

Kalkalpen National Park

Austria • 20 850 ha • www.kalkalpen.at

Kalkalpen National Park protects Austria's largest forest wilderness and is considered the most important forest national park in the Alpine region. The protected area includes the Reichraminger Hintergebirge and Sengsen-gebirge in the southeast of Upper Austria. The beech forests in Kalkalpen National Park are characterized by their extent and near-natural state, their old age, their diversity and dynamism. More than 10 000 species of animals, plants, and fungi occur in the various beech forest types. Old beech forests are an important refuge for primeval forest species that have become rare, such as the Rosalia longicorn beetle and white-backed woodpecker.

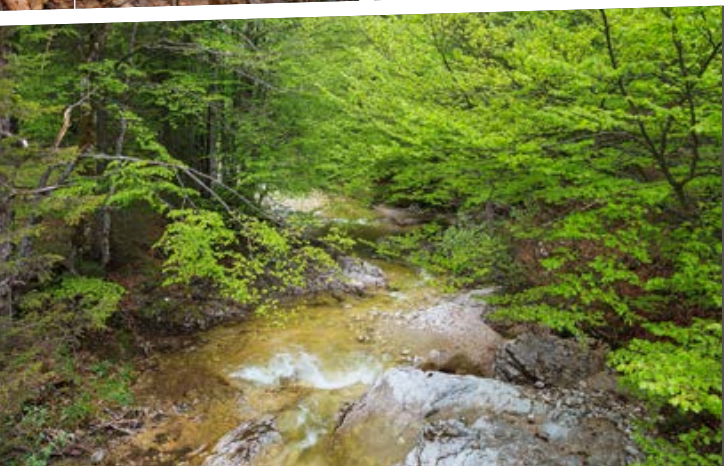
- Largest protected beech forest in the Alps
- 5250 ha are World Natural Heritage
- Oldest beech tree in the Alps, around 550 years old
- 41 species of primeval relic beetles
- 6 different types of beech forest



Cyclamen (Cyclamen purpurascens)



Rosalia longicorn (Rosalia alpina)



Dürrenstein-Lassingtal Wilderness Area

Austria • 7 000 ha • www.wildnisgebiet.at

Dürrenstein-Lassingtal Wilderness Area is home to one of the largest primeval forests in Central Europe. The centrepiece is the 400 ha Rothwald primeval forest in Lower Austria. The mixed spruce-fir-beech forest has never been used for forestry purposes and has developed largely undisturbed since the last ice age. With the expansion of the protected area to Lassingtal in the north of Styria, the total size of the Wilderness Area doubled to 7 000 hectares in 2021. The protected area is recognized as IUCN Category Ia and Ib, with its mountain forests ensuring the long-term preservation of valuable ecosystems with their special animal, plant, and fungus species – because the protection of nature is the preservation of life.

- Last primeval forest in the Alps
- 1 867 ha are World Natural Heritage
- Evolutionary processes can take place completely uninfluenced by humans
- Habitat for primeval forest relic species and endemics

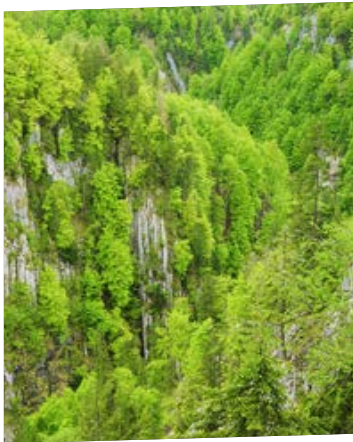


Ural owl (Strix uralensis)



Beech forests throughout the seasons

The seasons set the pace in the beech forests and create a fascinating display of colours over the course of the year. The fresh light green when leaves shoot in spring signals a new beginning and blossoming. Lush middle green symbolizes the abundance of nature in summer; because of their dense canopy, beech forests provide cool and shade on hot days. Autumn is the time of change: with bright yellow-orange leaves, the beech forest shows its most colourful side in October. In the winter silence, when the beech leaves are absent, the shapes of gnarled tree personalities are clearly visible.



Guided World Heritage tours

If you want to experience the World Natural Heritage beech forests in Kalkalpen National Park in a special way, join a guided tour with our national park rangers. They know the most beautiful places in the protected area, are your companions on an exciting journey of discovery, and they convey why old, natural beech forests are so valuable.

- “Durchs Hintergebirge” World Heritage tour (Reichraming)
- “Buchensteig” World Heritage tour (Reichraming)
- “Bodinggraben” World Heritage tour (Molln)
- “Auf den Wasserklotz” World Heritage tour (Rosenau/Hengstpass)

Information and booking of ranger tours:

- Ennstal visitor centre, A-4462 Reichraming, +43 72 54 84 14-0, info-ennstal@kalkalpen.at
- Windischgarsten info point, A-4580 Windischgarsten, +43 75 62 52 66-17, info-wdg@kalkalpen.at
- Villa Sonnwend National Park Lodge, A-4575 Roßleithen, +43 75 62 20592, villa-sonnwend@kalkalpen.at

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www.weltnaturerbe-buchenwaelder.at

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EUROPE'S WILDERNESS UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE BEECH FORESTS



The beech success story

Europe is the only place in the world with beech forests. The success story of the European Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) begins around 12000 years ago, at the end of the last ice age. At that time, the beech tree broke out of its isolated, ice-free refuges in the south of Europe and moved north to conquer almost the entire continent – and its expansion is still ongoing today. This phenomenon of the repopulation of a continent by a single tree species is globally unique, and it is made possible by the enormous competitive strength of the beech tree.

