

## The Thieves' Tower museum and the Wine Grower's House



The museum occupies several adjacent buildings located rue des Juifs (the Jewish street) in Riquewihr.

◆ **The Thieves' Tower** was a defensive tower built at the northwest corner of the first wall surrounding the medieval city in 1291. It is accessible from the covered parapet which dates from the same period. The 18-meter high tower, with its 2 to 5-meter thick walls, is pentagonal outside but square inside. Constructed circa 1335 to reinforce the city's defenses after the purchase in 1324 of the seignory by the earls of Württemberg, it was updated with gun-ports to adapt to firearms in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the second wall was built.

By then Riquewihr had become the administrative, judiciary and religious centre of the possessions of the dukes of Württemberg on the left bank of the Rhine (comprising the seignory of Riquewihr and the county of Horbourg). From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the tower served as one of the city's prisons; high justice (the highest penal authority) and low justice (minor cases) were rendered there, justifying the presence of:

- an authentic **torture chamber** with its 6 meters deep oubliette and the pulley used in strappado or reverse hanging, a form of torture in which the prisoners, with their arms tied behind their backs, were suspended in the air by means of a rope. Their ankles could also be tied with heavy weights attached to them. The intense pain made them confess crimes they had not committed.
- the **guardroom** on the upper story, where the prisoners were kept and questioned (literally put to the question), is dedicated to a collection of instruments of torture.
  - ◆ The Tower communicates with a 16<sup>th</sup> century (1563) **wine grower's house**; built against the fortifications, it is typical of civilian architecture. Partially furnished, it contains : a kitchen with its ancient utensils and a bedroom with its furniture, in the cellar and the basement, various items and tools used by coopers and wine producers.

New windows evoke **the local vineyard**; the sale of its renowned wines has enabled the winegrowers to build, over the past centuries, their stone and half-timbered **houses** which still make the charm of the city.

- ◆ **THE TEMPORARY EXHIBITION, "1918 to 1925: The difficult return of Alsace to France"**, explains the situation in Alsace during the first years of the attachment to France: after the enthusiasm of the Armistice in November 18 and the reception of the French troops was uneasiness and disillusionment.

>>> With projection of a **documentary film** on this period. <<<