

City Tour: Museums, Churches & Palaces

Duration: Approximately 2 1/2 - 3 hours

Departure point: Schillerplatz

Points of Interest:

- 1: Fastnachtsbrunnen (Carnival Fountain) – Osteiner Hof – Bassenheimer Hof
- 2: St. Stephan's Church and the Chagall Windows
- 3: Old Town: The Kirschgarten – Augustinerstraße – St Augustine's Church
- 4: Hoefchen – The Market Place – St. Martin Cathedral
- 5: Liebfrauenplatz – The Roman Emperor Palace – The Gutenberg Museum
- 6: The Fischergasse – The Holy Ghost Spital – The Brueckenturm – The Eisenturm
- 7: Algesheimer Hof – St. Christoph Church
- 8: The Government Quarter: The Zeughaus – Deutschordenshaus
- 9: Prince-Elector Palace (Kurfuerstliches Schloss)
- 10: St. Peter's Church
- 11: The Museum of the Rhineland-Palatine (Landesmuseum Mainz)
- 12: Roemerpassage – The Isis and Magna Mater Temple Site
13. The Proviant-Magazin (garrison warehouse for provisions) – Fastnachtmuseum

1: Fastnachtsbrunnen (Carnival Fountain) – Osteiner Hof – Bassenheimer Hof

This tour begins at Schillerplatz in front of the **Carnival fountain**. It's center piece stands 8.5-meters, almost 28-feet tall and is a tower of fools made of bronze. Designed by Blasius Spreng in 1967, it is populated by some 200 symbolic and fantasy figures which are traditionally seen during the pre-Lenten Carnival season. Some of them are grotesque, caricature faces which look down on passers-by. When you observe them more closely, you might recognize folklore characters like Gott Jokus, the scallywag Till Eulenspiegel, the water spirits of Father Rhine and his Daughter Mosel, and such.

The **Carnival fountain** is of existential importance to all genuine "Meenzer" (heart and soul Mainz folk) for every year Mainz's fools show up here at 11:11a.m. on 11.11, when precisely at 11 seconds of the 11th minute the official beginning of the mad 5th Season of the Year is proclaimed from the balcony of the **Osteiner Hof** across the way. The 11 rules of the season are traditionally announced opening the festivities. This honourable task is accorded that Carnival association which is celebrating a jubilee or special anniversary in that same Carnival-Season.

The Osteiner Hof is exactly across from the fountain and was built in the middle of the 18th Century as a family palace for Prince-Elector Johann Friedrich Karl von Ostein. With the entrance of Napoleon's occupation forces and the military administration, it acquired the name "government". Since 1958 the palace has served as regional headquarters for the German Federal Armed Forces, the Bundeswehr. Along side of the Schillerstraße adjacent to the Osteiner Hof is the **Bassenheimer Palace**. This widow's or dowager palace for the sister of the Prince Elector was also constructed in 1750. Today, it is the seat of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the "Land" Rhineland-Palatine.

The tour continues on up the Gaustraße to the famed hall church of St. Stephan which is adorned with nine stained-glass windows created by Marc Chagall.

2: St. Stephan's Church and the Chagall Windows

St. Stephan's was constructed between the years 1260 and 1336. Because it was the city's second largest church after the Cathedral (St. Martin's) it is sometimes referred to as "Mainz's second cathedral." St. Stephan's has experienced many deprecations in the course of history. During the Second World War it was almost entirely destroyed during air raids. With its reconstruction and restoration, this Gothic church has experienced its revivification. In 1978 the Jewish artist Marc Chagall (1887 – 1985) created the world-renowned Chagall Windows as a symbol for Jewish-Christian solidarity. More than 200,000 tourists from all over the world undertake the pilgrimage every year to admire the artist's splendid windows on the Stephansberg.

Now, follow the Willigisstraße back down into Old Town.

3: Old Town: The Kirschgarten – Augustinerstraße – St Augustine's Church

The first station on the way to Old Town is the **Kirschgarten (Cherry Orchard)** with its romantic half-timbered houses and the Marian Fountain. The name "Kirschgarten" encompasses both the square and the alley. Its origins are attested to by a single, lone cherry tree stump which may be viewed at the bakery "Zum Beymberg". The Kirschgarten next leads you to the picturesque **Augustinerstraße** which is Old Town's "strollers' mile" for those who like to amble and take "go with the flow." Up until the middle of the 17th Century, this was the city's main business thoroughfare. Nowadays you will find typical inner-city Mainz atmosphere characterized by plentiful small businesses and boutiques, cafés, pubs, restaurants and wine houses.

