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### The Mittleres Tor (Tower Keeper's Gate)

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the town tower keeper worked and lived in the *Mittleres Tor*. As described in a local council's decision taken in 1858, the tower keeper had many duties:

1. In case danger of fire he had to blow the alarm immediately.
2. He had to „blow the traditional good morning from the tower“ on New Year's Day at 00.00 a.m., at Christmas, at Easter and at Whitsun.
3. In June, July and August he had to announce noon to the farmers working in the fields by blowing a proper piece of music.

He was also in charge of playing a proper musical framework on all festivities and for the church choir.

Nearby, there is another wonderful house with a Gothic crenellated gable (21). Diagonally opposite there is the *Brauerei-Gasthof Winkler* (22), whose door and original fittings date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Pettenkoferplatz was named after the family of wine merchants Pettenkofer, who lived here in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The old Town Hall (23) stood at the intersection of the two squares until 1795. On your right there is the ancient pharmacy *Stadt-Apotheke* (24): over its door there are a statue of the Virgin Mary and an inscription: „*Der mirs vertraut, Hat wol gebaut. 1689*“ (The one who had faith in me has well built. 1689).

Diagonally opposite there is the inn *Gasthof Zur Blauen Traube* (25), dating back to 1720: its name „At the Black Grapes“ remembers that Berching has been an important wine market. On the right side of the Kirchgasse there is the parish church *Pfarrkirche Mariä Himmelfahrt* (26), dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. It was built in 1488 and it is one of the most beautiful and architecturally valuable churches in the whole of the bishopric of Eichstätt (see the church's guidebook). Standing near to the bell tower you'll see the square Dr. Grabmann-Platz. Turn into the small lane on your left, walk past the town hall courtyard (27, previously called Getreidehandelsplatz, now it hosts the cultural centre *Kulturhaus Schranne*) and head back to the Pettenkoferplatz. Here you'll see the building that houses the *Tourismusbüro* (28, Tourist Office), which was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and was previously the chandler's house. Now leave the town wall through the *Mittleres Tor* (29, previously *Tor des Türmers*, Tower Keeper's Gate).



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Looking southwards towards the green belt you'll see the towers *Ziegelturm* (30), *Schießturm* (31) and *Badturm* (32), the round tower that stands on the south-eastern corner of the wall: it is said that here engaged couples used to take their bath before getting married, as it was prescribed.

From the *Mittleres Tor* turn north into the *Klostergasse* before reaching the bridge. Right in front of you there is the *Pettenkofer-Haus*, formerly a Capuchin monastery. Walking along the small lane on your left you'll have a pretty view of the town wall. At the end of the lane keep right, cross the *Sulz* and reach the *Stampfermühle* (33): this mill with a hipped gable was built in 1628 during the Thirty Years' War by Jerg Stempfer. The inscription on the entrance says: „*Diese Mill stett in Gottes handt. Bey dem Jerg Stempferist es genannt, der hatß Erbaut in disem Jar, wie Alles drain Erschlagen War. Als man zelt 1628.*“ (This mill is in God's hand. It was named after Jerg Stempferist, who built it in 1628. At that time everything was destroyed.)

After a short incline, on your left you'll find the old train station made of quarry calcareous stones (*Raiffeisen*). The *Ludwig-Donau-Main-Kanal* (34), the Canal built by King Ludwig I and opened in 1844, flows at the eastern town's edge. In front of you there is Berching's mooring (previously harbour on the Canal) with information boards on the old Canal.

Through the gate *Neumarkter Tor* (35, previously called *Krapfentor*) you'll reach the most ancient part of the town, its primitive centre. Berching's first settlement was established here along a commercial trade route running in the *Sulz* valley.

Now take a look at the lantern, the bird cage and the „Berching's pike“ (symbol for the legend you can read below) hanging inside the gate.

