



VIA EPTERNACENSIS: HISTORICAL CITY CENTRE

■ Distance: 1.5 km | Duration: 1 hour



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



ECHTERNACH | #
Stadtmarketing



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HISTORICAL CITY CENTRE

Distance 1.5 km | Duration 1 hour

Follow the **pink route** on the map to discover the main sights of the abbey town.

Turn the brochure to discover the **blue marked, low barrier path ALONG THE OLD CITY WALL** (3 km | 1.5 hours).

The small circular route of the **VIA EPTER-NACENSIS** starts in front of the **Echternach Tourist Office - right in front of the Basilica**.

1 BASILICA

The present basilica is the 5th church built on this site. It houses the shrine of St. Willibrord, the founder of the abbey and the town of Echternach.

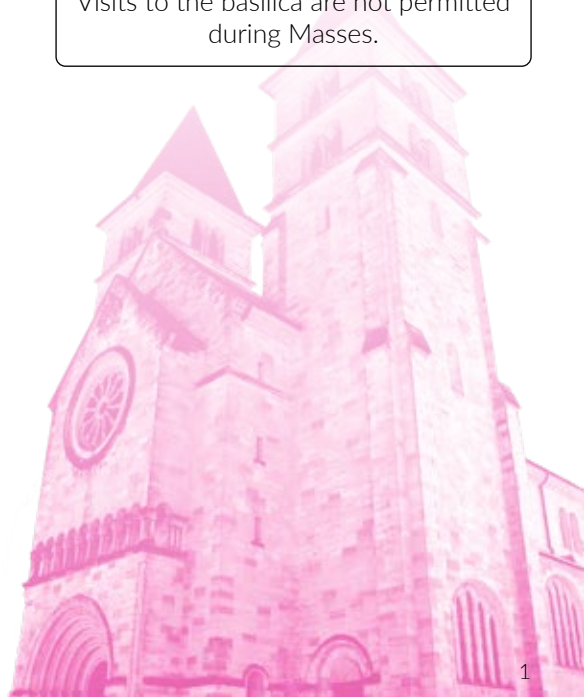
Around 700, Willibrord had a plain, aisle-less church built. Because of the rapidly growing number of pilgrims, this Merovingian church was replaced by a larger, Carolingian church with a crypt, about 100 years later. After a devastating fire in 1016, a Romanesque church was built. It had more or less the same dimensions as today's basilica. In 1031 the new construction was completed. In the middle of the 13th century, the Romanesque building was transformed into a Gothic one.

Looted and confiscated by the French revolutionary army in 1794, the abbey church was sold at an auction as French national property in 1797. In the years that followed, the church was converted into a porcelain factory. The association *Willibrordus Bauverein*, founded in 1862, took care of the reconstruction and the

restoration of the church in Neo-Gothic style. Blown up during the *von Rundstedt Offensive* (Battle of the Bulge) at the end of the Second World War, the church was rebuilt, from 1948 to 1953, thanks to funds from the Luxembourg State.

The two western towers surmount the eastern ones and dominate the exterior of the building. On the north side, the palatial complex of the former Benedictine abbey unfolds. Above the rose window of the west façade is a coat of arms relief consisting of three parts. On top: The papal insignia of a basilica (the parasol and the keys of St. Peter) refer to the honorary title *Papal Basilica Minor*. On the left: The double-headed eagle of the former imperial abbey. Its body is formed by a blessing hand, pointing at the motto *Sub Manu Solius Dei* (Under God's hand alone). On the right: The coat of arms of the city of Echternach.

Opening hours: Open daily 8h-18h
Visits to the basilica are not permitted during Masses.



For a detailed description of the interior of the Basilica, please see the flyer *Basilica of Saint Willibrord*, available at the Basilica and the Tourist Office.

