



INTER-NATIONAL PARK *Thayatal* Podyjí

NATIONAL PARK
Thayatal 1
Thayatalweg

NATIONAL PARK
Thayatal 2
Einsiedlerweg

NATIONAL PARK
Thayatal 3
Hardegger
Rundwanderweg

NATIONAL PARK
Thayatal 4
Merkersdorfer
Rundwanderweg

Hiking guide

NATIONAL PARK
Thayatal 5
Kajaweg

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Thayatal 6
Hennerweg

The Thaya River broke into the geological formations of the Waldviertel 150 metres deep. Along the river, a tight net of the various habitats can be found: meadows, forests, dry grassland and rocks provide a habitat for numerous animals and plants such as eagle-owl, black stork, green lizard, burning bush or variegated iris.

Its inaccessible situation and its bordering the Czech Republic spared the valley from human interference. Thus, one of the most beautiful European break-through valleys could be preserved in its naturalness. The area of the national park is also fascinating because of the castles and ruins, and the stories, which are woven around it. On marked hiking tracks, you will have the opportunity to experience the particularities of the Thayatal.



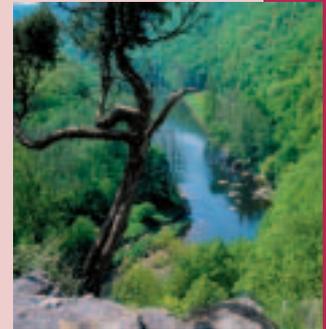
On guided tours around the National Park, you will be able to learn about hidden secrets and gather information on nature and habitats.

In the National Park Centre you will find information on the National Park.

The exhibition **NaturGeschichten - ThayaTales** provides surprising insights into the origin of the valley.

It stretches along the Thaya River to the Umlaufberg ("surrounding mountain"), one of the most impressive elements of the national park and leads through unspoilt countryside and charming landscapes. However, the track presents some difficult places. One should be fit and wear solid shoes. The walk may be started either in Hardegg or in Merkersdorf. On the way back, the route partly follows public roads.

The walk starts at the Thaya bridge in Hardegg. After the steep climb over the Gabrielensteig, the way gets easier again. Now and then, there is an outlook on the Thaya River. In a clearing, the "Einsiedlerweg 2" branches off.



The actual Thayatal path goes downhill again now. Directly beside the Thaya, it is pleasantly cool even in the middle of summer. The very rare yew-trees grow here in places. The path forks at the first fishing huts. On the right, uphill, it carries on to the Überstieg. Fascinating, how the narrow river bends build two opposing Umlaufberge. On the Czech side, only approx. 1.3 kilometres upstream, the Neuhäusl ruin can be seen.

The way around the Umlaufberg is easier (approx. 1 hr walking-time). Here the meadows and woods alternate and the murmur of the Thaya follows the walker. However, there is limited access to this path in the summer.

Below the Überstieg the paths meet again. At the mouth of the Kaja River, the Neuhäusl ruin, now downstream, can be seen again. In the Kaja moat, one reaches the outer limit of the national park. From there, the "Weitwanderweg 630" track leads to Retz and a forest road takes you to Merkersdorf, passed the Kaja ruin (alternative option: track 5).

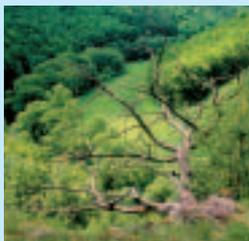
walking-time: 2.5 hrs



From the Thaya bridge onwards, the path is identical with the "Thayatalweg 1" at first. It is only on the plateau that the "Einsiedlerweg" branches off to the left.

Two vantage points leave a lasting impression of the Thayatal. The path leads through a cutting to the Bärenmühle meadow and ends at a rock face where

a brick rock dwelling can be seen at a height of approx. 5 metres. A legend says that a hermit lived there at the time of the crusades who helped the people of Hardegg to find a silver mine.



