

2026
DULUX STUDY TOUR REPORT

SINGAPORE - PARIS - VIENNA

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Introduction

The 2026 Dulux Study Tour took us through Singapore, Paris and Vienna - three different cities with little in common on paper, different climates, different policies - and yet each one, in its own way, offers generosity to the people living in it.

This post tour report and reflection is my attempt to bottle some of that. Singapore designs its generosity in from day one. Paris is patiently adapting and testing how generosity manifests in a restrained city dealing with increasing pressures. Vienna has had a hundred years to let generosity become a quiet and sustained habit.

I'm an architect, so this comes from an architect's eyes, but I hope it reads as more than that. Almost nothing in these three cities was built by architects alone - a planning scheme allowed it, a government funded it, a council decided patience was worth more than a quick win. So while this is a personal account of ten wonderful days, I hope there's something in it for anyone who cares about how a city gets to feel this good to live in, not just the people who draw the buildings.



The Dulux Study Tour is so much more than a list of projects and practices across three cities in ten days. It was, genuinely, life changing.

Going in, I was looking forward to the obvious things - finally standing in front of buildings I'd only ever known from photos and websites, getting a real sense of their scale, seeing what other cities offer, understanding a little of how architecture gets made in places so different from home. I was excited to meet other young architects too, people who'd understand exactly why any of this mattered so much to me.

What I got back was so much more than I ever let myself imagine. It found me in the quiet moments, not the big ones - taking off or landing in a new city, wandering the streets between one visit and the next, catching myself thinking "I can't believe this is actually happening." A dream career milestone that somewhere along the way it became something much bigger and more personal than that too.

I'll be forever grateful for the lessons, memories and life long friends formed on DST26 - thankyou.

Singapore

Generosity by Design

We met in the pool. As all great friendships probably should. And somewhere in those first three days, Singapore had completely rearranged my sense of what a dense city could feel like.



This was a city that exceeded every expectation I'd brought with me - and I'd brought high ones. Nothing here was left to chance, yet none of it felt heavy-handed. Reflecting Singapore's Green Plan 2030 and philosophy: nature wasn't an afterthought bolted onto the architecture or value managed out. It was mandated infrastructure from the outset, with the buildings fitted around it, not the other way round. Towering skylines wrapped in planting. Mixed use districts genuinely designed around people rather than traffic or floor space. Parks tended to like treasured living rooms rather than leftover green space.

The sheer scale of some of the projects we visited was like nothing I'd ever envisioned. We spent a lot of time looking up - at the cascading garden terraces of PARKROYAL COLLECTION Pickering by WOHA with a 200% increase in the sites green area; or by the sweeping ramps and waterfalls in the forecourt of Marina One by Ingenhoven Associates - a tower dense enough to house a small town wrapped around a green heart that still felt intimate at ground level. Similarly, Punggol Digital District and the Singapore Institute of Technology by WOHA showed this thinking scaling to entirely new districts with whole-infrastructure strategies,



Singapore rarely felt crowded, and every square meter worked harder despite the density. Punggol Green Linear Park by DP Architects turned the scrappy land beneath elevated train tracks into somewhere people actually want to walk - proof that even the leftover bits of a city can be treated kindly. Practice visits with WOHA, Populous, and Kerry Hill Architects exposed us to projects operating at a scale larger than many of us have ever experienced.

Jewel Changi by Safdie Architects - a dome of glass and steel wrapped around a waterfall - offers the Singapore airport, a transactional building type, a joyful place for commuters to linger and experience the tropical destination without setting foot outside the airport.



