

THE DEFENSIVE WALLS



The battlements of the fort, with a total length of about 730 m, are visible from a great distance through the trees. The southwest corner, on your left when facing the main gate, was first built as a partial section in 1885. This was intended to give the public a preliminary impression of the installation, with the aim of attracting financial support for the full reconstruction of the Saalburg.

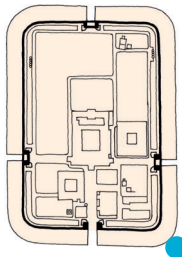
The walls were rebuilt on Roman foundations in the style of the fort's final construction phase around AD 220. They are made of irregularly hewn quartzite and stand about 4.8 m in height. In Roman times, the walls would have been coated with white plaster and then painted with red mortar seams to imitate fine stonework. At the southeast corner, to the right of the main gate, we have plastered a

section of the wall to illustrate the original effect. Prior to reconstruction, the ancient walls were still as high as 2.4 m at many points.

The merlons (raised elements of the battlements) were farther apart in Roman times. The original embrasures (spaces between the merlons) were recently restored on the north side of the fort. The merlons, topped with rounded basalt capstones, protected the soldiers' left sides during an attack; the defenders' primary weapons were hand-thrown projectiles, such as javelins and slingshots.

The rampart walk runs along an earthen bank on the inner side of the wall, thus providing direct access to the battlements.

The V-shaped ditches in front of the walls served as an obstacle to attack; they were never filled with water. Their V-shaped profile is typical of Roman defensive ditches and is also seen along the *limes*. The inner ditch was about 8.5 m wide at its upper edge and 3 m deep; the outer ditch is broader, but shallower.



PORTA PRAETORIA — MAIN GATE

The main gate, the *porta praetoria*, is located on the south side of the fort. From here the Roman road led straight down to the central town of the region at Nida, today's Frankfurt-Hedderheim. A simple wooden bridge provided entrance to the fort.

The **gateway** consists of a double carriageway flanked by square towers connected to the adjoining ramparts. In contrast to the reconstruction seen here, current research shows that in Roman times such towers would have had an additional storey. Narrow windows were located only in the upper storey; wooden shutters protected them. The walkway above the gates probably was roofed. Between the two gates, a bronze statue of Emperor Antoninus Pius greets today's visitor. Berlin sculptor Johannes Götz created the figure in 1901, modelling it on Roman prototypes. The statue rests on a pedestal with the following inscription:

To the Emperor / of the Romans / Titus Aelius Hadrianus / Antoninus / the sublime and pious / Wilhelm II / Emperor / of the Germans [dedicates this monument].

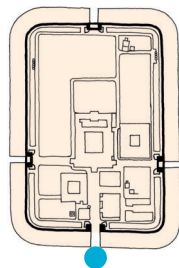
In Roman times, a sandstone statue of Mars, the god of war, probably stood on this spot. Only the legs of

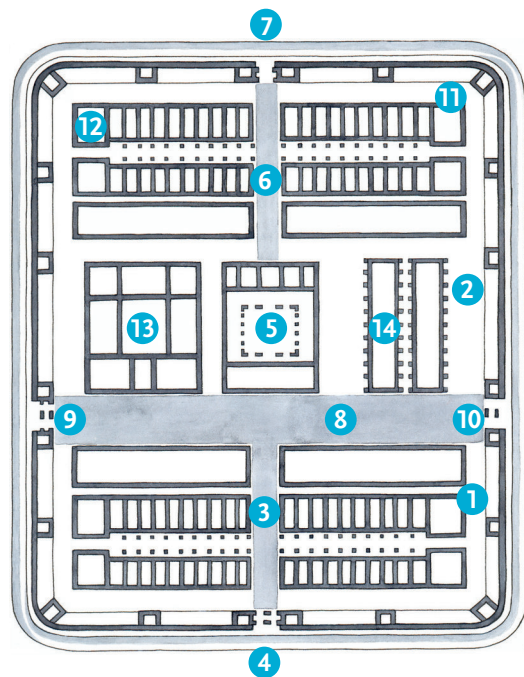
that statue survive; they can be seen in the exhibit in the *horreum*.

