



*In the footsteps of the lion  
and the giant Sletto*



# Sightseeing walking tour

24 places to stop and discover  
the town's outstanding sites





## *A meeting between legend and history*

Giant's footsteps? Lion's paws? Do they have anything whatsoever to do with the history of the town? Indeed they do.

The giant's footsteps are those of the giant Sletto; according to legend he founded the town of Sélestat and gave it his name.

As for his four-legged companion, of course this is an allusion to the lion on the town's coat of arms, which comes to us from the illustrious Hohenstaufen family who lay behind the town's expansion in the Middle Ages

Welcome to Sélestat  
Enjoy your visit

# In the footsteps of the lion and the giant Sletto

Set out in search of Sélestat's rich heritage by following the tracks left on the ground by the lion and the giant. The tour starts at the Tourist Office and ends in front of the Humanist Library.

As you proceed you will find three kinds of visual markers on the ground:



## Arrows pointing the way

On the pavements or in the street, they indicate the direction to take.



## Stopping points

Placed in front of each outstanding building or site, they mark the stops in the itinerary. They are numbered and relate to a commentary in this brochure.



## Studs

Located in the Rue des Chevaliers, they allow you to take a quicker route.

Find explanations of the various pictograms used in this brochure



## Did you know?

Find unusual historical anecdotes about Sélestat.



## For the curious

Learn about heritage in minute detail.



## Photo opportunity

Round the corner of a street or off a square, let the charm of what Sélestat has to offer surprise you. The loveliest views of the town centre are indicated by this pictogram.



## Stop and relax

Tired? Stop for a few moments and savour your exploration of the town to the full.



## Scan heritage lore

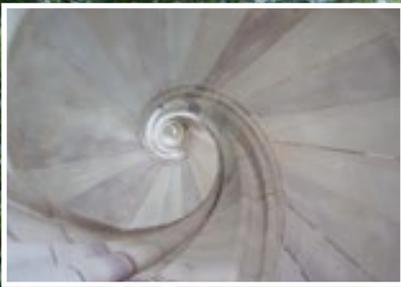
If you have a smartphone, at some sites on the route the Tourist Office suggests that you scan 2D codes to access supplementary information.



## Duration

The itinerary is 2.8 km in length. You have to allow about 2 hours to go right round.

1 hour if you choose the fast option along the rue des Chevaliers.



## Commanderie Saint-Jean

### Commanderie Saint-Jean

Let's start our visit with the building that houses the Tourist Office on the ground floor. In the Middle Ages it was part of a larger complex belonging to the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. This hospitaller and military order trained Alsace nobles to fight so that they could go and defend the Holy Land at the time of the Crusades. The only surviving parts of the former community are the Commanderie building where the Prior, i.e. the head of the Community, was lodged, and the Ritterhof where the knightly monks were accommodated. The church was on the site that is now the car park.



#### Did you know? A fatal fall

*In 1562 the architect Michel Sindelin, on the building site during construction of the Commanderie at the time, fell off a scaffold. He died of his injuries three days later. A man of many talents, as well as being an architect, he was a skilled stonemason and sculptor.*

6



#### For the curious A mesmerising staircase

*If you open the door of the staircase turret during office hours, you will find a very beautiful Renaissance staircase. Its special interest lies in the central spiralling part. Stand at the centre of the staircase and look up: You are afforded a very beautiful prospect.*



## Tribunal et château d'eau

### Court and Water Tower

Like the imperial district of Metz or the Neustadt district of Strasbourg, Sélestat too has its German quarter, created after the annexation of Alsace to Germany in 1870. A few major projects can be seen in this district of the town, such as the court (1900), the water tower (1906), or indeed the former Schweisguth barracks (1876). The sculptures on the façade of the court are associated with the theme of Justice. Sitting at

the top of the ogee arch, the owl symbolises intelligence and thoughtfulness. On either side of the owl, two winged lions bear escutcheons featuring scales and a sword. These are the attributes of Justice. The scales evoke balance and measure, while the sword represents power. The masks sculpted on to the lintels of the ground-floor windows are an allusion to Justice which unveils true faces.



#### For the curious The court's little sister

*The house on the left of the court is nothing other than a former prison, now privately owned.*



#### Did you know? A real weathercock

*When it was built the water tower was topped by an eagle symbolising the German Empire, then after World War I it was given a new crowning feature, a cock symbolising the restoration of Alsace to France. That was removed in 1940. Since then no further bird has established its nest at the top of the water tower.*

7



# Bains Municipaux

## Municipal Baths

Sea lions, fish, swans, polar bears, children playing with fish, naiads on seahorses: these are the elements in the sculpted decor on the façade you are facing. Everything suggests that water was no stranger to the former purpose of this building, as the inscription Bains Municipaux [Municipal Baths] above the windows of the central block confirms.

More traditionally referred to by the people of Sélestat as bains chauds [hot baths], the Municipal Baths were opened in 1928, so making several bath tubs and showers available to the public.

For at that time not everyone necessarily had a bathroom at home. With the development of private washing facilities, the area of the building allocated to baths and showers became ever more restricted, so making room for accommodating a variety of associations and entities.

The municipal baths were confined to the basement area in the 1980s, and finally closed their doors in the early 1990s.



**! For the curious**  
A divine entrance

Where the keystone of the entrance door is situated, a man with a long beard and crowned with a shell greets you. This is Neptune, the god of living water and springs.



# Eglise Protestante

## Protestant Church

The Protestant church has had an eventful history. Building work started in 1280; originally founded by Franciscan monks, in the 16th century it was taken over by a reform branch of monks: the Récollets.

