



SUITES & EATS VIENNA

Vienna's main draw is opera and classical music, with grand historical hotels to match. But, as Matthew Parsons discovers, there is an alternative for clients who oppose opera, or can't stand classical. Most of Vienna's hotels have an abundance of imperial grandeur – think Art Nouveau, marble and chintz interiors, antique furniture...

However, venture south past the city's Kaernter Ring and you'll find Das Triest; there's not a fusty lampshade or chandelier in sight – it's more Bang and Olufsen and artemide lamps.

Originally a coach station for the rich during the 19th century, travellers would stop here on their way to the spas in Trieste, once part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Now, behind the imposing solid wood doors lies what was Sir Terance Conran's first foray into hotels, and light from the courtyard floods the lobby, corridors, rooms and restaurant Collio.

Bathrooms throughout the 72 rooms and 13 suites are mostly white, surprisingly but intentionally old fashioned, with Molton Brown products.

It's a maze, but the courtyard holds it all together perfectly, with its outdoor grill. This, and the hotel's two other gardens, gives it the edge over others on the city. Giving guests the chance to relax outdoors, in an informal atmosphere, is something grander hotels simply cannot offer.

Das Triest is close to Kunsthalle – a buzzing cafe and exhibition space and perfectly fitting for this Design Hotel member. During my visit, I wasn't expecting an exhibition on Detroit's urban creativity and electronic music.

Apart from music, Vienna's other main draw is its museums – in particular The Leopold and Belvedere. Both house stunning collections by Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele – the 19th century Secession artists who dared to stand up against the old guard. Perhaps I shouldn't have been so shocked by Vienna's modern side after all.

Rates from €156 per night. Tel: 0043 1589 180, designhotels.com



Grand Hotel Wien

This Leading Hotels of the World member certainly lives up to its name – traditional 19th-century luxury throughout, enormous chandeliers, a tinkling piano bar, plus it's conveniently placed for the opera and a stroll from St Stephen's cathedral. For food buffs, 7th-floor restaurant Le Ciel, under chef Jacqueline Pfeiffer, steals the show here with Austrian/French fusion cuisine, while champagne brunch in the lively Grand Cafe comes a very close second. Entice clients to stay in one of the 205 rooms with celebratory packages, as the hotel turns 140 this year.

grandhotelwien.com

Book with lhw.com

MORE WAYS TO WOW IN VIENNA

1 Transforming restaurant: Relative new kid on the block The Ring (opened in 2008) has 68 rooms, and they all do away with the pomp and splendour of sister property Grand Hotel in favour of modern design and original artwork. The "At Eight" restaurant, with pop art on its walls, closes at 3pm, to transform into a swanky colourful restaurant (theringhotel.com).



2 Butler bonus: Hotel Imperial is the official hotel for state visits, and all the interiors are original, dating to the mid-19th century when it was built as a palace. The lobby has the chandelier factor, rooms are plush, and it boasts Vienna's only butler service. Suggest the Symphony package for classical music fans – with butler service (hotelimperialvienna.com).



3 Size matters: Hotel Bristol, opposite the Imperial Opera, boasts the Prince of Wales suite. At 250 sqm, it's the largest in town and has its own gym and sauna.



Executive chef Christian Krumpolz recently took over its excellent Korso restaurant, and previously worked at Hotel Grand's Le Ciel. Historic paintings and antique furniture cement the luxurious atmosphere (bristolvienna.com).

4 Aga doo: BMI's Monday-Friday, Heathrow-Vienna service launched in March, and Business Class passengers can take advantage of the Great British Lounge at Terminal 1, complete with custom-made black Aga, priority baggage, and speedy check-in (bmi.com). Return flights from £99 return.



Kirker Holidays offers three nights B&B at the Grand Hotel from £1,289pp, including BMI Business Class flights, transfers and Kirker's restaurants/sightseeing guide. Tel: 020 7593 2283, kirkerholidays.com



my kind of luxury...

“For me luxury is when something is extremely considered – it is when something has been refined to a point where all the senses are stimulated – smell, touch, style...”

Bill Amberg, Designer

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