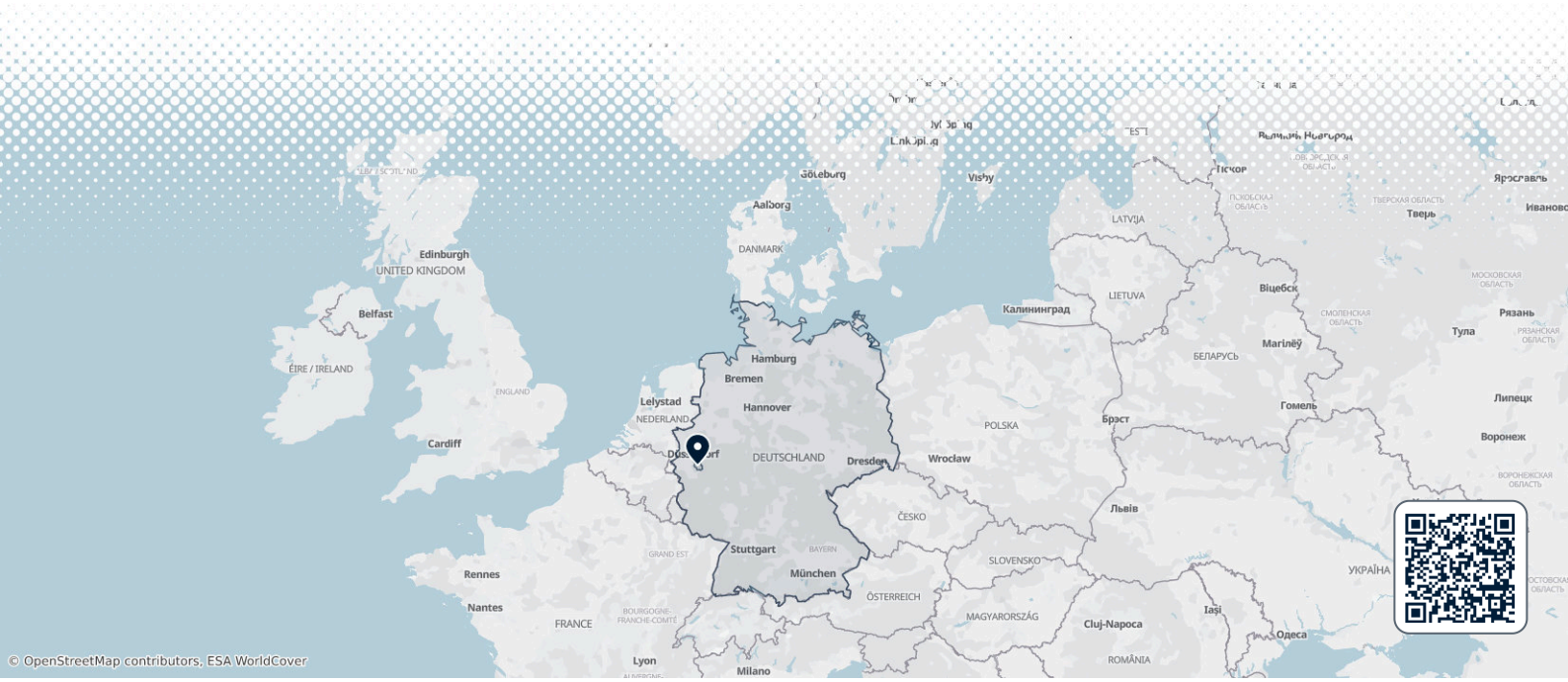


Cologne

North Rhine-Westphalia · Germany

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Cologne sits on the Rhine in western Germany, its skyline dominated by the twin spires of Cologne Cathedral. Founded by the Romans as Colonia in 50 AD, it grew into one of medieval Europe's great trading cities, and its Old Town still holds a dozen Romanesque churches from that era. World War II bombing destroyed most of the historic centre, so today's Cologne is largely rebuilt — a lively mix of remaining medieval landmarks, postwar architecture, and a genuinely relaxed, down-to-earth character.

This is a city that suits a short stay of two or three nights. It works well both as a standalone trip and as a base for day trips along the Rhine, since it sits on fast rail links to Bonn, Düsseldorf, Brussels, and Amsterdam. Locals are famously easygoing and proud of their own beer, Kölsch, and their carnival — both are as central to a visit as the sights themselves. The composer *Jacques Offenbach* and the painters of the medieval Cologne school were born here. The statesman *Konrad Adenauer* served as the city's Lord Mayor before becoming West Germany's first postwar chancellor.

When to visit

Spring and autumn are mild and comfortable for walking. Summer is warm with a chance of afternoon storms, and winter is cold and grey but brings the city's Christmas markets to life.

