



## Lusatia: Germany's Eastern Borderlands

Cities, palaces and gardens along the Oder-Neisse Line

7–13 July 2025 (ML 736)

7 days • £2,840

Lecturer: Dr Jarl Kremeier

A rarely-visited and unspoilt area, yet each day presents something of European importance.

Visit gardens laid out by one of Europe's foremost patrons of landscape gardening, Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau.

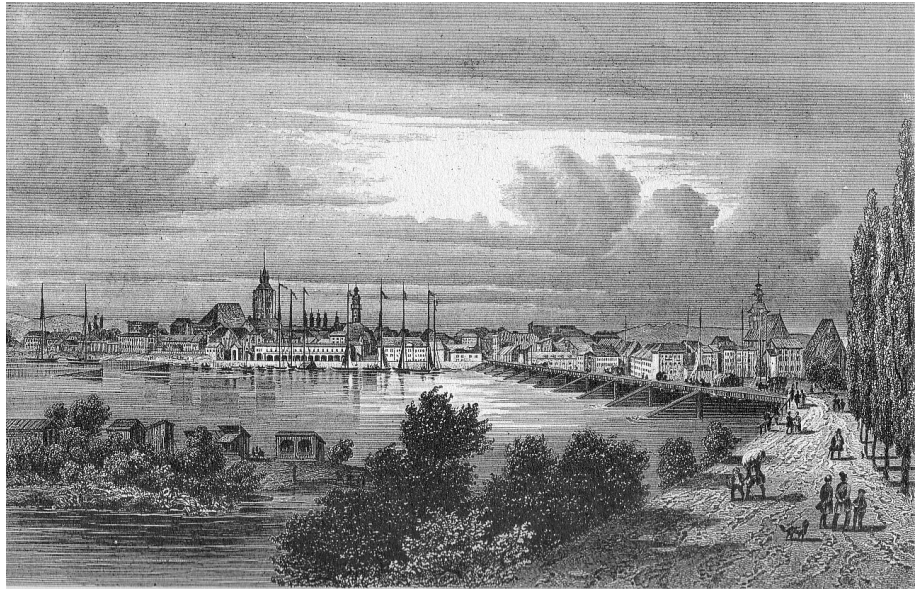
Old and important trading cities (Bautzen, Görlitz, Zittau) which largely escaped wartime damage and are now well restored.

Historically, the ground covered by this tour was the territory of two margraviates of the Holy Roman Empire, Brandenburg to the north and Lusatia to the south. Lusatia maintained strong links to the Kingdom of Bohemia throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. Continuing ecclesiastical relations with Prague led to the embedding of Roman Catholic institutions in what became Lutheran territories. This association is evident in the Baroque abbeys which are dotted around an area otherwise dominated by Gothic churches.

In order to protect peace and order in Upper Lusatia, six cities joined into a contract of mutual protection in 1346, an alliance which lasted until 1815 when Lusatia was partitioned and territories were ceded to the Kingdom of Prussia. From 1871 the whole of Lusatia became a part of united Germany and was divided between Prussia and Saxony.

In the middle of the journey through this fascinating region we explore the creations of Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau, a genius for his further development of the English landscaped Park. Pückler (1785–1871) inherited two large estates in Upper Lusatia, at Muskau (now a UNESCO world heritage site) and Branitz. Both parks set international standards and rank among the highlights of 19th-century garden design in continental Europe.

Since 1945 the rivers Oder and Neisse have formed the border between Germany and Poland, Poland having shifted about 200km to the west (losing its eastern territories to the Soviet Union). This part of Germany fell under communist rule. Görlitz, the final stop on this tour, is a prime example of a city divided by this natural frontier – in this case the Neisse – with the Polish city of Zgorzelec across the river. Bautzen and Zittau are the other significant cities we visit.



Frankfurt an der Oder, wood engraving c. 1880.

Many towns and cities escaped without much wartime damage, though misuse and lack of maintenance took its toll in the next fifty years (a process vigorously reversed in the last thirty). However, new towns sprang up in the GDR such as Eisenhüttenstadt, built from plan to accommodate workers at the newly established steel mill nearby. Today, it is a perfect living example of a socialist model city.

