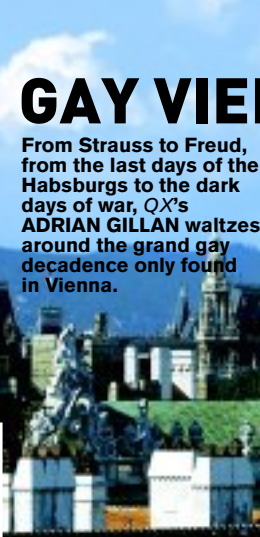


# GAY VIENNA

From Strauss to Freud, from the last days of the Habsburgs to the dark days of war, QX's ADRIAN GILLAN waitzes around the grand gay decadence only found in Vienna.



SITTING in a Viennese coffeehouse, you can drink in the history and autumnal fading aura of a once great empire, torn apart by The Great War and left savaged by the next. But amidst what is still, in many ways, backward-looking and conservative, you can still spy a society living on the edge - nowhere more so than on the resurging gay scene. Walk off your neuroses at the Freud House museum, then muse over tea at **Berg Café** (Berggasse 8; T: 0043 1 319 5720) down the street, one of Vienna's few gay window bars - just north of the city's mighty inner Ringstrasse. Its simple, modern design caters to an arty crowd, many leafing through purchases from the superb **Lowenherz** gay bookstore next door. But the main queer quarter is in the 6th District, a short distance west of centre. Its gay political and social heart is undoubtedly the friendly **Willendorf Café (aka Rosa Lila Villa)**, Linke Wienzeile 102; T: 0043 1 587 1789), a pinkish purple building where groups meet and friends boozie, eat and chat late into the night.

Perhaps the most quintessentially queer Viennese experience, and hence not to be missed, is the magical **Café Savoy** (Linke Wienzeile 36; T: 0043 1 586 7348) just along, a classic old wood, brass and leather corner café with a camp interior of chandeliers, gilt statues and feathers, multiplied by the largest single-piece mirrors in Central Europe. Best by night.

If you want something to make you feel more at home, try new American-style cocktail bar **Chamäleon** (Steingasse 8; T: 0043 1 585 1180) around the corner, crowded at weekends amidst its greens and reds. Or check out the young cuties in orange-hued **Mango** (Laimgrubengasse 3; T: 0043 1 587 4448) mere streets away.

For harder fare, close-at-hand **Eagle** (Blumengasse 1; T: 0043 1 587 2661) caters mainly for Levis and leathers; nearby **Nightshift** (Corneliusgasse 8; T: 0043 1 586 2337), then takes up the story on the more uniformed nocturnal bar-crawl circuit saga. But if you like it really hard, best try **Siefelknecht** (Wimmergasse 20; T: 0043 1 545 2301), Vienna's main leather bar with its slings, swings and things - or even **Losch** (Funfhausgasse 1; T: 0043 1 895 9979).

Vienna isn't Europe's best served capital when it comes to clubbing. **Why Not** (Tiefer Graben 22; T: 0043 1 535 1158 - www.why-not.at) in the central district has a stylish upper bar and packed basement dance space,

churning out cheese on Fridays and chart on Saturdays. The more serious ly tranced go to **Heaven @ U4** (Schonbrunnerstrasse 222; T: 0043 1 815 8307 - www.u4club.at) which is gay and busy on Thursdays with its two large rooms.

You can't beat a good steam as the nights grow long and cold. **Sport Sauna** (Langasse 10; T: 0043 1 406 7156, beneath Pension Wild) markets to a younger crowd with its maze of themed cabins, dark rooms and porn areas. And like Café Savoy, the **Kaiserbrundel** (Weihburgasse 16-20; T: 0043 1 513 3293) sauna offers a uniquely Viennese experience. Built in the 1870s at the height of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and with Moorish influence, it's a steamy cathedral of exotic arches, tiled pools and marble slabs.

As said, **Lowenherz** (Berggasse at Wasagasse next to Berg Café; T: 0043 1 317 2982) is the largest and best gay bookstore in town. The staff are friendly and helpful - a recurring theme on Vienna's gay scene - and there is a large selection of English language books, mags and DVDs. Or try **Man for Man** (Hamburgerstrasse 8; T: 0043 1 595 2064) for all your boy toys.

Need fresh air? The bushy area in the bottom left of **Rathaus Park** is proba-

bly the safest and most brimming meeting point in the wee small hours when bars close and spew forth; or in summer, try the **Donau Insel** nude beaches on the Danube. The city is also awash with public loos, for the most part well-maintained and used for a variety of purposes. You could do worse than the old wrought-iron museum piece in **Shonburn Park** at the corner of Floriangasse and Langegasse, famed for its erotic graffiti.

There are several big gay events in Vienna each year too. The **Regenbogen Ball** in January proves that the Viennese Waltz isn't just for straights; the **Life Ball** in May is perhaps the most flamboyant - and lucrative - HIV/AIDS charity event anywhere in Europe; and the famous **Rainbow Parade** at the end of June attracts over 150,000 visitors.

Gay-run **Pension Wild** (Langegasse 10; T: 0043 1 0 406 5174; www.pension-wild.at) offers modern, spacious rooms with breakfasts hale and hearty - a pleasant ten minute walk to most gay venues and smack on top of that sauna! Or for something more up-market, try the swish, gay-friendly Conran-designed **Das Triest** (Wiedner Hauptstrasse 12; T: 0043 1 589 180; www.dastriest.at) just south of Karlsplatz.

> Austrian Airlines operate 5 daily flights to Vienna from London Heathrow, with fares available from £103 including all taxes. Book via 0870 1242 625 or www.austrianairlines.co.uk

> For further information on gay Vienna, including a downloadable gay guide and map: www.vienna.info (see the LGB link within the 'specials' section).

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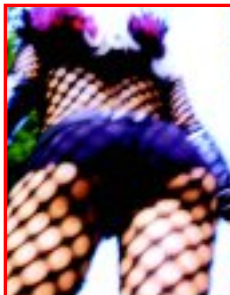
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## Vienna. Delightfully Queer.

Vienna is known for its waltzes and arts, for tasty apple strudel and grandiose architecture. Only too often do people forget about the queer life and history of the city. The local community claims the architects of the State Opera and Franz Schubert as gay historic celebrities and the Life Ball is the most exhilarating queer charity event in Europe. Whether you want the gaudy nostalgia of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, inspiring art nouveau from the 19<sup>th</sup> century or hip events of today: Vienna waits for you.

## Vienna

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