's most innovative composer Arnold Schönberg (1874–1951), who stretched tonal conventions to snapping point with his 12-tone style of composition. The most influential of his pupils in this Second Vienna School were Alban Berg (1885–1935) and Anton von Webern (1883–1945); both were born in the capital and both explored and continued the development of Schönberg's technique. Tellingly, at the first public performance of Berg's composition *Altenberg-Lieder*, the concert was cut short because the audience fell over itself with rage.

CONTEMPORARY CLASSIC

Given such a pedigree in classic, the high quality of Austria's contemporary classic scene should come as no surprise. The post-WWII years were finally lifted out of darkness by Friedrich Cerha (b 1926), whose famous compositions include *Spiegel I-VII* (1960–72) and the Brecht opera *Baal* (1974). In the 1960s and '70s Cerha was joined by a wave of brash and exciting young composers. Influenced by Schönberg, MOB art & tone ART was one group of composers and musicians that shook up the scene, formed around Otto M Zykan (1935–2006), Kurt Schwertsik (b 1935) and Heinz Karl Gruber (b 1943). Today Gruber is the most successful of the three. The 1980s brought the next generation. The Swiss-born Beat Furrer (b 1954) founded the Klangforum (Sound Forum), which has developed into the foremost group featuring new music soloists today – not least because it has a long-running residency at the prestigious Paris Opera (Palais Garnier). Others paddling innovative waters are Bernhard Lang (b 1957), who integrates electronic forms into his new music, and Olga Neuwirth (b 1968), who collaborates closely with Nobel Prize-winning author Elfriede Jelinek (see p55) on exciting dramatic works. On a more traditional note, the Tyrolean composer Johannes Maria Staud (b 1974) is very highly regarded. A premiere of his orchestral work *Apeiron* (2005) was performed by the Berlin Philharmonic under the expert baton of Sir Simon Rattle.

'After the call for a republic, the gentry in Austria was abolished. In its place is possession of a season ticket for the Vienna Philharmonic.'

AUSTRIAN WRITER HANS WEIGEL

Before burial, Haydn's head was pilloined by phrenologists. The skull was preserved, passed around over the years, and finally reunited with the rest of Haydn in the 1950s.

Beethoven must have been picky with his dwelling; he lived in as many as 60 addresses during his time in Vienna.

JAZZ

Among the figures from the 1980s, Max Nagl (b 1960; www.maxnagl.at, in German) is possibly the most influential, but jazz aficionado abroad will probably be more familiar with Wolfgang Puschnig (b 1956; www.puschnig.com, in German) and the big band Vienna Art Orchestra (www.vao.at), founded with Zürich-born Mathias Rüegg (b 1952) and others.

Since then a new guard has unpacked its instruments in the clubs and bars. The young trumpeter Lorenz Raab (b 1975; www.lorenzraab.at, in German) currently enjoys a very strong following in club culture. Other club performers to watch out for are HDV Trio from Vorarlberg (www.hdvtrio.com, in German), and Vienna's best-known acoustic act, Drechsler, a saxophone trio with its own DJ (www.ulrichdrechsler.com). The guitarist Wolfgang Muthspiel (b 1965; www.materialrecords.com, in German) is also quite well-known internationally, but if the soul sounds of the Hammond organ are your secret vice, Raphael Wressnig (b 1979; www.rafaelwressnig.com, in German) is the man in Austria to watch out for.

A group of ultra contemporary artists are associated with Vienna's Jazzwerkstatt (www.jazzwerkstatt.at), a collective that promotes jazz in Austria and organises an annual three-week jazz festival (free admission) in Vienna each March. Following is a whirlwind tour of the scene; check the websites for current dates and venues.

Austria currently has some great saxophone artists, including Christoph Auer (b 1981; www.christophauer.at), the saxophone quartet Phoen, (<http://phoen.at>) and the sax and clarinet player Clemens Salesny (b 1980; www.clemens-salesny.at, in German). Christoph Dienz (b 1968; www.dienz.at, in German) plays the bassoon and brings the zither, a stringed folk instrument, to jazz and improvisation, whereas Kelomat (www.kelomat.at), which plays traditional and improvised jazz, is the most successful among a new generation on the scene.

Moving on to grooves styles, Peter Rom (b 1972; <http://peterrom.com>) heads an exciting trio, and Bernd Satziger (b 1977; www.wurschtsemmerl.at, in German) leads a wonderful three-piece outfit that uses a Wurliitzer organ. If your style is more rock, fusion, punk, improvisation or strange noises, Jazzwerkstatt figures to keep an ear open for are the unutterable Brpobr (<http://brpobr.klingt.org>, in German), some of whose work is reminiscent of early Pink Floyd; the more melody-based Fuzz Noir (www.fuzznoir.com), and Tumido (<http://tumido.klingt.org>, in German); the latter is a techno-punk-jazz outfit.

Jazz women figure prominently on the scene, and one group to watch out for is Falb Fiction, led by the saxophonist Viola Falb (b 1980; www.falbfiction.com, in German). Her style ranges from 'strictly harmonic to free, melodic ballads to pulsing grooves' and goes into rock. Mosaik, an outfit headed by Angela Tröndle (b 1983) creates vocal and purely instrumental jazz sounds based on clean rhythms and melodies infused with lots of piano, which Tröndle herself plays. Agnes Heginger (b 1973) has an education in classic as well as jazz, and doesn't shy away from throwing in improvisation or pop or anything else for that matter. In the past she's worked with Georg Breinschmidt (b 1973), Austria's virtuoso of contrabass jazz. The Graz-born Elisabeth Harnik (b 1970) composes and improvises on piano, and appears regularly at home-grown jazz events and across Europe, either solo, on piano or improvising with groups. Austria also attracts some talented Balkan and Eastern European jazz artists. The Slovenian Maja Osojnik (b 1976; www.majaosojnik.com), a long-time resident of Vienna, is a hot tip among jazz punters.

'Actually, you don't go to the disco in Linz. You don't really go to Linz. Linz is the ass of the world: chemicals, boredom, drugs. Which means, come to think of it, of course you have to go to Linz if you're in the rap business – the ghetto city of Austria and the toughest Austria's got to offer.'

GERMAN JOURNALIST WOLFGANG HÖBEL

As well as the Jazzwerkstatt events, the three week Jazzfest Wien is held in June-July each year (www.vienna.jazz.org).

ROCK, POP & UNDERGROUND

Dig into the rock scene and the depth and variety of Austria's talent will lead to a lot of wild and sleepless nights in dark places. Some of the acts we mention here are well-known, others spend more time underground than above it. The websites will usually give you a taste of the music, and with a bit of surfing and good old-fashioned pencil and paper you can cobble together a 'Sound of Music' tour of a different kind (and more interesting than the Von Trapp variety).

Naked Lunch (www.nakedlunch.de) is currently the best-known Austrian band and have been working sounds for ages, yet it's only been in the last couple of years that they've risen to popularity at home and abroad. Going a bit deeper into the underground, the duo Attwenger (www.attwenger.at) has a large following for its music with flavours of folk, hip-hop and trance. Completing the triumvirate of relative old hands, Graz-based Rainer Binder-Krieglstein (b 1966; performing as binder & krieglstein, www.mikaella.org/bk, in German) does an eclectic blend of headz, hip-hop, groove and nujazz.

For hip-hop pure, Linz-based Texta (www.texta.at, in German) is the most established in the art. Young blood comes in the form of art-house hoppers Mieke Medusa & Tenderboy (www.miezemedusa.com, in German), who are regulars on the Vienna circuit and organise poetry slams in town. Two other bands calling the hip-hop shots are Waxolutionists (www.waxos.com) and the bizarre Bauchklang (www.bauchklang.com), remarkable for

FALCO – LIVING HARD, LEAVING BEHIND A WRECK

It may come as a surprise to some, but the music scene in Austria is one of Europe's most exciting at the moment. The roots of a distinctly Austrian sound go back to the 1970s, when 'Austropop' was born. It was influenced by US artists like Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan, and this small and still quite close-knit scene often sprinkled its lyrics with local dialect.

One of the most eccentric bands from the very beginning was the rock-punk group Drahdwaberl, who combined Vienna Actionism with rock and a damned good show. One of its members, a certain Hans Hölzel, played bass in the group and stood out from this chaotic, totally hotwired ensemble, with his tough style and light touch of arrogance. Decked out in a suit, gelled to the brink and performing with idiosyncratic gestures – that was the beginning of the phenomena Falco. In 1982 he went solo, and turned rock music upside down.

According to Helge Hinteregger from the Music Information Center Austria (MICA; www.mica.at, in German), an organisation that promotes Austrian artists, Falco's influence on the development of the scene has been enormous.

Falco brought together the chill of New Wave with a blend of English and German phrased lyrics delivered in spoken chants, which is one reason why he's also known as the inventor of German-language hip-hop. Fatalism was always in there somewhere; drugs and alcohol were almost part of his style. Legendary songs like 'Ganz Wien' (Total Vienna) about heroine abuse, 'Jeanny' and 'Junge Römer' (Young Romans) played with the chill of human life on the edge of a precipice. His innovation and power, his success, and not to forget the musician Falco himself, were a stroke of luck for the Austrian music scene. You can still feel his influence today. Out of the local style of New Wave later came Vienna Electronic.

With a number one hit in the US charts, Falco reached the peak of his career. But Falco himself knew it was also breaking point and the only way now was down. Rock me Amadeus wasn't Falco's last hit, but nor could he recreate its phenomenal success. Right up until his death in a car accident in 1998, he remained a key figure in Austrian music, and Falco events are held every year on his birthday and on the anniversary of the crash.

using only voices – no instruments – for its reggae- and ethnic-influenced hip-hop and trance.

This, of course, is absolutely normal compared to the equally remarkable Fuckhead (www.fuckhead.at), who, alone for a tendency to perform in plastic robes or gear that looks suspiciously like underwear, will obviously not be everyone's cup of tea. This is high-voltage turbo industrial grunge and it's akin to listening hard while a surgeon removes your eardrum; afterwards you might be ready to tune into the saccharine flavours of teeny rocker Christina Stürmer (b 1982; www.christinastuermer.de, in German), or indeed to the very soft lounge rhythms of Saint Privat (www.saintprivat.com).

Stage diving into the DJ scene, Electric Indigo (Susanne Kirchmayr, b 1965; www.indigo-inc.at) is the most influential of the female DJs, she organises a platform (female: pressure) for gals who DJ and an online sound base (Open Sounds), and performs with a Club Crazy residency in Vienna's Flex venue (see p153). Tanja Bednar (aka tibcurl; www.tibcurl.com), is possibly Vienna's best-known DJ act; she regularly puts on the Icke Micke Club (www.ickemicke.at), whose wintering ground in the past has included Vienna's Camera Club (p153). Among the guys, DJ Patrick Pulsinger (b 1970; www.feedback-studio.com) spins a variety of genres, including jazz, new music and experimental. Peter Kruder (b 1967) and Richard Dorfmeister (b 1968) together form the production and DJ and production team Kruder & Dorfmeister, who are Austria's most successful act, which ranges from downtempo to trip-hop and electronic rhythms.

Architecture

The earliest 'architecture' you'll find in Austria is a funereal form – the 700 grave mounds located outside Grossklein (p236), illustrating how the Iron Age Hallstatt Culture buried its dead. Also surviving from the early days of settlement are numerous Roman ruins dating from 15 BC to AD 500, including those excavated in Carnuntum (p178), and on Michaelerplatz (p137) in Vienna.

ROMANESQUE

The Romanesque period in Austria dates from about AD 1000 to 1250 and features heavy walls, closely spaced harmonising columns and heavy, rounded arches, along with the use of statues and reliefs on the portals and apses. Dig below any Gothic church and you'll often find Romanesque foundations. This style was almost entirely religious in nature and flourished under the Babenberg dynasty, which threw plenty of cash at craftsmen to build cathedrals and abbeys. Some of the best surviving Romanesque buildings today are the cathedral in Gurk (p302) and the Benedictine abbey in Millstatt (p308), both in Carinthia, and the funerary chapel of the Pfarrkirche St Stephan in Tulln (p173). You can also find some Romanesque features today in the main entrance and towers of Vienna's breathtaking Stephansdom (see p124).

GOTHIC

Around 1250 the Romanesque style gave way to Gothic, which petered out in the 16th century. Its hallmarks are high stained-glass windows, pointed arches and ribbed ceiling vaults, external flying buttresses to support the walls, and elaborately carved doorway columns. Stephansdom is the heart and soul of the Gothic style, but Austria also has lots of secular Gothic buildings, including the Goldenes Dachl (p337) in Innsbruck, the Kornmesserhaus (p240) in Bruck an der Mur and the Bummerhaus (p211) in Steyr.

RENAISSANCE

By the 16th century, Gothic flavours began to pall and Austrians discovered a new enthusiasm for classical forms. This obsession with grace, grandeur and symmetry coincided with the rising fortunes of the Habsburgs. Italian architects set to work on designing palaces, mansions and houses that blended Italian and Austrian influences. One of the hallmarks of the era was the arcade courtyard; fine examples are Schloss Schallaburg (p166) and Landhaushof (p224) in Graz. Another feature of Renaissance was the sgraffito façade, which is created by applying two layers of different colours and scratching a design into the top layer to reveal the layer beneath. This effect has been put to good use on houses in St Veit an der Glan in Carinthia (p303).

BAROQUE & ROCOCO

With the end of the Thirty Years' War and a receding Turkish threat, Austria's monarchy discovered urban development. This happened at a time baroque was making huge ground in architecture. Features of the resplendent, triumphal style were marble columns, elaborate sculpture and painting, and rich, gilded ornamentation; it added up to extravagant interiors designed to inspire and impress. Not to be outdone, the Church chipped in with a profusion of decorated interiors rich enough to make worshippers giddy.

Having learnt from the Italian school, Graz-born architect Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (1656–1723) developed an Austrian baroque style, which grew to prominence from 1690 and expired around 1730. This reflected the gushing decorative style of Italian baroque but gave it a specifically Austrian twist, with dynamic colours and irregular or undulating lines. Austria has so many outstanding baroque buildings that it's difficult to know where to start. Some of the best are Fischer von Erlach's Kollegienkirche (p273) in Salzburg and his Karlskirche (p133) in Vienna, Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt's Schloss Belvedere (p132), also in Vienna, and Stift Melk (p172) and Augustiner Chorherrenstift (p209), both by Jakob Prandtauer (1660–1726).

Rococo, the decorative climax of baroque, was the favoured style of the empress Maria Theresa, who chose it for the rooms of Schloss Schönbrunn (p135) when she commissioned Nicolas Pacassi to renovate the palace in 1744.

NEOCLASSICISM

From the 18th century, rococo's extravagance bowed down to a revival of old architectural styles. Known as neoclassicism (because many works had a classical bent) or revivalism, the trend culminated in cold lines and strict forms in the 19th century. The Ancient Greece-inspired historicism of the parliament building (p128) in Vienna from 1883 is a good illustration, symbolising democracy with its impressively soaring columns.

When Emperor Franz Josef I took the Austro-Hungarian throne in 1848, the building boom reached new heights of grandiosity. Vienna's Ringstrasse (p128) is Austria's showcase from this time, and was developed on the site of the old city walls from 1857 onwards. Ringstrasse also demonstrates just how flagrantly builders plundered previous styles, including French Gothic (Votivkirche), Flemish Gothic (Rathaus; p128), Grecian (Parliament; p128), French Renaissance (Staatsoper; p152) and Florentine Renaissance (Museum für angewandte Kunst; p128). If neoclassicism is your thing, this is the best Europe has to offer.

'The obsession with grace, grandeur and symmetry coincided with the rising fortunes of the Habsburgs'

Learn more about Austrian architecture at the Architekturtag (Architectural Days) in June. For more information go to www.architekturtag.at, in German.

GUSTAV KLIMT & SECESSIONISM

Now usually associated with Art Nouveau, the Viennese Secession movement was formed by 19 artists in the 1890s in order to break away from the historical or revivalist styles that dominated Europe at the time. The painter Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) was its first president, and other Secession artists included architect Otto Wagner (1841–1918), interior designer and painter Carl Moll (1861–1945) and painter Kolo Moser (1868–1918).

Secession artists worked in a highly decorative style. Klimt's famous painting *The Kiss* (1908) is typical of the rich ornamentation, vivid colour and floral motifs favoured by the movement. His later pictures (such as the two portraits of Adele Bloch-Bauer from 1907) employ a harmonious but ostentatious use of background colour, with much metallic gold and silver to evoke or symbolise the emotion.

Otto Wagner, by contrast, began working in historicist styles (some neo-Renaissance buildings on Vienna's Ringstrasse are by his hand), joined the Secessionists, and with Klimt and others split from them and adopted his own more-functional style. His greatest works include the Postsparkasse (Post Office Savings Bank; p131), the Kirche am Steinhof (p136) and the Majolikahaus (p135), but his work can be seen everywhere in the capital; he designed some 35 stations of the current U-Bahn system.

MODERN

In an age of change, something had to give. Late-19th-century Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) was sensuous, decorative and, unlike rococo, neoclassicism or neoclassical revivalism, not intent on bowling over with exaggerated displays of beauty or strict lines. In Vienna the style blossomed with the founding of the Secession movement in 1897, led by painter Gustav Klimt (1862–1918). One of the foremost architects in the movement was Otto Wagner (1841–1918; see above). Another, Adolf Loos (1870–1933) was influenced by Wagner, broke with his style, and became a bitter critic of the Ringstrasse buildings. His Loos Haus (p137) and American Bar (p149) in Vienna offer a good insight into his style.

The influence of the Social Democrats in the Vienna city government of the new republic (from 1918) gave rise to a number of municipal building projects, not least the massive Karl-Marx-Hof apartment complex. This stands in contrast to the multicoloured, haphazard-looking work of Austria's maverick 20th-century architect, Friedensreich Hundertwasser (see boxed text, opposite).

Austria's leading postmodern architect is Hans Hollein (b 1934), designer of the angular glass and stone Haas Haus (1990) in Vienna, near Stephansdom. Impressive but very different in its form, the monumental Hangar-7 (2003; p278) at Salzburg's airport is a spectacular glass and steel hanger housing vintage aircraft, art exhibitions and visitor facilities, designed by Volkmar Burgstaller (b 1944). Meanwhile in Linz, the Zürich architects Weber & Hofer are the force behind the cube-shaped Lentos art museum (2003; p203). One of Austria's most bizarre recent constructions, however, is the 'Friendly Alien' Kunsthaus (2003; p226) in Graz by British architects Peter Cook (b 1936) and Colin Fournier (b 1944), a creation with nozzles and an acrylic skin with electronic morphing capabilities.

Painting

Austria has some of the world's most impressive collections of paintings. Oberes Belvedere (p132) and the Prunkstall (p132) have a wealth of Gothic religious art from the Middle Ages. Come the Renaissance, the focus of the Viennese shifted from biblical motifs to landscapes. The Danube School (unusual because it combined both) included greats such as Rueland Frueauf

the Younger (1470–1545), Wolf Huber (1485–1553) and German-born Lukas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553).

Baroque artists were relatively thin on the ground in Austria, but the ceiling frescoes of Johann Michael Rottmayr (1654–1730) in Salzburg's Residenz (p268) and in the Stift Klosterneuburg (p160) are remarkable legacies. The other great baroque master is Daniel Gran (1694–1757), whose major work is in Vienna's Nationalbibliothek (p126). Taking the brush to canvas as well as roofs, Franz Anton Maulbertsch (1724–96) left legacies in the Riesensaal of the Hofburg in Innsbruck (p334) and in the Österreichische Galerie of Schloss Belvedere in Vienna (p132). The other great baroque painter, Paul Troger (1698–1762), created stunning spatial effects in Stift Melk (p172).

The Biedermeier period of the mid-19th century produced leading artists Ferdinand Waldmüller (1793–1865) and Friedrich Gauermann (1807–62), who captured the age in portraits, landscapes and period scenes. Some of Waldmüller's evocative (if idealised) peasant scenes can be viewed in the Oberes Belvedere (p132) in Vienna.

While the neoclassical period certainly produced its local greats, including August von Pettenkofen (1822–89) and Hans Makart (1840–84), Austria's golden age was still just around the corner. The turn of the century brought the Jugendstil period, featuring organic motifs such as plant tendrils, flowing hair, flames and waves. No-one embraced this sensuousness more than Gustav Klimt (1862–1918; opposite).

His contemporary, Egon Schiele (1890–1918), created grittier and more confronting works. Schiele worked largely with the human figure, and many of his works are brilliantly executed minimalist line drawings splashed with patches of bright colour and usually featuring women in pornographic poses. He also produced many self-portraits and a few large, breathtaking painted canvases, most of which can be seen in the Leopold Museum (p130). Vienna's Oberes Belvedere (p132) has a wonderful collection from the era,

Museum after museum is listed on www.austrianmuseums.net; it's in German but it's pretty easy to navigate.

THE STRAIGHT LINE IS GODLESS

One of Austria's most celebrated architects-artists is Friedensreich Hundertwasser. Thanks to his eccentricity, he is also one of the most entertaining – visually and literally. When you look at his creations, including his last work – a public toilet in his beloved second home, New Zealand – you can understand what lies behind his claim that the 'straight line is godless and immoral'.

Some say his work is a nervous response to Bauhaus or Jackson Pollock. Perhaps. In his famous *Verschimmelungsmanifest* (Mould Manifesto, 1964), he claimed to have once counted 546 straight lines on a razor blade. And while not everyone who has battled with mould in their homes will agree with his (positive) view that 'with the microbes and sponge, life comes into the house'. His claim that his uneven floors 'become a symphony, a melody for the feet, and bring back natural vibrations to man' has won followers.

Hundertwasser lost a good deal of his family in the Nazi death camps and began a career in art at the Akademie der bildenden Künste (Academy of Fine Arts) in 1948, soon afterwards treading his own creative path. He would later move towards spiritual ecology, believing that cities should be harmonious with their (natural) environment. He envisaged buildings semi-submerged beneath undulating meadows, and homes with 'tree tenants', who pay rent in environmental currency. With the air and ozone layer getting thinner, perhaps he was onto something.

Hundertwasser locked horns with the Viennese establishment on many occasions, and he complained that his more radical building projects were quashed by the authorities. Nevertheless, he was commissioned to re-create the façade of the Spittelau incinerator in Vienna. This project opened in 1992 and is probably the most unindustrial-looking heating plant you'll find. Other Hundertwasser creations include the Kunsthaus Wien and Hundertwasserhaus in Vienna (p131), St Barbara Kirche in Bärnbach (p235) and Bad Blumau's spa resort (p237).

VIENNESE ACTIONISM *Dr Ed Baxter*

Viennese Actionism spanned the years 1957–68 and was one of the most extreme of all the modern art movements. It was linked to the Wiener Gruppe (Vienna Group) and had its roots in abstract expressionism. Actionism sought access to the unconscious through the frenzy of an extreme and very direct art: the Actionists quickly moved from pouring paint over the canvas, which was then slashed with knives, to using bodies (live people, dead animals) as 'brushes', and using blood, excrement, eggs, mud and whatever else came to hand as 'paint'. The traditional canvas was soon dispensed with altogether. The artist's body became the canvas, and the site of art became a deliberated event (the scripted action, staged both privately and publicly).

It was a short step from self-painting to inflicting wounds upon the body, and engaging in physical and psychological endurance tests. For 10 years the Actionists scandalised the press and public and incited violence and panic – and got plenty of publicity in the process. Often poetic, humorous and aggressive, the Actions became increasingly politicised, addressing the sexual and social repression that pervaded the Austrian state. Art in Revolution (1968), the last Action to be realised in Vienna, resulted in six months hard labour all-round.

and a museum in Tulln (p173) is dedicated entirely to Schiele. The other major exponent of Viennese Expressionism was playwright, poet and painter Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980), whose sometimes-turbulent works reveal an interest in psychoanalytic imagery and baroque-era religious symbolism. Kokoschka's work is also showcased in the Leopold.

Painting took a backseat between the two world wars, but returned with a vengeance after WWII. In the 1950s HC Artmann (1921–2000) founded the Wiener Gruppe (Vienna Group); its members integrated surrealism and Dadaism into their sound compositions, textual montages, and Actionist happenings. Public outrage and police intervention were regular accompaniments to their meetings. The group's activities came to an end in 1964 when Konrad Bayer (1932–64), its most influential member, committed suicide; much of the legacy of the movement is on show in the MUMOK (p130).

Some of the important names in today's Austria's art scene include Gunter Brus (b 1938) and Hermann Nitsch (b 1938), both former members of the Actionism group, Arnulf Rainer (b 1929), also associated with Actionism but more recently involved in photographing and reworking classic pieces by Schiele, van Gogh and Rembrandt, and Eva Schlegel (b 1960), who works with a wide range of media. Sammlung Essl in Klosterneuburg has many of these artists and should be high on the list of places to visit for contemporary art.

Sculpture

Austria is blessed with two very early pieces of erotic pre-Christian sculpture. At over 30,000 years old, *Venus of Galgenberg* (aka Dancing Fanny) is the oldest-known stone figurine in the world, while the more rapturous *Venus of Willendorf*, discovered in the Danube Valley, has fended off suitors for some 25,000 years. Both are now in Vienna's Naturhistorisches Museum (p129).

The enamel *Verdun Altar* (1181) in Klosterneuburg abbey (p160) is Austria's finest surviving work from the Romanesque period. Some of the most beautiful altars were carved of lime wood during the Gothic era. The best known are today in St Wolfgang (p260) and are the work of Michael Pacher (1440–98), who is one of the most skilful religious artists working in the 15th century. The tomb (1502) of Maximilian I in Innsbruck's Hofkirche (p334) is a highlight of the Renaissance, and the same church has impressive statues in bronze, including several by the German master of all trades, Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528).

Hermann Nitsch still practices Viennese Actionism; decide for yourself whether it's your cup of tea at www.nitsch.org, in German.

Take a peak at the sublime works of the Wiener Werkstätte and learn something of the organisation's history at www.wiener-werkstaette.at.

