

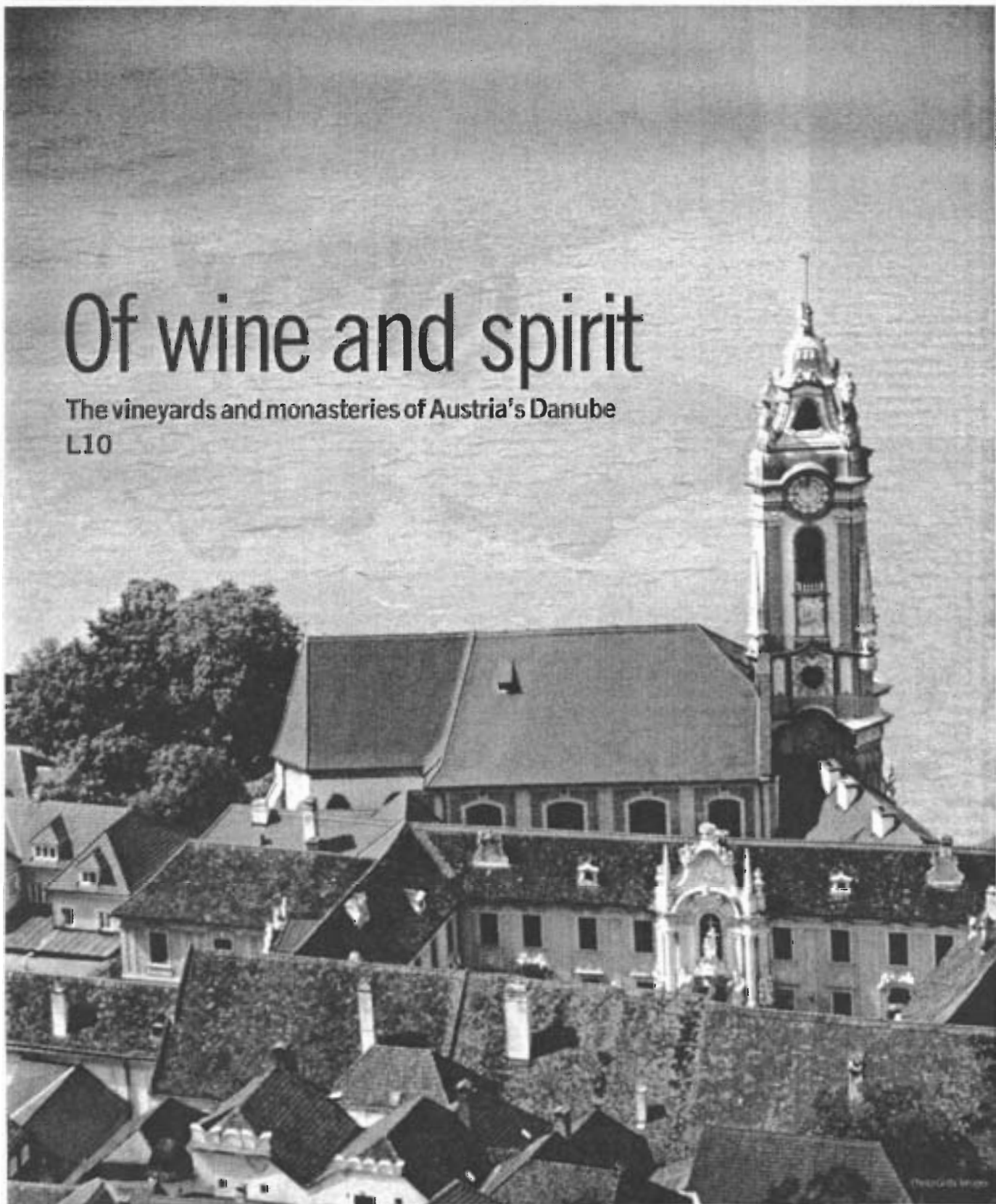
Life & Leisure

FINANCIAL
REVIEW
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JULY 8-10, 2005

PROPERTY • CARS • TRAVEL • WINE • TECHNOLOGY

Of wine and spirit

The vineyards and monasteries of Austria's Danube
L10



Summer sounds in Europe

Triguboff's flagship World Tower

Dine fine in the Marais

Danube sets fine tone for Austria's vineyards

As the Danube lolls its way through Austria, around each bend is a many centuries-old village with a story to tell. And food and wine to savour.

