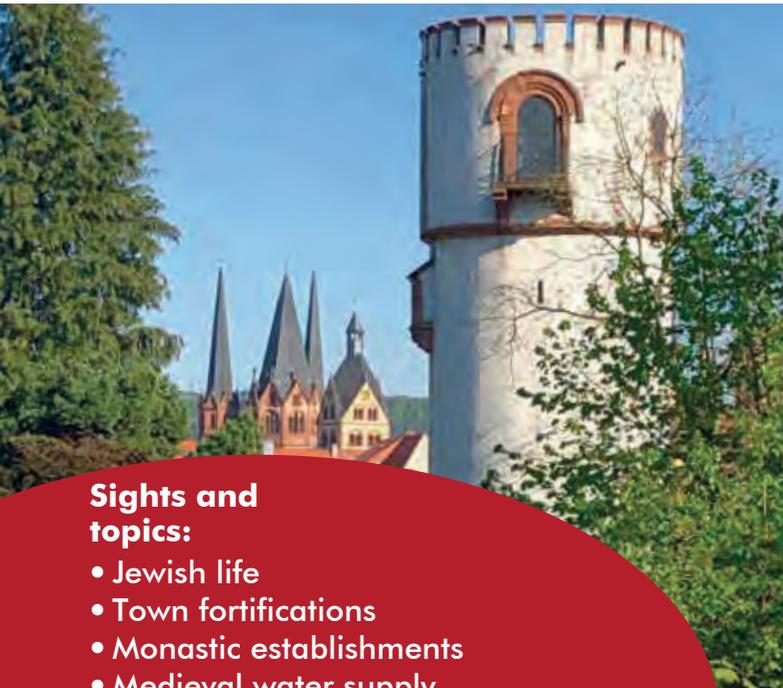


# Digital city tour



## Sights and topics:

- Jewish life
- Town fortifications
- Monastic establishments
- Medieval water supply

[www.vvgn.info](http://www.vvgn.info)



Based on QR-Codes and  
GPS locations!



Verkehrsverein Gelnhausen e.V.  
Gemeinsam für die Stadt



## TOURIST INFORMATION GELNHAUSEN

Phone: + 49 6051 830 300 or - 830 301  
Obermarkt 8  
63571 Gelnhausen  
[tourist-information@gelnhausen.de](mailto:tourist-information@gelnhausen.de)

Business hours:  
Monday to Friday: 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Saturday and Sunday: 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Opening hours Museum Gelnhausen,  
Stadtschreiberei 3:  
Tuesday to Sunday: 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

[www.gelnhausen.de/en](http://www.gelnhausen.de/en)

# HISTORIC GELNHAUSEN

## A WALK THROUGH THE TOWN



 BARBAROSSASTADT  
GELNHAUSEN  
DES KAISERS LIEBE



# WELCOME TO GELNHAUSEN

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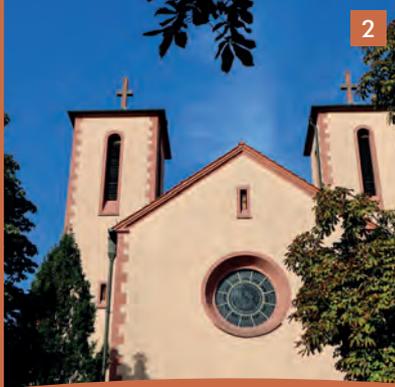
City map drawn by the local artist Achim Gogler, can be purchased in the Tourist Information Gelnhausen



History and stories, hospitality and good food – enjoy your visit in our enchanting town. Explore the winding alleyways of the old town centre, the romantic imperial palace and our picturesque churches and market squares. Browse in our attractive shops or relax in our cosy restaurants, cafés and pubs.

And it doesn't matter what the weather is like. Using factual exhibits and games, our new hands-on museum on the Obermarkt invites young and old to delve into the town's history. You can also experience the only walk-in ear in Germany. Have a look.

Throughout almost the whole year we offer individual guests a wide range of guided tours of the town and museum, tours on specific topics, culinary tours and, of course, our popular historical adventure tours.



## WORTH SEEING AND KNOWING

### 1 | Town hall

Today's town hall was originally established in 1333 when Ludwig the Bavarian granted the town the privilege of building a covered market hall. The Gelnhäuser Elle, a medieval yardstick mounted on the north west wall, recalls those times. Since the 16th century the former market hall has served as town hall. To this day the mayor and the city administration are based here. During a thunderstorm on August 15, 1736, the loft was set on fire by a bolt of lightning only to be put out by a hail storm which stopped the conflagration that threatened the town. The roof of the building was then renewed in the Baroque style. The „Hail Day“ is now a local public holiday.

