

Watersports in Austria: Cool off the Austrian Way!

Summer is the best time of the year for all things water sports – and luckily Austria spoils guest with choice. Swimming, rafting, SUP, diving, you name it, our holiday regions have it all. After all, the lakes and rivers are where we cool off in Austria.

Besides all the health benefits that come with being active on or in the water, travellers get to see some of the country's most stunning landscapes and national parks from a whole new perspective. And when going underwater, they might even spot hidden trees, cars, and whole sunken buildings. Have a look at some of Austria's highlights below!

Swim or paddle in Europe's cleanest bathing lakes

Austria might be a small country, but it has no less than 400 swimming lakes – and according to a recent report from the [European Environment Agency](#) (EEA) they rank among the cleanest in all of Europe! Almost 98 percent of Austria's bathing waters received an "excellent" rating. As a bonus, many are surrounded by mountain peaks, glaciers, and forests - a dreamy setting for a summer holiday. Popular resorts such as [Kitzbühel](#) and [Innsbruck](#) have lakes nearby, perfect for swimming and paddling, with equipment rental widely available.

Tirol's largest lake, [Lake Achensee](#), sits right amidst the Karwendel and Rofan mountains and ranks among the hotspots for active holidaymakers, while crystal-clear [Lake Zell](#) in SalzburgerLand, featuring three lidos surrounded by mountain peaks, makes a great option for families. [Lake Attersee](#) in the Salzkammergut region is another summer favourite.

For the warmest lakes, head to Austria's southernmost province [Carinthia](#) and check out [Lake Klopeiner See](#) (up to 28°C!), [Lake Wörthersee](#) (one of Europe's largest Alpine lakes) or [Lake Faaker See](#) (famous for its turquoise colour).

Sail on Alpine lakes – and in Vienna

As a land-locked country with no access to the ocean, Austria might not be the most obvious choice for sailing. But the lakes make up for it big time! More than 25.000 are 250 m² (2,690 ft²) or larger in size – ideal for sailors of all skill levels.

[Lake Achensee](#) is a playground for sailing beginners as well as pros – international regattas are held here. Or make your way to SalzburgerLand and learn to sail - or master your skills – at [Lake Zell](#) or [Lake Wolfgangsee](#), both picture-perfect spots.

In Carinthia [Lake Wörthersee](#), [Lake Ossiacher See](#) or [Lake Faaker See](#) rank among the sailing favourites, while Austria's easternmost province Burgenland and [Lake Neusiedlersee](#) are other popular spots.

City and sailing trip both in one? Choose Vienna and sail just half an hour from the city centre at the so-called [Old Danube](#) and [New Danube](#).

[Story tip: Meet two Austrian brothers competing in the world-famous Ocean's Race](#)

Go rafting on Austria's rivers

Looking for an adrenaline rush on the water? Thrillseekers and daredevils can raft down Austria's rivers and gorges, exploring the country's rougher side while testing their limits. Austria's Alpine regions have excellent rafting spots and guides.

Tirol's [Imster Schlucht](#) (Imst Gorge) with its thundering rapids, tall waves, and plenty of rocks ranks high among the top rafting spots in Europe. Guided trips cover roughly 14 km and are suitable for all levels. [Ötztaler Ache](#) is where the paddling pros meet – some of the whitewater sections are rated up to 5 on a six-level international scale.

In Tirol's neighbour province Styria, the [Salza](#) and [Ennstal River](#) are excellent for rafting, including for beginners – paddlers can explore beauty spots such as the Gesäuse National Park while mastering their skills.

Looking for something slightly more off-the-beaten-path? Austria's westernmost province Vorarlberg and its [Bregenzerach River](#), offering tours for both pros and newbies, might be just what you are looking for.

[Story tip: Meet Tapu from Tahiti, a rafting guide in Gesäuse National Park](#)

Dive to sunken wrecks, cars, and phone boxes

Sunken forests, fields of water lilies, shipwrecks, and craggy rocks: Divers heading to Austria can look forward to stunning underwater worlds. And while diving is possible in many of the above-mentioned lakes, some really stand out from the crowd.

Lake Attersee is so clear that you can see up to 25 metres. Scuba and free diving are both possible and [underwater attractions](#) such as a sunken submarine and sailboat, life-size figures from the Stone, Bronze and Iron Age and stilt houses await.

In Tirol's **Lake Achensee** [all kinds of curiosities](#) can be found under water, ranging from an old Opel Blitz and several old VW Beetles which sunk under mysterious circumstances, to boat wrecks, a telephone booth, and an underwater letterbox. The individual attractions are all connected by ropes, so explorers don't have to worry about missing out on something.

As always, we are happy to assist you in planning your research trip. Please get in touch at pressuk@austria.info.

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