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‘Servus to imperial Vienna’

We are in Vienna, a fantastic city and a perfect mix between a *metropolitan capital* and a cosy town.

While the traces of Austria’s great Imperial past cannot go unnoticed, Vienna’s history dates back almost 2,000 years to ancient Roman times, where it was a strategic outpost of various Empires by the Danube River. This melting pot of *various cultures and regions*, in an Empire where ‘the sun never set’, led to an incredible boom in cultural development, allowing great musicians, composers and scientists to excel in their fields in this booming city.

Beethoven, Mozart, the Strauss family, Sigmund Freud, Schiele, Klimt and the Viennese Secession Movement, as well as many, many other great minds of the past centuries, *found inspiration and a supportive environment* in this central European capital.

We will follow in some of their footsteps as we walk through downtown Vienna. We will start at Vienna’s landmark, *St. Stephen’s Cathedral*. Built almost 700 years ago, it is an amazing example of gothic architecture. Look at the stone carvings by the gate - full of mysteries and secret codes! From here, we will walk along the Graben, a pedestrian zone with many *opportunities for some shopping* and ‘breathing in’ the Viennese ‘way of life’: ‘Pomale, pomale’ (‘gently, gently’).

We will see the *Pestsäule*, an artful sculpture donated as a gift of gratitude for the end of the black plague, and reach the Kohlmarkt. Once a place where coal was sold, now home to stores of the world’s most renowned fashion flagships. We can have a *classical Viennese Melange* at Café Demel, the tradition of which dates back to old imperial times: this bakery used to deliver sweet cakes and exquisite delicacies to the Emperor and his

selected guests from all over the world!

We will walk into the Castle, which - now without its exterior walls - is rather a large palace area. There are a number of museums around us including the *Sisi museum*, dedicated to the *Emperatrice Sisi* who was a true revolutionary at the Austrian Imperial Court in the late 1800s.

We reach the 'Ring', which once held the city walls, and walk by the Parliament and City Hall, where fantastic international events are held each year, including the *Vienna Life Ball*. We walk by the *Burg Theatre*, one of Europe's most renowned theatres, and through small streets back towards the Castle, which now hosts, among other things, the Chancellery, several ministries and the President's Office. In a side-wing of the castle, the ancient tradition of Spanish horseback-riding is kept alive at the '*Spanische Hofreitschule*'. The level of training, grace and strength of these horses, and the abilities of their riders, is unmatched anywhere in the world. Have you ever seen a horse that dances in time with a Viennese Waltz?

After paying a quick visit to the crypt of the Imperial Family and learning about their secret burial rituals, we continue to the *Hotel Sacher* and the *Austrian State Opera*. This is one of the absolute leading opera houses in the world. It has a unique tradition: for a very small fee of only a handful of Euros, anyone can enter and see an opera from so-called 'standing places'. This way, the most highly acclaimed opera productions and the biggest international names in classical music can be heard and seen by everyone - a very 'Viennese' approach.

After a short ride on the subway, we reach the noble *district of Hietzing*, where the Imperial Family had its summer residence in *Schönbrunn Castle*. This slightly smaller copy of the *Parisian Versailles Castle* contains not only museums and concert halls, but also the world's oldest zoo, rose gardens, labyrinths and other beautiful and entertaining features.





Before visiting *Schönbrunn*, though, we visit a restaurant that was decisive in the creation of what today is the ‘Viennese Cuisine’: melting influences from Italy to Bohemia, from Bosnia to France, from Hungary to Spain and beyond, typical Austrian cuisine now has everything from Gyulyas and ‘Milanese’ meat dishes (i.e. Wiener Schnitzel) and Knödel (dumplings) to the sweet cakes and desserts that will make you discover your ‘sweet tooth’ in Vienna.

In Schönbrunn, you will see the influence of *foreign cultures and new ideas*. Vienna’s culture has always been based on a look back in history, forward in time, and beyond their own borders: from the notion of establishing a zoo, to the palm tree house, the *Japanese Garden*, the English Maze, the Neptune Fountain, the Gloriette and the French Gardens, to the hidden (and fake) ‘Roman Ruins’ in the parks. The fertility of this inspiring environment continues today, with a sizzling new generation of young musicians, composers and painters, all living in the middle of a unique mix of tradition and revolution, classical heritage and modernity.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Vienna, Austria’s capital and largest city, is home to 1.8 million inhabitants.
- With its lengthy imperial tradition and impressive history in the field of arts and culture, it has established itself as the city with the world’s highest standard of living for a number of years already.
- People living here not only appreciate the abundant selection of cultural events, but also the excellent and free education system, the healthy environment, the sports and leisure opportunities, the top-notch and generally affordable health system, modern and affordable public transportation, as well as the attractive economic setting.
- Austria’s unemployment rate is the lowest in all of Europe, and amongst the best in developed countries in general.

- With its traditional role as the capital of the Austrian Empire that ended almost 100 years ago, Vienna re-established itself as 'the gate towards the East' in Europe, and is now home to many companies seeking to establish a presence in Eastern European markets. This attracts a highly qualified and international workforce.
- Located not only geographically, but also culturally, at the heart of Europe, the Viennese have evolved a unique philosophy, wherein discipline and 'Northern' qualities meet a certain creativity, 'bohemian savoir vivre' and 'bella vita' more typical of Europe's southern regions.

USEFUL PHRASES

<i>Seavas</i>	-	hello	<i>Pfiati/seavas</i>	-	goodbye
<i>A Krügal</i>	-	a beer (0.5)	<i>A Seiderl</i>	-	a beer (0.3)
<i>A Pfiff</i>	-	a beer (0.2)			
<i>An Eitrige</i>	-	one 'Käsekrainer' (a sausage with cheese in it)			
<i>A Melange</i>	-	a coffee with milk			

USEFUL INFORMATION

For more information about *availability and pricing* please do not hesitate to contact our Edelweiss Bike Travel team. We are looking forward hearing from you:

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