

Audio Guide

# WIDOW'S PALACE



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## 350: Welcome and Introduction

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Hallo and welcome to the baroque city palace known as the *Wittumspalais*, the *Widow's Palace*, named after its most famous resident - Duchess Anna Amalia of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, who lived here for much of her life. Anna Amalia was widowed early in life, after only two years of marriage. Her husband Ernst August II died in 1758. But

why did Anna Amalia live here and not in her Weimar City Palace? The Wilhelmsburg, the city palace, was devastated by fire in May 1774. It was only rebuilt 30 years later. This spacious city palace had just been built by Jakob Friedrich Freiherr von Fritsch - Anna Amalia's long-term minister and advisor. Moreover, the palace was perfectly located. Anna Amalia's minister courteously offered his new city palace to his regent and she graciously accepted. A year later, Anna Amalia bought the palace so that she could live there for the rest of her life. Our tour now continues at the sedan chair in the stair well. When you get there, just key in the number you find in the tour flyer.

## 351: Ground floor and sedan chair

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When the Duchess wanted to leave her palace, she would order a sedan chair – and find it prepared with the court staff to accompany her. As indicated by the curved lines and the gilded relief decorations on black leather, this sedan chair dates from the late rococo period – the time when Anna Amalia moved into the palace. You may have already noticed some decorative elements shaped like seashells. It was that shell shape which gave rococo its name. The designs with irregular edges of rocks and shells were called "rocaille" – French for rockwork. Although this sedan chair is beautiful decorated, it has neither a coat of arms nor a crown and so was almost certainly not intended for ceremonial occasions. Unlike visitors today, the Duchess would have gone through the large doorway opposite the stairs, leading directly into the inner courtyard. The rooms around

the courtyard, as well as the other space on this floor, contained the many different services needed for the complex and elaborate management of a court. These included the kitchens and patisserie, the stores and silver chamber, wood store, wash house, as well as the stables, and storage for the coaches, sledges and sedan chairs. The court staff would also have lived here as well. But with almost no records surviving of the furnishings and use of these rooms, we cannot reconstruct them accurately today. Fortunately, we have many more records describing the two upper floors – the realm of Anna Amalia's state, reception and residential rooms. And that's where our tour continues. When you arrive on the next floor, just key in the room numbers in the tour flyer to immerse yourself in the world of an 18th century royal duchess.

## 352: Hallway first floor

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Anna Amalia portrait welcomes us personally to the palace. The portrait was painted in oils in 1806 when Anna Amalia was 67. Unusually for her portraits, she's wearing a widow's veil. Her reflective air suggests she is reviewing her eventful life and recalling some of its major events. She married Ernst August II Konstantin, Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, in 1756. The following year she gave birth to their son, Carl August – shown on the medallion around her neck. In 1758 and pregnant a second time, fate dealt her a tragic blow - her husband died. Just 18 years old, Anna Amalia took over the reins of government as the regent of her oldest son. She had never been prepared in any way for such a task, yet she mastered it with great perse-

verance and strength of will. Sixteen years later, in 1775, Carl August reached the age of majority and assumed power. By then, Anna Amalia was already living in the Widow's Palace. In the years to come, Weimar was transformed from a rather minor royal residence into one of Europe's leading centres of intellectual life. From 1772, one by one the main protagonists of Weimar classicism settled here: Wieland, Goethe, Herder and Schiller. They were also very welcome guests here in the Widow's Palace. During this period of her life, Anna Amalia withdrew from politics. Later, the great German writer, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, recalled this time:

*“With the composed knowledge that she had done her duty and accomplished the task laid upon her, she retired into a quiet private life, chosen according to her own inclination, where she lived happily in the society of artists and scholars [...].”*

And to find out what her life was like in the palace, just key in 30.



Anna Amalia was 36 years old when her son reached the age of majority and took over the reins of power in the Duchy. From then on, she was no longer a regent, but solely the mother of a Duke ruling an independent German state – and only had ceremonial duties to fulfil. Though saddened by the loss of power, she did gain new personal freedoms. She could finally dedicate her life to her numerous artistic interests – not only discussing and debating the arts, but also pursuing her own "dilettante" talents in writing, painting or music. Originally, dilettante comes from the Italian *dilattare* and means "to delight" – so a dilettante was interested in the arts for their

own pleasure and not as a way to earn a living. Nowadays, calling someone a dilettante is not exactly a compliment. However, this rather derogatory meaning only developed later. Anna Amalia regularly held concerts or readings and presented plays, and also invited her friends and acquaintances to join her at smaller social gatherings. Rather than guiding the Duchy's political fortunes, she was now organising Weimar's cultural life and causing quite a stir with her *Musenhof* – her 'court of muses'. Anna Amalia only lived at the Widow's Palace in winter. Her summers were spent with her court in the countryside: initially at Ettersburg Palace, and from 1781 at her manor house, the Tiefurt Mansion. As a royal widow, her court comprised up to 40 people: a Lord High Steward and several ladies in waiting as well as a personal physician, personal attendants, a chef and kitchen staff. From the hall where we are standing, the Duchess would have gone to the left to the side wing with her private apartments. The main wing contains the state and reception rooms – and that's where we start our tour.

