

# Aachen cathedral

**The Theatre Aachen** (Stadttheater) is housed in a classicist building designed by Johann P. Cremer and Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Following its almost destruction in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the newly built theatre was opened in 1951 with a performance of the Meistersinger. Even the site of the theatre is historic, as it is built on the former Capuchin monastery complex.

## Aachen and water - Introduction

Aachen's real name is Bad Aachen – a title which the most western metropolis of Germany mostly dispenses with, in order to be first place in alphabetic lists. Yet the imperial city, whose name derives from the Germanic word "ahha"(water), rightly bears the addition "Bad" (spa), as here the hottest springs north of the Alps are found.

According to archaeological findings thermal springs existing in the Aachen area caused people to settle in this place as early as in the New Stone Age. Already the Celts and Romans knew about the beneficial power of the up to 70° C hot water rich in minerals and they used it for building numerous thermal baths in the city area. Also, Charlemagne loved to take a bath in the springs of that town, which he for this preference made his residential city.

At the end of the 17th century the imperial city eventually rose to the status of a sophisticated spa resort, which was visited by famous personalities e.g., Händel, Dürer, Voltaire, Peter the Great or the Empress Josephine. The good reputation of the city and the smell of sulphur, which becomes noticeable when approaching the springs, made Aachen widely well-known. From all parts of Europe people came to allow themselves the delight of a bathing cure or drinking the water of the hot springs.

Doubts as to the healing power of the Aachen water have long been disproved by modern science: on the one hand, the heat and, on the other hand, not less than 19 different mineral elements of the sulphurous thermal baths containing sodium chloride and hydrogen carbonate have a very positive influence on illnesses of bones, muscles, joints and the skin. Administered as a tincture, Aachen water moreover has a detoxifying effect.

All this – and the special ambience of this town, in which modern spa facilities are combined with the flair of two thousand years of bathing tradition, annually leads around 6,000 patients to undergo treatment in one of the two health clinics in the district of Burtscheid. Also, the spa Carolus Thermen invites you to relax and stay. The wellness oasis in direct vicinity of the spa garden at the Monheimsallee offers a pleasant change to stressful everyday life. With its thermal world, in which guests are bathing in pleasant mineral-thermal water from the Rosenquelle take up Roman traditions.

The hot mineral water aquifer flows from the Upper Devonian limestones that meet the Variscan thrust front of the Rhenish Massif, and flow through the city center in a 500 m long by 50 m max. width that emerges from the source at numerous spring heads (≈ 30). Four of these spring heads are still accessible, two are managed. The discharge flow from the Aachen springs is 3.5 million liters per day, making them the most productive thermal springs in Germany.

## The Emperor's spring - With its thermal waters, the Eisenbrunnen fountain in the heart of Aachen is a symbol...

... of the spa city. The Eisenbrunnen, which consists of an open foyer and two pavilions, is well-known for its unpleasant-smelling thermal water. The two drinking fountains of the Eisenbrunnen in Aachen provide warm, sulphurous water at a temperature of 52°C. The unpleasant odour due to the high sulphur content of the water shouldn't stop you from trying it, however, since it is said to have healing properties. Do you dare to take a sip?

To the right of the entrance to the Tourist Information office, there is a model of the Eisenbrunnen fountain, which is designed to help blind people to feel the extensive building complex.

The Eisenbrunnen on Friedrich-Wilhelm-Platz originally had a basement that could be reached via feudal stairways.

Older Aacheners will be familiar with the **Seahorse Fountain**, which (from 1953) was originally located in the rotunda of the Eisenbrunnen. It was removed in the 1970s and is now located in Burtscheid.

The thermal water of the Eisenbrunnen comes from the Kaiserquelle (Büchel) and is piped underground to the outlets.

Incidentally, the water gets the sulphur smell of "egg water" on its way to the surface. Besides its rich mineral ingredients (among other things, the drinking cure was used against lead poisoning), the spring water contains microorganisms that extract oxygen from the water & oxidise it and cause the typical egg-water smell. Ur-Öchers are not deterred by the smell or the latest "No drinking water" signs. They still swear by the energising effect of drinking spring water.



## Geldbrunnen, Fountain "Circulation of Money" (1976)

Fountain "Circulation of Money" or Kreislauf des Geldes is an original fountain and interesting landmark in Aachen. Situated in the historic centre near Elisengarten, it was created by Karl-Henning Seemann in 1976. Depicting the circulation of money, the fountain presents six bronze figures: a woman that symbolizes the thrift, while the leaning man shows the avarice. You can also see a father with his child explaining how to deal with money. The centrifugal movement of water exemplifies the steady flow of money.

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## The "Marienbrunnen" ("Vinzzenbrunnen") fountain stands in the shadow of Aachen Cathedral.

