

Aachen

Aachen has a long history. Way back in Celtic and Roman times, people were already enjoying the hot springs here. But it wasn't until Charlemagne that the city gained true historical importance. In the Early Middle Ages, he chose Aachen as his favourite palace, and turned the town into the capital of his European empire. The spiritual expression of this former glory – and Germany's first UNESCO World Heritage site – is Aachen Cathedral.

Aachen is a future laboratory. The whole city ticks to the rhythm of universities and research. The RWTH Aachen University, a "University of Excellence" in research and teaching, the FH Aachen University of Applied Sciences, and Fraunhofer, Leibniz and Helmholtz institutes all stand for scientific creativity, technological innovation and social progress. The RWTH Aachen Campus is destined to evolve into one of Europe's greatest research landscapes. This will also benefit the local economy. Universities and commercial enterprises are working in close collaboration, in forums and networks, in spin-offs and start-ups.

Aachen is cosmopolitan and open-minded. Since 1949, the International Charlemagne Prize has been awarded here, an accolade named after Charlemagne himself and presented annually in recognition of services towards the unification and the unity of the European continent. For the people of Aachen, Europe is much more than symbolism and high politics. About 250,000 "Öcher" live, work, study and go shopping all over this tri-state border area of Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. Life in three countries – daily routine for the people of Aachen.

Aachen has more than 60,000 people studying here – and that gives the city a certain character. Then there are the tourists who flock here every year to enjoy the charm of the Christmas Market held in the historical old town centre, or the International Equestrian Tournament, the CHIO. Aachen has an abundance of cultural and sports highlights to offer: world-class museums, the Route Charlemagne – a historical tourist trail in Charlemagne's footsteps – as well as Aachen Theater, the international "Chorbiennale" choir festival, the Open-Air September Special, the "Schrittmacher Tanzfestival" for dance enthusiasts and many other events and attractions.