

VIA EPTERNACENSIS: ALONG THE OLD CITY WALL

■ Distance: 3 km | Duration: 1.5 hours | Low barrier



ONE FLYER, TWO ROUTES:
Along the old city wall
& Historical city centre



ECHTERNACH | #
Stadtmarketing



IMPRINT

Publisher: Stadtmarketing Echternach

Editing & Design: Stadtmarketing Echternach

Photos: Uli Fielitz, Pierre Haas, Pancake! Photographie, SIT, Stadtmarketing,
M. Thiel-Pinel, Mykyta Thill, Roland Wehking/Pfadfinder, Josée Willems

With the support of the Stadtmarketing project group „History“

ALONG THE OLD CITY WALL

Distance 3 km | Duration 1.5 hours

b low barrier

Follow the **blue route** on the city map and discover Echternach's small alleys along the old city wall.

Turn the brochure to discover the **pink marked path** through the HISTORICAL CITY CENTRE (1.5 km | 1 hour).

The tour starts in front of the Echternach Tourist Office. Cross the square to the street Porte St. Willibrord and then turn into Rue du Chemin de Fer on the opposite side.

1 HOYNSWENKEL

Rue du Chemin de Fer, also called *Hoynswenkel*, got its name in the 19th century when Echternach was connected to the national railway network. Before the street leads into the *Rue de la Gare*, you reach the large area where the Echternach railway station buildings were located. This is now the site of the new *Millermaoler Schull* school complex with sports hall and swimming pool.

Follow the road until you reach the pedestrian street *Rue de la Gare* (commonly known as *An Haal*), one of the oldest streets in Echternach. At the crossing, which forms a main axis towards Vianden and Diekirch, was the *Haal* or *Vianden Gate* until 1858. Continue the walk on the opposite street *Haaler Buurchmauer*.

OLD TRAIN STATION

At the end of the 19th century, Luxembourg was connected to the international railway network. Between 1862 and 1874, the foundation of the Prince Heinrich Railway Company enabled the opening of sections of the Sauer line from Ettelbrück to Wasserbillig. Around 1900, there was a legislative project to build the *Charly* narrow-gauge railway. It was supposed to connect the east of the Grand Duchy, which had been difficult to reach until then, with the capital city of Luxembourg in order to promote the economy and tourism.

After the Second World War, the narrow-gauge railways were taken over by the CFL (National Company of Luxembourg Railways) and operated until they were discontinued in 1954. They were then replaced by buses. After their closure, the railway lines were partly transformed into cycle paths. The imposing three-part station building with oriel turret was demolished in 1973.



Former railway station building
(Postcard 269, Bellwald)



Roud Haous in the Haaler Buurchmauer

② RUE NEUVE & HAALER BUURCHMAUER

In these alleys with a medieval character, you follow the route of the old city fortifications, of which there are no longer any visible remains on the outside in this area. Only inside a single house is a piece of a city wall tower preserved. The inconspicuous *Roud Haous* (Red House), with the house number 10, is connected to the wall that still exists here and uncovers the back of a former tower inside.

Other houses in this alley still indicate the original construction of this area of the town. The day labourer's house at the intersection of the *Rue Neuve* and the *Haaler Buurchmauer* is situated on a trapezoidal plot of land which is very narrow towards the intersection.

A little further on is another Echternach day labourer's house with the house number 14A. The small building, only one room deep, was built onto the back of the town wall. This example shows the cram-

ped, poor living situation of large parts of the population in the 19th century.

Walk to the end of the street and then turn left into *Rue André Duchscher*. After 20 m, turn left again into a small side street.

③ GOTHIC HOUSE

The so-called *Gothic House* is one of the oldest surviving gabled terraced houses in Luxembourg. Dendrochronological examinations of the timber (age determination by annual rings) have shown that the house was built just after the year 1300.

The building partially collapsed in 1996, causing damage to some of the window stones. These window stones, with the three-passage blind arches which were typical for the time, date back to the first half of the 14th century. During the restoration work between 1998 and 2001, the gable end was not added because the relevant information was missing. In total, there is documented evidence of ten alterations and repairs to the house between the 15th and 20th centuries.

