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# German plus culture

German plus culture courses offer students the means to learn the language while also gaining an understanding of Germany's impressive cultural background. Whatever a student's interest, they will surely be able to find a course to suit their needs.

Germany has been called *das Land der Dichter und Denker* [the land of poets and thinkers] and with so many literary figures, such as Kafka, Goethe and Schiller, calling the country home, language students looking for a taste of German culture do not have to look far. Music, architecture, art, literature, cooking and philosophy are all cultural activities that can be found in abundance in Germany and language schools have been quick to combine such add-ons into their language courses.

Robert Sobotta from the aptly named Goethe Institute in Dresden says that language and culture programmes have been the focus of the school since it opened in 1996. Here, students can undertake an intensive language and culture programme for either four or two weeks, combining intensive language learning with a full cultural programme that includes visits to theatres, historic sites and a behind-the-scenes look at local business and political institu-

tions. "We [recently] introduced courses focusing on the silver generation," says Sobotta. "That is, people older than 50 years." The Deutsch 50 plus course was developed for older students "to exchange ideas on language, history and culture with like-minded people," according to the course brochure.

Some schools are developing such courses as an addition to their mainstream offerings. Ute Klünder, Director of Carl Duisberg Centren in Hannover, says that they are offering new German language and culture courses as a combination with the Intensive Course Plus from 2009. "Additional programmes offer the possibilities of learning more about German cultural features," she says. "More intense than the regular leisure time programme, these additional programmes give an insight into, for example, German history in Berlin or wine growing along the Rhine in Cologne or the myths of King Ludwig II in Munich."

The variety of cultural activities available in Germany mean that the range of language plus culture programmes on offer is large. Susanne Wolny from Fremdsprachenforum in Cologne, which has offered German plus culture programmes since last summer, says that such courses have been really popular with certain types of students. "These courses are not so popular with the students who want to study at the German university but they are really popular with the students during summer courses," she says. The school has also introduced a German Christmas course during December, which includes a visit to one of the four Christmas markets that are held in Cologne each year.

She adds, "Every day we will introduce and explain a new typical German Christmas tradition: Nikolaus [St Nicholas], Weihnachtsmann [Father Christmas], Adventskalender. If we explain typical German Christmas food – especially the cookies – we will explain why Germans prepare them, where they come from and in the afternoon we will bake them because we have a kitchen in our school. We also plan to make an excursion to the famous Lebkuchen [type of traditional German Christmas biscuit] manufacturer in Aachen and we will follow the Krippenweg [a trail of nativity scenes] here in Cologne."

However, language plus culture courses can offer some challenges to language schools as Günter Ost from Hermann-Hesse-Kolleg in Horb am Neckar points out, adding that the school does not provide such courses to students. "It's hard to get enough students for them because you have to offer time-limited and time-defined courses," he says. "At the end you get a small group of very different language levels which causes unsatisfied learners."

Language plus culture courses do seem to be popular with one particular sector of the student market, however, that of older age leisure learners looking for a holiday with a difference. Brigitta Alkofer from Humboldt-Institut in Argenbühl says that they offer a full cultural activity programme as part of their activity programme for students on their general language courses, but have recently developed a new course for older learners. "In 2009, we will for the first time offer a German language course 50+ in Ellwangen, which will be a combined language and culture course focusing on visits to cultural monuments and points of interest in the surroundings – churches, monasteries, museums but also concerts etc," she says. The cultural events will not take place in the mornings – lesson time – but will be an integral part of the course."

Overall, language plus culture courses can be a good way for language schools to diversify their courses and attract a wider variety of students. Wolny says that the courses attract students from far and wide. "The nationalities that are attracted by this offer are Japanese, Korean and students from Eastern European countries," she says.

## Selection of programmes available

Location	Name of school	Do you offer courses?		Minimum length of course (wks)		Min hours tuition (p/wk)		Minimum language proficiency	Types of culture courses available
		Year round	Limited season only	Language	Culture course	Language	Culture course		
Argenbühl	Humboldt-Institut		●	3	25	20	n	ex	
Berlin	Carl Duisberg Centren	●	●	2	30	6	n	ad,h,m	
Berlin	Eurasia Institute	●		1	15	16	v	a,ar,h,l,p	
Berlin	Sprach-und Kulturborse der TU Berlin		●	5	-	-	-	a,c,f,h,l,m	
Cologne	Carl Duisberg Centren	●	●	2	30	6	n	a,ad,w	
Cologne	Fremdsprachenforum	●		1	15	5	e	c,l	
Dresden	Goethe-Institut	●		2	20	20	n	a,c,l,m	
Dresden	Kastner Kolleg		●	1	-	6	i	a,c	
Frieburg	International House Frieburg		●	6	25	-	i	th	
Kiel	Berlitz Center	●		1	-	-	n	-	
Kiel	Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel		●	4	16	4-6	e	h,l	
Munich	Carl Duisberg Centren	●	●	2	30	6	n	a,ad,h	
Munich	International University Club		●	-	20	20	n	eu	
Radolfzell	Carl Duisberg Centren	●	●	2	30	-	n	ad	
Tubingen	Sprachinstitut Tubingen	●		2	20	4-8	n	a,m	

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