Over the gateway, a plaque in the style of a Roman building inscription proudly proclaims the completion of the restored Saalburg by Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany in 1903:

Guilelmus II Friderici III Filius Guilelmi Magni Nepos / Anno Regni XV in Memoriam et Honorem Parentum / Castellum Limitis Romani Saalburgense restituit

Wilhelm II, son of Frederic III and grandson of Wilhelm the Great / in the 15th year of his reign in memory and honour of his parents / rebuilt the Saalburg Fort on the Roman Limes *





THE PLAN OF ROMAN FORTS

Around the mid-first century AD, a standard layout for military installations emerged; it was found all over the Roman Empire and survived into Late Antiquity. The basic plan of Roman forts, which was recorded by the Roman author Hygin, standardised the arrangement of the internal buildings. Because the main buildings were always laid out in a similar way, a soldier could quickly find his way around any new fort to which his unit might be transferred.

The forts were rectangular with rounded corners, shaped – as a rule – like a playing card.

Each fort's interior was divided into a front section, the *praetentura* (1) and a rear section, the *retentura* (2), crossed by two main roads at right angles to one another. The *via praetoria* (3) led from the main gate, the *porta praetoria* (4), straight through the front part of the camp to the headquarters building, the *principia* (5). The *via decumana* (6) was its extension in the rear part of the fort, connecting the fort's back gate, the *porta decumana* (7), to the *principia*. Running in front of the headquarters, the *via principalis* (8) connected the right and left gates,

the *porta principalis dextra* (9), and *sinistra* (10). This road often – as at the Saalburg – met the great hall at the front of the *principia*. 'Right' and 'left' were not determined – as one might assume – from the standpoint of the main gate, looking into the fort, but instead from the shrine in the *principia*, looking outwards. At the foot of the ramparts, the *via sagularis* (11) encircled the fort's interior.

The **barrack blocks** (12) were usually located in the *praetentura* and the *retentura*, while the headquarters, the commander's residence – the *praetorium* (13), and the granaries – the *horrea* (14), were located in the centre of the fort. At the Saalburg, however, the usual layout was changed: here, the *praetorium* and *horrea* stand on the *via praetoria* in the front section of the fort.



HORREUM – THE GRANARY

The *horreum*, the fort's double granary, is located just inside the *porta praetoria* on the visitor's right. Grain was a primary foodstuff and the most important of all the provisions issued to Roman troops. Consequently, granaries played quite an important role in terms of military logistics and so were most commonly located in the central area of the fort.

In the Roman era, grain was stored in un-milled form. To preserve the quality of whole grain, it had to be carefully protected from infestation and kept dry to prevent spoilage caused by moisture. Great precautions were taken in the construction of these store-houses. Typically, *horrea* were very solidly built, with massive stone foundations; their floors were elevated, raised on timber posts or masonry piers. Their walls were pierced by narrow slits, placed below floor-level, to ensure continuous ventilation of the storage area. Windows might also be inserted in the upper courses of masonry. A loading ramp in front facilitated the warehousing and distribution of bulk grain.

The *horreum* at the Saalburg stands directly on the camp's main road, near the main gate and the head-

quarters building, the *principia*. While it looks like a single structure, it is actually twin granaries, united by adjoining roofs. Their wooden flooring is supported by low stone walls that run parallel to one another, at a distance of 1 to 1.5 m. The structure, which measures 24 x 20 m, has massive exterior walls, almost 1 m thick. Instead of loading ramps, a set of stairs under a portico roof was reconstructed at the Saalburg.

Today, we still do not know precisely how grain was stored in *horrea* – most likely, it was kept in sacks or baskets. *

At present, the granary serves as an exhibit room containing many original Roman finds that illustrate varied aspects of daily life.

