

# LIVING AND WORKING IN AUSTRIA

**Government:** Federal Republic  
**Area:** 83,858 sq km  
**Population:** 8,139,000  
**Capital:** Vienna  
**Language:** German

**Currency:** EUR  
**Religion:** Roman Catholic  
**Climate:** moderate, continental  
**Time zone:** +1 GMT  
**Member of EU:** Yes

## Geography

Austria is located in Central Europe. It is an predominantly mountainous country with an area of 83,855 km<sup>2</sup>. Eight countries namely Italy, Switzerland, the Principality of Liechtenstein, Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia form the Austrian border. Vienna is the capital of Austria that lies on the Danube River and is partly surrounded by the hills of the Vienna Woods (Wienerwald).

## Austria is divided into nine federal provinces (Bundesländer):

- Vienna (Wien)
- Lower Austria (Niederösterreich)
- Upper Austria (Oberösterreich)
- Salzburg (Salzburg)
- Carinthia (Kärnten)
- Tyrol (Tirol)
- Vorarlberg (Vorarlberg)
- Styria (Steiermark)
- Burgenland (Burgenland)

## Population

Austria's population has just topped eight million. 20% of the total population are living in Vienna. 93% of Austrians are German-speaking. The country has a diverse ethnic mix that includes six officially recognized ethnic groups: Croats, Czechs, Hungarians, Roma/Sinti, Slovaks and Slovenes. About 73% of the population is Roman Catholic; there are 11 other officially recognized religions in Austria.

## Austrian weather

Austria enjoys a moderate continental climate featuring four distinct seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. Summers are generally warm and pleasant with cool nights, Winters are sunny, with reliable and frequent snowfalls.

The weather is changeable throughout the year. However, in summer rainfalls are usually heavy and of short duration only. Winters are rather cold in the North-East and can be lightened up by frequent and heavy winds (a warm and dry wind) in some valleys in the Alps.

## Getting There

Vienna is Austria's main airport, but you can also fly to Linz, Salzburg, Klagenfurt or Graz. Austrian Airlines (AUA), a holding company that includes Lauda Air and Tyrolean Airlines as well, flies to numerous international destinies.

Austrian rail road is comfortable, modern and reliable, international buses are cheaper, slower and less comfortable.

The network of streets and highways is excellent and well tended. You can cross the boarder at 24 hours a day on major crossing points.

## Travel Tips

Travelling to a foreign country is always an experience. To avoid troubles check in advance:

- if you need a **visa** to go to **Austria**
- if your **passport** is valid
- **health**: generally, no particular vaccinations are needed for visiting Austria but do take a first-aid kit
- **health insurance**: medical care is expensive, get health insurance esp. if you plan to stay longer
- find out about **etiquette**, Austria's dos and don'ts
- if you need an **adapter** (electricity: 220 V, 50 Hz)
- pack carefully: Austrian weather is not the most reliable, make sure to bring some protection
- Austria follows the **metric system**, [online metric converter](#)
- **Currency**: Euro!!
- **time zone**: 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Medium Time (+1 GMT)  
Careful: Austria observes Daylight Saving Time from March to October

## Health insurance

Austrian medical system is excellent, it is also expensive. So if you plan to stay longer, health insurance is an absolute must.

### Study abroad in Austria

If you take part in a course at a local language school, health insurance is mostly optional. Many schools offer an additional insurance package for moderate prices. Alternatively, you can take out private travel and health insurance.

### Attending university in Austria

Public health insurance is mandatory for attending university in Austria. Please contact the students' Foreign Office of your university for detailed information.

### Working in Austria

If you are working in Austria, mandatory public health insurance is automatically deducted from your salary. However, check back with your employer!

## Medical Emergency

### Visiting a doctor

generally, you do not have to pay in advance. If you are a student or working fulltime in Austria, you have to bring some insurance certificate. It is generally possible to leave a deposit if you need urgent medical help.

If you are covered by private travel or health insurance, you pay via bank transfer. Afterwards, you will hopefully be reimbursed by your insurance company (keep the receipt!). Not all treatments are covered by public or private insurances. Check with the doctor and/or the insurance company.

**In cases of medical emergency dial 144 for help.**

### Hospital

If you are studying or working in Austria treatment in hospitals is for free save for a small contribution called co-payment depending on your insurance. When travelling in Austria check with your insurance company prior to departure which treatments and emergencies are covered. Hospitals and physicians generally do not accept credit cards.

### Working fulltime

EU nationals, people from Liechtenstein and Switzerland have the same status as Austrians and need not worry about formalities like residence and work permit. However, like Austrians you need to register with the local police upon arrival.

