

ASPECTS OF FRANCONIA

Pencil Capital of the World

As you all know, the German word for pencil is “Bleistift”, suggesting that the black inside core is connected in some way to the metal “lead”, which is highly toxic. When you write or draw with a pencil, tiny pieces of pencil lead stick to the paper and make a mark. However, thankfully, the “lead” in a pencil isn't made of lead. It is made from a form of carbon called graphite. The graphite is mixed with clay and formed into long thin pencil lead.

Why do I mention this? Because at the moment I am thinking pencils and that our next outing is to Stein, home to one of the most famous pencil factories in the world, Faber-Castell. In fact, there are several pencil companies in our area. The Staedtler factory is located next to the B4 between Erlangen and Nuremberg, while Schwan-Stabilo is in nearby Heroldsberg. This is why the Nuremberg area is sometimes referred to as the “Pencil Capital of the World”.

Stein became associated with pencil making very early on, ever since 1719 in fact. In 1758, the carpenter Kaspar Faber settled there and began producing pencils in 1761. These were sold at the Nuremberg market. In 1851, his successor, Lothar Faber, built the Schloss, the company's headquarters in Stein.



It is a beautiful building in the historicist style from the 19th and early 20th century and well worthy of a visit. And its history is more intriguing than you may think. During the period when the War Trials were taking place in Nuremberg, many famous people were accommodated there – from Ernest Hemingway to Germans such as Willy Brandt, Erich Kästner and Markus Wolf. John dos Passos and the later US star reporter Walter Cronkite were also

guests in Stein. When we visit it in October we will find out much more, of course.

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