

Press-Information

Jewish Frankfurt

Prior to 1933, Frankfurt's Jewish community counted some 28,000 members, making it at that time the second largest in Germany after Berlin. Ludwig Börne, Max Beckmann, the Rothschilds, the Oppenheimers, Anne Frank, Paul Ehrlich, Theodor Adorno – these are all highly significant names in the long history of Frankfurt. Over the centuries, Frankfurt's Jewish inhabitants have helped to shape the city into what it is today, a bustling and multicultural metropolis, while playing an important part in Frankfurt's social life. Today, Frankfurt's Jewish community continues to be the second largest in all of Germany, with over 7,000 members.

The origins of Frankfurt's Jewish population can be traced back as far as the 11th century. Their settlement, protected by imperial decree, was located near the later Frankfurt Cathedral. It continued to expand until, by 1270, it had become a true Jewish community. However, due to reoccurring conflicts with the Archbishop of Mainz and upon insistence of Emperor Frederick III, the magistrate decided to resettle the community outside of the city walls. The new Jewish ghetto was "opened" in 1464. On average, some 2,200 people lived in "Little Jerusalem" or "New Egypt" over the next 350 years, crowded into perhaps 160 houses. Riots and looting occurred time and time again, with Frankfurt's Jewry ever fearing for their rights – and their lives.

In 1797, French artillery bombarded the ghetto, razing it to the ground. Nevertheless, the ghetto constraint was not lifted until 1811. Only in 1864 did Frankfurt's Jewish community achieve equality of treatment and full civil rights.

From this time on until the rise of fascism, Frankfurt's Jewry enjoyed their most prosperous era. Numerous charitable foundations were established thanks to the social engagement of Frankfurt Jews. Many of

the founders of Frankfurt's Goethe University were of Jewish faith, the university also being the first in Germany to appoint Jewish professors.

The **Jewish Museum** at Lower Main Quay (Untermainkai) offers a highly interesting look at the turbulent history of Frankfurt's Jewish community. At home in the monument-listed, classicistic Rothschild Palace on the banks of the River Main, the museum's permanent exhibition informs not only on Jewish history, but also on religious practices at home and in the synagogue, on life as a Jewish individual and as a community, at work and on religious holidays. A variety of changing exhibitions, many featuring accompanying fringe programmes, lectures and special events round off the offer spectrum of the Jewish Museum.

Between 1828 and 1929, the vast majority of Frankfurt's Jewish population was laid to rest at the Jewish cemetery on **Rat-Beil-Strasse**. The cemetery, enclosed on three sides by Frankfurt's "Hauptfriedhof", or Main Cemetery, documents the different eras and divisions of Frankfurt's Jewish community. Separate burial grounds for the different denominations of the Jewish faith were established there. In 1928, a further Jewish cemetery was founded on **Eckenheimer Landstrasse**, north of the Hauptfriedhof. This cemetery continues to be used today. It is open on Saturdays and all Jewish holidays.

Like everywhere else in Germany, 1933 marked the beginning of the discrimination, persecution and murder of Frankfurt's Jewish population. More than 10,000 Jews were taken from Frankfurt and deported to extermination camps, while only a few fortunate ones were able to save themselves by emigrating. Of the four main Frankfurt synagogues, only the **Westend Synagogue** on Freiherr-vom-Stein-Strasse escaped destruction. Today, this impressive Jugendstil structure serves not only as the religious centre of the city's Jewish community, but also as a place of remembrance and commemoration.

Frankfurt's main synagogue, or **Hauptsynagoge**, was located at Börneplatz. It was burned to the ground in 1938 on what is commonly known as "Reichkristallnacht", or "The Night of Broken Glass". Max Beckmann, the renowned artist, eternalised the synagogue in one of his most famous works, which today is on display at the Städel Museum at Frankfurt's museum embankment.

