

THE PETER PAUL
RUBENS
ATLAS

G U N T E R H A U S P I E

 | LANNOO

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A TRAVELLING ARTIST

The greatest painter of the Baroque. It is with this title that Peter Paul Rubens earned his place in history. For most people, this would be enough to regard their life as a success, but Rubens was so much more than 'just' an artist. He was also an outstanding entrepreneur, a skilful diplomat and a seasoned traveller. The combination of all these talents often took him away from his beloved Antwerp. To Italy and Spain. To the royal palaces in Madrid, Paris and London. Wherever he went, he was asked to stay longer than he originally planned. But always in vain, for Rubens always longed to return to his native city. No matter how great his love of new places and his desire to learn new things, his devotion to the 'city on the Scheldt' never failed to draw him back home. Rubens' travels have left their traces on many places in Europe. *The Rubens Atlas* follows in the footsteps of the Flemish master

and seeks to locate and identify those traces. In this way, readers can discover for themselves how foreign influences helped to shape both his art and his thinking. They will also learn how Rubens introduced many of these new insights into Flanders, thereby helping to set the region's world-famous artistic heritage firmly on the map.

The Rubens Atlas is neither a pure art book nor a pure biography. Nor is it a straightforward travel guide. Instead, it is an atlas, collecting the different pieces of the puzzle created by Rubens from the many different places where he left his footprint. Each piece helps to give us a clearer picture of this tireless artist and diplomat, who even on his deathbed was sorry that his travelling days had finally come to an end, once and for all...

Gunter Hauspie



Peter Paul Rubens

ANTWERP

1561-1568



Bartholomeus Rubens and Barbara Arents, Jacob Claesz. van Utrecht, 1530, Rubens House, Antwerp. These are the wedding portraits of the parents of Jan Rubens. The attributes shown tell us that Bartholomeus is a pharmacist. Barbara comes from a family of senior civic officials and jurists. Their only child, Jan, is born in 1530, the year of their marriage. Bartholomeus dies just eight years later, in 1538. The young widow Barbara remarries the same year. This second marriage results in the births of a step-brother and two step-sisters for Jan Rubens. The fact that Jan's parents have their wedding portraits painted by a well-known artist of the day shows that they already belong to the well-respected upper circles of Antwerp society.

WELL-TO-DO PARENTS

In 1577, Peter Paul Rubens is born as the sixth child of Jan Rubens and Maria Pypelinckx. The decade before his birth has been a difficult one for the family, and its effects make themselves felt during the early years of the artist's life. Jan (°1530) is the son of a wealthy Antwerp family of pharmacists. He

studies, amongst other places, in Rome, becomes a lawyer, and from 1562 to 1567 serves as an alderman in his native city. Maria (°1538) is the daughter of a wealthy tapestry merchant. She is born in Kuringen, near Hasselt, from where her family originates, but she spends her youth in Antwerp. Jan and Maria marry in 1561.



The Iconoclastic Fury in Antwerp on 20 August 1566, Frans Hogenberg, 1570, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. This cartographer sympathizes with the rebels and flees to Cologne, where in 1570 he makes this engraving of the destruction of the interior of an Antwerp church.

UNREST IN ANTWERP

These are years of great unrest in the Netherlands. During the 16th century, the Low Countries are under the control of King Philip II of Spain. He sees it as his divine mission to defend the Catholic Church against the encroachments of Protestantism. In the Spanish Netherlands, many noblemen and ordinary people are also increasingly influenced by Calvinism, a form of Protestantism based on the teachings of the reformer John Calvin. Calvinism is opposed to the power, wealth and splendour of the Church

and the Pope, and wants to return to a simpler form of faith based on the Bible. In August 1566, the so-called Iconoclastic Fury rages through the Low Countries. Calvinist iconoclasts - those who oppose the veneration of images - destroy many religious paintings and statues in Catholic churches. They justify their actions with passages in the Bible forbidding the worship of 'false images'. On 20 August, the stained-glass windows, statues, reliquaries, ceremonial tombs and altars in the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp are all destroyed. The cathedral's Gothic interior is lost forever.

