NEUSCHWANSTEIN CASTLE

I wish you a fascinating visit to Neuschwanstein Castle!

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The Singers' Hall on the fourth floor of the castle

Neuschwanstein Castle

Neuschwanstein Castle was commenced by the Bavarian King Ludwig II in 1869 and never completed. He saw it as a monument to medieval culture and kingship, which he revered and wanted to imitate. Built and furnished in medieval styles but equipped with what at the time was the latest technology, it is the most famous work of historicism and the embodiment of German idealism.

Formative influences and models

The father of Ludwig II, Maximilian II, acquired the nearby Hohenschwangau Castle, seat of the knights of Schwangau in the Middle Ages, and rebuilt it from 1832 in the Gothic style. Here Ludwig, who was born in 1845, developed a passion for the Middle Ages.

He learned much about the legends and history of the period from the murals and through avid reading. From 1861 he was decisively influenced by his encounter with the music dramas of Richard Wagner, who heightened the effect of the medieval sagas with incredibly powerful music. Ludwig first saw 'Lohengrin' and 'Tannhäuser'. These were followed by 'Tristan und Isolde' and 'Der Ring des Nibelungen', and Wagner's adaptation of the saga of the Grail King Parzival ('Parsifal'), with whom Ludwig II identified in his later years and with whom he was identified by Wagner. One of the most famous castles in Germany, the Wartburg, had been renovated and refurnished in 1867 and became a direct model for Neuschwanstein. In the 19th century, building in historical styles meant 'perfecting' them, also with the help of modern technology and historical studies. As a thoroughgoing idealist, Ludwig II clung to an already completely outdated belief in such perfection.

The walls of the Throne Hall glorify canonized kings and their deeds

Photo of King Ludwig II (l.);
Mural of 'St. George killing the dragon' from the Throne Hall (r.)

INFORMATION

NEUSCHWANSTEIN CASTLE

TICKET-CENTER-HOHENSCHWANGAU

Alpseestr. 12 · 87645 Hohenschwangau
Tel. +49 (0) 8362 930830 · Fax +49 (0) 8362 9308320
info@ticket-center-hohenschwangau.de
www.ticket-center-hohenschwangau.de

TICKET RESERVATION

Entrance tickets are only obtainable at the Ticket-Center in the village of Hohenschwangau below the castle (Tel. +49 (0) 8362 930830). Tickets can be booked in advance for an additional charge. The time can only be changed or the ticket cancelled up to two hours before the start of the tour (also by phone).

TICKETVERKAUFSZEITEN

April – 15. October: 8am – 5pm
16. October – March: 9am – 3pm

SCHLOSSVERWALTUNG NEUSCHWANSTEIN

Neuschwansteinstr. 20 · 87645 Schwangau
Tel. +49 (0) 8362 939880 · Fax +49 (0) 8362 9398819
svneuschwanstein@bsv.bayern.de · www.neuschwanstein.de

GUIDED TOURS

Guided tours of the palace (ca. 30 min.) in German or English or with an audioguide in further languages.
Exclusive tours on request

♿ For reasons of organization we ask handicapped visitors (wheelchair and walker users) to book their guided tour beforehand at the Ticket-Center. Disabled toilets available.

TRANSPORTATION

Train to Füssen · Bus (RVA) to 'Hohenschwangau';
The castle is easily reached on foot at a distance of 1.5 km (1640 yards, with upward slope);
Horse-drawn carriages to just below the castle;
Chargeable parking places in Hohenschwangau

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Cover picture: Achim Bunz

Study

Palace kitchen

Building History

Ludwig II became king in 1864. Two years later he was forced to accept the defeat and domination of his country by Prussia. No longer a sovereign ruler, he was unable to cope with the role of a constitutional monarch. He created his own alternative world, in which as the reigning king of Bavaria he could live like a king of the Middle Ages or the baroque age of absolutism. This is the idea behind his castles. On a ridge in a magnificent setting high above the Pollät Gorge with the mountains as a backdrop he built his 'New Castle' over the remains of two small medieval castles familiar to him since his childhood ('Vorder'- and 'Hinter'-Hohenschwangau). Ludwig II visited the Wartburg in 1867 and had his architect make drawings of the ornamentation. The ideal designs were produced by a scene painter from the Munich court opera house and incorporated motifs not only from the Wartburg, in particular the Palas and building ornamentation, but also from stage sets for 'Lohengrin' and 'Tannhäuser'. Ludwig II had written in a letter to Richard Wagner in 1868 that his 'New Castle' would contain 'reminders' of these works. Construction commenced in September 1869, and the Gateway Building was completed in 1873. This was where Ludwig II first lived, who was destined never to see his 'New Castle' without scaffolding. In 1884 his rooms in the Palas were ready for occupation. A simplified version of the southern part of the building, the 'Bower' was only completed in 1891, and the keep with the chapel was never built.

Rooms and ideals

The main rooms of Neuschwanstein are decorated primarily with murals of scenes from the Germanic and Nordic sagas on which Richard Wagner had based his works. The programme was designed by the art and literary historian Hyazinth Holland.

From the outset Ludwig II wanted his 'New Castle' to have a larger and more magnificent version of the Wartburg's 'Singers' Hall' as a monument to the chivalric culture of the Middle Ages. The final result was a combination of the motifs from two Wartburg halls, the 'Singers' Hall' and the 'Festival Hall', which however were not intended for performances or even festivals. The other commemorative room, the Throne Hall, was only added in 1881, when in his later years Ludwig II also wanted a version of the legendary Grail Hall corresponding to the description of medieval poets, in order to glorify Christian kingship. This room is however also a reference to his own dynasty. The room programme, the most comprehensive and complicated of the 19th century, was designed by Ludwig II himself, who was well read and interested in many different areas. For structural reasons it had a steel construction like a modern functional building, which was encased in plaster. Each of the adjacent residential rooms is dedicated to a saga. From 1880 a 'cabinet' was turned into a small artificial grotto, based on the Venus grotto in 'Tannhäuser' with coloured electric lighting and a real waterfall.

'Neuschwanstein'

Although heavily in debt, Ludwig II always wanted to go on building. When the banks threatened to seize his property, the government had him certified insane and interned him in Berg Palace. Here, on 13 June 1886, he died in Lake Starnberg. His 'New Castle', which he now thought of not as the Wartburg but as the Grail Castle, and which no outsider was ever allowed to enter, was opened to the public from 1 August 1886. It was only named Neuschwanstein after his death and is one of the bestknown and most frequently visited and photographed buildings in the world.

Neuschwanstein Castle

Bayerische Schlösserverwaltung