## 353: Dining Room (Round Table Room)

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Let's go back in time – over 200 years ago. In those days, the Duchess's bright and spacious dining room was often the scene of lively, social get-togethers. These gatherings at the city palace were mainly in the winter, and so they would have been glad to have the column-like iron stove in the corner to provide a cosy warmth. This dining room was most likely the venue for Anna Amalia's round table meetings, those cultivated and pleasurable evenings which have become a part of Weimar history. Goethe has left a description of just such an evening:

*“While some of them played cards, others played music, and along with Her Grace, the English gentleman Mr Gore, his oldest daughter and I occupied ourselves with various drawings and sketches. Meanwhile Councillor Kraus was observing the gathering with a painter's eye, occasionally taken by a particular fine scene, and some of those pictures still exist today.”*

A watercolour of these gatherings has indeed survived – you can see a copy in the Rococo Room at the Duchess Anna Amalia Library quite clearly showing these chairs grouped around the dining table. Anna Amalia mainly invited members of the ducal family or her own household – the chamberlains and ladies-in-waiting, who all belonged to the nobility. The strict divisions between the social classes excluded COMMONERS from Weimar official court life. However, some selected members of the educated bourgeoisie were included in Anna Amalia's evenings at home – in particular, renowned philosophers and writers who could enrich the social gathering with their thoughts and works. Music had been a part of Anna Amalia's education at her parent's court – as was only 30 fitting for a princess in those days. To find out more about Anna Amalia's youth, just key in 31.



Anna Amalia was born in 1739 into the royal house of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. She was the fifth of 13 children, though only eight of them lived to adulthood. You can see portraits of her parents on either side of the doorway to the next room. Her mother is on the left – Philippine Charlotte, Princess of Prussia. She is dressed in an impressive silk gown, holding an open book in her hand with her arm leaning on a piano. The book and piano highlight her education and artistic interests – values which she brought her daughter up to share. At that time, the Brunswick court was considered a major centre of cultural

life – and that atmosphere undoubtedly influenced Anna Amalia. She not only was given piano lessons but had her own personal language teacher and a dancing master. The portrait on the right shows her father, Carl I, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. He is depicted as a confident sovereign ruler with a friendly, almost good-natured smile. In those days, court ceremony did not allow close personal relations between royal parents and their children. Nonetheless, Anna Amalia could rely on her family to help when times were hard. When Anna Amalia's husband died, her mother, Philippine Charlotte, travelled to Weimar to give her moral support during the birth of her second son. And during her years as regent, her father, well-versed in court politics, offered advice and assistance - for example, ordering ministers in his cabinet to take over key tasks in the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach to put the duchy's finances back on a sound footing. Anna Amalia also had influential relatives. Her uncle on her mother's side was the Prussian king Friedrich II – and his portrait adorns the third painting here in the room.



## 354: First Red Salon

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The "First Red Salon" is dominated by the larger-than-life plaster cast of a Classical statue of a woman – and the impression it created would not have been lost on the Duchess's guests. They would have understood this imposing figure as a clear statement of their hostess's taste and refinement, and her considerable appreciation of the arts. The painting on the statue's right takes us back to Anna Amalia's life at the city palace with her husband. She is shown riding out with her entourage when she was just 17 years old. The matching portrait on the other wall shows her husband, Duke Ernst August II Constantine of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, riding a grey. If the portraits were hung next to each other, the young couple would be riding towards each other. Unfortunately, we know next to

nothing about their relationship. They were only married for slightly less than two years before the Duke died. His health had always been poor. Anna Amalia described this difficult situation in her own words:

*“During my eighteenth year the greatest epoch of my life began. I became a mother for 20 the second time, was widowed, became a guardian and a regent! The quick changes, one following hard on the heels of another created such turmoil in my soul that I could not find myself - a confluence of ideas and feelings, all of which were undeveloped! And no friend I could bare my soul to! I felt my uselessness, and still I had to find everything within myself. [...] In these years, when all else was blossoming, I found myself surrounded by darkness and fog. “*

When Anna Amalia moved into the Widow's Palace, she had already long overcome this crisis and was enjoying life in her art-loving circle. When she or her guests looked out of the windows in the Red Salon, they would have had a rather different view from today. To find our more, just key in 32.