The city's biggest event is Karneval, running from November 11 until Ash Wednesday but concentrated in the days before Lent — usually February or early March. The climax is Rosenmontag (Rose Monday), when costumed parade floats and hundreds of thousands of spectators fill the streets. Book accommodation well ahead if visiting then.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	5° / 11° Feels like -1°	-1° / -9°	14 rainy days · Dry air
February	Poor Poor for sightseeing	7° / 13° Feels like 1°	0° / -8°	13 rainy days · Dry air
March	Poor Poor for sightseeing	11° / 18° Feels like 6°	2° / -4°	13 rainy days · Dry air
April	Fair Fair for sightseeing	15° / 23° Feels like 11°	5° / -1°	Dry air
May	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 26°	9° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 30°	12° / 7°	13 rainy days · Dry air
July	Good Good for sightseeing	25° / 32°	14° / 10°	15 rainy days
August	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 33°	14° / 10°	14 rainy days
September	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 29°	11° / 6°	Dry air
October	Fair Fair for sightseeing	16° / 22° Feels like 12°	7° / 1°	13 rainy days · Dry air
November	Poor Poor for sightseeing	10° / 16° Feels like 5°	3° / -3°	14 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	6° / 12° Feels like 0°	1° / -7°	15 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: June, August, September

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Winters rarely drop far below freezing in the city centre, and summer afternoons in July and August can turn muggy before a thunderstorm clears the air.

Top sights

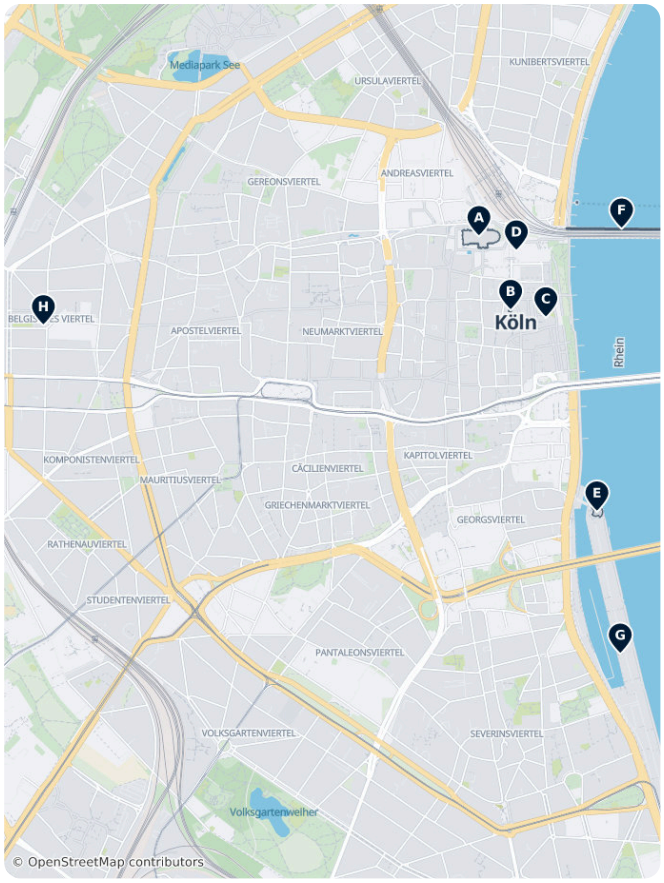
A Cologne Cathedral is Germany's most-visited landmark, a Gothic cathedral begun in 1248 and only finished in 1880. Climb its south tower for a view over the Rhine and the old town roofs below.

Cologne's B Old Town clusters between the cathedral and the river, rebuilt after the war with narrow lanes, pastel facades, and riverside beer gardens. Rising above its rooftops, C Groß St. Martin is the best-known of the city's twelve surviving Romanesque churches, with a distinctive clover-leaf east end.

D Museum Ludwig holds one of Europe's largest Picasso collections alongside German Expressionist and Pop Art works, right next to the cathedral. For something sweeter, the E Chocolate Museum on the Rhine harbour traces cocoa from the tree to the finished bar, with a working chocolate fountain.

Crossing the Rhine, F Hohenzollernbrücke carries both trains and pedestrians, its railings covered in tens of thousands of padlocks left by couples. Just downstream, the striking crane-shaped towers of G Rheinauhafen mark Cologne's modern waterfront.

West of the centre, the H Belgisches Viertel is Cologne's trendiest quarter, filled with independent boutiques, cafés, and street art around a leafy square.



