

# Munich's magic

A big city with a small town feel and plenty of attractions for all age groups means that Munich is sure to work its magic on any language travel student. GILLIAN EVANS takes in the city's charms.

**M**unich is a city of contrasts," says Michael Aulbach, Director of Did Deutsch-Institut in Munich.

"There is this famous mix [in Munich] of tradition and modernity, of natural peace and metropolitan excitement," he says.

Sebastian Deutschmann from Desk Sprachkurse adds that the city – which is home to 1.3 million people – is not as "hectic" as many other cities of its size. It is not surprising then that Munich has been dubbed *Weltstadt mit Herz* (The global city with a heart).

In many ways Munich's reputation goes before it. The twin towers of the city's cathedral, St Peter's church and the bell tower of the Neues Rathaus all characterise Munich's skyline, while Lederhosen, beer and brass bands colour everyday life in the Bavarian capital. However, there is another progressive side to the city, which is home to many global companies such as BMW and Siemens. As a result Munich attracts not only academic and vacation course students but also many who are learning the language for business purposes.

"[Our] students usually choose the city because their companies have subsidiaries, headquarters or important clients in Munich or nearby," says Geoff Johnson at business course provider Linguarama.

An added bonus for these language learners is that Munich boasts a lively cultural scene, with around 40 theatres and 50 museums, as well as a wide

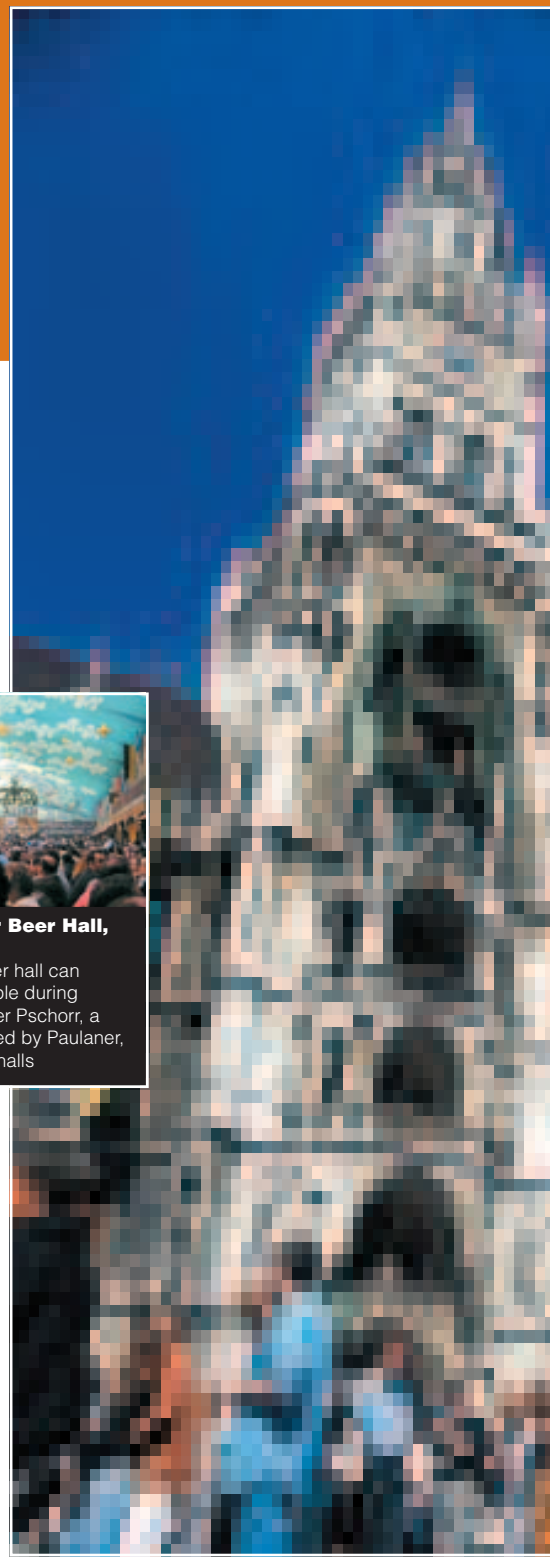
variety of restaurants, bars and nightclubs. "Whether opera or theatre, museums or concerts, sports or shopping, everyone can find something to suit their tastes," comments Isabel Heckelmann at Inlingua Munich.

Anette Achzehnter, from the Goethe Institut in Munich, highlights Munich's appeal to all student age groups. "With its great nightlife and its two widely known universities, Munich is quite attractive to young people but with its fantastic cultural life it also meets the demand of older people," she summarises.

With a student population of around 80,000, Munich is a lively city for university-age students with plenty of entertainment options. Popular hangouts

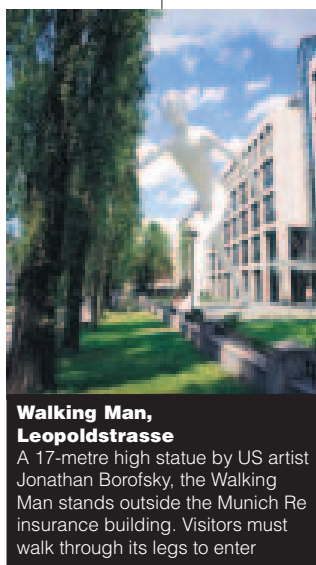
include Leopoldstrasse with its bars, restaurants and clubs, and the Kultfabrik near Ostbahnhof, which boasts 25 nightclubs. The city itself is carved up into different quarters such as Schwabing, Westend and Haidhausen, each of which, according to Deutschmann, has its own charm. "Cafés, restaurants, pubs, small parks, churches, flea markets and antique shops make each area special," he adds.

