



HISTORY

things worth knowing about the history
of the Olympiaregion Seefeld

Seefeld

A VILLAGE FOR ANY AGE

The high plateau of Seefeld has been inhabited since prehistoric times, but it only gained historic importance during Roman times, when a military road was built over the mountain pass. This was the shortest possible north-south link between the Po valley and Augusta Vindelicorum (Augsburg), Rhaetia's capital.

In later times, the Germanic tribes used the alpine road on their move southwards and the richly forested area came under the control of the Bavarian nobles. The whole area became known as the Scharnitzwald when a monastery was founded in Scharnitz. However, the settlement Seefeld 'Sevelt' is only mentioned in 1022 in a document of the Wilten Monastery in connection with a chapel erected on the lake shore, and the fortress Schlossberg on the northern slope of the high plateau. As legend has it, the mountains around Seefeld were inhabited by a monster, a rural giant named Thyrusus, who fought against the armoured and sword-wielding giant Haymon with a wooden club, lost the fight, and fled heavily wounded high into the mountains where he bled to death. While he was dying, he is said to have shouted: "Leave me, innocent blood, and do good to man and beast!" The last words of the giant from Seefeld are of mineralogical importance, as a rich deposit of bituminous material was discovered in the shale, which is still mined and distilled today. It was originally sold as 'Türschenblood' or 'Stinkoil' and is still used in a medical ointment under the name of 'Ichthyol'. The production of the remedy was first documented in 1350.

Duke Sigmund der Münzreiche (Rich-in-Coin), who ruled over the region from 1446 to 1490, particularly liked Seefeld. He gave instructions that the toll collected at the southern end of the village should no longer be paid to the regional government, but to the parish of Seefeld. He also built a lake behind today's Seekriehl to be used as a fish nursery. Emperor Maximilian I also favoured Seefeld, as he had his best hunting in the Karwendel Mountains.

Seefeld gained importance as a place of pilgrimage and as a transit region for all types of traders. The number of loaded carts travelling daily over the pass reached its highest (70 loads) in 1487,



when, due to a disagreement between the Prince and the Venetians, the annual Bozen Market was transferred to Mittenwald for several years. For many years however, the economic development of Seefeld was entirely dependent on pilgrimage. Even though the village was spared the devastations of the Thirty Year War (1618 – 1648), the number of pilgrims decreased substantially and commercial traffic across the Seefeld Pass declined noticeably when the large Mittenwald Market was transferred back to Bozen. The place of pilgrimage was particularly hard hit in 1775, when Emperor Josef II issued a decree abolishing nearly all Austrian monasteries. The monks had to depart, leaving behind all the furnishings and treasures, which were subsequently cheaply sold off. After the peace of Pressburg, Tyrol was incorporated into the Kingdom of Bavaria. In 1808, the State of Bavaria put the monastery up for sale and it was acquired privately. Today, it is known as the Hotel ‚Klosterbräu‘. The war-year 1809 was particularly distressing for Tyrol, and Seefeld became a transit area for the Bavarians and the French who torched the village, and 16 houses as well as the vicarage and the post office were destroyed.

The Seefeld Pass lost importance when the Brenner and Arlberg Railways were built.

Since the 1920s, the development of Seefeld has been completely dominated by tourism, which has converted the old Tyrolean village on the sunny high plateau into a relaxing resort and a well-known location for summer and winter sports.

This development was especially enhanced by its very convenient geographical location: Seefeld is located between the motorways Innsbruck – Telfs and Munich – Garmisch and can be easily reached from both the north and the south. Both access routes are open throughout the winter and are not endangered by mudslides or avalanches.

The construction of the Karwendel Railway in 1912 resulted in a noticeable economic upturn (fast railway connection between Innsbruck and Reutte). Since the beginning of the 1950s, the tourist infrastructure has gradually increased and in 1970, more than 1 million over-night stays were recorded for the first time.

