

# Lower Saxony



LOWER SAXONY

Confusingly, Lower Saxony lies in the north and evinces the sort of character opinion pollsters would describe as 'Middle Germany'. Yes, Niedersachsen, as it's called in German, lacks the big set-piece or bold image of some fellow states, but that doesn't make it uninteresting. Instead, it presents a mosaic, a panoply, a potpourri. With an array of wildly different attractions, visitors can certainly mix it up in Germany's second biggest state: steer a Volkswagen over an obstacle course in Wolfsburg's Autostadt theme park, smell the roses in Hanover's Herrenhäuser Gardens, or even pay a sobering visit to Bergen-Belsen.

The capital, Hanover, has a workaholic reputation as a host of trade fairs, especially the enormous communications show, CeBit. But cute medieval towns, cutting-edge science centre Phaeno, and a park of life-size dinosaur models make it a perfect state for relaxation and families. Cycling the Fairy-Tale Road to Hamelin's engaging Renaissance museum or visiting the archaeological site of a Roman defeat at Osnabrück's 'Varusschlacht' will appeal to young and old.

Culture vultures will be kept happy, with an early example of Daniel Libeskind's striking architecture in Osnabrück's Felix-Nussbaum-Haus. Plus, beautiful Celle is so keen about its art it's launched the 'world's first 24-hour museum' (of sorts).

With a varied landscape of coast, river plains, moor and heath, there's also plenty of stuff for nature lovers. In how many places can you say that you've walked to an island? Head north to where Deutschland meets the North Sea, and Lower Saxony offers that opportunity too.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Adrenaline Rush** Test your driving skills at Volkswagen's Autostadt theme park (p622) in Wolfsburg
- Quirky Old Town** Fall head over heels for the wobbly city of Lüneburg (p611)
- Living History** Travel back in time to the Renaissance, in the Pied Piper's town of Hamelin (p603)
- Pilgrimage** Pay your respects to Anne Frank at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp (p610)
- Green Haven** Admire the Niki de Saint Phalle grotto at Hanover's Herrenhäuser Gärten (p595)
- Off-beat Experience** Walk to an East Frisian island across the seabed at low tide (p637)



POPULATION: 10.7 MILLION

AREA: 47,613 SQ KM

## HANOVER

☎ 0511 / pop 515,800

Hanover gets a bad rap. Local comedians dismiss it as 'the Autobahn exit between Göttingen and Walsrode'. News magazine *Der Spiegel* has written it off as having 'the most boring parties', and the rest of the world knows it as the host of the not particularly sexy CeBit communications trade show.

However, things aren't really so grim up north in Lower Saxony's state capital. The city also boasts acres of greenery. Its baroque Herrenhäuser Gärten (gardens) are a mini-Versailles, featuring a sparkly Niki de Saint Phalle Grotto. The compact centre, only partially reconstructed in a medieval style after WWII bombing, is adjoined to the east by the Eilenreide forest, and you can enjoy a few museums en route to the southern Maschsee (lake).

## History

Hanover was established around 1100 and became the residence of Heinrich der Löwe (see boxed text, p619) later that century. An early Hanseatic city, it developed into a prosperous seat of royalty and a major power by the Reformation.

It has links with Britain through a series of marriages. In 1714 the eldest son of Electress Sophie of Hanover, a granddaughter of James I of England (James VI of Scotland), ascended the British throne as George I while simultaneously ruling Hanover. This British-German union lasted until 1837.

In 1943, up to 80% of the centre and 50% of the entire city was destroyed by Allied bombing. The rebuilding plan included creating sections of reconstructed half-timbered houses and painstakingly rebuilding the city's prewar gems, such as the Opernhaus (Opera House), the Marktkirche and the Neues Rathaus (New Town Hall).

A few years ago, Hanover was hoping to be at the centre of world attention as the host of Expo 2000. However, only 18 million visitors turned up – less than half the number expected. Having been one of the 12 German host cities for the FIFA Football World Cup in 2006 at least gives the city something new to boast about.

## Orientation

The Hauptbahnhof (central train station) is located on the northeastern edge of the

city centre. The centre contains one of the largest pedestrianised areas in Germany, focusing on Georgstrasse and Bahnhofstrasse. Bahnhofstrasse heads southwest from the Hauptbahnhof, and Georgstrasse runs west-east from Steintor via the Kröpcke square to Georgsplatz. There's a subterranean shopping strip running below Bahnhofstrasse, from the Hauptbahnhof to just south of Kröpcke, called the Niki de Saint Phalle Promenade.

The Herrenhäuser Gärten are situated about 4km northwest of the city centre. The Messegelände, the main trade fairgrounds, are in the city's southeast (see boxed text, p596).

## Information

### DISCOUNT CARDS

**HannoverCard** (per 1/3 days €9/15) Available from the tourist office, this card offers unlimited public transport and discounted or free admission to museums etc. Group tickets for five available, too.

### EMERGENCY

**Medical emergency service** (☎ 314 044)

**Police** (☎ 110; Raschplatz) Beneath the overpass on the north side of the Hauptbahnhof.

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Teleclick Hannover** (Schillerstrasse 23; per hr €3; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun)

### LAUNDRY

**Waschsalon** (cnr Friesenstrasse & Eichstrasse; per wash €3.50; ☎ 6am-11pm)

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Hospital** (☎ 304 31; Marienstrasse 37)

### MONEY

There are several ATMs and a late-opening Reisebank in the Hauptbahnhof.

### POST

**Main post office** (Kurt-Schumacher-Strasse 4; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat)

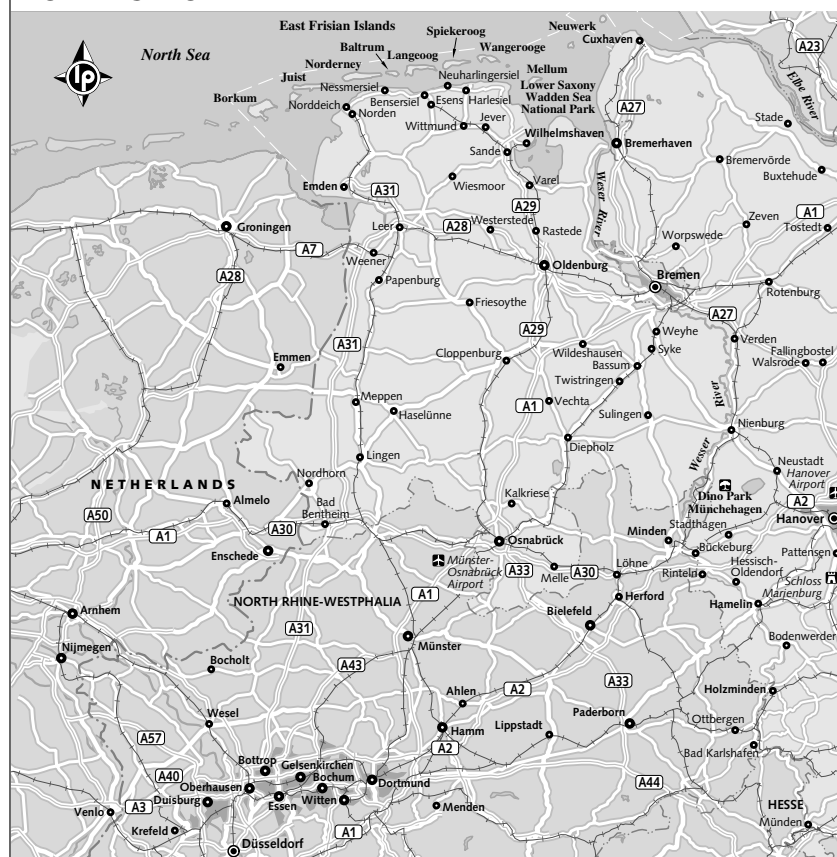
### TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist brochures are also available from the Neues Rathaus (see p594).

**Hannover Tourismus** (☎ information 1234 5111, room reservations 1234 555; www.hannover.de, www.hannover-tourismus.de; Ernst-August-Platz 8; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat)

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## Dangers &amp; Annoyances

The area around the Hauptbahnhof feels a bit dodgy after dark; there's a huge police presence there, but you should still use common sense. The red-light districts around Steintor to the southwest of the station and Ludwigstrasse to its north have been partly reclaimed by clubs and hotels, but it's still a good idea to stay reasonably vigilant in these areas at night.

## Sights &amp; Activities

## ROTHER FADEN

The city has painted a *Roter Faden* (red line) on pavements around the centre. Follow it with the help of the multilingual *Red Thread Guide* (€2), available from the tourist office,

for a quick 4.2km, do-it-yourself tour of the city's main highlights.

## NEUES RATHAUS

An excellent way to get your bearings in Hanover is to visit the Neues Rathaus (built in 1901–13) and travel 98m to the top in the **curved lift** (elevator; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 10am–6pm Apr–Nov) inside its green dome. There are several viewing platforms here, and while it's a novelty taking a lift that slants to stay within the dome, it's only on descent that you feel any gravitational swing. The cabin can take only five people at a time, so queues are inevitable.

In the downstairs lobby are four city models showing Hanover from the Middle Ages



to today. Comparing the models from 1939 and 1945 drives home the dramatic extent of WWII devastation.

## HERRENHÄUSER GÄRTEN

Largely modelled on the gardens at Versailles, the **Herrenhäuser Gärten** (☎ 1684 7576, 12345-333; www.herrenhaeuser-gaerten.de; ☎ 9am–sunset; Ⓞ 4 or 5 to Herrenhäuser Gärten) truly rank among Hanover's most memorable attractions. You need a couple of hours to do them justice, but they combine a couple of treats.

On the one hand, the Grosser Garten (Large Garden), Berggarten (Mountain Garden) and Georgengarten (Georgian Garden), are prime examples of why Hanover calls itself a city 'in green'. On the other, the statues, fountains

and coloured tile walls of the **Niki de Saint Phalle Grotto** (opened after her death in 2002) provide a magical showcase of the artist's work that could one day outshine Die Nanas (see below).

With its fountains, neat flowerbeds, trimmed hedges and shaped lawns, the 300-year-old **Grosser Garten** (admission €3, combined admission with Berggarten €4, child free Apr–early Oct, free mid-Oct–Mar) is the centrepiece of the experience. There's a maze near the northern entrance, while the **Grosse Fontäne** (Big Fountain; the tallest in Europe) at the southern end jets water up to 80m high. In summer, there are **Wasserspiele** (Water games; ☎ 11am–noon & 3–5pm Mon–Fri, 11am–noon & 2–5pm Sat & Sun Apr–early Oct) when all fountains are synchronised. During the **illuminations** (adult/concession €4/3; ☎ approximately 10pm Thu–Tue Jun–Aug, call for exact times) the gardens and fountains are atmospherically lit at night. Meanwhile there are summer concerts, Shakespearean dramas and more. Call or check the Herrenhäuser website for details.

North of the Grosser Garten lies the **Berggarten** (admission €2, combined admission with Grosser Garten €4, child free Apr–early Oct), with its great assortment of flora from around the world. Also here is the **Regenwaldhaus** (Tropical Rainforest House; ☎ 126 0420; www.regenwaldhaus.de; Herrenhäuser Strasse 4a; adult/concession €4.50/1.50; ☎ 9am–7pm, later on weekends in summer). Inside there's a fairly gimmicky and contrived virtual 'journey' to the Amazon. Things are much more pleasant in the attached tropical greenhouse.

Amid the lake-dotted Georgengarten (admission free), you'll find the **Wilhelm-Busch-Museum** (☎ 1699 9916; www.wilhelm-busch-museum.de; adult/concession €4.50/2.50; ☎ 10am–5pm Tue–Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun) containing a wealth of caricature, including works by Busch, Honoré Daumier and William Hogarth.

## DIE NANAS

The city government was inundated with nearly 20,000 letters of complaint when these three earth-mama **sculptures** were first installed beside the Leine River in 1974. Now, the voluptuous and fluorescent-coloured 'Sophie', 'Charlotte' and 'Caroline' by French artist Niki de Saint Phalle are among the city's most recognisable, and most loved, landmarks.

Indeed the Nanas helped make De Saint Phalle famous. Devout fans of her work will find that a direct trip to Leibnizufer (U-Bahn:

Markthalle Landtag) rewarding. Others could be left thinking 'Is that it?' In that case, wait until Saturday, when the extra attraction of a flea market takes place at the Nanas' feet.

**SPRENGEL MUSEUM**

It's the building as much as the curatorial policy that puts the **Sprengel Museum** (☎ 1684 3875; www.sprengel-museum.de; Kurt Schwitters Platz; adult/child under 12yr/concession €7/free/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun, 10am-8pm Tue) in such high esteem. Its huge interior spaces are brilliant for displaying its modern figurative, abstract and conceptual art, including a few works by Nolde, Chagall and Picasso. At the core of the collection are 300 works by Niki de Saint Phalle, a selection of which is usually on show. Take bus 131

from in front of the Hauptbahnhof to the Sprengelmuseum/Maschsee stop.

**MASCHSEE**

This artificial lake, built by the unemployed in one of the earliest Nazi-led public works projects, is now a favourite spot for boating and swimming. It's certainly the most central at just half an hour's walk away; otherwise take bus 131 to Sprengelmuseum/Maschsee.

A **ferry** (☎ 0172-541 5525; adult/child €3/1.50, tour €6/3) plies the lake from Easter to October in good weather, and there are sailing, pedal and rowing boats for hire. On the southeast bank, there's a free swimming beach, or **Strandbad** (☎ May-Aug), while in-line skaters glide by under the neighbouring trees.

**ALTSTADT**

Some of it is a postwar fake, but parts of Hanover's Altstadt (old town) still look appealingly quaint. The red-brick, Gothic **Marktkirche** (1349-59) in the market square has original elements, as do both the **Altes Rathaus** (begun 1455) across the market, and the nearby **Ballhof** (1649-64), a hall originally built for 17th-century badminton-type games.

However, the city re-created an entire row of **half-timbered houses** lining Kramerstrasse and Burgstrasse near the Marktkirche. The Renaissance façade of the **Leibnizhaus** is also a reconstruction; the house was once the home of mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). In front of the Leibnizhaus is the **Oskar-Winter-Brunnen** (Oskar Winter Fountain). If you make a wish and turn the small brass ring embedded in the ironwork three times, local lore has it that the wish will come true.

**OTHER MUSEUMS**

It's always worth checking listings for the **Kestner Gesellschaft** (Kestner Society; ☎ 701 200; www.kestner.org; Goseriende 11; adult/concession €5/2.50; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, to 9pm Thu). Having exhibited works by Otto Dix, Georg Grosz, Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee before they became famous, the society is still originating shows that later tour Europe. Its wonderfully light, high-ceilinged premises were once a bathhouse.

Decorative arts through the ages are covered at the **Kestner Museum** (☎ 1684 2120; Trammplatz 3; adult/concession €4/3, Fri free; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue & Thu-Sun, to 8pm Wed), where you'll see everything from Bauhaus-style cutlery to a very impressive collection of Greek and Egyptian antiquities.

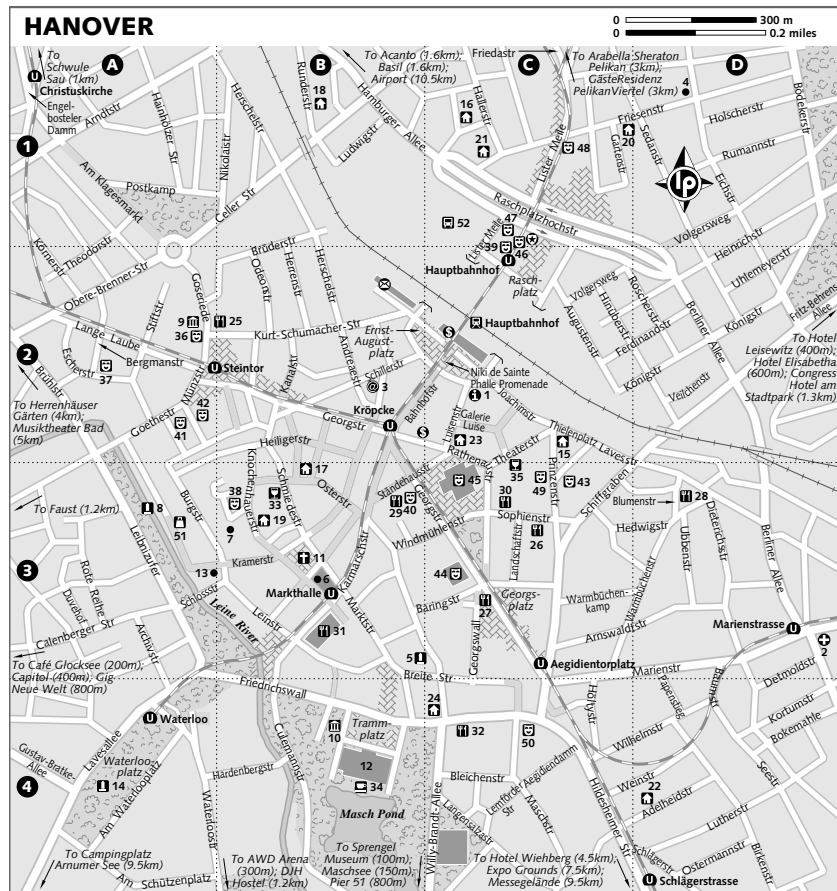
**WAR MEMORIALS**

In a city so devastated by war, it's not surprising to find a **peace bell**. Donated by sister city Hiroshima, it lies inside a steel-cross **Memorial to Our Dead** on Breite Strasse near the corner of Osterstrasse. Every 6 August at 8.15am, the date and time of the atomic detonation at Hiroshima, a delegation from both cities meets here to ring the bell. The neighbouring **Aegidienkirche Memorial** (1350) was bashed by artillery in 1943.

The winged angel **Waterloo Memorial** you see south of the Altstadt and west of the Neues Rathaus commemorates the German forces who fought at Waterloo.

**Festivals & Events**

The annual **Maschsee festival**, which includes drinking, performances and an enormous fireworks display, runs annually in early August. The international **fireworks festival** and competition at Herrenhäuser Gärten is another big summer event. People also come to Hanover from afar for the **International Jazz Festival**, held around Ascension Day in May/June.



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<b>SLEEPING ☑</b>	Der Gartensaal .....34 B4	Flea Market .....51 A3
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## ALL THE FUN OF THE TRADE FAIR

Coming to Hanover for a trade fair or Messe? You're part of a time-honoured tradition. The first export fair was held in August 1947 in the midst of all the rubble from WWII. As most hotels had been destroyed, the mayor made an appeal to citizens to provide beds for foreign guests. The people did, the money came and it's become a tradition; about a third more beds are available in private flats at fair-time (the only time they're offered) than in hotels.

The pre-eminent fair today is CeBit, a telecommunications and office information gathering that organisers claim is 'the largest trade show of any kind, anywhere in the world'. It's held every March and during the dotcom boom of the late 1990s had as many as 800,000 attendees. (More recent shows have attracted smaller crowds of around half a million visitors.) Another biggie is Hannover Messe, an industrial show in late April.

The Messegelände, the main trade fairgrounds, are in the city's southeast, served by tram/U-Bahn 8 (and during fair times 18) as well as IC and ICE trains. Tram/U-Bahn 6 serves the eastern part of the fairgrounds near the former Expo site.

During major fairs there's a full-service tourist office at the airport and an information pavilion at the fairgrounds, in addition to the main tourist office (see Information, p585).

Pressure on accommodation means you really need to book ahead – and be prepared for phenomenal price hikes too. Indeed some visitors choose to stay instead in Hildesheim, Celle (both of which up their own prices during these times) or even in Hamburg, and commute.

To organise a private room or hotel in Hanover, call ☎ 1234 5555.

## Sleeping

The tourist office books rooms, but for a pretty hefty €6.50 fee. Prices given here are those outside trade-show periods. During shows, they can double, triple and even quadruple. Check on the city website ([www.hannover.de](http://www.hannover.de)) or better yet ask the tourist office directly to ensure you're not unintentionally arriving during a trade-fair period.

## BUDGET

**Campingplatz Arnum See** (☎ 05101-3534; <http://camping-hannover.de>; Osterbruchweg 5, Arnum-Hemmingen; adult/car €5/2, tent €3-5; 🚻) In a pleasant leafy lakeside location south of the city, this extremely well-equipped camping ground has modern washing facilities, a restaurant, internet access, a playground and a separate areas for tents and caravans. Take bus 300 to Arnum Mitte, from where it's a five-minute walk. By road take A7 south to Laatzen, or B3 from Arnum and follow the signs.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 1317674; [www.jugendherberge.de/jh/hannover](http://www.jugendherberge.de/jh/hannover); Ferdinand-Wilhelm-Fricke-Weg 1; dm under/over 26yr from €18/21; 📺 📺 📺 📺 📺 ; 🚻 3 or 7 to Fischerhof) This huge, space-lab-looking structure houses a modern hostel with breakfast room and terrace bar overlooking the river. You feel like you're out in the suburbs when you arrive, but soon realise it's only a short walk to the Maschsee. All mod cons are provided.

**Etap Hotel** (☎ 235 5570; [www.etaphotel.com](http://www.etaphotel.com); Runde Strasse 7; s/d €40/50; 📺 📺 📺 ) This garish but comfortable chain hotel is not in particularly salubrious surroundings, but is handy for the train station.

**City Hotel am Thielenplatz** (☎ 327 691; [www.smartcityhotel.de](http://www.smartcityhotel.de); Thielenplatz 2; s €40-50, d €50-60; 📺 📺 ) This central place is metamorphosing from boring cheapie to 'budget boutique' beauty. The reception and bar have already spread their butterfly wings, having been remodelled in opulent style with red leather wall panels, black-and-white leaf-patterned wallpaper and lots of wood laminate. The rooms are expecting a 1950s-style retro refit, but were previously no-irony-intended, humble 1980s, so check the latest when booking.

**Hotel Leisewitz** (☎ 288 7940; [www.hotel-leisewitz.de](http://www.hotel-leisewitz.de); Leisewitzstrasse 11; s €50-90, d €75-115; 📺 ) Granies on acid alert! A psychedelic mishmash of chintzy patterns – florals, stripes and checks – is crammed into a small space in this friendly, family-run hotel. Fans of minimalism will hate it, but it's got bags of character and is pleasantly located on a leafy residential street. To get here take bus 128 to Plathnerstrasse.

**Gästeresidenz Pelikanviertel** (☎ 399 90; [www.gaesteresidenz-pelikanviertel.de](http://www.gaesteresidenz-pelikanviertel.de); Pelikanstrasse 11; s €40-230, d €60-260, tr €80-280; 📺 ; 📺 9 to Pelikanstrasse) Upmarket student residence meets budget hotel, this huge complex alongside the Arabella Sheraton has a wide range of very pleasant Ikea-ish

rooms. Some are split over two levels, with the bathroom and cupboard at hall level, and stairs to the bed, desk and kitchenette. Prices fluctuate wildly according to trade fair periods, but in quieter seasons it's excellent value indeed.

## MIDRANGE

**CJVM City Hotel** (☎ 360 70; [www.cityhotelhannover.de](http://www.cityhotelhannover.de); Limburgstrasse 3; s €45-70, d €65-100; 📺 ) Deliciously candy-striped curtains and bed bases (eg, yellow and green in some rooms) add a touch of elegance and chic to this quiet but central hotel. Be warned, however, that while doubles are perfectly adequate in size, the singles are a little too small.

**City Hotel Flamme** (☎ 388 8004; [www.cityhotelflamme.de](http://www.cityhotelflamme.de); Lammstrasse 3; s €50-65, d €75-90, q €120-140; 📺 📺 ) The rooms of this relaxed hotel-pension open onto balconies facing a large internal courtyard, which has an eating area and glassed-in front wall. If you don't like the area around the train station, they will pick you up from there for free, and you can forego breakfast if you wish to pay slightly less.

**Hotel Stella** (☎ 811 2050; [www.hotelstella.de](http://www.hotelstella.de); Adelheidstrasse; s/d from €60/80; 📺 📺 ) Pleasant if unspectacular, the Stella is a small hotel with a big heart and decent-sized rooms (plus odd floor numbering and a jolting lift). With luggage, it's a short U-Bahn ride from the Hauptbahnhof, but once you've dropped your bags, you can easily walk into town.

