

What's the Difference Between a Castle and a Palace?

 science.howstuffworks.com/engineering/architecture/castle-palace-difference.htm

If you hear the word "castle" or the word "palace," you might picture the same kind of building for both: large, made of cut stones, probably with a tower or turret. And, of course, you're not entirely wrong, as those are features of both palaces and castles.

So then why bother calling one royal building in the United Kingdom Buckingham Palace and another in the same country Windsor Castle? It turns out there is a difference, and you can see it pretty plainly in these two popular buildings.

The Case for Castles

Castles were built throughout Europe and the Middle East primarily for protection of the king and his people. Some common features of castles include:

- thick walls and heavy gates to keep invaders out
- high towers for keeping a lookout over the surrounding lands
- parapets or slits in the walls for archers to shoot with cover
- gatehouses for admitting allies instead of allowing enemies into the castle
- moats for defensive purposes

Castles were (and sometimes still are, as in the case of Windsor Castle) residences for royalty. But they were also intended as defensive seats. Say you're a king who has taken a particular area over. Now you have to hold it. So you build a castle and staff it with soldiers and ministers to defend your conquered territory and ensure it remains part of your kingdom.

The Place for Palaces

Palaces, on the other hand, have no defensive purposes. They're meant for showing off — big time. This is where the spoils of war might be displayed, along with elaborate architecture, golden thrones, massive banquet halls, gilded table settings and dozens — maybe even hundreds — of sumptuously decorated rooms.

While kings and queens certainly took up residence in palaces as well as castles, nonmilitary royals might also have lived in (or still live in) palaces. Bishops and ministers could live in castles to showcase the power of their immense riches rather than their nonexistent military power. The term comes from Palatine Hill in Rome, where the first palaces were built to display wealth.

You can see this when you look at Buckingham Palace, which is in the middle of London and built to impress visitors rather than to defend against any raiding hordes that might make it past Trafalgar Square.

Buckingham Palace is the official London residence of Queen Elizabeth II. It is a prime example of a royal residence not meant for defense, but one meant more for, well, showing off.