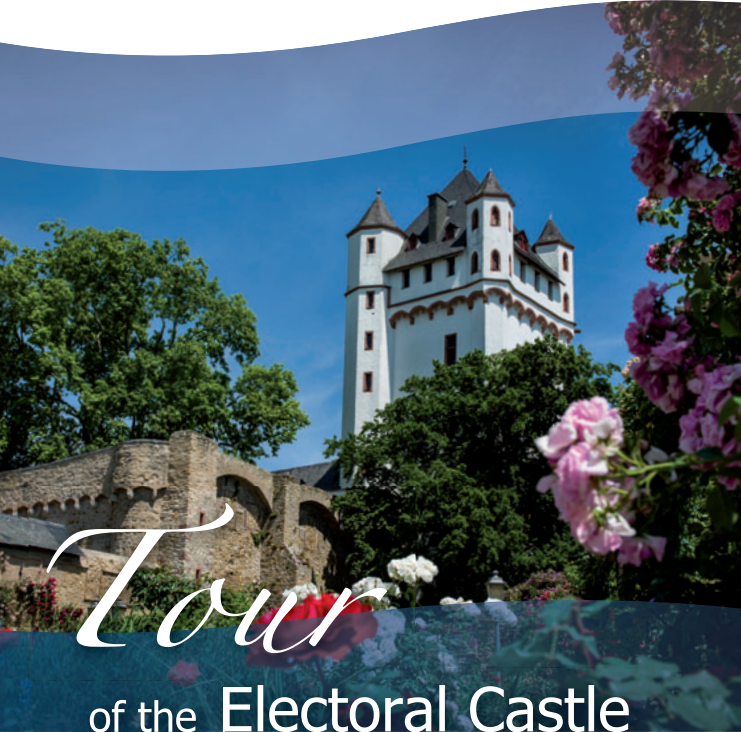




ELTVILLE AM RHEIN  
WEIN-, SEKT- UND ROSENSTADT



*Tour*  
of the Electoral Castle  
Eltville am Rhein



English Version





# History

from the 14th Century until today

The Electoral Castle is Eltville's historic landmark. The castle with its irregular four-sided ground plan formed the south-east cornerstone of the town's fortifications and was built on the ruins of a previous castle that was destroyed in the Customs War of 1301.

In 1332 Balduin of Trier, Archbishop of Mainz, Electoral Prince and Chancellor of the German Empire, obtained special privileges similar to those granted to the city of Frankfurt from his patron, Emperor Louis the Bavarian. These entailed the right to build fortification walls and moats. Up to the mid 19th century Eltville remained the only official city in the Rheingau.

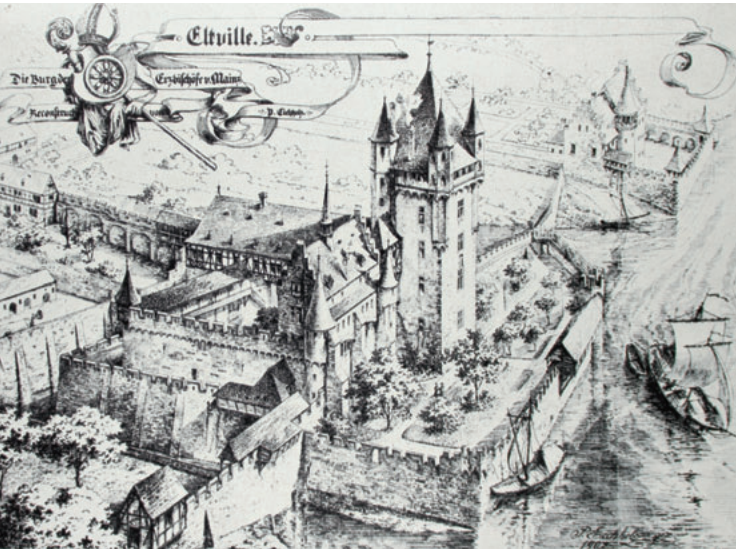
Balduin of Trier began the castle construction with a round tower. Remains of it can still be seen in the southern section between the tower and the palace wall.