It elegantly combines the history of the site. The figures of four saints surround its Goth spire, which is reminiscent of the cathedral. Saint Vincent is the patron of all charity institutions, and refers to a former hospital, which was built here during the 15th century.

## The "Möschebrunnen" fountain provides cool refreshment on hot days in Aachen (1978)

The "Vogelbrunnen" (bird fountain), on the Münsterplatz square is affectionately known by Aacheners as the "Möschebrunnen" because of its small sparrows. In the Aachen dialect, sparrows are known as "Mösche". Created in 1978 by Bonifatius Stirnberg, it is one of the few drinking fountains in Aachen's inner city.

## The "Fischpüddelchen" (1911) on the Fischmarkt square symbolises the fish market that used to be held here.

The "Fischpüddelchen" is a fountain monument which was built on the Fischmarkt in 1911. The name "Püddelchen" comes from the "Öcher Platt" local dialect and means a small naked child. Located in the city centre, the Fischpüddelchen was initially a controversial figure since children in particular were upset by its nakedness. After many years of dispute, with police guarding the monument, the citizens of Aachen learned to love the Fischpüddelchen, as do many visitors to the city.

**Aachen Cathedral** was the first site to be granted UNESCO World Heritage status in Germany: built in around 790 to 800, the cathedral is of world importance in terms of the history of art and architecture and is one of the great examples of church architecture. The final resting place of Charlemagne, it was also where German emperors were crowned for 600 years.

The "Türe-Lüre-Ließe" (1967) depicts an old Aachen nursery rhyme. Little Lieschen, who was often taken to whining, had an urgent call of nature and had to return home quickly. However, the naughty rascals blocked her path, so that she was forced to squat down in the middle of the circle and let out a little rivulet. The name of the fountain originates from the occupation of Aachen by the French from 1794-1814. "Türelür" probably meant "always the same whingeing and whining".

The "Wehrhafter Schmied" ("armed blacksmith") has stood at the corner of the Klappergasse street since 1909. The armed blacksmith is an Aachen city hero, who in 1278 killed Count Wilhelm IV of Jülich, three of his sons and other followers in the cathedral quarter during an attack on the city. In front of the fountain, an archaeological window offers a glimpse into a "mill gutter" from the Medieval period in Aachen.

On Gertrudis Night in 1278, Count William of Jülich entered the city at nine o'clock in the evening with three sons and 468 armed horsemen in his retinue to take possession of it. He had allies in Aachen who opened the gates. But when the count reached the market, the storm bells were rung, calling the people of Aachen to arms. The armed citizens rushed into battle with the invaders, women and children threw stones at the Jülichers from the windows. Many knights and many citizens lost their lives. When Count Wilhelm saw that his situation had become hopeless, he turned to flee in the direction of Jakobstor. But a blacksmith stepped into his path. With an iron bar he slew the count and his sons. None of the count's other companions survived the fight either.

**Puppenbrunnen (Doll fountain)** What makes Aachen special? You can find out in the middle of the city at ... the Puppenbrunnen. It shows the various well-known figures and faces from Aachen. The movable figures, including a bishop, a professor, town musicians, equestrian sports, a clown, or a fashion dummy, tell the story of the city and the people living there.

## Hof & Körbergasse - Aachen's living room with a terrace

Located between the Puppenbrunnen, the city hall and the Bahkauv, the Hof square has something to offer everyone, and is a good place to spend a few hours with its restaurants, bars, and cafés. Take a break, lean back and take it easy, Aachen-style.

## Hühnerdieb (Chicken thief, 1913) - A chicken has been stolen on Aachen's Hühnermarkt square! Or was it a cockerel?

The "Hühnerdieb" is a fountain statue and show the moment a boy is caught with his swag. Instead of catching a chicken, he has stolen a cockerel by mistake, and when it starts to crow, the crime is revealed.

## Rathaus – Town Hall - A testament to the centuries

The historic façade is already an indication of the building's glorious history: 50 rulers, 31 of whom were crowned in Aachen, surround the central figures of Charlemagne, the Holy Mary and Pope Leo III. In addition, the story of the city hall, which was built on the historic site of the great palace hall of Emperor Charlemagne, is brought to life. In the coronation hall, where formerly the rulers took a meal after being crowned, copies of the imperial regalia remind us of this glorious era today.

## At the Karlsbrunnen fountain, Charlemagne the Great watches over Aachen.

The oldest fountain in the city, known as the Karlsbrunnen or Marktbrunnen, has already witnessed many events. In 1792, the statue of Charlemagne was seized by the French as war booty, although it was won back in 1804. A copy of Charlemagne the Great now stands in the six-tonne bronze basin. The bronze fountain basin is also affectionately known as the "Eäzekomp" (the local dialect for "pea bowl") because of its appearance.

