

Austria, 2nd - 4th July 2018

Good Night Vienna

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Photos: John Wright

A friend of mine, David Walker, the warden of Dungeness Bird Observatory (Kent, England), encouraged me to visit Vienna following his visit there last year where he scored with European Hamsters (Common or Black-bellied Hamster) and European Sousliks. Both species being seen within the Vienna city limits. I couldn't go last year so I sorted out a short trip of two nights this year. I was going to go on my own but in the end my wife Jane decided to join me.

Many thanks to David for the site details for the Hamsters at the Franz Josef Hospital and the Sousliks at Badeteich Gerasdorf. Thanks also to Cathy Panterczyk (via the European Mammals Facebook page) for the Meidling Cemetery Hamster site.

We flew with Flybe from Southend Airport in South East Essex, which is our local airport, to Vienna. We used public transport throughout our stay. Public

transport is cheap and even cheaper if you get a network travel pass. Also pick-up a subway train map when you are there as it will prove very useful when negotiating subway travel.

Monday 2nd. Arrived mid morning at Vienna international airport and got a bus into the city proper and then walked to our hotel. Had a walk around looking at some of the sites before taking the subway (underground tube train) to Meidling Station (you can also get to it by overground train). Walking east from the station we came to Meidling Cemetery at just after 17:00 and made our way through the western section of the cemetery to the eastern section - the cemetery is split West/East by a road - the Hamsters are in the eastern section. At approx 17:00 we came across our first Hamster in the south east part of the eastern section. Before long we were watching three or four Hamsters scuttling between the graves - a new mammal for me so I was very happy. By the time we exited the cemetery at around 18:00 through a small gate at the eastern end we had seen at least ten Hamsters. We again walked east for about ten minutes making our way to the Franz Josef Hospital and

entered through the main gates. Seeking out relatively small patches of grass we soon started seeing more Hamsters - amazing! The nurses I talked to were well aware of the Hamsters and it wasn't a problem us being there. In fact notices have been put up on the grassy areas informing people of their presence. We saw at least nine Hamsters in less than an hour before departing. As we made our way back to Meidling station at around 19:00 we walked alongside the north fence of the eastern section of the cemetery, actually outside the cemetery, and saw another five Hamsters inside the cemetery grounds. According to a notice on the cemetery gate the gates are locked at 19:00 in the summer months.





Bitte schützen Sie unsere Feldhamster!



Foto: Stefan Weglehner

Hier wohnen Feldhamster (*Cricetus cricetus*), die zu den streng geschützten Tierarten zählen.

Das ist eine Besonderheit in Wien.

Bitte respektieren Sie den Lebensraum dieser seltenen Wildtiere:

Bleiben Sie auf den Wegen und zerstören Sie keine Hamsterbauten.


KAISER FRANZ JOSEF SPITAL
MEDIZINISCHES UNIVERSITÄTSSPITAL WIEN


kav
Wie tier
krankeinstellen verband
Tiereärzte, Landwirte

Stadt  Wien
Wien ist anders.

Above photo: The notice about the Feldhamsters in the hospital grounds - pity the photo of the Hamster doesn't do them justice.

Tuesday 3rd. We decided to go and look for the Sousliks, so after breakfast we went by subway train to Praterstern underground station, walked to Praterstern mainline station (about 2 minutes) and got an overground train to Gerasdorf on the S2 route. Gerasdorf Station is about 15K North East of Vienna but is still classed as being within the Vienna city limits and thus the train fare was very reasonable. From here we walked the 2K to Badeteich Gerasdorf swimming lake. We started seeing Sousliks as we walked down the approach road to the lake after passing some farmland, and just as we reached an equestrian centre. They were then numerous in the short grass fields all the way up to the swimming lake about 500 metres further along the road. They were quite tame and can be induced closer with some seed handouts.



You don't have to enter the swimming lake complex but they were also very numerous and tame around the lake being so used to humans and where they are also fed by hand, especially around the main entrance cafeteria. Of course you can enter and spend the day swimming or relaxing whilst all the time watching the Sousliks!

We got there about 09:45 and it wasn't too crowded but being another hot and sunny day more and more people were arriving.



Note the entrance fee was 9 Euros but we didn't know that until after we left as we just walked in, and out, of a small gate (not the main entrance) that was open and apparently shouldn't have been! As we left, just after midday, the Souseliks on the fields adjacent to the approach road were still on show but mainly loafing in the sunshine near their burrows. In all I suppose we saw around 100 Souseliks - adults with young. I had previously seen European Souseliks in Hungary.



Photo above: Ziesel, German for Squirrel, road sign. On the right of the photo is one of the equestrian fields. At the end of the road just behind the trees is the swimming lake.

We saw a **Brown Hare** on the agricultural fields and from the train just after we pulled out of the station a buck **Roe Deer**.

The rest of the day was spent sightseeing in Vienna.

Wednesday 3rd. No time to do anything so we made our way back to the airport for our mid-morning flight back to the UK.

Site details and re-cap:

HAMSTERS

<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Sozialmedizinisches+Zentrum+S%C3%BCd+-+Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Spital/@48.1737116,16.3496124,17z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x476da835cfffffc3:0xab2f8c1dd1834b50!8m2!3d48.1741731!4d16.3507497>

They frequent the grass areas of the Franz-Josef Hospital. We entered via the main entrance then walked to the left. You will see small green areas with

signs up about the Hamsters. The first ones we saw were in the Kindergarten/small children playground. This is locked up around 1700 and the hamsters then come out as it is quiet. We saw them here from approx 18:15 and then on many of the other grassy areas as we walked back to the main gate when exiting the hospital grounds. There was no problem with access or watching/taking photos of the Hamsters.

As stated the first Hamsters we saw were in the Meidling Cemetery which is a 10 minute walk west of the hospital and can be seen on the attached Google map. We went to the cemetery first as we went by subway train to Meidling Station (Bahnhof Meidling) the cemetery is east of the station. The cemetery is situated between the station and the hospital. If coming from the station go to the eastern section of the cemetery, crossing the road that divides the cemetery, we saw our first Hamsters around 17:15 in the south east area of the eastern section. When returning to Meidling Station at around 19:00 we saw more Hamsters in the north area of the eastern section. We only went late afternoon/early evening but it is probably also worth an early morning visit.

SOUSLIKS

<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Badeteich+Gerasdorf/@48.303403,16.4581167,313m/data=!3m2!1e3!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x476d04f44322f82d:0x24a031cde73621af!8m2!3d48.3034012!4d16.459211>

In the grounds of an outdoor swimming lake north of Vienna, "Badeteich Gerasdorf" and on the adjacent fields to the right of the approach road to the lake.

No need to enter the swimming lake complex although there are plenty of Sousliks running around there. As you go down the approach road to the lake, on your right after the agricultural fields, there is an equestrian centre - the Sousliks are in the horse grazing fields and in the next short grass field between the equestrian centre and the lake.









Couldn't resist taking a photo of the train fleet logo.

The End