When Anna Amalia looked out of the window, she wouldn't have seen today's modern pedestrian precinct but the Esplanade, a grand promenade, lined with trees, with a goldfish pond and a central pavilion. The Widow's Palace was the northern end of the Esplanade. This exclusive street could be sealed off with an iron gate here and at its southern end, the *Frauentor*. After all, it was a highly select area. Aside from the ducal family and the court, only the highest local dignitaries were allowed to stroll along in its leafy shade. In keeping with her position as mother of the ruling Duke, Anna Amalia was always accompanied by her court. As a contemporary recalled:

*“The regent usually appeared in a crinoline and with her entire entourage; the Lord Marshall went ahead, a page carried her train. Several little dogs leapt to and fro around her, as was the fashion at the time, when nearly every lady had a so-called lap dog.”*

Naturally, Anna Amalia attached great importance to being treated in accordance with her rank. Yet she often felt constrained by the restrictions on life among the higher nobility. When she handed over the reins of government to her son, she was quite relieved to finally ease the strict court ceremony in the Widow's Palace – a ceremony comprising innumerable rules and rituals of conduct and etiquette regulating her daily routine and social contacts down to the minutest details. On her country estate, where she spent the summer months, court life was slightly more relaxed than in the city. As you can imagine, only a few people in Weimar could afford to live on the exclusive Esplanade. When Friedrich Schiller decided to move here in 1802, he took on an enormous debt to buy the house. By the way, if you'd like to find out how he and his family lived there, his house is open to the public.

## 355: Second Red Salon

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Here they are all together – the Big Four of Weimar Classicism. To the right of the window, you can see Johann Wolfgang von Goethe followed by a series of portraits of, in a clockwise direction, Christoph Martin Wieland, Johann Gottfried von Herder and Friedrich von Schiller. And right in the centre, there's a portrait of Duchess Anna Amalia. She was around 30 years old when this portrait was painted, and it shows her as a self-confident regent, interested in literature and music. This room was redesigned by Anna Amalia's great-grandson, Grand Duke Carl Alexander, as a memorial to the Weimar poets over 60 years AFTER the Duchess died. In the early 1870s, he ordered the Widow's Palace to be refurbished. The building had long been used for other purposes or left standing empty. Now, it was to be a museum dedicated to its royal resident and the illustrious era in which she had lived. As far as possible, Anna Amalia's furniture

and personal effects were collected and brought back to the palace and the rooms returned to their original condition. In creating this "Poets' Room", Grand Duke Carl Alexander was constructing a kind of memorial highlighting Weimar's past as a key literary centre, and he assigned Anna Amalia a central role in his narrative. You can find the same idea at the Weimar city palace where each of these great writers has a room dedicated to them, and at the Tiefert Mansion with the "Goethe Room". The 19th century was an age when museums were founded, public monuments built, and collected editions of the great writers published - as development driven by the awareness that a glorious era had irrevocably ended and a growing interest in history. Duchess Anna Amalia had the privilege of associating with the intellectual giants here in this room on an everyday basis. But what brought these four men to Weimar? To find out, just key in 33.

The first to arrive was Christoph Martin Wieland, on the left of Anna Amalia. He came to Weimar in 1772 when the Duchess appointed him as the tutor of her oldest son Carl August. Wieland had been a professor of philosophy at Erfurt and was already a well-known writer. He spent the rest of his life in or near Anna Amalia's court circle. Goethe – a little further to the left – arrived in Weimar in 1775. He accepted the invitation of the young Duke, who had just taken over the Duchy's government from his mother. Goethe was appointed to the ruling Privy Council which advised Carl August. In this role, Goethe helped to drive forwards urgently needed reforms in the small state and gradually took on numerous other ducal offices as well. At Goethe's instigation, Herder also came to Weimar a few months later – and you can see this famous intellectual and theologian on the wall directly opposite. He was appointed as the general

superintendent of the Weimar city church. This literary quartet was finally completed by the renowned playwright, Friedrich Schiller, many years later. After staying in Weimar for several months in 1787 to 88, he finally moved here in 1799. However, the productive friendship and dialogue between Goethe and Schiller began earlier, while Schiller was still a professor in Jena, the nearby university town. Did Anna Amalia's appointment of Wieland launch the rise of Weimar as an intellectual and cultural centre? Or were these scholars and writers drawn here by the prospect of a secure livelihood? And was it relevant that the University of Jena, a renowned centre of learning, was near by? Or was it just a case of chance and coincidence? Undoubtedly, a series of factors created Weimar's special intellectual climate, enabling German classical literature to achieve its pre-eminence in those years.

## 356: Bedroom

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We are now in Anna Amalia's bed chamber, all decorated in green. This is where she retired in the evenings to recover from her day's work, and this is where she died on 10 April 1807. The paintings opposite her bed show her husband and both her sons – apparently a quite normal family. But Duke Ernst August II Constantine did not live to see the birth of his second son. After his death, in the middle of the Seven Year's War, the young duchess suddenly had to take on a leadership role. She never seems to have considered remarriage - perhaps because she took a great interest in her sons' education and was reluctant to jeopardise her position as their guardian. In the portrait on the right, Carl August, the heir to the throne, is around 12 years old. His birth secured the continuation of the Weimar dynasty. His education and training prepared him perfectly for his future as a ruler. His brother, Friedrich Ferdinand

Constantine, is on the left hand side. He was one year younger. Since Friedrich Ferdinand was unlikely ever to take the reins of government in the Duchy, his education was directed more to the arts. However, like his father before him, he also died relatively young, long before his mother. You may be rather surprised at how simply the duchess's bedroom is furnished. The impression of simplicity is created by the straight lines of the neo-classical style of furniture. Neo-classicism<sup>1</sup> was a very modern style in the late 18th century – so these furnishings also go to show just how fashion conscious Anna Amalia was. Can you see the table at the window? It has a remarkable interior design and can be extended three times its present size. The first extension is a dressing table with a folding mirror, and the second is a drawing table with a slanting board to hold the sheet of paper. A real quick-change artist!

