

Aschaffenburg

A Bavarian treasure on the river Main

PHOTOS BY TILL BENZIN



3rd century The first finds from this period point to a settlement in the age of Germanic migrations.

5th century The area of present-day Aschaffenburg is settled by the Alemanni.

869 King Ludwig III of the East Frankish realms marries Queen Liutgard and, as a wedding present, gives her the royal residence with an early 'Volksburg', or refuge, on the site of today's abbey quarter.

957 The collegiate monastery of St Peter and Alexander is founded by Duke Liudolf of Swabia.

974 The collegiate church of St Peter and Alexander is built.

975 The first account of the upper part of town constructed around the collegiate church is found in a document signed by Holy Roman emperor Otto II ('in civitate Ascaffaburg').

End of the 10th century The collegiate church passes to the Electorate of Mainz under Archbishop and Imperial Cardinal Willigis.

989 The first (wooden) bridge across the river Main is built for Archbishop Willigis.

1122 The collegiate church, castle and bridge form the core of the upper town, which was fortified under Archbishop Adalbert I.

1144 First mention of a market in Aschaffenburg.

1155 Aschaffenburg is allowed to start minting its own coins.

1161/1173 Aschaffenburg receives its town charter.

12th century onwards Aschaffenburg is extended beyond the old town walls and a lower town is constructed.

1210/1220 The castle is built.

1236 First known town seal.

1284 The castle chapel is dedicated to John the Baptist.

14th century onwards Aschaffenburg becomes the secondary residence of the Archbishops of Mainz, reflecting its growing importance.

Mid-15th century A circular wall to protect the town is added by Archbishop Theoderich Schenk von Erbach.

1516 The canons of the Church of St Peter and Alexander commission Matthias Grünewald to create altar paintings.

1541 As a result of the Reformation, Aschaffenburg becomes the residence of the Mainz Archbishop and Elector, Albrecht von Brandenburg, and acquires his artworks, including many paintings by Lucas Cranach the Elder.

1552 The town is plundered in the Margraves War, and the castle is burned down.

From 1594 Hundreds of women are burned to death during the witch trials under archbishops Johann Adam von Bicken and Johann Schweikhard von Kronberg.

1605–1618/1619 Johannisburg Palace is built in the Renaissance style, retaining the keep that survived from the medieval castle.

1631–1634 Aschaffenburg is caught up in the Thirty Years' War; the town is part of the Swedish state in Mainz.

1673–1681 Schönborner Hof is built.

Foreword

Anyone visiting this lively, hospitable town on the idyllic river Main will quickly fall under the spell of its old alleys and pretty half-timbered houses, beautiful parks and stunning Renaissance palace. Aschaffenburg's geographical and geopolitical location has given the town, its residents and its visitors a diverse cultural heritage to enjoy, in a region rich in history and artistic tradition. Even in its early days, Aschaffenburg was a centre of trade. Because of its location in Germania at the 'riverside limes', i.e. the river Main, the settlement had trading links with the Roman empire. Today, the Upper-Germanic Rhaetian Limes is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

In the 850 years that Aschaffenburg belonged to the prince-bishopric of Mainz, it was the favourite summer residence of the archbishops. They left behind artworks of international significance and splendid landscape gardens, as well as the Mainz dialect.

In 1814, Aschaffenburg became part of the Kingdom of Bavaria. King Ludwig I was captivated by the town's unique charm and mild climate, had the exceptional Pompeiianum built there, and is said to have described Aschaffenburg as Bavaria's answer to Nice.

After the end of the Second World War, large parts of the old town lay in ruins.

Following decades of reconstruction and renewal, Aschaffenburg is now a key cultural and economic hub in the Frankfurt Rhine-Main metropolitan region. Visitors to the town will discover a Mediterranean feel, Bavarian hospitality and remarkable witnesses to an eventful history and exciting present.

This photo book is designed to provide inspiration and tips. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

Acknowledgements

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A vision in red – Johannisburg Palace





Johannisburg Palace is one of the grandest and most important late-Renaissance palaces in Germany.

The massive four-winged complex of red sandstone was built between 1605 and 1618 on the site of a late-Gothic castle, of which only the 14th century keep was retained. It was designed by Strasbourg architect Georg Ridinger on behalf of Johann Schweikhard von Kronberg, Archbishop-Elector of Mainz. In the late 18th century, the palace interior was remodelled in the classical style to designs by the Portuguese architect Emanuel Joseph von Herigoyen.

