

The Castles & Palaces of the Bavarian Fairy Tale King



September 10–16, 2027

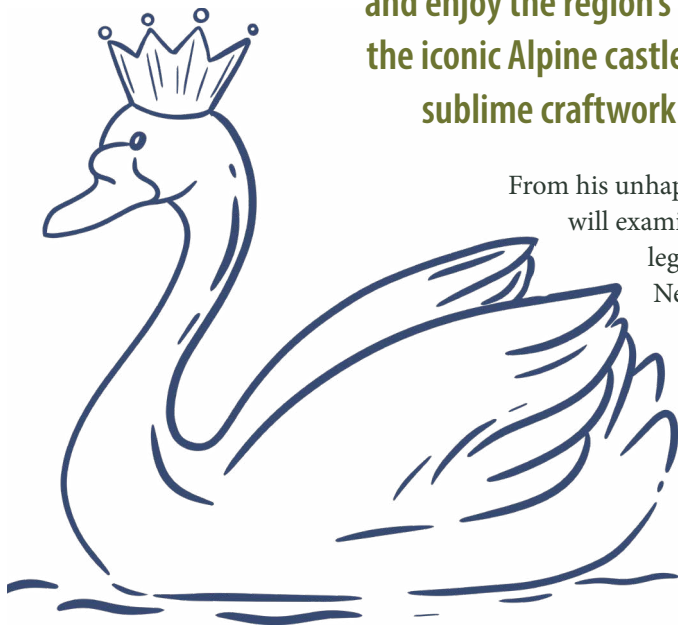
Tour Leaders: Stefan Albrecht and Curt DiCamillo



Above: Neuschwanstein Castle. C. Stadler-Bwag / Wikipedia.



American Ancestors is delighted to announce a spectacular six-night Bavarian journey through the heart and mind of the “Fairy Tale King,” Ludwig II of Bavaria. From our base in the luxurious Charles Hotel in Munich, we will dine on sumptuous local fare and enjoy the region’s finest wines and ales as we explore the iconic Alpine castles, palaces, theatrical fantasies, and sublime craftwork of this extraordinary monarch.

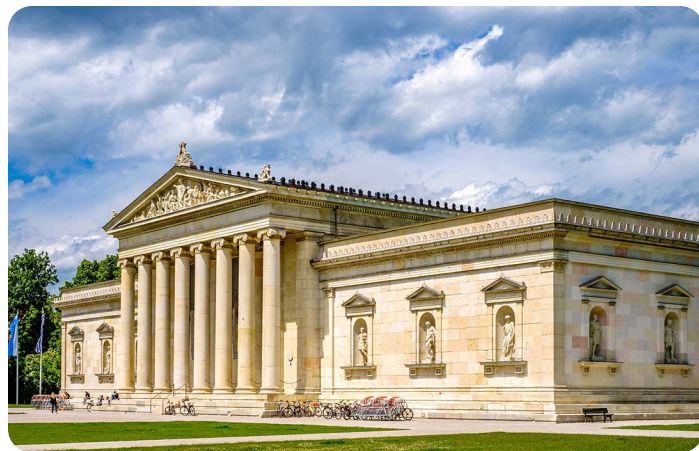


From his unhappy childhood to his mysterious death, we will examine the life of the House of Wittelsbach’s most legendary monarch—the Fairy Tale King who built Neuschwanstein, the world’s most famous castle, and many other magnificent buildings. In 1866, after Bavaria’s loss of independence in the Austro-Prussian War, Ludwig, who despised the harsh realities of governing, began to create an alternate reality, spending a fortune on magnificent dreamlike palaces in the Bavarian Alps designed entirely for his personal solitude.

Itinerary

Friday, September 10

Arrive at Munich Airport and transfer independently to our luxurious home for the next six nights: the Charles Hotel, a five-star property in the prestigious Rocco Forte Hotels collection. The tour begins with cocktail reception and an opening talk by our guest historian that will introduce us to the complex world of the 1860s Bavarian court and the man who would be king. Our guide will then lead us on a relaxed **walk through the historic Maxvorstadt district to the magnificent Königsplatz**. This monumental public square, famous for its towering Neoclassical Greek architecture, represents the civic expectations that suffocated the young Prince Ludwig and would ultimately drive him into the wilderness. We'll end our first day with a wonderful welcome dinner at a restaurant on the platz and raise a glass to the start of a fantastic week exploring the world of the Swan King.



