

# It's not just size that matters: Austria at Expos

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**From their origins as international gatherings of nations displaying industrial power and technological innovation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, World Expos have evolved to become platforms for the international community to debate, share best practices and explore new solutions for today's global challenges. Expos offer a unique stage through which participating countries can provide an emotional experience for visitors and present themselves in surprising ways. They create a distinctive connection between edutainment, diplomacy, business opportunities, arts and culture, architecture, design and innovation. Expos enjoy a high profile in the media and among the public, both internationally and locally. In terms of nation branding, they are effective in reaching a wide audience, both directly and indirectly, via new and traditional media channels.**

**A**s a founding member of the BIE, Austria has a long-standing tradition of participating in Expos. Austria is convinced of the long-term benefits of Expo participation - strengthening political, economic and cultural relations with the host country and region, developing long-term partnerships, business opportunities and new investments, to name a few.

Austria is recognised around the world as a country of art, culture and tradition with beautiful landscapes, intact nature, excellent hospitality and a high quality of life. Through our participation in Expos, we aim to broaden this image by including additional, perhaps lesser-known aspects of Austria such as its innovative strength, ingenuity and creativity, outstanding research and business capacities, high-quality educational system and strong focus on sustainable development.

### *How to select the right project?*

At Expos, large country and thematic pavilions with their lavish architecture and spectacular multi-media exhibitions are naturally major crowd-pullers. In this friendly competition, smaller countries like Austria have to rely on especially creative, exceptional and surprising concepts and ideas to attract their share of visitors.

Each time Austria participates in an Expo, an EU-wide creative competition tender for the pavilion design and scenography is held to select the pavilion. The advantage of this approach ("design-bid-build") is to have a broader range of creative ideas to choose from. The aim is to obtain design approaches in which story, exhibition content and architecture form a harmonious unit. The core message of Austria's presentation is to be conveyed in a way that focuses on the Expo theme, is easy

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to understand, captivates visitors emotionally and creates both an immediate and lasting impression. An interdisciplinary jury selects the winning project.

This approach has proven very successful in recent years, ensuring that Austria enjoys international success with very different and unexpected, but always creative and unique theme contributions.

### World Expo 2015 Milan – “breathe.austria”

“breathe.austria” was Austria’s distinctive architectural interpretation of the theme of Expo 2015 Milan, “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life”. “breathe.austria” boosted international awareness about the world’s number one source of nourishment and one of our most important natural resources: AIR. Architecture, nature, culture and research merged to form an all-encompassing sensory experience for the visitors.

The pavilion functioned as a prototype to address a possible future interaction between the natural environment and urban strategies by demonstrating the potential of hybrid systems that integrate nature and technology. The pavilion was developed

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Austria’s pavilion at Expo 2015 Milan was conceived as an air generating station inspired by a dense Austrian forest



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by the interdisciplinary project group team.breathe.austria under the direction of landscape architect and university professor Klaus Loenhardt.

### **An Austrian Forest**

The central element was a dense Austrian forest combined with technical elements in order to create a microclimate. With its forest, a producer of oxygen and carbon, the pavilion became an “air generating station”, the only building on the entire Expo site that allowed the visitor to withstand the hot Milanese summer without conventional air conditioning. By planting a grove of trees to create 560m<sup>2</sup> of forest, the pavilion took an exemplary approach – multifaceted and sensory in equal measure – to focusing on our relationship with the environment and climate. The tree grove’s vegetation featured an overall leaf surface area or evaporation surface of 43,200m<sup>2</sup> and thus generated 62.5kg of fresh air each hour, meeting the needs of 1,800 people – essentially making it a photosynthesis collector that contributed to global oxygen production. This effect was technically supported in the pavilion by evaporative cooling, but without air treatment systems.

A significant aspect of “breathe.austria” was its energy neutrality. The electric energy needed to power the building’s infrastructure (water pumps, kitchen, lighting, etc) was provided by a series of photovoltaic panels on the roof, and a solar sculpture with ‘dye-sensitized solar cells’. All excess energy was fed directly into the Italian power grid.

The pavilion was one of the highlights of Expo 2015 Milan, winning numerous awards, including the Gold Award for Content and Display awarded by the BIE, the Italian Ministry of the Environment Sustainable Architecture Award, and Best Pavilion award for ‘Best Interior and Exhibition Design’ granted by Expo Milan Social Media Managers.

With more than 2.4 million visitors, the Austrian pavilion was one of the top attractions at the Expo. The participation was also a great economic success: a total of 52 corporate events and 172 events with more than 4,400 guests were organised in the VIP lounge of the pavilion.

Austria’s pavilion received more than 1,800 reports in print, radio, TV and online during Expo 2015 Milan, generating an advertising value of more than EUR 11.6 million.

### **Specialised Expo 2017 Astana - “With brain, heart & muscle power”**

In line with the theme of the Expo 2017 Astana, “Future Energy”, BWM Designers & Architects developed a refreshingly different concept for Austria’s pavilion. Conservation of resources and sustainability were not just empty phrases, but rather formed a future-oriented context for the conceptual idea. The message was clear: “Future energy is you!” Human beings could engage their energy to actively participate in discussions and tackle pressing environmental issues.

