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A Viennese District Is Reborn



Josef Polleross for The New York Times

In the Karmeliterviertel, in the second district, dining options include Skopik & Lohn, an elegant canteen.

By KIMBERLY BRADLEY
Published: June 2, 2010

A CENTURY ago, the Karmeliterviertel, or Carmelite Quarter, in Vienna teemed with Jewish life. In Leopoldstadt, Vienna’s second district, across the Danube canal from the city center, the Karmelitermarkt square bustled with shoppers. Along nearby Taborstrasse, opulent Jewish theaters and coffeehouses provided entertainment.

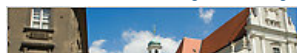
In the following decades, the quarter, named for a Baroque Carmelite church on the square, acquired a seedy, neglected patina. But over the last decade or so the area has become one of the few places in the world outside of Brooklyn and Tel Aviv where bohemians stroll alongside groups of Orthodox Jews — the former buying chutney from Slow Food Vienna’s booth at the market, the latter munching on matzo and hummus from **Kosherland** (Kleine Spierlgasse; 43-1-219-68-86; kosherland.at).

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Karmeliterviertel, Vienna

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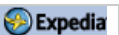


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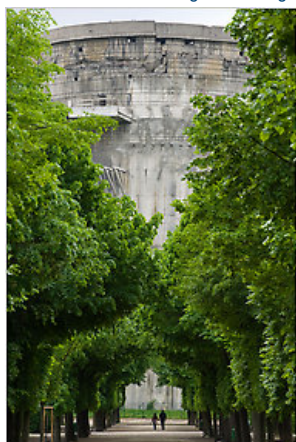
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Josef Polleross for The New York Times
Leopoldstadt, Vienna's second district.

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Josef Polleross for The New York Times
A garden in the Carmelite Quarter.

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Vendors sell flowers and fruits at the market.

“This is the new Vienna,” said Doron Rabinovici, an Israeli-Austrian author and historian, surveying the cultural mix while sipping a cappuccino at **Madiani** (Karmelitermarkt 21-24; 43-664-456-12-17, [madiani.com](#)), a popular Georgian restaurant that opened on the market square in 2005. Along with Turkish and Balkan immigrants, Jews primarily from Eastern Europe started settling into the area about 15 years ago. More recently the demographic has expanded to include a creative population attracted by diversity and still-cheap, generous spaces. (The city also helped, when it included a Karmeliterviertel station, Taborstrasse, in its 2008 extension of the U2 subway line.)

This development wasn’t exactly unexpected. “For years, everyone said this was the next hip place,” said the architect Gregor Eichinger, who, like Mr. Rabinovici, has lived here for six years. “Vienna moves in slow motion. After two years I thought I’d leave, since nothing was happening. But then things started happening.”

That was about the time Horst Scheuer opened **Skopik & Lohn** (Leopoldsgasse 17; 43-1-219-89-77; [skopikundlohn.at](#)), transforming a traditional tavern into an easygoing, elegant canteen that attracts arty types. **Kaas am Markt** (Karmelitermarkt 33-36; 43-699-181-406-01; [kaasammarkt.at](#)), a glassed-in booth selling locally produced specialty goods and serving a mean lunch, opened its doors in March. And things will get even classier in November, when a glass-facade Sofitel hotel, designed by Jean Nouvel, is scheduled to open on the Danube canal bank.

“I do better business here than I did in the first district,” said Myung-Il Song, referring to the city’s elegant center. Her store, **Song** (Praterstrasse 11-13; 43-1-532-28-58; [song.at](#)), sells avant-garde fashion by the likes of Balenciaga as well as furnishings by the Dutch designer Piet Hein Eek in a vast industrial space that includes a gallery. Ms. Song, who opened her shop three years ago, pioneered the area’s retail scene, which now includes the colorful wine shop **99wines** (Praterstrasse 11; 43-1-890-05-76) next door.

“Historically, the first and second districts in Vienna were always opposed,” Mr. Eichinger said. “The first district was opera, the second was the waltz. The first was high culture, the second low. Vienna looks so much to the past; but now we’re at the beginning of a new curve.”

A version of this article appeared in print on June 6, 2010, on page TR7 of the New York edition.

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