

Cultural Moments (Wednesday afternoon November 8th):

With Yves Lemoigne, Katerina Bobori



Visit to the Achilleion, the palace built for Empress Elisabeth of Austria (Sisi) in 1890 to flee the heavy atmosphere of the imperial Court of Vienna.

Departure: *Special Bus at 14:15, History Dept. (Please be in time!)*

Return: *17:15 History Dept.*

(Please provide 5 Euros per person for the visit of the Palace and gardens providing a magnificent view)

*If the timing allows,
there will be a detour
for the famous little
island of the
Vlacherna Monastery.*



History note:

The Achilleion Palace was built by Empress of Austria Elisabeth of Bavaria, also known as Sisi. Elisabeth was a woman obsessed with beauty. She had a very powerful, but tragically vulnerable character since the loss of several members of her family, mainly her only son, Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria in 1889. A year later in 1890, she built a summer palace in Corfu island, about ten kilometres to the south of the city of Corfu. The central theme of the palace is the mythical hero Achilles. Elisabeth spoke fluent Greek and expressed a desire to further immerse herself in the Greek culture. The palace was designed by Italian architect Raffaele Caritto. Ernst Herter, a famous German sculptor, was commissioned to create works inspired from Greek mythology. His famous sculpture Dying Achilles, created in Berlin in 1884 as inscribed in the statue, forms the centrepiece of the Achilleion Gardens. The palace surrounded with classic Greek statues is a monument to platonic romanticism as well as escapism and was, naturally, named after Achilles: Achilleion. The place abounds with paintings and statues of Achilles, both in the main hall and in the lavish gardens depicting the heroic and tragic scenes of the Trojan War. The architectural style is Pompeian.

The Imperial gardens on top of the hill provide a majestic view of the surrounding green hill crests and valleys with the Ionian sea gleaming in the background. Elisabeth used to visit the place often until 1898 when she was assassinated in Geneva by Italian anarchist Luigi Lucheni. The tragic cycle continued on the 28th June 1914 the murder of the heir Prince in Sarajevo which was the origin of the World War I

After Elisabeth's death, the German Kaiser Wilhelm II purchased Achilleion in 1907 from her heirs and used it as a summer residence. Wilhelm, expanding on the main theme of the grounds, commissioned his own Achilles statue from the sculptor Johannes Götz who created an imposing bronze sculpture that stands tall as a guardian of the Gardens facing north toward the city. This tall statue is surrounded by palm trees that complement its graceful outline. After the World War I Achilleion became property of the Greek state...