



That's what I want to know

Historic Castle Hill

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The story of the city of Kaiserslautern can be traced back over 1,300 years, and two important buildings in the city center have borne witness to a large part of this long history – the former buildings of the Imperial Palace, built in around 1158 by Emperor Frederick I, also known as “Redbeard” (Barbarossa), and the Renaissance castle built by Count Palatine Johann Casimir in 1570. Both buildings have always been connected to one another because of their construction and their fate through-out history. These stony sentries give us a glimpse into the past with their walls, stone blocks, foundations, reconstructed areas and even sections that were added after the buildings were initially built. As part of the “New City Center” project, since 2010 these valuable, historical witnesses have been brought back to life to show new visitors to the city the former size and importance of the entire complex.

Imperial Palace

During the time of the Holy Roman Empire, there weren't any capital cities. The Staufer kings and emperors reigned from the saddle of their horse. Whilst travelling, they mainly stayed in palaces strewn across the empire. The Villa Lutra was the first place built to his own specifications by Emperor Frederick I “Barbarossa” during his reign and it was one of the most famous and magnificent buildings of its kind in the entire empire.

The only remaining parts of this magnificent building (3) are a few parts of the foundation of colored sandstone and remnants of the stone outer wall (5) of the chapel (4) added by Frederick II.

Following the excavation and the evaluation of the findings, the city mounted the historic foundations. The Domos (imperial building) (3) originally measured 25 by 19 meters and was 19 meters high. In order to get a real sense of the size of the building, a 3D steel and tamped concrete construction that imitates the size and shape of the Palace was built.



You can see the remains of the castle wall (2), which have now been fully uncovered, just next to the former buildings of the Imperial Palace. The Stäpf fortress (2a) was also rebuilt in this location. The fortress was erected at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, in around 1619/1620, by fortress builder Adam Stäpf on the orders of the widow of Frederick IV, Elector Palatine of the Rhine. Stäpf built primary defensive walls with trenches, bastions and curtain walls which protected the medieval castle and city walls.

Casimir Castle

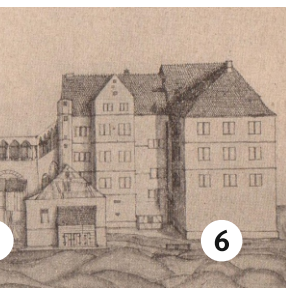
Count Palatine Johann Casimir, born in 1543, moved to Kaiserslautern in 1570 following his marriage to Princess Elizabeth of Saxony. This choice of residence was deliberate as Friedrich III, Elector Palatine of the Rhine also wanted a fortress on the left bank of the Rhine to protect against French invasions.

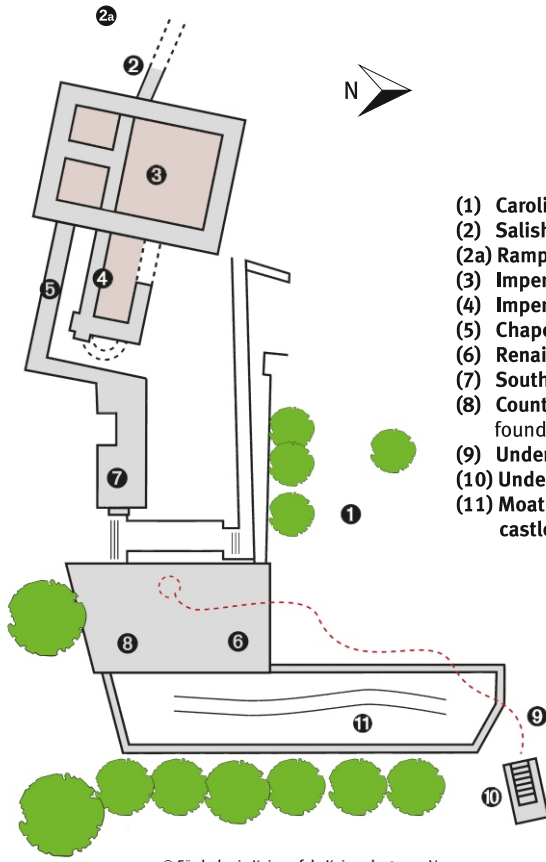
Johann Casimir built a Renaissance-style castle (6) on the borders of the land of the Imperial Palace. Whilst the castle was under construction, the couple lived in the Imperial Palace and even after the castle was completed (in around 1578), they continued to hold sumptuous receptions in the Imperial Hall of the palace.

Decline of the Palace Complex

Following damage caused by the Croatian Invasion during the Thirty Years' War and subsequent emergency repairs, blasts from French troops in 1688, 1703/1704 and 1798 ultimately brought about the successive decline of the Imperial Palace and Casimir Castle. In 1813, the French owners auctioned off the ruins of the buildings. In 1825, the Royal Bavarian State Government demolished the north part of the complex completely and constructed a central prison. The palace and castle areas on the southern side of the complex were changed forever when they were used by the Wächter Brewery in 1842.

The building that you can see today with the Count Palatine Hall (8) was built in 1934 with stones from both the Casimir Castle and the castle complex.





- (1) Carolingian burial site end of the 7th century
- (2) Salish castle wall 11th century
- (2a) Ramparts 17th century
- (3) Imperial Palace - Domus 12th century
- (4) Imperial Palace - Chapel 12th century
- (5) Chapel outer wall 13th century
- (6) Renaissance Castle 16th century
- (7) South wing Castle 16th century
- (8) Count Palatinate Hall reconstructed on the foundations of the original building in the 1930's
- (9) Underground passage
- (10) Underground passage exit
- (11) Moat with entrance to the former castle complex 16th century

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