



A Walk through history

KLOSTERSTADT
Waldsassen



Bayern®



Welcome

to your personal discovery tour into Waldsassen's history! The founding of the town is told in a moving legend:

Around the year 1127, the nobleman Gerwig von Wollmundstein and some of his companions settled down in Köllergrün in the woods on the territory of margrave Diepold III (1075 – 1146), a place close to nowadays' Waldsassen, to live a remote life dedicated to God. Thus, the town's name derives from the expression „die im Walde saßen“ (those who sat in the woods). One day while hunting, the margrave encountered the monks und recognized Gerwig as a friend who once fought against him in a tournament. Gerwig thought to have fatally injured Diepold then. Deeply dismayed by the supposed tragedy of having killed his best friend, Gerwig von Wollmundstein had become a monk of the monastery in Siegburg and later reached the remote woodlands that once would become known as “Stiftland” (“Stift” is a German word for monastery). Out of happiness about the unexpected encounter, the margrave promised to donate as much land to the monks as could be covered by riding around on a donkey in one day. It is said that the boundary of this territory was later marked by the so called “Eselsgraben” (donkey's ditch). In 1133 the monks founded the monastery.

The legend is depicted in the “Stiftsbrunnen” (abbey fountain) in the municipal park and in the frescos on the ceiling of the chancel in the Basilika

1 PARISH CHURCH (STIFTSBASILIKA)

The Stiftsbasilika, 82 metres long, 23 metres wide, is the most prominent landmark of Waldsassen. The Prague architect Abra-



ham Leuthner, the brothers Georg and Christoph Dientzenhofer and Bernhard Schießler (who replaced Georg Dientzenhofer after his early death) were the master builders of the new monastery church during the golden age of Baroque from 1689 to 1704. On 30th November 1704, the impressive house of God was consecrated in a ceremonial act by suffragan bishop Franz Ferdinand von Rummel. It served as monastery church until the secularisation in 1803. Since 1804 the church has been serving as church for the catholic parish of Waldsassen. It was elevated to a papal “Basilica minor” by Pope Paul VI in 1969.

The extraordinary quality of the Basilika arose from the cooperation of Bohemian, Bavarian and Italian artists. The choir stalls by Martin Hirsch, the Annunciation group on the high altar with its spherical golden tabernacle by Waldsassen sculptor Karl Stilp, the stucco by Johann Baptist Carlone and the frescos by Johann Jakob Steinfels are considered the most significant pieces of art in the church. Two clock towers of 48 metres height greet the visitor from far away. A special feature is the collection of twelve so called “Holy Bodies” of martyrs, beautifully dressed and displayed in reliquaries by friar Adalbert Eder. This big collection is unique north of the Alps.

The former crypt for the Cistercian monks under the Basilika is considered one of the largest monastery crypts in Germany. The monks’s graves were built into the walls of the vaulted cellar. It can only be visited during guided tours.

The Jann organ with its 103 stops and 7,720 pipes is one of the biggest organs in Europe. It consists of three parts - the main organ on the gallery and two organs in the chancel - and can be played from two identical six-manual-consoles on the gallery and at the altar of St. Mary.



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2 CISTERCIAN ABBEY

The Cistercian convent next to the Basilika represents the historical nucleus of the town of Waldsassen. At the instigation of margrave Diepold III, Cistercian monks from the Thuringian monastery Volkenroda came to the newly founded monastery at Waldsassen in 1133. In 1147, King Konrad awarded imperial immediacy to the monastery. This enabled a fast growth in importance and power. The monastery held the main responsibility for the colonization and the economic growth of the so called “Nordgau” (the region north of the Danube) and parts of Bohemia. From 1530 on, the increasing pressure to recognise the rule of the Electoral Palatinate lead to the first liquidation of the monastery. A period of new glory in the Baroque age ended with the secularisation in 1803.



Tip for Kids:

Two mice hid in the beard of one of the big statues in the library hall.
Can you find them?

In 1863, Cistercian nuns from Landshut-Seligenthal bought parts of the monastery's facilities excluding the church which at that time was already owned by the catholic parish of Waldsassen. In 1894, the convent of Waldsassen gained independence and was elevated to Abbey in 1925.

Since 1995, the convent has been managed by abbess Laetitia Fech, the fourth abbess in the history of the convent. Besides the contemplative life, the work of the nuns includes a secondary modern school for girls, the care for the library hall, the management of the “Kultur-und Begegnungszentrum” (culture and meeting centre), the “Umweltstation” (ecological station and



nature experience garden) in the former garden of the monastery, parament embroidery and the management of the guesthouse “St. Joseph”.