In the past the *Hotel zur Post* (36) was the residence of the lords of Berching. Centrally located, the church *St.-Lorenz-Kirche* (37) with its impressive tower over the choir was consecrated in 1062. The chapel quoted in the most ancient document of Berching dating back to 883 must have been located here. In the church you'll see the nave walls

### THE LEGEND OF THE BERCHING'S PIKE

A long time ago the *Sulz* was in full flood and the valley became a lake as far as *Plankstetten*. All fishes were very happy, but floods went out as quickly as they had come. A curious pike stood behind and remained all by itself in the meadows. A Berching's inhabitant found it: as he had never seen such a strange animal before, he carried it to the town hall. There the question was discussed at length and in the end everybody agreed that it was a bird. And - just like a peculiar bird - the pike was put in a bird cage in order to be admired by all the crowded people. As the pike opened its mouth for exhaling its last breathe the visitors from the neighbouring towns heard many Berching's people saying: „Silence, it's going to sing!“ The inhabitants of Berching led a very secluded life for a long time as the neighbours made fun of them everywhere they went, saying: „Look at him, he's a Berching's pike!“



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built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, remarkable half reliefs and panel paintings of the „Danube School“ on *Laurentius's* legend (see the church's guidebook).

The oldest part of the town is limited south by the *Beilngrieser Tor* (38): in the past this gate was called *Siechenator* because of the sanatorium once standing just outside the gates that then became a hospital (today's *Maria-Hilf-Straße*).

From the *Lorenzkirche* walk westwards over the bridge *Johannesbrücke* and go back to the centre. Before reaching the bridge, on your right you'll see the old hospital *Bürgerspital* (39) with its chapel (today public library) dating back to 1354. After the bridge, on your left there is the folk museum *Heimatmuseum* (40) with a rich collection of furniture coming from farmer houses of the region and farming implements of everyday use. On the eastern bank of the *Main-Danube Canal* there is the protestant church *Evangelische Kirche* (42). Walk along the main street for 300 m and reach the historic hotel and restaurant *Gewürzmühle* (41). Berching's mill was built before 1650 and belonged to the Pettenkofer family. In 1852 the Bauer family bought it and enlarged the building used as a stable that now hosts the restaurant. The mill is a listed building with original stucco ceilings and fittings.



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### „ONLY A WALL DIVIDES TOWNSPEOPLE FROM COUNTRYFOLK“

This is a saying that was often made in the Middle Ages, when cities built walls on the examples of castles. The concept of city was defined for the first time with the German term *Burg* and townspeople were then called *Bürger*. Cities provided their inhabitants with security and had special rights. Rural serfdom was opposed to city's freedom („the air of cities makes you free“). In the Middle Ages nearly 1,000 people lived in the centre of Berching, and nearly 1,000 cattle and horses, too. Therefore dung-heaps were easily to be found there.

## BERCHING – THE GATEWAY TO THE ALTMÜHLTAL NATURE PARK

### TOWN HISTORY

Berching is 1,100 years old and one of the few German cities still entirely ringed by a defensive wall. Narrow lanes and wide squares invite visitors to a stroll through the Middle Ages.

Berching is located in the *Altmühltal Nature Park (Naturpark Altmühltal)*, the „green heart of Bavaria“. The town lies in the *Sulz* valley, whose steep slopes have been shaped by erosion of karstic rocks, and is surrounded by ranges of hills that are part of the *Franconian Alb*. Many finds testify that the region has been continuously populated since the Neolithic (circa 5,000 BC).

The name Berching probably comes from *Bericho*, the name of an elder of a *Bavarii* tribe. Its foundation probably dates back to the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century AD as suggested by the ending of the name *-ing*. The first written document providing evidence of Berching dates back to 23rd March 883, when Charles the Fat, a Charlemagne's grand-grandson, granted the chapel in „*Pirihinga*“ and all its properties to „his loyal Euprant“ for the whole of his life. At that time Berching consisted only of its most ancient part.

In 912 Berching passed under the control of *Eichstätt's* bishops. The construction of today's town centre started in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and Berching was awarded the status of „city“ already in 1314. Bishop *Wilhelm von Reichenau* (1464–1496) renewed the fortifications and enlarged the town wall, which then took its present form with 13 towers and 4 gates.