They were driven out at the time of the French Revolution, and the building was then used as stables and a grain store.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the nave was destroyed. All that was then left was the choir which was handed over to the Protestant community. The Neo-Gothic front wall dates from that period.

The present Protestant church was officially opened in 1881.

**Did you know?**  
The letter and the spirit

In 1979 the Protestant church decided to install a new tympanum with a figurative evocation of a verse from St Matthew's Gospel.

"For one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." The former tympanum featured an inscription in German in Gothic lettering that literally corresponded to the verse quoted above. It is now preserved in the church vestibule.





## Ecole du Centre et Vieille Tour

### Town-centre School and Vieille Tour house

The present town-centre school, like the court, is part of the infrastructure dating from the German post-1870 era. It is a massive building, built in what is known as the colossal style.

The monastic buildings of the Franciscans, then of the Récollets, used to occupy the site where it now stands. From the time of the French Revolution, after the monks had gone, the monastic buildings were used as a barracks, saltpetre works, and a prison.

Opposite the town-centre school, in the Rue de la Jauge, the La Vieille Tour restaurant has a very strange frontage in which a small flanking tower is literally embedded.

That turret is a remnant of the construction forming the town's first ever city walls (1116-1130).



#### For the curious As on the railways

*The side of the school overlooking the rue de Verdun has a bell with a strange mechanism at the top of the central block. It is a railway carriage buffer that serves as the bell clapper.*



## Hôtel de Ville

### Hôtel de Ville

This building resembling a Greek temple is in fact the Hôtel de Ville built in 1788 to replace the previous one (the Herrenstube), destroyed due to dilapidation a few years earlier, likewise located on the Place d'Armes.

The new edifice did not greatly appeal to the revolutionary mayor, Mr Herrenberger, who described it as a dovecote.

The Hôtel de Ville is one of the few public

buildings in Sélestat in the Neoclassical style, as demonstrated by the composition of its façade distinguished by its rigour and symmetry, and the use of Doric and Tuscan columns.

The town hall offices are across the road, located in a 14<sup>th</sup> century former townhouse that was greatly altered in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



#### Did you know? Watch out!

*From the late 15<sup>th</sup> century until the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was from the steps of the former town hall on the present-day Place d'Armes that sentences for the crime of witchcraft were proclaimed. This square was named the Place d'Armes in 1807 when the guardroom was put there. It was next known as Paradeplatz (1870), then as Herrenplatz (1880) before regaining its present name in 1919.*





# 7

## Arsenal Sainte-Barbe

### Sainte-Barbe Arsenal

With its characteristic crenelated gable, the Sainte-Barbe arsenal is the most imposing building on the square. Built c. 1470, it was initially used as a warehouse before being transformed into an arsenal during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the building was refurbished as a community centre hall. The municipal architect, Jean-Jacques-Alexandre Stamm, was put in charge of the work. The first-floor

windows were enlarged, and a double flight of steps in Neo-Gothic style was built, leading to an elegant porch. Today the building is used for meetings by municipal bodies. The ground floor is dedicated more particularly to exhibitions and festive events.

### ! For the curious Barbara's story

Placed on the corner of the building, St Barbara can be identified by her crown, the attribute of martyrs, and the three-windowed tower (evoking the Holy Trinity) below her right hand. She was shut in the tower by her father to prevent her from converting to Christianity.

A priest disguised as a doctor managed to get into the tower to baptise her. When he learnt of this her father was furious, and beheaded his own daughter. The wrath of God then fell on him, and he was struck by lightning on the spot. That is why St Barbara is the patron saint of trades and professions associated with fire (artillerymen, fire-fighters, etc.).

### ☰ Stop and relax

Sit down on the seats in front of the arsenal and concentrate on the lines from the poem Erasmus wrote as a tribute to Sélestat. These are inscribed on the pavement in front of the entrance to the former arsenal.



# 8

## Synagogue

### Synagogue

The architect Jean-Jacques-Alexandre Stamm was also responsible for this building, dating from 1890. The distinguishing features of the Sélestat synagogue, inspired by Rhineland synagogues, are its central plan and the alternating materials that enliven its façade: yellow and pink sandstone and brick complement one another. The dome that used to top the building was destroyed by the Nazis in 1940. Major restoration

work was carried out between 1950 and 1960. It was then that the former ritual baths, there since 1836, were revealed in the subsoil. On the building's west façade the Tables of the Law can be seen at the level of the gable, and above the main door there is an inscription in Hebrew meaning: This is the Gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.

### ! For the curious A prickly subject

Before reaching the next stopping place, you will pass by a fountain which has an open book on top of it, resting on a fir tree; on its pages the inscription "1521" can be read. Should this be seen as a riddle to be solved? Not really. This is an allusion to the earliest written record referring to the tradition of the Christmas tree. That record is held in the municipal archives and dates from 1521. It informs us that the forest wardens of the town were paid to go and keep an eye on the trees in the forest a few days before Christmas. Thus in a kind of way Sélestat is the birthplace of the Christmas tree.





# 9

## Tour Neuve

### Tour Neuve

A vestige of the second city walls built in 1280, the Tour Neuve did not always have the contours we see today. Originally it was not so tall, and just had a terrace with battlements. It was radically altered in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the addition of a second building on top of the tower. Openings known as gun-loops were created to let the stocks of the cannons pass through, and a bulb-shaped roof was constructed. The fresco that can be seen on the south side depicts a Crucifixion scene. We recognize Christ with St John on his left, and the Virgin Mary on his right. Two other

people have been associated with the scene: St Faith who can be recognized by the grill she was tortured on, and St Christopher depicted carrying a child on his shoulders representing Christ.

