

Germany

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Berlin** The reborn capital is a shape-shifting creature, a European Shanghai that never sleeps (p446)
- **Dresden** Rebuilt grandeur by day, splendid partying by night (p459)
- **Munich** Beer gardens and naked sun-bathing; superb nightlife too (p466)
- **Hamburg** Its huge harbour has made it rich, but you needn't be to enjoy this feel-good boomtown (p501)
- **Best journey** Cruise up the Rhine, stopping at whatever fun town grabs your fancy (p487)
- **Off-the-beaten track** Head for trails lacing the green hills of the Harz Mountains (p467)

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 356,866 sq km (about two-thirds the size of France)
- **ATMs** Readily available
- **Budget** €25-55 per day
- **Capital** Berlin
- **Country code** ☎ 49, international access code 00
- **Famous for** beer, BMWs, invading Poland
- **Head of State** President Horst Köhler
- **Language** German
- **Money** euro (€); A\$1 = €0.60; ¥100 = €0.66; NZ\$1 = €0.51; UK£1 = €1.47; US\$1 = €0.78
- **Phrases** *Hallo* (hello), *tschüss* (goodbye), *danke* (thank you), *Entschuldigung* (sorry), *Igitt!* (yuck)
- **Population** 83 million
- **Time** GMT/UTC + 1
- **Visas** None required for passport holders of the EU, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand



TRAVEL HINTS

Try the end coaches on busy trains – most people head for the middle. Bring your own picnic to beer gardens.

ROAMING GERMANY

Try combining major cities (Berlin, Dresden, Munich, Hamburg) with the scenic heartlands (Thuringia, the Rhine Valley, the Black Forest).

Germany has been the major force in Europe for over a century. Often this has been bad (world wars and the Holocaust), but often it has been good (driving force of the unifying European Union and open confrontation of past crimes). Perhaps it is the latter that propelled Germany to being the moneybags of the continent for the past few decades. Money has flowed out to other European countries, including basket cases like Ireland in the 1980s and Eastern Europe today. The same generous German taxpayers have spent a remarkable fortune building up and integrating the old East Germany since 1989.



Today the country is a place more concerned with its future than its past. Although the economy seems to be permanently stuck in neutral (and this in the country of Porsche, BMW, Audi, Mercedes etc), Germans have done an amazing job of transforming themselves into forward-thinking people.

But it's the past that will draw many to Germany, whether it's the beer-drinking traditions of Bavaria, the scores and scores of historic sights like castles and cathedrals, or the darker corners as found at places like Dachau. Modernity, from the great transport system to cutting-edge music and raucous nightlife, is a bonus every traveller will enjoy.

HISTORY

Events in Germany have often dominated the European stage, but the country itself is a relatively recent invention: for most of its history Germany has been a patchwork of semi-independent principalities and city-states, occupied first by the Roman Empire, then the Holy Roman Empire and finally the Austrian Habsburgs. Perhaps because of this, many Germans retain a strong regional identity, despite the momentous events that have occurred since.

The most significant medieval events in Germany were pan-European in nature. Martin Luther, a monk from Erfurt, brought on the Protestant Reformation with his criticism of the Catholic Church in Wittenberg in 1517, a movement that in turn sparked the Thirty Years' War. Germany became the battlefield of Europe, and only began to regain stability after the Napoleonic Wars with increasing industrialisation and the rise of the Kingdom of Prussia. In 1866 legendary Prussian 'Iron Chancellor' Otto von Bismarck succeeded in bringing the German states together, largely by force, and a united Germany emerged for the first time in 1871, under Kaiser Wilhelm I.

Germany's rapid growth led to mounting tensions with England, Russia and France, sparking WWI. After Germany's defeat the Weimar Republic was proclaimed, but the new government was hampered by impossible reparation payments. Hyperinflation and economic depression bolstered support for extreme groups, including Adolf Hitler's National Socialists (Nazis).

By 1933, the Nazis had manoeuvred themselves into a position of political dominance: Hitler was appointed chancellor, dissolved parliament and assumed control. In September 1939 he attacked Poland, provoking war with Britain and France. Behind the scenes, concentration camps exterminated an estimated six million Jews and another one million more 'enemies of state'. Germany surrendered in May 1945, soon after Hitler's suicide.

After the war, the USA, Britain, France and the Soviet Union divided the country into four occupation zones. In September 1949 the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was formed from the three western zones. In response, the communist German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded in the Soviet zone, with (East) Berlin as its capital. To prevent skilled workers emigrating, the GDR built a wall around West Berlin in 1961, closing its border with the FRG.

For almost 40 years capitalist and socialist Germany coexisted uneasily. In 1989, however, the Peaceful Revolution overtook the reform-shy GDR regime. On 9 November 1989 the Berlin Wall opened, and in 1990 East Germans voted clearly for reunification, which occurred on 3 October 1990.

In recent years the dodgy economy (12% unemployment) has been the major domestic issue. In 2005 Angela Merkel was elected as the first female German chancellor and put together a broad coalition government to try to tackle the problems.

THE CULTURE

With 83 million people, Germany is the most populous country in Europe after Russia. Immigration compensates for declining birth rates among the established German population. More than seven million foreigners now live in Germany, mostly in the west. The biggest minority by far is the Turkish population (Berlin is reputedly the biggest Turkish community outside Istanbul), followed by immigrants from Eastern Europe, Russia and the former Soviet states.

Racial problems are relatively rare in Germany, but the international climate since the USA's 'war on terror' has increased tension between local and Muslim communities, often hindering the integration process. Also troubling is the ongoing problem in the east with violent neo-Nazis and skinheads.

On a personal level Germans are generally open, personable and interested in enjoying

READING UP

Still the most important German novel post-WWI, Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* (1959) takes a magical realist tour through 19th- and 20th-century German history. Australian journalist Anna Funder's award-winning *Stasiland* (2002) probes how the East German intelligence service destroyed ordinary lives, interviewing former Stasi men and their victims. Wladimir Kaminer's *Russian Disco* (2002) is a delightful collection of stories from reunified Berlin. For something more academic, check out *The Germans* (Gordon A Craig, 1997), *German Thought & Culture* (HJ Hahn, 1995) or *The Third Reich: A New History* (Michael Burleigh, 2001).

life, a far cry from their common strict and humourless reputation. However, in public this is quite a formal culture, and manners remain important. A little politeness goes a long way with officialdom in particular, and you should always introduce yourself by name when making a phone call.

ARTS

Historically Germany has always been strong in the arts, with the legacies of such literary, musical, artistic and architectural greats as Goethe, JS Bach, Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Caspar David Friedrich providing a rich vein of inspiration for modern successors like Günter Grass, Arnold Schönberg, Walter Gropius and Paul Klee.

Today the arts still occupy a key place at the heart of German culture. Tradition is scrupulously preserved around the country, but for the new generation of artists experimentation is the way forward. Germany is a hotbed of exciting new architecture, avant-garde art and left-field literature. Above all, the popular music scene is much more wide-ranging than radio playlists suggest, particularly where electronic dance music is concerned. Berlin and Frankfurt are centres of techno.

ENVIRONMENT

Germany can be divided from north to south into several geographical regions, including the Northern Lowlands, the Central Uplands (Germany's heartland), the Alpine Foothills and the Alps.

German weather can be variable. The most reliable weather is from May to October. Shoulder periods (late March to May and September to October) can bring fewer tourists and surprisingly pleasant weather. Camping season is May to September.

Environmental issues are taken seriously in Germany, and almost every household will have several separate bins for recycling glass, packaging, paper and organic waste. On a national level, Germany regularly introduces environmental initiatives to combat problems such as industrial emissions and energy wastage, and actively supports international agreements such as the Kyoto Treaty.

TRANSPORT**GETTING THERE & AWAY**
Air

The main arrival and departure points in Germany are proliferating as budget airlines expand. **Frankfurt airport** (code FRA; www.airport-city-frankfurt.com) and **Munich airport** (code MUC; www.munich-airport.de) are still the main destinations for long-haul flights, but are joined for intra-Europe flights by **Berlin Schönefeld** (code SXF; www.berlin-airport.de), which is soon to be renamed Berlin Brandenburg International (BBI); **Nuremberg** (code NUE; www.airport-nuernberg.de), and the misleadingly named and inconvenient **Frankfurt-Hahn airport** (code HHN; www.hahn-airport.de) among many others.

From North America, Lufthansa and its partners United Airlines and Air Canada have the most non-stop flights to Germany. Asian carriers offer the main connections from Australia and New Zealand.

European budget airlines serving Germany include Ryanair, easyJet, Air Berlin, DBA and Germanwings. And don't count out huge Lufthansa, which has promised to compete with the cheapies on price.

Boat

If you're heading to Scandinavia or the UK, the German port options are Hamburg, Lübeck, Kiel, Rostock and Sassnitz. The most common destinations are Trelleborg, Gothenburg and Oslo.

Bus

With bargain priced €1 fares from the UK to Germany, budget airlines have largely eclipsed

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Ambulance (☎ 112)
- Fire brigade (☎ 112)
- Police (☎ 110)

bus operators. Still, **Eurolines** (www.eurolines.com), a consortium of national bus companies, may prove useful. See the website for the latest fares and increasing number of specials. **Deutsche-Touring** (☎ 069-790 350; www.deutsche-touring.com) is the local Eurolines affiliate.

Car & Motorcycle

Germany is served by an excellent *autobahn* (motorway) system. If you're coming from the UK, the quickest option is via the Channel Tunnel; ferries take longer but are cheaper. Either way, you can be in Germany four hours after arriving in France.

You must have third-party insurance to enter Germany with a car or motorcycle.

Hitching & Ride Services

Lonely Planet does not recommend hitching, but should you decide to try it you may encounter long delays. The best way to pick up lifts is to head for a service area on the main route you wish to use.

Aside from hitching, the cheapest way to get to Germany is as a paying passenger in a private car. Rides are arranged through *Mitfahrzentrale* (ride-sharing agencies) in many German cities; you pay a reservation fee to the agency and a share of petrol and costs to the driver. Tourist offices can direct you to local agencies, or call ☎ 194 40 in large German cities.

Train

Trains are a lot more comfortable (and expensive) than buses. Some long-distance trains between major German cities and other countries are called EuroCity (EC) trains. The main German hubs with the best connections to/from major European cities are Hamburg (Scandinavia), Cologne (France, Belgium and the Netherlands, plus London via Eurostar), Munich (southern and southeastern Europe) and Berlin (Eastern Europe).

Generally the longer international routes are served by at least one daytime train and often a night train as well. Many night trains

only carry sleeping cars, which cost more but are considerably more comfortable than a standard compartment.

GETTING AROUND
Bicycle

Radwandern (bicycle touring) is very popular in Germany. Favoured routes include along the Rhine, Moselle, Elbe and Danube rivers and around the Lake Constance area. Cycling is strictly *verboten* (forbidden) on *autobahns*. There are well-equipped cycling shops in almost every town, and a fairly active market for used touring bikes. Simple three-gear bicycles can be hired from around €10/35 per day/week, and more robust mountain bikes from €15/50. The DB publishes *Bahn&Bike*, an excellent handbook covering shops, routes, maps and other resources and has a good website (www.bahn.de/bahnundbike).

A separate ticket must be purchased whenever you carry your bike on to most trains (€3 to €6). Most trains (excluding ICEs) have at least one bicycle compartment.

The central office for the main cycling organisation in Germany is the **Allgemeiner Deutscher Fahrrad Club** (ADFC; ☎ 0421-346 290; www.adfc.de) in Bremen.

Boat

Boats are most likely to be used for transport when travelling along the delightful Rhine, Elbe and Moselle Rivers.

Bus

The bus network functions primarily in support of the rail network, cutting corners and going where trains don't. Bus stations or stops are usually near the train station in any town.

Deutsche Bahn (DB) agents have information on certain regional services; otherwise, check with tourist offices. Deutsche-Touring services include the Romantic Rd buses in southern Germany; see p474 for details.

Car & Motorcycle

Although hiring a vehicle can be a great way to tour the country, it's expensive. For information, contact the Munich-based **Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobil Club** (ADAC; ☎ 089-767 60; www.adac.de); it has offices in all major cities and a national breakdown service.

Local Transport

Local transport is excellent within big cities and small towns, and is generally based on buses, *Strassenbahn* (trams), S-Bahn and/or U-Bahn (underground trains). Fares cover all these and are generally determined by zones or the time travelled. Multiticket strips or day passes are generally better value than single-ride tickets.

Train

Operated mostly by **Deutsche Bahn** (DB; www.bahn.de), the German train system is one of the best in Europe. Schedules are integrated throughout the country so that connections between trains are tight, often only five minutes. Of course, this means that when a train is late, connections are missed. Put some slack in your itinerary so you won't miss a connection and be stranded.

German trains fall into specific classifications. From fastest to slowest, these include InterCityExpress (ICE), InterCity (IC) or EuroCity (EC), RegionalExpress (RE), Regional-Bahn (RB) and S-Bahn (not to be confused with U-Bahn, which are run by local authorities who don't honour rail passes). EN, ICN and D trains are generally night services. *Zuschläge* (supplements) for faster trains are built into fares.

Buy your ticket before boarding, as buying from a conductor carries a surcharge (€1.50 to €4.50). Ticket agents cheerfully accept credit cards, as do most machines. During peak travel periods, a reservation (€3) on a long-distance train can mean the difference between squatting by the toilets or relaxing in your own seat.

A host of special train fares offered by DB allow you to cut costs for journeys. Most ticket agents are quite willing to help you find the cheapest options for your intended trip. For schedule and fare information (available in English), you can call ☎ 01805-996 633 from anywhere in Germany (€0.13 per minute) or – better – use the very helpful International Guests pages of the website.

Travel agents outside Germany sell German Rail Passes valid for unlimited travel on all DB trains for a given number of days within a 30-day period; prices start at €160 for four days. They're worth it if you're going to do a few long intercity journeys with stops in between. These are only available to visitors from outside Germany.

Eurail and Inter-Rail passes are also valid in Germany.

BERLIN

☎ 030 / pop 3.45 million

Apologies to Samuel Johnson, who first coined the complaint to London, but in the 21st century anyone who is tired of *Berlin* is tired of life. Even the buzzy English capital can't currently compete with the rapid change in its reborn German counterpart.

Just two decades ago this was still a divided city, split between the communist east and capitalist west. Today it's the European Shanghai, where building cranes dominate the skyline, and world-class architectural icons – Norman Foster's Reichstag dome, Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum and Peter Eisenman's Holocaust Memorial – emerge every few years.

It might be renowned for its diversity and tolerance, its alternative culture, its night-owl stamina and its affordability. But the best thing about the German capital is the way it continues to reinvent itself and isn't shackled by its powerful history.

Tills ring in the gleaming Potsdamer Platz complex down the road from Hitler's bunker, stallholders sell novels opposite the site of a major book-burning, and bits of the 'Berlin Wall' (they're not) are hawked alongside doner kebabs and *Wurst*.

Students rub shoulders with Russian émigrés, fashion boutiques inhabit monumental GDR buildings, and the nightlife has also long left the American sector, as clubbers watch the sun rise in the city's east.

In short, all human life is here, and don't expect to get much sleep.

ORIENTATION

The major sights are laid out roughly along an east–west axis going through the Brandenburger Tor (Brandenburg Gate). East of the gate lies Unter den Linden, the Museumsinsel (Museum Island) and the needle-shaped Fernsehturm (TV tower) at Alexanderplatz. Heading west you encounter the Reichstag, Holocaust Memorial, Tiergarten and Siegesssäule (Victory Column), plus Potsdamer Platz to the south.

Most of the action now happens in the east – which includes the 'centra' area of Mitte and the districts of Prenzlauer Berg and Friedrichshain. Meanwhile, on the far western side of the Tiergarten, near the Zoo

station, lies the Kurfürstendamm, the one-time centre of West Berlin.

INFORMATION

Discount Cards

Berlin-Potsdam Welcome Card (per 48/72hr €16/22)

Free public transport, plus museum and entertainment discounts.

Internet Access

Al Hamra (Map pp448–9; Raumerstrasse 16; €1 per 15min; ☎ from 10am; ☎ Eberswalder Strasse)

easyInternetcafé (Map p452; www.easyinternetcafe.com; Kurfürstendamm 224; ☎ 6.30am–2am;

☎ Kurfürstendamm/Zoologischer Garten) One of several throughout the city.

@ **Internet** (Map pp448–9; 1st floor, main hall, Ostbahnhof; per 15 mins €1; ☎ 10am–10pm)

Surf & Sushi (Map pp448–9; Oranienburger Strasse 17; per 30min €2.50; ☎ from noon Mon–Sat, from 1pm Sun;

☎ Oranienburger Strasse/Hackescher Markt)

Laundry

Schnell & Sauber (€5; ☎ 6am–11pm) Charlottenburg (Map p452; Uhlandstrasse 53); Mitte (Map pp448–9; Torstrasse 115)

Medical Services

Kassenärztliche Bereitschaftsdienst (Public Physicians' Emergency Service; ☎ 310 031)

Post

Post office (Map pp448–9; Georgenstrasse 12; ☎ 8am–10pm) Inside Friedrichstrasse station.

Tourist Information

Berlin Tourismus Marketing (☎ 250 025; www.berlin-tourist-information.de) Europa-Center (Map p452; Budapeststrasse 45; ☎ 10am–7pm Mon–Sat, 10am–6pm Sun); Brandenburger Tor (Map pp448–9; ☎ 10am–6pm); Fernsehturm (Map pp448–9; ☎ 10am–6pm)

GETTING INTO TOWN

There are two principal ways of getting to the city from Schönefeld airport. The half-hourly S9 takes 45 minutes and travels through all the major downtown stations on its way to Friedrichstrasse. Faster 'Airport Express' trains (mainly RE4, RE5) travel the same route, also half hourly, taking 15 minutes to Ostbahnhof, 21 minutes to Alexanderplatz and 31 minutes to the Hauptbahnhof. All tickets cost €2.60. A taxi costs up to €35. The airport station is 400m from the terminal, linked by covered walkway.

Tegel airport is connected by bus 109 (€2.10) to Zoo station, via Luisenplatz and Kurfürstendamm. JetExpress Bus TXL (€4.10) goes via Unter den Linden, Potsdamer Platz and the Reichstag. A taxi between Zoo station and Tegel airport will cost around €20.

From Tempelhof airport, take the U6 to Platz der Luftbrücke (€2.10). A taxi costs around €15.

EurAide (Map p452; www.euraide.de; Zoologischer Garten station; ☎ 8.30am–noon Mon–Sat Jun–Oct, 1–4.45pm Mon–Fri Nov–May) English-language service.

SIGHTS

Brandenburg Gate Area

Finished in 1791 as one of 18 city gates, the neoclassical **Brandenburger Tor** (Map pp448–9; Pariser Platz; ☎ S-Bahn Unter den Linden) became an east–west crossing point after the Wall was built in 1961. The crowning Quadriga statue, a winged goddess in a horse-drawn chariot, was once kidnapped by Napoleon and briefly taken to Paris. It's back in place now. Before reunification it faced east, but has since been reversed.

Just to the west of the gate stands the glass-domed **Reichstagsgebäude** (Parliament Bldg; Map pp448–9; ☎ 2273 2152; www.bundestag.de; Platz der Republik 1; admission free; ☎ 8am–midnight, last admission 10pm). A fire here in 1933 allowed Hitler to blame the communists and grab power, while the Soviets raised their flag here in 1945 to signal Nazi Germany's defeat. Today, the glass cupola added in 1999 by architect Lord Norman Foster is the highlight. Queues to visit the internal spiral walkway are long, so arrive early.

The Reichstag overlooks the Tiergarten (see p451). Meanwhile to the building's south stands the **Wall Victims Memorial** (Map pp448–9; Scheidemannstrasse), commemorating the 191 people who died trying to cross from East to West.

Further south again is the **Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas** (Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe or Holocaust Memorial; Map pp448–9; ☎ 2639 4336/4311; www.stiftung-denkmal.de; Cora-Berliner-Strasse 1; admission free; field ☎ 24hr, information centre ☎ 10am–8pm Tue–Sun, last entry 7.15pm; ☎ Potsdamer Platz/S-Bahn Unter den Linden) a grid of

MITTE & PRENZLAUER BERG

INFORMATION	SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	SLEEPING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> @ Internet.....1 H6 Al Hamra.....2 F1 Australian Embassy.....3 E6 Berlin Tourism Marketing.....(see 19) Berlin Tourism Marketing.....(see 17) Canadian Embassy.....4 B6 French Embassy.....5 B5 Irish Embassy.....6 C6 Netherlands Embassy.....7 E5 New Zealand Embassy.....8 C5 Post Office.....9 C5 Schnell & Sauber.....10 E3 South African Embassy.....(see 8) Surf & Sushi.....11 D4 UK Embassy.....12 C5 US Embassy.....13 C5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dokumentationszentrum.....16 C2 Brandenburger Tor.....17 B5 Carillon.....18 A5 Fernsehturm.....19 E5 Filmmuseum.....20 B6 Former Site of Hitler's Bunker.....21 B6 Hackesche Höfe.....22 E4 Hamburger Bahnhof.....23 B3 Haus der Kulturen der Welt.....24 A5 Holocaust Memorial.....25 B5 Neue Synagoge.....26 D4 Panorama Observation Deck.....27 B6 Pergamonmuseum.....28 D5 Reichstag.....29 B5 Sony Center.....(see 20) Tacheles.....30 C4 Wall Victims Memorial.....31 B5 World Time Clock.....32 E4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aurora.....33 F1 Circus Hostel.....34 E4 Circus Hostel.....35 E3 Citystay Hostel.....36 E4 Eastener Hostel.....37 C3 EastSeven.....38 E3 Heart of Gold.....39 D4 Mitte's.....40 B3 Pensyio Amsterdam.....41 E1

EATING	DRINKING	ENTERTAINMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duy Thai.....42 F2 Imbiss W.....43 E2 Kollwitzplatz Market.....44 E2 Konnopke.....45 E2 Monsieur Vuong.....46 F4 Nosh.....47 F1 RNBs.....48 D4 Sankt Oberholz.....49 E3 Zoe.....50 E4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Berghain/Panorama Bar.....51 H6 Café Moskwa.....52 F5 Erdbaar.....53 E4 Hotelbar.....54 E2 Kaffee Burger.....55 E3 Weekend.....56 E4 Weinerei Cafe.....57 E3 Wohnzimmer.....58 F1 Zu Mir oder zu Dir?.....59 F1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Berliner Ensemble.....60 C4 Berliner Philharmonie.....61 A6 Kauf Dich Glückliche.....62 E2 Staatsoper Unter den Linden.....63 D5

SAVE ON MUSEUMS ENTRY

With some leading Berlin museums costing €8 each, don't ignore the **SchauLust Museum Berlin Pass** (☎ 250 025; from tourist offices). For €12, it allows you free admission to more than 70 museums (not including Checkpoint Charlie or the Jewish Museum) over three days. Without any pass, all museums listed on www.smb.museum are free on Thursday for four hours before closing time.

2711 'stelae' or differently shaped concrete columns set over 19,000 sq metres of gently rolling ground. Designer Peter Eisenman has created an underground information centre in the site's southeast corner.

Unter den Linden

Lined with lime (or linden) trees, the street **Unter den Linden** (M 5-Bahn Unter den Linden) was the fashionable avenue of old Berlin. Today, after decades of communist neglect, it's been rejuvenated. The thoroughfare stretches east from the Brandenburger Tor to the Museuminsel, passing shops, embassies, operas, and a university.

Don't forget to stop a while at **Bebelplatz** (Map pp448-9; M Französische Strasse). There's a book-burning memorial – a chastening reminder of the first major Nazi book-burning, which occurred in May 1933 here. A window in the pavement reveals empty bookshelves below.

Museuminsel

The so-called **Museums Island** (all museums ☎ 2090 5577; www.smb.museum; adult/concession €8/4 each, or €12/6 all; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, to 10pm Thu; M 5-Bahn Hackescher Markt) lies in the River Spree. Of four museums, the leading venue is the **Pergamon-museum** (Map pp448-9; Am Kupfergraben). It houses the spectacular Ishtar Gate from Babylon, the Pergamon Altar and other antiquities.

Overlooking the 'island' is the **Berliner Dom** (Berlin Cathedral; Map pp448-9).

Hackescher Markt

A complex of shops and apartments built around eight courtyards, the **Hackesche Höfe** (Map pp448-9; M 5-Bahn Hackescher Markt) still attracts savvy young consumers looking for fashion-forward streetwear, even though big

brands such as Adidas, Puma and Hugo Boss are moving in.

Stores, cafés and restaurants are the main draw, but you'll also find the **Neue Synagoge** (Map pp448-9; ☎ 8802 8451; www.judaicum.de; Oranienburger Strasse 28-30; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 10am-8pm Sun & Mon, to 6pm Tue-Thu, to 5pm Fri, reduced hr Nov-Apr). Plus, there's the counter-cultural cup shopping centre of **Tacheles** (Map pp448-9; ☎ 282 6185; Oranienburger Strasse 54-56) in a bombed-out department store.

Much further northeast, the spectacular gallery of the **Hamburger Bahnhof** (Map pp448-9; ☎ 3978 3439; www.smb.museum; Invalidenstrasse 50; adult/concession €6/3; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun; M Hauptbahnhof/Lehrter Stadtbahnhof) showcases works by Warhol, Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg and Joseph Beuys.

TV Tower

Call it Freudian or call it *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for the communist East or *Ost*), but Berlin's once-mocked socialist **Fernsehturm** (Map pp448-9; ☎ 242 3333; www.berlinerfernsehturm.de; adult/concession €7.50/3.50; ☎ 10am-1am; M Alexanderplatz) has become its most-loved symbol. Erected in 1969 and the city's tallest structure, its 368m outline pops up in numerous souvenirs. That said, ascending 207m to the revolving Telecafé is somehow less exciting than visiting the Reichstag dome.

The needle-shaped Turm dominates **Alexanderplatz**, a former livestock market that became the lowlife district chronicled by Alfred Döblin's 1929 novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and then developed as a 1960s communist showpiece.

Today's the square is an unusual hive of construction activity as it's transformed into the next capitalist development. However, the socialist past still echoes in the retro **World Time Clock** (Map pp448-9) and along the portentous **Karl-Marx-Allee**, which leads several kilometres from here to Friedrichshain.

The Berlin Wall

The infamous Wall snaked through Berlin, so today's remnants are scattered across the city. The longest surviving stretch is the so-called **East Side Gallery** (www.eastsidegallery.com; Mühlenstrasse; M 5-Bahn Warschauer Strasse) in Friedrichshain. Panels along this 1.3km of graffiti and art include the famous portrait of Soviet leader Brezhnev kissing GDR leader Erich Honecker and a Trabant car seem-

ingly bursting through the (now crumbling) concrete.

Climbing the tower at the **Berliner Mauer Dokumentationszentrum** (Berlin Wall Documentation Centre; Map pp448-9; ☎ 464 1030; Bernauer Strasse 111; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm; M 5-Bahn Nordbahnhof) you overlook a memorial across the street – an artist's impression of the death strip behind an original stretch of wall.

In Kreuzberg, the renowned sign saying 'You are now leaving the American sector' still stands, marking the position of **Checkpoint Charlie** (Map pp454-5; cnr Friedrichstrasse & Zimmerstrasse). Nearby, the touristy **Haus am Checkpoint Charlie** (Map pp454-5; ☎ 253 7250; www.mauer-museum.com; Friedrichstrasse 43-45; adult/concession €9.50/5.50; ☎ 9am-10pm; M Kochstrasse/Stadt) chronicles tales of spectacular escape attempts, including through tunnels, in hot-air balloons and even with a one-man submarine.

Tiergarten

From the Reichstag, you can see the Tiergarten park's **carillon** (Map pp448-9; John-Foster-Dulles-Allee; bus 100 or 200) and the **Haus der Kulturen der Welt** (House of World Cultures; Map pp448-9; John-Foster-Dulles-Allee). The latter was erected during a 1950s building expo and is nicknamed the 'pregnant oyster'.

Further west is the **Siegessäule** (Victory Column; Map p452; bus 100 or 200), a golden angel built to commemorate 19th-century Prussian military victories. Be aware that there are better views than those from the column's peak.

A short walk south is a cluster of embassy buildings and museums, including the **Bauhaus Archiv** (Map p452; ☎ 254 0020; www.bauhaus.de; Klingelhöferstrasse 14; adult/concession €6/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Fri; M Nollendorfplatz), with Modernist objects from the influential Bauhaus design school. The school itself survives in Dessau (see www.bauhaus-dessau.de and www.dessau.de), not far from Berlin.

The **Berliner Philharmonie** (1961; see p456) and yet more stunning art museums lie a little to the east in the **Kulturforum** (Map pp448-9; www.kulturforum-berlin.de), south of Tiergartenstrasse. Check the website to see if anything appeals.

Potsdamer Platz

This postmodern temple to mammon was erected in 2000 in the former death strip. Under the big-top, glass-tent roof of the **Sony Center** (Map pp448-9; M or S-Bahn Potsdamer Platz) and along the malls of the Lego-like **DaimlerCity** (Map pp448-9), people swarm in and around shops, restaurants, offices, loft apartments, clubs, a cinema, a luxury hotel and a casino – all revitalising what was the busiest square in pre-war Europe.

There's a **Filmmuseum** (Map pp448-9; ☎ 3009 030; www.filmmuseum-berlin.de; Potsdamer Strasse 2; adult/concession €6/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, to 8pm Thu; M or S-Bahn Potsdamer Platz) and 'Europe's fastest' lift to the **Panorama Observation Deck** (Map pp448-9; www.panoramapunkt.de; adult/concession €3.50/2.50; ☎ 11am-8pm).

But, as ever in Berlin, the past refuses to go quietly. Just north of Potsdamer Platz lies the former site of **Hitler's Bunker** (Map pp448-9). To the southeast lies the **Topographie des Terrors** (Map pp454-5; ☎ 2548 6703; www.topographie.de; Niederkirchner Strasse; admission free; ☎ 10am-8pm May-Sep, to dusk Oct-Apr), a sometimes shockingly graphic record of the Gestapo and SS headquarters that once stood here.

Jewish Museum

The **Jüdisches Museum** (Map pp454-5; ☎ 2599 3300; www.juedisches-museum-berlin.de; Lindenstrasse 9-14; adult/concession €5/2.50; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon, to 8pm Tue-Sun, last entry an hr before closing; M Hallesches Tor) is as much about the Daniel Libeskind

TOUR BERLIN FOR FREE (OR A FEW EUROS)

Guided tours are phenomenally popular in Berlin, covering many themes, but the best introduction to the city is a free tour offered by **New Berlin** (www.newberlintours.com; ☎ 11am & 1pm outside Starbucks on Pariser Platz). The firm's other tours cost money, but here the enthusiastic, informed guides only accept tips.

Alternatively, put yourself on a bus 100 or 200 (single/day pass €2.10/5.80). These scheduled city services travel between east and west, passing many of Berlin's major attractions en route, including the Brandenburg Gate, Reichstag, Tiergarten and Siegessäule. At the time of writing, they both left from Bahnhof Zoo, but ask at a tourist office. On the return journey, bus 100 leaves from Alexanderplatz, near the TV Tower.



building as the collection of Jewish-German history within. Designed to disorient with its 'voids', cul-de-sacs, barbed metal fittings, slit windows and uneven floors, this still-somehow-beautiful structure swiftly conveys the uncertainty and sometime terror of past Jewish life in Germany.

Kurfürstendamm

West Berlin's legendary shopping thoroughfare, the Ku'damm has lost some of its cachet since the Wall fell, but is worth visiting for old times' sake. Here you'll find the **Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche** (Map p452; ☎ 218 5023; Breitscheidplatz; Memorial Hall ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, Hall of Worship ☎ 9am-7.30pm), which remains in ruins – just as British bombers on 22 Novem-

ber 1943 left it – as an anti-war memorial. Only the broken west tower still stands.

Stasi Museum

The one-time secret police headquarters now houses the **Stasi Museum** (☎ 553 6854; House 1, Ruchstrasse 103; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Magdalenenstrasse). It's largely in German, but worth it to see the cunning surveillance devices and communist paraphernalia.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

International Film Festival Berlin (☎ 259 200; www.berlinale.de) The Berlinale is Germany's answer to the Cannes and Venice film festivals. Held in February.
Christopher Street Day (☎ 0177-277 3176; www

.csd-berlin.de) On the last weekend in June, this is Germany's largest gay event.

Love Parade (☎ 308 8120; www.loveparade.net) In July 2006, Berlin's huge, techno street parade was making a (hopefully sustainable) comeback.

SLEEPING

HOSTELS

Berlin's independent hostels outdo the **DJH** (www.jugendherberge.de) offerings in the city.

our pick **Circus Hostels** (Map pp448-9; ☎ 2839 1433; www.circus-hostel.de; Rosa-Luxemburg-Strasse 39 & Weinbergsweg 1a; dm €15-20, s/d €32/48, 2-/4-person apt €75/130; ☎) We're not the only ones who think this place is pretty special. Whereas many establishments go for a cheerful but essentially cheap décor, the brightly painted rooms and clean bathrooms bespeak real quality. And their attic apartments, with panoramic views are simply stunning. The location is central, the staff friendly and helpful and the bar popular. What more could you want?