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What to experience

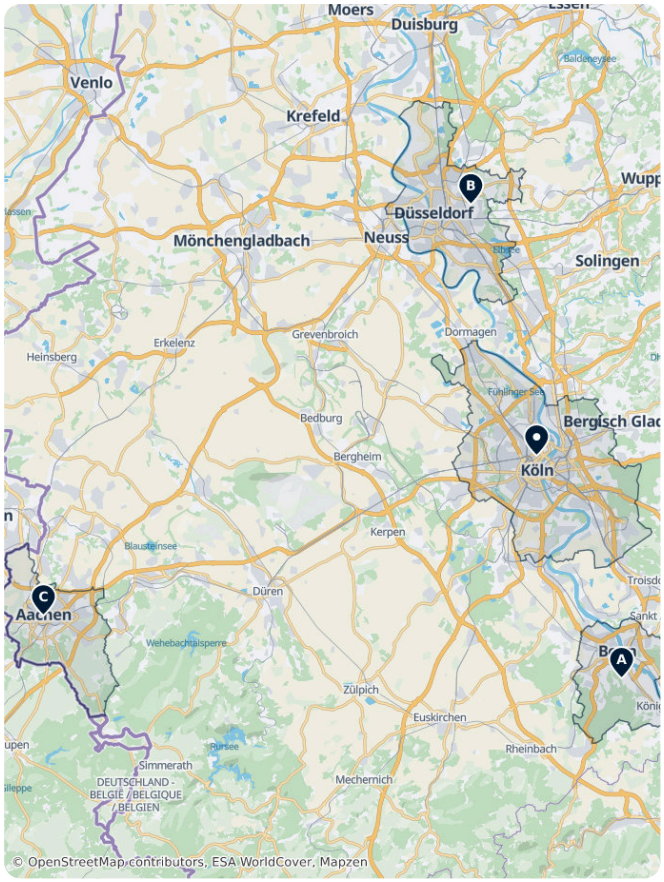
A visit here is best planned around Cologne's own rituals, not just its landmarks.

- **Join Karneval** if the dates line up with your trip — costumed street parties in the weeks before Lent, climaxing with the Rosenmontag parade.
- **Browse the Christmas markets**, held at several spots across the centre from late November, including one right beside the cathedral.
- **Take a Rhine river cruise** at sunset for a skyline view of the cathedral and the crane houses from the water.
- **Cycle the Rhine promenade** in the evening, when locals gather along the riverbank on warm days.

Day trips

Cologne's location on the Rhine puts several worthwhile day trips within easy reach, from close-by cities to the UNESCO river gorge farther south.

- **Bonn** — ≈25 min by train. West Germany's former capital, with Beethoven's birthplace and a lively Museum Mile along the Rhine. → A Bonn
- **Brühl** — ≈20 min by train. Home to the UNESCO-listed Augustusburg and Falkenlust Palaces, plus the Phantasialand theme park for families.
- **Düsseldorf** — ≈25 min by train. NRW's stylish capital, known for its Rhine promenade, Altstadt pubs, and fashion shopping. → B Dusseldorf
- **Aachen** — ≈40 min by train. Charlemagne's former capital, centred on a UNESCO-listed cathedral holding his marble throne. → C Aachen
- **Middle Rhine Valley** — ≈1.5–2 hours by train to towns like Bacharach or Rüdesheim. A UNESCO-listed stretch of river gorge lined with vineyards and hilltop castles, best seen by a slow train or a river cruise.



Where to explore

Cologne sits in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany's most populous state, alongside two other major cities and several rewarding countryside regions.

Other cities on the Rhine and Ruhr: Dusseldorf, the stylish state capital, and Bonn, the former West German capital, are both under 30 minutes away by train.

Countryside getaways: the Lower Rhine region to the northwest offers flat, quiet cycling country along the river. The hilly Bergisches Land southeast of the city is known for half-timbered towns and forested valleys, while the Sauerland and Münsterland further afield suit hiking, lakes, and cycling trips of a few days or more.

Getting there

- **By air**: Cologne Bonn Airport (CGN) has scheduled flights across Europe; a direct train reaches Köln Hauptbahnhof in about 15 minutes for around 3 €. Düsseldorf Airport (DUS), roughly 45 minutes away by train, offers a wider range of long-haul connections.
- **By train**: Köln Hauptbahnhof, right beside the cathedral, is a major ICE hub with direct high-speed trains to Frankfurt, Berlin, Brussels, and Amsterdam, plus Thalys/Eurostar services toward Paris.
- **By bus**: long-distance coaches (FlixBus and others) arrive at the ZOB Breslauer Platz bus station next to the main train station, with frequent links to other German and European cities.

Getting around

- **Public transit**: the KVB network of trams, light rail (Stadtbahn), and buses covers the whole city. Buy a ticket through the KVB app, the eezy.nrw check-in/check-out app, or a ticket machine at any stop, which also accepts contactless cards. KVB journey planner
- **Taxi / ride-hailing**: regular taxis and ride-hailing apps both operate in the city.
- **On foot / cycling**: the city centre is compact and flat, and the Rhine promenade makes for an easy, scenic cycling route; bike-share stations are widespread.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The centre around the cathedral, Old Town, and Belgisches Viertel is flat and easy to explore on foot.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

High

Cologne has an extensive bike-share network and a flat, well-signed riverside cycling route along the Rhine.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: not for the city itself — the centre is compact and walkable, and trains cover the region well. A car helps for exploring the wider Rhineland at your own pace.
- **Parking**: use one of the signposted car parks ringing the centre; on-street parking in the centre is metered and often full. Pay by app (EasyPark) or at the machine.
- **Restrictions**: the whole city centre is a low-emission zone (Umweltzone) requiring a green environmental sticker (Umweltplakette), which most rental cars already carry.

