



Fabulous by

After 72 hours in **Vienna**,
by the café scene and the chocolate,

Alt Wien Kaffee and its slow roaster
produce the real deal: coffee that keeps
connoisseurs happy.

Green machine: Hotel Stadthalle, where lavender and roses grow on all of the property's flat roof surfaces.



Design

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

you'll be gastronomically spellbound but new twists in design will keep you dreaming about Austria deep into the summer.

Oliver Goetz is serious about his coffee.

I'm at the bar of his tiny coffee shop, **Alt Wien Kaffee** (altwien.at), where the slow roaster sits just inside the front door. The air is so warm and aromatic I feel like I'm in the womb of a coffee bean.

"As coffee roasters, we're purists," Oliver says, working behind the bar. "It's hard to find a really pure espresso, even here in Vienna. Try this." He sets a little cup in front of me. I've barely sipped it before I realize it is by far the strongest caffeinated product to ever touch my lips. I sneak some sugar into the espresso, which is unyielding in its intensity.



Oliver says no matter how much you try to educate customers about the nuances and subtleties of coffee, "There are those who still like their coffee with milk." Like me. I then order a *melange*—half coffee and half milk, with frothy steamed milk on top. Oliver assures me that he isn't offended. I add two sugars and savor every sip.

Two days earlier, I arrive in Vienna with a list of recommendations from friends: Catch a performance at the State Opera House; see Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss* at the Belvedere; and go to Central Cemetery, where Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms are buried. But after checking in at my hotel, **Altstadt Vienna** (altstadt.at), I make a reckless decision to leave the list behind. The streets are calling.

I spend 72 hours walking this capital city, and I'm delighted to find that it has more than a few of my favorite things: funky cloth-



GETTING THERE

Daily nonstop service on Austrian Airlines to Vienna from Washington Dulles International Airport.

WHERE TO STAY



Altstadt Vienna (altstadt.at; classic double is \$205–\$250, including continental breakfast buffet and Wi-Fi) is a boutique hotel with contemporary art, built in a 19th-century house. It's centrally located in the Seventh District, just a 10-minute walk to the Museums Quarter and shopping on Mariahilfer Strasse. Several of the 42 rooms and suites have been redesigned by Italian architect Matteo Thun and Viennese furniture designers.

Das Triest (dastriest.at; standard double is \$428, including breakfast buffet, Wi-Fi, access to a fitness room, sauna and solarium) increases your chances of bumping into celebrities or designers. Located downtown near the Karlsplatz, the Terence Conran-designed property is considered Vienna's design hotel masterpiece, filled with pieces from international and local artists.



Roomz (roomz-vienna.com; standard double is \$102, including Wi-Fi in the lobby), a new budget design hotel, is a short train ride from Vienna's city center. It's the perfect spot if you're looking for cool design, innovative architecture, great colors and clever functionality while saving your euros for shopping in the Seventh District.

Hotel Stadthalle (hotelstadthalle.at; double with garden view is \$172, including breakfast), which reopened in 2009, is all about going green. Located about 25 minutes from the city center, the property owners call it "the world's first urban zero-energy balance hotel." Solar panels produce enough hot water for the entire property, and rain is collected to irrigate the gardens. This summer, rooms will be cooled with ice-cold groundwater, and two wind turbines will be installed on the roof.

GETTING AROUND

Getting to and around Vienna is surprisingly easy. From Vienna International Airport, I took the **City Airport Train**, or CAT (cityairporttrain.com), which leaves every half hour for the city center (16 minutes; \$15 one way, \$27 round trip). Headed back to the airport, you can check in and get your boarding pass at the downtown Wien Mitte CAT station. You can also take a bus (20 minutes; \$9 one way, \$16 round trip) or taxi (about \$50) from the airport.

In town, you have options—the subway, streetcar or bus. They're free for 72 hours if you purchase a **Vienna Card** (vienna.info; \$28, available at hotels and through the tourist office), which also provides discounts at museums, restaurants and stores.

More information: austria.info

ing shops, contemporary design stores and so many independent bookstores that I want to weep with joy. I find a city that's surprisingly eco-friendly. And I fall in love with Viennese hot chocolate—a perfectly sweet, milky antidote to the espresso.

