



YE OLDE TRAVEL GUIDE

Heidelberg

1618

In the latest instalment of our historical holidays series, in which experts imagine they're writing a travel guide in the past, **Cassandra Clark** introduces the charms of Heidelberg, seat of Prince Palatine Frederick V

ILLUSTRATION BY JONTY CLARK

IT'S A LONG journey through Europe to Heidelberg, in the heart of the Holy Roman Empire. It's here that Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I of England and VI of Scotland, holds court with her husband Prince Palatine Frederick V, and there is plenty to keep pleasure-loving visitors entertained

WHEN TO GO

There's no bad time to visit. Heidelberg enjoys mild winters and warm, often rainy summers – be prepared for showers at any time – so spring and autumn are often considered the most congenial seasons. But the sooner you go, the better: the royal couple are rumoured to be preparing to decamp to Prague, where the crown of Bohemia awaits Frederick.

WHAT TO TAKE WITH YOU

Your best garments if you're staying up at the town's castle,

your brains if you're staying down below at the university.

COSTS

You'll need plenty of bills to exchange for *thaler*, *schillinge*, *pfennige* or *mark* – prices have soared since the glamorous royal couple took up residence.

SIGHTS AND ACTIVITIES

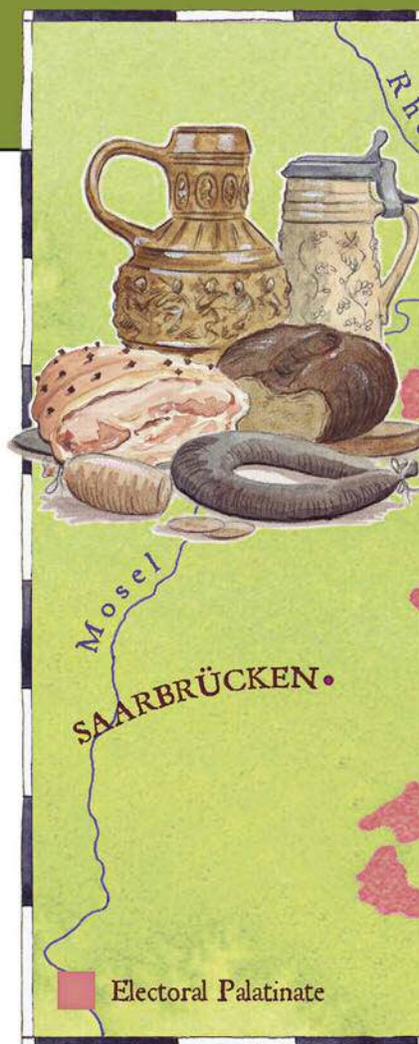
Heidelberg Castle, on the slopes of the crag known as *Königstuhl* (King's Throne), is a must-see. Rebuilt in 1537 after a gunpowder explosion destroyed an earlier fortification, its famous Fountain Hall

incorporates columns brought from Charlemagne's imperial palace at Ingelheim. Frederick has added an English wing for his bride, with impressive views over the town. In one of the towers he has installed a theatre modelled on the recently destroyed Globe in London. Masques featuring the royals and plays by Shakespeare, performed by professional actors, are all the rage.

For his wife's 19th birthday Frederick ordered the construction of an ornate triumphal arch, completed in just one night, as the entrance to the *Stückgarten* (pleasure garden) he is creating for Elizabeth. The Hortus Palatinus, as it's called, is already considered the eighth wonder of the world, and features terraces, exotic plants, fountains and grottoes.

The court rides daily into the town – a sight not to be missed, with outrageous new fashions and glorious jewels on display. If you want to join in, town stables hire horses by the day.

At the university you can rub shoulders with the lawyers and theologians who flock to these halls of learning. Founded in 1386, it was here in April 1518 that Martin Luther defended his



95 theses, provoking a religious debate that rages to this day.

