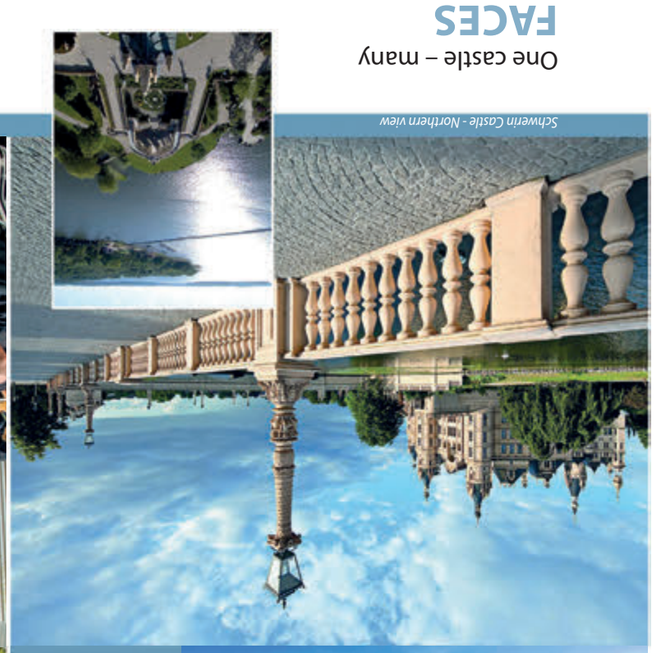
English

SCHWERIN CASTLE

Seat of the Land Parliament
of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania
History, culture and a place to meet

Mecklenburg Vorpommern
Landtag



Schwerin Castle - Northern view

One castle – many FACES

Schwerin Castle is at once monumental and delicate. Set amidst a small and wonderfully verdant island in Lake Schwerin, it comes pretty close to the usual definition of a fairy-tale castle. To gain even a preliminary impression of the complexity of the building, it is best to make at least one circuit of the Castle. The former residence of the Dukes and Grand Dukes of Mecklenburg is considered to be one of the most important monuments to Historicist architecture in Germany and Europe. Schwerin Castle came into being from 1845–1857, incorporating existing buildings from the 16th and 17th centuries, but the foundations on which the Castle stands are appreciably older, the first reports dating as far back as 973 and 1018.

The Castle's six different façades give it many faces. Its varied exterior is reflected in its multifunctional use. Since 1990 the main user of the Castle has been the Land Parliament of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. But it is not just a political centre; it is above all a central rendezvous for visitors to Schwerin – the capital of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania – and for the Schweriners themselves.

Plenary Room during a meeting

The castle as a PARLIAMENT

As the seat of the Dukes and Grand Dukes of Mecklenburg, the Castle always was a political centre. In 1948 the Plenary Room and various other adjoining rooms were fitted out in the "Unfinished Hall", which had been destroyed in the fire of 1913. The Castle then became the seat of the Mecklenburg Land Parliament, until 1952. In 1990 the first freely elected Parliament of the new Federal Land of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania designated the Castle as its seat. Since September 2017 the land parliament, seated in Schwerin Castle, uses a newly built, modern plenary hall for its meetings.

The Parliament passes the Land's laws, elects the Minister-President and controls the Government and Administration. It is the place where the political will is formed. To carry out its tasks, the Parliament has 11,500 m² of the Castle at its disposal. This is about half the total area of the Castle, or two-thirds of the area which is at present usable. Therefore, the Plenary Room, the offices of the 71 Members, the rooms for the parliamentary groups, the Press and conferences, the Parliament Library and part of the Parliamentary Administration are actually housed within the historic walls.

Throne Room in the Castle Museum

The castle as a MUSEUM

The first museum, in the historic rooms, opened its doors early, in 1921. This was the first time that the Castle had been opened to the general public. During World War II the Castle was used as a military hospital, and later as a college of education. In the early 1970s Historicist art and architecture were re-evaluated, and in 1974 the restoration of the sumptuous interior rooms began, with the aim of making these accessible to the public once more, as a museum.

