

Audio Guide

BELVEDERE PALACE WEIMAR



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450: Welcome

Hallo – and welcome to Belvedere Palace!

Duke Ernst August of Saxe-Weimar had this summer residence built on this beautiful site. The first plans for the palace were drawn up in 1722. It took just over twenty years to complete the entire palace complex – and its history takes us back nearly 300 years to the splendour and glory of court life in the Baroque era.

The three-digit numbers in your tour flyer are also the numbers for the audio guide commentaries. You can also find the numbers in the individual rooms inside the palace. Depending on where the numbers are shown, they may refer to an entire room or just one specific exhibit. You can listen to each commentary as an independent unit, so you can either follow the suggested route, or chose a route of your own. Naturally, though, all the commentaries supplement each other to give you an insight into this remarkable Baroque building and the people who lived here.

And now, enjoy your tour!

451: From summer residence to museum



Let's begin with the cheerful scene above us, on the ceiling of the room. Diana, the goddess of the hunt, is sitting in a chariot pulled by two stags. Her raised hand holds one of her attributes - an arrow. Her other hand is resting on the young dog in her lap. Diana is accompanied by winged cherubs, three hunting companions and other dogs. The subject of this ceiling decoration could hardly be more suitable – since not only was Duke Ernst August, the builder of this palace, a passionate hunter, but he also discovered this magnificent site when out hunting. A contemporary wrote:

“In the predestined year of 1723, Duke Ernst August was so captivated by the charm of the woodlands known as the ‘Frauenholz’ or ‘Eichenleite’ around a quarter of an hour from upper Weimar that he decided to build a hunting lodge there which later grew into this excellent palace and, on account of the beautiful views, was initially called ‘Bellevue’, but soon afterwards named ‘Belvedere’.”

200 years later, the Belvedere Palace became a museum. Since the palace's original furnishings have not survived, we are showing furniture, paintings and other exhibits from the ducal art collections, largely from the 18th century. In this way, you can gain a remarkable insight into the Baroque world of Duke Ernst August, and also into the life and times of some of his successors. The palace collection focuses primarily on porcelain and faience pottery from East Asia and Europe.

Have you noticed the female figures between the windows? They symbolise the four seasons. At first glance, they look as if they were made in Asia. In fact, though, they date from the early 18th century and were produced at the Thuringian Faience Manufactory in Dorotheenthal. At that time, Europe was swept by a craze for ‘chinoiserie’ – art works, including pottery and porcelain, inspired by Chinese designs.

452: White gold

Today, it's nothing special to find porcelain in shops or homes. Yet in the early 18th century, 'fine china' – at that time dubbed 'white gold' – was rare and expensive.

Around 1700, people in Europe first tried to discover the secret of how to make porcelain. In those days, European rulers still had most of their coveted porcelain brought from China and East Asia – and that was similarly the source of the valuable plates, porcelain figures and vessels in this room. Naturally, exquisite pieces of porcelain were also included in the cabinet of art and natural history established by Duke Ernst August and his uncle Wilhelm Ernst, who ruled the duchy together for over 20 years.

For example, look at the two large plates at the bottom right in the large display case. They are richly decorated with flowers, largely in shades of red.

These plates belong to the group of Chinese porcelain known by the French name 'famille rose' – the rose family. In China, though, the rose colours were known as 'yangcai' – foreign colours – but why? The opaque rose pigment was in fact a European invention, developed by Andreas Cassius in a Dutch laboratory and taken to China in the 1680s by Jesuit missionaries. In the 18th century European markets particularly, demand rocketed for rose family porcelain using the 'purple of Cassius', as the pigment was known. The demand for the 'rose family' pieces was so great that this style of porcelain largely replaced the previously popular green tones of 'famille verte'.

But do take your time to view these exhibits – and not only the porcelain, but also the exhibition space itself. The little side room with the arched ceiling may well have been an alcove – a bedroom niche able to be divided off from the main room. Originally, the other side also had a similar layout as well. Unfortunately, though, the surviving palace records do not tell us who

453: Portrait of Ernst August I wearing an Allonge wig

This carved wooden portrait dates from around 1730. The impressive figure framed by elegant decorative leafwork and strapwork is none other than the Baroque ruler Ernst August the First, Duke of Saxe-Weimar and founder of Belvedere Palace.

Ernst August is wearing an impressive, decorative suit of armour and the long, curly Allonge wig so typical of the Baroque period. The wig took its name from the French word 'allonger', to lengthen. As you can tell from the billowing, flamboyant curls falling well down over Ernst August's shoulder, the Allonge wig copied long natural hair.

The Allonge wig – or periwig, if you prefer – developed as a must-have fashion accessory in the 17th century at the French court. There, when Louis the Fourteenth, the Sun King, took to wearing an Allonge wig, it quickly became a status symbol and 'wig of state'. At that time, the influence of the French court at Versailles was enormous – whether on furniture, wall decorations, or porcelain, festivities or hunting, clothes and gowns or indeed hairstyles.

And that influence was also evident in Weimar. The Versailles court represented the ideal of Baroque rule, and epitomised luxurious extravagance. Like the majority of European rulers, Ernst August also eagerly copied French fashions – at least as far as the resources of his cash-strapped little duchy would permit.

Baroque court culture also favoured social get-togethers to play cards or table games – and so games tables, such as the Trictrac table directly behind you, were essential.

Does the inlaid board seem familiar? Trictrac was the French version of backgammon, and one of the most popular games at that time. By the way, games tables were not considered furniture. They were only brought out as needed – though that didn't mean they lacked in elegance or attractive ornamental features. Quite the contrary. Games tables were commonly adorned with elaborate inlay work and exquisite velvet coverings. In contrast, this Trictrac table with its green felt and gently curved legs appears to have been rather a simple model.

454: Hexagonal flowerpots

These two hexagonal flowerpots are decorated with three repeating patterns. The front of the left-hand pot is adorned with an intertwined E and A – the monogram of Duke Ernst August, who commissioned the pots. The next field shows the coat of arms of the state of Saxony, and the third field depicts a filled flower vase. The painting to the right of the door shows how this sort of ornamental flowerpot cover looked when in use – in this case, holding a long-stemmed carnation.

Like all other pieces in this room, these pots are faience earthenware – sometimes also known as Delftware in Britain. Faience resembled the much coveted and very costly porcelain imported from China or Japan. In contrast, though, faience is earthenware covered with a white tin-glaze.

And unlike porcelain, faience pottery had been manufactured in southern Europe for hundreds of years – for example, in the Italian town of Faenza, which gave its

name to faience earthenware. However, faience pottery only spread to Germany at the end of the 17th century. The earliest faience production sites in Thuringia were in the Dorotheenthal valley near Arnstadt and in Erfurt. In the mid-18th century, the Erfurt factory in particular developed into an important economic driver in the region.

All the examples of faience in this room date from Ernst August's reign, and were produced in manufactories in Thuringia. The cylindrical or barrel-shaped beer tankards with a lid and a pewter ring base were very typical products, and many different variations are on show here.

In the small adjacent room, as a comparison, you can find faience from southern Germany. There, they preferred a style known as the Enghalskrug – a jug with a round body and a long narrow neck with a pewter lid. These were usually for wine rather than beer.

455: Portrait of Ernestine Albertine with Belvedere Palace in the background

Ernst August and his first wife – Eleonore Wilhelmine of Anhalt-Köthen – had eight children. However, only three daughters survived to adulthood – and one of them was Ernestine Albertine.

In this portrait, she looks at us with a friendly yet suitably distanced expression. Her clothes reflect both her status and the fashion of her days – and since the painting dates from 1750, that fashion was rococo. As you see, tightly laced waists and hooped skirts were en vogue. Elaborate and elegant fashion features were also very popular.

