

Hanseatic League

The **Hanseatic League** (/ˌhænsiˈætlɪk/; Middle Low German: *Hanse*, *Deutsche Hanse*, *Hansa*, *Hansa Teutonica* or *Liga Hanseatica*) was a commercial and defensive confederation of merchant guilds and market towns in Northwestern and Central Europe. Growing from a few North German towns in the late 1100s, the league came to dominate Baltic maritime trade for three centuries along the coast of Northern Europe. It stretched from the Baltic to the North Sea and inland during the Late Middle Ages and declined slowly after 1450.

Hanse, later spelled as *Hansa*, was the Middle Low German word for a convoy, and this word was applied to bands of merchants traveling between the Hanseatic cities whether by land or by sea.

The league was created to protect the guilds' economic interests and diplomatic privileges in their affiliated cities and countries, as well as along the trade routes the merchants visited. The Hanseatic cities had their own legal system and furnished their own armies for mutual protection and aid. Despite this, the organization was not a state, nor could it be called a confederation of city-states; only a very small number of the cities within the league enjoyed autonomy and liberties comparable to those of free imperial city.^[1]

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History

Historians generally trace the origins of the Hanseatic League to the rebuilding of the north German town of Lübeck in 1159 by the powerful Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony and Bavaria, after he had captured the area from Adolf II, Count of Schauenburg and Holstein. Exploratory trading adventures, raids, and piracy had occurred earlier throughout the Baltic region—the sailors of Gotland sailed up rivers as far away as Novgorod, for example—but the scale of international trade in the Baltic area remained insignificant before the growth of the Hanseatic League.

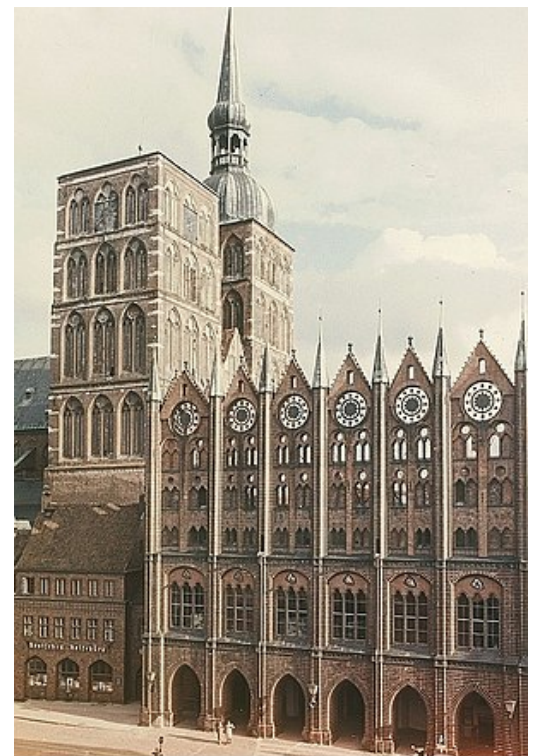
Hanseatic League

Hanse
Hansa



Northern Europe in the 1400s, showing the extent of the Hanseatic League (Hanse or Hansa)

Capital	Lübeck
Lingua franca	Germanic (Middle Low German)
Membership	<i>see list below</i>
Establishment	1358



Quelle: Deutsche Fotothek

The Hanseatic League was a powerful economic and defensive alliance that left a great cultural and architectural heritage. It is especially renowned for its Brick Gothic monuments, such as St. Nikolai and the city hall of Stralsund shown here. Together with Wismar, the old town is listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

German cities achieved domination of trade in the Baltic with striking speed during the 13th century, and Lübeck became a central node in the seaborne trade that linked the areas around the North and Baltic seas. The hegemony of Lübeck peaked during the 15th century

Foundation and formation

Lübeck became a base for merchants from Saxony and Westphalia trading eastward and northward. Well before the term *Hanse* appeared in a document in 1267, merchants in different cities began to form guilds, or *Hansa*, with the intention of trading with towns overseas, especially in the economically less-developed eastern Baltic. This area was a source of timber, wax, amber, resins, and furs, along with rye and wheat brought down on barges from the hinterland to port markets. The towns raised their own armies, with each guild required to provide levies when needed. The Hanseatic cities came to the aid of one another, and commercial ships often had to be used to carry soldiers and their arms.

Visby functioned as the leading centre in the Baltic before the Hansa. Sailing east, Visby merchants established a trading post at Novgorod called Gutagard (also known as Gotenhof) in 1080.^[2] Merchants from northern Germany also stayed in the early period of the Gotlander settlement. Later they established their own trading station in Novgorod, known as Peterhof, which was further up river, in the first half of the 13th century.^[3] In 1229, German merchants at Novgorod were granted certain privileges that made their positions more secure!^[4]

Hansa societies worked to remove restrictions to trade for their members. Before the official foundation of the league in 1356, the word *Hanse* did not occur in the Baltic language. Gotlanders used the word *varjag*. The earliest remaining documentary mention, although without a name, of a specific German commercial federation is from London in 1157. That year, the merchants of the Hansa in Cologne convinced Henry II, King of England to free them from all tolls in London and allow them to trade at fairs throughout England. The "Queen of the Hansa", Lübeck, where traders were required to trans-ship goods between the North Sea and the Baltic, gained imperial privileges to become a free imperial city in 1227, as its potential trading partner Hamburg had in 1189.

