

OFFICIAL VISIT GUIDE 2026

the Kunsthistorisches Museum

Vienna · From 22€

https://kunsthistorisches.visit-tickets.com/en/ · Skip-the-Line Tickets & Official Prices



History & Experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Habsburg Legacy: A Temple of Art

GOOGLE 4.8 ★★★★★ 35 281 reviews

TIQETS 4.7 ★★★★★ 2 391 reviews

The Kunsthistorisches Museum stands as a monumental testament to the **Habsburg dynasty**'s insatiable appetite for art and power. Commissioned by Emperor Franz Joseph I, its construction began in **1871**, marking a decisive shift from housing collections in palaces to creating a dedicated temple for art history. Unlike the Louvre or Hermitage, which repurposed royal residences, this building was designed from the ground up to showcase five millennia of artistic heritage, reflecting the empire's desire to centralize and legitimize its cultural dominance through architecture.

Designed by Gottfried Semper and Karl von Hasenauer, the structure is a masterpiece of **Neo-Renaissance style**, mirroring the Natural History Museum across the square. This symmetry was not accidental; it embodied the imperial vision of uniting art and science, placing them on equal footing as pillars of civilization. The grand dome, adorned with allegorical paintings, dominates the Ringstrasse skyline, signaling to all visitors that they are entering a space where history is curated with precision and grandeur.

Inaugurated in **1891**, the museum opened its doors to display treasures accumulated over centuries by emperors and archdukes. From ancient Egyptian artifacts to Italian Renaissance masterpieces, every object tells a story of imperial ambition. The famous Heldenstiege (Staircase of Heroes) serves as the architectural heart, featuring frescoes by Gustav Klimt and sculptures by Antonio Canova, celebrating the arts and sciences under Habsburg patronage before the empire's fall.

Today, the KHM remains one of Vienna’s most visited attractions, welcoming nearly **1.95 million visitors** annually. It continues to evolve, integrating modern conservation techniques while preserving the historic integrity of its collections. The museum houses not only paintings but also the Kunstkammer, numismatic cabinet, and extensive antiquities, offering a comprehensive journey through time that few institutions can match.

THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping into the main hall, you are immediately struck by the sheer scale and opulence of the interior. The air feels heavy with history, yet vibrant with the presence of thousands of artworks waiting to be discovered. Sunlight streams through the high windows, illuminating the **polychrome marble floors** and casting a warm glow on the gilded decorations. The atmosphere is one of reverent awe, as if you have entered a sacred library of human creativity.

As you ascend the monumental staircase, the perspective shifts dramatically. The ceiling opens up to reveal a dizzying array of frescoes, drawing your eye upward toward the central dome. The silence is broken only by the soft footsteps of fellow travelers, each absorbed in their own encounter with beauty. Here, the boundary between observer and observed blurs, inviting you to lose yourself in the intricate details of a Bruegel painting or the serene gaze of an ancient statue.



PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

Practical Information

ADDRESS

Innere Stadt · Metro: Kärntner Straße (U2) or Herrengasse (U3), 5 min walk.

OPENING HOURS

Open daily from 10am to 6pm. Note: Late opening until 9pm on Thursdays. Check for public holidays.

PRICES

Adults from €22. Free for children under 19. Combined passes available for affiliated museums.

VISIT DURATION

Allow at least 2 hours for the highlights (staircase, Bruegel). Plan 3 to 4 hours for a complete immersion including Egyptian antiquities and Italian paintings.

PHOTOS

Photography is generally allowed without flash or tripod in permanent collections. Always check specific restrictions for temporary exhibitions before taking ou

AUDIENCE

Ideal for old art enthusiasts and curious families. Audio guides make the visit accessible to teenagers. Wear comfortable shoes for the vast spaces.

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & Transportation

Subway

: Ring — 1 min à pied

West Station (11 min) · Vienna Main train station (Südtiroler Platz) (11 min)

Bus

: Volkstheater — 4 min à pied

West Station (16 min) · Vienna Main train station (Südtiroler Platz) (17 min)

Car

West Station (9 min) · Vienna Main train station (Südtiroler Platz) (10 min)

Bike

West Station (11 min) · Vienna Main train station (Südtiroler Platz) (12 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve the Kunsthistorisches Museum ?



📍 Maria-Theresien-Platz — 1010 Vienna

🌐 48°12.228′ N, 16°21.707′ E



ORGANIZATION

Navigating the Imperial Collections

Ground Floor & Mezzanine

This level houses the ancient worlds. Explore the **Egyptian and Near Eastern Antiquities**, featuring sarcophagi and daily life objects. Adjacent rooms display Greek, Etruscan, and Roman artifacts, including the stunning Gemma Augustea. The mezzanine also contains the Kunstkammer, showcasing decorative arts and curiosities collected by the Habsburgs.