The baroque period is captured in the fountain by George Raphael Donner in Vienna's Neuer Markt (p137), and Balthasar Permoser's statue of Prince Eugène in the Schloss Belvedere (p132). Those with a special interest in baroque funeral caskets should look no further than the giant double sarcophagus created by Balthasar Moll (1717–85) for Maria Theresia and Franz I, located on Vienna's Neuer Markt (p127).

Neoclassicism was the age of the equestrian statue, and nothing typifies this better than the one from 1804 of Emperor Joseph II in Josefsplatz in Vienna's Hofburg (p125). Salzburg also has some distinctive equine marvels in its old town centre.

The Biedermeier period achieved much in furniture and some of this can be seen in Vienna's Museum für angewandte Kunst (Museum of Applied Art; p131). It also gave rise to the technique of 'bending' wood in furniture, particularly in the backs of chairs, and since that time the bentwood chair has also been known as the Viennese chair.

The Secessionist movement not only had a hand in painting and architecture, but also some interesting sculpture. This offshoot was known as the Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshop), which changed the face of domestic design. Wallpaper, curtains, furniture, tiles, vases, trays, cutlery, bowls and jewellery were all targets for design; aesthetics came before practicality, which means that some of it is brilliant but utterly useless. Josef Hoffmann was a prominent figure in the Werkstätte, as was Kolo Moser (1868–1918); many of their works, along with other members, can be seen at the Museum für angewandte Kunst (p131) and Leopold Museum (p130).

Literature

The outstanding Austrian work produced in the Middle Ages was the *Nibelungenlied* (Song of the Nibelungs), written around 1200 by an unknown hand. This epic poem told a tale of passion, faithfulness and revenge in the Burgundian court at Worms. Its themes were adapted by Richard Wagner in his *The Ring of the Nibelungen* operatic series.

Aside from Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872; see p57), Austria's literary tradition didn't really take off until around the turn of the 20th century, when the Vienna Secessionists and Sigmund Freud were creating waves. Influential writers who emerged at this time included Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931), Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929), Karl Kraus (1874–1936) and the young poet Georg Trakl (1887–1914). Kraus' apocalyptic drama *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (The Last Days of Mankind, 1922) employed a combination of reports, interviews and press extracts to portray the absurdity of war.

Peter Altenberg (1859–1919) was a drug addict and alcoholic whose doctor wrote him off as unfit for work due to an overly sensitive nervous system. Quite sensibly, he dedicated his life to poetry after that and portrayed bohemian Vienna. You'll find an amusing figure of him as you enter his favourite coffee house, Café Central (p151) in Vienna. Hermann Broch (1886–1951) was also very much part of Viennese café society. Broch was a scientist at heart who believed literature could provide the metaphysical explanations for scientific discovery. His masterwork was *Der Tod des Vergil* (The Death of Virgil, 1945) written in a Nazi concentration camp and after his emigration to the USA.

Robert Musil (1880–1942) was one of the most important 20th-century writers, but he only achieved international recognition after his death with his major literary achievement, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (The Man without Qualities, 1932). This seven-volume unfinished work is a fascinating portrait of the collapsing Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Heimito von

A slice of Viennese life in the late '60s from popular US author John Irving, *Setting Free the Bears* tells a charming, sad and amusing story about a plan to release the animals from the zoo at Schönbrunn.

Set in 1932, *The Radetzky March* by Joseph Roth is the study of one family affected by the end of empire. The themes of *The Radetzky March* are applicable to any society emerging from a long-hated, but at least understood, regime.

Not just a novel, but a complete overhaul of what a novel can be, *The Death of Virgil* by Hermann Broch is as stylistically groundbreaking as Joyce's *Ulysses*. Covering the last day of the poet's life, this book is hard, hard work.

Doderer (1896–1966) grew up in Vienna, which is why his two great works, *Die Strudlhofstiege* (1951) and *Die Dämonen* (The Demons; 1956) depict Vienna society in the first decades of the 20th century.

A friend of Freud, a librettist for Strauss and a victim of Nazi book burnings, Stefan Zweig (1881–1942) certainly had a rich social pedigree. A poet, playwright, translator, paranoid and pacifist to boot, Zweig believed Nazism had been conceived specifically with him in mind and as a result he when he became convinced in 1942 that Hitler would take over the world, he took an overdose of barbiturates in his chosen exile, outside Rio de Janeiro. Joseph Roth (1894–1939), primarily a journalist, wrote about the concerns of Jews in exile and of Austrians uncertain of their identity at the end of empire. His re-released *What I Saw: Reports from Berlin, 1920–33* (2002) is part of a resurgence of interest in this fascinating writer.

Perhaps it's something in that murky Danube water, but the majority of contemporary Viennese authors (at least, those translated into English) are grim, guilt-ridden, angry and sometimes incomprehensibly avant-garde. Thomas Bernhard (1931–89) was born in Holland but grew up and lived in Austria. Like seemingly many Viennese, he was obsessed with disintegration and death, and in later works such as *Holzfällen* (Cutting Timber, 1984) turned to controversial attacks against social conventions and institutions. His novels are seamless (no chapters or paragraphs, few full stops) and seemingly repetitive, but surprisingly readable once you get into them.

The best-known contemporary writer is Peter Handke (b 1942). His post-modern, abstract output encompasses innovative and introspective prose works such as *Die linkshändige Frau* (The Left-Handed Woman, 1976) and stylistic plays like *Die Stunde, da wir nichts voneinander wussten* (The Hour When We Knew Nothing of Each Other, 1992). The provocative novelist and 2004 Nobel Laureate Elfriede Jelinek (b 1946) dispenses with direct speech, indulges in long flights of fancy and takes a very dim view of humanity, but she is worth persevering with. *Die Klavierspielerin* (The Piano Teacher, 1983), *Lust* (1989), *Die Liebhaberinnen* (Women as Lovers, 1975), *Die Ausgesperrten* (Wonderful, Wonderful Times, 1980) and *Einar* (2006) are all available in English; *The Piano Teacher* has also been made into a film.

Elisabeth Reichart (b 1953) stands out for her novels and essays, and especially for criticism of patriarchy and investigations of Nazi-related Austrian guilt, both during WWII and more recently. *Her Das Haus der sterbenden Männer* (House of the Dying Men, 2005) is a richly textured novel based on the relationship between two very different women, one of whom runs a home for terminally ill men. Novelist and lyricist Wilhelm Aigner (b 1954) was awarded the prestigious *Grosser Österreichischer Staatspreis für Literatur* (Grand Austrian State Prize for Literature) in 2006 and his *Die schönen bitteren Wochen des Johann Nepomuk* (The Beautiful, Bitter Weeks of Johann Nepomuk, 2006) about first love, football and adolescence also appears in English. Contemporary young authors who are shaping the literary scene today include Thomas Glavinic (b 1972), Berlin-based Kathrin Röggla (b 1971), and Vienna-based (Munich-born) Daniel Kehlmann (b 1975), whose historical novel *Vermessung der Welt* (Measuring the World, 2005) about early scientists Alexander von Humboldt and Carl Friedrich Gauss is highly acclaimed and in translation.

Cinema & TV

Austria may have a long history in film (1908 marked the country's first feature film, *Von Stufe zu Stufe*; From Stage to Stage), but its endeavours have generally gone unnoticed outside the German-speaking world. As a cinematic backdrop for film, the story is quite different; two of the most famous films

in cinematic history, *The Third Man* (1949) and *The Sound of Music* (1965), are set in Vienna and Salzburg respectively. Both flopped on release in the country, and while most Austrians still haven't a clue about 'Doe, a deer, a female deer', opinions on Harry Lime and his penicillin racket have turned 180 degrees since then (p32). There are literally hundreds of other films and TV programmes filmed in Austria; *Before Sunrise* (1994), *The Living Daylights* (1987) and *Where Eagles Dare* (1968; starring Clint Eastwood and Richard Burton) are three of the more famous examples.

Many of Austria's early big names were successful after they travelled to Berlin or Hollywood. Vienna-born director Fritz Lang (1890–1976) pretty much captures it all: he almost ruined his Berlin film studio with the astronomical budget of *Metropolis* (1926), the story of a society enslaved by technology. This and his *The Last Will of Dr Mabuse* (1932), during which an incarcerated madman spouts Nazi doctrine, were banned under the Nazis; after knocking back a work offer from Hitler, who was besotted Lang's silent classic *Die Nibelungen* (1924), the director went to Hollywood.

Writer and director Billy Wilder (1906–2002), who moved to Vienna in 1916, also worked in Berlin before striking out for Hollywood. Others who are famous internationally are glamour girl Hedy Lamarr (1913–2000), and director Fred Zinnemann (1907–1997; *From Here to Eternity* and *High Noon* in 1952). For many, Klaus Maria Brandauer (b 1944), star of *Out of Africa* (1985) and *Mephisto* (1981) will need no introduction, and Arnold Schwarzenegger (b 1947), has left visiting cards in Hollywood and as Governor of California.

One filmmaker today attracting attention at home and abroad is Michael Haneke (b 1942), whose work often features violence and a theme of self-destruction. His first film, *Funny Games* (1997), played at the Cannes Film Festival, and his *The Piano Teacher* (2001), based on the novel by Viennese writer Elfriede Jelinek went one step further by winning three awards there. Director Hans Weingartner (b 1970) achieved acclaim with *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei* (The Educators, 2004), an insightful film that shows the generation problems you take on if you kidnap an ex-student revolutionary-turned-businessman (it's not worth the trouble, it seems). Ground was also broken in *In 3 Tagen bist du tot* (In 3 Days You're Dead, 2006), when director Andreas Prochaska (b 1964) filmed amateur actors speaking local dialect in a teenage thriller set in the bucolic landscape of the Salzkammergut. In the documentary genre, Hubert Sauper (b 1966) received an Oscar nomination for *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004).

Although news coverage is excellent, locally dubbed foreign fare dominates a bland TV landscape. Testing the brain's sleep centre are noble but interminable broadcasts of parliament, Austrian talk shows, local variants on reality TV or specials on folk music. Against this backdrop, the old favourite, *Komissar Rex*, a bizarrely genre-fluid crime series with a dash of slapstick featuring a ham-roll-stealing German Shepherd dog and plenty of local scenery, reaches giddy and thoroughly enjoyable heights.

Theatre & Dance

Vienna's tradition in the theatre was – and still is – bolstered by the quality of the operas and operettas produced in the golden age of music. In addition to these forms, Greek drama, avant-garde, mime, comedy, cabaret, farce and other theatrical genres are regularly part of the vibrant scene. Vienna is home to the four national theatres and opera houses – the Staatsoper (p152), Volksoper (p153), Akademietheater (the Burgtheater's second stage) and the Burgtheater itself (p153), which is one of the premier theatre and opera venues in the German-speaking world. Theater in der

Thomas Bernhard's one-sentence prose poem *On the Mountain* is the story of a man about to die of lung disease. The first book Bernhard wrote and the last he published, it is bleak and bitter. Also try *Cutting Timber* and *Wittgenstein's Nephew*.

Witty and clever, Elfriede Jelinek hates all her characters. Her novel *Lust* is the story of a rural woman preyed on by her husband and lover, told without a gram of sympathy for the filthy habits of humans.

So it's kitsch, tacky and full of cheesy songs, but there's no denying the popularity of *The Sound of Music* (1965) by Robert Wise, the story of the multitalented Von Trapp family and their too-good-to-be-true nanny.

'All my six husbands married me for different reasons.'

AUSTRIAN HOLLYWOOD FILM ACTRESS HEDY LAMARR

For a complete rundown of Austrian films in English, consult the archives of www.afc.at, the Austrian Film Commission's website.

Viennese *enfant terrible* Haneke's first world-renowned work, *Funny Games* (1997) is a disturbing study of sadism and destruction. A family on holiday is taken hostage by two well-educated young men who want to push some boundaries.

Find out what the Austrian Oak's saying these days by visiting the Terminator-cum-governor's slightly wacky personal website at www.schwarzenegger.com.

Josefstadt (p153) is known for the modern style of acting evolved by Max Reinhardt, while the Theater an der Wien (p152) puts on opera, dance and concerts. All provincial capital cities are blessed with major theatres.

The first great figure in the modern era was the playwright Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872). Other influential playwrights who still get a regular airing are Johann Nestroy (1801–62), known for his satirical farces, and Ferdinand Raimund, the 19th-century author of *Der Alpenkönig und der Menschenfeind* (The King of the Alps and the Misanthrope, 1828). Adalbert Stifter (1805–68) is credited as being the seminal influence in the development of an Austrian narrative style.

Many Viennese authors are also playwrights – perhaps the Viennese fondness for the avant-garde encourages crossing artistic boundaries. Arthur Schnitzler, Thomas Bernhard, Elfriede Jelinek and Peter Handke (p55) have all had their plays performed at the Burgtheater.

Dance is by no means as popular as the other arts, but it does have a world-class venue in the TanzQuartier Wien (p153) as well as in those venues already mentioned.

Food & Drink

Tradition with new, non-regional edges best describes what you can increasingly expect from Austrian restaurants today. Wiener schnitzel (from veal), *Tafelspitz* (boiled beef with apple and horseradish sauce) and delicious hams and cheeses from Tyrol are often balanced by dishes with flavoursome infusions from outside a region or abroad. For many, the best is left for last: deliciously divine cakes and pastries, with an international reputation hard to beat, round off a meal perfectly.

STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

Traditionally, the largest meal of the day is at *Mittag* (midday), known as *Mittagessen* (midday meal), whereas *Abendessen* (dinner) consists of bread, cheese, ham and a beer or wine. Snacking between meals is common, and is often referred to as *Jause*. If they have time, Austrians will still sit down to a *Tagesteller* (set dish) or *Mittagsmenü* (set lunch, including soup; around €6 to €9) in a restaurant, which is invariably a cheap way to fill the belly. *Frühstück* (breakfast) is less important, and usually consists of coffee or tea with a *Semmel* (bread roll) and jam, ham or cheese (or all three). On weekends, particularly in Vienna, breakfast is a completely different creature; people lazily while away the hours over coffee, rolls, and occasionally a full English breakfast.

Three courses are usual for traditional meals. Clear soups are a particular favourite as a *Vorspeise* (starter), such as *Frittattensuppe*, a clear soup with shreds of crepe-like pancake. *Markknödelsuppe* is a clear bone-marrow soup with dumplings, while *Leberknödelsuppe* is yet another clear soup with liver dumplings. *Gulaschsuppe* (goulash soup), a rich beef-vegetable soup with plenty of paprika, can be taken as a starter or a main. If you're not a soup fan, then try *Bauernschmaus*, a platter of cold meats and bread.

Wiener schnitzel, a breaded escalope of veal, is Vienna's best-known culinary concoction, but it is ubiquitous throughout Austria. Variations on the schnitzel theme include the more common pork schnitzel, *Cordon Bleu*, with ham and cheese, and the *Natur*, a schnitzel fried on its own.

Other than schnitzel, *Speisekarten* (menus) normally feature classic Austrian dishes, such as *Backhuhn* (fried chicken; also known as *Backhendl*), *Tafelspitz*, *Schweinsbraten* (slices of roast pork) and *Zweibelrostbraten* (slices of roast beef smothered in gravy and fried onions). A great variety of *Wurst* (sausage) is available, and not only at the takeaway stands. Common fish include *Forelle* (trout), *Hecht* (pike), *Fogosch/Zander* (pike-perch), *Karpfen* (carp), and *Saibling*, a local freshwater fish, similar to trout.

Main dishes commonly appear with *Beilagen* (side dishes) and extras, which come in a variety of shapes and forms. *Knödel* (dumplings) are an element of many meals, and can appear in soups and desserts as well as main courses. *Nockerln* (sometimes called *Spätzle*, especially in the west) is small homemade pasta with a similar taste to *Knödel*. *Nudeln* is normally flat egg noodles, except when it's the tiny noodles in a soup. Austrians love potatoes, and are not satisfied with just boiling them. They appear as *Pommes* (French fries), *Quellmänner* (boiled in their skins), *Bratkartoffel* (roasted), *Geröstete* (sliced small and sautéed) and *Erdapfelsalat Erdäpfel* (boiled potatoes with chopped chives in a watery dressing).

Regional traditional cuisine is where things get really interesting. Burgenland has strong ties to Hungarian cooking, with lashings of paprika, beans, potatoes and cabbage, while in Styria it's hard to go anywhere

www.pumpkinseedoil.cc – more information than you will ever need to know about southern Styria's liquid gold.

It's estimated that each year about 73 million servings of schnitzel, 42 million portions of goulash and almost 40 million pasta dishes are spooned into Austrian digestive systems.

OUR TOP EATING EXPERIENCES**Vienna**

- **Österreicher im MAK** (p147) Classics like tongue of veal find a new edge in this sharp restaurant.
- **Naschmarkt** (p149) Not just the capital's most famous farmers market – nosh houses stand cheek by jowl, tantalising with exotic and local flavours.
- **Halle** (p147) Penne with artichoke hearts meets Styrian chicken on a changing menu in the pulsating Museums Quartier.

Lower Austria

- **Mörwald Kloster Und** (p170) All the hallmarks of the Wachau are here: a lovely setting, good wine and a chef to watch out for (all while enjoying breast of pigeon).
- **Filmbar im Kesselhaus** (p169) A hungry film-lover's dream come true, with delicious salads and meats, an art-house cinema, plus cinema exhibition space.
- **MOKA** (p178) Miss the last bus out, treat yourself to poppy seed cake and – damn it! – stay overnight.

Burgenland

- **Weingut Gabriel** (p194) Wash down smoked sausage with great wine while watching storks mate above the yard of this picturesque Heuriger.
- **Weingut & Weingasthof Kloster am Spitz** (p195) Organically produced wines, game flavoured with ginger and other fusion elements are all at home here.
- **Zur Dankbarkeit** (p196) A regional kitchen in a leafy yard off the pink, shimmering Neusiedler See, plus the best drops from local winegrowers.

Upper Austria

- **k.u.k. Hofbäckerei** (p207) Fritz Rath tempts the sweet-toothed with his famous *Linzer Torte* in the city's oldest café.
- **Knapp am Eck** (p213) Down a cobbled lane, this gorgeous tavern serves sage-stuffed pork in a lantern-lit, ivy-clad garden.
- **Schlossbrauerei Weinberg** (p216) Devour beer-drenched goulash and beer-battered schnitzel in this cavernous brewpub, hidden in the forest above Kefermarkt.

Styria

- **Lendplatz farmers markets** (p231) The finest out of the *Selchkammer* (smoke house), *Hartkäse* (matured cheese), vegetables, breads and flowers from Graz vendors – with views.
- **Aiola Upstairs** (p230) Chilled music, lemongrass risotto and beef, plus a strong wine and cocktail list and views of Graz from Schlossberg.
- **Iohan** (p231) Gothic vaulting, great wines and food, with *Leberpate* (liver pâté) served at the bar.

Salzkammergut

- **Restaurant-Pizzeria Simmer** (p253) Pizza and a bowling alley out back, and views across the swampy meadows to Hallstätter See.

without encountering *Kürbiskernöl*, a rich, dark pumpkin-seed oil. It is also home to Austria's *Almochsen* (shortened to *Almo*) bulls, delivering the best beef. In Carinthia, look for *Käsnudeln*, pasta made into balls and combined with cheese. *Käsnocken*, *Kässpätzle* and *Käsnödel* are variations on a the theme. Tyrol specialities include *Tiroler Gröstl*, pan-fried onions, meat and potatoes, and *Tiroler Knödel*, dumplings hiding small pieces of ham.

- **Im Weissen Rössl** (p261) Braised cheek of veal, colonial sauces, and fine views in two restaurants overlooking the Wolfgangsee.
- **Rudolfsturm** (p102) Rustic, filling fare while perched some 800m above Hallstätter See – a perfect end to hiking around the lake.

Salzburg & Salzburger Land

- **Scio's Specereyen** (p278) Few can resist the blinis with caviar and chocolate-coated *Venusbrüstchen* (Venus breasts) at Scio's.
- **Afro Café** (p277) Hot-pink walls, wacky artwork and African flavours (such as sticky ostrich kebabs) make this Salzburg's coolest café.
- **Obauer** (p286) Karl and Rudi Obauer reach for the Michelin stars, with local fare like Werfen lamb and trout strudel.

Carinthia

- **Restaurant Maria Loretto** (p294) Stupendous Wörthersee views, plus classic fare – from local trout and schnitzel with cranberries to Carinthian *Almo* steak.
- **Zauberhutt'n** (p294) Mediterranean influenced food, a kitchen full of magicians, and the best squid conjured up this side of the Alps.
- **Millstätter See** (p308) A romantic dinner for two on a raft on a lake: enjoy a seven course meal ferried out by to you by waiters on a watery mission.

Hohe Tauern National Park Region

- **Hözlalneralm** (p317) The *Kaspressknödel* (dumpling in Pinzgauer cheese) is a meal in itself at this farmhouse high above Krimml Falls.
- **Our's Lounge** (p316) Glass walls, throne-like red velvet chairs and a menu packed with fusion flavours draw trendsies to the lounge.
- **Hotel Haidenhof** (p326) Locals pile into the South Tyrolean tavern for fresh trout, homemade strudel and appetising Dolomite views.

Tyrol

- **Metzgerei Kröll** (p349) Nip into this family-run butchers for delicious *Schlegeis-Speck* ham, cured at 1800m to achieve its aroma.
- **Stanz** (p359) High on a plateau, Stanz's 65 distilleries pack a punch with fiery plum schnapps.
- **Auracher Löchl** (p355) Expect walls festooned with forest animals, low beams and humungous *Schweinshaxe* (pork knuckles) at this medieval haunt.

Vorarlberg

- **Käsestrasse** (p374) The dairies lining this road through the Bregenzerwald roll out tasty cheeses, from creamy Bergkäse to walnutty Nussknacker.
- **Cafesito** (p371) Squeeze into this hip café for chilli hot chocolate and Bregenz's freshest bagels and smoothies.
- **Wirtschaft zum Schützenhaus** (p376) '*Schiessen und Geniessen*' (shoot and enjoy) is the motto at this half-timbered tavern, with lederhosen-clad staff and enormous schnitzels.

No meal in Austria would be complete without *Nachspeise* (dessert). Beating all-comers in the popularity race is the *Apfelstrudel*, although *Palatschinken* (crepes) comes a close second. A speciality for Salzburg is the *Salzburger Nockerl*, a fluffy baked pudding made from eggs, flour and sugar. *Germknödel* are sourdough dumplings, but more appetising are *Marillenknödel* (apricot dumplings). Look for *Mohr im Hemd*, a chocolate pudding with whipped cream and chocolate sauce, *Guglhupf*, a cake shaped

like a volcano, the *Sacher Torte* in Vienna and the *Linzer Torte* in Linz. The ever-present *Mozartkugeln* (Mozart Balls) are another favourite.

DRINKS Nonalcoholic Drinks

Although herbal and black teas are popular, coffee is the preferred hot beverage, which is drunk mainly in a *Kaffeehaus* (coffee house) or café, or sometimes in a Café-Konditorei. Strong Turkish coffee is a popular variation in coffee houses. Mineral or soda water is widely available and cheap, though tap water is fine and for the asking. *Almdudler*, a cross between ginger ale and lemonade, is one local soft drink found the country over. Come September, *Traubenmost*, a fresh, unfermented grape juice, is available in wine regions.

Alcoholic Drinks

Although *Bier* (beer) is by far the most popular drink in Austria, internationally, *Wein* (wine) outshines the amber fluid. White wine is traditionally Austria's mainstay, but one-third of the country's viticulture is now planted in reds. Austria has four winegrowing regions: Weinland (Lower Austria and Burgenland; see p195), Steierland (Styria; see p236), Wien (Vienna) and Bergland (Upper Austria, Salzburg, Carinthia, Tyrol and Vorarlberg). These bring together 19 different winegrowing areas. Grüner Veltliner is the most common variety, while *Sekt* is the local bubbly.

Come autumn the whole country goes mad for *Sturm* – new wine in its semi-fermented state. It's yeasty, highly drinkable, has a kick like a mule, and hangovers resemble a porcupine waltzing inside your head, but it's an absolute must. *Staubiger* is new wine fully fermented and is more sour and cloudy than *Sturm*. Some of the young wines can be a little sharp, so it is common to mix them with 50% mineral water, called a *Gespritzer* or *G'spritzer*.

The perfect place to sample wine and *Sturm* is a *Heurigen* or *Buschenschank*, Austria's wine taverns. Rustic and rural, these wonderful establishments have plenty of character and traditionally sell only their own wine, but quite often you'll find stock from outside. They're easy to spot; just look for the *Busch'n* (green wreath or branch) hanging over the front door.

Acidic but pleasant, *Most* is an alcoholic beverage made from apples or wild and cultivated pears and similar to cider. It's found almost all over Austria, but especially in Upper Austria, and in Lower Austria, from where the fruit-growing Mostviertel region (between the Ybbs and the Enns Rivers) gets its name.

Austria loves its home-grown beer, which is no surprise considering the quality. It's usually a light, golden-coloured lager or pilsner (there are dark versions too), and is produced by breweries across the country. Common brands include Ottakringer from Vienna, Gösser and Puntigmer from Graz and Stiegl from Salzburg. *Weizenbier* (wheat beer), also known as *Weissbier* (white beer) has a full-bodied, slightly sweet taste and can be light or dark, clear or cloudy, and is sometimes served with a slice of lemon straddling the glass rim. *Vom Fass* (draught beer) comes in either a 0.5L or a 0.3L glass. In Vienna and some other parts of eastern Austria these are called respectively a *Krüge(r)* (sometimes spelled *Kriegel*) and a *Seidel*. Elsewhere these will simply be *Grosse* (big) or *Kleine* (small). A small beer may also be called a *Glas* (glass). A *Pfiff* is just 0.125L, which will probably satisfy you for all of two seconds. *Radler* is a mix of beer and lemonade.

Austrians have a soft spot for *Schnapps*, made from a variety of fruits and sometimes called *Obstler*. Some of the country's better drops can be bought at *Bauernmärkte* (farmers markets) across the country.

Check out what's happening in the Austrian vineyards and even practice your Austrian wine terms with mp3 at www.winesfromaustria.com.

Vienna is the largest wine-growing city in the world, although it produces only 1.4% of Austrian wine; 91.7% is produced in the Weinland region.