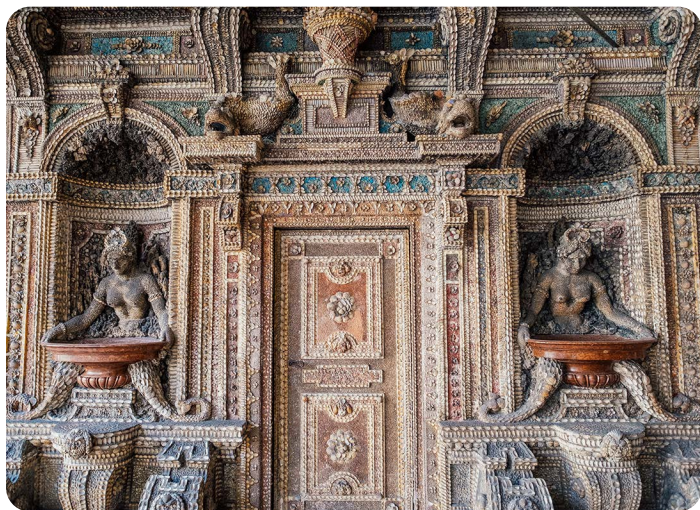
Königsplatz. Shutterstock / FooTToo.

Saturday, September 11

We begin today with a **walk through the Altstadt**, Munich's historical old town, ending with a historian-led exploration of the **Munich Residenz**, the urban palace of the House of Wittelsbach. In the monumental Antiquarium and the glittering state rooms, it's easy to imagine the immense pressure placed on the eighteen-year-old king. Evidence of Ludwig's unhappiness can be seen in the blueprints and models of his rooftop Winter Garden, a massive engineering project that featured an artificial lake where the young king rowed in a gilded boat, an early attempt to construct a private universe out of sight of his government ministers. After an independent lunch in old Munich, we'll visit **Nymphenburg Palace**, the grand Baroque summer residence where Ludwig was born in 1845. We'll tour the palace's interiors, including the famous Gallery of Beauties, and hear the story of Ludwig's childhood—a cold, strict father and a mother who preferred mountaineering to spending time with her fragile, artistic son. We'll also visit the **porcelain museum** to observe the meticulous artisanal heritage that would later supply the elaborate porcelain mirrors, bouquets, and chandeliers for the king's palaces. This evening we'll dine together in one of Munich's traditional eateries.



Marienplatz Square. Shutterstock / Sergey Dzyuba.



Shell grotto architecture in the Residenz Museum. Shutterstock / Camera de Riviere.



Nymphenburg Palace. Shutterstock / Axel Redder.

Sunday, September 12

Our morning begins with a private coach ride north into the Danube Valley to explore the ancestral roots that shaped who Ludwig became. Our first destination is the medieval **city of Regensburg**, a magnificent, UNESCO-listed gem and one of the rare European cities to have completely escaped the ravages of time and wartime destruction. Our expert guide will walk us through the old town and across the iconic Stone Bridge, tracing the urban and political roots of the Wittelsbach dynasty. After soaking in the Gothic grandeur of **St. Peter's Cathedral** and enjoying a riverside lunch, we will continue our journey into the nearby hills above the Danube, where we'll visit the colossal, Parthenon-inspired **Walhalla Memorial**. Built by Ludwig's grandfather, King Ludwig I, this Neoclassical monument stands as a fateful family precedent—a grand indulgence that strained Bavaria's finances and foreshadowed Ludwig II's own ruinous architectural passions. We'll stop for a classic Bavarian dinner in the country on our way back to Munich.



Regensburg. Shutterstock / saiko3p.



