Old masters – young experts

The world's largest Bruegel collection and the prettiest kiss immortalized by Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) genius Gustav Klimt in his world-famous painting can only be found in Vienna. The cultural capital is also a place where you can discover a rich diversity of styles and eras. Baroque opulence and cool avant-garde coexist in an exciting creative environment. Artworks by talented young designers now hang in the ornate staterooms and are just as impressive as the old masterpieces found in Vienna's modern museums.

The Albertina is located in a former Habsburg palace just behind the Vienna State Opera. It is home to one of the world's largest collections of graphic art. It also exhibits works by such renowned artists as Picasso, Monet, Chagall, and Renoir. The cornerstone of this is the Batliner Collection, one of the most important collections of classical modernist painting in Europe. The Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna on the Ringstrasse is devoted to Old Masters. Artworks from every important historical period are on display here, most notably masterpieces dating from the Renaissance and Baroque periods: Rubens, Titian, Rembrandt, Raphael and the world's largest Bruegel collection. The Kunstkammer is one of the most important galleries in the world: it exhibits more than 2,200 objects that were collected over centuries by the Habsburgs.

The Baroque Belvedere Palace houses the world's largest collection of Klimt paintings, including the famous "The Kiss," which is on permanent display in the Upper Belvedere. The Lower Belvedere and the adjacent Orangery host prestigious temporary exhibitions. The Secession Building, which was used as an exhibition space by Klimt's secessionist group of artists, awaits at Karlsplatz. While Klimt's world-famous "Beethoven Frieze" can be marveled at on the ground floor, contemporary art is presented in the main exhibition room. Just around the corner, the Academy of Fine Arts boasts an impressive art collection: its in-house picture gallery features 1,600 works, primarily by the Old Masters. The Wien Museum is located on Karlsplatz, which tells the story of the city and its residents through a diverse collection of objects – documents, models, everyday items, and world-class works of art. It is the first public museum in Austria to offer free admission to its impressive permanent exhibition.

The works of countless renowned artists are on display at the MuseumsQuartier. Built by Baroque architect Fischer von Erlach, the former court stables now make up a whole new district. In addition to the Leopold Museum, which houses the world's largest collection of works by Schiele, the Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation Vienna (mumok), the Kunsthalle Wien, the Architekturzentrum Wien, the Designforum, and many other cultural institutions, as well as shops, cafés, and restaurants, bring the area to life. The Belvedere 21 near the Upper Belvedere, built in 1958 for the World Expo in Brussels, has been renovated and exhibits Austrian art of the 20th and 21st centuries. The MAK – Museum of Applied Arts presents a diverse collection with a focus on design, applied arts, architecture and contemporary art. Speaking of which, the Albertina modern –

a branch of the world-famous Albertina – uses around 2,500 m² of the Künstlerhaus on Karlsplatz to host temporary exhibitions of contemporary art. On the upper floor, the Künstlerhaus Association exhibits art by its members as well as by external artists. Discussions often center on sociopolitical topics such as the environment, diversity, or religion. The Heidi Horten Collection private museum presents excerpts from the spectacular art collection of patron Heidi Goëss-Horten in a renovated palace in the city center.

Like the nearby Hundertwasserhaus, the KunstHausWien was designed by the famous Viennese artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser in his unmistakable style. It hosts international exhibitions of contemporary art with a focus on environmental issues. An exhibition space has been dedicated to Viennese Actionism, Austria's most important contribution to 20th century art, in the city center since 2024: the Wiener Aktionismus Museum (Vienna Actionism Museum).

Numerous galleries, particularly in the 1st and 4th districts, present a wide range of artworks and offer smaller but still impressive exhibitions on their premises. A historic bread factory in the 10th district is now home to more than 15 institutions of contemporary art, including Galerie OstLicht, which together with WestLicht has dedicated itself entirely to photography. The opening of the Foto Arsenal Wien, located at the main railway station, has given Vienna a new exhibition space for photography in 2025.

Every year, Vienna also hosts countless art events and fairs, such as Vienna Art Week, Parallel Vienna, the Spark Art Fair, and the gallery festival Curated by. The Foto Wien festival takes place every other year. Every fall, Vienna Design Week is entirely dedicated to the theme of design.

A stop in one of the city's traditional coffee houses is highly recommended following a visit to a museum. Take a seat — with any luck it will be a Thonet — and treat yourself. This too is very much a part of Viennese culture.

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Facts and figures “Art”

- World’s largest collection of paintings by Gustav Klimt in the Upper Belvedere: 24 oil paintings (including “The Kiss”). (Source: belvedere.at)
- World’s largest collection of drawings by Gustav Klimt in the Wien Museum: 400 drawings (not on permanent display). (Source: wienmuseum.at)
- World’s largest Egon Schiele collection at the Leopold Museum: 44 paintings and more than 200 watercolors, drawings and prints (source: leopoldmuseum.org)
- Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna:
    - world’s largest collection of paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder: 12 paintings
    - world’s largest collection of Flemish paintings: 800 paintings
    - one of the largest collections of Venetian paintings in the world (with paintings from all of Titian’s creative periods): 400 paintings
    - largest and most important wonder-room in the world: 2,200 objects
    - (Source: khm.at)
- Albertina:
    - 1.2 million artworks
    - 65,000 drawings and around one million prints from all the major artistic periods from late Gothic to contemporary art
    - contemporary art: around 70,000 works
    - (Source: albertina.at)
- MuseumsQuartier: one of the largest cultural areas in the world (90,000 m² of floor space) with in excess of 50 cultural institutions. (Source: www.mqw.at)