Eastern Comfort Hostelboot (☎ 6676 3806; www.eastern-comfort.com; Mühlenstrasse 73-77; dm €14-18, s/d from €42/46, bedding €5; ☎) ☎ S-Bahn Warschauer Strasse) Southeast of Ostbahnhof in Friedrichshain, Captain Edgar and crew organise regular events at this brilliant floating hostel beside the last standing bit of Wall. Upper cabins enjoying river views, there's a nicely designed bar and campers can pitch a tent on the deck for €10 a night.

Heart of Gold (Map pp448-9; ☎ 2900 3300; www.heartofgold-hostel.de; Johannisstrasse 11; dm €14-19, d without bathroom €48, s/d en suite €40/60, apt €120-160; ☎) ☎ Oranienburger Tor) Even if you're not into the subtle *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* theming, this new-build in Mitte still offers comfortable accommodation and a convenient location.

Citystay Hostel (Map pp448-9; ☎ 2362 4031; www.citystay.de; Rosenstrasse 16; dm €15-20, s/d €34/48; ☎) ☎ S-Bahn Alexanderplatz/Hackescher Markt) On a quiet street between the Fernsehturm and Hackescher Markt, this new loft-style establishment uses expensive finishes and bright colours to create an upbeat atmosphere. Showers (none en suite) are clean, but the spartan rooms lack cupboards.

EastSeven (Map pp448-9; ☎ 9362 2240; www.eastseven.de; Schwedter Strasse 7; dm €17-23, s/d €35/55, bedding €3; ☎) ☎ Senefelderplatz) It sounds like a boy band and this wonderful, cosy place is squeaky clean, with a retro '70s look, kitchen and lovely garden perfect for summer BBQs.

Meininger City Hostels (☎ 6663 6100; www.meininger-hostels.de; dm €13.50-25, s/d €49/66; ☎) ☎ Hallesches (Map pp454-5; Hallesches Ufer 30); Tempelhofer (Map pp454-5; Tempelhofer Ufer 10); Meininger (Map p452; Meininger Strasse 10) Dorms are clean but spartan, while cheerfully furnished doubles and singles stand out.

Mitte's (Map pp448-9; ☎ 2839 0965; www.backpacker.de; Chausseestrasse 102; dm €15-19, d €44-66; ☎) ☎ Zinnowitzer Strasse) and **Baxpax** (Map pp454-5; ☎ 6951 8322; www.baxpax.de; Skalitzer Strasse 104; ☎) Görlitzer Bahnhof) These sister establishments are a bit ramshackle – especially Mitte's – but fun and funky. In Baxpax, rooms are themed by nationality.

Eastener Hostel (Map pp448-9; ☎ 0175 112 3515; www.eastener-hostel.de; Novalisstrasse 15; dm €15-20, s/d €30/44; ☎) This private hostel is quiet and unassuming-looking, but young guests rave about the service and local tips.

Odyssee Globetrotter Hostel (☎ 2900 0081; www.globetrotterhostel.de; Grünberger Strasse 23; dm €10-16, s/d from €29/39; ☎) ☎ S-Bahn Warschauer Strasse) Rooms are adequate, but few see much of this in this popular party hostel in Friedrichshain.

HOTELS & GUESTHOUSES

Aurora (Map pp448-9; ☎ 4699 5524; www.aurora-hostel.com; Pappelallee 21; s/d/tr €26/48/64, s/d with bathroom €42/66; ☎) ☎ Eberswalder Strasse) This sleek, streamlined pad is decorated in neutral tones and even has customised coloured lighting, as in some flash designer abodes.

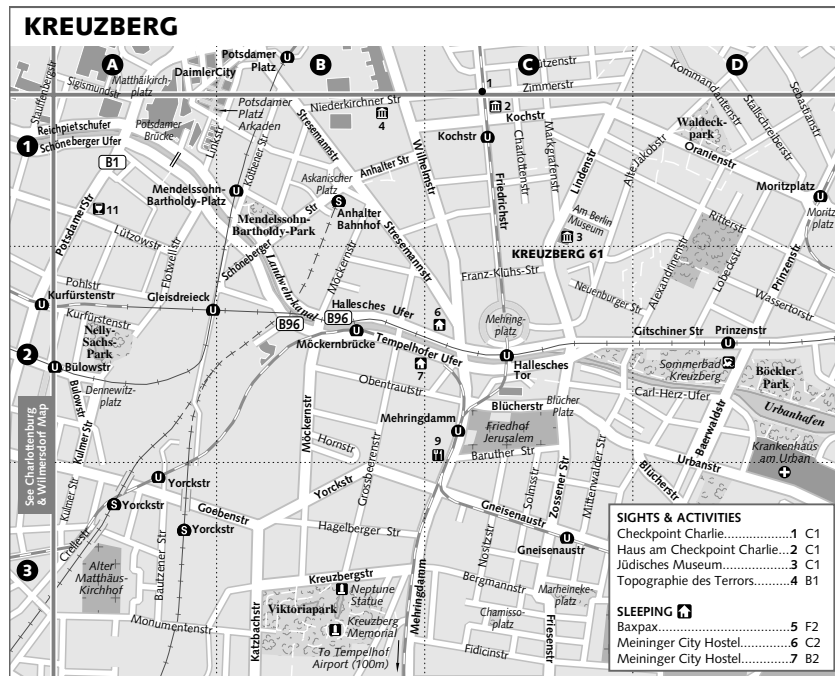
Pension Amsterdam (Map pp448-9; ☎ 448 0792; www.pension-amsterdam.de; Gleimstrasse 24; s €36.50, d €70-90, tr €75-120; ☎) ☎ Schönhäuser Allee) Big apartments, kitchens, rooms with four-poster beds and a downstairs café popular with a mixed gay crowd make this contemporary *pension* a winner.

EATING

Berliners love eating out and you needn't walk far for a feed. Restaurants usually open from 11am to midnight, with varying *Ruhetage* or rest days, and many close during the day from 3pm to 6pm. Cafés often close around 8pm, though equal numbers stay open until 2am or later.

Restaurants

MITTE & PRENZLAUER BERG
RNBS (Map pp448-9; ☎ 540 2505; Oranienburger Strasse 50; mains €2-4; ☎) ☎ Oranienburger Strasse) We can't vouch for the 'beauty tea' (sadly didn't work for us),



but the Asian soups and noodle dishes served up by this tiny orange-and-white outlet are as delicious as they are healthy: no preservatives, no MSG and no artificial flavourings.

Sankt Oberholz (Map pp448-9; ☎ 2408 5586; Rosenthaler Strasse 72a; dishes €3.50-5; **M**) Rosenthaler Platz) Not so much a café as an hilarious sociological experiment, where Berlin's *Urbanen Pennern* (office-less, self-employed creatives) flock with their laptops for the free wi-fi access. The deli fare of soups, lasagne and savoury polenta cake is pretty good, too.

Monsieur Vuong (Map pp448-9; ☎ 3087 2643; Alte Schönhauser Strasse 46; mains €6.40; **M**) Weinmeisterstrasse/Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz) Because this beautiful but cheap Vietnamese is where everyone says you should eat, this is where everyone is. Arrive early to avoid queuing. Mr Vuong himself shakes regulars' hands in the red-lacquered room, and the soups etc are toothsome.

Nosh (Map pp448-9; ☎ 4404 0397; Pappelallee 77; mains €6-13; ☎ dinner only in winter; **M**) Eberswalder Strasse) A relaxed diner-style eatery, with a daily changing blackboard menu and staples of spring rolls, Asian and European dishes. Sunday brunch is a great time to come.

Zoe (Map pp448-9; ☎ 2404 5635; Rochstrasse 1; mains €8-18; 2-course lunch menus €6-7; **M**) Weinmeisterstrasse/Alexanderplatz) Mediterranean and Asian flavours are skillfully mixed to create a piquant tang in this largely white restaurant. Excellent lunch deals.

Imbiss W (Map pp448-9; ☎ 4849 2657; Kastanienallee 49; mains €3-6; **M**) Rosenthaler Platz) Canadian-run joint offering Southeast Asian food and naan pizzas.

Duy Thai (Map pp448-9; ☎ 4431 7116; Kollwitzstrasse 89; mains €5-14; **M**) Eberswalder Strasse) Dishes are made to order in this relaxed canteen.

Café V (Map pp454-5; ☎ 612 4505; Lausitzer Platz 12; dishes €5.50-9.50; **M**) Görlitzer Bahnhof) Yellow, red and gilt trimmings greet you as you enter this old-school veggie/vegan café. Everything comes with a soya/caffeine-free/tofu alternative, although you can also choose straight-up dishes such as pizza or Thai fish curry.

Raststätte Gnadenbrot (Map p452; ☎ 2196 1786; Martin-Luther-Strasse 20A; mains €3.50-6; **M**) Victoria-Luise-Platz/Nollendorfplatz) An ironic, retro-70s taste on a motorway roadhouse, this wins loyal fans for its friendly atmosphere (you share bench seats) and good, cheap food and drinks.



Schwarzes Café (Map p452; ☎ 313 8038; Kantstrasse 148; dishes €4.50-9; **M**) S-Bahn Zoologischer Garten/Savignyplatz) Founded in 1978, this 24-hour food and booze institution must have seen half of Berlin pass through it (or indeed out in it) at some point in time. It has interesting toilets, too.

Quick Eats & Self-Catering

Berlin is a snackers' paradise, with Turkish (your best bet), *Wurst* (sausage), Greek, Italian, Chinese, even Sudanese *Imbiss* stalls throughout the city. Famous outlets:

Curry 36 (Map pp454-5; ☎ 881 4710; Mehringdamm 36; ☎ 9am-5pm; **M**) Mehringdamm) Kreuzberg's – some believe Berlin's – best sausage stand.

Frittiersalon (Boxhagener Strasse 104; **M**) Frankfurter Tor) In Friedrichshain, with an enormous choice incl *Wurst*, organic fries, tofu and even a Camembert burger.

Konopke (Map pp448-9; Schönhauser Allee 44a; ☎ 5.30am-8pm Mon-Fri; **M**) Eberswalder Strasse) Even former chancellor Gerhard Schröder has eaten *Wurst* here under the S-Bahn tracks in Prenzelberg.

Hasir (Map pp454-5; Adalbertstrasse 10; ☎ 24hr; **M**) Kottbusser Tor) The birthplace (yes, really) of the modern doner kebab is a sit-down restaurant, too.

Self-caterers will find Aldi, Lidl, Plus and Penny Markt discount supermarkets throughout Berlin. There's the excellent organic **Kollwitzplatz market** (Map pp448-9; ☎ 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) and the **Winterfeldtplatz farmer's market** (Map p452; ☎ Wed & Sat).

DRINKING

Berlin's legendary nightlife needs little introduction. Whether alternative, underground, cutting-edge, saucy, flamboyant or even high-brow, it all crops up here. The hottest action lies east. Prenzlauer Berg was the first GDR sector to develop a happening nightlife and still attracts student, creative and gay customers. Later, more venues arrived around Hackescher Markt, catering to a cool, slightly older and wealthier crowd. The area around Simon-Dach-Strasse and Boxhagener Platz in Friedrichshain is the latest scene to have emerged.

In the west, Kreuzberg remains alternative, becoming grungier as you move east. Charlottenburg and Schöneberg are fairly upmarket and mature, but liberal.

Bars without food open between 5pm and 8pm and may close as late as 5am (if at all).

Astrobar (☎ 2966 1615; Simon-Dach-Strasse 40; **M**) S-Bahn Warschauer Strasse) One of the first on the Friedrichshain scene and still going strong, the Astro offers the future as it looked in the 1960s, with spaceships, robots and classic computer games in the back room.

Erdbeer (Map pp448-9; Max-Beer-Strasse 56; **M**) Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz) A warren of interconnected rooms, this rambling cocktail bar derives its name not only from its red colour scheme, but also from its customers' favourite brand of daiquiri (*Erdbeer*, or strawberry).

Kumpelnest 3000 (Map pp454-5; ☎ 8891 7960; Lützowstrasse 23; **M**) Kurfürstenstrasse) Once a brothel, always an experience – the Kumpelnest has been famed since the '80s for its wild, inhibition-free nights. Much of the original warehouse décor remains intact. Watch your bags.

Hotelbar (Map pp448-9; ☎ 4432 8577; Zionkirchstrasse 5; **M**) Rosenthaler Platz) This cosy subterranean bar has a broad music policy, with jazz, Latin beats and electropop to things like 'balkanub', 'Hammondorgel' and even spoken word.

Tabou Tiki Room (Map pp454-5; Maybuchufer 39; ☎ closed Mon; **M**) Schönleinstrasse) This wonderful slice of kitschy '60s Hawaii in Berlin serves up exotic cocktails.

IN BERLIN'S LIVING ROOM

Berlin was once famous for its ramshackle squat bars. And while many snow-white nightlife venues are going upmarket, others have been trying to reclaim that anarchic legacy. This new spate of bars is decorated like 1950s, 1960s or 1970s domestic living rooms, with flock wallpaper, bead curtains and mismatched (sometimes threadbare) sofas seemingly rescued from the rubbish tip.

The most famous exponent of this 'second-hand design' is the dimly lit pub/café called **Wohnzimmer** (Living Room; Map pp448-9; ☎ 445 5458; Lettstrasse 6; ☎ 10am-4am; 🚶 Eberswalder Strasse). In hip Prenzlauer Berg, it combines styles from Louis XVI to, primarily, GDR c 1950.

Weinerei Cafe (Map pp448-9; ☎ 440 6983; cnr Veteranenstrasse & Fehrbellerstrasse; 🚶 10am-midnight; 🚶 Eberswalder Strasse) feels even more ad hoc, like stepping into someone's house. On Friday and Saturday nights, you simply rent a wine glass for €1, enjoy as many refills as you want and pay what you think is appropriate at the evening's end. (Be fair, otherwise they'll go broke!)

Zu Mir oder zu Dir? (Your place or mine?; Map pp448-9; Lychener Strasse 15; 🚶 from 8pm; 🚶 Eberswalder Strasse) is a slightly more plush and trendy bar, with a double-bed and some eye-catching pop-art features.

In Friedrichshain's **Kaufbar** (Buy-Bar or Purchasable; ☎ 464 1030; Gärtnerstrasse 4; 🚶 11am-1am; 🚶 S-Bahn Warschauer Strasse) and Prenzlauer Berg's sunny ice-cream café **Kauf Dich Glücklich** (Shop yourself happy; Map pp448-9; ☎ 4435 2182; Oderberger Strasse 44; 🚶 noon-midnight; 🚶 Eberswalder Strasse) even the furniture is on sale. As you enjoy one of the latter's famous waffles, just pray someone doesn't come in and snap up the chair or table you're using.

CLUBBING

Clubs rarely open before 11pm (though earlier 'after-work' clubs and Sunday sessions are also popular) and stay open well into the AM – usually sunrise at least. As the scene changes rapidly, it's always wise to double-check listings magazines or ask locals. Admission charges, when they apply, range from €5 to €15.

Berghain/Panorama Bar (Map pp448-9; www.berghain.de; Wriener Bahnhof; 🚶 from midnight Thu-Sat; 🚶 Ostbahnhof) Global techno fans pump it up in a huge cathedral-like former railway workshop in Friedrichshain, or chill out in the quieter Panorama Bar upstairs.

Café Moskau (Map pp448-9; ☎ 2463 1626; www.das-moskau.com; Karl-Marx-Allee 34; 🚶 Schillingstrasse) This one-time GDR restaurant is the epitome of retro Soviet kitsch and has to be seen, whatever's on.

Kaffeeburger (Map pp448-9; ☎ 2804 6495; www.kaffeeburger.de; Torstrasse 60; 🚶 Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz) A cornerstone of Berlin's alternative scene, decked out in original GDR '60s wallpaper. Come here for indie, rock, punk and cult author Wladimir Kaminer's fortnightly *Russendisko* (Russian disco; www.russendisko.de).

Watergate (☎ 6128 0394; www.water-gate.de; Falkensteinstrasse 49a; 🚶 from 11pm Fri & Sat; 🚶 Schlesisches Tor) In Friedrichshain, watch the sun rise over the Spree River through the floor-to-ceiling windows of this fantastic lounge. The

music is mainly electro, drum'n'bass and hip-hop.

Weekend (Map pp448-9; www.week-end-berlin.de; Am Alexanderplatz 5; 🚶 from 11pm Thu-Sat; 🚶 Alexanderplatz) Gaze through the 12th-floor windows, across the *Blade Runner* landscape of dug-up Alexanderplatz and over Berlin.

Berlin also has a thriving scene of no-holds-barred sex clubs. The notorious **KitKat Club** (☎ 7889 9704; Bessemerstrasse 14. 🚶 Alt-Tempelhof), south of Schöneberg, is the original and best.

ENTERTAINMENT

Berlin is not only famous for its clubs – its cultural offerings are also renowned. So if you fancy splashing out on a quieter, more refined evening, try one of the following.

Berliner Ensemble (Map pp448-9; ☎ information 284 080, tickets 2840 8155; www.berliner-ensemble.de; Bertolt-Brecht-Platz 1; 🚶 Friedrichstrasse) Where Bertolt Brecht worked before his exile in the US in the 1930s. In German only.

Berliner Philharmonie (Map pp448-9; ☎ information 254 880, tickets 2548 8999; www.berliner-philharmoniker.de; Herbert-von-Karajan Strasse 1; 🚶 Potsdamer Platz) Famous orchestra directed by Sir Simon Rattle.

Staatsoper Unter den Linden (Map pp448-9; ☎ information 203 540, tickets 2035 4555; www.staatsoper-berlin.de; Unter den Linden 5-7; 🚶 S-Bahn Unter den Linden) Unsold seats go on sale cheap an hour before curtain-up.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air
Until Schönefeld is turned into 'Berlin-Brandenburg International' and becomes the city's main hub, three airports (www.berlin-airport.de) operate.

Schönefeld (code SXF) has flights to/from Europe, Israel and North Africa, including **easyJet** (www.easyjet.com) services to the UK and the Netherlands.

Tegel (code TXL) also has European focus and is the **Air Berlin** (www.airberlin.com) hub. Direct **Delta Airlines** (www.delta.com) services to/from New York rotate out of here, too.

The landing hub for Allied airlifts during the Berlin blockade of 1948 to 1949, Tempelhof (code THF) today serves domestic and Danish destinations only.

Bus

Most buses arrive at and depart from the **Zentraler Omnibusbahnhof** (ZOB; ☎ 302 5361; Masurenallee 4-6; 🚶 Kaiserdamm/Witzleben), opposite the Funkturm radio tower. Tickets are available from travel agencies or at the bus station.

Car

Lifts can be organised by **ADM Mitfahrzentrale** (ride-share agencies; ☎ 194 40) Zoologischer Garten station (Map p452; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun); Alexanderplatz U-Bahn (Map pp448-9; 🚶 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun).

Train

Long-distance services arrive at the new Hauptbahnhof (also called Lehrter Bahnhof), with many continuing east to Ostbahnhof and Lichtenberg. You'll probably need to switch to local services to get to the former major terminus of Berlin Zoo (although local petitioning *might* change this). ICE and IC trains leave hourly to every major city in Germany and there are connections to central Europe. Sample fares include to Leipzig (€36, 70 minutes), Hamburg (€48 to €58, 1½ to two hours) and Prague (€53.80, five hours).

GETTING AROUND

Berlin's public transport system is excellent and much better than driving around the city. One type of ticket is valid on all transport and three tariff zones exist – A, B and C. Unless venturing to Potsdam or the outer suburbs, you'll only need an AB ticket, costing €2.10 for a single, €5.80 for a

day pass and €14.80 for a group day pass up to five people.

Most tickets are available from vending machines in stations, but must be validated before hopping on the train or bus, or as you enter them.

U-Bahn and S-Bahn services operate from 4am until just after midnight on weekdays, with many night bus (*Nachtbus*) services in between. At weekends, major U-Bahn lines run every 15 minutes all night, while most S-Bahns operate hourly.

AROUND BERLIN

Despite its proximity to Berlin, Brandenburg has suffered from a poor reputation since reunification. Many western Germans still think of Brandenburgers as archetypal Osis, ambivalent about the demise of the GDR and perhaps even a touch xenophobic. However, even the most sneering Wessi will happily go to Potsdam on a day trip.

POTSDAM

☎ 0331 / pop 131,000

With ornate palaces and manicured gardens dotted around a huge riverside park, the Prussian royal seat of Potsdam makes a relaxing break from wired Berlin. Elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg made the town his second home in the 17th century, but it was Friedrich II (Frederick the Great) who sealed its fame by commissioning the palaces in the mid-18th century.

In August 1945, the victorious WWII Allies chose nearby Schloss Cecilienhof for the Potsdam Conference, which set the stage for the division of Berlin and Germany into occupation zones.

Orientation

Potsdam Hauptbahnhof is just southeast of the city centre, across the Havel River. As this is still quite a way (2km) from Sansoucci Park, you might like to change trains here; see Getting There & Around for more details.

Information

Potsdam Information (☎ 275 580; www.potsdam-tourismus.de; Brandenburger Strasse 3; 🚶 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct; 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) Near the Hauptbahnhof.

Sanssouci Besucherzentrum (☎ 969 4202; www.spsg.de; An der Orangerie 1; ☎ 8.30am–5pm Mar–Oct, 9am–4pm Nov–Feb) Near the windmill and Schloss Sanssouci.

Sights

SANSSOUCI PARK

At the heart of **Sanssouci Park** (adult two-day pass €15 incl all interiors; ☎ dawn–dusk) lies a celebrated rococo palace, **Schloss Sanssouci** (☎ 969 4190; mandatory tour adult/concession €8/5; ☎ 9am–5pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct, to 4pm Nov–Mar). Built in 1747, it has some glorious interiors. Only 2000 visitors are allowed entry each day (a Unesco rule), so tickets are usually sold by 2.30pm, even in quiet seasons. Tours run by the tourist office guarantee entry.

The late-baroque **Neues Palais** (New Palace; ☎ 969 4255; adult/concession €5/4; ☎ 10am–5pm Sat–Thu) was built in 1769 as the royal family's summer residence. It's suitably impressive and the one to see if your time is limited, as the tour takes in only a dozen or so rooms.

The **Bildergalerie** (Picture Gallery; ☎ 969 4181; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 10am–5pm Tue–Sun 15 May–15 Oct) contains a rich collection of 17th-century paintings by Rubens, Caravaggio and other big names.

Many consider the **Chinesisches Haus** (Chinese Tea-house; ☎ 969 4222; admission €1; ☎ 10am–5pm Tue–Sun 15 May–15 Oct) to be the park's highlight. It's a circular pavilion of gilded columns, palm trees and figures of Chinese musicians and animals, built in 1757. Look out for a monkey with Voltaire's face!

NEUER GARTEN

Located in the separate New Garden, north-east of the centre on the bank of the Heiliger See, **Schloss Cecilienhof** (☎ 969 4244; tours adult/concession €4/3; ☎ 9am–5pm Tue–Sun) is an incongruously English-style country manor in rococo-heavy Potsdam.

British PM Winston Churchill, US President Harry Truman and Soviet leader Josef Stalin met here in 1945 for the Potsdam Conference on administering postwar Germany. Large photos of the participants are displayed inside.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

In April 1945, Royal Air Force bombers devastated the historic centre of Potsdam, but fortunately some pivotal features survived undamaged.

The **Brandenburger Tor** (Brandenburg Gate) at the western end of the old town on Luisenplatz isn't a patch on that in Berlin, but it is older, dating from 1770. From here, pedestrian Brandenburger Strasse runs due east, providing the town's main **eating strip**.

Standing out from its surrounds is the pretty **Holländisches Viertel** (Dutch Quarter). Towards the northern end of Friedrich-Ebert-Strasse, it has 134 gabled red-brick houses, built for Dutch workers who came to Potsdam in the 1730s at the invitation of Friedrich Wilhelm I.

Some travellers inevitably will have heard of the **UFA Film Studios** (☎ 721 2755; www.filmpark.de; Grossbeerenstrasse; adult/concession/child €17/15.50/12.50; ☎ 10am–6pm 15 Mar–2 Nov) in Babelsberg, east of Potsdam's centre. Only go if you're a very keen movie buff; the theme park is a fairly ordinary experience.

Tours

Boats belonging to **Weisse Flotte** (☎ 275 9210; www.schiffahrt-in-potsdam.de; Lange Brücke 6; ☎ 8.45am–4.15pm Apr–Oct) cruise the Havel and the lakes around Potsdam, departing regularly from the dock near Lange Brücke, with frequent trips to Wannsee (€8/10 one way/return) and around the castles (€9). Sister company **Haveldampfschiffahrt** (☎ 275 9233; www.schiffahrt-in-potsdam.de; Lange Brücke 6; tours from €9.50) has equivalent steamboat tours.

Getting There & Around

S-Bahn line S7 links Berlin with Potsdam Hauptbahnhof about every 10 minutes, for which you'll need a ticket covering Berlin Zones A, B and C (€2.60 single, €6 day pass, €15 group day pass up to five people). Change at Potsdam Hauptbahnhof for local trains going one stop to Charlottenhof (for Schloss Sanssouci) or two stops to Sanssouci (for Neues Palais). Some RB trains from Berlin stop at all three stations.

Although part of Berlin's S-Bahn network, Potsdam has its own trams and buses; these converge on Lange Brücke near the Hauptbahnhof. A two-zone ticket costs €1.60 and a day pass €3.70.

SACHSENHAUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP

In 1936 the Nazis opened a 'model' **concentration camp** (☎ 03301-200 200; ☎ 8.30am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 8.30am–4.30pm Oct–Mar) near Oranienburg

some 35km north of Berlin. By 1945 about 220,000 prisoners had passed through the gates of Sachsenhausen. About 100,000 people died here. After the war, the Soviets and the communist leaders of the new GDR used the camp for *their* undesirables.

Plan on spending at least two hours. Among the many monuments and museums are **Baracks 38 & 39**, with excellent displays on the camp's history. Maps, brochures, booklets and audio guides (also in English) are available.

From Berlin take the frequent S1 to Oranienburg (single/day pass €2.60/6, 50 minutes). The walled camp is a signposted 20-minute walk from Oranienburg station.

EASTERN GERMANY

Germany's eastern heartland is for many people (Germans included) the most historically German. Its three states all have their own distinct character. Saxony lives off its reputation based on the momentous history of cities such as Leipzig and Dresden. Thuringia, the self-touted 'green heart' of Germany, entices hordes of visitors to the humanist bastion of Weimar and the state capital Erfurt. Saxony-Anhalt boasts a good swathe of the Harz Mountains (sharing them with Lower Saxony).

Together with Brandenburg, East Berlin and Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania, these states made up the GDR. In the popular towns such as Dresden you'll still easily see vestiges of things past in the monumental – and monumentally ugly – 1960s blocks of buildings around (and sometimes in) the centre.

Any trips south of Berlin should include stops in this fun and fascinating region.

DRESDEN

☎ 0351 / pop 483,000

In death, Dresden became even more famous than in life. Shortly before the end of WWII, Allied bombers blasted and incinerated much of the historic centre, a beautiful jewel-like area dating from the 18th century. In life, Dresden was famous throughout Europe as 'Florence on the Elbe', owing to the efforts of Italian artists, musicians, actors and master craftsmen who flocked to the court of Augustus the Strong, bestowing countless masterpieces upon the city. More than 35,000 people died, and in bookshops throughout

town you can books showing the destruction (or read about it in Kurt Vonnegut's classic *Slaughterhouse Five*).

Rebuilding began under the communist regime in the 1950s and accelerated greatly after reunification, culminating in the city's 800th anniversary in 2006. With its beautiful baroque centre and vibrant nightlife, Dresden is a major tourist attraction that can bring in major crowds in summer.

Information

Dresden Information (☎ 4919 2100; www.dresden.de; Prager Strasse 21; second location Theaterplatz 2; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat & Sun) Discount cards from €19.

E@sy Internet (Pfarrgasse 1; per hr €3.95; ☎ 9am–midnight)

Haus Des Buches (☎ 497 369; Dr-Külz-Ring 12) Huge selection on local history and culture.

Sights

Dresden straddles the River Elbe, with the attraction-studded Altstadt in the south and the livelier Neustadt to the north. One of Dresden's most beloved icons, the **Frauenkirche** (Church of Our Lady; ☎ 439 3934; www.frauenkirche-dresden.org; Neumarkt; ☎ 10am–6pm) on **Neumarkt**, was rebuilt in time for city's 800th anniversary celebrations. Built between 1726 and 1743 under the direction of baroque architect George Bähr, it was Germany's greatest Protestant church until February 1945, when bombing raids flattened it.

Leading northwest from Neumarkt is Augustusstrasse, with the stunning 102m-long **Procession of Princes** porcelain mural covering the outer wall of the old royal stables. Augustusstrasse leads directly to Schlossplatz and the baroque Catholic **Hofkirche** (1755). Just south of the church is the Renaissance **Schloss**, which is being reconstructed (slowly!) as a museum.

THEATERPLATZ

On the western side of the Hofkirche is Theaterplatz, with Dresden's glorious opera house, the neo-Renaissance **Semperoper** (☎ 491 1496; Theaterplatz; tour adult/child €6/3; ☎ varies) – if you've watched any German TV you'll probably recognise it from a certain beer commercial. The opera tradition goes back 350 years, and many works by Richard Strauss, Carl Maria von Weber and Richard Wagner premiered here.

Next door, the baroque **Zwinger fortress** (☎ 491 4622; Theaterplatz 1; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is another great Dresden heavyweight, with no fewer than six museums within its ornate walls. The most important are the **Rüstkammer** (armoury; adult/child €3/2), with its superb collection of ceremonial weapons, and the **Galerie Alte Meister** (adult/child €6/3.50, incl entry to Rüstkammer), which features masterpieces including Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*. The dazzling **Porcelain Collection** (☎ 491 4622; adult/concession €5/3) includes plenty of local Meissen classics.

BRÜHLSCHE TERRASSE

The imposing block of **Albertinum** (☎ 491 4619; Brühlische Terrasse; adult/child €5/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon) houses many of Dresden's art treasures. The **Galerie Neue Meister**, with renowned 19th- and 20th-century paintings from leading French and German Impressionists, was closed during 2006 for expansion and renovation. **Sächsische Dampfschiffahrt** (☎ 866 090; tours from €11.50) runs river tours on rebuilt steam ships from the docks below the terrace.

Sleeping

Accommodation in Dresden can be very expensive in the high season. Luckily, several good-value budget places can be found in the lively Neustadt.

Hostel Louise 20 (☎ 889 4894; www.louise20.de; Louisenstrasse 20; dm/s/d €15/30/40; ☎) Rooms are divided between two buildings here. Basic ones are off a courtyard out the back, while more expensive – and stylish – units are up front. Families can rent entire suites of rooms. There are kitchen facilities; most rooms share baths.

Hostel Mondpalast (☎ 804 6061; www.mondpalast.de; Moonenstrasse 77; dm/s/d €15/39/50; ☎) The Moon Palace has rooms decorated by theme (Australia, Greece, space travel – see the website) and a great bar/café. It's one of many good-value places in this fun-filled neighbourhood.

DJH Jugendgästehaus Dresden (☎ 492 620; jghdresden@djh-sachsen.de; Maternstrasse 22; dm €17; ☎) This tower block was once a Communist Party training centre; now it's a great hostel, with 480 beds in small dorms and a bistro (breakfast included). Take tram 7 or 10 to the corner of Ammonstrasse and Freiburger Strasse.

EV.-Ref. Gemeinde zu Dresden (☎ 438 230; www.ev-ref-gem-dresden.de; Brühlischer Garten 4; s/d €45/70) An

amazing value at an amazing location – right across from the Albertinum and on the river. This historic retirement home makes rooms available for travellers whenever a resident has permanently 'checked out'. Rooms have baths and TV, and often great views, although obviously they'd prefer you keep quiet.

Hotel Martha Hospiz (☎ 817 60; www.vch.de; Nieritzstrasse 11; r €54-120; ☎) Quiet reigns in this 50-room inn with country furnishings, built over 100 years ago by a church. The location is central and it has many amenities including wi-fi.

Eating

It's no problem finding somewhere to eat in the Neustadt, with oodles of cafés and restaurants found along Königstrasse and the streets north of Albertplatz. This is the centre of nightlife. You'll be going until dawn, with dozens of choices.

Cafe Kontinental (☎ 801 3531; Görlitzer Strasse 1; mains €5-15; ☎ 24hr; ☎) A bustling place open around the clock, this trendy café caters to a broad swathe of Neustadt characters.

Caffe Blumenau (☎ 802 6502; Louisenstrasse 67; mains €5-15; ☎ 8am-2am; ☎) Flowers abound in this beautiful café and bar which also has a sunny back patio. A long breakfast menu is served through the day as well as sandwiches, salads, pasta and cakes.

Wenzel Prager Bierstuben (☎ 804 2010; Königstrasse 1; mains €7-20; ☎ 11am-midnight) This busy beerhall serves up oceans of Czech lager under arched brick ceilings. Always crowded, the menu leans towards traditional meaty mains. The garlic soup is sublime and the cured pork with horseradish a delight.

Drinking

The places listed under Eating above are also good just for a drink.

Neue Tonne (☎ 802 6017; www.jazzclubtonne.de; Königstrasse 15; entry free-€15) This well-known place has live music almost nightly.

Scheunecafé (☎ 802 6619; Alaunstrasse 36-40; mains €7-12) Set back from the street, Indian food, a vast beer garden, live music and DJs all combine here for a fun and funky stew

Café 100 (☎ 801 7729; Alaunstrasse 100) Off a courtyard, you'll pass hundreds of empty bottles on the way in, a foreshadowing of the lengthy wine list and delights that follow. Candles give the underground space a romantic yet edgy glow.