2 BASILICA (INSIDE)

SAINT WILLIBRORD

1

Willibrord was born in Northumbria (England) in 658. After his education in the monastery of Ripon, he emigrated to Rath Melsigi in Ireland, where he was ordained priest. In 690, with 11 companions, he set out to preach the gospel on the continent. In 695 Pope Sergius ordained him 1st Archbishop of Utrecht. Thanks to a donation in 698 by the abbess Irmina von Oeren (Trier), he was able to found an abbey in Echternach. After a fulfilled life as a missionary, Willibrord wished to be buried in his own abbey in Echternach. He died in 739 and was laid to rest in the crypt of the basilica.

Inside the basilica, the central nave is separated from the side naves by a series of pillars and columns connected by double semicircular arches. In Echternach, the characteristic feature of this architecture from the 11th century is the inclusion of two smaller arches in a large arch. This form of architecture is traditionally called the *Echternacher Stützenwechsel* or *Echternach system* because the basilica is one of the last witnesses of this particularity.

The stained-glass windows in the side aisles tell the story of St. Willibrord's life. The choir window created by Jacques Le Chevallier shows Willibrord in a praying posture in front of the Holy Trinity. Side windows: St. Peter and St. Paul (both patron saints of the first abbey church), and the symbols of the four gospel writers: Luke (bull), Matthew (divine man), Mark (lion) and John (eagle).



Tomb of St. Willibrord (crypt)

On the right of the choir, a staircase leads to the crypt and the tomb of St. Willibrord. The gallery crypt with thick walls and barrel vaulting is part of the Carolingian church from 800. On the vault of the chancel, opposite the shrine, there are remains of Roman frescoes from the 11th century. The Merovingian sarcophagus with the remains of St. Willibrord is placed in the centre of the neo-Gothic funerary monument made of white Carrara marble dating from 1906. Next to the chancel: The so-called *St. Willibrord's spring*. It is reminiscent of the baptismal activity of the saint.

Back in the upper part of the basilica, to the left of the choir room, you reach the documentation centre about the Echternach Hopping Procession. Every year on Whit Tuesday, thousands of pilgrims and

Opening hours
Documentation Centre:
April-October:
daily 10h-12h & 14h-17h
November-March: Sat & Sun 14-16h

spectators come together to take part in the Hopping Procession. The exhibition shows its history and the procedure.



Hopping Procession 2022

HOPPING PROCESSION

11

Soon after St. Willibrord's death on 7 November 739, pilgrims start coming to his grave. From the 11th century at the latest, there are the so-called hopping processions (obligatory for numerous parishes) during the Whitsun week. Perhaps there are already ritual dances in Echternach at that time. It is quite possible that their origin lies in heathen traditions. In the context of the penitential processions, the pilgrims of Waxweiler made the vow in the 14th century to hop in Echternach. The custom is first mentioned around 1497. Originally, it may have been a therapeutic dance according to the principle that "a disease can be cured by its analogy". Several attempts to forbid the hopping procession failed. On 16 November 2010, the Echternach hopping procession was inscribed by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible cultural Heritage of humanity.

After leaving the church, cross the small square to the left of the basilica towards the TRIFOLION cultural centre.

3 TRIFOLION

Since 2008, the TRIFOLION cultural centre has been an important event venue in Luxembourg and the cross-border region, hosting around 200 events a year. The building was built on the site of a former Redemptorist monastery and picks up on architectural features of the former monastery and its surroundings. TRIFOLION's programme includes concerts, theatre, children's events, dance, workshops, exhibitions, readings and lectures.



TRIFOLION Echternach (Atrium Hall)

Follow *Rue Haut-Ruisseau* until you reach the intersection with *Gebaakenen Hof*. Turn left here.

4 GEBAAKENEN HOF

According to various sources, there was a public baking oven in the *Gebaakenen Hof* alley in the Middle Ages. It may have been here that surplus grain was processed into bread and distributed to the people in need.

At the end of the alley, walk through the sandstone arch to the market square. You will see the *Justice Cross* on the right-hand side.

