

# ROUFFACH

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## A little bit of history

Rouffach was the capital of the Princes Bishops' possessions in the Upper Alsace, made up of the bailiwick of Rouffach, Soultz and Eguisheim, after a donation from the King Dagobert the Second. The powerful lords developed the town and built a double fortification around the city which was connected to the Isenbourg Castel.

The nobility, the ministers, the religious communities and the guilds of the craftsmen contributed to the growth of the city. The Renaissance was the golden age of Rouffach.

The rich architectural heritage shows the glory of the town. Many coats of arms or noble elements still decorate the houses, the oriels windows and the porches. Unfortunately, many have also been hammered during the Revolution.

From the Roman epoch, the most used material for the construction in Rouffach and the whole region (Colmar, Thann, Ensisheim...) is the yellow sandstone from the quarry from the Strangenberg, a few kilometres from Rouffach.

The houses in the old town of Rouffach are typical. The cellars are on the same level as the street in order to avoid the floods. The home was situated on the 1st floor.

In Rouffach, there are many "communities of yards", that is to say houses gathered around one shared yard. That was interesting to save some space into the area of the city. In the north part of the town, many green spaces were created.

By strolling through the streets of Rouffach, you will discover the old patrician residences with oriels windows and the wine growers' houses with porch, full of charm and very interesting.

The start for the historical path through the old town is situated on the place de la République. Then follow the numbers on the map.

# Path through the old town

1. **Corn exchange:** built in the 16th century, stairs from 1924. This building with gabled façade was used as a warehouse and trade centre for grain. From 1819 to 1960, it was used as a school for boys. On the first floor, historical museum showing the evolution of Rouffach and the life of the Marshal Lefebvre.
2. **Workshop house of Notre-Dame:** used as a workshop for the stonemasons who worked on the building site of the church. Between the arches, there is the little shield of the town dated from 1490. During the Inquisition, the courthouse judged the witches by asking them "the question".
3. **Presbytery:** the house is dated from 1778 and was the place where the cathedral's chapter of Strasbourg took its revenue. Nowadays, this house is the catholic presbytery.
4. **Former Town Hall:** the right wing was built in the 15th century and reworked in 1721. The left wing was built in 1581 by Franz Bauer, town master builder. It became a local school in the 19th century, then a farming school from which grew the present Lycée Agricole. Nowadays, the building is used for cultural activities.
5. **Witches Tower:** this tower is the last fortified tower of the town. The circular base is the oldest part from the 13th century. The squared 1st floor was built in the 14th and the 15th centuries. The tower was used as a jail for hundreds of years. During the Inquisition, the so called "witches" were imprisoned there that's why the tower is called "witches tower".
6. **Old typical farm:** typical farm from the 17th century. On the east gable, twin windows with decorations.
7. **Old Courtyard of the Abbey of Eschau** (near Strasbourg): old ogival fenestration walled up during modification work in the 17th century. Eschau had possessions in Rouffach since the 8th century.
8. **Old well:** this well, with shields on the lintel, comes from the property from the noble family Knechtlin / Kirtz (50 rue Poincaré) and is dated from 1578.
9. **Statue of Saint John of Nepomuk:** this statue from the bridges' patron and dated from 1796 recalls the former drawbridge situated at the same place called Froeschwillergate or Breisachgate.
10. **House of the "Three Ladies":** this house from the 16th century is called "Three Ladies", because of the oak pillars supporting the overhang. At the end of the street, there is a house with gothic elements and a butcher's shield. It was the house of the Beguine's confraternity with pious women who educated the young girls and took care of the sick.
11. **House with gallery:** this house, built in 1725, was a dyeing. It was situated along the river Ohmbach, which skirted round the old town, along the rue du Maréchal Lefebvre.
12. **Old Courtyard of the Princes Bishops of Strasbourg:** the coat of arms which decorated the porch from the 16th century has been hammered.
13. **Local slaughterhouse** (Metzig): it was built in 1544 and was used until the end of the Second World War.
14. **Synagogue:** situated at the nr 8 of the rue Ullin. Few elements from the 13th century. It remains the Jewish community who lived in Rouffach.

15. **Old house of the Schoenau nobility:** the building was modified during the 17th century. Gabled façade and walled up windows from the 14th century.
16. **Old house of the Rettig family:** one of its members was the mayor of the town during the 15th century, that's why the street is called rue Rettig. In 1573, it became the property of the Knechtlin family who built the present building.
17. **House of the "White Swan":** dated from 1666, shield with inscription in the rue de la Prévôté.
18. **Former tannery:** it was situated along the river Ohmbach since the 18th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, the pits were still used in front of the house.
19. **Public baths:** the river fed the public baths and was also used as washhouse.
20. **Headquarters of the guild "the Elephant":** an inscription from the year 1583 is engraved on the façade. The ensign on the lintel was hammered during the Revolution.
21. **Workshop:** this house was a booth. On the façade, there is a Latin inscription from 1362 which tells about the construction from an early house. The 1st floor overhanging was added in the 17th century.
22. **Holy Spirit Hospital:** the houses situated between the rue du Marché and the ruelle du Saint-Esprit were used as hospital. The Holy Spirit Hospital was founded in 1270 by Jacques de Rathsamhausen in order to treat the poverty-stricken and the children without family.
23. **Town hall:** it was built in 1831 at the same place as the "Neuhaus" in Renaissance style. The 1st floor was a meeting place and the ground floor was used as sales room. In front of it, the bust of the Marshall François-Joseph Lefebvre who was born in Rouffach (in the house on the right side of the town hall).
24. **Church "Our Lady":** romanesque-ogival style, which shows the evolution of the religious architecture from the 11th to the 19th century. Rouffach was the main town of the Princes Bishops' possessions in the Upper Alsace. The town had to own a remarkable church reflecting the power of its lords, so it was built like the cathedral of Strasbourg. The material used for the construction is the yellow sandstone from the Strangenberg, which reflects the light. Two towers (North one from 1875, South one not finished) extend the nave. Portal with sculptures hammered during the Revolution. The octagonal spire (former bell tower) stands on the transept; it's called "the finger of the city". Beautiful rose window like one of the roses from the Our Lady cathedral of Paris. Inside the church, fine altar of the Virgin Mary from the 15th century. Polygonal choir from the 13th century. Stained-glass windows from the 19th century. Fine sculptures at the door of the old sacristy: Pascal Lamb and the "Smile of Rouffach" (young boy and young girl).
25. **Former Episcopal barn for the tithe:** across the street, between the buttresses of the church's choir: counterweight from the wine press.
26. **Old Latin School:** it was reorganized in 1521 by the Bishop Jean de Honstein.
27. **Goldsmith Street (rue des Orfèvres):** so called because of the goldsmith's shops which were situated in this street. At the end of the street, remarkable house of the Eschau's Courtyard with ogival porch from the 15th century. On the right, old typical farm with a large porch and stone porch roofs over the windows.

# Path through the old town

