



Nasushiobara & Linz

Celebrating the New Year in the Capital of Music

Happy New Year! I wish you all good health and much happiness. Just like in Japan, the new year in Austria began on January 1st. In this edition of the International Sister City Newsletter, I will therefore write about the New Year's celebrations in Austria.

Austria, especially Vienna, is known as the “Capital of Music”, and there are many New Year's traditions that reflect that title. On the 31st of December, many theaters – led by the Vienna State Opera – stage a performance of the operetta “Die Fledermaus”. This operetta, composed by Johann Strauss II, tells the story of a lavish party. It is believed that “Die Fledermaus” became a New Year's Eve staple because the story fits the occasion so perfectly.



Indeed, most Austrians go out to celebrate with friends or partners on the evening of December 31st. In Linz, the main square transforms into a concert space starting in the afternoon. Then, when the clock strikes midnight, “The Blue Danube” plays from speakers and people start dancing the waltz in the streets. I believe people waltzing beneath fireworks is something you can only experience in Austria.

January 1st is a national holiday. Many Austrians spend the first morning of the year enjoying a breakfast of smoked salmon and champagne, while watching the Vienna Philharmonic's “New Year's Concert” on TV. The “New Year's Concert” is held every January 1st at the golden hall of the “Musikverein” and is broadcast across the world. It has become tradition for Johann Strauss I' “Radetzky March” to be performed as an encore, with the audience clapping along to the rhythm.



By the way, “The Blue Danube” is also a piece by Johann Strauss II. It can therefore be said that the Johann Strauss father-son duo is vital to Austrian New Year's celebrations.

Austria Quiz:

What hall is the Vienna Philharmonic's “New Year's Concert” held at?

A : Silver Hall

C : Wooden Hall

B : Glass Hall

D : Golden Hall

(Answer on page 4)

Happy
New Year!





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Sister City Exchange

Nishinasuno Kids' House x Kreuzschwestern Kindergarten

Nishinasuno Kids' House and the Kreuzschwestern Kindergarten in Linz have been partnering on exchange projects since 2023. This past October, a new photo album arrived at Nishinasuno Kids' House. The album, titled "Our Last Year in Kindergarten", included several pictures of the children participating in activities to prepare for elementary school. The children in Nasushiobara had a lot of fun looking at the photos, which ranged from a kindergarten sleepover to a chance to test-ride in an ambulance. They were especially surprised to see the character "Kuromi" also has fans in Austria!



Report on CIR Activities

Scan for details!

Since the release of the last newsletter, I have had many opportunities to share information about Austria throughout Nasushiobara. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to report on the activities I was involved in. I look forward to future projects!



Traditional Austrian Dance at Kyōei Elementary School

On December 11th I had the opportunity to teach the "Schuhplattler" to the 6th graders at Kyōei Elementary School. This traditional Austrian folk dance is popular for being a lively performance where dancers slap their thighs and shoes with their hands. We first went over the basic steps and then tried dancing along to the music. We had a great time, and it was nice to see the students enjoying this part of Austrian culture.





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German Language Class & Cooking Lesson with “Edelweiss”

On November 11th, I was invited to give a presentation about my hometown to “Edelweiss”, a group of locals practicing German together. We had a fun time discussing on the differences in pronunciation between Austria and Germany. I joined the group again on December 9th for a cooking class. We made the traditional Austrian dish “Spätzle” together and then talked about Christmas traditions while eating our creations.



Sakitama Festival

On December 5th, Sakitama Elementary School held its “Sakitama Festival”, an event where students interact with various members of the local community. I got to host the “Austria booth”, where the kids challenged a quiz about the contents of an Austrian lunch box. The students were surprised to learn that Austrians do not usually eat seaweed and had fun discovering the differences between the cultures.



Baking Christmas Cookies at Inamura Community Centre

Cookies are a non-negotiable when it comes to Christmas in Austria and on December 16th, I got to bake them together with the members of “Yashio Gakkyū” at the Inamura Community Centre. We made Linz City’s famous “Linzer Augen” and the widely beloved “Vanillekipferl” and got to experience the feeling of an Austrian Christmas.





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Cooking “Knödel” at Nishinasuno Community Centre

On December 19th, I got to take on the role of lecturer at the “World’s Kitchen” cooking class at the Nishinasuno Community Centre. The attendees and I tried our hands at “Knödel” (meat dumplings) and warm cabbage salad, and enjoyed the particular flavors of caraway seeds and white wine vinegar.



Things CIR Rena finds curious about Japan

Christmas Cake 🍰



Everyone, did you have a good Christmas? In Austria, Christmas is one of the most important holidays. December 24th to 26th are usually spent at home together with family, so having to work on those days this year was a strange experience.



Christmas Cookies

The food people eat during Christmas in Japan and Austria is very different. The thing that surprised me most when I first came to Japan was “Christmas Cake”. First, it is unusual to find strawberries during the winter in Europe. Dried fruits are used in dishes like “Stollen”, which we also have in Austria, but having fresh fruits during Christmas feels foreign to me.

Furthermore, rather than cake, the Christmas dessert spread most widely found in Austria is cookies. Around two weeks before December 24th Austrians bake a large amount of cookies and eat them leading up to Christmas.

By the way, this year I had a very Japanese Christmas and ate some cake. However, cakes in Austria are usually 26-28cm in diameter, so the Japanese cake felt a little small to me 😊.



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