Queens (☎ 810 8108; Görlitzerstrasse 3) This hopping gay bar/lounge/disco is a good first stop to find out what's happening locally.

Entertainment

Dresden is synonymous with opera, and performances at the spectacular **Semperoper** (☎ 491 1496; www.semperoper.de; Theaterplatz), opposite the Zwinger, are brilliant. Tickets cost from €10, but they're usually booked out well in advance. Some performances by the renowned Philharmonic are also held there, but most are in the communist-era **Kulturpalast** (☎ 486 60; www.kulturpalast-dresden.de; Schlossstrasse 2), which hosts a wide range of concerts and events.

Getting There & Around

Dresden Airport (code DRS; www.dresden-airport.de), served by Lufthansa, DBA and Air Berlin among others, is 9km north of the city centre.

Dresden has regular services through the day to Leipzig (€26, 70 minutes), Berlin-Hauptbahnhof by IC/EC train (€30.20, 2½ hours) and Frankfurt-am-Main (€76, 4½ hours).

Trams 3, 6, 7 and 8 (€1.70) provide good links between the Hauptbahnhof and Neustadt.

AROUND DRESDEN Meissen

☎ 03521 / pop 29,000

Some 27km northwest of Dresden, Meissen is a compact, perfectly preserved old town and the centre of a rich wine-growing region. It makes for a good day trip out of Dresden by train or boat.

The tourist office is at **Meissen-Information** (☎ 419 40; www.touristinfo-meissen.de; Markt 3; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Nov-Mar). It can help find accommodation. Cafés line the streets and are popular on warm days.

Steep stepped lanes lead up to Meissen's towering 13th-century **Albrechtsburg Cathedral** (☎ 452 490; Domplatz 7; adult/child €3.50/2; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Feb), which contains an altarpiece by Lucas Cranach the Elder.

Beside the cathedral is the remarkable 15th-century **palace** (☎ 470 70; Domplatz 1; adult/child €3.50/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Feb), widely seen as the birthplace of Schloss architecture, with its ingenious system of internal arches. A combined ticket for both buildings costs €5/2.50.

Meissen has long been renowned for its chinaware, with its trademark insignia of blue crossed swords. The **Porzellan Manufaktur** (Porcelain Factory; ☎ 468 700; Talstrasse 9; adult/child €8/4; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Apr) is 1km from the centre and dates to 1916.

Half-hourly S-Bahn trains run from Dresden's Hauptbahnhof and Neustadt train stations (€5.10, 45 minutes). A more interesting way to get to Dresden is by steamer (operating between May and September). Boats leave from the Sächsische Dampfschiffahrt dock in Dresden.

LEIPZIG

☎ 0341 / pop 498,000

Leipzig is the busiest city in Saxony, and a livelier alternative to Dresden. Although it lacks the capital's busload of museums, Leipzig in many ways feels more lively in an everyday sense.

Leipzig also has some of the finest classical music and opera in the country, and its art and literary scenes are flourishing. It was once home to Bach, Wagner and Mendelssohn, as well as Goethe, who set a key scene of *Faust* in the cellar of his favourite watering hole. More recently, it earned the sobriquet *Stadt der Helden* (City of Heroes) for its leading role in the 1989 democratic revolution.

The city has a compact centre worth wandering and a growing arts scene. It definitely merits a day or two of your travels.

Information

The Hauptbahnhof contains a modern mall with over 140 shops and, radically for Germany, it is open 6am to 10pm seven days a week. You'll find good bookshops, a post office, banks and much more. There's wi-fi in the DB Lounge.

Internetcafé (Reichsstrasse 18; internet per 15 min €1; ☎ 10am-10pm) Full service shop for CD burning and more.

Leipzig Tourist Service (☎ 710 4260; www.leipzig.de; Richard-Wagner-Strasse 1; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 9am-2pm Sun) One of the most helpful in Germany. Discount cards from €7.40.

Sights

Don't rush from sight to sight – wandering around Leipzig is a pleasure in itself, with many of the blocks around the central Markt crisscrossed by old internal shopping passages, including the classic **Mädlerpassage**.

MONUMENTS & LANDMARKS

Off the southern ring road is the impressive 108m-high tower of the baroque **Neues Rathaus** (New Town Hall; ☎ 1230; Martin-Luther-Ring; ☎ 7am-4.30pm Mon-Fri). Although the building's origins date back to the 16th century, its current manifestation was completed in 1905.

Located 4km southeast of the centre, the **Völkerschlachtdenkmal** (Battle of Nations Monument; Strasse des 18 Oktober; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar) is a massive 91m-high monument commemorating the decisive victory here by the combined Prussian, Austrian and Russian forces over Napoleon's army in 1813. Climb the 500 steps for a view of the region. Take tram 15 from the station (direction Meusdorf).

MUSEUMS

Leipzig's finest museum, the **Museum der Bildenden Künste** (Museum of Fine Arts; ☎ 216 990; Grimmische Strasse 1-7; adult/child €5/3.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 10am-8pm Wed) is housed in a stunning new building that provides a dramatic backdrop to its collection, which spans old masters and the latest efforts of the many noted local artists.

Haunting and uplifting by turns, the **Zeitgeschichtliches Forum** (Forum of Contemporary History; ☎ 222 20; Grimmische Strasse 6; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) tells the story of the GDR from division and dictatorship to resistance and reform.

Former headquarters of the East German secret police, the **Stasi Museum** (☎ 961 2443; Ditztriching 24; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm) has exhibits on propaganda, amazingly hokey disguises, surveillance photos and other forms of 'intelligence'.

Opposite the Thomaskirche is the **Bach Museum** (☎ 964 110; Thomaskirchhof 16; adult/child €3/2; ☎ 10am-5pm), where JS Bach worked from 1723 until his death in 1750.

Sleeping

Leipzig Tourist Service offers free booking in private homes near the centre. Average cost is €30 to €45.

Camping Am Auensee (☎ 465 1600; www.motel-auensee.de; Gustav-Esche-Strasse 5; camping per person from €3, cabins €28-35) This camping ground is in a pleasant wooded spot on the city's northwestern outskirts (take tram 10 or 28 to Wahren).

Hostel Sleepy Lion (☎ 993 9480; www.hostel-leipzig.de; Käthe-Kollwitz-Strasse 3; dm/s/d €15/28/40; ☎) All

rooms have their own baths at this 59-room facility in a renovated building. Some come with fake trees as well.

Central Globetrotter (☎ 149 8960; www.globe-trotter-leipzig.de; Kurt-Schumacher-Strasse 41; dm/s/d €14/24/36; ☎) In a busy location just north of the train station, this 80-room hostel offers bare-bone accommodation.

Hotel Adagio (☎ 216 699; www.hotel-adagio.de; Seeburgstrasse 96; r €72-95; ☎) The 32 rooms here are smartly decked out with a black-and-white theme. You can take breakfast in a garden and there's a certain intimate charm.

Günnewig Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten (☎ 985 10; www.gunnewig.de; Kurt-Schumacher-Strasse 23; r €60-130; ☎) Close to the train station, this anonymous place has wi-fi in all 67 comfortable rooms and serves up a good buffet breakfast in an atrium.

Eating

Zum Arabischen Coffe Baum (☎ 965 1321; Kleine Fleisnergasse 4; mains €6-15) Leipzig's oldest coffee bar has a restaurant and café offering excellent meals over three floors, plus a free coffee museum at the top. Composer Robert Schumann met friends here.

Kartoffelhaus No 1 (☎ 960 4603; Barfussgässchen 12; mains €6-12) Kids love the spuds where you can get 'em baked, fried, boiled, grilled and more (that's the tubers not the young-uns).

Bayerischer Bahnhof (☎ 124 5760; Bayerischer Platz 1; mains €7-20) Leipzig has its own local beer style, Gose, that is sadly all but extinct. But not here at this microbrewery where you can get the light, herby brew by the litre. Take tram lines 9, 10 or 16.

Auerbachs Keller (☎ 216 100; www.auerbachs-keller-leipzig.de; Mädlerpassage; mains €14-22) Founded in 1525, Auerbachs Keller is one of Germany's classic restaurants, serving typically hearty fare. Goethe's *Faust – Part I* includes a scene here, in which Mephistopheles and Faust carouse with some students before they ride off on a barrel.

Drinking

Barfussgässchen and Kleine Fleisnergasse, west of the Markt, form one of Leipzig's two 'pub miles', packed with outdoor tables that fill up the second the weather turns warm. The other is on Gottschedstrasse, a wider cocktail strip just west of the Altstadt.

Moritz-Bastei (☎ 702 590; www.moritzbastei.de; Universitätsstrasse 9) One of the best student clubs

in Germany, located in a spacious cellar below the old city walls, it has live music or DJs most nights and runs films outside in summer.

Entertainment

To hear the works of native-born Bach and others, try the 18th century **Thomaskirche** (☎ 212 4676; Thomaskirchhof 18), which has frequent recitals and other performances.

Getting There & Around

Leipzig-Halle airport (code LEJ; www.leipzig-halle-airport.de) is served by the Airport Express (€4, 15 minutes) every 30 minutes. Ryanair serves tiny and remote **Altenburg airport** (ADC; www.flughafen-altenburg.de).

Regular train services through the day include Dresden (€26, 70 minutes), Berlin-Hauptbahnhof by ICE (€36, 70 minutes), Munich by ICE (€74, five hours) and Frankfurt-am-Main (€61, 3½ hours).

Trams are the main public transport option, with most lines running via the Hauptbahnhof. A single ticket costs €1.70 and a day card €4.90.

ERFURT

☎ 0361 / pop 202,000

Thuringia's capital was founded by St Boniface as a bishopric in 742. In the Middle Ages the city shot to prominence and prosperity as an important trading post. The Altstadt's many well-preserved 16th-century and later buildings attest to its wealth.

During WWII, damage was extensive, and the GDR regime did little to restore the city's former glories. Over the past decade, however, Erfurt has spiffed up what it has and a stroll through the old streets and across the rivers is a delight.

Information

Erfurt Tourism (☎ 664 00; www.erfurt-tourist-info.de; Benediktspatz 1; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun) Discount card from €9.90.

Internettreff (Ratskellerpassage, Fischmarkt 5; internet per hr €1.30; ☎ 1-8pm Mon-Sat)

Sights

The numerous interesting lanes and alleys in Erfurt's surprisingly large Altstadt make this a fascinating place to explore. Whatever you do, though, you shouldn't miss the massive 13th-century Gothic **Dom St Marien** (☎ 646

1265; Domplatz; tours adult/child €2.50/1.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun, shorter in winter) and **Severikirche**, which dominate the central Domplatz square. The stained glass and elaborate portals make the cathedral one of the most richly ornamented medieval churches in Germany. The Severikirche, meanwhile, boasts the sarcophagus of St Severus.

The eastbound street beside the Rathaus leads to the restored **Krämerbrücke** (1325), a narrow medieval bridge lined with timber-framed shops – it's the only such structure north of the Alps. Further north, on the same side of the river, is the **Augustinerkloster** (☎ 576 600; Augustinerstrasse; adult/child €6/5; ☎) tours 10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun), a late-medieval monastery that was home to Martin Luther in the 16th century and now puts up tourists and conference guests.

Sleeping & Eating

Jugendherberge Hochheimerstrasse (☎ 6013 2600; www.djh.de; Hochheimer Strasse 12; dm from €17; ☎) This modern 200-bed hostel is 2km south of the city (take tram 5 to Steigerstrasse).

Pension am Dom (☎ 5504 8660; www.pension-am-dom-erfurt.de; Lange Brücke 57; r €29-69; ☎) True to its name, this friendly little central *pension* has superb views of the cathedral from the breakfast room and terrace. Rooms are light and airy with natural wood floors. It's located over some trendy shops.

Look for interesting and trendy restaurants and cafés along Michaelisstrasse and Marbacher Gasse. For a quick treat, have a thuringer bratwurst hot off the grill from a **stand** (☎ 793 5250; Schloßstrasse; meal €1.50) near a small waterfall.

Wirtshaus Christoffel (☎ 262 6943; Michaelisstrasse 41; mains €6-11) History oozes out of the wooden walls at this quaint little café. As the name implies, local sausage is a specialty. On some nights films are shown in the basement.

Haus Zur Pfauen (☎ 211 5209; Marbacher Gasse 12; mains €7-10) An atmospheric microbrewery with a large beer garden and tasty brews. If you're reduced to crawling, you might just head upstairs to the simple rooms (from €45).

Getting There & Away

Erfurt's Hauptbahnhof has services to Berlin (€41.20, 3¼ hours, every two hours), Dresden (€39, 2¼ hours, every two hours) and Frankfurt (€41.80, 2¼ hours, every two hours). Trains to Weimar (€4.20, 15 minutes) and Eisenach (€8.40, 50 minutes) run regularly.

AROUND ERFURT

Eisenach is home to the Wartburg, the only German castle to be named a Unesco World Heritage Site. Composer Johann Sebastian Bach was born here, but he plays second fiddle to the amazing edifice in stone and half-timber high on the hill.

The small town has a good **tourist office** (☎ 03691-792 30; www.eisenach.de; Markt 9; ☹ 10am-6pm Mon, 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun), which can help you find accommodation if your day trip gets extended.

The **Wartburg** (☎ 03691-2500; www.wartburg-eisenach.de; tour adult/child €6/3; ☹ tours 8.30am-5pm), parts of which date from the 11th century, is perched high above the town on a wooded hill, and is said to go back to Count Ludwig der Springer (the Jumper). You'll hear the story of how the castle got its name many times, but listen out for how Ludwig got his peculiar moniker as well.

The castle owes its huge popularity to Martin Luther, who went into hiding here from 1521 to 1522 after being excommunicated; during this time he translated the entire New Testament from Greek into German, contributing enormously to the development of the written German language. His modest, wood-panelled **study** is part of the guided tour (available in English), which is the only way to view the interior. The **museum** houses the famous Cranach paintings of Luther and important Christian artefacts from all over Germany. Most of the rooms you'll see here are extravagant 19th-century impressions of medieval life rather than original fittings; the re-imagined Great Hall, in turn, inspired Richard Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser*. Between Easter and October, crowds can be horrendous; arrive before 11am.

Frequent direct trains run to Erfurt (€8.40, 50 minutes) and most continue on the short distance to Weimar.

WEIMAR & AROUND

☎ 03643 / pop 64,000

The city of Goethe is not impressive on first glance. There are no vast cathedrals or palaces, nor are there any world-renowned museums. But spend a little time wandering its very attractive old streets and visiting its fascinating little museums and historic houses and soon you will understand the allure. You'll feel the presence of notables like Luther, Schiller and Liszt, and you'll begin to understand the re-

markable cultural accomplishments achieved in Weimar over the centuries. While the city can sometimes feel like a giant museum teeming with tourists, it is one of Germany's most fascinating places and should not be missed.

Information

There are scores of little book and music shops in town.

Tourist Information (☎ 240 00; www.weimar.de; Markt 10; ☹ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat & Sun) Discount cards good for most admissions from €13.

Vobis (Schwansestrasse; per hr €2; ☹ 10am-8pm) Internet access.

Sights

A good place to begin a tour is in front of the neo-Gothic 1841 **Rathaus** on the Markt. For in-depth museum information and high-end souvenirs try the **Stiftung Weimarer Klassik** (Weimar Classics Foundation; ☎ 545 401; www.swkk.de; Frauentorstrasse 4; ☹ 10am-6pm).

Those who visit the **Goethe Nationalmuseum** (☎ 545 347; Frauenplan 1; adult/child €6.50/5; ☹ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) expecting to learn all about the great man of letters will probably be disappointed. Rather than focusing on Goethe himself, the museum offers a broad overview of German Classicism, from its proponents to its patrons. The adjoining **Goethe Haus**, where such works as *Faust* were written, focuses much more on the man. He lived here from 1775 until his death in 1832. Goethe's original 1st-floor living quarters are reached via an expansive Italian Renaissance staircase decorated with sculpture and paintings brought back from his travels to Italy.

The Bauhaus School and movement was founded in Weimar in 1919 by Walter Gropius, who managed to draw top artists including Kandinsky, Klee, Feininger and Schlemmer as teachers. The exhibition at the **Bauhaus Museum** (☎ 545 961; Theaterplatz; adult/child €4.50/3.50; ☹ 10am-6pm) chronicles the evolution of the group, explains their innovations and spotlights the main players.

Housed in the **Stadtschloss**, the former residence of the ducal family of Saxe-Weimar, the **Schlossmuseum** (☎ 545 960; Burgplatz 4; adult/child €5/4; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar) encompasses sculpture, paintings and objets d'art. Highlights include the Cranach Gallery, several portraits by Albrecht Dürer, and collections of Dutch masters and German romanticists.

Goethe's fellow dramatist Friedrich von Schiller lived in Weimar from 1799 until his early death in 1805. Unlike his mentor, he had to buy his own house, now known as **Schiller Museum** (☎ 545 350; Schillerstrasse 12; adult/child €6.50/5; ☹ 9am-6pm Wed-Mon). The study at the end of the 2nd floor contains the desk where he penned *Wilhelm Tell* and other works, and also holds his deathbed.

BUCHENWALD

The **Buchenwald** (☎ 03643-4300; www.buchenwald.de; ☹ 10am-6pm May-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Apr) concentration camp museum and memorial are 10km north of Weimar. The contrast between the brutality of the former and the liberal humanism of the latter is hard to comprehend.

Between 1937 and 1945, more than one-fifth of the 250,000 people incarcerated here (Jews, gypsies, children, political opponents etc) died. The location on the side of a hill only added to the torture of the inmates as there are sweeping views of the region – a place where people were free while those here died. Various parts of the camp have been restored and there is an essential **museum** with excellent exhibits.

To reach the camp, take bus 6 (€1.60, 15 minutes), which runs regularly.

Sleeping & Eating

The tourist office can help find accommodation, especially at busy times. There are many small *pensions* scattered about the centre, which is where you should try to stay.

Hababusch (☎ 850 737; www.hababusch.de; Geleitstrasse 4; dm/s/d €10/15/24) Get in touch with Weimar's past at this unrestored 19th-century house. Conditions are, well, historic, but if you're looking for atmosphere this is it. The charming fountain out front is dedicated to the city.

Jugendherberge Germania (☎ 850 490; www.djh.de; Carl-August-Allee 13; dm from €17; ☹ ☒) The 121-bed Germania, south of the station, is convenient for a quick getaway but a little far from the centre.

Ringhotel Kaiserin Augusta (☎ 234 0; www.hotel-kaiserin-augusta.de; Carl-August Allee 17; r €66-140; ☹ ☒) Directly across from the train station, this 242-bed business hotel offers many services and well-equipped rooms with wi-fi. It has a good terrace and breakfast buffet.

Hotel Fürstenhof (☎ 833 231; www.fuerstenhof-weimar.de; Rudolf-Breitscheid-Strasse 2; r €46-100; ☒)

A nice modern alternative to the ubiquitous 'period' décor elsewhere, the 17 rooms boast abstract prints. There's a vivid yellow breakfast room.

Residenz-Café (☎ 594 08; Grüner Markt 4; mains €5-15) Known as the 'Resi' by regulars, this is one of Weimar's most popular haunts and has been for more than 160 years. The food is hearty and local – look for filling, starchy treats. The Sunday brunch draws hordes.

Johanns Hof (☎ 493 617; Scherfegasse 1; mains €6-14) Large windows punctuate the maroon walls in this historic and stylish café. The long wine list specialises in German white wines. Creative dishes include a fine garlic soup.

Köstritzer Schwarzbierhaus (☎ 779 337; Scherfegasse 4; mains €7-18) Fans of dark beer and substantial traditional Thuringian cooking are in exactly the right place here – the listed half-timbered house has been converted into a restaurant and *pension* (doubles €80).

Drinking

Studentenclub Kasseturm (☎ 851 670; www.kasseturm.de; Goetheplatz 10; ☹ 6pm-late) A Weimar classic, the Kasseturm is a historic round tower with three floors of live music, DJs and cabaret.

Getting There & Away

Weimar's Hauptbahnhof is on a line with frequent services linking Leipzig (€22, one hour) and Erfurt (€4.20, 15 minutes). Hourly ICE/IC services go to Frankfurt (€49, 2½ hours) and Berlin-Hauptbahnhof (€44, 2½ hours).

The town centre is a 20-minute walk south of the Hauptbahnhof. Most buses serve Goetheplatz, on the northwestern edge of the Altstadt.

BAVARIA

For many, Bavaria (Bayern) is every German stereotype rolled into one. Lederhosen, beer halls, oompah bands and romantic castles are just some of Bavarian clichés associated with Germany as a whole. But as any Bavarian will tell you, the state thinks of itself as Bavarian first and German second. And as any German outside of Bavaria will tell you, the *Bavarian* stereotypes aren't representative of the rest of Germany.

Bavaria draws visitors year-round. If you only have time for one part of Germany after Berlin, this is it. Munich, the capital, is the

heart and soul. The Bavarian Alps, Nuremberg and the medieval towns on the Romantic Rd are other important attractions.

MUNICH

☎ 089 / pop 1.25 million

Munich (München) is truly the capital of all things Bavarian. It's a heady mix of world-class museums, historic sites, cosmopolitan shopping, exhausting nightlife, trendy restaurants, roaring beer halls, vast parks and, of course, Oktoberfest.

It can easily occupy several days of your time and it will indeed be time well spent. The efficient public transport system can whisk you around town – although if you stay above ground you might be surprised at how compact the centre really is. Against all this urban life is the backdrop of the Alps, peaks that exude an allure that many locals – and visitors – find inescapable. It is hard to imagine any visit to Germany feeling complete without at least some time spent in this vibrant city.

Munich didn't really achieve prominence until the 19th century, under the guiding hand of King Ludwig I. In the aftermath of WWI, the city became a hotbed of right-wing political ferment. Hitler staged a failed coup attempt here in 1923. WWII brought bombing and more than 6000 civilian deaths. Today it is a growing city with a diversified economy.

Orientation

The main train station is just west of the centre. From the station, head east along Bayerstrasse, through Karlsplatz, and then along Neuhauser Strasse and Kaufingerstrasse to Marienplatz, the hub of Munich.

North of Marienplatz are the Residenz (the former royal palace), Schwabing (the famous student section) and the parklands of the Englischer Garten through which the Isar River runs.

GETTING INTO TOWN

Munich's international airport is connected by the S8 and the S1 to Marienplatz and the Hauptbahnhof (€8.80). The service takes about 40 minutes and there is a train every 10 minutes from 4am until around 12.30am. The S8 route is slightly faster. Taxis make the long haul for at least €60.

Information

For late-night shopping and services such as pharmacies and currency exchange, the Hauptbahnhof's multilevel shopping arcades cannot be beaten.

BOOKSHOPS

Hugendubel (☎ 484 484; Marienplatz 22) This bookshop has a good selection of guides and maps. A second large location (☎ 484 484; Salvatorplatz 2) stocks all English titles.

Max&Milian (☎ 260 3320; Ickstattstrasse 2) Gay bookshop and unofficial community centre.

INTERNET ACCESS

easyInternetcafé (Bahnhofplatz 1; per 80min €2; ☎ 24hr) In the post office building, part of a chain of internet cafés. Has hundreds of terminals and is normally packed with cyber surfers.

Internet Café (Tal 31; per 30min €1; ☎ 24hr) Full service shop.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Expats in Bavaria (www.expats-in-bavaria.com) Quirky, colourful & useful site for all manner of local info.

Munich Found (www.munichfound.de; €3) Long-running English language local magazine with a good website. Good entertainment coverage.

Toytown Munich (www.toytowngermany.com) Irreverent English-language recommendations from locals & ex-pats. Good bar and club reviews.

LAUNDRY

City SB-Waschcenter (Paul-Heysse-Strasse 21; €4; ☎ 7am-11pm) Close to the Hauptbahnhof.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Krankenhaus Schwabing (Schwabing Hospital; ☎ 3304 0302; Kölner Platz 1) North of the centre, it has a 24-hour ER.

POST

Main post office (Bahnhofplatz 1; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) The poste restante address is: Hauptpostlagernd (Poste Restante), Bahnhofplatz 1, 80074 München.

TOURIST INFORMATION

EurAide (☎ 59 38 89; www.euraide.com; Hauptbahnhof; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-6pm Jun-Oct; 8am-noon & 1-6pm Mon-Fri Nov-May) Next to platform 11 at the main train station, EurAide validates rail passes, sells train tickets and tours and dispense savvy advice in English.

Tourist office (☎ 23 33 65 00; www.muenchen-tourist.de) Main tourist office (Hauptbahnhof; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun); Branch office (Marienplatz;

BEWITCHING HARZ

The Harz Mountains constitute a mini-Alpine region straddling Saxony-Anhalt and Lower Saxony. Here, medieval castles overlook fairytale historic towns, while there are numerous hiking trails to explore.

The region's highest and most famous mountain is the Brocken, where one-time visitor Goethe set the 'Walpurgisnacht' chapter of his play *Faust*. His inspiration came from folk tales depicting Walpurgisnacht as an annual witches' coven. Every 30 April/1 May it's celebrated enthusiastically across the Harz region, particularly in Thale.

Goslar

Goslar is a stunning 1000-year-old city with beautifully preserved half-timbered buildings and an impressive **Markt**. The town's **Kaiserpfalz** is a reconstructed Romanesque 11th-century palace. Just below is **Domvorhalle**, which displays the 11th-century 'Kaiserstuhl' throne used by German emperors.

One way to reach the **Brocken's summit** is to take bus 810 or a train (faster) from Goslar to Bad Harzburg and then a bus (820) to Torfhaus, where the 8km Goetheweg trail begins.

The **tourist office** (☎ 05321-780 60; www.goslar.de, in German; Markt 7; ☎ 9.15am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat, to 2pm Sun May-Oct; 9.15am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat Nov-Apr) can help with accommodation, which includes a **DJH Hostel** (☎ 05321-222 40; www.jugendherberge.de; Rammelsbergerstrasse 25; dm junior/senior €16.50/19.20).

As well as being serviced by buses (www.rbb-bus.de), Goslar is connected by train to Hanover (€13.40, 70 minutes) and Wernigerode (€7.60, 50 minutes).

Wernigerode

A fairytale castle – one of the most-visited in Germany – watches over Wernigerode's colourful half-timbered houses. The town is the northern terminus of the steam-powered **Harzquerbahn railway** (☎ 03943-5580; www.hsb-wr.de), which chugs up the Brocken from here.

Wernigerode Tourismus (☎ 03943-633 035; www.wernigerode-tourismus.de, Nicolaiplatz 1; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun May-Oct, slightly reduced hr in winter) has details. Sleeping options include a private **Jugendgästehaus** (☎ 03943-632 061; Friedrichstrasse 53; dm junior/senior €16.20/20).

Direct buses run to most major towns in the region. For trains to Quedlinburg (€7.60, 50 minutes) and Thale (€9.10, 70 minutes), change at Halberstadt.

Quedlinburg

Quedlinburg's spectacular castle district perches on a 25m-high plateau above its historic half-timbered buildings. Begun in 919, it also boasts a 16th-century Renaissance **Schloss** with a restored baroque **Blauer Saal** (Blue Hall).

Contact **Quedlinburg-Tourismus** (☎ 03946-905 625; www.quedlinburg.de; Markt 2; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct; 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat Nov-Mar) for more info. Lodgings include a **DJH hostel** (☎ 03946-811 703; www.jugendherberge.de; Neuendorf 28; dm junior/senior €14/17.70, linen €3).

There are frequent trains to Thale (€1.80, 11 minutes) and hourly services towards Magdeburg, from where you can get to Berlin.

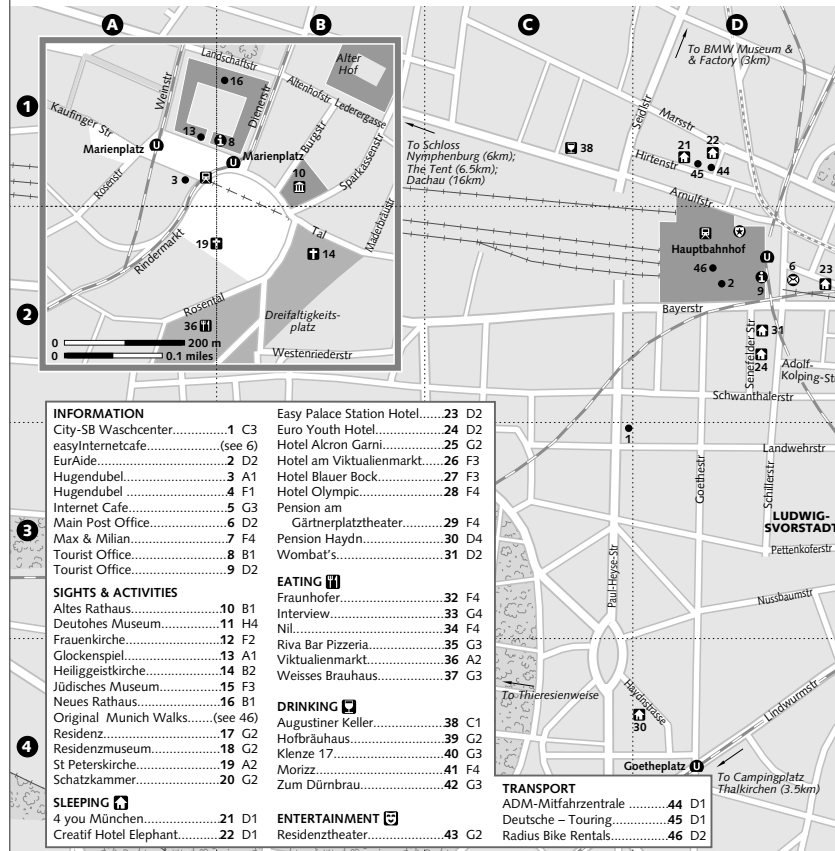
Thale

Two rugged outcrops, the **Hexentanzplatz** and **Rosstrappe**, flank the Bode Valley, which is a hikers' favourite. There's a cable car to the rather overdeveloped Hexentanzplatz. Meanwhile, the Rosstrappe, reached by chairlift, bears a strange hoof imprint, supposedly left when the mythological Brunhilde jumped the gorge on horseback to escape her unloved husband Bode. (He fell to his death.) Both outcrops become party sites on Walpurgisnacht.

Thale Tourismus (☎ 03947-2597; www.thale.de; Rathausstrasse 1; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) can help with accommodation, which includes a **DJH Hostel** (☎ 03947-2881; www.jugendherberge.de; Bodetal-Waldkater; dm junior/senior €14.50/17.20, s/d from €19.50/24.50).

There are trains and buses to both Wernigerode and Quedlinburg (see above), plus trains to Magdeburg and on to Berlin.

CENTRAL MUNICH



☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) Both offices sell the Munich Welcome Card (from €7.50), which allows one to three days' unlimited travel on public transport, plus discounts for many museums, galleries and other attractions. The main tourist office is to the right as you exit the Hauptbahnhof via the eastern entrance; its room-finding service is free. The branch office is beneath the Neues Rathaus (New Town Hall). No matter your age, be sure to ask for the excellent and free guide *Young and About in Munich*.

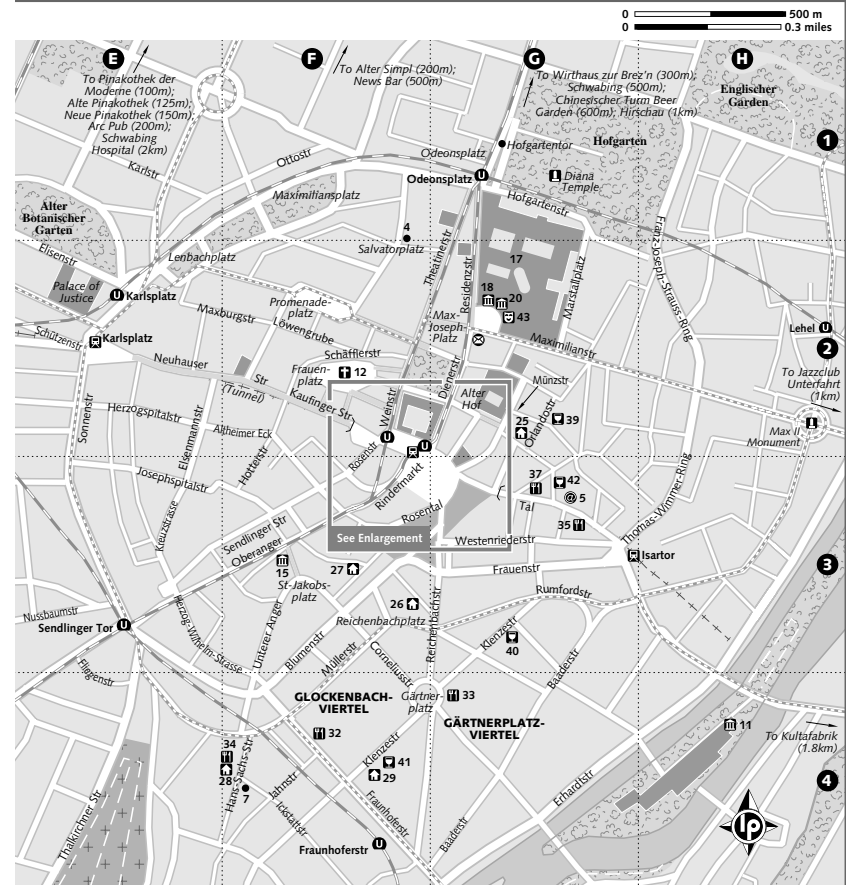
Sights

PALACES

The huge **Residenz** (Max-Joseph-Platz 3) housed Bavarian rulers from 1385 to 1918 and features more than 500 years of architectural history. Apart from the palace itself, the

Residenzmuseum (☎ 290 671; www.schloesser.bayern.de; Residenzstrasse 1; adult/child €6/5; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun, to 8pm Thu Apr-Oct; 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) has an extraordinary array of 100 rooms containing no end of treasures and artworks. In the same building, the **Schatzkammer** (☎ 290 671; enter from Max-Joseph-Platz 3; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun, to 8pm Thu Apr-Oct; 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) exhibits jewels, crowns and ornate gold.