For example, the Weimar princess is wearing a little rose in her hair, her charming gown is dotted with flowers, and the gown's arms are richly decorated with lace ruffles. In her right hand, Ernestine is holding a fan. On the top left of her elegant gown, she has a red ribbon with a star-shaped medal showing a portrait of her father. The medal and her

red cloak – lined with white ermine and falling in extravagant folds around her – both underline her royal status.

Incidentally, ermine is the white winter fur of the stoat – and the lining is decorated with the characteristic black tips of stoat's tails. One of the tails is set on the cloak above the princess's shoulder, jauntily pointing towards the right edge of the painting where we can see some of the Belvedere Palace and grounds.

The palace itself is on the far right. The central section, where we are now, is clearly visible, crowned by its raised tower. The east wing is also clearly depicted. Next to it, half hidden by Ernestine's cloak, you can also see part of the eastern Cavalier's House.

In 1724, when her father laid the foundation stone for this summer residence, Ernestine Albertine was just two years old.

456: Portrait of Ernst August I with Belvedere palace in the background

This is truly an impressive portrait of a ruler!

Dressed in a magnificent, decorative suit of armour, Duke Ernst August gazes out regally at the viewer. He is wearing a short rococo wig. The ermine lining of his royal cloak and stately columns behind are further symbols of the Duke of Saxe-Weimar's power.

From the decoration on a blue ribbon worn over his right hip, we can date this painting to after 1732 – since that was when Ernst August founded the grand-ducal Order of the White Falcon, whose members wore this decoration.

For twenty long years, Ernst August had to share power with his uncle Wilhelm Ernst. But when Wilhelm Ernst died in 1728, Ernst August was at last the sole ruler of the duchy and reigned – just like the French king in Versailles – as an absolute monarch. He summarily dismissed the privy council, an advisory body of lower nobles. From then on, he largely took all his political decisions without advisors.

Duke Ernst August loved pomp and splendour. With his left hand, he is proudly pointing to one of his many building projects.

The architecture and site resembles an earlier version of Belvedere Palace. Although the main building does not yet have the two wings added later, it is already the focal point of a radial network of avenues – and the central line of sight along those avenues leads directly to Weimar.

Ernst August wanted to emulate if not equal the great touchstones of royalty in his day, from the Belvedere in Vienna to the palace at Versailles. Yet even if Ernst August's Belvedere only represented a miniature edition of such lavish palaces, his numerous residences and extravagant court life put an impossible strain on his small duchy's coffers. When Ernst August died in 1748, he left behind a country facing financial ruin.

457: Wedding portrait

1842, the Hague, Holland. The warm October sun bathes the festive wedding ceremony in the royal palace's Gothic Hall. Watched by a stately court gathering, a bride and groom are kneeling before a simple altar and exchanging their marriage vows. Separated from Ernst August by a hundred years and four generations, the couple are Hereditary Grand Duke Carl Alexander, Ernst August's great-great grandson, and Princess Sophie of the Netherlands.

Once again, Weimar had forged an alliance with a major European royal house. Carl Alexander and Sophie were cousins. Their mothers, Maria and Anna Pavlovna, were daughters of the Russian Tsar.

Eleven years later, in 1853, Carl Alexander became the ruler of the duchy. When he and Sophie spent some time in Belvedere Palace in summer, they lived on the first floor in the east wing – the floor directly above us.

Thanks to their marriage, the royal arts collections in Weimar were enriched with valuable paintings and furniture, mostly from Holland – including, for example, the exquisite writing cabinet in the small room further to the left.

The cabinet was most likely a wedding present. It dates from 1700, and comes from the workshop of Hendrick van Soest, a cabinet-maker in Antwerp.

At that time, Europe was swept by a wave of enthusiasm for 'chinoiserie' - Chinese-style designs. Van Soest has used the same technique for his 'chinoiserie' scenes on the writing cabinet as André-Charles Boulle did for his console tables in the centre of the room. Boulle, a cabinet-maker working in Paris, cut his finely delineated scenes from wafer-thin tortoiseshell and brass sheets which he then glued to the wooden surfaces – an elaborate style of veneer work known as marquetry.

Before you continue your tour upstairs, take a moment to enjoy the impressive still life by Willem Heda between the windows on the opposite wall.

458: Grey Salon

This impressive room was not only popular with Ernst August, but also with the subsequent generations of rulers down the years – and many of them also refurbished the room to suit their own tastes.

The room was last altered around 1900, when the walls were decorated in Baroque-style silver-grey patterns. This makeover gave the room its present name – the Grey Salon. The redecoration also created a special kind of ancestral portrait gallery – a gallery of monograms. You may have already spotted some of them, though they are not exactly easy to find.

Ernst August's monogram, for instance, is on the right of the main entrance – an E and A in the centre of the golden-framed design on the wall. An E and W is to his left – for Eleonore Wilhelmina, Ernst August's first wife. The monogram of his second wife Sophie Charlotte – the letters S and C – are on his right. Their son and heir to the ducal throne was Ernst August Constantine – and his E, A and C monogram is next to his mother.

Ernst August Constantine married Anna Amalia, famous far beyond Weimar's borders for her 'court of the muses'. Her son, Grand Duke Carl August, brought Goethe to his small ducal capital, ushering in the period of Weimar Classicism.

The monograms of Carl August – K and A – and his wife Luise are on the right next to the wall niche opposite. They are followed on the left by monograms of the next generation – Carl Friedrich and his wife Maria Pavlovna, daughter of the Russian Tsar.

Carl Friedrich and Maria Pavlovna often stayed at the palace, and made a number of changes here. The marble-like alabaster fireplaces and wall panelling were probably added in the first half of the 19th century during their reign.

The series of monograms concludes with Carl Alexander and Princess Sophie of the Netherlands in the opposite corner. The strong illusionist perspective of the original ceiling murals, now largely uncovered again, seems to open up a view directly into the heavens above. But the real view out of the windows is equally impressive, just as it always was. From the central window, you can look down between two high trees to the spire of St. Peter and Paul to the left, with the spire of Saint Jacob's diagonally behind. The City Palace tower joins this little group further to the right.

This room, set on the cool, north side of the building, is thought to have been the dining room. To find out more about Ernst August's daily routine and meals at his beloved Belvedere Palace, just look at the next page.

10: 2nd Level: 458 - Daily Routine

Ernst August usually only brought a small group of attendants with him when he stayed at Belvedere Palace. He was accompanied by just two officers, three ladies in waiting and two 'Maids of Honour' – though the 'maids of honour' were most likely a polite way of saying mistresses. Away from the formal ducal court, Ernst August could enjoy carefree days at the palace.

Shortly after he became the sole ruler in Weimar, he was visited at Belvedere by the Prussian writer and adventurer Baron Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz, who has left us this vivid description of how the Duke spent his days there:

“He wakes early in the morning, but makes it late before he rises; for he takes his tea in bed and sometimes plays on the violin. At other times, he sends for his architects and gardeners, with whom he amuses himself in drawing of plans. His ministers also come to him while he is in bed to talk upon business.

About noon he gets up, and as soon as he is dressed, sees his guard mount, which consists of 33 men, commanded by a lieutenant or an ensign ...

This done, he takes the air and at two or three o'clock sits down to table, where the two Maids of Honour, the Master of the Horse, the Major, the Officer of the Guard, and even foreigners if any happen to be there, are of the company. The dinner holds a long while, and it is sometimes three, four, and five hours before they rise from the table. The glass hardly ever stands still, and the Duke talks a great deal...

When dinner is over, they drink coffee, after which the Duke retires for a few minutes, and then plays at quadrille with his two young ladies and the Major; but sometimes he does nothing but smoke tobacco, and he often retires to his chamber where he amuses himself with drawing or else playing on the violin until he goes to bed.“

459: Diana

The lady in green is Diana – not only the Roman goddess of the hunt, but also the goddess of the moon. Her attributes, though, have not survived the passage of time unscathed. Parts of the bow in her hand are missing or broken, as are some of the arrows in her quiver. The crescent moon originally on her forehead is now missing entirely. Nonetheless, this Diana is clearly a fine porcelain figure.

