

## Precious moments on the Danube Ship ahoy on the river Danube

The Danube comes to life every spring. Then, you can explore the varied landscape of the Wachau World Heritage Site by boat. Or take a cruise through the towns or boat excursion along the Danube. The varied landscapes along the Danube are perfect for exploring by bike, boat or on foot.

Spitz, February 2015. Not only is the Danube Europe's second longest river at 2,800 kilometres – it also forms an integral part of Austrian heritage, with Strauss's Danube Waltz and the Danube monarchy, the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy so-called because of the river's 1,300 kilometre course through the two countries. At the heart of the region is the World Heritage Site of Wachau, a landscape highlight of the Lower Austrian Danube region which can easily be explored by bike, boat or on foot.

### **Danube ferry crossings are back**

The option of combining cycling and boat trips makes exploring the Danube a unique experience. And it's worth exploring both banks: whether you want to discover the less well-known side of the Danube or experience the magnificent landscapes of Wachau from a different angle. Each year, from the beginning of April, the most important ferry crossing services run between Spitz-Arnsdorf and Weissenkirchen-St. Lorenzen. The Haslau-Orth ferry company, east of Vienna, begins operation at the start of May while the Dürnstein-Rossatz motorised ferry allows passengers to cross to the other side of the Danube at this time of year.

### **The Danube by boat**

Taking a boat trip along the Danube is recommended as well as crossing the river: in Wachau, the DDSG Blue Danube and Brandner Schifffahrt boats run between Krems and Melk from April to October. Those with a thirst for adventure could take a 'Naufahrt' – a trip downstream in a ten metre long 'Wachowia' wooden boat, based on the historic boats once used here. For sports enthusiasts, there is also the option of taking a barge out on the Danube. The emphasis is on experiencing the river at first hand – and after a brief training session in rowing and steering, you're ready for off, sailing downstream,

### **The Danube at the crux of history**

Even in pre-historic times, the Danube was used as a trade route for metals, salt, pelts and amber. Wooden boats and rafts were used initially which were driven downstream with their cargo. At the final destination, they were then generally disassembled and the wood sold. Only larger boats were taken back upstream with great difficulty, pulled by horses along the tow-paths. Steam navigation, introduced in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, made boat transportation a lot easier: the first Danube steam navigation company was established in 1830, leading to a boom in shipping on the Danube which overcame the difficult times after the First and Second World Wars. The company was transformed from a nationalised company to a limited liability company in 1999.

### Shipping museum

In Spitz, you can explore the history of shipping on the Danube at first hand. The museum, housed in the Baroque vineyard of the Niederaltaich monastery, deals exclusively with rowing boats and rafts. Not to be missed are the traditional objects such as the famous ship's organ from 1697 or the equipment worn by a tow-horse. Wine tastings are also held at times in the unique atmosphere of this shipping museum: each year in April and October, winegrowers from the Spitz region present their wines here for tasting.

### The natural wonders of the Danube

The landscape of the Danube has undergone significant changes over the last few centuries: prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a well-structured system of main and subsidiary routes in operation which were cut back following the passing of a regulation in the 50s. Nevertheless, the Danube section along the Wachau area and in the 'Donau Auen national park' remains one of the original landscapes of the Danube. In the Donau Auen national park, you can explore the largest continual area of meadowland in Central Europe. Taking a walk or guided canoe tour through the park, you can see some 70 species of animals, some of which are unique to the Danube river system. For more information: [www.donauauen.at](http://www.donauauen.at)

For more information on boat trips and ferry timetables for services operating on the Danube, please visit our homepage at [www.donau.com](http://www.donau.com) and see the section on boat trips.

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Pictures from the Danube Region in Lower Austria can be found in the online picture library on the web page [www.donau.com/bildarchiv](http://www.donau.com/bildarchiv).