



Tour of the island

- 1 Inselhaus, former priory, today's restaurant and monastery hotel
- 2 Farm
- 3 Vineyard manager's house
- 4 Roman temple precinct (extends from point 5 to point 9)
- 5 Great lake-wall
- 6 Pavilion
- 7 Woodland educational trail
- 8 Viewing platform
- 9 Hausländtekanal, a filled-in canal
- 10 Rousseau monument
- 11 Former Ligerz Pier
- 12 Marker with 1774 inscription commemorating the lake-wall

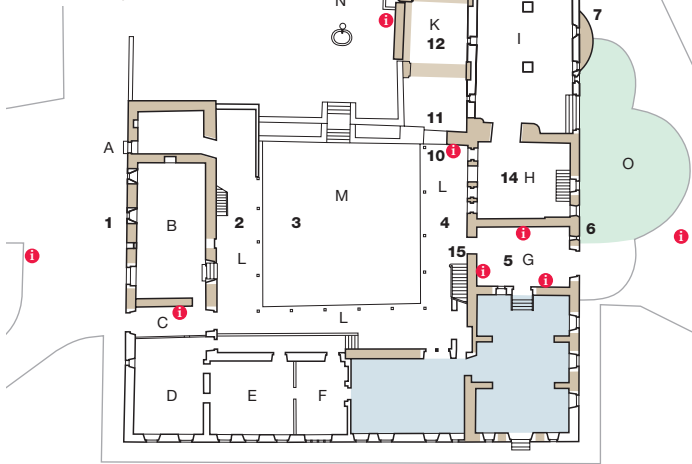


Archaeological tour

- 1 West wing of the Romanesque monastery with narrow round-arched windows, now walled up. The original monastery gate (A) is on the left.
- 2 Western cloister. Romanesque wall with rounded archway leading to the monastery cellar (B), now walled up. The (modern) row of columns on the courtyard side marks the original position of the western façade of the timber-built early medieval monastery.
- 3 The first monastic church was as long as the present courtyard (M) and 6.3 m wide.
- 4 Position of the small choir of the first monastic church. Its outer, eastern corners are marked in the floor by brass studs.
- 5 The rounded Romanesque arch leads into the *parlatorium* (G), where discussions took place and instructions were given, in particular to the brothers and lay people who worked in the field. It now houses an information display by the Archaeological Service of Canton Bern. The exhibits in this room include a Romanesque tomb slab of a 12th century prior on the northern wall and a Roman column and a Merovingian sarcophagus with a gabled lid (around AD 700) on the southern wall.
- 6 A section of the Romanesque wall has been exposed on today's eastern façade. It has been painted with a thin limewash, as it would have been around 1200. For the original effect, imagine the two Romanesque windows outlined in red with broad yellow jambs and frames. In the square (O), metal outlines on the ground show the position of the main apse and the northern side apse of the 11th century monastic church (Basilica I), which collapsed because of a construction error.
- 7 Plinth wall of the main apse of the early 12th century Romanesque church (Basilica II). The wall of the post-reformation wine cellar (I) was built on top of the remains of the old apse wall.
- 8 Outer wall of the Romanesque northern side chancel. The information board shows what the unfinished church would have looked like before it was demolished in 1557.
- 9 The upper courtyard (N) provides a view down into the transept (K) of the monastic church. The church's three naves were never built (see the large picture on the other side of the flyer); the area where they would have stood was subsequently used as a lay cemetery.
- 10 Entrance from the eastern cloister (L). The door-jambs and threshold have survived and the door has left scuff marks.
- 11 South arm of the transept.
- 12 The crossing (K) of the monastic church, where the choir stalls would have been (dark markings). Above the vaulted ceiling of this space, which was the monks' actual church, there was once a tower. The bases of the crossing pillars have been preserved.
- 13 North arm of the transept. Under a protective roof on the north wall are two Merovingian sarcophagi from around AD 700.
- 14 Romanesque chapterhouse (H), the monks' meeting room. Rediscovered in 1984, its Romanesque arcade facing the courtyard is the best-preserved part of the Romanesque monastery.
- 15 Staircase to the upper floor, where (R) some objects are on display next to a Romanesque and a Gothic window from the original façade facing the courtyard above the cloister roof. The exhibits include a crossing capital and a cornice fragment from the early 12th century Romanesque church and a display case with various small finds. The Rousseau Rooms with an exhibition are also located here.

