

**Mustafa YILDIZ**

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## **Field Report**

### **Berkeley-Austria Research Fellowship**

I spent three months in Vienna in Spring 2022 doing research on the Greek medical manuscripts held at the Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek – ÖNB) and working on the draft of a chapter from my dissertation. I enjoyed my time in Vienna both as an itinerant scholar and a casual tourist. I found the city of Vienna as a most pleasant place to live – an assessment confirmed during my stay by the Global Liveability Index of the Economist Intelligence Unit, which ranked Vienna as the number-one most livable city in 2022.<sup>1</sup> The strict COVID-19 restrictions in Austria were lifted in a few weeks after my arrival, so it was possible to appreciate the historical and cultural attractions of the city with an enhanced sense of normalcy for the most part.

I received the Berkeley-Austria Research Fellowship in Spring 2020 but was not able to travel to Vienna for two years because of the global travel restrictions implemented following the COVID-19 pandemic. In the meantime, I passed my doctoral qualification exam and started to work on my dissertation project, which focused on a different topic than my original proposal for the fellowship. However, I was fortunate to find out that the Austrian National Library had holdings relevant to my new research topic, the medical responses to the Black Death in late Byzantium, since this excellent library is in the possession of hundreds of medieval Greek manuscripts, a sizeable portion of which is on Byzantine medicine. Therefore, I was able to take advantage of the Austrian Marshall Plan grant thanks to not only the rich collection of the ÖNB

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2022/06/22/the-worlds-most-liveable-cities>

but also the strength of my host institution in Byzantine Studies. The University of Vienna's Institut für Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik, together with the Institute for Byzantine Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, makes Vienna a major hub of research for my field. The publicly available Byzantine Studies library at the University of Vienna is centrally located and has proved to be extremely useful for the consultation of both primary and secondary sources. Claudia Rapp, the professor of Byzantine Studies at the institute, has been most helpful as my faculty advisor at the University of Vienna. Therefore, I was especially disappointed when I contracted COVID and could not attend the outing to the ancient Roman archeological site of Carnuntum organized by the institute.

I'd recommend a research stay in Vienna for a variety of reasons. It has not only prominent academic institutions to conduct research but also a multitude of options for cultural and historical exploration. Future fellows can find affordable housing close to the city center and easy access to a wide variety of museums, libraries, parks, historic buildings, concert venues, restaurants, and much more. Walking through the beautiful streets of Vienna is delightful itself but it has also a well-maintained and punctual public transportation system, which enables you to get wherever you want without difficulty. Vienna has so much to offer that even after three months I felt like there was still much more to see and experience for future visit. It is easy to find an activity or venue for every interest, whether it means spending whole afternoons in the dazzling museums (the excellent museums of Nature History and Art History in the Maria-Theresien-Platz require multiple visits to fully appreciate their holdings), relaxing in many palace gardens dotting the cityscape, enjoying an opera at the magnificent Vienna Opera House, or just walking on the streets adorned by Romanesque, Baroque, and Neo-Gothic architecture.