In the middle of all this activity and encompassed by the facades of adjacent buildings is **St. Augustine's Church** built between 1768 –1776, whose own facade soars high above its neighbours'. Today a seminary church, it was originally built to serve the Augustinian hermit order housed in the adjacent monastery. The memorial monument provides insights into the life of St Augustine and the history of the mendicant order which has been located in the Augustinerstraße since the 13th Century. Unlike most of Mainz's churches which were damaged in World War II, the Augustine's Church survived the war undamaged.

Let's now ease on down and stroll the length of Augustinerstraße in the direction of the St Martin's Cathedral.

4: Hoefchen – The Market Place – St. Martin Cathedral

The **Hoefchen** is the first of three market places found near the cathedral. Its name, "Little Court" reveals that the residence of Mainz's archbishops was located here until the 15th Century. Originally, this place was completely separated from the Market. The businesses who stand here today indicate what remains of that separation.

Continuing on straight ahead we come to **the market place**, the heart of Mainz's municipal life. It is contained on one side by the market houses and on the other by the cathedral buildings. The market buildings were reconstructed after WWII. The Baroque buildings that are part of the cathedral complex were built by Johann Valentin Thomann and survived the war almost unscathed. The Heunen Column stands in the middle of the market place commemorating the cathedral's 1,000th anniversary in 1975. At the foot of this sandstone column a bronze casting portrays major occurrences in Mainz's history.

Direct in the centre of the market place stands the **St. Martin Cathedral** whose impact influences the entire city image of Mainz in a unique way. The bronze Markt por-

tal leads to the interior of the church. It was built in 975 under Archbishop Willigis and in the course of the years has experienced many fires, lots of destruction, and much re-construction. The Mainz archbishops were also arch-chancellors and the most powerful elector princes in the German Reich, and thus wanted to give evidence of their power in both the Church and the political establishment in concrete terms by the sheer size of their cathedral. The cathedral served as the coronation site for many German kings and as such is also a monument of imperial history. Next to the interior of the cathedral with its funereal memorial plaques commemorating the archbishops, are also the Romanesque St Gotthard Chapel, made of calciferous limestone, as well as the Late Gothic cloister-walkway which distinguish the Market Place side. Also, on the south side and within the cloister area are the Cathedral- and Diocese Museum. For those who wish to take the time, there are two millennia of Mainz church history, art and artefacts to admire.

5. Liebfrauenplatz – The Roman Emperor Palace – The Gutenberg Museum

The **Liebfrauenplatz** which lies on the Rhine-side of the cathedral is the largest of the three squares at St. Martin's. It is named for the "Liebfrau" – the Madonna – the Church of our Lady which stood in front of the east apse of the Dom until 1793 when it was all-but-destroyed and then subsequently torn down. Where its walls once stood is now marked by a sandstone construction. The Nail Column stands in the middle of the Liebfrauen-place. In the war year 1916 this wood column was hammered full of nails in mark donations to the war effort. Three other columns are grouped around the Nagelsaeule representing the allegorical figures of Unity, Strength and Charity.

On the north side of the Market place is the Late Renaissance place "**The Roman Emperor.**" Built in 1653, it was the first and most opulent non-public building built after the 30 Years War (1618-1648.) The edifice had epochal influence on future Mainz construction. Three universally-recognized towering figures of music and letters visited Mainz and stayed here – Voltaire in 1753, Mozart who performed here in 1763 as a seven-year old prodigy, and Goethe, Germany's greatest poet and all-around genius, in 1814. The **Gutenberg Museum** now resides within this palace and the adjacent new building since 1962. Under all circumstances one should visit this world-acclaimed museum of the arts of Writing and Printing. Demonstrations of Gutenberg's printing technology and his earth-shaking discovery and its subsequent evolution can be seen.

Of course, the famed Gutenberg bible, the world's first printed book made from movable type, with its 42-locks of text is on display, too.

Passing through the Roman Emperor Palace, we come to an arched passage, entering the Salmengaesschen. Bearing very sharply to the left, we enter into the Fischergasse.