If you leave the waymarked route to get a closer view of the building, under the tower you will find two frescos referring to the many guilds that used to govern the town: butchers, shoemakers, tanners, ploughmen, wine-growers...



### For the curious: Incognito

*Behind you is the Auberge de la Paix restaurant. At the top of the gable, resting on a pedestal that is not quite upright, is a mysterious individual with long wavy hair decorated with flowers, topped by a lyre. This is believed to be the Bible character David who of ten soothed King Saul with his singing – hence the presence of a lyre on his head. But it could equally well be Erato, one of the Nine Muses who accompanied Apollo, the Muse of lyric poetry, whose attribute is the lyre.*



### Did you know ? Open to the sky

*On the night of 7-8 December 1891, a fire broke out on the Tour Neuve, destroying 31 houses in its path and endangering 87 families. Following that incident, the Tour Neuve had no roof for several months.*



### Pushed for time?

*From this stop you have the option of taking a shortcut that will lead you directly to Stop 22. Go under the tower, and follow the studs on the road.*

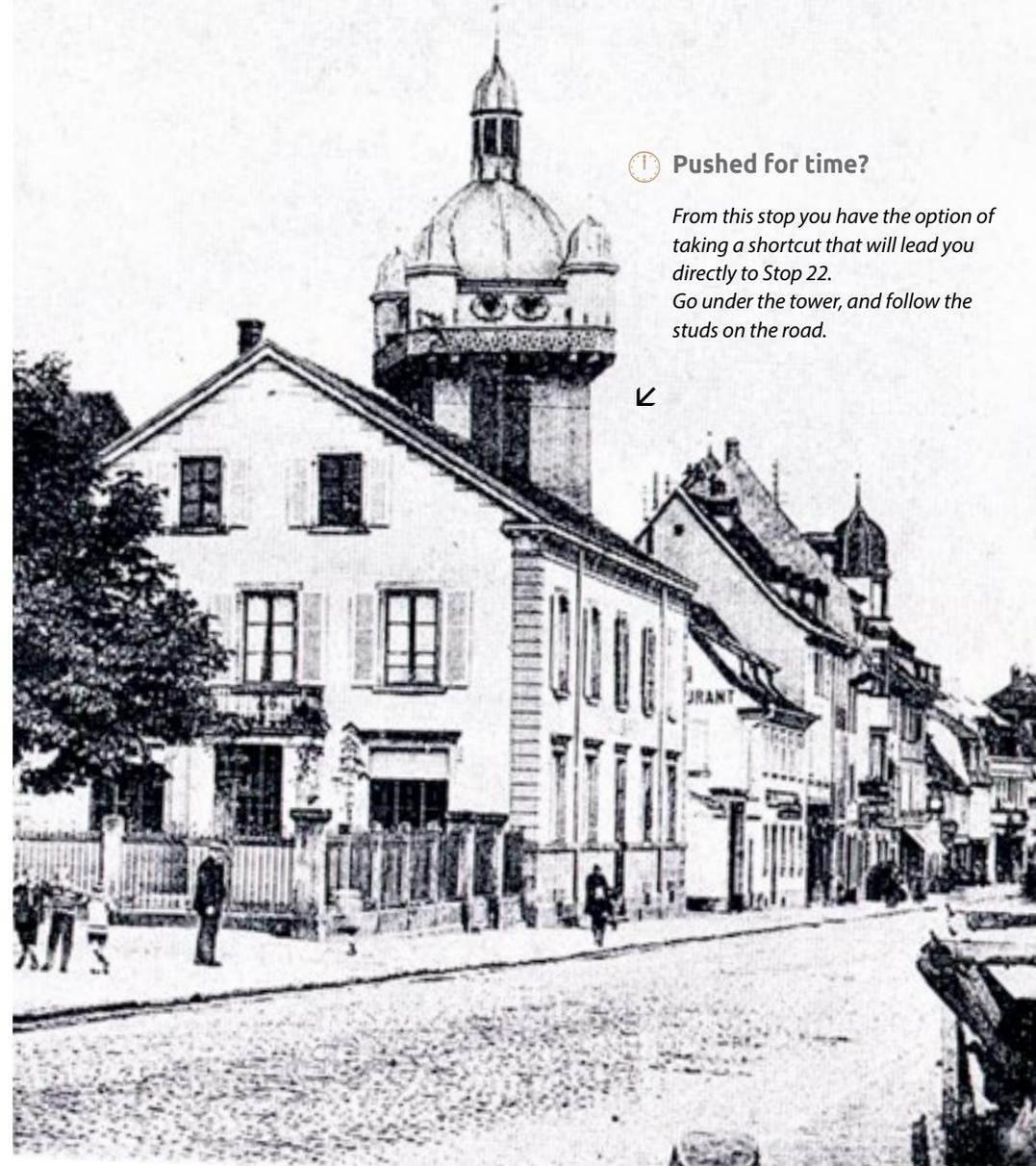


Photo : C. Dumoulin - ADJC



# 10

## Remparts Vauban

### Vauban ramparts

After the city walls were dismantled in 1673, the decision was made to fortify the town again. The final walls were built according to Vauban's designs. These were executed by Jacques Tarade. He was the director of fortifications of sites in Alsace from 1690 to 1720 for Louis XIV, and two streets bear his name, one in Sélestat, the other in Strasbourg.

The walls formed an irregular nine-sided polygon with three gates: the Strasbourg gate, the Colmar gate, and the Neuf-Brisach gate. In 1874, to allow the town to expand, the walls were dismantled.

