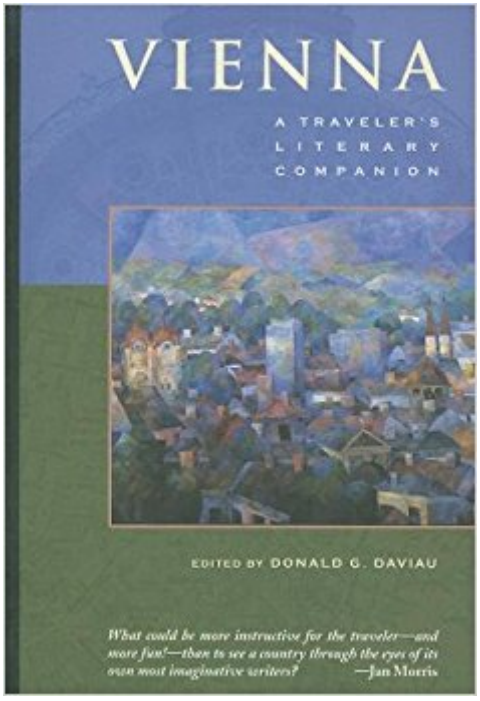
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Vienna: A Traveler's Literary Companion (Traveler's Literary Companions)



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Synopsis

This collection of short stories set in the crown jewel of Europe is an excellent introduction to the exceptionally rich contemporary Austrian literature spanning from the fin-de-siecle "dream-world Vienna" to more recent Nobel prize-winning authors. Vienna is not only home to historic cathedrals, formal teahouses, and a sparkling cafÃƒÂ© culture, but it is also the birthplace of new movements of thought that cover art and the human psyche. While illustrating a century of shifting forms and styles, these stories beautifully convey the Viennese nature and spirit.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A complete disappointment. None of the stories captured a mood or spirit of Vienna. Authors are not current, many are dead, thus none of the stories gives the reader a sense of present-day Vienna. Survey responses above do not apply to a book of this type. I did the best I could with those presented. For instance, there is no one plot in a compendium book. If I had a choice, I'd say Icould find no plot. Original writings may have been better, but I found the translations poor. I'm forcing myself to finish reading it, and hope the companion to Prague does a better job.Isabel Allende wrote the promo on the back cover. That gave me pause, with good reason, it turns out.

Interesting book with good information.

Loved this collection of short stories. Read it en route to Vienna and felt like I had a good feel for the

city when I arrived.

This book was published in 2008 and contained 15 works by as many authors. There were nine excerpts from novels and six short stories. The collection is part of the literary companion series, a beautiful attempt to introduce a wide range of foreign writers and locations to English-language readers.The oldest authors in the book were Schnitzler (1861-1931), Musil, Stefan Zweig and Kafka. The youngest were Elfriede Jelinek, Erich Skwara and Lilian Faschinger (1950-). Others included Heimito von Doderer, Elias Canetti, Rose AuslÃƒÂ¤nder, Ingeborg Bachmann and Thomas Bernhard. The stories ranged roughly from the end of the 19th century (Schnitzler) to the 1990s (Faschinger). Except for the pieces by Musil, Zweig and Kafka, the rest were from the postwar decades, mainly the 1960s to 80s.The editor, an American scholar who knows well the city and Austrian literature, said he aimed for pieces that informed and entertained, while reflecting the lifestyles, attitudes and relationships of the time. Many of the writers chosen were the more prominent ones, including a number of prize-winners.Among the selections enjoyed most were the one by Schnitzler, which showed the vanity of professional men and their complex private lives, with irony and cynicism. Jelinek's cynical take on relations between contemporary men and women. Bernhard's cynical take -- in a fascinating, repetitive style -- on artists, musicians and hangers-on. Mauthe's light, charming depiction of an Austrian man trying to seduce a foreigner at a party. And Peter Henisch's investigation of his father, who served on the Eastern Front in World War II.In fact, cynical, critical writers were well represented in this collection. And while the above stories were entertaining, a number of the others for this reader were cerebral and overlong. Some (Zweig, Musil, Canetti) seemed more suited to scholarly publications, proceeding at length with little point that could be grasped. So far, in this literary companion series, books have been published for two other cities, Prague and Amsterdam; the one for Prague seemed to me to better capture the atmosphere of its city and a wide range of authors and styles, showing enchantment in addition to darkness.The editor wrote that space limitations prevented the inclusion of authors like Ilse Aichinger and Peter Handke. Something might've also been included by Peter Altenberg on Vienna's coffeehouses, Egon Friedell on the Austrian spirit, Felix Salten on nightlife, or Joseph Roth.Other anthologies for Austria as a whole include Relationships: An Anthology of Contemporary Austrian Prose (1991), Against the Grain: A New Anthology of Contemporary Austrian Prose (1997), Into the Sunset: Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Austrian Prose (1999), Beneath Black Stars: Contemporary Austrian Short Stories (2002) -- an even darker collection -- The Dedalus Book of Austrian Fantasy 1890-2000 (2003), and Austrian Identities: Twentieth-Century Short Fiction (2004). A more

specialized collection on Vienna is The Vienna Coffeehouse Wits, 1890-1938 (1993).Excerpts from the present book:"The Viennese dialect, with the tiniest of vowel shadings, is capable of coaxing a charming tribute or a highly malicious yet scarcely intelligible insult from one and the same word. Sometimes they emerge simultaneously.""Attesting to an Austrian's charm doesn't simply mean baring one's breast to an open sword but rushing posthaste into the open blade. When it's a question of making use of this characteristic the Austrian knows no mercy!""Vienna has become a city of tourists. But a city of importance? No, a large provincial city: it shuts down at 9:00 p.m. -- at night the streets are virtually deserted.""The typical Viennese is Janus-faced: courtly and malicious, submissive and arrogant, sanguine and hysterical. The typical Viennese does not let someone who is not from his city, from his country, get close to him; he hermetically seals himself off from outsiders.""All these people whom I was now observing through their sickening cigarette smoke came to Vienna thirty or thirty-five years ago, hoping to go far, only to have whatever genius or talent they possessed annihilated and killed off by the city, which kills off all the hundreds and thousands of geniuses or talents that are born in Austria every year. They may think they've gone far, but in reality they haven't gone anywhere, I thought as I sat in the wing chair, and the reason is that they were content to stay in Vienna; they didn't leave at the decisive moment and go abroad, like all those who did achieve something; those who stayed behind in Vienna became nonentities, whereas I can say without hesitation that all those who went abroad made something of themselves."

One of the great literary cities of the world, Vienna is and was home to some of the best. "Vienna: A Traveler's Literary Companion" is an anthology of short fiction that opens a glimpse to the literary world of Vienna, focusing on fiction that offers a deep look into the human soul. With special attention paid to renowned writer Franz Kafka, "Vienna" encourages readers to enjoy a literary walk through the town, and it is quite the walk indeed.

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