TOUR
THE REGION OF GUEBWILLER

SUMMARY

4 THE LANDSCAPE
The plain
Vineyards
The Florival
The Hautes-Vosges
Textile valley

6 THE REGION OVER THE CENTURIES
Development under two large ecclesiastical powers
Renaissance
The Thirty-Year War...
... and the unification of France
Industrialisation
The First World War

9 FROM PLACE TO PLACE
Saint-Léger church in Guebwiller
The Bollenberg hills
The Lautenbach collegiate
Hugstein
Bucheneck
Murbach abbey
Dominicans
Renaissance houses
Guebwiller town hall
Shrine of Thierenbach
The church of Notre-Dame of Guebwiller and canonical district
The Gast spinning mill in Issenheim
Hartmannswillerkopf
The Schlumberger factory and workers' district

14 IN THE DISCOVERY OF THE REGION OF GUEBWILLER

Cover:
Map of the Florival Valley, 1680.
Departmental Centre for the History of Guebwiller Families

View of the Florival Valley from the vineyards of Guebwiller.

Photography credits:
CCRG-Pays d'art et d'histoire,
unless indicated otherwise

Cartographic credits :
CCRG-BDU

1. Workers' houses in Guebwiller.

2. Fifty kilometers of low pink sandstone walls support the vineyards.

3. Raedersheim, a village situated on the plains where cereal agriculture flourished.

4. Guebwiller spreads from the entrance of the Florival valley along the river, Lauch.
Postcard, Michel Ruh

THE LANDSCAPE

FROM THE ALSACE PLAIN TO THE TOP OF THE GRAND BALLON MOUNTAIN, THE REGION OF GUEBWILLER STRETCHES ACROSS A VARIED LANDSCAPE.

THE PLAIN

Formerly damp and humid, the plain has been drained over the centuries by man in order to allow for cereal cultivation. This drainage has also enabled urbanisation.

VINEYARDS

Vines have been grown on the lower Vosges hills of the region of Guebwiller since the Middle Ages, driven by the Murbach Abbey. The Vosges piedmont was purposely created for this type of agriculture. Low pink sandstone walls, built along the slopes, support the terraces where the vines are grown and protect the ground soil from erosion by reducing the impact of flowing water.

With its seven Grands Crus (Kitterlé, Spiegel, Kessler, Saering in Guebwiller, Ollwiller in Wuenheim, Pfingstberg in Orschwihr and Zinnkoepflé in Soultzmatt), the region of Guebwiller has a particularly strong wine-making heritage.

THE FLORIVAL

Florival is another name for the Lauch valley. This epithet, meaning «the valley of flowers», was first used in the 9th century by a poet-monk from Murbach. Until the 8th century, this valley was populated solely by hermits. Thereafter, the monasteries of Murbach and Lautenbach were at the centre of life and business slowly developing in the area. Numerous quarries excavated in the slopes of the Vosges over the centuries have shaped this landscape.

LES HAUTES-VOSGES

The region of Guebwiller boasts a mountainous landscape rising from 200 to 1400 m, which stretches around the Lauch and Rimbach valleys. Forests occupy most of the slopes. Above 1000 m, the forest gives way to stubble, stripped bare by the cold and wind. The holiday farms we see today owe their existence to the hill farms, which in the olden days were used by herdsmen as summer dwellings also known as «marcairies». The herdsmen made cheese which they sold at the market in Guebwiller. To mark the boundaries of the land divisions, they built low stone walls that can still be seen today.

TEXTILE VALLEY

With textile industrialisation, a wave of new factories was built along the edge of the towns and subsequently became part of the urban fabric. Spinning mills were built in the Lauch and Rimbach valleys in order to benefit from the principal driving force available prior to the introduction of the steam engine: water power. Most of these industrial sites can still be seen today. On a walk along the vineyard paths overlooking the valley, you can easily spot these old sites that are today either unused or have been redeveloped.