In 1241, Lübeck, which had access to the Baltic and North seas' fishing grounds, formed an alliance—a precursor to the league—with Hamburg, another trading city, that controlled access to salt-trade routes from Lüneburg. The allied cities gained control over most of the salt-fish trade, especially the Scania Market; Cologne joined them in the Diet of 1260. In 1266, Henry III of England granted the Lübeck and Hamburg Hansa a charter for operations in England, and the Cologne Hansa joined them in 1282 to form the most powerful Hanseatic colony in London. Much of the drive for this co-operation came from the fragmented nature of existing territorial governments, which failed to provide security for trade. Over the next 50 years the Hansa itself emerged with formal agreements for confederation and co-operation covering the west and east trade routes. The principal city and linchpin remained Lübeck; with the first general diet of the Hansa held there in 1356, the Hanseatic League acquired an official structure.^[5]

Commercial expansion

Lübeck's location on the Baltic provided access for trade with Scandinavia and Kievan Rus', putting it in direct competition with the Scandinavians who had previously controlled most of the Baltic trade routes. A treaty with the Visby Hansa put an end to this competition: through this treaty the Lübeck merchants also gained access to the inland Russian port of Novgorod, where they built a trading post or *Kontor* (literally: "office"). Although such alliances formed throughout the Holy Roman Empire, the league never became a closely managed formal organisation. Assemblies of the Hanseatic towns met irregularly in Lübeck for a *Hansetag* (Hanseatic diet), from 1356 onwards, but many towns chose not to attend nor to send representatives and decisions were not binding on individual cities. Over the period, a network of alliances grew to include a flexible roster of 70 to 170 cities.^[6]

The league succeeded in establishing additional *Kontors* in Bruges (Flanders), Bergen (Norway), and London (England). These trading posts became significant enclaves. The London *Kontor*, established in 1320, stood west of London Bridge near Upper Thames Street, the site now occupied by Cannon Street station. It grew into a significant walled community with its own warehouses, weighhouse, church, offices and houses, reflecting the importance and scale of trading activity on the premises. The first reference to it as the Steelyard (*der Stahlhof*) occurs in 1422.

Starting with trade in coarse woollen fabrics, the Hanseatic League had the effect of bringing both commerce and industry to northern Germany.^[8] As trade increased, newer and finer woollen and linen fabrics, and even silks, were manufactured in northern Germany. The same refinement of products out of cottage industry occurred in other fields, e.g. etching, wood carving, armour production, engraving of metals, and wood-turning. The century-long monopolization of sea navigation and trade by the Hanseatic League ensured that the Renaissance arrived in northern Germany long before the rest of Europe.^[8]



Foundation of the alliance between Lübeck and Hamburg



Main trading routes of the Hanseatic League

In addition to the major *Kontors*, individual Hanseatic ports had a representative merchant and warehouse. In England this happened in Boston, Bristol, Bishop's Lynn (now King's Lynn, which features the sole remaining Hanseatic warehouse in England), Hull, Ipswich, Norwich, Yarmouth (now Great Yarmouth), and York.

The league primarily traded timber, furs, resin (or tar), flax, honey, wheat, and rye from the east to Flanders and England with cloth (and, increasingly, manufactured goods) going in the other direction. Metal ore (principally copper and iron) and herring came southwards from Sweden.

German colonists in the 12th and 13th centuries settled in numerous cities on and near the east Baltic coast, such as Elbing (Elbląg), Thorn (Toruń), Reval (Tallinn), Riga, and Dorpat (Tartu), which became members of the Hanseatic League, and some of which still retain many Hansa buildings and bear the style of their Hanseatic days. Most were granted Lübeck law (Lübisches Recht), after the league's most prominent town. The law provided that they had to appeal in all legal matters to Lübeck's city council. The Livonian Confederation incorporated modern-day Estonia and parts of Latvia and had its own Hanseatic parliament (diet); all of its major towns became members of the Hanseatic League. The dominant language of trade was Middle Low German, a dialect with significant impact for countries involved in the trade, particularly the larger Scandinavian languages, Estonian, and Latvian.

Imports and exports, 18 Mar 1368 – 10 Mar 1369
(in thousands of Port Lübeck marks)

Imports		Origin, Destination	Exports		Total	%
150		London/Hamburg	38		188	34.4
44		Livonian towns:	51		95	17.4
	10	Riga		14		
	34	Reval (Tallinn)		14.3		
	-	Pernau		22.7		
49.4		Skania	32.6		82	15
52		Gotland, Sweden	29.4		81.4	14.9
19		Prussian towns:	29.5		48.5	8.9
	16	Danzig		22.8		
	3	Elbing		6.6		
17.2		Wendish & Pomeranian towns:	25.2		42.4	7.8
	5.5	Stettin		7		
	4	Stralsund		7.5		
	2.2	Rostock		4.6		
	5.5	Wismar		6.1		
4.3		Bergen	–		4.3	0.8
3		Small Baltic ports	1.2		4.2	0.8
338.9		Total	206.9		545.8	100 ^[7]

Zenith

The league had a fluid structure, but its members shared some characteristics; most of the Hansa cities either started as independent cities or gained independence through the collective bargaining power of the league, though such independence remained limited. The Hanseatic free cities owed allegiance directly to the Holy Roman Emperor; without any intermediate family tie of obligation to the local nobility

Another similarity involved the cities' strategic locations along trade routes. At the height of its power in the late 14th century, the merchants of the Hanseatic League succeeded in using their economic clout, and sometimes their military might—trade routes required protection and the league's ships sailed well-armed—to influence imperial policy

The league also wielded power abroad. Between 1361 and 1370, it waged war against Denmark. Initially unsuccessful, Hanseatic towns in 1368 allied in the Confederation of Cologne, sacked Copenhagen and Helsingborg, and forced Valdemar IV, King of Denmark, and his son-in-law Haakon VI, King of Norway, to grant the league 15% of the profits from Danish trade in the subsequent peace treaty of Stralsund in 1370, thus gaining an effective trade and economic monopoly in Scandinavia. This favourable treaty marked the height of Hanseatic power. After the Danish-Hanseatic War (1426–1435) and the Bombardment of Copenhagen (1428), the commercial privileges were renewed in the Treaty of Vordingborg in 1435.^{[9][10][11]}

The Hansa also waged a vigorous campaign against pirates. Between 1392 and 1440, maritime trade of the league faced danger from raids of the Victual Brothers and their descendants, privateers hired in 1392 by Albert of Mecklenburg, King of Sweden, against Margaret I, Queen of Denmark. In the Dutch-Hanseatic War (1438–41), the merchants of Amsterdam sought and eventually won free access to the Baltic and broke the Hanseatic monopoly. As an essential part of protecting their investment in the ships and their cargoes, the League trained pilots and erected lighthouses.