The Olympia Region has already twice hosted the Olympic Games for Cross Country Skiing and the Nordic Combination. 1964, was the first time that the Games were opened in Innsbruck with the Olympic Flame. However, this was not the only first for Innsbruck/Seefeld, it was also the first time ever that the Olympic Flame had been lit. Today it is a fixed feature of every opening ceremony. In 1976, the Olympic Games were again held in Innsbruck/Seefeld and they attracted thousands of enthusiastic fans into the region. Nobody could escape the excitement for the Olympics when the former Austrian President Rudolf Kirschschräger opened the Games, and the cross country and Nordic Combination participants glided towards potential victory.





However, also the regional hosts did their utmost to make the days of the Olympic Games an unforgettable event and to contribute towards writing history. They prepared special Olympic offers and cooked delicious menus, as if they too were going for gold in their discipline. And they continue to do so today ...

The Olympia Region has already twice hosted the Olympic Games for Cross Country Skiing and the Nordic Combination. In 1985, Seefeld held the Nordic World Championships and was again able to offer unbeatable conditions, a splendid countryside, and perfect hosts.

Memories of that time still linger on and give rise to one or another anecdote told at the Après Ski. Since 2004, the region has continued its internationally recognized success by hosting the World Cup Nordic Combined event for the 7th time in January 2010.

The Nordic World Championships in the Nordic Ski disciplines (cross-country skiing, ski jumping, and Nordic Combination) are held every odd-numbered year and are organised by the International Ski Federation, FIS.

THE SEEKIRCHL (LITTLE CHURCH BY THE LAKE)

In 1629, Archduke Leopold V started the construction of Seefeld's landmark, the Seekirchl, also called the Church of the Holy Cross, which was completed in 1666. At that time, it stood in the middle of the so-called Cross Lake, created in the 15th century by Count Sigmund dem Münzreichen, but later drained in 1808.

The little church is of a style rarely seen in Tyrol, an octagonal baroque central building with a dome. It was built by the famous court master builder Christoph Gump of Innsbruck. The main altar cross from the late gothic period and the frescos highlight the importance in earlier centuries of Seefeld's 2nd pilgrimage church. During the summer (usually between Whitsun and the end of September), a protestant mass is read on Sundays at 11 a.m. in the Seekirchl.

ST. OSWALD PARISH CHURCH

This pilgrimage church consecrated to St. Oswald stands in the centre of Seefeld. It is first documented in 1263 and became one of Tyrol's most famous pilgrimage churches after the so-called 'Miracle of the Altar Bread' in 1384.

According to the legend, during a mass, Oswald Milser, from the border fortress Schlossberg, asked for a larger altar bread than that of the common people. When he received it, the bread turned blood red, and both the stone on which he knelt and the altar stone, which he tried to hold on to, sank into the ground. The imprint of his hand can still be seen today. This event led to a large influx of pilgrims, which caused Duke Friedrich mit der leeren Tasche (Friedrich with the empty pocket) to enlarge the church in 1425. It was completed by Sigmund dem Münzreichen (Siegmond Rich-in-Coin) in 1474.

St. Oswald counts amongst Tyrol's most beautiful churches of the late gothic period: The impressive tympanum relief along the main portal tells the story of the 'Miracle of the Altar Bread'; the three-aisled interior contains precious artwork, such as frescos dating from the 15th century; the pulpit with flat-carvings from 1524; valuable shrine statues; a gothic font, and a famous panel from dating 1502 painted by Jörg Köderer.

Emperor Charles IV adapted the renaissance interior of the 'Blood Chapel', the part of the Parish Church in which the 'Miracle Altar Bread' was kept, to the baroque style by adding stuccowork and a ceiling fresco by Puellacher.

THE SEEFELDER WALDFRIEDHOF (GRAVEYARD IN THE FOREST)

The graveyard was created in 1947 as the last resting place of 63 Jewish concentration camp prisoners who were shot or died from exhaustion or starvation in the Seefeld area while being transported from a concentration camp at the end of the Second World War. A commemorative stone located in the upper left section of the graveyard was erected in remembrance of them and of the soldiers who died in the field hospitals of Seefeld and afterwards buried here. Later on, the graveyard was converted into the common graveyard of Seefeld where several famous people such as the writer Julius Kiener and the poetess Lilly von Sauter are buried.



