SHARITAGE

Version October 2026

ArchaeoTrail

Step-by-Step Guideline

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VolkswagenStiftung

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Getting Started

Introduction

ArchaeoTrail is a two-part system designed to make archaeological and cultural heritage sites accessible to the public through digital guided tours. The first component is the ArchaeoTrail App, which allows visitors to explore archaeological sites on their smartphones. Using GPS navigation, the app guides users along a predefined route and provides information, images, audio, videos, and other multimedia content at each station of a trail. The second component is the ArchaeoTrail Portal (www.archaeotrail.org), which enables archaeologists, researchers, site managers, educators, and other content creators to design and publish their own digital trails. By creating stations, uploading multimedia content, and arranging stations into a route, users can create interactive tours that can be accessed through the ArchaeoTrail App.

This guideline focuses on the ArchaeoTrail Platform and explains how to create and manage trails. It provides step-by-step instructions for preparing content, creating stations, assembling them into a trail, and making them available to visitors through the ArchaeoTrail App.

Before you begin

Before you start creating the trail, make sure you have the necessary information and materials prepared:

(1) Title and short description text for your trail.
(2) Illustration or cover image for your trail.
(3) Title and text content for each station.
(4) Images for each station.
(5) Optional additional files for stations, such as audio recordings, videos, or images.
(6) Optional quiz questions (multiple choice or fill in the blanks).

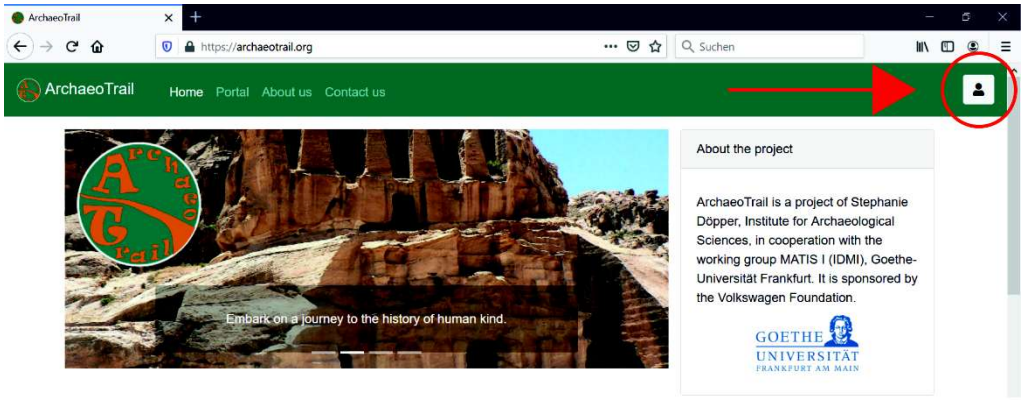
Important: Before you can create a trail, you must first create all the stations that the trail will include.

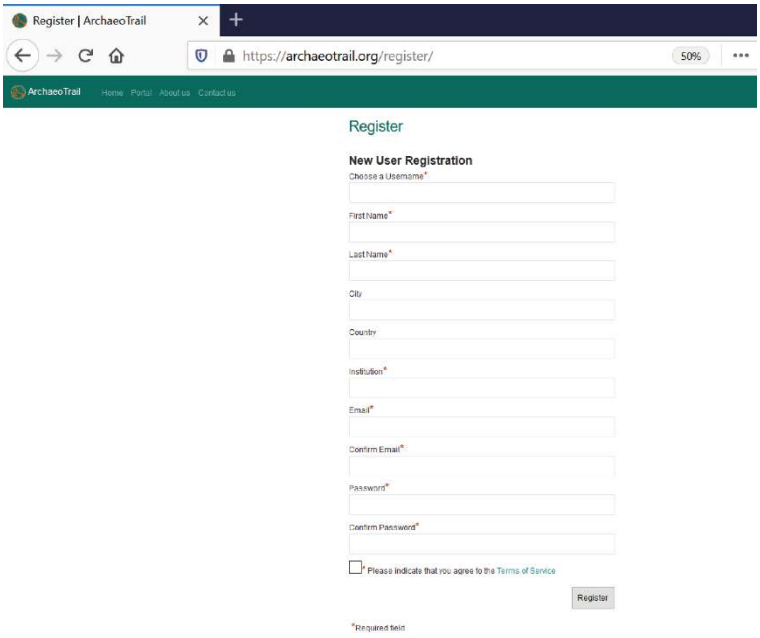
Make sure all intended stations have been created before starting the trail creation process. Adding stations to an existing trail at a later stage can be difficult and time-consuming, so it is strongly recommended to prepare and create all stations in advance.

Step 1: Create a profile

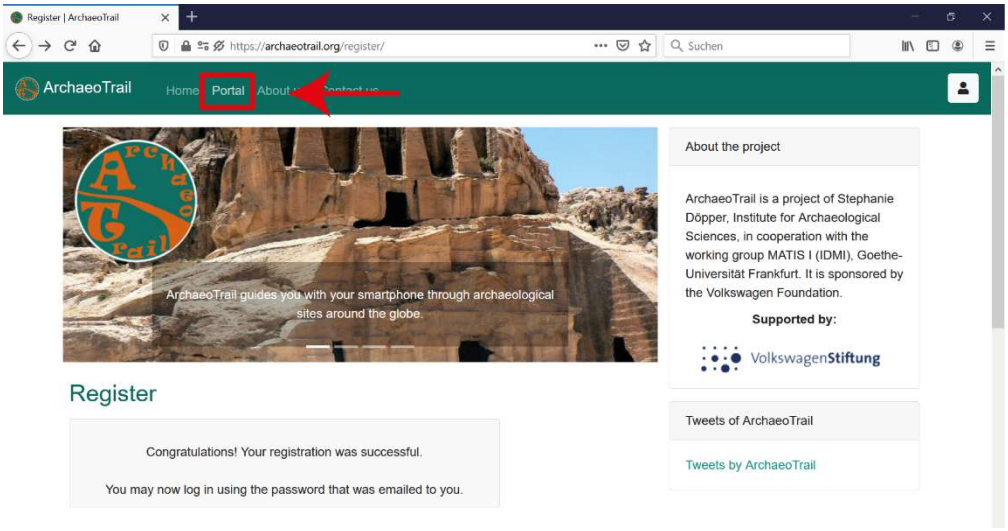
Registration and log-in

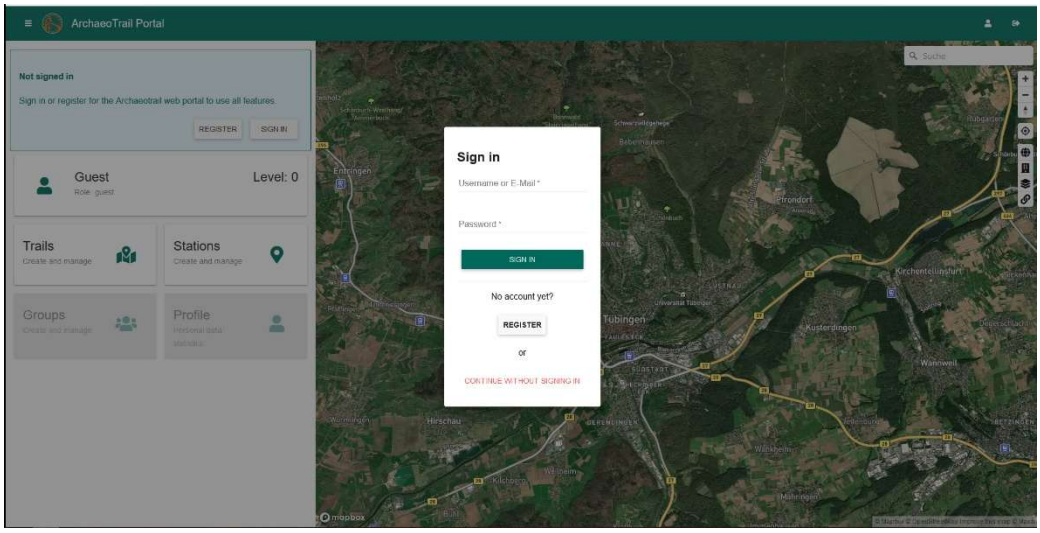
To use the ArchaeoTrail Platform, you first need to create a user account. Go to www.archaeotrail.org and register by clicking the button in the upper right corner of the page. During registration, you will be asked to choose a username and password and provide your name, email address, and institutional affiliation. Before completing the registration, make sure to accept the Terms of Service by checking the corresponding box.



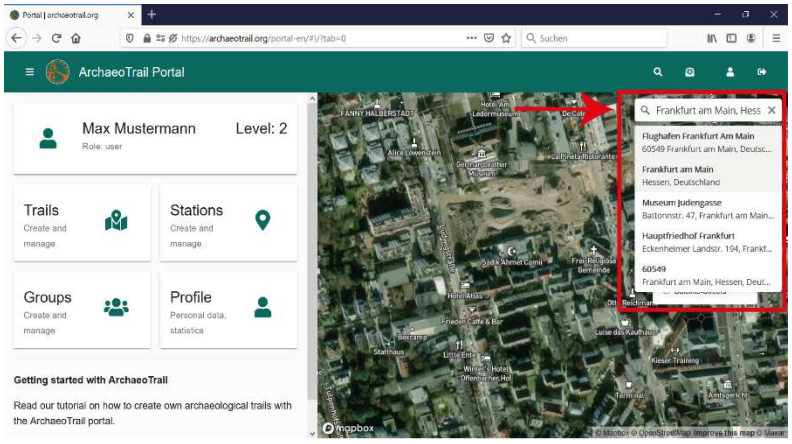


After completing your registration, access the platform by clicking the Portal tab at the top of the page. Once your account is set up, you can also log in directly to the Portal in future sessions without going through the main website.

