

= Sélestat =

Sélestat ( pronounced : [ sel?sta ] ; Alsatian : Schlettstätt ; German : Schlettstadt ) is a commune in the north @-@ east region of France . An administrative division ( sous @-@ préfecture ) of the Bas @-@ Rhin department , the town lies on the Ill river , 17 kilometres ( 11 mi ) from the Rhine and the German border . Sélestat is located between the largest communes of Alsace , Strasbourg and Mulhouse .

In 2013 , Sélestat had a total population of 19 @,@ 332 , which makes it the eighth most populous town in Alsace . During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance it was the third largest city in the region , after Strasbourg and Colmar , and it is ranked the third commune in Alsace for cultural heritage . Sélestat was founded in the 8th century as a port on the Ill and it experienced a long period of prosperity thanks to the trade in wine and a thriving religious and cultural life . It gradually declined after the Reformation and the French conquest in the 17th century . The town eventually experienced a new demographic growth in the second half of the 20th century when it became a small industrial and cultural centre .

Thanks to its rich heritage , which includes the renowned Humanist Library and an imposing pair of medieval churches , Sélestat is an important tourist destination in Alsace . It also benefits from its location on the Alsace wine road and its proximity to Haut @-@ K?nigsbourg castle . Aside from the medieval old town , the commune of Sélestat encompasses a nature reserve including one of the largest riparian forests of France .

= = Name = =

The present name of the town is a Frenchification of the original Germanic name . It appeared soon after the French conquest in the 17th century . The town is called Schlettstätt ( [ ??l?d ? ?d ? ?d ? ] ) in Alsatian and Schlettstadt ( German pronunciation : [ ??let ? ?tat ] ) in German .

Sélestat was first mentioned in 727 as Sclastat . It was mentioned as Scalistati in 775 , as Slectistat in 881 , as Sclazistat in 884 and as Slezestat in 1095 . The current German name , Schlettstadt , appeared in 1310 , although various spellings can be noticed on posterior documents , such as Schlestat , Schlet ( t ) stat and Schlestat . The French administration used various forms from the 17th to the 19th century , such as Frenchified ( Sélestat , Sélestadt ) and Germanic ( Schlestadt , Schelestadt ) . The town was officially known as Schlettstadt between 1871 and 1919 , when Alsace was part of the German Empire . Since 1920 , the town 's French name is fixed as Sélestat .

The origin of the name " Schlettstadt " is unclear . It probably derives from Germanic words slade or sclade meaning " marshes " , and stat for " city " . Sélestat would then be a " city in the marshes " , a reference to its position in the Grand Ried , a vast area subject to flooding that stretches over the centre of Alsace . Stat could also mean " area " rather than " city " .

A popular myth explains that the town takes its name from a dragon called Schletto that founded the settlement after opening up the nearby Lièpvre valley in the Vosges mountains .

= = History = =

= = = Birth of the town = = =

Sélestat was first mentioned in 727 AD but the town probably has an earlier Celtic or Roman origin . Archaeological findings provide evidence of human settlement during the Mesolithic , the Neolithic and the Bronze Age . A large number of wood piles dating from the 1st and 2nd centuries AD were discovered around St. Quirin chapel , suggesting a Roman settlement . At that time Sélestat might have already been a port on the river Ill .

When Sélestat started to appear in written documents in the 8th century , it may have been a market town or simply a village populated by fishermen and farmers . The area was part of the estate of Eberhard , a member of the Alsatian ducal family , who donated it to Murbach Abbey at the

end of his life . In 775 , Charlemagne spent Christmas in Sélestat , which indicates that the town must have had enough appropriate buildings and population to accommodate his court and troops .

