




Uniting the People
& Technology That
Move the World.

DESCARTES™

www.descartes.com | info@descartes.com
Waterloo, Ontario | Toll Free 800.419.8495



Bavarian WINDOW WORKS
Click for a Quote

 **SUN, SEP 13, 2015** | 11 °C
Overcast

CONTACT US
TV LISTINGS
COMMUNITY

Full Text Archive

metrolandmedia
Connected to your community

The Record.com

- EVENTS LISTINGS
 - HOW TO SUBMIT EVENTS
 - CONSUMER SHOWS
 - READER AWARDS
 - DIGITAL PUBLICATIONS
 - EMAIL AND TEXT ALERTS
- TO SUBSCRIBE ▾

TODAY'S E-PAPER ▾

IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD ▾



[SIGNUP](#) [LOGIN](#)

Search Living
 Search Entire Site

[HOME](#) [NEWS](#) [BUSINESS](#) [SPORTS](#) [WHAT'S ON](#) [OPINION](#) [COMMUNITY](#) [LIVING](#) [OBITUARIES](#) [CLASSIFIEDS](#) [REAL ESTATE](#) [SHOPPING](#) [JOBS](#)

How do you get more Canadians to invest in their future?

You give them a CHOICE. [LEARN MORE](#)



Home > Living > Travel > The once and future city: Trier and its treasures

 Tweet 1 |  0 |
      |
 [SHARE](#)   

Sep 12, 2015 | [Vote](#) 0  0

The once and future city: Trier and its treasures

Waterloo Region Record
By Anne Z. Cooke

TRIER, Germany — Arriving in Trier on a dark and moonless night, was never part of the plan.

Ten days in Germany, three Rhineland cities, train tickets, hotel reservations: I was organized, with times, places and a day-by-day itinerary. But after wasting more than two hours in the Dusseldorf Bahnhof (train station), searching for misplaced luggage and missing the early trains to Trier, on the winding Moselle River, I didn't board the afternoon local train until late.



MOST READ

Fire crews remain at scene of Waterloo dollar store blaze

Missing helicopter, two bodies found

Rough start for students at Waterloo high-rises

Hurrying down Trier's main street at 10 p.m., coaxing my suitcase over the cobblestones, the sudden sight of a glowing pink hulk towering looming up in the gloom stopped me dead in my tracks. The ghost of the Roman Empire, hovering in the night?

Stranger things have happened.

Then I realized it was the Porta Nigra, Trier's best preserved Roman ruin, illuminated at night by spotlights. Massive sandstone blocks, 30 metres high and twice as wide, the second century gate is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, one of Trier's nine such Heritage sites, historic monuments all.

Seen in daylight, the Porta Nigra is a dirty grey, mottled by 1,800 years of weather, hence the name, "black gate." But that first shimmering apparition, the gate at night as it might have looked lit by Roman torches, made Trier come alive.

It was early when I returned the next morning, but groups of tourists were already milling around in front of the Tourism Office, sipping takeout coffees, perusing brochures and waiting for their guides. While they snapped pictures of the Porta Nigra, I went to the office to pick up a city map and ask about guided tours.

"We've got something for every age," said the desk clerk, handing me a colour brochure. The most popular tours, she said, were the afternoon tours to the wineries and vineyards along the Moselle River. Some tours went by bus, she said, or I could go by river boat.

In the meantime, I might want to try the Roman Ruins tour led by a centurion in a breast plate and helmet; or the Toga Tour of Roman Trier, with guide and visitors clad in what looked like ribbon-trimmed sheets. The gladiator-led adventure to the Amphitheatre, complete with imagined battle scenes, seemed designed for kids with a taste for gore. The "Devil in Trier" promised a spooky immersion in the Middle Age's darkest years. "Beware of witchcraft!" she advised, smiling.

The tour I picked, walking through the old town streets, sounded dry by comparison, but focused on history, always good for a warm-up. Meanwhile, the Chinese tourists taking "selfies" headed out, making a beeline for a modest three-story pink house with a historic marker on the wall, and a "Euroshop" (a 99 cent store!) on the ground floor.

"They want to see where Karl Marx grew up," said Elke Schmeier, the group's guide. "His house and the museum down the street are the first thing Chinese tourists ask about," she said. "They're surprised when they hear that Marx came from a middle-class family."

The Chinese weren't the only visitors learning something new. By now, I realized that Trier, the lively, modern German town, and Treveris, the Roman city founded by Augustus Caesar in 17 B.C., were one and the same. The difference was geography.

Trier today sits comfortably in the midst of Western Europe, minutes from Luxembourg and close to France, all European Union members. Sharing the euro, the town's 105,000 residents share a regional sensibility with their neighbours. But Treveris, the capital of the Roman Empire's northwest sector, was an outlier on the frontier, a bulwark on the border between civilization and hostile barbarian hordes.

Still, the Romans built for the ages, even in a trackless forest. Trier was surrounded by a defensive wall and its streets were surveyed and paved. Residents lived in modest villas and enjoyed monumental public buildings, with a temple (later a church), imperial throne room and a 20,000-seat amphitheatre for gladiator games. Two enormous public baths, supplied by six miles of bricked, underground tunnels, boasted heating, cold and hot clean water and drains for steam rooms, baths and massage rooms.