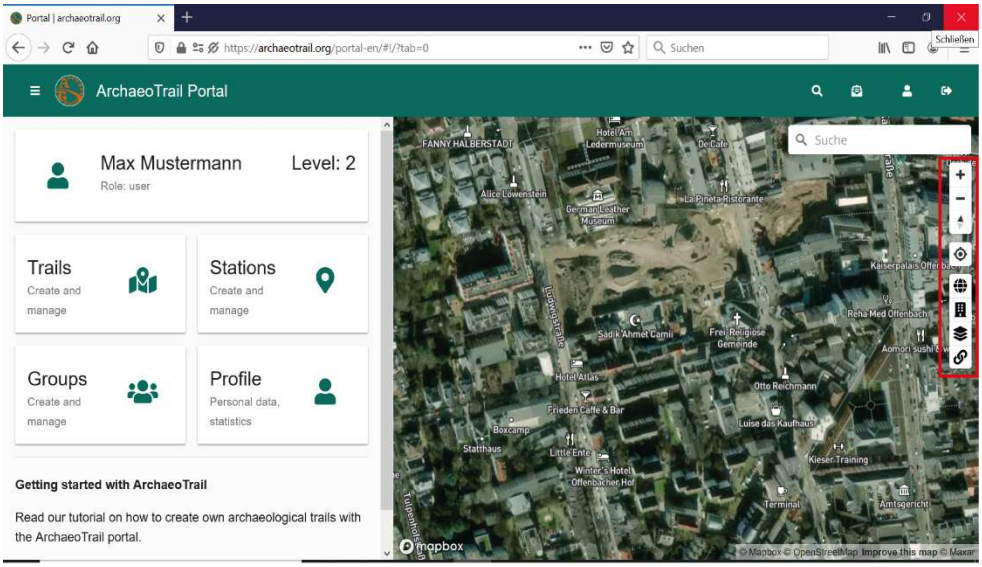




The portal



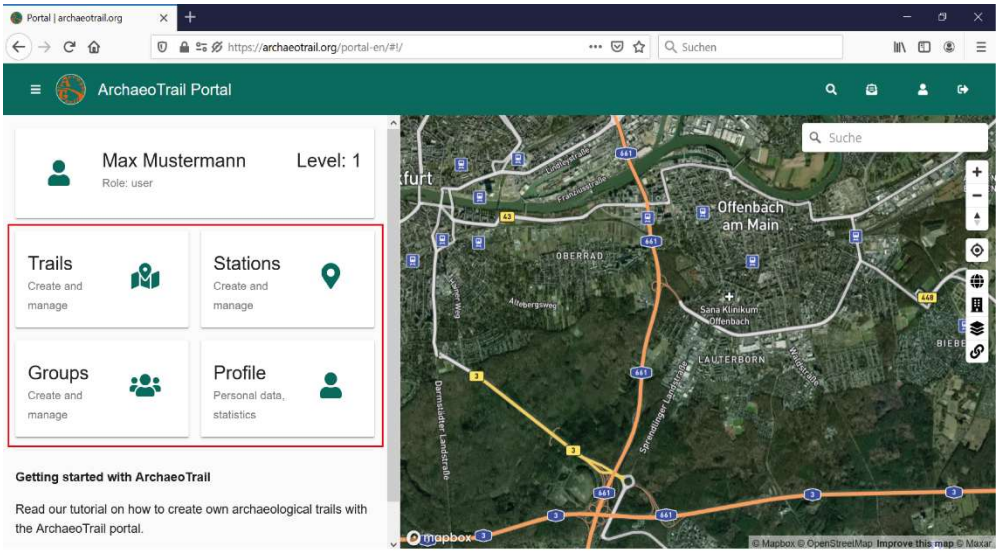
On the right-hand side of the portal landing page, you will find the map tool. This tool allows you to use the map search panel to locate your archaeological site or the nearest town. A second search panel, positioned above it, can be used to search for other users or additional site-related features. Next to the search area, you will also find several icons indicating notifications and account options. These allow you to view any updates, sign in or out, or leave the portal.



The plus and minus buttons allow you to zoom in and out on the map. The north arrow resets the map orientation so that it points north. The target symbol centers the map on your current location, while the globe symbol shows your position within a wider world map view. The building symbol toggles the display of building outlines on the map. The next icon allows you to switch between different map styles. The link symbol is used to synchronise your tasks—such as stations—with the map tool.

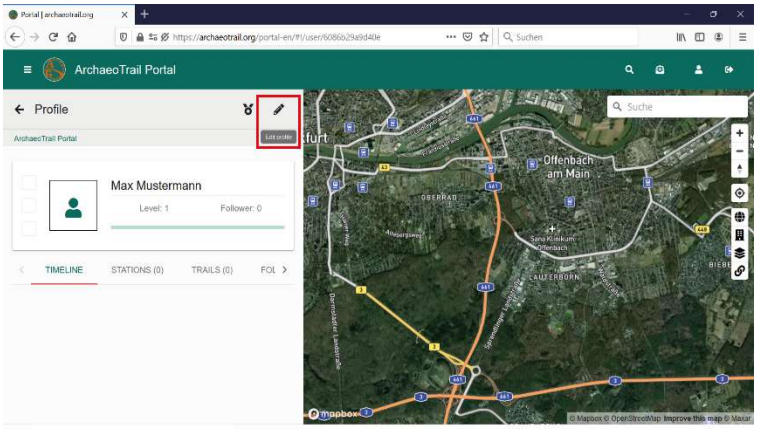
Your profile

On the left side of the portal, you will find four main tabs: Trails, Stations, Groups, and Profile.

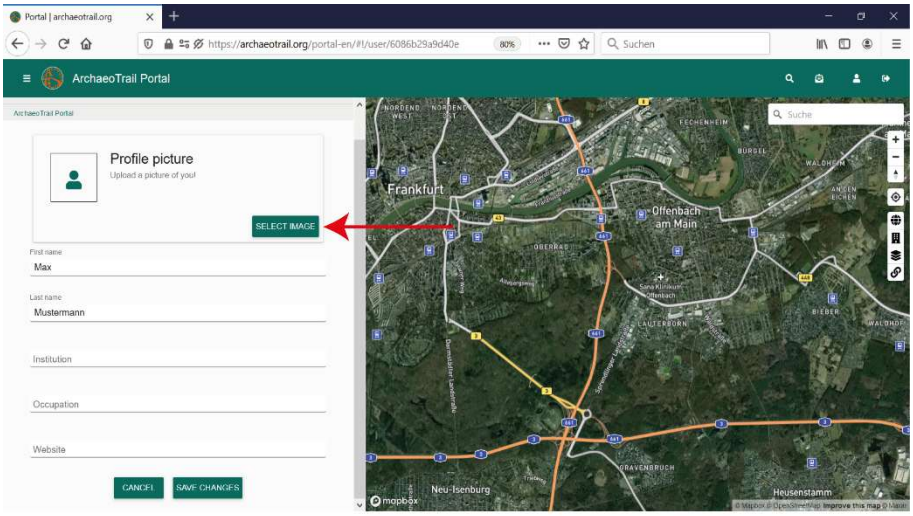


Select Profile to view and manage your user account. In your Profile, the timeline section appears underneath your name and profile picture. As you begin creating trails and stations, your progress will be displayed here. Once your content has been published, it will also appear in this timeline view. You can also see your number of followers and the number of users you are following (both starting at zero).

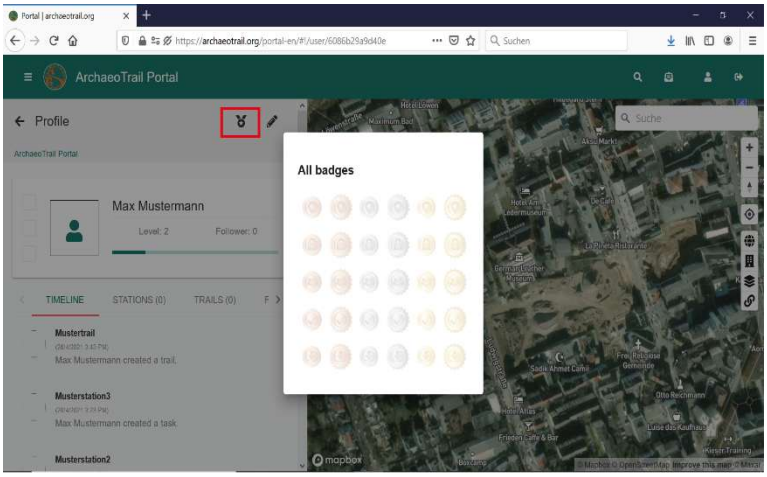
Your user level is displayed next to your name. Levels increase through activity on the platform, such as publishing trails, creating stations, and gaining followers.



To edit your profile, click the pencil icon in the upper right corner of the profile tab. Here you can upload a profile picture from your device by selecting Choose image. You can also customise how your name and institution are displayed, add your occupation, and include a link to your website.



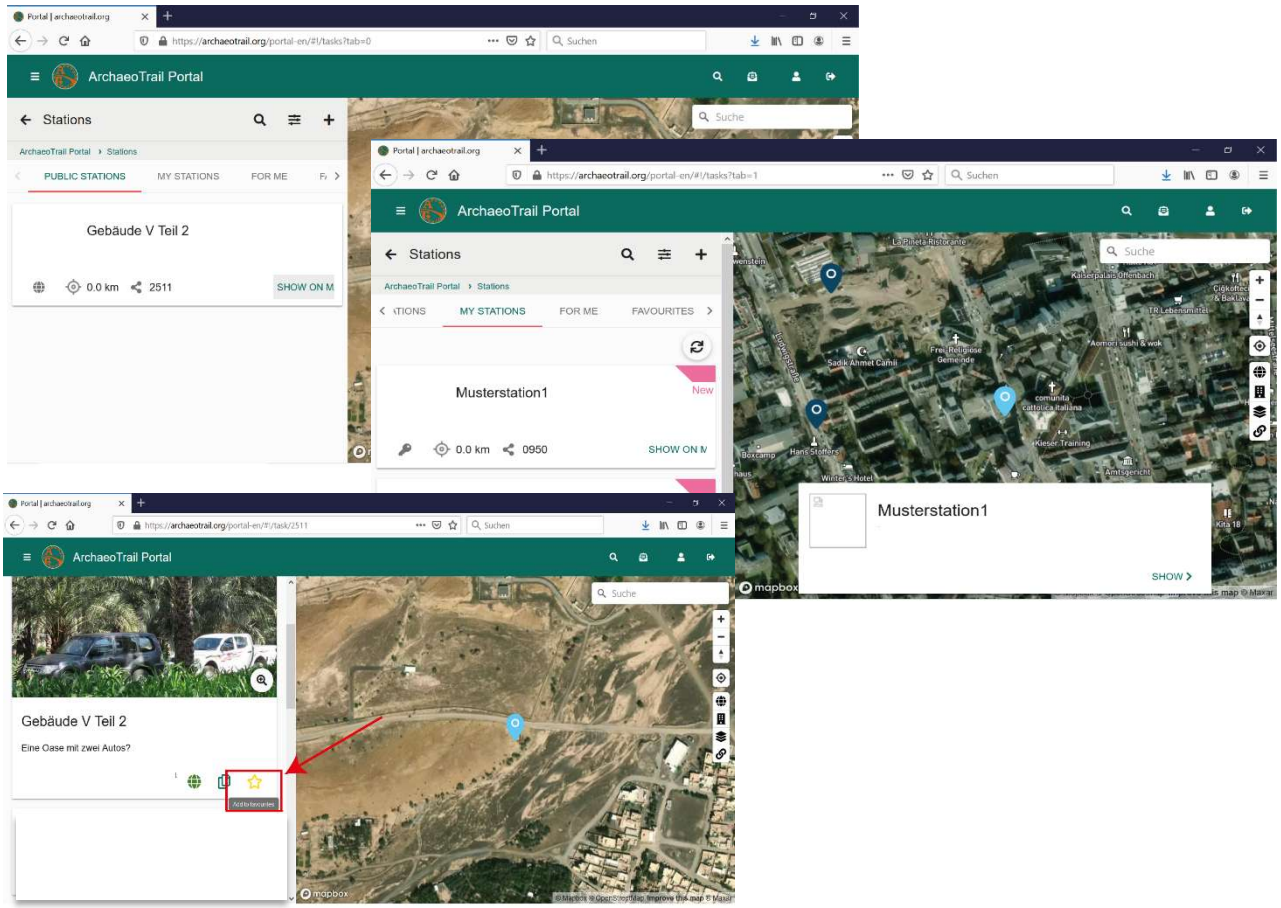
Click the badge icon located to the left of the pencil icon to view the badges you have earned. Badges are awarded for activities such as publishing trails and stations, gaining followers, completing reviews, and having visitors download your trails through the app. You can highlight up to three of your most significant badges by displaying them next to your profile picture. Simply drag and drop your selected badges into the display area.