If this doesn't satisfy your passion for palaces, visit **Schloss Nymphenburg** (☎ 179 080; www.schloesser.bayern.de; adult/child museum €5/4, museum & gallery €10/8; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun, to 8pm Thu Apr-Oct; 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), northwest of the city centre via tram 17 from the main train station (Hauptbahnhof). This was the royal family's equally impressive summer home.



ART GALLERIES

A veritable treasure house of European masters from the 14th to 18th centuries, the recently renovated **Alte Pinakothek** (☎ 23 80 52 16; www.alte-pinakothek.de; Barer Strasse 27; adult/child €5.50/4, €1 Sun; ☎ Tue 10am-8pm, Wed-Sun 10am-5pm), a stroll northeast of the city, includes highlights such as Dürer's Christ-like *Self Portrait* and his *Four Apostles*, Rogier van der Weyden's *Adoration of the Magi* and Botticelli's *Pieta*.

Immediately north of the Alte Pinakothek, the **Neue Pinakothek** (☎ 2380 5195; www.neue-pinakothek.de; Barer Strasse 29; adult/child €5.50/4, €1 Sun; ☎ 10am-8pm Wed, 10am-5pm Thu-Mon) contains mainly 19th-century works, including Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*, and sculpture.

One block east of the Alte Pinakothek, the **Pinakothek der Moderne** (☎ 23 80 53 60; www.pinakothek-der-moderne.de; Barer Strasse 40; adult/child €9/5, €1 Sun; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue & Wed, Sat & Sun, 10am-8pm Thu & Fri) displays four collections of modern art and architecture in one suitably arresting building.

MUSEUMS

An enormous science and technology museum, **Deutsches Museum** (☎ 217 91; www.deutsches-museum.de; Museumsinsel 1; adult/child €8.50/3, planetarium €2; ☎ 9am-5pm) celebrates the many achievements of Germans and humans in general. Kids become gleeful kids as they interact with the exhibits. So do adults. Take the S-Bahn to Isartor.

Tracing the lives of local Jews before, during and after the Holocaust, the **Jüdisches Museum** (☎ 233 281 89; www.juedisches-museum.muenchen.de; St-Jakobs-Platz 16) should open in this impressive new space in March 2007.

North of the city, auto-fetishists can thrill to the newly expanded **BMW Museum** (☎ 232 233 07; www.bmwmobiletradition.de), adjacent to the BMW headquarters. Take the U3 to Olympiazentrum.

ENGLISCHER GARTEN

One of the largest city parks in Europe, the **Englischer Garten**, west of the city centre, is a great place for strolling, especially along the Schwabinger Bach. In summer, nude sunbathing is the rule rather than the exception. It's not unusual for hundreds of naked people to be in the park during a normal business day, with their clothing stacked primly on the grass. If they're not doing this, they're probably drinking merrily at one of the park's **beer gardens** (p473).

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The **Marienplatz** is a good starting point for historic buildings. Dominating the square is the towering neo-Gothic **Neues Rathaus** (New Town Hall), with its ever-dancing **Glockenspiel** (carillon), which performs at 11am and noon daily (also at 5pm from March to October), bringing the square to an expectant standstill (note the fate of Austrian knight...). Two important churches are on this square: the baroque star **St Peterskirche** (Rindermarkt 1; tower €1.50; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar) and, behind the Altes Rathaus, the often forgotten but equally important **Heiliggeistkirche** (Tal 77; ☎ 7am-6pm).

Head west along shopping street Kaufingerstrasse to landmark of Munich, the late-Gothic **Frauenkirche** (Church of Our Lady; ☎ 423 457; Frauenplatz; tower adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ tower 10am-5pm Mar-Oct) with its then-trendy 16th-century twin onion domes. Go inside and join the hordes gazing at the grandeur of the place, or climb the tower for majestic views of Munich.

DACHAU

The first Nazi concentration camp was **Dachau** (☎ 08131 669 970; www.kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de; Alte-Roemerstrasse 75; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), built in March 1933. Jews, political prisoners, homosexuals and others deemed

'undesirable' by the Third Reich were imprisoned in the camp. More than 200,000 people were sent here; more than 30,000 died at Dachau and countless others died after being transferred to other death camps. An English-language documentary is shown at 11.30am and 3.30pm. Take the S2 (direction Petershausen) to Dachau and then bus 726 or 724 to the camp. A Munich XXL day ticket (€6.50) will cover the trip.

Tours

Munich's hordes of visitors and its plethora of sights mean there's lots of people willing to show you around. This can be an excellent way to gain background and context on what you see.

Mike's Bike Tours (☎ 2554 3987; www.mikesbike.tours.com; tours from €24) Enjoyable (and leisurely) city cycling tours in English. Tours depart from the archway at the Altes Rathaus on Marienplatz.

Original Munich Walks (☎ 5502 9374; www.radius.munich.com; Hauptbahnhof near track 32; tours from €10) Runs English-language tours: a two-hour walk of the city heart, and an excellent tour of Third Reich sites.

Sleeping

Munich has no shortage of places to stay – except during Oktoberfest or some busy summer periods, when the wise (meaning those with a room) will have booked.

CAMPING

Campingplatz Thalkirchen (☎ 7243 0808; www.camping-muenchen.de; Zentralländstrasse 49; sites per person/tent €4.40/3.60, heated cabin per person €11; ☎ mid-Mar-end Oct) To get to this camping ground, southwest of the city centre, take the U3 to Thalkirchen and then catch bus 57 (about 20 minutes).

The Tent (☎ 141 4300; www.the-tent.com; In den Kirschen 30; bed in main tent €9, camp sites per person/tent €5.50/5.50; ☎ Jun-Sep) Pads and blankets are provided for the bagless; bring your own lock for the lockers. Take tram 17 to the Botanic Gardens then follow the signs to a legendary international party.

HOSTELS

Euro Youth Hotel (☎ 5990 8811; www.euro-youth-hotel.de; Senefelder Strasse 5; dm €15-18, r €39-60; ☎) The party never stops at the friendly Euro Youth Hotel, where happy non-campers work on international relationships in the bar and lounge. Rooms and facilities in this classic old building are well maintained.

Wombat's (☎ 599 8918; www.wombats-hostels.com; Senefelder Strasse 1; dm/d €19/62; ☎) Despite the name, this 300-bed hostel is refreshingly free of Aussie shtick. Dorms have six to eight beds. There's a fun and relaxed vibe at this well-run place.

4 you München (☎ 552 1660; www.the4you.de; Hirtenstrasse 18; dm €17-25, r €34-54; ☎) The '4 you' is proud of its eco-friendly practices (check out the virgin wool blankets). Dorms have four to 12 beds while the private rooms have their own baths.

Easy Palace Station Hotel (☎ 5587 970; www.easypalace.com; Schützenstrasse 7; dm €20, r €29-69; ☎) This once-seedate midrange hotel has been converted into a budget haven (you can still see traces of its past stodgy life). Dorm rooms have four to six beds. Singles and doubles have both shared and private baths.

HOTELS

Pension Haydn (☎ 5440 4703; www.pension-haydn.de; Haydnstrasse 9; r €38-95) Not far from the Goetheplatz U-Bahn station on a nice, quiet residential street, the Haydn's 13 rooms are tended with love and care. More money buys private bathrooms.

Hotel am Viktualienmarkt (☎ 225 014; www.hotel-am-viktualienmarkt.de; Utzschneiderstrasse 14; r €40-150; ☎) Near the Viktualienmarkt (duh!), the 27 renovated rooms have a nice, light feel. It's good value in a great location.

Creatif Hotel Elephant (☎ 555 785; www.munich-hotel.net; Lämmerstrasse 6; r €50-150; ☎) The Creatif is a delightful and friendly place bursting with flowers. Its 44 rooms are stylish and comfortable in an Ikea sort of way and there's free wi-fi.

Hotel Alcron Garni (☎ 228 3511; www.hotel-alcron.de; Ledererstrasse 13; r €60-100; ☎) Nicely located near the Marienplatz, the 14 rooms here are furnished with vintage furniture. It's a good place to crash in the very middle of town.

Pension am Gärtnerplatztheater (☎ 202 5170; www.pension-gaertnerplatztheater.de; Klenzestrasse 45; r €65-180; ☎) An antique-filled classic just down the street from hip and happening Gärtnerplatz. The 10 rooms have a timeless air, although that scent is wood polish.

Hotel Blauer Bock (☎ 231 780; www.hotelblauerbock.de; Sebastiansplatz 9; r €60-102, with shared bathroom €41-79; ☎) This hotel traces its hostelry roots back more than a century. The 75 rooms now are modern and comfortable and the location on quieter side street is excellent.

SPLURGE

Hotel Olympic (☎ 231 890; www.hotel-olympic.de; Hans-Sachs-Strasse 4; r €90-180; ☎) Classy yet with unfussy décor that highlights the many fine antiques and artworks – all this lets you know you're off your budget. There are 38 very nice rooms here which are spacious and have wi-fi. You can't beat the relatively quiet location that's still near some of the hottest action.

Eating

Clusters of great restaurants and cafés can be found anywhere there's pedestrian life. The streets in and around Gärtnerplatz and Glockenback-Viertel are the flavour-of-the-moment and Schwabing always delights. Almost every place listed under Drinking is also good for eating.

The **Viktualienmarkt** (Rosenthal; ☎ closed Sat afternoon & Sun), just south of Marienplatz, is a large open-air market where you can put together a picnic feast to take to the Englischer Garten. Or relax under the trees here at tables provided by one of the many beer and sausage vendors.

Riva Bar Pizzeria (☎ 220 240; Tal 44; mains €7-12) Straight from fashionable Milan, this authentic pizza place packs 'em in for wood-fired treats. Wait for a table inside or toss a *ciao* or two to the cheery chefs at the long bar up front.

Fraunhofer (☎ 266 460; Fraunhoferstrasse 9; mains €7-14; ☎) The always-crowded Fraunhofer serves up good Bavarian cuisine from a changing menu. The setting is old and the patrons young at this hip place.

Wirthaus zur Brez'n (☎ 390 092; Leopoldstrasse 72; mains €7-15) Tradition abounds at this Bavarian beer hall and restaurant. Of the many levels, go for the *Keller* (basement) for real authenticity. There's seasonal brews on tap and choice menu items such as duck. Look for the bad jokes on the walls.

Weisses Brauhaus (☎ 290 1380; Tal 7; mains €9-20) The place for classic Bavarian fare in an ancient beer hall setting. Everything from *weisewurst* (beloved local white sausage) to hearty traditional fare like boiled ox cheeks is on offer.

CAFÉS

News Bar (☎ 281 787; Amalienstrasse 55; sandwiches €5; ☎) Besides food and drinks, newspapers and magazines are available at this popular

Schwabing hangout. Enjoy the *Herald-Tribune* with a latte.

Nil (☎ 265 545; Hans-Sachs-Strasse 2; meals €7-12; ☎ 8am-4am) Right in trendy Glockenback-Viertel, this hip place draws a straight and gay crowd in the know. Tables outside are packed when the sun shines; inside its packed all night long.

Interview (☎ 202 1646; Gärtnerplatz 1; mains €7-15) Patrons at this thriving and trendy café are more interested in eyeing each other than their food. Too bad, as the breakfasts served to 5pm are worth more than a glance, as are the pastas, salads and more.

Drinking

Outside of the beer halls and gardens, Munich has no shortage of lively pubs. Schwabing and Glockenback-Viertel are good places to follow your ears. Many serve food.

BARS

Alter Simpl (☎ 272 3083; Türkenstrasse 57) On a quieter Schwabing street than most, this historic pub exudes atmosphere. Thomas Mann hung out here 100 years ago and probably still would today.

Arc Pub (☎ 0178-325 6423; Schraudolphstrasse 24) A popular and lively sports bar with ex-pats and travellers who want to catch live broadcasts of the action from home – wherever that may be.

Klenze 17 (☎ 228 5795; Klenzestrasse 17) The extensive whisky selection is almost as large as Klenze 17's two small rooms, usually popu-

lated with young folks, many scarfing down nachos at midnight.

CLUBS

Kultafabrik (www.kultafabrik.de; Grafingerstrasse 6; ☎ 8pm-6am or later) From potatoes to clubbing – this former spud factory has been reborn as a vast playground of clubs. There's more than 25 that you can sample before you end up mashed or fried. The themes range from live rock to techno (of course) to post-Soviet squalor. It's close to the Ostbahnhof station.

Jazzclub Unterfahrt (☎ 448 2794; Einsteinstrasse 42-44) Near the Max-Weber-Platz U-Bahn station, it has live music every night from 7.30pm, and open jam sessions on Sunday night. Things often go until 3am.

GAY & LESBIAN VENUES

Much of Munich's gay and lesbian nightlife is around Gärtnerplatz and the Glockenback-Viertel. *Our Munich* and *Sergej* are monthly guides easily found in this neighbourhood. Another good resource is Max&Milian (p466).

Morizz (☎ 201 6776; Klenzestrasse 43) is a popular haunt for gay men that takes its cue from a classic Paris nightspot. It has a long wine and cocktail list and goes till dawn.

Entertainment

Munich is one of the cultural capitals of Germany; the publications and websites listed in the Information section (p466) can guide you to the best events. For tickets, try **München Ticket** (☎ 5481 8154; www.muenchenticket.de).

Residenztheater (☎ 2185 1920; Max-Joseph-Platz 2) Home of the Bavarian State Opera (www.staatsoper.de) and the site of many cultural events, particularly during the opera festival in July.

Getting There & Away

AIR
Munich's **airport** (MUC; www.munich-airport.de) is second in importance only to Frankfurt-am-Main for international and national connections. easyJet and DBA are major budget carriers here.

BUS

Munich is linked to the Romantic Rd by the popular **Deutsche-Touring** (☎ 8898 9513; www.deutsche-touring.com; Hirtenstrasse 14) Munich-Frankfurt service (see p474 for details). Buses

BEER HALLS & BEER GARDENS

Beer drinking is not just an integral part of Munich's entertainment scene – it's a reason to visit. Germans drink an average of 130L of the amber liquid each per year, while Munich residents manage to drink much more. Locals will be happy to help ensure that you don't bring down the average.

Beer halls can be vast boozy affairs seating thousands, or much more modest neighbourhood hangouts. The same goes for beer gardens. Both come in all shapes and sizes. What's common is a certain camaraderie among strangers, huge litre glasses of beer (try putting one of those in your carry on) and lots of cheap food.

On a warm day there's nothing better than sitting and sipping among the greenery at one of the Englischer Garten's classic beer gardens. **Chinesischer Turm** (☎ 383 8730) is justifiably popular while the nearby **Hirschau** (☎ 369 942) on the banks of Kleinhesseloher See is less crowded.

Augustiner Keller (☎ 594 393; Arnulfstrasse 52) Only five minutes from the Hauptbahnhof, the Keller has a large and leafy beer garden and a fine cavernous hall when the weather keeps you indoors.

Zum Dürnbrau (☎ 222 195; Tal 21) Tucked into a corner off Tal, this is a great and authentic little alternative to the Hofbräuhaus. There's a small beer garden and drinkers of dark drafts enjoy pewter-topped mugs.

Hofbräuhaus (☎ 2901 3610; Am Platzl 9) The ultimate cliché of Munich beer halls. Tourists arrive by the busload but no one seems to mind that this could be Disneyland (although the theme park wasn't once home to Hitler's early speeches).

stop along the northern side of the train station on Arnulfstrasse.

RISE SERVICES

For arranged rides, the **ADM-Mitfahrzentrale** (☎ 194 40; www.mitfahrz.org; Lämmstrasse 6; ☎ 8am-8pm) is near the Hauptbahnhof. The cost is split with the driver and you can reach most parts of Germany for well under €40.

TRAIN

Train services to/from Munich are excellent. There are rapid connections at least every two hours to all major cities in Germany, as well as daily EC trains to other European cities such as Paris (€105, nine hours), Vienna (€68, four hours) and Zurich (€59, 4½ hours).

High-speed ICE services from Munich include Frankfurt (€75, 3¾ hours, hourly), Hamburg (€115, six hours, hourly) and Berlin (€96, six hours, every two hours).

Getting Around

BICYCLE
Pedal power is popular in relatively flat Munich. **Radius Bike Rental** (☎ 596 113; www.radiusmunich.com; Hauptbahnhof near track 32; ☎ 10am-6pm May-Sep) rents out two-wheelers from €17 per day.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Munich's excellent **public transport network** (MVV; www.mvv-muenchen.de) is zone-based, and

most places of interest to tourists (except Dachau and the airport) are within the 'blue' inner zone (Innenraum; €2.20). MVV tickets are valid for the S-Bahn, U-Bahn, trams and buses, but must be validated before use. The U-Bahn stops operating around 12.30am Monday to Friday and 1.30am Saturday and Sunday, but there are some later buses and S-Bahns. Rail passes are valid only on the S-Bahn.

ROMANTIC ROAD

The popular and schmaltzily named Romantic Rd (Romantische Strasse) links a series of picturesque Bavarian towns and cities. It's not actually one road per se, but rather a 353km route chosen to highlight as many quaint towns and cities as possible in western Bavaria. From north to south the Romantic Rd includes the following major stops:

Würzburg Starting point and featuring 18th-century artistic splendour among the vineyards (see p474).

Rothenburg ob der Tauber The medieval walled hub of cutesy Bavarian touring (see p475).

Dinkelsbühl Another medieval walled town (☎ tourist information 09851-902 40; www.dinkelsbuehl.de) replete with moat and watchtowers, a smaller Rothenburg.

Augsburg A medieval and Renaissance city with many good places for a beer. On the Stuttgart-Munich train line.

Füssen The southern end of the route and the cute and overrun home of mad King Ludwig's castles (see p477)

OKTOBERFEST

Hordes come to Munich for **Oktoberfest** (www.oktoberfest.de), running the 15 days before the first Sunday in October. Although its origins are in the marriage celebrations of Crown Prince Ludwig in 1810, there's nothing regal about this beery bacchanalia now: expect mobs, expect to meet new and drunken friends, expect decorum to vanish as night sets in, and you'll have a blast.

Reserve accommodation well ahead and go early so you can grab a seat in one of the hangar-sized beer 'tents'. The action takes place at the Theresienwiese grounds, about a 10-minute walk southwest of the Hauptbahnhof. While there is no entrance fee, those €7 steins of beer add up fast.

In addition to these principal stops, more than a dozen more little towns clamour for attention – and your money.

Getting There & Around

The principal cities and towns we've listed are all easily reached by train; see individual listings for details. But to really explore the route you are best off with your own transportation. With a car, you can blow through places of little interest and linger at those which attract.

One popular way to tour the Romantic Rd is by the Deutsche-Touring's **Romantic Road bus** (www.deutsche-touring.com). Starting from Frankfurt in the north and Munich in the south, a bus runs in each direction each day covering the entire route between Würzburg and Füssen. However, seeing the entire route in one day this way is painful. Stops are brief so you'll want to choose places where you can break the trip for a day (stopovers are allowed). But of course this leads you to decide between a 30-minute visit and a 24-hour one.

The buses depart April to October from Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof at 8am and from Munich Hauptbahnhof at 8.15am and take about 13 hours. The total fare (tickets are bought on board) is a pricey €139. Railpass holders get a 60% discount and flexipass holders do not need to use a travel day for the discount. You can also just ride for individual segments (eg Rothenberg to Augsburg costs €27).

WÜRZBURG

☎ 0931 / pop 133,000

Nestled among river valleys lined with vineyards, Würzburg beguiles even before you reach the city centre. Three of the four largest wine-growing estates in all of Germany are here and most of the delicate whites produced locally never leave the region. The locals will always reach for a wine glass first – so should you.

The **tourist office** (☎ 372 335; www.wuerzburg.de; Oberer Markt; ☹ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat & Sun May–Oct; shorter hr & closed Sun other times), in the rococo masterpiece Haus zum Falken.

The magnificent, sprawling **Residenz** (☎ 355 170; www.schloesser.bayern.de; Residenzplatz 2; adult/child €5/4; ☹ 9am–6pm Apr–Oct, 10am–4pm Nov–Mar), a baroque tour de force by Neumann, took a generation to build and boasts the world's largest ceiling fresco painting. The interior of the

Dom St Kilian (☎ 386 261; Kiliansplatz; admission €5; ☹ 10am–7pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct, to 5pm Nov–Mar) and the adjacent **Neumünster**, an 11th-century church in the old town housing the bones of St Kilian (the patron Saint of Würzburg), continue the baroque themes of the Residenz.

Neumann's fortified **Alter Kranen** (old crane), which serviced a dock on the riverbank south of Friedensbrücke, is now the **Haus des Frankenweins** (☎ 390 1111; Kranenkai 1), where you can taste Franconian wines (around €3 per glass).

The medieval fortress **Marienberg**, across the river on the hill, is reached by crossing the 15th-century stone **Alte Mainbrücke** (bridge) from the city and walking up Tellstiege, a small alley. It encloses the **Fürstentum Museum** (☎ 438 38; admission €4; ☹ 9am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct, 10am–4pm Tue–Sun Nov–Mar) featuring some killer décor. For a simple thrill, wander the walks enjoying the panoramic views.

Sleeping & Eating

Würzburg's many *weinstuben* are excellent places to sample the local vintages. Look for crests of gilded grapes over entrances. Sanderstrasse has a good strip of lively bars.

Kanu-Club (☎ 725 36; Mergentheimer Strasse 13b; camp site per person/tent €5/5; ☹ Apr–Sep) A camping ground on the west bank of the Main; take tram 3 or 5 to Jugendbühlweg.

Hostel Babelfish (☎ 304 0430; www.babelfish-hostel.de; Pymstrasse 3; dm/d from €16/45; ☹) Close to the centre, this new hostel is ultra-clean and well run. Dorms have four to 10 beds each. From the train station walk east 200m.

Pension Spenhkuch (☎ 547 52; www.pension-spenhkuch.de; Röntgenring 7; s/d from €29/60) Located by the train station, the seven simple rooms are kept spotless by a charming family.

Hotel Till Eulenspiegel (☎ 355 840; www.hotel-till-eulenspiegel.de; Sanderstrasse 1A; s/d from €63/85; ☹) Oxygen-lovers celebrate: this is a non-smoking hotel. There's also a small but good *weinstube* and a pub serving unusual Bavarian microbrews.

Karma X (☎ 329 4149; Kardinal-Fraulhaber-Platz 4; meals €4–8; ☹ 7am–7.30pm Mon–Sat; ☹) This upmarket deli offers breakfasts, soups, salads, sandwiches, desserts and picnics to take away.

Weinstuben Juliusspital (☎ 540 80; Juliuspromenade 19; meals €8–20) This rambling place serves from a long list of wines. You can have a meal or just a drink at one of the many old wooden tables.

Getting There & Away

Würzburg is served by frequent trains from Frankfurt (€21 to €28, one to two hours) and one hour from Nuremberg (€14 to €19, 40 minutes to one hour). It's a major stop for the ICE trains on the Hamburg–Munich line. It is also on the Deutsche-Touring Romantic Rd bus route (€14, 2¼ hours to/from Rothenburg). The stop is in front of the train station.

BAMBERG

☎ 0951 / pop 70,000

Off the major tourist routes, Bamberg is celebrated by those in the know. It boasts an amazing and well-preserved collection of 17th- and 18th-century buildings, palaces and churches and its own local style of beer. No wonder it has been recognised by Unesco as a World Heritage Site. Could it be the best town in Germany?

The **tourist office** (☎ 871 161; www.bamberg.info; Geyserswörthstrasse 3; ☹ 9.30am–6pm Mon–Fri, to 2.30pm Sat year-round & Sun May–Oct) is situated on an island in the Regnitz River.

Bamberg's main appeal is its fine buildings: their sheer number, their jumble of styles and the ambience this creates. Most attractions are spread either side of the Regnitz River, but the colourful **Altes Rathaus** (Obere Brücke; ☹ 9.30am–4.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 10am–4pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar) is actually precariously perched on its own islet.

The princely and ecclesiastical district is centred on Domplatz, where the Romanesque and Gothic **cathedral** (Domplatz; ☹ 8am–6pm Apr–Sep, 8am–5pm Oct–Mar) is the biggest attraction. Across the square, the imposing 17th-century **Neue Residenz** (☎ 519 390; Domplatz 8; adult/child €3/2; ☹ 9am–6pm Apr–Sep, 10am–4pm Oct–Mar) is filled with treasures and opulent décor.

Above Domplatz is the former Benedictine monastery of St Michael, at the top of Michaelsberg. The **Kirche St Michael** (Franziskanergasse 2; ☹ 9am–6pm) is a must-see for its baroque art.

Sleeping & Eating

Bamberg's unique style of beer is called *Rauchbier*, which literally means smoked beer. Sort of bacony at first, it is a smooth brew that goes down easily. Happily, many of the local breweries also rent rooms.

Campingplatz Insel (☎ 563 20; www.campinginsel.de; Am Campingplatz 1; site per person/tent €3.50/6) A

well-equipped place in a tranquil spot right on the river. Take bus 18 to Campingplatz.

Jugendherberge Wolfsschlucht (☎ 560 02; www.djh.de; Oberer Leinritt 70; dm €15; ☹ closed mid-Dec–mid-Jan) On the river's west bank, take bus 18 to Rodelbahn, walk northeast to the riverbank, then turn left to this cute 92-bed hostel.

Petrolthor Fässla (☎ 265 16; www.faessla.de; Obere Königstrasse 19–21; s/d €37/55) It's a dream come true – a bed in a brewery. The 21 rooms are large, clean and comfy. Look for the keg over the door.

Brauerei Spezial (☎ 243 04; www.brauerei-spezial.de; Obere Königstrasse 10; r €20–55, meals €8–15) Across from Fässla, this half-timbered brewery has cosy drinking and dining areas featuring old tiled stoves. The seven rooms are quite simple but comfortable.

Schlenkerla (☎ 560 60; Dominikanerstrasse 6; meals €7–15) This rambling, ancient, half-timbered place is *the spot* to sample Rauchbier. The traditional menu boasts many a porky platter and there's always a lot of season specials.

Getting There & Away

There are hourly trains to/from both Würzburg (€15.50, one hour) and Nuremberg (€10, one hour). Bamberg is also served by ICE trains running between Munich (€48, 2½ hours) and Berlin (€69, four hours) every two hours.

ROTHENBURG OB DER TAUBER

☎ 09861 / pop 12,000

In the Middle Ages, the town fathers of Rothenburg built strong walls to protect the town from siege. Today those same walls are the reason the town is under siege from tourists. Possibly the most stereotypical of all German walled towns, Rothenburg can't help being so cute.

The **tourist office** (☎ 404 92; www.rothenburg.de; Marktplatz 2; ☹ 9am–noon, 1–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat) can help you find a room, which might be a good idea because after dark the streets are quiet and the underlying charm comes out.

The **Rathaus on Markt** was commenced in Gothic style in the 14th century, but completed in Renaissance style. The **tower** (admission €1) gives a majestic view over the town and the Tauber Valley. The **Meistertrunk** scene is re-enacted by the clock figures on the tourist office building (eight times daily in summer).

The totally uncommercial **Jakobskirche** (☎ 700 60; Klingengasse 1; adult/child €2/1; ☹ 9am–4pm)

is sober and Gothic. Marvel at the carved *Heilige Blut alter* (Holy Blood altar). Elsewhere, you won't be able to avoid the legion of Christmas shops and other places aimed right at your dowager aunt.

Das Lädle (☎ 61 30; www.das-laedle.de; Spitalgasse 18; r €22-48) is a good budget sleeping option, with light, modern rooms in a central location.

Vine covered, cosy **Altfränkische Weinstube** (☎ 64 04; Klosterhof 7; r €48-70; mains €7-15) has a great atmosphere inspired by the wine barrels out front. The simple rooms are comfortable.

There are hourly trains to/from Steinach, a transfer point for service to/from Würzburg (total journey €10, 70 minutes). Rothenburg is a crossroads for tourist buses. The Deutsche-Touring Romantic Rd bus (see p474) pauses here for 30 minutes. A companion bus serving the Castle Rd route provides daily direct links May to September to Heidelberg (€46, three hours) and Nürnberg (€14, two hours).

NUREMBERG

☎ 0911 / pop 494,000

Levelled during the war, Nuremberg has spent the last few decades rebuilding itself. The narrow backstreets reward wanderers, who can take sustenance at places grilling up the town's seductive namesake sausage. In winter the world-famous Christmas market draws hordes from home and abroad.

Nuremberg played a major role during the Nazi years, as documented in Leni Riefenstahl's film *Triumph of Will* and during the war crimes trials afterwards. It has done an admirable job of confronting this ugly past with museums and exhibits.

The main artery, the mostly pedestrian Königstrasse, takes you through the old town and its major squares.

Information

Both tourist offices sell the two-day Nürnberg Card (€18), which provides free public transport and entry to all museums and attractions, including those in nearby Fürth.

Netzkultur (3rd fl, Maximum Bldg, Färberstrasse 11; per hr €3.50; ☎ 9am-1am) Internet access, CD burning etc.

Schnell und Sauber Laundry (☎ 180 9400; Sulzbacher Strasse 86; per load €4; ☎ 6am-midnight) Take tram 8 to Deichslerstrasse.

Tourist offices (www.tourismus.nuernberg.de) Main office (☎ 233 6132; Königstrasse 93; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat); Branch office (☎ 233 6135; Hauptmarkt 18; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun May-Sep)

Sights

The stunning **Germanisches Nationalmuseum** (☎ 133 10; www.gnm.de; Kartäusergasse 1; adult/child €5/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, 10am-9pm Wed) is the most important general museum of German culture. It displays works by German painters and sculptors, an archaeological collection, arms and armour, musical and scientific instruments, and toys.

The scenic **Altstadt** is easily covered on foot. On Lorenzer Platz there's **St Lorenzkirche**, noted for the 15th-century tabernacle that climbs like a vine up a pillar to the vaulted ceiling.

To the north is the bustling **Hauptmarkt**, where the most famous Christkindlesmarkt in Germany is held from the Friday before Advent to Christmas Eve. The church here is the ornate **Pfarrkirche Unsere Liebe Frau**; the clock's figures go strolling at noon. Near the Rathaus is **St Sebalduskirche**, Nuremberg's oldest church (dating from the 13th century).

Climb up Burgstrasse to the enormous 15th-century **Kaiserburg complex** (☎ 225 726; Burg 13; adult/child €5/4; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct-Mar) for good views of the city. The walls spread west to the tunnel-gate of **Tiergärtnertor**, where you can stroll behind the castle to the gardens. Nearby is the renovated **Albrecht-Dürer-Haus** (☎ 231 2568; Albrecht-Dürer-Strasse 39; adult/child €5/2.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, to 8pm Thu), where Dürer, Germany's renowned Renaissance draughtsman and artist, lived from 1509 to 1528.

The Nazis chose Nuremberg as their propaganda centre and for mass rallies, which were held at **Luitpoldhain**, a (never-completed) sports complex of megalomaniacal proportions. After the war, the Allies deliberately chose Nuremberg as the site for the trials of Nazi war criminals. Not to be missed is the **Dokumentationzentrum** (☎ 231 5666; www.museen.nuernberg.de; Bayernstrasse 110; adult/child €5/2.50; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) in the north wing of the massive unfinished Congress Hall, which would have held 50,000 people for Hitler's spectacles. The museum's absorbing exhibits trace the rise of Hitler and the Nazis and the important role Nuremberg played in the mythology. Take tram 9 or 6 to Doku-Zentrum.

Sleeping & Eating

Don't leave Nuremberg without trying its famous finger-sized grilled sausages. Order 'em by the dozen with *meerrettich* (horseradish) on the side.

Lette'm Sleep (☎ 992 8128; www.backpackers.de; Frauentormauer 42; dm €16-20, r with shared bathroom €44-52; ☎) Dorms are available as well as quirky private rooms designed with colour and flair not often seen in hostels.

Pension Sonne (☎ 227 166; Königstrasse 45; s/d with shared bathroom €30/60) It's a steep climb up three flights of stairs to the cosy and bright rooms with high ceilings.

Hotel Lucas (☎ 227 845; www.hotel-lucas.de; Kaiserstrasse 22; r €50-90; ☎ ☎) Some of the 11 tidy rooms here have balconies; others have small adjoining rooms for doing work – which for you might mean scrutinising a guidebook. The location is very central.

Bratwursthäusle (☎ 227 695; Rathausplatz 2; meals €6-10) In a small house, the local sausages here are flame-grilled and scrumptious. Get them with *Kartoffelsalat* (potato salad). There are also nice tree-shaded tables.