"Look at this Roman cement," said Schmeier, tapping the spaces between bricks in one of the tunnels. "Still good since the fourth century. Now look at the cement in the restored tunnel over there. Eroding after 60 years. What does that tell you?"

As long as Trier was one of Rome's capitals, it prospered. But the town declined after A.D. 316, when Emperor Constantine II moved the capital from Rome to Constantinople (now Istanbul). Later, after the empire disintegrated, in 476 or thereabouts, the medieval church ruled the city, gradually ceding control to regional princes, ambitious power brokers and eventually to nation states.

But building continued. Churches, cathedrals, town halls, narrow houses, prisons and palaces, each squeezed in beside, in front of, behind and even on top of older buildings. Roman pediments and columns gave way to Romanesque churches, then to early and late Gothic cathedrals, followed by Renaissance, baroque, rococo, romantic, neoclassic, art deco and modern structures.

Cathedral

Handout, TNS

Trier Cathedral and the Liebfrauenkirche church, seen here from the front, combine Romanesque, Gothic, and baroque architectural styles.

2/6



Teen faces several charges in Waterloo dollar store blaze

Guelph driver's actions 'thoughtless, selfish, cold and callous,' after crash that killed cyclist

IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD TODAY

TURN HEADS WHEN YOU WEAR HIGH QUALITY CLOTHING WITH AN IMPECCABLE FIT FROM MARK NUNES

Mark Nunes , exclusive clothier and tailoring service in Waterloo, is the outcome of a dream to...

CHIROPRACTIC CARE IN ONTARIO — STANDARDS, PRACTICES AND BENEFITS TO YOU

If you're unfamiliar with the term "chiropractic" or its importance, Dr. Gregory J. Bidinosti of...

Old favourites were saved and enlarged. War damage was repaired. Roman blocks were carted away and reused, or saved for restoration. When the bricks wobbled or the paint peeled, the buildings were repaired. And the colours! Brick red, candy-land pink, baby blue, green, white with gold flourishes, tan with mustard trim, yellow tweaked with orange, and white, timber-framed houses with beams edged in red. Peaked roofs so steep they must have been a fashion trend, like a silk tie or 5-inch spike heels.

In fact, exploring historic Trier was as entertaining as a Disneyland tour (excuse me, Trier) is entertaining. The decorative flourishes on facades, doors and windows — swirls, angles, arches, spirals, scrolls, petals and leaves — were beyond counting, beyond imagining almost.

Especially intriguing was the fourth century Constantine Basilica, also brick, an enormous throne room, now restored with a coffered ceiling. So broad and tall that the Porta Nigra could fit inside, the basilica proved its worth as a Roman hall, church, concert venue and lately, now that it's equipped with chairs, as a place or tourists to sit and be amazed.

But for real amazement, the Cathedral and Liebfrauenkirche (church) complex took the gold. Significant enough to warrant its own fact-packed tour, the architecture deserved a close look, with enough time to see how the column, windows and side aisles work together.

The first building on the site was a square Roman structure, possibly a palace.

Converted to a "house church," it was lengthened at least twice before the Romanesque Cathedral was built right on top of it, in the 11th century. In the 13th century the early Gothic Liebfrauenkirche was erected next door, adjoining the Romanesque cathedral. Today the two stand as one, sharing a common wall and cloister.

The tour completed, some of us headed for a favourite local spot, the Weinstube Kesselstatt. A clubby hideaway with dark wood panelling and tables, it was a perfect place to order bratwurst with potatoes and sauerkraut, and a typical wine, a Saar River Riesling.

Afterward, I wandered over to the 10th century Market Square to take it all in again, the Gothic, Classic and baroque buildings standing cheek by jowl, and in the middle, the stubby stone cross (installed in A.D. 958) that identified the spot as a bishop-licensed market. You sold your cabbage and onions here or not at all.

Five hundred years later, in the year 1495, the St. Peter Fountain, the base adorned by four blue and white, gold-fringed figures, representing the four virtues, was installed, adding panache to the square. It took a while coming, but here in Trier, it could last forever.

Tribune News Service

If you go

STAYING: Highly recommended, the Hotel Casa Chiara, is on Engelstrasse 8. Find various prices and dates at www.casa-chiara.de. On a quiet street, this excellent 20-room hotel is a 15-minute walk from the Trier train station and a convenient five minutes from the Porta Nigra gate. Modest exterior, but immaculate rooms, small with remodelled bathroom, closet, TV, window that opens, desk, chair, king bed and down quilt. Very friendly manager and reception clerks; delicious breakfast, with choice of meat, fruit, eggs, breads, coffee and tea served in bright, modern room overlooking open courtyard. Parking garage at rear.



SUMMER TURNS TO FALL – BENEFITS OF OFF-SEASON LANDSCAPING
After you've completed your long list of spring clean-up chores, York Nursery in Kitchener can...

HOME RENOVATIONS BY RCS RENOWN CONSTRUCTION SYSTEMS
For complete home renovations, there is no better company to call in the...

SPONSORED CONTENT

TOP DEALS WagJag

Up to 49% off Chicopee Tube Park and Zip-Line	Up to 59% off Filler Treatments
\$29	\$99
View All Deals	

MORE TRAVEL

Yes, you can take your kids to the Shaw Festival

Quebec countryside getting ready to burst into the colours of fall