Wildhaus

Places

Station 1: Zwingli Birthplace

The house where Ulrich Zwingli was born is in the Lisighaus section of Wildhaus, and is one of Switzerland's oldest intact farmhouses. Nobody knows when it was built or by whom. The building served as a schoolhouse in the 19th century, and was then renovated around 1900 and gifted to the Evangelical Reformed Church of Canton St. Gallen, which now runs it as a museum.

The two-storey log construction consists of a living and kitchen area, a parlor, and a side room on the ground floor, and two bedrooms upstairs. A number of changes have been made to the house since it was built. The front door is, for example, not the original entrance, which was probably on the west side of the house instead. The row of large windows in front was also only installed when the building was used as a school. The furnishings derive mostly from the Swiss National Museum or from the region.

Station 2: Zwingli Source and Zwingli Well

There has been a source providing reliably excellent water since time immemorial near the Zwingli House. The Lisighaus settlement in fact probably grew around this source. The oldest rights to the water belonged to the house, and young Ulrich must have drunk water from the source or from the

well built atop it. The well in place there today was built by the Winterthur-based architect Edwin Bosshardt in 1951. The Zwingli relief is the work of Bern-based artist Karl Hänny.

Station 3: Wildhaus Reformed Church

Wildhaus split off from Gams Parish in 1484 and became its own church congregation. That same year, today's *Liebfrauenkirche* ("Church of Our Lady") was consecrated. The bell is from 1396 and was originally located in the Wildenburg Chapel. In 1506, Ulrich Zwingli held his first mass in the church. From 1595 to 1777, the church was used by Reformed and Catholic Christians alike, as Toggenburg was one of the few regions where both confessions existed side by side. In 1777, the Catholics of Wildhaus would build their own church.

Station 4: Old St. John's Priory *(Probstei Alt St. Johann)*

The Old St. John's Benedictine monastery was first mentioned in records in 1152, and spanned expansive manors in Toggenburg and in the Rhein Valley. The monastery came into its prime in the 14th century, and then survived the Reformation but was incorporated into the St. Gallen Abbey as a priory in 1555. Following a fire in 1626 and mysterious deaths, the priory was moved to the new location in 1629, the New St. John's Priory. It would then become an important outpost of the Counterreformation. The Catholic church and show garden there are worth a visit.

History

The area of transition from Toggenburg to the Rhein Valley was not settled until a late date. While people began to make use of the Alpine foothills in Late Antiquity, Wildenburg Castle was not constructed until around 1200 by the noble Von Sax family. The castle would then lend its name to the agricultural settlement. In 1484, the year Ulrich Zwingli was born, the Wildhaus church was consecrated and left Gams Parrish to became part of the Diocese of Chur.

Although Toggenburg was part of the Princely Abbey of St. Gallen, most of its inhabitants were Reformed after the Reformation. Toggenburg was one of the few regions in which people of both confessions were able to profess their faith. In the 17th century, the Abbey of St. Gallen made efforts as part of the Counterreformation to move Reformed Christians to return to the Catholic faith, and had Catholic churches built in most places in addition to the old churches that had become Reformed. Today, there is a slightly larger number of Reformed than Catholic Christians in Wildhaus.

Wildhaus was part of an area without its own sovereignty. The remote and somewhat affluent Wildhaus was able to enjoy a certain amount of autonomy around 1500. Toggenburg, as a former county, formed alliances with Glarus and Schwyz, and even declared its independence in 1530, but following the Second War of Kappel, the Princely Abbey of St. Gallen was able to regain its rights to the area in 1531. Since 2010, Wildhaus has formed a political commune together with Alt St. Johann. At just under 1100 meters above sea level (village center), Wildhaus is the highest village in Canton St. Gallen and has the highest postal code in Switzerland: 9658.

Ulrich Zwingli

Zwingli was born in Wildhaus in Toggenburg on January 1, 1484. Zwingli completed his theological and humanistic education in Basel. The Council of Zurich then appointed him to be a "people's priest" at the Zurich Grossmünster, where he began his tenure in 1519, on his 35th birthday. Through his exegesis of the Bible, Zwingli was able to criticize problems in the church and religion of his time, as well as the lucrative career of mercenaries. He had provided pastoral care at the 1515 Battle of

Marignano and had come to know the suffering of the mercenaries. At the time, Zwingli still believed in the ability of the Catholic Church to reform.

During Lent 1522, the book printer Froschauer and his apprentices were charged with having eaten sausages for dinner. Zwingli defended the "culprits" with sermons, one of which was published as *Von Erkiesen und Freiheit der Speisen* ("Regarding the Choice and Freedom of Foods"). In January 1523, the city council organized a disputation on Zwingli's teachings and permitted him to continue. A year later the council rescinded the Lent laws in their entirety. In 1524, Zwingli married Anna Reinhart, which constituted his actual break with the Catholic Church.

Zwingli's sermons, writings, and personal influence resulted in the Zurich City Council removing images of the saints and church treasures in the following years. Organ music and song were also abolished from worship services for a number of years. The altar for the Sacrifice of the Mass was also replaced by a simple table. The Lord's Supper was now to be seen as a celebration of thanks and commemoration. It was indeed the Lord's Supper that divided Zwingli from Luther. Luther believed in the actual presence of Christ in the bread and wine while Zwingli only believed in a symbolic one.

Together with Philip I, Landgrave of Hesse, Zwingli had great plans for a Reformed axis to liberate all of Europe from Catholicism. The particularly powerful Bern became Reformed in 1528 upon Zwingli's intervention, and Switzerland appeared to have found peace after the First Kappel War. Zurich was, however, taken by surprise and ill-prepared for the Second Kappel War in 1531, and was roundly defeated. Zwingli himself was killed on the battlefield. His death would catapult the Reformation into a deep crisis in Zurich and well beyond.

Source URL: https://ref-500.ch/en/guide/wildhaus