## 357 : Writing Room

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Did you notice the low step when you came into the room? This, together with the smaller window, indicates that we have left the main wing of the Widow's Palace and the rooms intended for outer display. This is the beginning of an older section of a building integrated into the new palace. The Duchess may well have used this room as her dressing room, since it was directly next to her bedchamber. However, a writing desk was always needed – and here, you can see an elegant writing desk next to window. Anna Amalia wrote innumerable letters – to her family, to prominent intellectuals and artists of her day, and also to Goethe's mother in Frankfurt. She also tried her hand at writing literary texts. She planned a series of 'Letters from Italy', a kind of a travel journal - one of her 'major projects'. Long after her delightful trip to Italy, she tried to capture her experience in letter form – and has left us this description of her visit to Tivoli, near Rome:

*“I directed the steps of my first visit to the Villa d’Este, which is most magnificently located and offers notable evidence of the splendour and noble mentality of this dynasty. It is set on a charming rise. [...] “*

The garden at the foot of the palace has beautiful and attractive spaces which, though not to the modern taste, are not without a certain grandeur that shines through everywhere. By the way, in the Tiefurt Mansion you can see a picture of Anna Amalia and her travelling companions in the Villa d’Este park. Since the Duchess spoke several languages, she translated a number of texts from Italian and English into French or German. She was brought up bilingually, speaking French and German. But throughout her life, she felt most comfortable speaking French - the language commonly spoken at most German courts then. To find out more about the furniture in the room, just key in 34.

The little silhouette pictures you can see over the writing desk were very popular in the mid-18th century. The cut-out silhouettes displayed here show members of the ducal family, high-ranking officials or other prominent figures. For example, on the far right of the wall with the window, the silhouette shows Anna Amalia's daughter-in-law, Duchess Luise. Duke Carl August - Luise's husband and Anna Amalia's son - is on the next wall on the far right. The PAINTING on the other side of the doorway shows the Duke's oldest son, Carl Friedrich. Anna Amalia was very pleased when her grandson married Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna of Russia, daughter of the Tsar - the young lady next to Carl Friedrich. They married in 1804. At that time, the ducal city palace had at last been re-

stored and refurbished - 30 years after the devastating fire. The little display case behind you contains some of the Duchess's personal possessions. As was only fitting for the higher nobility of her days, she had an impressive collection of fans. This fan has been decorated with a scene from classical mythology. According to tradition, Anna Amalia also had a serious weakness for beautiful shoes - and is said to have had innumerable pairs! The only surviving pair of her shoes is here in front of you. Made of elaborately embroidered red silk, they immediately evoke the age of rococo. As yet, though, scholars have not been able to discover whether Anna Amalia wore them herself or if this pair are, in fact, the bridal shoes worn by her mother.

## 358: Small Room

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The walls of this little room are tightly packed with colourful pictures of ballet dancers from Brunswick or Vienna in imaginatively designed costumes. Anna Amalia was always very keen on the theatre. The Weimar amateur theatre, with Goethe as stagemanager from 1776, was THE attraction at her 'court of the muses'. But how did her amateur theatre start? Two years earlier, when the ducal palace and the theatre inside it burned down, the professional theatre company had to leave. Anna Amalia made a virtue out of necessity and decided to start an amateur theatre with her fellow theatre enthusiasts. The driving forces behind the project were Anna Amalia, Luise von Göchhausen, her Chief Lady in Waiting, and Goethe. The members of the court who dabbled in the arts suddenly found they had a lot to do. Plays had to be written, accompanying music composed and stage settings designed. And, of course, they needed actors – and the actors not only came from court socie-

ty, but also from the ducal family. Naturally, though, court etiquette only allowed the royal family to appear in front of a selected court audience. The amateur theatre had a limited repertoire. As the Duchess wrote:

*“Since theatre is supposed to depict the course of the world, we amuse ourselves here with plays that are farces and believe, in this way, that we come closest to the matter.”*

The programme was primarily filled with such farces. Between 1775 and 1783, there were over 100 performances. Afterwards, the enthusiasm for the project gradually ebbed. Goethe was also no longer satisfied with superficial amateur acting. HE wanted a more professional approach. In 1791, Duke Carl August asked him to manage the newly founded court theatre. As a result, Anna Amalia's court lost its leading position – undoubtedly a painful loss.



