

INTRODUCING VIENNA



Karlskirche (St Charles' Church; p80)

JON DAVISON

'Vienna remains Vienna, and that's the worst anyone could ever say about it', quipped the Austrian writer Alfred Polgar. It also ranks among the world's most liveable cities.

The humorist Karl Farkas has a different angle on this. He said, 'We Viennese look with confidence into the past'. And what about the future? Well, it can probably look with confidence into that too. Few cities in the world match Vienna for its remarkably high quality of life. Throw in some excellent programs for sustainable development and we're talking about a city with a future.

We often see Vienna in terms of its grand past: angelic choirboys, monumental palaces, *Fiaker* (horse-drawn carriages) and flamboyance. The tones of Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms and the filigree paintings or sketches of Klimt, Schiele and Kokoschka. But this is to ignore its dynamic present. Vienna has an astoundingly colourful contemporary culture and arts scene; a burgeoning culinary culture; bustling and lively pubs, bars, coffee shops and beer houses; picturesque vineyards on its edges; an idiosyncratic rock and club scene; and extraordinarily innovative performance arts.

Throw in lakeside excursions to Burgenland or trips to the Danube Valley, Znojmo in the Czech Republic or Bratislava in Slovakia and Vienna becomes not just the city we think we know but also one we still need to discover.

VIENNA LIFE

With almost 1.7 million inhabitants, Vienna is large, it's flamboyant and at the same time it retains some of the features of a Habsburg-ruled province – close-knit and with a love for escalating even the most trivial into the absurdly grandiose.

The year 2010 will go down as an important one for the Viennese, as they voted in a referendum on five issues that have been on their minds for some time. They rejected a toll for vehicles entering the city. It was uncharacteristically 'ungreen' for this environmentally conscious capital. Oddly, voters favoured making the introduction of caretakers in housing blocks compulsory. Now this sounds like the Viennese village coming to the fore. Perhaps it is. Once federal laws are amended, it may even be implemented.

Educational reforms to make available all-day schools have long been sought by Viennese. At present, most are half-day, making it hard for poorer families in which both parents work. The fourth reform accepted by voters – if only narrowly – is the most interesting for visitors: the round-the-clock operation of the metro train system on weekends (taking in the early hours of Saturday and Sunday). Although this one was a close call, Vienna's transport authority soon got to work on it, and as a result the capital's nocturnal scene might get a boost on weekends. This will cost €5 million each year but it's music to the ears of everyone, especially the large number of visitors to Austria's capital.

Meanwhile, a spate of building is taking place, most importantly the construction of Vienna's first and only central train station, which is due to open from 2012.

And politics? Well, here it's business as usual, with Vienna living up to its tradition of being 'Red' – all its mayors since 1945 have come from the left-of-centre Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), even if its hold is not as strong today as in past years.

'Vienna has an
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Café Leopold (p180): café by day, trendy meeting place by night

KRZYSZTOF DYDYNKI

THE AUTHORS

Anthony Haywood



Born in the port city of Fremantle, Western Australia, Anthony first pulled anchor in the late 1970s to travel to Europe, North Africa and the US. He later studied comparative literature and Russian language. While

travelling to Moscow in the very early 1990s he detoured to Vienna – the start of a fascination with the capital, which he loves for its unusual contrasts of high and low culture, and of course for the Viennese themselves and their humour, the famous *Wiener Schmah*. Anthony works as a freelance journalist and writer. His publications include numerous Lonely Planet guidebooks, a cultural guide to Siberia, travel articles, short stories and translations. He coordinated this book and wrote the Introducing Vienna, Highlights, Getting Started, Neighbourhoods, Eating and Excursions chapters.

Caroline Sieg



Caroline's relationship with Vienna began after high school, when her best friend relocated to the city. Subsequent trips to the capital yielded countless hikes in the Wienerwald, *Heurigen*-filled afternoons and a profound ob-

session with *Würstchen mit Kren* (sausages with freshly grated horseradish) and *Mohr im Hemd* (steamed chocolate-hazelnut pudding). These days, this half-Swiss, half-American travel writer hangs her hat in Berlin.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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GETTING STARTED

With cultural attractions that are the envy of many European capitals, and only 1.7 million occupants, Vienna is the kind of place you might explore over a few days or over a lifetime. Its compact size means that much of your exploration can be done on foot, complemented by public transport to get around the suburbs. Even first-time travellers are likely to land running in the metropolis. With a few exceptions, it's also a place where you can wake up and plan your day according to whim.

