

Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania



Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), sparsely populated and refreshingly unurbanised, hasn't enjoyed a high profile internationally, although it's starting to attract some press attention as the scheduled host to a G8 summit of world leaders in 2007. Plus, anyone in Germany will fill you in with glee – the state is Germany's finest domestic holiday spot, much like Blackpool in the UK but with more sun, better beaches and fewer piers.

In summer thousands of visitors descend on the resort islands of Rügen and Usedom to enjoy the sparkling sand, brisk sea air and all-too-brief swimming season, as well as touring pretty coastal towns such as Wismar and Warnemünde.

Unlike Blackpool, however, the region has a lot more to offer than a bit of quality sun-lounger time. The state capital, Schwerin, has an incredible castle at its heart and is among the most striking little cities in the country; the historical centres of Stralsund and Wismar were Unesco-listed in 2002; even Rostock, once a gritty shipbuilding town, is building a reputation as a party city. Elsewhere, you can get off the beaten track into the area's delightfully wild national parks or sail into the sunset with any number of fishing, diving, cruise and ferry companies.

Thanks to Mecklenburg's long tradition of hospitality it's generally easy to get around the state. There's also a solid tourist infrastructure, particularly around the well-frequented coastal towns and resorts. Trust the southerners' judgment and spend some quality holiday time in a corner of Germany that is only going to get more popular.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Castle** Circumnavigate Schwerin's fairy-tale Schloss (castle; p706), stopping to enjoy its *orangerie*
- **Culture** Listen to open-air opera near the water in Schwerin (p707) or Stralsund (p723)
- **Beach Party** Enjoy a GDR-meets-Ibiza vibe, sipping cocktails on Warnemünde's beach (p714)
- **Natural Sight** Admire the white chalk cliffs of the Jasmund National Park (p732) on Rügen
- **Boating** Paddle and camp through the peaceful waterways of Müritz National Park (p711)
- **Off-beat Experience** Book yourself into a 'swimming holiday home' in Lauterbach (p732) on Rügen



■ POPULATION: 10.7 MILLION

■ AREA: 23,170 SQ KM

MECKLENBURGER SEENPLATTE

At the doorstep of the state capital, Schwerin, the Mecklenburg Lake Plains is one of the area's prettiest regions. A wilderness spreading across the centre of the state, the area may well become one of the most popular outdoor and sport destinations for visitors looking for some peace, quiet and reasonably pristine wilderness.

The plains are crisscrossed by roads and highways that make getting around very easy if you're travelling under your own steam. The roads (often canopied by trees planted by medieval fish merchants to shield wagons from the heat of the summer sun) meander through charming little villages and hamlets.

SCHWERIN

☎ 0385 / pop 97,700

Schwerin is an unusual beauty. No photo could convey the charming architectural mishmash of its landmark castle, while its

watery landscape of seven lakes – or possibly more depending on how you tally them – is not what you'd expect from this nook of northeastern Europe.

More than this, in its rush to forget its 45 years of communist rule, parts of Schwerin seem to be in denial about the past, oh, 300 years. This former seat of the Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg is an interesting mix of 16th- to 19th-century architecture, and in some of its restaurants you'll find yourself thinking you've slipped back in time to that era.

Orientation

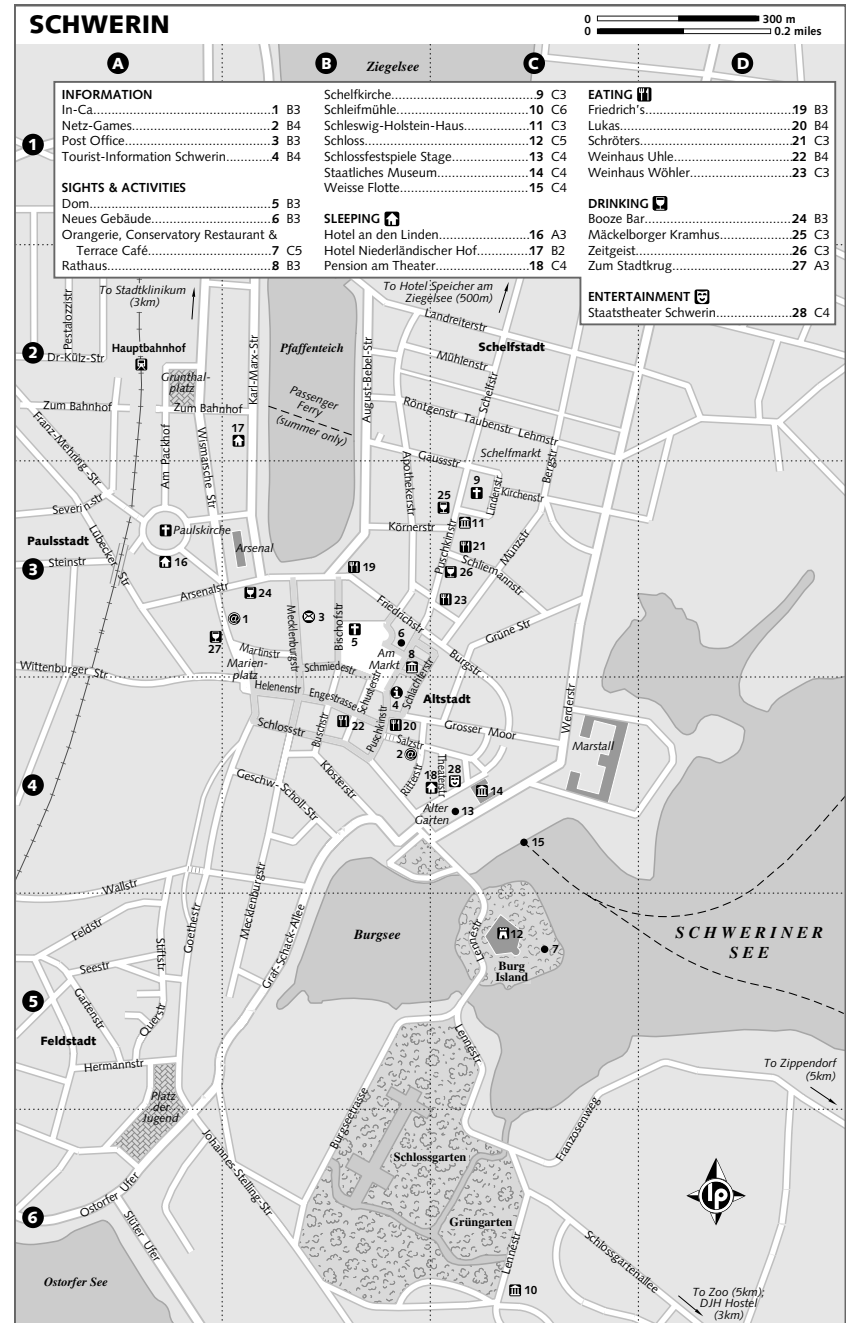
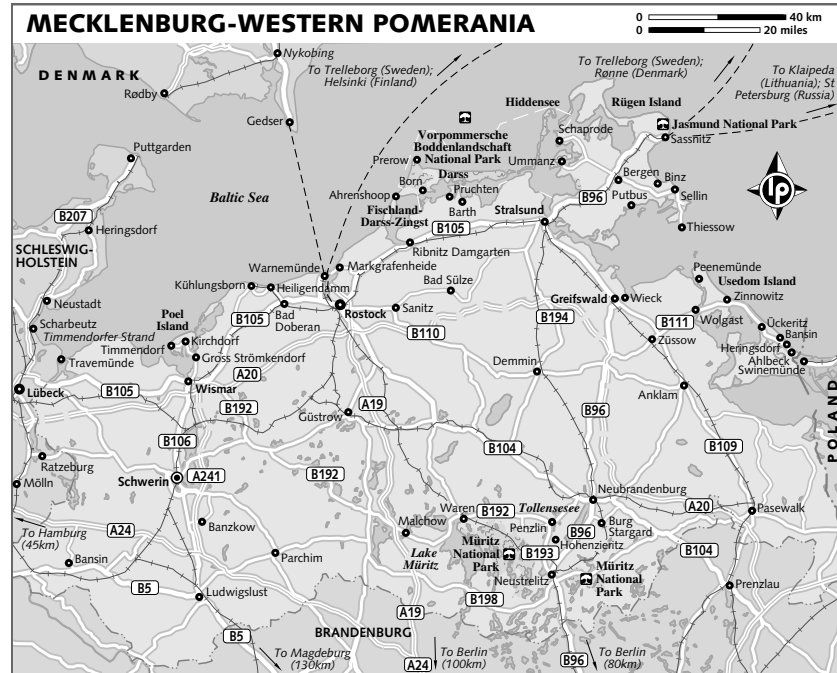
The Altstadt (old town) sits south of the rectangular Pfaffenteich (a pretty, artificial pond) and northwest of Burg Island (Castle Island). Burg Island is connected to two gardens further south – the Schlossgarten and the lesser-known Grüngarten.

Information

In-Ca (☎ 500 7883; Wismarsche Strasse 123; per hr €3;

☎ 1pm-midnight) Internet access.

Main post office (Mecklenburgstrasse 4-6; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat)



Netz-Games (☎ 593 6960; Ritterstrasse 1; per hr €3;

☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat, 4pm-midnight Sun)

Internet access.

Stadtklinikum (☎ 5200; 397 Wismarsche Strasse)

Medical services.

Tourist-Information Schwerin (☎ 592 5212;

www.schwerin.de; Rathaus, Am Markt 14; ☎ 9am-7pm

Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri,

10am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar)

Sights

SCHLOSS & GARDENS

No single adjective properly describes Schwerin's multifaceted **Schloss** (☎ 525 2920; www.schloss-schwerin.de; adult/concession €4/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Apr–mid-Oct, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Oct–mid-Apr), which earns its keep as Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania's parliament building. Its six façades combine various styles mainly from the 16th to the 19th centuries. As you walk around it, you'll spot Gothic and Renaissance turrets, a main golden dome, Slavic onion domes, vaguely Ottoman features and even three square terracotta Hanseatic step gables. Twenty-first century scaffolding is another mainstay, as renovations continue apace.

The **statue of Niklot** you see in a niche over the main gate depicts a Slavic prince, who was defeated by Heinrich der Löwe in 1160. Schwerin derives its name from a Slavic castle known as *Zuarin* (Animal Pasture) formerly on this site.

The park immediately surrounding the palace is known as the Burggarten and most notably features a wonderful **orangerie** overlooking the water with the **conservatory restaurant and terrace café**. A handful of statues, a grotto and outlook points are also here.

Inside the castle, you'll find a series of opulently furnished rooms and a huge collection of Meissen porcelain. In 2007, the castle celebrates its 150th anniversary as the Mecklenburg Parliament.

Don't forget to cross the causeway south from the Burggarten to the baroque **Schlossgarten** (Palace Garden), which is intersected by several canals. In 2009, Schwerin is hosting the Bundesgartenschau (BUGA; National Garden Show) and work is ongoing to the west of the Schlossgarten, including the establishment of a new stage.

Continuing northeast you'll come to the **Schleifmühle** (☎ 562 751; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Easter-Nov), a small local history museum located in a carefully restored 19th-century mill.

STAATLICHES MUSEUM

In the Alter Garten, opposite the Schloss, the **Staatliches Museum** (State Museum Schwerin; ☎ 595 80; www.museum-schwerin.de; Alter Garten 3; adult/concession €6/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) has a collection spanning the ages. The 15 statues in the Ernst Barlach room provide a small taste of the artist's work, allowing you to decide whether to visit Güstrow (see p708) for more. There's also a typically amusing and irreverent Marcel Duchamp collection. Those with more traditional tastes will prefer the oils by Lucas Cranach the Elder, as well as works by old Dutch masters, including a few by Rembrandt, Rubens and Brueghel.

CATHEDRAL

Above the Markt rises the tall 14th-century Gothic **Dom** (☎ 565 014; Am Dom 4; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sun), a superb example of north German red-brick architecture. Locals hotly point out that its 19th-century cathedral tower (118m) is a whole 50cm taller than Rostock's Petrikirche (church, see p714). You can climb up to the viewing platform (€1).

ALTSTADT

The Markt is a bustling place, and home to the **Rathaus** and the neoclassical **Neues Gebäude** (1780-83), which houses the classy Café Röntgen. In front of it is a lion monument honouring the town's founder, Heinrich der Löwe. Make sure you take a good look at the scenes depicted on the column below the lion – you might see more than you expect!

There are several architectural styles in the old city, and a walk southwest of the Rathaus to the appropriately named **Engestrasse** (Narrow Street) brings you past a lovely example of the city's earliest half-timbered houses at Buschstrasse 15.

SCHELFSTADT

Up Puschkinstrasse north of the Markt is Schelfstadt, a planned baroque village that was autonomous until the expansion of Schwerin in the mid-19th century. The restored 1737 **Schleswig-Holstein-Haus** (☎ 555 527; Puschkinstrasse 12; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 10am-6pm) contains a gallery that features changing contemporary art exhibitions. Just north of here is the baroque **Schelfkirche** (Nikolaikirche; 1708-13) and **Schelfmarkt**, the former town market.

Tours

From May to September, you can join the lucky locals messing about in boats by taking a cruise on the Schweriner See. **Weisse Flotte** (☎ 557 770; www.weisseflotteschwerin.de) operates a regular Inseltour (island tour; €9.50) leaving eight times a day from the quay between the Schloss and the Marstall. From Tuesday to Sunday, there are longer additional tours (€12 to €13). A reduced service runs in April and October.

The tourist office organises several guided tours, including 90-minute **city tours** (per person €4.50; ☎ 11am & 2pm) and **evening walks** (per person €4; ☎ 8.30pm Thu) from Weinhaus Wöhler (right).

Festivals & Events

The highlight of the cultural calendar is the **Schlossfestspiele** (www.theater-schwerin.de), open-air opera concerts performed on a stage erected in front of the theatre and state museum in June and July. Punters gather across the water in the Burggarten to listen in to the likes of performances such as *Aida*, *Nabucco* and *La Traviata*.

The programme is part of the larger **Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern** (☎ 591 8585; www.festspiele-mv.de) held throughout the state.

Sleeping

DJH hostel (☎ 326 0006; www.djh-mv.de; Waldschulweg 3; dm under/over 26yr €14.50/17.50; ☎) This hostel is about 4km south of the city centre, just opposite the zoo. Take bus 14. It's in a leafy location and popular with school groups.

Pension am Theater (☎ 593 680; www.pensionamtheater.m-vp.de; Theaterstrasse 1-2; s €50-60, d €70-85, apt 65-80; ☎) In the shadow of the huge theatre building and (just) within sight of the castle, this privately run establishment boasts cheerful, stylish and spacious rooms, although you may miss little things like soap in the bathrooms.

Hotel an den Linden (☎ 512 084; Franz-Mehring-Strasse 26; s/d €65/80; ☎) Handily located between the train station and the old town, this dignified midrange option has comfortable accommodation and a breakfast room with winter garden. There's a sauna, plus reiki massages on request.

