

Melk

Melk is a small riverside town (pop. ~5,000) on south bank of the Danube River in the Wachau Valley of Lower Austria. Melk marks the western terminus of the Wachau (86 km west of Vienna) and lies upstream (40 km west) from Krems.

Get in

- **Trains** leave frequently from Vienna's Westbahnhof to Melk, with two brief stops en route (about 1 hr. trip time).
- By **car**, use the A1 Westautobahn motorway and take the exit Melk. Melk-Wien: 85 km.

Get around

Walking the small historic town center (of mainly 16th-17th century buildings) is easy; takes about 10 minutes to traverse it. The famous and huge 18th century Benedictine Abbey on top of a bluff forms a northern Baroque backdrop for the older town center and is accessed on its eastern side.

See

- **Melk Benedictine Abbey (Benediktinerstift Melk)** Dietmayerstrasse 1, A-3390 Melk (tel. 02752/555232) Probably one of the most impressive sanctuaries in Austria, you don't want to miss this one. The Abbey is built on a bluff overlooking the Danube River to the northwest and the town center to the south. Mid-March to November: visits possible daily with or without a guided tour (see **Do** below for English tours); November to mid-March: visits possible only with a guided tour mainly in German. Buy your tickets at the booth on the southern side of the Abbey and enter at the east grand entry. Most of the design of the present abbey (a reconstruction started in 1702) was by the architect Jakob Prandtauer. The Kaisergang (Imperial Corridor and Abbey Museum), 650 ft long, is decorated with portraits of Austrian rulers. The Marmorsaal (Marble Hall), contains pilasters coated in red marble; a richly painted allegorical picture on the ceiling is the work of Paul Troger. The Library, rising two floors, again with a Troger ceiling, contains some 80,000 volumes.
- **Abbey Church (Stiftskirche)**, with its 200-ft dome and symmetrical twin towers, dominates the abbey complex and emphasizes its sacred purpose. Damaged by fire in 1947, the church is now almost completely restored, even to the gold-bullion gilding of statues and altars.

- **Town Hall (Rathaus)**, in the center of town, was built in 1575.
- **Haus am Stein**, built in the 15th century, is the oldest building in Melk.

Do

- The **Melk tourist office** at Babenbergerstrasse 1 (tel. 02752/52307410) in the center of town, one block east of the Rathausplatz, is open April through October. Free town map with a **self-guided walking tour**, a list of Melk hotels and Zimmer, latest info on nearby castles, bike rentals, and bike rides along the River.
- **English Tours of the Abbey**: daily mid-March through October at 14:55; cost: € 9.30 including tour and admission to the Abbey. Buy tickets at the south side of the Abbey.
- **Melk to Krems Wachau Valley bike ride**. Pedaling along the most beautiful stretch of the Danube downstream 40 km with the slope in your favor (about 3 hours). Check with the Melk Tourist Office for the best route. The north bank bike trail is paved all the way, winds through picturesque villages, and runs near the river. The south bank bike trail merges with the actual road about half the time, but it has better river views.
- **Melk to Krems Danube River boat cruise**. The downstream Melk to Krems cruise (~1.6 hr) is faster than the upstream Krems to Melk cruise (~3.3 hr). In the summer many tourist boats operate at the Wachau. The biggest and most visible boat companies are **DDSG** and **Brandner**. Both charge the same, allow stopovers, and take bikes for free, but they are not necessarily the cheapest. **MS Stadt Wien** is a popular alternative among locals (weekends only).

Eat

- **Hotel Restaurant zur Post**, Linzerstraße 1, Phone +43(2752)52345.
- **Hotel Restaurant Stadt Melk**, Hauptplatz 1, Phone 02752/52475.
- **Stiftrestaurant Melk**, Abt-Berthold-Dietmayrstrasse 3, Phone 02752/52555. Right near the entrance to the Abbey. Main courses 8€-15€.

For more info see www.wikipedia.com

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