Step 2: Create stations

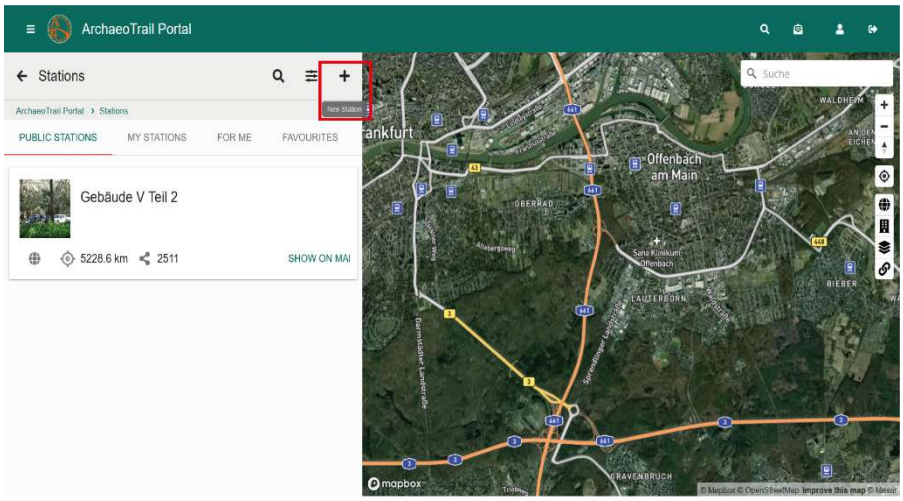
Remember: Before you can create a trail, you must first create all the stations that will be included in it. Make sure you have all required materials ready before starting the trail creation process, including a title and short description for your trail, an illustration or cover image for the trail, the title and text content for each station, images for each station, and any optional supplementary materials such as audio recordings, videos, or other media and questions for quizzes.

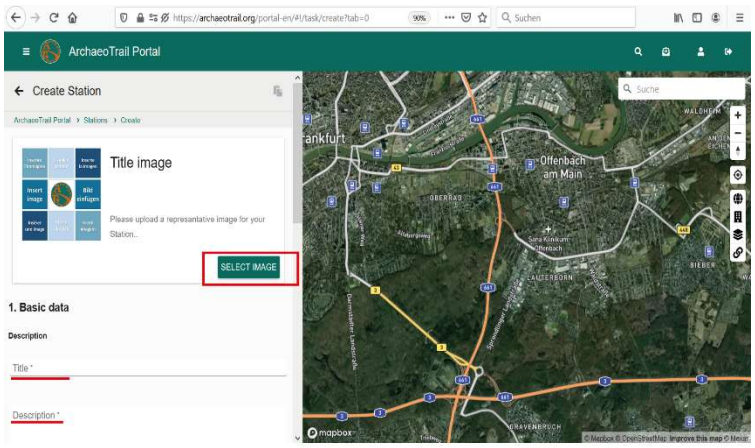
When you click on the Stations tab, you will see several categories: **Public Stations**, **My Stations**, **For Me**, and **Favourites**. Public Stations are accessible to all users. My Stations contains the stations you have created. For Me shows stations that other users have shared with you. Favourites contains stations you have marked for quick access. You can add a station to your Favourites by clicking the star icon below the station description.



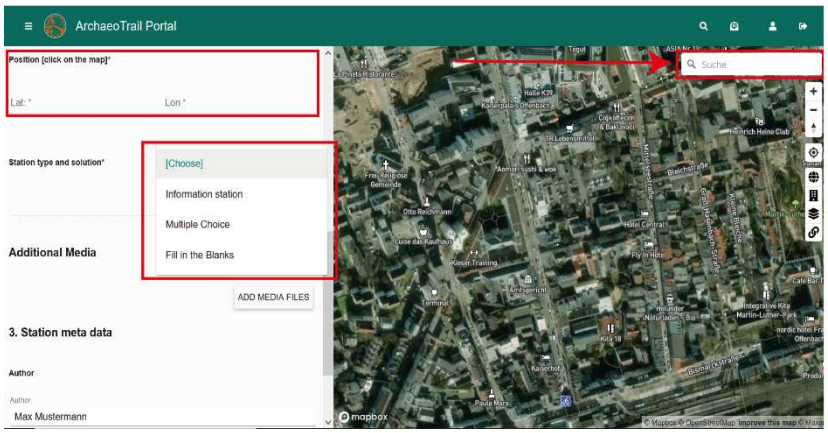
Creating new stations

To create a new station, go to the Stations tab and click the plus (+) icon in the upper right corner. It is recommended to have all texts and images for your stations prepared and readily available before you begin uploading them into the portal, as this will make the process faster and more efficient.





Upload a **title image** from your device, then enter a title and description for your station. Please note that station **titles are limited to a maximum length of 20 characters** to ensure they are displayed in full on smartphones. For the title image, choose a visual that helps users of the app immediately recognise that they have reached the correct location.

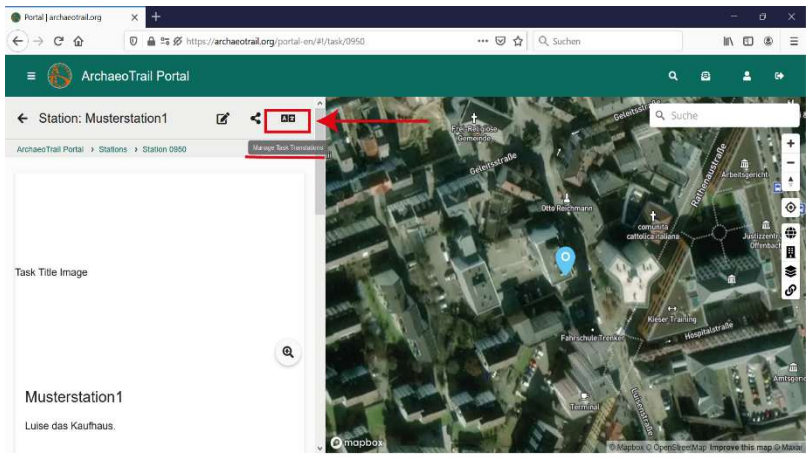


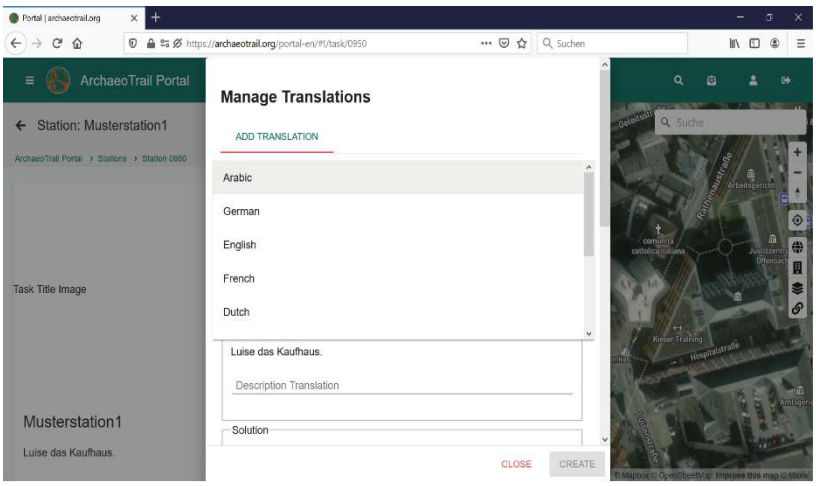
Search for the **location** of the station using the map tool, then place your station by clicking on the map. The exact latitude and longitude coordinates will appear on the left-hand side. Alternatively, you can enter the station's location manually by filling in the UTM coordinates. Make sure to use the correct UTM format: you must enter a numeric value and use a dot (.) as the decimal separator.

Next, choose the type of station from the drop-down menu. Decide whether the station should provide only information or also include a quiz. You can select between an **Information Station** or two quiz types: **Multiple Choice** or **Fill in the Blanks**. An **Information Station** is used to provide plain, accessible information to visitors. The text is limited to 1000 characters on purpose, as users typically engage with short, focused content while exploring a trail. The writing should be clear, engaging, and suitable for a general audience rather than a purely scientific or academic style. Where appropriate, you can include links to additional resources, further reading, or external media available on the web. The aim is to communicate key information in an understandable and interesting way. **Important: If you choose a Multiple Choice quiz, make sure to inform users within the station how many answers are correct (between one and four). You must always provide four answer options for each question**.

Translating stations

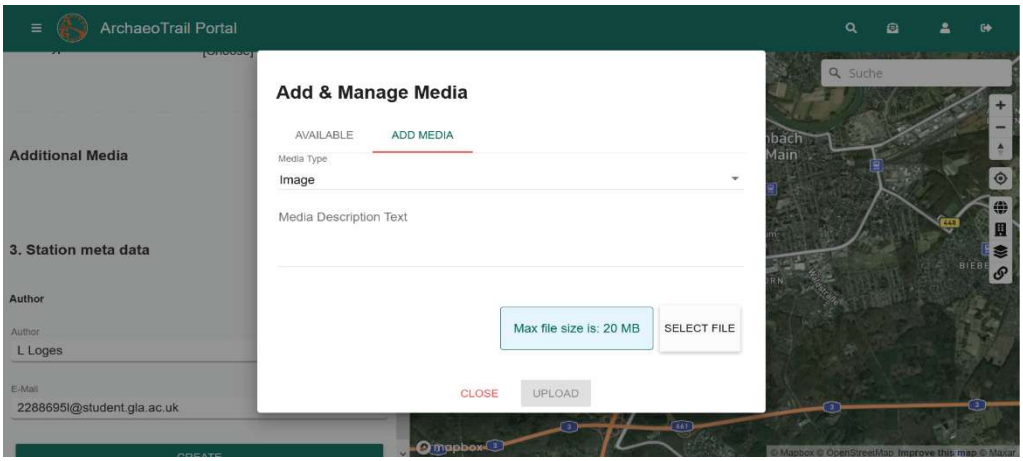
You can provide visitors with station information in multiple languages without needing to create a separate trail for each language. When starting the trail in the app, users can select their preferred language from the options you have provided. To add translations, click the icon in the upper right corner. You can then select a language from the drop-down menu and enter the corresponding translated content. If a required language is not yet available in the drop-down menu, please contact the ArchaeoTrail team to have it added (https://archaeotrail.org/contact-us/).

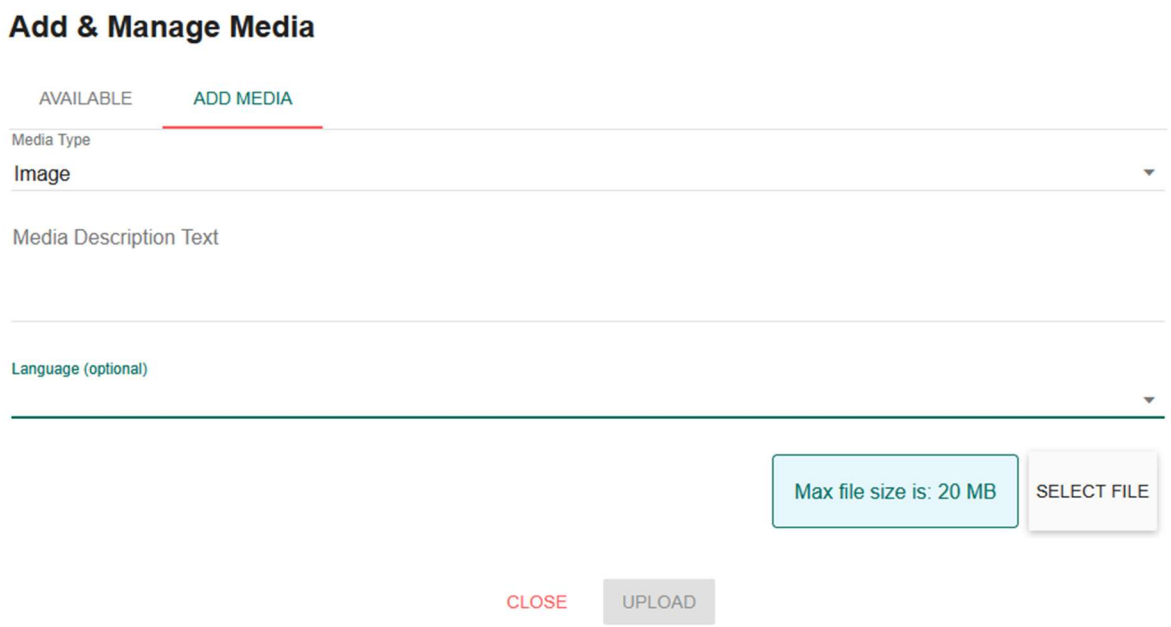




Additional media

Besides the title image, you can add various additional media. You can upload supplementary files by clicking ADD MEDIA FILES. These files may include images, videos or audio recordings, with a maximum file size of **20 MB per file**. If you are creating a multilingual trail, you can assign different images to different languages. This is particularly useful if, for example, you have labelled elements in an image in one language and need a separate version for another language. For this purpose, you can specify the language for each uploaded media file. Note that language translation is only available for additional media, not for the title image. It is also possible to **include links** in the station description to provide access to additional media available on the web.