In the 1080s , Sélestat was the property of Hildegard von Eguisheim , mother of Frederick I , Duke of Swabia , the first member of the House of Hohenstaufen . Hildegard transformed the place into a religious centre when she founded St. Faith 's Church , which she gave to the Benedictines of Conques Abbey . Monks from Conques opened a priory next to the church in 1092 . The House of Hohenstaufen quickly became the leading dynasty of the Holy Roman Empire , which came to the imperial throne in 1152 . Being under their protection , the priory of Sélestat strongly influenced local life . Even though Sélestat constituted a distinct parish , its priest had only limited power and the Benedictine prior was the true head of the municipality . At the end of the 12th century , the Hohenstaufen dynasty gradually lost power and as a result the priory started to decline . The citizens used this opportunity to reduce the prior 's dominance and secure the power of their parish . They started to build a new parish church in the 1220s . St. George 's Church was designed in Gothic style and was significantly larger than St. Faith 's Church , another way to signify the end of Benedictine hegemony .

= = = Free imperial city = = =

Frederick II , ruler of the Holy Roman Empire in the 13th century , realised that his dynasty was losing its power and granted freedoms to many cities in order to keep their allegiance . These cities became Free imperial cities and Sélestat became one of them in 1217 . Under the new status Sélestat was able to build city walls and collect taxes on its own . Its serfs and settlers were freed . The German monarch Adolf of Nassau granted Sélestat a constitution in 1292 . It was amended many times but it regulated local politics until 1789 . Although the new status favoured trade and prosperity , free cities in Alsace were afraid that they would not be defended by imperial forces if a conflict was to occur . So they decided to form an alliance called the Decapolis in 1354 , which comprised ten cities : ( Haguenau , Colmar , Wissembourg , Turckheim , Obernai , Kayserberg , Rosheim , Munster , Sélestat and Mulhouse ) . The seat of the alliance was in Haguenau but its archives were kept in Sélestat . Because the town was the most centrally located , it often hosted meetings of the association .

The Benedictine priory was closed in 1424 after many years of decline . It had long lost its power to the local nobility that were gradually replaced by the bourgeoisie in the mid @-@ 14th century . Nevertheless , Sélestat remained a religious centre even after the closing of the priory . Convents were established in the 13th century by Dominicans , Knights Hospitaller and Franciscans . Several abbeys located outside of the town also had a residence in town . At the beginning of the 16th century , Sélestat was a noted centre of Renaissance humanism thanks to its celebrated Latin school . Reformers Beatus Rhenanus and Martin Bucer were among the school 's alumni . This school helped spread Protestant ideas among the population , although the local authorities remained faithful to Rome . Erasmus of Rotterdam visited Sélestat four times between 1515 and 1522 .

Being a free city , Sélestat attracted settlers from the region who sought protection , freedom and a thriving economic environment . The first city wall , which had become too constricting , was replaced in 1280 , and a third wall had to be erected in the 16th century as the city grew . At the end of the Middle Ages , the population was estimated at between 5 @,@ 000 and 6 @,@ 000 . It was then the fourth largest Alsatian town after Strasbourg ( 18 @,@ 000 ) , Colmar and Haguenau ( 6 @,@ 000 each ) . The local economy reached its zenith around 1500 . It was centered on shipping and trade ( mainly hay , cereals , wine , fish , glass , iron and salt ) . As the road network was poor and dangerous , goods transited via the Ill river .

= = = Decline = = =

The decline of the town started in the 1520s , when the humanist school lost its former influence . The troubles surrounding the Protestant Reformation brought instability and unrest to the region .

The town experienced the German Peasants' War in 1525 and its convents were sacked by a mob in 1534 . During the same period Sélestat lost its pre-eminence in the Decapolis because the city of Mulhouse left the alliance in 1515 and was replaced by Landau in 1521 , moving the geographical centre of the alliance to the north .

During the 17th century , Alsace was one of the main battlefields of the Thirty Years War . Sélestat was seized by the Swedes in 1632 after a month-long siege . They surrendered the town to their French allies two years later . The local population long remained predominantly faithful to the House of Habsburg . The Peace of Westphalia ( 1648 ) formalised the annexation of the Decapolis by France . Sélestat was briefly occupied by the Germans during the Franco-Dutch War in 1674 . The Treaties of Nijmegen ( 1679 ) that ended the war also abolished the Decapolis .

