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# History of Vienna

The **history of Vienna** has been long and varied, beginning when the Roman Empire created a military camp in the area now covered by Vienna's city centre. Vienna grew from the Roman settlement known as Vindobona to be an important trading site in the 11th century. It became the capital of the Babenberg dynasty and subsequently of the Austrian Habsburgs, under whom it became one of Europe's cultural hubs. During the 19th century as the capital of the Austrian Empire and later Austria-Hungary, it temporarily became one of Europe's biggest cities. Since the end of World War I, Vienna has been the capital of the Republic of Austria.

## Beginnings and early Middle Ages

The name Vindobona derives from a Celtic language, suggesting that the region must have been inhabited before Roman times. The Romans created a military camp (occupied by Legio X Gemina) during the 1st century on the site of the city centre of present-day Vienna. The settlement was raised to the status of a municipium in 212. Even today, the streets of the First District show where the encampment placed its walls and moats. The Romans stayed until the 5th century.

Roman Vindobona was located in the outskirts of the empire and thus fell prey to the chaos of the Migration Period. There are some indications that a catastrophic fire occurred around the beginning of the 5th century. However, the remains of the encampment were not deserted, and a small settlement remained. The streets and houses of early medieval Vienna followed the former Roman walls, which gives rise to the conclusion that parts of the fortification were still in place and used by the settlers.

Byzantine copper coins from the 6th century have been found several times in the area of today's city centre, indicating considerable trade activity. Graves from the 6th century were found during excavations next to the Berghof, in an area around Salvatorgasse. At that time, the Lombards controlled the area, with Slavs and Avars following later. Early Vienna was centred on the Berghof.

The first documented mention of the city during the Middle Ages is within the Salzburg Annals, dating to 881, when a battle *apud Weniam* was fought against the Magyars. However, it is unclear whether this refers to the city or the River Wien.

## Babenberg rule



Old coat of arms of Vienna (1465–1925) with the imperial double-headed eagle



Overview of the Roman legion settlement Vindobona in the center of today's Vienna

In 976, the Margraviate of Ostarrîchi was given to the Babenberg family. Vienna lay at its border with Hungary.

Vienna was an important site of trade as early as the 11th century. In the Exchange of Mautern between the Bishop of Passau and Margrave Leopold IV, Vienna is mentioned as a *Civitas* for the first time, which indicates the existence of a well-ordered settlement. In 1155, Margrave Henry II of Austria made Vienna his capital. In 1156, Austria was raised to a duchy in the Privilegium Minus, with Vienna becoming the seat of all future dukes. During that time, the Schottenstift was founded.

The events surrounding the Third Crusade, during which King Richard the Lionheart was discovered and captured by Duke Leopold V the Virtuous two days before Christmas of 1192 in Erdberg near Vienna, brought an enormous ransom of 50,000 Silver Marks (about 10 to 12 tons of silver, about a third of the emperor's claims against the English. Richard had been extradited to him in March 1193). This allowed the creation of a mint and the construction of city walls around the year 1200. At the U-Bahn station Stubentor, some remains of the city walls can still be seen today. Because he had abused a protected crusader, Leopold V was excommunicated by Pope Celestine III, and died (without having been absolved) after falling from a horse in a tournament.

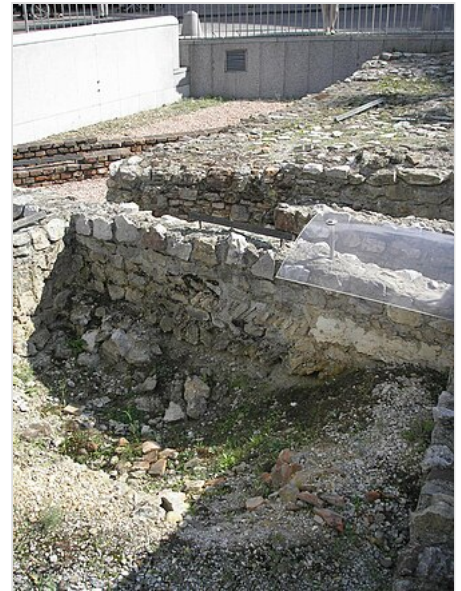
In 1221, Vienna received the rights of a city and as a staple port (*Stapelrecht*). This meant that all traders passing through Vienna had to offer their goods in the city. This allowed the Viennese to act as middlemen in trade, so that Vienna soon created a network of far-reaching trade relations, particularly along the Danube basin and to Venice, and to become one of the most important cities in the Holy Roman Empire.

However, it was considered embarrassing that Vienna did not have its own bishop. It is known that Duke Frederick II negotiated about the creation of a bishopric in Vienna, and the same is suspected of Ottokar Přemysl.

## Habsburg rule

In 1278, Rudolf I took control over the Austrian lands after his victory over Ottokar II of Bohemia and began to establish Habsburg rule. In Vienna, it took a relatively long time for the Habsburgs to establish their control, because partisans of Ottokar remained strong for a long time. There were several uprisings against Albert I. The family of the *Paltrams vom Stephansfreithof* was foremost among the insurgents.

In 1280, Jans der Enikel wrote the "Fürstenbuch", a first history of the city.



Roman ruins at Michaelerplatz



Duke Henry II of the Babenberg dynasty elevated Vienna to his capital in 1155





Duke Rudolf IV of Austria, known as "the Founder", did much to expand the city

With the Luxembourg emperors, Prague became the imperial residence and Vienna stood in its shadow. The early Habsburgs attempted to extend it in order to keep up. Duke Albert II, for example, had the gothic choir of the Stephansdom built. In 1327, Frederick the Handsome published his edict allowing the city to maintain an *Eisenbuch* (iron book) listing its privileges.



Frederick II with Vienna in the background (Babenberger family tree, 1489-1492)

The combination of the heraldic eagle with the city coat of arms showing a white cross in a red field is found on a seal dated 1327. This heraldic emblem was in use throughout the 14th century in different variants.<sup>[1]</sup>

Rudolf IV of Austria deserves credit for his prudent economic policy, which raised the level of prosperity. His epithet *the Founder* is due to two things: first, he founded the University of Vienna in 1365, and second, he began the construction of the gothic nave in the Stephansdom. The latter is connected to the creation of a metropolitan chapter, as a symbolic substitute for a bishop.

There was a period of inheritance disputes among the Habsburgs resulting not only in confusion, but also in an economic decline and social unrest, with disputes between the parties of patricians and artisans. While the patricians supported Ernest the Iron, the artisans supported Leopold IV. In 1408, the mayor Konrad Vorlauf, an exponent of the patrician party, was executed.

After the election of Duke Albert V as German King Albert II, Vienna became the capital of the Holy Roman Empire. Albert's name is remembered for his expulsion of the Jewish population of Vienna in 1421/22.

Eventually, in 1469, Vienna was given its own bishop, and the Stephansdom became a cathedral. During the upheavals of the era of Emperor Frederick III, Vienna remained on the side of his opponents (first Albert VI, then Matthias Corvinus), as Frederick proved unable to maintain peace in the land vis-à-vis rampaging gangs of mercenaries (often remaining from the Hussite Wars).

In 1485, the Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus and the Black Army of Hungary conquered the city and Vienna became the king's seat that served as the capital of Hungary until 1490.

In 1522, under Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor the *Blood Judgment of Wiener Neustadt* led to the execution of leading members of the opposition within the city, and thus a destruction of the political structures. From then on, the city stood under direct imperial control.

In 1556, Vienna became the seat of the Emperor, with Bohemia having been added to the Habsburg realm in 1526.