On the flip side, Rifle Range Nature Park by landscape architects Henning Larsen showed a different kind of generosity altogether. Singapore is dense enough, and short enough on land, that it would be easy to understand if its nature reserves had quietly been swallowed up over the years in the search for more room to build, the way they so often are elsewhere in the world. Instead, restored wetlands and a purpose-built green buffer protect the national reserve rather than eat into it. And then there's Kampung Admiralty by WOHA with Henning Larsen, without question one of my favourites of the whole tour. The plot itself is roughly the size of a single city block in Hobart's CBD, yet holds around a hundred apartments, a medical centre, a childcare centre and a community garden, all layered together rather than spread out - housing, childcare and aged care sharing the same lift and courtyard, the kind of intergenerational living Australia usually only manages at the scale of a single granny flat. Incredibly, it achieves a 100 percent green plot ratio - the greenery given back to the site







matches or exceeds its own footprint. It's part of why the eleven storeys never feel overwhelming from the ground: staggered, tiered levels and little green pockets break the height down into something you barely notice standing within the central courtyards. Even the food waste plays its part - compost from the ground-floor hawker centre feeds the herb gardens above, which flow straight back down into the same kitchens, a lovely little loop nobody living there needs to think twice about.

Part of how Singapore pulls all this off comes down to something simple: it's a city-state, so the city council and the national government are one and the same, with no extra layer to negotiate a masterplan through. The Housing & Development Board demonstrates what that alignment can do - established in 1960, it now houses around 80 percent of Singapore's residents the majority as homeowners. It's a different model to Vienna's rental-based approach, but the same instinct underneath: housing as something a city takes long-term responsibility for, not something left to chance. Compare that to home, where social housing covers only a small percent of Australian households, spread across separate state and territory authorities each running their own version of the same idea - and you start to see how much a single, patient, well-resourced authority can do when it's given sixty years to get on with the job. None of that transplants overnight, and Tasmania is a very different place to Singapore. But there's something lovely in it worth borrowing anyway: that consistency, kept up for decades rather than reset every election, might be its own kind of design.

Singapore proved that density doesn't have to mean compromise. It can be generous, joyful and wonderfully green. What a place to kick off the 2026 Dulux Study Tour.

Paris

Generosity Under Retrofit

Paris was equal parts croissants and concepts. Powered, it seemed, almost entirely by yellow bikes and butter.

Paris is going through a transition of its own - a slow shift towards a greener, more livable city. The grand, unified nineteenth-century boulevards and tourist icons weren't an accident, they were policy and statements to the world. But that same fabric now carries pressures it was never built for: tourism at a scale nobody could have planned for, and a changing climate bringing heat and water run-off this stone and zinc city simply wasn't designed to manage. Paris displayed a genuine willingness to allow things to change - old buildings taking on new lives rather than being frozen in place out of nostalgia.

Bourse de Commerce is a lovely example of this - a nineteenth-century grain exchange reimagined by Tadao Ando as a contemporary art museum without losing an ounce of its weight or grandeur. An unforgettable fog exhibit inside made it a space we could have spent hours in. Buildings here aren't torn down and started again so much as they're ushered into a second life.

Paris has been rethinking its relationship with green space even since the 1980s when Bernard Tschumi's follies of Parc de la Villette transformed what was previously a slaughterhouse and market site into an urban redevelopment now home to concert halls, cafes, parklands, and a museum. A similar transition is occurring today - roads are being converted to running and bike paths and roundabouts turned into landscaped urban piazzas. Our tour guide mentioned that Paris now has more bikes on its streets than Copenhagen simply by population - and the city keeps handing itself back to people on foot or on bike. The Seine River has also been undergoing a significant cleanup to provide designated swimming zones which has been a banned activity since the 1920s.

In a city full of recognisable architecture, even the straightforward civic briefs such as a Philharmonie de Paris concert hall by Jean Nouvel, or the National Library of France by Perrault, seem to result in a statement - rightly or wrongly. Paris has spent plenty on spectacle over the centuries - but rarer, and just as fine, are the moments that the same ambition gets spent somewhere quieter. Five minutes outside Cité de Refuge by Le Corbusier was a reminder that architecture shouldn't be reserved just for the wealthy - people needing shelter and support deserve just as much design ambition.