Leutasch MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD

Leutasch is one of the few communities where no remains of the centuries-long occupation by the Romans can be found, i. e. no Roman coins, no shards, and Roman roads of questionable origin. Two thousand years ago, the Leutasch was still an untouched valley where occasionally a hunter might go after prey.

In 1178, 800 years ago, Bernhard von Hausen, a Bavarian noble, made a generous donation for his parents' and his own spiritual welfare: he gave part of the forest through which the river named 'Luitaske' runs to the Augustinian monastery of Polling near Weilheim (literal translation of the Latin text). Towards the end of the 12th century, the woods were actively being cleared.

Despite the intensive clearing, everybody visiting the valley today can see that it was done with true respect for nature and the environment and without disturbing or destroying the countryside. The people living along the river in the Wetterstein Mountains are truly tied to the soil. This becomes clear simply by looking in the Leutasch telephone directory. You can find the same last names that are mentioned in records from the 13th and 14th century.

Statistical calculations show that approx. 240 people inhabited the Leutasch at that time. From then on, the number of inhabitants steadily increased. In 1775, there were about 800, an official count in 1826 stood at 945, 100 years ago the number was 986, 50 years ago 1020, and in 1981, 1672 people were counted. The census of 1991 recorded 1702 people and that of 2001, 1995 inhabitants.

Bernhard von Hausen's donation was eventually split into 12 farms. At around 1300/1350, each farmer paid tribute of one calf per year to the Polling Monastery. The monastery of Wilten acquired rights and possessions in Leutasch, around the same time as Polling, which in 1305 came to nine farms, and in later times, the local prince, as well as the Stams Monastery, also became landlords in the area.



The Polling Monastery was dissolved in 1803 and its rights were transferred to the State Government. During the agricultural reform of 1849, the institution of seignory was abolished completely.



How did the people of Leutasch survive? Only three or four decades ago, you would have received the answer: from our pastures and our forests. When hearing the word 'pasture' one immediately thinks of the Leutasch Golden Oats, which has been cultivated since 1929. On hearing 'forests' the saying comes to mind: 'The Leutasch is the wood source of Innsbruck and Hall'. However, to talk only about the rich forests of Leutasch without mentioning the historical abundance of game would omit one of the most important resources.

The importance of hunting can best be understood from the names of renowned hunters or game tenants, such as the Duke of Altenburg, Prince Fürstenberg, Baron von Neurath, and, of course, Ludwig Ganghofer. They, and above all Ganghofer with his novels, made the Leutasch and the Gaistal internationally renowned, one could almost say that they were the initiators of the tourist industry. Towards the end of the 19th century, alpinism (mountain climbing and walking) also started developing in the region.

The breathtaking beauty of the valley, its mountains with numerous walking routes and the warm welcome by the inhabitants of the Leutasch attracted visitors more than 100 years ago and drew them back to spend more time here.

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MAGDALENA IN OBERLEUTASCH

Leutasch is first mentioned in historic records in the 12th century. In this period, the Noble Lords of Weilheim owned large tracts of land in the Oberleutasch, whereas in the Unterleutasch the Barons of Werdenfels exercised sovereign rights. In 1178, Bernhard von Weilheim donated part of his forests and pastures in the Oberleutasch to the Augustine Monastery Polling near Weilheim. In 1190, the monastery built a church in the centre of the valley consecrated to St. Magdalena, which was first enlarged in 1500 and then again in 1725.

The building that we see today was raised in 1820/21. Construction was supervised by the curate, Franz Sieß, who was responsible for the parish from 1810 to 1836, built according to plans of the sculptor and artist, Josef Falbesoner of Nassereith, and was consecrated in 1831 by the Prince-Bishop Galura of Brixen. The impressive, classical high altar originally came from the Monastery of Bendiktbeuren in Bavaria, which was dissolved in 1803. The colourful, elaborate paintings on the ceiling and the painting behind high altar are the work of Leopold Puellacher (1776 – 1842). The massive structure is hardly segmented and its roof slightly curved. The tower from the earlier building was retained, and the oldest bell within bears the year 1482.

