

There are many different facets to Germany. Barbara Gerkmann at Berlitz Language Centre in Bremen calls it a 'country of tradition, customs and culture [with] an abundance of scenic possibilities'. Hans-Georg Albers, Director of Sales and Marketing at Carl Duisberg Centren (CDC), which has schools in Berlin, Cologne, Dortmund, Munich, Radolfzell and Saarbruecken, highlights the country's multiculturalism, high living standards and endless tourist sites.

The Germany of today has a population of over 82 million people, and has many economic opportunities, says Heiko Ahmann, Marketing Director at Humboldt-Institut, which also has centres throughout Germany. 'It is no wonder that many people consider Germany 'the engine of the European Union,' he adds.

Frankfurt-am-Main is Germany's financial capital and has been the headquarters of the European Central Bank since 1998.

Despite its high-powered status, Frankfurt retains some of its historic charm, with traditional half-timber houses living alongside modern skyscrapers. 'Frankfurt is full of contrasts and in its own fascinating way, blends the modern with the traditional,' comments Rolf Buchenau, Managing Director of Language Alliance, a language school situated in the heart of the city. He adds,

'One of the big advantages of Frankfurt is its high percentage of foreigners, which not only creates an international flair but inspires a non-discriminatory atmosphere.'

Another city that blends Germany's traditional heritage and modern living is Cologne. Felix Korn, Managing Director of Fremdsprachenforum in Cologne, says the city is 'a



Water Powered Mill, Black Forest
The Black Forest is a popular tourist area in Germany with its charming villages, dark forests and romantic valleys. Some water-powered mills in the region still operate, grinding corn into flour



Germany's mix

Germany is a vast country with many different language learning locations to choose from, from traditional quiet towns to high-tech cities that combine the modern with the old. GILLIAN EVANS reports.

vibrant media metropolis with over 2,000 years of history, as well as a modern culture, famous art scene, music [and] theatre'.

Home to Germany's main media companies, Cologne combines modern creativity with its long-standing history. It has many historical places of interest, including its majestic cathedral, which is the most visited building in Germany. It is also the venue of the famous Cologne Carnival, when the streets are filled with colourful processions of floats, bands, horses and people in fancy dress.

Germans certainly know how to celebrate, with regional festivals and parties peppering the annual calendar - Berlin's Love Parade in July, Munich's Strong Beer Season in March/April and Oktoberfest at the end of September/beginning of

October and the wine festivals in towns and villages along the Rhine and Mosell rivers are all examples. As Albers says, 'Almost every town or city has some special event or 'Fest' to offer.'

Germany's capital, Berlin, is undoubtedly the country's party city and cultural centre, with numerous bars and nightclubs, as well as three opera houses, four state theatres, and hundreds of smaller theatres, concert halls and museums. 'Berlin is the most exciting city in Germany,' asserts Dirk Heiland at Die Neue Schule in Berlin. 'No other city offers such a vast variety of chances and challenges to young people.'

Although there is round-the-clock entertainment and many new places to discover in Berlin itself, Die Neue Schule organises many activities outside the city as well. '[The] activities differ from week to week but include canoeing in the Brandenburg rivers, mountain climbing in Saxony, and weekend excursions to the Polish Baltic sea coast,' says Heiland.

Agent viewpoint



'The most popular cities among our students are Berlin, Hamburg, Köln (Cologne) and Munich. Mostly the students already have a grounding in

the German language and try to improve their knowledge to enter university successfully in Germany. [Also] there is more and more interest in business German. The reason for this is foreign companies' increasing integration in the Latvian market. Given that next year Latvia will join the European Union, I foresee that desire to study

German will only increase.'
Evija Graumane, Study Tours, Latvia



'We send students to Berlin, Munich, Radolfzell and Heidelberg. Berlin is the most popular city, because it is close to Poland, with quick and cheap transport facilities and suitable school prices. German schools are very professional [and] the social programme is usually very rich. Students have the possibility to meet many students from other countries. The

schools also have good equipment: computers rooms, libraries, cafeterias.'

Magdalena Piewcewicz, Centrum Olimpia, Poland



'We send students to Lindau, Berlin, Stuttgart, Munich, Köln and Tübingen. These [locations] are popular mainly because of word of mouth recommendation and the [close] vicinity of Lindau, and partly Freiburg, to Switzerland.'

