



# City guide Soest

## **Circular tour of the old town**

Interesting sights, city history, art treasures,  
cultural monuments, traditions and events



# Walking tour of the old town



**1 Many architectural styles** and important eras have left their traces in Soest. One of the few remaining representative Baroque buildings is the **RATHAUS**, 1713-1716 (the Town Hall) with its arcade of nine arches on its west side. A statue of St Patroclus, the patron saint of the town, looks down from above this arcade. At the back of this Baroque building is the newer part of the Rathaus which formerly housed a grammar school.

*Soest – that's 1000 years and more!*

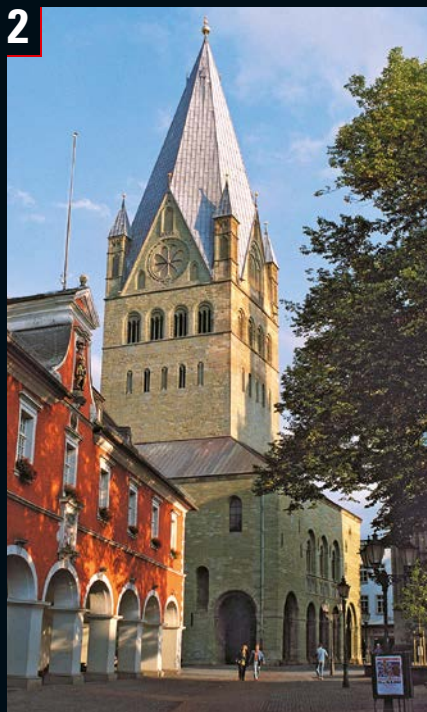


The centuries come to life in the narrow lanes and the nooks and crannies which mould the town and its image. Soest positively breathes history, inspired by a prolific past extending as far back as Neolithic times. As a **HANSEATIC TOWN** Soest played a crucial role in the structure of medieval Germany and it was the merchants of Soest who made a decisive contribution to the formation of the powerful Hanseatic League.

The silhouette of the town is dominated by its churches, as well as by its medieval town walls and numerous secular buildings dating from diverse eras. One can, with justification, speak of the **WORLD-WIDE, UNIQUE GREEN SANDSTONE ENSEMBLE** – the old town centre. Rows of delightful half-timbered houses and romantic lanes give the old town centre its unmistakable character. Two thirds of the town walls and their dry moats have been preserved and a walk along them is particularly inviting in April and May when the trees are in full bloom.

**Directly next** to the Rathaus rises the mighty tower of the **PATROKLI-MINSTER** (The Tower of Westphalia). This Romanesque building dates from after 965 A.D. when it was founded as a collegiate church. In the Marienchor there is a particularly fine apse fresco from 1200 A.D.

**2**



**A few steps** further on, in the Thomästraße, you will find the **NIKOLAI-KAPELLE** (Chapel of St. Nicholas) which dates from the 12th century. This chapel is dedicated to the patron saint of seafarers and travellers. Inside is a precious altarpiece by the school of Master Conrad of Soest.



**4 The Wilhelm Morgner Museum.** Built in 1962 right next to the St. Patrokli Cathedral is the Wilhelm Morgner Museum, which hosts alternating exhibitions as well as a permanent one by the well-known Soest expressionist Wilhelm Morgner. After extensive structural-climatic refurbishment it re-opened in 2016 – with the Foundation for Conceptual Art, the **SCHROTH-GALLERY** as a partner.

**The oldest church foundation** in Westphalia, the Patrokli-Dom and **THE PETRIKIRCHE** (the Auld Kirk), are separated only by the width of the pedestrian area. The oldest part of the Petrikerche, which is no longer detectable, dates from the 8th century. In the nave the Kaiserempore (Emperor's Gallery 1200 A.D.) bears witness to the illustrious guests of former days. The choir is of Gothic origin, while the spire has definite Baroque characteristics.

**You walk through** the **THEODOR-HEUSS PARK** to reach the Mill Pond, formerly a private garden. The park was modernised in 2018, restyled as a relaxing oasis and quality place to spend time in the centre of Soest.



**On the other side** of the green sand-stone wall, which completely encloses the park, is the **OLD MILL** (13th cent.). Here is the tourist information located. The **MILLPOND** beside it never freezes over because it is fed by innumerable springs. Diagonally opposite the mill, on the other side of the pond, is the reproduction of the **SEE-SAW**, a medieval instrument of punishment. In the Middle Ages miscreants were propelled from the see-saw (painted yellow – the colour of disgrace) into the pond.



