



# Austria

## A kayaking Webinar for British Canoeing



Steve Brooks / Kayak School Arlberg 2023

# Austria Webinar



## Order of events

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# Steve Brooks



Steve's route into kayaking was quite unusual. He was serving in the British Army and had specialised in a Mountain and Arctic environment in Norway before becoming an instructor in Alpine Winter survival and skiing in the Bavarian Alps. It was while he was serving in Germany that his commanding officer wanted him to become an instructor in a Summer adventure training activity and it was by luck that one of his troop commanders said "I am a kayaker, he will love it" so Steve got sent back to Bavaria in the Summer to learn to kayak and become a BCU Kayak Instructor. What the military did not realise was that it would open up a whole can of worms. After becoming an old BCU Level 3 coach Steve realised he lacked a lot of practice and experience and so after some careful thought he decided that 12 years was enough in the Army and he said goodbye to his military career and headed off looking for adventure on the worlds best rivers!!

Steve has explored some of the most remote rivers in the world, from the deepest gorges in the Peruvian Andes, into the dense amazon jungle rivers of Ecuador. He spent 8 months of the year on a river pushing rafts, safety kayaking or taking groups trekking so that he could go kayaking and explore. A couple of trips to Africa on the Zambezi and Nile also came along before he headed back to the Himalayas but this time it was India. He has spent months and many seasons kayaking in the Indian Himalayas in Ladakh, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. It is in Himachal Pradesh that he has become the encyclopaedia of its rivers!

In 2010 Steve along with his Austrian wife Ute, started Kayak School Arlberg in the West of Austria. Based out of the famous ski resort of St. Anton am Arlberg they offer kayaking courses from beginners all the way up to Class V on the classic alpine rivers around that part of Austria such as the Rosanna, Sanna, Lech, Inn and Oetz to name just a few. His knowledge of Austrian rivers around Landeck is second to none and he has travelled through Austria kayaking rivers that are little known to kayakers outside of the German speaking community. He has also continued to develop his BC qualifications and coaching skills.

Austria has been his base and home now for over 25 years, not only does it have the longest kayaking season in the Alps it is also a proven training ground for Himalayan kayaking expeditions!





# Austria - Österreich



Federal Republic

9 States or Provinces:

Vorarlberg, Tirol, Salzburg, Upper Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Lower Austria, Burgenland, Vienna

Size: 83.878 km<sup>2</sup> which only a ¼ is low lying and just 30% is under 500m in height

Language: German (Dialekt)

Population: 9,1 million of which 19% are foreigners

Laws: National, EU, State, Region, Municipality



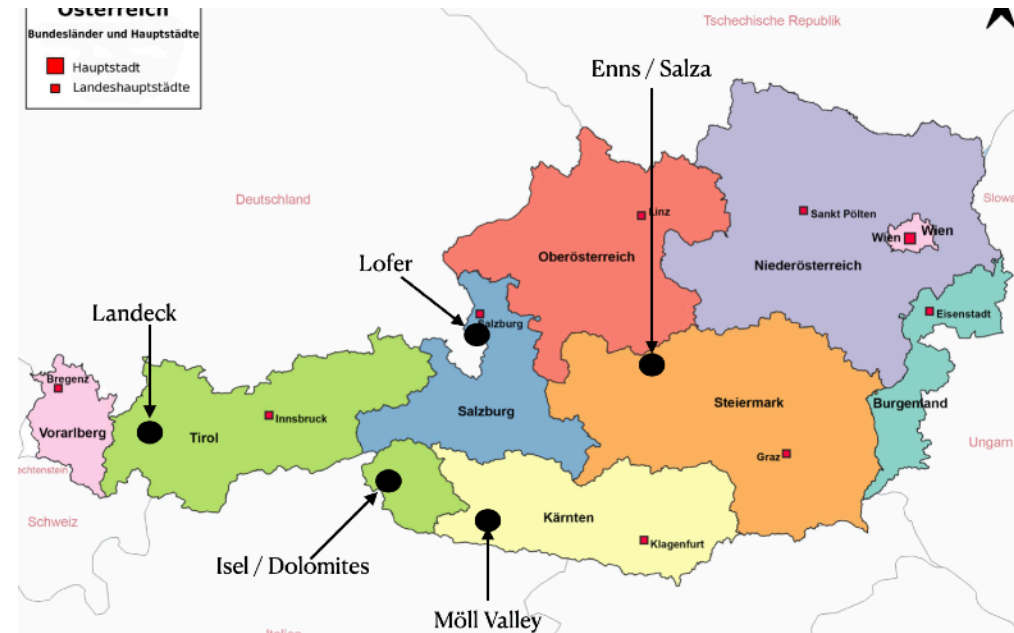




# Kayaking

## Kayaking Regions

Landeck & Imst  
Lofer & Salzburg  
Salzkammergut  
Enns / Salza  
Isel / Dolomite  
Möll Valley