First Floor

Dedicated entirely to painting, this floor is divided into wings. The left wing features **Flemish, Dutch, and German schools**, home to the world's largest Bruegel collection. The right wing presents Italian, Spanish, and French masters, including works by Raphael and Rembrandt. Each room is meticulously arranged to highlight stylistic evolutions.

Second Floor

This upper level hosts the Secondary Gallery (**Sekundärgalerie**), displaying hundreds of additional works from the 16th and 17th centuries. It offers a deeper dive into Flemish, German, and Italian art, providing context to the masterpieces below. It is less crowded, allowing for a quieter contemplation of lesser-known gems.

ACCESSIBILITY

♿ **Accessibility for people with reduced mobility**

PMR access guaranteed via elevators and ramps; some historical areas may require occasional assistan

👨‍👩‍👧 **Families**

Family-friendly with audio guides and captivating archaeological sections; visit duration is adjusta

🎧 **Audio guide**

French, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Masterpieces You Cannot Miss

01 PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER Room 204

The Fall of the Rebel Angels

This chaotic masterpiece depicts Lucifer and his demons being cast out of heaven. Observe the **intricate details** of the hybrid creatures, blending animal and human forms. Bruegel's attention to texture and movement creates a visceral sense of turmoil that draws viewers into the scene.

> 💡 Bruegel painted this around **1560**, using oil on wood panel. The complexity of the composition suggests he may have used mirrors or lenses to study reflections, enhancing the realism of the distorted figures.

02 UNKNOWN ROMAN ARTIST Greek & Roman Antiquities

Gemma Augustea

A massive cameo carved from three-layered onyx, celebrating the triumphs of Emperor Augustus. The **imperial imagery** includes gods, personifications of continents, and military victories. Its size and craftsmanship make it one of the most important pieces of Roman propaganda ever created.

> 💡 This gem was part of the **Habsburg crown jewels** until the 19th century. Its intricate carving required years of work by specialized artisans, highlighting the technical prowess of the Roman era.

03 GUSTAV KLIMT & OTHERS Main Entrance

The Staircase of Heroes (Heldenstiege)

More than just an access point, this staircase is a work of art itself. Frescoes by **Gustav Klimt** depict the arts and sciences, while statues by Canova adorn the niches. The interplay of light and color creates a dramatic ascent, setting the tone for the entire museum experience.

> 💡 Klimt's frescoes were controversial at the time due to their **modernist style**, contrasting sharply with the traditional architecture. They remain a focal point for debates on artistic freedom versus imperial tradition.

04 FAYUM PORTRAIT ARTIST Egyptian Collection

Portrait of a Lady with Necklace

These wooden panel portraits, placed over mummy faces, blend Egyptian funerary practices with **Roman realism**. The vivid colors and lifelike expressions offer a rare glimpse into the individuality of ancient Egyptians. Look closely at the jewelry and hairstyles for clues about social status.

> 💡 Discovered in the Fayum region, these portraits date from the **1st to 3rd century AD**. They represent a unique fusion of cultures, showing how Roman influence permeated even death rituals in Egypt.

05 PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER Room 204

The Triumph of Death

A haunting landscape filled with skeletons harvesting humans. This painting serves as a **memento mori**, reminding viewers of mortality's inevitability. The barren terrain and endless army of bones create a powerful emotional impact, challenging the viewer to confront their own existence.

> 💡 Some scholars believe this work reflects the trauma of the **Dutch Revolt** against Spanish rule. The chaos depicted may symbolize the devastation wrought by war on innocent populations.

06 ANCIENT GREEK SCULPTOR Greek Antiquities

Apollo Bronze Statue

A rare surviving bronze statue of Apollo, showcasing the **idealized beauty** of classical sculpture. The god's poised stance and serene expression embody divine perfection. Note the detailed musculature and the use of different metals for eyes and hair, adding depth to the figure.

> 💡 Most Greek bronzes were melted down for weapons; thus, this statue is exceptionally precious. It was likely recovered from a shipwreck, preserving it from destruction over **two millennia**.

07 RAPHAEL Italian School Room

Raphael's Madonna of the Rose

A tender depiction of the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child amidst roses. Raphael's mastery of **composition and color** creates a harmonious and peaceful scene. The soft lighting and gentle expressions evoke a sense of maternal love and spiritual grace.

> 💡 This painting was acquired by Emperor Rudolf II, who valued Raphael's works highly. It exemplifies the High Renaissance ideal of balancing **beauty and theology** in religious art.

