

# Time for nature.



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NATIONAL  
PARKS  
AUSTRIA



*Unser Naturerbe.*

# 6 national parks under one roof.



## NATIONALPARK DONAU-AUEN

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

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NationalparkGesaeuse



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WaldWildnis



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[www.nationalpark-neusiedlersee-  
seewinkel.at](http://www.nationalpark-neusiedlersee-seewinkel.at)

NATIONALPARK  
Thayatal

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@nationalpark\_hohetauern  
Hohe.Tauern

# Nothing touches us like the untouched.

Austria's six national parks, Thayatal (Thaya Valley), Hohe Tauern, Donau-Auen (Danube wetland), Gesäuse, Neusiedlersee-Seewinkel and the Kalkalpen (Limestone alps), protect the greatest natural treasures of our nation. Across a total of 2,380 square kilometres, they accommodate astonishing natural landscapes and provide vital habitats for a large number of endangered animals and plant species. Here in these enclosures, nature has enough space to evolve freely. It is the expressed purpose of the national parks to safeguard these areas and keep them alive for future generations to come.

Under the umbrella association “Nationalparks Austria”, these six Austrian national parks are closely collaborating with the Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism, in a steady effort to raise awareness for the immeasurable value of our natural heritage.

365 days a year, visitors are invited to witness impressive spectacles of nature – from the freezing cold to refreshing summer showers, from the magnificent bloom of the flora to forest landscapes dipped in gold.

Dive into the world of our local national parks. Set some time aside to witness this declaration of love for untouched nature.



[WWW.NATIONALPARKSAUSTRIA.AT](http://WWW.NATIONALPARKSAUSTRIA.AT)

NationalparksAustria

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# We give nature time and space to develop freely.

Join us, as we journey through all six national parks. We start our trip in spring, in the Thayatal and venture through Austria's natural wonders, ending up in the winter wonderland of the Kalkalpen National Park. All you need to pack is a little imagination and you will start to hear, smell and even feel the national parks.

# With the change of the seasons we travel across Austria.



## 1 SPRING AT THE THAYATAL NATIONAL PARK

FOUNDED: 2000 | AREA: 1,360 acres | ANIMAL AMBASSADOR: Wildcat

LANDSCAPE: 92 % Forest · 3 % Waterbodies · 4 % Meadows · 1 % Dry grassland and rocks ·

NATIONAL PARK FACT: This protected area transcends borders: It encompasses the Thayatal in both Austria and the Czech Republic.

## 2 EARLY SUMMER AT THE HOHE TAUERN NATIONAL PARK

FOUNDED: 1981 | AREA: 185,600 acres | ANIMAL AMBASSADOR: Golden eagle

LANDSCAPE: 54 % Glaciers, ruderal species, sheer rock walls, dwarf shrub garrigues · 32 % Subalpine/alpine lawns and alpine agriculture · 9 % Forest · 4 % Alder and mountain pine shrubs · 1 % Waterbodies ·

NATIONAL PARK FACT: This is the alpine national park with the mightiest waterfalls in all of Europe, the highest summits in Austria and the biggest glacial areas in the Eastern Alps.

## 3 HIGH SUMMER AT THE DONAU-AUEN NATIONAL PARK

FOUNDED: 1996 | AREA: 9,600 acres | ANIMAL AMBASSADOR: European pond terrapin

LANDSCAPE: 65 % Alluvial forest · 15 % Meadows · 20 % Waterbodies ·

NATIONAL PARK FACT: One of Europe's last big floodplain landscapes.

## 4 GOLDEN AUTUMN AT THE GESÄUSE NATIONAL PARK

FOUNDED: 2002 | AREA: 11,306 acres | ANIMAL AMBASSADOR: Rosalia longicorn

LANDSCAPE: 52 % Forest · 24 % Rock and rubble · 13,5 % Mountain pine shrubs and bushes · 10 % Alpine lawns and meadows · 0,5 % Waterbodies ·

NATIONAL PARK FACT: The Gesäuse is a hotspot of endemisms for plants, insects, and spiders. An endemism is globally unique and confined to one specific region.

## 5 DEEP AUTUMN AT THE NEUSIEDLER SEE – SEEWINKEL NATIONAL PARK

FOUNDED: 1993 | AREA: 9,673 acres | ANIMAL AMBASSADOR: Common spoonbill

LANDSCAPE: 43 % Reed · 30 % Lawns · 27 % Lakes and ponds ·

NATIONAL PARK FACT: Among the 300 bird species inhabiting visiting this area, one can often find stray flamingos and pelicans.

