

## A Month in Vienna

*World Nomads Travel Writing Submission March 2019*

As I watch the city come alive outside the window of the second floor of Vienna's Café de l'Europe, I smile.

I had been traveling for the past two-and-a-half years and to be honest my desire for such had waned in the last six months. Perhaps because I had grown tired of the tediousness of having to learn a new place. Where was the grocery store? What was the currency exchange rate again? How do I get from A to B without spending the money budgeted for C and D? Or maybe it was something else.

In last year's international breakout hit *Crazy Rich Asians*, the movie's lead character Rachel Wu explains to her class how she won a poker hand against her teaching assistant. He "wasn't playing to win," she said. "He was playing not to lose."

I think this sums up how I had traveled the past few months, trying to stretch each dollar, Baht and Dirham in whatever manner I could to make this lifestyle last and — *gulp!* — avoid having to return to corporate life. By this point I was entirely too far down the proverbial rabbit hole for that nonsense.

But here I was in Vienna, Austria, a place I had never been to, finding that there was still a lot of the world to be discovered and I was actually excited to do the discovering.

So setting out to be an explorer of the City of Music, waking up well before my alarm clock was close to going off (thanks jet lag), I was able to witness the city slumbering, and then rising awake, yawning brightly as the sun took full view in the sky, signaling the start of the day's adventure.

Vienna feels a bit like Paris, mixed with Budapest and a touch of Hamburg, which is no surprise considering they share German as the primary language. Classical music shops, cafes and concert halls fill the city center, dotted with odes and statues dedicated to musical greats such as Mozart, who lived here for several years.

It's a walkable city (10,000 steps ain't got nothing on me) and bicycle friendly, evidenced by the fact that bikes have their own street lanes and traffic signals. But if one wants to travel farther out, the highly-efficient

metro and connecting bus system has you covered. Uber is available as well if you're so inclined to spend the euros for travel convenience.

To get to know the city, I consulted TripAdvisor, scoured Instagram and Pinterest, and explored side and main streets alike to uncover what makes it unique.

I frequented Viennese cafes and tried their robust coffee options, better known as writer fuel.

I crossed the threshold of the Shakespeare & Company bookstore, sister location to the one in Paris, for reading inspiration.

I walked the halls of the picturesque Austrian National Library State Hall, giving me my money's worth from my newly-purchased mirrorless camera. I sat in silent serenity quite often within the sanctuary of Stephansdom/St. Stephen's Cathedral, as it had one of the earliest opening times across the city of 6 a.m.

Vienna's a city of discovery in which one can easily turn a corner and stumble upon some interesting place in history, such as the home of famed children's writer Hans Christian Anderson. Incidentally, I learned from the well-armed-but-equally-helpful guard on the street that his residence was located on the second floor of the building.

One can partake in any number of activities in the city from visiting museums to riding the 65-meter ferris wheel, Wiener Riesenradsee. And of course there's the equestrian Spanish Riding School.

My time in Vienna taught me many things about traveling and myself. Aside from the exquisite architecture, there's a charm to the city all its own, something in the air that calls one to explore all it has to offer. And so it was here, in the Austrian capitol city, that I quite unexpectedly rekindled my passion to travel. I had thought that piece was lost, but here in the City of Dreams, it was waiting — waiting for me to arrive, to walk its streets, to come home.

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