ALVA'S REIGN OF TERROR

In the 16th century, Antwerp is a thriving metropolis, with a self-confident elite and many prosperous merchants and craftsmen. Its population of 100,000 makes it the largest city in the Netherlands. As well as its religious dimension, Calvinism is also a form of economic resistance by the growing urban middle class to the centralist royal authority of Philip II. Opposition to the Spanish king and his tyranny in the assertive 'City on the Scheldt' is considerable. Philip decides to crush the rebellion and appoints the cruel and hard-hearted Duke of Alva as the new governor of the Netherlands. Alva initiates a reign of terror and publically executes a number of leading local officials as a warning to the rest of the people. In September 1568, this is the fate of Antoon van Stralen, a former burgomaster of Antwerp. Many merchants and other members of the local elite decide to leave the city. Jan Rubens is among them. He has never hidden his sympathies for the new religion and, as a result, now fears for his life.

The Duke of Alva, Peter Paul Rubens, 1628, Liria Palace, Madrid. Rubens makes this portrait, based on a painting by Titian, more than 35 years after the death of the Netherlands' Public Enemy No. 1 at the time when the artist's parents fled to Cologne. By now, Rubens is on close terms with the Spanish royal court. The choice of Alva as the subject for this painting not only shows that Rubens was a brilliant artist, but also an astute businessman and a shrewd diplomat.