The only surviving parts are two bastions linked by a curtain wall, and closer to the town centre, at the entrance to the Rue de la Grande Boucherie,

the Strasbourg gate.

In front of you, on the bastion wall, some 310 street name signs have been placed. They consist of a word or a snatch of a sentence encouraging us to walk or dream. This a contemporary art work made by Sarkis in 1993 entitled *Le point de rencontre: le Rêve*. The number of signs is significant.

At the time when the work was devised, Sélestat had 310 streets. A few blank signs were affixed to the low wall opposite the bastion, to allow for the future expansion of the town.

### Stop and relax

*Do you feel like resting for a few minutes or stopping for a picnic? Go along the rampart wall to the entrance to Ramparts Park. A children's play area and benches are available for you to use.*

*A fine expanse of water enhances the view.*

### Did you know? A resuscitated gate

*To preserve the memory of the Colmar gate, the pediment of the gate was recovered and built into the wall of the second surviving bastion.*

*To see it, follow the rue Brigade Alsace-Lorraine.*

# 11

## Médiathèque Agence culturelle d'Alsace

### Médiathèque - Agence culturelle d'Alsace

At the end of the 1990s cultural facilities rose from the ground on the other side of the River Ill, providing outstanding examples of modern architecture. With its long glazed façade in which the houses of the old town are reflected, the Fonds régional d'art contemporain [Frac] comes under the Agence culturelle d'Alsace which encourages and supports the cultural initiatives of local authorities, associations, and professional and amateur artists in the fields of audio-visual, performing and visual art.

Beside it is the Médiathèque or media library, easily recognized by the white portal frames that span the building. The Médiathèque and the Frac Alsace regularly organize exhibitions, so feel free to go in.

Thus it is a true cultural front that has been built along the opposite bank of the Ill. The most recent addition is a performing arts hall, the Tanzmatten, constructed in 2001 (Prix d'Architecture du Grand Est in 2005). Standing a little farther away, its parallelepipedic contours are the work of the architects Rudy Ricciotti and Heintz-Kehr.

### Did you know? Rudy Ricciotti: From the Tanzmatten to MuCEM

*If the name Rudy Ricciotti strikes you as familiar, it's not surprising. This architect was very much in the news at the time of the opening of the Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM) in Marseille in June 2013, a building he designed with Roland Carta.*





# 12



## Ladhof

### Ladhof

In the Middle Ages, Sélestat had a very active river port known as the Ladhof, located in one of the loops of the Ill. It lay between the first (1216-1230) and the second (1280) city walls. Then it was protected by several defensive towers, one of which can still be seen in front of you, encompassed in the house.

The port silted up at the end of the 14th century,

so the loading and unloading of goods took place directly on the Ill.

On the site of the former port a square was created, its name, Place du Vieux-Port, evoking the location's past.

### Did you know? Not so grand

*On the Place du Vieux-Port stands a building typical of those built in the 18th century. In 1765 it opened its doors to the most destitute. From being a poorhouse it became a hospital, and the patients it cared for included the well-off, so it was considered smart. But the future had a less glorious fate in store for it since at the beginning of the 19th century it was occupied by residents of a very different nature: The building was in fact converted into a prison.*



### Stop and relax

*Before you go over the pedestrian crossing to reach stop no.13, take a break beside the Ill to admire the façade of the Frac Alsace with its reflections of the historic centre. There are some benches awaiting you in a landscaped green area just beside the pedestrian crossing.*

### Photo opportunity



# 13

## Quartier des Tanneurs

### Tanners' District

You are entering the Tanners' district. Tanners were very often housed together away from the town centre, for their work was very polluting and foul-smelling. The channel that used to run along the middle of the road was covered over in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Water still flows under your feet and runs into the Ill. Some houses at the end of the Quai des Tanneurs (nos. 1 and 17) are typical of the needs associated with the trade. The high narrow

gables and sloping roofs are indicative of them. Before being transformed into leather, skins were washed several times, scraped, and tanned in baths. The space under the roofs was therefore deliberately quite high and well ventilated so that the skins could be hung up and dried. Above some doors you can still spot the emblem of the tanners' guild: three intersecting tanners' knives.

 **Did you know?**  
An alley that makes your spine tingle!

*A rather creepy legend is associated with the narrow alleyway between nos. 7 and 6 of the Quai des Tanneurs. This passage was reputedly the haunt of the "Stadtthier", a legendary creature which frequented this place, giving it the reputation of being unsafe. As if to ward off fate, a little wall chapel was installed in a recess in the façade of house no. 6.*



 **For the curious  
Dates**

On one of the pillars supporting house no. 7 on the Quai des Tanneurs two dates have been inscribed. The first, at the same height as the capital, is in Gothic script which can be misleading: it says 1499. That is most likely the date when the house was built, while the second date, 1806, probably commemorates the carrying out of restoration work.

