

### Trail #3 Roman legions on the Danubius – the river that attracted cultures

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In 2021, the Roman *limes* was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This recognition by the World Heritage Organisation, extending from Regensburg or, more precisely, from Eining all the way to Hungary, provides the coordinates for this trail. The trail follows the course of the Danube where the river once marked the Roman border and acted as a line of orientation. It leads through Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and Serbia. But the Danube was already an axis of development and infrastructure prior to Roman times. Traces of human settlement go back 70,000 years. Archaeological treasures have been found and presented to the public in the Wachau region (e.g. Venus of Willendorf, 40,000 years old) and in Serbia. They prove that, from time immemorial, the Danube has always been the central European axis for economic and cultural activity. The Romans brought a great deal of culture with them, but also prospered from Celtic and Germanic customs and techniques. Their main concern was the art of living and surviving along the Danube. Agriculture, urban culture, urban development – for example in Regensburg or Carnuntum – and ultimately philosophy were discovered, practiced, and fostered along the Danube. In particular, viticulture has its roots here, from the Wachau all the way to Serbia. The Danube formed the hub of trading routes converging from North and East (e.g., the Amber Road) and leading further southwards via Sopron, Szombathely, and Ljubljana, all the way to Aquileia in Veneto. While Emperor Marcus Aurelius in the second century AD resided in Carnuntum and was an intellectual still grounded on the spiritual world of the Roman gods, the final period of the Roman world along the Danube was increasingly shaped by Christianity. Leading religious personalities like St Florian, who died a martyr, and most notably St Martin and St Severin came to be pivotal figures in a world of dissolution and decay. Following the Roman Trail along the Danube opens up an astonishing perspective of achievements in logistics, architecture and culture. Roman culture was neither domineering nor exclusive; it was open to mixing with other cultures, to progress and friendship across its own borders. In this respect, the trail shows that “borders” are transitory and ultimately remain fluid. The Danube as a fluid border was therefore always a connecting force as well.