08 EARLY MEDIEVAL ARTISANS Migration Period Room

Nagyszentmiklós Treasure

A collection of golden vessels dating from the 9th century, found in Hungary. These items display intricate **animal-style motifs** and Christian symbols, reflecting the cultural synthesis of the era. The craftsmanship reveals the wealth and sophistication of early medieval courts.

> 💡 Legend says this treasure belonged to King Stephen I of Hungary. Its discovery in **1799** sparked intense debate about its origins, linking it to both Byzantine and Avar influences.

TIPS

Strategies for a Seamless Visit

TIMING

Visit on **Thursday evenings** until 9 PM for fewer crowds and better lighting for photography. Early morning arrivals also help avoid peak hours.

BILLET

Book tickets **online in advance** to skip queues, especially during summer months. Consider the combined pass if visiting affiliated museums like Ephesus.

PARCOURS

Start with the **Staircase of Heroes** to appreciate the architecture, then head straight to the Bruegel room on the first floor before it gets crowded.

PHOTO

Photography is allowed without flash. Capture the **dome's frescoes** from the staircase landing for a stunning perspective. Check restrictions for temporary exhibitions.

PAUSE

Enjoy a coffee in the **café under the dome** or nearby Café Sacher. This break helps digest the intense visual experience while enjoying Viennese ambiance.

ENFANTS

Use the **Family Audio Guide** to engage children with interactive stories. Focus on the Egyptian mummies and colorful frescoes to maintain their interest.

AUDIOGUIDE

Rent the audio guide for essential context, especially for the **dispersed collections**. It helps navigate the vast spaces and understand complex historical narratives.

CONFORT

Wear **comfortable shoes** as the museum spans multiple floors and large halls. Use elevators for accessibility, but plan for walking across polished marble surfaces.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I need to book my ticket for the Kunsthistorisches Museum?

Yes, online booking is highly recommended, especially during peak season (July-August) and on weekends. It allows you to avoid queues that can reach 30 to 45 minutes. On weekdays outside of holidays, buying at the ticket

Which tickets to choose: standard or combined pass?

The standard ticket is sufficient for the KHM alone. Opt for the combined pass if you plan to visit affiliated museums like the Ephesus Museum or the Coin Cabinet in the Neue Burg on the same day. Check the validity of p

Are there discounts or special rates?

Children under 19 years old often benefit from free entry. Reduced rates exist for students and groups. Consult the official website for seasonal promotions or annual memberships if you are staying in Vienna for a long t

Can I cancel or modify my reservation?

The cancellation policy depends on the type of ticket purchased. Many online tickets offer free cancellation up to 24 hours before the visit. Check specific conditions at the time of purchase to ensure flexibility in you

What is the difference between the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the Imperial Treasury?

These are two distinct entities. The KHM on the Ringstrasse exhibits paintings and antiquities. The Imperial Treasury is located at the Hofburg and contains royal objects (crowns, scepters). Do not confuse the two sites

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

A Scientific Twin

The KHM faces the **Natural History Museum** symmetrically on the Ringstrasse. This layout reflects the Habsburg vision of uniting art and science, creating a powerful architectural statement about knowledge and culture.

Hidden Egyptian Treasures

Only **4,000 of 17,000** Egyptian objects are displayed. The museum holds a vast reserve of archaeological pieces, including 12,000 Egyptian items, many unseen by the public.

Designed for Art

Unlike palaces turned museums, the KHM was built specifically for art from **1871 onwards**. Its function was fixed in the initial plans, ensuring optimal conditions for displaying collections.

Attendance Record

With nearly **1.95 million visitors** in 2024, the KHM remains a top cultural destination. This influx confirms its status as a must-visit site for lovers of old masters and antiquities.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

The museum sits proudly on the **Maria-Theresien-Platz**, surrounded by some of Vienna's finest cultural landmarks. Directly opposite lies the Natural History Museum, its architectural twin, perfect for those who wish to balance art with science. After your visit, stroll along the Ringstrasse to admire the Vienna State Opera, a masterpiece of Neo-Renaissance design. For a classic Viennese experience, head to **Café Sacher** nearby, where you can savor the original Sachertorte while digesting your cultural immersion. The Belvedere Park offers a peaceful retreat for a relaxing walk before exploring further art at the Belvedere Palace.



Leaving the Kunsthistorisches Museum is never just about exiting a building; it is about carrying a piece of history within you. Whether you were captivated by the chaos of Bruegel's angels or the quiet dignity of Egyptian mummies, the experience leaves an indelible mark. Take a moment to reflect on the layers of time compressed within these walls, and let the **spirit of Vienna** guide your next steps. This is more than a visit; it is a dialogue with the past that resonates long after you step back onto the Ringstrasse.