



RIZAL HISTORIC TRAIL

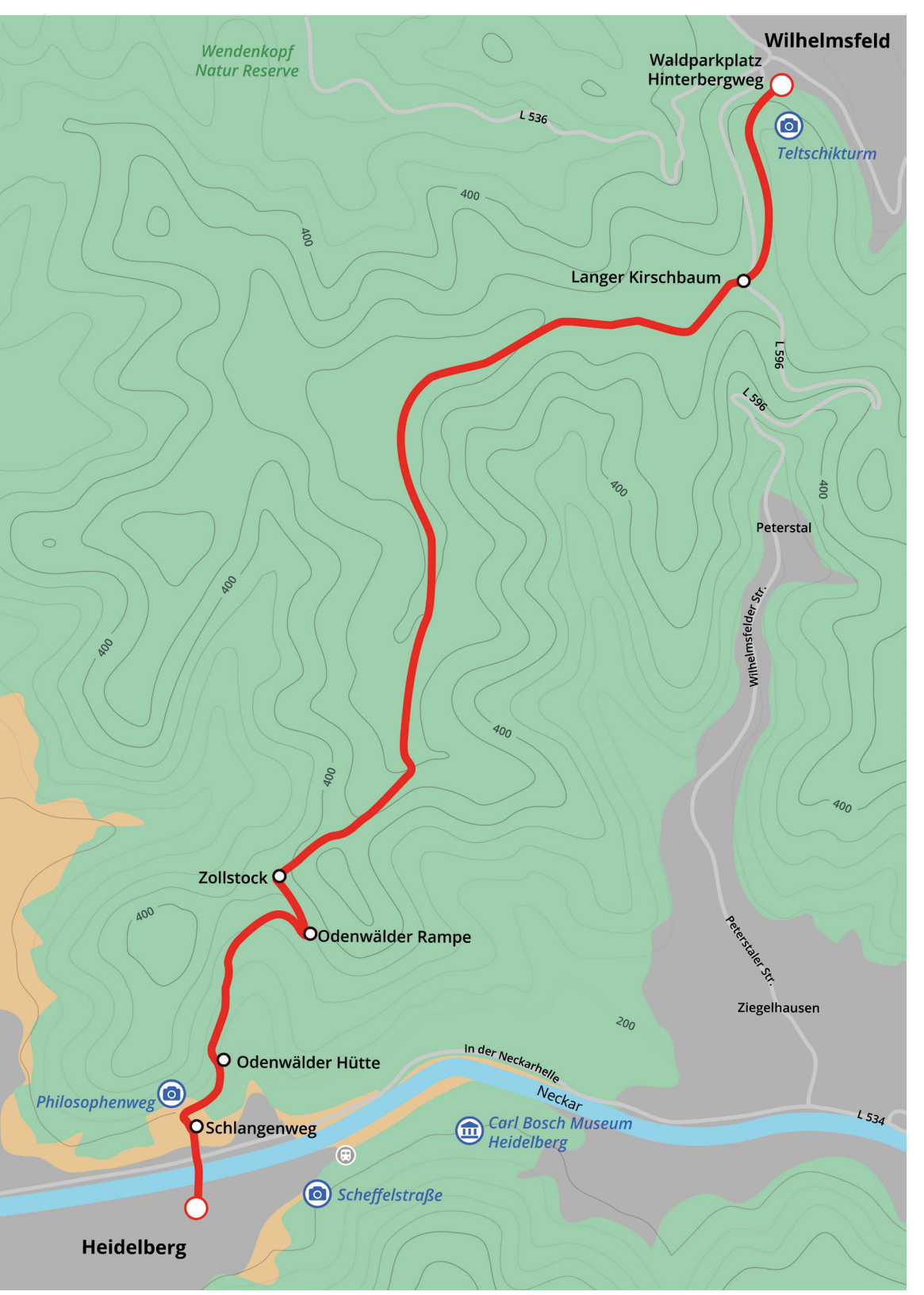




José Bijat

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Wendenkopf
Natur Reserve

Wilhelmsfeld

Waldparkplatz
Hinterbergweg

L 536

Teltschikturm

Langer Kirschbaum

L 596

L 596

Peterstal

Wilhelmsfelder Str.

