

EUROPE · MOUNTAINS · HIKING · WINTER SPORTS · CULTURE · HISTORY · ARCHITECTURE

Austria

Imperial grandeur meets serious mountains in Austria. Vienna's Habsburg palaces, coffee houses and concert halls are linked by fast, scenic railways to Salzburg's baroque old town, Hallstatt's lakeside salt-mining village and Tyrol's ski slopes and summer trails. Trains are punctual, cake is taken seriously, and the Alps are rarely out of sight once you leave the capital.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Austria and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 11 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Vienna	 CURRENCY Euro (EUR) £1 ≈ €1.19	 LANGUAGE German	 BEST TIME May-Sep, Dec
 DAILY BUDGET £65-£280 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type C, F 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 2h 10m direct ~£70-£260 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+1 standard time

Austria is really two countries: the flat, cultured east around Vienna and the Danube, and the Alpine west and south, where mountains take up roughly two-thirds of the land. A first trip usually follows the main east-west railway. Spend three or four days in Vienna for the Hofburg, Schönbrunn, the Kunsthistorisches Museum and an evening at the opera, detour along the Danube through the Wachau's vineyards, then continue to Salzburg and the lakes of the Salzkammergut. With more time, carry on west to Innsbruck and the Tyrolean valleys, or cross the Grossglockner road south to Carinthia's lakes. Distances are short, so a fortnight covers a great deal.

Travel here is easy, orderly and not cheap: prices are close to southern Germany's, with Vienna's hotels the main expense and village guesthouses and mountain huts better value. Summer brings hikers, lake swimmers and festival crowds; skiers take over from December to April, and December's Christmas markets fill Vienna and Salzburg with mulled-wine stalls. Hallstatt and Salzburg's old town are swamped by day-trippers at midday, so arrive early or stay the night. Many visitors are surprised by how formal service can feel, how much shuts on Sundays, and how good everyday food is, from a Beisl lunch to a slice of Sachertorte.

Top 5 highlights

- 1**

ARCHITECTURE

Schönbrunn Palace

The Habsburgs' 1,441-room summer palace on Vienna's western edge. Take the Grand Tour of the state rooms, then climb through the formal gardens to the Gloriette for the view back over the city; go at opening time to beat tour groups.
- 2**

CITY

Salzburg's Altstadt

Mozart's birthplace is a compact baroque old town of domes and passageways beneath the Hohensalzburg, one of Europe's largest medieval castles. Ride the funicular up for views to the Alps, then walk back down along the Mönchsberg.

3

CULTURE

Hallstatt

A lakeside village of painted houses squeezed between the Hallstätter See and the Dachstein massif, where salt has been mined for around 7,000 years. Take the funicular up to the salt mine and Skywalk, and visit early or late to avoid the coaches.

4

ADVENTURE

Grossglockner High Alpine Road

A toll road of 36 hairpins climbing to 2,504m beneath Austria's highest peak, the 3,798m Grossglockner. Stop at Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Höhe to look down on the Pasterze glacier; the road is usually open from early May to late October or early November.

5

NATURE

Wachau Valley

The Danube's loveliest stretch, between Melk's golden baroque abbey and Krems, lined with terraced Grüner Veltliner vineyards and apricot orchards. Cycle the riverside path or take a boat, and stop in Dürnstein, where Richard the Lionheart was held captive.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Vienna

≈ 2.4 million people

Allow at least three days for the Habsburg palaces, world-class art museums, a night at the Staatsoper and long afternoons in the coffee houses, then ride the trams around the Ringstrasse.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Graz

≈ 370,000 people

Austria's relaxed second city is a university town with a UNESCO-listed old centre of red roofs, the bulbous Kunsthaus 'friendly alien' and Styrian pumpkin-seed oil on almost everything.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Linz

≈ 280,000 people

An industrial Danube city reinvented around digital art at the Ars Electronica museum and the Lentos gallery; worth an overnight stop and a slice of Linzer torte.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Austria

