

Frankfurt's fun side

A thriving modern business hub with a rich historical and cultural heart, Frankfurt is an ideal destination for serious language students. BETHAN NORRIS looks at a few of the city's many attractions.

At first glance, Frankfurt appears to be a distinctly modern city, with a skyline dominated by gleaming skyscrapers and new office blocks housing the headquarters of many of the most influential financial institutions in the world.

Claudia Göbel from Language Studies International says that the city owes much of its modern architecture to developments after the Second World War. "In contrast to cities such as Munich that reclaimed the physical character of their past after World War II," she explains, "Frankfurt erected skyscrapers – hence the nickname Mainhattan, a reference to the River Main by which it stands."

The city's extensive development over the past 50 years has been largely directed by the growth of its financial industry and it is now Germany's financial capital, as well as the headquarters of the new European Central Bank, which was established with the launch of the euro in 1999.

This makes Frankfurt a natural choice for language students with a special interest in learning business German, and Göbel lists a range of large multinational companies that regularly send students to their school. "Some of our clients [include] American Express, Hewlett-Packard, Shell and the Walt Disney Company," she says. Wolfgang

Eifert from Fokus Sprachen & Seminare underlines that the city's status as "one of the most important financial centres in Europe" is a major draw for students.

However, beneath its modern facade, Frankfurt hides a fascinating historical and cultural past that spans 1,200 years, according to Göbel, who points out that the city has played a key role in Europe throughout history. "It was one of the joint capitals of Charlemagne's empire, the city where emperors of the Holy Roman Empire were elected and crowned, the site of Gutenberg's print shop [the inventor of book printing], the birthplace of Goethe – for many, Germany's greatest poet – and the city where the first German parliament met," she states.

For students keen to learn more about Frankfurt's historical legacy, there are many opportunities for sightseeing. The Historischer Garden is a small park where excavated remains of Roman and Medieval buildings can be seen, while restored 14th and 15th century buildings can be found in Römerberg – the historical city centre and Frankfurt's oldest square. The world's biggest book

fair, Frankfurt Book Fair, started its days in Römerberg in 1480 and is now the most important trade fair for the worldwide publishing industry.

Frankfurt boasts the largest number of museums of any German city apart from Munich and the majority of these are located on the 'Museum Mile', by the banks of the River Main. Christiane Bühler from Sprachcafé Languages Plus says that their school's location near this area is an attraction for students. "Our school is located in one of the most elegant parts of town called Sachsenhausen, with beautiful architecture, a lot of shops, restaurants [and] museums," she says. "Sachsenhausen is right on the banks of the River Main, where students can enjoy a wide range of outdoor activities – sunbathing, [having] picnics, rollerblading, volleyball etc."

The banks of the River Main also play host to the annual *Museumsuferfest* (Museum Embankment Festival), which lasts for three days and attracts more than three million visitors each year. As well as museum exhibitions, the event features live music and



Festival in the Römerberg

Frankfurt's historical centre, the Römerberg, is a great setting for festivals, such as the apple wine festival in June. The medieval market square was once home to a fort built by Charlemagne

Central Frankfurt offers shopping and cinema complexes alongside office buildings (main picture)

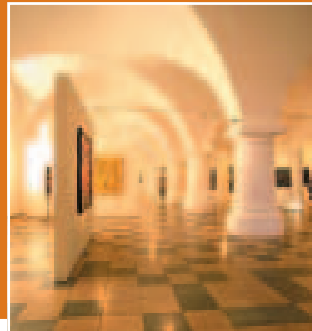


multicultural street celebrations featuring artists and musicians from all over the world. Bühler adds that this festival is just one of the many that take place within a very short distance from the school. “[Frankfurt has] many many festivals,” she says. “[These include] Fressgassfest [local wine festival], Opernplatzfest [devoted to

gastronomy],
Berger

Straßenfest [a five day festival known for its traditional rituals], and the Christmas market in December.”