Zollstock

Odenwälder Rampe

Peterstaler Str.

Ziegelhausen

Odenwälder Hütte

In der Neckarhelle
Neckar

Philosophenweg

Schlangenberg

Carl Bosch Museum
Heidelberg

L 534

Scheffelstraße

Heidelberg

The Rizal Historic Trail

In 2025, Germany and the Philippines celebrated 70 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Philippines were also the Guest of Honor at the Frankfurt Book Fair. The national hero of the Philippines, Dr. José Rizal, was consistently mentioned in writings and events, as he was, and still is, an important link between the two countries.

Dr. José Rizal studied in Heidelberg for several months in 1886 and lived in Wilhelmsfeld for some time with the local Pastor, Karl Ullmer. He travelled on foot between the two places.

To commemorate this, the Wilhelmsfeld-Heidelberg Chapter of the Knights of Rizal, in cooperation with the municipality of Wilhelmsfeld, established the Rizal Historic Trail as a unique project that brings to life the history and cultural connection with the Philippines in our region.

This hiking trail allows visitors to retrace the daily journey to work made by Dr. José Rizal from Wilhelmsfeld to Heidelberg and, in doing so, experience a part of regional history at first hand. At the same time, the hiking trail connects the memorial sites dedicated to Dr. Rizal in Heidelberg and Wilhelmsfeld, thus creating a historical link.

The hiking trail follows the original paths and locations that make it possible to retrace Dr. José Rizal's daily route to the Heidelberg University Eye Clinic in 1886 and illustrate what the daily journey to work was like at that time.

The aim is to make history tangible and to promote awareness of regional history.

Starting Points of the Rizal Historic Trail

Starting Point 1

WILHELMSFELD / HINTERBERGWEG HIKING CAR PARK

You can park in Wilhelmsfeld, provided you have not arrived by public transport, and either begin the trail at **Rizal Park** or at the **Wilhelmsfeld Parish House** before walking to the hiking car park. Alternatively, you may drive directly to the **hiking car park** and park there.

Here you will also find an **information board** with the most important information about the **Rizal Historic Trail**.

Starting Point 2

LANGER KIRSCHBAUM HIKING CAR PARK

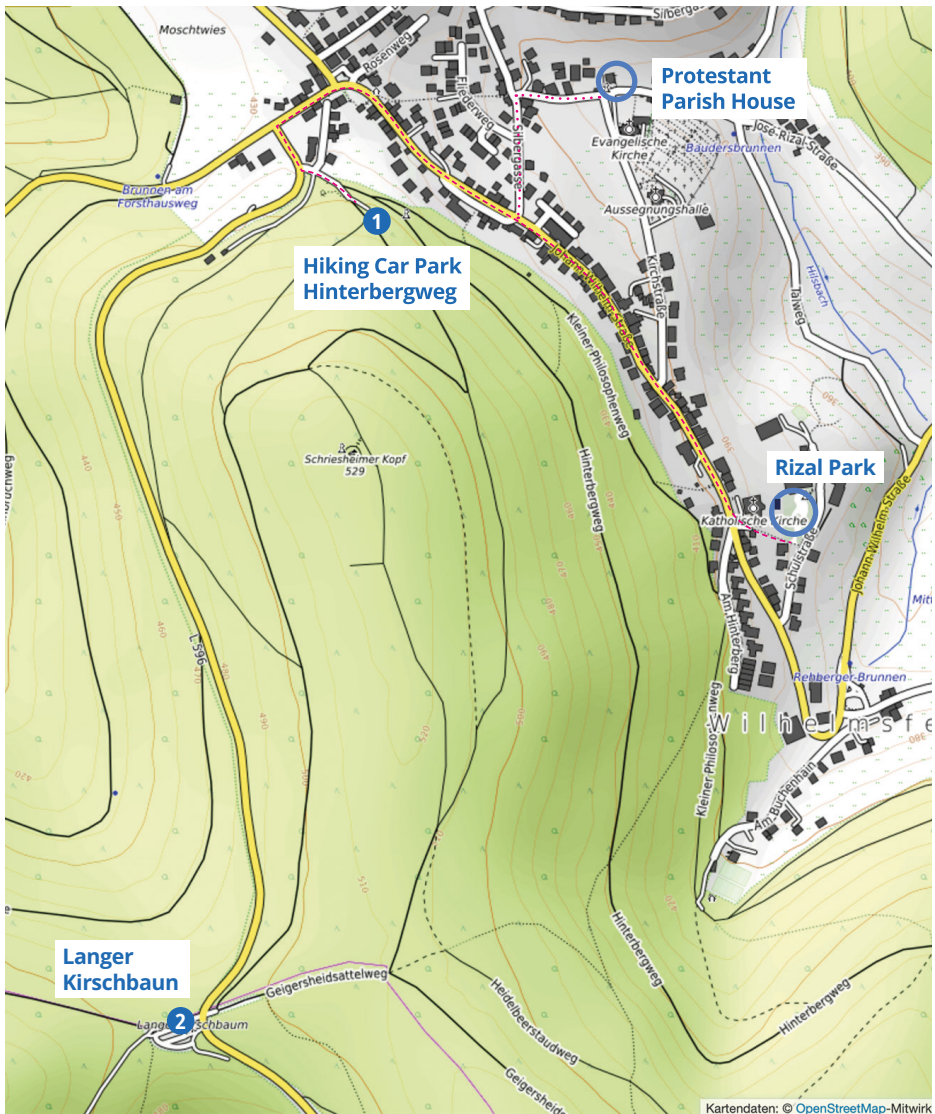
The car park can either be reached directly by car or by public transport on **bus route 34** from both Wilhelmsfeld and Heidelberg (stop “**Langer Kirschbaum**”).

