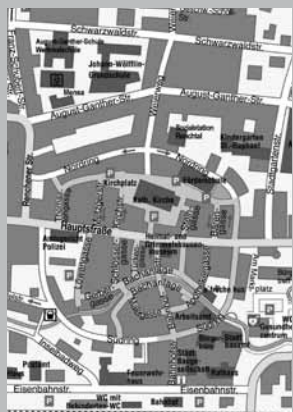


Oberkirch

H i s t o r i c C i t y T o u r



OBERKIRCH
Große Kreisstadt in der Ortenau



Historic City Tour

This tour takes you through the historic city center, to the cemetery and up to the Schauenburg Castle. All of the buildings described on this tour can be reached easily on foot. A visit to the Schauenburg Castle, however, does require a short hike. The cemetery is located approximately one kilometer from the city center.

Follow the footsteps of our ancestors.

At the end of the tour, you can visit the City Park. Here in this old park, you can rest beneath the trees spending some shade or on the banks of the pond. In the eastern part of the park there is a large playground and a mini-golf facility.



Every time you see this symbol in the brochure, you will find special information for children and teens.



History

Oberkirch can look back upon a long history. It was first mentioned in the 11th century and was granted city rights in 1326. For 500 years – from 1303 to 1803 – Oberkirch belonged to the territory of the Bishops of Strasbourg. In 1689, the town was burned down and almost completely destroyed by French troops during the Palatine War of Succession. Only a few stone parts of the buildings remained. These were used to rebuild the town after the fire. Now they are all that is left to remind us of the houses that stood here before.

During the 19th century industrialization reached Oberkirch. A paper factory and metal-working companies were founded. They remain major economic sectors to this day, along with craftsmanship and agriculture, especially wine growing and special crops.

WWII left Oberkirch relatively unscathed, however, in the years following the war a number of buildings were replaced by new constructions. Fortunately numerous old, picturesque structures remain.

Nine communities belong to Oberkirch, each of which became a part of the town in the 1970s. These integrated villages are worth a visit, for example the charmingly located baroque pilgrim's chapel of St. Wendel in Bottenau.

1

You will find a city map in the middle of the brochure. The map lists all of the tourist attractions with their corresponding number.



1. Obere Linde / Upper Linde

The Linde restaurant and hotel (Hauptstraße 25, 27), which was located outside of the city wall, was also destroyed in the fire of 1689. The half-timbered houses that stand here today were built in 1692 and 1702.

A corner beam in the smaller and older one of the two houses indicates the year of construction. The house stands on the old foundation from 1659. The inscription on the gable side tells us the names of the owners since then.

In 1872 the town of Fernach to the west became a part of Oberkirch. Because this town also had a restaurant known as the Linde, the two became known as the Fernach Linde, or Lower Linde and the Linde im Loh or Upper Linde.

Emperors and revolutionaries

The Linde has hosted many illustrious visitors over the years. In 1847, the democrats from Baden met here to prepare their meeting in the Salmen in Offenburg, where Friedrich Hecker proclaimed the 13 demands of the people, which are considered the basis for the German constitution. The Linde's owner, Hermann Geldreich, was active as a commander in the military for the Revolution and was sentenced to prison after their defeat.

In 1879, the German Emperor Wilhelm I dined at the Linde. He was the commander-in-chief of the Prussian troops when they brutally crushed the May Revolution in Baden in 1849. Do you think he knew he was staying at the inn of a former revolutionary?



K

Fischer

The Fischer Family is one of the former innkeeper families. Their coat of arms is embedded in the wall of the entry area. What does it depict?

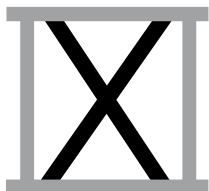
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Timber frame

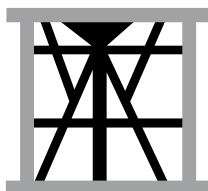
Most of the houses which were built in Oberkirch in the past were timber-framed houses. Carpenters built the frame with wood. Often you can see on the beams that they were not sawed but rather chopped with a wide axe. The spaces between the wooden beams were filled with clay or with masonry.

You can see examples of simple framework, but also extremely complex and artistic timber framework, such as on the first floor of the smaller building of the Obere Linde.

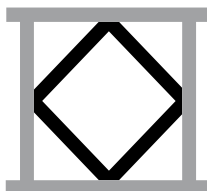
Popular figures on timber framework included St. Andrew's cross, a rhombus, and a man who looks like he has his legs spread wide and his arms raised. See if you can discover these figures while you take your tour of the city.



St. Andrew's cross



Man



Rhombus



2. City Wall

Oberkirch used to be surrounded by mighty ramparts. They were made up of numerous circular walls and a moat. In the east and west of the modern-day Hauptstraße, there were two gate towers.