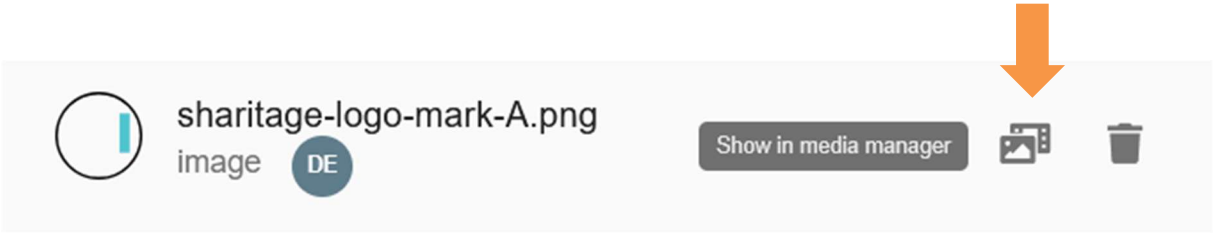
You should also add a description to each media file. Note that for illustrations, this description does not appear as a caption in the app; it is only used to help you identify the file later within the system. For audio and video files, however, the description will appear as the file name in the app, and it cannot be changed after upload.

Media manager

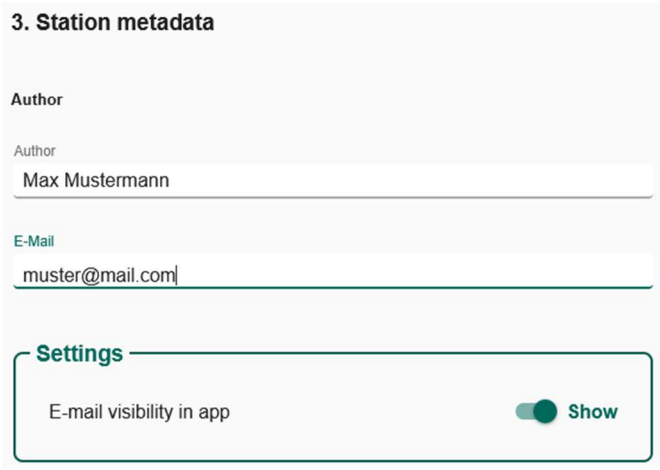


You can access the Media Manager by clicking the Media Manager button. The Media Manager allows you to manage all your media files. The number displayed in the top-left corner of a media item indicates how many stations are currently using that file, while the labels in the bottom-left corner show the languages for which media translations are available. To find a specific media file, use the search bar.

In the Station View, under "Additional Media", there is now a button that opens the Media Manager and automatically applies a filter to display only the corresponding media file.

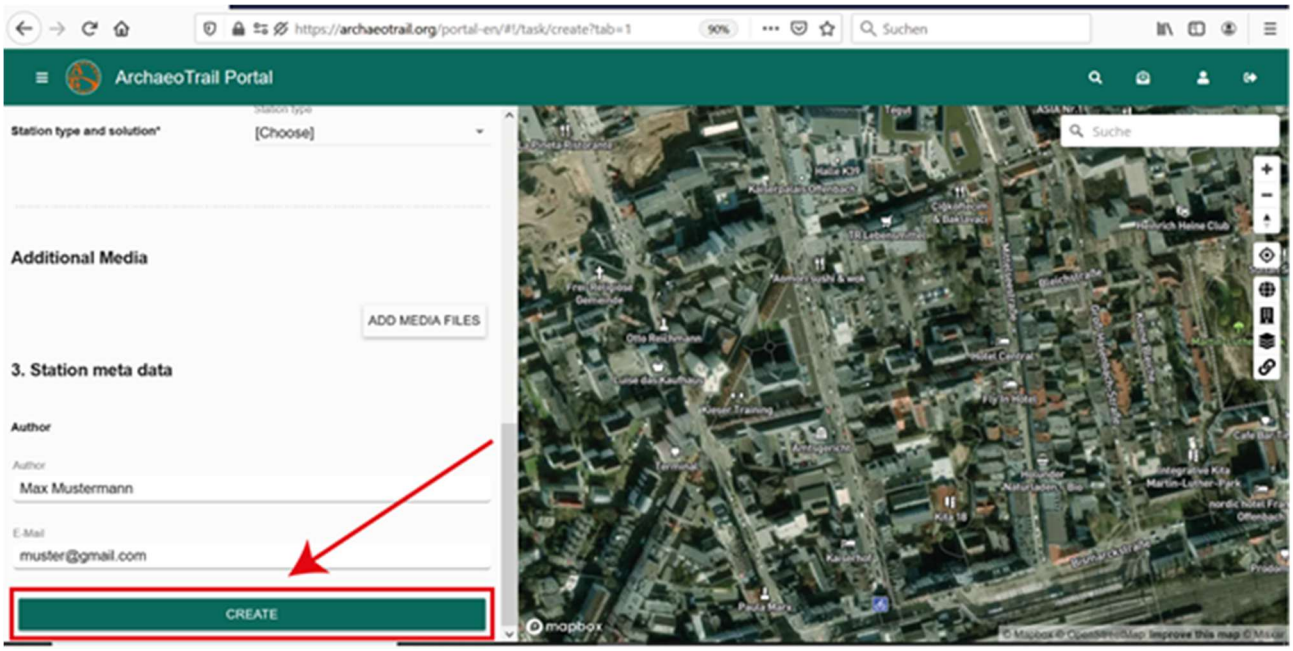


Station metadata



In the station metadata, you can enter the name of the trail creator as well as a contact email address. If you do not want this information to be visible to app users, make sure the visibility in the app slider is turned off.

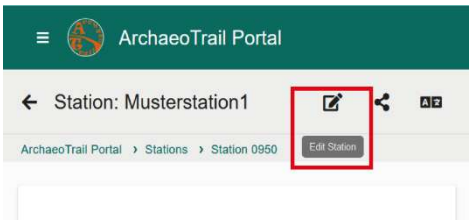
Finally, click CREATE at the bottom of the page. Congratulations, you have created your first station!



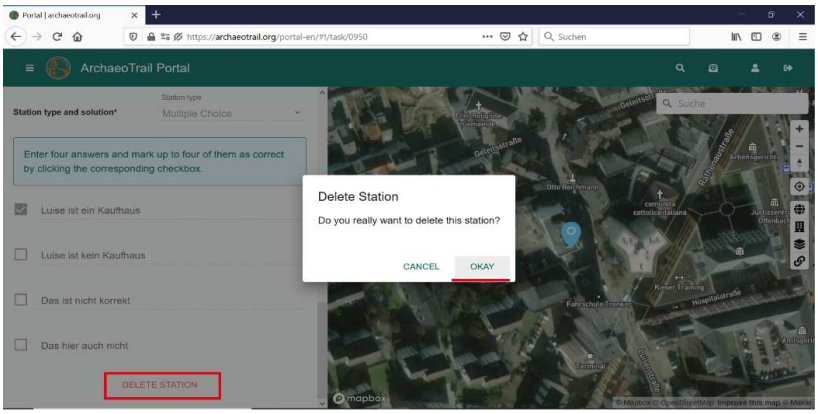
Please ensure that you create all stations you want to include in your trail before creating the trail itself, as adding stations to an existing trail later is time-consuming.

Edit station

If you need to make changes to a station later, click the **Edit Station** button at the top of the page and apply the necessary updates. If the trail to which the station belongs has already been published, any changes will only become visible once the trail has been downloaded again on the smartphone.



Delete station

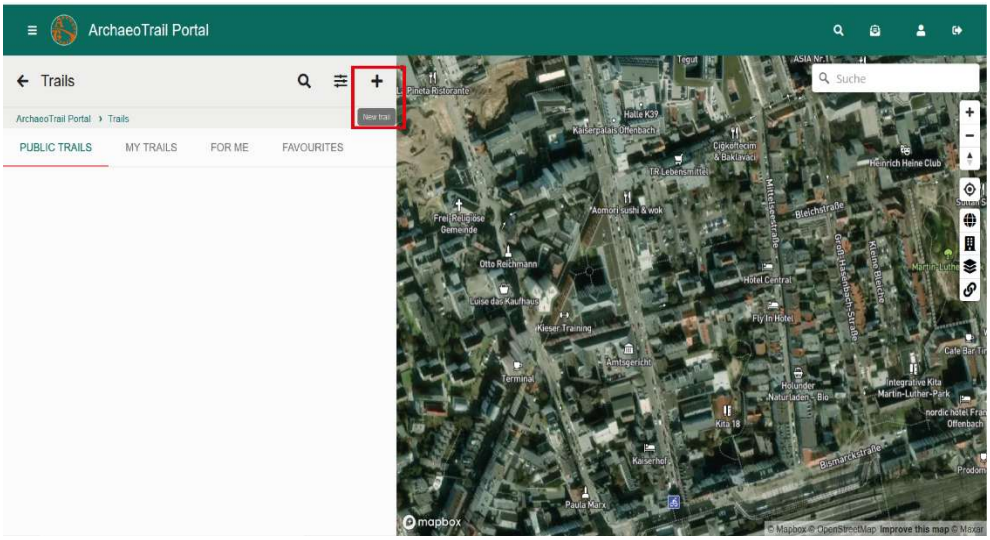


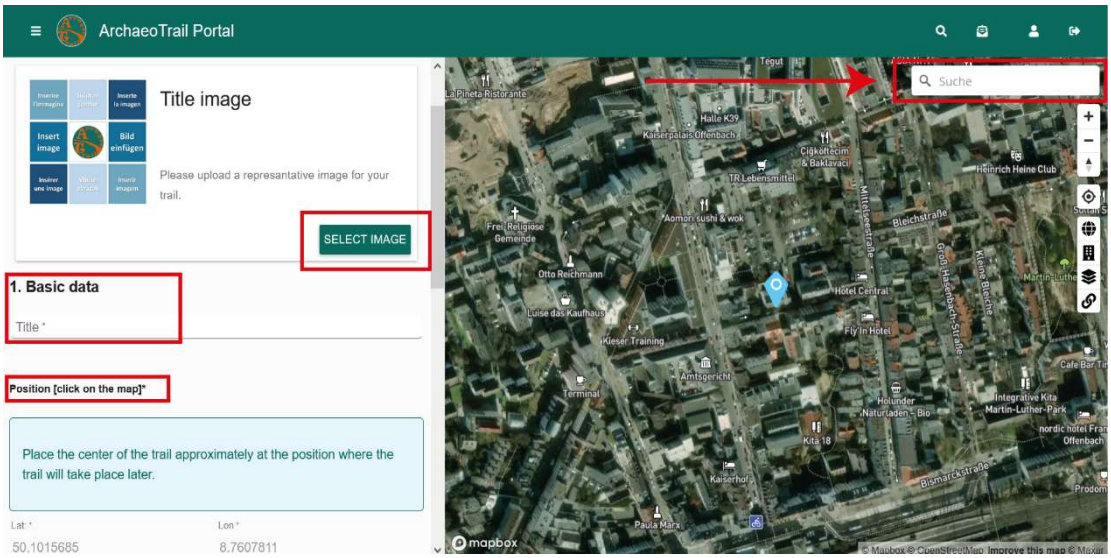
To delete a station, scroll to the bottom of the page, click DELETE, and confirm your selection. Please note that stations or trails cannot be deleted while they are in editing mode.