At the shelter in the car park you will find the **information board** for the **Rizal Historic Trail**.

Starting Point 3

> *On the following page.*





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Starting Point 3

PHILOSOPHENWEG IN HEIDELBERG, OPPOSITE THE JUBILÄUMSEICHE

This starting point can only be reached on foot. To do so, cross the Neckar via the **Karl Theodor Bridge** (Old Bridge). Here you can choose between the two routes alternatively used by Dr. Rizal.

ALTERNATIVE A – via **Schlangenweg** – **Philosophenweg**

Directly at the end of the **bridge**, there is a **pedestrian crossing** on the left, which you should cross. Immediately on the right, you will find a sign for the **Schlangenweg**.

Follow this sign and continue up the **steep ascent** (partly with steps) to the end of the path. Here you will reach the **Philosophenweg**, where you turn right. After approximately 200 m, you will find the **information board** for the **Rizal Historic Trail** on the left-hand side.

ALTERNATIVE B – via **Hirschgasse** – **Philosophenweg**

After crossing the **bridge**, turn right onto the **riverside road** (**Ziegelhäuser Landstraße**) and walk along the Neckar as far as the next traffic lights. Cross the road there and turn into **Hirschgasse**.

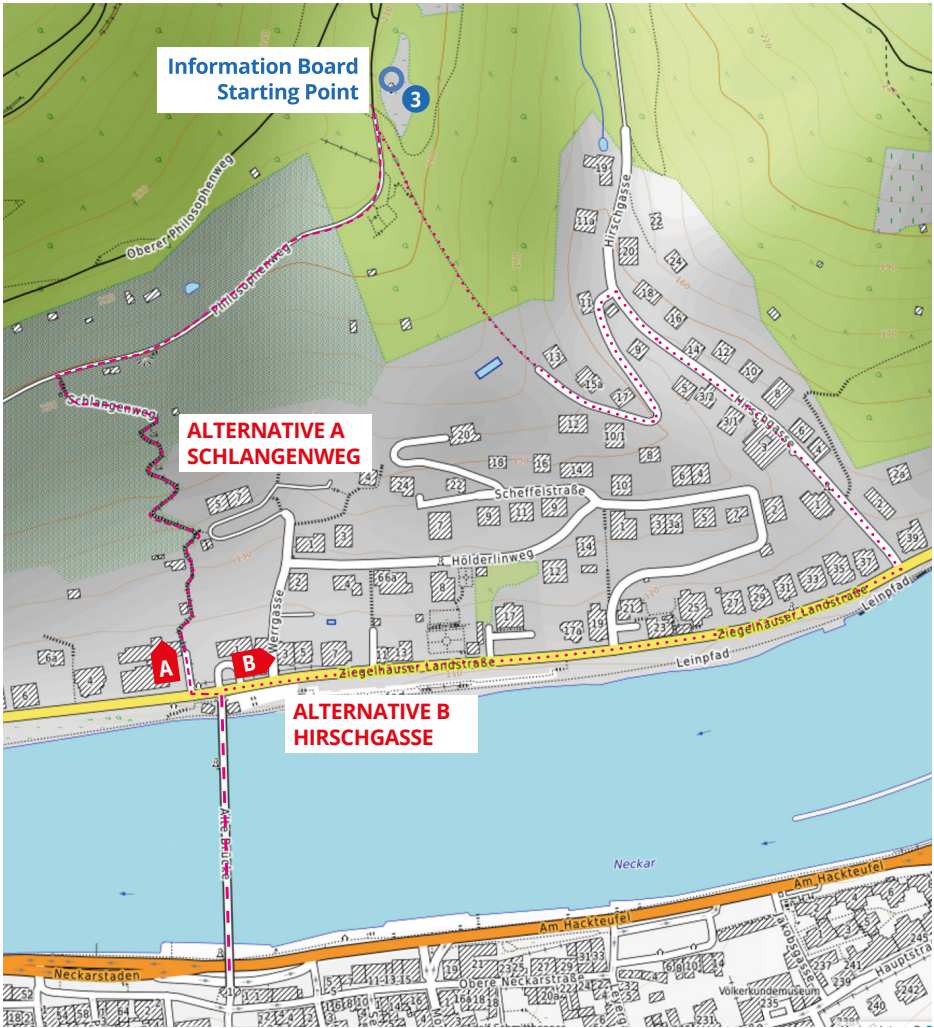
Walk up the steep street, passing the **Mensur Hall**, where Dr. Rizal watched the students during their activities (see his letter of 26 February 1886 to his parents).

Approximately 150 m beyond the Mensur Hall, follow the branch in the road leading onto the path that ends at the **Philosophenweg**. After a few metres, you will find the **information board for the Rizal Historic Trail**.

From the respective starting point, follow the marked Rizal Historic Trail.

The total distance from Wilhelmsfeld to the **Karl Theodor Bridge (Old Bridge) in Heidelberg** is approximately **10.5 km**. A further 1.5 km must be covered to reach the workplace at the University Eye Clinic.





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Trail Markings

The “Rizal Historic Trail” is marked in both directions by trail markings.

You will find the markers on trees along the trail or, in a few cases, on small signposts.

