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20 days

Duration

Austria, Germany

Destination

Level 2 - Moderate

Activity

# Richard Wagner Ring Cycle, Leipzig | Small Group Tours Germany

Jun 18 2026 to Jul 07 2026

## Richard Wagner Ring Cycle Tour

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours across Western Europe and beyond. Join us as we explore Austria and Germany's rich cultural and musical heritage across Vienna, Munich, Bayreuth, Leipzig, and Dresden, as well as daytrips to nearby towns and villages. Each location offers a unique glimpse into Europe's imperial heritage, World Heritage sites, and truly breath-taking



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landscapes, with the highlight being Vienna's renowned opera scene. This and more is all waiting to be explored on one of Odyssey's small group music tours of Austria and Germany, designed for the senior traveller and led by experienced and enthusiastic guides who share a passion for music and history.

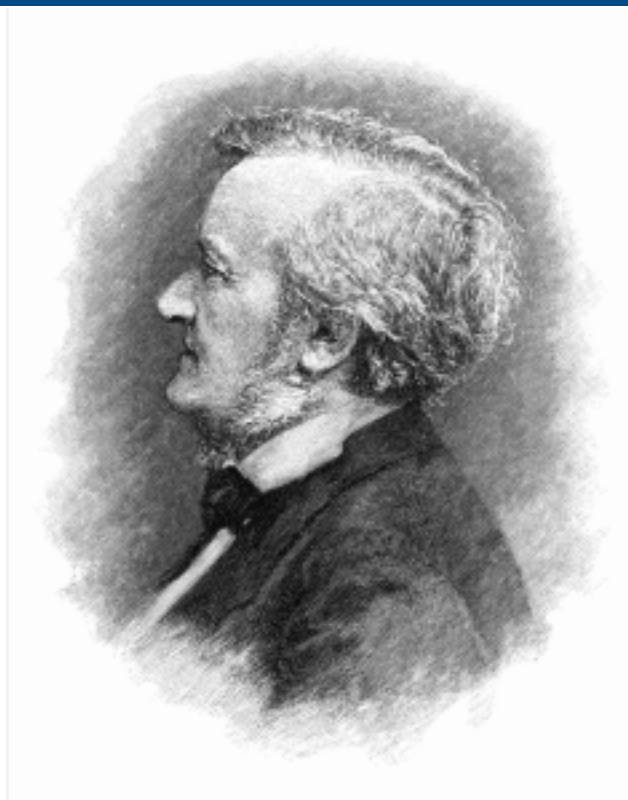
Richard Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, or *Der Ring des Nibelungen* ("The Ring of the Nibelung"), is a cycle of four German-language epic music dramas based loosely on characters from the Norse sagas and the epic poem *Nibelungenlied*. Odyssey Traveller's 20-day Wagner Ring Cycle Tour gives you the opportunity to see the extraordinary grand operas performed in the world capital of classical music, Vienna. Here world-class venues and orchestras bring Wagner's visionary work to life, providing an unparalleled atmosphere that enhances the drama and intensity of this masterpiece, making for a truly unforgettable experience for any music lover. Vienna's abundant tradition of music, opera, and art provides a vivid setting, with the city's classical architecture, grand palaces, and renowned art collections enriching the experience along the way.

Of course, there was more to Wagner than the romantic, thrilling notes of his operas. The man himself lived a passionate life, which was characterised by turbulent love affairs, financial scandal and a period of political exile. In this unique tour, we will not just experience this incredible operatic story, but we will also learn more about Wagner's life and the influences of culture and family on his music, and about other musical greats who worked and lived in these cities.

Der ring is for a maximum of 12 mature and senior travellers on a small group tour, either as couples or solo, accompanied to the magic ring by a tour director to guide you through Wagner's legendary tale.

## Richard Wagner and the Ring Cycle:

German composer Wilhelm Richard Wagner (1813-1833) is sometimes described as having marked the start of modern music. Technically and artistically innovative, Wagner's work is classical music at its most emotionally intense and deeply introspective, reflecting both the broader





political struggles of the Romantic era and the turbulent personal life of the composer.

In the 19th century, most operas were designed by a separate composer, who wrote the music, and librettist, who wrote the accompanying lyrics. Wagner was unique in writing both libretto and music, fusing the two into a singular artistic vision of poetry, music, visuals and drama, which he called *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or “total work of art”. He is also known for the use of leitmotifs (from the German, *Leitmotive*, literally “leading motives”) or distinct musical phrases that were associated with particular characters, places, or elements of plot.