**8 To the north** of the old part of the town you will see the spires of **ST. MARIA ZUR WIESE** (Wiesenkirche). This is one of the most beautiful late Gothic hall churches in Germany. The spires, however, were not completed until 1882. Due to the ongoing restoration of the towers the façade is partly covered in scaffolding. This and the accompanying stone restoration workshop have become an integral part of the church. In addition to important paintings on wood one is particularly fascinated by the famous **WESTPHALIAN LAST SUPPER**, a stained glass window above the northern portal. This window shows Christ and his disciples at the Last Supper. You will see ham, beer and Pumpnickel (black bread) on the table. The octagon of the north tower was completed in 2019.



**9 A few steps further** to the north along the Walburgerstrasse on your right, is the new **GREEN SANDSTONE MUSEUM**. This museum presents interesting details about green sandstone - Soest's trade mark – from its geological origin to its use in the reconstruction of the Wiesenkirche.

**By walking back** via the Wiesenstrasse and the Hohe Gasse you reach the church of



**ST. MARIA ZUR HÖHE** (Hohnekirche). This church with its splendid murals and painted ceiling was built around 1200 A.D. Here you will find the only disc cross (Scheibenkreuz) in Germany.



**A short walk** along the Kleine Osthofe brings you to the **OSTHOFENTOR**. This is the only existing gate of originally ten in the town wall. The reconstruction took place between 1523 and 1526. Inside there is a museum of town history including a worldwide unique collection of 25,000 medieval crossbow bolts.



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**Moving on** to the Ulrichertor you have a view of the **KATTENTURM** (1230 A.D.). This is the only remaining defensive tower of the former inner wall.

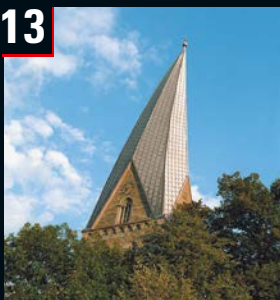


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**Directly opposite** starts the **TOWN WALL** (approx 1180 A.D.). It was formerly 3.8 kms. long and enclosed the 102 hectares of the old town. Two thirds of the wall still exist today. It is possible to take an interesting walk along the top of the wall, or through the dry moats which were situated between the inner and outer walls. From here you can catch a glimpse into some of the charming old town centre gardens.

**“Schiefer Turm”** (The Squint Tower) is the nickname of the **ALT ST. THOMÄ** Kirche, one of the oldest Gothic churches in the town (approx. 1270 A.D.). Many strange tales are told about the origin of its tower (1653 A.D.). Fact is that its “crookedness” is a result of damage due to rot in its timbers.

13



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**A few steps further** on you will come upon the **NEU ST. THOMÄ** church, a former Franciscan monastery church (1233 A.D.).

**Crossing the Grandweg** and wandering through a narrow lane you come to the **BURGHOF MUSEUM**, an old patrician house from 1559 A.D. where exhibits of art and town history, as well as a permanent exhibition of copper engravings by **HEINRICH ALDEGREVER** can be viewed. Behind the museum is the **ROMANESQUE HOUSE** from about 1200 A.D. which is one of the oldest residences between the rivers Rhine and Weser.

15



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**Situated between** the Ulricherstrasse and the Pauli-Strasse is the **PAULI-KIRCHE**. This church, with its many glass paintings and statues, was built in the middle of the 14th century and demonstrates the typical Soest style of church construction.

**The ‘Haus zum Spiegel’**, once a stately home to the aristocracy, still almost retains its authentic Baroque form and ranks as one of the city's most impressive patrician residences. From 1974 to 2020, it housed the city's archive and academic library, with an outstanding inventory of works, including some dating back to the 9th century.

18



**In the Bergenthal Park** you can admire a particularly rare stock of trees. This park was named after C.W. Bergenthal (1834-1893), one of the early pioneers of industrialisation in Soest. Here is also a former half-timbered barn which served the artist and philosopher **HUGO KÜKELHAUS** between 1954 until 1984 both as residence and place of work and which he converted to conform to his organological principles.