Please pay attention to the following markings, some of which may also include directional arrows.

Wegmarkierung / -beschilderung:



Hiking trail via Komoot (hiking app)



Openstreet Topographics

Importable GPX file at
www.kor-wilhelmsfeld-hd.de



Sponsors

We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to our sponsors and donors and acknowledge their commitment to the welfare of society and international understanding.

Through their financial support, they have helped create a connected historical space linking the memorial sites dedicated to the Philippine national hero Dr. José Rizal in the Wilhelmsfeld and Heidelberg region.

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in Frankfurt

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Dr. Fritz Hack-Ullmer, Familie Damm-Ludwig
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Sir Dr. Tobias Dangel, KCR · Sir Dominik Schäfer, KR & Venukah Schäfer · Frederik · Christian & Amanda Schoof

Rules of Behaviour in the Forest

The Rizal Historic Trail runs through a nature reserve.

Please observe the following guidance during your hike:



Stay on designated paths
in order not to disturb animals
and to protect plants



Do not leave any rubbish behind:
waste does not belong in nature,
as it can endanger animals.



Quiet behaviour:
avoid making noise so as
not to frighten wildlife



**Avoid visits 1.5 hours
before sunrise and after sunset,**
as wildlife is particularly active
at these times.



Conduct during storms:
avoid the forest during
and immediately after storms
because of falling branches.



Observe forestry work:
closures must be respected without exception. Danger to life from falling trees or heavy machinery.



Avoid encounters with wild animals,
do not feed them, and observe them respectfully from a distance.



Provisions:
bring sufficient water and provisions.



Orientation:
a hiking map will help you find your way.

A Short Biography of Dr. José Rizal

WITH A FOCUS ON HIS STAY IN WILHELMSFELD AND HEIDELBERG

José Protasio Rizal Mercado y Alonso Realonda was born on 19 June 1861 in Calamba in the Philippines and is regarded as the national hero of his country. He was a physician, writer, patriot, artist, and an important freedom fighter in the struggle against Spanish colonial rule.