### 2 | St. Peter's Church

In 1238, shortly after commencement of construction, building work was stopped. The provisionally finished building was used for baptisms, weddings and funerals. After an eventful history as storehouse, military hospital and cigar factory, St. Peter's was renovated at the beginning of the 20th century and became the Catholic parish church. The interior decor of St. Peter's combines medieval elements with contemporary creativity.

### 3 | The Birthplace of Philipp Reis

Philipp Reis was born here on January 7, 1834. He later moved to Friedrichsdorf where he worked as a physics teacher. He invented the first apparatus that transmitted the human voice by means of electric current. Today he is regarded as the inventor of the telephone.

### 4 | The Arnsburg Court

Already in the Middle Ages the Cistercian monastery of Arnsburg established an enterprise in Gelnhausen. In the first half of the 18th century both the monastery and also the local buildings were extended.

### 5 | Former Franciscan Monastery, former Augusta-School with Civic Museum, Municipal Library and Town archives

At the beginning of the 13th century, Franciscan monks established a large monastery, which was dissolved at the time of the Reformation. From 1540 the town installed a Latin school there. In the 19th century a new school for girls was erected and named after the Empress Augusta Victoria. The new building was designed to recall the architecture of the earlier monastery buildings. The Municipal Library, the Town Archives and the Local History Museum are located here.

## 6 | Former Secondary School

In 1834 the ramshackle monastery buildings had to make room for the new classical style building which continued to be used as a school until the 1980s. Since then local authorities have been located there.

## 7 | Kindergarten

The first Gelnhausen kindergarten was installed on another part of the site of the former Franciscan monastery. An endowment of the Schöffler and Becker families made this possible.

## 8 | Pfarrgasse/Narrowest Point

The Via Regia, the old trade route, was an important east-west connection in the Holy Roman Empire. In the Middle Ages at this point, due to the closely built houses, the broadly laid roadway became a bottleneck on the stretch between Frankfurt on Main and Leipzig. Thus, the road width in the Pfarrgasse, Gelnhausen became the official loading gauge for all carts on this stretch.

## 9 | House of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem

As one of the few medieval stone houses, this monastic court of the Order of St. John survived the devastating destruction of the Thirty Years' War. The magnificent stepped gable indicates the origins of the building in the 14th century.

## 10 | Court of the Teutonic Order

Like numerous other orders the Teutonic Knights of Sachsenhausen also operated a business enterprise in the town. Today the medieval stone building accommodates church and charitable institutions.

## 11 | Inner Timber Gate

As a „bowl“ tower which is open on the rear side the Inner Timber Gate belongs to the first line of fortification of the town. It was erected in approximately 1230.

## 12 | Outer Timber Gate

The Outer Timber Gate belongs to the second line of the town wall, which was erected on the outer limits of the town around 1330.

## 13 | Wine Vat Tower

Probably the oldest tower in Gelnhausen, this was mentioned already in the early Middle Ages under the name „Aulenthorn“. It was reconstructed several times over the centuries. It owes the designation „Buttenturm“ (Wine Vat Tower) to its appearance, which reminds one of the basket with the shape of a half wine vat which winegrowers wear on their backs when picking grapes. Today it is also used as an historical registry office for marriage services.

## 14 | St. Godobert's Chapel

The chapel from the High Middle Ages probably belonged to a count's castle situated above the town which existed before the town's foundation in 1170. Here in the sandstone building full of atmosphere, young couples can now be married, since it is used as one of the historical registry offices.





### 15 | Half Moon Tower

The tower owes its unusual name to its semicircular shape. It was established in the late Middle Ages and offers a wonderful view over the town and the Kinzig valley.

### 16 | Stone Well

The medieval well chamber is an example of the numerous, centuries old wells in the city.

### 17 | St. Mary's Church

The town's most famous landmark was built between 1170 and 1250 under the patronage of the monastery of Selbold: the magnificent St. Mary's Church. Situated on the site of a small one nave church, it grew over five building stages to become „the Crown Jewel of God“ – as it is known in Gelnhausen. The various master builders used the local material, Gelnhausen sandstone, and succeeded in creating an architectural master-piece of balanced harmony. Whereas in the western parts of the church Romanesque is the dominating style, the transept and eastern parts display strong Gothic influences. In particular, the rood screen with its representation of the Last Judgement enjoys international recognition as a unique work of art. The late medieval altars, in particular the high altar which dates from the end of the Middle Ages, as well as two late medieval tapestries are the most important art treasures of St. Mary's.