Most foreign cities confined the Hanseatic traders to certain trading areas and to their own trading posts. They seldom interacted with the local inhabitants, except when doing business. Many locals, merchant and noble alike, envied the power of the league and tried to diminish it. For example, in London, the local merchants exerted continuing pressure for the revocation of privileges. The refusal of the Hansa to offer reciprocal arrangements to their English counterparts exacerbated the tension. King Edward IV of England



Town Hall of Reval (now Tallinn, Estonia)



Stargard Mill Gate, Pomerania, Poland

reconfirmed the league's privileges in the Treaty of Utrecht (1474) despite the latent hostility, in part thanks to the significant financial contribution the league made to the Yorkist side during the Wars of the Roses. In 1597, Queen Elizabeth I of England expelled the league from London, and the Steelyard closed the following year. Ivan III of Russia closed the Hanseatic *Kontor* at Novgorod in 1494. The very existence of the league and its privileges and monopolies created economic and social tensions that often crept over into rivalries between league members.^[12]

Rise of rival powers

The economic crises of the late 15th century did not spare the Hansa. Nevertheless, its eventual rivals emerged in the form of the territorial states, whether new or revived, and not just in the west: Poland triumphed over the Teutonic Knights in 1466; Ivan III, Grand Prince of Moscow, ended the entrepreneurial independence of Hansa's Novgorod *Kontor* in 1478—it closed completely and finally in 1494.^[13] New vehicles of credit were imported from Italy, where double-entry booking was invented in 1492, and outpaced the Hansa economy in which silver coins changed hands rather than bills of exchange



Georg Giese from Danzig, 34-year-old German Hanseatic merchant at the Steelyard, painted in London by Hans Holbein

In the 15th century, tensions between the Prussian region and the "Wendish" cities (Lübeck and its eastern neighbours) increased. Lübeck was dependent on its role as centre of the Hansa, being on the shore of the sea without a major river. It was on the entrance of the land route to Hamburg, but this land route could be bypassed by sea travel around Denmark and through the Kattegat. Prussia's main interest, on the other hand, was the export of bulk products like grain and timber, which were very important for England, the Low Countries, and, later on, also for Spain and Italy

In 1454, the year of the marriage of Elisabeth of Austria to the Jagiellonian king, the towns of the Prussian Confederation rose up against the dominance of the Teutonic Order and asked Casimir IV, King of Poland, for help. Gdańsk (Danzig), Thorn and Elbing became part of the Kingdom of Poland, (from 1466–1569 referred to as Royal Prussia, region of Poland) by the Second Peace of Thorn (1466). Poland in turn was heavily supported by the Holy Roman Empire through family connections and by military assistance under the Habsburgs. Kraków, then the capital of Poland, had a loose association with the Hansa.^[14] The lack of customs borders on the River Vistula after 1466 helped to gradually increase Polish grain exports, transported to the sea down the Vistula, from 10,000 short tons (9,100 t) per year, in the late 15th century, to over 200,000 short tons (180,000 t) in the 17th century.^[15] The Hansa-dominated maritime grain trade made Poland one of the main areas of its activity helping Danzig to become the Hansa's largest city.

The member cities took responsibility for their own protection. In 1567, a Hanseatic League agreement reconfirmed previous obligations and rights of league members, such as common protection and defense against enemies.^[16] The Prussian Quartier cities of Thorn, Elbing, Königsberg and Riga and Dorpat also signed. When pressed by the King of Poland–Lithuania Danzig remained neutral and would not allow ships running for Poland into its territory They had to anchor somewhere else, such as at Pautzke (Puck).

A major economic advantage for the Hansa was its control of the shipbuilding market, mainly in Lübeck and in Danzig. The Hansa sold ships everywhere in Europe, including Italy. They drove out the Dutch, because Holland wanted to favour Bruges as a huge staple market at the end of a trade route. When the Dutch started to become competitors of the Hansa in shipbuilding, the Hansa tried to stop the flow of shipbuilding technology from Hanseatic towns to Holland. Danzig, a trading partner of Amsterdam, attempted to forestall the decision. Dutch ships sailed to Danzig to take grain from the city directly, to the dismay of Lübeck. Hollanders also circumvented the Hanseatic towns by trading directly with north German princes in non-Hanseatic towns. Dutch freight costs were much lower than those of the Hansa, and the Hansa were excluded as middlemen.

When Bruges, Antwerp and Holland all became part of the Duchy of Burgundy they actively tried to take over the monopoly of trade from the Hansa, and the staples market from Bruges was transferred to Amsterdam. The Dutch merchants aggressively challenged the Hansa and met with much success. Hanseatic cities in Prussia, Livonia, supported the Dutch against the core cities of the Hansa in northern Germany. After several naval wars between Burgundy and the Hanseatic fleets, Amsterdam gained the position of leading port for Polish and Baltic grain from the late 15th century onwards. The Dutch regarded Amsterdam's grain trade as the mother of all trades (*Moedernegotie*).

Nuremberg in Franconia developed an overland route to sell formerly Hansa-monopolised products from Frankfurt via Nuremberg and Leipzig to Poland and Russia, trading Flemish cloth and French wine in exchange for grain and furs from the east. The Hansa profited from the Nuremberg trade by allowing Nurembergers to settle in Hanseatic towns, which the Franconians exploited by taking over trade with Sweden as well. The Nuremberger merchant Albrecht Moldenhauer was influential in developing the trade with Sweden and Norway, and his sons Wolf Moldenhauer and Burghard Moldenhauer established themselves in Bergen and Stockholm, becoming leaders of the local Hanseatic activities.



The old and rich port city of Danzig. View of the *Krantor* (crane gate)



Hanseatic museum in Bergen, Norway

End of the Hansa



Heinrich Sudermann

At the start of the 16th century, the league found itself in a weaker position than it had known for many years. The rising Swedish Empire had taken control of much of the Baltic Sea. Denmark had regained control over its own trade, the *Kontor* in Novgorod had closed, and the *Kontor* in Bruges had become effectively moribund. The individual cities making up the league had also started to put self-interest before their common Hanseatic interests. Finally, the political authority of the German princes had started to grow, constraining the independence of the merchants and Hanseatic towns.

