

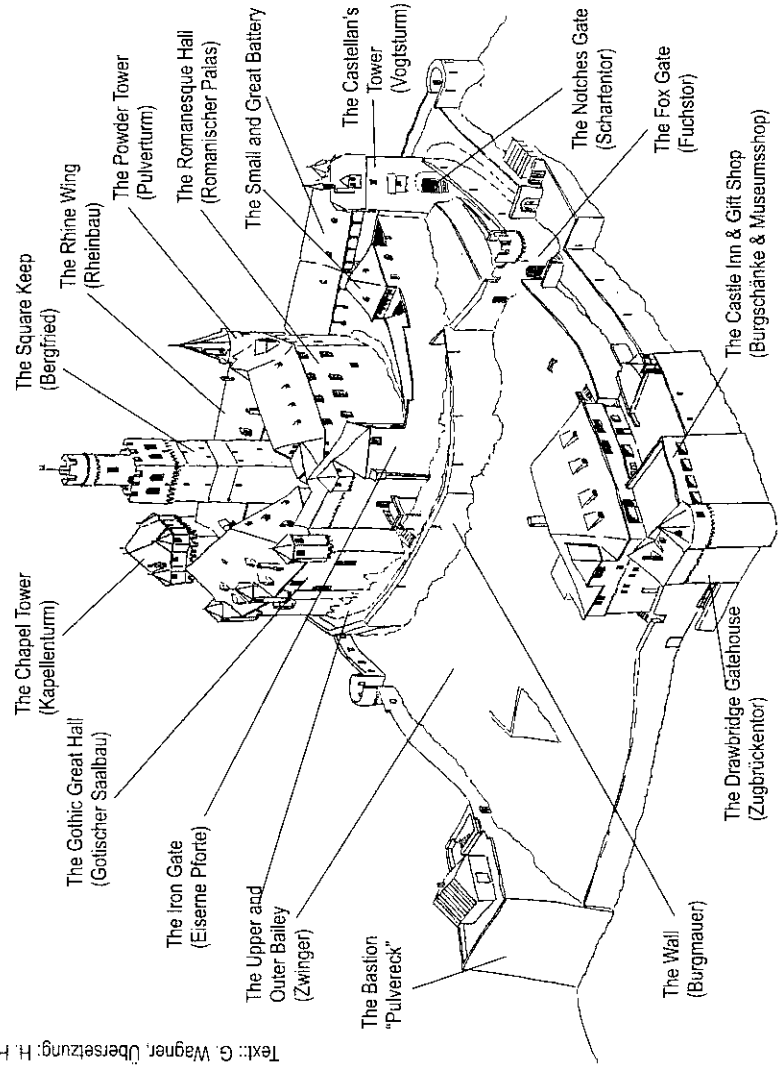
GERMAN CASTLES ASSOCIATION

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The German Castles Association (DBV) was founded in 1899 in Berlin "to stop the on-going destruction and incorrect restoration of castles and other historical fortifications". It is thus the oldest national citizens' initiative for the protection of historical monuments in Germany. Everybody can become a member! Marksburg Castle was handed over to the DBV in 1900 with the direction to demonstrate it as a real medieval castle and the living on it in the 14th century.

Since 1900 the German Castles Association is the owner of Marksburg Castle. Here is the seat of this association and its main office. Since a few years its special library and archive are at Philippsburg Castle down at the bank of the river.

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Marksburg Castle

A Guided Tour in English

This is a short guide of Marksburg Castle. You may follow the tour and read a short description of the rooms with their contents. The following numbers correspond to the stops your guide will make and will inform you about the room concerned. For more detailed information, please purchase the complete guide in the souvenir shop.

Marksburg Castle is the only hill castle on the Rhine that has never been destroyed. It has been lived in for over 700 years and thus represents an ever-changing and developing building complex that has been growing into its present shape over the centuries. Unlike all other Rhine castles which were rebuilt from ruins (most of them all too fancifully) the Marksburg is quite "genuine".

Let's have a walk round this medieval jewel! But please remember:
Don't smoke in the castle!

