



Viennese Modernism

Klimt, Wagner, Schiele, Moser

23–27 March 2026 (MM 905)

5 days • £2,880

Lecturer: Gavin Plumley

Focus on the key figures in Viennese Modernism: Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Koloman Moser and Otto Wagner.

Intensive study of architecture, design and art of the Vienna Secession, Art Nouveau, Arts & Crafts and early Modernism.

Perfectly located heritage hotel.

Vienna at the turn of the twentieth century was a city in ferment – a bastion of the established order, a hotbed of radical politics, a crucible of intellectual and artistic revolution.

As the capital of a multinational empire, residence of Europe's premier monarchy, centre of an omnipresent bureaucracy and headquarters of a formidable army, Vienna projected an image of unshakeable power and respect for tradition. Lift not the painted veil: behind it lay widespread discontent, a crumbling moral order and myriad cracks in the coherence of empire. With remarkable suddenness, there emerged from this complacent, decadent and artistically stagnant society a brilliant array of artists and intellectuals who were determined to break with the past and were prepared to risk affronting the establishment in doing so.

This was the city of Mahler, Schönberg, Schnitzler and Freud, and also of the protagonists of this tour, Klimt, Schiele and Otto Wagner and their friends, collaborators and rivals. The Great War brought Austrian suzerainty of Central Europe crashing to an end, causing death, destruction and trauma along the way. And then the 'flu pandemic of 1918 killed even more, including Schiele, Klimt and Moser.

In the first decades of the twentieth century Art Nouveau in its multifarious manifestations and transformations spread like wildfire around Europe and beyond. In the realm of architecture and ornamentation the Viennese variant was more measured than elsewhere, and more classical. In the first years of the new century, applied ornament retreated further to expose pure form and rational design. Here are the roots of modernism which, in turn, became the dominant orthodoxy of the twentieth century.



Vienna, Secession Building, wood engraving 1898.

By contrast, the revolution in painting and the graphic arts had little international influence, but resulted in works which were exceptionally luxuriant and expressive.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 9.00am from London Heathrow to Vienna (Austrian Airlines). An afternoon walk along the Ringstrasse and through the Inner City, including Secessionist designs by Otto Wagner, Max Fabiani, Jože Plečnik and Adolf Loos (including a public lavatory and a menswear shop).

Day 2. Morning lecture. The Museum of Applied Arts has excellent collections, strikingly displayed, of work by Hoffmann, Moser and other designers of the Wiener Werkstätte, as well as by the Scotsman Charles Rennie Mackintosh. In the afternoon, visit the Museum of the History of Vienna, a fascinating survey whose collections are particularly rich in turn-of-the-century art and artefacts. See also the decommissioned railway station pavilions by Wagner and Olbrich and the exhibition hall (the 'Golden Cabbage') designed in 1898 by Olbrich as an exhibition hall for the Secession. Klimt's 34-metre long *Beethoven Frieze* is here.

Day 3. The Leopold Collection is an excellent collection of works by Secessionist artists, especially Schiele. In the afternoon, drive to the Nussdorf Dam, part of Otto Wagner's ingenious system to regulate the flow of the Danube. Nearby is the Hohe Warte, featuring a number of Jugendstil villas, including those designed by Josef Hoffmann for his Secession and Wiener Werkstätte colleagues. The rest of the day is free for independent exploration.

Day 4. Drive to the outskirts to see buildings by Otto Wagner; the richly decorated apartment blocks in the Linke Wienzeile, the emperor's personal railway station at Schönbrunn and the hospital church 'Am Steinhof', the finest manifestation of Viennese Secessionism. The exteriors of Otto Wagner's two summer houses provide a contrast of the development of his architectural styles. The ground floor of the villa used by Klimt as a studio between 1911 and 1918 features a reconstruction of the original furnishings and various media related to Klimt's work.

Day 5. Visit the Gallery of Austrian Art in the Baroque magnificence of the Belvedere Palace to see the collection of paintings by Klimt (the world's largest, including *The Kiss*), Schiele, Kokoschka and their contemporaries. The flight to Heathrow arrives at c. 6.45pm.

Viennese Modernism
continued

Lecturer

Gavin Plumley. Writer, broadcaster, lecturer and the author of two books. He studied music at Keble College, Oxford and specialises in the culture of Central Europe during the last years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As well as writing for newspapers, magazines and opera and concert programmes worldwide, Gavin has lectured at the British Museum, the National Gallery, the National Theatre, the Royal Opera House and Wigmore Hall. **Instagram:** @gavinplumley | **Website:** gavinplumley.com

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £2,880 or £2,580 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,310 or £3,010 without flights.

Included: air travel (economy class) on scheduled Austrian Airlines flights (Airbus A320); private coach for airport transfers and excursions; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 1 lunch and 3 dinners with wine; admission charges for all included visits; all tips for waiters, drivers and guides; all airport and state taxes; the services of the lecturer.

Accommodation. Grand Hotel Wien (grandhotelwien.com): Luxury hotel in a superb location on the Ringstrasse just a short walk to the opera house, traditionally furnished and decorated in a Viennese style. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? There is quite a lot of walking on this tour. Average distance by coach per day: 9 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.