



# Schönbrunn Group

KAISERLICHES ÖSTERREICH ENTDECKEN

## MEDIA INFORMATION

### Schönbrunn: Imperial Attractions in Palace and Gardens

Schönbrunn Palace is a World Heritage Site and Austria's most frequented tourist destination. This Baroque synthesis of the arts consisting of palace and gardens was owned by the imperial family for centuries and can still be experienced for the most part in its original historical state. Many attractions await visitors – ranging over a tour through the imperial family's authentically appointed residential and state rooms in the palace, the maze and labyrinth in the palace park, and even its own children's museum.

Schönbrunn Palace is a unique Baroque synthesis of the arts consisting of the former residential palace with its surrounding 1.5 square kilometres of gardens. From 1569 until the end of the Monarchy in 1918, the ensemble was owned by the ruling house of the Habsburgs. The palatial ensemble enjoyed its most brilliant epoch from 1745 on under the rule of Maria Theresa and became the hub of courtly and political life. The original Baroque interiors in the state rooms from the time of Maria Theresa have mostly been preserved down to the present day.

With the end of the Monarchy, Schönbrunn Palace was transferred to the ownership of the Republic of Austria. Although parts had already been open to the public in the time of the Monarchy, the touristic use of the palace's state rooms was intensified greatly during the twentieth century. In 1996 palace and park as ensemble were added to the list of the UNESCO World Heritage sites. Today Schönbrunn Palace is one of the top tourist destinations in Vienna and the whole of Austria.

### Palace and Park

Today, visitors to Schönbrunn Palace can gain an authentic impression of imperial lifestyle in the historically original design of the interiors, both residential and the state rooms. Of the total of around eighty rooms in the palace with preserved historical interiors, 45 rooms on the bel étage are open to visitors. The tour starts with the residential quarters of Emperor Franz Joseph I and his spouse Elisabeth in the west wing of the palace.

It continues via the state rooms in the middle part and in the apartments in the east wing, where Maria Theresa and her spouse Emperor Franz I resided. In the nineteenth century the parents of Franz Joseph I – Archduchess Sophie and Archduke Franz Karl – lived in part of the east wing, which as of 1880 was used to accommodate official state rooms. The various interior designs reflect the lifestyles, atmospheres and the political orientation of the individual Habsburg rulers.

The Park with its imposing garden edifices and fountains from Maria Theresa's time as dowager empress (1770s) can still be explored in its original state. The gardens fittingly and intentionally continue the impression made by the prestigious interiors, characterised by the Neptune Fountain, the Obelisk Fountain, Roman Ruins, the eponymous "Schöne Brunnen" and the Gloriette, looming aloft in a breathtaking direct visual axis to the palace and offering a view across the entire grounds.

Since the demerging of the Schönbrunn Group from the State Administration, the financial means for preserving, restoring and revitalising the palatial ensemble have been generated by the association itself through optimal touristic usage, simultaneously to measures of preservation and

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research. After the end of the Monarchy in 1918, the constructional and conservational action taken to preserve the ensemble was inadequate for decades – except for clearing the war damage. Since the existence of the Schönbrunn Group, continual restorations and subsequent preventive measures have been carried out to preserve the palatial ensemble or reconstruct it to its authentic historical state. Furthermore, the accompanying scientific research has as a rule provided new knowledge on the palace's history of construction and interior design, contributing to the development of restoration targets and also reconstructions of the interior design and decorations; this also guarantees as sensitive a treatment as possible of the historical substance.

## **Children's Museum**

As part of the Schönbrunn Group's ongoing investments, additional options have been created to win new target groups and to relieve the state rooms on the bel étage, whose capacities are limited. So today a Children's Museum has been set up in the palace – in part in an apartment decorated by Johann Wenzel Bergl. The focus here is on the life of the imperial children at court.

The museum is conceived to be a theme site where the visitors can get to know and experience courtly life in all its facets. Life in the Imperial Age can be relived here in play, face to face and hands on. The rooms focus on different topics and illustrate how children at court dressed, played, ate and much more. A great many options for interaction convey historical facts in a way that is just right for children.

## **Maria Theresa's Summer Apartment and the Crown Prince Apartment – on the ground floor of the palace**

Besides the Children's Museum, the palace has two further apartments with landscapes painted by Johann Wenzel Bergl. One of them is the Dowager Empress Maria Theresa's Summer Apartment. Its rooms are remarkable for their decoration with exotic landscape paintings and for the construed Baroque garden. Maria Theresa's Summer Apartment is artistically the most valuable ensemble in the palace.

On the east side we come to the so called Crown Prince's Apartment, designed in 1854 for the son of Franz Joseph and Elisabeth, Crown Prince Rudolf. Here Bergl's landscapes were altered by adding native flora and fauna. Both apartments can be viewed in special guided tours.

## **Privy Garden, Maze & Labyrinth & Labyrinthikon Playground, Orangery and Orangery Garden**

The park has further attractions for visitors to spend an entertaining time in, created as mainly based on a historical model, such as the Privy Garden, the Maze, Labyrinth with the Labyrinthikon playground. The Maze, Labyrinth and Labyrinthikon playground offer grown-ups and children opportunities to discover, to experiment and to relax.

The Orangery of Schönbrunn is ten metres wide and thus, next to Versailles, one of the largest orangery buildings in Europe. Thanks to its original and still working hypocaust heating system (heating through underfloor channels) exotic, non-winterproof plants can be wintered here at a constant temperature of ten degrees. In the summer season visitors can roam through the orangery garden – and in doing so through the history of European horticulture and enter into an enchanted world of bitter oranges, olive trees and myrtle.

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## Meetings & Events

An extra mainstay was created through the event facilities in the Apothecary's Wing. The available conference and event rooms combine historical charm with the latest technology. Ten rooms of different sizes and flair guarantee an ambience that fits every occasion, whether private or business. The access to the Baroque Orangery Garden is not the least among these unique and charming facilities. The Great Gallery and the White-and-Gold Rooms directly within the palace can also be hired, always impressive as a historical and imperial setting.

## Interactive web portal “World of the Habsburgs”

An optimal supplement to the attractions to the Schönbrunn Group locations was created with the interactive web portal “The World of the Habsburgs” with a virtual exhibition on the history of the Habsburg Monarchy including a wide-ranging spectrum of topics, and breathing life also into the living habits and worlds of the Habsburgs. Detailed text and pictorial material casts a critical light on the leading ruler personalities and describes the historical backgrounds. The website has meanwhile become a reference project and has received many awards. It is continually augmented. Since 2014, the virtual exhibition on the 1914-1918 war, “The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy”, has been available for viewing online.

The **Schönbrunn Group**, in administering Schönbrunn Palace, the Vienna Furniture Museum, the Sisi Museum in the Vienna Hofburg, also the Schloss Hof Estate, has in its charge the leading attractions of Austria's Imperial heritage. The Schönbrunn Group is responsible for the preservation and revitalisation of the cultural assets entrusted to it. The necessary funds are provided in toto by the revenue earned by the Schönbrunn Group itself.

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