

Aspects of Franconia Nuremberg's Amber Museum JANUARY 2020

Tucked away in the Old Town, yet only a short walk from the market square, is one of Nuremberg's smallest, yet most intriguing museums: The **Amber Museum**. The museum displays over 400 varieties of amber, many with fascinating inclusions, i.e. remnants of flora and fauna trapped within them from millions of years ago. The museum also has examples of amber jewellery dating back 3,000 years, as well as contemporary amber sculptures and artwork. The star of the collection is the largest piece of amber in Germany, weighing 12.41 kg (27.36 lbs).

Amber is fossilized tree resin, which has been appreciated for its colour and natural beauty since Neolithic times. Resin, as you know, will burn, which explains its German name of Bernstein, derived from "bernen" (to burn/G. brennen). In Arabic it is called "anbar", the source of the English "amber".

Amber, sometimes referred to as the "Gold of the Baltic", comes from the resin of coniferous forests that grew in this region over 40 million years ago. Baltic amber is generally harvested from the beaches of the Baltic coast, where it is found washed up on the shore. Alternatively, it can be sourced from surface mines. The coal fields of Bitterfeld in East Germany, for example, have always supplied large quantities of amber.

We are very fortunate to have this museum in Nuremberg, which, being rather hidden away, gets relatively few visitors. All the more reason, perhaps, for us to drop in and enjoy a very personal introduction to this fascinating "gemstone". I'm thinking of going there again in the next couple of months so if you would like to join me wait for the announcement in our Newsletter or by email.

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