As human power sources, the visitors were required to take things into their own hands: Austria’s participation, themed “With brain, heart and muscle power” gave the theme of energy a poetic, playful spin. The focus was not on technology, but rather on human beings and the energy their bodies provided.





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### The "Austrian Power Machine"

The visitor path featured contraptions such as bicycles, exercise bikes, cranks, seesaws and bellows that provided interesting and entertaining information about Austria. For instance, turning a manual crank made the image of a waterfall appear. Together, two visitors on bikes could produce a series of pictures of Austrian landscapes. A seesaw at another station generated organ music. And yet another station allowed visitors to make a selfie video using muscle power.

But the best was saved for last; the final station presented ten bicycles which, when visitors pedalled in a synchronised rhythm, generated the Blue Danube waltz, Austria's unofficial national anthem. Although the individual power of each person was required, it was the collective effort that allowed the "Austrian Power Machine" to reach its highest potential.

The pavilion could get quite noisy at times. Instead of hi-tech gadgetry, visitors discovered charming low-tech installations overflowing with delightful ideas that painted a poetic image of Austria and placed human beings centre stage.

The aim of the visitor experience was to firmly embed environmental sensibility into the awareness of the Expo

Human energy was celebrated in Austria's pavilion at Expo 2017 Astana

*The aim of Austria's pavilion at Expo 2017 Astana was to firmly embed environmental sensibility into the awareness of the Expo visitors using a non-verbal universal language*



visitors using a non-verbal universal language. The Austrian pavilion conveyed an image of Austria that went beyond the usual tourist attractions. It presented a country that, in addition to its undisputed world-famous touristic and cultural features, also holds many surprises in store. But ultimately, the Austrian exhibition made a statement: even cutting-edge technology cannot exist without the human collective and its many different social competences.

The innovative concept attracted a lot of attention: Every sixth Expo visitor and a total of 615,000 people visited the pavilion. Media coverage reached 720 articles in print, radio, TV and online in Austria. Moreover, the pavilion won two design awards: the internationally acclaimed iF Design Award and the Red Dot Award.

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### **World Expo 2020 Dubai - "Austria Makes sense"**

With its motto "Austria Makes Sense", Austria's participation in Expo 2020 Dubai presented the country in yet another unconventional setting. Designed by the Viennese firm querkraft Architekten, the exceptionally shaped Austrian pavilion consisted of 38 geometrically arranged white cone towers inspired by traditional Arabian wind towers and made of precast elements in varying heights.

The cones not only provided a striking contrast to the standard steel and glass architecture so common at World Expos, but also created a sensual experience of light and shadows, a pleasant atmosphere, and spectacular room sequences.

At Expo 2020 Dubai, Austrian innovations were showcased in the iLab space within its pavilion



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Featuring natural building materials and a smart, low-tech approach, the whole structure combined creative use of Arabic traditional building techniques and Austrian expertise in integral building design. The cones were arranged in the main wind direction. Well-positioned and highly effective openings for light provided for moderate air movement. In addition, targeted ventilation at night – in accordance with the ventilative cooling principle – capitalised on the aerodynamic lift in the towers. The traditional clay plaster used in the pavilion's interior provided a pollutant-free, balanced indoor climate. It stored cool night air and released it during the day. The intelligent climate concept saved up to 70 per cent energy compared to conventionally air-conditioned buildings of the same size in the Arab region.

In line with the Expo theme “Connecting Minds, Creating the Future”, the spectacular pavilion's holistic concept connected people, technology and the environment in a perfect example of sustainability. Its structure illustrated the magnificent results that can be achieved when different cultures and minds come together.

### **A journey for all senses**

The scenography, developed by Ars Electronica Solutions and Büro Wien, invited visitors to embark on an inspiring journey of experience and to discover Austria in an unexpected way through features encompassing the senses of sight, hearing, smell and touch – linked with interactive technology components.

For the first time at an Expo, Austria's pavilion featured an “iLab”- a knowledge platform and a space for innovation, inspiration, information and interaction showcasing the inventive spirit of Austrian companies, start-ups, and research institutions to a global audience. More than 50 Austrian projects that contribute to making the world more sustainable, safer and better were exhibited in various thematic clusters: Smart City, Circular Economy, Mobility, Digital Opportunities, Water & Agriculture, New Materials, Health & Life Science and Digital Security.

With 1.2 million visitors and a recommendation rate of 96.5 per cent, Austria's pavilion ranked among the most popular medium-sized pavilions at Expo 2020 Dubai. With 16 awards, including the Silver Award for Architecture & Landscape in the BIE Official Participant Awards, and the Global Design & Architecture Design Awards 2021 (Category: Sustainable Architecture), it was Austria's most awarded Expo participation so far. Some 130 events took place in the pavilion and its VIP Lounge, and a total of 450 delegations were received at the pavilion. More than 100 Austrian companies contributed with their products and technologies, not only to Austria's pavilion, but also to 15 other country and thematic pavilions, or the infrastructure of the Expo site.