5 MARKET SQUARE

The market square in its present form is documented on the oldest town plan of Echternach (1550/1560) drawn by Jacobus van Deventer (p. 14/15). The foundations of some of the houses date back to the 14th century. The current appearance of the *Moart* was shaped by its reconstruction after the Second World War.

Routes met here as far back as Roman times. Fairs have been held here since the 12th century.

JUSTICE CROSS

During the Middle Ages, the Justice Cross, also called *Urtzel* (*Urteilssäule*, Judgement Column in High German), showed that the abbot was lord over the law. At the monumental column upon a 9-step base, the pronouncements of the court's judgements were made. The column of judgement probably dates back to Countess Ermesinde's charter of freedom, when the

city of Echternach and the aldermen were granted jurisdiction in 1236.

In 1774, the citizens wanted to demolish the hated symbol of medieval rule and replace it with a fountain of liberty. However, its destruction did not succeed until twenty years later, when the French Revolutionary troops arrived.

The cross was recovered in a garden in 1920 and rebuilt in front of the town hall in 1938. At the end of the Second World War it was again destroyed, but in 1955 it found a place as a smaller copy in front of the basilica.

In 1982, the Justice Cross was rebuilt in its historic location on the market square according to plans by Théodore Laurent from 1774.

DÄNZELT

The building that dominates the market square, called *Dänzelt* or *Dingstuhl*, dates back in part to the second half of the 14th century. During the Middle Ages, *Jahrge-dinge* (annual meetings at which the *Schef-fenweissthümer*, the wise words of the aldermen, were proclaimed) were held in the open hall with pointed arches.

In 1374, Wilhelm von Kerpen, the abbot and lord of Echternach, bought the





Justice Cross in front of the basilica (1955)

building to provide accommodation for the abbey administration. In 1444, the building was destroyed in a huge fire and then reconstructed. In 1520 it was rebuilt in the Renaissance style, which can be seen very clearly in the generous window frames.

During renovations in the neo-Gothic style (1895), statues were inserted into the façade. The sculptures are the work of the sculptor Lambert Piedboeuf from 1896; they represent the four cardinal virtues (prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice). In the centre are the Mother of God and King Solomon.



The former town hall (1870/1880)

The bronze plaque in the open hall of the *Dënzelt* commemorates the granting of the Charter of Freedom by Countess Ermesinde in 1236.

The building of the municipal administration next to the *Dënzelt* was built in the Baroque period and is reminiscent of the architectural style of the abbey. As a result of extensive renovations and repairs in 2000, the two buildings were connected.

On the opposite side of the present municipality is the old town hall. Only the open vaulted gallery remains of the former building, also called *Unter den Steilen*. The gallery was originally supported by five, today still four massive columns. Ancient reports say that these columns were donated by the five Echternach craft guilds and were deliberately designed differently.

Go straight past the *Dënzelt* and the municipality and turn right into *Rue des Écoliers*. At the end of the street, you will see the building of the former *St. George's Hospital*, now used by the police.



Market square/*Dënzelt*

6 ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL

It is likely that the *Hospice St Georges* dates back to the time before 698. After 1796, the hospital became a municipal civic hospice, which moved to a new building in *Rue de l'Hôpital* in 1919. The old buildings were auctioned off and passed into private hands and were used as outbuildings by the owner of the renowned *Grand Hôtel du Cerf* in Echternach. Most of the building complex was demolished after the Second World War in the 1950s, so that the space could be used for a large intersection. A new state administration headquarters building was constructed on top of the old foundations of the hospice.

The stone relief above the main entrance door depicts St. George, venerated as patron saint since 1360, as a dragon slayer.

Cross the small square at the pedestrian crossing over to *Place Irmine*.

