

Romanesque Route

Route 5 5 Stops

Here, we track the footsteps of emperors. We witness traces of Roman power and cultural glory. We watch art and architecture swiftly change from era to era. A loop of some 750 miles, the [Romanesque Route](#)—one of the oldest in Germany—holds a lamp to the country's past.



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Stop 1 on Romanesque Route

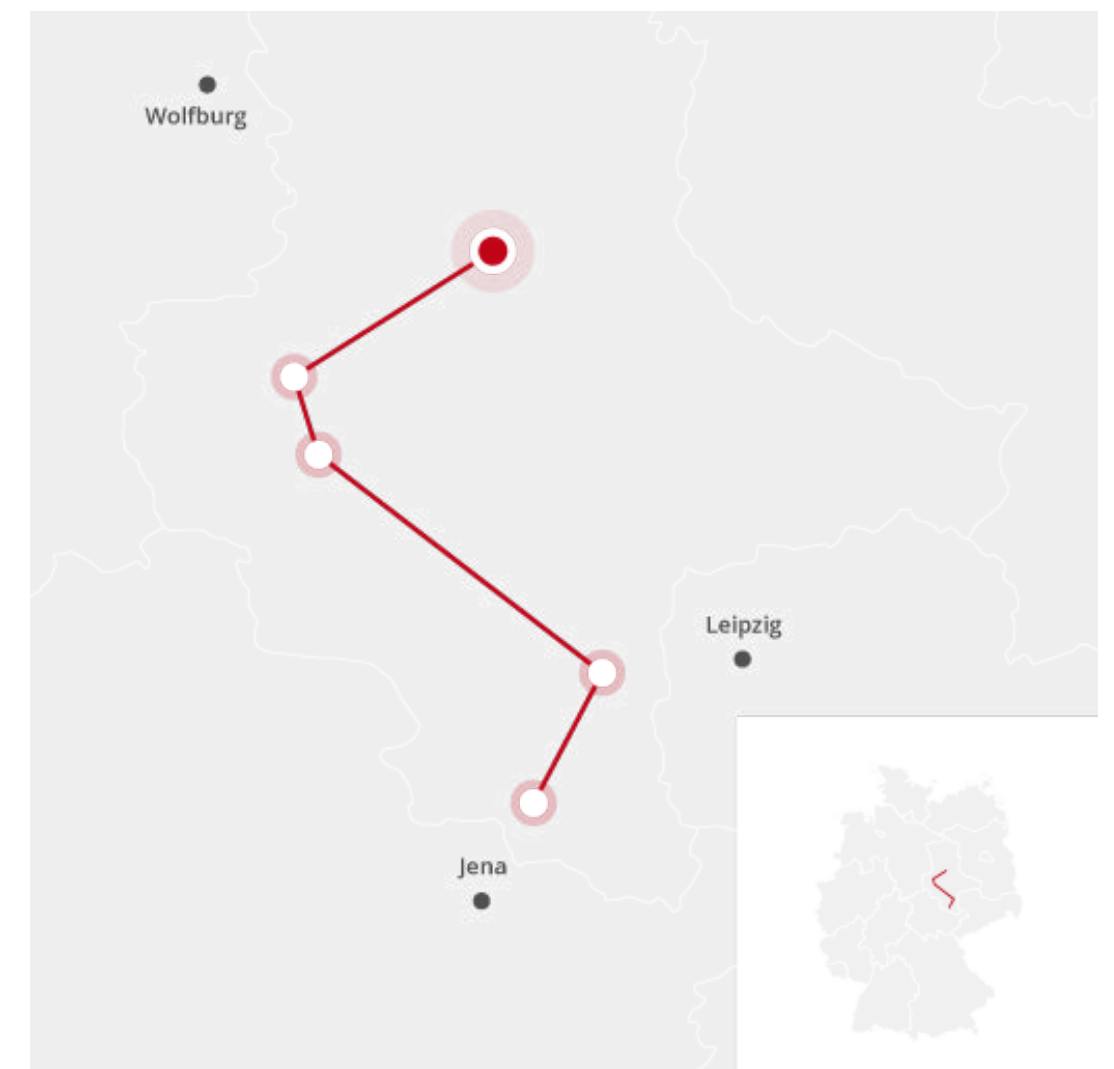
Art Museum in the Monastery of Our Lady, Magdeburg