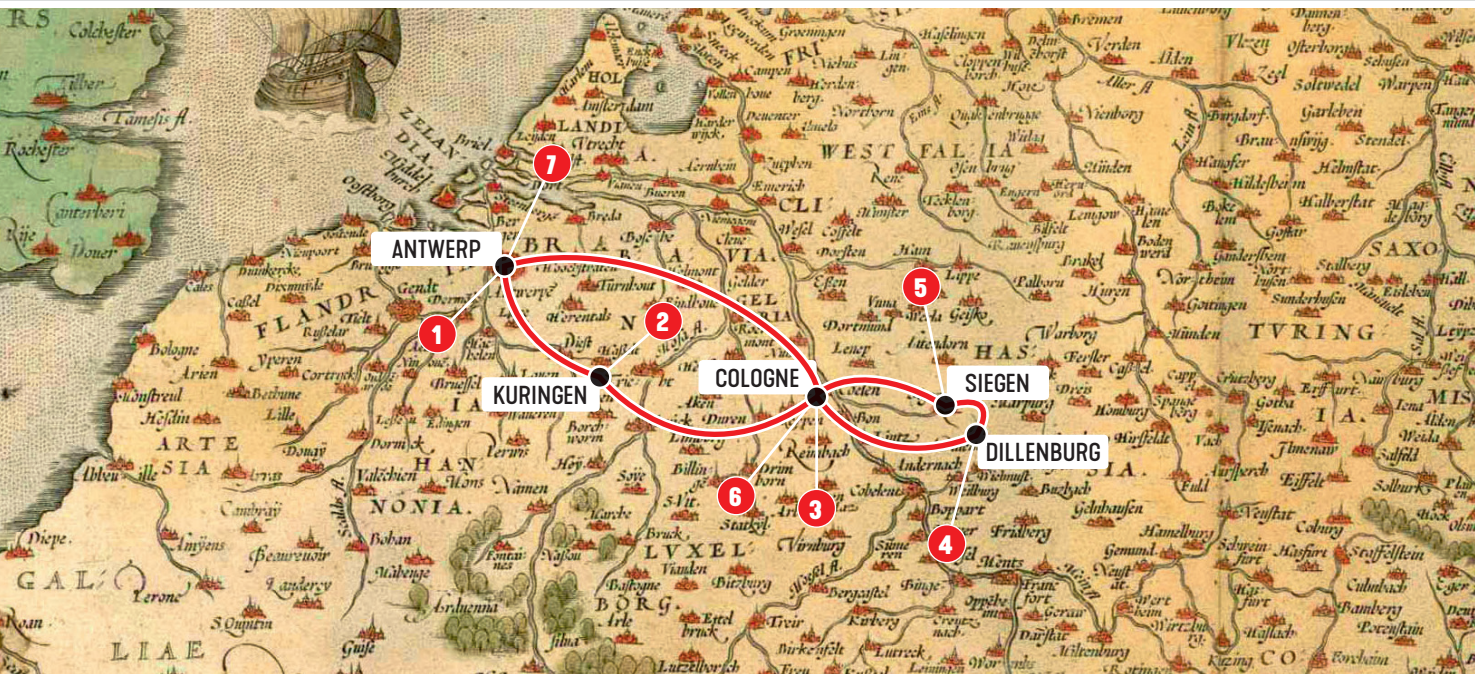
1561

1568

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GERMANY

1568-1589



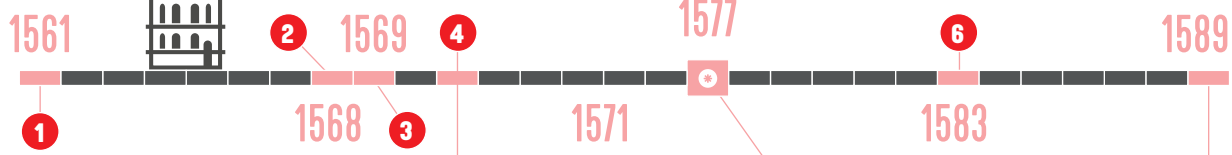
Jan Rubens and Maria Pypelinckx marry.



Jan Rubens is a confidant of William of Orange and defends the interests of William's wife, Anne of Saxony, in the city.

It is probably in Siegen that Peter Paul is born on 29 June 1577.

After the death of Jan Rubens, Maria Pypelinckx returns with her three surviving children, including Peter Paul, to Antwerp.



Jan Rubens and Maria Pypelinckx flee from Antwerp. During their flight they stop in Kuringen, where Maria has family.

Jan Rubens has a child with Anne of Saxony. As a result, he is placed under house arrest, first in Dillenburg and, from 1573, in Siegen.

The Rubens family is allowed to return to Cologne.

In 1570, Jan Rubens takes up residence with his family in the stately Rinkenhof in Cologne. This is a great privilege in a city where the many refugees from the crisis in the Netherlands are not always welcome. Jan lives in the Rinkenhof with his wife, their four children and two children of Anne of Saxony and William of Orange. Maria takes good care of them all. The Rinkenhof, with its striking tower resembling a campanile, is eventually demolished in 1911. Nowadays, the only reminder of its existence is the street name Am Rinkenpfuhl, one of whose side streets is the Rubensstrasse.



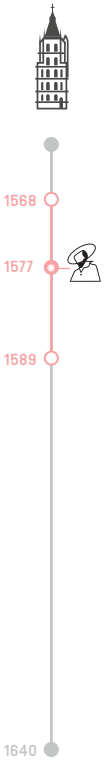
THE FLIGHT TO COLOGNE

Jan Rubens first travels with his wife and children to the County of Loon (in present-day Belgian Limburg), where his wife's family lives. Here they are safe. The county is part of the episcopal principality of Liege, where the Spanish king has no authority. Later, the Rubens family, like many refugees from Antwerp, continue their journey to the rich and free city of Cologne. At this time, the family consists of four children: Jan-Baptist, Blandina, Clara and Hendrik. In Cologne, the jurist Jan Rubens is appointed to administer the commercial interests of Anne of Saxony. She is the wife of Prince William of Orange, one of the leaders of the revolt against the Spanish. Jan becomes a close associate and adviser of the prince, winning him great respect and esteem. The family moves into the Rinkenhof, an impressive patrician mansion owned by Anne of Saxony.

↓ Dillenburg Castle in 1575. It is from this castle that William of Orange organizes resistance to the oppression of the Spanish king in the Netherlands. Jan Rubens is held prisoner here for two years, from 1571 to 1573.

HOUSE ARREST IN SIEGEN

The relationship between the jurist and his client goes beyond mere business. In August 1571, Anne of Saxony gives birth to Jan's illegitimate child. William of Orange is furious. Jan Rubens is arrested and imprisoned in the dungeon of Dillenburg castle, the ancestral home of the Orange-Nassau family, and it is only through the courageous intervention of Maria that her husband is able to escape execution. In two remarkable letters, Maria forgives Jan his indiscretion and pleads for his release to Count John of Nassau, Prince William's brother. In 1573, the death sentence is commuted to banishment to Siegen, where Jan lives under house arrest with his family. However, to secure this leniency, they have to surrender a large part of the family fortune.



