

Neuschwanstein Castle



Neuschwanstein Castle (German: Schloss Neuschwanstein, pronounced [ˈʃlɔs nɔɪˈʃvaːnʃtaɪn]; Southern Bavarian: Schloss Neischwanstoa) is a 19th-century historicist palace on a rugged hill of the foothills of the Alps in the very south of Germany, near the border with Austria. It is located in the Swabia region of Bavaria, in the municipality of Schwangau, above the incorporated village of Hohenschwangau, which is also the location of Hohenschwangau Castle. The closest larger town is Füssen. The castle stands above the narrow gorge of the Pöllat stream, east of the Alpsee and Schwansee lakes, close to the mouth of the Lech into Forggensee.

INSPIRATION AND DESIGN

History

Neuschwanstein embodies both the contemporaneous architectural fashion known as castle Romanticism (German: Burgenromantik) and King Ludwig II's enthusiasm for the operas of Richard Wagner. In the 19th century, many castles were constructed or reconstructed, often with significant changes, to make them more picturesque. Palace-building projects similar to Neuschwanstein had been undertaken earlier in several of the German states and included Hohenschwangau Castle, Lichtenstein Castle, Hohenzollern Castle, and numerous buildings on the Rhine, such as Stolzenfels Castle.[10] The inspiration for the construction of Neuschwanstein came from two journeys that Ludwig took in 1867: one in May to the

reconstructed Wartburg near Eisenach,[11] and another in July to the Château de Pierrefonds, which Eugène Viollet-le-Duc was transforming from a ruined castle into a historicist palace.[12][nb 3]

Neuschwanstein project drawing (Christian Jank 1869) Ludwig believed both buildings represented a Romanticist interpretation of the Middle Ages, as well as the musical mythology of his friend Wagner, whose operas *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* had made a lasting impression on him.[13] In February 1868, Ludwig's grandfather, King Ludwig I, died, freeing the considerable sums that were previously spent on the abdicated King's appanage.[8][nb 4]

Location

The municipality of Schwangau lies at an elevation of 800 m (2,620 ft) at the southwest border of the German state of Bavaria. Its surroundings are characterised by the transition between the Alpine foothills in the south (toward the nearby Austrian border) and a hilly landscape in the north that appears flat by comparison. In the Middle Ages, three castles overlooked the villages. One was called Schwanstein Castle.[nb 1] In 1832, Ludwig's father, King Maximilian II of Bavaria, bought its ruins to replace them with the comfortable neo-Gothic palace known as Hohenschwangau Castle. Finished in 1837, the palace became his family's summer residence, and his elder son Ludwig (born 1845) spent a large part of his childhood here.[4]

Vorderhohenschwangau Castle and Hinterhohenschwangau Castle sat on a rugged hill overlooking Schwanstein Castle,[nb 2] two nearby lakes (Alpsee and Schwansee), and the village. Separated by only a moat, they jointly consisted of a hall, a keep, and a fortified tower house.[5] In the 19th century, only ruins remained of the twin medieval castles; those of Hinterhohenschwangau served as a lookout place known as Sylphenturm.[6]

The ruins above the family palace were known to the crown prince from his excursions. He first sketched one of them in his diary in 1859.[7] When the young king came to power in 1864, the construction of a new palace in place of the two ruined castles became the first in his series of palace building projects.[8]

CONSTRUCTION

Construction

In 1868, the ruins of the medieval twin castles were completely demolished; the remains of the old keep were blown up.[25] The foundation stone for the palace was laid on 5 September 1869; in 1872, its cellar was completed, and in 1876, everything up to the first floor, the gatehouse being finished first. At the end of 1882, it was completed and fully furnished, allowing Ludwig to take provisional lodgings there and observe the ongoing construction

work.[24] In 1874, management of the civil works passed from Eduard Riedel to Georg von Dollmann.[26] The topping out ceremony for the Palas was in 1880, and in 1884 the King moved in to the new building. In the same year, the direction of the project passed to Julius Hofmann [de], after Dollmann had fallen from the King's favour. The palace was erected as a conventional brick construction and later encased in various types of rock. The white limestone used for the fronts came from a nearby quarry.[27]

The sandstone bricks for the portals and bay windows came from Schlaitdorf in Württemberg. Marble from Untersberg near Salzburg was used for the windows, the arch ribs, the columns and the capitals. The Throne Hall was a later addition to the plans and required a steel framework. The transport of building materials was facilitated by scaffolding and a steam crane that lifted the material to the construction site. Another crane was used at the construction site. The recently founded Dampfessel-Revisionsverein (Steam Boiler Inspection Association) regularly inspected both boilers.

FUNDING

Funding Castle

The King's demands expanded during the construction of Neuschwanstein, and so did the expenses. Drafts and estimated costs were revised repeatedly.[33] Initially a modest study was planned instead of the great throne hall, and projected guest rooms were struck from the drafts to make place for a Moorish Hall, which could not be realised due to lack of resources. Completion was originally projected for 1872 but repeatedly deferred.[33]

Neuschwanstein, the symbolic medieval knight's castle, was not King Ludwig II's only huge construction project. It was followed by the Rococo style Lustschloss of Linderhof Palace and the Baroque palace of Herrenchiemsee, a monument to the era of absolutism.[8] Linderhof, the smallest of the projects, was finished in 1886