



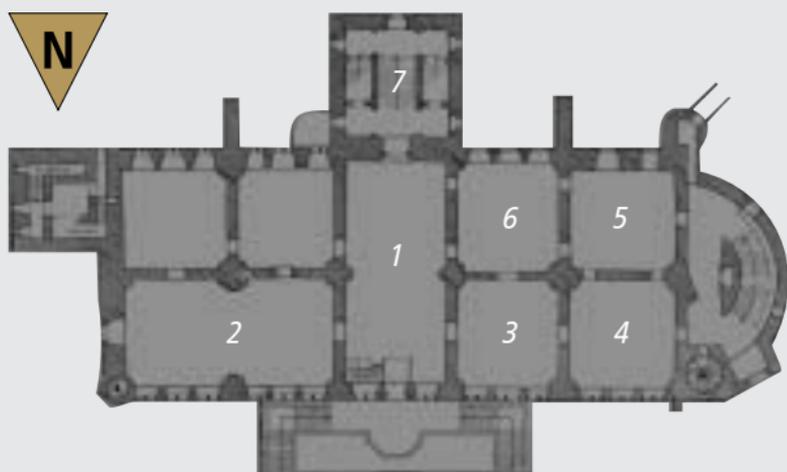
THE TOWN HALL

Station on the Route Charlemagne

ROUTE CHARLEMAGNE AACHEN

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Plan of the ground floor

Route Charlemagne

Aachen's Route Charlemagne connects significant locations around the city to create a path through history – one that leads from the past into the future. At the centre of the Route Charlemagne is the former palace complex of Charlemagne, with the Katschhof, the Town Hall and the Cathedral still bearing witness today of a site that formed the focal point of the first empire of truly European proportions.

Aachen is a historical town, a centre of science and learning, and a European city whose story can be seen as a history of Europe. This story, along with other major themes like religion, power, economy and media, are all reflected and explored in places like the Cathedral and the Town Hall, the International Newspaper Museum, the Grashaus, Haus Löwenstein, the Couven-Museum, the Axis of Science, the SuperC of the RWTH Aachen University and the Eisenbrunnen. The central starting point of the Route Charlemagne is the Centre Charlemagne, the new city museum located on the Katschhof between the Town Hall and the Cathedral. Here, visitors can get detailed information about all the stations and sights on the Route Charlemagne.



ROUTE CHARLEMAGNE AACHEN

Stations of the town history
of Aachen

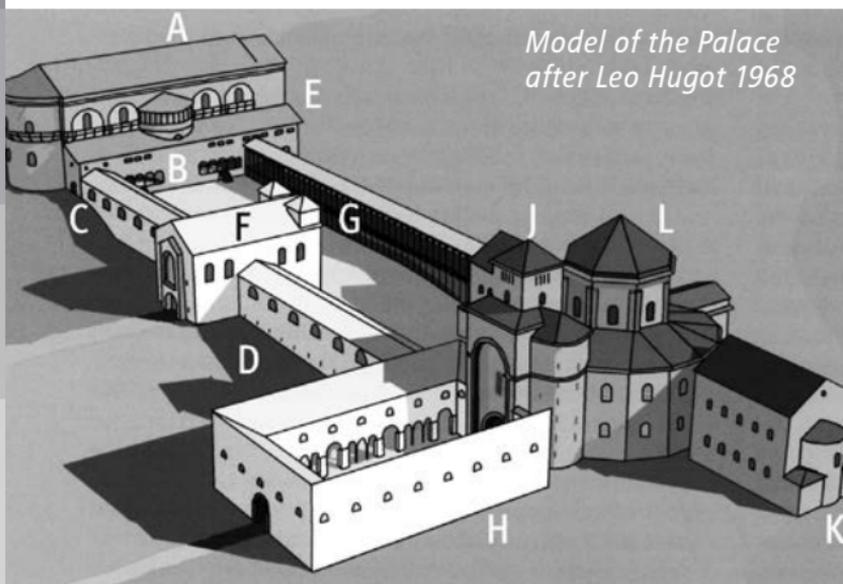
- 1 *Foyer*
- 2 *Council Hall*
- 3 *White Hall*
- 4 *Master Craftsmen's Court*
- 5 *Master Craftsmen's Kitchen*
- 6 *Peace Hall (Red Hall)*
- 7 *Ark Staircase*

The Palace of Charlemagne

Charlemagne (748-814) started building his favourite palace in Aachen from 789 on, and after his coronation in Rome in 800 it became his permanent seat of residence.