Return to *Rue André Duchscher* and turn right. After 50 m, turn left into *Rue des Tonneliers*. At the end of the alley, you will reach *Route de Luxembourg*.

④ ÉISCHTRICHER POART

Before 1851, one had to pass through the *Luxembourg Gate* (Éischtricher Poart) to enter the city when coming from Luxembourg. It was located at the current intersection between the two side streets, *Rue des Tonneliers* and *Rue Jean-Pierre Brimmer*, and the main street, *Route de Luxembourg*. The *Luxembourg Gate* was completely demolished in 1851.

The local historian and mayor Jean-Pierre Brimmeyr, who saw the gates during his lifetime, described them as follows: "The living quarters for the respective gatekeepers were located above the four double-lockable gates. On both sides, there was a stone staircase, one which led to this overhang and the other to the gallery."

Echternach's town gates were all demolished between 1840 and 1867.

Cross the street at the pedestrian crossing and turn left into *Rue Jean-Pierre Brimmeyr*. After a few metres, you will reach the first of five city-wall towers.

JEAN-PIERRE BRIMMEYR

Jean-Pierre Brimmeyr (1799-1876), a lay historian and pharmacist, became the owner of the former monastery pharmacy through his marriage to the daughter of the pharmacist Heldenstein. Until his death, he was the owner of the crypt of the Willibrordus Basilica, which he used as a storage cellar.

As a local politician, he also supported the demolition of the city gates so that the national road connecting Luxembourg City and Echternach could be built. At that time, the local municipal council justified this with the remark: "We should bring light and air into the city and open it up to traffic". 45 years after his death, the book *Geschichte der Stadt und der Abtei Echternach* (History of the City and Abbey of Echternach), written by him, was published for the first time.

5 THEODOR HOLLER TOWER

The fortified tower, which was rebuilt for residential purposes in the 19th century, has the typical shape of a shell tower. Its semicircular rear side, which has only very few narrow windows, is integrated into the city wall. The street side is straight and is used as a four-storey residential building.

This residential tower was dedicated to Theodor Holler († 3.12.1734). He was an alderman and later *schultheiss* (bailiff) of Echternach and represented the town in the Council of States in Luxembourg. As bailiff, he was committed to the restoration of the city walls, towers and streets. A humorous anecdote says that he used the tax levied on wine and other beverages for this purpose. It was joked that the more the people of Echternach drank, the safer and more beautiful their city became!



Theodor Holler Tower in the Rue J.-P. Brimmeyr

Follow *Rue Jean-Pierre Brimmeyr* until *Rue Comte Sigefroid* and turn right. You are now above the canalised *Lauterburerbaach* (Lauterborn stream), which used to feed the town moat. Cross the road and continue along the street *Hooveleker Buurchmauer*. Walk up to the fortress wall, then enter the garden on the right and look at the wall *extra muros* (outside).

6 HOOVELEKER BUURCHMAUER

Around this alley, the ensemble of the medieval city wall is still clearly visible, even if partially only as a reconstruction. In 1992, it was restored by the Institut national pour le patrimoine architectural – INPA (formerly *Service des sites et monuments nationaux*, Luxembourg's heritage protection service) and classified as a historical monument. On the outside of the wall, the full height of the tower with merlons is preserved. Inside, a wide, stable battlement runs over arcades, and the protruding stones still give an idea of where the stairs led up to the battlement.

This tower is called *Hämelmaous Tuerm* (*Hämelmaous*, Engl. house cricket) after a well-known carnival song in the Echternach dialect, which is a satire on the city administration. The first version of the song was written in 1873 by Professor Jos Speck (1834-1901).

The typical development of *Hooveleker Buurchmauer* shows the flair of old Echternach: small modest houses, built around 1800, lean back against the city wall here. They are only one room deep and measure three to four metres from the front door to the rear wall. They have characteristic shed roofs, while the windows and doors have simple jambs.

Follow the street to the back of the *Hospice Civil*.

