

## 5 Benefits of Walking & Hiking in Austria: Boost Your Health, One Step at a Time

It's National Walking Month in the UK and, being Austrians, we're, of course, big supporters of the initiative. After all, walking and hiking are national sports in our country. And it's not just the fact that they're enjoyable leisure activities. Walking is also one of the simplest and most accessible forms of moving your body. It requires zero equipment, no big spendings, and can easily be fitted around busy schedules, yet delivers wide-ranging physical and mental health benefits. According to the [NHS](#), brisk walking contributes to the recommended 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week.

To get more people moving, we've partnered up with Inghams Walking for a special [Strava Challenge](#) during May: Everyone who walks, hikes or cycles 25 km and tracks their progress in the Strava appa can enter a draw for a chance to win a walking holiday for two in Tirol (competition open to UK-based participants only). #TirolTrailsChallenge #WalkThisMay

And for everyone who's still hesitant to join, here are five reasons why they should still keep walking – and why Austria is the perfect setting for it.

### 1. Walking boosts heart, muscle and metabolic health

According to a [2023 study of the University of Cambridge](#), walking just 11 minutes a day can significantly lower the risk of heart disease, strokes, and a number of cancers. Around one in ten early deaths and nearly one in thirty cancers would be prevented. Regular walking also helps lower blood pressure and cholesterol, and reduces risk of chronic disease. Being a weight-bearing exercise, walking at the same time helps maintain bone density and reduces risk of osteoporosis. It also strengthens muscles and improves balance, reducing the risk of falls. Now, imagine doing all of this while just enjoying the great outdoors in the Austrian mountain and lake regions – you probably won't even notice that you're working your body.

### 2. It helps with weight management

Tried all the diets but nothing works? Adding walking time to your daily schedule might just do the trick. [Myweightcheck](#) estimates that a person weighing 70 kg burns 280 calories during 30 minutes of brisk walking. The NHS recommends a deficit of 500 calories per day for sustainable weight loss. So, while walking alone won't slim you down, it's a great addition to more healthy eating habits and regular strength exercises. Bonus when on holiday in Austria: You'll naturally walk more while exploring your new surroundings, be it a mountain resort or a sightseeing tour in the city.

### 3. It reduces stress, anxiety and depression – and can prevent cognitive decline

While linked, it's, of course, not all about physical health benefits. Walking is also a proven mental health booster. And if you've ever taken a walk along a wild river or a picturesque lake on a sunny day in Austria, you'll probably be nodding right now. However, there's plenty of statistical proof too: According to the UK's number one healthcare charity [Nuffield Health](#), just 10 minutes of walking outside is enough to boost alertness and mood. Walking in the sun further enhances the later. Research suggests that walking can also help reduce anxiety and depression. The [NHS](#) stresses that walking increases motivation and focus while also helping to calm the mind, especially when dealing with emotions such as anger, frustration and sadness.

What's more, walking might also prevent and slow down progression of Alzheimer. According to a [14-year-long study by the Mass General Brigham hospital in Boston](#), clocking up just 3,000 to 5,000 steps a day can delay cognitive decline by an average of three years. It increases to seven for those who manage 5,000 to 7,000 daily steps.

### 4. Walking is a sustainable leisure time activity

Now, this one's quite obvious. When walking and hiking, you don't pollute the air or need to buy tons of equipment that might later end up in the bin. So, yes, walking is a very eco-friendly activity. And the benefits add up if you work it into your daily schedule rather than just see it as a weekend hobby: According to a [2021 study lead by the University of Oxford's Transport Studies Unit](#), ditching the car for walking or biking just one day a week can cut your carbon footprint by about 0.5 tonnes over a year. In Austria, where more and more holiday regions are reaching for the [Austrian Ecolabel](#), holidaymakers will find plenty of walking and hiking paths at every corner, no matter if they head to the heart of the Alps or cities like Graz or Vienna where nature is just a stone's throw away.

### 5. It's a great way to experience the Austrian Lebensgefühl

While all the above mentioned benefits can also be experienced, elsewhere, this one cannot. The Austrian Lebensgefühl, a mix of calm enjoyment, an appreciation of the ever-present natural beauty and a go with the flow and "never rush" attitude is unique to the country. Austrians love being out and about any day and time of the year. And walking is an integral part of most people's life, as well as often a social activity too. It can further be further enhanced by adding a culinary bonus, e. g. when on a leisurely hut-to-hut hike. Travellers who explore Austria on foot, will not only appreciate the setting, but also naturally blend in with the locals and get a first-hand experiences what it really means to be Austrian.

#### Strava-Challenge:

[Our top 3 walks in Innsbruck, Paznaun, Ischgl, St. Anton and Lech Zürs am Arlberg](#)