The palace complex ran from St. Mary's Church (L) at the south end to the King's Hall (A) at the north end. These two structures were connected by a two-storey wing (C / D) that was interrupted halfway along by a "Portal Building" (F). The eastern boundary is assumed to have been formed by a wooden pergola (G). Large parts of this Carolingian palace complex still survive today. The central element of St. Mary's Church, an octagonal domed structure surrounded by a sixteen-sided walkway, is certainly one of the most impressive church buildings north of the Alps. It was flanked by no longer existing annexes (J, K) and an atrium (H).

The largest surviving remnant from Charlemagne's times is the so-called "Granus Tower" (E). Up to 869, The King's Hall of the Aachen Palace was an impor-



Model of the Palace after Leo Hugot 1968

tant European centre of power. It was 47.25 meters long and 20.76 meters wide, and consisted of a single storey with a height, measured from the floor of today's Ratskeller, of 20.75 meters. The building that previously occupied the site of today's Market Tower was probably the location of the emperor's throne. One wing of the building, whose function remains a mystery to this day, has more recently been designated the "Solarium" (B). No-one has so far succeeded in identifying the location of the residential quarters.

Charlemagne made Aachen not only the seat of his imperial administration but also, for a time, the most influential centre of culture in Europe. Prominent thinkers and scholars from all over Europe were gathered here around Alcuin of York and Charlemagne's later biographer Einhard. Delegations from all corners of the known world visited his court, which had become a fixed point in the triangle of power with Rome and Byzantium.

The Byzantine Emperor sent emissaries to pay homage to Charlemagne, and the Caliph of faraway Bagdad honoured him with opulent gifts, one of them the legendary "White Elephant" Abul Abbas.

- A King's Hall
- B Solarium
- C/D Western Palace Courtyard building
- E Granus Tower
- F Portal Building
- G Wooden Pergola
- H Atrium
- J/K Annexes
- L St. Mary's Church



Granus
Tower

The Gothic Town Hall

Following the deterioration and extensive demolition of the Carolingian palace in the 13th century, the municipal administration agreed with the Emperor Ludwig of Bavaria on the construction of a new building that would have a dual function: as the seat of the free imperial city's civic administration, and as the celebration hall for the grandest festivities of the empire, the coronation banquets. When construction was completed around 1350, the prominent humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini, who would later become Pope Pius II, described it in 1435 as the "stateliest palace in all of Germany".



The Gothic Townhall (after Merian)

On the foundations of the former palace, and within some of its surviving outer walls, a three-story palatial structure with a strict east-west alignment arose. The two main floors were each sub-divided into ten almost square bays with cross-ribbed vaults. The remains of the Granus Tower that still survived from Charlemagne's times were augmented with three new storeys and integrated into the main building. The north façade was richly ornamented with around 60 figures that were painted and partially gilded. The impact of this edifice on contemporaries was so great that it became a model for many Flemish town halls, for example in Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent.

The Baroque period

The town fire of 1656 devastated the Town Hall's roof and the spires of its towers. A decision was quickly made to build new and much higher towers in the "modern" Baroque style. From 1727 on, the Baroque transformation was extended to include the façade design as well. The precious ornamental figures were hewn off and replaced by stucco features.

The interior design from this period can still be seen today in the White Hall. The great Imperial Hall on the upper floor was partitioned into separate rooms and used for a wide variety of purposes.