Rizal grew up as the seventh of eleven children and, from an early age, displayed exceptional intellectual abilities, a passion for learning, and a deep love for his homeland.

At a young age, he developed an interest in literature, history, and science. He spoke several languages fluently, including Spanish, Tagalog, English, French, German, and Latin.

Rizal began his formal education in the Philippines, where he studied philosophy and literature among other subjects. Later, he continued his studies in Europe in order to study medicine, with a particular focus on ophthalmology.

On 3 February 1886, José Rizal arrived in Heidelberg to further his medical training. He practised ophthalmology at the Heidelberg University Eye Clinic under the renowned ophthalmologist Prof. Otto Becker. From April to June 1886, he lived in nearby Wilhelmsfeld, a small village near Heidelberg, as a guest of the parish family of Karl Ullmer in the community parish house.

There, on 19 June 1886, he celebrated his 25th birthday together with the Ullmer family. During his time in Wilhelmsfeld, he continued his studies and literary activities and completed his first novel, *Noli me Tangere*.

He left Heidelberg on 9 August 1886 and travelled via several stops to Berlin, where he arrived on 1 November 1886 and published *Noli me Tangere* in Spanish in mid-March 1887.





Parish house of family Ullmer, Wilhelmsfeld

Rizal's time in Germany was formative for his intellectual development and his commitment to Philippine independence. His novels *Noli me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, as well as his other literary activities, contributed to shaping his vision of a free and educated Philippine people.

He was also politically active, committed himself to reforms, and advocated the rights of his people. However, his writings and commitment earned him enemies, especially among the Spanish monastic orders and colonial rulers.

He was also politically active, committed himself to reforms, and advocated the rights of his people. However, his writings and commitment earned him enemies, especially among the Spanish monastic orders and colonial rulers. José Rizal returned to the Philippines in 1892, where he continued to fight for reforms. He founded the movement La Liga Filipina, which sought social and political reforms. However, his activities led to his arrest and ultimately to his execution on 30 December 1896 by the Spanish colonial authorities.

Dr. José Rizal was an extraordinary man whose life was shaped by education, patriotism, and the pursuit of justice.

His stay in Wilhelmsfeld and Heidelberg was a formative period during which he deepened his medical knowledge and further developed his patriotic ideas. This period contributed significantly to shaping him into the national hero he is today. His legacy lives on in the Philippines and throughout the world as a symbol of the struggle against oppression and for the freedom of his people.

Further information on Dr. José Rizal in the Wilhelmsfeld / Heidelberg region can be found at www.kor-wilhelmsfeld-hd.de



url zu englischen
versionen?

or the **brochure** *Dr. José Rizal – Physician, Writer, Martyr, Freedom Hero*
and the **flyer** *Dr. José Rizal*



A “normal working day” in the life of Dr. José Rizal

This account of Dr. José Rizal’s stay in Wilhelmsfeld is based on the preserved recollections of the Ullmer family and was passed down by Dr. Fritz Hack-Ullmer, great-grandson of Pastor Karl Ullmer.

In April 1886, Dr. José Rizal moved his residence from Heidelberg to Wilhelmsfeld because the financial support payments from his brother Paciano had not arrived on time and living in Wilhelmsfeld was less expensive. Rizal lived for more than three months as a member of the Ullmer family in the parish house in Wilhelmsfeld.



What Did Rizal's Daily Routine Look Like at That Time?

Wilhelmsfeld, a farming village in the Odenwald, had neither running water nor electricity. The journey to Heidelberg could only be made on foot, as there was neither a railway connection nor buses. These were introduced only later.

The pastor rose at 5.00 a.m. and invited his guest to come to his study for German lessons. Besides becoming acquainted with German life and German customs, he wished to improve his knowledge of German. Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* was chosen as the textbook. In those years, Schiller was the European poet who had expressed most clearly the problems of dictatorship, oppression, and contempt for humanity.