**Hanns Lilje-Haus** (☎ 124 1698; [www.hanns-lilje-haus.de](http://www.hanns-lilje-haus.de); Knochenhauerstrasse 33; s/d from €65/80, breakfast per person €6; 📺 ) No-one could take offence at the recently renovated rooms of this church-run hotel, which are decorated in the most neutral tones. However, they are quite spacious for such a central establishment and offer a good degree of comfort.

**Lühmanns Hotel am Rathaus** (☎ 326 268; [www.hotelamrathaus.de](http://www.hotelamrathaus.de); Friedrichswall 21; s €60-85, d €80-120, ste €150; 📺 📺 ) Posters from the nearby Kestner Museum adorn the halls here, and the rooms themselves are tastefully decorated with liberal use of reds, blues and black, as well as the occasional bit of original art. Although the hotel's on a busy street, double-glazing keeps noise at bay.

**Hotel Wiehberg** (☎ 879 990; [www.hotel-wiehberg.de](http://www.hotel-wiehberg.de); Wiehbergstrasse 55a; s/d €70/90; 📺 📺 ; 🚻 1 or 2 to Dorfstrasse) The patterned carpets mean the rooms of this historic villa could never be described as Zen. However, they do feature

low Japanese-style beds, set on rails so that guests can indulge in a little feng shui of their own by repositioning them. The hotel's in a leafy residential neighbourhood.

**Hotel Königshof am Funkturm** (☎ 339 80; [www.koenigshof-hannover.de](http://www.koenigshof-hannover.de); Friesenstrasse 65; s €70-110, d €100-125; 📺 📺 ) An eclectic mix of religious statues and ethnic sculptures (plus an old Rolls Royce) greet you as you roll your suitcase onto the Persian carpets here. This rambling abode has an older, cheaper wing out the back – where the bathrooms are huge – and a modern wing with corporate-oriented 'comfort', 'business' and 'deluxe' rooms. The location is handy for the train station, if somewhat sleazy.

**Hotel Alpha** (☎ 341 535; [www.hotelalpha.de](http://www.hotelalpha.de); Friesenstrasse 19; s/d €95/125; 📺 ) Although it's in a less grotty part of the same street, the Alpha is like Hotel Königshof in having quirky decorations. Here, however, the statues and marionettes are sweeter and more bucolic. There's a trompe l'oeil of an Italian piazza in the breakfast room and the rooms are lovely and homy.

## TOP END

**Arabella Sheraton Pelikan** (☎ 909 30; [pelikanhotel@arabellasheraton.com](http://pelikanhotel@arabellasheraton.com); Podbielskitrasse 145; s €100-125, d €130-155; 📺 📺 ) Fat beds with thick mattresses and plump cushions dominate the rooms of this luxury hotel, although the high ceilings alleviate any feeling of being cramped. It's easy to see why celebrities love the place. Set on a redeveloped factory site in the suburbs, it feels like a hideaway village, with the renowned restaurant 5th Avenue and Harry's New York bar. There's a fitness centre next door, too. Take tram 9 to Pelikanstrasse.

**Kastens Hotel Luisenhof** (☎ 304 40; [www.kastens-luisenhof.de](http://www.kastens-luisenhof.de); Luisenstrasse 1-3; s €155-185, d €180-220, ste from €250; 📺 📺 📺 ) Obviously extremely well cared for, this *grande dame* looks pretty good for having recently turned 150 years old. Rooms reflect a timeless elegance, but there's a stylish new addition in the upper-level spa and fitness centre. The extremely central location is another selling point.

## Eating

### RESTAURANTS

**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 (ask the staff) is perfect in summer.

**Georxx** (☎ 306 147; Georgsplatz 3; dishes €5.50-14.50) Arty types come to lounge around this upmarket bistro, with a wine, beer or coffee, but the changing menu, which runs the gamut from European to Asian to Caribbean, is also worth savouring. Breakfast is a staple, and served until 5pm.

**Pier 51** (☎ 807 1800; Rudolf von Bennigsen Ufer 51; mains €6-18) One of Hannover's loveliest restaurants, and very romantic at sundown, Pier 51 is walled with glass and juts out over the Maschsee. The menu is strong on fish, although you can also choose pasta or meat. In summer, there's an outside 'Piergarten', decked out with the old-fashioned *Strandkörbe* (straw basket seats) that you see on German beaches. Book at least a few days ahead if you want a window seat at dinner.

**Mr Phung Kabuki** (☎ 215 7609; Friedrichswall 10; sushi €2-6, mains €7-14) Boats bob by on the water-based sushi train, but you can order all manner of pan-Asian and wok dishes at this airy, trendy restaurant with an enormous range of spirits.

**Hiller** (☎ 321 288; Blumenstrasse 3; mains €7.50-14, set menus €8-21.50; ☎ closed Sun) Germany's oldest vegetarian restaurant is such an institution it even has its logo – a carrot – carefully embroidered on to every linen napkin. Despite the modern interior, with swirly green painting and mustard-coloured walls, the atmosphere is quite hushed and the food a tad old-fashioned. That said, come with an appetite if ordering a set menu.

**Besitos** (☎ 169 8001; courtyard, Goserie 4; tapas €2-4, mains €8-14; ☎ from 5pm) Locals come to this warehouse-sized place to enjoy the city's best tapas under high ceilings and the watchful eye of gaucho and matador murals on the Mediterranean-coloured walls.

**Basil** (☎ 622 636; Dragonerstrasse 30; mains €12-23, menus around €25; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) This former stables to the north of town now houses a fabulous fusion restaurant, with a high arched ceiling and pressed tablecloths. It serves imaginative concoctions, such as coffee-marinated duck breast with chicory and pear ragout, to an in crowd. Take tram 1, 2 or 8 to Dragonerstrasse.

**Biesler** (☎ 321 033; Sophienstrasse 6; mains €14-19; ☎ closed Sun year-round & Mon Nov-Mar) One of the oldest eateries in the city likes to mix the ancient and the modern on its menu. So each day it serves a different traditional German dish, such as roast calves' livers with apple

and onion, alongside international fare such as lamb on mushroom 'parfait' with rosemary and fennel.

### CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

**Holländische Kakaostube** (☎ 304 100; Ständehausstrasse 2-3; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-6pm Sat) With the blue-and-white square-patterned floor matching the Delft pottery, and a curved ship's staircase and maritime paintings creating a subtle nautical feel, this historic Dutch coffee house has many fans, young and old. Stained glass, windmill figures, daintily swirled cakes and great hot chocolate all contribute to the atmosphere.

**Markthalle** (☎ 341 410; Kamarschstrasse 49; dishes €3.50-8; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Wed, to 10pm Thu & Fri, to 4pm Sat) This huge covered market of food stalls and gourmet delicatessens is a no-nonsense place for a quick bite – both carnivorous and vegetarian.

### Drinking

#### CAFÉS

**Der Gartensaal** (☎ 1684 8888; Neues Rathaus, Trammplatz 2; ☎ 11am-6pm) A great place to sit and have a summer afternoon coffee overlooking the central *Stadtpark*, this venue now hosts occasional club evenings, too. Keep an eye out for flyers.

#### BARS

Many of the cultural centres, clubs and rock and jazz venues listed under Entertainment (opposite) are also good places to go just for a drink.

**Brauhaus Ernst August** (☎ 365 950; Schmiedestrasse 13) A Hanover institution, this sprawling brewpub makes a refreshing unfiltered Pilsner called *Hannöversch*. A party atmosphere reigns nightly, helped along by a varied roster of live bands.

**HeimW** (☎ 235 2301; Theaterstrasse 6; ☎ from 9am) Hanover's hipsters flock to this long, narrow bar, and not just for the cocktails, vodkas and whiskeys. How could you resist a place with lights shaped like huge droplets of water about to land on your head, a ceiling of blue sky and white clouds, potted palms beside cream leather banquettes, and intriguing photos of Hanover landmarks? Small meals are also served.

**Acanto** (☎ 391 030; Dragonerstrasse 28; ☎ Thu-Sat) Next door to the restaurant Basil, you'll find one of Hanover's trendiest DJ bars, where fashionably dressed beautiful people sip

caipirinhas under chandeliers and mirror balls. Take tram 1, 2 or 8 to Dragonerstrasse.

### Entertainment

For listings, check out the local edition of *Prinz*, in German.

#### CLUBS

Hanover has two main clusters of clubs and bars. Increasingly, the place to head is the red-light district of Steintor (cheekily nicknamed *Stöhntor* by locals, meaning 'Moaning Gate'), in a former strip and sex club stronghold.

**Eve Klub** (Reuterstrasse 3-4; ☎ Fri & Sat) For many, this small club is not only the best in Hanover, but one of Germany's best, too. A former striptease bar, it's kept the red lamps over the tables and red corduroy sofas, and added mirror balls, red hearts and retro trimmings. Reasonably priced drinks, a mixed crowd (mostly over 20) and a melange of funk, soul and party tunes from the 1970s and '80s keep things going to 6am on weekends.

**Kiez Club** (☎ 353 5699; Scholvinstrasse 4; ☎ Wed, Fri & Sat) Minimal house, techno house, electro house – it's all house within the red walls here. Beck's beer costs less than €1 on Wednesdays.

**Sansibar** (☎ 0177-500 6006; Scholvinstrasse 7) Its roster of 1960s soul, combined with classic tunes from the 1970s and '80s, make this another Steintor favourite.

**Intensivstation** (☎ 301 59; Scholvinstrasse 9; ☎ Fri & Sat, plus some Wed & Thu) This place has staff dressed as nurses and medically themed surrounds and drinks. Kinky.

Traditionally, the other main clubbing destination has been the concrete environs of Raschplatz (the so-called 'golden triangle') behind the train station. For years, this is where you've found **Osho Diskothek** (☎ 342 217; Raschplatz 7I), or 'Baggi' as Hanoverians fondly call it, playing a mix of classic disco hits for the over-25s. Latin club **Diablo Latino** (☎ 341 025; Raschplatz 1h) is also based here, as well as the see-and-be-seen **Palo Palo** (☎ 331 073; Raschplatz 8a). However, with Raschplatz due to be renovated in 2007, the future of all these clubs has been thrown into doubt. Check local listings before heading in this direction.

#### CINEMAS

**Anzeiger Hochhaus** (☎ 144 54; Goserie 9) This spacious, art-house cinema is on the top floor of a magnificent expressionist building

designed by Fritz Höger, the architect of Hamburg's Chilehaus (see p655). Check listing times, as the box office only opens just before screenings.

#### GAY & LESBIAN VENUES

More information can be found at <http://hannover.gay-web.de>, or head to the lesbian and gay hang-outs **Café Konrad** (☎ 323 666; Knochenhauerstrasse 34) or **Café Caldo** (☎ 151 73; Bergmanstrasse 7) where the staff will be able to fill you in on the scene.

**Schule Sau** (☎ 700 0525; Schaufelder Strasse 30a; ☎ U6 or 11 to Kopernikusstrasse) This alternative gay and lesbian centre regularly hosts concerts, theatre and club nights.

Otherwise the scene tends to revolve more around individual party nights, such as **Peppermint Pavilion** ([www.hannover-gay-night.de](http://www.hannover-gay-night.de)) or **Der Blaue (B)Engel** ([www.thenextgeneration.net](http://www.thenextgeneration.net)). Check the websites for details.

#### THEATRE & CLASSICAL MUSIC

**Opernhaus** (☎ 268 6240; Opernplatz 1) The star in Hanover's cultural firmament, the 19th-century Opera House was lovingly restored after suffering WWII damage and now hosts classical music performances as well as opera.

**GOP Varieté** (☎ 301 8760; Georgstrasse 36) This is an old-school type of variety theatre with dancing, acrobatics, circus-style acts, magic, music and more, housed in the Georgspalast. It also boasts a much-lauded restaurant.

Those interested in seeing some cabaret should make tracks for **Marlene Bar & Bühne** (☎ 368 1687; nr Alexanderstrasse & Prinzenstrasse), while German speakers into more serious drama should check out what's on at **Schauspielhaus** (☎ 168 6710; Prinzenstrasse 9) or the **Neues Theater** (☎ 363 001; Georgstrasse 54). Comedies and musical theatre are performed at **Theater am Aegi** (☎ 989 3333; Aegidientorplatz).

#### LIVE MUSIC

**Café Glocksee** (☎ 161 4712; Glockseestrasse 35) Part live-music venue, part club, the Glocksee has everything from techno and trance DJs to grungy gigs. Friday nights go electronic.

**Capitol** (☎ 444 066; Schwarzer Bär 2) This former movie theatre has rock, pop, house, soul and more on weekends and frequently during the week. Take tram 3, 7 or 9 to Schwarzer Bär.

**Heartbreak Hotel** (☎ 328 061; Reuterstrasse 5) You have to smile at a place that reserves a parking space for Elvis outside, which is just one

reason why this scurrilous little live-music venue and not-just-for-old-rockers club managed to become so cool.

**Gig Neue Welt** (☎ 453 486; Lindener Markt 1) This chi-chi venue in a historic house is divided into three spaces: the Jazz-Café, as well as serving food, has black music, funk and jazz evenings; the Gig-Lounge specialises in soul; and the main room downstairs is for major events. To get here take tram 9 to Lindener Marktplatz.

**Faust** (☎ 455 001; Zur Bettfedernfabrik 1-3, Linden; ☉ Leinaustrasse) Ska from Uruguay, Chinese new year festivals, disco, reggae, heavy metal gigs, multimedia installations, quiz evenings, book readings – this all happens, and more, in this former factory complex. The 1960s concert hall is complemented by a pub-bar, Mephisto.

**Musiktheater Bad** (☎ 169 4138; Am Grossen Garten 60) In this large old building and its surrounding grounds, you'll find a mixed bag of live music and dance offerings. It's great in summer when there's an outdoor stage.

**Pavilion** (☎ 344 558; Lister Meile 4) The café-bar of this huge circular venue swarms with customers all the day through, while evenings see a wide programme of jazz, off-beat rock, world music and even theatre.

## SPORT

**AWD Arena** (www.awdarena.de) Given a major makeover for the FIFA Football World Cup in 2006, this stadium with a capacity of 44,000 is top-class. If you're going to a football match, it's just west of the Maschsee. Take bus 131 to the AWD Arena stop. Alternatively, take U-Bahn 3, 7 or 9 to Waterloo and follow the signs for about 500m.

## Shopping

Hanover's compact city centre makes it ideal for shopping, although most of what you will find is modern, international fashion. A pedestrianised zone full of shops extends south from the Hauptbahnhof, along Bahnhofstrasse, Georgstrasse and Karmarschstrasse. The Niki de Sainte Phalle Promenade, a subterranean shopping strip running below Bahnhofstrasse, is also recommended as a good place for browsing.

There's a regular **flea market** (Hohen Ufer; ☎ 7am-1pm Sat) behind the Historisches Museum, along the Leine River Canal near Die Nanas.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Hanover Airport** (HAJ; ☎ 977 1223; www.hannover-airport.de) has many connections, including with low-cost carrier **Air Berlin** (☎ 01805-737800; www.airberlin.com), **British Airways** (☎ 721 076) and **Lufthansa** (☎ 0180-380 3803).

The S-Bahn (S5) takes 16 minutes from the airport to the Hauptbahnhof (€3.20).

### CAR

Nearby autobahns run to Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt and Berlin, with good connections to Bremen, Cologne, Amsterdam and Brussels. Major car rental firms are in the Hauptbahnhof, including **Sixt** (☎ general reservation 01805-252 525, local 363 830) and **Avis** (☎ general reservation 0180-555 77, local 322 610).

### TRAIN

Hanover is a major rail hub, with frequent ICE trains to/from Hamburg (€36, 1¼ hours), Munich (€101, five hours), Cologne (€56, three hours) and Berlin (€53, 1½ hours), among others.

## Getting Around

The transit system of buses and tram/U-Bahn lines is run by **Üstra** (☎ 01803-194 49). Most U-Bahn lines from the Hauptbahnhof are boarded in the station's north (follow signs towards Raschplatz), including U-Bahn 8 to the Messe (fairgrounds, 17 minutes). Lines U10 and U17 are different. These are over-ground trams leaving south of the station near the tourist office.

Most visitors only travel in the central 'Hannover' zone, where single tickets are €1.90 and day passes €3.60. If you wish to venture further into the Umland/Region zones, singles cost €2.60/3.20, while day passes cost €4.80/6.

For taxis call ☎ 8484. From the centre to the fairgrounds a taxi costs about €35; to the airport it's about €20.

## AROUND HANOVER

Nobles the world over will tell you that ancestral homes can be *such* a huge financial burden to maintain, especially when they're turreted castles. In late 2005, the family of Prince Ernst August of Hanover (Princess Caroline of Monaco's husband) auctioned off some 25,000 household objects to raise money for the upkeep of their 130-room

neo-Gothic fancy. Now a small part of the palace, **Schloss Marienburg** (☎ 05069-407; www.schloss-marienburg.de; tour adult/under 16yr €6/4.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct), is open to members of the public interested in a *Hello!* magazine-style behind-the-scenes glimpse. Admission is by a 45-minute tour only (leaving half-hourly), which includes the Knight's Hall, Queen's Library and more.

From Hanover, take the A7 and exit 62 for Hildesheim. Take the B1 out of Hildesheim and continue 7km until you come to Mähl-ehrten. Turn right for Nordstemmen and you should see the castle. By public transport, you can take a train from Hanover as far as Nordstemmen (€4.60) or bus 300 to Pattensen (€4.80 day card), but you'll have to walk or catch a taxi over the last few kilometres. If this sounds too complicated, ask the Hanover Tourist Office (p593) about guided tours to the castle.

Meanwhile, for something completely different, a wonderful family outing from Hanover is to **Dino Park Münchenhagen** (Dinosaur Open Air Museum; ☎ 05037-2073; www.dinopark.de; adult/under 12yr €8.50/7; ☎ 9am-7pm Mar-Oct, 10am-4.30pm Nov-Feb, last entry 1 hr before closing). This is *Jurassic Park* brought to life, with more than 200 life-size dinosaurs (brontosaurus, T-rexes, raptors and so on) arranged around a walking trail where real dinosaurs once roamed. There are even genuine dino footprints!

By car, follow the A2 west of Hanover and take the No 40 exit to Wunstorf-Luthe. Continue along the 441 out of Wunstorf and you'll reach the park before Locum. By public transport, take S-Bahn 1 or 2 from Hanover to Wunstorf (€6 day pass, 19 minutes), then bus 716 to Dino Park (€3.50 return, 15 minutes). Buses run more frequently at weekends; for timetable information check www.regiobus.de or call ☎ 0511-3688 8723.

## FAIRY-TALE ROAD – SOUTH

This stretch of the **Märchenstrasse** (Fairy-Tale Road; ☎ 0561-707 707; www.deutsche-maerchenstrasse.de) is one of the prettiest. Connecting Hamelin, Bodenwerder and Bad Karlshafen, it hugs the Weser River for much of the way and is one of Germany's most popular cycling routes. South of Bodenwerder, the river is flanked

to the east by the Solling-Vogler Naturpark, which is a great spot for hikers, too.

Hamelin is charming, if touristy, Bodenwerder is worth a quick stopover and Bad Karlshafen's a sleepy beauty.

See the boxed text on p536 for more information about this part of the Fairy-Tale Road.

## Getting There & Away

What is a simple journey by car – take the B83 to/from Hamelin or Bad Karlshafen – requires a little planning with public transport. From Hamelin's Hauptbahnhof, bus 520 follows the Weser to/from Holzminden (€10.25) via Bodenwerder (€15.15) hourly from 6am to 8pm during the week and every couple of hours on weekends. From Holzminden trains leave hourly to Bad Karlshafen (€6.75), via Ottbergen. Direct trains run every two hours from Bad Karlshafen to Göttingen (€7.95, one hour).

From April to October, boats operated by **Flotte Weser** (☎ 05151-939 999; www.flotte-weser.de, in German) also travel from Hamelin to Bodenwerder on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday (€12, 2½ hours). Very occasional cruises go as far as Bad Karlshafen.

Details of the much-loved **Weser Radweg** (Weser Cycle Path; www.weser-radweg.de, in German) can be found online. See Getting There & Around, p605, for details on bike hire.

## HAMELIN

☎ 05151 / pop 58,800

If you were to believe *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* fairy tale, this quaint, ornate town on the Weser River ought to be devoid of rats and children. According to legend, the Pied Piper (*Der Rattenfänger*) was employed by Hamelin's townsfolk to lure their pesky rodents into the river in the 13th century. When they refused to pay him, he picked up his flute again and led their kids away.

However, it is a bedtime story, after all; international tourism means the reality is very different. Everywhere you look along Hamelin's cobbled streets are – you guessed it – fake rats and happy young children. Hamelin (Hameln) positively revels in its folklore with a plague of fluffy rat toys, rat-shaped bread...rat everything really. Even the Pied Piper himself can be seen in various tourist-guide guises, mesmerising onlookers with haunting tunes.

## Orientation

On the eastern bank of the Weser River lies Hamelin's circular Altstadt. The main streets are Osterstrasse, which runs east-west, and Bäckerstrasse, the north-south axis.

The Hauptbahnhof is about 800m east of the centre. Turn right out of the station square (past the roundabout), follow Bahnhofstrasse to Diesterstrasse and turn left. Diesterstrasse becomes Diesterallee, where you'll find the tourist office, and then Osterstrasse. Buses 3, 4, 5 and 6 are just some of the lines that will take you into town.

## Information

**Hameln Tourist Information** (☎ 957 823, 0180-551 5150; www.hameln.de; Diesterallee 1; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat, 9.30am-1pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat Oct-Apr) On the eastern edge of the Altstadt.

## Sights & Activities

### ALTSTADT

The best way to explore is to follow the **Pied Piper trail** – the line of white rats drawn on the pavements. There are information posts at various points. They're in German, but at least you know when to stop to admire the various restored 16th- to 18th-century half-timbered houses.

The ornamental Weser Renaissance style prevalent throughout Hamelin's Altstadt has a strong Italian influence. The **Rattenfängerhaus** (Rat Catcher's House; Osterstrasse 28), from 1602, is the finest example, with its typically steep and richly decorated gable.

Also not to be missed is the **Hochzeitshaus** (1610–17) at the Markt (square) end of Osterstrasse; see the following section for details on its interior. The **Rattenfänger Glockenspiel** at the far end of the building chimes daily at 9.35am and 11.35am, while a **carousel of Pied Piper figures** twirls at 1.05pm, 3.35pm and 5.35pm.

During summer, ask the tourist office about the **open-air light displays** at noon on Sunday and the comic musical *Rats* on Wednesday at 4.30pm.

From May to September, there are **one-hour cruises** (adult/child €6/3) on the Weser River. They run five times daily between 10am and 3pm, with an additional departure at 4.15pm according to demand. Contact **Flotte Weser** (☎ 939 999), upstairs from the tourist office, to arrange. Cruises leave from the far west of the old town.

## ERLEBNISWELT RENAISSANCE

Clever use of modern media delivers a genuinely exciting history lesson in Hamelin's **Erlebniswelt Renaissance** (Renaissance Experience; ☎ 403 680, 01805-013 330; www.erlebniswelt-renaissance.de; Hochzeitshaus, Osterstrasse 2; adult/child/concession €9/5.40/7.20; ☎ 10am-6pm). The upper floor, where you start, is probably the weakest, although it features a handy timeline. However, stick with it because as you descend through the building it gets much, much better. A computer lays a table with three types of Renaissance meals, and a wall of 1000 masterpieces is presented alongside sections on the calendar and time, exploration and travel, fashion, trade and much more.

The history of the period is later presented as the evening news, while four great astronomers (Ptolemy, Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo) meet on an evening chat show. While it's obviously aimed at school-age children, adults will get a kick out of the exhibition, and learn from it, too, as it demonstrates how the Renaissance period laid the groundwork for the world we live in today.

Audio guides provide a narrative (in German only at the time of research, but in English and French soon), which automatically synchronises with the main displays. Meanwhile interactive features provide more detail on the subjects that interest you. Columbus, da Vinci, Dürer, Gutenberg, Luther and Shakespeare are just some of the major players waiting to tell their stories.

There's a Hamelin angle, of course – you can spy through a telescope at what's going on in the animated 17th-century town. Further sites in the surrounding countryside continue the 'Renaissance experience'; ask at the cash desk for details.