This early example of porcelain work, which dates from 1766, was produced in *Closter Veilsdorf*, one of the first porcelain factories in Thuringia, and renowned for its excellent series of porcelain figures.

Diana belongs to a group of large figures representing planetary deities. This group also included Mars, the god of war – on display two figures to the right. This series by modeller Wenzel Neu included five other classical deities, though these have not survived in our collection.

The display also includes smaller deity figures, originally belonging to particular thematic groups. In the 18th century, such porcelain figures were essential as a centrepiece on any regal banqueting table and provided a stimulus for conversation.

Duke Ernst August, founder of this palace, took great pains to try and establish his own porcelain factory – but to no avail. He died in 1748 – roughly ten years before the very first porcelain manufactory in Thuringia was established. Ernst August's dream may never have been realised in his lifetime, but the collections of subsequent Weimar Dukes did contain locally produced pieces of porcelain - and in considerable numbers.

The next rooms also showcase other porcelain manufacturers in Thuringia, and their diverse and varied porcelain products.

460: Porcelain Inventory

August the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, suffered from the ‘porcelain malady’, as he confessed to his prime minister:

“Don’t you know that it’s the same for oranges as for porcelain – anyone subject to the one or other malady never feels he has acquired enough but always wants more and more?”

And Ernst August, Duke of Weimar, could easily have said the same .

The watercolour sketches show particularly valuable pieces from the duke’s collection – for example, a Meissen porcelain cup, box, or teapot! Ernst August had 28 such pictures prepared for his ‘porcelain book’. The original is in the Klassik Stiftung Weimar’s collection. For conservation reasons, it cannot be permanently displayed.

Even today, the purpose of the book remains a mystery. In the field of porcelain studies, scholars have not found anything similar. It might have served as an inventory for the exquisite pieces that Ernst August had collected – or perhaps it was intended to impress his visitors.

A baroque ruler’s power was demonstrated by the wealth he could put on display – magnificent palaces, elaborate clothes, extensive art treasures or, in the same vein, expensive porcelain. August the Strong even had a Japanese Palace built especially to hold his vast porcelain collection. So perhaps Ernst August caught the ‘porcelain malady’ while visiting the Saxon court in Dresden – an idea certainly supported by his porcelain book!

461: Portrait of Wilhelmine Sophie Eleonore von Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt

This is a portrait of Wilhelmine Sophie Eleonore von Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt – who was also a member of Weimar’s royal family. Wilhelmine Sophie’s mother was Bernhardine, the daughter of Ernst August I.

Although only just 15-years-old in this portrait, Wilhelmine Sophie seems quite at ease in her white powdered wig and a rococo gown richly adorned with lace and bows.

She has long known how to behave at court – and how to communicate in the silent ‘language of the fan’, so popular in the 18th century. With her closed fan pointing upwards between her thumb and index finger, she coyly asks ‘Are you faithful to me?’

This finely modelled and painted portrait dates from around 1765, and was produced in the Volkstedt porcelain manufactory. Five years previously, Wilhelmine’s father, John Frederick,

Prince of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, had granted Georg Heinrich Macheleid the royal privilege of establishing a porcelain manufactory in his realm.

Macheleid, an apothecary’s son, did not resort to industrial espionage, as others had, to discover the secret of Meissen’s hard-paste porcelain. Instead, he discovered the secret for himself. Initially, the quality of the porcelain and the glaze still had their weaknesses – though, on this relief they are ingeniously hidden by the dark background. The two display cases also contain later works from the Volkstedt manufactory.

The porcelain produced in the Limbach and Wallendorf manufactories in Thuringia are on show in the adjacent room. The spiral staircase at the end leads you down to the garden exhibition.

462: West Pavilion ground floor

Originally, this room housed the palace chapel – and that function is still reflected in the ceiling stucco from 1735, when this section of the palace was built.

The Christian virtues of faith, hope, love and humility are symbolised by four allegorical female figures. Hope and humility are the two ceiling figures on the side of the room with no windows. You'll notice one of the figures is holding an anchor – an allegory for hope. Humility is depicted with a lamb on her lap.

In a later plan of the palace, this room is marked as the Silver Chamber – the equivalent of a court silver and table room, which stored the table linen, glasses, tableware and silverware.

Finally, in the first half of the 19th century, Maria Pavlovna made this her 'green living room', a place for floral displays and with direct access to the garden. Quite possibly, since this room was directly under her chambers, Maria Pavlovna may have used it as a pleasant living room on days when the weather was bad. The many windows gave her a magnificent view of the Russian Garden, especially created for her from 1811 by order of her husband Carl Friedrich.

The audio guide tour also takes you to the Russian Garden later on.

But first in this room, we'd like to give you an overview of the development of the park and gardens at Belvedere Palace.

463: Model of the Agave Tower

There are ramps on either side leading to a viewing platform set at a dizzying height. From there, you could observe the yellow agave flower at close quarters – one of nature’s most impressive spectacles!

In the Baroque period, a flowering agave had the same status as a state occasion – and was just as newsworthy. These exotic plants only flower once in their lifetimes, then they die, together with their flower. But it can take many long years before a plant actually flowers.

No wonder, then, that Weimar took such pains when an agave “flowered in Belvedere in anno 1753.” An extra ‘hothouse tower’ – shown here as a model – was even constructed for this spectacular event.

Since these sensitive plants often flower well into autumn and winter, this unusual construction was a must. With a flower spike reaching twelve meters high – nearly forty feet – the plant could never have fitted into the Belvedere orangery.

The grounds here had around 30 such plants. Across Germany, the rulers of the many principalities and kingdoms competed in growing the largest and most beautiful agave flower. And when an agave finally flowered, the sensation was preserved for posterity on engravings, special coins and paintings – and one of those paintings is on show here in this room.

464: General view of Belvedere Palace

This painting from 1760 opens a window on the past of Belvedere Palace. Despite some changes down the years, this still offers a good overview of the entire palace and grounds.

The Baroque summer residence, its roof crowned by a raised tower and gallery, is centrally located, flanked by pavilions on either side. The palace and auxiliary buildings are placed around a main courtyard. The auxiliary buildings include accommodation for guests and household servants, stables for the horses, and carriage houses for coaches and wagons. The two guardhouses, set at the front edge of the complex, no longer exist. To the east of the palace, on the left of the picture, you can see the horseshoe shape of the orangery buildings.

The Baroque park and grounds has changed most dramatically. The painting shows a series of fan-shaped segments set in a semi-circle behind the palace. This was once the site of Ernst August's menagerie – around 20 enclosures with aviaries and animal houses, beehives, ponds and any number of exotic animals. Beyond that, there was another forested animal enclosure.

After Ernst August's death, with the duchy's finances at breaking point, his expensive menagerie was quickly closed. But tastes and fashions had also changed. As time passed, the carefully structured Baroque gardens with their strictly geometrical flowerbeds were replaced by more natural landscaping – a process started by Anna Amalia in the second half of the 18th century. From 1811, though, Carl Friedrich and Maria Pavlovna systematically landscaped the entire gardens and grounds in the romantic English style with picturesque features and meandering paths – and that is how you see the Belvedere park and gardens today.

465: West Pavilion

A truly magical room – flooded with light, the walls covered with superb marble stucco designs, and an elaborately decorated domed ceiling apparently opening the room up to the skies.

From 1828, Carl Friedrich and Maria Pavlovna regularly spent the warm summer nights here.

In line with the customs of that time, the room was divided into two bedrooms by a “*wall of green damask [...] fastened on six columns with two entrances of tied-back curtains [...]*”. In other words, this was an elaborate room divider probably stretching from the fireplace to the opposite side. This arrangement provided both Carl Friedrich and Maria Pavlovna direct access to their adjacent chambers.

