

# The American Friends of Versailles travelers at Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna

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SOCIAL HISTORY • BY: SHARON HOGE

*Before becoming Queen of France, Marie Antoinette was an Austrian Hapsburg princess.* To learn about the region that shaped her, the American Friends of Versailles selected Vienna and Prague as destinations for this year's benefit heritage tour.

The annual tours help raise money for restoration projects at Versailles, which promote the important Franco-American friendship. AFV has contributed close to \$7 million dollars since its inception two decades ago, to restoring the **Trois Fontaines Bosquet**, the **Pavillon Frais**, and the baroque fresco ceiling of the **Queen's Guards Room**.

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Trois Fontaines Bosquet.





Pavillon Frais.





This year's funds will help restore the **Bosquet de la Reine**, a section of the Versailles parc once reserved only for **Marie Antoinette**.

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Le Bosquet de la Reine is next on the list.

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Getting ready for its close-up.

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Organizing the benefit trips are AFV founder **Catharine Hamilton** and **Princesse Béatrice de Bourbon Deux Siciles**. The Princesse, a descendent of **Marie Antoinette's** sister **Marie Carolina**, is an AFV French Board Member.

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*L. to r.:* American Friends of Versailles founder Catharine Hamilton; Princesse Béatrice arranges and manages the AFV benefit tours.

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Gathering the first Saturday evening in October we met for cocktails and then dinner among the statues, marble columns, and crystal chandeliers of the Imperial Hotel on the Ringstrasse. Originally constructed as a city residence for the **Duke of Wurtemberg**, it was converted into a hotel for the Vienna World's Fair of 1873, and retains a regal character.

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The Imperial Hotel originated as a palace.



Old and new American Friends of Versailles gather in the Imperial Hotel's Marble Hall.





Anne Lantry, Sir Richard Hitt, Susan Kendall, and Katherine Harris at the Welcome Dinner held in the hotel's Marble Hall.

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Assembled from Texas, California, Illinois, Florida, New York, Washington D.C., Virginia and France, some AFV members have traveled together over the years and are old friends with new acquaintances welcomed every year. This season's group numbered around two dozen.

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AFV members Josee Nadeau, Katherine Harris, and Claire Dwoskin.





Jim Hanson.





*L. to r.:* Michele Fieschi-Fouan; Photographer Francis Hammond.



Robert and Jaquine Arnold.





Dr. and Mrs. Alan Bentz, with Josee Nadeau.



American Friends of Versailles founder Catharine Hamilton.

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*Our private visits to several of Vienna's memorable palaces* over the next few days began with a tour of the Hofburg Imperial Palace, the sprawling 59-acre complex in central Vienna. The seat of the Hapsburg Dynasty until 1918, it was the birthplace of Marie Antoinette



and site of her proxy marriage to **Louis XVI** with her older brother **Archduke Ferdinand** standing in for the Dauphin.

A central feature of the Hofburg today is a museum dedicated to a later prominent Hapsburg, **Empress Elizabeth** the wife of **Franz Joseph**. An early devotee of physical fitness, nicknamed **Sissi**, she was a legendary beauty, beloved, and universally mourned after her 1898 assassination.

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The Hofburg was the seat of Hapsburg power.

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Emperor Franz Joseph lived and worked in sumptuous Hofburg rooms.





A portrait of Sissi on her husband Franz Joseph's desk in the Hofburg.





Jim Hanson admires the magnificent Austrian National Library built by Marie Antoinette's grandfather Emperor Charles VI

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*Later we visited Schönbrunn Palace, a Hapsburg summer residence, and also toured the Belvedere where Marie Antoinette's marriage was celebrated with a masked ball. Afterward the 14-year-old bride left in a procession of 57 carriages, now a French royal by marriage, to arrive at Versailles and meet her husband, the ill-fated future king.*

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Schönbrunn Palace was a Hapsburg summer residence.



Chicago supporters Elizabeth Parker and Keith Crow at Schönbrunn Palace.



The Schönbrunn gloriette terminates the garden.





Claire Dwoskin admires blossoms in the Schönbrunn gardens.



Stately Belvedere Palace was said to be patterned on Versailles.

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Invited to the Spanish Riding School, we attended a training session of the famed Lippizaner horses and then visited the stables to admire the horses (no mares!) up close. Each one is named for his bloodline and his mother, resulting in sleek stallions named Patrizia and Nina. Later we returned for dinner in a private room above the training ring.

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A training session at the Spanish Riding School designed by Von Erlach and opened in 1735.



Touring the Riding School stable.



We were instructed not to pet — or kiss — the magnificent Lippizaner stallions.