The times of the Archbishops and Electors of Mainz ended in 1803 when the ecclesiastical principalities were secularised. The occupations and destructive forces of the French Revolution fortunately left Aschaffenburg unscathed. Napoleon stayed in the palace several times. In 1814, Aschaffenburg became part of the Kingdom of Bavaria, whose Crown Prince (later King Ludwig I) made his "Bavarian Nice" his summer residence. The palace was used for ceremonial occasions right up until the kingdom was abolished, with King Otto of Greece, Prince Metternich, King Leopold of Belgium and the Empress of Brazil among those who stayed there as guests.

The palace was severely damaged during the Second World War. After decades of restoration work, however, the Bavarian Palace Department finally reopened its rooms and collections in 1964.

Architect Georg Ridinger designed the palace to be a highly symmetrical, four-winged complex, set around a square courtyard. He incorporated the keep – the only relic of the 14th century castle – as an asymmetrical accent. The Wheel of Mainz and



iron helmets of the House of Kronberg's coat of arms decorate the window pediments on the upper floor. Visitors to the vestment chamber can admire the exquisite garments worn by the Archbishops of Mainz and clergy. In addition to paintings by Dutch and German artists in the old Elector of Mainz gallery, the Bavarian State Painting Collections exhibits one of the largest and most influential collection of works by Lucas Cranach the Elder and his workshop. The royal living quarters contain neoclassical furniture and interior pieces.





The palace courtyard and Ridinger Hall provide a spectacular backdrop for concerts, exhibitions and formal dinners. The east tower contains the carillon, a set of 48 bells that play various tunes three times a day. The largest bell, the bourdon, weighs 271 kilograms. Before the river Main terrace is accessed via the palace garden gate, a glimpse over the walls reveals views of the kitchen garden. Of course, the royal kitchen was well versed in growing its own herbs, and in more recent times even kiwis have been ripening on the warm sandstone walls.