Ground floor

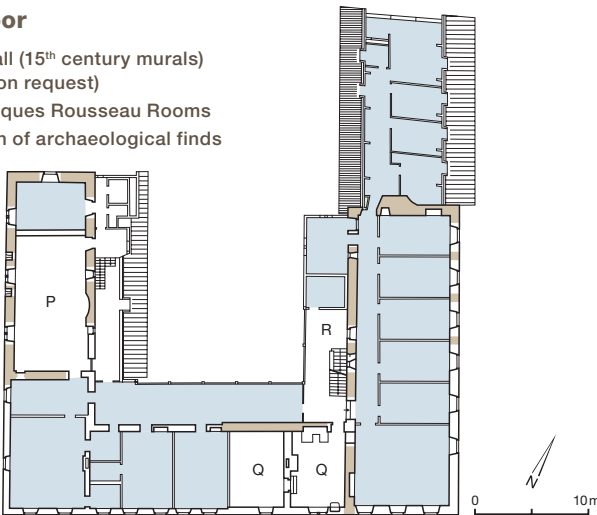
- Romanesque components
- Post-medieval components
- Hotel area
- Information panels



- A Original monastery gate
- B Monastery cellar
- C Western entrance
- D Rear lake room (originally the prior's room, later the steward's quarters)
- E Front lake room
- F Burestube (F and E together were the original monastery refectory)
- G Eastern access to the cloister (original *parlatorium* with archaeological exhibition)
- H Original chapter house
- I Wine cellar (previously the choir of Basilica II)
- K Original transept with crossing marked on the floor
- L Original cloister (with burials)
- M Courtyard
- N Upper courtyard (originally the lay cemetery)
- O Original monks' cemetery

Upper floor

- P Gothic hall (15th century murals) (viewing on request)
- Q Jean-Jacques Rousseau Rooms
- R Exhibition of archaeological finds



Bildungs- und Kulturdirektion des Kantons Bern Direction de l'instruction publique et de la culture du canton de Berne

Amt für Kultur | Archäologischer Dienst
Office de la culture | Service archéologique

Brünnenstrasse 66 | Postfach / Case postale | 3001 Bern / Berne
adb.sab@be.ch | www.be.ch/archaeologie

Useful information: Both the restaurant and hotel are open all year round (except during holidays). Restaurant & Klosterhotel St. Petersinsel, CH-3235 Erlach, Tel. +41 032 338 11 14, info@st-petersinsel.ch, www.st-petersinsel.ch Getting here by boat (timetable www.bielensee.ch); with the island's own small passenger boat (timetable www.st-petersinsel.ch); or on foot (an hour's walk along the Heidenweg from Erlach).

References: Daniel Gutscher et al., Die St. Petersinsel im Bielersee – ehemaliges Cluniazenser-Priorat. Bericht über die Grabungen und Bauuntersuchungen von 1984–1986. Bern 1997. – Daniel Gutscher, Andres Moser, St. Petersinsel, Schweizerische Kunstführer GSK, Series 87, No. 865, Bern 2010.

Cover picture: St. Petersinsel as seen from Ligerz Church.

Picture credits: Cover picture: www.merlinphotography.ch. – View of St. Petersinsel: Gouache by Johann Joseph Hartmann, 1787, Biel Municipal Art Collection. – Pavilion on St. Petersinsel: coloured etching by Franz Niklaus König, 1795, Swiss National Library, Gugelmann Collection of Graphic Art. – Computer-generated reconstruction: Joe Rohrer, Luzern. – Photograph of sarcophagus and all plans and reconstruction drawings: Archaeological Service of Canton Bern.

© 2022 ADB/Daniel Gutscher, Armand Baeriswyl (text), Eliane Schranz (graphics)

3/2022



Kanton Bern
Canton de Berne

Archäologie
Archéologie

St. Petersinsel

Former Cluniac Priory



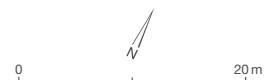
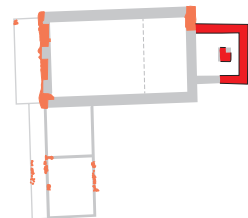
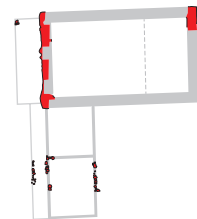


Like most islands, St. Petersinsel has always been a place where people gathered: a cultural and spiritual centre. The idealised concept of an island as a place for individual reflection, however, only began with the Romantic movement.

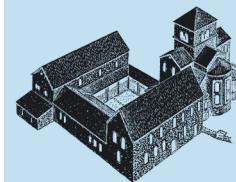
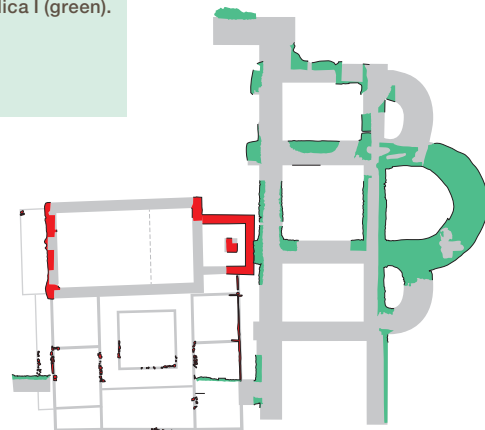
The Romanesque priory as seen from the north-west with a computer-generated reconstruction of the three naves of the church, which were never built.