## Seasons

Landeck & Imst goes from mid-April through to mid-October  
Lofer & Salzburg is from April through to September  
Salzkammergut is Spring  
Enns / Salza is April through to August at the latest.  
Isel / Dolomites is April through to September  
Möll Valley is Spring and Summer.

## Guide Book

There is no up to date guide book for kayaking in Austria.  
Rivers Publishing guide to the North Alps is out of print but if you contact Mr. Knowles he has informed me that there are copies available.  
Just remember the guide was written as information and is not the Gospel!!  
However, it is a great book to get an overview of some of the areas to kayak in Austria.

# Kayaking



## Access

Just be aware of the areas where there is rafting as you are not allowed to park in these areas, the rafting companies and Kayak School Arlberg have to pay for the use of the put-in and take-out of many rivers.

## Timings

It is acknowledged that you can only kayak from 0900 until 1900 on the rivers in Tirol.

## Government Information & Closed Rivers or sections

There is a government website which has information about some rivers that are closed be it temporary as they are working on a bridge or road or permanently .

Also the Bezirkshauptmanschaft (BH) of each region will have extra information about their local rivers.

If a river is closed, it is closed! You cannot go and ask a volunteer firefighter for permission to kayak a closed river. It MUST come from the BH.

If you are caught kayaking a closed river the fine is BIG!

If you are caught kayaking a closed river as a paying guest, your guide is extremely irresponsible and will get a fine PLUS every member of the group will also receive a fine and there are no excuses!

The Austrian's believe it is up to you to find out this information beforehand and will not accept the excuse that you are tourists or did not know.

## Lost Equipment

If you lose any equipment, for instance you take a swim and lose your kayak or paddle. You MUST inform the Police. This will prevent the water rescue from being called out to look for a body when you are in the bar drinking your bootie beer or having an ice cream!

Plus if you register your kayak or equipment as missing, Austrians are very honest people and will ring the Police to say they have found something, so you get your kayak back!

We have had people ringing us here at the Kayak School Arlberg to say that they have found a paddle or kayak, so make sure your name and contact is on your equipment!!

# Kayaking

## River Signs

Austria loves its signs and they will also appear on the river. There is a classic one half way down the Imst Gorge section of the River Inn on the river leftside and there is also a new one on the Toesens Gorge section of the River Inn near the end of the section.

There are other signs on the Austrian border of the River Inn where the new Finstermunz dam is.



Closed, not allowed to pass



Be aware, extra care should be taken



Stay 10m away from the rightside of the river bank.  
If it was the leftside of the river bank, it would be pointing to the right



End of restrictions



# Kayaking



## River App

This is a great little app that will show you the levels of the rivers around Austria. Again is not completely accurate but gives you some idea of when the rivers are running and at what levels.

## Fisherman

The Kayak School Arlberg has a fantastic relationship here with the local fisherman around the Landeck and Imst regions. We have worked extremely hard over the years to forge such a relationship with the local fisherman. The fishermen are as much in danger of losing the sport that they love with regards to the dams being built on our rivers just as much as kayakers are, so we know we need to work together to stop or delay any future dam projects!

Please be respectful, do not break out into the eddy where they are fishing.

Give them plenty of space and paddle past quietly, not shouting, making lots of noise and commotion!

Give them a wave and friendly smile, they have respect for kayakers and you may even be given a freshly caught trout for dinner!

## Farmers

On some rivers you must use a farmers field for access. Again please be polite and do not trample all over the grass in the meadow. The grass here is precious as in the Winter there can be 4 months of snow covering the pastures and so they need the grass they grow in the Summer to feed their cattle.

If you have to walk through a field, use the edge of the field to avoid as much damage as possible.

## Kayak School Arlberg

If you are not at all sure, give us a ring or have a chat if you see us by the river and we are more than happy to help and give you the current information.

