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Top 10 most beautiful castles & palaces in Europe

🕒 April 26, 2021  3

Monday newsletters always feature top 10 travel lists to inspire.

Today: Top 10 most impressive palaces & castles in Europe

Once the homes of kings, popes and emperors, palaces and castles represent an important part of the cultural heritage of European history. Not only the architecture itself, but also the technology used in constructing these amazing buildings reflect the remarkable progress of western civilization. Today, these castles attract millions of tourists every year who want to take a peek into the lives of royals of a bygone era. Here's my selection of the 10 most spectacular palaces and castles in Europe, the ones that you need to put on your bucket list.

There is more information below the slide show. Think I missed one? Leave a **comment** or take my **poll** below!



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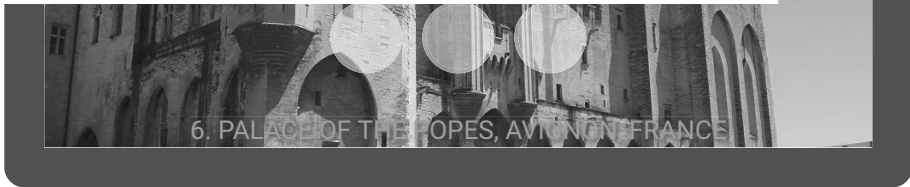
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10. WINDSOR CASTLE, UNITED KINGDOM

Windsor Castle is the oldest and largest inhabited castle in the world. It has been the family home of British kings and queens for almost 1,000 years. It is an official residence of Her Majesty The Queen, who spends most of her private weekends here. The Queen's standard flies from the Round Tower when she is in residence. Windsor is still very much a working royal palace. The castle is used regularly for ceremonial and state occasions. It is here that the Queen often hosts state visits from overseas monarchs and presidents. St George's Hall makes a spectacular setting for a state banquet, when a single table, stretching the length of the hall and seating 160 people, is decorated with porcelain, and silver-gilt from the Royal Collection.

- **Official website:** Windsor Castle



9. CHENONCEAU, LOIRE VALLEY, FRANCE

Chenonceau Castle – a former royal residence – is an exceptional site not only because of its stunning design (spanning the river Cher) and

an upgrade, daily breakfast, spa treatment, resort credit, early check-in, and late check-out. Click here to book your hotel online on the Classic Travel website.

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Madame Dupin. The iron, but very feminine, fist in the velvet glove has always preserved Chenonceau during times of conflict and war in order to make it forever a place of peace and inspiration.

- **Official website:** [Chenonceau](#)

8. SANSSOUCI, POTSDAM, GERMANY

No other palace is so connected with the personality of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, as Sanssouci Palace in Potsdam near Berlin. The name Sanssouci – a French phrase which translates as “without concerns” – is to be understood as a wish of the king, because this summer residence was his refuge in difficult times. Sanssouci is often considered to be the German equivalent of Versailles (see below), although its features a more intimate Rococo style and is far smaller than its French Baroque counterpart. The location of the castle, its famous terraced gardens and the stylish splendor of its interiors, make King Frederick’s love for the beautiful surroundings – the “Prussian Arcadia” – palpable for the 21st century tourists.

- **Official website:** [Sanssouci](#)



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7. SCHLOSS SCHÖNBRUNN, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

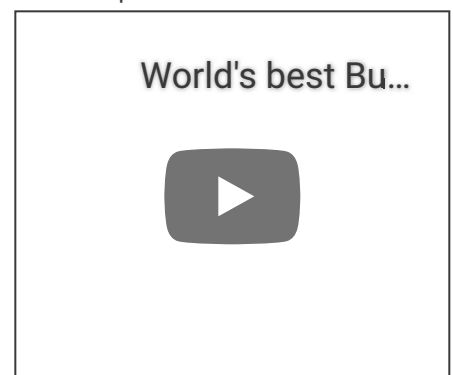
Schönbrunn Palace is a World Cultural Heritage site and Austria's most-visited sight. At the end of the 17th century Emperor Leopold I commissioned the gifted architect Bernhard Fischer von Erlach to build a palatial hunting lodge for the heir to the throne. Half a century later under Maria Theresa's reign, Schönbrunn Palace was to become the magnificent focus of court life. From that time onwards it played host to the leading statesmen of Europe. Although Austria is now a republic, Schönbrunn has remained a place of political encounter at the highest level as the magnificent architecture of the baroque palace and the exquisite décor of its state rooms has largely been preserved in its original condition.

