

Vienna
2nd Week of an Untours Sampler
October 2006
Simone and Tony Baker



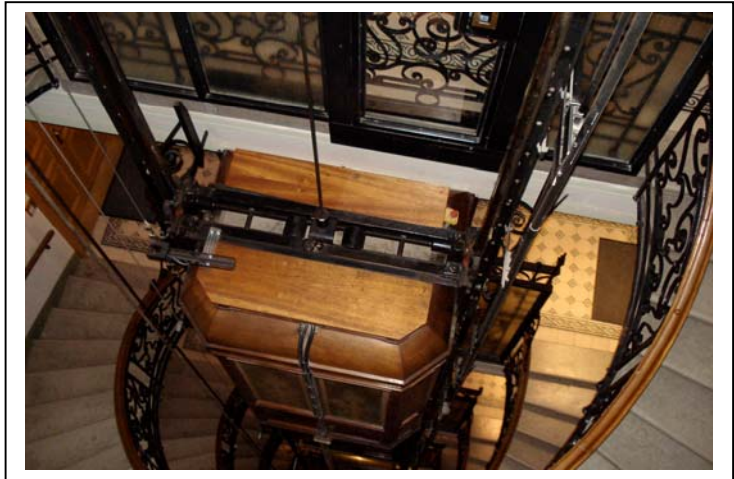
1-Café Gloriette -- Schonbrunn
2-Schonbrunn Castle
3-Technology (Technisches) Museum
4-Public Library
5-Natural History (Naturhistorisches) Museum
6-Fine Art (Kunsthistorisches) Museum

7- Michaelerplatz
8-Opera House and Albertina Museum
9-St Stephen's (Stephansdom) Cathedral
10-Our Untours Room
11-City Park (Stadtspark)
12-Graffiti on Danube Canal Wall

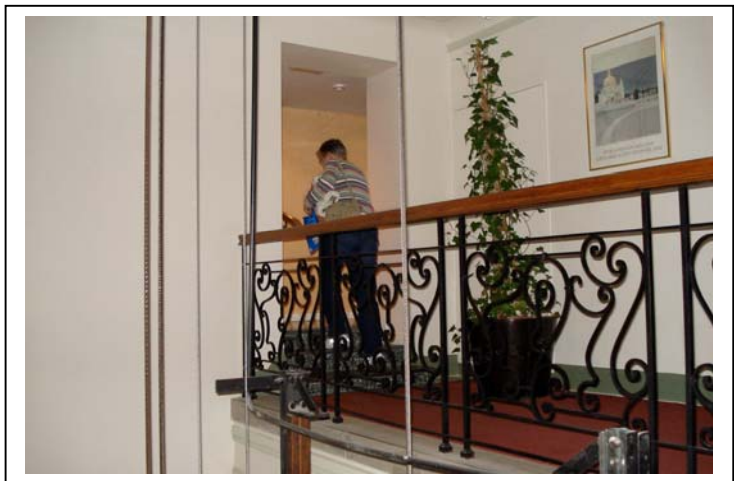
13-Danube Island (Donauinsel)
14-The Tree
15-Greenbelt area visited our last day.

Map from Google Earth

Wednesday (10/4) We arrived Vienna by train from Brno around 2pm. The Untours representatives met us, which includes all the Untours travelers from Prague, on the train platform. We were placed in taxis and whisk off to our apartments. Ours was in an old, sophisticated building. The elevator traveled in the center of the circular staircase giving the impression that it was an after thought. Yet, it was old itself as it was made of wood and ornately decorated with wrought iron that matched the wrought iron around the staircase. It could carry only two people with luggage and was delightfully slow. Plus, it only went to the 5th floor and our apartment was on the 6th. So we walked the last flight of stairs



Immediately on arrival we went to the management office on the second floor and got our room key. They only had one for some reason, so we would hide it in this flowerpot when we went out as we were often separated. They also informed us of the Untours orientation meeting the next morning.



