

Verwaltung der Staatlichen
Schlösser und Gärten

HESSEN



Castle Frankenstein an der Bergstraße

Spaziergänge durch Schlösser und Gärten
Kulturerbe Hessen



Boundary stones

Under the sign of the "Hippe"



The boundary stones at the northern wall of the castle chapel (15) date from 1556. Stones remaining from this period are very rare. These stones had to separate the district Seeheim from Frankenstein's territory. Seeheim was under the rule of the Counts of Erbach. At the left stone (a) the sign of the "Hippe" (a former vine knife) can be seen. It is also shown at the northern wall of the old town hall of Seeheim, and it is still today part of Seeheim's emblem. The missing upper part of the right stone (b) was also marked with this sign. 2008 both historic stones were brought up to the castle for protection against vandalism. Originally, they were placed on the border between the municipalities Seeheim-Jugenheim and Muehlthal (territories Malchen and Nieder Beerbach). Boundary stones showing Frankenstein's coat of arms were found in Ockstadt, Frankfurt and Buerstadt, but not near the castle. It is quite possible that they had been taken away by the Landgraf of Hessen-Darmstadt 1662.



Top of the stone (b)



Seeheim's Hippe



Place of the stone (a)



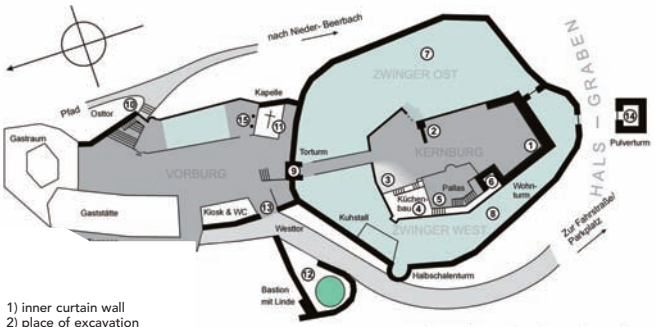
Place of the stone (b)

Castle Frankenstein

Nobility's residence, veteran's asylum, destination for an outing



Castle Frankenstein is situated on a hilltop, approximately 400 metres (MSL) high above the Rhine-valley. It is the northernmost castle of those along the Bergstrasse. The castle's history is closely connected with legends and poetry; therefore, it is a popular attraction for visitors from all parts of the world. First mentioned in 1252 by a charter, Castle Frankenstein was thereafter the place of residence of the noble lineage Frankenstein for 400 years. During this time, the castle was expanded in several phases to an impressive estate. In 1662, the family Frankenstein sold the castle to the landgrave of Hessen-Darmstadt. Accordingly it was used as a housing area for veterans and began to deteriorate. In the middle of the 19th century, the castle was made into a destination for outings. The tower of the core-castle (6) and the gate-tower (9) were enlarged and the chapel (11) was restored. In 1965, a modern restaurant was erected. Therefore several historic buildings were broken down.



- 1) inner curtain wall
- 2) place of excavation
- 3) debris pile of a former building
- 4) kitchenbuilding
- 5) palace
- 6) inner tower
- 7) eastern ward
- 8) western ward
- 9) gate-tower

- 10) sally gate
- 11) chapel
- 12) outer fortifications
- 13) outer gate
- 14) outer tower
- 15) boundary stones

Present groundplan of Castle Frankenstein

Description of the ruin



Excavation at the eastern side of the core-castle



Western side of the core-castle



Family's motto at the inner tower



View from the core-castle to the north

The core-castle is the oldest area of the site and dates partly from the time of foundation. It was surrounded by a 2 yards thick polygonal curtain wall (1). Buildings leaned closely thronged against it. The quarrystone work had a roughcast.

Currently, the tall curtain wall can only be seen at the western and the southern side. In 2008, remaining parts of the wall were found and brought up at the eastern edge in the course of restorations (2). By this opportunity also the foundations of a gate and inside buildings were discovered. There is a debris pile of another building (3) in the north-west. Its cellar is still in good condition. Nearby, one can see an old kitchen building (4) and the palace (5), the castle's most noble building. A tower (6) in the south displays the motto of Family Frankenstein in its wall: "Zu Gott steht meine Treue" (My loyalty belongs to God).

The core-castle is surrounded by two wards. The eastern one (7) was supposedly erected in the 13th century, the western one (8) in the 14th century. Also, the gate-tower (9) dates from the late 14th century. Its rear was probably already open in the Middle Ages. At its front, there are still traces of the former drawbridge: the deepening for the drawbridge's platform, the apertures for the ropes and the basic stones of their spin axes. Above the entrance, there is an tracery frieze and a nice armorial plate.



Armorial plate with tracery frieze



Gate of the gate-tower



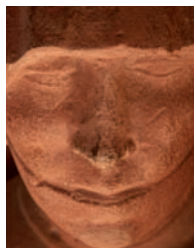
Outer tower with ramparts



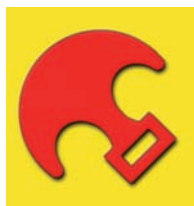
Picturesque small sally gate

The Lords of the Castle

The tomb slabs in the chapel (11) came from the village churches of Eberstadt and Nieder Beerbach and were brought to this place in the 19th century. They show some of the last members of Frankenstein's nobility, who resided in the castle. The family's founder had been Lord Konrad Reiz of Breuberg. In 1272 (maybe as early as 1252) he dubbed himself "von Frankenstein", like his castle. Through the centuries, the spelling of the name has varied. The family still exists and lives in Hesse and Franconia. Nowadays they write their name: "Franckenstein". Their coat of arms exhibits a red symbol like an red anchor on a golden ground. It is mostly interpreted as an axe or an ancient hatchet for killing wolves. Since 1670 the Lords of Franckenstein are "Reichsfreiherrn", which title was granted by the German Emperor Leopold I. Many of them had been high Catholic dignitaries. Arbogast of Franckenstein (1825-1890) had been an important politician as a member of the Zentrums-partei in the Reichstag (government).