The heart of the Abbey Waldsassen is the world-renowned library hall which was created in the interim phase from late Baroque to Rococo. Life-size wooden statues, skilfully carved by Karl Stilp carry the gallery that surrounds the hall. They allegorically portray the manifestations of human arrogance. The stucco work was carried out by Jakob Appiani, and the frescos on the ceiling by Karl Hofreither from Bayreuth. The original inventory of 19,000 books got lost during the secularisation and was replaced by a state loan collection of 2,000 old books in 1965.

The fountain in the courtyard between the library hall and the guest house, an octagon made of white marble, is a present from Verona, Italy (2008). The design was carried out by architect Maria Grazia Eccheli based on ideas of abbess Laetitia. It is reminiscent of the old Cistercian well houses with their bowls.

3 TOWN HALL

In October 1619, the so called “Winter King” Friedrich V of the Electoral Palatinate stayed in the building then called “Neubäu” for three days. More information is provided on the little information board left of the entrance. In 1873, the old building was pulled down and replaced by a new school building. The school building was converted into the town hall in 1971 and moved into in 1973. From 2015 to 2018 it underwent a full renovation. You can access the park “Neue Gärten” (new gardens) through an entrance in the backyard of the town hall.



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ABBOT'S CASTLE ("ABTSCHLOSS")

When you look slightly left across the Basilikaplatz when standing in front of the town hall, a hint of medieval times becomes tangible when you see the former castle moat and fortress wall. The wall is indeed from the middle ages. The Abbot's Castle is the town's oldest building. It was built from about 1440 to 1460 under abbot Johannes VI: At the end of the Thirty-Years-War in 1648, the castle burned down and was reconstructed only in 1675. Before the destruction, the castle was surrounded by a moat, had a draw bridge und four towers at its corners, one of which survived as pavilion. From 1804 to 1973, the building was seat of the magistrates' court. Since 1978 the building has been used for offices of the Inland Revenue.

About 1690 a baroque annex was built between the Abbot's Castle and the Basilika. It was originally used as a guesthouse for the monastery. Today the part of the building which reaches up to the moat's wall accommodates the so called "Harmoniesaal" that is mainly used for concerts. The right part of the building with the arches on its façade accommodates the rectory and the offices of the catholic parish. A path through the garden of the Inland Revenue leads to the municipal park "Schwanenwiese" (swans' meadow). It can only be used during daytime.



Waldsassen Today:

- 7,000 inhabitants
- 35 cafes, restaurants and pubs
- 35 hotels, guesthouses and B&B's
- 1 gingerbread factory
- 1 ostrich farm including 3 lamas and 7 alpakas



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JOHANNISPLATZ, “KASTENGEBÄUDE”

During monastery times the historical building from 1732 stored the so called “tithe”- the tenth of the farmers’ goods paid as a tax to support the monastery as owner of land and rights. Besides that, the building was used for the so called “Kastenamt”, the financial administration of the monastery. Already in 1861, a protestant prayer room was founded there. Since 1961 the building has been accommodating the “Friedenskirche”, the protestant church of Waldsassen, as well as the public library, the tourist information and the Inland Revenue. A pathway between library and tourist information leads to the municipal park “Schwanenwiese”.