Food & drink

Cologne's own beer, Kölsch, is a light, crisp top-fermented style served only here — order one in a traditional Brauhaus and the waiter (Köbes) will keep bringing fresh 0.2 L glasses on a round tray until you put a coaster on top of your glass to stop. Pair it with local dishes like Himmel un Ääd (black pudding with mashed potato and apple sauce) or Halver Hahn, a rye roll with Dutch cheese despite the misleading name ("half a chicken").

For a concentrated stretch of good, casual eating, head to the streets of the Belgisches Viertel, where small bistros, bakeries, and cafés cluster around Brüsseler Platz.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Doner Kebab · Döner Kebab
A sandwich of roasted meat, salad, and sauce in flatbread, invented by Turkish immigrants in Berlin and now a national staple.

DINNER

Schnitzel
A thin, breaded and fried cutlet, usually pork, served with potatoes or fries and a lemon wedge.

Sauerbraten
A pot roast marinated for days in vinegar and spices before slow cooking, served with red cabbage and dumplings.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Bratwurst
A grilled or fried pork sausage, often served in a bread roll with mustard, sold at stands nationwide.

Currywurst
Sliced sausage topped with curry-spiced ketchup, a Berlin invention now popular across the country.

Pretzel · Brezel
A large, chewy salted bread pretzel, especially common in Bavaria, often eaten with butter or cheese.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Black Forest Cake · Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte
A layered chocolate sponge cake with cherries, cherry liqueur, and whipped cream.

DRINKS

Beer · Bier
Germany brews hundreds of regional styles, from Bavarian Weissbier to Cologne's Kölsch, each tied to its home city.

Gluhwein · Glühwein
Mulled, spiced red wine served hot, a staple of winter and Christmas markets.

Apfelschorle
Apple juice mixed with sparkling water, the everyday non-alcoholic drink of choice.

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Safety & health

Cologne is a safe city for tourists by international standards. The main risks are ordinary petty crime: pickpockets around the main train station, the cathedral square, and on crowded trams, especially during Karneval and Christmas markets. Keep bags zipped and valuables out of back pockets in these spots.

The area right around Köln Hauptbahnhof and the Ebertplatz district can feel rougher after dark, though violent crime against tourists is rare. Tap water is safe to drink throughout the city.

History

The Romans founded the city in 50 AD as Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium, a name that gave Cologne its own. Roman remains, including a preserved city gate and mosaic floors, surface throughout the centre and fill the Romano-Germanic Museum, built directly over a Roman villa.

By the Middle Ages, Cologne had become one of the largest and richest cities north of the Alps, a free imperial city and a major trading hub — the wealth that built its twelve surviving Romanesque churches, including St. Gereon and St. Aposteln. Work on Cologne Cathedral began in 1248 to house relics of the Three Kings, but stalled for centuries and was only completed in 1880, closely following the original medieval plans.

Allied bombing during World War II destroyed roughly 90 percent of the old town, and the postwar decades saw the city rebuilt largely in a plainer, modern style — which is why so much of central Cologne looks younger than its history.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Germany at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
German

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Walks

Audio Guides by Tripomatic
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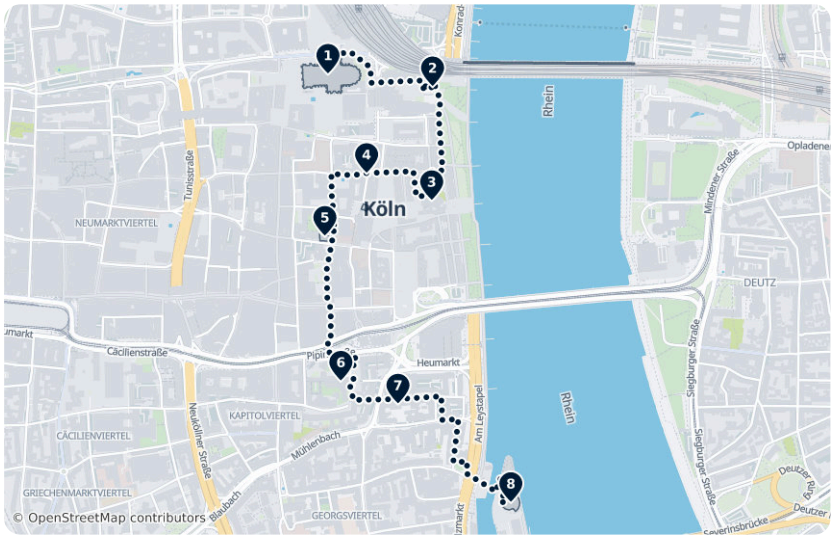
Best of Cologne

