

At the 4th century, roman castles were built in Bricasuch (Breisach), Horbourg and Biesheim/Kunheim.

The Alemanni settled in the upper Rhine Valley at the end of the 4th century. From this point on, the Alemannic culture and language would make a permanent impression on our history.

This area around the roman military camp was already an important Rhine crossing-point. Numerous small islands close ones to the others allowed the installation of small wood bridges. It was easy for people to go from one border to the other. In the early Middle Ages, the Principality of Swabia-Alsace belonged to the German Holy Roman Empire. After this, Upper Alsace and Breisgau fell to the Austrian Habsburg Empire.

After the Thirty Year War (1618 – 1648), Breisach and the Austrian properties in Upper Alsace were ceded to the french Kingdom. Headquarters of the Sovereign Council of Alsace were transferred in 1671 from Ensisheim to Breisach. A new city, called ville de Paille or Ville Neuve Saint-Louis, is built in 1681. In consequence of the Ryswick's Treaty, this city is pulled down in 1698. For the first time, the Rhine became the border between France and the Austria's Breisgau. When Breisach fell again to Austria in 1697, Louis XIV instructed his master architect Vauban to build the fort at Neuf-Brisach. In 1805 the Principality of Baden took over the former Austrian properties in Breisgau.

During the second half of the 19th century the Rhine was straightened and dammed according the plans of the Baden engineer Johann Gottfried von Tulla. After the German-French conflict in 1870, Alsace and part of Lorraine became German until 1918. The area was known as "Reichsland". The railway line between Colmar, Breisach and Freiburg was constructed (in 1878) during this period.

From 1918, the Rhine was again the border between France and Germany. The river is no longer merely a border, but rather a German-French intersection in Europe, with a rising number of cross-border projects and twinned cities such as Breisach and Neuf-Brisach.

Increasing exchanges in the areas of official co-operation, business, social contact, culture and tourism promote cross-border connections and friendships between inhabitants on the both sides of the Rhine.

City Tour

1 The Fountain

The octagonal fountain built out of red sandstone in 1726 could be used should a fire break out. In 1870, the fountain was completely destroyed and reconstructed in 1992.

2 The Royal St Louis Church

Constructed in 1731 – 1736 as military church, Royal St Louis Church was destroyed in 1945 and rebuilt in 1975 according to the original plans of the architect François Chevalier.

3 The Town Hall

Built in 1700 the original building was half brick, half wood, whereas the final building was built out of stone. The stalls on either side were used by local butchers.

4 The Roster Square – General de Gaulle Place

The Roster Square was used for military parades and exercises and for markets. A well was built on each corner of the place to supply the population with water.

5 The Grave of Michel Simon Marsal

The Fort's Artillery Commander, Michel Simon Marsal was killed on the glacis during the siege of 1870.

6 Vauban (1633 – 1707)

Louis the 14th promoted Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban to General Commissioner of Forts in 1678. Neuf-Brisach was built according to his plans.

7 The Vauban Museum

The Vauban Museum has been accommodated in the "Belfort Gate" since 1957. The relief plan with sound and light recounts the city's history and architecture.

8 The Belfort Gate (1700)

This is the original gate designed by Hardouin - Mansart.

9 The Belfort Gate – (Museum & Rhine Barge)

In front of the door in the trench is a flat-bottomed barge which was used to transport stone during the straightening work on the Rhine between 1862 and 1864.