7 IRMINA SQUARE

In 1998, to mark the 1300th anniversary of the foundation of the Echternach monastery, this square was renamed *Place Irmine*. The decorations on the stones are reminiscent of the writing and painting found in the books introduced by missionaries. Artists: Alex Reding and Götz Arndt.

698 – LARGA IRMINAE ABATISSAE TREVIRENSIS DONATIONE WILLIBORDUS MONASTERIUM EPTERNACENSE FUNDAVIT ITAQUE OPPIDUM CREVIT – 1998

The Latin inscription for the tribute was incorporated into the paving. The translation reads: '698 - Thanks to the generous donation made by Irmina – the Abbess of Trier, Willibrord founded the monastery of

Echternach and so the town developed - 1998'.

Walk along the pavement to the large staircase on the left. Take these to reach the hill of *St. Peter and Paul*. Follow the footpath that circles the church.



Irmina square and St. Peter & Paul church

8 ST. PETER & PAUL

People had already begun to settle on the hill in the city centre, where the St. Peter and Paul church stands today, in Roman times. In the 3rd century, a fortress with four towers and a guardhouse was built to monitor the crossing of the Sauer. The 12-metre-deep well inside the church also dates back to this time. In the deeds passed on in the donation that the Abbess Irmina of Oeren (Trier) made to Willibrord (698), a church and a small monastery were already mentioned.

There is a late Gothic ribbed vault inside, based on massive pillars. The remains of

the Romanesque fresco paintings (Beatitudes) in the arch above the alter were created around the year 1000. They are the oldest surviving paintings in St. Peter and Paul Church. In the choir on the left sidewall are remnants of a Gothic painting of musicians.

A wooden baroque sarcophagus from 1624 is placed here. St. Willibrord can be seen on the lid in a half reclining, half raised position. The remains of St. Willibrord were kept in the sarcophagus from 1828-1906. When the new funerary monument was finished in the basilica, the baroque coffin with the relics was moved to the basilica in a solemn procession. At the same time, the Peter and Paul Church was designated as the side church and the Basilica as the official parish church.

Extensive restoration of the vault painting from the late Renaissance took place in 2008. The stylised bouquets symbolise an idealised garden, the paradise on earth. The foliage of thistle-like acanthus leaves



St. Peter & Paul church

is a recurring motif in the ornamentation and can be attributed to the Renaissance style.

The descent is via the stairs on the north side. At the foot of the hill, turn right to the *Monument aux Morts*.

9 MEMORIAL TO THE FALLEN

The *Monument aux Morts* (Memorial to the fallen) was inaugurated in 1966 to commemorate victims of the Second World War. The Latin chronogram inscribed on the plain Luxembourg sandstone consists mainly of prose and also contains some numerals.

**TRVCI DE RVINA ERECTA VRBE VICTIMIS
NOVATA SACRATVR ARX**

Together, these numerals read 1945 – the end of the Second World War. The inscription reads: RISEN FROM TERRIBLE RUINS, THE CITY HEREBY DEDICATES THE NEWLY DESIGNED CITADEL TO ITS FALLEN.



National Remembrance Day in memory of the victims of the Second World War

Walk on until you reach the *Hihof* building on the right.

10 HIHOF

The *Hihof* building formerly belonged to the neighbouring *St. George's Hospital* and, for a time, was also home to the Christian women's community – the *Beguines*. The *Beguines* women made a living by caring for others. The last of the *Echternach Beguines* entered the *Poor Clare* monastery in the 14th century.

Although the building's vaulted ground floor dates back to the 15th century, its window openings have some late 16th century Gothic-style traits. The building was fully restored between 1978 and 1984.

The sculpture by the artist *Ilse Herzog*, which stands in front of the building, depicts *Homo Sapiens*, and is called *L'idée, le geste, l'outil* - or *Ideas, gestures, tools* in English.

Leaving the *Hihof* building, the way goes through the *Rue des Tanneurs* in the former *Sack* district. It turns left under the archway to *Rue du Pont*. The view opens onto the *A Kack* parking.