Wagner’s work was inspired by the political ferment that surrounded him. Prior to German unification in 1871, Europe’s German-speaking regions were divided into hundreds of kingdoms, duchies, bishoprics, and independent cities and towns. Through the 19th century, poets and thinkers – including Wagner – were inspired by the Romantic idea of a unified Germany. Summing up his passionate commitment to the idea of a united Germany, Wagner would write of his return to Dresden after a period in Paris: **‘For the first time I saw the Rhine – with hot tears in my eyes I, poor artist, swore fidelity to my German fatherland.’**

Wagner’s political and artistic ideas were synthesised in his Ring Cycle masterpiece, the collective name for his cycle of four operas. Wagner began to compose the cycle in exile in Zurich, Switzerland, where had been forced to flee due to his involvement in the May Uprising in Dresden in 1849. Wagner’s work on the ring cycle reaffirmed his deep commitment to German nationalism: the operas are based loosely on figures from German mythology, and Wagner wrote the libretto based on his interpretation of *Stabreim*, alliterative verse pairs used in ancient German poetry. Yet, Wagner had abandoned the idealism of his youth, and was increasingly influenced by the deeply pessimistic philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, who held music to be a direct expression of the world’s essence.

Wagner’s time in exile was also marked by personal drama. Still married to Minna, he fell in love with Mathilde Wesendonck, whose husband was a major patron of Wagner’s work. Wagner’s relationship with Mathilde is believed to have inspired the other great opera he wrote in exile, *Tristan*

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and *Isolde*. While it is unknown whether his love was requited or ever consummated, it threw his life into disarray, as Minna found a love letter intended for Mathilde, destroying their marriage.

## Wagner's Ring Cycle; The Operas

The Ring Cycle is widely regarded as the pinnacle of Wagner's work and one of the most ambitious works in the classical music tradition. The cycle is of extraordinary scale: over 15 hours long, it is typically performed over four nights. While the cycle might seem like hard work, listeners are rewarded with an epic story of gods and men, dwarfs and magic rings, and music of sublime beauty that has inspired people for over a century.

The Ring Cycle consists of four operas:

### Das Rheingold ("The Rhine Gold")

The Rhinemaidens' gold is stolen by the Nibelung Alberich. (The Nibelung is a race of dwarves.) Alberich fashions a ring from the gold. The gods Wotan (Odin) and Loge (Loki) trick Alberich to seize the ring, which they will use as payment for the giants building Valhalla.

### Die Walküre ("The Valkyrie")

Wotan fathers twin children, Siegmund and Sieglinde, who are separated at birth but find themselves attracted to each other when they meet as adults.

### Siegfried

Set years after the end of *Die Walküre*, and focused on the titular Siegfried, the son of Sieglinde and Siegmund, who is raised by the





Nibelung, Mime.

### Götterdämmerung (“The Twilight of the Gods”)

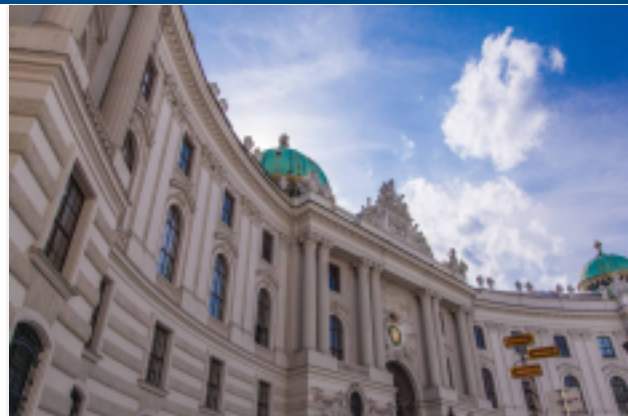
The last of the Ring cycle concerns the impending destruction of Valhalla, and centres on Siegfried and Brünnhilde. The title of the opera is a German translation of *Ragnarok*, a prophesied event in Norse mythology that is said to lead to the death of the gods.

The Ring Cycle would not be performed for more than twenty years after Wagner first developed the idea. The composer had been rescued from exile when Ludwig II (‘The Fairytale King’) came to the throne of Bavaria in 1864. A passionate fan of Wagner’s work, Ludwig invited Wagner to premiere *Tristan and Isolde* in Munich. Yet, in typical style, Wagner’s luck would soon change when he fell in love with his conductor’s wife, Cosima von Bulow. Wagner’s relationship with Cosima – the illegitimate daughter of composer Franz Liszt, who was twenty-four years younger than Wagner – scandalised Bavaria. Wagner and Cosima sought exile in Switzerland, and then, after marrying in 1870, moved to Bayreuth.

