

Architecture in Cologne

These days Cologne has one of the most intriguing architectural landscapes in Germany. The east bank of the Rhine now sports the **Rheinboulevard**, an expansive and attractive riverside space with generous stone steps that stretch 500 metres along the waterside between Hohenzollernbrücke and Deutzer Brücke and are a popular meeting place for Cologne residents and visitors alike.

Rheinauhafen, Cologne's historic harbour district is a promenade with an international feel that showcases the modern side of Germany's oldest metropolis and has quickly become the home of the city's creative scene. At its centre are the three spectacular **Kranhäuser**, or “crane houses”, a design by Hamburg-based architects Bothe, Richter, Teherani. The traditional and the modern maintain an easy relationship in Rheinauhafen. For instance, the district's former granary, often referred to as Siebengebirge (seven hills) owing to its distinctive steep gables, has been carefully restored and is now an attractive residential and office building.

Yet another architectural highlight, the **Weltstadthaus**, arrived in Cologne's best known shopping precinct Schildergasse in 2005. Designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, this extravagant glass-fronted palace houses the Cologne branch of Peek&Cloppenburg, a fashion retailer. Its shape is reminiscent of a stranded whale and so it's no surprise that Colonians immediately dubbed it “Walfisch” (whale). Nearby is **Kolumba**, an architectural treasure that is the Archdiocese of Cologne's art museum. Designed by Swiss star architect Peter Zumthor it moved into its spectacular home in 2007. The building encases the ruins of the ancient Roman church of St. Kolumba, which was badly hit by bombs in 1945.

Liebe Deine Stadt (love your city) is an extraordinary campaign designed to strengthen Cologne residents' interest in and ability to identify with their city's post-war modernist architecture. In 2005 concept artist Merlin Bauer began raising public awareness of Cologne's prominent buildings of the 1950s and 60s. The campaign's oversized red logo adorns the building that straddles the city's busy north-south passage near Offenbachplatz, where the opera and theatre complex designed by late Cologne architect **Wilhelm Riphahn** is currently being prepared for reopening.

To further support public awareness for architecture and its relevance for the city, the **Kölner Architekturpreis** (Cologne prize for architecture) honors architectural treasures throughout the city – including mundane, yet meaningful buildings as much as world class constructions. Since 1967 250 special buildings have received the prize. The award is one of Germany's oldest and most significant architecture prizes.

In the near future, the public spaces in Cologne's city centre will be redesigned to redirect our attention to the city's two thousand-year-old cultural heritage. The project will focus particularly on the area immediately surrounding the Cologne Cathedral, which has already been given an extensive upgrade. A new cultural centre in close proximity to the cathedral is under development – it will have an architecturally intriguing exterior spanning the City Museum, parts of the Romano-

Germanic Museum and the premises of the Curia. It will also include what is known as **Via Culturalis**, an 800-metre “culture path” extending from the cathedral through the Old Town to the Roman church of St. Maria im Kapitol, along which the layers and traces of two thousand years of urban and cultural history will be made visible. It will also lead past the Archaeological Zone with the Jewish museum MiQua, which is slated to open in 2025.