

Schloss Schönbrunn

IMPERIAL LIVING

Welcome to Schönbrunn Palace!

Your tour will take you through the State Rooms of the former imperial summer residence, which have been used since the eighteenth century for official functions and impressive displays of ceremonial splendour.

The Blue Staircase that you take to reach the first floor was built around 1746 as the official access to the piano nobile. The ceiling fresco was painted by the Venetian artist Sebastiano Ricci.

At the top of the Blue Staircase, proceed left to Room 20.

Lantern Room Room 20

Before you immerse yourself in the times of the Monarchy, we would like to give you a brief outline of the architectural history of Schönbrunn Palace. Back in the seventeenth century, the Habsburgs already owned a pleasure palace on this site. It was destroyed during the second Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683. After the Ottomans had been defeated, Emperor Leopold I commissioned the Austrian Baroque architect Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach to design a palatial hunting lodge. Fifty years later, Maria Theresa had this hunting lodge remodelled and extended in Rococo style as a summer residence by her court architect Nicolaus Pacassi. There she spent the summer months together with her family and court household – which numbered over fifteen hundred individuals. Schönbrunn thus became the political stage of the only female Habsburg ruler, and the rooms at the centre of the piano nobile were duly furnished and decorated in magnificent style to reflect the monarch’s status.

In Maria Theresa’s time the Lantern Room served as a Guards’ Room in the ceremonial sequence of rooms leading to the apartments in the east wing that were furnished for the Austrian monarch and her husband, the Roman-German Emperor Franz I, around 1745. In the nineteenth century, successive emperors moved their apartments to the west wing. The ceremonial rooms in the *corps de logis*, the central range of the palace, were no longer used as part of the daily routine of the court, and under Franz Joseph they continued to serve for hosting formal events. As the name of the room indicates, the lantern-bearers waited here until they were summoned to light the way through the unlit passages of the palace at night.

Take a look into one of the rooms beyond the stove, number 19.

Rosa Rooms Room 19

The so-called Rosa Rooms are named after Joseph Rosa, the artist who painted the landscape scenes on its walls. In total, Rosa executed fifteen paintings for this group of rooms at the behest of Maria Theresa between 1760 und 1769. The panelling and paintings in the Rosa Rooms date to the 1760s, to the time of Maria Theresa and the Rococo. This stylistic epoch had a second lease of life after the Biedermeier period of the first half of the nineteenth century, enjoying a new heyday in the so-called Rococo Revival era that started around 1850.

The rocaille work on the panelling and the ceiling was restored or recreated in order to provide a fitting tribute to the décor from Maria Theresa’s time. Very few of the furnishings from the time of Maria Theresa had been preserved, and so they were recreated in Rococo Revival style, as impressively demonstrated by the white-painted seating with its gilt rocaille work and the wall hangings of red court damask.

Great Gallery Room 21

The Great Gallery was used by several generations of the imperial family for receptions, balls and festive banquets. More than forty metres long and almost ten metres wide, the Great Gallery provided the ideal setting for courtly events. After the end of the Monarchy in 1918 and up to the 1980s, the Great Gallery was also regularly used by the Republic of Austria for state receptions. In 1961 the legendary encounter between President John F. Kennedy and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev took place here. With its opulent white-and-gold stucco decoration, tall mirrors and ceiling frescos, the Great Gallery is a work of art in its own right and one of the most magnificent Rococo ceremonial halls of European palace architecture.

The ceiling frescos were painted by the Italian artist Gregorio Guglielmi in 1759 to 1760. The central fresco represents the prosperity of the Monarchy under the rule of Maria Theresa. You can find detailed descriptions of each fresco on the display positioned directly below the fresco.

Maria Theresa was fond of using the Great Gallery as a stage on which she together with her husband and children displayed themselves in order to demonstrate the continuance of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty. During Franz Joseph’s time, from the middle of the nineteenth century, it was increasingly used for receptions and banquets which were also attended by Empress Elisabeth, called Sisi. In his later years, the ageing Franz Joseph would walk up and down the Gallery for exercise.

Even in the time of the monarchy, the Great Gallery had an imposing lighting scheme that encompassed both ceremonial halls at the heart of the palace. The two carved and gilded wooden chandeliers in the Great Gallery each bear seventy-two candles, while the wall sconces were supplemented after the middle of the nineteenth century by a second row of lights. With forty-eight candles, the gilt chandeliers in the Small Gallery are somewhat smaller, and the room has only four wall sconces. In total the two rooms were illuminated with 1,104 candles! This meant that the costs for illumination were extremely high, as good-quality candles that would burn for a whole night were true luxury goods. When the palace was electrified around 1900, the candles were replaced by light bulbs.