Step 3: Create a trail

Before creating a trail, you must first create all stations that will be included in it.

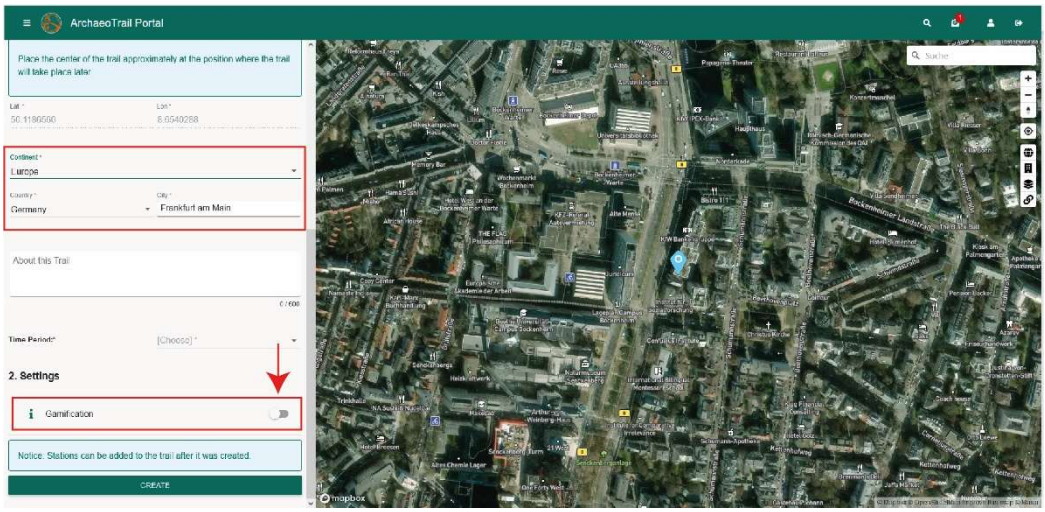
To create a trail, go to the Trails tab and click the plus (+) icon in the upper right corner. Trails are organised into **Public Trails**, **My Trails**, **For Me**, and **Favourites**, following the same structure as the Stations section. Begin by uploading a **title image** for your trail and choosing a clear, engaging, and informative title. Then use the map tool to locate the approximate area of your trail and click on the map to set its **position**, ideally near the centre of the route.





Select the appropriate continent, country, and city. The country and city will be visible in the app, while the continent field is used internally to help the ArchaeoTrail team assign the trail to suitable reviewers before publication.

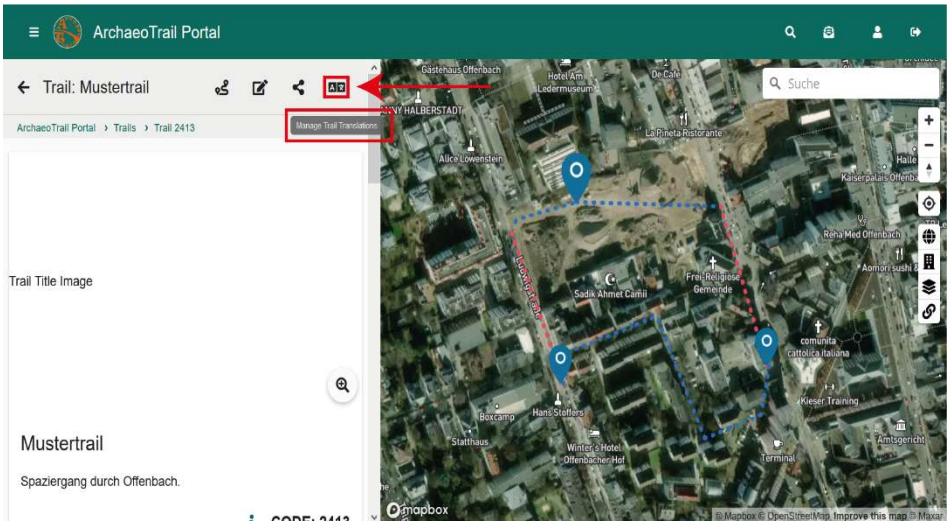
If you enable the Gamification option, visitors can earn points by completing tasks along your trail, such as station quizzes. These results are for personal use only and cannot be compared with other users. They may, however, be shared within a group, for example in a school class or among friends completing the trail together.

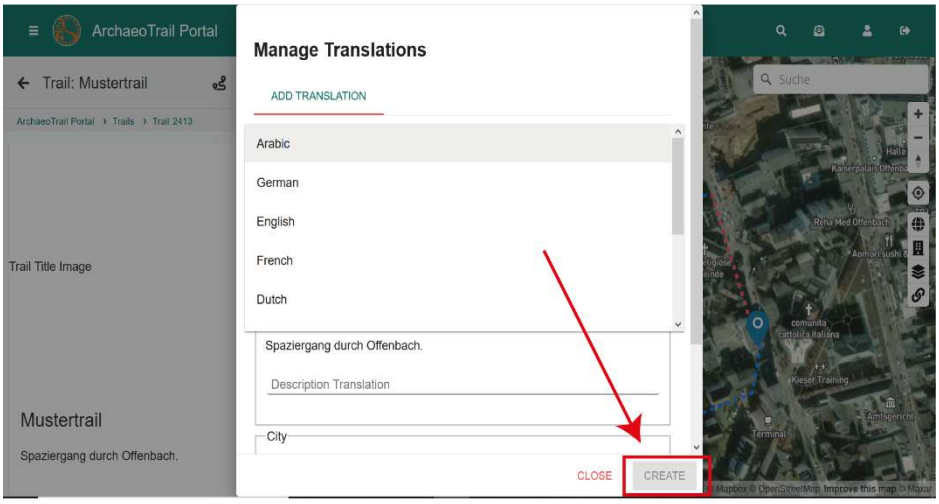


Now, choose a **time period** for your archaeological site from the drop-down menu. This field is not visible in the app; it is used only internally by the ArchaeoTrail team to assign suitable reviewers before publication. The selection can be very general. If you are unsure or cannot find an exact match, simply choose the closest available option.

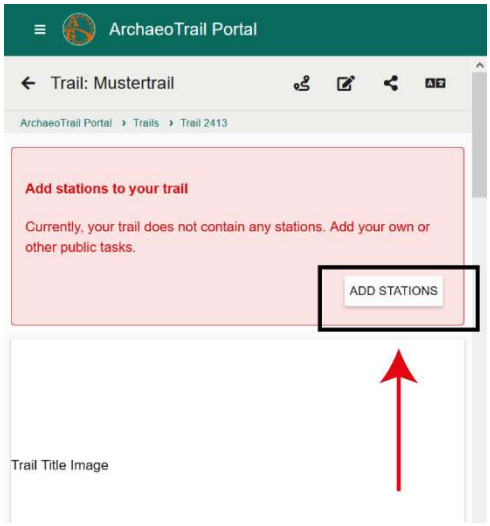
Trail translations

When starting the trail in the app, users can select their preferred language from the options you have provided. You can also make your trail multilingual. To do this, go to Manage Trail Translations at the top of the page. To add translations, click the icon in the upper right corner. You can then select a language from the drop-down menu and translate each step. After completing the translation, click CREATE to add it to your trail. You can repeat this process for multiple languages; however, please ensure that all additional materials are also uploaded in each language your trail offers. If a required language is not yet available in the drop-down menu, please contact the ArchaeoTrail team via https://archaeotrail.org/contact-us/ to request that it be added.



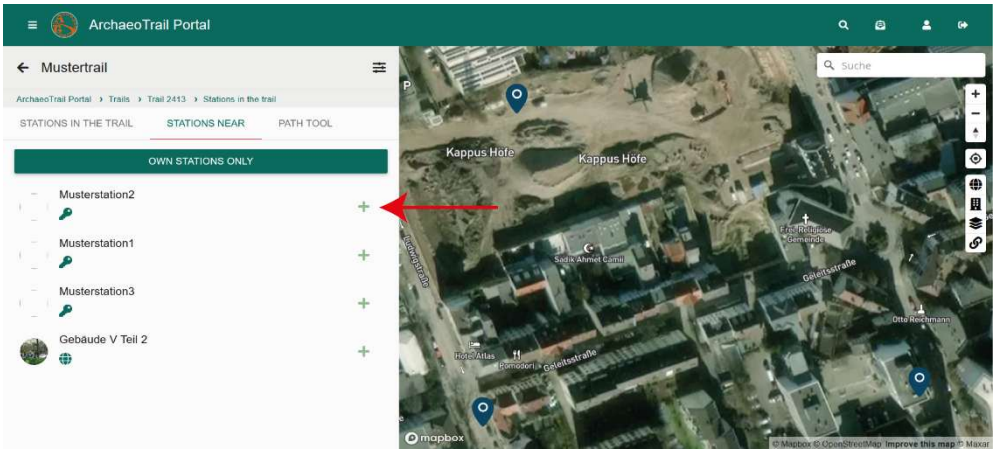


Adding stations to a trail



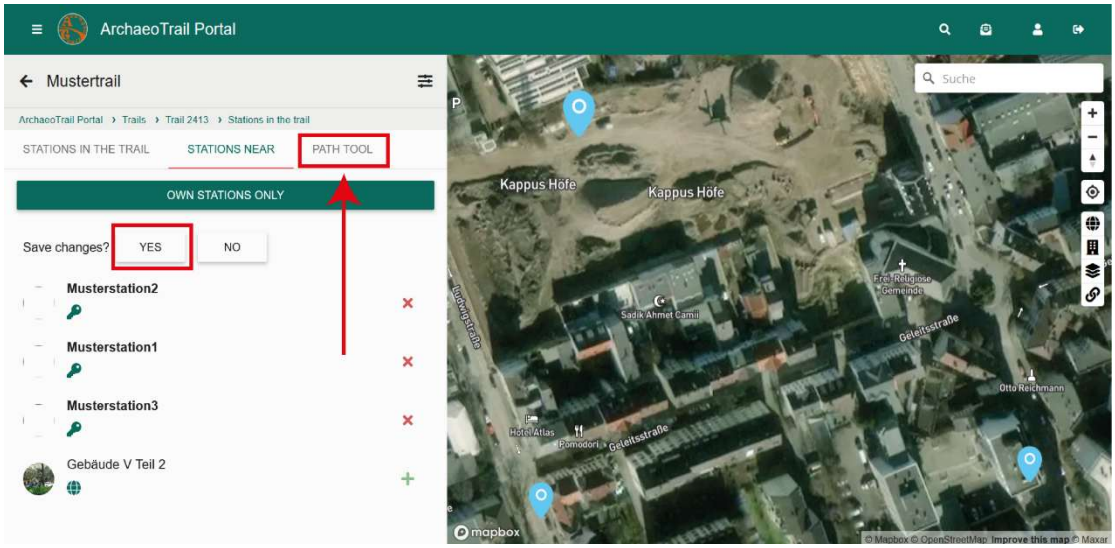
Click the **CREATE** button at the bottom of the trail page to finalise your trail. You will then be prompted to add the stations that belong to your trail.