The Ultimate Austrian Wine Guide, by Peter Moser and published by Falstaff, is the wine lover's bible to Austrian wine. It features a rundown on wines from Austria, 200 leading wineries and is in English.

MORE THAN JUST COFFEE

Legend has it that coffee beans were left behind by the fleeing Turks in 1683, however the tradition of the Viennese *Kaffeehaus* developed in the 19th century, when their numbers reached a reputed 600 cafés.

When ordering a cup of the brown stuff, a 'coffee, please' doesn't suffice. Make your choice from the many types, and this will generally be served on a silver platter accompanied by a glass of water, and if you're lucky, a small sweet.

Here's what you'll generally find on offer:

- *Brauner* – black but served with a tiny splash of milk; comes in *Gross* (large) or *Klein* (small)
- *Einspänner* – with whipped cream, served in a glass
- *Fiaker* – Verlängerter with rum and whipped cream
- *Kapuziner* – with a little milk and perhaps a sprinkling of grated chocolate
- *Maria Theresia* – with orange liqueur and whipped cream
- *Masagran* (or *Mazagran*) – cold coffee with ice and Maraschino liqueur
- *Melange* – the Viennese classic; served with milk, and maybe whipped cream too, similar to the cappuccino
- *Mocca* (sometimes spelled *Mokka*) or *Schwarzer* – black coffee
- *Pharisäer* – strong *Mocca* topped with whipped cream, served with a glass of rum
- *Türkische* – comes in a copper pot with coffee grounds and sugar
- *Verlängerter* – *Brauner* weakened with hot water
- *Wiener Eiskaffee* – cold coffee with vanilla ice cream and whipped cream

CELEBRATIONS

Austrian cuisine very much follows the seasons. Game, an integral part of most menus throughout the year, really comes into its own in autumn, when most of the hunting takes place. Expect to find *Hirsch* (venison), *Wildschwein* (wild boar), *Gems* (chamois) and *Reh* (roe deer) on menus around this time. Come early autumn, the hills and forests are crawling with Austrians, with their bums up and their heads down, searching for *Schwammerl/Pilze* (mushrooms). In May, it's hard to avoid *Spargel* (asparagus), but why would you want to miss this crisp, freshly picked stick of goodness? It's often served with a rich, creamy sauce.

St Martin's Day (November 11) is traditionally marked with the serving of *Gans* (goose), St Martin's symbol. The tasty dish is available the entire month of November. Just before *Weihnachten* (Christmas), you might like to check what's splashing in the bathtub before you dip a toe – the Central European tradition of keeping a live *Karpfen* (carp) in store for Christmas festivities is not unknown in Austria. Seasonal celebrations are complemented with *Vanillekipferl*, crescent cookies which have a special place in the hearts of all Austrians.

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Restaurants are by far the most common place to eat. Quite often a rural inn will call itself a *Gasthof* or *Gasthaus* to denote a more traditional setting and décor. Restaurants usually open from 11am or 11.30am to midnight (kitchen till 10.30pm); some close the kitchen, or even the premises, during downtime from 2.30pm to 5pm or 6pm.

Heurigen are fairly inexpensive places to eat in wine areas and the capital. Food is usually buffet style and consists of hearty, Austrian cuisine, and is

Ewald Plachutta and Christoph Wagner put together their favourite Austrian dishes in *The 100 Classic Dishes of Austria*, published by Deuticke.

Legend has it that the origin of the humble bagel dates back to 1683, when a Viennese baker created a *Beugal* (stirrup) for Polish King Jan III Sobieski in celebration of his victory over the Turks.

The Wiener schnitzel is not in fact from Vienna; it was brought back to the capital from Milan in 1848 by Field Marshal Radetzky's chief cook.

available from around 11am to 11pm. Take note that a *Kaffeehaus* (coffee house) or *Café* is very different from a *Café-Konditorei*. A coffee house/café serves coffee, tea and other beverages, as well as light warm and cold meals and sometimes a few pastries and cakes. By contrast, a *Café-Konditorei* specialises in cakes, often baked on the premises, and will usually serve coffee too. While it is customary to linger for hours, read the newspapers from the racks, drink a wine or beer and play chess or cards in a coffee house/café, this would be out of line in a *Café-Konditorei*. Hours tend to be different too. A *Café-Konditorei* keeps close to standard shop hours, whereas coffee houses and cafés open their doors early, often between 7am and 8am, and close from anything between 7pm and 1am, depending on the market they're catering to, or even morph into very late-night drinking dens.

In mountainous areas, *Hütte* or *Almhütte* (alpine huts) are atmospheric places for basic Austrian cuisine in stunning surroundings.

Quick Eats

If you need something in a hurry, a *Würstel Stand* (sausage stand) is never too far away. Deli shops sometimes offer hot food, such as spit-roasted chicken (an Austrian favourite). Supermarket delis will always have sandwiches for those on the run.

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

Vegetarians will do just fine in Vienna, and in Austria's other large cities there are at least a couple of vegetarian restaurants to choose from. In the countryside however, things can get extremely meaty. Many places now offer at least one vegetarian dish, but don't count on it every time; you may have to rely on a combination of salads and side dishes to create a full meal. Note that most soups are made with meat stock.

EATING WITH KIDS

Feeding the little 'uns will prove no problem in Austria; in general, only the very upmarket restaurants have a problem with children. Some restaurants have children's menus but most will be willing to serve smaller portions if you ask nicely.

See p383 for more on travelling with children.

HABITS & CUSTOMS

In general, Austrians are a polite and respectable bunch at the table, and tend to take their time over meals. More often than not, the next course will not be served until everyone at the table has finished, so don't ramble on to your neighbour while the rest of the diners are waiting. Nonsmokers (and some smokers) may be annoyed with smoking habits in restaurants; many smokers won't bat an eyelid lighting up while you're still only half way through your Wiener schnitzel.

Austrians certainly like a drink, and the country has its fair share of teenage binge drinkers and alcoholics, but your average Austrian tends to take his or her time getting sozzled. Every drink bought deserves a *Prost* (cheers) and eye contact with your fellow drinkers; not following this custom is thought of as rude. Even worse, it's believed to result in bad sex for the next seven years.

COOKING COURSES

Places offering cooking courses are rather thin on the ground, but if you're keen to learn how to bread a schnitzel the Austrian way, or roll the perfect *Knödel*, there are a few places in Vienna to check out:

Babettes (Map pp116-17; ☎ 01-585 51 65; www.babettes.at, in German; 04, Schleifmühlgasse 17; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) A food-lover's dream, with a zillion cookbooks and spices, plus cooking courses to boot.

Hollerei (Map pp116-17; ☎ 01-892 33 56; www.hollerei.at, in German; 15, Hollergasse 9; ☎ Mon-Sat) Conducts regular courses on veg cooking with style.

Restaurant zur Traube (☎ 02738-229 80; kochschule@moerwald.at; Kleine Zeile 13-17, 3483 Feuersbrunn) In rural Feuersbrunn (a short hop from Vienna). Offers seminars and courses almost weekly on Austrian and international cuisine.

Wrenkh Kochsalon & Restaurant (Map pp120-1; ☎ 01-533 15 26; www.wrenkh.at, in German; 01, Bauernmarkt 10; ☎ lunch & dinner) Runs some unusual courses: its *Zurufküche* (cooking calling) consists of lining up an array of ingredients and experimenting in style and dish, while *Kochsalon* courses are group cooking events whose multicourse outcome you enjoy together.

In Styria, try the **Erste Steirische Kochschule** (☎ 03135-522 47; www.kochschule.at, in German; Hauptstrasse 168) in Kalsdorf, or **Gasthof Vitalpension Hubinger** (☎ 03861-81 14; www.hubinger.com; 8633 Etmiszl 25) in Etmiszl for traditional Austrian cooking courses.

EAT YOUR WORDS

Want to know your *Germknödel* from your *Grammelknödel*? Your *Wiener Bachhendl* from your Wiener schnitzel? Get behind the cuisine scene, by getting to know the language.

Useful Phrases

Can you recommend ...?

<i>Können Sie ... empfehlen?</i>	ker-nen zee ... emp-fay-len
a restaurant	
<i>ein Restaurant</i>	ain res-to-rang
a bar/pub	
<i>eine Kneipe</i>	ai-ne knai-pe

A table for ..., please.

Einen Tisch für ..., bitte. ai-nen tish für ... bi-te

I'd like to reserve a table for ...

Ich möchte einen Tisch für ... reservieren. ikh merkh-te ai-nen tish für ... re-zer-vee-ren

(two) people

(zwei) Personen (tsvai) per-zaw-nen

(eight) o'clock

(acht) Uhr (akt) oor

Do you have ...?

Haben Sie ...? hah-ben zee ...?

a menu in English

eine englische Speisekarte ai-ne eng-li-she shpai-ze-kar-te

vegetarian food

vegetarisches Essen ve-ge-tah-ri-shes e-sen

What would you recommend?

Was empfehlen Sie? vas emp-fay-len zee

I'd like a local speciality.

Ich möchte etwas Typisches aus der Region. ikh merkh-te et-vas ti-pi-shes ows dair re-gyawn

I'd like the set menu, please.

Ich hätte gerne das Tagesmenü, bitte. ikh ha-te ger-ne das ta-ges- me-noo bi-te

What are the daily specials?

Was sind die Tagesspezialitäten? vas zind dee ta-gez-spe-tsya-lee-te-ten

Classic dishes and their recipes can be found on the English website www.austrianfoodandwine.com.

Food history, wine glossary and menu guide; it's all here under one website: www.globalgourmet.com/destinations/austria.

Get Elisabeth Mayer-Browne's take on the Austrian kitchen in the *Best of Austrian Cuisine*, published by Hippocrene.

I'm a vegetarian.

Ich bin Vegetarier(in). (m/f) ikh bin ve-ge-tah-ri-e-r/ve-ge-tah-ri-e-rin

Is it cooked in meat stock?

Ist es in Fleischbrühe? ist es in flai-sh-brü-e

What's in that dish?

Was ist in diesem Gericht? vas ist in dee-zem ge-rikht

I'd like ..., please.

Ich möchte ..., bitte. ikh merkh-te ... bi-te

Can I have some more ... please.

Bitte noch ein ... bi-te nokh ain ...

That was delicious!

Das war sehr lecker! das vahr zair le-ker

The bill, please.

Die Rechnung, bitte. dee rekh-nung, bi-te

Bon appétit.

Güuten Appétit. goo-ten a-pe-teet

Cheers!

Prost! prawst!

Menu Decoder**SOUPS & STARTERS**

Frittattensuppe (free-ta-ten-zu-pe) – clear soup with chives and strips of pancake

Leberknödelsuppe (lay-ber-kner-del-zu-pe) – liver dumpling soup

Rindsuppe (rind-zu-pe) – clear beef soup

MAINS

Backhendl (bakh-hen-del) – fried breaded chicken

Bauernschmaus (bow-ern-shmows) – platter of cold meats

Gammelknödel (gra-mel-kner-del) – pork dumplings

Gulasch/Gulas (goo-lash/goo-las) – thick beef soup

Schinkenfleckerl (shin-ken-flek-erl) – oven-baked ham and noodle casserole

Schweinsbraten (shvains-bra-ten) – roast pork

Semmelknödel (ze-mel-kner-del) – bread dumplings

Stelze (shitel-tse) – roast hock

Tafelspitz (ta-fel-spits) – boiled beef, potatoes and horseradish sauce

Tiroler Gröstl (tee-ro-ler grer-stel) – potatoes, onions and flecks of meat fried in a pan

Wiener schnitzel (vee-ner shni-tsel) – breaded veal cutlets (sometimes with pork or turkey)

Zwiebelrostbraten (tswee-bel-rost-bra-ten) – roast beef slices with gravy and fried onions

DESSERTS

Apfelstrudel (ap-fel-stroo-del) – apple strudel

Germknödel (jairm-kner-del) – yeast dumplings with poppy seeds

Kaiserschmarrn (kai-zer-shmar-ren) – sweet pancake with raisins

Marillknödel (ma-ree-len-kner-del) – apricot dumplings

Mohr im Hemd (morr im hemd) – chocolate pudding with whipped cream and chocolate sauce

Palatschinken (pa-lat-shing-ken) – crepes

Topfenknödel (top-fen-kner-del) – cheese dumplings

Food Glossary**MEAT & FISH**

bacon	<i>Speck</i>	shpek
beef	<i>Rindfleisch</i>	rint-flai-sh
brains	<i>Hirn</i>	heern
carp	<i>Karpfen</i>	karp-fen
chicken	<i>Huhn/Hendl</i>	hoon/hen-dl

duck	<i>Ente</i>	en-te
eel	<i>Aal</i>	ahl
fish	<i>Fisch</i>	fish
goose	<i>Gans</i>	gans
ham	<i>Schinken</i>	shing-ken
hare	<i>Hase</i>	hah-ze
lamb	<i>Lamm</i>	lam
liver	<i>Leber</i>	lay-ber
minced meat	<i>Hackfleisch</i>	hak-flai-sh
plaice	<i>Scholle</i>	sho-le
pork	<i>Schweinsfleisch</i>	shvai-ne-flai-sh
salmon	<i>Lachs</i>	laks
tongue	<i>Zunge</i>	tsung-e
trout	<i>Forelle</i>	fo-re-le
tuna	<i>Thunfisch</i>	toon-fish
turkey	<i>Puter</i>	poo-ter
veal	<i>Kalbfleisch</i>	kalp-flai-sh
venison	<i>Hirsch</i>	hirsh

VEGETABLES & FRUIT

apple	<i>Apfel</i>	ap-fel
apricot	<i>Marille/Aprikose</i>	ma-ree-le/a-pri-ko-ze
asparagus	<i>Spargel</i>	shpar-gel
banana	<i>Banane</i>	ba-nah-ne
beans	<i>Bohnen</i>	baw-nen
beetroot	<i>Rote Rübe</i>	raw-te- rü-be
cabbage	<i>Kohl</i>	hawl
carrots	<i>Karotten</i>	ka-ro-ten
cherries	<i>Kirschen</i>	kir-shen
corn	<i>Mais</i>	mais
cucumber,		
gherkin	<i>Gurke</i>	gur-ke
garlic	<i>Knoblauch</i>	knawp-lowkh
grapes	<i>Trauben</i>	traw-ben
green beans	<i>Fisolen</i>	fee-zo-len
mushrooms	<i>Champignons/ Schwammerl/Pilze</i>	sham-pee-nyon/ shva-mer/pil-tse
onions	<i>Zwiebeln</i>	tsvee-beln
pear	<i>Birne</i>	bir-ne
peas	<i>Erbsen</i>	erp-sen
peppers	<i>Paprika</i>	pap-ri-kah
pineapple	<i>Ananas</i>	a-na-nas
plums	<i>Zwetschgen</i>	tsvets-h-gen
potatoes	<i>Erdäpfel/Kartoffeln</i>	ert-ep-fel/kar-to-feln
raspberries	<i>Himbeeren</i>	him-bee-ren
spinach	<i>Spinat</i>	shpi-naht
strawberries	<i>Erdbeeren</i>	ert-bee-ren
tomatoes	<i>Paradeiser/Tomaten</i>	pa-ra-dai-ser/to-mah-ten

OTHER ITEMS

bread	<i>Brot</i>	brawt
bread roll	<i>Semmel</i>	ze-mel
butter	<i>Butter</i>	bu-ter
cheese	<i>Käse</i>	kay-ze

chocolate	<i>Schokolade</i>	sho-ko-lah-de
coffee	<i>Kaffee</i>	ka-fay
cream	<i>Schlagobers/ Rahm/Sahne</i>	shlag-o-berz/ rahm/zah-ne
dumplings	<i>Knödel</i>	kner-del
eggs	<i>Eier</i>	ai-er
honey	<i>Honig</i>	haw-nikh
jam	<i>Marmelade</i>	mar-me-lah-de
mustard	<i>Senf</i>	zenf
nut	<i>Nuss</i>	nus
oil	<i>Öl</i>	erl
pepper	<i>Pfeffer</i>	pfe-fer
rice	<i>Reis</i>	rais
salad	<i>Salat</i>	za-laht
salt	<i>Salz</i>	zalts
sugar	<i>Zucker</i>	tsu-ker

COOKING TERMS

baked	<i>gebacken</i>	ge-ba-ken
boiled	<i>gekocht</i>	ge-kokht
crispy	<i>knusprig</i>	k-noo-sprik
fresh	<i>frisch</i>	frish
fried	<i>gebraten</i>	ge-brah-ten
grilled	<i>gegrillte</i>	ge-grilt
homemade	<i>selbst gemacht</i>	selbst ge-makht
roasted	<i>braten</i>	bra-ten
steamed	<i>gedämpft</i>	ge-dempft
smoked	<i>geräuchert</i>	ge-roy-khert
sour	<i>sauer</i>	zow-er
sweet	<i>süß</i>	züs

UTENSILS

ashtray	<i>Aschenbecher</i>	a-shen-be-kher
cup	<i>Tasse</i>	ta-se
fork	<i>Gabel</i>	gah-bel
glass	<i>Glas</i>	glahs
knife	<i>Messer</i>	me-ser
plate	<i>Teller</i>	te-ler
spoon	<i>Löffel</i>	ler-fel
toothpick	<i>Zahnstocher</i>	tsahn-shto-kher

Environment

Landlocked in the heart of Europe, Austria may be small but she's a country magnet, surrounded by Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Despite her diminutive size, she's an astounding natural beauty who revels in diversity: from the green vines of Burgenland to Lower Austria's castle-speckled hills, Tyrol's voluptuous mountains to the pure lakes of Salzkammergut. In topographic terms, it's as though someone chalked a line straight down the middle and asked all the Alps to shuffle to the west and all the flats to slide to the east, so stark is the contrast in this land of highs and lows.

THE LAND

Think of Austria and invariably the first thing to pop into your head are mountains. Of the 83,858 sq km of land squeezed within Austria's borders almost two-thirds are mountainous. The glaciers that began carving up the landscape some 2½ million years ago played a big hand in softly sculpting the country's distinctive shape of mountains, valleys and lakes.

Austria's Alps can be split into three mountain ranges running in a west-east direction. The Northern Limestone Alps, bordering Germany, reach nearly 3000m and extend almost as far east as the Wienerwald (Vienna Woods). The valley of the Inn River separates them from the High or Central Alps, the highest peaks in Austria dwarfed by the majestic summit of Grossglockner (3797m). The Southern Limestone Alps, which include the Karawanken Range, form a natural barrier with Italy and Slovenia.

The rest of the country is a mixed bag of alpine foothills, lowlands and granite highlands. By far the most fertile stretch is the Danube Valley, growing 90% of Austria's food. In the northeast the landscape switches to rolling hills and dense forest, thinning out to the east in the pancake-flat Pannonian plains. What these regions lack in mind-blowing scenery they make up for with mile upon mile of vineyards and farmland.

Austria's greatest feature outside the Alps is the thoroughly un-blue Danube (Donau), flowing west-east from Germany through the Danube Valley and Vienna, and eventually exiting in Slovakia. Joining the Danube as it enters Austria is the turquoise Inn River. To the southeast, the main waterways are the Mur and the Drau.

Aside from rivers, Austria is riddled with lakes and it's hard to move without toppling into one in the Salzkammergut region and Carinthia. The country's most unusual lake is Neusiedler See in Burgenland, Austria's lowest point (115m) and one of Europe's few steppe lakes. It's an outdoorsy haven for ornithologists, water-sport fanatics and cyclists.

WILDLIFE

Austria has abundant wildlife and while you'd be lucky to glimpse an elusive lynx or golden eagle in the Alps, there's a good chance you might spy marmots, chamois and ibex. Bird-watchers flock to the banks of Neusiedler See to spot the 150 different species of birds that breed in the area. During the Europe-Africa migration period, the same number of species drop in on the lake during their flight south.

Animals

The critters of Austria's alpine regions are the most intriguing for visitors. There you'll find the ibex, a mountain goat with curved horns, which was

www.naturschutz.at is a one-stop shop for info on Austria's landscape, flora and fauna. It's in German, but there are a few links to English sites too.

Get your skates on at Neusiedler See. When the salt lake freezes it becomes Central Europe's biggest natural ice rink, beckoning anyone that fancies a teeth-chattering twirl.

Cameras and binoculars at the ready... Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Höhe in the Hohe Tauern National Park is a prime place to spot ibex, chamois and marmots in the late afternoon.

at one stage under threat but fortunately is now breeding again. It's the master of mountain climbing and migrates to 3000m or more come July. The chamois, a small antelope more common than the ibex, is equally at home scampering around on mountain sides. It can leap an astounding 4m vertically and its hooves have rubber-like soles and rigid outer rims – ideal for maintaining a good grip on loose rocks.

The marmot, a fluffy rodent related to the squirrel, is also indigenous to the Alps. It's a sociable animal that lives in colonies of about two dozen members. Like meerkats, marmots regularly post sentries, which stand around on their hind legs looking alert. They whistle once when a predator from the air (like an eagle) and twice when a predator from the ground (such as a fox) is approaching and the whole tribe scurries to safety down a network of burrows. Winged fauna in the Alps include golden eagles, vultures – both bearded and griffin – and a multitude of colourful butterflies.

In the east the picture is completely different. The Neusiedler See, a large steppe lake, is a unique sanctuary for numerous species of bird. Commonly spotted are avocets, Eurasian curlews, yellow wagtails, short-eared owls, great bustards and white storks.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Like most European countries, Austria has its fair share of endangered species, including the country's 'flagship' species below – those that stand out in a list that's far too long. For more information, consult the *Rote Liste* (red list; www.umweltbundesamt.at), a comprehensive list of endangered species collated by the Umweltbundesamt (Federal Environment Agency).

Austria's most endangered species is the *Bayerische Kurzhörmaus* (Bavarian pine vole), which is endemic to Tyrol and found only in six localities. Following close behind is the *Kaiseradler* (imperial eagle), at one time extinct in Austria but fortunately staging a comeback through re-immigration. The *Triel* (stone curlew), a rare bird found only in eastern Austria, is also under threat, as is the *Europäische Sumpfschildkröte* (European pond terrapin), which inhabits the Danube floodplains. The *Europäische Hornotter* (long-nosed viper) may be a venomous snake at home in Carinthia, but humans are a far greater threat to its survival than its bite will ever be to our survival.

Although still teetering on the brink of extinction, the country's population of brown bears now reaches double figures (estimated at around 15 to 20). This is due to the efforts of organisations like Austria's Brown Bear Life Project and the WWF who have invested millions of euros into bringing the bear back to the Alps. While rarely sighted, brown bears are said to roam in central and southern mountainous regions such as Carinthia and Styria.

Plants

An incredible 47% of Austria is forested, making it one of the most wooded countries in Europe. At low altitudes expect to find shady oak and beech forests; at higher elevations conifers, such as pine, spruce and larch, take over. At around 2200m trees yield to alpine meadows and beyond 3000m, only mosses and lichens cling to the stark crags.

A highlight of the Alps is its flowers, which add a palette of colour to the high pastures from June to September. The flowers here are built to cope with harsh conditions: long roots counter strong winds, bright colours attract few insects and specially developed leaves protect against frost and dehydration. By far the most popular is the edelweiss, which is a white, star-shaped flower found on rocky crags and crevices. Although most alpine

flowers are protected and should not be picked, many young, love-struck men have risked life and limb to bring such a flower to the lady of their choice. Delicate orchids, arnica, alpine roses and purple gentian also carpet the slopes in summer.

Of particular note again is the Unesco biosphere reserve of Neusiedler See, whose western shores are lined with a vast, almost impenetrable belt of reeds.

NATIONAL PARKS

For a country of such extraordinary natural beauty, it may come as a surprise to learn that only 2.9% of Austria falls within the boundaries of national parks. Within this 2.9%, commercial operations such as traditional farming and hunting, are still ongoing. However, the national park authorities have managed to strike a good balance between preserving the natural wildlife and keeping local economic endeavours alive. The website www.nationalparksaustria.at has links to all six national parks and a brochure in English to download.

Of Austria's national parks, Hohe Tauern National Park is the most spectacular and frequented hands-down. Neusiedler See-Seewinkel takes second place, due to its closeness to Vienna and the plethora of water sports activities available there.

Aside from the country's national parks, protected areas and reserves are dotted all over Austria and land protected by nature conservation law totals a more impressive 35.5%, which covers landscapes from forest to the Alps and Pannonian steppe.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

On the whole, Austrians are an ecofriendly bunch who treat their backyard better than most nations. They're well informed about environmental issues and the government, which spends 3% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The Dreiländereck in Villach, Carinthia, is the point where Austria, Slovenia and Italy meet. It's quite an experience to hike to the summit and kick back in three countries at the same time.

AUSTRIA'S NATIONAL PARKS

Park (area)	Features	Activities	Best Time to Visit	Page
Donau-Auen (93 sq km)	floodplains, meadows, still rivers; beavers, turtles, catfish	walking, cycling, boating	summer	p180
Gesäuse (110 sq km)	mountains, gorges, meadows, forests; owls, eagles, falcons, woodpeckers	rock climbing, hiking, rafting, caving, mountain biking	spring, summer, autumn	p243
Hohe Tauern (1787 sq km)	mountains; ibex, marmots, bearded vultures, golden eagles	hiking, rock & mountain climbing, skiing, canyoning, kayaking, paragliding	year-round	p310
Kalkalpen (210 sq km)	forests, gorges, mountains; lynx, golden eagles, owls, woodpeckers	cycling, hiking, rock climbing, cross-country skiing	year-round	p213
Neusiedler See-Seewinkel (97 sq km)	saline steppe lake, salt marshes; storks, great bustards, avocets, owls	sailing, swimming, cycling, walking, bird-watching	summer	p193
Thayatal (13 sq km)	rocky outcrops, virgin forest; otters, eagles, storks, bats	walking	spring, summer, autumn	p178

A right pair of love birds, golden eagles stay together for life. See www.birdlife.at, in German, to find out more about these elusive raptors and other Austrian birdlife.

on environmental measures, has happily signed international agreements to reduce pollution and preserve natural resources. See the Getting Started chapter (p21) for practical tips on limiting environmental impact.