## GLASHÜTTE HAMELIN

Another Pied-Piper-free zone is the **Glashütte Hameln** (Glass-Blowing Factory; ☎ 405 571; www.glasblaeserei-hamelin.de; Am Pulverturm/Kastanienwall; adult/child under 6yr/student €2.50/free/1.05; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun). Learn about glass-blowing throughout Hamelin's history and see the experts at work; you can even try it yourself, under supervision (€9). Don't worry if your own creation doesn't turn out quite as you'd hoped: there are plenty of covetable glassworks in the accompanying shop. The 35-minute glass-blowing demonstrations start every 30 minutes.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Fährhaus an der Weser** (☎ 611 67; www.campingplatz-faehrhhaus-hamelin.de, in German; Uferstrasse 80; per adult/tent & car €4/6; ☎) Although catering mainly to caravans, this year-round camping ground does have a few places for tents. It's across the river from the Altstadt and 10 minutes' walk north. Facilities are reasonably new, plus there's a beer garden, heated swimming pool and Greek restaurant.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 3425; www.jugendherberge.de/jh/hameln; Fischbeckerstrasse 33; dm under/over 26yr €15.30/18.30; ☎) This hostel is clean and relatively modern. Although there's not a lot of space in the dorms or bathrooms, the place does enjoy excellent river views out the back. Take bus 2 from the Hauptbahnhof to Wehler Weg.

**Hotel Garni Altstadtweige** (☎ 278 54; www.hotel-altstadtweige.de; Neue Marktstrasse 10; s/d/tr from €45/75/100; ☎) This unprepossessing red-brick building actually contains charming, individually decorated rooms. Most have stained-glass windows, while there's a four-poster bed in No 14. Kids will love No 12, which features a raised single bed, where you climb a stool to retire for the night.

**Hotel zur Krone** (☎ 9070; www.hotelzurkrone.de, in German; Osterstrasse 30; s €65-85, d €90-95, ste from €130; ☎) Historic rooms in the old, half-timbered part of this hotel are creaky, but have exposed ceiling beams, bags of character, and some even have bathtubs. Those in the modern wing are slightly more up to date and occasionally boast balconies. Take your pick.

**Hotel-Garni Christenhof** (☎ 950 80; www.christenhof-hamelin.de; Alte Marktstrasse 18; s/d €70/90; ☎) Historic on the outside, but totally modern in attitude, this hotel likes to pamper its guests, providing a small swimming pool in the vaulted cellar, a sauna, a generous buffet breakfast and compact but uncluttered rooms.

**Shaki Sushi Bar** (☎ 783 839; Osterstrasse 38; mains €4-11.50) The small ground-floor café here opens into a bright, black, red and yellow restaurant upstairs, with a fairly select menu of Japanese dishes. There's a small area where you can sit on cushions at low tables, and sushi is half-price after 10pm.

**Rattenfängerhaus** (☎ 3888; Osterstrasse 28; mains €5-20) Hamelin's restaurants are unashamedly touristy and sometimes it's best to just give in to it. This cute half-timbered tavern's speciality is 'rats' tails' flambéed at your table (fortunately, like most of the theme dishes

here, this one's based on pork). Schnitzels, herrings, veggie dishes and 'rat killer' herb liquor are also offered.

**Ambrosia** (☎ 253 93; Neu Marktstrasse 18; mains €6-22) The aromas of this restaurant's Italian and Greek food waft down the street, mesmerising diners just as the Pied Piper's tunes do.

**Museumscafé im Stiftsherrenhaus** (☎ 215 53; Osterstrasse 8; dishes €7-15) The must-munch here is the marzipan-filled *Rattenfängertorte* (rat-catcher, or Pied Piper, cake). However, there are also sandwiches and light seasonal meals available, served in a tearoom atmosphere.

## Getting There & Around

Frequent S-Bahn trains (S5) head to Hamelin from Hanover's Hauptbahnhof (€9.10, 45 minutes). You can also travel direct from Hanover's airport to Hamelin by train. By car, take the B217 to/from Hanover. See Getting There & Away on p603 earlier in this section for bus and boat links.

Bikes can be hired from the **Troches Fahrrad Shop** (☎ 136 70; Kreuzstrasse 7).

## BODENWERDER

☎ 05533 / pop 6800

If Bodenwerder's most famous son were to have described his hometown, he'd probably have painted it as a huge, thriving metropolis on the Weser River. But then Baron Hieronymus von Münchhausen (1720–1797) was one of history's most shameless fibbers. He gave his name to a psychological condition – Münchhausen's syndrome, or compulsive exaggeration of physical illness – and inspired Terry Gilliam's cult movie *The Adventures of Baron Munchhausen*.

Really just a small village, Bodenwerder's principal attraction is the **Münchhausen Museum** (☎ 409 147; Münchhausenplatz 1; adult/child €2/1.50; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Apr-Oct), which struggles a little with the difficult task of conveying the chaos and fun associated with the 'liar baron' – a man who liked to regale dinner guests with his Crimean adventures, claiming he had, for example, tied his horse to a church steeple during a snow drift and ridden around a dining table without breaking one teacup.

The museum does its best, housing a cannonball to illustrate the baron's most famous tale, in which he claimed to have hitched a lift on one similar in an attempt to spy on a battlefield enemy. It also has paintings and displays of Münchhausen books in many languages.

It's all definitely more enjoyable if you first arm yourself with the English-language book, *Tall Tales of Baron Münchhausen*, available at the museum shop.

In the garden by the museum, the simple fountain showing the baron riding half a horse relates to one such tale, where the baron noticed his horse seemed a bit thirsty, and then realised the animal had been cut in two by a descending town gate, so the water was pouring right through it. (In the story the horse is sewn back together and lives happily ever after.)

From April to October, things become livelier in Bodenwerder, as German storytellers relate Münchhausen tales for €1 (10am to noon and 2pm to 4pm daily). English stories can only be arranged for groups; ask at **Tourist Information Bodenwerder** (☎ 405 41; www.muenchhausenland.de, in German; Münchhausenplatz 3; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9am-1pm Sat Apr-Oct), which can also arrange accommodation and answer other queries.

No trains travel to Bodenwerder; see Getting There & Away on p603 for transport information. The village is small and walkable.

## BAD KARLSHAFEN

☎ 05672 / pop 4700

You'd be forgiven for thinking you'd stumbled into 18th-century France in this sleepy spa town. Little wonder, for Bad Karlshafen's orderly streets and whitewashed baroque buildings were built at that time for the local earl Karl by Huguenot refugees. The town was planned with an impressive harbour and a canal connecting the Weser with the Rhine to attract trade. But the earl died before his designs were completed and all that exists today is a tiny *Hafenbecken* (harbour basin) trafficked only by white swans. Add the town's

*Gradierwerk*, a large pine-twig contraption poured with saltwater to create 'healthy' air, and this is the perfect place to escape the worries of the world for a few days.

Bad Karlshafen is strictly in Hesse, but it's at the end of the Fairy-Tale Road, just across the Lower Saxony border. For transport information, see Getting There & Away, p603.

The town is small and easily covered on foot. Most of it lies on the south bank of the Weser River, with the *Hafenbecken* and surrounding square, *Hafenplatz*, at its western end. To reach the **tourist office** (☎ 999 922; kurverwaltung@bad-karlshafen.de; *Hafenplatz* 8; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-noon Sat, 2.30-5pm Sun May-mid-Oct, 9am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Oct-Apr) from the Hauptbahnhof, follow the only road exiting the station for a few minutes and cross the bridge, right, over the river. Turn right again on the other side and continue straight ahead to *Hafenplatz*.

While here, take a stroll around the *Hafenbecken* and pop into the **Deutsches Huguenotten Museum** (German Huguenot Museum; ☎ 1410; *Hafenplatz* 9a; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun mid-Feb-Dec), which explains the history of the Huguenots in Germany.

The *Gradierwerk* lies to the left as you cross the bridge.

## Sleeping

**Am Rechten Weserufer** (☎ 710; www.campingplatz-bad-karlshafen.de, in German; per adult/tent & car €3.50/3) This camping ground enjoys a prime position on the northern riverbank, just south of the train station. It overlooks the town centre.

**Hermann Wenning DJH hostel** (☎ 338; bad-karlshafen@djh-hessen.de; Winnefelder Strasse 7; dm €17, s/d €20/36.50; ☎ ☒ ☒ ☒) A genuinely lovely and quite healthy-feeling hostel, this place attracts lots of cyclists, has table tennis and

other nearby sporting opportunities and an excellent breakfast, with freshly sliced fruit. (Other meals are available on request.) It's a short, uphill walk from the train station; some of its clean modern rooms enjoy dreamy views over Bad Karlshafen and the surrounding hills.

**Hotel-Pension Haus Fuhrhop** (☎ 404; www.hotel-fuhrhop-karlshafen.de; Friedrichstrasse 15; s/d €35/65) The style of this charming *pension* is no-style. The spacious rooms are decorated with a mishmash of furniture, seemingly as pieces have come into the owners' possession, which gives the place a homy, relaxed atmosphere. It's on the first street left after you've crossed the bridge.

**Hotel zum Schwan** (☎ 104 445; fax 1046; Conradstrasse 3-4; s/d €40/80; ☎) Although Earl Karl's former hunting lodge is now a bit creaky, this atmospheric hotel is still one of the town's best. It overlooks the *Hafenbecken* and its rococo dining room is a perfect museum piece.

## LÜNEBURGER HEIDE

North of Hanover along the sprawling Lüneburger Heide lies a land of attractive, historic villages and natural allure. Lower Saxony was ruled from here before the court moved to Hamburg, so royal treasures and exquisitely preserved buildings await you in Celle. In Lüneburg, you can observe the quirky side-effects of the salt-mining that made the town rich in the Middle Ages (the town visibly leans).

The area in between, along the Lüneburger Heide, can be covered on foot, by bike or in a boat, and there are hay hotels (see boxed text, p614) and camp sites along the way.

## CELLE

☎ 05141 / pop 71,400

Celle's old town is an object of beauty, like a Fabergé egg, built by hard-working, pious folk who ironically had no truck with such frippery. In the 16th century, they lined their cobbled streets with ornate half-timbered buildings and then decorated them with stern mottos like 'Don't let widows and orphans suffer or you'll face the wrath of God', and 'This house was built from necessity not desire'. (What would they make of the one that now blares 'Sex Shop Kino'?)

The white-and-pink Ducal Palace is another historic landmark, passed down from the Middle Ages. However, Celle is also looking to the future with its new '24-hour' art museum.

## Orientation

The mainly pedestrianised Altstadt is about a 15-minute walk east of the Hauptbahnhof, reached by the rather unattractive Bahnhofstrasse. Turning left at the street's end will take you to the palace after 100m. From here, Stechbahn leads east (right) to the nearby tourist office. The Aller River flows around the northern section of the Altstadt, with a tributary encircling it to the south. Just south of the Altstadt is the Französischer Garten (French Garden).

## Information

**Adunni Callshop & Internet** (Bahnhofstrasse 38; internet per hr €3; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) **Main post office** (Rundstrasse 7; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Diagonally opposite the Schloss.

**Tourismus Region Celle** (☎ 1212; www.region-celle.com; Markt 14; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun May-Oct, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat Nov-Apr) Runs guided tours (€4; in German) at 2.30pm Monday to Saturday and 11am on Sunday from May to October (during other months at 2pm Saturday and 11am Sunday), and organises horse-drawn carriage rides (from €5 per person).

## Sights

### ALTSTADT

With row upon row of ornate half-timbered houses, all decorated with scrolls and allegorical figures, Celle is a perfect place for a stroll. Even the tourist office is located in a striking building, the **Altes Rathaus** (1561-79), which boasts a wonderful Weser Renaissance stepped gable, topped with the ducal coat of arms and a golden weather vane.

At the tourist office door, on the building's south side, there are two **whipping posts** with shackles; these were used from 1786 to 1850 to punish minor offenders. Prisoners weren't whipped but merely left here for 12 hours, to allow their neighbours to spit at them or throw insults and eggs. Opposite, the statue of a man in shackles recreates the scene.

Jousting tournaments were held a little further west on **Stechbahn**. The little horseshoe on the corner of the street's north side marks the spot where a duke was slain during a

## SOMETHING SPECIAL

**Schlosshotel Münchhausen** (☎ 05154-706 00; www.schlosshotel-muenchhausen.com; Schwöbber 9, Aerzen bei Hameln; s/d in Tithe barn €95/125, in castle €120/150; ☎ ☒ ☒ ☒) If you're driving through this region, it's worth staying 15km outside Hamelin just to treat yourself to a night or two here. As the name implies, it's set in a castle, where you can sit in front of the fireplace in the ornate, high-ceilinged 'Knight's Hall', enjoy Michelin-starred cuisine in an impressively historic restaurant, relax in the spa, or just enjoy your fine, historic bedroom. Alternatively, more modern accommodation is provided in the refurbished Tithe barn, connected to the castle by an underground walkway. The hotel is adjacent to two golf courses and set in eight hectares of parkland, which was probably handy for the French national football team when they stayed during the 2006 FIFA Football World Cup.



tournament; step on it and make a wish, and local lore holds that the wish will come true.

If you walk south from the tourist office, straight down Poststrasse, you'll find one of Celle's most magnificent buildings, the ornate **Hoppener Haus** (1532), one block along on the corner of Runde Strasse.

Continue another block southwards and stop in the square in the corner. Look up, and in the tiny alley between the two buildings you'll see a little box with a window. This was a **baroque toilet**. It's less glamorous than the name implies; waste would flush directly down into the alley.

Retrace your steps to the corner of Poststrasse and Zöllnerstrasse, and turn right into Zöllnerstrasse. This way, you'll pass **No 37** (built in 1570, now the shop Reformhaus), with its heart-warming inscription on the upper gable, 'Work! No chatting, talking or gossiping!'. Turn left into Rabengasse, and you'll come to Neue Strasse. Highlights here include the **Green House** (1478) with the crooked beam at No 32 and the **Fairy-Tale House** at No 11. The façade of the latter is decorated with characters, such as a jackass crapping gold pieces.

The tourist office has booklets describing various houses in German, but unfortunately nothing in English.

If you'd like to continue walking, double back south, where Celle also has a lovely **French Garden** at the edge of the Altstadt.

## SCHLOSS

Beautifully proportioned and magnificently restored is Celle's wedding-cake **Schloss** (Ducal Palace; ☎ 123 73; Schlossplatz; tours adult/concession €3/2; ☎ tours hourly 11am-4pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 11am & 3pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar). Built in 1292 by Otto Der Streng (Otto the Strict) as a town fortification, the building was expanded and turned into a residence in 1378. The last duke to live here was Georg Wilhelm (1624-1705), and the last royal was Queen Caroline-Mathilde of Denmark, who died here in 1775.

The Schloss can only be visited on guided tours (in German), but there are explanatory brochures in English for sale. Highlights include the magnificent baroque theatre, the private apartment of Caroline-Mathilde and, above all, the chapel. Its original Gothic form is evident in the high windows and vaulted ceiling, but the rest of the intricate interior is pure Renaissance. The duke's pew was

above; the shutters were added later so his highness could snooze during the three-hour services.

Rehearsals permitting, some tours do venture into the baroque **Schlosstheater** (☎ tickets 127 14; www.schlosstheater-celle.de; Schlossplatz; ☎ closed Jul & Aug). However, the only guaranteed way to peek inside is to attend one of the performances here. The tourist office can provide details.

## KUNSTMUSEUM & BOMANN MUSEUM

Across from the palace stands Celle's **Kunstmuseum** (Art Museum; ☎ 123 55; www.kunst.celle.de; Schlossplatz 7; adult/concession incl Bomann Museum €3/2; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun), due to have reopened in the latter half of 2006, supposedly as 'the world's first 24-hour museum'. It's claiming this after a €4 million refurbishment has created a transparent glass façade and a showcase for electric-light installations right through the evening. During the day, you can visit the contemporary German paintings, sculptures and objects of collector Robert Simon – all the while thanking the heavens you're not paying the museum's electricity bill.

In the older building adjacent, you'll still find the regional history **Bomann Museum** (☎ 125 44; www.bomann-museum.de; Schlossplatz 7; adult/concession incl Kunstmuseum €3/2; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, last entry 4.15pm). Here, among other things, you can wander through rooms furnished in 19th-century style.

## STADTKIRCHE

Just west of the Rathaus is the 13th-century **Stadtkirche** (☎ 7735; tower admission adult/concession €1/0.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat, tower 10am-noon & 1-6pm Tue-Sat Apr-Oct). You can climb up the 235 steps to the top of the church steeple for a view of the city, or just watch as the city trumpeter climbs the 220 steps to the white tower below the steeple for a trumpet fanfare in all four directions. The ascent takes place at 5.15pm and 7.30pm Monday to Friday, 9.30am and 7.15pm on Saturday and either 9.30am or 7.15pm on Sunday (ask the tourist office closer to the time).

## SYNAGOGUE

Dating back to 1740, Celle's **synagogue** (☎ 550 714; Im Kreise 24; admission free; ☎ noon-5pm Tue-Thu, 9am-2pm Fri, 11am-4pm Sun) is the oldest in northern Germany. Partially destroyed during Kristallnacht (see boxed text, p35), it looks

just like any other half-timbered house from the outside, but a new Jewish congregation formed in 1997 and services are held regularly. Changing exhibitions on Jewish history take place next door.

The synagogue is at the southeastern end of the Altstadt, in the town's former ghetto.

## Sleeping

**Camping Silbersee** (☎ 312 23; www.campingpark-silbersee.de; Zum Silbersee 19; per adult €3, per tent/tent & car €2.60/4.10) On the shore of a lake with plenty of tree cover, this camping ground has older buildings, but nevertheless plenty of facilities. About 4km from the centre, it can be reached by bus 1 to Am Tierheim.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 532 08; www.jugendherberge.de/jh/celle; Weghausstrasse 2; dm under/over 26yr €15/18; ☎ ☒ ☒) For a place so large and rambling, this hostel doesn't have especially spacious rooms and the lighting in the public areas can be a little gloomy. It's also very popular with school groups. On the edge of town, it's reached by bus 3 (alight at Boye) or by following the signs from the train station.

**Hotel Zur Herberge** (☎ 208 141; www.nacelle.de; Hohe Wende 14; s/d/tr €38/58/85; ☎ ☒) Seemingly straight from the Ikea showroom – with blonde-wood furnishings and yellow and blue fabrics – this small, charming hotel offers excellent value. En suite rooms have TV, phone and bathroom, and you can help yourself to coffee and beer in the communal kitchen corner. Reception isn't always staffed, so ring ahead. Bus 12 to Harburger Herrstrasse will get you here.

**Hotel St Georg** (☎ 210 510; www.hotel-st-georg.de; St Georg Strasse 25-27; s/d €60/80; ☎ ☒) A short walk from the old town, this family-run hotel offers a lovely mix of historic façade, modern rooms and friendly atmosphere. Amuse yourself at breakfast by checking out all the pictures on the restaurant walls.

**Celler Hof** (☎ 911 960; www.cellerhof.de; Stehbahn 11; s €65, d €90-100; ☎ ☒ ☒) You're mainly paying for the super-central location here – opposite the Stadtkirche and minutes from the Schloss. Although the design is modern and extremely comfortable, the rooms are reasonably small. A fitness room and sauna add value.

**Hotel Utspann** (☎ 927 20; www.utspann.de; Im Kreise 13; s €80, d €85-95; ☎ ☒) Under new management – reduced in size to 10 rooms in two half-timbered houses and a little less cluttered than previously – this historic place still evokes a staying-with-friends atmosphere. Individually

sized rooms variously feature exposed wooden beams, antique desks and even a few alcove beds. The guest living room backs onto a leafy garden.

**Hotel Fürstenhof** (☎ 2010; www.fuerstenhof.de; Hannoverische Strasse 55/56; s €135-185, d €185-255, ste from €225; ☎ ☒) A converted baroque palace, this renowned five-star hotel has given each of its floors a subtle theme, from golf, hunting and horses to romance and health (where, for example, the carpet features sheep and the pillow cases a leaf pattern). That the place still feels extremely elegant says something about the quality furnishings and the deft touch of the interior designer.

## Eating

**Pasta** (☎ 483 460; Neue Strasse 37; mains €4.50-6.50; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat May-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat Oct-Apr) Behind this instant Celle hit lies one of those ideas that is so simple it's genius. Mix your favourite pasta (tagliatelle, penne rigate, gnocchi, ravioli etc) with a sauce that takes your fancy (from bolognese or pesto to tuna and capers, or salmon cream). Crucially, it's all freshly homemade.

**Schlosscafé Vis à Vis** (☎ 925 790; Schlossplatz; mains €3.50-12; ☎ 8am-6pm) The interior is overwhelmingly green and during the week this place can be filled with bus tour groups. However, Sundays are fantastic, when a huge brunch buffet is laid out, or you can choose the usual pasta, salads or other light meals.

**Zum Ältesten Haus** (☎ 246 01; Neue Strasse 27; mains €7.50-18) German to the neat fringes of its pink tablecloths, this is the best place in town to try local specialities such as *Celler Rohe Roulade*, rolled, thinly sliced raw beef in a mustard marinade, or *Herzogene Pfanne*, Heide-style roast lamb with cranberries, stuffed pears, green beans and fried potatoes.

**India Haus** (☎ 485 152; Neue Strasse 34; mains €8-16) The combination of subcontinental interior décor and traditional, exposed medieval beams creates a surprisingly harmonious atmosphere in this half-timber house. The food might not meet exacting Londoners' standards (and we heard the occasional microwave ping), but it's excellent for provincial Germany. Lunch specials cost €5 to €5.50.

## Getting There & Away

Celle is within easy reach of Hanover, with three trains an hour making the trip (from €7.60) in anything from 19 minutes (ICE) to

45 minutes (S-Bahn). There are also IC (€17, 40 minutes) and regional (€13.40, 1½ hours) services to/from Lüneburg.

If you're driving, take the B3 straight into the centre.

### Getting Around

City buses 2, 3 and 4 run between the Hauptbahnhof and Schlossplatz, the two main stations. Single tickets are €1.50 and day passes €4.20.

For a taxi call ☎ 444 44 or ☎ 280 01. Bicycle hire is available at **Fahrradverleih am Bahnhof** (☎ 901 3377; Bahnhofstrasse 26-27; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat).

### BERGEN-BEISEN

Many concentration camps move you with their buildings, exhibitions and museums. **Bergen-Belsen** (☎ 05051-6011; www.bergenbelsen.de; Lohheide; admission free; 🕒 9am-6pm) provides a horrifying punch to the stomach through the sheer force of its atmosphere.

Unlike Auschwitz in Poland, none of the original buildings remain from the most infamous concentration camp on German soil. Yet the large, initially peaceful-looking lumps of grassy earth – covered in beautiful purple heather in summer – soon reveal their true identity as mass graves. Signs indicate approximately how many people lie in each – 1000, 2000, 5000, an unknown number...

In all, 70,000 Jews, Soviet soldiers, political hostages and other prisoners died here. Among them was Anne Frank, whose posthumously published diary became a modern classic.

Inside the **Documentation Centre** just outside the cemetery gates, there's a small exhibition outlining the history of the concentration camps in general and of Bergen-Belsen in particular, plus a theatre showing a 25-minute documentary. Both include awful scenes of the several thousand unburied bodies and emaciated survivors who greeted the British forces when they liberated the camp in April 1945. The film includes a moving testimony from one of the cameramen. Screenings are hourly from 10am to 5pm daily, but rotate between different languages.

Also inside the centre, there's a book of names of those who were interned here, as well as guides and books for sale – including *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1947) – plus the free *Guide for Visitors to the Belsen Memorial*.

In the several hectares of cemetery within the gates is a large stone **obelisk and memorial**, with inscriptions to all victims, a **cross** on the spot of a memorial initially raised by Polish prisoners and the **Haus der Stille**, where you can retreat for quiet contemplation.

A **gravestone for Anne Frank** and her sister, Margot, has also been erected (not too far from the cemetery gates, on the way to the obelisk). The entire family was initially sent to Auschwitz when their hiding place in Amsterdam was betrayed to police, but the sisters were later transferred to Belsen. Although no-one knows where Anne lies exactly, many pay tribute to their 15-year-old heroine at this gravestone. Other monuments to various victim groups, including a **Soviet memorial**, are dotted across the complex.

