

## Courage, Power and Myth – on the Trail of the Hanse in the European Hansemuseum

When Low German merchants from Soest, Münster, Groningen and Lübeck moored on the banks of the river Neva in 1193, they did not know that they were among the founders of a powerful association, which became known from the 14th century onwards as the „Dudesche Hense“. Over the following centuries, what started as a loose alliance of merchants preparing for commercial talks in the city of Novgorod evolved into the most influential network of economies and cities in northern Europe.

### The Hanse

The European Hansemuseum Lübeck has been dedicated to the multifaceted history of the Hanse. It illustrates its development from a group of merchants to a major northern European power with a network of more than 200 affiliated towns and cities. The exhibition examines the daring of the Hanse merchants, life abroad, riches, pomp and splendour, as well as the all-pervasive influence of religion. It concludes with the decline and dissolution of the mercantile network. Visitors are given the opportunity of discovering key events in the history of the Hanse by means of specially reconstructed scenes. For example, they can see how that meeting on the river Neva may have taken place when they walk past two cogs, authentic reproductions of the square-rigged sailing ships. „All the reconstructed scenes are based on the latest state of research and no expense has been spared to make them as historically accurate as possible“, says Dr Felicia Sternfeld, managing director of the Hansemuseum. As they walk through the exhibition, the visitors can also see how things may have looked in the kontore, the Hanse’s overseas trading posts. They can wander around a busy market hall in Bruges, gaze at the splendour of the Steelyard in London and examine an important trading centre for stockfish in Bergen. Lübeck, known as the „head of the Hanse“, is often the location for important moments in the development of the Hanse. It is here that the effects of the plague in the 14th century are portrayed, for instance. Its spread throughout Europe is an indication of how mobile the Hanse merchants were. Another scene focuses on the meeting of representatives of Hanse towns known as the Hansetag.

Many valuable original objects in the exhibition, including rare documents, paintings and collector’s items, also illustrate how the Hanse merchants lived and worked. Among the highlights are gold and silver coins from the Lübeck Hoard, which had lain buried in the city since the mid-16th century. Interactive media stations and infographics also enable visitors to learn in detail about economic relationships, trade routes and everyday life at the time of the Hanse.

One particularly interesting section of the exhibition is the archaeological dig. It tells of the earliest settlement in Lübeck around 800, the foundation of the city in 1143, and reveals the latest findings about the 1,200-year old history of the culturally important site on which the European Hansemuseum now stands.

### **Lübeck Castle Friary**

Another key element of the Hansemuseum is the Lübeck Castle Friary, one of the most important medieval convents in northern Germany. The former Dominican friary dating from the 13th century was extensively refurbished and restored with the help of federal funding and will be subject to special supervision to conserve its architectural and artistic legacies for future generations. An audio guide provides visitors with more information about the history of the friary as part of a separate tour. It also explains the unusual ornamental floors in the sacristy and the infirmary, frescoes from various periods and the keystones in the vaults, which are a defining element of the building's architecture.

The history of the Castle Friary's use has many dimensions and extends to the present day. After the Reformation it was an almshouse, later a hospital, then a prison, and with the addition of an annexe, a court of law, too. The social history of the 18th and 19th centuries, National Socialism and the post-war period have all left their mark on the site, and these traces have been preserved and elucidated.

### **Architecture**

The architecture of the new museum building makes a confident statement in its urban context, blending a finely crafted brick texture with elegant modernist lines. Subtle lines in the façade are a discrete allusion to the contours of buildings that used to stand here.

The open staircase in the centre links the historic docks with the old town in a bold gesture. It connects terraces, courtyards, a playground and restaurant, which offer spectacular views over the city and the port and create a place for people to explore, to sit and to enjoy. Thus the site that houses the Hansemuseum unfolds to reveal a location saturated with history, which in this highly condensed form is of inestimable value for the European history of the Hanse.

### **Information**

European Hansemuseum Lübeck  
An der Untertrave 1  
23552 Lübeck  
[www.hansemuseum.eu](http://www.hansemuseum.eu)

### **Opening hours**

Open every day (except December 24)  
10am – 6pm  
Last entry: One hour before closing

Photographic and other information material is available at  
[www.hansemuseum.eu /press/](http://www.hansemuseum.eu/press/)