The city walls survived for the most part in the areas where the houses were built right next to them, for example at the back of the event location, 's freche hus. Here you can see the two walls: the house wall and the lower wall directly at the Südring. Originally the internal city moat, which could be filled with water, was located between them.

Other remains of the city walls can be found along the southern ring by the Mühlbach (photo above, with information plaques), at the parking lot in Löwengasse and behind the houses in Thomaslohgasse. The Nordring and the Südring follow the lines of the ramparts for the most part.

The end of the city wall

Over the years, the ramparts fell into disrepair. At the end of the 18th century, the plots of land in the inner city moat were sold. In 1808 the residents were granted permission to take the wall down to a height of 2.5 meters. They made active use of this opportunity. By 1822, both of the gate towers had been removed. The residents at that time were of the opinion that these efforts would serve to make the town more beautiful.



Arrow slits

There is an arrow slit at the top of the city wall on the back side of the "freche hus". Can you find it?



3. 's freche hus

The freche hus (Apothekergasse 7) has become a venue for cultural events since its renovation by the city of Oberkirch. It was named after the Frech family.

The house was built by the tanner Matis Gebert in the decade after the city fire of 1689. The corner beam pointing in the direction of the Mühlbach indicates as much. In 1876 the pharmacist Friedrich Frech bought the property.

Next to the northern entrance of the house there are two keystones made from old archways. One of them shows the number 15 as the first two digits of a year along with the tanners' guild sign, two crossed knives. A mythical creature is depicted on the other door lintel.

Frech, the revolutionary

Friedrich Frech's father of the same name was a lawyer and one of the big local names in the Revolution of 1848/49. He rented a neighboring house and lived there with his family (Hauptstraße 22, Nr. 17 of the city tour). Frech held a speech in September 1848 in front of the Bären inn. According to eyewitnesses, he called out to the passing churchgoers to chase the government to the devil.

After the Revolution was put down, Frech was sentenced to 8 years in prison and his assets were confiscated. He fled to the USA and history lost track of him there. His wife remained with the children in Oberkirch.



4. Mühlbach Stream and Bachanlage

For centuries, the water in the Mühlbach Stream drove the wheels of the grain, oil, saw and paper mills as well as those of the blacksmith and the grinding machines. Since the beginning of the 20th century, turbines have used the falls for the production of electricity.

Sewage used to be disposed of in the Mühlbach. The butcher threw the guts of the slaughtered animals in the stream. The tanner dumped the stinking contents of his tanning tubs in the water. At the back of some of the houses you could find a privy which jutted out above the water.

The Mühlbach is diverted from the Rench River by a dam just above the swimming pool. All along the stream you can find lovely half-timbered houses.

According to the corner beam, the house on the corner of Bahnhofstraße (Bachanlage 2) was built in 1709 by Johannes and Anna Maria Braun. Braun was a butcher, as we can tell by the guild sign, which depicts an axe. A different guild sign – a bull's head – can be found two houses down (Bachanlage 6).

One of the oldest buildings along the Bachanlage stream system is the house at the corner of Schlossergasse and Gerbergasse (Gerbergasse 2). A beam bears the year 1696. The historical company sign reminds us of the Hodapp smithery that used to be located here.



A bread roll from the Bach bakery

In the 19th and 20th century there was a bakery located at Bachanlage 6. As the story goes, the owner instigated a boy in 1849 to call out to the Prussians as they were marching in: "Hecker and Struve were right when they said all princes should be baked like bread. And with ministers spike them well. And send the whole lot right to hell." The boy was promised a bread roll. The enraged Prussians threw the lad in the Mühlbach stream and the baker Bach gave him an extra bread roll.

K Walachia fountain

Along the Bachanlage stream system you will find the Walachia fountain, which is worth a visit.

Oberkirch's city center is called Walachia (in German: Walachei). When the Walachians celebrate their Carnival, they wear funny fish hats just like the Walachian family in the fountain. The curved forms above and below the Walachian family symbolize the waves of the Mühlbach Stream. On the trough of the fountain, a human bottom is symbolized. The Walachians are telling the residents of the other parts of the town to kiss their bottoms. This is, of course, not to be taken too seriously.

Which of these Walachian heads portray older people and which portray younger ones? Are you good at making faces? Go ahead and try to imitate the Walachian grimaces!



5. Tannery Building

In addition to butchers, tanners used to live and work along the Mühlbach.

The frame house at the western end of Gerbergasse (Löwengasse 1) was built in 1707. The year of construction and the initials HAP are embedded next to a little window on the ground floor. The builder was most likely Hans Adam Prokopp. Up unto the 20th century, a tannery was located in the building.