WHEN TO GO

Vienna's character changes with the seasons. The city looks just as glorious – some would say even more so – under a layer of snow; it glows in a warm spring or colourful autumn, and swelters and bends in the heat of a midsummer sun. In terms of climate, it is in a relatively mild continental zone. During a cold winter the thermometer can plunge to chilly depths and may limit the time you spend outdoors to a few hours; the advantage of winter, however, is that sights and the city at large are comfortably free of crowds. A warm spring is an ideal time to visit – there are few crowds, the parks and gardens are coming to life and the temperatures are high enough for you to enjoy outdoor as well as indoor pursuits. Come Christmas the good burghers of Vienna roll out the welcome mat with *Christkindlmärkte*, Christmas markets full of charm and grace, and the all-important *Glühwein* (mulled wine).

In summer you will find an enormous range of musical events. The granddaddy of them all is the *Donauinselfest*, a free concert attracting more than three million screaming revellers! One drawback worth keeping in mind: some of the city's world-famous institutions, such as the Vienna Boys' Choir, the Lipizzaner stallions and the Staatsoper, all take breaks.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Vienna's calendar of events is a ceaseless cascade of classical concerts, jazz and rock festivals, balls, gay parades, communist gatherings and art happenings. The following is by no means a complete listing of annual events; check the Tourist Info Wien website (www.wien.info) for a more comprehensive list, or read the weekly *Falter* paper. For a full list of public holidays, see [p234](#).

January & February

FASCHING

The Fasching season, a carnival time of costumes and parties, actually runs from November to Ash Wednesday, but February is traditionally the time when most of the action takes place. Look for street parties and drunken Viennese in silly get-ups.

OPERNBALL

www.wiener-staatsoper.at; 01, Staatsoper
Of the 300 or so balls held in January and February, the Opernball (Opera Ball) is number one. Held in the Staatsoper, it's a supremely lavish affair, with the men in tails and women in shining white gowns.

March & April

INTERNATIONAL AKKORDEON FESTIVAL

www.akkordeonfestival.at, in German

Running from the end of February through to the end of March, the International Accordion Festival features exceptional players from as close as the Balkans and as far away as New Zealand.

FRÜHLINGSFESTIVAL

Alternating each year between the Musikverein and the Konzerthaus, this spring festival of classical concerts generally runs from the end of March to the beginning of April.

ARGUS BIKE FESTIVAL

www.bikefestival.at, in German

Kicking off the cycling season in early or mid-April, this two-day free festival held on Rathausplatz is a cross between a trade fair and a celebration of the bicycle, with a dirt bike contest, test courses, electric bicycles

and high-performance bikes on show and going through their paces.

OSTERKLING FESTIVAL

www.theater-wien.at

Orchestral and chamber music recitals fill some of Vienna's best music halls during this 'Sound of Easter' festival. The highlight is the opening concert, which features the Vienna Philharmonic.

May & June

VIENNA MARATHON

☎ 606 95 10; www.vienna-marathon.com

The city's top road race is held in April or May.

LIFE BALL

www.lifeball.org

This AIDS charity event is one of the highlights of the ball-season calendar and is often graced by international celebrities. It's normally held in the Rathaus around the middle of May (though it can be as late as July) and attracts some colourful and flamboyant outfits. Mottos for 2011 and 2012, respectively, are 'Spread the Wings of Tolerance!' and 'Fight the Flames of Ignorance!'

SOHO IN OTTAKRING

www.sohoinottakring.at, in German

The multicultural streets bordering the Gürtel in Ottakring come to life in May and June with Soho in Ottakring. Hairdressing salons, disused offices and fishmongers are transformed into art galleries, bars, band venues and art shops, all of which attract an arty crowd.