The *Hämelmaous Tuerm* can be booked as a holiday home through the *Camping Officiel Wollefsschlucht*: campingofficiel@visitechternach.lu



Hämelmaous figurine

7 HOSPICE CIVIL

The Echternach *Hospice Civil* is a foundation and therefore belongs to the citizens of Echternach as a whole. It is administered by a commission whose five members are elected for five years by the municipal council.

The *Hospice Civil* has its origins in a hospice on Peter and Paul Hill, a donation by Abbess Irmina von Oeren (Trier). In 992, Count Siegfried, Echternach lay abbot, separated the abbey and the hospice, making it an independent institution. In

1207, the citizen Hermannus Cocus ante portam had the institution rebuilt at the foot of Peter and Paul Hill. Because more space was needed, the hospital moved to a new building in the *Rue de la Montagne* in 1734. Under French rule, the hospital was put under the control of the municipality and has remained independent ever since. as a retirement and nursing home in 1999.

Between 1914 and 1919, a new building was realised on the present site. After a

FORMER CITY WALL

The origins of the city wall date back to the 9th century. Old town seals from the 11th and 12th century show it with town gates and a basilica. At that time, a wide moat surrounded the 2000-metre-long wall, with four gates and 14 open towers. People began to repurpose individual city towers as cheap living spaces at the start of the 19th century before these towers fell into disrepair one hundred years later.

During the construction of the moat, the course was first determined, then the earth was excavated and piled up on the inner side of the city to form a mound before it was tamped down. In this way, a drivable path was created *intra muros*. On the inner slope (escarpe), the wall was built at least one metre thick and between four and six metres high. The slope (contrescarpe) on the opposite side of the ditch was planted with thorny bushes to make it more difficult for the enemy to attack. With the rise of firearms, the city wall lost its defensive function. Gradually, the moat was filled in with earth and gardens were created.

five-year renovation period, the completely renovated building was put into operation as a retirement and nursing home in 1999.

Follow the road to the *House in the Tower* (house number 7).

i

EVAKUIERUNG DES SPITALS

On 6th October 1944, 50 patients still remained in the hospital, seeking shelter in the basement rooms. With the help of the two doctors Dr. Gust and Dr. Bub Gretsch, the nurses and volunteers - and thanks to the kindness of the American army - the patients were evacuated from the Wehrmacht-occupied city in a fire engine and a private car in the last minute.

8 HERMANNUS TUERM

Since the Middle Ages, the shell towers and city gates of the defensive wall were the main components of the fortified city since the Middle Ages. From these towers, walls and battlements, a task force defended the citizens and abbey against attacks. Strategically, the fortifications were outdated in the 18th century, which is why the defensive towers were then auctioned off in 1813 and converted for residential purposes. By 1900, the quality of living in the towers had deteriorated to such an extent that people abandoned the dwellings. The city wall and the towers served as building material suppliers for new houses. The large corner tower of the city wall was taken down to a height of three metres.

The stone-covered rear and the mono-pitch roof show that it was once a defensive tower. The tower was dedicated

in 2022 to Hermannus Cocus ante portam, who used the inheritance of his wife Gerburgis to rebuild the hospice in 1207, thus promoting the charitable institution donated by Irmina and renewed by Abbot Siegfried.

Follow the road and go straight on at the intersection with *Rue de l'Hôpital*. At the end of the alley, turn right into *Rue Hoovelek*.

9 HOOVELEKER POART

There are many written documents about the gates of the Echternach city wall, but there is only one photograph of a gate. The picture shows the *Porta Hovelocha* - the *Hooveleker Poart* - which was mentioned for the first time in 1346, and was taken before it was demolished. The façade *intra muros* shows a baroque, two-storey residential building that was available to the city guard. If the guard wanted to pass the gate during his tour, he had to leave the battlements on one side of the gate by stairs and climb up again on the other side by another flight of stairs.

The area marked with cobblestones in the *Rue Hoovelek* shows the place where the *Hooveleker Poart* stood. During archaeolo-



Hooveleker Poart before its demolition in 1867

gical excavations in 2002, remains of its foundation walls were recovered under the pavement. This gate, also called the *Trier Gate*, was the last gate to be demolished in 1867. At the time, such installations were considered an obstacle to traffic and therefore had to make way for the modern spirit of the times.

