



"The Limes as the Historical Frontier of the Roman Empire has Great Significance for the History of Europe"

Interview with Member of the Board, First Mayor,
Christian Wagner

In 1995, the German Limes Road Association was founded with the aim of creating a tourist route for motorists along the Upper Germanic-Raetian Limes. Today, more than 25 years later, the association's members include over 90 towns, markets and municipalities as well as numerous districts and tourist communities. The members are strung together like a string of pearls along the Limes World Heritage Site.

Along the UNESCO World Heritage Sites Upper Germanic-Raetian Limes (World Heritage Site since 2005), Lower Germanic Limes (World Heritage Site since 2021) and Danube Limes (World Heritage Site since 2021), the German Limes Road and the German Limes Cycle Path run right across Germany from the Lower Rhine in North Rhine-Westphalia through Rhineland-Palatinate, Hesse, Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria to Passau on the Danube.

The association is managed by an eight-member board chaired by the Lord Mayor of the city of Aalen. In this interview, we introduce you to our board member, First Mayor Christian Wagner. He talks about the historical and cultural significance of the Limes, the deep roots of the Limes as a cultural heritage in the population and the close inter-communal cooperation in the association.

Dear Mayor Wagner. Thank you very much for taking the time for our interview. Would you start by briefly introducing yourself?

My name is Christian Wagner, I am 47 years old, married and since 2014 I have been the first mayor of the market town of Kipfenberg, which represents the geographical centre of Bavaria. Since 2020, I have also been the chairman of the special ILE working group of the "Limes communities" in the Altmühltal and have also supported the "German Limes Road" association as a member of the board since that time.





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What is Kipfenberg's connection to the Limes?

In Kipfenberg and the other "Limes communities" in the district of Eichstätt Altmannstein, Denkendorf, Kinding, Titting and Walting, the World Heritage Site is firmly rooted in the minds of the population. In Kipfenberg itself, our open-air swimming pool, one of our schools, various streets, a district and our big folk festival, the "Limesfest", which has been celebrated in mid-August every year for over 50 years and at which we remember our ancient and medieval past, are named after it.

In many places in our region, the Limes or Roman history is still partly visible. Examples of this are the fort in Pfünz and the Limes palisade in Kipfenberg.

Pfünz Roman Fort (partially reconstructed):

Pfünz had considerable strategic importance in Roman times, as the Roman roads Weißenburg - Kösching and Nassenfels - Böhming crossed here and the Limes, the Roman border fortification, was only 10 km away. The fort (Roman name Vetonianis) was built around 90 AD. Stationed in the camp was a unit of foot soldiers with a mounted division (cohors equitata) with a total of about 500 men, who were recruited from the Pannonian tribe of the Breuk people and who were granted Roman citizenship.



Roman Fort at Pfünz



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Reconstructed Limes watchtower with palisade fence in Kipfenberg:

Because of its direct visual contact with the fort and the entire valley from Böhming to Ibling downstream from the Altmühl, this tower was particularly important strategically.

There is no other place along the UNESCO World Heritage Limes where you can see all the expansion phases of the fortifications and a Roman fort at once. Since 2018, the reconstruction of a section of a palisade fence has been located in the immediate vicinity of the tower. The reconstruction makes the impressive dimensions of the former Roman border wall clear.



Palisade reconstruction at the Limes Tower

What excites you personally about taking on this honorary position on the board of the German Limes Road Association? What links have you developed to the Limes as a result?

First of all, I have been interested in history since my earliest childhood. I can still remember devouring the "Was ist Was" books and, in this context, the copies of "Ancient Rome" and "The Germans". The Limes as the historical borderline of the Roman Empire has great significance for the history of Europe. The mere idea of its sheer length can still inspire people interested in history today and immerse them in a different world. In my opinion, the Limes has not only historical but also cultural significance. It connects different regions and countries with each other and offers the opportunity to explore the cultural heritage along this route and thus to get to know many things. Through my involvement in the board, I can contribute in part to remembering and representing this heritage of the Limes. In addition, the Limes often runs through scenic areas. As a member of the board, I can contribute to the development of historical-touristic offers along the Limes. Last but not least, being on the board of the association offers the opportunity to work with like-minded people and thus be part of a committed community.



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How would you assess the awareness and perception in Kipfenberg of the Limes?