Kettensteg (☎ 221 081; Maxplatz 35; mains €7-15) Right by the river and with its own suspension bridge to the other side, this beer garden and restaurant is fine on a summer day and cosy in winter. The basic fare is tasty and absorbs lots of beer.

Zwinger (☎ 220 48; Lorenzer Strasse 33; mains €6-12) Up front you can have a meal of local favourites at this popular meeting place. Out the back there's live music or DJs until late.

Getting There & Around

Nuremberg's **airport** (MUE; www.airport-nuernberg.de) is a hub for budget carrier Air Berlin, which has services throughout Germany as well as flights to European capitals including London, Paris and Rome. There are frequent train services to the airport on the S-2 line (€1.80, 20 minutes).

The city is also a hub for train services. ICE trains run to/from Berlin Hauptbahnhof (€77, 4½ hours, every two hours), Frankfurt-am-Main (€39, two hours, hourly) and on the new fast line to Munich (€41, 79 minutes, hourly).

Tickets on the bus, tram and U-Bahn system cost €1.80 each. Day passes are €3.60.

REGENSBURG

☎ 0941 / pop 129,000

On the wide Danube River, Regensburg has relics of all periods as far back as the Romans, yet doesn't have the tourist mobs you'll find in other equally attractive German cities. The centre escaped WWII's carpet bombing and boasts Renaissance towers that could be in

Florence mixed with half-timbered charm. Throngs of students keep things from getting too mouldy.

From the main train station, you walk up Maximilianstrasse for 10 minutes to reach the centre. There's internet access at coin-op terminals (€1 per 15 minutes) on the top level of the train station. The **tourist office** (☎ 507 4410; www.regensburg.de; Altes Rathaus; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) is in the centre.

Dominating the skyline are the twin spires of the Gothic **Dom St Peter** (☎ 597 1002; Domplatz; admission free, tours in German adult/child €2.50/1.50; ☎ tours 10am, 11am & 2pm Mon-Sat, 1pm & 2pm Sun May-Oct; 11am Mon-Fri, 1pm Sun Dec-Apr) built during the 14th and 15th centuries from unusual green limestone.

The **Altes Rathaus** (Rathausplatz 1; guided tours €6; ☎ tours in German through the day, tours in English 3.30pm Mon-Sat May-Sep) was progressively extended from medieval to baroque times.

Bus 6 from the train station goes to the entrance of **Azur-Camping** (☎ 270 025; fax 299 432; Weinweg 40; camp site per person/site €5/6). The **DJH Hostel** (☎ 574 02; www.djh.de; Wöhrdstrasse 60; dm €17; ☎) is in a beautiful old building on Unterer Wöhrd island about a 10-minute walk north of the Altstadt. Take bus 3 from Albertstrasse to Eisstadion.

Spitalgarten Hotel (☎ 847 74; www.spitalgarten.de; St Katharinenplatz 1; s/d €23/46) is across the river is the Spitalgarten, with basic rooms in a large imposing building. The **Hotel Am Peterstor** (☎ 545 45; www.hotel-am-peterstor.de; Fröliche-Türkenstrasse 12; s/d €40/55) has 36 clean, basic rooms decorated in an attractive and unfussy way.

Don't miss the **Historische Würstküche** (☎ 466 210; Thundorferstrasse 3; meals €6). The Danube rushes past this little house that's been cooking up the addictive local version of Nuremberg sausages (slightly spicier) for centuries.

Regensburg is on the train line between Nuremberg (€16 to €21, one hour, hourly) and Austria. There are hourly trains to Munich (€21, 1½ hours).

FÜSSEN

☎ 08362 / pop 14,000

Close to the Austrian border and the foothills of the Alps, Füssen is primarily visited for the two castles in nearby Schwangau associated with King Ludwig II. The **tourist office** (☎ 938 50; www.fuessen.de; Kaiser-Maximilian-Platz 1; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) is often overrun. This place is really best seen as a day trip from Munich.

Neuschwanstein & Hohenschwangau Castles

The castles provide a fascinating glimpse into the romantic king's state of mind (or lack thereof) and well-developed ego. **Hohenschwangau** is where Ludwig lived as a child, but more interesting is the adjacent **Neuschwanstein**, his own creation (albeit with the help of a theatrical designer). Although it was unfinished when he died in 1886, there is plenty of evidence of Ludwig's twin obsessions: swans and Wagnerian operas. The sugary pastiche of architectural styles, alternatively overwhelmingly beautiful and just a little-too-much, reputedly inspired Disney's Fantasyland castle.

Tickets must be bought from the **Ticket Centre** (☎ 930 830; www.ticket-center-hohenschwangau.de; Alpeestrasse 12; per castle adult/child €9/free, both €17/free; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-Apr–mid-Oct, 10am-4pm mid-Oct–mid-Apr). In summer it's worth the €1.60 surcharge to reserve ahead. Hohenschwangau is a 10 minute walk away, Neuschwanstein a 30-minute steep hike. Horse-drawn carriages (€5) and buses (€2) shorten but don't eliminate the hike.

Take the bus from Füssen train station (€1.55, eight minutes, hourly return) or share a **taxi** (☎ 77 00; €8.50 for up to four people). Go early to avoid the worst of the rush.

Getting There & Away

Trains to Munich (€20, two hours) run every two hours. This is also the start of the Romantic Rd. The Deutsche Touring bus (p474) starts in Munich before coming here.

BAVARIAN ALPS

While not quite as high as their sister summits further south in Austria and Switzerland, the Bavarian Alps (Bayerische Alpen) are really a bunch of drama queens due to their abrupt rise from the rolling Bavarian foothills. Stretching westward from Germany's southeastern corner to the Allgäu region near Lake Constance, the Alps take in most of the mountainous country fringing the southern border with Austria.

BERCHTESGADEN

☎ 08652 / pop 8300

Berchtesgaden is easily the most dramatically scenic corner of the Bavarian Alps, which hang down into Austria like an appendix here. The views over the steep valleys and craggy

peaks go on forever. To reach the centre from the train station, cross the footbridge and walk up Bahnhofstrasse. The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 96 70; www.berchtesgaden.de; Königseer Strasse 2; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat, 9am-3pm Sun mid-Jun–Sep) is just across the river from the train station.

A tour of the **Salzbergwerk** (☎ 600 220; Bergwerkstrasse 83; adult/child €12.90/7.50; ☎ 9am-5pm May–mid-Oct, 12.30-3.30pm mid-Oct–Apr) combines history with a carnival. Visitors descend into the salt mine for a 1½-hour tour.

Nearby **Obersalzberg** is an innocent-looking place with a ugly legacy as the second seat of government for the Third Reich. Hitler, Himmler, Goebbels and the rest of the Nazi bigwigs all maintained homes here. The **Dokumentation Obersalzberg Museum** (☎ 947 960; www.obersalzberg.de; Salzbergstrasse 41; adult/child €2.50/free; ☎ 9am-5pm April-Oct, 10am-3pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) documents their time in the area, as well as the horrors their policies produced. The admission fee also gets you into the creepy **Hitler's bunker**. Catch bus 9538 (€5 return, nine minutes, hourly) from the Nazi-constructed Berchtesgaden train station to 'Dokumentation'.

Kehlstein (☎ 29 69; admission €13.50; ☎ May-Oct) is a spectacular meeting house built for, but seldom used by, Hitler. Despite its reputation as the 'Eagle's Nest', it's a popular destination because of the stunning views. Entry includes transport on special buses (running from 8.55am to 4.50pm) that link the summit with Obersalzberg-Hintersee, as well as the 120m lift through solid rock to the peak. Or you can make the steep ascent or descent on foot in two to three hours.

The best way to see Obersalzberg and Kehlstein is with **Eagle's Nest Tours** (☎ 649 71; www.eagles-nest-tours.com; €40), which has English-language tours lasting four hours and covering the entire history of the area during WWII.

You can forget the horrors of war at the **Königssee**, a beautiful alpine lake situated 5km south of Berchtesgaden (linked by buses in summer). There are frequent boat tours across the lake to the chapel at St Bartholomä (€12) or all the way to Obersee (€16).

The nicest camping grounds are at Königssee. **Grafenlehen** (☎ 41 40; www.camping-grafenlehen.de; camp site per person/site €5.20/6) has a playground and mountain views.

Take bus 9539 to Jugendherberge for the busy **DJH Hostel** (☎ 943 70; www.djh.de; Gebirgsjägerstrasse 52; dm €14; ☎ closed Nov & Dec). **Hotel Floriani**

(☎ 660 11; www.hotel-floriani.de; Königseer Strasse 37; s/d from 35/58) has cheerful, homy rooms with spectacular vistas.

There are hourly services to Berchtesgaden from Munich (€30, 2¼ hours), which usually requires a change in Freilassing. There are direct services to nearby Salzburg in Austria (€7.60, one hour, hourly).

BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG

Most people don't realise it (even as they're enjoying it), but Baden-Württemberg is one of Germany's best tourist regions. For starters, there's the Black Forest – a place on almost every itinerary. Ditto for Heidelberg and its half-timbered charms. Slightly less known but possibly even more worth exploring are the fun student town of Freiburg and misty waters of Lake Constance.

STUTTGART

☎ 0711 / pop 590,000

Hemmed in by vine-covered hills and full of greenery, Stuttgart is a haven for its residents, who enjoy a high quality of life. For tourists, it's another matter: come for the car museums and leave (especially to Tübingen). It's not a major stop for budget travellers.

Information

Call & Internet C@fé (Esslingerstrasse; per hr €2; ☎ 9.30am-11pm)

Tourist office (☎ 22 280; www.stuttgart-tourist.de; Königstrasse 1a; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun) Opposite the main train station on the main pedestrian strip, the office sells the three-day StuttCard (€17.50), which allows free public transport and free entry to some museums.

Waschsalon (☎ 241 275; Hohenheimer Strasse 33; per load €7.50; ☎ 8am-6.30 Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) Self-serve and drop-off.

Sights

An arms race has broken out among the two local car companies, with both building new and costly monuments to themselves.

The motor car was first developed by Gottlieb Daimler and Carl Benz at the end of the 19th century. The impressive new **Mercedes-Benz Museum** (☎ 172 2578; Mercedesstrasse 137; admission €8; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) is in the suburb of Bad-Cannstatt; take S-Bahn 1 to Neckarstadion. For even faster cars, cruise over to the strik-

ing new **Porsche Museum** (☎ 911 5685; Porscheplatz 1; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun); take S-Bahn 6 to Neuwirshaus, north of the city.

In town and stretching southwest from the Neckar River to the city centre is the **Schlossgarten**, complete with ponds, swans, street entertainers and modern sculptures. At the southern end, the gardens encompass the sprawling baroque **Neues Schloss** and the Renaissance **Altes Schloss**.

Next to the Altes Schloss is the city's oldest square, Schillerplatz and the 12th-century **Stiftskirche** (Stiftstrasse 12; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sun, noon-5.30pm Thu). Adjoining the park you'll find the **Staatsgalerie** (☎ 212 4050; Konrad-Adenauer-Strasse 30; adult/child €4.50/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, to 9pm Thu), which houses an excellent collection from the Middle Ages to the present.

Sleeping

Alex 30 Hostel (☎ 838 8950; www.alex30-hostel.de; Alexanderstrasse 30; dm/s/d from €19/20/25; ☎) Tidy and orderly in an interesting neighbourhood. Take U-Bahn lines 5, 6 or 7 to Olgaek.

Jugendherberge Stuttgart (☎ 241 583; www.jugendherberge-stuttgart.de; Haussmannstrasse 27; dm €17-23) It's a steep climb to this modern hostel, which is a signposted 15-minute walk from the train station or take U9 or U14 to Staatsgalerie.

Museumstube (☎ 296 810; www.museumstube.de; Hospitalstrasse 9; s/d from €35/55) The 10 rooms are pretty much no-frills at the Museumstube, but it's only a short walk to local nightlife.

Eating & Drinking

Stuttgart is a great place to sample Swabian specialities such as *Spätzle* (home-made noodles) and *Maultaschen* (a hearty ravioli in broth).

Markthalle (Dorotheenstrasse 4; ☎ 7am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 7am-4pm Sat) An excellent Art Nouveau-style market that's jam-packed with fresh fare (often from the region) and great cafés.

Weinhaus Stetter (☎ 240 163; Rosenstrasse 32; mains €5-8; ☎ dinner Mon-Fri, lunch Sat) The results of all those grapes you see growing in the hills fill the wine list here. Locals jam the place for the *Maultaschen*.

Weinstube Zur Kiste (☎ 244 002; Kanalstrasse 2; mains €8-17) Generations of Stuttgarters have patronised this old classic in the Bohnenviertel (Bean Quarter). Enjoy local chow and wines in the creaky old building or at tables outside.

L'Oasis (☎ 300 04 81; Theodor-Heuss-Strasse 21) One of several trendy bars and clubs on this stretch

Sleeping

Finding any accommodation during Heidelberg's high season can be difficult. Arrive early in the day or book ahead.

Camping Haide (☎ 802 506; www.camping-heidelberg.de; Schlierbacher Landstrasse 151; site per person €5.50, tent €2.50-6) These camping grounds are in a pretty spot on the river. Take bus 35 to Orthopädische Klinik.

Pension Jeske (☎ 237 33; www.pension-jeske-heidelberg.de; Mittelbadgasse 2; per person from €25) The four rooms at this backpacker favourite are squirreled away in a 250-year-old house. The Altstadt's pleasures are just outside.

Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten (☎ 241 64; www.4-jahreszeiten.de; Haspelgasse 2; s/d from €60/100) Goethe himself reputedly once slumbered here, so you know it's old. Things have been spiffed up since although the palette tends towards beige in the 22 rooms.

DJH Hostel (☎ 651 190; www.djh.de; Tiergartenstrasse 5; dm €15-20; ☑) Across the river from the train station, it has 487 beds. From the station or Bismarckplatz, take bus 33 towards Ziegelhausen.

Eating

Brauhaus Vetter (☎ 165 850; Steingasse 9; mains €5-12) A popular brewery that serves up lots of hearty fare to absorb the suds. The copper kettles gleam. Groups of six or more can order the Brewer's feast: a sausage, pretzels, radishes, meat and cheese smorgasbord.

Kulturbrauerei Heidelberg (☎ 502 980; Leyergasse 6; mains €8-15) The classic-looking Kulturbrauerei has an excellent beer garden. It's a big, bright and airy place and is always busy.

Also useful is the **Mensa** (Universitätsplatz; meals €3), which caters for students.

Drinking

This being a university town, you won't have to go far to find a happening backstreet bar. Lots of the action centres on Untere Strasse. Two ancient pubs, **Zum Roten Oschen** (☎ 209 77; Hauptstrasse 213) and **Zum Sepp1** (☎ 230 85; Hauptstrasse 217), are now filled with tourists reliving the uni days they never had.

Regie (☎ 652 226; Theaterstrasse 2; meals €6-10) What better way to deal with the tourist invasion than with a takeaway cocktail from this stylish and large café. Open until 3am weekends.

Club Nachtschicht (☎ 438 550; Bergheimer Strasse 147) A classic club near the train station. There's

a mix of DJs, house, pop, soul and more. Big with locals.

Cave54 (☎ 278 40; www.cave54.de; Krämerpetrolse 2; ☎ Thu-Sun) For live jazz and blues, head to this underground stone cellar that oozes character. There are regular jam sessions.

Getting There & Around

There are ICE/IC trains to/from Frankfurt (€14 to €17, one hour, hourly) and Stuttgart (€21, 40 minutes, hourly) The frequent service to Mannheim (€5, 15 minutes) has connections to cities throughout Germany.

The **Deutsche-Touring** (www.deutsche-touring.com) bus serving the Castle Rd route provides daily direct links to Rothenberg Ob Der Tauber (€46, three hours) from the train station between May and September.

Bismarckplatz is the main local transport hub. One-way tickets for the excellent bus and tram system are €2.

BLACK FOREST

The Black Forest (Schwarzwald) gets its name from the dark canopy of evergreens, though it's also dotted with open slopes and farmland. And while some parts heave with visitors, a 20-minute walk from even the most crowded spot will put you in quiet countryside dotted with enormous traditional farmhouses and patrolled by amiable dairy cows. It's not nature wild and remote, but bucolic and picturesque.

The Black Forest is east of the Rhine between Karlsruhe and Basel. It's shaped like a bean, about 160km long and 50km wide. From north to south there are three good bases for your visit: Schiltach, Triberg and Titisee. Each has good train links.

If you have a car, you'll find your visit especially rewarding as you can wander the rolling hills and deep valleys at will. One of the main tourist roads is the Schwarzwald-Hochstrasse (B500), which runs from Baden-Baden to Freudenstadt and from Triberg to Waldshut. And, yes, there are many, many places to buy cuckoo clocks (at least €150 for a good one).

ACTIVITIES

With more than 7000km of marked trails, hiking possibilities during summer are, almost literally, endless. A simple inquiry at any tourist office will yield lots of local options for exploration.

Cross country skiing is big on all these trails through the winter. For downhill fun, there are runs galore around Feldberg.

Schiltach

☎ 07836

The prettiest town in the Black Forest is easily Schiltach, where there is the always underlying roar of the Kinzig and Schiltach Rivers, which meet here. Half-timbered buildings lean at varying angles along the crisscrossing hillside lanes.

The **tourist office** (☎ 58 50; www.schiltach.de; Hauptstrasse 5; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) can help with accommodation and has a lot of English-language information.

Be sure not to miss the **Schüttesäge-museum** (Hauptstrasse 1; admission free; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct), which is part of an old mill built on the river. It shows what water power could do. The **Markt**, the town square, has several tiny museums that cover local history and culture.

There are numerous hotels and restaurants in the compact centre. **Zur alten Brücke** (☎ 20 36; www.altebruecke.de; Schramberger Strasse 13; s/d from €35/62) is a cosy choice and has a restaurant serving various *Maltaschen*.

Schiltach is on a small train line linking Offenburg (€8, 45 minutes) via Hausach to Freudenstadt (€5, 30 minutes) with hourly services.

Triberg

☎ 07722

Framed by three mountains (hence the name), Triberg has two duelling cuckoo clocks that claim to be the world's largest – it's a close call on these house-sized oddities.

It also has an appealing old centre and plenty of chances to go for a stroll. There's a one-hour walk to a roaring waterfall (and even better hiking beyond) that starts near the **tourist office** (☎ 866 490; www.triberg.de; Wallfahrtstrasse 4; ☎ 10am-5pm).

The **DJH Hostel** (☎ 41 10; www.djh.de; Rohrbacher Strasse 35; dm from €18) has 128 beds and spectacular views from its peak location. Take any bus from the train station to Markt and then walk 1.2km uphill.

Hotel Pfaff (☎ 44 79; www.hotel-pfaff.com; Hauptstrasse 85; s/d €38/72) The Pfaff offers comfortable lodgings near the waterfall; some rooms have balconies with views. There is also a fine restaurant.

Triberg is midway on the Karlsruhe (€20, 1½ hours) to Konstanz (€20, 1½ hours) train line. There's hourly service and good connections. Change at Hausach for Schiltach and Freudenstadt. The station is 1.7km from the centre; take any bus to Markt.

Around Triberg

In Furtwangen, 17km south of Triberg, visit the **Deutsches Uhrenmuseum** (German Clock Museum; ☎ 07723-92 01 17; Gerwigstrasse 11; adult/child €4/2.50; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar) for a look at the traditional Black Forest skill of clock-making. A fun demonstration shows what puts the 'cuc' and the 'koo' in the namesake clock.

Titisee

☎ 07651

The iconic glacial **lake** here draws no shortage of visitors to the busy village of Titisee. Walking around Titisee or paddle-boating across it are major activities. But if you can, drive into the surrounding rolling meadows to see some of the truly enormous traditional house-barn combos ('Is that the cow or is it your feet?').

The **tourist office** (☎ 980 40; www.titisee.de; Strandbadstrasse 4, Kurhaus; ☎ 8am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri year-round, 10am-noon Sat & Sun May-Oct) can help you arrange a farm stay.

The **DJH Hostel** (☎ 07652-238; www.djh.de; Bruderhalde 27; dm from €18) is in a huge farmhouse and is reached by bus 7300 from Titisee. **Terrassencamping Sandbank** (☎ 82 43; fax 82 86; Seerundweg; camp sites per person €4.90-5.60, per tent €5.50-7.70; ☎ Apr-Oct) is one of four camping grounds on the Titisee.

Hotel Sonneneck (☎ 82 46; fax 881 74; Parkstrasse 2; s/d €39/72) provides spacious comfort near the lake and boasts an excellent restaurant downstairs.

Titisee is linked to Freiburg by frequent train services (€9, 40 minutes). To reach Triberg to the north, there are very scenic hourly connections via Neustadt and Donaueschigen (€14, two hours).

Around Titisee

The Black Forest **ski season** runs from late December to March. While there is some good downhill skiing, the area is more suited to cross-country skiing. The main centre for winter sports is around Titisee, with uncrowded downhill runs at **Feldberg** (www.liftverbund-feldberg.de; day passes €23, rental equipment available) and numerous graded cross-country trails.

In summer you can use the lifts to reach the summit of Feldberg (1493m) for a wondrous panorama that stretches to the Alps. There is superb hiking almost everywhere here.

Feldberg is 15km south of Titisee. It can be reached by bus 7300 from Titisee (€4, 12 minutes, hourly).

FREIBURG

☎ 0761 / pop 213,000

Nestled between hills and vineyards, Freiburg im Breisgau is a delightful place, thanks to the city's large and thriving university community. There's a sense of fun here best exemplified by the tiny medieval canals (*büchle*) running right down the middle of streets. The monumental 13th-century cathedral is the city's key landmark, but the real attractions are the vibrant cafés, bars and street-life, plus the local wines.

Information

Tourist office (☎ 388 1880; www.freiburg.de; Rotteckring 14; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 10am-noon Sun Jun-Sep; 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 2.30pm Sat, 10am-noon Sun Nov-Apr) Amazingly helpful and loads of information on the Black Forest.

Wash & Tours (Salzstrasse 22; per wash €4, internet per 30min €2; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat, closed Sun) There's a drop-off laundry downstairs and an internet café upstairs.

Sights

The major sight in Freiburg is the 700-year-old **Münster** (Cathedral; Münsterplatz; steeple adult/child €1.50/1.00; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun year-round), a classic example of both high- and late-Gothic architecture that looms over Münsterplatz, Freiburg's market square. The bustling **university quarter** is northwest of the Martinstor (one of the old city gates).

The trip by cable car to the 1286m **Schauinsland peak** (one way/return €6.60/10.20, concession €3.60/5.60; ☎ 9am-5pm) is a quick way to reach the Black Forest highlands. Numerous easy and well-marked trails make the Schauinsland area ideal for day walks. From Freiburg take tram 4 south to Günterstal and then bus 21 to Talstation.

Sleeping

Camping Möslepark (☎ 767 9333; www.camping-freiburg.com; Waldseestrasse 77; sites per person/tent €5.80/3) Take tram 1 to Stadthalle (direction: Littenweiler), turn right under the road, go over the train tracks and follow the bike path.

Black Forest Hostel (☎ 881 7870; www.blackforest-hostel.de; Kartäuserstrasse 33; dm/s/d €13/23/28) Take tram 1 to Oberlinden (direction: Littenweiler). There are beds in large and small dorms as well as private rooms. Close to the old town.

Hotel Kreuzblume (☎ 311 9495; www.hotel-kreuzblume.de; Konviktrasse 31; s/d €60/90) On an especially charming street, the eight-room Kreuzblume has grapevine growing right over the street. The rooms are comfortable and traditional, and the restaurant is excellent.

Paradies Paradies (☎ 273 700; www.paradies-freiburg.de; Friedrich-Ebert-Platz; r €35-80; ☎) A real find over the train tracks (take tram 4). The rooms are simple but stylish. There's a vast café with vegetarian specials and a large terrace.

Hotel Rappen (☎ 313 53; www.hotelrappen.de; Münsterplatz 13; s/d €60/80; ☎) Lovely rooms done 'Black Forest' style with close-up views of the Münster. A good central choice.

Eating & Drinking

There's a good selection of *Wurst* and other quick eats from stalls set up in the market square during lunch.

UC Uni-Café (☎ 383 355; Niemenstrasse 7; meals €3-7) A popular hang-out that serves snacks on its see-and-be-seen outdoor terrace.

Markthalle (Grünwälderstrasse 2; meals €3-8; ☎ 7am-7pm) A huge number of stands selling ethnic food cluster around a bar selling local wine. A fun and fine deal.

R&B Resto Bar (☎ 217 2204; Universitätstrasse; meals €6-10) In the heart of the university café district, this chic place serves fresh and creative food. Out the back there's a funky bar with jazzy music. Grab a table outside and order breakfast anytime.

Schlappen (☎ 334 94; Lowenstrasse 2; meals €6-9) A very old but still very happening student nightspot. It's a large, sprawling bar with a lively vibe, a budget menu and late closing.

Hausbrauerei Feierling (☎ 266 78; Gerberau 46; meals €6-12) A microbrewery in one of the most attractive preserved parts of town. In decent weather there's a huge terrace for tossing the back the house product.

Jazzhaus (☎ 34 973; Schneewinstrasse 1) Live jazz alternating with dance clubs. Recommended. Admission starts at €6, depending on who's playing.

Jos Fritz Cafe (☎ 300 19; www.josfritzcafe.de; Wilhelmstrasse 15) Down a little alley past the recycling bins, this café hosts concerts of alternative bands and events such as political discussions.

(Want to get things going? say: 'That W is doing a heckuva job!')

Getting There & Around

Freiburg is on the busy Mannheim-Basel train line. ICE services include Berlin (€115, 6½ hours, every two hours), Cologne (€90, three hours, every two hours) and Frankfurt (€54, two hours, hourly). Freiburg is linked to Titisee by frequent trains (€9, 40 minutes).

Single rides on the efficient local bus and tram system cost €2; a 24-hour pass costs €4.80. Trams depart from the bridge over the train tracks.

LAKE CONSTANCE

☎ 07531 / pop 81,000

Lake Constance (Bodensee) is an oasis in landlocked southern Germany. Even if you never make contact with the water, this giant bulge in the sinewy course of the Rhine can offer a splash of refreshment. There are many historic towns around its periphery, which can be explored by boat or bicycle and on foot. Two good places to start are the namesake Constance, a tidy lake town, and Lindau, a forgotten corner of Bavaria.

Information

Constance Tourist Office (☎ 133 030; www.konstanz.de/tourismus; Bahnhofplatz 13; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Apr-Oct; 9.30am-12.30pm, 2-6pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar) About 150m to the right from the train station exit.

Lindau Tourist Office (☎ 260 030; www.lindau-tourismus.de; Ludwigstrasse 68; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun Jun-Sep, shorter hr in winter) is directly opposite the train station.

Sights & Activities

From Constance, head across to **Mainau Island** (☎ 30 30; www.mainau.de; adult/child €11.90; ☎ 7am-8pm mid-Mar-Nov, 9am-6pm Nov-mid-Mar), with its baroque castle set among vast and gorgeous gardens that include a butterfly house and beaches. Take bus 4 (€2, 25 minutes) or a BSB ferry from the harbour behind the station.

Connected to the nearby lakeshore by bridges, the key sights of this oh-so-charming island town all have murals: **Altes Rathaus** (Reichsplatz), the **city theatre** (Barfüsserplatz) and the harbour's **Seepromenade**, with its Bavarian Lion monument and lighthouse.

Other lakeside towns worth a visit include **Meersburg** and **Friedrichshafen**.

A 270km international **bike route** circumnavigates Lake Constance through Germany, Austria and Switzerland, tracing the often steep shoreline beside vineyards and pebble beaches. You can rent bikes in any town. Popular water sports include sailing and wind-boating.

A fun way to explore is by **Bodensee-Schiffsbetriebe boats** (BSB; www.bsb-online.com), which, from Easter to late October, call several times a day at the larger towns along the lake; there are discounts for rail pass-holders.

Sleeping & Eating

Lakeside beer gardens and cafés can be found in every town.

Campingplatz Bodensee (☎ 330 57; www.dkv-camping.de; Föhrenbühlweg 45, Constance; per person €4, tent €5) A lovely spot to camp. Take bus 1 to the car-ferry terminal, then walk south along the shore for 10 minutes.

Park Camping Lindau am See (☎ 722 36; www.park-camping.de; Fraunhoferstrasse 20, Lindau; per person/tent €6/2.50) By the lake 3km southeast of Lindau. Take bus 1 or 2 to the bus station, then bus 3.

Jugendherberge Konstanz (☎ 322 60; www.jugendherberge-konstanz.de; Zur Allmannshöhe 16, Constance; dm €21-24) This attractive place is reached by bus 1 or 4 from the station to the Jugendherberge stop.

Alte Post (☎ 934 60; www.alte-post-lindau.de; Fischer-gasse 3, Lindau; s/d €44/80) This maroon place has 19 beautifully maintained rooms. The restaurant serves Bavarian/Austrian fare (mains €7 to €18) and has a large terrace. Guests can use bikes for free.

Getting There & Away

Constance has trains to Offenburg via Triberg in the Black Forest (€26, 2¼ hours, hourly). There are good connections into Switzerland including Zurich (€16, one hour, hourly).

Lindau has trains to/from Ulm on the Munich-Stuttgart line (€20, 1¼ hours, hourly) and Munich (€33, 2¼ hours, four times daily).

WESTERN GERMANY

The western section of Germany mixes natural beauty with industry. The popular Rhine River offers boat rides amid castles and wineries – what more do you want? The Moselle River offers more of the same

but with smaller tourist crowds. Very un-German Frankfurt is a major transport hub with some good nightlife that you're bound to encounter. The northwest, with industrial states like North Rhine-Westphalia, is home to a quarter of Germany's population and little beauty. Beautiful exceptions such as the cities of Cologne and Aachen are *big* exceptions.

MOSELLE VALLEY

Exploring the vineyards and wineries of the Moselle (Mosel) Valley is an ideal way to get a taste of German culture and people – and, of course, the wonderful wines. Take the time to slow down and savour a glass or two.

The Moselle is bursting at the seams with historical sites and picturesque towns built along the river below steep rocky cliffs planted with vineyards (they say locals are born with one leg shorter than the other so that they can easily work the vines). It's one of the country's most romantically scenic regions, with stunning views rewarding the intrepid hikers who brave the hilly trails.

Many wine-makers have their own small *pensions*, but accommodation is hard to find in May, on summer weekends or during the local wine harvest (mid-September to mid-October). Note also that much of the region – like the vines themselves – goes into a deep slumber from November until March.

The most scenic part of the Moselle Valley runs 195km northeast from Trier to Koblenz; it's most practical to begin your Moselle Valley trip from either of these two.

Two good information sources for the valley are Koblenz's **tourist office** (☎ 303 880; www.koblenz.de; Bahnhofplatz 17; ☹ 9am–6pm Mon–Sat year-round, 10am–6pm Sun Apr–Oct), across from the train station, and Cochem's **tourist office** (☎ 600 40; www.cochem.de; Endertplatz) next to the Moselbrücke.

Koblenz is much more transit hub than tourist stop. **Coblenz** is a deserving stop. For a great view, head up the **Pinnerkreuz** with the chairlift on Enderstrasse (€5). The stunning **Reichsburg Castle** (☎ 255; ☹ 9am–5pm mid-Mar–mid-Nov) is just a 15-minute walk up the hill from town. There are regular daily tours (adult/child €3.50/2).

A great itinerary for the Moselle (good in either direction) would be as follows: by boat Koblenz to Cochem, by train Cochem to Bullay and then by Moselbahn bus to Trier,

stopping at any of the little villages along the way that grab you.

You'll find lots of sleeping options in all towns big and small. In Cochem, **Moseltal-Jugendherberge** (☎ 86 33; www.djh.de; Klottener Strasse 9; dm €17–24) is beautifully situated on the banks of the river, with 148 beds in spotless four-bed rooms. **Campingplatz Am Freizeitszentrum** (☎ 44 09; Stadionstrasse; per person/tent/car €5/4/6) is downstream from the northern bridge, alongside the river.

Getting There & Around

Trains fan out in all directions from Koblenz: up the Moselle to Trier (€17, 1½ hours, hourly) via Cochem and Bullay; north along the Rhine to Cologne (€18, one hour, two per hour); and south on the Rhine to Mainz (€18, one hour, two per hour).

Between May and early October, **Köln-Düsseldorfer (KD) Line** (☎ 0221 208 8318; www.k-d.com) ferries sail daily between Koblenz and Cochem (€22.40 one way, 4¾ hours). The ferry dock in Koblenz is a 10-minute walk from the train station. Eurail and German Rail passes are valid for all normal KD Line services.

Trains run twice hourly Cochem to Bullay (€4, 10 minutes) where you can pick up the bus.

Moselbahn (☎ 0651 147 750; www.moselbahn.de) runs buses between the train stations in Bullay and Trier (three hours each way), a very scenic route following the river's winding course and passing through numerous quaint villages.

The Moselle is a popular area among cyclists, and for much of the river's course there's a separate 'Moselroute' bike track. Most towns have a rental shop or two; ask at the tourist offices. Many of the Moselbahn buses also carry bikes.

TRIER

☎ 0651 / pop 100,000

Trier is touted as Germany's oldest town and you'll find more Roman ruins here than anywhere else north of the Alps. Its proximity to France can be tasted in its cuisine, while its large student population injects life among the ruins.