Artsy Wien

My first full day in Vienna, Alexa Brauner (alexabrauner.at), a Viennese design and architecture connoisseur, takes me on a walking tour. She says it's important to understand that before the Iron Curtain started coming down in 1989, there was no exchange of artistic ideas in Vienna, and there was only one gallery in the entire city. "Before then, it was dead," she says. But in just two decades, a once-dark city has sprouted communities of young artists, musicians and designers. The neighborhood with the most creative energy and commerce is the **Seventh District** (7tm.at), where we start our walk, outside my hotel.

Our first stop is **Park** (park.co.at), a sterile-looking high-fashion apparel store that stocks books by Phillip Roth, Sylvia Plath and Jonathan Franzen and displays a pair of thigh-high leather boots for \$1,320 (gulp). Next is **Das Möebel** (dasmoebel.at), a furniture and accessory gallery where I find terrific pastel-colored boxy stools, mirrors in the shape of Eastern European countries and an egg holder that looks and feels like a putting green.

Alexa and I spend the morning walking into shops, and I follow her lead, greeting shopkeepers with "*grüss gott*," a decidedly Austrian salutation that has a range of meanings and emotions behind it, but mostly "may God greet you" or "God bless you." We walk toward the city center, past Mariahilfer Strasse, Vienna's largest commercial street. Next is a stop at the **Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/Contemporary Art** (mak.at), known as MAK. The museum, built in the 1870s neo-Renaissance style, is free on Saturdays and located adjacent to the University of Applied Arts. MAK has a valuable collection of Wiener Werkstätte furniture, oriental rugs and precious textiles, porcelain and glass.

The exquisite design continues at **Österreicher im MAK** (oesterreicherimmak.at), the museum restaurant named after its star chef, Helmut Osterreicher. There's a Lobmeyr chandelier crafted from glass bottles, and the faucet in the restroom sink is a fountain of water that shoots up through a grate. The menu offers traditional and contemporary Viennese fare, so there's beef goulash on the former and herb-filled ravioli and pickled pumpkin salad on the latter.

St. Stephen's Cathedral



AUSTRIAN NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE/DIEJUN

I tell Alexa I'm surprised by the number of vegetarian options on menus in Vienna, after expecting largely sausages and schnitzels. She says the cuisine here (the only international cuisine named after a city rather than a country) is more sophisticated than that in other parts of Austria, since it's so close to Italy. While traditional Viennese cuisine is hearty, meaty and often breaded, there's a new movement to eat less meat, which I learn has as much to do with the environment as human or animal health.

After lunch we pop into the **Post Office Savings Bank**, designed by Otto Wagner, the architect and city planner who has had the most lasting impact on Vienna. The 1906 building used innovative materials for that era, such as reinforced concrete and aluminum. Inside, there's a small museum, **Wagner: Werk Museum Postsparkasse** (otwagner.com), with gorgeous photographs and architectural plans that delve into the mind of a genius.

Alexa and I stop for coffee, hit another dozen stores ("*grüss gott!*") and end up in the city center, at Graben, the bustling main square. We walk around **St. Stephen's Cathedral** (stephanskirche.at), the country's best example of Gothic architecture and the venue of Mozart's wedding. (I skip the 343 steps up to the towerkeeper's room.)

We peek into **Mühlbauer** (muehlbauer.at), the century-old hat shop whose customers include Brad Pitt, Meryl Streep and Yoko Ono. (In case you're wondering, headwear trends for 2010 include tiny hats for women and straw, yarn or hemp weaves for men.)

By nightfall, the Altstadt is luring me back. On the way there, I stop and buy an irresistible dress by a Hungarian designer at punkish **Disaster Clothing** (disasterclothing.at). Then I grab a book and easily sink into one of the sofas in the hotel's Red Salon, where evenings mean hot drinks, freshly made cakes and a visiting Dalmatian curled up by the carefully tended fire.

Eco-Wien

Nearly half the city is green—parks, vineyards or gardens. In theory, according to the Vienna Tourist Board, Vienna could supply its own demand for fresh vegetables and wine. Plus, the city council operates one of the country's largest organic farms. It's no surprise that this city of 1.6 million ranked first in Mercer's 2009 Quality of Living Survey for expatriates.

Vienna is also serious about recycling trash into art. The best example is at the showroom of **GabaraGe Upcycling Design** (gabaraGe.at), which uses industrial waste as raw materials for creative designs. I find bags, light fixtures, jewelry, shelves and a recliner, all made from, well, garbage. Then there's the natural **St. Charles** (saintcharles.at) empire, which has an old-style pharmacy, spa and restaurant all along the same street. Medicinal herbs at the pharmacy and vegetables at the café are grown on a farm just outside Vienna.