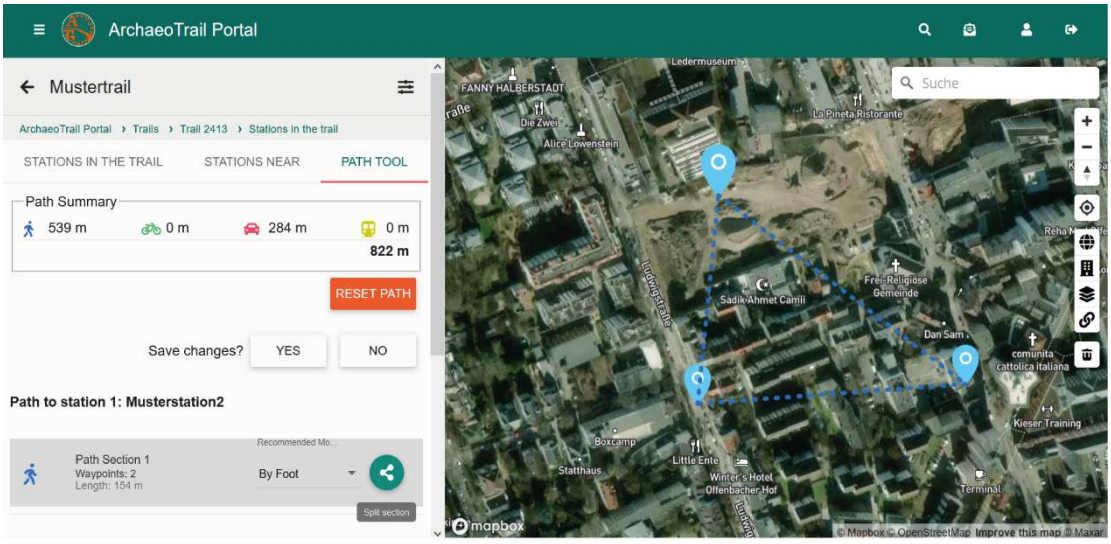
The stations you have created will be displayed automatically, sorted by their proximity to the trail's location. You can add them to your trail by clicking the plus (+) icon next to each station.



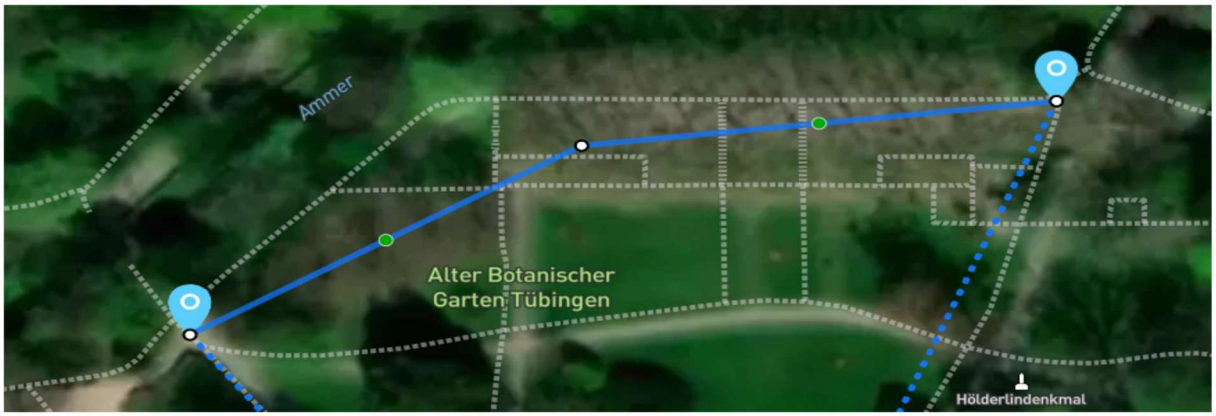
Create a path between the stations

Next, create a route between the stations using the Path Tool. Important: Ensure that all stations have been added to the trail before you begin creating the path. **Adding stations later requires you to recreate the entire path.** The portal automatically generates a path as straight lines between the stations, following the order in which the stations appear in the list.



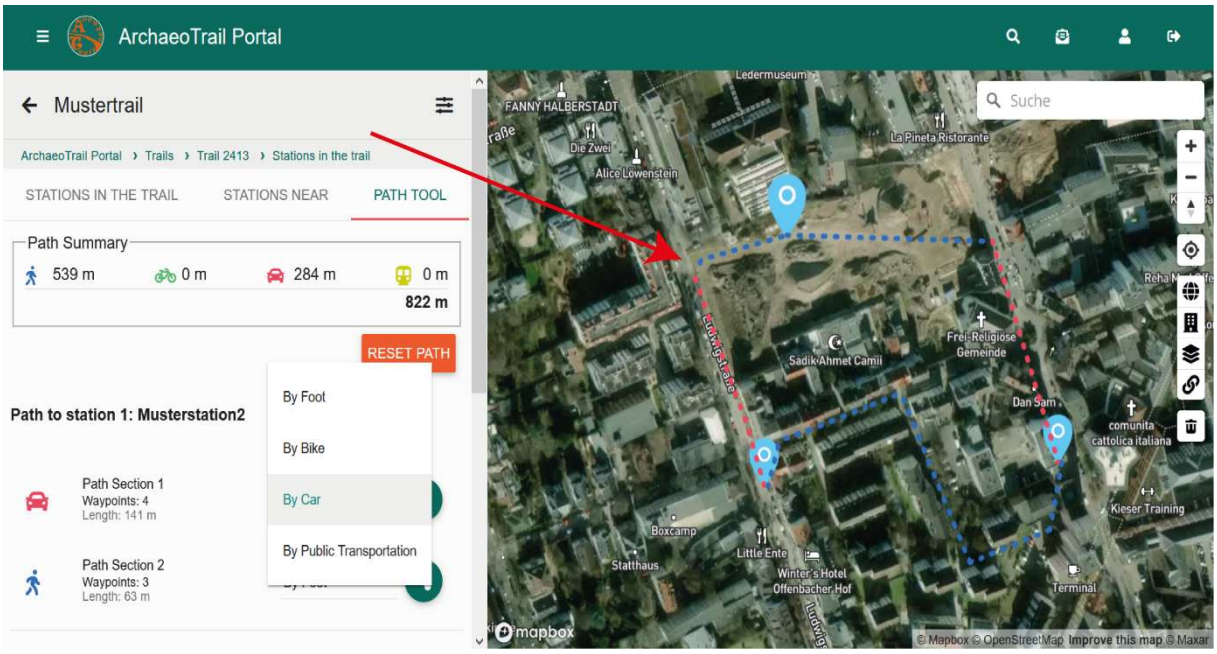


To adjust a path, click on one of its sections. The line will change from dashed to solid. Click the section again to activate editing mode. A green circle will appear in the middle of the segment. Click and hold this circle, then drag it to the desired location. New green points will automatically appear in the middle of the two newly created segments.



To delete a path, click on it so it becomes a solid line and press the Delete key. Please note that this action cannot be undone, and deleted paths cannot be restored or recreated automatically.

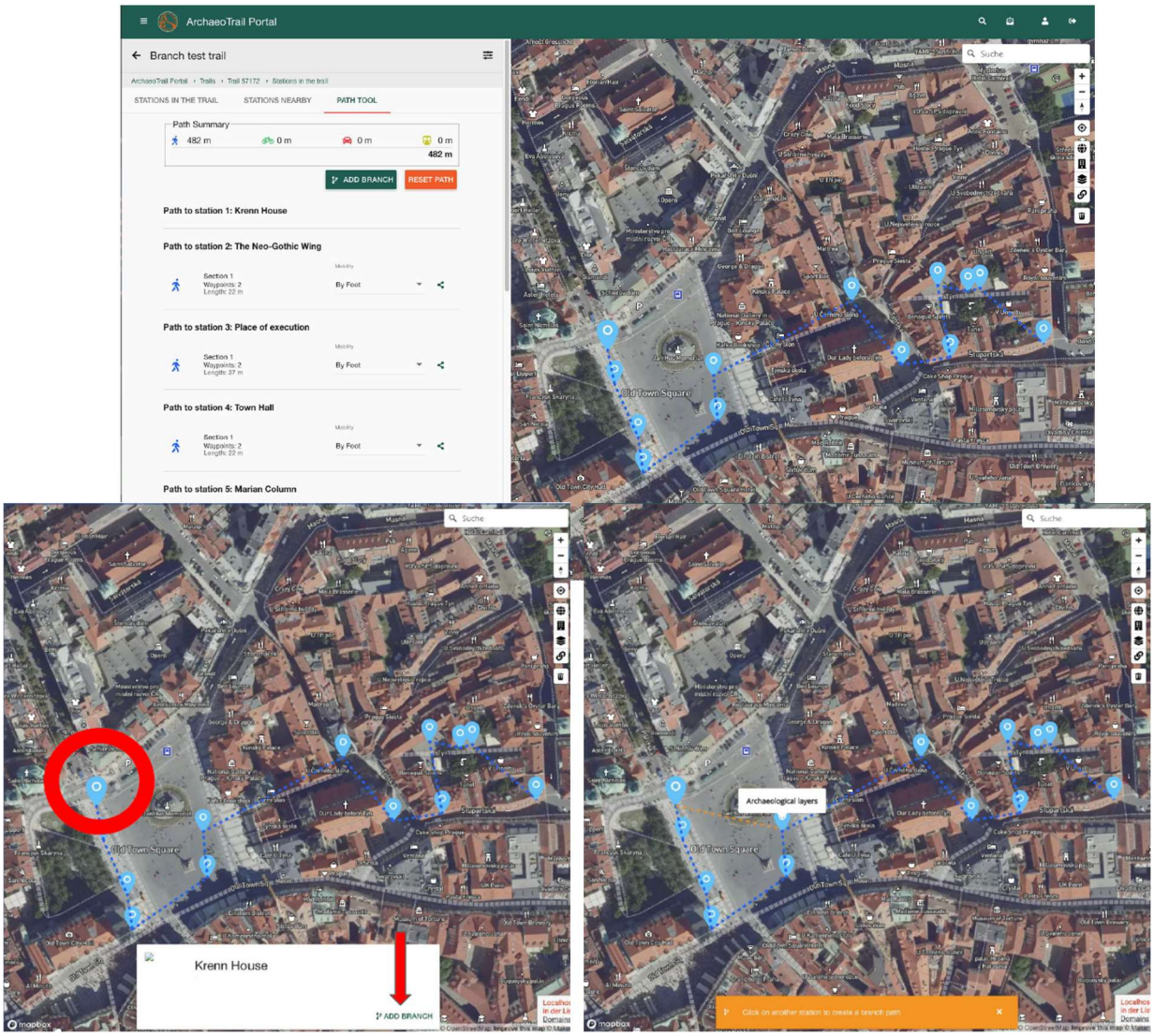
Choose the means of transportation for each section of your trail carefully. You can select between walking, cycling, driving by car, or using public transportation. Please note that the recommended mode of transport can be changed at split points along the route. **This means you can assign two or more modes of transportation between two stations.**

