



TOUR 1: CITY CENTRE

On the trail of a successful synthesis of old and new – a stroll through the city centre

It is not just the jewel that is the almost completely preserved historic *Altstadt* (old town) that makes Graz so special – it is the successful blend of old and new. From buildings steeped in history that have been sensitively restored, to contemporary additions – buildings that make bold statements, skilfully integrated and always of high quality. We'll start in the middle, at *Hauptplatz*.

HAUPTPLATZ

Hauptplatz | Markus Pernthaler (2002)

Building façades dating back to the Gothic period frame a space that bustles with activity every single day. To restore the striking triangular shape, the area was cleaned up, organised and divided into zones. By relocating the tracks, the *Weikhard-Uhr*, a popular meeting point for locals, was given a fitting new forecourt. The standardised steel and glass design concept for the bus shelters and kiosks elevates the square, with the mobile market stalls also adapted to reflect its importance.

1 DEPARTMENT STORE KASTNER & ÖHLER

Sackstrasse 7-13, Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Kai | Szyszkowitz-Kowalski (-2003), Nieto Sobejano (2010)

Through skilful expansion policies, the traditional department store grew into an empire. The acquisition of numerous properties around the original Fellner & Helmer flagship store demanded a restructuring of the building fabric and the skilful art of integration. Throughout the many years of renovations, Szyszkowitz-Kowalski displayed an extraordinary degree of finesse. Lightweight glass roofs are confidently integrated, while bridges in a delicate steel-and-glass construction and glass courtyard roofs form sophisticated linking elements within the diverse mix. The *Sporthaus am Kai*, the only new building, showcases the characteristic style of the married architect couple. The underground garage was – in a spectacular feat – built largely beneath a 400-year-old palace. A quantum leap forward in the ongoing expansion came in 2010 with the roofscape by Spanish architects Nieto Sobejano. It is still awaiting completion. But even now, the view from the rooftop terrace is magnificent.

SCHLOSSBERGPLATZ & SCHLOSSBERGSTIEGE STAIRS incl. (2) Dom im Berg and (2) Schlossberg Lift

Schlossbergplatz 1

To connoisseurs, *Schlossbergplatz* is one of the most beautiful squares in the city. A key element of its harmonious character is its framing by historic monuments. As well as the *Reinerhof*, the oldest building mentioned in historical

records, this also includes the staircase leading up the *Schlossberg*, which was built during the First World War by prisoners of war. The way the path winds through and is integrated into the rock makes it a masterpiece of landscape architecture, designed – remarkably enough – by a city official. The *Schlossbergplatz* is also the gateway to a vast labyrinth of air-raid shelters. In 2000, two of them were converted into the (2) “*Dom im Berg*”, an archaic-looking, soundproof hall for events of all kinds. Architect: Reiner Schmid. A wide variety of attractions, both gastronomic and cultural, make the *Schlossberg* a must-see. To create the quickest way up, the (2) **glass lift** (Reiner Schmid, 1999), 5000 cubic metres of rock had to be blasted out of the mountain. Take a look up during the rapid ascent!

3 HOTEL KAI 36

Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Kai 36 | Lam Architektur (2020)

A 16th century house with an overhanging pent roof and courtyard wings – a listed ensemble, set with its back to the very steep slope of the *Schlossberg*. It was no easy feat to transform it into a stylish hotel. The architect exposed the historic structure and created a new staircase that now connects all wings from within. The radical new design is only revealed when you step into one of the upper terraced slopes: The roof structures and a small new building are clad in copper, masterfully moulded as if by a sculptor. The cafe on the ground floor has also been given a fresh, urban touch.

THE SCHLOSSBERG

After the defensive structures on the dolomite cliff were demolished on Napoleon’s orders in 1809, leaving behind a devastated fortress hill, work began to plant vegetation on the previously barren rock and transform it into a landscape park. With the start of industrialisation, such recreational areas became important for the population. In 1894, a (4) **Standseilbahn** was opened, a funicular railway now furnished with modern carriages that ascends the mountain from the west to the delight of thousands of tourists. On the plateau, the (5) **Schlossberg Restaurant** (not shown, last renovation: Anderson & Moosbrugger, Erich Prödl, 2007) soon replaced the “*Schweizerhaus*”, which had been burned down. In a clear, unadorned design language, the space is divided into coveted window seats and quiet corners, crowned by a “sky bar” offering uninterrupted panoramic views. The former garrison museum at the *Stallbastei* was transformed into the new (6) **Graz Museum Schlossberg** (studio WG3, 2020), which focuses on the mountain and its history. The exhibition within the historic building has been expanded to include the impressive underground casemate and the garden has been redesigned and opened as a welcoming space for visitors of all ages. Unfortunately, you do need to buy a ticket to gain access.

7 CAFÉ BAR AIOLA UPSTAIRS

Schlossberg 2 | Siegfried Frank, Michael Rieper (2003)

A place of exceptional urban quality has been created here. With just a few elements, a light and transparent space has been defined. A flat roof on slender steel supports, floor-to-ceiling glass façades that disappear silently into the floor at the touch of a button, seamlessly uniting the interior and exterior space. What more could the heart desire?