Once in Bayreuth, Wagner set about staging his masterpiece. Believing in the ‘total work of art’, Wagner built his own opera house, the **Festspielhaus** (or ‘festival theatre’), to be the perfect complement to his masterpiece. The Ring Cycle was debuted in August 1876, at the first Bayreuth Festival, which brought admirers from around Germany and Europe.

Though the festival is now recalled as a pivotal moment, it left Wagner dissatisfied and deeply in debt. He moved to Italy for his health, returning only in the last few months of his life in 1882 to stage another festival.

Wagner has been a controversial figure, both within his lifetime and afterwards. The deep introspection of his work inspired modernist writers and artists, including Charles Baudelaire, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce, and his work on dreams is said to prefigure Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis. At the same time, Wagner has attracted criticism for his antisemitic views, compounded by the fact that Adolf



Hitler was a huge fan of his work.

Even today, Wagner inspires a passionate following like no other composer. For Wagnerians, the Bayreuth Festival – which lives on under the direction of his great-granddaughters – is a place of pilgrimage, an opportunity to see his great works as he himself designed them.

The 2020 ‘Wagner in Leipzig’ festival is the first opportunity in forty years to see Wagner’s great works performed in the city of his birth.

## Our Tour Itinerary:

In addition to the concerts in Vienna, our tour takes in several places closely associated with Wagner:

- **Leipzig**

Leipzig was Wagner’s birthplace and the city where his early musical aspirations took root. Known for its influential conservatory and vibrant musical community, Leipzig is where Wagner’s musical education began and where he nurtured the talents that would later produce his grand operas. The venues and sites around the city is where Wagner first encountered orchestral music, laying the foundation for his visionary compositions.

- **Munich**

As we explore Munich, we will hear stories of Wagner’s friendship with King Ludwig II. Without Ludwig’s consistent financial support, it is unknown whether many of Wagner’s works would ever have been produced. It was here in Munich at the National Theatre that Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde* was finally performed, after years of the composer’s toil, and frustrating dismissals. This opera gained a reputation as being “impossible to sing”, but finally overcame this here, thanks to the King’s unending devotion.



- Dresden

Following the untimely death of his father when Wagner was just 6 months old, he would move with his family to Dresden, to the residence of stepfather Ludwig Geyer. It was here that Wagner's love of theatre and music took flight.

- Bayreuth

Bayreuth is the location of Festspielhaus (Festival Theatre), constructed especially for the performance of Wagner's operas – the inaugural Bayreuth Festival devoted to the premier of his Ring Cycle.

As you tour Germany, you will have the chance to stroll through remarkable locations and see them through the eyes of Wagner and other talented composers. We will also visit the Walhalla Memorial, a hall of fame that includes important artists, composers, and other German cultural icons. This travel experience offers beautiful cities, a symphony orchestra, and breathtaking scenery.

## 2025 Wagner Ring Cycle schedule to follow

- June: Das Rheingold
- June: Die Walküre
- June: Siegfried
- June: The Twilight of the Gods

The schedule for 2026 have not yet been released. Tour dates will be adjusted accordingly.

**Due to the special nature of this tour, we have limited the group size to 12 participants.**

For more details, click the 'Top 5' or 'Itinerary' buttons above! If you're keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book,





simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.

You can learn more about [Austria](#) and [Germany](#) with our country profiles and see all other departures as well. You can also browse other [other performing arts and musical tours](#) Odyssey offers.

## Articles about Austria and Germany

These articles are published by Odyssey Traveller or are carefully selected external sources to maximise the knowledge and enjoyment of this tour for senior travellers:

- [Questions about Austria](#)
- [Questions about Germany](#)
- [Music and the Austrian Hapsburgs: The Definitive Guide](#)
- [A History of Berlin for Tourists](#)
- [The Oberammergau Passion Play](#)
- [The Bauhaus Movement](#)
- [Highlights of Austria: Schönbrunn Palace](#)
- [Destination: Germany](#)
- [Ten books to read about Berlin](#)
- [Ten of the best art galleries in Europe](#)
- [Must See Sights in Berlin](#)
- [13 Things to know before visiting Germany](#)
- [The Telegraph: Thirty reasons why we love Germany](#)
- [A Rhine Romance: Following the Mighty River](#)
- [Lonely Planet: 48 Hours in Hamburg](#)
- [Composer of the Month: Richard Wagner](#)



