

## On the trail of history

# Breisach lively past

The history of Breisach reaches back over 4000 years. The Münsterberg (Minster Hill) was the seat of a Celtic principality then a Roman castle and, since the early Middle Ages, was the centre of the up-and-coming city with its market rights and right of coinage, with formidable city defences, of which some wall and a few gates are still visible, and which provided a home for many monasteries.

The city's prosperity over many centuries, and its importance as a traffic hub and trading city, is due to its location on the Rhine, and the bridge across this river. In the 17th and 18th centuries Breisach, under Habsburg and French sovereignty, was one of Europe's most important and strongest fortified cities.

The fortifications were razed in the mid-18th century, and the city itself was almost completely destroyed by French bombardment in 1793. 85% of Breisach was destroyed again at the end of the Second World War in 1945. In 1950, surrounded by rebuilding work, this was the first city whose citizens expressed their wish for the formation of a united Europe.

Experience this city's lively past on a walk through the Lower City, over the Münsterberg or on a tour of the fortifications, and follow the footprints to the numerous explanations of the city's history.

### The Lower City Tour

#### 1 St. Martin's Hospital Church

Part of the former Holy Ghost Hospital from the 17th/18th century, destroyed during the Second World War. Now a municipal event and concert room.

#### The old city wall 2 8 13

Remnants of the city wall, constructed in the 14th century to protect the Lower City, can be seen opposite today's Martin Schongauer Gymnasium (grammar school), as well as on Rempartstrasse and near Muggensturmstrasse. They provide an impression of the formidable defences of the Middle Ages city.

#### 3 The Marienau Cistercian Monastery

Site of the monastery, destroyed in 1525 during the Peasants' War. Several historical buildings on the nearby Neutorplatz recall Breisach's numerous breweries during the 19th and early 20th century.

#### The Sparkasse building 4

From 1945-1953 the Sparkasse building was the seat of the municipal administration (up to 85% of which was destroyed during the war), and was thus also the polling station for the famous Breisach European Ballot of 9 July 1950.

#### 5 Rheinstrasse

The "Engel Lichtspiele" (Angel Cinema) has provided film entertainment since 1920 in Rheinstrasse, where Breisach's Presbytery, a Catholic "vicarage", stood until 1589 (sign on house no.11). The sandstone figure of the "Pfyfferkönig" (Piper King), an historical character in the Middle Ages "Kesselerlage" (Cauldron Days) and the "Brysacher Fasent" (Breisach's Faschnacht or Carnival), stands in solitary splendour on the corner house diagonally opposite.

#### The Gutgesellentor (The Gutgesell Gate) 6

Erected in 1402 and named after the Gutgesell family of watchmen, in 1415 the dissenting Pope Johannes XXII was arrested at this gate while on the run from the Council of Constance. It now houses the meeting place of the Narrenzunft (Guild of Fools) upstairs.

#### 7 Neutorstrasse

There are numerous historically interesting buildings in the Neutorstrasse pedestrian zone, including several restaurants with long traditions, as well as the Municipal Apothecary (since 1798).

#### The former Schanzhof 8

(military construction storehouse). Part of the former Baroque fort buildings with the city coats-of-arms on the south façade of the building. Nearby, part of the old city wall from the 14th century.

#### 9 The Protestant Martin Bucer Church

Breisach's first Protestant church was built here in 1904 and destroyed in 1945, during the war. A temporary church was erected here in 1951. Today's church was constructed in 1967/68 and named after the reformer Martin Bucer.

#### The Rentmeisterei 10

The old accounting office, the regional goods and accounts administration, from 1632, now part of the wine-growing estate of Gebrüder Müller, with a sales and tasting room in which the co-founder Johann Baptist Hau (1782-1857), a pioneer of high-quality viticulture on the Kaiserstuhl, is commemorated.

#### 11 Breisach's orphanage, prison and workhouse

Built as a French military hospital before 1688, the building later served as an orphanage, prison and workhouse before its destruction in 1793.