At first , Sélestat was a major strategic stronghold for the French . Located near the Rhine , it controlled the access to the Vosges mountains and the rest of France . Vauban , the foremost military architect at that time , rebuilt the town walls between 1675 and 1691 . However , after the conquest of Strasbourg in 1681 Sélestat lost much of its strategic importance , as Strasbourg was better located . But it remained a garrison town , and the troops stationed there helped to improve the faltering local economy . Although Protestantism was not forbidden in Alsace , French authorities largely encouraged Catholicism and opened three new convents in Sélestat . Jews were expelled from the town in 1642 . During the French Revolution the population was extremely conservative and opposed to change . The new territorial organisation confirmed the decline of the town , which did not become a prefecture and was not distinguished as a subprefecture until 1806 , when it replaced Barr in that capacity . Sélestat suffered from the Napoleonic wars as it was besieged and bombed by the Bavarians in 1814 and blockaded by a German coalition in 1815 .

== Since 1815 ==

Industry appeared very early in Sélestat . The town had already several factories at the beginning of the 19th century : a tillery , a sawmill , 12 tanneries and 11 mills . Sélestat quickly became specialised in wire gauze making but it never became a large industrial centre , remaining a small town with limited influence . The completion of the Strasbourg-Basel railway ( 1840 ) , one of the first to be built in France , did not lead to significant urban development . The town walls that still encircled the town were a significant factor in its economic and demographic stagnation . After the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 , Alsace and a part of Lorraine were annexed by the new German Empire . The German authorities demolished the city walls in 1874 and built new spacious neighbourhoods around the old town , as they did in Strasbourg and Metz .

Sélestat became French again after the First World War , during which almost a thousand inhabitants died . It was part of the Third Reich during the Second World War . Its liberation took three months and ended in February 1945 . The town is a recipient of the War Cross 1914-1918 and War Cross 1939-1945 . Sélestat has experienced steady demographic and economic growth since 1945 . Its population almost doubled between 1946 and 1999 and two industrial parks were built to accommodate new large factories . The service industry has enriched the town's economy since the 1970s with a large number of small businesses .

South of the town , at 48 ° 15 ' 4 " N 7 ° 25 ' 28 " E , a large broadcasting facility was used for transmitting on 1161 kHz and 1278 kHz in the medium-wave range . It was opened in 1948 and ceased to emit on 1 January 2016 .

== Governance ==

Sélestat is one of the six subprefectures of the Bas-Rhin département . As such it is at the head of the Sélestat-Erstein arrondissement . Sélestat is also the administrative centre of a canton including 28 other communes which primarily serve as a constituency for local elections . Sélestat is part of the 5th Bas-Rhin constituency for national elections . Since 2002 , the Member of the National Assembly for the constituency has been the Republican Antoine Herth .

Sélestat is a member of a federation of communes with shared competencies : the Communauté de

communes de Sélestat . Sélestat is its main town , and it includes 11 neighbouring villages . It was created in 1995 to replace an older but similar structure founded in 1969 . Sélestat is also the seat of the Central Alsace pays , a structure aiming at developing the area .

The town has had a council since 1292 , when it was granted a constitution under the Holy Roman Empire . The constitution shaped the local political system until the French Revolution of 1789 . Since then , the town has been administered as all the other communes of France . Its council currently comprises 33 councillors , whose number is defined by law according to the size of the population . The town also has a mayor elected by the councillors .

Alsace in general is a stronghold of the French right . The main French right @-@ wing party , The Republicans , currently holds a large majority in the council ( 26 councillors ) . Marcel Bauer , who has been mayor since 2001 , is also a member of that party . Voters in Sélestat generally favour right @-@ wing candidates at other elections as well , although Sélestat was governed by the Socialist Party between 1989 and 2001 .

### = = Geography = =

Sélestat is located at the very centre of Alsace , near the limit separating the Bas @-@ Rhin and Haut @-@ Rhin departments , which traditionally correspond to Lower and Upper Alsace , respectively . The town is located between Strasbourg and Mulhouse , the first being 42 kilometres ( 26 mi ) north and the latter 57 kilometres ( 35 mi ) south of the city . Sélestat is also located between Obernai ( 22 kilometres ( 14 mi ) ) and Colmar ( 21 kilometres ( 13 mi ) ) . On the other side of the Rhine , Freiburg im Breisgau is around 40 kilometres ( 25 mi ) distant .