The building housed long and short-term rentals. Ours was short term and very small compared to the previous apartment in Prague. It was only a bedroom and small kitchen with microwave and refrigerator. On the plus side, the room was very quiet and the windows could be opened. Additionally, high speed Internet was available in the room for around \$50 for the week. We jumped at this.



We immediately went walking after getting unpacked. Before leaving the building we asked the lady in the office of a location of a nearby ATM machine. She didn't know what we were talking about. We soon learn they were called "Bank-O-Mats" and we put euros in our pockets. We walked to the grocery store, which was on the corner of our block. We ate supper in an Italian restaurant a few blocks from the room. Unfortunately, the service was terrible and they completely missed Simone's menu request. I wasn't very happy with that place.

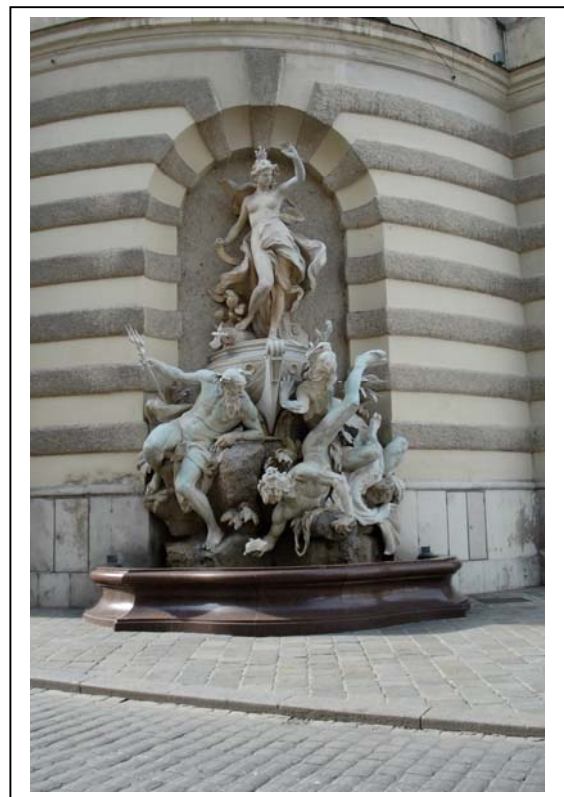
Thursday (10/5) At daybreak I went running in City Park (Stadtspark), which was only three blocks from our apartment. It is not a large park, but the guidebook says it was the largest park in the Inter-Loop. I would run in this park during our stay in Vienna.

We hung around the apartment until it was time to walk to the Untours orientation meeting. This meeting was on the second floor of a restaurant and within easy walking distance from the apartment. It was hosted by Claudia (Untours) and similar to the one in Prague except we got breakfast. Also, the Untours gift to us was a day field trip along the Danube River. We jumped at this opportunity. And, set it up for Sunday with another couple.



After the meeting we wandered southwest and found ourselves in the Michaelerplatz (platz means square). This sculpture is one of several that were in the wall of a building that partially surrounded the Michaelerplatz. Michaelerplatz is on the northeast corner of the Hofburg, which is the Imperial Palace. It is a collection of a bunch of magnificent buildings constructed over several centuries. Most of the buildings are museums today. We ended up calling this area and a number of other adjacent museums the "*Museum Quarter*."

We walked a few more blocks and saw a sign in front of the Albertina Museum promoting their temporary Picasso exhibit. We decided to go in. It represented the third and last phase of his career. Besides being classic Picasso, "cropped-up", it was extremely sexually explicit. In summary, neither of us cared for it.



We returned to our room, ate lunch, and took a nap. We were awakened by workman who wanted to change the cords on the blinds in the windowpanes. We tried to convince them to come back after we left. But, it was preventive maintenance and they said they had to do it “now.”. So we let them. I couldn’t believe it.



We returned to the Museum Quarter looking for the permanent art museum. After another dead end, we found the Kunsthistorisches Museum and her twin sister the Naturhistorisches Museum. They faced each other across a large open green area. I don’t know which one of the twins is in this image on the right side.