The league attempted to deal with some of these issues: it created the post of Syndic in 1556 and elected Heinrich Sudermann as a permanent official with legal training, who worked to protect and extend the diplomatic agreements of the member towns. In 1557 and 1579 revised agreements spelled out the duties of towns and some progress was made. The *Bruges Kontor* moved to Antwerp and the Hansa attempted to pioneer new routes. However the league proved unable to prevent the growing mercantile competition, and so a long decline commenced. The *Antwerp Kontor* closed in 1593, followed by the *London Kontor* in 1598. The *Beigen Kontor* continued until 1754; of all the *Kontore*, only its buildings, the *Bryggen*, survive.

The gigantic *Adler von Lübeck* warship was constructed for military use against Sweden during the Northern Seven Years' War (1563–70) but was never put to military use, epitomizing the vain attempts of Lübeck to uphold its long-privileged commercial position in a changing economic and political climate.

By the late 16th century, the league had imploded and could no longer deal with its own internal struggles. The social and political changes that accompanied the Protestant Reformation included the rise of Dutch and English merchants and the incursion of the Ottoman Empire upon the Holy Roman Empire and its trade routes. Only nine members attended the last formal meeting in 1669 and only three (Lübeck, Hamburg and Bremen) remained as members until its demise in 1862, in the wake of the creation of the German Empire under Kaiser Wilhelm I.^{[17][18]} Hence, only Lübeck, Hamburg, and Bremen retain the words "Hanseatic City" in their official German titles.

Modern Hanseatic connections

Despite its collapse, several cities still maintained the link to the Hanseatic League. Dutch cities including Groningen, Deventer, Kampen, Zutphen and Zwolle, and a number of German cities including Bremen, Demmin, Greifswald, Hamburg, Lübeck, Lüneburg, Rostock, Stade, Stralsund and Wismar still call themselves *Hanse* cities (their car license plates are prefixed *H*, e.g. *-HB-* for "Hansestadt Bremen"). Hamburg and Bremen continue to style themselves officially as "free Hanseatic cities", with Lübeck named "Hanseatic City" (Rostock's football team is named F.C. Hansa Rostock in memory of the city's trading past). For Lübeck in particular, this anachronistic tie to a glorious past remained especially important in the 20th century. In 1937, the Nazi Party removed this privilege through the Greater Hamburg Act possibly because the *Senat* of Lübeck did not permit Adolf Hitler to speak in Lübeck during his 1932 election campaign.^[19] He held the speech in Bad Schwartau, a small village on the outskirts of Lübeck. Subsequently he referred to Lübeck as "the small city close to Bad Schwartau."

After the EU enlargement to the East in May 2004 there were some experts who wrote about the resurrection of the Baltic Hansa.^[20]

The legacy of the Hansa is remembered today in several names: the German airline Lufthansa (i.e., "Air Hansa"); F.C. Hansa Rostock; the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen, in the Netherlands; the Hanze oil production platform (also in the Netherlands); the Hansa Brewery in Bergen; the Hansabank in the Baltic states (now known as Swedbank); and the Hanse Sail in Rostock. DDG Hansa was a major German shipping company from 1881 until its bankruptcy in 1980.

There are two museums in Europe dedicated specifically to the history of the Hanseatic League: the European Hansemuseum in Lübeck and the Hanseatic Museum and Schøstue in Bergen.

Organization

The members of the Hanseatic League were Low German merchants, whose towns were, with the exception of Dinant, where these merchants held citizenship. Not all towns with Low German merchant communities were members of the league (e.g., Emden, Memel (today Klaipėda), Viborg (today Vyborg) and Narva never joined). However, Hanseatic merchants could also come from settlements without German town law—the premise for league membership was birth to German parents, subjection to German law, and a commercial education. The league served to advance and defend the common interests of its heterogeneous members: commercial ambitions such as enhancement of trade, and political ambitions such as ensuring maximum independence from the noble territorial rulers.^{[21]:10–11}



Modern, faithful painting of the *Adler von Lübeck*—the world's largest ship in its time

Decisions and actions of the Hanseatic League were the consequence of a consensus-based procedure. If an issue arose, the league's members were invited to participate in a central meeting, the *Tagfahrt* ("meeting ride", sometimes also referred to as *Hansetag*, since 1358). The member communities then chose envoys (*Ratssendeboten*) to represent their local consensus on the issue at the *Tagfahrt*. Not every community sent an envoy, delegates were often entitled to represent a set of communities. Consensus-building on local and *Tagfahrt* levels followed the Low Saxon tradition of *Einung*, where consensus was defined as absence of protest: after a discussion, the proposals which gained sufficient support were dictated aloud to the scribe and passed as binding *Rezess* if the attendees did not object; those favouring alternative proposals unlikely to get sufficient support were obliged to remain silent during this procedure. If consensus could not be established on a certain issue, it was found instead in the appointment of a number of league members who were then empowered to work out a compromise.^{[21]:70–72}



Hanseatic Seal of Elbing

The Hanseatic *Kontore*, which operated like an early stock exchange^[22] each had their own treasury, court and seal. Like the guilds, the *Kontore* were led by *Ältermänner* ("eldermen", or English aldermen). The *Stalhof Kontor*, as a special case, had a Hanseatic and an English *Ältermann*. In 1347 the *Kontor* of Brussels modified its statute to ensure an equal representation of the league's members. To that end, member communities from different regions were pooled into three circles (*Drittel* ("third [part]"): the Wendish and Saxon *Drittel*, the Westphalian and Prussian *Drittel* as well as the Gothlandian, Livonian and Swedish *Drittel*. The merchants from their respective *Drittel* would then each choose two *Ältermänner* and six members of the Eighteen Men's Council (*Achtzehnmännerrat*) to administer the *Kontor* for a set period of time. In 1356, during a Hanseatic meeting in preparation of the first *Tagfahrt*, the league confirmed this statute. The league in general gradually adopted and institutionalized the division into *Drittel* (see table).^{[21]:62–63[23][24][25]}



Hanseatic Seal of Stralsund

<i>Drittel</i> (1356–1554)	Regions	Chief city (<i>Vorort</i>)
Wendish-Saxon	Holstein, Saxony, Mecklenburg, Pomerania, Brandenburg	Lübeck
Westphalian-Prussian	Westphalia, Rhineland, Prussia	Dortmund, later Cologne
Gothlandian-Livonian-Swedish	Gotland, Livonia, Sweden	Visby, later Rīga