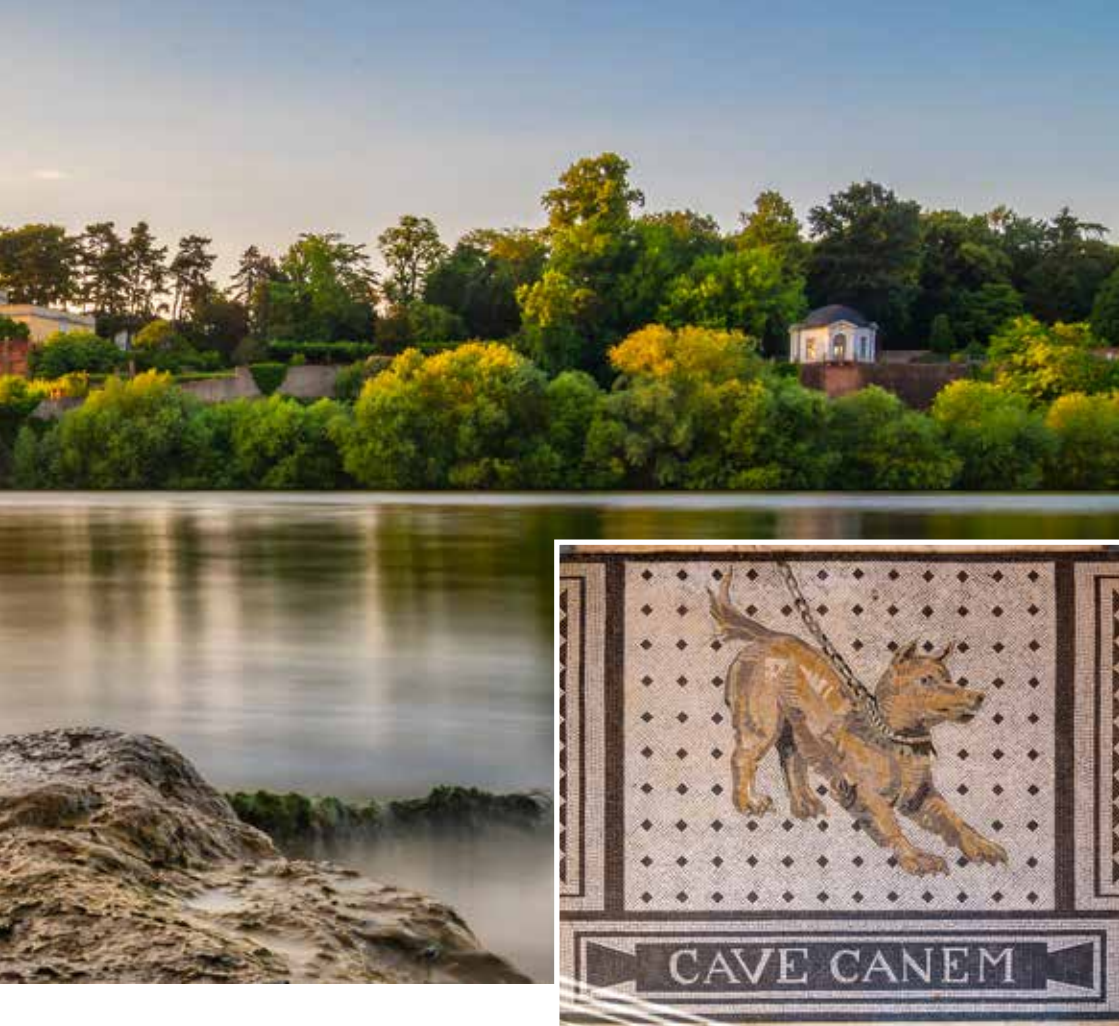


In around 1800, the nativity scene craft in Italy spawned a brief fashion for making cork models of ancient monuments. They were popular as souvenirs for travellers or as centrepieces. Under Archbishop Karl Theodor von Dalberg (later the Grand Duke of Frankfurt), court confectioner Carl May and his engineer son, Georg Heinrich May, made cork models of the buildings of ancient Rome. The world's biggest collection of cork models can be found on the second floor of the palace. Among its 52 exhibits is a model of the Colosseum, whose diameter of 312 centimetres makes it the largest in the world. The palace church is a real gem. Its altar, ornate pulpit and portal sculptures by Franconian sculptor Hans Juncker are among the finest examples of the late-Renaissance style.





Ancient Rome in Aschaffenburg



An idealised replica of a Roman villa in Pompeii – named the Pompeianum – rises up above the river Main on a vineyard slope to the west of Johannisburg Palace. King Ludwig I of Bavaria, who had a lifelong interest in art and antiquity, was one of the first to visit the excavations in Pompeii. And between 1840 and 1848, he had a replica of a Roman villa built to plans by architect Friedrich von Gärtner. The House of Castor and Pollux in Pompeii, named after the

characters featured in frescoes found at the site, served as the model. This replica of a Roman villa was intended to give art lovers in Germany a place to study classical art and lifestyles. Gärtner's copy was not a faithful one. Indeed, he used the exposed site high above the river Main and the climatic conditions to make architectural compromises. He incorporated an impressive external staircase with a portico, an observation pavilion on the roof and a glass





roof over the impluvium in the atrium. The Pompeiianum was badly damaged during the Second World War. Reconstructions and renovations by the Bavarian Palace Administration continued until 2002. Today, courtesy of the State Antiquities Collections, the interior features original Roman sculptures and objects from everyday Roman life. Even the grounds of the Pompeiianum were designed to emulate the charm of a Mediterranean landscape. Flower beds full of roses and terracotta pots planted with agaves decorate the terrace and balustrade columns, while a profusion of wisteria covers the southern facade.





Of particular note on the ground floor of the interior is the atrium with its twelve doric columns and pool, the viridarium (garden sitting room) and the summer triclinium (seasonal dining room). The magnificent mosaic floors and wall frescoes were based on examples from antiquity.

The culina (kitchen) in the Pompeiianum is an idealised reconstruction, with replica Roman bronze equipment and original Roman amphorae. The upper floor contains items that Romans would have used in their everyday lives as well as decorative objects. The State Antiquities Collections also hosts special exhibitions here, exploring different themes each year.





The old town

Attractive routes that connect Johannisburg Palace and Stiftsplatz square take you through Aschaffenburg's old town with its picturesque timber-framed houses which, after being destroyed in the Second World War, have now mostly been reconstructed. Details such as the Neidkopp, a guard against the 'evil eye', and the Flennerle, which signalled a ban on street entertainers in the area, offer an insight into the customs of the Middle Ages. The old town's beating



heart is Dalbergstrasse, with its many bars and restaurants.

The Muttergottespfarrkirche ('Church of Our Lady') is the principal church of Aschaffenburg's oldest parish. A Romanesque tympanum adorns its door, while the impressive ceiling frescoes were painted by Hermann Kaspar in the 1960s after the late-baroque originals were destroyed during the Second World War.

At the centre of Theaterplatz square is a sundial that exudes a modern aesthetic.

