

Special Days

For the majority of Austrians, cultural traditions and customs are predominantly associated with Catholicism. Special days celebrated may include:

- Austrian National Day – 3 October.
- *Heurigen* – annual wine tasting.
- Easter – homes are decorated and boiled eggs painted.
- White Sunday – First Sunday after Easter.
- Good Friday – No meat is eaten.
- Oktoberfest – First week of October.
- New Years Eve – Celebrated at midnight on the first day of the year by a feast and waltz music.

Food

Austrian cuisine is very diverse and has been influenced by various cultures from across Europe. Many foods are popular but generally may include:

- Potatoes, sauerkraut, red cabbage
- German sausages and chicken schnitzel
- Roast meats and beef olives (Rouladen)
- Meat Balls (Frikadellen)
- *Kolatsche* (yeast pastry with a sweet or curd cheese filling)
- *Liwanze* (yeast pancake)

Tea, coffee and soft drinks are popular. On special occasions beer, wine and schnapps are favourites.

Attitude to Aged Care

Older people prefer to stay at home for as long as possible and are reluctant to attend hospital. The elderly prefer to be cared for by family members and residential aged care is avoided. However, due to economic pressures and geographic dispersion of children the ties with families have weakened and it is now more difficult for family members to sustain traditional expectations and provide care for the elderly.

Attitude to Sickness

Western medical procedures are acceptable and some individual elderly prefer to be treated by a practitioner of the same gender especially during nursing, bathing and showering.

When ill or facing adversity, Austrian elderly do not complain and prefer to be approached gently and respectfully. It is usual that illness and pain is dealt with privately by the individual.

Although medical, nursing and hospital procedures and care are mostly acceptable, alternative methods of healing, such as drinking herbal tea, may be preferred.

Death and Burial

In the majority of cases, because the Catholic religion is prominent amongst people born in Austria, the burial practices and ceremonies are conducted in accordance with the Catholic religion.

For example, the body is bathed and dressed in new clothes. The Rosary is held and the body is viewed on the night before burial. The following day a mass is held and friends accompany the family to the cemetery. Family, relatives and friends then go to the deceased home for refreshments such as tea coffee sandwiches and cake. Masses are held annually for the deceased on the anniversary of the death.

There are also Austrians who are affiliated with other religions including Lutheran and Judaism which require specific practices and ceremonies to be followed. Please consult the family or the appropriate religious leader about the preferred practices.

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FACT SHEET



AUSTRIAN COMMUNITY ON THE GOLD COAST

Community Partners Program (CPP)

Austrian-born Community

Historical Background

Australia has had links with Austria since the earliest days of colonisation, when it is believed that Barnard Walford, an Austrian engraver, was sentenced to seven years transportation and arrived in the colony in September 1791. Even during the gold rushes of the 1850s a small number of Austrians came to live in Australia. But it is known that in the 18th and early 19th centuries Austrians visited Australia as part of scientific, diplomatic and religious missions.

After the First World War it was difficult to determine precisely the number of Austrians living in Australia because everyone from the Austro-Hungarian Empire was considered Austrian. But it was not until the 1921 Census when 830 German-speaking Austrians were recorded in Australia and after the annexation of Austria by Germany in 1938 a number of Austrians, many of whom were Jews, sought political asylum in Australia. Between 1947 and 1954, the Austrian-born population in Australia grew rapidly from 4,220 to 10,870, and by the 1961 Census, the number of the Austrian-born had grown to 23,810 people.

During the 1960s some people returned to Austria and by 1971 the Austrian-born population in Australia peaked at 23,940. Since then it has decreased at each Census primarily due to low levels of migration from Austria and the ageing of people born in Austria living in Australia.

The first Austrian to settle in Queensland is believed to be Johan Christian Bruennich, a chemist, who became manager of the Colonial Sugar Refinery in Mackay in 1887 and the Queensland Government's Chemist in the Department of Agriculture in 1897. *(Source: Multicultural Queensland, 2001; Community Information Summaries Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008)*

Notably, 89.5 per cent of people born in Austria arrived in Australia prior to 1996 as compared to 67.9 per cent of the total overseas-born population.

The 2006 Census recorded 17,930 people born in Austria living in Australia, which is a decrease of 7.2 per cent from the 2001 Census. The largest number lived in New South Wales (6,130), followed by Victoria (4,910), Queensland (2,810) and South Australia (1,640). *(Source: ABS Census 2006)*

The Gold Coast Community

Of 2,810 Austrian-born people living in Queensland a total of 569 people lived in the Gold Coast region.

In Gold Coast City, Austrians are mainly dispersed across the suburbs of Nerang, Robina, Southport, Biggera Waters, Labrador, Ashmore, Mudgeeraba-Reedy Creek, Surfers Paradise, Runaway Bay and Benowa. *(Source: A Social Profile of Gold Coast City, 2006)*

Age

The Austrian-born population is an older population compared to other groups with a median age of 61.2 years compared with 46.8 years for all overseas-born and 37.1 years for the total Australian population.

In 2006, approximately 369 people or 65.0 per cent of Austrians living in the Gold Coast area were aged over 55 years. *(Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006)*

Ancestry and Language

Across Australia, the top three ancestries among people born in Austria were Austrian (12,430), German (2,790) and Hungarian (670). The main languages spoken at home by people born in Austria were English (55.1 per cent) and German (36.7 per cent) whilst around 1.2 per cent did not state a language. *(Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006)*

Religion

In the 2006 Census, the major religious affiliations reported by Austrian-born people were Catholic (10,530 or 59%), No Religion (2,630 or 14.7%) and around 1,200 people (6.7%) did not state a religion. *(Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006)*

Culture and Traditions

A commonly recognised facet of Austrian cultural tradition is the association with art, music and waltz dance. In these areas, Austrians have made some outstanding contributions in Queensland including:

- Georg Tintner, the conductor who moved to Australia in 1954, joined the Elizabethan Opera in Sydney and the Australian Opera. Between 1977-1987 he became the Chief conductor of the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra;
- Gerturde Langer, was Australia's longest serving art critic and an official of the Queensland Art Gallery and Art Council - Queensland Division;
- Karl Langer, an architect and town Planner, who suggested the scrapping of the tram sheds in Fort Macquarie and the erection of the Opera House with a seaside esplanade and gardens. Langer's ideas emphasising the role of the river in the design of Brisbane are now recognised.

Clubs and Associations

On the Gold Coast the *Austrian-Australian Gold Coast Curling Club* provides social activities to the Austrian community including a choir and folkloric dancing. The Club was formed in 1985.

Austrian-born people also have historic connections, including language, with the German community which also provides social contact and cultural activities such as music, dances and special events such as *Oktoberfest* – an event that originated in Southern Germany (Bavaria) and which has closer ties with Austria.