

The redesign of Kloster- platz, Mariastein's main square Between the everyday and the sacred world



Why does the square need to be redesigned?

Klosterplatz is the calling card of Mariastein and an important station on the way to the shrine. It is also a meeting and gathering place. Two hundred and fifty thousand people come here every year, linger for a moment, go to one of the nearby restaurants or to the monastery store, pay a visit to the basilica, and view the "Madonna in the Stone" in the rock grotto. For many people, Mariastein is the starting point for hikes and bike tours in the region.

The monastery square was designed thirty years ago with transport utility in mind. The focus was on making the entrance to the monastery accessible for visitors and for delivery and public transport vehicles. Currently, sixty-four Postbus coaches cross the square daily. Cars, searching a parking place, drive across the square frequently each day



with activity peaking on weekends from May to September. People - travelling by bike, using walkers or wheelchairs, or pushing baby carriages - have to find their way through the car and bus traffic with pedestrians making zigzagging paths and with children jumping here and there.

The square provides nowhere to pause or gather little protection from the sun, rain and snow and no place for picnicking. This is to say nothing of the absence of an opportunity for inner preparation as pilgrims approach the basilica or the Chapel of Grace.

The current square is clearly unsatisfactory, not in harmony with the sacred space and repeatedly the source of dangerous transit situations.

Our solution's ambition: disentangle traffic and protect those arriving on foot from traffic and accidents. With a few exceptions, Klosterplatz will be traffic-free.



Access for people with impaired mobility

There is no question that access to the basilica must be guaranteed for people with impaired mobility. The following measures are planned as of fall 2023: free parking spaces will be made available in the immediate vicinity of the Mariastein Basilica for vehicles displaying the EU parking permit for disabled persons; and transport vehicles for people with limited mobility will traverse Klosterplatz providing access to the basilica. Appropriate signage will indicate the right of way for permitted vehicles and support this exception to the general ban on driving.

New arrival in Mariastein

The parking lot at the entrance to the village will be expanded by about 40 parking spaces. In the future, parking will be subject to a fee. The current PostBus stop at the Pilgerparkplatz (parking lot), at the junction of Flühstrasse and Metzlerlenstrasse, will be redesigned. A new, barrier-free stop will be built with adjacent public lavatory facilities. The existing public lavatories north of the basilica will be renovated and equipped for persons with disabilities. Benches will be placed along the monastery wall and along Flühstrasse to provide a place for visitors to rest and gather.



A place of transition

Abbot Peter von Sury, the head of the Benedictine Monastery Mariastein, says:

“The people who walk across this square toward the church are to become pilgrims step by step. They pass through a zone that leads them from the profane everyday life into the sphere of the divine, of the transcendent, which they want to encounter and which wants to reveal itself to them in the sanctuary of this holy place”.

Three new structures on the redesigned square will serve this transition between the everyday and sacred worlds: the aforementioned “Hortus conclusus”; a designated area for gatherings and events and to assemble for processions; and an attractive outdoor passage leading to the entrance to the Chapel of Grace.

Place of meeting and exchange

Klosterplatz is already a meeting place for many people from northwestern Switzerland, nearby France and the Baden region of Germany. Many people from other countries know and appreciate Mariastein as a meeting place for family and friends. The square thrives on the linguistic diversity and colorfulness of its visitors. With the redesign, the space will be upgraded and play an enhanced role in shaping the identity of the destination Mariastein.

How will the square be designed?

People from the surrounding area say, "Wir gehen in den Stein" or "we are going in the stone", when they come here. The holy shrine, the Madonna in the Stone Chapel, literally lies in the stone, within a natural rock grotto. Stone will also be a key element in the redesign of the Klosterplatz: user-friendly paving stones will serve to surface the square and limestone blocks will be worked in different ways to create signposts and seating. In addition, a water basin and a drinking fountain will be integrated. The water will provide additional cooling on hot summer days. Eight stately linden trees will be planted fashioning a green oasis. A special garden space called "Hortus conclusus," will provide an intimate spot for peace and contemplation. More specifically, a small part of the monastery garden will be opened for those pilgrims who seek silence in nature. For those who want to self cater or eat a snack from their backpack, a picnic area will be created and, next to it, a playground for children.







Support the redesign of the square

We ask you to consider making a financial contribution to support our efforts. The total investment needed for the redesign amounts to 6.2 million Swiss francs. About half of the financing will come from the public sector. The Benedictine monastery is responsible for the remainder of the financing and is not currently able to bear this burden alone. Become a sponsor of the new outdoor passage, the "Hortus conclusus", the water basin, the playground for children, or one of the benches at the monastery wall. Support the improvements to assure accessibility for persons with disabilities or be an adoptive patron for one of the eight linden trees. We rely on your support and thank you very much for it.

To make a donation:

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More information

Please consult our website

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