Across Stiftsplatz square is the town centre's busiest shopping area. A walk along its main street, Herstattlstrasse, takes you past the Herstattl tower en route to the bustling City Galerie mall with its big-name stores. Charming side streets mostly lead back to the palace, or, in the case of Sandgasse,

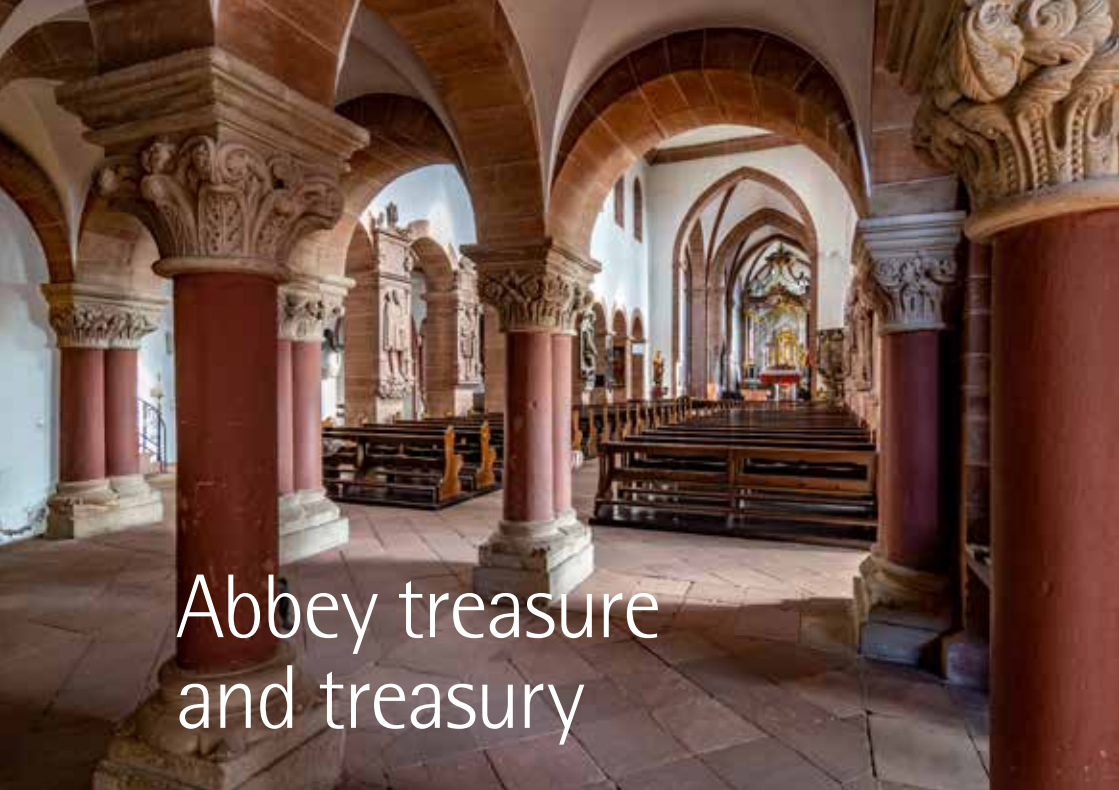




to Sandkirche church and Schöntal Park. The Sandkirche is a Catholic church and stopping point on Franconia's Marienweg pilgrimage route. Its standout features are the stucco-marble high altar, 15th century pietà and harmonious ceiling paintings. The church is also known as the White Lily, a name that can be traced back to the legend of its founding, as depicted in the ceiling frescoes.

Schönborner Hof was the family seat of the Counts of Schönborn, whose coat of arms decorates the main entrance. The three-winged baroque palace complex with family chapel is today home to Aschaffenburg's municipal archive and natural history museum.





Abbey treasure and treasury



The abbey basilica of St Peter and Alexander marks the oldest spot in Aschaffenburg, on a hill where the St Peter and Alexander collegiate church was founded in 957. The magnificent church contains many treasures from various periods, most notably Albrecht von Brandenburg's funerary monument, Grünewald's Lamentation of Christ, the Ottonian crucifix and the 13th century cloister. The neighbouring Stiftsmuseum displays a wealth of significant artworks. Its collections from prehistoric, Roman and medieval times include the opulent abbey treasury with its monstrances and reliquary busts, unique Aschaffenburg panel painting and reliquary board game.





Aschaffenburg's treasure trove of art



The court painters to the Archbishop-Electors of Mainz bequeathed to Aschaffenburg numerous old German artworks that exemplify the late-medieval period, most of which are on display at the Stiftsmuseum. They include Lucas Cranach the Elder's famous Altar of St Magdalene and Tilman Riemenschneider's St Joseph. The Bavarian State Painting Collections exhibit further significant works by Cranach and his workshop at Johannisburg Palace. Besides his Lamentation of Christ, Matthias Grünewald produced a triptych for the abbey basilica in the 16th century: the Our Lady of the Snows altarpiece, which disappeared during wars in the 16th century. The Madonna is now in Stuppach, but a copy made by Christian Schad between 1943 and 1947 graces the original frame.





