

Palace Castles

As western emperor, Barbarossa saw himself as heir to the old Roman empire and that of Charlemagne in AD 800. He made conscious efforts to copy the open effect of the Carolingian palaces like Aachen, and restored those at Ingelheim and Nijmegen. His palaces, or *pfalzen*, contrasted with imperial castles (*kaiserburgen*), which controlled and protected trade routes but were effectively centres of administration.

The palaces were more attractive and largely belonged to the emperor. Goslar in the Harz

Mountains is perhaps the most famous imperial palace, but is almost wholly a 19th-century reconstruction. The open plan of these palaces reflects the confidence of imperial power at this time, when defence was secondary to luxury, although at Gelnhausen in Hesse there is a strong wall and a *bergfried*.

Wildenberg

Wildenberg lies in wooded country in Odenwald in Bavaria (Franconia), 31 miles northeast of Heidelberg. The castle was begun by Rupert von Dürn soon after 1168. Konrad von Dürn continued its growth in the 13th century, adding the upper floor of the palace, which boasts early Gothic two-light windows. The enclosure wall forms a rectangle with a salient for the gate. Above the latter is a chapel. At the western end is a square *bergfried* in rusticated masonry, while a palace and tower are set against the east side. Such castles, with limited access, could be divided into sectors with ditches. In the 15th century, the courtyard was split in half by a dividing wall.

Unfortunately, a fire damaged the castle in 1525. The Bavarian knightly *minnesinger* (poet and singer), Wolfram von Eschenbach (died c.1220), mentions Wildenberg when speaking of lords that he apparently served in the area.

The Wartburg

This famous castle rises on a steep cliff above the south side of Eisenach in the Erfurt region. Ludwig von der Schauenburg first built it in the mid-11th century as a timber structure, with two timber towers by 1080. In the 12th century the castle was rebuilt by one of Frederick Barbarossa's followers, Hermann I, Landgrave of Thuringia, in the hope of counterbalancing the powerful princes; it is one of the few examples not built for Barbarossa himself.

The impregnable terrain allowed domestic comfort to take precedence, for example in the impressive sanitary arrangements and large external palace windows. Even so, a stout wall surrounds the site. The window arcades on the courtyard side open into *loggias* (galleries). The Romanesque palace of the Thuringian Landgraves has survived, though the castle has undergone much restoration, largely faithful to the original design.

Hermann's court was visited by the *minnesingers*, Walter von der Vogelweide and Wolfram von Eschenbach, and was remembered a few generations later in the poem *Sängerkrieg*, on which Wagner based his opera *Tannhäuser*. The Wartburg became a symbol of strength for Luther when placed here for his safety by the Elector Frederick III of Saxony, between May 1521 and March 1522.

Trifels

Unlike the palaces, Trifels, perched on a mountain near Annweiler, is a *kaiserburg*, an imperial fortress. Like some other *kaiserburgen*, the emperor appropriated the site from its owners. Trifels similarly lies close to an important trade route, that from Speyer to the Saar, which connected the



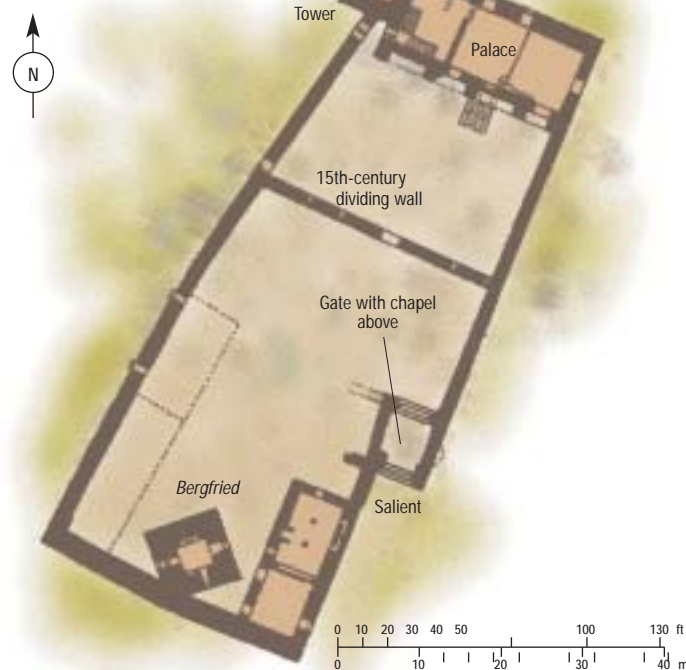
above: Reconstruction of Trifels, which commanded an important trade route.

middle Rhine lands to France. Together with Anebos and Schnarfenberg it forms one of the 'Trinity of Fortresses'. Barbarossa enlarged the site in 1153.

Trifels castle is now a ruin, although the triangular layout is clearly visible. The large staircase, usually in front of the palace building, here leads to the square tower, inside which is the palace entrance. The semi-circular apse (usually at the east end of a church or chapel, often with a domed roof) here juts out on the floor above, an early example of this feature.



Plan of Wildenberg



below: The watchtower is one of the earliest remaining parts of Wartburg castle.