On the Belletage and Festetage (second and third storeys) one can visit many apartments, reception rooms and state rooms, such as the Throne Room, the Gallery of Ancestral Portraits, the Library or the Grand Duchess's room. The rooms are astonishing, with inlaid floors of great artistry, and rich painted and carved decorations. There are also choice paintings, sculptures, furniture, weapons, medals, jewellery and other crafts to be seen. The former nursery on the first upper floor houses precious porcelain from Meissen, Berlin and other European manufactories.

Castle Chapel

The castle as a CHURCH

The construction of the Castle Chapel goes back to Duke Johann Albrecht I of Mecklenburg (1525 –1576). In 1563 the Chapel was consecrated as the first Protestant church in Mecklenburg. During the remodelling and renovation of the Castle in the 19th century the famous architect Zwirner (1802–1861) gave the Chapel its Neo-Gothic choir, which is clearly recognisable from the outside.

Guests have long had to for go a visit to the Chapel because of the comprehensive building works. Since Whitsun 2013 – the 450th jubilee of the Chapel's consecration – this house of God has appeared in all its new glory and splendour. The Chapel's congregation has also come home again. Besides the divine services on Sunday there are tours and concerts. The Landtag also uses the Chapel for its ecumenical services before the plenary sessions.

The funding for the Chapel renovations does not all come from taxes. Under the scheme "Buy Your Own Star in the Sky" it is possible to "buy" stars in the vaulted ceiling symbolically, and support the maintenance of Castle and Chapel in this way.

View of the Castle

Orangery Café

The castle as a RENDEZVOUS

Walks in the Burggarten, picnics in the Schlossgarten, weddings in the Castle Chapel, coffee in the Orangery, meals in the former King's Hall, round trips on Lake Schwerin, and the minor and major sporting and cultural events based around the Castle. The Castle Island is always bustling with activity.

A popular rendezvous is the Orangery, opened again in 2001 after almost six years of building work. After the expensive repairs, the Orangery Café was also opened in the side wing. Besides the restaurant – café in the former King's Hall, it is the second gastronomic centre actually inside the Castle. As the Orangery is used for its original purpose as a cold house for particularly delicate pot-plants and tub-plants from the Burggarten, the Café is open only from April to October.

Directly facing the Castle Island is the newly-built mooring for the Weisse Flotte (White Fleet). Here are the pleasure-boats, which offer a round trip of Schwerin's lakes from April to October.

Orangery Terrace

The castle and its GREEN SPACES

At every season, the Burggarten and the Schlossgarten have a fairy-tale appeal, especially in transition. The various parts alternate between strict symmetry and seemingly carefree, untouched nature. The Castle's island site gives a special fascination to the views across, through and into water – in the form of a large lake, an artificial canal, or here and there a fountain or water feature.

The Burggarten on the Castle Island takes up the design principles of English landscape gardens, and incorporates the suggestions and plans of Gottfried Semper, Georg Adolf Demmler, the Court Gardener Theodor Klett and the German garden designer, Peter Joseph Lenn., in the wake of the Castle's reshaping in the mid-19th century. The Schlossgarten, which is larger, was laid out as a baroque park on the base of an existing kitchen garden by the famous French garden designer, Jean Legeay, in the mid-18th century. In the 19th century there were also some redesigns and additions to the Schlossgarten, producing the two pergola walks, the Schlossgarten Pavilion and the Green Garden.