If you come from a country outside EU it is best to contact a local embassy.

It might be a good idea to apply for a job from your home country as your future company will probably assist you in organising your stay.

Again, job vacancies are published in daily newspapers, usually the weekend edition has a special job section. There are quite a few online career portals.

Check corporate websites

### **How to find a student job in Austria**

finding a **part time job** is generally not difficult as Austrian university system is based on a flexible schedule. As a student you do not even need a work permit. However, the amount of money you are allowed to earn is strictly limited. If you earn more you will be treated as working full time and are subject to taxes and more expensive social security deductions. Ask your employer: they know.

Universities often help with organising appropriate **internships** (i.e. magazine internships for media studies), esp. during summer vacation.

Vacancies are promoted on newspaper websites, via student unions or directly via university. Many corporate websites feature a job section, too.

Note: Some language schools offer a **combination of language course and internship!**

## **Accommodation**

As a student and as an employee finding a place to live is your job. University or company might support you, but in the end it depends on you. Especially in major cities housing can be hard to find.

Local newspapers usually have a section on housing, shared flats, etc. Local student unions are very helpful.

Check university bill-boards - they often offer places to rent for reasonable prices!

## **Cost of Living**

As well as being in the middle of Europe, Vienna is also in the middle in terms of prices.

Since joining the European Union, basic food costs have come into line with those in the rest of the European Union. Products available in the Austria federal capital originate from all over Europe.

Vienna is not a particularly cheap tourist destination in European terms, but visitors find it a great place to shop. **Food and drink comes in all price categories.**

There are numerous inexpensive pubs serving good local and international dishes. Main meals cost an average of between EUR 5-7. Beverages cost between EUR 1-3. Naturally, you will also find upmarket restaurants in higher price brackets (particularly in the inner city). Here you have to budget for between EUR 11-18 for a main meal. A good bottle of wine costs EUR 10 upwards.

It goes without saying that food and drink is cheaper at the **supermarket**: a litre of wine costs as little as EUR 2.50, a can of beer from EUR 0.50, 1 kg of bread approx. EUR 2 and a frozen pizza an average of EUR 2.50. Websites of some Austrian supermarket chains: <http://www.zielpunkt.at>: <http://www.billa.at>: <http://www.spar.at>: <http://www.merkur.co.at>: <http://www.hofer.at>

Cultural events, sports centres as well as public transport and even some stores offer **students discounts**.

Many language schools, too, have special deals with local enterprises - it is always worth to ask.

## **Quality of Life in Austria**

Quality of life is generally very high in Austria. A thriving economy, a stable political system, Austria's beautiful country (not only the Austrian Alps bewitch with their majestic beauty) and cultural diversity all contribute to a high-quality lifestyle for locals and tourists alike.

Austria's capital Vienna ranks as one of the most attractive cities world wide. The subjective feeling of well-being of locals and tourists has been repeatedly attested by leading international studies and city rankings.

## Vienna - 2nd place in international quality of life survey

The aim of international city rankings is to provide objective, consistent and comprehensive data of comparison.

Subjective expectation, of course, vary but certain attributes are objectively relevant: political stability, personal safety and freedom, medical and health considerations, educational situation, public services and transports, recreational options, availability of consumer goods, housing and environmental situation.

Internationally acclaimed ranking by **Mercer's overall quality of life survey 2002** evaluates 250 cities world wide.

Vienna (Austria) and Vancouver (Canada) share the second place, Zurich (Switzerland) scores highest. Within **EU capital city** rankings **Vienna (Austria) is unchallenged first**.

There are many reasons why Vienna comes off so well by objective and subjective evaluations. Therefore, the following list is not exhaustive.

- Vienna - city of culture: numerous activities on the area of theatre, music, art exhibitions, public readings, museums, opera and operetta cater for all tastes!
- Imperial Vienna: Imperial buildings like Hofburg, Schönbrunn Palace, Belvedere Palace, splendour buildings at the Ring Boulevard, medieval narrow streets and baroque squares shape the city's face
- Safe city with an excellent public transport network of underground trains, trams and buses
- Well-organised public services, clean environment and excellent traffic solutions
- Educational facilities are sufficient and open to all
- Good price level: excellent value for money
- Moderate and mild climate. Average summer temperatures 20°C to 30°C, average winter temperatures around 0°C.

## Austrian dos and don'ts

There are many clichés about Austrians, some contradictory: they are laid back ('gemuetlich') and a bit grumpy at the same time. As a rule, people will tell you when you transgress: So if you cross the street, when the traffic light is red, people who disapprove will make sure you notice.

Generally, Austrians are approachable and glad to help.

