

# Heidelberg

## The Romantic City

> Text and Pictures:  
Joahnes Bardong & Armin Gemmer

Heidelberg is considered one of the most beautiful German cities. The castle, the old town and the river together form a unity exuding harmony which inspired poets and artists of the romantic period. Nowadays this unique city fascinates millions of visitors from all over the world. It comes as no surprise that Heidelberg is a candidate for the UNESCO World Heritage List.



On the "Old Bridge"

فوق الجسر القديم

The trip from Frankfurt Airport to Heidelberg takes less than an hour. Trains depart from the airport every 25 minutes. Heidelberg is one of the few German cities with an undamaged baroque Old Town which was not destroyed during WWII. One of the largest pedestrian precincts in Europe – 1.6 kilometers long – meanders through the town, taking visitors from one point of interest to another. The historical university town at the foot of the

Odenwald hills is not only a world-famous destination for tourists but also an important service sector headquarters and the science centre of the region.

One of the oldest and most important relics of Europe's past is without a doubt the spot where Homo Heidelbergensis was found. This was the direct ancestor of Neanderthal Man and a predecessor of Homo Sapiens. In 1907 in a sandpit near Heidelberg, a lower jaw was found by accident. The

"Heidelbergensis" was from a species unknown until that date. This discovery proves that early man lived in Europe more than 600.000 years ago.

From 400 BC, the area near the ford on the river was a permanent settlement of the Celts and from 80 AD onwards it was settled by the Romans. For centuries it was the political, religious and cultural centre of the region. The first official documents which have survived the ages are dated 1196 AD. ▶

### Castle and Alte Brücke (Old Bridge)

The main tourist attraction and landmark of the town is the Heidelberg Castle – in reality, a ruin of the once-magnificent building. Overlooking the valley, it dominates the cityscape. It was built as the seat of the princes of the Palatinate. It was devastated first during the 30-year War, the ruinous religious war which swept Europe in the 17th century. This was followed by the capture of the castle by the French and a fire made rebuilding impossible. In the period of Romanticism the ruins became a tourist attraction and today are considered the most famous castle ruin in the world and the most well-known sight in Germany. The impressive “Carl Theodor Bridge” known as “Old Bridge/Alte Brücke” is one of Germany’s oldest bridges.

### Heidelberg and Poetry

Goethe found Heidelberg and its surroundings representing an ideal. He was not the only author to succumb to the charm of Heidelberg. The writers of Romanticism in the 19th century developed the myth of the city together with the ruins of the castle. Clemens Brentano, Jean Paul, Kurt Tucholsky, Friedrich Hölderlein and Gottfried Keller are all authors who spent considerable time in Heidelberg and who immortalized the city in their writings.

### University and Old Town

In addition to the history, the 30,000 students of Heidelberg impart a special aura to the city. Of the 80% of the population employed in the service sector one quarter are employees of the Ruprecht Karls University. The university was founded in 1386 and is the oldest university in Germany. The departments and institutes



The library of the university in the old town

مكتبة الجامعة في المدينة القديمة



Entrance to the library of the university in the old town

مدخل مكتبة الجامعة في المدينة القديمة

are located all over the city and many of them are in historical old buildings in the Old Town. One of the most important is the library and its baroque auditorium. The

building in classicism style made of red sandstone is home not only to an extensive collection of books but also to a museum with many medieval handwritten books. ▶

### Library Palatinate

At one time the most famous library of the occident, Bibliotheca Palatina, was located in Heidelberg. It was considered the mother of all libraries during the Renaissance. In its huge collection there were many famous volumes. One of these was written by Emperor Friedrich II on the art of hunting with birds dating from the late 13th century and influenced by the Arab world. As much of the contents of the medieval handwritten texts and early printings of books contained material viewed by the Catholic Church as explosive, the Pope ordered them to be transferred to the Vatican during the 30-year War. Very few of the German-language writings were returned in 1816.

### The Königsstuhl

When visiting the castle, you will have a good opportunity to ride the mountain railway which has recently celebrated its hundredth anniversary. It is also possible to take the train one stop past the castle and thus to an ideal location for a hike through the Königsstuhl region with its paths through the woods. You will find a hotel and a café and the falconry Tinnunculus with demonstrations for tourists. Should time allow, a worthwhile side trip is the Burg/Fortress Guttenberg, 50 kilometers away. Here is the most important falconry in Germany, Greifswarte. From April through October demonstrations take place daily at 11am and 3pm.

At an altitude of 600 meters, you have a gorgeous view of the valley and you will understand why Heidelberg has, since 2004, been a candidate for entry into the World Heritage List of UNESCO. Expectations are that the cityscape (Old Town and Castle Ruins) together with the natural surroundings will be included in the list as of 2007. ■

#### Tips and Links:

Further places of interest in the area are Speyer, Worms and Mainz.

Train Tickets can be booked online ([www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de)), the earlier, the cheaper.

For Individual Guided Tours, contact PMK Chauffeur Service:

([www.pink-chauffeur.de](http://www.pink-chauffeur.de))

City Tourist Office: Willy-Brandt-Platz 1, 69115 Heidelberg, Tel +49 (0) 6221-19433

Specific Details of the Falconry Tinnunculus Königsstuhl at:

[www.tinnunculus-heidelberg.de](http://www.tinnunculus-heidelberg.de)

Falconry Burg Guttenberg at:

[www.greifswarte.de](http://www.greifswarte.de)



Portal of the "Old Bridge"

فوق الجسر القديم