1h 30min · 2.5 km · 8 stops



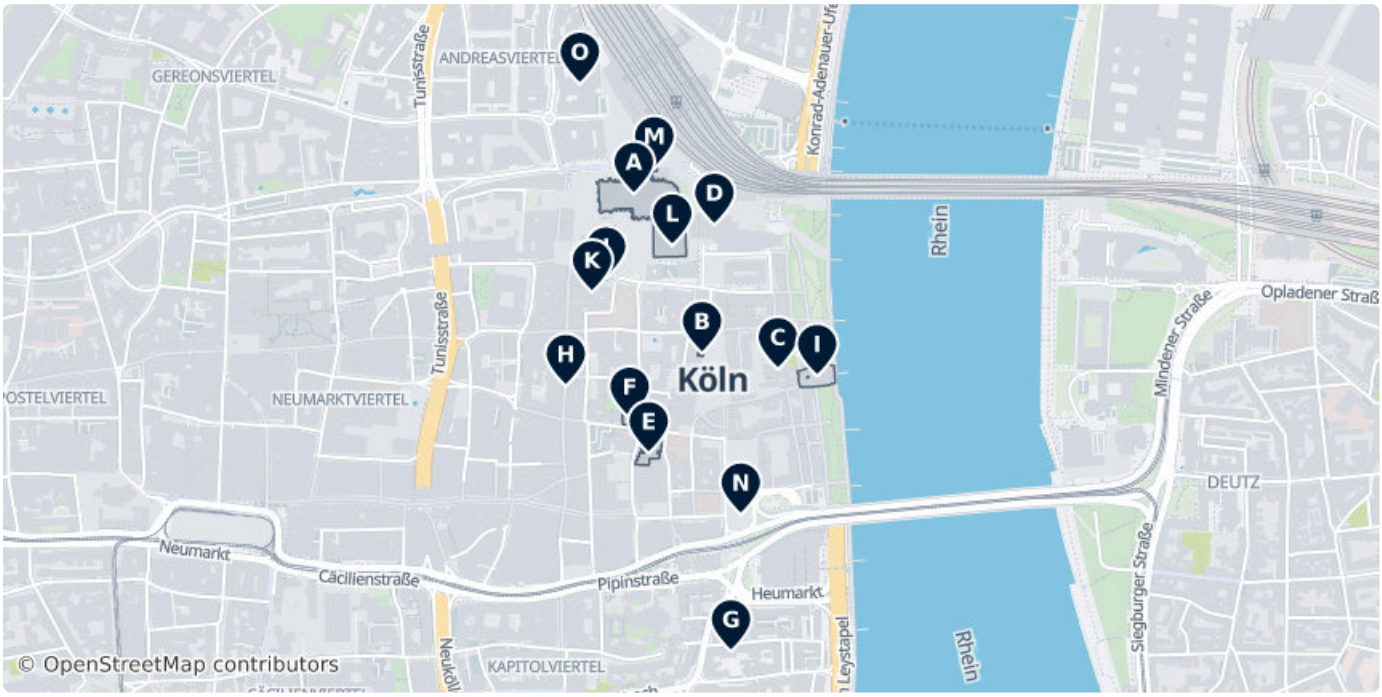
1. Cologne Cathedral
2. Hohenzollern Bridge
3. Groß St. Martin
4. Old Town Hall
5. Farina House
6. St. Maria im Kapitol
7. Overstolzenhaus
8. Chocolate Museum

Walk through the centre of Cologne, from the Gothic cathedral that took more than 600 years to finish to the chocolate museum on the Rhine. The route takes in the Hohenzollern Bridge, the Romanesque churches and houses of the old town, the Town Hall, and the house where eau de Cologne began. Eight stops, about 90 minutes including listening time. The walk starts in front of Cologne Cathedral, directly beside the central railway station.



Köln's Absolute Essentials

Cologne's landscape is anchored by its UNESCO-listed Gothic cathedral and a ring of Romanesque churches like Great St. Martin. This collection spans centuries of history, from Roman archaeological finds at the Romano-Germanic Museum to Baroque architecture at St. Mariä Himmelfahrt. Key cultural institutions include Museum Ludwig, housing significant modern works, and the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, focusing on medieval to 19th-century art. Visitors can explore the city's sensory history at the Farina Fragrance Museum or experience local brewing traditions at the Früh brewery, all located within the walkable Old Town and bustling Hohe Straße.





A Cologne Cathedral

Gothic cathedral with iconic twin spires, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Construction began in 1248 and completed in 1880, representing a major religious and historic landmark.

Domkloster 4, 50667 Köln, Germany (50.94132, 6.95800)

Mo–Su 06:00–20:00

koelner-dom.de, +4922117940555



B Old Town

Historic district known for its traditional culture, vibrant street art, and cultural attractions including seasonal markets and notable landmarks.

45 Alter Markt, Köln 50667, Germany (50.93881, 6.95971)



C Great St. Martin Church

The Great Saint Martin Church is a Romanesque Catholic church in Cologne, Germany.

An Groß St. Martin 9, 50667 Cologne, Germany (50.93855, 6.96162)

Mo	Closed
Tu–Sa	09:30–19:39
Su	10:00–19:15

+49 221 2779 4747



D Museum Ludwig

Museum Ludwig, located in Cologne, Germany, houses a collection of modern art.

Heinrich-Böll-Platz, 50667 (50.94083, 6.96002)

Mo	Closed
Tu–Su	10:00–18:00

museum-ludwig.de, +49 221 22126165



E Wallraf-Richartz Museum

First opened in 1861, this museum is home to a unique collection of fine art - ranging from the Middle Ages to the 19th century.