The *Tagfahrt* or *Hansetag* was the only central institution of the Hanseatic League. However, with the division into *Drittel*, the members of the respective subdivisions frequently held a *Dritteltage* ("*Drittel* meeting") to work out common positions which could then be presented at a *Tagfahrt*. On a more local level, league members also met, and while such regional meetings were never formalized into a Hanseatic institution, they gradually gained importance in the process of preparing and implementing *Tagfahrt* decisions.^[26]

Quarters

From 1554, the division into *Drittel* was modified to reduce the circles' heterogeneity, to enhance the collaboration of the members on a local level and thus to make the league's decision-making process more efficient.^[27] The number of circles rose to four so they were called *Quartiere* (quarters).^[23]

Quartier (since 1554)	Chief city (<i>Vorort</i>)
Wendish and Pomeranian ^[28]	Lübeck ^[28]
Saxon, Thuringian and Brandenburg ^[28]	Brunswick ^[28] Magdeburg
Prussia, Livonia and Sweden ^[28] – or East Baltic ^{[29]:120}	Danzig (now Gdańsk) ^[28]
Rhine, Westphalia and The Netherlands ^[28]	Cologne ^[28]

This division was however not adopted by the *Kontore*, who, for their purposes (like *Ältermänner* elections), grouped the league members in different ways (e.g., the division adopted by the *Stahlhof* in London in 1554 grouped the league members into *Dritteln*, whereby Lübeck merchants represented the Wendish, Pomeranian Saxon and several Westphalian towns, Cologne merchants represented the Cleves, Mark, Berg and Dutch towns, while Danzig merchants represented the Prussian and Livonian towns).^[30]

Lists of former Hansa cities

The names of the Quarters have been abbreviated in the following table:

- **Wendish:** Wendish and Pomeranian^[28] (or just Wendish)^{[29]:120} Quarter
- **Saxon:** Saxon, Thuringian and Brandenburg^[28] (or just Saxon)^{[29]:120} Quarter
- **Baltic:** Prussian, Livonian and Swedish^[28] (or East Baltic)^{[29]:120} Quarter

- **Westphalian:** Rhine-Westphalian and Netherlands (including Flanders)^[28] (or Rhineland)^{[29]:120} Quarter

Kontor: The Kontore were foreign trading posts of the League, not cities that were Hanseatic members, and are set apart in a separate table below






















The remaining column headings are as follows:

- "City" is the name, with any variants.
- "Territory" indicates the jurisdiction to which the city was subject at the time of the League.
- "Now" indicates the modern nation-state in which the city is located.
- "From" and "Until" record the dates at which the city joined and/or left the league.






































Map of the Hanseatic League, showing principal Hanseatic cities













Hansa Proper

















Quarter	City	Territory	Now	From	Until	Notes	Refs
Wendish	 <u>Lübeck</u>	 <u>Free City of Lübeck</u>	 <u>Germany</u>			Capital of the Hanseatic League , capital of the Wendish and Pomeranian Circle	[25][28][29]:47, 120[31][32]:74, 82[33]
Wendish	 <u>Hamburg</u>	 <u>Free City of Hamburg</u>	 <u>Germany</u>				[25][29]:47[31][32]:82[34]
Wendish	 <u>Lüneburg</u>	 <u>Duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg</u>	 <u>Germany</u>				[25][31][33][34][35]
Wendish	 <u>Wismar</u>	 <u>Duchy of Mecklenburg</u>	 <u>Germany</u>			Joined the 10-year Rostock Peace Treaty (<i>Rostocker Landfrieden</i>) in 1283, which was the predecessor of the federation of Wendish towns (1293 onwards).	[25][31][32]:82[33][34][36]
Wendish	 <u>Rostock</u>	 <u>Duchy of Mecklenburg</u>	 <u>Germany</u>			Joined the 10-year Rostock Peace Treaty in 1283, which was the predecessor of the federation of Wendish towns (1293 onwards).	[25][31][32]:82[33][34][36][37]
Wendish	 <u>Stralsund</u>	 <u>Principality of Rügen</u>	 <u>Germany</u>	1293		Rügen was a fief of the Danish crown to 1325. Stralsund joined the 10-year Rostock Peace Treaty in 1283, which was the predecessor of the federation of Wendish towns (1293 onwards). From 1339 to the 17th century, Stralsund was a member of the <i>Vierstädtebund</i> with Greifswald, Demmin and Anklam.	[25][31][33][34][36][38]
Wendish	 <u>Demmin</u>	 <u>Duchy of Pomerania</u>	 <u>Germany</u>			Joined the 10-year Rostock Peace Treaty in 1283, which was the predecessor of the federation of Wendish towns (1293 onwards). From 1339 to the 17th century, Demmin was a member of the <i>Vierstädtebund</i> with Stralsund, Greifswald and Anklam.	[25][33][36][39]

Wendish	 Greifswald	 Duchy of Pomerania	 Germany			Joined the 10-year Rostock Peace Treaty in 1283, which was the predecessor of the federation of Wendish towns (1293 onwards). From 1339 to the 17th century, Greifswald was a member of the <i>Vierstädtebund</i> with Stralsund, Demmin and Anklam.	[25][33][34][36][39]
Wendish	 Anklam	 Duchy of Pomerania	 Germany			Joined the 10-year Rostock Peace Treaty in 1283, which was the predecessor of the federation of Wendish towns (1293 onwards). From 1339 to the 17th century, Anklam was a member of the <i>Vierstädtebund</i> with Stralsund, Greifswald and Demmin.	[25][33][36][39]
Wendish	 Stettin (Szczecin)	 Duchy of Pomerania	 Poland	1278		Joined the 10-year Rostock Peace Treaty in 1283, which was the predecessor of the federation of Wendish towns (1293 onwards); since the 14th century gradually adopted the role of a chief city for the Pomeranian Hanseatic towns to its east	[25][29]:120[31][33][35][36]
Wendish	 Pasewalk	 Duchy of Pomerania	 Germany				
Wendish	 Kolberg (Kołobrzeg)	 Duchy of Pomerania	 Poland				[25][33][35][39]
Wendish	 Rügenwalde (Darłowo)	 Duchy of Pomerania	 Poland				[25][33][34][35][39]
Wendish	 Stolp (Słupsk)	 Duchy of Pomerania	 Poland				[33][35][39]
Baltic	 Visby	 Kingdom of Sweden	 Sweden		1470	In 1285 at Kalmar, the League agreed with Magnus III, King of Sweden, that Gotland be joined with	[25][31][33][40]

