



Franconia

Art and architecture in Germany's medieval heartland

22–29 May 2026 (MM 968)

8 days • £3,760

Lecturer: Dr Ulrike Ziegler

A neglected region of southern Germany which has an exceptional heritage of art and architecture, enchanting streetscape and natural beauty.

Medieval art including Romanesque sculpture (the Bamberg Rider) and late medieval wood carving by Tilman Riemenschneider.

Baroque and Rococo palaces, churches and paintings, including Tiepolo's masterpiece.

Once the very heart of the medieval German kingdom, Franconia possesses some of the loveliest towns and villages in Germany, beautiful countryside and a variety of art and architecture of the highest quality. Yet remarkably few Britons find their way here – or could even point to the region on a map.

Würzburg, with its vine-clad riverbanks and Baroque palaces, is a delight. The tour stays here for two nights. One of the loveliest and least spoilt of German towns, Bamberg has fine streetscape, riverside walks and picturesque upper town around the Romanesque cathedral. Nuremberg, the home of Dürer, was one of the great cities of the Middle Ages, and its churches and museums are filled with outstanding sculpture and painting. Bayreuth was a centre of Rococo culture and a mecca for Wagnerians. The end of the Middle Ages was artistically one of the most creative in Franconia, with Tilman Riemenschneider and Veit Stoss, perhaps Germany's greatest sculptors, evoking the fraught spirituality of the age in works of remarkable virtuosity. The Romanesque sculpture in Bamberg's cathedral is also of the highest importance.

The eighteenth century also bequeathed much artistic wealth. The Prince-Bishop's palace in Würzburg and the pilgrimage church of Vierzehnheiligen (both designed by Balthasar Neumann) are consummate achievements of Baroque and Rococo art and architecture. Moreover, the greatest achievement of eighteenth-century Venetian painting is here: Tiepolo's ceiling fresco in the Würzburg Residenz.



Coburg Castle and Park, from Germany, by E T & E Harrison Compton, 1912

Itinerary

Day 1: Würzburg. Fly at c. 9.30am from London Heathrow to Frankfurt (Lufthansa). Drive to Würzburg, and check in to the hotel. An afternoon walk to the oldest medieval bridge to survive and visit the Marienburg, the formidable fortress dominating the city from across the River Main. Visit the vast museum within, with its sizeable collection of Riemenschneider sculpture. First of two nights in Würzburg.

Day 2: Würzburg. The Residenz (Prince-Bishop's Palace), designed partly by Balthasar Neumann and extended over time, is one of the finest 18th-century palaces in Europe, with magnificent halls, state apartments, exquisite chapel and ceiling frescoes which are the masterpieces of the Venetian painter Tiepolo. In the afternoon walk around the largely post-war reconstruction of the old centre, with its vast and sombre Romanesque cathedral, delicate Gothic church and flamboyant Baroque churches.

Day 3: Creglingen, Rothenburg, Pommersfelden, Bamberg. Drive through gently undulating countryside to the little pilgrimage church near Creglingen; here see *The Assumption* by Riemenschneider, his finest work. Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber is an exceedingly picturesque little town scarcely

changed in appearance for hundreds of years; the church of St James has Riemenschneider's *Last Supper*. Visit Schloss Weissenstein in Pommersfelden, an early 18th-century country house with one of the grandest of Baroque staircases. Continue through lovely landscape to Bamberg. First of four nights here.

Day 4: Bamberg. Morning walk taking in the riverside town. Visit the Gothic Church of our Lady with its Tintoretto altarpiece and the splendid Romanesque cathedral with some of Germany's finest medieval sculpture, including the *Bamberg Rider*, a potent image of knightly values. The Diocesan Museum has outstanding medieval textiles. In the afternoon visit the Neue Residenz, palace of the Prince-Bishops.

Day 5: Bayreuth. All-day excursion. Bayreuth developed as a minor court city in the 18th century. A varietal of Rococo decoration evolved in the town palace and at the Hermitage, a complex of gardens, palaces and pavilions, under the patronage of the Markgraf. Visit Wagner's Festspielhaus, built to the composer's specifications on a hill outside the town.

Day 6: Coburg, Vierzehnheiligen. At Coburg visit the formidable fortress above the city, now a museum with good paintings and furnishings. Schloss Ehrenburg, in the centre of town was the home of Prince Albert.

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Across the valley, the pilgrimage church of *Vierzehnheiligen* by Balthasar Neumann is perhaps the greatest of all Rococo churches.

Day 7: Nuremberg. An immensely rich trading and manufacturing city in the Middle Ages, Nuremberg is girt by massive walls and possesses much art and architecture of the 15th and 16th centuries. A walk through the old town includes the church of St Sebaldus, which contains outstanding sculpture by Veit Stoss and others, and the Albrecht Dürer House. St Lorenz is the city's other great church, and is likewise laden with major artworks including Veit Stoss's *Annunciation* (1517/18).

Day 8: Nuremberg. Visit the German National Museum, home to the finest collection of German medieval and Renaissance art in the country. Fly from Munich, arriving Heathrow at c. 5.00pm.

Lecturer

Dr Ulrike Ziegler. Specialist in medieval art and architecture. She studied art history and archaeology at the University of Regensburg and King's College Aberdeen. Her PhD focused on art exhibitions and the cultural politics of postwar Germany. She lectures for various cultural institutions and organises her own study days and trips in Germany and Austria.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,760 or £3,480 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,210 or £3,930 without flights.

Included: air travel (economy class) on Lufthansa flights (Airbus A319); travel by private coach throughout; accommodation as described below; breakfasts and 5 dinners with wine; all admissions; tips for waiters, drivers and guides; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. Hotel Rebstock, Würzburg (rebstock.com): well-located, comfortable 4-star hotel. **Hotel Villa Geyerswörth, Bamberg** (villageyerswoerth.de): elegant, quiet 4-star hotel, conveniently located close to the old town. **Le Méridien Grand Hotel, Nuremberg** (lemeridiennuernberg.com): modern 4-star hotel in a late 19th-century building, a 10-minute walk from the centre. *Single rooms throughout are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? The tour involves a lot of walking in town centres, where coach access is restricted, and a lot of standing in museums and churches. A good level of fitness is necessary. It should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. There are several long drives. Average distance by coach per day: 55 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.