THE BIRTH OF PETER PAUL

Following the death of Anne of Saxony in December 1577, the Rubens family is allowed to return to Cologne, by which time Peter Paul has already been born. For a long time, it was assumed that his date of birth was 28 or 29 June 1577 in Siegen, but both the date and the place are a source of much dispute among historians. It is known for certain that, in the weeks before the end of June, Maria Pypelinckx spends a number of days in Antwerp. It is difficult to believe that in those perilous times a heavily pregnant woman would risk making the long and tiring journey from

Siegen to Antwerp. Moreover, the fact that Peter Paul never has to apply for burgher status in Antwerp, but is accorded it automatically, also lends weight to the thesis that he was actually born in the city. That being said, research into other source materials suggests that he might not have been born in 1577 at all, but in the second half of 1576. Whatever the truth of this matter, it is indisputable that Peter Paul is born during one of the darkest periods for both the Rubens family and his home city of Antwerp. At the start of November 1576, the city is devastated by the so-called Spanish Fury. Mutinous Spanish sol-

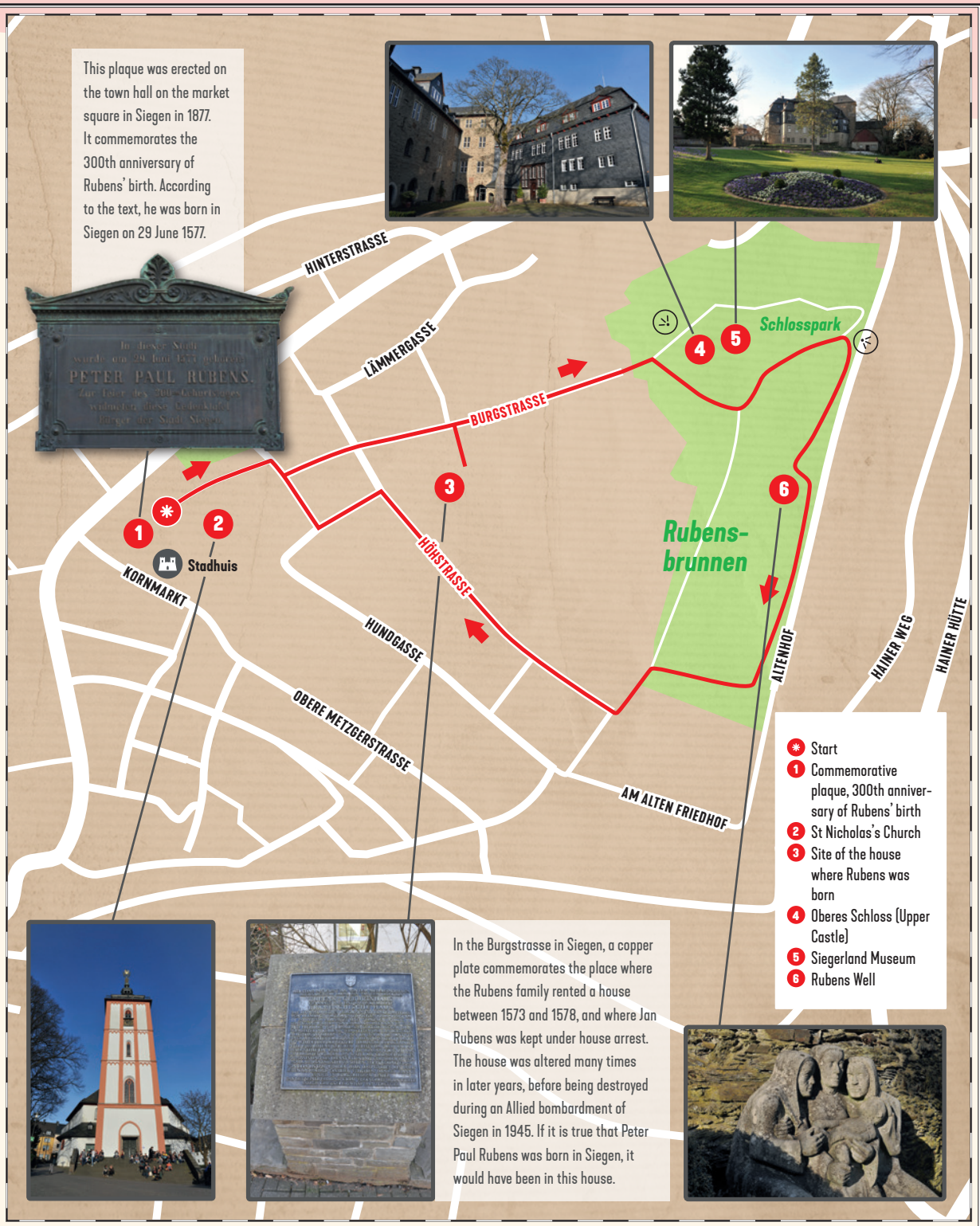
diers tear through the streets, looting and stealing as they go. Women are raped and men are killed. In just three days, some 7,000 locals are butchered. A number of the city's aldermen are also murdered. Although life for ex-alderman Jan Rubens is by no means easy in the dungeons at Dillenburg and during his house arrest in Siegen, perhaps he is safer and more fortunate than his colleagues back in Antwerp, whose lives hang by a thread.