						Sweden. In 1470, Visby's status was rescinded by the League, with Lübeck razing the city's churches in May 1525.	
Baltic	 <u>Stockholm</u>	 <u>Kingdom of Sweden</u>	 <u>Sweden</u>				[31][33]
Saxon	 <u>Brunswick</u>	 <u>Duchy of Saxony</u>	 <u>Germany</u>	13th century	17th century	Capital of the Saxon, Thuringian and Brandenburg Circle	[25][28][31][33][34][35]
Saxon	 <u>Bremen</u>	 <u>Free City of Bremen</u>	 <u>Germany</u>	1260			[25][31][33][34][37]
Saxon	 <u>Magdeburg</u>	 <u>Archbishopric of Magdeburg</u>	 <u>Germany</u>	13th century		Capital of the Saxon, Thuringian and Brandenburg Circle	[25][31][33][34][35]
Saxon	 <u>Goslar</u>	 <u>Imperial City of Goslar</u>	 <u>Germany</u>	1267	1566	Goslar was a fief of Saxony until 1280.	[25][31][33][34][35]
Saxon	 <u>Erfurt</u>	 <u>Archbishopric of Mainz</u>	 <u>Germany</u>				[25][31][33]
Saxon	 <u>Stade</u>	 <u>Archbishopric of Bremen</u>	 <u>Germany</u>				[25][34]
Saxon	 <u>Berlin</u>	 <u>Margraviate of Brandenburg</u>	 <u>Germany</u>		1442	Brandenburg was raised to an Electorate in 1356. Elector Frederick II caused all the Brandenburg cities to leave the League in 1442.	[29]:120[31][32]:32[33][35]
Saxon	 <u>Frankfurt an der Oder</u>	 <u>Margraviate of Brandenburg</u>	 <u>Germany</u>	1430	1442	Elector Frederick II caused all the Brandenburg cities to leave the League in 1442.	[31][32]:32[33][35]
Baltic	 <u>Gdańsk - Danzig (Gdańsk)</u>	 <u>Teutonic Order</u>	 <u>Poland</u>	1358		Capital of the Prussian, Livonian and Swedish (or East Baltic) Circle. Danzig had been first a part of the Duchy of Pomerelia, a fief of the Polish Crown, with Polish-Kashubian population, then part of the State of the Teutonic Order from 1308 until 1457. After the Second Peace of Thorn	[25][28][29]:120[31][32]:81[33][34][35][41]:403
















						(1466), <u>Royal Prussia</u> including <u>Gdańsk</u> was part of the <u>Kingdom of Poland</u> .	
Baltic	 <u>Elbing (Elbląg)</u>	 <u>Teutonic Order</u>	 <u>Poland</u>	1358		Elbing had originally been part of the territory of the <u>Old Prussians</u> , until the 1230s when it became part of the <u>State of the Teutonic Order</u> . After the <u>Second Peace of Thorn (1466)</u> , <u>Royal Prussia</u> , including <u>Elbląg</u> was part of the <u>Kingdom of Poland</u> .	[25][31][33][34][35][41]:452
Baltic	 <u>Thorn (Toruń)</u>	 <u>Teutonic Order</u>	 <u>Poland</u>	1280		<u>Toruń</u> was part of the <u>State of the Teutonic Order</u> from 1233 until 1466. After the <u>Second Peace of Thorn (1466)</u> , <u>Royal Prussia</u> , including <u>Toruń</u> , was part of the <u>Kingdom of Poland</u> .	[25][31][33][35][41]:436
Baltic	 <u>Kraków</u>	 <u>Kingdom of Poland</u>	 <u>Poland</u>	c. 1370	c. 1500	<u>Kraków</u> was the capital of the <u>Kingdom of Poland</u> , 1038–1596/1611. It adopted <u>Magdeburg town law</u> and 5000 Poles and 3500 Germans lived within the city proper in the 15th century; Poles steadily rose in the ranks of guild memberships reaching 41% of guild members in 1500. It was very loosely associated with <u>Hansa</u> , and paid no membership fees, nor sent representatives to League meetings.	[14][31][33][35][42][43][44]
Baltic	 <u>Breslau, (Wrocław)</u>	 <u>Kingdom of Bohemia</u>	 <u>Poland</u>	1387	1474	<u>Breslau</u> , a part of the <u>Duchy of Breslau</u> and the <u>Kingdom of Bohemia</u> , was only loosely connected to the League and paid no membership fees nor did its representatives take part in	[31][33][35][45][46]

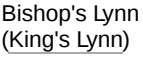



















					Hansa meetings	
Baltic	 Königsberg (Kaliningrad)	 Teutonic Order	 Russia	1340	Königsberg was the capital of the Teutonic Order, becoming the capital of Ducal Prussia on the Order's secularisation in 1466. Ducal Prussia was a German principality that was a fief of the Polish crown until gaining its independence in the 1660 Treaty of Oliva. The city was renamed Kaliningrad in 1946 after East Prussia was divided between the People's Republic of Poland and the Soviet Union at the Potsdam Conference.	[25][31][33][35]
Baltic	 Rīga	 Terra Mariana (Livonia)	 Latvia	1282	During the Livonian War (1558–83), Riga became a Free imperial city until the 1581 Treaty of Drohiczyn ceded Livonia to the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth until the city was captured by Sweden in the Polish–Swedish War (1621–1625).	[25][31][32]:82[33][34][35][47]:20
Baltic	 Reval (Tallinn)	 Terra Mariana (Livonia)	 Estonia	1285	On joining the Hanseatic League, Reval was a Danish fief, but was sold, with the rest of northern Estonia, to the Teutonic Order in 1346. After the Livonian War (1558–83), northern Estonia became a part of the Swedish Empire.	[24][25][29]:47[31][32]:81[33][35]
Baltic	 Dorpat (Tartu)	 Terra Mariana (Livonia)	 Estonia	1280s	The Bishopric of Dorpat gained increasing autonomy within the Terra Mariana. During the Livonian War (1558–83), Dorpat fell under the rule of the Grand Duchy of	[24][25][31][33][35]

