



MUSEUM CENTER

Three museums under one roof:

1. Lorsch Abbey monastic history
2. The tobacco museum (local museum of the city of Lorsch)
3. Temporary exhibitions on the 1st floor

EXHIBITION DEPOT „ZEHNTSCHUNE“

The building holds the finest relics of architectural decorations of the former medieval monastery

OPENING HOURS & ADMISSIONS AT A GLANCE



BOOKABLE GUIDED TOURS

1. UNESCO World Heritage Site Lorsch Abbey

2. Schaudapot Zehntscheune (Exhibition Depot Tithe Barn)

Year-Round, Tue.–Sun. Except for New Year's Day, Shrove Tuesday, Christmas Eve & New Year's Eve

Duration: approx. 90 min.

INFORMATION & BOOKING

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Further information can be found at:

www.kloster-lorsch.de/en/

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Staatliche
Schlösser und Gärten
Hessen



Lorsch
UNESCO-WELTERBE
Im Herzen unserer Stadt



UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE LORSCH ABBEY

UNESCO WELTERBE
KLOSTER LORSCH

LORSCH ABBEY

FROM THE CAROLINGIAN ABBEY TO A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

In 764, the Robertian family established a small proprietary monastery between two branches of the Weschnitz River, later known as Altenmünster. By 767, the community had moved to its new location. In 772 it was elevated to a royal abbey, and in 774 it was consecrated in the presence of Charlemagne. For more than eight centuries, monks and clerics gathered around the relics of St. Nazarius, which brought the abbey great prosperity. By around 800, its estates already extended across the territory of six modern European countries. The Lorsch Codex, one of Europe's most important economic-historical sources, records the earliest documented mentions of hundreds of towns and villages.

It was probably only in the mid-10th century that the monastery took shape as a purely Benedictine abbey. In 1232 it finally lost the independence that had been reaffirmed repeatedly since 772. Thereafter, under the authority of the Archbishop and Prince-Elector of Mainz, Premonstratensian canons served here until the dissolution of the Lorsch provostship in 1556. From its dissolution until the mid-18th century, much of the monastery complex gradually disappeared. The site was first transformed into an agricultural estate, and later gave way to the stately residence of a chief forester.

The name of Lorsch Abbey is associated not only with the famous Gatehall, but also with a library that, though now scattered across the world, has survived in large part. This library brought together all the available knowledge of God and the world, reflecting the rich cosmos of medieval scholarship. Today, it is freely accessible online to anyone interested. In the future, the monastery's archives – far more difficult to reconstruct – will likewise be made available to the public. Finds from more than 200 years of archaeological research on the site are displayed in the Zehntscheune exhibition depot, serving as eloquent witnesses to the centuries gone by.

Today, our aim is to restore part of the site's lost aura, to present the relics of its past, to make its significance tangible, and to continue exploring its history. The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lorsch Abbey is a cultural monument owned by the State Palaces and Gardens of Hesse.

Photos: Hanns Joosten, SG, Stadt Lorsch, F. Saum, Michael Thumm, Marcus Leinweber

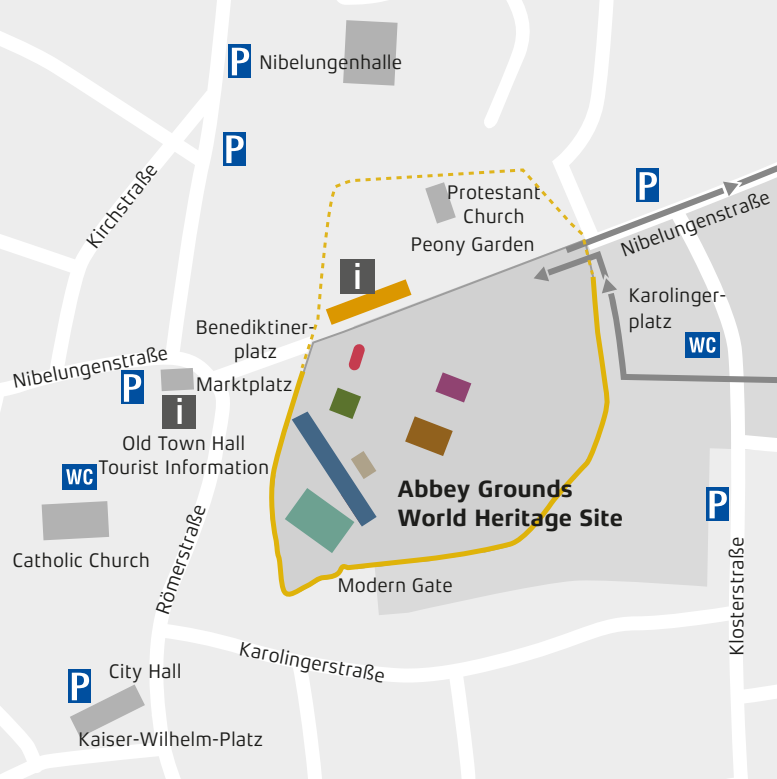


THE ABBEY GROUNDS

THE REMAINS OF THE CHURCH

THE CAROLINGIAN ‘KÖNIGSHALLE’

