



## **Innsbruck: Middle Ages - the Golden Age**

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**Ornate arbours and romantic arcade aisles - typical decorations of Gothic and Baroque façades - can be seen along Herzog-Friedrich-Straße, the main street of Innsbruck. This street will lead us to the building which is considered to be the city's showcase, commonly known as the Golden Roof.**

Maximilian I (1459 - 1519), Holy Roman emperor and German king, Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, Luxemburg, count of Flanders, Netherlands, Frisia, etc - in all, one of the founders of the power of the House of Habsburg - was not lucky with women. Mary, Duchess of Burgundy, the only daughter of Charles the Bold, whom Maximilian loved madly since the age of 15, was too good a catch for him (wooed by such good parties as French king's son or English king's brother). As she was designated to marry the German heir already in 1473, Mary agreed to be married *per procuracionem* to Maximilian only after her father's death in 1477, pressured by Louis XI of France who was eager to grab her inheritance - Burgundy, which he wanted to become part of the French crown. The marriage soon resulted in war between France and Germany over Burgundy - the first of numerous campaigns in which Maximilian triumphed, strengthening his state and widening its borders. Alas, Mary, who eventually granted Maximilian her love - and most importantly - an heir (Duke Philip, later known as Philip I the Fair, was born already in 1478) died as early as 1482, fatally injured after falling from her horse while hunting with her husband.

Until 1490, when his marriage to Anne of Brittany was arranged, Maximilian found comfort in casual affairs. Unfortunately, their wedding plans were ruined, this time by the French king Charles VIII (son of Louis XI) who was quicker... Another chance of marriage came in 1494. Maximilian's new sweetheart - Bianca Maria Sforza, daughter of Galeazza Sforza, Duke of Milan by his second wife Bona of Savoy - lacked beauty, which disappointed her husband. But she had one unquestionable asset - a large dowry which was particularly helpful after Emperor Frederick III, Maximilian's father died.

Maximilian had no love for Bianca and was frequently unfaithful (especially when it became clear that the empress could not bear children); he also passed syphilis onto her. However, it was in her honor that he ordered the extension of his father's former residence in Innsbruck, i.e. an elaborate bay window with a roof made of 2657 gilded copper shingles. Architect Niklas Türing made sure that this most famous European "balcony" looked special: it is decorated with animal inlays and relief representations of Maximilian and his two wives. Frescoes on the inside balcony walls display knights holding flags of the Empire and Tirol.

Maximilian, known as "the last knight" of Europe between the Middle Ages and modernity, was expert in sword fighting and horse riding, therefore he gladly participated in tournaments which he organised in Innsbruck. Besides, this ruler did not mind manual labour, was fluent in six languages (although, and this fact was rarely mentioned at his court, Latin was not his strength...), wrote an occasional scholarly treatise, sponsored artists and wrote two chansons de geste.

Maximilian I is also remembered because of one of Innsbruck's main tourist attractions, namely Emperor's tomb of his own design. The palace chapel of Hofkirche hides 28 huge bronze statues of "black knights" protecting the emperor's tomb which is actually ... empty. The great



**Magiczny  
Kraków**

Maximilian was not ment to rest here. His successors decided there was no point in transporting his body from the not so distant town of Wels.