5. The Landscape varies between plains, vineyards and peaks such as the Grand Ballon, the summit of which is 1424 m high.

6. Hill farm in Gustiberg.

7. The dale of Rimbach is home to numerous manufacturing units that still form the basis of working life today.

THE REGION
OVER THE CENTURIES

THE REGION OF GUEBWILLER, LIKE THE REST OF ALSACE, SHAPED ITS IDENTITY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF TERRITORIAL POWERS AND WAS SUBSEQUENTLY TORN BETWEEN THE CULTURES OF FRANCE AND GERMANY.

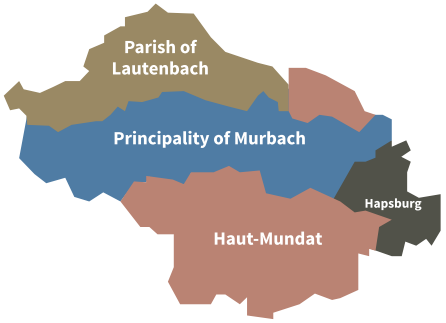
DEVELOPMENT UNDER TWO LARGE ECCLESIASTICAL POWERS

The medieval history of the region of Guebwiller was written almost entirely under the authority of religious institutions, notably the powerful Murbach Abbey, the most important and prestigious abbey in Alsace. It was this abbey that founded the town of Guebwiller in the 13th century.
In 1249, the bishop of Strasbourg founded the town of Soultz, at the same time granting it independent jurisdiction and a Bourgmestre (mayor). These towns protected themselves by constructing perimeter walls, inside which the urban structure developed.

RENAISSANCE

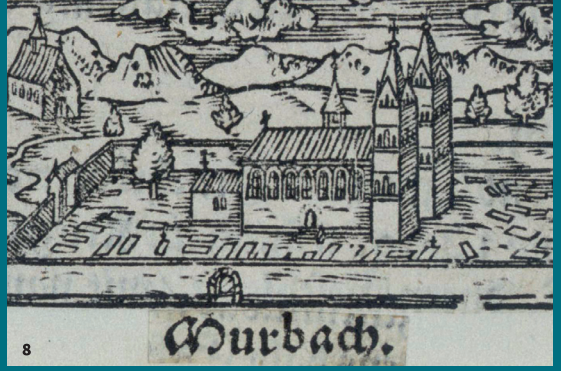
Viticulture and the wine trade ensured the prosperity of the region. The wealth of wine growers' residences during the Renaissance was particularly evident in Soultz, seen in oriel windows, staircase turrets and porches typical of the period.

The territorial divisions of the region of Guebwiller before the Thirty-Year War:



8. Murbach Abbey around 1550
Print, National University Library of Strasbourg (Bibliothèque Nationale Universitaire de Strasbourg)

9. Soultz has preserved the urban structure of the Renaissance at its center.



8

9

THE THIRTY-YEAR WAR...

Like the rest of Alsace, the region of Guebwiller witnessed the ravages of the Thirty-year War. In 1618, a dispute between the Protestants of Bohemia and the Catholic emperor of the Holy Roman Empire degenerated into a European conflict following the intervention of Spanish Catholics and the invasion of Danish and Swedish Protestants. In 1635, France, fearing that it would be encircled by Hapsburg territories, formed an alliance with the protestant powers of the North.

...AND THE UNIFICATION OF FRANCE

In 1648 the Treaty of Westphalia was signed. This treaty handed over areas of Alsace that had been the property of the Hapsburgs to the French (i.e. Rimbach, Issenheim and Raedersheim). Then in 1680, the territories of Murbach and the diocese of Strasbourg followed. These municipalities survived until the Revolution but remained subject to French royal authority.