## 6 WINTER AT THE KALK ALPEN NATIONAL PARK

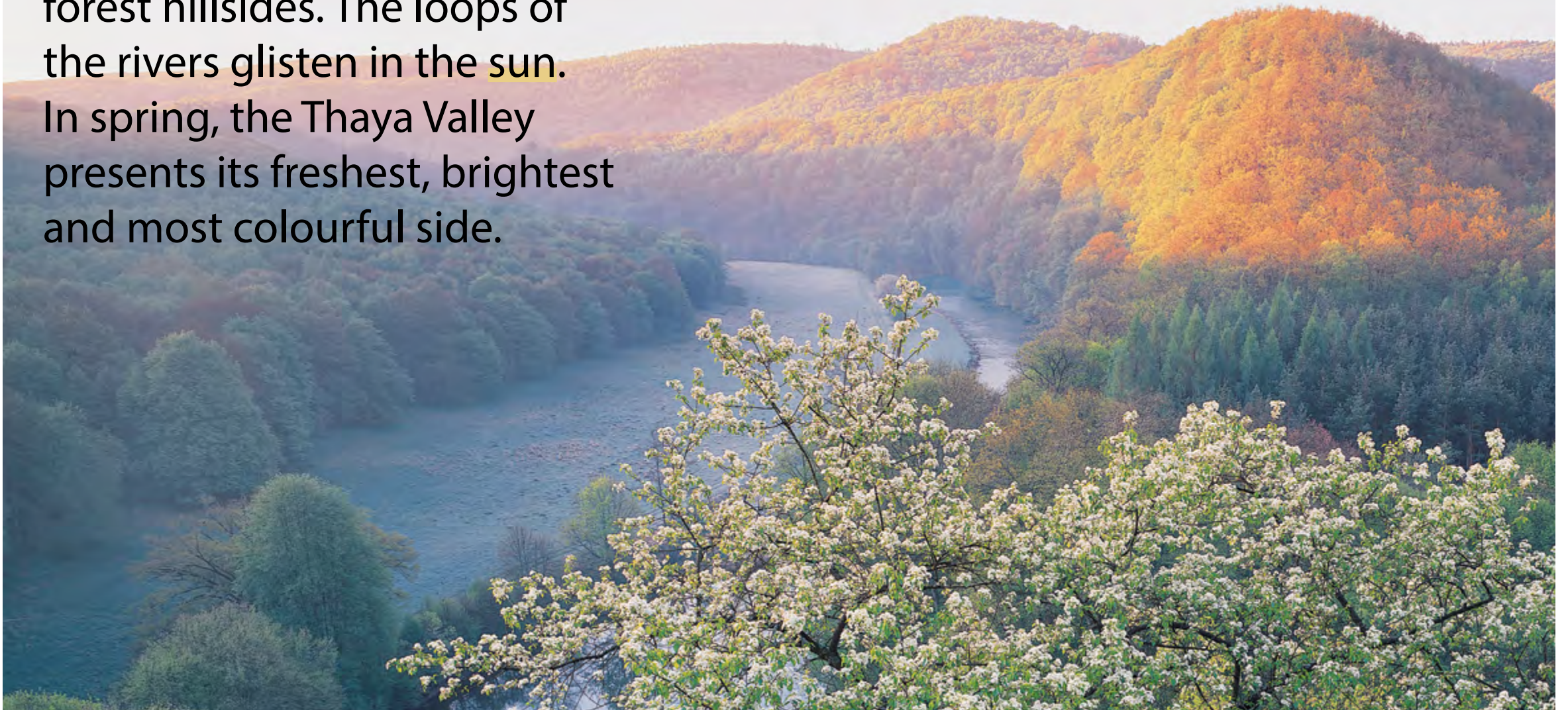
FOUNDED: 1997 | AREA: 20,856 acres | ANIMAL AMBASSADOR: Lynx

LANDSCAPE: 81 % Forest · 11 % Alp and rock · 8 % Mountain pine shrubs ·

NATIONAL PARK FACT: It is one of Austria's largest forest enclosures. The oldest beeches are over 500 years old.