Le Corbusier was ambitious with both Cite de Refuge and Villa Savoye although they were at almost opposite ends of the social spectrum - a shelter for people with nowhere else to go, and a weekend retreat for the wealthy. Yet both chased the same idea: that light, air and simplicity could provide anyone a better way of living. Villa Savoye was easy to fall for. It's such a simple building, and such a clever one for its time. Standing in it, I pictured the original owners driving out from decadent, ornamented Paris to a house pared back. A completely different way of living and hosting at the time. We arrived on a lazy Friday afternoon, sun pouring through the strip windows, and the whole group settled into the terraces and lawns. It felt exactly like what the building was designed for. Good design makes you want to stay.

Generous practices also made us want to stay - and this was none truer than at Lina Ghotmeh - Architecture's office. A true highlight of the tour. The depth of research and testing behind each project was remarkable to witness firsthand. Rohan, a Perth graduate now living and working in Paris, was generous with his time as he presented projects, ideas and the heart behind their work. Their office is filled with models, test pieces and pinboards of inspiration - everywhere you looked sparked excitement. Many practices can produce aesthetically beautiful work, but it was their sensitivity towards nature, culture and people that made this work successful and inspirational. I'm inspired in my own practice to dig deeper with research, sources of inspiration, materiality and testing.

Paris left me wondering what a bit more of that Parisian confidence might do back home: not because we don't value what we've got, but because there's real skill in treating heritage, not as a puzzle too fiddly to solve, but that great architecture isn't frozen in time - it's always evolving.






RMEE DU SALUT
CITE
DE
REFUGE







Vienna

Generosity by Inheritance

It was Sunday morning in Vienna and as we cruised past on e-bikes, there was a relaxed happiness in the air. Streets busy with people out doing ordinary weekend things together, neighbourhood basketball courts full of families and kids with a buzz akin to a school playground at lunchtime. In Australia, weekends tend to mean retreating into our own backyards, each household to itself. In Vienna, because so much of the housing is dense, the green spaces aren't a bonus - they're the shared backyard for an entire neighbourhood.

That was Vienna's real lesson, and it kept showing up everywhere: this isn't a city performing generosity for visitors, it's a city that built generosity into its own foundations for its people roughly a century ago and has simply kept investing in it since. Nothing here felt urgent, they were proud, and quietly confident - a city rewriting the rules without needing to shout about it.

It was Alt Erlaa designed by Harry Glück and associates (built 1975-86) that genuinely surprised me. This isn't a typical public housing block, it's closer to a small self-contained town: over 3,000 apartments, home to somewhere between nine and eleven thousand residents, with its own schools, medical centre, a church, shops, rooftop swimming pools. Described on paper it sounds institutional, and instead felt lived-in and genuinely loved by the people who call it home.

That scale matters back home where Australia is in a genuine cost-of-living crisis. Day-to-day life is expensive, homeownership feels out of reach, and when so much income disappears into rent or mortgage, there's nothing left for the fringes: for hobbies, for travel, for the things that make a life feel balanced. Vienna operates on an entirely different premise. Around 60 percent of residents live in some form of subsidised or municipal housing, income limits are set generously enough that most people qualify. For anyone in a position to actually influence housing policy, the mechanics are worth knowing: the city holds a huge stock of housing directly rather than leaving supply entirely to the market. Long-term, low-interest finance keeps rents stable over decades, and nobody gets pushed out if their income later rises, which is part of why the housing carries none of the stigma it does elsewhere - doctors and cleaners live in the same buildings, by design. The effect isn't just cheaper housing, it's a kind of citywide exhale: room left over for the schnitzels and river swims and unhurried Sunday afternoons that made this city feel so alive.

This isn't housing that people pass through - it's housing people stay in for life, and often hand on to their own children. Imagine growing up in a place like Alt Erlaa, moving away as a young adult the way most of us do, and then actively choosing to buy back in decades later because nowhere else compared. That's not just affordability, that's architecture and planning that has genuinely earned people's loyalty over an entire lifetime. Good design lasting the test of time.

It raises a lovely parallel with Kampung Admiralty back in Singapore. Both weave together things we usually keep stubbornly separate - housing, healthcare, education, community and daily life - under one roof or across one shared courtyard. It made me think about Hobart, where a hospital sits in one part of town, childcare in another, offices somewhere else again, and housing spread up and across the river, all disconnected. What if grandparents could go downstairs to pick the grandkids up from daycare?