The interior of the classical nave is separated into richly ornamented full barrel vaults without lunettes (saddle vault). The walls of the nave are segmented by flat Tuscan pilasters and by circular timberwork. Behind the inset triumphal arch lies the presbytery with the high altar, originally baroque, adapted to the church's style in 1821. Daylight only enters the church from tall south-facing windows and two other windows set into the diagonal walls of the chancel.

The parish priest, Karl Kneisl, had the interior and exterior of the church restored in 1971.





THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. JOHANNES THE BAPTIST IN UNTERLEUTASCH

In contrast to Oberleutasch, no church existed in Unterleutasch prior to the 19th century. The inhabitants of Unterleutasch frequented the parish of Mittenwald to which, from the church's point of view, they had always belonged.

It was only in 1803, that by high decree of Emperor Franz II, permission was given to build a church. However, due to the war of 1805 and the subsequent subjugation to Bavaria, the building plans could not be carried out.

Only in mid 1827 did the court chancellery issue a new decree allowing the church's construction, with building finally commencing at the end of the same year. Under the supervision of the Mayor and Director of Construction, Matthias Reindl, and the Highway Surveyor, Johann von Klebelsberg, who most likely also drew up the plans, Josef Waldhart of Imst built the church and the vicarage, completing it in 1829.

He built a simple nave with an inset directly adjoining the choir. Both sections of the building have hipped roofs with a tower rising from the western part. In 1955, a porch was added from which one steps into the interior through a circular area, the former baptistery, and the organ loft within the first bay. This is followed by a square nave with a flat bohemian vault, illuminated by a semi-circular window. The west-facing arch leads to a barrel-vaulted, rectangular choir loft.

Unterleutasch, which then consisted of only 18 households, mostly depended on donations for the furnishing of the interior of the church. An altar, donated by Reutte, and a tabernacle presented by Oberperffuss could not be accepted for the newly built church, and therefore a new altar to go with the existing altar leaf was ordered from Franz Xaver Renn of Imst through the mediation of Franz Seiss, the curate of Oberleutasch. The altar leaf in metallic and rather harsh colours depicts a sermon given by St. John the Baptist and is a work from the late 18th century by Josef Leibherr, who was born in Imst.

In 1978, the parish priest, Karl Kneisl, initiated a full restoration of the church. The nazarene 'embellishments', which Johann Kärle donated to the two churches when they were raised to the status of parishes in 1891, were removed and the original state was restored. In 1307, the abbot of

Stams Monastery confirmed in a document that still exists in the archives, that Otto the Karlinger had donated In 1307, the abbot of Stams Monastery confirmed in a document that still exists in the archives, that Otto the Karlinger had donated his Schwaighof (a farm, now the smithy) in Mösern to the monastery, so that “bread and cheese might be distributed to the poor”. In the middle ages, ‘Schwaighöfe’ were the preferred way of establishing permanent settlements in high-lying areas.

Since, for climatic reasons, the cultivation of wheat was impossible, the settlers depended on animal husbandry and were obliged to offer the landlord a certain number of calves and small cheeses as a yearly tribute. Where Mösern was concerned, being the only ‘Schwaighof’ in this area, the tithe amounted to 300 rounds of cheese, each weighing between one and two pounds. The paths connecting Telfs with the Leutasch via Buchen, and from Mösern to Seefeld have existed for a very long time. For hundreds of years all freight had to be brought along the cart track from Telfs to Scharnitz until, in the 1930’s, a road was built which was suitable for cars.

The Möserer Lake, situated above the village, is interesting from a geographical point of view. It lies within a flat rock basin deeply filled with till (a souvenir from the ice age) and in which water has accumulated. The lake former called ‘soul’, above Mösern was already mentioned in Emperor Maximilian’s famous fishing compendium in 1500. The near-by Wildmoossee and Lottensee lakes are completely different. They are aperiodic, i.e. both reappear together only every few years in the spring and disappear after just a few months.



Since the 1950’s, Mösern has developed into a tourist village and offers a variety of accommodation, from 5-star hotels to holiday farms. Owing to the sunny but exposed location, it is lovingly called ‘The Tyrolean Swallow’s Nest’. When Albrecht Dürer travelled through Mösern on his way to Italy in 1498, he was so enchanted by the view into the Inn Valley that he immediately made some rough sketches and then recorded the impressive, enormously wide view for posterity as the background for his famous self-portrait. This painting can be admired today in the Museo del Prado in Madrid.

