

MICHAELA LINDINGER



SECRET VIENNA



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

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REMAINS OF THE VERGILIUS CHAPEL

15

An enigmatic site in the heart of the city

Virgilkapelle – Stephansplatz, 1010 Wien
 Tuesday–Sunday 10am–6pm
 24 and 31 December 10am–2pm
 Closed 25 December, 1 January and 1 May
 U-Bahn: U1 or U3, Stephansplatz station



In the middle of Stephansplatz (St Stephen's Square), two sets of paving stones (white and ochre) outline the floorplan of two former buildings – the mysterious Vergilius Chapel and the Maria Magdalena Chapel, which was built over it.

As the city centre is generally crowded with tourists, the best plan is to go up to the terrace of Haas-Haus (No. 4 Stephansplatz), which affords a splendid view of the site of the two buildings in the courtyard below.

Although the Maria Magdalena Chapel, built in the 14th century, was completely destroyed in 1781, the Vergilius Chapel still exists (currently closed for renovations).

The chapel, 12 metres below ground, is the largest Gothic structure still standing in Vienna. Built around 1200, this rectangular *capella subterranea* (about 10 by 6 metres) is a mystery: there is no documentation to explain its subterranean construction.

The vault is not the original and the walls once rose 1.5 metres above the present ground level. The building therefore stood 13 to 14 metres high, a considerable size for the Middle Ages. The construction is oriented in a manner that is almost certainly based on astronomical calculations.

The chapel walls, 1.5 metres thick, are embellished with six niches, each containing a Byzantine cross like that of the Templars. Further on, a representation of a 'magical face' has been preserved.

This intriguing windowless and doorless building was probably accessed by a rope ladder and a trapdoor leading to the raised section on Stephansplatz, the nerve centre of Vienna.

From 1300 onwards, the chapel was the burial site of wealthy Viennese families.

It is dedicated to the Irish churchman and early astronomer Fergal (c. 700–84, later Vergilius of Salzburg). This king's son, nicknamed 'the geometer', was denounced to the pope by the English missionary Boniface on 1 May 748 for his recognition of ancient pagan beliefs. The success of his evangelisation was based on his great tolerance and his capacity to integrate religion with long-established practices.

The Vergilius Chapel, which had fallen into oblivion after the destruction of the church, was rediscovered in 1972 during the construction of Stephansplatz underground station. Some people find that a powerful force emanates from this place, even greater than that from the Stephansdom.

KAISERBRÜNDL MEN'S SAUNA

20

One of the most beautiful saunas in the world

Weihburggasse 18–20, 1010 Wien

kaiserbruendl.at

Monday–Sunday 2pm–midnight

U-Bahn: U1 or U3, Stephansplatz station; Tram: 2, Weihburggasse stop



Kaaiserbründl Men's Sauna, in the heart of the city centre, is probably one of the most beautiful in the world: sauna, bio-sauna, steam bath, massage rooms, solarium and restaurant, over three floors. Relaxation and pleasure in an exceptional setting.

Stefan Riedl, the owner, has decorated the place with scenes from Greek mythology and also designed a Roman grotto with nymphaeum.

Although the Vienna Tourist Board homepage states that prostitution is strictly forbidden in gay saunas, this has not always been the case.

In the 19th century, the homosexual jet set frequented the Centralbad (Central Baths), the predecessor of the Kaiserbründl. Philipp Graf Eulenburg, German ambassador to Vienna, was allegedly relieved of a tidy sum by a 'lifeguard' in exchange for his silence. The diplomat apparently said there'd been 'just a problem with a lady'. A rather unlikely explanation, because ladies didn't really use the Central Baths ...

Archduke Louis Victor had his face slapped here, an incident thought to have led to his being banished to Salzburg.

Women are only allowed into the sauna at special events open to all.

The Kaiserbründl is often used as a film set (*Kommissar Rex*, a police-dog procedural; *Comedian Harmonists*, the story of a German male sextet).



GRAND LODGE OF AUSTRIA DOOR

21

The 'Magnum Opus' of a Freemason

Rauhensteingasse 3, 1010 Wien
U-Bahn: U1 or U3, Stephansplatz station



Above the entrance to the Grand Lodge of Austria, a 'rough stone' (*raube Stein*) hangs from a metal hook. The street is named after this stone, the symbol of the apprentice Freemason who, initiated as a 'dressed stone', will one day contribute to the construction of the temple and the creation of a better world.

