



*River Snorkeling in*  
**Austria**

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# feature

On a hot summer day, the cool temperature of the river is refreshing (right).  
PREVIOUS PAGE: Along the trip, river snorkelers enjoy underwater canyons and natural waterfalls

**Curiously enough, I recently had one of my best snorkeling experiences far away from the ocean. River snorkeling in Austria was a really fun experience, even for a seasoned diver.**

When the sun shines from a clear blue sky and the thermometer reaches a simmering 34°C, there is not really much else to do than to get into the water as soon as possible. So, we were in the middle of Austria, more accurately by the River Traun in Upper Austria—eight people, neoprene dressed and full of expectations, standing on a cliff about three meters above the River Traun, getting ready to jump. This was the spectacular start of a 1.5-hour snorkeling trip in refreshing crystal clear water.



## Austria



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Freshwater crayfish are found in Austrian rivers

### Refreshing

On a hot day like that, it is rather refreshing to feel the 19°C water leaking into one's semi-dry suit, as you hit the water.

The short walk down to the river from the dive center and the sub-

sequent 10-minute instructions from the tour guides made everybody forget any hesitation about jumping off a cliff. When our team of snorkelers had their masks and snorkels in place, we followed the guides and headed down the river.

At the beginning of the dive, the river cut its way through a canyon, with natural waterfalls. The first stop was at a spring water source, where the water was drizzling out of the porous rock. It was our last chance for refreshment, our guide

exclaimed, before he took a big slurp of the pristine spring water.

Like pearls on a string, our group of colorful, neoprene-clad creatures paddled our way to a waterfall where we again gathered around the guide. Even though it was dif-







Beautiful terrain above and below the water line (left) where canyons with deep ravines, huge boulders and river bottom covered in light pebbles can be enjoyed



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difficult to hear him, with the noise from the falling water, we still understood that we should try diving into the waterfall, before we headed further downstream.

During the first part of the trip, we glided slowly through the canyon with deep ravines, huge boulders and a bottom covered with light pebbles. Now and then, some of my snorkeling buddies popped their heads out of the water, bubbling over with joy and rambling on about all the fish they observed.

### Rapids

Rapids are a natural part of many rivers and our snorkeling trip had to pass a couple of them. No worries, the guides were experienced and knew when we could pass the small rapids safely, or if we needed to bypass them on land. Before sending us through the rapids, the guides gathered all the snorkelers in calm water and explained the safest way to swim through them.



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Guide briefs snorkelers (left); Snorkeler diving into a waterfall (above) and down rapids (top right)







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Jumping off a cliff into the river (left) is an exciting way to start the snorkeling trip! Snorkelers glide down the river on the current (below)

station, explaining that from here to the exit point it is all about speed and not observing nature. Moreover, that the water, which comes out of the power station, was a good three to four degrees warmer than the river we had been snorkeling for a little more than one hour. Thus, for those who were getting a bit cold during the last 20 minutes, the final part would be more pleasurable.

The final advice given was that we had to enter the outflow from the channel with three to four hard kicks, to enable us to get into the middle of the current. As

Receiving the OK sign from everyone, we soon glided into the current with our arms stretched out in front of us as bumpers, speeding through the rushing water. Flowing with the rushing water between the rocks delivered a welcome adrenalin rush. All too soon, we glided slowly through calm water again.

### Speed snorkeling

For the final part of the snorkeling trip, we reached a wider stretch of the river. The guides gathered the group for a last briefing near an outlet from a power

said, it was done, and suddenly I found myself in a natural waterslide, gliding quickly down the river. What a ride! Just a few kicks with the fins now and then kept me heading in the right direction of

### Underwater landscape

Even though the river snakes through a beautiful, lush green landscape, the underwater landscape attracted our full attention. The underwater landscape of the Traun varies between 30cm shallow pools, to four to five-meter-deep gorges and large boulders. It was an exciting, and for many, a completely new world that appeared beyond the dive mask. Here and there, we passed pot-holes, small caves and sunken tree trunks. In the current, we saw plenty of trout, and the calmer water was perfect for perch. All along our trip, we observed crayfish.



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Snorkelers head to a bend of the river with several waterfalls





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A great activity for families, anyone, as young as eight, who can swim can participate in river snorkeling trips.

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by waving us onto a gravel beach, were we removed our fins and masks. We all sported happy faces as we hiked a couple of hundred meters up to the minibus, which brought us back to the dive center.

Some of the group had previous snorkeling experiences. For others, this was their first time. Nonetheless, the entire group was happy, giving our guides a big thumbs-up.

### Family fun

Anyone who can swim can join Atlantis Qualidive's snorkeling trips. Depending on the water flow, weather and qualifications of the snorkeler, there are five different trips available. Check with the dive center to find out when they are running these trips. This is the perfect activity for the whole family as children from eight years old and up can take part. If you are a certified snorkeler or scuba diver, just show your certificate and you can join the trip. Others need to make a one-hour snorkeling course in calm water near the diving center, for an extra cost, before they will let you down the river. You can hire all the necessary equipment (neoprene suit, mask, snorkel and fins) on site.

### Dive operator

Atlantis Qualidive (Flusstauchen.at) is a full-service scuba center and offers a range of different scuba dives, guided and unguided. Their website is only available in German, but don't let that put you off. The owner Franz Pramendorfer and his staff speak English. Franz is very experienced and started his diving career as an instructor in Egypt back in 1990. The in Austria center has been around since 1993.



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Atlantis Qualidive in Desselbrunn, Austria, offers river snorkeling trips

travel.

As the river wound its way through a flatter landscape, the current lost some of its force. The guides ended this fantastic snorkeling trip



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Various freshwater fish like carp, trout and perch can be found along the river

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