

Neuschwanstein: The German Castle That Inspired a Disney Fairytale

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Pronunciation: noy-**shvaan**-styne

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Who Was King Ludwig II?

Neuschwanstein Castle or *Schloss Neuschwanstein* is a 19th-century palace built by King Ludwig II of Bavaria. The castle is located on the cliffs above the village of Hohenschwangau, in the Bavarian region of South-West Germany. Neuschwanstein and surrounding area are known for their picturesque views of the Alpine foothills and freshwater lakes.

Nearly 1.5 million people visit the castle yearly, making it one of the most popular tourist destinations in Europe.



King Ludwig II of Bavaria commissioned Neuschwanstein Castle, thus he is sometimes referred to as the “Swan King” or “der Märchenkönig” (“the fairy tale king”).

The name Neuschwanstein is loosely translated to “new swan stone” in English. The name was inspired by the nearby Swan Lake (the “Schwansee”) and the rocks (“stein”) that the new (“neusch”) castle was built upon.

Construction of the castle began in 1869, however, due to construction delays King Ludwig didn’t move into the palace until 1884. The palace itself was never fully completed and the King only lived in the castle for 172 days.

Neuschwanstein cost 47 million euros to build in today’s currency, almost twice the initial budget. The king went into several million euros of debt during the castle’s construction, eventually asking his cabinet and parliament for loans, which led to the King being dethroned and arrested.

In June of 1886, the king and his doctor were found deceased in the waters of Lake Starnberg. The circumstances of King Ludwig and Dr. Gudden’s deaths remain a mystery.

Neuschwanstein Castle opened to the public for viewing shortly after the king’s death, and visitors’ fees eventually helped pay off the king’s debts.

Keep reading to learn more about the unique history of the castle and how to visit it yourself!

Neuschwanstein's Unique Origin Story

The Castle's Inspiration

Hohenschwangau Castle, built by King Ludwig's father King Maximilian II of Bavaria, is located on the other side of the lake across from Neuschwanstein Castle. Hohenschwangau was the family's summer home where Ludwig spent much of his childhood.



Originally Ludwig named his new palace New Hohenschwangau in honor of his childhood summer home. After his death it was renamed Neuschwanstein, in honor of the swan lake and stone of the surrounding area.

Ludwig primarily wished for the castle as a personal retreat and escape from public life. However, the palace also symbolized his power and wealth, as Bavaria had just lost a war to the ever-powerful and growing Prussia.

King Ludwig II was also greatly inspired by Richard Wagner, a German composer, director, and conductor known for his operas and beloved by King Ludwig since his childhood.

Despite the King's intentions of hosting Richard Wagner at Neuschwanstein, Wagner never had the opportunity to visit it himself, as he died before the castle was completed. Scenes from Wagner's operas can be seen in the border designs of many rooms within Neuschwanstein Castle.

Castle Design

Neuschwanstein was designed in part by a stage designer named Christian Jank, and constructed by architect Eduard Riedel. However, King Ludwig was extensively involved in the design process as well. Styles included in the design are Romanesque (simple geometric shapes), Gothic (downward lines, thin towers), and Byzantine (mosaics and frescoes).

A Medieval Castle with Modern Comforts

Many of the latest innovations in 19th-century technology were incorporated into the design of the castle including running hot water, flushing toilets, telephones, and a central heating system. Scaffolding and a steam crane were used to transport the materials high up into the mountains

Neuschwanstein was one of the last castles constructed in the medieval style and was met with a lot of criticism from contemporary critics at the time. However, it is now seen as one of many integral sites of European historical architecture.

References to Neuschwanstein in Pop Culture

Neuschwanstein Castle is featured in many films about King Ludwig and also makes an appearance in several other films such as *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

Walt Disney and his wife visited the castle shortly before the plans for Sleeping Beauty's Castle were created for Disneyland, Florida. Sleeping Beauty's Castle (inspired by Neuschwanstein) is now an iconic symbol of Walt Disney Productions.



Neuschwanstein's Restoration and UNESCO Designation

In 2017, restoration of the palace began with the Singers Hall and Throne Hall. These rooms have since been completed and are available for the public to view. The restorations are expected to be completed by 2024.

Since 2015 the castle has been on a list of German sites in consideration for designation as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

How to Visit Neuschwanstein Castle

Transportation

- If you are traveling from Munich, take the regional train or the Flexibus to Füssen, the nearest city to Neuschwanstein.
- From Füssen, take a public bus to the town of Hohenschwangau, where Neuschwanstein's ticket office is located. If you are traveling by car there are several car parks in Hohenschwangau.
- If you don't mind a hike, there is a 30-40 minute walk uphill from the ticket office to the castle. Or, you can hop on one of the frequent buses which take you within a 10-minute walk from the castle. **If you have a disability and need assistance, be sure to book your visit ahead of time with the booking office so that arrangements can be made to suit your needs.**

Tickets

- If possible, [book your tickets](#) ahead of time, as tickets can sell out fast! If you haven't booked online, purchase your tickets for the castle as soon as you arrive in Hohenschwangau.
- The castle can only be accessed by paid tours. These are available in German and English, with audio tours available in 17 other languages. You will be given a time for your tour so be sure to show up at your designated time. The tour lasts approximately 35 minutes.

Restaurants and Accommodations

- There are many [hotels and guesthouses in Hohenschwangau](#) and [Füssen](#).
- You can eat inside the castle at the café and bistro, and also at the Schlosrestaurant in the town of Hohenschwangau.

Nearby Attractions

- The Marienbrücke: A suspension footbridge above a 100-foot waterfall, located behind Neuschwanstein and built by Maximilian in honour of his wife (Ludwig's mother), Marie
- Hohenschwangau Castle and Alpsee lake



- The Museum of the Bavarian Kings located in the town of Hohenschwangau

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