Because the building fills a gap between the city wall, the Mühlbach and Löwengasse, it has a somewhat odd floor plan. The front gable end is 17 meters wide and the back gable end is only 7 meters wide. The Madonna on the front gable side was created by the Oberkirch sculptor Michael Huber in 1986.

The tannery trade

Tanners process the fur and skins of slaughtered animals. Tannery was an odor-intensive trade which also required quite a bit of water. After the hair and flesh remains were removed, the tanning process took place in oak bark, which was used as a tanning agent. There were deep trenches in the basement and courtyard of the tannery buildings where the animal skins and oak bark were layered. Later the skins were dried in the large attics of the buildings.

The remains of the tanning agent were stored in high racks in the neighborhood where they were pressed into forms, dried and used as heating fuel.



6. Hospital

The Oberkirch Hospital was located at Löwengasse 2.

The building was built after the city fire of 1689. One arch bears the inscription 1701. The hospital was put out of use in 1890 when the new hospital on Gaisbacher Straße was built.

For the sick, sinecures and the poor

The purpose of the hospital was not solely to cure the sick. The poor and sinecures, or benefices, were also housed here. The sinecures received room and board for the rest of their lives in exchange for giving their assets to the hospital.

According to a report from 1861 there were ten beds available. A live-in director and his wife were in charge of the care. The sick were cared for by a local doctor.



Year of construction

Can you find the arch with the date 1701?



7. Administration Building

The Administration Building (Hauptstraße 48) was the administrative seat of the Bishops of Strasbourg for the Oberkirch territory.

It was established around 1700 by the civil servant Johann Evangelist von Bodeck and his wife, Anna Maria von Scharpfenstein. They had restored the previous building in 1688 and "brought it to perfection". But the year after, the house became a victim of the fire of 1689.

The owner's coat of arms can be found above the entrance to the building. The sandstone mitre on the gable above it symbolizes the dominion of the bishops. Around 1759 the bishop's mint was housed in the administration building and at the end of the 18th century it was a military hospital. After the secularization in 1803, the administration of Baden moved into the building. Today there is a police station and the district court located in the building.

From the administration building you have a view of the Lutheran church. It was built in 1866 on the site of the former Capuchin Monastery.

Praise for the police

There used to be a guard house adjoining the building. In 1900 a contemporary wrote the following poem about one of the policemen: "Proud and tall at the guardhouse he stands / our Mr. Duschmalé, the pride of the lands / ... He protects us here, as we all know, / From robbers and from the murderer's blow ... He's everywhere to keep the peace, / long live our noble and gallant police!"



8. Birthplace of August Ganther

The local poet and honorary citizen of Oberkirch, August Ganther, was born in the house at Hauptstraße 69 (1862–1938).

August Ganther's parents passed away when he was a child. Nonetheless, he received a good education and became a teacher. From 1887 until he retired, he taught in Freiburg in Breisgau.

His poems in the local dialect are especially well known. They are characterized by a pronounced understanding of situational comedy. Ganther focused on the everyday worries of his contemporaries but also displayed their cleverness. His prose has been largely forgotten.

The August Ganther Fountain

Across the street you will find the August Ganther Fountain. It was a priority for Ganther that his poems weren't just read but were also read out loud: "We're meant for the ear! For all to hear!" The sculptor Michael Huber has interpreted this in this fountain. The sculpture also points to some of the titles of Ganther's volumes of poetry, e.g. "Dannezapfe", the pine cone, or "Silwerdischtle us em Schwarzwald", the silver thistle from the Black Forest.

D' KÜechli

D'liab Mueder bacht KÜechli; d'r flachsköpfig Bue,
Der lährt in d'r Biw'l un luegt ere zue.

„Du, Müederli“, sait 'r, „was bisch au so still?“

„Eh“, meint sie, „eh, wil i nit schwätze grad will.“

„Weisch“, seit 'r, „des Stillsi, i ka 's nit v'rtrage;

