



Ruhr Museum



**The Emscher.
Pictorial History
of a River**

12.9.22-16.4.23

Ruhr Museum

Zollverein

in Essen

Tours

Unless indicated otherwise:

Meeting point is the Ruhr Museum Counter 24-metre level,
€ 3 plus admission for adults,
1.5 hours, in German

Guided public tours

Thu to Sun and public holidays_
12 noon

Curator's tours

Fri 3.2., 3.3., 7.4._3pm

Guided tours for senior citizens

Tue 21.3._11am

Guided group tours

ENG

€ 80 plus admission per person,
groups of pupils and students € 75
with free admission, 1.5 hours

Bus excursions

Meeting point is Zollverein UNESCO
World Heritage Site, Fritz-Schupp-
Allee/bus stop bay, 45141 Essen
Registration is required.

Thu 16.3._8.15am

The eastern and central Emscher region: Dortmund – Gelsenkirchen – Bottrop

Thu 23.3._8.15am

The western and central Emscher region: Oberhausen – Dinslaken – Bottrop

The Emschergenossenschaft pursues
a water management approach that
encompasses a great variety of tasks
such as waste water treatment, the
care and maintenance of waterways,
flood protection, the regulation of
water run-off and the management
of groundwater and rainwater. The
tours offer a look behind the scenes
at the Emschergenossenschaft and
open doors that otherwise remain
closed.

In cooperation with the Emscher-
genossenschaft.

free, 7 hours

Offers for schools

ENG

Tours for school classes (starting at the lower secondary education level)

€ 75, free admission, 1.5 hours., in
German and English

The Visitor's Centre will be happy to
answer any questions you may
have about topics, tour group sizes,
and reservations:

besucherdienst@ruhrmuseum.de

Mon–Fri 9am–4pm

Phone: +49 (0)201 24681 444

Preparation materials for
teachers will be made available
for download in September at
www.ruhrmuseum.de

Programmes for children and families

ENG

Quiz for families

free plus admission for adults,
in German and English, approx. 1 hour,
daily for children from 6 years of age
The quiz lets families have fun while
they learn about the entire special
exhibition and the exciting history of
the Emscher River.

Everything flows

Holiday workshops

Ruhr Museum, Coking Coal Bunker,
for children between 9 and 12,
€ 20 per day

Please bring lunch/snacks and
beverages for your children

Easter holiday 2023

Tue 4.4., Wed 5.4._8am–4pm

Rivers and their tributaries are the
lifelines of the Earth.

How can water be filtered natural-
ly, and what types of fish and other
aquatic life live in clean rivers?

Curious and bright minds will find out
the answers to these questions and
many others when they take part in
experiments and solve puzzles.

Swamp in the Mattlackgraben trench,
the Hansa mine can be seen in the
background, Dortmund, 1926
Emschergenossenschaft, archive



The **history** of the Ruhr area is closely connected to the history of the **Emscher**. Although the Rhine-Westphalia industrial region is named after the Ruhr, it was the Emscher that perhaps played a more important role in ensuring the survival and expansion of this industrial and metropolitan area. During the second half of the 19th century, the growth of industry and the population in the region led to **untenable conditions in the “Wild West”** of the German Empire: Waste water was channelled into waterways without being treated – and especially into the river that had now been reached following the continuous northward expansion of industrialisation: the Emscher. Drinking water was contaminated, land caved in and sunk as a result of mining activities, and the lack of gradients in the Emscher and its tributaries led to flooding and the formation of swamps. Diseases such as cholera, typhoid fever and malaria raged among the population. In order to stop these abuses, the state of Prussia initiated a process in 1899 that led to the **establishment of the Emschergenossenschaft**, which was the first water management association in Germany. Municipalities and numerous companies joined the new cooperative.

Bochum water treatment plant,
with the Imhoff tank under
construction, circa 1907
Emschergenossenschaft, archive



The **Emschergenossenschaft** started a **giant construction programme** that included the construction of pumping stations and waste water treatment plants. The Emscher system was also regulated by straightening the river and its streams and transforming them into a type of canal system encased in concrete shells in most cases. The Emscher was thus transformed into a “sewage river”, or – as people referred to it – a “**Köttelbecke**” (faeces stream). Water management then became a key factor in the further development of the Ruhr area, along with mining and the steel industry. The Emschergenossenschaft became a model for new cooperatives and associations that were subsequently established. With the end of industrialisation, a new chapter began and it took the form of a project for the **ecological transformation** of the Emscher system that was launched in the 1990s. Large segments of the river and its tributaries were restored to their natural state. Underground waste water canals were also built, thereby making it possible to stop the further influx of sewage into the Emscher.