## 359: Middle Corridor

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This corridor leads you back to the stairs – and here you can meet some of the figures in direct contact with Anna Amalia. The two young ladies on the left and right of the portrait busts are Eliza and Emily Gore. In fact, they really shouldn't have been in the Duchess's circle at all since they were commoners! After travelling extensively in Europe, the Gore sisters settled in Weimar in 1791 with their widowed father, Charles Gore. The young women were talented at music and sketching, and their wealthy father was a very keen amateur artist. According to Herder, the German philosopher and poet, Mr Gore was:

*“a wise, knowledgeable, courteous and sociable man: he has such clarity of ideas and so much experience of the world, as well as a profound and judicious love of the fine arts.”*

And perhaps that explains why Anna Amalia decided to invite the three Gores to

her social gatherings in the evenings. The portrait busts are of two French scholars – on the left, the classical scholar Jean Baptiste Gaspard d'Ansse de Villoison, and on the right the anti-clerical priest and man of letters Guillaume Raynal. They both came to Weimar in 1782 and enjoyed the hospitality of the ducal family for several months – though not without providing a service in return, as Anna Amalia noted:

*“Since Villoisons has been here, I've started learning Greek and can read and understand seven Odes by Anacreon. [...] I truly find it pleases me no end and has given me many pleasant hours.”*

The odes were by the Greek lyric poet Anacreon – and Anna Amalia's Greek lessons with Villoison allowed her to translate them. But the presence of the two men benefited Weimar in other ways too – and to find out how, just key in 35.

When the ducal family received these scholars, the Weimar court publicly displayed an enlightened attitude. After all, a theologian who criticised the church and the clergy was not welcome everywhere! But how could they publicise their tolerant views outside the borders of Weimar? Here Klauer, the court sculptor played a role. He oversaw a brisk business in portrait busts of famous artists and scholars. Anna Amalia not only liberally gave the busts to her many guests, but also sent them to the porcelain factory founded by her father in Fürstenberg. There, the life-size busts were taken as models to produce miniatures busts in biscuit porcelain, an unglazed clay ware. The material, which vaguely looks like marble, perfectly matched the neo-classical taste of the day. Some of these miniatures are exhibited in the display case on the left. The range of miniature portrait

busts included famous names from classical antiquity as well as the writers, artists and scholars who frequented Weimar. The miniatures were more practical to transport than large portrait busts, and required less space for display. But large or small, the portrait busts spread Weimar's glory out into the world. The cup with the inscription "*Man spielt in Carreau*" – "One plays in carreau" – shows how social gatherings here in the palace may have been. By the way, the inscription is probably a name for a card game for four players. Thanks to another inscription, we also know who is shown on the saucer. Duchess Anna Amalia, as fitting for her status, is depicted from the front. The other figures are her lady in waiting Luise von Göchhausen, and the two chamberlains Freiherr von Einsiedel and Freiherr von Wolfskeel.

## 360: Corridor to the Green Salon

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We are now in the side wing of the Widow's Palace, in the private quarters of the Duchess. The watercolour plan near the window at the start of the corridor shows you the palace and its surroundings in those days. The plan dates from around 1800. At that time, there was a spreading garden and grounds where today we only see buildings. The brown palace directly to the right encloses a courtyard – the same courtyard you came through and which you can see from the window. In those days, it opened onto a garden with the decorative geometrically shaped flowerbeds typical of the baroque style. Anna Amalia soon leased extra land as well, and created a modern English garden with long winding paths – painted in light colours on the plan. The landscaped gardens and parks imitating nature were inspired by ideas in neoclassicism, the period following the baroque. The plan doesn't show the city wall,

demolished in 1793, which previously separated the two gardens, and ran directly past the palace. However, the semicircular terrace which was part of the old city wall is marked. Anna Amalia could access the terrace from the stairwell through a door still there today, and then walk down a set of stairs into her landscaped park. But soon there was no need for a set of stairs to go down to the garden at all. Around 1820, the ground in front of the palace was filled in, turning the former ground floor into a basement, except on the courtyard side, where the original design was kept. Anna Amalia had an old fortified tower in the city walls turned into a Chinese style garden pavilion. You can best see the tower on the watercolour of the Duchess on the left of the window. To find out more about Anna Amalia's Chinese pavilion, just key in 36.

Although the Chinese Pavilion was not actually that close to the Widow's Palace, Anna Amalia had a very exact copy of its exterior view included on her watercolour. This, by the way, is not the original but a reproduction. The original can't be permanently shown, since over time its colours would fade badly in the light. Anna Amalia ordered the tower to be redesigned as early as 1775, when it was still integrated into the city walls. As you can see from the picture, the upper tower was removed to leave a high base and a garden pavilion was set on top. At that time, chinoiserie, a style of European art using Chinese ornamental motifs, was at the height of its popularity. The pointed conical roof and the panels with Chinese symbols between the windows seemed especially exotic. The Leipzig painter Adam Friedrich Oeser dec-

orated the high walls inside the tower with Chinese landscapes and figures. Around 45 years later, Duke Carl August saved the wall paintings when the pavilion was demolished. He wrote to the chamberlain:

*“It is our desire that the frescos painted by Oeser in the tower of the Widow's Palace garden are removed with the necessary care, brought to Belvedere and stored there for the time being, and are afterwards embedded in the walls of a new tower to be built at the end of the long hot-house [...] in the coming spring at Belvedere.”*

Today, you can still see the frescos in the *Roten Turm*, the Red Tower, in Belvedere Palace park. But to see an example of Oeser's painting skills, you don't have to go quite that far, as you'll soon discover.

