





Peter von Puttkamer

# A LOOK AT LINDAU



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## On the border between north and south

Exploring Lindau's urban history



Lindau's landscape and history join to form a unique symphony. The foothills of the Austrian and Swiss Alps and the adjacent landscape that was shaped by the ice age are a perfect backdrop for the eastern part of Lake Constance, where the picturesque historic center of the southernmost town of Germany (apart from Füssen) is situated on an island about 200 meters from the mainland. Thanks to this combination Lindau can justifiably call itself the "Happy End of Germany".

Its history, which is more eventful than that of many a large city, can be traced back to the ninth century. The oldest proven documentation of the name Lindau, which means "island covered with linden trees", dates back to the year 882. The document refers to a convent which, according to legend, was founded around the year 800 by Count Adalbert of Rätien to give thanks for being saved when he was in distress at sea. It served to supply unmarried members of the Swabian aristocracy with appropriate partners. The members of the convent were

not subject to the strict rules of an order and the women were allowed to leave the order if they were to be married. This type of convent was called a canoness-stift. From 1466 each abbess became a Princess of the Empire.

On the mainland right before the island, important routes from the west and north that have existed since Roman times meet in today's suburb of Aeschach. Around the year 950 the convent founded a market here. The market was fortunate to benefit

*Excerpt from the "Schwabens-karte" (Swabian map) "Totius Sveviae novissima tabula" by Janssonius, Amsterdam 1633*

*p.4: The first realistic representation of Lindau shows the city around 1550 and was drawn up for the widely spread cosmography of the Sebastian Münster (Sample: City Museum Lindau)*





*In 1499 Albrecht Dürer painted the Lindau patrician Oswald Kröll, who worked for the Große Ravensburger Handelsgesellschaft (Great Trading Company of Ravensburg) in Nuremberg. The original of the portrait is in the old Pinakothek in Munich, whereas the City Museum of Lindau has a copy. (Sample: City Museum Lindau)*

from the fact that Lake Constance served as a traffic node, as water transport was preferred to land transport up until the nineteenth century. The lake also connected said routes with important Bündner Alpine passes. These could be reached from the Rhine Valley. The Rhine flows into the “Swabian Sea” directly opposite Lindau.

Due to wars around the year 1079 the market was moved onto the island. This led to the development of a settlement for merchants and craftsmen, the foundations of which can be seen up until today. An imperial tax register from the year 1241 bears witness to its rapid growth. It states that Lindau had far higher tax obligations than most other trading posts in the area, such as Ulm, Constance or Ravensburg for example. Throughout the centuries it was the transport of bulk goods (salt, corn, wine, wood, linen) over the lake as well as the trans alpine trade with Italy and France that ensured Lindau’s prosperity. The first mention of textile merchants from Lindau in Genoa dates back to the years 1213 and 1225. In the year 1500 the Lake Constance city established a regular courier service to Milan, which was called the “Mailänder -” or “Lindauer Bote”. Up until the year 1826 it brought news, goods and people across the Alps, most notably Germany’s princes of poetry Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1788.

Thanks to the privileges of Rudolf von Habsburg (1274/75) and other kings, the market settlement became independent of

the convent and was awarded the status of a city of the Empire, which means that it was only subject to the king or emperor. At first it was not the abbess who held power but solely the patricians, merchants dealing in bulk and exotic goods who formed a society in 1350. In 1345 the craftsmen, who had joined to form eight guilds, fought for and were granted a strong voice in government. Their influence was severely curtailed in 1551 when Emperor Karl V. modified the constitution of all free cities of the Empire.

Lindau was autonomous and prosperous and had been a member of several city alliances since 1315. It had purchased parts of the mainland and the culmination of its medieval prestige was reached in 1496 when an Imperial Diet was held within its city walls. One of the main reasons why Maximilian I. called the princes of the Empire or their envoys to the island city was the ideal road connection to northern Italy, where the king was involved in a military campaign.

Approximately 30 years later the Reformation started gaining popularity in Lindau. In 1528 the council abolished the celebration of Mass. During the Imperial Diet of Augsburg in 1530 Lindau did not sign the “Confessio Augustana”, which was signed by followers of Luther. Instead it proposed its own creed together with the cities of Strasburg, Constance and Memmingen. The Vierstädtebekenntnis (Creed of Four Cities) was influenced by the teachings of

the Swiss reformer Zwingli. It was only after his death in 1531 that Lindau started following Luther’s doctrines.

The Reformation deepened the rift between the city and its neighbors, including the convent, all of whom remained Catholic. The mightiest among them, Austria, tried to reconvert the city to Catholicism during the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) and to strengthen its ties to Lindau. However, during the Westphalian peace congress Austria failed in its endeavors. Lindau and several other Protestant cities of the Empire were successfully represented by the skillful urban diplomat Valentin Heider.

Thanks to its location the island city was hardly affected by any fighting. Only once did anyone lay siege to the city. This happened early in 1647, when Swedish troops besieged the town in vain until they retreated two months later. Lindau was therefore spared any large-scale destruction. However, the great fires of 1720 and 1728 succeeded where wars failed.

From 1796 the violent consequences of the French Revolution were being directly felt in Lindau. Austrian, French and Russian troops successively occupied the city, which had to accommodate and feed them. By 1798 France had occupied the entire left bank of the Rhine river.

