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CAPTIVATING

VIENNA



Austria's capital city, Vienna, is one of Europe's most inspiring cities, including the architectural treasures of Imperial Vienna.



From coffeehouse to music and palaces, indulge in one of Europe's greatest cities.

By Linda Barnard

Vienna is everything a traveller could want in a European capital destination — with whipped cream on top.

The largest city in Austria, Vienna has a sense of imperial grandeur with palaces and grand avenues lined with buildings. Or slip into the chic Servitengasse neighbourhood in the 9th District, called Little Paris by locals.

Introduce yourself to the city with the 5.3 km circuit on the Ringstrasse (Ring Road), a loop around the city's central 1st District. The most important and impressive buildings, including the Vienna State Opera, are within a few kilometres in a dramatic show of architectural splendour.

Then tour the remarkable Schönbrunn, the former hunting lodge that became one of Europe's grandest palaces.

Fashionable, pedestrian-only Graben is your next stop, a chic shopping street lined with cafes and 17th and 18th-century buildings. It ends at the heart of the city, St. Stephen's Cathedral, Stephansdom. The mosaic-like tiled roof on the Gothic building is a work of art.

Unwind at a coffeehouse with a Vienna classic, the Einspänner, a small cup of hot espresso topped with several inches of whipped cream. Spoil yourself further with a slice of Viennese apple strudel, served with a generous mound of whipped cream, of course.



The chic Servitengasse neighbourhood in Vienna's 9th District, called Little Paris by locals. Photo: Vienna Tourist Board

CITY OF MUSIC

Each evening, somewhere in Vienna, about 10,000 people are listening to live classical music. Join them. A visit to the city where composers including Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven created and performed isn't complete without attending at least one performance, whether it's The Vienna Boys Choir, or a program of Johann Strauss waltzes. The Blue Danube could be called the city's theme song.

For music in a magnificent setting, indulge in a regular evening performance of Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" in the 18th-century Karlskirche — Church of St. Charles — one of Europe's most glorious Baroque buildings. Composer Antonio Vivaldi, who died in 1741, is buried a few meters from the church. Vienna-born Hollywood actress and wartime scientific inventor Hedy Lamarr was married in one of the lovely side chapels of the church.

Tickets: viennaticketoffice.com

CITY OF FOOD

Vienna has several Michelin-starred restaurants, including three-star Amador in the Hajszan Neumann wine estate outside the city.

As the birthplace of wiener schnitzel, the breaded and fried thin veal cutlets are on many menus. Unlike some pretenders to the schnitzel crown, the Vienna version is light and tender, cooked to golden brown and served with a generous squeeze of lemon. Every district claims it has the best place for schnitzel. Want to try something different? Chef Karl Wrenkh of the popular Wrenkh bistro in central Vienna subs breaded oyster mushrooms for veal for his signature dish.