Wotruba Church was moving and memorable. We sat inside quietly, catching our breaths from the steep uphill ride, mesmerised by the stack of rough concrete blocks that reads more like a sculpture than a conventional place of worship. Light filters through voids and crevices across the raw, unfinished concrete. It was originally conceived to be built in marble but sculptor Fritz Wotruba died before it was realised, leaving only a scale model behind, no working drawings. Architect Fritz Gerhard Mayr had to interpret and complete the building from that model alone. There's something intriguing about a building this strange and beautiful, built entirely from someone else's unfinished intention.

Vienna's architecture is beautifully restrained on the surface, but look closer and there's joy everywhere - patina, pops of colour, unexpected flashes of gold, small moments of play tucked into the details..

Our two practice visits carried the same quiet confidence with undercurrent of joy. Querkraft work out of Vienna's old stock exchange, shelves stacked with competition models built and unbuilt. Shibukawa Eder Architects, in an equally beautiful Adolf Loos building, are a fusion of both Directors' Japanese and Viennese sensibilities. Both practices have built their portfolios on a pipeline of design competitions.







Add exceptional schnitzels, a swim in the river, e-bikes, ice creams so cool us down, and some of the friendliest people we met on the entire tour, and Vienna became the perfect final chapter - a city that proves you don't need to be loud to leave a lasting impression. What made this possible in the first place? What political and cultural conditions sustain this kind of generosity across generations, not just a single well-funded project - and what would it take for Tasmania to start treating density not as a threat to backyard privacy, but as an opportunity for the kind of shared, everyday community I saw on that Sunday bike ride?

In Conclusion

None of this happens quickly - the best of what we saw took decades of patience, sustained well past the people who first had the idea. But that's the encouraging part, not the discouraging one: plant that kind of patience now, and it's the people who come after us who get to enjoy the shade, and who'll thank us for having the foresight to start.

Generosity in architecture isn't a style, and it isn't a budget line. It's a choice, made and remade, about who a city is really for. Singapore showed me that generosity can be designed in from day one, achievable even at a scale that still feels almost unbelievable. Paris showed me that generosity can be fought for, patiently and rigorously, inside historic constraint that was never going to make it easy. And Vienna showed me, more than anywhere else, what it looks like when generosity has had a century to become habit rather than ambition - housing so genuinely good that people spend their whole lives in it and hand it on to the people they love.

Three different starting points, three different sets of constraints, politics and history - yet an underlying question: who does this building serve, and for how long?

For those of us who design buildings, that might mean asking what it would take to design a little more generosity in the way Singapore does. Or to retrofit a little more courage into how we treat our own heritage, the way Paris does. Or to think, even occasionally, in generations rather than financial years, the way Vienna does. But the same questions apply, arguably more sharply, to the people who decide what gets built at all. What would it take for a government to hold land the way Singapore holds its green buffer? For heritage controls to allow a building to be reimagined again and again, the way Bourse de Commerce has been, rather than locking it so tightly in place that a new life is never really on the table? For a housing authority to treat affordability as a long term commitment, the way Vienna does, rather than a program with an end date? Architects can draw the possibility. Only policy can make it the default.

In closing, I want to say that I am so grateful for these ten days. Getting to travel with this talented and kind group of DST winners, and our wonderful entourage keeping us fed, moving and laughing the entire way, was a genuine pinch-me moment from start to finish. I still can't quite believe I got to spend ten of the best days of my life exactly like this, with exactly this exceptional group of people. It's something I'll be proud of forever.

I came home with 1,376 photos, a genuine love for three cities I'd only just started to understand, and a crew of new mates I hope to keep sharing all of it with. But more than anything, I came home with a set of questions about patience and generosity that I can carry into my own practice.



Tour Recipients
Callum Senjov
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Jasmine Placentino
Ksenia Totoeva
Rachel Licht
Sharaan Muruvan

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