

Trauttmansdorff

One magical setting, two highlights

Floral colours ablaze as you amble through the garden. Admire snow-covered peaks from under a palm tree, or enjoy the live sounds of world-class musicians performing from the stage by the Water Lily Pond. Have fun playing with the biggest tourism flipper in the world. All this and more takes place at the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff!



The majestic Trauttmansdorff Castle, with its weathered walls, can be seen from afar, surrounded by a 12-hectare gardens that are home to plants from all around the world. It also houses the provincial Museum of Tourism, also known as Touriseum, with the halls providing a suitable backdrop to an engaging narration of the 250-year-history of tourism.

The Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle

The Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle cover an area of 12 hectares and extend over an altitude difference of 100 metres, offering a stunning view of the 80 different garden landscapes, of the city of Merano/Meran and of the surrounding mountain ranges. The gently meandering paths through the garden offer visitors the opportunity to explore four garden worlds home to plants from all over the world, across sunny terraces and past gurgling stream waters. On the south side beneath the castle

lie the exotic Mediterranean Sun Gardens with their characteristic charm, encompassing an olive grove, cacti, aloes and agaves. At the Water and Terraced Gardens, steps and small waterways connect the various levels linking the geometric flowerbeds to the Sensory Garden. Beneath the terraces the Water Lily Pond is encircled by over 200 palms, as well as camellias and azaleas. On the north side of the castle lie the Forests of the World, as well as wild and cultivated American and Asian landscapes in miniature, while the Glass House houses tropical plants and a terrarium. Last but not least, the area dedicated to South Tyrol highlights its distinctive terrain, including a fruit orchard with ancient apple and pear varieties, as well as a cottage garden and vineyard – all typifying the cultural landscape of South Tyrol.

Besides the various themed gardens and plant collections, are a number of art pavilions and experiential stations to entertain visitors. One gains some idea of what a cactus looks like

from the inside, or the thrilling experience of crossing a suspension bridge. Animal lovers delight in getting close to various kinds of livestock, including alpaca, Racka sheep and goats that roam around the Gardens.

Awards

Thanks to a unique approach bringing together nature, art, culture and entertainment, the Gardens have received both local and international recognition for achievements spanning 21 years, and thanks to their promotion of ecological sustainability. Last year, the Gardens were awarded the „2021 Ecological Gardening“ prize by the Natur im Garten Association for outstanding achievements in the area of conservation-oriented horticulture. Their “Diversity” project competed against 11 other top-level projects from Germany, Austria, Russia and the Netherlands. In 2014, the Gardens were awarded the Tripadvisor Certificate of Excellence, that recognises consistency and commitment to service by shortlisted tourist enterprises. Previously, the Gardens had also received the coveted 2013 International Garden of the Year Award at the Garden Tourism Conference. During the 2006 “Briggs & Stratton’s Best Parks” Competition shortlisted 20 parks in Germany, France, Italy, Sweden and Great Britain. Trauttmansdorff ranked sixth among Europe’s most stunning parks. With its relatively recent history as compared with the others, the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle nevertheless boast a strong spirit of innovation and are also oriented towards the future. At a Briggs & Stratton-sponsored competition in 2005, the Gardens were awarded the „Most Beautiful Park in Italy“ prize, organised together with the Grandi Giardini Italiani Association.

Touriseum, the provincial Museum of Tourism

Amidst its Gardens, the majestic Trauttmansdorff Castle also houses the “Touriseum”, the provincial Museum of Tourism, with its interactive display narrating 250 years of history of alpi-

ne tourism. The Touriseum is the first museum in the Alps that entirely focusses on the theme of tourism, narrating the story of its introduction in Tyrol, the changes it brought to the region and how it all affected the local population. The exhibition offers an interesting trip back in time, both from the perspective of the local population and that of tourists, in a pleasing and entertaining manner – surprising and inspiring visitors. Starting at a breath-taking gorge beneath a steep rockface, the re-enactment moves past the relics of a capsized horse carriage. This scene is reminiscent of what 19th Century wayfarers might have witnessed as they crossed through the Alps. In the olden days, travelling was a rather arduous and perilous undertaking. With its easy narration, the tour ends in present-day South Tyrol, today a well-established



holiday destination. Local ‘stube’ rooms, guest rooms and hotel bars nowadays offer a highly congenial tourist experience. The exhibition also houses an original restored BMW Isetta, and a model of a ‘grand hotel’ resembling an oversized doll’s house. At the end of the tour, one is confronted by the world’s largest tourism flipper, providing a tour while playing the “South Tyrol Game”. Visitors of all ages have fun manoeuvring giant wooden flippers, over 20 m² across. Chasing the ball, players ‘tour’ the South Tyrolean landscape, deciding which route to follow using the manually-controlled flippers. It simulates an authentic local holiday experience: whether it’s outdoor skiing on snow-covered slopes, celebrating with friends in a mountain hut after a fun day out on the slopes, or climbing up a via ferrata to visit “King” Laurin.