						Lithuania, with the 1581 Treaty of Drohiczyn definitively ceding Livonia to the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth until the city was captured by Sweden in the Polish–Swedish War (1621–1625).	
Westphalian	 <u>Cologne</u>	 Imperial City of <u>Cologne</u>	 <u>Germany</u>		1669	Capital of the Rhine-Westphalian and Netherlands Circle until after the Anglo-Hanseatic War (1470–74), when the city was prosecuted in 1475 with temporary trade sanctions (German: <i>Verhanst</i>) for some years for having supported England; <u>Dortmund</u> was made capital of the Circle. Cologne also was called "Electorate of Cologne" (German: Kurfürstentum Köln or Kurköln). In June 1669 the last Hanseday was held in the town of Lübeck by the last remaining Hanse members, amongst others Cologne.	[25][28][29]:120[31][33][34]
Westphalian	 <u>Dortmund</u>	 Imperial City of <u>Dortmund</u>	 <u>Germany</u>			After Cologne was excluded after the Anglo-Hanseatic War (1470–74), Dortmund was made capital of the Rhine-Westphalian and Netherlands Circle.	[25][31][32]:82[33][34][35]
Westphalian	 <u>Deventer</u>	 Bishopric of <u>Utrecht</u>	 <u>Netherlands</u>	1000	1500		[25][31][33][34][37][48][49][50]:438
Westphalian	 <u>Kampen</u>	 Bishopric of <u>Utrecht</u>	 <u>Netherlands</u>	1441			[25][31][33][34][49][50]:433
Westphalian	 <u>Groningen</u>	 <u>Friesland</u>	 <u>Netherlands</u>				[25][31][33][37]
Westphalian	<u>Münster</u>	<u>Prince-</u>					[25][32]:82[33][34][35]

		 <u>opric of Münster</u>	<u>Germany</u>			
Westphalian	 <u>Osnabrück</u>	 <u>Prince-Bishopric of Osnabrück</u>	 <u>Germany</u>	12th century		[25][31][33][34][35]
Westphalian	 <u>Soest</u>	 <u>Imperial City of Soest</u>	 <u>Germany</u>		1609	The city was a part of the <u>Electorate of Cologne</u> until acquiring its freedom in 1444–49, after which it aligned with the <u>Duchy of Cleves</u> . [25][31][32]:82[33][34][35]

Kontore

Quarter	City	Territory	Now	From	Until	Notes	Refs
Kontor	 Novgorod: Peterhof	 Novgorod Republic	 Russia		1500s	Novgorod was one of the principal Kontore of the League and the easternmost. In 1499, <u>Ivan III, Grand Prince of Moscow</u> , closed the Peterhof; it was reopened a few years later, but the League's Russian trade never recovered.	[28][29]:47[31][32]:26, 82[37][48]
Kontor	 Bergen: Bryggen	 Kingdom of Norway	 Norway	1360	1775	Bryggen was one of the principal Kontore of the League. It was razed by accidental fire in 1476. In 1560, administration of Bryggen was placed under Norwegian administration.	[28][31][32]:82[37][48][51][52]
Kontor	 Bruges: Hanzekantoor	 County of Flanders	 Belgium			Bruges was one of the principal Kontore of the League until the 15th century, when the seaway to the city silted up; trade from Antwerp benefiting from Bruges's loss.	[29]:47[31][32]:80[37][48][50]:134, 176
Kontor	 London: Steelyard	 Kingdom of England	 United Kingdom	1303	1853	The Steelyard was one of the principal Kontore of the League. <u>King Edward I</u> granted a <i>Carta Mercatoria</i> in 1303. The Steelyard was destroyed in 1469 and <u>Edward IV</u> exempted <u>Cologne</u> merchants, leading to the <u>Anglo-Hanseatic War (1470–74)</u> . The <u>Treaty of Utrecht</u> , sealing the peace, led to the League purchasing the Steelyard outright in 1475, with <u>Edward</u> having renewed the League's privileges without insisting on reciprocal rights for English merchants in the Baltic. London merchants persuaded <u>Elizabeth I</u> to rescind the League's privileges on 13 January 1598; while the Steelyard was re-established by <u>James I</u> , the advantage never returned. Consulates continued however, providing communication during the <u>Napoleonic Wars</u> , and the Hanseatic interest was only sold in 1853.	[12][29]:47[31][32]:26, 80–82 [37][48][51][53]:95
Kontor	 Antwerp	 Duchy of Brabant	 Belgium			Antwerp became a major Kontor of the League, particularly after the seaway to Bruges silted up in the 15th century, leading to its fortunes waning in Antwerp's favour, despite Antwerp's refusal to	[31][32]:80[48]

						grant special privileges to the League's merchants. Between 1312 and 1406, Antwerp was a margraviate, independent of Brabant.	
Kontor	 Bishop's Lynn (King's Lynn)	 Kingdom of England	 United Kingdom		1751	The Hanseatic Warehouse was constructed in 1475 as part of the Treaty of Utrecht, allowing the League to establish a trading depot in Lynn for the first time. It is the only surviving League building in England.	[31][48][53]:95
Kontor	 Ipswich	 Kingdom of England	 United Kingdom				[31][48]
Kontor	 Malmö	 Kingdom of Denmark	 Sweden	15th century		Skåne (Scania) was Danish until ceded to Sweden by the 1658 Treaty of Roskilde, during the Second Northern War.	[31][48]
Kontor	 Falsterbo	 Kingdom of Denmark	 Sweden	15th century		Skåne was Danish until ceded to Sweden by the 1658 Treaty of Roskilde, during the Second Northern War.	[31][48]
Kontor	 Kaunas	 Grand Duchy of Lithuania	 Lithuania	1441		In 1398 traders guild with close ties to Hanseatic league appeared in Kaunas. Treaty with Hanseatic league was signed in 1441. Main office was located in House of Perkūnas from 1441 till 1532.	[24][31][48]
Kontor	 Pleskau (Pskov)	 Pskov Republic	 Russia			In the 12th and 13th centuries, Pskov adhered to the Novgorod Republic. It was captured by the Teutonic Order in 1241 and liberated by a Lithuanian prince, becoming a <i>de facto</i> sovereign republic by the 14th century.	[31][48]
Kontor	 Polotsk	 Principality of Polotsk	 Belarus			Polotsk was an autonomous principality of Kievan Rus' until gaining its independence in 1021. From 1240, it became a vassal of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, being fully integrated into the Grand Duchy in 1307.	[31][48]