#### St. Joseph's Church with the Old Cemetery 12

The church was built as the cemetery chapel in the 17th/18th century and incorporated the Schwedeneturm (the Swedish Tower) from 1466. Gravestones from the 18th and 19th centuries are to be seen in the cemetery.



**Breisach am Rhein (Breisach-on-Rhine)**  
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Follow the footprints through the city and discover Breisach's lively past.

- The Münsterberg Tour
- The Fort Tour
- The Lower City Tour
- Poetry en route
- Locations of information signs
- Tourist information
- Playground
- Ships' moorings
- Car park

### The Münsterberg Tour

#### 14 The Hagenbachturm

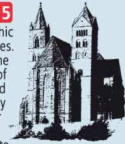
(The Hagenbach Tower). A former prison, whose name derives from nobleman Peter of Hagenbach from Burgundy, who was held here for a few weeks in 1474 while awaiting judgement.

#### The Franciscan Monastery 16

Where today the District Court and Notary's Office is located, there was a Franciscan Monastery with a Gymnasium (grammar school) and comedy playhouse in 1302-1793, thereafter from 1822-1945 the Amtshaus (administrative building) with the District Administration, District Court and prison.

### St. Stephan's Minster 15

Breisach's emblem, built in Roman and Gothic styles between the 12th and 15th centuries. Although badly damaged in 1945, during the Second World War, significant works of art of their time survived inside. Gravestones and epitaphs from the 14th to 18th centuries pay witness to Breisach's turbulent history under Austrian and French rule. The main signs of interest are the tympanum above the west gate, crypts, wall paintings by Martin Schongauer, the high altar, the reliquary shrine, the Holy Grave, the choir screen, and chancel. The Münsterplatz (Minster Square) served as a cemetery from the Middle Ages until the mid-17th century, and as an exercise area in the 18th century.



### 17 The Kapuzinerkloster (Capuchin Monastery)

A few steps further, the Kapuzinerkloster, whose high altar paintings in the chapel were created by one of the most famous painters of the 17th century, Guido Reni from Bologna, stood here from 1624-1793.

#### The Alte Kanzlei (The Old Chancellery) 18

The Alte Kanzlei, built in the 15th century, stood here until about 1700, and was also the residence of Breisach's city commanders.

#### The Tullaturm (Tulla Tower) 19

The centre of the Schlossplatz (Castle Square), on which Breisach's Castle stood from the 12th to 18th century, accommodates the Tullaturm, an observation tower built in 1874 as a central monument erected by the Baden Rhine Residents' Association for the "Tamer of the Wild Rhine", Johann Gottfried Tulla (1770-1828).

### The Augustinerkloster 20

(Augustine Monastery). The Augustinerkloster, founded shortly before 1271, was located here. Largely destroyed by fire in 1473 and subsequently rebuilt, the monastery was renovated in Baroque style during the 18th century. Finally destroyed in 1793.

#### 21 Zum Löwen (The Lion)

Here stood the "Zum Löwen" inn, first mentioned in 1300 and destroyed in 1793, which is believed to have accommodated Pope Johannes XXIII in 1415 while he was fleeing from the Council of Constance.

### 22 Zum Sternen (The Star)

The house, built in 1536, once a 3-storey structure with a magnificent gate and pillared hall on the ground floor, was one of the city's most beautiful secular buildings. Destroyed in 1793, only the arched cellar, parts of the ground floor walls, and the gate with the portrait medallions of Emperor Charles V and King Ferdinand I remain, integrated into the new building erected in 1996.

### The Radbrunnenturm 23

(Treadle wheel well tower). Rising from the centre of the Radbrunnallee, the Radbrunnenturm rises from here one has a 41-metre-deep drinking water well, work on which started under the Fifth Duke of Zähringen Bertold V in 1198, and from which water was drawn using a wooden treadle wheel. The tower was once also a Middle Ages town hall and court with a torture chamber. After several renovations, since 1983 the tower has served the "Kunstkreis Radbrunnen" (a local arts circle) as their exhibition and concert room.