Hotel Speicher am Ziegelee (☎ 500 30; www.speicher-hotel.de; Speicherstrasse 11; s €80-100, d €100-120; ☎) This striking, heritage-listed former warehouse on the waterfront has been kitted

out with modern Mediterranean-style rooms. You'll also discover a sauna, solarium, gym, English bar, restaurants and private pier.

Hotel Niederländischer Hof (☎ 591 100; www.niederlaendischer-hof.de; Karl-Marx-Strasse 12-13; s/d from €85/120; ☎) You can't beat the Pfaffenteich location or the swanky rooms and marble bathrooms at this exceedingly classy hotel. There's a library with an open fire, and a much lauded restaurant.

Eating

Friedrich's (☎ 555 473; Friedrichstrasse 2; mains €8-15) Overlooking the Pfaffenteich, this Parisian-style café has a nice casual atmosphere and an uncomplicated selection of salads, fish, grills and vegetarian dishes.

Lukas (☎ 565 935; Grosser Moor 5; mains €8-16) Sea-food lovers should head straight to this top conservatory restaurant, with a great range of dishes and some extravagant prawn and lobster options. If the aquarium makes you feel guilty, there are some steaks and schnitzels on the menu.

Weinhaus Wöhler (☎ 555 830; Puschkinstrasse 26; mains €8-16) With wood-lined rooms dating back to the 19th century, a courtyard and a tapas/cocktail bar, this sprawling historic house attracts a broad mix of people. Although the Hammond organ covers of the Beatles in the courtyard won't be to everyone's taste, the six luxury double rooms (€80 to €130) probably will.

Weinhaus Uhle (☎ 562 956; www.weinhaus-uhle.de; Schusterstrasse 13-15; mains €9-18) Step back in time at this traditional family wine merchants, where the pianist plays beneath stained-glass windows and barrel-vaulted ceilings in the formal restaurant and the occasional customer still wears an opera cloak in the wood-lined Weinstube. Dishes include Chateaubriand, carved at the table, venison and fish – all much cheaper in 1930, as you can see from the vintage menu in the hall. In business since 1740, the place has a practically encyclopaedic wine list.

Schröters (☎ 550 7698; Schliemannstrasse 2; set menus €35-140; ☎ from 6pm Mon-Sat) Run by Erik Schröter, Mecklenburg's No 1 chef, this place is way out of everything else's league, offering incredible regional cooking with a French twist.

Finally, don't forget to pay a visit to the Schloss' Orangerie Café (see Schloss & Gardens, opposite) for coffee and cake.

Drinking

Zum Stadtkrug (☎ 593 6693; Wismarsche Strasse 126) A central, traditional microbrewery pub, the homebrew here was declared among the best in Germany by *Stern* magazine, no less.

Mäckelborger Kramhus (☎ 581 3105; Puschkinstrasse 15) Art gallery, café, bar, jazz club...you'll find it all here.

Booze Bar (☎ 562 576; Arsenalstrasse 16; ☎ from 5pm) Connected to the somewhat cheesy Madison Club, this central cocktail bar has an eye-catching Marc Chagall-style mural behind the bar and an extensive and inventive drinks list.

Zeitgeist (Puschkinstrasse 22; ☎ from 5pm Tue-Sun) This modern, young and hip bar offers tapas (€2.50 to €7.95) and football viewing in the historic Schelfstadt. There's a terrace next door in summer.

Entertainment

Staatstheater Schwerin (☎ 530 00; www.theater-schwerin.de; Alter Garten) The state theatre offers an impressive range of concerts as well as varied theatrical performances.

Getting There & Around

Trains arrive regularly from Hamburg (from €19.10, one hour), Rostock (from €13.40, one hour), Stralsund (from €23.30, two hours) and Berlin (€2939, 1½ to 2½ hours). Direct trains run to/from Wismar (€6.20, 45 minutes) throughout the day.

By road from Rostock, head southwest on the B105 (E22), then follow the signs in Wismar.

City buses and trams cost €1.50/6.10 for a single/day pass. In summer a ferry crosses the Pfaffenteich (€1).

LUDWIGSLUST

☎ 03874 / pop 12,500

While it can't compete with Schwerin's Schloss, the sturdy **ducal residence** (☎ 571 90; www.schloss-ludwigslust.de; adult/child €3/2; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Apr-mid-Oct, to 5pm mid-Oct-mid-Apr) at Ludwigs-lust is a popular day trip from the capital. It's hardly surprising. Such was the charm of this place that when the ducal seat moved 36km north to Schwerin in 1837, some family members continued to live here until 1945. Now part of the Schwerin State Museum, its rooms are being progressively renovated. The stately, gilt-columned, high-ceilinged **Golden Hall** is the unrivalled high point.

Baroque Ludwigslust is a planned town, and its appealing, orderly layout is an attraction in itself.

Trains run from Schwerin every two hours (€6.20, 30 minutes). To get to the castle from Ludwigslust station, walk south on Bahnhofstrasse to Platz des Friedens, cross the canal to Kanalstrasse and turn right on Schlossstrasse.

GÜSTROW

☎ 03843 / pop 32,000

Another town, another castle museum, you might think when you see posters advertising Güstrow. Not quite so. This charming town, more than 775 years old, does have a small but stately Renaissance Schloss housing a historical exhibition, but it also boasts a unique selling point. As the place where sculptor Ernst Barlach spent most of his working life, it invites you to view dozens of his works, including in his former atelier.

The city's Markt is at the centre of the Altstadt; the Schloss is southeast, the Dom southwest and the Barlach museum northwest.

Güstrow Information (☎ 681 023; www.guestrow.de; Domstrasse 9; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat & Sun, closed Sun Oct-Apr) can help with accommodation.

Sights & Activities

The Gothic **Dom** (☎ 682 433; www.dom-guestrow.de; Philipp-Brandin-Strasse 5; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-4pm Sun mid-May-mid-Oct, reduced hours rest of year) contains a copy of Ernst Barlach's *Hovering Angel*, a memorial for the fallen soldiers of WWI; this copy was made secretly from the original mould after the Nazis destroyed the original sculpture.

The Barlach memorial in the **Gertrudenkapelle** (☎ 844 000; Gertrudenplatz 1; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 11am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) displays many of his original works. More of his bronze and wood carvings are housed along with a biographical exhibition at his former studio, the **Atelierhaus** (☎ 822 99; www.ernst-barlach-stiftung.de; Heidberg 15; adult/concession €4/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 11am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), 4km south of the city at Inseele (take bus 204).

The 16th-century **Schloss** (☎ 7520; www.schloss-guestrow.de; adult/concession €6/4; ☎ 9am-5pm) is one of several museums in town. It also offers a cultural centre, art exhibitions and occasional concerts.

ERNST BARLACH

One of the most important German expressionists, Ernst Barlach's sculptures and drawings are found across Germany, but it's especially hard not to notice him in Güstrow, where he spent the last 28 years of his life.

Born in 1870 outside Hamburg, Barlach made a trip to Russia in 1906, soon after finishing his art studies, which was to forever influence his work. Based on sketches he made there, his squarish sculptures began bearing the same expressive gestures and hunched-over, wind-blown postures of the beggars and farmers he met.

Barlach greeted WWI with enthusiasm, but soon came to realise the horrors of war, which also became a recurring theme in his work. He gained great fame executing, among other works, the WWI memorial in Magdeburg's cathedral (p208).

However, his profoundly humanist approach did not sit well with Nazi aesthetics. He was declared a degenerate artist in the 1930s and banned from working, while 381 of his works were destroyed.

Sadly he died in 1938 in Rostock at the peak of the ideological frenzy, without ever seeing his work resurrected, as it was, after WWII. He is buried in Ratzeburg (p690).

Getting There & Around

Trains leave for Güstrow once or twice an hour from Rostock's Hauptbahnhof (central train station; €5, 25 minutes) and hourly from Schwerin (€11.70, one hour).

NEUBRANDENBURG

☎ 0395 / pop 69,000

Neubrandenburg has few pretensions. It bills itself as 'the city of four gates on the Tollense (Tollensesee) Lake', and that's pretty well what it is. A largely intact medieval wall – with four gates – circles the 13th-century Altstadt, although you have to peer hard through some harsh GDR architecture to see it. The town's other main asset is its location on Tollense Lake, on the edge of the Mecklenburger Seenplatte, which has made it a boating mecca.

While building a parking station beneath its Markt in 2006, Neubrandenburg unearthed some precious archaeological remnants. The whole square has since been cordoned off and is likely to remain so until 2009.

Orientation

Consider the circular city wall as the outside of a clock face. The train station is at 12 o'clock, and to get to the tourist office and the middle of the Altstadt, you simply have to walk straight down Stargarder Strasse to the middle of the face. The four gates are located as follows: Friedländer Tor at 2 o'clock, Neues Tor at 3 o'clock, Stargarder Tor at 6 o'clock and Treptower Tor at 9 o'clock. Inside the walls is a grid of north-south

and east-west streets with the Marktplatz in the centre.

The wall effectively creates the largest roundabout outside Britain; it's circled by Friedrich-Engels-Ring.

Information

Main post office (Marktplatz 2; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat)

Stadt Info (☎ 194 33; www.neubrandenburg.de; Stargarder Strasse 17; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat May-Sep, 11am-4pm Sun Jul-Sep, reduced hours Oct-Apr) Tourist information.

Sights & Activities**CITY WALL**

The city was founded in 1248 by Herbold von Raven, a Mecklenburg knight granted the land by Brandenburg Margrave Johann I, and building progressed in the usual order: defence system, church, town hall, pub. The security system was the 2.3km-long, 7.5m-high stone wall that survives today, with four city gates and 56 sentry posts built into it.

The best way to appreciate the wall is to walk around the inside. The **Friedländer Tor**, begun in 1300 and completed in 1450, was the first gate. **Treptower Tor** is the largest and contains the **Regional History Museum** (☎ 555 1271; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 10am-5pm), which is really more of an archaeological collection.

At the southern end of the city is the gaudy **Stargarder Tor**; the simple brick **Neues Tor** fronts the east side of the Altstadt and houses a small exhibition on writer and satirist Fritz Reuter (1810-74).

Southwest of the train station (at about 11 o'clock) is the city's former dungeon, the **Fangelurm**. You'll recognise it by its pointy tower.

Perhaps even more striking than the city gates are the 27 sweet **half-timbered houses** wedged into the stone circumference. These are what remain of the 56 original sentry posts. When firearms rendered such defences obsolete in the 16th century, the guardhouses were converted into *Wiekhäuser*, homes for the poor, disadvantaged and elderly. The surviving homes have been rebuilt and most are now craft shops, galleries and cafés.

TOLLENSESEE

In the summer months, people flock to this large lake southwest of the centre for swimming, boating, camping and sunbathing.

The best swimming places are both fun and free: Strandbad Broda at the northwest tip of the lake and Augustabad on the north-eastern side.

Ferries (☎ 350 0524; www.neu-sw.de; one-way €4) circumnavigate the lake three times daily, going as far as Klein Nemerow (45 minutes one-way), Nonnehof (one hour) or Prillwitz (1½ hours). Ask the tourist office for the latest timetable, which also lists lakeside attractions. **Cruise boats** (☎ 584 1218; www.fahrgastschiff-mudderschulden.de; tours €8; ☞ Tue-Sun) also circumnavigate the lake.

You can hire all kinds of boats, including canoes, from several operators, such as **Bootsvermietung Wassersportzentrum** (☎ 401 3488; Augustastrasse 7; per hr €4.50-25; ☞ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct) and **Freizeittreff am Kulturpark** (☎ 566 5352; www.freizeittreff-behn.de; Parkstrasse 15; per hr €4.50-20; ☞ 9am-8pm Apr-Oct).

CYCLING

As many people cycle through the region, the tourist office publishes a *Radwandern* pamphlet, which details 60 tours. Several moderate and clearly marked bicycle routes are near the town, and there are cheap overnight accommodation options on routes south of the city.

Bikes can be hired from the two boat rental places in Tollensesee. Prices start from about €8 per day.

CONCERTS

Since 2001, Neubrandenburg has been receiving kudos for its **Konzertkirche** (☎ tickets

559 5127; www.konzertkirche-nb.de; cnr Stargarder Strasse & Grosse Wollweberstrasse). The hall is essentially the converted interior of the 13th-century Marienkirche and has goose pimple-creating acoustics. The ticket service in the tourist office handles bookings.

Sleeping

Camping Gatsch-Eck (☎ 566 5152; www.camping-gatsch-eck.de; per adult/car €4.50/2, tents €3.50-4.50) Down the western side of the lake, this leafy site has new bathroom facilities, and a laundry hut with washing machines and dryers. There's a ferry landing nearby and lots of sports facilities.

Wiekhaus 49 (☎ 581 230; www.hotel-weinert.de; 4th Ringstrasse; d €40; ☐) This former sentry post near the Neues Tor requires a minimum four-night stay. The hotel leasing it, Hotel Weinert, also has clean and pleasant if not particularly atmospheric rooms (singles/doubles from €45/65) at Ziegelbergstrasse 23.

Wiekhaus 28 (☎ 566 6571; www.wiekhaus.ws; 3rd Ringstrasse; d €50) Another one of the city wall's former sentry posts, this place has a minimum two-night stay. It's a homy little flat with old-fashioned furniture.

Parkhotel Neubrandenburg (☎ 559 00; www.parkhotel-nb.de; Windbergsweg 4; s/d €65/85; ☐ ☞ ☒) One of the few larger hotels in town that doesn't betray its GDR roots, this place has stylish and well-planned modern rooms, with doubles boasting two bathrooms to save domestic arguments. Located in the Kulturpark between the old town and the Tollensesee, rooms at the front have the best views.

Radisson SAS (☎ 558 60; Treptower Strasse 1; s €80-95, d €95-110; ☐ ☞ ☞) This hotel is handily located on the Markt, but doesn't have the best Radisson rooms you'll ever see.

Eating & Drinking

Café im Reuterhaus (☎ 582 3245; Stargarder Strasse 35; mains €5-9) Formerly home to Fritz Reuter for two years, this simple café serves light meals, snacks and soups during the day. When it closes, the smoky but cosy *Bierstube* (traditional beer pub) next door swings into action.

Wiekhaus 45 (☎ 566 7762; 4th Ringstrasse; mains €7-14; ☞ 11.30am-2pm & 5-10pm Tue-Sun) This is a lovely example of a renovated guardhouse, with huge portions of tasty Mecklenburg specialities and athletic waiters who zip up and down the narrow stairwell carrying them. You can sit outside in summer.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Koni Kneipe & Ostmuseum (☎ 582 3620; 14th floor, Marktplatz 1; ☞ from 4pm) This GDR bar on the 14th floor of Neubrandenburg's Haus der Kultur und Bildung (House of Culture and Education) more than atones for the communist-era building's obnoxious aesthetics. Run by a former GDR citizen, and housing more than the usual mix of Lenin and Honecker portraits, it's stuffed with 1950s, '60s and '70s chairs, photos and more retro light fixtures and clocks than is strictly necessary. While much *Ostalgie* (a romanticised yearning for the GDR era) is a case of false-memory syndrome on the part of those who never actually lived under the Communist regime, this place feels more wistful and genuine.

