

Schönbrunn Palace

Schönbrunn Palace (German: Schloss Schönbrunn) in Vienna is one of the most important cultural monuments in Austria and since the 1860s has also been one of the major tourist attractions in Vienna. The palace and gardens illustrate the tastes, interests and aspirations of successive Habsburg monarchs.

In the year 1569, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II purchased the Katterburg, which was located on a large area between Meidling and Hietzing where today Schönbrunn's parks and different buildings are situated. He showed interest in the newly founded zoo, the Tiergarten Schönbrunn, and tried to establish not only a systematic maintenance of wild animals, but also a garden of rare and exotic plants. He is justifiably called the creator of Schönbrunn's garden arrangement.

gave architect Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach the order to design a new palace. His first draft was a very utopian one, dealing with different antique and contemporary ideals. His second draft showed a smaller and more realistic building. Construction began 1696 and after three years the first festivities were held in the newly built middle part of the palace.

Not many parts of the first palace survived the next century because every emperor added or altered a bit on the inner and outer parts of the building. By order of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, the architect Nicolò Pacassi reshaped Schönbrunn Palace in a way of the style of the Rococo era. At the end of the so-called Theresianian epoch Schönbrunn Palace was a vigorous centre of Austria's empire and the imperial family.

In the 19th century one name is closely connected with Schönbrunn's, Emperor Franz Josef I of Austria. He spent the majority of his life here and died on November 21, 1916 in his sleeping room. Through the course of his reign, Schönbrunn Palace was seen as a Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art) and remodelled in accordance with its history.

Following the downfall of the monarchy in 1918 the newly founded Austrian Republic became the owner of Schönbrunn Palace and preserved, as a museum, the rooms and chambers.

After WWII and during the Allied Occupation of Austria (1945-1955) Schönbrunn Palace, which was empty at the time, 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.

UNESCO catalogued Schönbrunn Palace on the World Cultural Heritage List in 1996, together with its gardens, as a remarkable Baroque ensemble and example of synthesis of the arts (Gesamtkunstwerk). The palace complex includes sets of faux Roman ruins and an orangerie, staple luxuries of European palaces of its type. The sculpted garden space between the palace and the Gloriette on top of the hill is called the Great Parterre.

A public maze is located in the wide Palace gardens, the entrance fee allows entrance to the maze, as well as to a set of other outdoor puzzles, including a math game and a series of fountains.

Source: -- Wikipedia [<http://www.wikipedia.org>]