 **Photo opportunity**



# Route map

Sélestat town center

## Stops

1. **Commanderie Saint-Jean**
2. **Tribunal Court**
3. **Bains Municipaux** Municipal Baths
4. **Eglise Protestante** Protestant Church
5. **Ecole du Centre** Town-centre School / Vieille Tour
6. **Hôtel de Ville**
7. **Arsenal Sainte-Barbe** Sainte-Barbe Arsenal
8. **Synagogue**
9. **Tour Neuve**
10. **Remparts Vauban** Vauban Ramparts
11. **Médiathèque**
- Agence culturelle d'Alsace**
12. **Ladhof**
13. **Quartier des Tanneurs** Tanners' District
14. **Rue des Oies - rue des Veaux**
15. **Jardin du dahlia** Dahlia garden
16. **Tour des Sorcières**
17. **Porte de Strasbourg**
18. **Eglise Saint-Georges** Church of Saint-Georges
19. **Hôtel d'Ebersmunster - Lieutenance**
20. **Corporation des bouchers**  
Former Premises of the Butchers' Guild
21. **Eglise Sainte-Foy** Church of Sainte-Foy
22. **Maison Goll**
23. **Cour des Prélats**
24. **Bibliothèque Humaniste**

**Stops**  
Large plaques on the ground  
in front of buildings

**Arrows**  
Placed between stops, they tell you  
which direction to take

 Outline of route (duration: 2 h.)  
 Road crossing

 Shorter route (duration: 1 h.)  
Go along the Rue des Chevaliers

Project realised  
with the help of



14



## Rue des Oies, rue des Veaux

### Rue des Oies, rue des Veaux

The Rue des Oies owes its name to the well of the same name directly in front of you (you can still see the hand pump). The well went out of use in 1911. People used to say then that it supplied the sweetest water in the town.

From stopping point 14, you get an attractive view of the Rue des Oies and the Rue des Veaux. Most of the houses lining these streets are timber-frame houses.

Many of them are covered by roughcast, hiding the wood. But if you see that the window frames are made of wood, they are indeed timber-frame houses.

It was the fashion to roughcast these houses in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. People preferred to disguise this modest type of construction, inexpensive, therefore unlikely to enhance the owner's prestige.



### Did you know? Well water

*Before the installation of mains water in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the people of Sélestat fetched their water from wells. There were 16 in Sélestat, distributed across the town and suburbs. In addition to these public wells there were a large number of private wells.*



### For the curious Not to be eaten

*At no. 8 of the Rue des Oies a pretzel and a long bread roll are carved on the door lintel. As in the case of the tanners, here we are dealing with the emblem of a guild. It doesn't take very long to guess which one. Of course it's the bakers' guild!*

15



## Jardin du Dahlia

### Dahlia garden

Since 2006 this former car park has been refurbished as a real haven of peace in the heart of the town. Depending on the time of year, the garden is known by different names.

In summer it is called the dahlia garden, referring to the emblematic flower that decorates the flowered floats in the procession in August. A number of varieties of dahlia can be found in the garden.

As we approach the first Sunday in Advent, the garden takes on its winter garb. The beds of dahlias give way to different species of fir tree. The dahlia garden then becomes a fir-tree garden, as up to now Sélestat holds the record for the earliest written reference to the Christmas tree. That reference, taken from a municipal accounts book dated 1521, is held in the Municipal Archives (see also page 13).



### Did you know? A traveller's seed

*The dahlia, which owes its name to the Swedish botanist Andreas Dahl (1751-1789), came to us from Mexico. Brought to the Spanish court in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was initially grown for its tubers which at that time were eaten. But their insipid taste quickly put an end to the growing of dahlias as a food. Today the dahlia is cultivated for its aesthetic qualities. In Sélestat, every year around 500,000 dahlias decorate the floats of the Corso Fleuri procession which has been in existence since 1929.*



### Stop and relax

*Take advantage of the peace in this garden to rest for a few minutes.*



# 16



## Tour des Sorcières

### Tour des Sorcières

Originally known as the “Niedertor” (low gate), the Tour des Sorcières is one of the few remaining parts of the first 13<sup>th</sup> century town walls. It was raised by three floors at the end of the same century, so acquiring its present appearance. Access to the tower was through the door we can glimpse from the stopping point, probably reached by using a wooden staircase adjacent to the wall. In order to prevent potential assailants from seizing the building and using it against the

population, the upper levels of the tower used to be open-backed, on the side facing the town. So we have to imagine that the walls of the upper storeys of the west façade (overlooking the town) did not exist. If the building was captured by the enemy, he would then find himself exposed. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the two entrance doors were walled up to shut in unfortunate women who had been accused of making a pact with the devil.



### For the curious A construction set

*Go under the tower and come back out on the other side. Now look at the gate with the pointed arch. We can actually discern two arches. If you look more closely at the stones forming the arches you'll notice signs engraved in the stone. Those signs differ according to whether they relate to the first arch or the second one. They are the equivalent of laying marks. Thus the workmen responsible for constructing the building knew exactly which stones were to form the first arch, and which the second.*

# 17



## Porte de Strasbourg

### Porte de Strasbourg

Constructed from 1679 to 1681, the Porte de Strasbourg is the only survivor of the three gates that used to be part of Vauban's fortified walls. As was true of all such gates at that period, it is the façade facing out from the town that is most lavishly decorated.

There we see numerous symbols glorifying the army: trophies, flags, helmets or again on the pediment, under the lion of Sélestat, the

archangel St Michael, the patron saint of men-at-arms and soldiers. Above the lion three small fleurs-de-lys stand out, emblems of the kingdom of France. In the central space of the gate the bust of Marianne is enthroned, a supreme symbol of the Republic. This was not always the case: until the French Revolution it was the bust of Louis XIV that sat there.



### Did you know? The precious first stone

*In August 1679, the Minister Louvois laid the first stone of the building. As tradition required, a small lead box containing coins and medals, as well as an account of the ceremony, was sealed into the building.*



# 18

## Eglise Saint-Georges

### Church of Saint-Georges

You get a lovely view of the church of Saint-Georges from stop 18. You can clearly see all parts of the church, from the roof at the east end with its colourful glazed tiles, to the graceful tower at the front of the church, by way of the crossing tower with its copper roof.