*Johann Peter Scheuren:
The Baroque Town Hall in the 18th century*

The neo-Gothic restoration

When, in 1840, the great romantic Friedrich Wilhelm IV ascended the throne of Prussia, it was decided to restore the "Emperor's Hall" in all its historic splendour and original dimensions. Following the plans of the city architect Friedrich Ark, a staircase was built on the south side as a prestigious entrance to the upper floor. Ark also restored the Gothic window structure on the side facing the market place. Another fire in 1883 destroyed the Baroque towers, and these were also replaced in neo-Gothic style. With the addition of figures and statues to the façade in 1901, the neo-Gothic restoration of the Town Hall was finally completed.



The Market Façade around 1900

Destruction and rebuilding

In 1943/44, the Town Hall suffered heavy damage from bomb raids. In 1944, and especially from 1946 on, restoration work pressed ahead, first of all to secure the structure against collapse and then to rebuild it. In 1950, the provisionally restored Coronation Hall was used for the award ceremony of the very first International Charlemagne Prize. One year later, the city council and the Lord Mayor moved back into their historic home.

The main entrance, the portal of the west tower and the windows of the Coronation Hall are all the work of Ewald Mataré. The final touch to the current appearance of the Town Hall was only added in 1979 in the form of the new tower spires designed by Leo Hugot.



The Market Façade today

The Foyer

In the foyer you can watch a short film about the Carolingian palace. The sidewalls are dominated by two famous portraits, of the Emperor Sigismund (left) and of Charlemagne (right). These are copies of originals by Albrecht Dürer, who painted them in 1511/13 for the City of Nuremberg.



Charlemagne

Council Hall

The Council Hall

The ceiling mural in the first vault shows a renaissance painting from the year 1628 portraying Plato's four cardinal virtues. Female figures hold a book, symbolising wisdom, a pair of scales, symbolising justice, and a mirror symbolising moderation. They are joined by a lion as the symbol of courage. In the rear, eastern vault bay the ceiling murals, dating from 1730, depict scenes from the antique realm of the gods. The wood panelling, the work of master cabinetmaker Jacques de Reux from Liège, dates back to the Baroque renovation that began in 1727.

On the east wall of the room hangs a portrait of Charlemagne that originated from the imperial abbey in Werden near Essen. It was painted by an unknown artist around 1600. On the south sidewall you can see portraits of rulers from the Habsburg dynasty: from the left, the last Roman Emperor Franz II (later Franz I of Austria), followed by Karl VI, father of Maria-Theresia, who hangs to his right, and finally the portrait of her consort, Franz I.

If you now turn to face the exit, to the left and the right of the door hang two large portraits of the Emperor Napoleon I and his spouse Josephine. The portrait of the empress, painted by Robert Lefèvre in 1805, recalls her stay at the spa in Aachen. The portrait of Napoleon was painted by Louis-André-Gabriel Bouchet shortly before 1807. Napoleon presented the paintings as a gift to his "good city of Aachen" in 1807.

The Town Hall has been the traditional workplace of the city council and the Lord Mayor, from 1349 right through to the present day, with just a few interruptions between 1943 and 1951 due to the war.



Emperor
Napoleon I

The White Hall

Starting in 1727, this room was redecorated by Italian stucco artists and transformed into the Town Hall's small celebration hall. In addition to the handmodelled stucco work, six portraits of prominent figures catch the eye. These are the envoys of the powers that brought an end to the Austrian War of Succession with the "Aachen Peace" in 1748. The best known of them is the British noble John Montagu, the third Earl of Sandwich (1718-1792), famous most of all for the fast food named after him. His portrait hangs on the south wall on the right.

Before leaving the room, take a look at the magnificent work of the Italian stucco artists. Keep your eyes open for a winged "horse" with a goat's head, a bird's tail and woman's breasts! In the four medallions you can see symbols of antique sovereign virtues: the fasces and yoke, the sword pointed towards heaven between the Pillars of Hercules, the Ten Commandments with a pair of scales and finally a lion with a sceptre.



Earl of
Sandwich



White Hall

The Master Craftsmen's Court

The Master Craftsmen's Court is one of the most beautiful examples of the Aachen-Liège Baroque style. In the old days, it was in this room that the clothmakers had to submit their products for inspection by a committee of jurors, the master craftsmen of the guild, who would only approve the bales for export after intense scrutiny. A portrait of Charlemagne (by J. Ch. Bollenrath, 1730) commemorates those times.