Recycling is big in this country; Austrians are diligent about separating recycling material from other waste, and the practice is very much ingrained in society. You'll see recycling bins for metal, paper, plastics and glass on many street corners, and most neighbourhoods have stations for hazardous materials. Some glass containers, in particular beer bottles, have a return value that can be claimed at supermarkets; look for *Flaschen Rücknahme* (bottle return) machines.

Measures have been in place for years to protect the fragile ecosystem of alpine regions, yet some forest degradation has taken place due to air and soil pollution caused by emissions from industrial plants, exhaust fumes and the use of agricultural chemicals. The government has moved to minimise such pollutants by banning leaded petrol, assisting businesses in waste avoidance and promoting natural forms of energy, such as wind and solar power. Wind farms are prevalent in the flat plains in the east of the country and home owners are encouraged through tax breaks to install solar panels. Some buses are gas powered and environmentally friendly trams are a feature of many cities.

One of Austria's biggest environmental concerns is not within the country's sphere of control. In 1978, Austrians voted against developing a nuclear power industry, prompting the federal Nuclear Prohibition Law. The Czech Republic thought otherwise, and in 2000 its Temelín nuclear reactor was brought online just 60km from the Austrian border. Many environmentalists were appalled and their concerns were not unfounded; 2002 saw shut-downs, due to faulty valves and a pipe being welded on incorrectly. While no radiation leaks have yet been reported, environmental agencies believe it is only a matter of time. Border blockades and protests flared again in 2007 when the Czech government announced intentions to withdraw from the bilateral Melk Agreement, which monitors the power station's safety and environmental impact. The dispute is ongoing.

Melting ice is a hot topic in the Hohe Tauern National Park. The Pasterze Glacier has shrunk to half its size over the past 150 years and is predicted to disappear entirely within 100 years.

Want to know more about Austrian ski resorts stepping up efforts to save the environment? Check out www.saveoursnow.com.

GREENER SHADE OF WHITE

In a bid to offset the impact of skiing, plenty of Austrian resorts are now taking the green run by implementing ecofriendly policies. The following are green giants that aim to tread lightly:

- **Lech** (p379) in Vorarlberg scores top points for its biomass communal heating plant, the photovoltaic panels that operate its chairlifts and its strict recycling policies.
- **Zell am See** (p313) launched Austria's first ISO-certified cable car at the Kitzsteinhorn glacier. It operates a free ski bus in winter and runs an ecological tree and grass planting scheme.
- **Kitzbühel** (p351) operates green building and climate policies and is taking measures to reduce traffic and the use of non-renewable energy sources.
- **St Anton am Arlberg** (p362) shows its green streak by creating protected areas to reduce erosion and pumping out artificial snow without chemicals. Its excellent train connections mean fewer cars.
- **Ischgl** (p360) uses renewable energy, recycles in all hotels, lifts and restaurants and has a night-time driving ban from 11pm to 6am.
- **Mayrhofen** (p348) operates its lifts on hydroelectricity, separates all waste and has free ski buses to reduce traffic in the village.

SEPP HOLZER: THE REBEL FARMER

With its steep inclines and average temperature of 4.2°C, Ramingstein in Salzburger Land has been dubbed Austria's Siberia – cold and inhospitable. Yet precisely the reverse is true at Krameterhof, where kiwis, figs and lemons hang heavy on the trees at an elevation of 1500m. The green-fingered brainchild of this alpine Garden of Eden is Sepp Holzer, alias 'the rebel farmer'. His concept is permaculture using self-sustaining agricultural systems. Once planted, Holzer does not weed, water, prune or use pesticides. 'There's no need – nature is perfect', he says. 'It's humans that make the mistakes'.

An inquisitive child, Holzer observed and experimented with nature to discover that: 'every leaf, every stone, every plant, every insect has an important role to play'. Together with his wife, he runs the 50-hectare farm according to self-sufficient ecosystems; there are terraces to reduce erosion and catch rain, rocks to trap and emit heat, and foraging pigs to till the wheat fields. Carrots and lettuces grow wildly here not in ruler-straight lines and the cherries are plump despite 25cm of new snow a few days ago. 'I work with nature, not against it', Holzer shrugs. And the results are clear: 18 times the average yield using 10% of the energy.

Holzer has scattered the seeds of permaculture far and wide, with international projects including a self-sufficient orphanage in Thailand and a recultivation programme in Scotland. But it's not all been a bed of roses back home. 'People have branded me a liar, a mad farmer that says *Guten Morgen* to the rain worms. I don't talk to worms, but I do try to put myself in the place of animals and plants to consider what they like and need.' He has been fined and threatened for planting cereal crops in the forest, but sticks to his guns against monoculture. 'Deer eat bark from randomly chosen trees because they feel trapped and instinctively know that if trees fall, light will allow other species to grow. Others mock me, but my forest is still standing when a storm comes. Anyone that thinks they are above nature or can control it is a fool.'

In his summer seminars (see www.krameterhof.at, in German), Holzer encourages people to abandon textbook theories and open their eyes to what nature is telling them; the philosophy is careful thought, minimal action. 'Children should grow up understanding that earth is not dirt but the foundations of life', Holzer stresses. 'It's time to stop the social brainwashing and show some civil courage. Those that don't are slaves in their own farms', he adds. There's no doubting the wisdom in Holzer's words or the method in his madness. He may be a rebel, but he does have a cause.

With global warming on the increase, Austria's ski pistes are on the decrease. A UNEP report on climate change published in 2007 warned that rising temperatures could mean that 75% of alpine glaciers will disappear within the next 45 years, and that dozens of low-lying ski resorts such as Kitzbühel (760m) will be completely cut off from their slopes by 2030. Forecasts suggest that the snowline will shift from 1200m to 1800m by 2100, a prediction that is supported by recent mild winters in the Alps. As well as the impact on Austria's tourist industry, the melting snow is sure to have other knock-on effects, including erosion, floods and an increased risk of avalanches.

Austria's lucrative ski industry is a double-edged sword; on the one hand resorts face mounting pressure to develop and build higher up on the peaks to survive, while on the other their very survival is threatened by global warming. For many years, ski resorts have not done the planet many favours: mechanically grading pistes disturbs wildlife and causes erosion, artificial snow affects native flora and fauna, and trucking in snow increases emissions. However, many Austrian resorts (see opposite) now realise that they are walking a thin tightrope and are mitigating their environmental impact with renewable hydroelectric power, biological wastewater treatment and ecological buildings.

Take the plunge at Montafon's Mountain Beach (www.mountainbeach.at, in German). The award-winning complex is the last word in eco-bathing, sheltering two enormous pools filled with spring water and cleaned by micro-organisms.

Outdoor Activities

Austria is a great place to get into the outdoors, with a gigantic backyard full of spiky peaks, clear lakes and raging rivers custom-made for vigorous activities. Skiing and walking (p82) are perennial favourites and share the limelight with gravity-defying sports designed to make you scream. Feeling daring? Catch thermals with a parachute or abseil down a waterfall, bounce down the Alps in a snow tube or on the back of a bone-shaking mountain bike.

If that sounds too hair-raising, there's drama to be had in silent moves – swishing through frozen woodlands on cross-country trails and finding your (very big) feet in a pair of snowshoes. Snow or shine, this country is hyperactive.

WINTER

SKIING & SNOWBOARDING

Go to Austria in winter and you'll find that skiing and snowboarding still top the list of ways to amuse yourself with an enormous pile of snow. The Austrian Alps are fine specimens of mountains: high enough for one to hurl down black runs in big resorts like Mayrhofen (p348), low enough to give beginners the skitterbug on the nursery slopes in chocolate-box villages such as Filzmoos (p286). Almost every Austrian you meet has skied since they were knee-high and the average four-year-old will ski circles around you on the slopes. The best skiing is in the western reaches of the country, though most resorts in the Alps have T-bars, lifts and cable cars.

While this book features plenty of skiing information, it's not a dedicated skiing guide. Austria has hundreds of excellent ski resorts and no attempt has been made to cover them exhaustively. Many are now taking steps to improve their green credentials and minimise their impact on the environment (p72). For a detailed rundown of resorts based primarily on skiing criteria, consult a specialist book or magazine, such as the UK's *The Good Skiing & Snowboarding Guide*. More information on ski resorts can be provided by Österreich Werbung (p391) and the resort tourist offices.

Information

The skiing season kicks off in December and lasts till late April in the high-altitude resorts. The biggest crowds descend on the slopes at Christmas-New Year and in February half-term holidays. May to June and late October to mid-December fall between the summer and winter seasons. Some cable cars will be closed for maintenance and many hotels and restaurants will be shut, but you'll avoid the crowds and find prices at their lowest.

Austria offers some of the finest year-round skiing in the Alps at eight glaciers: Dachstein, Mölltaler, Hintertuxer (p349), Pitztaler, Kaunertaler, Sölden (p357), Kitzsteinhorn-Kaprun (p313) and Stubai (p345). However, most alpine glaciers are now receding in the face of global warming, and snow coverage is less secure at lower elevations in early and late season.

Vorarlberg, Salzburger Land and Tyrol are the most popular destinations, but there is also skiing in Upper Austria, Carinthia and even Lower Austria. Ski passes cover the cost of mountain transport, including ski buses between the ski areas. Pass prices for little-known places may be as little as half that charged in the jet-set resorts. You're usually better off

buying half-/full-/multiple-day passes. Count on around €25 to €40 for a one-day ski pass, with substantial reductions for longer-term passes.

Rental prices for carving skis, stocks and shoes are around €20 to €35 for one day for downhill skiing, with reduced rates offered over longer periods; snowboards are roughly the same as carving skis. Most ski resorts have one or more ski schools. Individual tuition and group lessons are available and will normally set you back around €250/60 per day respectively. The more days you take, the cheaper it gets.

Ski Regions & Resorts

The following are the pick of Austria's ski regions and resorts, but they're just a taste of what's up there. Weekly ski passes are quoted here at high-season rates; check with local tourist offices or turn to the regional chapters for details on possible discounts.

SPORTWELT AMADÉ (SALZBURGER LAND)

Salzburg's Sportwelt Amadé (www.sportwelt-amade.com) lures skiers with a whopping 865km of snow-sure slopes in 25 resorts. Among them are Radstadt (p287) and Filzmoos (p286). Filzmoos lies at the foot of the Dachstein massif and is a low-key, family-oriented resort with gentle skiing and village charm. The ski schools are in the heart of the resort, lift queues are short and the pistes uncrowded. Off-slope activities include 50km of winter walking trails and romantic horse-drawn sleigh rides. A weekly pass is €196.

EUROPA SPORTREGION (HOHE TAUERN NATIONAL PARK)

The vibrant resorts of Zell am See and Kaprun (p312) form the Europa Sportregion (www.europasportregion.info) and share 132km of pistes. The Schmittenhöhe challenges experts on nine black runs, while the gentle slopes of the Maiskogel are suited to families and novices. Out-of-season skiing is possible at Kitzsteinhorn glacier and snowboarders should check out the rails, kickers and boxes at the plateau. With its *belle époque* hotels and attractive lakefront, Zell am See retains an authentic feel unlike many purpose-built resorts. The entire region affords gorgeous views of the glacier-capped Hohe Tauern mountain range. A six-day pass costs €179.

SILVRETTA ARENA-ISCHGL (TYROL)

Located in the Paznauntal, Ischgl (p360) forms part of the Silvretta Arena and is swiftly carving its name as Ibiza in the Alps, thanks to its vibrant après-ski and clubbing. The powder is good, the lifts are ultramodern and the skiing mostly intermediate, with 230km of pistes for powder junkies to play on. Those seeking big air should check out the half-pipe and snowboarding park. The Silvretta Ski Pass costs €247 for seven days; it covers not only Ischgl, but also the neighbouring resorts of Galtür, Kappl and Samnaun (in Switzerland).

KITZBÜHEL-KIRCHBERG (TYROL)

The twin ski resorts of Kitzbühel (p350) and Kirchberg are among the best-known in Austria. Kitzbühel attracts the champagne crowd to the swanky hotels and restaurants in its medieval heart, while Kirchberg is more relaxed. They share 150km of prepared pistes and are linked by the 3S cable car at Pengelstein. A fine mix of intermediate and advanced, the slopes include the nerve-splintering Streif run. Snowboarders are well catered for at Kitzbühler Horn's fun park with a half-pipe, kickers and self-timer course. The only downside is Kitzbühel's comparatively low altitude, which means snow is

A great introduction to the never-ending list of outdoor activities on offer in Austria is the national tourist board's website www.austria.info, in German.

Get your skates on in Vienna for the Friday night skate sessions from May to September. Like-minded bladers meet up at 10pm on Heidenplatz. For route details, see www.fridaynightskating.at, in German.

Tee time! Austria's golfing pros give a whole new meaning to the word 'snowball' when they hit the powder for the World Golf Championships in Abtenau near Salzburg in February.

Get clicking on www.bergfex.com for piste maps and details of every ski resort in Austria, plus info on summer activities such as hiking and mountain biking.

no longer guaranteed. A weekly pass covering this and nearby ski areas (including Wilde Kaiser-Brixental) costs €202.

ZILLERTAL-MAYRHOFEN (TYROL)

Mayrhofen (p348) in the Zillertal combines steep slopes with broad pistes perfect for carving and cruising. Its varied terrain for skiers and boarders includes enough black runs to keep daredevils on their toes. Austria's undisputed king of scary skiing reigns here – the mogul-free and kamikaze-like Harakiri, with a 78-degree gradient that catapults skiers into the unknown (many take one look and judiciously turn back). Even when snow lies thin on the ground in Mayrhofen, the resort's easy access to the Hintertux Glacier means plenty of skiing is always available. The weekly Zillertal Super Ski Pass (€197.50) covers 157km of piste and 49 lifts in the Zillertal area.

ÖTZTAL-SÖLDEN (TYROL)

Sölden (p357) in the Ötztal is one of the country's highest resorts and snow coverage is superb. Most skiers that make it this far have the Big 3 in mind: a trio of 'three-thousanders' that are the ultimate in high-altitude, long-distance skiing. Experienced skiers seeking a leg-burner can attempt the Big 3 Rally, which conquers all three peaks in a marathon 50km, four-hour race. If that seems a little ambitious, the lively resort's 150km of slopes include many red and blue runs. The nearby Rettenbach and Tiefenbach glaciers are great for pre- or late-season cruising. The season here is one of the longest in Austria running from November to May and a weekly ski pass costs €228.50.

ARLBERG (TYROL/VORARLBERG)

Comprising the swish resorts of Lech (p379) and Zürs (p379) in Vorarlberg and devilish St Anton am Arlberg (p362) in Tyrol, the Arlberg (www.skiarlb.org.at) features 276km of groomed slopes. Lech and Zürs mainly offer red and blue runs, although there is some trickier off-piste terrain. Thrill seekers head for St Anton to ride the brand-new Galzigbahn gondola, speed down off-piste runs below Valluga and test out Rendl's half-pipe and jumps. The après-ski scene here is unrivalled in Austria. A weekly pass costs €224.

SILVRETTA NOVA-MONTAFON (VORARLBERG)

Silhouetted by Piz Buin (3312m), the Montafon ski area (p378) stretches along a valley in the southeast corner of Vorarlberg. This peaceful region has a clutch of small, laid-back resorts ideal for finding your ski legs on gentle pistes or getting off the well-bashed slopes with ski touring. Serviced by 62 lifts, the 222km of pistes mostly appeal to beginners and intermediates. Alongside downhill skiing, abundant sledding tracks and winter hiking trails make Silvretta Nova-Montafon a family favourite. A weekly pass (€198.50) covers seven resorts, including Schruns/Tschagguns, Gargellen and Gaschurn.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Locally known as *Langlauf*, cross-country skiing in Austria is considerably greener and cheaper than skiing. Skis give you the traction to walk uphill at your own pace and live the beauty of the forest and mountains in slow motion. The two main techniques are the classic lift-and-glide method on prepared *Loipen* (cross-country tracks) and the more energetic 'skating' technique. The basics are easy to master and tracks are graded from blue to black according to difficulty. It costs around €15 to €20 to rent a pair of cross-country skis for the day.

Seefeld (p345) features among Austria's top cross-country skiing destinations, with 262km of tracks crisscrossing the region and a 3km floodlit

Austrian Matthias Zdarsky penned the first skiing manual in 1897, invented the first practical ski binding and organised the first slalom competition in skiing history in 1905.

Weather and avalanche reports in Austria's ski regions are updated daily on www.lawine.at.

BEST SLOPES FOR...

- **Families** Heiligenblut (p319) for its relaxed vibe and Bobo's Kids' Club; Filzmoos (p286) for its central slopes and off-slope activities such as horse-drawn sleigh rides.
- **Snowboarding** For big air it has got to be Sölden (p357), with a half-pipe, two terrain parks and the Big 3 (three mountains above 3000m).
- **Cruising** Kitzbühel (p350) for its perfect blend of blues, reds and blacks.
- **Boozing** Après ski heavyweight? St Anton am Arlberg (p362) wins hands down. Hot contender? Ischgl (p360), dubbed 'Ibiza on skis' for its penchant for Europop and wild inebriation.
- **Snow-sure slopes** Topping 3000m, the Hintertux Glacier (p349) and the Kitzsteinhorn Glacier (p313) offer deep powder for pre- and post-season skiing.
- **Celebrity spotting** Lech (p379) and Zürs (p379) in Vorarlberg have earned their exclusive image with five-star pads welcoming royals, the filthy rich and supermodels on skis.
- **Ultimate scream** Mayrhofen (p348) for the breathtakingly sheer Harakiri run. It's very steep, pitch-black, and there's no turning baaaaaack...
- **Postcard scenery** Eschweg the Jägermeister parties in favour of Montafon (p378), a pristine valley with diverse terrain, snug chalets and awesome Piz Buin views.
- **Vista vultures** The views of the glaciated peaks of the Hohe Tauern National Park from the slopes above Zell am See (p312) will blow you away.
- **Cross-country** Seefeld (p345) and Bad Gastein (p320) are perfect for living life in the slow lane with glorious mountain scenery and mile upon mile of cross-country trails.
- **Night skiing** Hermagor (p301) is a great base for skiing Nassfeld's slopes, where one of Europe's longest floodlit runs at 2.2km lures after-dark skiers every Wednesday night.

stretch from Seefeld to Mösern. Zell am See (p312) is hot on its heels with 200km of groomed trails providing panoramic views of the Hohe Tauern mountains. Other great resorts to test your stamina and stride include the Bad Gastein region (p320), combed with 90km of well-marked cross-country trails.

SNOWSHOEING

It's immensely satisfying to make tracks through deep, virgin snow without sinking. Originally little more than strap-on tennis rackets, snowshoes have evolved into lightweight contraptions that allow you to shuffle through twinkling woodlands in quiet exhilaration. Many resorts in the Austrian Alps have marked trails where big-footed snowshoers can head up to the hills. It costs roughly €15 to €20 to hire a set of shoes and sticks for the day.

Prime spots to explore the snowy backcountry include Mayrhofen (p348), with around 45km of prepared trails, and Kitzbühel, (p350) where routes around the Kitzbühel Horn and Reith reveal the resort's tranquil side. During the winter season, guided snowshoe hikes depart from the tourist office at 9.45am from Monday to Friday (register in advance). The treks are €5 or free to visitors with a guest card.

SUMMER

CYCLING & MOUNTAIN BIKING

For many, Austria is best explored with your bum on a seat, freewheeling through the pristine countryside. The country is blessed with miles of well-marked cycle paths that pass through lowlands to the east and

mountains to the south and west. Whether you want to tear down the Alps, pedal through river valleys or ride rings around crystalline lakes, this two-wheel-friendly land has all the right ingredients. Warmer temperatures from May to October beckon cyclists, while downhill mountain bikers head to the Alps from late June to mid-September.

The local tourist offices usually stock brochures and maps on cycling and mountain biking. Cycle clubs are another good source of information; **Argus** (Map pp120-1; ☎ 01-505 09 07; www.argus.or.at, in German; Frankenberggasse 11, Vienna) has offices throughout the country and books (also in English) on the subject. Esterbauer's (www.esterbauer.com, in German) Bikeline books cover Austria's major trails in detail; they are in German but are reasonably easy to navigate. Freytag & Berndt and Kompass hiking maps are reliable sources for cycling, as they invariably have cycle trails marked.

City and mountain bikes are available for hire in most Austrian towns and resorts. Intersport has a near monopoly on rental equipment, offering a selection of quality bikes in 140 stores throughout Austria. Day rates range from €15 to €25 and the seventh day is often free on week rentals. All prices include bicycle helmets and there's a 50% reduction on children's bikes. Those that want to plan their route ahead can search by region and book a bike online (www.intersportrent.at).

Bikes can be taken on Austrian trains ÖBB (see p400). Many of the country's leading resorts have cottoned onto the popularity of downhill mountain biking and now allow cyclists to take their bikes on the cable cars for free or for a nominal charge in the summer season – maximising enjoyment and avoiding the sweat and strain of the uphill slog!

Cycling

The Alps offer a bumpy ride, but Austria has numerous flat trails that are less gruelling and sacrifice none of the splendour. Most of the routes circle lakes or follow the course of rivers and include those outlined following.

BODENSEE TRAIL

Touching base with Vorarlberg, the vast Lake Constance (p369) is easily explored by bike on a 270km cycleway that circumnavigates the lake through Austria, Germany and Switzerland. The route offers wonderful scenery – from forests to apple orchards and vineyards – fleeting views of the Alps and picnic pitstops at pebbly bays. Marked with red-and-white signs, the trail can be split into shorter chunks (see www.bodensee-radweg.com) making it a great option for families.

DANUBE TRAIL

Shadowing the Danube (p164) for 380km from Passau to Bratislava, this route's smooth trails make it popular with easy riders. The trail cuts a path through woodlands, deep valleys and orchards. A highlight is freewheeling past terraced vineyards, lofty cliffs and baroque abbeys in the Wachau. Green-and-white signs indicate the way on both sides of the river. For more details pick up Esterbauer's *Danube Bike Trail* (containing maps and instructions and practical information) or a free copy of the bilingual Donauradweg – Von Passau bis Bratislava.

INN TRAIL

Starting in Innsbruck (p331) and travelling 302km to Schärding, this trail sticks close to the turquoise Inn River. It's basically downhill all the way, passing through Tyrol, Bavaria and Upper Austria. You'll pedal through fertile farmland on Innsbruck's fringes, then alpine valleys dominated by

castles in Kufstein and Bavaria. The final flat stretch zips through quaint villages and rolling countryside to Schärding. The route is well marked, but signage varies between regions.

SALZKAMMERGUT TRAIL

This 345km circular trail explores the lake-studded Salzkammergut, including Hallstätter See (p249), Attersee and Wolfgangsee. It's not exactly flat, but the trail is well marked and only a moderate condition is required. The scenic route contours around lakes set against an alpine backdrop – there's nothing like pausing for a refreshing dip in their waters to relieve saddle sore! To explore the area in greater depth, pick up Esterbauer's *Radatlas Salzkammergut*. The trail is signposted (R2) in both directions.

TAUERN TRAIL

Taking in some of Austria's most spectacular scenery, the 325km Tauern tour is not technically difficult, but cycling at high altitude requires stamina. It begins at the thundering Krimml Falls (p317), then snakes along the Salzach River with vistas of glaciated Hohe Tauern peaks. Veering north, the trail passes the hilltop fortress of Hohenwerfen and the salt mines of Hallein. The final leg leads you through Salzburg and the Saalach Valley onto gentle pastures around Braunau am Inn and Schärding. The trail is marked with green-and-white signs in both directions.

Mountain Biking

The Austrian Alps are a Mecca to mountain bikers, with its hairpin bends, backbreaking inclines and steep descents. The country offers 17,000km of mountain bike routes, with the most challenging terrain in Vorarlberg, Tyrol, Salzburg and Carinthia. Below is a sample of the tours that lure the super-fit and speedy.

SALZBURGER ALMENTOUR

On this 146km trail, bikers pedal through 30 Almen (mountain pastures) in three days. While the name conjures up visions of gentle meadows, the route involves some strenuous climbs up to tremendous viewpoints like Zwölferhorn peak. Green-and-white signs indicate the trail from Annaberg to Edtalm via Wolfgangsee (p260). Route details and highlights are given online (www.almentour.com, in German).

DACHSTEIN TOUR

Hailed as one of the country's top mountain bike routes; this three-day tour circles the rugged limestone pinnacles of the Dachstein massif and blazes through three provinces: Salzburger Land, Upper Austria and Styria. You'll need a good level of fitness to tackle the 182km trail that starts and finishes in Bad Goisern, pausing en route near Filzmoos (p286). For details, see the website www.dachste.inrunde.at.

SILVRETTA MOUNTAIN BIKE ARENA

Grazing the Swiss border, the Silvretta Mountain Bike Arena in the Patznaun is among the biggest in the Alps, with 1000km of trails; some climbing to almost 3000m. Ischgl (p360) makes an excellent base with a technique park and plenty of trail information at the tourist office. The 15 freeride trails for speed freaks include the Velill Trail, involving 1300m of descent. Tour details are available at www.ischgl-bikeacademy.at, in German.

Plan your two-wheel adventure online at www.radtouren.at, with excellent info in English on cycling routes and bike-friendly hotels in Austria, plus maps, tips and brochures.

Surf www.bike-gps.com for downloadable GPS tours in Austria where you can get dirty on your mountain bike and www.bike-holidays.com for the best places to clean up afterwards.

KITZBÜHEL

Covering 750km of mountain bike trails, the Kitzbühel (p350) region rates as one of Austria's top freewheeling destinations. Routes range from 700m to 2300m in elevation and encompass trial circuits, downhill runs and bike parks. The must-experience rides include the Hahnenkamm Bike Safari from Kitzbühel to Pass Thurn, affording far-reaching views of Grossglockner and Wilder Kaiser, plus the Ehrenbach trail with jumps, drops and natural obstacles.

STUBAITAL & ZILLERTAL

These two broad valleys (p345 and p346) running south from the Inn River in Tyrol are flanked by high peaks crisscrossed with 800km of mountain bike trails. The terrain is varied and the landscape splendid, with gorges, waterfalls and glaciers constantly drifting into view. Highlights feature the alpine route from Mayrhofen to Hintertux Glacier and the dizzying roads that twist up from Ginzling to the Schlegeisspeicher.