Hihof before the restoration 1978

11 FORMER CITY DISTRICTS SACK & KACK

The *Lauterburerbaach* (*Lauterborn* stream) divided the two old *Echternach* districts of *Sack* and *Kack* and flowed openly towards the *Sauer*. The tanners, who mainly lived in the *Sack* quarter until the *Second World War*, cleaned the animal skins in the stream before processing them further.

The housing complex with an open passage was built after the war, when *Rue du Pont* became the official connecting road to the *Sauer Bridge* to *Germany*.

Passing through the passageway, the view opens onto the *A Kack* parking, which was created when the old neighbourhood was demolished after the war.

The square is bordered by the remains of the old city wall, whose construction probably began in the 9th century, when the abbey tried to protect itself against enemy incursions. In the beginning, only wood and earth were used as building materials. From the 12th century onwards, sturdy stone was used for the defensive



Former city district *Kack*



Redesigned bus stop A Kack



Along the Kack stream

wall. A wide moat surrounded the 2,000 m long wall with four gates and 14 open shell towers.

On the left side of the open defensive tower, at a height of about 3 m, there is still a horizontal row of broken stone slabs which rested on a wooden battlement. Until 1854, the *Kacker Pförtchen* (Kack's little gate), which gave access to the Sauer Bridge, stood where the remains of the wall ends.

Now turn left to the pedestrian crossing and cross it. The *Michael Hormann Abbey Gate* is on your right.



12 ABBEY GATE MICHAEL HORMANN

The baroque abbey with orangerie and rococo pavilion was built in 1727-31 according to plans of the French Benedictine architect Léopold Durand. The monastery was secularised in 1796.

The Baroque-style entrance was not part of the abbey complex from the beginning, it was built in 1753 under Abbot Michael Hormann. This gate was used as a side entrance to the imposing building. The main entrance, with its courtyard of honour, is on the opposite side and will be visited later on the circular route. The right coat of arms (hunting horn and three stars) commemorates Abbot Hormann, while the left coat of arms (oath hand) represents the abbey. Today, the former complex of the abbey has become a public high school with the abbey museum.

Continue along *Rue du Pont* until you reach the *St. Willibrord Fountain*.



Abbey Gate Michael Hormann,
on the right: Atelier Henri Owen Tudor

ELECTRIC STREET LIGHTNING

On the right of the abbey gate, a plaque reminds us that the Luxembourg engineer Henri Owen Tudor (1859-1928) set up a power station for street lighting in the Echternach Abbey outbuildings. Tudor was the inventor of the first fully developed lead accumulator and made it possible to replace the abbey town's old petroleum lanterns with modern, electric lighting in 1886. Echternach thus became one of the first cities in the world with electric street lighting.



Flood markings on the gate; the oldest is
from 1784



St. Willibrord Fountain

13 ST. WILLIBRORD FOUNTAIN

This former public fountain, which was re-designed in 1866, is probably connected to an artificial canal that the Benedictine monks had built in the Middle Ages. The water of the *Lauterburerbaach* was collected in the Route de Luxembourg below the *Nonnemühle* mill and led through the *Oberbachstraße* past the church into the so-called *Mühlenbau* building.

For several weeks in February and March 1945, the *St. Willibrord Fountain* was the only water supply in the town which had been devastated by the Battle of the Bulge.

Next to the fountain, the path leads upstairs into the abbey's former monastery garden.

14 GARDEN PAVILION & MONUMENT 2000

On the left you can see a statue of St. Willibrord, created in 1969 by the artist Gerd Bildau from Mainz.

On the higher level is one of the twelve *Stèles commémoratives* (commemorative steles) erected for the millennium as part of the project *Places of Remembrance and the Future in Luxembourg*.

The small baroque garden pavilion behind the choir of the basilica is located in the former monastery garden of the abbey. This area initially belonged to the monastery pharmacy and was used as a private garden after it was sold in 1797.