The Burgstrasse leads to the Obere Schloss (Upper Castle), high on Sieg hill and overlooking the town of Siegen and the valley of the River Sieg. In Rubens' time, this castle, like the city, belonged to the Nassau family. The castle's Siegerland Museum in the Rubens Hall is now home to nine paintings by the artist, including a version of his famous *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* and a self-portrait.



The Rubens Well, Hermann Kuhlmeil, 1935, castle grounds of the Obere Schloss, Siegen. This sculpture of three women taking tender care of a newborn child symbolizes the long-standing dispute between Antwerp, Siegen and Cologne about the birthplace of Rubens. However, the text on the nearby plaque seems to leave no room for doubt: his true birthplace is Siegen, of course!

This plaque was erected on the town hall on the market square in Siegen in 1877. It commemorates the 300th anniversary of Rubens' birth. According to the text, he was born in Siegen on 29 June 1577.



- * Start
- 1 Commemorative plaque, 300th anniversary of Rubens' birth
- 2 St Nicholas's Church
- 3 Site of the house where Rubens was born
- 4 Oberes Schloss (Upper Castle)
- 5 Siegerland Museum
- 6 Rubens Well



In the Burgstrasse in Siegen, a copper plate commemorates the place where the Rubens family rented a house between 1573 and 1578, and where Jan Rubens was kept under house arrest. The house was altered many times in later years, before being destroyed during an Allied bombardment of Siegen in 1945. If it is true that Peter Paul Rubens was born in Siegen, it would have been in this house.



HIS YOUTH IN COLOGNE

In 1578, the Rubens family - now including Filips and Peter Paul - move into a house at Sternengasse no. 10, right in the heart of the city. In 1581, Bartholomeus is born, but dies soon after. The family has cut all ties with the House of Orange and returns to the Catholic faith. Peter Paul is baptized in the parish church of St Peter, just a few hundred yards from the Sternengasse. Following his long imprisonment, Jan Rubens is a broken man and is unable to rebuild his successful career of former years. Maria Pype-linckx now provides the family's income by renting out rooms in the house and starting a small retail business.

Jan dies on 1 March 1587, without ever returning to Antwerp. He is buried in St Peter's Church, where Maria erects a remarkable epitaph to his memory, in which she mentions that she is the mother of sev-

en children 'all conceived by him, in twenty-seven years of love and harmony'.

Peter Paul Rubens spends roughly the first ten years of his life in Cologne. Little is known about this period and his early artistic development. He later says that until his fourteenth birthday his only initiation to the world of painting was copying most of the prints from the edition of the Bible published by Tobias Stimmer in 1576, which at the time was very popular. Rubens clearly understands from an early age that talent alone is not enough; practice and study are also necessary to achieve success. It is a rule he will respect throughout his life.

The house in the Sternengasse where the Rubens family lived, photographed during the interbellum, when it was the Weinhaus Rubens (Rubens Winery). The building was destroyed during an air raid in May 1942. The site is now occupied by modern office premises, which have a plaque commemorating the artist on the front wall.