AT THE THAYATAL NATIONAL PARK

The valley is full of **energy**.  
The Thaya riverside is coated  
by a myriad of snowdrops.  
The further one ascends, the  
more intense the colours  
get: purple, pink and yellow  
**blossoms** decorate the steep  
forest hillsides. The loops of  
the rivers glisten in the **sun**.  
In spring, the Thaya Valley  
presents its freshest, brightest  
and most colourful side.





Spring is finally here: The green-winged orchid in full bloom.

#### AURAL DELIGHTS

The hum of a rapidly passing bumblebee • The soft rustle of the flowing Thaya • The fresh spring air flowing through light green leaves of beeches and oak trees • Ducks splashing in the water • The mountain trails are still littered with the dark-coloured crunchy autumn leaves • The black woodpecker is knocking away in the treetops: It's spring.

The Hardegg castle is located in Austria's smallest town, in the heart of the national park area.

*In Austria, the wildcat (Felis silvestris) was thought to be extinct, until their traces could be proven again in the Thayatal National Park in 2007.*



#### FOR THE NOSY

Pollen-dust • The warm air meeting the untouched river banks • The dark and moist smell of the forest floor in spring • The world in bloom tickles your nose.



The **home** of Austria's highest mountain awakes and follows suit. The glaciers are slowly but surely shedding their winter coats. Where the **snow** yields, the highland's masters of adaptation breathe new life into the glacial forefields. A groundhog calls from a **distance**.





AURAL DELIGHTS

A rock has come loose and is tumbling down the steep cliff • The air, as it whizzes through the wings of the bearded vulture • The blubbering of mountain rivers, thirsty for glacial water • The rumbling thunder of the waterfall • The incessant whistling of the wind around all the mountain summits.

The Stotzbach waterfall makes itself heard.



Life on the edge.  
The glacier buttercup  
(*Ranunculus glacialis*)  
has adapted  
perfectly to life at  
high altitude and  
has already been  
spotted around the  
4,200-metre mark.



In nature lies peace.



ONCE MORE WITH FEELING

The cold breath of the waterfall on your face, the sprinkle hitting your sun-heated body • Loose, crunching stones underneath hiking boots • Warm, sharp rock • The light tickle of the freshly cut meadows • Soft, dewy moss.

AT THE DONAU-AUEN NATIONAL PARK

It is hot. The sun is emanating heat that makes the air shimmer. The alluvial forest has become a dense, almost impenetrable jungle. The side branches of the Danube are covered with water lilies – dragonflies dance around, a ring snake meanders through the water. On the sandy and gravelly shores of the great river, willows cast a soft shadow.

Midsummer is  
here.







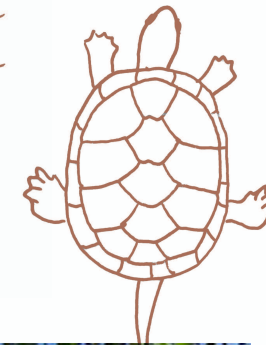
Beach feeling meets alluvial forest.

The Danube has a total length of roughly 2,850 kilometres.



Time for the Donau-Auen National Park

The Danube wetlands are the only intact habitat in Austria that has been home to the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*). The life expectancy of these animals: Over 60 years.



FOR THE NOSY

The smell of water and grass • The clearing in the forest on a damp lawn • The steaming soil in the alluvial forest after a summer storm • The aquatic mint • The alluvial jungle in high summer.

AURAL DELIGHTS

Ribbiting frogs • Screeching herons • The call of the kingfisher • The sound of rolling pebbles on the Danube beach • A gust of wind brushes across the meadows, populus, and alders • The hum and buzz of insects • Little ringed plovers are breeding in the rubble by the Danube.



AT THE GESÄUSE NATIONAL PARK

The night turns cold and you start to see your own **breath**. Especially when the sun has set and the sparkling starry canopy has been erected above the infamous **Hochtor mountain** group. During the day the larches and beeches glow yellow – the Gesäuse has thrown itself into its most colourful **robe**.