Monday, September 13

Today we'll witness how Ludwig's escapist fantasies became stone, exploring two of the king's legendary castles in a single spectacular day. We'll travel first into the secluded Graswang Valley to explore **Linderhof Palace**, the only major estate Ludwig lived to see fully completed. The palace reveals Ludwig's obsession with the absolute monarchy of pre-revolutionary France—its rooms a glittering labyrinth of gold leaf, porcelain, and mirrors designed as an homage to the Sun King, Louis XIV. We will see the famous mechanical disappearing dining table (*Tischlein-deck-dich*), which was lowered through the floorboards so the king could dine in solitude, completely unseen by human servants. We'll come down to earth with a rustic Alpine country lunch before advancing our narrative into the madness that later overcame King Ludwig. Stripped of any real sovereignty after Bavaria's devastating defeat in the Austro-Prussian War, a humiliated Ludwig began construction of **Neuschwanstein Castle**, the real-life inspiration for Disney's Sleeping Beauty Castle. To reach the famous castle, we'll wind our way up a steep, rugged mountain ridge in traditional horse-drawn carriages. Up close, the property reveals itself less as a fairytale castle and more as an impenetrable medieval fortress that protected the king from a world he despised. We'll explore the completed rooms, designed not by traditional architects but by theatrical stage designers brought in from the Munich opera house. We will visit the monumental Byzantine Throne Room, where a floor composed of two million mosaic tiles sits beneath a vacant space where a gold-and-ivory throne was meant to rest—a fitting monument to an absolute kingship that existed only in Ludwig's mind. After we return to Munich, dinner and the evening are on your own.



Linderhof Palace. Shutterstock / saiko3p.



Neuschwanstein Castle. Shutterstock / IngoSStar.

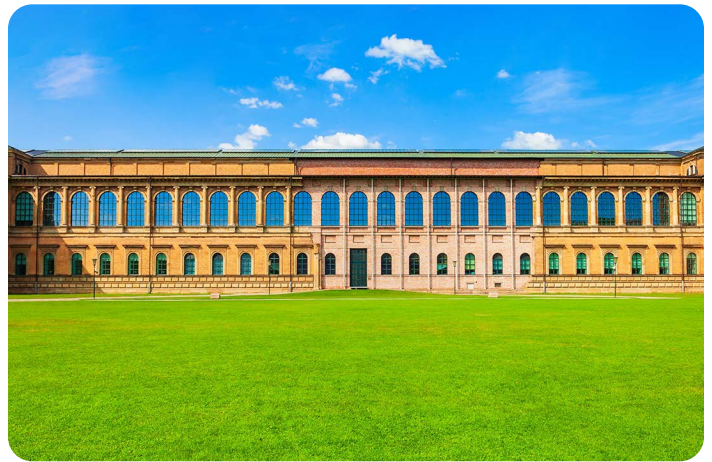
Tuesday, September 14

Today we will explore and enjoy the **city of Munich**. We'll begin with a historian-led tour of the **Old Picture Gallery** (*Alte Pinakothek*), which features spectacular masterworks collected by Ludwig's grandfather. Then we'll set out on **a curated walking route through Munich's historic core** to visit the elite shops that held the coveted title of Royal Purveyor to the Bavarian Court: Roeckl, maker of the delicate leather gloves worn by the Ludwig; and Eduard Meier, the oldest shoemaker in Central Europe, who made custom riding boots for the exceptionally tall monarch. We'll conclude our morning with a tasting lunch at Dallmayr, the luxury food house that sourced the exotic fruits, plums, and confections that the king demanded be shipped to his remote mountain hideouts. The afternoon is on your own to shop, explore, or to take in an optional visit to **Villa Stuck**. Built by the celebrated painter Franz von Stuck, this striking Art Nouveau residence serves as a "total work of art" (*Gesamtkunstwerk*). Its theatrical, gold-ceilinged rooms offer a fascinating glimpse into how another 19th Bavarian visionary created his own dreamlike alternate reality. Dinner this evening is on your own.