Aschaffenburg is also internationally renowned for 20th century art.

The famous expressionist and co-founder of the Die Brücke artists group, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, was born here on 6 May 1880. Kirchner viewed his childhood experiences in Aschaffenburg as particularly key to the development of his personality and artistic work. The KirchnerHAUS forum mounts exhibitions associated with his work in the house where he was born, which is located by a former Bavarian/Prussian border train station. The KirchnerZIMMER documents Kirchner's childhood and has an extensive reference library.

Schadography (taking camera-less photographs) and 'icons' of the New Objectivity propelled artist Christian Schad to





global fame. The Christian Schad Museum takes visitors on a journey through 20th century European art and cultural history, from Expressionism, the Dada movement and New Objectivity to Neorealism. The Jesuit Church Art Gallery, a deconsecrated church, displays temporary exhibitions on classical modernism and contemporary art. For fans of modern and experimental art, the KunstLANDING and the Kornhäuschen galleries regularly exhibit works by regional and international artists.





Jewish heritage

The turbulent history of Aschaffenburg's Jewish community from 1267 to the Nazi period is illustrated through contemporary documents and numerous ritual objects displayed in a former Rabbi's house. The synagogue, which was built in 1891/93 and destroyed in 1938, is brought back to life by a remarkable 3D reconstruction and commemorated on Wolfsthalplatz square by a grove of plane trees planted in 1984.





Anton Gentil

The industrialist Anton Gentil (1867–1951) had several splendid mansions built in Aschaffenburg. In one of them, the Gentil House on Grünewaldstrasse, he mounted his magnificent art collection. In addition to medieval art and Dutch paintings, it contains exquisite pieces from East Asia and works by German artist Franz von Stuck. Today, it is one of the Aschaffenburg museums.





Parks & gardens

Unlike many towns of a similar size, Aschaffenburg is blessed with a profusion of important historical gardens that enrich urban life and make it more restful.

Between 1774 and 1802, the penultimate Prince-Elector of Mainz, Friedrich Carl Joseph von Erthal, commissioned one of the largest and most beautiful English-style landscaped parks, Schönbusch Park. The large former game park and old outer ward in front of the town wall were converted