The Vienna Lodge represents all 33 of the Masonic degrees of initiation. The wooden door is decorated with an elaborate pattern made up of a cross and several squares to form an intricate octagon over a Sun motif – an ancient symbol of fertility and growth. Technically, the cross holds the two leaves of the door closed. Symbolically, the vertical bar represents a plumb line, the horizontal bar the base of a triangle – the tools of the builders of medieval cathedrals, from whom the Freemasons draw their traditions.

The other geometrical figures on the door are the square and compass, the two best-known Masonic tools. Interlocking squares formed part of the construction secrets of cathedral builders. This technique dates back to Eastern architecture and was probably brought to France by the Templars, regarded by many Masonic lodges as their spiritual predecessors.

The three doorknobs correspond to the signs, words and handshake that allow Freemasons to recognise one another.



The 'Magnum Opus' (Great Work) of a Freemason can assume very different forms according to the personal knowledge and preferences of the initiate: for example, it could be a musical, intellectual or craft pursuit, or the setting up of a charity.

FIREFIGHTERS MUSEUM

⑩

Fire!

Zentralfeuerwache

Am Hof 7, 1010 Wien

wien.gv.at/menschen/sicherheit/feuerwehr/museum

Sunday and public holidays 9am–noon, Tuesday 2pm–5pm

U-Bahn: U3, Herrngasse station



This building, which now belongs to the Vienna Fire Service, is worth a visit. The mansion, also known as Merkleinsches Haus (named after its patron Christoph von Merklein), was designed by Baroque architect Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt. As the bas-relief on the facade shows, it was the scene of a dramatic event in 1683: Mayor Johann Andreas Liebenberg was killed two days before the victory over the army of Ottoman grand vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha during the second Siege of Vienna. The ravages caused by the Turks, as well as the high incidence of fires in the city, led to the establishment of the world's oldest professional fire service in 1686.

The Firefighters Museum, on the first floor of the building, is also relatively old: it dates back to 1901, when Vienna Fire Station took first place at the Berlin International Firefighters Exhibition. As the registration fees were high, it was agreed that the exhibition material should later be made use of in Vienna. And so the museum was opened.

The eight exhibition halls highlight the tragic fires that the service has been called out to over the years. Time and again, whole districts of the city have been reduced to ashes, notably in the Ringtheater fire in 1881, the burning of the Justizpalast (Palace of Justice or courthouse) in the 1927 riots, and the destruction of the Rotunda, centrepiece of the 1873 Vienna International Exhibition, in 1937.

The fleet of historic fire-fighting vehicles is not on display in the museum but in the main fire station at Floridsdorf (21st district). There are horse-drawn vehicles, the first water tanker from 1903, and other trucks from the 1970s and 80s. One of the oldest restored vehicles is known as Froschkönig (The Frog King). Phone for an appointment (+43 1 531 9951207).



THE ESPIONAGE CHAMBER IN THE FEDERAL CHANCELLERY

25

Congress of spies

Ballhausplatz 2, 1010 Wien
bundeskanzleramt.at/

Public access: only during special occasions (open house day etc.)

Tram: 1 or 71, Rathausplatz / Burgtheater stop



At the time of the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815), the city was the centre of the world and a centre of surveillance. The foreign minister of that time, Clemens Wenzel Prince von Metternich, was able to perfect his legendary methods of spying during the congress. The so-called espionage chamber above the Congress Hall in today's Federal Chancellery is still there. It was vital that the ten recording clerks – who sat at a long table next to each other and had to write everything down – could understand every word. You can still sense the special acoustics there today. The conversations drifted up through the richly ornamented ventilation screens, which are still there. The employees in the Federal Chancellery still call this room 'the espionage chamber' – which confirms the reputation of the Prince von Metternich. He had the budget of the Vienna secret service increased by 500 per cent. Austria had declared national insolvency just a few years before the start of the Congress of Vienna, but hosting it was much cheaper than conducting war. Emperor Franz paid for practically everything during the congress, but the story that he had separate doors installed for representatives of France, Great Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia so nobody would feel disadvantaged is one of many false legends about the congress. What Henry Kissinger characterised as the longest period of peace in Europe started after the Congress of Vienna.



STIFTSKASERNE TOWER

⑦

A discreet blockhouse

Stiftgasse 2–2A, 1070 Wien

Exterior always accessible

To visit contact administrative building: +43 (0) 50201 / 1033006

Tram: 49, Stiftgasse stop

The Stiftskaserne, although 40-metres-high and sunk more than 5 metres into the ground, blends imperceptibly into a background of commercial buildings and apartment blocks, not to mention a church. Built in the years 1943–44 to counter bombing raids over the city, this is the last of the anti-aircraft flak towers still used by the Austrian Army.