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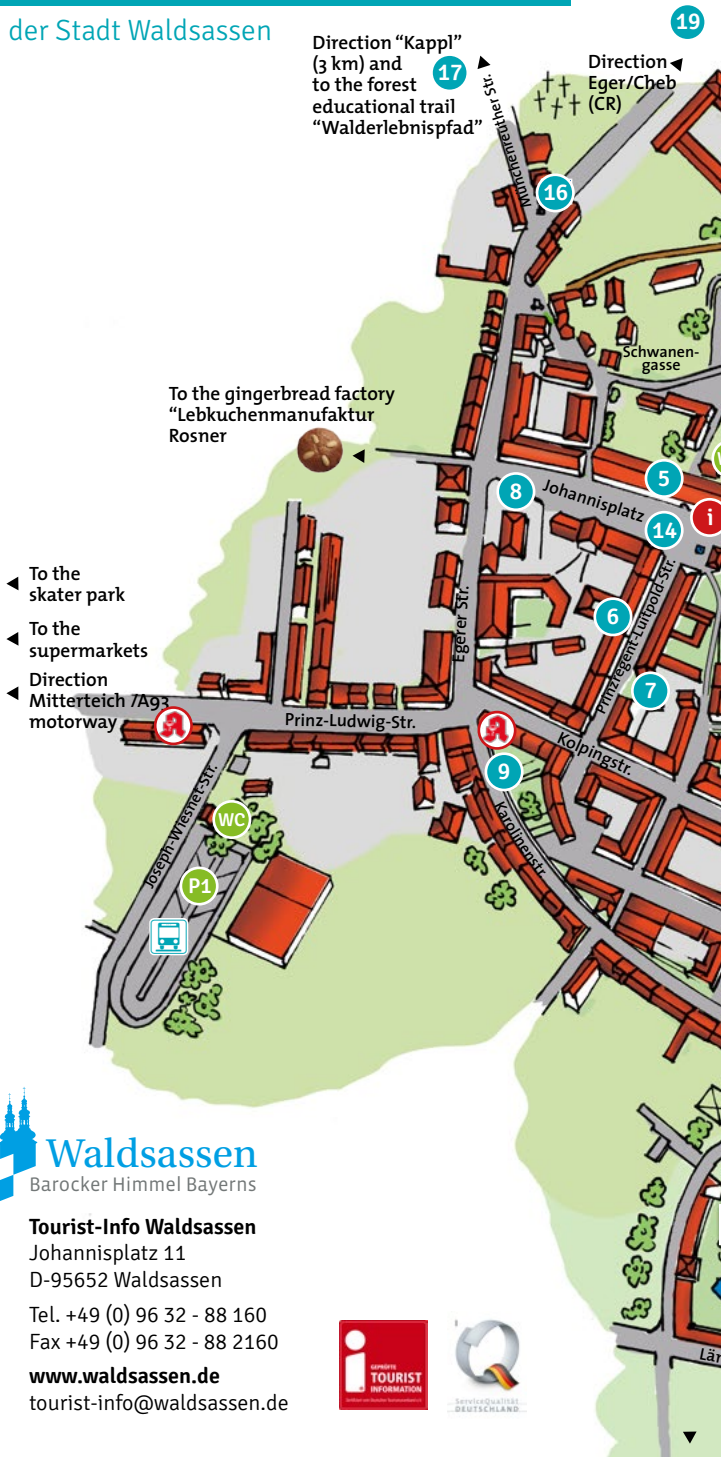
PRINZREGENT-LUITPOLD-STRASSE 4

After the secularisation, cloth-makers settled in Waldsassen. Consequently, a civil housing estate was developed by the brothers Geisel. A typical house of that time is the building on Prinzregent-Luitpold street No. 4, which was first mentioned in documents of 1661. Since 1991 it has been housing a restaurant. The main characteristics of the houses of the early settlers are a central gate and a courtyard. In 1896 Prinzregent Luitpold granted Waldsassen town privileges.

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BINHACK-HAUS

Also on Prinzregent-Luitpold street lies the so called Binhack house: It is the birthplace of the well-known professor of history and honorary citizen, professor Franz Binhack (1836 – 1915). A commemorative plaque was mounted in his honour in 1928. The Stiftland museum dedicated a room with his furniture and pictures to him.



- ◀ To the skater park
- ◀ To the supermarkets
- ◀ Direction Mitterteich / A93 motorway

Direction "Kapf" (3 km) and to the forest educational trail "Walderlebnispfad"

Direction Eger/Cheb (CR)

To the gingerbread factory "Lebkuchenmanufaktur Rosner"



Waldsassen

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Direction Lourdes Grotto
and ostrich farm – 2 km



- i** Tourist Information Waldsassen
- 1** Stiftsbasilika (parish church)
- 2** Cistercian Abbey
- 3** Town Hall
- 4** Abbot's Castle
- 5** Johannisplatz, "Kastengebäude"
- 6** Prinzregent-Luitpold street 4
- 7** Binhack-Haus
- 8** Green space Johannisplatz
- 9** Remains of Monastery Wall
- 10** Stiftland Museum
- 11** Ölbergkapelle (chapel of the Mount of Olives)
- 12** Municipal Park Schwanenwiese
- 13** Basilikaplatz
- 14** Johannisplatz
- 15** Goetheplatz
- 16** 1st Station of the Rosary
- 17** Church of the Holy Trinity "Kappl"
- 18** Nature Experience Garden
- 19** Lourdes Grotto



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8 GREEN SPACE JOHANNISPLATZ

Until 1804, the parish church named St. Walburga was located in the place opposite the “Sparkasse” (public savings bank) . The church was pulled down when the former monastery church and today’s Basilika received the status of parish church. Behind the wall you see the “Glück-Villa”, a residential building built as school house by the monastery under abbot Wigand Deltsch. It was completely renovated in 2016. Until 1958, one could find the monastery’s guest house and inn as well as the customs office opposite the villa. In 1959, a new building was erected which is now used by the “Sparkasse”. The church of St. Walburga and the monastery’s inn, that already in 1360 was used as a guest house for travellers, were once connected by the town gate called “Vorderes Tor” (front gate). This gate closed off the monastery district. The street was opened only in 1810.