The synagogue at **Friedberger Anlage** also fell prey to the Pogrom Night of 09th November 1938. In its place, the National Socialists erected an air-raid bunker. Today, it houses an exhibition entitled "The East End – Insights into a Jewish Quarter." It tells many interesting stories of Jewish life in Frankfurt prior to 1933.

The **Memorial** at **Neuer Börneplatz** is without doubt one of the most impressive places of remembrance of Jewish persecution in Frankfurt. The memorial's most imposing feature are the over 11,000 stone blocks, integrated into the cemetery wall and depicting the names of all the deported and murdered Jews of Frankfurt.

Behind the memorial, one finds the **Old Jewish Cemetery**, Frankfurt's oldest remaining Jewish graveyard. Only a very few of the 6,000 original graves could be salvaged after the widespread destruction caused by the National Socialists. This cemetery marks, among many others, the final resting place of Mayer Amschel Rothschild, founder of the famous Rothschild House, one of the last Hebrews to be born in the former Judengasse ghetto.

During the construction of the new municipal works building at Börneplatz in 1987, workers uncovered the historic remains of several Jewish houses, ritual baths and wells. The workers had in fact come across the southern end of the Jewish ghetto's "Judengasse", or Jewish Alley. Significant portions of the findings were saved, thereby helping to preserve some 800 years of Jewish history. The discovered site was integrated into the main administrative building of Frankfurt's municipal works department and today forms **Museum Judengasse**. **Börne Gallery**, part of Museum Judengasse, presents changing art and culture

exhibitions of smaller scale, focusing on diverse topics of the Jewish past and present. There is also a special database here, which contains the names and biographies of the deported and murdered Jewry of Frankfurt, in supplementation of the memorial at Neuer Börneplatz.

The “Jewish Community of Frankfurt am Main” was officially reformed in July of 1945. Today, it has its seat at the **Ignatz Bubis Community Centre** in Savignystrasse. The centre also includes two kindergartens, Isaak Emil Lichtigfeld Primary School, a youth centre, a community welfare department, a senior citizen’s club and a kosher restaurant, “Sohar’s”. An annual Jewish cultural festival, very popular amongst both Jewish and non-Jewish denizens of Frankfurt, has been held at the community centre since 1982.

The nursing home at Bornheimer Landwehr provides a home to approximately 200 senior citizens. A Jewish sports club also exists: TuS Makkabi currently has over 300 active members. Finally, “WIZO”, a Zionist women’s organisation, and the Jewish Women’s Club both hold regular meetings in Frankfurt.

Together with the Jewish Museum, the Fritz Bauer Institute (Study and Documentation Centre on the History and Impact of the Holocaust) of Goethe University and the comprehensive Judaica Collection at the University Library, the Jewish Community of Frankfurt am Main have taken great strides in maintaining and expanding Jewish life and culture in the Main metropolis.

Services

Guided tours

Thematic city walk: Jewish Frankfurt; Duration: 2 hours; Group size: Maximum of 25 persons per tour guide

Content: Historical Museum (incl. old city plan, models of the old town), Saalgasse, Weckmarkt, Frankfurt Cathedral, Fahrgasse,

Dominikanergasse, Dominican Monastery, Börneplatz, Museum
Judengasse

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Planning a Simche?

The Marriott Hotel, Hotel Intercontinental and Hotel Kempinski (Gravenbruch) all meet the requirements for holding kosher celebrations and simches. Hotel Fleming's in Frankfurt is also suited to host various kosher events. In order to meet stringent kosher prerequisites, these hotels have installed special, fully equipped kitchens purpose-built for such occasions and supervision of the rabbinate.

Restaurant Sohar's offers kosher catering for events held at Hotel Frankfurter Hof and the Hilton Frankfurt, with all food and tableware being supplied to the hotel.

Kosher supermarkets:

Max Koschere Lebensmittel GmbH

Westendstr. 71

60325 Frankfurt/Main

A&L Aviv GmbH

Hanauer Landstr. 50

60314 Frankfurt/Main