Thannenkirch lies in the foothills of the Taennchel (a mountain area rising to an altitude of 992 m and classed as an area of peace and quiet). Nestling among greenery and forests, Thannenkirch offers a splendid panorama over the plain of Alsace and the Black Forest mountain. This market town in the mountains is a much appreciated holiday destination for those who seek a calm environment that allows them to get close to nature.

Origin of the village name:
• In 1152, the episcopal archives of the bishopric of Basel mentions a chapel referred to under the name of "Templum Sanctae Annae supra Berken".
• During the 13th century, the village bore a variety of names, depending on whether it featured in Latin, French or German texts: "Thankilch", "D'Annakerich" (the church of Saint Anne), "die kapella zu Thankilch", "Dannekerich" or "Dannenkilch".
• In the 14th century, the village adopted the name of "Tannenkirch" or "Sankt Annakirch".
• After the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the village became known as "Thannenkirch".

A little history...
• 10th century: Legend would have it that a hermit set up an oratory dedicated to Saint Anne at the foot of the Taennchel, close by a spring (located 30 rue Sainte-Anne) under a majestic fir tree. Lorraine woodcutters and charcoal burners gradually set up around this site.
• 12th – 13th centuries: Thannenkirch was part of the Rathsamhausen seigniorial lands (a family from the Strasbourg region who lived in Alsace from the 12th to the 15th century).
• 15th century: In 1470, Thannenkirch was granted as a fiefdom to the Ribeaupierre family.
• 17th century: During the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), Thannenkirch was almost entirely abandoned by its inhabitants. New inhabitants came from Switzerland and the Welche-speaking areas to repopulate the village.
• 19th century: Following on from the textile industry boom in the nearby Val de Lièpvre, home hand-weaving developed in the village which had, until then, survived on the resources provided by the mountain: wood, charcoal, animal husbandry.
• 20th century: In 1924, Thannenkirch became a tourist resort and treatment centre for pulmonary disorders. During the World War II, Thannenkirch was occupied and then liberated on the 1st December 1944.

To round off your visit:
• Discover the following sites:
  • the silver fox fountain
  Just outside the entrance to the village, the fountain recalls the silver fox farming activities that used to be carried out on the upper slopes of Thannenkirch between 1924 and 1953.
  • the Bosshardt sculpture workshop
  In 1951, A. Bosshardt opened a wood sculpture workshop in Thannenkirch which is now run by his son, open to the public, this workshop allows visitors to watch the sculptor at work and to discover all the intricacies of producing statues from wood.
  • the Nativity scene sculpted out of wood (exhibited every year in the church during the months of December and January): A 3 m high and 4 m long Nativity scene (work of André Bosshardt) which includes, in addition to the usual figures: figures carrying out the traditional crafts practiced before and after the war: loggers, the log sled driver, woodcutter, stonemason, farmer, day labourer, weaver, etc.
  • an Alpen horn player, etc.
• The Taennchel mountain area and the surrounding countryside:
  • Walks in the Taennchel mountain area
    The Taennchel mountain area, preserved since time immemorial, is made up of rocky landscapes. Featuring an immense wealth of geological formations (granite base from which emerge many springs), the area also has a wide range of fauna and flora.
    A network of approximately 60 km of signposted paths (starting from and around Thannenkirch) that provide many walks in the heart of this conservation countryside.
  • The deer's bellow
    From mid September to mid October, Thannenkirch is one of the best sites for listening to the bellowing deer. You do not have to travel far out of the village in order to see the local fauna.

The village of Thannenkirch

A village, its history, a voyage of discovery.

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A voyage of discovery

The rogation cross on the “chemin de Ribeauvillé” (before entering into Thannenkirch), turn left towards the car park and picnic area. This cross is opposite the church.

This cross dates back to 1814. In the Catholic religion, rogations were the processions and the prayers offered up during the three days before the Ascension in order to ask God’s blessing on the fields and meadows; and for bountiful harvests. Those Catholic processions have ceased to take place since the 1960’s as the region’s agriculture declined.

FOUNTAINS OF THANNENKIRCH
Thannenkirch has 9 fountains fed by the overflow from the village’s untreated water springs. They contribute to the quality of the village’s water supply (the system is constantly being purged and every house in the village is supplied with spring water).

