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History of Falkenstein – an overview

By the end of the 11th until early 12th century, a number of castles was built for the protection of the roads around the important imperial town of Frankfurt am Main, so also the "castle triangle" Falkenstein, Königstein, Kronberg. Around the year, 1100 the earls von Nürings, an important knights family from the Mosel/Hunsrück region, erected a first residential tower in Falkenstein, of which the more than 4 meters thick foundation walls still can be seen. After the family von Nürings had died out, it was succeeded by the lords of Falkenstein, who gained large possessions in the region of the Taunus mountains around the middle of the 13th century and for a long time were in charge of the Imperial crown jewels as Imperial treasurers. The lords of Falkenstein erected a new castle next to the residential tower, which probably was already abandoned by that time and they called it "Neu-Falkenstein" after their home castle in the Palatinate. However, the lords themselves did not live in the castle, which even had its own chapel. In the 14th century the castle and the settlement became the possession of the earls von Nassau on the river Lahn, who let it to other knight families as feudal tenure, most of which were from the Rhine-Main area. As some of these families became robber barons in the 15th century, Falkenstein turned to be the starting point of many raids in the Frankfurt region.

Mainly the Thirty Years War and the wars of the French Revolution severely damaged the buildings and walls of the fortification. Also the original village, like many German settlements, disappeared during the Thirty Years War. A new beginning took place in the second half of the 17th century, when a small settlement came into being, which was later called Falkenstein. The old town hall and some of the houses around it are from that time. The last reign over the castle and the village (1680-1773) was held by the family von Bettendorf, which for several generations was serving the prince electors and archbishops of Mainz. The Bettendorf period was extremely hard for the population, as levies and statute labour were devastating. The Catholic church, the old tower of which was integrated into the later church building (1956-1958), was erected during that time.

Since the end of the 18th century, the castle was no longer used for dwelling purposes. Damaged by the wars and no longer of importance as fortification, the castle dilapidated more and more and the citizens used the ruin as quarry until prohibition in the 19th century. In 1954, the community of Falkenstein purchased the remainders of the castle from the Land Hesse.

On 20th August 1909, the German emperor Wilhelm II in person inaugurated the officers' rest home in the Debusweg in Falkenstein. The administrator of the district of the Upper Taunus of that time, the knight von Marx, could persuade the emperor to erect a new building. So, the old tuberculosis sanatorium, which stood in this place and had gained world-wide reputation under the lead of Dr. Peter Dettweiler since 1874, but was by then no longer adequate both under structural and medical aspects, could be torn down. It took only two years to erect the new facility. Equipped with its own



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heating and power supply, and with its own water supply and agriculture, it was almost entirely self-sufficient. Due to the emperor's generous support, the small, but engaged Lutheran community of Falkenstein was able to realize its old wish for its own church and between 1912 and 1914 the Martin Luther Church was erected just next to the officers' home. During the First and Second World War, the officers' home was used as military hospital and after that, until it was finally closed 1996, again as sanatorium and clinic.

Since 1999 the buildings in the Debusweg, after a three-years phase of alteration and renovation according to the original plans of 1909, hold a hotel of the extra-class – the Kempinski Hotel Falkenstein under the lead of Cyrus Heydarian. Surrounded by a six hectares large park, the five stars superior house has more than 105 dwelling units, 41 rooms, 19 suits and 45 long-term apartments allocated to eight buildings in English country house style. Nine rooms are equipped with most advanced technical installations for congresses and festivities. The gourmet restaurant "Siesmayer" and the bistro "Raffael's" are managed by the chef de cuisine Oliver Heberlein. From the terrace of the house, guests are able to enjoy the overwhelming panorama of the Taunus mountains and of the Frankfurt skyline. The facility offers everything, an open-fire lounge with bar, relish saunas and even an outdoor pool, completed by the wellness programme of the ASCARA Health & Beauty Centre.

Due to its favourable situation regarding climatic conditions, Falkenstein was a climate resort since a long time, before it was awarded the rare distinction of "curative climate resort" in 2002. So, until today Königstein is the only place in Germany, which was awarded this distinction twice: for the core city and also for the city quarter of Falkenstein. An important precondition for the acknowledgement of Falkenstein was the opening of the Asklepios Neurological Clinic and of the Hotel Kempinski in the autumn of 1999. Since 2005, one of the 12 portals to the first German curative climate park is located directly next to the hotel.

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