Jim Hanson, Josee Nadeau, Dr. Alan and Sallymoon Bentz, and Michele Fieschi-Fouan arrive at the Riding School for dinner.



General Manager Ervin Kissenberger's welcome to dinner in Spanish Riding School private quarters.



Crooner saxophonist Jengis Gumusay entertained at the Riding School dinner.

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Our fundraising trips are always enhanced by invitations from family and friends of Princesse Béatrice. **Lorentz Comte de Gudenus** guided us through Grafenegg Castle, and **Princess Marie of Liechtenstein** hosted a private tour of Liechtenstein Palace, which is not normally open to the public.

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Approaching Grafenegg Castle.



Lorenz Comte de Gudenus led our tour of Grafenegg Castle.



Luncheon at Grafenegg Castle.





Anne Lantry at the Grafenegg wishing well.



John Parkerson in the Grafenegg courtyard.





David Wiggins admires Grafenegg interiors.



Princess Marie of Liechtenstein with Princesse Béatrice welcomed us to the Palace.



Keith Crow and John Parkerson marvel at the ultra extravagant interior of Liechtenstein Palace.

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Presented three-course meals matched with local wines at both lunch and dinner, we dined in landmark restaurants, palaces, private homes and clubs.

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A string quartet greeted us at Kinsky Palace.



Claire Dwoskin and Princess Béatrice at Kinsky Palace.



Claire Dwoskin and Michele Fieschi-Fouan at the Black Camel for lunch.



*L. to r.:* The Black Camel, a Viennese institution since 1618; Apricot pancake and sorbet dessert at the Black Camel restaurant.





Lorenz Comte de Gudenus arranged dinner at private St. Johanns Club.



Sharon Hoge, Katharine Harris, Claire Dwoskin at the Vestibule restaurant where Hapsburg royals rested during theater intermissions.

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Vienna farewell dinner at Palais Schönburg.

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*Excellent guides took us to other notable sites in the city.* St. Stephen's Cathedral, Karlskirche, the Albertina. At the National Gallery we saw the world's largest collection of Breughel works and the original painting of **Klimt's *The Kiss***, which is copied in souvenir shops all over Vienna. The Austrian National Library, built by Marie Antoinette's grandfather **Charles VI**, is a magnificent double-height wall of books and paintings with hidden nooks for reading.

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Nave of iconic St. Stephen's Cathedral.



