

the wine-growing region
Wachau



THE INIMITABILITY OF THE WACHAU

The name “Wachau” resonates far and wide but it hails from a short 16 kilometre stretch of the Danube: from Spitz via Wösendorf, Joching, Weissenkirchen and Dürnstein ending in Loiben on the left bank, and from Oberarnsdorf via Rossatz all the way to Mautern on the right.

With 1,350 hectares of planted vineyard area, the Wachau is one of Austria’s smallest wine regions. Nevertheless, the multiplicity of soil types and climate influences here is nothing short of amazing.

Romans may have planted the first vines here, but from the beginning of the 10th century, it was monasteries that decisively formed the Wachau viticultural landscape by not only cultivating vines on the valley floor, but also on the steep slopes. To achieve this, they built the impressive vineyard terraces that anchored the Wachau as a historic cultural landscape, a landscape of stone walls which many generations of winemakers have toiled to tend and maintain.



VINEA WACHAU AND ITS CODEX



ORIGIN

The wines of the Wachau are inimitable and distinctly marked by their origin. In 1983, the Vinea Wachau producers' association pledged to uphold this character by voluntarily relinquishing their right to buy in grapes or wine from other regions, or cultivate vineyards elsewhere.

This has led to a region which is still characterised by small wineries and vineyard holdings.

Special attention is paid to the maintenance of the dry stone wall terraces. It is these walls that make the extreme viticulture of the Wachau possible, and they are a determining feature of the Wachau Cultural Landscape.

AUTHENTICITY AND CHARACTER

For the producers of the Wachau, making wine is an artisanal craft. They all agree on the importance of striving to reflect the character of their vineyards and vintages as faithfully as possible.

In 1984 they began to create the trademarks Steinfeder, Federspiel and Smaragd to cement this message. By using these names, the members commit to a wine style which reflects regional typicity: dry white wine, made without the addition of sugar, or detectable wood influence.

Various factors are expressed in the character of every Wachau wine: topography, soil and weather are fused with each winemaker's dedication and willingness to take a risk.



ARTISANAL CRAFT

Technological advancements of the past decades have eased the work of the vintner dramatically. Nevertheless, much in the Wachau remains the way it has always been. Where the vineyards are steepest and work the most toilsome, there are very few opportunities for mechanisation. The rough terrain of steep sites requires disproportionately more labour than vineyards on the plain. However, even in the places where machines could be used, the winemakers still carry out much of the work by hand.

All Vinea winemakers are obliged to hand harvest. Picking machines are deliberately not used, even in vineyards where they could theoretically be deployed.

INDIVIDUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The use of vineyard names to describe the wines has a long tradition in the Wachau, where many of the best-known names can be traced back to the 13th century.

These names do not just reflect the origin of the grapes, they also describe the character of the wines. The name also often hints at what the vineyard is like, who used to own it, or some local historical event.

Over 100 different vineyard sites pay tribute to the complexity arising from the variations in geology, soil, climate and topography. The personal understanding and experience of the winemakers are the final ingredients in reflecting the Wachau's terroir.

STEINFEDER® , FEDERSPIEL® AND SMARAGD®



The Steinfeder, Federspiel and Smaragd names are inseparably linked to the wines of the Wachau and have achieved both national and international recognition in the period of over 30 years since they were introduced.

The wines are always dry, made without any noticeable wood influence, while any form of sugar addition is not permitted.

The categories are defined according to the level of maturity of the grapes, which aids consumers in comprehending the wines.

Steinfeder®

STEINFEDER®

The “Steinfeder” is an indigenous feather grass from the Wachau and the name for the lightest of the three Wachau wine categories. It was the first trademark introduced by Vinea Wachau in 1984. The maximum alcohol content is 11.5 % by volume. The style is lively and delicate, with refreshing fruit in the foreground.



FEDERSPIEL®

A “Federspiel” is a prey dummy used as a lure in falconry, a sport once popular in the Wachau. These wines have between 11.5% and 12.5% alcohol, which puts them at the golden mean of the Wachau’s stylistic spectrum. These wines are often labelled with their vineyard of origin. Federspiels combine vitality and character and their delicate aroma components make them ideal food matches.



