

## **An extract from the history of Remagen**

Today's Remagen goes back to the Roman fort RIGOMAGVS. Evidence of this is an inconspicuous beam that comes from a palisade that was erected here by the Roman military shortly after the birth of Christ. The fort, which was built later and functioned as the southernmost base of the Lower Germanic Limes, existed until the 5th century AD and is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Frontiers of the Roman Empire - Lower Germanic Limes" since 2021. The REMAGEN ROMAN MUSEUM provides an insight into the numerous finds from the fort, the civil settlement in front of it and the burial grounds. Late Roman fort walls are preserved and can be visited in several places. The name RIGOMAGVS is of Celtic origin and means "king's field". The fact that Celts had already settled in the area of today's town before the Roman Empire conquered it has been proven by excavations, during which the remains of a Celtic farm from the time around 500 BC were found.

With the Roman troops, Christianity had also come to Remagen. After their departure, there was already a church in Remagen by the 6th century at the latest.

The first mention of Remagen in the Middle Ages in 755 concerns the donation of a vineyard "in castro Rigomo". It shows that the fortification was still in place and viticulture was practiced. Next to the Roman population, Frankish peasants had settled. They buried their dead at the foot of what is now the "Apollinarisberg". On the mountain they built a church dedicated to the Frankish national saint Martin of Tours. In 1110, the inhabitants of Remagen donated the "Martinsberg" with the church to the Benedictines of Siegburg Abbey and built a monastery there for the monks there. Since the 14th century the pilgrimage to the relic of St. Apollinaris developed on the mountain. The "Martinsberg" became the "Apollinarisberg". The Romanesque church from the Middle Ages was demolished in 1838 due to dilapidation. Franz Egon von Fürstenberg Stammheim commissioned a new building by the Cologne cathedral master builder Ernst Friedrich Zwirner. This neo-Gothic building is famous for its painting frescoes, which was done by painters of the Düsseldorf Nazarene school. Today, the Apollinaris Church is one of the town's landmarks.

In 1198 Remagen was burned down. In the process, the parish church of St. Peter and Paul was probably also badly affected and subsequently rebuilt. The Romanesque parish church gate with its mysterious sculptures figures dates back to the 12th century.

In a document in 1221, the citizens of Remagen and the monks on Martinsberg were exempted from paying any taxes. The seal of this document bears the inscription SIGILLVM LIBERE CIVITATIS RIEMAGE - seal of the free city of Remagen. However, the quest for freedom was soon over: In 1248, the German King Wilhelm of Holland pledged Remagen to the Count of Berg. In 1357, Emperor Charles IV allowed the "village of Remagen" to be surrounded by a wall.

Another turning point came in September 1794 with the invasion of French revolutionary troops. Remagen became French and the villages of Bodendorf, Oedingen and Rolandswerth were assigned to the "Mairie Remagen". This assignment was maintained after 1815, when the Rhineland became Prussian.

The economic development of the 19th century burst the medieval town walls. The Rhine had already been discovered by - mostly English - travelers in the 18th century, but it was not until the 19th century that a distinct Rhine tourism developed. Upscale hotels such as the "König von Preußen" and the "Fürstenberg" of the Caracciola family transformed the Rhine front. It was developed into a promenade starting in 1842. Now steamships could dock here. In 1858/1859, the Rhineland railroad also reached the town of Remagen and connected it with Bonn, Cologne and Koblenz; in 1880, the Ahr Valley Railway followed. Last but not least, the new Apollinaris Church

attracted visitors (to Remagen). Rich entrepreneurs, mainly from Cologne, built stately summer residences in like Humboldtstein, Marienfels, Calmuth, Herresberg and Ernich as well as in Rolandseck in a preferred location on the Rhine.

This development came to an abrupt end during World War I and the subsequent occupation. Almost simultaneously, viticulture, which had dominated the economy for more than a millennium, became a victim of pests and economic change within a few years.

At the end of the 2nd World War Remagen was badly hit by bombs. The "Ludendorff Bridge", built in World War 1 for military reasons and useless in peace, made the name "Remagen" world famous. Although the steel structure of the bridge collapsed into the Rhine after heavy German shelling on March 17<sup>th</sup> in 1945, the unexpected crossing of the Rhine by U.S. troops on March 7<sup>th</sup> in 1945, over the "Bridge of Remagen" saved the town from even worse damage. Since 1980, the PEACE MUSEUM in the bridge towers not only shows their history, but deals also with the theme of peace.

In the spring of 1945, a huge prisoner-of-war camp of the US Army transformed the "Golden Mile" into a field of suffering that still evokes painful memories today. The Chapel of the Black Madonna is a reminder of this time.

After the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, the proximity to the seat of government, in Bonn, initially brought disadvantages for Remagen. Numerous hotels and other buildings were requisitioned for the French High Commissioner André François-Ponçet. However, with a generous endowment, he also contributed to the reconstruction and beautification of the city. Haus Ernich was the residence of the ambassadors of the French Republic from 1955 to 1999.

As part of the 1969 municipal reform in Rhineland-Palatinate, the previously independent communities of Oberwinter, Oedingen, Remagen, Rolandswerth and Unkelbach merged to form the new "town of Remagen", while Bodendorf, with a population of around 1,700, joined the neighboring town of Sinzig.

The move of the government and parliament from Bonn to Berlin brought Remagen the RheinAhrCampus of the Koblenz University of Applied Sciences as a compensatory measure in 1998, where almost 3,000 students are now taught. Another compensatory measure was the construction of the new Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck, which has attracted almost 100,000 art lovers annually with its exhibitions since 2007.

Today, Remagen is considered one of the most beautiful excursion destinations in the romantic Middle Rhine Valley. Thanks to its many galleries and artists' studios, Remagen enjoys a reputation as a lively art city. The attractive festivals and markets also attract more and more visitors to the lively city center with its small stores and cozy restaurants.

Further current information at: [www.remagen.de](http://www.remagen.de)