

## Visitor information

The town hall is located around 150 metres away from the Ulm Minster. The "Rathaus" stop is served by several bus routes. For those travelling by car, the "Parkhaus am Rathaus" parking facility is available.

The town hall is open from Monday to Thursday between 8 am to 6 pm, and on Friday from 8 am to 2 pm. The building is closed at weekends. The barrier-free entrance is on the corner opposite the glass pyramid of the public library.



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The following three scenes from the Bible are painted above the balcony on the east side: the parable of the good Samaritan, David versus Goliath, and the planned sacrifice of Isaac.

## Just a facade?

Behind the "art on the building", there is also probably a little bit of vanity. Because magnificent buildings have always served and still serve to show what towns and cities have. Thus, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the city council commissioned the town painter, Martin Schaffner, to paint frescoes on the walls of the town hall. The images and texts transport religious and secular virtues that should serve as a moral guide and canon of values for the citizens.

The eastern side of the structure features mostly biblical examples such as the prodigal son, King Solomon as well as David and Goliath. The scenes represent for the following mottos: "divine wisdom", "self-knowledge", "justice", "patience", "love", "hope", "faith", "secret envy" and "childish advice". The north facade, on the other hand, shows motifs inspired by Roman legends. The themes here are "honourableness of war", "male boldness", "justice" and "obedience".

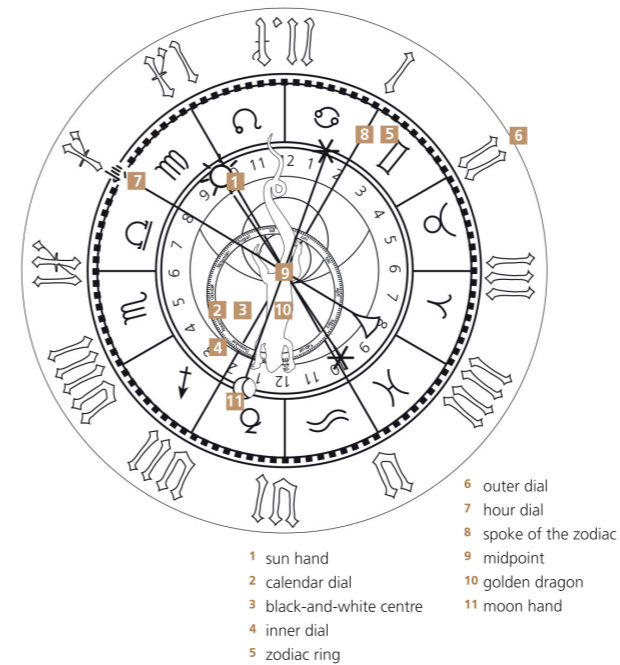
The south side, whose frescoes were only created in 1905, has a much more secular character. Through the typical traditional Ulm boat, the "Ulmer Schachtel", they are a reminder of the great trading tradition of the city. On the south-east corner, a plaque commemorates the famous astronomer and mathematician, Johannes Kepler. In 1627, he had his "Rudolphine Tables" printed in Ulm. On the west side, the "bridal staircase" through which newly-weds leave the town hall is a particularly striking feature.

## The astronomical clock

A true marvel of engineering is the astronomical clock which was installed on the east side in 1520. With five moving elements, it depicts the course of the sun complete with sunrise and sunset, phases of the moon, solar and lunar eclipses as well as the signs of the zodiac. The astronomical clock simulates, if you will, the complete celestial scenario.

The technical brilliance of the clock is hidden behind the walls of the town hall. Although not visible to the general public, it is a fascinating piece of (hand)work consisting of gears and other mechanical elements that drive the hands and symbols.

More can be learned about the functions of the individual pointers and symbols at [www.ulm.de/astronomischeuhr](http://www.ulm.de/astronomischeuhr).



Drawing of the astronomical clock with the positional markings of the hands.  
© Jochen Kohlenberger, Neu-Ulm

## The town hall







**From a trading facility to the "beating heart" of a municipal democracy**

Today's official residence of the Lord Mayor once served a completely different purpose. The original building was erected in 1357 and was initially used as a trading facility and warehouse. The city centre was not only geographically but also economically the central point of a "booming" municipality. In particular, the trade in fustian – an exclusive fabric made of cotton and linen – had made Ulm very wealthy. The trading facility was the market place for this textile as well as for iron, salt and saddlery.

In 1370, the building was expanded to include today's east wing where butchers could offer their wares. Thirteen years later, in 1383, the so-called Niedergericht (lower court) moved in which meant that the building was now used in multiple ways. From 1395 onwards, the Ulm City Council had a council chamber on the premises. From 1419, it was officially called the "Rathaus".

Between 1898 and 1905, the town hall was renovated and re-structured. The interior of the building was almost completely destroyed during the fatal bombing raid during the Second World War on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1944. Fortunately, the wall paintings along with the vaulted rooms on the lower floors remained largely intact. Nevertheless, it took several years to restore the building to its former glory.

If the Reichstag in Berlin is the "beating heart" of democracy at a federal level, the town hall thus deserves this label in the area of local self-government. Here, the executive (administration) and the legislature (city council) work under one roof. In public meetings in the large council chamber, the municipal council sets the course for the future of the city.

The lavish murals, most of which were created in the Middle Ages, give the Ulm town hall a unique exterior design. Framed by the modern architecture of the public library and the "Neue Mitte", it asserts itself with its historic appearance. Behind the – in this case attractive – facade lies countless stories and history from almost seven centuries.

As the political centre of the city, the town hall is the official residence of the Lord Mayor and the meeting place of the municipal council. It houses the registry office and other aspects of the city administration. Portrait paintings of former mayors are displayed on the second floor while, on the first floor, a wooden model depicts Ulm's urban core in miniature format. A stone sculpture with the inscription "Ein Stein" (A Stone) is a reference to Albert Einstein, the city's most famous son.

The real eye-catcher inside the building is the replica of Albrecht Ludwig Berblinger's flying machine; he is also known as the "Tailor of Ulm". Although Berblinger did fail in his attempt to fly across the Danube, his talent and innovative strength however are now recognised. The model of the flying machine is attached to the ceiling and – in keeping with the theme – gives the impression of hovering above the heads of the visitors.



**The fate of the city has been decided in the town hall over many centuries.**

A replica of the flying machine made by the "Tailor of Ulm" hangs in the atrium.



Public library, town hall, minster tower / The council chamber is a place for discussions and decisions. / The south and east sides in 1905 / The south and east sides in 1945 after a bombing raid.

**Contemporary witness of the city's history**

A dark stain in the history of Ulm is the reign of terror by the National Socialists. In 1933, the municipal council was forced into line politically and the mayor, Emil Schwamberger, was removed from office. Friedrich Foerster, a member of the NSDAP and SA, assumed the overall responsibility of town hall affairs until 1945. In June 1945, the Americans handed the office over to Robert Scholl, father of resistance fighters Hans and Sophie Scholl.

After the Second World War, the town hall once again became the centre of municipal democracy. Since then, the municipal council and administration have made numerous courageous but sometimes controversial decisions. Examples that can be seen in the cityscape are the Science Parks at Oberer Eselsberg, Stadthaus on the Münsterplatz and the Neue Mitte situated in the centre of Ulm. The fate of the city has been decided in the town hall over many centuries. This is actually very impressive for a building that started out as a trading facility.