While the Donau – the Danube to you and me, one of the great rivers of Europe – doesn't penetrate Vienna in quite the same grandiose way as it does Budapest across the border in Hungary, it is inextricably linked to the life of the city and even more so its wine regions.

As it slides its way eastwards the Danube has a profound influence both climatically and culturally on the wine regions of Niederösterreich (Lower Austria). It's at its most dramatic in Kremstal and the Wachau where the river lumbers around the steep, terraced vineyards which produce Austria's finest aromatic white wines from the cultivars riesling and grüner veltliner.

Before you hit the area's cultural centre, Krems, you're notified that there's going to be wine nearby by the edifice of Stift Göttweig, an 11th century Benedictine monastery which occupies a hilltop on the south bank of the river. Wherever there are monks in Europe, there are vineyards.

The city of Krems – and its immediate neighbour, sibling borough Stein – is steeped in both wine and steeples: there are hundreds of vineyards and wines

to keep the oenophile delighted; and enough churches to keep the devout or architecturally worshipping entranced for days. Plenty of museums and the like, too, and plenty to eat to partner the wine.

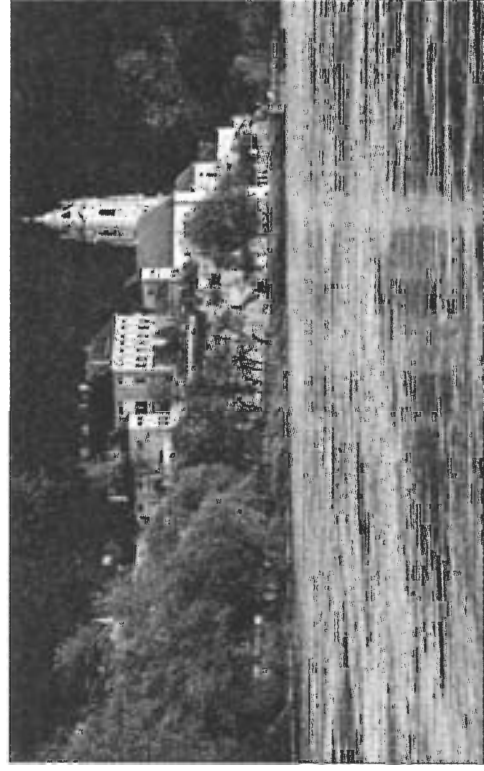
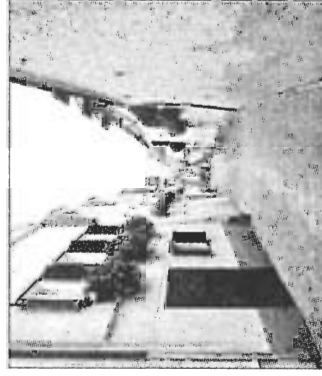
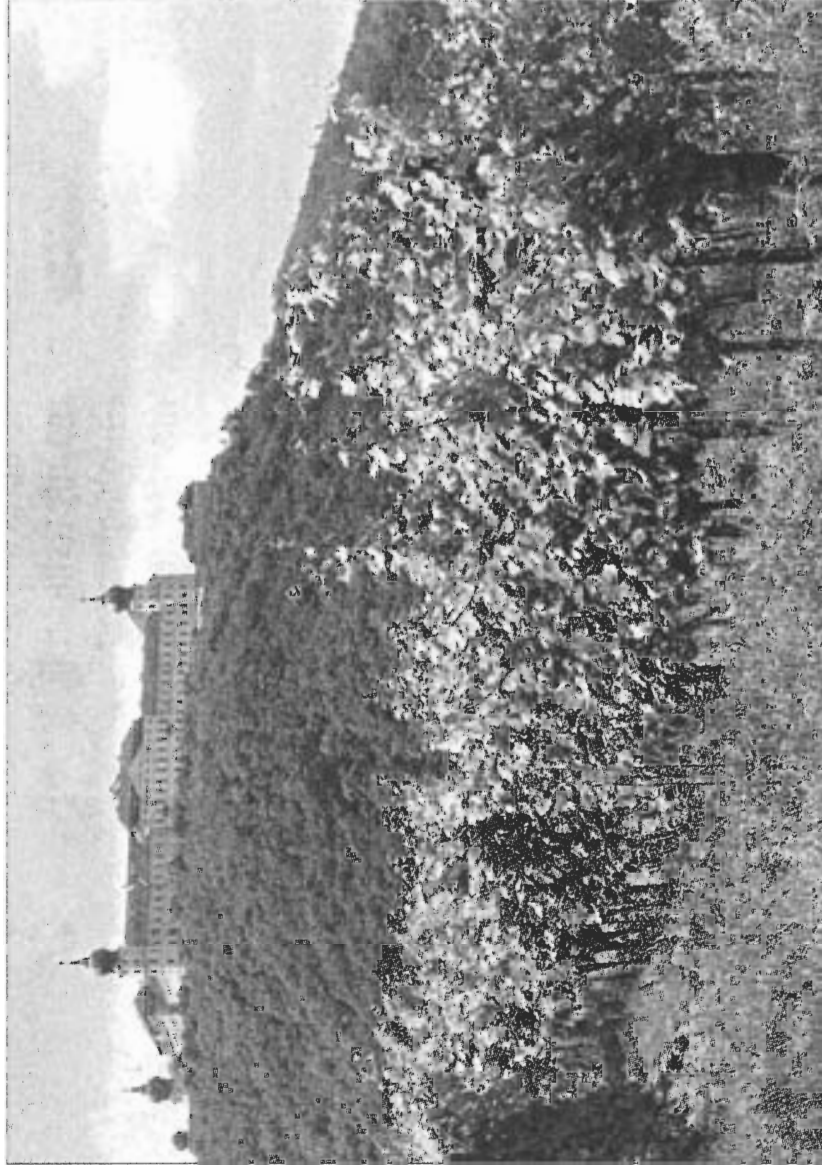
Around each bend in the river is a many centuries-old village with a story to tell. The old ruined castle at Dürnstein, for example, was once the prison of Richard Löwenherz (Richard the Lionheart). He was held there until a ransom was received, the proceeds of which paid for the creation of the Viennese mint (or *so* much: it certainly funded something substantial in the way of the capital's infrastructure).