The Grand Duke had the rooms – from here to the Grey Salon – facing the town, while Maria Pavlovna, his Russian wife, occupied the rooms facing south, towards the garden. Guests were accommodated in the rooms on the opposite side of the palace.

This is the room where Maria Pavlovna died. Unfortunately, today it is no longer possible to show the furnishings of those days. Instead, we have a display of exquisite pieces of porcelain from Thuringia, providing an insight into neo-classical styles and taste, so popular at that time.

To find out more, simply key in 11 and press play.

11: 2nd Level: 465 - West Pavilion: Neo-classical porcelain

Our tour continues with the first display case on the left in front of the windows – and the porcelain figures at the top. These figures were produced in the Gotha porcelain factory.

In a seated posture and dressed in classical robes, the figures of Flora with her floral wreath and Ceres with her sheaves of wheat represent spring and summer. The figures of Bacchus and Vulkan to their right represent autumn and winter.

Neo-classicism was motivated by the styles and subjects of antiquity. These gods and goddesses of the seasons are shaped from what is known as ‘biscuit porcelain’ – an unglazed, white, soft-paste porcelain that is fired twice. Since it resembles marble, ‘biscuit porcelain’ was considered ideal for reproductions of antique statuary.

In the adjacent display case on the same level, there is a set of breakfast tableware – richly gilded and decorated with classical scenes.

The serving plate has a small oval portrait of Carl Friedrich’s father, Grand Duke Carl August. In 1777, Grand Duke Carl August granted permission for the founding of the Ilmenau porcelain factory where this service was made – probably for him.

The octagonal display case behind you has a charming example of blue and white Wedgewood pottery produced by Josiah Wedgewood in his Etruria works in Staffordshire, England. Wedgewood pottery perfectly expressed those ‘pure and noble forms’ so popular in neo-classical designs, and so much copied across Europe.

466: White gold from Meissen

Here and in the following rooms, you have a chance to explore porcelain from the town of Meissen in Saxony, the cradle of European porcelain production.

For centuries, only China knew the secret of how to produce porcelain – that highly coveted ‘white gold’. From the seventh century in China, the formula for porcelain was a state secret. In 1708, over a thousand years later, two men in Dresden at the court of the August the Strong finally discovered the secret of porcelain – the ‘arcanum’ as the Europeans dubbed it. Working for the Saxon ruler, Johann Friedrich Böttger, an apothecary’s son, and scientist and researcher Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus cracked the secret of the mixture and the method needed to produce porcelain.

In 1710, August the Strong established the first European porcelain factory in the Albrechtsburg Castle in Meissen. These display cases contain some of the earliest exquisite pieces of Meissen porcelain –

for example, figures, plates and vessels of a red stoneware called ‘Böttger stoneware’, produced before the Meissen factory could make white porcelain. Böttger and von Tschirnhaus had discovered this mixture of red clay and loam almost by chance during their experiments.

But for the classic porcelain, you need a mixture of kaolin – a white clay –, a mineral known as feldspar, and quartz. And just those three substances have produced the enchanting objects in the smaller display case. The vase at the bottom right is something very special – it bears the rare Augustus Rex marking underneath, showing that it was made especially for August the Strong himself.

Of course, August tried everything to protect the secret of his ‘white gold’, but European royal houses did not shy at industrial espionage to obtain the formula. Even Ernst August sought to entice away some of the Meissen workforce – though, unlike some other royal rulers, with no success.

467: Writing cabinet with Christian motifs

This piece of furniture was produced around 1720.

The elaborate marquetry and elegantly curved lines are inspired by rococo, the style preceding the Baroque. Thanks to these inward and outward curves, despite the size of this two-part writing cabinet, it does not seem to be bulky – instead, it is rather like a wave flowing in and out of the wall. Generally, in the rococo period, furniture was designed to be more attractive. The lines and curves were intended to create a seamless, unbroken movement in the room.

The writing cabinet's lower section resembles an elegant chest of drawers with ample space for the royal correspondence. The section above the drawers has a hinged desktop and contained the writing implements. The top section, which has another selection of drawers, is decorated with images of the seasons. The marquetry here uses wood in

different colour tones, for example, light maple or the expensive red-brown mahogany from overseas. Some pieces of wood have also been stained to create colour shading. The cut out pictorial elements have then been put into position, rather like puzzle pieces, and glued to body of the cabinet.

This writing cabinet was taken into the ducal collection in the 19th century. It is thought to have belonged to a high church dignitary. That would be supported by the decoration on the inwardly curving door in the large niche, which shows the crucifixion of Christ with the Virgin Mary, John and Mary Magdalene, overcome with sorrow, embracing the cross. The exterior of the hinged desktop is also decorated with a Christian motif – Mary and Joseph's flight to Egypt shortly before the birth of Jesus.

468: Kändler bird's cage

Just like many rulers in that era, Ernst August had a weakness for exotic animals. He spent thousands of thaler on forest buffalo, Indian Muntjac deer and all kinds of small monkeys and apes for the menagerie in his palace grounds.

At that time, he could look out directly onto his animal houses, enclosures and aviaries from his palace windows. He also used smaller birdcages – for example, for his parrots, which were just as rare as they were costly.

But this porcelain cage with its filigree perforated pattern of foliage and arabesque ribbon work was too expensive to be set up outside. This work of art is thought to have been made by Johann Joachim Kändler, a leading modeller at the Meissen manufactory and renowned for his ingenuity and inventiveness.

Around 1735 when this bird's cage was produced, Kändler noted he was able to:

"... produce a very beautiful kind of perforated bird's cage from porcelain in such a way that it looks as if it were woven from wire."

The early years of porcelain production saw many objects created that were usually made from other materials. As in the case of this bird's cage, practical use was not necessarily the primary objective. The colourful squirrel in the corner display case opposite is also a sheer delight, and is similarly one of Johann Joachim Kändler's inspired designs. The tankard with the gilded lid in the adjacent display case on the left is also a very rare piece.

To find out why Ernst August would certainly never have wanted to drink out of this tankard, just have a look at the next page

48: 2nd level: 468 - Walzenkrug - Höroldt

A coin is set in the gilded pewter lid of the beer tankard on the far left in the display case. The coin shows Duke Wilhelm Ernst - the uncle of Ernst August, the founder of Belvedere Palace. The tankard was not part of the original palace furnishings, but it does come from the ducal collections.

There are no records to show whether Wilhelm Ernst actually drank out of it – but his nephew, Ernst August, would certainly never have wanted to. After all, his uncle held firmly to the reins of power in the duchy for 45 years - even though Ernst August was actually co-regent after his father's death.

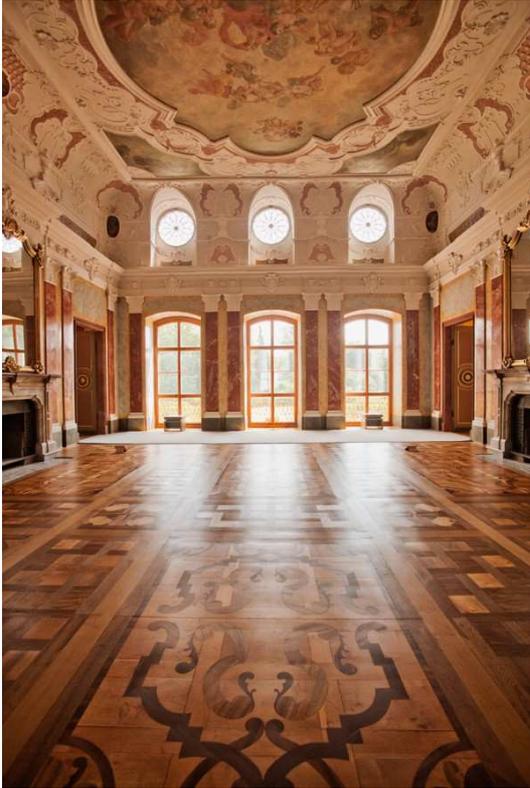
There were good reasons why Ernst August designed Belvedere Palace to be so luxurious – he wanted this residence to underline his own entitlement to the throne. It was to be a kind of counter-royal palace directly outside the gates of Weimar, the town where his uncle resided and ruled until his death in 1728.

