

Germany's broad appeal



From business language schools to university campus-based language courses, there are plenty of possibilities for students wanting to travel to Germany to learn the language. BETHAN NORRIS reports.

Germany is a country offering great variety,” says Johannes Schwab from Institut Matura in Donaueschingen, identifying one of Germany’s principle attractions for language students. “It has never been centralised but offers regional characteristics for quite different tastes.”

With a number of large cosmopolitan cities and plenty of small scenic towns, Germany can offer a plethora of different experiences. At Donaueschingen, Institut Matura specialises in third age programmes, combining language tuition with a cultural programme in the afternoon or evening and catering specifically for the more mature student. According to Schwab, this means that, year round, they have “a pool of open-minded students of the same age group who are happy to join excursions, concerts, etc”.

Popular activities with Schwab’s students include cycling, hiking and visit-

ing the historic towns of Villingen, Freiburg and Konstanz or the saltwater spa seven kilometres from Donaueschingen. “Lovers of nature and culture can expect a lot. Those who enjoy the excitement of city life find better destinations,” he says.

Students at Donaueschingen can also visit the nearby Lake Constance, which Schwab describes as a spiritual centre with many churches and monasteries. Anka Guter from S&W Training in Meersburg am Bodensee calls the area “breathtaking”. “It is the most beautiful region in Germany,” she claims. “Meersburg is one thousand years old and overlooks Lake Constance as well as the Alps.”

S&W Training also focuses on one specific client base – business

clients. “Our clientele are managers, not students,” says Guter. “They enjoy the lovely nature [here]. They swim, jog, sail, sit and drink the local wine, talk to their guest family – and relax. We have no stress at all.”

However, Guter is

quick to point out that there are plenty of opportunities for clients to have fun and get involved with the local population. “There is one special night [during the local carnival] called *Schmutziger Donnerstag* – Dirty Thursday – when everybody is in a special disguise – pyjamas or a nightgown,” she relates. “It is a very joyful party, going on the whole day and the whole night.”

While all areas of Germany provide opportunities for interesting social activities and nightlife, younger students might find the attractions of the big cities such as Berlin or Munich of greatest appeal. “Munich is one of the most popular cities for German students with three renowned universities,” confirms Petra Lundgren from EF in Munich, while Florian Meierhofer from BWS



Messe, Frankfurt
The Messe festival hall and congress centre complex in Frankfurt hosts a wide range of exhibitions and events. Its architectural highlight is the dome roof made of glass and steel

Beethoven Statue, Munsterplatz, Bonn (main picture)

Germanlingua adds, “Most of the students are strongly attracted by the large discos in Berlin and Munich. The nightlife in both cities is very intensive, especially during the summertime [when there are] open air cinemas, music festivals and parties.”

Dorothee Robrecht from GLS Sprachenzentrum Berlin says that their students particularly enjoy the “sub-cultural scenes in Berlin”, involving independent films, fashion and art. The school offers bicycle tours around Berlin where the wall used to be, water tours on the River Spree or nearby lakes and “nights out in Berlin bars and clubs that are popular right now, such as Moskau”, says Robrecht.

With lots of people and a thriving social scene, Germany’s larger cities provide language students with many opportunities to

meet and mix with the local people. Erich Thaler, from BSI Private Sprachschule in Berlin, says, “Kreuzberg, the district where BSI is located, is *the* multicultural area of the city. It has a long tradition of receiving people with different cultural backgrounds and helps BSI students to integrate very quickly into everyday life.”

Students at the school can also get to know the attractions of the city through the extra-curricular activities of their teachers.

Students are often invited to rock concerts, theatre plays and exhibitions that teachers are involved in outside school, according to Thaler. He adds, “[Students] play football in the regional league of Berlin, do cooking courses and present their own paintings and writings in young and trendy Berlin cafés.”

Another area of Germany with a university population is the town of Heidelberg, where F+U

International Academy is located. Tiziana Abegg at the school says that as well as being a beautiful historic town with cobbled streets, elegant architecture, a famous castle and the oldest, most renowned university in Germany, Heidelberg is actually “an important centre for science and medicine and research and development”.