Horst Castle prior to 1828,

painting, 1842

Archive of Hugenpoet Castle, Essen



This unique history is the focus of the **exhibition “The Emscher. Pictorial History of a River”**. The special exhibition in the Ruhr Museum at Zollverein UNESCO World Heritage Site presents images of the river in numerous settings, starting **from the pre-modern era and extending to the age of industrialisation and on to the present day**. Horses grazed in the Emscherbruch landscape, and even back in prehistoric times people lived along the river, which was teeming with fish. The Emscher could also be dangerous and cause hardship, however, especially because it often overflowed its banks and also wasn't navigable by ship. Moated castles and water mills were built on the Emscher and its tributaries in the Middle Ages: These structures shaped the cultural landscape, whose territorial borders were marked by the river. **Paintings, graphical depictions, maps and plans** present images and stories that reflect the wealth in the Emscher region in pre-industrial times. **Overview maps and construction and architectural drawings** that the Emschergenossenschaft commissioned at the beginning of the 20th century show the transformation into an industrial river.

The Borbecker Mühlenbach stream
next to a school yard, Essen, 1955
Emschergenossenschaft, archive



One of the key components of the exhibition are the **photographs from the Emschergenossenschaft archive**. The glass plate photography negatives section of the archive contains approximately 40,000 objects and is currently on loan to the Ruhr Museum's photo archive. The negatives document the cooperative's construction sites and were used to support project planning activities and the monitoring of construction measures. The negatives archive is also a photographic and social-historical treasure that reveals the development of settlements and industry in the Ruhr area over a **period of more than 100 years**. The photographs show an **enormous landscape transformation** – landscapes shaped by humans but also destroyed. Highlights here include panoramic photographs and before-and-after shots that document the changes made along the way. The historical images also show the technical feats the Emschergenossenschaft achieved with its buildings and facilities. This also applies to human achievements, as the photos make clear just how much hard physical labour was required to complete all of the cooperative's projects.

Emscher conversion experimental

track, Dortmund-Deusen, 2017

Jannis Reichard /

Emschergenossenschaft



The photographs, which were taken from 2000 onwards, document the **transformation of an entire region** and were also used for public relations to communicate the results of its work. The amazing pictures were taken by photographers from the Emschergenossenschaft and by commissioned photographers. The Emschergenossenschaft is now using technically advanced methods to document its construction activities in the 21st century. These methods include 3D scanning, virtual reality and augmented reality. The photographs taken by **Henning Maier-Jantzen** over 10 years play a special role, as they make use and functions of the transformed Emscher understandable in a larger context. The pictorial history of the Emscher includes photography projects that the cooperative implemented with amateurs, students and artists, whereby the film project the **“EMSCHER SKETCHES”** was also created by the award-winning filmmakers **Christoph Hübner and Gabriele Voss**. New areas of activity include climate adaptation and biodiversity projects, as well as the Emscherkunstweg, bike paths and trails and social projects.



Ruhr Museum

Ruhr Museum address

in the Coal Washing Plant
Zollverein UNESCO World
Heritage Site
Gelsenkirchener Straße 181
D-45309 Essen

Opening hours

Tue–Sun 10am–6pm,
closed on 24., 25. and 31.12.

Admission

€ 10, reduced € 7, children and
young people under 18, as well
as pupils and students under 25:
free admission
www.tickets-ruhrmuseum.de

Free Audio guide app

1 hour, in German and English

The Emscher.

Pictorial History of a River

The app tour provides detailed
information about the eventful
history of the Emscher at 24
selected stations.

Information and registration

Ruhr Museum Visitor Service
besucherdienst@ruhrmuseum.de
Mon–Fri 9am–4pm
Phone: +49 (0)201 24681 444
www.ruhrmuseum.de

Address

Parking lots A1 and A2
Fritz-Schupp-Allee, 45141 Essen

How to get there

Tram line 107

From Essen central station in the
direction of Gelsenkirchen or from
Gelsenkirchen central station
in the direction of Essen until the
“Zollverein” stop

Bus line 183

From “Altenessen Bf” or “Zollverein-
Nord” station to the “Kohlenwäsche”
station

Catalogue

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Subject to change without notice.
2/2023



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