Walk along the pavement to the pedestrian strip and go over to the other side of the street.

10 SHANZER BUURCH-MAUER

From here you have a beautiful view of the ensemble of the *Shanzer Buurchmauer* with its two towers (*Breet Baach Tuerm* & *Wollefstuerm*) and of the renaturalised *Lauterburerbaach* stream. For a long time, the water of the former town moat was squeezed into a narrow channel. Since the renaturation of the area between the *Hoovelek* and the banks of the Sûre (Sauer) river, it once again runs freely in its bed and flows into the Sauer a little further downstream.

For many years, an important regional horse market was held on the square next to the *Trier Gate*.



Regional horse market at the *Trier Gate*

LAUTERBURERBAACH

The Echternach town moat was fed by the *Lauterburerbaach* stream. The source of the lively stream is located in the hills above Echternach. It then flows through the city centre into the Sauer. On the plateau, it is fed by many small streams, meaning that it has sufficient water all year round. Thanks to its steep gradient, at least nine mills were able to operate on its riverbanks for over 1,000 years (between the 8th and 20th century). The stream was cut off in front of the city centre near the *Luxembourg Gate* to allow for the construction of the moat. Part of the stream remained open, flowing through the town centre and into the Sauer, while the other section was diverted to fill the city moat. The water level of the ditch could be regulated with the help of small weirs and sluices. The *Lauterburerbaach* changes its name several times along its 9.5 km long course. It takes on field names or the names of the respective neighbourhoods along the way. Today, a large portion of the *Lauterburerbaach* is in canals and several sections of the river run underground.



Shanzer Buurchmauer & *Lauterburerbaach*

Walk along the pavement to the small open gate. Follow the steps down to the *Lauterburerbaach* stream. Walk along the stream to the *Wollefstuerm*.

b TIP: A low barrier path leads to the left of the gate through *Rue des Redoutes* to the *Wollefstuerm*.

11 WOLLEFSTUERM

The *Wollefstuerm* is the only city wall tower with a historically documented name. Old drawings show that the tower originally had a conical roof. When it was converted for residential purposes at the beginning of the 19th century, it was probably half removed and given a mono-pitch roof. In the 1920s, the tower was again demolished down to the foundation walls. Targeted archaeological excavations in 1999 made it possible to rebuild 75 per cent of the large corner tower. The foundations stand on wooden posts buried seven metres deep in the bed of the river Sauer. A dendrochronological examination (age determination by annual rings) showed that the trees were felled around the year 1250.

The *Wollefstuerm* can be booked as a holiday home through the *Camping Officiel Wolleffschlucht*: campingofficiel@visitechternach.lu



Go around the *Wollefstuerm*, walk a little way up *Rue des Redoutes* and turn right onto the narrow path that runs between the gardens.

b TIP: You can also reach the next point, *Rue de la Sûre*, via the low barrier path that runs straight ahead from *Wollefstuerm* through *Rue des Redoutes*.



Typical *Schloff* - *Kellereigank*

12 KELLEREIGANK

A characteristic of the medieval architecture of Echternach are the so-called *Schläff* (in the singular *Schloff*), narrow passages between the houses, which usually connected parallel streets. These passages were used *intra muros* as shortcuts and prevented the fire from spreading to the surrounding buildings in case of a town fire. They usually ran from the city wall towards the city centre.

Cross the *Rue des Bons Malades* and continue through the narrow *Schloff* on the opposite side.



Coat of arms of the blacksmith's guild in the *Rue de la Sûre*

13 RUE DE LA SÛRE

Rue de la Sûre was the main road in Echternach until the Second World War, as it was the only way for vehicles to cross the Sauer Bridge. Craftsmen had settled in this street, whose workshops were replaced by small businesses and shops from the 19th century onwards. Due to the major changes in the street network in the 1950s, the alley lost much of its importance.

