

## THE HISTORIC CENTER OF KREMS: (NR on the city map)

The landmark of our town is the **STEINER TOR (TOWN GATE) NR. 1**, a clock tower flanked by twin towers, an entrance gate as well as a starting point for guided tours and walks through the historic centre of Krems. The only one left of the original four town gates, it was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and remodelled in the Baroque style in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was part of the powerful medieval fortifications which can still be seen in the Schwedengasse, a street leading south from the Steiner Tor. On the exterior of the gate coats of arms and inscriptions bear witness to the well-fortified defensive system; on the inside a marble plaque commemorates a huge build-up of ice on the Danube which endangered the town in 1573.

At the start of the modern pedestrian zone in the west of the town we look back to the Steiner Tor with its double arcade. Next to it you find a shopping centre which houses the tourist information centre. Heading north from the town gate the narrow **Schmidgasse** runs along the former town wall; the house **SCHMIDGASSE 3 NR. 2** was magnificently decorated by the Italian master builder Cypriano Biasino, who also built the Baroque parish church. Where Schmidgasse opens onto the **Körnermarkt (Corn Market)**, the **House of the Four Seasons at KÖRNERMARKT 4 NR. 3** is a particularly beautiful example of the late Baroque. It is painted pink and its name is derived from four figures symbolizing the four seasons: its main doorway already shows strong Rococo influence. On the corner of that house there is a statue of St. Nepomuk. A few houses further on, at **Körnermarkt no. 8** on the opposite side, you find some remarkable stuccowork on the former sexton's house, as well as a high relief of St. John of Nepomuk, the patron saint of water and bridges, who is believed to guide and protect travellers and who was very popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The centre of the Körnermarkt is dominated by the Baroque **St. Mary's column** which is dedicated to the Virgin Mary and dates back to 1685. Immediately opposite is the **DOMINICAN CHURCH NR. 4** with its adjoining **monastery** which was built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century outside the town walls, and was, therefore, frequently taken by enemies. It is worth mentioning that the Dominicans considered high steeples to be a sign of pride and arrogance and therefore preferred to put turrets on top of their churches. After the dissolution of the Order the church was alternately used as a theatre, cinema and fire station in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Since then the building has

been carefully restored and the former monastery now houses the **Museum Krems (Town Museum)** with its impressive collections and special exhibitions.

Walking east towards the square next to the church, the Pfarrplatz, you pass the house of the former financial administrator in Schlüsselamtsgasse. "Schlüsselamt" was the administrative office responsible for collecting taxes.

The **Pfarrplatz**, the square next to the church, is the centre of Krems and is still used as a market square. It is dominated by the mighty **PARISH CHURCH OF ST. VEIT NR. 2**, in 2011 renamed the "**Dom der Wachau**". What you see of the church today dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the most prominent artisans of the country created the imposing interior, especially the frescoes on the ceiling by Martin Johann Schmidt, called "Kremser Schmidt". The altar-piece, painted by Johann Georg Schmidt, a namesake of the "Kremser Schmid", depicts the martyrdom of the church patron saint, St. Vitus.

Opposite the parish church, the **Rathaus (Town Hall)** with its plain Renaissance façade and its impressive hall with many columns dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is situated on the southern side of the Pfarrplatz. Behind the church, where Margaretenstraße branches off in a north-easterly direction and leads uphill to the Hoher Markt, you pass the **BIG SGRAFFITO HOUSE NR. 6**, an important late medieval building decorated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the S2graffito technique, a technique where a top layer of colour is scratched to reveal a colour beneath. A wealthy merchant of Krems had the façade elaborately designed, and there are still discernible pictures of biblical and secular scenes from Renaissance times.

Behind the parish church a covered staircase leads up to the towering Piarist Church. At its lower end, the house **Pfarrplatz no. 9, Sängershof**, is a remarkable late medieval building with a stepped gable and the massive chimney of the former kitchen. It is worthwhile strolling through the archway into the courtyard which boasts a charming mixture of architectural styles.

At the upper end of the staircase, the Piaristenstiege, you enter the richly decorated Gothic south main doorway of the **PIARIST CHURCH NR. 7**. Its present shape dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and is obviously the work of the Viennese Cathedral Builders'

Guild. The high altar as well as two side-altars were erected as late as 1759 with their altar pieces painted by “Kremser Schmidt”. The steeple is on the west front of the church and is another landmark of Krems, while the monastic buildings stretch eastwards from Piarist Church and are nowadays used as a school.

