

## Welcome to Tartu – the city of good thoughts!

Archeological finds excavated in Tartu give us confirmation that the Dome Hill of Tartu was a temporary settlement of hunters and fishermen at the beginning of the Stone Age already in the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC. By the 5th-6th century a powerful ancient Estonian stronghold had been built on the high headland at the river where the Observatory stands today. The first mention of Tartu in written chronicles was made in 1030, the year when the Kiev prince Yaroslav the Wise successfully raided Tartu burning down the Estonian stronghold.

At the beginning of the 13th century Tartu fell into the hands of the Knights of the Cross who built a mighty stone castle for the seat of the Bishop on the site of the former stronghold. The Bishop ruled almost the whole of South - Eastern Estonia. Tartu as a town is first mentioned in 1248. In the 14th century the Dome Hill and the town were surrounded by a defence wall and a moat. The wall separated the lower town from the Bishop's estate on the Dome Hill. The town was surrounded by its outskirts, gardens and pasture-land.

At the end of the 13th century Tartu became a member of the Hanseatic League and trading with Russian and Western European cities Pskov helped Tartu become one of the most important commercial towns in Livonia.

At the end of the 16th century new wars caused destruction. During the Swedish-Polish wars the town went from hands into hands. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Swedes again took hold of Tartu and a longer peaceful period under the rule of Swedes followed. The rulers strengthened the positions of the protestant church establishing a secondary school in Tartu in 1630 which was converted into a university two years later. In honour of the King Gustavus II Adolphus the university was named Academia Gustaviana. The university functioned with interval until 1699 in Tartu, then it was transferred to Pärnu where it was closed in 1710.

In the year 1700 the Great Northern War broke out between Sweden and Russia. As a result, the territory of Estonia was united with Russia for a long time. The continuing war with Sweden resulted in a full destruction of the town. The damaging fires of the 18th century caused the disappearance of the whole architectural heritage and only in the fire of 1775 two thirds of the town burnt down. Soon the reconstruction started. The reopening of the university in 1802 enriched the townscape with many university buildings .

During World War 2 fierce battles were waged along the river Emajõgi in 1941 and also in 1944. Tartu lost 43.7% of its buildings including numerous university buildings.

Below is a short description of places of interest we will see during our excursion.



Throughout centuries the centre of town activity has been **Town Hall Square**, the history of which goes back to ancient times. At that time the market place was the square lying between the fortress on Toome Hill and the harbour on the banks of the Emajõgi River. This tradition persisted for centuries.

The **Town Hall** is the third building having the same function on the present site. The present building was erected after the design of the German architect J. H. B. Walter. The festive opening took place on 9 October 1786. Similar urban palaces with towers can be found both in the Netherlands and Bavaria.



Estonian's answer to the Leaning Tower of Pisa is the so-called "leaning House" at the northeast corner of Town Hall Square. The late 18th century building is called the **Barclay House** after Duchess Barclay who bought the house in 1819 after the death of her husband, Barclay de Tolly. You can see the inside of the house by visiting the Tartu Art Museum.

**St John's Church** was first mentioned in 1323. The church was completed in its present form in the 14th century and is a unique example of Gothic architecture in whole Europe with its almost 1,000 preserved terracotta figures. The church was badly damaged in World War II. After a long period of restoration, the church was re-opened on 29 June 2005, the Day of the City of Tartu.



The most impressive example of classical architecture in Tartu is **the main building of the University of Tartu**. The construction was done in 1803-1809 after the design of Johann Wilhelm Krause. The imposing building contains a festive assembly hall which because of its excellent acoustics is also functioning as a concert hall. The façade of the main building with its six columns is a long-term symbol of the university and Tartu as a whole.

From the foot of the Dome Hill we start ascending it where a wonderful view opens to the eye from the top – the old town with its red roofs, the river Emajõgi, distant living districts on the left bank. In 1803-1807 the university professors Parrot, Morgenstern and Krause were the initiators of planting trees on the hill which is covered by a cool and shady park today.



The ruins of **the Dome Cathedral** remind us of the times when Tartu was the residence of the Bishop. The construction of a huge stone cathedral began at the end of the 13th century. Two hundred years later the work was completed. In the second half of the 15th century two big towers, unique in the Baltic area, were added. The beauty of the cathedral made it equal to the Dome Cathedral in Riga. The Cathedral was destroyed during the Livonian War. Today, the building houses the University of Tartu History Museum.

**Angel's Bridge** was built in 1836-1838 after the classical design of the university architect B. G. Jacobi. The bridge is dedicated to the first Tartu University rector in the Russian period G. F. Parrot (1767-1852). From the bridge a wonderful view to the old town, the Town Hall and Lossi street opens before us.





The **Old Anatomical Theatre** was designed by the university architect J. W. Krause in the classical style. Initially it was a rotunda built in 1805 on a foundation in the shape of a square. Only in 1860 wings were added. The building was considered to be Krause's masterpiece.

The **Observatory of Tartu** was built by J. W. Krause in 1807-1810. The famous astronomer and geodesist Friedrich Georg Wilhelm Struve (1793-1864) worked as a director of the Observatory in 1820-1839. His observations with the world's largest telescope with lenses, the Fraunhofer refractor, in 1824 made him and the Observatory of Tartu world famous.



The **Gunpowder Cellar** was built into the moat that separated the episcopal castle from outer fortifications in 1767. It was used as a gunpowder cellar up to 1809. Until 1982 it served as a storehouse of different institutions, then as a café and, starting from 2000, as a beer restaurant.

More information for tourists about Tartu can be found at <http://www.visittartu.com/tartu-city-tourism-information>