

Abbey of St Gall (from UNESCO site: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/268/>)

The Convent of St Gall, a perfect example of a great Carolingian monastery, was, from the 8th century to its secularization in 1805, one of the most important in Europe. Its library is one of the richest and oldest in the world and contains precious manuscripts such as the earliest-known architectural plan drawn on parchment. From 1755 to 1768, the conventual area was rebuilt in Baroque style. The cathedral and the library are the main features of this remarkable architectural complex, reflecting 12 centuries of continuous activity.

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**Brief synthesis**

The Abbey of St Gall is located in the town of St Gall in the north-eastern part of Switzerland, and largely owes its present appearance to the construction campaigns of the 18th century. It is an impressive architectural ensemble comprising different buildings regrouped around the main square of the abbey: The west side includes the ancient abbatial church (the present cathedral), flanked by two towers and the ancient cloister, which today houses the abbatial Library; located on the east side is the "Neue Pfalz", the present seat of the canton authorities. The northern part of the square is composed of buildings of the 19th century: the ancient arsenal, the Children's and Guardian Angels' Chapel and the former Catholic school.

The Abbey of St Gall is an outstanding example of a large Carolingian monastery and was, since the 8th century until its secularisation in 1805, one of the most important cultural centres in Europe. It represents 1200 years of history of monastic architecture and is a typical and outstanding ensemble of a large Benedictine convent. Almost all the important architectural periods, from High Middle Ages to historicism, are represented in an exemplary fashion. Despite the diversity of styles, the conventual ensemble gives the impression of overall unity, bordered on the north and to the west by edifices of the town of St Gall that are, for the most part, intact. The High Baroque library represents one of the most beautiful examples of its era, and the present cathedral is one of the last monumental constructions of Baroque abbatial churches in the West. In addition to the architectural substance, the inestimable cultural values conserved at the Abbey are of exceptional importance, notably: the Irish manuscripts of the 7th and 8th centuries, the illuminated manuscripts of the St Gall School of the 9th and 11th centuries, documents concerning the history of the origins of Alemannic Switzerland as well as the layout of the convent during the Carolingian era (the only manuscript plan of that time remaining worldwide, conserved in its original state, representing a concept of monastic organisation of the Benedictine order).