

City of Dreams

A SYMPHONY OF CLASSICAL CULTURE AWAITS IN VIENNA

BY AMBER GIBSON

Facing page: The Graben, one of the most famous streets in the 1st District (the city center). Seen in the background is the Plague Column, in the foreground one of Vienna's many fountains. Upper right: The Ritz-Carlton Vienna Presidential Suite.



in the opulent Baroque palace and home to most of the permanent art collection; Lower Belvedere in the Palace Stables with rotating exhibitions; and Belvedere 21 for modern and contemporary art, music, and film. Both it and the associated park, which includes beautifully landscaped gardens, comprise a UNESCO World Heritage site. Begin at Upper Belvedere, which opens the earliest at 9 A.M., for the world's largest collection of Gustav Klimt paintings (including *The Kiss*), plus works from Austrian Baroque, French Impressionism, and Viennese Biedermeier periods. **Prinz Eugen-Straße 27, 3rd District, belvedere.at**

WHERE TO STAY

THE RITZ-CARLTON VIENNA

Four palaces built between 1865 and 1871 on the iconic Ringstraße comprise one of the most charming Ritz-Carltons in the world. Its spa is an urban oasis, with poppyseed scrubs, Alpine herb oils, and Austrian organic skincare by Susanne Kaufmann. The new Pastamara piazza lobby bar—in collaboration with Sicilian two-star Michelin chef, Ciccio Sultano—is a superb place for an aperitivo or afternoon gelato.

Upgrade to the Club level for several daily culinary presentations, complimentary garment pressing, and a one-way airport transfer. Mid-March rates start at \$380; the top-of-the-line and 2,045-square-foot two-bedroom Presidential Suite is seen here, complete with Hermès furnishings, an iMac-equipped workstation, dressing room and makeup table, and bulletproof and soundproof windows. **Schubertring 5-7 ritzcarlton.com/vienna**

PARK HYATT VIENNA

Located in the city's Golden Quarter, Park Hyatt is in the heart of Vienna's luxury shopping district. Architecture from the building's Austro-Hungarian royal bank history has been preserved; guests can actually go swimming in the old vault, and its adjacent spa is lovely. Manicures and pedicures are done in "spa suites" rather than a typical salon,

MAK - MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS

This experimental museum exploring design, architecture, and contemporary art is a terrific change of pace from the imperial collections and other masterpieces of the Albertina, Kunsthistorisches, and other museums. Its permanent collection includes furniture, glass, silver, textiles, and crafts from the Middle Ages to the present day. The MAK Design Lab is especially eye opening, with contemporary projects by artists, architects, activists, and programmers demonstrating how design shapes our world and the way we live beyond beauty and aesthetics. Plus, Salonplafond is one of the best museum restaurants around, open until midnight every night and 1 A.M. on Friday and Saturday. **Stubenring 5, 1st District, mak.at**

vacy. While most businesses, especially in touristy neighborhoods, will accept cards, have some euros handy, too.

This year marks Beethoven's 250th birthday, and so there will be even more of his music than usual throughout the city, including an April 23 performance of *Fidelio* at the Vienna State Opera. Plus, the Austrian National Library, Kunsthistorisches Museum, House of Music, and Beethoven Museum will all host special exhibitions.

ATTRACTIONS

THE BELVEDERE

The Belvedere Museum complex includes three separate museums: Upper Belvedere

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Vienna is organized by district, beginning with the First, or Innere Stadt, the historic core of the former walled city and framed by the Ringstraße. For shorter trips and for first-time visitors, this is where you'll want to stay to be within walking distance of most major museums, palaces, and churches. Purchase a Vienna City Card from your hotel for unlimited travel on the public transportation network, along with hundreds of discounts on museums, attractions, and boutiques. (Cards are available in 24-, 48-, and 72-hour versions.) The city features 100 museums, three palaces, 250 art galleries, and more than 15,000 concerts a year—the options can seem overwhelming.

Austrians, like Germans, prefer paying with cash rather than credit, mostly for reasons of pri-

in his characteristically dry and understated conversational style, composer Frederic Chopin once opined of Vienna that "it is a handsome, lively city, and pleases me exceedingly." Writer and journalist, Karl Kraus, put it in a more poetic fashion when he observed that "[its] streets are paved with culture, the streets of other cities with asphalt."

Austria's capital has for centuries been an incubator and gilded showplace for art and music—both of which permeate the very fabric of this imperial city. Sip a Wiener Melange at Café Landtmann and marvel at how this humble Roman settlement went on to become the capital of the Babenberg dynasty, then the seat of the Austrian Habsburgs and later the administrative center of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Fast-forward to today and it is still one of the most interesting, vibrant, and beautiful cultural capitals of Europe.