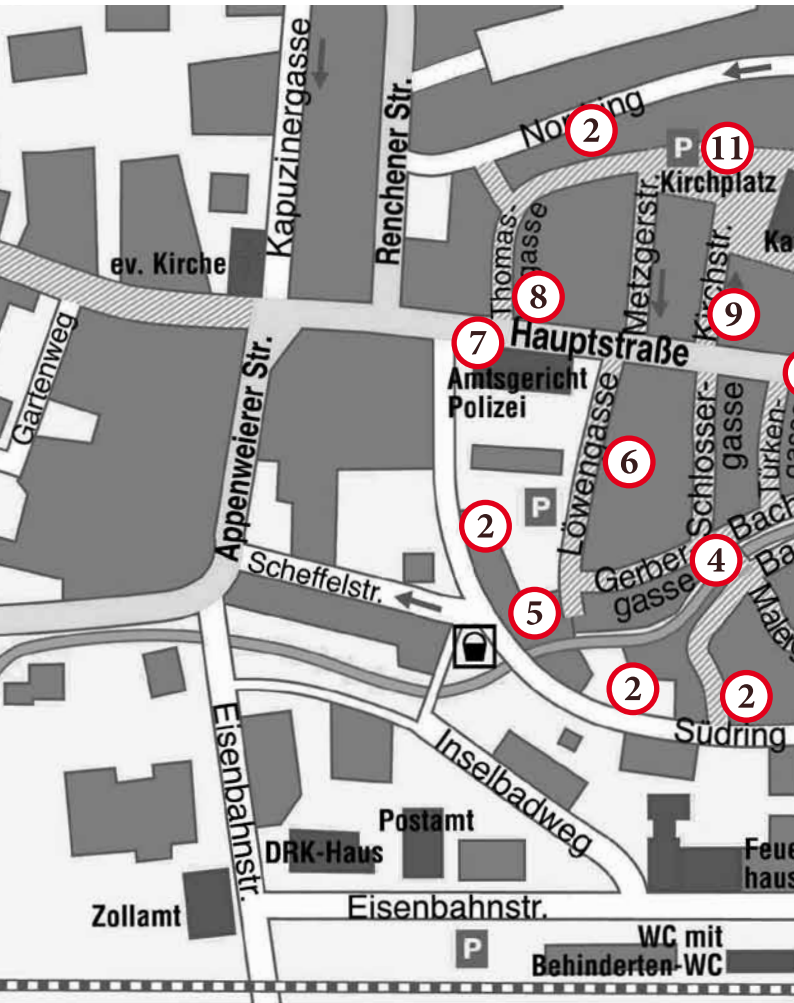
Gang, Müederli, sag ebbs.“ – „Was soll i denn sage?“

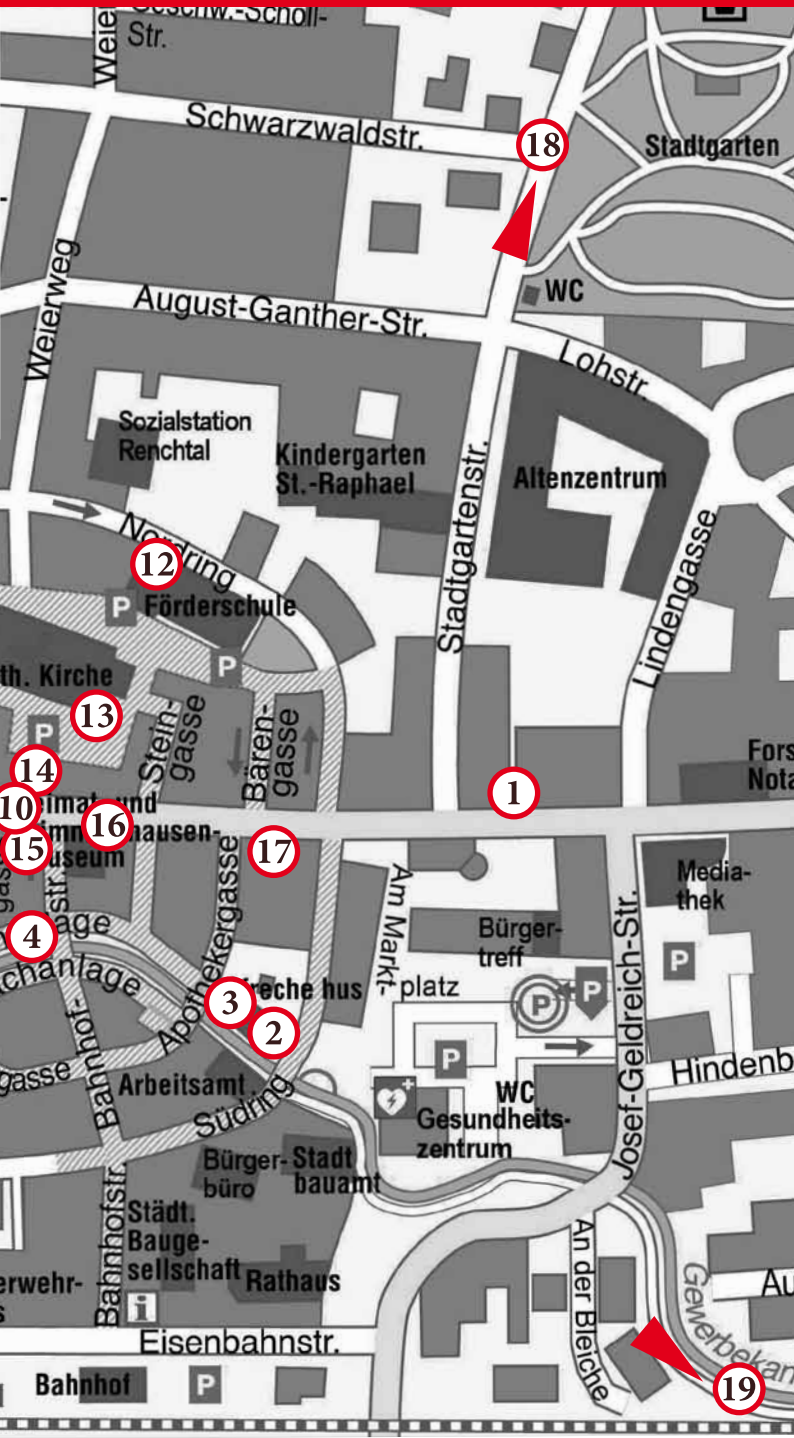
„He“, meint 'r un blettert druf los in sim BÜechli,

