

The Palace Garden of Eckartsau



„The Imperial palace, which is approached through a shady avenue, is a majestic building, ...“

Schweickhart of Sickingen, Supplementary Volume to the Perspective Map of the Archduchy of Austria below the River Enns, Section XVI from 1833

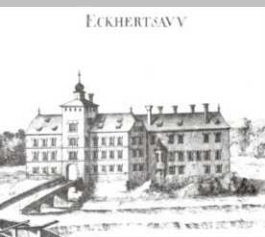
HISTORY

In the 11th century, a fortified medieval castle stood already in the place of today's palace. In the times of the knights of Eckartsau, the castle was surrounded by moats. In 1720, **Franz Ferdinand Count Kinsky** purchased the palace and the estate of Eckartsau and rebuilt the old moated castle into a baroque hunting palace.

In 1760, the property was purchased by the Habsburgs. In 1897 and the subsequent years, the palace was rebuilt under Archduke Franz Ferdinand according to plans of the Imperial Building Councilor Franz Siedek. The moat was filled in and the palace garden was redesigned. **Archduke Franz Ferdinand** himself was actively involved in the planning process. The blueprints were made by the Director of the Imperial Gardens, **Anton Umlauf**. Emperor Charles I., the last reigning monarch of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his family spent the winter of 1918/1919 in Eckartsau. The palace was his last place of abode in Austria before he had to make his journey into exile in 1919. During his stay there, he regularly took extensive walks through the palace garden and the riparian forest.

In the context of the interregional EU project “**The Great Gardens**” Park Network, the historical palace garden of Eckartsau will be restored to its former design in the style of an English landscape garden on the basis of the original plans by Anton Umlauf. Currently, this ambitious project is being implemented by the Austrian Federal Forests (Österreichische Bundesforste AG) together with Nationalpark Donauauen GmbH on the basis of a park management project.

ECKHERTSAU



Eckartsau Palace (Vischer, 1872)

Eckartsau Palace, today



THE PARK, TODAY

„Steinerne Brücke“ (stone bridge)



FLORA

The Imperial Walk (Kaiserweg), which was reconstructed according to the original plans, is an essential element of the historical park and leads round the palace through the park.

Gradually, the palace is again surrounded by a splendid park with numerous dendrological highlights. The exotic trees and different plant varieties go back to the plantings of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who was an enthusiastic landscape gardener. The impressive groups of **Californian swamp cypresses** (*Taxodium distichum*) with their characteristic knee roots are a special highlight, particularly in view of their large number. The combination of bright meadows and shady areas around the old trees lends the park a romantic atmosphere.

The main theme of Anton Umlauf's garden design is the dualism of artificial and natural landscape. The baroque **double-row lime avenue** has been preserved and divides the park into a northern part which borders on the village of Eckartsau and a southern part which gradually opens out to the riparian forest. While the northern part was modelled on the cultivated landscape of the Marchfeld area, the part south of the avenue was designed as a stylised natural landscape. For this purpose, the nearby Fadenbach stream was diverted to run through the park as an artificial creek.

The fluctuating water level of the creek, which sometimes will even dry up completely, is characteristic of an alluvial water body.

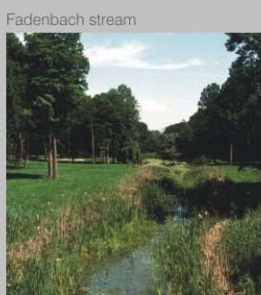
A large number of **water and marsh plants** are covering the surface of the water, transforming it into a white carpet of flowers, with colourful dragonflies hovering above in early summer.



Group of swamp cypresses



Lime avenue



Fadenbach stream

Visitors can also admire a large number of rare flowers like the yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) or the flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*).

The palace garden accommodates a wide variety of rare animal species. If you are lucky, some **stag beetles** (*Lucanus cervus*) will cross your way. The presence of beavers (*Castor fiber*), the master builders in the animal kingdom, is revealed by their gnawing marks on fallen tree trunks. A zoological sensation was the discovery of the European mudminnow (*Umbra krameri*), which was thought to be extinct, in the immediate vicinity of the park.

Another rarity is the **great capricorn beetle** (*Cerambyx cerdo*), one of the largest domestic beetles, which was thought to be lost in the Danube floodplains, but was re-discovered in the Eckartsau palace garden in 2004. On the roof of the palace, a white stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) has built its nest. Every year, it is used for breeding by a stork family. Once the young birds have hatched out, their parents can often be seen searching for food in the palace garden.

Eckartsau constitutes a unique combination of a historical garden and a national park. The palace and garden serve as a door to the **Donauauen National Park**, which was established in 1996, and mark the starting point of excursions through the riparian landscapes of Eckartsau. The overall layout of the Eckartsau palace garden is one of the most beautiful examples of the century-long efforts men have made to deal with the natural landscape of the Danube floodplains.

FAUNA



Great Capricorn Beetle



Palace garden and Danube floodplains

