

Plentiful water offers relief in Vienna

September 21 2022, by Blaise GAUQUELIN



Vienna's water system was set up almost a century and a half ago under the Austro-Hungarian Empire to provide the city with fresh water and to overcome diseases such as cholera.

As Europe suffered its worst drought in centuries, residents in Austria's capital were feeling fortunate for their plentiful water supply that courses from streams in the green forests of the Alps.

A rarity in the EU, the two million inhabitants of Vienna get their [tap water](#) from dozens of springs—the main one some 655 metres (2,150 feet) above sea level.

It's a serious subject in Vienna, where access to [clean drinking water](#) has since 2001 even been guaranteed in the constitution—a world first, according to the city's website.

"Vienna is in the fortunate position that, as a city of millions, firstly, we have enough [water](#) and secondly, that it's water of the best quality," Juergen Czernohorszky, Vienna councillor in charge of the environment, told AFP.

The summer of 2022 was the hottest in Europe's recorded history, as climate change drives ever longer heat spells and the drought parching the continent was the worst in at least 500 years.

Yet at the main Klaeffer spring feeding Vienna, some 150 kilometres (90 miles) outside the capital, the underground source bears water that is less than six degrees Celsius (43 degrees Fahrenheit) in temperature.

Some 10,000 litres (2,600 gallons) per second flow out from the Klaeffer spring alone, feeding a river named Salza that coils down a steep uninhabited valley.



Access to clean drinking water has since 2001 been guaranteed in Vienna's city constitution.

The [water system](#) was set up about a century and a half ago under the Austro-Hungarian Empire to provide the city with [fresh water](#) to overcome diseases such as cholera.

Today, the city's sanctuary still encompasses 70 sources in untouched mountains south-west of the capital with a system of 130 aqueducts.

Thirty-one reservoirs in and around the city store the water, drawing officials from as far away as China to marvel at them, municipal water company Wiener Wasser spokeswoman Astrid Rompolt told AFP.



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In Vienna, there is also enough to feed fountains, swimming pools, 1,300 drinking water fountains and even 175 mist showers that allow passers-by to cool off in the light spray.

The growing [city](#) plans to renovate 30 kilometres of pipeline per year to prepare for increasingly hot summers expected as the impacts of climate

change intensify.

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Citation: Plentiful water offers relief in Vienna (2022, September 21) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-09-plentiful-relief-vienna.html>

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