The last primeval beech forests

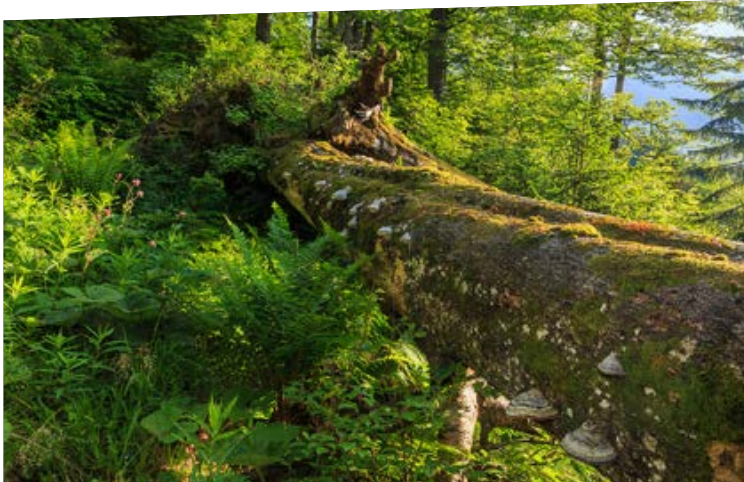
Beech forests are Europe’s natural wilderness. They cross national borders and connect Europe – if people allow them to. However, natural beech forests were pushed back significantly by human settlement and economic usage. The last large areas of these primeval forests are in the Carpathian Mountains. There are only a few remnants in the Alps. Centuries-old beech forests are now extremely rare and endangered in Europe.



Tau emperor (Agria tau)



Eurasian lynx (Lynx lynx)

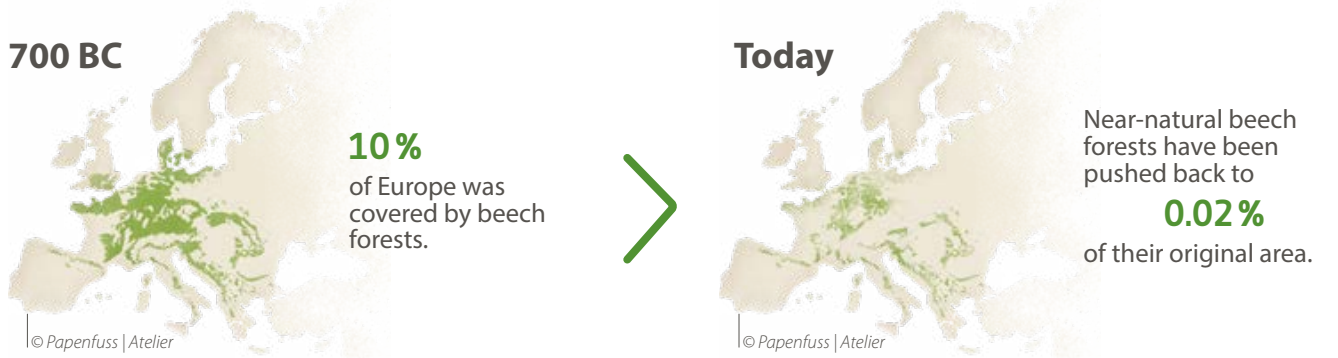


World Natural Heritage Beech Forests

The uniqueness and necessity to protect untouched beech forests has been recognized by UNESCO through designation as a World Natural Heritage Site. They are as important as other sites of global renown, such as the Galapagos Islands and the South Tyrolean Dolomites. The World Natural Heritage Series “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” covers a total of around 98000 hectares in 51 beech forest protected areas in 18 countries. It is the only World Heritage Site globally that connects so many countries with one another. Other valuable beech forest areas in other countries could still join it.



Beech forests are Europe’s natural wilderness. The UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests includes 51 protected areas – from the seashore to the mountains – in 18 countries.



Austria’s only World Natural Heritage Site

The old natural beech forests in Kalkalpen National Park and the primeval beech forests in Dürrenstein-Lassingtal Wilderness Area are of outstanding global importance. In 2017 they were designated as the first, and so far only, UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in Austria. There are also eleven World Cultural Heritage Sites in Austria, such as Hallstatt-Dachstein/Salzkammergut, and Schönbrunn Palace and Gardens. Admission to the World Heritage List is both an honour and an obligation. The natural and cultural sites are intrinsically owned by all of humanity and their uniqueness must also be preserved for future generations.

