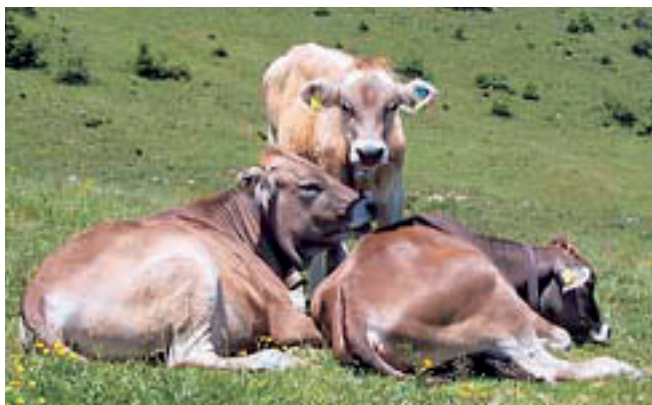


## A Snapshot from Greece

My snapshot impression of Austria would probably look like a Christmas card or rather a Christmas vacation advertisement in a Greek tourist guide. For us South Europeans, Austria and Vienna in particular are as much a popular winter destination, as the Greek islands are a summer destination to most Central and North Europeans. When I think of Austria, in my ears comes the sound of carols, yodel, and cows mooing peacefully in vast meadows.

When I close my eyes and think of Austria, the first images that pass through are those of very young children smartly dressed in warm coats with fur, wearing gloves, scarves and hats, singing Christmas songs or skating on ice. Another stereotype image is that of happy farmers up in the Alps milking their cows and jolly housewives preparing warm chocolate and baking cakes, while it's snowing on the outside.



aus „Der Alm- und Bergbauer, Zeitungsarchiv“  
<http://www.almwirtschaft.com/>

Have I ever been to Austria? No. Then where do all these sounds and images come from? “The Sound of Happiness” (translated from the Greek title) was the book I read about a dozen times before my teens and the movie starring Julie Andrews was probably my favorite musical at about the same age. “Edelweiss” was such a truly romantic song that I was then fantasizing of a brave young man offering me this rare flower by risking his life.

Quite recently I discovered that another of my stereotype images of Austria actually comes from Switzerland, since Heidi, my beloved childhood cartoon, takes place in the Swiss Alps, but who cares! I bet that once you are up there and you get lost, who can tell you which side is which ...and furthermore, it gets pretty complicated when everybody speaks German!

But let's get serious now. Of course! „Sissy”: A fine meeting point of both Austrian and Greek History and Culture. What a movie! And Romy Schneider, what an excellent actress indeed! Thinking of Austrian History and



aus [http://www.djfl.de/entertainment/stars/r/romy\\_schneider.html](http://www.djfl.de/entertainment/stars/r/romy_schneider.html)

Culture, I cannot help but think also that classical music was born and raised in mighty Austria, while Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn and dozens of other geniuses were mere art servants of an upper class intelligensia living in Baroque palaces and waltzing everyday in luxurious ball rooms.

And when I come to think of my Greek History book, apart from the ambiguous political figure of Metternich, a part of the Greek National Revolution is somehow connected with 17th century Vienna, since, a lot of rich Greek merchants lived there at that time, and the first Greek books and newspapers were published then. Ideas were free there, and there, the idea of Greek revolution was born and spread.

Another one, but rather silly popular stereotype that pops in my head comes from old Greek black and white cinema. In Greek movie comedy, there is this character that appears quite often: he either is, or he impersonates to be a doctor, has a beard but no moustache and, of course, a German name and accent. He usually comes from, or has studied in Vienna and he is a psychiatrist or specializes in neurology. His methods are strange and rather innovative J! At the end, he proves to be crazier than his patient (or victim). Sigmund Freud is, of course, one certainly leading paradigm of the scientific progress that took place in Vienna during the 19th century.

Modern Austria is a strong part of Europe, closer to the East, but still in the middle, close to all the decision-making points. The Internet is a source of information for contemporary Austrian economy, politics as well as history and culture. Where to go, what to see, how much it costs, the Internet has it all. After a Google search and all this thinking of Austrian images, I hope that the next snapshot of Austria will include me in it!

Till then, I wish all my best to Austrian Presidency of Europe.

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