

The Pegnitz walk



Dear Visitors

„Grüß Gott“, (the typical Frankonian greeting) and a warm welcome to our town. We hope you will enjoy the following “Walk” during your stay here in Pegnitz.

This officially approved holiday resort is the eastern gate to the “Fränkische Schweiz”. This attractive town, surrounded by beautiful rolling hills, has a population of about 15,000 inhabitants.

A brief history

Pegnitz originates from two settlements: A village on the “Begenze”, first documented in 1119 which was also called the “Altenstadt”, and the actual town of Pegnitz which was built here by the Earls of Leuchtenberg between 1347 and 1357. They chose to build here because of its good defensible position. It was officially declared a town in 1355, but the two settlements were only united about 100 years ago. From 1357 Pegnitz belonged to the kingdom of Böhmen. We are reminded of this fact by the “Böheimstein” castle which stood on the 544 metre high “Schloßberg” (castle hill). It was destroyed in 1553 by the city of Nuremberg. In 1402 Wenzel, the son of the Kaiser Karl IV, forfeited Pegnitz to Johann III one of the Hohenzollern counts of Nuremberg. As the Böhmisches crown was unable to recover Pegnitz, the town remained in the possession of the Hohenzollern. In 1792 Pegnitz became Prussian and 18 years later Bavarian. At this time, Pegnitz had a population of less than 1000 inhabitants who earned a modest existence from the poor Jurassic land surrounding the town. It was the opening of the railway line between Nuremberg and Bayreuth that had a positive effect on the local economy. Pegnitz has not only kept its significance as an industrial centre, it is still expanding.

Our circular tour of Pegnitz, which was first documented about 875 years ago, begins in front of the town hall. It stands in the middle of the elongated market place which is typical of the towns in the neighbouring “Oberpfalz”.

The town hall was built in 1347. In 1504 it was destroyed in the “Landshuter Erbfolgekrieg” and rebuilt in 1540. During the Thirty Years` War it went to ruin, but was renewed in 1708. In 1867 the interior was

refurbished. Later in 1929 the building was renovated and the timber-framing exposed. In earlier days the old town hall served many purposes. It was used as a market hall where bread and meat products were sold, as a much used dance floor and it served the purpose of a prison, the so-called "Narrenhäuslein" (madhouse). Fire fighting equipment was also stored here at one time. It became the post office and later the Sparkasse made use of it. Today it is the registration and passport office and conference hall. Registry office marriages also take place here.

The red eagle of the Brandenburgs and the half black/half white rectangle of the Hohenzollern on the town coat of arms which you can see in the east wall, indicates its earlier possession by these noblemen. The golden fish over the silver waves symbolises the fishing which once took place here in Pegnitz.

On the West side of the town hall, you can see the "coat of arms stone" bearing the date 1544. The explanation for this is as follows: The so called new town, where you are now standing, was protected by two gates, in the West the Nuremberg gate and in the East the Bayreuth gate. However, for the tradesmen and merchants these gates were too narrow and they laid the blame for the incurred damage on the "town fathers". As a result it was decided that the gates should be pulled down. The "coat of arms stone" was taken from the Bayreuth gate and built into the west gable of the town hall. Before you go on, take a quick look across the market place. On the left hand side you can see the "Weißes Lamm" (1674), the oldest inn in Pegnitz.

Now leave the market place on the right, opposite the town hall. Go down the cobbled lane next to the "Ratsstube". In the narrow alley on your left you can admire the fine gabled houses. Continue down the hill until you reach the "Rosengasse". Turn right in the direction of the "Bartholomäuskirche" and walk along to the houses numbered 29 and 31. Carry on down the narrow passage between these two houses.

After crossing a small street called "Stadtgraben" you come to a small bridge over the Pegnitz. On the other side the walk continues to the right, along the bank of the stream, through the avenue of birches. At the school bus stop turn right again and walk towards the school itself.