Heidelberg is within easy reach of the countryside and, according to Abegg, the school runs a number of excursions inside and outside the city centre. “[These include] visits to museums, evening walks through the old city, movie evenings, a barbecue party, a welcome party, a tour of Heidelberg castle, a boat cruise along the romantic Neckar and a hike to the *Thingstätte* – an



Martin Luther statue, Hesse
Martin Luther was a central figure in the Reformation of the Catholic church after railing against abuse by the church, notably the encouragement of the idea that one could buy forgiveness

Agent viewpoint



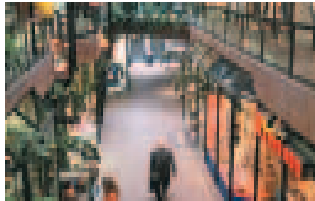
“Germany’s main attractions are the history, the architecture and the variety of destinations – whether the mountains of the Alps or the vibrant life in Berlin. Berlin and Frankfurt are our two most popular destinations. Students enjoy the energetic cultural life and nightlife of the cities and the opportunities to travel to nearby sights. Many of our students enjoy the museums and historical visits, the cultural events – particularly in Berlin – wine and beer tours and tastings,

open air arena on the Heilingenberg ‘Saint’s Mountain’ – overlooking the city,” she says.

Students also have the choice of studying on language courses at German universities. At the University of Hohenheim Language Centre in Stuttgart, Beate Löh says, “Our total group size is smaller than at most other universities so that students quickly get to know each other and also meet other students on campus.”

Students studying on the international language programme at the University of Tuebingen are offered many locally based extra-curricular activities

to experience some of the different cultural aspects of the area, according to Donato Tangredi. “We enjoy offering students a chance to experience



Hamburg shopping mall
Hamburg is known for its extraordinary shopping malls, as well as bars that never close, numerous coffee shops and a wide range of restaurants. This northern city is on the river Elbe

Swabian
cooking
courses,
dancing

courses, sport activities, wine-tasting events, town games, bike and boat tours, receptions at the town hall, to name but a few,” he says.

The German people are particularly fond of carni-

“One of our Italian students left all his pre-course information at home, including the address of his Munich host family. He only remembered the name of the suburb so he started knocking on doors in that particular suburb of about 15,000. A dentist and his family spontaneously invited him to stay overnight. The next day the dentist phoned up EF asking whether the student could stay with them.”

Petra Lundgren, EF, Munich

vals, street parties and parades and a number of regular events occur throughout the country, some of which attract visitors from all over the world. “Besides the well known Oktoberfest, we have a lot of small festivals in Munich all over the year

[featuring, for example] pop music, arts and international food,” says Meierhofer.

At Eurocentres in Cologne, Jannie Roos reports that the carnival was the favourite experience for one student, who recounted, “The spirit of Carnival reigns [everywhere]. You can meet lots of Cologne/German people and it is very easy to talk to them.” □

skiing in winter and hiking in the summer.”

Christine Londry, Languages Abroad, Canada



“My students [appreciate] the very professional teachers and wonderful landscapes in Germany. Southern Germany is very popular in our area due to previous immigration in the 1950s and 1960s, but also because the temperature is not as cold in winter as it is in the north. Younger people [like to] stay out until late [or go]

shopping, while older people [like to] practice their German in several contexts.”

Gabriella Perfetti, Auriga Servizi Centro di Lingue e Culture, Italy



“Germany’s main attraction is its rich history and variety of locations. Germany has amazing landscapes, such as the Bavarian Alps, Black Forest, Lake Constance, etc. It is popular with those students who enjoy the outdoor life, hiking, mountaineering

and cycling. Germany also has an excellent transport infrastructure and is easy to get to from most European destinations. With both Easyjet and Ryanair offering low-cost flights to Berlin, Hamburg and Cologne from the UK, it is becoming more and more accessible to language travel students. Berlin became a fascinating destination, especially after reunification, with its wide variety of museums, architecture and international popularity.”
Laura Woodhead, Cactus Language, UK