### 18 | „In the Light of Elisabeth Strupp“

A transparent female shape emerges from an apparently endless strand of metal. The figure is held together – or restricted – by a solid metal ring that has a weight of approximately half a ton. It is in memory of the clergy-

man's widow, Elisabeth Strupp, who in 1599 became a victim of the persecution of witches in Gelnhausen. The monument was erected in 1999 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of her death. The monument was designed by Fanna Kolerova and the work was carried out by Karl Menzen. You will find it in front of the west portal of St. Mary's Church.

### 19 | Romanesque House

The Romanesque House is considered to be one of the oldest still existing administrative buildings (town halls) of Germany. The seat of the imperial governor is mentioned for the first time in 1370. The building was probably erected around 1180 at the time of the imperial diet in Gelnhausen. It has structural parallels to the imperial palace.

### 20 | Philipp Reis Memorial

The bronze bust is in memory of the inventor of the telephone, who was born in Gelnhausen in 1834 (see 3).

### 21 | Haitz Gate

Once the largest gate of the city's fortification, the Haitz Gate was in use up to the 19th century. Then the road was moved to the north and the gate converted into a house.

## 22 | Witches' Tower

The late medieval fortification tower was originally used as an ammunition store. It was renamed in the vernacular from „Grimace Stone“ to „Witches' Tower“ because it served as a prison during the time of the witch trials. Today it houses a collection of copies of torture instruments.

## 23 | „The Caller“

Eva Gesine Wegener created the statue, which was set up at the foot of the Witches' Tower in 1986, in memory of the countless victims of the witch hunting era.

## 24 | The Birthplace of Grimmelshausen

The poet Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen (1621/22 to 1676) first saw the light of day in the building that is now a hotel. He is considered to be the most famous German narrative writer of the 17th century. He is best known for his powerfully eloquent „Abentheurliche Simplicissimus Teutsch“ („Simplicius Simplicissimus“).

## 25 | Former Synagogue

The Jewish community in Gelnhausen was among the earliest in Germany. The Jewish population settled below the two market places and built a synagogue in 1601. However, it was destroyed in the Thirty Years War and rebuilt in the second half of the 17th century. As the building had already been converted into a warehouse, it did not suffer damage during the period of National Socialism. In 1986 – after renovation – it was inaugurated as a house of culture. Particularly worth seeing are the baroque Torah shrine inside and

the monument in the forecourt. The open bronze door with three interlocking rings stands for Lessing's „Parable of the Three Rings“ and is a symbol for the dialogue of the religions, for reconciliation and tolerance.

## 26 | Gothic House

The half-timbered house dates from the 14th century and is considered to be one of the oldest half-timbered houses in Hesse.

## 27 | „Living Room“

This artistic house created by the architects Seifert and Stöckmann shows on the aluminium-covered facade the poem „The House is the Space of the Mouth“ by Thomas Kling. People passing by are invited to cast a glance at the interior through one of the 52 windows. Besides the 40 ton sandstone block on the ground floor, another interesting feature of the house is the giant drawer which, driven by a motor, can be extended up to 3m out into the open.

## 28 | Princes' Court

In the early 16th century the Prince Electors of the Holy Roman Empire held their diets here in the former administrative seat of the bailiffs.



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### 29 | Ship Gate

In medieval times the Kinzig was navigable from Gelnhausen downstream. The water route thus offered a further possibility of transportation. The goods from the town could be transferred from land to water and vice versa.

### 30 | Jewish Cemetery

The oldest gravestones of the Jewish cemetery date back to the 15th century. This cemetery is evidence of the once large Jewish community in Gelnhausen.

### 31 | City Wall

At the beginning of the 13th century a 1.5 km fortified ring wall was erected for the protection of the new city. However, only 100 years later it was necessary to build a larger second ring to protect the rapidly growing town.

### 32 | Brick Tower

The „Ziegelturn“ (Brick Tower) is part of the second city wall and connects the city with the „Ziegelhaus“ district.

### 33 | Tithe Barn

This was the former domicile of the Castle Chaplain, the priest who celebrated mass in the castle chapel. Modified several times since the Middle Ages, it acquired its name because it was also used as a tithe barn in the 19th century.

### 34 | Grove Gate

The late medieval gate belonged to the fortifications of the Kinzig island. In former times it had a half-timbered second floor where the guard lived.

### 35 | Imperial Palace

In the late 12th century the town's founder, the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, ordered the construction of this palace on an island in the Kinzig. Today it is considered the best preserved palace of the Staufer dynasty. The powerful walls rest on a bed of approximately 12,000 oak stakes. The portal, the well-preserved window arcades, the magnificent frieze and the wonderful capitals still bear witness to the outstanding quality of its Romanesque architecture.