Bergen-Belsen began its existence in 1940 as a POW camp, but was partly taken over by the SS from April 1943, to hold Jews hostage in exchange for German POWs held abroad. Many Russian and Allied soldiers, then later Jews, Poles, homosexuals and Romanian Gypsies all suffered here – beaten, tortured, gassed, starved or worked to death, and used as medical guinea pigs.

Tens of thousands of prisoners from other camps near the front line were brought to Belsen in the last months of WWII, causing overcrowding, an outbreak of disease and even more deaths. Despite the best attempts of the SS to hide the evidence of their inhumane practices, by forcing prisoners to bury or incinerate their deceased colleagues, thousands of corpses still littered the compound when British troops arrived.

After WWII, Allied forces used the troop barracks here as a displaced persons' (DP) camp, for those waiting to emigrate to a third country (including many Jews who went to Israel after its establishment in 1948). The DP camp was closed in September 1950.

### Getting There & Away

Driving from Celle, take Hehlentorstrasse north over the Aller River and follow Harburger Strasse north out of the city. This is the B3; continue northwest to the town of Bergen and follow the signs to Belsen.

By public transport the journey is considerably trickier and only possible Monday to Friday, so you'll need to be particularly determined to visit.

From the ZOB (central bus station), under the huge car park opposite the Celle Hauptbahnhof, you need to catch bus 12 (leaving 12.05pm, 1.40pm and 3.40pm) and change to bus 11 in the town of Bergen. Alternatively, take bus 80 (departing 1.35pm) from the ZOB and change to 11 in Winsen. The journey costs €4.80 each way and takes one hour. Beware that the 12.05pm and 1.40pm buses don't run during school holidays.

The last buses back from the camp are at 4.50pm and, requiring two changes, 5.29pm. A **taxi** (☎ 05051-5555) to the camp from the village of Bergen will cost about €15. There's a phone at the camp to call a taxi when leaving.

For further details, ask at the Celle tourist office.

### LÜNEBURG

☎ 04131 / pop 71,500

An off-kilter church steeple, buildings leaning on each other and houses with swollen 'beer-belly' façades: in parts it looks like the charming town of Lüneburg has drunk too much of the Pilsener lager it used to brew.

Of course, the city's wobbly angles and uneven pavements have a more prosaic cause. For centuries until 1980, Lüneburg was a salt-mining town, and as this 'white gold' was extracted from the earth, shifting ground and subsidence caused many buildings to tilt sideways. Inadequate drying of the plaster used in the now-swollen façades merely added to this asymmetry.

However, knowing the scientific explanation never detracts from the pleasure of being on Lüneburg's comic-book crooked streets. The lopsidedness of its pretty stepped gables and Hanseatic architecture make it a destination in its own right, not just the gateway to the surrounding heath.

### Orientation

The Ilmenau River sits between the Hauptbahnhof, which is on its eastern bank, and the city centre to its west. To reach the Markt by foot from the train station, turn left when leaving the station, and take the first right into Altenbrückertorstrasse. This street leads across the river to Am Sande. From here, you'll find lots of billboard maps all over town.

### Information

**Lüneburg Tourist-Information Office** (☎ 207 6620; www.lueneburg.de; Rathaus, Am Markt; 🕒 9am-6pm

Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun May-Oct, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat Nov-Apr) Arranges city tours and trips to the surrounding Lüneburger Heide.

**Post office** (☎ 7270; Sülztorstrasse 21; 🕒 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

**Spielhalle Westbahnhof** (Westbahnhof; per hr €3; 🕒 7am-11pm Mon-Thu, to midnight Fri, 9am-midnight Sat, 10am-11pm Sun) Internet access.

**Stadt Krankenhaus** (Hospital; ☎ 770; Bögelstrasse 1)

### Sights & Activities

#### ST JOHANNISKIRCHE

At the eastern edge of the square called Am Sande stands the clunky 14th-century **St Johanniskirche** (☎ 435 94; Am Sande; 10am-5pm Sun-Wed, to 6pm Thu-Sat Apr-Oct, 9am-6pm Thu-Sat, to 4pm Sun Nov-Mar), whose 106m-high spire leans 2.2m off true. Local legend has it that the architect was so upset by this crooked steeple that he tried to do himself in by jumping off it. He fell into a haystack and was saved, but celebrating his escape later in the pub drank himself into a stupor, fell over, hit his head and died after all.

The inside of the church is, well, a lot more believable than the legend; there's an impressive organ and stained-glass windows, both ancient and modern. Explanatory leaflets are provided in many languages.

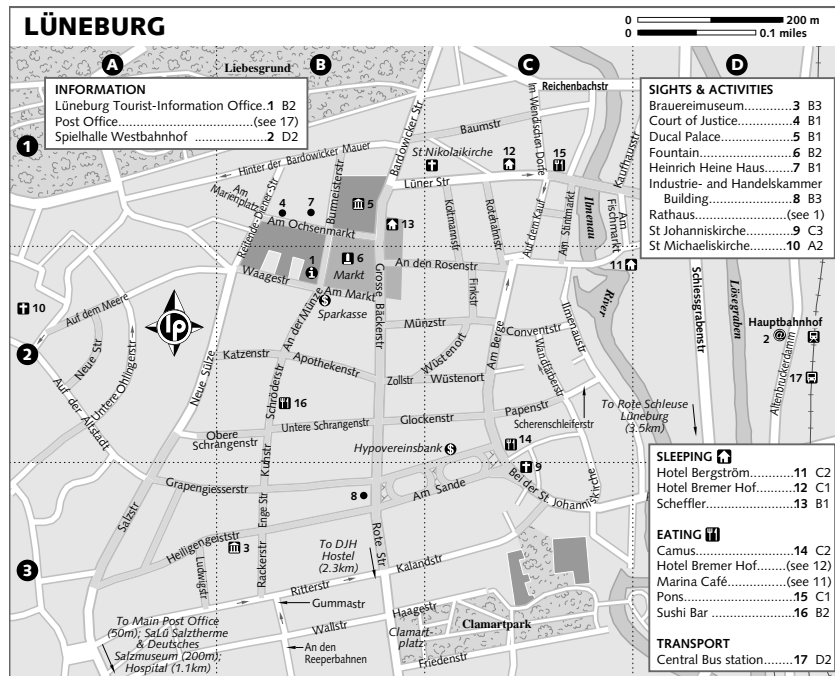
#### AM SANDE

Moving westwards, the cobbled, slightly wobbly Am Sande is full of red-brick buildings with typically Hanseatic stepped gables. Even among these striking buildings, the black-and-white **Industrie- und Handelskammer** (Trade and Industry Chamber) at the far western end stands out; it's undoubtedly the most beautiful. Continue one block past the Handelskammer and turn right into restaurant-lined Schröderstrasse, which leads to the Markt.

#### RATHAUS & MARKT

The name Lüneburg hails from the Saxon word *hliuni* (refuge), which was granted at the Ducal Palace (p612) to those fleeing other territories. However, many sources mistakenly assume the town's name has something to do with Luna, the Roman goddess of the moon. The city authorities at one time seem to have been among these misguided souls, erecting a **fountain** with a statue of the Roman goddess in the town's Markt.

The statue sits in front of the medieval **Rathaus**, which has a spectacular baroque façade,



added in 1720, decorated with coats of arms and three tiers of statues. The top row of statues on the façade represents (from left to right): Strength, Trade, Peace (the one with the big sword), Justice and Moderation. The steeple, topped with 41 Meissen china bells, was installed on the city's 1000th birthday in 1956.

Tours of the building's interior leave daily at 11am, 12.30pm and 3pm (€4.50/3.50/11.50 per adult/concession/family) from the entrance on Am Ochsenmarkt.

Other buildings around the Markt include the **Court of Justice**, the little gated-in, grotto-like area with paintings depicting scenes of justice being carried out throughout the centuries; and the former **Ducal Palace**, now a courthouse. West of that, on the corner of Burmeisterstrasse and Am Ochsenmarkt, is the **Heinrich Heine Haus**, the home of the poet's parents. Heine, who hated Lüneburg, wrote the *Loreley* here (for more on the Loreley rock, see p490).

#### AUF DEM MEERE & ST MICHAELISKIRCHE

If you continue west along Waagestrasse from the Markt and veer left, you'll come to

**Auf dem Meere**, a particularly striking Lüneburg street. Here the wavy pavements have pushed façades sideways or made buildings buckle in the middle. All the way to **St Michaeliskirche** (Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Platz; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat), the street feels like something from the 1919 German expressionist movie *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, or as if you're in a Tim Burton film. Just look at the steps leading to the church!

#### SPA BATHS

With Lüneburg having made its fortune from salt, where better to try the mineral's therapeutic properties than at the town's **Salü Salztherme** (Spa Baths; ☎ 723 1110; www.kurzentrums.de; Uelzener Strasse 1-5; admission from €7.70; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat, 8am-9pm Sun). You can bathe in 4% salt-water at 36°C, and try out the sauna, water fountains and whirlpool.

#### CARRIAGE RIDES & CYCLING

Traditional **horse-drawn carriage rides** (☎ 04178-8542; adult/child €9/4.50; ☎ at 11.30am, 1pm & 2.30pm Tue, Thu & Fri) leave from the Markt. Call ahead or simply turn up.

Many tourists come to the Lüneburger Heide to go **cycling**; Lüneburg's tourist office has dozens of different pamphlets outlining routes.

#### MUSEUMS

The **Deutsches Salzmuseum** (☎ 450 65; Sülfmeisterstrasse 1; adult/child/student €4/2.50/2.70; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Apr) explains (in German only) how Lüneburg's precious food preservative made the town such an important player in the Hanseatic League.

There's also a **Brauereimuseum** (☎ 448 04; Heiligengeiststrasse 39; admission free; ☎ 1-4.30pm Tue-Sun) looking at the history of beer-making in this city, which once housed more than 80 breweries.

#### Sleeping

**Rote Schleuse Lüneburg** (☎ 791 500; www.camproteschleuse.de; per adult/car & tent €4.80/5.70) This camping ground is about 3.5km south of the centre and offers a woody terrain scattered with fruit trees. Take bus 5600 to Rote Schleuse.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 418 64; www.jugendherberge.de/jh/lueneburg; Soltauer Strasse 133; dm under/over 26yr €16.50/19.50; ☎ ☎ ☎) After sundown, the lights glow a warm welcome from the glass-walled stairwell of this spacious, modern and relatively luxurious hostel in the town's south, right near the university. However, do call ahead as reception is not always staffed. Bus services – 5011 or 5012 from the train station to Scharnhorststrasse/DJH – don't run very late, either.

**Scheffler** (☎ 200 80; www.hotel-scheffler.de; Bardowicker Strasse 7; s/d €55/85; ☎ ☎) The hotel most in keeping with Lüneburg's quirky character, this place just off the Markt greets you with brickwork, stained glass, carved wooden stair-rails, animal trophies and indoor plants. The rooms are low-ceilinged and cosy, and there's a restaurant on site.

**Hotel Bremer Hof** (☎ 2240; www.bremer-hof.de; Lüner Strasse 12-13; s €50-100, d €80-125; ☎) Choose older, cheaper rooms in the 1970s concrete block at the courtyard's rear, or plump for more comfortable accommodation in the historic main house. Room 76 is particularly striking, with huge exposed ceiling beams.

**Hotel Bergström** (☎ 3080; www.bergstroem.de; Bei der Lüner Mühle; s €125-145, d €160-195; ☎ ☎ ☎) A little bit of New York loft living can be had in the 'Lüner Mühle' section of this luxury

hotel, spread across half a dozen warehouse buildings and an old mill around a weir in the Ilmenau River. Other rooms are more traditional and romantic.

#### Eating & Drinking

**Camus** (☎ 428 20; Am Sande 30; mains €6-18) Despite the heavy wooden beams and winding stairs to the two upper floors, this central establishment somehow manages to feel like a brasserie. Jazz is on the stereo (maybe that helps), while Tuscan and Provençal mains, and pizza and pasta are on the menu.

**Hotel Bremer Hof** (☎ 2240; Lüner Strasse 12-13; mains €6-22) Light and airy, with a lot of blue, the atmospheric restaurant here is strong on local specialities, including lamb from the heath, or *Heidschnucke*, which comes in all shapes and sizes.

**Sushi Bar** (☎ 248 348; Schröderstrasse 8; sushi €170-9.50, mains €7-29) All gleaming red-and-black lacquer, with blue up-lighting behind the bar, this chic restaurant obviously serves sushi. However, it's often the regularly changing supplementary menu of various Asian cuisines (Thai one week, Korean the next and so on) that offers up the truly delicious choices.

**Marina Café** (☎ 3080; Bei der Lüner Mühle; mains €25-35) The view over the Ilmenau would be reason enough for coming to the upmarket restaurant of the Hotel Bergström, but the daily changing menu of international cuisine is also pretty good. For those who want to spend a little less but enjoy the views, there's also a pleasant warehouse coffee shop attached to the hotel.

**Pons** (☎ 224 935; Salzstrasse am Wasser 1; ☎ from 5pm Mon-Sat, from 3pm Sun) If Pons looks this cracked, crooked and uneven when you walk in of an evening, just imagine how it will seem when you stagger out after a few drinks. A hippy hangover from the 1970s, it fortunately has much, much better musical taste and a small menu of cheap food served from 6pm (from €3.50). It's on the corner of the student drinking strip known as the 'Stint' (Am Stintmarkt).

#### Getting There & Away

There are frequent train services to Ham-burg (€11, 30 minutes), Hanover (€23, one hour) and Schwerin (€16 to €30, one hour 20 minutes). There are also IC (€17, 40 minutes) and regional (€13.40, 1½ hours) services to/from Celle.

### A ROLL IN THE HAY

Like several other German states, Lower Saxony has an excellent network of farm accommodation and several **Heu Hotels** (literally 'hay hotels'), where farmers set up straw bunks in their barns so they can rent them out for a small fee. It's an interesting way to spend time in the countryside, and they are usually much more comfortable (if odorous) than they sound. Some have horse riding, swimming lakes, sledding in winter and other activities. While some are bare-bones, all are heated in winter and many get downright luxurious. Check with tourist offices in the region for listings. The two best centres for finding country accommodation in the Lüneburger Heide are Celle and Lüneburg itself.

If you read German, visit [www.heuhotel.de](http://www.heuhotel.de) for further details.

If you're driving from Hamburg, take the A7 south to the B250. From Schwerin take the B6 south to the A24 west and then exit No 7 (Talkau). From there, turn south on the B209, and you'll eventually get to town. From Hanover, take the A7 north to the B209.

### Getting Around

Buses leave from the ZOB central bus station at the Hauptbahnhof and from the busy bus stop on Am Sande. Most services stop running at around 7pm. Single tickets are €1.60; day tickets cost €3.20.

For a taxi, call ☎ 194 10. You can hire bicycles at the **Hauptbahnhof** (☎ 557 77).

### NATURPARK ELBUFER-DRAWEHN

The Bleckede and the Biosphärenreservat Niedersächsische Elbtalau (Lower-Saxony Elbe Floodplain Biosphere) are located some 20km east of Lüneburg, in a wetland area of the Lüneburger Heide. The reserve is a haven for birdlife such as white storks, wild geese and cranes, and runs for 85km along the Elbe River. Cyclists and hikers will be well rewarded by this picturesque and interesting wetland, which is all part of the **Elberadweg** ([www.elberadweg.de](http://www.elberadweg.de); p216). If you intend to come out here, make sure you drop by the tourist office in Lüneburg first. You should find that it is well stocked with brochures on accommodation and activities that are available in the area.

For more information, you should contact the **tourist information office** (☎ 05852-958 458; [www.elbtalau-touristik.de](http://www.elbtalau-touristik.de), in German; Breite Strasse 10; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Nov-Mar) in Bleckede. The **Elbschloss Bleckede** (☎ 05852-951 40; [www.elbschloss-bleckede.de](http://www.elbschloss-bleckede.de), in German; Schlossstrasse 10; adult/child €4/2; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Nov-Mar) also has plenty of information on the biosphere.

### Getting There & Around

No trains run to Bleckede, but buses leave at least hourly from Lüneburg at Am Sande or the Hauptbahnhof.

If you're going by car, the B216 leads to the turn-off to Bleckede. A car ferry crosses the river at the turn-off and in Neu Darchau to the south.

## SOUTH & EAST OF HANOVER

### HILDESHEIM

☎ 05121 / pop 102,700

Two things in particular have visitors flocking to this former bishopric and market city: a picture-book 'medieval' town centre that's a glorious fake, and the genuinely ancient cathedral door bas-reliefs, which were cleverly saved from the WWII firebombing that razed Hildesheim to the ground on 22 March 1945. A legendary '1000-year-old' rosebush that re-emerged from the ashes of this attack also attracts pilgrims.

### Orientation

The central Markt is 750m south of the Hauptbahnhof. To walk there from the station, take the pedestrianised Bernwardstrasse, which becomes Almsstrasse and Hoher Weg. Turning left, or east, from Hoher Weg into either Marktstrasse or Rathausstrasse will lead you to Hildesheim's stunning centre, and the tourist office.

Continuing along Hoher Weg, instead of turning left for the tourist office, you hit Schuhstrasse, a central bus stop. To the right (west), the road heads to the cathedral and the Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum. Straight ahead across Schuhstrasse you'll

find the drinking strip of Friesenstrasse and, 10 minutes further south, the old Jewish quarter.

### Information

**Main post office** (Bahnhofsplatz 3-4; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat)

**Tele.Net.Journal** (☎ 697 2088; Friesenstrasse 20; per hr €1.50; ☎ 10am-midnight) Internet access.

**Tourist Office Hildesheim** (☎ 179 80; [www.hildesheim.com](http://www.hildesheim.com); Rathausstrasse 20; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3.30pm Sat) Office renovations mean this office might still be in temporary lodgings at Rathausstrasse 18 into 2007.

### Sights & Activities

For just €1, the tourist office sells the *Hildesheimer Rosenroute*, a very comprehensive guide to all Hildesheim's sights. It's available in several languages, including English, and is particularly useful if you're staying a few days.

### MARKT

The town's central market place was reconstructed in traditional style during the 1980s, after locals decided they could no longer stand the typical 'German postwar hideous' style in which the town was originally repaired. However, knowing that the **Markt** is about as old as *The Simpsons* barely tempers its appeal. People still 'ooh' and 'aah' as they gaze around, particularly at the (clockwise from north) **Rokokohaus**, **Wollenweberhaus**, **Wedekindhaus**, **Knochenhauerhaus** (Butchers' Guild Hall) and **Bäckeramtshaus** (Bakers' Guild Hall). In many cases, you can see behind the façade, too: the Rokokohaus is now home to the Meridien Hotel, and the Knochenhauerhaus houses a restaurant and there's also a local history **museum** (☎ 301 163; Markt 7-8; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun).

One original feature is the **Marktbrunnen**, the fountain in front of the **Rathaus** on the east side of the square (bells play folk songs at noon, 1pm and 5pm daily).

### DOM

There's a tiny entrance fee to see the **Tausend-jähriger Rosenstock** (1000-year-old rosebush; adult/concession €0.50/0.30) in the cloister of the **Hildesheimer Dom** (Hildesheim Cathedral; ☎ 179 1760; Domhof; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun May-Oct, 10am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun Nov-Apr). However, the bas-reliefs on the cathedral's almost 5m-high

**Bernwardstüren** (Bernward bronze doors) have much greater visual impact, and they aren't pay-per-view.

The allure of the rosebush lies in its supposed history as the very one on which Emperor Ludwig the Pious left his cloak and other effects in AD 815, where they miraculously stayed safe from theft. Its phoenix-like rise from the burnt-out cathedral remains after 1945 has only added to the bush's mystique.

Ultimately, though, it looks much like any other rose: something you wouldn't say about the bronze cathedral doors, which are Unesco-protected. Dating from 1015 and saved only because a concerned WWII prelate insisted they be stashed in a basement, they depict scenes from the Bible's Old and New Testaments in three-dimensional reliefs. A plaque to the left describes each scene in German, however, it's easy to identify each one yourself: from the creation of man, Adam and Eve's banishment from the garden of Eden, and Cain and Abel, to the three wise men attending the birth of Christ, and Mary Magdalene attending his crucified body (no *Da Vinci Code* conspiracy theories here, please!).

The church's **wheel-shaped chandelier** and the **Christussäule** (Column of Christ) are also original, and if you're really keen, there's an attached **Dom-Museum** (☎ 179 1640; Domhof; adult/concession €3.50/2; ☎ 10am-1pm & 1.30-5pm Tue-Sat, noon-5pm Sun), with rotating exhibitions and the cathedral treasury.

### OTHER CHURCHES

Like the cathedral doors, the Romanesque **St Michaeliskirche** (☎ 344 10; Michaelisplatz; admission free; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-4pm Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun Nov-Mar) is under Unesco protection. Built in 1022 and reconstructed after extensive war damage, it has been undergoing another makeover and should be seen in yet more gleaming new detail from 2007.

Off Hoher Weg is **St Andreaskirche** (☎ 124 34; Andreasplatz; adult/concession €1.50/1; ☎ tower 11am-4pm Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun) whose lofty spire offers a sweeping view. There are 364 steps to the top.

### LAPPENBERG

The former **Jewish Quarter** in and around Lappenberg Square is the oldest section of town. Most of it remains because, while local fire crews let the synagogue burn to the ground

on Kristallnacht in November 1938, they rescued other houses around the square. These included the former **Jewish school**, now owned by St Godehard's Church, on the corner. In 1988, on the 50th anniversary, a memorial was installed on the site of the synagogue, following the outline of its foundations and topped by a model of Jerusalem.

While down this way, take time to check out the quaint **Wernesches Haus** on Hinterer Brühl, which is one of the oldest buildings in Hildesheim.

### ROEMER- UND PELIZAEUS-MUSEUM

One of Europe's best collections of Egyptian art and artefacts is found in the **Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum** (☎ 936 90; www.rpmuseum.de, in German; Am Steine 1-2; adult/concession/family €8/6/14; ☎ 10am-6pm). There are dozens of mummies, scrolls, statues and wall hangings, but the life-size re-creation of an Egyptian tomb (of Sennefer) is a particular highlight.

### Sleeping

Its proximity to Hanover means Hildesheim often takes overspill guests during trade fairs, when accommodation prices rise phenomenally.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 427 17; www.jugendherberge.de/jh/hildesheim; Schirrmannweg 4; dm under/over 26yr €16.50/19.50; (P) ☎ ☎) In the morning, guests here often act as though they've just had an embarrassing one-night stand. It's a great hostel, really, with modern facilities and a good breakfast. But it's just so inconveniently located that many seem to be wondering what they're doing here and look in a hurry to leave. To get here catch bus 1 or 2 to Schuhstrasse and change to 4 in the direction of Im Kokenhof. Get off at the Triftstrasse stop and walk the remaining 750m uphill.

**Gästehaus Klocke** (☎ 179 213; www.gaestehaus-klocke.de; Humboldtstrasse 11; s €45-55, d €75-80) This is a quirky gem, which feels a bit like a mini-castle upon entering, as its high-ceilinged stairwell has a landing with a stained-glass window, chess set and chairs. The rooms aren't quite as amazing but have character nevertheless. The hotel is just south over the canal from the Jewish quarter.

**Gästehaus-Café Timphus** (☎ 346 86; www.timphus-conditorei-hotel.de; Braunschweiger Strasse 90/91; s €50-62, d €72-82, tr €108; ☎) Walls here are bedecked with photos of artful chocolate displays, which might mean you keep going next door to the

associated café for supplies. The 10 rooms are otherwise fairly generic, but spotless. The place has its own apartment-style entrance; you need to arrive between 8am and 6pm to collect the key from the patisserie.

**Hotel Bürgermeisterekapelle** (☎ 140 21; www.hotelbuergemeisterekapelle.de; Rathausstrasse 8; s €55-85, d €80-135; (P) ☎) Old meets new at this midrange hotel. The lobby has been nicely renovated and most of the rooms done up in blonde wood and green tones, but the restaurant and dim-lit halls remain rustic, with ancient wood-cut pictures, flower pots and bookshelves. The unrenovated rooms can cost as much as the refurbished ones, but don't offer the same quality.

**Dorint Novotel Hotel** (☎ 171 70; www.accorhotels.com; Bahnhofsallee 38; s €120-130, d €140-165; (P) ☎) Furnishings in black and beige, and warm touches like superior sea grass-style carpet, have been added to the exposed brick walls of this spacious stone cloister building to imbue it with cosy designer-chic style. Summer discounts are offered.