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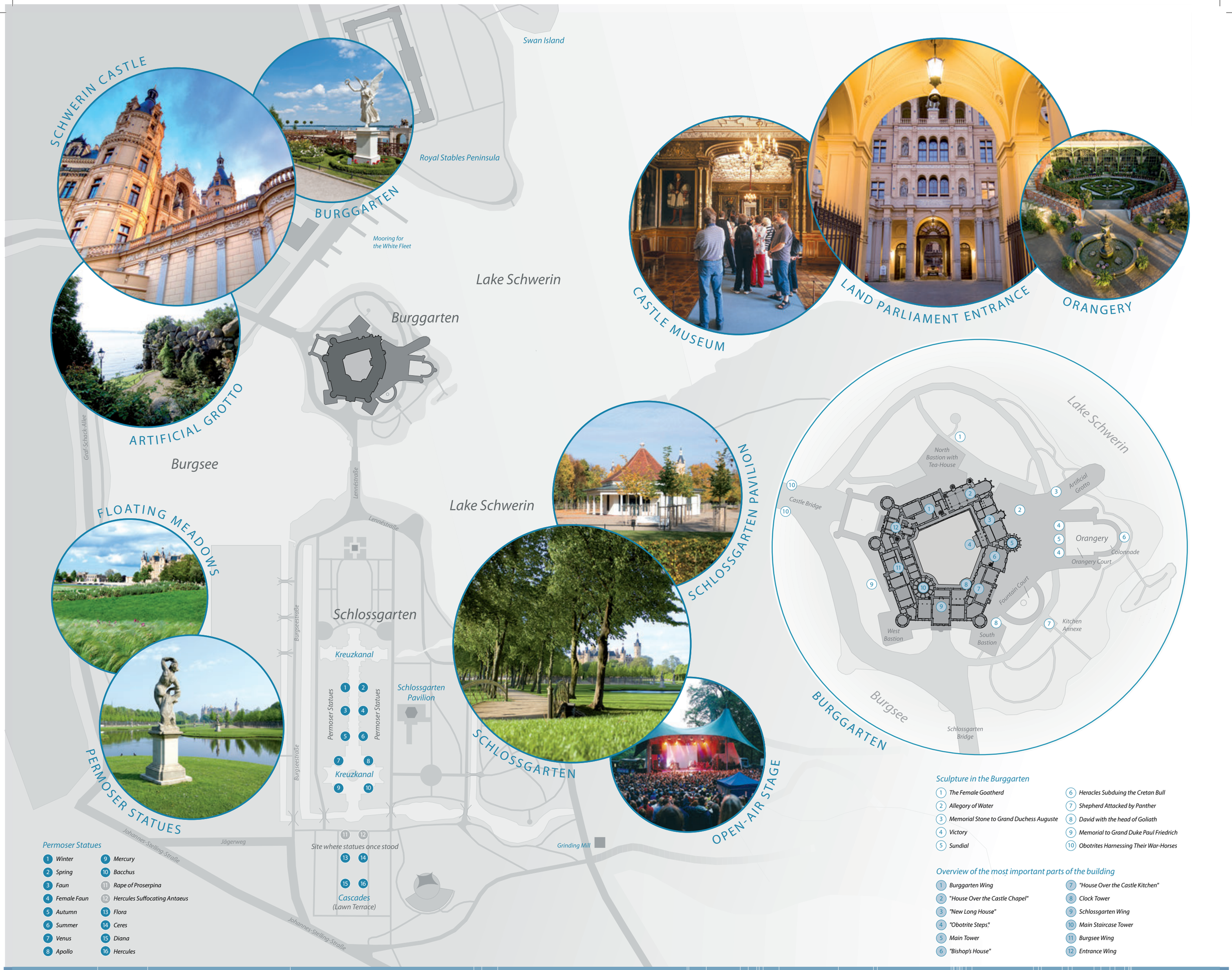

Permoser Statues

1. Winter
2. Spring
3. Faun
4. Female Faun
5. Autumn
6. Summer
7. Venus
8. Apollo
9. Mercury
10. Bacchus
11. Rape of Proserpina
12. Hercules Suffocating Antaeus
13. Flora
14. Ceres
15. Diana
16. Hercules

Sculpture in the Burggarten

1. The Female Goatherd
2. Allegory of Water
3. Memorial Stone to Grand Duchess Auguste
4. Victory
5. Sundial
6. Heracles Subduing the Cretan Bull
7. Shepherd Attacked by Panther
8. David with the head of Goliath
9. Memorial to Grand Duke Paul Friedrich
10. Obotrites Harnessing Their War-Horses