19

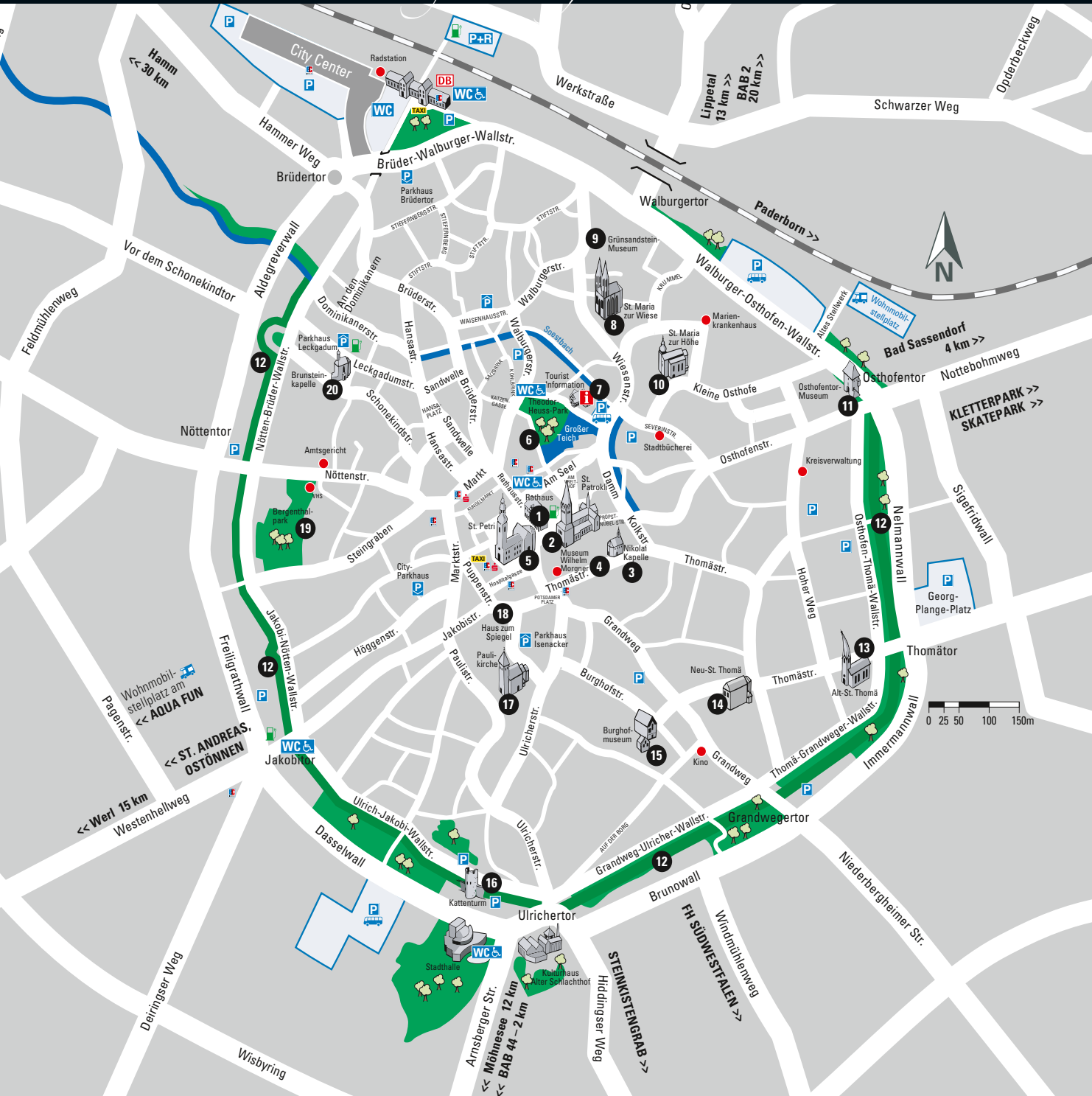


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The **BRUNSTEIN-KAPELLE** first documented in 1225 A.D. is, in addition to the Nikolai-Kapelle, the only one of the originally twenty Soest chapels still in existence today. It is now used as a studio and for exhibitions by the Soest artist Fritz Risken.

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# Walking tour of the old town





## Experience the flair



### Once a year ...

During a week-end in May Soest holds its **BÖRDE MARKET**. For two whole days young and old enjoy this celebration throughout the old town centre and during which their **BÖRDE QUEEN** is crowned.