From the main train station head west along Bahnhofstrasse and Theodor-Heuss-Allee to the Porta Nigra, where you'll find Trier's **tourist office** (☎ 978 080; www.trier.de; ☹ 9am–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–3pm Sun May–Oct; shorter hr in winter).

Sights

The town's chief landmark is the **Porta Nigra** (adult/child €2.10/1; ☹ 9am–6pm Apr–Sep, to 5pm Mar & Oct, to 4pm Nov–Feb), the imposing city gate located on the northern edge of the town centre, which dates from the 2nd century AD.

The interesting **Rheinisches Landesmuseum** (Weimarer Allee 1; adult/child €2.50/0.50; ☹ 9.30am–5pm Tue–Fri, 10.30am–5pm Sat & Sun, 9.30am–5pm Mon May–Oct) does a good job of putting the town's Roman era into context. Also worth visiting are the **Roman Amphitheater** (Oleiverstrasse), the **Kaiserthermen** (Im Palastgarten) and **Barbarathermen** (Roman baths; Südallee).

Trier's massive (and massively restored) Romanesque **Dom** (www.dominformation.de; Liebfrauenstrasse 12; ☹ 6.30am–6pm Apr–Oct, to 5.30pm Nov–Mar) has a 1600-year history.

The **Karl Marx Haus Museum** (☎ 970 680; Brückenstrasse 10; adult/child €3/1.50; ☹ 10am–6pm Apr–Oct, to 5pm & closed Mon Nov–Mar) is the suitably modest birthplace of the man. It has become a major pilgrimage stop for the growing numbers of mainland Chinese tourists travelling to Europe.

Sleeping & Eating

The narrow and historic Judengasse, near the Markt, has several small bars and clubs. There's also a cluster of stylish places on Viehmarktplatz. The **Markthalle** (☹ 9am–10pm Mon–Sat), set back from Palaststrasse, has places selling fresh produce and wines from the region, as well as numerous small delis and cafés where you can eat in or take away.

Camping Trevisis (☎ 869 21; Luxemburger Strasse 81; per person/tent/car €6/4/4; ☹ Apr–Oct) Central and located beside the Moselle River.

Hille's Hostel (☎ 710 2785; www.hilles-hostel-trier.de; Gartenfeldstrasse 7; dm €15) The rooms, furnished with 25 Ikea bunk beds, are set back from the road and quiet. The courtyard now boasts a palm tree.

DJH Jugendgästehaus am Moselufer (☎ 146 620; www.djh-info.de; An der Jugendherberge 4; dm €17–24; ☹) Located by the Moselle River.

Hotel Weinhaus Haag (☎ 975 750; www.hotel-weinhaus-haag.de; Stockplatz 1; s/d from €47/50) A traveller favourite in the Altstadt, it has a certain 1950s charm and a good selection of wine for sale.

Weinstube Palais Kesselstatt (☎ 411 78; Liebfrauenstrasse 9; mains €6–10) Across from the Dom, there's an excellent outdoor garden and a long list of local wines on offer.

Getting There & Away

Trier has train service to Koblenz (€17, 1½ hours, hourly) via Bullay and Cochem, as well as Luxembourg (€13, 45 minutes, hourly).

RHINE VALLEY – KOBLENZ TO MAINZ

A trip along the Rhine is on the itinerary of most travellers, as it should be. The section between Koblenz and Mainz offers ever-changing vistas of steep vineyard-covered mountains punctuated by scores of castles. It's really rather magic. Spring and autumn are the best times to visit; in summer it's overrun and in winter most towns go into hibernation. Mainz, like most of the other towns, has a good **tourist office** (☎ 286 210; www.mainz.de; Brückenturm am Rathaus; ☹ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10.30am–2.30pm Sat).

Every town along the route offers cute little places to stay or camp, and atmospheric places to drink and eat.

Sights & Activities

There are dozens of towns along this prime stretch of the Rhine. Details on some of the more notable follow. All have train and boat services.

Assmannshausen (right bank) is a small, relatively untouristed village with nice hotels, sweeping views and good hikes. **Bacharach** is a medieval walled village with a great **DJH Hostel** (☎ 12 66; www.djh.de; dm €17) in a castle. **Boppard** (left bank) features Roman walls and ruins, while **Oberwesel** (left bank) has numerous towers and walkable walls of a ruined castle. The towns of **St Goar** and **St Goarshausen** are on opposite sides of the Rhine. St Goar is on the left bank and has one of the most impressive castles on the river: **Burg Rheinfels** (☎ 383; adult/child €4/2; ☹ 9am–6pm Apr–Oct, 11am–5pm Sat & Sun in good weather Nov–Mar). Across the river, just south of St Goarshausen, is the Rhine's most famous sight, the Loreley Cliff. Avoid **Rüdesheim**, an overrated and over-visited town of trinkets and hype.

The Koblenz-to-Mainz section of the Rhine is great for **wine-tasting**, with Bacharach, 45km south of Koblenz, being one of the top choices for sipping. For tastings in other towns just follow your instincts.

Though the trails here may be a bit more crowded with day-trippers than those along the Moselle, **hiking** along the Rhine is also excellent. The slopes and trails around Bacharach are justly famous.

Getting There & Around

Koblenz and Mainz are the best starting points. The Rhine Valley is also easily accessible from Frankfurt on a very long day trip, but it could drive you to drink.

Each mode of transport on the Rhine has its own advantages and all are enjoyable. Try combining several of them. The **Köln-Düsseldorfer (KD) Line** (☎ 0221-208 83 18; www.k-d.com) runs many slow and fast boats daily between Koblenz and Mainz (as well as the less-interesting stretch between Cologne and Koblenz). The journey takes about four hours downstream and about 5½ hours upstream (€45, free with rail pass). Boats stop at many riverside towns along the way.

Train services operate on both sides of the Rhine River, but are more convenient on the left bank. You can travel nonstop on IC/EC trains or by slower regional RB or RE services. The ride is amazing – sit on the right heading north and on the left heading south.

From Mainz, trains along the Rhine to Koblenz (€18, one hour) run twice an hour. Heidelberg (€18, one hour, hourly) is an easy trip, as is Frankfurt via the Frankfurt airport (€9, 35 minutes, several per hour).

FRANKFURT-AM-MAIN

☎ 069 / pop 643,000

Called 'Mainhattan', 'Bankfurt' and much more, Frankfurt is on the Main (pronounced 'mine') River, and after London it is Europe's centre of finance. Both sobriquets also refer to the city's soaring skyline of skyscrapers, a profile found nowhere else on the continent.

But while all seems cosmopolitan, Frankfurt is often just a small town at heart. Things get quiet in the evenings and the many museums are devoid of any real stars. Then again, it has cute old pubs you'd only find in a small town. However, when a major trade fair is in town, it feels as bustling as any metropolis.

Frankfurt is also Germany's most important transport hub for air, train and road connections so you'll probably end up here at some point. Note that it is generally referred to as Frankfurt-am-Main, or Frankfurt/Main, since there is another Frankfurt (Frankfurt-an-der-Oder) near the Polish border.

The area between the former prison/police station (Hauptwache), and the Römerberg, in the tiny vestige of Frankfurt's original old city, is the centre of Frankfurt. The Main River flows just south of the Altstadt, with several

bridges leading to one of the city's livelier areas, Sachsenhausen.

Information BOOKSHOPS

The Hauptbahnhof is an excellent place to go book shopping. Shops near tracks 9 and 17 have scores of English language books and periodicals, as well as guidebooks and maps.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet & Call (Kaiserstrasse 81; per hr €2; ☎ 9am-11pm)

LAUNDRY

Miele Wash World (Moselstrasse 17; wash/dry €4/1; ☎ 6am-11pm) Near the train station.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Doctor Referral Service (☎ 192 92; ☎ 24hr)
Uni-Klinik (☎ 630 10; Theodor Stern Kai; ☎ 24hr)

MONEY

Reisebank Train station (☎ 6.30am-10pm); Airport (terminal 1, arrival hall B; ☎ 6am-11pm) The train station branch is near the southern exit at the head of platform W1.

POST

Post office Karstadt department store (Zeil 90; Ground fl; ☎ 9.30am-8pm); Hauptbahnhof (☎ 7am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat); Airport (departure lounge B; ☎ 7am-9pm)

TOURIST INFORMATION

The Frankfurt-am-Main Card (one day/two days €8/12) gives 50% off admission to important attractions and unlimited travel on public transport. The Hauptbahnhof office has an efficient room-finding service (€3).

Main tourist office (☎ 2123 8800; www.frankfurt-tourismus.de; Hauptbahnhof; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun); Römer Branch (Römerberg 27; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) Northwest corner of the Römerberg square.

Sights

About 80% of the old city was wiped off the map by two Allied bombing raids in March 1944, and postwar reconstruction was subject to the demands of the new age. Rebuilding efforts were more thoughtful, however, in the **Römerberg**, the old central area of Frankfurt west of the cathedral, where restored 14th- and 15th-century buildings provide a glimpse

of the beautiful city this once was. The old town hall, or **Römer**, is in the northwestern corner of Römerberg and consists of three 15th-century houses topped with Frankfurt's trademark stepped gables.

East of Römerberg is the **Frankfurter Dom**, the coronation site of Holy Roman emperors from 1562 to 1792. It's dominated by the elegant 15th-century Gothic **tower** (completed in the 1860s) – one of the few structures left standing after the 1944 raids.

Anyone with an interest in German literature should visit **Goethe Haus** (☎ 138 800; Grosse Hirschgraben 23-25; adult/child €5/3; ☎ 10am-4pm Sat & Sun year-round, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri Apr-Sep, to 4pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar), where the writer was born in 1749.

Museum für Moderne Kunst (☎ 2123 0447; Domstrasse 10; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue & Thu-Sun, to 8pm Wed), north of the cathedral, features works of modern art by Joseph Beuys, Claes Oldenburg and many others. Also on the north bank there's the **Jüdisches Museum** (Jewish Museum; ☎ 2123 5000; Untermainkai 14-15; adult/child €4/2; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue & Thu-Sun, to 8pm Wed), a huge place with exhibits on the city's rich Jewish life before WWII.

Numerous museums line the south bank of the Main River along the so-called Museumsufer (Museum Embankment). Pick of the litter is the **Städelsches Kunstinstitut** (☎ 605 0980; Schaumainkai 63; adult/child €8/6; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue & Fri-Sun, to 9pm Wed & Thu), with a world-class collection of paintings by artists from the Renaissance to the 20th century, including Botticelli, Van Eyck, Rubens, Rembrandt, Vermeer and Renoir.

Sleeping

Predictably, most of Frankfurt's budget accommodation is in the vicinity of the grotty Bahnhofsviertel, which surrounds the station. The streets between here and the Messe (convention centre) aren't especially interesting but are convenient for early departures or meetings. During large trade fairs the town is booked out months in advance and rates soar.

Campingplatz Heddernheim (☎ 570 332; An der Sandelmühle 35; camp sites per person/tent/car €6/4/5) In the Heddernheim district northwest of the city centre, it's a 15-minute ride on the U1, U2 or U3 from the Hauptwache U-Bahn station – get off at Heddernheim.

Haus der Jugend (☎ 610 0150; www.djh.de; Deut-schhermufer 12; dm €17-22) Within walking distance

GETTING INTO TOWN

S-Bahn lines S8 and S9 (€3.35, 11 minutes) run every 15 minutes from 4.15am to 1am between Frankfurt Airport and Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof, usually continuing via Hauptwache and Konstablerwache. The airport train station has two sections: platforms 1 to 3 (below terminal 1, hall B) handle S-Bahn connections, whereas IC and ICE connections are in the long-distance train station 300m distant. From the Hauptbahnhof, the Kaiserstrasse is the least sleazy way to walk to the centre.

of the city centre and Sachsenhausen's night-spots, this well-run hostel is a good choice. From the train station take S-Bahn lines S3, S4, S5 or S6 to Lokalbahn, then walk north for 10 minutes. Check-in begins at 1pm; curfew is 2am.

Pension Backer (☎ 747 992; fax 747 900; Mendelssohnstrasse 92; s/d from €25/40) The Backer has 25 basic rooms with shared bathrooms but is located in a nice residential neighbourhood.

Hotel Am Berg (☎ 612 021; www.hotel-am-berg-ffm.de; Grethenweg 23; s/d from €40/50; ☎) In pleasant Sachsenhausen, this 21-room hotel is in a pretty old sandstone building. Rooms come in all shapes and sizes.

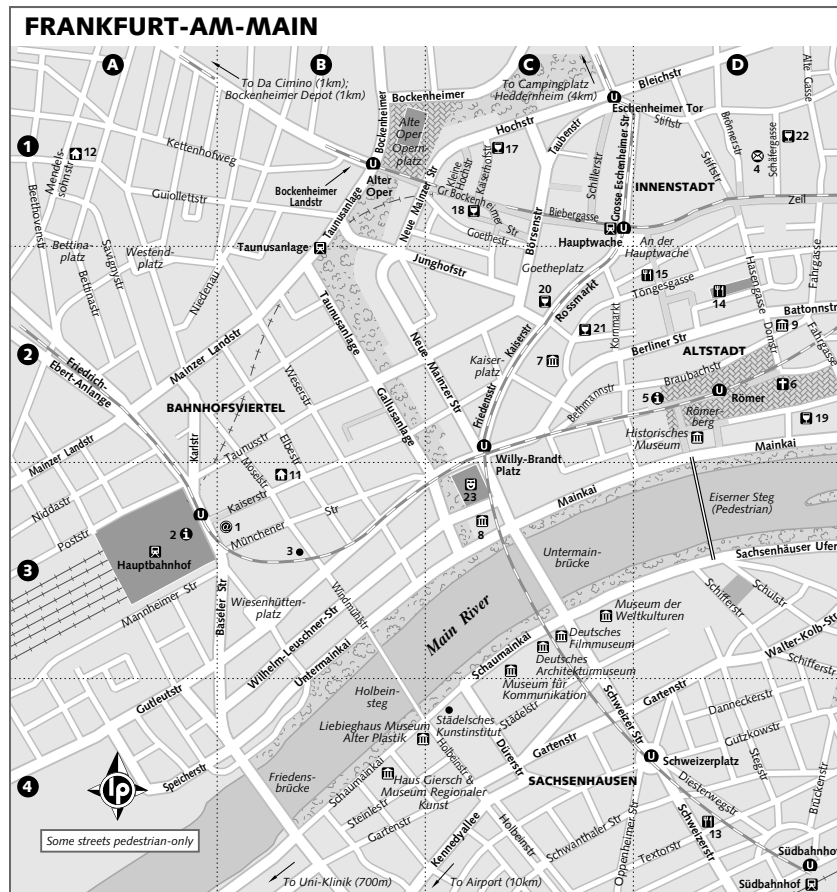
Hotel Kaiserhof (☎ 256 1790; www.kaiserhof-frankfurt.de; Kaiserstrasse 62; s/d from €65/80; ☎) This remodelled hotel three minutes from the Hauptbahnhof has 42 rooms that are easy on the eyes and have wi-fi. Those on the top floor have a small terrace.

Eating

Known to the locals as Fressgasse (Munch-Alley), the Kalbächer Petrolse and Grosse Bockenheimer Strasse area (northwest of the Altstadt between Opernplatz and Börsenstrasse) has some medium-priced restaurants and fast-food places with outdoor tables in summer.

APPLE-WINE TAVERNS

Apple-wine taverns are Frankfurt's great local tradition. They serve *Ebbelwoi* (Frankfurt dialect for Apfelwein), an alcoholic apple cider, along with local specialities such as *Handkäse mit Musik* (literally, 'hand-cheese with music'). This is a round cheese soaked in oil and vinegar and topped with onions;



your bowel supplies the music. Some good taverns that serve *Ebbelwoi* are situated in Sachsenhausen.

Zur Germania (☎ 613 336; Textorstrasse 16; meals €7-15) This Sachsenhausen apple-wine tavern has a good outdoor area and is well known for its huge pork roasts.

Adolf Wagner (☎ 612 565; Schweizerstrasse 71; meals €8-15) This old place has one of the most atmospheric interiors in Sachsenhausen. The garden is good as well.

RESTAURANTS

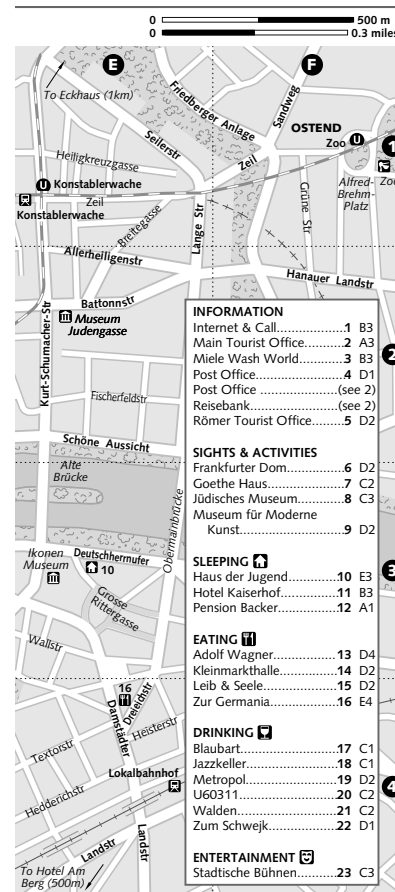
Da Cimino (☎ 71 11 42; Abdelstrasse 28; pizza €5-9) Northwest of the city, people flock here for the tasty pizza, which is possibly the best in town.

Leib & Seele (☎ 281 529; Kornmarkt 11; mains €6-12) Modern yet old-fashioned at the same time, there's large windows, a terrace and tables lit with candles. The menu extends beyond German and features many seasonal specials.

Eckhaus (☎ 49 11 97; Bornheimer Landstrasse 45; meals from €7) North of the city centre, this relaxed restaurant and bar serves well-priced salads and main dishes well into the evening, and has a nice outside area. Take the U-4 to Merianplatz.

SELF-CATERING

Off Hasenpetrolse, **Kleinmarkthalle** (Hasengasse 5-7; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) is a great produce market with loads of fruit, vegetables, meats and hot food.



Drinking & Clubbing

The Apple Wine joints listed under Eating are also good for a drink.

Blaubart (☎ 282 229; Kaiserhofstrasse 18-20) In a large basement, the ceiling here is arched bricks. The long tables are lined with jolly beer-drinkers.

Walden (☎ 9288 2700; Kleiner Hirschgraben 7; meals €6-12) An über-trendy café near the centre of town. Breakfast is served until 5pm and you can go right from eggs to the lengthy cocktail list. At night there's DJs, soul and jazz music.

Metropol (☎ 288 287; Weckmarkt 13-15; mains €7) Near the Dom, this popular place serves up café fare until late. Savour a coffee for hours with a book.

Zum Schwejk (☎ 293 166; Schäfferpetrolse 20) This popular gay bar is one of several on this street. Look for the blue mannequins out front.

Jazzkeller (☎ 288 537; Kleine Bockenheimer Strasse 18a) This club attracts top acts.

U60311 (☎ 297 060 311; Rossmarkt 6) Top local club for techno, draws the best talent from around Europe. It's underground, literally.

Entertainment

Ballet, opera and theatre are strong features of Frankfurt's entertainment scene. For information and bookings, go to **Städtische Bühnen** (☎ 134 04 00; Willy-Brandt-Platz).

The Forsythe Company (☎ 212 375 86; www.the-forsythecompany.de; Bockenheimer Depot; Carlo-Schmid-Platz 1) is easily the world's most talked-about dance company right now; see if they're in town.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Germany's largest airport is **Frankfurt Airport** (FRA; ☎ 69 01; www.airportcity-frankfurt.com), a vast labyrinth with connections throughout the world. It's served by most major international airlines although unfortunately not many budget ones.

Only cynics like Ryanair would say that Frankfurt has another airport. **Frankfurt-Hahn Airport** (code HHN; www.hahn-airport.de) is 70km west of Frankfurt. Buses to/from Frankfurt's Hauptbahnhof are run by **Bohr** (☎ 06543-501 90; www.bohr-omnibusse.de; adult/child €12/6) every hour (two hours).

BUS

The **Deutsche Touring** Romantic Rd bus (see p474) leaves from the south side of the Hauptbahnhof.

TRAIN

The Hauptbahnhof handles more departures and arrivals than any other station in Germany. Among myriad services: Berlin (€98, four hours, hourly), Hamburg (€93, 3½ hours, hourly) and Munich (€75, 3¾ hours, hourly). For Cologne you can take the fast (75 minutes) ICE line or – better – the slower and infinitely more scenic line along the Rhine (€40, 2½ hours, hourly).

Many long-distance trains also stop at the airport. Note that this station is located about 300m beyond the S-Bahn station under Terminal 1.

Getting Around

Both single or day tickets for Frankfurt's excellent **transport network** (RMV; www.traffiq.de) can be purchased from automatic machines at almost any train station or stop. The peak period short-trip tickets (*Kurzstrecken*) cost €1.35, single tickets cost €1.90 and a *Tageskarte* (24-hour ticket) costs €4.90 (or €7.40 with the airport).

COLOGNE

☎ 0221 / pop 1 million

Cologne (Köln) seems almost ridiculously proud to be home to Germany's largest cathedral; the twin-tower shape of its weather-beaten Gothic hulk adorns the strangest souvenirs, from egg cosies to expensive jewellery. However, this bustling Rhine-side metropolis has much more to offer than its most recognisable and ubiquitous symbol. As early as the first century AD, Colonia Agrippinensis was an important Roman trading settlement. Today it's one of Germany's most multicultural spots, with a vibrant nightlife only partly fuelled by the local *Kölsch* beer.

Orientation

The cathedral (Dom) and tourist information office are both on the doorstep of the main train station. The nightlife hubs of the Belgisches Viertel (tram 3, 4 or 5 to Friesenplatz) and the Zülpicher Viertel (tram 8 or 9 to Zülpicher Viertel/Bahnhof Süd) are several kilometres southwest.

Information

Several no-name internet cafés line Marzellenstrasse, minutes from the station.

Internet Café Colony (Map p494; Zülpicher Strasse 38-40; per 10min €0.40; ☎ 10am-2am Mon-Sat, 11am-2am Sun) Wide range of services, including online laptop connection.

Tourist office (Map p493; ☎ 2213 0400; www.koelntourismus.de; Unter Fettenhennen 19; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun & holidays Oct-Jun; 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun & holidays Jul-Sep)

GETTING INTO TOWN

S-Bahn 13 runs between Cologne-Bonn airport and the main train station every 15 minutes from 5.30am to 11.20pm daily (€2.20, 20 minutes). Key in code 2000 for Köln Hauptbahnhof. Bus 670 goes to Bonn every half-hour.

Sights & Activities

The huge **Kölner Dom** (Map p493; www.koelner-dom.de, Roncalliplatz; admission free; ☎ 6am-7.30pm, no visitors during services) is unmissable. Blackened with age, this gargyle-festooned Gothic cathedral has a footprint of 12,470 sq metres, with twin spires soaring to 157m. Although its ground stone was laid in 1248, stop-start construction meant it wasn't finished until 1880. Just over 60 years later it escaped WWII's heavy night-bombing largely intact. (No miracle, by the way. Allied pilots used it to navigate in an era before reliable radar.)

The interior is dimly lit and moody, while behind the altar lies the most precious reliquary, the **Shrine of the Three Magi** (c 1150-1210). The shrine reputedly contains the bones of the Three Wise Men, brought here from Milan in the 12th century. It can be glimpsed through the gates to the inner choir, but for a closer look, take a **guided tour** (per adult/concession €4/2; ☎ in English 10.30am & 2.30pm Mon-Sat, 2.30pm Sun). Groups meet inside the main portal. Tours in German (same price) are more frequent.

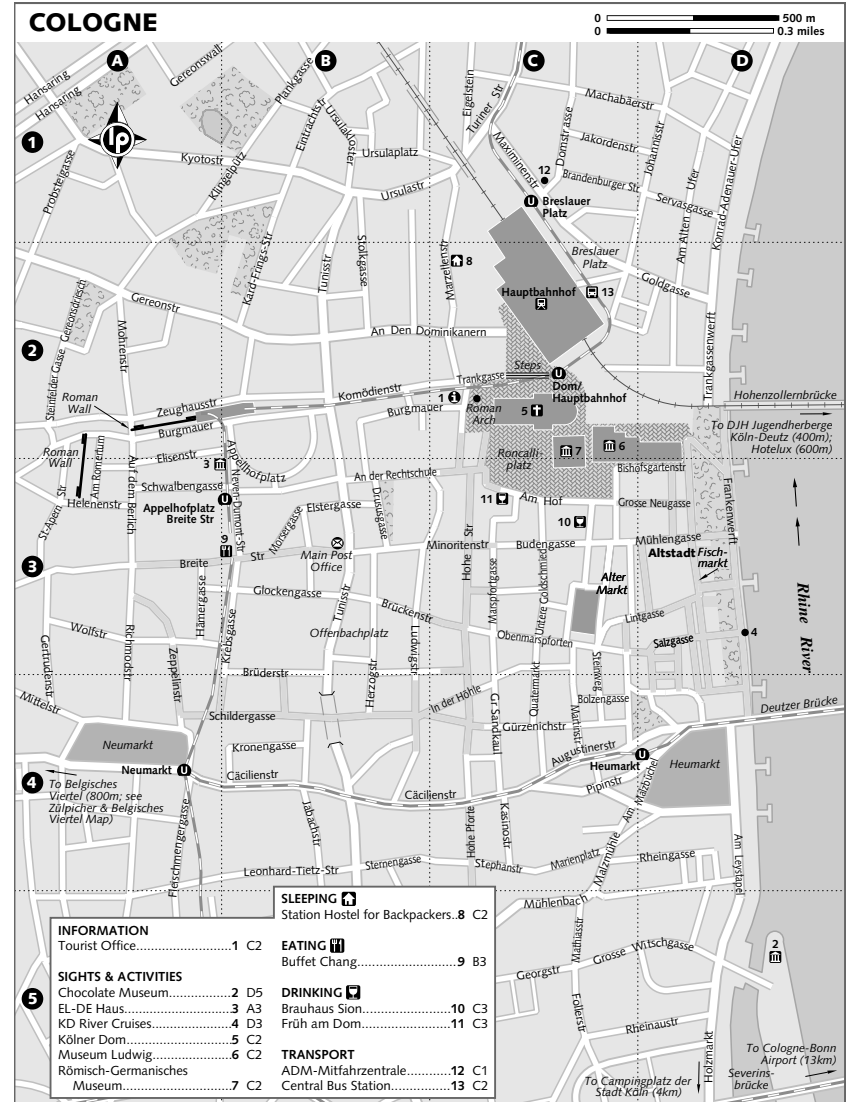
Alternatively, embark on the strenuous endeavour of climbing the 509 steps of the **south tower** (adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 9am-5pm Mar-Sep, to 4pm Oct-Feb). You pass the 24-tonne **Peter Bell**, the world's largest working clanger, before emerging at 98.25m to magnificent views.

MUSEUMS

South along the riverbank is the glass-walled **Chocolate Museum** (Map p493; ☎ 931 8880; www.schokoladenmuseum.de; Rheinauhafen; adult/concession €6/3.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun, last entry an hr before dosing), whose fountain of liquid chocolate permeates the exhibition with its delicious aroma.

Two prominent museums sit next to the cathedral. The **Römisch-Germanisches Museum** (Roman Germanic Museum; Map p493; ☎ 2212 2304; www.museenkoeln.de; Roncalliplatz 4; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) displays artefacts from the Roman settlement of Colonia Agrippinensis. The **Museum Ludwig** (Map p493; ☎ 2212 6165; www.museenkoeln.de; Bischofsgartenstrasse 1; adult/concession €7.50/5.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, closed during Carnival) has an astoundingly good collection of Pop Art, German Expressionism and Russian avant-garde painting, as well as photography.

Elsewhere, the sombre **EL-DE Haus** (Map p493; ☎ 2212 6331; Appellohofplatz 23-25; adult/concession €2.50/1;



☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun) documents Cologne's Nazi era.

TOURS

Rhine river trips are operated by **KD River Cruises** (Map p493; ☎ 208 8318; www.k-d.com; Frankfurter 35). Day trips (10am, noon, 2pm and 6pm) cost €6.80.

Festivals & Events

Held just before Lent in late February or early March, Cologne's **Carnival** (Karneval) rivals Munich's Oktoberfest for exuberance, as people dress up and party in the streets. Things kick off the Thursday before the seventh Sunday before Easter and last until Monday (*Rosenmontag*), when there are several parades.

ZÜLPICHER & BELGISCHES VIERTEL

0 300 m
0 0.2 miles

INFORMATION

Cleanicum	1	A1
Internet Café Colony	2	A3

SLEEPING

Pension Jansen	3	A2
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EATING

CurryCologne	4	A1
Feynsinn	5	A3
Habibi	6	B3

DRINKING

Päffgen	7	B1
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Sleeping

Campingplatz der Stadt Köln (☎ 831 966; camp sites per person/tent €4/4; ☞ Easter–mid-Oct) On the riverbank on Weidenweg in Poll, 5km southeast of the city centre, it has excellent kitchen facilities and a small shop. Take the U16 to Marienburg and cross the Rodenkirchener bridge.

Station Hostel for Backpackers (Map p493; ☎ 912 5301; www.hostel-cologne.de; Marzellenstrasse 44-56; dm €17-22, s €28-35, d €42-50, breakfast €2.60; ☞) Brightly patterned curtains can't quite disguise the basic quality of the dorms. However, the place is convenient and it's a great spot to meet people.

DJH Jugendherberge Köln-Deutz (☎ 814 711; www.jugendherberge.de; Siegesstrasse 5a; dm €19.90) This behemoth of a hostel is clean and spanking new, and while there's not much character in its green-grey rooms, those on upper floors have great views. It's an easy 15-minute walk east from the main train station over the Hohenzollernbrücke.

Pension Jansen (Map p494; ☎ 251 85; www.pensionjansen.de; 2nd fl, Richard Wagner Strasse 18; s/d from €40/65 with shared bathroom) This cute, well-cared-for pension has six individually decorated rooms with cheerful colours and motifs. Details like hand-made wreaths hanging on aqua walls – or a big, red rose screen-printed on the bed linen – convey a homy atmosphere.

Eating

Cologne's beer halls serve meals (see below), but Cologne overflows with restaurants, especially around the Belgisches and Zülpicher Viertels.

CurryCologne (Map p494; ☎ 589 4556; Antwerpstrasse 5; meals €2.20-5.90; ☞ 11am-11pm Mon-Thu, 11.30am-midnight Fri & Sat, 1-11pm Sun) This is fun: a trendy *Wurst* outlet, where you eat your sausages with designer cutlery.

Habibi (Map p494; ☎ 271 7141; Zülpicher Strasse 28; meals €3-8; ☞ 11am-1am Sun-Thu, 11am-3am Fri & Sat) A takeaway/restaurant with sturdy wooden tables and a smattering of decorated tiles, 'Be-loved' serves a wide range of falafels, kebabs, schawarma, haloumi cheese, *hubbi* (mince and almonds), mint tea on the house, and sweets.

Buffet Chang (Map p493; ☎ 250 9909; upper fl, DuMont Carré Centre, Breite Strasse 80-90; all-you-can-eat buffet €5.90; ☞ 11am-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-7pm Sun) Local office workers flock to this plastic-and-Formica Chinese canteen for its great-value cuisine.

Feynsinn (Map p494; ☎ 240 9210; Rathenauplatz 7; mains €5-10) The glint of artfully arranged glasses behind the mirrored bar will catch your eye from the street, as will the broken-glass chandeliers. Inside students, creative types and tourists tuck into curries, stews and other fare.

Drinking

As in Munich, beer reigns supreme here. Local breweries produce a variety called *Kölsch*, which is relatively light and slightly bitter. In the beer halls, it's served in skinny 200mL glasses. You can get food too.

MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE

There can't be many better places to air your dirty laundry than Cologne's **Cleanicum** (Map p494; www.cleanicum.de; Brussels Strasse 74-76; loads from €3; ☞ 10am-1am Mon-Fri, 9am-1am Sat, 11am-10pm Sun; ☞). Its washing machines and dryers sit in the middle of a 'lounge' establishment that also includes sofas, magazines, a TV area, internet terminals, a retro 1970s cocktail bar, a double bed (!) and a vibrating massage chair (€1 for 15 minutes).

Früh am Dom (Map p493; ☎ 2580 394; Am Hof 12-14) This three-storey beer hall and restaurant (including cellar bar) is the most central one in Cologne, with black-and-white flooring, copper pans and tiled ovens. It's open for breakfast, too.

Päffgen (Map p494; ☎ 135 461; Friesenstrasse 64-66) Another favourite, this thrumming wood-lined room has its own beer garden. It's near the bars of the Belgisches Viertel.

Brauhaus Sion (Map p493; ☎ 257 8540; Unter Taschenmacher 9) A traditional-looking, low-lit option, with *Wurst* sold by the metre.

Hotelux (☎ 350 0870; Rathenauplatz 22) East of town over the Hohenzollernbrücke, this small, wonderfully Russian-themed bar serves cocktails and 'Soviet water' (ie vodka).

Getting There & Away

AIR

Budget airline **German Wings** (www.germanwings.com) uses **Cologne-Bonn Airport** (code CGN; www.airport-cgn.de) as its hub, offering cheap flights to Moscow and St Petersburg, among others. Other scheduled flights go to widespread destinations.

