



HOW TO START RESEARCHING ANCESTORS IN TODAY'S AUSTRIA

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Photo: Stefanie Freynschlag

Start Researching Ancestors in Austria

Starting point:

- You or your parents or grandparents originate from today's Austria, and you want to research your ancestors further back.
- You start in the 20th or 19th century, and then continue several generations further back.

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You have:

- Asked all living relatives, made photos/scans of documents
- Searched all the usual international databases
- Become familiar with geography and general history
- Put all known dates and places of birth/marriage/death in a family tree

What is next?

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Basics, differences to other countries:

- There are almost no census records!
- Civil registry offices only from 1938/1939 (Burgenland from 1895)
- Before: religious vital records:
mostly Roman-Catholic, then also Lutheran „evangelisch A.B.“, reformed/Calvinist „evangelisch H.B.“, Uniate „alkatholisch“, Orthodox, Jewish
- For non religious persons: civil records (from 1860s)

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Basics, differences to other countries:

- Divorce, remarriage, impossible for catholics until 1938
- Before 1938/1939, no parallel civil and religious records
- Protections periods: 100/75/30 years for births/marriages/deaths
- Since 2014 Central Civil Register (ZPR)
- Since 2002 Central Residence Register (ZMR)

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Research in civil registry records:

- Registers within protection periods:
only with proof of legitimate interest
- Registers outside protection periods:
kept in civil registry offices, not archives
- „Certificate“ = extract from ZPR:
only little value (e.g. place only „Vienna“)

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Research in civil registry records:

- Complete transcript or copy/scan:
better for our research, not all offices do this
- Information from death record, family record:
via telephone or email, not all offices do this
- Worst case:
only inspection of records on site

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Research in civil registry records:

- Forms for death records and family book (marriage) records still the same as in 1938 until into the 1970s
- Most useful questions:
About parents, children, concrete data of marriage/birth
- Supporting files to civil records: seem to mostly exist, often unclear where, often referral to probate files

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Online sources:

- Specific Austrian databases, e.g.:
GenTeam (indexed vital records, gazetteer, etc.)
Familia Austria (indexed death announcements, vital records, directories etc.)
ANNO (OCR scanned old newspapers)
- Lists of casualties WW 1 at CompGen and GenTeam
- Austrian phone directory: Herold or others
- Vienna directories before 1945: Wienbibliothek, partly Ancestry

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Catholic vital records:

- On Matricula (free) for all dioceses except Burgenland (see below, paid service)
- Marriages/deaths until 1938 online, indexes partly further
- Births until 1922 accessible online, further years open mostly annually, otherwise need to ask
- Find the parish via gazetteer on GenTeam

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Catholic vital records:

- Since summer 2022: records of Vienna, Lower Austria, Upper Austria electronically indexed on Ancestry (paid service): > 50% of population; index not yet perfect
- Carinthia: some parishes indexed on Familysearch
- Burgenland: original records partly on matriken.at, duplicates on Familysearch, partly indexed

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Other vital records:

- Protestant: partly on Matricula, otherwise on site
- Jewish: Vienna until about 1911 Familysearch, index on GenTeam/Familysearch, later at Jewish community, duplicates at city archive
- Greek Orthodox parishes Vienna: at Matricula
- Old Catholic, other Orthodox: on site
- Civil vital records (bef. 1938): county administration; Vienna MA 35
- Military vital records: War Archive Vienna, until 1880s Familysearch

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Residence register (or population register):

- From 2002 ZMR: access online or via residence registry office
- Vienna before 1976: request at city archive via internet interface
- Vienna between 1976 and 2002:
MA 62, almost impossible (they do not go to the basement)
- Salzburg: before 2001 in archive, after in residence registry office
- Graz, Linz, Innsbruck: partly city archive / residence registry office
- Smaller communities:
residence registry offices, often only extant from 1950s

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Other sources:

- Probate files (district courts, provincial archives)
- Cemeteries (databases, contact via administration offices)
- Land register (public register, online, older records at district courts, provincial archives)
- Citizenship register (civil registry offices), domicile right register (older version)
- State Archive, provincial/city archives, Familysearch

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Photo: Markus Schönherr

Styrian Provincial Archive in Graz, Karmeliterplatz

How to Start Researching Your Ancestors in Today's Austria

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