Jean-Daniel Jemora, Link Study, Switzerland



The picturesque town of Heidelberg (main picture)

no wonder, given their many attractions. Leipzig, for example, is a vibrant historical city with Renaissance and Baroque architecture, and plenty of shopping and cultural opportunities. Dietrich Falk, at the Sprachschule

Falk Dietrich in



Cathedral, Bonn

Bonn's cathedral is situated in Münsterplatz, which is a focal point for the city and the setting for the annual Christmas market. The romanesque basilica dominates the square

Frauenkirche. But Uwe Kaestner of Kaestner Kolleg Sprachen in the city is also keen to highlight its modern side, too. 'Dresden isn't merely a living museum, but also home to innovation and state-of-the-art technology.' In addition, it has a thriving student population of 50,000. 'On the northern

With the exception of Berlin, it has taken tourists and language travellers a little longer to discover the other towns and cities of the former East Germany. But a number of places are now firmly on many travellers' itineraries - and



Leipzig, also mentions some of Leipzig's famous citizens, including the author and playwright Goethe, who studied there between 1765 and 1768, and the composer Wagner, who was born there in 1813.

Just southeast of Leipzig is Dresden, dubbed the 'Florence on the Elbe'. It is a monument to the Baroque period with the impressive Zwinger palace and its world famous art gallery, and the

banks of the Elbe lies the cosmopolitan quarter Dresden-Neustadt, with its small galleries, theatres and colourful houses. Every night, young people from all walks of life meet here and enjoy themselves in the numerous trendy bars, street cafés and international restaurants,' says Kaestner.

For a taste of medieval-style Germany, Regensburg cannot be missed. Situated in Bavaria on the River Danube, Regensburg's city centre is among the best-preserved medieval cities in Europe. 'Regensburg is one of the most beautiful and oldest cities in Germany,' asserts Sonja Schlesinger, Academic Manager at AEC Augsburg English

Centre, which is opening a new school, Academy Lingua, in Regensburg in January.

Another picture-postcard city is Heidelberg, situated in the southwest of Germany. Nestled in the beautiful valley of the Neckar River, just south of the Odenwald forest, Heidelberg is a historic town, which, throughout history, has attracted artists, poets and scientists. 'In the early 19th century, the town became the most important centre of German Romanticism,' relates Tiziana Abegg at F+U Academy in Heidelberg. The city is also home to the oldest university in Germany, having been founded in 1385, and today, one in five residents are students, giving it a lively and fun atmosphere.

In the heart of the Odenwald is Hoechst, a quiet town that is the location of the Kids & Language Club Centre for junior learners, run by Offaehrte Sprachreisen/IP International Projects. 'Hoechst is perfect for younger students,' asserts Heiner Gieser

'One of our students lost her wallet in a taxi in Dresden last week. Yesterday a Berlin taxi driver came along and handed the wallet in at our school - complete with around 300 euros and passport inside. That's quite typical of Germans: they may be thought of as not always being very funny but they are always reliable!'

Dirk Heiland, Die Neue Schule, Berlin

from the company. 'It's a small, safe, pretty town offering all the necessary amenities and located in the heart of one of Germany's most beautiful forests - the Odenwald.'

For an experience of Germany's seafaring days, students should head for northern Germany. Just a two-hour drive away from the German Baltic Sea and an hour away from the beaches of the North Sea and Hamburg is the port city of Bremen. 'The wonderful historic *Altstadt* (old quarter) of Bremen in the downtown area is well preserved and really worth a sightseeing trip,' says Gerkmann of Berlitz in Bremen, which has been offering language classes in the city for over 100 years. Bremen is also a good choice for students who enjoy the outdoors, as Gerkmann points out. 'Bremen is known for its

great biking opportunities. '[There are] well cared for biking trails throughout the city and outside of it too. Even our mayor rides his bike to his office each day!'

Another sporting city is Dortmund on the northwestern edge of the Ruhr area. Over half of the city area is covered in forests, fields and parks, and cycling, hiking, canoeing and fishing are all popular recreational pastimes for locals and visitors. But football is the city's real passion. 'During a home game, the streets of Dortmund are empty,' comments Albers.

Friedrichshafen on Lake Constance, in the south of Germany, meanwhile, benefits

from its location near the foot of the Swiss Alps. 'Lake Constance is a paradise not only for water sports enthusiasts. Also the surrounding countryside has its own appeal - expansive forests and small villages embedded in rolling landscapes,' says Raimund Voegele at Inlingua Friedrichshafen. □



The Rhine

The River Rhine is home to many of Germany's medieval castles, towers and fortresses as well as a thriving wine industry. Tourist trips along the Rhine are a high point for many visitors to the region