

PRACTICAL and USEFUL ADVICE for Smooth Sailing in Vienna and Europe

We are AMBASSADORS of our country and our law school, so we do want to be polite guests in Europe. Here are a few conventions of etiquette that will assure us a hospitable reception in our diverse travels:

Escalators help a lot in the airports, subways, and tram stations, but know the rule → Stand on the right side of escalators. Keep walking on the left part of the escalator.

Red placards everywhere say: *Bitte Rechts Stehen* (Please Right Stand)

Bikes are prevalent in the ubiquitous bike paths on the sidewalks – Resist inadvertence - DO NOT walk in the bike lanes – cyclists will ring their bells and shake their heads at your unawareness.

Jaywalking across the street against the signal is considered impolite – most Viennese do not do this. Motorists do not expect this either – we had a student hit by a car in Budapest one summer. And the cops may blow their whistles at you.

Do not just start rapid-fire English to a waiter or store person. Start the conversation with “May we speak English?” They will always say yes (if you just assume English is OK, they will think you are presumptuous and rude.). English is widely spoken in Vienna.

“**Indoor voice**” and “Train voice” are what some label the polite way to speak in closed quarters with lots of people crammed together. Use lower voices in the subway, on the airplane, etc. Austrian strangers really do not want to hear your stories.

“Outdoor voice” is appropriate later, as you know.

Be kind to your waiter! Many waiters at restaurants of all varieties in Vienna are professional waiters – this is their life-long occupation, and they take it seriously. (These jobs pay much higher than here, and job benefits are strong in Europe). And the waiters do not appreciate being commanded about or being rushed – in fact, if you rush them, a funny thing will happen – yeah, you guessed it. So show respect for the waiters.

Keep in mind too that it takes a while to draw a good Austrian draft beer from the tap. So it may take a little while for group of six of you to get beers brought to the table. See your Eyewitness Guide for Vienna (that we provided you) to see photos and explanations on the types of beer and food to order in Vienna, at pp. 2004-09. Look at the photo of the Wiener Schnitzel on p. 205 and think Cane’s chicken fingers – excellent American-style fried food tastes. And remember that the Austrians are very restrictive in food regulations, so the meat and vegetables are really pure and excellent.

Many European waiters follow the silverware signals taught in etiquette class. Many Americans were never taught these, so if you wonder why the waiter is trying to take

away your plate, look at where you have placed your silverware on your plate. If are unsure which way to set your knife and fork when you are finished with your food, see the lovely ladies on this 1 minute 23 second video →

<http://www.brightcove.tv/title.jsp?title=377215164&channel=2235976>

If you tip a solid 10-15%, the waiters will remember you fondly, and your service in some places may improve a bit.

High heels are not good for walking – and we walk a lot.