Freud and the Viennese Soul

**Sigmund Freud’s seminal work The Interpretation of Dreams was published in 1899. The cradle of psychoanalysis where the famous physician, psychoanalyst and theorist lived and worked for almost half a century is an apartment at Berggasse 19 in Vienna. Today it is home to the Sigmund Freud Museum.**

Sigmund Freud (May 6, 1856-September 23, 1939) was a doctor, neurologist, psychiatrist, cultural theorist and the founder of psychoanalysis. He spent most of his life in Vienna. The son of Galician parents of Jewish extraction, he moved to Vienna from his place of birth, Freiberg (Moravia, now in the Czech Republic), at the age of four.

The address Berggasse 19 in Vienna’s ninth district – the location of his private apartments and practice – would be the center of Freud’s life for 47 years. It was here that he worked on his theories, wrote scientific papers and analyzed Viennese high society as they lay on his couch. In 1902 the apartment building on Berggasse became the meeting point for the Psychological Wednesday Society. Founded by Freud, it was the precursor to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. Freud and his family fled Berggasse in 1938, going into exile to escape the National Socialist regime.

Sigmund Freud’s analysis uncovered what had previously been hidden, looking far into the depths of the human soul. He saw sexuality as being at the heart of many human desires and actions, to the upset and consternation of many of his contemporaries. In turn-of-the-century Vienna, sexuality was a taboo topic surrounded by fear and curiosity. The emergence of psychoanalysis coincided with the era of Viennese Modernism. Around 1900 Vienna was the center of intellectual life in Europe. It was a time of academic and artistic breakthroughs, a heyday for literature, music, art, architecture and philosophy, against a background of societal change and conflict. At this time, the capital of the Habsburg empire provided a fertile breeding ground for countless new ideas, theories and methods, many of which continued to make themselves felt long into the twentieth century. To this day, Freud’s work continues to be discussed, criticized and applied.

Sigmund Freud had the decisive dream that eventually led him to write the touchstone work of psychoanalysis on the night of July 23/24, 1895 at the picturesque villa that once stood on the Bellevue-Höhe, which looks out over the wine-growing village of Grinzing and is now a popular spot for Viennese day trippers.

His successes as a practitioner and his scientific publications brought Freud fame far beyond Austria’s borders. He shaped a new and revolutionary image of humanity. His attitude to women contrasted significantly with that of the majority of his contemporaries: in Freud’s life they were protagonists, mentors, patrons, patients and successors. Until the very end, the most important woman in Freud’s life was his daughter, Anna. She followed in his footsteps and continued his teaching.

While Freud’s international reputation continued to grow, the Nazis burned his books. In 1938, at the age of 82, Freud felt he had no choice but to leave Vienna, emigrating to London with his family, via Paris. Just under a year later, suffering from incurable cancer, he took an overdose of morphine with the help of his personal physician.

# The new Sigmund Freud Museum

The Sigmund Freud Museum at Berggasse 19 reopened on August 29, 2020, following a rebuild of 18 months. Sigmund Freud lived at this historic address for 47 years with his family. It was here that he ran his famous practice before fleeing the Nazi regime in 1938 and going into exile in the United Kingdom.

The museum will be almost twice as large as it used to be, having increased its floor space from 280 m² to around 550 m². A completely new permanent exhibition takes a fresh look at how the space was used, with the help of period photographs and other documentary evidence. The exhibits provide an insight into Freud’s multi-layered oeuvre and explore different aspects of his life and the lives of his family. With the original layout largely preserved, the museum creates as authentic an experience as possible of the birthplace of psychoanalysis – the routes linking the individual parts of the exhibition are the same that Freud and his visitors would also have walked along.

The mezzanine level containing the apartment and practice that formerly housed the museum, library and office space has now been recast in a contemporary museum format. Freud’s first practice on the upper ground floor level – previously only accessible on occasion – is also part of the newly extended layout and displays the museum’s collection of conceptual art, which was initiated by the American conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth. It also contains works by various other world-famous artists including John Baldessari, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Susan Hiller, Ilya Kabakov and Franz West.