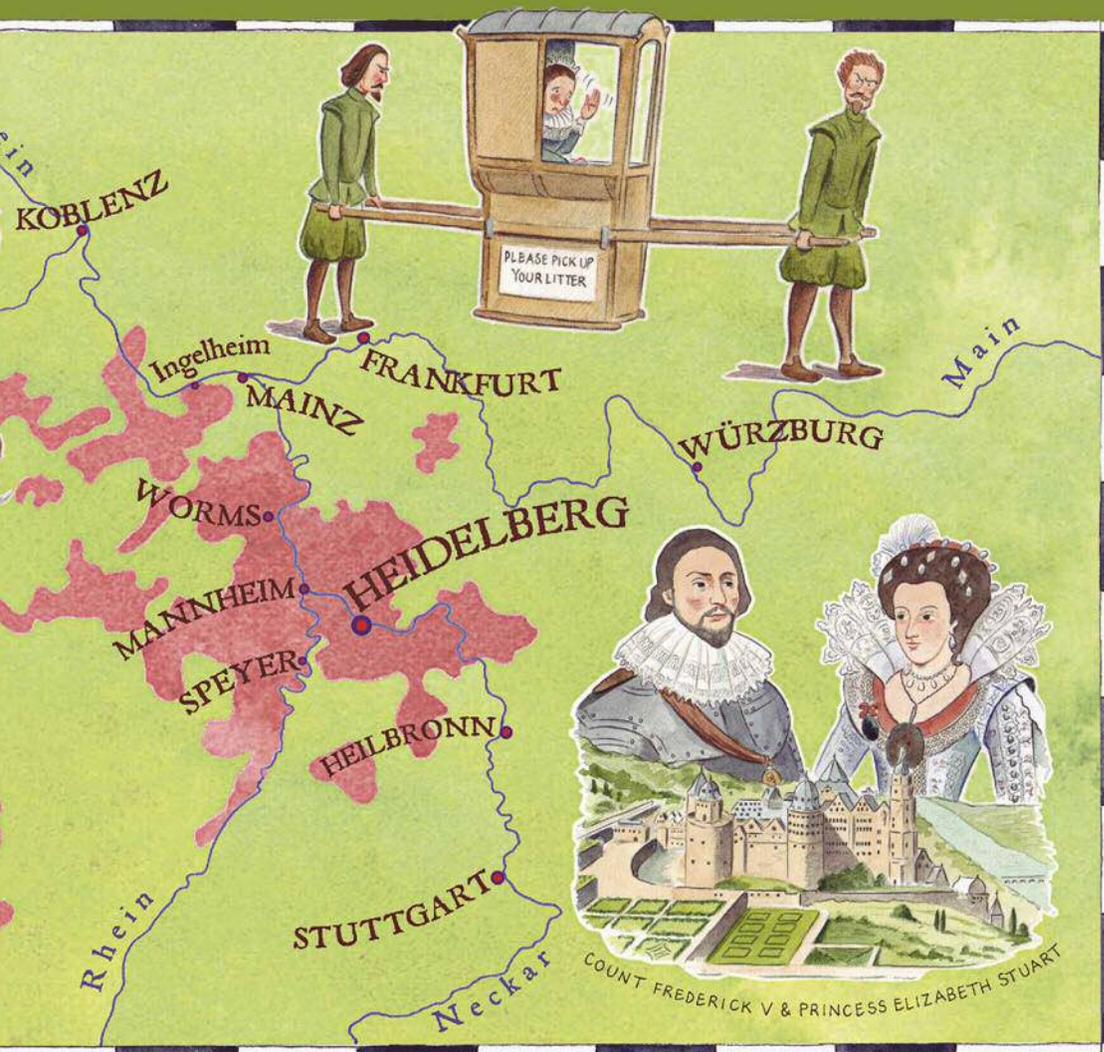
In the town itself you can while away the time with gambling, cockfighting or bear baiting. The main street stretches for almost a mile, a continuous ribbon of shops, taverns and churches. Don't be tempted to light a candle in the latter, lest you find yourself atop the next public bonfire – Catholics are not popular in this staunchly Protestant region.

Stretch your legs on a stroll across the wooden bridge and up the Heiligenberg mountain to the ruins of the 11th-century Monastery of St Michael.

DANGERS AND ANNOYANCES

Spanish troops are currently causing problems with shows of strength in the disputed lands outside the town, hoping

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HEIDELBERG TODAY

The ruins of the grand castle loom above the Neckar river



Given the chaos that enveloped the Palatinate lands following Frederick V's ill-fated assumption of the throne of Bohemia in 1619, the city has fared wonderfully well even if it is not quite the same place it was until then.

One of the few buildings to survive the conflicts of the 17th century is the beautiful pink-stone **Church of the Holy Spirit**. The castle still looks out over the Old Town and the Neckar river, a romantic ruin that draws millions of visitors every year. The city's **Old Town** is considerably more recent, but features some marvellous **baroque buildings** and another famous city landmark, the late 18th-century **Old Bridge**.

Heidelberg is usually visited on a day trip by tourists exploring central Europe's big hitters or following the popular Burgenstraße (Castle Route) through southern Germany. More active types follow the Philosophers' Walk, a scenic and historic trail on the southern side of the Heiligenberg, a hill offering fine views across the city.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

For another historic town with an academic bent visit **Santiago de Compostela, Spain**. If you like your German attractions a little less crowded, try the quirky city of **Ulm** on the Danube.

Tom Hall, editor, lonelyplanet.com. You can read more of Tom's articles at the website



to expand their Catholic territories, though most people believe their threats are unlikely to amount to anything. Otherwise, the only real dangers in Heidelberg are the usual urban perils of pickpockets, and the inconvenient chaos caused by nobles with unruly retinues thrusting along the streets.

SLEEPING AND ACCOMMODATION

The town is blessed with plenty of inns, the most expensive at the top of the *Hauptstraße* (Main Street). Rates become progressively cheaper as you descend through the town. The impecunious might find themselves sleeping on the riverbank alongside threadbare students, whores and victims of the rooks, wolves and cardsharps of the gambling dens.

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EATING AND DRINKING

Heidelberg is heaven for meat-eaters. The daily hunt in the nearby woods supplies the town with ample meat – venison, wild boar, rabbit and hare. Every part of these beasts is used in *Wursts* (that's sausages to you and me) in styles ranging from black blood sausage to the palest pork *Bratwurst*.

Bread is mainly baked with rye, dark and chewy; wheat is used to make pretzels in the shape of love knots.

This is a good wine region, and ale, brewed in every tavern, is drunk in copious amounts from tall clay pots or decorated pewter tankards.

GETTING AROUND

Electress Elizabeth generally rides through the town in her own Paris-built open chariot, but the average Johann either walks or rides a hired nag. Most ladies of wealth are conveyed in litters carried by a retinue of brawny servants. Litters will soon be as common in Heidelberg as they are on the streets of London, where they can be hailed by anybody with the cash to pay for them. **E**

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Cassandra Clark's fifth medieval crime novel, *The Dragon of Handale*, was published in May 2013 as an E-book. cassandraclark.co.uk