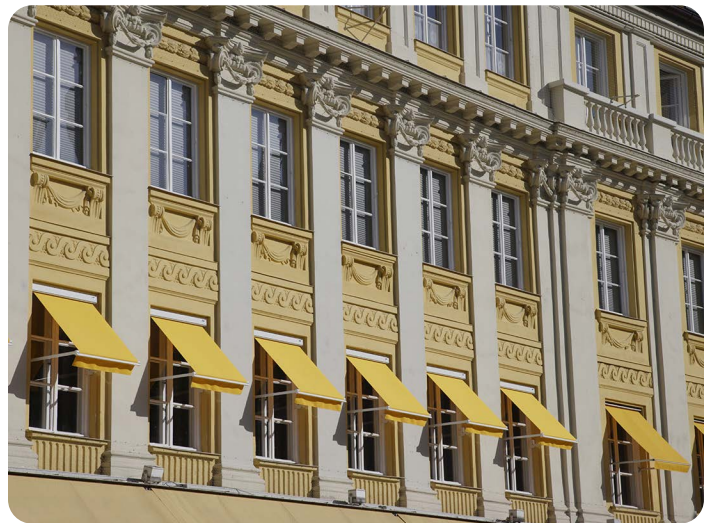


Wednesday, September 15

Our narrative reaches its tragic climax with Ludwig's most expensive architectural delusion and his mysterious death. We'll travel east to Lake Chiemsee and board the ferry to the island of Herreninsel. Here stands **Herrenchiemsee Palace**, commissioned by Ludwig in 1878 to be a precise, full-scale clone of the Palace of Versailles. Here our private tour guide will take us through the monumental Hall of Mirrors—which surpasses its French counterpart in scale and opulence—before walking directly into the raw, hollow, uncompleted brick wings of the palace. Within these half-finished walls, hear the final act of the Swan King: In June 1886, pushed to the brink by Ludwig's mounting astronomical debts, the cabinet staged a mutiny. Doctors who had never even examined the king signed a medical certification of insanity, leading to his forced abdication and arrest. He was found dead a few days later in a nearby lake. We will discuss theories of his death over a lakeside lunch before returning to Munich, where the remainder of the afternoon is yours to rest before we end our day with a feast fit for a king in one of Munich's finest restaurants. Here we will raise a glass to the enduring brilliance, absolute majesty, and haunting legacy of the Fairy Tale King.



Alte Pinakothek. Shutterstock / Saiko3p



Cafe Dallmayr. Altrendo Images / Shutterstock.



Herrenchiemsee Palace. Shutterstock / Adwo.

Thursday, September 16

Our tour ends after breakfast at the hotel, after which independent transfers will take you to Munich Airport for your return flights home.

Accommodation

The **Charles Hotel, Rocco Forte**, is a sophisticated five-star retreat that seamlessly blends contemporary style with traditional Bavarian elegance. Designed by Munich-born architect Christoph Sattler, the award-winning limestone building sits on the site of a historic former university building within the upscale Lenbachgärten Quarter. Nestled along the peaceful Old Botanical Garden, the Art Deco-inspired building with its graceful wrought-iron balconies evokes the romance of grand 19th-century Mediterranean hotels, paying tribute to Munich's reputation as "Italy's northernmost city." Inside, the light-filled layout features exceptionally spacious, bright rooms with clean lines, soft natural tones, and original local artwork, all anchored by a world-class wellness spa with a stunning indoor pool.



Tour leaders

Originally from Hesse, **Stefan Albrecht** moved to Berlin in 1994 and became entranced by the city's Prussian history and its unique architecture and city planning. He studied art history and classical archeology at Humboldt University and founded his own travel company in 1999 that specializes in luxury tours of Germany.

Curt DiCamillo is the Curator of Fine Art at American Ancestors. Before he came to American Ancestors he worked for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the National Trust for Scotland. Curt is a noted historian and a recognized authority on the British country house, about which he has written, lectured, and taught in the U.S. and abroad. Since 1999 Curt has maintained an award-winning database on the web, TheDiCamillo.com, which seeks to document every English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish country house ever built, standing or demolished. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a Fellow of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and a member of the Council of the American Museum in Britain.



The Charles Hotel. Photo courtesy Rocco Forte Hotels.



Signature park view suite at The Charles Hotel. Photo courtesy Rocco Forte Hotels.

**For more information, and
to register for the tour,
please call Mike McCartt at
202-244-1448, ext. 1.**



**American
Ancestors**
A NATIONAL CENTER FOR
FAMILY HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

American Ancestors is America's founding genealogical organization, the most respected name in family history, and one of the leading non-profit organizations in the field. We create enriching opportunities for members and the public to research their family history, attend educational programs and tours, exhibitions, and other inspirational experiences that communicate the power and importance of family history.