But to return to the tankard. This was produced in the Meissen manufactory in 1724. You might be wondering why a tankard is decorated by Chinese-looking figures – but this design reflected the fashion at that time.

In the early years of European porcelain in particular, it was quite common to keep to traditional forms of earthenware drinking vessels – such as the *Walzenkrug* tankard, a tall cylindrical vessel with a pewter lid and a pewter ring base. In contrast, though, early European porcelain was often decorated by adapted traditional Chinese designs.

This chinoiserie, as it's known, was very fashionable in the baroque era and featured prominently both in the arts and crafts as well as in architecture. You'll see another example of chinoiserie designs later on the tour at the Red Tower in the park.

469: Ballroom



Elegant gentlemen lead ladies in sweeping robes and with elaborate hairstyles out onto the parquet floor to dance. Around the fireplaces with their large ornamental mirrors, courtiers and officers gather, joking with the female members of the court, or enjoy a hand of cards at the games table – while the court musicians in the gallery opposite the windows strike up a tune.

This may well have been the scene when Ernst August's court assembled to amuse themselves in this festive ballroom. As Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz recalled in his memoirs, festivities were far from uncommon:

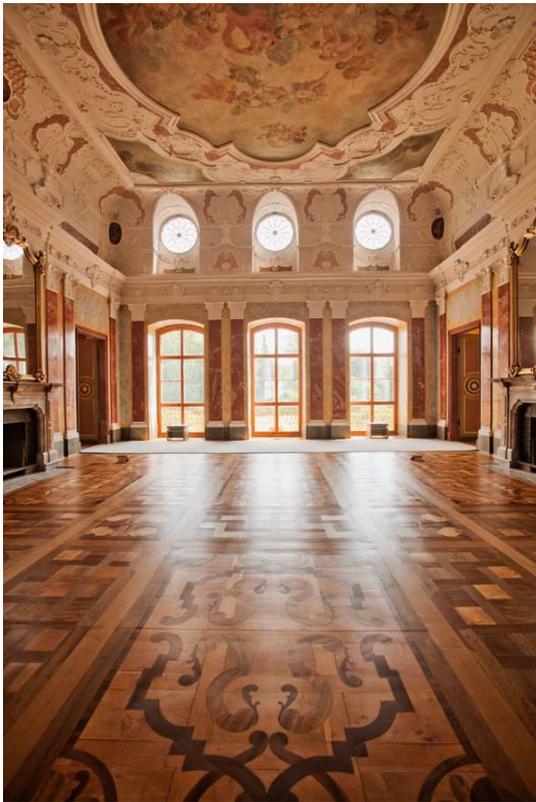
“There scarce a week passes but the Duke gives an invitation at least once or twice to all the persons of quality of the court and all the officers of his troops, at which time there are two great tables spread where they dine, play, sup and afterwards dance till the next day.”

Festivities at Belvedere Palace could certainly last several days. Aside from dining and dancing, the guests enjoyed such pleasures as plays, operas, masked balls, games of chance at the gaming tables, fireworks and hunting.

The ceiling mural reflects something of the fun and frolics down below. The scene shows Olympus – where the gods are indulging in their favourite drink of nectar and ambrosia. The enthroned figure in a red cloak in the centre is Zeus, the father of the gods, with his wife Hera next to him.

This ballroom was also the setting for a celebration to mark Goethe's 82nd birthday. To find out more, just have a look at the next page.

50: 2nd level: 469 - Goethe's 82nd birthday



On 28 August 1831, Goethe celebrated his 82nd birthday. It was a major event – and the Weimar court celebrated accordingly. After all, Weimar had much to thank Goethe for. Not only had he rendered considerable service to the Duchy through his work as a minister and privy councillor, but his brilliance as a leading author cast a very favourable light on the ducal house for its support of Weimar Classicism.

As we know from Chancellor Friedrich von Müller, a close friend of Goethe, the entire day was devoted to festivities.

The celebrations began with the inauguration of a marble bust of Goethe in the Weimar library. The ceremony included songs, speeches and music. Afterwards, 200 guests were invited to attend a festive dinner. In the early afternoon, the court assembled here in the ballroom. In honour of Goethe, Duchess Maria Pavlovna gave the first *levee* of the year at Belvedere Palace, her summer residence – the first of the official receptions held according to strict court ceremony that usually took place once a month. The only people admitted to this prestigious event were the “real aristocracy“, for example, ministers, presidents of the duchy’s authorities and other high-ranking court and state servants. It was a tribute of the highest order, though Goethe noted:

“To my embarrassment, this time the festivities for my birthday were brilliant. I had expected this, and withdrew to a cheerful village town in the Thuringian Forest.”

So Goethe himself was not even among the guests. He preferred to stay away from the official celebrations and spend the day with his grandchildren and a few close friends in Ilmenau.

470: Snowball Service

This dinner service could hardly be more ingenious. The famous snowball design was invented by Johann Joachim Kändler around 1737 for the Meissen porcelain manufactory. The snowball design is a masterpiece in baroque porcelain design. Kändler, who also created the porcelain bird's cage on show in this exhibition, was a leading porcelain modeller of his day.

He designed a series of dinner services and vases decorated with magical snowball blossoms. The blue green branches with their leaves and the small birds, seemingly caught in a moment of movement, are especially beautiful. The cups are usually gilded inside and delicately painted.

471: Breakfast set for one person

In the 17th and 18th centuries, courts across Europe keenly observed and emulated the customs at the French royal court.

This breakfast set for one person – known as a ‘solitaire’ – was ‘invented’ in Versailles, along with the ceremony it was used for: the so-called *levée*, the morning reception in a king or ruler’s bedroom.

As was standard, our Solitaire set comes in an appropriately elaborate case. The serving tray is stored in the case’s lid, while the other parts of the set fit neatly into the base. The coffee cup nestles between the cream jug – to the left – and the coffee pot. The coffee pot lid, decorated with a red flower, is above the coffee cup. At the top right of the base, there is a shallow bowl for pastries and, on the left, the saucer.

The saucer doesn’t have the foot rim we are familiar with today, since in the 18th century, it was also used to drink out of.

These elegant pieces, decorated with floral medallions and gold-red-green ornamental designs, were produced around 1780 in Vienna.

In 1720, sixty years before, two members of the workforce at the Meissen porcelain factory had been enticed away to help establish porcelain production in Vienna – a masterstroke that always eluded Ernst August, despite his most intensive efforts.

The other pieces on show in this display case are also from the Vienna porcelain factory, which only closed in 1864.

472: Mars and Minerva Centrepieces

These porcelain figures once decorated the dining table of Catherine the Great, ruler of Russia, when the dessert course was served. The figure with the richly gilded helmet crowned by an owl is Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, the handicrafts and the arts. The god of war, Mars, is directly next to her, sitting on the base of column. He is wearing a plumed helmet and holding a massive sword in his hand.

The figures come from an ensemble created by the Berlin porcelain manufactory for the Russian royal house in around 1770. We do not know exactly how these figures ended up in the ducal collection, but there was a direct link between the Romanovs and the Weimar dynasty - Maria Pavlovna who married Carl Friedrich of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach was the daughter of Tsar Paul I.

Groups of figures such as these were known as centrepieces. They were not only intended as an attractive feature for court guests, but also supposed to stimulate witty and clever conversation.

The classical Roman and Greek gods, for example, offered a chance to demonstrate one's own erudition. Allegorical depictions of the seasons were also very popular, and inspired philosophical discussions. Sometimes the centrepieces were far less intellectual – taking social events such as hunting, theatre, or carriage rides as their theme.