Teens sip daiquiris from enormous cocktail glasses, while genuinely nostalgic *Ossis* (East Germans) drink coffee from similarly *Alice in Wonderland*-sized cups and a cosmonaut's suit hangs from the ceiling. The views over town and the Tollensesee are impressive too.

Getting There & Away

Trains leave every two hours for Berlin (€22.50, two hours). There are also services every two hours to/from Rostock (€19.50, two hours), via Güstrow, and Stralsund (€13.40, 1¼ hours).

By road from Berlin take the A10 north-west to Neuruppin, then head east towards Löwenberg, where you catch the B96 north; follow the signs for Stralsund. From Stralsund or Greifswald, head south on the B96. From Rostock, take the A19 south to Güstrow then follow the B104 east all the way.

MÜRITZ NATIONAL PARK

Müritz is commonly known as the land – or paradise – of a thousand lakes. That's an exaggeration, but there are at least more than 100, as well as countless other ponds, streams and rivers. The national park's two main sections sprawl over 300 sq km to the east and (mainly) west of the lakeside town of Neustrelitz, about 35km south of Neubrandenburg. Declared a protected area in 1990, the park consists of bog and wetlands, and is home to a wide range of waterfowl, including ospreys, white-tailed eagles and cranes. Tourist offices throughout the region offer various recommendations for the main activity: **paddle-and-camp trips**.

The park's waterway begins on the Zierker See, west of Neustrelitz. The main information centre is the **Nationalparkamt** (National Park Office; ☎ 039824-2520; www.nationalpark-mueritz.de; Schlossplatz 3, Hohenzieritz) between Neustrelitz and Brandenburg, reached via either the westerly B196 or the easterly B96 and taking the L34 from either. Tourist offices, hostels and camp sites in the area have trail and park maps, and also sell travel passes for bus and ferry services.

Canoeists should pick up the brochure *Paddeln im Land der Tausend Seen* (Paddling in the Land of 1000 Lakes) from the Neubrandenburg tourist office. This includes tips for 13 tours and places to stay along the way; although it's in German, essential information such as maps, distances, camp site icons and telephone numbers are easy to read.

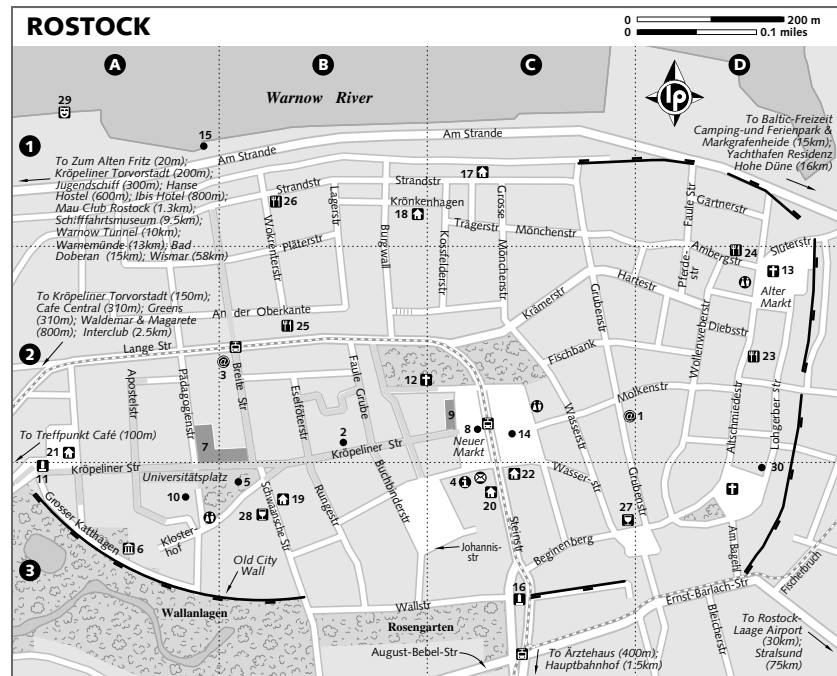
When camping, you must use designated sites, of which there are more than a dozen within the park, including two FKK (naturist) sites. **Haveltourist** (☎ 03981-247 90; www.haveltourist.de; adult/tent from €5/4) operates camp sites throughout the park. The company also hires out kayaks from €10/15/70 per half-day/day/week and runs organised canoe tours.

COASTAL MECKLENBURG- WESTERN POMERANIA

ROSTOCK

☎ 0381 / pop 197,000

First impressions count and unfortunately Rostock doesn't always make a good one. There is a small but very attractive historic core – red-brick and pastel-coloured buildings harking back to the 14th and 15th century Hanseatic era – but you generally have to wade past a gritty landscape of concrete and industrial eyesores to get to it. As a major port and shipbuilding centre, the city was devastated in WWII and later pummeled by socialist architectural 'ideals'. It is, as someone who knows both cities well remarked to us dryly, 'not to be compared with Hamburg'.



However, the largest city in northeastern Germany does have several winning cards up its sleeves. Its seaside suburb of Warnemünde is really quite stunning, Rostock's nightlife is the best north of Berlin and the city is a good base for several day trips. Most of all, things are getting better all the time, as buildings and streets are continually refurbished, and the city's venerable university helps biotech replace its uncompetitive shipyards.

Orientation

Rostock is located on the last stretch of the Warnow River before it flows into the Baltic Sea. The egg-shaped Altstadt sits below an east-west bend in the river. West of the Altstadt lies the student and nightlife district Kröpeliner Torvorstadt, most commonly known as KTV. The harbour is north along the top of the Altstadt and KTV. From this point, both the river and the city head north to Warnemünde and the sea. Most of Rostock is on the western riverbank, including Warnemünde, although some of Warnemünde's accommodation lies across the river mouth at Hohe Düne.

The train station is about 1.5km south of the Altstadt. Rosa-Luxemburg-Strasse runs north from the station to Steintor, in the old town's southeast corner. The airport is about 30km south of town.

Information

Ärztelhaus (☎ 456 1622; Paulstrasse 48) Medical services.
Das Netz (☎ 490 0270; Grubenstrasse 49; per hr €2; ☎ 2-8pm Tue-Thu & Sun, 2pm-midnight Fri & Sat) Internet access.

Main post office (Neuer Markt 3-8; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat)

Stadtbibliothek (☎ 381 2840; Kröpeliner Strasse 82) Library.

Surf Inn (☎ 375 6216; Galeria Kaufhof, Lange Strasse; per 15 min €1) Internet access.

Tourist-Information Rostock (☎ 381 2222; www.rostock.de; Neuer Markt 3; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat Oct-Apr)

Tourist office Warnemünde (☎ 548 000; www.warnemuende.de; Am Strom 59, nr Kirchstrasse; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat & Sun)

Treffpunkt Café (☎ 643 8062; www.e-treffpunkt.de; Am Vögenteich 23; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri) Twenty minutes' free internet access with any order.

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Sights

It takes just an hour or two to see the city sights, after which we recommend making a beeline for Warnemünde. The way to the sea is lined with *Plattenbauten*, stunningly ugly concrete apartment blocks, built to house GDR workers, but the beachside is very different.

MARIENKIRCHE

Central Rostock's pride and joy is the 13th-century **Marienkirche** (☎ 453 325; Am Ziegenmarkt; admission €1; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11.15am-5pm Sun May-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Sat, 11.15am-noon Sun Oct-Apr). It features a 12m-high **astrological clock** (1470-72), which locals optimistically compare to the more famous example in Prague's Old Town Square.

Rostock's clock is a bit more hidden, however, being behind the church's main altar.

(You actually have to walk around the altar to see it.) At the very top is a series of doors, and at noon and midnight the innermost right door opens and six of the 12 apostles march out to parade around Jesus. Note that Judas is locked out. The lower section has a disc that tells the exact day on which Easter falls in any given year. The replaceable discs are accurate for 130 years – the current one expires in 2017, and the university already has a new one ready.

Another highlight of the Marienkirche – the only main Rostock church to survive WWII unscathed – is the unusually tall, organically shaped **baroque organ** (1770).

NEUER MARKT

Just around the corner from the Marienkirche is this open square, dominated by the splendid and rather pink 13th-century **Rathaus**. The building's baroque façade was added in 1727 after the original brick Gothic structure collapsed.

Opposite the Rathaus is a lovely series of restored **gabled houses** and a stylised, sea-themed **fountain** (2001) by artist Waldemar Otto. The explanatory plaque says the four figures are Neptune and his sons, although locals seem to think they represent the four elements.

KRÖPELINER STRASSE & UNIVERSITÄTSPLATZ

Kröpeliner Strasse, a broad, lively, cobblestone pedestrian mall lined with 15th- and 16th-century burghers' houses, runs from Neuer Markt west to Kröpeliner Tor.

At the centre of the mall is **Universitätsplatz**, positively swarming with people year-round, and its centrepiece, the crazy rococo **Brünnen der Lebensfreude** (Fountain of Happiness). True to its name, the square is lined with university buildings, including the handsome terracotta **Hauptgebäude** (1866-70), which replaced the famous 'White College'. The university itself is the oldest on the Baltic (founded in 1419), and currently has about 11,000 students.

At the northern side of Universitätsplatz are the **Five-Gables Houses**, modern interpretations of the residences that lined the square before WWII.

At the southwestern end is the Kloster Zum Heiligen Kreuz, a convent established in 1270 by Queen Margrethe of Denmark. Today it houses the **Cultural History Museum** (☎ 203 590; Klosterhof 18; admission free; ☎ 1.30-6pm

Tue-Sun), with an interesting collection including Victorian furniture and a few sculptures by Ernst Barlach.

CITY WALLS & GATES

Today only two of 32 gates, plus a small brick section, remain of the old city wall. The 55m-high **Kröpeliner Tor** stands at the western end of Kröpeliner Strasse. From here, you can follow the *Wallanlagen* (city walls) through the pleasant park to Wallstrasse and the other surviving gate, the **Steintor**.

PETRIKIRCHE

The Gothic **Petrikirche** (☎ 211 01; Alter Markt; tower admission €2; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) has a 117m-high steeple – a mariner's landmark for centuries – that was restored in 1994, having been missing since WWII. You can climb the steps or take the lift up to the viewing platform.

SCHIFFFAHRTSMUSEUM

Rostock's **Ship Museum** (☎ 1283 1364; www.schiffahrtsmuseum-rostock.m-vp.de; MS Dresden, IGA Park, Liegeplatz Schmarl; admission €3; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) has been relocated to the shores of the park that hosted the International Garden Exhibition in 2003, on the northwest riverbank. On board, there's a rundown on shipping from the Hanseatic period to today, plus the chance to play captain and other hands-on activities.

Take the S-Bahn to Lütten Klein and then bus 31 or 35 to IGA Park. Alternatively, see Tours (right).

WARNEMÜNDE

The jewel in Warnemünde's crown is its long, wide expanse of startlingly white beach. Even the butt-ugly concrete block that's the Hotel Neptun (see opposite) can't spoil it, while the mollusc-shaped **Teepott** building (think the TWA terminal at New York's JFK airport) and 19th-century **lighthouse** positively add to its quirky appeal.

Walking from the train station along **Alter Strom**, the boat-lined main canal of this 'fishing village' (now officially a Rostock suburb), you'll pass a row of quaint cottages housing restaurants, but you might still wonder what the fuss is about.

Then you turn the corner into Am Leuchtturm and Seestrasse and – bam! – it hits you. Forget museums and the like,

Warnemünde is all about sunbathing, promenading, eating fish and afterwards sipping cocktails on the beach. Sundown, when the crowds have abated slightly, is a memorable time to be here.

Tours

The tourist office runs 90-minute guided walking tours (€4) at 2pm daily in summer (11am Sunday). English-language tours can be arranged for groups.

Reederei Schütt (☎ 690 953, 0173-917 9178; www.hafenrundfahrten-in-rostock.de) offers round-harbour trips (€4) and services from Rostock's harbour to Warnemünde, stopping at the Ship Museum, between May and October.

Festivals & Events

In the second weekend in August, **Hanse Sail Rostock** (☎ 208 5233; www.hanse-sail.com) is the biggest of the city's many regattas, bringing countless sailing ships to the city and Warnemünde harbours.

Rostock is also one of the venues for the classical music **Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern** (☎ 0385-591 8585; www.festspiele-mv.de), held annually from June to September.

Sleeping

ALTSTADT

Hotel Kleine Sonne (☎ 497 3153; www.die-kleine-sonne.de; Steinstrasse 7; s €50-70, d €55-75; ☎) This lovely place lives up to its sunny name with lots of red and yellow detailing, as well as jaunty paintings by Berlin artist Nils Ausländer dotted around. There's no denying that the bedrooms are plainer than the public areas, but at least you can learn semaphore from the Ausländer print in each.

City-Pension (☎ 252 260; www.city-pension-rostock.de; Krönkenhagen 3; s €45-55, d €70-90; ☎) This is a small family *pension* occupying a lovely quiet street near the harbour and in the heart of the old-fashioned northern Altstadt.

Altes Hafenhäus (☎ 493 0110; www.alteshafenhäus.de; Strandstrasse 93; s €70, d €75-85; ☎) Stained-glass windows, wooden floors and embroidered towels give the 10 rooms in this converted baroque villa an air of elegance (slightly spoiled by the kitsch toilet seats in the newer rooms, however). It's very handy for the old town and some rooms overlook the water, although this is not the most scenic stretch of river.

Steigenberger Hotel Sonne (☎ 497 30; www.hotel-sonne-rostock.de; Neuer Markt 2; s €120-130, d €140-160;

☎ ☎ ☎) It's hard for the interior to compete with the ornate façade at this hotel – a confection of stepped gables and iron lace-work topped with a golden 'sun'. However, the rooms do their best in tones of brown, red and yellow and there's a clutch of classy restaurants.

Other recommendations:

Radisson SAS (☎ 375 00; www.rostock.radissonas.com; Lange Strasse 40; s/d from €105/115; ☎ ☎) Fabulous new hotel opened in 2005.

Courtyard by Marriott (☎ 497 00; reservation.rostock@courtyard.com; Schwaansche Strasse 6; s/d from €120/140; ☎ ☎ ☎) Right near pretty Kröpeliner Strasse.

KRÖPELINER TORVORSTADT

Hanse Hostel (☎ 128 6006; www.hanse-hostel.de; Dobe-raner Strasse 136; dm €12-17, s/d €24/44, breakfast €4, bedding €2; ☎) On the edge of Rostock's trendy bar district, the KTV, this family-run operation is clean and friendly, with a kitchen, laundry and loads of other facilities – although it is on a busy street. Hosts Iris and Gerd are always ready to help with local tips and you'll feel like one of the family by the time you leave (which for some guests turns out to be many days later than they'd planned).