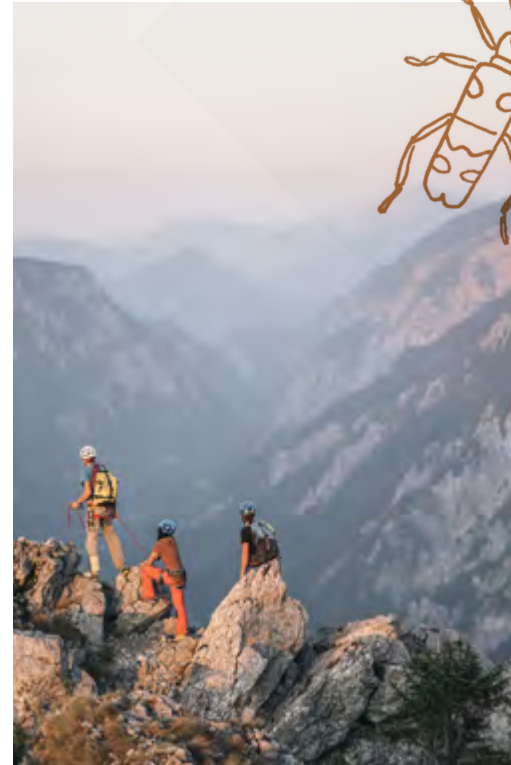
At the Gesäuse, the stars shine especially bright, for it is one of the darkest places to witness nightfall in all of Europe.





The yellow larches form the Gesäuse's guard of honour by the Enns river.

The rugged chalk summits of the Ennstal alps, located in the Northern Limestone Alps.



#### AURAL DELIGHTS

The rushing and bustling of the Enns river • The rocks cracking and rubbing against each other • The wind blowing through the forest • A yellow leaf, making a brief rustle, finds its resting place on the forest floor • The roar of deer almost sounds like a screeching door • It is mating season.