Obenmarspforten 40, 50667 Köln, DE (50.93723, 6.95838)

Mo	Closed
Tu–Su	10:00–18:00

wallraf.museum, +49 221 22121119



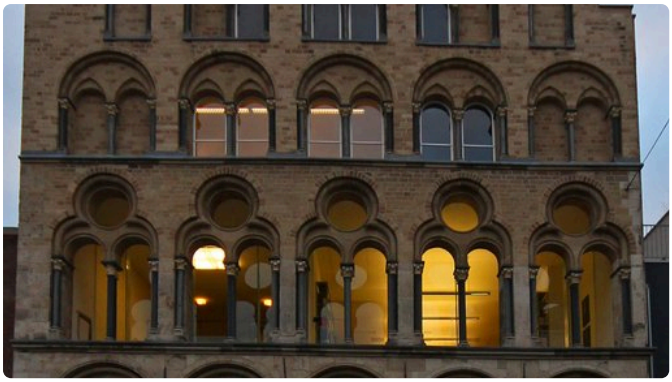
F Fragrance Museum

The Farina Fragrance Museum is situated across from Cologne City Hall, and near the famous Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in the Obenmarspforten...

Obenmarspforten 21, 50667 Köln, DE (50.93777, 6.95790)

Mo–Sa	10:00–19:00
Su	11:00–17:00

farina.org, +49 221-399 89 94



G Overstolzenhaus

Dating back to the 13th century, this is one of the oldest buildings in Cologne. However, its age is not its main draw.

Rheingasse 8, 50676 Cologne, Germany (50.93410, 6.96044)

+49 221 20189160



H Hohe Straße

Hohe Straße is a shopping street in the old town of Cologne, Germany, and one of the city's both oldest and busiest streets.

Hohe Straße, 50667 Cologne, Germany (50.93829, 6.95630)



I Fish Market

Despite its name, this is square is not a place to go fish-shopping. The area is now known mainly for its colourful buildings and an array...

33 Frankenwerft, Köln 50667, Germany (50.93845, 6.96260)



J Heinzelmännchen Fountain

Designed at the end of the 19th century, this historical fountain is located near the oldest brewery in the city, Früh.

14 Am Hof, Köln 50667, Germany (50.93999, 6.95731)



K Cologne Brewery Früh

Founded at the beginning of the 20th century by Peter Joseph Früh, this private-owned brewery features a renowned restaurant.

Am Hof 12-18, 50667 Köln, Germany (50.93977, 6.95695)

Mo–Su 08:00–24:00

frueh.de, +492212613211



L Romano-Germanic Museum

The permanent exhibition of the Romano-Germanic Museum is currently closed due renovations.

Roncalliplatz 4, 50667 Köln, DE (50.94051, 6.95897)

Mo–Su Closed

roemisch-germanisches-museum.de, +49 221 2124438



M Treasure Chamber of Cologne Cathedral

Discover the underground treasury of the Cologne Cathedral and marvel at the many precious ecclesiastical items displayed here.

Domkloster 4, 50667 Cologne, Germany (50.94173, 6.95852)

Mo–Su 10:00–18:00

dombau-koeln.de/index.php, +49 221 17940 300



N Statue of Frederick William III of Prussia

Astride his horse, Frederick William III overlooks busy life on the surrounding square.