Containing some 40,000 items, the Sigmund Freud Museum library is Europe’s largest repository of works on psychoanalysis. Previously housed in the Freuds’ private rooms, it has now been moved to the floor above. A new, fully equipped reading room will double up as a state-of-the-art lecture theater. The entire floor (the grand Beletage, or *piano nobile*) is set aside for research activities and contains a comprehensive archive as well as the Library of Psychoanalysis. The ticket desk, museum shop and cafe are all located on the ground floor, with the cloakrooms one floor below – the cafe and shop are also open to non-museum visitors. The significantly improved amenities have been designed to accommodate the constant rise in visitor numbers (2018: around 110,000 visitors).

The architectural concept for the refurbishment and expansion of the Sigmund Freud Museum is the product of a collaboration between the architects Hermann Czech and Walter Angonese, and Bettina Götz and Richard Manahl of ARTEC. It retains the original character of Freud’s private and working spaces while bringing them up to the state-of-the-art. The route through the museum allows visitors to experience the rooms and the way they interconnect, revealing their original purposes and telling their stories while giving an impression of their former appearance. A new exhibition and specially-designed glass display cabinets provide information on psychoanalysis and its genesis, as well as its founder Sigmund Freud and his family.

Berggasse 19 is the birthplace of psychoanalysis – a science that gave people new insights into themselves at the start of the last century, leaving its trace on science, culture and society and which continues to develop to this day. But it is also a monument to the cultural and human losses sustained under the National Socialist reign of terror. Freud and his family were able to flee the Nazis in 1938, taking their possessions – including the famous couch – with them to exile in London. The museum provides a place of remembrance for all the people displaced by the regime, as well as all those who were unable to escape: Berggasse 19 contained Jewish collection flats and 79 people were deported to the concentration camps from the address. This aspect of remembrance and acknowledgement of Austria’s and Vienna’s historic responsibilities has also been incorporated into the museum.

*Sigmund Freud Museum, Berggasse 19, 1090 Vienna, www.freud-museum.at*

# Freud in Vienna: residences, locations, monuments

*Berggasse 19, 1090 Vienna*

It was at this famous address, now home to the Sigmund Freud Museum, that the Freud family lived from 1891 to 1938. Anna Freud, Sigmund’s youngest daughter, played an instrumental role in setting up the museum in 1971.

*Berggasse 7, 1090 Vienna*

Between 1936 and 1938 Berggasse 7 was the registered office of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society and the International Psychoanalytic Press.

*Bellevuewiese, Himmelstrasse 115, 1190 Vienna*

In 1895 Freud spent the summer with the Ritter von Schlag family at Schloss Bellevue, which was located on a hillside above the village of Grinzing. On the night of July 23/24, he had a dream which was the first he was able to decipher as wish fulfilment, and which appeared in his book The Interpretation of Dreams. The palace has since been demolished; in its place is a small memorial with a quotation from a letter written by Freud to his friend and colleague in Berlin, Wilhelm Fliess: “Do you really think that some day one will be able to read a marble tablet inscribed: 'Here on 24th July 1895 the mystery of dreams was revealed to Dr Sigmund Freud?’”

*Khevenhüllerstrasse 6, 1180 Vienna*

In 1931 the Freud family rented a villa at Khevenhüllerstrasse 6 to use as a summer house. The old Biedermeier-era villa, which served as a hiding place for revolutionaries in 1848, was the summer residence of the Freud family for two years *(not open to the public).*

*Hohe Warte 46, 1190 Vienna*

Sigmund Freud and his family lived in this villa over the summer of 1933. Completely remodeled in 2006, it is now a Catholic seminary and education center *(not open to the public).*

*Strassergasse 47, 1190 Vienna*

The Freud family rented this house in Grinzing for the summer of 1934. It was here that Sigmund Freud started work on his book Moses and Monotheism, a historical novel that he talked about to visitors including Thornton Wilder and Thomas Mann. The building was his last summer residence until his exile in 1938 *(not open to the public).*

*Viennese coffeehouses*

*Café Landtmann, Universitätsring 4, 1010 Vienna, www.landtmann.at*

*Café Central, Herrengasse 14, 1010 Vienna, www.cafecentral.wien*

*Café Korb, Brandstätte 9, 1010 Vienna, www.cafekorb.at*

Sigmund Freud liked spending time in coffeehouses, sometimes for games of chess and the card game Tarock. He was a regular patron of Café Landtmann on the Ringstrasse, Café Central and Café Korb in the city center.