„De kinntsch emol sage: Wottsch nit au e KÜechli?“

Floorplan

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Obere Linde / Upper Linde | 11. Church square |
| 2. City wall | 12. Provost building |
| 3. 's freche hus | 13. St. Cyriak
Catholic Church |
| 4. Mühlbach Stream and Bachanlage | 14. Church gate |
| 5. Tannery building | 15. Sonne Restaurant |
| 6. Hospital | 16. Old City Hall |
| 7. Administration building | 17. City Castle |
| 8. Birthplace of August Ganther | 18. Schauenburg Castle |
| 9. Zum Greif House and Mersi House | 19. Cemetery and Sausteg |
| 10. Lion Fountain | |





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9. Zum Greif House and Mersi House

The Zum Greif House, or Griffon House, at Hauptstraße 57 was built in 1738.

Two griffons can be seen on the beam above the upper floor and the year of construction can be found on the corner beam. Up until 1919, the building was an inn and was owned in the end by the local Oberkirch brewery Schrempp and Gugelmeier. In 1919 it became a drug store and in 1975 a pharmacy.

The neighboring house (Hauptstraße 55) belonged to the woodturner family, the Mersis, for generations. It was built in the year 1691 and was the first-known house built after the city fire.

Becker, the innkeeper of the Griffon House

Markus Becker was one of the revolutionaries from 1848. He was a board member of the "Oberkircher Volksverein", the people's association, and displayed the republican newspaper "Der Volksführer" in his tavern. In September 1848 more than one hundred rebels gathered here and held counsel about the arrest of one of their political colleagues. With great effort, they were deterred from storming the prison.

Cinema

In the Griffon Hall at the Church Square theater companies from out of town gave guest performances during the winter in the 19th century. And the first cinema in Oberkirch was located here. The citizens of Oberkirch were fascinated by the new technology of films as early as 1899. The last film was shown here in the 1980s before the building was torn down.



10. Lion Fountain

The Lion Fountain was a gift from the Bishop of Strasbourg Johann von Manderscheid-Blankenheim to the city of Oberkirch.

The lion has been able to watch the goings-on along Hauptstraße from many different perspectives over the years. When the fountain was constructed in 1570 it was located directly on the street. It was here that the market took place. In 1864 the fountain was removed and the lion was placed in front of the Old City Hall. In the 1950s it was run over by a truck and a reconstruction of the fountain was placed in front of the Griffon house. When the Hauptstraße was redesigned in 2016/17, the lion was returned to his original location.

Oberkirch's Municipal Coat of Arms

Parts of the coat of arms that the lion is holding have become a part of Oberkirch's municipal coat of arms: The silver bar in the red field was the coat of arms of the Bishop of Strasbourg's territory of Oberkirch until 1803. The lion on the yellow background comes from the coat of arms of the family of Bishop Johann, the Imperial Count of Blankenheim. Today's municipal coat of arms also shows a church. It is known from the Oberkirch seal from the 14th century and, as such, is the oldest part of the coat of arms.





11. Church Square

K

If you follow Kirchstraße from the Hauptstraße you will end up at the Church Square. Walk to the main entrance of the church.

This is approximately the place where the photographer was standing when he took this picture 100 years ago. What has changed, what has stayed the same since then?





12. Provost Building

The Premonstratensian monastery Allerheiligen in the Lierbach Valley east of Oberkirch was donated at the end of the 12th century.

The monks had a provost building built in Oberkirch (Kirchplatz 6 und 7) which served as the administration for the monastery. The so-called tithe wine, which the local farmers had to pay to the monastery, was stored in the cellar. The parish church in Oberkirch was also supervised from here.

The building as it stands today was erected in 1798 after a fire. Shortly thereafter, it lost its original function when the monastery was disbanded in 1803. Above the door at the top of the stairs you can find the coat of arms of the Allerheiligen Monastery – three stars separated by a crossbeam – and of the Abbot, Felix Kemmerle. Today the building is the catholic rectory and a school.