Sélestat lies on the Alsace plains , a narrow , very fertile area that stretches between the Rhine and the Vosges mountains . The Ill flows parallel to the Rhine and crosses Sélestat . This river frequently branches and swells , making the area very wet and subject to flooding . Sélestat is only 4 kilometres ( 2 mi ) from the Vosges , at the opening of one of the rare valleys crossing the mountain range and providing a connection to the rest of France . This valley corresponds to the course of the Giessen , a 35 kilometres ( 22 mi ) long tributary of the Ill . In contrast to the Ill , which has a constant annual flow , the Giessen is a mountain river subject to sudden increases in the water level , especially during the spring thaw period . The Giessen passes north of the town and meets the Ill several kilometers to the east , in Ebersmunster .

The town itself is built on the Giessen alluvial fan so it is slightly higher than the rest of the Alsace plains . Much of its territory is however located on areas liable to flooding . Such areas are mostly located inside the Illwald natural reserve and comprise both forests and meadows . There the Ill forms more than 150 kilometres ( 93 mi ) of waterways .

### = = Transport = =

Despite its small size , Sélestat is well connected to transport networks . Alsace as a whole , being part of the economic heart of Europe , has a high road and railway density .

The town is served by the A35 autoroute , a motorway that crosses Alsace north to south , connecting Strasbourg , Colmar and Mulhouse . Further south it connects to the Swiss A3 motorway , and further north to the German B9 highway . Taken together , these three roads connect the Netherlands to Austria . Sélestat is also located at one of the seven crossings of the Vosges mountains , connecting Lorraine to Alsace and Germany .

Sélestat train station was opened in 1840 , which makes it one of the oldest in France . It lies on the Strasbourg ? Basel railway , which also serves Colmar , Mulhouse and Saint @-@ Louis . Sélestat is at the terminus of two local railways that are partly closed : Sélestat @-@ Lesseux , now ending in Lièpvre , and Sélestat @-@ Saverne , now ending in Molsheim . The former railway runs towards the west through the Vosges , while the latter runs towards the northwest . A third local line , Sélestat @-@ Sundhouse , closed in 1953 . Although one of the oldest in France , the Strasbourg @-@ Basel railway allows high speed travel of ( 200 kilometres per hour ( 120 mph ) ) because it is very rectilinear and crosses a very flat landscape . Sélestat is served by all regional trains between

Strasbourg and Basel ( one train in each direction every hour on weekdays ) . Local trains also run between Sélestat and Molsheim , Sélestat and Strasbourg and Sélestat and Barr . Sélestat is served by a Paris @-@ Colmar TGV every day in each direction , by Strasbourg @-@ Nice and Strasbourg @-@ Cerbère Intercités in the summer , and by EuroCity trains connecting Zurich to Brussels and Basel to Luxembourg City .

SNCF and the Bas @-@ Rhin council operate coach lines between Sélestat and Sainte @-@ Marie @-@ aux @-@ Mines , Saint @-@ Dié @-@ des @-@ Vosges , Ribeauvillé , Marckolsheim , Sundhouse and Villé . The council also arranges for seasonal connections with Haut @-@ K?nigsbourg castle and Europa Park .

Sélestat and its communauté de communes have their own local bus network , the " Transport intercommunal de Sélestat " ( TIS ) . It comprises two lines , one connecting Châtenois to Ebersheim , and the other Scherwiller to Muttersholtz . These two lines make several stops in Sélestat proper , which is at the centre of the network .

## == Demography ==

As of the 2013 census , Sélestat had 19 @, @ 332 inhabitants . It is the 8th most populated commune in Alsace , having reached its maximum population in 2006 , with 19 @, @ 459 inhabitants . The oldest preserved birth registries of the town 's Catholic parish go back to the year 1608 ; the oldest vital records ( état civil ) go back to the year 1793 .