Today officially designated the ‘Stiftgasse administrative building’,



the Stiftskaserne was built exclusively as a military base in the 18th century, during the reign of Maria Theresa. The tower now houses a service that organises the deployment of Austrian troops abroad. In a crisis, it can also be used as a control centre.

The tower also houses the Landesverteidigungsakademie (National Defence Academy) for the training of men and women officers: the elite of the Austrian armed forces. The passing-out ceremonies take place in the Sala Terrena, a Baroque hall with a stuccoed and medallioned ceiling. The church within the compound has a remarkable organ. A plant nursery was established in the so-called sappers’ wing. An inscription at the entrance notes that here the children of poor and noble officers were prepared for higher education at the Military Academy. The editorial staff of the military review *Truppendienst* now use this wing.

Esterházy park is home to the second (command) tower associated with that of the Stiftskaserne (combat). It has become an aquarium and vivarium, the Haus des Meeres, complete with climbing wall.

Vienna’s wartime flak towers

During the Second World War, three pairs of flak or combat towers and a huge blockhouse were built in Vienna as part of the city’s air defences.

The towers are located in Augartenpark (command tower and flak tower), Arenbergpark (command tower and flak tower) and Esterházy park (command tower – the corresponding flak tower is the Stiftskaserne).



SALVATORIANER KOLLEG

19

Baroque Barnabite cloister

Barnabitingasse 14, 1060 Wien

pfarrverbandmariahilf.at/mariahilf

Access difficult but sometimes possible; contact via website

U-Bahn: U3, Neubaugasse station



Even if not always easy to enter (see opposite), the Salvatorianer College, connected to Mariahilfer Church by a corridor, is well worth a visit. It used to be a cloister of the Barnabite Order. The three-storey building, designed by architect Paul Ulrich Trientl, was erected between 1768 and 1777.

In summer the monks ate their meals on the ground floor. This refectory, now known as Salvator Hall, has a magnificent Baroque fresco.

The superb library on the first floor is distinguished by its vaulted ceilings and its grisaille (grey-toned) paintings. The collection includes works dating from the early 16th to the 19th centuries as well as the Barnabite college archives, which date back to the year 1692.



THE BLACKENED WALLS OF THE ODEON THEATRE

⑤

A reminder of the destruction of Gestapo files

Taborstraße 10, 1020 Wien

odeon-theater.at

Tuesday to Friday, 10am–6pm and during performances

Tram: 2, Grederstraße stop



You can see a devastating fire ravaged the performance hall from the blackened walls. The members of the theatre ensemble working there today deliberately left the room like that, only making mandatory, safety-related renovations.

In the Third Reich, the censor's office of the Gestapo was in this house at Taborstraße 10. When the Red Army approached in 1945, panic erupted among employees of the National Socialist administration. All files were taken to one room and the mountain of papers set on fire. Plaster fell from the ceiling, and the room was badly damaged.

The building had been unusable for 43 years when the Serapions Ensemble moved in.

The structure of the building was still sound and it was renovated to the point where it was usable again, taking into account the need to protect historical monuments.

The work was finished in 1988. In reference to the Greek 'odeion' – a covered square for theatre performances – the events hall that was predominantly refurbished with the ensemble's own funds, was named 'Odeon' and reopened. It has room for an audience of 300 when the ensemble performs.

The ensemble was founded in 1973 by Ulrike Kaufmann and Erwin Piplits and is now known far beyond the borders of Austria. The aim of this very special independent theatre group is to connect musical theatre, dance, drama and visual arts on stage.

The Odeon is rented out for guest events and is one of the most exciting and interesting theatre halls in Vienna.

Grain was auctioned there in the 19th century. From the 1880s, the large fruit and products exchange hall was located in what is now the Serapion Theatre.

The rooms were designed in a classicist style influenced by the Italian Renaissance.



RABENHOF THEATER

14

From social housing to the stage

Rabengasse 3 / St Nikolaus-Platz, 1030 Wien
 rabenhoftheater.com

Open during performances

U-Bahn: U3, Kardinal-Nagl-Platz station



Vienna is probably one of the few cities in the world with a theatre in the heart of a social housing complex. Built between 1925 and 1928, it was known as 'Austerlitz-Hofes' in a tribute to Friedrich Austerlitz, the militant editor of the newspaper *Arbeiter Zeitung*. The large hall was a meeting place for the workers who lived in the affordable housing nearby.

