In Cologne there is a lot going on – not only at the Taxi Fair. The cathedral, the local beer and much more await discovery in this city on the river Rhine.

When Cologne was given the status of a Roman city in the year 50 AD, things did not look the way they do today. The Romans tried to place their most important buildings on hills, as they did in Rome. In Cologne all they found was a terrace next to the river that lay a little higher, so they constructed temples and government buildings on it. The city took its name at that time from its founder Agrippina, wife of the Roman emperor: it was called Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium. This produced two abbreviations: the German name Köln, derived from Colonia, and also CCAA, which some jokers believe was further shortened to result in the name of a shop: C&A. Back in those days, Roman military roads met in Cologne, and still have an important role in the street plan in our time. The east-west route from the area that is Belgium today ended at the Rhine, and the north-south routes from Trier and from Bonn, leading further north to Neuss. One of the quarters of the city that is most typical for Cologne lies on a section of the north-south road, and I would like to look at it in more detail in this article.

THE CATHEDRAL – THE HEART OF COLOGNE
In Cologne everything starts with the cathedral, which stands, of course, on the higher land above the Rhine that was already mentioned and on top of the remains of several previous churches and the houses of wealthy Romans. Close by is a small square called Wallrafplatz, the start of the Hohe Strasse (High Street), which continues under the name Hohe Pforte, then Waidmarkt, Severinstrasse and finally Bonner Strasse. This is exactly the course of the old Roman road. Wallrafplatz is the home of the regional television and radio broadcaster WDR. Here you can try to get tickets for concerts, which are often free. Before setting off, let’s refresh ourselves with a delicious glass of Cologne beer, which is called Kölsch, in the pub Lederer in the narrow street Unter Fettenhennen which leads to the tourist office (Kölntourismus). As this is an authentic Cologne-style pub, here you can eat excellent meatballs, and there is even a glass of salted eggs on the bar counter. Thus fortified, we walk along Hohe Strasse, which has been one of the busiest pedestrian zones in all of Germany for decades. In my opinion such shopping streets all look the same nowadays, so no more needs to be said. On the right Schildergasse, also a shopping street, branches off, but we continue straight ahead, cross a busy east-west road and soon reach Hohe Pforte. The surroundings are completely different here. We have now left the big department stores behind us.

Concerts – often free of charge – are held in the broadcasting house of WDR.
For culinary treats, culture or shopping – all visitors to Cologne can do whatever they like doing best, for example:

- in the Altes Brauhaus
- on the Hohe Strasse
- at Früh em Veedel
- the Fette Kuh
- or the Severinstorburg city gate.

A HAVEN OF PEACE IN THE BUSY CITY

In the side streets that we passed up to here there were plenty of attractive little shops, pubs, restaurants and cultural sights to discover, but I would like to explain a Romanesque church in a little more detail. Just off our path is St. Maria im Kapitol, on the slightly raised site where in Roman times there was a temple dedicated to Jupiter, father of the gods, his wife Juno and daughter Minerva, an extremely versatile goddess who was the protector of heroes, agriculture, cities, science and the arts. It goes without saying that an especially splendid church, which was originally a convent of nuns, was built here. It has a so-called clover-leaf choir, a ground plan with three apses that was only to be found previously in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. What these three churches have in common is the tradition that the first Christmas Mass is celebrated here – by the archbishop of Cologne, the pope and the patriarch of Jerusalem respectively. Next to this impressive church is an open space called Lichhof, a remarkably quiet spot only a few paces away from the roaring city traffic. At the south end of Lichhof is the Gate of the Three Kings, through which it is said that the bones of the Three Magi, which had been stolen from Milan, were discreetly brought into the city in 1164.
THE BLUE PART OF COLOGNE

If you need a break now, turn left and consider going to the Alte Münze restaurant, where there is a fine vaulted ceiling and even windows designed by the artist Ewald Mataré. Or go to the Malzmühle pub, where Bill Clinton personally drank a couple of glasses of beer. Otherwise turn right and cross Marienplatz, where – typically for Cologne – the city’s first gay sauna lies diagonally opposite the women’s history association. Our route goes along Stephanstrasse and back to Hohe Pforte. Soon we cross the road called Blaubach and reach Waidmarkt. This was once the district of the tanners, where the Duffesbach stream that marked the old city boundary flowed above ground, instead of being an underground channel as it is today. The names Waidmarkt and Blaubach refer to the fact that here the dyers used woad (a plant called Waid in German) to make the coveted indigo-blue dye. For this process, water and urine were needed. Some city guides claim that the blue colour of the dye was especially intense on Mondays, as the consumption of beer on Sundays provided a plentiful supply of urine. A few metres further, on Severinstrasse, we come across a huge hole in the ground. On 3 March 2009 the historical archive of the city disappeared into this hole, because mistakes during construction of a north-south subway line caused the ground beneath it to be washed away. Five years later, the exact cause has still not been established. Tragically, two people lost their lives. 95 per cent of the documents in the archive were recovered, but it will take up to 30 years and cost many millions of euros to restore all of them.

