

Villach

Villach is a town located in Carinthia in Austria. It has about 50,000 inhabitants.

Understand

Villach is the second-largest city of Carinthia. It is a railway gateway to most parts of Austria as well as the Italian border. In Austria Villach is well known for its carnival which is broadcast on public television throughout Austria. **Villach** is quite an old city with roots back in Roman times (when the city was called *Santicum*). The city was heavily bombed in World War II (due to its importance as a major traffic gateway) destroying many parts of the city.

Get in

By plane

Villach has no domestic or international airport. If you are travelling by plane you have to go to Klagenfurt (40 kilometers from Villach), which has an airport.

By train

Villach is a railway gateway within Austria, so trains go from virtually every bigger city including Vienna, Graz, Klagenfurt, Salzburg, Linz, Innsbruck and Bregenz. There are also direct connections to Munich, Venice, Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade.

By car

If you are coming from north, take the A10 Tauernautobahn. If you are coming from east (Graz, Vienna) take the A2 Südautobahn. If you are planning to go from Slovenia, take the A11 Karawankenautobahn. If you are arriving from Italy also take the A2 Südautobahn. The motorway around Villach has two exits at Faakersee, which takes you to the centre of the city, and Ossiachersee, which takes you to the north of the city.

Get around

Villach is a quite small town, so it is easy to get around on foot. Taxis can be found near the railway station and in the centre of the city near Hauptplatz. Federal buses go to the surrounding area from the local *Busbahnhof* (busterminal, located a few minutes away from the railway station). Local busline no.10 (operated by a company called *Kowatsch*) goes around the historic city centre. Getting around by car can be tiring since parking

space is rare during weekdays and traffic jams at business hours are very common. During weekdays parking fees are charged in most areas around the center of the city.

See

- **Villacher Fahrzeugmuseum** - has antiquities, which are worth seeing.
- **Museum der Stadt Villach** - if you are interested in the history of the town go there. The museum has a nice expo on minerals, mining and all kinds of Villacher History. Nice to visit for some background info on the town of Villach. Time to visit approx. 1 hour. Widmannngasse 38.
- **Landskron Castle** - the remains of the old fortress of Landskron are on the top of a hill, 676 m high. A fire destroyed a great part of the castle in the 19th century, but some parts are still there and a few halls can be visited. There is also a restaurant, and every Tuesday evening there is a special "medieval" dinner served by waiters dressed in period costumes. The view from the castle is wonderful. From here you can see Villach and the valley of the river Drau with its lakes, and the Slovenian Alps on the other side of the valley.
- **Falconry in Landskron Castle** - A section of the castle is now the home of several birds of prey. They can be seen in their cages, but even better is to see them fly, which is possible two or three times a day, according to the season and to the weather. The demonstrations last about 40 minutes, and the explanation on the birds and their behavior is in German only, but even those who cannot understand a word can enjoy watching eagles, hawks, kites, and owls fly just above their heads.
- **The bell tower of St Jakob** - The church of St Jakob (the parish church of Villach) has an impressive bell tower, 94 metres high. It is the tallest in Carinthia and its present appearance and height dates back to 1847. Visitors can climb the 239 steps to the top and enjoy the wonderful view.
- **Krimmler Waterfall** - On the border of Kärnten and Tirol is the Krimmler Waterfall, the largest of Austria. A magnificent roundtrip is to first take the Gross-Glockner hochalpenstrasse (pass) that brings you as well along the highest mountain of the country. From here towards the Zillertal and over the Gerloss-pass to the waterfall. Then back to Kärnten.
- **Thermen Resort** - The heated pools of Villach. Here, there are slides, vortex pools, and hot tubs for you to enjoy. Or, you can relax on the chairs outside of the pool. There is a restaurant inside and a spa for a little extra cost. The regular entrance was 7.90 Euro and is good for 3 hours.
- **Museum of Doll Art** - Collectors and doll lovers of dolls will be overwhelmed by this museum. They show porcelain, vinyl and wooden dolls made by famous artists. Some of these dolls are manufactured in the own studio. In the basement premises they exhibit all different kinds of craftwork like glass objects, pottery, flowers and certainly a great variety of special dolls. Vassacher Strasse 65.
- **Villacher Alpenstrasse** - This almost 20 km alpine road takes you up to Dobratsch mountain and ends on 1.732 m. Who wants to visit the top still has a bit of climbing to do! The top of Mount Dobratsch is at 2.167 m high.

