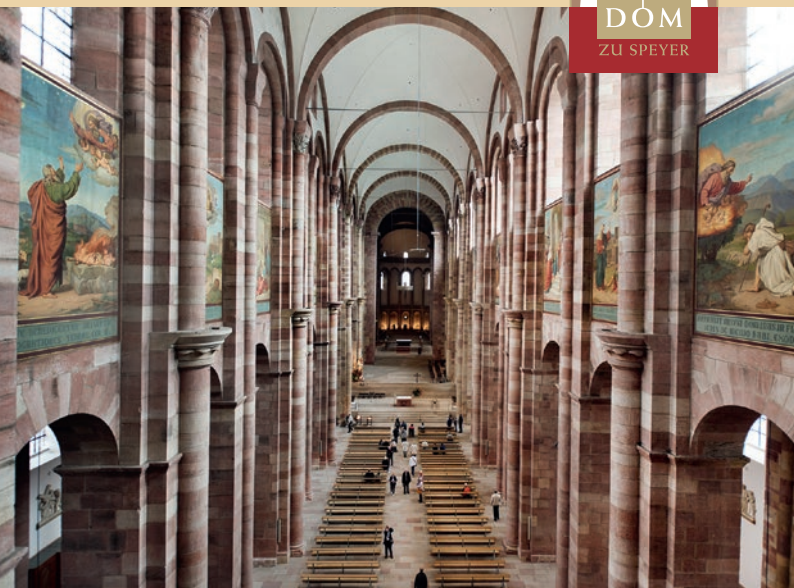


Welcome!



Speyer Cathedral

St Mary and St Stephen

A Spiritual Guide

www.dom-zu-speyer.de



Dear visitor,

Speyer Cathedral is of immense art historical importance: it is considered the world's largest and most significant Romanesque church (constructed between ca. 1030-1124). Its design embodies the idea of medieval imperial rule. From its very beginnings up until today, it has served as Speyer's Episcopal church and a pilgrimage destination. Art, history and religion are all fused into an inseparable union, where all elements must be considered in relation to each other. This small guide places an emphasis on the spiritual and seeks to help the visitor understand the religious messages communicated by this glorious building.

We sincerely hope that you feel welcome here and that your visit to the Speyer Cathedral proves enriching.

Speyer Cathedral Chapter

1. The Façade



In the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, Heavenly Jerusalem is described as a city with **three gates** at each cardinal point (Rv 21, 13). The architects of the cathedral sought to create a likeness of God's Holy City, with the cathedral's westwork featuring three portals. **Five figures** are placed above the central portal; from left to right these figures represent: the first martyr of Christianity and patron saint of the cathedral, St. Stephen; the archangel Michael, patron of Germany; the Mother of God Mary, the main patroness of the cathedral and the "Patrona Spirensis"; St. John the Baptist, as this is the first baptistery of the diocese; and Bernard of Clairvaux, the most renowned visitor of the cathedral in the Middle Ages (1146). Above these figures there is a circular rose window symbolizing the divine. This window is framed by a quadrangle, symbolizing the terrestrial. Its four corners are marked by the emblems of the four Evangelists (eagle, winged man, lion, and ox). These are the worldly heralds who have brought the divine message to us through the four gospels.

