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# The Upper Austria City of Linz – Where the Arts Change Everything

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I didn't know what to expect from Linz before I arrived, although I could guess from its many accolades that the creative arts scene was at the very core of its identity. A city proud to describe itself as future-orientated, Austria's third largest city has transformed over the decades by continuously embracing change.

Linz is known for its 17<sup>th</sup> Century Old Town quaintness and wealthy steel industry status – a Danube river city whose artistic revival was first ignited in darker days, when Hitler wanted to restructure and use it as a core European base and rebuild as the main cultural centre of the Third Reich.

Now a designated European Capital of Culture (2009) and a UNESCO Media Arts City, Linz has grown to become home to educational institutions and research facilities involved in the development and understanding of media art and digital culture, and has established itself as a European centre for social innovation and artistic enterprise.



As a visitor, I quickly saw beyond the pastel hues (which come to define aged Austrian towns), that Linz sets out to showcase the best of itself visually and creatively. In three days I was able to indulge in the multi-layers of artistic flair here, where contemporary arts seamlessly blend with the city's historical structures, dispersing amongst them cultural hubs, funky hangouts and artistic business ventures.

## **Linz History Intertwined with Art**

Linz doesn't forget its history and nor it is overlooked. On one side of the Danube River is the historical railway line that takes you to the fairy tale castle up on the Pöstlingberg Mountain; on the other the preserved minty greens, soft blues, butter yellows and delicate pink facades of the Old Town. They are simply some of the lovingly restored showpieces incorporated within the city's contemporary expansion.

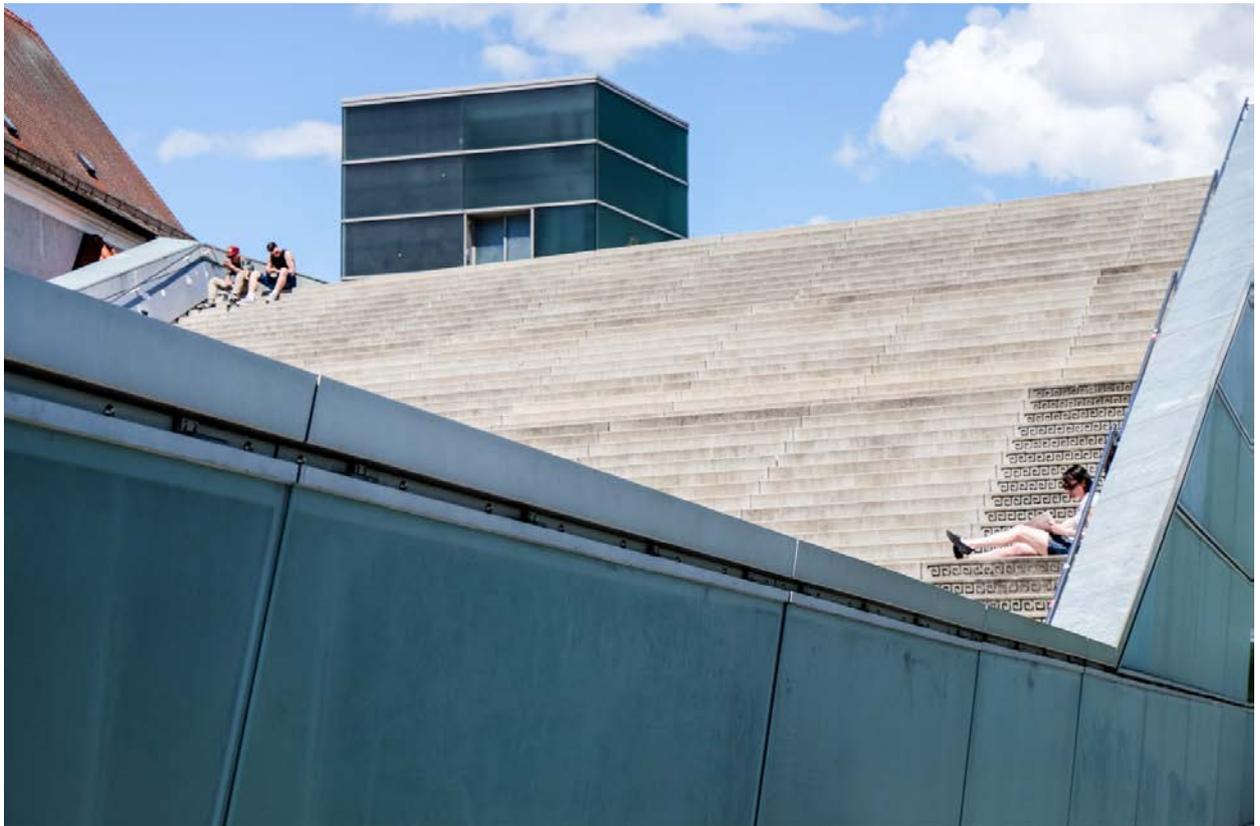




Its riverside green spaces are filled with independent enterprise such as the red van 'pay as you like cafe' and crazy golf hangout by the river and Salonschiff Fräulein Florentine gastropub on a boat.