Best time: **May–Sep, Dec.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

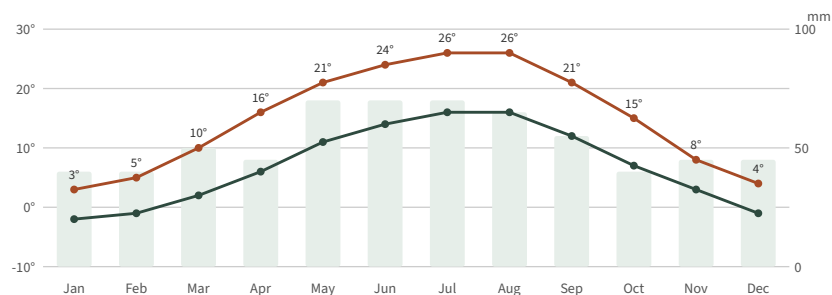
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Vienna

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan–Feb

Vienna ball season

Hundreds of formal balls fill Vienna's palaces and halls during carnival season, peaking with the Opera Ball in February; many sell public tickets, and dance schools run waltz crash courses.

Jul–Aug

Salzburg Festival

Around six weeks of opera, concerts and theatre from late July, including Jedermann performed on the Cathedral Square; book months ahead and expect hotel prices to soar.

Nov–Dec

Christmas markets

From mid-November, Vienna's Rathausplatz, Schönbrunn and Spittelberg, Salzburg's cathedral squares and Innsbruck's old town fill with stalls selling Glühwein, punch, roast chestnuts and wooden crafts.

How much does Austria cost?

SHOESTRING

£65

per person / day

≈ €77.37

hostels, street food, buses

MID-RANGE

£140

per person / day

≈ €167

3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis

COMFORTABLE

£280

per person / day

≈ €333

4-star+, guided trips, private transfers

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Wiener Schnitzel

A veal escalope beaten thin, breaded and fried in lard or butter until the crumb puffs up, served with lemon and potato or cucumber salad.

Tafelspitz

Prime beef simmered gently in broth and served with apple-horseradish, chive sauce and fried potatoes; Emperor Franz Joseph's reputed favourite and a Viennese Sunday classic.

Kaiserschmarrn

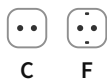
A thick, caramelised pancake torn into pieces, dusted with icing sugar and served with plum compote; a filling standard in Alpine huts and Viennese cafés.

Getting around

ÖBB's Railjet trains run from Vienna to Salzburg in about two and a half hours and on to Innsbruck, with private Westbahn trains competing on the same line. Postbus coaches reach villages the railways miss, and the cities have excellent trams. A hire car helps in the Alpine valleys, but you need a vignette (sticker or digital) to use motorways. Book advance Sparschiene fares in the ÖBB app.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter

DIALLING CODE

+43

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

TIPPING

Round up or add about 5–10% in restaurants and cafés, telling the server the total you want to pay rather than leaving coins on the table.

ETIQUETTE

Greet shopkeepers with 'Grüß Gott' and say goodbye when leaving. Use titles in formal settings, keep your voice down on public transport, and never cross against a red pedestrian light.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Vienna International Airport (VIE), Vienna; Salzburg Airport W. A. Mozart (SZG), Salzburg; Innsbruck Airport (INN), Innsbruck

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance or rescue: **144**

Fire: **122**

Police: **133**

European emergency number: **112**

You can also download the **112** Where Are U app

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC+1 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

Visas & entry for Austria

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel without a visa to the Schengen area, which includes Austria, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; for short-term studies or training.

The requirements for working in Austria are different.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Bat Lyssavirus

Tick-borne encephalitis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE
No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA
No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Austria

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Mon 26 Oct 2026	National Day
Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day
Tue 8 Dec 2026	Immaculate Conception
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Saint Stephen's Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Wed 6 Jan 2027	Epiphany
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Mon 17 May 2027	Pentecost Monday
Thu 27 May 2027	Corpus Christi
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in German

ENGLISH	GERMAN	SAY IT
Hello	Grüß Gott	<i>grooss GOT</i>
Thank you	Danke	<i>DAN-keh</i>
Please	Bitte	<i>BIT-teh</i>
Excuse me	Entschuldigung	<i>ent-SHOOL-dee-goong</i>
How much is this?	Wie viel kostet das?	<i>vee FEEL KOS-tet dass</i>

Know before you go

- Book ÖBB Sparschiene fares as soon as your dates are fixed; they can cost a fraction of the flexible fare, and a seat reservation is worth adding on busy Railjet services.
- Almost all shops, including supermarkets, close on Sundays. Stock up on Saturday or use the supermarket branches inside major railway stations, which stay open.

Carry some cash. Card use has grown fast, but mountain huts, Heurigen wine taverns and market stalls still sometimes accept only euros in notes and coins.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.