INDUSTRIALISATION

Buildings became available to house the nascent textile industry following the French Revolution and the sale, as national assets, of a range of ecclesiastical properties. The first industrial process, printing on fabric (Indian in origin), was established in the castle of Neuenbourg's prince-abbot. More than 20 textile companies were set up in the valley of Lauch, making Guebwiller the second largest industrial town in Alsace after Mulhouse.
The aftermath of the First World War saw a decline in the textile industry, which subsequently accelerated.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The 1914-18 war caused significant damage to the Guebwiller region due to its proximity to the front, and the bitter battles of Hilsenfirst and particularly Hartmannswillerkopf in 1915. Thousands of men lost their lives while fighting for control of the foothills of the Vosges that overlooks the plain of Alsace. At the end of the First World War, Alsace and Moselle regained French nationality, having been annexed by Germany in 1871.

10. Hugstein castle.
Photography, Françoise Maurer

11. The factory of Nicolas Schlumberger & Co is still operating today.

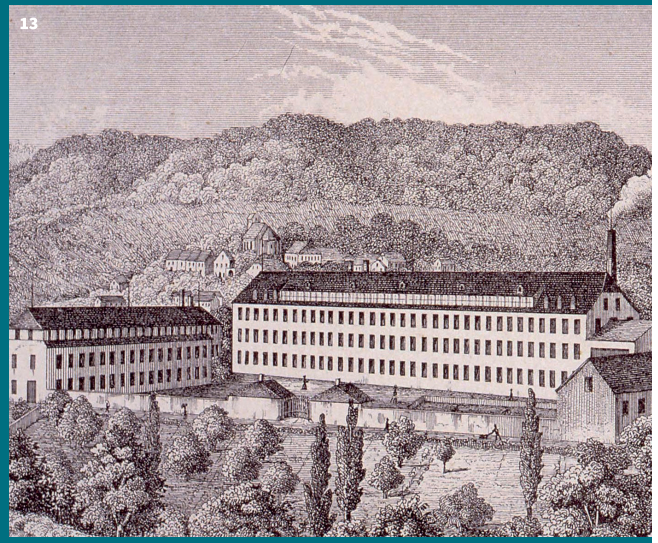
12. Legend has it that witches from across the region used to meet at Bollenberg to celebrate the witches' Sabbath.

13. The Koechlin factory in Buhl illustrated by the lithographer Jung.
Lithograph, National University Library of Strasbourg (Bibliothèque Nationale Universitaire de Strasbourg)

10

11

12


13

FROM PLACE TO PLACE

14

14. «Frei leben oder sterben. Im dritten Jahr der Freiheit» («Live free or die. The third year of Freedom»): This inscription, dating back to the French Revolution, is painted around the clock on the southern tower of Guebwiller's Saint-Léger church.

SAINT-LÉGER CHURCH IN GUEBWILLER

This late-roman-style parish church was built from 1182 to 1235 at the instigation of the abbot of Murbach, to replace a chapel that stood in the same place. The facade of the two towers, the open porch and the octagonal steeple are all features dating from the church's original construction. The harmonious design of the structure thus differs from other roman churches in Alsace whose construction was often left unfinished. Several extensions and modifications were carried out over the centuries, such as the five-sided apse and the upper parts of the choir.

THE BOLLENBERG HILLS

The biological richness of this limestone hill makes it a true natural monument.
Around 8.000 years ago, Alsace had a hot and dry climate. The Rhineland was home to Mediterranean flora and fauna. A thousand years later, climate change occurred and threatened the survival of these species. In the Rhineland area there was only one place they could survive: the lower Vosges hills and their exceptionally hot and dry microclimate. This ecosystem has survived until this day on the arid lands of the Bollenberg. It is unique in Europe: a living relic of a past dating back several thousand years.

THE LAUTENBACH COLLEGIATE

The former collegiate of Saints Michel & Gangolphe has seen numerous transformations over the centuries. The Narthex and its romans sculptures dates back to the 12th century. The rest of the edifice has been modified several times. Its arched porch is one of the most beautiful in the region. The edifice was fully restored in 1859 ; the decor and other additions such a the towers, which were carried out by the 19th century architect have been criticised but do not detract from the overall appearance.