Alternatively you can choose from the **ALTSTADTFRÜHLING** (Spring in the old Town Centre), the **SATTELFEST** (bicycle festival) and the **WINZERMARKT** (the wine-growers' market) in July, the **BÖRDEBAUERN-MARKT** (the Börde agricultural market) and, of course, Europe's largest **NEW YEAR'S EVE RUN** (Silvesterlauf). The list of events just goes on and on!



The indisputable highlight of the year however, is the **ALLERHEILIGENKIRMES** (the All Saints' Carnival). This fair takes place in the centre of the old town, is the largest of its kind in Europe. It always begins on the Wednesday after All Saints' Day and lasts for 5 days. Spread out beneath the historical backdrop 400 side-shows, booths and more than 40 roundabouts and carousels, always including the newest and most daring attractions, crowd into the narrow lanes of the medieval town.

A few times a year the largest **FLEA MARKET** in the region, attracting about 50,000 visitors at any one time, takes place in the moat under the town walls. Here you have the chance to haggle and bargain over the contents of Soest's attics and cellars.



The motto "**SOEST (RE-) LIVES THE MIDDLE AGES**" announces the Soest Feud which will take place every other year.



Every two years, approximately 600 participants from 12 countries take part in this **MEDIEVAL FESTIVAL**.

In December the **CHRISTMAS MARKET** takes place. The atmosphere is enhanced by its location snuggling between the ancient churches and cosy half-timbered houses. Art and craft articles, pottery and wood carvings are on offer, beautifully presented in spruce wooden huts.



The cultural programmes of the **STADTHALLE** and the **KULTURHAUS ALTER SCHLACHTHOF** are chock-a-block with famous names and a varied range of productions, thus providing something for every taste.



Enjoy Soest



## Dining in ancient walls

Hospitality has always taken pride of place in the old Hansa town of Soest. Even the famous Simplicissimus realised that transactions are made easier when your guest is well-satiated.

The people of Westphalia are well-known for their love of sumptuous food and drink, lavish parties and good company. This resulted in a dense concentration of public houses within the historic town walls – a concentration which still today seeks its equal. You'll find **HISTORIC INNS** with their **COSY BEER GARDENS**, **HOMELY PUBS** including regional produce.

This is tradition in Soest. **THE PILGRIM HOUSE**, the oldest guesthouse in Westphalia has been catering for guests since 1304.



The public houses are, now as then, the meeting places of cultural life. Scarcely a week goes by without a concert, whereby all styles and directions are represented.

An outstanding selection of **REGIONAL PRODUCTS** is to be found in many restaurants, cafés, etc. In 2017 the „Jägerkost“ – including the „Jägerschorle“ (Spitzer) – was introduced.



## Shopping Pleasure not High Street Hassle

Between "Kitchens and Kirks" there are still plenty of opportunities to go shopping in the historic town centre of Soest. No matter what you fancy – special offers or something more luxurious – here you will strike it lucky. In Soest we also have the luxury of everything being easily accessible. In addition to the pedestrian zone, other clusters of shops, such as around **JACOBHOF**, Potsdamer Platz and Vreithof, with their interesting offers and lovingly decorated windows, are just waiting to be discovered.

From the large car parks just outside the wall it is only a five-minute-walk – and a fascinating walk at that – to reach the centre of the town. **4500 PARKING** spaces are at your disposal within 150 metres of the town centre.

To make the start of your visit as pleasant as possible a **PARKING GUIDANCE SYSTEM** provides quick and explicit orientation around the town centre.



## The surroundings of Soest ...

... provide so many different things to do. To the south, about 12 kms away, is the recreational area around **THE MÖHNESEE** (one of the dams of the famous Dambusters film). Here you can go for long walks through the Arnsberger Wald or take part in numerous sporting activities.

Or why not visit idyllic **BAD SASSENDORF** situated 4 kms east of Soest? This spa, which can easily be reached from Soest on foot, has many health facilities such as a warm saline pool, graduation works and large spa gardens.

**THE SOEST BÖRDE** extends in all directions, ideal e.g. for bicycle tours.





# The History of Soest



**5500 - 5000 B.C.** Settlement of the so-called "band ceramic culture" south-east of St. Patrokli.

**Approx 600 A.D.** Salt production documented by excavations.

**Approx 800** St. Petri founded as the mission church of Saxony.

**836** First documentation of Soest as "villa Sosat".

**Approx 960/965** The Archbishops of Cologne, as sovereigns, establish their residence near the St. Petri Kirche. Remains of which can still be seen.

**965** Archbishop Bruno instructs in his Last Will and Testament that a charitable institution should be founded – the St. Patrokli of today.