While at first sight it gives an impression of homogeneity, the monument in fact took three centuries to build, at the impetus of the local townspeople, keen to assert themselves as against the religious power represented by the Priory of Sainte-Foy.

Work started around 1220 and was completed shortly before 1500. The stained-glass windows in the choir, partly dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, are indisputably this church's crowning glory.

### Stop and relax

All around you, a little area of greenery conducive to rest is beckoning you. There are lots of benches to sit on.

With its west tower rising to a height of 60 metres, the church of Saint-Georges is one of the tallest religious buildings in Alsace, though a long way behind Strasbourg cathedral (142 m).

A team of lookouts used to work in shifts to keep watch on the surrounding area and give warning of any outbreak of fire. They were also supposed to ring out every quarter hour, which one of them forgot to do in 1886. As a punishment, he had to choose between paying a fine and spending a day in prison.



### Did you know? Good old Charlemagne!

*On the present-day site of the church's choir there used to be a Carolingian chapel, built in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, where Charlemagne came to pray when travelling through Sélestat at Christmas in 775.*



**! For the curious**  
**A very strange sarcophagus**

*A little further along you will see a sarcophagus in the grass on your right. It is shrouded in mystery. It seems to date from the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century. There is a low-relief cross on the top.*

Photo: C. Dumeoulin - ADAC

Photo: <http://banmwaethballade-photos.com>



## Hôtel d'Ebersmunster - North doorway

Directly in front of you, do you see the richly carved sandstone doorway looking like a triumphal arch? When it was constructed (in 1538) this building belonged to the Abbey of Ebersmunster. The monks sought refuge here in the event of an attack. As Sélestat was a fortified town, it was more reassuring to come and take shelter here in troubled times.

The huge building was also used to store the abbey's income in kind, hence the imposing granary on three levels for cereals, and the two large vaulted cellars for wine.

Go up to the doorway to pick out all the details.

The sculpted decor is typical of the Renaissance: medallions, shells, and capitals.

At the centre of the medallions there used to be the profiles of Roman generals and Holy Roman Emperors, but they were hacked off during the French Revolution. On the edge you can still read the Latin inscription referring to the individual depicted.

Although access to the building is now from the other side, through the Cour des Prélats, we should not forget that this was not always the case. The majestic nature of the doorway serves as a reminder.



### For the curious Facing one another for ever

The two large medallions on either side of the doorway will certainly not have escaped your attention. The two individuals whose profiles used to be there must have been important in the eyes of the Abbey of Ebersmunster's monks. They were related to St Odile: Duke Etichon and his wife Bereswinde, who founded the abbey in 660.



## Lieutenance

### Lieutenant's house

Still at stop 19, the Rue du Babil leads you to the entrance to a very fine privately owned property the oldest parts of which date back to the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century, known to the people of Sélestat as the Lieutenance. At the end of the road which is a dead end you can stop in front of the wrought-iron gates that give access to the main courtyard of the Lieutenance. The property bears that name because the king's Lieutenant was lodged there in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Since 1920 the Weiller family has owned this place. Jean-Lazare Weiller who purchased it distinguished himself in several fields. He was involved in introducing the telephone to France, played a role in the history of television, and was a leading figure in communication and transport. In particular he was one of the founders of the *Compagnie Générale de Navigation Aérienne*, the predecessor of *Air France*.



### Did you know? Babbling on

*"Babil" is a strange name for a street.*

*It conjures up the verb "babiller", to babble, not much used now: we would tend to say "bavarder", to chat. The street seems to have had this name since the 18th century.*

*It is believed to refer to the groups of people who used to gather here after church services at Saint-Georges, exchanging the news of the day. But enough idle chat, let's move on to the next stop!*



# 20

## Corporation des bouchers Ancien siège

### Former Premises of the Butchers' Guild

From stop no. 20, you have a view of a building currently housing local authority services. It is here that the richest of Sélestat's guilds used to meet.

If you go nearer, you will see a fresco on the wall of the façade on the first floor. It gives you a clue as to the guild that used to occupy these premises. In the lower part there is a scene depicting the

slaughter of animals, and in the upper part we see the guild's patron saint, St Bartholomew. There can be no further doubt: It is the butchers' guild that used to meet on the first floor to talk over various matters of concern to the guild. The ground floor was used as a meat market until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



### For the curious Lost for words

On the building you will notice an imposing block of carved sandstone embedded into the wall between two first-floor windows. This was actually a sounding board letting the voice reverberate downwards, as happens with church pulpits. To give access to this part, a wooden gallery used to run along the façade, allowing a beadle to pass important information on to the population.

The opening on to that gallery was in the place where the fresco is now located.



### Did you know? A pointed lesson

*From the site of stop 20, you will doubtless have been intrigued by the long gilded plaque affixed horizontally to a wall. Entitled "La Lame" [The Blade], this work by the artist Marc Couturier has formed part of the gable wall where it is installed since 1998 (see photo opposite). The wall is a vestige of Sélestat's Latin or grammar school. Founded in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the prestigious, widely renowned school educated many humanists from the Holy Roman Empire, among them Beatus Rhenanus, a famous native of Sélestat.*



# 21

## Eglise Sainte-Foy

### Church of Sainte-Foy

Even though it is regarded as one of the town's oldest buildings, the church of Sainte-Foy has not remained set in stone since it was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It replaced a small chapel which had been built with funds donated by a famous lady, Countess Hildegard of Buren, the great-grandmother of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The chapel was given to Sainte-Foy Abbey in Conques in Rouergue at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and a few monks subsequently came from Conques to settle in Sélestat.