2. The Narthex

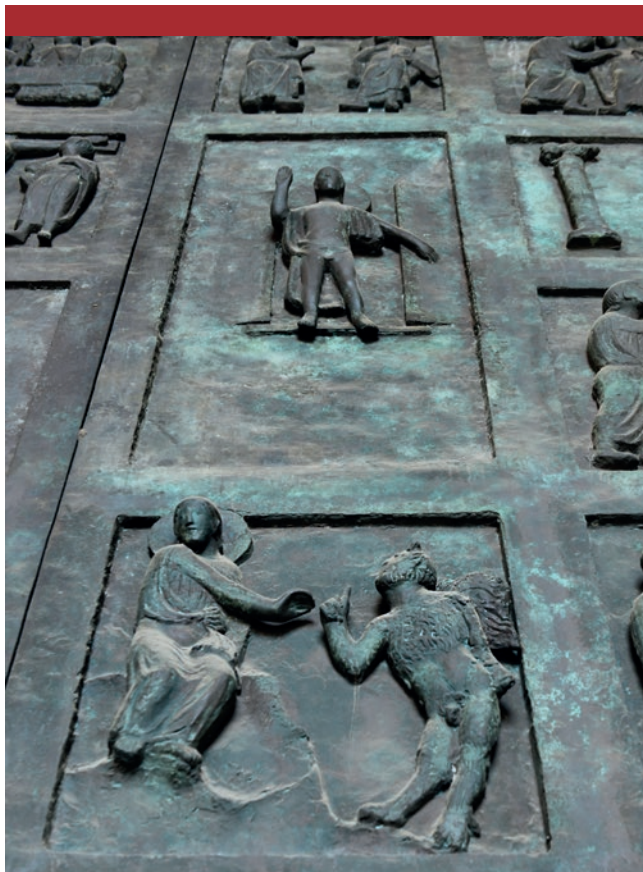
The portals lead into the narthex of the westwork. The **west-work** shields the west end of the cathedral like a battlement. In medieval times, the west side was associated with the sun setting, darkness, and by extension, evil. The visitor enters from the west and walks eastwards through the cathedral. This path through the cathedral allows the visitor to leave all evil and darkness behind, and to approach Christ and his "armor of Light". (Rm 13,12).



3. The Portal

While the narthex can be entered through three portals, the cathedral itself is accessible through one entrance alone. The numerous people who stream into the narthex must now enter the cathedral individually and successively, one by one. This sole portal is representative of the **narrow gate to heaven**, which Jesus describes in the gospel (Mt 7,13). Impressively ensconced inside a stepped portal and driven into an almost 7-metre-thick wall, the door forms a narrow entranceway. The portal is stepped six times on both its interior and exterior sides, forming 12 steps in total; this number symbolizes perfection.

Above the portal is a depiction of Jesus' farewell discourse from the Gospel of John: "**Ut unum sint – that they may all be one!**" (Jn 17, 21). As this cathedral is the last important construction of a church prior to the Great Schism of 1054, it is a memorial for the unity of the church. The cathedral door itself is a sermon cast in bronze. The lower bronze reliefs depict stories from the Old Testament, especially those pertaining to the Creation and Primordial History from the Book of Genesis. The upper reliefs draw from the New Testament, and present scenes from the life of Jesus. The visitor is thus reminded of the divine origins and the Holy Salvation, and is now free to begin the journey through the cathedral.





4. The Nave

Having passed through the narrow gate, the visitor is afforded an overwhelming view of the immense nave. Unlike the cathedrals of Mainz and Worms, Speyer Cathedral has only one choir; this gives the building a stark directionality, leading the visitor only one way, forward, eastwards, **towards the light**.

Walking along the nave, the visitor will take note of the **12 arches** that span the mighty pillars. This number is significant as the Church was founded on the teachings of the 12 apostles (Ep 2,20). High above, the visitor can discern that adjoining arcades are connected and vaulted, producing six large groin-vaults. These vaults are significant in that, in medieval times, they symbolized heaven, while at the same time they symbolize something worldly: the chronology of the **six days of Creation**.

The Virgin Mary is simultaneously the patroness of both the church and the Salian dynasty, to which Emperor Conrad II (reign 1027-1039), the initial builder of the cathedral, belonged. Mary's presence in the cathedral is ubiquitous and she accompanies the visitor along the way. **Scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary** are present on both sides of the nave, just below the windows. Additionally, on the ground there is a sequence of four inscriptions: "o clemens / o pia / o dulcis / virgo Maria". These are the last words of the Salve Regina and are said to have been added to the original hymn by Bernard of Clairvaux after his visit to the cathedral.

A large **statue of Mary** welcomes the visitor at the entrance to the choir. Every ceremonial Episcopal mass finishes with a devotional in front of the "**Patrona Spirensis**".