IDENTITIES – QUEER FILM FESTIVAL

www.identities.at, in German

Identities is easily Vienna's second largest film festival, showcasing queer movies from around the world. It normally takes place at the beginning of June every second year (2011 is an on-year).

DONAUINSELFEST

www.donauinselfest.at, in German

For the younger generation, the Donauinselfest on the Donauinsel (Danube Island) occupies the top spot on the year's events calendar. Held over three days on a week-

end in late June, it features a feast of rock, pop, folk and country performers, and attracts almost three million onlookers. Best of all, it's free!

REGENBOGEN PARADE

www.hosiwien.at, in German

In late June Vienna is taken over by the Regenbogen Parade (Rainbow Parade), a predominantly gay and lesbian festival attracting some 150,000 people. Expect loads of fun, frolicking and bare skin.

WIENER FESTWOCHE

☎ 589 22 22; www.festwochen.or.at

Considered to be one of the highlights of the year, the Vienna Festival hosts a wide-ranging program of the arts, based in various venues around town, from May to mid-June. Expect quality performance groups from around the world.

VIENNA INDEPENDENT SHORTS

<http://viennashorts.com>

Vienna's premiere short film festival attracts entries mostly from German-speaking countries; it's usually held at one cinema over seven days.

July & August

JAZZ FEST WIEN

☎ 712 42 24; www.viennajazz.org

From the end of June to mid-July, Vienna relaxes to the smooth sound of jazz, blues and soul flowing from the Staatsoper and a number of clubs across town.

IMPULSTANZ

☎ 523 55 58; www.impulstanz.com

Vienna's premiere avant-garde dance festival attracts an array of internationally renowned troupes and newcomers between mid-July and mid-August. Performances are held in the MuseumsQuartier, Volkstheater and a number of small venues.

KLINGBOGEN FESTIVAL

☎ 588 85; www.theater-wien.at

The KlangBogen Festival ensures things don't flag during the summer holidays. Running from July to August, it features operas, operettas and orchestral music in the Theater an der Wien plus a few other locations around town.

MUSIKFILM FESTIVAL

01, Rathausplatz

Once the sun sets in July and August, the Rathausplatz is home to screenings of operas, operettas and concerts. They're all free, so turn up early for a good seat. Food stands and bars are close at hand and are swamped by hordes of people, creating a carnival-like atmosphere.

GÜRTEL NIGHTWALK

07, 08, 09, the Gürtel

Usually on the last Saturday night in August, a handful of open stages are set up near locations on the Gürtel U-Bahn viaduct, featuring local independent music acts.

VOLKSSTIMMEFEST

www.volksstimmefest.at, in German

For a weekend in late August or early September, the Communist Party fills the Prater with music and art. The festival, which has been running since 1945, features some 30 live acts and attracts a bizarre mix of hippies, world music fans and party supporters.

September & October

LANGE NACHT DER MUSEEN

<http://langenacht.orf.at>; adult/child €12/10

On the first Saturday of October, around 500 museums nationwide open their doors to visitors between 6pm and 1am. One ticket (available at museums) allows entry to all of them, and includes public transport around town. You'll be hard pushed to visit all 80-plus museums in Vienna though.

VIENNALE FILM FESTIVAL

☎ 526 59 47; www.viennale.at

The country's best film festival features fringe and independent films from around the world. It is held every year in October, with screenings at numerous locations around the city. See [p198](#) for more details.

November & December

WIEN MODERN FESTIVAL

☎ 242 00; www.wienmodern.at

This festival takes an opposing view to many of the city's music festivals by featuring modern classical and avant-garde music. The festival runs throughout

November, with many performances in the Konzerthaus.

CHRISTKINDLMÄRKTE

Vienna's much-loved Christmas market season runs from mid-November to Christmas Day. See [p147](#) for more details.

SILVESTER

The city council transforms the Innere Stadt into one huge party venue for Silvester (New Year's Eve). It's an uproarious affair, with more than enough alcohol consumed and far too many fireworks let off in crowded streets.