**Meridien Hotel** (☎ 300 600; www.starwoodhotels.com/lemeridien; Markt 4; s €135-155, d €155-175; ☎ ☎) Behind its historic frontage on the central market place, this luxury hotel opens out into a surprisingly large building. Through the flagstone-floored atrium entrance, you'll find upbeat rooms decorated in shades of yellow and red. Prices are cheaper in summer.

### Eating & Drinking

**Café Desseo** (☎ 399 27; Hindenburgplatz 3; tapas €3-9, other dishes €4.40-14) Generally billed as a tapas bar, this excellent venue is actually much more of an all-rounder – the one catch-all Hildesheim address to file in your little black book. All-you-can-eat breakfasts (€6) and lunches (€6.90 – with jelly!) are joined by sandwiches, delicious wraps, pasta, pizza and other dishes. In addition to all this there's a large nonsmoking area and good cocktails at an evening.

**Die Insel** (☎ 145 35; Dammstrasse 30; mains €8-20; ☎ closed Mon) With its trimmed hedges, hanging pots of blazing geraniums, blue tablecloths and Tiffany lampshades, it's not surprising this cute restaurant in a former mill is a hit with Hildesheim's more mature citizens. Its location on a small, leafy 'island' in the middle of one of the town's canals means its terrace is an ideal spot to enjoy coffee and cake in summer.

**Noah** (☎ 691 530; Hohnsen 28; mains €8-19) Well worth the short journey out of town, this airy, glass-walled bistro enjoys great views of a peaceful lake. The normal fare is Mediterranean-influenced modern cuisine, including fish. However, in summer there are sometimes barbecues. Take bus 2 to Theodor Storm Strasse/Ochtersum.

**Schlegels Weinstuben** (☎ 331 33; Am Steine 4-6; mains €12.50-24.50; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) The lopsided walls of this rose-covered, 500-year-old house hunkering beside the Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum just add to the sheer magic of the place. Inside, there's a group of historic rooms and, in one corner, a round, glass-topped table fashioned from a well, where you can dine overlooking the water far beneath. As the ever-changing international cuisine is also exceptional, it's advisable to book ahead.

For further options, there's a popular strip along **Friesenstrasse** (just behind Schuhstrasse), where the pubs and bars usually sell cheap meals.

### Getting There & Around

Frequent regional train services operate between Hildesheim and Hanover (€6.20, 30 minutes), while ICE trains head to Braunschweig (€13, 25 minutes) and Göttingen (€22, 30 minutes).

For those driving, the A7 runs right by town from Hanover, while the B1 goes to Hamelin.

Most sights in Hildesheim are within walking distance, but buses will take you to outlying restaurants and accommodation, as indicated. Single tickets cost €1.80, daily city tickets €5.15.

### BRAUNSCHWEIG

☎ 0531 / pop 245,800

Still famous as the city of Heinrich der Löwe (Henry the Lion) nine centuries after this powerful medieval duke made it his capital, Braunschweig (Brunswick) reveals its past as five separate settlements with a slightly meandering and confusing but pleasant historic old town.

Having spent most of the post-WWII period near the Iron Curtain, it doesn't have a great reputation for sightseeing, but with a couple of glittering collections of artefacts, cobbled streets and its quaint Magniviertel district it can soon grow on you.

### Orientation

Most sights are in the historic town centre, a distorted rectangle bounded by Konrad-Adenauer-Strasse to the south, Gildenstrasse to the west, Lange Strasse to the north and Bohlweg to the east. However, the arty quarter of the Magniviertel and the Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum lie just to the old town's east. A moat surrounds the centre, lending it the compact character of an island. One-way systems may cause problems if you're driving.

### Information

**Main post office** (Berliner Platz 12-16) Near the Hauptbahnhof.

**Post** (Friedrich-Wilhelm-Strasse 3; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat)

**Tourist Service Braunschweig** (☎ 470 2040; www.braunschweig.de; Vor der Burg 1; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat)

### Dangers & Annoyances

The city's red-light district is in the alley connecting Wallstrasse with the intersection of Leopoldstrasse and Friedrich-Wilhelm-Strasse. It's not considered unsafe, but women who go there might be whistled at and generally harassed.

### Sights & Activities

Braunschweig's identity is so tied up with Heinrich der Löwe, it's best not to fight it and to learn a little about the duke (see boxed text, p619). The **Braunschweiger Löwe** (Brunswick lion) statue you see replicated around town, but most prominently on Burgplatz, is the city's symbol. Heinrich ordered the original to be built in 1166 as a symbol of his power and jurisdiction; you can see the original at Burg Dankwarderode (p618).

### DOM ST BLASII

Heinrich's tomb is in the crypt of **Dom St Blasii** (St Blasius Cathedral; ☎ 243 350; www.braunschweigerdom.de; Domplatz 5; crypt admission €1; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-5pm), where he lies alongside his wife Mathilde. In a macabre postscript to the duke's life, the Nazis decided to coopt his image and in 1935 exhumed his tomb to conduct an 'archaeological investigation'. Even Hitler paid a visit. However, the corpse found inside had one leg shorter than the other (it's known that Heinrich suffered a terrible horse-riding accident late in life) and dark hair, and the master-race propagandists went very quiet on the subject

after that. There were also questions over the body's gender and some doubt as to whether it's really Heinrich in the sarcophagus.

On the cathedral's northern side is the largely Gothic building's only remaining Romanesque door, which sports so-called 'claw marks'. Legend has it these were left by the duke's pet lion, trying to get to its master

when he lay in the cathedral after his death. A more realistic explanation is that soldiers sharpened their swords here.

### BURG DANKWARDERODE

Heinrich's former **castle** (☎ 122 50; www.braunschweig-museum.de; Burgplatz; adult/concession incl Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum €3/1.50; ☞ 10am-5pm Tue & Thu-Sun,

1-8pm Wed) is now a museum. It houses a glittering **medieval collection** (☞ 11am-5pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 1-2.30pm & 4-8pm Wed), including golden sculptures of arms, medieval capes, and the original bronze lion statue cast in 1166.

Upstairs is a huge, spectacularly adorned **Knights' Hall** (☞ 10am-11am Tue & Thu-Sun, 2.30-4pm Wed).

### HERZOG ANTON ULRICH MUSEUM

Braunschweig is not always about Heinrich der Löwe. Another duke, Anton Ulrich (1633-1714) left Braunschweig with an impressive legacy too. Like Bruce Chatwin's compulsive collector *Utz*, Anton Ulrich had an eye for miniature porcelain figures – as well as for crockery, furniture and all types of painting, from Chinese to European. Now the thousands of pieces he assembled in his lifetime are found in the **Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum** (☎ 122 50; www.braunschweig-museum.de; Museumstrasse 1; adult/concession incl Burg Dankworderode €3/1.50; ☞ 10am-5pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 1-8pm Wed). Artefacts, including an ancient Roman onyx cup that survived some escapades through the years, and the most complete museum collection of Fürstenburg porcelain anywhere, are here. Unfortunately, lack of funding often means that opening times for different floors are staggered (as at Burg Dankworderode), so ring ahead.

### LANDESMUSEUM

The city's **Landesmuseum** (State Museum; ☎ 121 50; Burgplatz; adult/concession €2.50/1.30; ☞ 10am-5pm

Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, to 8pm Thu) covers German history from a local perspective. It's particularly engaging if you understand German, but it's also very visual displays, such as the *zweihundert Milliarden* (200 billion) and *zwanzig Millionen* (20 million) mark notes from the inflationary days of the Weimar Republic and the huge statue of Heinrich der Löwe made from nails, that will appeal to all.

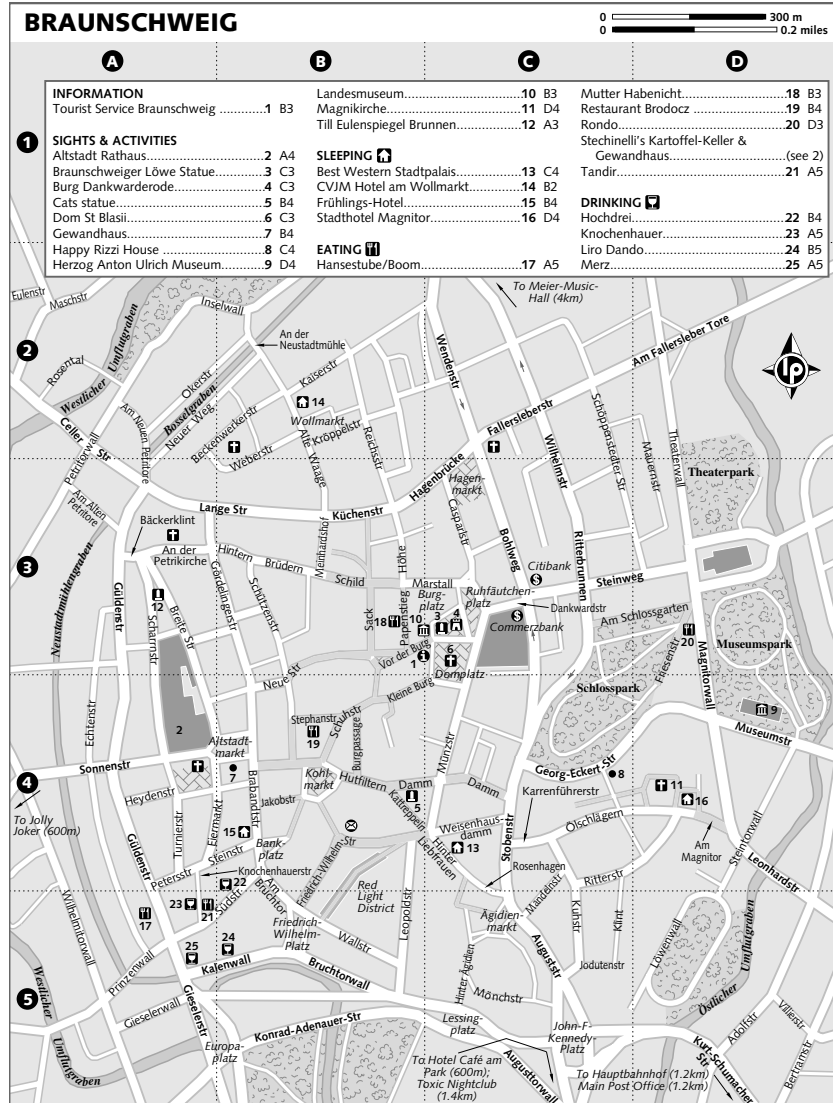
### OLD TOWN

Of the several market places in Braunschweig, each representing an original township, the Altstadtmarkt is arguably the most appealing, with the step-gabled Renaissance **Gewandhaus** (1303, façade 1590) and the Gothic **Altstadt Rathaus**. Inside the Rathaus is the magnificent Dronse meeting hall. The tourist office can help with individual details on other buildings.

Kids will like the playful **cats statue** on the corner of Damm and Kattreppeln and the lovely **Till Eulenspiegel Brunnen** at Bäckerkint, with Till sitting above owls and monkeys.

### MAGNIVIERTEL

Don't miss this arty quarter around the 11th-century **Magnikirche** (Am Magnitor). Restaurants and bars have restored the area's many restored half-timbered houses and there are some great boutique stores. Particularly eye-catching is the **Happy Rizzi House** (Ackerhof, nr Georg-Eckert-Strasse & Schlossstrasse), actually three colourful buildings decorated by American



### THE LION KING

Legendary in Germany, Heinrich the Löwe (1129-1195) is relatively unknown outside its boundaries. Yet, until his cousin and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa engineered his downfall, he was one of the most powerful nobles in 12th-century Europe.

The duke of both Saxony and Bavaria, Heinrich founded not only Braunschweig, but Munich, Lübeck and Lüneburg too. At the height of his reign, his domain stretched from the north and Baltic coasts to the Alps, and from Westphalia to Pomerania (in Poland).

Part of the Welfen clan, Heinrich's family connections no doubt helped him ascend to such heights. His father and grandfathers were dukes and his second, English wife, Mathilde, was Richard the Lionheart's sister. However, his military ability and acumen were also renowned, as were his greed and ambition.

Heinrich oversaw a period of *Ostkolonisation*, when German settlers moved east of the Elbe and Saale rivers. But then he refused to help Barbarossa on an ill-fated incursion into Lombardy – he wanted Goslar in exchange, Barbarossa refused – and the emperor took him to court and had him convicted of disobedience.

Stripped of his lands, Heinrich spent three years in exile (1182-1185) in Normandy with his father-in-law, Henry II (King of England). After another brief exile in 1188, he died in Braunschweig in 1195 and was entombed in its cathedral.

pop artist James Rizzi. Hearts are a recurring theme on the façade, while curved windows form integral parts of facial murals.

## Sleeping

Budget accommodation is both scarce and frequently disappointing in Braunschweig. There is no longer a hostel, so ask the tourist office about private rooms.

**Hotel Café am Park** (☎ 730 79; www.hotel-cafeampark.de; Wolfenbüttel Strasse 67; s/d from €32/50; 📍) This pleasant enough, slightly granny-style Hotel Garni is near a park to the south of town and relatively handy for the train station. The café serves homemade cakes.

**CVJM Hotel am Wollmarkt** (☎ 244 400; www.hotelamwollmarkt.de; Wollmarkt 9-12; s €55-60, d €85-95, tr €110; 📍) This YMCA-run hotel is just north of the centre and has pretty standard, but clean and comfortable rooms. The staff are welcoming and there's a nice breakfast bar and guest lounge, with a mural of historic Braunschweig, plus table football.

**Frühlings-Hotel** (☎ 243 210; www.fruehlingshotel.de; Bankplatz 7; s €65-110, d €85-145; 📍) Friendly staff with a good sense of humour, a stylish ground floor with reception and guest lounge plus three categories of pleasant bedrooms make this an excellent choice. Some of the cheaper accommodation on the top floor is a little old-fashioned, but still livable, while stunning room 407 has good rooftop views. There's even a tiny gym of sorts – a step-machine left in a corridor niche as a present from a regular guest.

**Best Western Stadtpalais** (☎ 241 024; www.palais-braunschweig.bestwestern.de; Hinter Liebfrauen 1a; s €70-140, d €90-155; 📍) This former 18th-century palace is now a hotel that really works, striking a good balance between historic and modern. Lots of cream, gilt and blue furnishings create interest, while great care has been taken to ensure that the place is comfortable and

functional. The central, but fortunately not too noisy, location is another plus.

## Eating

**Tandir** (☎ 165 67; Südstrasse 24; dishes €2-5.50) Its lavish displays of *pide* (flat bread), salads, doners, fried vegetable dishes and baklava have guaranteed this place an enduring position in the city's panoply of Turkish fast-food outlets.

**Mutter Habenicht** (☎ 459 56; Papenstieg 3; mains €5.50-15, weekday lunch menus €5.50) This 'Mother Hubbard' sure doesn't have a bare cupboard, as she dishes up filling portions of schnitzels, potatoes, steaks, spare ribs and the occasional Balkan dish. Seasonal specialities like *Spargel* (white asparagus) are also served in the dimly lit, bric-a-brac-filled front room, or in the small beer garden out the back.

**Restaurant Brodocz** (☎ 422 36; Stephanstrasse 1; mains €6.50-15; 📍 11am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat) Long a vegetarian restaurant, this Braunschweig institution now specialises in piscine delights, with everything from English-style fish and chips to dorade, perch and salmon on the menu. For old times' sake, though, it still serves ratatouille.

**Stechinelli's Kartoffel-Keller & Gewandhaus** (☎ 242 777; Altstadtmarkt 1-2; dishes €4-26) In the basement of the Rathaus, these adjacent restaurants are reasonably touristy, but handy as they open daily. Should you wish, you can indulge in potatoes over three courses in casual Stechinelli's, from potato soup to potato waffles for dessert. Gewandhaus specialises in schnitzel, although you're generally given a menu that covers both restaurants.

**Rondo** (☎ 123 4595; Magnitorwall 18; lunch mains €3-6, dinner mains €7-20; 📍 lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Tue-Sun) A great find on the top floor of the Stadttheater building, Rondo has a modern bistro-style room decorated with dramatic photos of opera diva Maria Callas, plus a roof terrace offering city views. The food is plain and

simple at lunch, but steps up a notch at dinner, with an array of fish, meat, vegetarian and seasonal specialities. Coffee and cake can be had in between times.

**Hansestube/Boom** (☎ 243 900; Güldenstrasse 7; mains €9-17) Widely regarded as Braunschweig's leading restaurants, these sister establishments in a renovated half-timbered house serve a seasonally changing menu of modern international cuisine. Or enjoy the *Braunschweiger Mummbraten*, a roast stuffed with mincemeat and served in a sauce based on Mumme, a local non-alcoholic malt extra. The room is divided into an elegant dining area with lots of glass and dark wood (Hansestube) and a more informal bistro (Boom).

## Drinking

The Magniviertel is a good district to head for drinks, with several traditional pubs. More listings can be found in *Cocktail* or *Subway*, the tourist office's *Braunschweig Bietet* or the quarterly *Hin & Weg*.

**Knochenhauer** (☎ 480 3503; Altes Knochenhauerstrasse 11; 📍 from 6pm) The bistro/bar of choice among Braunschweig's hip, casual set, Knochenhauer buzzes on a summer eve with friends getting together for drinks or light snacks. There are also DJs on Friday and Saturday night.

**Merz** (☎ 181 28; Gieselerstrasse 3) Spacious and relaxed, with table football, an attached weekend club (Schwanensee) playing house and soul classics, and a beer garden, Merz is a long-standing favourite. Snacks are also served.

**Liro Dando** (☎ 157 09; Kalenwall 3) A slightly trendier and older crowd can be found here, just around the corner from Merz.

**Hochdrei** (Südstrasse 31; 📍 from 10am) This young, upbeat café bar is the place to come for cheap drinks, with vodka kicking off at €1.

## Entertainment

**Jolly Joker** (☎ 0800-244 255, 281 4660; Broitzemerstrasse 220; 📍 from 10pm Tue-Sat) Other Braunschweig clubs come and go, but the Jolly Joker is not just here after more than 20 years, it's still being voted the city's best by local punters. Since a major overhaul in 2001, this venue with a capacity of 4000 features four separate dance spaces, 10 bars including a huge cocktail bar, and several food outlets. Expect top 100 dance-chart hits. The same complex also houses a cinema.

You probably don't need to know about anything other than the Jolly Joker, but if that's not to your tastes, other popular, mainstream clubs include **Toxic** (☎ 618 3399; www.toxic-bs.de; Böcklerstrasse 30-31; 📍 Fri & Sat) and **Meier-Music-Hall** (☎ 232 050; www.meier-music-hall.de; Schmalbachstrasse; 📍 Fri & Sat plus special events).

## Getting There & Away

There are regular IC and RE services to Hanover (from €14, 35 to 45 minutes) and IC trains to Leipzig (€35, two hours). ICE trains go to Berlin (€46, one hour 20 minutes) or Frankfurt (€68, 2¼ hours).

The A2 runs east-west between Hanover and Magdeburg across the northern end of the city. This connects with the A39 about 25km east of the city, which heads north to Wolfsburg. The A39 also heads south from the city.

## Getting Around

Braunschweig is at the heart of an integrated transport network that extends throughout the region and as far south as the Harz Mountains. Bus and tram ticket prices are determined by time, not distance: 90-minute tickets cost €1.90, 24-hour tickets €4.20.

Any bus or tram going to 'Rathaus' from the Hauptbahnhof will get you to the centre in 10 minutes; these leave from the same side as the public transport information booth just outside the train station. Trams 1 or 2 and buses 419 and 420 are among these.

If driving, be aware that there are one-way systems all around the Altstadt. Alternatively, there's parking by the train station.

## WOLFENBÜTTEL

☎ 05331 / pop 54,500

'Alles mit Bedacht' (take your time) is the motto of this friendly, charming little city, about 10 minutes by train from Braunschweig, but worlds away in attitude. First mentioned in 1118, Wolfenbüttel was virtually untouched by WWII, and it's almost a time capsule of half-timbered houses – there are over 600 of them, nearly all beautifully restored.

## Orientation & Information

The Hauptbahnhof is a five-minute walk southwest of Stadtmarkt, the town centre. To get to **Tourist Information Wolfenbüttel** (☎ 862 80; www.wolfenbuettel.com; Stadtmarkt 7; 📍 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat), in Stadtmarkt, take Bahnhofstrasse

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Stadthotel Magnitor** (☎ 471 30; www.stadthotel-magni.de, in German; Am Magnitor 1; s €55-80, d €80-110, ste €100-160) Easily the best of several half-timbered hotels in town, this place succeeds because of its location and interior. The historic black-and-white façade looks as it would have centuries ago, but up-to-date rooms have been painted white to create a sense of space and light unusual in such claustrophobic buildings. Furnishings keep things chic by rarely straying from the white, grey and black theme, although a touch of colour is added by the hall paintings. Two or three rooms do have very low ceilings, but these are cheaper than the rest. To cap it all, the place has a trendy bar and restaurant, right in the charming Magniviertel.

north to Kommissstrasse. This joins Kornmarkt, the main bus transfer point. Stadtmarkt is just to the north. The Schloss and Herzog August Bibliothek are west of here.

## Sights

The free tourist office brochure *A walk through historic Wolfenbüttel* is an excellent guide. It starts at Wolfenbüttel's pretty **Schloss Museum** (☎ 924 60; Schlossplatz 13; adult/concession/family €3/2/4; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), where the living quarters of the Braunschweig-Lüneburg dukes have been preserved in all their glory of intricate inlaid wood, ivory walls, brocade curtains and chairs.

However, it's the **Herzog August Bibliothek** (☎ 808 214; Lessingplatz 1; adult/concession €3/2; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), across the square, that will most interest bibliophiles. Not only is this hushed place one of the world's best reference libraries for 17th-century books (if you're a member that is), its collection of 800,000 volumes also includes what's billed as the 'world's most expensive book' (€17.50 million). This is the *Welfen Evangelial*, a gospel book once owned by Heinrich der Löwe. The original is only on show sporadically, as taking it out inevitably causes slight damage. However, an impressive facsimile is permanently displayed in the vault on the first floor.

From Schlossplatz, the walk suggested in the brochure continues east along Löwenstrasse to Krambuden and north up Kleiner Zimmerhof to **Klein Venedig** (Little Venice), one of the few tangible remnants of the extensive canal system built by Dutch workers in Wolfenbüttel in the late 16th century. From there the brochure continues to guide you past historic courtyards, buildings and squares. The entire walk takes around one hour (2km), excluding visits.

## Getting There & Away

Trains connect Wolfenbüttel with Braunschweig's Hauptbahnhof (€2.35, 10 minutes) twice an hour.

## WOLFSBURG

☎ 05361 / pop 121,800

All is not well in the 'capital of Volkswagen', but from the outside you wouldn't realise it. In a scene that could have come from Fritz Lang's classic film *Metropolis*, a huge VW emblem still adorns the company's nationalised global headquarters – and the same

insignia is repeated in solidarity on almost every vehicle.

Behind the scenes, the company wants to scale down operations in high-wage 'Golfsburg' (as Wolfsburg is nicknamed after one of VW's most successful models). Conversely, however, more visitors want in. Besides the increasingly successful theme park of Autostadt, the town now boasts the Phaeno science centre, a sleek piece of futuristic architecture by celebrity architect Zaha Hadid.

## Orientation

Wolfsburg's centre is just southeast of the Hauptbahnhof. Head diagonally left out of the train station to the partly pedestrianised main drag, Porschestrasse, and continue south. The Phaeno centre is impossible to miss, just to the left of the station. To get to Autostadt, walk under Phaeno and continue until you see the stairs across the railway tracks. These lead to the theme park.

## Information

**Babylon Tele- and Internet Shop** (Porschestrasse 23; per hr €2; ☹ 10am-11pm) Internet access.

**Main post office** (Porschestrasse 22-24)

**Wolfsburg tourist office** (☎ 899 930; www.wolfsburg.de; Willy Brandt-Platz 3; ☹ 9am-7pm) In the train station.

## Sights & Activities

### AUTOSTADT

Spread across 25 hectares, **Autostadt** (Car City; ☎ 0800-288 678 238; www.autostadt.de; Stadtbrücke; adult/child/concession/family €14/6/11/38; ☹ 9am-8pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar) is a celebration of all things VW – so no muttering about the company's recent boardroom scandals up the back there, please! Conceived as a luxury centre for customers to collect new vehicles, it soon developed into a theme park with broad family appeal.