Neuf-Brisach's defensive system 10

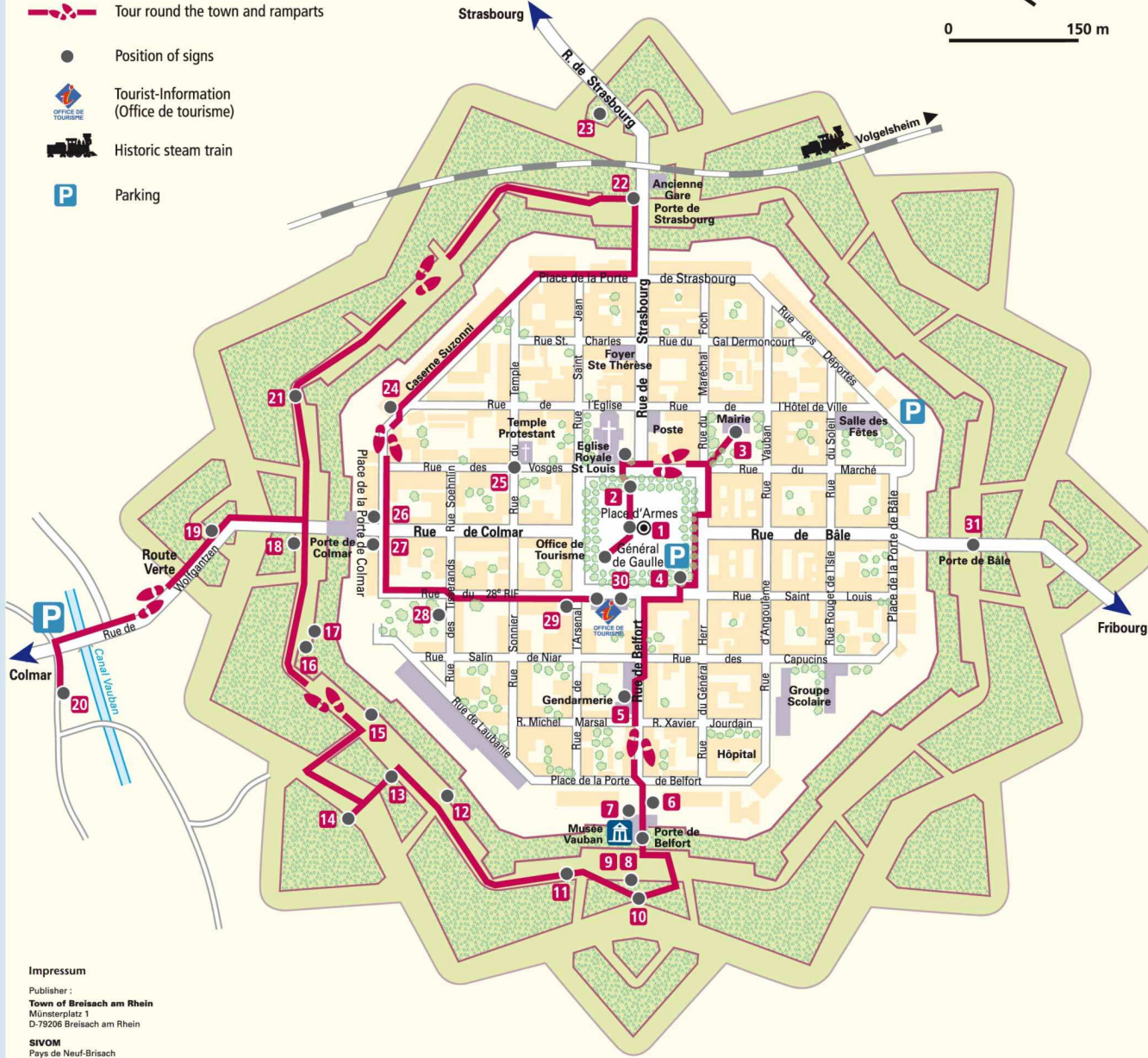
The defence of Neuf-Brisach relied on two parallel lines of defence, staggered in depth. The defensive line, formed by the parapeted towers and the wall between them, is located in the town centre. The actual offensive line is located outside. This consists of the counter-guard and the tenail, that are themselves protected by the half-moon earthworks.

Neuf-Brisach · On the trail of history

Follow the route, step by step and discover Neuf-Brisach's passionate history.