Traces of Baroque and Rococo can still be found on some of the buildings. The lintel of the oldest house in the street (house number 30) is decorated with the coat of arms of the blacksmith's guild: Horseshoe, Hammer and Pliers.

Follow *Rue de la Sûre* on the right until you reach *Rue du Pont*. Take the pedestrian crossing on the left to the toll house and the old border bridge.

14 SÛRE BRIDGE & TOLL HOUSE

The first settlers could only cross the Sauer near Echternach at low water and at certain points through a ford (river passage). This was presumably only possible in the dry season, as in winter and at high water there was a very strong and dangerous current.

To this day, it remains impossible to prove that the Sauer Bridge dates back to Roman times. In the 17th century, a draw-bridge connected the sixth arch field with the left bank of the river Sauer. In order to make the construction of the Prinz Heinrich railway possible, the arch on the Echternach bank was filled in at the end of the 19th century. The bridge was completely destroyed by war during the von Rundstedt Offensive. In order to ensure better flow when there were floods, a wide central arch was created during the reconstruction in 1949 (28.10 m).



Abbot Bertels with *Historia Luxemburgensis*

The statue on the bridge depicts the Echternach Abbot Johannes Bertels (1544-1607), who wrote the first history of Luxembourg – *Historia Luxemburgensis*. As such, he can be seen with an open book in his hands.



Border bridge over the Sauer between Luxembourg & Germany

At the 1815 Congress of Vienna, the decision to create a border between Luxembourg and Prussia was made. As a result, all of the territories on the other side of the Sauer river, which had previously belonged to Luxembourg, went to Prussia. However, the border took on a new level of significance in 1867, when Luxembourg joined the German Customs Union. The newly created border brought the first customs officers to Echternach. Indeed, the town's neo-baroque customs building was probably built after 1867. Until the Schengen Agreement came into force in 1995, the building served as a border station with Germany.

Continue along Rue du Pont for 50 m from the toll house, past the small car park. Then take the path on the right down to the park and the river Sauer. Go left and follow the riverside promenade.

15 SÛRE

The Sûre (Sauer) river has its source in the Belgian Ardennes and, with a length of 175 km, is the largest left tributary of the Moselle, into which it flows at Wasserbillig. During the abbey period, the abbots had exclusive fishing rights in the Sauer. Until the 19th century, it was a navigable river on which trade was conducted. Only flatboats were used to transport the goods. For 400 years, most of these ships were built in one - at times even two - shipyards here on the banks of the Sauer. In Echternach dialect, the shipyard was called *Schaffplaz* and the workers *Schaffbaier*.

After 400 m you reach the *Rococo Pavilion*. Walk around the building.

b TIP: A low barrier path leads from the promenade on the left straight to the pavilion.



Neo-baroque toll house by the bridge

SCHAFFBAIER

From 1650 onwards, pre-industrial wooden ships measuring up to 30 m long were built in Echternach, in order to transport goods across the river Sauer. The workers who built these ships were also known as *Schaffbaier*. Since the water in the river Sauer was often low, very shallow ships were made. The ships were built in different stages: *Dillschnidder* (board cutters) would cut tree trunks to the desired length and thickness. In order to produce the ship's curvature, the boards were then heated and shaped over fire. When assembling the boat on a scaffold, the bottom boards were mounted first, followed by longitudinal boards. Once the *canot* (flat boat) was finished, the joints between the planks were plugged with moss and smeared with wood tar. The last Echternach *Schaffbaier* was Peter Dell (†1925).

16 ROCOCO PAVILION

The *Rococo Pavilion* was built in 1765, as part of the redesign of the *Old Garden* at Echternach Abbey. The oldest mention of the structure from 1797 refers to the building as *maison d'amusement*, which can be roughly translated as garden gazebo. In the five corner alcoves, allegorical stone images express the joy of life and represent the closed cycle of the four stages of a day. The grotesque mask of the man with the beard above the entrance door of the great hall looks melancholic, while the child's head represents cheerfulness. The floor plan of the building, which takes on an irregular pentagonal shape, invites us to discover the front face of the house, which lies along the same visual axis as the prelate wing of the abbey.