Ibis Hotel (☎ 038204-122 22; Am Handelpark 5, Broderstorf; r from €54; ☎ ☎ ☎) One of the first midrange hotels to begin filling a severe gap in the Rostock market, this new business-class hotel is near the Stadthafen. It's generic but comfortable.

DJH hostel (Jugendgästeschiff Georg Buchner; ☎ 670 0320; www.djh-mv.de; Am Stadthafen 72-3; dm under/over 26yr €15/18, d €58; ☎) A hostel onboard a 1950s cargo ship sounds unusual and interesting. In reality, the dorms are slightly old-fashioned and claustrophobic, and the service gruff. Nevertheless, keen sailors might want to give it a whirl. There's a Hotel Garni here too (singles/doubles €50/75) with slightly better standards. Take tram 4 or 5 to Kabutzenhof.

Jugendschiff (☎ 495 8107; r €50-60) In the next berth to the DJH hostel, the Jugendschiff is a much smaller boat with some nice doubles.

WARNEMÜNDE

DJH hostel Warnemünde (☎ 548 170; www.djh-mv.de; Parkstrasse 47; dm under/over 26yr €21.15/24.15; ☎ ☎ ☎) Opened in 2001, this fantastic hostel is in a converted weather station, just minutes from the western end of the Warnemünde beach, near Diedrichshagen. The tower rooms are

particularly popular with families, who tend to predominate in July and August holiday period.

Baltic-Freizeit Camping- und Ferienpark (☎ 04544-800 313; www.baltic-freizeit.de; Dünenweg 27, Markgrafeneheide; sites €13-35) On the east side of the Warnow River, across from Warnemünde, this is an enormous city-run affair with 1200 pitches. Take tram 4 to Dierkower Kreuz, then bus 18 (45 minutes).

Hotel-Pension Kater (☎ 548 2422; www.pension-zum-kater.de; Am Strom 71 & Alexandrinenstrasse 115; s €50-75, d €70-95, breakfast €8; ☎) This *pension* manages to be cute and homy without straying into Laura Ashley territory. It's attached to a wood-lined pub selling Irish beer and a small fish restaurant. Look out for the sweet black-cat logo and ask about holiday apartments if you're interested.

Strandhotel Residenz (☎ 548 060; www.residenz-strandhotel.de; Seestrasse 6; s €75, d with/without sea view from €125/100, ste €150-210; ☎ ☎ ☎) The exterior of this new hotel reflects and updates the fishermen's cottages along Alter Strom, with a roof terrace above the first level and balconies above this. Inside, you'll find stylish, sound-insulated rooms with flat-screen TVs, plus a library. Spa treatments and physiotherapy are on offer, as is free 'energised' water.

Hotel Neptun (☎ 7770; www.hotel-neptun.de; Seestrasse 19; s €100-220, d €150-250; ☎ ☎ ☎) As hideous as this concrete GDR monolith is, its balconies have always been cleverly angled so that each room has a beach view, and it's now been completely renovated inside. It has an interesting background too, with past guests as diverse as Fidel Castro and Franz Beckenbauer.

Strand-Hotel Hübner (☎ 543 40; www.hotel-huebner.de; Seestrasse 12; s €115-160, d €140-185; ☎ ☎) This stylish, modern hotel has balconies overlooking the beach. A highlight is the guest lounge overlooking the Baltic Sea. In winter, you can enjoy coffee, cakes, fondue, baked apples or even *Feuerzangenbowle* punch (see boxed text, p79) here.

Yachthafen Residenz Hohe Düne (☎ 504 00; www.yhd.de; Am Yachthafen 1-8; s/d from €115/160, ste from €240; ☎ ☎ ☎) Located at the enclosed yacht harbour across the river mouth from the main beach, this huge luxury hotel development is one of those all-inclusive affairs – with 368 rooms and suites, a kids' club and conference centre. You'll need to catch a ferry or shuttle to go to and fro.

Hotel am Leuchtturm (☎ 543 70; www.hotel-am-leuchtturm.de; Am Leuchtturm 16; s €120, d €150-195; (P) (X)) The oft-used colours of yellow and blue are given a delicious designer twist in the spacious, light-filled accommodation here. Right near the lighthouse, most rooms enjoy spectacular views, especially the corner panorama ones.

Eating

ALTSTADT

Zur Kogge (☎ 493 4493; Wokrenterstrasse 27; mains €8-15) Touristy but still unmissable, this is Rostock's oldest restaurant. Cosy wooden booths are lined with stained-glass decorations of Hanseatic coats of armour and monster fish threatening sailing ships, while life preservers hang from the walls. The menu is dominated by fish, but you can enjoy coffee and cake between meal times if you want to avoid the crowds.

Tre Kronor (☎ 490 4260; Hansepassage, Lange Strasse; mains €8-16) Set in a strange split-level glass-fronted pillar box at the back of a shopping centre, the 'Three Crowns' serves up interesting Swedish dishes, including elk steak with mushrooms.

Am Berg 13 (☎ 490 6262; Amberg 13; mains €10-15; ☎ from 5pm Tue-Sun) This relaxed, unassuming restaurant is locally renowned for its ambitious and creative cuisine, with dishes such as *Kalbsaxe* (knuckle of veal) accompanied by polenta and capsicum, onion, rosemary and sherry ragout, or rabbit with chanterelle mushrooms, garlic gnocchi and green beans.

Albert & Emile (☎ 493 4373; Altschmiedestrasse 28; mains €15-22; ☎ from 6.30pm Mon-Sat) Up the road from the Petrikirche, an ivy-covered façade conceals this very posh two-storey French restaurant, which offers some of Rostock's finest *haute cuisine*.

KRÖPELINER TORVORSTADT

Waldemar & Margarete (☎ 200 5500; Budapesterstrasse 16; dishes €4-10) This popular café-cum-restaurant and pub has a friendly atmosphere, with its range of TV sports and film evenings. It serves huge portions of hearty meals, which you can enjoy in the beer garden in summer.

Green's (☎ 496 5172; Leonhardstrasse 22; mains €6-10) Paninis, smoothies as well as delicious Thai-influenced curries attract a hip, discerning crowd here. For those in a hurry, there's a weekday 'quick lunch', which has to be on your table in 15 minutes or it's free.

Zum Alten Fritz (☎ 208 780; Warnowufer 65; mains €8-15) One of four establishments in an expanding local brewery chain, this is a big pub-restaurant down on the docks with a good range of standards, plus organic meats and specials like turkey in beer.

WARNEMÜNDE

Both fresh fish and freshly smoked fish are available in abundance here. Somewhat touristy restaurants fill the old fishermen's cottages lining the western bank of Alter Strom. There's a new development on the eastern bank, where the restaurants are less atmospheric, but arguably do better food and have great views of the cottages opposite.

Fischerhaus (Am Strom; mains €8-13) This relaxed canteen-style place serves simple fish dishes, including delicious salmon in beer batter.

La Villa (☎ 510 9944; Am Bahnhof 1b; mains €12-19) In an old white villa with a chequered history, this designer restaurant and café gives its fish dishes a modern, Mediterranean twist. Try the freshly made strawberry punch, too.

Atlantic (☎ 526 55, 526 74; Am Strom 107; mains €11-24) One of the better-regarded fish restaurants on the western bank of the canal, Atlantic offers just about every type of fish downstair, and Italian gourmet cuisine on the floor above.

Drinking

Szene and *Piste* are the main free monthlies, geared predominantly towards music.

Krahnstöver Likörfabrik (☎ 4377 7654; Grubenstrasse 1) Rostock's oldest family-run wine merchant owns this multifaceted bistro-bar-café, next to an artificial stream near the city wall. They also have a brasserie in the Steigenberger Hotel Sonne.

Studentenkeller (☎ 455 928; Universitätsplatz 5; ☎ Tue-Sat) This cellar and garden joint has been rocking Rostock's learned youth for years.

Café Central (☎ 490 4648; Leonhardstrasse 20) Students and hipsters loll around sipping long drinks on the banquette seats below black-and-white photos or enjoy a tall beer over a game of backgammon at the tables in the middle. One of Rostock's prime meeting places, this is right in the heart of the scene.

The best bars from which to enjoy the Warnemünde sunset include **Schuster's** (☎ 700 7835; Im Teepott; ☎ from 11am), which also has a hip summer pavilion on the beach a few metres

away from its main Teepott building location, and the ritzier **Sky-Bar** (☎ 700 7835; 19th fl, Hotel Neptun; ☎ from 9pm Mon-Sat). The Hotel Neptun has a panoramic café, too, open from 1pm to 6pm daily.

Entertainment

MS Stubnitz (☎ 490 7475; www.stubnitz.com; Stadthafen, Liegeplatz 82) A former fishing trawler has been converted into Rostock's most unusual and popular venue, with bands, DJs and performances over three decks. The tone is alternative and often a bit grungy. Beware that the boat sometimes sails off to entertain other cities, too.

Mau Club Rostock (☎ 202 3576; Warnowufer 56; ☎ Fri, Sat & other special dates) Everything from indie to punk to disco attracts a wide-ranging crowd to this former storage hall opposite the Jugendherberge. Well known for its support of up-and-coming acts, it hosts many free local band evenings.

Interdub (☎ 377 8737; Erich-Schlesinger-Strasse 19a, Südstadt; ☎ Fri & Sat) Come here for serious dance music of various shades and flavours.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Rostock's airport, **Rostock-Laage** (RLG; ☎ 01805-007 737; www.rostock-airport.de), has a sparse number of scheduled services to Cologne-Bonn, Dortmund, Munich and Zürich, plus charter flights to holiday resorts in Crete, Spain, Turkey etc.

BOAT

There are ferry services to Denmark, Sweden and Latvia, as well as to Estonia and Finland in summer. Fares are quite complicated depending on the season and the number of people travelling, so the following are provided as rough high-season guides only.

Scandlines (☎ 01805-116 688, 673 1217; www.scandlines.de) travels to Gedser, Denmark (walk-on passenger €10, car with passengers from €75, 1¼ hours, six daily), Trelleborg in Sweden (walk-on €24, car from €126, cabins €45 to €85, 5¼ to 7½ hours, three daily) and Ventspils, Latvia (car without passengers from €80, cabin from €270, 26 hours, four weekly).

TT-Line (☎ 670 790; www.ttline.de) sails to/from Trelleborg (walk-on €30, car with passengers from €100, 5½ hours, three daily).

Boats depart from the overseas seaport (Überseehafen), which is on the east side of

the Warnow; take tram 2 to Dierkower Kreuz, then change for bus 49 to Seehafen. There is an S-Bahn to Seehafen, but it's a 20-minute walk from the station to the piers.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

To reach Rostock from Berlin, head north or south out of the city to the A10. Follow it north-west to the A24, which leads straight into the A19 running directly north to Rostock (2½ hours). From Neubrandenburg, take the B104 west to the A19 and turn north (1½ hours).

For a lift, get in touch with the **Mitfahrzentrale** (☎ 194 40; Lohgerberstrasse 1), a ride-sharing agency.

TRAIN

There are frequent direct trains to Rostock from Berlin (from €31.90, three hours) and hourly services to Stralsund (€11.70, one hour), Wismar (€9.10, 1¼ hours) and Schwerin (€13.40, one hour).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

An airport shuttle bus (€5) runs from the train station to the airport, timed with plane departures. A taxi should cost around €35.

BICYCLE

Cycling isn't much fun in the centre because of heavy traffic, but things quickly improve outside the city. Rental stations include **Radstation Rostock** (☎ 240 1153; Rostock main train station) and **Holiday & Mehr** (☎ 700 7060; Warnemünde train station).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

With complicated one-way systems, confusing street layouts and dedicated parking-ticket police, Rostock is not a driver-friendly city. There are several convenient parking lots off Lange Strasse. The **Warnow Tunnel** (www.warnowtunnel.de; toll €2.50), completed in 2002, crosses beneath the river in the north of the city and links to the A19.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Journeys within Rostock city, including Warnemünde, cost €1.50/3.20 for a single/day pass, valid on the Warnow ferries as well as land transport. The surrounding area is zoned; a single/day pass costs €1.50/2.80 for one zone or €5/10 for all zones.

The double-decker S-Bahn has frequent services to Warnemünde (€1.50); some continue to Güstrow (€5) or Berlin (€31.90).

Trams 2, 11 and 12 travel from the Hauptbahnhof up Steinstrasse, around Marienkirche and down Lange Strasse. Take tram 11 or 12 to get from the Hauptbahnhof to the university. Lines 4 and 5, which go from the train station to the KVT district, have been out of operation but *should* be back in service by 2007.

TAXI

For a taxi, ring **Hanse-Taxi** (☎ 685 858) or **FunkTaxi** (☎ 761 1176).

BAD DOBERAN & COASTAL RESORTS

☎ 038203 / pop 11,600

The former summer ducal residence of Bad Doberan, about 15km west of Rostock, was once the site of a powerful Cistercian monastery. Today, it's a tourist town with an impressive *Münster* (large church) and horse races in July and August.

Bad Doberan is also the starting point for the Molli Schmalspurbahn, a popular narrow-gauge steam train that travels to the coastal resorts of Heiligendamm and Kühlungsborn. Catching the train and walking along the coast between some stops makes for a pleasant and undemanding day trip from Rostock.

The Bad Doberan **tourist office** (☎ 621 54; www.bad-doberan-heiligendamm.de; Severinstrasse 6) is five minutes' walk from the train station.

Sights & Activities

MÜNSTER

On the eastern side of town is the **Münster** (☎ 627 16; www.doberanermuenster.de; Klosterstrasse 2; adult/concession €3/2, tour adult €2.50-4, concession €2-3; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-6pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-5pm daily Apr & Oct, to 4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb), a stunning brick Gothic hall church typical of northern Germany. Its chief treasures include a lovely high altar and an ornate pulpit. The Münster's 1.2 million bricks are being cleaned, while the rest of the monastery complex and grounds is filling up with craft shops, galleries and cafés.

ZAPPA MEMORIAL

Bad Doberan's racecourse is the unlikely venue for the **Zappanale** (☎ 598 207; www.arf-society.de), Germany's only Frank Zappa

festival, which has been held here every July since 1989 and now attracts audiences of up to 3000, as well as several of the great man's former bandmates. In 2002 a **Zappa memorial** was erected in the centre of town amid much psychedelic rejoicing.

MOLLI SCHMALSPURBAHN

In 1886, 'Molli', as she's affectionately known, began huffing and puffing her way to Heiligendamm, carrying Germany's elite. Then in 1910, the line was extended west along the coast to Kühlungsborn. Today the train goes by the full name of **Mecklenburger Bäderbahn Molli** (☎ 4150; www.molli-bahn.de), with services departing Bad Doberan's train station on average 11 times a day (but up to 13).

With a maximum speed of 45km/h, the journey takes 15 minutes to reach the coast at Heiligendamm (single/return €3.50/6) and 45 minutes in total to Kühlungsborn/West (€5.50/10), with interim stops in Steilküste, Kühlungsborn/East and Kühlungsborn/Mitte. Concessions and family fares are also available. Children love the dinky engine and carriages. There's a salon car on many journeys and the scenery is lovely.

