



Student Exchange with *into* - Don't dream it. *Do it!*



Informational brochure about **into** Austria's Study Exchange, our inbound program and general information about Austria.

Our program:

Includes: placement in a family, school placement and a local coordinator.

A basic level of German is required – although most Austrians speak English, the students are expected to speak German and improve their foreign language skills.

Full and half-year programs offered! (Also beginning in January)

1st semester starts at the end of August/beginning of September and lasts until beginning/mid-February

2nd semester begins in mid-February and lasts until the end of June/beginning of July

If there is a special regional wish, we will try our best to place the student there (Vienna/Salzburg (culture) or Tyrol (mountains)), but there are no guarantees.

School System:

The Republic of Austria has a free public school system where nine years of education are mandatory for everyone. Schools offer a series of vocational, technical and university preparatory programs which require one to four additional years of education beyond the minimum mandatory level. The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for funding and supervising primary, secondary, and since the year 2000, also tertiary (or university level) education. Primary and secondary education is administered at the state level by the authorities of the respective states.

Students in Austria are required to complete four years of elementary school (Volksschule). After this, students who have performed well have the option to attend a higher learning institution that prepares them for university, whereas the majority goes on to attend a vocational preparatory school. Some vocational/general schooling institutions end after a total of 8 years of schooling, whereas the higher institution "Gymnasium" finishes after a total of 12 years. These students receive the "Matura"- the university admissions certificate- after the final exams. Some students decide to attend trade schools after their general training, which could also include the "Matura", although these programs only offer limited admission into specific areas of study at the university level.

The Country:

Austria is a largely mountainous country due to its location in the Alps. The Alps of western Austria give way somewhat to low lands and plains in the eastern part of the country. The greater part of Austria lies in the cool/temperate climate zone where humidity and westerly winds prevail. With nearly three-fourths of the country dominated by the Alps, the alpine climate is predominant.

In the east—in the Pannonian Plain and along the Danube valley—the climate shows more continental features with less rain than the alpine areas. Although Austria is cold in the winter (–10 – 0 °C), summer temperatures can be relatively high with average temperatures in the mid-20s and a max temperature of 39.7 °C (103.5 °F).

The official language that is taught and spoken in education, publications, announcements and websites is Austrian German, and it is almost identical to the standard German used in Germany with some minor differences in vocabulary. Many local dialects are spoken in Austria, and though their main language is Austrian German, their corresponding speakers from other regions can have certain degrees of difficulty when trying to understand them. **English** is also widely spoken, especially among younger people.

The Culture:

Both Austria's past as a European power and its cultural environment generate a broad contribution to various forms of art, most notably among them- music. Austria was the birthplace of many famous composers such as Joseph Haydn, Franz Liszt, Franz Schubert, Anton Bruckner, Johann Strauss, Sr. and Johann Strauss, Jr. as well as Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern and Alban Berg. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, then an independent Church Principality of the Holy Roman Empire, though one that was culturally closely connected to Austria, and much of Mozart's career was spent in Vienna.

Austria's cuisine is derived from that of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is famous for its well-balanced variations of beef and pork along with countless variations of vegetables. There is also the "Mehlspeisen" Bakery, which contains particular delicacies such as Sachertorte, "Krapfen" which are like donuts and usually filled with apricot jam or custard, and "Strudel" such as "Apfelstrudel" filled with apple, "Topfenstrudel" filled with a type of cheese curd called "topfen", and "Millirahmstrudel" (milk-cream strudel).

Due to the mountainous terrain, alpine skiing is a prominent sport in Austria. Similar sports such as snowboarding or ski-jumping are also widely popular, and Austrian athletes are widely regarded as some of the greatest alpine skiers of all time. A popular team sport in Austria is football (or soccer). In addition, Austria also has professional national leagues for most major team sports eg. ice hockey, basketball, etc. Horseback riding is popular, too. The famed Spanish Riding School of Vienna is located in the capital city of Vienna. Austria is famous for its beautiful countryside, nature and friendly and easygoing people.