In 1338, Balduin gave up his battle for the Episcopal See in Mainz. His successor, Heinrich of Virneburg, completed the construction of the castle around 1350 with a Four-story square residential tower.

For the next 150 years the building served as the residence of the Archbishops of Mainz. In the course of the Thirty Years' War, in the autumn of 1631, the Swedes occupied Eltville. During their retreat in 1635 they laid the castle in ruins. Only the residential tower was preserved. The destroyed East Wing was the only section to be rebuilt in the 17th century - the rest remains a ruin to the present day.

The castle was the property of Electoral Mainz up to 1803, belonged to the Duchy of Nassau until 1866 and then to Prussia. In 1936 its ownership was transferred to the city of Eltville.

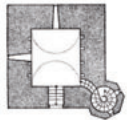
Due to its significance in terms of construction, artistry and cultural history, the Electoral Castle has been classified as a "cultural monument of national importance" by the Hague Convention for Protection of Cultural Property.



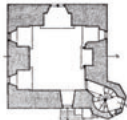
The Electoral Castle (Reconstruction by Eichholz 1902)

## The Tower

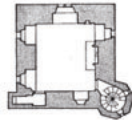
The residential tower, that was completed around 1350, was adjudged by the Hesse State Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments as having a particular historical significance: The type of fortified residential tower, originating from France, is an example for this specific architecture along the Middle Rhine. In the basement the walls reach a strength of 2,45 meter and in the 1st floor of 2,06 meter. With its height of 24 meter, the tower can be seen from far away.



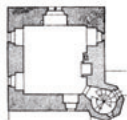
Castle Dungeon



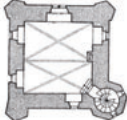
Ground Floor:  
Tourist-Info / Gift Shop



1<sup>st</sup> Floor:  
Count's Hall



2<sup>nd</sup> Floor:  
Gutenberg Memorial



3<sup>rd</sup> Floor:  
Capitular Chamber



4<sup>th</sup> Floor:  
Panorama Platform

## Tourist-Information and Gift Shop

The former recreational room for the servants on the ground floor of the tower today houses the tourist-information and gift shop with a selection of souvenirs. Here you can buy a ticket and start your tour through the castle. The hearth has borne Eltville's coat of arms since 1940.

## Count's Hall / Chamber

On the first floor of the castle tower is what is called the "count's hall / chamber". Next to the rooms of the Archbishop in the palace that was destroyed in 1635, the count's chamber was the most elegant room in the castle. It is adorned with paintings dating from the 14th century and was used as a livingroom and workshop.

In the centre of the hearth's lintel you can see the coat of arms of the Elector and Archbishop Konrad III from the lineage of the "Rhine Counts" of Stein and "Wild Counts" of Dhaun (1419 to 1434). Next to it is the coats of arms of his parents and grandparents.

In the count's hall Henne Gensfleisch zu Gutenberg, who became world-famous as Johannes Gutenberg, was bestowed the only honour he was to receive in his lifetime, being named a courtier on January 17, 1465, by the Elector Adolf II of Nassau. This honour brought with it, among other things, a pension of 20 "malter" (= around 800 gallons) of grain and 2 casks of wine.