# Seasons



## Spring

The rivers are starting to rise and you will find that the high alpine rivers such as the Rosanna and Lech will provide great places to improve your kayaking and work on techniques. During the month of May, most rivers will be at a low to medium volume. As we head into June the rivers begin to rise and by mid-June the snowmelt season is in full swing. If you an advanced kayaker this is a great time to be in and around Base Arlberg as everything is high. The rivers can be intimidating and we would only recommend coming during the Springmelt if you are used to kayaking Alpine and BIG volume rivers in high water as all the rivers and sections are at least a ½ grade higher than normal.

During the early Spring you will find the villages in and around the Arlberg to be ghost towns as the ski season has finished. Though accommodation is open it can be quite difficult to find a restaurant that is open, especially in St.Anton. From June onwards more restaurants and cafe's start to open bringing some life back into the villages!

## Summer

By the end of June, the rivers start to drop as the snowmelt season has finished and with all sections and rivers running it is a great time to come if you want to paddle different styles of whitewater and rivers. The Loisach in Bavarias is a firm favourite, our home rivers of the Rosanna and Lech rivers are in great condition and so is the Sanna (which is just a 15 minute drive from Base Arlberg). There is even water being released down the Landeck Gorge and this is a highlight for anyone wanting to paddle big bouncy whitewater!

In July and August the River Inn is fantastic, plenty of BIG water action on its various sections here in Austria and also in Switzerland, the Sanna is still at a great level and of course the River Oetz now starts to pump with big flows coming from the melting glaciers high up the valley.

The villages in and around St.Anton have life with tourists coming to enjoy the alpine scenery and fresh mountain air. It is certainly not overcrowded and there are plenty of choices of restaurants and cafe's in every village.

The Summer Tourist Card is also now available and is free for anyone staying in the villages of St.Anton, Pettneu, Schnann and Flirsch.



# Seasons



## Autumn

As we start to head into the beginning of September the weather changes in the mountains with cooler temperatures at night and so the river levels start to drop. Our Creeking season now starts to come to the fore, with the upper sections of the River Oetz and also the Venterache producing some world class sections of steeper whitewater. Certain sections of the River Inn is still running, albeit low the Imst Gorge is a great place to work on technique and to kayak without any of the BIG water scary feeling that can be associated with it during the Springmelt and Summer. The Sanna is still running at low to medium and the Lech has more water in it from the rain and is perfect for our Beginner and Class 2 Courses.

Restaurants and cafe's are still open in the villages until the end of September then the choice becomes somewhat limited. The Tourist card finishes at the beginning of October.

**To find out more about kayaking throughout the seasons around Base Arlberg just follow the links below...**

Spring Blog - <https://www.gokayaking.at/blog/what-to-know-about-kayaking-in-austria-during-the-spring>

Summer Blog - <https://www.gokayaking.at/blog/top-tips-for-kayaking-in-austria-during-the-summer>

Autumn Blog - <https://www.gokayaking.at/blog/top-tips-for-a-kayaking-trip-to-austria-in-the-autumn>







# Tourism

## Austria is open for Tourism!

### Visas

Tourist Visa for UK citizens is 90 days within a 180 day period.

If you are coming for just 90 days within the first 180 day period then you will not require a visa for tourism.

In 2024 the UK will be a launchmember of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS).

Passport should have at least 6 months left before it runs out.

### Entry and Exit

Make sure you get an entry and exit stamp when entering or leaving the EU!

You may have to show an onward ticket leaving Austria or prove you have enough money for your stay.

### Holiday Insurance - including Helicopter rescue

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) gives citizens access to a wide range of healthcare options.

Be aware that private healthcare and services like mountain or water rescue are not covered!

A good option is the Austrian Alpine Club (OeAV) which covers kayaking, hiking, climbing and also helicopter rescue.









# Transport - Driving in Austria



## Driving your own vehicle

UK Driving Licence (card format) is recognised and can be used in Austria.

Older driving licences or those issued in Isle of Man, Jersey etc require an International Driving Licence  
Insurance for Europe including Breakdown should be checked with the AA or RAC etc

## Vignette

To use the Austrian Motorways and Schnellstrasse you require a sticker (vignette).

You can buy these online or at a motorway service station by the border or within Austria itself.

The current cost of a Vignette for a car is:

10 Days - €9.90.-

2 Months - €29.-

1 Year - €96,40.-

## Required in your vehicle

First Aid Kit

Warning Triangle

Flouresant Vest

## Speeding and Cameras

In Villages, towns etc (Bundesstrasse) - 50km/h, coming off the Bundesstrasse 30km/h.