The monks were soon short of space in their

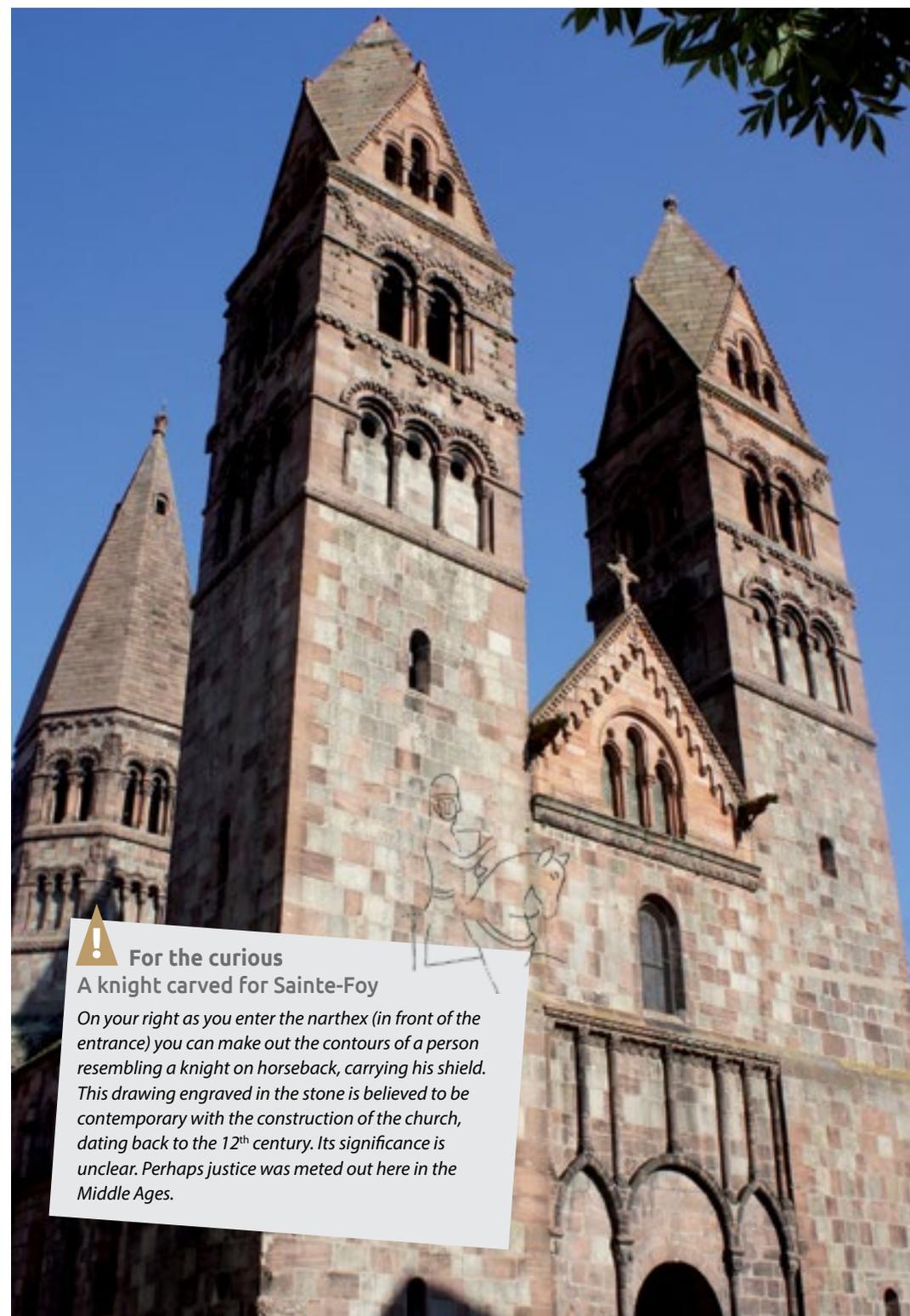
buildings, and undertook to construct the Priory of Sainte-Foy. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century they were superseded by a Jesuit community which altered the church along Baroque lines, before the Germans made their input in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The architect Charles Winckler, in charge of the restoration work, did away with the Jesuits' alterations to return the church to its original appearance, but he added two typically Germanic spires on the façade.



### Did you know? A Sélestat Gioconda

The present crypt of the church of Sainte-Foy is nothing other than a remnant of the chapel built by Hildegard of Buren at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The existence of the crypt was revealed during restoration work in the church at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When this happened a death mask consisting of lime that had solidified in the rubble was found. Several casts were made from the mask one of which is exhibited in the crypt. Historians pondered over the individual's identity, and came up with the hypothesis that it was either Hildegard of Buren or her daughter. As we cannot be certain, the bust is usually referred to as "The unknown beauty of Sélestat".



### For the curious A knight carved for Sainte-Foy

On your right as you enter the narthex (in front of the entrance) you can make out the contours of a person resembling a knight on horseback, carrying his shield. This drawing engraved in the stone is believed to be contemporary with the construction of the church, dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Its significance is unclear. Perhaps justice was meted out here in the Middle Ages.



## Maison Goll

### Maison Goll

Also known as the Maison à la Bourse or Stock Exchange, its painted exterior cannot fail to attract your attention.

In the style of Renaissance buildings, but here shown in trompe-l'oeil, medallions displaying the profiles of famous people are scattered across the façade. It is a real tribute to the great humanists associated with Sélestat that we see here.

We find Jacques Wimpheling, Martin Bucer, Beatus Rhenanus and Erasmus.

