

HC Newsletter December 2019 – Final

Dear Friends of Austria!

There are many traditions in Austria that come with the Holiday Season.



Adventkranz: It symbolizes the passage of the four weeks before Christmas, where every Sunday a candle is lit. Many families set up an Advent wreath the first Advent Sunday (the fourth before Christmas) to start off the Advent season and gather around the wreath on each Advent Sunday to light the next candle and sing Christmas carols. Until Christmas Eve, the Advent wreath provides also the evergreen look and aroma in the house.



Christkindlmarkts filled with Christmas songs, Lebkuchen and Glühwein. From the middle of November until Christmas, the prettiest squares in many cities in Austria transform into magical Christmas markets. Especially the downtown and shopping streets in Vienna are decorated with festive lights that create a unique Christmas atmosphere.



Christmas tree, with its special unveiling usually reserved for only on Christmas Eve, is decorated with often handmade ornaments, Strohsterne (straw stars) and apples and brings joy and a pleasant scent into the homes from December 24 until January 6.



Epiphany (Three Magi) on January 6. Star singers

("Sternsinger") are children and young people walking from house to house with a star on a rod and often wearing crowns and dressed in clothes to resemble the Three Magi (also known as Three Kings or Three Wise Man). The singing processions have their roots in an old medieval ecclesiastical play, centered on the Biblical Magi of the Christmas story about distinguished foreigners who visited the Christ Child (Christkind), bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

NEWS FROM AND ABOUT AUSTRIA

While the negotiations for the new coalition government in Austria are still ongoing (there are many difficult differences to be negotiated between the conservative ÖVP and the Green Party), there is a will on both sides to make it happen. In

the meantime, the well-respected interim government under Chancellor Brigitte Bierlein is taking care of business. The negotiations resume on December 27, so stay tuned for updates!



November 29: Fire destroyed 5 houses along the shoreline in historic **Hallstatt**, a UNESCO world heritage site. Luckily wet conditions helped to minimize the damage.



Vienna wins UNESCO's "Smart-City" Award and placed among the top 10 cities. "Innovative." "Intelligent." "Sustainable." These are just some of the accolades recently received by Vienna for its social housing construction program. The jury's decision was based on answers to how population growth can be brought into harmony with the well-being of a city's residents. <https://www.smartcitiesworld.net/news/vienna-ranked-top-for-smart-city-strategy-3965>



Throughout Vienna's history, many visitors have come - only to stay. But few were as genial as **Ludwig van Beethoven**. Born 1770 in Bonn, Germany, he first visited Vienna at the age of 17 to study with Mozart. He returned when 22 years old to become a student of Joseph Haydn, and then stayed in Vienna for the next 35 years until his death in 1827. The city plans to celebrate his 250th birthday in 2020 in style. Vienna as the world's capital of music would be hard to imagine without the great composer. With his European idea of Idealism shaping the continent's intellectual history, "WienBeethoven 2020" aims to present a diverse program reflecting his many contributions, with organizers and venues including the city's Department of Culture, the House of Music (Haus der Musik,) the National Library, Vienna State Opera and others.



Vienna: The Capital of Digitalization. Vienna, long a destination for culture seekers and one of the world's most livable cities, is well on the way to adding another feather in its cap; as Europe's Capital of Digitalization. The "Digital Agenda Vienna 2019" that City Council agreed on in September, coordinates dozens of projects in different fields under one strategic roof. It is a laundry list for the smart city of the future, a strategy paper and work document that allows the City of Vienna to respond to the changes in all areas of life driven by digitalization. <https://www.wien.gv.at/english/politics/international/newsletter/04-2019-digitalisation.html>.



December 2: UN Climate Change Conference in Madrid COP25: Plea of Austrian's President VanDerBellen: *"2020 is a decisive year, we must reduce CO₂ emissions to reach the climate goals & prevent drastic consequences for humankind."*



December 4: Chancellor Brigitte Bierlein visited the US Embassy in Vienna, the first visit of a sitting Austrian Chancellor to the US Embassy.