Do

- **Maibacherl** - located in Warmbad near Villach. A hot spring, which only appears in springtime. The water is hot enough for bathing and is very popular with the locals. Entry is free. Buses and trains operate from the main station to *Warmbad* on a regular base. The ancient Romans already knew the hot springs. Take bus No.1 from main station to *Warmbad* and get off in *Warmbad*. From there it's only a 10min walk to the hot springs.
- **Hiking - Villach** is surrounded by a number of mountains including the Dobratsch, which offer many possibilities for hiking.
- **Cross-country skiing** - Cross-country skiing is possible on Dobratsch and all major ski resorts around Villach.
- **Ice-skating** - Ice-skating is possible on Faakersee, Ossiachersee and Vassacher See though this depends heavily on the weather in winter whether lakes are frozen or not.
- **Villacher Kirchtage** - Every year (usually the first week in August) the city celebrates *Villacher Kirchtage* with a big amusement park. The city can get very crowded in this week with as many as 50.000 visitors, especially from Italy.
- **Jazz over Villach** - a Jazz festival in the middle of July located on Gernottenhöhe in Judendorf.
- **Kanzianiberg** is one of the best natural climbing walls in Austria. There are hundreds of colour-coded climbing routes at all levels, and on sunny days the vista is stunning. The maximum height difference is approx. 60 m. Kanzianiberg can be accessed by bus or bicycle (30 min from Villach) or car (15 min).

Buy

If you want to go shopping stick to the *Hauptplatz* and the city center. A bit outside of Villach (along *Mariagailerstrasse*) you will find an area with many shopping malls. These malls are far apart, so it's better to go by car or bus there. Buses to *Mariagailerstrasse* go from the local *Busbahnhof* (a bus terminal), which is located a few minutes away from the central railway station. In 2007 a huge shopping centre (atrio) has been opened. It has about 80 shops!

Eat

- **Cafe Paragraf**, Peraustr.18, Tel.+43664 4827174 - has cheap menus around €5,50 from 11.30 to 14.00 o'clock. Outdoor restaurant area!
- **Brauhaus Villach**, Bahnhofstrasse 8, Tel.242220 - has traditional Carinthian food and is run by the local brewery.
- **Trastevere** - Widmannngasse 30, Tel. 215665 - lovely interior, Italian-style kitchen renowned for the fish.
- **Kaufmann & Kaufmann**, Dietrichsteingasse 5, Tel.25871 - Italian-style kitchen, it is recommended to book in advance.

- **Gasthof "Genottenhöhe"** ,Genottehöhe Straße 40, Tel.379 18
genottehoehe@aon.at - serves traditional Corinthian food and is located on a hill in Judendorf.

Drink

If you want to go out in the evening go for *Hauptplatz* and the numerous small avenues that start there. You'll find various small pubs and cafes such as

- **Turmstüberl** Anton Tuder Straße 2, Tel.37875 - a small, atmospheric pub where the locals go. If you are travelling in a group you should book a table in advance.
- **Tostenwirt** Lederergasse 25 - a nice place if you want to try the locally brewed *Malzbier*. (a special blend of beer). They serve meals as well.
- **Soho Bar** Freihausgasse 13 - a cosy cocktail bar with a large amount of available cocktails.
- **Lücke** - an atmospheric pub
- **Stern** Kaiser Josef Platz 5 - a nice cocktail bar and restaurant
- **Flaschl** Seilergasse 1 - a lively pub
- **Parkcafe** Moritschstraße 2 - stylish cafe.
- **Koloini Konditorei** Ossiacher Zeile 72 -
- **Stern** Kaiser-Josef-Platz 5 -
- **Urbani** Meerbothstraße 22 - good ole plain cooking. Seasonally changing menu.

Stay safe

Tussles and vandalism among drunk people going out at weekend have been a problem on weekends in the centre of city. The city government reacted with raising the number of police controls, video surveillance in certain areas and assignment of private security services. Though the situation is getting better, be cautious especially on Saturday night.

Get out

- If you want to get out, try Faaker See, a beautiful lake a few kilometers outside of Villach. Faaker See is one of the warmest lakes in Austria with water temperatures around 27 degrees during summer. Faaker See can be reached by bus or train. Trains go to *Faak am See* (the ride takes about 20min) from the main station (during weekdays there is a train every two hours), a lido is only 10min away from the local train station.
- **Schütt** located in the south of mountain *Dobratsch*, an area with huge stone rocks, which are parts of Dobratsch itself after an earthquake back in the 14th century caused half of the mountain to fall into the surrounding area.
- **Gerlitz** is a mountain and small ski resort located half an hour from Villach. The skiing is nothing special but Gerlitz offers some of the best vistas in Austria. On clear days almost the whole of Carinthia can be seen from this

mountaintop. You can either drive up (take care in winter) or take the cable car. From the parking space/cable car station it's an hour's walk to the summit. Bus or train can reach the cable car station at the mountain's base at Annenheim, though connections are poor.

- **Burgruine Finkenstein** the scenic remains of a castle built in the 12th century. Have great views. Today it is used as location for musical events.
- The Soca/Isonzo valley in Slovenia is about an hour's drive from Villach over the Predil mountain pass via Italy. Its deep limestone gorges offer a spectacular scenery and its emerald-colored rivers are famed for some of the best kayaking and white water rafting in Europe. Since the Soca valley is actually easier to reach from Villach and Klagenfurt than Ljubljana (Slovenia's capital) it's well worth a day trip if you're hanging around Carinthia for longer. Head for the town Bovec, the touristic centre of the Soca valley.

Contact

Local area code is 4242.

Cafeteria Nikolai *Nikolaigasse 16* (about 10min away from central square), Tel. 22511, an Internet cafe that serves food and drinks.

For more info see: www.wikitravel.org

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