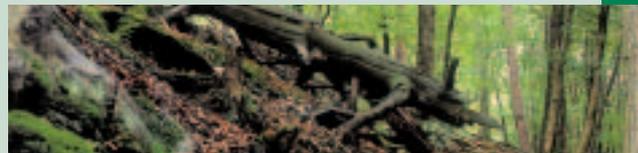
On the way back, the path leads uphill directly through the cutting, crosses the "Thayatalweg 1" path and at the National Park Centre, reaches the country road Merkersdorf-Hardegg. About 200 metres further on, the Kirchensteig starts on the right in a slight turn to the left. This path leads to Hardegg.



walking-time: 1.5 hrs

From the clock tower in Hardegg, on the climb up to the castle, a ledge sticking out way into the suburbs attracts attention in the southwest, the Regina rock. Up there and further on to the Maxplateau (transmitter of the ORF - the Austrian radio and television network) leads the "Hardegger Rundwanderweg" (the track around Hardegg). To the left of the clock tower, a footpath goes down into the valley to Fugnitz bridge and then on to the hiking track through a dead-end on the right. High above the Fugnitz, it leads directly to the bottom of the Regina rock. The hard limestone silicate formation stood firm when the Fugnitz shaped the valley basin.

At the next fork, the path carries on straight ahead to the Regina rock with a wonderful view on the suburbs and the castle of Hardegg (do not climb on the ramps, dangerous precipice!). Back to the fork, it turns right through an oak and hornbeam



forest to the Maxplateau. The underwood consists in yellow Cornelian cherry, blackthorn and privet. The high elevation in the vicinity of the town is typical of the Thayatal.

The steep cliffs towards the East and the South shelter heat-loving plants which also stand droughts and which are not at all typical of the Waldviertel region. Insects find here good living conditions. The western and northern slopes carry a totally different flora. Red beeches, ashes, birches, lime- and maple trees love the shadier, humid slopes.

The way back to the town goes either over an easy forest road or can be cut short across the steep Christbaumsteig, which branches off from the Maxplateau. Both paths meet again at the old swimming place and lead back to the town.

NATIONAL PARK
Thayatal
4
Merkersdorfer
Rundwanderweg



walking-time: 2.5 hrs

For a short while, one walks from Merkersdorf towards the Kaja Ruin, then opposite the children's playground the path turns left uphill. A cutting leads through a small wood and merges into the Merkersdorfer field. A well-built field track leads directly to the Schwarzwald, where the National Park Thayatal begins.

The path turns slowly into a mountain track. The dark old spruces clear up, oaks and hornbeams dominate the forest.

Before the path goes downhill, a bench invites you to a rest. From here, you have a wonderful view of the Thayatal.

Now the mountain track winds down towards the Thaya in a steep zig zag. Solid shoes are here absolutely essential! In spring, the slope is covered in liverworts and wild garlic exudes its distinct smell. Every so often the Thaya glistens through the trees. A last steep passage takes you down to the "Thayatalweg 1" which leads to Merkersdorf on the right. Shortly after, the path forks. From here, just follow the signs of the "Thayatalweg 1".

NATIONAL PARK
Thayatal
5
Kajaweg



walking-time: 30 mns

The track leads past the Kaja Ruin into the Kaja River valley. Rare crabs live in the Kaja River and the otter is out looking for food. At the first bridge, the track forks off the forest road to the left and runs along the Merkersdorf stream. The ruin can now be seen from behind. After two more bridge crossings, you reach a meadow, behind which you will find the Kaja car park again.

NATIONAL PARK
Thayatal
6
Hennerweg

walking-time: 40 mns

This track is ideal for a short but impressive hike on an easily accessible path.



The track starts at the edge of the forest opposite the National Park Centre and follows at first the Einsiedlerweg-Kirchensteig (2). After a short while, the path splits. To the right the Hennerweg continues past old oaks. After approx. 10 mns walking-time, one reaches a forest road, which leads to the vantage point. From there, you have a beautiful view of the town Hardegg and the river bands of the Thaya with its various habitats. Then a short walk back to the forest road that will lead you to the edge of the forest. Over a farm track, you get back to the National Park Centre.