As already mentioned, I may speak here not only for the market town of Kipfenberg but for the "Limes communities" in the Altmühltal. Through the diverse presentations and lectures, e.g. on World Heritage Day, the points of interest in the area, the committed local guides, the district curator of local history, the respective responsible persons and supporters in the communities, the managing director of the Limes communities in the Altmühl Valley and, last but not least, through the Roman and Bavarian Museum in Kipfenberg with the annual large museum festival and the "Limes Festival", the Limes is constantly present and thus anchored in the consciousness of our population.



Limestfest Kipfenberg: Limes Queen Kerstin Hausmann on a chariot during the procession

What synergies with other towns or districts have developed as a result of Kipfenberg's membership of the German Limes Road?

Of course, we cultivate very, very close cooperation within our association, if only because of our proximity to each other. For example, we are planning to expand and develop the Roman and Bavarian Museum in Kipfenberg into a joint museum of the "Limes communities". The necessary concept for this has recently been completed. I believe that this kind of inter-communal cooperation in the field of culture can serve as an example. But also the exchange with many other fellow campaigners and colleagues on the board enriches one's own activities and actions. It is often possible to cut good examples to size and then adapt them to one's own needs. You don't always have to reinvent everything.



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The German Limes Road Association is constantly developing and growing. Recently, new towns and districts have joined the association due to the establishment of the new World Heritage Sites "Lower German Limes" and "Danube Limes".

What drives the German Limes Road?

Overall, I think the German Limes Road contributes to preserving Germany's historical heritage, promoting tourism, strengthening communities and maintaining links with the past. That is incentive enough!

What is the recipe for success of the German Limes Road?

I am sure that several factors play a role there. It is not self-evident that one deals with a topic, even if it is a World Heritage Site, as consistently as the German Limes Road does. Here, the Limes is not only "worked on", but lived. All those involved - I would like to mention the respective chairmen of the association with the other board members, but above all the highly committed staff - are preserving history, creating identity and, above all, passing on their own enthusiasm. That is exactly what is infectious!

The topic of sustainability is one of the central tasks of our time. Sustainability is also playing an increasingly important role in tourism. In addition to the German Limes Road, the association has also been maintaining the German Limes Cycle Path for several years. In addition, the association also supports the German Limes Hiking Trail. Hiking on and around the Limes is also becoming increasingly popular.



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How do you think it is possible to fill a cultural route of this dimension (over 1000 km of route in 5 provinces) with life, create public awareness and work sustainably at the same time?

The design of a cultural route of such dimensions requires careful planning and cooperation between different actors. I mean the following thoughts are with cogwheel parts that must and do flow into each other in order to constantly fill a cultural route like the German Limes Road with life, to continue to create awareness among the public and to work sustainably:

1. **Cooperation and networking:** Cooperation between the participating federal states, municipalities, tourism associations, museums, research institutions and local actors is crucial. Well-coordinated networking enables the exchange of information, resources and experience.
2. **Education and outreach:** Involving schools and educational institutions is important to raise awareness of the historical significance of the route. Educational programmes, workshops and guided tours can arouse the interest of pupils, teachers and educational travellers. The great advantage here is that the topic of "Romans" is already taught at an early stage in schools and thus the path of "staying in the memory" is well established.
3. **Cultural Events:** The organisation of regular cultural events, festivals, exhibitions and performances along the route to attract the interest of the public and encourage them to visit the region and experience the culture is also an important component.
4. **Digital presence:** A well-designed website and social media presence will always help to raise awareness of the cultural route and attract tourists. The website must provide information about sights, events, route maps and interactive maps.
5. **Involvement of the local community:** the support and involvement of the local population is of immense importance. The route must not only appeal to tourists, but must also benefit the residents of the region by integrating local businesses, artisans and service providers, making it "liveable".



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6. **Care and maintenance:** The cultural route must be continuously cared for, maintained and, if possible, restored in order to maintain its attractiveness. This requires long-term investment and commitment.
7. **Marketing and promotion:** a targeted marketing strategy can increase the visibility of the cultural route and make it even better known nationally and internationally.

I am convinced that the combination of these approaches will continue to successfully bring the cultural route, as it is the German Limes Road, to life, make it even better known, and thus operate it in an even more sustainable way. It is an ongoing process that requires the involvement and support of many stakeholders, but the rewards lie in the promotion of cultural heritage, the economy and tourism in the regions.

Mayor Wagner, thank you very much for the interview.



Roman and Bavarian Museum, Museum Festival: Mayor Wagner as a Roman centurion, with Limes Queen Sabrina Picker and two Auxiliary Soldiers