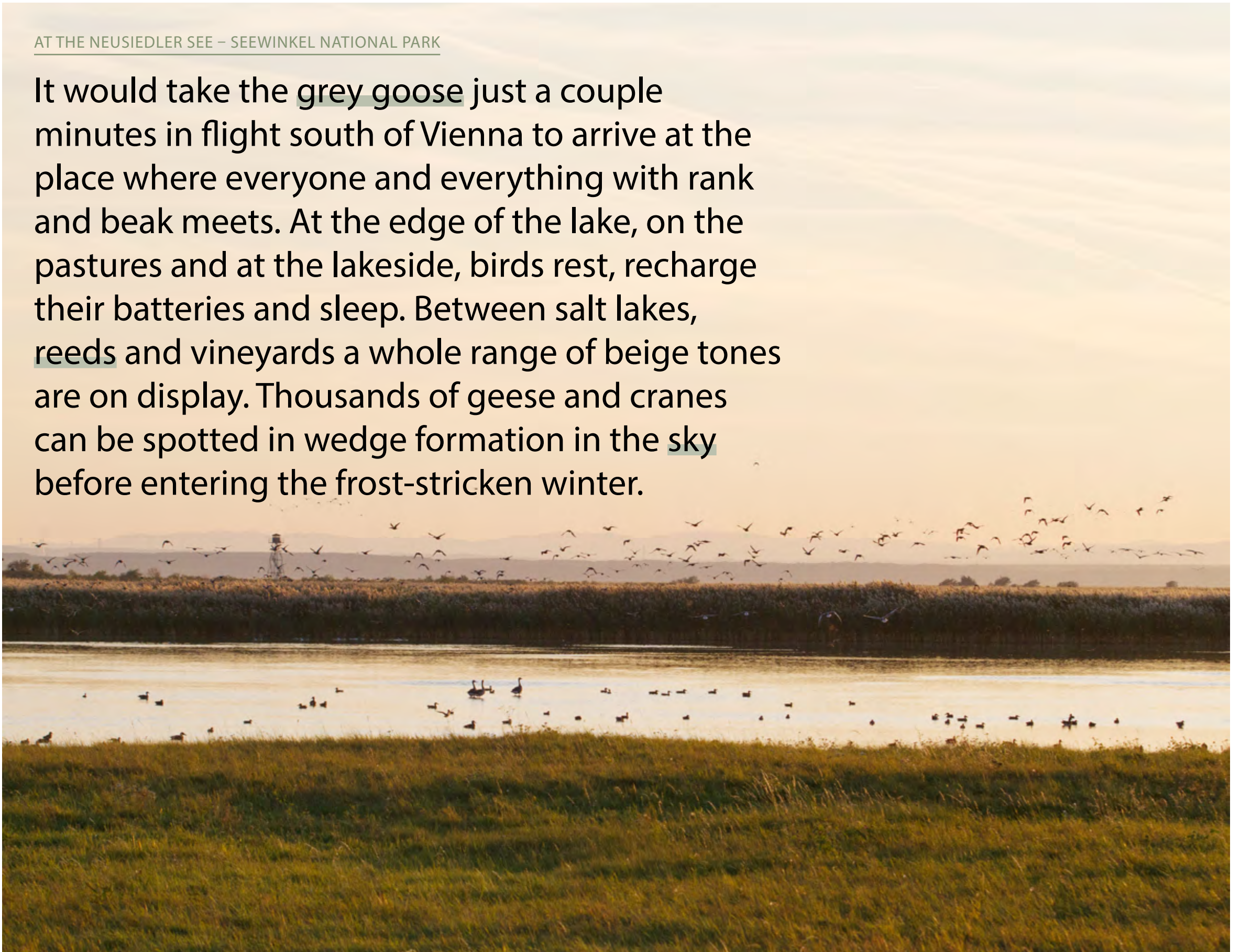


No *Rosalia longicorn*  
(*Rosalia alpina*)  
without coarse woody debris.  
To lay its eggs, it needs dead  
beech trunks and a lot of  
time, as the larvae take  
three to five years  
to mature.

#### FOR THE NOSY

The smell of mushrooms in the forest • The fresh feel of the Enns river • An old fir • Cold air • Damp moss • Dry, ruffled foliage.

It would take the grey goose just a couple minutes in flight south of Vienna to arrive at the place where everyone and everything with rank and beak meets. At the edge of the lake, on the pastures and at the lakeside, birds rest, recharge their batteries and sleep. Between salt lakes, reeds and vineyards a whole range of beige tones are on display. Thousands of geese and cranes can be spotted in wedge formation in the sky before entering the frost-stricken winter.



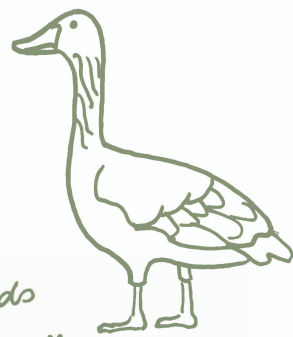


Austria's largest lake, characteristically surrounded by reeds.

The singing of cranes from the surrounding villages can also be heard in autumn.

AURAL DELIGHTS

The constant wind, crackling in the leafless reed stems • Up above, you can hear the south-bound birds seemingly hollering at each other in order to navigate • The soft knocking of rain on the wooden roof of the observatory.



In winter thousands of white-fronted geese (*Anser albifrons*) from the far north are regular guests at Lake Neusiedl. In spring it is an important breeding place for grey geese (*Anser anser*).



FOR THE NOSY

Wet wood • A raincoat • Brackish water • Steps in the mud • Raindrops on the dry lake floor • Fi-re-red rosehips.