*We invite you to say a prayer
before the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven:*

*All-powerfull and ever-living God,
you raised the sinless Virgin Mary,
mother of your Son,
body and soul to the glory of heaven.
May we see heaven as our final goal
and come to share her glory.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy-Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.
Amen*

(Prayer for the feast of the Assumption of Mary on the 15th of August)



5. The Crossing

At the end of the central aisle, the visitor turns and takes a path down one of the side aisles and up large steps into the transept. From this position the visitor can get a good view of the crossing.

Observed from far above, the cathedral's shape is unmistakable: it forms an enormous cross. The position where the transept and the nave intersect is the centre of this cross – the crossing. The cross is doubly emblematic: simultaneously representing an instrument of torture and paradoxically functioning as a **symbol of the resurrection**. In the cathedral the cross becomes a living space for Christians, who through their baptism die with Christ, and are reborn again through him, with him and inside him by the power of God, as new human beings. If the six groin-vaults above the nave symbolically represent the six days of creation, then the spacious cupola above the crossing can be said to represent the lofty heavens. This cupola symbolizes the seventh day, the day the creator rested. This day of rest was conceived for God's creations to be a holy time of calm and repose, where they could orientate themselves towards the Creator, towards God. The cupola is octagonal; the number 8 is arrived at by adding 7 and 1, because Christians do not regard the Sabbath of the Jews to be the day of rest, but rather the day after, Sunday. Sunday is the **Day of Resurrection** and thus the completion of the Creation. The number 8 seeks to express this with Sunday being both the first day of the week and at the same time the eighth day. Each Sunday is a symbol of the holy origin and completion of salvation in Christ. The altar, the symbol of Christ and the position where the Eucharist is celebrated and the mystery of salvation is made present, lies directly underneath the crossing's cupola.

6. Choir and Apse



The east end of the cathedral is comprised of the richly structured choir and the apse. The choir and apse symbolize Christ, the **head over all things to the Church** (Ep 1,22). As the body is imbued and filled with light and life from the head, the morning light of the east streams into the cathedral. It is for this reason that the choir is the space reserved for the bishop, the presider of this particular church. Here, he performs the Divine Office together with the cathedral chapter. The choir is the destination of the cathedral's individual visitors, who wish to venture out from darkness towards the light of Christ. At the same time however, the choir is the light source itself that seeks to penetrate westwards. Every morning, this light fills the New Jerusalem that is represented by the cathedral, until one day Christ is everything in everyone (Col 3,11).



7. The Crypt

We invite you to visit the crypt and burial grounds. Visiting the crypt requires an entrance fee, the proceeds of which support the maintenance and restoration of the cathedral.

The crypt is the oldest part of the cathedral, the foundation on which the building rests. The splendid rhythm of the pillars, hewn of red and white sandstone, and the soft light bring the visitor to awed silence. In the part bearing the apse there is an old baptismal font of the cathedral.

8. The imperial tombs

Access to the tombs of the Salian emperors and empresses, as well as to the resting places of kings from the Hapsburg, Staufer and Nassau dynasties is available via the crypt. From its very beginning, the cathedral was intended to be used as burial grounds for rulers and monarchs. The desire to be laid to rest in the cathedral was not only informed by piety, but also had at its core a firm conviction of ruling in the name of Jesus Christ. In 1024, at the coronation of Conrad II, the Archbishop of Mainz told the German king: "You are the Vicar of Christ on earth." The imperial crown itself was engraved with the wise words: "By me kings reign and princes decree justice" (Pr 8,15). In medieval times, this wisdom was attributed to Jesus Christ himself, the "King of the kings, and lord of lords" (Rv 19,16). The imperial tombs remind the visitor of the seriousness with which these rulers exercised their power. They understood that they had accepted **responsibility** not only from the people, but also from God himself. The earthly exercise of power is only a blessing when it derives from God and his commandments. This is the message that one takes away from the imperial graves. In the nave, you will see an oversized reproduction of the imperial crown of Conrad II, which indicates the position of the imperial tombs below. The grave findings can be seen at the nearby Historical Museum of the Palatinate.