At Language Studies International, Göbel adds, “Frankfurt may be a city of balance sheets and share prices [but] it adds up to more than just expense-account restaurants and sleek cars.” She points out that the city has world-class ballet, opera, theatre and art exhibitions on offer as part of the cultural calendar. “[Students] also find many traditional and modern bars, casinos, clubs and live music.”



Museum of Modern Art

Designed by Austrian architect, Hans Hollein, this museum was opened in 1991. Also known as MMK, the museum, which was built as a wedge-shaped building, seems spacious inside

One popular activity with students is visiting the traditional *apfelwein* (apple wine) gardens that can be found throughout the

old district of Sachsenhausen, says Bühler. *Apfelwein* or *ebbelwoi*, as it is pronounced in the Frankfurt dialect, is made using the same process as normal wine and first became popular in Frankfurt in the 1750s. There are four different types that have various strengths and the wine is traditionally drunk with *Handkäs mit Musik* (cheese with onions and vinaigrette) or *Rippchen mit Kraut* (smoked pork chop with *sauerkraut*).

Another popular area for going out in the evenings is Bahnhofsviertel, near the

Agent viewpoint

"The mix of skyscrapers and typical restaurants, original places to have a beer and eat authentic German food; this is one of the favourite aspects [of Frankfurt] for our students, who wish to socialise with other students from all over the world. Frankfurt offers excellent entertainment throughout the year - students commonly enjoy staying in the city centre. It is a good destination for mature adults who wish to join in the lively cultural life. Frankfurt is our third most popular destination to study German, after Munich and Vienna. Adult

students like staying in modern cities with good shopping facilities and entertainment options."
Gabriella Perfetti, Auriga Servizi, Italy

"Those [clients] who go to Frankfurt are students with an interest in business or technology and for them, the [business focus of the city] is the most important attraction. In their spare time in the evening, like all Italian students, they like the nightlife. Our students are university students and professional adults - Frankfurt is not a city for

children or teenagers."
Marco Righetti, Education Consultants, Italy

"Frankfurt has become more popular with our students in the last few years due to its good communications, such as direct flights. Students enjoy visiting the city centre and going to museums. They also like to explore the typical villages and towns nearby."
Susana Sanchez, CIE Consulting Idiomas Extranjeros, Spain

central station. The area previously had a reputation for being closely associated with the sex industry but, according to Göbel, this is now the "most international and exciting quarter" of the city. She adds, "You meet more people here during the day or night than in any other part of Frankfurt – except perhaps on the shopping street called the 'Zeil' at the heart of Frankfurt, which has the highest turnover in the whole of the German Republic."

Being such a key business city within Europe, Frankfurt has an extensive communications network that makes it easy for visitors to explore different areas around the city. "Within 30 minutes drive, mostly by public transport, you can reach mountains

for walking, traditional pubs in the suburbs, a large airport and the Rhine area," says Eifert. The close proximity to Frankfurt of areas of natural beauty, such as the Rhine, the Taunus Mountains and the Rheingau wine region, provide many opportunities for students to undertake outdoor activities. Bühler

says that "hiking, picnicking, biking, horse back-riding and swimming" can all be undertaken in the nearby Taunus Mountains, while river cruises from Frankfurt to Koblenz are also popular with students.



Fifa World Cup 2006

Frankfurt is one of the German cities hosting football's most prestigious event, the World Cup, in 2006. A new stadium, called the Waldstadion, is being built in the city to host the tournament

However, students wanting to explore Germany's natural attractions do not have to travel far from the city. Frankfurt boasts its own city forest that is found on the edge of Sachsenhausen and can be explored by foot, horse or bike. A wooden tower in the forest, called the Goetheturm, provides

panoramic views of the city. Eifert claims that the city forest is one of Frankfurt's little known attractions. "Frankfurt owns the largest forest in Germany," he says. "No other city can offer that."

PHOTOGRAPHS: GERMAN NATIONAL TOURIST BOARD