PARAGLIDING

Wherever there's a high mountain accessible by cable car and a constant wind, you'll find paragliding and hang-gliding in Austria. It's particularly exhilarating on bright, sunny days in the Alps, when the sky is dotted with people soaring above the pinnacles and floating effortlessly on thermal drafts.

Of the two, paragliding wins the popularity race, simply because the equipment is more portable. Many resorts have places where you can hire the gear, get a lesson, or go as a passenger on a tandem flight. Tyrol is traditionally a centre for paragliding, with narrow valleys and plenty of cable cars. A good place to head is Fly Zillertal (p347) in Zell am Ziller.

CANYONING

If the thought of hurling yourself down crevices and abseiling down frothing waterfalls appeals, you'll love canyoning. This adrenaline-fuelled sport has established itself as one of the most popular activities in the Austrian Alps. Sliding through a gorge requires nerve and effort, but the ice-cold pools at the bottom provide welcome respite. Among the hundreds of crag-riddled destinations calling budding Indiana Joneses are Mayrhofen (p349), the Ötztal (p356) and St Anton am Arlberg (p362). Inquire at local tourist offices about canyoning specialists in the region. Canyoning is graded according to difficulty and length, with prices fluctuating between €45 and €90.

ROCK CLIMBING

It's impossible to have mountains without *Klettern* (rock climbing) and Austria is covered with rock-climbing opportunities. A good introduction for would-be Spidermen or women is the **Österreichischer Alpenverein** (p83), which advises on places to go and runs rock-climbing courses. Peilstein, in the Vienna Woods, is often used for such weekend courses. Other rock-climbing centres include Dachstein in Salzkammergut, Hochkönig near Salzburg, the Hohe Tauern National Park and Wilde Kaiser near Kufstein in Tyrol. Austrian mountaineer Peter Habeler (p89) runs a first-rate climbing school in Mayrhofen (p349), taking groups high up into the Zillertal Alps.

WATER SPORTS

Austria is dotted with more than 6000 lakes and a mammoth number of rivers coursing through its valleys that offer more than enough places to enjoy water sports.

GOING TO EXTREMES

- **Go ahead, jump** Austria's mountains aren't the only high points. To discover Vienna's topsy-turvy side, take a deep breath and leap into oblivion from the needle-thin Donauturm (Danube Tower), the world's highest bungee jump from a tower. Daredevils can also plunge 192m from the Europabrücke bridge spanning the Sill River for a thrilling upside-down bounce.
- **Gone with the wind** Kite-surfing is all the rage on Austria's lakes and it's about as much fun as you can have wearing a wetsuit. For a taste of the extreme water action, make a beeline for Neusiedler See in Burgenland, one of the few steppe lakes in Central Europe. Podersdorf am See is a great base to grab a board and catch the waves.
- **An ice climb** If you thought regular climbing was slippery, try getting a grip on ice climbing! Scaling frozen walls and waterfalls is pure adventure, but you'll need a decent pair of crampons and a good instructor. Slide over to the Stubai Glacier (p345) in Tyrol to give it a go.
- **Mind the gap** This is a tube with a difference – one that glides over hard-packed snow at jaw-dropping speeds. For a change, abandon your skis or sledge for the day and get your hands on one of these robust rings for heaps of fun spinning down the slopes in ski resorts like Sölden (p357) and Mayrhofen (p348).
- **Going down...** If you think paragliding is for wimps, skydiving may be just the ticket. Rolling out of a plane at 4000m and freefalling for 60 seconds before your parachute opens is the ultimate adrenaline rush. Tandem jumps are available all over Austria – from Vienna to Graz and Salzburg (see www.skydive.at for details).

Got some fantastic tips about Austria that you'd love to share with Lonely Planet readers? Create your own **Bluelist** and upload it onto our website – www.lonelyplanet.com.

Zippering across lakes by wind power is the most popular water sport in the country, and the locals aren't bad at, if Olympic medals are anything to go by. Sailing, windsurfing and kite-surfing are all here to be had; the **Österreichischer Segel-Verband** (Austrian Sailing Federation; ☎ 02167-40 243-0; www.segelverband.at, in German; Seestrasse 17b, A-7100 Neusiedl am See) can provide a list of clubs and locations in the country. The Neusiedler See (p193) is the number-one lake for such activities (probably because Vienna is so close), followed by the lakes of Carinthia and Salzkammergut. Tyrol has the Achensee (p350) and Vorarlberg the Bodensee (p369).

Rafting, canoeing or kayaking the white waters of Austria's alpine rivers are other favourite pastimes. Big rivers which support such adrenaline sports include the Enns and Salza in Styria, the Inns, Sanna and Ötztaler Ache in Tyrol and the Isel in East Tyrol. Imst (p358) is a well-known centre for rafting. **Absolute Outdoors** (☎ 03612-253 43; www.rafting.at; Ausseerstrasse 2-4, Liezen) is a reputable company offering trips on all the above rivers.

When the sun's out, there's little that's more invigorating than a dip in one of Austria's lakes. Carinthia is famed for its pure waters, which can heat up to a deliciously warm 26°C in summer; Milsstätter See (p307) and Wörthersee (p295) offer open-water swimming and scuba diving with great visibility. Salzkammergut is another prime spot for a summertime splash, in lakes such as Hallstätter See (p249) and Attersee (p259).

Austrians prudish? Nah. Ubiquitous nudist beaches reveal there's nothing they love better than stripping off. Hallstättersee, Milsstätter See and even the Danube Island in Vienna are set up for skinny-dippers.

The closest thing to bathing in mineral water is taking a dip in one of Austria's pure lakes; these include Thiersee, Urisee and Plansee in Tyrol.

Find the best place to spread your wings in Austria at www.flugschulen.at; it gives a regional rundown of flight schools offering paragliding and hang-gliding.

And they call it puppy love... If you thought only Brits were soppy about their pooches, check out the dedicated doggy paddle areas on the beaches at Milsstätter See, Klagenfurt and Neusiedler See.

Walking in Austria

With its rugged peaks, crinkly valleys and sparkling rivers, Austria serves up some of Europe's finest landscapes – and the only way to truly discover them is by schlepping a backpack and hitting the trail. To the west the Alps flick out like a dragon's tail, luring hikers to its pointy pinnacles, while to the east the soft tapestry of vineyards and hillocks are tailor-made for lazy ambles. Seeing the morning clouds blanket the mountains, curling up by an open fire after an uphill trudge and witnessing the springtime eruption of violet and pink on alpine pastures are experiences that put hikers' senses on high alert.

Giving a walker the pick of the Alps is like giving a child the run of a sweet shop. Despite its accessibility, this country's high-altitude terrain is still laced with adventure: from flirting with mountaineering on fixed-rope routes in the Tennenberge to scaling the limestone crags of the Dachstein massif to gazing up at the Hohe Tauern National Park's mantle of glaciers. For families and ramblers seeking something gentler, there are deep gullies, thundering waterfalls and meadows riddled with marmot holes to explore.

But it's the locals that give trekking in Austria its unique flavour. Lithe 70-year-olds nordic walking (walking with ski poles) in the hills and rock climbers limbering up on the north face before breakfast are proof that this land embraces all forms of walking with a passion. Further evidence is the mountain huts perched on every hillside, welcoming walkers with farm-fresh cheese, cool beer and cushy beds. Spending a night in one of these snug refuges is a highlight on any trek – a chance to natter with the locals, savour simple home cooking and delight in tumbling out of your bunk at 6am, just in time to see dawn tint the peaks gold.



GETTING STARTED

Because Austrians are such a well-organised bunch, and many spend their weekends walking in the mountains, an ever increasing number of walking paths are indicated by red-white-red stripes on a handy tree trunk or rock, and regular signs point out the way ahead. The practice of marking mountain trails according to their difficulty started in Tyrol and is becoming more widespread. Paths are coded with the same colours that are used for ski runs: blue for easy, red for moderate (trails are fairly narrow and steep), and black for difficult (these trails are only for the physically fit; some climbing may be required).

Alpine huts make it easy to tackle many long-distance trails with little more than a day pack, but if you're keen to get out and stride during the summer rush hour (July and August) it's advisable to book ahead as the popular places fill up in a flash.

INFORMATION Information Sources

The **Österreich Werbung** (Austria National Tourist Office, ANTO; ☎ 0810-10 18 18; www.austria.info) has offices throughout the world and should be your first port of call. A full list of contact details can be found on its website, along with walking information on everything from themed family jaunts to multi-day treks for serious hikers. It produces the free and up-to-date *Walk Austria Guide*, which you can order online and use to plan your route before setting off. Check out the regional tourist offices for details on province-specific hikes and free walking brochures.

Österreichischer Alpenverein (ÖAV, Austrian Alpine Club; ☎ 0512-595 47; www.alpenverein.at, in German; Wilhelm-Greil-Strasse 15, Innsbruck) is an excellent source for more specific and detailed information. Adult membership costs €48.50 per year, with substantial discounts for students and people aged under 25 or over 60; members pay half-price at alpine huts and receive other benefits including insurance. The club also organises walks but you have to either join the club or be a member of an alpine club in your home country; there is an arm of the club in England, the **Austrian Alpine Club** (☎ 01929-556 870; www.aacuk.org.uk; 12A North St, Wareham BH20 4AG). Of the 1000-odd huts in the Austrian Alps, 241 are maintained by the ÖAV; see p380 for further details.

Two other clubs worth contacting for information are the **Naturfreunde Österreich** (NFÖ, Friends of Nature Austria; ☎ 01-892 35 34-0; www.naturfreunde.at, in German; Viktoriagasse 6, Vienna) and the **Österreichischer Touristenklub** (ÖTK, Austrian Tourist Club; ☎ 01-512 38 44; www.touristenklub.at, in German; Bäckerstrasse 16, Vienna). The first concentrates on Austria's lowlands, while the second has an excellent **library** (📖 4-7pm Thu). The majority of books on the Alps are in German, but there is an extensive collection of maps, which can be photocopied, and staff are supremely knowledgeable.

Maps

A great overview map of Austria is Michelin's 1:400,000 national map No 730 *Austria*. Alternatively, the **Österreich Werbung** (Austria National Tourist Office, ANTO; ☎ 0810-10 18 18; www.austria.info) can send you a free copy of its 1:800,000 country map.

There are plenty of high-quality walking maps to choose from, and paths are clearly indicated on all of them. The standard references at a 1:50,000 scale are produced by Freytag & Berndt (F&B) and Kompass. Both include small booklets, that list contact details for mountains huts and offering background information on trails. If you prefer larger-scale maps for walking, use the clear yet detailed Alpenvereinskarte 1:25,000 series. Many local tourist offices hand out basic maps that may be sufficient for short, easy walks. See the individual walks for specific map requirements.

The best place to stock up on maps in Austria is at a *Tabak* (tobacconist), newsagent or bookshop. Usually only local maps are available in these outlets, although bookshops in the major cities offer a wider selection. Outdoor-activities shops usually sell a limited variety of walking maps.

Books

The standard English-language walking guidebook to Austria has long been Cecil Davies' *Mountain Walking in Austria*. The book concentrates on the alpine areas of the country, but some route descriptions can be up to 20 years old. For a more contemporary treatment of multi-day routes, try *Walking Austria's Alps Hut to Hut* by Johnathan Hurdle. If you're keen to identify the local flora, Kompass publish *Alpine Flowers*, a pocket-sized guide complete with colour illustrations.

WHEN TO WALK

While the wildflowers and tinkling cowbells make summer (June to September) a top choice for *wandern* (walking), the sprightly Austrians don't let the dust gather under their boots the rest of the year – they accessorise. Deep powder? Snowshoes. Ice? Crampons. Slippery autumn leaves? A snazzy pair of walking sticks. Of course, if you're planning multi-day hikes in the Alps, summer is probably your only option, as Alpine huts only open from mid-June to late September.

The busiest months are July and August, when snowfields above 2000m melt and the weather is mostly fine. Spring offers fewer crowds and everything begins to bloom at lower altitudes. Autumn, too, is quieter and is a fantastic season to glimpse the mountains wrapped in a cloak of gold and crimson. Even winter walking isn't out of the question in the Alps; many resorts now cater to nonskiers with prepared *Winterwanderwege* (winter trails), and making tracks through

squeaky snow with a crisp blue sky overhead is quite something.

If there's one rule of thumb in the Alps, it's to never take the weather for granted. It may look sunny but conditions can change at the drop of a hat – hail, lightning, fog, torrential rain, you name it – so the trick is to pack layers and check the forecast before embarking on long hikes at high altitudes. Taped regional Alpine weather reports can be heard on ☎ 0990-911566 81. Tourist offices also display and/or provide mountain-weather forecasts, while web forecasts also available on website of the **ÖAV** (www.alpenverein.at, in German).

WHAT TO TAKE

A light pack full of little necessities is the secret to happy hiking. It's tough walking on an empty stomach, so make sure you have enough carbohydrate-rich food for the day (including emergency rations) and at least 1L of water per person to avoid dehydration. High-energy foods such as nuts, dried fruits, bread, cheese and cured meats are ideal.

HUT-TO-HUT HIKING

One of the joys of hiking in Austria is spending the night in a mountain hut. These trailside refuges make great bases for exploring the wilderness without sacrificing creature comforts. The highly evolved system means you're hardly ever further than a five- to six-hour walk from the next hut, which removes the need to lug a tent, camping stove and other gear that weighs hikers down. Most huts have a *Gaststube* (living room), a convivial spot that hums with the chatter of ruddy-cheeked walkers, comparing notes and clinking glasses. With a belly full of dumplings and schnapps, you retreat to your comfy bunk and hope you haven't picked the one next to a champion snorer!

Austria has more than 1000 huts, over 500 of which belong to the **Österreichischer Alpenverein** (ÖAV, Austrian Alpine Club; ☎ 0512-59547; www.alpenverein.at, in German; Wilhelm-Greil-Strasse 15) or **Deutscher Alpenverein** (DAV, German Alpine Club; www.alpenverein.de, in German). Huts in popular areas are more like mountain inns, with restaurant facilities, drying rooms and even hot showers (normally at an extra charge). Accommodation is in communal dorms called *Matrazenlager*, two- or four-bed rooms, or in the *Notlager* (emergency shelter – wherever there's space) if all beds have been taken. Blankets and pillows are provided but you might need to bring your own sleeping sheet. The lunchtime and evening menu is usually hearty and good value. Members of the ÖAV can order the *Bergsteigeressen* – literally 'mountaineer's meal' – which is low in price but high in calories, though not necessarily a gastronomic treat! On average, hikers should budget €8 to €10 for a basic meal with a drink. It's also sensible to carry tea or coffee, as *Teewasser* (boiled water) can be purchased from the hut warden.

Most huts open from mid-June to mid-September when the trails are free of snow; the busiest months are July and August, when advance bookings are recommended. Members of the ÖAV are entitled to a discount of up to 50% on the cost of overnight accommodation at ÖAV and DAV huts, so if you plan to undertake a hut-to-hut tour in Austria it's worth joining the UK section (p83); however, allow two months for your application to be processed. The ÖAV publishes the *ÖAV Hut Book for Austria* (in German, with key words in English), a comprehensive book on huts, with contact details and opening times. Consult p380 for further accommodation information.

Take lightweight layers that you can put on or take off to warm up or cool down. The basics include a breathable T-shirt, fleece, loose-fitting trousers, sturdy walking boots and waterproofs. For high-altitude hikes, it may also be worth packing a hat, gaiters, thermals, gloves and walking sticks. The sun can be extraordinarily deceptive in the mountains; while the air temperature may be subzero, the rays are still powerful and sunscreen is essential to avoid the lobster-skin and panda-eye look. Also consider taking a torch, first-aid kit, compass, mobile phone and a whistle for emergencies.

WALK DESCRIPTIONS

The times and distances in this chapter are provided only as a guide. Times are based on the actual walking time and do not include stops for snacks, taking photos, rests or side trips. Be sure to factor these in when planning your walk. Distances should be read in conjunction with altitudes – significant elevation can make a greater difference to your walking time than lateral distance. Grading systems are always arbitrary; however, having an indication may help you choose between walks. Easy refers to a short walk on gentle terrain, medium denotes challenging terrain and longer distances, while difficult indicates walks with long distances, significant elevation change and high-altitude or glacier travel.

RESPONSIBLE WALKING

The popularity of walking puts great pressure on Austria's natural environment, particularly the fragile ecosystem of the Alps. To minimise impact and help preserve Austria's ecology, consider the following tips when walking.

Trail Etiquette

Greeting your fellow walkers with a cheery *Servus* (Hello) and observing a few etiquette basics will stand you in good stead.

- On narrow paths, ascending walkers have right of way over those descending.
- Always leave farm gates as you find them. In summer low-voltage electric fences are set up to control livestock on the open alpine pastures; where an electric fence crosses a path, it usually has a hook that can be easily unfastened to allow walkers to pass through without getting zapped.
- The days of plucking edelweiss to woo your sweetheart are long gone. Alpine

wildflowers look lovelier on the mountainsides and many of them are protected species.

- Moving too close will unnerve wild animals, distracting them from their vital summer activity of fattening up for the long winter.

Rubbish

- The idea is to carry out what you have carried in, including easily forgotten items such as tinfoil, orange peel, cigarette butts and plastic wrappers. Empty packaging weighs very little.
- Burying rubbish is not recommended as digging disturbs soil and ground cover, and encourages erosion. Buried rubbish will more than likely be dug up by animals, who may be injured or poisoned by it. It also takes years to decompose, especially at high altitudes.
- Minimise the waste you carry out by taking minimal packaging or unpacking small-portion packages and combining their contents in one container before your trip. Take reusable containers or stuff sacks.
- Condoms, tampons and sanitary pads should also be carried out, despite the inconvenience, as they burn and decompose poorly.

Human Waste Disposal

- Make an effort to use toilets in huts and refuges where provided.
- Where there is no toilet, bury your waste. Dig a small, 15cm-deep hole at least 100m from any watercourse; consider carrying a lightweight trowel for this purpose. Cover the waste with soil and a rock. Use toilet paper sparingly and bury that too. In snow, dig down beneath the soil; otherwise your waste will be exposed when the snow melts.
- Contamination of the local water sources by human faeces can lead to the transmission of giardiasis, a human bacterial parasite. It can cause severe health risks to other walkers, local residents and wildlife.

Erosion

- Mountain slopes and hillsides, especially at high altitudes, are prone to erosion. It's important to stick to existing

LONG-DISTANCE TRAILS

Austria's extensive hut network is ideal for those keen to do some serious trekking in the Alps. The website of the **Österreichischer Alpenverein** (ÖAV, Austrian Alpine Club; ☎ 0512-595 47; www.alpenverein.at, in German; Wilhelm-Greil-Strasse 15) has a dedicated section on the country's 10 *Weitwanderwege* (long-distance trails), which stretch from 160km to 1200km and showcase different areas of Austria's stunning landscape. Accessible from mid-June to late September, the following trails are a taste of what's on offer.

- **Adlerweg** – Exploring Tyrol's finest scenery, the 280km Adlerweg (Eagle Trail) starts in St Johann near Kitzbühel (p350) and scales the Karwendel massif, before traversing the limestone crags of Wilder Kaiser and eventually landing in St Anton am Arlberg (p362). You'll need to be in good condition to attempt this challenging three- to four-week hike, with highlights including rugged peaks, waterfalls, ice caves and hilltop castles. See www.adlerweg.tirol.at for trail information and maps.
- **Berliner Höhenweg** – This 42km trail begins in Ginzling (p350) and quickly gains altitude (the highest point is 3133m). There are bewitching views of the Zillertal Alps towering over the trail and the turquoise Schlegeisspeicher below. Some mountaineering experience is required as snow patches are not uncommon and there are several passes to tackle. The hike takes three to four days to complete. Use Kompass 1:25,000 map No 37 *Mayrhofen – Tuxer Tal Zillergrund*.
- **Arnoweg** – The 1200km Arnoweg rates among Austria's best long-distance walks, making a circuit around Salzburger Land that takes roughly two months to complete. The official start and finish point is Salzburg (p266), but many walkers follow only the southerly stretch of the walk, which leads through the glacial landscape of the Hohe Tauern National Park (p310). The route ascends to 3106m, so a decent level of fitness is required. Rother Wanderführer map *Arnoweg Der Salzburger Rundwanderweg* covers the trail. See www.arnoweg.com for more details.
- **Stubai Höhenweg** – Austria's showpiece hut-to-hut route, the Stubai Höhenweg starts at Neustift in Stubaital. You'll need a good level of fitness to tread the well-marked 120km circuit, which affords tremendous vistas of hanging glaciers, rocky ridges and wild alpine lakes. Every section of the seven- to nine-day route involves battling at least one pass, and many sections have fixed wire ropes to assist with difficult steps. Buses run from Innsbruck to the Stubaital (p345). Pick up Kompass 1:50,000 map No 83 *Stubai Alpen – Serleskamm*.

tracks and avoid short cuts that bypass a switchback. If you blaze a new trail straight down a slope, it will turn into a watercourse with the next heavy rainfall and eventually cause soil loss and deep scarring.

- If a well-used track passes through a mud patch, walk through the mud; walking around the edge will increase the size of the patch.
- Avoid removing the plant life that keeps topsoils in place.

SAFETY & EMERGENCIES

Most walker deaths are directly attributable to fatigue, heat exhaustion, and inadequate clothing or footwear. A fall resulting from sliding on grass, scree or iced-over paths is a common hazard; watch out for black ice.

In high-Alpine routes, avalanches and rock falls can be a problem.

As long as you stick to the marked route, it's hard to get lost in Austria, where most trails are signposted and well mapped. Study the weather forecast before you go and remember that weather patterns change dramatically in the mountains. Increase the length and altitude of your walks gradually, until you are acclimatised to the vast Alpine scale.

That said, where possible don't walk in the mountains alone. Two is considered the minimum number for safe walking, and having at least one additional person in the party will mean someone can stay with an injured walker while the other seeks help. Inform a responsible person, such as a family member, hut warden or hotel receptionist, of your plans, and let them know when

you return. Under no circumstances should you leave marked trails in foggy conditions. With some care, most walking routes can be followed in fog, but otherwise wait by the path until visibility is clear enough to proceed.

The standard Alpine distress signal is six whistles, six calls, six smoke puffs – that is, six of whatever sign you can make – followed by a pause equalling the length of time taken by the calls before repeating the signal again. If you have a mobile phone, take it with you. **Mountain rescue** (☎ 140) in the Alps is very efficient but extremely expensive, so make sure you have insurance.

TYROL & VORARLBERG

ZILLERTAL CIRCUIT (TYROL)

Duration Five to six hours

Distance 11km

Difficulty Medium

Nearest Town Mayrhofen (p348)

Summary A high-level circuit that leaves a big impression, with relatively easy hiking providing tremendous views over the azure Schlegeisspeicher (Schlegeis Reservoir) to the Zillertal Alps.

The Zillertal Alps reward walkers with mesmerising views of flower-strewn meadows, gin-clear streams and frosted peaks. This scenic loop begins by climbing above the turquoise Schlegeisspeicher to join the high-altitude Berliner Höhenweg trail (opposite) at its westernmost point. It's a great mix of everything this mountainscape has to offer: babbling brooks, 3000m pinnacles, high meadows and pine woodlands. The highlight is the precipitous balcony trail that links two alpine huts. Although the route involves 850m of ascent and descent, the path is well graded and mostly gentle; however, you should use care and judgement in bad weather. Kompass 1:25,000 map No 37 *Zillertaler Alpen – Tuxer Alpen* covers the walk in detail.

Getting to/from the Walk

The Schlegeisspeicher is 25km southwest of Mayrhofen and is accessed by the twisting Schlegeis Alpenstrasse toll road, which is open from May to the end of October and costs €10 for a car. Alternatively, buses run between Mayrhofen and the reservoir (one

way €5.20, one hour, seven daily). The walk starts and finishes at the car park beside the reservoir. For details on transport to/from Mayrhofen, see p350.

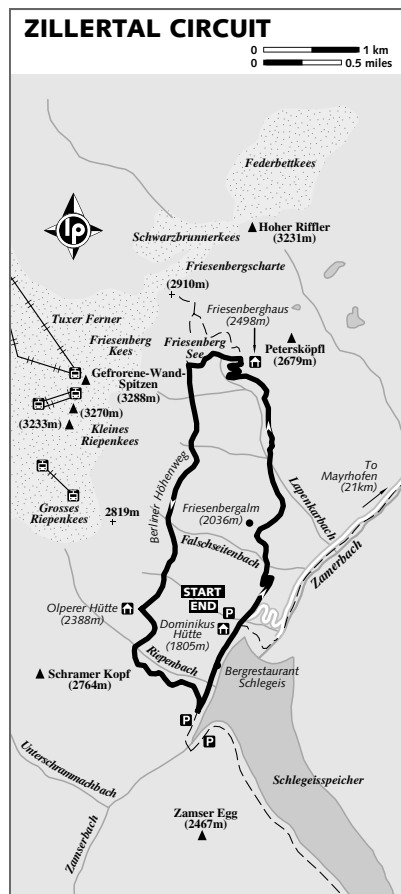
The Walk

The circuit starts at the Schlegeisspeicher, which impresses with its sheer scale and colour – it seems like a glittering turquoise gemstone dropped into a sea of ice white pinnacles. From the northeast end of the car park, take the well-worn trail signed to the **Dominikus Hütte** (☎ 05286-52 16; mattresses/beds €19/25; ☞ mid-May–late Oct). The turn-off for this hut comes just 100m along the path, but you should stick to the right and head towards the Friesenberghaus. The trail is shown by red-and-white markings on the rocks, and it soon begins its gradual ascent through shady mixed forest. If you peer back, there are views of the mountains, which rise like the bows of a ship above the glacially cold reservoir.