And speaking of hearts, one of the great dishes you must try when in Austria is *beuschl*, a spiced soup-cum-stew of herb and lunge (heart and lung): sounds offal but is absolutely delicious.

The other must eat in the region are apricots (*marille*). Wachau apricots are acknowledged as the country's finest, and they're certainly the best I've eaten. When in season they're on every dessert menu in some interpretation or another. You'll even find pots of *marille* and *kürbis* (pumpkin) conserve for sale: another truly sublime regional experience.

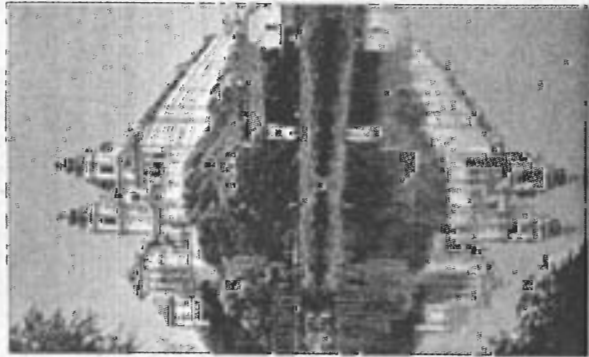
There are numerous places to eat well in and around the city, including one of Austria's most highly regarded regional gastronomic experiences, Landhaus Bacher, which is on the south side of the Danube at Mautern, about 10 minutes by taxi from Krems. But you can eat well here even in a more basic *heurigen* or *gasthaus*.

Krems is the heart, stomach, and spirit of Austria's part of the Danube.



Clockwise from top: Stift Göttweig monastery and vines; View of Dürnstein at the Danube; and Durnstein Street, Vienna. Photos: Austrian Wine Marketing/Kessler

FACTS



Abbey of Melk, on the Danube (Wachau Valley, Lower Austria)

Getting there

Krems is just an hour out of Vienna, whether you go by car or by train (which depart and return regularly from Franz-Josefs Bahnhof every hour until the late evening).

Accommodation

Steinberger Avance Hotel Krems,

Am Goldberg 2, Krems, A-3500, Ph (43) (2732) 71010.

www.krems.steinberger.at Many of the rooms have balconies and views to vineyards. Pool, gym, massage facilities, and great breakfasts, especially if taken on the huge outdoor deck. Doubles start at just \$150 with suites from \$200.