Some of the fountains are decorated with symbolic wood sculptures (work of André Bosshardt; local wood sculptor). For the Easter festivities, all 9 fountains are decorated using an Easter theme.

The itinerary will include a few examples of fountains (see points 3, 7, 8, 9, 16, 20, 21, 22).

The fountain at the entrance to the village
This fountain is carved from a block of sandstone from the Taennchel mountain area.

Houses and farms of Thannenkirch
All the houses and farms follow the same layout: outbuildings for animal farms and dwellings grouped together under the same roof. Most have a dated door lintel bearing the initials of the farm’s owner as well as the symbol representing their trade. Names of owners usually followed two separate trades.

The itinerary will include a few examples of houses and farms (see points 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26).

House located 3 rue Sainte-Anne
House located 2 rue Sainte-Anne

In front of this house, there is a spring that runs along the bottom of the house’s low wall. The fountain, fed by the Saint Anne spring, represents a miller’s father. The polychrome wood statue of the Virgin Mary rises, like a pillar, on the corner of the house; it is decorated with carvings of cherries (the symbol of Thannenkirch) and pine cones.

The church of Sainte-Catherine

The first stone of the present-day church of Sainte-Catherine was laid on the 3rd May 1799. Thannenkirch had been devoted to the Virgin since 1629. The previous church was too small for the 800 souls who lived in the parish and was extended in 1899 (Goff tower, nave and sacristy). Of interest: the clock outside the church only shows the hours and has one single hand, a rare and unusual feature.

- There are a number of works of André Bosshardt in the church:
  - bas-reliefs showing the discovery of Jesus’ empty tomb by the Mary of Magdala and the bronze staff that turned into a snake, the crafts practised by the inhabitants of Thannenkirch, instruments on which religious music was played,
  - old communion wafers decorated with biblical scenes,
  - a wedding pew from the 19th February 1955, created for André Bosshardt’s wedding,
  - a statue of Saint Anne.

- The nave in the church features:
  - the cross sculptured in wood (work of André Bosshardt); an outstanding example because of the symbolic use of hands in each scene: in some scenes the hands repel Christ, while in others they help Christ to bear the cross, etc.,
  - two relief images carved out of wood and dating back to the second half of the 18th century, registered as a Historic monument in 1982: saint Wendelin, protector of animals, saint Odile and saint Augustin.

- The organ has a case by Callinet.

- Town hall (place des Fêtes)
  Dating back to 1624, refurbished in 1996, the town hall has 2 pillars decorated with wooden sculptures that illustrate the local activities of yesteryear.

- Farm located 10 rue Sainte-Anne
  Farm located 11 rue Sainte-Anne

- The old Sanatorium Sainte-Anne (2 rue Sainte-Anne)
  The sanctuary was created for André Bosshardt’s wedding, in 1955.

- The old Oratory of Our Lady of the Woods (56 rue Sainte-Anne)
  This Oratory is a Virgin with the Child Jesus and was sculptured by André Bosshardt in 1952, directly out of the trunk of a one hundred year old oak tree.

- The old Sanatorium Sainte-Anne (2 rue Sainte-Anne)
  The sculpture was blessed on the day of the Assumption since then, it has been known as the “Oratoire Notre-Dame-des-Bois”/Oratory of Our Lady of the Woods.
  Each 15th August, torch-light processions dedicated to the Virgin and the Child Jesus used to take place from the church of Thannenkirch to this oratory in memory of a vow made by Louis XIII (1601-1643) when he consecrated the Kingdom of France to the Holy Virgin. These processions no longer take place nowadays but religious gatherings are held.

- The old Sanatorium Sainte-Anne (2 rue Sainte-Anne)
  The oratory was renovated in 2002: the oak tree is still alive and well which explains why the carving of the trunk of a one hundred year old oak tree.

- Thannenkirch

- The village of Thannenkirch was used as a drinking trough and for clothes washing up until the 1970s.

- The woodcutter’s fountain, constructed in 1906, is decorated with a sculpture that reminds us that most of the men in the village used to ply a trade that was linked to forestry.

- The church of Notre-Dame-de-Dusenbach
  The organ has a case by Callinet.

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