To help plan your day, pick up a pocket-sized timetable when you buy your ticket at Bad Doberan's train station.

For a particularly easy walk, get off at Heiligendamm and walk to the Steilküste station before picking up the train again.

HEILIGENDAMM

The 'white town on the sea' is Germany's oldest seaside resort, founded in 1793 by Mecklenburg duke Friedrich Franz I and fashionable throughout the 19th century as the playground of nobility. Since 2003 it's been reborn, with the opening of the exclusive **Kempinski Grand Hotel Heiligendamm** (☎ 7400; www.kempinski-heiligendamm.com; s/d with park view from €250/285, with sea view from €435/470; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎).

With modern rooms housed in five gleaming white, heritage-listed buildings, the Kempinski is continuing the resort's noble tradition, even proving grand enough to accommodate US President George W Bush on a state visit and to be chosen to host a G8 summit in summer 2007. Even for those not staying here, the hotel is an attraction, with a restaurant, pristine beach and lovely surrounding parkland.

Bad Doberan **tourist information** (☎ 4150) has an outlet in the Heiligendamm Molli-Bahn station.

KÜHLUNGSBORN

The biggest Baltic Sea resort, with 7300 inhabitants, Kühlungsborn is known for its lovely Art Deco buildings and its green surroundings, as it backs onto a 130-hectare forest. The east and west parts of town are linked by the Ostseeallee promenade, lined with hotels and restaurants. In the eastern part of town you'll find a pier running 240m out to sea and a newly built yacht harbour.

All water sports, including diving, are on offer. For more information, contact the **Kurverwaltung** (spa resort administration; ☎ 8490; www.kuehlungsborn.de; Ostseeallee 18).

Getting There & Away

Trains serve Rostock Hauptbahnhof (€2.60, 25 minutes) and Wismar (€6.20, 45 minutes) roughly hourly. By car, take the B105 towards Wismar.

WISMAR

☎ 03841 / pop 46,500

The many colourful 'Swedish Heads' you see across town are the most obvious but not the only mementos of Swedish rule in Wismar. This small, pretty town joined the Hanseatic trading league in the 13th century and looks essentially Hanseatic, with its gabled façades and cobbled streets. However, it spent most of the 16th and 17th centuries as part of Sweden and various buildings, a clock, a tomb and more still hint at this period.

Wismar's picture-postcard looks have always made it popular with filmmakers. Its *Alter Hafen* (old harbour) featured in the 1922 Dracula movie *Nosferatu*, and it's not unusual for day-trippers from Schwerin or Rostock to still stumble across movie crews.

Orientation

The Unesco-listed Altstadt is the city centre, built up around the Markt, said to be the largest medieval town square in northern Germany. The Bahnhof is at the northeastern corner of the Altstadt and the *Alter Hafen* port is at the northwestern corner; a canal runs from *Alter Hafen* almost due east across the northern half of the Altstadt. The streets around the Markt are pedestrianised and

the main night-time entertainment area is around *Alter Hafen*.

Information

Main post office (Mecklenburger Strasse 18-20;

☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat)

Tourist-Information (☎ 251 3025; www.wismar.de; Am Markt 11; ☎ 9am-6pm)

Sights

MARKT

Two things dominate the Markt. The first is the **Wasserkunst** (waterworks) in the middle. This ornate, 12-sided well, completed in 1602, supplied Wismar's drinking water until 1897. Today it remains the town's landmark.

Behind it stands the building and restaurant known as **Alter Schwede**. This has a characteristic step gabled façade, with a copy of one of the two so-called 'Swedish Heads' set in it (see boxed text, p720).

Other gabled houses around the Markt have been lovingly restored. The large Rathaus (1817-19) at the square's northern end houses an excellent **Historical Exhibition** (adult/concession €1/0.50; ☎ 10am-6pm) in its basement. Displays include an original 15th-century *Wandmalerei* (mural) uncovered by archaeologists in 1985, a glass-covered medieval well, and the Wrangel tomb, the coffin of influential Swedish General Helmut V Wrangel and his wife – with larger-than-life wooden figures carved on top of it.

CHURCHES

Of the three great red-brick churches that once rose above the rooftops before WWII, only the **St-Nikolai-Kirche** (☎ 1381-1487; admission €1; ☎ 8am-8pm May-Sep, 10am-6pm Apr & Oct, 11am-4pm Nov-Mar) was left intact. Today it contains a font from its older sister church, the St-Marien-Kirche.

Otherwise, all that remains of this, the 13th-century **St-Marien-Kirche** (admission by donation; ☎ 8am-8pm May-Sep, 10am-6pm Apr & Oct, 11am-4pm Nov-Mar), is its great brick steeple (1339), which still rises above the city. The clock on the tower was donated by the same General Wrangel whose tomb lies in the Rathaus basement. A multimedia exhibit on medieval church-building techniques is housed in the tower's base.

The massive red shell of the **St-Georgen-Kirche** (admission by donation; ☎ 8am-sunset or 8pm, whichever comes sooner) is being restored for use

A SWEDISH HEADS-UP

No, a Swedish head is not what you need to successfully assemble a flat-pack Ikea bookcase. A Swedish Head in the Wismar sense is one of two baroque busts of Hercules, which once stood on mooring posts at the harbour entrance.

Semi-comical, with great curling moustaches and wearing lions as hats, the statues' origins are much debated. However, it's believed they marked either the beginning of the harbour or the navigable channels within it. It's also thought that before this they were simply ships' figureheads.

Either way, they've proved to be a boon for Wismar's souvenir manufacturers, adorning all manner of gifts. The originals were damaged when a Finnish barge rammed them in 1902, at which time replicas were made. One original is now in the Schabbellhaus (see Historical Museum, below), while two replicas guard the Baumhaus in Wismar's *Alter Hafen*.

as a church, concert hall and exhibition space, and was partially opened in 2002 (completion by 2010). In 1945 a freezing populace was driven to burn what was left of the church's beautiful wooden statue of St George and the dragon.

FÜRSTENHOF

Between the St-Marien- and St-Georgen-churches lies the Italian Renaissance **Fürstenhof** (1512–13), now the city courthouse, largely restored. The façades are slathered in terracotta reliefs depicting episodes from folklore and town history.

HISTORICAL MUSEUM

The town's historical museum is in the Renaissance **Schabbellhaus** (☎ 282 350; www.schabbellhaus.de; Schweinsbrücke 8; admission free; ☞ 10am–8pm Tue–Sun May–Oct, to 5pm Nov–Apr) in a former brewery (1571), just south of St-Nikolai-Kirche across the canal. One of the original Swedish Heads can still be seen here.

Regional artist Christian Wetzels's four charming **pig statuettes** grace the **Schweinsbrücke** between the church and the museum.

Activities

Clermont Reederei (☎ 224 646; www.reederei-clermont.de) operates hour-long harbour cruises five times daily from May to September, leaving from *Alter Hafen* (adult €7). Boats also go to nearby **Poel Island** once a day (adult one-way/return €7/11), which has the atmosphere of a remote fishing community. Various other companies run tours on historic ships during summer; contact the **harbour** (☎ 389 082; www.alterhafenwismar.de) for details. **Fritz Reuter** (☎ 05254-808 500; www.ms-fritz-reuter.de) also organises wreck dives along the Baltic coast.

The huge indoor water park **Wonnemar** (☎ 327 623; www.wonnemar.de; Bürgermeister-Haupt-Strasse 38; day ticket adult/child/concession €9.50/7.50/8.50) has several pools, tennis, bowling, badminton, massage, sauna, steam baths and six (count 'em!) water slides.

Hanse-Sektellerei (☎ 636 282; www.altes-gewoelbe-wismar.de; Turnerweg 4b), the champagne factory south of the city centre, produces several varieties – from dry (Hanse Tradition) to extra dry (Hanse Selection). Tours are offered to groups of at least 15.

Tours

In summer there are 1½-hour walking tours of the city, in German, leaving the tourist office at 10.30am (adult/concession €4/3; also 2pm Saturday, Sunday and holidays). English-language tours are available on request for groups of 20 or more.

Festivals & Events

Annual events include the **Hafenfest** (Harbour Festival) in mid-June, featuring old and new sailing ships and steamers, music and food, and a free **street theatre** festival in July/August. Wismar also holds a **Schwedenfest** on the third weekend of August, commemorating the end of Swedish rule in 1903.

Sleeping

Reserve well ahead for the peak summer season, when Wismar fills up quickly. **Private rooms** start at €20 through the tourist office.

DJH hostel (☎ 326 80; www.jugendherbergen-mv.de; Juri-Gagarin-Ring 30a; dm under/over 26yr €17.25/20.25; ☐ ☒ ☞) The city's Jugendherberge Am Schwedenstein is in a pretty, old brick building west of town, not far from the water park. The

Schwedenstein (Swedish Stone) next door is another reminder of Swedish hegemony.

Pension Chez Fasan (☎ 213 425; www.pension-chez-fasan.de; Bademutterstrasse 20a; s €26-30, d €55; ☐) The en suite rooms in these three linked houses are relatively new (less than 10 years old) and great value for money, although we're not 100% sure about the service. Call ahead to make sure someone's around to let you in.

Bio Hotel Reingard (☎ 284 972; www.reingard.de; Weberstrasse 18; s €50-70, d €80-120; ☐) Foodies should dump their luggage quickly in their charming room – individually decorated with antique furnishings – before heading straight to the lauded organic restaurant here. Adjoining there's even a small museum and shop (only open Tuesday or on request) dedicated to the *Sanddorn*, a distinctive, citrusy Mecklenburg berry.

Hotel Reuterhaus (☎ 222 30; www.hotel-reuterhaus.de; Am Markt 19; s/d from €60/80) This is a family-run historic establishment with views of the Markt and the Wasserkunst.

Hotel Stadt Hamburg (☎ 2390; www.wismar.steigenberger.de; Am Markt 24; s/d from €85/110; ☐ ☒ ☞) Lots of abstract sculptures decorate the lobby, restaurant and spa of this flash place on the market. The rooms are a lot more generic, but extremely comfortable, and some enjoy great views.

Eating

If you're feeling adventurous, try *Wismarer Spickaal* (young eel smoked in a way unique to the region). Wismar's picturesque 'restaurant row' is along the pedestrianised Am Lohberg, near the *Alter Hafen*.

To'n Zägenkrog (☎ 282 716; Ziegenmarkt 10; mains €7-13; ☞ from 5pm) This popular pub, crammed with maritime mementos and boasting harbour views, serves excellent fish dishes.

Brauhaus am Lohberg (☎ 250 238; Kleine Hohe Strasse 15; mains €7-13) This building was once home to the town's first brewery; restored in 1995, it's now brewing again, taking up three floors and offering a good seafood menu. Look out for the painted penguins.

Fischerklause (☎ 252 850; Fischerreihe 4; mains €7-13; ☞ closed Sun & Mon) This is a tiny but characterful fish restaurant with a mainly local crowd, just off the Altstadt ring road near the *Alter Hafen*.

Zum Weinberg (☎ 283 550; Hinter dem Rathaus 3; mains €7-17) This lovely Renaissance house, with painted ceiling, stained-glass windows and

uneven walls, serves huge portions of fruity Mecklenburg specialities, including *Rippenbraten* (rolled roast pork stuffed with lemon, apple and plums).

Getting There & Away

Trains travel every hour to/from Rostock (€9.10, 65 minutes) and Schwerin (€6.20, 45 minutes).

DARSS-ZINGST PENINSULA

Nature-lovers and artists will be bowled over by the **Darss-Zingst Peninsula** (Fischland-Darss-Zingst; www.fischland-darss-zingst.de, in German), part of the 805-sq-km Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft (Western Pomeranian Boddenlandschaft) National Park, which also encompasses the island of Hiddensee (see p733) and the west coast of Rügen (see p732).

The 'Bodden' are lagoons that were once part of the sea here, but have been cut off by shifting landmasses and are now rich with fish-life. The seawards peninsula is raw and bracing, with trees growing sideways away from the constant winds. Further inland you'll find charming 'captains' houses – reed-thatched houses with colourfully painted doors depicting sunflowers, fish (one of the region's motifs) and other symbols of nature. Also common are *Zeesenboote* (drag-net fishing boats) with striking brown sails.

The area looks a picture, so it's not surprising to learn that it's home to an artists' colony in **Ahrenshoop** (www.ostseebad-ahrenshoop.de), whose **Kunstkaten** (www.kunstkaten.de, in German; Strandweg 1) gallery is in one of the region's most striking reed-thatched houses.

Baltic coastlines – not just in Germany – are the source of almost all the world's amber. As well as the jewellery on sale throughout Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, you'll find the **Deutsches Bernsteinmuseum** (German Amber Museum; www.deutsches-bernsteinmuseum.de, in German; Im Kloster 1-2) in **Ribnitz-Damgarten** (www.ribnitz-damgarten.de).

Prerow (www.ostseebad-prerow.de, in German) is renowned for its seamens' church and light-house.

The national park is the biggest resting ground in central Europe for migratory cranes. Some 60,000 birds stop over here every spring and autumn. Contact the park authority, **Nationalparkamt Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft** (☎ 038234-5020; poststelle@nlp-vbl.de; Im Forst 5, Born, Darss), for further information.

WESTERN POMERANIA

STRALSUND

☎ 03831 / pop 58,770

Once the second most important member of the Hanseatic League, after Lübeck, Unesco-protected Stralsund maintains its elegant medieval profile – despite these days being principally the gateway to the holiday island of Rügen.

Square gables interspersed with Gothic turrets, ornate portals and vaulted arches make it one of the leading examples of *Backsteingotik* (classic red-brick Gothic gabled architecture) in northern Germany.

Add the unusual sight of holidaymakers in shorts and flip-flops wandering along its historic cobbled streets and you have a rare – but thoroughly enjoyable – combination indeed.

Orientation

The Altstadt is effectively on its own island, surrounded by lakes and the sea. Its main hubs are Alter Markt in the north and Neuer Markt in the south; a few blocks south of the latter is the central bus station. The Hauptbahnhof is across the Tribseer Damm causeway, west of the Neuer Markt. The harbour is on the Altstadt's eastern side.

Information

Main post office (Neuer Markt 4; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, to noon Sat)

Matrix (☎ 278 80; Wasserstrasse 8–9; per hr €4; ☎ 2pm–midnight) Internet access.

Toff's Web Café (☎ 309 385; Am Lobshagen 8a; per hr €3; ☎ noon–10pm)

Tourismuszentrale (☎ 246 90; www.stralsund.de; Alter Markt 9; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, to 2pm Sat, 10am–2pm Sun May–Sep, 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat Oct–Apr; 📄) Tourist information and room bookings.

Sights

ALTER MARKT

Stralsund's symbol, bar none, is its splendid **Rathaus**, the city's retreat to Lübeck. The seven copper turrets and six triangular gables of its decorative, red-brick Gothic façade (1370) now grace postcards and marketing brochures far afield. The upper portion of the northern façade, or *Schauwand* (show wall), has openings to prevent strong winds from knocking

it over. Inside, the sky-lit colonnade boasts shiny black pillars on carved and painted bases; on the western side of the building is an ornate portal.