A Roads - 100km/h.

Motorways - 130km/h (between 2200-0500 it is 110km/h).

Most motorways have speeding cameras and there are a lot mobile Police speed checks before or after tunnels.

Watch out for I-GL speed restrictions as these are for the environment, these are costly!

There is no points system for speeding.



# Transport - Driving in Austria

## Trailers

In Austria trailers have a separate number plate, insurance and must be road certified (MOT) every year. A trailer up to 750kg (loaded) without a brake system requires no special licence but must have a chain as extra security. A trailer over 750kg (loaded) or with a brake system must have a special E licence.

## Roof Rack

In Austria we have a Typenschein which is a more substantial log book. It includes the maximum load capacity for the roof, modern vehicles can usually only carry a maximum of 80kg!

## Vans

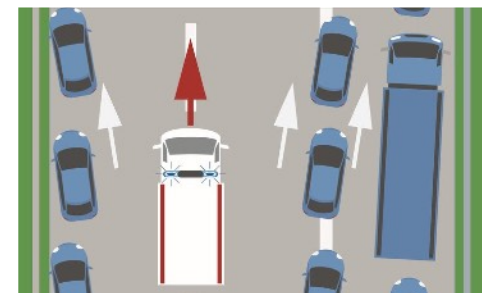
Some vans are registered as a HGV. This means you may not be able to drive from Midnight Saturday until Midnight Sunday on the motorways. Plus the vignette is more expensive for a HGV and has a different system.

## Driving in early Spring or Late Autumn

Throughout late Autumn, Winter and Early Spring you will require Winter Tyres. If you plan to drive over a pass then you will also require snowchains in your vehicle.

## Rettungsgasse

When there is a traffic jam on an Austrian motorway, you must move your vehicle so that there is an emergency corridor for ambulances, police and fire trucks to pass through.









# Accommodation



## Camping & Wild Camping

Wild camping is **illegal** in Austria!  
There are official campsites in the majority of valleys in Austria.

## Pension

This is a local house that offers rooms with bed and breakfast.

## Ferienwohnung

These are holiday flats where you can also cook, just be aware that there could be a substantial cleaning fee at the end!

## Hotels

Obviously there are plenty of hotels throughout Austria from quaint family run to full on 5 star superior.

## Tourist Tax

Wherever you stay there is a tourist tax, this can be included in the price or maybe extra so check the small print!  
In Stanzertal it is potentially rising to €5 per person per night! Some areas offer a Tourist Card with various attractions and offers in their area. Again just be aware of the small print as they may only start at the end of June until the end of September!

## Internet Booking Sites

It can be a lot cheaper to contact the accommodation directly rather than using an internet booking site.







# Helpful Links & Information



## Here are some helpful links and telephone numbers...

Police: 133

Ambulance: 144

Fire Brigade: 122

Mountain Rescue: 140

Water Rescue: 144

Standard Emergency number if you cannot remember those above: 112

## Government River Information

[https://www.tirol.gv.at/fileadmin/themen/sport/wassersport-in-tirol/downloads/Beschraenkungen\\_auf\\_Wildwasserstrecken.pdf](https://www.tirol.gv.at/fileadmin/themen/sport/wassersport-in-tirol/downloads/Beschraenkungen_auf_Wildwasserstrecken.pdf)

<https://www.tirol.gv.at/verkehr/verkehrsrecht/schifffahrt/aktuelles/>

## Vignette Motorway Sticker

<https://shop.asfinag.at/en/>

<https://www.austria.info/en/service-and-facts/getting-there-around/by-car/vignette>

## Kayak School Arlberg

Tel: 0043 676 5303878

[www.gokayaking.at](http://www.gokayaking.at)



# Working in Austria



## **EU citizens**

No problems working in Austria.

## **Non-EU citizens**

Must have a working visa.

## **Work from home / Digital Nomads**

Must have a working visa!

## **Work Visas**

Not easy to get and you must have an Austrian company willing to sponsor and do all the necessary paperwork. It is possible but is extremely time consuming for both the applicant and the company.

## **Classed as working?**

If you are running a trip and getting paid for it - this is working!

If you are running a trip and getting your expenses paid - this is working!

If you are running a trip and getting some form of equipment, accommodation, food or fuel - this is working!

If you are a club and are leading a trip but paying the same as everyone else - this is allowed.



The end 🙏

