

2021 media text

World Cultural Heritage Site between lake and mountain

St.Gallen lies between Lake Constance and Mount Säntis, nestled in a verdant Alpine valley. But it has all the panache of a cosmopolitan city. Designers watch trolley buses trundle by as they discuss the latest fashions presented on runways in Paris, Milan and New York. Business men in suits eat world-famous St.Gallen bratwurst while standing on a street corner in front of a butcher's shop. At Abbey Square, international students sip coffee and debate solutions to the world's problems. And looming above all of them is the World Cultural Heritage Site.

Books, architecture – and a mummy

Built in 719 as a hermitage, the Abbey of St.Gallen has become one of Europe's major spiritual centres with an imposing, double-towered cathedral. Its most precious possessions include the oldest German-language dictionary as well as the Plan of St.Gallen, the oldest surviving architectural drawing from the Middle Ages. Countless codices were produced at the Abbey and still remain there. Tourists regularly flock to the Abbey Library, built in 1758 and widely regarded as one of the world's most spectacular historic book repositories. The still active library has around 170'000 books in its collection. Other special sights include a 16th century globe measuring over two meters high and the Egyptian mummy Schepenese and her sarcophagus, which the library has owned since 1836. Schepenese is believed to have lived from approx. 650 to 610 BC. Architecturally, the library is a work of art in its own right. Its magnificent, curved reading room is a Baroque masterpiece with decorative intarsia wood floors, wood-panelled bookshelves flanked by columns and handsomely stuccoed ceiling murals.

Historical exhibits from the history of the monastery

The vaulted cellar of the Abbey Library (formerly the Lapidarium) is home to a new and fascinating permanent exhibition dedicated to Gallus, his monastery and the 1,400-year cultural history of the city. Important originals from the history of the monastery are on permanent display, including the magnificent Evangelium longum with the ivory carvings of Tuotilos (around 895) and the pillars from the Gozbert cathedral (around 830).

Original monastery plan from the 9th century

The famous St.Gallen monastery plan from the 9th century can be seen by the public in its original form. It will be on display in the new exhibition hall. The parchment is the earliest representation of a monastery district from the Middle Ages. It was probably drawn between 819 and 826 in the Reichenau monastery on Lake Constance and is owned by the Abbey Library of St.Gallen. There are also other treasures from the monastery archives and library to discover, including the oldest book of vows from the Carolingian period of the monastery. It contains the vows the monks took when entering the monastery. The title of the exhibition is: The miracle of transmission – The Plan of St Gall and Early Medieval Europe.

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