Sélestat was one of the largest towns in the region from the Middle Ages until the beginning of the 19th century . In 1801 , it was still the third most populous in Alsace behind Strasbourg and Colmar . It then had 7 @, @ 375 inhabitants , a slightly higher figure than for Mulhouse ( 7 @, @ 197 ) and Haguenau ( 7 @, @ 009 ) . Through the 19th century , Sélestat did not take advantage of industrialisation and rural exodus because its city wall and military function prevented urban growth . It reached its overpopulation threshold around 1830 , with around 10 @, @ 000 inhabitants living on only 32 hectares ( 79 acres ) . Only after the Second World War did Sélestat experience significant demographic growth , almost doubling its population in 50 years . However , this growth was not strong enough for Sélestat to recover its previous rank .

The demographic growth that occurred in Sélestat after 1945 was primarily due to a relatively high birth rate ( 20 @. @ 1 ? in Sélestat over the period 1968 ? 1975 , compared to 16 @. @ 9 ? in France ) . After 1975 , this rate progressively declined to match the national figure . Net migration figures remained slightly negative until 1990 because Sélestat and Central Alsace were on the margins of the metropolitan areas of Strasbourg and Colmar and lacked attractiveness . Since 1990 , the Strasbourg area greatly expanded to gradually reach Sélestat . The town has thus become more attractive to newcomers .

The population of Sélestat is relatively young , 39 @. @ 7 % of the population were under 30 in 2009 ( France : 37 @. @ 2 % ) and the percentage of people over 60 years old ( 19 % ) was lower than the national ( 21 @. @ 8 % ) figure . Sélestat has a significant proportion of people between 15 and 44 ( 42 @. @ 7 % , compared to 38 @. @ 9 % for all of France ) because it attracts a large number of young actives and couples starting a family . As other towns in the region , such as Saverne , Haguenau and Molsheim , it welcomes young adults and encourages them to settle in the surrounding villages .

## == Economy ==

At the end of 2010 , Sélestat had 1 @, @ 823 businesses , most of them ( 1 @, @ 240 ) in the tertiary sector . A large share were small businesses ; only 10 % had more than 10 employees . Sélestat is a retail and services centre for the whole Central Alsace , with a large shopping park and administrative and educational institutions . Industry is nonetheless represented by some large firms , such as the Société alsacienne de meubles , which builds kitchens and bathrooms under a Schmidt and Cuisinella franchise , Amcor ( aluminium packaging ) , Daramic ( battery separators ) , Albany ( gauzes for the printing industry ) , Wanzl ( warehouse material ) , and DHJ ( textiles ) .

Most of the large factories are in an industrial estate located south of the town centre . Created in the 1930s , it covers a site of 67 hectares ( 166 acres ) . The newer commercial estate north of the town was developed in the 1970s and is dedicated to retail and cottage industry . It covers 134 hectares ( 331 acres ) . The town centre is also an important shopping area with more than 200 businesses .

= = Sights and culture = =

In terms of architecture the city is one of the richest and most varied among the smaller cities of Alsace . Although it is only the 8th most populous town in the region , it has the third largest cultural heritage after Strasbourg and Colmar . Sélestat has 35 listed buildings and 119 additional sites that are indexed in the French list of cultural heritage monuments .

= = Museums = =

The Humanist Library displays one of the oldest and most homogeneous collections of medieval manuscripts and Renaissance books in Europe . Its core is the still almost intact library of Beatus Rhenanus , which was bequeathed to the city and has been maintained by it ever since . The institution also holds the books that belonged to the Latin school of Sélestat , at which Rhenanus and many other reformers were educated around 1500 . In 2011 , the library has been inscribed in the Unesco 's Memory of the World Register .

The library is open to both researchers and tourists , with an exhibition displaying some of its most noteworthy items : an 8th @-@ century lectionary , the first books printed in Alsace , a copy of the *Cosmographiae Introductio* where the oldest mention of America can be found , and a 1521 document which contains the oldest record of a Christmas tree .

Sélestat also has a museum dedicated to bread and baking and it is the seat of the FRAC d 'Alsace , a regional institution whose aim is to collect contemporary works of art ( see below , Cultural institutions and events ) . These works are regularly part of temporary exhibits in Sélestat and other places in Alsace . FRAC possesses works by Aurélie Nemours , Olivier Debré , Mario Merz and Panamarenko , among other artists .

