



King Ludwig II and the Wittelsbach palaces of Bavaria

15–20 August 2023 (MJ 828)

6 days • £3,050

Lecturer: Tom Abbott

Explore eight royal palaces and castles set against the breathtaking backdrop of Germany's most beautiful state.

Learn about the lives, loves and legacies of King Ludwig II and the House of Wittelsbach, rulers of Bavaria for over 700 years.

Art and architecture from the Renaissance through to Late Romanticism, much of it opulent and theatrical.

Germany's large and beautiful south-eastern state of Bavaria is an established destination for Martin Randall Travel, with a number of tours over the years dedicated to a variety of themes. This tour has a different focus, that of the legendary 'Swan King' Ludwig II and the House of Wittelsbach from which he hailed, and his extraordinary architectural and cultural legacy.

Architecturally and artistically, the tour encompasses outstanding examples of Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Neo-Classical and Romantic styles as well as Ludwig's fairytale follies. Historically it examines the eccentric world of one of Europe's most controversial monarchs and the story of what, until German unification, counted as one of the continent's most important little states.

It is true that Ludwig II's predilection for aesthetic absorption over political and legal leadership gained him fierce opposition and criticism, but this handsome young king and his elaborate castles are responsible for a considerable proportion of Bavaria's appeal today. Ironically, the dream world into which the sovereign retreated in order to escape the responsibilities of state now benefits Ludwig's former kingdom in a way it never did when he inhabited it.

Was he, to quote one of his more defamatory labels, insane? Or simply weak, of solitary disposition, and therefore tragically unsuited to the role imposed upon him at a time of Bavaria's considerable political fragility and conflict with Prussia, Austria and France? Once deposed in 1886, what was the cause of his untimely death? Was it suicide, or did it take place at the hand of murderous detractors? Or was it mere accident? Was he an impotent and irresponsible sybarite or a luminous benefactor of the arts?



Schloss Nymphenburg, engraving c. 1770.

Itinerary

Day 1: Schleissheim, Munich. Fly at c. 9.00am from London Heathrow to Munich (British Airways). Between airport and city, the palace and garden at Schleissheim form a rare ensemble of Baroque taste from an early 17th-century retreat, through the 1684 Lustheim pavilion at the far end of a canal of absolutist straightness, to the magnificent Neues Schloss, begun 1701 but whose progress continued haltingly into the Rococo period. There is a gallery of Baroque art, sculpted stucco of exceptional quality in the state apartments, Hofgarten (Court Garden) and a collection of Meissen porcelain in Schloss Lustheim. First of two nights in Munich.

Day 2: Munich. The Residenz in the centre of the city was the principal Wittelsbach palace and seat of government; a magnificent sprawl of buildings, courtyards, state apartments and museums of every period from Renaissance to the end of the 19th century. There are fine works of art and sumptuous interiors of the highest importance, especially the Rococo interiors and the Cuvillies Theatre (*subject to confirmation as the theatre can close for rehearsals at short notice*).

Day 3: Nymphenburg, Linderhof. Drive to the city's outskirts and the palace and park of Nymphenburg, birthplace of Ludwig II. An extensive complex including bathhouses and the Rococo Amalienburg lodge. After lunch drive to Ettal, site of the only one of

Ludwig II's commissioned castles to have been completed. 1870s Linderhof was reputed to have been the King's favourite castle; it draws, like Herrenchiemsee, on French influences, lavish interiors in Renaissance and Baroque styles, extravagant terrace gardens and Oriental adornments. First of three nights in Hohenschwangau.

Day 4: Hohenschwangau, Neuschwanstein. Visit Hohenschwangau castle, site of Ludwig II's childhood, owned by his parents Maximilian II of Bavaria and Princess Marie of Prussia. Majestic lakeside Alpine location, frescoes featuring medieval Swan-Knight Lohengrin which led to Ludwig II's obsession with Wagner. Then continue to Neuschwanstein, the famous fairytale turreted castle ordered by Ludwig II in homage to Wagner though never completed.

Day 5: Herrenchiemsee. In the countryside southeast of Munich and surrounded by a park, woodland and a great lake, Schloss Herrenchiemsee is a copy of Versailles. Ludwig II's megalomaniac hymn of homage to the absolutism of Louis XIV, his final folly, brought the Bavarian state to the brink of bankruptcy.

Day 6: Berg, Starnberg. Leave Hohenschwangau, drive to Berg and the mock Gothic castle to which Ludwig II retreated from his ministers, and where he was placed under house arrest after his forced abdication in 1886 on grounds of insanity. Lake Starnberg surrounds the castle and is the scene of Ludwig

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continued

II's death and that of his doctor, officially by drowning. Visit the Memorial Chapel and have lunch in Starnberg. Fly from Munich, returning to London Heathrow at c. 5.30pm.

Lecturer

Tom Abbott. Specialist in architectural history from the Baroque to the 20th century with a wide knowledge of the performing arts. He graduated in Psychology and Art History from Carleton College, Minnesota and studied at the Louvre School of Art History in Paris. Since 1987 he has lived in Berlin and has organised and led many academic tours in Germany. Tom has a particular interest in the German and American architectural and artistic modern including the Bauhaus and Expressionism.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,050 or £2,890 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,620 or £3,460 without flights.

Included: flights (economy class) with British Airways (aircraft: A319); travel by private coach throughout; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 1 lunch and 4 dinners with wine; all admissions; tips for waiters, drivers and guides; all state and airport taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. Hotel Torbräu, Munich (torbraeu.de): well-located 4-star, traditional in style and decor. **Ameron Neuschwanstein Alpsee Resort & Spa, Hohenschwangau** (ameroncollection.com): situated at the foot of two of the castles visited on the tour, Hohenschwangau and Neuschwanstein, with an extensive spa and good restaurant.

How strenuous? This is a strenuous tour with long coach journeys and a lot of walking and standing around in the castles and gardens. Average distance by coach per day: 65 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.