

The Municipality of Schellenberg

Diverse landscape

At 355 hectares (877 acres), Schellenberg is the smallest municipality by area in the Principality of Liechtenstein. The elevation of the municipal territory ranges from 430 meters (1411 feet) on the valley floor to 698 meters (2290 feet) at the highest point on the Gantenstein.

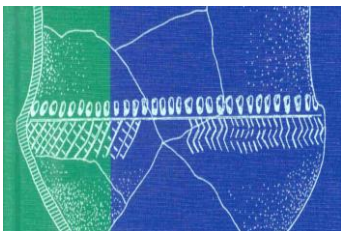


Schellenberg as seen from Gamprin

The three parts of town of Vorder-, Mittel-, and Hinterschellenberg lie on the crest of the Eschnerberg, a solitary mountain in the Alpine Rhine Valley. The charming landscape of the municipal territory is pictures-quely divided up by forests, providing many different views of the surrounding Alps, all the way to the far reaches of the Rhine Valley and Lake Constance.

First traces of humans

Thanks to its secure location above the Rhine Valley, the Eschnerberg was already a preferred settlement area in pre-historic times. Archeo-logical digs have shown continuous settlements since about 5000 B.C. The *Borscht* site near the Upper Fortress is a striking testimony to these early settlements.



Borscht: Neolithic ceramic fragments

The excavation of this ring-shaped living and defense construction brought cultural layers to light from 4300 B.C. (Neolithic Age) to 450 B.C. (late Iron Age). Other important prehistoric finds on the Eschnerberg – *Lutzengüetle*, *Malanser* and *Schneller* – are on the municipal territories of Gamprin and Eschen.

Lordship of Schellenberg

The names of the villages around the Eschnerberg and also many of the names of meadows bear witness to the presence of the Romans in the *Raetia Prima* province in the first four centuries A.D. and the continuation of the settlements since that time.

The name Schellenberg is of more recent origin. It comes from the fortresses whose ruins lie on the territory of the municipality. The fortresses were built by the Lords of Schellenberg. This noble line originally resided in the Bad Tölz area in Upper Bavaria and came to the Alpine Rhine Valley through the Staufer line. The Lords of Schellenberg are repeatedly mentioned in our area in documents after 1200, but already in 1317/18, they sold their shares of the Eschnerberg to the Counts of Werdenberg-Heiligenberg of Bludenz. Like the Counts of Montfort of Feldkirch and the Counts of Werdenberg-Sargans-Vaduz, they had also owned parts of the Eschnerberg for generations. Various Schellenberger lines developed in different parts of Southwestern Germany after their departure from our region. The modern coat of arms of the Municipality of Schellenberg derives from the knightly coat of arms of the Schellenberger.



Ruin of the Upper Fortress in Hinterschloss

Around 1437, the Barons of Brandis of Vaduz (the heirs of the Werdenberger) succeeded in purchasing the entire territory of the Lordship of Schellenberg and brought it under joint administration with the County of Vaduz. After the Brandis line went extinct, the Lordship of Schellenberg and the County of Vaduz were transferred to the Counts of Sulz in 1510. The Counts of Hohenems followed in 1613, who then sold the Lordship of Schellenberg to the Princes of Liechtenstein in 1699 and the County of Vaduz in 1712. In 1719, the two territories became the Imperial Principality of Liechtenstein.

Upper and Lower Fortress

The upper and larger installation in the Hinterschloss part of town was built beginning in 1200 and already contained all the important elements of a medieval fortress early on. The Upper Fortress was first mentioned in a document dated 10 January 1348. The Lower Fortress was built in 1250 as a smaller installation and only reached its final shape and size after 1350. The first documentary evidence of this fortress followed in 1317. Presumably, neither fortress was inhabited after the 16th century, and both gradually went to ruin. In 1956, Prince Franz Josef II donated the heavily overgrown ruins to the Historical Society, which then explored and preserved them.

On its way to a municipality

In the late 15th century, in a document dated 18 November 1493, the Municipality of Schellenberg is mentioned for the first time as the "neighborhood" of Schellenberg. These neighborhoods were the precursors of today's municipalities.

As a march cooperative, the neighborhoods of Ruggell and Schellenberg jointly used the wide pastures on the valley floor and the forests on the Schellenberg. The political municipalities as they exist today, with fixed municipal borders, only developed around 1800.

In 1809, Schellenberg had 53 houses and 280 inhabitants. The houses divided up among the five parts of town of Loch, Platta, Mittelschellenberg, Hinterschloss, and Hinterschellenberg. This old settlement pattern, deriving from the Middle Ages, remained nearly unchanged until after the Second World War. The picture only became blurred during the rapid expansion of the settlements in recent times. As for Liechtenstein as a whole, the boom began in the 1950's. Closely connected with this was the rapid transformation from a pure farming village to a modern municipality with a good infrastructure and a population that performs most of its work outside the village in industry, trades, and services. Today (2004), the Municipality of Schellenberg has about 1000 inhabitants.

Parish and cloister

For ages, the territory of the Municipality of Schellenberg belonged to the parish of Bendern. Only in 1873/74 was a complete separation achieved and Schellenberg's own parish created.

In Hinterschellenberg stands a chapel dedicated to *St. George*. It was built presumably around 1700 and has existed in its current form since 1850/55.



St. George's Chapel in Hinterschellenberg



New Parish Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

A first church was built in Mittelschellenberg in 1855/56. The cloister of the Sisters of the Precious Blood was established in 1858 in connection with the efforts to create a separate parish. The first cloister building was attached directly to the church. The order now has 40 nuns.

Under the leadership of parish priest Daniel Lins, the modern parish church was built between 1960 and 1963 at its new location. It is dedicated to the patronage of the *Immaculate Heart of Mary*. With its simple and clear shape, the building designed by the Swiss architect Eduard Ladner has become known as a classic example of modern church construction of the 1960's far beyond the country's borders.

Biedermann House

Near the Town Hall stands the *Biedermann House*. This farmhouse, made of wood in the typical local fashion, was built in the 16th century. It was moved here from its original location on the Platta in 1992/93.



Biedermann House Rural Museum

The Biedermann House is a branch of the National Museum in Vaduz and, in its current installation, provides insight into the rural living culture of our region around 1900.

Eschnerberg Historical Mountain Path

The *Eschnerberg Historical Mountain Path* is integrated into a widespread network of hiking paths. At historically interesting sites or areas with striking landscapes, informational sketches are posted. They teach the visitor interested in history or natural history about the eventful story of the people who have lived here over the last 7000 years.

Nature preserve in the meadow

Part of the municipal territory of Schellenberg is on the Rhine Valley floor. A nature preserve is located here (most of which is on the territory of Ruggell). It is a refuge for rare animals and plants and constitutes a last remainder of the peat bog landscape that used to characterize large areas of the Alpine Rhine Valley.

Modern infrastructure

Schellenberg has one of the most beautiful village squares in Liechtenstein. Around the square in front of the church are clustered the new Town Hall (1984) with the municipal administration, the Municipal Auditorium, and the Post Office, as well as the primary school, which was expanded in 1990/91. The municipality has modern facilities for sports and recreation. A "vita parcours" exercise track and a Kneipp facility are near the sports field. Children's playgrounds have been built in various locations. A camping ground for youth groups is located near the Upper Fortress ruins in the old fortress moat.

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