6: The Fischergasse – The Holy Ghost Spital – The Brueckenturm – The Eisenturm

The **Fischergasse** got its name from the Rhine fisher folk who once lived here. Fish stores characterized the life of this street. Some of their company names and trademarks can still be seen. The Fischergasse is typical of old Mainz. The city wall ran here. Former defence passageways built into the wall are still extant and some are part of the very houses here. Looking straight ahead, one sees **the Holy Ghost Spital**. It was built in 1236 and served as a refuge for pilgrims, the poor, the elderly and the sick. Over the course of years the Holy Ghost Spital has been used for very differing purposes. Today it houses a gastronomy business with historical flair.

If you take a right turn and go around the Holy Ghost and continue straight along the Rheinstraße, you will next come to **the Brueckenturm**, which today, among other things is the seat of the Mainz Central Tourist Office. Directly behind the Brueckenturm is the **Eisenturm- or Iron Tower**. This tower-gate was built in 1240 and was earlier a part of the city wall. It is named for the iron market which was held nearby.

Behind the Iron Tower we cross the Quintinstraße and proceed on the Loehrstraße, past the Hilton Hotel, where the excellently-preserved remains of Roman ships were discovered by construction workers. A reconstruction of these may be seen in front of the hotel. The original finds and two reconstructed ships as well as numerous models can be found in the Museum for Ancient Sea Travel. Taking a left, we next go along the Christophgasse.

7: Algesheimer Hof – St Christoph Church

On the narrowest point on the street stands the former **Algeheimer Hof** in which Gutenberg lived until his death. Looking straight ahead, one can see the ruins of the early Gothic **St Christoph Church** which was built between 1292 and 1325. It was totally destroyed in WWII. Rather than being rebuilt, it was converted to a monument of admonition and memorial. A commemorative plaque displays this dedication: "To Recall the Dead/To Admonish the Living." Relief images are found at the location of the demolished side nave on the north side installed on a concrete construction support. St Christoph is known as Gutenberg's christening church.

Continue now along the Mitternachtsgasse until the Deutschhausplatz.

8: The Government Quarter: The Zeughaus - Deutschordenshaus

We now find ourselves in the "**Regierungsviertel**" (**Government Quarter**). In the historic buildings along the Rhine are the Rhineland-Palatine **Landtag or Diet** and the Rhineland-Palatine State Chancellery. The Chancellery had its seat in the **Alten Zeughaus** (old armory) which was built exactly 400 years ago (2004 – 2005) and in the **Neuen (new) Zeughaus**. The former is disrespectfully known as the "Sautanz" as this three-winged building earlier looked out over the Prince-Elector's pig farm. The building originally served as a weapons arsenal for storing cannon, rifles and munitions. After 1770, the "Muenze" – a coinage mint -- was installed here.

Directly adjacent the New Zeughaus is the Deutschordenshaus in which the Parliament meets. It was constructed between 1730 and 1738 by the head of the Deutschorden, (German Knights Templar,) and Prince-Elector Franz Ludwig von Pfalz-Neuburg. Napoleon Bonaparte resided here during his visits to Mainz; in 1793, the revolutionary "Rhenish-German National Convention" met here.

Directly across the main traffic thoroughfare "Große Bleiche" stands the Prince-Elector Palace.

9: Prince-Elector Palace (Kurfuerstliches Schloss)

Once the residence of the Prince-Electors and Archbishops the important German Renaissance building today houses the collections of the Roman-Germanic Central Museum and the offices of the Mainz Convention Center. The former **Prince-Elector palace** is an impressive early Baroque Mainz landmark. Archbishop Diether von Isenburg had erected its predecessor, the Martinsburg in 1478, as a regional political and military headquarters as well as personal residence. As a fortification it had walls, moats and metal-plated cornice towers. However by the 16th Century, this no longer suited the higher representational needs of Mainz's governing Prince-Electors.

In 1627 Elector Georg von Greiffenklau began to build this new palace whose construction was frequently interrupted. Only in 1752 was it completed and served its princely, governing purpose but a short time until 1797. After the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations and its reigning royal prince-electoral system in 1806, it was converted successively to an army barracks, military hospital, customs warehouse and customs office. In 1942 the castle burnt to the ground. It was rebuilt in 1948. The facade was uniformly stained with red coloring which resulted in its being called the “red castle” by the local population.

