

KANT'S KÖNIGSBERG

Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) was founded in 1255 by the Teutonic Knights, when they erected a castle on a hill by the Pregel (Pregolya River). This monastic order of Crusaders formed in the Holy Land had been invited into the country by a Polish duke to Christianise the pagan Prussians. The settlement that developed at the foot of the castle, with German incomers, was granted town privileges in 1286 and named Königsberg ("King's Mountain") probably in honour of King Ottokar II of Bohemia.



Königsberg from the south in 1730 (East Prussian State Museum, Lüneburg)

The last Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, Albrecht of Brandenburg (1490-1568), following Martin Luther's advice, paid feudal homage to King Sigismund I of Poland and brought the Reformation to Königsberg, transforming the monastic state into the secular Duchy of Prussia that became a kingdom in 1701.



Königsberg Castle towering over the city in the early 19th century (East Prussian State Museum, Lüneburg)



Kant's home at Prinzessinplatz, next to Königsberg Castle, from 1784 until his death on 12 February 1804 at the age of almost 80 (East Prussian State Museum, Lüneburg)

**THANKS TO IMMANUEL KANT,
KÖNIGSBERG BECAME THE
CAPITAL OF THE GERMAN
ENLIGHTENMENT.**

Having a weak physical constitution Kant did not like to travel far and left his hometown only to visit friends nearby. In his book *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) Kant wrote: 'A large city such as Königsberg on the river Pregel, which is the centre of a kingdom, in which the provincial councils of the government are located, which has a university (for cultivation of the sciences), and which has also the right location for maritime commerce – a city which, by way of rivers, has the advantages of commerce both with the interior of the country and with neighbouring and distant lands of different languages and customs, can well be taken as an appropriate place for broadening one's knowledge of human beings as well as of the world, where this knowledge can be acquired without even travelling.'

In April 1945 the Red Army captured Königsberg, a city almost destroyed by the RAF the year before. The German population was expelled, Soviet citizens were resettled in their stead, and the city renamed Kaliningrad after a former head of state of the Soviet Union. Today it has about 430,000 inhabitants and is the centre of a Russian enclave between the EU and NATO states of Poland and Lithuania.

The countries on the Baltic Sea in the 21st Century showing the location of Königsberg