BOAT

KD River Cruises (Map p493; ☎ 208 8318; www.k-d.com; Frankenwerf 35) goes to Bonn (one way €11.40).

BUS

Deutsche Touring's Eurolines (Map p493; ☎ 135 252; www.deutsche-touring.com; Breslauer Platz) offers overnight trips to Paris (€34, 6½ hours).

CAR

The city is on a main north-south autobahn route and is easily accessible for drivers and hitchhikers. The **ADM-Mitfahrzentrale** (Map p493;

☎ 194 40; www.citynetz-mitfahrzentrale.de; Maximinenstrasse 2) is near the train station.

TRAIN

There are frequent RE services operating to both nearby Bonn (€6, 18 minutes) and Düsseldorf (€10 to €16, 25 to 30 minutes) as well as to Aachen (€12.50, 45 to 50 minutes). Frequent EC, IC, or ICE trains go to Frankfurt-am-Main (€55, 1¼ hours, three per hour) and Berlin (€93, 4¼ hours, hourly). Frequent Thalys high-speed services connect Cologne to Paris (€85.50, four hours) via Aachen and Brussels; rail pass-holders get only a small discount on this.

Getting Around

Buses and trams serve the inner city, with local trains handling destinations up to 50km away, including Bonn. A one-day pass costs €6 within the city (one or two zones), €9 for most of the Cologne area (four zones), and €13.30 including Bonn (seven zones). Single city trips cost €1.20, while 1½-hour two-zone tickets are €2.20.

AROUND COLOGNE

Bonn

☎ 0228 / pop 293,000

Bonn is not only the birthplace of musical genius Ludwig van Beethoven – its brief tenure as capital (of West Germany from 1949 and as the home of German government departments until 1999) has also left it with an excellent collection of museums.

The **tourist office** (☎ 775 000; www.bonn-region.de; Windeckstrasse 1; ☞ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) is a three-minute walk along Poststrasse from the Hauptbahnhof.

Music fans will head straight to the **Beethoven-Haus** (☎ 981 7525; www.beethoven-haus-bonn.de; Bonngasse 24-26; adult/concession €4/3; ☞ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar), where the composer was born in 1770. The house contains memorabilia concerning his life and compositions.

Elsewhere, the **Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland** (FRG History Museum; ☎ 916 50; www.hdg.de; Willy-Brandt-Allee 14; admission free; ☞ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) engagingly presents Germany's postwar history.

From Cologne, it's quicker to take an RE train to Bonn (€6, 18 minutes) than a tram (€13.30 day pass, 55 minutes each way). For river trips, see Boat (left).

DÜSSELDORF

☎ 0211 / pop 571,000

'D-Town' or 'The City D', as local editors like to call Düsseldorf, is Germany's fashion capital. But that means Jil Sander and Wolfgang Joop rather than cutting-edge streetwear, as you'll soon discover observing fur-clad *mesdames* with tiny dogs along the ritzy Königsallee.

Indeed, this elegant and wealthy town could feel stiflingly bourgeois if it weren't for its lively old-town pubs, its position on the Rhine and the postmodern architecture of its Mediahafen. Fortunately, those are more than enough to make up for its pretensions.

Information

Telesurf (Graf-Adolf-Strasse 102; €0.50 per 15min; ☎ 10am-4am Mon-Sat, 10am-midnight Sun) Minutes left of the train station.

Tourist office (www.duesseldorf-tourismus.de) Main office (☎ 172 0222; Immermannstrasse 65B; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat); Branch office (☎ 602 5753; Burg Platz; ☎ noon-6pm); Branch office (☎ 300 4897; Sparkasse Bldg, Berliner Allee 33; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat)

Sights & Activities

Düsseldorf has a lively **Altstadt** (old town), filled with enough restaurants and pubs to have earned it the slightly exaggerated title of the 'longest bar in the world'.

What really sets the city apart, however, is the contemporary architecture of its **Mediahafen**. Here, in the city's south, docks have been transformed into an interesting commercial park, most notably including the **Neuer Zollhof**, three typically curved and twisting buildings by Bilbao Guggenheim architect Frank Gehry.

On the street side of the red-brick building, there's a billboard with a map of the entire park. Alternatively, catch the lift 168m up the neighbouring **Rheinturm** (adult/child €3.20/1.50; ☎ 10am-11.30pm) for a bird's-eye view.

GETTING INTO TOWN

From Düsseldorf International, frequent S-Bahn services (1 & 7, €2.10) travel to the main train station. There's a coordinated bus service (€11, 1¼ hours) for Ryanair passengers from Niederrhein Airport (aka Weeze).

It's a pleasant stroll between the Mediahafen and the Altstadt along the riverside **Rheinuferpromenade**. River cruises are also possible (contact KD River Cruises, see Tours p493).

Alternatively, you can watch the city's elite window-shopping along the **Königsallee**, or 'Kö' – Düsseldorf's answer to Rodeo Drive or the Ginza strip.

K21 (☎ 838 1600; www.kunstsammlung.de; Ständehausstrasse 1; adult/concession €6.50/4.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun) is a brilliant gallery of attention-grabbing contemporary art. It boasts a great-looking bar, too.

Sleeping

Backpackers-Düsseldorf (☎ 302 0848; www.backpackers-duesseldorf.de; Fürstenwall 180; dm €20; ☎) Bright colours, soft beds and great service make this modern hostel a real winner. Near the Mediahafen, Backpackers-Düsseldorf is reached from the train station by bus 725 to Kirchplatz, from where there are several trams into town.

Jugendgästehaus (☎ 557 310; www.jugendherberge.de; Düsseldorf Strasse 1; dm €22, s/d from €26/48) On the other bank of the Rhine in posh Oberkassel, this will remain open while undergoing renovation until 2008.

Eating & Drinking

Libanon Express (☎ 134 917; Berger Strasse 19-21; café meals €2.50-13, restaurant meals €8-19) Crammed with mirrors and patterned tiles – and with numerous recommendations stuck on the window – this tiny café serves excellent kebabs, falafel and other Middle-Eastern specialities.

Im Fuchsen (☎ 137 470; Ratzingerstrasse 28; mains €6-11) The 'Little Fox' is a typically rumbustious Rheinisch beer hall, with Schweinhaxe and other local fare, on a popular nightlife street.

Fischhaus (☎ 854 9864; Berger Strasse 3-7; mains €9-26) This huge, glass-fronted seafood restaurant is the sort of classic affair that never goes out of fashion, and buzzes with all ages and demographics. The setting is just formal enough to make it feel special, without being the slightest bit intimidating.

Zum Uerige (☎ 866 990; Berger Strasse 1) In this noisy, cavernous place, the dark, semisweet Uerige Alt beer flows so quickly that waiters just carry around trays and plonk down glasses of the stuff whenever they spy an empty.

Getting There & Around

Most airlines fly to **Düsseldorf International** (code DUS; www.duesseldorf-international.de), but low-cost Ryanair uses **Niederrhein (Weeze) Airport** (code NRN; www.flughafen-niederrhein.de).

Train services from Düsseldorf include Cologne (€10 to €16, 25 to 30 minutes), Frankfurt-am-Main (€65, two hours), Hanover (€46 to €49, 2¼ hours) and Hamburg (€63 to €73, 3½ to 4 hours).

The metro, trams and buses cost €1.10 for journeys up to three stops (*Kurzstrecke*), €2 around the centre and €3.80 for the greater city. Day-passes start at €4.70

AACHEN

☎ 0241 / pop 244,000

Fancy an indulgent mini-break? Aachen has the perfect recipe. Before reaching its thermal baths, you'll find yourself wandering cobbled streets, past quirky fountains, shops full of gingerbread, one of Germany's leading cafés, and a small but perfectly formed cathedral.

The town's curative thermal springs were the reason the great Frankish conqueror Charlemagne (Karl der Grosse) made this his capital in 794, and the cathedral he built consolidated its fame. Its proximity to the Netherlands and Belgium gives Aachen – Aken or Aix La Chappelle in Dutch or French – a dynamic international personality, while its student population saves it from being too touristy and twee.

Orientation

Aachen's compact centre is contained within two ring roads roughly tracing the old city walls. To get to the tourist office from the Hauptbahnhof, cross Römerstrasse, follow Bahnhofstrasse north and then go left along Theaterstrasse to Kapuzinergraben.

Information

Tourist office (☎ 180 2960/1; www.aachen.de; Atrium Eisenbrunnen, Kapuzinergraben; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat year-round, 10am-2pm Sun Apr-Dec)

The Web (Kleinmarschierstrasse 74-76; per 10min €0.50; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) Internet access.

Sights

OLD TOWN & FOUNTAINS

Beside the tourist office is the **Eisenbrunnen**, the only town fountain with drinkable water;

despite its sulphuric 'rotten eggs' smell, it's supposedly good for the digestion.

In the far left-hand corner of the park behind the Eisenbrunnen is the **Geldbrunnen**, which represents the circulation of money. The comical figures around the pool clutch their coins or purses while the water is sucked down the central plughole (jokingly known as 'the taxman').

Head east along the top of the park here, towards Forum M, and turn left into Buchkramerstrasse. Soon you'll reach a fountain with a scary-looking creature. This is the mythological **Bahkauv**, rumoured to pounce on those returning late from the pub and demand a piggyback home.

Buchkramerstrasse becomes Büchel. Turn left just past Leo van den Daele restaurant, then right again and you'll come to Hühnermarkt, with its **Hühnerdiebbrunnen** (Chicken thief fountain). The hasty thief hasn't noticed one of his stolen chickens is a rooster and is about to unmask him by crowing.

From here, Aachen's main **Markt** (marketplace) is visible just to the northeast, with its 14th-century **Rathaus** (adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sat & Sun) and fountain statue of **Charlemagne**.

Head back down the hill along Krämerstrasse until you reach the **Puppenbrunnen** (Puppet fountain), where you're allowed to play with the movable bronze figures.

Aachen's famous Dom is another 50m in the same direction.

DOM

While Cologne's cathedral wows you with size and atmosphere, Aachen's similarly Unesco-listed **Dom** (Kaiserdom or Münster; www.aachendom.de; ☎ 7am-7pm) impresses with its shiny neatness. The small, Byzantine-inspired **octagon** at the building's heart dates from AD 805, but was refurbished in 2003 so its mosaics and marble gleam.

The building is significant not just because Charlemagne ordered it built, but also because 30 Holy Roman Emperors were crowned here from 936 to 1531.

The brass **chandelier** in the centre was donated by Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa in 1165, while Charlemagne himself lies in the golden **shrine** behind the altar, a centuries-old magnet for pilgrims.

Multilingual leaflets in the antechamber provide a concise cathedral guide.

THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAIL

If the devil has all the best music, he also has the funniest myths. Aachen lore, for example, says you haven't really visited the town unless you've touched the thumb of hell's black prince.

The legend goes that a mysterious benefactor appeared when the town needed more money to finish its cathedral. Locals recognised him as Lucifer by his cloven hoofs, but being *lues* (cunning and crafty, in the local dialect) hatched a plan. When he asked to be repaid with the soul of the first being to enter the cathedral, they agreed, then released a wolf into the building. Satan pounced on the creature, but flew into a rage on realising he'd been cheated. Storming out of the cathedral, he slammed the door so hard he trapped his thumb.

Today, a statue of the wolf (or Roman bear) stands in the cathedral's antechamber, with a hole in its chest from where its soul was ripped. Meanwhile, 'the devil's thumb' remains stuck in the main cathedral doors – between the side doors currently used. Inside the lion's head on the right-hand door, you can feel, well, a digit-shaped something.

THERMAL BATHS

The 8th-century Franks were lured to 'Ahha' (water) for its thermal springs. And centuries later the start-of-the-art **Carolus Thermen** (Carolus Thermal Baths; ☎ 182 740; www.carolus-thermen.de; Stadtgarten/Passtrasse 79; from €9.50 without sauna) is still reeling them in. The complex is part therapeutic spa – good for rheumatism etc – and part swimming centre. Don't pay for the sauna; there's a steam room accessible to all. The baths are in the city garden, northeast of the centre.

Sleeping

Jugendgästehaus (☎ 711 010; www.jugendherberge.de; Maria-Theresia-Allee 260; dm/s/d €21.90/36.40/54; ☑) This modern DJH outpost sits on a hill overlooking the city, and gets lots of school groups. Take bus 2 to Ronheide.

Hotel Marx (☎ 375 41; www.hotel-marx.de; Huberstrasse 33-35; s/d with shared bathroom from €35/60, with own bathroom from €50/75) There's a garden with pond out of the back of this traditional family-run place. Inside the rooms are decent, but the bathrooms are a little cramped.

Eating & Drinking

Aachen's students have their own 'Latin Quarter' along **Pontstrasse**, with dozens of bars and cheap eats. The street heads northeast off the Markt and runs for nearly a kilometre.

Our pick **Leo van den Daele** (☎ 357 24; Büchel 18; dishes €4.50-8.50) A warren of 17th-century rooms linked by crooked stairs across four merchants' homes, this nationally renowned café specialises in gingerbread, or *Printen*. Yet you can also enjoy light meals – soups, sandwiches, quiches and *pastetchen* (vol au vents) – among its tiled stoves and antique knick-knacks.

Vitaminbar (☎ 409 3912; Alexaniergraben 13-15; dishes €2.50-6.50) Exotic options like Iranian and Russian are among this café's dozens of tasty sandwich fillings. The salads are just as diverse.

Getting There & Away

There are twice-hourly trains to Cologne (€12.50, 45 to 50 minutes) and Liège (€9.90, 40 minutes), as well as transfers from Düsseldorf and Köln-Bonn airports. The high-speed Thalys train passes through regularly on its way to Brussels and Paris (€80.50, 3½ hours). Frequent buses go to Maastricht.

Getting Around

Most sights are easily reached on foot, although the baths are a bit of a hike. Buses cost €1.45 (a few stops), €2 (regular single) or €5 (day pass).

LOWER SAXONY

Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen) likes to make much of its half-timbered towns. Hamelin is certainly a true fairytale beauty, and leaning Lüneberg is quite unlike any other you'll see. However, the state is also home to the famous Volkswagen car company, while the even the business-minded capital, Hanover, has its diversions.

HANOVER

☎ 0511 / pop 523,000

German comedians – yes, they do exist – like to dismiss Hanover as 'the Autobahn exit between Göttingen and Walsrode'. However, the capital of Lower Saxony is really nowhere near

that grim. While it's famous for hosting trade fairs, particularly the huge CEBIT computer show in March, it also boasts acres of greenery in the Versailles-like Herrenhäuser Gärten.

Parts of the central Altstadt (old town) look medieval, but few are. They're mostly clever fakes built after intense WWII bombing.

Information

Hannover Tourismus (☎ information 1234 5111, room reservations 1234 555; www.hannover.de; Ernst-August-Platz 8; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat)
Teleklick Hannover (Schillerstrasse 23; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) Internet access per hr €3.

Sights

The enormous **Grosser Garten** (Large Garden; €3, free in winter) is the highlight of the **Herrenhäuser Gärten** (☎ 1684 7576; www.hannover.de/herrenhausen/start.htm; ☎ 9am-sunset). It has a small maze, Europe's tallest fountain and a popular beer garden. Check the website in summer for **Wasserspiele**, when fountains are synchronised, and the night-time **illuminations**. The **Niki de Saint Phalle Grotto** is a magical showcase of the artist's work. She was French – her colourful figures adorn the famous Stravinsky fountain outside Paris's Centre Pompidou – but developed a special relationship with Hanover.

The **Neues Rathaus** (New Town Hall) was built in 1901–13. Town models in the foyer reveal the extent of WWII devastation. There's a pleasant lakeside café and, if you don't mind queuing, a **curved lift** (adult/child €2/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Nov) to a 98m viewing platform.

Beside the River Leine since 1974, **Die Nanas** are three fluorescent-coloured, earth-mama sculptures by de Saint Phalle. Although major Hanover landmarks, they're best seen on Saturday, when there's a flea market held at their feet.

In summer, the Machsee (lake) has **ferries** (crossing €3, tour €6) and numerous boats for hire. There's a free public **swimming beach** on the southeast shore.

Sleeping

The tourist office only finds private rooms during trade fairs, but arranges hotel bookings year-round for a fee.

Jugendherberge (☎ 131 7674; www.jugendherberge.de; Ferdinand-Wilhelm-Fricke-Weg 1; dm junior/senior from €17.60/20.60; ☑) This large space-lab looking structure houses a modern hostel with breakfast room and terrace bar overlooking the

GETTING INTO TOWN

The S-Bahn (S5) takes 16 minutes from the airport to the main train station (€3.20).

river. Take U3 or U7 to Fischerhof, cross the Lodemannbrücke and turn right.

GästeResidenz PelikanViertel (☎ 399 90; www.gaesteresidenz-pelikanviertel.de; Pelikanstrasse 11; s €40-230, d €60-260, tr €80-280) Upmarket student residence meets budget hotel, this huge complex has a wide range of plain but very pleasant rooms, all with kitchenettes. Prices fluctuate wildly, so try to avoid trade fair periods. Take U9 to Pelikanstrasse.

Etap Hotel (☎ 235 5570; www.etaphotel.com; Runde Strasse 7; s/d €40/50; ☑) This garish but comfortable chain hotel is right near the train station.

Eating & Drinking

Markthalle (Karmarschstrasse 49; dishes €3.50-8) This huge covered market of food stalls and gourmet delicatessens is a no-nonsense place for a quick bite – both carnivorous and vegetarian.

Maestro (☎ 300 8575; Sophienstrasse 2; mains €4.50-8) This atmospheric subterranean restaurant offers an all-you-can-eat vegetarian buffet (€7) at lunch daily. Its tucked-away courtyard beer garden (shh!) is perfect in summer.

Brauhaus Ernst August (☎ 365 950; Schmiedestrasse 13a) A local institution, the Brauhaus Ernst August brews its own Hannöverscher beer.

Getting There & Around

Hanover's **airport** (code HAJ; www.hannover-airport.de) has many connections, including on low-cost carrier **Air Berlin** (www.airberlin.com).

There are frequent train services to Hamburg (€36, 1¼ hours), Berlin (€53, 1½ hours), Cologne (€56, three hours) and Munich (€101, five hours).

Most visitors only travel in the central 'Hanover' zone. Single tickets are €1.90 and day passes €3.60.

AROUND HANOVER

Hanover makes a good jumping-off point for day trips to the beautiful towns of Lower Saxony. By sticking to slower RE/ME trains, non-railpass holders can travel all across the state on a daily €17 Niedersachsen ticket.

Closest is quaint **Hamelin** (Hameln in German) of Pied Piper fame. With ornate architecture and lots of rat cakes, breads and

souvenirs, it's a great place for kids big and small. **Hameln Tourist Information** (☎ 957 823; www.hameln.de/touristinfo; Diesterallee 1; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri year-round; 9.30am-4pm Sat, 9.30am-1pm Sun May-Sep, 9.30am-1pm Sat Oct-Apr) can provide further details.

The leaning town of **Lüneburg** is also immediately striking. Centuries of salt mining have resulted in widespread subsidence, leaving some of Lüneburg's pavements warped, while its gabled Hanseatic buildings twist and tilt. The **Tourist Office** (☎ 207 6620; www.lueneburg.de; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat Oct-Apr) is on the main market square. The city's easily reached from either Hanover (€23, one to 1¾ hours on ICE or ME services) or Hamburg (€11, 30 minutes on ICE).

Finally, **Wolfsburg** is home to Volkswagen's global headquarters and huge factory; the latter is as large as Monaco. At the attached theme park, **Autostadt** (Car City; ☎ 0800-2886 782 38; www.autostadt.de; Stadtbücke; adult/concession/child/family €14/11/6/38; ☎ 9am-8pm Apr-Oct, 9am-6pm Nov-Mar), you can catch up on VW Beetle history, take a tour into the factory or test your driving skills. In town, there's also a separate **car museum** and a cutting-edge science centre, **Phaeno**. The **Wolfsburg tourist office** (☎ 899 930; www.tourismus-wolfsburg.de, for English www.wolfsburg.de; Willy Brandt-Platz 3; ☎ 9am-7pm) is in the train station. Frequent services go to Hanover (€19, 30 minutes/one hour on ICE/RE trains) and Berlin (€39, one hour, ICE).

BREMEN

☎ 0421 / pop 550,000

Bremen is what Germans call *schön klein*, the equivalent of good things coming in small packages. You can easily travel on foot between its red-brick market place, Art-Deco Böttcherstrasse and the doll-house sized Schnoor district.

Best known from the *Town Musicians of Bremen* fairytale – about four animals who left home to find fame here – Bremen is predictably cute and pretty. But the water-

front promenade along the Weser River is a wonderful spot for a drink and the student district along Ostertorsteinweg is downright alternative.

Orientation

Head south (straight ahead) from the train station to reach the centre, on the banks of the Weser River. The Schlachte waterfront promenade is west of the centre; the Schnoor district lies just east. The student and nightlife district is further east still along Ostertorsteinweg.

Information

Internet.Center Bremen (Bahnhofsplatz 22-28; per hr €5; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun)

Tourist office (☎ 01805 101 030, premium rate; www.bremen-tourism.de; Hauptbahnhof; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun) Branch (Oberstrasse/Liebfrauenkirchhof; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun) The main office organises daily tours.

Sights & Activities

Bremen's **Markt** is striking, particularly its gabled **Rathaus** (town hall). In front stands a 13m-tall medieval statue of the knight **Roland**, Bremen's protector. On the building's western side, you'll find the **Town Musicians of Bremen** sculpture (1951). The animals are in their most famous pose, scaring the robbers who invaded their house, with the rooster atop the cat, perched on the dog, on the shoulders of the donkey.

Also on the Markt is the **Dom** (cathedral) and its slightly macabre **Bleikeller** (Lead Cellar; ☎ 365 0441; adult/concession €1.40/1; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun Apr-Oct) Here, open coffins reveal eight corpses mummified in the dry air underground.

The nearby Art-Deco alley of **Böttcherstrasse** is unique. Through an arch with a striking golden relief, you enter a world of tall brick houses, shops, galleries, restaurants, a **Glockenspiel** and several (missable) museums.

A maze of narrow winding alleys, the **Schnoorviertel** was once the fishermen's quarter and then the red-light district. Now its doll-house-sized cottages are souvenir shops and restaurants.

If you have time, visit the **Beck's Brewery** (☎ 5094 5555; Am Deich 18-19; tours in German €7; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, to 3pm Sun; tours in English 2pm Tue-Sun).

Sleeping

Camping Stadtwaldsee (☎ 841 0748; www.camping-stadtwaldsee.de; Hochschulring 1; adult/tent/car €7/4/1.50) Rebuilt in 2005, this features modern amenities, a supermarket and café with a lakeside terrace. If driving, take the A27 to the university exit in Bremen Nord. Tram 6 will get you close and bus 28 is on the doorstep.

Jugendherberge Bremen (☎ 163 820; www.jugendherberge.de; Kalkstrasse 6; dm junior/senior €21/24, s/d €32/56; ☎ ☒) With an eye-catching yellow and orange Plexiglas façade and slitted rectangular windows, this refurbished building has comfortable en suite dorms. Other pluses include a bar/breakfast room overlooking the river and a rooftop terrace. Take tram 3 or 5 to Am Brill.

Bremer Backpacker Hostel (☎ 223 8057; www.bremer-backpacker-hostel.de; Emil-Waldmannstrasse 5-6; dm/s/d €16/27/44, linen €3; ☎) Five minutes from the train station, tucked away on a quiet street, this hostel has Spartan but spotless rooms, a modern kitchen and a living room. Low water pressure means taps on the middle floor run slowly and not at all on the upper floor.

Eating

Das Viertel, the student quarter in and around Ostertorsteinweg, is full of eateries and bars. The waterfront promenade, **Schlachte**, is more expensive and mainstream, but pleasant nonetheless.

Piano (☎ 785 46; Fehrfeld 64; mains €5.50-9.50) An enduringly popular café in the student quarter, this serves pizza, pasta, steaks and veggie casseroles. Breakfast can be ordered until 4pm.

Energie Café (☎ 277 2510; cnr Sögestrasse & Am Wall; mains €3.50-12.50; ☎ closed Sun) A delightfully upbeat café run by a local power company, this serves delicious cut-price lunches and solid evening meals. While waiting, amuse yourself by watching the model surfer on the wave-motion display.

Getting There & Away

Flights from **Bremen airport** (code BRE; www.airport-bremen.de) include **easyJet** (www.easyjet.com) flights to London-Luton.

Frequent trains go to Hamburg (€18.30 to €22, one hour), Hanover (€18.70 to €27, 60 to 80 minutes) and Cologne (€52, three hours). Some IC trains run direct to Frankfurt-am-Main (€76, 3¾ hours) and Munich (€100, six hours) daily.

Getting Around

Trams and buses cover crisscross the city. With single tickets costing €2.05, a €5 day pass is excellent value.

NORTHERN GERMANY

Flat, sparsely northwestern Germany features two very different gems. Hamburg might be the country's second largest city, but its port has also made it the richest. With an outward-looking multicultural population, it features a nightlife and dining-out scene to rival Berlin's.

By contrast, the historic town of Lübeck trades on its absolutely stunning picture postcard looks.

HAMBURG

☎ 040 / pop 1.7 million

Water, water everywhere – Germany's biggest port city has always been outward-looking. Its wealth, dynamism, multiculturalism and hedonistic red-light district, the Reeperbahn, all arise from its maritime history.

Joining the Hanseatic League trading bloc in the Middle Ages, Hamburg has been enthusiastically doing business with the world ever since. In the 1960s, it nurtured the Beatles' musical talent. Nowadays, it's also a media capital and the richest city in Germany.

The Alster lakes, the Elbe River and the canals between the Speicherstadt warehouses are all perfect for leisure cruises. Haggling at the rowdy fish market early on Sunday is also an unrivalled experience.

Orientation

The sprawl of the city means you will probably be using public transport regularly. The Hauptbahnhof is central, near the Alster Lakes, but the Speicherstadt warehouses and port lie southwest, on the Elbe River. The nightlife districts of St Pauli (including the Reeperbahn) and Schanzenviertel are further west again.

Information

DISCOUNT CARDS

Der Power Pass (€7 for first day, €3 each extra day up to a week) For under-30s, this is the best of the tourist office's discount cards. It offers free public transport, reduced museums and tours, some free club entries and more.

GETTING INTO TOWN

Tram 6 leaves the airport frequently, heading to the centre (€2.05, 15 minutes).

GETTING INTO TOWN

The **Airport Express** (☎ 227 1060; www.jasper-hamburg.de; €5; ☹ 6am-11pm, every 15-20min, journey time 25min) runs between the Hauptbahnhof and airport. Otherwise, shuttle buses from Lübeck airport (one way €8, 1¼ hours) arrive at Hamburg's bus station.

EMERGENCY

Police Hauptbahnhof (Kirchenallee exit); St Pauli (Davidwache, Spielbudenplatz 31, cnr Davidstrasse; ☎ Reeperbahn)

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet Café (Adenauerallee 10; per hr €2; ☹ 10am-midnight Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun; ☎ Hauptbahnhof)
Tele-Time (Schulterblatt 39; per hr €3; ☹ 10am-midnight; ☎ Feldstrasse/Sternschanze)

LAUNDRY

Schnell & Sauber (Am Neuer Pferdemarkt 27; ☹ 6am-11pm; ☎ Feldstrasse)

POST

Post office (☎ 01802 3333) Main (Dammstorstrasse 14; ☹ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat; ☎ Jungfernstieg); Branch (☎ 01802 3333; Mönckebergstrasse 7; ☹ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat; ☎ Hauptbahnhof)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Hamburg Tourismus Hauptbahnhof (☎ information 3005 1200, hotel bookings 3005 1300; www.hamburg-tourismus.de; Kirchenallee exit; ☹ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun); Landungsbrücken (btwn piers 4 & 5; ☹ 8am-6pm Mon, Wed & Sun, 8am-7pm Tue, Thu, Fri & Sat Apr-Sep; 10am-6pm Oct-Mar; ☎ Landungsbrücken); Airport (☎ 5075 1010; ☹ 5.30am-11pm)

Dangers & Annoyances

Although safe, Hamburg is undeniably sleazy in parts, with red-light districts around the train station and Reeperbahn. Fortunately, there's a strong police presence in these areas, too – a phenomenon the Germans call red-light/blue-light!

Sights & Activities

OLD TOWN

Hamburg's medieval **Rathaus** (☎ 4283 120 10; tours adult/concession €2/1, ☹ tours in English hourly from 10.15am-3.15pm Mon-Thu, to 1.15pm Fri-Sun; ☎ Rathausmarkt/Jungfernstieg) is incredibly opulent. North of here, you can wander through the **Alsterar-**

kaden, the elegant Renaissance-style arcades sheltering shops and cafés alongside a canal or 'fleet'.

For many visitors, however, the city's most memorable building is south in the Merchant's District. The 1920s, brown-brick **Chile Haus** (cnr Burchardstrasse & Johanniswall; ☎ Mönckebergstrasse/Messberg) is shaped like an ocean liner, with remarkable curved walls meeting in the shape of a ship's bow and staggered balconies looking like decks.

LAKE & RIVER CRUISES

Hamburg is surrounded by water, so cruising on its many lakes, canals, harbour or river is one of the best ways to appreciate the city. Most boat tours cost around €10 to €12 per adult.

The **Inner and Outer Alster Lakes** (Binnenalster and Aussenalster) demonstrate the city's elegant side. Ships leave in summer from Jungfernstieg.

For a **port or river cruise**, head to the St Pauli Landungsbrücken. **Abicht** (☎ 317 8220; www.abicht.de; Brücke No 1; ☹ noon daily Mar-Nov) offers English commentary, while **Hadag** (☎ 311 7070; www.hadag.de; Brücke No 2; one-hr harbour trip from €9/4.50 adult/child) is the cheapest.

Cruises along the canals of the Speicherstadt (see below) also leave from the Landungsbrücken.

If you're the DIY kind, hire your own row-boat. Visit **Segelschule Pieper** (☎ 247 578; www.segelschule-pieper.de; An der Alster; ☎ Hauptbahnhof) opposite the Atlantic Hotel.

SPEICHERSTADT & HARBOUR

The beautiful red-brick, neo-Gothic warehouses lining the Elbe archipelago south of the Altstadt once stored exotic goods from all over the world. Now this so-called **Speicherstadt** (Warehouse city; ☎ Messberg/Baumwall) is full of visitors taking boat rides up its canals. (Some operators leave from opposite the archipelago, as well as the Landungsbrücken.) Alternatively, you can just wander around its streets. Many of the warehouses have been turned into museums. Most of them are missable, but check out the Hamburg Tourismus website for whatever takes your fancy.

Further west, at the Landungsbrücken, there's a famous ship museum, **Rickmer Rickmers** (☎ 319 5959; www.rickmer-rickmers.de; Brücke No 1; adult/concession €3/2.50; ☹ 10am-6pm).

REEPERBAHN

No discussion of Hamburg is complete without mentioning St Pauli, home of the sleazy, sexedelic **Reeperbahn** (☎ Reeperbahn). While tamer than Amsterdam, it's still Europe's biggest red-light district.

Among the 'sights' are the men-only **Herbertstrasse**, the **Erotic Art Museum** (☎ 317 4757; www.eroticartmuseum.de; Bernhard-Nocht-Strasse 69; adult/concession €8/5; ☹ noon-10pm, to midnight Fri & Sat) and the **Condomerie** (Spielbudenplatz 18), with its collection of prophylactics and sex toys.

Harry's Hamburger Hafenbasar (☎ 312 482; www.hafenbasar.de; cnr Balduinstrasse & Erichstrasse; adult/child €2.50/1.50, redeemable against any purchase; ☹ noon-6pm Tue-Sun) is bursting with African statues, Asian masks and other ephemera from abroad.

FISCHMARKT

Here's the perfect excuse to stay up all Saturday night. Every Sunday between 5am and 9.30am, people of every age and walk of life descend of the famous Fischmarkt in St Pauli. The market has been running since 1703, and today's undisputed stars are the boisterous **Marktschreier** (market criers) who hawk their wares at full volume. Live bands also entertainingly crank out ancient German pop songs in the adjoining **Fischauktionshalle** (Fish Auction Hall). Take bus 112 to Hafentreppe or Fischmarkt.

BLANKENESE

The upmarket western district of **Blankenese** (☎ Blankenese) is wonderful to explore. A former fishing village, its fine houses are set on a hillside labyrinth of narrow, cobbled streets. There's a network of **58 stairways** (4864 steps total!). The best views of the broad Elbe River are from the 75m-high **Süllberg** hill. From the train station, take bus 48 to Krögers Treppe or Weseberg.

Sleeping

For private rooms, contact **Bed & Breakfast** (☎ 491 5666; www.bed-&-breakfast.de), which has singles from €27 to €45 and doubles at €40 to €70.

Campingplatz Buchholz (☎ 540 4532; www.camping-buchholz.de; Kieler Strasse 274; per person/car €4.80/5, tent €8-11; ☎ Hamburg-Stellingen/Hagenbecks Tierpark) This small, family-run site has decent washing facilities, lots of shade and now some private hotel rooms. When driving, take the A&/E45 and take exit 26 to Hamburg-Stellingen.