### 36 | „Conservatory for ideas“

An architectural sculpture made of Douglas fir. It is 10m x 8m x 5m with an interior to be entered and occupied, a place to rest and contemplate. Further information at: [www.clausbury.de](http://www.clausbury.de)

# TIMELINE

- 1170** | Gelnhausen is granted its charter by Emperor Frederic I., known as Barbarossa or Redbeard, and becomes an imperial town.
- 1180** | Diet of Gelnhausen: Barbarossa litigates against his cousin Henry the Lion. Henry's fiefdoms are redistributed.
- 1226** | League of Towns of the Wetterau: The imperial towns of the Wetterau unite to form the „League of Towns of the Wetterau“.
- 1241** | First proof of a Jewish settlement in Gelnhausen. The Imperial Tax List shows Gelnhausen in second place directly after Frankfurt on Main.
- 1349** | The later Emperor Karl IV. mortgages the city and the Pfalz (imperial palace).
- 1502** | The Prince Electors of the Holy Roman Empire hold their Prince Elector Diet in Gelnhausen.
- 1506** | The historical Dr. Faust, known from Goethe's play, travels through Gelnhausen and stays at the „Löwen“ (the Lion's Inn).
- 1543** | Reformation: after Martin Luther's posting of the ninety-five Theses in 1517 Gelnhausen converts to the Lutheran faith; Saint Mary's becomes the Protestant city parish church.
- 1621/22** | The famous baroque poet Johann Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, the author of „Abentheurlichen Simplicissimus Teutsch“ („Simplicius Simplicissimus“), is born in Schmidtgasse 10.
- 1634** | Devastation and plundering of the city during the Thirty Years' War (1618 –1648).
- 1736** | Fire in the town hall on the Upper Market Place – „Hageltag“, the day it hailed, becomes a local holiday.
- 1803** | Reichsdeputationshauptschluss: (an edict issued in 1803 reorganizing German territory after the Revolutionary Wars). Gelnhausen loses the imperial immediacy and thus the status as an imperial town. The town now belongs to the Grand Duchy of Frankfurt.
- 1811** | The French occupying forces introduce the Code Napoléon.





- 1815** | Gelnhausen is incorporated into the Electorate of Hesse-Kassel.
- 1821** | Gelnhausen becomes the county town.
- 1834** | Philipp Reis is born in Gelnhausen. In 1861 he was the first person in the world to present a telephone instrument to the Physical Society in Frankfurt and is thus considered to be the inventor of the telephone.
- 1866** | During the „German War“ Gelnhausen – as part of the Electorate of Hesse-Kassel – becomes a part of the Kingdom of Prussia.
- 1868** | On the opening of the railway line Hanau-Fulda: Gelnhausen acquires its own railway station.
- 1962** | Twinning with the French town Clamecy.
- 1974** | Hanau becomes county seat of the Main-Kinzig-Kreis (Main-Kinzig County), Gelnhausen loses its rights as county town.
- 1977** | Twinning with the Italian town Marling.
- 1978** | Official bestowal of the city-surname „Barbarossa-stadt“ (City of Barbarossa)
- 1986** | The former synagogue becomes a cultural meeting place.
- 1995** | The anniversary of the town charter is celebrated for the first time: 825th anniversary of the town charter.
- 1996** | The annual Hesse Fair and Exhibition is celebrated in Gelnhausen.
- 1997** | First guided tours in appropriate period costume explaining an aspect of the history of Gelnhausen.
- 2005** | Gelnhausen becomes county town of the Main-Kinzig-Kreis, which is the county with the largest population in the Federal State of Hesse.
- 2007 – 2013** | Gelnhausen was the geographical Centrepoint of the European Union.
- 2013** | Re-introduction of the car registration GN.
- 2016** | Opening of the new hands-on museum with the „walk-in ear“.
- 2022** | Medieval festival for the 50th anniversary of the town charter (originally planned for 2020 but delayed due to Covid)

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Join one of our qualified town guides on one of the numerous public guided tours with a wide variety of topics. Or come with friends and family and book your own exclusive tour tailored to your personal interests. There's a lot to discover in the new hands-on museum and the beautiful old town.

Or explore the town as a game with one of our interactive tours. „Armed“ with a bag or secret agent's case full of useful gadgets and a tablet-PC, you will experience a completely new view of things:

## GELNHUSANA MAGICA

A look in the shop window shows nothing unusual. But if you look through the magical device, a - admittedly quite sleepy - goblin magically appears. If the players manage to wake him up, he reveals a new perspective on the peaceful city of Gelnhausen: Someone opened a magic portal and evil monsters are threatening the city!

It can only be closed by a smart and brave team that is capable of collecting all magical crystals just in time to save Gelnhausen. To do this, they have to solve tricky puzzles, crack codes, find hidden spots, open a cryptex and master interactive tasks. Help comes from the greedy goblin, whose lovely animation is fun for young and old. However, his services are not unselfish ...