Berching was awarded the status of „market“ in 1245 and for centuries it has been a market town important for the sustenance of its rural region. Many charitable institutions, the sanatorium, the hospital, the two main churches, the old town hall and the beautiful middle class houses testify to the wealth of Berching at that time.

Berching was annexed to Bavaria in 1802 with the secularization of the bishopric. At the end of World War II the town was occupied by American soldiers, but it was not directly affected by the conflict effects.

In 1978 Berching incorporated nineteen independent neighbouring municipalities and the number of its inhabitants grew from 2,600 to the present 9,000. With an area of circa 131 km<sup>2</sup> Berching is one of the largest municipalities in the whole of Bavaria.

The construction of the *Main-Danube Canal* brought about the most significant changes. The new waterway was opened in Berching in September 1992 after decades of planning. Although halved by the Canal in an eastern and a western part, the town is still fascinating with the atmosphere created by the contrast of the modern waterway running close to the medieval walls.



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### Tourismusbüro Berching

85 km to Regensburg, about 45 km to Kelheim.  
Distances: 120 km to Bamberg, about 60 km to Nürnberg.  
From Bellingries or along the Main-Danube Canal.  
make a short detour (8 km) from the cycle trail *Altmühlradweg*.  
By bike: Follow the *Tour-de-Baroque* or the *Fünf-Flüsse Radweg* and then to Berching by bus (Line 515 and other lines).  
By Train: Reach the train main station of Nürnberg; from here continue to Neumarkt i.d.OPf. (about 25 min. by the local train line) from the north – Hilpoltstein.  
By Car: Motorway A3 Nürnberg-Regensburg – exit: Neumarkt i.d.OPf.; motorway A9 München-Nürnberg – exit: Greding or – from the north – Hilpoltstein.