In the Baroque era, the design and use of tableware flourished – the standard decorations for courtly banqueting tables included exquisite porcelain, floral arrangements, banners, table fountains and these sorts of themed centrepieces. Dining together was a social event and, as such, it was suitably ritualised at the courts. It offered a space for display – where hosts could impress with splendour and riches, and the guests could show off their eloquence and knowledge.

473: East Pavilion

We have reached the East Pavilion. With its decorative marble stucco designs on the walls and elaborately decorated domed ceiling, this room closely resembles the corresponding room in the West Pavilion.

When Carl Friedrich and Maria Pavlovna stayed in the palace, their chambers were in the west wing and guests were accommodated here on the palace's east side. Carl Friedrich's parents, Carl August and Louise, had shared the entire first floor – with Louise taking the rooms on the east side, and Carl August's chambers in the west wing.

In those days, guests stayed in one of the Cavaliers' Houses flanking the palace – and you can see one of those two houses through the window facing the town. In memory of his parents, Carl Alexander, Carl Friedrich's son, left the palace's west wing empty. Instead, both he and his wife Sophie had their chambers on this side, here and in the adjacent suites of rooms.

Today, this room showcases especially decorative and elaborate glass works from the ducal art collection. The exhibits date from the 16th to the 19th centuries, and

come from many key centres of glass production. The works on show range from Renaissance Venetian Murano glass to examples of Bohemian and Silesian glass from the Biedermeier period between 1815 and 1848. The collection also contains glass works from the region. For example, you'll find an elaborate goblet in the central section of the third display case to the left. The goblet, set on the right of the display, was made in Andreas Friedrich Sang's Ilmenau workshop.

The elegantly curved design of bluish-greenish glass is richly engraved – or cut as the glassmakers say. This classic example of Baroque glasswork dates from 1730.

Duke Ernst August employed Andreas Friedrich Sang for twenty years as his court glassmaker, and liked to decorate his banqueting tables with Sang's magnificent glass works.

474: East Pavilion ground floor

At some time, Ernst August may well have attempted to make gold in this room. The Duke was very interested in alchemy. Today, though, there is nothing left of the laboratory supposedly set up here. Instead, there is a rich display of hunting pictures and weapons from the ducal collections.

As the prize pieces here show, hunting guns were often richly ornamented. In the Baroque era, hunting was a privilege of the nobles – and a popular pastime. The ‘Hildburghausen map of the Grand Hunt’ records just such a grand court hunt in the neighbouring Duchy of Saxony-Hildburghausen. You can see the depiction of it on the tables opposite the door.

Dozens of royal stags, wild boars, foxes and hares are breaking out of the wood as they are driven into a kind of arena. The ducal hunting party has set themselves up in a secure shelter in the centre. The animals run directly in front of the hunter’s guns. The trumpeters on the right announce the animals’ arrival, while guests not involved in the hunt can watch events from a stand.

This contemporary work shows what is known as an ‘enclosed hunt’, the high point of the royal hunting year. For this kind of hunt, as this exhibit shows, a meadow or clearing was enclosed with temporary fencing. Weeks before the day of the hunt, beaters – usually bonded peasants or soldiers on release – had to drive the animals towards the enclosure, a process involving at least several hundred beaters and, at times, more than a thousand. When the animals were finally driven into the arena, they were easy prey for the hunters. As a rule, the game came past the guns at a distance of no more than 70 paces.

At such hunts, it was quite common for several hundred animals to be killed. For the hunters, it was a very comfortable affair, since they were also provided with magnificent tents and soft easy chairs. There was an abundance of food, and entertainment in the form of music, diversions and pranks – for example, with tumblers riding pigs through the arena, as you can see on the right.

475: Faience stove

On your tour, you may have noticed that most rooms either have a fireplace or – as here – a stove. Since Belvedere Palace was a summer residence, usually awoken from its slumbers in May and closed again in mid-October, it was only heated when the weather turned cool.

And as you see, when it came to heating, Duke Ernst August happily combined function and beauty. The top of the cast-iron firebox is decorated with a ducal crown with Ernst August's monogram – an E and an A – set underneath. The stove's upper section is green and white faience pottery, which looks almost fragile in appearance. The faience, produced by the Dorotheental factory in Thuringia, is decorated on either side by a relief-like figural design, and has a lidded vase as a crowning feature.

In contrast, the porcelain in the adjacent display case comes from much further away! These pieces were made in the Imperial Porcelain Manufactory in St. Petersburg. As you may well recall, Grand Duke Carl Friedrich's wife, Maria

Pavlovna, was a daughter of the Russian Tsar. Carl Friedrich and Maria Pavlovna were married in St. Petersburg's Winter Palace in 1804.

The cup in the centre at the base of the display shows the imposing Winter Palace against a brilliantly blue sky. It's also worth taking a look inside the cup. The transparent glass base is decorated with a portrait of Tsar Alexander the First, Maria Pavlovna's brother. The plate to the right is decorated with a clearer portrait of Alexander, who visited his sister in Weimar several times.

The display in the next room also showcases Russian porcelain. Today, these pieces are a special feature in Weimar's art collections, yet for Maria Pavlovna, they were a welcome memory of her distant homeland. She brought some valuable porcelain with her in her dowry, while other pieces were dispatched from Russia to Weimar "at the sovereign command of the Tsar's family".

476: Porcelain figures in folk costumes

The figures dressed in simple dark blue robes emanate a certain dignity and calm. These masterpieces of neo-classical porcelain date from around 1820.

Russian porcelain figures at that time commonly depicted traditional characters, usually ordinary country folk in everyday situations. These figures were produced in the Imperial Porcelain Manufactory in St. Petersburg.

The seated woman has turned to one side to looking down anxiously at the jug that has just slipped out of her hand. This figure is based on a famous sculpture of a girl with a pitcher at the Milkmaid Fountain in the spreading Catherine Park, south-east of St. Petersburg. The palace and grounds there were the favourite residence of Catharine the Great. The painting to the left shows a portrait of Catherine as a young princess.

The portrait opposite shows Catherine's granddaughter Maria Pavlovna when she was around fourteen years old. Catherine once said of Maria Pavlovna:

“She is very clever and has many talents, and will become a wise young lady.”

Catherine was proved right. She also decisively supported her granddaughter – for example, arranging the truly imperial dowry that Maria Pavlovna took with her to Weimar as a newly-wed. Aside from a million roubles in cash, Maria Pavlovna's dowry comprised 144 cases, packed with treasures of all kinds, transported on 79 horse-drawn carts. These links to one of Europe's richest and most powerful ruling houses not only ensured that the duchy could stabilise its strained finances, but also fuelled a new golden age in Weimar's cultural life.

477: Portrait of Ernst August Constantine II as a child

Ernst August Constantine may still have been a child, but this did not excuse the heir to the duchy from adopting the pose of a proud adult ruler.

Around his neck, he is wearing the grand-ducal Order of the White Falcon founded by his father, Ernst August. There are other symbols of power to the right – the ducal crown and cloak, both lined with costly ermine, and two classical columns in the background. Incidentally, have you noticed the red heels on Ernst August Constantine's buckled shoes? In the Baroque period, shoes with red heels were the exclusive prerogative of the nobility.

Ernst August Constantine spent the first years of his life here at Belvedere Palace, where this portrait was also painted. When his father Ernst August died in 1748, Ernst August Constantine was just eleven years old. He had lost both parents, and his health was far from good. Seven years later, aged eighteen, he took over the government of the duchy from his guardians.

Since Ernst August Constantine's health had always been delicate, the court urged him to marry as soon as possible, concerned that Weimar's ruling house might remain without an heir. In March 1756, Ernst August Constantine married Anna Amalia of Brunswick–Wolfenbüttel and in less than a year Anna Amalia had given birth to a son – later, Grand Duke Carl August. Ernst August Constantine died not long afterwards from 'consumption' – four days before his 21st birthday. His young widow Anna Amalia took over as regent, ruling on behalf of her oldest son who was just two years old – and she continued to rule as regent for another 16 years.

