

Bleibe in der Alten Kirche Bernkastel-Wehlen:

New life for an old church

A deconsecrated church on the river Mosel is now a holiday home and seminar venue

The first church in Germany to be repurposed into a holiday home and seminar venue opened in the Spring of 2018.

After a two-year phase of planning and renovation, owner Anke Nuxoll-Oster recently opened her doors to welcome guests into this listed building in the wine-growing district of Bernkastel-Wehlen by the river Mosel. Alte Kirche (the Old Church) will comfortably accommodate up to 24 people for group excursions, seminars and celebrations.

Anke, a business studies graduate, is no newcomer to property renovation. In 2007 she discovered her passion for rescuing old buildings and welcoming guests into them. Since then she has saved several houses from ruin and turned them into holiday homes. She focuses on larger properties suitable for group and seminar stays.

Anke Nuxoll-Oster has found, with each new property, that she can barely keep up with demand. There are still too few destinations on the market for larger groups looking for a private, high quality atmosphere as an alternative to traditional hotel stays.

Repurposing not reconstructing

As with her previous projects, host Anke is not only the owner and developer, but has also been involved in the planning, being responsible for all the interior design.

Alte Kirche in Wehlen, a rendered quarrystone building dating from the middle of the 17th century, has been secularised for more than 150 years and came into municipal ownership. The building then served as an alms house and was completely renovated during that period.

The single-knave main building, originally linked by a pointed arch with the choir, was partitioned off. Since then two further links have been made with the choir: a door in the ground floor and a window in the upper floor.

Dividing up the space has proved ideal for the present use: in the course of repurposing, no major works affecting the fabric of the building were needed. Only a few plasterboard walls needed to be installed. Extensive renovation was required throughout the interior and exterior however; among other things, due to pervasive dry rot, the ceiling to the top floor

had to be replaced and new emergency escape routes provided to conform to the latest fire prevention requirements. In the three-storey main building there are now nine bedrooms, seven bathrooms and a large living room.

Meeting and dining in unique surroundings

The eight-metre high choir remains the centrepiece of the accommodation. Thanks to underfloor heating, a convenient cooking island and long tables, it now serves equally as a meeting place, dining room and seminar room with a unique atmosphere. The perfect place for meeting and dining!

The room, somewhat narrower than the main building, has been kept in its original form. It has four pointed windows, double-bay cross-vaulting and a triangular end. Inside it has two pillars with shallow projections and four consoles leading to two bosses with Gothic foliage.

A cloud-shaped wadding lighting installation optimises the acoustics.

Another defining element is the west tower which still has, on the ground floor, a cross vault, two round-arched passages and a portal to the main house, above which there is a cartouche with the royal coat of arms and the date 1669.

The facilities are rounded off perfectly by outside seating and a barbecue area. Later in the year, further rooms will be opened up in the vaulted cellar, ideal, among other things, for wine tastings in a rustic ambience.

Facts and figures

Completion/open: since March 2018

Planning/design/interior design: Anke Nuxoll-Oster

Residential space, total: 350 m². Residential and communal areas: Industrial style choir with kitchen island (65 m²), living room (60 m²), 9 bedrooms for max. 24 people, 7 bathrooms, 2 guest cloakrooms. Area with garden: 1200 m² incl. outside seating and barbecue area.

Vaulted cellar (in progress)

Seminar equipment: 70-inch television, Audio box (Bose), three flip charts, three metal plan walls, facilitator's toolkit.

Address: Brückenstrasse 15, 54470 Bernkastel-Wehlen, Germany (Rhineland-Palatinate)

Location: In the wine district of Wehlen an der Mosel, part of Bernkastel-Kues with its historic centre full of half-timbered buildings and many art-nouveau villas. Situated between Trier (45 km) and Koblenz (100 km). Frankfurt am Main and Cologne and their airports are approximately 150 km away.

Destinations: The town itself is world-famous for the Wehlener Sonnenuhr wine location. Here and in the immediate vicinity there are several top vineyards, where local steep-slope Rieslings can be tasted. Many wine and street festivals also attract visitors. In addition to various Roman remains, such as Trier Roman City, historic locations and fortifications such as Eltz Castle are particularly worth visiting. Nearby Luxemburg also waits to be explored, as do the famous volcanic crater lakes of the Eifelmaare. In addition to this, there are many walking and cycling trails very close by, as well as boat tours.

Participating companies, partners and sponsors

Government grants from funds for the upkeep of cultural heritage sites not owned by the state, from the cultural heritage directorate in Mainz

Interior paint: Farrow & Ball (official interior paint sponsors)

Parquet flooring: Parkett Dietrich GmbH & Co. KG

Tiling: Keramundo (Saint-Gobain Building Distribution Deutschland GmbH)

Sanitary appliances: Megabad

Felt cushions and felt baskets: HEY-SIGN GmbH

Kitchen: Kitchen studio Rubbe (installation). Equipment: Nobilia (manufacturer), Miele (appliances)

Other equipment

Heating: gas heating, underfloor heating on a sealed concrete subfloor (choir)

Furniture: beds and many other items of furniture have been designed by the owner; various antiques; church benches (existing) sofa (Candy)

Further information

www.bleibe.de//www.urlaubsarchitektur.de/de/bleibe-in-der-alten-kirche-bernkastel-wehlen

Story: <https://www.urlaubsarchitektur.de/de/homestory-new-life-for-the-old-church-in-bernkastel-wehlen/>