The princes that were thereby driven from their land were compensated with cities and abbeys of the Empire on the right

bank. This is how at the end of 1802 the city and convent fell into the possession of Prince Karl August von Bretzenheim, brother of the next to last princess-abbess Friederike. Dissatisfied with his new property, he exchanged it for lands in Hungary in a deal struck with Austria in March 1804. Only two years later, following a defeat against Napoleon, Austria had to relinquish the land to the French ally Bavaria, which had long been exporting salt from Reichenhall to Switzerland via Lindau.

This transfer of possession to Bavaria in 1806 had far-reaching consequences. The actual city of Lindau was reduced to the island part, which at the time had a size of about 50 hectares and a population of around 2,800, while the mainland part of about 5,000 hectares and with a population of around 4,200, centered around the villages of Aeschach, Hoyren and Reutin, was split off. With the arrival of Bavarian officials, military and servants the Catholic share of the population grew until, after about 100 years, it surpassed the Protestant share (1905: 6,530 inhabitants). Finally, in 1853/54 Lindau was connected to the railroad network through Bavaria. The new means of transport encouraged tourism and the trade in grain, which for a while was the most important sector of the city’s economy. The first large hotels were constructed close to the railway station, which in itself drastically changed the face of the hitherto undeveloped western island. The lake harbor, which was completed in 1856, and the railway station together formed a

functional interface between the two most modern means of transport of the time, railroad and steam navigation. As the southwestern entrance to Bavaria, the lake harbor was given a distinctly Bavarian character of which the lion and lighthouse remain.

The first tourists arrived around the middle of the nineteenth century. They belonged to the aristocracy and upper middle-class such as the Bavarian Prince Regent Luitpold and were called “Sommerfrischler”. With their majestic villas they created the “Bavarian Riviera”. The center is the Lindenhof Villa in Schachen, which was built by the merchant Friedrich Gruber in 1842/45. Gruber was born in Lindau but interestingly enough earned his money in Italy.

The band of villas has only belonged to Lindau since 1922. This was the year in which the communities of Aeschach, Hoyren (with Schachen) and Reutin were reunited with the island city after having been split off in 1808/18.

Just as Lindau survived the Thirty Year’s War virtually unscathed so it weathered the Second World War. The city and district of Lindau were the only part of Bavaria that was not placed under American control in 1945. It was placed under French control as the area constituted a land bridge between their occupied zones in southwestern Germany and western Austria. Therefore, Lindau was no longer subject to the Bavarian authorities. A separate district executive

committee was installed, which took over the responsibilities of the usual provincial government. This exceptional constitutional state of affairs ended in 1955/56. The opportunity was however used to found a casino (1950) and to attract industry. This period also witnessed the beginnings of the Lindau Psychotherapy Weeks (1950) and the Lindau Meeting of Nobel Prize Laureates (1951). Both events have been adding annually to Lindau’s kudos as a conference city for over 50 years.

In 1976 the villages of Oberreitnau and Unterreitnau were incorporated into Lindau, thereby almost doubling the surface area to about 3,300 hectares. Of this only 68 hectares are actually on the island, where nowadays hardly more than eleven percent of the population lives: 2,800 out of a total of 24,600. Nevertheless, the island has remained the heart of the tourism industry. For many tourists from the south this is their first stop in Germany while many Germans take a break here on their way to Italy, thus confirming the city’s role as interface between north and south. This role was underlined by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2002 when it founded an office of the Mediterranean. It is situated in the Luitpold Park, a former barracks on the western island, which has been used as a sophisticated service and training center since 2001. With the center and other projects Lindau is confronting current economic and social challenges. Its motto is “City with history – location with a future”.

*Heiner Stauder*



*Princess-Abbess Friederike von Bretzenheim (1771–1816) owes her fame to Horst Wolfram Geißler’s novel “Der liebe Augustin”. After an eight year term she left the convent in 1796 to marry. (Sample: City museum Lindau)*





## The Harbor – landmark of the city

For centuries the lake harbor was central to the economy of Lindau. The old lighthouse, which was part of the city's fortifications, is a reminder of this. Its name "Mangturm" refers to the fulleries that used to be in the vicinity. While Lindau was a free city of the Empire the harbor was open. In 1812 the Bavarian authorities finally ordered the construction of a stone breakwater to create a separate basin. After the railroad was extended to the island in 1854 it was enlarged by approximately



*Exclusive hotels and the Old Lighthouse from the thirteenth century give the lake promenade its distinctive character*



*Left: The lion is the Bavarian heraldic animal and so makes it clear to everyone that Lindau is the Bavarian entrance to the "Swabian Sea". Right: The western part of the lake promenade is dominated by the main railway station that was constructed in 1911–1922. Two passenger ships are moored in front of it, one of which is the only paddle-steamer on the lake, the "Hohentwiel"*

four hectares to its current size. The new lake harbor was completed in 1856 and the entrance has since been flanked by the 33 meters high New Lighthouse and the 6 meters high Bavarian Lion. Both helped King Maximilian II. of Bavaria to decorate the southwestern entrance to his empire in a representative way.

*Bottom: The marina of the "Lindau Sailing Club"*

*p.8: Welcome to Lindau!*





## Arriving from the lake

When arriving on the island by ship one is immediately reminded of Venice. The lion with the lighthouse, the majestic buildings, the high towers and medieval gables, the entrances to narrow alleys and streets, all of these things suggest that the waterways reach far into the island.

In fact, water sports are the islanders favourite. Visitors value Lindau as port of departure for an uplifting boat ride.

*p.10: The Island of Lindau is a popular destination for sailors*



*Top: The berths for boats are in high demand*

*Bottom right: Lindau's landmark*

*Middle bottom: The sea gulls have arrived*