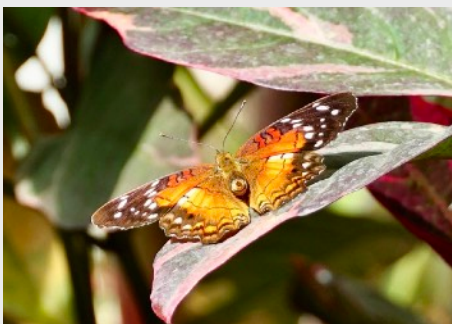
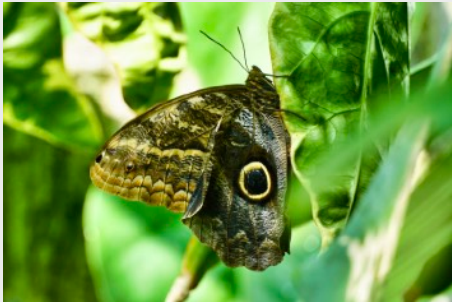
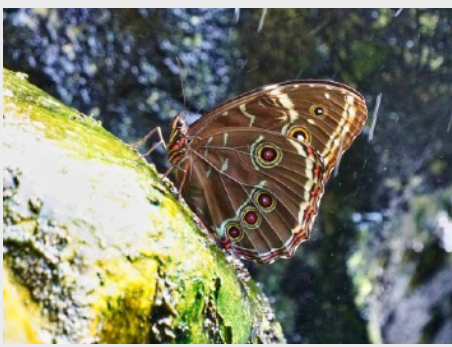


EUROPE 2023

4 months | 6 countries | 8 house swaps | 10 journey legs



Vienna

A comfortable night was spent at our Pension, Dr Geissler. A hearty breakfast this morning before jumping on our trusty steeds to cycle the central area of Vienna. The canal at the back of our hotel was our first destination. We were extremely disappointed that the sides of the canal were covered in graffiti. This total scarring of the built landscape continued over much of the surfaces of the park that we followed. Eventually we came to the lovely area of the Belvedere Schloss.

The Belvedere is a historic building complex consisting of two Baroque palaces (the Upper and Lower Belvedere). The grounds are set on a gentle gradient and include decorative tiered fountains and cascades. I felt very tired this morning and sat and contemplated the surrounds (and the masses of visitors) whilst Sig wandered and took photos. We then headed back towards the centre of the city seeking the area that I think was the old imperial palace, to find the centre of most of the museums and the famous Spanish Riding School. The complex was huge and impressive and very classy. We did find the riding school where we will be going tomorrow to watch a performance. That has been on my bucket list for most of my life. We did see a practice here in 1983 and I'm keen to see the full performance..



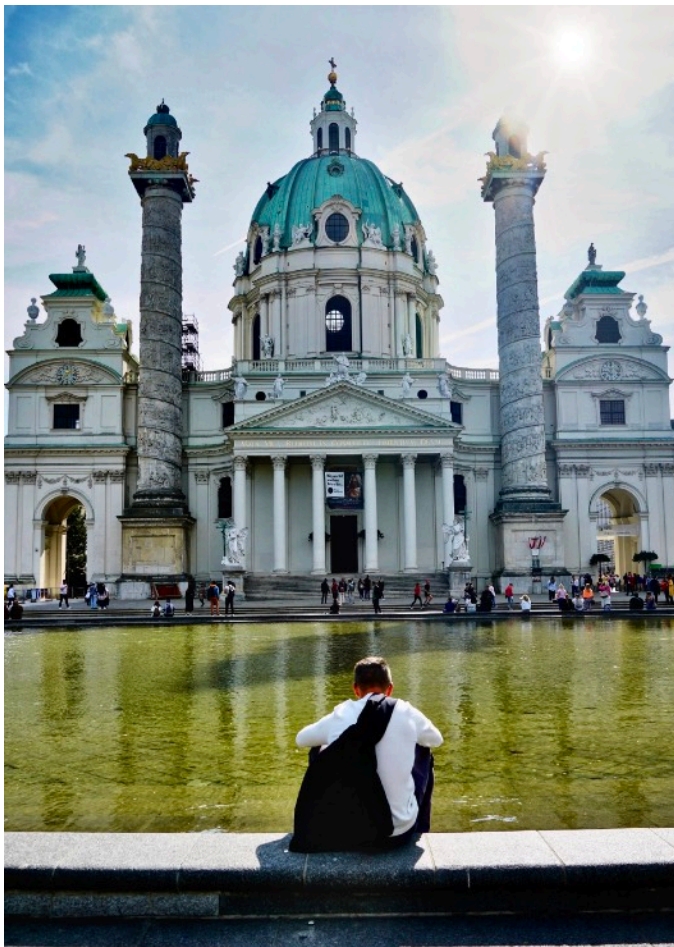
Our wanderings then took us into an extremely busy shopping district. The place is again classy, neat and tidy and abounds in beautiful skyscraper sized old buildings. At one point we came upon a butterfly house and I went in to investigate. It was inside what looked like a very old glass orangery. Beautifully coloured butterflies refused to sit to allow me to photograph them. Never mind. Sig was disappointed but realised taking butterfly photos is not an easy skill. It was nevertheless a lovely interlude and my tiredness was starting to wear off, especially since we met a lovely couple from Montana USA and got chatting. We may swap houses with them in the future. And then there was the guy on a Brompton who pulled us up to chat. He had hired a Brompton for a couple of hours and by the time we finished with him he was going back to the bike shop to invest in one.