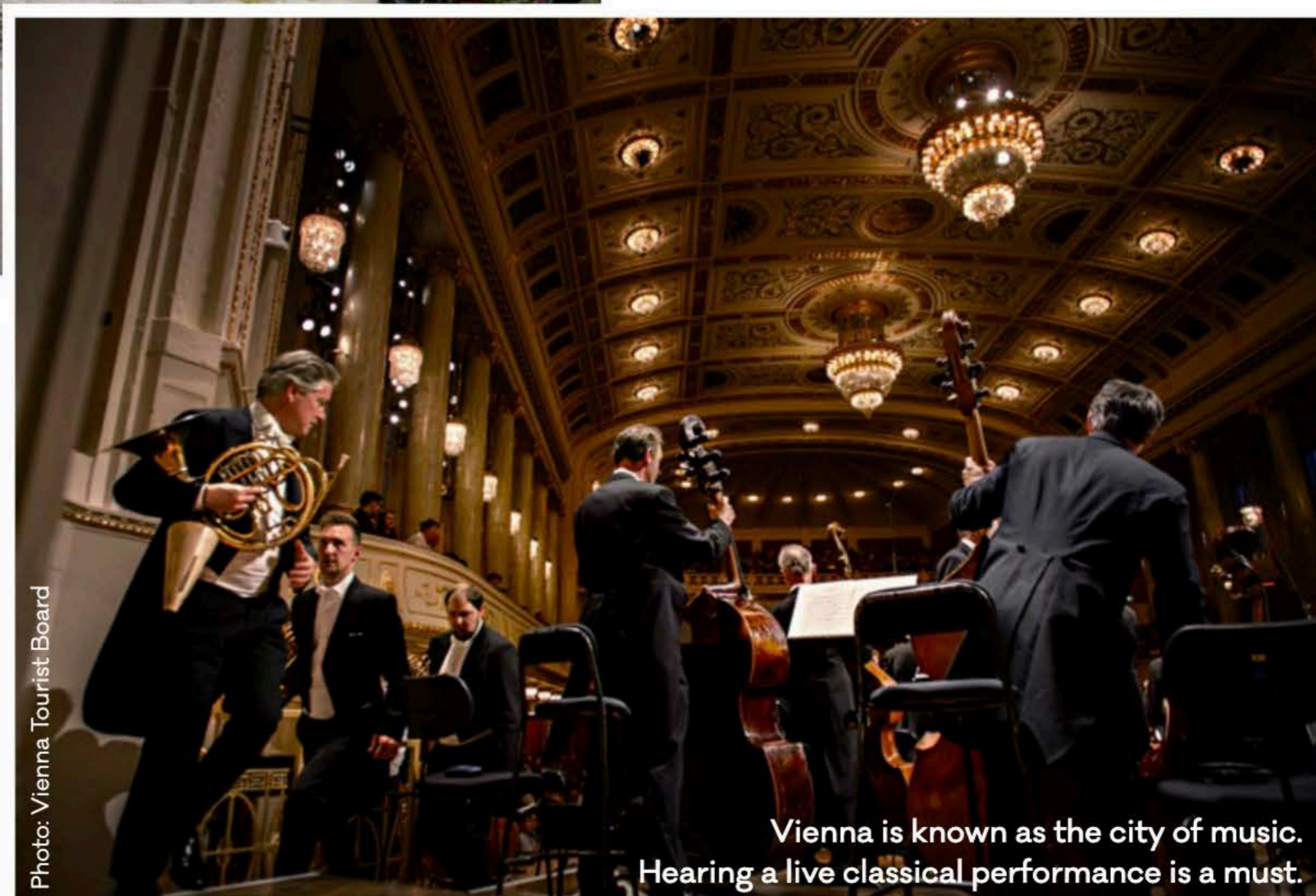


Photo: Vienna Tourist Board

Vienna is known as the city of music. Hearing a live classical performance is a must.