Renamed the Rabenhof in 1934, the complex is one of the most remarkable developments of the 1920s in 'Red Vienna', as the city was known when a strong municipal government was trying to solve its social problems. The main hall was converted into a cinema in the 1930s, and then a major renovation around 1990 enabled the Theater in der Josefstadt (the oldest in Vienna) to use the venue too. Additional work carried out in 2008 aimed to restore its former splendour to one of the finest authentic halls of the interwar period.

Today, the Rabenhof is an independent theatre that has become a benchmark for political satire and cabaret. Among the other events organised here are theatre for young audiences, musical comedy and book readings.

The venue is regularly used as a set for the police procedural TV series *Kommissar Rex* and *Tatort*.



ZACHERL FACTORY

27

Effective from Vienna to Philadelphia

Nusswaldgasse 14, 1190 Wien

Closed to the public but can be seen from outside

Tram: 37, Barawitzkagasse stop; Tram: 38, Silbergasse stop



No. 14 Nusswaldgasse is a stunning multicoloured tiled building with cupolas and a minaret at the back. Originally a factory producing anti-moth powder, it was constructed in the years 1888 to 1892, a time when the hugely popular Oriental style was used to encourage trade.

Johann Zacherl, qualified in the casting of tin, travelled to Tbilisi, where he noted how the Georgians protected fabric from the voracious insects using a powder extracted from chrysanthemum-like flowers.

The active element of this powder was pyrethrum. Zacherl launched himself into commercialising the insecticide, which he baptised 'Zacherlin', or 'True Persian Powder'. He opened stores in Paris, Constantinople, Amsterdam, London, and even New York and Philadelphia.

It was Hugo von Wiedenfeld and Karl Mayreder who customised the manufacture of the insecticide for Zacherl's son, Johann Evangelist, marketing it with ceramic tiles produced in Wienerberg.

Young Zacherl managed the company until the first half of the 20th century, but the demand for its products gradually fell with the growth of the chemical industry. Production ceased after the Second World War.

In recent years, the former factory has hosted various artistic projects at the initiative of the Zacherl heirs. The programme is currently on hold, however, as the owners are not able to meet current building regulations.



The Yenidze cigarette factory in Dresden (Germany) also has stunning Eastern architecture.

The Zacherl House

The Zacherl House (Zacherlhaus) at No. 5 Bauernmarkt in the Innere Stadt – designed by Josef Plečnik, a talented pupil of Otto Wagner – was sponsored by the same Johann Evangelist Zacherl who was responsible for the Zacherl factory. The facade, the work of Ferdinand Andri, shows St Michael armed with Zacherl insecticides – archangel triumphs over invaders! A light fitting in the form of an insect illuminates the oval staircase while publicising the company. Note the elaborate patterned roof. This building still belongs to the Zacherl family and houses offices and commercial premises.

KUFFNER OBSERVATORY

9

Head in the stars

Johann-Staud-Strasse 10, 1160 Wien

kuffner-sternwarte.at

Sunday and Monday from 8pm in all weathers, Wednesday and Thursday from 8pm except rainy days

Sun observation, third Sunday of the month starting at 2pm

Tour of the institute: Sunday at 6pm; individual group visits can be arranged

Other events on the annual calendar

Bus: 46A, 46B or 51A, Ottakringer Bad stop



The Kuffner Observatory, named after its philanthropic founder Moriz von Kuffner, industrialist and owner of the Ottakringer brewery, was built in 1886.

Although it was originally conceived as a private research institute by Franz Ritter von Neumann junior, the observatory, now run by the Ottakring authorities as part of further education (Astronomie Wien), is open to the public: a remarkable excursion into the universe of astronomy of past centuries. The immaculately preserved historical instruments, some faithfully restored, give an incredible view of the night sky.

Unlike a planetarium, you can look directly at the stars and planets, in particular through the large refracting telescope that dates back to 1886. Gas eruptions on the surface of the Sun, as well as the craters of the Moon, are clearly visible.

The former villa of the observatory directors, built in the same style as the research institute, is part of the complex. It can be viewed from the outside only.

Moriz von Kuffner had to sell his brewery in 1938 and emigrate to Switzerland, as the Nazis had appropriated the major observatories throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He died in 1939 in Zurich.