- Formal vs. informal pronoun ('du' and 'Sie'). Use formal pronoun when talking to people older than you. At universities however, 'du' is fairly frequent even with teaching staff. Watch German students.
- **Title and last name:** Title is important, though in business communication rather than in private meetings
- Shaking hands is the established form of greeting. Take the other hand out of your pockets and look into the person's eyes
- Say 'hello', 'Guten Tag' ('Good Day') or 'Grüß Gott' (typical Austrian greeting) when you enter a (small) shop
- **Punctuality:** This cliché is true, try to be punctual or apologise if not - though some people believe in being a tad late (max. 5-10 minutes depending on meeting point) for dinner invitations and they are considered to be social outlaws
- **Dinner-invitations:** be punctual and bring a small gift (flowers or a bottle of wine) when dining at somebody's place
- **Table manners:** Say 'Mahlzeit' or 'Guten Appetit' before eating. Keep your hands but not your elbows on top of the table.
- In restaurants and bars tip is not included in the bill. Staff will expect about 10%

Generally, **people will understand if you blunder**. Don't worry, they have been abroad themselves. However, if you are in Austria to do business it might pay to do some extra research.

## Getting around in Austria

Austrians are known to be a **car-loving nation**. Hence, Austria boasts an excellent network of streets. However, almost all bigger cities suffer from a severe parking problem. Space is scarce and expensive. One way streets and traffic jams often take enjoyment out of the ride.

**Public transport is excellent.** Austria's rail network is comfortable, reliable and fast. The website offers loads of information on time tables, services and discounts. If you can take the train don't bother using public busses.

Linz, Salzburg, Innsbruck, Graz and Klagenfurt and - obviously - Vienna all sport their own airport. **Austrian Airlines**, Austria's very own airline, approaches them all and interconnects Austria and many international destinies.

All major cities feature impressive public transport systems. **Tube, tram and busses** assure reliable transportation. During the night, there often exists a network of night busses, a cheap alternative to taking a taxi.

Many of Austria's cities encourage **cyclists** with designated bicycle lanes. Also, there are many beautifully tended cycling routes throughout the country.

## Communication & Media in Austria

### Telephone

**International phone calls** are cheaper if you use private phone companies. You can either use one of the many international call centres or prepaid cards. Costs vary strongly, it pays to do some comparison shopping.

**In emergencies dial** 133 for police, 122 for fire squad or 144 for medical care. The call is for free, but abuse is expensive.

### Access to internet

In Austria, internet access is often possible via university or school. If not, all major cities feature numerous internet cafes. Some pubs and coffee shops offer internet access as well.

### Austrian newspapers

Major national papers include 'Der Standard', 'Salzburger Nachrichten' and 'Die Presse' covering politics, arts, economics and sports from liberal to conservative viewpoints. 'Die Kronenzeitung' is powerful and popular. 'Krone' is running a private radiostation, too. 'Der Kurier' covers a broad spectre.

'Nachrichten' have a national part but are especially liked for their in-depth coverage of regional events varying from federal province to federal province. 'Kleine Zeitung' (Styria), 'Tiroler Tageszeitung' and 'Wiener Zeitung' are some more regional newspapers.

Many Austrian coffee shops offer a large selection of (international) newspapers for customers to browse.

Some kiosks, esp. at train stations, offer a wide range of international newspapers as well.

### Austrian magazines

'Profil', 'Format', 'News' and 'trend' are weekly high-gloss magazines covering politics, sports and culture alike.

There are quite some special interest magazines. However, many of them are important from Germany. Just Browse!

For those visiting Vienna 'Der Falter' is a vital tool. Appearing on a weekly basis it features an virtually complete guide to what's on in Vienna with interesting articles on politics, arts and culture. It's event database is accessible via internet, too!

### Austrian TV & radio

ORF is the traditional public broadcasting organisation featuring two channels (ORF 1 and ORF 2). ATV and TW1 are upstarting commercial broadcasting outfits.

Commercial German channels like Sat1, 3 Sat and RTL or Arte with its focus on high-quality films, arts, lifestyle and documentations are popular as well.

Cable is widespread in Austria's households.

There are 4 public radio stations: OE1 focuses on high-quality infos, arts and classical music, OE2 features local news and folkloristic and popular music, OE3 offers the usual blend of best hits and entertainment and FM4 caters for young people with an interest in independent scenes from rock to hip-hop.

Lately, liberalization in media law has opened the market to various private stations from almost pirate status to commercial outfits. Most radio stations feature live streaming services so you can tune in from abroad as well!

Radio Austria International (ROI) is a short-wave radio station which presents Austria related news in various languages all over the globe.