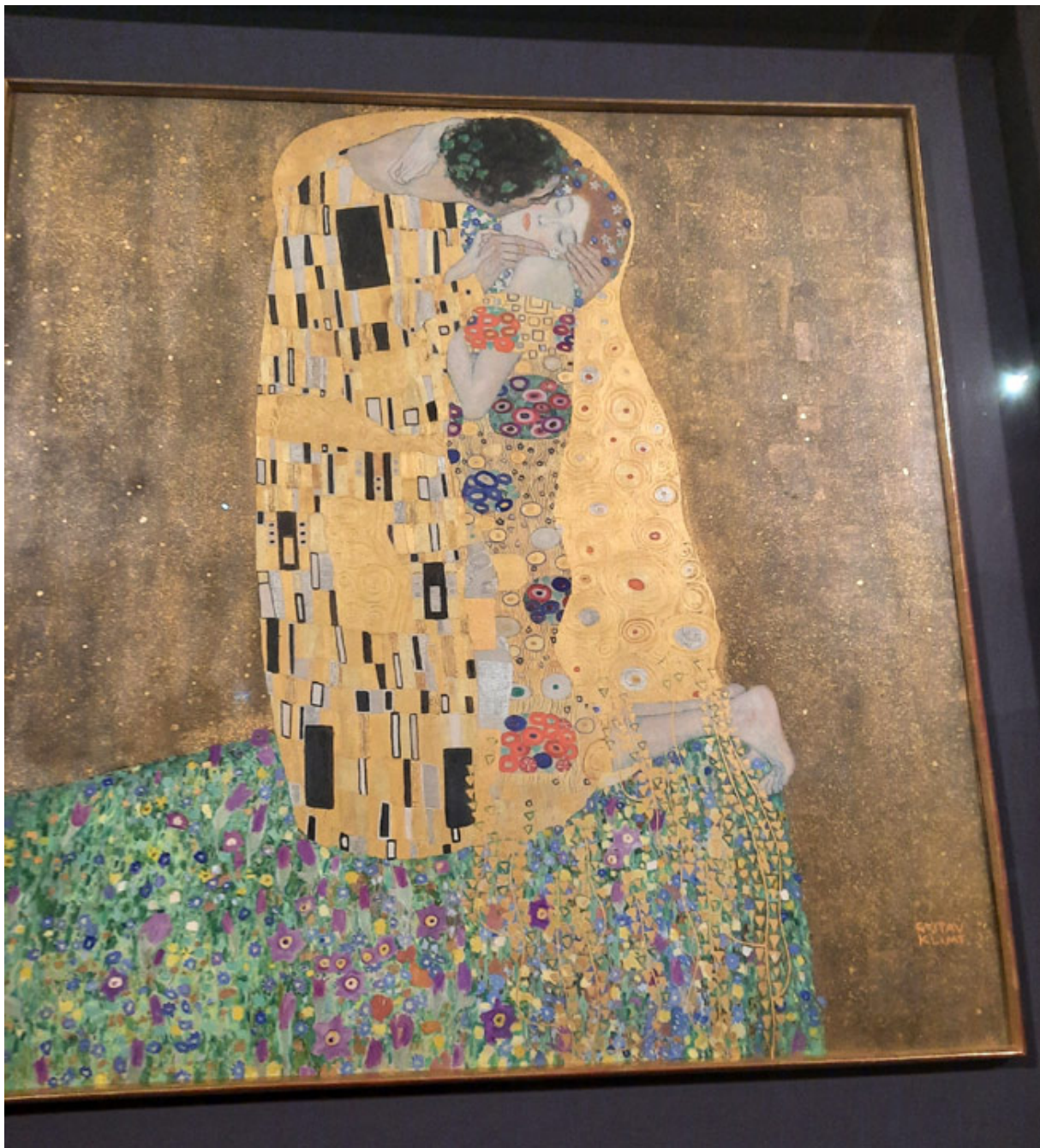


An elevator takes visitors up for close views of Karlskirche ceiling paintings.





AFV photographer Francis Hammond admires the Karlskirche ceiling.



Souvenir images of Klimt's *The Kiss* are duplicated all over town.

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Seeing Vienna's treasures renewed interest in our projects to help preserve Versailles. We touched on the city's highlights and many of us hope to return soon. But after four days of non-stop meals and activities, it was time to proceed to Prague.

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*Stay tuned for Part 2, coming on Monday.*

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*Photographs by Francis Hammond, Sharon King Hoge, & Michele Fieschi-Fouan.*

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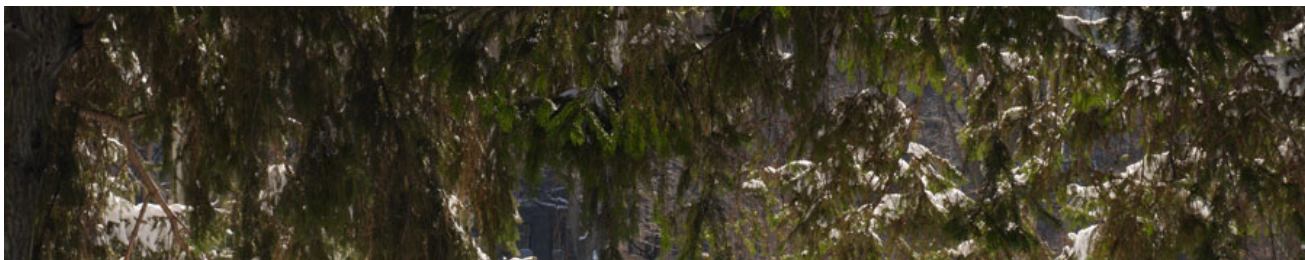




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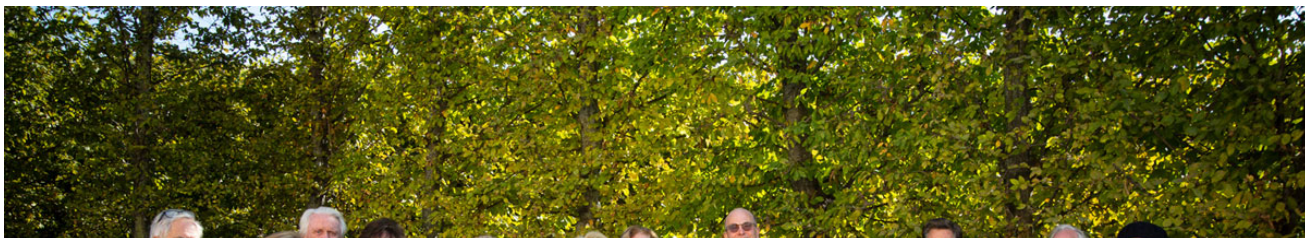


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