Return to the first level via the small staircase, then go back up a few steps on the left and then follow the stairs down to the right into the abbey courtyard. At the foot of the stairs, turn left. Walk around the abbey quadrangle until you reach the court of honour with the main facade.



Parlodrom with baroque garden pavilion

15 ABBEY

The origin of the former Benedictine Abbey of Echternach dates back to about 700, when Willibrord received several donations from Abbess Irmina of Oeren (Trier). The abbey's fame is based on the artistic activity of its scriptorium, which had its golden age in the 8th and 11th centuries.

In the 18th century, under the Austrian-Habsburg regime, the abbey's desolate buildings were replaced by a new building. The plans drawn up by the architect Léopold Durand from St. Avold Abbey in Lorraine and executed by Sigmund Mungenast from Tyrol were based on the classical French Baroque style.

The centre of the Echternach complex is a square building, each side 75 m long, with four corner pavilions. The symmetrically structured main facade of the prelate's wing takes up the monumental staircase and emphasises the central risalit by

extending the vertical axis over two storeys. The triangular pediment shows the mythra, staff and sword - the symbols for church and justice - as well as the speaking coats of arms (pictorial signatures) of the builder-abbots.

At the end of the 18th century, the supremacy of the nobility and the church was abolished by the French Revolution, and thus Willibrordus Abbey, which had existed for over eleven centuries, was also dissolved. The Luxembourg businessman Jean-Henri Dondelinger bought the abbey complex at auction and moved his family and staff into the prelate's wing. He set up a porcelain manufactory in the basilica.

After parts of the building were used by the military and various manufacturers, the entire abbey was bought by the State and set up as a school. After the Second World War, the facilities were additionally used by the post office and the tax office. Today, the building houses the *Lycée Classique d'Echternach*.



Abbots' catalogue (located in the hall of honour of today's school)

Inside the abbey, the hall of honour with the abbot's catalogue, the hall of mirrors with elaborate leather tapestry, the cloister with French garden and the monks' refectory are particularly noteworthy. Due to school operations, the interiors of the former abbey can only be visited on request.

However, the Abbey Museum can be visited in the basement of the building. It covers an area of 755 m² and displays archaeological relics, facsimiles of the most beautiful Echternach manuscripts, as well as an insight into the period, the work and the veneration of St. Willibrord.

Opening hours Abbey Museum:
Palm Sunday-All Saints
10h-12h & 14h-17h.
July & August 10h-17h

SCRIPTORIUM

From the beginning, there was a scriptorium in the monastery, i.e. a writing room for the production of books. These were indispensable for the celebration of the divine services and the education of the young monks. In the 11th century, the scriptorium became the preferred supplier of Emperor Henry III. At this time, some now world-famous publications were written, such as the *Codex Aureus Epternacensis*, which has been in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg since 1955, the *Codex Uppsaliensis*, now in the University Library in Uppsala in Sweden, and the *Codex Aureus Escorialensis*, which is kept in the Escorial near Madrid. They are rarely exhibited any more for conservation reasons. However, facsimiles, i.e. true-to-the-original copies, allow them to be examined.