9 REMAINS OF THE MONASTERY WALL

The remains of the monastery wall along the Karolinenstraße in the old town’s centre have historical character. Once, the town gate “Unteres Tor” (lower gate) at the entry to the Museumsstraße secured the monastery district. Already at the end of the Middle Ages, Waldsassen was enclosed by a late gothic ring high wall, built around 1450 as protection for the monastery complex. The remains of the ring wall were completely renovated in 1970.

10 STIFTLAND MUSEUM

The Stiftland Museum opened in 1975. It impressively documents the life of our forefathers. The extensive collection recounts the history and cultural past of the “Stiftland” (the county endowed to the monks) and the town of Waldsassen. Today, the museum has



over 50 departments. They document the history of the monastery and the town, show old crafts in reconstructed workshops, the largest collection of tools in Upper Palatinate, and much more. It even has a mining and mineralogical department. Besides that, it shows all aspects of life and work in “Stiftland” and northern Bohemia, the so called “Egerland”. Every year, the museum organises a special exhibition on a current topic. Groups can book guided tours and get a glimpse behind the scenes.

11 ÖLBERGKAPELLE

Another part of the external ring wall is located at the Johanniss bridge. Around 1733, the Ölbergkapelle (chapel of the Mount of Olives) was built into the wall. The life-size figures are made of limewood. It is supposed that they were carved by master Karl Stilp. On the bridge stands a statue of St. Nepomuk commissioned by abbot Alexander Vogl.

12 SCHWANENWIESE (MUNICIPAL PARK)

The park is surrounded by the longest remaining part of the monastery wall and offers charming rear views of the Basilika and the Abbot’s Castle. With the “Schwanenweiher” (swans’ pond) and the “Wildgarten” (wild garden) it preserves the original green belt of the old monastery settling. In 1992, the artist Engelbert Süß created the “Stiftsbrunnen” (abbey fountain). It depicts the legend of the monastery’s founding around 1127.

The “Friedenssäule” (column of peace) close to the entrance of the park was made by the master of stonemason Dieter Zemann jr. The word “peace” is chiselled into it in 40 different languages.



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13 BASILIKAPLATZ

If you want to enjoy the full panorama of the Basilikaplatz, stand by the fountain in the centre of the square. The fountain, originally built as a memorial for the victims of World War I, was renamed Diepold Fountain in 1986. The name was chosen because of the statue on top of the column that shows the founder of the monastery, margrave Diepold III of Vohburg. The panorama is dominated by the Basilika built in southern German baroque style.

To the right of the Basilika lies the Cistercian abbey with its famous library. The little tower reaching over the roof of the library hall is the only part to be seen of the convent church in the courtyard of the monastery. It was built in 1924.

On the opposite side of the monastery's outer yard, an old stone stairway leads to the garden of the monastery. The building with the glass façade originally housed the laymen's rooms and later the malthouse. Today, it accommodates the guest house St. Joseph and the abbey shop.

On the opposite side of the guesthouse, a modern private house from 1964 breaks the style of the historical square. The building next to it is the town hall of Waldsassen. The neighbouring estate, Basilikaplatz 5, the "Hotel zum Königlich Bayerischen Forsthaus", is located on the site of the former Electorate's scribe's office. The next building across the street is the so called "Kastengebäude" of 1732 (see station 5) On the façade of its gable, facing the Basilika, interesting details can be found: a statue of St. Florian, supposedly by the Waldsassen sculptor Karl Stilp, and a sundial of the year 1785. In front of it, with the Abbot's Castle to its back, is a memorial for the victims of the last wars, created in 1961. The bronze sculpture by Günther Rossow from



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Wunsiedel was added in 1983. The baroque building between the castle and the Basilika takes your look back to the Basilika.

14 JOHANNISPLATZ

In the 19th century, the Johannisplatz was called “Klostergasse” (monastery lane). In former times, it was used for parades and processions. Today, it is a place for fun fairs and markets, the traditional May Tree celebration and the annual Citizens’ Festival on the first weekend of July. The Johannisplatz was named after a statue of St. Johannes Nepomuk that used to be located there, but had to be removed due to serious damage at the end of World War II in 1945. In 2003, during the restoration of the old town centre, a modern memorial for St. Johannes Nepomuk including a fountain was created by the Upper Palatinate sculptor Erwin Otte.

