



# AUSTRIAN ESCAPE

Few places in Europe are more beautiful than Austria in the summer. Leave the hustle and bustle of city life behind and synchronise watches to #AustrianTime

Photos by Austrian National Tourist Office / Nina Baumgartner

Wander the foothills of the Alps and you'll find it hard to believe that Vienna's baroque palaces and the hum of Salzburg's indie cafés are a train ride away. Meadows of harebells blow in the warm breeze, lakes glimmer in the sunshine and eagles swoop low over snowy mountain peaks. In the age of selfies, social media and smartphones, these rare moments of peace are precious and nowhere does them better than Austria.

Switch off and let nature take charge. There's always another slope to scale or mountain gorge to marvel at. Many of the most impressive can be seen by hiking sections of the Alpe-Adria-Trail, an epic journey of 750km from Austria's highest mountain, the Grossglockner, to the sparkling blue of the Adriatic Sea. We particularly recommend the Carinthian leg for refreshing yourself at glassy mountain streams and staying in medieval villages, where you'll enjoy the legendary hospitality of the locals.

Another route not to be missed is the Wachau World Heritage Trail, a Unesco-recognised landscape. Nowhere is the Danube more beautiful than along these 180km. Stock up on fragrant *Marille* (apricots) from the farmers' market in the centre of Maria Laach and strike out along the riverbank. The ruins of castles

along the way hint at the region's past, but now peace is only broken by the rustle of grass and squeaking of river otters.

If all that clean air leaves you feeling thirsty, the vineyards of Styria aren't far away. Explore them on two wheels, filling your basket with Styrian specialties such as fresh gingerbread, and picnic among the wine routes. At the end of the day, relax tired muscles in the region's nine natural hot springs, then head to one of the taverns where the wines are fresh and elegant.

Linger on the shores of Lake Neusiedl in Nationalpark Neusiedler See and you'll feel a little like you're in Africa. The dry reed beds are home to more than 300 species of native birds, more than anywhere else in mainland Europe. It's the perfect place to switch off your emails and give bird watching a go.

If you want to learn a new skill, why not enrol at Wanderhotels' School of Wild Herbs? You'll forage for rowanberries in pine forests and ramble through meadows harvesting blackberry leaves, before learning how to use your haul in the kitchen.

However you spend your holiday, you'll realise that the journey really is the destination in this unique country. Locals call it being on Austrian time. We call it pure relaxation. [austria.info](http://austria.info)