Burgenland

Of Austria’s federal states Burgenland is the easternmost, in terms of area the third smallest, of population the smallest, and, in both historical and geographical terms, a borderland. To the east it borders on Hungary, in the north on the Republic of Slovakia, in the south on Slovenia. It lies at the point of transition to the Pannonian climate zone. In terms of landscape the areas grouped around the Neusiedler See (height above sea level 114 m) include the Seewinkel, which has fertile pasture land and wine-growing areas but also black alkali soil whose salty steppe vegetation makes agricultural use impossible, further north is the cultivated steppe of the Heideböden, while in the west the province extends across the wooded Leitha Mountains on whose eastern slopes vineyards flourish. The limestone of the Leitha Mountains has been quarried in St. Margarethen since Roman times and formed the basis for the farming culture as well as the craft of stone masonry, which enjoyed a heyday during the Baroque era. The Neusiedler See, mentioned by Pliny, is an endorheic steppe lake with an artificially created outflow, and is famous not only for its wealth of fish and wild birds but also as a source of reeds. It regulates the climate, mitigates the continental temperatures, and in autumn the dome of haze above the lake contributes to the maturing of the grapes. The Pannonian flora and the terraced vineyards give the landscape an almost Mediterranean character.

The oldest proof of settlement in the region dates from the late Mesolithic period (10,000–5000 BC). Since the early Neolithic age the plains around the