

**PRESS RELEASE**

APRIL 19, 2022 / 3 PAGES + SERVICE

THE STATE PALACES AND GARDENS: WORLD BOOK DAY

*Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg*

## Exceptional monastery libraries in Wiblingen, Ochsenhausen, and Hirsau

*Today, books are affordable for all, and libraries are open to everyone everywhere. But for centuries, that was not the case: Monasteries were islands of learning in a bookless world, and their collections of books were precious treasures. April 23 is World Book Day. The State Palaces and Gardens of Baden-Württemberg are taking this as an opportunity to explore the book traditions in their former monasteries. Wiblingen and Ochsenhausen Monasteries are located on the magnificent Upper Swabian Baroque Route, while Hirsau Monastery is in the legendary Black Forest.*

### WIBLINGEN MONASTERY: A HUB FOR BOOK ART

Wiblingen Monastery near Ulm was rich and powerful, a place of books and learning. In the late Middle Ages, the Upper Swabian monastery near Bavaria had its own flourishing writing workshop. Specialized artists and professionals painstakingly wrote books here, line by line. In the 18th century, the monks designed a special room for their precious collection of writings: The famous library of Wiblingen Monastery, one of the most impressive halls in Upper Swabia, was built between 1740 and 1750. It is a masterpiece of architecture, sculpture, and painting from the Rococo period. The detailed fresco by famous painter Franz Martin Kuen still makes an impression. At the center of the painting is a female figure surrounded by angels: the divine Wisdom, who rules over all. In its heyday, the library contained roughly 15,000 volumes—more than many a contemporary university library today. The precious books were removed from

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**VISIT. MARVEL. ENJOY.** The State Palaces and Gardens of Baden-Württemberg opens, preserves, shares, and markets 62 historic monuments in Southwest Germany. In 2019, approximately 4 million people visited these historical sites with distinguished cultural treasures: among them Heidelberg Palace, Schwetzingen Palace and Gardens, Ludwigsburg Residential Palace, Weikersheim Palace and Gardens, World Heritage Site Maulbronn Monastery, Salem Monastery and Palace, as well as the Hohentwiel Fortress Ruins.

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**IMAGE DOWNLOAD** Photographs of the monuments can be found online in printable quality at: [www.schloesser-und-gaerten.de](http://www.schloesser-und-gaerten.de) (Section “Press”/“Press photographs”).

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Wiblingen at the start of the 19th century due to secularization. However, the exceptional atmosphere of the hall has been preserved. Wiblingen Monastery is a highlight of the Upper Swabian Baroque Route, which brings the world of Baroque to life over a distance of around 860 kilometers.

### DIVINE WISDOM IN OCHSENHAUSEN MONASTERY

Another stop on the Upper Swabian Baroque Route is Ochsenhausen Monastery. This former Benedictine monastery was a place of faith, learning, and science. This is particularly evident in the library: It is a ceremonial hall for books. The room was furnished in the Classicist style in 1783. The bright light from several windows and the white frame create a light, almost cool impression in the space. Abbot Romuald Weltin commissioned stucco-workers from the Wessobrunner School to create the room's sculptural decorations. The four statues of ancient deities and a muse challenge library visitors to better themselves through scholarly pursuit, intellectual inquiry, knowledge, and understanding. The stucco on the gallery references the knowledge gathered in the library. The center of the illusionistic ceiling fresco shows the order's founder, Benedict of Nursia, in front of Mary, depicted here as a seated figure, as the "Seat of Wisdom." This motif illustrates: Divine wisdom is always superior to worldly knowledge, represented by the sculptures. Of the 60,000 handwritten and printed books once kept here, only a small fraction remained on site after secularization.

### HIRSAU MONASTERY: MEDIEVAL BOOKCASES

Hirsau Monastery, situated in the picturesque northern Black Forest, represents roughly 1,000 years of history in southwestern Germany: The sprawling abbey once played a prominent role in the Investiture Controversy between the pope and the emperor. Hirsau was an intellectual center that reached beyond the Black Forest. The monastery was destroyed in the 17th century, and yet, its sundered walls still display its former size and

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importance. The chapel of St. Mary is one of the few buildings to have survived the destruction intact. On the upper floor of the two-story building was the monastery's library. Its valuable manuscripts and prints were stored in lockable wooden cabinets, which had been acquired in the early 16th century. The gems from the late Gothic period are decorated with ornate carvings. Because bookcases of this kind only very rarely survived, they are considered an absolute rarity today, and have been back in their original place since 2008, following extensive restoration work.

## WORLD BOOK DAY

Since 1995, "World Book Day" has been held every year on April 23. On this global day of action, UNESCO celebrates reading, books, and authors' rights. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was inspired by the Catalan custom of giving roses and books as gifts on the national saints' day dedicated to St. George. Numerous events and readings have been held throughout Germany since 1996, organized by bookstores, publishers, libraries, schools, and reading enthusiasts.

## INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

### Wiblingen Monastery

#### HOURS

Library, Monastery Museum

March 1 to October 31

Tue – Sun, holidays 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM

#### PRICE

€5.50 adults, €2.80 discounted, €13.80 families

### Ochsenhausen Monastery

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## HOURS

Monastery museum

April 1 – October 31

Tue – Sun, holidays 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Prelature, Fishermen's Staircase, refectory, and observatory can only be visited on a guided tour.

Tours

Tue – Sat 2:00 PM

## PRICES

Monastery museum

€3.00 adults, €1.50 discounted, €7.50 families

Convent building (incl. tour)

€5.00 adults, €2.50 discounted, €12.50 families

Convent building and monastery museum combined ticket

€6.50 adults, €3.30 discounted, €16.30 families

## Hirsau Monastery

St. Peter and Paul Monastery with chapel of St. Mary

HOURS

Open to the public during daylight hours

## NOTES

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Starting April 3, 2022, the following COVID-19 rules will apply at the State Palaces and Gardens of Baden-Württemberg:

We want to continue to make it possible for vulnerable individuals and vulnerable groups to visit us as safely as possible. Masks are an efficient way to protect yourself and others from infection. Otherwise, the risk of infection is high, especially indoors. In light of high infection rates, we are therefore maintaining the mandatory use of masks indoors until further notice.

Please note that individuals ages 18 and up are required to wear FFP2 masks (or comparable, e.g. KN95/N95/KF94/KF95 masks).

## CONTACT

General information

Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg

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[www.kloster-wiblingen.de/en](http://www.kloster-wiblingen.de/en)

[www.kloster-ochsenhausen.de/en](http://www.kloster-ochsenhausen.de/en)

[www.klosterhirsau.de/en](http://www.klosterhirsau.de/en)

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