Weaving through pine trees, the trail soon reaches two streams that flow swiftly over water-worn rocks; both are crossed via wooden footbridges. Pause to dangle your toes in the tingling water before continuing through the forest and past slopes that are speckled with wildflowers such as delicate alpine roses and purple gentian in summer. As the rocky trail snakes upwards, the scenery shifts to fields of dwarf pines, moss-clad slabs, and waterfalls that streak the rugged mountain faces silver. The clang of cowbells and the high-pitched whistle of marmots interrupt quiet contemplation on these upper reaches.

After roughly 45 minutes, you approach the tree line near the wooden cabin at **Friesenbergalm** (2036m). The trail flattens out here to traverse high meadows punctuated by tarns, which are rimmed by tufts of silky cottongrass and reflect the towering pinnacles above. Continue around a shoulder and enter a broad valley overshadowed by the immense bulk of the Hoher Riffler (3231m). Affording superlative views of the peaks crowning the horizon, the snaking path is well graded and largely constructed from rock slabs.

It is a further one- to 1½-hour ascent from the Friesenbergalm to Friesenberghaus, passing through boulder-strewn meadows that give way to patches of scree and the gurgling Lapenkarbach (Lapenkar Stream), which meanders through the valley. If you're lucky, you might spot chamois here, though you're



more likely to bump into sheep and cows grazing on the pastures. The trail continues to wind uphill in a series of long bends until the Friesenberghaus slides into view. A series of tight switchbacks completes the climb to the hut, which is scenically perched above the valley.

Situated under the glowering face of Hohe Riffler and above a lake that remains ice-bound well into the summer months, the stone-built Deutscher Alpenverein (DAV; German Alpine Club) **Friesenberghaus** (☎ 0676-749 7550; mattresses/beds €16/22; ☞ mid-Jun-late Sep) is a popular base for long-distance hikers. It's a fine spot for a cool beer or a bowl of goulash before tackling the rest of the walk. After a little refreshment, take time out to appreciate the views across

the valley to magnificent peaks including the Grosser Grainer (3201m) – Zillertal locals nickname it the Grauer (Grey) because of its steely colour – and its smaller sidekick, the Kleiner Grainer (2952m).

Retrace your steps for 50m and turn right along the path signposted to the Olperer Hütte and the Berliner Höhenweg. This begins by descending slightly to cross the outlet stream of the lake, then makes a steep but mercifully short ascent up the rocky slope on the other side. You may need to cross a few patches of snow near the start, which are generally easy to negotiate. Use your hands here for a short section of very easy scrambling. The ascent ends at a path junction; turn left and begin to contour across the mountainside ahead.

The next 1½ hours are spent following a wonderful balcony trail that leads under the 3000m-high glaciers of the Gefrorene-Wand-Spitzen. You'll definitely want to have your camera handy here, as there are fantastic vistas of the azure Schlegeisspeicher and the spiky peaks of the Zillertal Alps. The high-Alpine trail is part of the three- to four-day **Berliner Höhenweg** route, which starts in Ginzling and makes a circuit around the head of the valley. This section makes for interesting and easy-going walking, descending gently as it traverses rock-studded slopes and providing uninterrupted views of the reservoir.

Around two hours from the Friesenberghaus, the 2388m **Olperer Hütte** (☎ 05285-626 71; mattresses/beds €18/24; ☞ early Jun-early Sep) is suddenly revealed, though another stream crossing on wooden planks is necessary before you reach it. The hut is currently being rebuilt from scratch and is scheduled to reopen to walkers in 2008. From here, there are sterling views of the glacier-capped peaks of the Olperer and Zillertal Alps. As well as resident chickens, the hut is home to several Haflinger horses – a beautiful breed of mountain horse unique to this region.

After reaching this point, it's downhill all the way – pass in front of the hut and continue your steady descent to the reservoir. The path begins with more lovely scenery as it winds gently over grassy hummocks and crosses several ice-cold streams. The trail then steepens slightly and zigzags down beside a stream to the road (1½ hours from the Olperer Hütte). Turn left and follow the road for 1km to return to the damside parking area where you started.

ROCKET MAN: PETER HABELER

Celebrated Austrian mountaineer and ski instructor Peter Habeler was born in Mayrhofen in 1942 and has been scrambling up the glaciated peaks of the Zillertal Alps since the tender age of six. His one-time climbing partner Reinhold Messner said famously of Habeler: 'He's like a sky rocket – really impressive once the fuse is lit.'

By the age of 21, Habeler was a qualified mountain guide and rapidly gaining a reputation as a bold and talented climber. He began a partnership with Messner in the 1960s and together they pushed the boundaries of mountaineering. They soon applied their remarkable Alpine skills to race up the eight-thousanders of the Himalaya and pioneer the first ascent of Everest without supplementary oxygen in 1978. 'We climbed quickly and travelled light, taking only the bare essentials,' Habeler enthuses. 'Other climbers said it was suicide, but we knew that if Sherpas could reach 8500m, Everest was only a couple of hundred metres higher.'

'Extreme Alpinism has always been my goal and I was lucky enough to have fantastic teachers – the best there is,' he says emphatically. He believes, though, that respect for the mountains is declining. 'Alpinism is not about having the latest equipment or proving a point; it's about technique, condition and the ability to predict. There is freedom in the mountains but also restriction.' His secret? 'Taking the time to acclimatise is vital. We spent a couple of months at Everest base camp before making the ascent. Climbers should adapt to the mountains, befriend them. They are not enemies that need to be conquered. It's all about understanding your boundaries and those of the environment. Knowing when to call it a day.'

Today Habeler still stands out as a mountaineer: lean, chiselled and incredibly fit for his age. His passion for climbing is deeply rooted in what he affectionately calls his playground, the Austrian Alps, where he grew up and now runs a guiding company, Ski School Mount Everest (p349). He spends a lot of his time leading tours of the Zillertal Alps and speaks of his love for the Olperer (3476m) and his 'little Everest', the Ahornspitze (2976m). When he's not at home in Mayrhofen, Habeler occasionally pops over to Nepal to guide an expedition or dashes across to Hohe Tauern to climb Grossglockner. It seems there is no keeping this man of the mountains still.

KAISERGEIRGE CIRCUIT (TYROL)

Duration Six to seven hours

Distance 18km

Difficulty Medium

Nearest Town Kufstein (p354)

Summary Deep ravines, meadows full of wildflowers and the perpendicular turrets of the Kaisergebirge leave walkers awestruck on this high-altitude hike.

The soaring limestone spires of the Kaisergebirge may not count among Austria's highest peaks, but they are undoubtedly some of its most spectacular. Rising abruptly from the valley floor, these distinctive peaks make perfect walking territory. This six- to seven-hour hike passes through beautiful deciduous forest and flower-dotted Alpine pastures before traversing the dizzying Bettlersteig, and affords vistas of both the Wilder Kaiser (Wild Emperor) and the gentler Zahmer Kaiser (Tame Emperor), divided by the fertile Kaisertal (Kaiser Valley). Sturdy footwear and waterproofs are recommended. You can pick up a basic map at the Kufstein tourist office or invest in the more detailed Kompass 1:

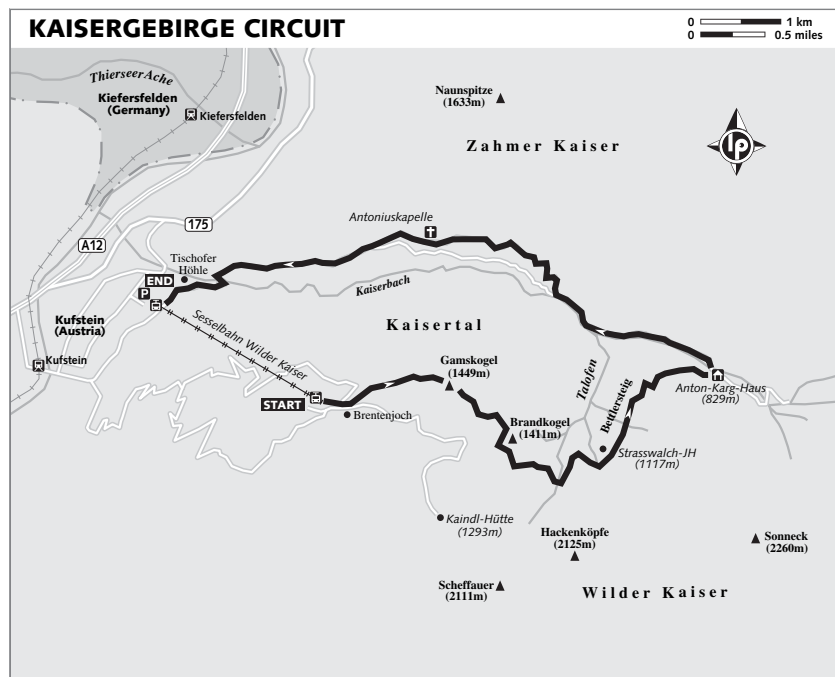
25,000 map No 9 *Kufstein-Walchsee-St Johann in Tirol*.

Getting to/from the Walk

The trailhead is Brentenjoch, at the top station of the Sesselbahn Wilder Kaiser in Kufstein (p355). There is a car park at the bottom of the lift (per day €2), or buses 1 and 2 run every 20 minutes from Kufstein to Kaisertal (one way €0.80), five minutes' walk from the bottom station of the chairlift. For full details on getting to/from Kufstein, see p355.

The Walk

The route begins on a high with a giddy ride on a creaking 1970s chairlift, which saves walkers plenty of legwork and certainly gets the adrenaline flowing. The lift glides over slopes wooded with beech and larch trees that are particularly spectacular in autumn when they turn shades of gold, amber and russet. As you approach the top station, the limestone pinnacles of the frost-polished Wilder Kaiser massif come into view.



From the top of the chairlift at **Brentenjoch**, take the narrow trail that veers left and leads downhill through Alpine meadows that are filled with purple thistles and gentian in summer. The zigzagging descent is easy and there are fine views of limestone columns dusted with snow ahead. Bear left onto the well-made path signed for Gamskogel, which initially winds through cool pine and beech forest. A glance left reveals the Kaisertal and pointy Naunspitze (1633m). After roughly 25 minutes, you reach a glade where you can spy Scheffauer (2111m) and Hackenköpfe (2125m).

Continue your gradual ascent on a rocky path, clambering over knobbly roots that form a natural staircase through the forest. The trail steepens on the final climb up to **Gamskogel** (1449m), approximately 50 minutes from the start of the trek. This is chamois territory and close encounters are quite common. At the summit, you are rewarded with stupendous 360-degree views of the rolling Zahmer Kaiser to the north and jagged Wilder Kaiser to the south. Take time out from your hike to relax and enjoy the wonderful pano-

rama of the Nördliche Kalkalpen (Northern Limestone Alps).

The woodland trail begins its descent to the Bettlersteig via a path bordered by dwarf pines and blueberry bushes that cling to crags. To the left is a sheer cliff that drops abruptly to the valley floor; to the right the Kaindl-Hütte drifts into view. The track now runs like a vein through the undulating *Alm* (Alpine meadow) studded with heather and bracken. A slight incline gives way to shady beech and maple forest, and brings the Wilder Kaiser ever nearer; its chiselled north face and rock formations now appear incredibly close.

Around 1½ hours from Brentenjoch is the infamous **Bettlersteig**, the route's toughest and most exhilarating stretch, which traverses a narrow wind-buffed ridge. While sure-footedness and a head for heights are the only real prerequisites for attempting this stretch, caution should be exercised in bad weather, when the rock becomes slippery and dangerous. Otherwise, it's easily negotiated via the cables and metal rungs hammered into the rock face that create a real-life high-altitude game of snakes and ladders. The scenery to

the north is awesome: a ravine carpeted in luxurious shades of green and the imposing rocky summits of Zahmer Kaiser.

With the arduous bit behind you, the Bettlersteig heads on through beech and fir forest, and crosses the clear Talofen stream. This is about the closest you'll get to the north face of Wilder Kaiser, with its solid wall of limestone thrusting skywards and turrets crowding the horizon. Keep an eye out for chamois and deer in the forest on your way down to Strasswalch youth hostel, where an enormous fir tree provides respite from the midday heat. Further along the Bettlersteig, a trail heads right to **Sonneck** (2260m), a challenging and rewarding ascent for those with suitable experience and climbing equipment.

After another hour of traversing streams and negotiating switchbacks, walkers are generally glad to reach **Anton-Karg-Haus** (☎ 05372-625 78; mattresses/beds €17/22; ☞ May–mid-Oct) for a well-earned rest. The terrace is a pleasant spot for lunch when the sun's out, while a mug of *Milchkaffee* (milky coffee) with homemade shortbread is bound to boost hikers' spirits when the weather is drab.

It's a gentle and scenic 2½ hour descent to Kufstein from here. Tracing the meandering Kaiserbach (Kaiser River), the track leads steadily through the narrow Kaisertal and provides new perspectives of Gamskogel and the surrounding precipices – from this side you can appreciate how steep they really are! There is little change in elevation on the trail, which passes through beech forest and a tunnel hewn out of the rock face. Around an hour from Anton-Karg-Haus, look out for a path on the right that detours to **Antoniuskapelle**, a photogenic 16th-century chapel that is prized for its baroque sculptures.

An hour further on, an easily missed sign points the way to the **Tischofer Höhle**. This 40m-deep karst cave has a long and fascinating history; bones and fossils of *Ursus spelaeus* (cave bear) have been unearthed here, which are believed to date back around 26,000 years to the Pleistocene epoch. When Tyrol went to war in 1809, the cave was also used as a secret hideaway for the freedom fighters.

From the cave, the route continues downhill past overhanging crags and trees forming arches. As you descend, there are great views over Kufstein, and the clang of cowbells in the dairy farms below brings you gently back to civilisation. Finally, the path veers left along

a road and crosses a field to the car park at the chairlift.

ROSENGARTENSCHLUCHT CIRCUIT (TYROL)

Duration Three hours

Distance 5km

Difficulty Easy

Nearest Town Imst (p358)

Summary This family-oriented walk has plenty of highs: from climbing a dramatic gorge to racing in a roller coaster to plunging into an Alpine lake.

This three-hour walk is one of Imst's hidden gems and is ideal for families seeking to stretch their legs in summer. The circuit begins by scaling the 200m-high Rosengartenschlucht (Rose Garden Ravine), where boarded walkways make for an easy ascent and the vertiginous views of a cascading river are memorable. The trail then weaves through shady pine forest, providing fine views of the Lechtaler Alps, and reaches a grotto with a glittering blue pool. Before descending to Imst, there is a chance to cool off in the pure waters of a tree-fringed lake and to pick up speed on one of the world's longest Alpine roller coasters. The walking is gentle, but sturdy footwear is recommended as some sections can get slippery.

For more details on this walk, pick up the 1:25,000 *Imst-Gurgltal* map from the tourist office (see p358) opposite the Johanneskirche in central Imst.

Getting to/from the Walk

The walk starts and finishes at the Johanneskirche (St John's Church), just across from the tourist office in central Imst. From here, there are signs to the Rosengartenschlucht, and the trail is well marked and easy to follow. For details on public transport services operating to/from Imst, see p358.

The Walk

The circuit begins on the path behind the frescoed Johanneskirche in Imst and shadows the crystal-clear Schinderbach (Schinder River) upstream to the entrance of the Rosengartenschlucht. On the right-hand side of the trail, take note of the unusual **Berghäusl**, cavetike dwellings that have been hewn out of the sheer rock face. Soon you'll catch your first glimpse of the river, which gushes through a narrow ravine gouged out during the last ice age. The cool, damp environment here

The Walk

From the Silvretta Stausee car park, walk over the dam and join the well-worn path that skirts around the reservoir's western shore, pausing to admire the views of the milky green lake framed by brooding peaks. Here you'll catch your first glimpse of the cone-shaped Hohes Rad (2934m), which you will be walking around later. A sign warns that stiletto-heeled shoes are not appropriate footwear! The path rounds the southern end of the lake, first crossing a bridge over the fast-flowing Klostertaler Bach; keep to the shoreline as you follow the route. Soon you'll traverse the glacially cold **Ill River**, which cuts a path through the Ochsentäl Valley at the southeastern corner of the reservoir. Shortly after the second bridge you reach a junction. Turn right here and start up the trail signed to the Wiesenbadener Hütte.

The path to the hut is wide and follows the east bank of the Ill towards the arrow-shaped peak of **Piz Buin** (3312m) at the head of the valley. The climb is steady throughout and the scenery offers plenty of distraction; at least four magnificent glaciers come into view as you gain height: to the west Schattenspitzgletscher (3202m) and Schneeglockengletscher (3223m), and up ahead the Vermuntgletscher and the heavily crevassed Ochsentäl Gletscher suspended above the valley and glistening ice blue.

The gradual ascent continues and reaches the **Wiesbadener Hütte** (☎ 05558-42 33; mattresses/beds €15/20; 🗓 mid-Jun–early Oct) and its small adjacent chapel around two to 2½ hours from the start. Nestled at the foot of Piz Buin and just a stone's throw away from the spring where the Ill rises, this alpine hut is a great place to unwind on the sunny terrace, refuel with a bite to eat and enjoy the panoramic vistas of the surrounding snow-dusted mountains and glaciers.

At the back of the hut, signs attached to a concrete shelter indicate the Radsattel to the left. Following the Edmund-Lorenz-Weg, the path is now much narrower and rougher underfoot, and is marked by red-and-white paint splashes. Zigzag steeply up the slope behind the hut and cross a small stream. Keep right on the opposite bank and climb a rise topped by a large cairn. The path can now be seen rising and dipping across the undulating terrain up to saddle itself. Cross the outlet of

a shallow pool before making the final steep climb to the narrow **Radsattel**, where a sign marks the Vorarlberg-Tyrol border (one to 1½ hours from the hut).

Drop steeply down the rocky, boulder-strewn eastern side of the pass, possibly crossing a couple of small snowfields near the top. There are great chances of spotting ibex up here (some of them are quite tame), so keep an eye out for their distinctive backward-curving horns. You will pass several small lakes and then the **Radsee**, a sparkling jewel-like lake fringed by greenery, on your way down to the Bieltal (Biel Valley). While this valley is less dramatic than the previous one, the smaller path and lack of hut makes it feel more remote, and it's certainly tempting to linger beside the bubbling Bieltalbach on the valley floor, flanked by meadows where cows graze.

Follow the path along the west bank of the stream all the way to the mouth of the valley, where an extraction unit takes the water from the river and the path widens into a vehicle track. Continue west to the banks of the Silvretta Stausee and turn right along the lake. Once back at the main road turn left and follow the pavement for about 300m to return to the car park where you started (1½ to two hours from the Radsattel).

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: VIA HOHES RAD

2½ to three hours, 6.5km, 280m ascent, 980m descent

For a more challenging end to the route, turn left (north) at the Radsattel instead of dropping down into the Bieltal. The path contours around the eastern slopes of **Hohes Rad** (some patches of snow may need to be crossed) before climbing over a spur and reaching a signed junction. The path straight ahead drops down to Bielerhöhe and joins the described route shortly before it reaches the Silvretta Stausee. The path to the left scrambles up the rock to the cross that marks the summit of Hohes Rad. Hands will definitely be needed for balance over this section, but the route is marked with red paint splashes throughout. The breathtaking 360-degree views from the top make the extra effort worthwhile: Piz Buin and the pointed peak of Silvrettahorn (3244m) loom large on the horizon. Return to the junction and turn left to the Bielerhöhe to complete the circuit.

SALZBURGER LAND & SALZKAMMERGUT

GOSAUKAMM CIRCUIT (SALZBURGER LAND)

Duration Two days

Distance 22km

Difficulty Medium

Nearest Town Filzmoos (p286)

Summary A satisfying circuit that circumnavigates a limestone massive. It features towering rock pinnacles, a 200m pass and high forest trails.

Gosaukamm is the name given to the most westerly massif in the Dachstein range, a compact group of serrated limestone peaks containing seven summits over 2000m high. The scenery is reminiscent of the Italian Dolomites to the south: pinnacles and spires tower above sheets of scree and there is one section of magnificent limestone pavement. The lower slopes of the massif have vegetation, however, and this circuit undulates around the tree line. As the path circumnavigates the massif, the scenery alternates between pine forest and stark, rocky terrain.

The itinerary given here is for a two-day walk, and much of the climbing comes on the first day of the walk. The most challenging terrain comes around the Steigpass (2016m), the highest point of the circuit. The ascent to the pass involves a series of ledges and gullies with moderate exposure. Cables are in place for security and most fit walkers should be able to negotiate the section, with a little care.

The porous limestone rock of the Dachstein range means that natural water sources are few and far between. On this route, the huts provide the only reliable sources of water. Make sure to fill up with enough water at each hut to last you until you arrive at the next one. F&B 1:50,000 map No 281 *Dachstein – Ausseerland – Filzmoos – Ramsau* covers the route. Alternatively, for more detail, use the Alpenvereinskarte 1:25,000 map No 14 *Dachsteingebirge*.

Getting to/from the Walk

The Filzmooser Wanderbus runs regular shuttles between Filzmoos and Hofalm (€3.50, 15 minutes, five daily Sunday to

Friday) from the end of May to the end of October. Regular bus services are provided by Postbus between Filzmoos and Eben (adult/child €2.70/1.40, 20 minutes, six daily Monday to Friday, three daily Saturday), where there are connections to Salzburg.

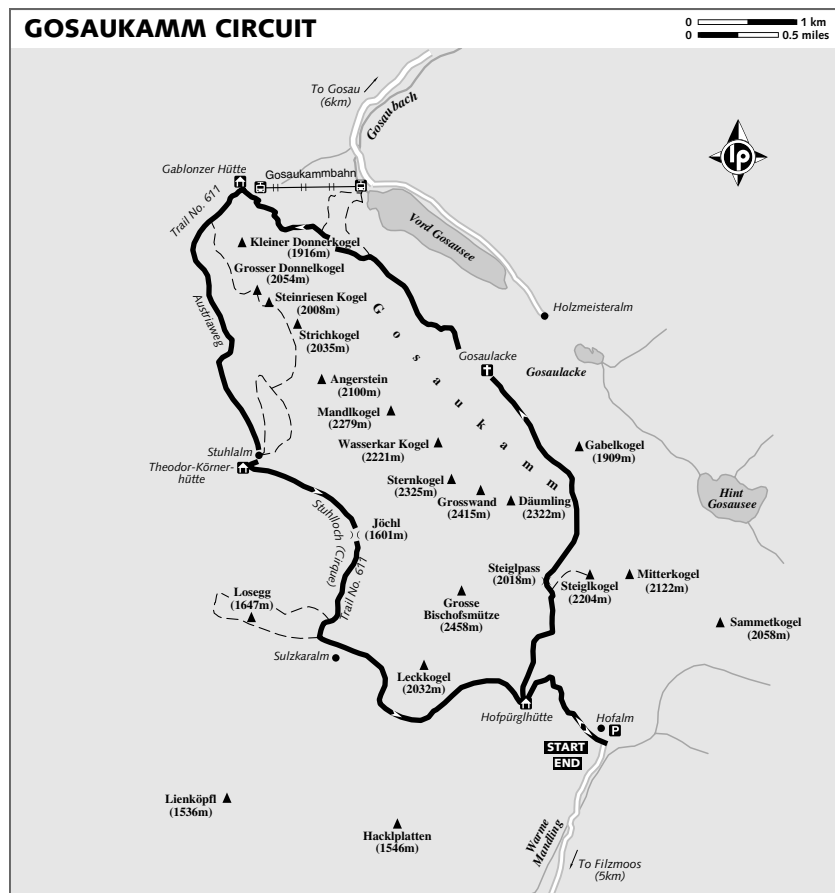
This route can also be accessed from the north, starting and finishing at the Gosausee, 7km south of Gosau village. The advantage of starting here is that you can use the **Gosaukambahn** (☎ 06134-84 00; one way/return €7.30/10.70; 🗓 8.15am–4.50pm mid-May–Oct) to gain 550m in height and arrive directly at the Gablonzer Hütte.

The Walk

DAY 1: HOFALM TO GABLONZER HÜTTE
Five to six hours, 10km, 1120m ascent, 880m descent

From the Hofalm car park, take the path that leads north past two restaurants. Follow signs for the Hofpürglhütte, veering right after the second restaurant to begin climbing up to the left of a white limestone gully. The path is steep for most of the way, though the gradient eases somewhat towards the end. After climbing for about an hour you reach a junction at the top; turn left and continue for 200m if you want to take a break on the scenic terrace of the large **Hofpürglhütte** (☎ 06453-83 04; mattresses/beds €16/22; 🗓 Jun–early Oct). Perched high on a grassy hillcock, the hut commands tremendous views of the jagged turrets that frame the horizon.

To continue the route retrace your steps and continue straight ahead at the junction where you joined the path to the hut, following signs to the Steigpass. The path to the pass can be seen zigzagging up the rock wall ahead, though you must descend across a shallow cirque before you start the climb. Photographers will want to capture the distinctive profile of the **Grosse Bischofsmütze** (2458m) on the left-hand side; shaped like a bishop's mitre, this is the highest peak in the Gosaukamm range. The ascent begins over loose stones but crosses the crags themselves in the upper reaches, negotiating the most challenging terrain of the entire circuit. You are likely to need your hands for balance as you cross rock ledges and mount stony steps, and a moderate amount of exposure keeps your attention on the task at hand. Fortunately cables are in place for security where required.



Around one hour from the Hofpürghütte, you arrive at the **Steigpass** (2018m), where you may have to traverse the occasional snowfield, even in summer. You are now right up amongst the pinnacles and spires on the main ridge of the Gosaukamm massif, and the views are impressive in both directions: Grosse Bischofsmütze, Däumling (2322m), Gabelkogel (1909m) and the formidable glaciated peaks of the Dachstein massif are all visible. It's little wonder that for many walkers, the pass is the highlight of the circuit.

The trail continues to cross the pass and begins to descend gradually though a wonderful lunar landscape of limestone pavement and escarpments. You descend several rock steps and one small gully, but the obstacles serve

as entertaining distractions rather than real challenges. The path eventually weaves out of the rock, and continues to descend gently through pine and larch woodlands, which are a riot of colour in autumn. Around one hour from the pass you reach a small, triangular-roofed memorial chapel, the **Gedenkkapelle**, in a clearing to the left of the path. The memorial commemorates all those who have perished in the mountains of the area, and in particular the 18-year-old first female ascendant of the nearby Däumling pinnacle, who died during the descent.