Gerhard Strassgschwandertner
Photo: Linda Barnard

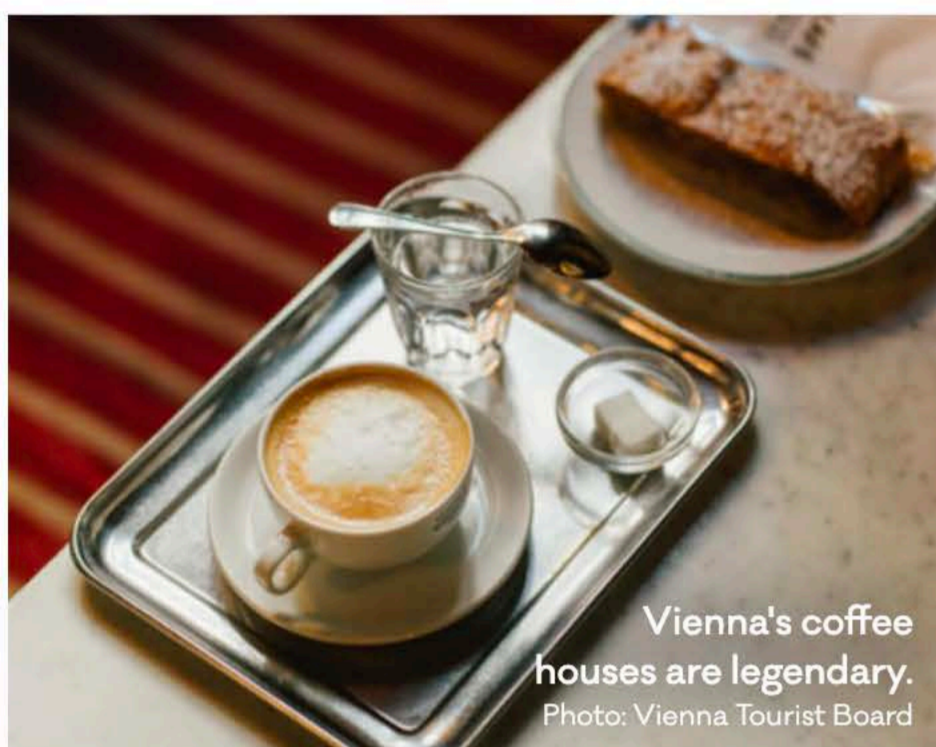
CITY OF THE THIRD MAN

For two decades, husband-and-wife curators Gerhard Strassgschwandertner and Karin Höfler have owned and run the only museum dedicated to what's been called one of the greatest films of all time, *The Third Man*.

Shot in post-war Vienna, the 1948 black-and-white drama directed by Carol Reed stars Joseph Cotten and Orson Wells. This year marks the 75th anniversary of its release.

There are 3,200 items and incalculable passion in the museum's 16 exhibit rooms. The museum is open Saturdays from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. and for private tours.

Bonus: Head to Prater amusement park in Leopoldstadt to enjoy the Vienna view from the 65-meter Riesenrad Ferris wheel, built in 1897 and made famous in *The Third Man*.



Vienna's coffee houses are legendary.
Photo: Vienna Tourist Board

CITY OF COFFEE

Ranging from bustling art deco delights to plush places with chandeliers and banquettes, relax over a cup of coffee in a historic Kaffeehaus and you'll understand why Vienna's coffeehouse culture is listed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

The Kaffeehaus was to 19th-century Vienna what contemporary coffee chains are to us today — minus the wi-fi. Who can say how many ideas were born over a cup of cappuccino-like Austrian Melange? Sigmund Freud, who lived and worked at Berggasse 19 (it's in the 9th District and now a museum), was a regular at Café Landtmann. Café Goldegg was my favourite, as much for its hushed ambiance as the original Jugendstil interior. Treat yourself with what's been called the world's best chocolate cake, the densely decadent Sachertort at the lavish Café Sacher Wein coffee house in the five-star Sacher Hotel Vienna. Of course, it comes with a bountiful dollop of whipped cream.

perform in the evening, or being put through their paces at morning exercise by skilled riders in traditional uniforms. Just sitting inside the circa-1735 riding ring at the Winter Riding School at Hofburg Palace is thrilling. But seeing the precision of eight horses and riders in the ballet-like school quadrille is unforgettable. viennaticketoffice.com

WHERE TO STAY

The family-owned Harmonie Hotel is a luxury 4-star, 66-room boutique hotel in the Servitengasse Little Paris neighbourhood. It's next door to the 1st District Innere Stadt, making the Harmonie an ideal base to explore both the historic centre, as well as the treed, French-styled residential district of shops, cafés and peaceful streets of the 9th District.

Every aspect of the stylish, contemporary hotel was curated by owner Sonja Wimmer with care and flair. Excellent breakfast.

CITY OF THE LIPIZZANER WHITE STALLIONS

Visit the Spanish Riding School to see the legendary Lipizzaner white stallions

GETTING AROUND

Personalize your visit to Vienna with the tourist board's free ivie smartphone app.



See the legendary Lipizzaner white stallions at the Spanish Riding School.
Photo: Vienna Tourist Board