Australia 1300 888 225
New Zealand 0800 440 055
info@odysseytraveller.com

From
$6,422 USD

Single Room
$7,309 USD

Twin Room
$6,422 USD

Prices valid until
30th December 2024

12 days
Duration

Germany
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Richard Wagner Ring Cycle, Leipzig | Small Group Tours Germany

Jul 03 2024 to Jul 14 2024

Richard Wagner Ring Cycle Tour to Leipzig, Germany

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours across Western Europe and beyond. We explore Germany's incredible natural beauty, its city state and imperial heritage, World Heritage Sites, and world famous cities, all with some truly spectacular scenery along the way on the Wagner program. This and more is all

waiting to be explored on one of Odyssey's small group music tours of Germany, designed for the senior traveller, and led by experienced, and enthusiastic like minded people.

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 Wagner Ring Cycle Tour gives you the opportunity to see the extraordinary grand operas performed in Richard Wagner's city of birth, Leipzig. This 12 day tour includes four concerts (a tetralogy of the entire cycle) at the Oper Leipzig (Leipzig Opera), where the Oper Leipzig opera company, together with the Gewandhouse Orchestra, will perform this famous Wagnerian masterpiece, this is musical theatre for any ring nut.

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 in the city.

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 *Gesamtkuntswerk*, 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 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 Mathlide, 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 Seigfried 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 Leipzig, our tour takes in several places closely associated with Wagner:

- **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.

- **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.

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.

2024 Wagner Ring Cycle schedule to follow

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

The schedule for 2025or 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 10 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 Germany with our country profile and see all other departures as well. You can also browse other other performing arts and musical tours Odyssey offers.

Articles about 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 Germany
- A History of Berlin for Tourists
- The Oberammergau Passion Play
- The Bauhaus Movement

- 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

- This itinerary is not available for 2023. The festival is taking place in Bayreuth this year and in 2024 as well (instead of Leipzig)
- 2024 itinerary will be revised and released later in 2023.

Highlights

1. Tickets to 'Siegfried', 'Die Walkure', 'Gotterdammerung', and 'Das Rheingold'.
2. A Oper Leipzig production together with the Gewandhaus Orchestra.
3. A visit to the Framus Vintage Archive, a museum of instruments.

4. A guided tour of Oberammergau's Passion Play Theatre.
5. A guided tour of Bayreuth's magnificent Festspielhaus.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Dresden

Overview:

Upon arrival in Dresden make your own way to the hotel. In the late afternoon, we have a welcome meeting followed by dinner.

For those who arrive early, there will be time to visit some of the city's fine art galleries as well as to learn about its more recent past.

Accommodation:

2 nights in Maritim Dresden Hotel or similar.

Day 2

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.

Accommodation:

Maritim Dresden Hotel or similar.

Day 3

Locations: Leipzig

Overview:

This morning we transfer to the station and board a train to Leipzig. On arrival we'll be met and transferred to our hotel with some free time to

rest before tonight’s performance.

Tonight we enjoy a 5pm performance of “Das Rheingold,” followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

5 nights at Victor's Residenz or similar

Day 4

Locations: Leipzig

Overview:

This morning, we take a guided city tour of Leipzig that follows in the steps of Wagner. After the tour, you will have the afternoon to spend as you wish. We will reconvene for a 5pm performance of the second part of the ring cycle, “Die Walküre.”

Accommodation:

Victor's Residenz or similar

Day 5

Locations: Leipzig

Overview:

Today we visit Halle, famous as the birthplace of Baroque composer Georg Friedrich Händel. We take a guided walking tour of the city, including visits to Marienkirche and Händel museum.

Accommodation:

Victor's Residenz or similar

Day 6

Locations: Leipzig

Overview:

This morning, we visit the Museum of Musical Instruments, part of the University of Leipzig. It first opened in 1929 and today is considered one of the largest music instrument museums in Europe with a collection of

approximately 10,000 objects. The collection includes valuable instruments and beyond, as well as music-related items from the Renaissance, Baroque and Bach's Leipzig periods.

The afternoon is free to enjoy the city at your own pace. Later we enjoy another opera performance, this time of *Siegfried*, the third of the four music dramas that constitute Der Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring of the Nibelung). This opera premiered at the Bayreuth Festspielhaus on 16 August 1876, as part of the first complete performance of The Ring cycle.

Accommodation:

Victor's Residenz or similar

Day 7

Locations: Leipzig

Overview:

Leipzig is not only the birthplace of Wagner but also the place where Bach lived later in his career and where he died. Today we'll visit the Bach Museum, located near St.Thomas Church where Bach worked.

This evening we attend the final installment of Wagner's Ring Cycle, 'The Twilight of the Gods'.

Accommodation:

Victor's Residenz or similar

Day 8

Locations: Bayreuth

Overview:

This morning we travel from Leipzig to Bayreuth where we tour the Margravial Opera House, a Baroque opera house built between 1744 and 1748. It is one of Europe's few surviving theatres of the period and

has been extensively restored and re-opened in mid-2018.

In the evening we'll enjoy a group dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

2 nights Bayerischer Hof or similar

Day 9

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 stunning Festspielhaus opera house for a guided tour. The opera house was built by Richard Wagner and dedicated solely to the performance of his stage works.

Accommodation:

Bayerischer Hof or similar

Day 10

Locations: Munich

Overview:

Today we depart Bayreuth and travel to Munich. On our way we'll stop at the Walhalla memorial, a hall of fame that includes important artists, composers, and other German cultural icons.

After arriving in Munich, we have visit Munich's Pinakothek der Moderne, one of the world's largest museums of modern and contemporary art. Nearby are other great art museums that you may wish to visit on your own time tomorrow afternoon.

Accommodation:

2 nights Hotel Excelsior or similar

Day 11

Locations: Munich

Overview:

Today we a guided tour of city's highlights and tell stories of Wagner, including how he met King Ludwig II. The afternoon is free to explore the city on your own.

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

Accommodation:

Hotel Excelsior or similar

Day 12

Locations: Munich

Overview:

The tour concludes after breakfast.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 11 nights accommodation.
- 11 breakfasts and 4 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.