

ASPECTS OF FRANCONIA

July 2025

Zirndorf and the Thirty Years' War

In the summer of 1632, Albrecht von Wallenstein, the commander of the Imperial (Catholic) Forces established a massive field camp just outside of Nuremberg for 50,000 soldiers and 15,000 horses. The area it covered stretched from Zirndorf to Stein and Oberasbach. Wallenstein's Camp, as it came to be known, also became home to the 30,000 people who travelled along with the soldiers: family members, prostitutes, entertainers, traders, merchants, suppliers of this and that. These were hard times. The hygienic conditions were terrible, there was a severe shortage of food, people lay dying of hunger and disease.

The story of the camp is told in the Zirndorf museum close to where we will eat. And those who enjoy a good walk can make their way afterwards to the Alte Veste (Old Fortress), located in the forested area just outside of Zirndorf. On the way we can visit the Lutheran Church of St. Roche in Zirndorf. Rochus, or Roche, was a saint one turned to if suffering from the plague.

The battle of the Alte Veste in September 1632 was fought between the Catholic soldiers under Wallenstein, encamped, as we have heard, close to Zirndorf and the Swedish troops under the command of Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden from 1611 to 1632, whose quarters were in Nuremberg. The battle was hard-fought but indecisive and ended with the withdrawal of the Swedish.

The Thirty Years' War was to continue for many more years until a settlement could be reached with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The *Westfälischer Friede*, is in fact the collective name for two peace treaties signed in October 1648 in the Westphalian cities of Osnabrück and Münster. Approximately eight million people died in this conflict.



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