- [Gods And Monsters: 5 Unforgettable Wagner Moments](#)
- [The Brilliant, Troubled Legacy of Richard Wagner](#)
- [Wagner in Leipzig](#)

## Tour Notes

- Group size is limited to 12 participants

## Highlights

1. Tickets to 'Siegfried', 'Die Walkure', 'Gotterdammerung', and 'Das Rheingold'.
2. Guided tours of sites related to Wagner's life in Leipzig and Dresden
3. Entrance to Mozart's House and Beethoven's Pasqualatihaus
4. A visit to Bayreuth's magnificent Margravian Opera House
5. A visit to the impressive art collection at Moritzburg Art Museum Halle

## Itinerary

### Day 1

**Locations:** Vienna

**Overview:**

Arrive Vienna. Transfer to our hotel (own arrangements). There will be some free time before an evening welcome by your Odyssey Leader followed by a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

**Accommodation:**

10 nights at Mercure Wien City (or similar)

## Day 2

**Locations:** Vienna

### Overview:

The tour starts with in the morning tour with a half-day tour around the city of Vienna led by a local guide. We view the main sights of the city, including such highlights as Hofburg Palace and St Stephen's cathedral. You will then have free time in the afternoon to explore this magnificent city further. In the evening we attend a Wagner Opera performance: *Das Rheingold*.

### Accommodation:

Mercure Wien City (or similar)

## Day 3

**Locations:** Vienna

### Overview:

Today we take a full-day tour of Vienna with a local guide. We view some more of the city's magnificent sights, including a visit to the Ring Road, a stroll through Naschmarkt, a visit to Museums Quarteir, a stop at Prater to see the Wheel, and a look at Hunterswasserhaus. After the tour, you will have the evening to spend as you wish.

### Accommodation:

Mercure Wien City (or similar)

## Day 4

**Locations:** Vienna

### Overview:

This morning, we visit Kunsthistorisches Museum. One of the most prominent art museums in the world, its collections includes masterpieces from celebrated artists such as Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Titian, Rembrandt, Raphael, and Caravaggio. In the afternoon we visit to Academy of Fine Arts, Picture Gallery, to view European masterpieces from the Renaissance to the Baroque periods. In the evening we attend a performance of the second part of Wagner's *Der*

*Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring of the Nibelung): Die Walkurie.*

**Accommodation:**

Mercure Wien City (or similar)

**Day 5**

**Locations:** Vienna - Bratislava - Vienna

**Overview:**

Today we take a day trip to Bratislava, where we enjoy a city tour and view the main sights with a local guide. This includes lunch at a local restaurant. Return to Vienna in the evening.

**Accommodation:**

Mercure Wien City (or similar)

**Day 6**

**Locations:** Vienna

**Overview:**

This morning we visit two museums, each dedicated to the life and works of the two most renowned classical music composers associated with the city: Mozart's house and Beethoven Pasqualatihaus. Both composers spent significant parts of their lives in Vienna, producing many of their most famous works.

The afternoon is free to enjoy the city at your own pace. In the evening, we enjoy dinner together at a local restaurant.

**Accommodation:**

Mercure Wien City (or similar)

**Day 7**

**Locations:** Vienna

**Overview:**

This morning, we visit the Secession Building. The Secession Building is an iconic Art Nouveau exhibition hall and a symbol of the Vienna



Secession movement, founded in 1897 by a group of rebellious artists, including Gustav Klimt, Koloman Moser, and Josef Hoffmann. The gallery hosts a number of famous permanent works, well as as contemporary exhibitions in the spirit of its founders' commitment to new ideas and experimentation.

The afternoon is free to enjoy the city at your own pace. In the evening, we attend another opera performance, this time of *Siegfried*, the third of the four music dramas that constitute *Wagner's Ring Cycle*.

**Accommodation:**

Mercure Wien City (or similar)

**Day 8**

**Locations:** Vienna - Heiligenkreuz - Mayerling - Baden - Vienna

**Overview:**

Today we conduct a full-day excursions to three historical and scenic destinations located near Vienna, Austria, each with unique cultural and historical significance. We begin with a guided tour of Stift Heiligenkreuz, a Cistercian monastery founded in 1133, nestled in the Vienna Woods. We then visit the Carmelite Monastery, a historic monastery in the small village of Mayerling. Lunch is included at a local restaurant in the spa town of Baden. You then have free time in the afternoon to explore Baden, before we return to Vienna.

**Accommodation:**

Mercure Wien City (or similar)

**Day 9**

**Locations:** Vienna

**Overview:**

This morning, we visit the Belvedere Museum (both upper and lower palaces) and take in the museum's impressive collection of art, which includes pieces from the Middle Ages to the contemporary, with a focus on Austrian art, particularly works from the Viennese Secession and

Expressionism movements.