Things kick off with a broad view of automotive design and engineering in the Konzernforum, while the neighbouring Zeithaus looks back at the history of the Beetle (see boxed text, p624) and other VW models. Then, in various outlying pavilions you can learn more about individual marques, including VW itself, Audi, Bentley, Lamborghini, Seat and Skoda. Many exhibits are interactive and most have signage in German and English.

Many people will be keener to do something more active, and Autostadt doesn't

disappoint here. Included in the entrance price is a 45-minute trip into the neighbouring Volkswagen factory, bigger than Monaco and the world's largest car plant. These leave at 15-minute intervals from Monday to Friday only, and there's a daily tour in English (at 1.30pm at the time of research, but check the latest details on the website). Queues can be long, so heed the staff's advice if they ask you to come back later. Be aware that because the factory is so large, tours rotate through different workshop sections, so it's pot luck whether you'll see one of the 3000 cars produced each day roll off the assembly line or something less interesting, such as metal-pressing.

For a pure, competitive adrenaline rush, ring ahead to organise an English-speaking instructor for the park's **obstacle courses** and **safety training** (€25 each). You'll need a valid licence, of course, and to be comfortable with a left-hand-drive car. The park even has a **mini-course**, with toy models that can be driven by kids.

## AUTOMUSEUM

After the whizz-bang, showbiz aplomb of Autostadt, its sister **AutoMuseum** (☎ 520 71; Dieselstrasse 35; adult/concession/family €6/3/15; ☹ 10am-5pm, closed 24 Dec-1 Jan) is pretty low-key. You proceed through a hallway of ads (in German), which make you realise how central its 'cheeky chappie' persona was to the Beetle's success. Then you turn the corner and a room full of that personality confronts you.

The museum often lends its cars to other exhibitions, so it's impossible to list exactly what you'll see. However, its collection does include a vehicle used in the *Herbie, the Love Bug* movie, a Beetle built from wood, the original 1938 Cabriolet presented to Adolf Hitler on his 50th birthday, and (our favourite) a white, see-through, iron-lace Beetle built by Mexican factory workers for the wedding of some colleagues. Amphibious Beetles and a few Passats and Golfs complete the show.

Take bus 208 to Automuseum.

## PHAENO

The glass-and-concrete building that houses the science centre **Phaeno** (☎ 0180-106 0600; www.phaeno.de; Willy Brandt-Platz 1; adult/concession/family €11/7/25; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, last entry 1hr before closing) is truly cutting edge. Sleek, curved and thin, it looks like a stretchy spaceship from Planet Minimalism.

Inside, however, you rarely have time to appreciate the design by British-based Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid. The place is full of 250 hands-on physics exhibits and experiments (with instructions and explanations in both German and English) and, frequently it seems, 10 times as many schoolchildren all pulling at them. You can wind up your own rocket, check your eyes by looking at bunnies, build an arched polystyrene bridge, watch thermal images of your body – and so on and so on. Indeed, the place is quite physically, as well as mentally, absorbing, so it helps to set yourself some time or other limits.

If you speak German, an excellent idea is to pick up the brochure that poses a list of questions and try to answer them during your visit. For the one really peaceful chance to savour the building's architecture, head to the canteen. Look for the window at the far end to see how it cleverly frames Porschestrasse.

## CITY CENTRE

As you walk south down Porschestrasse, you'll come to another great building, the **Kunstmuseum** (Art Museum; ☎ 266 90; Porschestrasse 53; adult/concession €6/3; ☹ 11am-8pm Tue, to 6pm Wed-Sun), which is home to temporary exhibitions of modern art. On the hill just southwest of the southern end of Porschestrasse is **Planetarium Wolfsburg** (☎ 219 39; Uhländweg 2; adult/concession/family €5/3/10), built in 1982 after VW bartered Golfs for Zeiss projectors with the GDR. It's got laser and rock shows, star shows and spoken-word performances set to the stars. Call ahead, as show times vary.

Next to it is the city's historic landmark, the **Esso Station**, built in 1951 and now restored to its original splendour.

## SCHLOSS WOLFSBURG

In historic contrast to Autostadt's space-age sheen, Wolfsburg's castle dates from 1600 and today houses the **Stadt Museum** (☎ 828 540; Schlossstrasse 8; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 1-6pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun). It has a rundown of the city's history from 1938, when the VW plant was founded, to the present day. There's also a small regional history museum and two **art galleries** that host rotating exhibitions. The Schloss is five minutes northeast of Autostadt. Several buses, including 160, 201, 202, 208, 211 and 380 will get you here.



**FALLERSLEBEN**

Keen history students who speak German might want to visit this historic part of town to see **Fallersleben Schloss** and its **Hoffmann Museum** (☎ 05362-526 23; adult/concession/family €1.50/0.50/3; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 1-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun). In 1841, Fallersleben native August Heinrich Hoffman (1798–1874) wrote the lyrics to what would become the German national anthem (music courtesy of Joseph Hayden). Here you'll find discussion of how his words 'über alles' (above everything) were simply a call for an end to petty inter-German fiefdoms, and how they were expunged after the Third Reich's nationalistic excesses. Take bus 206 or 214 to Fallersleben.

**Sleeping**

Most tourists who come to Wolfsburg tend to be day-trippers, and the city's accommodation is geared towards business travellers. Facilities like modem ports are standard, but single rooms far outnumber doubles.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 133 37; www.jugendherberge.de/jh/wolfsburg; Lessingstrasse 60; dm under/over 26yr €16.50/19.50; 📞 📺 📺) Slightly cramped and fairly old, with pine furniture and checked linen, this hostel is nevertheless friendly and extremely central.

**Hotel Wolf** (☎ 865 60; www.alterwolf.de; Schlossstrasse 21; s/d from €35/50, f €75-85; 📞) A good-value option for families travelling by car, this attractive, black-and-white half-timbered house is located in a quiet, leafy part of town just behind Autostadt and the city castle. Rooms aren't particularly fashionable, but some are huge.

**Cityhotel Journal** (☎ 292 662; www.cityhotel-journal.de; Kaufhofpassage 2; s/d from €40/70) Better in winter than summer, as it's on the city's main drinking strip, this place is friendly, homy and convenient for automotive fans in town for one night.

**Global Inn** (☎ 2700; www.globalinn.de; Kleistrasse 46; s €45-65, d €90; 📞 📺) While very much aimed at the corporate customer, this place's comfortable furnishings and facilities, including an

excellent Italian restaurant, deliver the goods for leisure travellers, too. Book ahead.

**Penthouse Hotel** (☎ 2710; www.penthouse-hotel.de; Schachtweg 22; s €60-65, d €80-95, f €95) With basic kitchens, these central, although quite plain-Jane apartments, are also suitable for families or longer-stay business travellers. Discounts are given for extended stays.

**Ritz-Carlton** (☎ 607 000; www.ritzcarlton.com; Stadtbrücke; rooms from €280; 📞 📺 📺 📺) This stunning ring-shaped building in the heart of Autostadt is Wolfsburg's only five-star hotel. It has elegant rooms decorated in natural tones of camel, cream and brown, a sauna, and a Michelin-starred restaurant. Naturally, if you stay here admission to Autostadt is free.

**Eating & Drinking**

**Atelier Café** (☎ 122 19; An der St Annenkirche; dishes €4.50-16; 🕒 closed Tue) Summer breakfasts are the best here, because you can sit in the lovely courtyard in the historic inner-city district of Hesslingen, five minutes east of Porschestraße. You can also head inside the half-timbered house, where three meals a day are served in a modern industrial-style bistro of concrete, glass and steel. Ask the tourist office for a map and directions.

**Altes Brauhaus** (☎ 053362-3140; Schlossplatz, Fallersleben; mains €7-15) If you're visiting the Hoffman Museum in Fallersleben or simply dying for some genuine German beer-hall atmosphere, come here. There's a good house brew and hearty fare including salads, sausages, potatoes and sauerkraut.

**Aalto Bistro** (☎ 891 689; Porschestraße 1; mains €10.50-15; 🕒 from 6pm Mon-Sat) This is the only part of the Kulturhaus, designed by star Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, that most visitors will get to see. It serves pasta and seafood in a modern bistro environment.

**Walino** (☎ 255 99; Kunstmuseum, Porschestraße 53; mains €16-17.50, per person 3-course meal for 2 €18.50; 🕒 closed Mon) The menu of international cuisine always changes in the Kunstmuseum's loft-style restaurant – including dishes such as corn-fed chicken breast on polenta, and fish on truffle risotto – while the pleasant outlook over town makes it a perennial.

Some of the eight **Autostadt restaurants** (☎ 406 100) stay open later than the park itself, so within two hours of the park's closing time, you can buy an **Abendticket** (evening ticket, €6) and your admission fee is credited towards your restaurant meal. The restaurants

are all operated by Mövenpick, but have different cuisines. Options range from a cheap American diner to a sushi bar and an upmarket Mediterranean restaurant. Ask for details at the park's main cash desk.

Wolfsburgers do much of their drinking in **Kaufhof** – not the department store, but a small strip of bars, pubs and a few eateries west of Porschestraße. The best thing is to wander along and see what appeals.

**Getting There & Away**

Frequent ICE train services go to Berlin (€39, one hour) and Hanover (€19, 30 minutes), the latter passing through Braunschweig (€11, 16 minutes). Regional trains are cheaper, especially to Braunschweig (€3.50, 24 minutes).

From Braunschweig, take the A2 east to the A39 north, which brings you right into town. Alternatively, take the B248 north to the A39.

**Getting Around**

Single bus tickets, valid for 90 minutes, cost €1.90 and a day pass costs €4.20. The major bus transfer point (ZOB) is at the northern end of Porschestraße. Buses 206 and 214 go regularly to Fallersleben from here.

A free shuttle called City Mobil runs from the Hauptbahnhof down Porschestraße with stops at Kaufhof, the Südkopf Center (a shopping centre) and the Kunstmuseum from 8am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 4pm Saturday.

Once you leave the pedestrianised centre, distances become difficult to cover easily by foot. In every sense, Wolfsburg was built for cars. The car park behind the Planetarium is free. Vehicles can be hired from **Europcar** (☎ 815 70; Dieselstrasse 19).

There are taxi ranks at the Hauptbahnhof and at the northern end of Porschestraße. Alternatively, call **City Taxi** (☎ 230 223).

**GÖTTINGEN**

☎ 0551 / pop 121,800

Germans sometimes take the mickey out of themselves as a nation of *Besserwissers* (know-it-alls), and few places know better than this famous university town. With the Georg-August Universität a pillar of the community since 1734, Göttingen has sent more than 40 Nobel Prize winners into the world. And, as well as all those award-winning doctors and scientists, the fairy-tale writing Brothers

**BITTEN BY THE BUG**

Cast-iron proof that Germans *do* have a sense of humour, the Volkswagen Beetle is truly greater than the sum of its parts. After all, the parts in question initially comprised little more than an air-cooled, 24-horsepower engine (maximum speed: 100km/h) chucked in the back of a comically half-egg-shaped chassis. Yet somehow this rudimentary mechanical assembly added up to a global icon – a symbol of Germany's postwar *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) that owns the world over fondly thought of as one of the family.

Indeed, it's a testament to the vehicle's ability to run on the smell of an oily rag while rarely breaking down that few would even begrudge its Nazi provenance. Yes, in 1934 Adolf Hitler asked Ferdinand Porsche to design a 'Volkswagen' (people's car) affordable for every German household and, yes, the *Käfer* (bug) was the result. However, Beetle production only really began in the new Wolfsburg factory under British occupation in 1946.

Did the company realise then what a hit it had on its hands? By the early 1960s, the chugging, spluttering sound of VW engines could be heard across 145 nations.

Urged on by ads to 'Think Small', North Americans were particularly bitten by the bug, and this durable, cut-price vehicle became a permanent fixture on the hippie scene. Later in Europe, the Golf model cars that superseded the Beetle in the 1970s and 1980s would prove a phenomenal success. (While Douglas Coupland talked about *Generation X*, the German equivalent, as identified by best-selling author Florian Illies in 2000, is *Generation Golf*). However the US never warmed to the usurper, pushing VW to introduce a sleek, trendy, state-of-the-art New Beetle in 1998.

Long after VW withdrew its bucket-of-bolts old Beetle (essentially the same beast despite improvements) from Western markets, the car remained a best-seller in the developing world. Only on 31 July 2003 did the last one roll off the assembly line in Mexico, the 21,529,464th of its breed.

But the secondhand market remains strong. In 2005, online auction site eBay sold Pope Benedict XIII's old Volkswagen Golf to a US casino for about €189,000. Newspapers since have said Volkswagen has now contacted the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger; it reportedly wants to build the next Pope-mobile.

Grimm (as German linguistic teachers) and Prussian chancellor Otto von Bismarck (as a student) could also be expected at a timeless alumni evening.

Despite such a formidably pointy-headed reputation, Göttingen is actually an atmospheric and typical student haunt. Much is made of the iconic statue of Gänseliesel (the little goose girl) being the most kissed in the world, thanks to the custom among graduating doctoral students to peck her on the cheek. For most of the year, however, Gänseliesel remains unmolested, while the university's 25,000 students major in having a good time.

## Orientation

The circular city centre is surrounded by the ruins of an 18th-century wall and is divided by the Leinekanal (Leine Canal), an arm of the Leine River. The centre has a large pedestrianised mall, the hub of which is the Markt, a 10-minute walk east of the Hauptbahnhof.

## Information

**Gö-Card** (one/two days €5/9) Discount card offering free public transport and discounts on tours and museums.

**Post office** (Heinrich von Stephanstrasse 1-5) Near the Hauptbahnhof.

**Post office** (Groner Strasse 15)

**Tourist-Information Göttingen** (☎ 499 800; www.goettingen.de; Altes Rathaus, Markt 9; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, closed Sun Nov-Mar)

**Universitätsklinikum** (University hospital; ☎ 390; Robert-Koch-Strasse 40) Medical services.

## 'STADT, DIE WISSEN SCHAFFT'

Göttingen is so damn pointy-headed that even its clever-clever tourist office slogan takes a bit of explaining to translate into English. A play on words, its straightforward meaning is 'the town that forges knowledge'. However, Wissenschaft (as one word, with one f) also means science – one of Göttingen's strengths.

Vitamin D was discovered here and aluminium first developed. Meanwhile, famous names to have worked at the university include physicists Niels Bohr, Max Planck and Otto Hahn, as well as astronomer Carl Friedrich Gauss. David Hilbert and Hermann Minkowski also laid down the mathematical groundwork for Einstein's theory of relativity.

**Waschsalon** (Ritterplan 4; per wash from €3; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Sat) Laundry.

## Sights & Activities

Rather than having any urgent must-sees, Göttingen is a mosaic of attractions that you'll most appreciate by walking around. Having existed since 953 at least, the town long had a protective network of walls and moats, and a walk around the 18th-century ramparts is recommended. These are not brick constructions, but rather earthy hummocks left from that time. It takes less than an hour to circumnavigate the city, the best starting point being the entrance near Cheltenham Park. This takes you past **Bismarckhäuschen** (Bismarck Cottages; ☎ 485 844; Im Hainberg; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm Tue, 3-5pm Thu & Sat), where the town fathers reputedly banished 18-year-old Otto for rowdy behaviour in 1833. This incident is probably apocryphal, but it's a matter of historical record that the future Iron Chancellor was later found guilty of witnessing an illegal duel. Nearby are two old **water mills**. The walk ends near the **Deutsches Theater** (☎ 496 90; Theaterplatz 11).

## AROUND THE MARKT

The city's symbol, the **Gänseliesel** statue and fountain remains a handy meeting point for locals and most visitors will soon head this way after arrival, if for no other reason than to see the Markt and visit the tourist office. Close up, the demure little goose girl (with geese) isn't exactly a show stopper. After all you hear about her being the 'most kissed girl in the world', the bronze statue doesn't even have particularly shiny cheeks from all that human contact. There's nothing here to compare with the gleaming right breast of the statue of Juliet in Verona, Italy.

While you're here, however, pop into the nearby **Altes Rathaus** (☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, closed Sun Nov-Mar) for a quick look at the interior. Built in 1270, the structure once housed the merchants' guild, and the rich decorations later added to its Great Hall include frescoes of the coats of arms of the Hanseatic cities and local bigwigs, grafted onto historic scenes.

## BUILDINGS

Looking at some of Göttingen's half-timbered buildings is a pleasant way to while away some time. **Junkerschänke** (Barfüsserstrasse 5) is the prettiest, thanks to its colourful 16th-century

Renaissance façade. Just down the road is another ornate number, **Haus Börner** (Barfüsserstrasse 12); built in 1536 it has the busy **Börnerviertel** alley behind it. Kurze Strasse and Paulinerstrasse are also worth exploring.

Among Göttingen's six Gothic churches, the most interesting is the **St Jakobikirche** (1361) on Weender Strasse. With eye-catching red, white and grey angular striped columns, it also features some contemporary stained-glass windows.

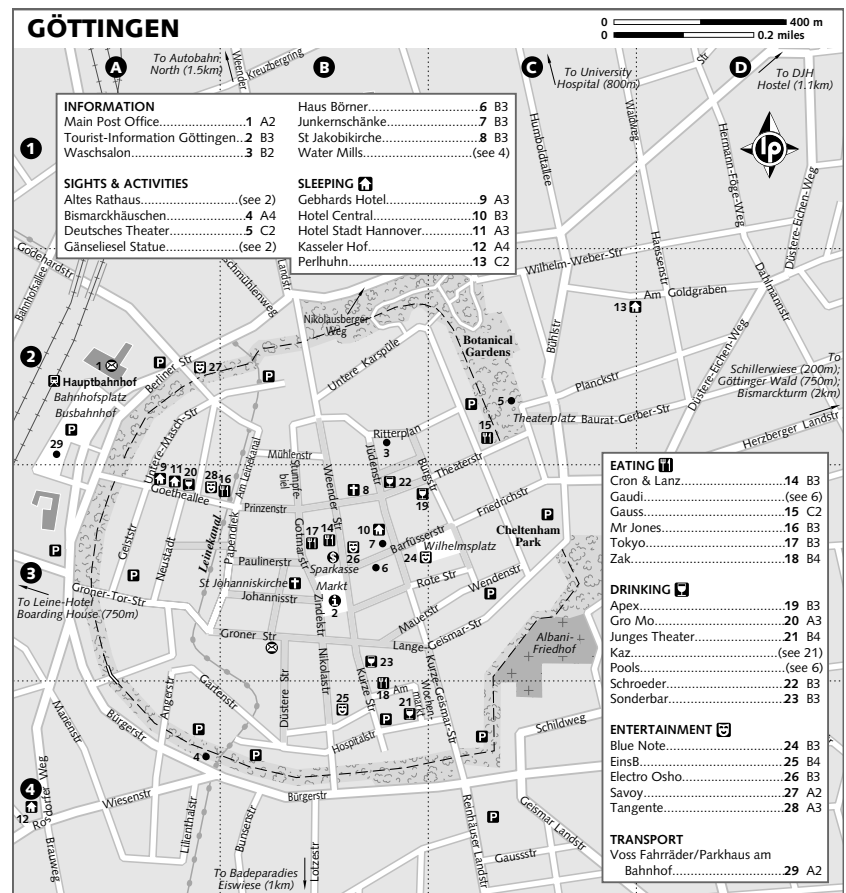
## PARKS & GARDENS

In the shadow of the old ramparts, the small **Botanische Gärten** (Botanical Gardens; ☎ 395 753; Untere Karspüle 2; admission free; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat & Sun) were Germany's first, and there's a

section devoted to mountain plants – the Andes, the Alps etc. The **tropical greenhouses** (☎ 9am-noon & 1.30-2.45pm) are highly recommended in winter.

A 20-minute walk east of the Markt is the **Schillerwiese**, a large park that backs onto forest. To reach it, follow Herzberger Landstrasse east, then turn right into Merkelstrasse.

To enter **Göttinger Wald** (Göttinger Forest), continue along Herzberger Landstrasse near where it forms a hairpin bend, and turn into Borheckstrasse. From there, a bitumen track open to hikers and cyclists winds towards Hainholzhof-Kehr, 45 minutes away, where there's a Bavarian-style beer garden in summer. Another option is to take bus 1 or 7 to Zienterrassen and walk northwest back through



the forest into town. From the terminus a path leads to the **Bismarkturm** (adult/concession €1.70/0.70; ☎ 11am-6pm weekends & holidays Apr-Sep). This stone tower has spectacular views over the Leine Valley.

## BATHS

If all the walking through parks has knotted your muscles, unwind in **Badeparadies Eiswiese** (☎ 507 090; Windausweg 6; adult/concession from €12/8; ☎ 10am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10.30pm Sat & Sun). This huge swimming/spa complex has pools from 28°C to 34°C, with the usual assortment of massaging underwater jets, geysers and currents. While kids enjoy the water slides, there are massages (book in advance), a solarium and a sauna for adults.

## Tours

It's worth going on a tourist office **city walking tour** (per person €5.50; ☎ 11.30am Fri-Sun Apr-Oct, English tours 11am 1st & 3rd Sat of month Apr-Oct), because that's the only way you get to visit the **Karzer** (former student cells) at Aula, the main university building. Historically, students were sent here when they misbehaved. Many used charcoal and chalk to etch profiles that are still well preserved. The brochure *Göttingen Komplet* (€2.50) outlines two other walks to do on your own. Plaques on buildings around town show which famous scholars lived where and when.

Also ask the tourist office about its occasional **London-Bus tours** (adult/concession €6.50/4), using a red Routemaster to tour the city.

## Festivals

The **Händel Festival**, held in late May or early June, will interest those keen on music. Inquire about tickets at the tourist office.

## Sleeping

Ask the tourist office about camping; the nearest site is 15km west of town.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 576 22; www.jugendherberge.de/jh/goettingen; Habichtsweg 2; dm under/over 26yr €16.90/19.90; ☎ ☎ ☎) In a pleasant spot on the outskirts of town, this large, slightly older hostel is popular with cyclists and very self-contained. There's a laundry, café, games room, and grill area, as well as several restaurants down the same street. To get here, take bus 6 or 9 to Jugendherberge.

**Kasseler Hof** (☎ 720 812; www.kasselerhof.de; Rosdorfer Weg 26; s €52-59, d €75-89; ☎ ☎) Ongoing

renovations are turning a chintzy budget hotel into something a little more appealing, with newer rooms decorated in a simple Ikea style. All rooms have en suite bathrooms. Tucked away in a quiet corner not far from town, the hotel has its own restaurant.

**Perlhuhn** (☎ 551 10; www.perlhuhn.de; Am Gold-graben 22; s/d €55/80; ☎) This tiny B&B offers two unforgettable apartments themed from the golden age of travel. One combines an aircraft living room with an African bedroom, the other a captain's living room (with a ship's propeller as an elegant table base) and a pirate's bedroom.

**Leine-Hotel Boarding House** (☎ 505 10; www.leinehotel-goe.de; Groner Landstrasse 55; s €55-70; d €85-110; ☎ ☎ ☎) A 10-minute walk from the centre, this place is popular with visiting academics for the kitchenettes in every room and its business centre. It's generic looking, but a well-run operation with a good buffet breakfast and lots of helpful information for guests.

**Hotel Central** (☎ 571 57; www.hotel-central.com; Jüdenstrasse 12; s €72-100, d €95-120, ste €150; ☎ ☎) Unusual wallpaper has been used to enliven several of this hotel's rooms, from the brown-and-blue cloth tartan in room 245 (which still has a 1970s orange bathroom) to the seagrass-style wallpaper of completely modern room 135. Even where rooms have painted walls, this place presents an appealing and interesting mix of styles and periods. Exposed red bricks and Miró prints set the tone at reception and in the breakfast room.

**Hotel Stadt Hannover** (☎ 547 960; www.hotel-stadthannover.de; Goetheallee 21; s €72-90, d €102-120, tr €135-155; ☎ ☎ ☎) Through the Art Nouveau etched glass door and quaint entrance hall here, you'll find modern, comfortable and slightly masculine rooms. There's a choice of bathtub or shower, while the smoking rooms are sensibly (but unusually) separated from the nonsmoking rooms by a fire door. The owners, the fourth generation of the same family to run the place, speak excellent English.

