

THE VOICE OF VIENNA

When Eurovision kicks off in Vienna this month visiting music fans from across Europe will be treated to a whole new sense of cool

By Camilla Alfthan Photos by Stefan Fürtbauer

Vienna has long been known as Europe's cradle of culture, yet it's always had a healthy respect for kitsch. Conchita Wurst, possibly the most famous drag queen in the world, cut her musical teeth in local clubs, and when she helps welcome the multitude of Eurovision fans who roll into town for the big show, she'll be leading them into a city with a newfound zest for life.

With a vast classical heritage, Vienna has always been a must-see destination. Mozart composed some of his most important works here, as did Beethoven, Strauss, and Wagner (until he was thrown out of his apartment for not paying the rent). Today, the ghosts of the past are nestled right up alongside new voices and visions, so no matter what your taste, there is something on offer.

During the Austro-Hungarian golden age Vienna's best architects and artists were in great demand. Today, traces of their work can be found everywhere, from the imposing Jugend buildings of Otto Wagner to the symphonies played at the Wiener Konzerthaus. At the picturesque Belvedere Palace you'll find Gustav Klimt's most famous painting, *The Kiss*, although you might have to elbow your way through the crowds to see it.

A decade ago the capital was a bit like a museum, like a lavishly ornamented marzipan cake gone stale. That's all changed now, as a new generation of creatives are infusing fresh energy in to the grandeur of the past – and making their own, very modern, mark on the city. >



Belvedere Palace: Stop by to see Gustav Klimt's most famous work, *The Kiss*, as well as plenty of other visual treats

"Just ten years ago Vienna was a little boring, but now it's become a completely different place," says Katharina Marginter, owner of interior design shop Das Möbel, where you'll find a variety of Austrian designs, such as hand-blown glass lamps in the shape of candy and a chrome-coated Melting Chair. Just a few steps away is the café where it all started – and where all the furnishings are for sale, alongside delectable food.

Just a few steps away you'll find Vienna's brand new cultural center, the Museums Quartier, situated in the former stables of the Habsburg dynasty. The minimal design of its two main museums, MUMOK and Leopold, is in stark contrast to the romantic style of the past. In the afternoons, the area is a popular spot for art lovers as well as people who just want to hang out in the large courtyard or to eat in its stylish restaurants.

The contemporary design wave that has washed over Vienna in recent years extends well beyond the Museums Quartier. A favorite spot for the local crowd is the revamped Hotel Daniel, where you can sip a coffee on a swing or enjoy the rooftop art installation – a sailboat, which looks as if it fell from the sky. In the city center oversized pink hares, inspired by German artist Albrecht Dürer's work, are scattered about, with the most notable one sitting atop a popular hot dog stand.

Where once it was the upper class that turned Vienna into Europe's capital of arts and culture, today it's more of a grass roots movement, particularly when it comes to music. "Vienna's notorious techno-music scene was launched by German students, who were in Vienna on Erasmus scholarships," says a bartender at the Naschmarkt, one of Vienna's many food markets, which host live music until the wee hours. At the slightly run down ZWE bar in the city's second district, seasoned jazz musicians share the limelight with students from the music academy.

The most pleasurable way to enjoy Vienna's astounding classical architecture is to take a walk along the Ringstrasse, where you'll be treated to one iconic monument after the other, including the Opera House, Parliament, and the Academy of Fine



Contemporary hangout in the midst of history



The Museum of Modern Art offers the finest in contemporary art

"What you learn here, you learn for life"



Arts. This stunning avenue is where the city wall once stood, until Emperor Franz Joseph decided to tear it down 150 years ago. The Opera still appeals to all generations, as do the concert halls where classics are often interpreted by jazz and pop artists. Even the famous dance school, Elmyer, is still going strong, teaching everything from waltzing to disco fox. The school also has a motto: "What you learn here, you learn for life". That could be a motto for Vienna as a whole, because this city at the heart of Europe has once again recreated itself as a cultural destination. Dedicated Eurovision fans heading to Vienna should prepare to enjoy a city that offers a myriad of delights far beyond the walls of the Wiener Stadthalle Arena. <

VIBRANT VIENNA

Catch the buzz



Haus der Musik

Music is everywhere in Vienna, especially at the interactive House of Music. Here, sounds become visible as organ pipes can be walked on and visitors become virtual composers and conductors. Seilerstätte 30 hausdermusik.at

Albertina Passage

For the past twenty years the Vienna Jazz Festival has reflected the city's love for this quintessentially American form of music. To enjoy jazz in smart surroundings go to the Albertina Passage, found in

the iconic Albertina Museum. The design is futuristic and the drinks menu is almost as impressive as the sound. Albertina Platz 1 albertinapassage.at

Sacher Hotel

After a show or dance, people head out for a late dinner and drinks. The historic Sacher Hotel, opposite the Opera, should be at the top of your list. With imperial interiors and a lively atmosphere this is the place to

enjoy the famous Sachertorte, an absolute must. Philharmonikerstr. 5 sacher.com

On Market

A slick hotspot combining striking design with Chinese and European cuisine. On Market has an extensive menu. The outside terrace is a popular spot for

both brunch and lunch. Linke Wienzeile 36 on-market.at

Neni

Among Vienna's coolest markets, Naschmarkt is not one to pass by. Every Saturday a flea market with some 400 stands pops up, and it's a great spot for treasure hunting. At Neni, food and drinks are combined with music, design, and modern art. 510 Naschmarkt neni.at

Palmenhaus

Vienna is famous for its many parks, including Burggarten, which is crammed with an incredible variety of trees and flowers. Palmenhaus, next to the museum of butterflies, features a large outdoor terrace, popular for lunch. Burggarten 1 palmenhaus.at

Imperial Palace (Hofburg)

Music is an integral part of The Spanish Riding School, which celebrates its 450th anniversary this year. It's situated next to the home of the horse-loving empress Sisi, whose former home, the Hofburg, has been turned into a museum illustrating the lavish lifestyle of Vienna's monarchy. Every weekend, the famous white horses perform under the Hofburg's chandeliers. Hofburg hofburg-wien.at

Cafes: Sperl and Prueckel

There's an entire culture built around Vienna's coffee houses. Don't miss Gumpendorfer Str where you'll find Café Sperl (opened in 1880), one of Vienna's classic cafés. You can also find cool new design shops, as well as Vienna's largest vendor of analogue music. The Café Prückel flaunts a suitably 50s retro style, with live piano music in the evenings. Gumpendorfer Str. 11 cafesperl.at Stubenring 24 prueckel.at

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