

Upper Austria



While Upper Austria may not exactly leap off the map as a holiday destination, it revels in the unexpected. Its cutting-edge cityscapes, Gothic architecture and glorious countryside aren't yet well known, but they will be. The capital, Linz, is a bit of a rebel by Austrian standards. Once considered an industrial backwater, the city is now catapulting into the 21st century: where there was dull concrete now there are flagship museums – high-tech temples of glass, steel and clean lines. With its edgy bars, boutique hotels and mushrooming avant-garde arts scene, this is clearly a city on the move.

Venture south from Linz and the countryside takes on a dreamlike quality, with rambling *Vierkanter* (four-sided) farmhouses and cornfields fading off into a watercolour distance. Pick a random spot on the map to explore on foot or by bike, or go straight for the biggies: St Florian's striking Augustine abbey, Steyr's knot of medieval lanes, the radon-laced waters of Bad Hall and the limestone pinnacles of the Nationalpark Kalkalpen grazing the border to Styria. Winding along scenic country lanes, the landscape switches from thick evergreen forests to undulating hills in the Traunviertel, where earthy locals and a pitcher of *Most* (cider) are never far away.

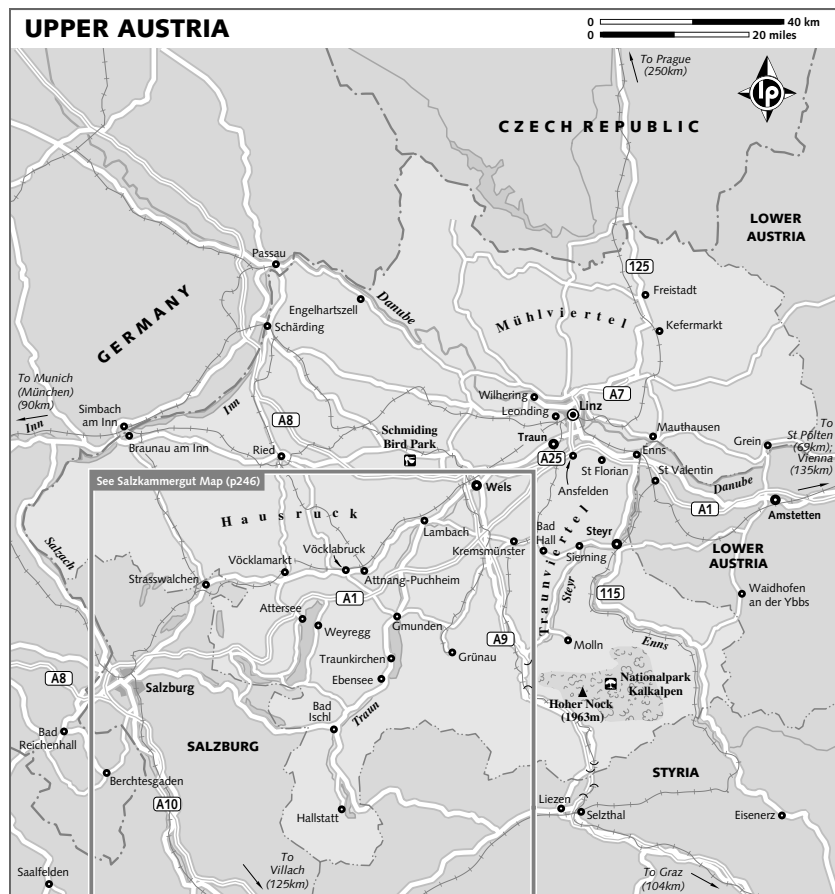
The northern stretch of the Mühlviertel strikes an entirely different chord – Gothic churches, mist-enshrouded forests and an air of Bohemian melancholy are evidence that the Czech Republic is close by. Stepping slightly east, the Innviertel is where, in the space of a day, you can roam the banks of the Inn River in Braunau, soak in Geinberg's Caribbean lagoon and sleep sweetly above the treetops in Kofing. Upper Austria boring? We think not.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Flying high above Linz's rooftops at the futuristic **Ars Electronica Center** (p203)
- Marvelling at the golden Tassilo Chalice in Kremsmünster's sublime **Benedictine Abbey** (p213)
- Quaffing potent brews and staggering around centuries-old fortifications in **Freistadt** (p215)
- Wandering cobblestone lanes in medieval **Steyr** (p211), squeezed between the Enns and Steyr Rivers
- Sipping cider in the orchards and soaking in the thermal baths of **Bad Hall** (p213)



■ POPULATION: 1.3 MILLION ■ AREA: 9480 SQ KM ■ HIGHEST ELEVATION: GROSSE PRIEL 2515M



Climate

The temperate climate of the Mühlviertel is characterised by long summers and harsh winters. Heading south, milder temperatures are more prevalent until the Alps rise from the east.