Before crossing back over the Pegnitz, look over to your left and you will see a small church. The foundation stone of this Catholic church was laid in 1926. It was the first Catholic church to be built in Pegnitz after the

Reformation. A year later it was consecrated and given the name "Maria". At first the church did not have any significant decoration. Then in 1939 three alters, a pulpit and a station of the cross, were brought here from an abandoned church in Dornbach (near Grafenwöhr/Opf.). The high altar, a four columned wooden construction, originates from the Auerbach sculptor, Johann Michael Doser (1678-1756).

Now walk past the school. From here you have a good view of the "Bartholomäuskirche" from its most impressive angle. You can see the chancel, belfry and a tower. This is the third church to stand on this site. The earliest was consecrated on St. Bartholomew's Day in 1533. It is said to be the first protestant church building to be erected in the "Fränkische Schweiz" after the Reformation.

After only 150 years it was in such a dilapidated state, that it had to be demolished and was replaced in 1688 by a new Baroque church. In the existing church, which was consecrated in 1900, we can still see remnants of these earlier buildings. The altar and the chancel originate from the old church. To the rear of the altar there is an inscription telling us that it was made by the Conrad Schleunig in 1696. The master craftsman came from a small village called Alsfeld not far from Marburg.

Now walk past the Bartholomäus church and a short distance up the main street. Before arriving back at the town hall, turn left into the "Brauhausgasse". Both the "Brauhausgasse" and the "Rosengasse" run parallel to the main street which indicates that the town was planned and did not develop randomly.

Leave the "Brauhausgasse" by the first footpath on the left. Cross the small bridge over the Fichtenöhe. This stream flows into the Pegnitz not far from here. Over the bridge, at the end of the gardens, turn left and follow the row of houses (Erlenweg). At the pedestrian lights, cross the "Bayreuther Straße".

To your left, there is a very fine half-timbered building, the former "Zaußenmühle". Today it is an inn. Its name comes from the first owner Hans Zauß, who built the mill in about 1450. After the Thirty Years' War it remained a ruin for many years until Hans Dennerlein rebuilt it in 1710. The last owner was the tanner, Johann Jakob Wagner. Shortly before his death he donated the mill to the town. It was renovated in 1976, then let to a publican. Later the mill wheel which still turns next to the house was replaced.

Behind the mill you can see the source of the Pegnitz. This is a typical karst spring which up till the turn of the century still produced sufficient water to operate the mill. After a short rest here, continue walking to the right of the spring, up a short path to the lane above. Turn right, and then at the end of the lane go left into the road "Am Brunnberg" which leads you up the hill.

In "Ernst-Böhm-Weg" you come to a car park. Here there are five steps leading to a path, which takes you part of the way around the "Schloßberg". On arriving at a wooden barrier, follow the signpost up the rest of the hill to the "Aussichtsturm" (the observation tower).

The "Burg Böheimstein" (castle) stood here on top of the hill until it was destroyed by the armies of Nuremberg nobility in 1553. The only remaining sign of the castle is the moat which describes a wide arc around the tower. It is worth climbing the 97 steps to the top of the observation tower to enjoy the splendid view of the surrounding area.

On the way back towards the town, take the path that is about 30 metres away from the foot of the tower. This path, running along the mound of the former moat, circuits the tower. Then, when you recross the path, take the wider path on the other side. This leads down the hill along the slope until, after walking about 300 metres, you reach the "Festwiese" (festival ground). In summer several different events take place here, for example "Gregori", a children's festival. And, on fine summer days, a "Biergarten" could tempt you to stop for a glass of beer or a snack.

From the "Biergarten" continue further down the hill past the war memorial. As you descend you can see the old town gradually appearing between the leaves of the trees. Soon you will have a clear view over Pegnitz. From here you can easily recognise how the town, consisting of two rows of houses left and right of the market place and encircled by the "Rosengasse" and the "Brauhausgasse", developed within the arc formed by the Pegnitz and the Fichtenohe.

At the bottom of the steps you arrive at a set of traffic lights on the "Bayreuther Straße" and the end of the walk. We hope you will visit one of the local pubs or restaurants for some light refreshment before leaving.

Enjoy your stay in Pegnitz and have a pleasant holiday!!

The Tourist Information Office, Pegnitz.