

## **GENERAL TIPS FOR REFUGEES:**

### **Surveillance**

# Surveillance along the Austrian-Czech border is conducted by officials, dog patrols and helicopter surveillance. Thermal imaging cameras and night vision equipment are employed. There are many watchtowers along the border. They are usually set up at the edge of forests with a view to clearings, also often by singletrees, but most of them are not manned. Patrols along the border are to be expected, but even in areas farther away from the border, suspicious vehicles are often subject to controls along the main traffic routes.

# The controls range up to 30 kilometers beyond the border. Local taxi and bus drivers, but also "normal" private citizens often act as denouncers and report "suspicious-looking" persons to the authorities.

### **Crossing the Border**

# Crossing the border by day seems to be better than at night, since it is thus possible to achieve a certain "equal opportunity" in terms of "seeing and being seen". At night the guards operate with night vision equipment and can detect persons even at a great distance, where these persons believe they are still safe. In addition, there are twice as many guards on duty at night as during the day. Disguising oneself as a hiker/day tourist seems to be effective for remaining inconspicuous.

# Crossing the border is very strenuous. Because of the exertions involved, taking children under the age of 8 along is not recommended. Wearing long pants and long-sleeved shirts is imperative, because of bushes, thorns, nettles, mosquitoes and ticks. After crossing the border, clothing and hair should be carefully checked for ticks. Ticks are usually a maximum of 2-3 millimeters big and a very small proportion are carriers of encephalitis and borreliose. If they have already bitten into the skin, they can be easily removed with tweezers - first turn them on their back and then pull them out slowly while pressing lightly without twisting your hand. The ticks usually seek out a spot in the armpit, the bend of the knee or the crotch but insect repellents will often stop ticks from biting. If a circular red ring should form on the skin within a few days after the tick bite, it is vitally important to seek medical care (borreliose!). Encephalitis initially appear with influenza-like symptoms, often causing headaches and sore joints. In rare instances, encephalitis can be fatal.

# Sturdy footwear is also a necessity.

# The most important rule of behavior for crossing the border is: stay cool! The probability of being discovered is relatively low. Hikers, patrols or forestry workers can be heard well in advance, if you move quietly, and you can almost always find a bush or a hollow in the adjacent woods to hide in temporarily. Most of the noises one hears, however, usually come from birds, mice, lizards or even roebucks (they bark in a way similar to dogs).

# You should be sure to take drinking water with you. Also take precautions against chilling or sunstroke (especially during cold and wet weather). First get the patient out of the wind and/or rain, remove their clothing if it's wet and replace it with dry, warm clothing. Give them hot liquid (not alcohol!) and easy digestible food. In critical stages warm them with your own body.

# There are also many other ways to cross the green border, in addition to those described on this homepage. Beginning in autumn 2002, increased surveillance is to be expected along the routes described here, which should abate, though, over the course of 2003 to return to the normal level.

### **In Austria**

# Once one has crossed the Austrian border, in order to avoid being deported back to a third country (e.g. Czech Republic), all indications of having traveled through a third country should be destroyed. One can only be deported to these third countries, if there is proof that one has entered Austria from this country (e.g. tickets, bills or other papers). One can also be deported to another safe third country, if one has a valid visa for that country.

# Anyone wishing to seek asylum in Austria must contact the authorities as quickly as possible. Those who are picked up by the authorities before submitting an application for asylum are in danger of detention and deportation. There is also a danger of detention and deportation, if the application for asylum is judged as being unfounded (no reason for flight, insufficient credibility, no cooperation on the part of the refugee, ...).

# If one does not intend to seek asylum in Austria and wants to travel to a different EU country, assistance in Austria appears indispensable. It seems, though, that crossing the green border is less of a problem than the continued journey within the country. If one's knowledge of German is limited and if one is dark-skinned, it is likely that a bus driver, from whom one buys a ticket to continue traveling, or a taxi driver or any other person may contact the police. The most promising strategy seems to be to agree on a meeting point with a contact person in Austria, where one is to be picked up. Should the contact person receive payment for this, they are liable to charges of trafficking!