Count's Hall

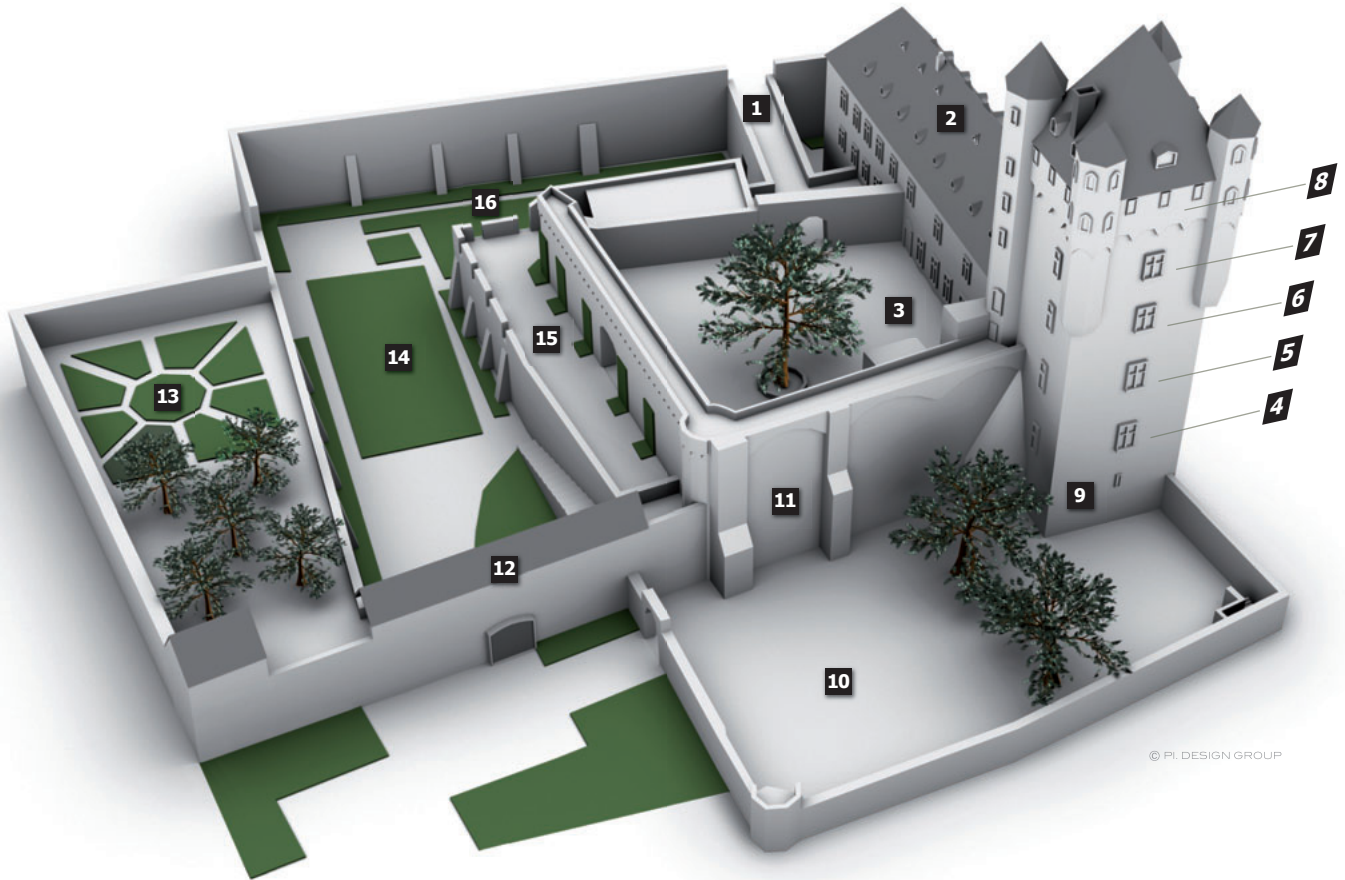


Gutenberg Memorial

## Gutenberg Memorial

On the next floor of the tower, the Burg-Verein e.V. Eltville (association of the friends of Eltville Castle) has dedicated an exhibition to Gutenberg and his legacy in Eltville. The portrait by Ernst Zoberbier shows Johannes Gutenberg in courtier's dress with his life's work, the 42-line bible. The coat of arms of the world's first printing locations – Mainz, Bamberg, Strasbourg, Cologne, Eltville, Rome and Augsburg – shows how closely Eltville is linked to the beginning of the Black Art and its inventor.

Eltville's first and most important print work dates back to 1467: the Latin/German dictionary "vocabularius ex quo"; some sections of it are displayed in the exhibit. A collection of printing equipment can also be seen here, in the so-called "Offizina Eltvilla".