When the sun rose at around 5.45 a.m., José accompanied the pastor's 17-year-old daughter Margaretha, known as Eta, into the garden to water the plants. The chickens and geese had to be fed, as did the pig. Eta remarked: "It is only fair that the young guest should help me with my morning duties." Eta was 17 years old at the time. In this sense, the Ullmers were self-sufficient. The income of a village pastor was modest.

Seated at the family table were the pastor (44 years old), his wife Marie (43 years old), his son Fritz (15 years old, grandfather of Dr. Fritz Hack-Ullmer), and his daughter Eta (great-aunt of Dr. Fritz Hack-Ullmer).

Dr. José Rizal arrived as a stranger and a guest, but soon became a friend.



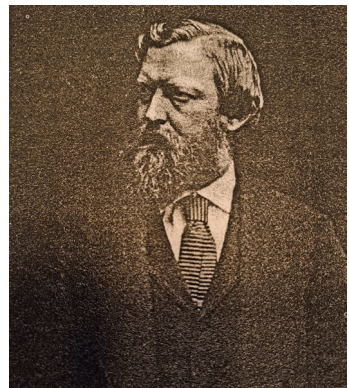
Pastor Karl Ullmer

For breakfast there was milk, local tea (peppermint or camomile), green tea on Sundays, home-baked bread, and homemade jam. Marie packed the same breakfast for lunch and gave it to José when, **at 6.45 a.m., he set off on foot along the direct forest paths to the Eye Clinic of Heidelberg University.** He must have walked very quickly, since the route descended for approximately 9.5 km. Craftsmen from Wilhelmsfeld, who also used this route regularly, needed around 1.5 hours for the downhill journey towards Heidelberg and approximately 2 hours for the uphill return journey.

From 8.00 a.m. until 4.30 p.m., work at the clinic took place either in the outpatient department or in the operating theatre under the famous Professor Otto Becker. There were probably eight other doctors working there as well. The hospital had been built in 1878 as a specialised eye clinic solely for eye patients and their needs.



Universitäts-Augenklinik, Heidelberg



Prof. Otto Becker

At around 5.00 p.m., he began the steep climb back to the parish house in Wilhelmsfeld. The daily hot meal was served upon arrival. First came the soup, then the main course: meat (chicken, pork, goat, occasionally game) was served only once a week; otherwise there were vegetables, turnips, salads, and potatoes.

From 9.00 p.m. onwards, the family spent the evening together without radio or television, with readings from books or world news from the





Zeitschrift Gartenlaube

Frankfurter Zeitung and discussions about it. Not to be forgotten were the open discussions and José's descriptions of the Philippines and his latest passages from *Noli me Tangere*, written the previous evening. The magazine *Gartenlaube* was also read, often featuring the illustrations and stories of Wilhelm Busch.

Ullmer had met the illustrator and humourist in Munich, and Busch visited him once in Wilhelmsfeld in the mid-1880s. An oil painting of a mountain landscape by Busch hung in the sitting room of the parish house. Karl Ullmer played the violin. Many German folk songs were sung, and José sang songs in Tagalog in his fine baritone voice, which brought great joy to all who listened.

At 10.00 p.m., the Ullmer family went to bed.

At nightfall, wax candles or an oil lamp were lit. Rizal needed only five hours of sleep. He regularly worked for two hours by candlelight in the guest room until midnight. He made substantial revisions to his great first novel *Noli me Tangere*, as can be seen from the many corrections, and also added a section unmistakably describing the Odenwald around Wilhelmsfeld (see Chapter 7 of the German edition of *Noli me Tangere*).

Quotes from Letters

Rizal, Heidelberg, 24 April 1886, to Pastor Ullmer

To the Reverend Pastor Ullmer in Wilhelmsfeld.

Reverend Pastor,

I promised to write to you should I decide to live in the countryside for several weeks, since you were kind enough to offer to help me find accommodation. On Sunday evening, weather permitting, I shall be in Wilhelmsfeld. I have been told that the inhabitants of Wilhelmsfeld do not speak proper German, but rather a dialect; if I were not afraid of abusing your kindness, I would ask you, if at all possible, to let me stay with you rather than elsewhere, for not only would I live with a venerable family whose friendship is dear to me, but I would also speak good German, which I consider the main thing. However, if this is impossible or inconvenient for you, I shall take whichever room you consider suitable, whatever it may be.

Please convey my greetings to your whole kind family. Accept in advance my thanks and the assurance of my deepest respect.