The remaining portraits depict Aachen mayors who presided in this room up to 1995. Bollenrath also created three large murals, the most important of which can be seen on the south wall: "Peace and Justice". The cycle is completed on the west wall by "Susanna and the Two Old Men" and on the east wall by the "Victory of Virtue over Vice".

The Baroque wood panelling came from the workshop of master cabinetmaker Jacques de Reux from Liège. In front of the windows there are three display cabinets containing the Golden Book, the Lord Mayor's chain of office, and the historic civic silver.



The Golden Book

The Master Craftsmen's Kitchen

The name of this room also harks back to Aachen's traditional clothmakers' guild. The video wall features film footage of war-devastated Aachen in 1944. An interactive photo album and an audio station complete this theme exhibition. The fireplace, dating from 1668, shows in wrought brass the coat of arms of the incumbent mayor at that time on the pediment, while on the frieze two master craftsmen and two city architects are immortalised. On the cast iron plate you can see Charlemagne with St. Mary's Church and the imperial heraldic eagle.

The north wall boasts a splendid portrait, painted by Anton von Werner in 1890, of Wilhelm I in front of the Town Hall, which is festively decorated in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the unification of the Rhinelands with Prussia. Beneath it there are two portraits, Friedrich Wilhelm IV and Elisabeth of Bavaria, both painted by Wilhelm Hensel (1857).



Wilhelm I



Master Craftsmen's Kitchen

The "Peace Hall" (Red Hall)

The name of this room refers back to the "Aachen Peace" of 1748. The negotiations to end the Austrian War of Succession were originally meant to take place here, but because of hierarchical disputes the room was never used for this purpose. Four portraits of the participating envoys can be seen in the splendour of their original frames. In the barrel vaults of the end walls hang two masterpieces from the late Baroque era, painted by Marcantonio Franceschini around 1700: "Pan offering wool to Diana" (west wall) and "Alpheus and Arethusa" (east wall). The wood panelling is by Jacques de Reux and dates from 1730. In the middle of the room there is a multi-touch table at which you can learn more about the "Aachen Peace".



Peace Hall

The Ark Staircase

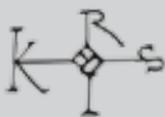
A neo-Gothic sandstone portal leads into the Ark Staircase, which was built in 1840. The ascent offers splendid views of the Aachen Cathedral and also the opportunity to learn all about the International Charlemagne Prize and its laureates.

In front of the Coronation Hall, two colossal murals by Albert Baur from the years 1900/01 cannot fail to catch the eye: to your left, the citizens of Aachen swear an oath to the Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa to build a city wall; to your right, the legend of Nero Caesar's brother Granus Serenus discovering Aachen's thermal springs.

Above the entrance itself you can see Charlemagne's monogram.



Staircase



The International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen

In 1949, the citizens of Aachen created an award to honour persons for outstanding contributions to the unification of Europe.

In 1950, in a Coronation Hall still heavily scarred by the war, the founder of the Pan-European-Movement, Richard Graf Coudenhove-Kalergi, became the very first laureate of the International Charlemagne Prize. He was followed by the founding fathers of the EEC, Alcide de Gasperi, Jean Monnet, Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman.

The history of European unification with its great phases of enlargement to northern, southern and most recently eastern Europe is also documented in the list of eminent laureates of this award. The great significance of the EU in the process of globalisation was conveyed by the award of the prize to the US President Bill Clinton in 2000.



Charlemagne Prize 2008: Nicolas Sarkozy, Angela Merkel and the Lord Mayor

The Coronation Hall

This double-span hall, whose five cross-ribbed vaults are divided into sections by four mighty columns, is 45 meters long and 18.5 meters wide, and on its completion around 1349 was the largest secular hall in the Holy Roman Empire.

It is this hall that lends Aachen's Town Hall its unique character and distinguishes it from all the other town halls in the realm. While in the Middle Ages it was the coronation banquets, today it is the International Charlemagne Prize that gives the hall its European significance.