COSTS & MONEY

By European standards, Vienna isn't an expensive city. It's cheaper than Paris, London or Rome, but more expensive than Prague or Budapest. Shopping splurges or special items aside, accommodation and eating out will be the most expensive items in your budget.

Bearing in mind financial and other regular crises, there are numerous ways of getting best value out of a trip. Some involve advance planning and booking ahead (see [p20](#)). At the 'hard class' end of the budget the obvious way to reduce costs is to stay in hostels and grab your food from market stalls or supermarkets. See the boxed texts in each neighbourhood of the eating section of this book for selected market locations (eg [p158](#)).

For those on a midrange budget or business travellers, booking well ahead at the lower end of the scale of midrange hotels, especially using the internet, will keep the purse in reasonable shape and the eyebrows straight in the accounts department. See the Sleeping chapter ([p207](#)) for more on price ranges.

If you're in town for an all-out splurge on an upmarket hotel and fine dining and cultural experiences, the sky will be your limit – in Vienna there is no shortage of very, very fine places where you can enjoy this kind of experience.

For most travellers eating out well is part of the experience of a city, and Vienna is one place where fine food is available for all budgets. One trick is to order the set lunch menus or lunch dishes, which are invariably cheaper but no less worthy than their evening counterparts.

The cost of visiting museums and enjoying performing arts can be kept in check by

buying combined tickets for museums and theatre 'rush' tickets a couple of hours before performances. Also see the 'It's Free' boxes in each neighbourhood section (eg p71) for some ideas. Some museums also have one day each month with free admission.

On average, staying at a two- to four-star hotel (double room per person), eating out twice a day, taking in a show and a couple of museums and downing a few cups of coffee will set you back around €170 to €250 per day. Anyone staying in dorms in hostels and eating low-cost can expect to survive on about €45 to €50 per day.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Checking out a few things on good websites before you leave can save you a lot of time and help you quickly find your feet when you arrive. As well as the excellent official websites, there are a few informal ones that offer good insights.

Austria Press and Information Service (www.austria.org) Run by the Austrian embassy in Washington DC, this gives a good introduction to the country and the capital, including a recipe for Wiener Schnitzel.

Falter (www.falter.at, in German) This is Vienna's listings newspaper – a wealth of information for what's on.

Hauptstadt (www.hauptstadt.at, in German) Film programs, clubbing dates, music and other events, arranged in a useful calendar format.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) A first stop for Vienna highlights at a glance, blogs, and for hot topics and tips on the Thorn Tree from fellow travellers.

MuseumsQuartier (www.mqw.at) All about the MQ and its venues. By clicking on 'Links' (at the bottom) you reach a great list of hotlinks to cultural institutions.

Tourist-Info Wien (www.wien.info) The main official Vienna city tourist information website. As well as having the usual offerings it has sections such as www.viennahype.at, with a more happening angle.

Vienna Metblogs (<http://vienna.metblogs.com>) This multilingual blog site ranges from the banal to the inspiring and insightful – it's as unpredictable and insightful as the Metblogs get.

Vienna Webservice (www.wien.gv.at) The official Vienna city council website, with everything from the current weather through to interactive maps for address searches, information on sights, and services for Viennese residents. Not all of it is in full length in English, but a lot is.

Virtual Vienna Net (www.virtualvienna.net) Informative nonofficial website with a forum and some good articles,

HOW MUCH?

72-hour transport ticket (from machine) €13.60

Bratwurst from a stand €2.80

Glass of beer in Beisl (0.5L) €3.40

An Achterl of wine (0.125L) €2.90

Nightclub entry €5-15

Copy of Vienna's newspaper, Falter €2.40

20-minute Fiaker (horse & carriage) ride €40

Box of 23 Mozart Kügel'n (marzipan chocolates) €9.90

120mm Perzys Wiener Schneekugel (Perzy Vienna Snowball) €24

such as on the Jewish Vienna pages. Interesting for short-term visitors as well as expats.

Wieninternational (www.wieninternational.at) Weekly bilingual (German and English) online magazine with short and feature articles on all aspects of culture, economy and society, often with a focus on European integration.

