



Vienna at Christmas

Art and architecture in the Habsburg capital

21–27 December 2022 (MI 592)

7 days • £3,630

Lecturer: Dr Jarl Kremeier

One of the world's most beautiful cities – grand boulevards and picturesque alleys, great architecture and outstanding art.

Soaring Gothic and stately Renaissance, lavish Baroque and imposing Historicism, Art Nouveau and early modernism.

The Kunsthistorisches Museum, one of Europe's greatest art galleries, is among the many outstanding museum collections.

Excellent located 5-star heritage hotel.

Vienna was once the seat of the Habsburgs, the centre of the Holy Roman Empire and capital of a multinational agglomeration of territories which encompassed much of Central and Eastern Europe. Today it is an imperial city without an empire. It is a relic, but a glorious relic, and one of the world's foremost centres of art, architecture and music.

The Kunsthistorisches Museum ranks with the best of Europe's art collections, and the Court Treasury is without peer for its historic regalia and *objets d'art*. The great Gothic cathedral bears witness to the city's status in the Middle Ages as the most important city in Danubian Europe; the Church of St Charles and numerous Baroque palaces demonstrate that by the beginning of the 18th century Austria had become one of the great powers.

During the 19th century, when the Empire reached a peak of prosperity and prestige, a splendid range of historicist buildings was added, notably on the Ringstrasse, the grand boulevard which encircles the medieval core. Around the turn of the century there was an explosion of artistic and intellectual activity which placed Vienna in the forefront of Art Nouveau – here known as Secessionism – and the development of modernism.

Not all is on a grand scale. Tucked behind the imposing palaces and public buildings are narrow alleys and ancient courtyards which survive from the medieval and Renaissance city. In Vienna the magnificent mixes with the unpretentiously charming, imperial display with the *Gemütlichkeit* of the coffee houses. The city regularly comes top in the rankings of most liveable city in the world in the Economist Intelligence Unit annual survey.



Vienna, Karlskirche, early-20th-century etching.

As with the planning of all our Christmas tours, careful research into seasonal closures and several special arrangements enable us to provide a full programme of visits.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 11.00am from London Heathrow to Vienna (British Airways). Introductory walk through the Roman and medieval core to see a cross-section of architecture including Gothic and Baroque churches and some of Vienna's most enchanting streetscapes. Some free time before an *apéritif* and dinner in the hotel's own excellent restaurant.

Day 2. Pass the former railway station pavilions by Wagner and Olbrich and visit the Secession building, built in 1898 as an exhibition hall for avant-garde artists and containing Klimt's *Beethoven Frieze*. The Museum of Applied Arts has excellent international and Viennese collections, strikingly displayed. Drive to the outskirts to visit the hospital church 'Am Steinhof' by Otto Wagner, the apogee of Secessionist art and architecture.

Day 3. Visit the Stephansdom, the magnificent Gothic cathedral which is adorned with fine paintings and sculpture. The walk continues through parts of the picturesque old centre and around the Hofburg, the Habsburg winter palace, a vast agglomeration from six centuries of building activity. Within the complex are the Great Hall of the library, one of the greatest of Baroque secular interiors, and the unparalleled collection of precious regalia in the Treasury. Adjacent is the court church of St Augustine.

Day 4, Christmas Eve. Located beyond the Ringstrasse in the 18th-century suburbs, the votive Church of St Charles (Karlskirche) is the Baroque masterpiece of leading Austrian architect Fischer von Erlach. The palace and garden of Schloss Belvedere, built for Prince Eugene of Savoy on sloping ground overlooking Vienna, constitutes one of the finest residential complexes of the 18th century. It now houses the Museum of Austrian Art with art of all eras, including paintings by Klimt and Schiele. Christmas dinner. There are several musically embellished midnight masses.

Vienna at Christmas
continued

Day 5, Christmas Day. The morning is free, though Mass at St Augustine's is recommended and some museums are open. Spend the afternoon in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, one of the world's most important art collections. It is particularly rich in Italian, Flemish and Dutch pictures, but its holdings extend to superb decorative arts and ancient sculpture. *We hope to offer a musical performance this evening. Programmes are published later in the spring.*

Day 6. Coach excursion to Klosterneuburg Abbey, once the seat of the Babenbergs. Largely Romanesque and Gothic, the church contains an altarpiece by Nicholas of Verdun, one of the greatest surviving metalworks of the middle ages. Return to Vienna after lunch for some free time: a visit to the Albertina is recommended.

Day 7. Private visit to the magnificent Liechtenstein Palace, which was built c. 1700 by the richest family in the Habsburg Empire. The princely art collection housed here is one of the world's greatest still in private hands. Time for a leisurely lunch before driving to the airport for the flight to Heathrow, arriving c. 6.15pm.

Lecturer

Dr Jarl Kremerier. Art historian specialising in 17th- to 19th-century architecture and decorative arts; teaches Art History at the Berlin College of Acting and the Senior Student's Department of Berlin's Freie Universität. He studied at the Universities of Würzburg, Berlin and the Courtauld, is a contributor to the *Macmillan Dictionary of Art*, author of a book on the Würzburg Residenz, and of articles on Continental Baroque architecture and architectural theory.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,630 or £3,270 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,290 or £3,930 without flights.

Included: air travel (economy class) on scheduled British Airways flights (Airbus A321); travel by private coach; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 2 lunches and 5 dinners with wine; all admission charges; all tips for waiters, drivers; all taxes; services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Music: a ticket for 1 performance is included in the price of the tour, costing c. £180. *To be confirmed in June 2022.*

Accommodation. Hotel Bristol, Vienna (bristolvienna.com): 5-star hotel in a superb location on the Ringstrasse beside the opera house, traditionally furnished and decorated though recently refurbished. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? There is quite a lot of walking and standing around in museums and churches.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.