The Buchen part of the village offers a breathtaking panoramic view of the surrounding mountains (Hohe Munde, Wettersteingebirge, Mieminger Kette and Plateau, Stubaier Alpen). Directly next to the 'Ropferstüb'm' Inn in Buchen, a farmers' museum offers interesting insights into the traditional life of farmers. The chapel in Buchen dates back to the 18th century. Buchen is located at 1,250 metres above sea level in a breathtaking natural environment and offers its guests, free of charge, a natural Kneipp installation with a specially designed course for walking barefoot.

THE MARIA HEIMSUCHUNG CHURCH IN MÖSERN

The main part of this attractive, small baroque church dedicated to Mary of the Visitation dates back to the 17th century. The first donations for church services date from the year 1836/37. The church was rebuilt and enlarged in 1763, and renovated in 1951. Ekkehard Hörmann enlarged the nave with two new bays in 1979. The beautifully marbled rococo altar, with diagonally set pillars, dates from around 1770. The altar leaf showing Mary of the Visitation and a Madonna set in an aureole, dates from the first half of the 18th century and is carved into one of the pilasters. A graveyard was finally added alongside the little church in 1997, prior to this date, the deceased of Mösern had had to be buried in the graveyard of their county parish in Telfs.

THE KALVARIENBERG

The Kalvarienberg is located to the north of the church. On this hill, a semicircular building with an open, triangular gable, accommodates the Crucifixion Group dating from around 1830: Jesus Christ on the cross with the two thieves, Mary, St. John and Mary Magdalene appear as supporting figures painted on wooden panels and presumably date from before the carving. The frescos painted in the style of Leopold Puellacher depict God the Father encompassed by clouds looking down on Jerusalem. The narrow, winding path leading to the Kalvarienberg originally contained eight station chapels in the form of wayside shrines, which were increased to 11 in 1989.

Various local families maintain the chapels according to regulations agreed on 1 June 1841. In 1988/89, the inhabitants of Mösern helped restore the Kalvarienberg in a great communal effort by working uncountable hours and with each family making substantial financial donations. Three chapels were added to the path leading to the Kalvarienberg. The first containing a nazarene painting, 'Christ's Farewell', by Maria Theresia Striegl dated 1899. The following chapels hold paintings by Prof. Heinrich with scenes from the passion. The old, existing frescoes were retained, and the paintings on asbestos-cement slidings from the individual stations were transferred to the foreground. By autumn 2007, the path up to the Kalvarienberg will also have been improved and will have been linked to the Peace Bell Walk and the centre of Mösern. The Kalvarienberg is also recorded in the EU atlas of Europe's Holy Mountains.

THE PEACE BELL

Every day at 5 p.m., the Peace Bell rings in one of Europe's most beautiful locations, here in Mösern, reminding people of peace and good neighbourly behaviour. In addition, it is a monument to 25 years of cross-border co-operation by the "ARGE-ALP" (WORKING COMMUNITY OF THE CENTRAL ALPS) countries. With a height of 2.51 metres, a diameter of 2.54 metres and weighing over 10 tons, Tyrol's largest bell stands free in the spectacular alpine countryside. The Peace Bell Walk has led to the bell since 2003 and should be taken as an invitation to contemplation. Seven prominent sites invite the walker to rest a while and offer him ideas for reflection and contemplation.

The exact date when the community was founded is unknown. However, urn-graves indicate that the alluvial fan of Zirl was inhabited by a tribe called Veneto-Illyrians from as early as the bronze age (approx. 1800 to 750 BC). The first written documents about Reith date from the Romans, who, under Drusus and Tiberius pushed the borders of the Roman Empire beyond the alpine peaks to the river Danube.

From 80 AD onwards, the Romans started to fortify the most important sites. On the road between Sterzing (Vipitenum) and Partenkirchen (Partanum), eight Roman milestones have been found, but from when the milestone at the entrance to Zirl dates, is unknown, as it bears no inscriptions.