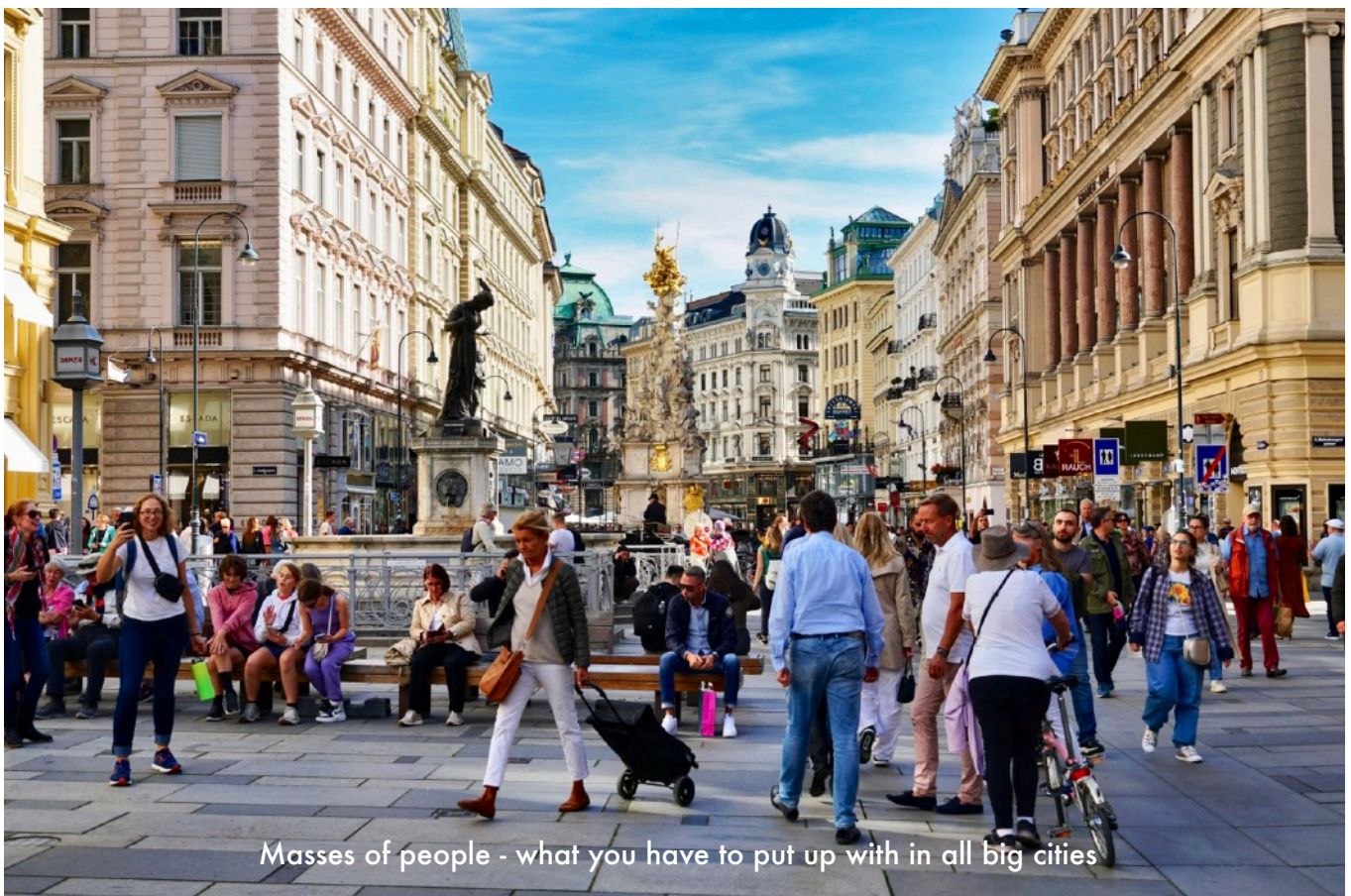
Further on we stopped at a huge, old domed church and enjoyed the water feature out front. The bells of the church started peeling (and continued for more than 20 minutes along with a nearby siren) and then many people in tails and fancy dress emerged. It was a wedding of course. The bride and groom emerged at the end and did a circuit of the pond to the applause of their guests and all the onlookers. Our last stop was Stephen Platz - a major public space where St Stephens Church dominates. We recognised it as the spire and roof we could see from our apartment window. What a fabulous roof! It is a replacement of a wooden roof that was destroyed by fire in 1945. 230,000 colourfully glazed tiles transform the roof into a true work of art. Apparently each of these tiles weighs about 2.5 kg, each and is nailed to the rafters with two copper nails and all of it is also embedded in mortar.

A good day in a classy city - apart from the graffiti.









Masses of people - what you have to put up with in all big cities