Follow the path until you reach the fountain.

17 ABBEY GARDENS

Today's city park grew out of the baroque gardens of Echternach Abbey. By the end of the 15th century, the abbey garden, known as the *Pomerium* could already be seen on the van Deventer city map (p. 14/15). The intersecting avenues with fountains followed the design principles of the great European palaces. The Echternach monastery gardens were used as a model for many private gardens. The abbey complex was auctioned as French national property in 1797. The following note can be found in the documents: "bomgart bussent der stattgraben mit 900 Obstbäumen, drei Wasserbecken und einer Baumschule" (garden outside the town moat boasts 900 fruit trees, three water basins and a tree nursery).

The fountain is the last of three water



Rococo pavilion & limestone tuff fountain

sources that ran through the gardens of Echternach's former monastery during the abbey period. The stone in the middle is a limestone tuff, the youngest solid rock in the Müllerthal region. In the surrounding sandstone, the lime is dissolved, which forms the binding agent between the quartz grains. If this lime-rich water comes to the surface from a source, solid lime can form again through evaporation of the water and other processes. The calcareous water that spouts from the stone means that the stone continues to grow to this day. The moss that has settled on the stone is called *curled hook-moss*. It grows in calcareous and moist locations and likes to colonise soil, rock and rotten wood.

Pass the fountain and follow the path to the abbey. A passage leads you into the abbey courtyard. Walk right along the building and then turn left to enter the *cour d'honneur*. On the opposite side of the Abbey, go through the gate to the *Orangerie*.

18 ORANGERIE

The *Prelate's Garden* was created after 1731 by Abbot Gregorius Schouppe according to French models on the site of the former city wall. The *Orangerie* was built for the overwintering of exotic plants and was completed in 1736, presumably according to the plans of Leopold Durand.

The four stone pictures in the niches of the main façade are attributed to the work of the Würzburg sculptor Adam Ferdinand Tietz (1708-1777). This depiction of the cycle of the four seasons played a major role in the Baroque period and symbolises the succession of spring, summer, autumn and winter as the eternal cycle of nature.

The garden is in the shape of a rectangle divided into eight squares and bordered by avenues. At the intersection of the main avenues is a fountain, next to a sundial from the time of its origin. Only a few

of the twelve stone figures which once marked the corners of the avenues have survived. They were destroyed during the *von Rundstedt Offensive*.

NATUR- & GEOPARK MÖLLERDALL

The history of the *Natur- & Geopark Möllerdall* begins around 245 million years ago, in a sea. Countless particles of sand and others were deposited and solidified into rock. The sea disappeared, and rivers shaped the impressive rocky landscape of the *Mullerthal* we see today. The task of the *Nature- & Geopark* is to preserve this heritage and to develop the region in a sustainable way. In 2022 *Natur- & Geopark Möllerdall* was included in the international network of *UNESCO Global Geoparks*.