Reith is first mentioned in documents dating from the year 1095, in which Bishop Megenward von Freising allowed the use of a plot of land (Hube in der Leite) south of the Scharnitzwald by a certain Pillung von Brucko. This is the first time Leithen is mentioned as a settlement in the community of Reith. Reith is also mentioned 60 years later (Auf dem Gereuth) and yet again more than 100 years later, in 1260, when mediation over a border stone between the monasteries of Benediktbeuren und Wessobrunn 'auf dem Gereuth' was documented. This document proves that the main village had been established and with it, the history of Reith started. Reith comprises several quarters – Reith, Auland, Leithen, MaxhütteMühlberg, Krinz and Gschwandt. Leithen, the first quarter of Reith, is documented for the first time in 1095 and therefore has the longest history. The name Am Mühlberg is first mentioned in a document in 1281.



Towards the middle of the 19th century, mountain climbing also became popular in Germany. Alpine Clubs were founded, which built huts in the high mountains and one of them, the Nördlinger Hütte near the summit of the Reither Spitze, was consecrated in 1897. Although the opening of the Karwendel Railway in 1912 led to the disappearance of stagecoaches, it also brought with it a revival of tourism. Poverty and inflation in the post-war period paralysed any economic development before 1925. However, as early as the winter of 1927/28, the village of Reith reported the availability of 250 guest beds to the County Tourism Office. Skiing was the village's mainstay in winter, but even in summer, it was well frequented as a staging point for mountain tours. In 1932, all newly built guesthouses reported a satisfactory number of guests in both winter and summer. The Second World War brought great suffering to the inhabitants of Reith due to the fact that in 1945 the Karwendel Railway bridge was declared a bombing target by the Allies. In a span of only six days, nearly 300 bombs were dropped on the municipality and a total of 22 houses were destroyed during the raids. In addition to the church and the school, 12 further houses were also heavily damaged. When the occupying forces left in 1955, a building boom as never seen before started on the high plateau, and a vast number of tourism-related enterprises and installations were initiated and are still in use today.

ST. NICHOLAS PARISH CHURCH

Since 1391, the Reith parish church is known as the little St. Nicholas church. When it was constructed in 1751, a priest moved into the village, which until that time had been attached to Zirl. The nave and the tower were rebuilt between 1832 and 1835, but the walls dating from the late gothic period were retained, giving the church its present shape and dimensions. In 1892, both the village and the church were completely destroyed by fire.

The basic structure of the new church was consecrated in 1895 and the current interior furnishing of the church was completed between 1911 and 1912. In 1945, the church was heavily damaged during air raids and its reconstruction took until 1950. The interior of the church was completely renovated in 1989 and 1990, and once more shows the original splendour of the years between 1911 and 1921.





Despite the fact that Scharnitz is the most recent settlement in the Scharnitz Woods, the village bears the most ancient name of all. The site of today's village has been well known since the earliest times. It was described in the chronicles as wild, depressing, buried in heavy snow all winter and thus, as early as the 8th Century A.D., dreaded. It was nicknamed "solitudo Scarantiensis" and "Scaraza" and even "desertum Scaratie." The word root "scar" is thought to stem from ancient Illyrian and means "naked rock."

When the ancient Romans built a road from Teriolis (modern Zirl) to Parthanum (today's Partenkirchen, in Germany), they recognized the narrow valley passage in today's Scharnitz as a spot of great strategic importance. They erected a castle and gave it the name of "Mansio Scarbia" in the village district of Bühel, near Haus Kapferer and Rainer (house numbers 8 / 9). It served the Romans as quarters for troops on the march, as well as a resting station for postal couriers. In 763 A.D., the Bavarian nobles Reginbert and Irminfrid were ordered by the Bishop of Freising with the approval of the dukes to establish in the wilderness a "solitudine Scarantiensi" - the Scaraza Monastery, also known as Scarantia, together with a church dedicated to St. Peter.

As is evident from a number of official documents of the time, the entire region extending from today's Garmisch-Partenkirchen all the way to Zirl was known as the Scharnitz Woods, or simply, Scharnitz. Today's communities of Scharnitz and Seefeld formed the upper part, Mittenwald formed the middle part and Klais and Gerold formed the lower or outer part of the Scharnitz Woods. From the original name "Scaraz" and "Scarbia" came the name "Scarnize" which evolved over time to become "Scharnitz."