Small Gallery Room 22

The Small Gallery lies on the side of the palace that faces the gardens. It provides a wonderful view of the palace park and the Gloriette that was erected on the hill opposite as part of the redesign of the gardens in the 1770s, towards the end of Maria Theresa’s reign. The Small Gallery was generally used for name day and birthday celebrations within the family circle.

As in the Great Gallery, the ceiling fresco is by Gregorio Guglielmi, in which the Habsburg claim to power is vividly rendered. Maria Theresa’s device as ruler – Justice and Clemency – is depicted as two allegorical figures with their attributes of scales, fasces and sword.

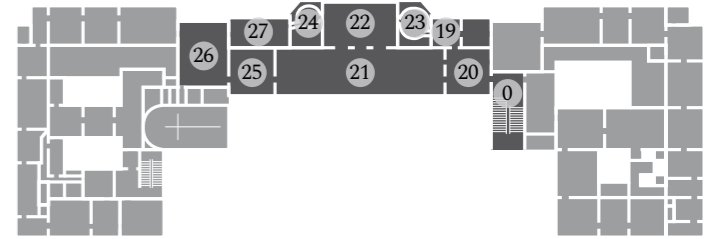
The busts on the shorter sides of the room are of the two daughters of Maria Theresa who became queens by marriage: on the right is Maria Karoline, Queen of Naples and Sicily, and on the left Marie Antoinette, Queen of France.

Chinese Round Cabinet Room 23

The two cabinets on either side of the Small Gallery are unique examples of Maria Theresa’s great regard for East Asian art, which she referred to as ‘Indian’.

From the early eighteenth century, East Asian art from China and Japan had been in great demand, influencing the interior decor of princely palaces, in particular in the form of small private rooms or cabinets, which only a few selected guests were permitted to enter. Known simply as ‘Chinese’ cabinets at Schönbrunn, they are notable for their precious Chinese lacquer panels, from which issue small consoles. These form pedestals for the blue-and-white porcelain objects which mostly date from the Chinese Kangxi period. The rooms are also notable for their elaborate intarsia parquet floors. The two cabinets served as rooms for playing cards and board games, and for holding conferences. In the Chinese Round Cabinet secret meetings and discussions took place, for example between Maria Theresa and her state chancellor Prince Kaunitz, who could reach his apartments on the floor above directly via a small staircase lying behind the cabinet.

Ground plan of the first floor of the main palace building



- 0 Blue Staircase
- 19 First Small Rosa Room
- 20 Lantern Room
- 21 Great Gallery
- 22 Small Gallery
- 23 Chinese Round Cabinet
- 24 Chinese Oval Cabinet
- 25 Carousel Room
- 26 Hall of Ceremonies
- 27 Horses Room

Chinese Oval Cabinet Room 24

Porcelain is also displayed in the Chinese Oval Cabinet. But in contrast to the Round Cabinet, here the delicate consoles do not bear blue-and-white Chinese porcelain objects but polychrome porcelain. Most of this comes from Arita, the major centre for Imari porcelain production. It is complemented by individual objects from the Vienna Du Paquier manufactory, which was founded by Emperor Charles VI and is today recognized as among the most important porcelain producers in Europe at the time.

Here too, lacquer panels of varying sizes and shapes are also set into the white-and-gold panelling. This cabinet was also only open to a small select circle of individuals and was used as a withdrawing room and for playing cards and board games.

Maria Theresa not only took delight in the exotic but also enjoyed attending high-spirited carnival celebrations for which she dressed up in costume. In the portrait she is depicted in Turkish costume with a mask. After relations with the Ottoman Empire had improved during her reign, economic and cultural exchange started to flourish, something that is reflected in the emergence of so-called 'Turkish operas', for example Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*.

Carousel Room Room 25

The Carousel Room takes its name from the large oil painting on the left, which shows a Ladies' Carousel held by Maria Theresa in the Winter Riding School of the Vienna Hofburg in 1743 to celebrate the retaking of Prague in the War of the Austrian Succession. The Winter Riding School – today's Spanish Riding School – is where the performances with the Lipizzaner horses take place. In the centre of the painting Maria Theresa rides a Lipizzaner at the head of her ladies-in-waiting. The painting on the right shows the investment ceremony of the Order of St Stephen, founded in 1764. The Order of St Stephen, patron saint of Hungary, had been founded as a companion civil order to the Order of Maria Theresa awarded for military achievements. It was intended to thank the Hungarian magnates for their support in the War of the Austrian Succession from 1740 to 1748.