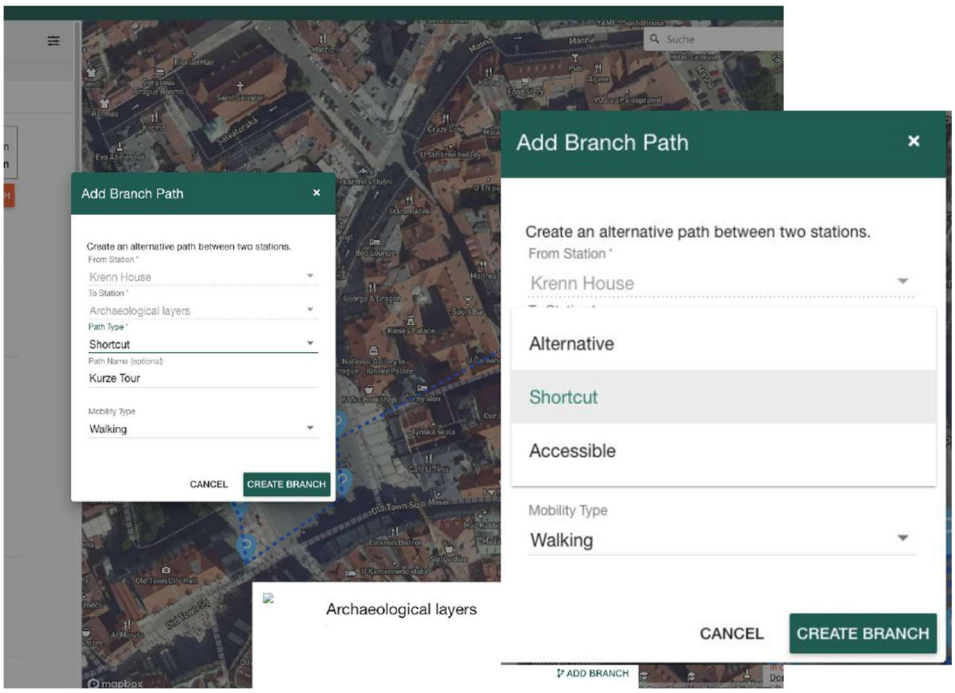


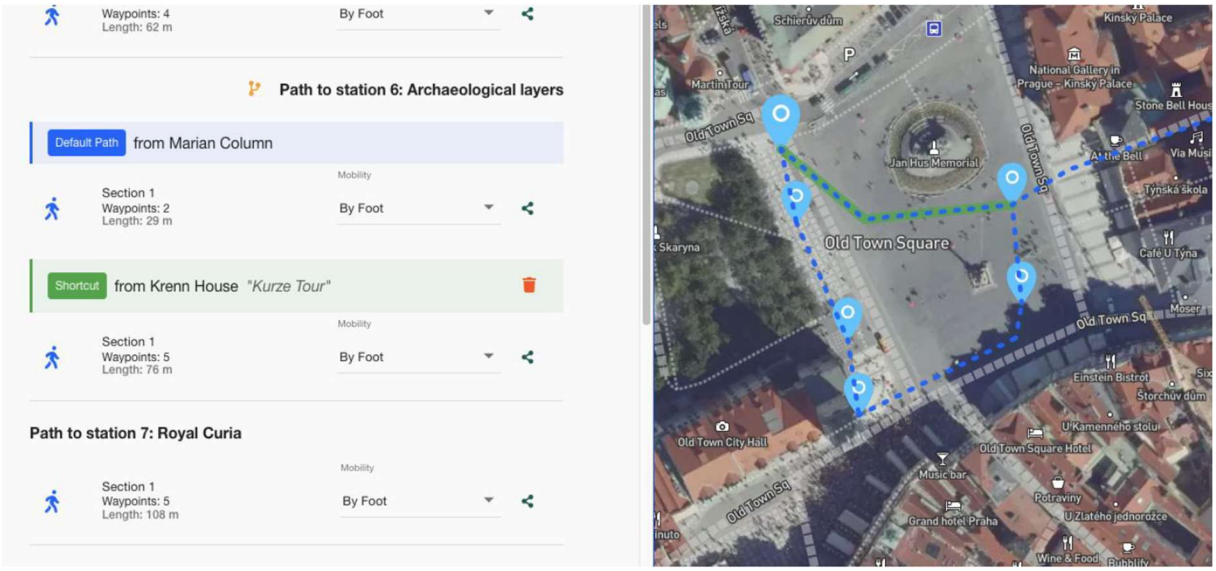
Branching

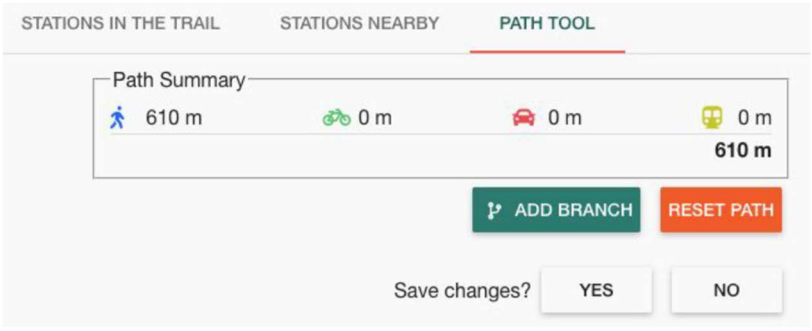
In addition to following a single, consecutive path, it is also possible to create alternative routes within a trail. These can include shortcuts, additional segments, or alternative narrative paths that users can choose according to their preferences, allowing for a more flexible and personalised experience.

To create alternative routes, start with the usual Path Tool as explained above. After creating the path, select a station on the map and click Add Branch Tool. Next, select the target station to which the new route should lead from the station you initially selected. Then complete the branch path dialog by configuring the available options. You can define the branch type, such as a shortcut, an alternative route (for example a more scenic option), or an accessible path (e.g., suitable for wheelchairs or strollers). Give the new path a clear name that explains its purpose, and select the appropriate mobility type from the standard options (walking, cycling, driving, or public transport). Finally, adjust and fine-tune the new branch of the path as described above.









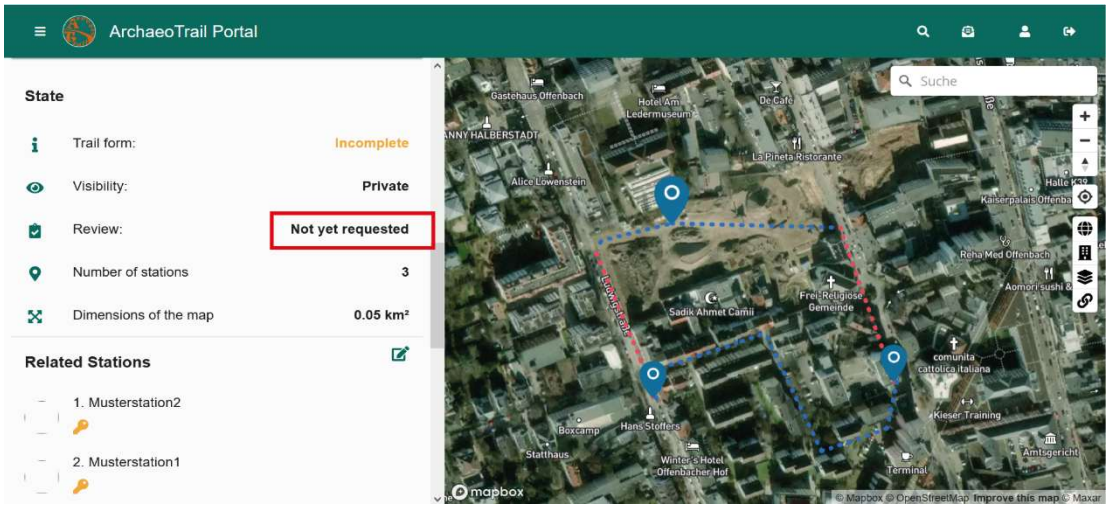
Alternatively, you can also access the branching tool directly from the Path Tool dialog by clicking the Add Branch button.

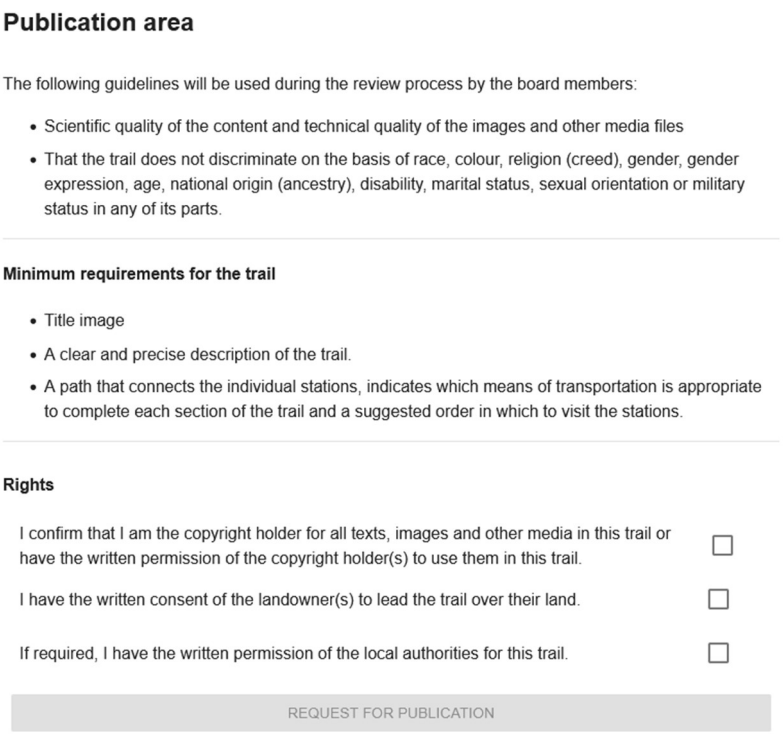
In the app, branches are displayed differently from the main path. The main route appears as a blue dotted line, while branches are shown as coloured highlighted segments. Different branch types are indicated using different colours; for example, a shortcut may be displayed with a green highlight.



Publishing the trail in the portal

Finally, once your trail is complete (meaning all associated stations have been fully prepared), you must **submit it for review by clicking on the "Review Not yet requested" line**. This will notify the ArchaeoTrail team that your trail is ready for review. Please ensure that you have all necessary rights and permissions before submitting your trail. This includes copyright clearance for all media content as well as any required permissions from landowners or relevant local authorities for the locations used. Responsibility for ensuring these permissions lies entirely with the trail creator; the ArchaeoTrail team does not assume responsibility for legal compliance or any damages resulting from the content or its use. If you are unable to request a review, this is usually because the minimum requirements for publication have not yet been met. Once the trail has been approved, it can be published and will become available to all users of the ArchaeoTrail App.





The download symbol at the bottom of your trail's landing page shows how many users have downloaded your trail. The icon next to it indicates the visibility status of your trail: a key symbol means the trail is private, while a globe symbol indicates that the trail is public. Next to this, you find a star symbol, so you can add your trail to your favourites.