## 361: Green Salon

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Take a moment to look at Anna Amalia's sitting room, decorated in different shades of green. The room seems rather inviting with its large-format Italian landscapes – probably a souvenir of her two-year trip to Italy –, pastel ceiling fresco and relatively simple furnishings. Anna Amalia no doubt liked to sit here, relaxing with a book or chatting with her close circle of friends or acquaintances. The Duchess also set great store by modern furnishings in her private apartments as well. In the early 1780s, she had the furnishings in this room and the two following rooms newly designed in the neo-classical style, which was just becoming fashionable. In neo-classicism, austerity and clear geometric lines replaced the curvilinear and sensuous forms found in rococo. There's also a prime example of neo-classical architecture here in Weimar – the Roman House in the park on the River Ilm. Built under Goethe's supervision, the house was intended as a refuge for Duke Carl August – and by the way, it is also open to the public. The chairs in this room are a good example of the transition to a

neo-classicist style in the decorative arts – they have square backs set with an oval inner frame. Neo-classicism explicitly returned to the styles and themes of antiquity – as you can see from the ceiling fresco. Minerva, goddess of wisdom, war and the arts, is shown with a helmet and carrying a large book. She symbolises Anna Amalia in her aspects as an art lover and regent of the state. Anna Amalia commissioned the frescos from Adam Friedrich Oeser. Goethe was thrilled:

*“The ideas for the ceiling frescos are so charming and painted with a sense of taste which is a refined achievement of age and experience and, at the same time, they were carried out with the vivacity which youth usually believes to be its own prerogative.”*

Goethe apparently also belonged to the small, privileged circle that had access to the Duchess's private chamber. But even those who didn't had a chance to take a peek inside – and if you key in 37, you can find out how.

In 1786, work on Anna Amalia's private apartments was finished. In the same year, the first edition of an ambitious fashion magazine appeared with the self-declared mission of:

*“... always promptly providing news [...] of every fashion and invention [...] in whichever branch of luxury may be concerned.”*

The editor and publisher of the Journal of Luxury and Fashion was the Weimar businessman Friedrich Justin Bertuch. In a series of editions, he presented the chairs, couch or fire screen from the Duchess's living room as models of modern neo-classical furnishings worthy of being copied. As the treasurer of the duke's finances, Bertuch was exceptionally well informed and apparently Anna Amalia had consented to him publishing the details of her interior designs. The Journal included pictures

of the furniture, and the reader received handy tips on how they should be used or where they could be bought – just as in today's home furnishings magazines. For example, take a look at the fire screen. In the Journal, it said:

*“The inner frame, which turns in the middle on a pivot so that it can be opened partially or entirely depending on whether one wants to let through more or less heat, is covered on either side by a beautifully decorated Chinese paper of the kind easily obtainable in Copenhagen and Hamburg.”*

Bertuch's extensive descriptions were not only interesting for his contemporary readers, but also are very valuable for today's scholarly research into Weimar. Thanks to his Journal, we know more about the original furnishings in the Duchess's private living room than any other room – this is where we come closest to Anna Amalia!

## 362: Painting Room

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In 1780, Anna Amalia wrote:

*“My love of drawing is still just as strong as ever. I have a Camera Obscura and draw there, and it seems to me to be extremely useful to become properly familiar with proportions in nature. It is a great help for me because I started rather too late to dedicate myself to sketching.”*

She first started drawing when she was around 37 years old. She took lessons with Georg Melchior Kraus and Adam Friedrich Oeser – by the way, his ceiling fresco in this room references Anna Amalia's interest in art. On the right of the window, you can see a drawing and painting desk that is both simple and yet very practical. The top of the desk hides an adjustable board for sketching or painting and a compartment to hold pastel crayons, chalk, pens and brush-

es. The two large drawers were used for sketching paper or the first preliminary sketches. Yet despite her obvious enthusiasm, Anna Amalia seemed quite realistic about her own abilities. In a letter to Oeser, she wrote:

*“I'm very busy with sketching and I'll soon be sending you some of my work. But it's not presented to the art judge and connoisseur but to the good friend who looks at it with a tolerant eye.”*

Anna Amalia not only loved to sketch and draw but also enjoyed talking about art works and surrounded herself with the pictures, sculptures and frescos she liked. In the late 18th century, this kind of free and unbiased approach to art was increasingly questioned – and to find out who was starting to question it, just key in 38.