**Gebhards Hotel** (☎ 496 80; www.romantikhotels.com/goettingen; Goetheallee 22-23; s €92-125, d €135-180; ☎) The quaintly elegant rooms here, some with Art Deco wall panels and lights, will appeal to more traditional tastes. Facilities include a whirlpool, sauna and one of the city's most opulent restaurants.

## Eating

**Cron & Lanz** (☎ 560 22; Weender Strasse 25; coffee/cake from €2/2.50, snacks €2.50-6.50) The windows of this ornate Viennese-style café will tempt you in with their artful arrangements of chocolates and cakes. Once inside, you may have to wrestle with your conscience to ignore the healthier light snacks of toasted sandwiches, quiches and casseroles.

**Zak** (☎ 487 770; Am Wochenmarkt 22; mains €5-9.90) This ivy-covered pub-café-bar is a relaxed popular meeting spot, thanks in part to its excellent location opposite the Junges Theater. But do try to keep a straight face when ordering. Dishes, from bagels to potatoes to meat, all carry film-title names, so you'll have to ask for the likes of a *Natürlich Blond* (Legally Blond) or a *Findet Nemo* (Finding Nemo)!

**Tokyo** (☎ 999 5735; Gotmarstrasse 16; sushi €2-9, mains €8-14; ☎ closed Mon) In the simple exposed-pine and bamboo interior here, the lone sushi chef works hard to turn out customers' orders, including the usual *maki* and *nigiri* sushi, *tempura* and *gyoza*. Tofu and vegetarian options are available, and there's even Korean beef and *kimchi*.

**Gaudi** (☎ 531 3001; Börnerviertel, Barfüsserstrasse 12-13; mains €10-22) Stained glass and other Iberian-style splashes of colour give this restaurant its name. The menu, however, would be better described as Mediterranean or modern international, with dishes such as beef roulades with spinach, ratatouille chutney and grated polenta, and rack of lamb in garlic sauce with spinach and gnocchi.

**Gauss** (☎ 566 16; Oberer Karspüle 22, enter on Theaterstrasse; mains €16-24; ☎ dinner, closed Sun) Renowned TV chef Jacqueline Amirfallah upholds this cellar restaurant's reputation as Göttingen's best gourmet experience with exquisite (and changing) *haute cuisine*, such as souffléed fillet of North Sea flounder on lemon sauce with endives and asparagus risotto. There's a noticeable concentration on seasonal ingredients.

## Drinking

**Pools** (☎ 820 7472; Börnerviertel, Barfüsserstrasse 12-13) Göttingen's contribution to the spate of funky 'second-hand bars' (with recycled furniture) currently popular in Germany, Pools features '70s arc lamps, potted plants and chairs rescued from the rubbish, including four ripped-out bus seats. The toilets are upstairs;

outside a cool, relaxed crowd hangs out in the courtyard.

**Schroeder** (☎ 556 47; Jüdenstrasse 29) This hip, studenty place touts itself as a 'bar-café-living room', and some patrons do seem to treat it as their second home, spending hours drinking and chatting. There's a TV screen used for watching football, some DJ evenings, and pavement tables in summer.

**Mr Jones** (☎ 531 4500; Goetheallee 8) Waiters zip to and fro with milkshake-sized cocktails in Day-Glo colours at this relaxed, slightly American-style bar. The €4 happy hour lasts all evening (despite what the menu says) and punters are keen to taste everything, including the 'surprise' Mr Jones and Mrs Jones drinks.

**Gro Mo** (☎ 488 9232; Goetheallee 13a) Patrons nurse huge mugs of coffee or even bigger steins of beer at this funky Goetheallee hang-out. As they're strewn all over the place, it's a great spot to pick up flyers and local magazines.

**Apex** (☎ 447 71; Burgstrasse 46) A refined, academic and generally older crowd (40s to 50s) comes to sup a range of wines or even Sion Kölsch in this dark-wood bistro, attached to a cabaret venue and art gallery.

**Sonderbar** (☎ 431 43; Kurze Strasse 9) If you're after a late-night watering hole, head to Sonderbar, which is open until 5am daily.

Combined with Zak, **Junges Theater** (☎ 495 0150; Hospitalstrasse 6) draws a large crowd to Am Wochenmarkt. The theatre's bar, **Kaz** (☎ 530 62), is also an enduringly popular place to drink.

## Entertainment

German-language *Pony* is your best bet for information about individual gigs and club nights.

**Savoy** (☎ 531 5353; Berliner Strasse 5) Dress up, for only sleek and trendy beings are waved through easily at Göttingen's leading and most glamorous club. Playing mainstream and house music, it's spread over a couple of levels, with a chilled-out lounge below the main floor (with bar and go-go podium).

**EinsB** (☎ 820 7799; Nikolaistraße 1b) Friday nights concentrate on new-wave guitar music, Brit-pop etc, while on Saturday things take a turn for the electronic in this laid-back, younger club above a pipe-smoking Turkish lounge.

**Electro Osho** (☎ 517 7976; Weender Strasse 38) This small club, at the end of an arcade next to a

mobile-phone shop, focuses on drum 'n' bass and techno.

**Tangente** (☎ 463 76; Goetheallee 8a) The long-standing punters at Tangente just keep getting older with it and its famous 'Zartbitter' rock parties (which are quite heavy metal).

**Blue Note** (☎ 469 07; Wilhelmplatz 3) Right next to the university *Mensa* (canteen), the Blue Note has regular live bands and theme dance nights, including salsa, tropical and even Persian.

## Getting There & Away

There are frequent direct ICE services north to Hanover (€28, 30 minutes) and Hamburg (€54, two hours) or south to Frankfurt (€51, 1½ hours) and Munich (€87, four hours). ICE services also go to Berlin-Hauptbahnhof (€63, two hours 20 minutes). Direct regional services go to Kassel (€11.70, one hour) and Weimar (€23.10, two hours), but you'll have to change trains to get to Goslar (€13.40, 1¼ hours).

Göttingen is on the A7 running north-south. The closest entrance is 3km southwest along Kasseler Landstrasse, an extension of Groner Landstrasse. The Fairy-Tale Road (B27) runs southwest to the Weser River and northeast to the Harz Mountains.

## Getting Around

Single bus tickets cost €1.70, while 24-hour tickets are €4.

There are taxi ranks at the Hauptbahnhof and behind the Altes Rathaus. To call one, ring ☎ 340 34.

Bikes can be hired from **Voss Fahrräder/ Parkhaus am Bahnhof** (☎ 599 94; Am Bahnhof).

# WEST OF HANOVER

## OSNABRÜCK

☎ 0541 / pop 163,000

'Zum Glück komm' ich aus Osnabrück', locals boast of their good luck to come from this city; and that's something you most understand at night, wandering the winding lamp-lit streets of the old town, past ornate half-timbered houses.

But this historic heartland is now offset by a contemporary building that has overtaken interest in native son Erich Maria Remarque, author of the WWI classic *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and truly eclipsed Osnabrück's claim to be where the Thirty Years' War ended

in 1648. The construction in question is the Felix-Nussbaum-Haus, by leading world architect Daniel Libeskind.

## Orientation

Osnabrück's egg-shaped city centre is divided into the northern Altstadt and the southern Neustadt, with the east-west Neumarkt drawing a line across the middle. The Hauptbahnhof is on the town's eastern edge. To reach the centre from the station takes about 15 minutes, going straight ahead along Möserstrasse, turning left at the Kaufhof building into Wittekindsstrasse and then right into Grosser Strasse. When you come to the Domhof, continue left along Krahnstrasse to the tourist office.

## Information

There's an ATM in the Hauptbahnhof.

**Main post office** (Theodor-Heuss-Platz 6-9; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat)

**Marketing & Tourismus Osnabrück** (☎ 323 2202; www.osnabrueck-tourism.de, in German; Bierstrasse 22/23; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat)

## Sights

### FELIX-NUSSBAUM-HAUS

Shaped like an interconnected series of concrete shards, with slit windows and sloping floors, the **Felix-Nussbaum-Haus** (☎ 323 2207, 323 2237; Lotter Strasse 2; adult/concession €5/3; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) is an older, slightly more neglected sister to Libeskind's famous Jewish Museum Berlin. The Osnabrück-born Jewish painter Felix Nussbaum (1904-44) wasn't a great original; his work has shades of Van Gogh and Henri Rousseau. However, Libeskind's 1988 building was deliberately designed to show it at its best.

When first opened, the building conveyed Nussbaum's changing life circumstances and moods, for example, using a long, darkening corridor to convey the period of despairing wartime exile before the painter was finally arrested and sent to Auschwitz.

However, the collection has since been rehung to drive you into the adjacent Kulturgeschichtliche Museum (don't bother going in) and now isn't such a powerful experience. All the same, it remains an interesting insight into the life of a German-Jewish artist, as well as Libeskind's architecture.

## MARKT & AROUND

It was on the **Rathaus** (admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) steps that the

Peace of Westphalia was proclaimed on 25 October 1648, ending the 'Thirty Years' War. The preceding peace negotiations were conducted partly in Münster, about 60km south, and partly in the Rathaus's **Friedenssaal** (Peace Hall). On the left as you enter the Rathaus are portraits of the negotiators. Also have a look in the **Schatzkammer** (Treasure Chamber) opposite, especially at the 13th-century **Kaiserpokal** (Kaiser goblet).

The four richly ornamented cross gables of the **Marienkirche** loom above the square, painstakingly rebuilt after burning down during WWII. Opposite, the small **Erich Maria Remarque Friedenszentrum** (Erich Maria Remarque Peace Centre; ☎ 323 2109; Markt 6; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) uses photos and documents to chronicle the writer's life (1898-1970) and work.

Various **half-timbered houses** survived WWII. At Bierstrasse 24 is the baroque **Walhalla** (right), with a portal flanked by cheeky cherubs. At Krahnstrasse 4 you'll find a beautiful house (1533), with **Café Läer** taking up the ground floor (see below). The best of the bunch is the Renaissance **Haus Willmann** (1586) at No 7, with its carved circular motifs and small relief of Adam and Eve.

Ask the tourist office about the **Bocksturm**. The oldest tower of the former city wall contains torture implements dating from Osnabrück's medieval witch trials, but at the time of research it was due to be restored, so it might not be open.

## Sleeping

Ask the tourist office about camping, about 5km northeast of town.

**Penthouse Backpackers** (☎ 600 9606; www.penthousebp.com; Möserstrasse 19; dm €14-15; ☎) The furniture looks like it's been cobbled together from friends of the owner (because it has been!) and the reception has limited hours (so call ahead), yet you can't beat the warmth of the welcome here, from a well-travelled proprietor who understands the backpacker scene. Handily located for the train station, this 4th-floor establishment has a kitchen, big guest lounge room and a leafy terrace great for summer barbecues.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 542 84; www.jugendherberge.de/jh/osnabrueck; Ilburger Strasse 183a; dm under/over 26yr €15.40/18.10; ☎) This modern, if somewhat nondescript hostel, is something of a schlep from the centre, so you might be lucky

enough – providing no school groups are booked in – to get a dorm to yourself. Take bus 62, 643 or 468 to Kinderhospital.

**Intour Hotel** (☎ 963 860; www.intourhotel.de; Maschstrasse 10; s €30-50, d €67-80; ☎) From the squat building's exterior, you wouldn't expect the rooms here to be as modern and comfortable as they are; it's an excellent deal. If the owner is on duty, remember to give her lovely dog – half German Shepherd, half terrier – a pat.

**Dom Hotel** (☎ 358 350; www.dom-hotel-osnabrueck.de; Kleine Domsfreiheit 5; s €45-60, d €70-100; ☎) Rooms here are comfortable and cheery in Mediterranean yellowy-orange, but they don't exude bags of atmosphere. That's left to the friendly owner, who always seems ready to help and chat, even when busy.

**Romantik Hotel Walhalla** (☎ 349 10; www.hotel-walhalla.de; Bierstrasse 24; s €80-85, d €100-110; ☎) If you're looking for historic atmosphere, this hotel has it aplenty. The half that's housed in a traditional half-timbered building has higgledy-piggledy rooms with low-beamed ceilings and rustic features. Even rooms in the more modern half continue the theme.

**Steigenberger Hotel Remarque** (☎ 609 60; www.osnabrueck.steigenberger.de, in German; Natruer-Tor-Wall 1; s/d from €110/120, weekends €90/110; ☎ ☎) Over-looking the old town from a small hill just across from it, this modern four-star hotel offers the unusual combination of quiet and convenience. A glass lift takes you up to tasteful rooms decorated in Mediterranean-style sienna and blues, with portraits and mementos of Erich Maria Remarque dotted around for local colour.

## Eating

**Bagels** (☎ 260 363; Osterberger Reihe 12; bagels from €0.80, dishes €3-10) With a wide range of sandwich fillings you'd expect to find in a New York deli, coupled with the usual German breakfasts and light meals, customers often settle in for a couple of hours here. You can also get your bagel to go, and be out of there in minutes.

**Café Läer** (☎ 222 44; Krahnstrasse 4; snacks €4-4.50) The stone walls inside this historic building lend the place a surprisingly modern feel. The mezzanine floor is a great place to sit while having coffee and cake.

**Pferde haben keine Flügel** (☎ 202 7910; Am Kamp 81-83; tapas €2-8, platter for 2 €18) Candlelight and rough-hewn stone walls create a romantic atmosphere at 'Horses Have No Wings' (don't ask), so it's hardly surprising so many couples

flock to this tapas bar during the evenings. Still, there are enough bigger groups of friends to put other customers at ease and the food is extremely tasty, especially the dates in bacon.

**Arabesque** (☎ 260 363; Osterberger Reihe 12; mains €5.50-14.50) Settle yourself into a private niche and smoke a hookah. Or take your place on the low Arabic seating and tuck into kebabs and falafel. Alternatively, park yourself at a table, drink an Afri-Kola and admire the desert wall painting. It's all possible at this relaxed friendly restaurant; no wonder it's become such an Osnabrück hit.

**Hausbrauerei Rampendahl** (☎ 245 35; Hasestrasse 35; lunch €6, mains €10-20) The restaurant here serves one set dish from noon, before breaking out the other traditional German food after 6pm. Special beers are brewed on the premises, including the potent Rampendahl Spezial.

Osnabrück has a wonderful range of pubs (most open in the evening only) that also serve simple, inexpensive food. These include the traditional food haven of **Grüne Gans** (☎ 239 14; Grosse Gildewart 15; mains €3.50-7.50).

## Drinking

**Grüner Jäger** (☎ 273 60; An der Katharinenkirche 1) Right near Arabesque is this popular student hang-out, with a covered-in beer garden and table football.

**Zwiebel** (☎ 236 73; Heger Strasse 34) 'Onion' does sell onion cake, but it's the quirky decoration in the room out the back, with a rocking horse, old metal-plate ads for coffee and even a Marx Brothers photo, that makes this place stand out.

## Getting There & Away

The low-cost carrier **Air Berlin** ([www.airberlin.com](http://www.airberlin.com)) is among those with services to **Münster-Osnabrück airport** (FMO; [www.flughafen.fmo.de](http://www.flughafen.fmo.de)). The airport is 30km southwest of the centre, and reached by Schnellbus X150 (€8.50, 40 minutes), which leaves the airport roughly hourly between 6am and 8pm, with reduced services on weekends.

RE (€20.20, 1½ hours) and IC (€24, 1¼ hours) trains to Hanover leave twice an hour. Various services go to Hamburg (€39, one hour 50 minutes), Cologne (€35, two hours 10 minutes) and Dortmund (€25, 55 minutes).

Osnabrück is well connected by road via the A1 (Bremen to Dortmund) and the B51, B65 and B68.

## Getting Around

Single tickets cost €1.80 and day tickets €3.10 (so buy a day ticket).

Call a taxi on ☎ 277 81 or ☎ 320 11.

## VARUSSCHLACHT MUSEUM & PARK KALKRIESE

You needn't be a history buff to come to the **Varusschlacht Museum & Park Kalkriese** (☎ 05468-920 40; [www.kalkriese-varusschlacht.de](http://www.kalkriese-varusschlacht.de); Bramsche-Kalkriese; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar), although by the time you leave you'll have probably acquired an interest. It was long known that a ragtag bunch of rebellious Germanic tribes had won a major victory over their Roman masters somewhere in the Osnabrück region in AD 9 – defeating three of military commander Publius Quinctilius Varus' legions.

However, only in 1987 was the exact site of the so-called 'Battle of Teutoburg Forest' uncovered near Kalkriese. In 2000, the battlefield was opened as an archaeological park to display the Germans' dirt ramparts and explain how they did it. Two years later, a funky new steel-clad museum was built by famous Swiss architectural duo Annette Gigon and Mike Guyer.

This museum, rising in a 40m rectangular tower, showcases coins, battle masks, bells, spearheads and other finds. And it tells the story in an incredibly engaging manner, at one point using film and sound to evoke the feeling of battle. Elsewhere, the Doors song 'The End' (famous from *Apocalypse Now*) accompanies a short video on the mysterious identity of the victorious German commander, and national hero, Arminius. The site was discovered by an amateur British archaeologist, so there are English annotations.

The surrounding park and battlefield now features three quirky pavilions, called 'seeing', 'hearing' and 'questioning'. Using a camera obscura, huge ear trumpet and video technology respectively, they give you an unusual perspective on the battlefield.

Unless you have your own car, you must plan your visit carefully, as bus services are sparse. Take bus X275 from Osnabrück's main train station (€2.90, 50 minutes). Sometimes you will need to change at Herringhausen Leckermühle, but the bus driver will make an announcement. Check return bus times when you arrive. At least if you come in summer, there's a restaurant and beer garden where you can while away any waiting time.

## OLDENBURG

☎ 0441 / pop 162,400

Being shuffled between Danish and German rule has left the relaxed capital of the Weser-Ems region with a somewhat difficult-to-pin-down identity. Most of its medieval buildings were destroyed in a huge fire in 1676, while others were later refashioned at various stages according to the prevailing architectural style of the time. Count Peter Friedrich Ludwig began redecorating the town in a neoclassical style in 1785, evidence of which still survives in the Schlosspark, its promenade and other nearby buildings.

Today it's principally a business destination, but you might make a day-trip from Bremen if you're a mummy fan, or stop over on the way to the East Frisian Islands.

## Orientation

Oldenburg's pedestrianised core is bounded by Heiligengeistwall to the north, Theaterwall to the west and Schlosswall to the south. Turn right after you exit from the 'Stadtmitte' side of the Hauptbahnhof (Bahnhof Sud), which takes you along Moslestrasse. Turn left into Osterstrasse, which takes you to Achternstrasse in the city centre. Turn left and continue until you come to the Markt. The tourist office is in a street one block northwest of this; look for the signs.

## Information

**Main post office** (Bahnhofplatz 10; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

**Oldenburg Tourismis** (☎ 01805-938 333, 361 6130; [www.oldenburg-tourist.de](http://www.oldenburg-tourist.de); Kleine Kirchenstrasse 14; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat)

## Sights

The pale-yellow Renaissance-baroque **Schloss** (1607) at the southern end of the Altstadt shopping district (on Schlossplatz, just south of the Markt) was once home to the counts and dukes of Oldenburg. Part of the same family governed Denmark briefly in the 15th century.

Inside is the **Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte** (Museum of Art & Cultural History; ☎ 220 7300; adult/concession incl Augusteum €3/1.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue, Wed & Fri, to 8pm Thu, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun), which chronicles the area's history from the Middle Ages to the 1950s. On the 1st floor, you'll find the remarkable Idyllenzimmer with 44 paintings by court artist Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, a friend of Goethe.

Behind the Schloss is the sprawling English-style **Schlosspark**. The neoclassical building you see across the square from the Schloss is **Die Neue Wache** (1839), once a city guardhouse but now part of a bank.

The museum's collection of 20th-century art has been farmed out to the **Augusteum** (☎ 220 7300; Elisabethstrasse 1; adult/concession incl Landesmuseum €3/1.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue, Wed & Fri, to 8pm Thu, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun). Showcased here are works by Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, August Macke and others.

However, skip all this if time is tight. The best museum in Oldenburg is the **Landesmuseum Natur und Mensch** (Natural History Museum; ☎ 924 4300; [www.naturundmensch.de](http://www.naturundmensch.de); Damm 38-44; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue & Wed, to 3pm Fri, 10am-8pm Thu, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun). Covering the ecology of Lower Saxony's various landscapes, its highlight is a huge chunk (or wall) of peat bog, with three niches containing bodies from the Roman period originally found preserved in surrounding moors in the 1930s and '40s. Damm runs southeast from Schlossplatz and this museum is not far from the Augusteum. Alternatively, take bus 289, 270, 314, 315 or 316 from the train station to the Staatsarchiv stop.

## Sleeping & Eating

The tourist office can help with private rooms or provide information on camping, north of town.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 871 35; [www.jugendherberge.de/jh/oldenburg](http://www.jugendherberge.de/jh/oldenburg); Alexanderstrasse 65; dm under/over 26yr €15/17.70; ☎ ☒) Large and rambling, this hostel is rather old and very dimly lit. However, the staff is helpful and it atones for its shortcomings by having a few comfy bathrooms with tubs. It's about 20 minutes by foot north of the Hauptbahnhof, or take bus 302 or 303 to Von-Finckh-Strasse.

**Hotel Tafelfreuden** (☎ 832 27; [www.tafelfreuden-hotel.de](http://www.tafelfreuden-hotel.de); Alexanderstrasse 23; s €60-70, d €85-95, apt €115; ☎ ☒) Really the only interesting hotel in town, this has seven distinctively themed rooms, plus an apartment. Some of the singles, such as England and Japan are tiny, if cleverly organised, but larger boudoirs like the 'Orient', 'Afrika' and 'Unter Wasser' (underwater) are real treasures. There's an upmarket organic restaurant on the ground floor.

For eating options simply cruise along pedestrianised **Wallstrasse**, north of the Markt.

## Getting There & Around

There are trains at least once an hour to Bremen (€5.80, 30 minutes) and Osnabrück (€17.20, 1¼ hours). From Oldenburg, there are trains north to Emden and beyond.

Oldenburg is at the crossroads of the A29 to/from Wilhelmshaven and the A28 (Bremen–Dutch border).

Single bus tickets (valid for one hour) for the entire city cost €1.75; short trips are only €1.30, and day passes €4.80. Buy your tickets from the driver.

## EMDEN & AROUND

☎ 04921 / pop 51,700

You're almost in Holland here, and it shows – from the flat landscape, dikes and windmills around Emden to the lackadaisical manner in which locals pedal their bikes across canal bridges and past red-brick Lego-like houses. People greet you with a 'Moin', or 'Moin Moin', and they're generally proud of the local *Plattdütsch* dialect, even if they don't always speak it. It sounds like a combination of English, German and – guess what? – Dutch.

## Orientation

Emden's train and bus stations are about a 10-minute walk west of the city centre. As you exit, take the road heading right, which will lead to Grosse Strasse and the small medieval harbour called Ratsdelft.

## Information

**Tourist-Information Emden Pavilion** (☎ 974 00; www.emden-touristik.de; Am Stadtgarten; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat, 11am–1pm Sun May–Sep, 9am–1pm & 3–5.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat Oct–Apr) Just north of the central Ratsdelft harbour, near the car park and taxi stand.

## Sights & Activities

Most people visit Emden en route to the East Frisian Islands, although there are lots of relaxing pursuits here and a few surprisingly good museums.

For starters, Emden has an unusually good **Kunsthalle** (☎ 975 050; Hinter dem Rahmen 13; adult/concession €4.50/2.50; ☎ 10am–8pm Tue, to 5pm Wed–Fri, 11am–5pm Sat & Sun), thanks to local boy Henri Nannen. The founder of the magazine *Stern* (a glossy newsweekly à la *Time* or *Newsweek*), he made his private collection available to the town when he retired. Focusing on 20th-century art, its white-and-exposed-timber,

light-flooded rooms show off a range of big, bold canvases. There are some works by Max Beckmann, Erich Heckel, Alex Jawlensky, Oskar Kokoschka, Franz Marc, Emil Nolde and Max Pechstein, although most of the artists are more obscure. Three times a year, the museum closes its doors for a week while exhibitions are changed. Follow the signs from the tourist office.

