



The Golden Chamber



The Festival Hall



Senate Chamber



Underground delicacies



For all to see – a force in the world

The Town Hall, unpretentious in its simplicity, served its purposes well for 200 years. Yet the City Council decided to give it an impressive new façade that would show to all that the Council was powerful and self-assured. Reconstruction in 1612 produced one of Europe's most beautiful Renaissance façades. The middle portion of the old façade was torn down and replaced by a magnificent bay window crowned by a five-layered Flanders gable. The opulent and imaginative front side of the Town Hall, visible from the marketplace, was designed by Lüder von Bentheim, the sculptor. An artistic masterpiece, a tapestry in stone, it contains stirring images reflecting political and religious themes. The richness of figures and images adorning the façade is hard to appreciate with the bare eye – bizarre scenes from a world alien to us, figures with symbolic meanings, as well as reliefs, angels, fabled beasts, flowers, vases and bouquets of fruit – a masterpiece of stonemasonry. One important figure for Bremen people is that of the hen and its chickens above the second arch of the Town Hall – a reference to a saga about Bremen's origins. The east and west sides with their pointed windows and portals remained in their original form.

Cherished like treasure

A much-admired and treasured jewel of the Town Hall is a small room called the *Guldenkammer*, or Golden Chamber. This was added and integrated into the Upper Hall, and is protected like a treasure. The Chamber is richly ornamented on the outside with splendid wood carvings and paintings. The interior is a Jugendstil gesamtkunstwerk.



A detail of the leather wall covering

Heinrich Vogeler, the Worpwede artist, was commissioned in 1905 to beautify this somewhat unseemly room. He chose a red and gold wall covering of finest leather and added a wealth of ornamentation to every element, however insignificant. Door panels, lampshades, fireplace screens and door handles were transformed into works of art in their own right. Images of birds and flowers predominate.

A beautifully crafted wooden staircase leads to the upper storey of the Chamber. Several wood carvers and master carvers worked to create it. Today, it is considered to epitomise the High Baroque period.



Old and new – of a piece

The Council needed space. In the early 20th century, it became necessary to add an annex to the Town Hall. Extending onto a historical building of such importance with the necessary 'tactful restraint' was a major architectural challenge. Gabriel von Seidl, from Munich, mastered that challenge and skilfully succeeded in combining the old with the new. The mediaeval hall retained its dominance, while the new building blended harmoniously and unobtrusively with the old.

The new *Festsaal*, or Festival Hall, was created in the process and emanates its own, incomparable charm. High panels in dark oak lend elegance to the room, and a large painting by Carl Vinnen showing a 17th-century harbour scene provides a maritime touch. An imposing Jugendstil chandelier hangs from the ceiling.



Wilhelm Kaisen, bronze bust in the Senate Chamber

Adjacent to the Festival Hall is the somewhat smaller *Kaminsaal*, or Fireplace Salon. The room has style, thanks to the warm, dark brown parquet floor, the dark red velvet wall covering and the white stucco ceiling, and is gladly used for smaller celebrations and official receptions. Large oil paintings stand out from the red walls. Like many artefacts in the New Town Hall, the fireplace itself – made of French marble and decorated with Delft tiles – was a gift from citizens.

The *Gobelinzimmer*, or Tapestry Room, next door has an intimate, almost merry atmosphere, and takes its name from a large tapestry dating from the 17th century. It is eminently suitable for smaller meetings and consultations, and is now used for registry marriages as well.

The most important room for present-day politics is the *Senatssaal*, or Senate Chamber. The Senate meets regularly on Tuesdays around the large, oval table. The patterned silks on the walls and the huge carpet with Bremen keys woven into it make this a very welcoming room. A bust reminds us of Wilhelm Kaisen, who was Mayor and Senate President in the twenty years following World War Two.

It is not far from the treasures on the upper floor to the underground delicacies in the *Ratskeller*. Originally built as foundations for the Gothic town hall, it now houses an enormous selection of German wines – around 600 different vintages in total. Guests sit at long wooden tables before huge and imposing old wine casks. The lucky few are taken into the *Rosekeller*, where one can sniff the bouquet of centuries-old wines. The oldest is a Rudesheimer dating from 1653.

'I show you freedom'

Roland statues, symbols of market and commercial rights, can be found in many northern German cities. For experts, Bremen's Roland statue is the most famous, artistically impressive and beautiful of these figures, and for that reason was included in the World Heritage List... The Roland statue in Bremen is also a symbol of freedom. The words 'I show you freedom' are inscribed on the figure's shield. The previous wooden statue had been a symbol of civic freedom, and was destroyed in 1366 by order of the Archbishop. Roland, with the pointed knees, is Bremen's symbolic landmark, and always will be. Bremen people are convinced that, as long as he stands, Bremen will be free.

The Bremen Town Hall

UNESCO World Heritage



Bremen live it!





Bremen Town Hall and Roland Statue Join World Heritage List



On 2 July 2004, UNESCO added the Town Hall and the Roland statue, two unique symbols of Bremen's history, to the World Heritage List. This is internationally the highest and most coveted distinction that can be awarded to a building, an urban district or a landscape.

The United Nations' cultural organisation has thus acknowledged the outstanding historical, political and artistic importance of the Town Hall and the Roland statue.

