

*Hofburg* **Kaiserappartements**



**Sisi Museum  
Silberkammer**

## **Press Release**

**Hofburg –Imperial Apartments & Sisi Museum &  
Imperial Silver Collection**

**Vienna, November 2009**

# Vienna Hofburg: On the trail of Sisi, the domestic life and housekeeping of the imperial family

***For many centuries the Vienna Hofburg was the centre of the Habsburg Empire. Three museum attractions - the Imperial Apartments with their historically accurate decoration and furnishings; the sensitively designed Sisi Museum; and the Imperial Silver Collection, an extensive collection of objects necessary to the running of the imperial household - provide visitors with a historically authentic insight into court tradition and daily life.***

The Vienna Hofburg was the residence of the Habsburg dynasty for more than 600 years. Over the centuries the original castle buildings were repeatedly modified and extended until they became the 18 wings and 2,600 rooms that exist today. In addition to living apartments for every member of the family, the Hofburg Imperial Palace contained ballrooms and rooms for staff, as well as several kitchens and the Court Silver and Table Room. Today most of the palace is given over to the offices of the Federal President, various ministries, administrative bodies and other museums. However, in the Imperial Chancellery Wing and the Amalia Residence, visitors can still gain a genuine insight into the lifestyle of the imperial court.

Since 1994 the Imperial Apartments in the Hofburg have been administered by Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H (SKB), the company which also operates the imperial attractions, Schloß Schönbrunn, the children's museum "Experience Schloss Schönbrunn" and the Imperial Furniture Collection – the Vienna Furniture Museum. Of the former state rooms and private apartments, those 19 rooms which were once occupied by Emperor Franz Josef and his wife, Elisabeth, are open to the public. Building on intensive scientific research the SKB has successfully recreated the original character of the rooms. "In recent years extensive restoration work has enabled us to gradually restore the Imperial Apartments to their original condition. Since 1994 we have invested a total of over Euro 4 million in restoration and maintenance work," states Commercial Managing Director, Franz Sattlecker. In order to ensure that the Imperial Apartments are decorated and furnished in a historically authentic manner, the company is constantly purchasing new items.

The decoration and furnishings of the private rooms reflect the modest nature of Emperor Franz Josef. Although the simple décor still creates a feeling of imperial flair, there is no wastefully extravagant pomp or grandiosity to be found here. Highlights of the tour include the study, where Franz Josef surrounded himself with numerous pictures and mementoes of family members; the dressing/exercise room used by the beauty-conscious Sisi; and the dining room, where the table is set with original items from the Imperial Court.

Since 1994 the Sisi Museum has been housed in the Stephan apartments, so named after Archduke Stephan Viktor. Here numerous personal items that once belonged to Elisabeth are used to help illustrate the true personality of the frequently misunderstood Empress. The sensitively designed exhibits, created by renowned set designer Prof. Rolf Langenfass, are inspired by the monarch's poetry and illustrate how the once light-hearted young girl, Sisi, became a restless, unapproachable and melancholic woman. "In setting up the museum we felt it was particularly important that we didn't simply perpetuate the myth that surrounds Sisi, but wanted to move away from the normal clichés and paint a realistic picture of this fascinating character," explains Technical Managing Director Wolfgang Kippes.

The more than 300 items on display in the museum include parasols, boxes and gloves which once belonged to the anthropophobic Elisabeth, along with her beauty recipes, her death mask and the actual file used in her assassination, which is usually kept securely under lock and key.

Further items include a reconstruction of the evening dress worn by 16 year old Sisi in 1854 before she left her home in Munich, and a replica of a section of her imperial railway carriage. In 2006 the SKB bought the so-called Klauda Collection of approximately 240 items. Elisabeth's travelling medical chest, her games case, a wash set and other items from the collection now feature in the exhibition. Other objects, such as her christening robes and milk tooth, are only displayed on special occasions. In 2009, after 5 years in service and having welcomed over 3 million visitors, the Sisi Museum was closed for renovation and partial remodelling. The display was extended to include some spectacular exhibits, including the reconstructed Hungarian coronation dress, the black coat used to cover Elisabeth after the assassination, mourning jewellery and the young Sisi on her swing.

The Imperial Silver Collection on the ground floor is the largest exhibition dedicated to the culture of a courtly household to be found anywhere in the world. Here items from the former Court Silver and Table Room provide an impressive illustration of the wealth of the Imperial household, showcasing exquisite individual pieces which were once used by the members of the Imperial family alongside magnificent dinner services. 7,000 items are displayed over an area of 1,310 m<sup>2</sup>. Pots from the Court kitchens, baking tins from the Court confectionery, napery, glass services, silver tableware, porcelain, and gilt-bronze centrepieces are among the astonishingly varied collection of original works of art and items necessary for the running of the imperial household. Particular showpieces include Empress Maria Theresia's personal "Mundzeug", the golden dinner service belonging to Napoleon I, the Minton dessert service (a gift from Queen Victoria to Emperor Franz Josef), Empress Elisabeth's travelling dinner service and the imperial sanitary ware and chamber pots.

A single ticket opens the doors to the Imperial Apartments, Sisi Museum and the Imperial Silver Collection. Together they number among Vienna's most visited attractions and, with approximately 600,000 visitors a year, they are ranked fifth in Vienna's Top Tourist Attractions.

Contact:

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# Imperial Apartments – Sisi Museum – Imperial Silver Collection

## Facts & Figures

### Information and Reservations

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### Management

Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H.  
Dr. Franz Sattlecker  
DI Dr. Wolfgang Kippes

### Scientific Management

Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H.  
Dr. Elfriede Iby (Imperial Apartments & Sisi Museum)  
Federal Ministry for Economy, Family and Youth  
Dr. Ilsebill Barta-(Imperial Silver Collection)

### Opening hours

Daily 9.00 – 17.30 (Last admission 16.30)  
July and August 9.00 – 18.00 (Last admission 17.00)