Tomb Irmel von Cleen (1494-1533)



A dragonkiller, but not a monster



Georg von Frankenstein (†1531)

Castle Frankenstein is often described as a mysterious place. But there aren't any connections to Mary Shelley's novel "Frankenstein". In 1814, the English author had been on a boatrip on the river Rhine. She had a break for a couple of hours in Gernsheim/Rhine -- but in the middle of the night. As Gernsheim is approximately 15 miles (linear distance) far from Castle Frankenstein you can hardly see the castle, even by day! However, Castle Frankenstein is rich in authentic legends. Unfortunately these are falling more and more into oblivion. One of the most famous legends tells about Lord Georg and the dragon:

"Long, long ago a dangerous dragon lived near the well. The peasants of the village (Nieder Beerbach) went to Lord Georg of Frankenstein, a brave knight, and poured out their troubles. He promised to help. He put on his armour and rode to the well where the dragon was taking a rest in the sun. Lord Georg got off his horse and attacked the enemy. The dragon fought for his life, puffed and spewed out fire and steam. Finally the knight was victorious. But as the beast struggled in agony, it coiled its tail with the poisonous spine around the knight's leg and stung. Lord Georg reached his castle with great difficulty and died from his wound three days later. Nowadays you can still see his tomb in the church of Nieder Beerbach." (By August Nodnagel, 1803-1853)

Another legend tells the tales of a knight named Arbogast of Frankenstein. It is said, he lived already 948 AD, but it's an invention of a tournament book of the 16th century.



Oldest known painting of the castle; fantasy and reality are mixed. (Johann Tobias Sonntag, 1747. Schlossmuseum Darmstadt)

On the trail



On the trail to the original places of the boundary stones How to find the boundary stones

Starting point: Castle's parking ground. Cross the road (yellow) and follow the gently rising way (blue). Pass by a sports ground at the right. At the end of a small hollow way there is the historic place of the stone (b). This place is now marked by a present boundary stone. Turn right and follow a steep footpath down the slope along the border (red). Cross the following three paths and turn right at the fourth path. Follow this way until reaching a bench.

Approximately 35 yards down the slope there is the historic place of stone (a). Its place is also marked by a present boundary stone; (you can read the letters FM). This new boundary stone marks a striking point: the border bends sharply, recognizable by a 15 centimetres deep boundary ditch; also, there is a change in the vegetation. Back at the bench the route (blue) leaves the border line (red). Continue the way until crossing an old hollow way. On its left side a narrow footpath leads up the slope. Cross the road (yellow) and further the way (blue) to the castle.

This trail isn't easy to walk, but it is extremely interesting and takes approximately 1 hour.

GROSSER STEIN (a):

UTM (WGS84): 32 U E 0 475 548 N 5 515 569;
Geogr. Koor.: N 49°47'32" E 8° 39'37"

KLEINER STEIN (b):

UTM (WGS84): 32 U E 0 475 969 N 5 515 187;
Geogr. Koor.: N 49 °47'19" E 8°39'58"

Visitors' Informations

The way to Castle Frankenstein

Public transportation:

Tramway: Line 6,7 or 8 to Eberstadt, stop "Kirche". Get out, turn left and follow Schlossstrasse, then "Frankensteiner Strasse" until the end and then follow the mark: blue B (1 hour).

Bus: From Eberstadt "Wartehalle" bus line NB to Nieder Beerbach, stop "Untergasse". Get out, cross Kreuzgasse, turn right to Frankensteiner Weg (near the inn "Darmstaedter Hof"). Look to the mark: white double line. (45 min.)



Cars and coaches:

Leave motorway A 5 at exit Pfungstadt/Eberstadt and follow the street signs.

Opening Times

Castle restaurant "Burg Frankenstein", Event & Restaurant, 64367 Muehltal, phone 0049-6151-501501, fax 0049-6151-501500
e-mail: info@burg-frankenstein.de

Opening times March-December:
Tuesday-Sunday 11.00 a.m.–10.00 p.m.

Opening times January-February: weekend 11.00 a.m.–6 p.m.
In autumn annual "Halloween Festival" during three weekends.

Other objects of interest:

1. Magnetic rock south of the castle
2. "Walderlebnispfad", 3 kilometres, 2-3 hours invites you to enjoy nature on a special nature trail. Mark: yellow L middle of a yellow circle and a blue flame at the edge.

Other internet information:

Burgrestaurant: www.burg-frankenstein.de;

Geschichtsverein Eberstadt/ Frankenstein e.V.:

www.eberstadt-frankenstein.de;

Walderlebnis Frankenstein e.V.: www.walderlebnis-frankenstein.de;

Datenbank der Dt. Burgenvereinigung e.V.: <http://www.ebidat.de>;

Verein zur Pflege historischer Grenzmae Hessen e.V.:

www.grenzmae-hessen.de;

Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser und Gärten Hessen (VSG)

Schloss, 61348 Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe, Tel. 0 61 72 - 92 62-0, Fax 0 61 72 - 92 62-190
www.schloesser-hessen.de, info@schloesser.hessen.de

Concept and text: Michael Müller

Translation: Evelyn Schenkelberg

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