

Countries Around the World™

Austria

Program Summary

Meet 12-year-old Peter. He and his family live in Innsbruck, a city in western Austria. Join Peter as he attends choir practice in preparation for Holy Week, which begins with Palm Sunday and culminates on Easter Sunday. Next, Peter, adorned in traditional Austrian garb, strolls the streets of Innsbruck before returning to his house to decorate Easter eggs to give as gifts for his mother and sister. Peter reveals the importance of tourism to Austria's economy when he travels to the Alps for some downhill skiing. Discover some of the animals indigenous to Austria as Peter goes to the Innsbruck Zoo and sees ibexes, bearded vultures, golden eagles and bears. Then, Peter and his father travel to the city of Salzburg, briefly passing through the neighboring country of Germany. Once they arrive, Peter frolics among the statues of gnomes at Mirabell Castle. Finally, students will come to appreciate how music is an integral part of Austria's culture and national identity when Peter visits the childhood home of one of the most famous composers of all time — Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart!

Country Information

- **location:** Central Europe; bordered by Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Switzerland
- **capital:** Vienna
- **official language:** German
- **type of government:** federal republic
- **total area:** approximately 83,870 sq km
- **climate:** temperate; continental, cloudy; cold winters with frequent rain and some snow in lowlands and in mountains; moderate summers with occasional showers
- **terrain:** Alps mountain range in the West and South; mostly flat or gently sloping along the eastern and northern margins
- **natural resources:** includes oil, coal, lignite, timber, iron ore, copper, zinc, antimony, magnesite, tungsten, graphite, salt and hydropower
- **industries:** includes construction, machinery, vehicles and parts, food, metals, chemicals, lumber and wood processing, paper and paperboard, communications equipment and tourism
- **agricultural products:** includes grains, potatoes, sugar beets, wine, fruit, dairy products, cattle, pigs, poultry and lumber

Vocabulary

Tyrol — A province in western Austria.

medieval — Referring to the time period that stretched roughly from the 5th to the 15th century C.E.

lederhosen — Leather shorts, often with suspenders, worn by men and boys in Austria and Germany.

euro — The currency of Austria and several other European Union countries.

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ibex — Any of several wild goats, native to mountainous regions of Eurasia and northern Africa, that have long, ridged, backward-curving horns.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Distribute outline maps of Austria to the class. Have them find and label the capital and other major cities in addition to the neighboring countries. Ask students questions, such as: How many countries border Austria? Which country shares the longest border with Austria? Which country shares the shortest border? What is the closest body of water to Austria?
- Remind students of the difference between fact and opinion. Introduce the idea of point of view and how it relates to facts and opinions. Ask students to convey how they would describe their communities to a person from another country. Which of the things you said would be considered facts? Which ones would be opinions? Why do you think it's important to know the difference between the two? How is your point of view part of your opinion of your community? As they prepare to watch the program, instruct students to watch out for the host presenting facts and offering opinions about Austria.
- Invite students to share stories about a time when they took a trip somewhere. Questions to ask include: Where did you go? Why did you go there? How did you get there? How different was the place you visited from where you live? Was there anything that was the same? Would you go back? If you could choose to go anywhere in the world, where would it be? Why? After watching the program, encourage students to share anything they saw that would make them want to visit Austria.

Follow-up Activities

- The world-renowned composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was from Austria. Listen to a sample of Mozart's music by visiting www.classicsforkids.com/music/music_view.asp?id=6. Afterwards, ask students to share their impressions of the music. Then, have students discover facts about Mozart's life and create time lines that feature pictures or illustrations. As an extension, listen to samples of music from other famous Austrian composers, like Franz Schubert or Joseph Haydn, and compare them to those by Mozart.
- A significant portion of Austria is covered by the Alps mountain range. Students can create dioramas about the Alps that depict different aspects of the mountain range, such as sports played on the mountains, the types of wildlife found there or even events from history, like the mountain range's roles in the Crusades and World War II! Instruct students to write fact sheets to accompany their dioramas.
- Students will have fun investigating Austrian holidays and festivals. Using graphic organizers, students can compare and contrast Austrian holidays with those of the United States. As a resource, visit www.virtualvienna.net/holidays/holidaysmain.html. Engage students in a discussion by asking questions, such as: What are the holidays the Austrians celebrate that Americans don't? What are those holidays like? Why do you think we don't celebrate them in the United States? How are holidays, like Christmas and Easter, celebrated differently in Austria compared to how they are celebrated in the United States? As an extension, have students create posters to announce upcoming Austrian holidays that feature pictures and information about the types of activities associated with the holidays.
- National symbols, like the flag and national anthem, can reveal a lot about a country's history and identity. Students can discover more about Austria by finding facts about Austria's national symbols. Students can compile the information they find into an informational booklet. As an extension, have students work in small groups and create fictional countries with their own flags, anthems, coats of arms, national birds, etc.

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- Hello from Austria! Postcards are a fun way to show people the different places you've visited. Using information from the program, have students design and write a postcard as if they had visited Austria and wanted to tell their friends back home all about it. Students can visit www.readwrite-think.org/materials/postcard/ to create postcards online. For added authenticity, incorporate some German words and expressions, like "guten tag" or "auf wiedersehen" into the postcard.
- Students can learn basic German words and phrases by visiting www.bbc.co.uk/languages/german/lj/. Drawing from the various sections, have students write and perform skits using these phrases as if they were traveling in Austria, visiting places like Innsbruck, Salzburg and the Alps. After each performance, students can translate their skits into English.
- Stop the presses! Students can pretend that they are publishers at an Austrian newspaper by designing and printing a newspaper page about Austria. For an interactive page maker, visit interactives.mped.org/ppress110.aspx. Divide students into groups and assign each group a topic to cover, such as food, geography, clothing or recreation. As students complete rough drafts of their papers, have them exchange with another group for a peer editing session. Once they've finished making their papers, students can print copies to pass out to the class and give a presentation based on their topics.
- Stone gnome statues are popular in Austria and are featured prominently in the gardens of Mirabell Castle. Using clay and other craft materials, invite students to create and name their own gnome statues. Next, students can write and illustrate original folktales that feature their gnomes. Students can even write a "fractured folktale" in which the protagonist of their folktales is the gnome! Encourage students to share their stories with the class.

Suggested Internet Resources

- www.austria.org/
The Embassy of Austria in Washington, D.C. provides information about Austria's history, geography, people, politics and economy.
- www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/mozart/index.shtml
This site from the BBC presents basic information about Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.
- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Austria and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the "World Factbook" link.

Suggested Print Resources

- McDonough, Yona Zeldis and Carrie Robbins. *Who Was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart?* Grosset & Dunlap, New York, NY; 2003.
- Sheehan, Sean. *Austria*. Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, NY; 2003.
- Stein, R. Conrad. *Austria*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2000.

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