



Medieval Saxony

Carolingian, Ottonian, Romanesque

26 April–5 May 2027 (MN 342)

10 days

Lecturer: Dr Ulrike Ziegler

One of Germany's most fascinating areas of surviving early medieval art and architecture.

Straddling the former border between East and West Germany, it remains largely off the tourist trail.

Delightful landscape and attractive towns.

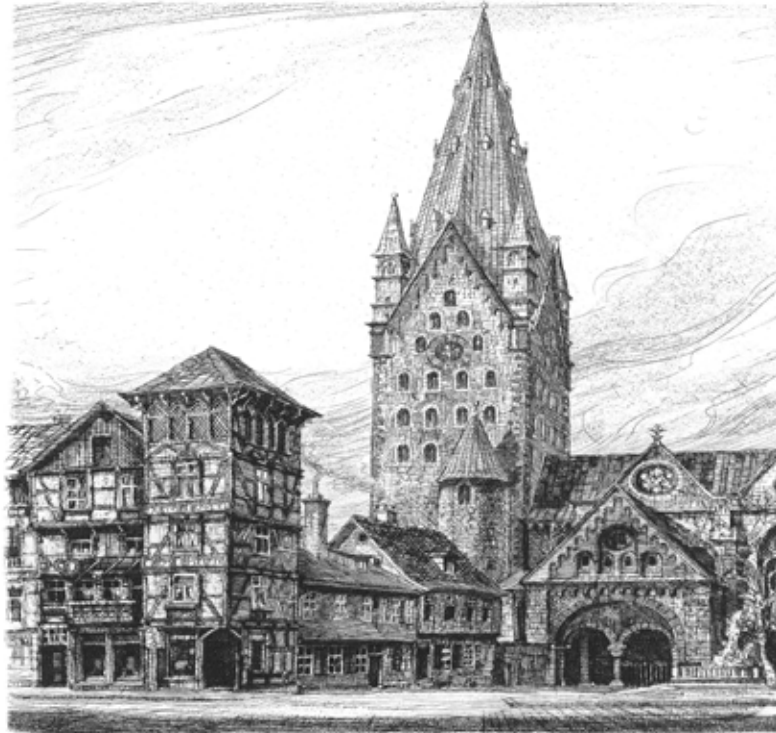
In amassing territory which stretched from the Atlantic to Bohemia and from the Baltic to central Italy, Charlemagne believed that he was recreating the ancient Roman Empire. Vivid expression was given to this belief by the attempts to emulate Roman forms by the builders and artists who worked on his innumerable projects of construction and embellishment. Few of these survive, but some of the most enlightening are to be seen in Saxony.

The election of Henry of Saxony in 919 to the royal throne of Germany brought to an end a century of disunity and baronial misrule and ushered in a period during which the Saxon kings – two Henrys and three Ottos – achieved a partial reconstitution of Charlemagne's empire and brought about the emergence of a nation state, arguably the first in Europe.

'Old' Saxony, which comprised the Harz mountains and the undulating plains to the north, became the most powerful of the German duchies and the kernel of the German nation. Subsequently the region gradually lost its pivotal role in national and international affairs; even the name slid across the map to designate another part of Germany.

A consequence of the region's central importance in the early Middle Ages is that Old Saxony has no peers in northern Europe for the wealth of Ottonian and early Romanesque architecture, sculpture, precious metalwork and other arts. A consequence of subsequent decline is that much of this heritage is situated in some amazingly lovely and unspoilt little towns amid a largely rural landscape of wooded hills and rolling farmland. Split after the war between West and East, the region is still far from recovering the popularity it had with travellers in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Itinerary



Paderborn, early-20th-century etching.

Day 1: London to Paderborn. Fly in the morning from London Heathrow to Düsseldorf (British Airways) with onward travel to Paderborn (c. 2 hours) by private coach. Overnight in Paderborn.