- **Official website:** [Schloss Schönbrunn](#)

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6. PALACE OF THE POPES, AVIGNON, FRANCE

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equivalent of 4 gothic cathedrals). Six papal conclaves were held in the Palais, before the popes returned to Rome in 1377. In the following centuries, the palace functioned as the residence of antipapal forces, military barracks and a prison. Nowadays, more than 600,000 visitors per year admire the pope's private chambers and the frescoes painted by the Italian artist Matteo Giovannetti.

- **Official website:** [Palace of the Popes](#)

5. SCHLOSS NEUSCHWANSTEIN, SCHWANGAU, GERMANY

Seven weeks after the death of King Ludwig II in 1886, Neuschwanstein was opened to the public. The shy king had built the castle in order to withdraw from public life; today Neuschwanstein is one of the most popular of all the palaces and castles in Europe with 1.4 million people per year visiting "the castle of the fairy-tale king". In the summer around 6,000 visitors a day stream through rooms that were intended for a single inhabitant. The setting of Neuschwanstein could not be more idyllic. However, movement in the foundation area has to be continuously monitored, and the sheer rock walls must be repeatedly secured. The harsh climate also has a detrimental effect on the limestone façades, which will have to be renovated section by section over the next few years.

- **Official website:** [Schloss Neuschwanstein](#)

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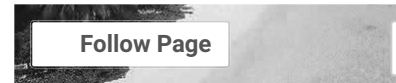


4. WINTER PALACE, ST PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

The Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg was the official residence of the Russian imperial Family until the Russian Revolution in 1917. The green-and-white palace was built in 1732 and continual improvements and revisions were made during the 18th and 19th century. In 1837, fire broke out, destroying nearly all the palace interiors, but the reconstruction was completed within one year. The palace was constructed on a monumental scale that was intended to reflect the might and power of imperial Russia. From the palace, the Tsar ruled over 22,400,000 sq km (8,600,000 sq mi) (almost 1/6 of the earth's landmass) and over 125 million subjects by the end of the 19th century. Today, the Winter Palace houses the world-famous Hermitage Museum.

- **Official website:** Winter Palace St Petersburg
- **Other accolades:** The Winter Palace also features in my top 10 list of the world's best museums.

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(known as the Sun King) transformed and expanded it, moving the court and government of France to Versailles in 1682. Each of the three French kings who lived there added improvements to make it more beautiful. The château lost its standing as the official seat of power during the French Revolution in 1789. However, it still serves political functions today as heads of state are regaled in the Hall of Mirrors, and French politicians meet in congress here to revise or otherwise amend the French Constitution.

- **Official website:** Versailles

2. CHAMBORD, LOIRE VALLEY, FRANCE

In a class of its own, the Loire Valley in France is dotted with hundreds of elegant castles, but its Chambord that is the largest and most famous of them all. Chambord's architecture is a carefully balanced blend of traditional elements of medieval architecture and other elements borrowed from the Italian Renaissance. With its dual inspiration, the château was the perfect instrument to sing the praises of King Francis I of France, who commanded its construction (which was never completed). The genius behind François I's masterpiece remains a mystery. While some maintain that it is a purely French creation, others have put the name of the multi-talented Italian genius Leonardo da Vinci forward.

- **Official website:** Chambord

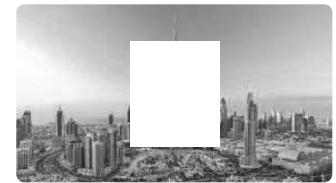


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1. ALHAMBRA, GRANADA, SPAIN

Listed under the World Heritage Sites list of the UNESCO and located in the Andalusian city of Granada, the Alhambra is one of Spain's most famous and most visited tourist attractions. The emotive, sensual Moorish palace and its stunning setting on an elevated plateau above the Albaicín gipsy quarter with the snow-capped peaks of Sierra Nevada mountains as a magnificent backdrop has inspired many songs, poems and stories. From the 13th to the 14th century, the Alhambra was the home of the Nasrid sultans, high government officials, servants of the court and elite soldiers. Exhibiting a unique mix of Islamic and Christian architecture, it is composed of a defensive area, the Alcazaba, the Nasrid Palaces, and the Gardens of the Generalife.

- **Official website:** [Alhambra](#)