### How to Reach Us



## Guided Walking Tour of the Town





## GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF THE TOWN

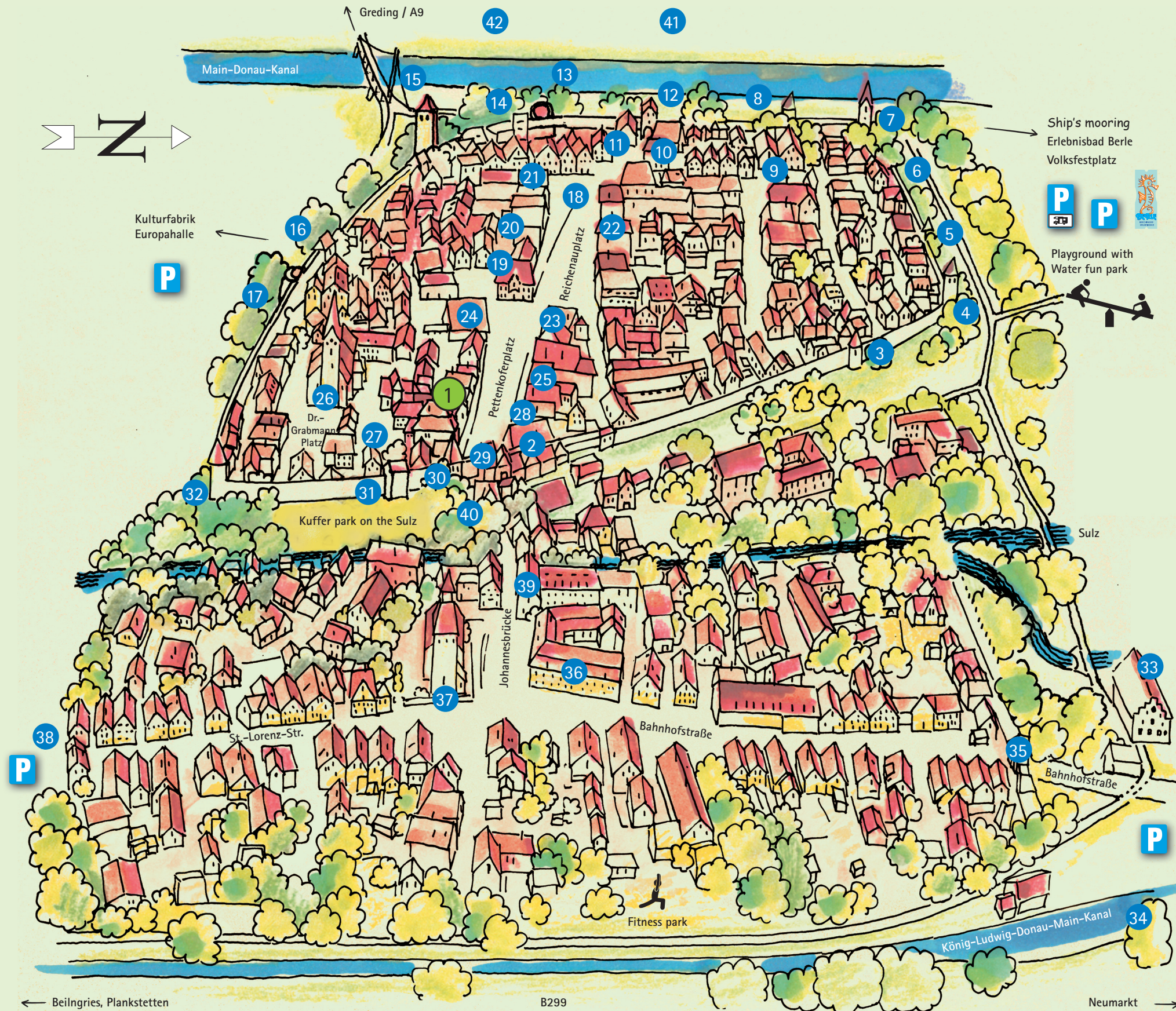
Our walking tour begins at the *Rathaus* (1) on the square *Pettenkoferplatz*: the town hall with its mighty hipped roof was built in 1693 by the wine merchant Georg Pettenkofer as business premises (note his family's coat of arms over the entrance gate) and has been the town hall since 1795. In front of it there is the guild fountain *Zunftbrunnen* with its symbolic figures: the bishop remembers that the town has been ruled by the prince-bishops of Eichstätt for almost 900 years, the pike refers to the legend of the „Berching's pike“, the smith symbolizes the craft and the tow horses remind of Berching's position along the old Canal *Ludwigskanal*. Cross the square, pass under a pointed arch and reach the *Ringmauerweg* (2). The fully preserved walkway of the wall is partially accessible by the stairs near the towers *Bettelvogtturm* (Beggars' Administrator Tower, previously town prison), *Dachsenturm* (3, Badgers' Tower) and *Pulverturm*, also called *Storchenturm* (4, Gunpowder's Tower or Stork's Tower, previously a warehouse for ammunitions). During the Summer the latter houses the gallery of the local art club *Kunstgilde* (free admission). Then you'll see the *Chinesenturm* (5), called „Chinese Tower“ because of its pagoda-shaped roof, and the *Zechhäusel* (6), built in the wall.



On the north-western corner of the town wall stands the *Frauenturm* (7, Women's Tower): it is said that here „nasty and quarrelsome women“ have been punished by pillory.

Walking southwards you'll reach the *Biersiederturm* (8, Brewer's Tower). Now turn left in the *Probstgasse*: on your left there is the *Fürstbischöflicher Zehentstadel* (9), the barn with an impressive stepped gable built in 1464, where prince-bishops stored the corn collected as tithe. Tithes consisted on the tenth part of natural goods regularly paid from farmers both to princes and local parishes.

Walking further south you'll reach the *Reichenauplatz*, the square named after the prince-bishop Wilhelm von Reichenau, who built the town wall. On your right there is the building called *Propsthaus* (10), once seat of the prince-bishop's administrator. Right in front of you you'll see the



- 1 Town Hall (built in 1693)
- 2 Accessible defensive wall and tower *Bettelvogtturm* (once town prison)
- 3 Tower *Dachsenturm*
- 4 Tower *Pulverturm* (*Storchenturm*)
- 5 Tower *Chinesenturm*
- 6 *Zechhäusel*
- 7 *Frauenturm*