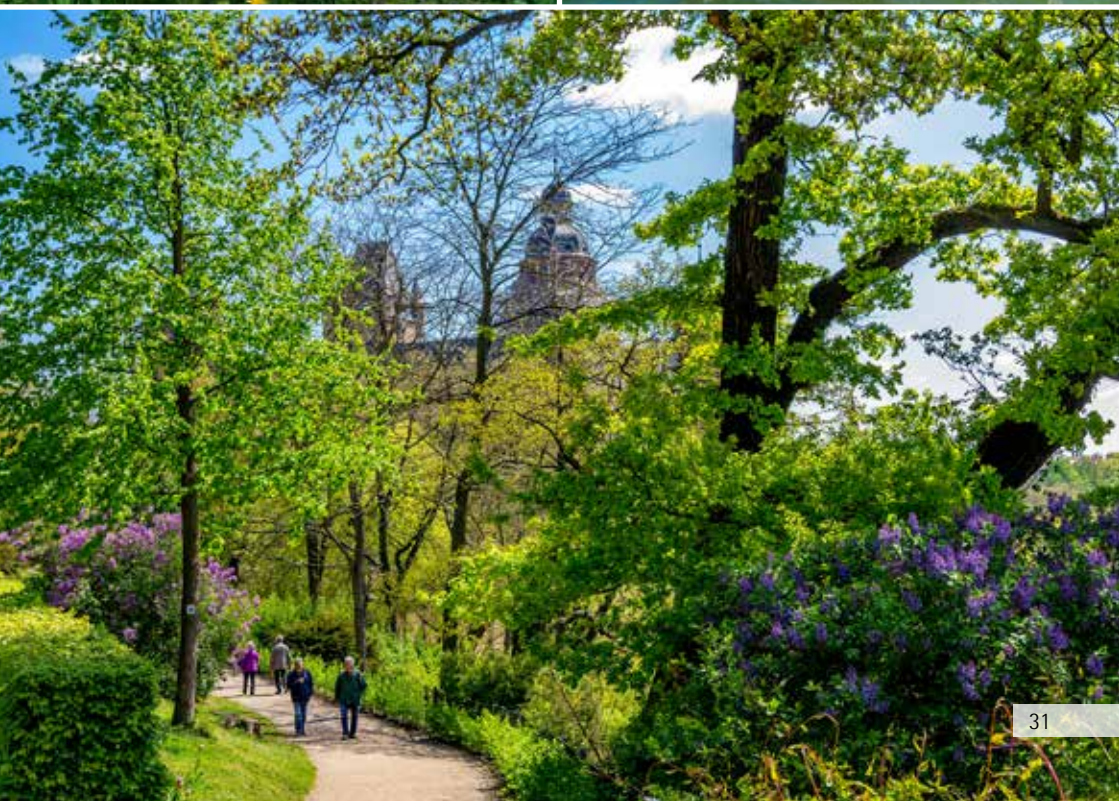


into a public garden and linked to the palace gardens by promenades and verdant axes such as the Offenes Schöntal. In 2014, the Grünbrücke 'bridge' joined Grossmutterwiese to the Fasanerie municipal forest. It covers an area of around 14,000 square meters, is 140 meters wide and, thanks to its clever planting, looks just like a park when viewed from the ring road and the railway line. Nilkheimer Park, whose attractions include an ancient Roman bath, also merits a visit.





The ever-changing palace garden links Johannishaus Palace to the Pompeiianum. The path between the two, offering sweeping views over the Main valley, leads through an enchanting arbour and across a well-preserved section of the medieval town wall to Emanuel Joseph von Herigoyen's neo-classical Breakfast Temple. It continues on a footbridge across the old town moat, converted into a landscaped garden by Friedrich Ludwig Sckell, and on to the Mediterranean-style grounds at the Pompeiianum and then to the Saint Germain terraces, named after Aschaffenburg's twin town in France. The verdant Offenes Schöntal and Schöntal Park are then reached via the valley in the old town moat.





There are magical places to discover in Schöntal Park. Beginning in 1780, Friedrich Ludwig Sckell converted the game park, including the ruins of the Beguine abbey, into an English landscaped park. Its huge 19th century magnolia grove is a magnificent sight in spring. Containing over 40 trees, it is one of the largest in Germany. In late spring, the dominant feature are the rhododendron bushes blooming in all possible colours. The small lake is an especially charming spot with its reflections of the walls of the ruined abbey.





Schönbusch Park was a royal hunting ground prior to 1775 and is today under the management of the Bavarian Palace Administration. Prince-Bishop Friedrich Carl von Erthal commissioned the leading landscape gardener of his time, Friedrich Ludwig Sckell, to create one of the first English-style landscape parks in southern Germany. Sckell's masterful design featured man-made lakes and watercourses, hillocks, follies and snaking paths, and even a small village. The small neoclassical garden palace on the lower lake offers an unimpeded view of Johannisburg Palace.





Aschaffenburg – town of good living





There are more cafés, bars, restaurants and beer gardens in Aschaffenburg than there are days in the year. When it comes to eating out, there is something to suit every age, taste and budget – from traditional regional pubs and international eateries to award-winning restaurants. Visitors to Aschaffenburg are also spoiled for choice when it comes to quenching their thirst. Freshly pulled German beer, craft beer and Hessen's famous *äbbelwoi* cider are among the choices on offer, as are wines from Aschaffenburg, Franconia and all around the world. The locally made Schlaraffenburg apple juice is also worth a try, while the Schlappeseppel brewpub and brewery museum is a must.





A nighttime photograph of a cityscape. In the foreground, several large, ornate buildings with domes and spires are illuminated with warm lights. The middle ground shows a dark, silhouetted landscape with several tall, thin masts or towers. In the background, a city skyline is visible, with lights from buildings and a prominent tower. The sky is a mix of deep blue and purple, with streaks of light from fireworks on the left side.

Vibrant town of culture



Not a month goes by in Aschaffenburg without an event – whether large or small – taking place. The town boasts numerous stages, including the municipal theatre with its stunning neoclassical auditorium, the Stadthalle civic hall (much praised for its acoustics), the Hofgarten Kabarett comedy theatre and the multi-award-winning live music club Colos Saal. Their combined programme features everything from plays, concerts, cabaret and variety to modern dance, opera, operettas and musicals, with plenty of open-air entertainment in summer. On the festival front, Aschaffenburg's guitar festival and Bach festival attract visitors from far and wide. And every year, the festival hall in Schönbusch Park and the open-air stage in Schöntal Park provide an





especially romantic backdrop to concerts. Other high points of the cultural calendar are the Volksfest in June, with its funfair, firework displays and beer tents, and the traditional town festival at the end of August. The Kulturtage arts festival offers an extensive programme (on a different theme every year) that includes exhibitions, tours and an open-air cinema and ends with a museums night. The Brüderschaft der Völker – Brotherhood of Nations – festival showcases Aschaffenburg as a cosmopolitan town with inhabitants from more than 130 countries. The town's markets exude a particular charm, from market day on Wednesdays and Saturdays, to pottery and craft markets in the inner courtyard of Johannisburg Palace, and of course the traditional Christmas market.



