Making the Most of Their Environment

December 19th, 2012

The Austrians make the most of their environment by using their natural resources. Their environment is naturally rich in many resources. The economy profits off of these. I like how they use all of these resources to their benefit. This is why I chose Austria.

Their main resource is their geography. The Austrians use their mountains to attract people looking for outdoor recreation; hiking, skiing, rock climbing, etc. There are three main geographical areas in Austria. The **Lowlands** are the country’s agriculture center and are located on the east and southeast side of the country. In the **Hill Country,** north of the Danube River, the land is covered in forested hills and low mountains to the border shared with the Czech Republic. Seventy percent of Austria is covered by the Alpine Region. The central and western areas of Austria are part of this region. The mountains here are the Alps. They come into Austria from Switzerland. In this region, many other different small ranges branch off. They are forested and snow-capped. The highest peaks in this region are in the central Tauern Range where the highest point in the country, the Grossglockner, is located. At the end of the Tauern Range, it slopes down into the Danube River Valley, and to the eastern lowlands, from Vienna, then it goes south to its border shared with Slovenia. The most significant river in the country is the [**Danube**](http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/euriv.htm). Being the second longest river in Europe, it is a vital waterway for commerce. Many lakes run through the mountain ranges, mostly found in the south and to the east of Salzburg. Lake Neusiedler is the largest lake in the county.

The wildlife in Austria is also a significant resource. Tourists wanting to get a glimpse of the spectacular wildlife come here. Some species native to the Alpine regions are the chamois, groundhog, eagle and mountain jackdaw. There is a large bird population in the reed beds of Lake Neusiedl (heron, spoonbill, scooper, wild goose, and many more). Recently, a small bear population has grown. They can mainly be found in the heavily wooded southern and central mountain regions. Since Austria is one of Europe's most heavily wooded countries, it is home to a variety of different trees and flowers. Some trees include oak, beech, fir, and pine. The Alpine flowers include the Alpine rose, heather, Alpine carnation, arnica, gentian, and the edelweiss that is only found in high altitudes. The northern edge of the Alps is covered in grasslands. [Austria's nature parks](http://www.austria.info/us/austria-nature-adventure/national-parks-in-austria-1084208.html) stretch across 3% of the country.

Austria’s culture is very influenced by other countries. The official language inAustria is German. Only 2% of the population of Austria doesn’t speak High German or a dialect of it. The German that the Austrians speak sounds "softer" than the German spoken in Germany. There are also regional dialects of German.

Austrian cooking is also influenced by many other countries, like Germany, Hungary, The Czech Republic, and northern Italy. A very popular food in Austria is the Wiener schnitzel. It is breaded veal.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed in Austria. About three-fourths of Austrians are Roman Catholic. Another major religion in Austria is Protestantism, and many foreign workers are Muslim or Serbian Orthodox. There is also a small community of Jews.  
The arts are highly respected in Austria, and Vienna was known during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a world center of culture, especially in music. It was home to some of the greatest classical composers, including Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms. Annual festivals throughout the country feature Austrian orchestras, choirs, and other groups. The best known is the Salzburg Summer Festival, founded in 1920. Austria is famous for its Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and Vienna Boys' Choir. Austrian children have required music and art classes in primary and secondary schools. Provincial theaters and orchestras bring the arts to rural and town dwellers. The arts are responsible for stimulating a large portion of the tourist trade in Austria and are considered excellent investments for private supporters.

About one-third of the Austrians live in the five largest cities—Vienna, Graz, Linz, Salzburg, and Innsbruck—with the remainder inhabiting small towns and the countryside. Most urban dwellers live in four- or five-story apartment buildings, high-rise buildings, or single-family homes. Many rural areas are dominated by farmhouses that have been in the family for hundreds of years. Because of the Alps, Austrian farms are small and isolated, making production expensive. Western provinces have wooden chalets with steep, pointed roofs, like those in Switzerland.

Austria is a federal republic based on parliamentary democracy. Its constitution was adopted in 1920 and has been amended several times. The federal government has a legislative, an executive, and a judicial branch. Austria has a federal president, elected by the people, who serve as head of state. The president has the power to appoint the chancellor and members of the cabinet and other government posts. However, governmental power rests chiefly with the chancellor (prime minister) and the cabinet, who write most laws.

Austria, by constitutional law, is prohibited from entering into military alliances, and foreign countries are prohibited from establishing military bases on Austrian soil. Austria's military does participate in some United Nations peacekeeping missions in other countries. Austria has an air force but, no navy. Military service is on a volunteer basis. Austrian women have never served in the military.

Austria is highly industrialized, but expert craftsmanship can be found in products such as leather goods, pottery, jewelry, woodcarvings, and blown glass. Manufacturing makes up one-third of the workforce and about 40 percent of the gross domestic product. Iron ore is Austria's most important mineral resource, and metal and metal products, especially iron and steel, lead the manufacturing sector. Major products include motor vehicles, locomotives, heavy machinery and equipment, customized electronics, and tools. Other principal manufactured goods include chemicals, petroleum, graphite, wood and paper products, textiles, beverages, and processed foods. Its rivers are used to produce hydroelectric energy that provides a large portion of the nation's energy needs. Abundant forests provide materials for lumber, paper products, and fuel. Conservation has helped protect farmland from landslides and erosion.

Austria joined the European Union (EU) in 1995 and their currency is the euro. Germany is Austria's principal trading partner. Austria's major exports are machinery and equipment, electronics, paper products, clothing and textiles, and metals. It also conducts foreign trade with Italy, Switzerland, and other EU countries, as well as the United States, Japan, and other Asian countries.

Austria's education system is one of the world's best. Austria has a literacy rate of 99 percent. All children have an equal right to free education, with free transportation to and from school and free textbooks provided. Schooling is coeducational and is compulsory through the ninth grade. Between ages six and ten, all children attend a primary school. After age ten, children are separated through a "two-track" system in which some students attend a general secondary school for four more years, and the remainder attends an upper-level secondary school until age eighteen. After secondary school, students have the option of attending a university or a vocational school. Austria has twelve universities and six fine arts colleges. A university education is free for Austrians.

The major crops in Austria are wheat and other grains, sugar beets, and potatoes. Some animals that farmers breed here are pigs, sheep, and dairy cattle. Farmers obtain meat, wool, milk, cheese, and butter from their livestock. Most farms are small and are owned and operated by families. Many farm families increase their income by renting out rooms or serving as tour guides or ski instructors.

Work Cited

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