Bite-size break: Graz, 1

# -Bite-size break-Alpine delights

Austria's second city, Graz, scales the heights with its turrets and spires - and also with its food, from mega-schnitzels to small plates. Add in mild summer weather and you have a recipe for a fine weekend

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#### WALKING UP AN APPETITE

**Red-roofed** Graz is known for its pumpkins; plate-defying schnitzel in old-school Landhauskeller, sausage at Gutmann and small plates in Der Steirer, near the 'friendly alien' art gallery; a traditional clocktower

FROM LEFT

Graz is a city that gladdens the heart. A river runs through it (the Mur), it's stuffed with glorious architecture –all clocktowers, turrets and spires – and it rings to the sounds of church bells. Mighty **Schlossberg** mountain provides a dramatic backdrop and it's worth the huff-and-puff walk up for the best views of the red-roofed Old Town and the quirky, sinuous curves of the modernist Kunsthaus Graz.

The capital of Austria's Styria province, Graz is surrounded by fertile farmland and vineyards that produce excellent wines, with a summer climate that feels more Mediterranean than Alpine.

# **GRANNY FOOD RULES**

Topping the list of best food stops is **Deli Frankowitsch** (franko witsch.at). It's a brötchenbar – a wonderful word for a place serving open-faced sandwiches – and a deli. The dainty sandwiches are genre-defining; order a selection and a 'pfiff' (about 175ml) of pils beer to go with it.

'Granny food' is proudly served at staunchly trad **Gasthaus Stainzerbauer** (stainzerbauer.at), with dishes such as liver dumplings in beef broth, and veal goulash with spaetzle (noodle/dumplings). If you need a dumpling fix, this is the spot.

For hearty but smart fare, try Landhauskeller (landhauskeller. at) – our wiener schnitzel hung over the edge of the plate. On which subject, you might be surprised to learn that wiener schnitzel, despite its name, is an Italian dish – from Lombardy, to be precise – brought by craftsmen who came to Graz to build the Habsburg palaces of the 16th century.

# GRAPE AND GRAIN

There's no shortage of places to imbibe. For wine, **Klapotetz Weinbar** (klapo.at), named after a noisy wooden contraption that scares birds from the vineyards, is set in a quiet courtyard. Staff will guide you through myriad tongue-twisting Austrian grape varieties and suggest a good Styrian white.

Hops Craft Beer Pub (Prokopigasse 14; facebook.com/ HopsGraz) is owned by Mr O'Sullivan from Cork, who looks like a young George Clooney and runs this popular spot with his Austrian wife. The place stocks a wide range of bottles, cans and casks from all around the world.

### CAFÉ CULTURE

The grand old cafés such as Café Sacher Graz have been usurped by the coffee connoisseurship and the hipness of modern upstarts. The four branches of **TriBeKa** (tribeka.at) – the name's an abbreviation of 'drink better coffee' in German – takes its caffeine and design creds seriously.

The landmark **Kunsthaus Graz** contemporary art museum is unmissable, in both senses of the

word. It's known as the 'friendly alien' because of its funky exterior. Go for the creative exhibitions and enjoy the cultural vibe and good food at the **Kunsthauscafé** (kunsthauscafe.co.at).

#### THE FAR SIDE

Until the friendly alien landed in the Lendplatz neighbourhood west of the Mur, it didn't much figure on the tourist map. It's since earned a reputation as Graz's hotspot for sophisticates, with design shops, cafés and wine bars. Der Steirer (der-steirer.at) has an excellent wine shop and is famous for its 'SFK' – Styrian fried chicken. Nearby S'Auenbrugger (auenbrugger.at) is an intimate wine bar with a top (mostly Austrian) wine list, walls hung with canvases by local artists and a seasonal small-plate menu.

#### MARKET LIFE

Graz's farmers' markets overflow with picture-perfect produce. At Lendplatz Market (Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm), taking time to talk to the growers, bakers, jam-makers and sausage producers is part of the fun. Buy toasted pumpkin seed oil (kurbiskernol) to sneak home in your suitcase – Styria is famous for its pumpkins, and this lush green oil is gorgeous drizzled over roast veg and soups.

# AN ABSOLUTE BANGER

The central Hauptplatz comes alive in the evenings with sausage stands. Familien Gutmann (Hauptplaz, stand 3) is the longest established wurst temple and decorated with pics of local hero Arnold Schwarzenegger (he grew up in a nearby village). Go for the kasekrainer with a dollop of sinusclearing horseradish. Sausage sarnie and beer in hand on a warm evening, there's only one thing to say to Graz: "I'll be back..." (d.) Susan Low travelled courtesv of the Austrian National Tourist Board; austria.info

**BLACK YELLOW MAGENTA CYAN** 

# WHERE TO STAY

# • Grand Hotel Wiesler

A suitably arty option on the trendy west bank near the Kunsthaus. The best rooms look out over the Mur to the Schlossberg. Doubles from  $\[mathcal{e}121.50$  room only. grandhotelwiesler.com

# • Schlossberg Hotel

By the River Mur at the foot of Schlossberg, it has elegant rooms and, for a pre-breakfast refresher, a rooftop pool. Doubles from  $\epsilon$ 160 room only. *schlossberghotel.at* 

# HOW TO GET THERE

There are no direct flights to Graz from the UK (the upside is that Graz hasn't become a hen 'n' stag destination). Connect via Munich, Frankfurt or Vienna. Return flights from London Heathrow from around £177.

# EARLY SUMMER AVERAGES

- HIGH TEMP 25°C (27°C in August)
- LOW TEMP 14°C (-4°C in February)
- RAINY DAYS 6
- SUNNY DAYS 17 (19 in July)

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