SMARAGD®

The Wachau vineyard terraces and their dry stone walls offer a natural habitat for numerous plants and animals; among them the local green “Smaragd” lizard that lends its name to the best known of the Vinea categories. The grapes for the Smaragd wines, which must have a minimum of 12.5% alcohol by volume, ripen in the best vineyard sites of the Wachau. They are harvested late and are true representatives of their terroir. The wines are concentrated and powerful, complex and very long-lived.

GEOLOGY AND SOIL

The vines of the Wachau are rooted in an astounding diversity of soils and underlying parent rock. Several different types of gneiss are prevalent here; they were formed through heat and pressure during the Variscan orogeny around 350 million years ago. Depending on the level of metamorphosis, amphibolites have also been formed. These are usually found together with gneiss.

The primordial ocean Tethys and later the Danube River have also left their mark, in the form of sedimentary deposits, on the geological development of the region.

Over many tens of thousands of years, windblown loess was deposited predominantly on the east facing slopes, adding yet another component to the geological profile of the Wachau.

The soils of the Wachau are predominantly sandy, well-drained, and warm up well. Despite this, vines often find very little topsoil, particularly on the steep slopes. Here, vines thrust their roots deep into rock cracks and crevices. Eroded deposits at the foot of the slopes provide deeper soils, giving good moisture retention and constant vine nourishment. Alluvial soils with sand and gravel are most common near the Danube River and provide the ideal conditions for fine-boned Steinfeders and delicately fruity Federspiels.





CLIMATE

The Wachau is situated on the climatic border of the wine-growing zone. It is only through the interplay of warm Pannonian air masses, the regulating effect of the Danube, slope exposure, and the warm sandy soils that the desired ripeness can be achieved.

This is also the reason why the harvest takes place later than in other regions, and often the pickers need to pass through the vineyard several times.

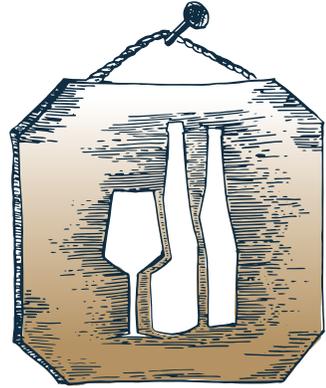
On top of this, there are significant diurnal temperature variations which are magnified by the cooling influence of the Waldviertel region. Even though the climatic conditions of the Wachau can be difficult to deal with, they are a significant factor in the unique character and depth of aroma of the wines.

THE LONGEVITY OF WACHAU WINES

Wachau wines not only possess an astounding ability to age, over years and decades they evolve additional sensory nuances and aroma details. The initial fruit and exotic notes yield successively to a broad spectrum of tertiary aromas – mineral nuances step increasingly to the fore.

It is the Smaragd wines in particular that should be approached with patience, for these wines can be very rewarding if forgotten for one or two decades (or even more) in the cellar. Federspiel wines should be opened a few years earlier, but the best of these can gain maturity over many years without losing any of their attractiveness. Steinfeder wines offer the most pleasure within the first two years of bottling.