No less a person than the great writer Goethe was challenging Anna Amalia's naïve delight in the arts. While initially supporting events at Anna Amalia's 'court of the muses' – for example, as the stage manager of the amateur theatre –, he later distanced himself from such dilettantism. He systematically introduced a more professional approach to Weimar's cultural policies. There were strict rules for performances at the court theatre. Artists should have a theoretical training – and, in Goethe's opinion, the audience for works of art needed special training too to be able to appreciate them. Goethe's views were supported by the playwright Friedrich Schiller, as well as Johann Heinrich Meyer, an art scholar who moved to Weimar in 1792. Anna Amalia was not inclined to blindly follow some particular art theory. Instead, she preferred to rely on her own feelings about works of art. She vented her annoyance at

the new systematic approach to the arts in an ironic text called "A dream in the year 98":

*"I once dreamt I was in a foreign land [...] and at one moment the inhabitants there called themselves the makers of systems, and at the next the grand intellectuals, and then the Only Clever Ones. Their efforts and affairs were all directed towards transporting nature into a different country and making it unnatural."*

But she couldn't stop this process. Instead, she gradually withdrew from Weimar's cultural life. Her text ends:

*"I leapt up from the bed which had so disturbed me and looked eagerly yet trustingly at the picture of the world near me – but unfortunately it showed me in reality in even more vivid colours those scenes that I had held for an unhappy dream."*



## 363: Music Room

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On the ceiling, a pastel-coloured figure is playing a lyre, a stringed instrument popular in ancient Greece. One can well imagine how Anna Amalia relaxed here with music for some pleasant hours. Throughout her life, music was always her favourite among the arts. She had taken piano lessons as a young princess, and enthusiastically took up the guitar on her trip to Italy when she was 50 years old. Anna Amalia also collected musical notation and wrote essays on musical theory – and she composed! That excerpt comes from the ballad opera "Erwin and Elmire" – with a libretto by Goethe set to music by Anna Amalia. The Weimar amateur theatre performed the premiere of this entertaining romance in May 1776. The young lady on the painting to the right of the window also had a considerable talent for acting. She is Emma Hart, later renowned as Lady Hamilton. She was the brilliant and colourful companion of Sir William Hamilton, the British envoy to the royal court at Naples. An-

na Amalia came to know the couple in early 1789 on her trip to Italy, and liked them. She enthused over Emma's lively performances portraying classical figures in a mix of posture, dance and acting. She wrote:

*"This lady, a born Englishwoman, has the very unique art of presenting all attitudes of Greek attire in her person a[nd] vibrantly giving them a life which no artist could give them in his works; she achieves this magic by the simple device of her shawl a[nd] her beautiful hair."*

Anna Amalia does not seem to have been shocked by the fact that Sir William was "living in sin" with Emma. The Duchess stayed in Naples for several months, meeting them both nearly every day. She was on quite friendly terms with Emma – this unconventional woman who later became notoriously famous as the mistress of Lord Horatio Nelson.

## 364: Stairway an hall on the second floor

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The Italian landscapes by Adolf Friedrich Harper on the staircase and this hallway were very popular – and the Tiefurt Mansion has a large number of similar Italian landscapes as well. Harper more or less mass produced these views of ancient ruins for a ready audience – and Weimar shared the widespread fervent enthusiasm for Italy. When she was nearly 50, Anna Amalia wrote:

*“How happy I am to realise my dream and see and enjoy that beautiful country, so rich in nature and arts, with my own eyes.”*

Shortly afterwards, in 1788, she left for Italy – two years before Goethe. It was an unusual trip for a Duchess in those days. She stayed in Rome and Naples for many months – accompanied of course by an entourage fitting to her status – and never had time to be bored. As Chamberlain von Einsiedel wrote to Gottfried Herder in Weimar:

*“The theatre fills two evenings of the week, and there are concerts on two other evenings at our house, where the circle of the audience grows daily. [...] The mornings are spent in playing the guitar, and the afternoons in sleeping. Portici or Pausilip serve as the destinations of our outings, and what happens under the wings of the night, my pen shall not reveal!”*

Anna Amalia's journey to Italy lasted two years. It gave her quite a special kind of freedom, as she confided to her brother:

*“I do indeed sense only too well, my dear Fritz, how we only live for others and rarely for ourselves, above all in our position; and without the slightest arrogance I can say with certainty that since I was sixteen I was only living for others until my trip to Italy, and in Italy I was living for myself.”*

Can you see the closed door over there? If you'd like to know who lived there, just key in 39.