55 Heumarkt, Köln 50667, Germany (50.93626, 6.96069)



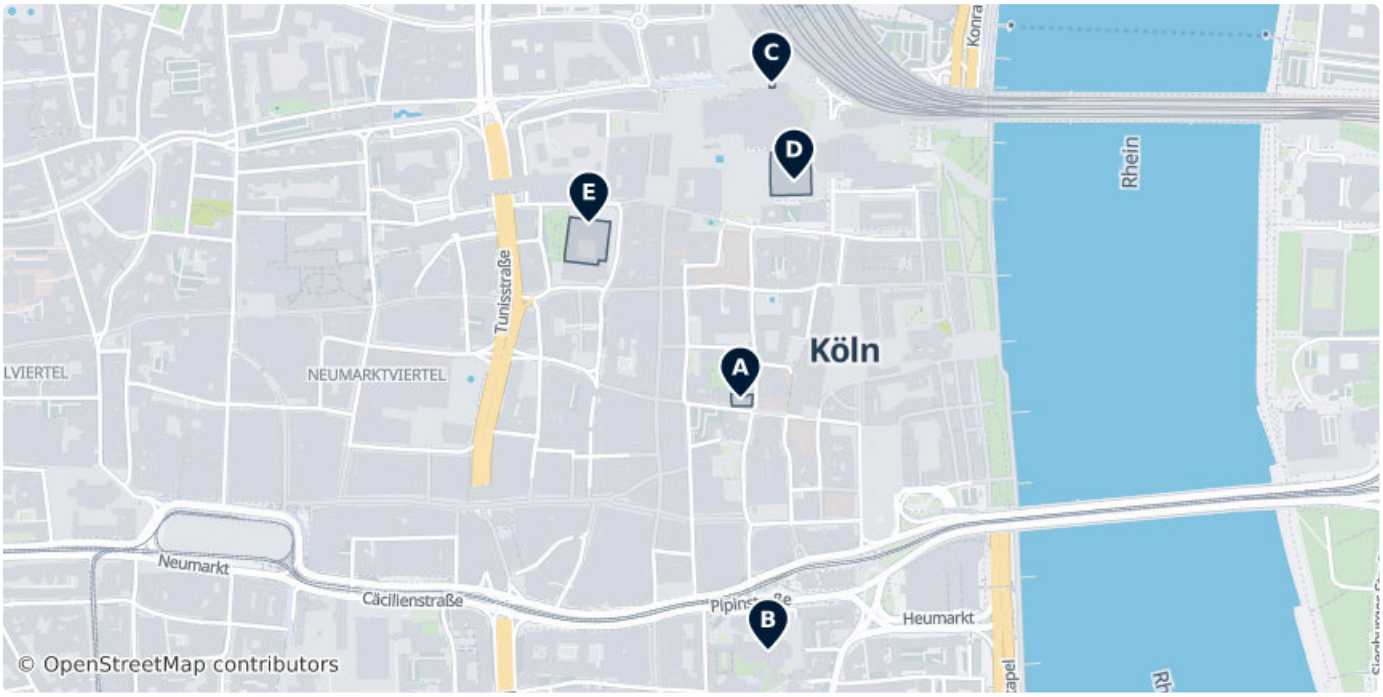
St. Mariä Himmelfahrt Church

Once one of the largest churches in Cologne, this cathedral is one of the last remaining examples of Baroque architecture in the city.

Marzellenstraße 26, 50668 Cologne, Germany
(50.94306, 6.95665)

Cologne's Hidden Gems

Cologne's lesser-known sites offer deep insights into its Roman origins and artistic heritage. The Farina Fragrance Museum marks the 1709 birthplace of Eau de Cologne, while St. Mary's in the Capitol stands as a premier example of 11th-century Romanesque architecture. Below the cathedral, the Treasure Chamber houses centuries of ecclesiastical gold work and textiles. For ancient history, the Romano-Germanic Museum displays artifacts from the city's time as a provincial capital, complemented by the Museum of Applied Art's extensive collection of European decorative objects and modern design.





A Fragrance Museum

The Farina Fragrance Museum is situated across from Cologne City Hall, and near the famous Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in the Obenmarspforten...

Obenmarspforten 21, 50667 Köln, DE (50.93777, 6.95790)

Mo–Sa	10:00–19:00
Su	11:00–17:00

farina.org, +49 221-399 89 94



B St. Mary's in the Capitol

St. Maria im Kapitol is an 11th-century Romanesque church located in the Kapitol-Viertel in the old town of Cologne, Germany.

Kasinostraße 6, 50676 Cologne, Germany (50.93460, 6.95845)

maria-im-kapitol.de, +49 221 214 615



C Treasure Chamber of Cologne Cathedral

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dombau-koeln.de/index.php, +49 221 17940 300



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Roncalliplatz 4, 50667 Köln, DE (50.94051, 6.95897)

Mo–Su Closed

roemisch-germanisches-museum.de, +49 221 2124438



E Museum of Applied Art

The Museum für Angewandte Kunst Köln is a decorative arts museum in Cologne.

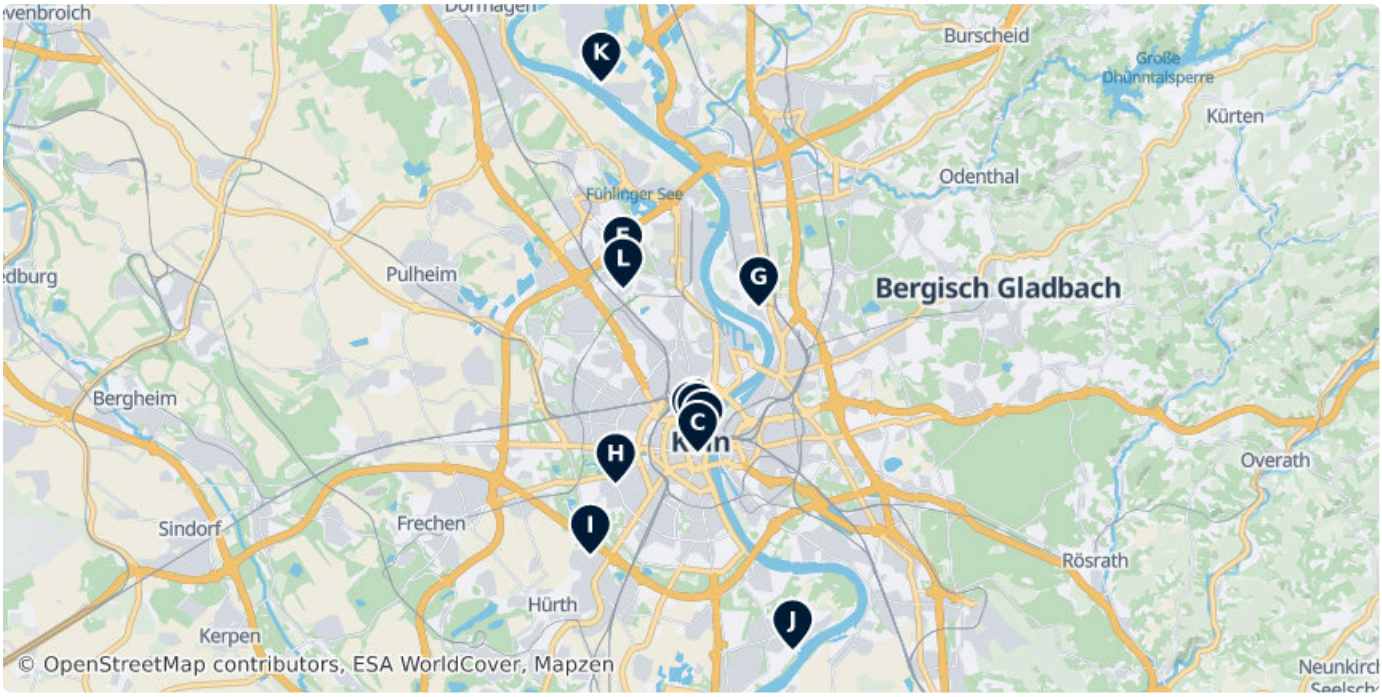
An der Rechtschule 7, 50667 Köln, DE (50.93997, 6.95487)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