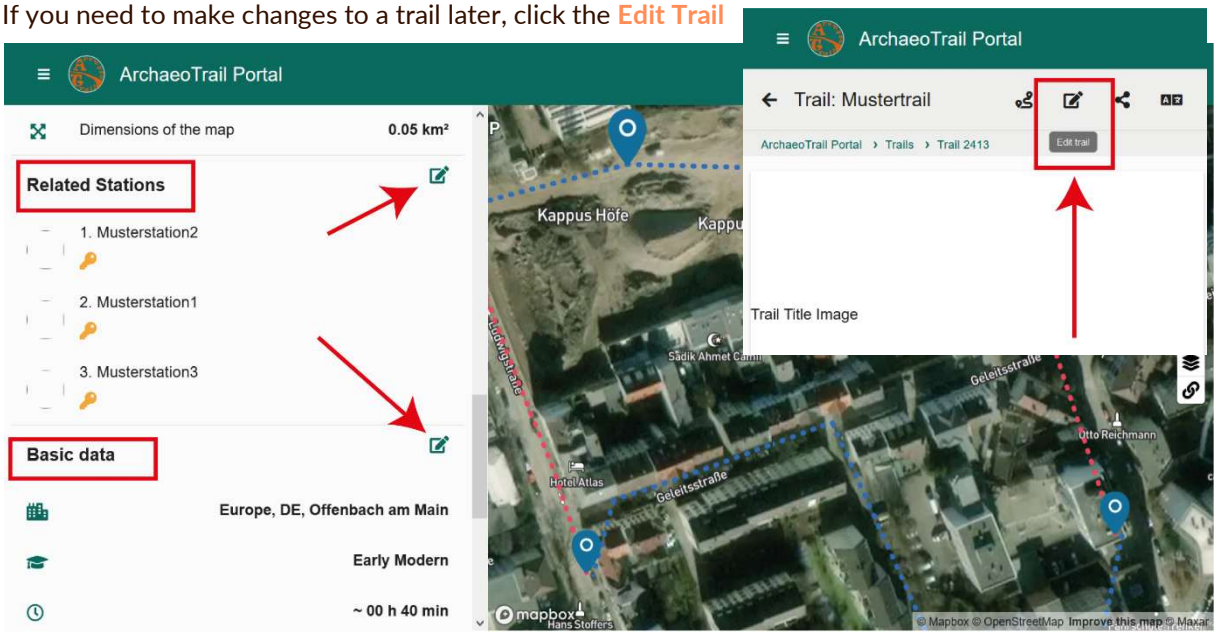
ArchaeoTrail is not responsible for promoting or publicising your trail. We therefore recommend that you actively share your trail yourself, for example by installing an information board at the site with a QR code linking directly to ArchaeoTrail app.

Sharing the trail without publication

In some cases, it can be useful to make a trail accessible to others without publishing it publicly. This allows you to share and test the trail with selected users, such as local authorities, stakeholders, or members of a closed group like a school class, where the content is not intended for general public access. Every trail is assigned a four-digit code. This code can be used by the creator to share the trail with other users, even if the trail remains private. By entering the code **in the app under the section "Add Trails"**, users can load and access the trail directly.

Edit Trail

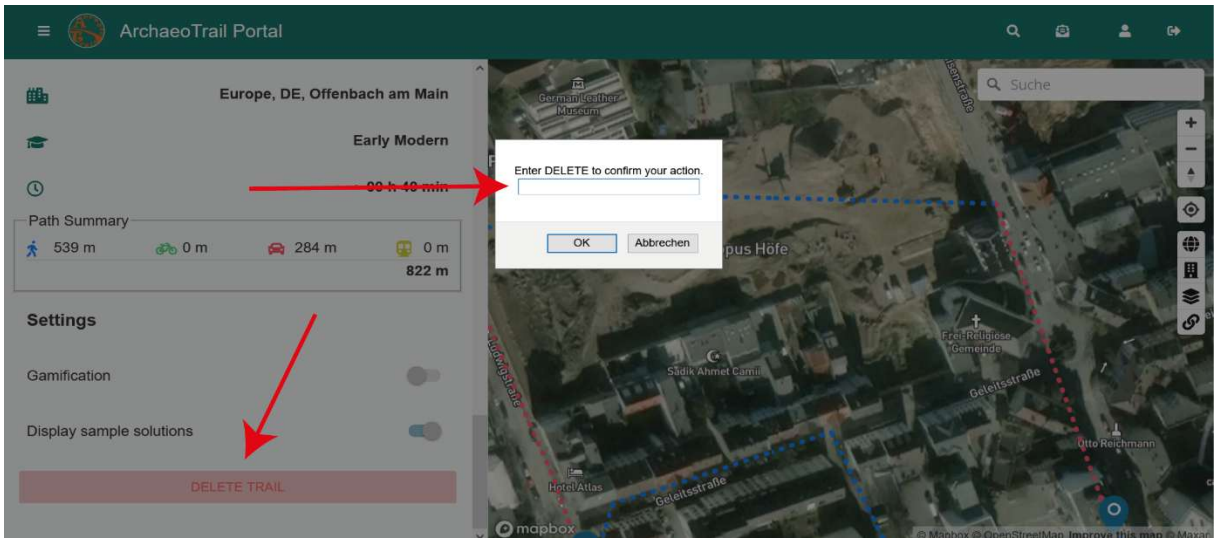
If you need to make changes to a trail later, click the Edit Trail



button at the top of the page, or scroll down and use the edit buttons in the trail summary to access specific sections. After making the necessary updates, remember that if the trail has already been published, any changes will only become visible once the trail has been downloaded again on the smartphone. Note that you can only add or remove stations from the trail in this menu. **To edit the stations themselves, you must go to the Stations section** (see above).

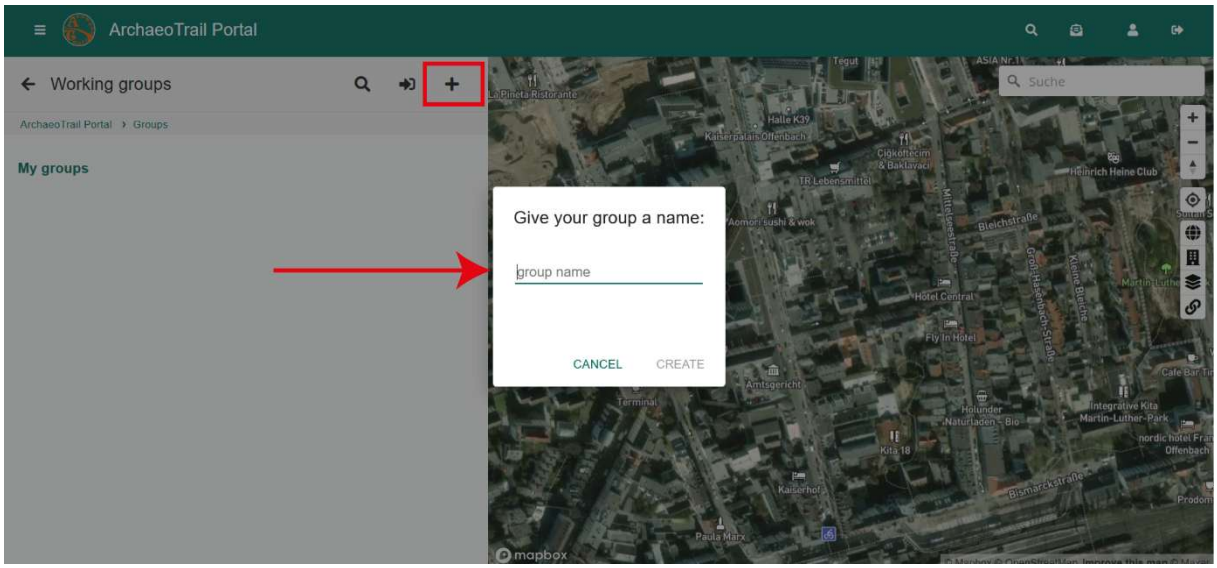
Delete Trail

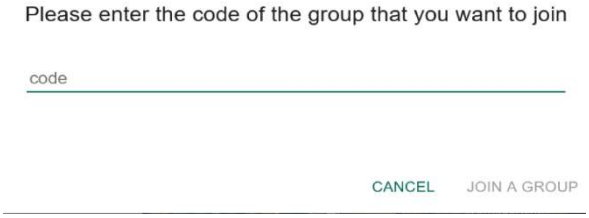
To delete your trail, scroll to the bottom of the page (ensure you are not in editing mode), and click DELETE. You will then be required to confirm the action by typing DELETE in the pop-up window.



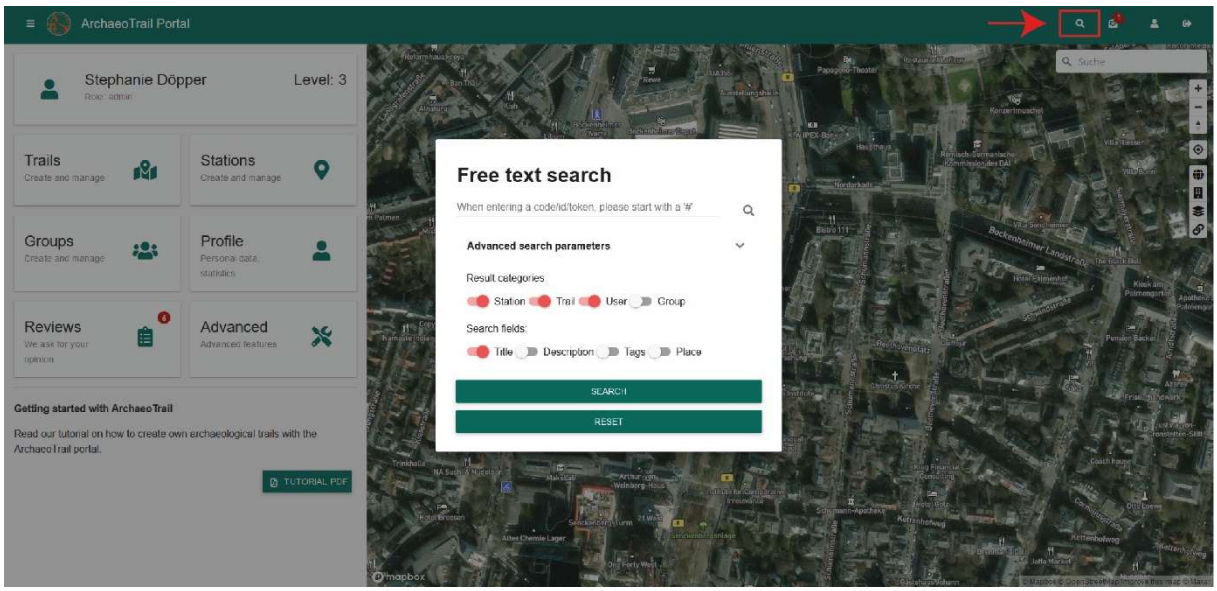
Join or create groups, interact with others

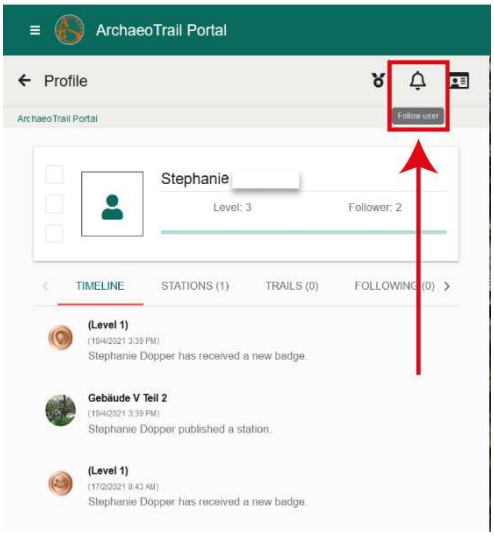
If you want to interact with other trail creators in the portal, you can create a group to collaborate on trails with others. To do so, go to the Groups section and click the plus (+) icon in the upper right corner.





After naming your group, you will receive a three-digit code that you can share with anyone you wish to invite to collaborate. To join a group created by another member, you will need to obtain this code from the group creator. This allows group members to view and collaboratively edit unpublished trails. Group creators can also remove members from their group at any time by clicking the **DELETE** button.





You can also interact more directly with other members of the platform. To find another researcher, use the keyword search panel located above the map tool. To follow a user, go to their profile page and click the bell icon. Once you are following them, you can send a direct message by clicking the paper airplane icon on their profile. Alternatively, you can request another user's contact details, regardless of whether you are following them.