Through the Rathaus' eastern walkway you'll come to the main portal of the other dominant Alter Markt building, the 1270 **Nikolaikirche** (☎ 299 799; Alter Markt; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Sat, 11.15am–noon & 2–4pm Sun). Modelled after the Marienkirche in Lübeck and bearing a fleeting resemblance to Notre Dame, it's filled with art treasures. The **main altar** (1708), designed by the baroque master Andreas Schlüter, shows the eye of God flanked by cherubs, capped with a depiction of the Last Supper. Also worth a closer look is the **high altar** (1470), 6.7m wide and 4.2m tall, showing Jesus' entire life. Behind the altar is the **astronomical clock** (1394).

Opposite the Rathaus you'll find the **Wulfflamhaus** (Alter Markt 5), a beautiful 15th-century townhouse named after an old mayor. Its turreted step gable imitates the Rathaus façade.

OTHER CHURCHES & CLOISTERS

The Neuer Markt is dominated by the massive 14th-century **Marienkirche** (☎ 298 965; Neuer Markt; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun), another superb example of north German red-brick construction. You can climb the steep wooden steps up the tower (€1) for a sweeping view of the town, with its lovely red-tiled roofs, and Rügen Island.

On Schillstrasse, reached via Külpstrasse, is the **Johanniskloster** (☎ 666 488; Schillstrasse 26; adult/concession €2/1.50; ☎ 10am–6pm Wed–Sun May–Oct), a former Franciscan monastery that's now a concert venue. It's famous for its 'smoking attic' (there was no chimney), chapter hall and cloister.

Don't forget to look at the lovely ivy-covered face of the **Heiligestkirche** (Wasserstrasse).

OCEANOGRAPHIC MUSEUM

Stralsund's **Meeresmuseum** (☎ 265 010; www.meeresmuseum.de; Katharinenberg 14–20; adult/child/concession/family €6.50/4.50/4.50/17; ☎ 9am–6pm Jun–Sep, 10am–5pm Oct–May) boasts an excellent large natural history section, including a 1000kg skeleton of a finback whale (hanging over your head!).

However, its highlight is the atmospheric aquarium in the basement of this 13th-century convent building. Turn left for re-created North Sea environments and right for

Baltic fish (including huge sturgeon). There's also a tropical section and a 350,000-litre sea-turtle pool, the top of which extends to the café above.

There are English audio-guides available. The museum is planning to extend and turn into a 21st-century **Ozeaneum** (www.ozeaneum.com) by 2008.

Activities

Weisse Flotte (☎ 0180-321 2120; www.weisse-flotte.com; Fahrstrasse 16; adult/child €6/4) offers four one-hour harbour cruises a day (from May to October), circling the island of Dänholm, between Stralsund and Rügen.

West of Tribseer Damm, the massive **Hanse-Dom** (☎ 373 30; www.hansedom.de; Grünhofer Bogen

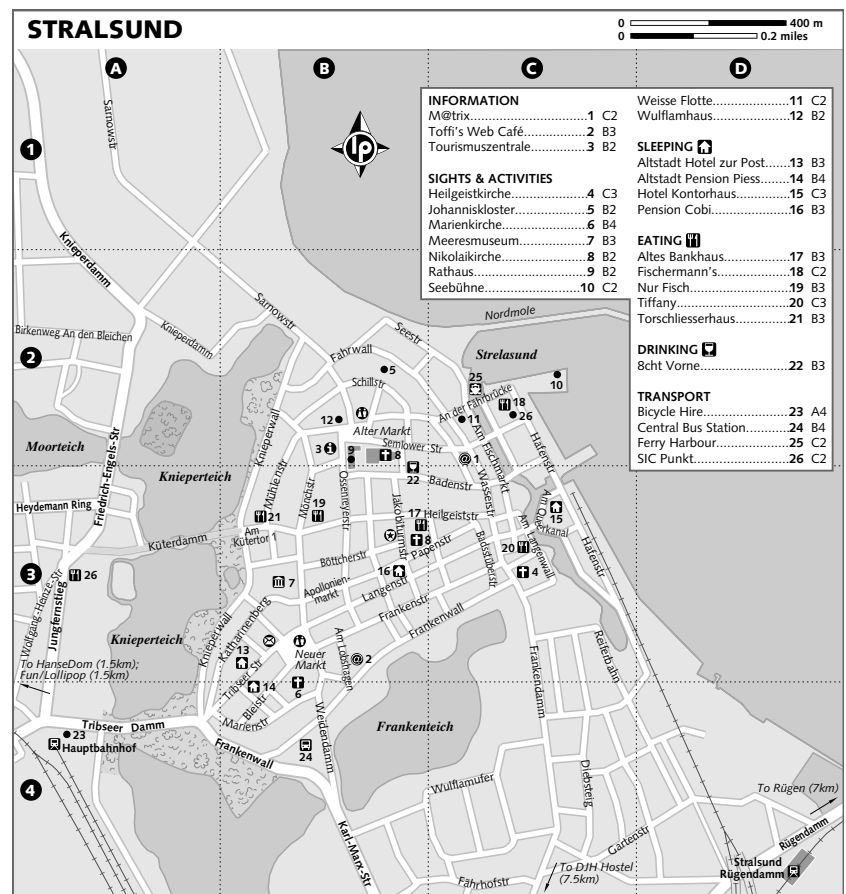
18–20; adult from €9.70; ☎ 8am–midnight) boasts pools, baths, saunas and sports facilities, plus the four-star Dorint Hotel.

Tours

For the deposit of a passport and €4, the tourist office will let you hire an English-language **MP3 audio-guide** tour of the city. Apart from this, it offers a variety of themed tours in German (€3) at 11am every day of the week.

Festivals & Events

A **Seebühne**, or floating stage, is erected in the harbour every year from June to August for opera performances during the **Ostseefestspiele** (☎ 264 6150; www.ostseefestspiele.de).



In the third week of July, Stralsund celebrates repelling an enemy invasion in 1628 with the **Wallensteintage** historic festival.

In early September, some 50 public buildings open their doors all night and welcome visitors with light displays, concerts, performing art, dance and cabaret during the **Lange Nacht des Offenen Denkmals** (Long Night of the Open Monuments).

Sleeping

DJH hostel (☎ 490 289; www.djh-mv.de; Strandstrasse 21, Devin; dm under/over 26yr €17.50/20.50; ☒) Stralsund no longer has a hostel, but you'll find this pleasant option 8km from town in Devin, right on the Strelasund channel with a terrace and views of Rügen. Take bus 3 to Devin.

Pension Cobi (☎ 278 288; www.pension-cobi.de; Jakobiturmstrasse 15; s €32-45, d €46-68; ☐) In the shadow of the Jakobikirche, this is a great location for exploring the Altstadt, and also offers bike hire. Rooms are smart and clean, and some have balconies.

Altstadt Pension Piess (☎ 303 580; Tribseer Strasse 15; s €50-60, d €55-85; ☐ ☒) Clean, spacious rooms with blonde wood, terracotta-coloured linen and Paul Gauguin prints combine with friendly, familiar service here. With a terrace, small garden and bike rack, it's especially popular with cyclists.

Hotel Kontorhaus (☎ 289 800; www.kontorhaus-stralsund.de; Am Queerkanal 1; s/d €70/100, ste €115; ☒) This harbour hotel states its nautical intent from the outset, with brown Hamburg-style brick and lots of windows, some shaped like portholes. Developed by a cruise-liner interior designer, the rooms feel like upmarket cabins, some with views of Rügen.

'BAD' COMPANY

It's impossible not to eulogise about Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania's coast once you've seen it. With clean white sand, blue water and lots of trees, it's as beautiful as places in the Mediterranean or Australia. However, here's the thing: the water temperature is – you guessed it – rather bracing up here.

That's not to say people don't swim in the cool sea. They do, but they're hardy folk and they generally swim quite briefly. For a long, warm soak they'll turn instead to a *Bad* (spa or bath), such as Stralsund's HanseDom (p723), Wismar's Wonnemar (p720) or Binz' Vitamar (p729).

Germans have long been obsessed with the curative properties of warm waters and hot steam. Their idea of 'wellness' combines everything from workouts and massage to beauty treatments, solaria and indoor beaches. So the *Bad* – with its many pools, water slides, steam rooms, fitness centres and restaurants – not only protects against bad weather, they also feel it keeps them healthy in all seasons. Next time you see that unseasonal tan and sixpack abs, you'll know exactly where they've been...

Altstadt Hotel zur Post (☎ 200 500; www.altstadthotel-stralsund.de; Tribseer Strasse 22; s €95, d €120-140; ☐ ☒) Right on the Neuer Markt, this place presents all the comforts you would expect of a modern business hotel, right down to TV and radio piped into the bathrooms. Good internet booking deals make it popular with holiday-makers as well.

Eating

Nur Fisch (☎ 306 609; Heilgeiststrasse 92; dishes €2.50-13; ☒ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat) As the name suggests, this simple bistro is only about marine delights, from fish sandwiches to a gourmet platter of sumptuous seafood.

Tiffany (☎ 309 0088; Am Langenwall; buffet €5.50) This very loosely themed breakfast bar is simply fantastic, darling. Try the Audrey Hepburn all-you-can-drink champagne buffet (€28, including fruit bowl).

Torschliesserhaus (☎ 293 032; Am Kütertor 1; mains €7-13) This 1281 building in the city wall provides a varied menu of steaks, fish and lots of snacks in an atmospheric setting.

Fischermann's (☎ 292 322; An der Fährbrücke 3; mains €7-14) This slightly cheesy-looking 'maritime' restaurant in an old warehouse redeems itself with its waterfront location and small number of better-than-expected fresh fish dishes.

Altes Bankhaus (☎ 303 388; Heilgeiststrasse 43a; mains €9-14) Delicious meat, vegetarian and fish dishes, such as red snapper on black pepper and capsicum coulis, vegetable crêpes and lamb in a polenta crust, keep us coming back to this sleek modern bistro. Although casually dressed couples frequently pop in just for a beer, others come for corporate entertaining and celebratory dinners.

Drinking & Entertainment

8cht Vorne (☎ 281 888; Badenstrasse 45) A scene stalwart, this place furnishes Stralsund's student population with drink, DJs and dancing every night.

Fun/Lollipop (☎ 399 039; Grünhufener Bogen 11-14) Out by the HanseDom, this is the biggest mainstream club in town.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

See Getting There & Away on p727 for details of services to Rügen Island, and Getting There & Away, p733, for boat services to Hiddensee Island.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If coming from the west – Lübeck, Wismar or Rostock – avoid travelling on the slow B105. Instead get on the A20, or take the B110 from Rostock to the B194 (via Bad Sülze) and head north. From points east, you'll use the B96.

TRAIN

Regional trains travel to/from Rostock (€11.70, 1¼ hours), Berlin-Hauptbahnhof (from €32.30, 3½ hours) and Hamburg (from €34.60, 3½ hours) at least every two hours. There are frequent trains to Sassnitz (from €9.10, 50 minutes) and Binz (from €9.10, 50 minutes), on Rügen Island.

Getting Around

Your feet will do just fine in the Altstadt. You can also hire a bicycle from the **train station** (☎ 625 81) or **SIC Punkt** (☎ 280 155; Harbour).

GREIFSWALD

☎ 03834 / pop 54,200

The old university town of Greifswald is an oddity, largely unscathed by WWII thanks to a courageous German colonel who surrendered to Soviet troops (a move usually punishable by execution). Although it's the fourth largest city in the state, its handsome medieval centre makes it principally a tourist town.

The skyline of this former Hanseatic city – as once perfectly captured by local son Caspar David Friedrich – is defined by three churches, the 'Long Nicholas' the 'Fat Mary' and the 'Kleine Jakob'.

However, Greifswald also has a pretty harbour in the charming district of Wieck, reached by a Dutch-style wooden drawbridge,

and its old city walls have been turned into a nice promenade. The town is a convenient gateway for the island of Usedom, too.

Orientation & Information

The Altstadt is northeast of the train station, on the bank of the Ryck River. It's partly encircled by a road, partly by railway tracks. The mostly pedestrianised Lange Strasse bisects the Altstadt from east to west and is quickly reached via Karl-Marx-Platz. Around 4km east is the gull- and mast-filled harbour neighbourhood of Wieck. (Incidentally, if you're a Caspar David Friedrich fan, the ruins of the Eldena cloister portrayed in one of his famous paintings are a few minutes' walk south of Wieck.)

Greifswald Information (☎ 521 380; www.greifswald.de; Markt; ☒ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) is in the Rathaus.

Sights

DOM ST NIKOLAI

The 100m onion-domed tower of the **Dom St Nikolai** (☎ 2627; Domstrasse; ☒ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-12.30pm Sun) rises above a row of historic façades, giving the cathedral the nickname 'Long Nicholas'. It has an austere, whitewashed interior with a large and solitary golden cross. You can climb the tower (adult/concession €2/1.50) and, yes, there is a great view from the top.

MARKT & AROUND

The many historical buildings on the Markt hint at Greifswald's stature in the Middle Ages. The **Rathaus**, at the western end, started life as a 14th-century department store with characteristic arcaded walkways. The red-brick **gabled houses** on the eastern side are worthy of inspection; the **Coffee House** (No 11) is gorgeous and a good example of a combined living and storage house owned by Hanseatic merchants.

Walk one block east on Mühlenstrasse to the now complete **Pommersches Landesmuseum** (Pomeranian State Museum; ☎ 831 20; www.pommersches-landesmuseum.de; Theodor-Pyl-Strasse 1-2; adult/concession €4.50/2.50; ☒ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar).

Renovated and reopened in 2005, it consists of three historic buildings of a Franciscan monastery, all linked by a 73m-long, glassed-in hall. There's a major gallery of paintings, including half a dozen by Caspar David Friedrich, as well as history and natural history exhibits.

Northeast of the Markt is the 12th-century red-brick **Marienkirche** (☎ 2263; Brüggstrasse; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat & Sun), a square three-nave tower trimmed with turrets. It's easy to see why it's teasingly called 'Fat Mary'.

UNIVERSITY AREA

Close to the train station is the university district, with Rubenowplatz at its heart. There's a fanciful neo-Gothic **monument to Heinrich Rubenow**, the university's founder, in the middle of the little park. The university's main building flanks the square's south side. Only the **Aula**, the assembly hall, is worth a closer look. East of Rubenowplatz is the 'Kleine Jakob', the modest **Jakobikirche**.

Sleeping & Eating

ALTSTADT

Hotel Alter Speicher (☎ 777 00; www.alter-speicher.de; Rossmühlenstrasse 25; s/d €70/85; ☎ ☒) This place occupies a renovated warehouse overlooking the river just outside the centre. It has lovely quarters and a good regional restaurant.

Hotel Galerie (☎ 773 7830; www.hotelgalerie.de; Mühlenstrasse 10; s/d €75/95; ☎ ☒) Rooms in this sparkling modern hotel across from the state museum are filled with a changing collection of work by contemporary artists.