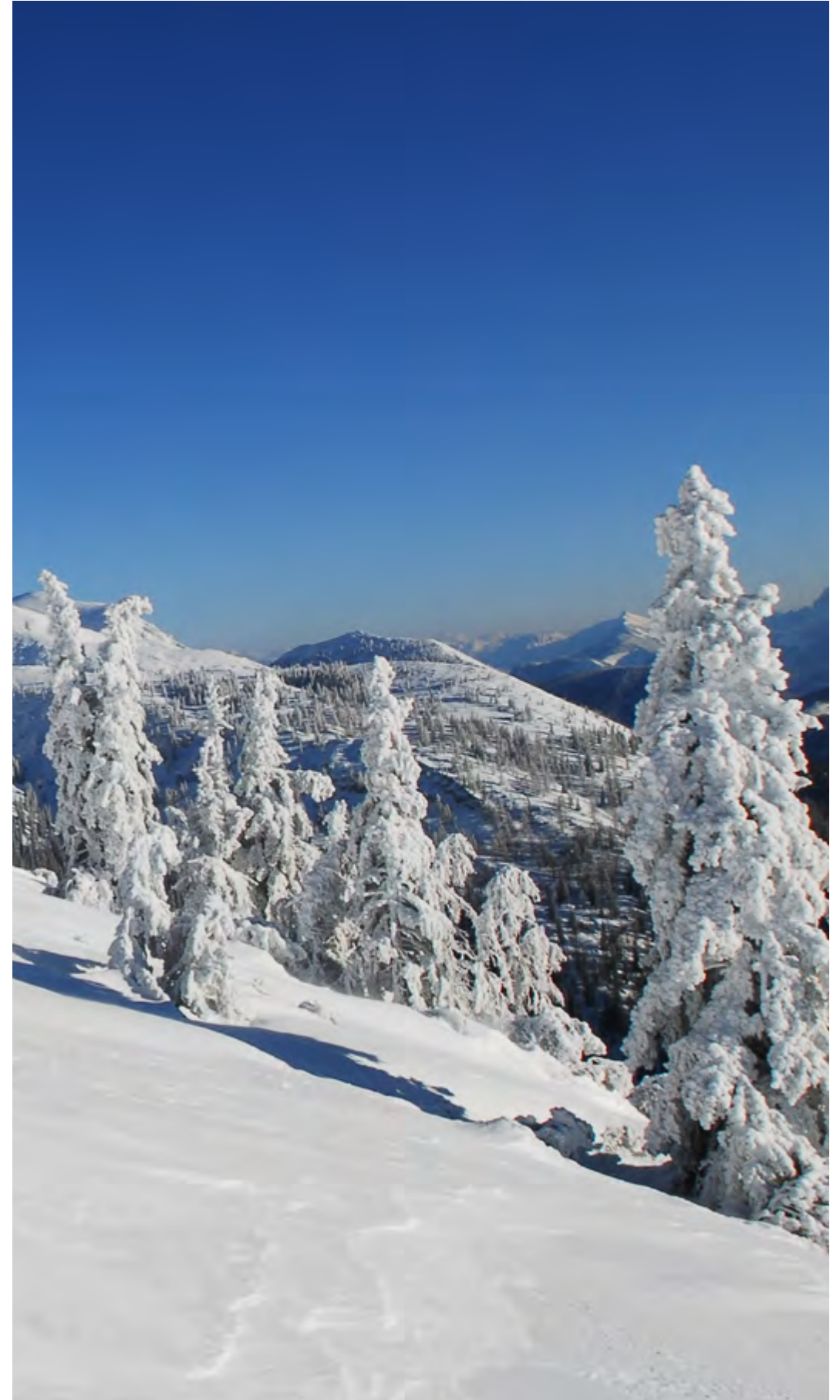




AT THE KALKALPEN NATIONAL PARK

The days have gotten shorter and the **cold** has the mountains and valleys firmly in its grasp. The lynx sneaks through the white in search of food. Everywhere you look, the **winter forest** glitters and sparkles. Snowshoe hikers walk through the silence of resting nature, following **tracks** in the snow. The Kalkalpen summits appear in their winter coat.

A winter fairy tale in white and blue.





Rich in lakes, rivers, and forests: The Kalkalpen.



FOR THE NOSY

The feeling of the cold winter air filling your nostrils • A cup of tea • The faint scent of pine needles • Fresh snow.

The Winter rose (*Hebeborus niger*) is a typical species of time-beech forests. Depending on the weather, the first flowers can already be discovered in December. Botanically speaking, it is not a rose, but a buttercup plant.



One of the Kalkalpen's most famous residents: The Lynx.



AURAL DELIGHTS

The careful treading of the lynx • An icicle breaks off • The pleading cry of a young eagle • The creaking of the mixed woodland • The wind blowing powdery snow off of the trees • Hands, rubbing against each other for warmth • But mostly, it is quiet – because winter brings calm.

# The national parks – united by their shared values.

NATIONAL  
PARKS  
AUSTRIA



National parks of today aren't just NATURE AND WILDLIFE RESERVES, but also AREAS OF ENCOUNTER. Human beings and animals meet each other with respect.

The concept of having a national park originates from the United States. In 1872, the world's first national park, Yellowstone National Park, was founded.

In 1971, the Austrian NATIONAL PARK MOVEMENT has started. The latest Austrian national park was founded in 2002.

Whether by boat, over sticks and stones or through snowy terrain – the RANGERS bring nature to the visitors and inspire them with their stories. All Austrian rangers have completed a certified course.

Every national park must adhere to international rules. These are stipulated by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the IUCN. All Austrian national parks are internationally acknowledged as protected areas in the CATEGORY II.

The tasks of national parks go far beyond preserving nature. They are important RESEARCH CENTRES, popular RECREATIONAL AREAS and important players in the field of ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION.









Have we got you curious?

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