Landhaus Bacher, Südtirolerplatz 2, Mautern A-3512, Ph (43) (2732) 82 937, www.landhaus-bacher.at Deluxe, intimate boutique accommodation, with food to match. The restaurant is closed Monday and Tuesday but is open to all after that. Incredible wine list.

Romantik Hotel Richard Löwenther, 3 Dürnstein A-3601, Ph (43) (2711) 222, www.richardloewenther.at Forty-room, four-star hotel right on the river.

Eating and drinking

Karl Lagler, Rote-Tor-Gasse, Spitz an der Donau, A-3620, Ph (43) (2713) 25 16. A heurigen (a family-run winery/cellar door eatery) with fabulous home-smoked freshwater fish and meats.

James Weingut und Restaurant, Jochnig 45, A-3610, Ph (43) (2719) 2235, www.weingut-jamek.at Smart winery/restaurant with a great courtyard/garden and

the perfect place for summer lunch or dinner.

Schloss Dürnstein, Dürnstein 2, A-3601, Ph (43) (2711) 212 0, www.schloss.at This is a Relais and Chateau hotel and restaurant, but it's not too stuffy and the food is exceptional. Especially when enjoyed on the terrace high above the Danube where you can watch the tourist cruisers and more industrial river traffic go by.

Gasthaus zum Elefanten, Donaulande 56, Krems-Stein A-3504, Ph (43) (2732) 85016, www.zum-elefanten.at A place with a buzz and a deck with view to the river. Casual environment serving tasty, modern Austrian food.

Kloster UND, Undstrasse 6, Krems A-3504, Ph (43) (2732) 710 90 0, www.klosterund.at

The ideal place to taste and buy a wide range of the region's wines: they'll even prepare tutored tasting flights of wines from different producers. The restaurant - Morwald - backs up the quality local liquid produce.

Wineries

Wineries in Austria generally don't operate cellar doors in the way that we understand them here unless they have a heurigen serving food as

well as wine. Very few open at weekends, so you'll need to book ahead if you wish to do tastings.

Weingut Alzinger, Unterloiben 11, Wachau A-3601, Ph (43) (2732) 77900, www.alzinger.at Superb producer which has made some of the best riesling and grüner veltliner from the '04 vintage.

Weingut Prager, Weissenkirchlen 48, A-3610, Ph (43) (2715) 2248, www.weingutprager.at A stunning cellar right on the Danube (it flooded when the river burst its banks in '02) which produces some of the region's most breathtaking whites.

Nikolaihof, Mautern A-3512, Ph (43) (2732) 82901, www.nikolaihof.at A producer of fine biodynamically grown wines. The best way to enjoy them is with some home-cooked food at the winery's 'weinstube' which is open from 5pm-11pm Mon-Fri, and from 12 on Sat.

Undhof Salomon, Undstrasse 10, Krems A-3504, Ph (43) (2732) 83226, www.undhof.at Probably the most Australian-friendly winery in Austria. Not surprising as the Salomon family own vineyards in South Australia where they grow their red wine. Open from 1-5pm Mon-Fri and Saturday mornings. You can even taste an Aussie Shiraz

if you're feeling homesick.

Culture

Karikatur Museum Krems, Steiner Landstrasse 3a, Krems, A-3500, Ph (43) (2732) 90 80 20, www.karikaturmuseum.at Recently commissioned gallery devoted to

cartoons and caricatures. It helps if you understand Austrian sociopolitical goings on, but it's fascinating nonetheless. A great place to pick up postcards.

Stift Göttweig, Furth bei Göttweig, A-3511, (43) (2732) 85581, www.stiftgoetweig.at Even if monasteries aren't your thing this is top spot to take in a seriously elevated view of Krems and the sweep of the valley.

Kunsthalle Krems, Franz Zeller Platz 3, Krems 3500, Ph (43) (2732) 90 80 10, www.kunsthalle.at An exhibition of Renoir paintings and work from abstract Austrian artists Jakob Gasteiger is now on offer. Not bad for a country city gallery.

Weinstadtmuseum, Kornmarkt 14, Krems A-3500, Ph (43) (2732) 801-557, www.weinstadtmuseum.at An interesting place covering the thousands-of-years-history of wine in the region.