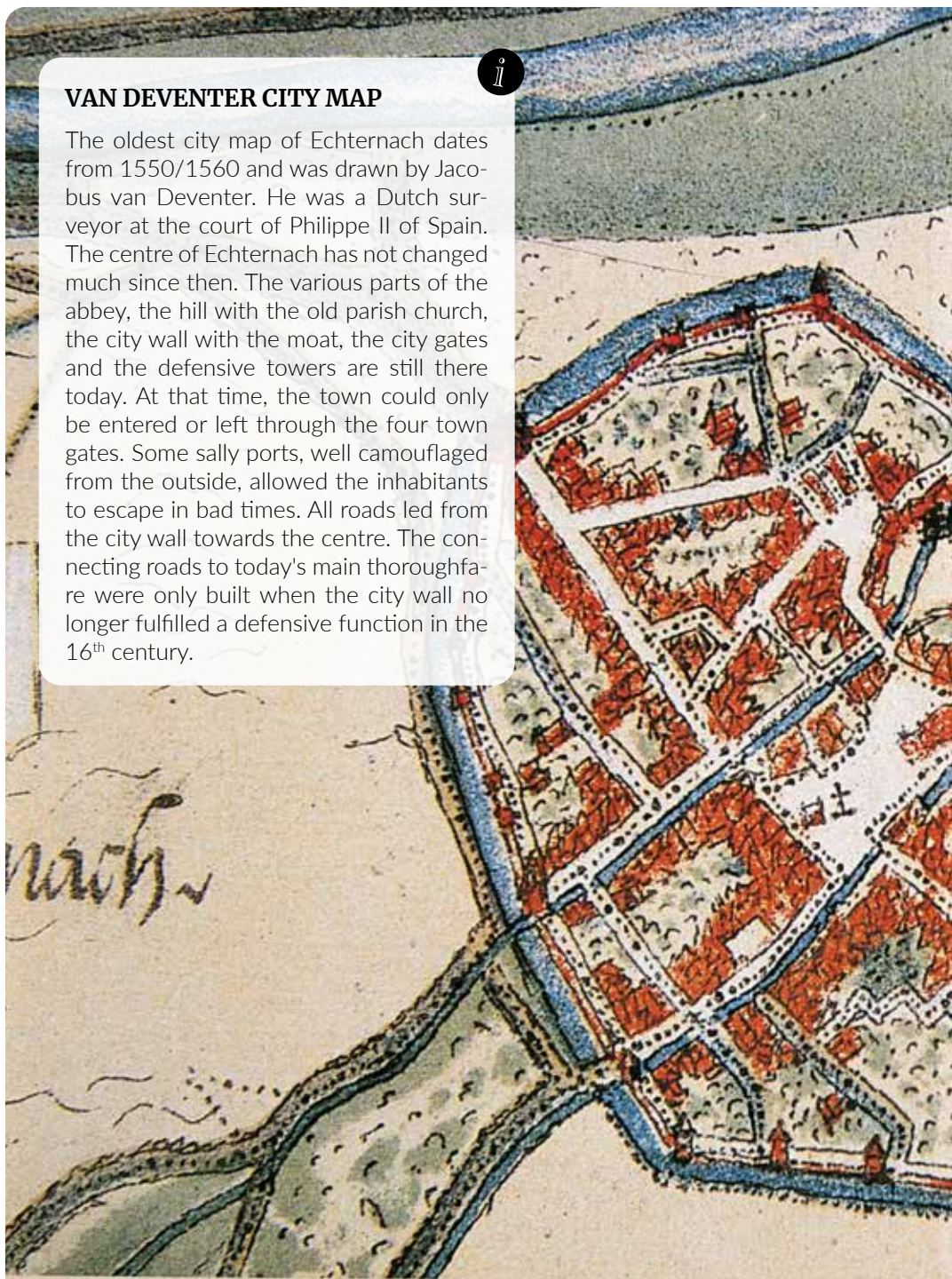


French garden in the abbey building

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)