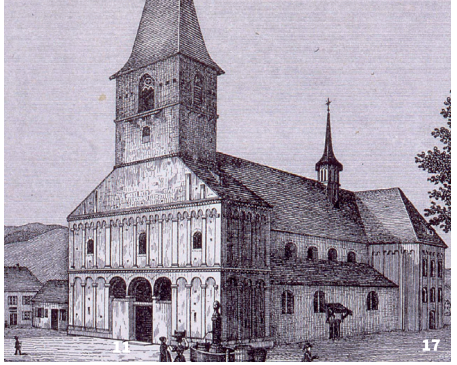
HUGSTEIN

Dominating the heights of the village of Buhl, this castle was founded at the start of the 13th century by Hugues de Rottenburg, prince-abbot of Murbach abbey. Situated in the heart of the principality, Hugstein's main function was to defend the abbey. It kept watch over the communication route of the Florival valley as well as the large town of Guebwiller. The abbot Barthélémy d'Andlau modernised Hugstein during the 15th century, in particular by adjoining a tower gate decorated with a frieze and equipped with a drawbridge.

15. Wine-grower's house in the center of Soultz.

16. The single-storey workshop of the former Gast spinning mill was became a listed monument in 2005.

17. The collegiate of Saints Michel & Gangolphe in Lautenbach before its restoration in 1862.
Lithograph, National University Library of Strasbourg (Bibliothèque Nationale Universitaire de Strasbourg)



BUCHENECK

Cited as the property of the bishop of Strasbourg in literature dating back to 1251, Bucheneck served as a residence for bailiffs: officers charged by the diocese with the administration of the district. Occupied by industrialists after the Revolution, the castle was bought back by the town in 1990 and has since been undergoing restoration. Today it houses the Bucheneck museum, the collections of which illustrate the history of Soultz and the history of distinguished families that lived there.

MURBACH ABBEY

Founded in 728, Murbach abbey obtained numerous privileges over the centuries that allowed it to develop in Alsace and even beyond. The roman abbey-church, of which only the apse and the transept remain, was built in the 12th century with Lombard- and Byzantine-influenced decor. At the start of the 18th century, the monks started to reconstruct the church. Since they did not have sufficient funds, the monks asked for the abbey to be transferred to Guebwiller. They obtained the requested secularisation in 1764 and the remains of the abbey-church were transformed into a parish church.

DOMINICANS

The Dominican order settled in Guebwiller in 1294. The church was built between 1312 and 1339, and respects the typical architecture of the mendicant orders: austerity, absence of steeple and the organisation of spaces to accommodate crowds. Thus, the nave resembles a large covered hall. It is decorated with impressive murals dating back to the 14th and 18th centuries. In 1791, the order was abolished. The buildings were declared national property and sold for use as factory warehouses, hospitals, dye-works and market halls. The former convent today houses a musical institution: the Dominicans of Haute-Alsace.

RENAISSANCE HOUSES

The town of Soultz has retained the urban fabric of the Renaissance in its center, with the exception of Republique square, which was renovated in the 19th century. Most of the houses were built in the 16th and 17th centuries between the Peasants' Revolt and the Thirty-year War. They are endowed with architectural elements such as spiral staircases and oriel windows, which highlight the wealth enjoyed by the city thanks to viticulture. The wine-growers' houses are generally set around an internal courtyard, with outbuildings and cellars that are usually accessed through fully curved porches, typical of the period.

GUEBWILLER TOWN HALL

An engraved inscription on the oriel window states that it was built in 1514 by Marquart Hesser, a drapery merchant. When he died, his heirs sold the building to the parish of Murbach, who turned it into a communal hall, ending its role as a private home. The five-sided oriel, the mullions, the door and the different curvilinear moldings imitating tree branches give Guebwiller town hall the recognizable hallmarks of a florid gothic style.