The painting in the next room shows just how different a princely portrait looked around 80 years later – when we meet Ernst August Constantine's great-grandson, Carl Alexander.

478: Portrait of Carl Alexander as a child

Julie von Egloffstein has portrayed Carl Alexander in front of Belvedere's gardens and park. The palace is visible in the centre of the painting.

This portrait of Carl Alexander, then crown prince, dates from 1832. The Baroque period, with its taste for show and lavish extravagance, was long over. The 14-year-old Carl Alexander is not posed as stiffly and distantly as his great-grandfather Ernst August Constantine in the portrait in the previous room. Instead, Carl Alexander looks out at us quite naturally, even slightly dreamily. Yet he too is wearing clothes suited to his royal status even though, three generations on, they may look much simpler.

Carl Alexander's education was strongly influenced by the spirit of the Enlightenment, so much in evidence in his parents, Grand Duke Carl Friedrich and Maria Pavlovna. They even appointed Swiss scholar Frédéric Soret as the young prince's tutor. Not only was Soret not an aristocrat, he was even critical of court traditions.

Nonetheless, Carl Alexander still had to learn court etiquette. The corner display case to the right shows a gilded, dark blue

tea service decorated with charming figures of children. But only after a moment or two do you realise that the pieces in the set are slightly smaller than normal – and especially suitable for children to practice with. Quite possibly, Carl Alexander, born in 1818, may even have used this Sèvres porcelain service himself, since it dates from as early as 1754.

Later, as regent, Carl Alexander gained a reputation for his commitment to commemorating the age of Weimar Classicism. For example, he not only donated memorials for Herder, Wieland, Goethe and Schiller in Weimar's old town, but also transformed the Widow's Palace, dedicating it to the memory of his great-grandmother Anna Amalia, who had lived there for many years. Indeed, we have to thank Anna Amalia for many things – among them, bringing to Weimar her father's outstanding quality porcelain from the Fürstenberg manufactory. The miniature busts of leading figures on show in the display case opposite were one of Fürstenberg's specialities.

Belvedere Park

479: Orangery (inner courtyard)



The orangery provides a sheltered environment for oranges, palm trees, bay and laurel and other Mediterranean plants. The building was designed especially to house such sensitive plants during the winter – and to judge from the amount of available space, which is still in use today, there must have been a lot of them. Duke Ernst August, who had Belvedere Palace and the Orangery built, spent vast sums on exotic plants. Since an orangery was a benchmark for the brilliance and importance of a baroque court, the Duke's summer residence simply had to have one.

The horseshoe-shaped ensemble you can see today was completed in the mid 18th century. The Gardner's House in the centre was the home, as the name suggests, of the Belvedere court gardener.

At the highpoint of the orangery's use, it held hundreds of bitter orange trees, but such exotic fruit as pomegranates, figs and pineapple were also grown here. When the fruit was ripe, it went directly to the ducal table. The bitter oranges, for example, were turned into jam. Under Duchess Anna Amalia, the orangery even contained coffee trees, as court gardener Friedrich Reichert recalled in his memoirs:

"... some trees were as high as the building and were covered with fruit so that every years several pounds of coffee could be harvested. The coffee made from them was delicate and stronger than the Levantine..."

The Levantine most likely meant coffee from the Levant, the area of today's Lebanon.

480: Neuholländer Garten - New Holland Garden

Do you know a casuarina tree when you see it? They grow here behind the high hedge at the Pavilion in the *Neuholländergarten* – the New Holland Garden. They are the trees with foliage resembling long green spaghetti. Under Grand Duke Carl August, seven different types of these rare shrubs and trees were identified in the Belvedere Park - a plant even today only familiar to people with a wider knowledge of botany.

And Carl August was certainly one of them – even publishing a botanical treatise on the casuarinas trees in 1819. He also laid out the New Holland Garden. The majority of the plants came from Australia – previously known as New Holland.

Duke Carl August was a keen horticulturalist. He took the advice of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, not only his friend but also his government official responsible for scientific matters, on how to gradually transform Belvedere Park and orangery into a botanic garden - and it gained a reputation as one of the most diverse collections in Europe.

The botanic holdings were constantly enlarged by exchanging existing plants and buying new ones. English woods and pineapple plants came from London, flower bulbs from Holland, tulip trees and other north American plants from Philadelphia, and exotic seeds from the gardens of the Russian Tsars. Even Alexander von Humboldt, a famous explorer and naturalist and a friend of Goethe, acquired rare seeds in Paris for Belvedere Park.

But the Grand Duke and Goethe did not regard botany as just a hobby. They wanted to systematically research into the wide range of plants here, and record them in catalogues. The *Hortus Belvedereanus* was the most famous of these catalogues, and Goethe vigorously supported its publication. It was prepared over a period of three years by August Wilhelm Dennstedt, an apothecary and later professor of botany at the University of Jena. He identified and examined nearly 8000 types of plants in Belvedere Park.

481: Red Tower



The Red Tower is not exactly large, but it certainly stands out because of its colour. The redbrick tower – in fact, more a pavilion – doesn't really fit in with the rest of the pale yellow baroque orangery ensemble. That's hardly surprising since this neo-classical tower was built much later, from 1819 to 1821.

At that time, Grand Duke Carl August and Goethe could often be found examining the plants in the Belvedere hothouses. The Red Tower was built to provide them with a study for their botanical research. The tower can be entered from the orangery's Lange Haus – Long House – next to it. The tower's high windows provide a fantastic view across the broad River Ilm valley.

Unfortunately, for conservation reasons, the tower is not open to the public. But, of course, you can take a look through the windows.

Today, the room is nearly empty. In its day, though, the room was functionally furnished – with tables, benches and a collection of reference books. The walls are decorated with large-scale murals. The landscapes seem to be rather unusual – reflecting the chinoiserie style so much in fashion in the 18th century. Some of the figures are busy with measuring and surveying instruments – a reference to the power of human reason and intellectual curiosity. These frescoes by Leipzig artist Adam Friedrich Oeser originally decorated Anna Amalia's garden pavilion at the Widow's Palace. Carl August and Goethe, who had studied drawing with Oeser, had the sections of plaster with the frescoes saved when the garden pavilion was demolished in 1818. They ordered the frescoes to be carefully removed and built in to the Red Tower in 1819 – though heavily restored and with a different colouring.

482: Floraplatz



A statue of Flora, goddess of spring and youth crowns this stone pyramid for flowers. This is *Floraplatz* - a circular clearing laid out in 1815, and one of the many landscaped features giving the palace grounds their particular charm today. It's tempting to stop and rest at places like this, or at the artificial ruins, memorials, grottos or fountains set along the paths meandering idyllically among the trees.

The design of the Belvedere Park today largely goes back to Duke Carl Friedrich, Maria Pavlovna's husband. While Carl Friedrich was still Crown Prince, he had the grounds landscaped in the English style, with spreading, picturesque vistas that were even praised by the renowned landscape gardener Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau in 1845. Prince Hermann noted that the design of the gardens "*succeeded perfectly*".

The summer residence was originally set in formal baroque gardens modelled on those at such major contemporary courts as Versailles and Vienna. Belvedere Palace founder Duke Ernst August strolled through the grounds with his guests between geometrically laid out flowerbeds and trimmed hedges on paths radiating out from the focal point of the palace – and they were completely undisturbed by the common people. At that time, the park was enclosed by a high wall.

In tune with the zeitgeist, Anna Amalia, Ernst August's successor, longed for more natural surroundings and a sense of space. She initiated the changes which her grandson Carl Friedrich finally completed. The park gradually lost its strict baroque formality – and its exclusivity. It became a popular destination for an excursion from Weimar – and the town's residents came here for picnics, walks or to go sledging in winter.