This is indicated by the three coats of arms over the dais: in the middle, the Staufer imperial eagle, since 1351 the emblem of the free imperial city; to its right the double-headed eagle, since 1433 the heraldic emblem of the Emperor; and to its left the Aachen Cathedral Chapter's "Coat of Arms of Charlemagne", which since the 15th century has united the French lily and the German eagle.



Coronation Hall

The coronation banquets

Up to the last royal coronation in Aachen in 1531, this hall was the venue for the grandest celebrations in the realm: the coronation banquets. After his coronation in St. Mary's Church, the king proceeded in magnificent robes to the Town Hall, the imperial regalia being carried before him. The seating order of the seven electoral princes around the enthroned king in the middle are marked by engravings of their coats of arms in the flagstones of the east half of the hall. Here, the Aixplorer audio guide gives you an impression of what it was like at the coronation banquets.



The imperial regalia

The imperial regalia were an indispensable feature of all medieval royal coronations. In a small choir bay of the former Town Hall chapel in the east wall of the hall you can see exact copies of the originals, commissioned by Kaiser Wilhelm II for a planned exhibition in 1915.



The imperial regalia

The bronze statue of Charlemagne

The original location of this statue was on top of the fountain in front of the Town Hall, which has been crowned by a replica since 1969. The life-size figure was cast by an unknown master in 1620 in Dinant (B). Charlemagne is depicted wearing armour and a crown, and holding a sword and the imperial orb.



Charlemagne

Alfred Rethel's Charlemagne Frescoes

The unique murals painted by Alfred Rethel have made the Coronation Hall a place of pilgrimage for art enthusiasts from all over the world. Of the eight planned murals, Rethel was only able to complete four between 1847 and 1851. We start the tour to the left of the chapel bay.



Battle of Cordoba

Otto III visits the crypt of Charlemagne

This fresco portrays a historic event that took place in the year 1000, and was painted in 1847 as the first of the series of frescoes. Charlemagne, by all appearances in sound condition, sits on a marble throne in the crypt. The young Otto kneels before him.

Felling the Irminsul

To the right of the bay, in 1848 Rethel then immortalised an event from the year 772. In a forest near Paderborn, Charlemagne fells the heathen „Pillar of the Universe“, the Irmin Column or Irminsul.

Battle of Cordoba

Above the entrance you can see the principal work of the series, painted in 1849/50. It recounts a part of the medieval Charlemagne legend. The superb composition in this fresco is Rethel's masterpiece, and is regarded as the most important portrayal of a battle scene painted in 19th-century Germany.

Charlemagne entering Pavia

To the left on the west wall, Rethel depicts Charlemagne's victorious entry into Pavia in 774 after defeating the Langobards.

Coronation of Louis the Pious

Josef Kehren completed this fresco in 1860/61 based on Rethel's sketches. It portrays Louis' self-coronation, although the truth is that he was crowned co-emperor by Charlemagne in 813.



Charlemagne

Service

Opening hours

Daily 10.00 am – 6.00 pm

Individual rooms or the Town Hall as a whole may be closed to the public due to special events. Please check in advance: Fon +49 (0)241 432 7310 or on www.aachen.de/rathaus

Admission

Single visitors: 5,- Euro / concessions 3,- Euro
Groups: 3,- Euro per person /
(of 8 or more) concessions 2,- euro
Family ticket: 10,- Euro
Audioguide: 2,- Euro / concessions 1,50 Euro

Guided tours for individual visitors (01.04. - 31.12.)

Dates: Saturdays and Sundays
10.30 am
Languages: D
Starting point: Foyer of the Town Hall
Duration: approx. 1 hour
Price: single visitor 10,- Euro /
concessions 7,50 Euro

Guided tours for groups (must be booked in advance)

Dates: by arrangement
Languages: D, GB, F, NL, E, I, RUS, TR, RO, PL
Starting point: by arrangement
Duration: approx. 1 hour
Price: 60,- Euro excl. admission fee to
Town Hall / 16,- Euro supplement
for foreign language tours
Participants: groups of up to 25 persons

Barrier-free access with door intercom
(on the right of the stairs) and barrier-free toilets



Information

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Charlemagne



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