For the second year in a row, *The Economist* Intelligence Unit ranked this the world's most livable city, and it also grabbed the top spot on global consulting firm Mercer's Quality of Living survey. Stellar public transportation, plenty of parks, world-class universities, cozy cafés, and distinctive cuisine are just a few of the reasons to visit.



for a more luxurious and private experience. The 143 accommodations include 35 suites, but standard rooms are among the largest in the city. Enjoy a Wiener Melange with poppyseed cake at street-level Café Am Hof to begin the day. Rates start at \$420. **Am Hof 2, 1st District, parkhyattvienna.com**

ANDAZ VIENNA AM BELVEDERE

This is one of Vienna's newest hotels, in the Quartier Belvedere and designed by renowned architect, Renzo Piano. It's modern in every way, and inspired by how Prince Eugene of Savoy—who commissioned The Belvedere palaces in the park across the street—might have designed his own 21st-century abode. The living room lobby is eclectically posh, offering complimentary Austrian wines and snacks every evening from 5 to 7 P.M., and a nice additional perk is that all 303 guest rooms have floor-to-ceiling windows. Fun contemporary artwork is apropos for the site—directly across the street from modern art museum, Belvedere 21, for which guests receive free admission when they show a room key. The location is a bit further from city center, but close to public transportation. Rates start at \$260. **Arsenalstraße 10, 10th District, andazviennaambelvedere.com**

DAY TRIPS AND TOURS

WALTZ LESSONS

Even if you aren't auditioning to open the Vienna Opera Ball, a waltz lesson at Tanzschule Kraml or Tanzschule Elmayer will prepare you for any of the city's hundreds of balls throughout the year. Attending one is a glorious tradition that should be on every traveler's bucket list, with the season peaking in January and February. Tickets to most are open to the public, so take your pick,

from the Confectioner's Ball to the Hunters' Ball. Viennese waltz, swing, and rumba are the most useful dances to get acquainted with, and don't worry about learning the steps to the mid-night Fledermaus-Quadrille—it's just a drunken gallimaufry that's always great fun. **Multiple locations, tanzschule-kraml.at and elmayer.at**

KLOSTERNEUBURG ABBEY

Just 20 minutes from the city center, this monastery, founded in 1114, brings more than 900 years of history to life. Enjoy a glass of wine from one of the oldest and largest wine estates in Austria, then descend into the cellars or wander the magnificent rooms of Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI's residence. You can also take a tour through the monastery church and its frescoes, Baroque organ, and renowned Verdun Altar. Its stories are endless and fascinating. **Stiftsplatz 1, 3400 Klosterneuburg, stift-klosterneuburg.at**

DINE AND DRINK

KONSTANTIN FILIPPOU

Ingredient-driven fine dining here is served with warmth in a dark, cozy



space. Its heavily-staffed kitchen carefully arranges an appetizer of celery root and cockles to resemble a flower, and their fine *brunois* of veal tongue and Granny Smith apples demonstrates intense precision and an eye for detail—which extend to purity of flavors and pristine proteins like Croatian langoustine, served in a buttery citrus sauce dusted with crisp cochayuyo kelp. Next door, O boufés is Filippou's more casual bistro and wine bar. **Dominikanerbastei 17, 1st District, konstantinfilippou.com/restaurant**

MEIEREI IM STADTPARK

This is the most elegant white-tablecloth power breakfast in Vienna, and overlooks the city park. Order a tasting menu that comes on a three-tiered tray and is enough for two to share. Each individual dish is available à la carte as well, and simple orders like bacon and eggs, marinated salmon trout, and nutty granola with organic yogurt are taken to new heights of flavor, although one could just opt for bread and cheese from the dozens of different cheeses available and be perfectly content. The beverage list includes novelties like lavender or cardamom milk, raw hay milk, sour milk with geranium, and beetroot passion fruit whey. **Wiener Stadtpark, Am Heumarkt 2A, 3rd District, steirereck.at/meierei**

EUGEN21

This hip spot in the Andaz Vienna Am Belvedere combines classic Viennese tavern food with inventive modern dishes inspired by Prince Eugene's travels. Try hearty beef goulash, roasted calf's liver, or, of course, the original Wiener schnitzel. Cuttlefish stuffed with black pudding in a caper raisin sauce is also a highlight, and sheep's cheese spaetzle with crispy onions and poppy seeds will delight vegetarians. After dinner, head upstairs to the rooftop bar, Aurora, for Nordic cocktails and excellent views of the city. **Arsenalstraße 10, 10th District, restaurant-eugen21.com** ■



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