

Kaiser Wilhelm II's dream for the château du Haut-Koenigsbourg



Wilhelm II never intended to turn Haut-Koenigsbourg into his own personal residence, and he never actually slept there. At the same time, he wanted to do more than just stop the castle ruins from falling into even greater disrepair, so he ordered that the castle be completely restored. He took a very close interest in the project and visited the site every year.

His vision was an ambitious one. He wanted to bring the age of knights in armour back to life and create a museum of the Middle Ages. To attract visitors, he intended to bring the château back to the height of its glory, as it would have been around about the year 1500. Right from the start, opening the château to the public and developing the castle as a tourist attraction were an integral part of the restoration project. There were also political reasons behind the restoration of the castle. This new property gave Wilhelm II an excellent opportunity to legitimize his control of Alsace, which had been annexed in 1871.

The goals of the project

The Kaiser's goals were simple: to literally set in stone the idea that Alsace was and would always remain German territory. New construction projects in Strasbourg (the place de la république, the Gallia building and the main building of the university of Strasbourg, the palais universitaire) together with the restoration of the château du Haut-Koenigsbourg were an integral part of this vision.

Moreover, carving his coat of arms on the restored main entrance together with that of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, was a way of staking his claim to be the legitimate successor to this prestigious emperor, who had once owned the château.

The castle became a symbol of the western borders of his empire, in the same way that the castle of Marienburg (Malbork), now in Poland, used to symbolize its eastern frontiers.