Aschaffenburg's snaking blue artery – the river Main







Aschaffenburg's location on the river Main is simply magical. Whether you arrive by boat at Flosshafen or come by bike or on foot along the riverside promenade, you cannot fail to be impressed by the grandeur of the Pompeiianum with its vineyard terraces, by Johannisburg Palace and Park and the neoclassical 'breakfast temple', and by the route to the historical buildings in the upper part of the town. On summer evenings especially, the riviera-like atmosphere along the promenade and marina will make you realise why Aschaffenburg came to be known as the 'Nice of Bavaria'.



National natural heritage site



Aschaffenburg boasts plenty of greenery – both on the banks of the river Main and in its numerous parks and landscape gardens. It also has a 'national natural heritage site'. This conservation area occupies around 300 hectares on the Schweinheimer Exe, a former training ground for the US military. A 3km circular discovery trail allows visitors to get up close to the rare plants and animals and find out all sorts of fascinating facts about them. The Heck cattle and the herd of protected Przewalski horses are particular highlights.





It is a mere stone's throw from the town to the edge of the Spessart Hills Nature Park, one of the largest deciduous forests in Germany, home to beautiful beech and oak trees and biodiverse river valleys. The landscape has been in its present state for around 8,000 years and along the many trails you might spot woodpeckers, kingfishers, wildcats, wild orchids and snake's head fritillaries – all typical of the Spessart hills' flora and fauna.

Aschaffenburg's natural history museum, in Schönborner Hof, focuses on the topography, geology and geological history of the Spessart hills region.







Last but not least ...

The sundial on Theaterplatz is one of the largest in Europe and has an accompanying information centre. On walls dotted about the old town you can spot Neidkopp faces, which were intended to protect the townspeople from the 'evil eye'. The Flennerle faces, meanwhile, prohibited travelling entertainers and players. The Stiftsmuseum displays a range of single-use pipes used by the clergy, showing that even the medieval era had a throwaway culture! The Maulaff statue, which once stood in Schönbusch Park, was used for a game where you had to aim a ball at his open mouth. He's now on display at the Palace Museum. One of Aschaffenburg's most curious features is the bottom set into the palace wall – quite why the stonemason immortalised this particular body part remains a mystery to this day!

1775–1794 Friedrich Carl Joseph von Erthal has the palace gardens and the parks of Schönbusch, Schöntal and Fasanerie laid out.

In 1785, the Schwetzingen court gardener Friedrich Ludwig Sckell transforms Schönbusch into the first English landscaped park in Bavaria. Johannsburg Palace acquires its classical interior.

1798 Aschaffenburg becomes the seat of government of the Electorate of Mainz.

1803 The Electorate of Mainz is dissolved and the principality of Aschaffenburg (which lasts until 1810) is founded under Carl Theodor von Dalberg.

1810–1813 Aschaffenburg is part of Carl Theodor von Dalberg's newly created Grand Duchy of Frankfurt.

1814 After the end of the Napoleonic wars, Aschaffenburg becomes part of the Kingdom of Bavaria. Crown Prince Ludwig of Bavaria (later King Ludwig I of Bavaria) stays here often.

1836 King Ludwig I awards the town its coat of arms, which is based on its 13th century seal and features a bishop giving a blessing.

1840–1848 The Pompeiianum is built to plans by the architect Friedrich von Gärtner, a vineyard is planted and the grounds are turned into an idealised Mediterranean landscape.

1854 Official opening of the Bamberg–Würzburg–Aschaffenburg railway line, and the emergence of productive industry.

1874 Johann Desch opens Germany's first ready-made garment factory.

1904–1906 Germany's first driving school opens, designed by architect Rudolf Kempf.

1944/45 Heavy Allied bombing destroys a large part of Aschaffenburg, including the old town and Johannsburg Palace. The Pompeiianum is badly damaged.

1954–1978 Johannsburg Palace is reconstructed.