Continue to weave through the wood, passing several cabins. The deep green waters of the Gosausee soon come into view to the right and the switchbacks steepen into

a steady descent. Keep an eye open for the junction signed to the Gablonzer Hütte. Turn left onto a much fainter trail (a sure sign that most walkers descend to the Gosausee here) and traverse the slopes to join the main Gosausee–Gablonzer path.

This well-trodden path begins by climbing steeply but eases as it passes through a grove of beech trees. Join a gravel track at the top of the climb, turn left and continue for 200m to the **Gablonzer Hütte** (☎ 06136-84 65; mattresses/beds €18/24; ☞ Jun–mid-Oct), around 1½ to two hours from the memorial chapel. The sunny terrace of the hut has a great view southeast to the ice-capped summit of Hoher Dachstein (2995m), which is the highest peak in the Dachstein range.

DAY 2: GABLONZER HÜTTE TO HOFALM 4½ to 5½ hours, 12km, 360m ascent, 600m descent

Begin by climbing the hillock directly opposite the entrance to the hut, following the signs to Austriaweg and Theodor-Körner-Hütte (trail No 611). At the top of the hill, veer right, pass through a metal turnstile, and begin to descend gently through shady fir, pine and larch forest. The path picks a way through the vegetation and re-emerges at the open pasture around the Stuhlhalm. Here you join a broad track, turn left and pass a cluster of wooden huts, where refreshments, food and accommodation are available. Continue along the track for a further 500m to reach the picturesque **Theodor-Körner-Hütte** (☎ 0664-916 6303; mattresses/beds €10/14; ☞ Jun–mid-Oct), 1½ to two hours from the start.

From the Theodor-Körner-Hütte, return along the access track for 100m and veer right onto a footpath signed to the Hofpürghütte. A descent brings you into a cirque bordered by dwarf pines, Stuhloch, where jagged limestone pinnacles begin to dominate the skyline once more. Contour around the base of the cirque and you will be presented with the most exciting part of the day's route: a steep, zigzagging climb between the sheer rock walls of a narrow gully. Your passage through this dramatic ravine is eased by a long flight of steps and occasional sections of cable. The **Jöchl** (1601m), at the top of the gully, is reached around 40 minutes after leaving the Theodor-Körner-Hütte.

The path now makes an undulating traverse across a series of meadows, passing over sev-

eral spurs and keeping left at four trail junctions. Alpine roses and gentian bloom on this high grassland in early summer, and there's a chance you'll glimpse chamois and marmots. A final shoulder is rounded and the Hofpürghütte comes into sight on a ridge ahead. Contour across to the hut, arriving 1¼ to 1¾ hours after leaving the Jöchl.

To return to the Hofalm, retrace your original ascent route from day one (45 minutes). If you plan to return to Filzmoos by foot, however, you may prefer to take the path that leaves from the front terrace of the Hofpürghütte and descend gently through woodland before joining the Hofalm road for the final few kilometres to the village; if you chose this option, add one to two hours to the day's duration.

TENNENGEIRGE CIRCUIT (SALZBURGER LAND)

Duration Eight to nine hours

Difficulty Medium to difficult

Distance 15km

Nearest Town Werfen (p285)

Summary A high-altitude trail around a vast limestone plateau. Highlights include enthralling climbs, steep descents and memorable views of the Hochkönig massif.

Slung high above Werfen, the Tennengebirge is a karst plateau that is wild, isolated and beautiful in its austerity. Trekking through this surreal landscape of rounded heights, snow-filled cirques and sheer cliffs is a one-off experience. If you're keen to get off the well-trodden track, this day hike offers challenging walking involving almost 1000m of ascent and some scrambling. Walkers should have a good head for heights and be sure-footed for the initial climb and steep descent; undertaking this trek alone is not recommended.

Snowfields mean that this hike is best attempted from July to early September, and an early start is essential. Aside from emergency shelters, there is very little up here, so you should pack enough food and water for the day. Paths are waymarked, but you'll need a proper map, such as Kompass 1: 50,000 map No 15 *Tennengebirge Hochkönig*, and possibly a compass.

Getting to/from the Walk

Take the cable car (one way €4.50) to Achsenkogel and walk roughly 15 minutes uphill to the trailhead. The trek starts on the

right-hand side of the path winding up to Eisriesenwelt. For further details on getting there and away, see p285.

The Walk

Heading up on the path between the cable-car top station and Eisriesenwelt, take the narrow trail on the right, signed Steig (trail No 212), towards Leopold-Happisch-Haus, indicated by a red-and-white stripe on the rocks. The hardest climbing of the day's trek starts here with loose rocks underfoot, a steep incline, and a breathtakingly sheer 1000m drop to your right. While the going isn't easy, the awesome views more than compensate: below, the Salzach River snakes through pastures that form a rich patchwork of greenery, while ahead the towering limestone cliffs are scored with crevices and riddled with caves. The sign *Steinschlag Möglich* reminds hikers to keep their distance from the cliffs because of falling rocks.

The precipitous track contours around the cliff face, passing slopes covered in dwarf pines, and affording head-spinning views of the valley below and the summits above, in-

cluding **Hühnerkrall** (2289m). Sporadic cables ensure safety, but sure-footedness and a sturdy grip are needed as you clamber up and over the rocks. This exposed section of the trek is undoubtedly exciting, but it can be torturous under a blazing sun, so it's advisable to tackle it early. The zigzagging ascent quickly gains elevation and involves some easy scrambling. The icing on the cake, however, is climbing two (slightly wobbly!) ladders that scale the vertical rocks and get the adrenaline pumping. The trail crosses piles of scree and passes a memorial on the left-hand side, which commemorates two mountaineers who lost their lives here in 1994.

Around two hours from the trailhead, there's a sense of achievement upon reaching the magnificent karst plateau, a vast, grey desert of undulating limestone where snowfields often linger till summer. The Jagdhütte emergency shelter lies to the left, but you should sidle right and follow the signs for Leopold-Happisch-Haus. Bordered by dwarf pines and tussock grass, the path traverses the plateau and leads gently up natural steps hewn into the rock. When clouds cast

shadows across the contours of this rugged and starkly beautiful landscape, the effect is otherworldly.

The trail climbs further and, glancing back, the jagged pinnacles of the Hochkönig range are visible. Roughly three hours into the hike, keep an eye out for the sign to Vord-Streitmandl (trail No 229). This track continues to scale the ridges of the plateau, but is now waymarked with a red dot in a white circle (similar to the Japanese flag). It can be tricky to stay on the path if there are snowfields, as the markings are sometimes obscured, so particular care is needed when traversing the bowl-shaped depressions and cirques. Though challenging, the walking here is extremely satisfying and the far-reaching views reveal the Alps tumbling down to the flats, including the twin peaks of Hühnerkrallkopf (2403m) and Hochpfeiler (2410m) to your left.

The trail soon emerges in front of the dramatic **Lehnender Stein** (2400m) precipice, which provides heart-stopping views of the valley below. These cliffs are home to nesting eagles and, while you may spot one if you're lucky, you're far more likely to hear their high-pitched screech. Another pleasant half-hour is spent wandering past steely turrets before weaving up a rocky path to the exposed and wind-buffed peak of **Raucheck** (2430m), the highest mountain in the Tennengebirge range. The amazing views from the summit, marked by a silver cross, make all the puffing and panting worthwhile: the 360-degree panorama of the Northern Limestone Alps is difficult to drag yourself away from.

Around six hours from the start of the hike, it's all downhill on the trail veering right signed to **Grieskar-Mahdegg**. While the prospect of skipping down the hillside may seem like a breeze after all that climbing, the tough descent is designed to test tired legs and is easily underestimated. The track zigzags down a deep ravine, where care is needed climbing over weatherworn limestone dotted with fissures and sinkholes. Look back to admire the spectacular trio of horned peaks: Grosses Fieberhorn (2276m), Kleines Fieberhorn (2152m) and Hochthron (2362m).

The trail descends relentlessly for roughly another hour, traversing rocks and a ladder before culminating in a series of tight switchbacks down extremely steep slopes of scree and boulders. The fabulous vistas of the **Hochkönig** massif's pinnacles crowding the

horizon bolster waning spirits and there are good chances of sighting the nimble-footed chamois that inhabit these upper reaches. It's quite a relief to catch sight of the first dwarf pines speckling the slopes, as these signal your gradual approach to the tree line.

The relief at reaching the tree line is overwhelming – finally earth that does not slip or slide! The narrow trail now weaves through pine forest and becomes much flatter and easier, though the gnarled roots and leaning trees can be a bit of an obstacle course. After a steady hour-long march, the **Alpengasthof Mahdegg** sails into view. Keep your eyes peeled for the small sign indicating the trail (trail No 43) that will take you back to the starting point, which winds through shady beech and fir forest, and provides snapshot views of Werfen. Eventually the path brings you out onto the road to Eisriesenwelt; turn right, and the car park is about 10 minutes' stroll. The alternative is to take the zigzagging route (trail No 33) from Alpengasthof Mahdegg down to central Werfen, which takes just under an hour.

OBERTRAUN TO HALLSTATT (SALZKAMMERGUT)

Duration Six to seven hours

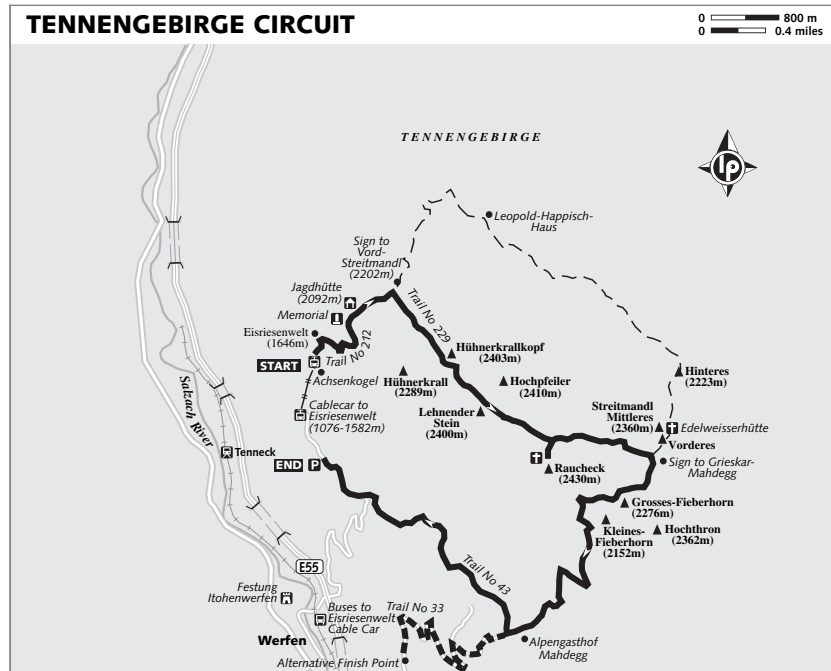
Distance 18km

Difficulty Easy to medium

Nearest Town Obertraun (p252)/Hallstatt (p250)

Summary A picturesque and spectacular walk around the shores of the pristine Hallstätter See (Lake Hallstatt) against a backdrop of towering mountains, with opportunities for swimming.

The Hallstätter See is a magnificently pristine lake in the Salzkammergut region, surrounded by soaring peaks and providing excellent opportunities for summer swimming. Few trails in Austria match this circuit for lakeside beauty. The walk initially follows the shore of the lake along the easy and mostly level Ostuferwanderweg (Eastern Shore Hiking Trail) from Obertraun, joins the historic Soleweg (Brine Pipeline Trail) at the northern end of the lake, then continues along this winding and spectacular trail past a waterfall to Rudolfsturm, a scenic lookout-restaurant above Hallstatt. The section along the eastern shore can be done any time of year and in any conditions, while the Soleweg requires a good level of fitness, good shoes and a reasonable head for heights. Children will need careful



supervision in this section. The Soleweg section should be attempted in winter only in good conditions and with appropriate clothing.

Getting to/from the Walk

This walk begins in Obertraun and heads anticlockwise around the lake. It is also possible to start at Rudolfsturm in Hallstatt. From Obertraun train station, follow the line north-west along Bahnhofstrasse for 200m, cross the line and veer right. The trail begins just after the ferry terminal, 10 minutes' walk from the tourist office.

The Walk

After leaving Obertraun, follow the trail above the lake shore around the forested **Sechserkogel**, with its rocky outcrops. If you are combining a hike with a swim, the bluff is one of the more attractive places for swimming off rocks, although it's best approached from the water itself. However, there are plenty of other opportunities to paddle or swim along the eastern shore.

After 1.5km the trail leads across the Hallstatt train station and, shortly after, continues

along a walkway attached to the rock face above the water. This is the deepest section of the Hallstätter See (125m). This part of the walk affords some splendid views up the lake between the wonderfully carved rock faces flanking the valley, petering out at the northern tip of the lake at the settlement of Steeg and the mouth of the Traun River.

From the walkway, the trail continues along a gravel path among riverbank acacias, pines, larch, fir and beech. This is also a botanical theme path, so the vegetation is often marked along the way. Keep left at the fork in the trail (and at all forks on this section). From here it is about another 15 minutes' walk along the water's edge to **Seeraunzn** (☎ 0676-433 12 63; Obersee 41; mains €5.50-12; ☞ 10am-8pm Easter Sun-Oct), a lakeside restaurant that is a great place to recover strength for the tougher Soleweg leg of the walk.

About 1½ hours into the Ostuferweg section the trail approaches Steeg and joins a small access road leading under the railway line. Follow the trail left and around. At the T-junction, Strandbadstrasse runs left under the railway line again to the **Steeg public beach**.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PILGRIMS

A historic path, the Pilgrim's Way (Pilgerweg), connects St Gilgen and St Wolfgang via the western shore of the Hallstätter Sea (Lake Hallstatt). In the past pilgrims followed this path to honour St Wolfgang, the bishop who was said to have founded the church in St Wolfgang village by throwing his axe from the Falkenstein hill into the valley below and building the church on the spot where it fell.

The walk takes half a day and maps are available from the tourist offices in St Wolfgang and St Gilgen. The path starts from Furberg, near St Gilgen, and climbs the Falkenstein (795m) before continuing through the village of Reid to St Wolfgang. Apart from the fairly steep climb to the top of the Falkenstein, the walk isn't too strenuous (remind yourself that many pilgrims did it with lentils in their shoes or naked with iron rings around their necks as a sign of penance!). There are various things to see along the way, including a stone that still apparently bears the marks of the St Wolfgang's buttocks. It became as soft as wax in a miracle sent by God to allow the saint to rest his weary bones.

This (clothed) beach area has sunbathing platforms, a diving board and a children's slide. Beyond this (across the creek) is the rather swampy but lovely **FKK naturist beach**. Experienced swimmers can shorten the walk by tackling the 500m across the mouth of the Traun River (don't forget to bring your watertight bag and check out the water temperature first). If you do this, aim for the small clearing at the camping ground. You will need to walk back towards the power station from there to resume the walk.

Walkers should backtrack from the beach to the T-junction and keep going straight before turning left at the fork with the traffic mirror and crossing the small bridge. Here the Salzkammerweg (trail No A17) ascends into a grove of trees above the cliffs, or alternatively you can take the road (Arikoglstrasse) at the foot of the cliffs. After about 750m, those taking the cliff path will reach the road; head left and about 100m later turn right into the trail at the orchard. Walkers following Arikoglstrasse should turn left into this trail at this orchard; follow it around to the B166 main road.

This section is the least attractive part of the walk, but the lovely beer garden at riverside **Steegwirt** (☎ 06135-8302; Au 12; mains €8-12; ☞ 10am-9pm, closed Tue Nov-Mar) offers relief.

From Steegwirt, cross the Traun River, follow the road south for about 150m past the hydroelectric power station and turn right onto Salzstubenweg. This ascends for another 150m to join the **Soleweg** to Hallstatt.

Forget all about low lakeside trails now. The Soleweg (also called in parts Soleleitungsweg) follows the precarious path hacked into the Ramsau mountains between 1597 and 1607

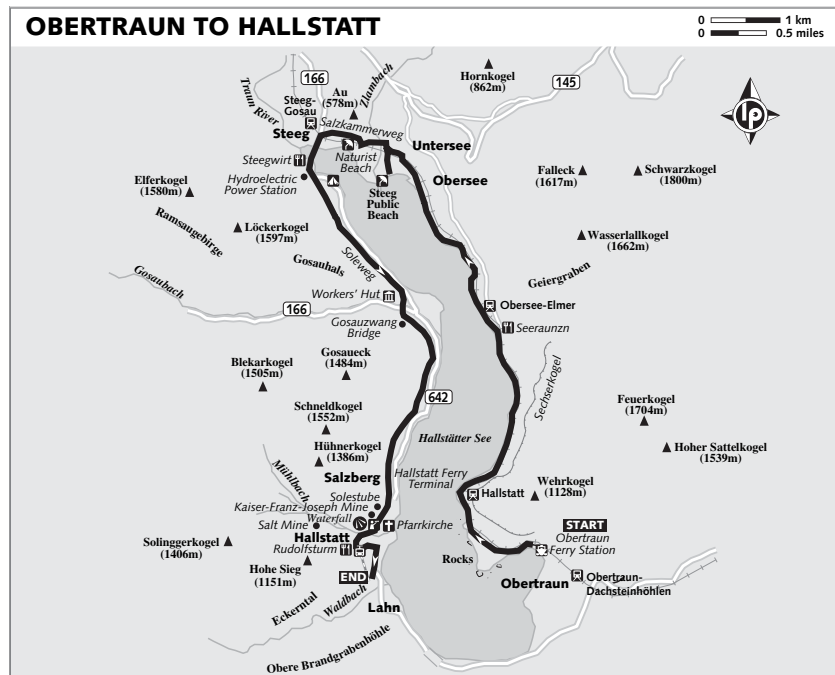
for a pipeline, which transports brine from the nearby salt mines. It is reputed to be the oldest in the world and was originally made from hollowed-out tree trunks fitted together.

Approximately 1.5km from the point where you join the Soleweg, the trail leads past a small **workers' hut** (admission free; ☞ summer), which contains a small exhibition (in German) on the pipeline and salt in the region. Just after this is one of the walk highlights: the 43m-high **Gosauphang** bridge spanning a gorge carved out by the **Gosaubach** (Gosau Brook).

Sections of the walk after the bridge require care in parts, especially the stretch from a 2.5km marker to the turn-off to Hallstatt. In several places you will need to duck beneath rocks and avoid dripping water while making sure you keep your distance from the steep edges of the path. But the rewards here are many, with some great views to the lake.

The trail divides at the 1km marker the trail divides. The path to the left leads 500m down into Hallstatt, emerging behind the 15th-century **Pfarrkirche** (p251). If you're approaching the trail from the opposite direction, this is an easy entry point, but you will miss the sensational views from the Rudolfsturm.

The trail to the right becomes steep and narrower, passing a **Solestube**, where the volume and pressure of brine in the pipes is controlled. As you ascend, Hallstatt can be glimpsed below through the trees. About 300m after a steep climb, you reach a **lookout** and the **Kaiser-Franz-Joseph mine**. Steps from here lead past a **waterfall**, where the Mühlbach tumbles down a rock face towards Hallstatt. Finally, after crossing an iron bridge and negotiating more steps, this dramatic trail



reaches a grand climax at **Rudolfsturm** (☎ 06134-20677; Am Salzberg; dishes €4.50-16; 🕒 9am-6pm May-Oct). The fort, built in the 13th century to protect the salt mines, today offers fine food and views from its hilltop location, 800m above the lake. The historic **salt mine** and archaeological area are just a short walk west of here. To end your walk, the **funicular** (one-way adult/child/family €5.10/3.10/10.80) – or alternatively a switchback trail – take you down to Hallstatt.

HOHE TAUERN NATIONAL PARK REGION

PINZGAUER SPAZIERGANG

Duration Five to six hours

Distance 19km

Difficulty Easy to medium

Nearest Town Zell am See (p312)

Summary Easy walking on grassy ridges allows you to enjoy the fantastic views into the Hohe Tauern National Park without serious effort.

This perennially popular day hike in the Kitzbühel Alps combines gentle walking with wonderful Alpine scenery. Sun-dappled woodlands soon thin out and give way to high pastures that are a delight to walk through. To the south is a host of snow white peaks to ogle, including the glaciated summits of Grossglockner and the pyramid-shaped Kitzsteinhorn, while to the north the limestone turrets of the Kaisergebirge and Watzmann slide into view.

In its entirety, the Pinzgauer Spaziergang stretches 32km from the summertime boating playground of Zell am See in the east right across the crest of the range to Mittersill in the west. Covering the second stretch from Schmittenhöhe to Saalbach, this five- to six-hour amble takes in the highlights of the trek without the hard slog. It's generally easy to stick to the trail, but Kompass 1:30,000 map No 30 *Zell am See – Kaprun* might come in handy.

Getting to/from the Walk

The walk starts from the top station of the **Schmittenhöhebahn** (☎ 06542-789-0; one way €16; 🕒 9am-5pm mid-May–mid-Jun, 8.30am-5pm mid-Jun–Oct) in Zell am See. Gondolas depart roughly every half hour. For details on public transport connections to/from Zell am See, go to p316.

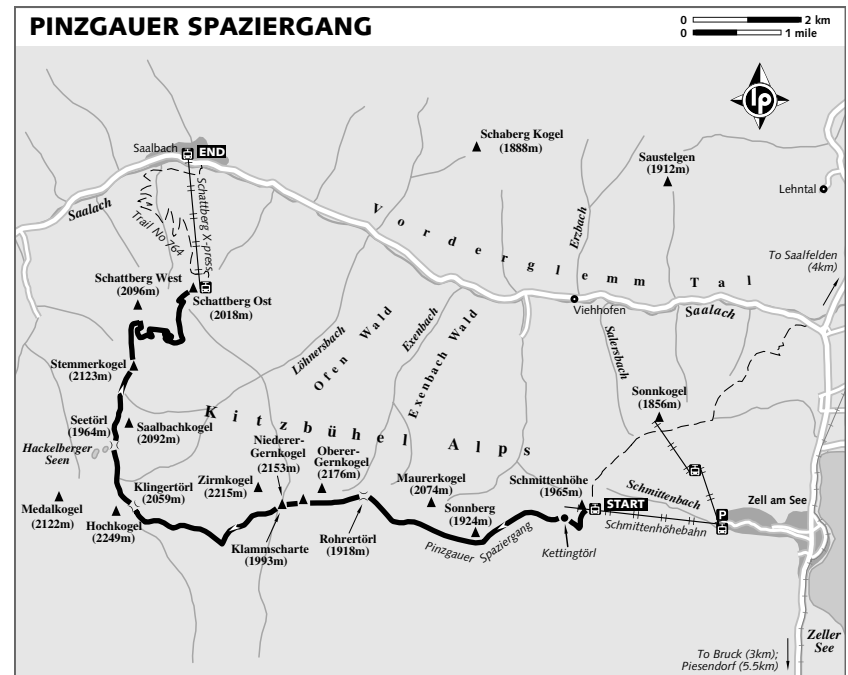
The walk finishes at the bottom station of the **Schattberg X-press** (☎ 06541-62 71 10; one way €6.90; 🕒 9-11.45am & 1-4.15pm mid-Jun–Sep), located right on the main road in Saalbach. Bus 680 runs every hour from Saalbach to Zell am See (€3.70, 30 minutes); the last bus departs at 7.15pm.

The Walk

From the top station of the Schmittenhöhebahn (1965m), follow the signs to Saalbach and the Pinzgauer Spaziergang. The views are immediately spectacular: to the east the glistening Zeller See is a blotch of inky blue on the Salzach Valley more than 1000m below, while to the south the 3000m summits and pearly-white glaciers of the **Hohe Tauern National Park** spread out before you. The well-prepared trail gently descends a ski slope flanked by fir trees, passes a chairlift and emerges at Kettingtörl. A slight incline brings you to a flat ridge bordered by heather and bilberry bushes, commanding views across undulating alpine pastures.

Waymarked by a red-and-white stripe, the path soon narrows. Following the ridge trail through fir forest studded with deep blue tarns, your gaze is often drawn left to a stunning line-up of snowy peaks including Austria's highest, Grossglockner (3798m), and the glistening Kitzsteinhorn glacier (3203m) in the foreground. This view, subtly changing all the time, remains with you for the most of the walk. You soon emerge out of the forest onto a stony trail, where the panorama opens up to the south and the landscape is a patchwork of heather, dwarf pines and ponds that reflect the scenery above. From here, you'll catch your first glimpse of the rounded summit of **Maurerkogel** (2074m), which is still dusted with snow in early summer.

It's now an easy amble along a snaking track through pastures where cows graze peacefully and colourful wildflowers such as gentian and alpine roses bloom. After nearly an hour of walking, the track contours around the southern slopes of the Maurerkogel and you'll see the knobbly summit of Oberer-Gernkogel (2175m) ahead. Continue along the path, crossing the occasional meltwater stream, and you'll spy the wooden hut at Sonnenbergalm on the left-hand side. It's now a short and painless ascent to the saddle of **Rohrertörl** (1918m), where you can contrast the snow-free rocky limestone ranges to the



north, such as the chiselled Kaisergebirge range, with the more distinctly alpine, glaciated Hohe Tauern peaks to the south.

Passing two junctions, continue along a fine balcony trail that begins by contouring around the base of Oberer-Gernkogel and gently mounting the slightly lower **Niederer-Gernkogel** (2153m), before making its way down the other side to Klammscharte (1993m). If you're attempting this walk in early season, there is a high possibility that you will have to traverse a few snowdrifts. You're now at the foot of Zirmkogel (2215m) which, if you have the will and expertise, can be climbed in little more than an hour. The rocky trail cuts a path through high meadows carpeted with gold-tinged tussock grass and punctuated by boggy tarns. The sharp peak of Hochkogel (2249m) draws ever nearer.