INTER-NATIONAL PARK Thayatal Podyjí



Hiking trails in Austria

-  Thayatalweg 1
-  Einsiedlerweg 2
-  Hardegger Rundwanderweg 3
-  Merkersdorfer Rundwanderweg 4
-  Kajaweg 5
-  Hennerweg 6

Cross-border hiking trails

-  Hardegger Warte A
-  Eisleitenweg B
-  Neuhäuslweg C

Symbols

-  Vantage point
-  Place of interest
-  Visitors centre
-  National Park Centre
-  National park boundaries

450 0 450 900 1350m

approx. 1 : 45 000 (1 cm \approx 450 m)

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walking-time: 2 hrs



High above Hardegg, on the Czech side, lies the so-called Hardegger Warte. Immediately after the gate, at the border bridge, a marked mountain track branches off to the left. From the Thaya, you get a view of Hardegg across the river. The natural vegetation remained relatively untouched in this area during the time of the "Iron Curtain". Some concrete bunkers give evidence of the former fortifications. At a ditch, the path turns off to the right, leads through the forest to a plateau and further to an asphalt road.



To the left, it goes towards Čížov (1 kilometre), where the information office of the Czech national park Podyjí is located and where some remains of the "Iron Curtain" can be seen. To the right, it goes back to Hardegg. But already after 200 metres a path branches off to the right towards the Hardegger Warte. One should not miss out this outlook onto the Thayatal and Hardegg. Back on the road, a steep track goes down to the state border.

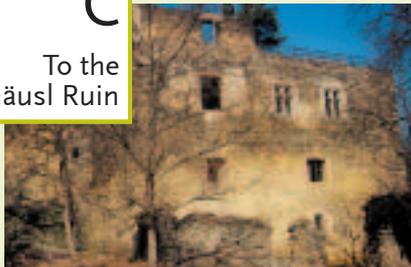
walking-time: 4 hrs

Follow the route to the Hardegger Warte. It is only on the plateau where the path goes to Čížov that the hiking track separates. At the Kely crossroad, a field track branches off left of the asphalt road. Following the red marks, the path turns into a mountain track, the so-called "Schmugglerpfad" (smugglers' track), for which solid shoes and a good footing are necessary.



For approx. 3 kilometres the track goes through old stands of deciduous trees, over scree and passed romantic rock formations. At the same time, the Thaya can be seen here and there. Finally, the track turns left at a crossroad and up to the outlook above the ice caves. Here one has the most beautiful view into the Thaya valley and over to Vranov (Frain). However, for safety reasons the ice caves are closed to visitors.

From the last crossroad, a yellow-marked path leads to the Lesna summerhouse and after 300 metres, reaches an asphalt road. After another 3 kilometres, one reaches Čížov. Over the blue-marked asphalt road, the way goes back to the border bridge.



After the border crossing on the Thaya bridge, there are two possibilities: either over the hiking-track mentioned in the first two walks or directly on the road, on the plateau, towards Čížov. After the Kepy crossroad, shortly before Čížov on the right-hand side, red marks lead through the forest and after 5 kilometres, to Lukov.

Lukov, a place with remarkable rural architecture, a late-baroque church and a 16th century pillory is worth an extended visit. Then, also following the red marking, the track carries on to Prický (2 kilometres) from where a green marking leads to the Neuhäusl Ruin (Novy Hradek).

The precursors of the later hunting lodge Neuhäusl date back to the 14th century. The building can be visited from May to September. From the highest point of the ruin, one enjoys the most incredible view over the Thaya valley. Three times one can see the Thaya and watch the black stork in the summer. The same track leads the hikers back to Hardegg.



Useful Information:

► National park administrations

Nationalpark Thayatal GmbH
A-2082 Hardegg
T ++43 (2949) 7005, F ++43 (2949) 7005 50
office@np-thayatal.at www.np-thayatal.at

National Park Centre Hardegg
Information and Administration
Exhibition: **NaturGeschichten-ThayaTales**

Opening hours:

April - Sept.:

Tu.-Su. & public holidays 10.00h - 18.00h
March, Oct. & Nov.:

Th.-Su. & public holidays 10.00h - 16.00h
Subject to change.