It's along the banks that I visited the bold-edged glass structures housing two of the city's core arts centres – the visual media and technology focused Ars Electronica Centre, which focuses on digital issues of the future (and whose 'FutureLab' research unit is a worldwide top 10 media laboratory), and the modern art collection that fills the Lentos Kunstmuseum.





The Old Town, whilst retaining character in its residential floors, small stores, traditional culinary outlets and the Jindrak café serving the infamous ‘Linzer Torte’, is filled with hipster-cool coffee shops like Friedlieb und Töchter serving up avocado toast breakfasts and international coffees. Boutique outlets reside here away from the more modern high streets.





[Theatre costume guided tours](#) often bring the old streets and their stories to life via theatre and drama and even the Town Hall has brushed off a typical stuffy civil structure by becoming an exhibition space showcasing Linz from above. A giant aerial city view of Linz is displayed on the floor in one of the large ground floor rooms.





The South Wing of the Linzer Schloss (castle), which burnt down in 1800, is replaced by a modern architectural construction, and is home to the Schlossmuseum documenting the early history of Linz. Even the biggest church in Austria, the Mariendom in the very heart of Linz city, features stain glass windows displaying modern-art designs.





My favourite space of all – the Höhenrausch – in the repurposed space known as the [OÖ Kulturquartier](#), incorporates over 30 indoor, outdoor and rooftop artworks with great views across the city, even to the point of incorporating an artwork onto the front of the Ursulinen Church (the current exhibition theme is ‘angels’).





The wooden tower, erected amongst it all, allows you the most artistic view of all – Linz in a 360 panorama, and the perfect display of its many layers of old and new.



# Arts Repurposing an Industrial Heritage

Industrial heritage has been given a makeover by creative minds and hands, where urban development can be found all along the Danube, such as [Tabakfabrik](#) – a former tobacco factory turned hub for makers and designers, and soon-to-be home to an international research centre for media and performance arts (Valie Export Centre).

[A boat trip on the Linz Harbour](#) eventually takes you out to the commercial port, which has been transformed into a giant street art space. While you can't get off here for a closer look, the boat allows access to the art mural wall, which has become one of the world's largest outdoor galleries.



Various murals adorn the industrial buildings, with works from international creatives, including Spanish street artist ARYZ whose artwork – the biggest of them all – has come to symbolise this area's transformation. During the outdoor event known as [Bubble Days](#), street and graffiti artists are invited to come and decorate the area, expanding Linz's international arts platform.



**‘Say Linz. Say Change’ is one of the city’s taglines – it’s not afraid to try something new as it incorporates an ultra-contemporary present into its cherished centuries old past. Linz is a city that likes nothing more than to treat visitors to a sensory overload, both interactive and visual, in honour of the media arts and forward-thinking dynamism for which it is so often rewarded.**

## **Things to Know**

- **Getting to Linz.** The city is a perfect weekend getaway and takes approximately 90 minutes by train from Vienna.
- **The Linz Card** is a 3-day card costing €30 that includes use of all public transport within the city, a return ticket (up hill and downhill) to the Pöstlingberg Tram, admission to all museums, discounts on over 15 attractions, a €10 voucher for some concerts and theatres and a € restaurant voucher. A one-day card is also available for €18.
- **Plan your [boat trip along the Danube](#)** which departs three times daily at 11:00, 13:00 and 15:00. Tickets cost €14.80 per person
- **Touring Linz Digitally.** Linz not only has 125 free wifi spots around the city but the ‘Let’s Go’ app allows you to embark on a digital tour of Linz in the style of a modern scavenger hunt that via puzzles, takes you to various media and arts spots around the city.
- **Linz plays host to many annual festivals** including the Ars Electronica festival, Crossing Europe Film Festival, the Pflasterspektakel street art festival, Nextcomic comedy festival and the Linzer Krone Fest of music acts.

- **For further inspiration** on social media follow the hashtag #VisitLinz and visit the [Linz Tourism Website](#).

*My trip to Linz was a part of the #roundtripAustria project involving five blogs covering various cities, regions and activities all over Austria. Read about the city of Graz tomorrow on [Inside the Travel Lab](#) – the next story in the series. You can also read more on #roundtripAustria from [Time Travel Turtle](#), [Global Grasshopper](#) and [LiveShareTravel](#), by the end of the July.*