- 8 Tower *Biersiederturm*
- 9 *Zehentstadel* (tithe barn)
- 10 *Propsthaus*
- 11 Mill *Tormühle*
- 12 *Gredinger Tor* (upper gate tower)
- 13 *Main-Danube-Canal*
- 14 Tower *Schmidweberturm*
- 15 Tower *Amtsknechturm*
- 16 Tower *Bildhauerturm*

- 17 Tower *Pfeiffenschneiderturm*
- 18 Square *Reichenauplatz*
- 19 *Hutterhaus*
- 20 House with hipped gable
- 21 *Wohnhaus des Kastner* (treasurer's house)
- 22 *Gasthof Winkler*
- 23 War memorial/former town hall
- 24 Pharmacy *Stadt-Apotheke*
- 25 *Gasthof „Blaue Traube“*

- 26 Parish church *Mariä Himmelfahrt*
- 27 Cultural centre *Kulturhaus Schranne*
- 28 Tourist Office
- 29 Gate *Mittleres Tor*
- 30 Tower *Ziegelturn*
- 31 Tower *Schießturn*
- 32 Tower *Badturn*
- 33 Historic mill *Stampfermühle*

- 34 *Ludwig-Donau-Main-Canal*
- 35 Gate *Neumarkter Tor*
- 36 Hotel *zur Post*
- 37 *St.-Lorenz-Church*
- 38 Gate *Beilngrieser Tor*
- 39 *Bürgerspital* (former hospital)
- 40 Museum *Berching* with exhibition on *Gluck*
- 41 Historic mill *Gewürzmühle*
- 42 Protestant Church

streamlet that crosses the town west to east: in the past its spring water coming from the *Haarberg* was not drinkable and was used for the mill *Tormühle* (11).

At the western edge of the *Reichenauplatz* is the *Gredinger Tor* (12): this gate was built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, while its door dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In 1819 the 7 members of the family that lived here perished in the fire caused by a lightning strike. The tower was then rebuilt, but not so high as it originally was in order to prevent similar tragedies to happen again. The *Main-Donau-Kanal* (13, *Main-Danube Canal*) of 171 km length flows just outside the gate – it was opened in 1992. Walking northwards along the Canal side you'll reach the ship's mooring and the *Berching's* adventure pool centre *Erlebnisbad BERLE*. Walking southwards you'll see the new symbol of the town: the one-pier suspension footbridge, which lies 2 km before *Berching's* locks. The 800-year-old Benedictine abbey of *Plankstetten* lies further south (4 km).

Follow the Canal side southwards and turn left before the footbridge. From here you'll have a beautiful sight of the *Schmidweberturm* (14), a round tower once provided with catapults. The tower called *Amtsknechtsturm* (15) at the south-western corner of the town wall was previously a prison: here the remains of a double moat once ringing the whole town are easily recognizable. Heading back from here you'll reach the town centre through a small gate.

After the gate turn right into the *Landsknechtsweg*. Here you'll see several small and modest buildings that were day labourer houses and show the town's social structure clearly: the mighty warehouses of brewers, traders and merchants stood on the market square *Marktplatz*, the houses of workmen on side lanes (i.e. *Kupferschmiedgasse* and *Schmiedstraße*, named after smiths and coppersmiths), while the small houses of day labourers were built next to the wall. Walk past the *Bildhauerturm* (16, *Sculptor's Tower*) and the *Pfeiffenschneiderturm* (17, *Pipe Carver's Tower*) and head back at the gate *Marientor* towards the town centre to the square *Reichenauplatz* (18). On your left is the *Hutterhaus* (19) with a rectangular bow-window supported by consoles on the first floor and a pear tree on its façade. Among the many splendid middle class buildings to be visited on this square we remember the house at street number 4 (20) with a Gothic hipped gable and the house at no. 6 with a Renaissance roof.

### ABTEI PLANKSTETTEN – THE GREEN ABBEY

The monks of *Plankstetten* abbey live and work strictly following the Rule written by St. Benedict. They practice organic farming and process their products obtaining only high-quality natural foods for their monastery, guesthouse and tavern.