Another important aspect of the Austrian soul is the **priority of domestic life**. Austrians love to build, repair, extend, maintain, refurbish and modernise their **homes**. They also love **gardening**, and they spend hours in their gardens. Houses and gardens are important **social stages** for dinner parties, BBQs or even the occasional laidback setting of just staying in and watching TV.

South Tyrol:

is a unique autonomous province in northern Italy which culturally belongs to Austria. It is one of two autonomous provinces that make up the region of Trentino-Alto Adige, or *Südtirol*. The province has an area of 2,857 sq mi and a total population of 511,750 inhabitants. Its capital is the city of Bolzano.



The majority of the population is of Austro-Bavarian heritage and speaks German. Only around a quarter of the population speak Italian as their first language.

South Tyrol is granted a considerable level of self-government, and it is among the wealthiest and most developed regions in Italy and the European Union. If you are interested in being placed in South Tyrol, please let us know, and we will do our best to try and find a suitable host family for you there, although we cannot guarantee a placement in a particular region.

Garden-culture:

Something you find all throughout Europe. The obsession with home renovation and fixing up the house is a more continental and even Germanic characteristic (a variation of the same principle as "**washing the car**"). The priority that home and family has for Austrians may in fact contribute to the stereotype of the bourgeois mountain people.

And speaking of mountains...

The natural beauty of the country gives rise to a pronounced **outdoors culture**. Mountaineering, downhill skiing, rock climbing, cross-country skiing, paragliding, cycling, camping, swimming, water skiing, just strolling around and - of course - skiing are really big in Austria, and we **love to spend our weekends climbing up pretty much anything pointing out of the landscape that resembles a hill!**

History and Architecture:

People enjoy the historic heritage that surrounds you just about anywhere you go here. Austria is also located in the center of Europe right in the center of several different European cultures and ethnicities, which simply adds to its wide spectrum of traditions as it lies directly between Eastern and Western Europe.

Safety and Tidiness:

Austria is a very safe place (there are less than 100 murders a year), and you will note that with the exception of few urban areas, it is remarkably clean and tidy.

Good value for your money:

Of course, everyone in Europe complains about the high prices since the Euro was introduced - however, statistics show that Austria is still doing pretty well when it comes to the ratio between average income and the cost of living. If you doubt this, simply look up the "quality of life" rankings that the consultant Mercer publishes annually for *The Economist* magazine. Vienna always ranks amongst the top 5 cities in the world!

Cultural offerings:

Cheap access to the opera, **massive student discounts** for world class concerts at the Salzburg Festival and the Wiener Festwochen, a lot of fun and party at the Donauinselfest in Vienna (a large open-air festival with a lot of famous musicians - for free), exquisite art museums like the History of Art Museum, the Albertina, the Palais Liechtenstein in Vienna, the Staatsoper ballet, the sights of the Schönbrunn palace and its Versailles-inspired gardens, and the list continues- thumbs up!

Language:

Austrian German is a bit more guttural (pronounced in the throat or the back of the mouth) and softer than standard German in regards to pronunciation as well as more metaphorical and expressive with its many regional idioms. As some Germans may consider Austrian German a peasant's dialect, it is important to note that writers of Austrian origin are very well represented in the world of German literature (Franz Kafka, Joseph Roth, Arthur Schnitzler to name a few).

Natural beauty and diversity:

It's easy to believe that one! The **Austrian Alps** separate the country with its vast landscapes that include a plethora of lakes, swamps, hills and glaciers, which are among just some of the country's dramatic features. Almost 50 percent of Austria is covered by forest, and Europe's biggest National Park (Hohe Tauern) is only one of several in the country.

Wide-spread prosperity and socialist tradition:

Since the 1970's, high taxes ensure an efficient network of **public transportation**, little poverty, a solid middle-class, excellent public health care, funding for the arts and endowments for museums as well as wide access to free education (thus creating a meritocratic system in which advancement is based on individual ability or achievement).

As you can see, there are many reasons to spend a semester or year abroad in Austria. **into Student Exchange** would like to make that happen for you! If you are interested, please contact our partner in your home country so that you can begin the application process today.

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