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- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1</b> Bridge to northern Gate                                | <b>9</b> Castle Dungeon  |
| <b>2</b> East Wing (Castle Hall, Elector's Hall, Hunting Salon) | <b>10</b> Lower Courtyard  |
| <b>3</b> Upper Courtyard  | <b>11</b> Palas (former Residential Quarters, today Castle Cellar) |
| <b>4</b> Tower Ground Floor: Gift Shop / Tourist-Information    | <b>12</b> Battlement Parapet with South Gate                       |
| <b>5</b> Tower 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor: Count's Hall / Chamber    | <b>13</b> District Court Garden                                    |
| <b>6</b> Tower 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor: Gutenberg Memorial        | <b>14</b> Castle Moat with Rose Garden                             |
| <b>7</b> Tower 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor: Capitular Chamber         | <b>15</b> Upper Outer Wall Enclosure                               |
| <b>8</b> Tower 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor: Panorama Platform         | <b>16</b> Back side Castle Moat                                    |

## Capitular Chamber with the „Alta Villa“ Collection

In an inventory of household goods that has been preserved since 1465, this room on the third floor of the tower is called the "Domherren Chamber" (Capitular Chamber). It is the only room in the residential tower that has a vaulted ceiling. A keystone in this ceiling shows the Virneburg coat of arms and signifies Archbishop Heinrich III of Virneburg as the builder.

Since 1983 the historical collection "Alta Villa" is on display here, featuring documents on the history of Eltville. The valuable engravings of Eltville were donated by Cecil Nassenstein to his hometown.



Capitular Chamber on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor



Tower Panorama Platform on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

## Tower Panorama Platform

Anyone climbing the 118 steps from the ground to the tower platform is rewarded with a superb view of the remains of the castle, the historical old quarter of Eltville with the Catholic parish church Saint Peter and Paul, the old aristocratic courts, the beautifully restored half-timbered buildings, the vineyards and the Rhine River.

## Castle Dungeon

Leading down from the Gift Shop, a 40-step spiral staircase takes you to the castle's dungeon which is covered by a "Tonnengewölbe."



Tourist-Information / Gift Shop



Castle Dungeon

## The East Wing

As you enter the fortress by coming through the north door via the historic town center you see to your left the East Wing, which was originally one story higher and supposedly reached only up to the fortress wall. During the archiepiscopal time this wing probably served as the public officials' seat.



East Wing



Castle Hall



Elector's Hall

The East Wing is the only building that was reconstructed in its original form (1683) after its destruction by the Swedes. From then on the office of the county treasurer and administrator was located here. After that the district court was initially situated here and later it became the forestry office. The building houses the magnificent Baroque Elector's Hall, the Castle Hall and the Hunting Salon. Today the Electoral Castle serves as a location for festivities, cultures events and meetings. The rooms can be rented for private functions and celebrations. Eltville's civil registry office offers wedding ceremonies in the romantic ambiance.

## Residential Quarters (Palas)

The three-story residence, the "Palas," was located to the south in the direction of the Rhine River. Only its southern exterior wall with its large windows facing the Rhine, which have been bricked up, remain.



Palas



Lower Courtyard

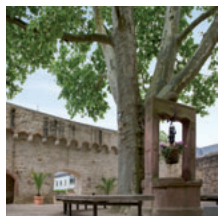
By viewing the framework of the dark stone tiles one can still trace the former 18 x 15-meter surface area of the building. The kitchen and pantry were located on the ground floor, above it was the archbishop's apartment with its large fireplace and its magnificent view onto the Rhine. A large hall and a small chapel were located on the top floor. The attic accommodated several servants' chambers. Two stair towers were located on the south side. The western tower led to a toilet built onto the outside wall as well as a covered battlement walkway. From here a door leads at ground level into the Castle Cellar with its vaulted ceiling; inside the cellar a steep staircase ascends to the Upper Courtyard.