This was where Luise von Göchhausen had her own little realm, 5 directly above the Duchess's private chambers. She joined Anna Amalia's service in 1775, shortly after the move to the Widow's Palace, and spent over 30 years at her side – initially, as her companion and later as the Duchess's Chief Lady in Waiting at court. Luise von Göchhausen was not physically imposing. She was small and had a hunchback. But she had a very sharp and astute mind. Her cleverness and quick-wits not only endeared her to court society but also to the poets and authors frequenting it. Moreover, she could write easily and fast in an elegant hand. It seems that even Goethe came to visit her in her two attic rooms. He dictated to her and gave her some of his

manuscripts to copy. In this way, she obtained a copy of the first draft of Goethe's groundbreaking play "Faust", even though he went on to destroy the original. As you'll have noticed, Goethe was a very welcome guest at Anna Amalia's palace. In 1791, he founded the "Friday Society", which initially met in the Widow's Palace. In contrast to the Duchess's social gatherings for informal conversation and a shared dilettante interest in the arts, Goethe's "Scholarly Society" focused on scientific lectures and discussions. Soon, though, the Duchess felt quite out of place in the intensive exchanges between scholars and artists. From the mid-1790s, the Friday Society meetings were all held in Goethe's home.

## 365: Blue Salon

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The Blue Salon, which you can see best if you look into it from the hallway, is decorated in the gracefully light and playful rococo style. The furniture's urvilinear lines play just as much a part in creating this atmosphere as the entwined lines of the stucco on the ceiling or the light blue walls. However, this design is NOT left over from Anna Amalia's first years in the palace, when rococo was still popular. The stucco ceiling is the only decorative element from those days – but perhaps the ceiling provided the inspiration for Duke Carl Alexander, Anna Amalia's great-grandson, to furnish the room in a style

that, one hundred years later as NEO-rococo, was becoming fashionable once again. After the Widow's Palace had stood empty for many years, Carl Alexander refurbished it as a memorial to his great-grandmother. Most of the rooms were restored as authentically as possible. In contrast, THIS room was redesigned entirely. During Anna Amalia's lifetime, it was known as "yellow room next to the ballroom". The furnishings were completely different. It is thought to have been used by musicians and actors as backstage space and a changing room for the performances in the ballroom next door. The charming paintings on the walls show members of Anna Amalia's family from Brunswick. On the right of the chimney, there's a portrait of Anna Amalia herself with portraits of her mother and her oldest brother Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand on either side. In 1780, after their father died, Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand became the Duke and ruler of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel.

## 366: Ballroom

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Sounds like that could be heard over 200 years ago in Anna Amalia's ballroom. The room has a very festive atmosphere with its shiny walls, glittering chandeliers and column lights, and the colourful ceiling fresco. An expectant audience would gather here to enjoy concerts or amuse themselves at entertaining performances given by the court amateur theatre. Naturally, only invited guests were allowed at these events. The performances for a larger audience, including local worthies and the educated classes, were given near the Widow's Palace in a public ballroom on the Esplanade. However, this room only became this size in 1804. At that time, despite her age – she was already 65 - , Anna Amalia decided to combine the original room with two adjacent rooms. As a result, the ceilings in different sections are at different

heights. The bright ceiling fresco by Adam Friedrich Oeser, though, is original. During the extension, the walls were treated with *scagliola* – a technique intended to create an effect similar to marble. The city palace had only been completed the year before, in 1803, and was furnished and decorated entirely in the new neo-classical style – which could have been Anna Amalia's inspiration for this conversion. She died only a few years later on 10 April 1807. She was laid out in an open coffin three days after her death in this ballroom, which was hung with black cloth. In the evening, the people of Weimar were allowed to take their leave of Anna Amalia, Duchess consort of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach. To find out what impression people had of her as she lay in state, just key in 17.

The coffin rested on four silver-plated lion's claws [...], her burial gown was made of white satin with a very long [...] train. In addition, the body was dressed in a cloak of crimson red velvet trimmed with ermine. At her head, there stood two tabourets on either side with cushions of red velvet decorated with silver braids and fringes, and on the right one lay the princely crown of red velvet with the diamonds of the deceased, and on the other to the left lay a sceptre with pearls twined around it as a symbol of her regency. These details of the duchess's funeral ceremony could be read, together with many others, in the *Weimarischen Wochenblatt*, the Weimar paper. When Anna Amalia died in 1807, she was nearly 68 years old – a good age for those days. But it was difficult time in Europe. Napoleon had just divided up the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. It was also doubtful whether the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar would survive. And as if that was not enough, Weimar's era as a centre of great literary talent was also coming to an end. Schiller and Herder

were both already dead. Those uncertain times called for a return to traditional values – and so Anna Amalia's obituary also had a political function. The obituary was written by Goethe together with Christian Gottlob Voigt, a fellow Privy Councillor, and they both presented an image of Anna Amalia as a figurehead of Weimar Classicism to unite the country:

*“She enjoyed socialising with brilliant persons and was happy to initiate, maintain, and make associations of this kind; indeed, no significant name has come out of Weimar that was not sooner or later active in her circle.”*

The obituary was read at all the commemorative funeral services across the Duchy. Even if the authors might have somewhat exaggerated Anna Amalia's leading role, their text certainly achieved its effect – and still influences our image of Duchess Anna Amalia as a woman from a special age who was fascinated by the arts.