K

The legend of the founding of the Allerheiligen Monastery

Uta von Schauenburg wanted to found a monastery after the death of her husband. But where? In a dream, Uta was prompted to let a donkey go at the Schauenburg castle. The donkey should be laden with a sack of gold which was intended for building the monastery. The place where the donkey throws of the sack of gold is where the monastery should be built.

And that is exactly what happened. The donkey marched off through the woods. When he got tired, he dropped the sack of gold. It rolled down the mountain a little bit before it came to a stop. The Allerheiligen Monastery was built on this exact spot. Today only ruins remain. These can be visited along with the waterfall which lies below the monastery.



13. St. Cyriak Catholic Church

The church was built in a neo-Romanesque style between 1863 and 1866.

The pastor had complained as early as 1830 that the old church was too small. The church was "so full of people" during the masses that it was "impossible to maintain discipline and order".

The new church, made of sandstone from the Moos River, was not built on the exact location of the old church. On the southern part of the Church Square you can see the outline of the original building embedded in the plaster. The old church tower remained standing at first. But in 1871 during the victory celebration after the French-German War, it burned down and was later replaced by a new building. The bottom part is all that remains of the old church.

A hidden number

The late baroque Mount of Olives on the southern facade was a donation from the Oberkirch city clerk Franz Xaver Joseph Stephan Fischer. Not far away from the Mount of Olives (between the side entrance and the church tower) you can find a sandstone cross, that displays a chronogram. The Latin words EN CRVCIFIX VM DOLE can be translated as "See the one who was crucified in pain". If you remove the letters which are also Roman numerals and add them up, you will get 1772. This is most likely the year in which the cross was donated.



K

Arithmetic

Check to see if 1772 is really the right answer.

The following Roman numerals are equivalent to our numbers:

I = 1 V = 5 X = 10 L = 50

C = 100 D = 500 M = 1000

Write down the correct number next to the letters which are also Roman numerals. Add them up to see what you get.

E - _____

V - _____

N - _____

M - _____

C - 100

D - _____

R - _____

O - _____

V - _____

L - _____

C - _____

E - _____

I - _____

F - _____

I - _____

X - _____

Result: _____



14. Church Gate

The late gothic archway to the Church Square used to be closed off with a metal gate.

In the pointed arch of the church gate you can see the coat of arms of the Allerheiligen Monastery. The alcove above contains a reproduction of a pietà which most likely dates back to the 16th century. Some of the parts of the arch are also reproductions. The western jamb of the gateway is original.



15. Sonne Restaurant

The Sonne Restaurant (Hauptstraße 34) was badly damaged during the fire in Oberkirch in 1689.

Parts of the building remained standing however, such as the archway from 1619 on Bahnhofstraße and the coat of arms above the door on Hauptstraße from 1629. On the corner facing Bahnhofstraße is an elaborate tavern sign.

Knight – Civil servant – Innkeeper

This used to be the location of the so-called Neuensteiner Hof. The coat of arms at the entrance reminds us of its noble owners: Johann Adam von Neuenstein and his wife Anna Maria Zornin von Bulach. The Knights of Neuenstein had their headquarters in a castle in Hubacker southeast of Oberkirch. Just like the Knights of Schauenburg, they left their castle and moved to a town house.

In 1682, the Neuensteins sold the property to the civil servant of the Strasbourg Prince-bishop, Johann Evangelist von Bodeck. He kept it until 1687. The innkeeper, Peter Mast, took over the property and turned it into a restaurant. The city fire just two years later must have been a tough blow for him, as it was for all the citizens of Oberkirch. But Mast dared to start again and the ensuing restaurant and inn remained in his family for generations.



16. Old City Hall

The Old City Hall (Hauptstraße 32) was built at the beginning of the 19th century. The massive ground floor rests upon cellar walls which are up to several meters thick. The floors above are made of plastered half-timber framework.

Originally the building was used as a city hall and school house. In 1842 three teachers taught 313 children here. The ground floor contained a hall where the grain market was held. A resident of Oberkirch who was born in 1865 remembered: "There were large containers in which the millers and traders from far away used to store their crops. There was a large door facing Hauptstraße, where the middle window is. This is where the town messenger made his announcements after mass on Sundays."

After the city administration moved out, the city opened a museum in the Old City Hall.

Grimmelshausen

The Museum serves to remind us of the famous baroque author Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen. He lived from 1649 to 1667 in two different parts of what is now Oberkirch: in Gaisbach and on the Ullenburg near Tiergarten. His most famous work is "Der Abentheuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch".



Tip

If the museum is open, be sure to see the model of the city. It shows Oberkirch at a time when the city wall was still standing.



17. City Castle

The civil servant of the Bishop of Strasbourg, Heinrich Fischer, had the baroque palace built in 1743 (Hauptstraße 22). Matthias Fuchs, who also built the City Hall in Offenburg, was the architect. The iron lattices date back to the origins of the building.