At the end of Piaristengasse you face another convent which houses the “Mary Ward School” and is situated on the **Hoher Markt**, the upper market square. From here you reach the oldest part of the town. After a short walk up Wachtertorgasse you turn right into Pulverturm-gasse, where the **PULVERTURM (GUN POWDER TOWER) NR. 8** rises. In front of the Pulverturm, in a small grassy area, you can see a torso on a pillar, the “**Mandl ohne Kopf**” (the man without a head). According to legend, he was a Swedish officer, who, during the Swedish occupation in the Thirty Years’ War, had shot at the image of the Holy Virgin, and was turned into stone as a result.

The view from the Pulverturm, where parts of the town wall are still preserved, reveals the importance of the fortifications. The “Urbs Chremisia”, as it was named for the first time in 995, is situated high above the river of the same name (River Krems). From there you can overlook the residential area of the new town and the industrial zone adjoining a plain called Tullnerfeld.

In the centre of the upper market square, **Hoher Markt**, you will find the **HERCULES FOUNTAIN NR. 8** erected in 1632. The highlight at the southern end of this square is definitely the **GOZZOBURG NR. 10**, a former town castle which was remodelled by the merchant Gozzo into an imposing mansion and administrative building in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In later years its appearance was altered several times. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century further alterations were made: the addition of arcades on the front of the building and an assembly hall above, formed a structure similar to the “palazzo publico” in central and upper Italy as the seat of administration. Recent restoration work, including an additional glass construction at the entrance, was finished in 2007.

At the end of Wegscheid, a street that leads downhill to **Landstraße**, you come across **SIMANDLBRUNNEN (LITTLE SIMON’S WELL) NR. 11**, the symbol of a former brotherhood. “Simandl” is the local variation of the henpecked husband and

legend says that the wives of Krems exercised an overwhelming power over their husbands.

**Untere Landstraße (Lower Landstraße)** leads to the east and contains historic houses with magnificent facades and bay windows from the Renaissance period. The pharmacy "**Wienertorapotheke**" used to be an inn which can be identified as such by a fresco on its façade showing a trooper inviting the townsfolk to drink wine with him. On the opposite side we can admire the second most outstanding and prominent **Sgraffito House** of Krems.

The end of Landstraße is marked by the **Wienerbrücke (Viennese Bridge)**, which spans the river Krems and leads to a roundabout with a night watchman made of bronze, a symbol of the twin town of Grapevine in the USA.

Walking back towards the centre along Untere Landstraße, which is a pedestrian zone nowadays, we reach **Mohrenapotheke (The Moor's Pharmacy)** and the **Täglicher Markt (Daily Market)**. Long ago it used to be a market square with a fountain, an important centre of communication in the trading town. The impressive frescoes and coats of arms on the magnificent façade of a merchant's house from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century illustrate what happened in the square in the past. A key feature of the building is to be seen above the entrance door: the projecting Gothic chapel with its turrets.

Turning south you reach another square: **Dreifaltigkeitsplatz (Holy Trinity Square)** is dominated by the **DREIFALTIGKEITSSÄULE (HOLY TRINITY COLUMN) NR. 12** which dates back to 1713.

Walking westwards from the Daily Market, Untere Landstraße turns into **Obere Landstraße (Upper Landstraße)**. The house Obere Landstraße no 4 is the beginning of the long southern façade of the **RATHAUS (TOWN HALL). NR. 13** Its Baroque façade already shows strong Classicist influences and only the splendid bay window at the corner towards Kirchengasse, an architectural gem, reminds us of the former Renaissance building.

Right opposite the Town Hall is the former **Bürgerspital (almshouse)** with a Gothic church. Above its door the inscription A.E.I.O.U. denotes Emperor Frederick's motto "Austriae Est Imperare Orbi Universo". On the way back to the **Steiner Tor** we pass several gorgeous facades and impressive inner courtyards. In days long ago numerous inns lined the street such as the last house on the right, the former inn "The Golden Goose".

600 years ago the area outside the town gate Steiner Tor was open countryside, often endangered by floods. After the river regulation the town walls were demolished thus linking Krems and Stein; today strong embankments protect the two historic centres.