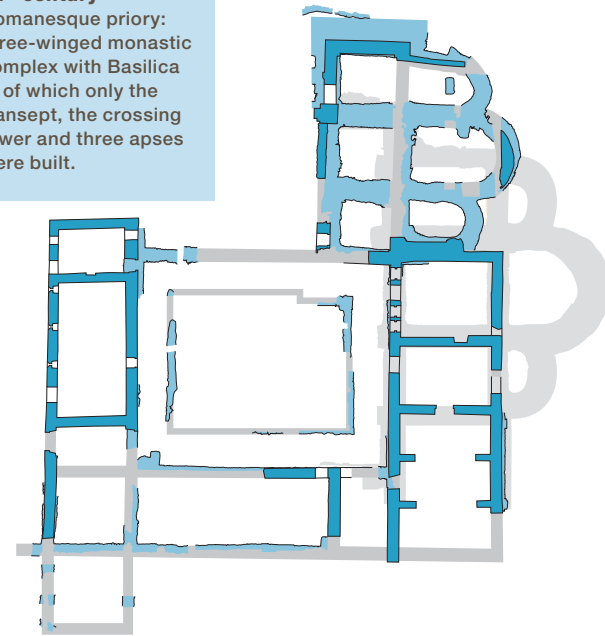
9th/10th century
Monastery with timber-built living quarters and stone church, before and after the addition of the choir; ground plans and reconstruction (view from the south-east).



11th century
Extended timber-built monastery (red) with foundations of the collapsed Basilica I (green).



12th century
Romanesque priory: three-winged monastic complex with Basilica II, of which only the transept, the crossing tower and three apses were built.



History and Archaeology of St. Petersinsel (St Peter's Island)

The history of settlement on the island began a long time ago. Apart from the medieval monastery, excavations also uncovered Bronze Age settlement remains, a Roman temple precinct and Merovingian burials. In the 11th century, the small early medieval monastery became a priory of the powerful Cluniac Order. In 1484, the priory's estates were incorporated into the collegiate chapter of St Vincent in Bern. St. Petersinsel became known throughout Europe after Jean-Jacques Rousseau, philosopher and proto-revolutionary, stayed here in 1765. Despite the fact that his works were banned, they were read by everyone in Bern's educated circles. A day trip to the island became a "must" for travellers on the Grand Tour of Switzerland. Illustrious tourists included Goethe, Empress Josephine Bonaparte and the kings of Prussia, Sweden and Bavaria. Today's visitors to the island still encounter a unique blend of history, literature and natural beauty.

The site is owned by the Burgher Community of Bern and is protected under national and cantonal law. As part of the most recent restoration programme carried out between 1984 and 1987, archaeological excavations were mounted and the site was made accessible to the public by means of an archaeological tour and a publication.

Exhibition room in the *parlatorium*. Merovingian sarcophagus with lid (around 700).



From the pile dwellers to the Romans

Three settlements (11th–5th centuries BC) were situated on the southern, eastern and northern shores of the island. Their fields lay where the hotel stands today. In the eyes of the Romans the island was a sacred area and they maintained a temple precinct here (2nd/3rd centuries AD) on the important water-transport route along the southern foot of the Jura Mountains. Several architectural components survive in the priory house, hinting at buildings with balustrades and porticoes.

From the Merovingians to the first monks

Sarcophagi from the 7th century attest to the presence of a church or burial chapel where Merovingian aristocratic families laid their loved ones to rest. The first monastery was also constructed in the Merovingian period, though somewhat later (7th/8th century). It consisted of timber-built quarters for the monks and a stone-built hall church, which was later enlarged with a square choir.

A Carolingian timber-built monastery and the start of Basilica I.

A south and an east wing were added to the timber monastery buildings. This created the usual Benedictine monastic design, with a narrow cloister enclosing a 5 m square quadrangle. In the mid-11th century, the foundations were laid for a huge three-aisled basilica with a staggered choir (Basilica I). The astonishing leap in size and the design of the church's footprint mark the transition of the monastery to the Cluniac Order.

Collapse due to faulty design

The ground plan of the church was directly related to that of Cluny II and Romainmôtier III and the planned church was to out-strip them both in size. However, the concept turned out to be disastrously miscalculated. The ground appears to have given way, causing the building to collapse and the project to be abandoned. The timber-built monastery continued to be used.

The Cluniac Priory: Romanesque Basilica II

In reaction to this difficulty, a somewhat smaller church (Basilica II) was erected in the first third of the 12th century further to the north-west, where the foundations could be laid on solid molasse rock. The new design consisted of a choir and transept, and the three naves that had been planned were never built. The church is believed to have been the burial place of Count William IV of Burgundy, who was murdered in Payerne in 1126/27.

Monastic buildings

The monastic buildings were constructed to the south. The timber-built monastery continued to exist while the two-storey east and west wings we see today were built in stone alongside it. The early medieval monastic buildings were probably demolished after the middle of the 12th century and the south wing was erected.