Getting There & Away

Upper Austria has good connections; the A1 autobahn runs east-west to Vienna and Salzburg, the A8 north to Passau and the rest of Germany and the A9 south into Styria. Express trains between Vienna and Salzburg pass through Linz and much of southern Upper Austria, and there are also express trains heading south from Linz to St

Michael in Styria, from where connections to Klagenfurt and Graz are possible.

Getting Around

Upper Austria's excellent bus and train services are covered by **Oberösterreichischer Verkehrsverbund tickets** (☎ 0810-240 810; www.oöevv.at, in German). Prices depend on the number of zones you travel (one zone is €1.60, 10 zones cost €8.10). As well as single tickets, daily, weekly, monthly and yearly passes are available.

LINZ

☎ 0732 / pop 203,000

Linz dares to defy the braces-and-breeches image of Austria; a city with an urban edge, a

thriving youth culture and its feet firmly in the 21st century. It may not have old-world architecture to rival the giddy heights of Vienna or Salzburg, but it comes up trumps in the modern art and new technology stakes, with crystalline venues like Lentos and the Ars Electronica Center.

And who would have thought that this industrial powerhouse had it in it to become European Capital of Culture 2009? By injecting life into the centre in recent years, the city has successfully reinvented itself: where people once diverted their gaze from unsightly smoke stacks, they now crane their necks to ogle glass-walled galleries displaying Kokoschka or daring public art installations. This sleeping city has finally awoken, even though she may not be a classic beauty.

While Linz takes contemporary design seriously, it has not become a soulless space. Alongside the modernist cubes are snug cafés where you can indulge in a slice or two of scrumptious *Linzer Torte*, hip bars lining the narrow streets of the *Altstadt* (old town) and a creaking railway that has crept into the Guinness Book of Records. So next time you're passing through this corner of Austria, hop off the train to see why this city is worth more than a cursory glance.

History

Linz was a fortified Celtic village by the time the Romans arrived, who took over and named it *Lentia*. By the 8th century, when the town came under Bavaria's thumb, its name had changed to *Linze*, and by the 13th century it had mushroomed into an important trading town for raw material out of Styria. In 1489, Linz became the imperial capital under Friedrich III until his death in 1493.

Like much of Upper Austria, Linz was at the forefront of the Protestant movement in the 16th and 17th centuries. However, the Counter-Reformation made a spectacular comeback, knocking the stuffing out of the place for the following century. Its resurgence in the 19th century was largely due to the development of the railway, when Linz became an important junction.

Adolf Hitler may have been born in Braunau am Inn (p217), but Linz was his favourite (he spent his school days here), and his (largely unrealised) plans for the city were grand. His Nazi movement built massive iron and steel works, which still employ

many locals. After WWII, Linz was at the border between the Soviet- and the US-administered zones. Since 1955, Linz has flourished into an important industrial city, port and provincial capital.

Orientation

Linz straddles both sides of the Danube (Donau), with the *Innenstadt* (city centre) and most attractions huddling on the south bank. Most sights on the north bank cluster in the district of *Urfahr*, squatting in the shadow of 537m-high *Pöstlingberg*. The main hub is *Hauptplatz*, an elongated square that is mostly car-free and abuts *Landstrasse*, the main shopping thoroughfare with a long pedestrian-only section. The *Hauptbahnhof* (main train station) is about 1km south of *Hauptplatz*.

MAPS

A free map, with information in both German and English and an enlargement of the *Innenstadt*, is available from Tourist Information Linz.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Thalia (☎ 76 15-0; Landstrasse 41; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat) A small selection of English-language books.

INTERNET ACCESS

Atlas Media (☎ 78 10 05; Graben 17; per hr €2.40; ☎ 9.30am-11pm Mon-Sat, 1-11pm Sun) Internet access, discount international calls, Skype and copying available.

Hotspot Linz Offers free wi-fi at 120 hotspots in the city centre; details are given online at www.hotspotlinz.at, in German.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Linz.info.at (in German) Links to the city's prominent cultural venues, firms and transport providers.

www.linz-termin.at Listings of cultural events and exhibitions throughout the year.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Krankenhaus der Stadt Linz (☎ 78 06-0; Krankenhausstrasse 9) The main hospital, 1km east of the centre.
Unfallkrankenhaus (☎ 69 20-0; Garnisonstrasse 7) Emergency hospital.

MONEY

There are a number of banks with ATMs in the *Innenstadt*; the airport also has a bank. The *Hauptbahnhof* has an ATM and