Tour round the town and ramparts

- Tour round the town and ramparts
- Position of signs
- Tourist-Information (Office de tourisme)
- Historic steam train
- Parking



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Basle Gate 31

Located to the south-east of the city, the Basle Gate remained undamaged during the siege of 1870. The French garrison marched across the Gate's intact drawbridge on 11 November 1870 to surrender the German troops with full military honours.

11 The counter-guard

It was built to defend a parapeted tower. The lower earthworks could, if taken, also be attacked effectively from the parapeted towers.

The connecting wall, also called "courtain" 12

As the name suggests, it is a connecting wall located between the two parapeted towers. The wall cladding consists of red Vosges sandstone. The crown of the wall is made of bricks. There is a parapet with battlements on the crown of the wall. Height : 9 m, thickness : 3 m.

13 The tenail with gateway

The half-height tenails are located in front of the connecting wall and protect it. A gateway provided the soldiers with rapid access to the second set of wall ditches.

The half-moon 14

The half-moon is the front-most defensive work of the fort. It is located in front of the pincer earthworks and is given all-round protection by a ditch.

15 Sentry oriel and coats-of-arms

Small round or polygonal wooden sentry oriels for single sentry posts were positioned on the tops of the parapeted towers. The oriels were provided with small observation openings.

The parapeted tower 16

With each 8 angled wall, the parapeted tower constitutes the major defence work of the fortified town. Each parapeted tower has an enormous casemate, sufficient to accommodate 300 men.

17 The Erato muse and Radbühne

This parapeted tower contains the contemporary sculptures of a German artist, Helmut Lutz from Breisach am Rhine. The "Radbühne" is eight meters high. On the angle of the tower is the "Muse Erato", muse of love and poetry.

The Colmar Gate 18

The City gates were considered weak points in the fort. There are only four in Neuf-Brisach. The access road ends at a right angle in front of the gate.

19 The half-moon

The sentry tower was modernised at the end of the 20th century. The windows and doors were rebuilt as gun embrasures, to cover the access road. It was covered with a thin layer of cement.

The Vauban Canal 20

Built in 1699 on the orders of the building contractor, Jean-Baptiste de Regemote, the Vauban Canal was used to transport the building materials needed during the construction of Neuf-Brisach. It is 28 km long and connects the quarry at the foot of the Vosges mountains to Neuf-Brisach.

21 The Building work (1698 – 1703)

The building work took place during the final years of the reign of Louis XIV. 3000 people worked continuously on the new fortified city : bricklayers, carpenters, joiners, locksmiths, stonemasons, plasterers, sculptors, blacksmiths, etc. ...

The Strasbourg Gate 22

The Strasbourg Gate was badly damaged during the siege in 1870. It was repaired and extended in 1902 to facilitate the access downtown. Traders paid taxes to the city office in front of the Gate.

23 The Calvary Cross, 1745

The impressive sandstone cross is the oldest cross in Neuf-Brisach. A.D. Noiroit. 18th century.

The Suzonni Barracks 24

Vauban had 4 barracks built all based on the same design. A German college for non-commissioned officers was accommodated in the Suzonni Barracks from 1888 to 1918.

25 The protestant church

Following the German Annexation in 1871, the City Commandant, Colonel Benno von Heynitz, had the Evangelical Church built in 1886.

The Colmar Gate, its functions 26 27

In turn guardhouse, room of the Officer of the Watch, and a prison. Then kitchen and bakery for the army, or the Staff Officer's Clubs and "Casino" for the German garrison.

28 The Saint-François Powder Magazine

Neuf-Brisach was equipped with two magazines. After being heavily damaged in 1870, the Saint-François Magazine was strengthened with a ceiling of concrete and earth.

Arsenal 29

Only the main entrance gate of the original arsenal remains. The arsenal was badly damaged in 1870 and 1945. It served as both a storeroom for weapons and equipment as well as a workshop for any necessary repairs.

30 Governor's Palace

This building was the private realm of the Governor of the fort. All administrative buildings, such as houses for the engineers, were built directly on the Roster Square.