In the afternoon, we visit Schoenbrunn Palace for the Imperial tour. One of Vienna's most famous landmarks and important cultural sites, this grand Baroque palace once served as the summer residence of the Habsburg emperors and their families.

**Accommodation:**

Mercure Wien City (or similar)

**Day 10**

**Locations:** Vienna

**Overview:**

This morning is free to explore the city on your own. In the afternoon, we attend an Opera performance of *Götterdämmerung*, the fourth and last instalment of Wagner's Ring cycle.

**Accommodation:**

Mercure Wein City (or similar)

**Day 11**

**Locations:** Munich

**Overview:**

This morning we transfer to the station and board a train (1st class) to Munich. On arrival we'll be met and transferred to our hotel, where we'll enjoy dinner together.

**Accommodation:**

2 nights at Eurostars Grand Central (or similar)

**Day 12**

**Locations:** Munich

**Overview:**

This morning, we enjoy a guided walking tour of Munich's highlights, with an emphasis on stories of Wagner, including how he met King

Ludwig II. The afternoon is free to explore the city on your own.

**Accommodation:**

Eurostars Grand Central (or similar)

**Day 13**

**Locations:** Munich - Donaustauf - Bayreuth

**Overview:**

Today, we travel in our coach from Munich to Bayreuth. On route, we stop at Donaustauf, a small town located on the banks of the Danube River, most famous for being home to the Walhalla Memorial, a stunning neoclassical monument that commemorates notable figures in German history. In Bayreuth, we have dinner together at our hotel.

**Accommodation:**

2 nights at Bayerischer Hof (or similar)

**Day 14**

**Locations:** Bayreuth

**Overview:**

We begin the day with a guided tour of the town, where we will see the main sights that relate to the life of Wagner. In the afternoon we'll visit the Margravial Opera House, considered one of the most significant examples of 18th-century European theatre architecture, renowned for its exceptional acoustics and decorative interior.

**Accommodation:**

Bayerischer Hof (or similar)

**Day 15**

**Locations:** Leipzig

**Overview:**

This morning we travel from Bayreuth to Leipzig. The remainder of the day is free for you to explore Leipzig at your own pace, before we



reconvene for dinner together at our hotel.

**Accommodation:**

3 nights at Viktor's Residenz hotel (or similar)

**Day 16**

**Locations:** Leipzig

**Overview:**

This morning, we take a half-day guided city tour of Leipzig that follows in the steps of Wagner. After the tour, we visit the Bach museum, located near St. Thomas Church in the heart of Leipzig, where Bach spent the later part of his life. The museum provides an in-depth look at his contributions to music and the cultural context of his time.

**Accommodation:**

Viktor's Residenz hotel (or similar)

**Day 17**

**Locations:** Leipzig- Halle - Leipzig

**Overview:**

Today we conduct a day trip to Halle, famous as the birthplace of Baroque composer Georg Friedrich Händel. We take a guided walking tour of the city, including visits to the striking, Gothic Marienkirche and Moritzburg Art Museum Halle, host to an impressive collection of fine art spanning several centuries, from medieval to contemporary.

**Accommodation:**

Viktor's Residenz hotel (or similar)

## Day 18

**Locations:** Dresden

### Overview:

This morning we transfer to the station and board a train (1st class) to Munich. On arrival we'll be met and greeted and transferred to our hotel.

### Accommodation:

2 nights at Maritim Dresden Hotel (or similar).

## Day 19

**Locations:** Dresden

### Overview:

The tour starts with a half day tour around the city of Dresden. The focus of the guided tour is of Wagner related sites in Dresden. In the afternoon, we'll visit the Green Vault (Grünes Gewölbe), a unique historic museum containing the one of the largest collection of treasures in Europe.

In the evening, the group will enjoy a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

### Accommodation:

Maritim Dresden Hotel (or similar).

## Day 20

**Locations:** Dresden

### Overview:

The tour concludes after breakfast.

## Inclusions / Exclusions

### What's included in our Tour

- 19 nights accommodation.

- 19 breakfasts, 2 lunches and 6 dinners.
- Tickets to 4 Wagner operas.
- All excursions, sightseeing, and entrance fees as per the tour.
- Tips and gratuities.
- Detailed preparatory material.

#### **What's not included in our Tour**

- Return international airfare and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Items of personal nature such as laundry and phone calls.

#### **Level 2 - Moderate**

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.