SHRINE OF THIERENBACH

This shrine to the Miraculous Virgin, situated above Jungholtz, has existed at least since the 12th century and was the origin for the Benedictine priory-church, which came under the control of Cluny abbey. The current church dates back to 1723. The external architecture is devoid of decoration; in contrast, numerous decorative elements can be seen on the interior walls.

THE CHURCH OF NOTRE-DAME OF GUEBWILLER AND CANONICAL DISTRICT

The church of Notre-Dame was erected in the lower town from 1764 to 1785 after secularisation and the transfer of the parish from Murbach to Guebwiller.
The development of the plans for the building was entrusted to the architect Beuque of Besancon, but most of the large-scale work and neo-classical decorative elements were carried out by Gabriel Ignace Ritter.
Around the square, the canonical quarter features five houses built for the canons and the abbey castle, which has been home to the Cultural and Tourism Centre of Neuenbourg since September 2019. Inside, you'll find the Region of Art and History Department of the Guebwiller region and its Architecture and Heritage Interpretation Centre (CIAP), the Guebwiller Tourist Office and the European Centre for Ceramic Art (IEAC).

THE GAST SPINNING MILL IN ISSENHEIM

Dating from 1851, this building, which originally housed the Edouard Gast spinning mill, features architecture unusual for Alsace. Its «neo-Tudor» style was in fact influenced by industrial architecture in England. The front facade, made of cut stone, is reminiscent of medieval castles due to its crenellated towers and gothic-arched bay windows. The building contains a vast non-partitioned interior space covered with shallow arcades supported on cast iron columns. The mill became a listed monument in 2005.

HARTMANNSWILLERKOPF

Following a bad translation by French WW1 infantrymen of the name of Hartmannsweiller village, the term «Vieil Armand « (Old Armand) was born (weiler becoming «vieil» and Hartmann, « Armand »). Hartmannswillerkopf was one of the bloodiest battlefields of the Alsace front during 1915 and 1916; the bodies of 12,000 unidentified soldiers were brought together in the crypt of Silberloch, a national monument built in 1923.

THE SCHLUMBERGER FACTORY AND WORKERS' DISTRICT

In 1810, Nicolas Schlumberger purchased an old windmill and undertook the construction of a spinning mill. Numerous buildings were added throughout the 19th century. Schlumberger's «Louvre» building, made from reinforced concrete, dates back to 1920. Other older buildings that escaped destruction in the world wars have been preserved.

Workers' houses were built in the streets close to the various textile mills (in particular under the initiative of the industrial philanthropist Jean-Jacques Bourcart.)

18. Vieil Armand
Photography, Gilbert Wagner

19. The Notre-Dame church and a canonical house that today houses the Florival Museum.

20. Bucheneck and its fortifications in a meander of the Rimbach valley.

21. The florid gothic oriel windows of Guebwiller's town hall.

22. The nave of the former convent is today used as a concert hall in the poly-musical center of the Haute-Alsace Dominicans.
Photography, Jean-Marie Nick

23. The bulb-shaped bell tower of the Notre-Dame basilica in Thierenbach was added in 1932.

24. The facade of the Notre-Dame church and itz allogorical statues.

IN THE DISCOVERY OF THE REGION OF GUEBWILLER

Audio commentary available on the mobile app *Les voies du Patrimoine* downloadable for free on Apple store or Google Play Store.

LANDSCAPE SHAPED BY HISTORY

1- Guebwiller Vineyards
2- Marcaireries (20th C)
3- Vieil-Armand (20th C)
4- Soultzmatt vineyards
5- Bollenberg
6- Grand Ballon

CIVIC ARCHITECTURE

1- Tithe cellar (13th C)
2- Hartmannswiller castle (14th C)
3- Neuenbourg castle (18th-19th)
4- Waldner de Freundstein castle (16th C)
5- Vineyards houses (16th C)
6- Provost-marshal's house (16th C)
7- Tithe house (16th C)
8- Guebwiller town hall (16th C)
9- Soultzmatt town hall (20th C)
10- Vineyards houses (16th C)
11- "Modern-style" houses (20th C)
12- Villas of industrialists (19th C)