Trauttmansdorff Castle

After visiting the museum, move up to the second floor through the old, painstakingly-restored halls of Trauttmansdorff Castle. From the medieval frescoed hall to the neo-Rococo or Late-Baroque, visitors get a feel of the castle's rich and eventful historical and artistic legacy, where erstwhile occupants have left their mark. The permanent exhibition within the old halls of the castle are a suitable testament to the contribution made by each of its illustrious former inhabitants.

Empress Sissi

Without any doubt, the most illustrious resident of Trauttmansdorff Castle was Empress Elizabeth (better known as 'Sissi'), with her former living quarters located on the second floor. An avid traveller whose sojourn lasted throughout the winter months of 1870 – 71 (and again in 1889), Sissi's retinue included 102 courtiers, who were lodged in one of several castles and manor houses in the vicinity. Following the arrival of the Imperial court at Trauttmansdorff Castle, Vienna's newspapers reported that the frail Marie Valerie began feeling much better in the mild winter climate of Merano, and the town thus acquired its much-vaunted reputation as a spa destination.

Thousands of colours and fragrances

Ambling through the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle is always a special experience that changes from one week to another. The arrival of Spring is heralded by a sea of tulips in bloom, followed by rhododendrons, peonies and roses. With summer approaching, sunflowers and hundreds of flowers and perennials are decked in their brilliant colours, until Autumn. The air in the Gardens is permeated by a host of competing fragrances. In Spring, the hyacinth and narcissus release their sweet aromas, while in summer, the spherically-shaped lavender bushes beneath the castle offer a Mediterranean flavour. In the Sensory Garden, the intense

chocolate flower scent competes with the harlequin glory bower tree, exuding its own sweet fragrance. Autumn, too, offers myriad olfactory sensations, such as the Sweet Osmanthus in bloom, emitting its unmistakable scent into the Palm Forest.



Guided tours of the Gardens and Castle

Never heard of pawpaw or chocolate flowers? Then perhaps it's time to go on a journey of discovery at the Trauttmansdorff. The expert guides know the Gardens like the back of their hand and enjoy recounting the numerous curiosities of the plant world. They delight to share their knowledge with visitors who in turn learn to increasingly appreciate and understand what the Gardens have to offer. During the organised tour, visitors observe rare plants and experience the Mediterranean fragrances of the flowers, along paths that cross over gurgling torrents and during leisurely walks with scenic views from the sunny terraces.

Trauttmansdorff Castle and its Touriseum can also be visited independently, without guides. Visitors walk through 20 halls, each with especially-designed miniature models faithfully reproducing the originals down to the smallest details, with videos and sound effects to enhance the experience. Group tours according to specific themes may also be requested. The Touriseum provides guided tours and special workshops whenever temporary exhibitions are held.

Events

The Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle always offers different experiences, favouring outdoor activities especially on mild summer evenings. Well-known bands from all over the world perform on stage by the Water Lily Pond, their music ringing across the Gardens. The “Trauttmansdorff After Hours” Friday evenings, suggest a more mellow atmosphere: with extended happy hours at the Palm Café with live jazz music performances as a sonic backdrop, or leisurely picnics under the palms, creating a perfect weekend mood. In Autumn, antique shopping aficionados can look forward to a bonanza at the Touriseum’s “Vintage Market”, scouring the stands for quality odds and ends to take back home. Themed and family-oriented programmes continue throughout the season, underlining Trauttmansdorff’s ability to host all kinds of events.



The Trauttmansdorff’s Green Credentials

Effective and sustainable environmental management is a core mission at the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle. A breeding ground of biodiversity, the Gardens provide an indispensable habitat for a variety of flora and fauna, including 344 different kinds of pollinators: among them 111 wild bee species.

Since the phasing out of chemical and biological pesticides in 2019, the emphasis has turned to soil health and plant fortification. An environmentally friendly wood chip plant provides the structure with heat in winter. The Gardens have their own composting facility, producing com-

post enriched with biochar and live microorganisms.

Although the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle cannot realistically attain 100% green credentials, the aim is to minimise their carbon footprint as much as possible. In recognition of their efforts in the field of ecological gardening, in 2021 the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle received the annual “European Award for Ecological Gardening” conferred by the European Garden Association Natur im Garten.

Highlight 2024

Spiny, ribbed, hairy, water-storing, fat, thick-fleshed, spherical, flat, columnar: Every one of these words can be used to describe succulents. These water-storing plants thrive in arid locations, and their survival strategies are nothing short of astounding. Succulents are also extremely diverse and useful.

The special exhibition “**Succu...what?**” in the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle illustrates the incredible variety and ingenious survival strategies of these plants, and showcases a number of succulent useful plants which provide us with tasty fruits, medicinal substances, durable fibres and even well-known spirits.

The exhibition is rounded off with exhibits, living plants, interactive stations and themed guided tours.



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