

Trier Extra-Curricular Activities on Thursday & Friday

Guided by William L. Chew III, PhD, FINS

Trier (“Trèves,” in French) is often billed as the “oldest town in Germany,” tracing its legendary foundation to 1,300 years before that of Rome, ostensibly by a Babylonian Prince, son of Queen Semiramis. This is, of course, an ancient version of what we would today call an “alternative fact.” Scholarly research, textual and archaeological, reveals the existence of an early settlement by the 1st century BC. By the time of its heyday, from 306-383, it was a capital of the Western Roman Empire under Constantine I, Valentinian I, and Gratian. For almost a century, it was a major cultural center of the Empire and even seat of a university. With the barbarian invasions of the 5th century, it went into decline and by 475 was Frankish. Fortunately, many well-preserved architectural relics are still extant, making it the premier Roman city of Germany and, indeed, since 1986 a UNESCO World Heritage Site. During our stay in Trier, we shall visit the most important of these sites, guided by one of our members, Bill Chew, who studied history in Germany at the University of Tübingen, where during his graduate studies he sub-specialized in the constitution of the Roman Republic, and the early Principate.

Wednesday last paper slot

1. Intro lecture: History of Roman Trier 1 hr.
 - a. A lecture and PPT presentation will trace the history of Roman Trier from its legendary beginnings to its fall in 475. We shall look at its rise to an important center of trade and administration, and how this was reflected in urban growth and development, earning it contemporary titles such as “urbs opulentissima,” “second Rome,” or “Rome of the North.” We shall sketch out a brief archaeological history, largely initiated by Napoleon in 1804, during his stay in Trier.

Thursday

Depart from Hotel lobby 10:00 – (30 min. walk)

1. Hauptfriedhof (Main municipal cemetery) 15 min.
 - a. See 1842 commemorative obelisk listing 112 Napoleonic army vets, 109 Prussian vets and 35 Russians
 - b. During the territorial expansion of revolutionary France, Trier was annexed in 1794, remaining French until the First Peace of Paris (March 30, 1814). Thus, many young men from Trier served as soldiers under the tricolore, and the eagle. On November 2, 1842, under the impulse of the Trier Veteran’s Association, this *Veteranendenkmal* (“Veteran’s Memorial”) was inaugurated. Note that veterans from the Prussian and Russian armies were also included.

(15 min. walk)

2. Porta Nigra 45 min.
 - a. The Porta Nigra – or “Black Gate,” so known due to the discoloration of its stone – is Trier’s hallmark Eiffel Tower or Brandenburg Gate. Part of the town’s defensive system, into the city walls, it is the best-preserved ancient city gate extant anywhere in the world. As with so many Roman monuments, it

was saved from a sad fate as a quarry, during the Middle Ages, by being converted into a Church. It was Napoleon who commanded it be liberated from its non-Roman structural confines and restored.

(10 min. walk)

3. Cathedral and Liebfrauenkirche (Cathedral and Church of Our Lady) 45 min.
 - a. The Trier Cathedral ranks as the oldest episcopal church in Germany, founded by Constantine I in 326 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of his reign, as part of a grand project to create four major basilicae in the Empire – the other three in Rome, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem. As most such edifices, it has had a varied architectural history since, though the main structure is still that of the 12th century. Importantly, it still houses a highly-venerated relic, the *Tunica Christi*, ostensibly brought by St Helen, Constantine’s mother, from the Holy Land.

Lunch 12:45-13:45 (after lunch meet at fountain in Hauptmarkt – central square)

Depart from Marktbrunnen (fountain) 14:00 – (5 min. walk)

4. Basilica 45 min.
 - a. The Basilica (called so due to its architectural lay-out) is properly known as the *Aula Palatina*, because of its function as an imperial audience hall in the 4th century, at the center of Constantine’s palace complex. Built in 310, it was able to survive the ravages of history due to architectural “re-cycling,” i.e. usage for different purposes, e.g. as the seat of the regional Frankish count, or of that of the bishop of Trier. It is the largest Roman hall without supporting pillars, extant in the world.

(5 min. walk)

5. Rhineland Museum (Landesmuseum) 2 hrs.
 - a. The *Rheinisches Landesmuseum* (“State Museum of the Rhineland,”) ranks, along with the *Römisch-Germanisches Museum Köln*, in the top echelon of Roman museums in Germany. Arranged and well-presented didactically according to theme and artifact, highlights include floor mosaics, funerary monuments, cultic artifacts both pagan and Christian, objects of everyday life, and coins. A model of Constantinian Trier and scale reconstructions of individual monuments are reminiscent of the *Museo della Civiltà Romana* in Rome, E.U.R.

End ca. 17:00 rest of afternoon free

Friday

Depart from Hotel lobby 10:00 – (15 min. walk)

1. Amphitheater 45 min.
 - a. *Panem et circenses* were part of the bedrock of Roman culture and political stability. Every respectable city in the Empire had an amphitheater (for gladiatorial combats, or “games”) or a circus (for chariot-racing), or both.

Trier, rich and opulent, had both, though there are no extant remains of the latter. Built around 100, the amphitheater seated some 20,000-30,000 spectators and was the 10th-largest in the Empire. The remains are impressive, indeed, and include access to the *hypogeum*, or underground staging-area.

(10 min. walk)

2. Imperial Baths 45 min.

- a. What would a Roman city be, without a bath? Public baths were as much a part of Roman culture as the “games.” Trier had several, of which the Imperial Baths the 3rd-largest in the Empire! Only those of Diocletian and Caracalla in Rome were larger. Just a hint at their dimensions: almost the whole Porta Nigra could fit inside the original *caldarium*, or hot-water bath, with a height of 19m. The total surface covered measured 332m x 260m. Much of the original structure is extant, to include the subterranean heating system, the *hypocaustum*, which can be visited.

(10 min. walk back to hotel)

Lunch 12:15-13:15

Depart from Hotel lobby 13:30 (10 min. walk)

1. Roman Bridge 10 min.

- a. Famous as engineers on the march, the Roman legions pioneered advanced bridge-building throughout the Empire and Trier, as a *colonia* (or veterans’ settlement) situated on the Moselle, was no exception. The present structure, of which the 12m high basalt cubes of the original pillars date from 140, still supports the modern road structure crossing the river with countless vehicles every day.

(10 min. walk)

2. Karl Marx House 14:00 with 1 hr. Guide 1.5 hrs.

- a. We close our visit to Trier with guided tour, in English, by a local academic, of the Marx House, which today houses the most important collection of Marx editions, not to mention an extensive archive. It is run by the *Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung*, the think-tank and research service of the German Socialist Party. Connection to Napoleon? Well of course there is one! That’s homework for all attendants ... you can tell me what you think the answer is ... if right you might earn a good Bitburger Bier! But then you must say: “Bitte ein Bit!”

End ca. 16:00 rest of afternoon off for shopping

A practical matter

Group tickets and collective antiquity entries provide substantial savings for admissions. To facilitate logistics, Bill will collect €20 from each participant on Wednesday after the introductory lecture. This will cover all admissions and include the lecture at the Marx House.