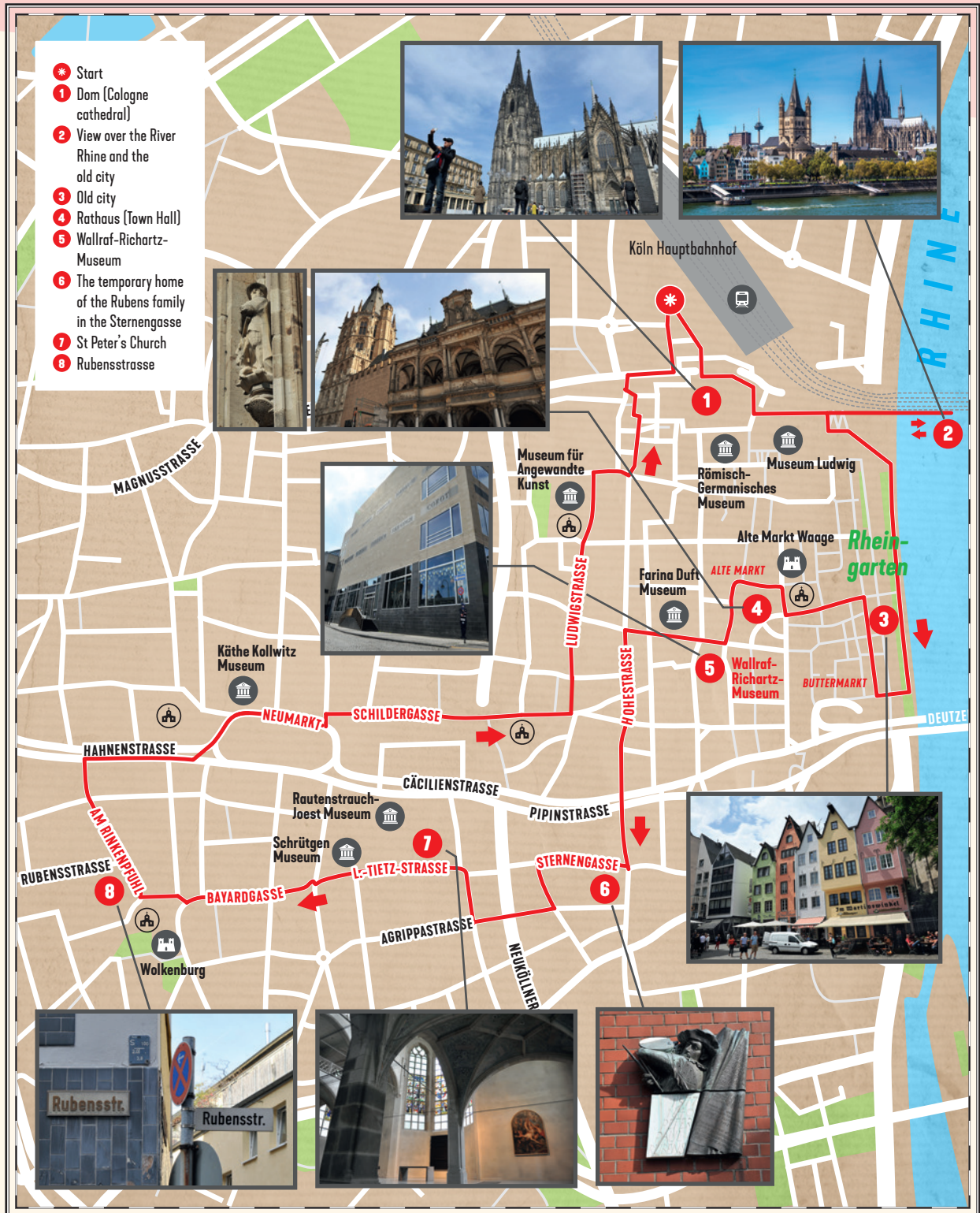


COLOGNE

A WALK THROUGH THE EARLY YEARS OF PETER PAUL - 6 KM

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500 m







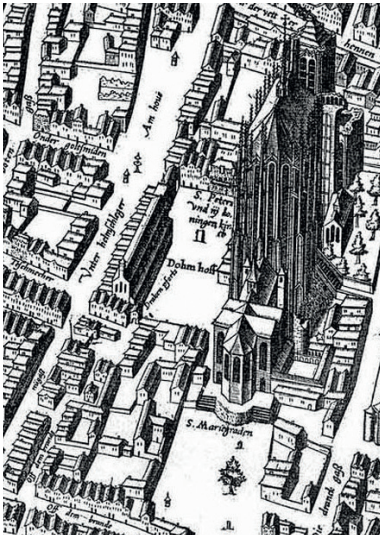


Rubens' painting in St Peter's Church

St Peter's Church, in the heart of Cologne, was destroyed during the Second World War and later rebuilt. Sadly, the grave of Jan Rubens, with its epitaph, has disappeared. However, his son's painting of *The Crucifixion of St Peter* was saved. Peter Paul is commissioned to paint this work in 1636 by the heirs of Everhard III Jabach, who had recently died. In the 1580s, this influential merchant, like the Rubens family, had lived in the Sternengasse, so he must have known the artist in his childhood years. Jabach was a member of the city council in Cologne and also a warden in the parish of St Peter's. Rubens accepts the commission to make a painting for a new marble altar to be erected in the church. He does this, to use his own words, out of his "great love for the city of Cologne". The family allows him to choose the subject - a freedom not granted to many artists - and he chooses the crucifixion of St Peter. The painting is completed by the time of Rubens' own death in 1640, but is only taken to Cologne in 1642 after the Jabach family has paid the agreed fee to Rubens' heirs. Its installation in St Peter's Church is regarded as the cultural highlight of the history of 17th-century Cologne. Almost exactly three centuries later, in 1941, the painting is removed to a place of safety during the Second World War. As a result, it escapes the destruction suffered by the rest of the city. *The Crucifixion of St Peter* now once again hangs on a side wall in the church for which it was created.

↑ St Peter's Church after the Second World War, with Rubens' last great painting hanging on a wall to the right of the choir.

← *The Crucifixion of St Peter*, Peter Paul Rubens, 1638, St Peter's Church, Cologne.



“I have great affection for the city of Cologne, because I grew up there until the tenth year of my life, and even after all this time I still often have a great yearning to visit it again.”

PETER PAUL RUBENS IN 1637

↗ Detail from the city plan of Cologne by Arnold Mercator, showing the Dom (cathedral) under construction.

➤ The frontage of the Alte Rathaus dating from 1569, inspired by the influential Antwerp architect, Cornelis Floris de Vriendt.

THE DUTCH ENCLAVE IN COLOGNE