AmericanAncestors.org



Terms & Conditions

The Castles & Palaces of the Bavarian Fairy Tale King

September 10–16, 2027

Tour Leaders: Stefan Albrecht and Curt DiCamillo

TOUR COST

Land Package: \$10,295

Single Supplement: \$2,195

Tour price is per person, based on double occupancy, with a minimum of 15 paying participants.

Deposit & Final Payment: A deposit of \$2,000 per person is required to reserve space on the tour. Deposits are payable by calling International Seminar Design (202-244-1448) and giving your credit card number over the phone to a staff member. MasterCard, Visa, and American Express are accepted. The final balance will be invoiced and is due by May 13, 2027. The final balance is payable by check, bank wire, or ACH transfer to International Seminar Design, Inc. Credit cards are not accepted for final balance. Registrations will be accepted beyond this date on a space-available basis.

Activity Level: Moderate to strenuous; good walking ability is advised. You should be comfortable walking up and down slopes, sometimes on uneven terrain, and be able to walk up to two hours at a time. Comfortable shoes are strongly recommended. Many visits require the use of staircases and steps, not always with handrails. There will be up to two hours travel by coach to reach some of our more remote locations.

Flights: Airfare is not included in the tour price. Participants are responsible for all aspects of their round-trip air arrangements to Munich, Germany. Please do not purchase airline tickets until the operation of the tour is confirmed.

Terms & Conditions: Upon receipt of registration, ISDI will send registrant a Participant Tour Agreement that details the full terms and conditions for this tour. This document must be signed and returned to ISDI before participant's registration is considered complete and any arrangements can be confirmed. ISDI will send all documents pertaining to the tour by email, unless specifically requested otherwise.

Travel Insurance: Travel Insurance is not included in the tour cost, but participants are strongly encouraged to purchase a travel protection plan in conjunction with this tour, including coverage of trip cancellation, trip interruption, emergency evacuation/repatriation, medical expenses, lost or damaged baggage, and other expenses and/or losses incurred due to unexpected situations. Should a participant cancel at any time after registering for the tour, American Ancestors and ISDI must strictly abide by the cancellation policy outlined herein. Travel insurance information will be sent upon tour registration.

Tour Price Inclusions: Six nights' accommodation at the Charles Rocco Forte, Munich; breakfast daily at the hotel, four lunches, four dinners; water, non-alcoholic beverages and wine with all included lunches and dinners; land transportation by private coach; entrance fees to sites and visits listed in the itinerary; leadership of Stefan Albrecht and Curt DiCamillo for the duration of the tour; expert local guides for all touring; gratuities for guides, drivers, and at included meals; handling of two pieces of luggage per person upon arrival and departure from the hotels; bottled water on coach; service charges and taxes.

Tour Price Exclusions: Airline tickets, airline taxes, surcharges, and baggage fees; airport portorage; arrival transfer from Munich International Airport (MUC) to the hotel; departure transfer from the hotel to the airport; passport, visa, or ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorization System) fees; meals, other than those specified in the itinerary; gratuities for hotel housekeeping; personal items such as telephone calls, room service, valet service, à-la-carte orders, specialty wines and liquors, laundry charges, travel extensions, or tour deviations; entry or departure fees levied by local governments; travel insurance; any other items not specifically included in the itinerary.

Cancellations & Refunds: Cancellation by participant must be made in writing to ISDI and is effective only upon acknowledged receipt by ISDI. There is a non-refundable registration and planning fee of \$1,000 per person, regardless of cancellation date. Written cancellation received by ISDI on or before May 13, 2027: refund of all monies paid, minus \$1,000 per person registration and planning fee. Written cancellation received by ISDI between May 14 and September 10, 2027: refund of all monies paid, minus \$5,150 per person cancellation fee. Written cancellations received by ISDI on or after September 11, 2027: no refund.

**For more information, and to register for the tour,
please call Mike McCartt at 202-244-1448, ext. 1.**

This tour is operated by International Seminar Design, Inc. for American Ancestors.