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

1- Windmill vivarium (18th C)
2- Ollwiller castle (18th C) and its tilery (19th C)
3- Industrial Latscha villa and its park (19th C)
4- Gast textile mill (19th C)
5- Marin-Astruc factory (19th C)
6- Bottling factory (19th C)
7- Schlumberger factories as surrounding workers accommodation (19th & 20th C)
8- Schliff steam engine (20th C)

RELIGIOUS HERITAGE OF THE ROMAN ROUTE

1- Lautenbach Collegiate and conventual buildings (12th C)
2- Murbach Abbey-Church (12th C)
3- Saint-Léger Church (12th C)
4- Schwartzenthann convent ruins (12th C)

RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

1- Saint-Maurice gothic church and Silbermann organ (13th C)
2- Dominican convent (14th C)
3- Buhl altar piece (15th C)
4- Antonin convent (15th C)
5- Saint-Jean Order commanderies, now the Nef des Jouets museum (16th C)
6- Notre-Dame de Lorette chapel (17th C)
7- Notre-Dame du Saering chapel (17th C)
8- Jewish Cemetery (17th C)
9- Notre-Dame de Thierenbach baroque church (18th C)
10- Notre-Dame de Guebwiller church and canons' houses (18th C)
11- Raedersheim Callinet organ (19th C)
12- Issenheim Callinet organ (19th C)
13- Oelberg Way of the Cross (19th C)
14- Orschwihr Stiehr-Mockers organ (19th C)
15- Saint-Paul-et-Pierre Church (12th C)
16- Saint-Sébastien Church (12th C)

MEDIEVAL FORTIFICATIONS

1- Hohrupf castle ruins (12th C)
2- Stettenberg castle ruins (13th C)
3- Hugstein castle ruins (13th C)
4- Burgstall (13th C)
5- Bucheneck castle (13th C)
6- Defensive wall (13th C)
7- Freundstein castle ruins (13th C)
8- Witches tower (14th C)
9- Fortified cemetery (16th C)
10- Wagenbourg castle (13th C)

PARKS AND GARDENS

1- Neuenbourg Park (18th-19th C)
2- Marseillaise Park (19th C)

« GREETINGS, OH FLORIVAL (*FLORIGERA VALLIS*), YOU ALMOST RIVAL PARADISE, WITH YOUR BOUNTIFUL HILLS AND YOUR SLOPING VINEYARDS CANOPIED BY THE BRANCHES OF THE GRAPEVINES. ».

Flurandus, *11th century monk*

The designation "**Cities and Regions of Art and History**" is granted by the French Ministry of Culture after consultation with the National Council for Cities and Regions of Art and History. This designation is awarded to local areas, municipalities and associations of municipalities which, understanding the challenges involved in getting local residents to appropriate their architecture and heritage, commit to an active process of knowledge acquisition, preservation, mediation and support for creation, architectural quality and living conditions.

The Heritage Events Department, managed by the Architecture and Heritage Events Planner, organises a wide range of initiatives to present the architectural and heritage treasures of the region to its residents, young and old alike, and to its visitors, with the help of professional tour guides.

Nearby

Val d'Argent and Mulhouse have the designation "Cities and Regions of Art and History".

For more information:
Cultural and Tourism Centre of Neuenbourg
3 rue du 4 Février,
68500 Guebwiller
Tel.: +33 (0)3 89 62 56 22
patrimoine@cc-guebwiller.fr
www.cc-guebwiller.fr

Le Château de la Neuenbourg

VILLES & PAYS D'ART & D'HISTOIRE
PRÉFET DE LA RÉGION GRAND EST
COMMUNAUTÉ DE COMMUNES DE LA RÉGION DE GUEBWILLER
www.cc-guebwiller.fr