

German History Takes Us Back Thousands Of Years

The German history can be said to have begun with the migration of Scandinavian tribes to the regions around the [Rhine River](#) and [Mainz](#). This is according to Tacitus, the Roman historian, who put it all down in his, "[Germania](#)" dated A.D. 98.

I say its history began with the [Germanic Tribes](#), but Tacitus was the historian — not me, so we'll defer to him.

Of course, the Romans had a say in the matter. They promptly overpowered the migrants and their new home to add to their empire.

A.D. 500 saw the beginning of the end of the Roman Empire and the Franks took over most of Europe. Though united under Charlemagne around A.D. 800, subsequently the empire split into the West Frankish Kingdom which was French, and the East Frankish Kingdom, which was German.

The East Frankish Kingdom included tribes such as the Saxons, Bavarians, Franconians, Swabians and others. In A.D. 911 Conrad I. was elected king over all and this turn of events is normally considered the beginning of German history.

When King Otto the Great was crowned *Römisch-Deutscher Kaiser* (Holy Roman Emperor) in 962 it marked the beginning of the [Holy Roman Empire](#). Soon the empire expanded to include the Middle Kingdom and under Otto I. and other kings enjoyed immense economical and political power — and the [Teutonic Knights](#) received donations that grew their wealth. This expansion and colonization came with a heavy price.

There was the onus of having to maintain control by expensive wars and other measures of suppression against powerful enemies such as German princes, the papacy, and other rivals. This led to a weakening that saw the division of the empire into sections and smaller groups like principalities, electorates, and free cities that constantly waged wars against each other. The Middle Ages thus saw a weakened empire divided against itself.

BTW, between those battles, from the 13th up until the 18th or even mid-19th century, the [Hanseatic League](#) (a transatlantic alliance) had been formed in order to protect economic interests among its member cities.

German history has an all important chapter in the 16th century when the [Peasants' War](#) and the [Protestant Reformation](#) flared throughout the land. The latter actually led to disunity of a different kind when Lutheranism and Calvinism created strong supporters from among what used to be a mainly Catholic population. Protestants and Catholics fought bitterly to uphold their majority and convert as many as possible to their side. This is said to have been behind the [Thirty Years' War](#) that was fought from 1618–1648.

Then came naughty Napoleon boy and decided to have a series of [Napoleonic Wars](#) throughout Europe from 1803 to 1815. The net result? He lost about everything, particularly by or after invading Russia in 1812.

Ultimately, Napoleon's wars and loss broke up the Holy Roman Empire.

By 1815, the hundreds of states were combined to form about 38 states according to the Congress of Vienna. The largest of these were Austria and [Prussia](#) and they continued to fight for supremacy. Eventually by 1871, the political brilliance of [Otto von Bismarck](#) saw the unification of Germany without Austria.

The history of Germany then saw a period of prosperity that put the other European countries to shame. Under Wilhelm II., Germany pushed forward on a competitive vein to own the status of the richest and the most powerful country in Europe.

This came to a crescendo by 1914 when Russia and France were perceived as serious threats to Germany. A regional conflict with Austria-Hungary soon escalated into [World War I](#). Germany saw defeat in 1918.

This left matters worse and an attempt at instituting democracy with the [Weimar Republic](#) turned out to be less than successful. The Great Depression saw the stirring of patriotic emotions that finally lead to the formation of [Adolf Hitler's](#) National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSGWP, German: *NSDAP*).

January 1933 saw Hitler at the head of the [German government](#) which he soon turned totalitarian, resulting in the ugly [Third Reich](#). In 1939 he invaded Poland and thus began [World War II](#), a horrible part of the history of Germany. Hitler was defeated in 1945 after millions were killed in war-related horrors and concentration camps.

German history records the revival of the nation since the world war. As retribution, Germany was divided into four factions and administered by the the US, England, France, and Russia.

The subsequent [Cold War](#) changed the political alignment somewhat and soon the faction under Russia, East Germany or German Democratic Republic (GDR), disappeared behind the Iron Curtain while West Germany became the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The [Berlin Wall](#) was erected in 1961 by East Germany making the separation tangible and total.

FRG made huge strides in progress and soon came to be known as the [Wirtschaftswunder or Economic Miracle](#), and a vibrant democracy, while GDR under a socialist dictatorship didn't fare too well.

The main event in post war German history would have to be the fall of the Berlin Wall on

November 9th, 1989 and the following official [German reunification](#) on October 3rd, 1990 (a national [German holiday](#)). After 45 years of separation, Germany was united as one nation once again. (Awesome, I remember that time as if it was yesterday... :-)