

LuxuryWeb Magazine

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Photos courtesy of Hotel Imperial Vienna

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Hotel Imperial Vienna

Many hotels fancy themselves as "Grand" and "Royal," but in the case of Vienna's Hotel Imperial the description can be taken literally. Custom built in 1863 as Palais Württemberg, it was designed and constructed as a residence for Duke Philipp of Württemberg who married Austrian Archduchess Maria Theresa. Five years later when they sold it and moved, the palace was converted into a hotel for visitors attending the 1873 Vienna World's Fair. Since that time, a century and a half ago, the hotel has been patronized by a magnificence of celebrities -- Queen Elizabeth, Charlie Chaplin, Sigmund Freud, Adolph Hitler, the Rolling Stones, the Emperor of Japan.

Situated conveniently on the Ringstrasse, a ten-minute stroll from the city's iconic St. Stephen's Cathedral, a two block walk from the Opera House, it retains its splendor as a Luxury Collection Hotel under the efficient management of the Marriott group.



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Directly from the street, guests enter the sumptuous lobby with a multi-colored patterned marble floor, gold-frame chairs upholstered in red velvet, and royal portraits of Prince Philipp and the Archduchess gazing down at the reception desk overseen by the hotel's acclaimed "Clef d'Or" Imperial Concierge. Doors at the far end open into Imperial Hall which originated as an open courtyard for horses and carriages; its cobblestones have been covered over in marble with frieze panels of putti adorning the walls. Within, the Imperial Bar serves cocktails and snacks, and during his stay, tenor Luciano Pavarotti delighted hotel guests when he used the cocktail pianist's grand piano to rehearse.



To the left of the main doors, the Café Imperial is fitted out in paneled wood and chandeliers with windows overlooking the street. The breakfast buffet is laid out here and all day long, belying its origin as the birthplace of the legendary Viennese *kaffeehaus*, several coffee delicacies are served: a Wiener Melange mixture of coffee and milk, the *Pharisaer* local version of Irish coffee, and *Maria Theresia* spiced up with orange liqueur and whipped cream. Afternoon tea and champagne brunches are offered.



For fine dining, elegant meals are served in Restaurant OPUS five days a week.



Furnished in the style of Schönbrunn Palace where Marie Antoinette spent her childhood, two symmetrical Royal Suites provide bedrooms and seating areas with brocade draperies, upholstered walls, and glittering chandeliers. The traditional décor is carried out in a variety of classic suites which feature desk and seating areas, large screen televisions, walls of closet space. Even basic suites offer Marriott Residential Amenities in large marble bathrooms with tubs, showers, and double sinks. Butler service is provided with many of the more expensive rooms.



Not to be overlooked is the establishment's famous Imperial Torte. Created in honor of Emperor Franz Joseph I to commemorate the hotel's 1873 opening, its secret recipe which fuses buttercream and marzipan with a slight aroma of almonds and melty chocolate icing is a legendary favorite to this day – and a good reason to utilize the array of elliptical machines, exercise bikes, stair climbers, and weights in the extensive Fitness Studio with a sauna which is open twenty-four hours a day.

For an extra cleaning fee, one dog is allowed per room and greeted with a Pet Welcome Kit including a bowl, bed, and mat.

A first floor hallway is lined with posters of photos and quotes tracing the hotel's fascinating legacy of celebrities and events. Studying the information, hotel guests can feel a part of the establishment's unfolding history and lore.