The city is easy to navigate – "It has probably the best public transport system in Germany," says



**Hacker Pschorr Beer Hall, Oktoberfest**

This enormous beer hall can house 10,000 people during Oktoberfest. Hacker Pschorr, a local brewery owned by Paulaner, sponsors six beer halls



**Walking Man, Leopoldstrasse**

A 17-metre high statue by US artist Jonathan Borofsky, the Walking Man stands outside the Munich Re insurance building. Visitors must walk through its legs to enter

Deutschmann – with an efficient tram, bus and subway network. Aulbach adds, "With a wide network of cycle paths, Munich is a fantastic place to explore by bike."

Munich also has lots of open spaces and offers plenty of outdoor activities. "Munich is a very green city, so students enjoy hanging out on the River Isar, in the Englischer Garten or in the Olympiazentrum," says Aulbach. Students can hire a rowing boat on the lake in the famous Englischer Garten, ice skate at Olympiazentrum or, every Mon-



The Neues Rathaus is a central point in the city (main picture)



Oktoberfest, which attracts around six million people each year. Beer and sausages are consumed in copious amounts against a backdrop of Lederhosen and *Dirndl* (traditional dresses with bodices), brass bands and fairground rides. There are many other events too, such as the Auer Dult, a traditional fair and antiques market held in May and August, and Tollwood, which takes place twice a year. Aulbacher explains, “In summer [Tollwood] offers a big variety of music and [stage] performances in a very relaxed and international ambience.”

Another entry for the diary is the Christkindlmarkt, where, says Florian

Meierhofer of BWS Germanlingua, “you can buy small gifts for Christmas, eat a cake called *Weihnachtstollen* and drink *Gluhwein*”.

Being close to both mountains and lakes means Munich is an ideal location whatever the season. “In summer there are dozens of really beautiful lakes [in



**Viktualienmarkt**  
This outdoor food market in the heart of the city sells an array of cheeses, meats, fruit and vegetables. The marketplace is a focal point for local celebrations and has a maypole and fountain

## Agent viewpoint

“Munich is a very popular course location for students from the US. If I get feedback it is generally very positive and I have many students who are returning for another course at the Goethe Institut. [According to my students,] Munich has outstanding nightlife and plenty of activities. It is definitely one of the liveliest cities in Germany for young people. It also has excellent cultural life (second only perhaps to Berlin) and more than enough events in the city itself to keep students busy. There is great outdoor life and even a couple of beaches in the outlying areas (especially down toward Lake Starnberg to the south of Munich.”

**Barbara Scott, North American Agent for Goethe Institut, USA**

“We send our students to Munich, Berlin, Göttingen, Lindau and Vienna. Munich is popular because it is near to Italy. Most [of our] students know Munich and like it because it is a big city. One negative aspect of studying in Munich is the accent of the Bavarian people. In addition, some students don't want to go to Munich because they think there are too many Italians on the German courses.”

**Sonia Candura, Alpha Beta, Italy**

“We send students to other locations [in Germany] such as Berlin, Hamburg or Heidelberg. I would say that Munich is the third most popular destination after Heidelberg and Berlin. Students mostly choose Munich because it is one of the more beautiful areas in Germany. We normally send students there who have preferences for family homestay. We have never received any bad comments about the city [from our clients].”

**Eliá Sánchez Chicote, Astex, Spain**

“Our adult clients (16 and over) may choose from these cities in Germany: Munich, Berlin, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Hamburg and Heidelberg. Some of our clients choose Munich for its beautiful atmosphere and architecture. Some need to learn German language with a Munich dialect. Many of our clients are surprised that the city is so huge.”

**Klara Ruzickova, Student Agency, Czech Republic**

“Our students fall in love with Munich very easily! It is a wonderful city and easy to promote, probably joint-favourite with Berlin as a German destination. The Alps, interesting architecture, world class museums and galleries, local culture, nightlife and weekend skiing make it a popular location.”

**Wayne Carr, Languagesabroad.com, Canada**

which you can swim] and in winter the mountains are close enough to go skiing for only one or two days,” says Meierhofer. The city is also well situated for exploring other

places of interest. “Students really like to discover the [Medieval] cities of Bavaria,” continues Meierhofer. “Most of them really love to make trips to Regensburg, Passau and Augsburg.” Another highlight is a trip to the castle of Neuschwanstein, upon which the Disney castle was based. □

day in summer, roller blade through the city with thousands of other inline skaters.

Another popular pastime is soaking up the leisurely atmosphere at one of Munich's many Biergarten. One favoured by many Münchener is the Augustiner Biergarten. Here, says Deutschmann, “Under old high trees in front of a Tuscan-style house, you can have a cool drink and enjoy traditional Bavarian food.”

Special events pepper the city's calendar, with its most famous festival being the