The 'justification for inscription' of the Bremen Town Hall explicitly highlights 'the outstanding Late Renaissance architectural form in northern Germany, the so-called Weser Renaissance'.

The Bremen Roland, say the UNESCO experts, is 'the most representative and one of the oldest Roland statues erected as a symbol of market rights and freedom'.

'The ensemble of the Town Hall and Roland of Bremen is directly associated with the development of the ideas of civic autonomy and market freedom in the Holy Roman Empire.'

In close contact with the past

The Town Hall charms every visitor to the city, and no wonder – this is history close-up. Erected 600 years ago, the building has been preserved almost unchanged – even today one can see how the two large Gothic halls, one above the other, were used. The City Council met here, passed resolutions, waged politics and passed laws for the citizens.

This Town Hall stands in a unique way for continuity, as the seat of government and public administration in a city that has always had one thing in mind – to preserve and defend its independence and self-governance as a city-republic. It is for that reason as well that it now forms part of the World Heritage.

Lower Hall



Booked out

The Lower Hall impresses with its simplicity of form. Mighty oak pillars lend an air of austerity. The only decorative elements are the wonderful portals that were later added. Covered, protected against rain and cold, this room was once a market hall and meeting place for farmers, traders and wandering minstrels. Taxes and levies were paid here, and verdicts pronounced on petty criminals. In short – it was a much-used, multi-purpose hall brimful of life, and has remained so to this day. It is eminently suitable for events and exhibitions of all kinds, and booked out almost the whole year round.

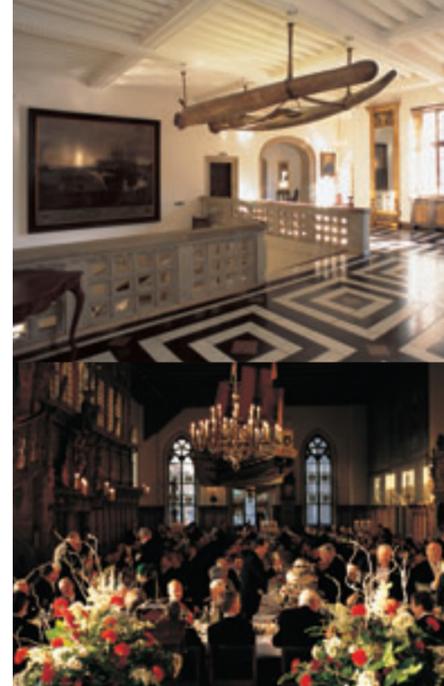
Upper Hall



History pure

A fascinating contrast – the lower storey simple and austere, the Upper Hall of the Town Hall resplendent in its 'solemn dignity'. 40 metres long and 13 metres high, and decorated with works of art and rarities, it is considered Bremen's most beautiful festival hall. Four magnificent men-o'-war models hang from the ceiling, witnesses to an age in which Bremen people sent their valuable cargoes across the seas under armed protection. Richly decorated portals lead to other rooms in the New Town Hall.

The Wandelgang



The Upper Hall served for centuries as a focal point of political life. The City Council met here, forging political decisions for the welfare of the city, and passing jurisdiction. Impressive wall paintings, epigrams and figures bear witness to these past uses. Today, this wonderful room is used by the Bremen government (the Senate) and the Mayor for formal occasions. When the Schaffermahl – the oldest brotherhood banquet in the world – is held each year and the tables are festively laid, the hall unveils its fullest charm.

Johann Smidt, marble sculpture
by Carl Steinhäuser (1813 – 1857)

Guided tours of the Town Hall Bremen's 'drawing room' is the *Marktplatz*, and its greatest attraction is the Town Hall. Guided tours of the historic building (in German and English) provide an insight into its fascinating 600-year history. The tour includes the impressive Upper Town Hall and the splendid Golden Chamber. Since 2004, the Town Hall and the Roland have been inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List!

All year round, Mondays to Saturdays at 11 a.m., 12 a.m., 3 p.m. and 4 p.m., Sundays at 11 and 12 a.m. (no tours are held when the Senate is meeting, or during other meetings and events). Tickets and information are available from the Tourist Information Office on the Liebfrauenkirchhof, Obernstrasse.

Guided tours of the Ratskeller The Bremen Ratskeller is one of the oldest and most famous of its kind in Germany. German wines have been sold here since 1404, as well as freshly-tapped Bremen beer, of course. The *Schatzkammer*, the *Rosekeller* and the *Apostelkeller* house vintages dating from the 16th and 17th centuries.

From the end of April to early October, Fridays at 4 p.m., starting at the Tourist Information Office on the Liebfrauenkirchhof, Obernstrasse.

Bookings and further information can be obtained from the Tourist Office on the Liebfrauenkirchhof, Obernstrasse, at the main railway station, by telephone under 018 05-10 10 30 (€ 0.12 per minute), or on the Internet at www.bremen-tourismus.de.

Tours of the Town Hall and the Ratskeller can arranged at other dates and times for groups. We can help you reserve seats in the Bremen Ratskeller, of course. Just call our service number 018 05-10 10 30 (€ 0.12 per minute), and we'll gladly be of assistance!