The "Printenmädchen" (gingerbread girl) is a homage to Aachen's traditional... soft gingerbread biscuits. In the oldest coffee shop in Aachen, the first owners already knew how good Printen gingerbread and Spekulatius spiced biscuits taste with a cup of coffee. In honour of the "Öcher Prent" Leo van den Daele commissioned the gingerbread girl statue from Hubert Löneke.

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### Printen-Sage – or how the devil once again lost out.

The great fire of Aachen in 1656 almost brought the city and its citizens to ruin. But a clever baker's apprentice knew how to prevent this: He got involved with the devil. When the city was burnt out, the people were suffering from hunger and winter was just around the corner, in their time of need they remembered Emperor Karl's old favourite pastry, the Aachen Printen. Selling this sweet, unique-tasting pastry would not only satisfy the people of Aachen, but also fill the city's coffers. But how could one get hold of the recipe that the emperor had taken to his grave? No one knew exactly where the emperor's tomb was. So devilish help was needed. When Beelzebub offered to take the baker's boy to the emperor's tomb at night, he demanded the key to the treasure chamber in return. No sooner said than done. The very next night, thanks to the help of the devil, the boy was standing in the emperor's tomb. Annoyed, the latter opened his eyes and asked the reason for the disturbance. The baker's apprentice's desperate description of the town's plight touched the emperor's heart: "I have always loved this town and its inhabitants, so I will gladly help them". With these words, he handed the recipe to the baker's apprentice. Happily, the boy hurried to his master, who, after initial horror at his pupil's deed, immediately set about baking the imperial Printen. Thanks to their wonderful smell and taste, they were soon in demand far beyond the city limits and the misery of the people of Aachen came to an end. When the devil demanded his wages from the apprentice, he cunningly offered him some of the freshly baked hot Printen. The devil greedily gobbled them down together with the baking tray. Plagued by hellish pain, the devil had to realise once again that he was no match for the cleverness of the Aachener - and descended to hell, cursing loudly.

### Klappergassen-Sage - or how the Klappergasse got its name.

When Charlemagne returned home victorious from the war against the Saxons in 805, it filled him with great joy to see that Aachen Cathedral had been completed. As an expression of his deep faith, the festive consecration of the cathedral on Epiphany was to be celebrated with pomp in honour of God: In addition to Pope Leo III, not only numerous counts and prelates were expected to attend the feast, but also 365 bishops, one for each day of the year.

On the eve of the cathedral's consecration, however, only 363 bishops gathered in Aachen - much to the disappointment of Emperor Charles. God, however, was so moved by the emperor's reverence that he wanted to fulfil his wish: so he sent an angel to Maastricht's St Servaas Church to send the two bishops buried there, Mundolph and Gundolph, on their final journey to Aachen Cathedral. The angel called out: "Mundolph & Gundolph, rise and go to Aachen. There you shall take part in the consecration of the church of Emperor Charles". The two skeletons immediately left their graves to carry out the angel's command.

As the two dignitaries approached Aachen Cathedral, the clatter of their bones could be heard clearly from afar. Hastily, the bishops entered the cathedral and sat down in the last two free seats. Thanks to this miracle, there were now actually 365 worshippers present for the consecration of the cathedral. Mundolph and Gundolph left the city after the ceremony the same way they had come, now finally to lay themselves to eternal rest in Maastricht.

What remains of Aachen from these two extraordinary visitors is the name of the small alley that leads to the cathedral from the west: Klappergasse. Today, at the monastery "Vom armen Kind Jesu" in Klappergasse, you can find a relief of the two dead bodies, donated to the citizens of Aachen by the city of Maastricht in 1956.

### The Bahkauv (1965), a monstrous creature, hungrily waits for his next victim.

There used to be a spring here, which was created by the run-off from the hot springs of the market. During the day, it was used as a place to wash clothes by young girls and poor people. According to this legend, the Bahkauv lived in the sewer of the thermal springs at Büchel. Its shape resembled a large calf with a shaggy coat. Its mouth had sharp teeth and its bulky eyes glowed in the dark. Its paws looked like bear paws with sharp claws, and its tail was scaled and trailed on the ground. The bahkauv wore chains on its neck and legs that rattled when it moved. However according to the legend, at night, when drunken men made their way homewards, their shouts awakened the sleeping Bahkauv monster. It jumped onto the shoulders of the terrified men, robbing them of every cent they had left in their pockets. A good excuse for explaining the loss of their money to the women waiting for them back home.

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Charlemagne's ambition was to create a new Rome when he made Aachen the centre of his empire in around 800. The imperial palace's chapel – the oldest part of the cathedral today – was to be the religious centre. The mighty octagonal domed building is now thought to have been built in a mere ten years or so. A unifying architectural masterpiece, it brought together forms from the eastern and western parts of the Holy Roman Empire. Charlemagne was buried in the Palatine chapel following his death in 814. His sarcophagus can be found in the Gothic chancel, near to the still-intact imperial throne. Containing exquisite relics from late antiquity and medieval times, the cathedral treasury in the cloister is one of the finest in Europe.

