

Geographical area and historic overview

The ancient city of Carnuntum spanned 10 square kilometres covering today's towns of Bad Deutsch-Altenburg and Petronell-Carnuntum. According to the high-ranked Roman official Velleius Paterculus, the future emperor Tiberius reached the Danube in 6 A.D. where his troops constructed a winter camp for about 40.000 soldiers. The precise location of this winter camp (*castra hiberna*) has not been determined up to now. Although the expansion plans of Emperor Augustus and his step son and commander Tiberius could not be pursued, one legion remained stationed at this section of the Danube. The territory was of high strategic importance since the Amber Road stretching down from the Baltic Sea down to Aquileia ran directly through Carnuntum.

In 40 A.D., the *legio XV Apollinaris* erected a fortified camp on the southern bank of the Danube. At the same time, a suburban area known as *canabae legionis* started to develop around the camp. The so-called civil city evolved in 80 A.D. which Hadrian raised to the status of a *Municipium Aelium Carnuntum* in 124 A.D. In the decades to follow, large public buildings such as the forum, temples and Roman baths, a sewerage system and paved roads were built. Several lavishly furnished residential constructions with frescoes, mosaics and hypocaust heating systems (underfloor heating) testify to the inhabitants' wealth.

Wars against Germanic tribes set a sudden end to Carnuntum's heyday. Between 170 and 173 A.D., Emperor Marcus Aurelius dwelled in Carnuntum on several occasions to defend the Danube Limes. On 9 April 193 A.D., the Governor Lucius Septimius Severus was proclaimed emperor by his troops and subsequently approved by the Senate in Rome. He founded the Severan dynasty. Carnuntum was promoted to the status of a *colonia* thus becoming the most important city within the province *Pannonia superior*. During a short period, Carnuntum was an important military base along the Danube Limes. In 259/60 A.D., Regalianus and his wife Dryantilla seized power. However, they were deposed and killed only a few months later.

Under Diocletian's rule, numerous political and economic reforms boosted a new golden era. The city's importance was highlighted by the Emperors' Conference in 308 A.D. organised in order to settle Diocletian's succession following the ruler's death.

An earthquake in the second half of the 4th century A.D. caused severe destruction in a great number of public buildings. Researchers presume part of Carnuntum's population left the city due to the damages as well as negative climate changes in Pannonia. This theory is also supported by the fact that skirmishes with foreign peoples took place along the Limes in the wake of the Migration Period.

There is, however, proof that certain areas of Carnuntum remained inhabited until the 5th century A.D., e.g. residential buildings in Petronell-Carnuntum's Roman City Quarter and the legionaries' camp the civilians moved to. In 433 A.D., Pannonian provinces were acquired by the Huns. The Roman settlement was not destructed, but decayed.

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