The Fischer Family was exceptionally well off. Family members held influential positions in the administration, were innkeepers or followed careers in the church. In the first quarter of the 19th century at the latest, a pharmacy was opened in the house by Raimund Fischer. In the 1960s it moved into the annex.

Dolphins

The pharmacy was named after the dolphins which can be found on the balcony above the entrance. These mammals seem to have been important to the pharmacist Fischer. One of his daughters was christened by the name of Adolfine Alexandra Delphine.

Nepomuk Fountain

The Nepomuk Fountain used to be located closer to the city castle. The masks on the sides of the fountain are from the 19th century and were formerly the waterspouts. The Nepomuk figure was created in the 18th century as was the Nepomuk in the fountain at the corner of Hauptstraße and Appenweierer Straße.

Johannes Nepomuk was a Bohemian priest and martyr. He became very well known after his canonization in the 18th century.



18. Schauenburg Castle

These castle ruins are Oberkirch's landmark. The castle was built in the 11th century by the Zähringer Family.

Later the castle was owned by the Count of Calw, then by the House of Welf and finally by the Count von Eberstein, who used the castle as a fiefdom. The Schauenburg family has been the fief holders since the 12th century.

They have not lived in the castle constantly since then. Little by little, they bought more comfortable properties in the valley. It is not known exactly when the Schauenburg castle was destroyed. In 1731 it was considered ruins and was used as a quarry in the following years.

The castle is surrounded by a moat. Although it is dried out now, it used to be fed by rain water, sewage and a stream. It also used to be deeper than it is now. The Schauenburg is protected by a 3.7 meter thick shield wall on the mountain side. Large parts of this wall remain intact, as do a well, a cellar and the rest of two towers which served as keeps, or residential towers. You can reach the location of the castle's chapel by a spiral staircase.

Gaisbach

Stop in Gaisbach on your way back. There you can see the Schauenburg Family Castle, the St. Georg's Chapel and the Silberner Stern Restaurant where Grimmelshausen was the inn-keeper.



19. Cemetery and Sausteg

The cemetery in Oberkirch is located between the Rench River and Oberdorfstraße.

You can reach it best on foot or bicycle by taking the Sausteg, or sow's bridge. Turn at Josef-Geldreich-Straße on to Lohmühlweg. This path runs along the Mühlbach Stream and the train tracks. Along the way you will pass the old oil press, the remains of the Ihringer oil mill. It was driven by a waterwheel up into the 20th century. At the back of the Koehler paper factory, the path leads you underneath the tracks and shortly after that meets up with the Rench River and the Sausteg.

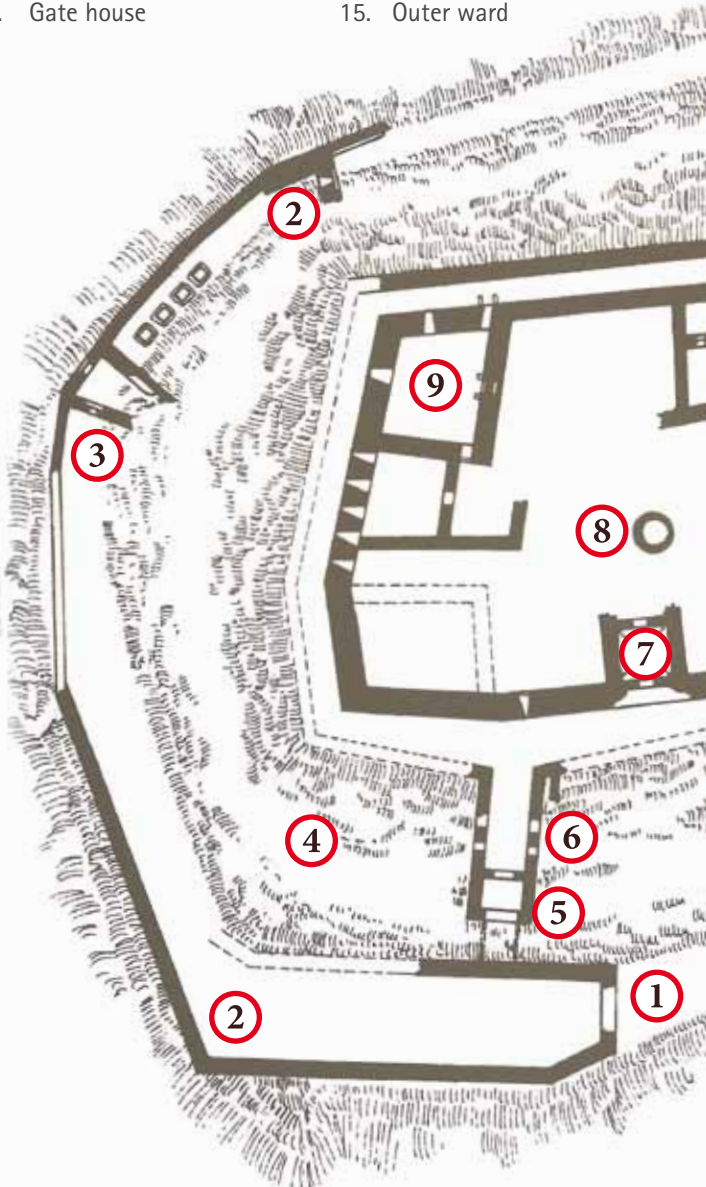
The Sausteg used to be an important connection for the residents of Hesselbach and Ödsbach, both parts of Oberkirch, for getting into town. It got its name from the town's sow pasture which is located next to it.