Overview of the most important parts of the building

1. Burggarten Wing
2. "House Over the Castle Chapel"
3. "New Long House"
4. "Obotrite Steps"
5. Main Tower
6. "Bishop's House"
7. "House Over the Castle Kitchen"
8. Clock Tower
9. Schlossgarten Wing
10. Main Staircase Tower
11. Burgsee Wing
12. Entrance Wing

1000 | 1100 | 1200 | 1300 | 1400 | 1500 | 1600 | 1700 | 1800 | 1900 | 2000

973 Mention of an island fortress in a freshwater lake.

1018 Mention of an Obotrite frontier fortress.

1160 In the face of the overwhelming hostile force of Heinrich the Lion, the Obotrite prince Niklot destroys the frontier fortress on the island. Heinrich the Lion rebuilds the fortress and founds the town of Schwerin. Around 1167 the island fortress becomes the residence of the German count Gunzelin.

1350 Mention of an arsenal (arms depot) on the fortress island.

1358 Duke Albrecht von Mecklenburg acquires the countship of Schwerin and the island fortress by purchase. He transfers his main residence from Wismar to Schwerin.

1374 Mention of a tower on the fortress island.

1557 The architect Johann Baptista Parr enters the ducal service.

1560 Start of construction work on the Castle Chapel – continues till 1563.

1577 Mention of a kitchen garden at Schwerin Castle.

1612 The architect Geert Evert Piloot enters the Mecklenburg service.

1620 King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden stays at Schwerin Castle.

1629 The Castle is occupied by Imperial troops.

1631 The Castle is occupied by Swedish troops.

1635 The "House over the Castle Kitchen" is erected – building continues till 1643.

1651 Devastating fire in the town of Schwerin.

1716 Tsar Peter I. stays at Schwerin Castle.

1752 Fourteen sandstone statues from the workshop of Balthasar Permoser (dating from 1720) are bought in Hamburg for the Schlossgarten.

1756 The Court begins its transfer to Ludwigslust.

1834 Inauguration of the new Government building (State Chancellery).

1836 The theatre, built by Demmler, in inaugurated.

1837 The Court is transferred back from Ludwigslust to Schwerin. The old Castle is thoroughly restored.

1840 Demmler prepares a design for a new palace at the "Old Garden".

1842 Foundation-stone laid for Paul Friedrich´s castle at the "Old Garden". Demmler´s first design for a new Castle on the island.

1843 Gottfried Semper, the architect from Dresden, sends a design of his own for the construction of Schwerin Castle.

1845 Demmler´s third and definitive design is approved. Construction starts on the new Schwerin Castle.

1850 Year of the most intensive construction work on the new Castle. Demmler submits his request for resignation.

1857 Inauguration of the new Castle on 26 May.

1913 Serious fire at the Castle.

1918 Grand Duke abdicates. The Castle passes into the possession of the Land.

1921 A museum is opened in the Castle´s historic rooms.

1942 A military hospital is set up in the Castle.

1948 Extension of the Plenary Room for the Land Parliament of Mecklenburg.

1952 A college of education is set up in the Castle.

1974 The Throne Room is the first of the restored state rooms to be handed to the public.

1981 The college of education leaves the Castle.

1990 The newly elected Parliament of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania designates the Castle as its seat.

1994 The Parliament confirms the concept for the Castle´s general use.

2001 Re-opening of the restored Orangery after almost six years of building.

2007 Anniversary festivities – Schwerin Castle is 150 years old.

2009 German Garden Exhibition in Schwerin around the Castle.

2010 City Jubilee – Schwerin is 850 years old

Grand Duke Friedrich Franz II
(1812–1883, reigned from 1842–1883). Painting by Franz Krüger in the Throne Room, 1854.

Grand Duchess Auguste
(1822–1862) was the first wife of Friedrich Franz II. Painting by Friedrich Kaulbach in the Throne Room, 1856.