Credit: Photo: © GNTB/Francesco Carovillano

Regarded as one of the most important examples of Romanesque architecture in Germany, Magdeburg's Art Museum in the Monastery of Our Lady actually blends contemporary art and medieval architecture, thanks to a permanent, five-floor exhibition showcasing postwar international art.

The sculpture park surrounding the building is home to historical sculptures from antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the modern era—there's also a library that dates to 1638 and holds a collection of 22,000 books from the 15th to 20th centuries. The Georg Philipp Telemann concert hall, named after the famous Magdeburg-born Baroque composer, is also worth a peek.

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Stop 2 on Romanesque Route

Cathedral of St. Stephen and St. Sixtus, Halberstadt

Built over a span of roughly 200 years—between 1236 and 1486—this soaring, monumental church was inspired by French cathedral architecture. The nave is an impressive 88 feet high, there are 290 stained-glass decorations to admire, and a few items have survived from the Romanesque era. (Look out for a baptismal marble font and a triumphal cross from around 1220.)

The cathedral also houses one of the most valuable church treasures in the world, with over 1,250 individual items of medieval art. Not just pottery here, either: The list includes a chip from the cross of Christ brought from Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade, immense tapestries that illustrate biblical stories, and a Byzantine bread bowl from the 11th century. (Well, some pottery.)

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Stop 3 on Romanesque Route

St. Servatius Church, Quedlinburg

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The Collegiate Church of St. Servatius is one of the most important Romanesque buildings in Germany. Located in the UNESCO World Heritage City of Quedlinburg, it was founded in the early 10th century by the first German King, Henry I. And yet, despite its age, the monumental sandstone construction has a richly ornamental interior that's worth a moment's meditation.

The church is famous for its collection of medieval treasures, which range from sculptures, panel paintings, and jewelry to oriental crystal art. Note the biblical words of King Solomon in the ceiling frescoes in the crypt, which also has the oldest relief tomb slabs found in Germany.

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Stop 4 on Romanesque Route

Merseburg Cathedral

Credit: Photo: Shutterstock/Bildagentur Zoonar GmbH

Merseburg's Cathedral St. Johannes and St. Laurentius—as it's officially known—is set on the River Saale, nine miles south of Halle in Saxony-Anhalt. The first stones for its construction were laid by Henry II and Cunigunde (his wife) around 1,000 years ago; renovations between 1510 and 1517 transformed the cathedral into a late Gothic structure and, soon afterward in 1545, Martin Luther preached here.

The interior contains remarkable Gothic and Renaissance features, including a 12th-century monolithic baptismal font made of red sandstone and a 500-year-old royal crypt, as well as several original altars. The chapter buildings house a library that includes a copy of the Merseburg Bible from around 1200, and there's a three-wing Renaissance castle next door to explore.

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Stop 5 on Romanesque Route

Naumburg Cathedral

Credit: Photo: © Saale-Unstrut-Tourismus e.V./Transmedial

Naumburg Cathedral, located about an hour west of Leipzig, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2018—a long wait for a building that dates back to 1029. And while a part of the cathedral crypt, constructed around 1170, is the only room to have survived that earlier era intact, it's still absolutely worth a stop on this route.

Among the highlights of the interior are life-size sculptures of the founders of the cathedral, including a statue of Uta von Ballenstedt—the “most beautiful woman in medieval Europe.” The cathedral treasury is housed in a large Romanesque vaulted cellar off the cloister and features Middle Age and Renaissance objects, like paintings and liturgical books. The pleasant, pond-dotted garden behind the cathedral is good for a stroll, too.

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