

“Compressed Mainz” A Quick Tour Around the Town Keeping Close to the Dom

Duration: About an hour, exclusive of time spent in the museums, so allow extra time to enjoy the attractions

Starting point: Gutenbergplatz

Route:

1. Gutenbergplatz, Gutenberg Monument, The Staatstheater
2. Hoefchen – Marktplatz
3. The Dom
4. Market Fountains-Liebfrauenplatz-Gutenberg Museum
5. Fischergasse-Heilig-Geist –Eisenturm
6. The Rathaus – The Rhine Embankment
7. Algesheimer Hof – St Christoph
8. St Quentin – Alte Universitaet

Destination: Old Town

Welcome to our “Quickie Tour” of Mainz

Actually, there is so much to do and discover in Mainz that it is almost impossible to conduct a “quickie tour” like this. However, if there’s simply no time and you still want to at least catch the highlights, then this tour is the way to go. So, welcome aboard!

1. Gutenbergplatz –Gutenberg Memorial – The Staatstheater

We’ll begin at **Gutenbergplatz** which is named for our city’s most famous son and which has been enhanced with a bronze statue commemorating him since 1837. It was fashioned from a design by H.W. Bissens, a pupil of Thorvaldsen, and created by Crozatier in Paris. The bas reliefs in the pedestal portray the discovery and practice of printing books.

Across the way is the Large House of the **Mainz State Theater** namely, the historical building by Moller. He erected this between 1829 and 1833. It was reconstructed in 1951 and 1952 following its destruction in World War II.

The Big House was reopened in 2001 after a complete renovation. Today, a modern glass complex crowns this historical edifice. From within the glass cylinder-shaped structure, one can enjoy a panoramic view of Mainz whereby past and present may be ascertained simultaneously as is the case everywhere in Mainz.

2. Hoefchen-Marktplatz

If we turn about to the right and head east, we come to **Hoefchen**, the first of the three places or squares at the St Martin's Cathedral which is known as the Dom. This square bears this name as up until the 15th Century this where the Archbishop's palace stood. Originally, the square was almost entirely separate from the market which today is still indicated by the row of business buildings.

Immediately ahead, we come to the **Market Place** which is the pulsating heart of Mainz's municipal life. It is contained by the market houses on the left and the cathedral houses on the right. The former were reconstructed after WWII. The Baroque cathedral houses were created by Johann Valentin Thomann and survived the war almost untouched. The Heunen Column stands in the middle of the Market place since 1975 when the 1000th anniversary of the Dom was celebrated. At the foot of the sandstone column events in Mainz's city history are portrayed in bronze.

3. St Martin's Cathedral – The Dom

The Dom, St. Martin's Cathedral, is the principal image of Mainz, it's logo, so to speak. It rises above the Market place in a particularly salient manner and is the focus from every vantage point in town. We enter the church through the Market Portal. The Dom was built in 975 by Archbishop Willigis and in the course of the centuries has experienced many fires and destruction and numerous re-constructions. Mainz's Archbishops, (who were simultan-eously Imperial Arch-chancellors, and the mightiest Elector-princes of the Empire,) also wanted to use the Dom as an expression of their power within the Church and political life. As the site for the coronation of German kings, the Mainz Dom is a monument to Imperial history.

Next to the interior of the cathedral with its gravestone memorials of the archbishops, the most distinguishing aspect is the Romanesque Chapel of St Gotthard. It is made of gray limestone and the Late Gothic quadrangle gallery (Kreuzgang) on the Market Place side of the church. In the main buildings on the south side and along the Kreuzgang is the Cathedral-and Diocese Museum. Who ever can take the time can admire the artworks of two thousand years' Mainz church history.

4. Marktbrunnen-Liebfrauenplatz-Gutenberg Museum

When we leave the Dom and turn to the right, we come upon the outermost corner of the Market place at the Market fountain. This original decorated fountain or well is made of sandstone and is one of the oldest and most beautiful Renaissance fountains in Germany. This well with its hanging bucket is not only artistic but also serves as an historic symbol of the relative power relationships of those times.

We continue on in the direction of the **Nail Column**. In the war year 1916, this wooden pillar was laced with nails as war donations. Encircling the nail column three other pillars are grouped showing the allegorical figures of unity, strength and mercy. (The dilapidated column was dismantled in February 2006 for an indefinite period.)

Further along we come straight away to the **Liebfrauenplatz** or Square of Our Lady, the largest of the three squares adjacent the Dom. It is named for the Liebfrauenkirche or Church of Our Lady, which stood in front of the Dom until its being heavily damaged in 1793, followed by the subsequent demolition of its east apse. Today there is a building where its walls once stood.

On the north side of the square is the Late Renaissance palace "**The Roman Emperor.**" In 1653, five years after the 30-Years War, this was the first and the most lavish private house to be built, the building exercising profound influence on future Mainz constructions. Mozart performed here as a seven-year old prodigy in 1763; Voltaire had stayed here a decade earlier in 1753, and Goethe followed 60 years later in 1814. It is in this palace and in the adjacent new building that the **Gutenberg-Museum** has been housed since 1962.

In any case, a visit to the Gutenberg Museum, which is known throughout the world as the Museum of Printing and the Printing Art. How Gutenberg printed is demonstrated here as well how the further development of his earth-shaking invention evolved. Naturally, his world-famous 42-column Bibles are to be seen here.