(1) Passing through the large drawbridge gate and the vaulted tunnel followed by the museum shop and the castle inn on the left, we begin our tour at the „Fuchstor“ (Fox Gate). It's the second medieval castle gate.

(2) Above the doorway of the third gate, the „Schartentor“ (Notches Gate), there is a machicoliation, a little balcony from which the defenders would pour boiling tar or oil onto attackers who had advanced this far. The gate was reduced in size in more recent times.

(3) We have come to a wall display showing the succession of the various Marksburg Castle owners and their coats of arms, starting with the Counts of Eppstein and ending with the German Castles Association.

Climbing the „Reitertreppe“ (Riders Stairway), hewn into the bedrock, we pass the „Vogtsturm“ (Castellan's Tower) with the old guard's quarter and begin our walk through the castle.

(4) We are now in front of the oldest main residential building, the „Palas“ (Romanesque Great Hall), with its stately apartments; it dates back to the beginnings of the 13th century and underwent various changes in the years to come. Today it houses the offices and the official residence of the general secretary of the German Castles Association (DBV).

(5) The Great Battery in front of the Great Hall was built during the 30-Years' War. The breech-loader of 1450 in the Small Battery (from 1709) is one of the oldest guns of that type in the whole of Germany.

(6 + 7) We continue into the „Rheinzwinger“ (the Upper Bailey) that boasts an unique medieval herb garden consisting of two patches of about 170 medieval plants. We climb a wooden staircase, reaching the core of the castle: the courtyard with the impressive central keep.

(8) We proceed to the wine cellar with its 17th century interior.

(9) From here we ascend to the large castle kitchen of the gothic Great Hall (14th century). Note the two fire-places, the wine-press dating from 1767, the window benches built into the extraordinary thick walls (4,5 m) and the vast array of cooking implements. The room is still used for candle-light banquets by the open fire today and can be hired for similar functions.

(10) Leaving the kitchen we climb a stone staircase leading to the upper storey, where we enter the „Kemenate“ (bedchamber) furnished with a canopied matrimonial bed, a cradle, a spinning wheel etc. It was one of the few rooms of the castle to be heated with a stove.

(11) The adjoining room is the „Rittersaal“ (Great Banqueting Hall) with its mighty fireplace, a gothic chest and tapestries. A unique item is the garderobe (medieval toilet) integrated into the wall on a corbel above the upper bailey. Note the portrait of Landgrave Johann II of Hessen (a.k.a. „The Bellicose“), one of the great campaigners of the 30 Years' War (1618-1648).

(12) Next we enter the chapel which is part of the „Kapellenturm“ (chapel tower). It was converted in the 15th century and is dedicated to St. Mark (hence: Marksburg!).

(13) A narrow staircase into the wall takes us onto the former rampart leading to the „Rheinbau“ (Rhine wing), erected 1706. It houses a weaving room where a loom and various other tools for working flax and wool are on display, as well as old household implements.

(14) The next room, the „Rüstammer“ (armoury) contains a remarkable collection of personal armour illustrating the historical development of armour from ca. 600 BC to 1500 AD. This is a very rare and noteworthy collection, only equalled by similar displays in Paris and in the Tower of London.

(15) Leaving the Rheinbau, we come to the „Bergfried“ (central keep) which is situated in one of the smallest courtyards in Germany. Of ancient but unknown age, it towers ca. 40 m over its base. Its present shape is 14th century, but certain parts belong to the oldest elements of the castle (12th century). The keep was the defenders' last refuge during a siege. Its only entrance was 10 m above the ground, inaccessible with a ladder. The lower section contains the dungeon, measuring only 1,70 by 1,70 m.

(16) We now enter the former stables underneath the Romanesque Palas (Great Hall) which houses today numerous instruments of torture and punishment such as would be uses in a typical „Folterkammer“ (torturing chamber).

(17) Finally we leave the inner castle through the „Eiserne Pforte“ (Iron Gate) and walk down the Riders' Stairway (see above!). Do not forget to look at the castle forge on your left. We leave the inner fortification of Marksburg Castle via the „Fuchstor“.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit and look forward to welcoming you again some time in the future.