Sprava Národní Park Podyjí
CZ-66901 Znojmo, Na Vyhliďce 5
T ++420 515/22 67 22, F ++420 515/221 115
info@nppodyji.cz www.nppodyji.cz

► Visitors' Information

Retzer Land
A-2070 Retz, Althofgasse 14
T ++43 (2942) 200 10, F ++43 (2942) 200 11
office@retzer-land.at www.retzerland.at

Tourist Association Retz
A-2070 Retz, Hauptplatz 30
T ++43 (2942) 2700 F ++43 (2942) 2700
tourismus@retz.at www.retz.at

Border-crossing Hardegg

Open to pedestrians and cyclists who do not need a visa for A or CZ, from 15th April to 2nd November, between 8.00 and 20.00h.

Border-crossing Mitterretzbach

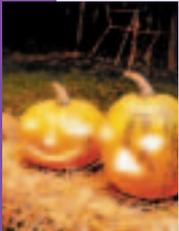
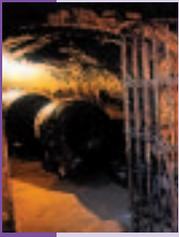
Open all year from 6:00 to 22:00h.

Only for people who do not need a visa for A or CZ.
No bus connections! Tel. ++43 (2942) 20 804

New border crossings are planned in Oberretzbach and Felling (status February 2005).

Please do not forget to bring a valid passport or identity card.





Remarkable sights around the National Park

Around the National Park, there are numerous possibilities for excursions.

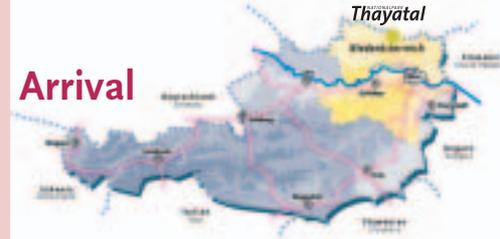
In Merkersdorf one can visit the Kaja fortress or discover the castle in Hardegg.

In Riegersburg, a baroque castle awaits visitors; in Felling can be found the only Austrian mother-of-pearl turnery.

The numerous inns in the Retz area and the restaurants of the region offer a welcoming rest after a hike through the national park. The town of Retz is known not only for its good wine, but also because of the 21 kilometre-long and 30 metres deep historical cellars.

Over the border, the National Park Podyjí offers hiking opportunities, but also a visit to the visitors' centre in Čížov and the Novy Hradek (Neuhäusl) Ruin. Castle Vranov (Frain) at the western end of the National Park is also worth seeing and the town of Znojmo (Znaim) has many remarkable sights to offer.

For more detailed information outside the National Park, please contact the Retzer Land office in the Althof Hotel in Retz.



By car:

From Vienna: A22 as far as Stockerau, B 303 via Hollabrunn to Guntersdorf, B 30 via Retz to Niederfladnitz, L 38 to Hardegg (approx. 95 km).

From the West: A1 Linz-St Pölten, dual carriageway St Pölten - Krems via Eggenburg to Hardegg.

From the North: Prague - Znojmo: D1 via Jihlava, 38 (E59) to Znojmo (200 km); Znojmo - Retz - Hardegg: 413 to border-crossing Hnanice - Mitterretzbach to Hardegg (15 km).

Public transport:

Train Vienna-Retz, for information please call: 05 1717

Bus Retz-Hardegg, for information please call: 01 711 01

Nature deserves consideration and peace!

- ▶ Only walk on the marked tracks!
- ▶ No cycling or driving!
- ▶ Boating on the Thaya is prohibited!
- ▶ Dogs must be kept on a short lead!
- ▶ Please keep off the meadows!
- ▶ No camping or campfires.
- ▶ Please take your trash back with you!
- ▶ It is forbidden to pick flowers or mushrooms.

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ANERKANNT

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