WEINGARTNER BILLIARD MUSEUM 26

The difference between carambole, pool, billiards and snooker

Neubaugürtel 11, 1150 Wien

billard-weingartner.at

By appointment (see website)

U-Bahn: U3 or U6, Westbahnhof station



Between the traditional Viennese café Weingartner at No. 6 Goldschlaggasse and the eponymous billiards and games shop, Heinrich Weingartner's private Billiard Museum is the only one of its kind in Austria. The owner, a former Austrian champion player now over 70 years old, is a world snooker legend and still attends tournaments. He even publishes his own specialist journal. He opened his shop at the age of 24 and began collecting everything relating to his favourite pastime. The museum opened in 1992.

The centrepiece of the collection dates back more than 200 years: a complete set of elephant ivory billiard balls on which tarot card figures are engraved.

This captivating museum also has around 150 antique pool cues, 11 antique tables, 800 artworks and 2,000 postcards on the same theme.

The images taken from satirical journals are particularly interesting: very instructive about the changing fashions in billiards. A well-stocked library shows the great interest in this game that was formerly the reserve of the aristocracy. Some of the books were published as early as the 17th century.

Of course, Herr Weingartner also points out the difference between carom (or carambole) billiards, pool, English billiards and snooker.



JOHANN BERGL PAINTINGS

⑥

Elephants in America

Schloss Ober-St-Veit

Wolfrathplatz 2, 1130 Wien

Open only as part of Hietzing district festival

Tram: 53A, Wolfrathplatz stop



The ground floor of the eastern wing of the castle at Wolfrathplatz is open only as part of Hietzing district festival. It contains four splendid rooms decorated by Johann Wenzel Bergl (1718–89).

The building, which took its present form in the 18th century, was always the property of the Church except between 1762 and 1779, when it belonged to Maria Theresa, who spent no less than 80,000 guilders on refurbishing it. She commissioned this work from Bergl, her favourite painter. As at Schloss Schönbrunn, his brief was to give the walls a breath of exoticism.

The concept of a Sala Terrena – large rooms open to the garden – is perfectly illustrated by this castle. There is a breathtaking view of the park, with its majestic trees and a fishpond. In poor weather, garden parties could be held in these ground-floor reception rooms, which gave the illusion of extending into a beautiful landscaped garden.

Bergl worked by applying his lush colours onto linen panels which were then fixed to the walls, when he would continue painting over the ceilings of the various rooms. Having chosen India as the dominant theme at Schönbrunn, he opted for the Americas at Ober-St-Veit. While his Indian frescoes focus mainly on splendidly exuberant fauna and flora, his later composition includes people, both European and American.

The first room, which is particularly successful, shows a black tribal chief with a feathered headdress, seated in a sedan chair borne by two white men. A Baroque parasol protects him from the sun. In the background, a shipload of European explorers has just landed. This distant paradise is still unspoiled. In the Europe of those days, the idea prevailed that ‘savages’ led a contemplative life and lived in perfect harmony with nature.

The walls of the four rooms are covered with ‘typical’ fruits and animals from the Americas: cocoa beans, lemons, parrots, butterflies, flying fish, turtles, monkeys, snakes and llamas rub shoulders. Only the elephant and the rhinoceros seem out of place in this America according to Johann Bergl.





There was originally a fifth room designed by Bergl, at the end of the corridor. Unfortunately, his artwork has not been preserved and the room is now a kitchen.

Ober-St-Veit Castle, which now belongs to the Roman Catholic Church, is a Redemptoris Mater (Mother of the Redeemer) seminary. The former library on the second floor of the castle is now a chapel. The wall and ceiling frescoes, painted in the 18th century by an unknown artist and now restored, represent the sequence of spring, summer and winter. The fourth ceiling is a personification of the Habsburg dynasty as established during the reign of Maria Theresa, who had decided to enlarge the room by a quarter. The royal couple, Emperor Franz I and his wife, appear in medallions over the doors.



OTTO-WAGNER-HOFPAVILLON HIETZING

9

A breakthrough for modernism

Schönbrunner Schloßstrasse, 1130 Wien

wienmuseum.at/de/standorte/otto-wagner-hofpavillon-hietzing

March–October: Saturday and Sunday 10am–1pm and 2pm–6pm

U-Bahn: U4, Hietzing station; Tram: 10 or 60, Hietzing stop



Franz Joseph only used his ultra-sophisticated private railway station twice. But this did not matter to its designer Otto Wagner, who was primarily interested in showcasing his work. This architectural gem reopened in summer 2014, after extensive renovation and restoration.