### 24 Zur Roten Kuppe (The Red Cup)

Drinking lounge of the Guild of Gentlemen from 1499 to 1793. Here, in 1673, the French "Sun King" Louis XIV received the ambassadors of Alsace's Brotherhood of Knights and the 10-City Alliance. Seat of the Supreme Court and Parliament of Alsace from 1674 to 1681. Destroyed in 1931, only the gate survives.

### The Pforrhaus 25

Built in 1511 by the patrician Pforr family as one of the city's most magnificent secular buildings. After 1643 it was the "Zum Sternen" restaurant and from 1797 to 1807 a provisional town hall. After its destruction during the Second World War, it was rebuilt with alterations including oriel reliefs by the sculptor Karl Heinz Engelin.

### 26 The Notre Dame Monastery

A sign commemorates the location of the "Notre Dame" Monastery between 1736 and 1793. The northern part of the building was rebuilt, and from 1820 to 1927 served as the St. Ursula Monastery and, from 1945, a schoolhouse. After renewed destruction and rebuilding it has been an elementary school since 1950.

### The Kapfzor "Gate with Lovely View" 27

Believed to have been built in the 12th century, the name refers to "kapfze" (meaning "view") because from here one has a beautiful panorama over the Rhine to the Vosges mountains. Used as a local prison by the military from 1895 to 1918, it now offers municipal residential housing.

### 28 The Rheintor (The Rhine Gate)

Built in 1678 by Jacques de Tarade, the French master architect of forts, to protect the Rhine bridge first mentioned in 1246. Rich figures decorate the west façade; since 1991 the building houses the Museum of City History, whose numerous objects, pictures and models provide an overview of about 4000 years of Breisach's history.

### The Fortification Tour

### Synagogenplatz 29

The synagogue, built in 1804, with the Mikwe (ritual bath) annex, was destroyed by arson on 10 November 1938 after the Reichspogromnacht (the "Night of Broken Glass"). On the site of a memorial stone erected in 1959, the area was redesigned in 1998 with the outlines of the synagogue and a memorial.

### 30 The Jüdisches Gemeindehaus

(The Jewish Congregation Rooms). The restaurant "Zum St. Peter", mentioned as early as the 17th century, was used for the Jewish Congregation Rooms from 1829 to 1941. After extensive restoration it is now used for events and for documenting the Jewish history of Breisach and the region.

### The Kupfertor 31

(The Copper Gate). Built in 1641/43 during construction of the fortifications and badly damaged in 1793. After rebuilding in 1844 in a simple design, it temporarily served as a guardhouse and from 1893 to 1918 as a garrison depot. It now accommodates two of Breisach's groups of "fools" ("Narren"). In front, the Gauklerbrunnen (Jugglers' Fountain), designed by Helmut Lutz in 1987.

### 32 The Zehntscheuer (The Tithe Barn)

The Kupfertorstrasse house the Zehntscheuer, built in 1588, once a riding stables and barracks, later used as a residential and business building and destroyed by fire in 1971. The former Bercher brewery, a few metres farther, built in the 19th century on the foundation walls of the former Zeughaus (an arsenal or armoury) is another reminder of Breisach's fort period in the 17th/18th century.

### The former barracks 33

Barracks, built in about 1900, and used for civilian purposes in 1918 after the end of the First World War. A French garrison was accommodated here from 1945 to 1997. After restoration and redesign it is now a modern residential complex.

### 34 The station

Built in 1913/14 using Kaiserstuhl basalt. Until the Rhine bridge was demolished in 1945, it was a station on the European east-west connection between Freiburg and Colmar. The rail connection to Freiburg has been in existence since 1871, and that to the Kaiserstuhl since 1895.