



## Austria Fast Facts

### Population:

8,184,691 (July 2005 est.)

### Capital:

Vienna (Wien)

### Currency:

euro (EUR)

### Religion(s):

Roman Catholic 73.6%, Protestant 4.7%,  
Muslim 4.2%, other 3.5%,  
unspecified 2%, none 12% (2001 census)

### Language(s):

German (official nationwide),  
Slovene (official in Carinthia), Croatian (official in  
Burgenland), Hungarian (official in Burgenland)

### Major Events:

National Day, 26 October (Commemorates the  
State Treaty restoring national sovereignty, the  
end of occupation, and the passage of the law on  
permanent neutrality)

Religious holidays

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## Online Resources

ActiLingua Academy  
[www.actilingua.com](http://www.actilingua.com)

University of Vienna  
[www.univie.ac.at](http://www.univie.ac.at)

The Austrian National Tourist Office—Vienna  
<http://cms1.austria.info>

Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship  
Program  
<http://www.iie.org/gilman>

National Security Education Program  
<http://www.iie.org/NSEP>

Portraits of the Regions  
<http://forum.europa.eu.int>

Austrian Press and Information Service  
<http://www.austria.org>

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# Austria at a Glance...

Austria is a country of fairytale landscapes, a complicated political history, and a bright future. In the West, much of its reputation is derived from popular culture: The Sound of Music, after all, takes place in the town of Salzburg, where the real von Trapp family once lived and sang. Mozart was born there, too. But Austria is also a country whose unfortunate past is very much a reality in the present. Adolph Hitler was born in Braunau, and in 1939, Austria was annexed by Hitler's Germany in what was known as the Anschluss, or "connection or annexation."



however, on the path to becoming one of the most important members of the European Union, and in that sense, it provides students a wonderful opportunity to experience all that modern Europe has to offer.

Austria occupies a unique place in Europe, and due to its diverse topography, in the east, the summers are long and the winters are mild; the Alpine regions experience the kind of long, snowy winters one would naturally expect; and the rest of the country's weather varies. The natural landscapes range from some of the most breathtaking mountains in the Alps to the lush river valleys of the countryside. The capital, Vienna, which lies in the basin of the Danube River, is temperate and sees little precipitation. Because of its location and the role it played during the rule of the Habsburgs, Vienna has been one of the most important cities in Europe for hundreds of years.

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It is, perhaps, inevitable that a country located at the center of Europe will have experienced as tumultuous a history as Austria has. Over the centuries, Austria has been in the possession of some of the most powerful rulers in Europe, including Charlemagne and, perhaps most famously, the Habsburgs, who reigned in Austria from 1282 (the appointment of Rudolph II as duke) to 1918 (the end of World War I). Austria became part of Germany in 1938, until the end of World War II when the Allies occupied it. In 1955, Austria became an independent republic and joined the UN and has become increasingly involved in European affairs since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. In 1995, Austria joined the European Union and in 1999 it adopted the Euro as its currency.

Austria's total land mass is less than that of the state of Maine, and the most recent estimates put its population at 8.1 million. The country's prosperous social market economy is built on a number of industries including its principal exports of iron and steel products, timber, paper, textiles, and chemical products. President Heinz Fischer has been in office since July 2004, and, as of January 1, 2006, he is also the president of the European Union.

Vienna (or Wien in German, the national language, which is spoken by 92% of the population) is located in the northeast of the country, reasonably close to its borders with Hungary and Slovakia. It is home to 2 million people, and boasts one of the most exciting cultural scenes in Europe. Architecturally, the city reflects its imperial past; beautiful buildings seem to pop up around every corner you turn. It is also famous for its deep and profound history of achievement in philosophy and the arts. The city has been called home by such luminaries as Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele (painting), Ludwig Wittgenstein (philosophy), Sigmund Freud (psychology), Arthur Schnitzler and the 2004 winner of the Nobel Prize, Elfriede Jelinek

(literature), and Mozart, Beethoven, Strauss, and Schubert (music). Residents, students, and tourists alike may choose to divide their leisure time between viewing the magnificent historical monuments and pondering the meaning of life in the city's famous coffee shops. Some people argue, in fact, that Vienna is home to the best coffee in the world.

The opportunities for students are seemingly limitless in this deceptively small country. Many universities offer programs abroad in Austria, and the combination of Vienna's intellectual and cultural resources and the beautiful and varied natural landscape make Austria a prime location for students who are interested in history, geography, geology, and subjects both cultural and artistic. Some students may also be able to take advantage of the various academic opportunities at the University of Vienna, which was founded in 1365 by Duke Rudolph IV. Famous students have run the gamut from the Jewish Nobel Prize in Literature winner Elias Canetti to the Nazi war criminal Josef Mengele.

So whether it is the history, culture, or the central location of the country that is most appealing, students who choose to study in Austria are sure to benefit from all it has to offer.