We chose to go into the Art Museum and it was fabulous. This is some of the inside décor.



The holdings met all my expectations. I was hoping to find a picture with the theme of “Salomi with John’s Head.” To my delight, I found four.

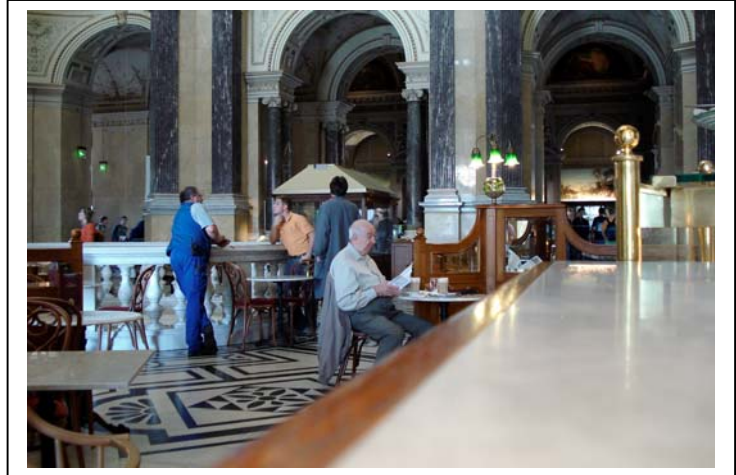
In the bookstore I discovered a post card with a picture of the Venus of Willendorf. (The Venus of Willendorf is a famous, tiny sculpture from the Upper Paleolithic.) I ask the salesperson if she was in the Museum, and if I had missed her. I was told that she was located in the Naturhistorisches Museum, across the green area. I walked over to the twin sister and into the bookstore. Sure enough she was everywhere; on post cards, key rings, and by herself in several sizes. They did have a cast of her in actual size and a number of other casts of portable Paleolithic Art. I decided I would visit the Natural History Museum the next morning and after seeing the museum I would buy some of these casts.

On the way back to the room we stopped and had a beer in a little bar on the second story of a theater. Besides the barmaid, there were only two other people in there and they were not together. I suspect this place would be popping after one of the theater performances. We ate supper at a restaurant about two blocks from our room. We had a meat medley of lamb, steak, and veal, which was very good.

Friday (10/6) I went running at daybreak and then Simone and I had toast and leftovers from last night’s supper for breakfast. Simone headed off to the Sisi Museum in the Royal Apartments, and I returned to the Natural History Museum. I wanted to see the museum, but mostly to see the Venus of Willendorf. I found an entire room, granted it was small, dedicated to her and other portable, Paleolithic art found locally and in Europe. In the Bookstore I purchased a cast of her and 11 other casts. With the casts I purchased in Brno, I had now purchased 15 pieces of portable Paleolithic art on this trip. This is an image of her I found on the Internet. She is made of carved oolitic limestone and dates between 22,000 and 24,000 years ago. (Her actual size is only 1.2 times larger than this image, if you print this page. See <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/willendorf/willendorfdiscovery.html>)



I celebrated my great fine and purchases at the Natural History Museum with a beer in the Museum's restaurant. When I left the Museum I found Simone waiting for me outside of the building. We walked back to the room, had some lunch and took a nap.



After our nap, we again went our separate ways. Simone headed for St. Stephen's Cathedral, which was only a few blocks from the room. According to the guidebook, the Cathedral it is "the most beloved and recognizable structure in all of Vienna". It was also located in the center of the tourist shopping and Simone was looking for some tiny painted, cognac sipping glasses.



I was tired of people and the City and decided to take an afternoon walk along Donauinsel, a 20-km long manmade island in the Danube River. It was built for flood control, which I didn't understand, and no cars were allowed. It was for walkers, bikers, skateboarders, roller-bladers, etc. I took the subway out to the island and got off at the stop on the island. I started walking north.