Take a moment to sit on this stone bench and enjoy the view while you listen to Goethe's 1813 poem "The Merry Folk of Weimar", where Belvedere Park also plays a role. By the way, when Goethe mentions *Rapuschen*, he is referring to a particular French game of cards. But that's enough of an introduction – let hear what Goethe has to say. Just have a look at the next page.

49: 2nd level: 482 - poem by Goethe
„The Merry Folk of Weimar“

Thursday, off to Belvedere,
Friday, to Jena we race:
It is, on my honour,
Truly the loveliest place!
Saturday, what we're waiting for,
Sunday to the country we rush;
Zwätzen, Burgau, Schneidemühlen
Are the places we love so much.



On Monday, the play is pleasing;
Tuesday then soon follows on
Yet it adds to its quiet moods
A jolly game of *Rapuschen*
On Wednesday, no lack of emotions
at a stage event full of cheer;
And on Thursday, temptation leads us
Back again to Belvedere.

And this delightful round of joys
Continues without ever ending
Across fifty-two weeks of the year,
If you apply the right sort of planning.
Games and dances, talk and theatre,
Our spirits to invigorate;
Let the Viennese have their Prater;
Weimar, Jena - that's what's great!

483: Große Fontäne - Large Fountain



The large fountain, which can send up a water jet ten meters high – around thirty feet - has given its name to this clearing in the park, the oldest landscaped feature at Belvedere Park. This circular clearing was laid out under Anna Amalia. The fountain was added in around 1809. The locals call the rockery around the edge of the clearing the ‘Alpinum’ – the Alpine garden.

When this feature was originally created, such quiet corners were very popular in parks and grounds. In contrast to the formal baroque designs, the aim was now

to create spreading and seemingly natural landscapes where you could stroll and relax. The borders between park and landscape, art and nature should be dissolved – and that’s why, as you can see from here, the parkland in the little Possenbach river valley carries on seamlessly as woodland. This ‘back to nature’ approach allowed the nobility to escape the constraints of court etiquette, and gave them a chance to pursue their own thoughts.

Artificial ruins as a feature in the grounds were intended to call to mind the transience of life – and you can see an example of such ruins if you stand with the Alpine garden to your right and look over the fountain basin. Originally, this ruin was built as a grotto. In approximately 1815, though, it was transformed into a ruined chapel.

Parks also often included small hermitages to encourage self-reflection. Sometimes, paid hermits lived in the hermitages to add local colour. However, there are no records of anyone ever being paid to live as a hermit at what is known as the ‘moss hut’ in the Belvedere Park, which you can see, slightly hidden, in the opposite direction from the artificial ruin.

484: Alte Eiche - Old Oak Tree



This oak tree is among the oldest trees in Belvedere Park. It dates from the years before the palace was built – so it must be around 300 years old!

Belvedere was built on a plateau known as the Eichenleite because of its oak woods. But of course the park, which extends down to the little Possenbach river valley, does not only contain oaks. The grounds are also home to a diverse mix of around 3000 trees ranging from lime trees, hornbeam, and maple to copper beech, chestnut and spruces.

The group of trees here in the foreground illustrates another special aspect of how the park was landscaped. As you walk through the grounds, you'll notice various groups of trees whose structure looks rather like a large bunch of flowers. This effect was created by planting several trees very close to one another, or even planting them in the same hole in the ground – just like, for example, the three hornbeams a little bit further down the slope on the right of the oak tree. When trees are planted in this way, the trunks often grow together at the base, creating a single outer trunk, but separate again into individual trees higher up.

485: Ice House

This looks rather like a small chapel - but it was actually the 'ducal fridge', the icehouse for Belvedere Palace. The ice blocks stored here were used in summer to keep meat, fruit and vegetables fresh, or to cool drinks, or make ice cream. But this was not where the food was stored. The ice blocks were collected from here and taken to the palace kitchen.

The earliest icehouses date back to antiquity, and this cooling technique was even used well into the 20th century. During the baroque era, from the 17th century on, the courts favoured elaborate menus and meals – and that, in turn, required a constant and plentiful supply of ice. Increasingly, ice-stores were built near manor houses and stately homes. Initially, the ice was kept in an ice-cellar or ice-pit. Later on, special buildings designed as attractive features in

landscaped grounds were used to store the ice. Icehouses came in the shape of pyramids or pavilions - or small chapels, just like this one from around 1863, which was built over an ice-pit.

But perhaps you're wondering why the ice didn't melt? Then just take a look into the icehouse.

The ice was stored in a very deep pit - and the walls are impressively thick. This provided extremely effective insulation. When the doors and windows were shut, the ice could keep a remarkably long time.

The ice was 'harvested' in winter from frozen lakes and rivers. Here on the wall, you can see the saw and pincers used to harvest the ice. The ice blocks were taken from the frozen *Schirmteich* pond, which is close by, and then dragged to the edge and transported here - a job must have worked up quite a sweat! The ice was stored in layers, with straw or brushwood between the blocks.

486: Hedge Theatre

Today, this hedge theatre is sometimes used as the setting for open-air plays and concerts – performed, for example, by the Music High School Schloss Belvedere or the Liszt School of Music, which are housed in the palace’s subsidiary buildings.

Carl Friedrich had the hedge theatre laid out between 1823-24, when he was still Crown Prince. Unfortunately, there are no records to show whether he and his wife Maria Pavlovna actually watched plays performed here.

The hedge theatre, with its pruned hedges and geometrical shapes, seems inspired by baroque landscaping – even though when it was built here the preference was more for the natural setting of a park or natural surroundings. That tendency, for example, was much in evidence at Anna Amalia’s ‘court of the muses’ during the summers she spent at Tiefurt Mansion - and you can find out more about that at the Tiefurt manor house and park. In contrast, hedge theatres were very popular during the

baroque era – as a decorative stage and a setting for court life. This was where the aristocracy met to wile away the hours with masked balls, or to watch French comedies and Italian operas.

But why then did Carl Friedrich of all people have such a historicizing feature added? After all, in the rest of the grounds, he rigorously pursued a policy of transforming the baroque into parkland landscaped in the English style.

A good argument can be made for him wanting to match this design to the Russian Garden, which was already built and is the next stop on our tour. By aligning the designs, he kept the stylistic unity of the entire ensemble of the Russian Garden, hedge theatre and the nearby maze. Moreover, the high hedges provided a shelter against prying eyes. While the rest of the park was open to the public, here the ducal family could remain private and undisturbed.

487: Russian Garden



In 1811, Carl Friedrich had the Russian Garden laid out here for his wife Maria Pavlovna of Russia, daughter of the Tsar Paul I – and you are welcome stroll around here just as you like. The garden was intended to alleviate some of Maria Pavlovna’s homesickness. She moved to Weimar, far from her homeland, when she was just eighteen. She was delighted by the garden. As she wrote to her mother in Russia in 1811:

”... my dear Mama, the Prince has had build a replica there – even if on a smaller scale –of the little garden at Pavlovsk, and although it's still in the early stages, I find a real joy in seeing once again the objects so familiar and a design and features so very dear and precious to me ... “

And in fact the Russian Garden is nearly a one-to-one scale copy of the park at Pavlovsk near St. Petersburg. There, in the summer residence of the Russian Tsars, Maria Pavlovna spent many happy hours in her childhood and youth.

The Belvedere garden is divided into three parts to match the divisions in the Pavlovsk park. The three sections are easy to spot – the flower garden, Cupid’s garden with the statue of the ancient god of love, and the lime tree garden. The ducal family and their guests liked to walk in the Russian Garden after a meal, since there the pergolas, the shaded walks, protected them from the curious gaze of the park visitors. In 1825, Maria Pavlovna wrote in one of her many letters to her mother in Russia of how much she loved to stroll there:

”...the garden is charming, and that makes me even sadder to leave this place where I feel so well and which has developed this year in the most beautiful way.“

And our tour of Belvedere Palace and Park also comes to an end here. We hope you found it both informative and enjoyable. Please remember to return your audio guide to the desk in the palace. Have a pleasant day in Weimar!