## Upper Courtyards with Gates

Those who in earlier times wanted to visit the Electoral Castle entered initially through the upper courtyard. One was able to enter only through the then-existing gates. Across from the fortress tower one finds the large pointed-arch northern gate. Today a stone bridge leading to the Burgstrasse and to the town center spans the wide moat. Earlier the stone bridge did not stretch all the way to the fortress gate. Entrance for wagons was possible only via a large drawbridge and pedestrians crossed via a smaller one. An eastern gate formerly existed to the left of the fortress tower; it can still be recognized by its pointed-arch doorframe, which has since been walled up. A small drawbridge was located in front of it allowing one to enter the fortress from the harbor. During the time in which the fortress served as the residence of the archbishops of Mainz the courtyard appeared to be smaller than it looks today. Several buildings were located within today's walls. Stalls and coach houses were located to the right of the fortress tower. In addition to the stately residence of the archbishop there also existed to the south an outbuilding, presumably a winepress house. Later the kitchen was moved there and a bathhouse was constructed. The underground portion of the 12-meter-deep fountain still exists in its original form. The portion existing above ground originated from a mansion fountain. One can assume that the original one looked very similar to the present fountain.

## Upper Outer Wall Enclosure

You reach the upper section of the Outer Wall Enclosure via an opening that was later broken through the western wall and upon which a fortified walkway with parapets is located. This battlement wall, which served defensive purposes, originally existed along the entire western and northern sides of the moat. Looking above the staircase as you descend you see stone brackets protruding along the moat's western wall upon which a wooden parapet walk rested. The western portion of this area of defense has been preserved and serves as a "rose terrace" with its magnificent view onto the rose beds in the moat as well as those seen by looking across onto the "Amtsgarten."



Upper Courtyard



Upper Outer Wall Enclosure



Battlement Parapet

## Battlement Parapet

By walking through the small entryway beneath the southwestern tower of the former archbishop's residence you reach the wooden parapet walk, which is believed to have originated during the time of the destruction by the Swedes. The original walkway at this location is thought to have been located approximately 60 cm lower, as indicated by the walled-in openings and the shooting slits.

## District Court Garden (Amtsgarten)

You can reach the Amtsgarten via the parapet walk. Its name originates from the period after 1803 when the fortress served as the seat of the district court (Amtsgericht) and later of the forestry office. It already served as a garden during the archbishops' residency. Today this garden with its rosette design invites you to relax under the shady linden tree with its view to the Rhine and to the island "Eltviller Aue."

## Castle Moat with Rose Garden

The fortress was originally surrounded on three sides by wide moats and was protected in the south by the Rhine. The eastern moat was later filled in while the western and northern sections remain and still show its original depth of approximately 5 meters. The moats themselves were not flooded with water. One was able to enter the interior of the fortress over these deep moats via the northern and eastern gates. The entrance from the Rhine side wasn't broken through the former city wall until 1936.



A true jewel is the wonderful rose garden located in the moat and around the battlements. Particularly in early summer one can admire the lavish splendor of the blossoms from countless rose bushes in huge varieties, including many rarities and older rose varieties. Together with the Amtsgarten opposite the battlement wall this garden forms the centerpiece of Eltville's rose beds, which in 1988 brought Eltville the honor of joining the circle of official German rose cities.

## Lower Courtyard (Zwinger)

From the promenade along the bank of the Rhine you reach the Lower Courtyard (Lower Outer Wall Enclosure or Zwinger) through a gate which was broken through the wall in more recent times. The Zwinger, which is located on the south side of the fortress and below the former Palas, served above all as a garden and open space and could be reached directly from the Palas. Because of its location four meters below the castle courtyard it also served as a moat and provided a protective function. During the time that the fortress served as the home of the archbishops the Zwinger stretched substantially further to the east. From the towpath looking toward the Zwinger you can see an additional defense tower and in its vicinity a portal to a small harbor containing an upstream icebreaker.



## ELTVILLE AM RHEIN

WEIN-, SEKT- UND ROSENSTADT

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