

SHERIDAN ROAD

NORTH SHORE STYLE
& SUBSTANCE
FEBRUARY 2017

“Nothing great
was ever achieved
without enthusiasm.”

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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FOOD & TRAVEL

FIRST CLASS DINING AND TRAVEL EXPERIENCES



From Austria's Vienna and Salzburg to the farm-to-table cuisine of Evanston's Boltwood, here is an insider's look at the best of foreign travel and local cuisine

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF VIENNA TOURISM

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FIRST CLASS



A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Touring Austria's most famous cities—Vienna and Salzburg.

WORDS BY AMBER GIBSON

For a first-time visitor to Austria, it's easy enough to split a week between Vienna and Salzburg. You'll have difficulty deciding which is more picturesque. Summer and autumn are great times to dine al fresco, watching the sun set over the city. Visitors in winter can explore Christmas markets or get dressed up for a Viennese ball after taking a few waltz lessons.

VIENNA

You'll likely stay in the Innere Stadt, or first district, where you'll find St. Stephens Cathedral; Hofburg Palace; and a wealth of art, music, and theater museums. Shopping is plentiful, too. Wade through familiar global brands to find the few remaining former

imperial court purveyors for unwavering quality and craftsmanship. Find yourself enchanted by exquisite chandeliers and intricately engraved glass at J. & L. Lobmeyer, dapper menswear at Knize, royal jewels at A.E. Köchert, and bespoke shoes and handbags at Rudolf Scheer & Söhne.

In the modest Scheer workshop upstairs, six shoemakers and two apprentices make fewer than 300 pairs of shoes each year. The process can take half a year and requires at least three visits—to measure your foot for the last along with an initial and final fitting.

"It happens once or twice a year that a shoemaker rips a shoe when taking out the last," Scheer PR Director Daniel Stifter confides. "We all look away at this part because we get nervous. You've just spent six weeks working on this shoe. If it breaks, we

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RIGHT: View of Vienna
BOTTOM RIGHT:
 Schönbrunn Palace
BOTTOM LEFT: The Ritz-
 Carlton Vienna Indoor Pool
OPPOSITE PAGE: Hellbrunn
 Palace, Salzburg



will all be sad for a day.” But it isn’t in the Viennese nature to dwell on the negative, and so life moves on. There are too many würstels and sachertortes to eat, operas to see, and balls to attend. Even if you can’t afford a pair of €5,000 shoes, visit Scheer to tour the meticulous cellar archives.

If you’ve seen the Sissi movies starring Romy Schneider, you’re familiar with a cheerful version of Empress Elisabeth’s melancholy life. See the splendor that she and the House of Habsburg enjoyed with a tour of their Schönbrunn Palace summer home, inspired by Versailles. It’s even possible to stay the night in the Schloß Schönbrunn suite, although there’s no air conditioning and you’ll have to climb five flights of stairs. However, opening the windows to gaze down upon the magnificent gardens and your doting subjects, well, other tourists, will make you feel imperial.

Dine like royalty at Steirereck where merely the bread (18 varieties from eight local bakeries) and cheese (53 of Europe’s finest, aged in-house) trolleys will blow you away. Signature dishes like local char cooked in beeswax and tender wild venison served with onion and young coconut lift local ingredients to the realm of haute cuisine. You should also enjoy a humble würstel at Bitzinger sausage stand at the Albertina unless you’re a vegetarian eschewing wiener schnitzel and tafelspitz, in which case TIAN will appeal with an entirely vegetarian menu from light cucumber mélange to hearty porcini risotto.

For your hotel, you must stay at The Ritz-Carlton, Vienna. This luxury hotel is comprised of four 19th century palaces just a couple blocks from Stadtpark with warm, gracious service. Their spa is an urban oasis with Austrian organic skincare by Susanne Kaufmann.

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SALZBURG

Unlike Vienna, Salzburg is not an imperial city. Instead of the emperor, the Archbishop and Catholic Church reigned supreme for centuries from the Middle Ages until autonomous Salzburg joined the Austrian Empire in 1815. The wealthy city and its magnificent Gothic and Baroque architecture have been well preserved. Like Vienna, Salzburg's historic city center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site although many American tourists are more interested in the *Sound of Music* shooting locations.

Begin at the DomQuartier, opened in 2014 to provide unprecedented access to five separate attractions within the Cathedral Quarter, including a new Museum of St. Peter with impossibly delicate Biblical wax scenes by Johann Baptist Cetto. The museum movement began in the Baroque period, with private collections like the Archbishop's Cabinet of Curiosities, proudly displaying a narwhal tusk masquerading as a unicorn's horn. See where the Prince Archbishop once lived, in a palace every bit as grand as the Habsburg castles, and say a prayer in the Salzburg Cathedral, where black outlines sharpen the elaborate white stucco motifs.

Conduct a taste test between the original Fürst Mozartkugel and Josef Holzermayr's version with more pistachio marzipan and less nougat. These iconic chocolate treats were named for the prodigious composer and Salzburg's favorite son, although Mozart sadly never tasted them since they were created a century after his lifetime. Silver wrapping denotes hand-rolled Mozartkugel while gold and red foil ones are mass-produced. For a complete Mozart tour, visit his birthplace, now a muse-

um, and listen to an intimate live performance of his music in the gilded marble hall at Mirabell Palace.

There are many locally made souvenirs too, like the best lederhosen in town at Jahn-Markl. The shop, established in 1408, is the oldest in Salzburg and deerskin trousers are still hand-stitched with the region's signature white thread. Pick up a gewürzstrauß spice bouquet or Austrian-designed cashmere and fox tooth brooches at Die Goldgrub'n along the narrow medieval Goldgasse passageway. The hefty custom-made umbrellas with smooth wooden handles at Kirchtag would likely stand up to even the fiercest Chicago storms.

When you venture beyond the city, there's plenty to see nearby. Hellbrunn Palace will delight children with its trick fountains, which leave you more soaked than the splash zone at SeaWorld if you're not careful. Daily falconry shows at Hohenwerfen Fortress are also a crowd pleaser and the macabre torture chamber, with thumb screws, a Spanish sock, and heretic's fork on display will make your stomach turn.

For your hotel, visit the Hotel Sacher Salzburg, a family-owned five-star property with a prime location on the Salzach River and the same excellent service – and original sachertorte – as its sister property in Vienna.

Austrian Airlines has daily direct service from Chicago to Vienna and the friendly, attentive service and food is much improved from domestic carriers. From Vienna it's a two-and-a-half hour train ride to Salzburg.

Amber Gibson writes about luxury travel, food, and wine for Saveur, Departures, Spafinder, Hemispheres, and American Way.