= = Religious architecture = =

Sélestat has two large and remarkable churches from the Middle Ages . St. Faith 's Church is the oldest and a prime example of Romanesque architecture . Its design is related to similar buildings both in the Rhine region and in Lorraine . It was built during the second half of the 12th century to replace an earlier building . The church was renovated in the 19th century and a medieval death mask was found during this work . It is often attributed to Hildegard of Eguisheim , founder of the church , and is now displayed in a crypt .

St. George 's Church has always served as the main parish church . It is often referred to as " the cathedral " because of its size , but it has never been the seat of a diocese . Its construction started soon after 1200 and was completed at the beginning of the 15th century . Its design is pure Gothic , save for a Romanesque side portal . The choir , the last part to be completed , is the most remarkable element . It is illuminated by 288 stained glass panels , of which 55 date from the 15th century .

Most of the convents of the town have disappeared ; the Dominican convent is the only one to have retained much of its original appearance . It was built in the 13th century and still has its church and cloister . The Franciscan convent was completely destroyed , apart from the choir of its church , which now serves as a Protestant church . Sélestat also has an old granary that belonged to the Benedictine priory , and a 16th @-@ century commandery built by the Knights Hospitaller .

The synagogue was built in 1890 . Its architecture is typical of the region , with a square shape and discreet neo @-@ romaneseque ornaments . Its cupola was destroyed in 1940 by the Nazis and never rebuilt . The Jewish cemetery , located outside the old town , was opened in 1622 . It has

several 18th century gravestones showing a Christian artistic influence .

= = = Civil and military architecture = = =

The old town comprises a large number of medieval and Renaissance buildings . The quai des Tanneurs ( " tanners ' quay " ) is one of the most picturesque streets in Alsace . A stream used to flow in the middle of the street until the beginning of the 20th century , the relic of a former noxious @-@ smelling trade , since tanning required large amounts of flowing water for treating and washing animal skins . Most of the old tanner houses date back to the Middle Ages and have a tall attic to provide a ventilated space for drying leather . In the neighbouring streets , rue des Oies ( " geese street " ) and rue des Veaux ( " calf street " ) , many houses were covered with a coat of plaster in the 19th century in order to hide the timbering , which was considered too rustic .

Several hôtels particuliers ( large townhouses ) date from the Renaissance . Most of them have oriel windows that are characteristic of German Renaissance architecture . The grandest of these hôtels belonged to the Ebersmunster abbey and it has a large three @-@ story granary . The Ziegler house has a beautiful oriel that shows the interest of the elite of that time in Antiquity . The oriel partly reflects Vitruvius 's architectural legacy and displays the portraits of four key figures of Antiquity . Baroque architecture is visible on some later hôtels dating from the 17th and 18th century . French classical architecture and its main feature , the mansard roof , were largely employed in the 18th century . To reduce costs , buildings were still built with timber framing , but as this technique was considered too Germanic and rustic , they were often covered with a rendering imitating stone .

The German period ( 1870 ? 1918 ) left some examples of Wilhelminism in the city 's architecture . This prestige @-@ oriented style is a mixture of various earlier styles , including Romanesque , Gothic and neoclassical . Noteworthy are the post office ( 1884 ) , the courthouse ( 1900 ) , the lycée Koeberlé ( 1913 ) and the water tower ( 1906 ) . The latter ( height : 50 m ( 160 ft ) ) was largely inspired by the water tower in Deventer , Netherlands .

The medieval city walls , built in several stages between the 13th and the 16th century , were torn down after the French annexation in the 17th century . However , four towers escaped destruction . The Tour des Sorcières ( " witches ' tower " ) , which served as a gate and a jail , is the tallest . The Tour de l 'Horloge ( " clock tower " ) was also originally part of a gate . The clock and the elaborate roof were added in 1614 . Two much smaller towers can also be seen , one near the Ill river and another integrated into a later house . All these remains date from the 13th century .