The members of the Rubens family are by no means the only refugees from the Netherlands in Cologne. Many other Calvinists find a safe haven there and contribute to the city’s cultural and artistic development. The beautiful Renaissance frontage of the Alte Rathaus (Old Town Hall) was designed in 1569 by the Dutchman Wilhelm Vernukken, drawing inspiration from the style of Cornelis Floris de Vriendt, an influential Antwerp architect responsible in part for the design in 1560 and later the construction of the Antwerp Town Hall. The first city street plan of Cologne is made in 1570 by Arnold Mercator, son of the famous cartographer Gerard Mercator and an adherent of the Lutheran creed. In 1587, the poet Joost van den Vondel is born in Cologne to Baptist parents, who flee Antwerp in 1582 but later move to the Northern Netherlands following the creation of the United Provinces in 1588.

Wallraf-Richartz-Museum



The Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne is one of the most important art galleries in Germany. It was founded with a bequest made by the Cologne art collector Ferdinand Franz Wallraf (1748-1824) and a large financial donation from the wealthy Cologne merchant Johann Heinrich Richartz (1795-1861). The museum opened in 1861 and its collection contains many great masterpieces, including works by the two most famous artists of the 17th century, Rubens and Rembrandt. Rubens is represented by his magnificent *Juno and Argus* (1610) and his *Self-portrait with Friends in Mantua* (1602-1604), one of his oldest surviving canvases (see p. 38). *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* (1610) is a theme he revisited on a number of occasions. Later in his career, he would make a larger version of the same painting for the Church of Our Lady in Mechelen (1618-1619). With paintings by Jacob Jordaens, Anthony van Dyck and Frans Snyders, the pupils and assistants from Rubens' workshop are also well represented in the museum.



↑ *Self-portrait with Friends in Mantua*, Peter Paul Rubens, 1602-1604, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne.

← *Juno and Argus*, Peter Paul Rubens, 1610-1611, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne.

THE RETURN TO ANTWERP

After the death of her husband, Maria Pypelinckx returns to Antwerp in 1589. Three of her seven children accompany her – Blandina, Filips and Peter Paul. Her oldest son, Jan-Baptist, has already left for Italy and little more is heard of him. Clara, Hendrik and Bartholomeus have all died. Peter Paul will never return to Cologne, though his desire to revisit the city of his youth never leaves him.

↘ The Ratsturm (town hall tower) is decorated with 124 statues of famous people from Cologne's history. Peter Paul Rubens is one of them. His statue is on the first floor on the south side and was erected in 1994.

→ Statue of Peter Paul Rubens