**1144** Transfer of Soest's privilege of holding markets to Medebach the very first town.

**1150** Trade extends as far as Russia.

**1140-1150** First Soest town seal.

**Approx 1175** The oldest German wooden panel, now on display in the LWL-Museum for art and culture, was created in Soest.

**1180** Soest at its peak: the town expands to an area of 255 acres and is surrounded by a wall, which is 3,8 kms long and has 10 town gates.

**Approx 1200** The construction of the churches St. Maria zur Höhe, Alt St. Thomä and St. Nicolai begins.

**1253** Soest, Dortmund, Münster and Lippstadt form an alliance to promote common trade. Soest is one of the most important towns of the medieval Hansa.

**1300** The purchase of the Börde (fee, payment) including 48 villages begins; the Minorite Church (Neu St. Thomä) and St. Pauli Kirche come into being.

**1313** Work is started on the construction of St. Maria zur Wiese, the last great church of the Middle Ages.

**1338** The Allerheiligenkirmes (the All Saints' Fair) is documented for the first time.

**1444 - 49** The Soest Feud: Soest renounces its connection with the Archbishop of Cologne which results in a war lasting 5 years. Not until 1449 did arbitration establish Soest's affiliation with the Duchy of Cleves.

**Post 1500** As a consequence of the loss of its influence with the powerful Archbishopric of Cologne, Soest's importance declines. Soest now lies on the outskirts of the Duchy of Cleves and is no longer at the intersection of the main trade routes.

**Approx** Heinrich Aldegrevener paints the Marienaltar (Altar of the Virgin Mary)

**1530** in the church of St. Maria zur Wiese.

**1531** The Reformation in Soest. Six parish churches become Protestant.

**1608** For the last time Soest takes part in a Hanse tag in Lübeck.

**1669** The people of Soest pay homage to the elector of Brandenburg. Soest, which had been badly damaged during the 30-Years' War, is now a Brandenburg town.

**1751** The Prussian King Frederick II repeals the council constitution of 1260 A.D. This signifies the end of the town's independence.

**1756 - 1763** As the result of the Seven Years' War the town reaches the lowest point in its development.

**After 1810** The beginning of the demolition of churches, chapels and town gates.

**1817** The creation of the Kreis Soest: Soest becomes the major town, but in the process has to forfeit the territory of the Soester Börde.

**1850** The railway line Hamm/ Soest/ Paderborn is opened. Soest becomes an important junction between west and central Germany.

**1882** The newly-completed church St. Maria zur Wiese is consecrated.

**1905 - 1917** The artists e.g. Emil Nolde, Christian Rohlf, Otto Modersohn and Wilhelm Morgner re-discover Soest as a town of the arts.

**1934** The art historian Wilhelm Pinder suggests declaring the whole town a national monument.

**1940/45** Two thirds of Soest is destroyed as a result of more than 30 air raids.

**1969** The communal re-organisation extended the area of the town by 18 further communities.

**1975** The former districts of Soest, Lippstadt and Warstein now constitute the new Großkreis Soest, due to this re-organisation, Soest has become seat of the county council.

**1982** The Osthofentor is restored. A museum of town history established there.

**1990** Soest sets up its own department of town archaeology which has since kept Soest's "underground" under total surveillance.

**1991** Opening of the Conference Centre (Stadthalle) and the Civic Centre (Alter Schlachthof).

**1992** Up to this point in time 600 houses have been listed as historical monuments.

**1998-2018** The laying open and restoration of the Soestbach to its natural state.

**as of 2019** Renovation of the town wall.



## SoesTour FREE DOWNLOAD



## Join us in discovering well over 1,000 years of Soest history

We recommend our SoesTour app to you as the perfect companion for a nice, leisurely walk through the historic old town. It provides an overview in English of all the main sights, with detailed information and accompanying pictures. **SIMPLY SCAN THE QR CODE, DOWNLOAD THE APP AND IT CAN START RIGHT AWAY!**

## Almost everything about Soest ...

... can be obtained at the Tourist Information. Their office is situated in the **HISTORICAL MILL** (Teichsmühle) next to the Theodor-Heuss Park. There are various themed tours on offer for everyone who would like to get to know Soest better, to learn about the importance of the town at the time of the Hanseatic League, to pursue the creativity of its artists and, in general, to become more familiar with **ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE TOWNS IN GERMANY.**

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