

An aerial photograph of a lush, mountainous valley in Austria. The landscape is a patchwork of green fields, dense forests, and small villages. In the background, majestic mountains with patches of snow rise under a blue sky with scattered clouds. A white outline map of Austria is overlaid in the upper left, with the Styria region highlighted in red.

AUSTRIA

STYRIA

Wine, dine and relax in the beauty of Austria's 'green heart.'

Styria, Austria's southernmost wine region, lies in the lush countryside between Vienna and the Slovenian border. Known as Austria's "green heart," it's famous for light yet intensely aromatic white wines. Sauvignon Blanc is the star here, but it's the beautiful landscape that will capture your heart. You may have never heard of the Steiermark, as the Austrians call it, but that's because the well-heeled Viennese who come here to relax like it that way. You'll be well looked after amid its wealth of outdoor sports, indoor spas, wineries, hotels and restaurants. —*Anne Krebiehl, MW*



AUSTRIA

STYRIA

...e, dine and relax in the beauty of Austria's 'green heart.'
Austria's southernmost wine region, lies in the lush countryside between Vienna and the Slovenian border. Known as a "green heart," it's famous for light yet intensely aromatic white wines. Sauvignon Blanc is the star here, but it's the lush landscape that will capture your heart. You may have never heard of the Steiermark, as the Austrians call it, but that's where the well-heeled Viennese who come here to relax like it that way. You'll be well looked after amid its wealth of outdoor activities, indoor spas, wineries, hotels and restaurants. —Anne Krebiehl, MW

WHERE TO DINE

You have to experience a traditional *buschenschank*: winery-run taverns with simple, local and hearty food served alongside the estate's wine. One of the best is **Weingut Tamara Kögl** in Ratsch. Gourmets won't be disappointed at **Die Weinbank**, where Chef Gerhard Fuchs focuses on seasonal, local dishes executed to the highest standards. He also runs a more down-to-earth **Wirtshaus** with simpler fare. **Kogel3** offers traditional dishes coupled with spectacular views.

WHERE TO STAY

The luxurious, art-themed **Schlossberghotel** in Graz, Styria's capital, will shake off any jetlag. Don't forget to enjoy its multilevel roof terrace before you head into the country. **Loisium Wine & Spa Resort** in Ehrenhausen combines wine, pampering and modern architecture for an otherworldly experience of ultimate relaxation. The real countryside beckons at **Weingartenhotel Harkamp**, where the surrounding vineyard is an ideal spot to relax with a bottle of Harkamp's own fine sparkling wine.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Styria's other specialty is pumpkin seed oil, which is featured heavily in local dishes.

A scenic drive along the wine route will take you past countless estates and through beautiful vineyards.

Watch it being milled and sample it at **Ölmühle Hartlieb**. Chocolate lovers will be in heaven at **Zotter Experience**, with its astonishing, innovative varieties. You can burn off the calories biking, golfing or hiking.

BUDGET TIP

Head to the **Genussregal** in Vogau, which translates as "pleasure shelf." It showcases local food and drink, ideal to fill a picnic basket and grab a bottle before you hit the vineyards.

WHERE TO TASTE

At the **Erwin Sabathi Estate**, you'll find some of Styria's finest Sauvignon Blanc. Taste a range of single-vineyard Sauvignon Blanc and dreamy Muskateller at **LacknerTinnacher**. A scenic drive along the wine route that starts out in Ehrenhausen, Leutschach or Gamlitz will take you past countless estates and through beautiful vineyards. Grab a map at the tourist office in Leutschach or at your hotel. In Vulkanland, Steiermark, be dazzled by the countless green



Die Weinbank

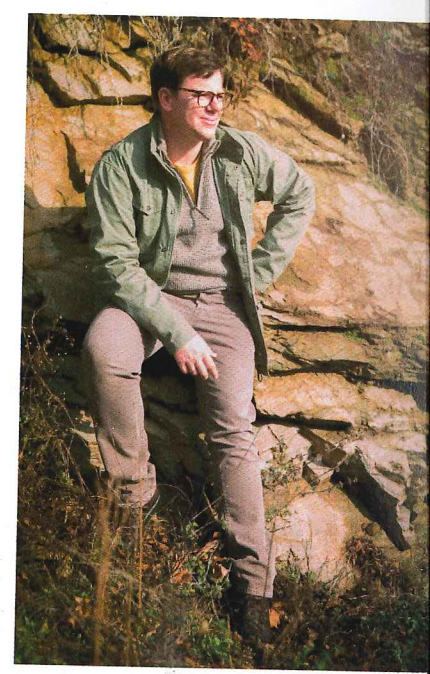
bottles that form part of the tasting room at **Neumeister**. Even better, drink the wines while you dine at its **Saziani Stub'n** restaurant. Head to the southwestern part of the region and try racy pink Schilcher, both still and sparkling, at **Weingut Jöbstl**. Beer lovers, too, can rejoice: Styria is Austria's chief hop-growing region. Local brews can be sampled with snacks like pretzels and sausages at **Die Brauerei** in Leutschach.

WHEN TO GO

Spring and fall are best. Both seasons offer stunning landscapes and mild temperatures.

PROMINENT WINES

Aromatic whites reach a kind of zenith in this climate. Sauvignon Blanc is the star here. It comes both as fragrant and zippy young wines—look for "Steirer Klassik" on the label—and as gently oak-matured, ageworthy selections that can be a revelation. Try some of the single-vineyard wines from sites like Gamlitzberg, Grassnitzberg, Edelschuh or Zieregg. The local hero is equally aromatic Gelber Muskateller, full-flavored and dry, yet ultra-light, with fresh floral and grape aromas. Styria is also famous for Schilcher, a lip-smacking, tart rosé. Chardonnay is produced throughout the region as well, though it's known as Morillon.



LOCAL IN THE KNOW

Gerhard Josef Wohlmuth, cellar-master of **Weingut Wohlmuth**, suggests starting a weekend off with a gourmet brunch in the 14th-century rectory **Tom am Kochen** before walking it off on a mountainous **hike through the vineyards**. "If you're there in fall, forage for edible chestnuts to roast," says Wohlmuth. He adds that the perfect day finishes with organic fare and intriguing wine at **Buschenschank Wurga-Hack**, also in Kitzack. For Graz, he recommends **Bar Albert**.