A & O Hostel (☎ 2104 0294; www.aohostel.com; Hammer Landstrasse 170; dm/breakfast/linen €12/5/3, s/d inclusive €29/32; ☎ ☹; ☎ Hammer Kirche) Typical of the A & O chain – new and clean, but a trifle bland – the Hamburg branch has a slightly out-of-the-way location east of the Hauptbahnhof.

Instant Sleep Backpacker Hostel (☎ 4318 2310; www.instantsleep.de; Max Brauer Allee 277; dm €15-20, s/d €28/44; ☎ ☹; ☎ Sternschanze) Brightly painted murals distract you from this place's relatively spartan surrounds. It's friendly, though, and well located in the happening Schanzenviertel district.

Auf dem Stintfang (☎ 313 488; www.jugendherberge.de; Alfred-Wegener-Weg 5; dm €19-22, d €47; ☎ ☹; ☎ Landungsbrücken) Convenient, modern and clean, this DJH hostel overlooks the harbour. With lots of large, noisy school groups, however, it's very keen on rules, and you're locked out for part of the day.

Hotel Pension Annen Hof (☎ 243 426; www.hotelannenhof.de; Lange Reihe 23; s/d €40/70; ☎ Hauptbahnhof) Behind the grubby façade, Annen Hof's surprisingly attractive rooms have polished wooden floorboards and bright colour schemes.

Kogge (☎ 312 872; www.kogge-hamburg.de; Bernhard-Nocht-Strasse 59; s/d €29.50/48.50; ☎ Reeperbahn) Quirky themed rock 'n' roll pub with a vast array of rooms to choose from (see the website) and late check-out.

Schanzenstern (☎ 439 8441; www.schanzenstern.de; Bartelsstrasse 12; dm €18, s/d/tr €36/52/62; ☎ ☹; ☎ Sternschanze) This backpackers hostel has older rooms, but it's right in the heart of Schanzenviertel and has a healthy café that becomes a popular bar at night.

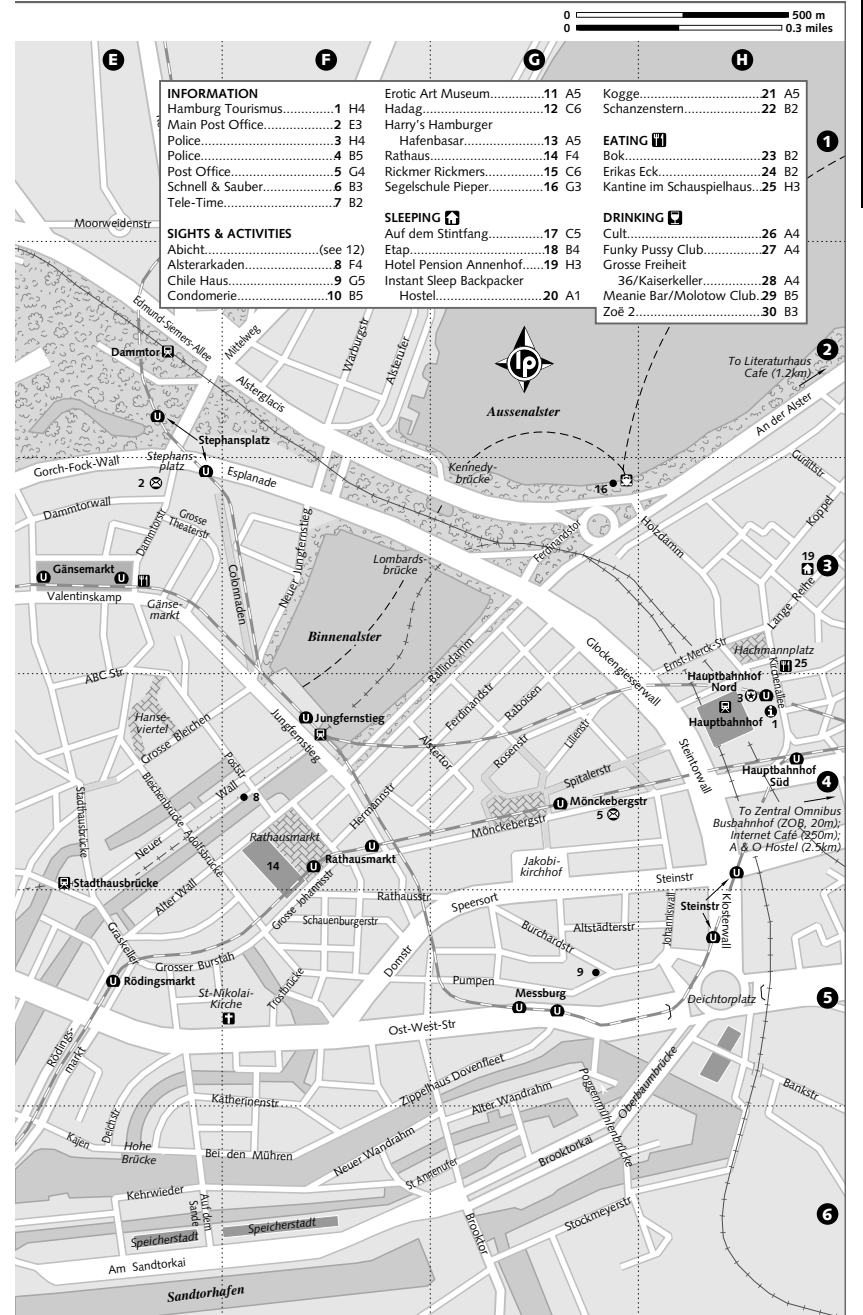
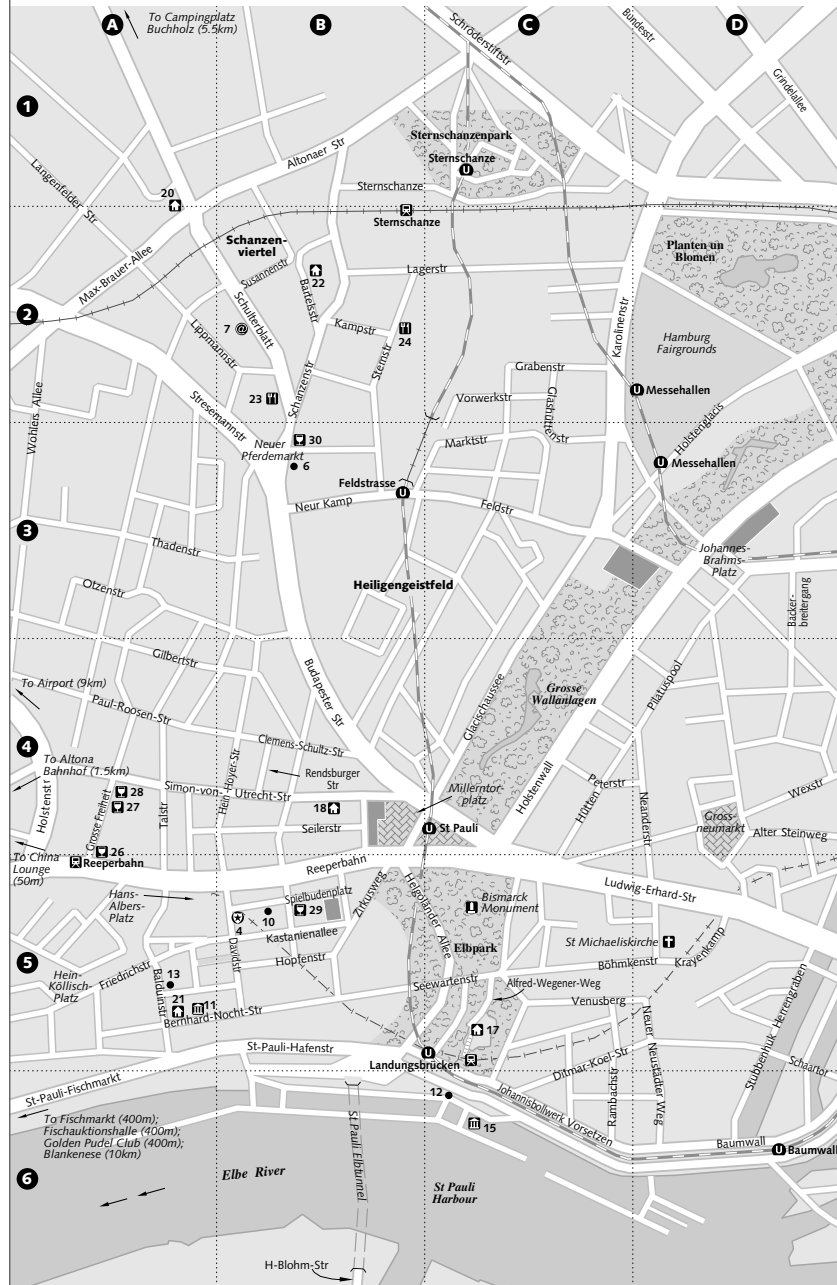
Etap (☎ 3176 5620; www.etaphotel.com; Simon-von-Utrecht Strasse 64; s/d €44/52; ☎ ☹; ☎ St Pauli) Being just around the corner from the Reeperbahn, this is an unusually central outlet for this budget chain. Its bathrooms are better than older Etap outlets, but it does attract many groups, including groups of boozy blokes.

Eating

The Schanzenviertel area swarms with cheap eateries; try **Schulterblatt** for Portuguese outlets or **Susanenstrasse** for Asian and Turkish. Conversely, beware that many fish restaurants around the Landungsbrücken are rather overrated and touristy.

Erikas Eck (☎ 433 545; Sternstrasse 98; mains €5.50-10; ☹ 7-2pm Mon-Fri, 7pm-9am Sat, midnight-9am Sun) Hamburg's night-owls flock to this red-eye specialist, which starts serving breakfast (the

HAMBURG



belegte Brötchen plus accompaniments) from midnight.

Kantine im Schauspielhaus (☎ 2487 1239; Kirchenallee 39; lunches €4.50-6.50; ☎ noon-3pm Mon-Fri; (M) Hauptbahnhof) There's as much theatre in this bustling basement restaurant as there is on the stage above, as busy waiters patrol between gossiping thespians.

Literaturhaus Café (☎ 220 1300; Schwanenwik 38; dishes €5-15; (M) Hauptbahnhof) With golden walls and heavy chandeliers, this stunningly baroque café positively glows, as you will too after partaking of its Mediterranean bistro fare. It's northeast of the train station.

Bok (☎ 4318 3597; Schulterblatt 3; mains €9-15; (M) Feldstrasse/Sternschanze) Thai, Korean and Japanese food is on the menu at this cool but casual pan-Asian restaurant in the Schanzenviertel.

Drinking & Entertainment

Zoë 2 (Neuer Pferdemarkt 17; ☎ from noon; (M) Feldstrasse) The battered sofas, rough-hewn walls and old lampshades prove the ad-hoc, second-hand look is a Hamburg hit. Bottled beers and cocktails provide all the sophistication needed.

Meanie Bar/Molotow Club (☎ 310 845; www.molotowclub.com; Spielbudenplatz 5; ☎ from 6pm; (M) Reeperbahn) One of the few venues along the Reeperbahn with real local cred, the retro Meanie Bar sits above the Molotow Club, where an alternative, independent music scene thrives.

Cult (☎ 2982 2180; Grosse Freiheit 2; ☎ from 11pm Thu-Sat; (M) Reeperbahn) Claiming to be Hamburg's most beautiful club, Cult serves up an unintimidating, good-time mix of '70s and '80s music in its shiny, cathedral-like main room.

Grosse Freiheit 36/Kaiserkeller (☎ 3177 7811; Grosse Freiheit 36; ☎ from 10pm Tue-Sat; (M) Reeperbahn) Wedged between live sex theatres and peep

shows, this is popular for live rock and pop, particularly as the Beatles once played in the basement Kaiserkeller.

Funky Pussy Club (☎ 314 236; Grosse Freiheit 34; ☎ from 11pm Thu-Sat; (M) Reeperbahn) Artistically decorated (and dreadfully named), this plays mainstream chart-toppers, hip-hop, dance and house. Most drinks are €1 on a Thursday.

China Lounge (☎ 3197 6622; Nobistor 14; ☎ from 11pm Thu-Sat; (M) Reeperbahn) This trendy club has four areas playing electro, house, hip-hop and R&B – the main floor under a huge laughing Buddha. Thursday is students' evening.

Golden Pudel Club (☎ 3197 9930; Fischmarkt 27; ☎ from 10pm) In a ramshackle, almost derelict fisherman's hut near the waterfront, this underground bar/club plays an eclectic mix of, electronic, hip-hop, R&B and reggae. Take bus 112 to Hafentreppe.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Hamburg's **airport** (code HAM; www.flughafen-hamburg.de) has flights to domestic and European cities, including on low-cost **Air Berlin** (www.airberlin.com).

For Ryanair flights, see Getting There & Around (p508).

BUS

The **Zentral Omnibus Busbahnhof** (Central bus station; ☎ 247 5765; Adenauer Allee 78) is near the Hauptbahnhof and popular for services to central and eastern Europe. **Eurolines** (☎ 4024 7106; www.eurolines.com) has buses to Prague (€55/98 one way/return) and Warsaw (€55/86). Several specialist operators are also in the building.

Autokraft (☎ 208 8660) travels to Berlin frequently for €24/39 one way/return. Elsewhere, **Berlin Liniensbus** (☎ 030-861 9331; www.berlinliniensbus.de) and **Rainbow Tours** (☎ 3209 3309; www.rainbowtours.de, in German) are good for travel to Berlin or London, respectively.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The A1 (Bremen-Lübeck) and A7 (Hanover-Kiel) cross south of the Elbe River.

TRAIN

Remember there are two main stations: Hamburg Hauptbahnhof and Hamburg Altona (west of the city centre). There are frequent RE/RB trains to Lübeck (€10, 45 minutes), as well as EC trains to Berlin (€48 to €58, 1½ to two hours), Cologne (€68 to €78, four hours)

and Munich (€115, six to nine hours). Overnight services also go to international destinations such as Copenhagen and Paris.

Getting Around

There's an integrated system of buses, U-Bahn and S-Bahn trains. Day tickets, brought from machines before boarding, cost €5.80, or €4.90 after 9am.

LÜBECK

☎ 0451 / pop 215,000

Oh, how the mighty are fallen! But Lübeck doesn't look like she cares. Once the 'queen' of the Hanseatic League – a powerful medieval trading bloc – she's now just a provincial town, yet she still boasts an extraordinary appearance.

The two pointed cylindrical towers of Lübeck's Holstentor (gate) lean towards each other across the stepped gable that joins them, behind which the streets are lined with merchants' homes and spired churches. It's hardly surprising this 12th-century gem is on Unesco's World Heritage List. The place looks so good you could eat it – especially the colourful displays of its famous marzipan, which you actually can.

Orientation

Lübeck's old town is on an island ringed by the canalised Trave River, a 10-minute walk east of the train station. Leaving the station, head through the bus station and veer left along Hansestrasse. The tourist office is just across the Puppenbrücke (Doll Bridge), near the Holstentor.

Information

Lübeck Travemünde Tourismus (☎ 01805 882 233, premium rate; www.lubeck-tourism.de; Holstentorplatz 1; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Jun-Sep; 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Oct-May) With café, internet terminals and a discount card.

Sights

The cute city gate or **Holstentor** (☎ 122 4129; adult/concession €5/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) is Lübeck's museum as well as its symbol. It's been under renovation, but should be out of its *trompe l'oeil* wraps by now. The six gabled brick buildings east of the Holstentor are the **Salzspeicher**, once used to store the salt that was pivotal to Lübeck's Hanseatic trade.

Nearby, the Trave River forms a moat around the old town, and if you do one thing in Lübeck in summer, it should be a circular **boat tour** around the river. Just jump on the boats that leave frequently from the Holstentorbrücke between April and September. Prices are adult/student €7/5.50.

Lübeck's seven churches are all different. The shattered bells of the **Marienkirche** (Schüsselbuden 13; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) still lie where they fell after a WWII bombing raid. There's also a little devil sculpture outside, with an amusing tale (in English). The tower left in the **Petrikirche** (Schmiedstrasse; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 11am-4pm Tue-Sun, to 6pm mid-Nov–mid-Dec, closed Feb) affords superb views.

Have a look at the **Rathaus** (Town Hall) before heading to **JG Niederegger** (Breite Strasse 89) opposite. This is Lübeck's mecca of chocolate-coated **marzipan**, with toothsome sweets and an adjoining café.

Lübeck has 90 *Gänge* (walkways) and *Höfe* (courtyards) tucked away behind its main streets, the most famous being the **Füchtingshof** (Glockengiesserstrasse 25; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm) and the **Glandorps Gang** (Glockengiesserstrasse 41-51).

The **Günter Grass-Haus** (☎ 122 4192; www.guenter-grass-haus.de; Glockengiesserstrasse 21; adult/concession €4/2.20; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Dec, 11am-5pm Nov-Mar), celebrates the author of *The Tin Drum* (*Die Blechtrommel*), who caused great controversy in 2006 by admitting after decades of silence his WWII involvement in the SS. The **Buddenbrookhaus** (☎ 122 4190; www.buddenbrookhaus.de; Mengstrasse 4; adult/concession €5/2.60, 'Kombi' card incl Günter Grass-Haus €7/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Dec, 11am-5pm Nov-Mar) commemorates Thomas (*Death in Venice*) Mann.

Sleeping

Campingplatz Schönböcken (☎ 893 090; fax 892 287; Steinrader Damm 12; cap site per person/tent/car €4.50/3.50/1; ☎ Apr-Oct) This modern camping ground has a kiosk, entertainment room and playground, although two readers have complained about the lack of shade. It's 15 minutes by bus west of the city centre (take bus 7).

Jugendgästehaus Altstadt (☎ 702 0399; www.jugendherberge.de; Mengstrasse 33; junior/senior €17.90/20.90) If you prefer convenience, opt for this central DJH hostel. It isn't particularly new, but it's cosy and comfortable enough.

Vor dem Burgtor (☎ 334 33; www.jugendherberge.de; Am Gertrudenkirchhof 4; junior/senior €16.80/19.80; ☎)

CHEAPER HARBOUR TOURS

If you want to acquaint yourself with Hamburg's harbour for less, there are a couple of ferry lines you can travel on, using an ordinary public transport day pass (€4.90 after 9am). For a thorough 'tour' catch Line 62 from the Landungsbrücken to Finkenwerder. Change here for the Line 64 to Teufelsbrück. Wander back towards town to Neumühlen, and take Line 62 back to Landungsbrücken.

Those fussier about their furnishings might prefer this huge, modern place. However, it's popular with school groups, and outside the old town – just.

Hotel zur Alten Stadtmauer (☎ 737 02; www.hotel-stadtmauer.de; An der Mauer 57; s/d with shared bathroom from €38/65, with private bathroom from €45/75) With creaky wooden floors, pine furniture and splashes of red or yellow, this simple 25-room hotel is bright and cheerful. Back rooms overlook the river.

Two very cheap and basic places are **Sleep-Inn** (☎ 719 20; www.cvjm-luebeck.de/cvjm; Grosse Petersgrube 11; dm €12.50 without breakfast; ☒ mid-Jan–mid-Dec) and the **Rucksackhotel** (☎ 706 892; www.rucksack-hotel-luebeck.de; Kanalstrasse 70; dm €13-15, d €34-40, linen €3, breakfast €3-5; ☒). The latter has a vegetarian café open to the public.

Eating

It's good to make lunch your main meal in Lübeck, where many restaurants have great lunch deals of only €5.50 for one or two courses.

Suppentopf (☎ 400 8136; Fleischerstrasse 36; soups €3.50; ☒ 11am-4pm Mon-Fri, closed Jul & Aug) Join Lübeck's office workers for a stand-up lunch of delicious, often spicy soup.

Tipasa (☎ 706 0451; Schlumacherstrasse 12-14; mains €3.60-16) Pizzas, curries and other budget meals are served below the faux caveman frescos of animals and Australian Aboriginal dot paintings.

Schiffergesellschaft (☎ 767 76; Breite Strasse 2; mains €10-23) Ships' lanterns, 17th-century ship models and orange Chinese-style lamps with revolving maritime silhouettes hang from the wooden beams of this wonderful, dimly lit, 500-year-old guildhall. Staff in long white aprons serve fishy Frisian specialities and local beer.

Getting There & Around

Lübeck's **airport** (code LBC; www.flughafen-luebeck.de) is linked to London by budget carrier **Ryanair**

(www.ryanair.com) and to Gdansk, Poland by low-cost carrier **WizzAir** (www.wizzair.com).

Trains head to Hamburg at least once an hour (€10, 45 minutes). Trains to/from Copenhagen also stop here.

Bus journeys around town cost €1.40 to €2.15, depending on distance.

GERMANY DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Germany's accommodation is well organised, though some cities are short on budget hotels – private rooms are a good option in such situations. Accommodation usually includes breakfast. Look for signs saying *Zimmer frei* (rooms available) or *Fremdenzimmer* (tourist rooms). Most tourist offices offer a *Zimmervermittlung* (room-finding service), sometimes at a small charge.

Camping

There are more than 2000 organised camping grounds in Germany. Most are open April to September, but several hundred stay open all year round. Make sure you get permission before camping on private property. The best source of information is local tourist offices.

Hostels

The **Deutsches Jugendherbergswerk** (DJH; ☎ 05231-740 10; www.djh.de) coordinates all Hostelling International (HI) hostels in Germany. Almost all German hostels are open year-round. Guests must be members of an HI-affiliated organisation or join the DJH when checking in. The annual fee is €10/17.50 for juniors/seniors (above/below 26 years of age). If you don't have a hostel-approved sleeping sheet, it usually costs from €2.50 to €3.50 to hire one. Breakfast is always included.

Prior booking or early arrival determines who gets rooms. In Bavaria, the strict maximum age is 26. Most hostels have a curfew, which may be as early as 10pm in small towns.

DJH *Jugendgästehäuser* (youth guest-houses) offer better facilities, freer hours and smaller dorms at marginally higher prices. Better yet, most tourist towns have one or more private hostels offering much more relaxed fun and freedom aimed at backpackers.

Pensions & Hotels

Pensions offer the basics of hotel comfort without asking hotel prices. Many are private homes, often a bit out of the centre of town. It's easiest to arrange bookings through tourist offices.

Cheap hotel rooms are hard to find during summer. Average budget prices are €35 for a single and €50 for a double (without bathroom). Rates usually include a filling breakfast.

ACTIVITIES

Germany is ideal for hiking and mountaineering; popular areas include the Black Forest, the Harz Mountains, Saxon Switzerland, the Thuringian Forest and the Bavarian Alps. Good sources of information on hiking and mountaineering are **Verband Deutscher Gebirgs- und Wandervereine** (Federation of German Hiking Clubs; ☎ 0561-938 730; www.wanderverband.de) and **Deutscher Alpenverein** (German Alpine Club; ☎ 089-140 030; www.alpenverein.de).

The Bavarian Alps have the most extensive area for winter sports. Cross-country skiing is also good in the Black Forest and Harz Mountains. Local tourist offices are the best sources of information.

Eastern Germany has much to offer cyclists in the way of lightly travelled back roads, especially in the flat and less-populated north. There's also an extensive cycling trail along the Elbe River.

BUSINESS HOURS

Shops are generally open from 8am or 9am to 6pm (or in cities 8pm) Monday to Friday and usually 9am to 2pm (again later in cities) on Saturdays, but closed on public holidays. Except for a few rebels around train stations, by law everything retail is shut on Sunday – and many a charming town can seem utterly dead and deserted as a result. Don't expect to find the German equivalent of a 7-Eleven outside of petrol and train stations.

Other businesses are generally open at the following times:

Banks ☒ 8.30am to 1pm and 2.30pm to 4pm Monday to Friday and until 5.30pm on Thursday, banks close on public holidays.

Bars ☒ around 6pm, while most nightclubs kick off at 11pm.

Museums ☒ closed on Monday or Tuesday.

Restaurants ☒ 11am to midnight, often closing from 3pm to 6pm.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Although the usual precautions should be taken, crimes against travellers are rare in Germany. Africans, Asians and southern Europeans may encounter racial prejudice, especially in eastern Germany. The animosity is generally directed against immigrants, not tourists.

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Germany caters reasonably well to the needs of *Behinderte* (disabled) travellers, with access ramps or lifts where necessary in most public buildings. Assistance is usually required when boarding public transport. If travelling on Deutsche Bahn distance services, you can arrange this when buying your ticket.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Many tourist offices offer local discount cards, generally including free public transport and free or discounted entry to attractions.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Embassies & Consulates in Germany

All embassies are in Berlin.

Australia (Map pp448-9; ☎ 030-880 0880; Wallstrasse 76-78)

Canada (Map pp448-9; ☎ 030-203 120; Friedrichstrasse 95)

France (Map pp448-9; ☎ 030-590 039 000; Pariser Platz 5)

Ireland (Map pp448-9; ☎ 030-220 720; Friedrichstrasse 200)

The Netherlands (Map pp448-9; ☎ 030-209 560; Klosterstrasse 50)

New Zealand (Map pp448-9; ☎ 030-206 210; Friedrichstrasse 60)

South Africa (Map pp448-9; ☎ 030-825 2711; Friedrichstrasse 60)

UK (Map pp448-9; ☎ 030-204 570; Wilhelmstrasse 70-71)

USA (Map pp448-9; ☎ 030-238 5174; Neustädtische Kirchstrasse 4-5)

German Embassies & Consulates Abroad

German embassies can be found in many countries:

Australia (☎ 02-6270 1911; www.germanembassy.org.au; 119 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

Canada (☎ 613-232 1101; www.ottawa.diplo.de; 1 Waverley St, Ottawa ON K2P 0T8)

New Zealand (☎ 04-473 6063; www.wellington.diplo.de; 90-92 Hobson St, Wellington 6011)

GETTING INTO TOWN

Bus 6 (€2.15) goes to the Hauptbahnhof and the neighbouring central bus station. Services travel three times an hour between 6am and 7pm, and half-hourly after that until 11pm (and periodically during the night). Journey time is 25 minutes.

UK (☎ 020-7824 1300; www.german-embassy.org.uk; 23 Belgrave Sq, London SW1X 8PZ)
USA (☎ 202-298 4000; www.germany-info.org; 4645 Reservoir Rd, NW Washington, DC 20007-1998)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

January

Carnival season (Shrovetide, known as *Karneval* or *Fasching*) Most notably in Cologne, Munich, Düsseldorf and Mainz.

February

International Toy Fair Held in Nuremberg.

International Film Festival Held in Berlin.

March

Frankfurt Music Fair and Frankfurt Jazz Fair (☎ 069-757 50; http://musik.messefrankfurt.com)

Spring Fairs Held throughout Germany.

April

Stuttgart Jazz Festival

Munich Ballet Days

Walpurgisnacht Festivals Traditional pagan celebrations held the night before May Day in the Harz Mountains.

May

Dresden International Dixieland Jazz Festival
Dresden Music Festival (☎ 0351-486 6317; www.musikfestspiele.com) Held in last week of May into first week of June.

June

Munich Film Festival

International Theatre Festival Held in Freiburg.

July

Folk festivals Held throughout Germany.

Berlin Love Parade

Munich Opera Festival

Richard Wagner Festival (☎ 0921-787 80; www.bayreutherfestspiele.de) Europe's largest festival dedicated to the wild man of opera, held in Bayreuth.

August

Heidelberg Castle Festival (www.schlossfestspiele-heidelberg.de) Theatre festival held in the famous castle.

Wine festivals Held throughout the Rhineland area.

September & October

Oktoberfest (www.oktoberfest.de) Held in Munich.

Frankfurt Book Fair (www.frankfurt-book-fair.com) The international publishing industry's biggest annual event.

Bremen Freimarkt

November

St Martin's Festival Lantern processions and feasting, held throughout Rhineland and Bavaria.

December

Christmas fairs Held throughout Germany.

FOOD & DRINK

Germany is a meat-and-potatoes kind of country, although vegetarians shouldn't go hungry. Students can often eat quite cheaply at *mensas* (university cafeterias). Other popular cheap options are the ubiquitous doner kebab (Germany's favourite fast food) or a takeaway *China-Pfanne* (a noodle dish). Asian restaurants are generally quite fast food-oriented and will usually do vegetarian dishes on demand. Sunday brunch buffets are a great institution at many cafés and restaurants.

Wurst (sausage), in its many hundred of forms, is by far the most universal main dish in Germany. Regional favourites include *Bratwurst* (spiced sausage), *Weisswurst* (veal sausage), *Blutwurst* (blood sausage) and of course the Berlin *Currywurst*. Other popular main dishes include *Rippenspeer* (spare ribs), *Sauerbraten* (roast pork) and many forms of *Schnitzel* (breaded pork, chicken or veal cutlet).

Potatoes feature prominently in German meals, often as *Bratkartoffeln* (fried), *Kartoffelpüree* (mashed) or Swiss *Rösti* (grated, then fried). Salads, pasta and sandwiches are increasingly a part of the menu at even the most stalwart German restaurants and cafés.

Popular desserts include *Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte* (Black Forest cherry cake), as well as endless varieties of *Apfeltasche* (apple pastry).

At the liquid end of things, German beer is a cultural phenomenon that must be fully appreciated. *Helles Bier* is light, *Schwarzbier* or *Dunkles Bier* is dark, and *Pils* is slightly more bitter than normal lager, while *Alt* is darker and more full-bodied. A speciality is *Weizenbier*, made with wheat instead of barley malt and served either as *Kristall* (filtered) or *Hefe* (with yeast).

German wines are fairly inexpensive and are typically white and light and range from dry to very fruity. The Rhine and Moselle Valleys are the classic German wine-growing regions.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Germans are generally tolerant of homosexuality, but gays (*Schwule*) and lesbians (*Lesben*) still don't enjoy quite the same social acceptance as in some other northern European countries. Most progressive are the large cities, particularly Berlin, Hamburg and Cologne. The age of consent is 18 years. Christopher Street Day (Gay Pride) festivals are held in Berlin, Hamburg, Mannheim and Würzburg in June, and in July in Cologne.

HOLIDAYS

New Year's Day 1 January

Easter March/April – Good Friday to Easter Sunday

Labour Day 1 May

Ascension Day May/June, 40 days after Easter

Pentecost/Whit Monday May/June, 50 days after Easter

Corpus Christi 10 days after Pentecost

Day of German Unity 3 October

All Saints' Day 1 November

Day of Prayer & Repentance 18 November

Christmas 24-26 December

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet cafés are common. And more and more regular cafés, hostels and hotels offer wi-fi access – usually called WLAN in Germany.

LANGUAGE

The official language, *Hochdeutsch* (High German), is universally understood. English is widely understood by young or educated Germans, but less so outside big cities, especially in eastern Germany. See the Language chapter (p12) for pronunciation guidelines and useful words and phrases.

LEGAL MATTERS

Police in Germany are well trained and usually treat tourists with respect. You are required by law to prove your identity if asked by the police, so always make sure you carry your passport, or an identity card if you're an EU citizen.

MONEY

Credit Cards

Credit cards are especially useful for emergencies, although they are sometimes not accepted by budget hotels and restaurants outside major cities. Most widely accepted are MasterCard, Visa and American Express.

Exchanging Money

The easiest places to change cash in Germany are banks or foreign-exchange counters at airports and train stations, particularly those of the Reisebank. Main banks in larger cities generally have money-changing machines for after-hours use, though they don't often give good rates. The Reisebank charges a flat €3 to change cash.

There are ATMs virtually everywhere in Germany; most accept Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Eurocard, Plus and Cirrus. Typically, withdrawals over the counter against cards at major banks cost a flat €5 per transaction.

Tipping

Restaurant bills include a service charge and tipping is not compulsory but is common. If you're satisfied with the service, add about 5% to 10%. It's customary to tip as you're paying. If you have the exact amount, just say '*Stimmt so*' (that's fine).

POST

Standard post office hours are 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and to noon on Saturday. Many train station post offices stay open later or offer limited services outside these hours. Mail can be sent *Postlagernde* (poste restante) to the main post office in your city. There's no fee for collection, but German post offices will hold mail for two weeks only. The postage for letters up to 20g within Europe is €0.55, and outside Europe €1.55.

TELEPHONE

To ring abroad from Germany, dial ☎ 00 followed by the country code, area code and number. The country code for Germany is ☎ 49. An operator can be reached on ☎ 0180-200 1033.

Home direct services for reverse-charge (or collect) calls are only possible to some countries. The prefix to call is ☎ 0800 followed by the home number. For the USA dial ☎ 888 225 5388 (AT&T) or ☎ 888 0013 (Sprint); for Canada ☎ 080 1014; for Australia ☎ 080 0061 (Telstra); and for Britain ☎ 080 0044.

For English-language directory assistance within Germany call ☎ 118 37 (☎ 118 33 in German); both cost €0.25 plus €0.99 per minute. International information is ☎ 118 34 (€0.55 per 20 seconds).

Phonecards

Many payphones in Germany only accept phonecards, available for €5, €10 and €20 at post offices, kiosks, tourist offices and banks. Prepaid calling cards are good for international calls. A minimum €0.10 is required in phones that still take coins.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Before you even leave for Germany, you can consult the **German National tourist**

office (Deutsche Zentrale für Tourismus, DZT; www.visits-to-germany.com).

VISAS

Americans, Australians, Britons, Canadians, Israelis, Japanese, New Zealanders and Singaporeans require no visa. Citizens of the EU and some other Western European countries can enter on an official identity card. Germany is part of the Schengen visa scheme. Three months is the usual limit of stay.