The narrow trail now runs like a vein through mountains whose mottled greenery resembles a tortoise shell. Shortly you'll reach a small hut near a cool stream that is a great spot to take a break. Around four hours from the start of the trek, the path veers right and ascends a fairly steep incline to **Klingertörl**

saddle (2059m), where a sign next to a stile indicates the way to Saalbach. Temporarily leaving behind the mesmerising views of the Hohe Tauern peaks, traverse the base of cliffs that sweep down from the summit of the Hochkogel and descend for a short while to the wide grassy col of Seetörl (1964m), a nice place to linger and survey the petrol blue lakes of Hackelberger Seen.

Walk north from here, either climbing directly over the summit of the Saalbachkogel (2092m) or contouring around its western slopes. The same option is repeated for the slightly higher **Stemmaerkogel** (2123m) where, looking back, there is a final chance to bid farewell to the frosty pinnacles of the Hohe Tauern National Park. Head down the ridge of the mountain and continue towards Schattberg – look right and you'll be able to trace the entire day's trek, including the starting point at Schmittenhöhe. The trail now skirts around the base of Schattberg West before making a final ascent to the top station of the Schattberg X-press gondola down to Saalbach.

If you'd prefer to return to **Saalbach** on foot, however, follow the signs at Schattberg-Ost

onto a path (trail No 764) that weaves gently down a ski slope before descending more steeply through fir and pine forest. This trail emerges onto the main road to the village centre; if you choose this option, add one to 1½ hours to the day's duration.

KRIMML FALLS LOOP

Duration Four hours

Distance 15km

Difficulty Easy

Nearest Town Krimml (p317)

Summary This half-day walk takes in Europe's highest waterfall, open meadows and a little-known Celtic trail. Expect mostly gentle walking and dramatic views all the way.

This four-hour walk explores the 380m-high Krimml Falls (Krimmler Wasserfälle) in all their splendour. The first stretch passes through lush forest, pausing at viewpoints for close-up views of the three-tiered falls. The scenic trail then twists up to the Krimmler Achenal, an alpine valley sliced in two by the burbling Krimmler Ache and set against a backdrop of 3000m-high peaks. Looping back, you'll travel on a Celtic trade route, where sturdy footwear is needed to negotiate a rocky, root-strewn trail that can become slippery when wet. The going is generally easy on the well-marked trail, which makes it a favourite with families and vista vultures.

Getting to/from the Walk

The walk begins and ends at the ticket office, approximately 10 minutes' stroll from the car park, which costs €4 per day. For further details on transport to/from Krimml, see p318. Should you get tired, a taxi will set you back €6.50 per person from the upper falls or €8 per person from Hölzlahneralm; bookings must be made by telephone (☎ 06564-83 27).

The Walk

From the ticket office (p317), the trail ascends gently through mixed forest of fir, larch and birch. The raging falls nurture a special microclimate here – take note of ostrich ferns, spongy moss and lichen in myriad shades of green, which thrive in this damp atmosphere. Before you actually see the falls, you'll hear their rumble. Soon your attention will be drawn to the lower level of the falls, the **Unterer Achenfall**, which plummet 140m through a steep-sided gorge and are enshrouded in mist. The bronze ibex statue

is a superb vantage point for photos, so have your camera ready.

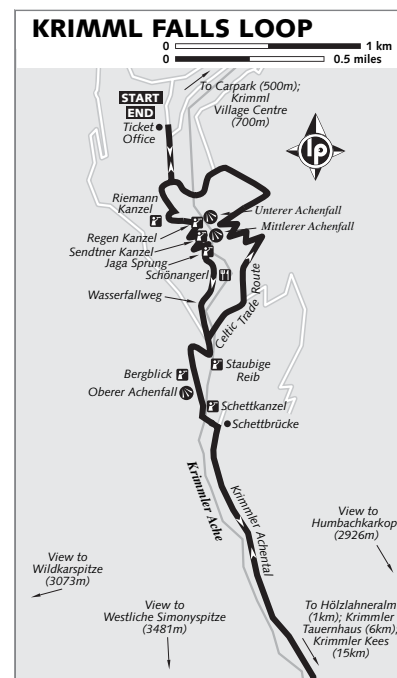
The Wasserfallweg (Waterfall Path) continues to weave uphill in a series of long loops, and the well-graded trails make for easy walking. This area is a protected nature reserve and signs remind walkers that they should stick to the track. Wandering through shady forest carpeted in clover and bilberry bushes, you'll glimpse the falls on the approach to the first proper viewpoint, **Riemann Kanzel** (1110m), around 15 minutes from the start. Here you'll be rewarded with awe-inspiring views of the falls, which thrash against the jagged cliffs and illuminate the dark green forest with their brilliance.

The path soon begins to steepen, and tight switchbacks lead up through woodlands, affording fleeting glimpses of the village of Krimml in the valley below. A steady incline brings you to a number of lookout points that grant close-up views of the glinting falls, which are often arched by a rainbow when the sun shines. These include the Regen Kanzel, hung in a fine misty spray, and the precipitous Sendtner Kanzel, where the waterfall seems close enough to reach out and touch it.

After roughly 30 minutes you'll catch sight of the second tier of the falls, the 100m **Mittlerer Achenfall**; while they are not as high as the lower and upper falls, this detracts nothing from their drama. Between Jaga Sprung (1220m) and Staubige Reib (1330m), the zig-zagging trail becomes steeper at each bend, contouring around slopes dotted with craggy boulders that shimmer with minerals. By the time you reach Schönangerl, you might need a quick break and this is the perfect spot to kick back with a drink on the terrace, rest your legs and soak up the fabulous views.

At Bergerblick (1390m), you begin your approach to the third tier of the falls, **Oberer Achenfall**, which tumble 140m through a vertical wall of granite. The sheer force of the frothing water is impressive, and the ascent to the final lookout point, Schettkanzel (1460m), is also likely to leave you breathless on a hot summer's day. Approximately an hour from the starting point, you emerge at the top of the falls at Schettbrücke, where the cool forest gives way to open pastures and the Krimmler Ache River runs swiftly over smooth rocks.

Above the falls, the trail flattens and continues to shadow the wild glacial river, making its way through the U-shaped **Krimmler**



Achenal, a highland valley that seems a million miles away from the tourist hordes far below. In June and July, the meadows here are ablaze with wildflowers and you'll spend as much time staring at the ground as you do up ahead; keep an eye out for yellow cowslips, bell-shaped gentian and swaths of bright pink alpine roses. Although the track is reasonably crowd-free, you'll probably bump into a few hikers en route who'll cheerfully bid you *Grüss Gott* (Good day).

About 15 minutes from the falls, 3000m-high peaks begin to slide into view, including the snow-capped Wildkarspitze (3073m) to the west. But the mountains dominating the horizon aren't the only big rocks here – the sea of dwarf pines edging the left-hand side of the path is strewn with huge boulders and bizarre rock formations. Looking right, however, your attention is drawn to the mooring Pinzgauer cows that graze the pastures and the fast-flowing Krimmler Ache. The feeling of peace in this valley is sublime and it's little wonder that it has been dubbed a mini Alaska.

Around two hours from the start of the walk, the fluttering Austrian flag at

Hölzlahneralm (see p317) is like a beacon for weary walkers. Filled with local characters, this rustic hut is a charming place for lunch and a deserved rest; tuck into the homemade *Kaspressknödel* (cheese fritters) with a glass of creamy buttermilk. It's worth taking time here to appreciate the glaciated landscape that unfolds ahead, including the Humbachkarkopf (2926m), the Westliche Simonyspitze (3481m) and the Krimmler Kees glacier, whose meltwaters feed the Krimml Falls. In the early morning and evening, this is prime terrain for animal spotters, as it has a healthy population of marmots, Haflinger horses and chamois.

Retrace your steps along the valley and back to the falls, following the way you came until you reach a fork in the path before Schönangerl. Turn right to reach one of the day's highlights, a little-known **Celtic trade route**, built in about 2000 BC and restored in 1985. Mind your step on the rocky, root-strewn path that twists down through lichen-clad fir trees. This silent area affords an entirely different perspective of the falls and deer can often be seen or heard rustling through the trees. At the bottom, you'll have the final chance to feel the spray of the waterfall from riverbanks daubed with golden marsh marigolds. Make your way across the wooden footbridge and back to the starting point.

CARINTHIA

GARNITZENKLAMM CIRCUIT

Duration Three hours

Distance 6km

Difficulty Medium

Nearest Town Hermagor (p301)

Summary This hike leads through the first two sections of Garnitzenklamm (Garnitzen Gorge) past spectacular waterfalls and pools, returning through mountain forest.

Situated in a province famous for its rugged mountain landscapes, the 6km-long Garnitzenklamm is considered to be the prettiest gorge in Carinthia. The trail follows the course of the Garnitzenbach (Garnitzen Brook) and is officially open between the months of June and September. Although this walk is often possible at other times of year, the path is even more slippery than usual – very good shoes are needed for this walk at

the best of times – and local authorities warn it is at your own risk. The first two sections are also suitable for children, but kids should be carefully supervised and anyone who suffers from vertigo may encounter problems. Difficult stretches have chains or iron bars to hold onto. After strong rainfall, it is inadvisable to attempt sections 3 and 4. At the end of section 2 is a *Notunterstand* (emergency shelter). All bridges should be crossed one person at a time. Admission to the gorge is €2.50/1 per adult/child.

Getting to/from the Walk

The trailhead is 2.5km southwest of Hermagor, above the small settlement of Möderndorf. From the tourist office in Hermagor take the B111 southwest (left at the fork) and turn left again at the ÖAMTC office. From here continue another 2km through Möderndorf, and across the railway line and bridge to the information stand at the start of the gorge.

The Walk

The walk begins at the lower section of the gorge at an altitude of 612m, where there is an information stand and the Klammwirt restaurant, which has outdoor seating summer that is the perfect spot to gather your strength for strenuous climb ahead. The early section of the walk, which ascends the gorge left of the stream on pebbly ground, is also geologically the oldest (you will see boards along the way explaining the geology), dating back about

460 million years. The youngest stone (at the top of the gorge at an altitude of 1125m) was formed about 200 million years ago and the gorge itself is the product of erosion over about 10,000 years.

Section 1 leads around a **weir** and artificially constructed **waterfall**, as well as rock pools in which it's possible to paddle in the chilly waters. About 30 minutes into section 1 of the gorge, the first **bridge** comes into view. The gorge has been attracting hikers since the late 19th century, but maintaining the trail and crossings is difficult because of flooding. In 2003 five bridges were swept away and replacements had to be flown in and lowered into place by helicopter. This bridge was rebuilt in 2004 (cross it one person at a time); it's worth pausing in the middle for a first view of the gorge from above the water.

After this crossing, the trail ascends steeply on rocks and you pass a tree with an odd root system swelling above the ground. A second bridge follows, and the final leg of section 1 and the early stages of section 2, which begins after **Idawarte**, have some pretty rock formations, spectacular cascades and narrow, bubbling pools flanked with lush vegetation.

From Idawarte the trail crosses another bridge and leads past waterfalls near **Franzenswarte** and along the northern side of the gorge. As the trail ascends, the gorge narrows and the level of difficulty increases. Sections of the trail running along the north side to the next bridge crossing some 500m upstream can get extremely slippery and re-

quire care. Parts of the trail have been cut into the cliffs to provide access and have a chain you can hold onto, while other parts run along natural ledges.

Shortly before the end of section 2 of the gorge, the last bridge of this walk is reached. This marks the end of the gorge section of this circuit walk. If you are not walking the entire gorge, cross the bridge just before the end of section 2 and follow Steinernder Weg (trail No 116) for about 1km through some pretty deciduous forest until it joins trail No 410 at the **cross**, where you turn right towards **St Urbani**, some 500m from the junction; this small chapel is set picturesquely in the woods, and has some simple frescoes. The chapel is also a vantage point for more good views over the gorge. From St Urbani, follow the trail through the lush deciduous forest until it rejoins the forestry road. This ends at the road from Möderndorf, just north of the information booth.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: SECTIONS 3 & 4 OF GARNITZENKLAMM

If you decide to continue along the gorge, sections 3 and 4 require another 1½ hours in all and involve several steep climbs before you reach the end – at **Klause** – at an altitude of 1125m. It's a spectacular walk at a higher level of difficulty. If you want to hike these sections, instead of turning right and crossing the bridge, continue past the emergency shelter. About 1km further on, the trail crosses a forestry track at the end of section 3, where you have another opportunity to leave the gorge trail; to do this, follow the forestry road north for about 3km and exit back onto the circuit trail (trail No 410).

the Viennese, who come here to hike its lush forests and spectacular grassy plateau. Rising to 2076m, it is also easily reached by a narrow-gauge cog railway in the summer months. The first section of this trail follows yellow and green markers alongside the railway line for approximately 7km to Baumgarten station (1398m), leaves the railway line for most of the remaining 3km, and finishes at the mountain station (Bergstation). From here the 7km Plateauwanderung (Plateau Hike) begins to the summit of Schneeberg. The entire hike should only be attempted between April/May and October/November, when the ascent is free of snow; sections of the trail can get a bit slippery in the wet and weather can be changeable. Check the railway timetable for departure times if you are completing one section by rail, and be prepared for all weather conditions.

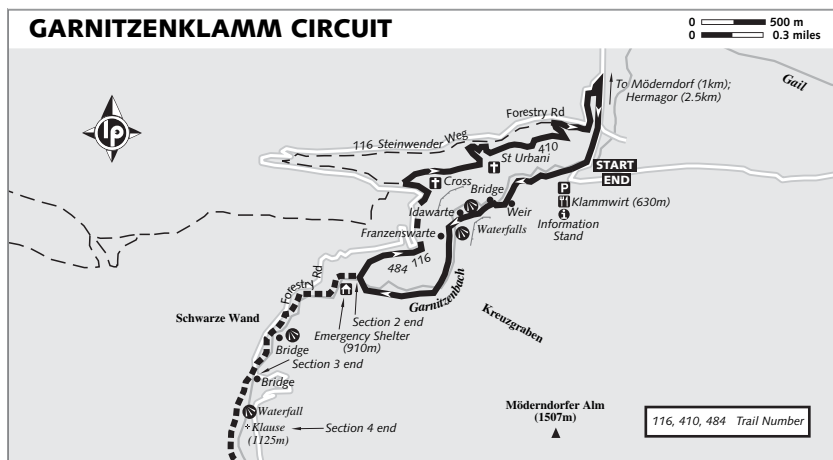
Getting to/from the Walk

The trailhead is a 10-minute walk north of the railway station in Puchberg. From the train station, follow Bahnstrasse southwest for about 200m until the end, turn right at the T-junction and follow this road until you arrive at the railway line. The trail begins here.

The Walk

From the trailhead, take the path running along the left-hand side of the railway line. After a few hundred metres it crosses the track (watch out for trains!) and follows the course of the line on the right-hand side for most of the hike to Baumgarten station. You will find the trail sublime and picturesque in these early stages, consisting mostly of a forestry track that clings to the side of the Niederer Hengst range. The vegetation in this section is predominantly mixed evergreen and deciduous forest of spruce, beech and some oak. As you climb and wind through the forest you notice views starting to open up into the Hengsttal (Stallion Valley) on the east. After about one hour and a climb of 435m you reach **Hengsthütte** (☎ 02636-21 03; www.hengsthutte.at; Hochschneeberg 1; beds €25; ☞ Tue-Sun May-Oct, Sat & Sun Nov-Apr), where there are spectacular views into the valley and mountains.

The vegetation shows signs of the higher altitude here, with larch and pine trees becoming more frequent. The trail continues along the right of the railway line for another 30



LOWER AUSTRIA

PUCHBERG TO SCHNEEBERG

Duration 7½ hours

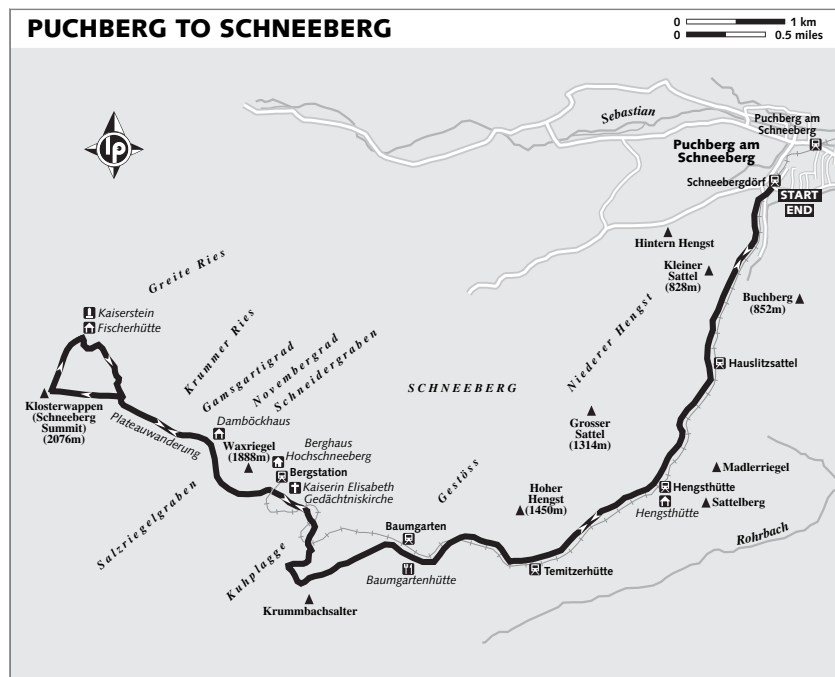
Distance 17km

Difficulty Easy to medium

Nearest Town Puchberg am Schneeberg (p187)

Summary This scenic hike follows the route of a railway line through changing forest landscapes, while the plateau section of the hike also offers tremendous views.

Schneeberg is Lower Austria's highest mountain and is the most popular among



or 40 minutes before crossing the track and leading to the café at Baumgarten station, **Baumgartenhütte** (☎ 02636-2107; Hochschneeberg 5; light mains €6-8; ☒ daily when train runs). With an evocative game-hunting interior, it's a good spot for a first rest. Few places in the world look like this, and it fills with forestry workers (and train passengers), who step inside to indulge in Baumgarten's famous *Buchtl*, a sweet leavened pastry.

With a *Buchtl* in your belly, follow the yellow trail along the stone embankment of the railway line before crossing the track. From now on you need to keep to the trail marked yellow. A red trail leading to Herminensteig goes off to the right just after the railway crossing; do not take this.

The yellow trail sticks closely to the line for about 200m, then leaves it and ascends through forest that was burned out in bushfires in the 1980s. Gradually you leave the tree line altogether, and the path becomes steep, rocky and uneven. If you are not an experienced hiker, you might find this section difficult in the wet. There are no steep drops, however, and the trail is well marked.

This section is also one of the most panoramic, with magnificent views to Hoher Hengst (1450m) and the valley around Puchberg in the northeast. Finally, about one hour after leaving Baumgarten and about three hours into the walk, you arrive at the stone **Kaiserin Elisabeth Gedächtniskirche**, built in honour of Empress Elisabeth and consecrated in 1901. Across from this is the Bergstation. The first section of the walk ends here.

The **Plateauwanderung**, marked in green and later yellow, starts from the station (1795m) and climbs gently along the side of Waxriegel mountain. A few minutes into the walk you have a wonderful view of what lies ahead: the **Klosterwappen** (Schneeberg summit), whose summit is marked with a cross, and the Fischerhütte perched delicately in the distance. After 20 minutes you reach **Damböckhaus** (☎ 02636-2259; www.damboeckhaus.at; Hochschneeberg 8; mattresses/beds €17/23; ☒ May-Oct), situated at an altitude on 1810m. This is a good place to nip in for sustenance and the host's speciality – game goulash – before you tackle the summit; dishes cost €7 to €9.

About 15 minutes from Damböckhaus the path forks and you follow the trail (marked yellow) to the left to the peak. Not surprisingly, this section is the steepest climb on the trail, rising 225m over 1.5km. About 45 minutes after leaving the fork, you reach the summit. Enjoy the splendid panorama if the weather is good and gather your strength.

The Plateauwanderung has one final section, which takes you along the ridge north for 15 minutes towards **Fischerhütte** (☎ 02636-2313; Hochschneeberg 9; mattresses/beds €10/16; ☒ Apr-Oct), on the cusp of the plateau. Near the hut is the **Kaiserstein**, commemorating royal hikes by Kaiser Franz I in 1805 and 1807. From Fischerhütte, complete the circuit on the plateau by taking the direct trail (green) for 40 minutes back past Damböckhaus, and from there walk another 20 minutes to the Bergstation. You can now return to Puchberg by train or, if you would like to stay overnight on the mountain in a pension, the comfortable **Berghaus Hochschneeberg** (☎ 02636-2257; berghaus.hochschneeberg@aon.at; Hochschneeberg 7; s/d €24/48) is situated conveniently close to the Bergstation.

SPITZ-SCHWALLENBACH CIRCUIT

Duration 4½ hours

Distance 11km (round circuit back to Spitz)

Difficulty Easy to medium

Nearest Town Spitz (p172)

Summary This is an easy hike in the Danube Valley through vineyards and forest to hilltop castle ruins. It continues through a nature park and returns via the Danube Cycle Path.

The Wachau region in the Danube Valley is one of the most spectacular river landscapes in Europe. Lush forests and picturesque vineyards cling to high valley walls and crags, while rustic *Heurigen* (wine taverns; ask at the tourist office in Spitz which ones are open) offer the chance to sample local wines direct from the cellar door. Although most towns in the Wachau have hiking trails, this circuit offers the advantage of hiking in almost any weather conditions, and brings together the best qualities of the Wachau: pretty vineyards, deciduous forest, great views of the Danube and a historic castle ruin. Even young children will find the section to the foot of the castle manageable. The climb to the castle and the trail through the nature park to Schwallenbach

are more difficult; here leaves on the path can make it slippery in the wet. Don't stray too far off this path as cliffs are located beyond the trees.

For more details on this walk, pick up the 1:35000 Naturerlebnis Wachau Wandern & Radfahren map (€1) from the tourist office (see p172).

Getting to/from the Walk

The trailhead is on the northern outskirts of Spitz at Rotes Tor, a medieval city gate. From Marktplatz in the centre of Spitz, follow Rote-Tor-Gasse to the right, then go right again at the school gate. Signs point the way.

The Walk

Even as you approach the trailhead from Marktplatz, you pass through small vineyards and an orchard. The Wachau region is famous for its *Marillen* (apricots), which are worked into jams, liqueurs and heady schnapps. Once you arrive at the trailhead you will also see why **Rotes Tor** is considered one of the best spots to take in the view.

Follow the path through the stone portal and into the forest. It's important to keep left at the first fork and follow the blue trail (trail No 10) leading towards Huthof. The path takes you through forest of birch, pine and occasional oak trees; after about 600m a new view over the valley opens up, and you reach a bench and **small cross**.

From here the trail changes direction significantly for the first time by leaving the blue trail and making a switchback southwest up the hill. As the path straightens out, some wooden boxes appear in the forest. These are used for feeding game, and after a while you come across a *Hochsitz* (hunting stool) used by the local forest hunters to wait for their unsuspecting game. More importantly, though, watch out for snakes in this section of forest as they tend to loiter around the woodpiles.

After a fairly moderate climb for another 600m you reach the crest of a ridge that extends up to the 700m-high Buchberg to the north; between the trees there are lovely views of the serpentine **Danube** (Donau).

The trail follows the swath cut into the lower reaches of Buchberg and gradually descends again, offering spectacular views over to the terraced **Michaeler Berg** in the east. At the next fork keep to the right, going in the direction of Erholungswald Jagdriedl; just after this

TREKKING WITH LLAMAS

One of the more interesting hikes with llamas in Lower Austria is along a section of the Jakobsweg (Jacob's Path). A two-day trek along this pilgrim's trail begins in Stift Göttweig (near Krems An Der Donau; p167) and goes via the monastery Maria Langegg – where you stay overnight – to Melk. This two-day trek involves about six hours walking each day along pretty forest trails and costs a very reasonable €65 in a group of 15 people. **Donau Niederösterreich Tourismus** (☎ 02713-300 60 60; www.donau.com) handles bookings and can tell you more about the hike.

another view opens up, this time over the rooftops of Spitz to the Danube.

From here keep following the trail marked yellow, which leads down towards Radlbach, once a separate town but today a part of Spitz. As the trail heads in a more northerly direction, views shift from the Danube and Spitz to the side valley, the Spitzer Graben (Spitz Basin); from a bluff you get an interesting view of this river valley closed off on three sides by densely wooded mountains. This is a good place to unpack a lunch, and a bottle of local wine or juice.

Continue along the yellow trail (trail No 5) into the gully and across Radlbach (Radl Brook) then stay on the forestry track (yellow; trail No 6) alongside the brook all the way into Radlbach settlement, where there are more vineyards and **Heurigen**. As you walk around Rauch Emma (one of the vineyards), **Burgruine Hinterhaus** (Castle Ruin Hinterhaus) appears in the distance on the bluff.

From Radlbach, go left along the main road and right across the bridge. At the road marked Auf der Wehr, go left again. A sign warns that the climb ahead is steep – and it's serious. The degree of difficulty increases in this section, and for good reason: the approach to the fortress, which was first mentioned in official documents in 1243, was planned in

such a way that attackers stormed it with the right side of the body exposed to the castle defenders. This is typically the side of the body unprotected by a shield in battle. Despite this crafty piece of fortress building and landscape design, the castle gradually fell into disuse from the 1460s. To get to the castle, follow the signs along Weitwanderweg 05.

Views from the castle are superb, and this is a good place to rest up before tackling the second section of the walk. This section takes you through the lush **Jauerling Naturpark** (Jauerling Nature Park) towards Schwallenbach, a small town about 3km from the castle. To walk it, backtrack from the castle and take trail No 6/605 (marked in red) up into the forest. It's another steep climb and will require good shoes in the wet. Walk along the trail through the forest for about 500m, following red-and-yellow markers (trail No 7) until you see the fence; the trail divides here. Take the yellow trail (trail No 7), which winds along the top of **Teufelsmauer** (Devil's Wall) through dense forest, with occasional glimpses over the Danube Valley. After walking for about an hour, you descend gradually through vineyards towards Schwallenbach, from where you have the choice of taking a train or bus back to Spitz or completing the circuit by following the bicycle path alongside the Danube to Spitz.