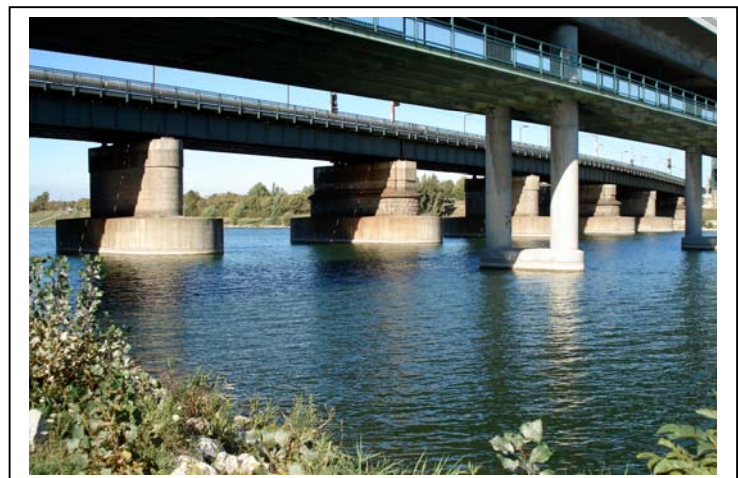
I was such a beautiful afternoon and early on I only saw older people. However, they were riding fat tire bikes, flying kites, and even rollerblading. There were three middle age, fat men with earrings and crew cuts drinking beer at a park table. Two were on one side and the third on the other side facing the first two. Then I found this area, which was an outdoor sculpture park.



I encounter a few river homes. They weren't riverboat homes because they were not design to be propelled. They were just pushed out into the water and anchored there. This one had satellite TV, wind-powered generator, potted flowers around on the deck, and a gangplank. I found another not so nice and without a gangplank. However, both had these big, square nets that were used for some kind of fishing. I even found one of these houses up on the bank and it did not look like it was occupied.



Further on, I walked under two railroad bridges. Maybe one was a subway bridge. Regardless, the interesting thing was the visible history that one could see in the columns. The near bridge was obviously the most recent with its slender, pre-stress concrete columns. The columns in the bridge in the background were more interesting. There were two different types. The second and fourth columns from the left were made of carved rock and much older than the first and third column, which were made of concrete brick.



So, there originally was an older bridge here that the rock columns supported. That bridge had been replaced with the current bridge, which required more columns. The brick columns were added between the earlier rock ones and both were used to support the current bridge.

I walked further to the north and began to notice that the groups of people were getting younger. It was also getting later in the afternoon, so I assumed they were getting off work and/or out of school. Then I encountered this piece of art, which was a dead tree hung by its roots. It was similar to a lodge pole pine with the limbs stripped off. There were no signs around it, but there was no doubt it was a permanent installation. I struck me so, that I ended up writing this poem.

the tree

look up from your grave
Tom
your method of death is dead

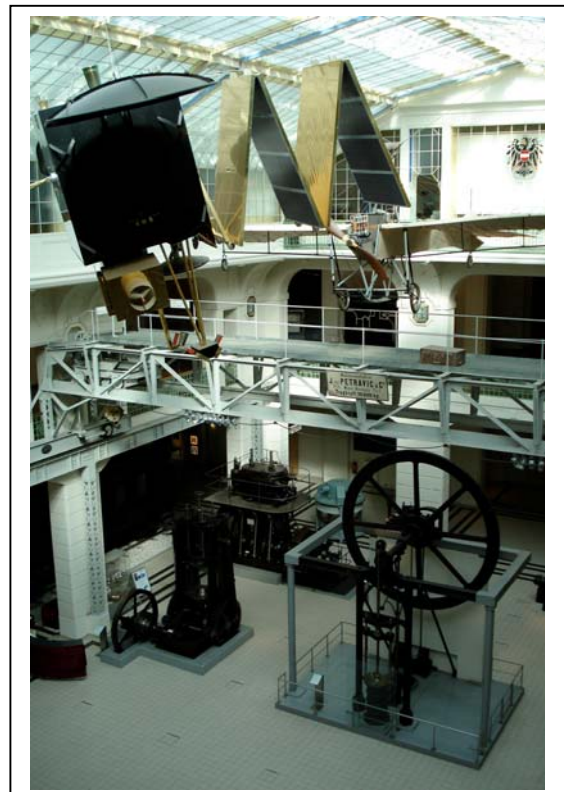
look across from your bench
Roy
your instrument of justice is destroyed

