

Esterházy Palace Garden, Eisenstadt



“When I laid out the garden in Eisenstadt, I did not know for whom, but through an act of divine providence, it was for you. Now the roses and other flowers are blooming. I wish you would come soon to pick them ...”

Count Nikolaus Esterházy to his wife Krisztina Nyáry in 1624

HISTORY

In 1622, the late-medieval moated castle came into the possession of the **Esterházy family** as part of the Imperial lien property. From 1663 to 1672, the castle was rebuilt in early baroque style and became the residence of the Esterházy family, who were elevated to the rank of princes in 1687.

The first zoological and vegetable gardens were documented in 1569, while the first ornamental gardens were documented in 1624. From 1682 onwards, the garden area was extended. In 1750, the **garden architect Louis Gervais** reshaped the early-baroque formal garden into an elaborate garden in Rococo style.

In **1797**, after he had purchased several additional plots of land, Prince Nikolaus II. Esterházy started to convert the park into a vast English landscape garden.

The conversion was begun by the head gardener of the Esterházy family, **Matthias Pölit**, and finally completed by the architect **Charles de Moreau**, who was also responsible for the redesign of the palace in neo-classic style.

Together with the **Court Gardener Anton Niermayer**, he created the romantic landscape garden which still presents itself to today's visitors.

THE PARK TODAY

The first thing visitors will notice when walking through the park is the well preserved and excellently renovated park architecture. A characteristic feature of the park is the large number of different ponds, artificial rocks and picturesque group of trees. Embedded into open meadows and densely planted groups of trees, they form the basis of the charming images and surprising vistas in the landscape garden.

A walk through the park may start at the **Engine pond with the Engine House**, which is located directly at the south-eastern entrance to the park. The engine room was planned by Charles de Moreau and accommodated the **Watt steam engine**, which Prince Nikolaus II. had bought in London in 1803. It was the oldest steam engine in Central Europe and operated the pumping station which supplied the artificial water fall.

Past the western bank of the Engine pond, the walkway is quickly ascending. It crosses the stream in the forest and immediately afterwards opens up the view to the chestnut avenue and the **Orangery**. In the early 19th century, the Orangery, which was renovated in an exemplary manner, was the most significant of its kind in Austria because of its rich collection of plants and the size and number of its greenhouses.

The **Orangery parterre** in its present structure was built in the early 20th century. With its cone-shaped yews, the Colorado blue spruces and Caucasian firs as well as the row of red-blossoming chestnuts, it constitutes an appealing, formal contrast to the English style of the garden. One of the few elements taken over from the baroque garden is the **chestnut avenue**. In the past, the avenue featured two rows of square-cut chestnuts. Today, only remnants of the former design are still visible in this area.

Further to the west, the walk leads to the **Leopoldine pond and Leopoldine temple**. After the restoration of the water pipeline system, the pond with its ravine and water fall will be fully renovated. The neo-classic temple, which was built from 1812 onwards, is dedicated to Leopoldine, the daughter of Nikolaus II., who commissioned the work. As a quote on the famous Sibyl temple in Tivoli near Rome, it constitutes the climax of an artificial rock landscape and forms a picturesque counterpart to the monumental garden façade of the palace. Today, the renovated Leopoldine temple is one of the highlights of the park. Right next to the temple towards the east is the **tulip tree meadow**, which features a few specimens that date back to the time when the garden was created. Particularly in autumn, the uniquely bright yellow colour of the tulip tree leaves is an impressive sight.

Towards the north-east, the walkway above the Leopoldine temple leads first to the **Obelisk pond** and then on to the **Obelisk** itself. The Obelisk pond is the highest pond of the garden and serves as a water reservoir for all the other ponds. The Obelisk at the highest point of the garden was built in 1871 by Prince Nikolaus III. in memory of his wife, Lady Sarah Child-Villiers of Jersey, who had died quite young at the age of 31. The currently forest-like surroundings of the Obelisk will be shortly redeveloped by means of garden preservation measures.

Descending the walkway, visitors can make a brief detour to the mostly dilapidated Little Hearts pond located above the Orangery, which is also due for restoration. In its vicinity, there are some beautiful specimens of common honey locusts and **Kentucky coffee trees**.

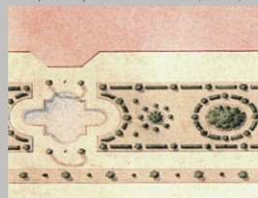


The Engine House and pond (1809)



The Orangery

The Orangery parterre: blueprint by Anton Umlauf (detail)



Orangery and Orangery parterre



The planned garden façade of the palace (1812)

The garden façade today



Maria Leopoldina Esterházy (1806)



Leopoldine temple (Dies, 1807)

The Obelisk pond



Kentucky coffee tree