These two paintings are flanked by portraits of Maria Theresa's parents, Emperor Charles VI and Elisabeth Christine, which are attributed to the court painter Jakob van Schuppen.

Hall of Ceremonies Room 26

During Maria Theresa's time the Hall of Ceremonies was used for ceremonial court celebrations marking baptisms or weddings in the imperial family.

The series of paintings decorating this room documents the wedding festivities of Maria Theresa's eldest son and successor Joseph and the Bourbon princess Isabella of Parma. The largest of these paintings shows the bridal entrée with a procession of ninety-eight carriages, with all attending guests – the entire high nobility of Europe – recognizable from the family coats of arms on the carriages. On the right-hand wall is a depiction of the court banquet and the souper or evening meal in the state rooms of the Vienna Hofburg. The banquet, which took place in the Large Antechamber of the Leopoldine Wing, was served on the gold service, while the dessert table is set with the Green Ribbons Service from the royal porcelain manufactory at Sèvres. This was sent to the Viennese court as a wedding gift by Louis XV, and can be viewed today in the Silver Collection of the Sisi Museum at the Vienna Hofburg.

On the opposite wall you can see the wedding ceremony in the Augustinian Church, and beside it the opera serenade in the Large Redoute Hall of the Hofburg. Depicted in the audience of the opera performance is the young Mozart. He was not in fact present at the wedding celebrations, as they took place in 1760, when he was just four years old and still living in Salzburg. The paintings took three more years to complete, and in the meantime Mozart had become celebrated across Europe as a musician and was thus inserted into the painting retrospectively. The paintings display an impressive accuracy of detail in the rendering of the buildings, individuals and their dress, right down to the tableware. Placed among this cycle of paintings is what is probably the best-known portrait of Maria Theresa, showing her as Europe's 'First Lady' in a precious gown of Brabant bobbin lace.

Horses Room Room 27

You can now take a look through the glass door of the Horses Room, which gets its name from the paintings set into the wall panelling. These include twenty portraits of thoroughbred horses and four other paintings showing horses grazing at the various imperial studs, all of which were executed by court artist Johann Georg von Hamilton. Dating to between 1720 and 1730 and thus among the earliest holdings of paintings at Schönbrunn, they attest to the immense importance accorded to thoroughbred horses as an element of courtly display and magnificence. The breeding of these horses at the court studs of the Monarchy had always served to enhance the prestige of the ruling family. Today the famous Lipizzaner horses are still bred at one of these studs.

The central painting shows a hunt in the forests near the river Morava south-east of Vienna. Depicted surrounded by his retinue is Emperor Joseph I, for whom Schönbrunn was built as a hunting lodge around 1700.

Laid for a formal court dinner, the Marshals Table documents the use of the room during the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph. The table was reserved for the highest-ranking military and court dignitaries as guests of the emperor. However, the monarch did not join them at table, dining instead at the same time in another room, either on his own or in other company.

Franz Joseph, the last ruler to occupy the palace, was the only emperor to be born at Schönbrunn and also die here. In 1908 he made Schönbrunn his permanent residence.

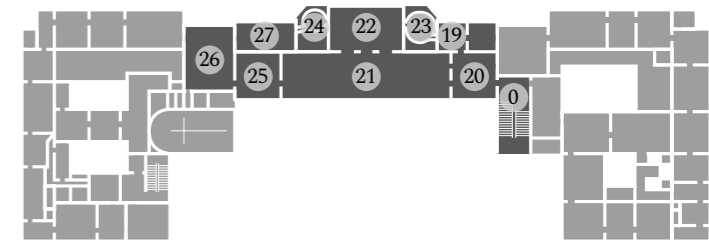
The tour of the ceremonial rooms ends here.

With the purchase of your ticket you have generously contributed to preserving the World Cultural Heritage Site of Schönbrunn. We would also be delighted to welcome you again at the Zoo at Schönbrunn, the imperial collections at the Vienna Furniture Museum, and the Sisi Museum with the Imperial Apartments and the Silver Collection at the Vienna Hofburg.

And in addition to the Hofburg, the state residence of the Habsburg dynasty, why not take the opportunity to visit Schloss Hof Estate, the Habsburg pleasure palace located an hour outside Vienna, with its unique Baroque gardens.

Goodbye!

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