Wien-Konkret (www.wien-konkret.at, in German) Politics, sport, nightlife and much more – a good source of information.

Wikipedia Districts of Vienna (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Districts_of_Vienna) Detailed overview of Vienna's districts.

SUSTAINABLE VIENNA

Part of Vienna's high quality of life is its leading role in Europe that sees it right near the top of the list of that continent's 'green' cities. This is a key aspect of its status as one of the world's most liveable cities. The city council, for instance, has its own climate protection program with goals to reduce greenhouse gases by 21% on the 1990 level. A good way to reduce your own impact from the outset is to use rail transport as much as possible if travelling from within Europe.

Vienna is very easy to get around, either by foot or by using the city's cheap and excellent public transport. Spend a few minutes sniffing the fumes of the Gürtel – a six-lane, fume-packed highway to hell – and you will probably appreciate the benefits of Vienna's trams and subway as an alternative to cars. Night buses are available, which are a more climate-friendly choice than taxis and, in a 2010 referendum, a majority of Viennese who voted were in favour of the subways running

ADVANCE PLANNING

If you are in town between June and early September, advance planning is especially useful to avoid long queues. Book admission tickets online when possible (or go early to buy your ticket) and visit early or late in the day. To avoid bottlenecks, plan your itinerary with a sprinkling of outdoor landmarks – cemeteries, parks, the Danube River and the canal – or with less usual sights such as Vienna's Justizpalast (p74) or the main university building (p73).

Well ahead: Before you book your train or plane to Vienna browse the accommodation options online (p207) or use the official city tourist website www.wien.info.at for bookings – it could save you a lot of time later. For a top restaurant with limited tables such as Restaurant Bauer (p155) or one that is immensely popular such as Kim Kocht (p164), reserve well ahead. If you've got your heart set on a show at the Spanish Riding School (p67), check out the performance dates on the website and book as early as possible. The same applies in summer to other classical arts and theatre if you want good seats for a specific performance.

One week ahead: If you're travelling in summer, now is the time to go online and book your ticket for Schloss Schönbrunn (p118), Schloss Belvedere (p102) and the Kaiserappartements (p66). This is also the time to book a table in one of the upmarket restaurants if you want to be sure of a place on a Friday or Saturday.

One or two days ahead: Check *Falter* (p19), websites of venues in the Drinking & Nightlife chapter of this book, the official city website (p19), and start reading blogs such as Vienna Metblogs (p19) to plan your day or night.

all night. If implemented, this will make getting around in the small hours even easier.

Another great transport option is the inexpensive Citybike (see p228) – a network of more than 60 bicycle hire stations across the city (two at the Prater). You register your Visa or MasterCard for security, a token €1 is deducted, and after the first hour (which is free) the fee of €1 per hour is charged. If you're spending a month or so in Vienna, consider buying an inexpensive second-hand bike and enjoying the pleasures of Vienna's cycling paths.

Much has changed in recent years in Vienna when it comes to restaurants and minimising the impact on the environment. Austria has an *Umweltzweichen* (Environmental Badge) that offers orientation as to whether a restaurant or hotel has adopted environmentally friendly practices. While its list of places is not enormous (about 90 in Vienna), there are many other establishments that fill some but not all of the criteria. For instance, the capital

is experiencing a boom in the use of regional produce. This is all about chefs going 'locavore' and using quality local produce to create fresh flavours. It's also sound environmental practice. A great deal of this fresh produce comes from the nearby Waldviertel. Meats are often organic and sourced from farms where the animals are not simply the product of *Fleischfabriken* (meat factories). A place like Die Burgermacher (p164) offers a green alternative to the typical global franchise hamburger joint. See the GreenDex on p259 for a list of places with good environmental credentials.

Accommodations with green credentials are less plentiful but some do exist; you will find the ones we liked in the GreenDex too.

Finally, Vienna's green spaces are great for relaxing – and there's no shortage of them. Visit the Lobau (p115), the Donauinsel (p115) and the Donau-Auen National Park, or any one of the parks in town – just remember to sort your rubbish whenever possible or carry out what you take in.

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