

ShUM Speyer

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ShUM Sites
of Speyer, Worms and Mainz
World Heritage since 2021



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ShUM in Speyer

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Opening hours

Summer: 1 April to 31 October
Daily from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Winter: 1 November to 31 March
Tuesday - Sunday: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Guided tours

also outside opening hours

Contact

Tourist-Info Speyer +49 6232 -142392

- **Please also visit the ShUM sites in Worms and Mainz;** this can best be done with the new ShUM app:
www.schumstaedte.de/schum-app



SCHUM-STÄDTE
SPEYER WORMS MAINZ

ShUM in Speyer

As of July 27, 2021, the ShUM historic sites in Speyer, Worms and Mainz have become UNESCO World Heritage sites.

The ShUM sites comprise unique, exemplary community centers, monuments and cemeteries. Thanks to their prominence, age, completeness and the fact that they have been preserved in close proximity to each other, they bear witness to a Jewish tradition that continues on to this day, in this region and beyond.

The ShUM sites tell us of the interconnection of the ShUM communities during the Middle Ages. In them, we can also see architectural innovations and outstanding scholarship.

In this information brochure, we will introduce you to the locations that most resonate with the Jewish life of Speyer, namely the:

Jewish cemetery

medieval synagogue

Women's school

Ritual bath

SchPIRA museum

שר"ם

ShUM

Jerusalem on the Rhine

There were also interfaces within ShUM to the non-Jewish majority society through which exchanges with the surrounding culture could take place. Those interactions reflected both the best and the darkest times in Jewish history. Here stood the cradle of Ashkenazic Jewry and from here, centuries-old roots extend into the Jewish present and future.

The Jewish communities of Mainz, Worms and Speyer formed a covenant during the Middle Ages that became known by the word, "ShUM". It is based on the first letters of the Hebrew names of the three cities:

| | | | | |
|---|-------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|
| ש | Shin | <i>Sh</i> | Shpira | Speyer |
| ו | Waw | <i>U</i> | Warmaisa | Worms |
| מ | Mem | <i>M</i> | Magenza | Mainz |

Testimony in stone – synagogues, cemeteries and ritual baths (Mikvah) – along with religious deliverances provide a picture of the heyday of the ShUM cities.



Jewish Speyer

in the Middle Ages



During the Middle Ages, Speyer housed one of the most significant Jewish communities north of the Alps.

In 1084, Bishop Rüdiger Hutzmann took in Jewish refugees from Mainz; this made it possible to establish a Jewish community in Speyer.

The Jews in the city were protected by the Bishop and gained certain privileges from him. The Jewish community in Speyer persisted for about 400 years.

Until the 13th century, scholars from all over the world came to the Rhine in order to study, not just in Worms and Mainz, but with the “wise men of Speyer”. However, that mostly peaceful coexistence and cooperation between Jews and Christians ended in the 14th century with the Black Death Persecutions.

Around 1500, the history of the Jews in Shpira came to an end as Jews were dispossessed.

Despite the attempt to once again found a community, it proved impossible because of the intermitently recurring persecutions.

By 1534, there no longer was a Jewish community.

As early as 1529, the city had turned the synagogue into an armory. During the destruction of Speyer in 1689 during the Palatine War of Succession, the former synagogue was one of the many buildings that fell into ruin.

Synagogue & Women's School



3D-Visualisierung Synagoge Speyer © Architectura Virtualis

The synagogue formed a focal point of Jewish community life — a place for prayer, celebration, worship, assembly, judgement and teaching.

In 1100, Christian craftsmen — presumably the same ones who worked on the Speyer Cathedral — started to build the Romanesque building which was consecrated in 1104.

In 1250, it was rebuilt in Gothic style and in the process, a so-called women's school was added. Women were able to follow along with the happenings in the main synagogue through acoustic slits. The east wall of the original synagogue reveals a bricked up apse for the Torah shrine. In it, the Tora rolls were preserved.



The opposite western wall is part of a neighbor's house built around 1900.

The two windows visible there are copies of the original Romanesque windows.

Mikvah



Abgang zur Mikwe Speyer @ Klaus Venus

The Jewish ritual bath erected in Speyer around 1120 is the oldest of its kind north of the Alps. The Hebrew word “Mikvah” stands for “living water”.

The Mikvah was meant for ritual cleansing and was mainly used by women during certain periods of uncleanness — perhaps during birth or menstruation or before a wedding. To accomplish this, only “living” water was suited, i.e. naturally flowing water such as groundwater or rainwater.

Mikwe Speyer @ Jürgen Ernst



The water basin of Speyer’s Mikvah lies about 30 feet below today’s ground level. Here groundwater and rainwater collect. Quicksand on the floor serves to purify the water. The entrance to the bathing enclosure is provided by a stone staircase.

The vestibule of the bath is provided with such architectural ornamentation as pillars and windows. They make reference to the design vocabulary of romanesque cathedrals.

Museum SchPIRA



The exhibition Space is dedicated to the three most important pillars of the Jewish community: **synagogue, cemetery, and ritual bath**. While the walls of the synagogue and Mikvah have largely survived and can be viewed in their original form, the medieval cemeteries and residential developments no longer exist. The medieval buildings on the "Old Jewish Lane" (today renamed "Kleine Pfaffengasse") were destroyed during the city's great fire of 1689. In the 18th Century, new housing developments emerged there.

© Historisches Museum der Pfalz Speyer



Schatz von Lingenfeld

In addition to architectural embellishments, the museum houses a replica of the Lingenfeld treasure. It presumably belonged to a Jewish money lender who had to flee during the Black Death persecutions of 1349.

Cemetery

House of Eternity

When in 1084 Bishop Rüdiger Hutzmann settled Jews in the outlying areas of Old Speyer, he allocated to them a burial ground north of the city near the site of today's station.

Jewish cemeteries are created for eternity; yet in Speyer, the sacred resting place was ultimately destroyed after about 400 years. After the demise of the Jewish community around 1500, the cemetery was cleared away.

The area was leased and the massive gravestones were repurposed as building material. Hammered into stair steps, they were used in defensive walls, urban bridges and private homes. Almost 50 gravestones have resurfaced, dating from the time between 1112 and 1443.

Their Hebrew inscriptions tell us about the lives of Speyer's Jewish community, once so influential and give us some glimpses into their personal ways of life.





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