Val des Roses

Rue du Chemin de Fer

Porte St Willibrord

Rue des Merciers

Porte St Willibrord

1

2

3

4

Rue du Haut-Puisseau

Gebaakenen Hof

5

place du Marché

Rue des Ecoliers

6

7

8

9

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11

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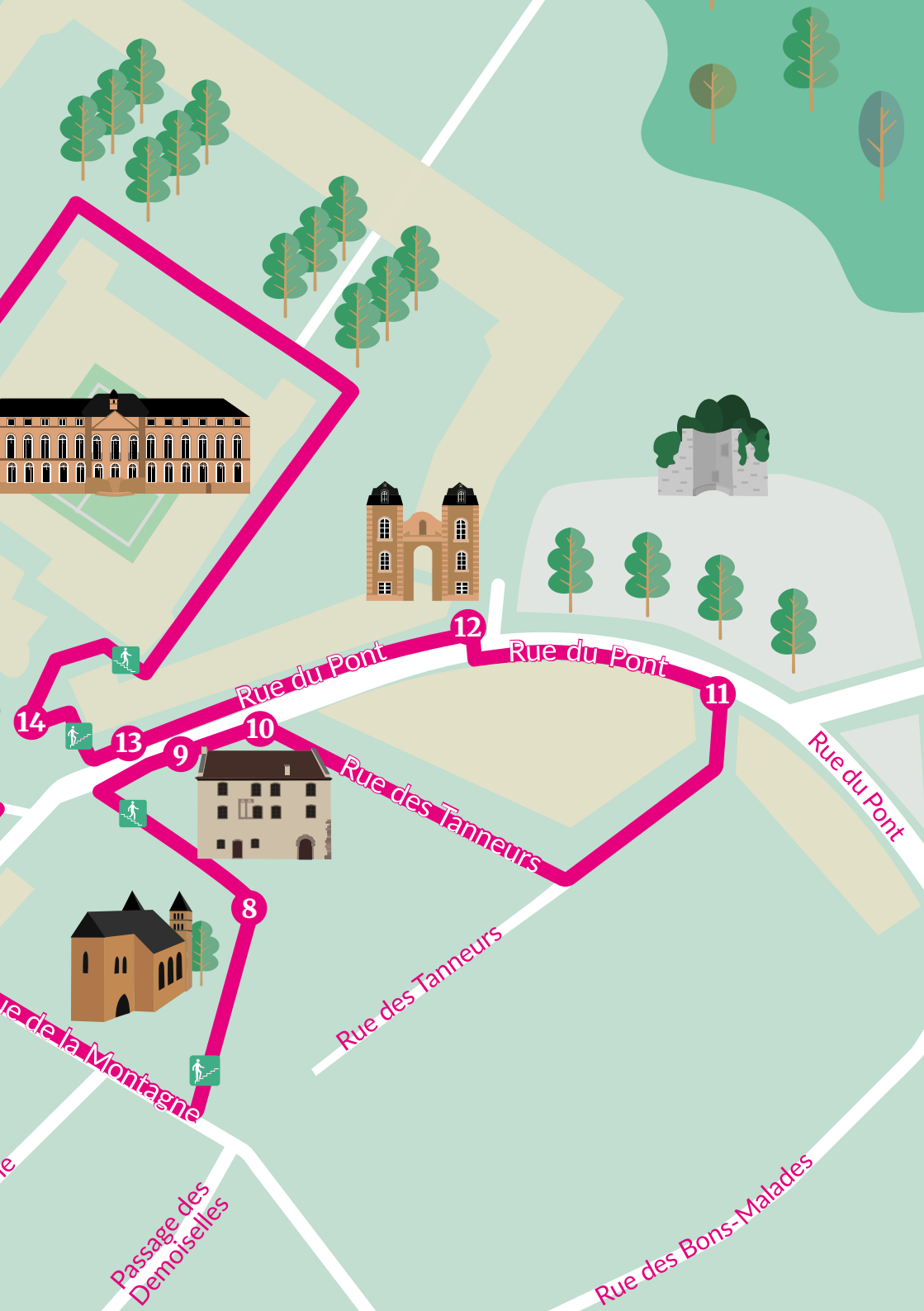
15

chscher

Route de Luxembourg

Devant le Marché

Rue Ste Irmin



14

13

9

10

Rue du Pont

12

Rue du Pont

11

Rue du Pont

Rue des Tanneurs

8

Rue des Tanneurs

Rue de la Montagne

Passage des Demoiselles

Rue des Bons-Malades