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Neuzelle Abbey – Brandenburg’s Baroque Wonder

Around 35 kilometres south of Frankfurt Oder stands one of Central Europe’s architectural gems: Neuzelle Abbey. The abbey, which was donated by Henry the Illustrious, Margrave of Meissen, is one of the few fully preserved examples of Cistercian architecture. At the centre of Neuzelle Abbey there is St. Mary’s Catholic Church with its 70-metre-high bell tower, which is the town’s landmark. The original gothic style building was redesigned in the 17th and 18th centuries by Italian and Bohemian artists and since then has been regarded as one of the most important baroque churches in Central Europe. Neuzelle Abbey is known as Brandenburg’s “Baroque Wonder”. “It is a fully

preserved abbey, something seldom found in Brandenburg or Europe.” says Norbert Kannowsky, Director of the Stift Neuzelle Foundation.

A jewel at Neuzelle Abbey is the Abbey Garden, which is being completely restored in 2022. With its paths and stretches of water from the 18th century, steep sloping terraces and historic plants – among them several lemon trees – it is today considered to be the only baroque garden in Brandenburg. Head gardener Ralf Mainz often observes the visitors to “his” garden. “A lot of guests look down from the terraces onto the garden and think they have seen everything. But they are mistaken”. His advice: allow plenty of time for your visit to the baroque Abbey Garden, because it has so much more to offer. “Baroque is all about affluence, exaggeration and hidden surprises.” For the monks, the five-hectare complex was not only a place for rest and reflection. They also grew vines here. A few years ago, another of the Abbey’s highlights appeared beneath the vineyard.

The so-called “Heavenly Theatre” is a museum, specially built underground to house the Neuzelle Passion depictions of the Holy Sepulchre. Norbert Kannowsky calls it “a three-dimensional baroque stage, on which 15 scenes depict the Passion of Christ” and explains “this is unique in Europe, both in terms of its artistic style and its completeness.” The paintings, which date back to 1750, were hidden for 150 years in the church tower, exposed to pigeon droppings and rainwater. Today, following their restoration, they are regarded as a sensation on account of their number, size, and artistic quality.

Back outside the museum, visitors can enjoy a tasty meal in the “Wilde Klosterküche” restaurant. Or pop into the Neuzelle Abbey Brewery, where craft beer has been brewed using traditional methods for over 400 years.

Further information: www.klosterneuzelle.de...

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