»Kölsch – the only language that you can drink«

KÖLSCH – A LANGUAGE AND A BEER

At Severinstrasse we have reached the quarter of the city, known in local dialect as Vringsveedel, which is said to be most typical of Cologne’s tradition. Walking through here and seeing people of many different nationalities, natives of the city cannot fail to be reminded of a popular song called “Unser Stammbaum” (Our Family Tree) by the Bläck Fööss, a Cologne band. The song describes how the people of the city have come here from many points of the compass, but all speak the same language today. This language is Kölsch – a word derived from the German name of the city, Köln – and is said to be the only language that you can drink, as Kölsch denotes both the local dialect and the local beer. Speaking of which: this part of town, also known as the Südstadt, is the home of the Reissdorf brewery. The production facilities moved out a few years ago, but at Severinstrasse no. 51, on part of the old brewery premises, is a brew-pub called Das Alte Brauhaus that can be highly recommended. Thanks to various marketing activities and excellent quality, Reissdorf has become the kind of Kölsch favoured by young people – which gives the brand good prospects for the future in an age of falling beer consumption. In the side streets leading off Severinstrasse and its continuation, Bonner Strasse, it is well worth strolling about, as there are many little pubs serving Kölsch and restaurants with cuisine from all over the world. On Severinstrasse stands the Odeon Filmtheater, a small arthouse cinema that was once a popular theatre where a Cologne actress called Trude Herr set up an alternative to the long-established Millowitsch Theatre as a place of entertainment with local colour. Trude Herr became famous for the films she made with the comedian Heinz Erhardt and a hit song “Ich will keine Schokolade” (“I don’t want any chocolate”).

FINISH AT THE TAXI CALL CENTRE

On a small square where an organic food market is held several times weekly stands St. Severin, another of Cologne’s twelve Romanesque churches. It deserves special mention, in contrast to others that we passed along the way, because it is the eighth church to be built on the site. Remains of the early buildings can be visited by booking a guided tour. A little further on, on the right-hand side we pass Haus Balchem, a reconstructed house dating from the 17th century that once served as a smithy. At the end of Severinstrasse we reach Chlodwigplatz, named after a bloodthirsty Frankish king who was baptised in 496 after carrying out his conquests. One of the three remaining large gates in the city wall stands on this square. Apart from a few small sections, the old city wall was torn down in the late 19th century at the wish of the Prussian rulers. For those who like German rock music: in front of the gate on the right, the parents of Wolfgang Niedecken, the frontman and founder of the band BAP, had a grocer’s shop. By passing through the gate, you can take a break by drinking a delicious, fresh glass of Kölsch beer diagonally opposite in Früh em Veede, one of the most authentic Cologne-style pubs in terms of its furnishings and its menu with local dishes. For those who prefer a different kind of food, the restaurant Fertig, at Bonner Strasse no. 26 on the last stage of our walk, is a good address. Here French specialities have been served along with Reissdorf Kölsch for decades now. Much more recent, but also highly recommendable, is Fette Kuh at number 43. Long lines of people at the door indicate the outstanding quality of the freshly made burgers here. Opposite, next to a beautiful building dating from the early 20th century, you can enjoy an espresso at one of the little coffee-roasting places that are appearing more and more often. If we now walk straight ahead beneath the railway bridge, we leave the city centre. Instead let’s turn right into Bonner Wall to reach Taxi Ruf Köln eG at number 37, where, if you have made contact in advance, you can conclude this three-kilometre walk by visiting the city’s taxi call centre.

Peter Zander
Where to eat during the trade fair
The exorbitant energy costs have forced us to take leave of the restaurant Ampère in the open passageway above Hall 4 this November. Instead you can have lunch in the self-service restaurant Edison in the entrance foyer between Hall 4.1, where the trade fair is being held, and Hall 2.2, where the meeting and tombola draw will take place. As usual, the prices will be at an acceptable level, by the standards of trade fairs.
The Edison restaurant is open from 11 am to 3.30 pm. From 8 am until 6 pm an Illy Bar will be open without interruption in front of Edison. Here you can enjoy a range of coffee specialities and snacks such as muffins.
In the exhibition hall there will once again be two snack points. They are to be found in the rear part of the hall, so you will be well provided with refreshments during the handing-out of the arm bands for the tombola.
The snack points will remain in operation throughout the opening times of the fair.
As in past years, you can place an advance order for breakfast for eight persons or more from the trade-fair caterer Sodexo. It will be served in a room specially allocated for the purpose.
The contact persons for alternatives, prices and any other wishes connected with catering is Nadine Pauls
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