In the 1890s, the City of Vienna launched a large-scale infrastructure project with the construction of the Stadtbahn metropolitan railway. Wagner was in charge of the overall design of this new means of mass transport.

On his initiative, a private pavilion was specially planned for the emperor and his court at Hietzing station. The building, completed in 1899, was in Art Nouveau style, with a unique exterior and opulent interior decoration – its imperial magnificence was a breakthrough for modernism.

Inside the pavilion are eye-catchingly unexpected red silk hangings and carpets, while sinuous philodendron motifs dominate the decoration. Trapezoidal windows, another of the architect's 'specialities', make optimal use of indirect natural light. The low lighting is designed so that the precious fabrics do not fade. The upper part of the cupola is made from frosted glass.

This pavilion is an impressive compendium of Otto Wagner's artistic style, which paved the way for 20th-century modernist architecture.



A canvas painted from a vantage point of 1,600 m

The immense oil painting, dated 1899, is by Carl Moll, an important artist in fin-de-siècle Vienna. This aerial view of the city was painted in an airship at an altitude of 1,600 metres.

Eagles hover over the panorama, which extends from Schönbrunn Palace and Gardens to the Ringstrasse.

The painting is beyond any shadow of doubt a portrayal, not of Franz Joseph, as might have been expected, but of the rise of the capital during his reign.

ALCHEMICAL FRESCO AT SCHÖNBRUNN ZOO

⑩

Mysticism in the world's longest-surviving zoo

Tiergarten Schönbrunn, Maxingstrasse 13B, 1130 Wien
zoovienna.at

January 9am–4.30pm, February 9am–5pm, March 9am–5.30pm, April–
September 9am–6.30pm, October 9am–5.30pm, November and December
9am–4.30pm

U-Bahn: U4, Hietzing station; Tram: 10 or 60, Hietzing stop



The geometry of Schönbrunn Zoo in the palace gardens derives from the interests of Holy Roman Emperor Franz I, Freemason and Rosicrucian. Members of these fraternities met regularly in the Alchemist's (or Emperor's) Pavilion that the emperor, who had a profound interest in the sciences, had had built in 1759 at the precise centre of his menagerie. He had a laboratory set up in the basement to carry out his scientific experiments, cherishing the idea of piercing the mystery of the philosopher's stone.

The frescoed ceiling of the pavilion dome is by court painter Josef Ignaz Mildorfer. Through scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the artwork illustrates the basic principle of alchemy, according to which every element on Earth comes from one and the same original matter. The celebrated philosopher's stone is also depicted.

Each of the animal enclosures was provided with a hut or 'lodge' in the Masonic tradition, designed so that people could view the animals, but also, conversely, so that the animals could look at them.

The 12 animal enclosures – for the 12 signs of the zodiac – are arranged radially around the central Emperor's Pavilion, the 13th and final lodge intended for men. Its octagonal shape symbolises the eternal cycle and power. It rests on a square plinth which represents the four elements and the four virtues of Plato, illustrated on the arched doorways: Prudence, Courage, Temperance and Justice. Three pathways lead to the centre of the menagerie.

Alois Kraus, the zoo manager, broke the quasi-magical ambience to build an extension in 1889, the year of the 'Mayerling incident', the apparent murder–suicide of Archduke Rudolf and his lover, Mary Vetsera. Almost all the animal enclosures were destroyed by bombing in 1945 – only the pavilion remained intact.



Every year, on 13 May and 31 July, the pavilion is the site of an astonishing spectacle: the rays of the morning sun pass through the two-headed eagle on the roof of Schönbrunn Castle and across the central window, flooding the building with light for over 10 minutes. 13 May is Maria Theresa's birthday and 31 July is the anniversary of the founding of the imperial menagerie.

CHOCOLATE HOUSE

18

A truly unusual home

Wattmangasse 29, 1130 Wien

Bus: 56A, 56B or 58A, Tiroler Gasse stop



Although some Viennese also know it as the Lebkuchenhaus (Gingerbread House), this Art Deco residence owes its different nicknames to its dark brown majolica façade. Designed in 1914 by architect and interior designer Ernst Lichtblau, who studied under Otto Wagner, it was awarded the Prize of the Municipality of Vienna for Outstanding Buildings in the same year.

