

Sisi's Road -- Bavarian Girl, Austrian Empress, Hungarian Queen

The legacy of Elisabeth Amalie Eugenia von Wittelsbach (known as Sisi to her family and friends) is felt more than a century later, and spans across five European countries (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, and Switzerland) on Sisi's Road, or the *Sisi Strasse* in German.

Sisi was considered to be one of the most beautiful women of her time, married to the heir of the Austrian Empire (at 16, he was 24). Yet, her life was hardly charmed — even going so far as to being compared to a “Hollywood movie script.” Even her death was tragic; murdered on a city street at the age of 61.

Who was this extraordinary woman to warrant an entire [scenic route in Germany](#) and beyond that bears her name? She wasn't simple by any means, born Christmas Eve 1837. Her father was a Bavarian Duke, her mother the sister of Bavaria's King Ludwig I.

Yes, that makes Sisi the first cousin to Mad King Ludwig II.

Sisi wasn't supposed to be queen or empress. Her sister, Helene, was the one who was to marry Austria's heir-apparent Franz Joseph. When her family traveled to meet the prince's family, he was instantly smitten with Elisabeth instead.

The Start of Sisi's Road in Germany

Whomever she married, Sisi's Road follows the places and sites that were important in the life of this magnificent lady. The sites in Germany on the Sisi Road are huddled together in [Bavaria](#) and the [German Alps](#) region, so there's no exact starting point.

Either way, let me kick it off in [Aichach](#).

Elisabeth spent her childhood here in Aichach at Unterwittelsbach Castle (her father's retreat) where she was known to ride her horses quite frequently. She was also known to frequent the pubs around town with her father, even finding a way to make her own money. You can see the exterior of the castle just about anytime, but the inside only on special occasions.

[Pöcking](#) is where Elisabeth spent time in another castle, Possenhofen Castle — the family's ducal estate. But, that's not where you'll find the Kaiserin Elisabeth Museum; that's housed in the Old Train Station (open weekends 2pm – 6pm).

As befitting a queen (and the cousin and niece of kings, as well as the niece of queens) Elisabeth was often in castle and palaces. The next palace where Sisi spent her time was St. Emmeram

Castle in [Regensburg](#). The Austria Empress' sister died here (with Elisabeth at her side) at the seat of the House of Thurn & Taxis.

The room of her death was eventually converted to a chapel; and visitors are welcome to take guided tours of the palace, the Carriage Museum, and brewery. Just so long as you do it between April and the beginning of November.

It wouldn't be correct to say that Elisabeth spent too much time at the [Neuschwanstein Castle](#), but this epic palace was "created" by her cousin, Ludwig II. They would often meet at Rose Island in [Lake Starnberg](#), away from prying eyes at Court and free to be themselves; and the reasons why both places are stops along Sisi's Road.

Actually, make that three stops as Lake Starnberg is also listed. Ludwig died under mysterious circumstances at the lake (there's a small chapel for that reason) but you can boat, fish, waterski, or dive all you want.

You can also hike or bicycle too, as there's a 46.2km circular trail around it.

Sounds like an idyllic life, doesn't it? Who wouldn't think so surrounded by royalty and both living or visiting some of [Germany's most beautiful castles](#). It wasn't the case for Elisabeth, I'm sorry to say.

After her brother went on to become Duke Ludwig, he "married" his Jewish girlfriend (a nice way of saying mistress), and their illegitimate daughter wasn't ever accepted at Court. Nothing too scandalous today, but really unthinkable back in the mid-19th century.

The child that wasn't accepted into royal life (and who died broke) was one of Elisabeth's favorite nieces. Sisi was a free-thinker. She was a Queen — who was going to tell her different? ;-)

Her brother, BTW, lived on Maximilian Strasse in [Augsburg](#), one of the last stops on Sisi's Road.

We actually end Sisi's Road at Feldafing where Kaiserin Elisabeth spent almost a quarter-century of summers. She often stayed at what's now called the *Golfhotel Kaiserin Elisabeth*. You're more than welcome to stay in the Sisi Suites and dine on a menu that was available in her day.

Ironic considering Elisabeth was thought to have anorexia.

You've got to be wondering where's the intrigue? Where's the royal scandal?

Well, it didn't happen in Germany. Most of her tragedies (her bouts of depression; the suicide of her son with a 17-year old girl; her murder in Geneva in 1898) happen beyond Bavaria's borders. Here she was a carefree girl who just so happened to be married to an Emperor and related to

other royalty.

Sisi's Road Web Site

Here is the official [Sisi's Road Web Site](#).