The Chapels

9. St Afra Chapel



The St Afra Chapel is located at the end of the cathedral's left side aisle. It is reserved for silent prayer and is not open for sightseeing. The admirable depiction of the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary by the angel Gabriel reminds us of the beginning of the Son of God's transformation into man. In the obedience of Mary, the word becomes flesh. For this reason, the St Afra Chapel also serves as a sacrament chapel and is, as such, a place of Eucharistic Adoration.



10. The Double Chapel



St Martin Baptistry: a place for baptismal renewal

At the end of the right aisle you will find the baptistry. It invites you to remember your own baptism and to renew the baptismal promises you gave to live as a Christian.

St Catherine Chapel: a place of relics and for confession

The St Catherine Chapel is located at the end of the right aisle above the baptistry. It is the relic chapel of the cathedral. Because it is situated above the baptistry, it is also a place for the sacrament of penance. The promises we made to become Christians that we gave when we were baptized, undergo renewal through the return to God and the receiving of the sacrament of penance.



11. Mount of Olives

On the southern side of the cathedral, you will find a sculpture of the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives was located at the centre of the former cloister. Still today, it invites us to pray together with Jesus Christ for the **redemption of the world**. During the night he spent at the foot of the Mount of Olives, Jesus Christ showed that redemption will only become reality if man is prepared to place his whole life in the hands of God, and ready to fulfill the intention of the Father (Mt 26,42).

12. The Emperor's Hall and Southwest Tower

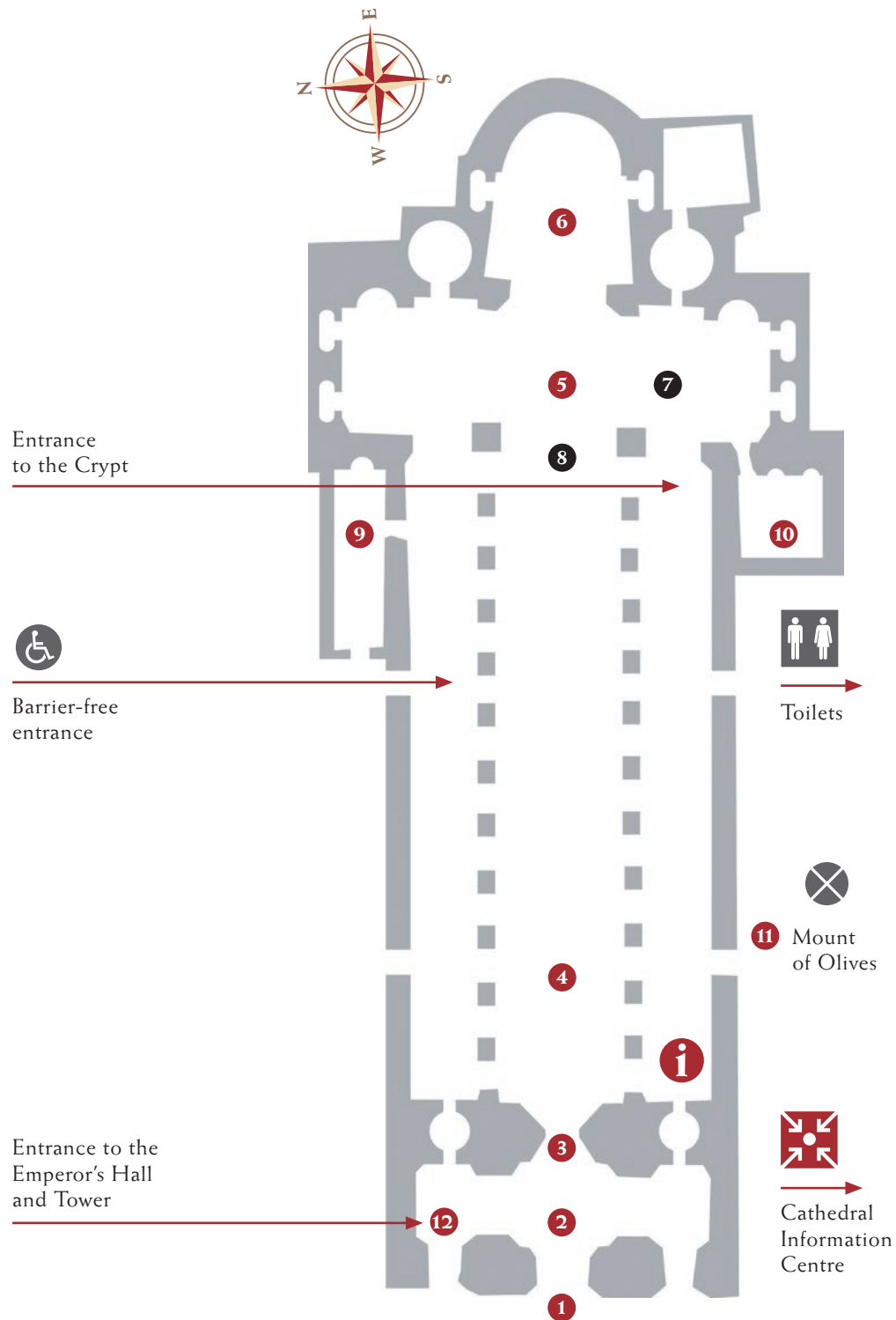
Located above the narthex, the Emperor's Hall houses the remains of the 19th century paintings that previously graced the walls of the cathedral. From here the visitor can ascend to the observation platform of the southwest tower. Entrance tickets can be obtained from the Cathedral Information Centre on the southern side of the cathedral from April until October.