WIECK

Maritimes Jugenddorf Wieck (☎ 830 2950; www.majuw.de; Yachtweg 3; dm €27; ☎ ☒ ☒) Offering super-modern hostel accommodation, this place has nice en suite rooms and a vast range of activities on offer across its 15,000-sq-m complex. Geared towards school and youth groups, it has a café on site.

Schipp In (☎ 840 026; Am Hafen 3; r €36-62) This tiny *pension* acts as a branch of the tourist office and has a public coin laundry and sauna. Breakfast is not included.

Getting There & Away

There are regular train services to Stralsund (€6.20, 25 minutes), Rostock (from €17, 1½ hours) and Berlin-Lichtenberg (from €29, 2½ to three hours).

The B105 and B96 roads from Rostock and Stralsund are notoriously slow; the B96 also continues to Berlin.

Getting Around

It's easy to get around Greifswald's centre on foot, but to reach outlying areas you may want

to make use of the bus system. Single/day tickets cost €1.50/3.30. You reach Wieck via a 4km foot/bike path, or bus 6 ends here. If you're driving, head east towards Wolgast; the turn-off is on your left.

USEDOM ISLAND

Usedom lies in the delta of the Oder River about 30km east of Greifswald, and is separated from the Pomeranian mainland by the wide Peene River. The greatest assets of this island, which Germany shares with Poland, are the 42km stretch of beautiful beach and the average 1906 annual hours of sunshine, which makes it the sunniest place in Germany. It earned the nickname *Badewanne Berlins* (Berlin's Bath tub) in the prewar period and was a sought-after holiday spot in GDR days.

Since the *Wende* (fall of communism), Usedom has been somewhat overshadowed by neighbouring Rügen, but as sprucing up continues it's coming into its own. Elegant 1920s villas with wrought-iron balconies grace many traditional resorts, including Zinnowitz and Ückeritz in the western half and Bansin, Heringsdorf and Ahlbeck further east.

Usedom Tourismus (☎ 038372-708 90; www.usedom.de; Bäderstrasse 5, Ückeritz; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) books accommodation all over the island; holiday apartments are common here.

Peenemünde

Usedom's only attraction of historical importance is Peenemünde, on the island's western tip. It was here that Wernher von Braun developed the V2 rocket, first launched in October 1942. It flew 90km high and a distance of 200km before plunging into the Baltic and marked the first time in history that a flying object had exited the earth's atmosphere. The research and testing complex was destroyed by the Allies in July 1944, but the Nazis continued their research in Nordhausen in the southern Harz (see Mittelbau Dora, p242).

At the **Historisch-Technisches Informationszentrum** (Historical & Technological Information Centre; ☎ 038371-5050; www.peenemuende.de; adult/concession €5/4; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar, closed Mon Oct-May) Peenemünde is immodestly billed as 'the birthplace of space travel'.

The harbour is another popular spot for visitors, with plenty of boats and the battered **U461 submarine** (☎ 285 66; www.u-461.de; admission €5.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Jun & Oct, 9am-9pm Jul-Sep, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar).

Getting There & Away

Züssow is the gateway to Usedom, reached by train from Stralsund (€11, 30 minutes) and Greifswald (€6, 15 minutes); **Usedomer Bäderbahn** (www.ubb-online.com; day card €11) trains continue to Zinnowitz, Peenemünde and other resorts. Buses also connect Wolgast, one stop from Züssow, with the island.

RÜGEN ISLAND

Rügen is much mythologised in the German national imagination. Frequent in the late 19th and early 20th century by the country's good and great, including Bismarck, Thomas Mann and Einstein, its chalk coastline was also immortalised by Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich in 1818.

Unfortunately, Hitler was also beguiled by Germany's largest island, choosing one of its most beautiful sandy beaches to build a monstrous holiday resort for his loyal troops. Later, GDR governments made Rügen the holiday choice for dedicated comrades, as well as top apparatchik Erich Honecker.

Although it boasts 574km of coast, much of Rügen is covered in leafy vegetation. Driving across the island, you'll pass beneath lush canopies of chestnut, oak, elm and poplar trees. Its surrounding waters are national parks or protected nature reserves.

Many visitors make a beeline for the main resort of Binz and the *Stubbenkammer* area of white chalk cliffs in the Jasmund National Park. However, Rügen has many corners to explore and also features some interesting, historic buildings.

Its resorts' white villas have been refurbished since 1990, as the island has reclaimed its place in tourist itineraries. A couple of flights of architectural fancy are found in the planned town of Putbus (p731) and the Jagdschloss Granitz (p729).

Orientation

Rügen's 1000-sq-km surface divides into several distinct areas. The Mönchgut Peninsula in the southeast is where most of the resorts, such as Sellin and Göhren, lie. The main resort, Binz, sits at the top of this. North of Binz lies the Jasmund National Park, and west is the more remote area of Wittow, with Germany's most northeasterly point, Kap Arkona (Cape Arkona).

The island's official capital is Bergen, but it's of little interest to visitors other than as a transport hub.

Information

Medical Services (☎ 03838-802 30)

Tourismus Rügen (☎ 03838-807 70; www.ruegen.de; Am Markt 4, Bergen) The island's main information office does not book rooms.

Touristik Service Rügen (☎ 038306-6160; Hauptstrasse 18, Altefähr)

Verbund Rügerner Zimmervermittlungen

(☎ 01805-334 433; www.insel-ruegen.org)

Island-wide reservations.

Dangers & Annoyances

In 2005-06, there was an outbreak of H5N1 bird flu in a remote region of Rügen near the Wittow Ferry (Wittower Fähre). It was widely reported in the media but swiftly brought under control. Check out the latest before travelling, but unless the situation changes drastically, there's no need to avoid the island, although you should take sensible precautions and not handle birds or feathers.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

Rügen is a stop for domestic ferries to the mainland and international ferries (Denmark and Sweden). For ferries to Hiddensee, see Getting There & Away on p733.

The Mainland

Weisse Flotte (☎ 0180-321 2120; www.weisse-flotte.com; Fährstrasse 16, Stralsund) operates passenger and car ferries to Rügen.

The passenger ferries leave Stralsund harbour for Altefähr on Rügen's southwestern shore (one-way/return €2.50/3.80, 15 minutes, hourly 9am to 7pm).

Car ferries leave from Stahlbrode, 15km southeast of Stralsund, for Glewitz every 20 minutes, between 6am and 8pm from April to November only (car/passenger €3.80/1.10).

Sweden

Scandlines (☎ 01805-116 688; www.scandlines.de) runs five ferries daily from Sassnitz Mukran, several kilometres south of Sassnitz, to Trelleborg (adult/child €15/7, 50 daily in high season, 3¾ hours). Cars cost from €100 in the high season.

Denmark

Scandlines also runs ferries between Sassnitz and Rønne on Bornholm Island from April to November (Thursday, Saturday and Sunday April to June and September to November; daily in July and August). The trip takes 3¼ hours and costs €21/10 per adult/child in the high season. Cars cost from €115 in the high season.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

From 2007, there will be two crossings from the mainland to Rügen, which should mean no more – or at least fewer – traffic bottlenecks in the high season. The new Rügenbrücke bridge joins the older Rügendamm (1936) in crossing the Strelasund channel.

Both are reached via Stralsund's Karl Marx Strasse.

TRAIN

IC trains connect Binz to Hamburg (€44.20, four hours) and beyond, all via Stralsund. Local trains run hourly from Stralsund to Binz (€9.10, 1¼ hours) and also to Sassnitz (€9.10, 50 minutes). To get to Putbus, change RE trains in Bergen. Other destinations are served by the historic Rasender Roland train (see Train, opposite).

**Getting Around
BICYCLE**

Sharing roads with cars cannot always be avoided. Ask at tourist offices for the *Fahrrad*

& *Nahverkehrskarte*: besides being a map, it includes route recommendations and a list of hire and repair shops.

BOAT

Reederei Ostsee-Tour (☎ 038392-3150; www.reederei-ostsee-tour.de) will carry you around the coast from Göhren to Sassnitz, via Binz between April and October. There are five services a day; sample fares include Göhren–Binz for €4.50, and Göhren–Sassnitz for €8. An extra three ferries travel solely between Sassnitz and Binz (€6). Some services are operated by boats sailing around the chalk cliffs of the Jasmund National Park (see p732).

BUS

RPNV Buses (☎ 03838-194 49; www.rpnv.de, in German) link to practically all communities. In summer, there are half-hourly services from Binz to Göhren and Sassnitz, but service to other towns is more sporadic.

Fares are according to distance. Sassnitz–Königsstuhl costs €1.55, for example, Binz–Königsstuhl €4.10, Binz–Göhren €3.60 and Göhren–Bergen €4.60. A day card for the whole network is often a good deal at €9. Local tourist offices usually have timetables and maps.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If you don't have much time, a car is the best mode of transport on Rügen Island, although environmental concerns are strong here and driving will be frowned upon in some quarters. The main artery is the B96. Parking meters abound, so carry plenty of change.

TRAIN

The **Rasender Roland** (☎ 038301-801 12; www.rasender-roland.de) steam train shuttles between Putbus and Göhren from 7.45am to 9.30pm daily, stopping in Binz, Jagdschloss Granitz, Sellin and Baabe. Several services a day also go beyond Putbus to Lauterbach Mole. The route is divided into five zones, each costing €1.60 (Putbus–Binz is two zones; Putbus–Göhren or Göhren–Lauterbach Mole five zones). Bikes cost €2.10.

BINZ

☎ 038393 / pop 5600
Rügen's largest and most celebrated seaside resort, 'Ostseebad' Binz is a vision of ornate, white 19th-century villas, white sand and blue

water. Its roads are signed in Gothic script and lined with coastal pines and chestnut trees. So even if all the signs of 21st-century capitalism abound, especially along jam-packed Hauptstrasse, you can still feel the pull of history.

The town's renovated *Bäderarchitektur* (spa architecture) – as the villas with their wrought-iron latticework or carved wood balconies are collectively called – is separated from the beach by the long tree-lined Strandpromenade. Once you step down onto the sand, you have glorious views of Prorer Wiek bay and its white chalk cliffs.

Information

Fremdenverkehrssein (☎ 2782; www.gastgeber-binz.de; Paulstrasse 2; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) Room booking.
Kurverwaltung (☎ 148 148; www.ostseebad-binz.de; Heinrich-Heine-Strasse 7; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) For general information and lists of hotels.
Tourismusgesellschaft Binz (☎ 134 60; www.binz.de; Zeppelinstrasse 7) Room booking.

Sights & Activities

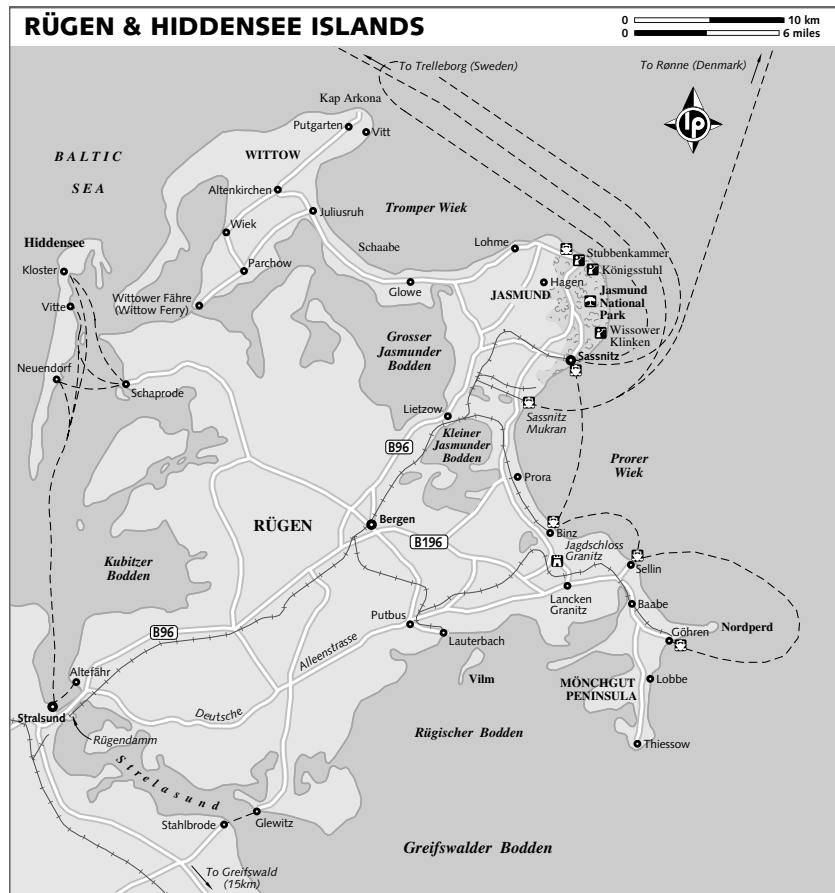
Binz has a 4km-long north-south beach promenade. At the southern end of the built-up area, you'll find the palatial **Kurhaus**, a lovely-looking historic building that's now a luxury hotel. In front of it is the long pier. Strandpromenade does continue further south from here, but becomes markedly less busy.

At the northern end of the beach is the IFA holiday park and its state-of-the-art **Vita-mar pool** (☎ 911 02; Strandpromenade 74; adult per 1/3hr €2.50/5; ☎ 7.30am-8pm), with slides, whirlpool, saunas and waterfalls.

Forgeries of some of the world's most famous paintings, including the *Mona Lisa* and Caspar David Friedrich's Rügen paintings (natch), are on view at the **Fälschermuseum/Galerie Jahreszeiten** (Museum of Art Forgeries; ☎ 131 48; Margaretenstrasse 20; adult/concession €3.50/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). Not only that, if you have a spare €2000 or so, you can buy them as well.

Jagdschloss Granitz (☎ 2263; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Sep, 9am-4pm Oct, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Apr), a hunting palace built in 1723 on top of the 107m-high Tempelberg, was significantly enlarged and altered by Wilhelm Malte I, whose flights of fancy also gave Rügen the grandiose Putbus. Malte added the palace's main attraction, a 38m-high tower.

From Binz, you can catch the motorised Jagdschloss-Express minitrain (adult/child



return €7.50/3.50), which handily passes through town, or walk to the Rasender Roland train station. If you're driving, you must leave your vehicle in a parking lot before heading to the palace.

Sleeping

Private rooms (from €15 per person) are available in Binz. There's also a spa tax of €2.10. Prices given in the following reviews are all high-season.

DJH hostel (☎ 325 97; www.jh-binz.de; Strandpromenade 35; dm under/over 26yr €19.90/23.90, s/d from €28/42; (P) ☒ ☑) One of the best-situated hostels in Germany – right on the beach – this place has been refurbished to the tune of several million. The exterior still looks a bit scuffed, but all mod cons are provided in the lounge and dining room, while bunk beds have been creatively painted with a sea-green wash. Book well ahead.