The revamped **Ostfriesisches Landesmuseum** (Regional History Museum; ☎ 872 057; www.landmuseum-emden.de; Rathaus, Neutorstrasse; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun) now has an impressive new entrance, through which you'll find a gallery of old Dutch masters and one of the biggest armouries in Germany.

The labyrinth of WWII civilian air-raid shelters at the **Bunkermuseum** (☎ 322 25; www.bunkermuseum.de; Holzägerstrasse; adult/child €2/1; ☎ 10am–1pm & 3–5pm Tue–Sun May–Oct) includes testimonies from those who sheltered here, offering a moving insight into part of recent history.

Some 6km north of Emden, along the B70, stands what claims to be the world's most crooked church. That's nothing to do with the administration of the church of **Suurhusen** (1262), but a comment on its tilting tower. Currently leaning 2.43m off true, it allegedly outdoes even the famous tower in Pisa by 4.7cm. The overhang is the result of the decreasing groundwater levels in the peat-rich soil.

Harbour cruises run by **EMS** (☎ 890 70; www.ag-ems.de, in German) leave several times daily between March and October from the Delftreppe steps in the harbour (adult/child €6.50/3). The company also runs services to the East Frisian Island of Borkum (see p640) and North Frisian Island of Helgoland (see p702).

**Canal tours** (adult/child €10/5) leave from the quay at the Kunsthalle between April and October on weekdays at 11am and 3pm, and on Sunday at noon and 3pm.

The flatlands around Emden are perfect for **cyding**, and the tourist office has plenty of maps.

Another good way to travel is by water. **Kanuverleih am Wasserturm** (☎ 04921-974 97; Am Wasserturm) has canoes for hire, or ask at the tourist office.

## Sleeping & Eating

**DJH hostel** (☎ 237 97; www.jugendherberge.de/jh/emden; An der Kesselschleuse 5, off Thorer Strasse; dm under/over 26yr €16.50/19.50; ☎ closed Dec & Jan; P ☎) With some

## EAST, WEST, FRIESLAND'S BEST

Like Bavarians, the people in northwest Germany have a reputation for being 'different'. Frieslanders, as they're called, have their own language – *Plattdütsch* – and are rather partial to a cup of tea (reputedly drinking 25% of Germany's tea imports). Although merely a geographical area today, Friesland was once a political entity, a league of seven states stretching from the northern Netherlands to the Danish coast. Roughly speaking, the eastern part of the Netherlands was Westfriesland (Western Frisia), northwest Germany was Ostfriesland (Eastern Frisia) and the area around the Danish border was Nordfriesland (Northern Frisia).

In the 16th century, Jeverland, the region around Jever, seceded from Ostfriesland and remained separate as it fell into the hands of the Dukes of Oldenburg and subsequently Russia. In modern times, however, Jeverland was rechristened Friesland, leading to the odd situation today where Ostfriesland (Eastern Frisia), around Emden, actually lies west of Friesland.

dorms in stand-alone bungalows, this place feels more like a holiday camp than a hostel. Popular with schools and other groups, its canal-side location offers plenty of swimming, canoeing and cycling opportunities. Take bus 3003 to Realschule/Am Herrentor.

**Hotel am Boltentor** (☎ 972 70; fax 972 733; Hinter den Rahmen 10; s/d €65/85; P) Hidden by trees from the main road nearby and just a minute from the Kunsthalle, this homy red-brick hotel has possibly the best location in town, plus comfy and well-equipped rooms.

**Heerens Hotel** (☎ 237 40; www.heerenshotel.de; Friedrich-Ebert-Strasse 67; s €50–80, d €90–105; P) The generously sized rooms here are slightly older, but the hotel comes highly rated for its service and restaurant.

Other recommendations:

**Alt Emden Bürgerhaus** (☎ 976 100; www.alt-emder-buergerhaus-emden.de; Friedrich-Ebert-Strasse 33; s/d from €50/70; P) Friendly, family-run hotel and restaurant in traditional building in the centre.

**Goldener Adler** (☎ 927 30; Neutorstrasse 5; s/d from €65/85) Central and modern, with an excellent local restaurant.

## Getting There & Around

Emden is connected by rail to Oldenburg (€13.40, one hour) and Bremen (€19.10 to €23, 1¼ hours). Despite its relative remoteness, the town is easily and quickly reached via the A31, which connects with the A28 from Oldenburg and Bremen. The B70/B210 runs north from Emden to other towns in Friesland and to the coast.

Emden is small enough to be explored on foot but also has a bus system (€1 per trip). The best transport method is the bicycle; to hire one contact **Oltmanns** (☎ 314 44; Grosse Strasse 53–57; per day €8).

## JEVER

☎ 04461 / pop 13,000

Famous for its Pilsener beer, the capital of the Friesland region also has a secondary outfit. The face of 'Fräulein Maria' peers out from attractions and shop windows alike. She was the last of the so-called *Häuptlinge* (chieftains) to rule the town in the Middle Ages, and although Russia's Catherine the Great got her hands on Jever for a time in the 18th century, locals always preferred their home-grown queen. Having died unmarried and a virgin, Maria is the German equivalent of England's (in truth more worldly) Elizabeth I.

With its Russian-looking castle, Jever is worth a brief visit, probably en route to the East Frisian Islands.

## Orientation

Most of Jever's attractions are within a few hundred metres of each other in the eastern section of the Altstadt around the Schloss. There are map boards at the small train station. Follow the signs to the centre along Schlossstrasse to the beginning of the pedestrianised streets. Continue along the cobbled streets until you come across yet more signposts.

## Information

**Tourist Information Jever** (☎ 710 10; tourist-info@stadt-jever.de; Alter Markt 18; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat Apr–Oct, 9am–5pm Mon–Thu, 9am–4pm Fri Nov–Mar)

## Sights & Activities

### SCHLOSS

Looking like a prop from the film *Doctor Zhivago*, the onion-shaped dome is the first thing that strikes you about Jever's 14th-century

**Schloss** (☎ 969 350; adult/concession €3/2; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Sat year-round, 10am-6pm Sun Jul & Aug). The town's 18th-century Russian rulers added it to a building built by Fräulein Maria's grandfather, chieftain Edo Wiemken the Elder. Today the palace houses the **Kulturhistorische Museum des Jeverlandes**, a mildly diverting cultural-history museum with objects chronicling the daily life and craft of the Frieslanders, including a vast porcelain collection.

The *pièce de résistance* is the magnificent **audience hall**, with a carved, coffered, oak ceiling of great intricacy. Fräulein Maria retained the Antwerp sculptor Cornelis Floris to create this 80-sq-metre Renaissance masterpiece.

### FRIESISCHES BRAUHAUS ZU JEVER

A brewery that has been producing dry Pilsener since 1848 is worth a visit, and the **Friesisches Brauhaus** (☎ 137 111; www.jever.de; Elisabethufer 18; tours €6.50; 🕒 tours hourly 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat) allows visitors a peek behind the scenes. The two-hour tours travel through the production and bottling facilities, as well as a small museum. Reservations are essential.

### OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Many of Jever's sights are in some way connected to Fräulein Maria. The most spectacular is in the **Stadtkirche** (☎ 933 80; Am Kirchplatz 13; 🕒 8am-6pm), where you'll find the lavish memorial tomb of her father, Edo von Wiemken (1468-1511). The tomb is another opus by Cornelis Floris and miraculously survived eight fires. The church itself succumbed to the flames and was rebuilt in a rather modern way; the main nave is opposite the tomb, which is now behind glass.

Near the tourist office, you'll see a **statue of Fräulein Maria**. Her image also joins that of her father and other historic figures in the town's **Glockenspiel** (🕒 11am, noon, 3pm, 4pm, 5pm & 6pm), opposite the tourist office on the façade of the Hof von Oldenburg.

Alternatively, an interesting Frisian craft is on show at the **Blaudruckerei shop** (☎ 713 88; www.blaudruckerei.de; Kattrepel 3; 🕒 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat). This is owned by former teacher Georg Stark, who 20 years ago revived the long-lost art and tradition of Blaudruckerei, a printing and dying process whose results vaguely resemble batik.

### Sleeping

**DJH hostel** (☎ 909 202; www.jugendherberge.de/jh/jever; Dr-Fritz-Blume-Weg 4; dm under/over 26yr €17.70/20.70; 📞 ☒ ☒) Jever's new *Jugendherberge* is like a little village, with a series of green and red-brick bungalows grouped around the reception. Dorms are as clean, modern and comfortable as you would expect from buildings only opened in 2006.

**Am Elisabethufer** (☎ 949 640; www.jever-hotel-pension.de; Elisabethufer 9a; s €35-40, d €60-70; 📞 ☒) Frilly lampshades and floral duvet covers are par for the course in Jever's *pensions*, and also what you'll find in this steep-roofed Frisian brown-brick building. There are nice garden views from its breakfast window.

**Hotel Pension Stöber** (☎ 5580; www.hotel-stoerber.de, in German; Hohnholzstrasse 10; s €35-40, d €60-70; 📞 ☒) In a leafy neighbourhood south of the centre, this whitewashed building has traditionally German rustic rooms.

**Im Schützenhof** (☎ 9370; www.schuetzenhof-jever.de, in German; Schützenhofstrasse 47; s €45-50, d €75-80; 📞 ☒) For something a little more upmarket, this hotel, just south of the centre, has comfortable modern rooms. It's favoured for local celebrations because of its excellent restaurant, Zitronengras.

### Eating & Drinking

**Balu** (☎ 700 709; Kattrepel 1a; mains €9-17.50) White-washed walls and tasteful ethnic decoration give this African restaurant understated style. Tex-mex and Italian fare are also on the menu, for those unfamiliar with the *joliffe* rice, *jambo*, yams and plantains.

**Haus der Getreuen** (☎ 3010; Schlachtrasse 1; mains €10-20) With a historic dining room and outside seating, Haus der Getreuen is famous for regional dishes, especially fish.

**Bier Akademie** (☎ 5436; Bahnhofstrasse 44) Although it's located on the corner of a rather unattractive shopping centre, inside the wood-lined Bier Akademie turns out to be an excellent place to educate yourself in the ways of Jever Pilsener and dozens of other beers.

### Getting There & Around

The train trip to Jever from Bremen (€15.70, two hours) involves at least one change, in Sande, and sometimes one in Oldenburg, too. By road, take the exit to the B210 from the A29 (direction: Wilhelmshaven).

Jever is small enough to explore on foot.

## EAST FRISIAN ISLANDS

Trying to remember the sequence of the seven East Frisian Islands, Germans – with a wink of the eye – recite the following mnemonic device: 'Welcher Seemann liegt bei Nanni im Bett?' (which translates rather saucily as 'Which seaman is lying in bed with Nanni?').

Lined up in an archipelago off the coast of Lower Saxony like diamonds in a tiara, the islands are (east to west): Wangerooge, Spiekeroog, Langeoog, Baltrum, Norderney, Juist and Borkum. Their long sandy beaches, open spaces and sea air make them both a nature lovers' paradise and a perfect retreat for those escaping the stresses of the world. Like their North Frisian cousins Sylt, Amrum and Föhr (see p696), the islands are part of the Wadden Sea (Wattenmeer) National Park.

The main season runs from mid-May to September. Beware, however, that the opening hours of tourist offices in coastal towns change frequently and without notice. Call ahead if possible.

### Resort Tax

Each of the East Frisian Islands charges a *Kurtaxe* (resort tax), entitling you to entry onto the beach and offering small discounts for

museums etc. It's a small amount, typically €3 a day, and if you're staying overnight it's simply added to your hotel bill. Remind your hotel to give you your pass should they forget.

### Getting There & Away

Most ferries sail according to tide times, rather than on a regular schedule, so it's best to call the ferry operator or **Deutsche Bahn** (DB; www.bahn.de/nordseeinseln, in German) for information on departure times on a certain day. Tickets are generally offered either as returns for those staying on the island (sometimes valid for up to two months) or cheaper same-day returns.

In most cases (apart from Borkum, Norderney and Juist) you will need to change from the train to a bus at some point to reach the harbour from where the ferry leaves. Sometimes those are shuttle buses operated by the ferry company, or scheduled services from **Weser-Ems Bus** (☎ 01805-194 49; www.weser-ems-bus.de, in German). For more details, see Getting There & Away for each island.

Light aircraft also fly to every island except Spiekeroog. Contact **Luftverkehr Friesland Harle** (☎ 04464-948 10; www.inselflieger.de, in German).

### Getting Around

Only Borkum and Norderney allow cars, so heading elsewhere means you'll need to leave

### WALKING TO THE ISLANDS

When the tide recedes on Germany's North Sea coast, it exposes the mudflats connecting the mainland to the East Frisian Islands, and that's when hikers and nature lovers make their way barefoot to Baltrum and its sister 'isles'. It's a minimum two-hour journey, wallowing in mud or wading knee-deep in seawater, but it's one of the most popular outdoor activities in this flat, mountainless region.

*Wattwandern*, as such trekking through the Wadden Sea National Park is called, can be dangerous. You need to know which fordable channels are left by the receding sea, and must be able to cope with the enveloping fog that, even in summer, can blow in within minutes. Therefore, the crossing should only be undertaken with a guide. Once you've safely reached your destination – and can now boast that you've walked to an island – you get to wait for the ferry to take you back while watching the sea rise swiftly over your trail.

As a kind of 'horizontal alpinism', *Wattwandern* (Wadlopen in the Netherlands) is far too dirty and strenuous to really be compared to walking on water. But the fresh sea air and the workout you've given your body does make you feel pretty holy.

Tourist offices in Jever and Emden can provide details of state-approved guides, including **Martin Rieken** (☎ 04941-8260; www.wattfuehrer-rieken.de, in German), or **Eiltraut and Ulrich Kunth** (☎ 04933-1027; www.wattwanderung-kunth.de, in German). English-speaking guides can be contacted at info@wattwandern.de.

Tours cost about €20, including the ferry ride back. Necessary gear includes shorts or short trousers and possibly socks or trainers (although many guides recommend going barefoot). In winter, gumboots are necessary.

your vehicle in a car park near the ferry pier (about €3.50 per 12 hours).

## WANGEROOGE

A famous German novel is called *Die Entdeckung der Langsamkeit* (The Discovery of Slowness). That's what the marketing folks have cleverly said about this island, and it's true. Crunching sand between your toes and watching huge tanker ships lumber in and out of the ports at Bremerhaven, Hamburg and Wilhelmshaven, it's easy to feel like a willing castaway.

There are two information centres: the **Kurverwaltung** (spa administration; ☎ 04469-990; www.wangerooge.de; Strandpromenade 3; ☎ 9am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-noon Mon-Fri Nov-Mar) and the **Verkehrsverein** (☎ 04469-9480; info@westturm.de; Hauptbahnhof), which handles room reservations as well.

If you're feeling active you can climb the historic 39m-tall **lighthouse**, take to the sea-water adventure pool or indulge in a long list of sports activities. For more of a learning experience, head to the **Nationalparkhaus** (☎ 04469-8397; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sat & Sun) in the Rosenhaus; opening hours are reduced in winter, so call ahead.

## Getting There & Away

The ferry to Wangerooge leaves from Harlesiel two to five times daily (1½ hours), depending on the tides. An open return ticket costs €26.90 (two-month time limit), and a same-day return ticket is €25. This includes the tram shuttle to the village on the island (4km). Large pieces of luggage are an extra €2.50 each, and a bike €10 each way. The ferry is operated by **DB** (☎ in Harlesiel 04464-949 411, in Wangerooge 04464-947 411).

To reach Harlesiel, take bus 211 from Jever train/bus station (30 minutes).

## SPIEKEROOG

Rolling dunes dominate the landscape of minuscule Spiekeroog; about two-thirds of its 17.4 sq km is taken up by these sandy hills. It's the tranquillity of this rustic island that draws people, although you can distract yourself with the **Pferdebahn** (☎ 04976-910 120; Inselmuseum, Noorderloog 1; adult/child return €3/2; ☎ 2pm, 3pm & 4pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep), a horse-drawn train that runs on rails and dates back to 1885. There are also plenty of baths for swimming.

The **tourist office** (☎ 04976-919 3101; www.spiekeroog.de, in German; Noorderpad 25; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat Apr-Oct, 9am-12.30pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar) is in the 'Haus Kogge', where there's also a **Mussel Museum** (☎ 04976-919 3225; admission €1; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) with more than 3000 shells of all varieties.

Spiekeroog is not only car-free but discourages bicycles too.

## Getting There & Away

From the ferry departure point in Neuharlingersiel it takes 40 to 55 minutes to reach Spiekeroog. Ferry times depend on the tides, so same-day returns aren't always possible. Prices are €10 each way or €17 for same-day return tickets. Each piece of luggage over the two-bag limit costs an extra €2 return. Call ☎ 04974-214 or ☎ 04976-919 3133, or email reederei@spiekeroog.de for details and tickets.

To get to the ferry, catch a train to Esens (coming from Jever, 22 minutes) or Norden (from Emden, 15 minutes), and change there for a bus. Not all buses from Esens to Neuharlingersiel run daily, so check with the Jever tourist office beforehand.

## LANGEOOG

Floods and pirates make up the story of Langeoog, whose population was reduced to a total of two following a horrendous storm in 1721. But by 1830 it had recovered sufficiently to become a resort town.

The island boasts the highest elevation in East Friesland – the 20m-high **Melkhörndüne** – and the **grave** of Lale Anderson, famous for being the first singer to record the WWII song 'Lili Marleen'. Nautical tradition is showcased in the **Schiffahrtsmuseum** (☎ 04972-693 211; adult/concession 1.50/0.75; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-5pm Mon-Thu, 10am-noon Fri & Sat), although the original **sea rescue ship** (admission free; ☎ 3-5pm Tue & Thu, 10am-noon Sat) also on view is perhaps more interesting. In sunshine, the 14km-long **beach** is clearly the biggest attraction.

Langeoog's **tourist office** (☎ 04972-6930; kurverwaltung@langeoog.de; Hauptstrasse 28; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Thu, 8am-12.30pm Fri year-round, 3-5pm Fri, 10am-noon Sat Jul & Aug) is in the Rathaus, while **room reservations** (☎ 04972-693 201; zimmernachweis@langeoog.de; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) can be dealt with on the 1st floor of the island's 'train station' or ferry landing stage.

## Getting There & Away

The ferry shuttles between Bengersiel and Langeoog up to nine times daily. The trip takes about one hour and costs €21 return, or €18.50 for a same-day return. Luggage is €2.50 per piece, bikes €15 return. For details, call ☎ 04971-928 90 or email schiffahrt@langeoog.de.

To get to Bengersiel, take the train to Esens or Norden, and change to a shuttle bus.

## BALTRUM

The smallest inhabited East Frisian Island, Baltrum is just 1km wide and 5km long and peppered with dunes and salty marshland. It's so tiny that villagers don't bother with street names but make do with house numbers instead. Numbers have been allocated on a chronological basis; house Nos 1 to 4 no longer exist so the oldest is now No 5.

There's little to do except go on walks or to the beach, or visit the exhibition on the National Park environment in **house No 177** (☎ 04939-469; admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-7pm Mon-Fri). As the island closest to the mainland, Baltrum is the most popular destination for *Wattwanderungen* guided tours (see boxed text, p637).

The **Kurverwaltung** (☎ 04939-800; www.baltrum.de; house No 130; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-noon Fri) can provide information. For room reservations, call ☎ 01805-914 003 or email zimmernachweis@baltrum.de.

## Getting There & Away

Ferries (and *Wattwanderungen*) leave from Nessmersiel. Ferries take 30 minutes. Departures depend on the tides, which means day trips aren't always possible. Tickets are €12.50 one way or €16/22 for a same-day/open return. Bikes cost €4 each way and luggage is usually free. More details are available from **Reederei Baltrum** (☎ 04939-9130; www.baltrum-linie.de, in German).

To get to Nessmersiel change from the train in Norden to a bus (€6.50/10 per same-day/open return).

## NORDERNEY

'Queen of the East Frisian Islands', Norderney was Germany's first North Sea resort. Founded in 1797 by Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia, it became one of the most famous bathing destinations in Europe, after Crown Prince Georg V of Hanover made it his summer residence,

and personalities such as Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and composer Robert Schumann visited in the 19th century.

Now 'Lüttje Welt' – little world, as the islanders call Norderney for the way fog makes it seem like it's the only place on earth – is trying to regain its pre-eminence. It has a new designer spa, an upcoming five-star hotel, and 21st-century refurbishments of its lighthouse and church. All these add to its wonderful Art Deco **Kurtheater** and other historic buildings to make this a great time to visit.

The jewel in the crown is indisputably the new **Badehaus** (☎ 04932-891 162, 891 141; Am Kurplatz 3; adult/child from €6/3.50; ☎ 9.30am-9.30pm, women only from 2pm Wed), opened in 2006 in the old Art Nouveau seawater baths. This sleek stone-and-glass complex is now the biggest thalassotherapy centre in Germany, with warm and cold swimming pools, a roof-top sauna with views over the island, relaxation areas where you can lie back on loungers and drink Frisian tea, and much more – all split between the 'Spa' and 'Spaß' (fun) zones.

Norderney's **tourist office** (☎ 04932-918 50, room reservations 01805-667 331; www.nordeney.de; Bülowallee 5; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-May–Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat Oct–mid-May) can provide more details or book rooms.

There's also an outdoor pool at Weststrand. The **Nationalpark-Haus** (www.nationalpark-haus-nordeney.de; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) is directly on the harbour.

## Getting There & Away

To get to Norderney you have to catch the ferry in Norddeich. **Reederei Frisia** (☎ 04931-9870; www.reederei-frisia.de, in German; adult/child return €15/7.50, bikes €5.50) offers roughly hourly departures from 6am to 6pm daily (to 8pm in summer). The journey takes 50 minutes and any DB office can provide details.

There are trains (€6.90 to €9.70) from Emden to Norddeich Mole, the ferry landing stage.

## JUIST

Juist, shaped like a snake, is 17km long and only 500m wide. The only ways to travel are by bike, horse-drawn carriage or on your own two feet. What makes Juist special is what is not here: no high-rises, cars or shopping malls. Instead, you're often alone with the screeching seagulls, the wild sea and the howling winds. Forest, brambles and elderberry bushes blanket large sections of the island.



One peculiarity of Juist is the idyllic **Hammersee** – the only freshwater lake on all the islands, and also a bird sanctuary. There's also the **Juister Küstenmuseum** (Coastal Museum; ☎ 04935-1488; adult/concession €2/1.25; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat) on Loogster Pad.

Juist's **tourist office** (☎ 04935-8090; www.juist.de, in German; Friesenstrasse 18; 🕒 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat) has a separate number for room reservations (☎ 04935-809 222).

### Getting There & Away

**Reederei Frisia** (☎ 04931-9870; www.reederei-frisia.de, in German) operates the ferries from Norddeich to Juist (adult day/normal return €17.50/27.50, 1½ hours); children are half-price and bikes cost €9.50. You can also ask any DB office for details.

Trains from Emden (€6.90 to €9.70) travel straight to the landing dock in Norddeich Mole.

## BORKUM

The largest of the East Frisian Islands – once even larger before it was ripped apart by a flood in the 12th century – has a tough seafaring and whaling history. Reminders of those frontier times are the whalebones that you'll occasionally see, stacked up side by side, or as unusual garden fences. In 1830, however,

locals realised that tourism was a safer way to earn a living. Recently, the island has been hoping for an extra spike in interest since former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and his wife Doris bought a holiday home here.

To learn about the whaling era and other stages in the life of Borkum, visit the **Heimatmuseum** (Local History Museum; ☎ 04922-4860; adult/concession €3/1.50; 🕒 10am-noon & 3-5pm Tue-Sun) at the foot of the old lighthouse. Also of interest is the museum fire ship *Borkumriff*, with its exhibition on the Wadden Sea National Park.

Borkum has a **Kurverwaltung** (☎ 04922-9330; kurverwaltung@borkum.de; Goethestrasse 1). It's open on weekdays, timed to coincide with ferry arrivals/departures. There's a **tourist office** (☎ 04922-933 117; Hauptbahnhof; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 2-4pm Sat & Sun), which also handles room reservations.

### Getting There & Away

The embarkation point for ferries to Borkum is Emden. **AG-Ems** (☎ 01805-024 367; www.ag-ems.de, in German) has both car ferries (adult same-day/open return €16/29.50, two hours) and faster catamarans (€24.80/38.30, one hour). Transporting a car costs from €70 to €150 return (depending on size), while a bike costs €10.50.