It also features artefacts such as the silver and gold bust of Charlemagne and the Cross of Lothair dating from around 1000, which is still shown to faithful followers as a liturgical object on major religious holidays. Since the Middle Ages, the cathedral along with its relics has become increasingly important as a pilgrimage site. However, it was the imperial coronations that kept Aachen at the centre of world politics over the centuries. More than 30 German kings were crowned here between 936 and 1531 – in a building that could hardly be more solemn and majestic.

Entrance: While the wolf, who is a female bear, comes from antiquity, the pinecone was probably cast during the 10th century. It once adorned a fountain located in front of the entrance to Aachen Cathedral. However, the two bronze figures are conjoined by the legendary story of the cathedral construction.

### Aachen city foundation saga

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Karl often went hunting and liked to do so. During a hunt in the Aachen Forest, he got further and further away from his hunting party while pursuing a stag. In the process, he came across the crumbling ruins of a castle. As Karl approached the castle, his horse's front hooves suddenly broke into the ground, he jumped up and wanted to run away. Charles held it back, dismounted and examined the ground. At the place where the horse had broken into the earth, steam rose first, then hot water poured out of the hole. Karl sank to his knees and thanked God for this discovery because he immediately realised that this spring would be a blessing for the health of many. He vowed to build a church here to Our Lady and resolved to rebuild the dilapidated castle into a hunting lodge, to build a palace nearby and to find a town. He sounded his horn and showed his hunting companions his discovery. Soon the hunting lodge was rebuilt and the foundations for the palace and the Church of Our Lady were laid. Many individual houses were also built, which formed the beginning of the city of Aachen. Charles had the hot springs, of which more and more were being discovered, tapped and bathhouses built over them, which he himself liked to use. His favourite was the Kaiserbad (imperial bath).

### The building of Aachen Cathedral - or how the people of Aachen outwitted the devil

Charlemagne wanted to build the largest and most beautiful church ever seen north of the Alps in his main city of Aachen. He ordered the most skilled craftsmen and the best materials to Aachen, and the work progressed well at first. But then Emperor Charles went to war against the Saxons and instructed the city council to supervise further construction work.

The inevitable happened: the city ran out of money, because building the cathedral and the war were expensive. The city fathers were at a loss - where should they get the money to finish the cathedral? Would they even have to borrow it from the devil himself? And indeed: at the next council meeting, a fine, unknown gentleman appeared and offered the Aacheners the necessary money. He demanded only one small thing in return: the first soul to enter the finished cathedral should belong to him.

At these words the gentlemen turned pale, for they had obviously received an offer from the devil! But what else could they do but accept it? With the devil's gold they managed the miracle: when Charlemagne returned to Aachen, his magnificent church was finished. The emperor was proud of the city council, but the soul that the devil was to receive for his money was that of Pope Leo III, as he would be the first to enter the church to consecrate it.

This was unimaginable! At the last minute, a clever monk had the saving idea: why it had to be a human soul? With short decision, the people of Aachen chased a wolf into the cathedral before the consecration. The devil was already lurking behind the door in the dark church, immediately pounced greedily on the first visitor and blindly tore his soul out of his body. When he realised his mistake, he became very angry. Enraged, he rushed out of the minster and slammed the heavy portal so hard behind him that it cracked, crushing one of the devil's thumbs. The finger fell into the doorknob, where you can still feel it today - now hard as iron. In the vestibule of the cathedral, two bronze figures commemorate the wolf and his soul.

### Lousberg Saga - The people of Aachen are too clever for the devil.

The devil wanted to take revenge for the fraud in the devil's pact concluded for the construction of the cathedral, in which the people of Aachen had only given him a wolf's soul for the promised soul. He loaded himself up with a sand dune on the seashore and planned to bury the whole city with it. When he reached the area of Aachen, a wind arose that drove the sand into his eyes, so that he could only see poorly. In the Soers, he met an old woman and asked her how far it was to Aachen.

The woman realised who she was dealing with and pointed to her expired shoes. She said it was still very far. She had bought new shoes in Aachen and the soles were already worn out from all the walking. Then the devil cursed, hurled the sand dune away from him and disappeared. The impact caused the dune to burst in two, forming the larger Lousberg and the smaller Salvatorberg.

Because the woman was so clever (in Oecher Platt "lous"), the mountain was given the name Lousberg.

Track:- — Möschebrunnen — (Aachen Cathedral) – Türe-Lüre-Ließje – Wehrhafter Schmied – Puppenbrunnen – (Hof und Körbergasse) – Hühnerdieb – (Rathaus) – Karlsbrunnen – Printenmädchen: Printensage, Klappergassensage – Bakhau – Elisenbrunnen