At first glance, the design of the façade is more akin to Josef Hoffmann's style than Wagner's. Its harmonious combination of straight and curved shapes, on both flat and relief surfaces, teems with detail. The majolica work is by German sculptor Willy Russ, who chose to intertwine floral and figurative motifs. The date '1914' is clearly visible on the wall to the left of the front door.

The multi-tiered cornice has raised ceramic panels featuring plants and birds of incredible ornamental richness. The gutters tumbling down on both sides are also remarkable. Ernst Lichtblau's window sashes seem to presage the architecture of the 1920s.

After the Anschluss, Lichtblau was forced to emigrate to the United States, where he inspired an entire post-war generation of American designers.

Many of his Viennese buildings are now listed monuments (notably a semi-detached house on the Werkbundsiedlung housing estate).



KALKSBURG MURALS

26

Among thieves and Jesuits

Promenadeweg 5, 1230 Wien

kalksburg.at

Silver Chamber: open only during special events, Open Days or Monument Day

Park: open all day

Regionalbus: 254, Wien Kalksburger Kirchenplatz stop



Kollegium Kalksburg is a private Roman Catholic college that not only specialises in old Viennese bawdy songs but assists recovering alcoholics. The property is surrounded by a vast park: a former English-style landscaped garden of which there are few traces today. There remains a round structure that was originally found in a lake and a Chinese temple, partly renovated, at the edge of the wood. A walk through the garden leads to a secluded pond.

Kalksburg was once the haunt of a band of brigands, until in 1463 some members of the local bourgeoisie managed to apprehend their leader and destroy their fortress. From 1609 the site belonged to the Jesuits and then to court jeweller Franz Mack (1730–1807), who bought up the grounds surrounding the buildings. He was knighted under the name Edler von Mack.

The ‘Silver Chamber’, now the meeting place of the inter-faith charitable organisation B.R.O.T., dates from this period. Its superb panoramic frescoes with pastoral motifs dating back to around 1800 have been restored.

Prince Albert of Saxony spent time in Mack’s residence while he was in mourning for his beloved wife Archduchess Maria Christina (Mimi, who died in 1798). He often walked in the park, where his friend Mack had set up a place of contemplation dedicated to her. You can still decipher some weathered letters: ‘He sought consolation and left the city, and came to you, Mack, in your refuge in Kalksburg...’.

By the mid-19th century, the estate had again come into the hands of the Jesuits. Their educational institution has been welcoming young people to Kalksburg since 1856 and the college adopted its current form in 1897.

NEARBY

‘Heap of stone’

Promenadeweg 12a, 1230 Wien

The road to Kalksburg College passes Liesing pond in front of the ruins of a villa dating from 1786. This building, conceived as an artificial cliff pierced with caves, was commissioned by Mack the jeweller, who was appointed Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge of St Joseph in 1785. This ‘heap of stone’ is one of the rare ‘ruined’ villas that were fashionable during the Enlightenment. The privately owned property is classified as a historic monument.

FAVORITEN WATER TOWER

③

One of the world's most beautiful?

Windtenstrasse 3, 1100 Wien

wien.gv.at/wienwasser/bildung/wasserturm

Interior: by appointment or during special events



The Favoriten water tower, designed by architect Franz Borkowitz, was built between 1898 and 1899 on the Wienerberg hill in Vienna's 10th district. The interior of this splendid brick tower (standing 67 metres high) can be seen by appointment or during special events. Climb to the top to reach the wide circular passage, which has fine views.

Inside, the building has a steel water tank with a capacity of 1,000 cubic metres, reached via a spiral-shaped ramp over 200 metres long.

The tower formerly supplied water to the highest points of the 10th and 12th districts, as the pressure of the nearby Wienerberg water tower was insufficient. The population of these districts was growing rapidly and the demand for drinking water had increased exponentially. In 1910, with the commissioning of Vienna's second water supply system, use of the Favoriten tower was restricted to peak demand and emergencies. It was taken out of service in 1956.

Nowadays the building has found a new use as a water-themed cultural venue and exhibition space. Outside you'll find an aquatic playground and discovery trail.



TOMB OF THE RINGTHEATER FIRE ⑪

VICTIMS

The worst fire in Viennese history

Zentralfriedhof (Central Cemetery)
 Gate 2, section 30A
 Simmeringer Hauptstrasse 234, 1110 Wien
 3 November–February 8am–5pm
 March and October–2 November 7am–6pm
 April–September 7am–7pm
 May–August, Thursday 7am–8pm
 Tram: 71, Zentralfriedhof 2, Tor stop



In Vienna's Central Cemetery, a particularly moving monument by sculptor Rudolf Weyr stands near gate 2, section 30A, in tribute to the Ringtheater fire victims. At the top of the monument, the city of Vienna is represented by its coat of arms, a widow's veil and a funerary crown. Below stands a phoenix, symbol of resurrection. The bird gazes over the tombs of the victims of the fire that ravaged the popular opera house at Schottenring on 8 December 1881.