Today Scharnitz is the smallest community in Olympiaregion Seefeld, yet is one of the largest town districts in Tyrol due to the inclusion of the Karwendel Massif, most of which lies within the town lines of Scharnitz.

CREATION OF THE PORTA CLAUDIA

During the Thirty Year War (1618-1648) the government of Innsbruck obtained permission to erect a fortress on the lands of the Freising Monastery in the narrowest part of the valley. It was built in 1632 - 1634. On the festive occasion of the dedication of this ravine-like valley passage, it was named after the shrewd Princess Claudia of Medici, who was personally present.

Simultaneously, at the end of the valley in the Leutasch, the so-called "Schanz" was also constructed. Porta Claudia was not attacked during the Thirty Year War. Around 1670, it was expanded according to the plans of Christoph Gump.

In the course of the "Bavarian Uprising" in 1703, Prince Max Emanuel II. succeeded in taking Porta Claudia in a bold and unexpected attack. When the occupying Bavarian forces exploded the ammunitions stores, it caused immense destruction. However, all was soon rebuilt.

When Goethe passed through here on his Italian Journey in 1786, he noted, "Near Scharnitz, one arrives in Tyrol. The border is closed by a wall which locks off the valley and merges with the mountain massif. It looks quite attractive. On one side, the cliffs are fortified, on the other, they shoot up vertically."

In 1805, during the Napoleonic Wars, the French Marechal Ney, coming from Mittenwald, attacked the "Schanzen" in the Leutasch and Porta Claudia with 13,000 troops.

Porta Claudia was defended by 12 cannons and 700 men at the time. To begin with, they were able to fend off the attacks. Every demand to surrender was rejected by the commander of the fortress. Only when the French, under the leadership of a Bavarian woodsman who knew the area well, circled around the fortress, was Porta Claudia's fate sealed. The Austrian occupying forces were all taken into captivity. The French suffered 1800 casualties.

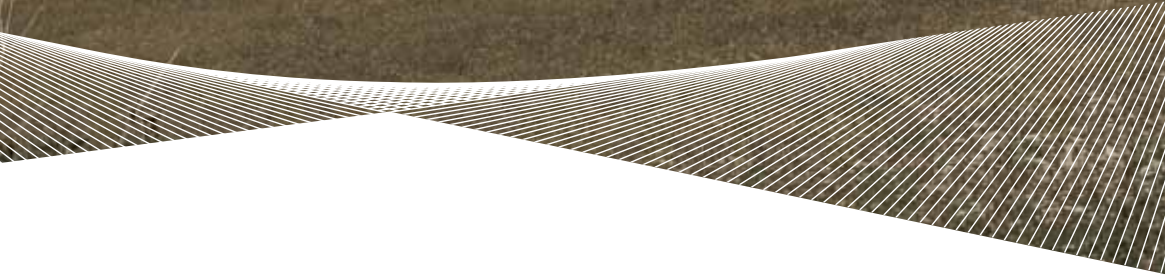
In 1809, rule over the fortress changed back and forth among the Tyroleans, the French and the Bavarians. When Tyrol became part of Bavaria, it was more or less levelled, with huge amounts of explosives, at a cost of more than 12,000 Guilders. Nevertheless, a few of the ruins of these old fortifications on both sides of the Isar River north of Scharnitz still recall the fortress of old. The 6 meter high ruins can still be seen.

In the former military barracks of Porta Claudia, the Customs Office was housed until 1957. Some remains of the "Leutasch Schanz" are also still visible today.

The fortress consisted of a main part and the ramparts. In the main part there was, besides the military barracks, also a chapel. The so-called "Cavalier" was part of the ramparts, where a cannon was mounted: "the powder magazine, the devil's kitchen and the water shed," from which water from the Isar River was fed into the moat.

The 6 - meter high walls with their battlements and embrasures, the partly ruined and grown-over ramparts, the large vaulting (housing soldiers and horses), the moat, the parapets, etc. all give one an idea of how mighty this fortress once was.





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