look down from your throne
Martin
your roots of equality are righted



That evening Simone and I ate at a restaurant around the corner from our apartment. I had pork medallions in a peppercorn sauce and Simone had grilled pork, beef, and turkey with mixed vegetables.

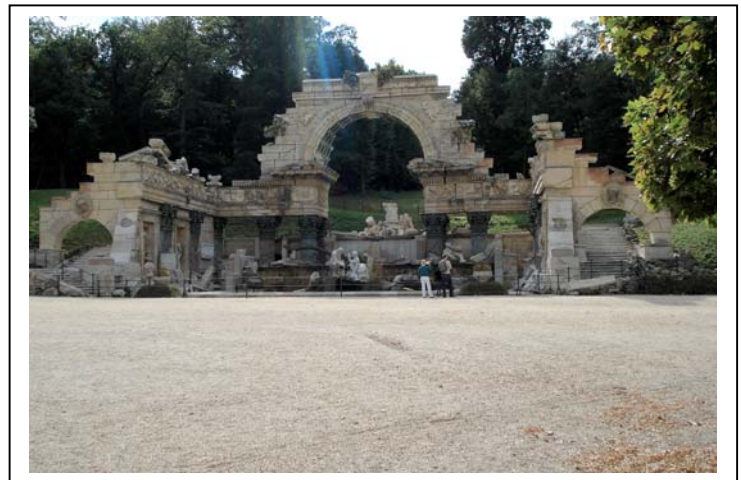
Saturday (10/7) We took the subway to the Technology Museum. Although the guidebook didn't give it a great rating, we spent several hours in the place and enjoyed ourselves. There were four floors of the evolution of technology from heavy industry, the steam engine, to modern computers and satellites. I suspect if this had been a weekday, there would have been hundreds of kids running around the place and this would not have been as enjoyable.



From a window in the Technology Museum, I took this picture for the Schonbrunn Palace and Gardens. The building in the foreground is the Palace proper. The building and land behind it are the associated Gardens. From the museum, we walked to the Schonbrunn.



Like cathedrals and such, if you've seen one palace, you've seen them all. So, I chose to walk in the Gardens while Simone did the Palace tour. We agreed to meet in front of the Palace in an hour and half. This is a fake Roman ruin that I found in the Gardens.



This is the building on the top of the hill in the image at the top of this page. It is called the Gloriette and in its center is the Gloriette Restaurant.



I had some time to kill before I met Simone, so I set down under a tree near the Gloriette. This was the view. Notice the Palace in the foreground and Vienna beyond it.

As planned, I met Simone about the time she finished her tour and we took the subway back to the room.



Sunday (10/8/06 8:30am) We were in a Vienna train station waiting to catch a train to Melk. There were four of us and this was the day of our Untours field trip. Melk is on the Danube River and upstream (to the west), about an hour train ride, from Vienna.

At Melk, we were met by Norbert Prieler. He called himself the Unguide, and was also the father of Claudia who was the lady at our orientation meeting in Vienna.



Norbert drove his personal car out of Melk, across the Danube to the north side, and then east (downstream) on the two-lane highway that paralleled the river. As we drove past a tiny village, Norbert mentioned its name was Willendorf. **What?** Yes, it was where the Venus of Willendorf was excavated. Who would have believed it? I couldn't have planned a better field trip. I naturally requested Norbert to turn around and we went to see the Venus's home.



The Venus' home was a short walk up a path from the tiny road that passed through Willendorf. This is a view from her site looking across the Danube River valley and up the other side.