### Itinerary

**Day 1: Frankfurt an der Oder, Eisenhüttenstadt.** Fly in the morning (British Airways) from Heathrow to Berlin Brandenburg and drive southeast to Frankfurt an der Oder. Largely devastated by allied bombing, amid the post-war architecture stand the impressive gabled town hall and towering Brick Gothic Marienkirche. Precious original fittings include medieval stained glass and a double-winged altarpiece (c. 1495) in nearby St Getrude's. Eisenhüttenstadt (formerly Stalinstadt), 'the first socialist town on German soil', was established in the 1950s. Overnight in Neuzelle.

**Day 2: Neuzelle, Branitz.** Neuzelle Abbey is one of the most significant Baroque monuments in northern Germany. The medieval Cistercian Monastery was largely revamped in the 17th and 18th centuries under Bohemian and South German influence and

now forms an amazing architectural ensemble. Schloss Branitz (Cottbus) is an 18th-century palace in a very fine park designed by its owner, Prince Pückler-Muskau; his tomb is here, beneath a twelve-metre earth pyramid. Continue to Bad Muskau where two nights are spent.

**Day 3: Bad Muskau.** Spend the day exploring the large estate of Prince Pückler-Muskau, which comprises his first landscaped garden – vast, c. 600 ha – laid out at great expense from 1816 with lakes, extensive planting, numerous small buildings and sixteen bridges. Two thirds of this garden is now in Poland, the river Neisse having been chosen as the border in 1945, but since 1989 both sides of the garden have been open to pedestrians.

**Day 4: Bautzen, Görlitz.** Drive South to Bautzen, a picturesque city in the Spree valley renowned for its many towers. Once the administrative centre and capital of the Lusatian League, the culture and language of the Sorbs (a West Slavic ethnic group) is kept alive here with bilingual street signs and the Sorbian National Museum. Continue to the other major Lusatian power, Görlitz, where three nights are spent.

**Day 5: Görlitz.** Straddling the River Neisse, the German side of Görlitz retains the old city centre which is abundant in Renaissance and Baroque architecture. A morning walk

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continued

includes the Upper Lusatian Society of Sciences with its beautifully formed library, founded in 1779. Towards the edge of the centre is a 1489 sculpted recreation of the Holy Sepulchre (*Heiliges Grab*) which remains intact and unmodified. Across the bridge are the now Polish former eastern suburbs.

**Day 6: Zittau, St Marienthal.** At the tripoint where Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic meet, Zittau is an interesting example of urban planning with an oval inner city, Italianate town hall designed by Schinkel (1840s) and city walls which became a *Ringstrasse* lined with 19th-century public buildings. The former Franciscan monastery is now a museum displaying the *Zittauer Fastentuch*, a vast altar cloth (1472). Return to Görlitz via St Marienthal, a Cistercian nunnery rebuilt in Baroque style after 1683.

**Day 7.** Fly from Berlin Brandenburg, arriving at London Heathrow in the afternoon.

## Lecturer

**Dr Jarl Kremeier.** Art historian specialising in 17th- to 19th-century architecture and decorative arts; teaches Art History at the Berlin College of Acting and the Senior Student's Department of Berlin's Freie Universität. He studied at the Universities of Würzburg, Berlin and the Courtauld, is a contributor to the *Macmillan Dictionary of Art*, author of a book on the Würzburg Residenz, and of articles on Continental Baroque architecture and architectural theory.

## Practicalities

**Price, per person. Two sharing:** £2,840 or £2,510 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,010 or £2,680 without flights.

**Included:** flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320 and 319); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; 2 lunches and 5 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

**Accommodation. Landhaushotel Prinz Albrecht, Neuzelle** (hotel-prinz-albrecht.de): 3-star hotel with restaurant picturesquely located opposite the Abbey. **Kulturhotel Fürst Pückler Park, Bad Muskau** (kulturhotel-fuerst-pueckler-park.de): no-frills 4-star hotel with restaurant next to the park. **Romatik Hotel Tuchmacher, Görlitz** (tuchmacher.de): 4-star hotel in a restored 16th-century town house with original features. *Single rooms throughout are doubles for sole use.*

**How strenuous?** The tour involves a lot of walking in historic centres and parks, and a lot of standing in museums and churches. A good level of fitness is essential. You will be on your feet for lengthy stretches of time. Average distance by coach per day: 54 miles.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.