makk.de, +49 221 22127380

Cologne's Churches

Cologne's religious landscape is defined by the UNESCO-listed Gothic Cathedral and its twelve Great Romanesque churches, including Great St. Martin and St. Maria im Kapitol. Beyond these medieval landmarks, the city features notable Baroque examples like St. Mariä Himmelfahrt and modern Protestant architecture such as the award-winning Immanuel-Kirche. This selection spans from 10th-century foundations to contemporary community spaces, illustrating the evolution of ecclesiastical design and the city's status as a historic center of Christian heritage in the Rhineland.





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Mo–Su	06:00–20:00

koelner-dom.de, +4922117940555



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+49 221 2779 4747



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Kasinostraße 6, 50676 Cologne, Germany
(50.93460, 6.95845)

maria-im-kapitol.de, +49 221 214 615



D St. Andrew's Church

St. Andrew's is a 10th-century Romanesque church located in the old town of Cologne, Germany.

Komödienstraße 6-8, 50667 Cologne, Germany
(50.94196, 6.95484)

sankt-andreas.de, +49 221 160 660



E St. Mariä Himmelfahrt Church

Once one of the largest churches in Cologne, this cathedral is one of the last remaining examples of Baroque architecture in the city.

Marzellenstraße 26, 50668 Cologne, Germany
(50.94306, 6.95665)



F Christopherus-Kapelle

A listed historical monument and Catholic chapel located in the Longerich district.

(Unnamed Road), Köln 50737, Germany
(51.00046, 6.91622)



G Immanuel-Kirche Stammheim

Modern Protestant church known for its striking award-winning wooden architecture, completed in 2013 by architects Sauerbruch Hutton.

(50.98620, 6.99282)

brueckenschlag-gemeinde.de

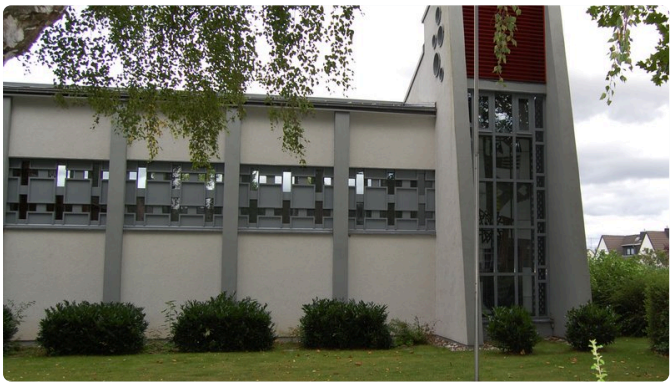


H Paul-Gerhardt-Kirche

Known as the "Rote Kirche" (Red Church) due to its distinctive brick exterior, this Protestant church serves the Lindenthal district.

(50.92351, 6.91228)

kirche-lindenthal.de



I Friedenskirche

A Protestant church belonging to the Matthew congregation in the Efferen district of Hürth.

(50.89825, 6.89792)

evangelisch-in-huerth.de

J St. Remigius

Catholic parish church located in the southern district of Sürth.

(50.86438, 7.01202)



K St. Antonius Kapelle

A Catholic chapel located in Hitdorf, belonging to the St. Stephanus parish.

(51.06572, 6.90405)

L St. Bernhard

A Catholic church serving the community in Cologne's Longerich district.

72 Hansenstraße, Köln 50737, Germany
(50.99264, 6.91648)

sankt-dionysius-koeln.de

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