

SCHÖNBRUNN PALACE

Schönbrunn Palace is a former imperial summer residence located in Vienna, Austria. The 1,441-room Baroque palace is one of the most important architectural, cultural, and historical monuments in the country. Since the mid-1950s it has been a major tourist attraction. The history of the palace and its vast gardens spans over 300 years, reflecting the changing tastes, interests, and aspirations of successive Habsburg monarchs.

HISTORY

In 1569, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II purchased a large floodplain of the Wien river beneath a hill, situated between Meidling and Hietzing, where a former owner, in 1548, had erected a mansion called **Katterburg**. The emperor ordered the area to be fenced and put game there such as pheasants, ducks, deer and boar, in order for it to serve as the court's recreational hunting ground. In a small separate part of the area, "exotic" birds such as turkeys and peafowl were kept. Fishponds were also built.

The name **Schönbrunn** (meaning "beautiful spring"), has its roots in an artesian well from which water was consumed by the court.

During the next century, the area was used as a hunting and recreation ground. Eleonora Gonzaga, who loved hunting, spent much time there and was bequeathed the area as her widow's residence after the death of her husband, Ferdinand II. From 1638 to 1643, she added a palace to the Katterburg mansion, while in 1642 came the first mention of the name "Schönbrunn" on an invoice. The origins of the Schönbrunn orangery seem to go back to Eleonora Gonzaga as well. The Schönbrunn Palace in its present form was built and remodelled during the 1740–50s during the reign of empress Maria Theresa who received the estate as a wedding gift. Franz I commissioned the redecoration of the palace exterior in the neoclassical style as it appears today.

Franz Joseph, the longest-reigning emperor of Austria, was born at Schönbrunn and spent a great deal of his life there. He died there, at the age of 86, on 21 November 1916. Following the downfall of the Habsburg monarchy in November 1918, the palace became the property of the newly founded Austrian Republic and was preserved as a museum.

After World War II and during the Allied Occupation of Austria (1945—55), Schönbrunn Palace was requisitioned to provide offices for both the British Delegation to the Allied Commission for Austria, and for the headquarters for the small British Military Garrison present in Vienna. With the reestablishment of the Austrian republic in 1955, the palace once again became a museum. It is still sometimes used for important events such as the meeting between U.S. president John F. Kennedy and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev in 1961.

Since 1992 the palace and gardens have been owned and administered by the *Schloss Schönbrunn Kultur-und Betriebsges.m.b.H.*, a limited-liability company wholly owned by the Republic of Austria. The company conducts preservation and restoration of all palace properties without state subsidies. UNESCO catalogued Schönbrunn Palace on the World Heritage List in 1996, together with its gardens, as a remarkable Baroque ensemble and example of synthesis of the arts (Gesamtkunstwerk).

1 – GARDENS

The sculpted garden space between the palace and the Sun Fountain is called the Great Parterre. The French garden, a big part of the area, was planned by **Jean Trehet**, a disciple of André Le Nôtre, in 1695. It contains, among other things, a maze.

The complex however includes many more attractions: Besides the Tiergarten, an orangerie erected around 1755, staple luxuries of European palaces of its type, a palm house (replacing, by 1882, around ten earlier and smaller glass houses in the western part of the park) is noteworthy. Western parts were turned into English garden style in 1828–1852.

The area called **Meidlinger Vertiefung** (engl.: depression of Meidling) to the west of the castle was turned into a play area and drill ground for the children of the Habsburgs in the 19th century. At this time it was common to use parks for the military education of young princes. Whereas the miniature bastion, which was built for this purpose, does not exist anymore, the garden pavilion that was used as shelter still does. It was turned into a café in 1927 and is known as **Landtmann's Jausen** Station since 2013..

At the outmost western edge, a botanical garden going back to an earlier arboretum was re-arranged in 1828, when the Old Palm House was built. A modern enclosure for Orangutans, was restored besides a restaurant and office rooms in 2009.

2 – GLORIETTE

The garden axis points towards a 60-metre-high (200 ft) hill, which since 1775 has been crowned by the Gloriette structure (Fischer von Erlach had initially planned to erect the main palace on the top of this hill).

Maria Theresa decided the **Gloriette** should be designed to glorify Habsburg power and the **Just War** (a war that would be carried out of “necessity” and lead to peace), and thereby ordered the builders to recycle “otherwise useless stone” which was left from the near-demolition of Schloss Neugebäude. The same material was also to be used for the Roman ruin.

The Gloriette was destroyed in the Second World War, but had already been restored by 1947, and was restored again in 1995.

The Gloriette today houses a café and an observation deck which provides panoramic views of the city.