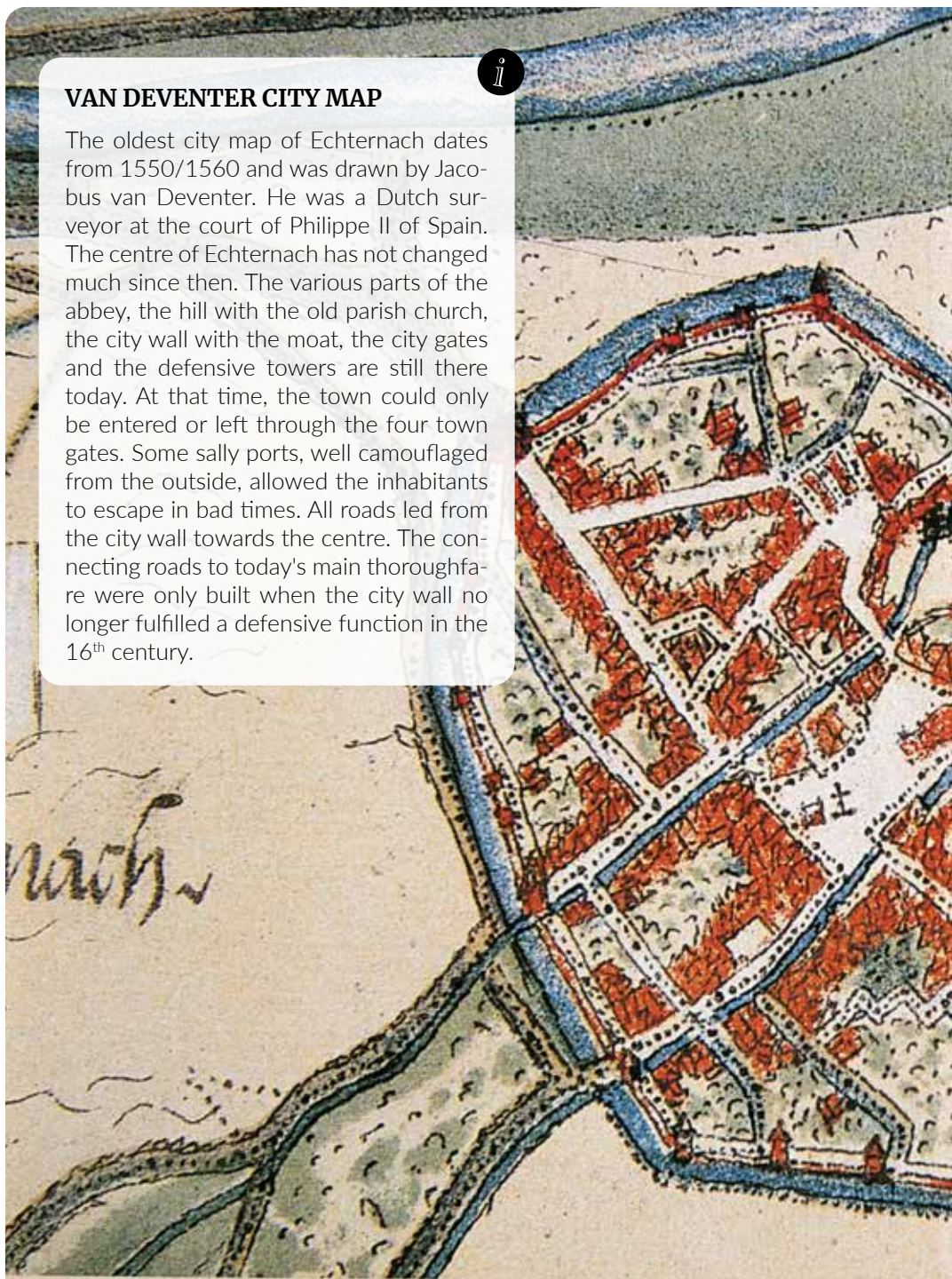


Orangerie with *Prelate's Garden* according to plans by Leopold Durand

VAN DEVENTER CITY MAP

ii

The oldest city map of Echternach dates from 1550/1560 and was drawn by Jacobus van Deventer. He was a Dutch surveyor at the court of Philippe II of Spain. The centre of Echternach has not changed much since then. The various parts of the abbey, the hill with the old parish church, the city wall with the moat, the city gates and the defensive towers are still there today. At that time, the town could only be entered or left through the four town gates. Some sally ports, well camouflaged from the outside, allowed the inhabitants to escape in bad times. All roads led from the city wall towards the centre. The connecting roads to today's main thoroughfare were only built when the city wall no longer fulfilled a defensive function in the 16th century.



Oldest city map of Echternach, drawn by Jacobus van Deventer (1550/1560)





16

17

b

15

14

13

11

12

9

8

7

Rue du Pont

Rue du Pont

Rue de la Sûre

Rue de la Sûre

Rue du Pont

Rue Ste Claire

Rue des Bons-Malades

Rue des Bons-Malades

Rue de l'Hôpital

Rue Hobvelok

Rue des Redoutes

Rue des Redoutes

Rue des Bénédictins

Rue des Pemparts

Route de Wasserbillig

Ecoliers

Rue Ste Imine

l'Hôpital

er Buurchmauer

s