1958 A new section of the A3 connects Aschaffenburg with Germany's autobahn network.

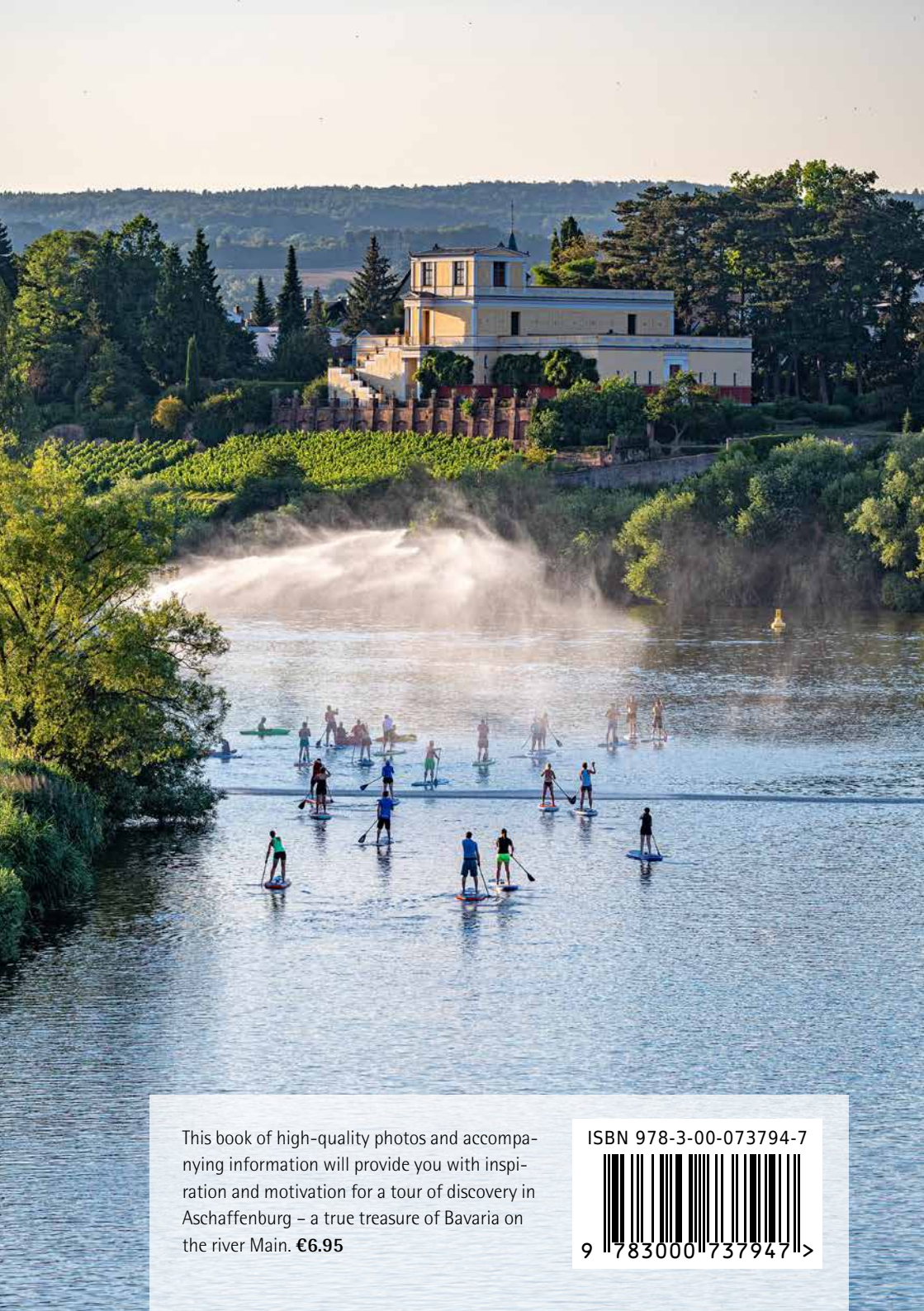
1958 The (collegiate) Church of St Peter and Alexander receives the papal title of 'basilica minor', so becoming an abbey basilica.

1960–1999/2002 The Pompeiianum is rebuilt and restored.

1945–1992 In the immediate post-war period, Aschaffenburg falls within the American occupation zone. The US military bases close between 1990 and 1992.

2012 Aschaffenburg's Hauptbahnhof, whose new building opened in 2011, is chosen as the 2012 Train Station of the Year by Allianz pro Schiene (Pro Rail Alliance).

2018 The discovery trail exploring Aschaffenburg's national natural heritage site is opened on 4 May 2018. It is a joint project by Deutsche Bahn and the Institute for Federal Real Estate. The approximately 3km circular route tells visitors about the transformation of these former military grounds, which have since become a home for Przewalski horses.



This book of high-quality photos and accompanying information will provide you with inspiration and motivation for a tour of discovery in Aschaffenburg – a true treasure of Bavaria on the river Main. **€6.95**

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