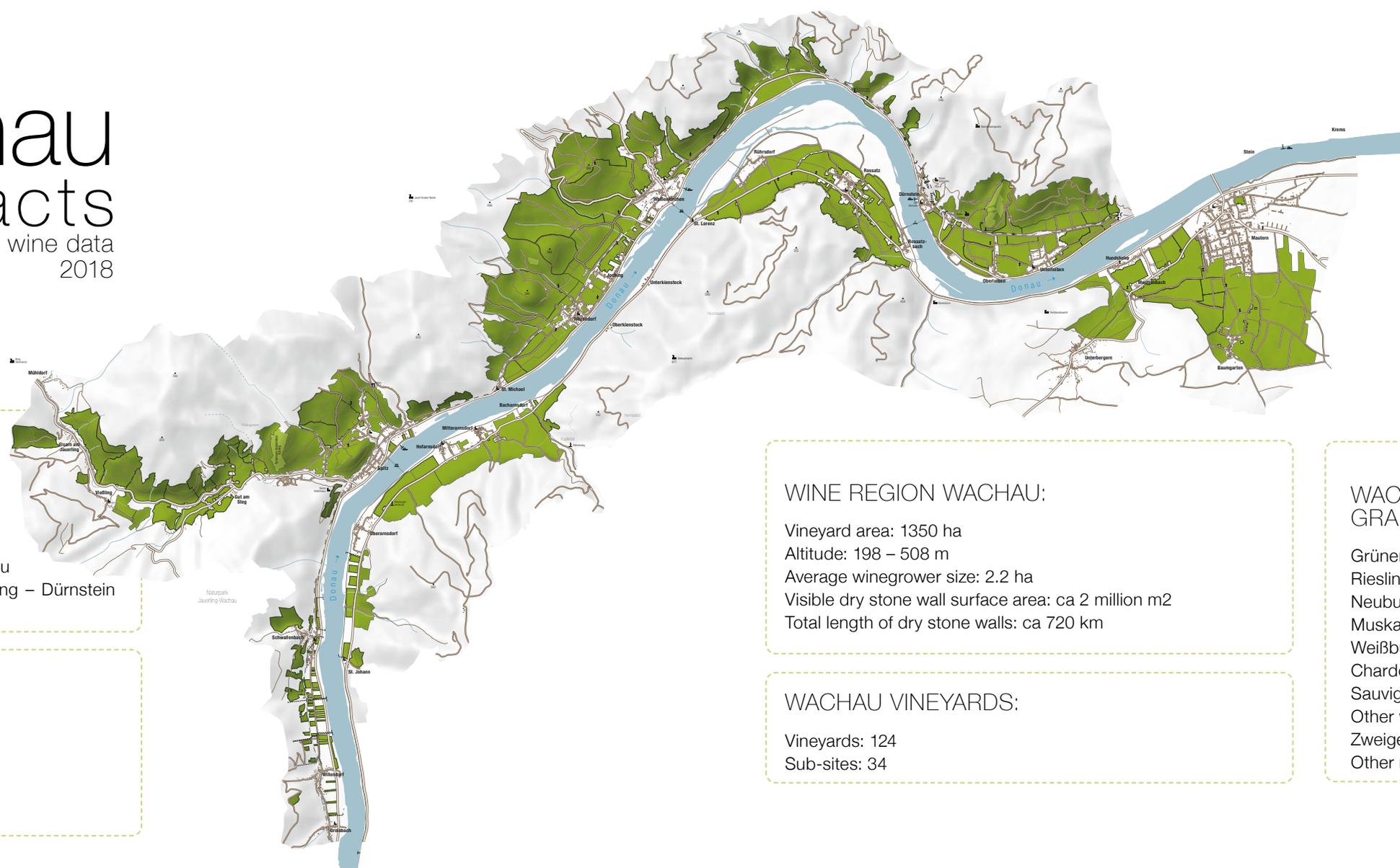


myWachau

Vineyard Map, Soil Profiles, Wine Taverns, Restaurants

wachau facts

the wine data
2018



The emblem of the Vine Wachau depicts Leuthold I. von Kuenring – Dürnstein (1243 – 1312).

VINEA WACHAU NOBILIS DISTRICTUS:

Number of members: 217
Established: August 17th, 1983
Chairman: Emmerich H. Knoll

WINE REGION WACHAU:

Vineyard area: 1350 ha
Altitude: 198 – 508 m
Average winegrower size: 2.2 ha
Visible dry stone wall surface area: ca 2 million m²
Total length of dry stone walls: ca 720 km

WACHAU VINEYARDS:

Vineyards: 124
Sub-sites: 34

WACHAU GRAPE VARIETIES:

Grüner Veltliner: 57 %
Riesling: 17 %
Neuburger: 3 %
Muskateller: 2 %
Weißburgunder: 2 %
Chardonnay: 1 %
Sauvignon blanc: 1 %
Other white varieties: 8 %
Zweigelt: 6 %
Other red varieties: 3 %



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