

Torgau -- Red Army, Brown Bear, And Opera Coming To Town

The town of Torgau on the banks of the [Elbe River](#) forever will be known where the Red Army met up with the United States Army on April 25, 1945 during the [Second World War](#) invasion of Germany. It was at first occupied by American troops, then became under the control of the Soviets.

There's a plaque commemorating the historic event on the banks of the Elbe.

But, Torgau's history dates back much further than the 20th century, dating back at least another 1000 years. It is believed that there was once a castle made of wood. When it fell in the 10th century, it had fallen to the Holy Roman Emperors who built a castle made of stone (the current Hartenstein Castle).

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Not quite as old as the castle is the town's market, dating back to the early 12th century. Surrounding the market, you'll be able to visit the 13th century St. Nicholas Church, and see some of the historic Burgher's homes.

The castle is open for tours and the B Wing houses works of art, the Castle Chapel (consecrated by Martin Luther in 1544), and the District Museum with medieval arms and armor. There are great views of the Elbe from the castle's towers (the *Südturm*, *Hasenturm*, *Jagdtor*, and *Flaschenturm*). While some castles are surrounded by a moat filled with water, the castle moat in Torgau is filled with brown bear. It was at Court in 1627, that the first German Opera, *Dafne*, by Heinrich Schütz was performed.

The period of the Reformation were turbulent times in Torgau. By the year 1523, the entire town's cloisters were closed and the townspeople destroyed priceless works of art, including paintings and statues of saints. Katarina von Bora, Martin Luther's wife, is buried in St. Mary's Church Cemetery. There's also a plaque at Katharinenstraße 11, the house where she died.

Though the past has been quite tumultuous, the medieval town of Torgau shouldn't be missed as it's filled with so much history and such beautiful architecture.