*Sigmund Freud bust, University of Vienna, Universitätsring 1, 1010 Vienna, www.univie.ac.at*

A bust of Freud was unveiled in the colonnaded courtyard of the University of Vienna in 1955. The years on the plaque (1885-1934) refer to Freud’s teaching years.

*Sigmund Freud memorial, MedUni-Campus AKH, Spitalgasse 23, 1090 Vienna*

One of the courtyards of the Medical University of Vienna contains a statue of the founder of psychoanalysis.

*Sigmund Freud Society, www.sigmundfreudgesellschaft.at*

Founded in 1968 in Vienna, the Sigmund Freud Society is dedicated to making the life and work of Sigmund Freud, and his research into the theory and application of psychoanalysis known to the public at large. Lectures and events in cooperation with the Sigmund Freud Museum and the Sigmund Freud Private Foundation (which was established by the Society) aim to publicize the insights made possible by psychoanalysis, as well as the latest developments in the discipline.

*Sigmund Freud Park*

Sigmund Freud liked to walk in the park in front of the Votive Church, usually accompanied by his two chow chows. The green space between the church and the Ringstrasse was named after him in 1984.

*Sigmund Freud Private University Vienna, Freudplatz 1, 1020 Vienna, www.sfu.ac.at*

The Sigmund Freud Private University Vienna (SFU) opened in 2005 as a university for the humanities with a focus on psychotherapy research. It now has three additional faculties (psychology, medicine, law) as well as offshoots in Linz, Berlin, Paris, Ljubljana, and Milan.

*Viktor Frankl Museum Vienna, Mariannengasse 1/15, 1090 Vienna, www.franklzentrum.org*

The life and work of the famous neurologist and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, founder of the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy and an acquaintance of Freud, can be seen in the ninth district in his former place of work. The Viktor Frankl Museum opened in 2015.

# Freud today

**Freud series on Netflix**

The online streaming service Netflix also pays tribute to the founding father of psychoanalysis in its series entitled “Freud”. The eight 55-minute episodes, produced by Vienna-based production company SATEL and Bavaria Fiction for Austrian national broadcaster ORF and Netflix, shows Sigmund Freud in his younger years and his entanglement in a murderous conspiracy. The crime thriller takes viewers on an exciting journey though fin-de-siècle Vienna. Netflix is streaming the series worldwide, with subtitles in 30 languages and eight dubbed languages.

*www.orf.at, www.netflix.com*

**Freudian Wood eau de parfum**

Viennese perfumery Wiener Blut has created a special fragrance dedicated to Sigmund Freud. Freudian Wood’s ingredients include ambrette (musk mallow), cypress, milk, caraway, mimosa and sandalwood which create a “milky scent that captures intimate skin feeling”. *www.wienerblut.at*

**Vienna street art for Freud**

Various contemporary artists continue to look to Freud as a source of inspiration – chief among them Viennese street artist Nychos, who has given Sigmund Freud a contemporary memorial in the shape of a mural on the Danube Canal. *rabbiteyemovement.at/about/artists/nychos*

**Freud’s food for thought**

Doctor and author Katja Behling-Fischer took a closer look at Freud’s way of life and eating habits in her 2000 book “Zu Tisch bei Sigmund Freud” (ISBN 3-85498-040-X). It contains various recipes from Martha Freud’s private cookbook as well as photographs from the Freud family album.