### ***A preview: World Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai - “Composing the Future”***

Music has been a part of Austro-Japanese relations since the very beginning, when Emperor Franz Joseph I gifted Japanese Emperor Mutsuhito (Meiji) a grand piano in 1869, thus fuelling the Japanese interest in European classical music.

In Japan, Austria is widely considered as the land of music. Few things have as much power as sound. It envelops, awakens feelings and carries messages. “Composing



*Austria's participation  
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Austria's Expo participation is co-funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Labour and Economy and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. For more information visit [www.expoaustria.at](http://www.expoaustria.at).

Music is the overarching theme of Austria's pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai

the Future", the theme of Austria's participation in Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai therefore uses the over-arching theme of music to create a fascinating composition of the future together with its visitors.

In the pavilion, designed by BWM Designers & Architects, music will become a metaphor for a global community in which the triad of humankind, nature and technology once again create a harmonious sound. The first eye-catcher in front of the pavilion will be a wooden sculptural spiral rising up into the sky as a symbol for a musical staff.

The individual components of the spiral sculpture can be completely disassembled and reused after Expo 2025. Thus, sustainability will not only be one of the themes of the

exhibition, but will also be put into practice in the pavilion's construction.

The exhibition concept developed by facts and fiction is based on the main theme of Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai – "Designing Future Society for Our Lives" – and will convey Austria's contribution to shaping a prosperous future for people, society and the planet in the context of nature, tradition and innovation. The exhibition hall will be divided into three areas: Relations - People - Ideas. Visitors will be immersed in a sculptural band of music which transforms into a projection and interaction surface for future-oriented technologies and innovative solutions from Austria. Thematic focus areas will include green tech, mobility, smart factories, AI, life sciences, education and creative industries.

In the spectacular finale, visitors will explore the topic of a sustainable future by using interactive elements to actively direct and shape the exhibition content. When selecting the future values and topics they are interested in based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, visitors will impact the AI-controlled visual landscape and soundscape of the room in line with the motto "Composing the Future".

As in previous Expos, Austria will present itself as a diverse, modern country, rooted in a strong sense of tradition as well as being open to new ideas and being a driver of technology and innovation with outstanding creative minds and thinkers.



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## Un défi de taille : l'Autriche aux Expositions Internationales

**E**n tant que membre fondateur du Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), l'Autriche a une longue histoire de participation aux Expositions Internationales, qu'elles soient Universelles ou Spécialisées. Le pays reconnaît les avantages et impacts positifs à long terme de ces événements qui permettent notamment de renforcer les relations politiques, économiques et culturelles avec le pays et la région hôtes et de favoriser les partenariats et les échanges.

L'Autriche est connue et reconnue dans le monde entier comme un pays d'art, de culture, et de traditions avec des paysages magnifiques et un haut niveau de qualité de vie. Les contributions de l'Autriche aux Expositions Internationales visent à enrichir cette image en mettant en lumière certains aspects peut-être moins connus, telles que sa force innovante, son ingéniosité et sa créativité ainsi ses exceptionnelles capacités de recherche et d'affaires, son système éducatif de haut niveau et son engagement en faveur du développement durable.

Dans un contexte d'effervescence sensorielle et de compétition amicale entre les pavillons au sein des Expositions Internationales, les petits pays tels que l'Autriche doivent rivaliser d'ingéniosité et présenter des idées et des concepts particulièrement créatifs, exceptionnels et surprenants afin de séduire et attirer les visiteurs. Au cours de ces dernières années, cette approche a ainsi permis à l'Autriche d'être couronnée de succès, avec des participations très différentes des autres pays, inattendues et toujours uniques, reconnues et primées sur la scène internationale.

Ainsi, à l'Exposition Universelle Expo 2015 Milan, le pavillon de l'Autriche, neutre en carbone, sur le thème « breathe.austria », avait planté 560 m<sup>2</sup> de forêt dense permettant de créer un microclimat agréable, dans une approche exemplaire axée sur la relation humaine à l'environnement et au climat.

Pour l'Expo 2017 Astana, la participation du pays, axée sur « L'Autriche - Avec l'esprit, l'âme et la force musculaire », avait adopté une interprétation ludique du thème de l'Énergie du Futur, entraînant les visiteurs sur un parcours alimenté par l'énergie fournie par leur corps.

Durant l'Expo 2020 Dubai, le pavillon de l'Autriche, articulé autour du thème « L'Autriche fait sens », se distinguait par ses 38 tours coniques blanches inspirées des traditionnelles tours à vent arabes. Cette conception, associée au savoir-faire autrichien, avait ainsi permis de réaliser jusqu'à 70 pour cent d'économies d'énergie. Le pavillon mettait par ailleurs en avant plus de 50 innovations nationales au sein de son « iLab ».

Quant à la participation de l'Autriche à l'Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai, les visiteurs y seront entraînés dans un parcours musical du passé vers le futur, de l'Autriche traditionnelle à l'Autriche contemporaine, tout en « composant ensemble le futur ».

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