

FORTRESSES AND CASTLES (WINDSTEIN-Letterbox)

Approx. 49° N, 7°40 ' east

place	Windstein/Elsass Windstein is situated in France/the Elsass nearby the German border between Obersteinbach and Niederbronn-les-bains. Par exemple you can reach it from the east through Karlsruhe-Wissembourg-Climbach-Lembach-Obersteinbach.
start	After Obersteinbach we drive left in the direction Wineckerthal/Windstein. We leave the large road and drive left into the Windstein Valley, remain on the lower road to a crossing, where at the right hand a small car park with a playground appears, there we park our car.
Equipment	torch, good footwear
difficulty	middle, small upward gradients, two steep, but short rises to the castle mountain length of the migration approx. 6 km, duration depending upon intensive inspection and breaks approx. 2,5 - 3 h.
Info.:	The search for theWindstein-Letterbox leads us into the historical landscape of the Nordelsass. Here in the Middle Ages was the former heartland of the "Holy Roman Empire Of German Nation", which we see beside other things by the quantity of (Staufer-)Castles on the mountains all around.

Past the fortresses of the Maginot line (World War II), the beautiful round leads to the group of castles known as "Windstein", which covers after newest research at least 4 castles. The two plants of "Old Windstein" are a typical example for the "Wasgauer rock castles" with chambers, stairs, wells beaten out of the rock and the donjon on a high sandstone rock. The southern plant of "Old Windstein" shows the only example of a long, underground siege course, by which the aggressors (after approximately 6 weeks chisels) penetrated in the castle inside. "New -Windstein" is a small, but architecturally content-fuller plant with beautiful apartment tower and pronounced details at windows, doors, oriels - far older than officially known. The sandstone rock north from "New-Windstein" -the "unknown castle" - hides at least one castle, however showing little pieces of walls and stone works.

Literature: Thomas Biller: "Die Burgengruppe Windstein", unfortunately out of print, in Libraries still available, very detailed.
Rüdiger Bernges: "Die Felsenburgen im Wasgau" , an overview of the most important castles in Southern Pfalz and Northern Elsass with description of start, history, ground plans
Very good! New edition available. Ask your bookstore.

Web: www.dickemauern.de
www.felsenburgen.de

CLUE

from the car park our way leads to the playground, there we have a short rest in the swing.
In front of us there is a playing field on the ground.

How many more fields are there than on an normal chess field? A _____

Straight ahead, beside the little source we follow the small road (rue de la foret) to the right until we reach the edge of the forest, then further straight forward. We walk the 2. path left (counted from the edge of the wood) after the and reach after a while walking lightly upwards a fork. We stay on our way right. pass a little Shelter and stand after approx. 300 steps forwards near a shelter with tank dome. This is the western one, we search for the eastern shelter.

A sign over the door shows us the year of construction. The two last numbers are B _____ (The cross sum is 5)

annotation shelter: the shelters are clear and free of ammunition. Please enter only with torch, because in the former "sanitary room" the soil has been broken through.

Even if there are over 700 years difference between these fortresses and the forts of the Middle Ages, there are many similarities: The situation at the steep slope, the thick walls, openings for throwing and shooting with guns(= bows), turrets, close concrete(=Stone) - chambers, solid doors... Nevertheless we regard these building not with the same romantic feeling like an old mediavally fort. We all hope, that these days are gone forever.

At the large crossing, there we find a sign with an altitude and a sign to "Windstein".

What is our altitude? C _____ m

We follow the sign "Windstein" downhill. Through the trees we have a beautiful view into the valley and to the rock of the castle "Old - Windstein". We reach a fork (walk left), then we stand in front of a large crossing. We go straight forward, after approximately 40 steps we turn left -next a sign "21" on a little path steeply uphill: we climb the castle mountain of the rear (northern) plant of "Old - Windstein".

We stand breathless before a well good-held wall with 2 windows in it. On the left of it the rock stages highly, past at little guard`s room and through the gate - we are inside.

We count the visible stones in the the new rear wall of the guard`s room. D _____

We roam over stairs, by courses and gates and come further south to the deep cut (neck ditch), which separates the two castle plants. At the neck ditch we take the way on the eastern side of the rock and reach over bars and stairs along the well pit the plateau on the top.

From here above we can enjoy the wonderful prospect over the valley - and down to the cafe. Is there still an free seat on the terrace? Over the well pit, in the rising wall, we read a sprayed number.

How many digits does the number have? E _____

Between well pit and foundation of an altar(!), a few stone stages and then a small stony way leads downwards. We notice holes beside our way downwards: under us there is the underground siege mine !
If you want, you can climb into it and climb inside up until you can look down in the former fort yard.

At the cafe, we order some coffee, red wine or or a glas of beer (there is only a little left to do) and look around precisely . Yes, the stone balls at the stairs are former stone-sling balls of the siege!

Coffee and red wine away - we want to get our stamp and therefore we leave the cafe and climb the castle mountain of "New-Windstein". After 10 steep minutes we stand directly in the neck ditch of the castle in front of the turret. Now it is time to take a close view to the fort.

In the rock cellar there are two columns, builded in the 19. Century for reason of security (Look at the great splits at the ceiling)

How many stone disks build the rear column? F _____.

We go upstairs to the former apartment tower. Of course, we sit like the knights in the window niche and enjoy the view over the valley, look at the good-held windows, the remains of the fire-places and other details.

How much console stones are in the lower floor of the apartment tower at the south wall? G _____.

On the castle there is a good-holded shooting oriel. We search for this and place ourselves directly under it.

We see a little path towards (D-F)_____ degrees. We follow this way starting (and counting) at the oriel, make (C:E) _____ steps and turn then approx. (F*G) _____ steps to the right.

We are standing in the "unknown castle", perhaps in the neck ditch? We look for a straight wall surface with one rectangular beam hole. We place ourselves with our back to the hole and look straight forward- we see a line of trees .

The Windstein-Letterbox is at the end of the right root of tree No. (A-B) _____ under a stone, hidden under leaves.

Unobserved by othe hikers we stamp and hide the box again in its hiding place.

The way back: either again forwards to New-Windstein (something You have forgotten, something still to look at?) or simply the way further down to the cafe (thirst?). From the cafe we walk the road downwards, the first road left and after 10 minutes we stand again at the car. Homewards, our trained eyes discover many WW II shelters and medieval castles at the sideof the road. Good travel.