KARMEILTERPLATZ

The ancient avenue offers an all-weather route back to the city centre, leading down to the historic city crown, the **Karmeliterplatz** (Norbert Müller, 2002). This design, realised as part of the “*Platz für alle*” initiative, is arguably the most urban of them all. It offers plenty of space, with different zones for strolling and relaxing, splashing around or enjoying a drink in the sun. Dominating the square is a high-end residential complex with hotel, the **(8) Pfauengarten Development** by Pichler & Traupmann (2015, 2018), and the **(9) Karmeliterhof** by LOVE architecture and urbanism (2011, not shown). An administrative building, in which three interconnected historic structures have been joined together by a new “connecting piece” to form a unit. Well done! This made it possible to remedy both design and functional shortcomings and create additional office space.

10 FORUM STADTPARK

Stadtpark 1 | Werner Hollomey (1960), Peter Zinganel, Ernst Giselbrecht (2000)

As a cultural institution, the *Forum Stadtpark* is almost venerable – as a hub for the artistic avant-garde, it is as fresh and irreverent as ever. After years of pulsating vitality, the building had become too small and demanded a clever solution, since a general construction ban in the *Stadtpark* ruled out any horizontal expansion. The building was extended upwards. The new workspaces in the added storey are part of a striking structure in brilliant white, composed of steel beams and horizontal slats. A widely visible emblem that reflects the building's adaptability.

11 CAFÉ PROMENADE (not shown)

Erzherzog-Johann-Allee 1 | F. X. Aichinger (1836), Atelier Thomas Pucher (2015) u.a.
Originally built as a castle guardhouse, the neoclassical building was converted into a coffeehouse as far back as 1870 and, after several refurbishments, has become a popular cafe with a shaded garden right next to the *Stadtpark*.

12 OLD UNIVERSITY

Hofgasse 14, Bürgergasse 2a | Bramberger Architects (2007)

The cathedral, mausoleum, castle, late-Gothic double spiral staircase, or the old university: each of these historic buildings in Graz's “*Stadtkrone*” reveals the genius of the old masters. The most recent example of a successful integration of old and new is the adaptation of the former Jesuit university and its magnificent library into a prestigious event venue. Notice the details!

13 STADTWOHNHAUS BALLHAUSGASSE (not shown)

Ballhausgasse 6 | Hope of Glory Architektur (2013)

A gap in the heart of the World Heritage site. The demand for new living space. Strict regulations to preserve the *Altstadt* and architects with a passion for the contemporary. What appeared to be an insurmountable hurdle had an unexpected outcome: the slightly inclined façade of polished stainless steel, combined with the mirrored windows (like in a crime film), creates a fascinating interplay of light and shadow with the building on the opposite side of the street. Artful enough for the strict *Altstadtkommission* to approve the project.



14 BOARDING HOUSE ARGOS

Burggasse 15 | Zaha Hadid (2019)

With its dozens of “eyes”, Argos, the distinctive building at the crossroads, rather than the giant from Greek mythology, attracts everyone’s attention. After the 2004 competition, it was clear that a signature work by the star architect would soon enrich Graz – with free, digitally designed shapes. Since 2019, the boarding house apartments have been a place of legendary dreams for lovers of parametric architecture.

HERRENGASSE

Every day, thousands of people stroll along *Herrengasse* between the trams and shopfronts. The highlight is undoubtedly the **(15) Landhaus**, which, with its magnificent arcaded courtyard, is one of the most significant Renaissance buildings in Central Europe and, having been renovated and modernised, is still a centre of political activity to this day. Behind a number of historic façades, contemporary gems are concealed, among them the famous **(16) Painted House**. First documented in 1360, the *Herzoghof* underwent a careful refurbishment (Gangoly & Kristiner, 2007), receiving the *Fischer-von-Erlach-Preis*. In contrast, the expressive glass elements of the *Schuhhaus Spitz* from 1991 were destroyed and replaced with historicising shopfronts. A demolition that does not do justice to Graz, a city renowned for its architecture.

17 UNIVERSALMUSEUM JOANNEUM

Neutorgasse | Arge Nieto Sobejano + eep architekten (2011)

2011 was an important year for Graz: The Joanneum, Austria’s oldest and second-largest museum, turned 200 years old. This festive occasion provided not only an opportunity to consider restructuring the collections, but also to launch an international architectural competition. Two museums and the *Landesbibliothek*, historical buildings from different eras, were to be integrated into a functional entity, with a shared entrance created for visitors. The Spanish architects’ solution: the basement beneath the museum courtyard was transformed into an attractive, light-filled visitor centre through the insertion of distinctive conical glass structures.

18 STEIERMÄRKISCHE SPARKASSE FACELIFTING (not shown)

Sparkassenplatz, Andreas-Hofer-Platz | Szyszkowitz-Kowalski (2006, 2011)



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Tip: Don’t overlook the **(19) Stadtwerkehaus** (not shown) just because it’s 90 years old. When electric light replaced gas lamps, the era of historicist architecture came to an end as well. This modernist gem (Rambald von Steinbüchel-Rheinwall, 1935), the result of an open competition, is well worth a closer look. The glass ground floor, subtle rows of windows and smooth rendered façade still characterise the headquarters of Holding Graz to this day. It is worth noting how the use of scale distortion on the stairwell – with two rows of windows per floor – has been used here to create the impression of greater height.