J. Rizal



Rizal, Heidelberg, 26 June 1886

*To Pastor Ullmer
(Your Honour)*

... Yesterday, halfway along the road, I suddenly saw Bärle¹ running behind me. Despite the stones I threw at him, and despite all my efforts, I could not send him back. For a long time he followed me from afar; finally, I decided to bring him with me, since Friedrich will be going home today. I gave him a fine supper (milk and bread), and the people here treated him kindly ...

... May you too, whenever you are in a foreign land, receive the same kindness and friendship that I found with you: and if I, a stranger in a foreign country, am nothing, I may still be of worth in my homeland, where you will always find a good friend, provided of course that I do not die. The joy of being understood by other people is so great that one cannot easily forget it. You have also understood me despite my brown skin, which for some people appears mysterious or meaningless: fortunately, for some it gradually becomes lighter, for example for the innkeeper in Heilig + Steinach²; though unfortunately not everyone is an innkeeper.

I greet Frau Pfarrerin and Eta most warmly and wish you the happiest future.

*Your good friend,
Rizal*

1 Dog belonging to the Ullmer family

2 Meyer: Heiligkreuzsteinach

Rizal to Friedrich Ullmer, Munich, 29 May 1887

... Please greet the good Pastor's wife, your dear mother, and tell her that I shall write to her when I return home. I shall never forget how kind she and your father were to me when I was an unknown stranger without friends or recommendations staying with you ... I shall never forget Wilhelmsfeld and its hospitable parish house ...

Rizal, Heidelberg, 26 (?) February 1886, Letter to Parents and Brothers

... Three times I went to their duels in the Hirschgasse and witnessed 20 to 25 of them; each time 7, 8, or 9 men fought, and on several occasions the fights ended bloodily. Once I saw a duellist struck six times during a duel. Sometimes they are not injured. They fight only among themselves, fraternity against fraternity, often without any reason at all, for those who choose the opponents are the seconds. The duels serve only to test bravery and to demonstrate personal honour and courage. There are five student fraternities here, namely Vandalia, Guestfalia, Saxoborussia, Rhenania, and Suebia ...



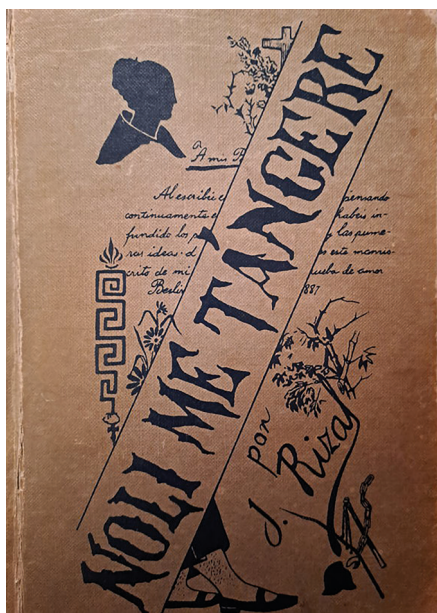
Mensur auf der Hirschgasse, um 1865

Quotes from *Noli me Tangere*

In Chapter 7 of the novel, Rizal's alter ego Ibarra responds to Maria Clara's question of whether he had thought of her during his travels, among other things, with the following words:

“Forget you? Often I believed I could hear your piano playing and the sound of your voice, and when, in Germany at dusk, I wandered through the forests inhabited by the wondrous figures of poets and the dark legends of old, it seemed to me as though I saw you in the veils of mist rising from the valley, as though I heard your voice in the rustling of the leaves, and when from afar the songs of the country people returning from their day's work could be heard, it was as though their singing joined with the voices within me, as though they sang for you and gave reality to the floating image of my dreams.”

“At times I lost my way along the mountain paths, and the night, descending gently there, would still find me in the forest searching for my path among firs, beeches, and oaks, and when a moonbeam fell through a gap in the dense branches, you appeared to me in the depths of the forest like an elusive, loving shadow moving between the light and darkness of the thicket; and when the nightingale sang, I believed it had caught sight of you and that you had drawn those notes from it.”



Bucheinband *Noli me Tangere*



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www.kor-wilhelmsfeld-hd.de/rizal-historic-trail/