

Vienna (Wien) - Vienna waits for you (Billy Joel)

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Vienna, Vienna, Austria
Tuesday, June 7, 2016

There is nothing like looking if you want to find something. You certainly usually find something, if you look, but it's not always quite the something you were after. J.R.R. Tolkien

Saturday 4th of June 2016

We encountered our first travel hiccup today. We were expecting to get the 9:17 train from Ljubljana railway station to Villach today for the first part of our journey to Vienna. The train had been cancelled due to maintenance works so a bus replacement was running instead. The bus left on time but couldn't keep up with the train timetable and we were running half an hour late by the time we got to Villach. We had missed our connection to Vienna, but luckily there was another train leaving in 2 hours. As a bonus we got to have a look around Villach, just over the border from Slovenia in Austria. We had a coffee and Coke in a hotel bar, and just as we were leaving a group of gentlemen entered and started singing - a sort of Austrian barber shop quartet, with the lead singer doing a small yodel and the others replying in a chorus. Before long it was time to get back on the train - a "RailJet" - to Vienna. Our Eurail pass entitles us to first class seats which is very nice. This train hiked along pretty quickly at about 160 km/h until we climbed out the valley and started winding our way over a couple of mountain ranges, running through tunnels then over high bridges across deep valleys. We passed by snow capped mountains with pine forests on the lower slopes. Fantastic scenery. After a couple of hours of that we started speeding along again and arrived in Vienna in the late afternoon. We had a 1.7 km walk to our accommodation and were soon unpacked and ready to venture out for some tea. We found a hawker style food market nearby and ate the obligatory Wiener Schnitzels - delicious!

About 25 degrees and sunny. Walked 8 km. Train about 5 hours.

Sunday 5th of June 2016

Ah Vienna! (with apologies to Ultravox). What a city. Every direction you look there are unbelievably impressive buildings as far as the eye can see. It is overwhelming. You could take photos for years and not be satisfied you had captured the spirit of this place. We walked past the impressive St. Charles church which was just down the street from our apartment. A nice young man approached us and sold us tickets to a concert to be held there tomorrow night. We continued on our way across the Ringstrasse and past a number of monuments and famous buildings before reaching the northern end of old town where we caught the tourist tram that circumnavigates town on the Ringstrasse with a commentary allowing us to get our bearings. The trip only takes about 20 minutes and then we struck out to do our own sightseeing, commencing with a church that was built in the 1100s, behind a block of land that had been left vacant since WWII - as that had been the location of the Nazi HQ. Some of the more memorable buildings seen included Stephansdom Church and St Peters Church - owned by Opus Dei and very plain on the outside but incredible Baroque interior, Albertina, Spanish Riding School, the museum quarter and many others. We stopped for lunch in a quaint old fashioned cafe / restaurant off the main tourist street. I had a nice salad with sliced Austrian sausage and dressing. Anna thought she'd have something light and ordered a toasted ham and cheese sandwich. She got a deep fried ham and cheese sandwich served on top of pommes frites (chips)! It was delicious of course (anything tastes good deep fried). Quite late in the afternoon we came to Hofburg, the Imperial Palace. Steph had suggested we visit the Sisi Museum, dedicated to Elisabeth the Empress of Austria who died tragically in 1898. This was quite an interesting display, which was a prelude to the royal apartments. It was intriguing comparing this site with the ones seen in England a few weeks ago. Similar in some respects, but quite different in others.

We were quite weary after so much sight seeing. Finding somewhere / something to eat for tea was a challenge. Hardly anything is open on Sunday in Vienna, except the tourist attractions of course. All the supermarkets / kiosks and most fast food places were shut. We did manage to find a Tapas restaurant and it was good. It rained quite heavily while we were eating but stopped in time for us to walk home.

About 26 degrees, fine morning, cloudy afternoon, rain evening. Walked 9 km.

Monday 6th of June 2016

Wien is not actually located on the Danube River. There is a river about the size of the Yarra flowing (quite strongly) past the northern edge of Old Town, but this is the Danube canal. The actual Danube is about 3 kilometres further away. We decided to hire some bicycles and go and have a look. We walked all the way through Old Town again to a bike hire shop, where the owner provided us with a very good map and suggested a route along the canal, then over to a huge park south of the canal with a long, car free street called Hauptallee, before crossing the main channel of the Danube onto a long, thin island in the middle of the river. As we are nowhere near the coast in this part of the world, this island serves as the maritime playground for Wien. We saw many people sunbaking on the lush grassy banks, others swimming with their dogs, and some even water skiing without a tow boat. There was a rope tow system set up and it looked quite odd seeing people skiing around with no boat in front!

We tootled back into town and poked around some other areas near the Ringstrasse before returning our bikes. It was quite warm now and we were hungry, so we headed back to the hawker's market near our apartment for a late lunch.

At 7:30 p.m. we headed off to St. Charles Church (Karlskirche) for our concert. The music was performed by members of the Vienna Concert Orchestra.

There were only 10 of them but they filled the church with exquisite sound. We were absolutely impressed with the performance. The soprano performed Ave Maria and it brought goose bumps to your skin. Our other favourite was Vivaldi's Four Seasons - and they did all four. This was the best classical music performance we have ever seen - it was well worth the money and we might take in another one at Salzburg.

Find and sunny 26 degrees. Rode about 15 km. Walked 8km.

Comments

Wow! Wow! Wow! You really need to see first hand the history of these cities to appreciate how amazing it is. I only now understand it and it never ceases to amaze me since our European trip this year - look forward to next blog xo

— From badminton65, on Jun 8, 2016 at 11:30AM

Snow in the mountains in June! Wow, you must have been high up.

— From Craig McArthur, on Jun 9, 2016 at 10:09PM

Pictures & Video



Karlskirche (St. Charles Church)



Former Coburg Palace



Stephansdom (St. Stephens)



Stephansdom Tower
Comments!



St Peters outside



St Peters inside
Comments!



Interesting sculpture
Comments!



Hofburg precinct
Comments!



Hofburg precinct
Comments!



Near Hauptallee



Danube island



Selfie on the Danube



Typical Vienna bike path



Vienna Concert Orchestra
performance at St Charles



French embassy
Comments!



View from our window -
Vienna University of Tech.



Karlskirche (St. Charles Church)

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Former Coburg Palace

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Stephensdom (St. Stephens)

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Stephensdom Tower

Comments:

How many men, how many years, did it take to do this? Wow! Men - because I assume it was men. Years and years or work - if not centuries. Astounding stuff.

— *From Craig McArthur, on Jun 7, 2016 at 11:18PM*

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St Peters outside

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St Peters inside

Comments:

Colour, sometimes the church said yes, sometimes no. In this one it was a definite yes.



Interesting sculpture

Comments:

Ah, I like the complexity of the sculpture. Nice one.

— From Craig McArthur, on Jun 9, 2016 at 10:04PM



Hofburg precinct

Comments:

Can we get rid of the cars? Lovely building, but the cars detract from it. A common European problem.

— From Craig McArthur, on Jun 7, 2016 at 11:13PM

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Hofburg precinct

Comments:

It may look stark, but, I love the uniformity. It shows that design can be about practicality.

— From Craig McArthur, on Jun 7, 2016 at 11:10PM

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Near Hauptallee

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Danube island

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Selfie on the Danube

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Typical Vienna bike path

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Vienna Concert Orchestra performance at St Charles

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French embassy

Comments:

I love the design, but, how do I get it to work in my neighborhood? I want one.

— From Craig McArthur, on Jun 9, 2016 at 10:07PM

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View from our window - Vienna University of Tech.

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