## Kunstmeile (Art Mile) and the historic town center of Stein

Walking westwards past the **Stadtspark (Town Park)** and along **Schillerstraße** you arrive at the recently restored **KLOSTER UND (UND MONASTERY) NR. 14**, which is proud of its 400 year old history. The original building was destroyed by a disastrous fire in 1656 and was rebuilt in the Baroque style with beautiful frescoes by Daniel Gran. In its colourful history it served different functions: as a monastery, a military hospital and a residential building.

If you continue along this road for a few more minutes, it will lead you under a railway bridge and past the prison until you finally reach the heart of the **Kunstmeile** with the **Art Gallery** on your right and the **Caricature Museum** on your left. Adolf Krischanitz built the **Kunsthalle (Art Gallery)** by carefully incorporating it into a former industrial building which was part of the Stein tobacco factory. Gustav Peichl designed the Caricature Museum.

The newly constructed campus of the **Danube University Krems** is situated to the north in another former tobacco factory from where you can see the dock for ships on the Danube.

A walk through the historic centre of Stein starts at the **KREMSE TOR (KREMS GATE) NR. 15** and leads along Landstraße as far as the **Linzer Tor (Linz Gate)**. The first building of note is the **GÖTTWEIGERHOF NR. 16**, the former economic hub of the Benedictine monastery of Göttweig on the other side of the Danube. In the chapel you can admire well-preserved murals dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but you will need to book in advance for a guided tour. Walking further on along Landstrasse you pass galleries and cultural places which are well worth visiting.

The former **MINORITENKIRCHE (MINORITES' CHURCH) NR. 17** on **Minoritenplatz** was consecrated in 1264 and has similar elements in style to the Dominican Church in Krems. Today, due to the church's excellent acoustics, wonderful concerts, organized by the Lower Austrian festival organization, are performed there.

At the southern end of the Minoritenplatz there are two former salt depots, the **SALZSTADL NR. 18**, dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They remind us of Stein's role as an important trading centre in the late Middle Ages.

The **Ludwig-von-Köchel-Square** is the first of three squares on the Steiner Landstraße facing the Danube. The way to the second square leads past **SAINT NICHOLAS CHURCH NR. 19**, the parish church of Stein. It contains one of the main works by "Kremser Schmidt" from 1750. Behind the church steep, narrow steps lead up to the deconsecrated **FRAUENBERGKIRCHE NR. 20**, which is dedicated to the soldiers killed during both world wars. The view of these two strikingly dissimilar church steeples are landmarks of Stein visible from a great distance.

The **STEINER RATHAUS (TOWN HALL) NR. 21**, which dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, dominates the square of the same name. In the centre of the square stands the richly decorated Nepomuksäule (St. John of Nepomuk Column) erected in 1715.

On the way to **Schürerplatz**, the third of the squares, we pass first the small and then the large **PASSAUERHOF NR. 22**, first mentioned in 1263. They were part of one of the 50 estates with vineyards owned by out-of-town monasteries that were wealthy landowners in the Wachau. During the restoration of the **MAUTHAUS (TOLL**

**HOUSE) NR. 23** many impressive Renaissance frescoes were uncovered. The façade shows that throughout its colourful history, many a mercenary spent some time in a pub there.

The **MAZZETTIHAUS NR. 24**, named after a Mayor of Stein, is a small Baroque mansion. For a while it used to be the home of the parents of Ludwig Köchel, who researched Mozart's life and works. That is the reason why, to this day, an inscription on the wall of the house mistakenly describes it as Köchel's birthplace. A little further on, Landstraße leads past impressive townhouses owned by the wealthy citizens of the town, with much admired facades, notable among them the façade of the gallery Göttlicher.

Approaching the end of our walk through Stein we pass the house of "Kremser Schmidt" and go through the gate **LINZERTOR NR. 25** to **Förthof** and the Wachau. To your left you can see the bridge across the Danube to Mautern, a former Roman settlement.

The way back leads us along the **Donaulände** which is now protected by mobile barriers in case of a flood. In days gone by the town wall, which is still discernible in the remnants of the old watch tower, protected the town centre from ice floes and floods. On the site of the former town walls, you nowadays find many impressive buildings such as the newly renovated **House of European Regions** which was reopened in 2004 as the centre of Lower Austrian folk culture. Not surprisingly, archaeologists have discovered parts of the old town walls inside some of the buildings.

Our way continues past the salt warehouses, where the ships used to dock before the Danube was confined within artificial banks, to the newly built "**Gate of the Wachau**" with the landing stage for river traffic, the landing pier and a nice restaurant.