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Fussweg Mitterwald >

PORTA CLAUDIA

Useful information about the ruins of the ancient fortress on the Bavarian-Tyrolean border





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

Contemporary depictions of Porta Claudia: a wood carving in Oberammergau; a painting of the events of 1805 in Mittenwald's Town Hall; and a copper engraving in the Ferdinandeum State Museum in Innsbruck.

HISTORIC GUIDED TOURS TO PORTA CLAUDIA

Start:	Information Office Scharnitz
Duration:	approx. 2 hours
Difficulty:	easy, not suitable for prams, ascent with steps
Registration & Info:	Nature Lounge, Tel. 05213/20283, info@nature-lounge.com or Information Office, Tel. 05/0880-40, info.scharnitz@seefeld.com