5. Fischergasse – Heilig Geist – Eisenturm

Next we go along the Baroque Palace straight ahead through a gate, the Salmengaesschen or Little Salmon Alley. Then we take a very sharp left turn and enter the Fischergasse or Fishermen's Alley. This is where the Rhine fishermen once lived giving the street its name. Fish market transactions keynoted life here and are attested to in many inscriptions. The Fischergasse is typical of old Mainz. The city wall ran here. Several city wall fortification passageways are part of the remaining buildings, integral parts of the houses even to this day. Just ahead of us we see the Heilig-Geist -Spital or Hospital of the Holy Spirit. When it was built in 1236, it served as a way station for pilgrims and housing for the poor, elderly and sick. In the course of the years, the Heilig Geist has been used for a great variety of purposes. Today it houses a restaurant with historical ambience.

Going around the side of the Heilig Geist and continue straight along the Rheinstrasse, we come to the **Brueckenturm. The Galerie in the Bruecken-turm** is housed here. And immediately behind it is the **Eisenturm** which was built around 1240 and which was earlier part of the city wall. It is named for the Eisenmarkt or Iron-Market which used to be held here. For a while it was used as a jail, but today serves as the domicile for the **Eisenturm Art Association.**

6. Rathaus – Rheinufer -- The City Hall & The Rhine Embankment

We now go to the rear and ascend the small stairway next to the **Brueckenturm.** We find ourselves crossing the pedestrian bridge over the Rheinstrasse. Alternatively, we

could also take a right turn into the Mailandsgasse at the Heilig-Geist-Spital at the end of which is a sharp right curve ascending up and over the Brand in the direction of the Brueckenturm. Upstairs in the Brueckenturm is the **Mainz Tourist Office** (MTO) central headquarters. We now cross over the broad foot bridge and arrive directly at the **Rathausplatz** – City Hall Square.

The new **Rathaus** was designed by the Danish architects Arne Jacobsen and Otto Weitling and was building during the years 1970 1973. The aluminum statuary-construction “Lebenskraft” (Life-Strength) was created by Andreu Alfaro. Further along towards the Rhine is the bronze piece “Schluessel des Stundenschlaegers” (The Bell-Tower-man’s keys) eight-times its original size. It was created by Hans Arp.

From here we get a view across “Father Rhein” and see the mouth of the Main River at its confluence with the Rhine. Whoever wishes to can also descend the broad stairs leading to the banks of the Rhine and enjoy a short walk directly on the **Rheinufer** river embankment.

7. Algesheimer Hof – St. Christoph

Our path goes along the Rhine parallel to the Rheingold Halle Exposition Halls heading north, downstream, towards the Theodore-Heuss Bridge. We leave the Rhine shoreline at the fountains and cross Rheinstrasse at the traffic light, entering the Karmaliterstrasse and immediately turn left into the Loehrstrasse.

In front of the Hilton Hotel's new building, we see the replicas of Roman ships whose remains were excavated by construction workers at a building site there. The originals and two reconstructed ships as well as numerous models may be viewed in the Museum for Antiquity Sea-Transportation. All manner of fascinating information about ship construction, organization of marine activity including peacetime and military naval operations on inland waterways and open sea are available as well as personnel and material organizational tables providing great insight into Roman life and culture in Mainz two thousand years ago.

Bearing to the right we proceed to the Hinteren Christophsgasse. Where it begins to get more narrow, stands the former **Algesheimer Hof**, in which Gutenberg lived until his death, (1468.) In front of us we see the ruins of the Early Gothic St Christoph Church. It was built between 1292 and 1325. It was destroyed in World War II and not rebuilt serving instead as an admonishment and place of reflection.

“To remember the Dead/To admonish the Living” are the words inscribed on the commemorative plaque. At the place where the destroyed north-side nave stood is a concrete support structure with reliefs. The St Christophkirche is also important as having been Gutenberg’s parish church.

8. St Quentin – Alte Universitaet

Now we shall go further along the Hinterer Christophsgasse and come upon the Schusterstrasse. We take a left and continue on to the intersection. Encompassed within the house façades on the corner is the purportedly oldest parish church in the city, St Quintin. It was already referred to in 815 and was re-built in the Gothic style after 1288. Following its destruction in 1942, a reconstruction took place. The church was completely renovated in 1996. Unfortunately, it is closed except for religious services.

We cross the intersection and follow the Schoefferstrasse. On the right hand side we see the **Alte Universitaet**, “Domus Universitatis” – the Old University – “Home.” It was built in 1615 – 1618 as a Jesuit College. Today, the Institute of the University of Mainz is housed here. Very close by, the St Francis or Franziskanerkirche, until 1742, stood. Gutenberg was buried here.

End of the Tour: The Altstadt or Old Town.

Once more the Staatstheater stands in front of us. We reached our final destination for today. Whoever still has some time should really grant himself a stroll through the Old City. Go to the other side of the Dom via the Leichhof in the direction of the Augustinerstrasse, Countless cafés and wine bars await you, inviting you to discover Mainz’s famed culinary offerings.

Thanks for joining us on this all-too-brief quickie-tour of Mainz!