THE EXHIBITION DEPOT „ZEHNTSCHUNE“



- Museum Centre
- Königshalle (King’s Hall)
- Exhibition Depot „Zehntscheune“
- Former electoral manor
- Church ruins
- Adalherhaus
- Former forestry office
- Herb garden
- Monastery wall
- Former monastery wall

The abbey church was the architectural heart of every monastery and the spiritual center of life for the monks and canons. In Lorsch, psalms were sung here day and night for eight centuries, and the Eucharist was celebrated. The church was richly furnished at all times: floors of colorful marble, finely crafted choir and altar screens, antependia of gold and silver, precious textiles, and painted wall decorations. From the time of Charlemagne – who was present at its consecration in 774 – the three-aisled basilica also served as a burial place. Laid to rest here were his brother-in-law and cousin Tassilo III, his grandson Louis the German (†876), and two further generations of East Frankish Carolingians. Even the sparse remains of the church, which in its prime stretched over one hundred meters in length and ended in an imposing twin-tower façade to the west, still leave a powerful impression today. Most of the surviving fabric dates from the 11th to the 14th century.

THE MONASTERY WALL

The largest structure to survive from the monastic period is the monastery wall, around two-thirds of which still stand today. It continues to mark the boundary of the larger, southern part of the abbey grounds, while to the north of Nibelungenstraße – now densely built up – its course can still be traced in places along old field boundaries and with the help of historical maps. Both in its early days and again at the beginning of the 16th century, the wall served a defensive function. In the early Middle Ages it formed part of a protective system of ditches and ramparts; later it became a high fortification wall, probably equipped with wooden walkways and connected to the gate complex last recorded in 1830 on today’s Benediktinerplatz. For most of the abbey’s eight-hundred-year history, the wall was both a barrier and a point of contact with the “world” beyond the monastery’s bounds. Each period left its mark on its preservation and transformation.

The most famous building at the World Heritage Site Lorsch Abbey is the ‘Königshalle’ (King’s Hall). It was built around 900 and is considered one of the best preserved examples of Carolingian architecture, referencing classical styles but also consciously deviating from the canon of classical architectural elements. The unique facade decorations correspond with the remains of high-quality architectural paintings inside on the upper floor of the building. Its purpose is not known. Current research points to this being a reception building for visiting rulers, but there is also discussion about it having been used as a courtroom for trials. So far it has only been proved that it was built on an existing cemetery, which buried the deceased from the monastic ‘familia’ – the many people who served the monastery without being monks or canons. The medieval appearance of the Königshalle was reconstructed around 1935.

THE HERB GARDEN

The Lorsch Pharmacopoeia, one of the oldest manuscripts produced in Lorsch in the 8th century, may be among the earliest witnesses to the emergence of medicine as a science in the post-antique West. It offers a thoughtful justification of medical practice as a special form of active charity – intended to persuade Christian fundamentalist skeptics who regarded illness and death as unavoidable consequences of original sin. The broader significance of the Pharmacopoeia, accessible even to a non-specialist audience, is due to the initiative of Lorsch’s citizens. They not only secured a translation of the text, but also created a “visualization” of it in the form of a herb garden on the symbolically charged Spittelsberg behind the Zehntscheune, maintained by local volunteers. The name of this sandy hill derives from a nearby monastic hospital that existed from the 12th to the 15th century. In 2013, the Lorsch Pharmacopoeia was inscribed on UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register.

The tithe barn is the oldest post-monastic building on the abbey grounds. It was constructed at the end of the 16th century using material from demolished monastic structures. Originally, the building consisted of three identical barns – each open up to the roof, and not connected with one another. Around 1720 a fourth compartment was added. Today, the space has been converted into an exhibition depot and houses a rich collection of architectural sculpture and archaeological finds dating from Roman times to the 19th century. Among the most famous objects on display are the so-called sarcophagus of King Louis the German and the reputed coffin of Siegfried, the hero of the Nibelungenlied. The exhibition is continually supplemented with material from the archaeological holdings kept in the newly created, but non-public, upper floor. For research purposes, the barn also accommodates both an anthropological and an archaeozoological study collection.

AFTER THE MONASTIC ERA

Buildings from the post-dissolution period testify to the site being used after the monastery’s closure: earliest is the tithe barn from the 16th century, then came the electoral manor, which was probably built in the 18th century on the site of the late-medieval prelatore, and lastly, at the end of the 19th century, the district forestry warden’s building and pigsty. All these buildings were witness to the monastery complex’s systematically advancing ruin up until the middle of the 18th century. However, when the Archbishopric of Mainz gained possession of the site, the electoral manor formed its new centre, surrounded by the chapel (Königshalle), stables, coach houses, wells, a barn, a kitchen, a confectioner’s and a silver servant’s apartment. In 1772, the site – with remarkable dimensions – became the residence of a master forestry warden. The award-winning new design of the Abbey Grounds, which was completed in 2014, has returned a dignified air to the place without wiping out the traces of its more recent history.