On that fateful evening, Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann* was to be performed and the auditorium was rapidly filling up. While the stage was being set up, a gas lamp failed to light. A workman allowed gas to escape and the lamps exploded, setting fire to a section of the wings. In a moment the curtain was alight and the flames had reached the top rows of boxes. Panic broke out. The doors only opened inwards. Someone finally managed to cut off the gas supply, but then the only light in the theatre came from the flames. The emergency services took away many charred bodies, but it was soon realised that many more were unaccounted for. In all, some 400 men and women lost their lives, among them the elder brother of Mary Vetsera, mistress of Archduke Rudolf of Austria, who was herself found dead eight years later in an apparent suicide pact with her lover.

The bodies of the fire victims that could not be identified were buried together in the Central Cemetery.

Some time after this drama, the director of the Ringtheater killed himself.

However, the fire was the impetus for supporters of worthy causes to form the Wiener Freiwillige Rettungsgesellschaft (Vienna Civil Welfare Society), a direct precursor of Wiener Rettung (Vienna Rescue).

Much of the monument was destroyed in the Second World War, including the wall on which the names of the dead were inscribed.

An office block erected on the Ringtheater site is now a police headquarters.

At No. 35 Weillburgstrasse in Baden, 25 kilometres south of Vienna, stands a statue of the Virgin Mary on a column rescued from the Ringtheater. This is a reminder of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, celebrated on 8 December, the same day as the catastrophic fire.

ST MARKUS COPTIC CHURCH (11)

Not a Russian church, but the oldest Coptic church in Vienna

Wagramer Straße 17, 1220 Wien
Every Sunday, 10am–1pm
U-Bahn: U1, Alte Donau station



Some Viennese may still remember the delicate little church in front of the monumental UNO-City as the ‘Russian church’, since many Russian prisoners of war worked on the construction site between 1915 and 1922, when it was built according to the blueprint of Otto Prutscher. A maiolica relief with Jesus and soldiers can be seen between the entrance gates, honouring those killed in action during the First World War. The projecting roof is decorated with gargoyles made of enamelled clay.

The correct name of the church is St Markus Coptic Church. It was originally a Catholic church to serve the Bretteldorf settlement for the poor as a place of worship. The design was in the regional-traditional style inspired by north-east European elements, which really does not fit today’s function, since St Markus is the oldest Coptic church in Vienna. The Copts are a religious minority in Egypt, with the founding of the religion dating to the first century after Christ.

When the UNO-City, the Vienna International Centre, was constructed in the 1970s, with many foreign officials working there, the church was adapted so that various Christian denominations could hold their mass services. For example, Coptic believers do not see the altar, which goes back to ancient Egyptian traditions.

Since the Coptic community was constantly growing in Vienna, this religious community have been the only users of the ‘Russian church’ since 2004. A large new Coptic church was also built in Vienna in 1998 – the Church of the Virgin Mary of Zeitoun is in the Hirschstetten district in Quadenstraße 4–6.



MICHAELA LINDINGER



SECRET VIENNA

A magnificent private palace that can be visited by reservation, a crocodile mummy in a private library, a chocolate house, an alchemical ceiling in Schönbrunn, one of the most beautiful pharmacies in the world, an exceptional Art Nouveau church, the tomb of a fish that would have converted to Judaism, a jazz museum in public toilets, a public dump that can be visited like a museum, the oldest organ in Vienna hidden behind a painting, an empress dressed as a nun, the mystery of the symbol 05, a masculine sex discreetly sculpted on the cathedral of Vienna, a surprising private museum of billiards, an incredible bouquet of flowers made from butterfly wings, a source of water that reveals the winning lotto numbers, an extraordinary underground annex at the Mauthausen camp where the world's first jet was built, a charming historic 'love hotel'..

An indispensable guide for those who thought they knew Vienna well or who wish to discover another facet of the city.

JONGLEZ PUBLISHING
528 PAGES

£17.99
€20.95
US\$22.95

ISBN: 978-2-36195-939-5



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www.jonglezpublishing.com

