



Austria

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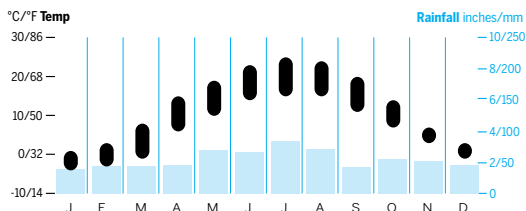
Why Go?

For such a small country, Austria is ridiculously large on inspiration. This is the land where Mozart was born, Strauss taught the world to waltz and Julie Andrews grabbed the spotlight with her twirling entrance in *The Sound of Music*. It's where the Habsburgs ruled over their spectacular, sprawling 600-year empire.

These past glories still shine in the resplendent baroque palaces and chandelier-lit coffee houses of Vienna, Innsbruck and Salzburg, but beyond its storybook cities, Austria's allure is one of natural beauty and outdoors adventure. Whether you're schussing down the legendary slopes of Kitzbühel, climbing high in the Alps of Tyrol or cycling the banks of the mighty Danube, you'll find the kind of landscapes that no well-orchestrated symphony or singing nun could ever quite do justice.

When to Go

Vienna



Jul–Aug Alpine hiking in Tyrol, lake swimming in Salzkammergut and lots of summer festivals.

Sep–Oct New wine in vineyards near Vienna, golden forest strolls and few crowds.

Dec–Jan Christmas markets, skiing in the Alps and Vienna waltzing into the New Year.

VIENNA

01 / POP 1,766,750

Few cities in the world waltz so effortlessly between the present and the past like Vienna. Its splendid historical face is easily recognised: grand imperial palaces and bombastic baroque interiors, revered opera houses and magnificent squares. But Vienna is also one of Europe's most dynamic urban spaces. A stone's throw from Hofburg (the Imperial Palace), the MuseumsQuartier houses provocative and high-profile contemporary art behind a striking basalt facade. In the Innere Stadt (Inner City), up-to-the-minute design stores side up to old-world confectioners, and Austro-Asian fusion restaurants stand alongside traditional *Beisl* (small taverns).

Sights

Vienna's magnificent series of boulevards, the Ringstrasse, encircles the Innere Stadt, with many of the city's most famous sights situated on or within it, including the monumental Hofburg palace complex. Just outside the Ringstrasse are exceptional museums including the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the ensemble making up the MuseumsQuartier, while attractions further afield include the sumptuous palaces Schloss Schönbrunn and Schloss Belvedere.

★ Hofburg

PALACE

(Imperial Palace; www.hofburg-wien.at; 01, Michaelerkuppel;  1A, 2A Michaelerplatz,  D, 1, 2, 46, 49, 71 Burggring,  Herrengasse) **FREE** Nothing symbolises Austria's resplendent cultural heritage more than its Hofburg, home base of the Habsburgs from 1273 to 1918. The oldest section is the 13th-century **Schweizerhof** (Swiss Courtyard), named after the Swiss guards who used to protect its precincts. The Renaissance **Swiss gate** dates from 1553. The courtyard adjoins a larger

courtyard, **In der Burg**, with a monument to Emperor Franz II adorning its centre. The palace now houses the Austrian president's offices and a raft of museums.

★ Kaiserappartements

PALACE

(Imperial Apartments; www.hofburg-wien.at; 01, Michaelerplatz; adult/child €12.90/7.70, incl guided tour €15.90/9.20;  9am-6pm Jul & Aug, to 5.30pm Sep-Jun;  Herrengasse) The Kaiserappartements (Imperial Apartments), once the official living quarters of Franz Josef I and Empress Elisabeth, are dazzling in their chandelier-lit opulence. The highlight is the **Sisi Museum** ( 01-533 75 70; 01, Michaelerkuppel; adult/child €12.90/7.70, incl guided tour €15.90/9.20;  9am-6pm Jul & Aug, to 5.30pm Sep-Jun), devoted to Austria's most beloved empress, which has a strong focus on the clothing and jewellery of Austria's monarch. Multilingual audio guides are included in the admission price. Guided tours take in the Kaiserappartements, the Sisi Museum and the **Silberkammer** (Silver Depot; 01, Michaelerkuppel; adult/child €12.90/7.70, incl guided tour €15.90/9.20;  9am-6pm Jul & Aug, to 5.30pm Sep-Jun), whose largest silver service caters to 140 dinner guests.

★ Kaiserliche Schatzkammer

MUSEUM

(Imperial Treasury; www.kaiserliche-schatzkammer.at; 01, Schweizerhof; adult/child €12/free;  9am-5.30pm Wed-Mon;  Herrengasse) The Kaiserliche Schatzkammer contains secular and ecclesiastical treasures, including devotional images and altars, particularly from the baroque era, of priceless value and splendour – the sheer wealth of this collection of crown jewels is staggering. As you walk through the rooms you see magnificent treasures such as a golden rose, diamond-studded Turkish sabres, a 2680-carat Colombian emerald and, the highlight of the treasury, the imperial crown.

ITINERARIES

Two Days

Make the most of **Vienna**, spending your first day visiting the Habsburg palaces and Stephansdom before cosying up in a *Kaffeehaus* (coffee house). At night, check out the pumping bar scene.

One Week

Plan for two long and lovely days in Vienna, plus another day exploring the **Wachau** (Danube Valley) **wine region**, a day each in **Salzburg** and **Innsbruck**, a day in St Anton am Arlberg or Kitzbühel **hiking** or **skiing** and then a final day exploring the **Salzkammergut** lakes.