Day 2: Paderborn, Corvey. At Paderborn are the fascinating archaeological remains of Charlemagne's palace and a modern reconstruction of the Ottonian replacement. The 13th-century cathedral has a western tower and spire similar to its pre-Romanesque predecessor. Also see the treasury in the Diocesan Museum. The westwork of the Abbey at Corvey is among the most important of surviving Carolingian buildings. Drive to Hildesheim for the first of two nights.

Day 3: Hildesheim. Hildesheim is of enormous importance in the history of Romanesque art and architecture. The cathedral has some of the earliest and best bronze sculpture of that era and the treasury is one of the finest in Germany. A pinnacle of Ottonian achievement embodying many influential innovations, the six-towered church of St Michael was begun in 1010. Overnight Hildesheim.

Day 4: Hildesheim, Goslar. Goslar is a lovely little town with outstanding Ottonian art and architecture, of which the palace is a rare secular survival. Works of art including a bronze altar are in the museum. First of six nights in Quedlinburg.

Day 5: Quedlinburg, Gernrode. Quedlinburg is not only a wonderfully preserved medieval town but has the authentic feel of a place not spruced up for the tourist trade. The castle hill is crowned by the collegiate church of St Servatius, begun 1070, and contains another of Germany's finest treasures. The Wipertikirche has a 10th-century crypt. St Cyriakus at Gernrode is a church of exceptional beauty; begun 961, it is the oldest large-scale Ottonian building surviving.

Day 6: Halberstadt, Hamersleben. Halberstadt was a major city in the Middle Ages. The Romanesque Church of Our Lady contains life-size reliefs of apostles. The cathedral is the largest French-style Gothic church in Germany after Cologne, and has a very rich treasury,

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which is particularly good for medieval textiles. Visit the Monastery and church of St Pankratius in Hamersleben, a hidden gem of Romanesque architecture.

Day 7: Magdeburg, Königslutter. Magdeburg was the favoured residence of Otto the Great. The cathedral, standing on a bluff above the River Elbe, is the first Gothic building in Germany and a veritable museum of medieval sculpture. Königslutter am Elm has a very fine church and cloister from the abbey founded in 1135 and built by Lombard masons; the sculpture is superb.

Day 8: Merseburg, Naumburg. Drive south to Merseburg on the river Saale with its cathedral, begun in 1015 and dating mainly from the 13th and 16th centuries. Architecturally, Naumburg Cathedral is an outstanding embodiment of the transition from Romanesque to Gothic, but its great importance lies in its 13th-century sculpture, including statues of the founders, among the most powerful and realistic of the Middle Ages.

Day 9: Braunschweig. Braunschweig (Brunswick) was residence of Henry the Lion, one of the most powerful princes in 12th-century Europe. The Romanesque cathedral has extensive frescoes of c.1220, a rare survival. Opposite stands Henry's castle; now a museum, it displays the Lion Monument, the first free-standing monumental bronze sculpture since Roman times.

Day 10: Quedlinburg. Free morning in Quedlinburg. Fly from Hanover and arrive at Heathrow in the afternoon.

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 post-war Germany. She has taught at university and now lectures for various cultural institutions as well as organising and leading many study days and trips in Germany and Austria.

Practicalities

Included: travel by private coach throughout; breakfasts, 6 dinners with wine; all admissions; tips for drivers, restaurant staff; all state and airport taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation: **Hotel zur Mühle, Paderborn** (hotelzurmuehle.de): a modern 3-star hotel in the city centre. **Van der Valk Hotel, Hildesheim** (hildesheim.vandervalk.de): a modern 4-star hotel with a historical facade looking onto the market square. **Hotel Romantik am Brühl, Quedlinburg** (hotelambruehl.de): restored 4-star hotel in a heritage building near the historical heart, comfortably furnished. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use at the hotels in Hildesheim and Quedlinburg.*

How strenuous? This tour involves a lot of walking in the town centres where vehicular access is restricted, and should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. Some days involve a lot of driving. Average distance by coach per day: 91 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.