

# THE SATURDAY CITY: VIENNA

November 5, 2011 / By NomadicMatt



It took me three times to really see Vienna. When I first went in 2006, I was visiting friends and we didn't do much of anything except lounge around in a park and go to a concert. The second time was to see a girl I was dating, and my time was spent with her, not Vienna. However, this time I was determined to actually see the city and its historic sites.

And so this visit was like visiting Vienna for the first time. While my previous visits gave me a brief glimpse into day-to-day life in Vienna (which isn't bad in itself), I walked away from those visits never really feeling like I knew anything about the city. I couldn't tell you anything about its history, what to see, or what to do other than what I knew beforehand, and I had no concept of the city's layout.

This visit changed all that. This time around, I wandered around the historical core of Vienna. I visited various attractions. I paid attention on the subway to learn where all the stops were. In effect, I discovered the city for the first time.

I remember when I was going to Vienna the first time. People told me that, because I love Prague, I would also fall in love with Vienna. But when I got there, I remember being incredibly disappointed. The city was nothing like Prague. It wasn't as fun, it wasn't as beautiful, and it wasn't as charming. It wasn't a bad city. It just didn't blow me away.



Yet after this visit, I see Vienna in a bit of a new light. Vienna Tourism connected me with one of their local tour guides, who led me on a walking tour one afternoon. I think it was this walking tour that helped change my mind about Vienna.

Walking tours are a funny thing. Their content is always dependent on the personality of the guide. Guides tell stories and point out features relating to their interests. And so you think you are going to learn one thing and you end up learning something totally different. My guide liked cafés, art, and design, and so my “historical” tour leaned less on history and more on art. I never knew Vienna was such a major center of design, fashion, and modern art.

One thing I was fascinated by were all the coffee shops. The real first coffeehouse in Austria opened in Vienna in 1683 after coffee was left behind by the defeated Ottoman Turkish army. A Polish military officer by the name of Jerzy Franciszek Kulczycki opened the first coffeehouse with the coffee beans he kept from the Turks, and he popularized the custom of adding sugar and milk to the coffee to make it more palatable to European tastes. And to this day, there seem to be more coffee shops in Vienna than in Seattle.





While I was impressed with the city's café and design scene, Vienna's art museums left something to be desired. Having taken in many of the city's museums, I was left extremely disappointed. Don't get me wrong: the museums are actually really good — if you like modern art. I, however, do not. I lean more toward 17th century Dutch landscapes and impressionism. I left wishing modern art didn't involve so many shovels glued to the wall so I could enjoy it more. (In all fairness, though, the Leopold Museum did have some wonderful paintings and portraits.)

Despite the cold and rain during my visit, I spent my days meandering around Vienna, marveling at its architecture, getting lost in its sea of never-ending twists and turns, and sneaking into coffeeshops for warm tea. I visited Sigmund Freud's home and learned his daughter was also a shrink and that he analyzed her when she was a child.



I strolled by the river, enjoyed Vienna's impressive Gothic church, and ate my way through the town's main market. Twice. I visited the old royal chambers and finally learned a great deal of the city's history.

I'm glad I finally got to really experience and explore Vienna. But, while I like Vienna more than my first visit, I'm still not in love. I don't think I ever will be. Sure, Vienna has its charms, and I can see why some people might love it. But I'm not one of those people. It doesn't light a fire under me. It doesn't grab my soul the way [other cities do](#).

Would I go back? Yeah, maybe one day. It's not a *bad* place. But with no real pressing reason to return, I doubt my next visit will be any time soon. Vienna didn't wow me and it doesn't pull me back. There are some places in the world that are just *nice*. Not bad, but not great either.

And that's all Vienna is to me. It's just nice.

**A. Write True or False according to the passage.**

1. Nomadic has been to Vienna four times. (      )
2. Nomadic wants to visit a place of historic interest. (      )
3. Nomadic took the bus tour. (      )

**B. Choose the best answers.**

1. What is true about Vienna?
  - a. The first café opened in the early 17th in Vienna.
  - b. Vienna has a lot of 17th century Dutch museums.
  - c. Sigmund Freud's home is in Vienna.
  - d. It rains a lot in Vienna.
2. According to the passage, what is Nomadic unlikely to say about Vienna?
  - a. My favorite city is not Vienna.
  - b. The walking tour I did in Vienna wasn't good.
  - c. I was happy the Leopard Museum had some beautiful works.
  - d. I prefer Prague more than Vienna.

**C. List the sentences in order.**

- (a) Nomadic was not sure he will visit Vienna again.
- (b) Nomadic had no idea what Vienna is about before the travel in 2006.
- (c) Nomadic was attracted by the coffee shops in the city.
- (d) Nomadic took on a walking tour which he enjoyed a lot.

**D. Write your experiences that you can think of the city which didn't attract you.**