**Meeting Destination Vienna**

The name Sigmund Freud continues to draw neurologists and psychotherapists to Vienna. And in 2025 the World Congress for Psychotherapy will bring 4,000 participants to the Sigmund Freud Private University in Vienna. www.wcp2025.at

# Sigmund Freud biography

May 6, 1856: Sigismund Schlomo Freud is born in the town of Freiberg in the Moravian-Silesian Region in what is now the Czech Republic

1860: The Freud family moves to Vienna

1873: School leaver’s certificate and start of studies at the University of Vienna

1881: Graduates as a doctor of medicine

1882-1883: Freud starts working at Theodor Meynert’s psychiatric clinic

1884-1885: Research into cocaine

1885: Studies under Jean-Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris

1886: Marries Martha Bernays

1887-1888: Studies the therapeutic use of hypnosis

1891-1892: Moves into Berggasse 19

1893-1894: Freud works with Josef Breuer on the study of hysteria

1895: Freud successfully analyzes one of his own dreams for the first time

1896: Freud uses the term “psychoanalysis” for the first time

1897: Start of self-analysis

1899-1900: First copies of The Interpretation of Dreams appear

1901: Freud starts his analysis of the 18-year-old Dora

1902: Founds the Wednesday Psychological Society, re-established in 1908 as the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society

1904: Freud travels to Athens for the first time with his brother Alexander

1905: The papers on sexual theory, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, and Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (‘Dora’) appear.

1906: Start of Carl Jung’s correspondence with Freud.

1908: The first congress of Freudian Psychology takes place in Salzburg.

1909: Freud travels to America

1910: Establishment of the International Psychoanalytic Association

1911: Alfred Adler leaves the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society

1912: Establishment of psychoanalytical journal Imago

1913: Split with Carl Jung

1914: Start of the first world war

1916: First phase of introductory lectures in psychoanalysis.

1918: Freud loses his entire fortune, which is tied up in Austrian state bonds

1919: Foundation of the International Psychoanalytic Press

1924: Conflict with Otto Rank on the significance of birth trauma in psychoanalysis

1925: The first volume of Freud’s collected works is published

1926: Freud receives numerous awards honoring his 70th birthday

1927: An election notice for the Social Democratic Party of Austria co-signed by Freud is published in the Arbeiter Zeitung newspaper

1929: Arnold Zweig publishes an essay entitled Freud und der Mensch (Freud and Humankind), in which he celebrates Freud as a liberator from religious and pathological terror

1930: A heart attack forces Freud to give up smoking

1931: The parlous state of the International Psychoanalytic Press’s finances deteriorates. Freud sends out an SOS to the psychoanalytic organizations

1933: Hitler becomes Chancellor of the Greater German Reich. Freud corresponds with Einstein on the question of “Why war?”

1934: The 23rd International Psychoanalytic Congress takes place in Lucerne. By this point, numerous German analysts have already been forced into exile

1935: Freud is made an Honorary Member of the British Royal Society of Medicine

1936: Thomas Mann gives a speech at the Wiener Konzerthaus, entitled Freud and the Future

1937: Anna Freud opens the Jackson Nursery with Dorothy Burlingham, a kindergarten in which she begins her research into aspects of children’s eating behaviors

1938: Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg is forced to resign by Hitler. Schuschnigg promises that the advancing German army will not encounter any resistance on March 12. On March 13 the Law on the Reunification of Austria with the German Reich is announced. A wave of political arrests and antisemitic persecution erupts. Freud’s apartment and the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society are searched. Anna Freud is held and interrogated by the Gestapo for a day

June 4, 1938: Freud and his family emigrate to London via Paris. Now in extreme old age, his sisters Adolfine, Marie, Pauline and Rosa remain in Vienna. The money that the family gave to support them is soon eaten away by the new taxes and fees levied by the Nazis. Driven out of their homes, they are forced to move into “collecting apartments” before moving to a Jewish old people’s home. In the summer of 1942 the sisters are taken on an *Altentransport* to Theresienstadt where Adolfine dies on September 29. Marie, Pauline and Rosa’s transfers to Treblinka on September 23 and 29 end with their murders a few hours after arrival. The rest of the family do not learn of their fate until they receive a letter from the Red Cross in 1946

September 23, 1939: Sigmund Freud dies in exile in London. The final entry in his diary is dated August 25 and simply says “war panic”

*Source: www.freud-museum.at*

### **www.vienna.info**

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