Villa Schwänenbeck (☎ 2013; www.villa-schwänenbeck.de; Margaretenstrasse 18; s €30-60, d €55-60; (P) ☒ ☑) Rather old-fashioned but comfortable and spacious, this place has a central location, a well-respected restaurant and reasonable room availability.

Pension Haus Colmsee (☎ 325 56; www.hauscolmsee.de; Strandpromenade 8; d €65-85; (P) ☒ ☑) At the leafy, quieter and altogether most pleasant eastern edge of town, this historic villa has relatively modern rooms. Its reasonable prices make it just as popular as the neighbouring Kempinski hotel, so book ahead.

Villa Undine (☎ 7970 6185; www.villa-undine-binz.de; in German; Strandpromenade 30; apt €85-90; (P)) Binz has scores of historic villas, but only four are heritage listed and this apartment is one of them. Its brick-red wooden exterior has A-line roofs and an onion-domed tower, while the rooms inside have been renovated and modernised. Longer stays are necessary in the high season.

Hotel Villa Neander (☎ 5290; www.glasner.de; Hauptstrasse 16; d €85-110; (P)) In the centre of town, the upmarket Neander has lovely, large rooms with nice bathrooms, plus charming staff and owners.

Hotel am Meer & Spa (☎ 440; www.hotel-am-meer.de; Strandpromenade 34; s/d from €150/180; (P) ☒ ☑) Sixty newly renovated and light-filled rooms, some over two floors, are decorated in light and cheerful colours at this hotel, just minutes from the beach. There's also a spa, opened in 2005.

Also recommended:

meersinn Hotel (☎ 6630; www.meersinn.de; Schillerstrasse 8; s €125-195, d €155-195, ste €290; (P) ☒ ☑ ☑) Stylish designer hotel mixing Oriental and ocean-going themes.

Kurhaus Binz (☎ 6650; www.travelcharme.de; Strandpromenade 27; s/d from €135/205; (P) ☒ ☑) Traditional style and luxury, including many restaurants.

Eating

Strandcafé (☎ 323 87; Strandpromenade 29; mains €6-18) This enormous beachfront place is a good catch-all option, with a wide range of offerings from coffee, cake and ice cream to meals.

Poseidon (☎ 337 10; Lottumstrasse 1; mains €8-17) For years one of the most respected fish restaurants in Binz, this lovely historic building with terrace serves fresh catches of the day and even has a menu section that takes you 'round the herring'. If that's not to your tastes, venison is another speciality.

PRORA

☎ 038393

Prora was going to be the largest holiday camp in the world, according to the Nazis. The 5km of uninterrupted, fine white-sand beach just north of Binz still bears testament to this, one of the regime's (unfortunately lesser) follies. Running parallel to the beautiful coast is a wall of six hideous six-storey buildings, each 500m long. Begun in 1936, this was intended as a *Kraft-durch-Freude* (strength through joy) resort for 20,000 people. The outbreak of WWII stopped its completion; after the war, Soviet troops tried to blow it up, but somehow failed miserably.

What to do with the buildings is an ongoing debate. The Museumsmeile (Museum Row) that occupied a portion of the buildings from 1994 was told to quit the location in 2006 by new owners, possibly to make way for a huge hotel, although at the time of writing there were no concrete plans. Check the latest with the tourist office in Binz.

SOUTH RÜGEN

Göhren

☎ 038308 / pop 1400

Göhren is a quiet, somewhat unassuming resort on the Nordperd spit. Non-Germans seldom stay here, and it's less conveniently located than Binz, but it might appeal to those who find Binz too touristy. Göhren claims to have the best resort beach on the

island, a contention you wouldn't dismiss out of hand. Its 7km-long stretch of sand is divided into the quieter Südstrand and the more developed Nordstrand. Göhren is served by buses and is on the Rasender Roland steam train route.

The **Kurverwaltung** (☎ 667 90; www.ostseebad-goehren.de; Poststrasse 9; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat, reduced hours in winter) and **Fremdenverkehrsverein** (☎ 259 40; www.zimmervermittlung-goehren-ostsee.de; Berliner Strasse 8; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) can both help with information and room bookings.

The mildly diverting **Monchgüter Museen** (☎ 2175; www.moengguter-museen-ruegen.de; combined ticket €8) combines a collection of four historic sites: the Heimatsmuseum, the Museumshof farm, the Rookhus (an unusual chimney-less house) and the museum ship *Luise*.

SLEEPING & EATING

Regenbogen Resort (☎ 901 20; Nordstrand; adult/tent/car €5/8/4, plus tax €2.10) In the woods behind the dunes, this is the island's largest camping ground (open from April to October). While well equipped, the 1000-plus crowd does detract a little from the idyllic location.

Robinson Jr (☎ 250 97; www.robinson-jr.de; Nordstrand 1; s €45-65, d €55-85; (P)) Breakfasting on the beachfront terrace, it occurs to you that this former boathouse converted into a 14-room *pension* among the dunes is just right for Göhren's castaway style. However, the restaurant-pub downstairs hosts live bands, which is surely something Robinson (Crusoe) Snr never had to contend with?

Also available:

Waldhotel (☎ 505 00; www.waldhotelgoehren.de; Waldstrasse 7; s €60-80, d €70-100; (P) ☑) Comfortable villa near the beach.

Hotel Hanseatic Rügen (☎ 515; www.hotel-hanseatic.de; Nordperdstrasse 2; s/d from €115/140; (P) ☒ ☑) Palatial rooms and a panoramic tower café.

Putbus

☎ 038301 / pop 2700

The planned town of Putbus rises up like a sci-fi mirage from the middle of modest farming villages. At its heart lies a gigantic circular plaza, known as the **Circus**, resembling a roulette wheel, with its alternating wedges of green and paving. Around this, 16 large white neoclassical buildings are dotted. Nearby, the town's 75-hectare **English park**, filled with ginkgos, cypresses, Japanese spruces and other exotic trees, lets you take a botanical journey around the world.

This civic oddity was conceived and realised in the 19th century by an overly ambitious local prince, Wilhelm Malte I of Putbus (1783-1854), and stands today as the last European town to be purpose-built as a royal seat. Priding itself on being Rügen's cultural centre, it has the island's only **theatre** (www.theatre-putbus.de; Markt 13).

Putbus Info (☎ 431; www.putbus.de; Orangerie, Alleestrasse 35; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct-Mar) provides information and hotel assistance and is in the popular Orangerie gallery, a town highlight.

Rügen-Besucher-Service (☎ 605 13; www.ruegenbesucherservice.de; August-Bebel-Strasse 1) books rooms. That said, most accommodation in Putbus is in holiday apartments, and there are very few hotels. Unless you're coming to the theatre, the town is best seen during a day trip.

Putbus is on the Rasender Roland route (p729); bus 30 also runs here from Bergen.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Strandhalle (☎ 315 64; Strandpromenade 5; mains €7-17) A local legend and deservedly so, Toni Münsterteicher's Strandhalle promises – and delivers – fine cooking at everyday prices. Lauded by *Feinschmecker* magazine, Michelin and other gourmet heavyweights, its food is simple but delicious. To get yourself acquainted, order the €21 menu for which Münsterteicher is most famous: pear-and-celery soup with red peppercorns, Baltic cod cooked in a potato crust, and the *Scheiterhaufen* (literally 'pyre') dessert of baked and caramelised apple.

Located on the quiet eastern end of Strandpromenade, with sea views, Strandhalle's vaulted-ceiling, wood-lined interior is decked out with an eclectic mix of church statues, fairy lights, chandeliers and dried plant arrangements.

Can't get a table? Sister restaurant **Münsterteicher** (☎ 143 80; Strandpromenade 17-18; mains €7-28) serves Argentine steaks, pasta, fish and sushi.

Lauterbach

☎ 038301

The yacht harbour southeast of Putbus will be of interest to keen sailors, with all kinds of boat hire and a couple of sailing schools. Lauterbach's stand-out feature, however, is its **Swimming Holiday Homes** (Schwimmenden Ferienhäuser; ☎ 8090; www.im-jaich.de; Am Yachthafen; apt 2-4 people €115, 6 people €140), which is made up of new Scandinavian-looking bungalows and two-storey huts that float in the harbour on individual pontoons. The same company also runs one of the sailing schools, and has land-based accommodation.

Lauterbach Mole is the westerly terminus of the Rasender Roland steam train.

JASMUND NATIONAL PARK

The rugged beauty of Jasmund National Park first came to national attention thanks to the romanticised paintings of Caspar David Friedrich in the early 19th century. His favourite spot was the **Stubbenkammer**, an area at the northern edge of the park, where jagged white-chalk cliffs plunge into the jade-coloured sea. Today the area symbolises Rügen; it's a sight most Germans are familiar with through some medium and want to see in reality.

By far the most famous of the Stubbenkammer cliffs is the **Königsstuhl** (King's Chair; admission €1) – at 117m, it's Rügen's highest point. Sadly, enjoyment of the scenery is often marred by everyone else trying to see it too; on busy weekends, up to 10,000 people visit. Fortunately, fewer people make the trek a few hundred metres east to the **Victoria-Sicht** (Victoria View), which provides the best view of the Königsstuhl itself.

The **Nationalpark-Zentrum Königsstuhl** (☎ 038392-661 766; www.koenigsstuhl.com; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar) has multimedia displays on environmental themes, a 'climbing forest' and a restaurant, Caspar's.

Bus 20 (from Göhren) and 23 (from Bergen) go to the Königsstuhl, passing the train stations at Sassnitz and Binz. For speed tourists, it's sometimes possible to get off the ICE from Hamburg at Binz and step right on to a bus to the Königsstuhl! In summer, each service runs half-hourly between 8am and 4pm, with a few hourly services before and after that.

From April to October, **Reederei Ostsee-Tour** (☎ 038392-3150; www.reederei-ostsee-tour.de) operates several daily trips from Binz (€14.50) and

Sassnitz (€11) around the chalk cliffs. The first morning service departs from as far away as Göhren (€16) at 10.15am. The round-trip takes 1¼ hours from Sassnitz and 2¾ hours from Binz, and offers what many believe to be the best views of the cliffs. **Adler Schiffe** (☎ 038378-477 90; www.adler-schiffe.de) offers similar packages.

For the fit, a spectacular way to approach the area is by making the 10km trek from Sassnitz along the coast through the ancient forest of Stubnitz. The trail also takes you past the gorgeous **Wisower Klinken** chalk cliffs, another famous vista painted by Friedrich.

If you're driving, leave your vehicle in the (paid) parking lot in Hagen, then either catch the shuttle bus (€1.30) or walk 2.5km past the legendary Herthasee through the forest.

Panorama-Hotel Lohme (☎ 038302-9221; www.lohme.com; Dorfstrasse 35, Lohme; s €60, d €90-120; Ⓟ) This hotel, west of the Stubbenkammer, has what may be the island's most romantic restaurant, particularly when the sun sets over Kap Arkona on summer nights. Its *Eintopf* (potato stew served with vinegar and sugar on the side) is renowned.

While most people only pass through Sassnitz, the town has been redeveloping its Altstadt and has a nice fishing harbour. Its **tourist office** (☎ 038392-6490) Bahnhofstrasse 19a; (☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 2-6pm Sun); Strandpromenade 1; ☎ 10am-5pm) can help with information and room bookings.

KAP ARKONA

Rügen ends at the rugged cliffs of **Kap Arkona**, with its famous pair of lighthouses. The older **Schinkel-Leuchtturm** (☎ 038391-12115; adult/concession €3/2.50), designed by the legendary Karl Friedrich Schinkel, was completed in 1827. It's square, squat and 19.3m high, and inside are exhibits by Rügen artists. From the lookout platform there's a wonderful view over a colourful quilt of rape fields, meadows and white beaches, all set against the dark-blue Baltic Sea. The views are better still from the adjacent 36m-high **Neuer Leuchtturm** (adult/concession €3/2.50), which has been in business since 1902.

A few metres east of the lighthouses is the **Burgwall**, a complex that harbours the remains of the Tempelburg, a Slavic temple and fortress. The castle was taken over by the Danes in 1168, paving the way for the Christianisation of Rügen.

The gateway to Kap Arkona is the village of Putgarten, served by hourly bus 11 from Altenkirchen in central Wittow. (To get to Altenkirchen, you need to travel from Sassnitz or Bergen and change in Wiek.)

From Putgarten, take the gas-powered **Arkona Bahn** (☎ 038391-132 13; www.arkonabahn.de; per person €2) or make the 1.5km journey by foot or bicycle. Driving all the way to the cape is not allowed, for environmental reasons. You must leave your vehicle in Putgarten.

Reederei Ostsee-Tour (☎ 038392-3150; www.reederei-ostsee-tour.de; tour €19.50; ☎ Tue-Fri Jun-Sep) operates boat tours around the cape (without landing). The four-hour tours leave from Binz at 1.15pm and Sassnitz at 2pm.

For a slightly different approach to this area, contact **Rügen Safari** (☎ 0173-610 6514; www.ruegen-safari.de, in German), which runs unusual adventure tours here and in Jasmund National Park. You can try a jeep safari, mountain biking or an Indian canoe tour with real tepees!

HIDDENSEE ISLAND

☎ 038300 / pop 1280

If Rügen is exalted, the mention of Hiddensee island makes Germans swoon. 'Dat söte Länneken' (the sweet little land) is a tiny patch off Rügen's western coast, 17km long and 1.8km at its widest point. What makes it so special is its remote, breathtaking landscape. North of the village of Kloster are the heath and meadows of the 'Dornbush' area, with the island's landmark lighthouse (it has another, too) and wind-buckled trees. From the main

village of Vitte, dunes wind their way south to Neuendorf. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Hiddensee bewitched artists like Thomas Mann, Bertolt Brecht and Gerhart Hauptmann, the last of whom is buried here.

Cars are banned on Hiddensee; the best way to get around is by bike. Hire places are everywhere.

The **tourist office** (☎ 642 26; www.seebad-hiddensee.de; Norderende 162, Vitte; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat May-Sep, reduced hours in winter) has another **branch** (☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat May-Sep) at Kloster harbour.

There are no camp sites on Hiddensee. **Private rooms** (high season per person from €10) are available in all three villages.

Cheap dorm-style accommodation is provided in the cabins of the **Hotelschiff Caprivi 93** (☎ 501 62; www.hotelschiff-hiddensee.de; Springe 39, Vitte; s/d from €24/38, plus final cleaning fee €5).

The **Hotel Hitthim** (☎ 6660; www.hitthim.de; Hafenweg, Kloster; s €50-65, d €70-110; Ⓟ) might have a funny name, but this appealing timbered building is one of Hiddensee's best accommodation options.

Reederei Hiddensee (☎ 0180-321 2150; www.reederei-hiddensee.de) ferries leave Schaprode, on Rügen's western shore, several times daily year-round. Return fares to Neuendorf are €12.70, to Kloster and Vitte €14.80.

The same company offers services from Stralsund up to three times daily between May and September. Return tickets to Neuendorf cost €16.20; to Vitte and Kloster it's €16.70. Check the website for other services.

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