# Fact Sheet

## European Hansemuseum Lübeck

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| <b>Location</b>  | Hanseatic City of Lübeck<br>In the northern part of the UNESCO World Heritage site, in the direct vicinity of the Castle Gate and listed historical warehouse buildings on the river Trave<br><br>An der Untertrave 1<br>D - 23552 Lübeck |
| <b>Opening Times</b>   | Open daily (except December 24)<br>10am – 6pm   |
| <b>Managing Director</b>   | Dr Felicia Sternfeld  |
| <b>Type of Company</b>   | Non-profit limited company  |
| <b>Opening</b>   | May 27, 2015, by German Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel   |
| <b>Concept, Architecture &amp; Exhibition Design</b>   | Studio Andreas Heller GmbH<br>Architects & Designers, Hamburg<br>Andreas Heller, Architect  |
| <b>Scientific Research, Narrative and Advice</b>   | Prof Dr Rolf Hammel-Kiesow (concept), Dr Angela Huang<br>Large network of scientific advisors   |
| <b>Supporting Organization</b>   | Possehl-Stiftung  |
| <b>Funded by</b>   | European Union, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Federal State and the state of Schleswig-Holstein  |
| <b>Building and Complex</b>  |   |
| Castle Friary Monument   | 4,614 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| New building   |   |
| European Hansemuseum   | 3,735 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Confessional building  | 376 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Open Spaces (castle friary churchyard, castle friary courtyard, former prison yard, playground outside confessional building, roof terrace) altogether | 3,225 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| <b>Exhibition Space</b>  | 3,500 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| <b>Catering</b>  | Restaurant NORD, Café Fräulein Brömse   |
| <b>Event Spaces</b>  | for rent  |

### **Stations of the Permanent Exhibition „The Hanse“**

The concept enables visitors to discover the history of the Hanse in a chronological (12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century) and in a geographical way (Lübeck and the four trading stations Novgorod, Bruges, London und Bergen). Reconstructed scenes take up milestones of the Hanse's past, while cabinets with valuable original objects give more detailed information about the historical situations shown:

- Archaeological dig: Lübeck history around 800
- The beginnings: Neva and Novgorod 1193
- Foundation and expansion: Lübeck 1226
- Global marketplace Bruges 1361
- Black Death in Lübeck 1367
- Commercial metropolis London in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century
- Diplomacy and Politics: Hansetag in Lübeck 1518
- Faith and Religion 1517
- Trading post in Bergen 1774
- HanseLab (scientific approaches: Museology, numismatics, archaeology and history of reception)

### **Castle Friary**

One of the most important convent sites in northern Germany, which has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site. The former Dominican convent from the 13<sup>th</sup> century was extensively refurbished and restored by means of federal funds (1.3 mil). By using the free audio guide, visitors can learn details about the history of the Friary. In the Long Hall, the cloister, the vestry, the hospital and the winter refectory, one can see the floor decoration, the wall paintings from different periods as well as the keystones of the cross-vaults, which are highly significant for the convent. It is also visible that after the Reformation, the Castle Friary was turned into an almshouse, later into a hospital and at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century into a court building and remand prison. The magistrate's court and two cells still exist on the upper floor.

### **Special Exhibitions**

„Silver's Shine and Silver Greed – the Silver Treasure from Bergen“: December 7, 2016 to February 26, 2017

“Pin it! Social Media of the Middle Ages #PIEHM“: May 19 to August 6, 2017

“Money. Power. Faith – The Reformation and economic life“: September 8 to November 26, 2017

“Consensus. Europe's culture of political decision-making“: May 10 to July 8, 2018

“875 Jahre – Lübeck erzählt uns was“: September 9, 2018 to January 6, 2019

“Segel, Salz und Silberlinge – Seehandel in der Hansezeit“: December 2, 2018 to March 3, 2019

“Für Freiheit und Republik! Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold“: May 26 to July 7, 2019

“Störtebeker & Company – Pirates of the Hanse period?": September 27, 2019 to April 19, 2020

### **Awards and Nominations**

iF Design Award 2016 in gold, category: „Architecture – Public“

RIBA „International Award for Excellence“ 2016 for Andreas Heller Architects & Designers for the design of the European Hansemuseum

Museum prize 2016 of the hbs kulturfonds in the Niedersächsische Sparkassenstiftung, awarded to Prof Rolf Hammel-Kiesow and Andreas Heller

AIT Award 2016, 2nd price, category “Public Buildings/Education” for Andreas Heller Architects & Designers for the design of the European Hansemuseum

Price of the db-competition „Building in Substance“ 2016 for Andreas Heller Architects & Designers for the restoration of the Castle Friary and new museum building

DAM price for architecture in Germany 2017 for Andreas Heller Architects & Designers for the design of the European Hansemuseum

Nomination for the European Museum of the Year Award EMYA 2017