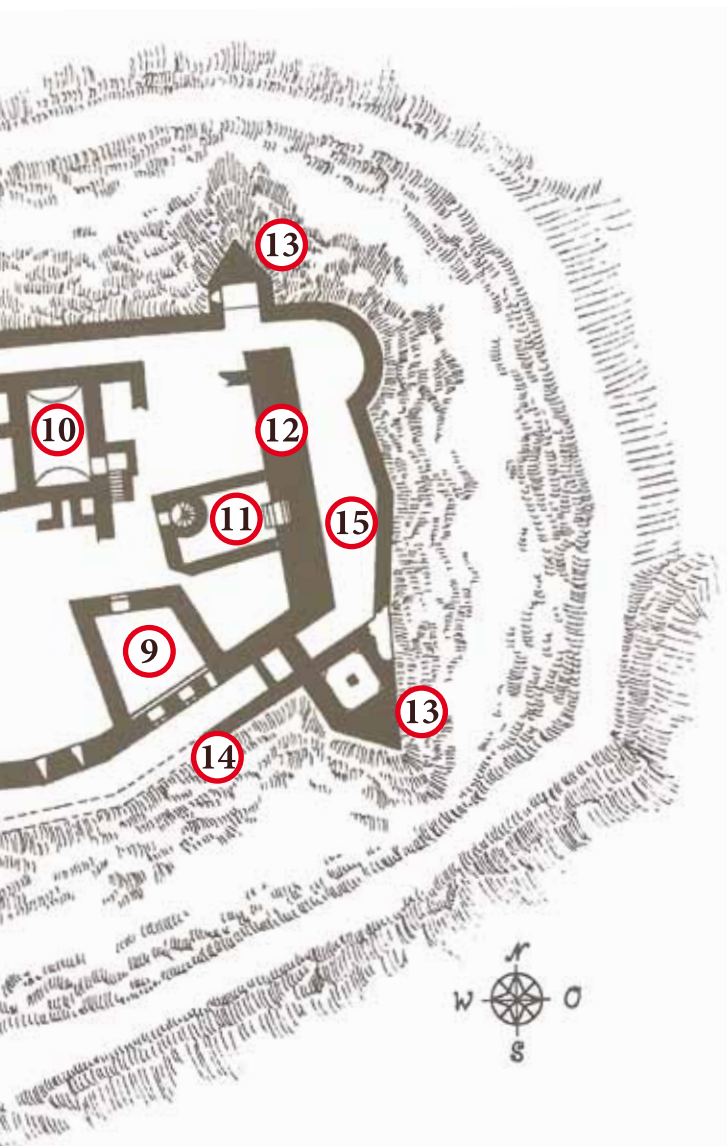
At the cemetery you can see quite a few old tombstones close to the cemetery chapel. The Oberdorf Church was located here until the beginning of the 19th century. Oberdorf used to have its own parish church, which was most likely founded in the 12th century. In the middle ages a monastery belonged to the church as well. Around 1820 the old church was torn down. The choir remained and was rebuilt as the cemetery chapel.

There is a sandstone crucifix located on Hauptweg which runs parallel to Oberdorfstraße. It was donated in 1773 by the widow Catharina Müllerin, who later remarried as a Panther.

18. Schauenburg floorplan

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Castle Gate | 8. Well |
| 2. Wall | 9. Keep towers |
| 3. In front of the castle
(Service buildings, Stalls) | 10. Cellar |
| 4. Moat | 11. Castle chapel St. Ulrich |
| 5. Draw bridge | 12. Shield wall (3.7 m thick) |
| 6. Bridge | 13. Bulwark |
| 7. Gate house | 14. Circular wall |
| | 15. Outer ward |





Editor: City of Oberkirch
Eisenbahnstraße 1, 77704 Oberkirch
Tel. 07802 82-0, stadt@oberkirch.de, www.oberkirch.de
Photos: City of Oberkirch, Heinz Erhardt