Words on the Danube

Reading material is everywhere in Vienna. Go into any coffeehouse, and you'll find a dozen newspapers and magazines available

for perusing. There are bookstores aplenty and book sections in restaurants, gift shops, galleries and clothing stores. Most titles are in German, but I see some in English, too.

My favorite book spot is **Babette's** (babettes.at), a spice and cookbook shop-cum-café, surrounded by galleries and not far from the famous open-air market, Naschmarkt. I go there with my friend Julia, a Viennese photographer, and we browse a large collection of cookbooks. We sit at the bar and watch our lunch being prepared in the tiny, home-style kitchen. My chestnut dumplings, sitting atop a bed of lentils and greens, were worth the trip to Europe alone.

Julia and I go to **Westlicht** (westlicht.com), a photo gallery, coffee bar and camera museum, where we look through the exhibits and chat with a model Julia shot for her eco-calendar. Again, I find beautiful books: new and rare, including a 1959 edition from Czech photographer Josef Sudek for about \$1,300 (okay, it's nice to at least browse).

And the Adorable Award goes to **WieWien** (wiewien.at), a gift shop with a large book section in back. Wallets, T-shirts, music, jewelry (including a fabulous Ferris Wheel ring for \$115) are all displayed in 1950s-era suitcases. (And if you never thought an apron could be sexy, WieWien will prove you wrong.)

Kaffee and Schokolade

Vienna's coffeehouses are unhurried and extraordinarily civilized. I am told a coffeehouse should be considered a second living room—as comfortable and relaxing as your own home. Some have full menus, and some only have pastries. But if it feels like a place where you can bring a book and read all afternoon or meet with friends—as my neighbors were doing at 130-year-old **Café Sperl** (cafesperl.at)—then you'd be safe calling it a coffeehouse. Another long-established coffeehouse

Dritte Mann

It's hard to think of Austria and film without two classics coming to mind: *The Sound of Music* and *The Third Man*. Neither is well known in Vienna, but for cult followers of the latter, there are plenty of ways to get a fix during your visit. The 1949 film, the only one to show the postwar ruins of Vienna, is played in English at the **Burg Kino** (burgkino.at) every Friday at 10:45 p.m. and on Sunday and Tuesday afternoons.

The **Third Man Museum** (3mpc.net; open Saturday, 2–6 p.m. or groups by appointment) is run by Gerhard Strassgschwandter, who has been collecting artifacts for a dozen years, including 90 editions of the Graham Greene novel, the original zither on which Anton Karas played the film's quirky soundtrack, and 420 digitized cover versions—from the Beatles to Bob Hope.

In warmer months, you can re-enact the Orson Welles chase scene on a **Third Man Sewer Tour** (thirdmantour.at). And there's a **Third Man Walk** (viennawalks.com) every Monday and Friday at 4. If you do nothing else, take a ride on the giant **Ferris Wheel** (prater.at) that was used for a famous scene with Welles and Joseph Cotten. Just keep the cabin door closed.



is 23-hour **Café Drechsler** (cafedrechsler.at). If you're looking for a quicker *kaffee*, try the '60s-style pink neon and chrome chain **Aida** (aida.at), where you can stand at the bar with your drink.

What better way to relish the slow pace than with sweets? One treat to go out of your way for: the apple strudel at **Café Diglas** (diglas.at), near St. Stephens. There are also a handful of chocolate shops that exhibit their wares so artfully, you'd think they were displaying fine jewelry. That's the case at **Fruth Chocolaterie** (fruth.at), where delicate chocolates are shown in old-style cabinets. I stop in the famous 1786 chocolate shop **Demel** (demel.at) and hang out in the back of the shop, watching pastries and cakes being made.

Finally, I hit **Wiener Schokolade König** (leschanz.at), the "chocolate king." Housed in what was a well-known button shop in the days of the monarchy, the store still displays old buttons and presents chocolate in tiny button drawers. But the best discovery of all is that my favorite hot chocolate of the trip (I had about six cups of *heisse schokolade* in three days) isn't from a coffeehouse at all—it's in a disposable cup at this store, served thick and creamy with plenty of milk and sugar. I can't think of any better way to shop. ☺



GERALD ZUGMANN/WMAK