Ports with Hansa trading posts

- Berwick-upon-Tweed
- Bristol^[31]
- Boston^{[31][37][48][53]:95}
- Damme^[31]
- Leith^{[31][48]}
- Hull^{[31][48]}

- [Newcastle](#)^{[31][48]}
- [Great Yarmouth](#)^{[31][48]}
- [Kings Lynn](#)^[31] ^[54]
- [York](#)^{[31][48]}

Other cities with a Hansa community

- [Aberdeen](#)^[55]
- [Åbo \(Turku\)](#)^[48]
- [Arnhem](#)^{[50]:432}^[56]
- [Avaldsnes](#)^{[37][52]}
- [Bolsward](#)^{[34][57]}
- [Bordeaux](#)^[48]
- [Brae](#)^[48]
- [Doesburg](#)^{[49][50]:433}
- [Elburg](#)^{[49][50]:433}
- [Fellin \(Viljandi\)](#)^{[24][35]}
- [Goldingen \(Kuldīga\)](#)^[24]
- [Göttingen](#)^{[25][34][35][58]}
- [Grindavík](#)^[48]
- [Grundarfjörður](#)^[48]
- [Gunnister](#)^{[48][52][59]}
- [Haapsalu](#)^[24]
- [Hafnarfjörður](#)^{[37][48][60]}
- [Hamelin](#)^[35]
- [Hanover](#)^{[25][34][35]}
- [Harderwijk](#)
- [Harlingen](#)
- [Haroldswick](#)^[48]
- [Hasselt](#)^{[25][33][49]}
- [Hatter](#)^{[33][49]}
- [Herford](#)^{[32]:82}^{[33][34][35][53]:391}
- [Hildesheim](#)^{[25][34][35]}
- [Hindeloopen \(Hylpen\)](#)^{[50]:397}^[61]
- [Kalmar](#)^{[33][62]}
- [Kokenhusen \(Koknese\)](#)^{[24][33][35][63][64][65]}
- [Krambatang](#)^{[37][52]}
- [Kumbaravogu](#)^[66]
- [Kulm \(Chełmno\)](#)^{[25][33][35]}
- [Leghorn](#)^{[67]:98}
- [Lemgo](#)^{[25][33][34][35]}
- [Lemsal \(Limbaži\)](#)^{[24][33][35]}
- [Lippe](#)^{[25][34]}
- [Lisbon](#)^[68]
- [Lunna Wick](#)^[48]
- [Messina](#)^[69]
- [Minden](#)^{[25][33][34][35]}
- [Naples](#)^[69]
- [Nantes](#)^[48]
- [Narva](#)^{[24][48]}
- [Nijmegen](#)^{[33][34][37]}
- [Nordhausen](#)^{[25][33]}
- [Nyborg](#)^[48]
- [Nyköping](#)^[33]
- [Oldenzaal](#)^[33]
- [Ommen](#)
- [Paderborn](#)^{[25][33][35]}
- [Pernau \(Pärnu\)](#)^{[24][25][33][35]}



The Hanseatic Warehouse in King's Lynn is the only surviving League building in England



The Oostershuis, a kontor in Antwerp

- [Roermond](#)
- [Roop \(Straupe\)](#)^[24]
- [Scalloway](#)
- [Smolensk](#)
- [Stargard](#)^{[25][31][33][35][41]}:476
- [Stavoren \(Starum\)](#)^[50]:398
- [Tórshavn](#)^{[37][48]}
- [Trondheim](#)^[52]
- [Tver](#)
- [Uelzen](#)
- [Venlo](#)
- [Vilnius](#)^{[24][48]}
- [Walk \(Valka\)](#)^[24]
- [Weißenstein \(Paide\)](#)^[24]
- [Wenden \(Cēsis\)](#)^{[24][33][35][47]}:60
- [Wesel](#)^{[33][34]}
- [Wesenberg \(Rakvere\)](#)^[24]
- [Windau \(Ventspils\)](#)^{[24][33]}
- [Wolmar \(Valmiera\)](#)^{[24][33][35]}
- [Zutphen](#)^{[25][33][34][49][50]}:433
- [Zwolle](#)^{[25][33][34][49][50]}:433, 439

Modern "City League The Hanse"

In 1980, former Hanseatic League members established a "new Hanse" in [Zwolle](#), the "City League The Hanse". This league is open to all former Hanseatic League members and cities that once hosted a Hanseatic *kontor*. The latter include twelve Russian cities, most notably [Novgorod](#), which was a major Russian trade partner of the Hansa in the Middle Ages. The "new Hanse" fosters and develops business links, tourism and cultural exchange.^[70]

The headquarters of the New Hansa is in [Lübeck](#), Germany. The current President of the Hanseatic League of New Time is Bernd Saxe, Mayor of Lübeck.^[70]

Each year one of the member cities of the New Hansa hosts the [Hanseatic Days of New Time](#) international festival.

In 2006 [King's Lynn](#) became the first English member of the newly formed modern Hanseatic League.^[71] Hull also joined and [Boston, Lincolnshire](#) was considering an application in early 2013.



German language logo

Historical maps



Europe in 1097



Europe in 1430



Europe in 1470



[Carta marina of the Baltic Sea region \(1539\)](#)


See also

- [Baltic maritime trade \(c. 1400-1800\)](#)
- [Bay Fleet](#)
- [Brick Gothic](#)
- [Company of Merchant Adventurers of London](#)
- [Hanseatic Cross](#)

- [Hanseatic Days of New Time](#)
- [Hanseatic flags](#)
- [Hanseatic Museum and Schøtstuene](#)
- [Hanseatic Trade Center](#)
- [List of ships of the Hanseatic League](#)
- [Lufthansa](#)
- [Maritime republics](#)
- [Thalassocracy](#)
- [The Patrician](#)

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