We visited the tiny Willendorf Museum dedicated to the Venus. I bought a tee shirt here.



We then stopped at this restaurant and had a cup of coffee. Inside the cigarette smoke was so bad that we sat out on the patio in the chill of the morning to drink our coffee. I suspect the rest of the group wasn't really interested in getting coffee here, but I wasn't going to pass up the chance of drinking coffee in the Venus of Willendorf Restaurant.



We continued driving down the Danube toward the tourist village of Durnstein. One doesn't really get a sense of how large the Danube is until you see some of its traffic. Here is a tug pushing two huge barges upstream. At this location it still had 700 miles to flow, as the crow flies, until it dumped its waters into the Black Sea. It is about $\frac{3}{4}$ as long as the Mississippi River.



At Durnstein, Norbert let us walk a tourist street, which was closed to automobile traffic. He let us out at one end and drove around to the other end and waited for us there.



This is the Castle above Durnstein. According to the history on the Internet, Richard the Lion-Hearted of England was imprisoned in the castle in 1193. However, Norbert suggested this was not necessarily so and that this might be local tourist hype.



Norbert drove further down the Danube to the Town of Krems an der Donau, where there was a bridge and we crossed back to the Melk side and started back. We drove into the Black Forest and up to a lookout point above the Danube River. This is looking up stream at the village of Durnstein. Look closely and you can see the castle.



This is looking downstream at Krems an der Donau and the bridge we crossed to this side.



On the journey back to Melk, Norbert stopped at a modern day stone circle created by a friend of his. This is Norbert waiting on us.

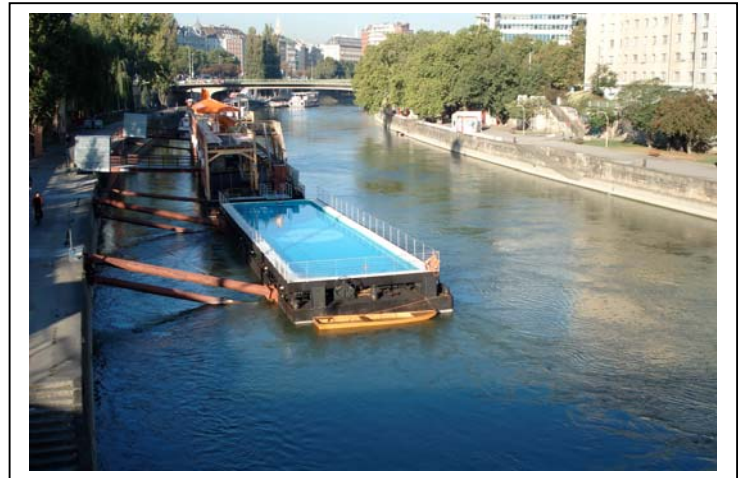
Next we stopped at a restaurant where Norbert often takes his Untours guests for supper. Simone wrote in her journal “Ate dinner at a café – soup – salad with potatoes & green beans – beef with potato dumplings, vermicelli with veal & sauce – apricot dumplings – lots of food.”



Norbert put us on the last train to Vienna that evening and we were back in our room by nine o'clock.

Monday (10/9) Simone and I again decided to split up again. She went shopping and I went for a walk along the Danube Canal on the northeast side of the inter-loop.

This is an interesting café (?), bar (?), and/or swimming pool located on barges in the canal. To get to the barge with the pool, one had to pass through the other barge.