December 10: Peter Handke receives the **Nobel Prize for Literature** in Stockholm: in his **acceptance speech** the Austrian author uses mostly biographical anecdotes about ordinary people from his Slovenian - Carinthian upbringing and connects them to the inseparable values of nature and human being. He speaks exclusively as an author and does not address the controversy about his sharply criticized position about former Serbian atrocities.



December 10: In Vienna, the Federal Chancellery has been lit up in orange over the past 16 days to stand with **"Orange-The-World"**, a movement by the UN Women, a UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment, to end violence against women.

December 12: A group around H-C Strache, the former - in the meantime disgraced and from the party expelled - leader of the right wing party FPÖ, formed a new party, DAÖ (Die Alternative für Österreich) and plans to enter the race for the next election, the Vienna elections, as a party separate from the FPÖ.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Now, as the Holiday festivities are over and daytime is increasing, we are getting ready to celebrate the beginning of a new year, a new decade!

New Year's Eve Party organized by Val Caspaar, (Austrian -Österreichische Meet – Up Gruppe):

When: Tuesday, December 31, 2019; 8:00 PM

Where: Magic Flavors, 23636 104th Ave SE #2, Kent, WA 98031

Live music by James Lindsey, Rob Kneisler, Mary & Bob Psarks; Card Games, Dancing, Karaoke, Short Movie "Dinner for One", European Food, Thin Crust Pizza, Glühwein, Draft Beer

For more information see: <https://www.meetup.com/Austrian-Stammtisch-and-Events/>



Wed. Jan 1: The New Year's Concert from Vienna with the Vienna Philharmonic will ring in the new year at the Musikverein under the Latvian Maestro Andris Nelsons. I hope you have a chance to watch the broadcast of this beautiful tradition on your public TV Station (in the Seattle Area: **KCTS9 Public TV at 9pm**).



Dec 22 - Jan 2: SIFF Uptown Theater, 511 Queen Anne Ave N, Seattle. **Movie: A Hidden Life:** Terrence Malick's film based on the real-life story of an Austrian farmer heroic defiance of the Nazis, is moving, beautiful; in

English and unsubtitled German. Franz Jägerstätter isn't an especially contentious man - on the contrary, his manner is generally amiable and serene. But he has done something that people in his village and beyond find provocative, which is to refuse combat service in World War II. He won't take the oath of loyalty to Adolf Hitler that is required of every Austrian soldier. When he is faced with the threat of execution for treason, it is his unwavering faith and his love for his wife Fanni and children that keeps his spirit alive. Terrence Malick directs this historical drama starring in the leading roles August Diehl and the Austrian actor Valerie Pachner, also featuring the final on-screen performances of Michael Nyqvist and Bruno Ganz. <https://www.siff.net/year-round-cinema/a-hidden-life>

Note: A 1971 documentary of his life was made for Austrian television, *Verweigerung* ("The Refusal") (originally titled *Der Fall Jägerstätter*), by director Axel Corti. In 2007, Franz Jägerstätter was declared a martyr and he got beatified at the New Cathedral in Linz.

Starting Jan 19, 10pm: Public TV: KCTS9: "Vienna Blood", a series set in 1900's Vienna – a hot bed of philosophy, science, art, where clashes of art and ideas play out in the city's grand cafes and opera houses. A brilliant young English doctor studying under Sigmund Freud is keen to understand the criminal mind.

Goethe-Pop Up Seattle: good news! Since its launch a year ago, this institution became a reliable and active source for cultural support for the German speaking community in Seattle. Their funding got now extended for another year by the German government. <https://www.goethe.de/ins/us/en/sta/gps.html>



February 29, 2020: 20th Anniversary of the Viennese Ball in Seattle

Get ready for the upcoming social highlight here in the Seattle Area, organized by members of the Austria Club www.austriacclubwa.com who are dedicated to continue this beloved and fun tradition. See enclosed flyer for more information and ticket reservations: vienneseball2020.brownpapertickets.com. I hope many of you can join in and celebrate this special anniversary by enjoying artistic performances, elegant dinner, and dancing until midnight!



Wishing you all a peaceful, joyful, healthy and happy New Year –

Herzlichst,

Eva Kammel

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Attachment: Viennese Ball Flyer