

EXCURSIONS

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Vienna is blessed with a bountiful array of day trips and short-stay destinations. The Danube Valley ([below](#)), to the northwest of Vienna, is perfect for day trips and longer explorations. The region is also a paradise for hikers and cyclists. The stretch of the valley between Krems an der Donau (Krems) and Melk is known as the Wachau – it is easily the most spectacular section of the Danube in Austria.

South of Vienna in Burgenland, wine features, particularly in the lakeside town of Rust ([p224](#)), arguably the prettiest town in the region and certainly one of the most interesting when it comes to the nectar of the gods.

If medieval towns are your passion, don't miss Znojmo ([p225](#)) in the Czech Republic, where you can immerse yourself in one of the best-preserved historic towns in Central Europe, dip into some delicious Bohemian wines and enjoy some cycling or hiking in the Podyjí National Park.

In the east, Bratislava ([p226](#)), across the border in Slovakia, can be reached within an hour from the capital and offers a glimpse of the 'new Europe' within a stone's throw of Vienna.

THE DANUBE VALLEY

The Wachau, the section of the Danube Valley between Krems and Melk, is arguably the prettiest stretch along the entire course of the Danube, and is a Unesco World Heritage Site. Here the dustless highway bends and twists between high hills whose slopes are layered with vineyards, offset by peaks topped with castles.

Highlights are numerous, but rivalling the cultural offerings and architecture of Krems, Dürnstein and Melk is the region's wining and dining. Some of the country's finest wines are from the Wachau, and the seasonal fare, using the freshest ingredients from the valley, attracts gourmands from across Austria.

The best place to begin a tour is Krems, where you can hire bicycles for riding along the riverside path or organise other transport. For more information, see [below](#) and [p221](#).

KREMS

Krems (population 24,000) is one of the larger towns in the Wachau region; with its historical core dating back over 1000 years, and excellent restaurants, it's a perfect starting point for exploring the culinary, vinicultural and historical sights of the Wachau. It's on the northern bank of the Danube, surrounded by terraced vineyards, and has been a centre of the wine trade for most of its history. Today it also has a small university.

The town is comprised of three parts: Krems to the east, the smaller settlement of Stein 2km to the west, and the connecting suburb of Und – an unusual name that inspires the joke: 'Krems and (*und* in German) Stein are three towns'.

The tourist office (see [p220](#)) has an excellent walk-by-numbers map that leads you past the sights. The walk begins at the imposing

TRANSPORT: THE DANUBE VALLEY

Direction 64km west of Vienna to Krems; 73km to Dürnstein; 83km to Melk

Travel time One hour

Bicycle A bicycle path runs along both sides of the Danube from Vienna to Melk, passing through Krems, Dürnstein, Weissenkirchen and Spitz (these are all on the northern bank)

Boat Sunday morning services run from Vienna between mid-May and mid-September

Car For Krems and Dürnstein take the A22 north out of Vienna towards Stockerau, then the S5 west to Krems; from Krems, the Bundesbahn 3 continues west and passes through Dürnstein, Weissenkirchen and Spitz. Melk is best reached by the A1 autobahn, which connects Vienna with Salzburg. See [Cruising, Railing & Riding the Danube Valley](#), [p221](#), for transport options in depth, and the detour to the Kamptal and Waldviertel ([p222](#)) for a road trip north

Train Frequent direct trains travel between Franz-Josefs-Bahnhof in Vienna and Krems (€13.90, one hour)