

Explore Austria's national parks in winter

Excursions to the six national parks are particularly worthwhile when the landscape is transformed by snow, ice, and hoarfrost.

Six Austrian national parks preserve and protect landscapes of wild beauty and great biodiversity. The [Hohe Tauern](#), [Kalkalpen](#), [Gesäuse](#), [Thayatal](#), [Donau-Auen](#) and [Neusiedler See-Seewinkel](#) National Parks cover roughly three percent of Austria's total surface. They not only safeguard nature and its biodiversity but are also committed to undertaking research. Curious about the extraordinary habitats? Book a tour with an expert guide for valuable insights.

While visitors can technically access all Austrian national parks on their own, it is recommended to head out with a park ranger in winter, particularly in the alpine regions.

Find out more about national parks in Austria [here](#) and [here](#)!

HOHE TAUERN: IN IBEX TERRITORY

With a little bit of luck, winter hikers may see ibexes in the imposing mountain range of the Hohe Tauern National Park.

Visitors encounter a fascinating realm of winter in the [Hohe Tauern National Park](#). Austria's oldest and largest protected area boasts 342 glaciers and more than 300 peaks over 3,000 metres. The protected region stretches across the three federal provinces of Salzburg, Tirol and Carinthia.

National Park rangers offer regular winter and snowshoe hikes as well as special programmes, starting from several locations in all three federal provinces. [Mittersill in SalzburgerLand](#), for example, is a great starting point for observing the feeding of wildlife. The chance to see ibexes is relatively high when out snowshoeing around [Heiligenblut in Carinthia](#). A great starting point for snowshoe hikers is [Kals in East Tirol](#), with Austria's highest mountain, the 3,798-metre-high Grossglockner always in sight.

KALKALPEN: THE KINGDOM OF THE LYNX

In the wooded Kalkalpen National Park in Upper Austria, winter hikes follow the tracks of lynxes.

Extending to the south of Upper Austria, the [Kalkalpen National Park](#) celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2022. Its special feature is the particularly diverse stock of trees with 32 species growing in the mountainous terrain, and the number of beeches especially remarkable. The old beech forests, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2017, are even home to the oldest beech tree in Central Europe (over 560 years!).

A few years ago, a small lynx population settled in the densely wooded area. The animals are known to be extremely shy, and they hardly show themselves when people are around. On winter hikes, however, it is possible to discover lynx tracks in the snow – especially when you set off with a national park ranger.

GESÄUSE: UNDER STARRY SKIES

With a view of the majestic mountains, hikers in the Gesäuse National Park in Styria are active either during the day or at night when the stars shine.

Wild water and steep rock faces characterise the landscape in the [Gesäuse National Park](#), which celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2022. Flowing through the region, the river Enns has formed impressive gorges. The National Park owes its remarkable biodiversity to the accentuated topography and geographical location. Nowhere else in Austria are there more endemic species - this refers to plant and animal species that only occur in a specific area.

Tours with national park rangers venture into this impressive natural space in winter. Winter and snowshoe hikes start in Irtdning and Admont on selected days. A special highlight are the two hour night , allowing visitors to marvel at the fascinatingly clear sky.

THAYATAL: IN PRISTINE FORESTS

Forests frame the mostly untouched river valley of the Thaya in Lower Austria. The wintry scenery can be explored on numerous hiking trails.

The [Thayatal National Park](#) along the Thaya River on the border between Lower Austria and the Czech Republic is very quiet in winter. The Thaya flows in long drawn-out loops through the hilly forest landscape, with some astonishingly steep slopes. Winter walks or hikes here have a special charm. Trees, bushes and grasses are often covered by thick frost. Bizarre ice crystals grow on the needles and leaves. Once the bright colours of the vegetation have disappeared, the dark tree trunks stand out much more prominently. Without leaves, the forests appear very open and allow for views into the far distance.

If you want to set out with national park rangers, book individual tours in the National Park House.

DONAU-AUEN: VISITING WINTER GUESTS

Ducks, geese, seagulls and many other water birds spend the winter in the protected surroundings of the Donau-Auen National Park in Lower Austria.

The [Donau-Auen National Park](#) stretches from the Lobau near Vienna to the Hainburger Au on the border to the Slovak Republic. Even in winter, the banks of the Danube and its backwaters are teeming with life. Many birds arrive in autumn and spend winter in the dense alluvial forests and on the mostly ice-free river. During the cold season hikers primarily spot ducks, geese, seagulls and a number of songbirds. Thanks to the flat terrain, all hiking trails are easily accessible in winter.

The park offers several tours led by professional rangers. Depending on the date, participants either marvel at sea eagles, discover beaver tracks or learn more about the feathered winter guests.

NEUSIEDLER SEE-SEEWINKEL: ON THE QUIET PLAINS

The Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park in Burgenland is wrapped in delicate colours. Even in winter, the steppe landscape is a refuge for many species of birds.

Lake Neusiedler See, reeds, meadows and salt pans characterise the largely flat landscape in the [Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park](#). Almost 350 species of birds live in this special natural habitat. All year round they come and go as some of the feathered animals are only guests at certain times. In winter, hen harriers, buzzards, bearded reedlings and various duck, geese and seagull species can be spotted.

The paths in the Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park are mostly snow-free. During cold periods, however, it often happens that hoarfrost covers the plants. The terrain can easily be explored alone, but if you want to be accompanied by a national park ranger, there are also tours available.

For further information, please contact pressuk@austria.info.

Austrian National Tourist Office UK

Marie de Waal / Astrid Hofer

pressuk@austria.info
press.austria.info/uk/