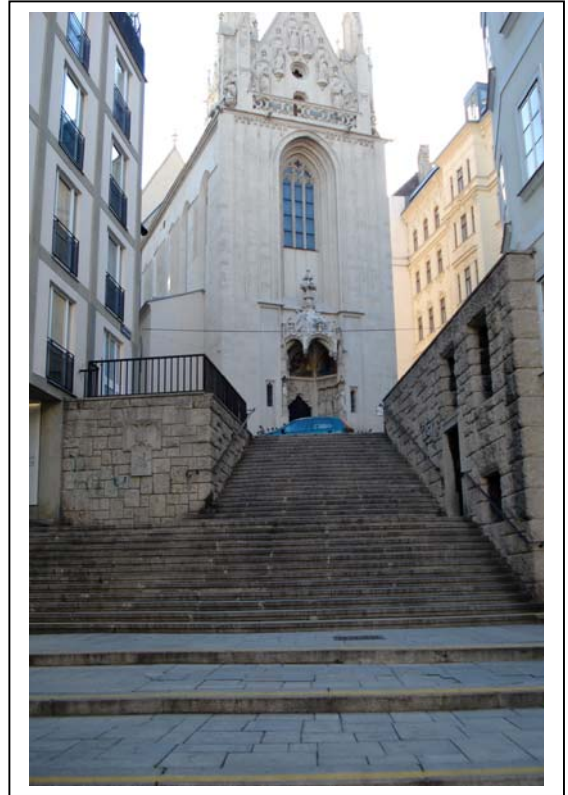


Here is an example of Vienna's graffiti on the wall of the canal.



At the north end of the inter-loop I left the canal and started walking back to the room. This route caused me to walk pass some interesting buildings. Here is an example of an iron sculpture of a workman with a ladder attached to the side of the building. Also, notice the wrought iron railing around the one single window.





These two buildings contrast the new and old looks. On the left the building appears to be a condominium. Notice the red in the various windows. On the right is a church, and the staircase to the higher ground makes this image unique.

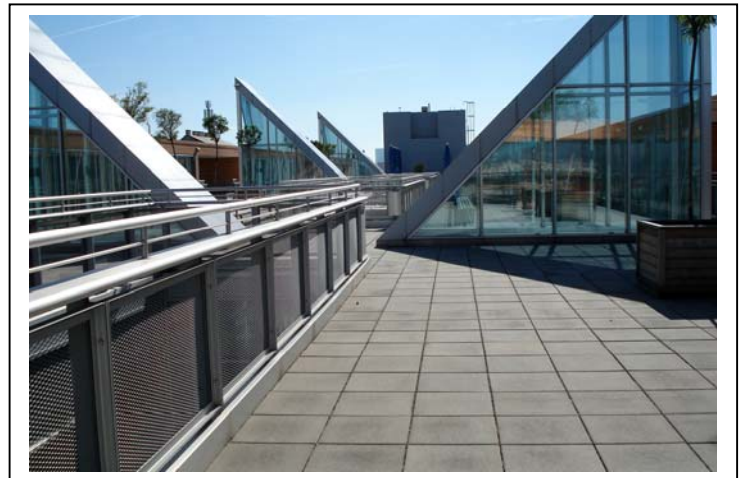
Simone and I met back at the room and ate lunch there and took a nap. Simone headed off to her Opera House tour. This is an image of the entrance to the Vienna Opera house in the afternoon.



This is inside the Opera House and the chandeliers caught her eye.



I went over to the new public library to check out their collection of archaeology books. It was meager as is most public libraries. However, the building was a treat. It was built in the middle of a boulevard, and therefore was long and narrow. On the south face, which was a narrow end, the face was inclined like a pyramid. This entire inclined face was stairs leading up to the main library door on the second floor. One can walk up passed the main door up onto the roof and this is the roof.



This is a shot of Vienna taken from the library roof looking north up the boulevard.

That evening Simone and I ate in a Chinese restaurant.



Tuesday (10/10) This was our last day in Vienna and we were getting anxious to go home. In the morning I went walking and running along the Danube canal south of the inter-loop. Simone went shopping and finally bought her tiny cognac glasses and some tee shirts.

After lunch we took the subway southeast toward the greenbelt area located between the canal and the river. We separated and went walking. We spent the afternoon there and this is a picture of a pond in the greenbelt.

That evening we ate in a German restaurant. Simone had pork cordon blue and I had pork sausages w/ sauerkraut. The sauerkraut was still sweet.



Wednesday (10/11) Flew home will no eventful occurrences.