The Große Bleiche takes you straight to St Peter's Church

10: St. Peter's Church

All of the magnificence of the Rococo is gathered in **St. Peter's** and glows in bright gold just as it did on the first day of its existence. There's a good reason for this: in 1989 this elegant church with its onion-dome twin towers was re-opened following a 10-year restoration and returned to the community in brand-new condition. The church was founded 944 by Archbishop Friedrich von Lothringen. In 1748 Court Architect Johann Valentin Thomann erected a new church on the site of the former St. Mary's parish church which had been demolished. The original late Baroque elegance has been retained in this historic renewal. Within awaiting your discovery are art treasures of earlier centuries as well as artworks of today. The colorful décor of the interior was the work of the Bavarian artist Karl Manninger and his student Hermengild Peiker. The numerous paintings relate the life and legends of the Apostle Peter, their originals to be found behind the entrance.

Continuing along the Große Bleiche on the right side one approaches the historical building of the Museum of the Rhineland-Palatine.

11: The Museum of the Rhineland-Palatine (Landesmuseum Mainz)

The Museum of the Rhineland-Palatine has its beginnings among others in a donation made by Napoleon in 1803 and therefore counts among Germany's oldest museums. It contains the most important art collection of the state of Rhineland-Palatine. The collection of the Museum is broadly divided: Within the building which once housed the prince-electoral stables and mounted-exercise area, the so-called Golden Horse Casern – are the pre- and early- historic painted works, sculpture and handicrafts dating from the Middle Ages to the present. These augment the extensive Roman stone sculpture collection from the Middle Rhine Valley region. Above and beyond that, the museum possesses the largest collection of graphics in the state as well as an outstanding collection of Belle Epoque (Jugendstil) glass and Hoechst porcelain. The 20th Century Department integrates the largest weavings collection in Germany. The activities–presentations program is further enhanced by rotating special exhibitions, tours, lectures, and museum-pedagogical events for children and adults.

Proceeding yet futher along the Große Bleiche, we come to the Neubrunnenplatz. From here, the Lotharstraße takes us to the Roemerpassage shopping mall and cultural site.

12: Roemerpassage - The Isis and Magna Mater Temple Site

Oil lamps throw flickering light on the walls of the temple, the odor of smoldering aromatics and burn fruit offerings hang heavily in the air. Mainz's soil has enabled a bit more light to be brought to the daily religious life of the Romans in ancient Moguntiacum as varied religious practices flourished here side-by-side. It was in 2000 that

construction workers excavating the foundation for the new **Roman Passage Shopping Mall** complex came upon part of an ancient temple dedicated to the Egyptian goddess of life and renewal **Isis** together with that of another divinity, **Magna Mater**, the Great Mother. The temple apparently dates from the 3rd Century. This discovery provided sensational insights into religious practices of the Roman period. Of exciting importance are the more than 300 oil lamps discovered among the offerings which included fruits such as dates and figs as well as pinion nuts and grains for burnt altar offerings. Animal sacrifices were also offered as countless chicken bones attest. Under the buried statues was also found a sculpture of an amorous couple locked in tight embrace, a statue of Venus, one of a steer with a sacrificial binding, and a Mercury fashioned of bronze with a money-sack in his hand. These finds are exhibited in the "**Taberna Archaeologica**" and enable the viewer a trip back in time into the religious cultural heritage of Rome.

The Emmeranstraße takes us past the burnt-out remains of the St Emmeran Church destroyed in WWII leading us to the final point on our city tour the Schillerplatz.

13. The Proviant-Magazin (garrison warehouse for provisions) – Fastnachtsmuseum

Situated in a former **garrison warehouse** for provisions, located between the Schillerplatz and the Muensterplatz, is the **Mainz Carnival Museum**, housed among private apartments and restaurants and food-shops. Newly opened in 2004, the Museum presents visitors with 160 years of Fastnacht – pre-Lenten Carnival season history and offers virtually anything that makes a Carnival fan's heart beat faster. Do not let this opportunity go by to experience all the paraphernalia, souvenirs, pictures, films and costumes that characterize the season of frivolity, madness and fun for which Mainz is world-famous.

Note: the actual admission times of all churches and museums may be found in the Internet under www.mainz.de under "Tourism" "Worth Seeing" "Sightseeing."