In the 18th and 19th century, the tiny house behind the Nepomuk fountain was a bakery. Today it is a café. Next to the café is the entrance to the “Kunstgasse” (artists’ lane) with the “Kunsthaus Waldsassen”. The original building, a former barn known as “Malzer-Stadl” originally housed a stable and a hayloft.

Two buildings flank the square: the former “Kastengebäude” and, opposite, a building from 1665. It is owned by the family Ziegler, former brewers and brick makers. The building next to it was erected in 1928 as fire station. Today, it accommodates a doctor’s surgery and apartments.



15 GOETHEPLATZ

“On entering Bavaria, the first thing one sees is the monastery of Waldsassen. The clerics who own this valuable property have been wiser than most people. It lies in a saucer- or basin-like hollow amid beautiful meadows and surrounded on all sides by fertile, gently rolling hills. The monastery owns property all over the countryside.”

These were the words Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who visited Waldsassen several times, noted down on his famous Italian journey in 1786. Waldsassen is situated on the European Goethe Road. Already in 1956, the town named a street after the famous poet. Besides that, in the summer of 2002, the newly designed square in front of the business property was named “Goetheplatz”. The eye-catcher on this square is the Goethe column by Erwin Otte. The artist used antique glass plates made in the local glassworks “Lambertshütte” for it. Lamberts is one of only a few glassworks worldwide that produce mouth-blown antique glasses.

The business building on Goetheplatz was built in 1961-62 on the site of the former stronghold. In 1808, the stronghold named “Eisenfronfeste” had been built as prison for the former district court in Waldsassen. Until the middle of the year 1945, the prison constantly held 50 prisoners on average. It was liquidated in 1951.

16 1ST STATION OF THE ROSARY

In 1698, the Cistercian monastery in Waldsassen gained the long strived for administration of the Münchenreuth parish including the “Kappl” church (built 1685 – 1689). As a visible sign of this connection, Abt Albert Hausner had fifteen baroque steles with motives of the rosary erected along the road through the woods from Waldsassen to the “Kappl” – along today’s “Stationsweg”.



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They mark the pilgrims' road to the pilgrimage church "Kappl" and serve as contemplative stations. The steles, unique in Europe, were renovated in 2008.

17 CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY "KAPPL"

Three kilometres from Waldsassen you find the church of the Holy Trinity "Kappl". The baroque church rotunda is one of the landmarks of the "Stiftland". The impressive church was built by Georg Dientzenhofer in the years from 1685 to 1698 on the summit (628 m) of the hill "Glasberg" next to Münchenreuth. It could finally be completed and consecrated in 1711. Its special architecture and furnishings symbolise the Holy Trinity of God father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Glasberg provides a wonderful view across the Stiftland and into Northern Bohemia.



Tips for Kids:

The water playground in the Nature Experience Garden is a wonderful place for little explorers!

18 NATURE EXPERIENCE GARDEN

When you cross the abbey's outer yard and go down the stone stairs you get to the „Brauhausstraße“, a street leading to the river Wondreb and to the entrance of the „Naturerlebnisgarten“ (nature experience garden). It features a herb garden according to St. Hildegard of Bingen, a garden with herbs for traditional Chinese medicine, an ecological station and a „Kneipp“ water basin. From 1730 on, during Baroque times, the original monastery garden was planned and built under abbot Eugen Schmid (1724 – 1744). To facilitate the access to the garden from the

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monastery, abbot Wigand Deltsch had the famous Muttone bridge built around 1760-70. When the monastery was brought back to life by the Cisterian nuns from Landshut-Seligenthal in 1864, a cemetery for the deceased nuns was built close to the southern wall of the garden.

19 LOURDES GROTTO

The Lourdes grotto close to the abbey's farm „Mitterhof“ was built following the world famous grotto of Massabielle in Lourdes (southern France). Displayed in a niche on the right side is a statue of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception. Anna Rockstroh, neé Grabinger (1869 – 1935), a merchant's wife from Waldsassen, was a great worshipper of St. Mary. In the summer of 1904, she presented the abbess of the convent with her plans of building a Lourdes grotto near the estate Mitterhof. The plan was drawn by architect Josef Ochsenmayer, residing in Nuremberg, born in Waldsassen. The grotto was solemnly consecrated on 29th October 1905.

Over decades, the grotto was looked after by the abbey. In 1978, members of the local Kolping Family (a catholic family organisation) took over this task. Services and prayers take place here on several occasions during the church year. The Lourdes Grotto is held in high esteem and is a popular place for private prayers.



Lourdes Grotto with statue of St. Mary