King Ludwig I of Bavaria resolved in 1843 that the interior of the cathedral was to be painted, and entrusted Johann Baptist Schraudolph with this task. The frescoes, which were made in the style of the Nazarene movement (1846-1853), were largely destroyed during the cathedral restorations of 1957 to 1961. The fresco cycle of the transept was retained and it is dedicated to the Church Militant. The frescoes pertaining to the sermon of St Stephen and Pope Stephen were mounted in the southern transept. The northern transept presents a cycle concerning St Bernard of Clairvaux and his visit to Speyer for Christmas 1146. As we have stated many times, Speyer Cathedral is dedicated to Mary, Mother of God; the fresco of the Coronation of the Virgin was previously located in the hemispherical vault of the Apse and provided the culmination for the cycle of images drawn from the life of Mary that embellish the central nave. The admission of Mary to heaven is the greatest and **most hopeful image of the Church**. As the first person saved, she provides a shining example to all of us who hope to one day pass through death to the splendour of God. This hope is made manifest in the annual celebration of the cathedral's patroness, held on Assumption Day on the 15th of August.



Floorplan

- 1 Façade
- 2 Narthex
- 3 Portal
- 4 Nave
- 5 Crossing
- 6 Choir and Apse
- 7 Crypt
- 8 Burial Grounds
- 9 St Afra Chapel (silent prayer)
- 10 Double Chapel
- 11 Mount of Olives
- 12 Entrance to the Emperor's Hall and Tower



See you again!

Church services and concerts are regularly held in the cathedral and we invite you to attend. For those of you interested in **silent prayer** there is the St Afra Chapel on the north side of the cathedral.



dom-zu-speyer.de

Up-to-date information and schedules concerning opening hours, church services and concert dates is available at **www.dom-zu-speyer.de**. At our **Cathedral Information Centre**, located at the south end of the cathedral grounds, you can procure entrance tickets, audioguides, literature concerning the cathedral, and souvenirs.



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Speyer Cathedral
World Heritage since 1981

In order to provide our guests from all over the world with information pertaining to the cathedral and UNESCO World Heritage Sites, we offer **guided tours** in various languages. Contact: Domkapitel Speyer, Office for Guided Tours, 67343 Speyer, domfuehrungen@dom-zu-speyer.de



**HISTORISCHES MUSEUM
DER PFALZ SPEYER**

Please visit the Cathedral and Diocese Museum at the Historical Museum of the Palatinate Speyer.

Findings from the imperial graves of the Salian emperors are exhibited here alongside precious liturgical instruments and textiles. The museum is located only a few steps away from the cathedral.

www.museum.speyer.de

Imprint

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Images

pages 1-3, 6, 7, 13, 14

page 12

page 14 (top)

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Design

Print

Edition

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english, DS-16-1573/7-2022