

JOHANNESWEG

Hiking Guide

The recommended starting point is in the village of **Pierbach**. However, the trail can be joined in any municipality along the route. A few metres after the western town sign, we turn right, hike up the Ramlberg and continue to the Irxenmayr family farm. The **Johannesbrunnen and the Angels Chapel** invite you to take a short rest. Those who wish can visit the bottling facility for "Irxwasser" and the ball mill, and refill their drinking bottle.

We then descend through the Muehlviertel river valley of the Kleine Naarn, following it for a short stretch towards **Schoenau im Muehlkreis**. After the village, the climb to the **Herrgottsitz** rewards us with a magnificent distant view. The rock can be climbed without much effort. On this rock formation with a seat-shaped hollow, God is said to have rested contentedly after creating the world. Of course, it is more likely that this site was used as a pagan place of sacrifice.

We follow the trail to **Prandegg Castle Ruins**, one of the largest ruins in the province. The striking round tower offers a breathtaking panoramic view all the way to the Alps. With the free Hearonymus app, your smartphone becomes a modern audio guide for the castle and the museum.

We now hike down into the Waldaist valley, with its typical iron-rich water. Next comes an alpine summit experience on the ascent to the **Herzogreitherfelsen**, whose impressive rock formation and splendid long-distance views as far as the mountains make it one of the region's most beautiful viewpoints. Remains of abutments, posts and palisades still testify today that a wooden castle once stood on the summit. Several sacrificial bowls also point to ritual practices here in ancient times.

The Johannesweg now continues to **St. Leonhard bei Freistadt**. A visit to the pilgrimage church, whose origins date back to the early 12th century, is a fitting part of our pilgrimage. We also visit the **Bruendl Chapel and the Augenbruendl** in the village centre. It was built in 1728 on the old village road from St. Leonhard to Ennsedt. Locals attribute strong healing powers to the spring water, especially for the eyes and ears.

The route now climbs to the Haiderberg, where a unique view invites you to pause. Across the natural gem of the Waldaist-Naarn European protected area, you reach the **Galgenbuehel**. In 1570, Knight Christoph Haim, lord of Reichenstein, had the high court, still visible among the trees today, erected on the Robischhof lands as a deterrent and demonstration of power after his subjects had revolted against the high compulsory labour and additional levies.

Downhill, through the forest and along the federal road, the trail leads us on to the **Zwischenstromwiese**. Here the Black and White Aist merge to form the Waldaist. Along the White Aist, the route continues into the centre of **Weitersfelden**.

We follow meadow and forest paths, pass the Natural Cinema and go through the village of Nadelbach. Now comes the summit push to the highest point of the Johannesweg, the **Kammererberg**. The impressive chapel in Steinbloss style and a grand panorama with views of the Alps make every hiker's heart beat faster. A special place of energy where we can consciously experience reflective moments to pause and breathe.

Before we enter **Kaltenberg** (the second-largest Marian pilgrimage site in the Muehlviertel), the hiking route passes the **Ursprung Chapel and the Augenbruendl**. The Augenbruendl, around 150 metres north of the Ursprung Chapel, was already revered as a healing spring around 1600 and was used above all for eye ailments.

On the path to Unterweissenbach, the Way of the Cross passes 14 chapels, some of which were built with the Steinbloss masonry typical of the region. The chapel roofs are crowned with the papal cross, and wooden reliefs by sculptor Felix Weiss from Liebenau adorn the facades. The stone water basin set into the wall gave the eighth station of the Way of the Cross the nickname "Schuesselkapelle".

We reach **Unterweissenbach** with its parish church dedicated to St. Nicholas. Visitors interested in culture should look out for the fine net-ribbed vault. We then head up to the **Wegererstein**. The mighty rock formation with its viewing platform offers a view back towards Kaltenberg.

An alpine summit experience awaits on the ascent to the **Harlingsedt summit cross**, a natural granite platform. Once again, you can enjoy a wonderful view over the Muehlviertel hill country before the route descends to **Koenigswiesen**. In the market town, it is worth taking a look at the late-Gothic parish church with its impressive loop-ribbed vault.

The walk through an impressive natural landscape to the village of Moetlas, where there is a very beautiful Steinbloss chapel, is especially rewarding. Along the panoramic road, the final Johannesweg station at the **Langtaler Chapel** awaits on a rise. It is an ideal resting place with magnificent long-distance views before you climb around the Bischofsberg to reach **Ruttenstein Castle Ruins**. The once enormous stronghold, equipped with seven ring towers and with a history dating back to the 12th century, is one of the most impressive ruins in the country and is demonstrably the largest fortified complex in Austria.

The route now enters the Naarn valley, where you can let your mind wander once more at the **Wasserfelsen** before the trail leads back to Pierbach. At the Friedensfelsen above Pierbach, the **final station** of the Johannesweg, "**Finis terrae**", invites you to look back and say farewell:

Reflect once more on your experiences and take the insights
with you on your journey home.

Individual Tour Planning

Tailored to your available time and fitness level, you can choose from several route suggestions at www.johannesweg.at. Traditionally, the route starts in Pierbach, but of course you can start in any municipality along the Johannesweg. An accommodation directory on the website helps you find places to stay.

The team at the tourism association will be happy to help you plan your individual tour.