New walls were built by Tarade and Vauban in the 17th century . They were in their turn destroyed in 1874 . Only small portions survive : two bastions and the Porte de Strasbourg ( " Strasbourg gate " ) , a good example of French architecture under Louis XIV . Sélestat still has two old arsenals , Sainte @-@ Barbe on the main square ( 1470 ) and Saint @-@ Hilaire ( 1518 ) . The first , with a large crenelated gable , is a fine example of Gothic architecture .

= = = Illwald forest = = =

The Illwald forest was designated a regional nature reserve in 2013 . It covers 1 @,@ 855 hectares ( 4 @,@ 584 acres ) , almost half of the territory of Sélestat , and is one of the largest riparian forests in France . It lies on the Ill , which forms a complex hydrographic network there . The site is subject to flooding and it is characteristic of the Grand Ried , a flat region located between the Ill and the Rhine that serves as a natural spillway for the two rivers .

Common trees are oaks , willows and alders , which tolerate wet soils . Because the phreatic table is very close to the surface , soils hardly freeze in winter and drought rarely occurs in summer . The nature reserve also has meadows and reed beds . Common animals include a large variety of birds ( storks , curlews , harriers ) , amphibians and mammals ( beavers ) . The reserve is home to the largest fallow deer population in France . This animal was introduced to the area in 1854 .

The Illwald contains three chapels that were originally pilgrimage destinations . The Schnellenbuhl chapel was built by Jesuits in 1683 ; Our Lady of the Oaks dates back to the 15th century but it was rebuilt after a fire in 1920 ; Our Lady of Peace was built in 1960 , and St. Anthony was founded in

1280 but rebuilt in 1930 .

= = = Cultural institutions and events = = =

Sélestat is the seat of the Agence culturelle d 'Alsace ( " cultural agency of Alsace " , ACA ) since 1976 . Since 1982 , Sélestat is the seat of the FRAC Alsace , the Alsace branch of the Fonds régional d 'art contemporain ( " Regional Contemporary art fund " ) , administered by the ACA . A biennale dedicated to contemporary art takes place every two year in autumn since 1984 . It has welcomed artists like Daniel Buren , Ben Vautier , Sarkis Zabunyan and Agnès Varda . Since 2006 , Sélestat is the seat of the Pôle interdépartemental d 'archéologie rhénan ( PAIR ) , the " Rhenish inter @-@ départemental center for archaeology " , which conducts and documents archaeological field surveys and excavations in Alsace .

Every year since 1927 , Sélestat has organised a large flower procession through its old town . The " corso fleuri " is one of the biggest floral shows in eastern France . New floats are made each year around a theme and decorated with dahlias only . A carnival procession is also held in March . It is the remnant of a very old tradition started by the town 's butchers . Sélestat also has festivals dedicated to electronic music ( Epidemic Experience ) , satirical cartoons ( Sélest 'ival ) , a spring fun fair , and a summer medieval reenactment with a market and a procession .

The cultural complex Les Tanzmatten , built by Rudy Ricciotti , was inaugurated in 2000 . It serves as the town 's concert and performances hall , as well as for exhibitions , commercial fairs and weddings .

= = Sports = =

Sélestat Alsace Handball is a noted French handball club . It was founded in 1967 . FC Sélestat , the football club , was founded in 1906 .

= = Notable people = =

= = = Born in Sélestat = = =

Martin Bucer , German Protestant reformer  
Fabienne Keller , French politician  
Eugène Koeberlé , French surgeon  
Heinrich Kramer , German inquisitor  
Johannes Mentelin , German printer  
Beatus Rhenanus , German humanist  
Jakob Wimpfeling , German humanist

= = = Connected to Sélestat = = =

Ludwig Dringenberg ( died in Sélestat )  
Thierry Omeyer ( played professionally for Sélestat )  
François Ignace Schaal ( died in Sélestat )

= = Twin towns = =

Sélestat is twinned with four European towns .

Montignies @-@ sur @-@ Sambre , Belgium , since 1959 ( merged with Charleroi in 1977 )  
Waldkirch , Germany , since 1966  
Grenchen , Switzerland , since 1988  
Dornbirn , Austria , since 2006