The oriel is also noteworthy, corresponding to the corbelled construction of the façade. This typically Renaissance feature had several advantages: it brought more light into the room concerned, and gave a view along the street without the window having to be opened.



### Did you know? A distinguished guest

Beatus Rhenanus was a major Sélestat figure in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century whose name still has resonance in Sélestat today; he left his collection of books to his native town in 1547. He was very close to Erasmus who visited him in Sélestat several times between 1515 and 1522. Erasmus was so delighted by the intellectual ferment in the town that he dedicated the poem "Eloge de Sélestat" to it. It can be seen at the Bibliothèque Humaniste, and a few lines from the poem are inscribed on the pavement of Place la Victoire, in front of Sainte-Barbe arsenal.



## Cour des Prélats

### Cour des Prélats

Do you remember the Hôtel d'Ebersmunster at stop 19? This time you are on its other side. The south façade of the building is distinguished by its turret housing a very fine spiral staircase, similar to the one in the Commanderie Saint-Jean - stop 1. On entering the hall, on either side of the door you will find two medallions – the profiles on them have been preserved, unlike those on the north doorway. They represent Romulus and Remus, the twin brothers who according to legend founded the city of Rome.

The other building present in the courtyard is the Maison du Pain. You will notice the glazed extension at the back, reflecting the church of Saint-Georges. The museum devoted to bread installed in the building since 2001 also comprises a bakehouse on the ground floor where a variety of baked goods are prepared throughout the day. This place was not chosen at random by the association responsible for the site since these are the former premises of the Bakers' Guild. On the upper floor is the Zunftstube, the room where the bakers used to meet.



### Did you know? Back to front

Until 1923 the Cour des Prélats was a courtyard enclosed by three houses (nos. 4, 5 and 6 of the Rue du Sel). These were demolished, so providing direct access to the Hôtel d'Ebersmunster from the Rue du Sel, and making the grand entrance on the north side redundant.





# Bibliothèqu Humaniste

## Bibliothèqu Humaniste

Located in the town's former Halle aux Blés (Corn Exchange) since 1889, the Bibliothèqu Humaniste houses very precious works including 460 manuscripts, 550 incunabula, and 6400 books printed between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Part of the Library's collection comes from the personal library of Beatus Rhenanus, an illustrious native of Sélestat who was a pupil and then a teacher at the Latin school from the late 15<sup>th</sup> to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Since May 2011 this collection has been listed on the UNESCO *Memory of the World* register.

On the mosaic on the façade, you will recognize two animals: an eagle and a lion. They are the two emblems of the town. While the official emblem is today the lion, the eagle replaced it throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The mosaic dates from 1907, which explains the German inscription Stadtbibliothek Museum.

After World War I an attempt was made to replace the inscription by one in French, as the old view below illustrates. But the lettering could never be successfully fixed on to the mosaic. In the end they settled for a French inscription in gilded metal letters above the main door.



### Did you know? Back to the cradle

*What does the word incunabula really refer to? It is a special term that is used for the very first books printed between 1450 (the probable date of the invention of printing with movable type) and 1 January 1501. After that date we talk of printed material. Etymologically incunabula meant swaddling clothes and by extension cradle, early childhood, or indeed beginning.*



# Discover Sélestat and its heritage all year round

## Heritage information plaques

Thirty plaques in three languages are installed beside Sélestat's heritage sites.

A heritage map available from the Tourist Office lists all the plaques.



## Scan heritage

The Tourist Office has set up QR codes giving access to further information about outstanding buildings: the Commanderie Saint-Jean, Tour Neuve, church of Saint-Georges, Lieutenance, Hôtel d'Ebersmunster, Bibliothèque Humaniste, church of Sainte-Foy, Sainte-Barbe arsenal, Protestant church and Tanners' district.



## The Rue des Chevaliers revealed

In 2009 around fifty plaques giving information about the heritage of one of the oldest streets in Sélestat were installed by the Action de Sélestat association with the support of the Fonds Martel Catala and the Sélestat municipality.



## Explore the Renaissance on foot

Itinerary with twenty-six stops in the historic centre.

Leaflet available from the Tourist Office.



## Geo Caches itinerary

The Tourist Office suggests discovering Sélestat in a novel way by taking part in a modern treasure hunt: Geocaching. You will need a pedestrian GPS device or a smartphone app.



## And more

Throughout the year, activities aimed at the general public and school students: workshops, guided visits

Find them in the annual *Saison Patrimoine* brochure.

You're interested in the architecture of the timber-frame houses? A leaflet is available from the Tourist Office.

*Sélestat contemporary art circuit*

Learn about public commissions and artworks in the town as well as exhibition venues. Brochure pending.





# Sélestat's footprint

Sale of arrows as collectors' items

Did you enjoy the tour? Sélestat Tourist Office is offering limited-edition polished bronze arrows for sale in boxes numbered 1 to 100.

Introductory price: 30 €



OFFICE DE TOURISME  
TOURIST INFORMATION  
Commanderie Saint-Jean  
Tél. + 33 (0)3 88 58 87 20

## Enquiries

Direction de la promotion  
culturelle et touristique  
Service valorisation  
et animation du patrimoine  
Tél. + 33 (0)3 88 58 07 31  
animation.patrimoine@ville-selestat.fr  
[www.selestat.fr](http://www.selestat.fr)

## Tourist information

Office de Tourisme  
Tél. + 33 (0)3 88 58 87 20  
accueil@selestat-tourisme.com  
[www.selestat-haut-koenigsbourg.com](http://www.selestat-haut-koenigsbourg.com)



**Sélestat**  
**Sightseeing**  
**walking tour**