The **Ottheinrich Building**, with its splendid decorative figures, is one of the earliest and most significant Renaissance structures north of the Alps. The facade of the **Friedrich Building**, on the other hand, draws the visitor’s eye with its ancestral portrait gallery of the Electoral Palatinate, while its interior hides historic furnishings.

The impressive terraces of the **Hortus Palatinus**, which were among the most famous Renaissance gardens in the world in their day, are as deserving of a visit as the Heidelberg Tun and the German Apothecary Museum.
E ach year, Heidelberg Palace (Schloss Heidelberg) attracts around one million visitors from all over the world. Since the early 19th century, these impressive ruins have been synonymous with Romanticism.

It would be hard to imagine a more striking location: Set against the deep green forests on the north side of Königstuhl hill, the red sandstone ruins tower majestically over the Neckar Valley. From its lofty position, the palace's silhouette dominates Heidelberg's historic town center.

The rich and eventful history of Heidelberg Palace began when the counts palatine of the Rhine – later prince electors – established their residence at Heidelberg. First mentioned in 1225, this was destined to become one of the grandest palaces of the Renaissance.

ARCHITECTURAL MASTERPIECES OF THE RENAISSANCE

Until the Thirty Years’ War, Heidelberg Palace boasted one of the most notable collection of buildings in the Holy Roman Empire. In brisk succession, the prince electors commissioned a series of imposing buildings: Hall of Glass, Ottheinrich Hall, Friedrich Hall and English Hall. Each one is a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture. Their magnificent façades create a resplendent frame for the courtyard.

THE RAVAGES OF WAR AND THE FORCES OF NATURE

In the late 17th century, the palace was repeatedly attacked and ultimately destroyed by the French in the Nine Years’ War. Today, the “castle illumination” stages a magnificent fireworks show several times a year highlighting the previous destruction. In 1764, after some provisional repairs, the battered palace was heavily damaged again: this time by the forces of nature in the form of two devastating lightning strikes. The once majestic residence was almost completely burned out, and became a ruins.

THE PALACE AND GARDEN–MYTHS AND LEGENDS

In the 19th century, the palace ruins became the paragon of the Romantic mood and were promoted to National Monument during Historicism. The imposing edifice and famous garden, the Hortus Palatinus, became associated in myth. The garden, the last work commissioned by the prince electors, was never completed. Some remaining landscaped terraces and other vestiges hint at the awe-inspiring scale of this ambitious project. In the 17th century, it was praised as the “eighth wonder of the world”. Time may have taken its toll, but Heidelberg’s fame lives on to this day.

A grand 19th century expansion: Friedrichshuus with plasterwork ceilings as well as wooden and sandstone portals and archways.

The palace buildings are adorned with sculptures: featured here, a statue of the Palatine Prince Elector Friedrich IV

The ancestors of the palatine prince electors look down proudly from the façade of Friedrichshuus

A highlight of German Renaissance architecture: Ottheinrichshau

The palace is open to the public during daylight hours.

Group tours by arrangement; special rates as per online program and by arrangement.

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ETHICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RENAISSANCE

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