

Maulbronn Abbey

The history of the Cistercian Abbey of Maulbronn actually begins at the beginning of the 12th century near Mühlacker. The knight Walther von Lomersheim wanted to found a new convent here, but then had to move it because the original location turned out to be unfavourable. A previously completely undeveloped area in the Salzach valley was chosen as the new site. There is a legend about the choice of location and the foundation of the monastery, according to which the monks, who already belonged to the convent at that time, sent out a mule. When the mule stopped at a spring to quench its thirst, the monks saw this as a sign that they should settle their new monastery here. Today, this legend is commemorated by the Donkey Fountain and the mule in the coat of arms of the town of Maulbronn.

The Romanesque basilica of Maulbronn, which forms the centre of the monastery, was consecrated as early as the middle of the 12th century. Until the end of the monastic period in the middle of the 16th century, the monastery was repeatedly rebuilt and extended, so that today, in addition to the Romanesque basilica, all phases of the Gothic period can be found there.

One of the principles of a Cistercian order was to live isolated from the outside world. For this reason, handicraft businesses and agriculture were also attached to the monastery, so that the inhabitants of the convent could provide for themselves.

At the beginning of the 16th century, the monastery fell to the Duchy of Württemberg due to political unrest. The then Duke Ulrich of Württemberg decided in favour of the new Protestant faith. Thus the monastery was secularised. Duke Christoph of Württemberg then founded a school in Maulbronn to train future pastors of the Protestant Church. This school became the Protestant Seminary in 1806 and is still located in the building of the monastery. Its students included some later celebrities, for example the astronomer Johannes Kepler and the poets Friedrich Hölderlin, Justinus Kerner and Hermann Hesse.

In 1993, Maulbronn Monastery was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, the main reason being the cultural landscape shaped by the Cistercians.